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A Meditation Guide

For

Mahamudra

Peter Barth

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A Meditation Guide  
For  
Mahamudra

Peter Barth

Mahamudra Meditation Center  
Petaluma, California, USA

Dedicated  
to  
Thrangu Rinpoche  
and  
Karma Mahasiddha Ling

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# CREDITS

## Mahamudra

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*Moonbeams of Mahamudra I-V* by Thrangu Rinpoche, edited by Clark Johnson. Copyright © 1989-1995 by Namo Buddha Seminar. Namo Buddha Seminar, Boulder, CO, USA. These are the oral instructions which provide a basis for most of the practices. These should also be studied as companion texts to *A Meditation Guide to Mahamudra*.

*Mahamudra: Eliminating the Darkness of Ignorance* by Wangchug Dorje, translated by Alexander Berzin. Copyright © 1978 by Library of Tibetan Works & Archives. Library of Tibetan Works & Archives, Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India. A great practice text for Mahamudra. Consulted in developing the MMC curriculum.

*Piercing the Autumn Sky: A Guide to Discovering the Natural Freedom of Mind* by Peter Barth. Copyright © 1993 by Peter F. Barth. Lame Turtle Press, Petaluma, CA, USA. A basic introduction to Mahamudra view, practice and action.

*The Garland of Mahamudra Practices* by Kunga Rinchen, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen, co-translated and edited by Katherine Rogers. Copyright © 1986 by Khenpo Rinpochoy Könchog Gyaltsen and Katherine Rogers. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, NY, USA. A great summary of Drikung Kagyu Mahamudra practice.

*Mahamudra Teachings* by Garchen Rinpoche, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen, edited by Peter Barth. Copyright © 1997 by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen. (to be published by Ratna Shri Dharma Center).

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*The Cycle of Day and Night: An Essential Tibetan Text on the Practice of Contemplation*, by Namkhai Norbu, edited and translated by John Reynolds. Copyright © 1984, 1987 by Namkhai Norbu (Tibetan text) and John Myrdhin Reynolds (translation and commentary). Station Hill Press, Inc., Barrytown, NY, USA. A wonderful instruction on practice according to Garab Dorje from the long-de series of Dzogchen.

*The Golden Letters*, translation, notes, and commentary by John Myrdhin Reynolds. Copyright © 1996 by John Myrdhin Reynolds. Snow Lion Publications, Ithaca, NY, USA. Wonderful commentary by Dudjom Rinpoche and Patrül Rinpoche on the 'Three Statements of Garab Dorje.'

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### Bodhicitta and Dharma

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### Illusory Body

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# FOREWORD

This meditation manual provides instructions for a cycle of six series of Tibetan meditations taught and practiced at the Mahamudra Meditation Center in Petaluma, California, U.S.A. It is primarily intended for use by members of the center, including both teachers and students. This text provides a comprehensive and thorough introduction to the meditation practices of Mahamudra according to Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, as described in his authoritative meditation manual from the sixteenth century, *Moonbeams of Mahamura*. In addition, select meditation maintenance and enhancement practices are included from a variety of other sources.

The first five series of the cycle are based directly on the teachings of Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (1512–1587) and the Ninth Karmapa Wangchug Dorje (1556-1603) as taught by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche. They represent the heart of transmission and practice of the sacred lineage of the Dakpo Kagyu and make up the core of this cycle of practice. The remaining series is based on various teachings of Kagyu (mainly Mahamudra) and Nyingma (mainly Dzogchen) lineages and the 'Time, Space and Knowledge' vision introduced by Tarthang Tulku in 1977.

The cycle of meditations consists of the following series:

- **Resting Mind**
- **Exploring Mind**
- **Exploring Thoughts and Appearances**
- **Spontaneous Coemergence**
- **Dawning of Certainty**
- **Facets of Being**

I am most grateful to the Very Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche for teaching *Moonbeams of Mahamudra* in its entirety three times over the course of five ten-day retreats at Lake Big Bear, California between the years 1989–1995. *Moonbeams of Mahamudra* was translated into English by Lobsang Lhalungpa and published by Shambhala Publications in 1986 under the title *Mahamudra: The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation*. This translation was undertaken at the request of Dukchen Thuksay Rinpoche and the Sixteenth Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche gave teachings on this text at the request of the Karmapa and a sincere belief that they would be most helpful for practitioners in this time and place. Transcripts from these teachings are available from Namu Buddha Publications in Boulder, Colorado thanks to the efforts and attention of Dr. Clark Johnson.

The relationship between Dakpo Tashi Namgyal and Thrangu Rinpoche is indeed a direct and profound one. Tashi Namgyal at one time resided at Thrangu Monastery, so there has been a specific and close association of these teachers and their lineages over many generations now. Thrangu Rinpoche is the geshe who was asked to establish the curriculum for the four regents of the Karma Kagyu lineage. He also is the abbot of Rumtek Monastery and several other monasteries and centers. Lamas of the Karma Kagyu lineage have been quoted as saying, 'No one can point out the view like Thrangu Rinpoche.' Therefore, Thrangu Rinpoche has the highest qualifications for presenting these teachings.

Thrangu Rinpoche has provided detailed commentary on at least three occasions in California on *The Aspiration for Mahamudra* written by the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje between the years 1989–1997. Over the years, he has also given detailed instructions on other teachings of Mahamudra including but not limited to those of Tilopa, Naropa, and Wangchug Dorje. These have all helped to strengthen the transmission of Mahamudra to the West. It is with Thrangu Rinpoche's encouragement that in 1991 I established Mahamudra Meditation Center in California, U.S.A.

Although the first five cycles represent a complete set of teachings of the Dakpo Kagyu lineage and can stand on their own, it has been common over the years for Tibetan yogis to utilize the practices of different traditions. This may occur when they are drawn to particular teachings, practices, or teachers which they regard to be helpful to themselves or to their students.

It is in this spirit that the sixth series was developed. These practices are based on instructions received from numerous sources including Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen, Garchen Rinpoche, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso, Chetsang Rinpoche, Dukchen

Thuksay Rinpoche, Togden Rinpoche, Kalu Rinpoche, Geagen Khyentse, Dudjom Rinpoche, Namkhai Norbu, Tarthang Tulku and the Nyingma Institute and Suktse Rinpoche. The influence of my participation in 'Advanced Nyingma Meditation' and nine-month programs on the 'Time, Space and Knowledge' vision presented at the Nyingma Institute in Berkeley, California between 1977–1984 will be evident from some of these practices. Furthermore, my personal inclinations and education in physics have caused me to take an interest in Tibetan practices related to time and space. Finally, I have introduced a few dream yoga experiments that have emerged through my own practice over the years.

Appendix A includes the briefest introduction to the life and teachings of the historical Buddha, taken from a hand-out which I have used in my role on the faculty of the Elder Hostel program of the Catholic Diocese at the Silver Penny Farm in Petaluma, California. I have found that most students interested in meditation know little if anything about the historical Buddha. Appendix B discusses some of the many frameworks associate with Mahamudra.

Introduction to 'the view' of Mahamudra traditionally occurs through the help of a spiritual friend. These days, many Westerners have been introduced to the view of Mahamudra or Dzogchen by qualified teachers of one or more of the Tibetan traditions, whether Kagyu, Nyingma, Gelug, Sakya, or Bon. In addition, they have received instruction on meditation practices which bring forth, maintain, and enhance this view. It is also for those who have access to such a teacher that this meditation manual is intended.

In any case, this manual only contains gentle practices which are entirely safe to apply. Only one of the six series in the cycle comes with a specific recommendation regarding timing, the **Dawning of Certainty Series**. Even in the case of the **Dawning of Certainty Series**, timing is just a matter of knowing when introduction is most effective for the student to progress successfully on the path of liberation.

The importance of both genuine ongoing self-assessment and the support of a spiritual friend should be obvious in this kind of endeavor. It is difficult to learn a trade or to play an instrument without a teacher. Similarly, it is difficult to learn these mind practices well without one.

I feel I have been extremely fortunate to receive the instructions of several great Tibetan yogis who were trained in country of Tibet before the Chinese takeover of 1959. I have studied, practiced and taught these meditations at various times during the past twenty-eight years. During this time, I have come to appreciate their effectiveness in providing a degree of meaning and balance to my life. In this text, I have attempted to provide a summary of the practices which have proven most helpful to

myself and, based on feedback, my students. I have had the opportunity to proceed through this cycle of meditation in my own practice and with small groups of fellow practitioners repeatedly between the years 1989–1998 and have incorporated their feedback. In fact, it is my hope that this meditation manual will continue to be enhanced as our experience with applying these practices increases.

These practices are meant to both challenge you and provide you with support in your own practices and self-exploration.

I hope you will come to treasure them!

Peter Barth  
(Lama Thapkhay)  
Mahamudra Meditation Center

### **Addendum**

January, 2007

So that students may not have doubts of the origin of this text, it should be noted that upon his second, detailed review of this text in 1999, in San Francisco, California, USA, Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche spontaneously wrote the following letter and stamped it with his official seal and then handed it to our director, Peter Barth (Lama Thapkhay):

*“The Mahamudra Tsogpa (gathering) would like to thank you from the bottom of the heart for practicing Mahamudra.”*

Translation of original hand-written letter provided by David Curtis of the Tibetan Language Institute, 1999.

Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche had bestowed the title of “Lama” on Peter Barth in 1998 in Vancouver, Canada.

As of this time, this text has been adopted for use by individual Dharma students and/or centers in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. It continues to be utilized at Mahamudra Meditation Center (MMC) and affiliated groups in Northern California.

MMC

# INTRODUCTION

## **BODHICITTA**

It is said that the heart of Buddhism is Bodhicitta (awakened mind), including both relative (aspiration and application) and absolute (mind-as-it-is) aspects. When undertaking Mahamudra practice we are always asked to check our motivation carefully. We check it at the outset of each sitting and work on cultivating a genuine altruistic attitude. Then we check it again at the conclusion and do likewise. It is for this reason that we usually have as a minimum a small 'Refuge and Bodhicitta' chant in the beginning and a 'Dedication of Merit' prayer at the end. Also, this chant helps to settle our mind and serve to remind us that we are about to undertake or conclude something extraordinarily special. And then, when we can, we cultivate bodhicitta in between these moments, either during sitting itself or during post-meditation.

Initially, our efforts at generating an altruistic motivation and putting it into practice may feel slightly contrived or artificial, but with time and the right wish, it is said we can develop both pure motivation and application in this respect. Then our motivation can truly be one of working for the two benefits, the benefit of self and the benefit of others.

## **THE START OF A GROUP**

When a sitting group starts to meet, at the outset it is helpful to state that as an instructor one sees one's role as that of facilitator and as someone with a little bit of experience and, hopefully, a little bit of integrity. Ask that all participants also bring this spirit to the group, a

reliance on their experience and a little bit of integrity. Thereby plant the seeds for cultivating an environment of mutual trust and respect.

At the first meeting one should take a moment to reflect on why we are here today. We should regard ourselves as being extremely fortunate that we have been able to take a little time out of our busy lives to explore who and what we are. This is extremely rare indeed. It is rare to be born a human being and to have this life. The odds of this are much less than the odds of winning the State Lottery. We all have this extremely rare and precious human life. Still rarer is it, having been born a human being, to look for the meaning of this life and to cultivate self-understanding. And we have all taken a little time to do this. So we should feel very fortunate indeed.

Having this life, if we do not apply ourselves in doing something meaningful, then when we die we may die very confused and with a deep regret. So, since life is uncertain and impermanent, and we do not even know if we will be alive tomorrow, we should make the most of our time.

As instructors, we must try our utmost to help students discover the value and significance of their own lives, not according to any of our own inner agendas, but by honoring completely each member's presence and individuality. Simply be there for the members of the group. With presence of awareness, bring you spirit of caring to play. There is no greater fortune than to be able to share the dharma and there is nothing more meaningful in life than this. So treasure it!

If you feel so inclined, invite all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the three times and ten directions, and yidams, and the yogins and yoginis, and the dharma protectors and dakinis, and the lamas of the lineage to the space around you and ask them to participate with you and support you in your efforts. Thank them at the conclusion as you dissolve them into your heart.

It is not that an instructor transmits something to the student, but that through a little instruction, guidance, and example, the student discovers things directly in his or her own experience and being. The instructor facilitates a self-understanding which arises through a student's own experience and awareness. That is the true meaning of transmission and the role of a spiritual friend.



## **AREAS OF DEVIATION**

When experiences of various types arise for students, the important point is that they not attach to them. Whether brilliant flash insights, or experiences of agitation, bliss, luminous states, or complete emptiness arise, just remind the student that these things may occur as a result of practice (or getting hit on the head!) They are neither good nor bad and they should simply continue with the practice. Think of the story of Gampopa and Milarepa where Gampopa relays experience after experience to Milarepa who remains unimpressed.

In some cases, experiences may arise because a student is trying too hard, with too great of an expectation. Students who are of this type need to remind themselves to relax. In other cases, students may find themselves repeatedly in dull states because they are too lax. They need to remind themselves to try just a bit harder. The methods for dealing with these conditions are various and are well-documented in basic books on Shamatha practice. Share these methods with students. Tell them what you do that works. If a student is really tired, let them go take a nap! If they are very agitated, let them take a walk!

Keep in mind the four aberrations and the three areas for going astray. The comments above address the three areas where practitioners go astray, such as attachment to bliss, clarity, or non-thought (or stillness). The four aberrations involve straying into active intellectual or residual false, fabricated understandings and mistaking them for the way things are.

For example, attaching to extreme nihilistic views should be watched for. As Hakuin Zenji said, 'This is a great pit where countless monks have gone astray and been engulfed' so watch out! A practitioner may have a fabricated, conceptual view of the meaning of emptiness and feel that based on this view of the way things are cause and effect don't matter at all. Saraha has said that to hold on to nothingness is more foolish than to hold on to existence. The remedy to this most important aberration is to understand emptiness as presence. Often, mindfulness is being neglected because of habitual reliance on intellectualization. The emptiness of mindfulness itself does not at all have a nihilistic quality. Realizing (1) the unity of emptiness and appearances and (2) emptiness through the play of dependent arising are traditionally said to play an important role here. Also, cultivate loving-kindness. Hakuin Zenji saved all the students from this error by saying how much he likes to eat sweets! Similarly, extreme views on eternalism pose a problem when arising in such a conceptual manner. Here the emptiness aspect should be emphasized. The saying goes 'compassion saves one from nihilism, emptiness saves one from eternalism.'

Or sometimes one may label things intellectually with the concept of emptiness or luminosity rather than integrating them directly with true understanding. We should not encourage this or buy into useless prattle, although some of that may be necessary to work through. This minor variation of the first aberration is not quite as strong as the major form, where one's understanding and life is completely dominated by the concept of emptiness. Here, it is just that we are sometimes still being carried into the stream of intellectualization, although we already have some genuine understanding of the meaning of emptiness underlying it. So by this habit we rob ourselves of the power of a more direct understanding.

We may also develop a tendency to 'seal' things as emptiness or Mahamudra, but totally miss the point by doing this. One applies this seal with a conceptual understanding after the actuality of the event and thus it never catches up to the event itself. One must understand all to have completely the nature of emptiness or Mahamudra and as such not feel the need for a subsequent seal. Similarly, emptiness or Mahamudra is not an antidote to anything such as the defilements. The defilements themselves should be understood as intrinsically being Mahamudra as they arise.

Finally emptiness or Mahamudra may be set up as a goal outside of the present moment and experience, and one may feel that meditating on Mahamudra or emptiness is the path. One must come to understand that ground, path and goal are all intrinsic to mind, right in this present mind and experience. There is no other place to go. There is no path other than this.

It goes without saying that as instructors, we must avoid these ourselves.

## **THE PLAYGROUND**

Meetings should not be such serious affairs. One lama who was impressed by the interest by Western students was noted as remarking that he was perplexed how serious students take the whole thing. They need to play a little, have fun, and lighten up! I remember another lama who, while others were busily arranging the shrine for H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche, was running around mingling with the audience and chasing this wind-up toy mouse around the room!

Anyone who has practiced these kind of things for a while begins to feel that one can never do enough to help others. In this regard, the focus should be on one's immediate condition and whomever one is with and allowing that to be one's source of fulfillment and practice. The only true sign of accomplishing Mahamudra is said to be the engendering of loving-kindness and compassion. In this regard, many who have not encountered these special teachings are way ahead of us! They are much better practitioners than ourselves even though they have never heard of Mahamudra.

So as precious as we may feel this is, allow that preciousness to manifest simply and naturally in the moment. Right where we stand is our greatest treasure. It is beyond the three times and encompasses all of the ten directions and ways of being. Please treasure it!



# 1 - RESTING MIND SERIES



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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Resting Mind Series** provides a cycle of instruction in training the mind and cultivating its ability to attend to any selected object of choice. Thereby mind learns to abide in its own nature free from a subject-object framework. Once the mind can abide in a calm and clear manner for even a little while, with either an object of reference or no object of reference, a fresh new manner of knowing becomes active. This knowing is uncontrived in nature and does not depend on words or analytical reflection. It is a knowledge or wisdom which stems from naked or direct perception.

For example, as a beautiful bird lands on a fence in front of us, in the first moment we notice the change in appearances to us. This change itself brings along our attention. The moment of direct attending to this visual appearance is similar to the moments in meditation in which the kind of knowing through direct perception is active. Thereafter, we may process this perception and identify it as a crow or a red-tailed hawk, whatever the case might be, and then think about why it is on the branch and where its home might be. Seeing the appearances of mind, whether outer or inner, with a fresh, unelaborated way of looking is the basis for training and resting mind.

Beginners should learn to maintain the mind in a relaxed state free from attachment. Mindfulness is the key to both meditation and post-meditation. However, mindfulness should not be unduly sharpened. It need only be reinforced when this is required due to loss of awareness or sinking. Eventually, awareness will present itself and stabilize itself free from the flow of thoughts. When the mind vividly, calmly, and unceasingly perceives forms, sounds, feelings, tastes, smells, thoughts, without anxiety or tension, then resting mind (shamatha or shinay) has been realized.

At first, this takes quite some effort. Eventually the practitioner will observe progress in his or her own practice and how easy it is to return to this state. Finally, a meditator should not only easily attain this state but also should not cling to this state and move into subsequent activity as easily as into the meditation.

One may feel that this practice of 'resting the mind' is a little bit artificial in that it emphasizes non-analytical over analytical meditation

and involves bringing something to rest which is forever active. However, if one does not learn how to exercise some control of the mind, one remains completely at the mercy of its creations. It is said that the mind is like a powerful elephant which can do so much positive work if brought under control but can also destroy an entire village if left in a mad frenzy. Therefore, by doing this meditation and training the mind, we learn to become a little more in charge of things. Our mind becomes more flexible, we become more flexible. In addition, by learning to settle the mind, we prepare the ground of practice for seeing things more clearly. It is said that until we learn to rest the mind, we are looking at things as if in a room lit by a candle flickering wildly in the wind. We just cannot see things very decisively in this situation and even when we sometimes think we see things as they are, we may be in error. But when the mind is settled then our vision is clear and steady.

Through resting mind and abandoning our habitual wandering, we begin to bring the mind under control. We thereby provide ourselves with the ability to explore the nature of our mind, our self-identity, our thoughts, and our perceptions, and even awareness, time and space with more ability. The things that we see directly are then known with a greater degree of certainty. We are then able to investigate things so very carefully. It is like we have felt our way through every bit of a pile of garbage to make sure we haven't lost a diamond in it or we have inspected every facet of a diamond to ensure its authenticity before we buy it. Then our knowledge becomes decisive and stable, and completely free from any lingering doubt.

Therefore, at the outset we do resting mind meditation to provide a more suitable ground for establishing the view of things as they are. And once we have established the view, we use this meditation to stabilize that view itself. In that sense, this series can be both a beginner or advanced practitioner practice. In fact, all Buddhistic meditation is a unity of resting mind meditation (shinay) and splendid view (lhakthong).

With practice, at first your mind is like a stream cascading down a mountainous ravine. Then, after a while, your mind is like a great river. Finally, your mind is like the mixing of a river and the ocean, or the meeting of a mother and son.

At the outset, frequent, short sessions are recommended rather than longer sessions. Keep the awareness fresh. One should stop one's practice while still in a vivid state of calm abiding, so that one resumes the practice with enthusiasm and one's practice doesn't deteriorate.

The key instruction is to tighten a little or make slightly more effort when getting dull and to relax a little when getting too uptight or wild.



At some point, reliance on outer objects should be dropped and the practitioner should return to meditation without an object, such as Practice (1) or (8). Some say it is only when the clinging to shinay itself is dismantled that one should move into objectless meditation, others say it depends on one's degree of stability in objectless meditation and that one should begin with that and see how it is. For this purpose, a student may be asked to evaluate whether there is a discernable difference in the stability of his or her calm abiding in Practice (1) as compared to Practice (2), where a visual object is utilized. When they have a similar degree of stability, they should drop the object-oriented meditation as a regular practice. One may return to it now and then to gauge how one's practice is progressing.

A life style which is straight-up, without excessive planning supports success in this practice and maintenance of it. Execute plans straight up and down, 'like a bellows.' In retreat, it is said one should walk around slowly and carefully, 'as if convalescing.'

Meditators who practice resting mind meditations generally report the experience of one or more of the following: bliss, clarity, or emptiness. Attachment to anyone of these is cautioned against. Traditionally, it is said that attachment to bliss results in rebirth in the Desire Realm, attachment to clarity in the Form Realm, and attachment to emptiness in the Formless Realm of samsara. That they arise is not a problem and in fact can be beneficial. It is attachment to these states and experiences which is a problem. The key is to remain unattached to any experiences which arise.

Besides finding that one's mind becomes more at peace, practitioners who persist in this meditation develop a degree of suppleness such that they are very at ease and flexible in different conditions. A state of complete suppleness or flexibility and complete delight emerges (shin-jang). Higher degree of awareness to what is going on in and around one may result. Traditionally, psychic powers are said to come from this practice.

Still resting mind practice without insight practice is incomplete. Resting mind practice (shamatha or shinay) only temporarily quiets the bewilderment and afflictions of mind (kleshas). Thus it needs to be coupled with exploration series or insight (vipashyana or lhakthong) to be successful. Thus, students should be encouraged to continue with the exploration or insight series of meditation practices and be reminded of the importance of insight practice.

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (1) JOYFUL RESTING

**Body:** Sit comfortably in a stable and pleasant position, with the back reasonably straight. The posture should promote neither restlessness nor sleepiness. Place your hands (a) on your knees with the palms up or down or (b) on your lap with the palms up. The eyes should be open and look gently slightly down past the tip of your nose and in a relaxed manner. Establish a base physical posture for meditation which suits you. This will be referred as your base posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with a joyous attitude. Feel fortunate that you are taking some time to explore yourself and care for yourself. Then just let the mind 'rest in its own nature', however that may seem to be for you.

