

Moonbeams of Mahamudra

Thrangu Rinpoche

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I. Introduction

Why practice Mahamudra ?

Conflicting emotions no longer increase.
Find peace and happiness in mind.
Can act clearer.

Tashi Namgyal wrote this since in his time many practiced, but it was easy to make errors. He wrote this treatise to correct errors.

Generally 3 kinds of problems arise:

- 1) Person gets stuck on words, doesn't enter practice even when doing.
- 2) Person sees things differently; visions and flashes of insight arise, thinks he is very important, becomes attached.
- 3) Person meditates well and deep level of experience arises; becomes attached to them and tries to continue with experience rather than technique. (Yet when give up technique as such? Recurring question in Zen. Eventually there is "no technique", "just living".)

Of the ten religious attitudes including offering and generosity, most important is meditation (better translated as "cultivation" or "habituation") since directly related to clearing of suffering in our minds. To pursue must know how to do it...that is what we will discuss.

A. Reasons For Practicing

- (1) All appearances are mind.
- (2) Considerable problems arise if don't practice.
- (3) Qualities or capabilities which develop if practice.

(1) All appearances are mind is established in two ways (What about 3rd: looking at experience ?) :

- a) Scriptural authority - Tashi Namgyal uses only this (all that was needed in Tibet)
- b) Reasoning - Thrangu Rinpoche uses logic.

When first say "all appearances mind", people say "you are kidding, look at the trees and lakes". (Rinpoche holds up two sticks of incense, one longer and one shorter.) All will agree that one incense stick is long and the other short. May think that "it's length has nothing to do with mind". Rinpoche then holds up 3rd, longer stick of incense. Now "long" stick not long, rather "middle length". Length is a quality which our mind projects.

So all qualities we project, e.g. good, bad, high, low are qualities of the mind. Similarly, we speak of I and you, he and me. Even these are mental projections as well.

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People then argue that "long" and "short" are qualities of mind, attached to the incense, which really exists as such. They will go along with qualities arising in mind, but not things like the trees, our arms and our legs. Let's consider this. (Holding up hand.) Is this hand a hand or is it our mind? What if I only show the thumb, forefinger, skin or bone, etc.? Where has the hand gone? It is also a quality of mind. So perhaps we think there is actually a finger! But then there are joints, bone and blood. "Finger" is also a projection of mind, a perception of mind.

In the same way everything we perceive is a projection of mind. Can't say "this is that". All are projections of mind, of "mind nature". This is why all great masters have called everything mind. Even Nagarjuna, with his logic.

How we feel determines how we see the world. When happy, it is wonderful, when sad, the world is terrible. It is how we feel inside, not inherently a quality of the world that determines our view.

(2) and (3). Suffering occurs if don't practice. How can we transform the mind? History has shown us that the most powerful technique, perhaps the only technique, is through meditation. Many people are aware of the need to transform the mind, e.g. take drugs and alcohol. They do accomplish some transformation, but it is temporary, then gone. Unstable. The purpose of meditation is to effect a very permanent change in how we view the world, self. (Permanent? What about the "enlightened one" who later went mad?)

There are many methods of meditation. We will look at two:

- a) General Buddhist Approach.
- b) Special Mahamudra approach.

II. General Buddhist Approach To Meditation - Synopsis & Detailed Discussion

Synopsis

There are many different states of samadhi; tranquility and insight are most important of these. There are many different methods taught for obtaining Tranquility and Insight. Tranquility means to go to a place of peace, by practicing diligently, listening to instructions, stopping thoughts, etc. First we discuss how to clear away problems.

A. Traditionally there are Six Difficulties. To be able to work with difficulties, first have to recognize them.

Two main difficulties for Tranquility are excitement and regret;

e.g. went to nice place and really had a great time at party yesterday, we think about that, or, respectively,

e.g. didn't handle problem correctly yesterday, shouldn't have said that to so and so, shouldn't have eaten that.

Two main difficulties for Insight are dullness and doubt;

e.g. mind not so clear, foggy, eventually go to sleep, or, respectively,
e.g. sitting in meditation, think it isn't going to work, this is strange practice.

Two difficulties with respect to both Tranquility and Insight are inclination to desire and malice or enmity;

e.g. would be really nice to get that, have this, want this, or, respectively,

e.g. this person wasn't very nice, if I do this, I can get even with them, ill intention.

What to do with difficulties ?

Excitement - Good to remember we are in Samsara and will die. May get us a little depressed, but stops excitement.

Regret - Stop and think about the qualities which develop as a result of meditation. Will give us encouragement.

Dullness - Reflect on qualities of Buddha and enlightened mind; or alternatively, generate joyful mind. (positive thinking, attitude)

Doubt - Study and learn, reinforce our confidence and conviction on soundness of instruction received.

Inclination towards desire - Reflect on how much trouble our desires have cost us in the past and will cause in the future.

Enmity - Remember that this just causes pain in someone else; replace with loving kindness.

B. What do Tranquility and Insight really mean ?

Tranquility - Currently our mind is constantly in motion, never rests for a moment from thoughts. When mind rests, then Tranquility.

Insight - Closely related to discriminating awareness. Insight is the quality of knowing which is present when the mind has become still, stable and clear. Clarity is the concern of insight.

C. In what order do we develop these ? What stages ?

Generally, develop Tranquility first and then Insight. The ability to let mind rest naturally is firstly important and main purpose of Tranquility. This is not enough though, since there is very little development of positive qualities unless practice Insight.

After develop these two, it is not enough. Must integrate Tranquility and Insight. This is full meditation practice.

D. Results of Tranquility and Insight

Tranquility - Emotional disturbances reduced. Contact "pure mind". Mind becomes stable and clear. If we don't practice Tranquility, we are like a feather in the wind, jump around. If stable, then "things become clear, this is what is meant by pure mind".

Insight - Development of discriminating intelligence. Important since informs us about what is going on. Can develop through other ways, but this way is stable and not so dependent on circumstances.

For these reason, Gampopa always called Tranquility and Insight the "door to Dharma".

Stages of Tranquility and Insight - Detailed Discussion

A. Requirements for Success

To practice Tranquility, first have to bring together a) comfortable seat, b) sitting straight on seat and c) breath. Breathe naturally in a relaxed fashion. If we breathe forcefully, then mind doesn't come to rest. Breathe evenly, in a relaxed, natural manner, allowing breath to come and go. Also need d) patience and e) enthusiasm for effort. Then we can have success.

So how do we place our attention ?

B. Four Characteristics of Tranquility Meditation

1) Open, pervasive sort of attention, embracing everything. Non-conceptual, not thinking about. Like looking in a mirror. Not what we project out of mind, like visualization, rather attention is simply on what arises in mind.

2) Object of attention is suitable for temperament of person (5 types) -

<u>Person Type</u>	<u>Appropriate Object</u>
Desire - passion, attachment tendencies.	Something not very attractive, not too negative, e.g. bone.
Anger - aversion.	More positive sentiments, development of love for family, friends and ultimately enemies.
Dull .	Something which increases intelligence, e.g. 12 interdep. origination. Requires much effort.
Proud - arrogant. This is direct manifestation of ego.	Elemental constituents (earth, etc.) of things, and self.
Thinking - thinking, full of thoughts.	Breath. <i>"dabar all thoughts" - main method</i>

3) For scholars and academic philosophers - Focus attention on 5 skandhas, or 18 elements of existence or 12 entrances to experience.

