

Pith Instructions on Mahamudra (translated by Ken McLeod)

I bow to Vajra Dakini.

1

Mahamudra cannot be taught, Naropa,
But your devotion to your teacher and the hardships you've met
Have made you patient in suffering and also wise:
Take this to heart, my worthy student.

2

For instance, consider space: what depends on what?
Likewise, mahamudra: it doesn't depend on anything.
Don't control. Let go and rest naturally.
Let what binds you let go and freedom is not in doubt.

3

When you look into space, seeing stops.
Likewise, when mind looks at mind,
The flow of thinking stops and you come to the deepest awakening.

4

Mists rise from the earth and vanish into space.
They go nowhere, nor do they stay.
Likewise, though thoughts arise,
Whenever you see your mind, the clouds of thinking clear.

5

Space is beyond color or shape.
It doesn't take on color, black or white: it doesn't change.
Likewise, your mind, in essence, is beyond color or shape.
It does not change because you do good or evil.

6

The darkness of a thousand eons cannot dim
The brilliant radiance that is the essence of the sun.
Likewise, eons of samsara cannot dim
The sheer clarity that is the essence of your mind.

7

Although you say space is empty,
You can't say that space is "like this".
Likewise, although mind is said to be sheer clarity,
There is nothing there: you can't say "it's like this".

8

Thus, the nature of mind is inherently like space:
It includes everything you experience.

9

Stop all physical activity: sit naturally at ease.
Do not talk or speak: let sound be empty, like an echo.
Do not think about anything: look at experience beyond thought.

10

Your body has no core, hollow like bamboo.
Your mind goes beyond thought, open like space.
Let go of control and rest right there.

11

Mind without projection is mahamudra.
Train and develop this and you will come to the deepest awakening.

12

You don't see mahamudra's sheer clarity
By means of classical texts or philosophical systems,
Whether of the mantras, paramitas,
Vinaya, sutras or other collections.

13

Ambition clouds sheer clarity and you don't see it.
Thinking about precepts undermines the point of commitment.
Do not think about anything; let all ambition drop.
Let what arises settle by itself, like patterns in water.
No place, no focus, no missing the point —
Do not break this commitment: it is the light in the dark.

14

When you are free from ambition and don't hold any position,
You will see all that the scriptures teach.
When you open to this, you are free from samsara's prison.
When you settle in this, all evil and distortion burn up.
This is called "The Light of the Teaching".

15

The foolish are not interested in this.
The currents of samsara constantly carry them away.
Oh, how pitiable, the foolish — their struggles never end.
Don't accept these struggles, long for freedom, and rely on a skilled teacher.
When his (her) energy enters your heart, your mind is freed.

16

What joy!
Samsaric ways are senseless: they are the seeds of suffering.
Conventional ways are pointless. Focus on what is sound and true.
Majestic outlook is beyond all fixation.
Majestic practice is no distraction.
Majestic behavior is no action or effort.
The fruition is there when you are free from hope and fear.

17

Beyond any frame of reference mind is naturally clear.
Where there is no path you begin the path of awakening.
Where there is nothing to work on you come to the deepest awakening.

18

Alas! Look carefully at this experience of the world.
Nothing lasts. It's like a dream, like magic.
The dream, the magic, makes no sense.
Experience this grief and forget the affairs of the world.

19

Cut all ties of involvement with country or kin,
Practice alone in forest or mountain retreats.
Rest, not practicing anything.
When you come to nothing to come to, you come to mahamudra.

20

A tree spreads its branches and leaves.
Cut the root and ten thousand branches wither.
Likewise, cut the root of mind and the leaves of samsara wither.

21

Though darkness gathers for a thousand eons.
A single light dispels it all.
Likewise, one moment of sheer clarity
Dispels the ignorance, evil and confusion of a thousand eons.

22

What joy!
With the ways of the intellect you won't see beyond intellect.
With the ways of action you won't know non-action.
If you want to know what is beyond intellect and action,
Cut your mind at its root and rest in naked awareness.

23

Let the cloudy waters of thinking settle and clear.
Let appearances come and go on their own.
With nothing to change, the world you experience becomes mahamudra.
Because the basis of experience has no beginning, patterns and distortions fall away.
Rest in no beginning, with no self-interest or expectation.
Let what appears appear on its own and let conceptual ways subside.

24

The most majestic of outlooks is free of all reference.
The most majestic of practices is vast and deep without limit.
The most majestic of behaviors is open-minded and impartial.
The most majestic of fruitions is natural being, free of concern.

25

At first, practice is a river rushing through a gorge.
In the middle, it's the river Ganges, smooth and flowing.
In the end, it's where all rivers meet, mother and child.

26

When your mind is less acute and does not truly rest,
Work the essentials of energy and bring out the vitality of awareness.
Using gazes and techniques to take hold of mind
Train awareness until it does truly rest.

27

When you practice with a sexual partner, empty bliss awareness arises.
The balancing of method and wisdom transforms energy.
Let it descend gently, collect it, draw it back up,
Return it to its place, and let it saturate your body.
When you are free from longing and desire, empty bliss awareness arises.

28

You will have a long life, you will not gray, and you will shine like the moon.
You will radiate health and well-being and be as strong as a lion.
You will quickly attain the ordinary abilities and open to the supreme one.

May these pith instructions, the essentials of mahamudra,
Abide in the hearts of all worthy beings.

These are the great Tilopa's oral instructions. On the completion of the twelve hardships, Tilopa taught these on the banks of the river Ganges to the Kashmiri pandit, the wise and learned Naropa. Naropa taught The Twenty-Eight Vajra Verses to the great interpreter, the king of translators, Marpa Chökyi Lodrö. Marpa finalized his translation at Pulahari in the north of India. Ken McLeod translated this into English in Los Angeles in the southwest of the United States, working from the efforts of previous translators and various commentaries.

The Ganges: Essential Instructions on Mahāmudra (translated by Ari Kiev)

Sanskrit: *Mahāmudra Upadesha* ~
Tibetan: *Chaggya Chenpö Menngag*

Homage to glorious coemergence!

Intelligent Nāropa, forbearing of suffering, you have endured hardships and are devoted to the guru.
Thus, though mahāmudra cannot be shown, take this to heart, you fortunate one!

O! Look well at worldly phenomena! Dream-like and illusory, they cannot last! [But] they are not dreams or illusions in actuality. Therefore, when giving rise to disenchantment, you have insight

into worldly activities. Completely severing the connections of attachment and aversion – the domain of samsara – meditate alone in mountain and forest hermitages!

When, through remaining in an ongoing state of non-meditation, non-attainment is attained, mahāmudra is attained. These worldly affairs are the useless causes of suffering. Look at the ultimate essential meaning [that realizes] the futility of deliberate action!

The truth that transcends the intellect will not be seen by means of the intellect. The point of non-action will not be reached by means of deliberate action. If you want to achieve the point of non-action transcending thought, sever the root of mind itself and rest in naked awareness!

Leave the polluted water of conceptual thoughts in its [natural] clarity. Without affirming or denying appearances, leave them as they are. When there is neither acceptance nor rejection, [mind] is liberated into mahāmudra.