- Now don't follow thoughts about the future. Let go of them when you find yourself caught up in them.
- Don't follow thoughts about the past. Let go of them when you find yourself caught up in them.
- Don't follow thoughts about the present. Don't analyze the present.
- Don't meditate. Relax a bit about the whole thing. Just sit and relax in your own clarity.
- Just enjoy the flavor of sitting and relaxing your mind with the presence of alertness.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. The seven-fold posture of Vairochana is recommended with (1) legs crossed (or feet flat on ground if in chair), (2) spine straight (relaxed), (3) hands in lap palms up, (4) chin tilted slightly downwards, (5) eyes half-open, looking slightly downward, (6) tongue and lips relaxed (tongue may touch upper palate), (7) elbows out to the sides, shoulders level. Kamalashila added (8) breath left as it is.

2. These are meditation instructions and not the way one should remain in post-meditation. In daily life, from time-to-time, one has to consider the future and the past.

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### **(2) ATTENDING TO VISUAL APPEARANCES**

If you are able to rest your mind calmly and clearly in the first practice, just continue with it. Otherwise, continue on with the rest of the series. You may use a comparison of your calmly abiding state between Practices (1) and (2) to determine whether utilization of objects and breath meditation would be beneficial.

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Attend to a visual object of choice. Pick a marble, or a stone, or a piece of wood and place the object on the ground or table about three feet in front of you. Just look at, attend to the perception of the object.

- Whenever you notice that your attention is wandering, just return gently to the object.
- Whenever you see the object fading or becoming distorted, just return gently to the object. See the object clearly.
- Don't analyze the object. That is reflection not meditation.
- Don't be concerned if there are slight variations to your perception. Just continue with the meditation without losing the object.
- Don't be concerned if your mind wanders a lot. Just maintain the practice. Just keep returning gently to the object.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Would you characterize your mind as calm or busy? It is said that just as sunlight exposes all the dust floating in your room, meditation exposes all the activities of your mind. The first thing to note may be how busy your mind is.
2. How does use of an object compare to having no object in the previous meditation? Is it like a token of memory by which you can more precisely observe your wandering? If this is helpful, continue with it..

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (3) BLUE LIGHT AT THE HEART

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Visualize a small blue light at your heart center (located at the center of your body just in front of the spine at the heart level). Allow this blue light to arise as if on its own. It should be about the size of a pea and be marvelous to behold and have the color of a clear autumn sky opposite in the sky from the sun.

- Whenever you notice that your attention is wandering or you have lost the light completely, just return gently to the light.
- Whenever you see the light fading or changing size, just return gently to it. Restore it. See it clearly. Don't analyze it.
- Don't be concerned if you have difficulty visualizing the light. If you are having difficulty, try remembering something visually from your recent past such as the act of entering the meditation room. Go over these visual images carefully in your mind's eye. Then similarly produce a blue light within these visual images and carry this to your heart center. If that doesn't work, it is fine to just feel as if there is a light at the heart center and attend to that feeling.
- If your mind becomes sleepy, visualize a bright white light at the center at your forehead center. If your mind is beginning to wander excessively, visualize a dull black light at the point beneath where your crossed legs meet the floor.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. How does attending to a visualized light differ from attending to a visual object which presents itself to your eyes?
2. Some people have more difficulty visualizing than others. This is not regarded to be a sign of development but rather just due to differences in individuals' channels (nadi or tsa).

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (4) SOUNDING AH

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Listen to all the sound for a few moments. Just simply attend to the sounds that are there.

About one third of the way through the sitting, sound AH in long, deep tones. Unite your out breath with the chant of AH and rest your awareness on the sound itself.

Finally, sit without chanting AH or paying particular attention to sound. Just sit as in Practice (1) of this series.

- Notice where your awareness is when you place it on the sound. Mix it into the sound if your awareness feels separate from the sound. Go inside the sound. Pay attention to how this is.
- Whenever you lose the sound or awareness, just return gently to it. Know the sound clearly. Don't analyze it.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. How does attending to sound compare to resting mind on light? What qualities are the same? What qualities are different?
2. Attend to music with full attention the next time you listen to some. Enjoy the dance of your awareness to the music and stimulation of it by the music.

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (5) COUNTING BREATH

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Attend to your breathing. Count each inhalation, and exhalation cycle as one up until the number ten. Mentally count the number with the out breath.

When you complete a cycle of ten breaths, start over again from the number one.

- Place your attention particularly on the out-breath. Notice the quality of the exhalation.
- Be sure also to attend to the moments between the inhalation and exhalation and exhalation and inhalation.
- When you lose your count, return to the number one. Don't worry about it. Just keep with the practice.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This meditation is typically done as a starting meditation by practitioners of Soto Zen and may be practiced for several years before moving on to the next practice.

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (6) FOLLOWING BREATH

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Open your mouth slightly. Breathe evenly through your nose and mouth simultaneously with about half of the air flowing through each passage. Curl the tip of the tongue gently against the back of your front top teeth or the palate of the mouth. Relax your mouth.

Attend to the sensation of the flow of breath in your body and through your nose and mouth. Savor the sensation, allowing it to accumulate. Just rest your awareness on your breath by resting on the sensations of breath as far as the sensations may extend.

- If you become dull, try a little harder, be a little more alert. If you become agitated, relax a little bit. Don't try so hard.
- If the sensation of breath extends beyond your body's limits, just stay with it. Don't get excited about it or attach to it. If this doesn't happen, that is fine too.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Try attending to the feeling qualities to this practice. How would you describe them?
2. Breath is like an antenna. A common saying is the "air was so thick you could cut it with a knife." Attend to the more syrupy feelings as well as the lighter ones.



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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (7) GENTLE VASE BREATH

**Body:** Relax into your base posture. Place your hands palm-down on your knees. Relax your chest. The upper chest is not directly involved in this practice.

**Breath:** First let the breath be as it is. Breathe through the nose.

**Mind/Breath:** Then take a slightly deeper inhalation into the belly.

When you exhale the first three times, each time extend the fingers of your hands. With the first breath, imagine that all your illnesses and physical impurities leave your body through your fingers and dissolve out into the space around you. During the second breath, imagine that your inner demons or obstacles such as nervousness or depression or anxiety are purified and dispelled into space. During the third breath, imagine that all of your ignorance and hatred and grasping are dispelled and dissolve into space.

Now when you breathe in, breathe in to your lower abdomen or belly. Attend to the breath as you inhale and fill into the lower belly area. Keep the upper chest relaxed. Feel a slight pushing downwards from above as you complete the breath and a simultaneous pulling upwards from below, as if containing the breath in a center about four finger-widths below the navel center. Hold the breath gently in this location and attend to it. As soon as you feel the need to exhale, exhale gently through the nose. Continue with breathing in this way.

- This is a gentle version of vase breathing and is completely safe. Do not attempt any forceful versions of this without the guidance of a qualified instructor. In no instance should breath be forced.
- The upward pull sometimes is described as the sensation internally after completing going to the bathroom. One may emphasize this sensation by actually tightening the muscles below slightly the first one or two times, but thereafter, the upward and downward sensation is much more subtle.

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## RESTING MIND SERIES

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### (8) JUST SIT

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose or through both nose and mouth.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with a joyous attitude. Feel fortunate that you are taking some time to explore yourself and care for yourself. Then just let the mind 'rest in its own nature', however that may seem to be for you. Completely drop all intentions. Don't try so hard. Don't expect so much. Be free from expectations or worries. Just relax.

- Let go of thoughts of the three times. Don't follow thoughts about the future. Don't follow thoughts about the past. Don't follow thoughts about the present. Don't meditate.
- Do not wander for even a moment. Be as alert as one who is threading a needle. Then rest. Forget all these instructions and "Just sit."
- If you drift into sleepiness or dullness, try a little harder. If you become restless, relax a little more. Like Buddha said to the guitarist, "Not too loose, not too tight, just right."
- When involvement with thoughts occurs, recognize that and then set your mind as it was before the thought arose.
- Don't be happy if there are few thoughts or unhappy if there are many thoughts. Just look at thoughts as they arise.
- With time, one's awareness should be so vivid as to detect an emerging dullness or restlessness immediately. One should know how to relax without losing the vividness of the meditation. One should know how to intensify one's alertness and maintain the continuity of an undistracted state without losing the quality of relaxation.

## **Questions/Comments**

1. After training with the other seven practices, how does your experience in this practice compare with practice (1)?
2. Saraha said that if you attempt to hold a camel, it fights you and tries to go every which way, however if you let it go, it stands right where it is. Let the camel go. Stop stirring the pot of karma.



# 2 - EXPLORING MIND SERIES



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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Exploring Mind Series** provides a cycle of instruction in exploring the mind itself and cultivating an understanding or recognition of its nature. Once the mind can abide in a calm and clear manner for even a little while, one looks with the mind at the mind itself. There is nothing more simple than this. It does not depend on anything outside of one. Resting mind (shamatha or shinay) meditation alone only temporarily arrests the kleshas. It does not uproot them. Therefore, insight (vispashyana or lhakthong) meditation is needed. Exploring mind by seeing clearly deals more with the wisdom aspect of our nature, whereas resting mind deals more with the compassion aspect.

The practitioner is taken through a series of analytical investigations of mind. Once the practitioner sees decisively and clearly how it is, he or she continues with stability in that recognition. It is a little like upon hearing that someone has let a small wild cat loose in your house. Although you at first may doubt the truth of it, a lingering fear persists that it might indeed be true. Therefore you carefully go into the house and methodically check each and every room. You check under the beds, you check in the closets. You even check the cabinets and under the piles of clothes. It is only after you have completed your search to an entirely satisfactory degree that you are able to relax fully with the understanding that this story was completely fabricated and untrue. There is no cat in the house. Similarly, one investigates one's assumptions about the nature of mind very carefully until all misconceptions and doubts are cleared up. This frees one from wandering in mind's conceptual realms of being.

Why does one explore mind before anything else? There are two reasons: 1) since all realities are projections of mind, by understanding the nature of mind, one understands the nature of all realities and 2) exploring things is a never ending endeavor, whereas exploring mind is straightforward and reaches a definite conclusion. In fact all of samsara and nirvana depends on mind. By understanding the mind, one may understand all things including the nature of all of samsara and nirvana.

Ignorance of the nature of mind is the source of all of samsara. By exploring mind and its projections and ignorance, one can cut through and uproot the afflictions (kleshas) of mind. Understanding mind as it is paves the way to freedom from samsara. It is through meditating on

mind that one comes to directly experience and understand the meaning of the emptiness or openness of mind.

At first, this practice involves analytical explorations with effort. Eventually the practitioner begins to resolve the situation definitively. The practitioner then discovers an open lucidity which is present when mindfulness is present. At that stage, he or she may continue with maintaining mindfulness without any distraction on this empty, unidentifiable open awareness. Finally, a meditator should include meditation and subsequent experiences into this without losing his or her mindfulness.

Now one may feel that this practice of 'analyzing the mind' is a little bit artificial in that it emphasizes analytical over non-analytical meditation and involves investigating something which is self-knowing, and therefore already knows how it is. However, if one does not learn to definitively recognize the nature of mind, one remains completely subject to the confusion in that regard. For example, when we mistake a rope for a snake, we may respond in a completely inappropriate way to the situation. Similarly, by having false understandings about our minds, many unnecessary fears and needs arise. Thus, the importance of doing this thoroughly cannot be overemphasized.

Insight pertains to the emergence of an understanding of things as they are. Traditionally, both relative and absolute levels of reality (dharma) are differentiated. Relative dharma addresses individuals under specific conditions and deals with things which are temporary in nature. Absolute dharma is truth under all conditions and all times.

The *Bhavankrama* mentions three sources of insight including 1) associating with spiritual people, 2) listening to the dharma, and 3) reflecting on the dharma and analyzing it carefully.

In the path of Mahamudra, three wisdoms (prajna or sherab) are traditionally cultivated. These encompass both analytical and non-analytical ways of knowing. The first is the wisdom which comes from listening to and reading instructions on the dharma, on meditation, and on reality. The lineage provides the continuity for these teachings. The second is the wisdom which comes from reflecting on and analyzing the instructions and their relevance for our condition. Buddha had said that even his own words should be considered as carefully as when one makes a big investment, such as buying gold. The third is the wisdom which comes from meditation itself. This is described as illuminating the way things are without adding anything extra or taking away anything. All three wisdoms work to help bring one to a true self-understanding in a stable manner.



Ultimately, one also discovers a primordial wisdom (jnana or yeshe) which is not subject to the play of time. When one comes to know this wisdom completely and manifests it in all of one's condition then, one has achieved complete enlightenment (Buddha or Sangye). These three wisdoms are the vehicle for honoring the primordial wisdom in our lives and thus are cultivated on the path of Mahamudra.

The key instruction is to tighten slightly and look very carefully directly as guided by the questions. This direct looking is in contrast to reflecting or thinking about the object or answers to the questions. Then rest for awhile. Resume looking again after a bit. When one has a decisive understanding, continue with that understanding without repeating the analytical questioning. Just maintain the mindfulness of things as they are.

Do not attach to flashes of insight. Just relax and continue with looking until you experience a decisive understanding which is neither pumped up or deflated in character. It is said one should investigate the mind as carefully as someone who is 'crushing a bone into fine powder with a stone.'

Practitioners may experience an undefinable state imbued with mindfulness and a sense of certainty. Eventually this is experienced as a resplendence which cannot be described and an even stronger confidence. It is just like experiencing the taste of sugar, which cannot be described. And by understanding mind, one understands all experiences since all experiences are of mind. In fact, in the next series, thoughts and appearances (i.e. the full range of experience) of mind are investigated in a similar fashion.

Students should be encouraged to continue with the unity of resting mind and insight practices by maintaining mindfulness of things as they are, completely without any essence. One works on maintaining this view without distraction until it is present in a completely effortless fashion. Like reading, it becomes effortless.

Eventually, it is said one comes to understand that mind is like space in that it remains completely unaffected by any thoughts which arise. Concepts of loss and gain do not apply to it. And one learns to live with complete confidence in the freedom of one's mind just as it is.

In shamatha, like sun shining into the room, one sees all the dust in one's mind. Through insight, we effectively turn the dust into gold.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (1) SHAPE OF MIND

**Body:** Sit comfortably in a stable and pleasant position, with the back reasonably straight. The posture should promote neither restlessness nor sleepiness. Place your hands (a) on your knees with the palms up or down or (b) on your lap with the palms up. The eyes should be fully open and looking straight ahead (in contrast to shinay where eyes gaze downwards slightly and may be half-closed) in a relaxed but alert manner. Establish a base physical posture for meditation which suits you. This will be referred as your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. It should be similar to someone walking carefully across a narrow plank bridge spanning over a small creek by a height of one or two feet.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, look with mind at mind itself. Consider the following:

- Does mind have any kind of shape? For example, is it round like a circle? Is it square? Is it round like a sphere? Is it of the shape of the ground, is it the shape of a rock, is it the shape of a person?
- Does mind have any form to it at all? Does it have the form of the experiences which continually arise, and thus an ever changing form? Does it have a fixed form? Does it have no form at all?

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. If you feel that mind has a particular shape, look at this very carefully. When you are certain that mind has no distinct shape, no fixed shape and no varying shape, in fact that the concept of shape or form does not at all apply to your mind, rest in that understanding and allow that understanding to continue in your experience.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (2) COLORS OF MIND

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, look with mind at mind itself. Consider the following:

- Does mind have any color to it? For example, is it blue? Is it green? Is it red?
- Is it black or is it white?
- Just sit and look for a while to see what colors are experienced, if any.
- Does mind itself have any color to it at all? Does mind itself have multiple colors?

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. If you feel that mind has a particular color to it, investigate this very carefully at different times of day and when in different moods. When you are certain that mind has no color, not even white or black, and that in fact the concept of color does not at all apply to your mind, rest in that understanding and allow that understanding to continue in your experience.
2. The question of looking for shape and color of mind may seem a little absurd. Continue with this until you are relaxed and comfortable with the absurdity and not confused by it. Practices (1) and (2) provide a bit of training in looking with mind at mind.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (3) LOCATION OF MIND

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, look with mind at mind itself. Consider the following:

- Does the mind have any support to it? Does mind have anything which supports it from the outside or inside of itself? Does it stem from a material object? Does it stem from anyone else? Does it stem from the play of the brain?
- Does the mind dwell anywhere? Does it have any location? If the mind rests on part of the body, examine the remainder of the body. If the mind seems to permeate the entire body, investigate whether it is inside the form of the body itself, or outside of the form of the body. Is it both inside and outside of the body at the same time?
- How can something with no shape or form have a location? Investigate that by entering the mind at any location with mind and by exploring the boundaries beyond the location of mind which you regard or hold to be true. Rest in your understanding when it is decisive.

#### Questions/Comments

1. If you feel that mind has a particular location to it, investigate this very carefully. Consider for a moment that Western science associates the mind with the brain; ancient Greeks and Tibetans locate it at the heart center. Wherever you may feel that the mind is, explore it carefully. Go inside the mind's location with your mind. Find the boundary. Whenever you scope a location which has the sense of, "This is it" go into that location and open it up. Investigate mind inside and outside of that location.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (4) LUMINOSITY AND VOIDNESS OF MIND

The term 'luminosity' refers to the 'knowing' quality of mind. This has definitively been clarified by Tibetan teachers. It does not refer to the 'experience of light' referred to by some mystics. Rather it is the knowing or awareness or clarity or lucidity of mind.

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, look with mind at mind itself. Consider the following:

- What is the mode of abiding of mind? What is its existential mode? Is mind like an open space? If so, is it completely empty? How does it compare to a completely empty space?
- Is mind an aware vividness? Is it imbued with a lucid knowing quality? How does it compare to the luminosity of the sun? Is it an inner luminosity? Is there any sense of inner or outer to it?
- Is it an open lucidity without form, without color, without location in time and space?

Look with mind at mind carefully, then take a rest, and then look again.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Rely on your direct experience not your imagination.
2. Mind is not like dead space nor is it like physical light since it has an intelligent, knowing quality. Space is not a self-knowing awareness.
3. Mind is totally free of consisting of a core substance. It has no mode of abiding. It does not abide. Concepts of existence and non-existence

do not apply. Its nature is undefineable and beyond imagination or intellectual comprehension.

4. Is it an 'inmost self-arising awareness' as declared by some of the fathers of the lineage? Does inner apply to it. A Tibetan term that is sometimes used for this experience is *rang-rig rang-tsal*, which means self or naturally arising awareness, self or naturally clarity or lucidity. It cannot be identified to be anything in particular, yet it remains a distinct experience when mindfulness is present. When mindfulness has been lost, the experience of this quality diminishes.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (5) ORIGIN, ABODE, DESTINATION

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, look with mind at mind itself. Consider the following:

- Where is the origin or source of mind itself? Look with mind directly at the source of your mind as it is in a calm state.
- Where is the abode or dwelling place of mind itself as it is experienced in a calm moment?
- Where does the mind itself go? How does it cease?

Go through these one by one at a leisurely pace. This is an extremely profound practice.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Understand clearly that mind itself is completely free from birth, existence, and death. Reflect on the significance of this revelation. Savor 'the flavor' and feelings associated with this.

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## EXPLORING MIND SERIES

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### (6) SELF-AWARE PRIMORDIAL WISDOM

**Body:** Relax into your base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment. Relax with alertness and a presence of awareness.

Consider whether your awareness has a self-knowing quality. Savor this quality. Notice if it ever goes away. When you think you have lost it, look for it again.

- Does this self-aware knowingness ever go away or arise? What makes your experience of it disappear? What makes it return? Is it always there when you consider it?
- Listen to the following chant several times said or sung in a leisurely fashion:

“Lo! This is the self-aware primordial wisdom. It is beyond all avenues of speech and all thoughts of mind. I, Tilopa have nothing further to reveal. Know all to be the display of awareness. Without imagining, without deliberating, without analyzing, without meditating, without investigating, just let the mind be in its natural state.”

#### Questions/Comments

1. Consider how a candle’s flame will illuminate not only the room but also itself.
2. This may provide the first sense of *rang-rig ye-she*, the primordial (ye) wisdom (she) which knows itself, or the self-aware primordial wisdom. This is a wisdom which exists outside the play of time and space, and transcends the wisdoms (prajnas) which we are cultivating through listening, analyzing, and meditating. It is not something newly created. It is the one constant in our being. It is immutable.



3 - EXPLORING  
THOUGHTS AND  
APPEARANCES SERIES



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## EXPLORING THOUGHTS AND APPEARANCES SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Exploring Thoughts and Appearances Series** provides a cycle of instruction in exploring the appearances or manifestations of mind and cultivating an understanding or recognition of their nature. From one perspective, one can say nothing can ever be directly known which is not within mind. Our experienced universe consists of our mind and the thoughts and perceptions which arise to mind. Everything else is only known as a projection or inference of mind. Therefore, by exploring the appearances of mind in addition to exploring mind itself, one can accomplish a complete exploration of one's experienced universe.

To understand that nothing exists outside of mind, consider how real things can be in a dream. In a dream, we think, see, hear, feel, taste, and smell worlds. Similarly, in the waking state, things may not be established as they seem to be. Consider the following assertions one-by-one. When we see things, we don't really see the objects themselves, rather we see the light reflected from the objects. Actually, we don't see the light, rather we see the nerve impulse generated by the visual receptors in our eye. Actually, we don't see the impulses due to the visual receptors of the eye, but rather the nerve impulses which they evoke. We don't see the nerve impulse, but rather the activity evoked by it in the conscious center in the brain. Ultimately, we must acknowledge that what we experience occurs in the mind and it is not known until it is known to 'mind.' From an experiential perspective, nothing exists outside of the mind.

From an inferential perspective, in our waking reality we experience a sense of continuity to things. Certainly we cannot ignore cause and effect in this realm. Still, even the things which we infer to exist can be deduced to be completely empty of self. For example, from one tree one can carve four wheels, two axles, a frame and some seats and build a cart. Now the cart didn't exist before you fashioned it out of the tree, but once you have built it, you regard the cart to be a self-existing thing when in fact it is not something which exists as such. Practically speaking, however, it can be a very handy appearance! Similarly, a 'hand' does not exist as such, but is just a collection of 'skin, 'bones, and 'other 'tissue'. And yet 'bones' do not exist as such but are just a collection of 'cells', and so forth, ad infinitum.

Thrangu Rinpoche sometimes holds up two pieces of incense with one longer than the other and points out how we would agree that one is 'long' and the other is 'short.' After we all agree to this, he brings out a third piece of incense and then the 'long' one becomes one of 'middle length' and is no longer long. Similarly, he points out that we should consider how 'things' only exist in a relative way. For example, 'self' and 'not self' are just relative designations which have no substance in themselves.

