

Teachings on Mahamudra

Jason Espada, editor

Introduction

This is but a summary.

If you follow at timeline of Buddhist Wisdom teachings, it would go something like this:

The historical Buddha spoke in terms of anatta, non-self. The pith instruction carried forward to the 20th century by Ajaan Buddhadasa sums it up as ‘Nothing should be grasped as I or mine’. Although some would say that the Buddha was revealing something new, another interpretation is that he was showing another way to universal truth, beyond illusion.

The word ‘emptiness’ was applied in the centuries that followed to describe the way the self and named phenomena exist, and the wisdom teachings on shunyata, or emptiness were expounded and written down as the Perfection of Wisdom Sutras. These include the Heart Sutra and the Diamond Sutra, which is the oldest printed book, dating back to 868 A.D.

Buddhism went from India into both China and Tibet in the first millennium, and each developed their own way with Wisdom practice. In Tibet, the Nature of Mind Teachings dating from that era, and still taught today are known as Dzogchen, or the Great Perfection Teachings. In China, teachings with a very similar feeling, but different language developed into Chan (and later in Japan, Zen) Buddhism. Distant as they were geographically, both emphasized liberation through meditation and insight, directly looking at the mind’s nature.

Over the centuries, other schools of thought developed in Tibet, and criticisms, some valid, worked their way back, and were incorporated into the Great Perfection method.

The Kaguyd Lineage developed from the meeting of Nyingma (Old School) nature of mind meditation, and Sarma (New School) disciplines and insights. Milarepa’s famous disciple, Gampopa was versed in both of these.

Mahamudra then can be seen at times to have elements of the method of what is called the Nalanda school - where analysis and clear meditation are joined together, as well as the ‘letting be with awareness’, that is characteristic of the Great

Perfection. For someone with the karma to connect with these teachings, here is a profound and effective union of these two approaches.

Later schools of thought also can be seen to influence the teachings that were founded earlier. For example, in Tibet, the Buddha Nature teachings, that highlight the potential of the mind, and its positive qualities, can be heard in the teachings on Mahamudra.

I would like these classic Mahamudra teachings to speak for themselves. Over the years I've worked with the language of some the main root texts from this tradition, always looking for the language that worked for me to bring some experience. Surely this is a subjective matter. If these versions work for anyone else, that would be the best I could hope for.

My first exposure to the Mahamudra teachings was in a book called *The Teachings of Tibetan Yoga*. The chapter called *The Essentials of Mahamudra Practice* has always been one of my favorites for that reason.

I've also included in this collection two sets of notes from lectures by one of my teachers here in San Francisco, Lama Lodu Rinpoche (also spelled Lama Lodro Rinpoche). For me, these will always have the flavor of his oral teachings, and carry inspiration and blessings.

The teachings on mahamudra by Lama Yeshe also have a special place in my heart, and so they are included here. Although his teaching has a bit more of the Gelugpa analysis than the other selections presented here, they fit perfectly, and show the complementary nature of slightly different approaches to mahamudra. They are from the book *Becoming the Compassion Buddha - Tantric Mahamudra for Everyday Life*.

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A Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples, by Bokar Rinpoche

Fortunate men and women, who have karmic affinity with the Teachings,
You gained a free and fully endowed precious life,
Met an authentic noble spiritual master,
And received vast and deep teachings for spiritual maturity and liberation.
Now exert yourselves in cultivating meditative experience,
I beseech you.

Your spiritual master is like the sun in space--
When your doubts or wrong views do not cloud him,
His compassionate light shines continuously:
In yearning faith and devotion, pray.

Your pure vision is like an eye--
When your pride or critical thoughts do not blind it,
All beings are mines of noble qualities:
Train in universal pure vision, I beseech you.

Your development of the mind of awakening is like a potent seed--
When plans for your own good do not spoil it,
It grows into perfect awakening:
Always meditate on the two aspects of the mind of awakening.

Your self-clinging is like an unseen enemy--
When you lose hold of the antidote of mindfulness,
You will never escape the den of suffering:
Therefore, please subdue your own mind.

Your mind's nature is like an endless ocean--
When waves of clinging to appearances do not disturb it,
It has a single flavor, the essence of reality:
Dwell without acceptance or rejection, affirmation or denial,
I beseech you.

Your mind is like a wish-fulfilling jewel--

When delusion's impurities do not taint it,
It produces all you need and desire:
Always meditate on Great Seal.

At all times--in this life, the next, and in between--
The spiritual master's enlightened mind and your mind
Are not separate in your intrinsic awareness.
In natural repose, without distraction or clinging,
Make manifest the primordial body of ultimate enlightenment.

I, Karma Ngedon Chokyi Lodro, who holds the title of Bokar Tulku, composed this Short Song of the Six Similes to Satisfy the Heartfelt Yearning of Devoted Disciples according to the wishes of the residents of France's Niga Ling Retreat Center.

~

From Timeless Rapture: Inspired Verse of the Sbangpa Masters, compiled by Jamgon Kongtrul, translated and introduced by Ngawang Zangpo (Ithaca, N. Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 2003)

The Karma Kagyu Lineage Prayer

Great Vajradhara, Tilopa, Naropa,
 Marpa, Milarepa, and Lord of the Dharma, Gampopa
 Knower of the three times, omniscient Karmapa
 Lineage holders of the four great and eight lesser schools
 Drikung, Taklung, Tsalpa, glorious Drukpa and others,
 You who have thoroughly mastered the profound path of Mahamudra
 Unrivaled protectors of beings, the Dakpo Kagyü
 I pray to you, the Kagyü lamas
 Grant your blessing that we may follow your tradition and example.

Detachment is the foot of meditation, it is taught.
 Attachment to food and wealth disappears
 To the meditator who gives up ties to this life,
 Grant your blessing that attachment to ownership and honor cease.

Devotion is the head of meditation, it is taught.
 The lama opens the door to the profound oral teachings
 To the meditator who always turns to him,
 Grant your blessing that uncontrived devotion be born within.

Unwavering attention is the body of meditation, it is taught.
 Whatever arises, is the fresh nature of thought.
 To the meditator who rests there in naturalness,
 Grant your blessings that meditation is free from intellectualization.

The essence of thought is dharmakaya, it is taught.
 They are nothing whatsoever, and yet they arise in the mind.
 To the meditator who reflects upon the unobstructed play of the mind,
 Grant your blessing that the inseparability of samsara and nirvana be realized.

Through all my births, may I not be separated from the perfect Lama
 and so enjoy the glory of the dharma.
 May I completely accomplish the qualities of the path and stages
 And quickly attain the state of Vajradhara.

The Essentials of Mahamudra Practice, as Given by The Venerable Lama Kong Ka, From "The Teachings of Tibetan Yoga", translated by Garma C. C. Chang

Lama Kong Ka said:

"To practice this Mahamudra meditation one should first be initiated by a qualified Guru. The purpose of Mahamudra initiation is to make the disciple recognize the illuminating-void awareness of his Self-mind. Only after recognizing this intrinsic "awareness without content" can the disciple practice Mahamudra correctly. Until he has done so, he will find it difficult to escape from the subject-object entanglement and to elevate his mind to the state of non-distinction and non-attachment. To deepen this illuminating-void Awareness, he should practice often the essential instructions given below.

"He who can rest his mind in pure Self-awareness without distraction will be able to do anything. To practice Mahamudra he should stop discriminating, abandon habitual thoughts of "accept this" and "reject that", and strive to reach a state where Samadhi and activities become one.

Until he has done so, he should stress quiet meditation first, and then as a subsidiary exercise apply his Mahamudra- awareness to his daily activities."

* * *

"There are three essentials in the Mahamudra practice: equilibrium, relaxation, and naturalness.

" 'Equilibrium' means to balance body, mouth, and mind. The Mahamudra way of balancing the body is to loosen it, of balancing the mouth is to slow down the breathing, and of balancing the mind is not to cling to and rely on anything.

"This is the supreme way to tame the body, breath [prana], and mind.

" 'Relaxation' means to loosen the mind, to let everything go, to strip off all ideas and thoughts. When one's whole body and mind become loose, one can, without effort, remain in the natural state, which is intrinsically non-discriminative and yet without distractions.

" 'Naturalness' means not 'taking' or 'leaving' anything: in other words the yogi

does not make the slightest effort of any kind. He lets the senses and mind stop or flow by themselves without assisting or restricting them. To practice naturalness is to make no effort and be spontaneous.

"The above can be summarized thus:

The essence of equilibrium is not to cling.
 The essence of relaxation is not to hold.
 The essence of naturalness is to make no effort."

The Five Similes of Mahamudra Experience

"There are five similies which describe the correct experience of Mahamudra:

A sphere which is like infinite space.

Awareness omnipresent like the great earth.

A mind steady as a mountain.

Self-realizing Awareness clear and bright like
 a lamp.

Pure consciousness, crystal clear and empty of
 discriminating thoughts.

"Mahamudra experience can also be described thus:

Like a cloudless sky, the sphere is broad
 and free from obstruction.

Like a waveless ocean, the mind is steady
 without discriminating thoughts.

Like a bright lamp on a windless night, the
 consciousness is clear, bright, and stable."

* * *

"To practice Mahamudra, keep both mind and body loose and gentle without straining to do so; stop doubting and worrying, and remain balanced.

"In practicing Mahamudra, identify all that you encounter with the 'unborn Void' and remain natural and relaxed."

* * *

"To keep the body loose and gentle does not imply completely abandoning all activities, but that these activities should be carried out in a smooth, relaxed, and spontaneous way.

"To keep the mind loose and gentle does not imply making it dumb or insensible, but that one should try to further its bright awareness.

"To identify everything with the Unborn Void means that he who has realized Self-awareness and is able to sustain it, should then try to let everything he meets and experiences liberate itself into the Voidness."

Five Ways of Straying from Mahamudra

"(1) One is liable to misconstrue Voidness as an annulment of both virtues and vices if he does not know that existence and Voidness are, in essence, identical, and this includes all moral truths and laws. This misunderstanding is straying from the View of Mahamudra. On the other hand, if one only has some sort of understanding of this truth, but cannot experience it intimately, he is said to have strayed from the realization of Mahamudra.

"(2) If one does not know that Mahamudra practice [the Path] is, in essence, not different from Mahamudra accomplishment [the Fruit] and that all the wondrous merits are contained in the practice itself, he is liable to think that practice comes first and Realization follows, so that Enlightenment is a product of the practice. This is perhaps true on the everyday level, but as far as the View is concerned, he is said to have gone astray.

"(3) If one can make a genuine effort in Mahamudra practice but does not have

immutable faith in the teaching itself, he is liable to cherish a 'hidden' hope that some day he may attain a teaching that is superior even to Mahamudra. This is also a sign of straying from Mahamudra.

"(4) He who knows not that the cure and the cured are, in essence, the same, is liable to cling to the idea that the Dharma-practice [the cure] and the desire-passions [the cured, or that which is to be cured] are two absolutely different things. This is also straying from the View of Mahamudra.

"(5) In Mahamudra practice, there is always a tendency on the yogi's part to make too many corrections, He who finds himself always trying to correct faults is most likely to have strayed from the Path."

The Three Major Experiences of Mahamudra

"In the course of meditation practice, three major experiences will be encountered. They are: Blissfulness, Illumination, and Non-distinction.

"(1) In the experience of Blissfulness some people feel that a great rapture envelops the whole body and does not decrease even in adverse circumstances, such as in extremely cold or hot weather. Some may feel that both body and mind disappear, that they are extremely joyful - and they often burst into laughter. Some may feel full of inspiration and enthusiasm, or extremely peaceful, contented, and happy. The ecstasy may become so great that they become unconscious of day and night.

"(2) In the experience of Non-distinction, some may feel that all things become empty, or may see the void nature of the world; others experience all things as devoid of self-entity, or that both body and mind are non-existent; while yet others really understand the truth of Voidness [Sunyata]."

"None of the above experiences should be treated as perfect and complete, and one should never cling to any of them. Among them, that of Non-distinction is most important and unerring. Some of the Illumination and Blissfulness experienced could be very misleading and even harmful."

* * *

"The profoundest of all the verbal instructions on Mahamudra is this:

Cast aside all clinging and the essence will at once emerge.

"The core of Mahamudra practice consists of two things, non-effort and non-correction. One should know, however, what this non-correction means. The Jetsun Milarepa explained this point very clearly: 'Concerning the practice of non-correction, one should understand three things: If wandering thoughts and desire passions are not corrected, one will fall into the lower realms. If the Blissfulness, Illumination, and Non-distinction are not corrected, one will fall into the Three Realms of Samsara. Only the immanent Self-mind needs no correction.'"

* * *

"At all times in the day, during or after meditation, one should try not to lose the 'essence'. In other words, one should try to bring the meditation experience into his daily activities.

"It is quite understandable that one may be distracted during his daily work, thus forgetting the 'essence,' but he should try always to bring back the Awareness, and if he succeeds, the 'essence' will at once emerge again.

"One should try not to lose Self-awareness by day or night. To practice Mahamudra during sleep and in dreams is also extremely important. He who cannot do so properly should shun all activities and practice Mahamudra meditation uninterruptedly for five or six days, then he should rest for one day before continuing. One should not be discouraged if he cannot keep the Awareness alive for a whole day. To make continuous and persistent effort is essential. He who can do so will certainly broaden his Awareness and Realization."

How to Cultivate Mahamudra Through Adverse Conditions

"After one has realized the 'essence,' he should then proceed to practice the so-called 'utilizing exercises.' That is to say one should utilize some particular conditions to further Realization.

"(1) To utilize distraction and discriminating thoughts to further Realization:

"This does not mean observing the nature of discriminating thoughts, nor meditating on Voidness, nor being 'mindful' of the distraction, but implies keeping 'bright Awareness'- the essence of discriminating thoughts- vividly alive. This Awareness in its natural state is Mahamudra. If at first one has great difficulties he should try to overcome them and merge the distracting thoughts into the Path.

"(2) To utilize desire-passions to further realization:

"Sometimes you should purposely stir up desire-passions such as lust, hatred, jealousy, etc.- and then observe them in depth. You should neither follow, relinquish, or correct them but clearly and 'awaringly' remain in a loose and natural state. When in deep sleep you should try to merge Awareness with the unconscious without strain. This is the best way to transform the unconscious into 'light'.

"(3) To utilize apparitions and devils to further Realization:

"Whenever any fearful apparition appears, you should employ the Mahamudra meditation on the fears. Do not try to dispel the fear but dwell on it clearly and loosely. In doing so, if the apparition vanishes, you should try once more to conjure up even more frightful apparitions and again apply Mahamudra to them.

"(4) To utilize compassion and grief to further Realization:

"Since in the final analysis, life and Samsara imply suffering, a Buddhist should have great compassion for all sentient beings. When contemplating men's sufferings, a great compassion will arise; right at the very moment when that compassion arises, one should practice the Mahahudra meditation on it. When one does so, both Wisdom and Compassion will grow.

"(5) To utilize sickness to further Realization:

"Whenever you are ill, you should practice the Mahamudra meditation on the sickness. You should also observe penetratingly the essence of both the patient and of the sickness, thus eliminating the dualism of subject and object.

"(6) To utilize death to further Realization:

"He who can practice Mahamudra as instructed will not be perplexed or frightened when death occurs. He will then be able to identify, without fear, all the visions

and experiences that take place in the process of dying.
Free from attachment and expectations he can then unify the Light of the Mother and Son into one great whole."