4) Consider that which completely overcomes disturbing emotions. Reflect on how problematic they are, how important it is to reflect on them, how tranquility helps remove them and mind becomes more peaceful. Then, by practice of insight and 4 Noble Truths, we overcome them.

There are many different methods. Of all, most important for beginners is to counteract thoughts, thus generally most important to attend to breath for most of us. Once establish Tranquility, other meditations (e.g. diety) better. Good to do first.

C. Two principal tools for development of Tranquility

1) mindfulness - defined as "not forgetting object of meditation"

2) awareness - (at least 5 different Tibetan words exist for awareness, Lhalungpa translates as vigilance) here defined as "knowing through observation whether one's practice is going well, what is going on at all times".

Mind is like an elephant. Dangerous, if uncontrolled. We use these two tools to subdue the craziness in our minds.

How to practice ? First realizes, recognize obstacles. Traditionally there are five.

D. Five Impediments or Obstacles

- 1) unwillingness or laziness - don't want to do it, lack of inclination.
- 2) forgetting the instructions.
- 3) dullness and activity - when dull, not clear; when active, not stable.
- 4) not applying a remedy - even if active/restless, do not apply a remedy. Under-application.
- 5) trying too hard - when mind resting in own nature, try to make it more clear. Over-application.

How counteract these ?

E. Eight Remedies

Faith,

Confidence - that what we are doing is worthwhile.

Interest,

Inclination - then will apply ourselves. These 4 together counteract "unwillingness". If we apply ourselves, we develop some expertise and understanding. Then less likely to avoid.

Mindfulness - remembering instructions, bringing them to mind.

Awareness - knowing what is going on, whether dull or active. Then can do something about it.

Just application - just do.

Equanimity - "Ah, that's all that is" sense. These 4 counteract remaining 4 impediments, respectively.

F. Nine Ways of Placing Mind, Ways It Rests (also called 9 stages)

1. placing mind on object (e.g. breath) - again and again;
← after a while mind stays on breath, called...
2. continuous placing - after a while...
3. intermittent resting - rest for a while, then thought comes up, and then strays, and then returns to breath again;
4. full placing on mind - maybe thoughts, but less disturbance from them, less amplitude, less frequency.

Significant shift takes place as enter next stage.

5. subduing or taming of mind - mind able to rest, many good qualities arise;
6. pacifying mind - now when thoughts and emotions arise recognized and calmed very quickly, respectively;
7. complete pacification - stream of emotion, thoughts, feelings largely subsided; except for particular emotions mind undisturbed;
8. single-mindedness - no disturbance (vs. 7. where if mind dull or active, remedies applied), here very few disturbances arise;
9. complete composure - as soon as mind is directed at an object, it rests there, effortlessly, equanimity.

G. "Key Instructions" Associated With 9 Ways Of Placing Mind, Known as the Six Forces

- 1) learning, "study" - learn importance of meditation from our teacher - develops first level;
- 2) considering, "reflection" on what learned - to understand clearly, develops second level of attention;
These two develop meditation which manifests as mindfulness and brings us to..
- 3) "mindfulness" - remembering object develops 3rd and 4th levels;
- 4) "awareness" - know what is going on, can recognize and eliminate problems, thus move from 4th to 5th and 6th levels;
- 5) "effort" - develops 7th and 8th levels. Continued, consistent application, mind becomes fully pacified and eventually becomes single-minded;
- 6) "familiarity" - have done it alot, know meditation well, deep familiarity allows us to move from single-mindedness to complete composure.

H. Four Kinds of Attention (supplements above)

- 1) "Firm" - in the beginning, "really have to make effort",
- 2) "Broken attention" - takes from 3rd to 7th level, with interruptions,
- 3) "Without interruption" - 7th and 8th level,
- 4) "Natural" - no effort made.

I. Three Kinds of Insight

- 1) worldly or mundane - if certain amount of Tranquility developed, we see how emotions produces suffering;
- 2) lower transcendent - see into the 4 Noble Truths;
- 3) Mahayana - complete realization of mind and phenomena.

Two major Mahayana branches:

1. Asangha - all objects perceived and "mind"
2. Nagarjuna - "middle way" - subject, object dualism not considered directly. Go directly to all mutual events, empty. Like moon reflection in water, through dependent origination.

Both investigate lack of self, non-self of individual and phenomena. The self which we see in contrast to others causes all conflicting emotions, has no intrinsic existence. Phenomena - sensations, etc., all experiences have no intrinsic reality.

In Mahamudra a distinction is made between General Buddhist Teachings and Special Mahamudra Teachings. The General Buddhist Teachings are common to all Buddhist systems - Hinayana, Mahayana and Vajrayana. This is the end of discussion on General Buddhist Teachings. Now begins the presentation of Special Techniques of Mahamudra Meditation/Cultivation.

III. Special Mahamudra Teachings

Tashi Namgyal first presents 3 major topics:

- A. Background on Mahamudra, to generate confidence and trust in teachings,
- B. What we need to prepare, prerequisites,
- C. How to actually proceed with meditation, cultivation of Mahamudra.

A. Background - first describes (1) what Mahamudra is and how wonderful it is; then (2) person who practices, qualities manifested.

(1) What is Mahamudra ?

- 1) instructions derived from Buddha's teachings
- 2) derived from sutras
- 3) derived from pinnacle of Vajrayana system, of the 4 yogas, from Supreme Yoga Tantra
- 4) essence, pith of sutras and tantras all Buddhas taught.

1. Name "Mahamudra"

Sanskrit word Mahamudra, Maha is "great" and Mudra is "seal" as in "seal of a king or court". Have ground, path and fruition. Ground is most important.

In this context, Mahamudra means nature of mind, "how mind is". The mind is in nature empty. The major expression of mind is clarity. It has clarity with no substantial nature, whatsoever, yet is unceasing in manifestation.

Mind - Essence - empty
Nature - clarity
Manifestation - unceasing.

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(long + n and Buddha's
emptiness) (non-ending)

By understanding mind, then understand all phenomena. This is why metaphor of seal is used. When a king makes a proclamation, with hundreds of orders within it, for them all to have effect it is sufficient to apply his seal to the end of the document, not to each order. Similarly, by knowing mind is empty, we understand that everything, all Dharmas, are empty.

Perhaps it is helpful to look at philosophical systems. In contrast Hinayana to Mahayana, etc.

In Hinayana we see things in terms of truth. Our goal is understanding of 4 Noble Truths, inherent here is that the world exists in some way. In the Mahayana, focus is on realizing, understanding emptiness. All phenomena lack intrinsic existence. We develop this experientially. In a branch of Mahayana called "Jen-Jong(?)" there is more emphasis on "Buddha nature" (compared to emphasis on emptiness) and unfolding of its qualities (including emptiness). In the Vajrayana, we focus attention much more inward, understanding how mind actually is.

