

Aspirations for Mahamudra

Namo guru.

Gurus and yidams, deities of the mandala,
Buddhas of the three times and ten directions and your offspring,
Consider me with kindness.
Pour into me your energy so that these wishes are fulfilled.

A river of virtue undefiled by the three spheres
Springs from the snow-mountain of pure actions and intentions-
Mine and those of all sentient beings without limit.
May this river flow into the ocean of the four expressions of full awakening.

Until I wake up to full presence,
Through all my lifetimes, birth after birth,
May not even the words for defilement and suffering be heard
And may I enjoy the wealth of oceans of happiness and virtue.

Having obtained this excellent free and well-favored life along with faith,
energy and intelligence,
Having attended a worthy master and received the pith of the sacred instructions,
May I practice the sacred dharma properly
In all my lives without interruption.

The study of scriptures frees one from the veil of ignorance.
The contemplation of oral instructions overcomes the darkness of doubt.
Light born of meditation illuminates the way things are.
May the radiance of the three wisdoms increase.

The basic ground consists of the two truths, free from the extremes of
eternalism and nihilism,
The excellent path, the two accumulations free from the extremes of
assumption and denial,
The result obtained, the two benefits free from the extremes of existence and peace.
May I meet teaching which is free from error.

The ground of refinement is mind itself - indivisible luminosity and emptiness;
The refining - the great vajra composure of mahamudra;
What is to be refined - the incidental stains of confusion;
The result of refining - the unstained experience of being: may I know it.

Confidence in outlook cuts assumptions about the ground.
The key to cultivation is to maintain that without distraction.
The supreme expression is to exercise the sense of cultivation in everything.
May I have confidence in outlook, cultivation and expression.

All experience is the manifestation of mind.
As for mind, there is no mind; mind's nature is empty.

Empty and unceasing, mind arises as experience.
By looking into mind deeply, may I be clear about how it is.

Perceptions, which never existed in themselves, are mistaken for objects.
Awareness itself, because of ignorance, is mistaken for a self.
Through the power of dualistic fixation I wander in the realm of existence.
May ignorance and confusion be completely resolved.

It doesn't exist: even buddhas do not see it.
It doesn't not exist: it is the basis of samsara and nirvana.
No contradiction: the middle way is union.
May I know the pure being of mind, free of extremes.

If one says "it is this," nothing has been posited.
If one says "it is not this," nothing has been denied.
Unconditioned pure being transcends intellect.
May I gain conviction in the ultimate outlook.

Not knowing it, I circle in the ocean of existence,
Knowing it, buddha isn't anywhere else.
"It is everything", "It isn't anything": none of this.
Pure being, the basis of everything, may I see any misunderstanding here.

Since perception is mind and emptiness is mind,
Since knowing is mind and delusion is mind,
Since arising is mind and cessation is mind,
May all assumptions about mind be eliminated.

Unpolluted by meditation with intellectual effort
Undisturbed by the winds of everyday affairs,
Not manipulating, knowing how to let what is true be itself,
May I become skilled in the practice of mind and maintain it.

The waves of subtle and coarse thoughts return to their source.
Undisturbed, the river of mind flows naturally.
Free from the contaminations of dullness and torpor,
May I establish the still ocean of shamatha.

When one looks again and again at the mind that cannot be looked at,
And sees vividly for what it is the meaning of not-seeing,
Doubts about the meaning of "is" and "isn't" are resolved.
Without confusion, may my own face know itself.

Look at objects and there is no object: one sees mind;
Look at mind and there is no mind: it is empty of nature;
Look at both of these and dualistic clinging subsides on its own.
May I know sheer clarity, the way mind is.

Free from mental constructions, it is called the great seal.
Free from extremes, it is called the great middle way.

Because everything is complete here, it is also called the great completion.
May I gain the confidence that, in understanding one, I know them all.

The great bliss of non-attachment is continuous.
Sheer clarity without fixations is free of obscurations.
Passing beyond intellect, non-thought is naturally present.
May these experiences continually arise without effort.

Attachment to good and fixation on experience subside on their own.
Confusion and evil concepts are cleared away in the realm of ultimate nature.
In the ordinary mind, there is no control or alteration.
May I know the truth of pure being, complete simplicity.

While the nature of beings has always been full enlightenment,
Not knowing this, they wander in endless samsara.
For the boundless suffering of sentient beings
May overwhelming compassion be born in my being.

While such compassion is active and immediate,
In the moment of compassion, its essential emptiness is nakedly clear.
This conjunction is the undeviating supreme path;
Inseparable from it, may I practice day and night.

From the power of attention come eyes and direct knowing.
Sentient beings are ripened and domains of enlightenment refined.
Aspirations for the realization of all aspects of buddhahood are fulfilled.
May I complete these three - fulfillment, ripening and refinement - and become buddha.

By the compassion of the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions
And the power of whatever pure virtue there may be,
May my wishes and those of all beings
Be fulfilled in the way I am seeking.

Aspirations for Mahamudra, the definite point of the teachings, was composed by Lord Rangjung Dorje, Karmapa III. This translation was made by Ken McLeod at the request of several students who wanted to use this prayer in their practice

The Very Essence of Mind, Mahamudra, the One Sufficient Path

Homage to the genuine gurus.

The Mahamudra of Gampopa, the One Sufficient Path, has three sections:

- 1) To Have a Decisive Understanding About the True Nature,
- 2) The Introduction to the Fundamental Character, and
- 3) Training on the Path of Suchness.

To Have a Decisive Understanding About the True Nature

Mahamudra has no causes.

Mahamudra has no conditions.

Mahamudra has no methods.

Mahamudra has no path.

Mahamudra has no result.

The Introduction to the Fundamental Character

"Mahamudra has no causes," and yet faith and devotion are the causes of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no conditions," and yet genuine gurus are the conditions for mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no methods," and yet uncontrived mind is the method of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no path," and yet undistracted mind is the path of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no result," and yet the mind liberated into dharmata is the result of mahamudra.

Training on the Path of Suchness

As the preliminary practice, meditate on guru yoga with faith, devotion, and respect, three times during the day and three times at night.

As the main practice, rest within the state of uncontrived mind with undistracted recognition.

As the conclusion, recognize whatever appears as your own mind and train your awareness with skill.

Relying upon the sequential arising of experiences, exert yourself in meditation until conceptual mind is exhausted.

There are two ways in which experiences arise: as unfavorable experiences and as favorable experiences.

As for the first: All unfavorable experiences—whatever they are, such as dullness, agitation, illness, fear, fright, or doubt—arise from your meditation. Therefore, recognize them to be experiences. Without abandoning them, meditate, taking those very things as the object of your view and meditation.

As for favorable experiences:

First, the experience of the mind's abiding arises.

Based on that, the experience of the essence, emptiness, arises.

Based upon that, the experience of attaining realization arises.

Based upon that, the experience of turning away from attachment arises.

With that sequential arising of experiences, you should exert yourself in practice without any complacency.

The mind's merely abiding at first is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to see the essence. Merely seeing the essence is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to attain realization. Merely attaining realization is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to turn away from attachment.

Merely turning away from attachment is not sufficient—you must meditate so that, through the liberation of conceptual mind into dharmata, conceptual mind is exhausted, phenomena are exhausted, and you awaken.

This completes The Very Essence of Mind, Mahamudra, the One Sufficient Path by Gampopa. Translated

orally into English during a teaching by Tenga Rinpoche at the Kalachakra for World Peace program at Madison Square Garden in 1991, and later revised, by Elizabeth Callahan. Tenga Rinpoche's commentary was published in Shenpen Osel, Vol 4, No 1, June 2000.

Maitripa's Essential Mahamudra Verses

To innermost bliss, I pay homage!

Were I to explain Mahamudra, I would say-
All phenomena? Your own mind!
If you look outside for meaning, you'll get confused.
Phenomena are like a dream, empty of true nature,

And mind is merely the flux of awareness,
No self nature: just energy flow.
No true nature: just like the sky.
All phenomena are alike, sky-like.

That's Mahamudra, as we call it.
It doesn't have an identity to show;
For that reason, the nature of mind
Is itself the very state of Mahamudra

(Which is not made up, and does not change).
If you realize this basic reality
You recognize all that comes up, all that goes on, as Mahamudra,
The all-pervading dharma-body.

Rest in the true nature, free of fabrication.
Meditate without searching for dharma-body-
It is devoid of thought.
If your mind searches, your meditation will be confused.

Because it's like space, or like a magical show,
There is neither meditation or non-meditation,
How could you be separate or inseparable?
That's how a yogi sees it!