By clarifying the similarities and differences between mind itself and the appearances of mind, one develops an overarching understanding of reality and one's universe of experience. Thoughts and perceptions are similar in nature to mind in that they are open and have a knowing quality or lucidity. However, they have unique characteristics which make them discernible as phenomena of distinct note.

Ultimately we have to integrate thoughts and appearances into our recognition of mind as it is. In this way we achieve a completely fluid realization which accommodates all phenomena and all modes of being.

What is the emergence of insight? Insight perceives the nature of all of reality. At this stage, it is an understanding that (1) mind and its appearances are empty of any mode of birth, existing, and cessation and (2) self and things are completely empty of essence.

Progress of individuals will vary. Some will attain this immediately, but in that case it is usually not so stable. Some skip through stages but again, generally find it is not so stable. Some go through it systematically and thereby achieve a very stable realization.

Beginners may experience an undefinable aspect to their thoughts and appearances. Eventually this is experienced as a resplendence which cannot be described, similar to the resplendence of mind noted in the previous series on exploring mind. Again, it is just like experiencing the taste of sugar, which cannot be described. Now one's understanding of mind encompasses all experiences, since all experiences arise in mind.

Students should be encouraged to continue with the unity of resting mind and insight practices by maintaining mindfulness of things as they are, completely without any essence. One works on maintaining this view without distraction until it is present in a completely effortless fashion amidst thoughts and appearances, effort and non-effort, talking and silence.

## (1) SHAPE OF THOUGHTS

**Body:** Sit comfortably in a stable and pleasant position, with the back reasonably straight. The posture should neither promote restlessness nor sleepiness. Place your hands on your knees with the palms up or down or on your lap with the palms up. The eyes should be fully open and looking straight ahead (in contrast to shyness where eyes gaze downwards slightly and may be half-closed) in a relaxed but alert manner. Establish a basic physical posture for meditation which suits you. This will be referred to as your basic insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. It should be similar to someone walking across a narrow plank bridge over a small creek.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- Does the thought have any kind of shape? For example, is it round like a circle? Is it square? Is it round like a sphere? Is it of the shape of the ground? Is it the shape of a rock? Is it the shape of a person?
- Does the thought have any form to it at all? Does it have a dynamic form or texture that is forever changing? Or does it have a fixed form? Or does it have no form at all?

### **Questions/Comments**

1. If you feel that thoughts have a particular shape, look at this very carefully. When you are certain that thoughts have no distinct shape, no fixed shape and no varying shape, in fact that the concept of shape or form does not at all apply to your thoughts themselves rest in that understanding and allow that understanding to continue in your experience.

## (2) COLORS OF THOUGHTS

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- Does the thought have any color to it? For example, is it blue, is it square, is it green or is it red? Is it black or is it white? Just sit and look for a while to see what colors are experienced, if any.
- Does a thought itself have any color to it at all? What about visualizations associated with thoughts? Do visual images associated with thoughts have color? Is the color intrinsic to the thought or independent of the thought?

### Questions/Comments

1. If you feel that thoughts have a particular color to it, investigate this very carefully at different times of day and when in different moods. When you are certain that thoughts (for the moment, excluding visualizations) have no color, not even white or black, and that in fact the concept of color does not at all apply to your thoughts, rest in that understanding and allow that understanding to continue in your experience.
2. The question of looking for shape and color of thoughts may seem less absurd than looking for the shape and color of the mind itself. Carefully consider whether shape and color are fixed attributes of thoughts or whether thought exists independent of these attributes. Continue with this until you are relaxed and

comfortable with the absurdity and not confused by it. Practices (1) and (2) provide a bit of training in looking with mind at thoughts.

3. Consider a visualization of light. It has a distinct color. Consider it from similar perspective as to a 'non-visual thought.' How could you describe the experience of this color to a blind person? Is it indescribable like the experience of awareness and openness or like the taste of sugar?

### (3) LOCATION OF THOUGHTS

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- Does the thought have any supporting basis to it? Does the thought have anything which supports it from the outside or inside of itself? Does it stem from a material object? Does it stem from a previous thought? How so? Does it stem from the play of the brain? Can you discern this?
- Does the thought dwell anywhere? Does it have any specific location? If the thought rests anywhere, examine the space beyond the thought. If the thought seems to permeate all of space, investigate whether it is inside the form of the body itself, or outside of the form of the body. Is it both inside and outside of the body at the same time?
- How can something with no shape or form have a location? Is location defined only in relation to other thoughts and perceptions? Investigate that by entering the thought at any location with mind and by exploring the boundaries beyond the location of thought which you hold to be true. Rest in your understanding when it is decisive.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. If you feel that thought has a particular location to it, investigate this very carefully. Wherever you may feel that the thought is, explore it carefully. Go inside it's location with your mind. Find the boundaries.



Whenever you scope a location which has the sense of, “This is it” go into that location and open it up. Investigate thought inside and outside of that location.

#### (4) LUMINOSITY AND VOIDNESS OF THOUGHTS

The term 'luminosity' refers to the 'knowing' quality of mind. This has definitively been clarified by Tibetan teachers. It does not refer to the 'experience of light' referred to by some mystics. Rather it is the knowing or aware or clarity or lucidity of mind.

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- What is the mode of abiding of the thought? What is its existential mode? Does it play out like a short song? How is it compared to open space? If apparently empty, is it completely empty?
- How does thought relate to awareness? Is it imbued with a lucid knowing quality? Is it like the glow of awareness? How does its luminosity compare to the luminosity of the sun? Is it an inner luminosity? Is there any sense of inner or outer to it?
- Is it an open lucidity without form, without color, without location in time and space? Then how is the meaning of the thought determined? Is the meaning or message or projection of thought something which is dependent on other thoughts and appearances or is it interdependent? Is the message of a thought timeless or is it of a completely relative nature?

Look with mind at thoughts carefully, then take a rest, and then look again.

## **Questions/Comments**

1. Thoughts have message content, and almost textural qualities to them. They are not like dead space nor are they like physical light since they have an intelligent, knowing quality to them. Space is not a self-knowing awareness. Their relative play within space and time are their distinct characteristics relative to the experience of mind itself. Otherwise, there is no difference, or is there?
2. Thoughts are totally free of consisting of a core substance. They have no mode of abiding. They are mere appearances. Concepts of existence and non-existence do not apply. Their nature is undefinable and beyond imagination or intellectual comprehension.
3. Is it an 'inmost self-arising awareness' as declared by some of the fathers of the lineage? Does inner apply to it? A Tibetan term that is sometimes used for this experience is *rang-rig rang-tsal*, which means self or naturally arising awareness, self or naturally arising clarity or lucidity. It cannot be identified to be anything in particular, yet it remains a distinct experience when mindfulness is present. When mindfulness has been lost, the experience of this quality diminishes. Investigate how this quality continues with and without thoughts.

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## EXPLORING THOUGHTS AND APPEARANCES SERIES

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### (5) ORIGIN, ABODE, DESTINATION

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Breathe through your nose. Let the rate and depth of your breath be just as it is. Don't interfere with it.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- Where is the origin or source of the thought itself? Look with mind directly at the source of your thoughts.
- Where is the abode or dwelling place of thoughts itself as it is experienced in the moment of its appearance?
- Where does the thought itself go? How does it cease?

Go through these one by one at a leisurely pace.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Understand clearly that the nature of thoughts is completely free from birth, existence, and death whereas the appearance of thoughts go through these phases. Why does appearance of thought have these three times? This arises in interdependence upon other thoughts only.
2. Reflect on the significance of the revelation that the nature of thoughts is similar to the nature of mind.

## (6) SELF-AWARE PRIMORDIAL WISDOM

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment. Relax with alertness and a presence of awareness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, wait until the next vivid thought arises. You may facilitate this by giving rise to a very emotional thought such as one of severe anger or severe desire. Consider the following:

- Does this self-aware knowingness ever go away or arise? What makes your experience of it disappear? What makes it return? Is it always there when you consider it?
- Listen to the following chant several times said or sung in a leisurely fashion:

Lo! This is the self-aware primordial wisdom. It is beyond all avenues of speech and all thoughts of mind. I, Tilopa have nothing further to reveal. Know all to be the display of awareness. Without imagining, without deliberating, without analyzing, without meditating, without investigating, just let the mind be in its natural state.”

Meditate according to it, including both your active thinking moments and your calm thought-free moments into it.

### Questions/Comments

1. This may provide the first sense of *rang-rig ye-she*, the primordial (ye) wisdom (she) which knows itself, or the self-aware primordial wisdom. This is a wisdom which exists outside the play of time and space of thoughts. It is not something newly created. It is the

one constant in our being. It is immutable and untouched by thoughts.

## (7) INVESTIGATING APPEARANCES

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, attend to the appearances to your mind from one of your senses. Attend directly to your experience of one of the following: light, sound, feeling, taste, or smell. Consider the appearances as follows:

- Investigate shape and form.
- Investigate color.
- Investigate location.
- Investigate luminosity or emptiness.
- Investigate arising, dwelling, and cessation.
- Investigate with respect to self-aware primordial wisdom.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Consider the various types of sensory appearances one by one and reach a decisive understanding with respect to each one of them. In nature they are the same as mind itself and thoughts, although in character they are different. In no way is this nature changed by the rising and cessation of appearances.

## **(8) INVESTIGATING THE PERCEIVER OF APPEARANCES**

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Complete the previous meditation on 'Investigating Appearances.' This time, investigate the perceiver of the appearances instead of the appearances.

- Keep the perception of the appearances clear and vivid. They should be unobstructed and unfiltered by interpretation and free from attachment or aversion.
- Maintain the unity of appearance and emptiness, however that may seem to you.
- Then proceed with the instructions of the previous meditation.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Do not get caught up in the never ending exploration of appearances and thoughts. By determining the nature of awareness and the consciousness itself, one gains release from the thoughts and appearances themselves.
2. These practices should each be performed from both the perspective of looking at the thoughts and appearances themselves and looking at the perceiver of the thoughts and appearances. It is important to determine both the nature of the perceiver and the appearances themselves.
2. Determining the nature of thoughts and appearances in addition to mind itself facilitates integrating them into one's realization. One should not develop a sense that the dawning of the wisdom which knows itself depends on a calm and tranquil state.



## (9) INVESTIGATING MOVING AND CALM MIND

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment. Relax with alertness and a presence of awareness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, determine the nature of your calm, rested mind, mind as it is. Then allow a vivid thought to arise.

- Compare the appearance of this thought to mind itself. What is the same? What is different?
- Look at the source, dwelling place, and destination of mind-itself. Then compare it to the source, dwelling, and destination of thoughts. Is there a discernible difference?

### Questions/Comments

1. Does a thought arise like a mother giving birth to a child, as a distinct entity? Is it more like the way in which a sun or moon emits light or like a waves and water?
2. Does every thought have temporal aspects to it? It comes and goes and changes. In comparison, does the experience of a tranquil mind have temporal aspects to it? How about the nature of thoughts? How about the nature of the calm mind or mind itself?
3. Are both moving mind (with appearances of thoughts and perceptions) and mind itself an open lucidity? If this is the sense you reach, decisively, then one has achieved a little bit of genuine understanding. The awareness is continuous.

## (10) COMPARING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment. Relax with alertness and a presence of awareness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, select a vivid positive emotion. Then alternate it with a vivid negative emotion.

- Compare the perceivable differences of these thoughts and their essential nature. What is the same? What is different?
- Look at the source, dwelling point and destination of the different thoughts. Is there a discernible difference?
- Is the mind like water and waves? Is deluded mind separate from mind itself or is it inseparable from mind? How about realized mind?

### Questions/Comments

1. If thoughts are regarded to be somewhat like limbs on the body of mind then their complete inseparability with mind has not yet been realized. There is no spatial separation between thought and mind.

## (11) COMPARING POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE APPEARANCES

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** Begin your meditation with establishing a calm and clear state of mind. Take a moment to appreciate the discerning quality of your mind. Then refresh your alertness. Appreciate the openness, clarity and pleasant quality of the moment. Relax with alertness and a presence of awareness.

Once you are established in a fully relaxed yet vividly clear state of mind, select a vivid positive appearance (e.g. beautiful flower or fruit). Then alternate it with a vivid negative appearance (e.g. severely wilted flower or rotten and moldy fruit).

- Compare the perceivable differences of these appearances and their essential nature. What is the same? What is different?
- Look at the source, dwelling point and destination of the different thoughts. Is there a discernible difference?
- Is the appearance to mind also like water and its waves? Are appearances separate from mind itself or is it inseparable from mind? How about perceptions to mind?
- Examine all different kinds of coarse and subtle appearances.

### Questions/Comments

1. Such a thorough examination should eliminate all sense of duality between thoughts and mind and appearances and mind. The practitioner should experience the indivisible unity of appearances and emptiness.

## (12) CERTAINTY REGARDING MOVING AND CALM MIND

**Body:** Relax into your base insight posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** In a calm and clear expanse of mind, settle the mind free from the duality of emptiness and awareness. Allow this overarching unity to embrace all of your thoughts and perceptions.

Observe the mind when it is calm and when it is moving.

- Is there a calm aspect to mind even when it moves? Is there movement to mind when it is generally calm?
- Relax your sense of these being distinct separate phenomena.

Observe all to be the manifestation of mind and thus completely open and lucid in nature.

- Do all thoughts and appearances of mind have 'one-flavor' in terms of their openness?
- Regardless of whatever state arises, realize it as indivisible from the unity of awareness and openness, which is spontaneously lucid and self-liberated. Savor the self-liberation of everything which arises (like a snake uncoiling itself).

Review the complete openness of mind with respect to origin, dwelling, and cessation. Review the complete openness of thoughts with respect to these three modes.

- Since mind does not exist as such, it can not be harmed or destroyed. It is untouched by good and bad. It is not subject to improvement or degeneration. Then why do you still have so many worries and fears? Why do you parade around so many hopes?

## **Questions/Comments**

1. Calm and moving states have been cultivated separately to make practice meaningful. Now we need to relax the distinction between these states.
2. By doing this practice thoroughly, one discovers with certainty the nature of mind and how it extends to everything.
3. At this point post-meditation is sustained not by applying these analyses in daily life (which would just be a continuation of meditation) nor by just remembering the meditative experience. At this stage, the flavor of this realization permeates the continuum of one's being and it continues in daily activity just like the flavor of a spice permeates to all of a meal into which it is mixed. No additional contrivances are necessary.



# 4 - SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES





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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Spontaneous Coemergence Series** provides instruction in practices which point out the nature of mind itself and its appearances. Practices are provided to maintain the engendered view both in meditation and in post-meditation.

The fundamental nature of mind itself is described by the terms *essence*, *nature* and *characteristics*. These three are completely given together.

The essence of mind is its *openness* or emptiness. This emptiness is free from arising, dwelling, and cessation and corresponds to the intrinsic openness of everything. Essence is also described in terms of primal purity. This is related to the element of space.

The nature of mind is its *luminosity* or knowingness or awareness or lucidity. This clarity is immutable and remains undefiled by discriminating thoughts and the kleshas. It is fundamentally inseparable from space. The nature of mind is also described in terms of spontaneous presence which is self-perfected. It is related to the element fire.

The characteristics of mind is its unimpeded or *unceasing display* of appearances. Due to incidental defilements, the luminosity of mind has come to dominate the emptiness aspect and all of samsara has unfolded and continues to perpetuate itself. Upon realization, the activity of mind manifests for the benefit of all living beings. The characteristic of mind is also described in terms of compassion. It is related to the element wind.

*Coemergence* means to arise simultaneously or be present simultaneously. For example, fire and its heat, sugar and its sweetness coemerge.

The spontaneous *coemergence of mind itself* refers to its indivisible luminosity and emptiness, the basic non-dual clarity of mind. *Coemergence of thoughts and appearances* refers to the innate power (Tib. tsal) of mind within the luminous emptiness of mind. Coemergence of mind and its thoughts and appearances is like the sun and its rays or sandalwood and its fragrance. Mind, thoughts and appearances have been coarising since the beginning of time and are entirely indivisible.

Realizing this is called *harmonizing with coemergence* or joining with coemergence.

Coemergence as *ground* refers to the coemergence of mind itself and that it is the basis for all of samsara and nirvana. Coemergence as *path* consists of gaining insight into the coemergence of the ground by listening, analyzing, and meditating. Through the instructions of Mahamudra and guided investigations into experience one comes to realize the coemergence of samsara and nirvana. Coemergence as *result* consists of the full realization of the coemergence of the ground, path, and fruit.

There are many spiritual teachers who guide students to states of meditative absorption. It is extremely rare to find one who introduces them to spontaneous coemergence and their *ordinary mind*. The ordinary mind is a special term of the Kagyu lineage which is used to make clear that nothing new is created. We are just recognizing what has been there all along.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (1) COEMERGENT MIND

**Body:** Relax into a base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** In a calm and clear expanse of mind, settle the mind in the unity of its emptiness and awareness. Rest mind in its natural state. Clear out all dullness and relax all restlessness of mind. Drop all expectations and fears.

Now looking with mind at mind, note how all thoughts are completely pacified. Maintaining this, look with mind at mind. In doing so, one sees nothing. This is the coemergence of mind.

- This seeing of nothing is coemergence of mind. It cannot be described, yet this experience of how it is is vivid and imbued with an awareness of certainty.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Resting (shamatha) is inherent in the self-awareness of mind. Awareness or insight (vipashyana) is inherent in the peaceful ground of mind. Thus even shamatha and vipashyana or peace and awareness can be said to be inseparable and coemergent.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (2) COEMERGENT THOUGHTS

**Body:** Relax into a base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** In a calm and clear expanse of mind, relax in the unity of its luminous openness of mind. Relax mind in its natural state. Clear out all dullness and relax all restlessness of mind. Drop all expectations and fears.

Now looking with mind at mind, note how all thoughts are completely pacified. Maintaining this, look with mind at mind.

Now allow a vivid emotional thought to arise, either positive or negative. Look directly at the thought's appearance itself. Looking at the thought itself, one sees nothing. This is the experience of the coemergence of thought.

- One sees the unity of the vividness of the thought with its emptiness. It cannot be described, yet this experience of how it is is vivid and imbued with an awareness of certainty.
- Just as waves are inseparable from water, similarly thoughts are inseparable from their emptiness. They arise from causes and conditions through the unimpeded play of the luminosity of mind.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Again shamatha and vipashyana or peace and awareness can be said to be inseparable in the coemergence of thought.
2. Thoughts (namtok) are dharmakaya (Tib. chöku), or more appropriate the essence (ngowo) of thoughts as opposed to fabrications or projections are dharmakaya. Even the projections are empty and dharmakaya when included into this. Awareness of certainty regarding the coemergence of thought must be present with the thought for this to be true.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (3) COEMERGENT APPEARANCES

**Body:** Relax into a base posture.

**Breath:** Let the breath be as it is.

**Mind:** In a calm and clear expanse of mind, settle into the unity of its luminous openness of mind. Relax mind in its natural state. Clear out all dullness and relax all restlessness of mind. Drop all expectations and fears.

Now looking with mind at mind, note how all thoughts are completely pacified. Maintaining this, look with mind at mind.

Now look directly at an appearance to the senses such as a visual appearance (such as a vase, stone, mountain or house). Looking at the appearance itself, it is spontaneous presence free from solidity. This is the experience of the coemergence of appearances.

- One sees the unity of the vividness of the appearance's perceptive form or texture with its emptiness. It cannot be described, yet this experience is vivid and imbued with an awareness of certainty.
- Just as waves are inseparable from water, similarly appearances are inseparable from their emptiness. They arise from causes and conditions through the unimpeded play of the luminosity of mind.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. One may also experience this directly in a dream. One becomes awake within the dream realm and realizes that all one is experiencing is just the fabric of the projections and display of one's mind. This is a moment of extreme freedom within the dream condition.
3. *Heart Sutra* : 'Form is emptiness and emptiness is form, form is no other than emptiness.' Appearances themselves are dharmakaya (chōku).

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (4) ORDINARY MIND

**Body and Breath:** No instructions.

**Mind:** Leave your awareness and feelings just as they are.

Now look at the openness and clarity of mind within whatever condition or activity you find yourself. See whether it is affected by your thoughts, positive or negative.

- Do not modulate or change your awareness or condition in any respect. Do not seek luminosity, just recognize it as it is there. Ordinary mind is the unmodulated simplicity of being, free from acceptance and rejection. The natural, unmodulated ordinary mind which knows itself is the dawning of Mahamudra.
- Ordinary mind is simply your ordinary awareness which thinks of this and that. When recognized as it is, unelaborated, this is called the coemergent self-knowing. When unrecognized, this is called coemergent ignorance. Maintain this by not being distracted from the natural state by fabricating and indulging in new false realities.

#### Questions/Comments

1. *Ordinary mind* (prakrita or thamal shepa) refers to crude or natural mind. Here it refers to the natural mind of luminosity and self-aware primordial wisdom, unmuddled by thoughts of existence and nonexistence, bliss and pain, hatred and lust, dullness or agitation. Non-dual awareness and naked ordinary mind are synonyms.
2. Knowing the intrinsic nature of the ordinary mind is described as 'discovering the essence of mind.' The way one knows does not depend on the emergence of a non-discriminating state through meditation. Dakpo Tashi Namgyal says, 'It happens the moment a meditator discovers it through the discriminating mind itself – which is exactly like an unreligious person – without losing sight of its segment or aspect.'

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (5) MEDITATING ON THE ORDINARY MIND

**Body and Breath:** No instructions.

**Mind:** Recognizing the ordinary nature of mind, remain aware of it without a moment of distraction. Whatever mode of being or thought arises, do not change it.

Do not attempt to alter anything.

Do not elaborate anything.

- Notice if you are losing this meditation by fabricating something new.
- How do you keep from elaborating appearances and thoughts? When a thought or appearance arises, just recognize it. Do not add or take away from it.
- Look at 'Free-From\_Elaboration.' One sees the error in the designation (compared to 'Free-From-Elaboration.'). Detection of this can't and shouldn't be stopped. However, no need to elaborate on it! Continue in looking at the term written out 'Free-From\_Elaboration' to practice non-elaboration.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This is called living in accord with or honoring the ordinary mind.
2. Do not fall into laziness, passivity, or distraction.
3. 'Specially gifted' practitioners can simply bring mindfulness to all emerging thoughts. More typically, one will have to go through the stages of meditation to eliminate doubts and assumptions about the mind and its activities. Otherwise it is difficult to give rise to an awareness of certainty of comergent mind.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (6) MINDFULNESS, VIGILANCE, AND CARING

**Body and Breath:** No instructions.

**Mind:** Maintain mindfulness of the ordinary mind.

For one third of the session at a time, meditate with emphasis according to the noted topic (i.e. emphasizing maintenance of mindfulness, then detecting distractions, then practicing caring).

