

In this book Thrangu Rinpoche relates how the fearless Marpa left Tibet three times and traveled the perilous journey to India to receive the authentic vajrayana teachings.

Not only does Rinpoche relate the story of Marpa's interesting life, but he also relates Marpa's relationship with his guru Tilopa and his relationship with his own students. Given are also description of the practices and a detailed explanation of the Twelve Instructions of Maitripa on Mahamudra meditation.

Marpa was instrumental in bringing the tantric meditation instructions to Tibet. Under the guidance of Tilopa, Marpa was able to visit the greatest siddhas of India and to receive these teachings. Not only did Marpa copy down these tantric practices, but he translated them from Sanskrit into Tibetan and spend years practicing them until he had thoroughly mastered them. This was fortunate because soon afterwards there was the Moslem invasion of India and most of these teachings were destroyed in India. These teachings from Marpa continue to be practiced in Tibet to this day.

This book is part of a series of teachings on the Kagyu lineage holders by Thrangu Rinpoche. In previous books of this series, he has given the life and teachings of Tilopa and Naropa the first two lineage holders. Marpa is the third lineage holder and Rinpoche has also given the teachings and life of Milarepa, Rechungpa, Gampopa, and the Karmapas.

Thrangu Rinpoche has said that the study of the biographies of the lineage holders is valuable especially when one is discouraged with one's practice or faced with doubt about one's spiritual practice. For this reason he has given us these inspiring spiritual biographies.

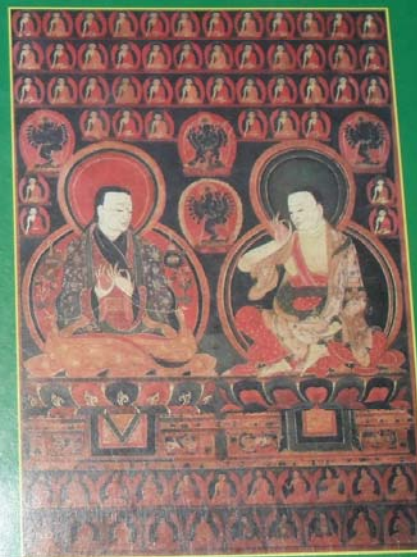
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The Spiritual Biography of Marpa, the translator



Thrangu Rinpoche
Geshe Lharampa

Translated by
Ken and Katia Holmes
&
Lama Yeshe Gyamtso

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Notes

Technical terms are italicized the first time that they are used to alert the reader that they can be found in the Glossary.
Tibetan words are given as they are pronounced, not spelled in Tibetan. The actual Tibetan spelling is given in the Glossary of Tibetan Terms.
We use the convention of using B.C.E. for "B.C." and C.E. for "A.D."

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Contents

Introduction	1
1. The Life of Marpa	3
2. Marpa Meets Maitripa	17
3. The Songs of the Twelve Instructions	23
4. Marpa Returns to Tibet	35
5. Marpa Gains Eight Disciples	43
6. Marpa's Third Visit to India	53
7. Marpa Returns to Tibet	67
8. How Marpa lost his Son	69
9. Marpa Teaches Through Miracles	81
10. Marpa's Passing into Nirvana	85
11. Glossary	89
12. Glossary of Tibetan Terms	99
The Notes	101
The Bibliography	106



Marpa

Introduction

This book is part of a planned series on the great lineage masters of the Kagyu lineage. This lineage of Tibetan Buddhism was founded by Tilopa who was born about 1,000 years ago. Tilopa was an extremely accomplished master and passed the tantric Buddhist teachings to Naropa. All this happened in India in the ninth century C. E. and in Naropa's lifetime the courageous Marpa came from the mysterious country of Tibet to receive these teachings and propagate them throughout Tibet. This was fortuitous because in the next two centuries, Buddhism was to be almost complete obliterated from the Indian subcontinent.

The teachings that Marpa received and then gave to his disciples have been passed down without distortion right down to the Venerable Thrangu Rinpoche. Thrangu Rinpoche has been recognized as an outstanding teacher. He has practiced these teachings so that when he teaches about Marpa he conveys not only the words of the teaching, but also their meaning.

Thrangu Rinpoche has traveled around the world many times, visiting now over 30 countries both East and West. In these travels he has taught almost non-stop for a decade, stopping usually for less than two weeks at a single center. In this unceasing teaching, he has emphasized again and again, that when beginning to practice one must develop the right view by studying the dharma teachings with a complete and open mind. Not only has he emphasized developing the correct view, but he has encouraged all students to find an appropriate guru and actually practice the Buddhist teachings. This is not an easy path and the student may encounter discouraging times when the he or she doesn't feel like practicing any more. At these times Thrangu Rinpoche has suggested reading the spiritual biographies of the great Buddhist masters to gain encouragement to continue to practice.

It is in this light that Namo Buddha Publications feels fortunate to offer this spiritual biography of Marpa.

Thrangu Rinpoche actually gave teachings on Marpa on two different occasions—once at Samye Ling in the early 1980s and this set of teachings was translated by Ken and Katia Holmes. The

second set of teachings was given at Halifax in 1992 with Lama Yeshe Gyamtso translating. Since Rinpoche emphasized different aspects of Marpa's life, these two teachings have been combined to make this book.

Clark Johnson, Ph. D.

Chapter 1

The Life of Marpa

There are three forefathers of the Kagyu lineage: Marpa, Milarepa, and Gampopa. Marpa (1012-1097 C.E.) was very important to the lineage because he actually brought the teachings from India to Tibet. Marpa had tremendous courage and determination and he didn't consider any of the risks or difficulties involved in going to India to obtain the Buddhist teachings. He also didn't do it to become rich or famous or to achieve happiness. He did it to establish the pure Buddhist teachings in Tibet.

There were two great waves of transmissions of the *dharma* into Tibet: the "early period of translations" (Tib. *tan pa nga dar*¹) which had a few great sponsors who helped with this work of translation. But in the later wave called "the later period of translation" (Tib. *tan pa phyi dar*) there weren't any sponsors and being a part of this wave, Marpa had to rely entirely on his own motivation and determination to bring the teachings to Tibet. It was through his work that the teachings really took root in Tibet and that many people were consequently able to practice the teachings and thereby attain liberation.

The subject of this book is the life of Marpa the Translator. It is very important to understand Marpa's life because he is a special example within the tradition of the Kagyu lineage. The complete account of Marpa's life can be found in *The Life of Marpa the Translator* translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee.² However, I would like to make a few remarks. This type of biography is called a *namtar* in Tibetan which literally means "full liberation." The reason these biographies are called this is that they try to show the obstacles and impediments which the lamas encountered in the beginning, how the lamas practiced the dharma, how they overcame these obstacles, and how they relied on their own gurus. Finally, these religious biographies tell how the lamas

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

achieved complete liberation and how they were to greatly benefit others through their teaching. These biographies were not written simply to promote the reputation of the lineage lamas, rather to show the circumstances in which these teachers began and how with the limitations of their beginning, they were able to practice and attain liberation. So the function of spiritual biographies is to encourage us by showing us how these practitioners have dealt with their particular situations.

Marpa didn't become a monk like, for example, Shariputra. He was also quite an angry and arrogant person. In the beginning of his life he was extremely selfish. But at the same time he also had tremendous courage both for achieving enlightenment for himself and for helping others. He was extremely intelligent, was very diligent, and he had a great deal of faith, confidence, and devotion to the dharma. He had genuine love and compassion for other beings. The process that Marpa underwent during his training was that his defects such as his arrogance were gradually transformed into good qualities that could help other beings. In this process the qualities were expanded so that by the end of his training, his experience and realization was complete and he had become a supreme *siddha* (i.e. an enlightened being). It is through Marpa's example and teaching that this unbroken Kagyu lineage of these extraordinary instructions exist which we practice to this day.

Marpa's had extraordinary compassion which was neither *idiot compassion* or *partial compassion*. His compassion was intelligent compassion meaning that it was not limited to a small group of people. He did not focus his compassion just towards his family or towards the people living in his neighborhood, but his compassion was directed towards all those who would practice the *vajrayana* in the future. To make this possible for future generations, he engaged in acts of great hardship. Specifically, he went to India three times to receive teachings and bring them back so that people could practice these teachings in the future.