Then, aware of all good and bad stuff as the basic reality,
You become liberated.
Neurotic emotions are great awareness,
They're to a yogi as trees are to a fire-FUEL!

What are notions of going or staying?
Or, for that matter, "meditating" in solitude?

If you don't get this,
You free yourself only on the surface.

But if you do get it, what can ever fetter you?
Abide in an undistracted state.
Trying to adjust body and mind won't produce meditation.
Trying to apply techniques won't produce meditation either.

See, nothing is ultimately established.
Know what appears to have no intrinsic nature.
Appearances perceived: reality's realm, self-liberated.
Thought that perceives: spacious awareness, self-liberated.
Non-duality, sameness [of perceiver and perceived]: the dharma-body.

Like a wide stream flowing non-stop,
Whatever the phase, it has meaning
And is forever the awakened state-
Great bliss without samsaric reference.

All phenomena are empty of intrinsic nature
And the mind that clings to emptiness dissolves in its own ground.
Freedom from conceptual activity
Is the path of all the Buddhas.

I've put together these lines
That they may last for aeons to come.
By this virtue, may all beings without exception
Abide in the great state of Mahamudra.

Colophon: This was Maitripa's Essential Mahamudra Instruction (Tibetan: Phyag rgya chen po tshig bsdus pa), received from Maitripa himself and translated by the Tibetan translator Marpa Chökyi Lodrö. English translation 1999 by Nicole Riggs.

Maitripa's Concise Summary of Mahamudra

*Sanskrit: Mahamudra-sanca[ya]-mitha
Tibetan: Phyag-rgya chen-po tshig-bsdus-pa*

Homage to Great Bliss!

Mahamudra is knowing that
all things are one's own mind.
Seeing objects as external is just noetic projection.
The whole of "appearance" is as empty as a dream.

The mind as such is merely a flow of awareness,
without self-nature, moving where it will like the wind.

Empty of an identity, it is like space.
All phenomena, like space, are the same.

That which is termed Mahamudra,
Is not a "thing" that can be pointed to.
It is the mind's own nature
that is Mahamudra [i.e., the Absolute State].

It is not something to be perfected or transformed.
Thus, to realize this, is to realize
that the whole world of appearance is Mahamudra.
This is the absolute all-inclusive Dharmakaya [i.e., the Ultimate Embodiment of Buddhahood].

Uncontrived and just as it is,
the inconceivable Dharmakaya,
is itself effortless meditation.
Trying to attain something is not meditation.

Seeing everything like space, like a magical illusion,
Neither meditating nor not meditating,
Neither separate nor not separate:
Such is the Yogin's realization.

All virtuous and evil actions
Become liberated through this knowledge.
The sinful defilements become the Absolute Gnosis itself;
becoming the Yogin's friend, this is a fire consuming the forest of trees.

Where then is going or staying?
Who then needs to run to a Monastery to meditate?
If one does not understand this point,
liberation will be but a temporary event.

When the true nature is realized,
one abides in the unwavering state.
Whether or not one is in the state of Integration or not,
There is nothing to be corrected by antidote or meditation.

Whatever arises is devoid of self-nature.
Appearances are auto-liberated into the Sphere of Reality (Dharmadhatu).
Conceptual creation is auto-liberated into Absolute Gnosis (Mahajnana).
The non-duality [of these two] is the Dharmakaya.

Like the flow of a great river,
Whatever occurs is meaningful and true.
This is the eternal Buddha state,
The Great Bliss, transcending the Worldly Cycle.

All phenomena are empty of self-identity,
Wherein even the concept of emptiness is eliminated.

Free of concepts, clinging not to mental projections,
is the Path of all the Enlightened Ones.

For those fortunate to connect with this teaching,
I have uttered these words of heartfelt instruction.
Thus, may all sentient beings
become established in Mahamudra.

Colophon: This exposition of Mahamudra (in thirteen four-lined stanzas) was given orally by the Master Maitripa to Marpa Chos-kyi-lodro, who translated it into Tibetan. It was translated into English from the original Tibetan text belonging to Bardok Chusang Rimpoche of Tingri by a Ngakpa-Yogin of the Dharma Fellowship.

Saraha's Song for a King (Michele Martin translation)

Doha kosha nama tsarya giti

Doha mdzod ces bya ba spyod pa'i glu

I prostrate to the one who has vanquished the power of the maras.

Just as when the wind blows
And still water is turned into moving waves,
So the appearing Saraha is just one,
Yet the king creates diverse aspects.

The ignorant press their eyes
And see one lamp as two.
Like this, in mind's nature where seer and seen are not two,
Alas! The mind appears as two things.

Though many lamps are lit throughout the house,
Those with eyes to see remain in darkness.
Like this, though spontaneous wisdom is all-pervasive and nearby,
For the ignorant it is far, far away.

Though diverse, rivers are one in the ocean.
Though myriad, lies are overcome by a single truth.
Though darkness is manifold,
The rising of a single sun clears it away.

Though cloud banks take up water from the ocean
And fill the earth again with descending rains,
The ocean does not decrease; filling the whole sky, it remains full:
There is no increase or decrease.

The Victorious Ones are filled with perfect qualities,
Which all have the very same nature -- spontaneous presence.
From the natural display of the great sphere, living beings take birth and therein cease.
In relation to this, there is not thing and no nonthing.

Giving up genuine bliss, you take another path
And place your hopes in conditioned bliss. Taking nectar in their mouth, bees come close,
But not drinking, they are far from enjoyment.

Having gone astray, the animals do not create suffering;
On the basis of this human life, experts create suffering.
On one hand, practitioners come to drink the nectar of space;
On the other, experts remain very attached to objects.

Bugs on excrement are attached to its smell
And think the pure fragrance of sandalwood foul.
Likewise, attached to dense ignorance, the source of samsara,
Individuals toss away the transcendence of suffering.

The ignorant think an ox's hoofprint filled with water is the ocean and look for gems therein,
Yet soon this water will evaporate. Likewise, those who take their passing experiences to be
enlightenment
Will not see the perfect qualities. By developing a stable and perfect mind,
The mind clinging to passing experience as perfect will evaporate.

Just as the ocean's salty water
Taken into the clouds turns sweet,
The stable mind works to benefit others,
The poison of objects turns into healing water.

When you realize the ineffable, it is neither suffering nor bliss.
When there is nothing to meditate upon, wisdom itself is bliss.
Likewise, though thunder make evoke fear,
The falling of rain makes harvests ripen.

First a thing and in the end a nonthing -- neither is established; likewise, there is nothing other than
these two.
There is no place to abide in the beginning, middle, or end.
For those whose minds are obscured by continual concepts,
Emptiness and compassion are expressed in words.

Just as the nectar dwelling within a flower
Is known by the bumblebee,
The fortunate toss away neither existence nor nirvana.
Like them, the ignorant should fully understand.

Just as an image appears on the mirror's surface,
Where the ignorant look in their lack of knowledge,
So the mind that throws away the truth
Relies on many concepts that are not true.

Though the fragrance of a flower has no form,
It clearly pervades everywhere.
Likewise, through the formless nature
The circles of the mandalas will be known.

When a wintry wind strikes and stirs up water,
Though soft, it takes the form of stone.
When concepts attempt to disturb mind's nature, where ignorance cannot take form,
Appearances become very dense and solid.

The true nature of any state of mind is free of flaws
And unaffected by the mire of existence and nirvana.
Even so, if a supreme gem is placed in a swamp,
Its radiance will not be clear.

When stupidity is clear, wisdom is unclear.
When stupidity is clear, wisdom is clear.
Like this, from a seed, a seedling arises;
With this seedling as a cause, offshoots appear.

In analyzing the mind with the reasoning of being neither one nor many,
If you discard the clear aspect of mind's nature, you will descend to the lower realms;
While gazing at that suffering, you fall into its bottomless pit.
How could one have anything but compassion for this?

Once totally attached to kissing and the bliss of what follows,
The ignorant say that this is indeed the ultimate.
Having left his house, he stands in front of the gate,
Soliciting tales of sensual pleasure.

For the sake of the winds, you meditate on your body as an empty house,
Practicing artificial means in great variety and number.
From space it falls along with faults.
Overwhelmed, the yogi faints away.

Just as Brahmins make their burnt offerings
Of ghee and rice in a blazing fire,
Know that, from *Ham*, the quintessence of space, the substance of nectar produces experience;
The passing experience of bliss is grasped as reality.

Some make the firelight burn and bring it to their fontanel;
With their tongue they enjoy union with the smaller one.
This bonds them up and makes them thoroughly disturbed.
Swayed by pride, they call themselves yogis.

