

# The Mahamudra Instructions of Tipun Pema Chogyal

Homage to the precious white lineage.<sup>1</sup>

Co-emergent Mahamudra introduces our ordinary mind as pure intrinsic knowing. I explain this in three sections: the preliminaries, the central topic and the conclusion.

The preliminaries are of two kinds, the ordinary and the special. The ordinary preliminaries have been dealt with in other works.<sup>2</sup> The special preliminaries<sup>3</sup> concern the three solitudes,<sup>4</sup> the three stabilities,<sup>5</sup> and the three spontaneities.<sup>6</sup>

The central topic has two aspects: the ordinary practice and the extraordinary practice.

The ordinary practice also has two aspects. Firstly, one seeks to practise the root of meditation, which is tranquillity,<sup>7</sup> and then meditates in the yoga of one-pointedness. Secondly, having examined the root of abiding and moving and gained insight,<sup>8</sup> one meditates in the yoga of freedom from interpretation or conceptual elaboration.

The development of tranquillity, the basis of meditation, from first taste to the full experience of one-pointedness, can be practised with or without reliance of supports.

The use of supports may be without breath control or with breath control. Practices without breath control may involve the use of common objects such as small stones or wooden objects or reliance upon holy images, books or stupas representing the body, speech and mind of the Tathagata.

Practices with breath control include vajra recitation and reliance on breath retention in the manner of a sealed pot.

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<sup>1</sup> of 'Brug-Pa bKa'-brGyud-Pa teachers

<sup>2</sup> There are many texts dealing with these ordinary preliminaries. In order to encourage readers to change their attitude towards life and develop a dharmic perspective they focus on topics like death, impermanence, karmic consequence, the sufferings of samsara and the rarely gained potential of a precious human life.

<sup>3</sup> These refer to the sNgon-'Gro practices of refuge and bodhicitta, vajrasattva purification, mandala offering, and guru yoga as well as the practices listed in notes 4, 5 and 6.

<sup>4</sup> The three solitudes or isolations (*dBens-Pa gSum*): of place or proximity; of speech; of listening. This term can also refer to: isolation of body; isolation of speech; isolation of mind.

<sup>5</sup> The three stabilities or unwaverings (*Mi-gYo gSum*) of body; of speech; of mind.

<sup>6</sup> The three spontaneities or as it comes (*Rang-Babs gSum*) of body; of speech; of mind.

<sup>7</sup> Zhi-gNas, sāmatha

<sup>8</sup> Lhag-mThong, vipassanā

There are three ways to practise tranquillity without the use of supports. These are: ceasing to encourage mental arisings; not responding to whatever arises; the essential method of abiding.

The essential method of abiding has four aspects: to abide in the manner of a brahmin spinning a thread; to abide like a bundle of straw when the rope is cut; to abide like a child gazing at a temple; to abide like an elephant whose flesh is pierced.

By examining the root of abiding and moving, one gains insight and then can meditate in the yoga of non-interpretation. There are three aspects to this: to examine the root of abiding and moving; to recognise and experience insight; to meditate in the yoga of non-interpretation.

Firstly, to examine the root of abiding and moving, one enquires<sup>9</sup> as follows. If abiding in stillness what is the nature of this abiding? In what way does one abide? How does movement occur from that state? Is this movement different from abiding or not? What is the nature of that movement? What is the manner in which movement ceases?

Secondly, examine the awareness that does the looking. Is it other than the abiding and movement that it looks at? Or is it that very abiding and moving?

Thirdly, meditating in the yoga of non-interpretation has three methods: examining through the doorways of the past, the present and the future; examining through the doorways of the real and the unreal; examining through the doorways of sameness and difference.

Now we come to the extraordinary practices which are of two kinds: the yoga of one taste in which all phenomena have the same taste of the indistinguishability of mind and appearance; the yoga of non-meditation in which one establishes beyond doubt that all phenomena are the original co-emergent open mode (dharmakaya).

The yoga of one taste in which all phenomena have the same taste of the indistinguishability of mind and appearance is introduced by means of three examples. With the example of sleep and dreams one is introduced to appearance and mind. With the example of water and ice one is introduced to the union of appearance and emptiness. With the example of water and waves one sees without doubt that all phenomena have the same taste.

Following these three aspects (of one-taste) there are three further aspects (concerning co-emergence): seeing one's own nature through being introduced to mahamudra; the examination of obstacles and errors; the analysis of meditation states (Nyams), true seeing (rTogs), and intellectual understanding (Go-Ba).

There are four aspects to seeing one's own nature through being introduced to mahamudra: the basis is established and accepted; the path is practised; the details of experiences of states are examined; the signs of success on the stages and paths are analysed.

These are the four means by which the result manifest clearly. Detailed explanation are given in the text *Phyag-Chen Nges-Don, True Meaning of Mahamudra*.

Obstacles and errors in meditation are analysed as follows. There are three enemies that can arise: appearances can arise as enemies; thoughts can arise as enemies; emptiness can arise as an enemy.

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<sup>9</sup> This enquiry is not mediated through concepts but relies on opening to what is occurring so that it is fully revealed rather than interpreted.

There are three sites where one can go astray in meditation: happiness; clarity; absence of thought.<sup>10</sup>

There are four sites of loss: lost in the nature of emptiness; lost in interpretation; lost in antidotes; lost on the path.

