

Mahamudra Tantra

Also by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

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GESHE KELSANG GYATSO

Mahamudra Tantra

THE SUPREME
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THARPA PUBLICATIONS
UK • USA • CANADA
AUSTRALIA • HONG KONG

First published 2005.

Reprinted 2006, 2008.

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Conishead Priory
Ulverston, Cumbria
LA12 9QQ, England

Tharpa Publications US Office
47 Sweeney Road
Glen Spey
NY 12737, USA

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Tharpa books are published in most major languages.
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Buddhist Union 2005.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2005923969

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Kelsang Gyatso, 1931-
Mahamudra Tantra:

an introduction to meditation on Tantra

1. Mahamudra (Tantric rite)
2. Meditation - Tantric Buddhism

1. Title

294.3'4435

ISBN 978 0948006 93 7 – paperback

ISBN 978 0948006 94 4 – hardback

Set in Palatino by Tharpa Publications.

Printed on Wentworth Opaque, acid-free 250-year longlife paper and
bound by The Cromwell Press, Trowbridge, Wiltshire, England.

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Preface

This book, which I have prepared for the people of this modern world, is a practical guide to discovering the real meaning of human life. Generally, according to our common experience, there is no real meaning in this ordinary human life. Many old people or those very close to dying understand how human life is empty and hollow. Throughout our life we try very hard to accumulate so many things such as wealth and possessions, but finally without choice everything that belonged to us passes to others; we can carry nothing with us to our next life. The real meaning of human life is finding and following the correct path to enlightenment, and the supreme correct path to enlightenment is Highest Yoga Tantra, especially Mahamudra Tantra.

If we sincerely wish to practise the instructions on Mahamudra Tantra presented in this book, we should first receive the empowerment of Buddha Heruka and gain complete understanding of the meaning of these instructions. Then, through putting these instructions into practice, we can fulfil our ultimate goal.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso
January 2005, Happy New Year!

PART ONE

Introduction to Tantra



Buddha Shakyamuni

Basic View

Mahamudra Tantra is a quick method for attaining enlightenment, and the instructions on this practice are very profound. For our practice of Mahamudra to be effective we need a firm foundation in basic correct view and intention. Just as we cannot build a house properly without a basic foundation, we cannot practise Mahamudra effectively without first accomplishing this basis, and without understanding its meaning clearly.

Our normal view is that our daily experiences, whether unpleasant or pleasant, come from external sources. Following this view we dedicate our whole life to improving our external conditions and situation, but still our human problems and suffering increase year by year. This clearly indicates that our normal view is incorrect, and only deceives us. Incorrect views and intentions cause us to follow wrong paths that lead to suffering, whereas correct views and intentions enable us to follow spiritual paths that lead to

happiness.

In this context, ‘paths’ do not mean external paths that lead from one place to another. We do not need to study external paths as we can see them directly with our eyes. ‘Paths’ here refer to internal paths, which are by nature our actions. Actions of body, speech and mind that are motivated by ignorance are wrong paths because they lead to suffering, and actions that are motivated by wisdom are correct paths – or spiritual paths – because they lead to happiness.

Because there are different levels of happiness, such as the happiness of liberation and enlightenment, there are different levels of spiritual paths, such as the path to liberation and the path to enlightenment. These paths can be further divided into the path of accumulation, the path of preparation, the path of seeing, the path of meditation and the Path of No More Learning. Moreover, because there are different levels of suffering, such as the sufferings of humans, animals and hell beings, there are different levels of wrong paths, such as those that lead to rebirth as a human being, animal or hell being. By studying the different types of paths presented by Buddha we can distinguish between correct and incorrect paths, and thereby avoid incorrect paths. Then, by entering, making progress on and completing correct spiritual paths, we can attain enlightenment and thus accomplish the real purpose of our human life.

In *Guide to the Middle Way* the famous Buddhist scholar Chandrakirti lists seven types of internal path:

- 1 Actions that lead to the happiness of great enlightenment
- 2 Actions that lead to liberation

- 3 Actions that lead to rebirth as a god
- 4 Actions that lead to rebirth as a human being
- 5 Actions that lead to rebirth as an animal
- 6 Actions that lead to rebirth as a hungry spirit
- 7 Actions that lead to rebirth as a hell being

The first two are supramundane paths, which are correct spiritual paths that lead to great enlightenment and liberation. There are many levels of these paths corresponding to the many levels of spiritual attainment that are explained in teachings on the stages of the path, Lamrim. For example, *The New Meditation Handbook* explains twenty-one different meditations that accomplish twenty-one spiritual paths, or stages of the path to enlightenment. Traditionally, the first of these is strong reliance on our Spiritual Guide. As Je Tsongkhapa says in *Prayer of the Stages of the Path*:

The path begins with strong reliance
On my kind Teacher, source of all good.