A PRAYER TO MARPA

The life of the great master Marpa in a very, very condensed form can be described in three stages. This can be found in the prayer

The Life of Marpa

composed by Khyentse Rinpoche called *The All-Accomplishing Melody*. This prayer describes the life story of Marpa in three verses. The first verse says:

*Through his great determination and courage,
he traveled many times to the holy land.*

The Holy Land refers to India. It is through Marpa's very great courage and determination, his very profound devotion, and his incredible compassion for all disciples (present and future) that he went through all the difficulties and hardships involved with three journeys to India. So this first verse refers mostly to his qualities of courage, devotion, and compassion. The second verse tells us:

*With great intelligence he saw
the essential nature of all things.*

This verse refers to the quality of the very sharp intelligence of Marpa. He brought all the teachings of the Buddha and particularly the *vajrayana* teachings with all the very deep *tantras* to Tibet. Among the *tantras* he particularly concentrated on bringing the highest *tantra*, the *Anuttarayoga* *tantra* to Tibet. He realized the meaning of these *tantras* and assimilated the meaning of these *tantra* teachings completely. Not only did he understand them, but he used them all the time, tasting the flavor of the teachings completely. These teachings were constant and direct experience for him and that is why it is said that he had great intelligence with which he could see the true nature of phenomena.³

The third verse says:

*Through great realization,
he manifested many kinds of miracles.*

What is meant by doing miracles? There are miracles that can be manifested physically, some verbally, and some mentally. Physical miracles are used to arouse faith in the mind of persons who do not have faith. Then there are miracles of speech. This means that when the person who has these powers gives instructions, his or her

disciples are automatically able to achieve what is being pointed out in the instruction. So through the lama's words, they can achieve the same state of realization as the lama. Through the miraculous power of the lama's speech, ordinary people are able to immediately assimilate the instructions so that they can accomplish the purification of the impurities, in particular the *disturbing emotions* (Skt. *kleshas*), and the realization and understanding are fully developed.

How can a lama transmit this power of realization to others with speech? It is because the lama possesses very great qualities him or herself. The lama has the qualities of great compassion, diligence, courage, and determination. It is because of this that the lama has that miraculous power to transfer realization to others. So this third verse refers to Marpa's capacity to do miracles of body, speech, and mind. These three qualities of Marpa described in the prayer are also described in more detail in the biography of Marpa.

The biography of Marpa¹ has five chapters. The first describes the events from Marpa's birth and when he encounters the dharma. The next three chapters describe his dharma activity corresponding to the three verses just given. The last chapter of the biography speaks of his passing away.

MARPA'S EARLY LIFE

Marpa was born in Tibet in the central province, which is called U which simply means "central province." There are three main areas in Tibet, U which is the central province, Zang and Kham which is in the eastern part. So he was born in the central province; in the south of this province is a place called Lhotrak. Marpa's family had three sons and he was the youngest one.

When we look at life stories of great masters, it is rather discouraging because we see examples of people who are naturally peaceful, very kind, very good, very disciplined, and we feel that we can't compare with them because we are angry and are very agitated with many disturbing emotions. So we feel that it's all right for great masters to achieve these great things, but we can't do that because we are just ordinary people. But if we practice the dharma, then little by little, through meditation we can learn how to pacify the mind

and train and discipline it. In the case of Marpa, it's really quite a different story because Marpa was a very angry person. He lived as an ordinary householder and had a family and lots and lots of children, many wives, and engaged in many different worldly activities. But it was through his tremendous determination and courage that he managed to practice the dharma and achieve realization.

As a child he was rather temperamental and was very quick to be angry. Because of his terrible temper, his family began thinking that they should do something to make him more manageable. His father thought that maybe if they made him become a monk, he might become more peaceful and self-controlled. So his father and mother decided to make him follow a religious path. At that time there was Drogmi Lotsawa (*lotsawa* is Tibetan for translator) who had been to India and brought back many texts and done many translations and was recognized in Tibet as a very special and good teacher. So Marpa was sent to him and when he met Drogmi Lotsawa, he asked him for *empowerments* and instructions. But Drogmi didn't really give him very many empowerments except that under his instruction Marpa learned the main spoken dialect of India and became quite proficient in this language. But because there wasn't a very strong karmic connection between Marpa and Drogmi, Marpa began developing a strong desire that he should go to India himself.

In these days there were a lot of translators in Tibet. Many of them were great scholars, and of course, these scholars did benefit the dharma. But generally speaking these translators were mostly interested in translating texts on the arts and sciences such as astrology, Sanskrit medicine and so forth. These were, of course, helpful the student, but not as helpful as what Marpa translated because there were few translators who were translating the vajrayana texts from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Marpa's translations were distinguished by the fact that the texts that he received and translated were previously unknown and unavailable to the Tibetan practitioner. Unknown were texts such as explanations of the *generating stage* and *completion stage* of the *Guhyasamaja* tantra and the *Hevajra* tantra and the teachings connected to the dharma protectors. Marpa relied upon teachers that no one in Tibet had heard of and from these teachers he received and translated teaching

which no one had ever received before. The result of his work is that we have an unbroken lineage of these teachings.

MARPA GOES TO INDIA

The second chapter of the original text describes how Marpa went to India three times. The journey from Tibet to India was not like traveling under modern conditions. It was an incredibly difficult and arduous journey. First of all the roads were very poor and it was always possible to meet wild animals on the road. Then in the Tibetan part of the journey, one had to go through very high passes which were extremely cold. As one got closer to India, one would have to go through incredibly hot jungles with many diseases, parasites, and poisonous snakes. One had to ford very wild rivers and there was the constant danger of meeting robbers who could easily kill you.

But Marpa didn't consider any of these difficulties at all. He went on this journey, not once, but three times. He was able to do this entirely because of his great courage and determination. His courage came from his tremendous devotion to the dharma. He had great faith in the teachings and what gave him his determination was his great compassion for others who would need the teachings.

MARPA'S FIRST JOURNEY

When Marpa wanted to go to India for the first time, he went to see his parents and said, "I've decided to go to India. Please would you kindly give me my share of the inheritance so I can convert it into gold and take it with me to India." His parents and brothers tried to dissuade him saying, "There isn't really any point in going to India. We don't see why you should go there and become a translator. If you want to practice the dharma, why not stay here and do in Tibet? Also if you can't practice, then why not become a farmer and do something useful?" So they argued and argued and tried to talk Marpa into not going to India, but nothing would do. Marpa had an unflinching resolve to go to India and that was that.

The first time Marpa went to India, he stayed in Nepal for three years. The reason for this was primarily that, the change in

temperature and humidity in India was unbearable to Tibetans unless they gradually acclimatized themselves to it. So Marpa remained in Nepal for three years, learning more Sanskrit, some more Indian languages, and getting used to the climate.

There were also two other Tibetans from the same area where Marpa lived who were to travel with Marpa to India. But in the end they were talked out of going by their families. So Marpa finally was left on his own. When Marpa was quite far from his home, he met up with somebody else who was travelling to India and they traveled together. So Marpa started traveling with Nyö Lotsawa and on the way to India they went through Nepal. On the first day that they were in Nepal there was a whole crowd of people and these people told them, "If you want to get yourself a little bit of food and drink, just go where there's a crowd." Marpa asked, "But what's going on?" and the people answered "Today there are two disciples of Naropa from Pontengpa who have come here to give teachings." Just hearing the name of Naropa triggered something very strong inside Marpa. It awoke his subconscious memory because in his past lives he had had a connection with Naropa. Marpa immediately felt tremendous faith and devotion and he had a very strong urge to go immediately to the place where Naropa's disciples were teaching. He said to his friend Nyö Lotsawa, "Let's go there and receive teachings and find out what is going on."

The two lamas named Chitherpa and Paindapa from Pontengpa were going to give teachings on the Guhyasamaja tantric teaching. But some of the Nepalese saw Marpa and Nyö Lotsawa and said, "Here come the Tibetans, so today we won't receive any profound teachings or empowerments because Tibetans are rather stupid. They are like cows and don't understand the language or anything. What a bother that they came." But Nyö Lotsawa could understand Nepalese and became very upset when he heard the people calling them cows. At the teachings Nyö Lotsawa had been so hurt that he turned his back to the teacher and recited *mantras* all the way through the teaching which is very disrespectful).

On the next day, Marpa said, "Let's go back today and receive some more teachings." But Nyö Lotsawa said, "No, I'm not going to bother. They said we were cows, so I'm not going to bother if I'm a cow." But Marpa went back alone and, in fact, received many

teachings and empowerments. After the teachings Marpa went up to these two students of Naropa to find out what good teachers could be found in India and to talk about Naropa because he felt a very great urge to find out more about Naropa. The two lamas told him a great deal about Naropa's special qualities which kindled Marpa's desire to go and see this great lama even more. Marpa felt the inner call to see Naropa and he decided to ignore the advice of the lamas who said to him, "Maybe you should stay here a little while accustom yourself to the heat, and once you've been in Nepal a while, then you can travel to India." But the call of *karma*¹ was so strong that Marpa decided to go to India as soon as possible to find Naropa.

Marpa left with his companion Nyö Lotsawa and they embarked on this difficult and arduous journey, but eventually they reached India. From all the conversations with the Nepalese and with the lamas he met in India Marpa knew he wanted to meet that very great pandita and realized being Naropa. He said to Nyö Lotsawa, "You know that everyone says he is the greatest, so why don't we go and see him?" However, Nyö Lotsawa didn't have any particular connection with Naropa from his past lives, so he said, "Oh, this Naropa is quite good and I've heard good things about him too. But you know what happened to his teacher Tilopa who went really wild and is living like a wild yogi. Naropa is turning into the same thing and I'm not keen on that. Besides in India you can find lots of very great teachers and *panditas* all over the place. So I don't think I have any particular desire to go find Naropa. I can meet good teachers anywhere." So they decided each to go their own way and find their own lamas.

