

Six Yogas of Naropa

Ringu Tulku

Mahamudra and Six Yogas are quintessence of Kagyudpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The Six Yogas or Six Dharmas (Chos-drug) are meditation techniques which enhance the practice of Mahamudra (Phyag rgya-chen po) at certain points and under special conditions i. e., at that level of practice which is known as the Perfect stage (Sampannakrama, rzdogs-rim) of the Anuttara Yogas such as like Guhyasamaja, He-vajra, Chakrasamvara and Kalacakra, etc.

Tilopa(988-1069A D.),the first Guru of the Kagyu lineage, received the teaching of the Six Yogas from various Gurus. He received the teachings of Illusory

Lineage of Kargyudpa	Body and Transference of Consciousness from Nagarjuna and the teachings of Dream and Intermediate state from Charyapa; the teachings of luminosity from Lawapa (Dombupa) and the teachings of Candali (mystic heat) from Yogini Sumati (Sudhagini). As the four oral traditions merged into one, Tilopas lineage came to be known as Kagyu (the oral traditon). Naropa (1016-1100 A.D.) received the lineage of six Yogas from Tilopa and he along with his sister Niguma expounded the teachings so much so that the teachings became known as the Six Yogas of Naropa and Six Yogas of Niguma, both of which are still preserved in Kagyu teachings.
-------------------------	--

Marpa, the translator (1012-1097 A.D.), carried them to Tibet and through his noted disciple the saint poet Milarepa (1040-1123 A.D.) spread to all sub-sects of Kagyu School. The teachings have been zealously guarded and secretly transmitted for the last thousand years. They are still preserved in the original form as an oral tradition which is transmitted only after thorough preparation so that they may not be wasted or confused. The Ahapramana-samaya-nama-dakini-upadesa (bka-yong-dak-pa' i-tshed-ma-don-gyi-yige-gsang-ba-mkha'-gro' i-man-ngag) with its commentary by Marpa, forms the principal work of the Six Yogas. Among the 30 odd different kinds of literature on this topic available in India are the earlier and later Kapes (bka'-dpe) written by Tilopa and Naropa respectively.

Tibetan saints and scholars,of course,wrote many commentaries later on. But it should be pointed out here that despite the vast literature available one cannot practise the Six Yogas without the assistance of an experience duGur.

Here is given a general idea of the Six Yogas of Naropa without going into the esoteric aspect of the Teachings—Candali or Tummo means ‘fierce’ or ‘wrathful’. A kind of psychic heat is generated and experienced through certain meditative practices. This heat serves to burn up all types

of obstacles and confusion. It is a fierce or wrathful
 Mystic heat fire. Although the heat generation is given emphasis
 (gtum-mo—candali) Candali does not deal with heat generation alone.

Another important part of this Yoga is the
 practice of nadi, prana and bindu. (Tib.rtsa, rlung, thigle) practice
 helps one to attain realization by synchronising body and mind.

The Tantric texts describe prana as the horse, mind-consciousness as the rider, nadis as the pathway and bindu as mind-nourishment. The prana functions in the left and right channels called Symbolic representation *lalana* and *rasana* and therefore our mind conceives of Prana, Mana and the things in duality. In other words, we lapse Nadi in Tantric text into duality because the prana functions in *lalana* and *rasana*. These two channels represent the subjective objective activities and Karmic activities. If the prana functions in the central channels (*Avadhuti*) the prana transforms into wisdom-prana.

The mind then conceives the non-duality of the things, and realizes all dharmas as unborn. The meditation on prana, nadi and bindu is called inner gTummo. When the inner candali is

Mind conceives synchronized with the outer candali which is
 non-duality of things Mahamudra, prana, nadi and bindu dissolve
 into *sampannakrama* non-duality delight. This
 is known as the attainment of vajra body, vajra speech and vajra mind.
 Candali is the root or foundation of all other Yogas.

