

INTRODUCTION TO MAHAMUDRA IN THE GELUG TRADITION

By Zasep Tulku Rinpoche

What is Mahamudra and why do we need to practise it?

Mahamudra is the ultimate nature of the mind, intrinsically it is pure and empty of inherent nature: pure awareness, luminous and spacious.

The true answer is that Mahamudra is the very heart of Buddha's teachings. Mahamudra reveals the true essence of the mind: clarity and cognizance. Mahamudra practice slows us down so we can see things as they really are. Mahamudra is meditation that enables us to realize that the true nature of all things is emptiness of inherent existence and dependent-arising. Through meditation, we realize that emptiness and dependent-arising are as inseparable as the two sides of a door, or the front and back of a human hand.

In the text called the 'The Drop of the Great Seal' - In Tibetan *Chag Chen Tegle* — *Mu* means the wisdom of emptiness, *Dra* is liberation from Samsara. *Maha* is greatness. Hence Mahamudra is the great union of emptiness and liberation.

In these teachings I will present the Gelug Mahamudra of Sutra tradition, based on the commentaries by the first Panchen Lama, Losang Chokyi Gyaltsen, and by the great teachers, Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen, Gungtang Tenpe Dronme, Tsultem Nyima and Shar Kalden Gyatso

I will include instructions on preliminary practices, and the different practices of Samatha Mahamudra and Vipashyana Mahamudra in the Sutra tradition.

According to the great Gelug Gurus, Mahamudra is the essence of Buddha's teachings and the path of all Buddhas of past, present and future times; it is the great path of those fortunate being who strive to become enlightened in this lifetime.

The Tibetan term for Mudra is *Chag ja* - *Chag* is emptiness. The realization of emptiness is something that removes all impurity. This does not mean we are making something new that was not there in the first place. When we meditate, we recognize the nature of emptiness is always there; the realization of emptiness dispels defilements. With the realization of emptiness one is able to perceive all mental defilements and their nature of emptiness.

There are different levels of Mahamudra, we generally group them into three levels:

1. Ground Mahamudra which is present within all sentient beings. This is the awareness that the nature of the mind has no inherent existence — empty, vast, spacious uncreated awareness — without beginning.
2. Path Mahamudra actualized and cultivated through the method of practice passed down through the unbroken lineage of Gurus. This leads us to take responsibility for practising until we accomplish the goal.
3. Result Mahamudra is the Dharmakaya that we can achieve through following the example of all the previous great lineage Gurus.

Mahamudra meditation is awareness and understanding of the true nature of mind, emptiness and lack of inherent nature. The mind is spacious, without beginning and end. It is like observing the sky without the trace of birds, or the trails of jet planes.

You can merge your consciousness in the state of Mahamudra, beyond words and thoughts. The true nature of the mind is raw awareness or naked awareness. It is an uncovered, untamed and unaltered state without fabrication. As the great teacher Gampopa put it, "It cannot be explained intellectually, but follow the instructions of the guru and practise according the lineage."

Mahamudra is a practice that leads us to experience the true nature of our own mind, face to face.

The sources of Mahamudra teachings go all the back to the Buddha's Prajnaparamita, or Heart Sutra, and also to the Samadhi Raja, or the King of Concentration Sutra. The Tibetan word is *Teng nye zin gyalpoe do*. This says that the nature of all phenomena is Mahamudra.

The Heart Sutra states: "Mind is emptiness and emptiness is also mind. There is no mind other than emptiness, no emptiness other than the mind."

Mahamudra is the method of realizing the clear light wisdom of shunyata and accomplishing directly and vividly what we call the 'meaning clear light'. In its Tantric aspect, the clear light nature of the mind is called 'Ultimate short A'. It means the uncultivated mind, the unspoiled and pure mind.

As the Buddha himself said: " Mind does not exist within the mind, but the true nature of the mind is clear light."

(For *Praises and Receiving blessings from Lineage Gurus* go to the next pages.)

Praises and Receiving Blessings from the Lineage Gurus of Gelug Mahamudra

Translated by Zasep Tulku Rinpoche, 2017

Namo Mahamudra-ya

Homage to Prajnaparamita, the great mother of all the Buddhas.

Glorious primordial Buddha, principal of the Buddha family, the spontaneous pervasive mansion of the three kayas.

I pray to the all-pervasive lord, the great Vajradhara.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness.

You are the holy teacher of all the Buddhas of the three times,

Dwelling in the perfect pure lands of the Buddhas of the ten directions:

I pray to Manjushri whose wisdom is supreme among all Aryas.

Here in the northern land of snows,

You are a second Buddha for the preservation of the Dharma:

I pray to the most holy Losang Drakpa, Je Tsongkhapa, the perfect teacher.

You are the principal holder of the practice lineage of Lama Je Tsongkhapa,

The true heart-son of Manjushri:

I pray to the great yogi, Togden Jhampel Gyatso:

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

You opened treasures like the ear-whispered lineage teachings,

By your kindness, you ripened the mind stream of fortunate disciples:

I pray to holy Baso Chokyi Gyaltzen:

After having perfected the two yogic stages of Vajrayana

You attained the vajra body beyond death:

I pray to the great Mahasiddha, Drup Chen Cho Dorje.

You abandoned completely the bondage of the eight worldly Dharmas (Spiritual Materialism),

You are the holder of the highest banner of absolute Dharma truth:

I pray to Losang Dhundub (Ensapa).