2. Essence of Mahamudra

The essence of Mahamudra is mind as it is.

How is it ?

Cannot associate characteristic such as color, shape, etc. with it. Cannot say mind exists, difficult to ascertain. Third Karmapa in "Aspirations of Mahamudra" said "doesn't exist", "doesn't not exist". Yet it is basis for totality of our experience, samsara and nirvana (freedom, liberation).

As difficult as this is to reconcile, this is how mind is. This is the "ground", basis for everything, the "way things are". There are also practices in Mahamudra. In summary, Mahamudra refers to 1) ground - mind, the way things are, 2) practice - meditation system and 3) teachings - body of instruction. Principally, however, Mahamudra refers to "the fundamental way things are".

3. and 4. Disadvantages If Don't Practice and Benefits of Practice

To understand this point clearly, it is helpful to distinguish between the way things are and how they appear to be. Traditional example here is of coiled rope being mistaken for a snake. It is rope, but appears to be a snake. The thought arises "be careful here", one becomes frightened by the rope.

The rope has no role in this, rope is simply rope. For fear to be dissolved, it is important to see it as it is, a rope. Once see this, all fear is gone. One can experience a lot of fear and suffering in samsara, the cycle of existence, as we do not perceive things as they are. The purpose of this tradition of meditation/cultivation is to experience ourselves and the world as we are and so eliminate the suffering that misperception has caused us.

The question often arises: Was Mahamudra derived from the sutras ? Did Tilopa, Naropa make it up ? No. Mahamudra is found in the sutras and tantras and was given "by Buddha directly". Tashi Namgyal further substantiates this position by appealing to highest tantric practitioners, where "action", "wisdom" and "commitment" seals are referred to with "special seal" being Mahamudra. Songs and teachings of Tilo and Naro refer to it.

There is some question whether it is a little teaching. Tashi Namgyal demonstrates that Mahamudra is the essence of the sutras and tantras and thus clearly not a minor teaching.

Tashi Namgyal discusses misunderstanding regarding Mahamudra which historically occurred when Sakya Pandita said Mahamudra meditation is not so helpful. However, the context of his statement was important. He is referring to one specific kind of remedy, S. Pandita called it wrong remedy for one specific case.

Mahamudra is the essence of the sutras and tantras. In Vajrayana, there are two paths 1) Sutric Mahamudra and 2) Tantric Mahamudra. Sutric Mahamudra relies on letting the mind become natural and open; Tantric Mahamudra relies on empowerment of visualization. In Sutric tradition, one doesn't rely on empowerment, just develops understanding of mind. In Tantric tradition of Mahamudra, one uses empowerments, yogic practices (dealing with wind channels) and dieties, and develop understanding of the way things are visualized. The methods are different, the attainments the same.

In the history of our tradition, Marpa and Milarepa principally instructed students on tantric tradition of Mahamudra. Gampopa put emphasis on Sutric tradition of Mahamudra.

When Buddha was teaching, taught to 800 the "Sutra of the King of Meditation Absorption", he asked who would take responsibility for preserving these teachings. "Young Moon" said he would do so. Buddha was pleased and said "Young Moon" would be reborn with same name at a later time, as he was incarnated as Gampopa (Gampopa also had 800 students).

This concludes what Mahamudra is.

(2) Discussion of Kind of Individual Who Practices

For this one can go back to Indian times to see records of great figures such as Saraha and Nagarjuna; also in Tibet there were many great figures who have "relied principally on cultivating Mahamudra". Their clarity and impact on the world demonstrates the benefit.

B. Preparation - for Mahamudra

Divided into 3 sections :

- (1) General Buddhist approach
 - (2) General basis for cultivating Mahamudra
 - (3) Special form of Mahamudra
- (1) General pursuit of spiritual practice - has 3 requisites
 - 1) ethical way of life - fullest expression is ordination as a monk, this is helpful, but not necessary; if not monk, lead a calm, restrained, not harming life.
 - 2) study - know what Mahamudra is, its significance, and how to cultivate/meditate.
 - 3) think through everything carefully - so our doubts and confusion and hesitation are resolved.
 - (2) General basis for cultivating Mahamudra
 - 1) refuge - spiritual understanding is our lives.
 - 2) bodhicitta - "awakened mind", develop with a) for others to eliminate suffering.
 - 3) basic Tranquility and Insight skills
 - (3) Special preparations traditionally part of Mahamudra
 - 1) reflection on impermanence - own mortality, helps to combat laziness or unwillingness to practice. This is why emphasized again and again in Buddhism.
 - 2) "Ngondro" - Refuge and Bodhicitta Practice (develop attitudes), Vajrasattva (cleanses), Mandala Offering (develops wholesomeness and relationship to world), Guru Yoga (special yearning to cultivate understanding, brings tremendous energy and inspiration).

Of these special preliminaries, probably the most important is joining of mind with gurus and teachers. Why? Since confidence and devotion play an important role. (In Tibetan, word for devotion, consisting of Mue-pa and Gue-pa is difficult to translate. Mue-pa means interest, personally relevant, from which naturally flows energy enabling us to put effort forth with enthusiasm, and Gue-pa, appreciation or reverence, this is something very special, very, very important. Our quality with respect to the teachings and teacher important. These 2 interact and generate energy.)

Practicing of joining mind with teachers helps cultivate interest and appreciation which enables us, empowers us.

C. Proceeding With Cultivating Mahamudra - stages of progression of understanding, actual practice of Mahamudra.

This is extremely special and precious since is "essence of what has been handed down by transmission in Kagyu lineage".

(1) Tranquility from a Mahamudra Perspective

There are 7 topics:

1. Requisites

- a) Conducive location - if do this very seriously, need quite quiet, peaceful location.
- b) how we behave, act - not forceful or violent. Example is "like a sick person, slowly, gently, carefully as if convalescing". Careful not to be too quick.

2. Posture - How hold the body

- a. posture per Naropa - posture is one of the crucial points. 7 pointed posture.
 1. legs - in vajra or warrior (both legs on ground) position; either is suitable.
 2. hands one above other, slightly below navel.
 3. spine straight - very important, then rest of body hangs freely.
 4. elbows held out at sides
 5. chin brought in slightly, not alot
 6. tongue against roof of mouth or behind front teeth.
 7. eyes gaze along nose slightly downwards.
- (Also) 8. breath - not made so strongly that there is sound, also do not try to be quiet, just let it come and go quite naturally. (Kamila Sila introduces 8th point).
- b. benefits of posture explained in terms of energies in the body. Each point brings energy into balance. 5 principal energies, 5 secondary.
 - Primary - Feet balances eliminating energy; hands strengthen warmth, fire, help digestive process; spine balances pervasive energy which "governs body as a whole", dispels many tensions and discomforts; elbows strengthen and stabilize energy which maintains our life; chin balances energies which rise in body (e.g. so food doesn't rise back up).
 - Secondary - all 5 to do with eyes, when quiet and still. Also channels and energies become more straight and free from obstruction, if they are so, we have an increase in health and vitality.