- **Mindfulness** (smriti or drenpa) means remembering or not forgetting. 'The best mindfulness is the best meditation.' It is the key to establishing and maintaining the practice. Gampopa said, 'Meditate on the view with undistracted mindfulness. Strive to keep it unperturbed. Seek nothing else but the continuity of this.' If one loses mindfulness, one is bound to lose the power of realization.
- **Vigilant Awareness** refers to detection of the loss of mindfulness. The causes of this movement to loss of mindfulness are to be abandoned.
- **Caring** or self-restraint refers to how you behave or think. Plant positive seeds and eliminate negative ones.
- All three stem from well-spring of mindfulness.

#### Questions/Comments

1. Under all different circumstance, in meditation and post-meditation, maintain mindfulness. Mindfulness of what? Mindfulness of ordinary mind. How does one do this when extremely busy? By maintaining mindfulness on what you are doing, without adding anything extra. Is this not just like a non-practitioner at the time? Yes, if that non-practitioner is mindful. However, something continues into this practice, like a spice flavors an entire bowl of cereal, something very subtle continues to operate. This little something makes all the difference.
2. Consider continuity of mindfulness in sleep. How is it? Is there a sense of continuity of ordinary mind through sleep?



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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (7) LOOSENING MIND

**Body and Breath:** Relax into a base posture.

**Mind:** Completely and utterly relax with a presence of awareness in whatever state your mind is in.

Completely and utterly relax with a presence of awareness in whatever appearances and thoughts you are experiencing.

Drop all clinging or attachment.

Drop all fear, tension, and anxiety.

- This awareness of unborn (open) intrinsic lucidity is the inseparable union of shamatha and vipashyana.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This is the first of Gampopa's four points on maintaining Mahamudra meditation.
2. This is related to several Dzogchen practices including *long-de* (space) practices and the *men-ngag-de's* four *chog-zhag* (1. mountain – body, 2. ocean – eyes or vision, 3. rigpa – awareness, and 4. vision or appearances (nang-wa), where all are left without changing or modifying and visions are ornaments of the primordial state, Kunto Zangpo, where 'all is fine'). I recommend using these instructions to make this clear. For example, a mountain in this case does not refer to being large or stable. Rather it refers to it being uniquely as it is, whether small or large.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### **(8) RESTING IN PRIMAL FRESHNESS**

**Body and Breath:** Relax into a base posture.

**Mind:** Simply rest in the intrinsic coemergence of mind.

Consider awareness and how fresh it is.

Consider how this is now the case, has always been the case, and will always be the case.

Without distraction, keep free from changing or altering anything.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This is the second of Gampopa's four points on maintaining Mahamudra meditation.
2. Traditional analogies for this practice include:
  - Like intrinsic gold, our (primordial (ye) freshness (Tib. somate)) remains pure regardless of time and processing. This analogy addresses the experience of continuity of the practice.
  - Like a dove entering its nest. This analogy addresses the experience of relaxation, intimacy, and familiarity. Like coming home.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (9) DELIGHTFUL MIND

**Body and Breath:** Relax into your base posture.

**Mind:** Completely and utterly relax with a presence of awareness in whatever state your mind is in.

Let it be. Just simply 'let it be.'

Continue in this delightful state.

#### Questions/Comments

1. This is the third of Gampopa's four points on maintaining Mahamudra meditation.
2. The traditional analogy for this practice comes from Saraha:
  - Like a camel, if shackled, it will try to escape; if let go, it remains where it is.
2. Suzuki Roshi used to say, 'Control your cows by giving them a big spacious meadow.'

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (10) MIND OF RELAXATION

**Body and Breath:** Relax into a base posture.

**Mind:** Completely and utterly relax with a presence of awareness in whatever state your mind is in.

Leave it as it is. Let it be.

Realize your boundless mind without fabricating, without manipulating, without worrying, without being chained to affirmation and rejection, reality or unreality, good or evil, attachment and clinging.

Let your unbound mind relax.

Finally, allow the aspects of Loosening Mind, Resting in Primal Freshness, Delightful Mind, and Mind of Relaxation to all be cultivated together.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This is the fourth of Gampopa's four points on maintaining Mahamudra meditation.
2. The traditional analogy for this practice is:
  - Like a hay which was bound and then cut, it lies loosely on the ground. Similarly, the unbound mind is relaxed.

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## SPONTANEOUS COEMERGENCE SERIES

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### (11) NON-MEDITATION AND NON-DISTRACTION

**Body and Breath:** Relax into a base posture.

**Mind:** Non-meditation: Since the essence of mind is beyond meditation and non-meditation, settle mind in its naturalness without differentiating between these modes of being. Let go of intellectual effort.

Non-Distraction: Since there is nothing to meditate on with the intellect anyway, maintain undistracted mindfulness of the intrinsic coemergence of mind. Let go of expectations.

Union: Maintain an even blend of non-meditation and non-distracted.

The summary of Dakpo Tashi Namgyal (p. 279) – “The nature of mind cannot be observed by letting ‘the mind watch the mind’ penetratingly. When experiencing the non-substance of mind, one should let this awareness rest loosely in its natural mode. In order to not let it fade into a neutral state, lucid mindfulness and unimaginary simplicity, devoid of direct focus, should be maintained, without clinging either to affirmation or abandonment. This summarizes well the vital points of Mahamudra meditation.’

#### Questions/Comments

1. These instructions represent Dakpo Tashi Namgyal’s summary points on maintaining Mahamudra meditation.
2. Non-meditation corresponds to Tilopa’s six points (not thinking of the future, etc.) and relates to shamatha aspect. Non-distracted corresponds to insight. The union of non-meditation and non-distracted represents the unity of shamatha and vipashyana.
3. Beginners should ensure that non-meditation does not result in dullness and non-distracted does not result in wildness of mind. They should know and use methods to clear these away. Like Brahmin’s thread or a guitarist’s string, ‘not too loosely, not too tightly, just right.’ Regarding insight, since they have not yet realized the meaning of the coemergence of mind, they should continue to meditate on its coemergence and maintain an

awareness of certainty with respect to it based on their inner experience. Removing every obstacle, they are sure to 'wax like the moon', grow 'like a lion's cub' or 'like a child.'

#### 4. Post-meditation

- Maintain mindfulness of mind's coemergence and the coemergence of thoughts and appearances. Whatever the practitioner does or thinks or perceives, maintain mindfulness of it clearly, without affirmation or rejection, without labeling it as real or unreal. Maintain a definite sense of their indeterminable nature. Do this through extended effort, to actualize an expansive kind of mindfulness like 'an infant looking at a shrine.' Beginners should practice by just maintaining the stream of mindfulness. For example, they can apply mindfulness to the four-fold conduct.
- How does one accomplish this mindfulness? Like a 'cowherd watching his cattle.' Maintain an unwavering, non-grasping awareness of every unfolding thought and appearance as a vibrant movement of luminous emptiness.

# 5 - DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES





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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Dawning of Certainty Series** provides instruction in establishing and maintaining a definitive awareness of certainty (Tib. lada) regarding the nature of mind itself and its appearances. This certainty does not rely on words. Nor does it rely on manipulating the mind or maintaining any particular state of mind. At this stage, a practitioner very clearly sees the limitations of words and practices with respect to establishing the view. By continually bringing forth an understanding that is completely free from hesitation and doubt, the view encompasses all of life's conditions including joy, illness, suffering, sleep, dreams, and death. Practices are provided to accomplish this.

One may feel that this realization is a wonderful or miraculous thing. At this stage the simplicity of it is starkly apparent.

For the **Dawning of Certainty Series** there is a certain time in a student's development when they should be taken up. It is noted that the timing of introduction is best if undertaken when the 'husk' of the experiences of emptiness, bliss, and non-thought has fallen-off or opened up. It is also said that a clear recognition of the unity of emptiness and awareness, appearance and emptiness, or clarity and emptiness should be maintained for at least one entire day and preferably through a cycle of one day and night prior to undertaking this series.

If practitioners undertake these practices too soon, then in all likelihood their understanding will remain purely intellectual. They will be able to say all the right things, but will not achieve a true awareness of certainty. However, if a practitioner undertakes these practices too late, perhaps due to not encountering a properly trained teacher, then they may be fettered to the temporary experiences of bliss, clarity and non-thought and not realize liberation with respect to them. However, even if one should stray in the ways indicated above, these are not fundamental problems which cannot be remedied.

These methods are extremely effective for the 'gifted practitioners' and can help them to achieve liberation at once. They will help more average meditators advance rapidly from the lower levels to the higher levels of the four yogas of Mahamudra.

*Carrying conditions on the path* such as kleshas, illness, suffering and death can only be meaningful once the view has been established and the meaning of coemergence has been realized by the practitioner.

When a practitioner has continuity of awareness throughout day and night, throughout all awake, dream and sleep states, and does not regard a moment of distraction to fundamentally deviate, then the understanding has taken root in an appropriate manner. This does not mean that there is a continuous ego consciousness but rather continuity, like water pouring into water, condition after condition. It is an indescribable but distinct actualization of the nature of mind in the continuum of one's being.

The significance of realizing Mahamudra is that one sees clearly the suffering and anguish of all other beings. One feels as a crippled mother watching her child carried away by the river. This gives rise to an unbearable compassion. At the same time one sees clearly that by one's practice complete freedom from the kleshas and the three times is not only possible but that it is possible in a completely lasting way. This arises as an indescribable joy or bliss. Thrangu Rinpoche describes this as kind of like a bitter-sweet flavor.

Please do all you can to preserve this invaluable lineage of instruction, practice, and realization.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### (1) DETERMINING THE NATURE OF THOUGHTS

**Please see the instructions regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body & Breath:** The base insight posture (first few times) followed by multiple variations in physical posture should be applied.

**Mind:** A practitioner should reflect on how very precious these teachings are and strengthen his or her devotion to and confidence in the teachers of the lineage. In any case, the practitioner should strengthen devotion to and confidence in the primordial Buddha such as Dorje Chang or Samantabhadra, or the lineage lamas, such as Milarepa or Guru Rinpoche. Guru yoga is very helpful at this stage, and it is said one will progress in dependence upon one's devotion to and confidence in the teacher and the practice of Mahamudra.

From within the unity of non-meditation and non-distraction, in a relaxed state free from fixation, allow or cause a subtle (i.e. not accompanied by emotional qualities) thought to arise in the presence of awareness. Discern the intrinsic nature of this thought.

Now allow a coarser thought to arise, with either a very vivid positive or negative quality. Discern the intrinsic nature of this coarser thought and compare it to the subtler thought.

Now compare the nature of these thoughts to the intrinsic nature of the serene or calm state.

Now consider each of the eight worldly dharmas one by one with regards to their intrinsic nature. Consider pleasure and pain, praise and blame, gain and loss, honorable fame and ill repute.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. The meditator will become aware of the self-arising or spontaneous clarity of every thought, without having a need to suppress or control.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(2) DETERMINING THE NATURE OF THOUGHTS AND APPEARANCES**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body & Breath:** Multiple variations in physical posture should be applied.

**Mind:** Continue with the previous practice, discerning the intrinsic reality of thoughts when they arise and your calm mind, when it is calm.

Now extend the practice to all appearances. Continue by opening up the practice to all sensory inputs and thoughts. Discern the intrinsic nature of all visual perceptions and all thoughts. Try high and low frequency sounds. Try pleasant and not so pleasant feelings, tastes and smells. Train in a continuous and all-inclusive, expansive way. Be creative. Vary even the direction of the eyes and whether or not they are open.

Continue with this practice for at least five days.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. The meditator will become aware of the self-arising or spontaneous clarity of every thought and appearance, without a need for suppression or control, thereby harmonizing everything. One may feel as if there is completely harmony in the palace of one's own mind.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(3) DETERMINING THE NATURE OF CONSCIOUSNESS**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body & Breath:** Multiple variations in physical posture should be applied.

**Mind:** Maintain undistracted awareness in a relaxed manner, as in Practice (1) of this series. Tune mind to its own nature.

Again, open up the practice of discernment to all sensory inputs and thoughts. Discern the intrinsic nature of all visual perceptions and all thoughts.

Now without distraction, expectation, or attachment, shift attention to the nature of consciousness itself and the intrinsic nature of the perceiver. Discern its intrinsic nature directly.

If there is any sense of duality between the perceived appearances or thoughts and the consciousness or between the meditator and meditation, repeat the process of determination from Practices (1) and (2) of this series for a few days and then return to this practice.

Continue with this practice until an awareness of certainty dawns.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. If the practitioner is attached to a distinction between consciousness and awareness, such as awareness being a purer form of consciousness or consciousness being awareness of awareness, include both awareness and consciousness, one by one into the investigation. Both are a complete emptiness.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### (4) AWARENESS AND THE THREE TIMES

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body & Breath:** Multiple variations in physical posture should be applied.

**Mind:** Maintain undistracted awareness in a relaxed manner, as in Practice (1) of this series. Tune mind to its own nature. Again, open up the practice of discernment to all sensory inputs and thoughts. Discern the intrinsic nature of all visual perceptions and all thoughts. Discern the nature of consciousness or awareness itself. In other words, start by continuing with the previous meditation.

Now without distraction, and without adding any expectation or attachment, shift attention to thoughts of the three times to see if any discernible difference exists between them.

Look for the destination of a past thought.

Look for the nature of the present thought.

Look for the source of a future, arising thought.

Now look at the nature of a present thought about the past.

Look at the intrinsic nature of a present thought about the future.

Is there any objective reality associated with these?

Similarly, leisurely consider appearances of the three times.

Continue with this practice until an awareness of certainty dawns regarding the uninterrupted flow or dynamism of thoughts and appearances themselves, and their primordial purity and openness.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### (5) SELF AND OTHERS

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body & Breath:** Multiple variations in physical posture should be applied.

**Mind:** Maintain undistracted awareness in a relaxed manner, as in Practice (1) of this series. Tune mind into its own nature. Again, open up the practice of discernment to all sensory inputs and thoughts. Discern the intrinsic nature of all visual perceptions and all thoughts. Discern the nature of consciousness or awareness itself. Discern the nature of thoughts and appearances of the three times. In other words, start by continuing with the previous meditation.

Now without distraction, and without adding any expectation or attachment, shift attention to the coarse or subtle sense of duality (start with a coarse one, if that is how you feel).

Discern the intrinsic nature of that which establishes and sustains or clings to 'I' or 'me' or 'self.'

Discern the intrinsic nature of that which establishes and sustains or clings to others.

Continue with this practice as long as you perceive a distinction between external and internal realities, as if polar or opposite in nature. As long as this persists, not all doubts have been cleared away. They are like the residual smell of a container which just had root beer or wine in it.

Continue until you achieve an inmost certainty that all dualities (self or other) or trinities (essence, nature, characteristics) are just a manifestation of mind, which itself is just a continuous self-releasing self-awareness.

Continue with this practice for many days on whatever thoughts or appearances arise, letting them be in a completely relaxed mode, without modifying or elaborating them, without affirming or rejecting, without abandoning or clinging to them.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(6) OVERARCHING AWARENESS OF CERTAINTY**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

**Body:** Try multiple variations in posture.

**Mind:** Maintain undistracted awareness in a relaxed manner, as in Practice (1) of this series. Tune mind into its own nature. Open up the practice of discernment to all sensory inputs and thoughts. Discern the intrinsic nature of all visual perceptions and all thoughts. Discern the nature of consciousness or awareness itself. In other words, start by continuing with the previous meditation.

Now relax any residual clinging to an object of meditation. Relax your striving. Relax your mindfulness. Relax mindfulness of discerning intrinsic reality. Give up all tossing and turning of things in mind. Let go of mindfulness, remembering, and meditating.

Just let your mind be in its ordinary, normal state, relaxed and free from elaboration or free from efforts at modification. Continue without abandoning or adopting whatever arises.

Do not become concerned when you become distracted. Do not even examine what happens. Once you regain mindfulness, just keep your ordinary, unadulterated awareness. Do not think about meditation, experience, practice or realization.

In post meditation, be straight up in your activities with minimal planning. Even stop reciting texts for a short period. Continue with 'No worry. No approval. No anxiety. No tension.'

Continue with this practice keeping your mind in a pleasant state for several days. Within a few days, an overarching awareness of certainty should manifest.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. This will develop an inner release from attachment to virtuous activities as well as negative activities.



2. A key characteristic at this stage for an advanced meditator: Dakpo Tashi Namgyal says (P. 324), 'Regardless of whether he is mindful or distracted, attentive or inattentive, experiencing or not experiencing, realizing or not realizing, when he cognizes any appearance or existence, he must be able to bring about an awareness of certainty that every thought emerges or dissolves by itself and is an open, unsupported single stream, that everything is a meditational state, and that meditation pervades and continues throughout [day and night].'

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(7) CONTINUING IN AWARENESS OF CERTAINTY DAY AND NIGHT**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

The meditator should continue with the awareness of certainty regarding the intrinsic nature of everything throughout the day and night.

Be careful not to over exert at this stage even in sustaining mindfulness, since attachment to temporary experiences may arise.

‘Letting mindfulness go while refreshing it is by itself a non-clinging mindfulness.’ This is the key point at this stage. Remaining in a non-discriminatory state is the perfect mindfulness of the nature of mind.

From time to time, observe carefully how you feel with respect to losses of mindfulness. Is there any difference? Is there still a sense of continuity in intrinsic nature? Consider this from time to time, but then return to letting mindfulness go while relaxing it.

Now consider how it is with respect to the evening. How is this loss of mindfulness with respect to sleep states?

If the dawning of certainty arises (as may be confirmed by clear understanding as indicated under Note 1 below), then continue with this natural certainty for five consecutive days, and then rest completely for one day. Repeat this process of practice, maintaining certainty with regard to mind and its manifestations’ intrinsic nature for several (7-10) days and then taking a day of complete rest. Continue with repetitions of this.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. A key point at this stage for an advanced meditator: (P. 329) Dakpo Tashi Namgyal, ‘If the meditator feels distressed by the intermittent distraction of mindfulness, this means that the meditator has drawn a premature conclusion from his determination of the mind’s intrinsic nature and also has not as yet realized the uninterrupted stream of its

abiding reality.' This is a very important distinction at this stage and should be considered very carefully by the practitioner.

2. Furthermore (P. 330), 'The purpose of determining the mind is to settle it harmoniously in its abiding nature or its "existential ground" by dissolving clinging to dualities such as meditation and meditator, experience and experiencer, realization and seeker. Similarly any clinging to emptiness should be eliminated.'
3. Start with realizing this continuity through one day. Then work on carrying it through the night time also. Within a certain number of days, realization of the nature free from dualities will be realized. The way in which this will dawn will vary from individual to individual and there is no telling quite how it will vary. It depends on the person.

If one fails to achieve this realization, return to the previous meditations with respect to determining the nature in meditation and post-meditation. Post-meditation practice is extremely important at this stage, since for most practitioners the bulk of their day is spent in it.

This is the heart of the profound path of the sutras, tantras, and quintessential instructions and *lata*.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(8) CARRYING KLESHAS ON THE PATH**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.** The best time in which to practice this is when the practitioner has gained insight into the coemergence of mind and coemergence of thoughts and appearances in meditation and in post-meditation. Without this, carrying kleshas, illness, suffering, and death on the path will not succeed and one should resort to transformation (e.g. “Let my suffering substitute for and replace the suffering of all sentient beings”) or other appropriate means.

Now practice the following step by step:

1. Identify every dualistic thought, your likes and dislikes.
2. Give up efforts to increase or sustain or decrease or discontinue them, abandon clinging to self. Do not modify the thoughts but let their openness and clarity continue without altering it.
3. Throw away the chasm of hope and fear, and your agitation and anxiety. Completely realize the trackless nature of mind, without evaluation or clinging. Let everything be.

Practice these three steps, in turn with vivid and intense anger, lust, jealousy, arrogance, and dullness or bewilderment.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. If emotions are still disturbing to the practitioner, this is because of the interdependence of the afflictive emotions (kleshas) and inner energies. With continued effort, one will be able to conduct these practices and not lose the harmony between body and the inner energies (pranas or lung). Finally, one will master everything which arises completely and integrate it into one’s realization.
2. Through self-liberation by carrying the kleshas on the path and realizing their intrinsic nature ‘confusion dawns as wisdom.’ Hatred dawns as the mirror-like wisdom or Buddha Akshobhya. Lust or grasping desire dawns as the wisdom of discernment or

Buddha Amitabha. Jealousy dawns as the all-accomplishing wisdom or Amoghasiddhi. Arrogance dawns as the wisdom of equality or the Buddha Ratnasambhava. Ignorance dawns as the all-pervading wisdom (dharma dhatu) or the Buddha Vairochana.

3. Suffering can be carried on the path in a similar manner. From a Hinayana perspective one uses renunciation. From a Mahayana perspective one uses transformation through loving-kindness (substituting your suffering for others), first you transform it into something else and then you digest it. From Vajrayana perspective you transform them directly into wisdom. From a Mahamudra or Dzogchen perspective, no transformation is required since they are primordially self-liberated. Consider how suffering is beneficial and makes you turn to the dharma path and feel compassion for others. Consider how it gives you the opportunity to strengthen your practice. 'The greater the kleshas, the greater the realization.' However, 'An incense fire can only directly burn a strand of hair, while a firestorm can engulf almost anything.' Fan the embers of practice and your realization. Make a two-part practice out of this with (1) Mahayana/Vajrayana practice and (2) Mahamudra practice, as defined above.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(9) CARRYING ILLNESS ON THE PATH**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

Although this practice may be beneficial to your health, in no way should it be relied upon to accomplish healing.

Without hope or fear, without analyzing the cause or remedy, without considering impacts in one's life on oneself and others, just directly look at the intrinsic nature of the feelings associated with the illness in the body and mind. Look directly at the experience of the illness itself, which may include excruciating pain or unusual and dense states of being.

Now maintain the clarity of awareness without modification. Without elaborating it intellectually by rejecting it or without dwelling on aversion for it, just maintain awareness of it and its intrinsic nature.

From time to time, look at the experiencer of the pain or illness and the concern about the experiencer of the pain. Carefully consider this. Illness provides such a wonderful opportunity for growth.

Through this practice, one may arrive at a degree of freedom from the illness and a lessening of the suffering which arises due to it. One then will 'overpower it.'

One may then continue with the three steps outlined in the previous practice.

When you are healthy, you can train in this by pinching yourself and attending to the pain and carrying it onto the path. You can train by accommodating different states due to overwork or prolonged sitting or other factors and carrying them on to the path successfully. Gradually you will strengthen the ability to accomplish this and discover a real place of power within.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. For meditators not so developed in the view, consider Mahayana or Vajrayana approaches as discussed in the previous practice.