For example, [if] the root of a tree with flourishing branches and foliage is cut, its ten thousand branches and hundred thousand leaves wither.

For example, even the accumulated darkness of a thousand aeons is cleared away by a single lamp flame. Similarly, an instant of the luminosity of mind itself dispels aeons of accumulated negativity and obscurity without exception.

If people of inferior intelligence [can] not abide in the ultimate meaning, they [should] hold the vital point of wind energies and give up exerting [themselves] in awareness.

Until you abide in the ongoing state of awareness by means of myriad gazes and [modes of] focused attention, make effort!

For example, if you examine the center of space, the one who fixates on the boundary and center ceases to be. Likewise, when you investigate the mind with the mind, the multitude of thoughts ceases and you see the nature of mind.

For example, [when] vapors from the earth or clouds disperse into space, they have gone nowhere and yet do not remain anywhere. So it is with the multitude of thoughts that arise from the mind: by seeing the mind itself, the waves of thoughts dissipate.

For example, space transcends color and form. It is immutable and without a tinge of black or white. Similarly, the mind itself, beyond color and form, is untainted by the white and black phenomena of virtue and evil.

For example, the clear and pure orb of the sun is not eclipsed by the darkness of a thousand aeons. Likewise, aeons in cyclic existence cannot obscure the luminous essence of mind itself.

For example, although space is labeled ‘empty,’ space itself is indescribable by such [terms]. Similarly, though the mind itself is described as ‘clear light,’ there is no basis for designating it as such through verbal expressions.

For example, in space, what is supported by what? Like [space], the mahāmudra that is mind itself has no supporting ground. Rest at ease in the uncontrived, innate continuity. When the bonds are loosened, there is no doubt of release.

In that way, the nature of mind is like space. There is no phenomenon not included in that.

Completely give up physical activity and remain at ease. Without much speech, [sound] is like an echo. Without thinking, look at decisively-resolved reality.

The body is insubstantial, like the hollow stalk of a reed; and the mind, like the center of space, transcends the realm of thought. Rest at ease in that state, without releasing or placing.

When the mind is without a focal point, that is mahāmudra.

By habituating yourself to that, unsurpassable awakening is attained.

When there is no object of focus, the mind is naturally clear. When there is no path, the path of the buddhas is entered. By habituating non-meditation, unsurpassable awakening is attained.

Transcendence of all subject and object [duality] is the king of views. When there is no distraction, that is the king of meditations. When there is no deliberate effort, that is the king of conduct. When there is neither expectation nor doubt, the fruition is made manifest.

The uncreated ground of all is clear of the obscuring veil of propensities. Do not engage meditation and post-meditation, [but] rest in the uncreated essence. [Thus, outer] appearances, [inner] perceptions and intellectual faculties are exhausted.

The complete release of limits is the supreme king of views. Boundlessness, deep and vast, is the supreme king of meditations. Freedom from action, abiding in its own state, is the supreme king of conduct. Freedom from expectation, abiding in its own state, is the supreme king of fruitions.

To a beginner, [mind] is like a waterfall. In the middle, it flows gently, [like] the River Ganges. At the end, it is like the confluence of a stream [with the ocean] – like the meeting of mother and child.

The luminosity that is mahāmudra will not be seen through expounding the [secret] mantra and parāmita [vehicles], the scripture collections including the vinaya, or even through individual philosophical scriptures and tenet systems.

When you fabricate nothing in the mind and are devoid of any wish, [thoughts] are like self-arising, self-subsiding ripples in water. When a wish arises, luminosity is obscured and not perceived.

Preserving the vows conceptually, you violate the samaya on the level of ultimate meaning. If [mind] does not stray from the non-abiding, unobjectified ultimate meaning, the unimpaired samaya is a lamp in the darkness.

When, devoid of any wish, you are not confined to a position, all the teachings of the scripture collections without exception will be realized. If you exert yourself in this truth, you will be freed from the prison of samsara.

If you [cultivate] even meditation upon this truth, all unawareness, negativities and obscurations will be burnt away. [Thus], it is known as the lamp of the teachings.

Those foolish people who are disinterested in this truth are continually carried off and wasted by the great river of cyclic existence. How sad that they [endure] the unbearable suffering of evil rebirths!

If you want release from suffering, follow a masterful guru! Becoming infused with [the guru's] blessing, your mind will be liberated!

If you rely on the action mudra, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise. [Thus], unite the blessings of method and wisdom!

The [seed essence] should slowly descend, stop, reverse and spread. It should be brought to its innate abode and pervade the body.

When there is no fixation to that, the wisdom of empty bliss arises and, flourishing like the waxing moon, one [attains] longevity without greying hair. One becomes lustrous and radiant, with power like that of a lion. The common attainments will be swiftly accomplished, leading to the supreme [attainment].

May fortunate wayfaring beings take to heart this essential advice on mahāmudra.

On the banks of the River Ganges, this was taught to Nāropa by Lord Tilopa. May it be virtuous!

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The Mahamudra Upadesa of Tilopa (translated by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche)

Homage to the Co-emergent Wisdom!

Mahamudra cannot be shown;
But for you who are devoted to the guru, who have mastered the ascetic practices
And are forbearant in suffering, intelligent Naropa,
Take this to heart, my fortunate student.

Kye-ho!

Look at the nature of the world,
Impermanent like a mirage or dream;
Even the mirage or dream does not exist.
Therefore, develop renunciation and abandon worldly activities.

Renounce servants and kin, causes of passion and aggression.
Meditate alone in the forest, in retreats, in solitary places.
Remain in the state of non-meditation.
If you attain non-attainment, then you have attained mahamudra.

The dharma of samsara is petty, causing passion and aggression.
The things we have created have no substance; therefore, seek the substance of the ultimate.
The dharma of mind cannot see the meaning of transcendent mind.
The dharma of action cannot discover the meaning of non-action.

If you would attain the realization of transcendent mind and non-action,
Then cut the root of mind and let consciousness remain naked.
Let the polluted waters of mental activities clear.
Do not seek to stop projections, but let them come to rest of themselves.
If there is no rejection or accepting, then you are liberated in the mahamudra.

When trees grow leaves and branches,
If you cut the roots, the many leaves and branches wither.
Likewise, if you cut the root of mind,
The various mental activities will subside.

The darkness that has collected in thousands of kalpas
One torch will dispel.
Likewise, one moment's experience of luminous mind
Will dissolve the veil of karmic impurities.

Men of lesser intelligence who cannot grasp this,
Concentrate your awareness and focus on the breath.
Through different eye-gazes and concentration practices,
Discipline your mind until it rests naturally.

If you perceive space,
The fixed ideas of center and boundary dissolve.
Likewise, if mind perceives mind,
All mental activities will cease, you will remain in a state of non-thought,
And you will realize the supreme bodhi-citta.

Vapors arising from the earth become clouds and then vanish into the sky;
It is not known where the clouds go when they have dissolved.
Likewise, the waves of thoughts derived from the mind
Dissolve when mind perceives mind.

Space has neither color nor shape;
It is changeless, it is not tinged by black or white.
Likewise, luminous mind has neither color nor shape;
It is not tinged by black or white, virtue or vice.