3. "Frame of Reference" of Cultivation/Meditation (gom)

- a. recognize necessity for interest and enthusiasm. Without them, won't have energy and determination to carry it through. Cultivation/meditation very important. It doesn't matter if we hear, study and do rituals. Nothing takes place of cultivation/meditation. For example, if a person is thirsty, sees glass of water, and says it is clear, cold. Only drinking water will quench thirst. The way to develop interest and enthusiasm is to appreciate now it is very special.

4. Method of Meditation/cultivation - Different steps

A. Cultivation (gom) with a reference

1. depending on an actual object
 - a) holy objects - e.g. using image of Buddha, Kamila Sila taught this
 - b) mundane objects - e.g. using a stone.Here cultivate Tranquility by training mind to rest on an object. "Just attend to it, not being distracted, not forgetting it, being mindful of it."

2. not depending on an actual object - 2 principal methods

- a) "counting breaths" - observe breath as it moves out and goes in. "May or may not include actual counting, both methods included here. (Attention is on sensation of breath at nose).

b) "filling breath" - breath gently in, until can't anymore. Keep it in and then, when feel urge to, gently expel breath. (This is not vase breath).

B. Cultivation without reference

1. "Just sit" - as we are sitting, 2 kinds of disturbances arise, dullness and activity.
 - o If active, then we relax our attention. Just sit very open and relaxed, with very big mind. This generally dispels activity, mind comes to rest.
 - o If becomes dull, lacking clear attention, then we put more energy into mind. Sit straight, wake ourselves up, make mind clearer, increase attention.
 - o Employ both mindfulness and awareness to full extent to detect and remedy 2 events.

5. Relaxation

In practice, how do we actually bring mind to rest ?

By not controlling. Saraha said "Can't hold on to it, just have to let it go". Example - camel. If put a rope on it, it tugs and pulls. If take rope off of it, it just stands or sits there.

At this point, can let mind rest, "take a break".

Sometimes, because of our body, or something, a thought may arise. Use mindfulness to see it coming, when notice stop thinking and let mind return to rest.

We begin (meditation) by developing motivation by recalling how beneficial this practice is. Once develop it, then during actual period of meditation, we just let mind sit very relaxed and open, employing mindfulness and awareness, so we can step out of disturbance and relax.

6. Stages of Cultivation/meditation - way it is achieved, 3 degrees of experience

- a. Beginner - A lot of thoughts, never before noticed how many thoughts. Like mountain stream rushing through a gorge.
- b. Continuity of Attention - After weeks or months, just a few thoughts. Like a river flowing through the valley.
- c. Calm ocean - all activities slow down. Like a big sea or the ocean.

7. Necessity For Tranquility

Most important point - Insight, whether it develops well, depends on quality of Tranquility. Whether one achieves understanding, depends on cultivating practice successfully.

(2) Instruction on Insight Per Mahamudra

There are 6 topics:

1. Necessity for Insight

Sometimes people develop stable Tranquility, with many pleasant experiences, mind is blissful, open, and clear. Feeling is it is enough. Important to develop Insight in addition to this. The principal reason concerns the disturbing emotions. When practice Tranquility and it is somewhat stable, we feel freer from emotions.

Really only intensity of emotions has been reduced a certain amount. The roots of emotions have not been resolved. Only Insight can help this.

Kamila Sila said "when can let mind rest,
the emotions are subdued to an extent;
unless one takes up Insight,
they will never be completely resolved".

2. Requisites, what need for development of Insight

Per Kamila Sila, 3 things are needed

- a. access to a spiritual teacher - in Mahayana this means "spiritual friend", a person with good character who has expertise, precise understanding in meditational absorption.
- b. extensive study - seek wide range of instruction.
 1. Teachings of Buddha known as Kangyur contains great range.
 2. In history, teachers have sifted out what is important in commentaries called shastras, known as Tengyur.
 3. Again, a lot of material here. It comes down to particular teacher one is working with, who knows what is important and can turn this knowledge into precise instructions on how to meditate and "this is how to understand".
 4. Also, teachers have own experience. Tried this, helpful, summarized in "key instructions".

3. Basis for Meditation/cultivation of Insight

Generally, there exist many, many ways. Earlier, talked of Mundane - day-to-day, Hinayana - 4 Truths, Mahayana - many way. Saraha, Tilopa and Naropa's methods and instruction are ones considered here.

In this tradition, emphasis is not on deduction and reasoning, but on immediate and direct experience to make it applicable to our lives.

4. Way to Meditate/cultivate - 2 aspects

- 1) to understand nature of experience
- 2) understanding of mind as it is

In Madhyamika, emphasis on emptiness of all things perceived. In this system, via logical analysis, all experience has no intrinsic existence, thus "let go of extreme, limiting ways, is middle path".

In Mahamudra, attention is turned not out, but to mind within. In practice, we cultivate understanding of mind as is. When do this, one naturally understands nature of experiences. In Mahamudra, 1) comes from 2).

Where do instructions on understanding "how mind is" come from ?

Basically, from Buddha, sutras. Remember, Buddha spoke in wide range of circumstances, to a wide range of students, some very experienced and advanced. Buddha taught all simultaneously. Advanced interpret teachings differently from beginners. Generally, two type of teachings by Buddha: 1) provisional - to help them on way and 2) definite - the way things are. Past masters have drawn from this what is important. That extraction from the sutras is what we have as "mind teachings".

a. Meditating/cultivating Definite Understanding of Essence of Mind

1. scholastic - analytical, here examine and analyze how mind is. On basis of that understanding, let mind rest.

2. contemplative - direct, engage in no examination at all, here place mind in its own nature, as it is. (This is where Insight enters Soto Zazen practice). Note: Contemplative approach is elaborated on under Practice of Virtue - major section (3) below.

In the beginning, it is helpful to have a little understanding of how mind is, so we will discuss the analytical approach some.

a) Analytical approach - 1st step is to let mind come to rest in Tranquility. Insight takes place on the basis of Tranquility. When mind is resting, we think resting is going on. here we give our attention.

1) We look where mind is resting ? (inside body, outside, somewhere else?)

We look at what is resting ? What characteristics, shape color, form does mind have ? We actually can look and see if it does. This is the analytic approach.

Often people ask me or tell me mind is in the brain. I have difficulty with this, if have pain in foot, how can know if mind is in brain ?

2) Sometimes we have sensation that the mind moves, goes somewhere.

What goes somewhere ?

Where does it go ?

What moves ?

What is staying ?

Can investigate this carefully. (This is done not by thinking about answers to questions but looking directly. Like "Look at bird in the tree", we don't analyze bird in tree thinking about it, we just look).

Another way to approach analytical meditation is by 3 subtopics :

1) arising - attending to arising of mind, thoughts. Important point to consider is "what has arisen?", "what has it arisen from?"

2) abiding - when arises, it abides. Important to consider "what is present?", "where is it present?"

3) moving, going - "what goes?", "where does it go?"

Some, when they practice this, find themselves seeing nothing. This can be quite frightening, they panic and become disturbed. No need to be so. Never had looked at it this way before. Always thought "had a mind".

But this is we aim to see in Insight. 1) How to see things as they are and 2) dispel confusion, becoming deeply peaceful as a result.