Eventually, Marpa was able to meet Naropa and Naropa was extremely happy to see him and said right away, "You are the one who was predicted by my own teacher (Tilopa) and I name you 'Marpa, The Intelligence of Dharma' (Marpa Chokyi Lodro). In the future you will bring the Buddha's teachings to Tibet." So Naropa being very, very happy to meet Marpa looked after him and treated him very kindly. He first gave him the three tantric teachings connected with the Hevajra tantra. One was the *Tatnig* tantra, the other the *spiritual songs* (Skt. *dohas*) and the third was the *Samputa* tantra. So Marpa spent about a year studying and learning these three tantras.

After the year was over, Marpa took a break and went to the neighboring town. There he met Nyö Lotsawa and they quite naturally talked about what they had been doing for the past year. Nyö Lotsawa asked, "What did you study?" and Marpa replied that he had studied the Hevajra tantras. They talked quite a lot about the Hevajra teachings and Marpa realized that he understood more than his friend. But then Nyö Lotsawa told him that the Hevajra Tantra was already being practiced in Tibet and since it was already there, they should really try to learn the Guhyasamaja tantra which is part of the collection of "father tantras."² Nyö Lotsawa said, "If you know how to practice this tantra, then you can gain complete control over all the energies in your body, to the extent that you can bring all the subtle energies of your body to the tip of your fingers.³ Once you can do that, then you can go back having reached Buddhahood meaning that this tantra leads to easy realization. As Nyö went on and on talking about the Guhyasamaja teachings, Marpa realized that he didn't know anything about it. So he went straight back to Naropa and told him what had happened and begged him to give him this teaching as quickly as possible.

When Naropa heard his request, he said that the greatest teacher of the Guhyasamaja teaching was Yeshe Nyingpo (Skt. *Jnanagharba*) who lives in western India. So Marpa should go and see him and request the teachings. He then told Marpa that he wouldn't meet any difficulties on the way, but when he got there he should very hard to master this practice. So Marpa visited yeshe nyingpo and was able to receive the empowerments and all the instructions on the Guhyasamaja tantra. He also received the empowerments and instructions on the *kriya tantra* and the *yoga tantra* from Yeshe Nyingpo.

On Marpa's return to Naropa he stopped at a temple on the road and met Nyö Lotsawa again. So the two friends started talking about their studies and Nyö Lotsawa asked, "What have you been doing lately?" They began discussing this *father tantra* of Guhyasamaja and it turned out again that Marpa knew all the teachings more thoroughly than Nyö Lotsawa. Then Nyö Lotsawa said, "Oh well, that's really good. But you know the Guhyasamaja teachings are already known in Tibet. What we really need in Tibet is something from the *mother tantras* called the Mahamaya practice which we

don't have in Tibet. This is a teaching which talks about the static aspect of the *subtle channels* located in the body and the dynamic aspect of the *subtle energies* that circulate in the body and how *bodhicitta* is within the whole system. These are very profound instructions and this is what we should try to bring to Tibet." Then, of course, Marpa realized that he didn't know anything about the Mahamaya teachings. When he returned to Naropa and Naropa asked, "Well, how did it go. Did you get the Guhyasamaja teachings from Lama Yeshe Nyinpo?" And Marpa said, "Yes, I indeed received all these wonderful teachings. Everything went very well until I met my friend on the way and he told me that we really need to take the Mahamaya teachings to Tibet. So please give these to me."

Naropa had sent Marpa to study the Guhyasamaja with another teacher because he wanted Marpa to get that particular line of blessing from that teacher. Naropa could have given the teachings himself, but he wanted that particular transmission. He thought that later on he could always give other transmissions to Marpa if the need be. Concerning the Mahamaya teachings, he said to Marpa, "Well, the one who is really the master of this teaching is Kukuripa who lives on an island in a lake of poison. He is really the master of the mother tantra so you must go and see him to receive this teaching."

Before Marpa left to go south to see Kukuripa, Naropa went to a cemetery with him that had several *yogis* living there. He pointed his finger at them and said, "Marpa is going to receive teachings from the teacher who lives on an island in a lake of poison. I want you to protect him from all dangers on his journey." One of the *yogis* stepped forward and said, "I promise to protect him from poisonous snakes" while another said, "I promise to protect him from wild animals" while the third said, "I promise to protect him from all the evil influences that come from non-human beings." Then just before Marpa left, Naropa advised him that when he arrived, he would find the *mahasiddha* Kukuripa and warned him that Kukuripa would look quite strange all covered with hair and looking almost like a monkey with the lower part of his body being a rather horrible color. And he said, "Don't be surprised because he often shows himself in all kinds of strange forms. So when you

arrive there, don't have any doubts. Think that he is the guru that you are looking for and ask him for the Mahamaya teaching and tell him you were sent by your guru." Then Naropa gave him a letter to give to the teacher when he arrived there.

On the way Marpa encountered many hardships and difficulties. But he prayed to Naropa with great faith and somehow managed to deal with all these troubles. Finally when he arrived on the island, he saw somebody sitting against a tree with hair covering his whole body was not saying a word. Marpa said, "Hello, who is there? Is that Kukuripa?" Then Kukuripa answered, "What's that flat-nosed man?" meaning a Tibetan who have Mongolian features. "Where do you come from, flat-nose? Why did you take all that trouble to come here? Who are you looking for anyway? I've never heard of Kukuripa and I've never seen him." Marpa was taken aback, but he couldn't see any other person there, so he decided that this hairy person must really be Kukuripa. As instructed by Naropa, he went up to that weird creature and said, "I've been sent by Naropa my guru to ask you to give me the Mahamaya teachings, so please give them to me" and gave him the letter from Naropa.

Then Marpa said, "I've been sent by the great *pandita* Naropa to receive the teaching from you." Kukuripa then replied, "Great *pandita* Naropa? What are you talking about? He's a joke of a *pandita*. You make me laugh. He doesn't know anything. He has no experience of meditation. As for the teaching of Mahamaya, just ask him to give it to you. But leave me alone. Why did you come and disturb me anyway? Just go and see your joke of a *pandita* and ask him for the teaching."

After Kukuripa has said this and a lot of other terrible things about Naropa, he later confessed, "No, in fact, Naropa is a tremendous teacher. He is a great *mahapandita* and a realized being. And, of course, he could give you the Mahamaya teachings, but since I have a special transmission of this teaching, that is why he sent you to me." And then he gave Marpa the complete transmission of that Mahamaya teaching.

WHAT MARPA STUDIED

The vajrayana basically consists of two aspects: one is the aspect of *means* (Skt. *upaya*) which emphasizes the stage of practice called the *generation stage* and the other aspect is knowledge or insight (Skt. *prajna*) which emphasizes the *completion stage*. The tantras can be divided according to whether their emphasis is on the means or the knowledge aspect. The tantras emphasizing the aspect of the method are called the father tantras and those emphasizing the knowledge aspect are called the mother tantras. What Marpa initially received from Naropa was the instruction in the mother tantra, particularly in the most profound of the mother tantras known as the Hevajra tantra. He received the empowerments, the instructions for practice, as well as the transmission and explanation of the original teaching of this practice given by the Buddha which is called the root tantra. The explanatory tantra that goes with the Hevajra tantra together with Naropa's explanation is now called the "two examinations" and the explanatory tantra is called the "vajra tent" or the "dakini vajra tantra." Marpa received this tradition of Hevajra in its complete entirety.

Then Naropa he requested instruction in the father tantra. He asked Naropa for teachings of that most essential father tantra called the Guhyasamaja. At that time, Naropa said that it would be better if he received this from the pandita Jnanagarbha who used this tantra in his own practice and had received a special tradition of this practice. So Marpa received the Guhyasamaja from Jnanagarbha as well as another mother tantra. In one of Marpa's *spiritual songs* he says, "I received the most profound of mother tantras, Hevajra, and its essence, Mahamaya." Marpa was referring to the Mahamaya tantra as the essence of mother tantra that he had received from Kukkuriipa.

All these teachings of the Hevajra, Guhyasamaja, and Mahamaya that Marpa received on his first journey to India were the extremely profound instructions of the highest Anuttarayoga tantra. Marpa received what was called the uncommon transmission which has the two aspects of practice: the *path of liberation* also called the path of *mahamudra* and the *path of means* also called the Six Yogas of Naropa. The path of liberation became the main meditation

practice of the Kagyu lineage and he received this from Maitripa in accordance with a prophecy by Naropa. While Marpa was receiving the extensive instruction in mahamudra from Maitripa, he also received instruction in a tantra called *Praises Sung as Song*. He also received transmissions for these spiritual songs of the *siddhas* such as Saraha, Shavari, and so forth.