An experience of self-awareness, a mere name, they display with a proud intellect.
"Whatever binds, that itself liberates," so they say.
Not knowing how to appraise a gem, the ignorant
Single out the color green to say that some trinket is an emerald.

This is bringing brass to mind as gold.
You think carrying this experience onto the path will accomplish the ultimate.
That is like being attached to the bliss of a dream.
You claim that aggregates are impermanent and bliss is permanent?

The letters *E Vam* make themselves understood.
By classifying four moments, the four seals are set out.
Some claim that through experiences, spontaneous presence appears.
Do not be like the one attached to the mirror's reflection.

Not understanding, the deer runs
In confusion after the water's mirage.
Likewise, the ignorant cannot evade thirst, and die.
Claiming it is ultimate, some take up bliss.

The relative truth refers to mindfulness; nonminding
Points to those mental states when the mind is released from mindfulness.
When completely transformed, this is the supreme of the supreme.
The result is the genuine supreme. Friends, you should know these.

The mind released from mindfulness engages in samadhi.
It is completely purified of the afflictions.
As the utpala born from a swamp is not stained by it,
So the mind itself is not affected by the faults arising from samsara nor by the qualities found in the Victorious One.

Mindfulness also sees with certainty that all things are like an illusion.
Transcending the world, take this moment into your mind and rest evenly in meditation.
Those whose minds recognize the teaching bind up ignorance.
Self-arising and inconceivable, wisdom naturally abodes within.

These appearances have the nature of clarity; from the very first they are unborn.
They do not arise as an entity with form; discard as well thinking they arise in the aspect of form's characteristics.
Abide continually within the mind itself and practice only deep meditation.
Without thought, rest in this meditation free of mental activity and free of flaws.

Intellect, mind, and mental appearances have this very nature.
All the worlds appearing in their diversity have this very nature.
All the varieties of the seen and the seer have this very nature.
Attachment, desire, aversion, and bodhicitta, too, have this very nature.

A lamp is lit in the darkness of ignorance.
While you differentiate mental categories,
You discard the mind's flaws.
Reflect upon the nature of nonattachment.

There is no negating, no constructing,
And no apprehending; it is inconceivable.

The ignorant are bound by mental categories.
The inseparable, the coemergent, is utterly pure.

Examining emptiness with the reasoning of one or many, you see that it is neither.
Through mere recognition, living beings are utterly freed.
Meditate recognizing what is clear and unmoving.
I apprehend the stable mind to be just that.

Through attaining the vast land of happiness,
And through seeing its own nature, mind becomes vast.
You walk through the land, yet mind's nature is not separate.

Coemergent joy is the dharmakaya. The sambhogakaya is the seedling of joy
And superior; the leaves come forth.
At the time of the path, the dharmakaya does not radiate in the ten directions.
Bliss free of constructs is fruition itself.

Those staying in the land benefit those living there but are not truly existent.
Nevertheless, there is a need that they stay in that place, benefiting those beings.
Attached and ultimately not attached are the form kayas;
Emptiness is inseparable from appearance.

It is not like a pig attached to the mire of samsara.
Once you have realized the flawless mind, what fault is there?
Anyone who practices like this is not affected by anything.
Why would this person be bound by flaws?

Colophon: These verses were composed directly by glorious Saraha, great lord of practitioners. It was translated from the Indian original into Tibetan by the bilingual Nepali, Lama Asu. It was translated into English by Michele Martin and published in A Song for the King: Saraha on Mahamudra Meditation, with commentary by Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche. Wisdom Publications, 2006).

Saraha's Dohakosa: The Royal Song (Dowman translation)

Dohakosa nama caryagiti

Doha mdzod spyod pa'i glu

Homage To Aryamanjusri!
Homage to the destroyer of demonic power!

The wind lashes calm waters into rollers and breakers;
The king makes multifarious forms out of unity,
Seeing many faces of this one Archer, Saraha.

The cross-eyed fool sees one lamp as two;
The vision and the viewer are one,
You broken, brittle mind!

Many lamps are lit in the house,
But the blind are still in darkness;
Sahaja is all-pervasive
But the fool cannot see what is under his nose.

Just as many rivers are one in the ocean
All half-truths are swallowed by the one truth;
The effulgence of the sun illuminates all dark corners.

Clouds draw water from the ocean to fall as rain on the earth
And there is neither increase nor decrease;
Just so, reality remains unaltered like the pure sky.

Replete with the Buddha's perfections
Sahaja is the one essential nature;
Beings are born into it and pass into it,
Yet there is neither existence nor non-existence in it.

Forsaking bliss the fool roams abroad,
Hoping for mundane pleasure;
Your mouth is full of honey now,
Swallow it while you may!

Fools attempt to avoid their suffering,
The wise enact their pain.
Drink the cup of sky-nectar
While others hunger for outward appearances.

Flies eat filth, spurning the fragrance of sandalwood;
Man lost to nirvana furthers his own confusion,
Thirsting for the coarse and vulgar.

The rain water filling an ox's hoof-print
Evaporates when the sun shines;
The imperfections of a perfect mind,
All are dissolved in perfection.

Salt sea water absorbed by clouds turns sweet;
The venom of passionate reaction
In a strong and selfless mind becomes elixir.

The unutterable is free of pain;
Non-meditation gives true pleasure.
Though we fear the dragon's roar
Rain falls from the clouds to ripen the harvest.

The nature of beginning and end is here and now,
And the first does not exist without the last;
The rational fool conceptualising the inconceivable
Separates emptiness from compassion.

The bee knows from birth
That flowers are the source of honey;
How can the fool know
That samsara and nirvana are one?

Facing himself in a mirror
The fool sees an alien form;
The mind with truth forgotten
Serves untruth's outward sham.

Flowers' fragrance is intangible
Yet its reality pervades the air,
Just as mandala circles are informed
By a formless presence.

Still water stung by an icy wind
Freezes hard in starched and jagged shapes;
In an emotional mind agitated by critical concepts
The unformed becomes hard and intractable.

Mind immaculate by nature is untouched
By samsara and nirvana's mud;
But just like a jewel lost in a swamp
Though it retains its lustre it does not shine.

As mental sloth increases pure awareness diminishes;
As mental sloth increases suffering also grows.
Shoots sprout from the seed and leaves from the branches.

Separating unity from multiplicity in the mind
The light grows dim and we wander in the lower realms;
Who is more deserving of pity than he
Who walks into fire with his eyes wide open?

Obsessed with the joys of sexual embrace
The fool believes he knows ultimate truth;
He is like someone who stands at his door
And, flirting, talks about sex.

The wind stirs in the House of Emptiness
Exciting delusions of emotional pleasure;
Fallen from celestial space, stung,
The tormented yogin faints away.

Like a brahmin taking rice and butter
Offering sacrifice to the flame,
He who visualises material things as celestial ambrosia
Deludes himself that a dream is ultimate reality.

Enlightening the House of Brahma in the fontanelle
Stroking the uvala in wanton delight,
Confused, believing binding pleasure to be spiritual release,
The vain fools calls himself a yogin.

Teaching that virtue is irrelevant to intrinsic awareness,
He mistakes the lock for the key;
Ignorant of the true nature of the gem
The fool calls green glass emerald.

His mind takes brass for gold,
Momentary peak experience for reality accomplished;
Clinging to the joy of ephemeral dreams
He calls his short-thrift life Eternal Bliss.

With a discursive understanding of the symbol EVAM,
Creating four seals through an analysis of the moment,
He labels his peak experience sahaja:
He is clinging to a reflection mistaken for the mirror.

Like befuddled deer leaping into a mirage of water
Deluded fools in their ignorance cling to outer forms
And with their thirst unslaked, bound and confined,
They idealise their prison, pretending happiness.

The relatively real is free of intellectual constructs,
And ultimately real mind, active or quiescent, is no-mind,
And this is the supreme, the highest of the high, immaculate;
Friends, know this sacred high!

In mind absorbed in samadhi that is concept-free,
Passion is immaculately pure;
Like a lotus rooted in the slime of a lake bottom,
This sublime reality is untouched by the pollution of existence.

Make solid your vision of all things as visionary dream
And you attain transcendence,
Instantaneous realisation and equanimity;
A strong mind binding the demons of darkness
Beyond thought your own spontaneous nature is accomplished.

Appearances have never ceased to be their original radiance,
And unformed, form never had a substantial nature to be grasped;
It is a continuum of unique meditation,
In an inactive, stainless, meditative mind that is no-mind.

Thus the I is intellect, mind and mind-forms,
I the world, all seemingly alien show,
I the infinite variety of vision-viewer,
I the desire, the anger, the mental sloth - and bodhicitta.

