

## **Pith Instructions to Mahamudra**

By Sri Tilopa to Naropa at the Banks of the River Ganges

1

Homage to the glorious Co-emergence!

2

Mahamudra cannot be shown;  
but for you who are devoted to the guru,  
who have undertaken hardships  
and are forbearing in suffering, intelligent Naropa,  
the fortunate one, take this to your heart.

3

Kye-ho! Look carefully at worldly phenomena,  
unable to last like an illusion or dream.  
Illusions and dreams do not truly exist.  
Therefore, develop sadness and relinquish worldly activities.  
Renounce all retinues and relations, the objects of passion and aggression,  
and meditate alone in forests, mountains and solitary places.

4

Remain in the state of non-meditation.  
Mahamudra (Great Seal) is attained when non-attainment is attained.  
The dharma of samsara is futile, the cause of suffering.  
The dharma of action has no substance;  
so, look at the substance of the ultimate.

5

The dharma of intellect cannot fathom the truth beyond intellect.  
The dharma of action cannot discover the truth of non-action.  
Should you wish to attain the truth beyond intellect, the truth of non-action,  
search out your mind and leave your awareness naked.

6

Allow the polluted water of thoughts to clear.  
Do not negate or affirm projections, but leave them as they are.  
If there is no rejecting or accepting,  
then you are liberated into mahamudra.

7

For example, a tree grows leaves and branches.  
Severing its root withers the hundreds of thousands  
of leaves and branches.

8

For example, darkness has been accumulating  
over thousands of kalpas (aeon),  
but a single lamp dispels the whole mass of darkness.  
Likewise, a single moment of the luminosity of your mind  
will dispel all negativities and obscurations without exception,  
accumulated over kalpas.

9

If those of lesser intelligence cannot dwell in the truth,  
focus on the breath and maintain awareness with earnestness.  
By the myriad ways of gazing and focusing the mind,  
discipline your awareness until it rests naturally.

10

For example, if you observe the middle of space,  
the fixed ideas of center and boundary dissolve.  
Likewise, if mind observes mind,  
the crowd of thoughts cease, and [mind] remains free of thoughts  
and the unsurpassed awakening, the nature of mind, will be seen.

11

For example, the clouds of vapor from earth vanish into space;  
they have gone nowhere and reside nowhere.  
Likewise is the crowd of thoughts arising from mind;  
the waves of thoughts vanish when you see your own mind.

12

For example, space is beyond color or shape;  
it is not tinged by black or white and is changeless.  
Likewise, your mind is beyond color or shape;  
it is not tinged by black or white, virtue or non-virtue.

13

For example, the luminous and pure essence of the sun  
cannot be dimmed by the darkness of a thousand kalpas.  
Likewise, the luminosity, the essence of your mind,  
cannot be dimmed by a kalpa of samsara.

14

For example, although space is held to be empty,  
space cannot be described in a certain way.  
Likewise, although your mind is said to be luminosity,  
there is no basis for such designations.

15

For example, what relies on what when it comes to space?  
Likewise, your mind, mahamudra, has no reliance.  
Let it loose in the uncontrived innate state;  
when the bond is loosened, there is no doubt of release.

16

Thus, the nature of mind is like space.  
There is no dharma whatsoever which it does not encompass.

17

Abandon all actions of the body [and] set the [mind] in its natural state.  
Do not talk too much [for] speech is like an echo.  
Have no thoughts in the mind but look at the resolved dharma.

18

Having no substance in it, the body is like a bamboo stalk.  
The mind, like the middle of space,  
is beyond the reach of thoughts.  
Place [your mind] loosely in that state;  
neither letting it go nor holding it back.  
If mind has no objectives, it is mahamudra.

19

By habituating that, [you] reach unsurpassable enlightenment.  
When there is no object to perceive, the nature of mind comes to light.  
When there is no path to tread, the path to buddhahood begins.  
The unsurpassable enlightenment is attained by habituating non-meditation.

20

Transcendence of all subject and object is the king of views.  
When there is no distraction, that is the king of meditation.  
When there is no deliberate action, that is the king of conducts.  
When there is no hope and fear, the result becomes manifest.

21

The [mind] basis of all is unborn and  
is free of the obscuring veil of habitual patterns.  
Do not do meditation or post-meditation,  
but place [your mind] in the unborn essence.  
The self projected projections,  
the phenomena of mind, come to exhaustion.

22

Free from all boundaries and extremes is the supreme king of views.  
Boundless, deep and vast is the supreme king of meditation.  
Abiding naturally with no deliberate action is the supreme king of conducts.  
Abiding naturally with no expectations is the supreme king of results.

23

In the beginning [mind] is like a river running in a canyon.  
In the middle it flows gently, [like] the River Ganges.  
At the end it is like the confluence of little rivers [in the ocean],  
[like] the meeting of mother and son.

24

The luminosity, mahamudra, will not be seen  
by the exponents of tantra (tantric teachings) and prajnaparamita (perfection of wisdom),  
or the teachings of the vinaya pitaka (basket of teachings on moral ethics) and the like,  
or even through the respective scriptures and tenet systems.

25

Without mental fabrications and free of longing wishes,  
[thoughts] are self-arising and self-subsiding like the waves in water.  
When longing wishes arise, luminosity is obscured and not seen.

26

Guarding the vows conceptually, the truth samaya (sacred commitment or pledge) is  
violated.  
Not abiding and not objectifying, if you don't stray from the truth,  
you are the Unwaning Sublime One,  
the lamp which illuminates darkness.

27

Free from all longing wishes, if you dwell not in the extremes,  
You will come to see all of the baskets of teachings without exception.  
If you endeavor in this truth, you will escape the prison of samsara.

28

If you evenly meditate by this truth, you will burn  
all negativities and obscurations without exception.  
Therefore, it is called the lamp of the doctrine.

29

The foolish beings who have no interest in this truth  
are carried off continually by the river of samsara.  
Poor thing! The suffering of the lower realms is unbearable.

30

If you wish to be free from suffering, follow a skilled guru.  
Your mind will be liberated upon becoming infused with his blessings.

31

If you rely on a *karma mudra* (action seal),  
the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise.  
Engage in the union of the blessing of method and wisdom.

32

Let the [essence] slowly descend, beheld, reverse and drawn up.  
Bring it to the location and let it spread all over the body.

33.

If there is no craving for that,  
the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise.  
You will gain longevity, have no grey hairs  
and prosper like the waxing moon.  
You will become lustrous and radiant with strength like that of a lion.  
The common attainment will be quickly achieved  
and you will apply yourself to the supreme attainment.

34

May these pith instructions to mahamudra  
be embedded in the hearts of fortunate beings.

By Sri Tilopa to Naropa at the Banks of the River Ganges

These root stanzas of the Mahamudra Upadesa by Mahasidha Tilopa, the Glorious Vajradhara, have been compiled on the basis of its version found in the *Dege Translations of Commentaries (sde dge bstan 'gyur)* which was carefully compared with the Beijing edition of the same text and then verified with the version in the *Treasury of Pith Instructions (gdams ngag mdzod)* and so on. Khenpo Konchok Tamphel has done the English translation (with editorial suggestions by Meghan Howard and Rachel Dodds) and Sharon Lee has edited the Chinese translation. May this be virtuous!

Kyabgon Konchok Tenzin Kunzang Thinle Lhundub, the one blessed with the epithet Gyalwa Drikungpa.

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