The Errors in Mahamudra Practice

"(1) If one's Mahamudra practice is confined solely to the effort of stabilizing the mind, the activities of all one's six consciousnesses will be halted, or dimmed. This is called a 'frozen ice' type of practice, and is a very harmful tendency in Mahamudra meditation which must be avoided.

"(2) He who neglects the clear 'Awareness' but abides solely in Non-distinction will see or hear nothing when confronted with sights, sounds, smells, and touches. . . This is an error due to having become sluggish.

"(3) When the last thought has gone, and the next one has not come, this immediate, present moment is a very wonderful thing if one can abide therein; but, if he does so without clear awareness, he still falls into the error of sluggishness.

"(4) he who can hold the bright Awareness but thinks there is nothing more to Mahamudra also falls into error.

"(5) If one only cultivates 'Blissfulness,' 'Illumination,' and 'Non-distinction' without practicing 'penetrating-observation-into-the-mind,' it still cannot be considered as the correct Mahamudra practice.

"(6) He who develops a dislike to manifestation is most likely to have gone astray.

"(7) He who concentrates on his Awareness and cultivates the illuminating-void Self-mind is said to practice Mahamudra correctly. However, this 'concentration-effort' has a tendency to hinder that spontaneity and freedom of spirit, without which it is difficult to unfold the vast and liberating Mind. One should therefore never forget to practice the 'looseness,' 'vastness,' and 'spontaneity.'"

* * *

"What, then, is the correct Mahamudra practice?"

"[Answer:] The ordinary mind [Tib.: Thal.Ma.Ces.Pa] is itself the correct practice. That is to say, to let the ordinary mind remain in its own natural state. If to this mind one adds or subtracts anything, it is then not the ordinary mind but the so-called 'mind-object' [Tib.: Yul.]. To make not the slightest intention and effort to practice, and yet to not be distracted for a single moment, is to practice the natural mind correctly. Therefore, as long as you can keep your Self-awareness, no matter what you do, you are still practicing Mahamudra.

On Meditation, by Milarepa

How to settle your own mind at rest,
 The secret lies in letting go,
 Making no strain, doing nothing,
 Like sleeping child you should do so.
 Like calm ocean without waves,
 Like a brilliant lamp without wind,
 Rest your mind in peace.
 Like corpse without pride,
 Rest it steadfastly.
 Like sea without tide,
 Free from any kind of grind.

...

If it is obstructing, it isn't space.
 If it can be counted, it isn't the stars.
 If it trembles, it isn't a mountain.
 If it's increased or diminished, it isn't the ocean.
 If a bridge reaches across, it's not a great river.
 If it can be seized, it isn't a rainbow.
 These six are the outer examples.

If it has reference points, it is not the view.
 If there is dullness and agitation, it's not meditation.
 If there is adopting and rejecting, it is not conduct.
 If there are concepts, it's not yoga.
 If there's dawning and waning, it's not wisdom.
 If there's birth and death, it's not buddhahood.
 These are the six inner faults.

If faith is strong, that's liberations path.
 If you rely on the learned and righteous, that's liberations path.
 If your samaya is pure, that's liberations path.
 If you wander in mountain retreats, that's liberations path.
 If you stay alone, that's liberations path.
 If you engage in practice, that's liberations path.
 These methods are the six paths of liberation.

From Meditation without a Reference Point, from Essentials of Mahamudra, by Thrangu Rinpoche

There are also times when our mind stays with the object of meditation, but the meditation is not very clear; rather it is gentle and soft. It is easy to mistake this for good shamata but, in fact, it is not. Such a subtly unclear state of mind needs to be purified by tightening the mind and making our mindfulness strong, dear, and bright. This brings a sense of lifting both body and mind.

...

The most important thing in meditation is to understand how to concentrate and how to relax. Tightening or concentrating the mind when it is appropriate and relaxing it when it is appropriate allows us to develop a shamata in which the mind rests comfortably, evenly. At this point, it is very important not to let mindfulness degenerate. It is important that mindfulness be strong so that the mind is relaxed, yet bright and one-pointed.

...

What is recommended at this point is a very subtle kind of mindfulness. We bring in our mindfulness, not with forceful concentration, but with a light touch.

(108 - 111)

Notes from The Essentials of Mahamudra, by Thrangu Rinpoche

In a commentary, Gampopa said, "Ordinary mind is unstained by any perceived forms, unmuddled by any existential projections, and unclouded by dullness, depression, or thought." Ordinary mind, he continued, is not polluted by the Dharma, not stained by worldly consciousness, and not wrapped up in a heavy mind. Not polluted even by any aspect of the Buddhadharma means that our mind is not polluted by philosophical systems of reasoned analysis and inferential conclusions, such as thinking that something exists or that something does not exist. The mind is neither manipulated nor fabricated in that way, nor is it affected by temporary experiences that occur when we practice. So the first characteristic is that the mind is not some new thing that has to be fabricated.

The second characteristic of ordinary mind is that it is not filled with the turbulence of disturbing emotions or the discursiveness of mind. Ordinary mind is uncontrived, free from such preoccupations. The third characteristic of ordinary mind is luminosity; it is not wrapped up in a dull, obscure state of mind or within conceptuality. In brief then, we could say that ordinary mind isn't altered by something else - it is just itself. If we realize ordinary mind, this is called "the wisdom that knows itself".

We meditate on ordinary mind by recognizing it *as* ordinary mind. We know it for what it is - empty and luminous. Through the force of habitual tendencies we lose track of ordinary mind. We sustain recognition of ordinary mind by way of mindfulness and alertness. Thus Gampopa emphasized that the practice of ordinary mind is simply not becoming distracted and wandering from it.

...

We should not spend a lot of time noticing what the mind is not. Rather we should see what it is with nothing added or subtracted. Ordinary mind is not polluted. It is not a matter of contriving something regarded by the Dharma as good, such as wisdom or luminosity. Ordinary mind is mind as it is without the interference of passion or aggression. It is just our mind noticing itself. It is not a matter of looking at something else, or trying to fix itself or do anything. It is simply our mind looking at itself and resting in chat. And the way that this is sustained and extended is through mindfulness.

...

This nature of mind has existed within us from the beginning of time, but, until the point of our recognizing it, we were confused. The habits and predispositions established by our confusion are so strong that, even if we recognize the nature of mind, these latencies resurface and our confusion returns. Therefore, we must meditate again and again. The Tibetan word for meditation is *gom*, which means habituation. So we must habituate to, become familiar with, the nature of mind. For our medication to improve, it is important to hold our mind on the nature of mind.

(from 176 - 184)

The Six Points of Tilopa

Do not recall,
 Do not think,
 Do not anticipate,
 Do not meditate,
 Do not analyze,
 Do rest naturally.

Do rest naturally means that the mind rests with mind as it is in an unfabricated way. Mind is placed in ordinary mind; it rests in the mind's own nature. These are six methods taught by Tilopa for sustaining a session of meditation.

...

We must become skilled in seeing this totally unelaborated meditation as delightful.

(192-193)

As beginners, we are distracted most of the time. There are two things we can do about that distraction - one in meditation and one in postmeditation. The most helpful thing to do in meditation is to give rise to a very strong mindfulness of the mind's coemergent nature. In postmeditation we must exert ourselves in applying our mindfulness. Once we have done that, we will be able to stay in luminosity and emptiness, without applying much exertion when thoughts and appearances arise.

(198)

Nonmeditation and nondistractedness

Question: I was wondering if you could explain how we would remedy dullness by using nondistractedness and wildness by using nonmeditation. A passage in the book says, "Beginners should know that nonmeditation connotes tranquillity and relaxation, but that an excess of relaxation will produce dullness; and that nondistractedness includes insight and exertion, but an excess of exertion will produce wildness." How do we work with these in our practice?

Rinpoche: The essentials are nonmeditation and nondistractedness. Through nonmeditation the mind rests in peace or shamata, but if that resting becomes too strong, the mind becomes dull. Through nondistractedness sharp insight develops, we experience vipashyana; but if that becomes too strong, wildness arises. The essential point is that both need to be present and in balance. (205)

From 'Luminous Clarity'

The mind looking at itself is like a candle flame that illumines itself. The candle flame also casts light around it, but the flame is its own light; it doesn't need a separate light. The mind's capacity to look at itself and the mind's activity of looking at itself is like that. (p 68)

From the teachings of Milarepa and Gampopa

From The Illuminating Wisdom by Milarepa

The essential nature of things, the mind of the buddhas, the mind-essence of sentient beings - does not exist like something that has color, or shape, or a center or edge. It is free from limitations and partiality and knows neither existence nor non-existence. It is neither confused nor liberated. It is not created through causes and not changed through conditions. It is neither altered through the wisdom of the buddhas nor spoiled through the obscurations of sentient beings. It is neither improved through realization nor worsened through confusion.

The Path is that which is to be practiced. When settling, settle without conceptualizing. When remaining, remain without distraction. When practicing, practice without fixation. When manifesting, let it manifest as dharmata. When freed, practice it as natural freedom.

From The Single Sufficient Path, by Gampopa

Mahamudra has no cause, yet faith and devotion are the cause.
 Mahamudra has no condition, yet a sacred master is the condition.
 Mahamudra has no method, yet nonfabrication is the method.
 Mahamudra has no path, yet undistracted mind is the path.
 Mahamudra has no fruition, yet freeing concepts into dharmata is the fruition.

As the main practice, settle the mind in the state of nonfabrication, and embrace it with nondistraction. Beyond this, it is not enough for your mind to be still - you must practice to see its essence.

On Mahamudra, by Drigung Kyabgon Chetsang Rinpoche

Sustain the fresh, non-arising mind without delusion.
In this uncontrived, natural state
Completely avoid the fabrication of meditation and meditator
The non-meditating, undisturbed, ordinary mind
Remains non-attached and non-separated
Free from hope and fear, grasping and letting-go
Rejection and acceptance, meditation and post-meditation.

Swooping Down From Above, by The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

The Single Word of Heart-Advice

Homage to all the sacred masters.

The heart-mind of all the Buddhas of the past, the present, and the future, widely renowned as Dharmakaya, as Mahamudra, as enlightened mind, is precisely your own mind, which thinks of this and that.

Simply allow this unique awareness to rest vividly awake and present in its natural way.

You don't need to worry or think, "Is this really it? Could this be Mahamudra?" Don't bother yourself with these doubts and questions. Don't hope for improvement or be afraid of degeneration.

By practicing in this extraordinarily simple way, again and again, you will definitely recognize the groundless, rootless open essence of all thoughts, appearances, and phenomena. When that happens, realization blooms naturally. All attachments, all habitual patterns, all conditioning is spontaneously liberated and released in this blossoming of realization.

I swear there is not a more profound and ultimate instruction from all the holy and realized masters of the enlightened lineage that is more profound and more vital than this single word of my heart-advice. Please don't waste this. Don't squander it. Remember this teaching always. There is no mistake in it. Rely on the blessings of such a teaching, rather than on the blessings of others.

This was written by Karmapa Rangjung Dorje in the Yangon Hermitage. May all beings be happy. Sarva mangalam.

The Aspiration Prayer for the Attainment of Mahamudra (my own version)

Composed by the Third Gyalwa Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

Namo Guru

1. Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,
Buddhas of the three times in the ten directions and your sons and daughters,
Please consider us with kindness and understanding,
and grant your blessing that these aspirations may be accomplished
exactly as we ask.

2. Sprung from the snow mountain of pure intentions and actions
Of myself and all sentient beings without limit,
May the river of accumulated virtue of the threefold purity
Flow into the ocean of the four bodies of the Victorious Ones.

3. So long as this is not accomplished,
Through all my lifetimes, birth upon birth,
May not even the words "evil deeds" and "suffering" be heard
And may we enjoy the splendour and goodness of oceans of happiness and virtue.

4. Having obtained the supreme freedoms and conjunctions
of the precious human existence, endowed with faith, energy, and intelligence,
Having attended on a worthy spiritual friend, and received the pith of the holy
instructions,
May we practice these properly, just as we have received them,
without obstacle or interruption.
In all our lives, may we practice and enjoy the holy dharma.

5. Learning the teachings frees one
from the obscuration of not knowing;
contemplating the oral instructions overcomes the darkness of doubt;
the light arising from meditation
makes clear the nature of mind,
just as it is.
May the brightness of these three wisdoms increase.

6. By understanding the meaning of the ground,
 which is the two truths, free from the extremes of eternalism and nihilism,
 and by practicing the supreme path of the two accumulations,
 free from the extremes of exaggeration and denial,
 is attained the fruit of well-being for oneself and others,
 free from the extremes of samsara and nirvana.
 May all beings meet the dharma which neither errs nor misleads.

7. The ground of purification is the mind itself,
 indivisible clarity of knowing and emptiness.
 That which purifies is the great vajra yoga of mahamudra.
 What is to be purified are the temporary, adventitious stains of confusion,
 May the fruit of purification, the stainless dharmakaya, be manifest.

8. Resolving all doubts about the ground
 brings confidence in the view.
 Maintaining this without distraction
 is the main point of meditation.
 Applying this in everything we do
 is the supreme action.
 May we have confidence in the view, meditation, and action.

9. All experience is the display of the mind.
 As for the mind, it is empty of any entity that can be called 'mind'.
 Although empty, experiences arise unceasingly.
 May we examine this fully,
 and resolve any doubts about the ground.

10. Appearances to our mind, which never existed in themselves,
 are mistaken for objects.
 Self-existing awareness, out of ignorance, is mistaken for a self.
 Through the power of this dualistic fixation, we wander in the realms of samsara.
 May ignorance, the root of confusion,
 be discovered and cut.

11. It is not non-existent – even the Victorious Ones do not see it.
 It is not non-existent – it is the basis of all samsara and nirvana.
 This is not a contradiction, but the middle path of unity.
 May we realize the true nature of mind, which is free from extremes.

12. If one says 'This is it', there is nothing to show.
 If one says, 'This is not it', there is nothing to deny.
 The true nature of mind transcends conceptual understanding,
 and is unconditioned.
 May conviction be gained in the ultimate, perfect truth.

13. Not realizing this, we circle in samsara.
 If it is realized, enlightenment is not anything other.
 Nothing is affirmed or negated at all.
 May we realize the essential nature of the dharmata,
 the ground of everything.

14. Appearance is mind and emptiness is mind.
 Realisation is mind and confusion is mind.
 Arising is mind and cessation is mind. May all doubts about mind be resolved.

15. Not adulterating meditation with conceptual striving,
 or mentally created meditation,
 unmoved by the winds of everyday busyness,
 knowing how to rest in unfabricated, natural spontaneity,
 May the practice of resting in mind's true nature be skillfully sustained.

16. The waves of gross and subtle thoughts calm down by themselves,
 and the waters of unmoving mind
 rest naturally,
 free from dullness, torpor, and murkiness.
 May the ocean of shamatha be unmoving and stable.

17. Looking again and again at the mind that cannot be looked at,
 one sees clearly, just as it is, the truth of not seeing any thing.
 Thus resolving any doubts about how it is, or is not,
 May we recognize our own nature, free of confusion, by ourselves.

18. Looking at objects,
 the mind devoid of objects is seen;
 looking at mind, *its* empty nature, devoid of mind is seen;
 looking at both of these, dualistic clinging is self-liberated.
 May the clear light nature of mind be realized.