2. Meditators should consult the appropriate medical experts for remedies. By understanding causes, they may be better able to understand preventative approaches and remedies. Interestingly, Zen practitioners refer to the idea of physical affects due to practices as having to do with 'technology' and not at all with 'spirituality.' Tibetans do use many practices and healing from them has been reported from time-to-time, but that is not the area of focus here and occurrences are mainly attributed to the times of the Mahasiddhas. Although this practice may be beneficial to your health, in no way should it be relied upon to accomplish a healing. That is not the purpose of the meditation. But to be clear about this see Dakpo Tashi Nagyal. 'Since this human body as the invaluable support for seeking enlightenment cannot possibly be left to the fate of the live-or-die attitude of ignorant ones, meditators must rely upon conventional healing methods and relevant practices. They must also meditate on the ultimate awareness to eliminate any materialistic hope or fear.' (P. 347) Thus, interestingly, Dakpo Tashi Namgyal's view is fully in accord with Zen.
3. In recent years, in some sects there have been instances where senior practitioners believed that they could prevent infection of self and others (e.g. AIDS) through Vajrayana and other practices. This lineage does not subscribe to this view and believes that there has been ample evidence that such an approach is totally irresponsible.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(10) CARRYING SLEEP ON THE PATH**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

When lying down to sleep, rest your mind in its natural state, free from expectation and hope.

When you wake up, immediately discern the intrinsic reality of your awake mind. See how it compares to the intrinsic reality of your mind during sleep. In a similar but more penetrating manner to an earlier practice where distractions and sleep were compared to unwavering states, consider how the intrinsic nature of mind continues through the cycle of day and night.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. There are other practices for recognizing and working with dreams. This practice is aimed at realizing the intrinsic nature of mind continuously through the day and night. One still falls asleep at night. However, there may be a slightly lighter quality to it and an easier transition to an awake state.



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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(11) CARRYING DEATH ON THE PATH**

**Please see the instructions and previous practices in this series regarding the appropriate timing of these practices.**

There are many wonderful teachings and methods by the Tibetans on dying and the six bardos.

The most important point is to be able to maintain every emerging thought and appearance without embellishing it, distorting it, or modifying it through clinging. Upon death, the natural luminosity of mind will dawn vividly by itself. Through sustained practice of Mahamudra, in dying the practitioner sees the identity of this state with the meditative states and this is called the union of mother and daughter. It is like water mixed with water or space merged with space.

From time to time the practitioner can gently touch and ever so lightly push on the eyelids over the inner tops of the eyeballs (as indicated by the instructor, this causes the experience of auto-phosphorescence). The self-luminous appearances which do not depend on the sunlight or the moonlight should be attended to and the coemergence of it within the play of mind should be recognized. This is a special method to train for the dawning of self-appearances in the bardo.

Similarly, the practitioner can cover his ears and attend to the internally self-arising sounds and realize the unity of the appearance of sound and emptiness.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. Just relax with confidence in the full realization of your nature. This realization will dawn during or after the turmoil of the changes which are forced upon one as one dies.

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## DAWNING OF CERTAINTY SERIES

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### **(12) THE FOUR YOGAS OF MAHAMUDRA**

The four yogas are a profound summary of the path of Mahamudra. They include the yogas of (1) one-pointedness, (2) free-from-elaboration or simplicity, (3) one-taste, and (4) non-meditation. Through the practices of this series one advances rapidly through these stages.

Per Gampopa

A lucid, unceasing awareness of the moment is the one-pointed stage of yoga.

Understanding the essential state of the awareness as non-arising, transcending all conceptual modes, is the free-from-elaboration stage of yoga.

Understanding the diverse appearances as being one from the standpoint of their intrinsic nature is the one flavor yoga.

An unceasing realization of the union of appearance and their intrinsic emptiness is the great equipoise of the non-meditation yoga.

Per Garchen Rinpoche

When we achieve shamatha and establish calmly abiding well then at that time you can see your thoughts. At that time you can identify all your different thoughts because mind has become so calm and fine, enabling you to do that. And in that state, as you see your mind, that is called the one-pointed yoga stage.

After that, when that is well established, then as any thought arises, you just see it. Any conceptual thought that arises has no essence. There's no essence at all. So to see that nature that has no essence at all is called "uprooting the thought." There is nothing to follow. And that realization is called free-from-elaboration or the unelaborated state. That's like the ocean and the waves. The waves may arise constantly but just each moment that they arise, they also dissolve into the ocean. A wave doesn't go to any other place. So like that, thought arises within the mind and dissolves into that, without elaborating that.

'So it is when you can meditate well, then both suffering and happiness are experienced as having the nature of emptiness. They have one taste. Meditate on that. Not rejecting the suffering, not attaching to the happiness. Whatever comes, let it come. Just sustain the Mahamudra.

When that progresses or becomes enhanced, then it becomes effortless. Then there is no need to make any effort. Then that is called "no more meditation."

Meditate according to each stage as indicated above by Garchen Rinpoche for a short time.

## **Questions/Comments**

1. These are wonderful simple summaries based on Garchen Rinpoche's Mahamudra teachings (1997 in San Francisco).
2. Traditionally the path of Mahamudra is divided into four yogas or "natural abidings" (the meaning of yoga in Tibetan is more like natural way of abiding than 'to join'). These are sometimes broken down even further. The following notes paraphrase some of the teachings of Thrangu Rinpoche on the twelve stages of the four yogas:

### One-Pointedness

Recognizing and resting in the essence of mind.

First, characterized by knowing mind is clear and open, we let mind rest in this way. At this stage, it is not very stable.

Second, this arises more easily, with more stability, one has the feeling of mastery.

Third, the experience of emptiness and clear light is very strong and continuous at this point. No distinction between moving and resting mind. The way one feels: very great respect and appreciation for one's teacher and kinship with dharma companions and natural and genuine compassion

### Free-From-Elaboration

Free-From Elaboration means realizing the nature of mind, as it is, without embellishment and denial, without root or basis.

First, generally a stable experience of emptiness dawns, particularly during meditation. One realizes the emptiness of any event in the mind and its abiding or ceasing.

Second, one realizes the emptiness of all external objects. One becomes free from clinging since realize all appearances are empty. Also one is free from clinging to emptiness.

Third, all extreme views are cut through, in meditation and post-meditation. Things neither (a) exist nor (b) don't exist nor (c) neither exists nor don't exist nor (d) both exist and don't exist. Detailed discussion with teachers and companions is helpful here. Generosity and virtue are very helpful. Read or sing songs of masters to enhance one's understanding.

### One-Taste

At this stage, one knows how mind is directly. Knowing this, one knows how everything else is. Everything has the same flavor. Whereas in the One-Pointedness and Free-From-Elaboration stages emphasis is on

understanding how mind is, here emphasis is on understanding appearances and senses. They are of the same flavor.

First, one has slight and infrequent experiences that all phenomena have one nature and the inseparability of appearances and mind.

Second, the experience of sameness is enhanced. It is like water pouring into water.

Third, one understands quite directly that all appearances are empty. This is not a state of stupidity where nothing is taking place in a big mixture. Rather it manifests as five wisdoms. Discriminating awareness wisdom, accomplishing wisdom, equanimity wisdom, mirror-like wisdom and dharama-dhatu wisdom are very specific and vivid. It is an enhancement of wisdom and insight, rather than a state of stupidity. Because of considerable attention given to emptiness, here it is helpful to study karma, seed and result, intensively.

### Non-Meditation

This is arrived at through becoming intimately familiar with meditation. When one obtains direct understanding, there is nothing more to cultivate or meditate on. One no longer makes a distinction between meditative composure and post-meditation. Conceptual mind is exhausted.

First, one experiences no difference between meditation and post-meditation.

Second, one becomes more stable in this. Both emotional and intellectual obscurations are purified. Even more subtle dualistic intellectual obscurations are purified at this point.

Third, one realizes that the realization that arises in meditation is the same as the original nature of all things, which has always been there. So this is like mixing the original mother luminosity with the developed child luminosity and recognizing them as the same all along. Final realization of this feeling is becomes completely all-pervasive, pervading to all of time and space completely. This is the expanse of the wisdom of dharama-dhatu.

3. Chapter Nine of Book II of *Moonbeams of Mahamudra* may be consulted for more detailed information.

# 6 - FACETS OF BEING SERIES



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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### INTRODUCTION

The **Facets of Being Series** provides a collection of meditations which complement the previous Mahamudra meditations. These come from a variety of sources and in most cases have been received by teachers within the context of more than one discipline. For example, the practice of **Bodhicitta Aspiration and Application** is a universal one. Perhaps some of the best instructions which I have encountered on this have been preserved in Geshe Rabten's *Treasury of Dharma*. The combination of relative and ultimate bodhicitta are the heart of all of Buddhism.

The **Illusory Body** teachings rely heavily on the teachings of both the great Nyingma lama Lonchenpa and the great Drikung Kagyu lama Dharmakirti. Oral instruction and transmission of these teachings stem mainly from The Nyingma Institute and Khenpo Könchog Gyaltzen.

**Knowing Time, Knowing Space**, and **The Play of Knowledge** are drawn from many sources. Some parts, such as comparison of measures of time, space, and knowledge and the exploration of their boundaries, are ruminations I used to embark on as an adolescent while living in Germany. Other practices, such as mixing with space and attending to time, are drawn from key Dzogchen and Mahamudra practices. In fact, several of these practices, including subject-object reversal, are common to multiple traditions. Still the most significant influence, which permeates these exercises, is the *Time, Space, Knowledge* vision of Tarthang Tulku. The instruction relies heavily on my own experience with regards to exploring that vision.

Kalu Rinpoche was the first to introduce the author to the five elemental qualities of mind. The meditations on **The Five Elements and The Female Buddhas** and **The Five Skandhas and The Male Buddhas** stem from Kalu Rinpoche.

The **Dream Yoga** set of practices is a collection based on my own experience. In my case, dream experience began within one or two years after starting practice at quite an early age. In the early seventies, there was very little literature on dream yoga available in the West so I developed my own experiments and explorations. These are basically consistent with the traditional approaches of Tibetan yogis.

The meditations under **Wrathful Means** include practices which the author received from several teachers, including Garchen Rinpoche and Namkhai Norbu.

The importance of working on integrating meditation with daily life to its fullest degree is underscored in **The Guiding Body** and **In Action**. Traditional texts, including *Moonbeams of Mahamudra*, should be consulted for instructions that are more definitive in this regard. Based on my own experience, I have found the Zen instruction for the position of *tenzo* (cook) and for *samu* (work practice) to be probably the most helpful in this regard.

At Mahamudra Meditation Center we have mainly focused on incorporating Tai Chi and Kinhin (walking Meditation) into our practice. That has been possible due to the kind and tireless instruction of Keith Hale, who has practiced and taught Tai Chi for over 25 years.



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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### **(1) BODHICITTA ASPIRATION AND APPLICATION**

Chant the wish for the four immeasurables (loving-kindness, compassion, joy, and equanimity).

May all beings have happiness and the causes of happiness.

May all beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering.

May all beings never be separated from the great happiness which is beyond suffering.

May all beings have happiness equally and freedom from clinging attachment, aggression, and ignorance.

Learn it by heart and chant it several times a day. Take it to heart.

1. Equanimity: Reflect on how you attach to some people, hate others, and are indifferent to the rest. Reflect on how these feelings may quickly change due to a change in circumstances based on support or challenge to your self-cherishing attitude.
  - Cultivate an attitude of cherishing all others more than yourself. Reflect on this in meditation. Put it into practice in daily life. This is an incredibly profound and difficult practice.
  - Consider the emptiness of both self and others. Consider how your understanding of emptiness or Mahamudra gives you such a strong inner peace. Consider how others do not recognize this and hence suffer unbearably. Maintain this view of the emptiness of self and others.
2. Loving-Kindness (Skt. maitri): When all beings appear equally dear to one, then a pure loving-kindness is developing.
  - Consider how you can cultivate this attitude. Cherish each and every being you encounter. Put this into practice in daily life.
3. Compassion (Skt. karuna): When we wish for the happiness of all beings equally, then a pure or great compassion is developing.
  - Reflect on the suffering and bewilderment of all the beings around you until you wish for nothing more than to free them from their suffering. Even include the rich and healthy people in this, for you know that

they are probably very unhappy, or if they are happy that their happiness will not last.

4. Joy: Practice feeling genuine delight at the joy of others, especially when it arises due to discovering the meaning of the dharma, the source of lasting joy.
  - With joy, maintain your bodhisattva vows to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all beings. Take joy in any bodhisattva actions which you may witness.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. This practice pertains to relative bodhicitta's (awakened mind's) two aspects: aspiration and application. Absolute bodhicitta is enlightenment or the realization of mind as it is.
2. Be like a sun, which on its own accord shines light to everyone. It is their choice or the karmic circumstances which may determine whether they can receive it or not.

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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### (2) ILLUSORY BODY

Reflect on the eight (in groups of two) analogies:

Like *illusions* and *dreams*, everything is non-existent. All appearances are like a magician's illusions or the displays of a dream. All realities do not exist in the ultimate sense. In our delusion we grasp at them as if they existed.

Like *echoes* and *reflections*, everything occurs through a combination of causes and conditions. All sounds are like echoes in a rocky canyon, all images are like very clear reflections in a mirror. All appearances lack inherent existence. They arise in dependence on causes and conditions.

Like *dew* and *bubbles*, everything is impermanent and constantly changing. Morning dew disappears as the sun rises and bubbles arise and vanish in an instant. All phenomenal appearances are impermanent. They change moment by moment.

Like *mirages* and *rainbows*, everything appears but does not really exist. Floating rivers appear in a hot desert and magnificent rainbows appear in the sky. All phenomenal appearances, although vividly apparent, do not exist. They do not exist for even one moment.

We should rid ourselves of grasping and actually experience the world of appearances as illusions.

In addition, we can meditate as follows:

- Body: Contemplate your body as a reflection in a mirror. Praise it and insult it. There is no self anywhere from head to toe. Where will the happiness and sadness stick to?
- Speech: Contemplate your voice as an echo. The echo has no self from beginning to end. How can you react to others' words?
- Mind: Contemplate your mind like a sky with clouds. Clouds arise and then vanish, leaving no trace. Likewise,

all your positive and negative thoughts are without root and do not leave a trace, so why are you so bothered by them?

Continue practicing until all realities are experienced to be illusory. Realize these teachings. Take them to heart. Do not leave them as dry, intellectual understandings.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Illusory does not mean appearances aren't vivid or clear. Experiences may be very clear in nature and still be illusory. Illusory refers to the fact that we believe (mistakenly) that something exists which does not.
2. The common view 'All is like an illusion' doesn't come close to the true meaning. See all vividly and clearly as it is, empty of existence.
3. When we are alive, it is as if our daily life is 'real' and our dreams are 'illusory.' When we die, then it is as if our whole life is 'illusory' and the dream bardo is 'real'. This is a dualistic view which we have to cut through. Replacing one set of beliefs by another is not the issue, but rather it is Manjushri's sword which cuts through all delusions that sets us free from these dualities.
4. Naropa's famous admonishment to Marpa is as follows: 'Outer appearances are but an illusion. Inner experiences are inexpressible. Day and night, arising experiences are the Nirmanakaya. This is the instruction on the Illusory Body. Are you free from attachment Translator?' Your self-attachment and concern with the eight worldly dharmas will diminish commensurate with your realization of the Illusory Body.
5. Respect the laws of karma and bodhicitta. Realizing the Illusory Body does not mean embracing a nihilistic view. Instead, realizing the Illusory Body is no different than realizing the unity of your compassion and wisdom. Your compassion and respect for cause and effect should increase and become vast.

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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### **(3) KNOWING TIME**

Conventionally, time is appreciated as a source of liberation and feared as a threat to the continuation of existence.

Contemplate the following:

- Compare the relative measure of different magnitudes of time (e.g. nanoseconds to minutes and minutes to thousands of years) Compare them to each other so that you can get a distinct sense of this. Then try to cut a piece of time into consecutively smaller and smaller pieces. Does the smallest piece of time still possess all the characteristics of time? Now step-by-step expand the small interval of time until it includes 'all of time.' Relax in the flavor of this.
- Determine how a sense of the measure of the flow of time exists. Is the flow of time a relative thing (e.g. two people with respect to each other, or work with respect to a clock)?
- Compare backward and forward flowing time. How are they the same (e.g. time-invariant laws), how are they different (e.g. time-variant laws such as the Second Law of Thermodynamics dealing with entropy)?
- From one perspective, can events be viewed as flowing backwards from the future into the past? Consider your own life from this perspective. Now try to hold both views (past to future and future to past) simultaneously, as if all events are given together in one time and in one space. View all the events of your life in one time and in one space.
- Take a time interval and investigate the boundaries of it. When does it begin? When does it end? Reconsider it. Again, when does it begin? When does it end?
- Consider yourself traveling in time. You are doing this already as you (in the present) move from the past (known set of events which have vanished) to the future (unknown set of events which are yet to appear). Consider how you are moving from that which is known to that which is unknown, new knowledge or new experiences.

- Consider that even if you could travel backward in time, you would move from the already known to new knowledge, so in a sense experientially, nothing would change.
  - Consider that even if you could travel backward or forward in time at varying speeds (and you are moving forward in time, by definition) you remain in the present. So from an experiential perspective, you remain in the 'now', however elusive that might be.
- Dive into the future repeatedly. Then dive into the past. See what happens to your sense of time and your awareness.
  - Gently try to freeze time for a moment with your awareness. Is this possible? What about the sense of time in the space between thoughts? How do thoughts act as clocks or bearers of time?
  - Explore all of these investigations in light of subtler selves evoked in later meditations on self-identity. Do some other selves make time travel more of a possibility? How about, less of a possibility?
  - Now simply attend directly to the flow or dance of time in your experience. Dogen Zenji was profoundly moved by watching the incense burn at his mother's funeral ceremony. Without thinking about analogies, just attend to time itself. See how certain of your understandings are timed out, like a song. See how everything which you experience or regard to be a self is actually a flashing forth in time. Attend to sounds such as the sound of voices or the wind or flowing water or rainfall. Rest your awareness on time itself. See how fresh everything is in this ever vibrant well-spring. See that stagnation is a complete illusion. Savor this freshness which is present in your immediate awareness of the moment. Include any tightness or stiffness you may have and allow it to relax.
  - Now unite your awareness with time itself. Allow there to be no separation between your awareness and time itself.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Do not expect anything from these investigations of time. Relax.
2. The father of the Karma Kagyu is known as Düsüm Khyenpa, 'Knower of the Three Times.' How are the past, present, and future identical? What changes with time? What stays the same? How could one know

all three times? Consider if awareness itself moves through time or if from the perspective of awareness there is only an eternal now.

3. Is the flow of time illusory?
4. It has been said that impermanence is the greatest of all the meditations of Buddhism. It leaves an elephant size footprint on one. This is also regarded to be one of the most profound meditations of Dzogchen.
5. Time corresponds to the wind element and the throat center.

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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### **(4) KNOWING SPACE**

Conventionally, space is appreciated when accessible and providing freedom and feared when limited to such an extent that it becomes restrictive.

Contemplate the following:

- Compare the relative measure of different magnitudes of space (e.g. microns to inches and inches to thousands of miles) Compare them to each other so that you can get a distinct sense of this. Then try to cut a piece of space into consecutively smaller and smaller pieces. Does the smallest piece of space still possess all the characteristics of space? Now step-by-step expand the small region of space until it includes 'all of space.' Relax in the flavor of this.
- Determine how a sense of the measure of space exists. Is the size of space a relative thing? Does size mean anything to a space without objects?
- Compare backward and forward movement in space. Then consider upwards and downwards movement. Before there were airplanes, was the sense that man could never get off the surface of the earth (i.e. constrained to two-dimensions) similar to the sense of limitations with respect to time travel (e.g. one-dimension, with uni-direction). How are space and time the same (e.g. space-invariant laws, such as back and forth on a surface), how are they different (e.g. directionally, upwards movement near a gravitational body requires energy, downwards movement yields energy)?
- Can one object located in space appear to be moving in one direction at a certain speed, in another direction at a different speed or stationary all at the same time? For example, imagine observers on three trains, one stationary and two moving past an object at different speeds and in different directions. Consider your own movement from this perspective. Now try to hold all three views (Speed A in one direction, Speed B in another direction, and stationary or speed of zero) simultaneously, as if all events are given together in one time in one space.



- Take a section of space and investigate the boundaries of it. Where does it begin? Where does it end? Reconsider it. Again, where does it begin? Where does it end? Now consider the boundary with respect to time. When does it begin? When does it end? Move with your awareness through your imagined space and the boundaries.
- Consider yourself traveling in space. You are doing this already as you move around from moment to moment. Consider how travel through space requires time (e.g. measures in distance over time or miles per hour). Consider the time aspect of travel to be related to how you are moving from that which is known to that which is new knowledge or a new experience. In a sense, time itself allows the sense or experience of movement through space (into newer spaces).
  - Even if you could travel backward or forward in space, you would move from the already known to new knowledge, so in a sense experientially, nothing changes. So your movement is tied to time.
  - Even if you could travel backward or forward in space you remain in 'here.' Wherever you go, you are 'here.' So from an experiential perspective, you remain in the "here", however elusive that might be. You never really travel anywhere.
  - Look carefully how your perception of self and non-self allows for the illusion of travel. Is travel really an illusion? Who travels?
- Dive into the space repeatedly in different directions with your awareness. See what happens to your sense of space and directionality.
- Now try to stay stationary in space. Given the never ending flow of time, is it possible to 'be still' in space?
- Explore all of these investigations in light of subtler selves evoked in later meditations on self-identity. Do some other selves make space travel more of a possibility? How about, less of a possibility?
- Now simply attend directly to the experience of room or space in your immediate experience. See how certain of your understandings are drawn on to space, like a transparent picture. See how everything which you experience or regard to be a self is actually a flashing forth in space. It is like a drawing on the surface of water. Attend to spaces such as the space of the room you are in or the spaces of your experiences or the sky or a

rainbow. Rest your awareness on space itself. See how open everything is in this ever unestablished display. See that closure is a complete illusion. Savor this openness which is present in your immediate awareness of the moment.

- Now mix or unite your awareness with space itself. Allow there to be no separation between your awareness and space itself.
- On a day when the sky is clear, attend to the sky itself. Mix your awareness with the sky. Look at the sky in the direction away from the sun.
- On a day when you are feeling especially relaxed and spacious, sit down and consider the following:
  - Consider all forms and appearances as kinds of space.
  - Consider all motion and delineations to be kinds of time.
  - Relax the sense of an observer or one who controls things. Consider that the play of space and time is not 'outside' of you. This play, itself, carries a 'knowingness' with it which does not depend on you. There is no need to declare yourself to be the 'knower.'
  - Relax and include everything in this understanding. Participate directly in the play of space, time, and awareness. Let go of working so hard to maintain a 'self' which is distinct from this.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Do not expect anything from these investigations of space. Don't allow these investigations to just reinforce old ways of desiring or avoiding things. Relax.
2. Is the extension of space and movement through it illusory?
3. Mixing or blending or mingling or uniting of awareness and space is a key Dzogchen practice. In fact, it is the root of Dzogchen practice.
4. Consider, do you ever experience a 'dead space?' Investigate any dead spaces directly with your awareness and open them up.
5. Space is associated with the element space (which consists of the other elements in subtle form) and the head center.