In the supreme joyful palace of the three Buddhakayas,

You are the spiritual guide who dances with saffron robes:

I pray to you, fully enlightened in one lifetime, Sangye Yeshe.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

Knowing all phenomena, and holder of Lama Je Tsongkapa's teachings,

You are no different from the holy being, omniscient Losang Drakpa:

I pray to the most holy Losang Chokyi Gyaltzen (First Panchen Lama).

Buddha's entire teachings —sutras, tantras and commentaries —

You condensed them beautifully, showing how to practise effectively:

I pray to the Great Mahasiddha, Gendün Gyeltsen.

Extracting the essence nectar of Losang Gyalwa (Tsongkhapa's) teaching,

By your great perseverance, you showed how to enjoy the practice:

I pray to you, great master Gyeltsen Dzinpa.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the

highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

The profound and extensive Dharma essence, you taught for the fortunate ones:

I pray to Tantric abbot, Kunchog Gyaltzen.

For the benefit of all beings and the preservation of the Dharma,

You reincarnated again, graciously like the Venerable Losang Chökyi Gyeltsen himself:

I pray to the holy venerable Losang Yeshe (Panchen Losang Yeshe).

Blessed by the true Buddha, you have achieved the profound path of oral transmission:

I pray to the great Mahasidha, Losang Trinley.

Accomplished essence of Je Losang Gyalwa's ear-whispered lineage,

Practice-in-action, I pray to the Great Siddha, Losang Namgyel.

You taught Lama Je Tsongkhapa's ear-whispered lineage teachings perfectly, without error:

I pray to the great and kind master, Kachen Yeshe Gyaltzen.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

You spread the essence of the complete, perfect path to central and distant lands:

I pray to the Venerable Ngawang Jampa.

Glorious primordial Buddha, wearing saffron robes,

You who nurtured sentient beings of Tibet and China:

I pray to Panchen Lama, Pelden Yeshe.

You have achieved the realizations of the sublime path of sutra and tantra,

By your single-pointed contemplation:

I pray to the learned and great yogi, Ngawang Dorje.

You are highly skilled in illuminating the path of Dharma, like the second Buddha himself,

Especially in teaching and composition:

I pray to the venerable Ngulchu Dharma Bhadra.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

Your compassionate eyes never close, and your profound and immense wisdom is like Manjushri's:

I pray to you, Yangchen Drubpey Dorje.

After perfecting the yoga of bliss and voidness, you have reached the palace of Zung Jug:

I make requests to the great learned one and Siddha, Tendzin Tsondru.

After perfecting the realization of the profound Shunyata path,

You upheld the banner of study and contemplation:

I pray to Losang Tsondru Gyeltsen.

Holding a banner which represents the three levels of Buddha's teachings,

You are perfectly pure without any stains of immoral conduct:

I pray to the most holy being, Losang Donyo Drubpa.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness.

You are like the second Buddha, Je Tsongkhapa,

Reincarnated again as a monk in saffron robes:

I pray to the most kind and pure being, Gelek Gyatso.

In the immense and profound path that is the treasury of Dharma,

You provided teaching and practice for those fortunate ones:

I pray to the most kind Guru, Ngawang Jampa.

With stainless logic and debate which clarifies our minds,
You revealed the sublime path, beyond the two extremes:
I pray to the skilful teacher, Jigme Wangpo.

You are the incomparable and unequalled master who explains
The lineage and practice of Lord Manjushri and Tsongkhapa:
I pray to the holy Gungtang Tenpey Dronme

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness

By tasting the Amrita of the Gaden ear-whispered teaching of Jamgon lama,
The strength of your realization of Dharmakaya became even more powerful:
I pray to the holy Konchok Gyeltsen.

You have contemplated the sacred teachings of the Gaden practice lineage,
Remaining in the pristine wilderness for long periods of time:
I pray to the great Mahasiddha, Ngodrub Rabten.

Accomplishing methods of awareness on abandonment and actualizing,
You showered down abundant Dharma rain of excellent explanation:
I pray to the highest Dharma teacher, Gendun Gyatso.

Your wisdom shines like the crown jewel among great masters,
As your attainment of the two stages of Vajrayana is supreme:
I pray to you, glorious Palden Tenpe Nyima

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness.

Due to the power of your loving-kindness for all sentient beings,
You upheld the banner of Lord Buddha's teachings of sutra and tantra:
I pray to Je Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo - Jampa Tenzing Trinlay Gyatso.

You propagated the holy Dharma of scripture, and the method of gaining realizations
The way wished for by countless victorious Buddhas:

I pray to incomparable Yongzin Ling Rinpoche, Thubten Lungtog Namgyal Thinley.

The clear light of your holy mind ,a treasure-house of second Buddha Losang Drakpa,
Shines on fortunate disciplines, like myself:

I pray to my most kind root Guru, Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang, Losang Yeshe.

May I be blessed to cut the mental continuum of my self-grasping,

**To generate Metta-Karuna, Bodhicitta and compassion and soon attain the
highest state of Mahamudra: the union of bliss and emptiness**

May you bless me to develop aversion towards to samsara;

May you bless me to take upon myself responsibility for liberating all sentient beings;

May I soon achieve the unified path of common and uncommon attainments, and
particularly the great path of Mahamudra.

May you bless me with the confidence to see my body and the Guru's body as one;

May you bless me with the confidence to see my speech and the Guru's speech as one;

May you bless me with the confidence to see my mind and the Guru's holy mind as
inseparable, here and now.