19. Free from mental fabrications,
 it is called the Great Seal, Mahamudra.
 Free from extremes, it is called the Great Middle Way, Madhyamika.
 Because everything is complete here,
 it is also called the Great Perfection,
 Dzogchen.
 May I gain the confidence that,
 by understanding one,
 the essential meaning of all is realized.

20. Great bliss, free from attachment, is unceasing.
 Luminosity, free from clinging to concepts,
 is unobscured.
 Non-thought, beyond conceptual mind,
 is spontaneous presence.
 May the effortless enjoyment of these experiences be continuous.

21. Longing for, and attachment to good experiences are self-liberated.
 Negative thoughts and confusion purify naturally in the dharmadhatu.
 In ordinary mind, there is no rejecting and accepting,
 loss and gain.
 May the truth of the ultimate nature,
 complete simplicity,
 be realized.

22. While the nature of all beings has always been full enlightenment,
 not knowing this,
 they all wander in endless samsara.
 For the boundless suffering of sentient beings,
 may unbearable compassion arise in our being.

23. When such compassion is awakened,
 in the moment of compassion,
 its empty essence nakedly dawns.
 This unity is the supreme, unerring path.
 May we be inseparable from it,
 day and night.

24. By the power of meditation,
one gains the eyes,
and higher perceptions,
ripens sentient beings,
perfectly purifies buddha fields,
and fulfills all of ones aspirations
to attain the qualities of a Buddha.
Through bringing these three to the utmost fruition –
the fulfilling, ripening, and purifying,
may utmost buddhahood be manifest.

25. By the power of the compassion of the Victorious Ones of the ten directions
and their sons and daughters,
And by the power of all the pure virtue that exists,
May the pure aspirations of myself and all sentient beings
Be accomplished exactly as we wish.

The Ganges: An Experimental Pith Instruction on Mahamudra

In the language of India: Mahāmudropadeśam

In the language of Tibet: Chaggya Chenpö Menngak

Homage to glorious co-emergence!

Intelligent Nāropa, forbearing of suffering, you undertake hardships and respect the guru. Thus, though mahāmudrā cannot be explained, hold this in your heart, fortunate one.

O! Look closely at worldly phenomena! Unable to last, they are like dreams and illusions, which, in fact, are non-existent. That being so, having given rise to disenchantment, drop worldly activities.

Having cut all connection with attachment and aversion, the domain of samsara, cultivate practice alone in mountain and forest wilds. Remain in a state of nonmeditation. When you've attained that which is without attainment, mahāmudrā has been attained.

Worldly affairs are meaningless causes of ill-being. As actions performed are without essence, look at the actual, true essence.

The meaning that transcends rational mind will not be perceived through the phenomena of dualistic mind. The fact of non-action will not be reached through actions performed. If you want to attain the meaning of non-action transcending mind, seek out your own mind and nakedly place it in rigpa.

Put the sullied water of thoughts into its natural clarity. Without blocking or producing appearances, leave them as they are. When there is nothing to be rejected or adopted, mind is released into mahāmudrā.

If the root of a tree with lush branches, leaves and petals is cut, its ten thousand branches and hundred thousand leaves wither. Even the darkness amassed over a thousand kalpas is dispelled by a single lamp. Likewise, an instant of your own mind's luminosity dispels without exception all the negativity and obscuration amassed throughout kalpas.

When persons of lesser intelligence cannot abide within the meaning, they should ascertain awareness through holding the key point of breath. With manifold gazes and means of mental focus, they should fine tune until they abide in the state of rigpa.

If you survey the center of the sky, grasping at center and outer edge ceases. Likewise, when you examine mind with the mind, the multitude of thoughts ceases and you see mind's nature.

When vapors from the earth and clouds disperse into the sky, though they have gone nowhere at all, they yet abide nowhere. So it is with the multitude of thoughts arisen from mind: by seeing your own mind, the waves of thoughts vaporize.

Space transcends color or form. It is immutable—unstained by black or white. Likewise, your own mind, beyond color or form, is untainted by the black and white phenomena of evil and virtue.

The core of the clear and pure sun cannot be veiled by the darkness of a thousand kalpas. Likewise, kalpas in cyclic existence cannot obscure the luminosity that is your own mind's essence.

Although space has been labeled “empty,” space itself is inexpressible as such. Likewise, though your own mind is said to be “luminosity,” there is no referent similarly established through expressions.

Within space, what is supported by what? Mahāmudrā, your own mind, is similarly unsupported. Leave it loose in its unaltered, innate state. Once you have loosened the bonds, there is no doubt of release.

In that way, the nature of mind is like space. There is no phenomenon not included therein.

Give up physical activity altogether and sit idly. Without much verbal expression, speech is like an echo. Not pondering things in the mind, look at resolved truth.

As the body has no substantial essence, it is like a bamboo reed. The mind, like the center of space, is beyond being an object of thought. Leave it loose in that state without releasing or placing. When mind has no focal point, that is mahāmudrā. By habituating that, unsurpassed enlightenment will be attained.

Without an object of reference, the mind's nature is clear. Without a path to traverse, the buddhas' path is entered. By habituating non-meditation, unsurpassed enlightenment will be attained.

To transcend all grasped-at objects and grasping mind is the king of views. When there is no straying, that is the king of meditations. When there is no deliberate effort, that is the king of conduct. When there is neither expectation nor apprehension, the fruition is made manifest.

The unborn, underlying basis is clear of propensities' obscuring veil. Avoiding equipoise and post-attainment, rest in the unborn essence. When appearances are recognized as self-projections, the phenomena of dualistic mind are spent.*

When extremes are completely undone, that is the supreme king of views. Freedom from any extreme, deep and vast, is the supreme king of meditations. Self-abiding freedom from occupation is the supreme king of conduct. Self-abiding freedom from expectation is the supreme king of fruitions.

To a beginner, mind is like water falling down a gorge. In the middle, it flows gently, like the River Ganges. At the end, like tributaries' [confluence with the ocean], is the meeting of mother and son.

The luminosity that is mahāmudrā will not be perceived through the teachings of mantra proponents or pāramitā proponents, the vinaya collections and the like or even through their respective scriptures and tenet systems.

When you do nothing in the mind and are free of all wants, thoughts are like self-arisen, self-subsiding ripples of water. Obscured by the arising of want, luminosity is unperceived.

Vows observed conceptually deviate from the meaning of samaya. When you pay no mind to the non-abiding meaning that is without reference, the unimpaired samaya is a lamp in darkness.

When you are free of all wants and not dwelling in extremes, you will perceive all the teachings of the scripture collections without exception. If you dedicate yourself to this fact, you will be freed from samsara's prison. Equipoise upon this fact burns away ignorance, negativity and obscurations. Thus, it is described as a lamp of the teachings.

Foolish persons, disinterested in this fact, are spent, forever carried off by the great river of cyclic existence. How worthy of compassion are they, enduring evil destinies' unbearable miseries!

If you want release from ill-being, you should attend a masterful guru. His blessing having entered, your own mind will become liberated.

If you consort with the action mudrā, bliss-emptiness wisdom will arise. Thus, enter into equilibrium, the blessing of method and knowledge! [The pure essence] should be gently brought down, retained, reversed, drawn up, conveyed to its abode and made to pervade the body. When you're free of clinging to that, bliss-emptiness wisdom will arise.

Attaining longevity without graying hair and waxing like the moon, you'll have clear radiance and strength like that of a lion. The common accomplishments will be swiftly gained and you will arrive at the supreme.

May this crucial advice on mahāmudrā abide in fortunate wayfarers' hearts!

These words were spoken to Nāropa by Lord Tailopa on the banks of the River Ganges. Mangalam.

The Mahāmudropadeśam was spoken by Mahāsiddha Tilopa (988-1069) to Great Pandit Nāropa (c. 1012-1100). Later, at Pullahari in the north, Nāropa transmitted it to and recorded it in Sanskrit language with his disciple and lineage holder, Marpa Chökyi Lodrö, who translated it into Tibetan.

In the present time, there exist numerous Tibetan versions of the text, which consist mostly of the same words in various configurations. This edition accords with the Tibetan text transmitted by Drigung Kyabje Garchen Triptrül Rinpoché. At his request and with his clarifying commentary, it has been translated into English without any reference to original Indic texts by the disciple Ari-ma.

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*The words of this line have been supplemented with commentary by Garchen Rinpoché.

A note on the following text

The Prayer of Samathabhadra first came to my attention as being a teaching from the Nyingma Tradition. Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche's wonderful book, *Discovering Infinite Freedom*, is a commentary of The Prayer of Kutunzangpo another name for this text. I have included selections from that version in the collection of Great Perfection teachings.

The reason I'd like to include this text here in its entirety is because I have heard His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche refer to it in his teachings on mahamudra. He concluded his commentary on the Ganges Mahamudra of Tilopa in 2003 with a reading of this prayer.

There has long been a close association between the Kaguyud and Nyingma schools, such that when teachings are given, they often speak of the Kagyud-Nyingma. It is a very rich, complimentary relationship between these lineages, and at times it's vividly clear that the vital point they would have us recognize and cultivate the experience of is the same. Having The Ganges Mahamudra of Tilopa followed by The Prayer of Samantabhadra shows this very well.

The Prayer of Samantabhadra

Ho!

Everything — appearance and existence, samsara and nirvana —
 Has a single Ground, yet two paths and two fruitions,
 And magically displays as Awareness or unawareness.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer, may all beings become Buddhas,
 Completely perfected in the abode of the Dharmadhatu.

The Ground of all is uncompounded,
 And the self-arising Great Expanse, beyond expression,
 Has neither the name 'samsara' nor 'nirvana'.
 Realizing just this, you are a Buddha;
 Not realizing this, you are a being wandering in samsara.
 I pray that all you beings of the three realms
 May realize the true meaning of the inexpressible Ground.

I, Kuntuzangpo, have realized the truth of this Ground,
 Free from cause and condition,
 Which is just this self-arising Awareness.
 It is unstained by outer expression and inner thought,
 Affirmation or denial, and is not defiled
 By the darkness of unmindfulness.
 Thus this self-manifesting display is free from defects.

I, Kuntuzangpo, abide as Intrinsic Awareness.
 Even though the three realms were to be destroyed, there is no fear.
 There is no attachment to the five desirable qualities of sense objects.

In self-arising consciousness, free of thoughts,
 There is neither solid form nor the five poisons.
 In the unceasing clarity of Awareness,
 Singular in essence, there yet arises the display of the five wisdoms.
 From the ripening of these five wisdoms,
 The five original Buddha families emerge,
 And through the expanse of their wisdom
 The forty-two peaceful Buddhas appear.
 Through the arising power of the five wisdoms
 The sixty wrathful Herukas manifest.

Thus the Ground Awareness is never mistaken or wrong.
 I, Kuntuzangpo, am the original Buddha of all,
 And through this prayer of mine
 May all you beings who wander in the three realms of samsara
 Realize this self-arising Awareness,
 And may your great wisdom spontaneously increase!

My emanations will continuously manifest
 In billions of unimaginable ways,
 Appearing in forms to help you beings who can be trained.
 Through my compassionate prayer
 May all of you beings who wander in the three realms of samsara
 Escape from the six life forms!

From the beginning you beings are deluded
 Because you do not recognize the Awareness of the Ground.
 Being thus unmindful of what occurs is delusion —
 The very state of unawareness and the cause of going astray.
 From this delusive state comes a sudden fainting away
 And then a subtle consciousness of wavering fear.
 From that wavering there arises a separation of self
 And the perception of others as enemies.
 Gradually the tendency of separation strengthens,
 And from this the circle of samsara begins.
 Then the emotions of the five poisons develop —
 The actions of these emotions are endless.
 You beings lack awareness because you are unmindful,
 And this is the basis of your going astray.
 Through my prayer, may all you beings recognize your Intrinsic Awareness!

Innate unawareness means unmindfulness and distraction.
 Imputing unawareness means dualistic thoughts towards self and others.
 Both kinds of unawareness are the basis for the delusion of all beings.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer
 May all you beings wandering in samsara
 Clear away the dark fog of unmindfulness,
 Clear away the clinging thoughts of duality!
 May you recognize your own Intrinsic Awareness

Dualistic thoughts create doubt.
 From subtle attachment to this dualistic turn of mind
 Dualistic tendencies become stronger and thicker.
 Food, wealth, clothes, home, and friends,
 The five objects of the senses, and your beloved family —
 All these things cause torment by creating longing and desire.
 These are all worldly delusions; the activities of grasping
 and clinging are endless.
 When the fruition of attachment ripens, you are born as a hungry ghost,
 Tormented by coveting and desiring, miserable, starving and thirsty.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer may all you desirous and lustful beings
 Who have attachments, neither reject longing desires,
 Nor accept attachment to desires.
 Let your consciousness relax in its own natural state,
 Then your Awareness will be able to hold its own.
 May you achieve the wisdom of perfect discernment!

When external objects appear, the subtle consciousness of fear will arise.
 From this fear, the habit of anger becomes stronger and stronger.
 Finally, hostility comes causing violence and murder.
 When the fruition of this anger ripens, you will suffer in hell
 by boiling and burning.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer, you beings of the six realms,
 When strong anger arises for you, neither reject nor accept it.
 Instead relax in the natural state and achieve the wisdom of clarity!

When your mind becomes full of pride
 There will arise thoughts of competition and humiliation.
 As this pride becomes stronger and stronger,
 You will experience the suffering of quarrels and abuse.
 When the fruition of this karma ripens, you will be born in the God Realms
 And experience the suffering of change and falling to lower rebirths.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer, may you beings who develop pride,
 Let your consciousness relax in the natural state.
 Then your Awareness will be able to hold its own.
 May you achieve the wisdom of equanimity!

By Increasing the habit of duality, by praising yourself and denigrating others,
 Your competitive mind will lead you to jealousy and fighting,

And you will be born in the jealous God Realm, where there is
 much killing and injury
 From the result of that killing, you will fall into the Hell Realm.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer, when jealousy and competitive thoughts arise,
 Do not grasp them as enemies.
 Just relax in ease, then consciousness can hold its own natural state.
 May you achieve the wisdom of unobstructed action!

By being distracted, careless and unmindful,
 You beings will become dull, foggy and forgetful
 By being unconscious and lazy, you will increase your ignorance
 And the fruition of this ignorance will be to wander helplessly
 in the Animal Realm.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer,
 May you beings who have fallen into the dark pit of Ignorance
 Shine the light of mindfulness and thereby achieve wisdom free from thought.

All you beings of the three realms are actually identical to Buddha,
 the Ground of all.
 But your misunderstanding of the Ground causes you to go astray,
 So you act without aim.
 The six karmic actions are a delusion, like a dream.
 I am the Primordial Buddha here to train the six kinds of beings
 Through all my manifestations.
 Through Kuntuzangpo's prayer may all you beings without exception
 Attain enlightenment in the state of Dharmadhatu.

Ah Ho!
 Hereafter, whenever a very powerful yogin
 With his or her Awareness radiant and free from delusion
 Recites this very powerful prayer, then all who hear it
 Will achieve enlightenment within three lifetimes.
 During a solar or lunar eclipse, during an earthquake or when the earth rumbles,
 At the solstices or the new year, you should visualize Kuntuzangpo.
 And if you pray loudly so all can hear,
 Then beings of the three realms will be gradually liberated from suffering,
 Through the prayer of the yogin and will finally achieve enlightenment.

This prayer was taken from the ninth chapter of the Dzogchen Teachings of the Gongpa Zangthal the Northern Treasures discovered by the Tertön Rigdzin Godem.