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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### **(5) THE PLAY OF KNOWLEDGE**

Awareness or the knowingness quality of our being is the basis for freedom and for suffering. Our mind creates both nirvana and samsara.

Contemplate the following:

- Compare the relative measure of different magnitudes of knowledge (e.g. one thought about the shape of the letter 'A' and a thought about the meaning of 'love'; awareness of the tip of your nose to awareness as expansive as the galaxy, the feeling of being when experiencing a migraine and the feeling of being when healthy and on a walk on a sunny day). Compare the experience of each of these directly until you get a distinct sense of them. Then try to cut a piece of knowingness into consecutively smaller and smaller pieces. Does the smallest piece of knowingness still possess all the characteristics of knowingness? Now expand this knowingness until it encompasses everything in the universe. Relax in this.
- Determine how a sense of the measure of knowledge exists. Compare 'content-oriented' or 'message-bearing' knowledge (e.g. 'John can swim') to knowingness which is self-evident and not carrying pointers to things outside itself (e.g. the experience of the color blue or 'blueness'). Is the meaningfulness of knowledge a relative thing? Does experience carry an intrinsic knowingness with it which does not depend on references to things outside of itself?
- Compare the knowingness of pain to the knowingness of pleasure.
- Compare backward and forward movement in knowledge. How does one gain knowledge? How does one lose it? Before you encountered Mahamudra meditation, did you have any sense that you could ever know independent of the realm of conceptual knowledge (i.e. free from the constraints of language-oriented knowledge)?
- What new kinds of knowing emerge in meditation practice?

- How are these ways of knowing the same as time and space? How are they different? Is there really a distinction between these?
- Compare the qualities of different levels of knowing or awareness.
- From one perspective, can knowledge located in the future appear to be gained while from another perspective that gain represents a loss in knowledge? Can a loss of knowledge (e.g. a false knowledge like a prejudice) be considered a gain?
- Consider that all your knowledge is there, complete in your being right now.
  - Visualize a light. Behold it and the knowingness quality which is present with it.
  - Now visualize a light above, beneath, in front of, behind, to the right, and to the left of this light. Each light is just as pure and bright as the central light.
  - Now let each one of these serve as its own center with six lights around it.
  - Keep doing this until all of space is filled with this pure bright light. Your awareness should be mixed with this.
  - Then dissolve the light into space and mix your awareness with it.
  - Similarly, from time to time take nurturing feelings and accumulate them and allow them to permeate all of space. This can be most effective with kum-nye or tummo practice.
  - Finally, take note of the luminous and fresh quality of all your perceptions. Allow the sense of 'knowing' evident through them to commingle into one great space of knowingness which includes everything without fabricating this.
- Take an amount of 'knowingness' and investigate the boundaries of it. Where does it begin? Where does it end? Reconsider it. Again, where does it begin? Where does it end? Now consider its boundaries in time. When does it begin? When does it end? Move with your awareness through your imagined knowingness and its boundaries. Now consider where there is 'knowingness' and where there is 'not knowingness.' Compare these to each other and see whether there is a sense of knowing even in the not knowing and a sense of not knowing in the knowing.

- Attend to an object in your experience. Perhaps there is a sense of you, the knower, over here and the object, over there.
  - See if the experience of the object itself has a knowing quality to it. See if the object may exist as a radiance of the subject.
  - Now reverse the situation. Let the object know you. Let it be the knower and you be the object. Repeat this several times.
- Consider yourself accumulating in knowledge. You are doing this already as you live from moment to moment. Consider how changes in knowledge relate to both space and time. Consider the knowledge aspect of movement through space and time. Who moves? Who learns?
    - Even if you could gain knowledge or lose it, still you would have your ground of awareness. Wherever you go, when you consider it, you are 'aware,' you 'know.' So from an experiential perspective, you remain in awareness however elusive the nature of that awareness might be. You never really change anything by knowing or forgetting anything.
    - Look carefully how your understanding of self and non-self allows for the concept of gain and loss of knowledge. Is 'knowledge' an illusion? Is lack of knowledge an illusion? Is there a level of knowledge which does not seem illusory at all, which seems relevant and indestructible?
  - Dive into the knowingness of experience after experience repeatedly in different directions with your awareness. See what happens to your sense of knowledge and loss and gain.
  - Now try to stay stationary in knowingness. Given the never ending flow of time, is it possible to 'be still' in knowingness? Investigate the movement of knowingness and the stillness of it and compare the two. What is the same? What is different?
  - Explore all of these investigations in light of subtler selves evoked in later meditations on self-image. Do some other selves make knowledge gains and loss more of a possibility? How about, less of a possibility?
  - Now simply attend directly to the experience of knowingness or awareness in your immediate experience. See whether everything which you experience or regard to be a self is actually a flashing forth of knowingness itself. See if this knowingness carries space and time with it. Attend to luminosity such as the light of the room

you are in or the knowing quality of your experiences or the experience of the sky or of a rainbow or of the earth or a mountain. Rest your awareness on this awareness itself. See how lucid everything is in this ever knowing nature. See that lack of knowledge is a complete illusion. See that 'having or possessing knowledge' is also a complete fabrication. Savor this knowingness which is present in your immediate awareness of the moment, free from loss and gain.

- Now unite your awareness with knowingness itself. Allow there to be no separation between your awareness and knowingness which arise with and in between all of your experiences and identities.
- On a day when the sky is clear, attend to the surface of a large lake or ocean. Mix your awareness with the light shimmering on the surface of the ocean. Consider how your mind and its knowledge is like the ocean and its waves. Reflect on this from time to time. Then return to just looking at the light reflecting off of the surface of the water.
- Consider the 'mirror-like' quality of mind. It reflects everything, large or small, near or far, beautiful or ugly, without distinction. In each case, no trace is left. Maintain awareness of this quality of mind while actively engaged in things. Allow the genuine confidence in this aspect to permeate your being.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. Relax your drive to obtain more knowledge. Relax in the completeness of your intrinsic knowledge.
2. Looking with awareness at awareness is at the heart of both Mahamudra and Dzogchen.
3. Consider, do you ever experience a 'not knowing space?' Investigate any 'not knowing spaces' directly with your awareness and open them up. Investigate 'not knowing times' directly with your awareness and open them up. Have you ever been in a space or time without awareness? Consider this as carefully as if you were holding your own eyes in your hands.
4. Awareness is either associated with the element fire or the element consciousness (sometimes considered to be a sixth element) and is related to the heart center.

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## FACETS OF BEING SERIES

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### **(6) GROUND OF BEING AND SELF-IDENTITY**

Maintain undistracted awareness in a relaxed manner.

(1) Ground Experience Through Breath - Attend to the sensations and knowingness which is present with your breath. Breathe evenly through the nose and mouth (See Resting Mind Series, Following Breath (6)) and just rest your awareness on the breath. Continue in this way for a while.

Now consider your sense of self as it emerges in your immediate experience. What brings it forth (e.g. first thing in the morning or after you 'regain yourself' in meditation)? When does it dissolve? Consider moments when a strong sense of self emerges such as moments of danger or embarrassment.

When a strong sense of 'self' is present, look at it directly. Look at its origin directly. Then look at its abiding. Finally look at where it goes. Note how the intrinsic nature of 'self' is no different than the intrinsic nature of thoughts and appearances. Consider the subtle sense of self in the same manner. Where does it abide?

(2) Self and Visual Appearances: Consider a visual experience of an object's appearance. Investigate the location of the sense of self within your awareness related to the object. Are you on the 'far side' of the object? Are you on 'this side?' Are you above or beneath the object or to its right or left?

Investigate the sense of separation between you and the object. If self is over here, where is here and what distance is there between here and there? Investigate this directly by moving through the space with your awareness.

(3) Self and Sound: Consider your sense of self as you listen to sounds. In a room with other practitioners chanting mantras or with a tape of this, attend to the location of self with respect to sound. See if you can travel on the sound and enter the 'inside' of the sound. Investigate this directly by moving through the space with your awareness.

Now, sitting in a room where you will not be 'self-conscious' (e.g. by disturbing others) call your own name out loud to the wall in front of you. Call it repeatedly in which ever manner you feel inclined. Move through calls of kindness and anger, joy and sorrow, past and future. Look directly at the sense of self evoked by your own name, and the relationship between sound and meaning, language and self.

(3) Self and Thoughts: Attend to self during calm abiding states and active thinking and emotional states. Attend to what is the same. Attend to what is different.

(4) Alternate Selves: Dissolve everything into space and then manifest either as a yidam (e.g. Chenrezig) or a pure light (e.g. white light) or a seed syllable (e.g. AH). Consider this 'pure manifestation' to be your self. Consider how this experience of 'self' differs from the more 'ordinary' sense of self.

Practice a yidam practice to realize the purity of appearances and transform attachment to self. Now the ordinary self may seem more real, but over the years, the yidam will seem more real than the ordinary self. This may be helpful to you in the bardo.

(5) Self During Sleep: Attend to the dissolution and emergence of self as you sleep and awake or dream. What continues? What changes? Investigate this directly for several days.

(6) Dream Self: Consider how the self during a dream is similar to the yidam self practiced earlier. Practice dream yoga where you travel and transform self.

(7) Self at Death: Consider what has continued in your sense of self since (a) before you were born, (b) since your were an infant, (c) since your were a young child, and (d) now. Continue this investigation by considering future selves. Who will you be tomorrow, ten years from now, one hundred, one thousand, fifty billion? What continues? What changes? Understand and recognize that which continues.

(8) Who Am I?

First consider this directly by looking and analyzing what you see. Are you your fingernails? Are you your hands? Are you your heart (what about the advent of heart surgery)? Are you your experiences? Are you your awareness?

From one perspective there is only that which sees (Skt. drishti) and that which is seen. Ask 'Who am I that sees all this?' It has been said (Patanjali, author of the *Yoga Sutras*) that the cause of all misery is identification of the eternal seer with the transitory seen.



Liberation (Skt. kaivalya) only occurs when the seer abides in his own state (Skt. svarupe 'vasthanam). Consider both the seer and seen aspects of experience from these perspectives.

Does identification with any piece of experience inevitably result in suffering? Why?

Consider everything which arises as not being you. 'I am not this' (Skt. anasmita).

What about identification with aspects of the nature of mind, such as time and space or awareness? Are they you? You should consider this exhaustively.

(b) Now consider that you are everything which arises. Think, "I am also that" (Skt. asmita) thus developing an intimacy which embraces everything and everyone.

(c) Finally, practice the meditation by looking directly at self as guided by the question 'Who am I?' This meditation was taught by Milarepa. Rest in this non-dual awareness.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. I practiced the breathing meditation (first paragraph under (1) for five years while working on understanding kun-zhi). During this time, dull states were left as dull, lighter states as light. Only later did a Dzogchen teacher clarify that one must not dwell in the dullness but rather lighten it up a little and the importance of distinguishing between ignorance and awareness or rigpa. See how it is for you.
2. 'Who Am I?' is the key meditation of Ramana Maharshi who was a great self-realized yogi. I participated in a meditation retreat with students of his back in 1971 in Switzerland. His meditation is very similar to Mahamudra as it involves directly looking with mind at self. Two chants developed by his students to remember him by are 'Arunuachala Siva' and 'Namur Ramanaya.'
3. Consider Patanjali's three sutras:

Yoga is the cessation (nirodah) of the whirlpools of the mind (citta).

At that time the seer (drashtah) abides in his true nature (swarupa).

At other times, the seer identifies with the seen.

This is an elegant and simple way of viewing the human condition.

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### **(7) THE FIVE ELEMENTS AND THE FIVE FEMALE BUDDHAS**

#### **Refuge is a requirement for this practice.**

The five aspects or elements of mind are space (open, empty), fire (luminous, knowing), wind (unceasing, unimpeded play, time), water (continuity, flowing without interruption), and earth (ground of all, ground of all experience, samsara and nirvana). The five elements respectively manifest externally as space, luminosity, motility, fluidity and solidity and in the body as cavities, radiance and warmth, breath and energy, blood and fluids, and flesh and bones.

Presently, these manifest in an impure state. It is necessary to realize them as not self-existent, which is their pure state. In the pure state, the five elements are called the five female Buddhas.

We are conceived when the red and white elements (each of which is composed of the five elements) of our mother and father, respectively, unite together with our consciousness (which is frequently treated as a sixth element). After we are born, in dependence on the nourishment of the five elements we grow stronger until eventually we weaken and die. It is said that after death most of us become unconscious for a while. Then these five elements dawn, in turn, in their pure form as radiant lights. Eventually the elements combine into *tigles* (something like droplets) to present to us 'impure' forms. In this confused state our consciousness may once again be drawn to the union of red and white elements of a new set of parents, and once again we take birth.

This meditation is helpful for preparing for death.

After taking refuge and engendering bodhicitta, place mind on the following visualizations of shapes of light. Each shape is about four fingers in width and one to two fingers in depth, with the exception of the spheres which are perfectly round. In considering these visualizations, do not think one has a body or that one doesn't have one. Don't regard these lights as being either in the body or outside.

Proceed through each of these gradually:

(a) Visualize a yellow square (3D as described above) which is the essence of earth. Concentrate clearly and vividly on this.

Attend one-pointedly to the square without following any thoughts which may arise. Do not analyze the square. Just rest mind on it. After a while, visualize that the essence of earth dissolves into the essence of the next element, water.

(b) Visualize the essence of water as a white disk. This in turn dissolves into the essence of fire.

(c) Visualize the essence of fire as a red triangle. This in turn dissolves into the essence of wind.

(d) Visualize the essence of wind as a green half-disk disk (open-side facing upwards). This in turn dissolves into the essence of space.

(e) Visualize the essence of space as a blue sphere (perfectly symmetrical). This in turn dissolves into the essence of consciousness.

(f) Visualize the essence of consciousness as a crystal-clear sphere. This in turn dissolves away like a rainbow fading away into emptiness.

(g) Now rest the mind for a short while in this unity of emptiness and clarity.

Close with a dedication of merit.

## **(8) THE FIVE SKANDHAS AND THE FIVE MALE BUDDHAS**

### **Refuge is a requirement for this practice.**

The five *skandhas* (collections or aggregates or heaps) which make up human beings are *form, sensation, perception, impulses, and consciousness*. All skandhas are within mind (sem) and together they encompass the full range of human experience. No experience passes beyond mind.

It is necessary to realize the five skandhas as not self-existent, which allows their pure state to dawn. Thereby, form and hatred are purified into the mirror-like wisdom of the Buddha Akshobhya. Sensation and arrogance are purified into the all-equalizing wisdom of the Buddha Ratnasambhava. Perception and desire are purified into the discerning wisdom of the Buddha Amitabha. Impulses and jealousy are purified into the all-accomplishing wisdom of the Buddha Amoghasiddhi. Consciousness and ignorance are purified into the all-pervading wisdom of the Buddha Vairochana. In the pure state, the five skandhas are the five male Buddhas.

The meditation is very helpful in working with self-identification and purifying self-attachment.

After taking refuge and engendering bodhicitta, place mind on the following visualizations of spheres of light. Each shape is about four fingers in diameter and perfectly round. In considering these visualizations, do not think one has a body or that one doesn't have one. Don't regard these as being either in the body or outside. Don't even regard them as being in the mind or outside the mind. In fact, they each should not be regarded as being separate from the essence of mind itself.

Proceed through each of these gradually:

(a) Visualize a white sphere of transparent light which is the essence of the skandha form. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. This in turn dissolves into the essence of the sensation skandha.

(b) Visualize the essence of sensation as a yellow sphere. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. This in turn dissolves into the essence of perception skandha.

(c) Visualize the essence of perception as a red sphere. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. This in turn dissolves into the essence of impulses skandha.

(d) Visualize the essence of impulses as a green sphere. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. This in turn dissolves into the essence of consciousness.

(e) Visualize the essence of consciousness as a blue sphere. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. This in turn dissolves into the essence of mind.

(f) Visualize the essence of mind as a crystal-clear sphere. Consider this sphere to be inseparable from the essence of your mind. Rest your mind on this sphere totally.

(g) Now expand the sphere to encompass all of space, everything.

(h) Rest the mind for a short while in this unity of emptiness and clarity.

Close with a dedication of merit.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. A breakdown of the skandhas follows:

- Form - Causal: earth, water, fire, and wind. Resultant: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and feelings. Also sub-atomic, imagined, visible to meditation, vows.
- Sensation - Pleasurable, painful, or neutral.
- Perception – Identification and differentiation.
- Impulses (samskara) – Fifty-one mental events including virtuous, non-virtuous, variable and neither.
- Consciousness (vijnana or nam-she) – eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, mind, afflicted mind, ground.

2. Similarly, the four kayas (bodies) embody the full range of enlightened human existence. The *dharmakaya* is the mind as it is, the

*Sambhogakaya* is related to thoughts and the clarity of mind which do not pass beyond mind as it is, and the *Nirmanakaya* is related to appearances of mind within mind as it is. The *Svabhavakakaya* is the natural body in which all three of these are given as one.

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### **(9) DREAM YOGA**

When undertaking meditation, in dependence on their predispositions, some people experience 'awake dreaming' states. These can be helpful for realizing the nature of self and mind and practice of this should be cultivated.

Meditate in a relaxed manner with awareness and clarity for at least twenty minutes before going to bed.

- (1) Relax as you lay down to go to sleep. Remind yourself that you are going to try to recognize your dreams. Now visualize a soft white lotus at the heart center with four petals. Each petal has one of the seed syllables AH, NU, TA and RA above it (Tibetan, if you prefer, or the English rendition is fine). At the center of the lotus is the seed syllable HUM. Visualize these also as white in color. Rest your mind simply on this. Allow this image to be self-illuminating. Imagine that it lights up the room and your mind, like a full moon on a clear night. Now as you progressively fall asleep shift your attention, from the AH to the NU, then to the TA, then to the RA, and then to the HUM. When you reach the HUM, you should almost be fully asleep. Eventually, you may begin to realize, in the midst of a dream that you are dreaming.

If this doesn't happen, try three things:

- (a) Increase your determination. Almost self-hypnotically, remind yourself that you intend to do this.
- (b) Make some time for a retreat for yourself. Practice meditation as much as you can, of course allowing for periods of rest and practicing a purifying breathing exercise. See whether the meditation becomes so habitual, that it continues on its own. If it does, from time to time it will continue even after you fall asleep.
- (c) Even in your waking state, remind yourself that everything is a dream. Make this a habit. If you have dreams with recurring images, train yourself at thinking about 'This is all a dream' when encountering the image causing you to 'wake up slightly.'

If you fail in recognizing this after persistent effort, take a break and resume with it again after a year or two. For some, this does not happen without continued persistence. For others, it arises effortlessly. It is not a sign of wisdom, but just a matter of the channels in one's body.

(2) When you become aware within a dream, several different things may happen:

(a) You may have a slightly awake experience where you kind of know you are dreaming, but really haven't realized the significance of this. Continue with efforts to deepen your awakening within the dream realm.

(b) You may become fully conscious in your sleep, in a bodiless state. This is a very energetic experience and the dream realm even vanishes in comparison to the blaze of this raw conscious energy. Normally one will experience fear that one has died and be terrified by the raw and vivid quality of the energy associated with this. Relax. When this occurs you may feel as if everything is completely out of control. In this case, simply return to the waking world by your sheer determination. This may seem to take eons to accomplish, but will happen readily. Then relax.

(c) You may recognize your dream state and become fully awake in it, but find that the excitement causes you to wake up totally. In this case, relax a bit more as soon as you become aware within your dream. Don't get too excited about it.

(d) With continued practice, eventually you will be able to stabilize your awake awareness in the dream realm. When you are able to accomplish this, try the follow:

1. Try to travel through the dream realm freely. Experiment with traveling through walls and flying. Notice how you control the laws of the dream reality. You can make a wall feel as solid as concrete and experience the textures of it as you slide your dream fingers over it or you can make them as transparent as space.

2. You may sometimes find you are in an almost 'astral projection type' of realm, floating around in a dream body. This state, although fully awake, does not carry the clarity (e.g. full color) of the previous state with it. The shape of appearances and being encountered in it may or may not correspond to the physical world. People who have encountered this over the years (such as S. Muldoon, H.



Carrington and Moore) have considered it to be an independent realm. In any case, it is just another realm created in dependence on the mind.

3. Experiment in meeting different people and in transforming yourself into a yidam or light or other forms.
4. Take up meditation directly in your dream. In this case you may find that you experience the bodiless energy state mentioned earlier. Relax in this experience as long as it lasts. See how new realms unfold within the clarity and luminosity of your mind.
5. When you have mastered space, awareness and self-identity, experiment with time travel in the dream realm. What happens? What meaning does time travel have in a dream realm?

When you awaken to the 'real world,' consider carefully the similarities between the 'dream realities' and the 'realities' of the common awake world. Consider the power of your mind to shape these realities and realize freedom within their midst. Learn to discover the complete freedom of the dream state in your waking state. Consider this freedom as the natural expression of mind and not something which a self achieves.

Realize that the stability of the daytime world is just an illusion, although at this time, it seems more stable than the dream world. It is the very illusion of stability which makes practice of a meaningful path like Mahamudra possible and is a vital aspect of the precious human birth.

Finally, return to just recognizing your natural state in all of life's conditions, whether awake, dreaming, or sleeping, healthy or subject to trauma.

### **Questions/Comments**

1. A genuine experience of a bodiless, dream consciousness or energy state usually generates severe fear. One feels one has died, and that one cannot get back to the body. Sometimes one may feel as if a nuclear bomb has gone off, this dawning can be so intense. This will shake one up for a few moments, and yet carry a profound sense of just having contacted some deep aspect of one's being. With time, this will cease and one will learn to relax in whatever arises.
2. It was an early goal of mine to establish correspondence between dream or astral world experiences and the physical world. However, I

could never establish this in a definitive way. There is much room for research here. My original motivation for doing this was purely scientific. I thought that if I could establish an awake dream experience which had a legitimate relationship to the physical world, I could use it not only to travel without any limitation in space but through time as well (an area of fascination for me since I was a little kid and which caused me to study physics).

3. My experiment with time travel resulted in everything dissolving into sheer, vibrant openness. The sheer absurdity of moving through time in a dream realm confronts one directly, since there is no past nor future in a dream realm to proceed to. All is 'mind made.'
4. Use these practices to enhance your awareness of certainty.
5. At some point, the experience of dreams may cease entirely. Do not be alarmed. There is a stage of purification of dreams where there are few kleshas strong enough to leave imprints in one's consciousness which carry over into the day.

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### (10) WRATHFUL MEANS

From time to time, when all the other methods have failed utilize wrathful means:

(1) PHAT: When you are sitting and subtle thoughts are causing you to become distracted or residual feelings are lingering and maintaining a grip on you, from a clear and calm state, suddenly and vigorously shout out loud PHAT (pronounced PE or PHET). Then relax right where you are. Settle in that state. This state beyond thoughts is the dharmakaya or the way mind is. However, it is not just associated with the moment of stillness when no thoughts arise but continues right in the midst of the motion of the thoughts.

