

Mahamudra Pointing-Out Instructions in Chö - A Bit About Chö (Chod)

The Ninth Karmapa kindly created or recorded four types of pointing-out instruction which have four stages, one-by-one. You will recognize why this sequence is this way. So that's all about our experience. So it's nothing like slapping a concept of the pointing-out instructions onto our own direct experience. As you guys know, this is like pointing a finger at the moon. We don't want to get confused with fingers and moons.

Anyway, having said that, just sit quietly. That's the most important thing. We're going to have a settled mind, body, and subtle body. So that becomes a basis for this practice. One thing I'm just going to warn you about, because I've done it myself, this mistake: so this is not about understanding, even. When somebody's pointing out, not understanding. We're going to develop the capacity for this insight or wisdom to dawn. It's already within us, but it's hidden, and it's veiled with obscurations. But just with these kinds of tools--this is just a kind of tool, pointing out. Then see, internal, innate wisdom dawns.

But then, if that's not your experience, that means the conditions are not yet ripe. So it's not about really trying to understand or trying to cultivate this understanding. So Cho practice is very good for creating the capacity or conditions very conducive for this wisdom to dawn. Okay, so anyway, it's no big deal, just as usual, settling body, speech and mind in whatever way. I like inviting breath into the whole body, the entire body meditation. So as soon as I do that, concepts are gone. It's nonconceptual, especially the lower belly. Bringing awareness down to the lower belly, rest there.

I encourage you to keep your eyes slightly open if you are not so used to it. Just naturally keep your eyes open, without any fixation, so that the channels which run from the eyes, the eye-globe, outside the eye-globe down to the heart center--that's wide open. You don't want to shut down anything.

So the first one, first pointing-out is: "Appearances are mind." Appearances, whatever appears, externally, internally, all phenomena, outside, inside, everything. Right now, look at this environment: the walls, ceiling, and screen. These are appearances, no? Appearances on the surface of the clear lake of your awareness. Everything is reflected in your mind, no? Perception.

So in today's practice, see if you can start to get a sense of this, the illusory nature of phenomena. We think all these brick walls and everything externally out there, you know, separate from me, this solidification of phenomena--the first one is, we deconstruct that assumption. We live on that assumption, no? Me here, other there, you know, other things out there. So, we've started to have a sense of whatever appears is nothing other than my own mind. So that's the first step. We don't end there, but that's the first kind of stumbling-block, so to speak.

We'll do the illusory dance, play of Cho today. Then the second one--I'm just going to do two today--then I want you to look at your mind, the one which perceives appearances, or the clear surface of the lake of your awareness. Look at that. Look at your mind. Can you find it? Is there such a thing? So see if you can find it. See if you can find your mind. Where is it? What's the shape? How does that look? Can you point to it and say, "Oh, I found it, this is the one, this is the projector of all appearances." Are you confused? Good. See if you can rest in that

confusion, the experience of confusion. If you can't find it, then see if you can rest in that unfindability. That is called emptiness.

So the second pointing-out is that mind or mind's nature is empty or emptiness. So this is the second level of deconstruction. So today we're going to see, explore, if you can rest there, without any expectation. We can start to make sense of this pointing-out in our practice.