All these twenty-one stages of the path, beginning with reliance on our Spiritual Guide, are spiritual paths that lead to pure and everlasting happiness.

The remaining five paths listed by Chandrakirti are mundane paths, which are incorrect paths that lead to states of suffering. They are also called ‘contaminated actions’ because they are motivated or contaminated by the inner poisons of self-cherishing and self-grasping ignorance. Even virtuous actions that are motivated by self-grasping ignorance, and that lead to human rebirth, are contaminated actions. In our previous lives, motivated by the delusion of self-grasping, we performed virtuous actions such as observing moral dis-

cipline. This action was the main cause of our present human rebirth, but because it was contaminated by delusions our present human rebirth is a contaminated rebirth. Because we have taken a contaminated rebirth as a human being, we have no choice but to experience the various kinds of human suffering.

Our present experiences of particular suffering and problems have a specific connection with particular actions we performed in the past. This hidden connection is subtle and not easy to understand. We cannot see it with our eyes, but we can understand it through using our wisdom, and especially through relying upon Buddha's teachings.

Why do we suffer and experience so many problems? Suffering and problems are not given to us as a punishment. Whenever we experience difficulties we usually blame others, but in reality it is because we have taken a contaminated human rebirth as a result of contaminated actions that arose from our own self-grasping and self-cherishing. Our human rebirth is the basis of all our human suffering and problems. Animals have to experience various kinds of animal suffering and problems because they have taken a contaminated animal rebirth. This is also true for hell beings, hungry spirits and even the gods of the desire realm; all living beings experience suffering because they have taken a contaminated rebirth. Such rebirths are the nature of suffering, and are the basis of all unhappiness and problems.

If we use our human rebirth for spiritual practice it becomes meaningful, but otherwise its nature is suffering; it is a manifestation of the poisonous mind of self-grasping. If

a seed is poisonous, its resultant crop is poisonous. Similarly, because the cause – a contaminated rebirth – is like poison, its effects are inevitably poisonous and painful.

Contaminated rebirth is like a deep and boundless great ocean, and our problems and sufferings are like waves continually arising from it. We have been in this great ocean since beginningless time, taking contaminated rebirths in life after life. If we do not achieve permanent liberation from taking contaminated rebirths in this life, we shall have to remain in the ocean of suffering for countless future lifetimes; this suffering will never end naturally by itself. For as long as we remain in this great ocean, our bodies will be eaten again and again by the sea monsters of the Lord of Death, and we shall constantly have to experience new rebirths. Then, in each new life, we shall have to experience the suffering and problems of that particular life. If we are born human we have no choice but to experience human suffering and problems, and if we are born an animal we have to experience animal suffering and problems. This cycle of contaminated rebirth and suffering, which is called 'samsara', revolves continually, for life after life, endlessly.

Our contaminated rebirth is our own samsara. Although none of us wants to suffer, because we are in samsara suffering arises naturally without choice. It takes great wisdom to recognize our own samsara and to understand that this is our real situation. The understanding and belief that our own samsara – our contaminated rebirth – is the source and basis of all our suffering and problems is the basic correct view that leads us to the attainment of liberation and enlightenment. Developing and maintaining such a non-deceptive view is

the basis for effective practice of Mahamudra Tantra, which is the actual method to cut the continuum of contaminated rebirth.

When, through contemplating these instructions, we understand clearly that all our daily problems and suffering come from our own samsara, we shall strongly believe, from the depths of our heart, that it is extremely important to abandon our own contaminated rebirth and attain permanent liberation from suffering. We should exert great effort in maintaining this beneficial view day and night without forgetting it.

While maintaining this view, we should then consider other living beings. Compared with others our own problems and sufferings are insignificant because others are countless while we ourselves are each just one single person. The happiness and freedom of countless living beings are more important than the happiness and freedom of one single person – ourself. It is therefore inappropriate to be concerned only with our own liberation. We should develop instead the superior view that cherishes all living beings and maintain this day and night, never allowing ourself to forget it.

End of preview

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