



Langri Tangpa Centre
Tibetan Buddhist Study & Meditation



The Buddha Project

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Langri Tangpa Centre

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Panchen Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen's Highway of the Conquerors¹

Mahāmudrā Root Text According to the Precious Geden Lineage

Namo mahāmudrāya.

1

I bow at the feet of my peerless guru,
the sovereign lord among siddhas, who reveals naked mahāmudrā, the all-pervading
nature of everything, indivisible, and the ineffable expanse of the vajra mind.²

2

I will compose here the instructions of the mahāmudrā oral tradition of the most
realized Dharmavajra, father and son,
the upholders of the sacred Geden lineage who distilled the essence of the sea of sutra,
tantra, and pith instructions and transmitted it well.

3

Here, of the three — preparation, main practice, and conclusion —
since it's the doorway and support beam of the teaching and the Mahayana,
strive first in going for refuge and arousing awakening,
not just with your mouth and with words alone.

4

And since seeing the mind's true nature depends on gathering merit and purifying
obscurations,
proceed first by reciting the hundred-syllable mantra a hundred thousand times
and repeating hundreds of times the *Confession of Downfalls* with prostrations.

5

To your root guru, who is inseparable from
all the buddhas of the three times,
make heartfelt supplications again and again.

¹ Thupten Jinpa. *Stages of the Path and the Oral Transmission: Selected Teachings of the Geluk School* (Library of Tibetan Classics Book 6). Used with permission from Wisdom Publications. © 2022 Institute of Tibetan Classics. All rights reserved.

² In the collected works of Panchen Losang Chögyen, the verses of the root text are not numbered. We have introduced verse numbers here in the translation for the benefit of the reader. Please note the numbering here differs slightly from the Tibetan critical edition. In editing my translation, I have benefited from Roger Jackson's eloquent translation in his *Mind Seeing Mind*.



6

With regard to the main practice of mahāmudrā,
though there seem to be numerous perspectives,
it is divisible in terms of two: sutra and tantra.

7

The latter is the clear light of great bliss
that arises from skillful means such as
penetrating the vital points in the vajra body.

8

This is the mahāmudrā of Saraha and Nāgārjuna,
of Naropa and Maitripa, taught
in the Attainment and Essence texts³
and is the quintessence of unexcelled tantras.

9

As for the former, this refers to the way of meditating on emptiness
taught explicitly in the long, medium, and short [Perfection of Wisdom].
The supreme ārya, Nāgārjuna, has stated
that there is no path to liberation apart from this.

10

Here I will present a guide to mahāmudrā
that accords with his thought
and expound a way to introduce the mind's nature
that accords with the teaching of the lineage gurus.

11-12

The Innate Union, the Amulet Box,
the Fivefold, Equal Taste, and the Four-Lettered,
Pacification, Cutting Off, and the Great Perfection,
the Guide to the Middle Way View, and so on –
though many teachings exist, each with a different name,
when examined by a yogi who is versed in definitive scriptures
and reasoning and who possesses meditative experience,
they come down to a single intention.

13

Thus, of two approaches – seeking meditation

³ These refer to the Seven Attainment Texts (grub pa sde bdun) and the Essence Trilogy (snying po skor gsum).



on the basis of the view and seeking the view
on the basis of meditation –
the presentation here is the latter approach.

14

On a platform conducive to meditative absorption,
your body maintaining the seven-point posture,
dispel the stale winds through the nine-round breathing
and distinguish well the fresh and sullied awareness.

15

With a pure virtuous state of mind, proceed first
with going for refuge and arousing the awakening mind,
and then practice the profound path of guru yoga.
After performing fervent supplications
a hundred times or so, dissolve the guru into you.

16

While in that state where appearances are indistinct,
do not alter it or add anything to it
by thoughts of hope, fear, and so on,
but rest unwavering in equipoise for a while.

17

Do not cease mental activity
as in fainting or falling asleep;
post the sentry of undistracted mindfulness
and station meta-awareness to detect any movement.
Hold the clear and aware nature of mind
with a firm focus and starkly look at it.

18

Whatever thoughts arise, any thought,
note it as that and just that.
Alternatively, like a skilled swordsman,
swiftly cut down the thoughts as they arise.