Marpa first received these numerous instructions and then he actually put them into practice through meditation. Having experienced these instructions in meditation, he then investigated them further by cutting through all his doubts and hesitations about the teachings.

During this time Marpa practiced the Six Yogas of Naropa, in particular, the practice of *tummo* and through this practice of *tummo*, he developed experiences of bliss, clarity, and non-thought to such an extent that at one point he didn't move for seven days. In brief, he assimilated these practices completely and practiced them very well.

Chapter 2

Marpa Meets Maitripa

The next teacher that Marpa met was the great vajrayana master Maitripa. From Maitripa Marpa received the mahamudra instructions. Marpa had already received the mahamudra instructions from Naropa and so one may wonder why he wanted to receive them a second time. He did this because Naropa and Maitripa represented two different streams of transmission of the mahamudra teachings. Naropa had what is called the "short transmission" because he received these teachings directly from Tilopa who received them directly from Vajradhara.⁹ Maitripa had what were called the "longer transmission" because he received these teachings from Nagarjuna who received them from the mahasiddha Saraha. So Marpa received these two streams of transmission: the short or near one and the longer one.

Maitripa was staying in a monastery in a very isolated place called the "Mountain that Looked like Blazing Fire." The road to it was extremely difficult to travel so Marpa met with tremendous difficulties on the way. Some people he met on the way told him, "You'd better give up because you'll never get there alive." But Marpa answered, "I'm not going there to have a good time. I'm also not going to become rich or famous. I'm going there to find the precious dharma teachings and even if I die on the way, then I will know that it was for the right purpose." So without hesitation Marpa just carried on and finally reached Maitripa.

When Marpa met Maitripa, he requested the mahamudra instructions which Maitripa gave him out of his great compassion. Maitripa had received these teachings from Shamaripa who had received them from Saraha who originated them. Maitripa then gave these instructions to Marpa, particularly the instructions on the realization of the true nature of mind.

In addition to the mahamudra teachings which Maitripa had received from Saraha's pupil, Maitripa gave Marpa the teachings on two more tantras. He gave him the tantra *Chanting the Names of Manjushri* which concerns mahamudra.¹⁰ He also gave him the tantra which is commentary by the Buddha on the mahamudra. In addition to this he gave Marpa the *Spiritual Songs of Saraha*.¹¹ These are very beautiful, inspired spiritual songs in which Saraha gives instructions on the how to gain realization of the true nature of mind. By receiving all of these instructions, Marpa was able to eliminate all doubts and misunderstandings concerning the mahamudra so that he understood the mahamudra just as it was.

Before leaving Maitripa, Maitripa sang Marpa the *Song of Twelve Instructions* which is discussed in the next chapter. After receiving these instructions from Maitripa, Marpa returned to Naropa. Naropa then instructed him to go and receive teachings from the wisdom dakini at the funeral ground of Sosadvipa. This wisdom dakini was called the one with the bone ornaments.¹² Naropa told Marpa to receive the empowerment and the instructions of Catuhipitha (Tib. Dorje Dentze) from her. So after he had received these, he had received five main teachings in all: the Hevajra, the Guhyasamaja, the Mahamaya, the remote transmission of the mahamudra from Maitripa, and now the teachings and instructions on Dorje Dentze. One might note that these five teachings were given to Marpa in the "usual manner" which means that although they were very, very profound teachings, there was nothing really exceptional about the way in which the teachings were given or received.

TEACHINGS FROM NAROPA

Marpa also received some very special teachings and very special transmissions from Naropa. Naropa also received the teachings of Chakrasamvara from Naropa as is discussed in *The Rain of Wisdom* (page 130). When Naropa gave Marpa the Chakrasamvara empowerment and instructions, he sang Naropa a spiritual song distilling this moment. Then Marpa replied in another spontaneous spiritual song to Naropa requesting the full cycle of instructions on

Chakrasamvara including the empowerment, the actual tantric teaching, the commentary on the teaching, and all the meditation instructions connected with this practice. In answer to this request, Naropa gave him the full empowerment and extremely detailed teachings on the tantra, and the commentary on the tantra. But throughout all these teachings Naropa emphasized the practice aspect. Then Naropa gave him the four transmissions that came from Tilopa, which are also called the Six Yogas of Naropa.

Finally, Naropa gave Marpa the mahamudra instructions. He described these mahamudra instructions in terms of the "naturalness" of mind. This means that when we meditate, we are not trying to develop a new mind that we didn't have before or to create a new mind with all new qualities. The purpose of meditation is not to change our old mind into a new one, or even to eliminate whatever we had before, but it is to leave mind just as it was initially. So this "naturalness" is the same as the innate intelligence that is within the mind. The mahamudra instructions teach us to recognize this natural state of the mind.

So Marpa received all these instructions. He then meditated and practiced them and achieved full realization. In particular, Marpa mastered the practice of *subtle heat* or *tummo* in Tibetan so that he constantly had the experience of great bliss, great clarity, and non-thought simultaneously which is the result of the highest level of realization. In this way Marpa became extremely accomplished and developed many positive qualities. For instance, when he sat down to meditate, he could do this for seven days without moving at all. He was in such a state of happiness that whether it was day or night, he was constantly immersed in a state of great joy. When he got to this point of constant meditation, he remembered the twelve years that he had spent in India and Nepal. He realized that during these twelve years, he had been able to receive a great number of empowerments, teachings, tantras, commentaries and instructions he has mastered. He saw that he had mastered the literal understanding of words. He had also achieved the understanding of the meaning of these teachings. He had also found what he wanted to achieve through practice. So he felt that he had gotten to the point where he couldn't have any regrets about anything that had happened during these twelve years because he had fully satisfied his search for

teaching and realization. He now felt he didn't need to look to anyone else to teach others or improve his meditation.

Not only had he achieved what he wanted but his provision of gold was completely exhausted. So he thought that he should return to Tibet and get more gold to return to India to complete any missing teachings. He also wanted to check up on everything he'd previously learned so he would be able to give all the teachings that he had received from Naropa and Maitripa in Tibet. His greatest wish was to make it possible for these teachings to flourish and spread in Tibet.

Then Marpa assembled all of his companions and fellow disciples who were studying with Naropa and told them to prepare for a celebration and a feast before he went. Whatever bits of gold that were left were put together to make an offering to Naropa. So they had this last party with all the dharma friends and the guru. Marpa thought that he had come to India and was able to meet all the finest mahasiddhas and thus to receive all the teachings of the Buddha through the great tantras and their commentaries. He was able to become a proficient translator of Sanskrit and was able to discover their real meaning. He was lucky not to have any troubles with his health or had any great injury. So he said, "Today, I feel a joy like I've never known before. And now it is time to go back to Tibet."

Then Marpa composed a spiritual song for Naropa:

Naropa, you are a very fortunate person because through the amazing amount of virtue you must have gathered in other lives, you were able to receive the direct teachings from Tilopa. Then you had the courage to go through twelve very difficult ordeals.¹³ Then in one instant, you were able to realize the true nature of everything. So you are truly a wonderful being, a great mahasiddha. As for me, I am only a petty translator from Tibet. But still I'm fortunate enough to have the good karma not just to meet you, but also to receive great teachings from you. I received the Hevajra teaching, the Mahamaya teachings, and particularly the teaching which is like the essence of all the others, the Chakrasamvara teaching.

Marpa continued his spiritual song:

Through untainted meditation, I have been able to meditate without moving for seven days. I have gained an understanding of the *prana*, this very subtle energy which is carried by the subtle airs in the body. Because this prana has become very pure, it doesn't circulate just through my *right and left channels*, but now goes directly through the *central channel*. It is like going through space itself. And because of this, I now experience the great bliss, the great clarity, and the great non-thought of mind. Also now all illusions of the mind dissolve naturally into the *dharmakaya* and all outer appearances are just like conjured illusions that disappear within mahamudra. When I recognized the true nature of my mind, it was like finding a very, very old friend that I haven't seen for a long time. Having realized my own mind, when I have experiences, the experiences are completely ineffable, beyond anything I could express, anything I could even imagine. It is like the experience of a dumb man who is having a dream, but can never tell anyone about his dream because he cannot speak. Through whose kindness did I get all this? It was through your kindness, Naropa. I hope that you may still look after me with such great kindness in the future.

In answer to Marpa's spiritual song, Naropa replied in a very short song of advice:

Marpa, you should never allow yourself to be dominated by the eight worldly concerns. You should never let your mind think in terms of subject and object, of "I" and "other." You should never put other people down or criticize them in an aggressive way. But you should always study and reflect as much as you can, because this will act like a lamp to remove all darkness. This

study and reflection is the path that leads to liberation, so always maintain your studies. And as for your relationship to the guru, so far you have relied very closely on your guru and you have respected him and served him well. And as you did before, you should always do so in the future. Always rely on your guru.

Then Naropa concluded his spiritual song with these words.

Never forget that your mind is like a jewel. It is a jewel because it is the source of all happiness and all goodness. Know that what I have told you is in your mind and never forget it. Never leave this knowledge unused. Always use it, always be aware of it.