Now there is a lamp lit in spiritual darkness
Healing the splits riven by the intellect
So that all mental defilements are erased.
Who can define the nature of detachment?

It cannot be denied nor yet affirmed,
And ungraspable it is inconceivable.
Through conceptualisation fools are bound,
While concept-free there is immaculate sahaja.

The concepts of unity and multiplicity do not bring integration;
Only through awareness do sentient beings reach freedom.
Cognition of radiance is strong meditation;
Abide in a calm, quiescent mind.

Reaching the joy swollen land
Powers of seeing expand,
And there is joy and laughter;
Even chasing objects there is no separation.

From joy, buds of pure pleasure emerge,
Bursting into blooms of supreme pleasure,
And so long as outflow is contained
Unutterable bliss will surely mature.

What, where and by whom are nothing,
Yet the entire event is imperative.
Whether love and attachment or desirelessness
The form of the event is emptiness.

Like pigs we wallow in this sensual mire
But what can stain our pearly mind?
Nothing can ever contaminate it,
And by nothing can we ever be bound.

This song of existential freedom was composed by the Glorious Master Yogin Saraha. This Dohakosa of Saraha has been translated by Kunzang Tenzin in Kathmandu over many years, finished on the full moon of the seventh month of the wood-ox year. May all beings be happy! May all manner of things be well!

The Royal Song Of Saraha

I bow down to noble Manjushri
I bow down to Him who has conquered the finite.

1

As calm water lashed by wind
Turns into waves and rollers,
So the king thinks of Saraha
In many ways, although one man.

2

To a fool who squints
One lamp is as two;
Where seen and seer are not two, ah! the mind
Works on the thingness of them both.

3

Though the house-lamps have been lit,
The blind live on in the dark.
Though spontaneity is all-encompassing and close,
To the deluded it remains always far away.

4

Though there may be many rivers, they are one in the sea,
Though there may be many lies, one truth will conquer all.
When one sun appears, the dark
However deep will vanish.

5

As a cloud that rises from the sea
Absorbing rain the earth embraces,
So, like the sky, the sea remains
Without increasing or decreasing.

6

So from spontaneity that's unique,
Replete with the Buddha's perfections,
Are all sentient beings born and in it come
To rest. But it is neither concrete nor abstract.

7

They walk other paths and so forsake true bliss,
Seeking the delights that stimulants produce.
The honey in their mouths and to them so near
Will vanish if at once they do not drink it.

8

Beasts do not understand the world
To be a sorry place. Not so the wise
Who the heavenly nectar drink
While beasts hunger for the sensual.

9

To a fly that likes the smell of putrid
Meat the fragrance of sandalwood is foul.
Beings who discard Nirvana
Covet coarse Samsara's realm.

10

An ox's footprints filled with water
Will soon dry up; so with a mind that's firm
But full of qualities that are not perfect;
These imperfections will in time dry up.

11

Like salt sea water that turns
Sweet when drunk up by the clouds,
So a firm mind that works for others turns
The poison of sense-objects into nectar.

12

If ineffable, never is one unsatisfied,
If unimaginable, it must be bliss itself.
Though from a cloud one fears the thunderclap,
The crops ripen when from it pours the rain.

13

It is in the beginning, in the middle, and
The end; yet end and beginning are nowhere else.
All those with minds deluded by interpretative thoughts are in
Two minds and so discuss nothingness and compassion as two things.

14

Bees know that in flowers
Honey can be found.
That Samsara and Nirvana are not two
How will the deluded ever understand?

15

When the deluded in a mirror look
They see a face, not a reflection.
So the mind that has truth denied
Relies on that which is not true.

16

Though the fragrance of a flower cannot be touched,
'Tis all pervasive and at once perceptible.
So by unpatterned being-in-itself
Recognize the round of mystic circles.

17

When in winter still water by the wind is stirred,

It takes as ice the shape and texture of a rock.
When the deluded are disturbed by interpretative thoughts,
That which is as yet unpatterned turns very hard and solid.

18

Mind immaculate in its very being can never be
Polluted by Samsara's or Nirvana's impurities.
A precious jewel deep in mud
Will not shine, though it has luster.

19

Knowledge shines not in the dark, but when the darkness
Is illumined, suffering disappears at once.
Shoots grow from the seed
And leaves from the shoots.

20

He who thinks of the mind in terms of one
Or many casts away the light and enters the world.
Into a raging fire he walks with open eyes--
Who could be more deserving of compassion?

21

For the delights of kissing the deluded crave
Declaring it to be the ultimately real--
Like a man who leaves his house and standing at the door
Asks a woman for reports of sensual delights.

22

The stirring of biotic forces in the house of nothingness
Has given artificial rise to pleasures in so many ways.
Such yogis from affliction faint for they have fallen
From celestial space, inveigled into vice.

23

As a Brahman, who with rice and butter
Makes a burnt offering in blazing fire
Creating a vessel for nectar from celestial space,
Takes this through wishful thinking as the ultimate.

24

Some people who have kindled the inner heat and raised it to the fontanelle
Stroke the uvula with the tongue in a sort of coition and confuse
That which fetters with what gives release,
In pride will call themselves yogis.

25

As higher awareness they teach what they experience
Within. What fetters them they will call liberation.

A glass trinket colored green to them is a priceless emerald;
Deluded, they know not a gem from what they think it should be.

26

They take copper to be gold. Bound by discursive thought
They think these thoughts to be ultimate reality.
They long for the pleasures experienced in dreams. They call
The perishable body-mind eternal bliss supreme.

27

By the symbol EVAM they think self-clearness is achieved,
By the different situations that demand four seals
They call what they have fancied spontaneity,
But this is looking at reflections in a mirror.

28

As under delusion's power a herd of deer will rush
For the water in a mirage which is not recognized,
So also the deluded quench not their thirst, are bound by chains
And find pleasure in them, saying that all is ultimately real.

29

Nonmemory is convention's truth
And mind which has become no-mind is ultimate truth.
This is fulfillment, this the highest good.
Friends, of this highest good become aware.

30

In nonmemory is mind absorbed; just this
Is emotionality perfect and pure.
It is unpolluted by the good or bad of worldliness
Like a lotus unaffected by the mud from which it grows.

31

Yet with certainty must all things be viewed as if they were a magic spell.
If without distinction you can accept or reject Samsara
Or Nirvana, steadfast is your mind, free from the shroud of darkness.
In you will be self-being, beyond thought and self-originated.

32

This world of appearance has from its radiant beginning
Never come to be; unpatterned it has discarded patterning.
As such it is continuous and unique meditation;
It is nonmentation, stainless contemplation, and nonmind.

33

Mind, intellect, and the formed contents of that mind are It,
So too are the world and all that seems from It to differ,
All things that can be sensed and the perceiver,
Also dullness, aversion, desire, and enlightenment.

34

Like a lamp that shines in the darkness of spiritual
Unknowing, It removes obscurations of a mind
As far as the fragmentations of intellect obtain.
Who can imagine the self-being of desirelessness?

35

There's nothing to be negated, nothing to be
Affirmed or grasped; for It can never be conceived.
By the fragmentations of the intellect are the deluded
Fettered; undivided and pure remains spontaneity.

36

If you question ultimacy with the postulates of the many and the one,
Oneness is not given, for by transcending knowledge are sentient beings freed.
The radiant is potency latent in the intellect, and this
Is shown to be meditation; unswerving mind is our true essence.

38

The buds of joy and pleasure
And the leaves of glory grow.
If nothing flows out anywhere
The bliss unspeakable will fruit.

39

What has been done and where and what in itself it will become
Is nothing; yet thereby it has been useful for this and that.
Whether passionate or not
The pattern is nothingness.

40

If I am like a pig that covets worldly mire
You must tell me what fault lies in a stainless mind.
By what does not affect one
How can one now be fettered?

English translation by Herbert V. Guenther.

Saraha's Treasury of Songs

The Brahmins who do not know the truth,
Vainly recite the Vedas four.

With earth and water and kusha-grass they make preparations.
And seated at home they kindle fire,

And from the senseless offerings that they make,
They burn their eyes with the pungent smoke.

In lordly garb with one staff or three,
They think themselves wise with their brahmanical lore.
Vainly is the world enslaved by their vanity.
They do not know that dharma's the same as non-dharma.

With ashes these masters smear their bodies,
And on their heads they wear matted hair.
Seated within the house they kindle lamps.
Seated in a corner they tinkle bells.

They adopt a posture and fix their eyes,
Whispering in ears and deceiving folk,
Teaching widows and bald-headed nuns and such like,
Imitating them as they take their fee.