The analysis of states, true seeing, and understanding: to see how our mind actually is through listening and reflecting is called understanding; one pointed seeing of the general situation is called states; direct appreciation free of interpretation is called true seeing.

These three terms may all be referred to as true seeing accordingly to ordinary linguistic usage and there is no error in this.

The causes which nurture the general, ordinary aspects of tranquillity and insight have been considered in the sutra, *dGongs-Pa Nges-'Grel, True Exposition of Mind*:

“ ‘Bhagavan, what is the cause of tranquillity and insight?’ ‘Maitreya, they arise from the cause of pure morality. The cause is the pure view (established by) listening and reflecting.’ ”

*sGam-Po-Pa* also speaks of the cause in these terms.

Moreover, tranquillity is explained as arising from: the blessing of the guru; auspicious connection (with the practice); the accumulation of merit and wisdom; the purification of obscurations. This also applies for insight.

The text *sGom-Rim Bar-Pa* says,

“Staying in an agreeable place (is helpful).”

The text *mDo-sDe rGyan (Sutralankara)* states,

“A place where the wise practise is easy of access. It is in a good position, with good land, good companions and a ready supply of the things required for yoga.”

Furthermore, the five causes of tranquillity are said to be having little desire; being contented; giving up unnecessary activities; pure morality; completely letting go of thought. While the three causes of insight are explained as being serving holy people; seeking out the learned; thinking according to the correct method.

The text *Byang-Chub Lam-sGron* states,

“If the branches of tranquillity are spoiled then even if one meditates with great diligence for a thousand years one will not attain absorbed contemplation.”

The factors which obscure tranquillity and insight are described in the text *bShes-sPrings*, the *Suhrillekha* by Nagarjuna:

“Excitation and regret; malice; dullness and sleep; desire and longing; doubt – these five are the thieves which steal the virtuous wealth of mental stability. Thus has the Buddha said.”

These five (obstacles), excitation and regret; malice; sleep and dullness; desire and longing; doubt (can be clarified as follows).

The excitation arising from sending thoughts after myriad objects, and regret for the inappropriate actions one has done, both obstruct the mind from resting peacefully.

Malice obstructs the mind from resting happily.

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<sup>10</sup> These are the three main states which occur when progress is made – but like the Land of the Lotus Eaters they can lead one astray with the sense that you have arrived at your goal.

When the mind clouds over it sinks and with more sinking it becomes dull and oppressed by sleepiness. These three (sinking, dullness, and sleepiness) obstruct the mind from resting in clarity.

Desireful longing for and attachment to possessions and sentient beings obstructs the mind from resting in its proper work.

Doubt as to whether one will or will not enter absorbed contemplation obstructs the mind from resting one pointedly.

The text *dGongs-'Grel* says,

“Bhagawan, concerning the five obstacles, which of these are obstacles to tranquillity, which are obstacles to insight, and which are obstacles to both?”

‘Maitreya, excitement and regret are obstacles to tranquillity. Dullness, sleep and doubt are obstacles to insight. Longing, desire and malice are obstacles to both.’”

Moreover the Buddha has given many different enumerations of obstacles such as the five waverings,<sup>11</sup> the five faults,<sup>12</sup> and so on, but all obstacles are subsumed within the essential groupings of the three-fold sinking, dullness, and excitement, and the two-fold sinking and excitement.

Considering the three-fold grouping:

Sinking is spoken of in the *sGom-Rim Bar-Pa*,

“When the mind does not see its object clearly, in the manner of a blind man, or of a person entering a dark room, or of someone with their eyes closed, then what is happening at that time should be known as sinking.”

Dullness is spoken of in the *mDzod-'Grel*,

“If you ask what dullness is, it is the heaviness of body and mind which prevents body and mind from doing the work appropriate to them”.

Excitement is spoken of in the *Kun-Las bTus-Pa*,

“If you ask what excitement is, it is the agitated mind which, swept along by desire, goes following after the dangerously entrancing erotic and thus becomes an obstacle to tranquillity.”

The method for removing these obstacles has been briefly stated by Nagarjuna:

“Replace sinking and heaviness with a positive attitude, and distraction and wandering by settling the mind in its own place.”

Furthermore, for excitement meditate on impermanence. For hopelessness and regret avoid thinking about the events which evoke them. For mental dullness bring to mind that which is pleasing. For sinking focus on whatever you find uplifting. For sleepiness increase your perception of light. For doubt settle into one-pointedness. For desireful longing reflect on the faults of what is desired and cultivate contentment. For ill-will develop love and a concern for the welfare of others.

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<sup>11</sup> The five waverings (*gYeng-INga*): wavering due to mentation; wavering due to the mind being focused on externals; wavering due to the mind being focused on what occurs internally; wavering due to attending to signs; wavering due to abiding in a bad place.

<sup>12</sup> The five faults (*Nyes-Pa INga*): laziness; forgetting instructions; dullness and agitation; non-application of antidotes; over-application of antidotes. Alternatively: suffering; loss of possessions; being without joy; being bound up in things; obscuration.

These points are all very important. As it is said, “With this, there is nothing to clarify and nothing to alter. Simply look at your actuality. When this is truly seen there is complete liberation.”<sup>13</sup>

The principle point is to look at the nature of sinking and excitation. To dwell without artifice in this actual nature is truly profound.

Moreover, sinking, excitation and so on can be categorised into four groups each with three aspects: sinking, dullness and fogginess; excitation, dispersal, and regret; desire, longing and attachment; undercurrents, merged, and indeterminate.

