

## Chapter 6

### Mahamudra Practice

#### **3. Mahāmudrā Meditation: the Essential Meaning of the Completion Stage**

The Protector of the World, Jigten Sumgön, said:

In the vast space of mind-nature  
If the gathered clouds of thought do not disperse  
The stars and planets of the two wisdoms will not shine;  
Therefore, persistently strive in this non-conceptual mind.<sup>1</sup>

This has two parts: (1) stages of instruction and (2) pointing out instruction.

##### ***1. Stages of Instruction***

The first is two-fold: instruction by means of the transcendent perfections of (1) concentration and (2) supreme knowledge; or, (1) calm abiding and (2) special insight.

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<sup>1</sup> Space represents the nature of mind, the *dharmakāya*. Gathered clouds represent the adventitious, co-emergent defilements, or thoughts. The stars and planets shining when the gathered clouds disperse represents the following: when sustaining the fundamental nature of mind, which is primordially unborn, or sustaining the non-conceptual meaning without distraction or grasping, the qualities that are innately present from the beginning, such as the two wisdoms, are actualized.

## **1. Calm Abiding**

In general, “calm abiding” means to abide calmly without the disruption of conceptual constructs in the mind. To practice it, there are two ways: (1) with signs and (2) without signs.

### **1. With Signs**

This is two-fold: (1) with support and (2) without support.

#### ***1. With Support***

Concentrate intensely on a support of observation in front of you, one that is not too bright.<sup>2</sup> Without being distracted, stay steadily focused<sup>3</sup> on it for as long as you can within a state of empty clarity. When thoughts suddenly arise and your mind does not abide, cut through them immediately, as soon as they arise. Stay focused nakedly on that support of observation. Rest naturally, without polluting your mind with thoughts such as “the support of observation has been brought into my mind,” “my mind has been carried out to the support of observation,” “my mind and the support of observation are the same,” or “they are different,” etc. It is also fine to use any other support of observation, such as the body of a Tathāgata, etc.

Or, visualize a *yidam* deity with the path of the generation stage. Within that state, stay as long as is comfortable without being distracted from the clear focus of mind, and without polluting your mind with thoughts such as “the color of the body and implements are like so,” “the generation stage is clear,” or “it is not clear,” etc. If you can maintain your attention well in the generation stage, there are great

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<sup>2</sup> It seems that the intent here is that something bright and shiny may harm the eyes; or, it may lead one to err into agitation and dispersion.

<sup>3</sup> The mind, eyes, and winds are one essential point; the mind abides when the eyes don’t move.

purposes such as gaining stability in liberation, integrating the two stages, and consummating the viewpoint of the path of release.

## **2. *Without Support***

This section has two parts: (1) with the breath and (2) without the breath.

### **1. With the Breath**

Direct your attention to your breath coming in, remaining, and going out. While meditating, do not pollute your mind with thoughts such as “now it is coming in, now it is going out...” Just use the breath as a *mere* support for your attention.

To summarize, to abide naturally in the natural state without disturbing the mind with distorting conceptuality is the definition of concentration. Also, the Precious Protector, Jigten Sumgön, claimed it to be the *vajra*-like meditative stabilization because of destroying the conceptuality that grasps at signs.

### **2. Without the Breath**

Without any basis of support for the mind, rest naturally in the state of just how you are. If empty, let be within emptiness; if clear, let be within clarity—let be without fabrication. If thoughts suddenly arise, directly cut through them as was previously explained.

## **2. Without Signs**

This section has two parts: (1) tightened and (2) loosened.

### **1. Tightened**

As was stated by Master Padma, for example:

At the time of the completion stage,  
Sharpen your awareness,  
Invigorate your senses, and  
Awaken your consciousness.

Enliven your body and gaze. At times, dispel stale winds, sharpen your awareness, and resolve not to entertain any thoughts of the past, present, or future. Cut through all the movements of thought and rest within the state of empty clarity.

## **2. Loosened**

If you become fatigued, or your mind becomes agitated by the previous [tightened technique], then let your body and mind relax and rest naturally. Within this state, if coarse thoughts such as afflictive emotions arise, directly cut through them. If there is a subtle movement of thought, let it be without obstructing it. Cut through dispersion through balancing these methods. Do short sessions frequently; this is a quintessential instruction.

If you are tightened too long, there is the fault of becoming agitated. If you are too loose, then you fall under the power of drowsiness, dullness, and sloth. Nevertheless, [there are specific techniques] according to a person's type and constitution: those who are sluggish, dull, bored, and lack clarity of awareness—having a predominance of the earth element—should mainly use the tightened technique. Those whose minds are like monkeys—the type who are predominantly excited and diffuse—should mainly practice the loosened technique. Those of the type who are dull and excited equally should practice [tighten and loosened techniques] in alternation. Without knowing this essential point, there is a danger that your meditation will be faulty.

## **2. Special Insight**

In the instructions on special insight in the general language of *dharma*, there is meditation on (1) “the selflessness of phenomena” and (2) “the selflessness of persons.” In the context of the profound instructions here, they are said to be (1) “ascertaining the various appearances as mind” and (2) “cutting through superimpositions regarding the ground’s expression.”

### **1. Ascertaining Various Appearances as Mind**

This section has two parts: (1) ascertaining the nature of mind—the selflessness of phenomena, and (2) ascertaining thoughts, which are its expression—the selflessness of persons.