On the fifteenth day of the seventh Tibetan month in the year of the Sheep (1991) this prayer was translated by the Venerable Bhakā Tulku Rinpoche in Berkeley, California, assisted by Lunpo Ugyan Thondup.

This prayer was distributed by His Eminence Garchen Rinpoche to commemorate Tibetan Losar (New Year) of the Waterhorse, February 13, 2002.

Notes from the lectures of Lama Lodu, On Emptiness and the Nature of Mind

It is necessary to know the essential nature of the mind, right view, without which you will grasp what you visualize, and with your grasping this will become reality. This will make a big obstacle.

View means emptiness, emptiness, everything. In order to bring confidence to your mind, you have to use discriminating wisdom to analyze what which we see, what you feel, to determine whether these things are real or not real.

Analyze, check up, use your intellect, and the result you will find.

Self of person, self of phenomena, we are holding as self, 'me' and 'I', and phenomena as real.

These two make confusion. These two make dualistic mind, and lead us to become confused.

Having an 'I' leads to 'mine'. Without 'I' there cannot be 'mine'; 'my hand', 'my hat', 'my feet', 'my clothing', 'my food'... Then, 'I like', 'I dislike', clothing, food, house, relating to phenomena through strong grasping.

I project phenomena, which becomes like and dislike, ego becomes tight, narrow.

Things distract us, we allow distraction.

Human beings have 'I' and 'mine'; 'my mother', 'my father', 'my brother', 'my sister'. Without I, no mine. This is attachment, clinging. Then if they dislike another, I don't care, but 'my' family, I dislike them. Why? Because ego grasps them. My family is relative to me.

Through ignorance possessing an artificial I, we have strong grasping, holding, and this produces anger towards anyone who doesn't like 'me', and 'I'. Attachment, then anger, pride, greed, jealousy.

Due to these the mind is completely artificial. 'Me' and 'I' become a strong center, and the true nature becomes lost, covered over. With these afflictions there is no right speech, action, motivation, which contributes to suffering, and we blame

family, world, government. I'm the only good one', loneliness, fear, longing, drug, drink, crazy...

As soon as 'I', then desire, greed, due to ignorance, wrong actions, confusion, pain, blame. You never think you're responsible.

You have to use discriminating wisdom to analyze what you see and what you feel, to determine whether these things are real or not real.

Right now we are holding as self an 'I', a 'me' and phenomena as real. Through ignorance we possess an artificial I which we hold with strong grasping.

The misconception, the idea of 'I', which does not exist there, which is not true but which we think is true, that makes all afflictions come, then wrong action, negative action, then suffering.

We ignore our true nature, and we place, instead of our true nature, an 'I', 'me'.

Wisdom is to put an end to the ignorance that holds and artificial 'me', and 'I', and to bring the true nature.

To pacify afflictions and make a purified mind, we practice concentration, then the mind becomes calm. We can see what we are doing and stop wrong actions.

We should keep concentration continuously, the clear and sharp mind. Then you can see whether the 'I' or 'me' is real or whether it is an artificial concept that we grasp and hold and think is real.

The ego is the question. Is it real or not real?

We can think: 'My name is Michael. People call me Michael, and I say 'Yes'.

Even when I talk to myself, I use my name, 'Michael', and I believe I am the Michael.

But we can see, if this is real, then where is the Michael? Is it the body? The body has many parts. which part is the 'Michael'. The practice is to take this apart, looking, 'Where is the Michael?' Is it the skin, flesh, bone, lung?
In detail, everything you take apart. Which is the Michael?

Head is called head, hair is called hair, eye is eye, nose is nose, ear, ear, skin is skin, blood is blood, flesh is flesh. Each has its own name. None are called Michael.

Michael is not found. Did I not find Michael, or does Michael not exist? If 'Michael' exists, it must be found by looking for it. We can see 'Michael' is an artificial concept.

'Michael', and 'me' is the same. Sometimes we call the name 'Michael' and sometimes 'me', 'I'. Both at the same time you are able to analyze.

Not seen inside, outside, in the same way, the 'I', the 'me', which creates confusion, is not real, it is an artificial concept. But we get caught.

Look from the top of your head to the bottom of your feet for whatever you are called by name, for 'I', 'me'.

You can see it's not there. It's a concept.

This I is a concept, it does not exist, inherently. Me and I, they do not exist inherently, their nature is emptiness. Emptiness is the real thing, but through affliction, ego, that makes the difficulty.

Now look carefully to not finding 'I', 'me'. What is its location? What color? What shape? It has no location because it doesn't exist. Bring your mind to that stage.

You can analyze, each time: is the I there or not? Is this concept, 'I', 'me' there or not? Is it artificial or truly existent? Is this a concept or really there?

Look one time each session, then, when you come to the point that you realize there's nothing there, then stay there. Don't analyze further.

When you find and still you're looking, that's wrong. So first analyze, then just stay with that nature without bringing artificial thought.

Bring your spacious nature of mind, and leave it that way, without any kind of thought.

At a point, further analysis is only a distraction.

This emptiness is not a blank, forgetting everything, but this emptiness is very much aware, bright and shining.

Everything you can see or hear, or feel, the reality is empty, completely without anything artificial there.

Atisha taught that is very important to first analyze the 'me' the 'I', and carefully check up. Look into it. (is it real or not) When you don't find, stop looking. You found it already. When you have found, stay with that nature.

Selfishness leads to suffering, self-lessness leads to nirvana. 'Self-lessness' is when you have completely found nothing, then you stay with that stage. That is the meditation on selflessness.

Phenomena - nothing exists inherently. Whatever is dependant on conditions, is emptiness. Whatever is depending on other, not created by singleness (by itself), not creating its own reality, that does not inherently exist also.

All details of internal, external, is empty.

Table is emptiness. With ignorant I, with selfishness, we can see grasping, but with enlightened mind, Dharmakaya mind, we can look - this table is emptiness.

Why is it called 'table'? We have to find. We find wood, not table. all together dependent, it is a table. When we take it apart, where is the table? Is it one, or many? Actually there is no table. 'Table' is merely named, a concept. Actually this is a piece of wood. No table. Table is empty.

Same kind of analysis, we can take apart anything, looking for what we call an object. None inherently exists.

That things exist, this is the mistaken idea.

Same with country, the United States of America. (it does not inherently exist)

As soon as I landed, I thought, 'This is the United States.' 'Airport is the United States, house is the United States.'

But rock is rock, tree, tree, earth is earth, but there is no United States. United States is empty of United States. It is a concept. They do not exist inherently at all.

So that way we come to the conclusion that they do not exist at all. They are emptiness, not inherently existent.

First analyze self. Become self-less. 'Self' is like a dream, not existing inherently. At the same time you eat, drink, are happy, upset, then we cling to that artificial and we suffer, feel pain, confused, happiness, unhappiness in dream time. Why? Because we didn't realize it as a dream.

This phenomena, an enlightened being can see does not exist inherently - it is like a dream. Therefore they are not effected mentally, good, not good. There is equipoise, evenness. Samsara and nirvana, suffering and happiness becomes the same. Due to realization, there is no grasping. One is not effected by samsaric suffering or happiness.

Self, phenomena, then self and other, not two. Leave your mind on that stage.

Deeper, more clear, beyond conceptualization, beyond intellect.

Concentration, purify enough, then one time analysis, and you can stay longer.

You have to have lots of conditions to be able to maintain this emptiness; accumulation of merit, and purification, concentration and good karma.

With more accumulation of merit, meditation on emptiness becomes more profound, lasts longer. Being more purified, you can go deeper. Merit and purification, and good deeds, the Six Perfections, the wisdom of emptiness requires these.

Motivation is important, If it is just for the present, it is so limited. Practice Dharma so that all can become completely enlightened, completely free from suffering. That motivation is very important.

Keeping vows aids your realization.

Create, and maintain good conditions.

Do your best to have right speech, right mind, right action, and especially to have a pure mind, compassion and kindness toward other beings. With this, action is always positive. A mind that is kind, loving, compassionate, and warm - cultivate and generate this as much as you can. Live positively in your daily life, and then during meditation you can experience a deeper, longer duration of emptiness meditation.

The Six Perfections, and emptiness, go together, the Six Perfections with compassion, with loving kindness.

In skillful means, wisdom is the eye, means is the foot to walk. These two conditions bring you to where you want to go.

Wisdom and means have to be practiced together, not emptiness, wisdom alone, not skillful means, positive actions, compassion and kindness alone. They have to go together, in conjunction.

Offering, prostration, mantra, and visualization are skillful means to attain the mahamudra state of enlightenment, to purify and accumulate merit.

In general, tantric practice is developing pure view, one's self as deity, others as entourage, as retinue, sound as mantra, and place as mandala of the deity, place as pure land. Hold this in your mind perfectly and purely viewing that way. At the same time know that all these things are not inherently existent. The true nature of all these things is emptiness., Dharmakaya wisdom.

To visualize the deities and phenomenal world as the pure land is the purification. Knowing all this nature is not existing inherently, that all this nature is emptiness, that is wisdom.

So, tantric practice is this way.

To go deeper in practice, empty of self, empty like the sky, try to become accustomed to that stage. If you can keep this in your mind it will be helpful.

What is real then? Real is the nature of the mind. Our Mind is emptiness without any kind of conditions. It is emptiness, beginning emptiness, in between emptiness, emptiness future. Emptiness never changes.

Emptiness, Dharmakaya, that is true, that is indestructible.

(Madhyamika) ‘Mind is real, unchangeable, indestructible.’

Everything is emptiness, does not exist inherently. What is real is the true nature of mind. Real because it is permanently there. It is not born, never dies; it never exists, therefore it can never disappear.

No harm can destroy it; no one can destroy it. It is very good friend. That is called Dharmakaya enlightenment.

Especially in the Kagyud-Nyingma, that is the special view. That’s why in their introduction to the Mahamudra and Maha-Ati, someone going into the Mahamudra and Maha-Ati definitely it is important to have first that view for a long time, and to practice.

All of these are very important: devotion, compassion and kindness, very important, good actions. And with that good action you put all your effort into the practice of concentration, but before you go to emptiness you must have some experience of mental stability, samadhi practice, it’s very important. Then you can go on to tantric practice.

We ignore our true nature of mind, and we place, instead of emptiness, ‘I’, ‘me’. Ignorance puts an artificial ‘me’ and ‘I’ there, and ‘others’ completely burying the true nature of emptiness. Then we have to work hard like this.

The misconception, the idea of ‘I’ which does not exist there, which is not true, but which we think is true, that makes all the afflictions come, then unskillful, wrong actions, negative, then suffering. Then we are confused. First we go that way, then we return.

Everything is empty, bright, but you see, hear, feel. Everything is aware around you, but at the same time everything is empty, space.

Presentation depends on the personality. Mental stability is very important.

Emptiness means that the mind does not have any artificial thought, any concept. You hear, see, feel, but it’s still emptiness.

This means when you sit, and meditate on emptiness, you are aware of everything, but not grasping onto it. Their nature is completely emptiness.

Blank is just unconscious, so the more you meditate on emptiness, the more sharp your awareness has to be, but without grasping anything.

Don't invite anything, also don't resist. Then bring the descriptions of emptiness to mind. That you have to cultivate.

Intellectually when you check up, you never see the inherent existence of 'I'. Then stay on that stage of emptiness. Emptiness quality is exactly like that. Aware of everything, but without grasping anything.

Don't invite anything, or suppress. Do not grasp or hold. Mind stays as emptiness.

Feeling, sound, their color or shape you cannot see, which means the feeling is emptiness. Then taste, same thing. Then touch.

When confident, don't look anymore, just stay with that emptiness.

Mind is like a small vase broken, the space inside merges with the whole space of the universe. Emptiness becomes vast and deep, and profound, if you can integrate that. If not, cultivate selflessness, the quality I just described, the same thing.

(Maitreya)

'The nature of mind has never been defiled, has never contained any kind of fault or impurity, so there is nothing to remove from that.'

The nature of mind is, from the beginning, very pure and stainless, therefore there is nothing you have to remove from the nature of mind. It has never been defiled, therefore there is nothing to remove.

Mind is spontaneously, naturally pure and permanently stainless.

'There is nothing to add, no quality or perfection of the Buddha to add into the mind.'

Even a little bit, there is no need to put in. Mind itself is Buddha. There is no need to put in any Buddha quality or perfection. It is there already.

‘Look at it as completely perfect in itself.’

But then, when you look at it, who are you this is looking?

‘That which is looking is the perfect one.’

This perfect, completely stainless pure nature, spontaneous Buddha nature, that is not looked at by something other than that which is the perfect wisdom.

The wisdom of meditation is capable of seeing the perfect things within us, within our Buddha nature, completely.

‘Look at the perfect through perfect wisdom. If you see the perfect through perfect wisdom, then you are completely liberated from suffering.’

Mind has no substance. That emptiness is Buddha nature. That mind is completely separate from the emotions, afflictions, ego. Therefore, it is naturally, completely, spontaneously perfect Buddha himself.

So you have to look that way very directly, the Buddha is in your hand. There is no distance for you. The Buddha is within view.

The nature of mind is Buddha himself. It is not mixed with any kind of affliction, or the emotions.

The mind, nature of emptiness, is never born, never dies, and it is permanently existing. Because it is never born, it never dies, and does not depend on anything else. It is just spontaneous nature. That is the nature of our mind.

It is there all the time.

Other afflictions are the new things, the temporary things. Anger is temporary, desire, temporary, pride is temporary, ego is also temporary, because mind and ego are completely separate things, not one.

If the nature of the mind, Buddha nature and ego were mixed, it would be very hard to become enlightened. When the ego was removed, Buddha nature would be removed also.

Understand that ego and mind are completely separate things but ego obscures, like the sun in the sky, bright, shining, that is covered by cloud. Sun and cloud are separate, yet cloud can temporarily obscure the sun, envelop the sunlight. At the time, sun and cloud are still separate.

Our mind, Buddha nature, and our afflictions are also not identical. They have a separate identity.

So this is a very important point. When you are introduced to Mahamudra, Maha-Ati practice, that's the way you look.

The nature of mind is Buddha itself, so you have to maintain that nature, that perfection, that quality. Then you are enlightened that very moment, that very time.

The problem is that although Buddha is within us right now, we are not able to maintain it. (At the same time, that nature, that quality, that perfection is there all the time.)

Why? Due to afflictions, obscurations - that's the reason. We have to remove them stage by stage, accustoming our habit to remove these through concentration, meditation on emptiness, applying the skillful means of method.

All these can remove the obscurations little by little. Then, finally, you are able to relax and rest on the nature of what you own mind quality is.

Another way is, you just sit down and do not cultivate any concept, and just look directly at the mind. Its quality is completely emptiness. The essence of mind is emptiness, externally, internally.

Look at it that way, and at the same time, its aspect is luminosity, bright, shining. Empty, yet of every single thing you are aware, but never clinging, grasping or holding. What you are aware of around you, why you notice things, that is the aspect of luminosity.

Emptiness becomes more bright and shining because of that awareness. Essence is emptiness, and aspect is luminosity, radiance, bright, shining - it means the luminosity can see the different forms. That awareness is very necessary. If your meditation is missing that one quality the meditation is incomplete.

Emptiness in essence, yet the aspect of mind is not expressed fully if you don't bring a state of mind that is very aware, awake. Of everything you are aware, that's called luminosity.