We often do what is called "catch-up" (term for meditational phenomena). Thinking of Los Angeles, then food, then clothing, each time we think "oh yes, this is L.A, food, etc." Always following after though, we are one step behind. Nothing comes of this! When image of L.A. or food come to mind... ask where it comes from, where it is located, where it is going to? what is this thought? This is helpful.

Instruction on this is found in a song from Milarepa :

Mila : Look at mind, see exactly what is going on.

Student : Lots of thoughts come up !

Mila: If you could understand thought to be the play of mind...

Thoughts are the miraculous working of the mind; these you must understand exactly.

Further when cultivating understanding of Mahamudra, looking at mind this way, letting it rest, many things may happen:

Thoughts arise, images, appearances arise, sometimes like watching TV. These take place on 7th level of consciousness, may feel like looking over a valley, with lights. As they arise, they are to be taken as the object of analysis. What is arising ? What is it ? Where coming from, where subside ?

Further, we have mind at rest and mind in motion. Both can be objects of investigation. In Tranquility, mind is restful, we look at what is resting. Also true for when sometimes thoughts arise or are radiated or emitted. What is this thought, emission ? What emitted ? What produced it (Not as in psychological or circumstantial cause, but rather directly, the source)?

This is also true for anger. What caused it (not psychological sense) ? What is it itself ? If look carefully, not much difference between mind at rest and in motion.

Many, when exposed to these instructions say "I can't understand, never will". We are covering much here and it takes some time to assimilate. Work on this gradually. Understanding gradually cultivated. (How to go about this practice in a practical sense ?) With Tranquility as a basis, keep doing this (analytical practice) from time to time and more understanding develops. Don't be disheartened.

5. What is difference between Insight arising and not arising ?

If doesn't, then feel like we don't know mind, unsettled.

If does, then feeling "ah" and mind rests and becomes stable. (Kalu Rinpoche used to say when not looking for mind, then we feel as if still searching for mind, however, when looking for mind, seeing nothing, then we rest and the feeling of not looking or needing to search for mind arises. We need to learn to look at nothing.)

6. Relationship of this Meditational Path to other Systems

e.g. Dzogchen, Sakya, Maha-Ati, in one sense, not a lot of difference, since all focus on mind as is. Yet not same.... that would be wrong understanding. Not identical since different emphases and different key instructions, so some differences in this way exist.

(Kalu Rinpoche said : "If don't look at mind, we wander in samsara.
If look at mind we see nothing...very difficult!"

Regarding question of practice without a teacher - Ken: Teacher very important, but don't need even monthly contact. Just from time to time. Most important thing is own practice daily. This is more important than teacher, especially if had training like had during this week. 40-60 min per day plus mindfulness. "Clear attention" is essence of practice.)

(3) The Practice of Virtue - The Contemplative Approach to Insight per Mahamudra and the "Pointing-Out Instructions"

3 topics of pointing-out instructions 1. what needs to be present for pointing out, 2. the actual pointing-out and 3. clearing away short-comings.

1. Need understanding of how mind is first

- a) the way mind is
 - 1) the essence of mind - mu - "presence" of mind
 - 2) the nature of mind
 - 3) the characteristics of mind
- b) coemergence
- c) joining with coemergence

Under a):

1) "presence" as essence of mind. One of Gampopa's main students said "without origin, cessation, free from embellishment and elaboration" regarding presense of mind, e.g. if look for mind with respect to body, can't find any place it is located, also no colors or qualities; regardless how much we look, don't find. Inability to find mind anywhere indicates it is "empty".

2) the nature of mind - empty, but not absence of anything, since wherever it is, there is clarity, the ability to know perceive, hear, think, awareness. "Clarity" - "ability to know". This emptiness knows. Mind which is empty, not like emptiness of space, with nothing there. We mean nothing can be found as described which indicates mind, yet there is always a knowingness with mind.

3) characteristics of mind - due the presence of accidental, incidental impurities, mind doesn't know its own nature, essence. Not aware it is empty and clear. All problems come from this lack of knowing.

How solve this problem ? By application of Buddha Dharma and key instructions can eliminate this not knowing.

This clear, empty mind has always been with us. Uttara Tantra - mind likened to large piece of gold, lost in garbage heap for 1000's of years. A destitute person happens to build a shack above the gold. Doesn't know it is there. A passerby, with some sensitivity, tells him about gold below him. Poor man finds gold. Because we don't know, we have samsara. Buddha is like the passerby.

b) coemergence - connate or conatural "to be born with", literally "arisen together", "born together", "born simultaneously". Simultaneity implies 2 things going on :

- 1) confusion of not knowing way mind is
- 2) the way mind is

In not knowing, way mind is is also present. (Not just conceptually, but completely given together !)

Three Coemergences:

- a. ground - way mind is, is present with confusion, as discussed.
- b. path - cultivating this concept in meditation until some understanding arises.
- c. fruition - understanding of precisely this (ground coemergence).

Gampopa talked of 2 kinds of coemergence:

- a. pure being of mind - way mind is is simultaneous with not knowing
- b. appearances - as things arise, are empty. Appearance (incl. happiness, suffering, etc.) also empty.

A student of Gampopa (Gomchi) said coemergence of thought, thinking and way mind is arise together.

c) Joining with coemergence - what we do in Mahayana tradition. "Mind" and way mind is is not quite together. Join with coemergence to know it experientially (not just conceptually).

2. The actual pointing-out - coemergence

a) when mind rests in Tranquility and looks directly at mind and sees nothing, although nothing is seen, there is still knowing. Empty and clear, simultaneously, this points out coemergence of mind itself.

b) coemergence of thought - in meditation practice (this is like Nyingmapa-Dzogchen practices), might give rise to attachment, desire, anger, jealousy, some feeling and thoughts associated with it. Seems tangible and strong. But we look at what is arising. If anger, with irritation, we look at what irritation is and where does it come from. We see it is nothing and doesn't come from anywhere. Now it ceases to have some of its power and force, loses some momentum. Thoughts become more like waves, rather than solid objects which affect us strongly.

c) coemergence of external appearances - e.g. mountain, tree, visual images ... can appear very vivid. Then we look at what this appearance is,. If we do, it disintegrates. We stop, it appears again; look at what it is, it disintegrates again. This points out coemergence of appearances, empty although appear otherwise.

In the Heart Sutra, "Form is emptiness, emptiness is form". When it says emptiness is form, it says emptiness is not just absence. No differentiation between emptiness and form. If we have one, we have the other. Yet, even if we could meditate this way, without dullness or activity, certain mistakes arise.

3. Clearing away shortcomings, in pointing -out

a) We may think we can do this without Bodhicitta. Wrong! This precious motivation should always be present.

b) Mistaken directions - some feel as if when mind clear, they are cultivating, meditating on Mahamudra. Not true! It is good if we can rest with clarity, but this is not Mahamudra. Actual Mahamudra is when mind itself is disintegrated, there is nothing present. There is still a clarity, knowing present, not just a clear, calm experience.

In our practice, what is not useful is alot of intellectual analysis. The way our mind is, we strongly look at it with clarity, totally. When we look at it we see nothing.

To cultivate Mahamudra we need to look at mind and know it as it is.