In brief, they can all be subsumed within sinking and excitation. There are six aspects to sinking: place; time; companions; food; way of sitting; meditation.

Regarding recognition of the nature of tranquillity and insight, the text *dKon-mChog-sPrin* states, “Tranquillity occurs when there is one-pointed focus. Insight occurs when one truly sees actuality just as it is.”

Tranquillity, generally speaking, is said to occur when the mind remains focused on its object of attention, whatever that might be, without being distracted elsewhere. Insight occurs when the mind clearly sees on the basis of the discernment arising from precise examination of whatever presents itself as experience.

The literal definition of the terms tranquillity and insight is briefly as follows. Tranquillity (Zhi-gNas) occurs when the mind’s afflictions and thoughts are pacified (Zhi) and it abides (gNas) one-pointedly inclining towards virtue. Insight (Lhag-mThong) is supreme (Lhag) seeing (mThong) among all kinds of seeing, for it is to see the invisible actuality just as it is.

With regard to the classification of tranquillity and insight, tranquillity is classified as having three varieties: worldly tranquillity, tranquillity which transcends the world, and tranquillity arising from the activity of resting contentedly on the object that is to be observed. In addition, by a well known method, it can be analysed according to the nine aspects of mind.

In order to attain tranquillity, the five faults must be abandoned.<sup>14</sup> Using their antidote, the eight conditions,<sup>15</sup> the defects of sinking and excitation are removed. With the six strengths<sup>16</sup> and four applications<sup>17</sup> one is able to attain the nine aspects of the mind that abides in equilibrium.

These nine aspects are as follows: to engage the mind; to fully engage it; to engage it with certainty; to engage it closely; to control it; to calm it; to calm it closely; to bring it in one flow; to bring it into equilibrium. So it is described.

As the text *Kun-bTus* says:

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<sup>13</sup> This is said by Maitreya.

<sup>14</sup> They are sinking, dullness, fogginess, excitation and regret. Tranquillity’s obstacles are excitation and regret. Insight’s obstacles are dullness, sleepiness and doubt. Desire, longing and malice are obstacles for both.

<sup>15</sup> The eight conditions are: longing; effort; faith; attentiveness; recollection; attention; understanding; equanimity.

<sup>16</sup> The six strengths are: strength of listening; strength of contemplating; strength of recollection; strength of attention; strength of diligence; strength of recognition and familiarity.

<sup>17</sup> The four applications are: to endeavour and engage; to separate and engage; to engage without separating; to effortlessly engage.

“To engage the mind within itself; to fully engage it continuously; to engage it in contact; to engage it closely; to control it; to calm it; to calm it closely; to make it one-pointed; to bring it into equilibrium.”

Regarding the classification of insight, the text *dGongs-'Grel* says:

“ ‘Bhagawan, what kinds of insight are there?’ ‘Maitreya, there are three kinds of insight: that which arises from signs; that which arises from all one’s efforts; that which arises from analysis of particulars.’ ”

The fruit of tranquillity and insight is described in the text *dGongs-'Grel*:

“If one asks what is the fruit of these two, their fruit is a pure mind, their fruit is pure wisdom.’ Thus the Buddha has said that tranquillity leads to pure mind and insight leads to pure wisdom. A pure mind is one which is purified of afflicting thoughts. To be purified of the traces of ignorance is pure wisdom.

Moreover, it is explained that in this life tranquillity averts attachment to worldly pleasures and helps one achieve mental powers and meditative absorption, while in the next life one will gain the form of a god in the realm beyond desire. And it is also explained that with insight, all beings gain happiness in the short-term and then, understanding the nature of existence, they are completely liberated from the three worlds.

The Buddha has said that the ultimate fruit of tranquillity and insight is to gain perfect enlightenment.

Speaking generally of tranquillity and insight, the saintly sGam-Po-Pa said, ‘Tranquillity and insight are the door to the entire Dharma.’ The meaning of this is discussed under five headings: cause; activity; obstacles; obscurations; pure path.

The cause of tranquillity is pure morality. The cause of insight is the discernment arising from listening and reflecting.

The activity of tranquillity is to free oneself from the bondage of reliance on signs and interpretations. The activity of insight is to free oneself from the bondage of taking birth in a lower realm.

The obstacle to tranquillity is attention to one’s body and wealth. The obstacle to insight is not to be satisfied by the teachings of the holy ones. Socialising and not being content with little are obstacles to both.

Excitation, regret and doubt obscure tranquillity. Desireful longing and malice obscure both tranquillity and insight.

The pure path of tranquillity is to overcome dullness and sleep. The pure path of insight is to overcome excitation and regret. By overcoming these two obscurations with tranquillity and insight one gains the result of the pure open mode.”

I now record my recollection of my Guru Shakyasri’s oral instructions providing a commentary on the text *Phyag-Chen Zin-Bris* (by Padma Karpo).

This is arranged in three sections. Firstly, all phenomena are shown to be one's own mind. Secondly, the errors and defects of not meditating on the nature of one's mind are explained. Thirdly, the benefits of such meditation are explained.

Those practicing breath control train in the four aspects: counting the breath; inhalation and exhalation; vajra recitation of the three letters; pot-like breath retention.

Those not practicing breath control focus at first on the three aspects of mind: abiding; moving; awareness. Then in accord with whichever text they are studying, they practise cutting thoughts at the moment of their arising and so forth.