Then, unimpededness - when you hear sounds, what you hear is luminosity. Unimpededness is that you are not clinging to the sound that you hear. That is unimpededness.

So these three: essence of emptiness, aspect of luminosity, and the nature of unimpededness. That is the complete form of the qualities of the mind.

That is the direct teaching, if you can keep it. You can see if you can keep it or not keep it. Don't deceive yourself, thinking you can keep it. High teaching can be very risky, dangerous, low teaching, no risk.

Mind is very tricky. Even if you are qualified for high teaching, it's still o.k. to go stage by stage, you're not losing anything at all. You still get what you need to get. And if you're not qualified, you're wasting your time.

This Buddha quality, if you can keep it, there's no need to do anything. Stay with that. That is the best practice.

Your nature as it is, that is the fire puja, that is the rite, that is the Six Perfections. Even if for a single moment you can keep your mind that way, that is the most perfect thing you can do. If you cannot do this, then you do other practices, fire puja, Six Perfections, in order to develop, to cultivate, to purify. To this practice all these things are illusion.

So staying as it is, as Buddha himself within you, without speaking, doing, thinking, if you can stay that way, then everything is there. That is called the direct way to understanding.

The main thing, think of the essence of emptiness, the aspect of luminosity, and the nature of unimpededness.

These three. If you are missing one, you fall into some extreme. Emptiness without luminosity, meditation on emptiness alone, you fall into the formless god realm; luminosity, clinging you fall into the form realm; and meditation with grasping you fall into the desire realm.

The Three Kayas

Essence is emptiness, this is the Dharmakaya, the wisdom of emptiness; aspect is luminosity, this is the Sambhogakaya, the enjoyment body; and the nature of unimpededness, this is the Nirmanakaya.

The speech, mind and body are the basis, or foundation of our three kayas. They are immature, but mind is Dharmakaya, speech is Sambhogakaya, and body is Nirmanakaya.

Speech, mind, body, that is the source, the potential. That is the basis, the source of the three kayas.

When you practice, then that is the path three kayas. Cultivating the view that the mind is emptiness, speech, luminosity, and form and appearance is unimpeded, that we all path three kayas.

What we attain is the result three kayas. That is the destination of our practice.

Mind, speech, body are the source of the three kayas, yet manifesting in an immature way. The three kayas- speaking, doing, thinking, the immature way they are expressed outside, this will bring karma.

Instead of emptiness, we are thinking something, holding something. Instead of luminosity, we are grasping whatever you see or hear, whatever you like or dislike. Instead of unimpededness, you grasp here or there. The three kayas are used that way.

Yet the mind has very much potential. The three kayas are the potential for enlightenment. Every living being has Buddha nature.

The path in general is made of shinay practice, to make the mind stable, concentrated, one pointed, free of thought, purification, and accumulation of merit.

Then you look at the nature of mind, viewing emptiness without grasping or holding, with radiance of mind. This is called path.

You are applying the path. It is not something you find from outside, it is always there.

Notes from the Teachings on Mahamudra, by Lama Lodu, January 26th, 2008

The lineage blessings are always there, very fresh. Through this we can get something from these teachings.

From the three poisons we have more ego, more afflictions, more mistakes, suffering, confusion.

Of the different Buddhist Traditions, the Hinayana counteracts mainly desire; the Mahayana counteracts mainly anger and ignorance. The Varjayana is the remedy to all three at the same time. Tantra is a method to realize mahamudra.

Step by step, with humility, from the beginning

The first step is to detach from samsara – wanting only simple food and clothing, just enough to practice. Renunciation means that we are not mostly concerned with fame, name, gain and loss. Instead we are completely renounced.

The Four Thoughts that turn the mind are: the precious human existence, impermanence, cause and effect, or karma, and the suffering and confusion of all beings in the six realms. If you have an awareness of these in your heart, this will correct your attitude.

Second, turn your mind to the bodhisattva attitude. Love, compassion, perfect and pure bodhicitta – this is the heart of enlightenment. This includes, specifically, our enemies, those who obstruct us. Generate bodhicitta toward them. The enemy is very important. We should have this, love, compassion and bodhicitta, towards all equally.

Looking at the essence of anger, with spaciousness and clarity can bring great purification. It is an opportunity to awaken.

It is important also that one's loving kindness be without clinging, without grasping, from the depths of your heart, without expectation. Then you are close to mahamudra.

With expectation (wanting something in return) love is not love, it is business.

With bodhicitta, everything you do becomes the path.

Next, shinay, or calm abiding practice.

For calm abiding, we need lots of purification, and the accumulation of merit. Apply mindfulness. Make sure your mind is positive. In daily life, examine your mind – what we are doing or saying, but especially what is going on in our mind. Inside, the motivation is what counts.

From daily life practice, meditation comes more easily. It is clear and comfortable.

Then tantra, precisely, perfectly, honestly, the tantric mandala, tantric dimension. One session can purify lots of imprints, and help attain mahamudra.

For samadhi – calm abiding practice: mount the mind on the breath. Usually the mind goes from emotion to emotion, from affliction to affliction. The benefit of this kind of meditation practice is that it stops those afflictions, and reduces habits.

Increase your concentration and clarity. Be aware of what is going on in your mind.

What is called ‘patch-like’ concentration is like having a hole in a robe. The ‘hole’ is when your mind leaves its object. Bring your mind back. Cultivate the power of mindfulness.

What is called ‘near placement’ is when you are distracted, but you catch it and bring your mind back.

The first four Paramitas are a cause for you to improve your concentration. Calm abiding, samadhi, opens your heart to wisdom.

Settled doesn’t mean we have removed ego and afflictions. It’s like sediment, if you stir, it will come up again.

Milarepa said, ‘Don’t be attached to samadhi; Let bloom the beautiful flower of vipassana, insight-wisdom’.

Meditation should be not cloudy, but clear, but samadhi practice alone cannot liberate you from samsara.

The body gets sick because the mind gets sick. There are the illnesses of anger, jealousy, desire, pride and ignorance, and of these, the basic cause is ignorance. The body depends on the mind.

Calm abiding practice can calm these sufferings. And your clarity and calm can heal other people. Samadhi has great benefits.

We haven't touched the ego yet, but without this you cannot practice mahamudra.

Next comes vipassana – insight, and there are two ways to approach this. The first is analytical – through study and learning, and the second is by directly looking at the mind.

Self is not really existent. Is this self existent or not existent in any way? Look in the five aggregates, and the six consciousnesses.

No part of this body is me or I. It has no location. Search through the body for the me. What we conceive of as a self, me, I, is not really existent.

Finally, when you find no self, don't think of anything. Just relax.

Self and phenomena are empty, without self as we conceive it.

Things have a compounded nature – what is called the table, for example, is interdependent arising. It is impermanent.

KDK is not existent. Ok – you are in the house. What part of the house? Where is the house? 'House' is just an idea – it doesn't exist.

Or the USA – where is the USA? Is this the USA? No, this is San Francisco Airport. Where is San Francisco? Look and we see buildings. Look everywhere and we cannot find San Francisco. Everything disappears into emptiness.

When everything disappears, then relax into emptiness.

After short analysis, let the mind go, spacious like the sky, without the concept of emptiness.

Here, through analytical vipassana samadhi, we are on the way to mahamudra.

Then, looking directly at the nature of the mind, without any kind of past, present or future thought.

(In response to a question)

Guru yoga cultivates devotion, and confidence in your practice.
You reach mahamudra when you truly see your guru as buddha.

To recap – renunciation, bodhicitta, shinay (calm) and lhaktong (insight), which has its own divisions.

In the school called ‘Rangtong’ the self is empty. In Shentong, the idea is put forth of ‘other empty’. This means that other than buddha nature, all is empty, but Buddha nature is not empty – is never empty.

This is the basis for the Uttaratantra and the Tathagatagarba Sutra.

As interdependent phenomena, objects are empty. They are based on causes and conditions – dependent origination – they don’t have inherent existence. Desire, for example, needs a subject and an object, and is empty, not inherently existent.

But the perfect true nature of Buddha is not empty, not subject to conditions, not solid, nothing tangible. It is beyond intellectual emptiness, transcendent. The enlightened quality and perfection is there. Buddha nature is clear, radiant, forever, transcending everything artificial.

The mind is like this: A conch shell is white, but someone with an eye disease, even the conch shell becomes yellow. We have confusion, so we see the true nature of buddha, awake, clear light, we see as a solid self, and are overwhelmed by afflictions.

A skilled doctor gives the proper medicine and cures the patient so he sees the conch shell as white, as it is, clear light, radiance, infinite, permanent.

Removing the disease of the afflictions and ego, our true nature is always buddha, clear, radiant, permanent.

A being may be an insect, or an animal, or a hungry ghost, but that never changes. Transcendent emptiness, clear light, luminosity, permanence is always there.

Other than the true nature, all is empty, but buddha nature is never empty.

This is the bridge between the Mahayana and the Vajrayana.

We already have these enlightened qualities, clear, radiant, indestructible. Knowing this we call ‘Vajra dignity’, ‘Vajra pride’.

Like gold that is beneath the ground for a million years, for eons and eons, afflictions and emotions cover buddha nature. The quality of the gold, the value of the gold never lessens. In the same way, even after a million years, buddha nature is naturally pure. There is no need to remove anything – there is no impurity in it. And there is no need to add anything to it – the good quality is already there.

Perfect wisdom is seen by perfect wisdom, gained through meditation.

Meditation on emptiness is clear light without clinging. We should continue the flow of meditation without attachment, fresh, completely naked and unstained.

Words do not liberate from ego clinging. We need to give birth to the certainty of what the view is. Words alone do not help. Bring the meaning to mind. Gain certainty about what it means to meditate.

Meditation means the clear light, not clinging, without attachment to calm abiding. Calm abiding alone cannot liberate from samsara, but drowsiness, sleepiness or excitement are hindrances to wisdom, so we need mindfulness, introspective alertness to notice if sinking or excitement are there.

Sleepiness is the gross level. With sinking, there is some clarity, but extreme clarity and sharpness is not there. That is sinking, the subtle level of sinking. To notice this, you need very accurate, very sharp introspective alertness.

The same with excitement – gross excitement is losing the object. Subtle excitement too is an obstacle to wisdom. Be mindful, alert to those, so you can gain wisdom. That is meditation.

Then, conduct, continually, non-attachment, no craving, like drawing on water, that is conduct.

Conduct should be harmonious with meditation and the view. If conduct is away from the view, then something is wrong. Conduct should be unobscured by ignorance; without desire, anger, jealousy, greed. This is called ‘stainless conduct, but wearing the clothing of characteristics’.

Remove illusions and look directly at the true nature. Good can also be negative; bad, when there is not clinging, can also be good. Just let go of the mind of grasping, holding, and you can see the true nature.

Look at your mind, and relax on that. This is like working hard, then getting to the top of a mountain – there is realization, and joy.

There are two ways of being confused. One is from not practicing properly, and the other is from the lineage not coming through directly.

The meaning of mahamudra is that ‘maha’ means great, and ‘mudra’ means gesture. Another explanation is that mahamudra means the union of emptiness and compassion; maha means wisdom, emptiness, and mudra means method, or compassion – the method to realize buddha nature.

Transcending the concept of emptiness, this is ‘other emptiness’. Words cannot touch this.

Then, because of buddha nature, enlightened qualities can manifest to benefit sentient beings.

In response to the question:

‘I recall a verse from The Aspiration Prayer for the Attainment of Mahamudra that says, ‘The light rising from meditation makes clear the nature of mind, exactly as it is’, so my question is, this light rising from meditation – is that mahamudra?’

Answer: If it is without ego, that is mahamudra.

In response to a question about mahamudra and dying:

Merging your mind with the mahasiddha’s mind, and merging your mind with the dead person, or the dying person’s mind – that is best. You can also practice taking and sending.

Deity practice and mahamudra are the same. Appearance as the deity, awareness is emptiness, that is mahamudra. The union of compassion and emptiness, that is mahamudra. The creation stage leads to the completion stage. All these lead to the same point.

Teachings on Mahamudra – by Lama Thubten Yeshe, from, ‘Becoming the Compassion Buddha; Tantric Mahamudra in Everyday Life’

Mahamudra: Absolute Reality

The Absolute Seal

There are many different ways of analyzing and explaining Lord Buddha's marvelous teachings on the absolute reality of emptiness, mahamudra. Here, however, we will not be trying to understand the various philosophical points of view or to develop a merely intellectual understanding of mahamudra. We will try to achieve a direct experience of it.

Buddha explained mahamudra from two different perspectives: one according to the Paramitayana, his general Mahayana teachings, the other according to the Vajrayana, his esoteric teachings. Maha means great; mudra means seal; mahamudra means absolute seal, totality, unchangeability. Sealing something implies that you cannot destroy it.

Mahamudra was not created or invented by anybody; therefore, it cannot be destroyed. It is absolute reality.

I see Western scholars talking in extensive philosophical terms about mahamudra and the rest, but I have a question for them: ‘You talk about these things, but do you meditate?’ Sometimes, our mind is interested only in fantasy, which is like going to the supermarket with empty pockets, saying, ‘This is fantastic. That is good. This is healthy. That is tasty.’ In the end, you have nothing.

The intellectual world and the practical, experiential learning process are as different as a supermarket and Mount Everest. If you leave mahamudra at the intellectual level, it will never touch you; it will have nothing to do with you. Even if you write an entire book about mahamudra, nothing can stop your problems; nothing can move your wrong conceptions. But don't worry, I'm not going to talk about mahamudra too intellectually. I'm going to keep it simple.

Mahamudra Embraces All Phenomena

Lord Buddha explained that mahamudra refers to the unborn, unchangeable nature that exists within all phenomena. It is not as if mahamudra is something special

that exists only in some holy place and not in your breakfast muesli. Mahamudra exists within all phenomena without discrimination. Its nature is reality-nature. That's why Lord Buddha says, *chonam kungyi rangzhin chaggya chen*: the absolute nature of all phenomena is the great seal. This mahamudra character embraces all phenomena in samsara and nirvana.

Absolute nature is not some philosophy made up by Lord Buddha or by Nagarjuna, the great Indian master who clarified emptiness. Nobody can invent the absolute nature of reality. But even though mahamudra is the nature of all universal phenomena, our hallucinating, conceptual mind prevents us from seeing it. Instead of seeing totality, we get caught up in relative notions of reality. We have a fanatical, dualistic view of how things are.

That is why the conception, the concrete projection, of the self, 'I', appears to our mind; and it appears as totally independent, as a self-entity. Therefore, even if we know about mahamudra, we don't really know at all; we don't realize the interdependent nature of phenomena.

Check up on the ego's view of the I when you're feeling hungry. In reality, your hunger depends on many interdependent phenomena: there is the kitchen ... the food ... your body and mind ... all these things are dependent on each other. If you realize that your hungry I is totally dependent, you'll be able to control your hunger, and after eating, you will have a deeper understanding as well.

When one part of an interdependent combination disappears, the combination itself disappears as well. For example, in our group of seventy people here, when one person disappears, the group of seventy has also gone; the group of seventy no longer exists. Do you agree or not? It's so simple, so logical. If you remove one of a hundred butter lamps, the group of a hundred has gone as well, because the group of a hundred is the combination of each one.