This is the end of the section on the Contemplative Approach. Here we just rest mind. Regardless of what arises, look at them directly to see what they are, they disintegrate, mind peaceful and clear, whether still, active, visions, practice is the same.

Now learn how to protect, preserve cultivation of Mahamudra.

D. Maintaining Cultivation of Mahamudra

- (1) Need to preserve, maintain cultivation (gom)
- (2) Techniques and methods
 - a. meditation- composure (nam-shak, "composure", placing evenly, letting mind rest naturally, not "meditative absorption", samadhi)
 - b. Post-meditation - subsequent attainment
- (3) Place we can lose cultivation if we make a mistake
- (4) Definite understanding of all phenomena without origin, unborn

- (1) 3 reasons/features of needing to preserve cultivation of Mahamudra
 - a) If we do not maintain, then we derive no benefit, it disintegrates; like throwing away a jewel
 - b) How to preserve/agents used:
 - 1) mindfulness - putting attention on whatever we are doing
 - 2) awareness - aware of what is going on, when doing it, eating, walking
 - 3) care - take care about how we act and what we are doing.

Of these three, mindfulness is most important - attention on what we are doing.

Shantideva, great teacher, describes thoughts and emotions like thieves and bandits. They look at various people and see if someone strong and protected, powerful, they leave them alone; if see someone in a weak position, they figure out how to rob him, then goes ahead and steals and kills. Likewise thoughts and emotions don't bother us much if mindfulness and awareness are active, attending to and knowing what is going on. If not mindful and aware, then they rob.

Mind is like a door, admits good and bad things; but if there is a doorkeeper, certain things go through, others don't.

In India there are lots of banks. Life is difficult there, with many robberies. They have many guards to protect a bank. But life is so hard that even the guards may rob the bank. They worked this out by chaining the guards to a pillar. Can happen to us. "Care" is the chain which holds us to the pillar; this is important.

- (2) How to preserve Mahamudra cultivation in meditation and post-meditation

5 points

- a) what is composure and what is subsequent attainment ?

When first start to meditate, there isn't a big difference between meditation and "subsequent attainment". But when we acquire some experience in looking at mind and letting it rest empty and clear, that's composure, and then there is a greater difference between meditation and post-meditation.

b) how to preserve cultivation/meditation - Gampopa taught 3 skills

- 1) skill in starting meditation
 - a. sit properly
 - b. reflect on importance of meditation in our lives and qualities which come from it and renew our interest for a few moments
- 2) skill in practice
 - a. employ mindfulness and awareness to recognize dullness and activity, and applying remedies immediately. This is practice.
- 3) skill in ending meditation session
 - a. sometimes meditation going nicely, wish to meditate forever; othertimes, we get tired and it it hard. Skill is to stop in such a way so that there is always interest maintained. Usually means stop when positive. "Don't over-extend ourselves", instead meditate frequently.

c) how to preserve cultivation in meditation - Tilopa gave 6 instructions

First 3 literally "Don't think, don't think, don't think", translated best as "Don't recall (past), don't anticipate (future), and don't think (now, about what is happening)". Let go of thoughts completely.

Second 3 "Don't cultivate (contradiction; if plan to cultivate, do something), don't examine (don't get into intricate details) and rest naturally (completely relaxed).

Note these instructions are from a song (doha) to Naropa. Instructions go straight to the point.

A little bit of danger exists here with regard to these instructions. Quite often misinterpreted or misunderstood. People take the phrase "don't cultivate" as meaning they don't have to do anything. This is quite wrong. "These instructions are for how to place the mind in meditation". This is actually practice, "how to place the mind in meditation, how to cultivate". (So true in Zen also where non-attainment is emphasized)

d) How to preserve in post-meditation

1. single most important practice is mindfulness. "Lord of the 3 worlds" (Gampopa's disciple) taught "If one is skilfull in mindfulness, then one is skilfull in cultivation/meditation".

How do we practice or maintain mindfulness in daily life ?

Example: In Tibet there is a domestic animal called a Zo (? , cross between a cow and yak). It looks carefully where it is going, what is the danger here. While grazing, keeps eye on everything going on, watching for enemy. It is different from other animals, others "just graze" (isn't just grazing better practice ?) . Zo always very alert, aware of what is going on, any danger. This is how to practice.

e) Combining composure and subsequent attainment, meditation and post-meditation

At first, there is not much difference since there is not much composure. As one continues to practice, some kind of understanding develops from meditation practice, so there is something to develop.

Realistically, when they start to combine, it refers to someone of high attainment; not easy. During composure there is clear, precise experience of mind as it is. Sufficiently strong, so that even if one arises from meditation, some clarity, sense is present. This is when begin to combine.

(3) Areas we can lose practice and areas where we can make mistakes

a) Areas we can lose practice - first areas themselves

1) Going astray with respect to nature of emptiness at the ground. Our understanding may be incorrect. The attitude: everything is empty, so virtue doesn't matter, harmful actions not very important. This is a mistaken, dangerous impression of emptiness. Nagarjuna said "the view of emptiness can be very destructive".

2) Going astray with respect to emptiness on the path. When we look at mind and see nothing, this is actually cultivating emptiness. This is correct. Many people think that looking is not enough, they try to get rid of absolutely everything and "fabricate emptiness", where absolutely nothing is. Quite wrong.

3) Emptiness goes astray as an antidote. Refers to situation where disturbing emotion arises, we recognize it, it is emptiness, have to attend to emptiness aspect. This is incorrect. The emotional disturbance as arises is empty. Noting it arise and then conceiving it as empty is not correct practice.

4) Going astray using emptiness as a seal. In meditation or post-meditation many things arise in mind. In practice of cultivation of Mahamudra, when appearances arise, it is not necessary to think they are empty, rather "practice is being aware, resting in nature of mind".

Often people see something, "have to remember it is empty", "oh yes, this is empty". This is fabrication, attributed after arisal. Thus one may "falsely stamp things as empty" as if a great seal. If first perceive and then view as empty, this is ineffective, incorrect.

Second - How can we avoid these 4 ways of going astray ?

Basically, when we look at mind, nothing is established about its existence. However, the knowing, the radiance and clarity of mind is no way arrested. Appearances and experiences continue to arise. Per Sutras emptiness is root of everything, dependent origination. Understanding that we avoid the 4 problems noted here.

When we practice meditation we do not manufacture, fabricate anything. Nothing new is created, nor comes into being. Mind knows itself, that is all that takes place, mind knows what it is and what has always been.

b) 3 errors that arise

1) attachment to experiences which arise from cultivation/meditation - As one practices in this way, incredible variety of experience can arise, wonderful, or horrific, ecstatic or alarmed. Whatever comes up, the basic instruction is not to be concerned about it, positively or negatively. (Like Tarthang Tulku regarding dream experiences).

Milarepa and Gampopa in song. Gampopa went to Milerepa. Said saw a mandala, it was great. Other time, he went and said he was in the middle of a black hell, very horrible. Mila: "Not good, not bad, just happens". Like pressing eyeball and seeing 2 moons, one may think one is a very special person, great. What others think (1 moon) is wrong !