#### ***1. Ascertaining the Nature of Mind***

When the mind abides alertly, look nakedly into its essence. Is this abiding the body or the mind? If it is the mind, it must be some kind of entity. Yet how is it? Does it have form, shape or color? Is its shape like a square, triangular, or round? Is its color white, red, or black? Is it in the body, outside the body, or somewhere in between? When the faculties, the eyes and so forth, see visible forms or hear sounds, does a single mind rotate among each of the faculties or does it pervade them all? As such, where is it? In the five major organs, such as the heart? In the six minor organs, such as the intestines? In the upper or lower part? If you think the mind permeates the entire body, then how does it permeate? If it remains as inseparably wed to the body, then where is the mind when the body becomes a corpse? In this way, examine well [the mind’s] arising, abiding, departing, and so forth.

#### ***2. Ascertaining Thoughts, Which Are Its Expression***

Have the one examining the mind [yourself] look nakedly at thoughts. Do they have shape and color, etc.? Where do thoughts begin? When do they arise? Where do they abide now? Where do they go in the end? And so forth—examine in detail. It is extremely important to analyze deeply until you have gained certainty for yourself from within.

## **2. Cutting Through Superimpositions Regarding the Ground's Expression**

This section has four parts: (1) resolving that thoughts are the mind, (2) resolving that appearances are the mind, (3) cutting through the root of the abiding and moving mind, (4) resolving, or conclusively settling, that whatever arises is unborn.

### ***1. Resolving that Thoughts are the Mind***

Within the state of a vividly abiding mind, construct a thought and look nakedly at it. Does this thought come from your mind or not? Is it the same as your mind or different? If it came from your mind, does it arise like light rays from the sun? If so, do thoughts and mind arise together like the simultaneous appearance of the sun and light rays?

Or you may think that thoughts arise upon meeting with conditions, and do not when not meeting with conditions—like smoke arising when incense and fire meet. Is it the case that along with the cessation of one of the two, mind and thought, the other also ceases with it—like the smoke ceases along with the cessation of fire and incense?

Or you may think that they are like reflected images in a mirror. Well, does a thought depend upon the condition of an object like a reflected image depends upon the condition of an object? Do thoughts arise in one part of the mind and not another, like reflections shine in one part of a mirror but not in another?

Or you may think that they are like the appearance of the moon in water. Well, as the moon appears simultaneously in as many containers of water as there are, many conflicting thoughts, such as pleasure and pain, would likewise be suitable to simultaneously arise in the mind, but they do not.

Or you may think that they arise like a child from his mother? Well, do thoughts and mind live together as a mother and her child live together? Can the mind die when a thought is born, like a mother dying after giving birth to a child? Can thoughts die and the mind live on, like a mother living after her child has died? Is it that thoughts and mind both die, like the possibility that both the mother and child die? [Investigate this] in detail and reach a decision.

Moreover, you may think that mind and thoughts are the same. Are they the same in that the mind arises as thought, or are they the same by way of thoughts merging into the mind? If they are not the same, how are they different? In this way, investigate well.

## ***2. Resolving that Appearances are the Mind***

Look directly at something in front of you like a pillar. Does this form arise from the mind or not? Is it the same as the mind or different? You may think that it does not come from the mind. Then, even when dead, it would be suitable to appear to a corpse, but it does not. If it comes from the mind, then when you leave this place to go somewhere else, it would be suitable that objects like pillars accompany you, but they do not. Investigate in the same way as before with such things as sounds, scents, tastes, and textures.

Again, if the mind and objects are the same, are they the same in that the mind becomes appearances or are they the same by way of appearances merging into the mind? If they are not the same, are appearances and mind such that they are independently self-sufficient? How are they different? Investigate in this way.

### ***3. Cutting Through the Root of the Abiding and Moving Mind***

Look nakedly at the essence of the abiding mind at the time of calm abiding. Also, look nakedly at the essence of the moving mind, as when searching for the mind in special insight. Is there a difference between the two or not? If there is difference, what is it like? If not, why is it that the mind both moves and abides?

Moreover, through distinctive examination, thoroughly resolve the presence of (1) subtle movements within an abiding mind, such as the thought “it is still,” and (2) the subtle aspect of abiding within the state of a moving mind, such as the thought “it is moving.”

### ***4. Resolving, or Conclusively Settling, that Whatever Arises is Unborn***

Without paying attention to thoughts and appearances such as those of the six collections [of consciousness], look nakedly at the essence of the mind-nature itself. Is it clear? Is it empty? Is it predominantly clear or predominantly empty? Is it indivisible as empty clarity? It is extremely important to investigate thoroughly in this way.<sup>4</sup>

## ***2. Pointing Out Instruction***

This section has three parts: (1) the actual pointing out instruction, (2) explanation of the faults of meditation, and (3) the experience of faultless meditation, or the way to sustain the continuity of practice.

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<sup>4</sup> On these points, if you leave it as a mere intellectual understanding, and think ‘I have heard this before,’ without probing to the depths of analysis, then later you will enter into a web of doubt. Some so-called mature meditators still need to search out the pointing out instructions and the obstacles to be dispelled; this fault is due to their failure to decisively resolve this here.



## **1. Actual Pointing Out Instruction**

From among the three types of co-emergence, [co-emergence of thoughts, appearances, and mind-nature,] I will first state the pointing out instructions for the co-emergence of thoughts.

### **1. Co-emergence of Thoughts**

Previously at the time of ascertaining thoughts, and ascertaining thoughts as the mind, if you understood thoughts and mind to be the same or different, then you still have yet to resolve them. In the previous explanation of metaphors, if you understood [the relationship between thoughts and mind to be] like light rays arising from the sun, it is similar from the aspect that thoughts just arise from the mind. However, while the sun and light rays appear distinctly, it is impossible for *two*, mind and thoughts, to appear together.

If you understand [the relationship to be] like incense and smoke, it is similar from the aspect of simply arising when meeting with conditions. However, while the smoke is gone when the incense is consumed, it is not feasible that when one of the two, mind and thought, is gone that the other is consumed too.