19

When, after cutting down, your mind is stable,
then, without losing mindfulness, loosen and relax:
"Focus with firmness but loosen and relax;
there lies the spot to rest your mind."⁴

⁴ In Lamp So Bright, Panchen attributes this to Machik Labdrön



20

So it is stated; and elsewhere it says,
 "This mind, bound in its own entanglement,
 when relaxed becomes free, no doubt."⁵
 As taught here, relax without distraction.

21

Whatever thoughts arise, when you observe their nature,
 they naturally disappear, and a pure vacuity appears.
 Likewise, when you examine the settled mind as well,
 you see an unobstructed vacuity and vivid clarity.

22

This is called "merging of stillness and movement."
 And whatever thoughts may arise,
 do not stop them, but recognize their movement
 and place your mind upon their nature.

23

This is analogous to the flights of a bird captive on a ship:
 "It's like the raven that takes off from a ship,
 flies to every direction, and lands there again."⁶

24

In this way, as you maintain meditative equipoise,
 its essence will dawn as unobscured
 by anything, as lucid and clear and,
 since it does not exist in any physical way,
 as a pure vacuity just like space,
 where everything appears vividly.

25

Thus though the mind's true nature
 may be seen as if in a direct manner,
 it cannot be grasped at or shown as "this."
 Whatever appears, without grasping, rest your mind.

⁵ Saraha, Dohā Treasury of Songs (Dohākoṣagīti), Toh 2224 Tengyur, rgyud, wi, 73a4.

⁶ Ibid., 74b5; a slightly different version appears in Saraha's Treasury of Dohās (Dohākoṣamahāmudropadeśa, Toh 2273).



26

"This is the special instruction to grab
buddhahood with one's bare hands."
So proclaim most present-day meditators
of the Land of Snows, with a shared understanding.

27

Be that as it may, I, Chökyi Gyaltsen,
would say the following:
"This is an excellent method for the beginner
to cultivate mental stillness and the way
to introduce the mind's conventional nature."

28

Now, as for the way to introduce
the mind's true nature,
I will set this forth following the oral instructions
of my root guru: as a saffron-clad monk,
the embodiment of the *gnoses* of all the *buddhas*,⁷
dispelling the darkness of ignorance from my mind.

29

While in that foregoing meditative equipoise,
unwavering, and just like a minnow
darting about in clear water,
analyze skillfully with subtle awareness
the nature of that person who is meditating.

30

The savior Ārya Nagarjuna himself says:
"The person is not earth nor water,
is not fire, wind, nor space,
is not consciousness — nor is it all of them.
Where then, apart from these, is the person?"

31

The person is a composite of six elements;
as such it has no real existence.
Likewise, each element too is in turn
a composite and hence has no real existence."⁸

⁷ "Gnoses of the buddhas" is a gloss on the name of Panchen's root guru, Sangyé (buddha) Yeshé (gnosis).

⁸ Precious Garland (Ratnāvalī), 1.80–81, Toh 4158 Tengyur, spring yig, ge, 109b7.



32

In accordance with this statement, when you search,
not even a minute particle will be found
of the meditative equipoise, the one who is in equipoise, and so forth.
At that point, maintain the space-like equipoise
without distraction and single-pointedly.

33-34

Alternatively, while in meditative equipoise,
observe your mind as thus characterized:
pure *vacuity* because it does not exist as physical;
unobscured as diverse appearances arise to it;
and *unceasing*, a *luminous* and *aware* continuum
that is uninterrupted in its engagement.
Such a mind appears and is conceived
as independent, but with respect to such objects of clinging,
the guardian Santideva states:

35

"The so-called continuums and collections,
just like rosaries, armies, and so on, are false."⁹
So through scripture such as this and reasoning,
establish this truth of how things do not exist as they appear
and rest your mind single-pointedly in this meditative equipoise.

36

In brief, as my spiritual mentor,
the omniscient Sangyé Yeshé,
who is in accord with reality, states:

37

"When you are fully aware that whatever appears is conceived by thoughts,
then the ultimate expanse dawns independently of anything else.
When your awareness enters into what has thus dawned,
you rest in single-pointed meditative equipoise — *E ma ho!*"¹⁰

⁹ Guide to the Bodhisattva Way (Bodhicaryāvatāra), 9.101, Toh 3872 Tengyur, dbu ma, la, 27b1.