The Jain monks mock the Way with their appearance,
With their long nails and their filthy clothes,
Or else naked and with disheveled hair,
Enslaving themselves with their doctrine of release.

If by nakedness one is released,
Then dogs and jackals must be so.
If from absence of hair there comes perfection,
Then the hips of maidens must be so.

If from having a tail there comes release,
Then for the peacock and yak it must be so.
If wisdom consists in eating just what one finds,
Then for the elephant and horse it must be so.

For these Jain monks there is no release, Saraha says.
Deprived of the truth of happiness, they do but afflict their own bodies.

Then there are the novices and bhikshus with the teaching of the Old School,
Who renounce the world to be monks.
Some are seen sitting and reading the scriptures,
Some wither away on their concentration on thought.

Others have recourse to the great Vehicle.
This is the doctrine which expounds the original texts, (they say).
Others just meditate on mandala-circles.
Others strive to define the fourth stage of bliss.

With such investigating they fall from the Way;
Some would envisage it as space,
Others endow it with the nature of voidness,
And thus they are generally in disagreement.

Whoever deprived of the Innate, seeks nirvana,
Can in no wise acquire the absolute truth.

Whoever is intent on anything else, how may he gain release?
Will one gain release, abiding in meditation?
What's the use of lamps? What's the use of offerings?
What's to be done by reliance on mantras?

What is the use of austerities?
What is the use of going on pilgrimage?
Is release achieved by bathing in water?

Abandon such false statements and renounce such illusion!

Than knowledge of This there is nothing else.
Other than This no one can know.

It is This that's read and This that's meditated,
It's This that's discussed in treatises and old legends.
There is no school of thought that does not have This as its aim,
But one sees it only at the feet of one's master.

If the words of one's master but enter the heart,
It seems like a treasure in the palm of one's hand.
The world is enslaved by falsehood, says Saraha,
And the fool does not perceive his true nature.

Without meditating, without renouncing the world,
One may stay at home in the company of one's wife.
Can that be called perfect knowledge, Saraha says,
If one is not released while enjoying the pleasures of sense?

If it's already manifest, what's the use of meditation?
And if it is hidden, one is just measuring darkness.
Saraha cries: The nature of the Innate is neither existent nor non-existent.

By means of that same essence by which one is born and lives and dies,
By means of that one gains the highest bliss.
But although Saraha speaks of these profound and mysterious words,
This stupid world seems not to understand.

If it exists apart from meditation, how may one meditate upon it?
If it is ineffable, how may it be discussed?
The whole world is enslaved by the appearance of things,
And no one apprehends his true nature.

Mantras and tantras, meditation and concentration,
They are all a cause of self-deception.
Do not defile in contemplation thought that is pure in its own nature,
But abide in the bliss of yourself and cease those torments.

Eat and drink, indulge the senses,
Fill the mandala (with offerings) again and again,
By things like these you'll gain the world beyond.
Tread upon the head of the foolish worldling and proceed!

Where vital breath and mind no longer roam about,
Where Sun and Moon do not appear,
There, O man, put thy thought to rest,
This is the precept taught by Saraha.

Do not discriminate, but see things as one,
Making no distinction of families.
Let the whole of the threefold world become one in the state of Great Passion.

Here there is no beginning, no middle, no end,
Neither samsara nor nirvana.
In this state of highest bliss
There is neither self nor other.

Whatever you see, that is it,
In front, behind, in all the ten directions.
Even today let your master make an end of delusion!
There is no need to ask of anyone else.

The faculties of sense subside,
And the notion of self is destroyed.
O friend, such is the Body Innate.
Ask for it clearly of your master.

Where thought is held and breath passes hence,
That is the highest bliss.
Elsewhere one goes nowhere.

Now it is a matter of self-experience,
So do not err with regard to it.
To call it existence or non-existence or even stage of bliss would impose a limitation.

How by meditation should one fondly gain release?
And why accept such falsehood?
Have confidence in the word of your good master.
This is the advice that I Saraha give.

The nature of the sky is originally clear,
But by gazing and gazing the sight becomes obscured.
Then when the sky appears deformed in this way,
The fool does not know that the fault's in his own mind.

Through fault of pride he does not see the truth,
And therefore like a demon he maligns all ways.

The whole world is confused by schools of thought,
And no one perceives his true nature.

They do not perceive the true basis of mind,
For upon the Innate they impose a threefold falsification.
Where thought arises and where it dissolves,
There you should abide, O my son.

For one who thus ponders the truth without its true basis,
A master's instruction would make everything clear.
Saraha says, O fool, surely know,
The diversity of existence is but a form of thought.

One own true nature cannot be explained by another,
But it is revealed by one's master's instruction.
There exists in it not an atom of evil,
Both dharma and non-dharma are cleansed and consumed.

When one's own mind is cleansed,
Then one's master's good qualities may enter the heart.
It is in knowledge of this that Saraha sings,
Paying no regard to tantra or mantra.

Men are bound by karma and by release from karma the mind is released.
And by this release of the mind they gain for a certainty this highest Nirvana.

Mind is the universal seed.
Both Samsara and Nirvana spring forth from it.
Pay honour to this that like a wish-granting gem
Gives all desirable things.

Thought bound brings bondage, and released brings release,
Of that there is no doubt.
By that with which fools are bound, the wise are quickly released.

When so bound it dashes in all directions,
But released, it stays calm.
Just consider the camel, my friend.
I see there a similar paradox.

Don't concentrate on yourself, restricting your breath.
Fie, yogin, don't squint at the end of your nose.
O fool, hold fast to the Innate,
And abandon the clinging bonds of existence.

Bring together in thought the restless waves of breath.
Then know the true nature of the Innate,
And this becomes still of itself.

When the mind goes to rest
And the bonds of the body are destroyed,
Then the one flavour of the Innate pours forth
And there is neither outcast nor brahmin.

Here is the sacred Jumna and here the River Ganges,
Here are the Prayaga and Benares, here are Sun and Moon.

I have visited in my wanderings shrines and other places of pilgrimage,
But I have not seen another shrine blissful like my own body.

Lotuses in clusters with leaves and blossoms and fragrance and petals and tendrils,
Abandon this discrimination, O Fool, do not torment yourself and cling to such fondness.

As objects of desire mantras and treatises go to destruction.
Ask, O thou of no family,
For Brahmin and Vishnu and all the three worlds return here to their source.

Know the taste of this flavour which consists in absence of knowledge.
Those who recite commentaries do not know how to cleanse the world.

Listen, my son; this taste cannot be told by its various parts.
For it is free from conceits, a state of perfect bliss, in which existence has its origin.

It is the very last segment that remains of the creation of illusion,
Where intellect is destroyed, where mind dies and self-centeredness is lost.
Why encumber yourself there with meditation?

A thing appears in the world and then goes to destruction.
If it has no true existence, how may it appear again?
If it is free from both manifestation and destruction, what then arises?
Stay! Your master has spoken.

Look and listen, touch and eat,
Smell, wander, sit and stand,
Renounce the vanity of discussion,
Abandon thought and be not moved from singleness.

Those who do not readily drink the ambrosia of their master's instruction,
Die of thirst in the desert of multitudinous treatises.

Abandon thought and thinking and be just as a child.
Be devoted to your master's teaching, and the Innate will become manifest.

It is devoid of names and other qualities;
I have said it cannot be known by discussion.
So how may the Supreme Lord be described?
It is like a maiden's experiencing of bliss.

Completely devoid of the notions of being and non-being,
It is there that the whole world is absorbed.
For when the mind abides motionless,
One is released from the toils of existence.

So long as you do not recognize the Supreme One in yourself,
How should you gain this incomparable form?
I have taught that when error ceases,
You know yourself for what you are.

One should not think of molecules or atoms;
It is this supreme bliss that pours forth unceasingly as existence.
Error such as that is madness, says Saraha.
Know but the pure and perfect state!

He is at home, but she goes outside and looks.
She sees her husband, but still asks the neighbors.
Saraha says, O fool, know yourself.
It is not a matter of meditation, or concentration or the reciting of mantras.

"If one's master just speaks, would one know everything?
And without knowing everything would one gain release?"
So they wander about gaining experience,
But they know not the Innate. They just amass evil.

Enjoying the world of sense, one is undefiled by the world of sense.
One plucks the lotus without touching the water.
So the yogin who has gone to the root of things
Is not enslaved by the senses although he enjoys them.

One may worship a divinity, and (in trance) even his form may be seen.
But one is still oneself subject to death, for what can he do?
All this does not destroy the Samsara,
"Without perseverance", they say, "there is no escape."