Or, if you understand [the relationship to be] like a child born from his mother, it is similar from the aspect that one arises from the other. However, since the mother and child are separate continua, if the mother dies the child can live, or if the child dies the mother can live, they can both live or die together, but this is impossible [for mind and thought].

Thus, an appropriate metaphor is like gold and tarnish. Mind and thought arise co-emergently. Even though it appears as if thoughts obscure the nature of mind, which is the *dharmakāya*, by recognizing that thoughts themselves are the *dharmakāya*, you understand that they are self-purified, inseparably liberated. They are not the same by such ways as the mind becoming thought or thought merging

with the mind. Rather, mind and thought are essentially indivisible; they are only different by means of contradistinction, in the way that water and ice appear differently due to the conditions of temperature, but in essence are none other than water. Therefore, when you realize that they are neither the same nor different, you have recognized the co-emergence of thoughts. Furthermore, Maitripa said:

Adventitious thoughts arise from the unborn;  
Thoughts themselves are the essential nature of the expanse.  
From the beginning, these two are not different;  
The equal taste of these two is my teaching.

## **2. Co-emergence of Appearances<sup>5</sup>**

When you look directly at something in front of you like a pillar or pot, its appearance as something truly real with genuine characteristic is the *imagined nature* because it is imputed by the deluded mind. It is produced by other conditions; hence, it is the *dependent nature*. When its essence is examined and scrutinized, the *thoroughly established nature* is the realization that it is essentially not established other than being a mere name, a mere sign, and a mere designation. As illustrated by this, all appearances—such as forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and textures—have these three natures.

Not even the Victorious Ones can stop this mere appearance; the mere appearance itself is empty of its own essence. Therefore, appearances and mind are not such that they are independently self-sufficient: appearances are not left outside and the mind is not left inside; they are essentially indivisible, from either aspect of clarity or emptiness. They are also not the same by way of the mind going out to

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<sup>5</sup> Resolving appearances as mind.

merge with appearances or appearances coming in to merge with the mind. When you realize that in reality, appearances and mind are neither the same nor different, then you have recognized the co-emergence of appearances. Furthermore, the *Inconceivable Tantra* states:

The co-emergent nature of mind is the *dharmakāya*.

Co-emergent appearances are the radiance of the *dharmakāya*.

Therefore, indivisible appearances and mind are co-emergent.

### **3. Co-emergence of Mind-Nature<sup>6</sup>**

From among faultless calm-abidings in the beginning, middle, and end, in the end, there is calm-abiding which is like an ocean undisturbed by waves. All thought-constructs are completely pacified; nevertheless, it is not like a non-conceptual oblivion. The six collections [of consciousness] are unhindered and lucid, yet the mind does not follow after them, but resolves their essence as indivisible clarity and emptiness. No matter how many waves form on the vast ocean, other than the surface, the depths are not moved. Likewise, even movements within abiding and abiding within movement, etc., are none other than mind-nature's mere aspect of lucidity; when self-liberated as the essence of indivisible emptiness and clarity, you have recognized the co-emergence of mind-nature. Furthermore, the Glorious Shapari said:

Just as all the various rivers, such as the Ganges,  
Are of one taste in the salty ocean,

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<sup>6</sup> The pointing out instructions on ascertaining the nature of mind, cutting through the root of the abiding and moving mind, and resolving whatever appears as unborn.

You should know that the investigating mind, and all the various mental states

Are of one taste in the *dharmadhātu*.

## 2. Explanation of the Faults of Meditation

For an extensive presentation of the faults of meditation, you should know it from the *Vajra Song of the Non-Conceptual Ultimate*. What I write here is extracted from that *Vajra Song*:<sup>7</sup>

For those following the meditation on such a meaning  
The mistakes and faults of meditation are as follows.

When mainly holding onto the aspect of the abiding mind  
The six collections cease or the mind blocks them.  
You become like a lake covered with ice;  
This is abiding in nothing at all.

It causes you to achieve the three states spoken by the Lord [Sakya] Paṇḍita;  
this is a fault.

Even when the perceptions of the six collections are not obstructed,  
When they are unclear and hazy  
This is the fault called “foggy meditation.”

When you are oblivious,  
Without noticing whether or not the six collections are clear,

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<sup>7</sup> This was written by the Lord [Jigten Sumgön] himself.

This is the fault called “neutrality.”

After a previous thought subsides and  
Before the next thought arises,  
Meditation with an unfocused mind in a blank state  
Is faulty because special insight is not involved.  
Desiring blank meditation to be the unwavering Mahāmudrā  
Has the fault of “starved meditation.”

Even when meditating on sheer bliss in the mind  
Since there is no wisdom of special insight,  
Thoughts and appearances are held as enemies.  
This is the fault of holding the one as two.

Also, when your mind is utterly empty,  
Without engaging in any thoughts of the three times,  
Since this also is not embraced by special insight,  
It has the fault of blocking the appearing quality.

Meditation with an apprehension of the unreality  
Of anything and everything that appears,  
With certainty in the emptiness that is provisional and definitive,  
Has the fault of holding onto an absence of entities.

Also, thinking meditation to be mindless perception,  
Without accepting or rejecting the six collections,  
Has the fault of abiding in equanimity.

Also, one may maintain that the nature of mind that is clear and non-  
conceptual is meditation—

An unidentifiable clarity of awareness

After thoughts have pacified on their own.

While this is similar to the meaning of the abiding reality,

Since the non-conceptual is eagerly held,

This too is an ultimate that is partial.