(2) AH With Head Rotations: Similarly, relax and then slowly draw a circle with your chin as you rotate your head in a clockwise direction and chant AH loudly and continuously. Then reverse directions and continue with the practice. Do not do this if you have had a neck injury.

(3) Clap Your Hands: Finally, from time to time clap your hands together. This is said to 'scare away the demons.' In this case, the demons are ones of laziness or nervousness or depression or anxiety.

#### **Questions/Comments**

1. There are four different means utilized in the Kagyu lineage: peaceful, powerful, intensifying powerful, and wrathful. In governing a country, peaceful means are deployed as much as possible (e.g. law and order), but sometimes more powerful means have to be applied and intensified (police presence). In extreme cases wrathful means (police action) have to be utilized to bring things under control. Similarly, we should be flexible with respect to applying means to control our mind and helping our friends on the path.
2. See *The Golden Letters* for a wonderful discussion of the application of the PHAT practice according to Dzogchen. H. H. Dudjom Rinpoche gives a beautiful brief commentary on the three statements of Garab Dorje in this text (translated by John Myrdhin Reynolds) which are paraphrased in the following:

**Recognize your own nature directly.**

This is the fresh (soma) immediate awareness of this very moment.

**Definitively resolve this one state.**

All is the unobstructed display (tsal) of awareness (rigpa) itself.

**Continue with confidence in liberation.**

In recognizing the nature of all, everything is self-liberated.

All of Dzogchen and Mahamudra are contained in these statements. Please consult Reynold's book.

Sing the 'Song of the Vajra' (emahkirikiri...rarara) or the vajra guru mantra (OM AH HUNG VAJRA GURU PEMA SIDHHI HUNG) as much as you can to maintain this experience and integrate it into all of your life.

If you are drawn to Dzogchen teachings, after obtaining the pointing-out of a Dzogchen master, consult the 'restricted texts' *Song of the Vajra* (Namkhai Norbu) and *The Circle of the Sun* (Tsle Natsok Rangdrol, translated by the Lotsawa Erik Pema Schmidt, Rangjung Yeshe Publications) which provide pithy yet meaningful summaries of the path of Dzogchen. The latter work also corrects mistaken assumptions about the ground, such as the belief that "it is multifaceted", i.e. the title of this meditation series. This is only a partial understanding of the ground.

*Chagchen* and *Dzogchen* are sometimes called the two eyes by which one knows reality. Milarespa has been quoted as saying that through Mahamudra he came to Dzogchen.

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### **(11) THE GUIDING BODY**

Practitioners should explore forms of movement with awareness such as Tai Chi, walking meditation (kinhin), Yoga, or Kum-Nye (include massage). These help to enhance one's practice and ensure that it moves out of the intellectual realm to an actualized one.

Integrate presence of awareness with energy, movement, and order.

Without clinging to stillness, let the play of awareness unfold in action.

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### **(12) IN ACTION**

Design aspects of your daily life to support mindfulness, whether maintaining a small shrine, or wearing a necklace, or building a curved path to the front door instead of a straight one.

Practice loving-kindness when you can. Don't force your help on others. This just doesn't work and is usually a result of ego activity instead of loving-kindness. Practice the six paramitas of generosity (things, fearlessness, dharma), morality (taking up positive, abandoning negative actions of body speech, and mind), patience (remaining free from agitation), joyful effort (overcoming laziness, including the laziness of business), meditation, and wisdom.

A recent Western Tibetan Nun who was traveling in the U.S. after many years in India said,

"It is remarkable how obsessed people in the West are about meditation practice. Actually, dharma is mainly concerned with working with our daily life. Meditation is only one part of it."

These words demonstrate her genuine realization and are particularly relevant to the conclusion of a meditation manual which focuses on meditation. The importance of these words cannot be overemphasized.

Finally, 'Take up virtuous actions, abandon non-virtue, and train the mind.'

Often it seems that mindfulness naturally imbued with caring is the best practice. Treasure it in your daily life and it will take care of you.

Let us share in the aspiration of the Third Karmapa (translation per Ken McLeod) and thereby realize the meaning of our life:

'May I realize the truth of pure being, complete simplicity.'

APPENDIX A - AN  
INTRODUCTION TO  
BUDDHISM





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## APPENDIX A – AN INTRODUCTION TO BUDDHISM

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### THE LIFE OF THE BUDDHA

Historically speaking, Buddhism began during the sixth century BC with the enlightenment of *Gautama Buddha*, the son of the ruler of the kingdom of *Shakyas* in what today is known as Nepal. *Buddha* is a Sanskrit word which means "awakened one." Buddha's personal name was *Siddhartha*. He married at the age of sixteen and eventually had a son named *Rahula*. It was said he led a very privileged and protected life. When he reached the age of twenty-nine, for the first time he came face-to-face with the suffering of his people, witnessing how they struggled with aging, disease, and death. He was deeply troubled by this experience. Realizing that even his wealth would not protect him or his people from the ravages of illness, old age, and death, he decided to find a spiritual solution. He left his wife, son and home and embarked on a spiritual exploration.

Since Buddha did not find happiness through a privileged life, he decided to try the other extreme: asceticism, a practice which was popular in India then and is still practiced today. He subsequently determined that happiness did not come from asceticism either. All in all, he spent six years studying with different teachers and doing different practices, including some very rigorous and austere practices. Then, one evening, while spending the night meditating beneath a Bodhi tree, he attained enlightenment.

Buddha gave the first teachings on his enlightenment at Sarnath in Northern India and spent the rest of his life, until the age of 80, teaching about it and "the truth" as he had come to know it. After his death, his teachings were organized in to the three turnings of the wheel of dharma. Even with his last breaths he asked students to ask him questions about his teachings and express any doubts they might be harboring so that he could try to clarify things and be of help. These days Buddhism has sizable followings in several countries including Sri Lanka, Bhutan, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, China, Japan, Mongolia, Tibet, Korea, India, Pakistan, and Nepal.

## THE FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS

The first wheel or set of teachings given by the Buddha included the four noble truths. These are summarized in the following:

1. **The truth of suffering** - We need to understand how suffering is prevalent in the human condition. Not only is it present in obvious ways via the occurrence of illness and death, it is also present more subtly in what is commonly designated to be "happiness." For example, even wealthy and healthy people have been known to be so unhappy as to put an end to their lives. No sooner do we achieve what we have longed for when we discover that our happiness is not guaranteed and is subject to change.
2. **The truth of cause of suffering** - Our suffering is not due to some external cause, such as a god or a source outside of our control; it originates in ourselves and is a product of what we have done. It begins with our ignorance of who and what we are and is perpetuated by actions taken based upon these mistaken beliefs. Based on ignorance, we give rise to mistaken notions of "self", of existence and non-existence. And from this we become subject to endless attachment, craving, and restlessness. Finally, a web of confusion expresses itself not only in our bewilderment but also in our actions and condition. So the causes of our suffering are said to be our mental defilements (such as ignorance, greed, hatred) and the courses of action which perpetuate those. And by committing non-virtuous actions of body (harming others, sexual misconduct, stealing), speech (lying, slander, coarse-aggressive, and useless speech), and mind (hatred, covetous, or ignorant minds) we remain trapped in the cycle of suffering.
3. **The truth of cessation of suffering** - The good news is that we are the ones who have control over our suffering since we alone are responsible for its causes. By giving up the causes, we can become completely free from suffering. First of all, on a very practical level we can practice virtue and abandon non-virtuous actions since these directly result in happiness and unhappiness, respectively. For example, by practicing kindness and ceasing from harming others, we obviously will experience very positive results. Secondly, we have to deal with the root cause of our suffering, our ignorance. Through reflection and meditation we explore "who we are" and in doing so discover that our common understanding of self is quite mistaken; what we regard to be "self" is in fact just a mistaken perception or illusion. When we investigate it a "self" cannot be found to exist. And it is precisely because a self does not exist as

such that we have the basis for complete freedom from suffering and the elimination of mental defilements.

4. **The truth of path** - To help us free up this deep-rooted mistaken sense of identity, Buddha advocated an eight-fold path consisting of Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Meditation. These are traditionally grouped into three areas: (1) ethical conduct (encompassing speech, action, livelihood), (2) mental discipline (effort, mindfulness, meditation), and (3) wisdom (thought and understanding). Buddhism is the union of compassion and wisdom, the wish for all beings to be free from suffering in a lasting way, and the awareness of how to accomplish this.

## THE MEANING OF "NO-SELF"

In the second set or wheel of teachings, Buddha emphasized emptiness of "self" or persons and phenomena. Perhaps the most difficult concept to come to terms with in Buddhism and the most revolutionary idea forwarded by it, is the one of "no-self" or "no-soul" (*Anatman* in Sanskrit). This was an idea which was in direct opposition to the idea of a permanent everlasting self (*Atman*) advocated by the Hindus of his time and based on the Buddha's direct experience.

Two traditional arguments to clarify the meaning of this follow:

- If one holds two sticks in one's hands, and one stick is longer than the other, we may call one stick "long" and the other "short". However, as soon as we bring a third stick into the picture, let's say a much longer one, the "long" stick becomes "middle-sized." The notion "long" does not apply. The point is attributes such as "long" and "short" are not intrinsic to things but just a projection of our minds. Similarly, "existing", "non-existing", "self", "world" and "others" are just projections of mind and not intrinsic realities.
- If one considers a more material thing, such as a completely wooden wagon. Initially all one has is some wood, some of which is cut up into wheels, other parts of which is cut into a base, and an axle, and ultimately when all this "wood" is assembled it becomes a "wagon". Really nothing has changed, we have not created anything fundamentally new from the wood. We just have a

collection of wood; but together it makes a "wagon." So we say that the "wagon" really has no existence other than an imputed one.

These arguments are meant to clarify that our common notion of "self" may be completely mistaken. In the above example, "long" and "wagon" do not exist as such. Similarly, what we have come to regard as "self" and events associated with it such as birth, growth, existence, deterioration, and death may be completely mistaken.

Interestingly, Buddhists do not regard clinging to the concept of "no self" as correct either. This is regarded as extremely negative or nihilistic. The reality (*dharma* in Sanskrit) of our being is beyond dispute and beyond our characterizations and concepts. This "no self" is not a complete emptiness like an empty, desolate space. It is just as wrong to hold the belief that "I have no self" as it is to hold the belief in "I have a self". By understanding our situation and being correctly, and not subjecting it to the extreme views of "permanence" vs. "impermanence" or "existence" vs. "non-existence", we arrive at true peace and the cessation of our ignorance.

## **THE PRIMORDIAL BUDDHA AND A LASTING LIBERATION**

Besides the usual fanfare of spiritual attributes ascribed to the historical Buddha (who never claimed to be anything but a man), the true nature of man has come to be called "Buddha Nature" or "Primordial Buddha" by some Buddhists. This designation, in many respects, is more in line with the teachings of Buddha in that he regarded that (1) his teachings pointed to the fundamental, true human condition and (2) this nature or reality was not subject to the play of space and time and thus exists primordially.

However, a basic premise of Buddhism is that which is born dies. So how does one achieve freedom from suffering in a lasting way?

The answer is perhaps best presented in Buddha's third set or wheel of teachings. In this he emphasized that freedom is our true and fundamental nature, and that ignorance and bondage are incidental stains with respect to this nature. In fact, wisdom and compassion turn out to be intrinsic qualities of who and what we are. This wisdom can further be described as a "wisdom which knows itself" which has been active primordially. In Tibetan Buddhism a term for this exists which may be translated as a "self-aware primordial wisdom" (*rang-rig ye-she* in Tibetan). Everything we experience is a manifestation or display of this

but since we do not recognize it as such and instead fabricate false identities and realities, we suffer.

It is pointed out that at this very moment we are both empty of self, like the open sky, and self-aware, like the self-luminous sun. This union of openness and awareness has always been in evidence and will always continue to be so. Thus it serves as a basis for both "primordial buddhahood" and a lasting liberation which may be realized, an "achieved buddahood" so-to-speak, resulting from the cessation of ignorance and the mental defilements. This teaching is at the core of the teachings of Mahamudra.

Ultimately, the Buddhist path serves as the basis for recognizing and returning to the "true nature" which is present in every sentient being. And it is through this endeavor, by striving for the benefit of self and others, that the Buddhist comes to appreciate and realize the significance of human life. Finally, the engendered confidence comes to permeate the life of the Buddhist completely -- nothing is left out -- and the Buddhist works to continue with the Buddhist way until the end of the cycle of suffering (*Samsara* in Sanskrit) is reached for all beings.

## **THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION**

One of the other main thrusts of Buddhism is emphasis on mental discipline and the use of meditation as a means of achieving self-control and self-understanding.

Whereas it is acknowledged that physical suffering can take place, it points out that mental suffering can be of much greater significance than physical suffering. For example, a person who has mental peace can handle an illness and death with equanimity; whereas a person who is subject to mental anguish, perhaps through being threatened, will find even good health to not be the source of happiness. The role of our minds is most fundamental to our happiness and sorrow. And until we meditate, our mind remains like an uncontrolled elephant; powerful and capable of causing much damage.

In Buddhism, there are two principal types of meditation:

1. **Shamatha** or resting meditation - where emphasis is on being able to place the mind on objects of choice, whether non-religious (for example, a "pebble", one's "breath", or "no-object at all") or religious (for example, the body (a picture or statue), speech (a "mantra"), or mind (a pure light or emptiness) of the Buddha). Here one learns to

discipline the fluctuations and wandering of the mind and establishes its basic calmness.

2. **Vipashyana** or insight meditation - where emphasis is on seeing the true nature of mind, thoughts, and experience. Here one cultivates recognition of the reality of our condition and establishes the stability of this recognition, ultimately integrating this recognition with all activity, including sitting, reclining, eating, talking, dreaming, and sleeping.

Whereas in *Shamatha* one may experience peace, this peace does not last since *Shamatha* alone does not eradicate the causes of suffering. Thus one must also practice *Vipashyana*, where the true nature of all things and our self is illuminated thereby cutting the causes of suffering at their root.

Even in meditation Buddhism expresses itself as the union of compassion and wisdom, with *Shamatha* more related to the peace of love and compassion and *Vipashyana* more related to wisdom. More advanced meditation is a complete union of these.

APPENDIX B -  
PERSPECTIVES ON  
MAHAMUDRA





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## APPENDIX B – PERSPECTIVES ON MAHAMUDRA

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### THE MEANING OF MAHAMUDRA

#### *Basis, Path, and Result*

Mahamudra is regarded by the Tibetan Kagyu lineage to be the heart essence of all of the teachings of the Buddha. Mahamudra also stands for the essence of mind-itself. The true nature of the mind is called the ground of our existence or *ground Mahamudra* (gzhi chakchen). *Path Mahamudra* (lam chakchen) begins with recognition of this essence (ngo-wo) and continues as progress is made at stabilizing this recognition. When the recognition of mind-as-it-is (sem-nyid) becomes completely part of our condition, without wavering (yeng-me), and we bring forth effective means of freeing sentient beings from ignorance and suffering, then this is referred to as *fruition Mahamudra* (traybu chakchen). It is said that this fruition Mahamudra is free of emotional or experiential bewilderment and is untouched by duality of subject and object or the three spheres of subject, object, and action.

Mahamudra is a Sanskrit word consisting of two parts: *maha*, which means great or vast, and *mudra*, which means gesture or symbol. The Tibetans translated this into *chak gya chen po*, with *gya* corresponding to *mudra* and *chenpo* corresponding to *maha* in meaning. In addition, the syllable *chak* is added which is honorific for “hand”. This has been translated variously into English as the “great seal” or “great gesture” or “great symbol”. The essence of reality is inherent to everything and like a king who applies his seal to his proclamations which then applies to the entire kingdom, the ultimate reality pervades all of samsara and nirvana. It is the essence of our mind and all its manifestations.

The nature of mind or the way mind is (ngas-lug) is completely present in our present mind. It is present when we are awake, when we dream, and when we sleep, before this life, in this life, and after this life. Recognition of the essence of mind is something which we must cultivate. In addition, we must learn to live in accord with the understanding which develops from this recognition. Why is this so? Since if we don't we will continue to suffer and sometimes our suffering and bewilderment will be unbearably intense. And without doing so this suffering and the causes of it will continue without end.

Sometimes a distinction is made between causal paths and fruition paths. In causal paths, we practice to collect the causes of enlightenment, whereas in fruition paths we begin with the realization of our existing enlightened nature and practice on the basis of that realization. Mahamudra is a fruition path which considers the ground, path, and fruit to be one. One doesn't start with a nature which is shrouded in non-enlightenment and then remove the shroud to enlightenment. Rather one has the enlightened nature at the outset and practices based on understanding that. In actuality, the shroud has never existed; however, from our perspective it is as if there has been a shroud since we are unable to recognize the significance of the nature of mind. Emphasis is placed on recognizing this enlightened nature (Skt. *ta tha ga tha gar ba*) since only then can the qualities of enlightenment manifest in our condition. The *Uttara Tantra* tells the story of someone who lives in poverty on his own land and although his home is built above a gold deposit, until he becomes aware of this fact, it doesn't do him any good.

Mahamudra is often referred to as the "practice lineage." Even though we have the awake nature, or precisely because we have this self-aware nature, the value of establishing practice with respect to that nature is strongly emphasized. A key point regarding this awake nature is that it is not something which is newly created or fabricated. It is not something newly brought forth. It does not have a source, nor does it manifest via establishing a divine connection. This intrinsic *primordial wisdom* (ye she) does not magically appear in our condition as result of doing certain practices. Rather this wisdom is already fully self-realized and fully ripe within our being. It is beyond temporal characteristics and the play of time (tu). Also, it is beyond spatial characteristics and description in terms of (a) being, (b) non-being, (c) both being and non-being, and (d) neither being or non-being. And yet our confusion about this is evident in how we live.

To ensure that there is no confusion about this most important point, the Mahamudra tradition uses such special terms such as *ordinary mind* (thammal gyi shepa ) and *primordial wisdom which knows by itself* (rang-rig yeshe). However, discussing these terms as objects of our intellect (gom ja) is of almost no benefit at all to us. We must come to know their meaning and reality in our own condition in a direct (tu) and first-hand manner. Another way of stating this fruition is that through Mahamudra, the thoughts and appearances of mind join with the way the mind is. In effect, Mahamudra is a way of joining or harmonizing with the way the mind is.

In conjunction with establishing this familiarity or intimacy within our being, all the enlightened qualities manifest in the play of mind itself. We discover our intrinsic freedom and yet continue to see the

overwhelming suffering of others. By this, we are moved as strongly as a crippled mother who sees her only child being carried off in a river. We then not only possess the wish to help all beings realize freedom from their suffering, we also have the wisdom to know how to do this in a lasting way. As such, we may come to realize the *two benefits*: the benefit of self and the benefit of all other sentient beings. This is also known as the realization of the unity of wisdom and compassion. This is represented in the symbols of tantric embrace of the male and female Buddha or deities (yab-yum) and in the symbol of the bell (wisdom) and dorje (compassion).

*The Adventitious Stains of Ignorance and Path of Liberation*

Clearly Mahamudra is a path which places emphasis on self-understanding. It is also known as the path to liberation (dröl-lam) through direct perception. The question might be liberation from what? It is taught that we do not know our true nature and inner wisdom due to adventitious obscurations. Our awareness (rigpa) is subject to obscurations of two type: obscurations of knowledge (marigpa) and obscurations to freedom, the emotional defilements. Obscurations of knowledge manifest as identification and duality and are more subtle; obscurations to freedom manifest as aggression, clinging, excessive pride, and jealousy. In Mahamudra we develop freedom from both of these.

How did we first go astray? We may never know for sure. However by looking at how our ignorance arises in the present we can actually see how it originated at the beginning of time. One traditional explanation follows.

Our universe of experience and being originates in the mind itself, which is intrinsic to all. The nature of this mind is a union of luminosity (öd sal) or compassion (thug-je or thab) and openness (tong nyid) or wisdom (she). This ground of our being or *all-ground* (kun zhi) is the foundation for everything. Within in the mind or all-ground arises the quality or element of space. Space itself displays the subtle elemental qualities of the four elements, wind, fire, water, and earth, as pairs of even more basic energies based on the expression of its inherent luminosity. Pairs of these very subtle energies interact and work together, and thus come to exhibit the four different elemental qualities of wind, fire, water, and earth. These elements remain in pure form which appear as pure colored lights of green, red, white, and yellow, respectively.

In this space, a pair of subtle energies interacts and there is a stirring, which is like a wind, and temporal play begins. A coarser manifestation of wind becomes apparent. This motion has a friction to it

which in turn produces heat. The heat causes there to be a temperature variation and condensation which produces water. Finally, water tends to mix with everything else and produces earth. Originally the elements are in their pure form and devoid of duality, or tinged with only the subtlest forms of duality. Now they give rise to a coarser manifestation of the element space which contains all four other elements in it in subtle form and includes the *all-ground consciousness* (kun zhi nam she). Our basic nature is completely devoid of delusion, but as our nature manifests, and temporal and spatial aspects of being or awareness emerge, a *lack of awareness of our true nature* (ma rig pa) also emerges. Our lack of awareness arises concurrently with our sense of being.

Now the interesting point about the defilements is that they come and go. In fact, all of the manifestations of ignorance such as anger and hatred, come and go. They depend on causes and conditions. In comparison, the qualities of mind, the way mind is, persists through time and touches all of space of our experience. So it may be said that the ignorance and causes of it are incidental events which have no real strength, no real staying power, whereas our enlightened nature, the intrinsic nature of mind has real staying power. Therefore, our prospects of success are very, very good, if only we make an effort to do so.

Gampopa differentiated between three spiritual paths which are worthy of effort and by which one may realize the true of existence and thereby the true nature of things: *inference*, *empowerment*, and *direct perception*. He distinguishes between the *path of liberation through direct perception* and two other paths.

The first path, inference, relies on analytical reasoning. First one examines establishes the emptiness of things by applying reasoning such as the “one and the many.” One establishes the emptiness of all things and persons. Using reasoning one establishes the correct view like a bird flapping its wings to achieve a great height and then one meditates on the view which has been established. The second way, empowerment, relies on purifying one’s perceptions via yidam practices and working with the channels (tsa) and energies (lung) within the body. One takes on the pride and aspects of the deity to whom one is introduced and works on bringing the energies into the central channel. This is known as the path of skillful means (thap lam). The third way, direct perception, relies on working directly with all aspects of one’s being and establishing the essence of mind, thoughts, and appearances through direct investigation. It works directly with our experience and is not limited to the application of reasoning. This is the path of Mahamudra which is synonymous with the path of liberation through direct perception (drol lam).