In order to protect meditation, one first needs to know how to start meditation. Then during it one needs to know how to work with states arising in meditation. Finally one needs to know how to cut the development of thought.

Abiding in tranquillity is classified in three stages. Firstly one abides like a stream descending from a steep mountain. Then one abides like a gently flowing river. And finally one abides like a calm ocean.

There are many systems of classification of insight but these can be brought together in a threefold division: insight focused on an object; insight of attending to states arising in meditation; insight of seeing clearly.

There is also the twofold division of the insight of the path, and the insight of the result. The insight of the path refers to the fine discrimination arising from the clarity of discerning the particulars occurring during the period of tranquillity. The insight of the result is the understanding of how it is which transcends the duality of seer and seen. This is how it has been described by the Buddha.

To differentiate between tranquillity and insight we can say that to abide purely with one's mind as it is is tranquillity, while insight is the addition of awareness to that abiding.

There are many classifications of insight according to the sutras but the best known of these is that of establishing the understanding of the two kinds of absence of inherent self-nature. Now if we make a comparison, becoming certain about the nature of one's mind is similar to the sutra method of becoming certain about the absence of inherent self-nature in people. Furthermore becoming certain about the nature of thought and appearance is similar to becoming certain about the absence of inherent self-nature in phenomena.

The third part of the root text (*Phyag-Chen Zin-Bris*) is concerned with the introduction to and recognition of mahamudra.

Firstly, there are three aspects to the recognition of mahamudra: the meaning of name and enumeration; nature and classification; the faults of not knowing it and the benefits of knowing it.

Secondly, there is the introduction to and recognition of one's mind. In brief our mind is introduced to us through the three<sup>18</sup> that co-emerge in one's mind; the threefold ground, path and result; the threefold view, meditation and conduct; the three modalities of enlightened being<sup>19</sup>; the fivefold

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<sup>18</sup> The three that co-emerge in one's mind (*Rang-Sems lHan-Cig-sKyes-Pa rNam-Pa gSum*): the cause, the method, the result

<sup>19</sup> Open mode (dharmakaya); display mode (sambhogakaya); manifest or participative mode (nirmanakaya).

intrinsic knowing.<sup>20</sup> If you wish to go into this more thoroughly, the nature of introduction is presented very well by Kun-dGa' bsTan-'Dzin in his *Phyag-Chen Zab-Don rGya-mTsho' Lam-Tshang*.<sup>21</sup>

There are four aspects to this recognition: staying even; subsequent knowledge; subsequent appearance; subsequent attainment. Regarding the method of abiding in staying even, there are six methods of abiding in one's own nature, as well as three others and many further ways. However, in brief, they are all included within the two aspects of non-wavering and non-meditation.

Regarding the manner of developing subsequent knowledge, there are three aspects: subjugation on contact; no following on; seeing the absence of inherent self-nature.

The mind is classified as follows: the nature of mind (awareness); mind; that which arises for the mind. The consciousness of the five senses together with mentation consciousness are called the group of six. When the afflicted mentation consciousness and the consciousness which is the basis of everything are added there is the group of eight and this is referred to as 'mind'.

The five ever-present ones; the five which determine objects; the eleven attendant functions of every positive attitude; the six root afflictions; the twenty subsidiary afflictions; the four or six variables are the classifications known as the fifty-one mental events.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding their development, there are the three aspects: development of afflictions; development of the six consciousnesses; development of circumstances taken to be happy/sad, good/bad, and elevated/debased and so on.

Regarding the analysis of obstacles and mistakes or deviations: outer obstacles include those in authority, relatives, enemies, robbers and so on. Inner obstacles include illness caused by conflict between the four elements, ratiocination and so on. In particular there are the 'five' obstacles or dangerous passages: appearances arising as enemies; thoughts arising as enemies; karma arising as enemies; compassion arising as enemies.

The three and eight deviations are explained by opening up their meaning. Thus, firstly, due to bliss, clarity, and absence of thought, one may deviate (go astray) towards the three dimensions of samsara. The venerable 'Ba'-Ra-Wa<sup>23</sup> said:

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<sup>20</sup> These are: intrinsic knowing of infinite hospitality; mirror-like intrinsic knowing; intrinsic knowing of perfect equality; intrinsic knowing of perfect discernment; all-accomplishing intrinsic knowing.

<sup>21</sup> The author was the second Khamtrul Rinpoche and the text has been reprinted at Tashi Jong, H.P., India.

<sup>22</sup> These are the standard classifications found in the Abhidharmakosa. The fifty-one mental events (*Sems-Byung INga-bCu-rTsa-gCig*): the five ever-present ones (*Kun-'Gro INga*) of contact, attention, feeling, cognition and motivation; the five which determine objects (*Yul So-Sor Nges-Pa INga*) of adherence, inclination, recollection, contemplation and discriminative awareness; the eleven attendant functions of every positive attitude (*bCu-gCig dGe-Sems Kun-Gyi 'Khor-Du 'Byung-Ba*) of faith, carefulness, lucidity, equanimity, decency, decorum, detachment, non-hatred, non-delusion, non-violence and perseverance; the six root conflicting emotions (*rTsa-Ba'i Nyon-Mongs-Pa Drug*) of hatred; desire; arrogance; ignorance, view of mundane aggregates and doubt; the twenty subsidiary conflicting emotions (*Nye-Bar Nyon-Mongs-Pa Nyi-Shu*) of anger, hostility, dissimulation, malice, jealousy, avarice, deception, dishonesty, spitefulness, pride, contempt, indecorum, delusion, over-exuberance, distrust, laziness, carelessness, forgetfulness, excitability and inattentiveness; the four variables (*'Gyur-Ba bZhi*) of drowsiness, regret, ideas and scrutiny.