The sun's pure and brilliant essence
Cannot be dimmed by the darkness that endures for a thousand kalpas.
Likewise, the luminous essence of mind
Cannot be dimmed by the long kalpas of samsara.

Though it may be said that space is empty,
Space cannot be described.
Likewise, though it may be said that mind is luminous,
Naming it does not prove that it exists.
Space is completely without locality.
Likewise, mahamudra mind dwells nowhere.

Without change, rest loose in the primordial state;
There is no doubt that your bonds will loosen.
The essence of mind is like space;
Therefore, there is nothing which it does not encompass.

Let the movements of the body ease into genuineness,
Cease your idle chatter, let your speech become an echo,
Have no mind, but see the dharma of the leap.

The body, like a hollow bamboo, has no substance.
Mind is like the essence of space, having no place for thoughts.
Rest loose your mind; neither hold it nor permit it to wander.
If mind has no aim, it is mahamudra.
Accomplishing this is the attainment of supreme enlightenment.

The nature of mind is luminous, without object of perception.
You will discover the path of Buddha when there is no path of meditation.
By meditating on non-meditation you will attain the supreme bodhi.

This is the king of views-it transcends fixing and holding.
This is the king of meditations-without wandering mind.
This is the king of actions-without effort.
When there is no hope or fear, you have realized the goal.

The unborn alaya is without habits and veils.
Rest mind in the unborn essence; make no distinctions between meditation and post-meditation.
When projections exhaust the dharma of mind,
One attains the king of views, free from all limitations.

Boundless and deep is the supreme king of meditations.
Effortless self-existence is the supreme king of actions.
Hopeless self-existence is the supreme king of the fruition.

In the beginning mind is like a turbulent river.
In the middle it is like the River Ganges, flowing slowly.
In the end it is like the confluence of all rivers, like the meeting of mother and son.

The followers of Tantra, the *Prajnaparamita*,
The Vinaya, the Sutras, and other religions-
All these, by their texts and philosophical dogmas,
Will not see the luminous mahamudra.

Having no mind, without desires,
Self-quieted, self-existing,
It is like a wave of water.
Luminosity is veiled only by the rising of desire.

The real vow of samaya is broken by thinking in terms of precepts.
If you neither dwell, perceive, nor stray from the ultimate,
Then you are a holy practitioner, the torch which illuminates darkness.

If you are without desire, if you do not dwell in extremes,
You will see the dharmas of all the teachings.

If you strive in this endeavor, you will free yourself from samsaric imprisonment.
If you meditate in this way, you will burn the veil of karmic impurities.
Therefore, you are known as "The Torch of the Doctrine."

Even ignorant people who are not devoted to this teaching
Could be saved by you from constantly drowning in the river of samsara.

It is a pity that beings endure such suffering in the lower realms.
Those who would free themselves from suffering should seek a wise guru.
Being possessed by the adhishtana [blessing], one's mind will be freed.

If you seek a karma mudra, then the wisdom of the joy of union and emptiness will arise.
The union of skillful means and knowledge brings blessings.
Bring it down and give rise to the mandala.
Deliver it to the places and distribute it throughout the body.
If there is no desire involved, then the union of joy and emptiness will arise.

Gain long life, without white hairs, and you will wax like the moon.
Become radiant, and your strength will be perfect.
Having speedily achieved the relative siddhis, one should seek the absolute siddhis.
May this pointed instruction in mahamudra remain in the hearts of fortunate beings.

*Oral instructions on mahamudra given by Sri Tilopa to Naropa at the banks of the Ganges River.
Translated from the Sanskrit into Tibetan by Chogyi Lodro Marpa the Translator.
English translation by Chogyam Trungpa Rinpoche in The Myth of Freedom.*

Tilopa's Mahamudra Instruction to Naropa in Twenty Eight Verses (translated by Keith Dowman)

Homage to the Eighty Four Mahasiddhas!
Homage to Mahamudra!
Homage to the Vajra Dakini!

Mahamudra cannot be taught. But most intelligent Naropa,
Since you have undergone rigorous austerity,
With forbearance in suffering and with devotion to your Guru,
Blessed One, take this secret instruction to heart.

Is space anywhere supported? Upon what does it rest?
Like space, Mahamudra is dependant upon nothing;
Relax and settle in the continuum of unalloyed purity,
And, your bonds loosening, release is certain.

Gazing intently into the empty sky, vision ceases;
Likewise, when mind gazes into mind itself,
The train of discursive and conceptual thought ends
And supreme enlightenment is gained.

Like the morning mist that dissolves into thin air,
Going nowhere but ceasing to be,
Waves of conceptualization, all the mind's creation, dissolve,
When you behold your mind's true nature.

Pure space has neither colour nor shape
And it cannot be stained either black or white;
So also, mind's essence is beyond both colour and shape
And it cannot be sullied by black or white deeds.

The darkness of a thousand aeons is powerless
To dim the crystal clarity of the sun's heart;
And likewise, aeons of samsara have no power
To veil the clear light of the mind's essence.

Although space has been designated "empty",
In reality it is inexpressible;
Although the nature of mind is called "clear light",
Its every ascription is baseless verbal fiction.

The mind's original nature is like space;
It pervades and embraces all things under the sun.

Be still and stay relaxed in genuine ease,
Be quiet and let sound reverberate as an echo,
Keep your mind silent and watch the ending of all worlds.

The body is essentially empty like the stem of a reed,
And the mind, like pure space, utterly transcends
the world of thought:
Relax into your intrinsic nature with neither abandon nor control -
Mind with no objective is Mahamudra -
And, with practice perfected, supreme enlightenment is gained.

The clear light of Mahamudra cannot be revealed
By the canonical scriptures or metaphysical treatises
Of the Mantravada, the Paramitas or the Tripitaka;
The clear light is veiled by concepts and ideals.

By harbouring rigid precepts the true samaya is impaired,
But with cessation of mental activity all fixed notions subside;
When the swell of the ocean is at one with its peaceful depths,
When mind never strays from indeterminate, non-conceptual truth,
The unbroken samaya is a lamp lit in spiritual darkness.

Free of intellectual conceits, disavowing dogmatic principles,
The truth of every school and scripture is revealed.

Absorbed in Mahamudra, you are free from the prison of samsara;
Poised in Mahamudra, guilt and negativity are consumed;
And as master of Mahamudra you are the light of the Doctrine.

The fool in his ignorance, disdainful of Mahamudra,
Knows nothing but struggle in the flood of samsara.
Have compassion for those who suffer constant anxiety!
Sick of unrelenting pain and desiring release, adhere to a master,
For when his blessing touches your heart, the mind is liberated.

KYE HO! Listen with joy!
Investment in samsara is futile; it is the cause of every anxiety.
Since worldly involvement is pointless, seek the heart of reality!

In the transcending of mind's dualities is Supreme vision;
In a still and silent mind is Supreme Meditation;
In spontaneity is Supreme Activity;
And when all hopes and fears have died, the Goal is reached.

Beyond all mental images the mind is naturally clear:
Follow no path to follow the path of the Buddhas;
Employ no technique to gain supreme enlightenment.

