**Foundational Views of Mahamudra, and a Four-Line Summary**

Mahamudra view and practice is based on Early Buddhism, along with aspects of the two main strands in Mahayana. These two, Madhyamaka and Yogachara, are sometimes described as schools of Buddhist thought, and their views became the basis for scholarly analysis and debate. However, their essential insights arose as realizations in the minds of Buddhist practitioners. Mahamudra draws on elements from both Madhyamaka and Yogachara as methods for exploring experience, as powerful aids to insight to put an end to suffering.

**Some Key Insights of Madhyamaka**

All phenomena, including everything we think of as ‘me’, are empty of any self-nature or inherent existence, because they are dependent arisings.

All concepts are unable to capture, or do justice to, reality.

**Some Key Insights of Yogachara**

There is nothing in experience which is external to mind.

Everything we experience is aware appearances.

These two streams come together in Mahamudra, which can be summed up as follows:

**The Four-Line Summary of Mahamudra**

1. *Everything is mind.*

This summarises the central insight of Yogachara. (When we begin working with this material, it may be more helpful to replace the word ‘mind’ with ‘awareness’.)

2. *Mind is empty.*

This uses the central insight of Madhyamaka, to prevent us holding onto mind as a truly existent nature of everything. (Many of us produce nihilistic associations to the word ‘empty’, so thinking in terms of things being ‘ungraspable’ may be more helpful.

3. *Mind appears in endless unobstructed forms.*

This is another Yogachara insight, that in reality there is no perceptual duality between awareness and its objects. (‘Unobstructed’ here refers to the way in which there is a steadily unfolding, ordered flow of experience.)

4. *All these forms self-liberate.*

This expresses the basic Buddhist insight of impermanence, the flowing nature of all experience.

Taken together, these insights lead to liberation, as there is complete relaxation of mind, and especially of the tension created by the wrong assumption of a subject/object duality. The practitioner comes to know directly that all appearances are manifestations of awareness. Because awareness is groundless, empty of any inherent existence, that is also true of everything that appears (just as we know that whatever appears on a film screen has no true existence and cannot be grasped). When we know the ungraspable, flowing nature of everything that appears in mind, there is no need to hold onto anything or fight against it. Mind stays relaxed, in the certainty that everything will follow the law of conditioned arising and pass away by itself.

*[This is a rough draft, written by Vessantara during the online Order retreat on The Ocean of True Meaning, 2020.]*