<sup>23</sup> 'Ba'-Ra-Ba rGyal-mTshan dPal-bZang



“The site of deviation in mahamudra is this: taking all phenomena to be like the sky, one is drawn into meditation experiences of limitlessness and goes astray with a meditation which is limitless like the sky. Taking consciousness to be limitless, one goes astray with the experience of limited consciousness. Taking all phenomena to be absolutely non-existent, by meditation generating this experience one goes astray into non-existence. Taking all phenomena to be neither existing nor non-existing, with this experience meditation leads one astray into the highest realms of formless consciousness where nothing registers.

If with intellectual contemplation one has a conceptual longing and with this one practises and develops a one-pointed meditation on the blissful happy mind, one deviates to the first absorption. By longing for contemplation and one-pointedly meditating on mind’s blissful happiness, one deviates to the second absorption. If one contemplates without thoughts or discernment but with a one-pointed focus on recollection, happiness and mind, then one deviates to the third absorption. If one contemplates with perfect impartiality and perfect recollection, that one-pointed mind free of the sensations of pleasure and pain will deviate to the fourth absorption.

Having inhibited the arising of the objects of the six senses if one keeps one’s mind in a state devoid of thought, then one is without pure recollection and deviates to the state devoid of perception. When consciousness is indeterminate, unpredictable and happy, one may deviate into recollectionless indeterminacy.<sup>24</sup> When mind is dark, heavy, dispersed and devoid of thought and clarity then one can deviate to the animal realm.

The four sites of loss are: on the nature of emptiness; on the path; on the antidote; on integration. Each of these four is also further classified into original loss and immediate loss and thus there are eight categories of loss.”

Moreover, the error of thinking that things are what they are not is described thus in the *Rin-Chen sPungs-Pa*:

“To think that views constructed by the intellect are ultimate is to go astray. To think that the experience of the states of happiness, clarity, and absence of thought is the open mode (dharmakaya) is to go astray. To think that self-abiding intrinsic knowing which has never been placed anywhere is changeable is to go astray. To think that conduct whose artificiality destroys the distinct qualities of appearance is also destroying delusion, is to go astray. To think that desireless conduct free of judgement is a cause of sin and downfall is to go astray. To think that conduct which expresses compassionate method is inferior is to go astray. To think that false and foolish behaviour which lacks true confidence is ultimate is to go astray. To think that those who help others out of their own desire are bodhisattvas is to go astray.

Classification cannot encompass the many ways in which one can go astray but they can be summarised as the twofold belief in entities. If one sees that both the mind that believes in self-existing entities and these objects that are identified as being real, are without inherent self-nature, then one becomes freed from all grasping at entities and so even the term ‘going astray’ is no more.”

For your practice to be beneficial, remember: devotion is the head of meditation; revulsion is the feet of meditation; recollection is the main part of meditation; shame and conscience are the armour of meditation; the message of meditation can be entrusted to love and compassion.

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<sup>24</sup> This state covers all undefined possibilities.

There are seven points to gaining the benefit of certainty regarding the unborn: being clear about the name; being clear about the meaning; being clear about the occasion; being clear about the nature of how it is; seeing the nature of the mind which is the root of clear certainty; actual clarity of the immediate unborn; and by merging in this continuously day and night there is the necessary experience of settled confidence.

There is also the conduct which establishes skilful competence. Thus the father tantras use a threefold classification of conduct: elaborate conduct; non-elaborated conduct; extremely non-elaborate conduct. The mother tantras have a different threefold classification: secret conduct; extreme conduct; totally victorious conduct.

The text cycle *Grub-sNying Gi sKor* describes a fourfold division: all good conduct; concealed secret conduct; the extreme conduct of awareness; totally victorious conduct.

Moreover there are said to be these four: the conduct of beginners; the conduct of those who have the power of intrinsic knowing; the conduct of those who have greater power of intrinsic knowing; the conduct of total liberation.

Concerning the practice of non-elaborated conduct, there are the five kinds of conduct: the conduct of being like a shy deer; conduct like that of a lion; conduct like that of the wind in the air; conduct like the sky; conduct like that of a crazy person.

Regarding the levels of human ability, the most competent will have instant awakening. Those of middle capacity will have visionary awakening. Those of least capacity will experience a gradual awakening.

For each of these types there is a specific knowledge, experience and understanding. Thus for whatever virtuous practice one is engaged in, be it high or low, when the exact meaning of it arises as an object of intellect, there is knowledge arising from enquiry. Arising from beneath the experience of your habitual sense of who you are, clear experiences manifest from the cause of not straying from awareness. And with seeing clearly one's intrinsic way of being free of delusion, there is the intelligent certainty of understanding.

The sequence for gaining knowledge through recollection is as follows: recollection when the mind is focused one-pointedly is called a held recollection or recollection with effort; recollection on the levels up to freedom from limitation is effortless recollection or pure recollection. The former is called engrained recollection or constrained recollection. Moreover there is the recollection which holds to emptiness or recollection of knowing (recognition).

