

*Gampopa Teaches
Essence Mahamudra*

INTERVIEWS WITH HIS HEART
DISCIPLES, DUSUM KHYENPA
AND OTHERS

BY TONY DUFF
PADMA KARPO TRANSLATIONS

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	v
1. Points of Interest	v
2. About the Teacher, Gampopa	vii
3. About the Teaching, Mahamudra	xii
4. About the Texts	xviii
5. Interview Text: Lord Dvago's Personal Advice and Lord Gomtshul's Interviews	xxii
6. Interview Text: Dusum Khyenpa's Interviews	xxiii
7. Interview Text; Phagmo Drupe's Interviews	xxv
8. Interview Text: Yogin Choyung's Interview	xxxiv
9. Other Points	xxxiv
THE FOUR DHARMAS IN BRIEF BY GAMPOPA	1
PRECIOUS GARLAND OF THE SUPREME PATH BY GAMPOPA .	7
LORD DVAGO'S PERSONAL ADVICE AND LORD GOMTSHUL'S INTERVIEWS	19
DUSUM KHYENPA'S INTERVIEWS	53
LORD PHAGMO DRUPA'S INTERVIEWS	195
YOGIN CHOYUNG'S INTERVIEW	239

GLOSSARY 249

SUPPORTS FOR STUDY 281

INDEX 287

[Part four: memories of the guru, Gampopa, after his passing.]

Namo Guru.²¹⁹

On the water year's summer's middle month's
 Fourteenth night, he was a little sick.
 "I will not take medicine now", he said.
 Due to this condition he
 Laughed again and again.
 On the fifteenth day he passed away.
 We cremated him in a large stupa.
 On the eighteenth, when the cremation was done,
 A mass of light above Gungthang was seen.
 One person from Nyalwa saw spears of rainbow light.
 Various rainbows appeared many times.
 A wondrous state of mind uninterruptedly appeared.
 I prostrate to the Lord whose mind is luminosity.²²⁰

I heard the following from the precious guru.

"When I (born in the sheep year²²¹) was a teenager of sixteen years,
 I went (in the dog year) before the geshe of Zangkar²²². I studied

²¹⁹ Dusum Khyenpa tells of Gampopa's death in a short piece of verse. He then recounts what Gampopa has told of his own life story.

²²⁰ "Whose mind is luminosity" here means that his guru has passed away and entered the full fruition luminosity of buddhahood.

²²¹ A number of notes have been added by a later scribe in order to make the original notes of Dusum Khyenpa more understandable. These notes are shown in parentheses in the text itself.

²²² Zangkar is the name of one of the three districts that made up the Western-most province of Tibet, Ngari. That geshe is referred to in the previous part as Ngaripa.

the tantra sections of Yoga, Chakrasamvara, and others²²³. In my twenty-sixth year (the year of the monkey), I took ordination at Drongkar, taking it all at once. I took many empowerments of secret mantra from guru Mar Yulwa and the bodhisatva, both, then meditated. A good experience of shamatha arose; appearances shone forth like misty rainbows and no-thought²²⁴, without identification, arose day and night. When I looked to see how long it had lasted, I saw that it had occurred uninterruptedly for thirteen days. Now I had achieved excellent meditation.

“I thought to go to observe the conference on bodhisatva conduct happening with the geshe at Uru plains which led to hearing the paramita Stages of the Path in the presence of Geshe Nyug-rumpa and Geshe Gyayon Dag. These two had gone to buddha knowledge and experienced the kayas. I felt that the enlightenment mind which I now had roused in my mind was a kindness of those two.

“Then, hearing guru Mila’s name, extreme faith arose, and I requested leave of the geshe. In Tsang, I was on the road for forty days. In my thirty-first year (the ox year) I met guru Mila. I offered my earlier experience in meditation to him and he said, ‘That’s your meditation! It is not the path to buddhahood!’ He also said, ‘At some point you should stop this kind of pond-like meditation and do pranayama meditation!’ Then I meditated for one year on pranayama and by that all the good qualities of wind meditation were completed. He said, ‘It seems to me that you have been able to produce bliss-warmth and samadhi in your mindstream without difficulty.’

²²³ Yoga here means yogatantra.