"One fixes the eyes, obstructs the thought, restrains the breath.
This is the teaching of our lord and master."
But when the flow of his breath is quite motionless
And the yogin is dead, what then?

So long as one is in the sphere of the senses,
Desire pours forth of itself.
Who can deal with this awkward problem?
In so far as one is within something, once cannot see it (from without).

All these pandits expound the treatises,
But the Buddha who resides within the body is not known.
Comings and goings are not destroyed in that way.
But they shamelessly say: "We are pandits."

He who among living men never grew old,
Such a one would be free from old age and death.
(This is their impossible aim).
But at one's master's word the mind is cleared.
What treasure is there other than this?

He who does not enjoy the senses purified,
And practices only the Void,
Is like a bird that flies up from a ship
And then wheels round and lands back there again.

But do not be caught by attachment to the senses, Saraha says.
Consider the fish, the butterfly, the elephant, the bee and the deer.

Whatever pours forth from the mind,
possesses the nature of the owner.
Are waves different from the water?
Their nature like that of space is one and the same.

Who speaks, who listens, and what is confided?
Like the dust in a dusty tunnel,
That which arises in the heart goes to rest in the heart.

Even as water entering water
Has an identical savour,
So faults and virtues are accounted the same
As there's no opposition between them.

Do not cling to the notion of voidness,
But consider all things alike.
Indeed even the husk of a sesame-seed
Causes pain like that of an arrow.

One thing is so, another is not so.
The action is like that of a wish-granting gem.
Strange how these pandits go to grief through their own errors,
For in self-experience consists this great bliss.

In it all forms are endowed with the sameness of space,
And the mind is held steady with the nature of this same sameness.
When the mind ceases thus to be mind,
The true nature of the Innate shines forth.

In this house and that the great matter is discussed,
But the basis of the great bliss is unknown.
The world is enslaved by thought, Saraha says,
And no one has known this non-thought.

There is one Lord revealed in many scriptures,
Who becomes clearly manifest at your wish.

Oneself is the Lord, and another is the enemy.
This is the notion they have in their houses.
In eating the one, he consumes all the other,
But she goes outside and looks for her master.

He is not seen to come,
Nor known to stay or go;
As signless and motionless the supreme Lord is known.

If you do not abandon coming and going,
How may you gain this rare one, this splendour?

Thought is pure when consigned to the forehead.
Do not then conceive differences in yourself.
When there is no distinction between Body, Speech and Mind,
Then the true nature of the Innate shines forth.

There how should another arise,
Where the wife without hesitation consumes the house-holder?
The yogini's action is peerless.

She consumes the house-holder and the Innate shines forth.
There is neither passion nor absence of passion.
Seated beside her own, her mind destroyed, thus I have seen the yogini.

One eats and drinks and thinks what occurs to the thought.
It is beyond the mind and inconceivable, this wonder of the yogini.

Here Sun and Moon lose their distinction,
In her the triple world is formed.
O know this yogini, perfecter of thought and unity of the Innate.

The whole world is tormented by words
And there is no one who does without words.
But in so far as one is free from words
Does one really understand words.

The same without as within,
Firmly established at the 14th stage,
The bodiless form is concealed in the body.
He who knows this is therein released.

I used to recite (the text-book, which begins with the words), "Let there be success."

But I drank the elixir and forgot it.
There is but one word that I know now,
And of that, my friend, I know not the name.

At the moment of the embrace does he then win the great bliss,
Who does not comprehend that everything is of his own nature?

He is like a thirsty deer that runs for water which is but a mirage.
It dies of thirst, and how should he obtain the divine waters?

The five skandhas, the five material elements, the twelve sense-fields, the six faculties of sense and their spheres, these with their various modifications are the water. In these doha-verses which are altogether new nothing is anywhere concealed.

So pandits, please have patience with me,
For here there is no hesitating.
That which I have heard by the word of my master,
Why should I speak of it secretly?

That blissful delight that consists between lotus and vajra,
Who does not rejoice there?
In the triple world whose hopes does it fail to fulfil?

This moment may be the bliss of Means or both (Wisdom and Means),
And by the flavour of their master and by merit it is known by a few.

It is profound, it is vast.
It is neither self nor other.
O know this self-experience
Of the Innate in the Fourth Moment!

Even as the moon makes light in black darkness,
So in one moment the supreme bliss removes all defilement.

When the sun of suffering has set,
Then arises this bliss, this lord of the stars.
It creates with continuous creativity,
And of this comes the mandala-circle.

See thought as thought, O fool, and leave all false views,
Gain purification in bliss supreme,
For here lies final perfection.

Question not with hesitation.
Release this elephant which is your mind,
That he may drink the river-waters
And stay on the bank at his pleasure.

Held in the trunk of the elephant that no represents the senses,
One may appear as lifeless,
But he yogin like a nimble rider slips away and goes.

As is Nirvana, so is Samsara.
Do not think there is any distinction.
Yet it possesses no single nature,
For I know it as quite pure.

Do not sit at home, do not go into the forest,
But recognize mind wherever you are.
When one abides in complete and perfect enlightenment,
Where is Samsara and where is Nirvana?

O know this truth,
That neither at home nor in the forest does enlightenment dwell.
Be free from prevarication
In the self-nature of immaculate thought!

"This is myself and this is another."
Be free of this bond which encompasses you about,
And your own self is thereby released.

Do not err in this matter of self and other.
Everything is Buddha without exception.
Here is that immaculate and final stage,
Where thought is pure in its true nature.

The fair tree of thought that knows no duality,
Spreads through the triple world.
It bears the flower and fruit of compassion,
And its name is service of others.

The fair tree of the Void abounds with flowers,
Acts of compassion of many kinds,
And fruit for others appearing spontaneously,
For this joy has no actual thought of another.

So the fair tree of the Void also lacks compassion,
Without shoots or flowers or foliage,
And whoever imagines them there, falls down,
For branches there are none.

The two trees spring from one seed,
And for that reason there is but one fruit.
He who thinks of them thus indistinguishable,
Is released from Nirvana and Samsara.

If a man in need approaches and goes away hopes unfulfilled,
It is better he should abandon that house
Than take the bowl that has been thrown from the door.

Not to be helpful to others,
Not to give to those in need,
This is the fruit of Samara.
Better than this is to renounce the idea of a self.

He who clings to the Void
And neglects Compassion,

Does not reach the highest stage.
But he who practises only compassion,
Does not gain release from toils of experience.
He, however, who is strong in practice of both,
Remains neither in Samsara nor in Nirvana.

Saraha's Dosakosha, translated by David Snellgrove, published in Buddhist Texts Through the Ages edited by Conze, Horner, Snellgrove, Waley (1954).

Song of Métripa (Advayavajra)

To gain experience in the profound teachings brings happiness.
To gain no experience at all brings happiness.
To have a view without hope or fear brings happiness.
If it is spontaneously present, this brings even more happiness.
To meditate without dualistic clinging brings happiness.
To have no reference points brings even more happiness.
To engage in choiceless conduct brings happiness.
To have no hesitation brings even more happiness.
To use the mind to watch the mind brings happiness.
To cut off the mistaken path of hope and fear brings happiness.
To stay in retreat in the mountains brings happiness.
To have a view without hope or fear brings happiness.
To set aside homeland, friends, and relatives brings happiness.
To live on begged food brings happiness.
To eat the food of great bliss brings happiness.
To wear the clothes of luminosity brings happiness.
To practice the path of the messenger brings happiness.
To keep one's focus at the tip of the nose brings happiness.

From Timeless Rapture: Inspired Verse of the Shangpa Masters, compiled by Jamgon Kongtrul, trans. & ed. by Ngawang Zangpo.

Zerbu Dunpa: Seven Nails

I proclaim the perfection of primordial Knowing as the indivisibility of radiance and Openness.
Awareness pervades all, is always open without sides.

Penetrating through the ground of immovability with these seven great nails through the narrow paths of the circuit of conditioned experience and freedom from it, the joy that is always so arises within my mind.

Nail together conditions and the unconditioned with the unobstructed clarity of Knowing.

Nail together intelligence and objects with inherent radiance.

Nail together mind and matter with the spontaneous stainless essence.

Nail together nihilism and eternalism with freedom from fixated views.

Nail together forms and the nature of forms with the transcendence of Awareness beyond forms.

Nail together excitation and torpor, liberating the totality of the senses.

Nail together appearances and Openness with the primordial perfection of the Body of Reality.

Translated by Ven. Anzan Hoshin Roshi, White Wind Zen Community.