In all three cases one works to achieve liberation from the defilements or enslaving emotional afflictions (skt. *klesha*; Tib. *nyon-mong*): ignorance-delusion (*ma rig pa*), aggression-hatred, grasping-attachment, arrogance-pride, and jealousy-envy. However, the emphasis on how one works with the defilements is different in the three approaches. In the first, one uses analysis to understand that there is no independent existence of either objects or self. To give up negative defilements, one works at eliminating them. In the path of empowerments, instead of abandoning the defilements, one transforms them into their pure wisdom aspects: all-pervading wisdom, mirror-like wisdom, discerning wisdom, all-equality wisdom, and all-accomplishing wisdom. In using direct perception as the path, there is no assumption of something to be transformed and one who transforms; everything arises as the play of mind and is self-liberated as such.

These three different ways of dealing with defilements are further elaborated upon in the three vehicles (*yanas*) of Buddhism: *hinayana*, *mahayana*, *vajrayana*. These three vehicles correspond approximately with the three wheels of the dharma of Buddha. Starting at what is regarded to be the highest level of practice, there are times when the self-liberation of defilements is accomplished and therefore one is engaged at a Mahamudra (by their self-liberation) or vajrayana (by transforming them into the five wisdoms) level of practice. At other times, one is caught up in them, so then one needs to apply a more vigorous method such as that of transformation. For example, we may work on transforming our hatred into genuine love. This is more of a mahayana approach. Or if the defilements are so strong that we can't deal with them at all, then we simply take some "time out" from the conditions which cause them. We renounce the conditions which cause these emotions to arise by "pushing our buttons." This is regarded to be more of a hinayana approach.

The Tibetan traditions have maintained all three approaches and how one works with it depends on one's inclinations. Although all three approaches are intermingled, it has been noted that those who emphasize the analytical approach tend to be scholar-monks, those who emphasize empowerments tend to be yogis, those who emphasize the Mahamudra approach tend to be lay people. However Mahamudra is by no means restricted to any particular lifestyle. As if to bring home this point it is interesting that Tibet's first three lineage holders of Mahamudra exemplified all three life styles including lay (Marpa), monk (Gampopa), and yogi (Milarepa).

Since Mahamudra has been combined into the inferential and tantric approaches, three versions of Mahamudra are sometimes mentioned: *sutric Mahamudra*, *tantric Mahamudra*, and *essence Mahamudra*. In sutric Mahamudra one usually works with first developing non-

analytical, peaceful abiding meditation (shi nay) and then, by utilizing the stillness which has been cultivated, developing analytical insight (lhak thong) practice which encompasses not only the stillness but also movement and awareness. In some cases, a student is first introduced to the essence of mind and then uses peaceful abiding meditation to stabilize this view. Ultimately the meditation becomes a unity of peaceful abiding and insight, and one's insight evolves to the point where it is entirely independent of cultivated stillness and can accommodate any condition. Emphasis is on the unity of awareness and emptiness and appearances and emptiness. In tantric Mahamudra one usually works with development (kye-rim) and completion (dzog-rim) practices involving visualized deities (yidam) to which one has been introduced and initiated. This practice culminates in the Six Yogas of Naropa which include inner heat (tummo), illusory body, clear light, dream, and bardo practices. Emphasis is on the unity of bliss and emptiness and appearances and emptiness. In essence Mahamudra one usually is introduced directly to one's nature by a teacher. Both sutric and tantric Mahamudra include the utilization of essence Mahamudra. Emphasis in all three forms is on the sameness of awareness and emptiness and appearances and emptiness.

In *Moonbeams of Mahamudra* Dakpo Tashi Namgyal demonstrates that Gampopa regarded Mahamudra to be an entirely independent path which, although representing the essence of both the sutras and tantras, can stand entirely on its own. The emphasis in this meditation manual is consistent with Dakpo Tashi Namgyal's presentation. To avoid the confusion of using Mahamudra to refer to the tantric approach to Mahamudra, in this text the term Mahamudra, when used without additional qualifiers, refers the path of liberation by direct perception as summarized by Gampopa, the father of the Dakpo Kagyu.

## **PRELIMINARIES**

Regarding different approaches and type of practitioners, traditionally a differentiation is made between specially gifted and more typical practitioners. Specially gifted practitioners receive a direct introduction at the outset followed by stabilization of the view established by the introduction as in the case of Saraha and Tilopa, among others. This is consistent with the approach generally utilized in Dzogchen. In contrast, average practitioners receive instructions according to a more gradual approach, with first learning to rest the mind and subsequently developing insight into its nature. The emphasis in this text is on practitioners of the more typical or average type. These days it is rare to

encounter gifted practitioners. However, it should be noted at the outset that preliminaries depend on the practitioner and are not universal in application.

Unfortunately, since its introduction to the West there has been quite a bit of confusion regarding the preliminaries of Mahamudra. Several teachers have erroneously taught that Mahamudra is strictly a path of transformation or skillful means (thap lam). They apparently were unaware that it is traditionally an independent path of liberation (dröl lam). This has led to a lot of confusion among students who were first introduced to the path of tantra. I have witnessed no less than a dozen occasions where upon receiving Mahamudra instruction from a qualified teacher, a long-time student asks for confirmation that this is indeed a complete path to liberation on its own. The student may also ask whether the tantric special preliminaries (ngondro) must be completed prior to setting out on the path of Mahamudra. The answer from leading teachers of the lineages has consistently been, “Yes, Mahamudra is a complete path of liberation. It can be done before, during, or after ngondro.” Indeed, Mahamudra instruction is frequently given to students who have not even taken refuge, which is a requirement for all further initiations in the path of tantra. I believe that the teachers who are in error are speaking based on their own training and experience in which they have found the combination of the path of skillful means and the path of liberation to be most beneficial. However, I find it extremely unfortunate that they state their belief in an exclusive way and thereby undermine confidence in those who might benefit from a more direct Mahamudra or Dzogchen approach.

Without doubt, Mahamudra has been declared to be an independent path by the father of the Dakpo Kagyu lineage, Gampopa. Similarly, the father of Dzogchen, Garab Dorje, never made the tantric preliminaries a requirement for Dzogchen. Thus, the student should be assured that the first five cycles present the profound meditation practices of the path of liberation based on the Dakpo Kagyu lineage. It is interesting to note that according to the teachings of the Nyingma and Bonpo lineages, these Mahamudra practices are very similar to the Mind Series (sem de) of Dzogchen. In fact, Dzogchen teachers frequently intermingle Mahamudra teachings when teaching the sem-de series. Therefore they may also be considered to represent a complete path to liberation from a Dzogchen perspective. Certainly, Mahamudra can be practiced independent of the path of tantra or in conjunction with the path of tantra, however one chooses.

In the Kagyu lineage and other lineages of Tibetan Buddhism, the *ordinary preliminaries* are taught prior to meditations of the type included in this manual. These include reflection on and awareness of (1) the *precious human existence*, (2) *impermanance*, (3) *cause and effect* or

karma, and (4) the *prevalence of suffering* (samsara). In addition, *special preliminaries* are taught as a foundation to tantric Mahamudra and tantric Dzogchen practice. These include (1) refuge and bodhicitta, (2) Vajra Sattva purification, (3) mandala offering, and (4) guru yoga. Dzogchen has its own set of preliminaries which in some schools include reflection on and awareness of the illusory body and the practice of heat yoga (tummo). Interestingly, practices similar to these are advanced practices of the Kagyu and Gelug/Kagyü lineages.

In any case, preliminaries are indispensable to the practitioner. It is commonly noted by teachers that the preliminaries are in no way less important than the main body of teachings. In fact it is said that the preliminaries are (1) helpful at the outset to get one to turn to the dharma, (2) helpful on the path to get one to persist in dharma practice, and (3) helpful at the end to help one complete realization. Thus, their importance should be underscored. Several excellent texts are now available for those who want to follow the Tibetan traditions within the context of individual lineages. Serious students should refer to these.

In addition, students should read a text such as *Meaningful to Behold* (a commentary by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso on Shantideva's *Guide to the Way of Life of a Bodhisattva*) or *The Jewel Ornament of Liberation* (see recent translation by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltzen offered by Vajra Publications). These texts are frequently given to lay practitioners in Tibet as fundamental texts or "must reading." In addition, books such as *A Search for Stainless Ambrosia* (Khenpo Könchog Gyaltzen) provide a useful summary of fundamentals with which every practicing Buddhist of the Kagyu tradition should be familiar.

As a minimum students should reflect on the ordinary preliminaries noted above and develop awareness of them in their lives. In addition, students should cultivate an altruistic motivation to work for the happiness of all sentient beings and to free them all from suffering. Without at least these qualities, it will be difficult to accomplish the deeper meaning associated with these meditations.

## **SPIRITUAL FRIEND**

The third Karmapa Rangjung Dorje notes in his famous prayer, *Aspirations for Mahamudra* that a spiritual friend is the source of the key instructions to Mahamudra. If possible, students should undertake these practices with the help of a spiritual friend. A teacher does not have to be a Buddha. Thrangu Rinpoche defines a spiritual friend as



someone with 'a little bit of experience and a little bit of integrity'. Still a teacher who has experience in these practices and some integrity may be difficult to find even among lamas in these degenerate times. When it is not possible to find a suitable teacher, I recommend that a student at least obtain a copy of the first transcript of *Moonbeams of Mahamudra* from Nammo Buddha Publications. This transcript of Thrangu Rinpoche's instructions will provide a firm foundation for one's practice until such time as a suitable teacher becomes available.

It has been said that the Buddha's wisdom and compassion extends to every living being and with enough confidence and devotion, one can succeed in these practices even on one's own. Since life is short and uncertain, I strongly recommend against putting off practice until one finds the 'ideal' teacher. It has been said that when considered and applied carefully and diligently, these practices alone can help open the door to the heart of Mahamudra. The practices serve to point-out one's true nature directly within one's own experience and condition. Given the choice between practicing without a teacher and not practicing at all, Tibetan teachers of the path of liberation have always said that the former is infinitely preferable. This is in contrast to the path of tantra where it is said that practice without the empowerment of a teacher is futile.

Note that a genuine teacher will ask a student to evaluate his or her own progress and participate in deciding on a practice accordingly. A fundamental teaching of the Buddha is that a student ultimately remains responsible for his or her own development. Instructions are given which empower the student to evaluate and make choices for him or her self. The Buddha said that even his words should be inspected by everyone, and that this should be done as carefully as if one were buying gold at the bazaar, where trickery is rampant. Similarly, he said that one's progress depends entirely on one's own effort. No one else can tread the path for you.

It is common to observe a relationship between one's effort on the path and other factors. For example, one's effort varies quite a bit in dependence upon one's confidence in one's spiritual teacher, in the teachings, and in the practices. This is the essence of the role of a teacher and in this regard, the relationship between the teacher and student is a very simple one. "Guru worship" is thrown out the door by all teachers worth their salt, a lesson that is still painstakingly ignored by many students in the West. Genuine teachers are just happy to have had some access to the dharma and take joy at sharing this with others. The certification of teachers by masters who 'deem them ready' is a sad state of affairs which, not surprisingly, has had unfortunate consequences in the West over the past twenty years. When I was eighteen years old and had received certain preliminary teachings from

Dukchen Thuksay Rinpoche (acting as head of the Drukpa Kagyu at the time) in Darjeeling, India, in my naivete, I inquired about teaching the dharma to others upon my return to the West. He replied, “As long as there is one being who is interested in the dharma, you should teach.” Of course.

Mahamudra is described as both a lineage of realization and a lineage of instruction and the spiritual friend is the living and tangible manifestation of this.

Traditionally, two ancestral lineages are defined: the long and the short lineages.

### *The Long Lineage*

Near the end of his life, the historical Buddha Shakyamuni thought that it would be of benefit to provide instructions on the essence of the dharma (chö). Thus he provided instruction on Mahamudra, which was regarded to be the most excellent of all his teachings. In addition, he prophesized that others in the future would also do so. Two bodhisattvas named Manjughosa and Avalokitesvara reincarnated later in the form of Deva Ratnamati and Deva Putra Sukhantha, received this instruction from Vajradhara and then gave this instruction to Saraha who realized it instantly and fully. Saraha passed it on to the Nagarjuna who is renowned in the history of Buddhism.

One of Nagarjuna’s students, Savari, received and realized the transmission. Some say Savari received this directly from Vajradhara and the two Bodhisattvas, Manjushri and Avalokitesvara. He in turn passed it on to Maitripa, who passed it on to Vajrapani and others.

### *The Short Lineage*

The Indian Mahasiddha Tilopa was said to have been in incarnation of Chakrasamvara and received the instructions on Mahamudra and other teachings directly from the primordial Buddha Vajradhara. In addition, it is said he studied with Nagarjuna.

Tilopa in turn passed on the instructions to Naropa. The first Tibetan to receive these teachings via this lineage was Marpa, the translator, who received the essential instructions from both Naropa and Maitripa.

Marpa passed on the lineage to Milarepa, Tibet’s most famous and accomplished yogi. Milarepa’s students included the illustrious Gampopa, who renewed emphasis on the quintessential Mahamudra instructions. In the *Samadhiraja Sutra* the Buddha prophesized that the sutric Mahamudra teachings would be resurrected by the Bodhisattva

Chandraprabha. Gampopa was regarded to be an incarnation of Chandraprabha and is said to have fulfilled this prophecy.

From these teachers, countless branches have formed. Mahamudra allows a lot of latitude in life-style and both teachers and students are free to select aspects of the practices which are most suitable and beneficial to one. The basic life stories of the lineage sons and daughters serve to suggest just what kind of motley crew have benefited from it! Countless practitioners have come to terms with their human condition and discovered complete liberation in its midst.

### *Other Lineages*

In addition to the Kagyu lineage, many aspects of Mahamudra have been joined into the Gelug tradition. Its founder, Tsongkapa, received and realized teachings on Mahamudra and the Six Yogas of Naropa. Based on the teachings of one of Tsongkapa's successor's, the First Panchen Lama later established the Ganden-Kagyu tradition of Mahamudra which recombined Gelug and Kagyu streams. Separately, since the earliest days the Nyingma tradition contained a series of teachings called the mind series (sem de); these together with elements of the space series (long de) and secret teachings (men ngag de) of the path known as the Great Completion (dzok chen) include many of the instructions on Mahamudra. Even the original shamanistic Bon tradition which was influenced by the influx of Buddha dharma has come to include teachings very similar to Mahamudra, such as the A-Khrid tradition.

The streams of motivation, instruction, practice, realization, and dedication behind these all are one. It is a stream of bodhicitta, the aspiration towards and application of enlightenment for the benefit for all beings. It is a stream of instruction on how to foster direct perception of mind-as-it-is. It is a stream of practice towards accomplishing this recognition. It is a stream of stabilized realization and awareness of mind-as-it-is. It is a stream of dedication to return the benefit of this to all beings.

## **PERSPECTIVES FROM THREE KAGYU LINEAGES**

### *Karma Kagyu Tradition*

The first point is that effort does not depend on one's external conditions, so one should abandon all ideas about pre-requisites

required to make an effort. We can begin right where we stand in whatever condition we may find itself. This tradition is also called the *mahasiddha* tradition. Members of this tradition historically have held any kind of lifestyle, from beggar to king, from yogi to butcher. We should begin in our condition right now how it is. The idea of prerequisites should be abandoned since this demand or expectation can act as a major obstacle. Even the instruction on the eight freedoms and ten endowments which make up a precious human birth should in no way serve as a discouragement here, for example, in case one of the factors is missing. One should not feel, “I am not ready or the time is not right or I am too busy with my work or studies or with raising twelve kids or I don’t have the right teacher or whatever.” So we begin where we stand.

So what kind of effort do we make? We begin with some renunciation or detachment (*shen-lok*) for prerequisites in daily life as we have come to know it. We let go or cut through our own demands we place on this life. For example, we can acknowledge that lasting happiness will not come from worldly, wealth, honor, and fame and that our habit of pursuing these with such vigor has to be cut through. They will be of no assistance after we die, so we decide to give these up. Similarly, we work on giving up incessant avoidance of suffering. We can recognize that lasting peace will not come out of clumsy, knee-jerk efforts to avoid suffering. All efforts to date have not had an impact which will endure. In fact, suffering has some value and can be used to enhance our realization, so when it arises we can be thankful for it. So whether our current condition is positive, negative, or neutral, we must begin to practice. And we must let go with our obsession of avoiding the painful and pursuing pleasurable experiences.

The second key point is that there is a rich lineage of instruction and realization which provides a basis for this practice. We can set out on our own and ultimately we may come to the same place, but it will take an incredibly long time, and we are unlikely to succeed in this lifetime. By relying on the instructions of the lineage holders of the past and the present, by reading and listening to their teachings and reflecting on their meaning, and then putting them into practice, we can make substantial progress. When we become a lineage member, it is like we are now able to inherit wonderful riches and benefit immensely from those efforts. A teacher opens the doors to the treasury of instructions (*men-ngak ter-go*). Approaching these teachings and practices with sincerity, and coupling a keen interest with appreciation, we help ourselves have the opportunity to succeed. In fact the opportunity for success is strongly dependent on our interest and appreciation. At first, this attitude may be somewhat superficial but with time we may discover that it arises naturally within us.

Thirdly, we need to ensure that we recognize the nature of mind and become firmly established in that recognition. How do we do this? We begin by receiving pointing-out instructions of this lineage, as if we are nudged (*chin-lop*) by the efforts of those who have some experience (*geshes*) in Mahamudra. Basically, these instructions, through their potency, enable us to directly perceive the true nature of mind in our being and in our experience. Since nothing is closer and more immediate than our own experience, when realization dawns in it, we can come to know our true nature with complete confidence and a lucid certainty.

In the beginning, we establish this through the practice of mindfulness (*drenpa*), vigilant awareness (*sheyshin*), and kindness-caring. Eventually we come to discover that intrinsic to and at the essence of everything which arises, including our thoughts (*namtok*), there is a lucid openness (*tong-nyid*), a freshness (*soma-te*). We do not bring this freshness into stagnation or close off this openness by fabricating or altering (*ma-chö*) new realities, so we learn to relax a little. We return to and rest in our ordinary mind, free from fabrication or elaboration, the way mind is. Then we also learn how we may be mistaken about this essence or go astray in our understanding of it. Ultimately, it is said that we come to understand all as Mahamudra or the dharmakaya, and as the play of mind (*man-gak rolpa*) and that all experiences, samsara and nirvana, do not pass beyond mind and share the same essence.

This preceding summary is a loose overview of the instructions included in the key Karma Kagyu practice text on Mahamudra, the Dorje Chang Thun Ma. Please see the detailed translation of the text maintained by Mahamudra Meditation Center for a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of this prayer.

### *Drukpa Kagyu Tradition*

Pema Karpo's classic work *Practice of the Co-emergent Mahamudra* (translated by Anzan Hoshin) presents a succinct summary of practices of the four yogas of Mahamudra. This is the text which I encountered in Evans-Wentz's and Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub's *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines* and started to practice at the age of fourteen. Practice of this ultimately inspired me to study under Drukpa Kagyu lamas in 1974. It provides very simple and precise instructions on the key meditation practices of Mahamudra.

It states that the preparatory instructions include the ordinary and special preliminaries explained earlier. In addition, it instructs one on the prerequisites of body, speech, and mind by explaining (1) the seven-pointed posture of Vairochana, (2) silence, and (3) Tilopa's instructions

regarding the three times and dropping analysis and meditation. Once again, emphasis is on non-wavering of mind and continued mindfulness.

The yoga of one-pointedness provides instructions on meditation with support and without support. With support distinguishes between ordinary objects (e.g. rock or wood) and special objects such as symbols of the Buddha's body (e.g. thanka), speech (seed syllable such as HUM), and mind (e.g. small light.) In addition, breathing meditation is taught using the vajra recitation (OM, AH, HUM) coupled with counting, following the breath, investigating breath in dependence on the five elements, and vase breath. Meditation without support uses (1) detecting and cutting down distractions as soon as they arise, (2) 'let it be' with respect to whatever arises, and (3) resting mind in its own nature. The third practice consists of the practice of (a) 'not too loose, not too tight, just right' like a weaving a Brahmin's thread, (b) resting in the boundless state of mind like 'cutting a bundle of hay', (c) gazing like a 'a small child looking at frescoes in a temple' and (d) rest like 'an elephant' who's thick skin is pricked by a needle.'

The yoga of freedom-from-elaboration involves (1) investigating the mind when it is still and when it is moving, (2) using obstacles including samsara as aids by 'carrying them to path,' (3) exploring the three times, (4) exploring the stuff of mind, and (5) investigating the one and many with respect to mind.

The yoga of one-taste involves (1) understanding all as inseparable from mind, such as in dreams, (2) the sameness of knower and known, and (3) resting all in its natural condition by the example of water and waves.

The yoga of non-meditation points to the wisdom which knows itself (rang rig ye she) and the effortless self-liberation of ignorance.

A special teaching of this lineage exists with regard to carrying all dualities and afflictions on the path.

### *Drikung Kagyu Tradition*

A particularly elegant unity of the essential paths of Gampopa is maintained by the Drikung Kagyu tradition. In this emphasis is placed on a five-fold approach to Mahamudra which combines (1) bodhicitta (loving-kindness), (2) yidam practice, (3) teacher practice, (4) Mahamudra (with emphasis on realizing emptiness via interdependence), (5) dedication of merit. This is consistent with the practices of most of the other lineages, but this framework includes all the vital elements. Please see *The Garland of Mahamudra Practices* for a detailed introduction to these five areas of practice.

A beautiful song by Lord Jigten Sumgon called 'The Song of the Five Profound Paths of Mahamudra' (see *Prayer Flags: The Spiritual Songs of Lord Jigten Sumgon*, translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen) outlines the core elements of this practice and was taught by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen to members of our center in 1993. In 1996 H. H. Chetsang Rinpoche, one of the heads of the Drikung Kagyu lineage, authored a sadhana called "The Heart Essence of Mahamudra" which includes the practice of all five of the above aspects. This is a tantric Mahamudra practice and therefore requires an empowerment for practice.

In 1997, H. E. Garchen Rinpoche gave Mahamudra teachings in California which were based on the teachings of Lord Jigten Sumgon, the founder of the Drikung Kagyu (translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen; these are available from Ratna Shri Center in San Francisco).

# AFTERWORD

I have assembled this guide to the practice of Mahamudra meditation at the repeated requests of my friends and students, in particular, Keith Hale, Lucie Levine, and Pat Schotka. Thanks to Keith for giving this a thorough going over and for his many helpful suggestions. This book is intended to support both individual practice of this path and an understanding of how to teach these practices. May we determine the significance of each of these practices in the continuum of our own being.

I would like to particularly thank my wife Ilene Barth for helping me to make this text a reality and for consistently demonstrating to me that wisdom and compassion are sometimes understood most by those who seek it the least.