KYE MA! Listen with sympathy!
With insight into your sorry worldly predicament,
Realising that nothing can last, that all is as dreamlike illusion,
Meaningless illusion provoking frustration and boredom,
Turn around and abandon your mundane pursuits.

Cut away involvement with your homeland and friends
And meditate alone in a forest or mountain retreat;
Exist there in a state of non-meditation
And attaining no-attainment, you attain Mahamudra.

A tree spreads its branches and puts forth leaves,
But when its root is cut its foliage withers;
So too, when the root of the mind is severed,
The branches of the tree of samsara die.

A single lamp dispels the darkness of a thousand aeons;
Likewise, a single flash of the mind's clear light
Erases aeons of karmic conditioning and spiritual blindness.

KYE HO! Listen with joy!
The truth beyond mind cannot be grasped by any faculty of mind;
The meaning of non-action cannot be understood in compulsive activity;

To realise the meaning of non-action and beyond mind,
Cut the mind at its root and rest in naked awareness.

Allow the muddy waters of mental activity to clear;
Refrain from both positive and negative projection -
leave appearances alone:
The phenomenal world, without addition or subtraction, is Mahamudra.

The unborn omnipresent base dissolves your impulses and delusions:
Do not be conceited or calculating but rest in the unborn essence
And let all conceptions of yourself and the universe melt away.

The highest vision opens every gate;
The highest meditation plumbs the infinite depths;
The highest activity is ungoverned yet decisive;
And the highest goal is ordinary being devoid of hope and fear.

At first your karma is like a river falling through a gorge;
In mid-course it flows like a gently meandering River Ganga;
And finally, as a river becomes one with the ocean,
It ends in consummation like the meeting of mother and son.

If the mind is dull and you are unable to practice these instructions,
Retaining essential breath and expelling the sap of awareness,
Practising fixed gazes - methods of focussing the mind,
Discipline yourself until the state of total awareness abides.

When serving a karmamudra, the pure awareness
of bliss and emptiness will arise:
Composed in a blessed union of insight and means,
Slowly send down, retain and draw back up the bodhichitta,
And conducting it to the source, saturate the entire body.
But only if lust and attachment are absent will that awareness arise.

Then gaining long-life and eternal youth, waxing like the moon,
Radiant and clear, with the strength of a lion,
You will quickly gain mundane power and supreme enlightenment.

May this pith instruction in Mahamudra
Remain in the hearts of fortunate beings.

Tilopa's Mahamudra Instruction to Naropa in Twenty Eight Verses was transmitted by the Great Guru and Mahasiddha Tilopa to the Kashmiri Pandit, Sage and Siddha, Naropa, near the banks of the River Ganga upon the completion of his Twelve Austerities. Naropa transmitted the teaching in Sanskrit in the form of twenty eight verses to the great Tibetan translator Mar pa Chos kyi blos gros, who made a free translation of it at his village of Pulahari on the Tibet - Bhutan border.

This text is contained in the collection of Mahamudra instruction called the Do ha mdzod bryad ces bya ba Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag gsal bar ston pa'i gzhung, which is printed at the Gyalwa Karmapa's monastery at Rumtek, Sikkim. The Tibetan title is Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag, or Phyag rgya chen po rdo rje'i tsig rkang nyi shu rtsa bryad pa. This translation into English has been done by Kunzang Tenzin

[Keith Dowman] in 1977, after transmission of the oral teaching by Khamtrul Rinpoche in Tashi Jong, Kangra Valley, India. <http://keithdowman.net/mahamudra/tilopa.htm>

The Song of Mahamudra by Tilopa (translated by Garma C.C. Chang)

Mahamudra is beyond all words
And symbols, but for you, Naropa,
Earnest and loyal, must this be said.
The Void needs no reliance,
Mahamudra rests on nought.
Without making an effort,
But remaining loose and natural,
One can break the yoke
Thus gaining Liberation.

If one sees nought when staring into space,
If with the mind one then observes the mind,
One destroys distinctions
And reaches Buddhahood.

The clouds that wander through the sky
Have no roots, no home; nor do the distinctive
Thoughts floating through the mind.
Once the Self-mind is seen,
Discrimination stops.

In space shapes and colors form,
But neither by black nor white is space tinged.
From the Self-mind all things emerge, the mind
By virtues and by vices is not stained.

The darkness of ages cannot shroud
The glowing sun; the long kalpas
Of Samsara ne'er can hide
The Mind's brilliant light.

Though words are spoken to explain the Void,
The Void as such can never be expressed.
Though we say "the mind is a bright light,"
It is beyond all words and symbols.
Although the mind is void in essence,
All things it embraces and contains.

Do nought with the body but relax,
Shut firm the mouth and silent remain,
Empty your mind and think of nought.

Like a hollow bamboo
Rest at ease your body.
Giving not nor taking,
Put your mind at rest.
Mahamudra is like a mind that clings to nought.
Thus practicing, in time you will reach Buddhahood.

The practice of Mantra and Paramita,
Instruction in the Sutras and Precepts,
And teaching from the
Schools and Scriptures will not bring
Realization of the Innate Truth.
For if the mind when filled with some desire
Should seek a goal, it only hides the Light.

He who keeps Tantric Precepts
Yet discriminates, betrays
The spirit of Samaya.
Cease all activity, abandon
All desire, let thoughts rise and fall
As they will like the ocean waves.
He who never harms the Non-abiding
Nor the Principle of Non-distinction,
Upholds the Tantric Precepts.

He who abandons craving
And clings not to this or that,
Perceives the real meaning
Given in the Scriptures.

In Mahamudra all one's sins are burned;
In Mahamudra one is released
From the prison of this world.
This is the Dharma's supreme torch.
Those who disbelieve it
Are fools who ever wallow
In misery and sorrow.

To strive for Liberation
One should rely on a Guru.
When your mind receives his blessing
Emancipation is at hand.

Alas, all things in this world are meaningless,
They are but sorrow's seeds.
Small teachings lead to acts;
One should only follow
Teachings that are great.

To transcend duality
Is the Kingly View;
To conquer distractions is
The Royal Practice;
The Path of No-practice
Is the Way of Buddhas;
He who treads that Path
Reaches Buddhahood.

Transient is this world;
Like phantoms and dreams,
Substance it has none.
Renounce it and forsake your kin,
Cut the strings of lust and hatred,
Meditate in woods and mountains.
If without effort you remain
Loosely in the "natural state,"
Soon Mahamudra you will win
And attain the Non-attainment.

Cut the root of a tree
And the leaves will wither;
Cut the root of your mind
And Samsara falls.

The light of any lamp
Dispels in a moment
The darkness of long kalpas;
The strong light of the mind
In but a flash will burn
The veil of ignorance.

Whoever clings to mind sees not
The truth of what's
Beyond the mind.
Whoever strives to practice Dharma
Finds not the truth of
Beyond-practice.
To know what is Beyond both mind and practice,
One should cut cleanly through the root of mind
And stare naked.
One should thus break away
From all distinctions and remain at ease.