The Seven Nails of Acarya Sri Simha

Homage to absolute Gnosis, [the unity of] uncreate Clear Light and Emptiness. This Gnosis of self-existent Awareness (svayambhu-vidya-jnana), which encompasses all and abides in all, is open and impartial. Therefore, nail the original immutable Ground (prakriti) by using the seven nails of the Path of the Nonduality of Samsara and Nirvana. Thus shall primordial Great Bliss (mahasukha) arise in the mind.

(1) Affix the juncture of Samsara and Nirvana with the nail of unimpeded effulgent Gnosis.

(2) Affix the juncture of Observer and Observed with the nail of the self-radiant Clear Light.

(3) Affix the juncture of Self and Other with the nail of innate pure Ipseity (vastu).

(4) Affix the juncture of Nihilism and Eternalism with the nail of liberation from all Views (dristi).

(5) Affix the juncture of Phenomena (dharma) and Ultimate Reality (dharmata) with the nail of absolute Awareness (vidya).

(6) Affix the juncture of meditative Passivity (laya) and Excitation (auddhatya) with the nail of abandonment-of-sense-stimuli.

(7) Affix the juncture of Appearance (abhasa) and Emptiness (sunyata) with the nail of primordial Dharma-embodiment [of the Absolute].

*This is the last testament of Sri Simha. English translation from the Dharma Fellowship website
http://www.dharmafellowship.org/7_nails.htm*

The View, Concisely Put by Naropa

Sanskrit: Adhi Siddhi Sama Nama

Tibetan: Ita ba mdor bsdus pa zhes bya ba (Tawa Dordupa)

Homage to the Vajra Dakini!

To the omniscient lord of refuge,
The protector of beings, I pay homage!

After pursuing statements and reasoning
I have condensed and established the true meaning.

All these apparent and existing phenomena
Are nowhere apart from mind, your own awareness.
Since it perceives and is cognizant,
It is like experience that is self-known.

If this mind was not like that
There would be no link and therefore no experience.
This is how I have established the relative:
"Understand that all phenomena are based on mind," as it is said.

The very basis of phenomena, which is mind essence,
Can be analyzed, dissected with reasoning, and so forth,
But this naturally luminous mind
And the momentary defilement of thought, these two,
Whether they are one or different
Is a topic of extreme profundity.
Because of this depth, scholars analyze.
Though they explain, I shall not write about it here.

This mind that knows emptiness
Is itself the awakened mind, bodhicitta.
The buddha potential is just this.
The sugata essence is just this.

Because of tasting what is,
It is also the great bliss.
The understanding of Secret Mantra is just this.
Means and knowledge is just this.

The vast and profound is just this.
Samantabhadra with consort is just this.
This space and wisdom, perceiving while being empty,
Is what is called 'knowing original enlightenment.'

This self-knowing, while one is still defiled,
Does not depend on other things,
So self-existing wakefulness is just this.

Being aware, it is cognizance.
A natural knowing that is free of thought.
This self-knowing cannot possibly form thoughts.

Without conceptualizing a 'mind,'
Since it is not something to be conceived,
This original wakefulness, cognizant yet thought-free,
Is like the wisdom of the Tathagata.

Therefore, it is taught, "Realize that luminous mind
Is the mind of original wakefulness,
And don't seek an enlightenment separate from that."

Nevertheless, this mind does become disturbed
By the defilement of momentary thoughts.
Like water, like gold, like the sky,
It may be either pure or impure.

But the naturally luminous mind
Is free from even a hair-tip of concrete substance,
Like the analogy of a sky flower.

It does not exist as it seems to be,
Therefore, it cannot be established to be nonexistent.
As everything is mutually dependent,
When one side is invalid, the other side also does not exist.

Mind is neither existent nor nonexistent,
Since each of these [constructs] is negated.
It is also not both,
Since existing and not existing are a contradiction.
It is not a living being
Nor other than living beings.

Therefore, it is free from all constructs.
This is how I have established the ultimate:
"Mind is based on space," as it is said.

Thus unconstructed self-knowing
Perceives while empty, and while empty it perceives.
Experience and emptiness are therefore indivisible,
Like the analogy of the moon in water.
This is how I have established nonduality:
"Space is not based on anything," as it is said.

The unconstructed self-knowing
Is itself the very basis of samsara.
Nirvana as well is also just this.
The Great Middle Way is also just this.
That to be seen is also just this.

That to train in is also just this.
That to attain is also just this.
The valid truth is also just this.

The renowned threefold tantras
Of basic cause, method, and result,
And what is known as ground, path, and fruition,
Are just different situations of this.

The basic consciousness, the all-ground,
And all possible aggregates in samsara,
Are known as the 'dependent,' and so forth.

Emaho!
The creations of this mind essence, while one is still defiled,
The six classes of beings, and so forth,
Extending to the bounds of space,
Are the magical machinery of suffering, which surpasses the grasp of thought.

The unconstructed self-knowing itself
Which is free from the defilement of thought,
Is the nondwelling nirvana.

The Vajra Being is also just this.
The Sixth Buddha is also just this.
The six families are also just this.
Manjushri Kumara is just this.
Vairochana is just this.

Dharmakaya, the great bliss,
And the state of unity are also just this.
This itself is the fourth empowerment.
Innate joy is also just this.
Natural purity is also just this.

All these and other different indicators
Known from the sutras and tantras,
Are for the most part based on this;
Simply combined with this in whichever way is suitable.

Emaho!
The creations of this undefiled mind essence,
What comprises the kayas of form:
The buddhafiels of utter purity,
The magically created mandalas, and so forth--
All these creations of great wonder--
Appear, extending to the bounds of space.

The non-Buddhist Tirthikas,
In the ignorance of mind itself,

Are submerged in an ocean of erroneous philosophy
Involving a self, supreme godhead, and the like.

The schools of Buddhism, such as the shravakas,
The pratyekabuddhas, and the followers of Mind Only,
Maintain the duality of perceiver and perceived,
And conceptualize nonduality as being the true.
Moreover, they get caught in the web of concepts
Such as whether the perceived is real or false.

By not mistaking the view in this way,
You attain enlightenment through the meditation training and conduct,
That are in harmony with the real,
Just like a well-trained race horse.

Unless you are in harmony with the real view,
Your meditation training and conduct will be mistaken
And you will not attain fruition,
Like a blind man without a guide.

How can my conceptual mind, [limited in its perceptions] like a frog in a well,
Discover the profundity by stirring up
The ocean-like depth of true meaning!
May all learned masters forgive my errors!

Through whatever goodness there is from writing this
May the stain of delusion be fully cleared away
In fortunate and worthy beings,
And may the knowledge of realization grow forth!

The completes The View, Concisely Put by Naropa. In the presence of the pandita Jnana Siddhii, this was translated and corrected by lotsawa Marpa Chokyi Lodro. English translation by Erik Pema Kunsang. Published in Songs of Naropa: Commentaries on Songs of Realization, by Thrangu Rinpoche (Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1997).

The Summary of Mahamudra by Naropa

Sanskrit: Mahamudra Padametha
Tibetan: phyag rgya chen po tshig bsdus pa (Chagya Chenpo Tsig Dupa)

Homage to the great state of bliss!

First, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of perception:

Concerning what is called Mahamudra:
All things are your own mind.

Seeing objects as external is a mistaken concept;
Like a dream, they are empty of concreteness.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of awareness:

This mind, as well, is a mere movement of attention
That has no self-nature, being merely like a gust of wind.
Empty of identity, like space,
All things, like space, are equal.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of union:

When speaking of 'Mahamudra,'
It is not an identity that can be shown.
Therefore the mind's suchness
Is itself the state of Mahamudra.

Thus he taught the Mahamudra of the view through the threefold perception, awareness and union.
Next, among the three points on the Mahamudra of meditation, first stating the nature of the Mahamudra of the basic state:

It is neither something to be corrected nor transformed,
But when anyone sees and realizes its nature
All that appears and exists is Mahamudra,
The great and all-encompassing dharmakaya.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of realization:

Naturally and without contriving, allowed to simply be,
This unimagined dharmakaya,
Letting it be without seeking is the meditation training,
But to meditate while seeking is deluded mind.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility:

Just as with space, just as with a magical display,
While neither cultivating nor not cultivating
How can you be separate or not separate!
This is a yogi's understanding.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of conduct, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of self-liberation:

All the good deeds of harmful actions
Dissolve by simply knowing this nature.
The emotions are the great wisdom;
Like a jungle fire, they are the yogi's helpers.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of equal taste:

How can there be staying or going?
What meditation is there by fleeing to a hermitage?
Without understanding this, all possible means
Never bring more than temporary liberation.

Third, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of indivisibility:

When understanding this nature, what is there to bind you?
While being undistracted from its continuity,
There is neither a composed nor an uncomposed state
To be cultivated or corrected with a remedy.