Whatever it is, don't attach to it. Although there are many experiences, typically these are of 3 types: 1) bliss, 2) clarity, 3) non-thought. Sometimes we have a combination of 2 or 3 of these. Natural reaction is to think "I need more of this, this is helpful". Not correct. Whatever arises, not seeking it to arise again or getting rid of it.

(TR Q&A: In this practice o.k. to just relax when dullness and activity arise. If gross dullness or activity arise, then use remedy, here just relax, let be. Also, even for a beginner it is not useful to remember emptiness, rather cultivate Mahamudra directly. "Chasing after" things not very effective.)

(4) Definite understanding that all phenomena unborn

This section is concerned with "enhancing" practice, "strengthening" or "refining" it (many wrong translations of this word are in use)

1. to increase our understanding that our experience is unborn, without origin
2. to make it effective in our lives, particularly problems, illnesses. How to work with negative circumstances so our understanding is enhanced.

(Ken unsure ..about this statement.. Ascending to the path, getting over the path. We must be clear when to ascend). The point is that this instruction is given at certain (appropriate) point in person's practice.

1. Saraha said "mind is without base". One understands this from instruction from a teacher. "Crossing the path" - given when person is stable and rests in mind nature without effort. When is it appropriate for this to take place ? If done too soon, then person thinks about it too much and won't appreciate it for what it really is,; if done too late, then person is attached to own experience. Teaching is given when student is ready.

What is the basis for "crossing the path" ?

Per Saraha: "The significance of coemergence
is not substantial.
The significance of coemergence
is not unsubstantial.
Basically, I talk alot !"

In sutras, people say "I see the sky", others ask "If it is empty, what do you see?" People say "I know my mind". Yet "what do they know?"

The way one goes on crossing the path depends on devotion, interest or appreciation (particularly in one's teacher). This is why in Kagyu tradition, emphasis is on devotion to teacher. The reason for importance of devotion and appreciation can be illustrated, for example, if you want to go to L.A., you ask a person how to get there. If you believe him, you'll follow his instructions, otherwise one wanders.

Need confidence in instruction. This is main reason for devotion. Otherwise one will not have the determination, and hold something back. This is where we get matter of a teacher's blessing.

It is said we get understanding from the blessing of the teacher. "chin-lap" translated as blessing means capability or understanding, perhaps best translated as "wave of capability or energy" (lap is from word ba-lap which means wave). If a student reaches a point, where can understand mind from teacher's own understandings, "doesn't mean something transmitted from teacher to student out of his understanding, rather teacher gives key instructions, coming from his own experience which carries a certain capability or force, which may carry student to some understanding".

The importance in this comes from how student understands teacher's instructions. Ordinarily we use words to explain something. Regarding mind nature, it is difficult to give meaning clearly, since our mind is not a thing. So belief in a teacher is important. Otherwise someone may say "mind is like this" and you will say he is crazy.

Principally by practice student comes to appreciate what teacher is trying to convey. That's why relationship is important, to believe in instructions.

2. How to maintain practice throughout day and night

(In day) need some effort in practice. However, it is bad if one keeps trying to make progress, to obtain better and better understanding. This is detrimental, "can't relax". In summary, how is one to meditate? Relax a little. Key instruction is "Relax a bit, then cultivate/meditate".

(In night) when going to sleep key instruction is to "Let mind rest in own nature, without distraction or wandering".

- 1) First when we do this, we just have regular dull sleep.
- 2) Gradually, we note that when we wake up our mind is quite clear, same clarity as before bed.
- 3) If continue, then have certain understanding in dreams even.

How do we make our practice effective ? (some translate as "how to carry practice on path")

1) with respect to thoughts, Gampopa said, whatever thought comes up, whether virtuous, negative, small or big, first identify it. "This is thought". Second, when thought arises, don't regard it as a problem, nor a good thing. Don't block, send away or engage in thought, "just look directly at it". Then thought becomes what it is.

2) with respect to disturbing emotions, e.g. anger, person did that to me, that's why I'm angry; this is "catch-up" - doesn't help. When anger arises, recognize it in practice to derive benefit. We say I'm feeling angry, very angry, so strong. What is this anger, what really is it ? "We look right at anger". There is absolutely nothing we can say, e.g. this is the anger. We stay right there with it. We look again and again and thus enhance the understanding of the baselessness of mind.

Ratna Lingpa, a Tertön in the Kargyu tradition said

"When anger first arises, it is very clear;
when look directly at what it is, it subsides into emptiness"
So it is for all disturbing emotions.

3) how to use practice effectively when faced with gods or demons ?

All kind of things arise in mind. All that is needed is to maintain the way mind is.

Milarepa once had a demon appear. He said "go away, don't cause me troubles". She said "I'm not the demon. I you really understand your mind nature, I'll go away". Milarepa replied "That's good instruction. Thank you".

4) How to make practice effective in the face of suffering .. in others ? For example, if someone is ill or hit or sick.

In Hinayana, approach is "This is what you get in Samsara". Used to strengthen renunciation. In Mahayana, "Oh this person is suffering". Sight provokes love, concern and compassion. Wish I could help strengthen to enlightenment, to help all beings, Bodhicitta.

In Vajrayana/Mahamudra, "I know how mind is". I wouldn't suffer since know it is empty. But others don't know, so compassion to help person arises.

5) How to make it effective when pain and suffering and sickness arise in self?

If have pain, don't regard it as good or bad. Look at pain itself and what is hurting, feeling sick. If look precisely, can't find anything. This doesn't make the illness or pain go away. But a definite shift takes place. It is not nearly as bothersome, doesn't drive us crazy. Mind can be much clearer; sometimes it can alleviate pain completely.

Now talk about how experience and understanding arises, stages one progresses through when cultivating Mahamudra.

E. Four "Natural Abidings" (actually 4 yogas, naljorpas, which means to "join with the natural state").

These 4 are described in the Mahayana sutras as 5 paths:

1. accumulation
2. accommodation
3. seeing
4. no learning
5. no cultivation/meditation

In Mahamudra we refer to the 4 yogas.

In development of direct understanding, there are generally three levels:

1. comprehension - intellectual, thinking
2. experiencing potential
3. direct understanding

Regarding 1., Zungpa-Jare said "Comprehension comes from investigation and examination", e.g. thinking and analyzing, telling them what Bodhgaya is like, by describing it, someone else can have some understanding. Regarding 2., refers to experience which may arise in meditation and post-meditation. E.g. experiences potential for clarity, mind very, very clear. The potential of non-thought, of bliss, well being in body, ecstatic states. None of these are how things are, they point the way to how things are.

Regarding 3., "direct understanding" (some translate as realization, not quite right since different Tibetan word exists for this) in meditation practice focus our attention, depending on kind of practice, on different objects:

Hinayana - 4 truths
Mahayana - emptiness
Mahamudra - "the way mind is"

There may appear that there are 3 different foci of attentions; more accurately, there are 3 different methods. As focus mind on these we gain some comprehension, experiencing potential and know ay mind is. We know what it is, experience actually how mind is.

It is very helpful to have a clear understanding of these 3 levels of understanding. A beginner often confuses these, e.g. many have good intellectual understanding, have experienced potential and not have understanding or some have experienced direct understanding and don't even know it (!!). Very helpful to know three different levels.