Having received all this advice, Marpa took his leave from Naropa and promised that he would come back to India one more time.

Marpa's Return to Tibet

At the end of his first journey to India, Marpa had been a total of twelve years in India and Nepal. He had mastered Sanskrit and several other Indian and Nepali languages. He had received the empowerments, transmissions, and instructions for a variety of tantras. He had not only studied these teachings, but he had also practiced them. Not only had he practiced them, but he had also developed the signs of real accomplishment such as being able to develop inner heat in his subtle heat meditation. Pleased with what he had accomplished, Marpa decided to return to Tibet and went on the same route through Nepal which he had taken to go to India.

Chapter 3

The Song of the Twelve Instructions

Before Marpa was to return to Naropa in his first journey, Maitripa gave him one last instruction in the form of a spiritual song. This song gives twelve points which embody all the *key instructions* of mahamudra meditation. These instructions are called the *Twelve Points of Instruction* and when Marpa heard this spiritual song, he immediately realized how beneficial these instructions were for him and felt a great affinity for these teachings.

The first verse of the song consists of two lines:

*1. O son, if the root of faith is not firm.
The root of nonduality will not be firm.*

The first point is that the root of all practice is faith and this faith must be very firm and stable. If this faith is not strong, then everything else which comes out of the practice will not be good either. So faith is the root of practice. To use an analogy if the root of a tree is weak, then the trunk and branches and leaves will not be strong. It is said that the root of the understanding of *emptiness*¹⁴ (Skt. *shunyata*) or the understanding of non-dual nature is faith. If our faith is not strong, we cannot begin to understand the true nature of emptiness.

We can infer from these lines of Maitripa's that the opposite is also true, if the root of faith is firm, the insight into nonduality will be firm. Faith here refers to faith in the three jewels of the Buddha, dharma and *sangha* as they are presented in the vajrayana. The Buddha is the Completely Awakened One who teaches the dharma. The dharma in this case refers to the tantras, particularly the Anuttarayoga tantra which includes the father, mother, and non-dual tantras. The sangha in this case is the lineage of Indian and Tibetan siddhas who having practiced the instructions have realized their

meaning. The point is that without firm faith in the three jewels of the vajrayana, the insight which is the experience of the meaning of the vajrayana cannot be attained.

The second verse deals with the need for compassion:

2. *If you do not develop unbiased compassion,
The two form kayas will not be attained.*

The second point is that we should develop compassion. If we have not developed compassion at the time of the ultimate fruition of Buddhahood, there will be no spontaneous manifestation of the two form kayas (the *sambhogakaya* and the *nirmanakaya*) to benefit other beings.¹³ So we should develop strong compassion without any partiality or bias.

The source of enlightened activity is compassion. The cause for Buddhahood is the two form bodies created by the compassion which has been generated by the Buddha during his training. In this case, the two form bodies are the supreme *nirmanakaya* and the *sambhogakaya*. The *nirmanakaya* helps beings with impure perception and the *sambhogakaya* helps beings with pure perception.

As ordinary practitioners we have impure perception and must engage in activity that is beneficial for others, rather than the extraordinary compassion that is totally without bias "I" and "others." Compassion without bias is practiced with beings with pure perception and compassion based on the recognition everyone without distinction wishes to be happy and to avoid suffering. Therefore everyone is equally fit to be an object of compassion.

The third verse contains the third instruction:

3. *If the three prajnas are not practiced,
Realization will not arise.*

The third instruction is that we should train in developing spiritual understanding (Skt. *prajna*). If we don't have this spiritual understanding, we will not be able to gain realization of the true nature of phenomena, the most important point of the whole practice. We should try to develop spiritual understanding as much

as possible. This is developed in three ways: through study, through contemplation, and through meditation.

To develop a genuine realization it is necessary to first develop stable meditation or *samadhi*. To do this we have to train in the three aspects of supreme knowledge called the three prajnas. Without doing this it is impossible to give birth to genuine realization. The term *prajna* literally means "supreme" or "full understanding." There are, of course, many different kinds of knowledge. For example, some are very knowledgeable in ways of harming others such as hunting and this is not what is meant by the three prajnas. Then there are individuals who are very knowledgeable in the mundane sciences such as geology but this also is not *prajna* as is meant here. What is meant here is the type of knowledge that is of endless benefit for oneself and others, that is, the knowledge to help sentient beings achieve liberation. This is the *prajna* or supreme knowledge of the dharma.

These three prajnas are hearing, conceptualizing, and meditating. The first *prajna* of "hearing" means being exposed to the words and instructions of the Buddha and the Buddhist scholars and siddhas. The second *prajna* of contemplation means actually thinking about what has been learned. Finally, the third *prajna* of meditation is the actual application of what has been understood through contemplation in meditation and this leads to realization.

The fourth verse reads:

4. *If you do not attend the jetsun guru,
The two siddhis will not be attained.*

The fourth instruction is that we should rely on our jetsun which is our root guru. Without reliance on a guru, it is impossible to discover the true aspects of spiritual accomplishment. This means, in the short term, we will not be able to achieve ordinary spiritual accomplishments and, in the long term, we will not be able to achieve final realization. The reason it is impossible to achieve realization without the help of a guru is that while practicing on the path, we have all sorts of experiences and impressions. Without someone explaining what is happening and how to react to these different things going on in the mind, we can easily go down an

incorrect path. We can't expect to find spiritual guidance from books or from other ordinary persons. We have to have a guru who has enough realization and insight to guide us through all these experiences so that we stay on the right path. With the help of a proper guru, we will be able to achieve all the aspects of spiritual accomplishment.

The two siddhis are the two results of correct practice which are the supreme and common siddhis. The supreme siddhi is the full awakening which is the abandonment of ignorance and the disturbing emotions.

In addition to the supreme siddhi of enlightenment there are lesser results called the common siddhis. These are extrasensory perception, miraculous powers, and the ability to deal skillfully with a variety of situations. To attain either siddhi it is absolutely necessary to rely upon an authentic guru. We can attain the result of practice only if we rely on a qualified teacher and receive the appropriate instruction and put these instructions into practice. We cannot attain anything by simply practicing under our own power. Nor can we practice effectively based on information obtained from books. Even if the book is absolutely correct, it is still likely that we will misunderstand what the book says or develop doubt or confusion about its meaning.

The fifth verse says:

*5. If you have not cut the root of mind,
Do not carelessly amend an awareness.*

The fifth instruction is that we should guard our mind very carefully. When we begin meditation practice, we are overpowered by negativity and caught going hither and thither by our anger, our jealousy, our desire, and our ignorance. So we have to keep our mind in check. The best way to do this is to go straight to the root of the mind, which is the understanding of the nature of the mind. Once the nature of the mind is actually understood, then the other problems dissolve. So in the beginning we shouldn't allow ourselves to be pulled about by the various mental movements, but try to keep watch over our mind.

There are instructions in meditation where we are told to simply relax the mind and not engage in any effort whatsoever. However, this instruction can only be effective after we have already cut the root of mind. Cutting the root of mind means recognizing the mind's nature, that is, to cut through all doubts about the nature of the mind. So if we have totally experienced the mind's nature, we will have no fear and no doubt, and then relaxation of mind is possible. But until that point, if we simply relax, we will just wander further into the disturbing emotions and ignorance. So the point of these two lines is that until we have cut through the root of mind, it is necessary to engage in continual mindfulness and awareness.

The sixth verse is:

*6. If you cannot strike phenomena with mudra,
You should not retreat into great bliss.*

The sixth instruction concerns the experiences in meditation. In meditation there are many different experiences including pleasant feelings of well being and bliss. The instruction is that when we are beginners, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be carried away by this great feeling of happiness. This is because at this stage we haven't realized emptiness yet, and therefore will not be able to integrate this experience of bliss into our practice. If we become attached by this feeling of bliss, then there is a great risk that it will become an obstacle to our practice.

These lines refer to the fact that, at some point, our mind must come rest in an experience of bliss which is the total pacification of all the disturbing emotions. For this to occur, all experience has to be sealed with the recognition of the emptiness of all experience. The term *mudra* here means "seal." "To strike phenomena with mudra," means to seal all phenomena with the recognition of its emptiness.

The first six instructions emphasize what should be practiced. The next verses deal with what should be abandoned. The seventh verse is:

*7. If thoughts of desire arise,
You should act like a joyful elephant.*

The seventh instruction concerns attachment. In general, we should avoid having excessive attachment or involvement with outer objects or inner experiences of meditation. The way to deal with the feeling of attachment when it arises is not to stop the thought forcibly, nor to follow it either. Rather we should remain immersed in non-conceptualization, that is, not creating any particular thoughts about it.

