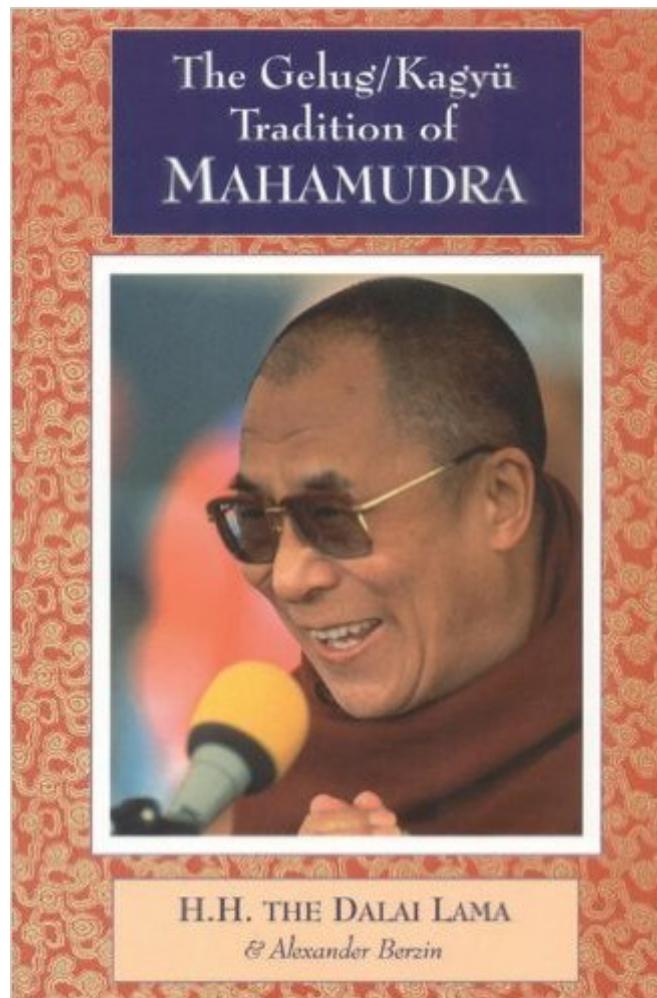


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The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition Of Mahamudra



Synopsis

Mahamudra, the great sealing nature, refers to systems of meditation on both the conventional and ultimate natures of the mind. These have been transmitted through the Kagyu, Sakya, and Gelug traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Within the Gelug, Mahamudra teachings occur in a combined Gelug/Kagyu tradition exemplified in the First Panchen Lama's Root Text for the Precious Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra. The work presented here contains two brilliant commentaries by the Dalai Lama. The first is a teaching based directly on the First Panchen Lama's root text. In the second, His Holiness bases his discussion on the First Panchen Lama's own commentary to this text. The book opens with an overview of Mahamudra by Alexander Berzin that discusses the relation of mind appearances and reality and offers practical techniques for overcoming problems of excessive worry, anxiety, and disturbing thoughts. This treasury of practical instruction contains extensive teachings on the nature of mind, the development of shamata, sutra and tantra levels of Mahamudra, and the compatibility of Dzogchen and Anuttarayoga Tantra.

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Customer Reviews

This is a rather imposing book, I have to say. It is certainly not for everyone, but will be of inestimable value to the right persons. Its apparatus is divided into four sections: first an introductory section of 70+ pages written by the translator, Alexander Berzin. Second, the root text itself, entitled "A Root Text for the Precious Gelug/Kagyu Tradition of Mahamudra: The Main Road of the Triumphant Ones, by the First Panchen Lama, Lozang-choekyi-gyeltsen" (6 pages). Third, an oral

commentary on the root text by H.H. the Dalai Lama (60+ pages). Fourth, an oral commentary on the First Panchen Lama's auto-commentary, again by H.H. the Dalai Lama (180+ pages). Lastly, prints of the root text in the Tibetan language. Teachings on Mahamudra and Dzogchen are difficult to categorize. On the one hand, they are seen as the summit of Tibetan Buddhist practice.