Intellectual comprehension is very helpful, but basically doesn't result in anything. very ineffective for working with disturbing emotions.

Experiencing potential is more helpful, but it is like morning mist, there in the morning, then gone; not very stable or reliable.

Direct understanding is like the sun shining. There it is and remains.

Most important point is we should be striving to develop direct understanding. How it arises depends on our make-up (e.g. varies by interest, intelligence, effort).

Three (3) kinds of people, temperaments

1. arising at once - person experiences potential which is sufficient to move to direct understanding. For example, imagine a small valley with steep sides. When sun rises, doesn't take long for it to warm valley, by the time it gets over mountains. However in practice this is regarded as "unstable", and may be good at understanding one point but not another.

2. skipping steps - (4 yogas 1. single-mindedness (with lessor, middle and greater), 2 free from elaboration (with lessor, middle and greater), 3. one flavor (lessor, middle, greater), and 4. no-cultivation (lessor, middle, greater)) without first level of understanding, gets to 4th stage off yoga. This is like the sun shining through the clouds. This person very unstable. Sometimes right there, sometimes not.

Best for this person to be in retreat and form close relationship with teacher; this will help stabilize understanding.

3. stage by stage - very slow, but very stable. "Most reliable". First level, everything develops at that level, methodical, slow, plodding but stable. Like sun rising, a little light but first no warmth, then some warmth, then when rises warms whole land.

Understanding these 3 types will help you know what to be working at and to select your practice to help make progress.

Four Natural Abidings

Tashi Namgyal gives basis in sutras and tantras for this. Many have said "Kagyu just made this up". TN addresses this substantially. However, Rinpoche leaves you to look at all this rhetoric yourself (!)

The four stages of natural abiding are all concerned with both Tranquility and Insight

(1) single-mindedness - in other context refers to Tranquility; here also it refers to mind resting (Tranquility part) in essence of mind (Insight part)

(2) free of elaboration - stage in which one cuts through any embellishment or denial. Elaboration means "saying more than we can or perceiving more than is there", e.g. "mind exists" is elaboration, "mind doesn't exist" is also elaboration, can't say "our mind is origin of samsara and nirvana", "when experience mind as it is, know it exists and doesn't exist". All elaborations fall away.

(3) one flavor - or one taste - at this stage of understanding, one knows how mind is directly. Knowing this, we know how everything else is, all take on one flavor.

(4) no-cultivation or nothing to cultivate - this is reached through the process of working at meditation, cultivating. When one obtains direct understanding, nothing more to be cultivated.

2 major Kagyu teachers, Karmapa Rangchen Dorje and Kanchen Wangpa have in detail described each level, including obstacles and difficulties encountered and remedies.

Basically through blessing of teacher and own effort one works through this.

4 Natural Abidings -

(1) single-pointedness - from Tranquillity perspective mind rests. From time to time thought arises, it moves. For beginner these are 2 very different states. If have direct understanding and rest in mind's essence, there is not much difference. No distinction between moving and resting mind.

a. lesser stage - characterized by knowing mind is clear and empty, letting mind rest that way, but not very stable. Takes some effort to rest it.

b. middle stage - more stable, arises more easily, have feeling of mastery, mind clear and empty.

c. high stage - same experience as middle, here one sometimes has to make effort, other times happens by itself, no effort needed. The way one feels: very great respect and appreciation for one's spiritual teacher and kinship with one's Dharma companions and natural and genuine compassion.

At this point in practice it is good to do retreat, observe silence, focus on cultivation. Sometimes darkness and depression arise; if so, do confession prayers and purification practice. Develop very strong love and compassion. If get sick, rest and take a few days break, perhaps read biographies of previous teachers, what they went through, for obtaining inspiration and confidence.

(2) free from elaborations - not existence and non-existence. Emphasis on knowing nature of mind (in (1) emphasis on resting mind)

a. low level - one generally has a stable experience of emptiness. During meditation, composure, emptiness dominates. One has strong feelings for or against people one likes and dislikes in post-meditation.

b. middle - fixation on emptiness and attachment to appearances in post-meditation noted in a. is reduced.

c. higher - fixation on emptiness in meditation and on appearances in post-meditation resolved. Detailed discussion with teachers and companions helps here. Work out techniques in practice in great detail. Gives one energy in practice; generosity, virtue helpful. Read or sing (out loud) past songs of masters. Can enhance one's understanding.

(3) one-flavor - emphasis on practice shifts. For (1) and (2) emphasis is on understanding the way mind is inside. At this point this understanding is stable. Now applies this understanding to appearances, senses. They are same as mind.

a. low stage - one has slight and infrequent experiences of all phenomena same nature

b. middle - more frequent

c. high - understand quite directly, all appearances empty.

Because of considerable attention on emptiness, helpful to study karma, seed and result intensively. Clear understanding on dependent origin, compassion also need to be developed here.

(4) no-cultivation - Up to this point in practice, distinction between composure and subsequent attainment (post-meditation). In 4th stage, this differentiation begins to break down. Way mind is in composure occurs quite naturally in post-meditation.

- a. low - first have some experience of this
- b. middle - becomes more stable
- c. high - no difference.

Next follows description of how these stages correlate with 5 paths and 10 levels in sutras.

3 levels of singlemindedness come under category (action or activity based on inclination) corresponding to stages of "accumulation" (obtaining requisites) and "accomodation" (getting some understanding and used to it). Free from elaboration is equivalent to the "path of seeing" (understabnding of nature of mind). Also 10 levels of a Bodhisattva first reached here. Moreover, one-flavor levels correspond to path of "cultivation" from sutras (where cultivate what one has seen, regarding mind, now apply it to phenomena). Stage of no-cultivation equals the path of no learning. Levels a. and b. under the stage of no-cultivation equals the path of no learning of the sutras and 8-10 stages of the Bodhisattva.

The high level of no-cultivation of Mahamudra corresponds to Buddhahood in the sutra system.

The level of realization of inner understanding same in the Mahamudra and sutra path. Difference in form exists. In sutra path, this takes place over many lifetimes. Accumulation of good. Until one obtains the body with 99(?) marks of karma perfection. In Mahamudra, much more direct. People like us are very fortunate to meet with a teacher, are very fortunate. If practice, we can go through 12 stages and become like Buddha. However, our body is the same as we started with!!

IV. Conclusion

You are so fortunate to have learned how to cultivate, preserve and enhance Mahamudra. Yet, watch out ! Obstacles may arise.

"Really understand something now" we may become proud. "No progress in our meditation", we may pick on faults of others. Think we are better than others. Look at our own faults, understand how much more work we need to do, understand thus and avoid pride.

Also, as we pursue this path, we should be very careful to have as the basis of action in the world a moral basis. This is extremely important as develop understanding. Acting morally doesn't mean to become a monk or nun for most of us. That is one expression. In our daily life, to be very straightforward and honest, acting gently, non-violent, considerately, exercising restraint and moderation and understanding.

There is a saying in Tibet "A house holder who acts this way with care, honesty, is just as much a practitioner of virtue as the most senior monk".