When the mind and all mental states

Are in a vivid state of empty clarity,

This is similar to meditation; however,

This does not have the natural swells of mindfulness and

The aspect of loose relaxation.

It also is difficult for one who is overly tight and rigid

To realize the abiding reality.

Those who boast the emptiness of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—

Without holding the three supreme refuges as refuge and

Without cultivating compassion for the six lowly beings—

Act without regard for causality.

This is the nihilistic prattle of voidness.

It may be thought that whether the mind is abiding or moving

One sustains that alone,

Having thrown out the necessary essentials such as faults and qualities,

Dispelling obstacles, and making enhancements.

Like the blind leading the blind,  
There are many who say “Mahāmudrā” and  
Claim to have realized the ultimate entity of mind.  
Yet when the thoughts of afflictive emotions arise  
Immediately they run wild into the gross five poisons.  
When medicine becomes poison there is no cure;  
This is the root of all the faults.

Also, here is the presentation of the four sidetracks and three deviations, etc.

### **1. Four Sidetracks**

There are four sidetracks: (1) sidetrack within the basic nature, (2) sidetrack within the antidote, (3) sidetrack within the path, and (4) sidetrack within stamping a seal. Each of the four has two parts: (1) a fundamental sidetrack and (2) a circumstantial sidetrack.

#### ***1. Sidetrack Within the Basic Nature***

##### **1. Fundamental Sidetrack**

The fundamental sidetrack is to hold on to only the empty aspect, in resolving that all things—from form to omniscience—from the beginning lack a basic nature.

##### **2. Circumstantial Sidetrack**

The circumstantial sidetrack is to meditate on non-existence, thinking “nothing is real,” at the time of practice.

#### ***2. Sidetrack Within the Antidote***

### **1. Fundamental Sidetrack**

The fundamental sidetrack is to think (1) that everything in the sūtras and tantras, etc., is only an antidote and (2) that afflictive emotions, etc., are only to be rejected.

### **2. Circumstantial Sidetrack**

The circumstantial sidetrack is to meditate on Mahāmudrā as an antidote to thoughts and afflictive emotions.

### **3. *Sidetrack Within the Path***

#### **1. Fundamental Sidetrack**

The fundamental sidetrack is to view the ground as inferior, the path as what is to be abandoned, and the fruition as excellent.

#### **2. Circumstantial Sidetrack**

The circumstantial sidetrack is to take to the path of Mahāmudrā meditation now, hoping to achieve some other *dharmakāya* in the future.

### **4. *Sidetrack Within Stamping a Seal***

#### **1. Fundamental Sidetrack**

The fundamental sidetrack is as if stamping everything that was previously existent with a seal of primordial non-existence.

#### **2. Circumstantial Sidetrack**

The circumstantial sidetrack is to instantly purify real entities into emptiness by means of a mantra with three purities, etc., as if stamping them with a seal.



## **2. Three Deviations**

There are three deviations: (1) deviation into bliss, (2) deviation into clarity, and (3) deviation into non-thought.

### ***1. Deviation into Bliss***

Deviation into bliss is clinging to, or falling under the power of, the bliss that arises to the six collections [of consciousness] or blissful experiences, such as the dripping of milk and blood, without bringing them onto the path. This also includes clinging to happiness resulting from pacifying sickness or suffering through meditation.

### ***2. Deviation into Clarity***

Deviation into clarity is attachment to experiences of clarity, the arising of awe-inspiring, yet untimely, superknowledges such as: seeing what is hidden, like one's body, house, or the universe, etc.; reading someone's mind, or hearing a mute speak, etc.

### ***3. Deviation into Non-Thought***

Deviation into non-thought is to cling to the cessation of thoughts of the six collections [of consciousness], the experience of the emptiness of cessation, or a non-conceptual vacuity.

Other than respectively leading to birth in the Desire Realm, the Form Realm, and the Formless Realm, these [three deviations] do not go on the path of liberation.

Also, to denigrate the causality of karma, resolving that the meaning of emptiness is such that there are no results from good and evil deeds, is to deviate into nihilistic prattle. Furthermore, [holding] what is to be abandoned, identifying

it, and meditating on emptiness as an antidote to it is the root of the sidetracks and deviations. Moreover, it is said that to view all phenomena as relatively existent and ultimate non-existent, as relatively non-existent and ultimately existent, as both relatively and ultimately existent, or as non-existent, is to deviate into holding extremes.

### **3. The Experience of Faultless Mediation, or the Way to Sustain the Continuity of Practice**

This section has two parts: (1) identifying the fresh, ordinary mind and (2) the actual way of sustaining the practice.

#### **1. Identifying the Fresh, Ordinary Mind**

First of all, it is important to identify the meaning of “ordinary mind.” Master Togtsepa taught its meaning in this context of Mahāmudrā as follows:

Let the guests, the fatigued nature of your minds, relax free from constructs.

Fresh, innate, and natural—

This is Mahāmudrā beyond the intellect.

The manner of resting the guest, the nature of mind fatigued by the constructs of perceived-perceiver [duality], is threefold: (1) fresh, (2) innate, and (3) natural. The past has finished and the future has yet to arise. This present mind is new; this is the meaning of *fresh*. Although the word “fresh” is used, since it the primordial mind itself, it is *innate*. One may think, “Isn’t this a mind of the future?” It is *natural* because of the essential indivisibility of the three times. Since the meaning is beyond the domain of mind, it is as stated, “This is Mahāmudrā beyond the intellect.”

Or, explained in conjunction with the views of the four philosophies,<sup>8</sup> the Protector Maitreya stated as follows:

Through the intellect knowing that there is nothing other than the mind,  
The mind itself is realized to be non-existent.  
Intelligent ones know that both are not existent  
Possessing neither of the two, they abide within the *dharmadhātu*.

All phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—the outer and inner environment and inhabitants—are one’s own mind. The mind too is empty of essence. Although there are dualistic appearances of appearances and mind, they are not taken as referent objects. They are realized as free from the constructs of existence and non-existence, etc. Or, according to Mantra in the context of the fourth empowerment:

This wisdom is extremely subtle and  
Like a *vajra* in the center of space.<sup>9</sup>  
Immaculate, liberation-bestowing,<sup>10</sup> peace;  
You are its father, too.

Since the primordial mind from the beginning is free from thought constructs, it is *extremely subtle*. It is indestructible by conditions. Saṃsāra is destroyed when it is realized; nirvāṇa is destroyed when it is not realized. Therefore, it is a *vajra*. Since

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<sup>8</sup> Within the four philosophies, the Vaibhāṅhikas assert perceived objects as minute particles and the perceiving mind as momentary; Sautrāntikas accept appearances as the mind, yet dualistically, with perceiving subjects and perceived objects; Proponents of Mind-Only accept reflexive awareness, without perceiver or perceived, as truly real; Madhyamakas assert all phenomena as free from constructs.

<sup>9</sup> Or “the vajra-essence is equal to space”.

<sup>10</sup> Or “perfection”.

it is the nature of both saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, it is the *essence*. Due to having a meaning that is like space, beyond color and shape, it is *equal to space*. Or, stated as “like a *vajra* in the center of space,” the center is the meaning of the indivisibility of center and periphery in space. Through realizing afflictive emotions themselves as its essence, defilements are purified without being abandoned; therefore, it is *immaculate*. It is the perfection of saṃsāra and reaches the great nirvāṇa; hence, it is *perfection* and peace. Or, because it attains or bestows liberation, it is *liberation-bestowing peace*. This is to be realized for oneself; otherwise, it cannot be shown by another. Tilopa said,

Know this as it is presented to your own awareness.

Since this is similar it is said, “You are its father, too.” In short, the natural way of mind, the fundamental nature of mind undisturbed by thoughts of the three types, cannot be expressed by words but can be experienced. It is not a non-conceptual vacuity nor is it a mind that follows after thoughts; it is the naked and vivid awareness that is the ordinary mind. Furthermore, in the *Non-Abiding Thusness Tantra*:

The nature of the ordinary mind is the supreme fruition.

When let be without fabrication, the fruition of the three *kāyas* is attained.

When let loose as it is, it is the consummate wisdom.

And Nāgārjuna said:

Don’t conceptualize or think of anything at all.

Don’t alter; relax naturally.

Without fabrication, be natural and unborn.

And Shawari said:

Do not disturb the innate own way of the ordinary mind

With fabricated objects of reference.

You don't need to alter the mind that is naturally pure.

Don't hold it or let it go; let it be just as it is.

And Tilopa said:

Without thinking, pondering, or reflecting, and

Without meditating or analyzing, let be naturally.

Naropa said:

If you look, look at your own mind.

Since the nature of mind is not established at all

It is inexpressible and transcends objects;

Free from constructs; it has the nature of space.

And Maitripa said:

Other than remaining undistracted within that state

There is nothing to do with the body or speech, and nothing to meditate on.

And Lord Marpa said:

It is not to be meditated on nor are you to be distracted;  
It is unthinkable and inexpressible.  
It cannot be illustrated by anything.  
I realized it as such through the kindness of my lama.

And the venerable [Milarepa] said:

When meditating on Mahāmudrā,  
Do not exert yourself in virtuous activities of the body and speech;  
There is a danger that non-conceptual wisdom will dissipate.  
Rest in the uncontrived, innate state.

And Lord Gampopa said:

Do not alter; loosely relax.  
Do not search; just let be.  
Do not engage the mind; rest without reference.

And Lord Pagmo Drupa said:

Upon investigation and analysis, there are no real entities.  
That which is beyond shape and color  
Becomes poison if found by the mind.  
So rest naturally without fabrication.

And the Lord [Jigten Sumgön,] Protector of the World said:

One's own awareness, the uncontrived, ordinary mind,  
Left naturally to itself right now is called "Mahāmudrā."  
Therefore, thinking of only this, sustain it.

Also, the Lord Yanggönpa said, "In short, the ordinary mind, not created by anyone, is just this; this itself recognizing itself is called 'the birth of Mahāmudrā meditation'."

## **2. The Actual Way of Sustaining the Practice**

This section has four parts: (1) the manner of sustaining meditation in general; (2) the manners of sustaining meditation in particular: (a) for beginners, (b) for those with a little familiarity, and (c) for those with a lot of familiarity; (3) the manner of bringing onto the path; and (4) the manner of realization.

### ***1. The Manner of Sustaining Meditation in General***

The arising of meditation is not enough; it needs to be sustained well. Regarding this, aversion is the foot, or ruler, of meditation. Therefore, contemplate the sufferings of saṃsāra. Put the impermanence of life and [saṃsāra's] lack of essence at the forefront of your mind. Give up worldly attachments and cultivate your mind to equalize your life with your practice.

Devotion is the head, or enhancement, of meditation. Therefore, without being apart from the attitude that the lama and Kagyü [masters] are the actual Buddhas, supplicate them trustingly from your heart. Mindfulness is the watchman, or main part, of meditation. Therefore, when not in a session, don't let it stray from your mind. At all times and circumstances, train to not be separate from being mindful of the abiding reality.