Regarding the latter, there is pure recollection or inseparable recollection and also the recollection free of thought or beyond thought. Thus it is shown that there are four divisions.

Recollection and awareness have been described as follows by the Great Omniscient One<sup>25</sup> :

“Recollection is the root of all the paths. Devotion is to keep it in front of one. The essence of the ability to abide for as long as one wants in meditation is recollection. Recollection is unwavering. If one does not waver one becomes aware of movement. That aspect of knowing is awareness.”

## Recognising the nature of the four yogas

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<sup>25</sup> The epithet 'Great Omniscient One', Kunkhyen Chenpo (*Kun-mKhyen Chen-Po*) is used for Longchen Rabjam (*Klong-Chen Rab-'Byams*) and, as is probable here, for Padma Karpo (*Padma dKar-Po*).

rJe sGom-Chung<sup>26</sup> said:

"To abide in clarity is one-pointedness. Cutting off doubt is freedom from interpretation. The absence of adopting and abandoning is the experience of one taste. Pure experience is non-meditation."

One-pointedness means when one's mind clearly, purely and simply abides in the state free of centre and edge, like the sky, this is the emptiness and clarity of awareness which pervades abiding and movement.

Freedom from interpretation means when graspable object and grasping mind and all the possible outer and inner phenomena are freed from the interpretations of beginning, ending and abiding and from semiotic identification, then all doubts are cut down within the unborn emptiness encompassing everything.

One taste means that all the possible phenomena of samsara and nirvana are absolutely equal in the original state free of inhibiting or developing; abandoning or adopting; emptiness or non-emptiness; interpretation or non-interpretation; beginning or ending and so on.

Non-meditation means that when the impurities of previous states and experiences are purified, understanding developed on the path and the actual nature of how it is merge together and then there is no difference between meditation and post-meditation, or between recollection and distraction.

### **Definition of the four yogas**

"One-pointedness" (rTse-gCig) refers to one-pointed unwavering recollection of the actuality of how one's own mind is as one-pointed awareness permeating abiding and movement.

"Freedom from interpretation" (sPros-Bral) refers to the actuality of how one's own mind is. This is like the sky. Being free of the limiting interpretations of beginning, ending and abiding, of permanence and annihilation, of coming and going, and so on, it is called "freedom from interpretation".

Generally speaking, "one-taste" (Ro-gCig) refers to the fact that all the phenomena that are encompassed within samsara and nirvana are said to have one taste within the actuality of emptiness. However, here it specifically means that the many different kinds of phenomena which are usually dualistically seen as being diverse and different, for example as being visible or invisible, are actually inseparable in their own nature which has one taste.

Generally speaking, "non-meditation" (sGom-Med) refers to the facticity of the absence of inherent self-nature revealed by not reifying the object of meditation into a seemingly 'real' entity. Now if one asks how this can be the case, well, while experiencing one-taste the subtle sense of a meditator and a meditation is purified. One sees simply and without distraction that there is no difference between meditation and post-meditation, or between recollection and non-recollection. Then the act of meditation is free of all effort, and this is called "non-meditation".

### **The classification of each of the four yogas into three types, giving a total of twelve aspects**

With minor one-pointedness one sees that one's mind is bliss and clarity. With medium one-pointedness one gains one's own authority with that absorption. With great one-pointedness, experience is continuous.

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<sup>26</sup> A disciple of sGam-Po-Pa.

With minor freedom from interpretation one sees that one's own mind is unborn. With medium freedom from interpretation one sees that it is without root. With great freedom from interpretation one destroys all doubts regarding all the inner and outer phenomena.

With minor one-taste samsara and nirvana are merged as one. With medium one-taste the root of subject and object is cut. With great one-taste all phenomena are pacified in the state of perfect equality.

With minor non-meditation one is free from both the meditator and the meditation. With medium non-meditation one abides in the site of spontaneity. With great non-meditation the two aspects of clarity (mother and child) merge.

### **There is also a sixteen-fold classification of these yogas**

The one-pointedness of one-pointedness. The one-pointedness of freedom from interpretation. The one-pointedness of one-taste. The one-pointedness of non-meditation.

There are similar sequences for the other three, freedom from interpretation, one-taste, and non-meditation, producing a total of sixteen.

### **Classification of the moments of true seeing**

Firstly, regarding what makes truly seeing different, rJe sGom-Chung said:

“At the time of one-pointedness, one sees one's true nature. At the time of freedom from interpretation, one sees one's natural qualities. At the time of one-taste, one sees one's characteristics. With non-meditation, true seeing becomes continuous.”

### **States that occur in meditation**

One-pointedness becomes dulled within unfocused darkness. Freedom from interpretation is lost in empty counting. One-taste is distracted in the waves of mixing. The sun of non-meditation is covered by clouds.

### **Developing post-meditational understanding**

The post-meditation understanding from one-pointedness is habitual focus. The post-meditation understanding from freedom from interpretation is illusoriness. The post-meditation understanding from one-taste is emptiness. The post-meditation understanding from non-meditation is compassion.

### **The taints to be purified**

One-pointedness is tainted by belief in real entities. Freedom from interpretation is tainted by non-recognition. One-taste is tainted by states occurring in meditation. Non-meditation is tainted by dualistic knowledge.

### **Identification of post-meditation gain**

One-pointedness has separation but no gain. Freedom from interpretation has both separation and gain. One-taste has no separation but does have gain. Non-meditation has neither separation nor gain.