Once more, for the three points about the Mahamudra of fruition, first, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of what appears and exists:

It is not made out of anything.
Experience self-liberated is dharmadhatu.
Thinking self-liberated is great wisdom.
Nondual equality is dharmakaya.

Second, stating the nature of the Mahamudra of samsara and nirvana:

Like the continuous flow of a great river,
Whatever you do is meaningful.
This is the eternal awakened state,
The great bliss, leaving no place for samsara.

Third, stating the nature of Mahamudra of ultimate perfection:

All things are empty of their own identities.
The concept fixed on emptiness has dissolved in itself.
Free of concept, holding nothing in mind;
Is in itself the path of all buddhas.

To conclude, instructing and stating the dedication:

For the most fortunate ones,
I have made these concise words of heartfelt advice.
Through this, may every single sentient being
Be established in Mahamudra.

This was given orally by the great pandita Naropa, to Marpa Chokyi Lodro at Pullahari.

These thirteen verses that concisely show Mahamudra in completeness were divided up in accordance with their meaning. The details should be known from oral teachings. Do not fix your mind on other variations; since this is copied from the old manuscript, I feel it should not be changed.

(This note was added by Shamar Kacho Wangpo. There is a saying that "The pith instructions in Mahamudra should be known from an instruction in concise words." It is the opinion of all past sublime masters who upheld the Practice Lineage that this teaching summarizes all the key points of Mahamudra instruction).

Translated by Erik Pema Kunsang. Published in Songs of Naropa: Commentaries on Songs of Realization, by Thrangu Rinpoche (Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1997).

How to Stop by Shabkar

When all I do is think about reality
And let awareness undermine itself --
I must stop.

When I let go
Of fighting, loving, dealing,
Prostrating, circumambulating,
Sacred dance and gesture --
I am alone and independent.

When I let go
Of mundane chatter,
Chants, prayers,
Psychic-energetic recitation --
I am in silence.

When I let go
Of muddled mundane thought,
Faith, compassion,
Esoteric practices --
I'm open, vivid.

Why?

When you stop running --
The body's at ease,
When it's at ease,
Nerves are settled,
When they're settled,
Mind energy's settled,

When it's settled,
Thoughts stop by themselves,
Luminous intelligence erupts.

(The yogi's never sick
Because his body's undisturbed.)

When you stop language games --
Wordless concentration starts,
Free flowing energy inside
Nerves of kati's crystal hollow
Intensifies the light.

(The yogi's life is long
Because his energy's at ease.)

When you stop thinking --
The twists and turns of thought stop,
You break free.

From The Flight of the Garuda (Thod rgal: 37b, iii - 38b, i., 1825), translated by Stephen Batchelor, 1998.

Note: the *kati*: is "a crystalline translucent nerve or channel connecting the heart with the eyes." (John Myrdhin Reynolds, *The Golden Letters*, p. 307).

The Very Essence of Mind, Mahamudra, the One Sufficient Path

Homage to the genuine gurus.

The Mahamudra of Gampopa, the One Sufficient Path, has three sections:

- 1) To Have a Decisive Understanding About the True Nature,
- 2) The Introduction to the Fundamental Character, and
- 3) Training on the Path of Suchness.

To Have a Decisive Understanding About the True Nature

Mahamudra has no causes.

Mahamudra has no conditions.

Mahamudra has no methods.

Mahamudra has no path.

Mahamudra has no result.

The Introduction to the Fundamental Character

"Mahamudra has no causes," and yet faith and devotion are the causes of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no conditions," and yet genuine gurus are the conditions for mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no methods," and yet uncontrived mind is the method of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no path," and yet undistracted mind is the path of mahamudra.

"Mahamudra has no result," and yet the mind liberated into dharmata is the result of mahamudra.

Training on the Path of Suchness

As the preliminary practice, meditate on guru yoga with faith, devotion, and respect, three times during the day and three times at night.

As the main practice, rest within the state of uncontrived mind with undistracted recognition.

As the conclusion, recognize whatever appears as your own mind and train your awareness with skill.

Relying upon the sequential arising of experiences, exert yourself in meditation until conceptual mind is exhausted.

There are two ways in which experiences arise: as unfavorable experiences and as favorable experiences.

As for the first: All unfavorable experiences—whatever they are, such as dullness, agitation, illness, fear, fright, or doubt—arise from your meditation. Therefore, recognize them to be experiences. Without abandoning them, meditate, taking those very things as the object of your view and meditation.

As for favorable experiences:

First, the experience of the mind's abiding arises.

Based on that, the experience of the essence, emptiness, arises.

Based upon that, the experience of attaining realization arises.

Based upon that, the experience of turning away from attachment arises.

With that sequential arising of experiences, you should exert yourself in practice without any complacency.

The mind's merely abiding at first is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to see the essence.

Merely seeing the essence is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to attain realization.

Merely attaining realization is not sufficient—you must meditate in order to turn away from attachment.

Merely turning away from attachment is not sufficient—you must meditate so that, through the liberation of conceptual mind into dharmata, conceptual mind is exhausted, phenomena are exhausted, and you awaken.

This completes The Very Essence of Mind, Mahamudra, the One Sufficient Path by Gampopa. Translated orally into English during a teaching by Tenga Rinpoche at the Kalachakra for World Peace program at Madison Square Garden in 1991, and later revised, by Elizabeth Callahan. Tenga Rinpoche's commentary was published in Shenpen Osel, Vol 4, No 1, June 2000.

Nagarjuna's Mahamudra Vision [Twenty Mahayana Verses]

Homage to Manjusrikumarabhuta!

1. I bow down to the all-powerful Buddha
Whose mind is free of attachment,
Who in his compassion and wisdom
Has taught the inexpressible.
2. In truth there is no birth -
Then surely no cessation or liberation;
The Buddha is like the sky
And all beings have that nature.
3. Neither Samsara nor Nirvana exist,
But all is a complex continuum
With an intrinsic face of void,
The object of ultimate awareness.
4. The nature of all things
Appears like a reflection,
Pure and naturally quiescent,
With a non-dual identity of suchness.
5. The common mind imagines a self
Where there is nothing at all,
And it conceives of emotional states -
Happiness, suffering, and equanimity.
6. The six states of being in Samsara,
The happiness of heaven,
The suffering of hell,
Are all false creations, figments of mind.
7. Likewise the ideas of bad action causing suffering,
Old age, disease and death,
And the idea that virtue leads to happiness,
Are mere ideas, unreal notions.

8. Like an artist frightened
By the devil he paints,
The sufferer in Samsara
Is terrified by his own imagination.

9. Like a man caught in quicksands
Thrashing and struggling about,
So beings drown
In the mess of their own thoughts.

10. Mistaking fantasy for reality
Causes an experience of suffering;
Mind is poisoned by interpretation
Of consciousness of form.

11. Dissolving figment and fantasy
With a mind of compassionate insight,
Remain in perfect awareness
In order to help all beings.

12. So acquiring conventional virtue
Freed from the web of interpretive thought,
Insurpassable understanding is gained
As Buddha, friend to the world.

13. Knowing the relativity of all,
The ultimate truth is always seen;
Dismissing the idea of beginning, middle and end
The flow is seen as Emptiness.

14. So all samsara and nirvana is seen as it is -
Empty and insubstantial,
Naked and changeless,
Eternally quiescent and illumined.

15. As the figments of a dream
Dissolve upon waking,
So the confusion of Samsara
Fades away in enlightenment.

16. Idealising things of no substance
As eternal, substantial and satisfying,
Shrouding them in a fog of desire
The round of existence arises.

17. The nature of beings is unborn
Yet commonly beings are conceived to exist;
Both beings and their ideas
Are false beliefs.

18. It is nothing but an artifice of mind
This birth into an illusory becoming,
Into a world of good and evil action
With good or bad rebirth to follow.

19. When the wheel of mind ceases to turn
All things come to an end.
So there is nothing inherently substantial
And all things are utterly pure.

20. This great ocean of samsara,
Full of delusive thought,
Can be crossed in the boat Universal Approach.
Who can reach the other side without it?

Colophon: The Twenty Mahayana Verses, (in Sanskrit, Mahayanavimsaka; in Tibetan: Theg pa chen po nyi shu pa) were composed by the master Nagarjuna. They were translated into Tibetan by the Kashmiri Pandit Ananda and the Bhikshu translator Drakjor Sherab (Gags 'byor shes rab). They have been translated into English by the Anagarika Kunzang Tenzin [Keith Dowman] on the last day of the year 1973 in the hope that the karma of the year may be mitigated.

May all beings be happy!