Looking at it another way, even as you are eating your muesli, as your stomach gets full, you're thinking, 'Oh, the hungry I feels better now.' But even that is a misconception. You are still holding onto the previous hungry I, even though it has disappeared. Maybe this is difficult for you to understand. It's not surprising that many Buddhist professors misinterpret Nagarjuna's view and think that he is nihilistic, that he destroys everything.

Check up. The 'you' of this morning has disappeared, but you still think it exists this evening. Similarly, you think that the baby 'you' still exists today. But even after one second, the 'you' of that previous second has already disappeared. Everything yourself, your sense perceptions, all the objects of your senses, everything is in the nature of change; we can say, in fact, that everything disappears.

The idealistic ego thinks, 'I built this meditation hall,' for example. But the you who built the gompa (meditation hall) has already disappeared. The gompa, the making of the gompa, and the person who made it this relationship have all disappeared.

Here's another example. When it is getting dark, you see a hose rolled up and think it is a snake. Suddenly, you're afraid, 'Oh!' That's a good example. Because of the conditions darkness and the rolled-up hose you get the idea that there's a snake there. The combination of factors brings about the wrong conception, and you feel afraid, perhaps even more afraid than if you'd seen a real snake in the distance. This time, because it is so close, you have this hallucination.

This is a good example of how we hallucinate. This snake does not even exist, but your mind paints a picture, creates a fantasy, makes it up. Nevertheless, there is an interdependent relationship of environment, object, and many other things.

It's the same with the hungry I, the concrete I: it's also an ego-projection, just as the snake is. Although the I does not exist within your five aggregates, your body and mind, it looks like it does; it appears to be concretely existent. The I seems to exist somewhere within your sense organs, but it appears to your sense perception and your conceptual mind in exactly the same way as the hallucination, or projection, of the snake appears.

Using penetrative wisdom to look mindfully into the situation, you will never find anything that you can point to and say, 'This is the snake.' You will never find it. You can't. It's the same with the I, the hallucinated concrete idea of a self-existent I. When penetrative wisdom checks up, it cannot find the I anywhere within your body - not in your heart, your brain, your leg, your hand, or anywhere else.

Outside this gompa, there are some logs of wood. If we look with penetrative wisdom, we cannot find 'Tom' within the energy of that wood. It's exactly the same if we look within the energy of Tom's five aggregates: his body and mind. No

matter how much we search, from head to foot or from foot to head, we can never say, 'This is Tom; here he is.' You can never find any 'Tom.'

You always think you are something; you are not satisfied with just your name. You seek some reality, some identity, beyond the name. However, the fact is that besides the name 'Tom,' nothing else exists.

There is not much difference between the logs of wood and Tom's aggregates. Of course, the aggregates have some kind of interdependent relationship with Tom that they do not have with the wood outside, but in the end, 'Tom ' and' wood' are merely names.

Here's another example: Before the name 'Peter,' for example, is given to a child, one would not say, 'There's Peter' when looking at that child's body. Yet, once you have named your baby 'Peter,' automatically, when you look at his body, you think, 'Peter.' You don't remember that you gave the name 'Peter.' Instead, you think that 'Peter' comes from the side of the person, from out there. Such concrete attachment to such a concrete object!

It's the same when some situation bothers you. You think, "This is bad.' Actually, you have made that situation bad; you have created it by labeling it 'bad.' No such concretely 'bad' situation exists. You have named the situation 'bad' in the same way that you have named the baby 'Peter.'

All our judgments are very gross. We see things as having a very gross nature; we never see them in their nature of totality. Therefore, we need to meditate in order to investigate the totality nature of all phenomena.

There is Only Name

Other religions, Hinduism and Christianity, for example, assert a soul, some kind of permanent entity, which possesses all the goodness of the human being. But Buddhism would say that from a philosophical point of view it is actually impossible that such a solid, concrete entity exists. There is no such concrete soul, spirit, or whatever you want to call it; there is no such permanent, independent entity existing within the human being, not even relatively.

At some point in history on this earth, people thought that there had to be some concrete, solid entity, something self-existent, in order for there to be such a thing

as a human being. Such a philosophy was created in order to be able to say, 'This is a human being.' So when Nagarjuna came along and vanquished such conceptions, people thought that he was nihilistic: 'Oh, don't go near him; he'll turn you into a nihilist!' Even many Buddhist traditions still have difficulty accepting Nagarjuna's view.

But you can see: there are many interdependent parts, you give a name to that combination, and then those parts become that object. Nagarjuna would say that it's the same with every existent thing: there is just the name. There is no happiness, no unhappiness. He says that if you really check, if you penetratively investigate the situation, the object, it is impossible to find any- thing.

Take the pain in your body, for example. When you search for the pain with penetrative wisdom in the area where the energy of the pain is, sometimes the pain disappears. I'm sure that you have had this experience. Even if you just make up the idea, 'Oh, my knee is blissful,' sometimes you will feel bliss. You check up. Good and bad come from the idea, the concept. No such thing actually exists.

All these examples show how ridiculous we are. Everything is just a name. The more superstition there is, the more names we produce. And because there is more superstition in the West, there are more names, more things, more goodness in the supermarket!

A mirage is a good example. I have had the experience sometimes that when I am thirsty and I see a mirage, there appears in my mind a very concrete image of cold, calm water. We all know that a mirage is a totally interdependent phenomenon: a combination of the vibrations of the sun and the sand creates this type of energy; a mirage. But when you look at it, because it appears as if water were really there, suddenly clean, clear water appears to your mind.

This is a good example of how things don't have solid existence. A mirage appears to have a very solid existence, doesn't it? But if you check up, it is merely the coming together of various conditions: an interdependent phenomenon, changing, changing all the time. It is actually the same with everything in the world.

Phenomena Do Exist Interdependently

Nevertheless, the various phenomena do exist. When we describe how things are mere names, this does not mean that we are being nihilistic and are destroying

phenomena; we are not saying that phenomena do not exist. When you contemplate the right view, the hallucination, the fantasy of the self-existent object that your conceptual mind believes in, automatically disappears. When this happens, your wisdom experiences what we call right view: emptiness, voidness, or in Sanskrit, shunyata.

At the beginning of your contemplation of right view, use your intellect to examine the ways in which phenomena are interdependent, how they come together in dependence upon various things. Then, when you gain an experience of this, do not intellectualize. Just leave it there; let go. When this wisdom is there, it is a very powerful experience.

Normally, we see the world as concrete. When you go to Sydney, for example, and see the fantastic buildings, it all seems so concrete, so solid. But when you experience emptiness, right view, the whole world becomes like nothingness, so small. Of course, it is not small, but because you are controlling the heavy vibrations that produce all the fantasies, it appears like nothingness.

Nagarjuna explained this reality in his philosophical writings, strongly emphasizing how phenomena do exist, that we are not destroying reality, nor are we saying that there is nothing.

Everything does exist as an interdependent phenomenon, even if only in name. If you understand this properly, you will understand that Nagarjuna's view is not at all nihilistic.

The Tibetan term for interdependence is *tendrel*. Each time a thing appears to us or a situation arises, we say, 'This is this, this is that.' But the moment we have said it, it has already changed.

So Much Fear

Thus, we can see that delusions arise when our sense perceptions make contact with an object. Interdependent phenomena come together, and suddenly delusion arises, such as when we mistake the rope for a snake and feel very afraid and emotional. In fact, this is a fantasy, a projection of our mind. In the same way, all universal phenomena are actually projections of the mind, fantasies projected by the mind.

However, the conceptualizing ego always feels that there is something more than what is made up by the mind. But when you check up, intensively investigate the object, the snake, for example, the hallucination disappears. When you realize that it is only your mental projection, your fear is automatically released.

It's interesting that the phenomena that look so real to us are merely interdependent combinations of things; they're all made up. When one of the factors disappears, the whole thing disappears. But until we discover mahamudra all-embracing unity, reality everything we experience with our sense perceptions, or even in our dreams, will be a hallucination. We always feel that objects are self-entities that don't depend on mental projection, but everything in the sense world is a hallucinated bubble it comes from nothingness, formlessness, and its nature is such that it will disappear into nothingness, emptiness, formlessness. Nevertheless, we sentient beings believe in a concrete world filled with concrete self-entities.

We feel insecure; we have so much fear. This comes from our lack of understanding, our ignorance, which means not understanding right view, reality. People often say, 'I don't believe in anything,' thinking that only religious people are 'believers'. This is common in the West. In fact, when you have the hallucinated vision of the snake and feel afraid, it shows with perfect logic that you do believe in something. Intellectually, you might say, 'I don't believe in anything,' but in fact, you believed the hose was a snake. If you didn't, why were you afraid? If you're a true nonbeliever, why did fear arise when you saw the fantasy of the snake?

This shows that you have tremendous belief. As long as you hallucinate, there is always belief. Belief is not just an intellectual thing. Simultaneously, each misconception in our mind is accompanied by various states of mind: feeling, discrimination, cognition, and so forth. These mental factors are automatically there, watching. Therefore, as long you have wrong conceptions, hallucinations, there is always feeling.

People ask, 'What's the best solution for fear?' Here are two methods that are among the most powerful ways to overcome fear. The first is to cultivate more concern for other sentient beings' pleasure than for your own. This attitude lessens fear. The second solution is right view, wisdom, which completely cuts all fear. Fear comes from the unclear fantasy mind, which produces speculation and superstition. Actually, this is the nature of fear.

It's the same when you worry, when you are thinking about something that you don't have. This, too, comes from not having right view. Instead of worrying, try to understand and simultaneously just to act; then you will get what you want. Right now, we don't put our actions in the right direction; we worry instead. We speculate so much, it's as if we're in a dream state.

The right view of wisdom is blissful. This is easy to understand: the nature of wisdom is bliss because it automatically releases agitation, fear, and worry. If you are free of those emotions, you feel naturally joyful, don't you? In actual fact, emptiness is always there - you just need to recognize it.

You always feel you want a happy life. Well, the happy life is always there - you just need to recognize it. Sentient beings are too much. They're always wanting something, but looking nowhere. Eventually, when you really see this, you'll laugh instead of worry. Up in the mountains, Tibet's great yogi Milarepa was laughing at the world. He couldn't control it because he saw reality. When you see reality, you, too, will always be laughing. Whenever you see everything in a concrete way, it's too heavy; you can't laugh. With wisdom, you can control the whole world.

When you perceive the reflection of yourself in a mirror, you feel light. In the same moment that you see your image, you instinctively know that it is not the real you. This is a good example. All existent phenomena, the objects of the sense world, are like a reflection in a mirror. When you understand right view, reality, all relative phenomena somehow become lighter for you. Maybe you see it, but maybe you don't see it. Let's say there is some desirable chocolate, and someone says, 'Do you see the chocolate?' The person who understands right view, the reality of this chocolate, could say both yes and no. Why would you say yes? Because relatively, the chocolate is there. Why would you say no? Because it has no concrete self-entity.

When there is that heavy feeling, chocolate seems huge, but when you see reality, it's as if you're seeing through the energy of the chocolate, as if you're seeing it through a veil. It's not too heavy; there is no concrete vision of it. If you look at an iron door with right view, instead of seeing heavy iron, you see it as very light and feel as if you could walk straight through it. You can have that kind of experience, and it's scientific. In reality, when you check up, an iron door is simply a combination of atoms, electrons, and other particles. Even without the experience of emptiness, without mahamudra, if you check up on the nature of such phenomena scientifically, your concrete conceptions will become lighter.

When you understand the Paramitayana explanation of right view, you can easily understand the tantric view of mahamudra. ‘But mahamudra is universal; reality is the same,’ you might say. That's true, but the Paramitayana view is much easier to experience than that of the Vajrayana.

Here, for example, when we practice the tantric mahamudra of Vajrayana, we visualize ourselves in the clear-light nature of the divine deity Avalokiteshvara's body. Our energy becomes Avalokiteshvara, and simultaneously we experience bliss and understand emptiness. This combination is difficult. Why? Generally, when we are blissful, we lose our mindfulness, our penetrative wisdom; we become as if unconscious. Check for yourself.

When you are happy, you are intoxicated by sentimental feelings; even if somebody wants to talk to you, you don't even notice them. You are completely full of yourself. Through practicing yoga methods such as this, you learn to have a clean- clear vision of yourself as the deity and simultaneously to experience bliss and intensive, mindful right view. This is the mahamudra of tantric yoga.

The Absolute Nature of the Dharmakaya

Why does the dharmakaya have the nature of existing spontaneously, without effort, with neither beginning nor end? One explanation is that the dharmakaya is not subject to causes. This is made; that comes; this ends - it is not like that. The dharmakaya is fundamentally existent within all living beings.

Fish and chickens have the absolute nature of dharmakaya as well. There is no difference between the absolute nature of a chicken's mind and the absolute nature of Avalokiteshvara. Only our dualistic minds see a difference: ‘Oh, dharmakaya is special; something absolute. My mind doesn't have that absolute nature’. This is a misconception. The absolute nature of our own consciousness is already completely unified with that of the dharmakaya. We simply need to recognize it, that's all.

The quality of the dharmakaya absolute nature, Buddha, supreme consciousness, God, whatever, is exactly the same as the quality that exists in your own consciousness. At the moment, everything appears to us as dualistic, separate; but when our understanding deepens, the dharmakaya will appear in the mirror of our consciousness. It's a bit like television: the images are always there, but they appear to our consciousness only when we turn on the TV. The dharmakaya is like

that: it is always there. You don't make the dharmakaya, but when you understand it, it appears. That's why we call it *lhundrub*: effortless, spontaneous. Actually, it is a very simple thing.

Let's say the sky is dark and cloudy, and your grasping mind thinks, 'Oh, today is too bad. I want the sun to shine.' If you have proper understanding, you realize that the fundamental nature of the sky never changes. Sunny or cloudy, the nature of the sky is there. The clouds are all so temporary; they don't change the fundamental nature of the sky.

Our delusions are like the clouds; they cannot alter the reality of our consciousness. It is always there. The delusions cover it temporarily, that's all. When you wear different clothes, your body does not change, does it? The reality of your body does not change when you change your clothes. The reality of your beauty does not change when you put on makeup, either.

Your reality is always there whether you wear makeup or not, isn't it? Creation, everything you are, is already within you. Nobody comes along and forcefully creates something on top of what you already are. Nor does your mind make up this reality. The absolute reality of your consciousness cannot change. Even though relatively you change, like clouds blown by the wind this way and that, the absolute quality of your mind, like space, is always there.

You can see that we need much purification in order to receive the vision of the clear-light dharmakaya. You have to make your consciousness as clear as possible; then the dharmakaya will appear. You don't need to grasp at it: 'The dharmakaya is somewhere; I want to find it.' No. It is there, always with you. You just need to see it, that's all.

Tantra gives the good example that the dharmakaya is like the sky and the divine form of Avalokiteshvara is like a rainbow. The space-like dharmakaya, which is formless and in the nature of bliss, transforms into the blissful, white, radiant light body of Avalokiteshvara, a rainbow body.

Westerners like rainbows - I've checked on this. When you see a rainbow, you are joyful. 'Oh, there's a rainbow! Isn't it beautiful!' It has nothing to do with being religious, either. All universal sentient beings feel great enjoyment when their sense perception contacts a rainbow. This proves the power of visualization, doesn't it?

Whenever you visualize the blissful dharmakaya, your mind is incredibly energized, you experience deep satisfaction, and a powerful imprint is left on your consciousness. Each time you experience this satisfaction, the dissatisfaction that causes your misery vanishes. This is the method for cutting, or purifying, dissatisfaction.

