

THE MAHAMUDRA MIDDLE WAY OF THE GANGES

BY

THE GREAT ADEPT TILOPA

IN THE LANGUAGE OF INDIA: MAHAMŪDRA UPADESHA

IN THE LANGUAGE OF TIBET: PHYAG-RGYA CHEN-PO'I MAN-NGAG

1. I pay homage to Śri Vajradakini.
2. With devotion to (me), your guru, you have endured hardship,
3. Intelligent Naropa, patient in suffering.
4. You are fortunate so pay attention with your heart. 1

5. Mahamudra cannot be taught, yet
6. As an example, in space is there something that rests on something else?
7. In the same way in your own mind, mahamudra, there are no objects to rest on.
8. Relax at ease in the uncontrived primordial state. 2

9. If you release your binding your liberation is not in doubt.
10. For example, by looking at the centre of space seeing ceases.
11. In the same way if your mind looks at your mind
12. All thoughts will cease and unsurpassed awakening will occur. 3

13. For example, mist rising from the earth and clouds both vanish in vast space
14. Without going anywhere and without remaining somewhere.
15. In the same way many thoughts arise in the mind, yet
16. By seeing your own mind, these waves of thought vanish. 4

17. For example, space is naturally free of colour and shape.
18. It is changeless and is not altered by light or dark.
19. In the same way the essence of your mind transcends colour and shape.
20. It is not tainted by the white or black phenomena of virtue or vice. 5

21. For example, pure luminosity is the essence of the sun.
22. The darkness of a thousand aeons cannot dull it.
23. In the same way the clear light essence of your own mind
24. Cannot be dulled by aeons of samsara. 6

25. For example, although the term 'empty' is applied to space
26. It is impossible to say how space actually is.
27. In the same way, although the mind is said to be 'clear light'
28. There is no basis for such conventional terms that assert, 'it exists in this way'. 7

29. Thus the essence of your mind has always been like space.
30. There are no phenomena that it does not encompass.
31. Desist from all physical activity and rest easily as you are.
32. With your voice silent, empty sounds are like echoes.
33. With your mind free of mental activity look into the dharma of immediacy.

34. Your body has no substance, like a hollow reed.
35. Your mind, like the depths of space, is beyond being an object of thought.
36. Remain relaxed in this state free of discarding or keeping. 8

37. If the mind is not made an object you rely on, this is mahamudra.
38. If you become familiar with this and merge as it, unsurpassed awakening will occur. 9

39. The followers of mantra and the paramitas,
40. The vinaya, the sutras, the pitakas and so on,
41. Will, due to their individual scriptures and philosophical systems,
42. Be unable to see the clear light mahamudra.
43. Due to the arising of desire there is obscuration so that luminosity is not seen. 10

44. The vow to guard against thought, the heart of samaya, is lost.
45. With no mental activity, free of all desire,
46. (Experience is) self-arising, self-quiet, like waves of water.
47. If you do not stray from non-abiding non-referential truth
48. You will not stray from samaya and will be like a lamp in the dark. 11

49. If you are free of all desire and do not abide in the extremes
50. You will see all the dharma teachings of the three baskets. 12

51. If you give yourself to this truth you will be freed from the prison of samsara.
52. Resting evenly in this truth all unvirtue and obscuration is burnt up.
53. This is said to be 'the lamp of the teachings'.
54. Foolish beings uninterested in this truth
55. Are continually carried away to their demise by the river of samsara.
56. These foolish ones suffer unbearably in the lower realms - how sad!
57. If you wish liberation from unbearable suffering then rely on a wise guru
58. For their blessing will enter your heart and your mind will be liberated. 13

59. Khye Ho! These samsaric phenomena, the cause of meaningless suffering,
60. Are fabricated phenomena lacking their own essence - so look at the true essence!
61. To be free of all aspects of subject and object is the king of views.
62. If there is no distraction, this is the king of meditation.
63. If there is no deliberate activity, this is the king of activity.
64. If there is no hope and fear the result will manifest. 14

65. Beyond being an observable object the mind's nature is clarity.
66. With no path to travel you have taken the Buddha's way.
67. Without having anything to habitually focus on, unsurpassed awakening occurs. 15

68. Khye Ma! An excellent understanding of worldly phenomena
69. Cannot be permanent, being like a dream or an illusion.
70. The meaning found in dreams and illusions does not exist.
71. So, sadly disillusioned, abandon worldly activity.
72. Cut all bonds of attachment and aversion to country and those around you.
73. Stay alone in the forest. Meditate in isolated retreat.
74. Abide in the state that is free of meditation.
75. If you attain non-attainment you attain mahamudra.

76. A tree with trunk, branches and leaves
77. Has a single root which if cut will cause all its parts to wither.

78. In the same way, if you cut the root of the mind, the foliage of samsara will wither. 16
79. For example, if darkness accumulates over a thousand aeons,
80. All this darkness can be dispelled by a single lamp.
81. In the same way the clear light which is your own mind
82. Will instantly dispel the ignorance, unvirtue and obscuration gathered over aeons. 17
83. Khye Ho! The phenomena accessed by the intellect will not see the truth beyond intellect.
84. Fabricated phenomena will not get the truth free of activity.
85. If you wish to open to the truth free of activity and beyond intellect
86. Cut the root of your mind and leave awareness naked.
87. Let the water polluted by thought become clear.
88. Neither inhibiting nor encouraging appearances, leave them as they are.
89. Appearance and becoming free of rejecting and adopting is mahamudra.
90. The ground of all is unborn and so remains clear of the veil of the obscurations and traces.
91. Avoid pride and calculation - settle in the unborn essence.
92. Appearances are one's own appearance; they are mental phenomena which come to nothing.
93. Complete freedom from extremes is the supreme king of views.
94. Boundless, deep and vast is the supreme king of meditation.
95. Free of extremes and bias is the supreme king of conduct.
96. Free of hopes this self-liberation is the supreme result. 18
97. At first activity is like water rushing in a gorge.
98. In the middle it is like the gentle flow of the Ganges.
99. Finally all waters meet like mother and child.
100. If those of limited intellect cannot remain in this state
101. They should work with their breath and nourish awareness.
102. By means of the many aspects of gazing and mind exploration
103. They should persevere until they rest in the state of awareness. 19
104. If they rely on a karmamudra, the pristine clarity of bliss-void will dawn.
105. The blessings of method and wisdom will merge by
106. Gently bringing down, holding, reversing and drawing up again so that
107. It flows to its abode and spreads throughout the body.
108. If there is no lust and desire the pristine clarity of bliss-void will dawn. 20
109. Free of white hairs, with long life increasing like the waxing moon,
110. Radiant complexion and the strength of a lion,
111. The common siddhis will be quickly attained and you will flow towards the supreme. 21
112. May this instruction on the key points of mahamudra
113. Dwell in the hearts of fortunate beings! 22

This completes the twenty-three indestructible verses on mahamudra taught on the banks of the River Ganges by the master adept of mahamudra, Sri Tilopa, to the learned and accomplished Kashmiri pandit Naropa after he had accomplished the twelve demanding tasks. Great Naropa then transmitted it to the great king of translators Marpa Chokyi Lodro who translated it and finalised it at Naropa's northern residence of Pullahari. Ithi! May there be virtue! 23

Translated by James Low, September 2019.

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