One should not give or take
But remain natural,
For Mahamudra is beyond
All acceptance and rejection.
Since the Alaya is not born,
No one can obstruct or soil it;

Staying in the "Unborn" realm
All appearance will dissolve
Into the Dharmata, all self-will
And pride will vanish into nought.

The supreme Understanding transcends
All this and that. The supreme Action
Embraces great resourcefulness
Without attachment. The supreme
Accomplishment is to realize
Immanence without hope.

At first a yogi feels his mind
Is tumbling like a waterfall;
In mid-course, like the Ganges
It flows on slow and gentle;
In the end, it is a great
Vast ocean, where the Lights
Of Son and Mother merge in one.

*Translation by Garma C.C. Chang published in Teachings of Tibetan Yoga
(republished as Six Yogas of Naropa and Teachings on Mahamudra).*

Ganges Mahamudra by Tilopa (translated by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso)

Homage to the Vajradakini

Although Mahamudra cannot be taught, intelligent and patient Naropa, tolerant of suffering, who is engaged in austerity and is devoted to the guru, fortunate one, do this with your mind.

For example, in space what is resting on what? In One's mind, Mahamudra, there is nothing to be shown. Rest relaxed in the natural state without attempting to alter anything. If this fetter or bondage of thought is loosened, there is no doubt that you will be liberated.

For example, it is like looking in the middle of the sky and not seeing anything. In the same way, when your mind looks at your mind, thoughts stop and you attain unsurpassable awakening.

For example, just as the vapor that, arising from the earth, becomes clouds and dissolves into the expanse of space, not going anywhere else and yet not continuing to abide anywhere, in the same way the agitation of the thoughts that arise from the mind and within the mind is calmed the instant you see the mind's nature.

For example, just as the nature of space transcends color and shape, and just as space is therefore unaffected or unchanged and unobscured by the various colors and shapes that occur within it, in the same way the essence of your mind transcends color and shape, and therefore, is never

obscured or affected by the various colors and shapes of virtue and wrongdoing.

For example, it is like the luminous heart of the sun, which could never be obscured even by the darkness of a thousand eons. In that way, that luminous clarity that is the essence of the mind is never obscured by the samsara of innumerable kalpas.

For example, just as we apply the term empty to space, in fact, there is nothing within space that we are accurately describing by that term. In the same way, although we call the mind clear light or luminosity, simply calling it so does not make it true that there is actually any thing within the mind that is a true basis for that designation.

In that way, the nature of the mind has from the beginning been like space, and there are no dharmas that are not included within that.

Abandoning all physical actions, the practitioner should rest at ease. Without any verbal utterance, your speech becomes like an echo, sound inseparable from emptiness. Think of nothing whatsoever with the mind and look at the dharmas of the leap.

The body is without meaning, empty like a bamboo stalk. The mind is like the midst of space. It is inconceivable. Rest relaxed within that, without letting it go or placing it. Rest relaxed in that state without sending it out or placing it in, letting it go or attempting to place it. If mind has no direction, it is Mahamudra. With this you will attain unsurpassable awakening.

Those who follow tantra and the vehicle of the paramitas, the Vinaya, the Sutras, and the various teachings of the Buddha with an attachment for their individual textual traditions and their individual philosophy will not come to see luminous Mahamudra, because the seeing of that luminosity or clear light is obscured by their intention and attitude.

The conceptualized maintenance of vows actually causes you to impair the meaning of samaya. Without mental directedness or mental activity, be free of all intentionality. Thoughts are self-arisen and self-pacified like designs on the surface of water. If you do not pass beyond the meaning which is not abiding and not conceptualizing or focusing, then through not passing beyond that, you do not pass beyond or transgress samaya. This is the torch which dispels all obscurity or darkness.

If free of all intention, you do not abide in extremes, you will see without exception the meaning of all the Buddha's teachings or of all the sections of the Buddha's teachings.

If you rest in this, you will be liberated from the prison of samsara. If you rest evenly within this, all of your wrongdoing and obscurations will be burned. This is called for those reasons the torch of the doctrine.

Foolish people who have no interest in this will only be continually carried off by the river of samsara. Those foolish people experiencing intolerable sufferings in lower states of existence are worthy of compassion.

Wishing to attain liberation from intolerable suffering, rely upon a wise guru. When the guru's blessings enter your heart, your mind will be liberated. These things of samsara are meaningless or pointless, the causes of suffering. And since all of these things that have been done or made are

pointless, look at that which is meaningful.

If you are beyond all grasping at an object and grasping at a subject, that is the monarch of all views. If there is no distraction, that is the monarch among all meditations. If there is no effort, that is the monarch among all conducts. When there is no hope and no fear, that is the final result, and the fruition has been attained or revealed.

It is beyond being an object of conceptual focus, and the mind's nature is lucidity. There is no path to be traversed and yet, in that way you enter the path to buddhahood. There is no object of meditation, but if you become accustomed to this you will attain unsurpassable awakening.

Thoroughly examine mundane things or the things of the world. If you do you will see that none of them persist, none of them are capable of permanence, and in that sense, they are all like dreams and magical illusions. Dreams and magical illusions are meaningless. Therefore, generate renunciation and abandon mundane concerns.

Cut through the bonds of attachment and aversion toward those around you and your surroundings. Meditate in isolated retreats, forests, and so forth, living alone. Remain in that state without meditation. When you attain that which is without attainment you have attained Mahamudra.

For example, if the single root of a tree with a trunk and many branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit, is cut, the ten thousand or one hundred thousand branches will automatically die. In the same way, if the root of mind is cut through, the branches and leaves of samsara will dry up.

For example, just as the darkness that has accumulated over a thousand eons is dispelled by the illumination of one lamp or one torch, in the same way, one instant of the wisdom of the clear light of one's mind dispels all of the ignorance, wrongdoing and obscurations accumulated throughout numerous eons.

Kye ho

The intellect cannot see that which is beyond conceptual mind. You will never realize that which is uncreated through created dharmas. If you wish to attain or realize that which is beyond the intellect and is uncreated, then scrutinize your mind and strip awareness naked.

Allow the cloudy water of thought to clarify itself or to clear itself. Do not attempt to stop or create appearances. Leave them as they are. If you are without acceptance and rejection of external appearances, all that appears and exists will be liberated as mudra.

The all-basis is unborn, and within that unborn all-basis, abandon or relinquish habits, wrongdoing, and obscurations. Therefore, do not fixate or reckon. Rest in the essence of the unborn or in the unborn nature. In that state, appearances are fully apparent; but within that experience of vivid appearances allow concepts to be exhausted or to dissolve.

Complete liberation from all conceptual extremes is the supreme monarch of views. Boundless vastness is the supreme monarch of meditations. Being directionless and utterly impartial is the supreme monarch of conduct. Self-liberation beyond expectation or hope is the supreme result or

fruition.

For a beginner it is like a river with a fast current running through a narrow bed or a narrow defile. In the middle or after that, it becomes like the gentle current of the River Ganges. In the end, it is like the flowing of all rivers into the mother ocean, or it is like the meeting of mother and child of all the rivers.