The activity of meditation is compassion in action. Cultivate love, compassion, and *bodhichitta*, for all sentient beings. Dedicate and make aspirations to be their protector. Until you perfect your meditation, teaching others, and developing them, is a semblance of the welfare for others. It is the obstructing hold of demons, so rely on solitude. The armor of meditation is having a conscience and knowing shame: internally, let your mind be your own witness, and externally, don't shame the lamas, the [three] jewels, and your *dharma* friends. Meditate earnestly by means of mountain retreats, sealed retreats, and silence, etc.

Moreover, the essential point of consummate profundity is to rely on uninterrupted, undistracted mindfulness as explained above. Jigten Sumgön said:

The highway of the Buddhas of the three times  
Is continuous, uninterrupted mindfulness.  
Without knowing constant mindfulness  
There is not much benefit in the deeds of body and speech.

And Pagmo Drupa said:

Give up hopes for superknowledge and magical powers, etc.;  
Look at your mind.  
When not separate from seeing your mind  
It is certain that all the Buddha's qualities without exception—  
Such as the ten powers, eighteen unshared qualities, and  
Four fearlessnesses—will come in the first *bardo*.

## ***2. The Manner of Sustaining Meditation in Particular***

### **1. For Beginners**



The manner of sustaining meditation for beginners is to sustain in the way said by Lord Götangpa:

Look nakedly at your mind.

It is not seen by looking; it is not a real entity.

Relax into the state of absence.

Rest vividly in this without grasping.

Look nakedly at your mind; no nature of mind is seen whatsoever. Relax into the nature of mind—into the way it is—within the state of experiencing the lack of a real entity. Moreover, without falling into neutrality, and without a referent object, meditate without contrivance within the unborn with a bright and vivid mind. Without accepting or rejecting, or holding onto the empty or non-empty, rest within an empty and clear state without grasping at anything whatsoever.

## **2. For Those With a Little Familiarity**

Those with a little familiarity just look nakedly at the essence of whatever appears or arises; other than that, they do not need to make deliberate efforts to set the mind.

## **3. For Those With a Lot of Familiarity**

Those with a lot of familiarity do not need the slightest bit of effortful meditation because they are free from clinging to (1) something to be meditated on and (2) a meditator.

In summary, as was stated by the Precious Lord [Atīsha],

The eighty-four thousand sections of doctrine  
Come down to this suchness.

The essential meaning of all the topics of the sacred *dharma* is only this uncontrived, ordinary mind. The great Venerable One [Milarepa] said:

By sustaining the ordinary mind  
I left ignorance and confusion in the dust.

As for sustaining this practice, it is said that there is nothing better than not clinging to whatever appears. I see this to singularly comprise all the essential points of practice because clinging to self and other is the root of saṃsāra. Even clinging to what is positive—such as the view, meditation, and conduct—obstructs liberation, needless to mention clinging to what is negative such as the three poisons! All defects and faults are initiated by a clinging mind. Therefore, the supreme path is to rest without clinging to anything that appears whatsoever, no matter what arises—such as appearances of meditation experiences with and without signs or mundane appearances that arise in dependence upon ordinary habits. The matchless Gampopa said:

Whatever may arise, don't cling to it at all!  
There is nothing that will take you further than this supreme path.

And,

Without desires, all is equality.  
When realized as such, meditation is uninterrupted.

And Saraha said:

Give up whatever you are attached to!

These statements seem to have a similar intent.

Thus, some other meditators meditate sometimes and sometimes don't—depending on such conditions as whether they are in a gathering or solitude, at leisure or work. Although they realize this abiding reality which completely pervades saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, like the waves on the ocean, they don't realize it from the depths, which is a fault. In reality, if the mind is there, so is Mahāmudrā. If there is no mind, there is no Mahāmudrā.

Therefore, they do not rely at all on good or bad conditions, such as gatherings or solitude, leisure or work. They do not accept or reject, and have no hopes or fears, doubts or concerns such as thinking, “Is this Mahāmudrā or not?” “Is this meditation or not?” At all times, no matter what appears, they look nakedly<sup>11</sup> at whatever arises and without fabrication, sustain [Mahāmudrā].

### ***3. The Manner of Bringing Onto the Path***

Moreover, to identify thoughts, such as the different activities of Mahāmudrā, and bring them onto the path—the afflictive emotions, gods and demons, sickness,

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<sup>11</sup> It was asked whether there was a difference between (1) looking nakedly at whatever arises and (2) relaxing loosely. The response was “no”. By the force of this, it has been said that the past master's had no more profound method of sustaining meditation than mindfulness. Among the two types of mindfulness explained—effortful mindfulness and effortless mindfulness—relaxing without clinging to whatever arises is effortless mindfulness. It is taught to be superior to effortful mindfulness.

suffering, and death, etc.—there are many different practices for bringing onto the path, such as the famed *Six Cycles of Equalizing Taste*. However, Jigten Sumgön said,

The arising of an afflictive emotion itself is a thought.

Ego-clinging is also a thought.

To meditate as an antidote to this is also a thought.

I do not consider this stack of three thoughts!

Since all this is the function of your one mind, the self-sufficient way to bring onto the path is to sustain [Mahāmudrā] without clinging to whatever may arise. The antidote and what is to be abandoned are indivisible. To illustrate this with gods and demons, too, the thought that apprehends them itself is the obstruction or harm-doer. If you know the essential point of resting just as it is, there are no outer harm-doers at all. For example, the Venerable Milarepa took the Rock Ogress as an enemy. However, his thought fixating on the Rock Ogress was the enemy. Other than that, there was no harm at all done by the Rock Ogress. Therefore, the meaning of the “single self-sufficient remedy” taught by the past masters has the intent of not needing to rely on anything else to bring onto the path. If you know the essential point of practice such as this, however gross your afflictive emotions are, the power of your realization will be that much stronger. Hence, you do not need to see them as faults. Also, a sūtra says,

The manner that afflictive emotions are accompaniments for the path of a bodhisattva is as follows:

In the way that the filthy manure of the center of the city

Helps the sugar-cane in the fields,

The manure of a bodhisattva’s afflictive emotions likewise

Helps the Victorious Ones and their triumphant qualities.

