

Mahāmudrā Upadeśa

By Tilopa

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In Sanskrit: *Mahāmudrā upadeśa*

In Tibetan: *phyag rgya chen po man ngag*

I prostrate to Vajradakini!

Mahāmudrā can not be explained, nevertheless,
Since you have engaged in hardships, have devotion to the Guru,
Can withstand suffering, and are intelligent, Nāropa,
Fortunate one, let this be poured into your heart!

Kye ho Look well at the phenomena of the world.
They can not last. They are like an illusory dream.
They are not actually existing illusory dreams.
Therefore, give rise to disenchantment and renounce worldly activities.

Giving up all servants and kin, [causes] of attachment and aversion,
Go alone to the forest and meditate in mountain hermitages.
Abide in the state of not-meditating.
If you attain the unobtainium, you have attained mahāmudrā.

Through the phenomena of samsara, meaningless attachment and aversion stirs.
Since the phenomena of activities are without essence,
Seek the essence of the ultimate.
The phenomena of the intellect can not see the meaning beyond the intellect.

Through the phenomena of activities, the meaning of non-fabrication is not attained.

If you wish to attain that meaning of non-fabrication beyond the intellect,

Nakedly rest your awareness, severing the root of your mind.

Let the sullied water of thoughts settle and become clear.

Do not try to stop or create appearances. Rest in yourself.

If there is no rejection or adoption, there is liberation into mahāmudrā.

For example, if the root of a tree with branches of blossoming leaves is cut,

The millions of leaves on those branches will wither.

For example, even though there may be a darkness that has accumulated for ages,

A single flame will dispel all the gathered darkness.

Like that, a single instant of the luminosity of one's own mind

Clears away all the negative deeds and obscurations accumulated for aeons without

exception.

If those of inferior intellect do not abide in the ultimate meaning,

[They should] seize the key point of the breath and let go of focusing awareness.

Through the many gazes and ways to hold the mind,

Train until you abide within awareness.

For example, if you investigate the center of space,
Grasping towards an edge or center will cease.
Like that, if you investigate the mind with the mind,
The ebb and flow of discursive thoughts will come to abide in non-conceptuality.
Then, the nature of the unsurpassed enlightened mind is seen.

For example, clouds of fog from the earth dissipate in the sky.
There is nowhere that they have gone and no place they abide.
Like that, though there may be accumulated thoughts arisen from the mind,
Through seeing one's own mind, the waves of thoughts dissipate.

For example, space is beyond color and shape,
It does not wear virtue or non-virtue. It is unchanging.
Like that, one's mind is beyond color and shape.
It cannot be dressed by the phenomena of virtue and non-virtue.

For example, the essence of the luminosity of the sun,
Even if eclipsed for a thousand aeons, still can not be obscured.
Like that, the luminosity essence of one's mind,
Even if wandering in samsara for aeons, still can not be obscured.

For example, even if one fully investigates empty space,

There are no words to describe what it compares to.

Like that, even though one's mind is called luminosity,

There is no ground for this verbal comparison.

For example, there is nothing that can be supported by space.

Like that, the mahāmudrā of one's own mind is not supported anywhere.

Rest in the relaxed innate uncontrived state.

Have no doubt that bondage will be relaxed and liberated.

In that way, the nature of the mind is like space.

All phenomena without exception are gathered within it.

Give up activities of the body, letting it naturally rest.

Without many expressions of speech, it is like an echo.

Do not think in mind, but seek the dharma of transcendence.

Since the body is without essence, it is like the trunk of bamboo.

The mind is like the center of space, beyond the object of thoughts.

Rest, relaxing in that without leaving or staying.

When the mind has no focus, it is mahāmudrā.

By becoming familiar with that, you will attain unsurpassed enlightenment.

The mind is naturally clear without any object of conception.

Seize the path of Buddhahood without traveling anywhere.

By becoming familiar with non-meditation, unsurpassed enlightenment will be attained.

Going beyond the grasper and the grasped is the king of views.

If there is no distraction, it is the king of meditation.

If there is no activity, it is the king of conduct.

If there is no hope nor fear, the fruition will become manifest.

The unborn ground of all is free from habitual tendencies and obscurations.

Rest in the essence of the unborn, beyond meditation and post-meditation.

Exhaust all phenomena of thoughts of appearances and self-appearances.

Being completely free from limits is the king of views.

Deep and vast limitlessness is the king of meditation.

Naturally abiding without fabrication is the king of conduct.

Naturally abiding without hope is the king of fruitions.

In the beginning, it is like the water in a gorge.

In the middle, it is like the slowly moving water of the Ganges.

In the end, it is like the confluence of the mother and child waters.

This goes beyond the limits of the utterance of mantra, the paramitas,
The vinaya and the other baskets of teachings,
Together with their individual texts.

Through these, one does not see the mahāmudrā of luminosity.

Not doing anything in the mind, free from all aversion and desire,

It is like self-arisen and self-settled waves.

Through the arising of aversion and desire, luminosity is not seen, but obscured.

Thinking about the vow to guard realization, the ultimate commitment is broken.

If you do not stray from ultimate non-abiding non-conceptuality,

It is sublime practice, the light in the darkness.

Not abiding in extremes, free from all aversion and desire,

You will see the meaning of all the baskets of dharma teachings.

If you dedicate yourself to the meaning here, you will be freed from the prison of samsara.

Through this meaning, evenly resting, all negative deeds and obscurations will be burned away.

This is what is explained to be the “lamp flame of the teachings.”

Those foolish beings who pay no heed to this here

Are forever carried off by the waters of samsara.

The unbearable sufferings of the lower realms cause my heart to ache.

If liberation is desired, rely upon wise Gurus.

Entering their blessings, your mind will be liberated.

If you rely upon the karmamudrā, the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise.

Evenly dwell within the blessings of method and wisdom.

Slowly, let [bindu] descend, be drawn into the cakras,

Travel to the abodes, and pervade the body.

Without attachment to that, the primordial wisdom of bliss and emptiness will arise.

Life will be long, hair will not be grey, and one will wax like the moon.

One will have luminous radiance and the strength of a lion.

The common siddhis will be swiftly attained and one will strive towards the supreme.

May this instruction on the key points of mahāmudrā

Dwell in the hearts of fortunate beings!

This was taught by the glorious Tilopa to Nāropa on the banks of the Ganges river.

[In the presence of the great Nāropa, the king of translators, Marpa Chökyi Lodrö, translated and requested this at Phulahari in the North.]¹

¹ Bracketed part came from the *phyag chen do ha mdzod*.