Those of little intelligence, if they find they cannot remain in that state, may apply or hold the technique of the breathing and emphasize the essence of awareness. Through many techniques or branches such as gaze and holding the mind, tighten awareness until it stays put, exerting tension or effort until awareness comes to rest in that state or in its nature.

If you rely upon karmamudra, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise. Enter into the union having consecrated the upaya or method and the prajna or knowledge. Slowly let it fall or send it down, coil it, turn it back, and lead it to its proper place. Finally spread it or cause it to pervade your whole body. If there is no attachment or craving, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness will appear.

You will possess longevity without white hair and you will be as healthy as the waxing moon. Your complexion will be lustrous and you will be as powerful as a lion. You will quickly attain the common siddhis or attainments, and you will come to alight in or attain the supreme siddhi as well.

These instructions of the essential point of mahamudra, may they abide in the hearts of worthy or fortunate beings.

Colophon: This was bestowed on the banks of the River Ganges by the great and Glorious Siddha Tilopa, who had realized Mahamudra, upon the Kashmiri pandit who was both learned and realized, Naropa, after Naropa had engaged in twelve hardships or austerities. This was translated and written down at Pullahari in the north by the great Naropa and the great Tibetan translator, the king among translators, Marpa Chokyi Lodro.

This is a translation of the root text by Lama Yeshe Gyamtso during the course of teaching by Thrangu Rinpoche, published in The Life of Tilopa & The Ganges Mahamudra (Namo Buddha Publications & Zhyisil Chokyi Ghatsal Publications, 2002).

Thrangu Rinpoche's teachings on the Ganges Mahamudra in Vancouver BC in June 1998 were published in *Shenpen Osel*, Vol 3, No 3 (Dec 1999)

Pith Instructions on Mahamudra (translated by Karl Brunnholz)

I prostrate to glorious Vajradakini.

You work with hardships, are dedicated to the guru,
Can endure suffering, and are full of insight, Naropa.
You fortunate one, deal like this with your mind!

Though Mahamudra cannot be taught,
Just as in the example of which [part of] space is supporting which,
Your own mind, Mahamudra, lacks any supporting ground.
Let go and rest in the uncontrived, fundamental state.
If you loosen up your tightness, there is no doubt that you are liberated.

For example, when you look at the center of the sky, seeing will cease.
Likewise, when mind looks at mind,
The swarms of thoughts cease and unsurpassable enlightenment is attained.

For example, clouds [formed by] vapor on earth vanish in the sky's expanse.
They neither go anywhere, nor do they dwell any place.
The same is true for the swarms of thoughts sprung from the mind:
Through seeing your own mind, the waves of thoughts clear up.

For example, the nature of space is beyond color and shape,
Untainted and unchanged by black or white.
Likewise, the essence of your own mind transcends color and shape,
Not tainted by the black and white phenomena of good and evil.

Just as the bright and clear heart of the sun
Cannot [even] be obscured by the darkness of a thousand eons,
The luminous heart of your own mind
Cannot be obscured by this cyclic existence of [infinite] eons.

For example, though space is conventionally labeled as empty,
Space cannot be described as being like this.
Likewise, though your own mind may be called luminosity,
Through this expression, it is not established in this way nor is there a basis for conventional labeling.
Thus, the nature of the mind is primordially like space.
There is not a single phenomena that is not included within it.

Cast away all bodily activities, rest at ease in naturalness.
Let your speech be without utterance, resounding yet empty, like an echo.
Don't think of anything in your mind, behold the dharma of the final leap.
The body is without pith, just like a bamboo cane.
Mind is like the center of space, beyond being an object of thinking.
Without discarding or placing, relax and leave it in its own state.
If mind lacks any point of reference, this is Mahamudra.
If you become familiar and acquainted with this, you attain unsurpassable enlightenment.

Whether it be what the mantra[yana] or the paramita[yana] say,
The collections of the vinaya, the sutras, and so on,
Or your own individual scriptures and philosophical systems,
Through none of these will you see luminous Mahamudra.
Through what springs from wanting, you do not see luminosity, but it obscures.
Through conceptions, precepts and samayas fall away from the actual.

Not engaging mentally, free from all wanting,
Self-arisen and self-settling, just like patterns on water--
If you do not go beyond the actuality of nondwelling and being nonreferential,
You do not go beyond samaya, which is the lamp in the darkness.

If you are free from all wanting and do not dwell in extremes,
You will see all dharmas of the scriptural collections without exception.
If you merge into this actuality, you are released from the dungeon of cyclic existence.
Resting in equipoise in this actuality, all wrongdoing and obscurations are consumed.
This is explained as "the lamp of the teachings."

Foolish beings who are not interested in this actuality
Are always just carried off by the stream of cyclic existence.
How pitiful are these fools who undergo unbearable sufferings in the lower realms!
If you wish to be liberated from such unbearable sufferings, rely on skillful gurus.
Once their blessings enter your heart, your own mind will be released.

Oh! The phenomena of cyclic existence are meaningless and the causes of suffering.
Since produced phenomena lack any essence, behold the essence that is meaningful.
Being beyond all that apprehends and is apprehended is the king of views.
If there is no distraction, this is the king of meditations.
If there is no activity with effort, this is the king of conduct.
If there is no hope and fear, the fruition is revealed.
Beyond an object of focus, the nature of the mind is luminous.
Without a path on which to travel, the beginning of the path of the Buddha is seized.
If you become familiar with there being no object with which to become familiar, unsurpassable
enlightenment is attained.

Oh! Worldly phenomena, well seen through,
Are unable to persist, just like dreams and illusions.
Dreams and illusions do not exist in actuality.
Therefore, give rise to weariness and cast away worldly activities.
Cut through all bonds of attachment and aversion toward your retinue and country
And meditate alone in forests and mountain retreats.
Dwell in the sphere of there being nothing on which to meditate.

If you attain the unattainable, you have attained Mahamudra.
For example, on a tree with a trunk, branches, and foliage so vast,
Once its single root is cut, its millions of branches will wither.
Likewise, if mind's root is severed, the foliage of cyclic existence will wither.

Take, for example, the darkness that has accumulated over thousands of eons:
A single lamp dispels the immensity of this blackness.
Likewise, a single moment of mind's luminosity
Eliminates the ignorance, wrongdoing, and obscurations that have amassed for eons.

Oh! Through the phenomena of the mind, the actuality beyond mind is not seen.
Through the phenomena of doing, the actuality of nothing to be done is not realized.
If you wish to attain the actuality beyond mind in which nothing is to be done,
Resolve mind to its depths and leave awareness nakedly.

Allow the polluted waters of thoughts to become clear.
Do not stop or make up appearances, leave them in their own place.

If there is no rejecting and adopting, whatever can appear is liberated as Mahamudra.
Since the all-ground is unborn, its being covered by the obscurations of latent tendencies is cleared away.
Do not be self-inflated or evaluate, rest within the unborn essence.
Appearances are self-appearances, so let mental phenomena exhaust themselves.

Complete release from extremes is the supreme king of views.
Boundless spacious depth is the supreme king of meditation.
Freedom from the bias of decision making is the supreme king of conduct.
Self-abiding with no hopes is the supreme fruition.