Just as the filthy manure of the center of the city produces sugar-cane, or crops, likewise, when strong emotions meets with a strong antidote, the fruition is instantly attained. For example, when the Buddha taught the *dharma* to Midungwa, “the one with the garland of fingers,” who was extremely angry, he instantly saw the truth.

Moreover, for those who bring afflictive emotions onto the Secret Mantra path, the potency of the path corresponds with however strong the afflictive emotions are. In this context of Mahāmudrā, not only afflictive emotions, but even love, compassion, *bodhichitta*, and deity meditation, etc.—all positive and negative thoughts—in reality are not different in being just thoughts. They are not to be deliberately abandoned or taken up; the authentic essential point of practice<sup>12</sup> is to sustain [Mahāmudrā] within whatever arises without contrivance.

It is said that due to attaining mastery in the authentic meaning of one’s mind, one is called a “realized one” (*tokden*) because of realizing, or seeing, the essence of yoga and one’s own mind. In accord with the aforementioned statements on bringing onto the path, Saraha said:

Lions, elephants, tigers, black bears, brown bears,  
Fierce wild animals, poisonous snakes, fires, and precipices,  
Punishment by kings, poisons, thunder and lightning;  
Since the essence of all this is only this, there is no harm.  
By overcoming thought, you overcome all enemies.

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<sup>12</sup> The Protector [Jigten Sumgön] said that the afflictive emotions, etc. are dispelled by the five-fold path; however, this was intended for those who have not yet achieved mastery. The consummate intent is the indivisibility of what is abandoned and the antidote as such.

By taming the toxic view of self, you tame the entirety of toxins.  
Therefore, be the jewel of mind sublime.

And Naropa said:

All obstacles of sicknesses and demons  
Are comprised within thought.  
When you're sick, it is thought itself that is sick;  
When you are harmed, it is thought itself that harms;  
When you die, it is thought itself that dies;  
When you're born, it is thought itself that is born;  
All happiness and suffering, etc. is thought—  
There is nothing other than mind.  
If you cut through the root of thought,  
No sickness or demons will come.

To meditate on the meaning of such an abiding reality, according to the Sūtra path there is the three-fold studying, contemplation, and meditation, or the six transcendent perfections. In the Mantra path, everything is comprised within the generation stage and the elaborate completion stage. Saraha said:

It is reading, it is memorization and meditation, too.  
It is also holding the treatises in your heart.

In the *Vajrasamādhi-sūtra*:

Not wavering from emptiness

Comprises the six transcendent perfections.

From the condensed [*Prajñāparamitā-sūtra*]

Whatever learned person wants to perfect all the trainings should train in the  
Buddha's training, the perfection of wisdom.

From the *Two Sections [Hevajra-tantra]*

Within the nature free from constructs  
Mantras and deities authentically dwell.

And,

It is mantra recitation; it is doing austerities; it is doing burnt-offerings,  
It is the lord of the maṇḍala; it is the maṇḍala itself.  
In short, the mind embodies what has form.

Therefore, there is more merit in meditating for a single instant on the meaning of  
the profound abiding reality than there is in performing conditioned virtues for  
many aeons. From the *Ratnakūṭa Sūtra of Maitreya's Great Lion's Roar*:

Someone may fill all the world-realms in the great billion-fold universe with  
stūpas made from the seven precious substances and as big as the king of the  
supreme mountains. Yet there is greater, inconceivable merit, in attaining  
the forbearance of the profound doctrine for the duration of just a finger-  
snap.

From the *Sūtra of the Meeting of the Father and Son*:

There is more merit in hearing about thusness than in practicing the five perfections for ten aeons. There is more merit in teaching one sentient being than in listening for ten aeons. O Shāriputra, someone may teach others about thusness for ten aeons, but the merit of one who mediates on the meaning of thusness for the duration of just a finger-snap is greater and increases immeasurably.

By realizing that what is abandoned and the antidote are indivisible, all evil deeds, obscurations, and predispositions are purified. Tilopa said:

For example, in the way that a single lamp dispels a mass of darkness  
That was dark for thousands of aeons,  
Likewise, a single instant of a luminous and clear mind  
Dispels the evil deeds, obscurations, and ignorance accumulated for aeons,

In the *Precious Garland*:

Those with little merit  
Do not even have doubts about this doctrine.  
To even begin to doubt,  
Is to rent existence apart.



All the joy and happiness—of this world and that which is transcendent—are brought forth without needing the exertion of effort. From the *Condensed [Prajñāparamitā-sūtra]*:

One should know that all happiness—the happiness that is conditioned and the happiness that is unconditioned—comes from this.

And,

The Buddhas, their [bodhisattva] offspring, Auditors, Self-Realized Ones, the deities, and

Whatever happiness and joy there is for anyone,

All comes from the supreme perfection of wisdom.

Along with this, it destroys the attachment and aversion regarding the eight [worldly] concerns, such as gain and loss. In the *Bodhicharyāvatāra*:

In these empty entities

What is there to gain and what is there to lose?

Who is there to honor me?

And who is there to scorn?

From where does this happiness and suffering come?

What is there to be happy or sad about?

Unbearable, great compassion comes about for the sentient beings who do not realize this. Nāgārjuna said:

For yogis who have meditated  
On emptiness in this way,  
There is no doubt that  
They have joy in benefiting others.