### **The separation between meditation and post-meditation**

With one-pointedness there is clarity both in meditation and post-meditation. In freedom from interpretation there is differentiation of meditation and post-meditation. During one-taste, meditation and post-meditation are merged. Non-meditation is the time of obvious presence.

rJe Yang-dGon-Pa (a disciple of Milarepa) said:

“At the time of one-pointedness the constituent<sup>27</sup> of form is separated off and the consciousnesses of the five senses are purified. At the time of freedom from interpretation, the constituents of feeling and perception are separated off and mentation consciousness is purified. At the time of one-taste, the constituent of association is separated off and the consciousness of afflicted mentation is purified. At the time of non-meditation, the constituent of consciousness is separated off and the consciousness of the ground of all is purified. Thus the means of purifying the eight consciousness is taught through the four yogas.

Moreover, one-pointed yoga carries taints. Freedom from interpretation distinguishes between meditation states and true seeing. One-taste is the union of meditation states and true seeing. Non-meditation is uninterrupted seeing. In this way the four yogas are related to the difference between meditation states and true seeing.

Moreover, at the time of one-pointedness, one experiences one’s habituation to cause and effect. At the time of freedom from interpretation, cause and effect are like an illusion. At the time of one-taste, cause and effect are like the sky. At the time of non-meditation, one understands groundless dependent origination. In this way the four yogas can be related to the modes of karmic cause and effect.

With presence in abiding we see what movement is. With presence in movement one is settled in abiding. With these the separation of abiding and movement ends. This is self-introduction to one's self through one-pointedness.

With presence in delusion there is confidence in its liberation. With presence in liberation there is awareness of the self-deception of delusion. With these the separation of delusion and liberation ends. This is self-introduction to one's self through freedom from interpretation.

With presence in appearances awareness is how the mind is. With presence in mind we see how appearances arise. With these the separation of appearance and mind ends. This is self-introduction to one’s self through one taste.

With presence in meditative awareness there is no wavering from the state of uncontrived actuality (dharmata). With presence in post-meditation there is infinite kindness. With these the separation of meditation and post-meditation ends. This is self-introduction to one's self through non-meditation."

Moreover, regarding identifying whether true seeing in each of the four yogas is completed or not, rJe rGya-Ras (a disciple of one of Milarepa’s disciples) said:

“Seeing or not seeing one’s true nature. Perfect or imperfect energy. The arising or non-arising of thoughts in meditation. The appearance or non-appearance of qualities. Being confident or not in identifying relative truth. The planting or non-planting of the seed of the form mode (gZugs-sKu). There are thus six or twelve points that are identified for differentiation.

In brief, to be able to remain in meditation for as long as one wishes is one-pointedness. To recognise the nature of one’s ordinary mind and see that it has no base or root is freedom from interpretation. To liberate grasping at the appearances of

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<sup>27</sup> Skandha in Sanskrit. There are five constituents that make up our existence: form, feeling, perception, association and consciousness.

samsara and nirvana on awareness is one-taste. The certainty gained from purifying all the taints of the subtle traces is non-meditation. In this way the true nature of the four yogas is briefly described.

There are four special features. The view is special because it arises from within direct seeing that is not dependent on consulting texts. The meditation is special for it does not rely on methods to stabilise the mind but allows dullness and excitement to be self-liberated in their own place. The conduct is special because it does not rely on rules and sanctions but remains free of both encouraging and abandoning. The result is special because it is not dependent on time and signs since the three modes arise effortlessly.”

### **The method for traversing the stages and paths**

Regarding the method for traversing the stages and paths it is said that “True seeing by itself traverses all the stages and paths.” It is not appropriate to make differentiation regarding the door to our true nature, the actuality which is mahamudra. However, according to the sutra path, there are five paths: the path of accumulation; the path of connection; the path of seeing; the path of meditation; the path of fulfilment.

On the little path of accumulation there are four aspects to keeping close recollection: a closely kept recollection of the body; a closely kept recollection of feeling; a closely kept recollection of mind; a closely kept recollection of phenomena.

On the middle path of accumulation there are the four complete abandonings: abandoning the development of sin and unvirtuous ways; not developing those that have not been developed; developing the antidote of virtue not yet developed; the increase of all that has been developed.

The great path of accumulation has the four feet of magic: devoted concentration; diligent concentration; concentration of the mind; investigative concentration.

The path of connection has four branches of analysis: heat; the summit; patience; supreme dharma. During heat and the summit, one acquires the five organs or capacities: the capacity of faith; the capacity of diligence; the capacity of recollection; the capacity of concentration; the capacity of discerning wisdom.

During patience and supreme dharma, one acquires the five strengths: the strength of faith; the strength of diligence; the strength of recollection; the strength of concentration; the strength of discerning wisdom.

The path of seeing has the seven branches of enlightenment: pure recollection; pure discernment of phenomena; pure diligence; pure happiness; pure developed ability; pure concentration; pure equanimity.

The path of meditation has the eightfold noble path: pure view; pure true seeing; pure speech; pure activity; pure livelihood; pure effort; pure recollection; pure concentration.

The path of fulfilment has the nature of the end of suffering and knowledge of the unborn.

The ten stages of the Bodhisattvas may be understood in terms of their general and their particular features. There are three general features: the nature of the stage; the literal meaning of the stage; the reason for the division into ten stages.

Regarding the particular features, each stage is distinguished by nine identified items. Thus there is differentiation by name; by literal meaning; by purification; by practice; by purity; by true seeing; by what is to be abandoned; by birth; by power.