A good practitioner is not usually troubled by attachment or fixation, but sometimes through force of habit, thoughts of attachment or fixation arise. In this situation, Maitripa says "Act as a joyful elephant" with the term elephant signifying tremendous strength, and more specifically, to the power of samadhi. So the joyful elephant means that we should engage in that very strong and unshakable samadhi which vanquishes these thoughts. This leads to the eighth verse which is:

*8. If occasionally the kleshas arise,
Look at the mind and meditate without distraction.*

The eighth instruction is not to be overpowered by negative emotions or kleshas. When any negative emotion arises, we shouldn't allow ourselves to be overpowered or carried away by them. Instead, we should remain in a state of meditation without distraction. The way to deal with these kleshas is to look directly at their essence. If we can look straight at the essence of the negative emotions, they will automatically disappear. So we shouldn't be distracted or carried away by negativity.

When practitioners engage in the practice of extraordinarily profound dharma, they become capable of gradually decreasing the power of the kleshas and gradually removing ignorance. But while that process is occurring, the emotional obscurations or kleshas will still arise through force of habit which has been accruing over beginningless time. Sometimes the practitioner will be able to cope with the kleshas and sometimes not.

When the practitioner cannot abandon the kleshas, one of two things can happen. He or she will either experience tremendous anxiety or fear about the presence of the klesha or he or she might

simply dive in and follow the obscuration wherever it leads. Maitripa's advice is to not to follow nor be seduced by the klesha nor to fear it and treat it as an enemy. The remedy is to look at the nature of the mind which is experiencing the klesha and recognize that the klesha is simply an expression of the mind. We should look at the nature of the mind and try to determine the characteristics of that mind. By engaging in this type of examination, the klesha will be naturally pacified.

The ninth verse is:

*9. If the mind is harmed by unfavorable conditions,
Practice the four abhishekas continually.*

The ninth instruction concerns difficulties, troubles, and physical problems in meditation. We might feel unwell, have some great problem, or feel extremely negative. When this happens, we should either use our *yidam* or our *guru yoga* practice and take the four empowerments (Skt. *abhishekas*). The first empowerment of body is called the vase empowerment. The second empowerment of speech is called the secret empowerment. The third empowerment of mind is called the jnana empowerment. The fourth empowerment is called the understanding of the true nature of phenomena. So whenever we feel we are at a dead end and everything is very difficult, we should take these four empowerments and then we will feel our mind and the pure mind of the guru or yidam have become completely mixed and inseparably in us. Doing this, we will find that these difficulties can be solved and they gradually disappear.

Even when a practitioner has a stable practice there may still be situations where we are suddenly disturbed by something. We might be very happy which will distract us to the point where we are not able to practice. Or things might become very unpleasant and we may begin to suffer so much that we can't practice normally. When these impediments occur, that is the time that we take the four empowerments. This consists of visualizing our root guru in front of us in space and visualizing white light rays coming from his or her forehead, purifying the obscurations of body and bestowing upon us the vase empowerment. Then from the guru's throat come rays of red light which strike and enter our throat, purifying obscurations of

speech and granting us the secret empowerment. Then from the guru's heart come rays of blue light which strike us and enter our body at the center of the heart granting us the wisdom empowerment. Then from the same three places come rays of light of these same three colors which strike and enter the same three places of our body all at once. At this time we should think that we have received the transmission or pointing-out instruction of the fourth empowerment which purifies obscurations effecting body, speech, and mind. We should think that as a result of this empowerment, we have attained the realization of the true nature of reality (Skt. *dharmata*). This practice will cause the obstacles to our practice to be dispelled. This also means that they probably won't arise but, if they do, it won't be a big deal.

The tenth verse is:

*10. If kleshas arise in your being,
Remember the guru's instructions.*

The tenth instruction is that we shouldn't let ourselves be dominated by disturbing emotions whenever they crop up. We must remember that these disturbing emotions are marked by emptiness and we should not allow them to take over, always keeping them in check. If we find that a negative emotion is getting very strong, we should try to remember very clearly the instructions of our guru.

Whenever a klesha arises, if we can directly recognize its nature, then it is self-pacified without posing any problem. But even experienced practitioners will still find that sometimes no matter how hard they try, they can't seal the klesha which has arisen with suchness. The practitioner can't embrace it with emptiness, and finds him or herself under the power of anger or attachment or ignorance. In this situation, the remedy is to bring to mind the actual instructions on the antidote for this particular klesha or to remember the general meditation instructions of the guru. The point is that as long as we can bring these instructions to mind, they will pacify the kleshas. If we don't remember them, then we won't be able to pacify the kleshas. This brings us to the eleventh verse:

*11. If you do not supplicate one-pointedly,
How can you fulfill the intentions of the holy ones?*

The eleventh instruction is to pray to our guru with perfect concentration. It is necessary to pray to our guru and all the great masters to receive their blessings so that we can integrate this blessing within our being. If we do not receive this blessing, then we will not be able to develop all their qualities and integrate these qualities within us. To develop all these qualities we must pray with full concentration to our guru and to the lamas of our lineage praying that all their qualities can arise within us.¹⁶

Fulfilling the intentions of the holy ones means to actually generate in our mind, the same realization that the root and lineage gurus have. To actually bring this about we must first generate a genuine faith and strong devotion in the root and lineage gurus. If we supplicate one-pointedly, then somehow their realization is transferred to us. Without devotion, this transferring process can't occur. And so that is what is being pointed out here.

The twelfth verse is:

*12. If you do not meditate in the union of creation and completion,
How can you realize the inseparability of samsara and nirvana?*

The twelfth instruction relates to yidam meditation.¹⁷ There are two stages of meditation: the development stage (Skt. *utpattikrama*) and the completion stage (Skt. *sampannakrama*). But these two stages have to be practiced simultaneously. While doing visualization practice, we must at the same time do the completion stage practice. If not practiced simultaneously, we will not be able to realize the inseparability of present existence and liberation, that is, of *samsara* and *nirvana*. We will not be able to realize that within *samsara* there is the realization of the ultimate true nature of phenomena.

To realize the inseparability of *samsara* and *nirvana*, it is necessary to remove the foundation of the continual production of kleshas. This root is the fixation and strong belief in the reality of ordinary appearances which causes an impure outlook. To cut through the process of appearances, we must correctly identify, instead of identifying with our impure projection of our own mind

and the world into that of conceiving of oneself in the form of a yidam. This process is the development stage of yidam practice. However, simply conceiving of oneself in the form of a yidam is not sufficient because we might develop the idea that the yidam is an actual being with its own mind and personality. We might also begin to believe that the yidam is pleased by the offerings and praises we make to it. So it is important to cut through this misconception that the yidam has any inherent existence or that the yidam is some kind of god or goddess to be propitiated. We recognize that visualization is totally insubstantial in the completion stage.

The point is that in order to attain the realization of the inseparability of samsara and nirvana it is necessary that our meditation to include both the sacred outlook of the generation stage and the recognition of the insubstantiality of that sacredness. So these were the twelve instructions of Maitripa to Marpa. There is one more verse:

13. *This is a vajra song of twelve instructions.
Remembering these makes thirteen.*

These are the twelve instructions given by Maitripa to which he added one more point: always keep the twelve points in mind. And then Maitripa said to Marpa, "If these thirteen points can be with you all the time, in the future you will definitely achieve the thirteenth *bodhisatva level* (which is Buddhahood).

The point of the last two lines is that the implementation of these twelve instructions depend completely upon remembering the instructions, with uninterrupted mindfulness and awareness. So the thirteenth verse runs through the other twelve verses and therefore is not enumerated separately. In other words, mindfulness is the basis for all the other instructions.

The biography of Marpa goes on to say: "Thus Maitripa sang. Marpa was delighted with these instructions and assimilated them." When it says "delighted" it really means that Marpa was intensely excited and pleased with these instructions, in the sense that he completely recognized their importance and their usefulness. By hearing these instructions, he developed an uncommon faith in Maitripa and firmly resolved to put these into practice, which he did.

If we look carefully at the biography of Marpa we will get some idea of how helpful these instructions were to Marpa. As explained earlier, when Marpa returned to Tibet on his first journey, all of the texts which he had accumulated over this twelve-year period of intense endeavor were thrown into the River Ganges by a jealous companion Nyö Lotsawa who had accompanied Marpa to and back from India. Now Marpa had a strong tendency towards anger and pride. Yet in this situation where he could easily have become enraged, he didn't react with any aggression whatsoever. He showed total patience and perhaps we can trace his development of patience to dharma instructions such as these.

Chapter 4

Marpa Returns to Tibet

Marpa left India to go back to Tibet, and he traveled with his companion Newe Lotsawa. On the way there were a few difficulties that arose because Newe Lotsawa was feeling jealous of Marpa, so there were a few incidents and difficulties because of that.¹⁸ This particular problem of jealousy is very typical of our human life in conditioned existence. There is no special quality attached to these incidents and these problems. They are just the manifestation of all the difficulties that are inherent in the very nature of samsara.

When Marpa was on his way back to Tibet, he had a dream in which he met Saraha, the great mahasiddha, and Saraha gave him a teaching in a dream which enabled him to gain very deep insight and understanding. The account of this dream is found in his life story and also in the *Rain of Wisdom*.