Through this realization itself, without needing to reckon with the stages of the grounds and paths, one traverses [the path] and quickly actualizes the state of the Buddha. From the *Samādhirāja-sūtra*:

Someone who upholds this supreme *samādhi*  
Attains the ten grounds:  
Complete joy, the stainless, illumination,  
The radiant, extremely difficult to train, the manifest  
Gone afar, unwavering, good mind, and the cloud of *dharma*.

And from the *Tent*,

Through meditating with your mind  
That this life is just the supreme Buddha, you become a Buddha.

And in the *Sun and Moon Accomplishment*:

Yogis of highest capacity  
Engage in unwavering concentration  
Through relying on the ultimate Mahāmudrā.  
By this, in accord with the cause, their meditation is the *samādhi* of empty bliss.

In three years and one and a half months,  
They attain the supreme accomplishment.

#### **4. *The Manner of Realization***

For the manner of realization, together with enhancement, there are four yogas: (1) single-pointedness, (2) simplicity, (3) one-taste, and (4) non-meditation. It is said that each has a division into lesser, middling, and great, so there are twelve.

##### **1. Four Yogas**

###### **1. Single-Pointedness**

Lesser single-pointedness is when there is a slight difficulty sustaining a *samādhi* with experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-thought, up until meditation comes whenever one meditates. Middling single-pointedness is when there is *samādhi* sometimes even when not meditating and there is stability at the times of meditation. Great single-pointedness is when one is utterly immersed within the state of empty clarity continuously, without interruption in sessions or breaks, during the four activities, in the day or night.

###### **2. Simplicity**

Lesser simplicity is when one realizes the essence of thoughts, appearances, and mind as free from constructs of arising and ceasing, yet one is not free from the addiction to certainty that fixates upon emptiness; and also one has hopes and fears regarding saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Middling single-pointedness is when the addiction to certainty that fixates upon emptiness has dissipated, yet there are hopes and fears regarding appearances, and also there are superimpositions which have not been cut through. Having become free from holding onto the certainty that fixates on the emptiness of all that appears and existence in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, great

single-pointedness is when one is free from hopes and fears and has cut through superimpositions.

### 3. One-Taste

Lesser one-taste is when one realizes that all thoughts and appearances are the one-taste of Mahāmudrā, the nature of mind, yet there is still the addiction to certainty that fixates upon that experience. After the defiling certainty that fixates on the experience of the one-taste of multiplicity is purified, middling one-taste is when the indivisibility of mind and appearances vividly manifests; appearances are not left outside and the mind is not left inside. Great one-taste is when everything is pacified within the innate state of equality; the one-taste of multiplicity is realized and one-taste arises as multiplicity.

### 4. Non-Meditation

Lesser non-meditation is when there is no need to maintain mindfulness and no need to deliberately rest in meditative equipoise; all appearances arise as meditation. It is lesser non-meditation as long as there arises a slight illusory clinging. Middling non-meditation is when even slight illusory clinging is gone. All night and all day are constant non-meditation, yet there is a subtle aspect of consciousness that arises as self-luminosity in ensuing perceptions. Great non-meditation is when everything is constantly wisdom after that subtle aspect of consciousness has also transformed into wisdom.

Moreover, there are three ways of developing these for individuals who are (1) the instantaneous type, (2) the leap-over type, or (3) the progressive type. It is also said that there are various, uncertain ways of development due to the greater and lesser degrees of mental fortitude within these three types as well. You can see

extensive presentations on the stages of four yogas by previous masters, concerning the respective essences of the four yogas being seen or not, having perfected the strength or not, whether or not thoughts dawn as meditation or not, whether qualities arise or not, whether the relative has been mastered or not, and whether the seed of the Form Bodies has been planted or not, etc.

## **2. Enhancement**

The details of enhancements in the respective contexts of the four yogas can be known elsewhere. In general, it is to mainly rely on solitary places and maintain silence; and to let go of the three attachments: attachment to oneself, attachment to enjoyments, and attachment to *samādhi*. As Jigten Sumgön said, method and wisdom mutually aid enhancement. Practice by integrating the precious mind of enlightenment and discipline with the virtuous practices with signs, such as the development stage, within a state of meditative equipoise. The main enhancement is just devotion to the lama. Jigten Sumgön said,

The enhancement for Mahāmudrā  
Is devotion to the holy lama.

The manner in which the four yogas are conjoined with the grounds and paths is stated in the *Vajra Song*:

The fruition of meditation in this way  
Is aligned with the grounds and paths as follows:  
From entering the path of blessings  
Up until the completion of the yoga of single-pointedness  
Is called the “path of accumulation” for beginners.

During simplicity, one with aspiring conduct  
Has the essence of the “path of joining.”  
One-taste is the wisdom of the “path of seeing” on the first ground,  
And the lesser and middling non-meditations,  
From the second ground to the tenth,  
Are called the “path of meditation.”  
The ultimate great non-meditation  
Is the “path of perfection,” the Buddha as such.  
These are the grounds and paths in the Vehicle of Characteristics;  
Although it is difficult to bring it together with scriptures and reasoning,  
It is not mistaken in meaning, so hold it as valid.

Regarding this, Jigten Sumgön was asked about the discord between the assertions of some of the past Kagyü masters regarding the pure essence supported within the four *cakras*—the navel, heart, throat, and crown—as stated in the Mantra path, and the correlations of the four yogas—one-pointedness with the path of joining, simplicity with the path of seeing, one-taste with the path of meditation, and non-meditation with the path of no more learning. He said that it is not a mistake to correlate them in that way by means of the aspect of the essence of realization, but in this context, it is explained in this manner by means of the aspect of quality; hence, there is no contradiction here between the assertions.