The first stage is called 'very happy'; the second 'stainless'; the third 'illuminating'; the fourth 'radiant'; the fifth 'hard to do'; the sixth 'manifest'; the seventh 'distant'; the eighth 'unmoving'; the ninth 'good intelligence'; the tenth 'cloud of dharma'; the eleventh 'total light'; the twelfth 'lotus free of attachment'; the thirteenth 'bearer of vajra'.

The differences in qualities of the stages are as follows. While on the first stage one can enter a hundred different concentrations and ascend in them. One can see the faces of a hundred Buddhas, and know the blessings given by a hundred Buddhas. One can go to a hundred Buddha lands. One can shake a hundred realms and one can illuminate a hundred realms. One can open a hundred doors of the Dharma. One can ripen a hundred sentient beings. One can show that one remains for a hundred aeons. One can see a hundred past and future lives with one's wisdom perception. One can display a hundred bodies. Each body is surrounded by a retinue of a hundred auspicious ones and has the power to show the twelve hundred qualities.

On the second stage one is able to show twelve thousand qualities and so on up the levels.

Here in this text it is not appropriate when making a literal description to enumerate in detail all the stages and paths.

The great adept Zhang said:

"Mahamudra on its own is sufficient. Foolish people confuse themselves by counting the stages and paths. However, for the sake of these foolish one, the stages and paths are set out in the vehicle which uses signs and here will also be counted."

As rJe rGya-Ras said:

"Although there is no necessity for the stages and paths, yet if one wants to demonstrate it, it can be shown like this. Offering the mandala is the path of accumulation. Developing meditation states and experience is the path of connection. Freedom from interpretation is the path of seeing. The arising of true seeing is the path of meditation. One-taste is the eighth stage. Non-meditation is the eleventh stage and the path of completion."

Perfect Buddhahood with the inseparable three modes, the ultimate result of mahamudra, can be considered under seven aspects: nature; literal meaning; classification; explanation; enumeration; signification; particularities. Firstly there is auspicious renunciation and auspicious intrinsic knowing. Regarding this there are five intrinsic knowings: intrinsic knowing of infinite hospitality; mirror-like intrinsic knowing; intrinsic knowing of perfect equality; intrinsic knowing of perfect discernment; all-accomplishing intrinsic knowing.

In brief there is the intrinsic knowing of understanding how it is, and there is the intrinsic knowing of understanding how it appears.

The sixth aspect is signification. Thus if we explain in a reversed manner, there are eight signs relating to the open mode: evenness; depth; permanence; alone; pure; clean; clarity; joined with the radiant mode.

The radiant mode also has eight signs or aspects: retinue; place; body; distinguishing marks; Dharma; deeds; effortlessness; absence of determining essence.

The manifest or participative mode also has eight signs or aspects: form; cause; place; time; nature; commencing; ripening; liberating.

The seventh aspect is particularities. This has three aspects, the particularities: of evenness; of permanence; of appearance.

Moreover, there are the seven branches of union,<sup>28</sup> the eight qualities of greatness,<sup>29</sup> and the secrets or mysteries of Buddha body, speech and mind, the inexhaustible wheels of adornment.

Moreover, there is the secret or mystery of the inconceivable body and of all the forms of the body. There is inconceivable secret of speech, and of all that is speech. There is the inconceivable secret of mind, and of all that is mind.

In summary, unmistakable self-introduction to the natural condition of one's mind just as it **is is** the ground of mahamudra. Not remaining in doubt about this, one gains true confidence.

The path mahamudra is to thoroughly understand the nature of view, meditation and conduct, and practise them one-pointedly day and night without a break. By this all the adventitious obscurations of subject-object identification are purified and awareness is fully revealed as the open mode.

The two form modes (radiance and manifest) effortlessly and spontaneously benefit beings for as long as samsara is not emptied. This is called result mahamudra.

*May all beings be happy*

Written by 'Khrul-Zhig rDo-rJe 'Chang (Khrid-dPon Padma Chos-rGyal)

### Colophon

*Khamtag (Kham-Brag) Rinpoche, a direct student of Tipun Pema Chogyal (Khrid-dPon Padma Chos-rGyal), allowed John Crook to photocopy his umed manuscript of this text. Tashi Rabgyas copied it out in uchen and made a gloss of the meaning. The text was then fully translated by James Low in consultation with C.R. Lama. A rough version of this translation appeared in The Yogins of Ladakh (Delhi, 1997). This translation has been revised in January 2024 by James Low.*

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<sup>28</sup> The seven branches of union(Kha-sByor-Gyi Yan-Lag bDun): non-substantiality (*Rang-bZhin Med*); union with awareness in the form of the consort (*Rig-Ma*); great bliss (*bDe-Chen*); the body or mode of enjoyment (*Longs-sPyod rDzogs-Pa'i sKu*); no cessation of experience (*'Gog-Pa Med*); infinite compassion (*sNying-rJe Yongs*); no break in the flow of experience (*rGyun Mi-Chad*).

<sup>29</sup> The eight qualities of greatness, or, the eight forms of mastery (*dBang-Phyug Gi Yon-Tan brGyad*): mastery of body; mastery of speech; mastery of mind; mastery of miraculous transformation; mastery of omnipresence; mastery of abode; mastery of fulfilling whatever is desired; mastery of enlightened activity.