Illusory body or apparition is broadly divided into three categories,
 viz. the mundane illusory body; the immaculate illus-
 Illusory Body ory body; and the most immaculate illusory body.
 (sgyu-lus—mayadeha) The universe and its contents are nothing
 but illusions as they have no substance in their
 nature. They just appear like illusory bodies, like dreams, like mirror-reflection
 and the like. To understand this and to meditate upon this helps one to
 cut off the mundane attachments and to realize the ultimate truth. This
 practice is known as mundane illusory body. Higher Tantricism makes one
 realize that the five aggregates, the twelve dhatus and the six sense-organs

are divine by nature. This practice transforms all the mundane thoughts into divine thoughts. The universe becomes a Mandala of divine deities where the forms are gods and goddesses; sounds are mantras; and thoughts are transcendental wisdom. Even this immaculate appearance has no substance and hence is illusory. This practice is, therefore, known as the immaculate illusory body.

The immaculate illusory body still has a tinge of artificiality. The most immaculate illusory body, however, is a spontaneous, natural experience, born out of completely pure prana and non-dualistic thought to achieve the last illusory body.

The first stage of dream practice is to recognize dreams during the time of dreaming. The next stage is to use the dream as a means to practise various spiritual exercises including that of illusory body. Dreams are then transformed into the practice of luminosity. A constant practice on dream will have great effect on waking hours. There will be a time when the learner will see no distinction between the dream, waking hours and the death. The Practice of luminosity is believed to be the essence of the path. Luminosity in Tantra is the spontaneous, self illuminating enlightened (Hod-gsal, prabhasvara Buddha -nature which could be seen only with the ultimate intuitive perspective or the deepest meditation. Though a momentary flash of luminosity appears when dying, fainting, yawning and copulating, it is not recognized, as such. The technique here would help to recognize those moments especially in dreams. It is therefore said that a Yogin is meditating even when asleep. Luminosity is regarded as the last stage of Sampannakrama of Anuttarayoga Tantras and its practice leads directly to the experience of Sambhogakaya and Dharmakaya.

Intermediate state has been classified into many different ways. Of that, the most popular one is Marpa's classification where the bardo is classified into three types—the intermediate state between birth and death (lbt) (Bar-do, antarabhava) the intermediate state of dreams; and intermediate state of becoming (between death and rebirth). The practice of Bardoyoga is the last stage.

The intermediate state after death is called 'the mind body'. This

is an important stage as a strong reaction at this period will have an immediate effect in deciding the realm into which the person will be reborn.

“In our being we find passion, aversion and bewilderment. Through passion we become spirits, through aversion denizens of hell and through bewilderment brute animals. While through these poisons we bound to wander endlessly in Samsara, by making them a path according to the teaching of Naropa, there will be no birth for us (in Samsara)”¹.

The three stages of practices are, therefore, recommended for this period. The best of these is to recognize the luminosity when it is experienced at the time of death. The next stage is the practice of illusory body which is practised when the mind-body is separated from the dead physical body. If both of them fail to liberate the subject, the meditative techniques to stop entrance into the six realms of the world are applied. A few of these techniques have been discussed in the Book of Dead.

Pho-ba is also known as the teaching to achieve Buddhahood without meditation. The purpose of these teachings is to be ready to die and to avoid being reborn in unfavourable situations. This is also divided into three stages of practice as found in Bardo. The first stage is to transform one into luminosity. The second stage is to realize the divine nature and accomplish the illusory body. The last stage is to transfer one's mind-body into the wisdom-mind of the Guru and Yidam or into some Buddha in Sukhavati. These trainings are practised during the life-time and they are used when all the signs of death are manifest. An accomplished person can help another person to a happy departing.

It may be noted here that it is not necessary that all the Six Yogas should always be practised together. But they as a whole make a complete path. The first four are known as the root Yogas and the last two as their parts. It is also not always necessary for the total number to be only six, although the six Yogas of Naropa are the most popular. There are texts which mention eight, ten or varying numbers with the addition of more branch Yogas.

1. sGampopa, Vol.32, P. 30a.

References :

1. Jamgon Kongtrul, Shes-bya-mzod, Vol. IV.
2. „ „ gDams-ngag-mzod (Kagyü part)
3. Collected Works of Gampopa Vol.32.
4. H.V. Guenther, The Life and Teaching of Naropa
5. Chogyam Trungpa, The Rain of Wisdom,