Dzogchen is the ultimate practice, the essence of the practices, in the Nyingma tradition; and similarly Mahamudra is here taught as a very high-level practice closely related to the completion stage of the anuttarayoga tantras. On the other hand, Mahamudra and Dzogchen are also taught to beginners as a way to quickly see into the nature of mind. This does not mean that they are "easy" or "simple" practices, as Berzin stresses; he notes that to speak of them in such a way is to disparage them - a terrible thing to do. The First Panchen Lama himself points out this tension in the root text, where he notes: "The great meditators of the snow mountains are practically of a single opinion in proclaiming that this is a guideline indicating how to forge a state of Buddhahood. Be that as it may, I, Choekyi-gyeltsen, say that this is a wondrous skillful means for beginners to accomplish the settling of their mind and is a way that leads you to recognize [merely] the conventional nature of mind that conceals something deeper." In other words, one can engage in Mahamudra practice as a beginner to see the conventional nature of mind. Later, one can use the practice to see the ultimate (empty) nature of mind. Berzin's excellent introduction will prepare practitioners somewhat for the root text and the commentaries by His Holiness. That being said, a few recommendations... (1) Repeated readings will be beneficial, since Berzin's introduction, although easy to read, can be a bit unclear at times. (2) Memorize the root text. It is only 6 pages. It is very important in practice to keep in mind the instructions of the teacher. To memorize the root text was the instruction of my teacher, and although it may seem laborious, it is of unquestionable value. Treat it as a preliminary practice, or to help you in the development of shamatha. (3) Study this text with an experienced practitioner/teacher. If you just pick up this book, but never receive any teachings on mahamudra from a teacher, your progress may be slow. Good luck - don't give up!!!

These brilliant discourses by H.H. the Dalai Lama are among the clearest and most detailed teachings on Mahamudra available in English. They explain the complete path to realization of Mahamudra practice, from the preliminary practices on through the development of calm abiding and the methods for meditating on emptiness and the nature of the mind. This book would give anyone an excellent introduction to Mahamudra meditation and philosophy, but the detailed explanations would make it of particular interest to those who are actually doing the practices.

I first found amusing that this relates to basically four pages of text that describe the Mahamudra tradition. Explained by HH, an explanation that was commented and expanded on again by HH, and then prefaced by the writer: Reality is as real as it can get, our thoughts are not "reality" regardless of how real these seem. This tradition is a Buddhist approach to changing our mindset into this "reality-based" one. The basis of this tradition was mostly rediscovered by a sequence of philosophers such as Descartes, Hume, Kierkegaard, etc. With empiricism at its basis, modern science continuously approaches it. The more I read of it, the more it looks like the closest we could have gotten to science 3000yrs ago. With many intervening years of superstitious thought blocking its fundamentals from view. Thankfully we live in an era where psychology might start re-discovering much of this, modernizing the language, bringing instrumentation into it, formalizing it, and introducing it into common practice. (Or simply re-discovering it altogether.)

An amazing book. Provides a translation of the First Panchen Lama's wonderfully profound text on Mahamudra along with two very clear, deep, important commentaries by H.H. the Dalai Lama. Really a treasure of instructions for meditation. Clarifies how different traditions of Mahamudra can each lead you to the intended goal. Provides wonderful ways of working with obstacles to meditation and also on combining calm abiding meditation with reasoned analysis in the tradition of Arya Nagarjuna in order to realize the view of emptiness.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has once again written and coauthored a book that is very well written and easy to understand. Mahamudra can be confusing, but as one of the most important meditations used in the Tibetan tradition of Mahayana Buddhism it could not have been presented to the Buddhist community at a better time. I highly recommend this book, the Sutra's are translated and explained, and the meditations are broken down in explicit step by step detail. Gen Rinchen

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