¹⁰ Khedrup Sangyé Yeshé, Collection of Experiential Songs, Letters, and Replies to Queries, 67b6.



38

In the same vein, Dampa Sangyé says:

"Whirl the spear of awareness within emptiness;
the view, O people of Dingri, is unobstructed."¹¹

These statements and their likes make the same point.

39

At the conclusion, the virtues that have emerged
from meditating on mahāmudrā
together with the ocean of virtues of all three times,
dedicate these all to the great, unexcelled enlightenment.

40

Thus, having gained familiarity [with this practice],
realize precisely the mode of appearance
of any object that appears within the field of your six senses,
and its mode of being will dawn naked and vivid.
Recognizing whatever appears is the key point of the view.¹²

41

In brief, whatever appears —
be it your own mind or something else —
do not grasp but ascertain its mode of being
and always maintain that awareness.
Knowing this, bring all phenomena
of samsara and nirvana into a single nature.

42

Here, Aryadeva says:
"The viewer of one thing
is stated to be the viewer of all,
and the emptiness of one
is the emptiness of all."¹³

43

Thus, within the perfect meditative equipoise
on this ultimate nature of reality,
you are free from the elaborated extremes
of existence and nonexistence and of samsara and nirvana.

¹¹ Dampa Sangyé, Hundred Verses of Advice, verse 51, 17a4.

¹² This line is part of a well-known instruction attributed to the Indian mystic Mitrayogi; see page 722.

¹³ Four Hundred Verses (Catuhśataka), 8.16, Toh 3846 Tengyur, dbu ma, tsha, 9b6.



44

Yet when you arise from that equipoise and examine,
it is undeniable that actions, agents, and dependent originations
of mere labels and mere concepts naturally appear –
like a dream, like a mirage, like the moon in water,
or like a magician's illusion.

45

When appearance does not obscure emptiness
and when emptiness does not obstruct appearance,
the excellent path – where emptiness and dependent origination
share the same meaning – will then manifest.

46

These were uttered by a renunciant who has heard widely,
someone who is called Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen.
From this virtue may all beings swiftly become victorious
through this path, for there is no second path to peace.

COLOPHON

This method of pointing out mahāmudrā was written in response to long-standing repeated requests from the master of ten topics Rabjampa Gendun Gyatso and the master of ten treatises Hamdong Sherab Sengé, who, having seen the eight worldly concerns of this life as the play of a madman, live in mountains of solitude as wandering mendicants embracing this path as their heart practice. I have also been approached by many students who have the desire to engage in the practice of definitive mahāmudrā.

In one of his experiential songs addressed to both himself and to others, the lord among the siddhas, the omniscient Ensapa the Great himself, gives instructions on the stages of the path according to the Kadam teachings, beginning from the topic of proper reliance on the spiritual mentor up to tranquil abiding and insight. At the end he says:

*Not the path I have just outlined,
and not known at present in this Land of Snows,
there is the definitive instruction on mahāmudrā.
At this point, though, I dare not commit it to writing.¹⁴*

¹⁴ Ensapa Losang Döndrup, Great Bliss Treasury (in Miscellaneous Writings), 52. I have read the first line according to how it appears in Ensapa's own text, where the first line, in fact, reads: "Not included in the path I have just outlined" (bshad ma thag pa'i lam 'dir ma gtogs pa).



There are examples of teaching that, on account of present obstacles, may not be committed to writing but are intended for a later time. There is, for example, the following statement in the *Sublime Dharma of the White Lotus*:

*To help [beings] realize the buddha's gnosis,
the Buddha used this method spontaneously.
But he will never say to them [at present]:
"You will be a fully awakened buddha."
Why is this so? The savior factors in the timing.*¹⁵

So in order to fulfill Ensapa's aspiration, I, Losang Chökyi Gyaltsen — upholder of the instructions on sutra and tantra, a renunciant who has been born in the lineage in which (1) the continuity of the blessings of direct experience of this path from the Peerless Teacher, the sovereign among Śākyas, up to my root guru, the omniscient Sangyé Yeshé, remains unbroken and (2) no pollution has sullied the precepts — composed this at Geden Nampar Gyalwai Ling [Ganden Monastery].

¹⁵ Saddharmapuṇḍarīka, chap. 2, Toh 113 Kangyur, mdo sde, ja, 30a6. The version cited here is slightly different from the one found in the sutra itself.