When Marpa reached the border between Nepal and Tibet, there was a little village called Lishokara. When he attempted to cross the border, he was detained by customs officials because at that time travelers had to pay a tax to cross the border. Marpa did not have any money so he was detained for a few days. The night before he was due to go back to Tibet, he had a dream.

In the dream some dakinis came to him and said, "You must go to Shri Parvata mountain in the south." Marpa replied that he didn't know how to get there and the dakinis said, "Don't worry about it, we will take you there." And in the dream they escorted him to the mountain where he met the great siddha Saraha. When he actually saw Saraha, the dream became more real than an ordinary dream. He was technically asleep and dreaming, but in his dream he received definite instructions from Saraha that he had not received previously. So Marpa didn't encounter Saraha physically, but he definitely encountered Saraha's wisdom body.

As a result of this dream, he found that he had gained a new insight on the understanding of mahamudra. He proceeded on his way to Tibet and just beyond the border he was invited to stay with one of his disciples with whom he had stayed before on his trip from Tibet to India.

While staying there, the disciple asked him, "You have been to India and studied a lot and have probably gained great realization. So I would be very grateful if you could give us a teaching of something that is new, something that you have never taught before." Marpa said that on his way from Nepal, he had been held up at the border by customs officers and that was why he had to stay in the little village for a few days. While he was there, he had a dream in which he received instructions from Saraha. He said, "Now I'm going to sing this song of instructions from Saraha to you, so please listen attentively."

Marpa taught them about his instructions of Saraha in the form of a story and a song. He told them about what had happened, and in the middle of this, he sang parts of the instruction that he had received. He started telling them:

Today is very auspicious and special. It is the tenth day of the lunar month and we have all gathered together for this great feast and this wonderful celebration of being together. You are people with great faith and all of you kept your commitments to your lama completely. Today you've asked me to give you a special teaching that you've never heard before. But I must admit that after having traveled to India, my body has gone through so much hardship that I'm very tired and don't think I will be able to sing a very good song. I'm not a good singer anyway and I'm not very clever with words; so I don't think I can do this very well. But since all of you, my friends, are kindly requesting, I don't want to ignore your kindness to me and I will try to sing something to you. Since you asked me for something new, I will tell you in my song what happened when I met the great mahasiddha Saraha in my dream. Now please hearken to my song and try to keep it in mind.

I was held up by customs at the border because these people are very strict and they didn't know that I own absolutely nothing. They are very, very adamant. And for a humble traveler like me, it was difficult and that is why I had to stay there for a few days. But during one of the last days I was there, I had a dream. In my dream I saw two very beautiful Indian maidens and they told me, "You ought to go to Shri Parvata, the southern Mountain of Splendor." I replied that I have never heard of it and I had never been there or seen this place. I have had no experience travelling there and don't know the way.

But the two girls replied, "We are like your sisters, so don't worry. We will take you there without any trouble."

They then took a piece of cloth and formed it into a kind of hammock. When Marpa sat on this hammock, they carried him through space and in an instant, he arrived at the Mountain of Splendor. When Marpa arrived, he saw a very magnificent tree and in the shade of the tree was sitting the Saraha. Marpa had never seen anyone so incredibly majestic. He was sitting with two consorts by his side and was wearing bone ornaments. He looked incredibly joyful and was smiling at Marpa saying to him, "Hello my son. Have you had a nice journey? How was it on the way?" Immediately, Marpa felt tremendous joy and had tears streaming from his eyes because he was so moved. His whole flesh was dripping with an incredible feeling of faith and all the hairs of his body were standing on end. With this amazing feeling of fervor and devotion, he prostrated to Saraha and placed Saraha's feet on top of his head.¹⁹ Then Marpa said, "Father, please look upon me with your great compassion." At this moment Marpa received all the great blessings of body, speech, and mind. Saraha placed his hand on top of the head of Marpa giving him the blessing of the body. Immediately this created a tremendous feeling of bliss and well being in Marpa which is called the experience of "untainted bliss." This bliss is compared to the experience of incredible happiness that one can have when one is high or drunk, like an elephant that's drunk too much. Then Marpa received the blessing of speech in the form of the greeting

from Saraha. These few words had such an impact on him that they brought about the blessing of mind which created a completely new, fresh insight in Marpa's mind. The new insight that Marpa gained was totally inexpressible. It was similar to the experience of a dumb person who has a dream but can never tell anyone of the experience because he cannot talk. As a result of this blessing of mind, Marpa realized the meaning of the dharmakaya and emptiness just as they are. He said that his experience was like being a corpse meaning that a corpse doesn't have any thoughts or any sensations. So in this vision Marpa realized the whole world just as it was without any conceptualization on his part.

Then Marpa continued, "Saraha then sang his spiritual song of advice. He sang it with the most beautiful melody and in a very gentle, smooth voice:

Namo [which means, I pay homage or I prostrate]. Emptiness and compassion are inseparable and are unceasing. The continuity of these two is never broken. This is because from the very beginning, they are within the mind. They have not been created anew. They are part of the very nature, the natural condition of the mind. They are continually there.

Where does one find the root of this? It is found in the mind. And that is why one should guard one's mental consciousness very carefully. When one looks for the essence in the mind, look at the present instant. Don't become involved with the moment before or the moment which will come later. The whole point of meditation is to be within the nature of the mind.

If one interferes and changes things, that's not meditation. The point of meditation is to let the mind be within the true nature of the mind. It isn't a matter of thinking it is like this or like that. The true way to meditate is to leave the mind within the unaltered state; without changing or interfering with anything. This has to be done the very instant the mind is there.

If one can let the mind be unaltered, then one will gain liberation from samsara. When one lets the mind be

within its own nature, it should be as a child who looks at things in a wide-eyed, completely natural way. If one can do this, one will feel fearless like a lion. One must let the mind rest within itself just as a wild elephant roams about just as he likes. Just let the mind be completely relaxed and free. It is like the bees going from flower to flower. Just let the mind be completely relaxed and free and natural within its own nature.

When one meditates, one mustn't look at samsara as being bad, filled with all sorts of faults. This is because the very nature of samsara will lead one to the true essential nature of phenomena, the true nature of the mind. Also there is no need to think in terms of achieving samsara or Buddhahood because the very nature of the mind is the nature of the Buddha.

What is called this ordinary mind²⁰ is the mind as it is in itself, not adulterated or modified in any way. Normally, our mind is under the influence of thoughts and negativity and isn't in its ordinary condition. When one thinks, "I must meditate" this isn't ordinary mind either. This is the mind that is modified, that is adulterated, that is changed. So let the mind be within itself and let it be within its own essence which is naturally peaceful, relaxed, clear, and empty. One just has to rest within this without interfering, without changing anything, and let the mind be as it is in its freshness, in its immediacy without bringing any change. If one can do this, then one will understand the true nature of mind, the true nature of everything. This is pointing to the very essence of everything and is the very key of mahamudra. This is what I heard from Saraha.

Marpa continued by saying that when he had heard the entire spiritual song of Saraha, he woke up. When he awoke, all the words that Saraha had spoken were still very clear in his mind. He hadn't forgotten a single word. He also had a very vivid experience which was like the experience of coming out of darkness. All of a sudden it

was as though all the very vivid intelligences of the mind had opened up and that the very nature of mind was lying open in front of him. So now Marpa could see this incredible clarity of mind. It was like the sun when there are no clouds. As a result of this experience Marpa gained a decisive understanding and conviction of the validity of what he had been taught. He felt that even if all the buddhas of the past, present, and future were to appear before him, he wouldn't have anything to ask them because he was convinced that this nature of the mind, this nature of phenomena was completely understood by him and there was nothing else to know. As a result he gained this very decisive confidence in what he had understood. Marpa continued:

Whatever advice one receives from a yidam or dakini or one's guru is very precious. It is something one must keep present in one's mind and one must practice. It also isn't something one should boast about or talk about with others because there is no point of going around and telling others about all the various signs and experiences that one has. One must keep whatever happens in one's mind like a precious jewel. But tonight there was a purpose for me telling you about this because it is so meaningful. I never have mentioned this experience before tonight and you will see later whether I mention it again; tonight I had a particular purpose for sharing this experience with you.

This story is particularly meaningful because when I came from Tibet to go to India, I was all on my own. I had no support, no friends, and lots of troubles. During this time all of you, my disciples, helped me and were very kind to me. I have never forgotten your kindness, so tonight out of gratitude I shared this very deep teaching with you. I pray that all the lamas and yidams and protectors may not be irritated by my sharing this profound teaching with you and that they may not look upon this as a fault of mine.

Following this story, Marpa was able to return to his native home of Lhotrak.