²²⁴ This is the no-thought of shamatha, which simply means that thoughts have been stopped within dualistic mind; it is not the no-thought of the entity in which discursive thoughts do not exist within wisdom mind.

“I had stayed in the presence of the guru for thirteen months. Now, I decided to go back down (in the tiger year). He put a large white torma on my crown and gave the empowerment of the dakinis and dharma protectors. ‘Through you, there will be much benefit for sentient beings’, he said. I asked how that would be and he said, ‘When you came here, a sign that you would benefit beings arose. After you stayed here, I had a dream in which we had a race and you came first; it says that your benefit for sentient beings will be greater than mine. Again, one time I dreamed that you hurled a boulder bigger than a Bra²²⁵ tent to another land and by striking the boulder with both hands it was reduced to dust. Your body also was better than mine; I did not have your capacity. It means that you will not be afraid of external objects.’

“I went down. Then I heard extremely detailed explanations of glorious Dipankara’s²²⁶ oral instructions from geshe Drowa, Chag Riwa, Ja Yulwa, and so on.

“The monks there begged me to tell them about the practice I had been doing and what had been produced in mind because of it. I told them the experience of abiding came on when I meditated on the three experiences of bliss, luminosity, and emptiness but not unless I meditated. I told them that this experience of one-pointedness is different from that of the four types of conduct; it comes on through a cleared-out purity and with a continued presence of thought process²²⁷. It can be brought forth with the clear type of

²²⁵ A Bra tent is the standard tent of Tibetan nomads made from the very coarse hair of a yak woven into canvas called Bra. It is a very large tent that can accommodate a whole family with kitchen, beds, and all other possessions included.

²²⁶ Dipankara is Atisha Dipankara. His oral instructions are the instructions of the Kadampa.

²²⁷ This means that his one-pointedness developed in meditation
(continued...)

knowledge that thinks, ‘This is it.’ Sometimes the meditation would come on separated from awareness and I would think, ‘Is this totally without meditation?’ Sometimes not meditating would come and sometimes meditating would come. I did not gain realization but that practice produced a little of the awareness. The root is mind so this was somewhat like the moon of the first lunar day of the month appearing.

“It is when wisdom gets started that the path is actually reached and begun. A genuine occurrence of wisdom shone forth; I had an excellent dream then I saw, as though it was standing there, a rigpa which could not be greater, my own entity. It was like meeting a person with whom I was acquainted from before. Now that awareness itself had become meditation, there was no meditation to be done. There was no meditator. Mind shone forth as supportless luminosity-emptiness. I understood that it was being recognized clearly. All dharmas became an outer shell. Nonetheless, I was thinking that, if discursive thought arose, I did not like it and that if there was no-thought it would be proper. If there is no discursive thought, there is no un-interrupted luminosity-emptiness; ‘Oh!’, I thought, ‘that has happened!’ That was my view staying in Nyal of Sewa district.

“I shifted to Drongphur where there was a production of realization. Previously, when discursive thought arose I did not like it and when realization arose preferred that. Now at Drongphur, discursive thought shone forth as luminosity, and now, when thought did arise, it was as though it was light coming off the luminosity. The thought arose, ‘For the secret mantra yogin, it doesn’t matter whether he lives or dies.’ For such a person, the appearances of the bardo will not shine forth. The Jetsun guru had said to me, ‘Stay

²²⁷(...continued)

according to Mahamudra instruction is different from the ordinary one-pointedness developed in the ordinary kinds of meditation that most people do. It has the special characteristics mentioned.

constantly in the luminosity. Through that, you will not see the city of the bardo.' I think that has happened to me. I am not harmed by discursive thought so the luminosity is never interrupted by anything. Now I have embraced a continuity of luminosity and luminosity-emptiness arises like the flow of a river. It travels with me as a part of me which is not obvious, and because of it, even the use of my intellect—which also is free from grasping at the luminosity—does not contaminate me in the slightest. For me, mind-ness has gone onto being dharmakaya.”

Following that, he shifted to Zang²²⁸ district where, in his year of passage (seventy-five), he recognized the way in which the three kayas shine forth.



²²⁸ Gampo Zang Valley in Central Tibet.