In beginners, this is similar to water [gushing down] a gorge.
In between, it is the gentle flow to the river Ganga.
Finally, all waters meet like a mother and her child.

If persons with inferior minds cannot dwell in the natural state,
They should seize the essential points of prajna and strip awareness bare.
Through many branches of gazing techniques and holding the mind,
They should be disciplined until awareness dwells in its natural state.

If you rely on a karmamudra, blissful-empty wisdom dawns.
By blessing means and prajna, enter into union.
Let it descend slowly, retain it, pull it back up,
Guide it to its place, and let it pervade the body.

If there is no attachment, blissful-empty wisdom dawns.
You will be of long life, without white hairs, and flourish like the moon.

Your complexion will be radiant and you will be powerful like a lion.
You will swiftly attain the common siddhis and blend with the most supreme.

May this pith instruction on the essential points of Mahamudra
Dwell in the hearts of fortunate beings!

Colophon: This completes the twenty vajra-verses on Mahamudra that glorious Tilopa, who was accomplished in Mahamudra, spoke to the Kashmiri pandita Naropa on the banks of the Gangea after having put him through the twelve kinds of hardship. It was translated and finally edited in this form by this pandita himself and the great Tibetan translator Marpa Chokyi at Pushpahari in the north [of India]. English translation by Karl Brunnholz, along with a commentary by the Fifth Shamarpa Goncho Yenla (1525-1583), both published in: The Straight from the Heart: Buddhist Pith Instructions (Snow Lion Publications, 2007).

Ganga-Mahamudra-Upadesa of Sri Tilopa (translated by Rodney Devenish)

Homage to the Innate Gnosis!

Mahamudra is beyond all words and concepts.
But for your sake, O Naropa, my devoted disciple,
who is diligent in ascetic practice and exertion, this shall be said:
Alas! Impermanent is this world.
It is like a mirage or a dream.
Even the illusion of its existence
is not something that exists.

Therefore, abandon worldly pre-occupations,
renounce distinctions of caste and race,
the cause of attachment and aversion,
and meditate alone in forest, mountains and solitary places.

Abide without seeking;
loosely remaining in the natural state.
By attaining non-attainment,
you will quickly reach the stage of Mahamudra.

Know all the phenomena of Samsara as worthless;
just the causes of attachment and aversion.
All created phenomena are without real substance,
therefore seek instead the substance of the Ultimate.

That which pertains to consciousness is unable
to perceive the transcendent Gnosis (jnana).
That which pertains to action is unable
to perceive the truth beyond action.

If you would attain the transcendent,
that which is beyond consciousness and action;
then cut the root of consciousness,
and let the mind revert to nakedness.

The polluted pool of mental activity will clear
if simply left to settle, undisturbed.
Do not try to stop appearances as they arise,
for Mahamudra is beyond acceptance and rejection.

If you sever the root of a living tree,
the branches will quickly wither and die.
Cut off the very root of consciousness,
and all mental projections will immediately cease.

The darkness of long ages is dispelled at once
by the light of a single lamp.
One moment's experience of the mind of uncreate clear Light
will immediately rend the veil of ignorance.

One who wishes to attain this level of meditation
should first begin by practicing remembrance on the breath.
Through control of the gaze and such exercises,
the mind will be disciplined until it abides in its own state.

Just as when looking into the open sky,
fixed concepts of centre and circumference dissolve,
So if with mind one perceives the mind,
then mental activity ceases; Enlightened-mind is realized.

Clouds that arise and take form in the sky
pass away quite automatically according to natural law.
Likewise, the flow of thoughts arising in the mind
naturally pass away when mind perceives mind.

Space has neither colour nor shape;
changeless, it is not tinged by either white or black.
Likewise, mind has neither colour nor shape,
nor can it be stained by virtue or vice.

The burning stellar radiance of the sun
cannot be covered by the eternal darkness of space.
The luminous essence of mind
cannot be shrouded by Samsara's endless duration.

Though we say that space is empty,
the actual nature of this vacuity defies description.
Though we say that mind is Clear Light
it is actually beyond all words and concepts.

Space lacks any locality at all.
Likewise, Mahamudra rests on naught.
Without making effort, remain loose and natural in the primordial state,
and the fetters that bind you will simply drop away.

Since mind is empty like space, there is nothing which mind does not encompass.
Cease with bodily movement and sit relaxed;
close your mouth and remain in silence;
empty your mind and leap beyond the phenomenal!

Let the body rest at ease,
insubstantial like a hollow tube of bamboo.
Let the mind rest in itself,
spacious and un-preoccupied with thought.

When the mind is not possessed by aims,
that is Mahamudra.
Accomplishing this,
that is Great Enlightenment!

Once you let go of all objects-of-perception
the nature of the mind shines forth.
Not trying to meditate is the supreme path of the Buddha.
By the meditation of non-meditation Enlightenment is won.

Non-duality is the King of Views.
Resting the mind without flux is the King of Meditations.
Not choosing this or that is the King of Conduct.
When there is neither hope nor fear, this is the King of Results.

Since the fundamental ground (alaya) is unborn,
it can neither be obscured nor defiled.
Simply rest in that original unborn state and
without meditating or not-meditating,
let appearances resolve back into Ultimate Reality (dharmata).

In being free of the extremes, one attains the King of Views.
Entering the vast and deep, one attains the King of Meditations.
Not making an effort, one attains the King of Conduct.
With non-seeking awareness, one attains the King of Results.

At first the yogi feels his mind to be turbulent like the upper course of a rushing river.
In the middle stage it becomes smooth like the broad Ganges.
In the end it is like the Ganges entering the ocean, meeting of son and mother.

Adherents of shamanic ritual and of the Mahayana
of the Sutra and Vinaya, and followers of The Religions
with all their various scholastic theologies and devotions
have no idea of the marvelous innate Mahamudra.

Not caught up in perceptions, nor caught in desire,
seeking nothing, abiding in the self alone, one simply lets
consciousness flow like a wave in the great ocean.
The light is hidden only by seeking to know it.

As to keeping the covenant (samaya), it is broken
by the very act of trying to adhere to rules.
Cease with rules and ritual, abandon volition, stray not from the Ultimate,
and then a true Precept-keeper will you be, a lamp illuminating the darkness.

If you slip not into conation,
if you hold to neither this nor that,
the real meaning behind all the Scriptures, will make itself clear.

In Mahamudra one is released from the prison of Samsara.
In Mahamudra all one's karmic impurities are burned away.
It is then that you shall be known as a 'Lamp' of the Dharma.

Even the ignorant who understand not the Teaching,
and fools who are lost for a time in Samsara,

can be saved if they but rely on a holy Lord (guru).
Through grace (adhithana) they may be sure of deliverance.

Now concerning the practice of Karmamudra,
of causing Bliss-Emptiness to arise
through union of Wisdom (prajna) and Means (upaya):
drow down and blend thoroughly,
and you shall manifest the actual Divine Pleroma (mandala) in your own body.

Following this path free of desire,
the experience of Bliss-Emptiness will carry you along.
Glowing inwardly, blessed with renewed vigour, with immortality,
your power will expand like the waxing moon.
Thus, surpassing all worldly accomplishments (siddhi),
the supreme goal, the Supramundane Accomplishment, shall you attain!