When you make this method your own, you realize that satisfaction comes from the energy of your own mind. Because of this, it can go on forever, because it's not dependent on anything outside.

Most of the time, our pleasure and happiness are dependent upon transitory conditions such as the beach or chocolate. But the real chocolate, your blissful dharmakaya, is always there. It doesn't matter where you are - in the sky, on the earth, in the bathroom - it is always with you. Your mind is in the nature of the dharmakaya; the trouble is that it is covered, obscured. You look here, you look there, but you cannot find it. And when you are sad because you cannot find it, you think, 'Maybe the lama will give me dharmakaya.' But no one can give you dharmakaya. It is always with you; it is always with everyone. We just need to recognize it, that's all.

Therefore, we should prostrate to all universal living beings, because the absolute dharmakaya exists within them all.

Our concrete conceptualizations about who and what we are prevent us from actualizing the deity. Our ego's projections are too strong. We have tremendous, concrete emotions - how can we release them? We cannot just say, 'I am nothing, nothing, nothing.' I could tell you all day long that you are nothing, nothing, but this doesn't make your ego-projections disappear. Do you understand what I mean? But with these techniques of mind training you can easily experience emptiness and thereby release your ego's fantasy, 'I am this, that.' Right at the beginning, we say, *tongpanyi gyi lha*, which means 'emptiness deity.' This is extremely important for actualizing Avalokiteshvara.

This sense of who we are is a complete hallucination. It has nothing whatsoever to do with reality, but it is so strong. When you had breakfast this morning, for example, there was such a concrete I enjoying it; a concrete I somewhere within your five aggregates; a hungry I in your stomach, perhaps. This is not an intellectual thing; it's completely instinctive.

Ego is very tricky. When you check intellectually, when you look for your ego, it disappears, but when you have strong contact with a sense object such as attraction to or hate for somebody, or wanting your breakfast, your ego arises incredibly strongly. The rest of the time it remains obscured, in hiding.

Once you are able to actualize the emptiness deity, when you find your- self in such situations of strong contact with sense objects, you will be able to see clearly your concrete projection of 'I', which is, in fact, completely nonexistent, opposite to the vision of emptiness. With intensive awareness, you will see the strongly hallucinated projection, which then disappears into nothingness. It is nothing, so it disappears. At that moment, you experience emptiness.

Emptiness Doesn't Destroy Reality

The wisdom of emptiness does not destroy the reality of the external world. It destroys the mental fantasy hallucinated by ego and brings you an entirely different experience of reality.

When you realize the non-self-existence of the concrete projection of the idealistic fantasy that you have believed in for countless lives, it completely disappears into nothingness. Everything becomes empty. This experience is the wisdom of emptiness. What appears to you at that time is nothingness, not even the relative things you ordinarily see. When you re-emerge from your meditation and see forms, colors, and so forth, they appear to you as reflections in a mirror, but when you experience emptiness in meditation, there is no appearance at all.

When you first experience emptiness, it can scare you; you can feel as if you have completely disappeared. You can be sitting in meditation, experience emptiness, and suddenly feel, 'Oh! I have gone completely!' Once Lama Tsongkhapa was teaching on emptiness when one of his students suddenly grabbed hold of himself; he thought he had disappeared. Lama Tsongkhapa was so happy. He saw that his student had just had an experience of emptiness. Such a precious student; his mind was ready. The moment Lama Tsongkhapa said the words, the student had a direct experience.

Thus, it is possible. This is a good example; it should energize you and give you confidence and encouragement. But don't be afraid if you experience fear in this way; don't pay attention to it. Just let go, but at the same time, be aware. Be conscious.

Emptiness is Not Religious

Both the Paramitayana and Vajrayana emphasize emptiness. In fact, we say that emptiness is the heart of the Dharma. Emptiness is a blissful experience, like nectar. It is not a religious trip or just mythology; it is not merely something made up. Emptiness is scientific reality, not something simply to believe in. Emptiness is incredible; it is the heart of universal phenomena. When you realize emptiness, all concrete concepts of ego vanish. Automatically, you are liberated and experience everlasting bliss. Emptiness is the real Dharma; it is what elevates you to tathagatahood.

Emptiness is symbolized by a sword, whereas loving kindness is soft, like cotton; no matter how much you touch it, it never harms. The wisdom sword of emptiness, however, penetrates all obstacles and cuts through all delusion.

You can see how we hallucinate. This morning, your hungry I went to breakfast, and even though, as you were eating, the hungry I was disappearing, there was still the feeling of 'I am a hungry person'. You were still holding on: 'Hungry me is eating.' We have such permanent conceptions of ourselves.

We also think that yesterday's I is eating today's breakfast. That is also a wrong conception. Yesterday's you does not exist today. But this is how we think; we bring past experiences into the present all the time: 'I am this, now doing that', but it's impossible. The past is past. Even though the past has disappeared, you still keep bringing it with you. You don't want it to disappear, but it is nothingness.

Sentient beings are too much. We like to intellectualize about impermanence- 'Everything is changing minute by minute' - but actually, we don't want to let go: 'yesterday's me is here today'. However, whatever you have experienced in your life right up until this minute is not you. It has all gone.

No matter how much you idealize, 'I am this, I am that,' it is all just conceptualization. The moment you identify yourself as something, you are already something else. Check up on this. It is scientific, not just something psychological.

A momentary experience of emptiness alone is not enough to cut through our concrete hallucinations, our fantasies of who we think we are. But an understanding of emptiness together with that experience - recognizing how we

conceptualize our ego, how its nature is this and that, how we create the entire fantasy - really knocks the ego; something revolutionary happens.

Some people think that emptiness is a very difficult subject and that you have to study it for years and years before you can understand it. Of course, you can study it, and you must, but unless you really look at your hallucinated fantasy ego, the concrete conception created by your own mind, you won't get anywhere. It is not enough to have a merely intellectual understanding of emptiness. You'll still be hungry - like the tourist who hears all about Mount Everest but never gets to experience it. It is good to learn the philosophy, but you will really begin to experience emptiness only when you look, simply and practically, at your own ego's view.

When you are meditating on emptiness, for example, first there is a concrete sense of 'I am this.' Then, when you check up, when you analyze, suddenly this I disappears. When that experience comes, don't intellectualize; just let go without expectation. Again the fantasy comes, again skillfully check up, and when you apply intensive awareness, again the ego disappears. Concentrate on that emptiness, the lack of the I. Meditate on the object, emptiness.

Some Zen philosophers, for example, say that there is no object. But there is an object. It is not possible to have the subject, mind, without an object. Mind without an object is like an old man without a stick: it cannot stand.

Mind and object of mind are completely interdependent. You cannot say there is just nothingness. Mind cannot exist without an object; there is no such consciousness.

However, there are many different levels of objects, gross and subtle. At the subtlest level, you can almost say that there is no object, but there is an object. Emptiness, which is so subtle, is an object not in the way we normally think of concrete objects, but in the sense of being something that the mind holds, or knows, that the mind meditates on. The mind cannot stand without an object.

Some people think that in dealing with emptiness it is good to block yourself off as much as possible from the objects that cause you to cling to self-existence, but that is not right. It's a bit like sleeping. We have been asleep for countless lives. Our eyes have been closed, and superstition just keeps going, constantly, like a clock; it is always there. Anyway, it is not our sense perceptions that cause us to

grasp, it's our mental consciousness: the conceptualizations of our ego. Our senses are like the consul, but the ego is president. The consul passes on information 'I am this; I am that' but it's the conceptions that are all-powerful.

When distraction comes, recognize that it is superstitious mental energy. Instead of rejecting it, watch it, intensively, consciously - the bubble, the superstitious distraction, will disappear of its own accord.

The Reality of Our Fantasies

Actually, you could say that when the distraction disappears into empty space, this is, in fact, the reality of the superstitious view. Let's say that someone tells you a big story that in Brisbane a spaceship has landed from the moon, and in that spaceship are moon people. They are as tall as the hill down there, their mouths are the size of Chenrezig gumpa, and they have two conches in their hair. Well! You'd be very excited, hearing this, and would want to check it out for yourself. You'd rush down to Brisbane, asking for information about where to find the spaceship, searching here and there but you wouldn't find anything. After that big story, all that excitement, all that seeking, you find nothing. At that moment there would be a feeling of space, wouldn't there? As if you'd lost your fantasy object. 'I came all this way, and there's nothing.' There'd be some sense of emptiness.

Of course, in that situation, you'd feel dissatisfied to find nothing, but actually, that finding of nothing is the reality of the fantasy, isn't it? After all that emotion and idealism, you end up finding nothing. That nothingness is the reality of the fantasy. Does this make sense? I am talking psychologically.

Our ordinary experiences produce great dissatisfaction, but it's ridiculous. It's because we do not face reality. Our fantasies are not reality; therefore, when they arise and we check them out, we find nothing. But that is the reality of our fantasies.

When superstition arises during your samadhi meditation on the divine deity, don't reject it. Just look at it and it will disappear naturally; automatically, you will return to the meditation object. Sometimes, instead of looking at the superstition itself, you can look at the object of the superstitious thought. Check, watch - it, too, will naturally disappear.

Closing the Door to Negativity

Losing Your Made-up Self

Whatever you think of as your 'I' 'I am this, I am that', your mind makes it up and gives it a name. When you check with intensive wisdom, nothing whatsoever can be found. It's just like an actor: One minute he pretends to be one person, then the next minute he changes his clothes and becomes somebody else.

Since the moment Tom got his name, every day, every month, every year, he has thought: 'I am Tom.' He thinks that Tom is something to be found within his body. His wrong conception believes that his self-entity exists within his five aggregates. Over and over again, he has continuously thought this. But it's impossible to find such a Tom; what he thinks he is has nothing whatsoever to do with reality.

The name Tom is given to a combination of shapes and colors, then the superstition arises. The idea was made up: 'This is Tom,' and then the wrong conception developed: 'I am Tom.' But actually, the moment the name was given, that Tom was already finished; the interdependent combination of various factors that was the basis of the name Tom had already disappeared. New aggregates, new colors, and new shapes arise, but constantly the idea 'I am Tom' remains: 'This is me; this is me; this is me.' But it's just the mind making it up. Absolutely! Nothing can exist that is not made up by the mind; nothing has self-entity. The phenomenon of Tom is nonexistent. It is made up by the mind. This is reality. This is reality.

Whatever we are: student, farmer, anything, whatever name we give, it is always, 'I am this; I am that.' But it's completely made up by the mind. There is no self-existing entity there. All sentient beings are the same: 'I am ant; I am cow; I am monkey.'

We can all see scientifically that we are changing all the time, but we always point to our body and feel instinctively, 'This is me.' If you really look at this, you will understand intellectually how your conceptual thoughts make up such a self-entity.

The real experience of non-self-entity is when you come out of your samadhi and feel as if your made-up self has been lost. However, even without such a direct experience, you can understand reality simply through clean-clear, analytical wisdom.

Thus, you can understand that the divine pride of being the deity-'I am this; I am that'-is not totally made up; nor is it new. That reality is and has always been there; it's simply a matter of recognizing it. When the heavy, thick vibration of your usual projection of who you are has dissolved, you feel more sensitive; you have a subtler view. And when you have a more subtle view of phenomena, you have wisdom, you're more liberated; you have a view of totality. The fanatical view has vanished, the neurotic view has vanished, your miserable energy has vanished.

Such liberated wisdom energy transforms into the beam of light, and that in turn transforms into the rainbow body of the mahamudra deity - even more beautiful than a rainbow. Imagine that your body is that of a sixteen-year-old; just looking at this transcendent rainbow body stimulates bliss.

The divine pride of identifying yourself in this way automatically releases the hallucinated ordinary conception of who you think you are and of seeing yourself as having self-existence. Even though it is not actually nirvana, liberation, you can say that this blissful experience, especially when deep concentration develops, is like that - an eternal, blissful experience. And this mental energy is without limits, embracing all universal energy rather than being limited to this samsaric body and all samsaric objects. Whereas normal, superstitious experiences are shakable, this experience is unshakable. You reach beyond superstition. And you reach beyond mundane expectations, which bring conflict, indecision, and doubt.

Actually, you have the ability to stay in this experience forever, without coming down, but if you intellectualize too much about 'How?' your experience is likely to disappear.

Delusions Can Show Us Reality

Dealing with Distractions

When distractions, mundane thoughts, come into our contemplation, we should not get angry or try to reject them. When superstition arises, we should take advantage of it. 'You're welcome! Would you like to come in?' Mundane thoughts are your teacher; they give you realizations, show you reality. Let's say the thought of chocolate cake comes into your mind - it is easy to use distractions like this on the path to enlightenment.

First of all, why does this thought of chocolate cake come? Because your previous experience of enjoying chocolate cake has left an imprint in your consciousness. The experience itself has disappeared completely, but the imprint remains, as if you'd sealed it, stamped it, in your mind. As long as that stamp is there, the indestructible identification will also be there. It's the same whenever you psychologically experience anything - happiness, misery, anger, bliss it is never lost. It is imprinted on your mind, programmed into your mental computer. It is always there. This is memory.

There is a continuity between the past experience and the present recollection of it. It's like electricity: the source is somewhere else, but the energy comes through the various wires to where we are now, without a break. So, although the experience of desire has passed, who is acting now? The Tom who experienced desire in the past is completely nonexistent; the present Tom is completely nonexistent; but there is the recollection of the experience. The previous experience, the thought, the person, the object everything is gone, but still the memory of craving-desire comes, superstition comes, because it is imprinted on the mind.

When you understand that the experience of the chocolate cake arises interdependently, you can see that it has no self-entity, that it doesn't come from the object; it comes instead from your mental energy. You don't need too much explanation to see this it's simple, isn't it? The imprint of the previous experience of chocolate cake is always there, whether you are awake, asleep, or meditating. Of course, there are cooperative causes, too: the feeling of hunger, the arising of desire, and the object, the chocolate cake. All these come together.

We have to realize that the desirable chocolate cake is a complete hallucination. Objectively, it's not there; it's as if the imprint in your mind manifests into chocolate cake. You can check up scientifically. Where is that chocolate cake? It is a projection of your superstitious mind. Without the previous experience of chocolate cake, the thought of chocolate cake could not arise now. Your experience has nothing to do with external chocolate cake; your chocolate cake is an internal object. Your object of craving-desire is a fantasy, a hallucination.

It happens like this: Every time you recall the chocolate cake and craving arises, you're simply adding more petrol to the fire of your craving. And you keep believing in it as real. Most of the time we see things as real and believe them to be real, when in fact, they are like dreams.

So, whenever the thought of chocolate cake arises in your meditation, recognize with intensive wisdom that it is a hallucination, a mental picture, and that nothing exists out there. This will leave a strong impression on your mind. Then, whatever situation arises in your life, you will see it like that.

Remember, we discussed seeing a rope as a snake? Believing it's a snake brings fear, doesn't it? If you didn't have this belief, there would be no fear. It's just the same here. When you believe in the self-existent chocolate cake, superstition arises. But if, when seeing the chocolate cake, you recognize it as nondual, non-self-existent, this will bring some kind of dharmakaya experience. This is liberated wisdom because it doesn't bring the reaction of craving.

I repeat: When the mundane thought of chocolate cake arises in your meditation session, if you use intensive wisdom to analyze the object, you will see that it is just a manifestation of mental energy. It is only mind; no object exists. Because of your previous experiences of chocolate cake, you have the recollection of it now. The past has gone, the future has not yet arrived, so it must be a complete hallucination.