Colophon: By virtue of entering this practice, may all obstacles to the realization of Mahamudra dissolve away. May the Clear Light of Mahamudra dawn in the minds of the practitioners. May this Pith Instruction on Mahamudra come to abide in the hearts of those disciples fortunate to connect with it. This pith-instruction on Mahamudra was given by Sri Tilopa to Mahapandita Nadapada on the banks of the Ganges River. Translated into Tibetan from the Sanskrit by Marpa Cho-kyi-lodro. Now presented in English by the Dharma Fellowship [Lama Karma Kunzan Rodney Devenish, Denman Island British Columbia]
http://www.dharmafellowship.org/ganga_ma.htm

Song of the Mahamudra (version by Lex Hixon)

Mahamudra, the royal way, is free
from every word and sacred symbol.
For you alone, beloved Naropa,
this wonderful song springs forth from Tilopa
as spontaneous friendship that never ends.

The completely open nature
of all dimensions and events
is a rainbow always occurring
yet never grasped.
The way of Mahamudra
creates no closure.
No strenuous mental effort
can encounter this wide open way.
The effortless freedom of awareness
moves naturally along it.

As space is always freshly appearing
and never filled,
so the mind is without limits
and ever aware.
Gazing with sheer awareness
into sheer awareness,

habitual, abstract structures melt
into the fruitful springtime of Buddhahood.

White clouds that drift through blue sky,
changing shape constantly,
have no root, no foundation, no dwelling;
nor do changing patterns of thought
that float through the sky of mind.
When the formless expanse of awareness
comes clearly into view,
obsession with thought forms
ceases easily and naturally.

As within the openness of universal space
shapes and colors are spontaneously forming,
although space has no color or form,
so within the expanse of awareness
realms, relations and values are arising,
although awareness possesses
no positive or negative characteristics.

As the darkness of night,
even were it to last a thousand years,
could not conceal the rising sun,
so countless ages of conflict and suffering
cannot conceal the innate radiance of Mind.

Although philosophers explain
the transparent openness of appearances
as empty of permanent characteristics
and completely indeterminable,
this universal indeterminacy
can itself never be determined.

Although sages report
the nature of awareness to be luminosity,
this limitless radiance cannot be contained
within any language or sacramental system.
Although the very essence of Mind
is to be void of either subjects or objects,
it tenderly embraces all life within its womb.

To realize this inexpressible truth,
do not manipulate mind or body
but simply open into transparency
with relaxed, natural grace --
intellect at ease in silence,
limbs at rest in stillness
like hollow bamboos.
Neither breathing in nor breathing out

with the breath of habitual thinking,
allow the mind to be at peace
in brilliant wakefulness.

This is the royal wealth of Mahamudra,
no common coin of any realm.
Beloved Naropa, this treasure of Buddhahood
belongs to you and to all beings.

Obsessive use of meditative disciplines
or perennial study of scripture and philosophy
will never bring forth this wonderful realization,
this truth which is natural to awareness,
because the mind that desperately desires
to reach another realm or level of experience
inadvertently ignores the basic light
that constitutes all experience.

The one who fabricates
any division in consciousness
betrays the friendship of Mahamudra.
Cease all activity that separates,
abandon even the desire to be free from desires
and allow the thinking process to rise and fall
smoothly as waves on a shoreless ocean.

The one who never dwells in abstraction
and whose only principle
is never to divide or separate
upholds the trust of Mahamudra.

The one who abandons
craving for authority and definition,
and never becomes one-sided
in argument or understanding,
alone perceives the authentic meaning
hidden in the ancient scriptures.

In the blissful embrace of Mahamudra,
negative viewpoints and their instincts
are burned without remainder, like camphor.
Through the open door of Mahamudra,
the deluded state of self-imprisonment
is easily left behind forever.
Mahamudra is the torch of supreme liberty
shining forth through all conscious beings.

Those beings constituted by awareness
who try to ignore, reject or grasp awareness

inflict sorrow and confusion upon themselves
like those who are insane.

To be awakened from this madness,
cultivate the gracious friendship
of a sublime sage of Mahamudra,
who may appear to the world as mad.
When the limited mind
enters blessed companionship
with limitless Mind,
indescribable freedom dawns.

Selfish or limited motivations
create the illusory sense of imprisonment
and scatter seeds of further delusion.
Even genuine religious teaching
can generate narrowness of vision.
Trust only the approach
that is utterly vast and profound.

The noble way of Mahamudra
never engages in the drama of
imprisonment and release.
The sage of Mahamudra
has absolutely no distractions,
because no war against distractions
has ever been declared.
This nobility and gentleness alone,
this nonviolence of thought and action,
is the traceless path of all Buddhas.
To walk this all-embracing way
is the bliss of Buddhahood.

Phenomena on every plane of being
are constantly arising and disappearing.
Thus they are forever fresh,
always new and inexhaustible.
Like dreams without solid substance,
they can never become rigid or binding.
The universe exists in a deep, elusive way
that can never be grasped or frozen.
Why feel obsessive desire or hatred for it,
thereby creating illusory bonds?

Renounce arbitrary, habitual views.
Go forth courageously to meditate
in the real mountain wilderness,
the wide open Mahamudra.
Transcend boundaries of kinship
by embracing all living beings

as one family of consciousness.
Remain without any compulsion
in the landscape of natural freedom:
spontaneous, generous, joyful.
When you receive the crown of Mahamudra,
all sense of rank or attainment
will quietly disappear.

Cut the root of the vine that chokes the tree,
and its clinging tendrils wither away entirely.
Sever the conventionally grasping mind,
and all bondage and desperation dissolve.

The illumination from an oil lamp
lights the room instantly,
even if it has been dark for aeons.
Mind is boundless radiance.
How can the slightest darkness remain
in the room of daily perception?
But one who clings to mental processes
cannot awaken to the radiance of Mind.

Strenuously seeking truth
by investigation and concentration,
one will never appreciate
the unthinkable simplicity and bliss
that abide at the core.
To uncover this fertile ground,
cut through the roots of complexity
with the sharp gaze of naked awareness,
remaining entirely at peace,
transparent and content.

You need not expend great effort
nor store up extensive spiritual power.
Remain in the flow of sheer awareness.
Mahamudra neither accepts nor rejects
any current of energy, internal or external.

Since the ground consciousness
is never born into any realm of being,
nothing can add to or subtract from it.
Nothing can obstruct or stain it.
When awareness rests here,
the appearance of division and conflict
disappears into original reality.
The twin emotions of anxiety and arrogance
vanish into the void from which they came.

Supreme knowing knows
no separate subject or object.
Supreme action acts resourcefully
without any array of instruments.
Supreme attainment attains the goal
without past, future or present.

The dedicated practitioner
experiences the spiritual way
as a turbulent mountain stream,
tumbling dangerously among boulders.
When maturity is reached,
the river flows smoothly and patiently
with the powerful sweep of the Ganges.
Emptying into the ocean of Mahamudra,
the water becomes ever-expanding light
that pours into great Clear Light --
without direction, destination,
division, distinction or description.

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