The key is skillful, indestructible wisdom. Instead of being caught up in hallucinated objects, you will have blissful experiences instead. Seeing chocolate cake as a hallucination automatically shakes desire, dissolving it, whereas believing in real, concrete chocolate cake increases the vibration of fantasy and, by reacting again and again and again, you accumulate deluded karma.

Your Delusions Are Your Teacher

In this way you can use the arising of superstition as your teacher. In Buddhist terms, a teacher is someone who shows you reality. If we have both wisdom and method, all our experiences become our teacher; they show us reality. Learning does not come only from books. The wind, the water, the growing flowers, the growing beard! everything can be our teacher; everything can talk to us. Our limited minds think knowledge is in the library. But for the person who really understands the graduated path to enlightenment, even the energy of a supermarket can be a teacher. Wherever you go, everything you see shows you reality.

You can see: During our meditation, and during our daily life, too, instead of being obstacles to liberation, distractions and superstitions can be helpful. They can help us realize the dharmakaya, emptiness. Our superstitions are kind: they show us the

reality of emptiness. If there were no misconceptions, how could there be right conceptions?

By using our introspective wisdom, we can see that these hallucinations come from the mind. Mental energy is transformed into chocolate cake; it has nothing whatsoever to do with external chocolate cake; no such entity exists. Seeing this, we can automatically experience emptiness.

But don't rush; you can't rush mental energy. It takes time. Be patient; accept. It's not good to push yourself. In the beginning, perhaps, having the distraction of chocolate cake will get you down, but gradually, you will be able to put your mind back onto the object of contemplation.

Of course, it is better to have the thought of blissful samadhi rather than the thought of chocolate cake! As we talked yesterday: If we were to realize the transcendental experiences of bliss that we could experience from samadhi, we would definitely wake up from sluggishness in our meditation. It would give us much energy.

With intensive knowledge-wisdom, our penetrative introspection can become right view. After the superstition is gone, there is an experience of unity, of nonduality, and your mind can let go; you want to let go. Then, without pushing, automatically, you can easily return to the object of your contemplation.

Afterward, when you wake up out of meditation and resume your everyday life, before you do an action, you will be able to recognize the hallucinated, concrete picture and thus deal with things more easily.

Your Wisdom Is Your Guru

We have such fixed ideas about ourselves: 'I did this and that, therefore, I am guilty.' These fantasies are released by the powerful, divine, radiating essence of the guru transformed into light coming into us. All our philosophizing and conceptualizing, the hallucinations of who we think we are, are instantly annihilated. When iron and fire mix, they become completely unified: iron becomes fire and fire becomes iron. You cannot separate them. It's the same when the powerful divine wisdom light comes: it burns all your projections of yourself.

You paint a picture of who you think you are, but it's a complete hallucination, having nothing whatsoever to do with reality. Your minds are so limited; you think 'I am this or that,' based only on your past experiences.

You're not aware of the present at all, even when your eyes are wide open. Also, we either overestimate or underestimate everything; we don't perceive reality. It's incredible. When we make things more important, more handsome, more beautiful than they really are, they appear more important or more beautiful, but it's just the projection of your hallucinating mind.

Let's say you're involved in some fantastic project and someone tells you that you are wrong. Because of your fixed view, you will freak out. But whatever you do, if you understand that everything is a hallucination-object, subject, environment, your future plans - you will be free. Someone can tell you that you are wrong, but because you are flexible and have no fixed view, you will accept. 'Yes, I am wrong.'

But this ego of ours always thinks, 'I am right.' You build up such a mandala, brick by superstitious brick, and finally, 'This is my fantasy! It is perfect!' But you've built up something completely idealistic that has nothing whatsoever to do with reality. And when there are fixed ideas like this, there is fear, paranoia. You worry so much about what other people think. 'Maybe he thinks it's nice; maybe she thinks it's not nice.' Whenever there is superstition, it's always, 'Maybe this, maybe that ... ,' Even if somebody isn't thinking about you at all, you still worry about what he thinks.

Or, if you think something is fantastic but someone else thinks it's nothing: 'He thinks I'm nobody!' You're hurt when they don't care. Ridiculous! If you know you are nobody, then you are nobody, so there's no need to worry! Enjoy what you are doing; accept what you are!

All this is because of our superstitions, our fixed ideas. We hallucinate this incredible dream world. I mean, it's more than a dream world! This is not something that you need to believe in; it's reality, isn't it? This is how we are. You can explain this to anyone, believer or nonbeliever.

Once you recognize this polluted way of seeing things, you can liberate yourself. Then you will have no fear about what people think of you. Lord Buddha's psychology is the most profound treatment. When you become yourself, you

become familiar with your entire energy. Whatever you think you are melts into light when it's touched by the powerful supreme energy of the guru absorbing into you; you experience total unity.

In your meditation, stay with the experience of unity as long as you like; it's an incredibly powerful antidote to the fixed idea of who we think we are, of the wrong conceptions. Perhaps one day you stay in that experience, and the next day you become Avalokiteshvara!

Most of the time your problems come because you create fantasies. You think they are reality, and then, when things go wrong, you blame the situation. But you are not flexible. This practice, however, frees you: you can freely communicate, freely go, freely come, freely sleep, freely eat, freely drink. It is revolutionary, truly revolutionary. And it never harms; it is blissful in nature, so soft, peaceful, and liberating.

Sometimes you don't know who to believe. Someone says, 'This is right,' and another says, 'No, that is right.' Every time you practice guru yoga, however, you should think that your own wisdom is your guide. 'Wisdom is my guru,' you should explain to yourself. If we always rely on someone else when we have psychological problems, we will remain weak. 'Guru' does not have to refer to something physical. There is the relative guru, and there is the absolute guru. The relative guru refers to the outside person, but the actual guru is your own wisdom. 'The guru is Buddha, the guru is Dharma, the guru is Sangha,' does not necessarily refer to the external.

It doesn't matter how much the guru talks; unless your wisdom is functioning, the teachings will go nowhere. But when your wisdom is functioning, you are liberated. 'Who is your guru?' someone will ask. 'My own small wisdom is my guru,' you will say. 'It guides me in a simple way.' You take refuge in your baby guru. Every time you do guru yoga, you are taking refuge in the guru. My wisdom guides me, explaining to me my entire nature. That is my guru.

So, this practice of absorbing the guru into ourselves is incredible. Maybe it takes time for it to come together, but it is worthwhile. The powerful universal light embracing all the universal energy comes through your central channel. Because the energies of your body and mind are connected, everything will be purified and there will be an experience of totality: the darkness, bad memory, everything is purified. The light energy coming to your throat will purify impure speech and

bring indestructible control, power. When it comes to your heart, you will experience unity of mind, totality like the infinite blue sky.

The radiating light is supreme wisdom and, therefore, has the power to burn all impure energy. All your conceptions, your interpretations, are consumed by the wisdom fire. Psychologically, you will feel pure.

Slowly, slowly, practice becoming Avalokiteshvara. Remember, don't feel, 'How do I become Avalokiteshvara? Does my nose become Avalokiteshvara? My ear?' I've explained this many times as it is such a difficult point for the Western mind. So check up, study. When you totally absorb the guru into yourself, you experience your own wisdom energy, your own totality.

Making Every Moment Meditation

During Everyday Life, Don't Believe In What You See

In Tibetan, we talk about *jeto chawo*: the action after samadhi. During retreat, this refers to the times between sessions, but it can also refer to our everyday life, when we're not meditating. When you have finished your session, which we call *nyamshag*, or contemplation, and have dissolved into emptiness - you, the mahamudra deity Avalokiteshvara, dissolve into the heart, into the moon, and into the beam of light, and then become smaller and smaller and eventually disappear into emptiness - you reappear out of this emptiness as Avalokiteshvara, and then, as Avalokiteshvara, go to work, eat your lunch, or do whatever you have to do.

It is important to practice like this. During your meditation session you feel good, transcendent, but after your session or when you've left here and gone back home you feel that you've gone from heaven to hell. That's wrong. In Tibetan, we describe this as *kangje lhagsub*, which means leaving footprints, trying to cover them up using your hands, but leaving more as you go. In other words, it's an endless task. Instead, you should take your good experiences with you.

It's important to have balance and continuity and not to feel that when you leave here, you've entered another world. If you feel like this, your practice is wrong; it's not integrated.

When you have finished your retreat, you should maintain the clarity of yourself as Avalokiteshvara, the mahamudra deity, and see all forms and colors as

Avalokiteshvara, all sounds as the transcendent mantra, and all superstitious thoughts as transcendent consciousness. If you can't do this, then at least see everything as an illusion: see the various objects that appear to you as bubbles, as empty: 'What I am seeing is not real; not true.'

Why do you need to think this? Since we were born up until now we have been cheated by our concrete conceptions, our belief that everything is real. We always say, 'This is real.' Why? 'Because I feel it is so,' 'Because I see it like that.' Our logic is always 'I feel,' 'I see.'

We need to realize that what appears to us is like a bubble, that it isn't real.

We need to develop the intensive wisdom that sees through the bubble and not get caught up in it. As long as you have the hallucinating mind, you will see as real whatever sense objects you perceive. This is not some kind of religious trip. We're actually describing reality, scientific reality. It is not philosophy, not doctrine. It is an experience that is beyond doctrine, beyond ideas.

You can see from experience that as soon as you give a name to something and believe in it, it appears to you. The saying, 'You hear what you want to hear,' is a good example. If you don't want to hear something, even though someone says it a hundred times, you will not hear it. This shows the relative nature of our mind.

Cultivate the understanding that bad is not bad and good is not good. Recognize that you are hallucinating a bubble. Then you will experience neither fear nor excitement; you will have control. You will reach beyond the extreme view and have a greater sense of unity. You will experience mahamudra.

Your mind is powerful. If you can have this right view for just two or three minutes, you can stay there indefinitely. Of course, it's difficult to do this at the beginning - we're like the new driver who can't put everything together and, therefore, can't let the driving just happen. But when you find the skill to put things together, to have the right view, and then, when you have developed the habit, your progress on the path will go so fast you won't believe it. Such is the power of the mind.

Another way to practice in our everyday lives is to perceive the various sense objects that arise in the same way that a magician perceives the illusions he creates as interdependent phenomena. When a magician creates an illusion, due to the

arising of various phenomena - the onlookers' hallucinated mental condition, a piece of wood, the magician's spell - a horse appears. The horse does not exist in the wood, nor in the magician's mantra, nor does it come from the hallucinations of the people.

This is important to understand. The magician sees the horse but knows it is not real; he doesn't believe in the bubble of the horse. His mind doesn't move; he doesn't get caught up. We call this *nyitsog*, which means to experience the unity of emptiness and the relative bubble; to see them

simultaneously. Therefore, don't be like the ordinary people who see the horse: 'Oh, fantastic! A horse! Look!' They see it as totally real; they become completely caught up in the hallucinated vision. Instead, we should be like the magician, who sees the hallucination but doesn't believe in it. This will bring an entirely different feeling than the feeling that arises when you see everything as having a self-entity.

But Don't Reject Reality

However, although the horse is not real, the magician doesn't reject it, does he? He enjoys it; he plays with the energy. People come to watch; he makes money from it; he has a good time. It's the same with us. We don't need to reject our muesli, our chocolate; we should simply see these things as a bubble.

When you are in samadhi, contemplating your mahamudra divine body, you don't have any mundane thoughts. There is no bubble vibration, is there? But when you come back down from your samadhi, your old, dangerous habits are still there, especially when you go back into your usual environment. At that time, you need the intensive wisdom that sees through the bubble reality of your chocolate.

At the moment we are ordinary people. We see desirable chocolate and believe it has its own self-entity. But when we develop an understanding of non-self-entity, we see the chocolate but at the same time see it as empty. Eventually, when we become buddha, we won't have any dualistic view at all; we'll have reached beyond the dualistic view.

It is very important, then, to see your break times, and your everyday life, as sessions as well. After our meditation session ends, our practice should be to see things as illusory, as not concrete.

If your mind is divided and you feel that when you're out of meditation, you are so deluded 'I'm guilty! I have so much desire!' you will not be happy. You think that meditation is good, is nirvana, but going to the supermarket, drinking, and eating are samsara. This attitude doesn't help. You're rejecting life. It's not necessary to think like this.

If this is your attitude, then perhaps only one minute out of twenty-four hours will be meditation; the rest will be samsara. This will mean that samsara is completely powerful whereas meditation is only an atom.

All you people who go to work might think, 'I don't really like my job; I don't like my boss. I just go because I need the money.' If you really understood that everything is a hallucination with no self-existent reality, your job, your experiences, would be fantastic. Every day, your activities would be the teachings, the lamrim. When you finished your job for the day, you would think, 'Today, my graduated path to liberation session has finished. Now I'll go home.' It's possible! I'm not joking.

We all have a life: a house, a wife, some children, a dog. And we have all these fixed ideas about what they are - but it's all hallucinated. We build up everything, piece by piece; it all becomes a total statement: 'This is who I am.' But it's all a complete hallucination and has nothing whatsoever to do with reality. If this were reality, then when you were happy, the picture of 'This is who I am' would be real. But when you're miserable, that picture becomes 'This is who I am.'

If you really check up intelligently, you can see this is what we do. Buddhism emphasizes using our intelligence. We need to see how we hallucinate, how we don't see totality, how we're caught up in fanatical views and end up miserable.

It's not only in our mundane activities that we have these fixed ideas. If you were to come to a place like this with the attitude that it, too, is a mental projection, a hallucinated bubble, then you'd have no problems. Instead, you come with a concrete idea: 'Oh, there's a lama teaching meditation at Chenrezig Institute. He had better give me realizations, otherwise, I might as well go to the beach!' You have a fantasy about the place even before you come here - that's why all you get is trouble, and you miss out on the chocolate.

The lamrim is not just the texts we study. All your energy, everything, can be the lamrim. Then you become a professional, a *lamrimpa*.

Mahamudra is Always Here

Enjoy your life! Tantric yoga has powerful methods; it doesn't matter whether you are meditating, not meditating, or even sleeping. There are methods for putting yourself onto the right path at all times. When you wake up in the morning and you experience the sense world again, try to understand how everything is a hallucination. Then, because you are seeing that everything has non-self-entity nature, you will not react to the various problems that come.

During the day, continuously see yourself as Avalokiteshvara. When you eat your dinner, for example, imagine each mouthful as blissful, radiant light energy going into your heart.

The Paramitayana view greatly emphasizes understanding the problems of desire and renouncing this or that: 'I can't have chocolate any more. I can't even have a drop of water.' If, however, you have skillful method and wisdom, whatever you do, all your actions, even those you call mundane, can become the transcendent path to liberation.

Mahamudra, emptiness, is always here. It is unchanging, permanent. It is not something special in some special place. If you think that samsara is your ordinary life and emptiness is up there somewhere - no! You will never find reality if you think idealistically and look for it in books or lamas. You will never find reality that way.

Spirituality is always here, too. We say, 'Oh, I am looking for spirituality. I need to find lamas, priests, texts, bibles' but spirituality is always here. It is reality, and reality is not dependent upon whether you believe in it or not. If you look into the mundane, hallucinated bubble of everyday life, you will see reality.

Of course, the ability to remain in your contemplative state and simultaneously to do activities is the most difficult thing; only a buddha is able to accomplish this. But try to experience this. Then your life will be worthwhile.