It is important to have some understanding of exactly who Saraha is in the context of the mahamudra lineage. The extraordinary lineage of mahamudra has both a short and a long lineage. The short lineage is the passing of the mahamudra teachings from Vajradhara directly to Tilopa and then from Tilopa on to Naropa to Marpa to Milarepa to Gampopa and so on to present day. The long lineage is the transmitting of the mahamudra teachings from Vajradhara to the bodhisattva Ratnamati, who transmitted them to Saraha, who transmitted them to Nagarjuna, to Shavari, to Maitripa who then transmitted them on to Marpa. So Saraha is extremely important for the mahamudra lineage. Of course, it was impossible for Marpa to have met Saraha physically because he had lived much earlier (9th century C.E.). This encounter was not a dream which we might have, but Marpa was able to come fact-to-face with the timeless wisdom body of Saraha.



Naropa

Chapter 5

Marpa Gains Eight Disciples

Marpa had many great disciples and history records his eight famous disciples: four whom were called "the four great pillars of the teaching" and the other four are called the "four disciples with a karmic link" which means that they were connected to Marpa by a special karmic link from a previous life.

As described previously, when Marpa was returning from India, he gave advice to his disciples at the border between India and Tibet with a spiritual song. The disciple at whose house he stayed was actually the very first disciple connected by a karmic link. He was called Ngoktön Chödor with the word "chödor" referring to the name of the place where he was from which is Shung, Tibet. His actual name was Lotsa Choche. When Marpa returned to Tibet, he then acquired many other disciples who practiced the dharma under his guidance and progressed gradually along the various stages leading to enlightenment.

Marpa then traveled to many different places in Tibet teaching the dharma. One day he was travelling with someone who was his servant and they met two yogis: a teacher and his disciple. These two yogis came up to Marpa and his servant and said, "Where do you come from? Where are you going?" Marpa's servant answered, "This is Marpa. He went to India and became one of the greatest disciples of the great mahasiddha Tilopa. He now is traveling in Tibet to give the vajrayana instructions to those who are spiritually mature enough to receive the teaching. Through practicing his instructions, a person can achieve the ultimate fruition of the path. But even those who are not spiritually ready to practice these teaching will derive benefit by just hearing his words and meeting him. They will get a chance to establish a connection with Marpa and this will sow a seed of liberation and omniscience, the seed of Buddhahood in their mind. This is why we have come here. Soon

Marpa will have to return to India to obtain more teachings. To express his gratitude to his teachers, he must take some gold with him to India. He is now touring different places and giving teachings in order to collect offerings of gold to give to his teachers in India."

After meeting these two yogis Marpa met the disciple called Merton Chagu Dorje who was to become one of Marpa's greatest disciples, one of the "four great pillars." Marpa gave him the empowerment of Hevajra and remained at this place teaching for two months.

Marpa Meets Marpa Golek

Then Marpa went north. A trader named Marpa Golek who was passing through saw a great gathering of people and asked what was going on there. Someone said, "There is a lama named Marpa who is a disciple of the famous mahasiddha Naropa and he is giving teachings and empowerments." When the trader heard this, he was surprised thinking, "Oh, that's very strange. My name is also Marpa so maybe we come from the same family. He seems to be a good teacher, so maybe I should go and listen to him." He then went to meet Marpa and received teachings from him.

Then Marpa Golek offered Marpa Lotsawa some very nice clothes because he noticed that Marpa wasn't wearing any new clothes. He invited Marpa to visit him at his home. When Marpa arrived, he was still wearing the same old ragged clothes. Marpa Golek was a bit surprised and thought, "Well, that's a bit strange. I gave him these brand new clothes and he is still wearing the same old rags. What's going on? Maybe he is very attached to beautiful things and riches and can't even bear to wear them. Maybe this lama isn't as good as he's supposed to be." He then said, "How come you're still wearing those old clothes. I offered you some nice new ones, and I know that some other people also gave you new clothes. Why do you keep wearing the same old ones?" Marpa replied, "Well, you see it's because I'm trying to go back to India to receive some more teachings and I need gold to go there and won't be able to get gold for old rags. So I keep on wearing the same clothes so that I can exchange all the new clothes for gold and go to India to obtain more teachings. That's why I keep on wearing the same old

clothes." When Marpa Golek heard this, he was extremely impressed and realized that Marpa hadn't worn the new clothes because he wasn't involved in material things. So this reinforced his faith in Marpa even more.

Marpa Meets Dorje Wangnge

Then Marpa left the northern part of Tibet to return south towards his home in Lhotrak. There he was invited to teach by Dorje Tsultrim Wangnge who was to become his second greatest disciple of the four great pillars of teaching. Afterwards Marpa visited another place in the south of Tibet where he met another disciple called Baram Bawachen. The name "Bawachen" is actually a nickname which means "having a goiter." So Baram Bawachen became his fourth disciple connected by karma.

Marpa had now made the connection to the "four main disciples connected by karma." Ngokpa, the first pillar, was given the Hevajra teachings, Tsultrim Wangnge and Marpa Golek Marpa were given the Guhyasamaja empowerments and teachings and also the five levels of instructions on the completion stage of the father tantra. Baram Bawachen, received the Mahamaya teachings. So in this way Marpa created the conditions for the spreading of the teachings in Tibet.²¹

Marpa's Second Trip to India

Following the period of getting these four main disciples, Marpa went on his second journey to India. When he went, he had started a family in Tibet. He married and began to have children, but in spite of this, he felt that it was still necessary for him to go back to India and continue what he had begun in his first journey. Aside from relinquishing his attachment to his family, there was also the tremendous expense of the journeys which he undertook. Before going to India the first time, Marpa had gone to his parents and requested from them everything that was going to be his inheritance and he converted it to gold and took it all to India. It was eighteen *srang* in Tibetan (or *thal* in India) of gold. The reason he converted everything into gold was on the difficult and dangerous trails and

roads to India, he could carry only a small sack of gold. The second time Marpa went to India he took fifty thals of gold which he had acquired with a great deal of exertion. When he went the third time, he took a large bowl full of gold dust with him and he used this gold as an offering for teachings and texts in India which he brought back to Tibet and translated for the benefit of all Buddhist practitioners.

On Marpa's first journey, his traveling companion dumped all of Marpa's books into the water which meant that when he returned to Tibet after the first journey, the only texts he had were those he had memorized. He had no books with him at all: no *sadhana* texts, no liturgies, no commentaries, nothing. So everything he taught after this first journey came from his extensive memorization. He felt that he absolutely had to go back to India a second time because he wanted to acquire copies of these texts and to receive additional instructions on them.

When Marpa was about to leave on his second journey, many of his disciples offered to accompany him and go as his servant. But Marpa wouldn't agree to this and decided to go on his own. Once again he traveled through Nepal and met two lamas in Nepal. He then proceeded to India where he went again to meet Naropa, his teacher.

From Naropa he received the three levels of empowerment of Hevajra. The first level is called the very detailed empowerment; the second level the middle length empowerment; and the third level the short empowerment. Marpa also received three tantras. He received the root tantra of Hevajra which is called the *Hevajramula* tantra which he had already received during his first journey. Then he received two other tantras which provide more detailed explanations of this practice. These last two are more like tantras and an oral commentary, but they still came from the Buddha himself. One of these was called the *Dakinivajrapanjara* tantra which is a special tantra that provides an explanation of the Hevajra tantra. Marpa then received the *Sumpu* tantra which provides a general explanation for all the other tantras. These explanations and commentaries weren't just explanations of their terminology, but went very deep were very profound and provided instructions for the practice of the tantras.

Naropa then advised Marpa to go and visit some other teachers because, "The last time when you came here, you already received some teachings from other masters, and now you should go and see them to clarify doubts and ask questions about what you've already learned. You should also receive from them whatever other teachings you didn't receive before."

Marpa first went to visit the great master Maitripa. From him he learned all the teachings he had received before and he made sure everything was very clear. He also received some new teachings from Maitripa including the Guhyasamaja empowerment and the commentary on this tantra. He also received the tantra on mahamudra which were taught by the Buddha and translated these into Tibetan. This is called the *Mahamudra Tilaka* in Sanskrit or the *Phyags Chen Thigle* in Tibetan. Then he returned to Naropa for a while. Then he went to see his other teachers, Kukkuripa and Yeshe Nyinpo, with whom he again reviewed the meaning of everything he had learned from them before.

After returning, Marpa stayed with Naropa for some time and received the Chakrasamvara teachings again. But this time Marpa received a different line of transmission of these teachings than the one called the "Tradition of the King" which came from the Buddha through King Indrabhuti. Rather this particular line of transmission was received by Naropa and he passed this tradition of practice of the Chakrasamvara tantra on to Marpa.

Following this, Marpa made preparations to go back to Tibet again. Before Marpa was about to go, Naropa sang a very strange spiritual song of farewell with a very obscure meaning:

There is a man who is a flower in the sky and there is a son of a barren woman riding a horse who has a whip made of the hairs of a tortoise. She has a dagger which is made of a rabbit's horn and she kills the enemy within the true nature. At the moment of this killing, the dumb can speak and the blind can see and the deaf can hear and the lame can run and jump about and the sun and moon are dancing.

When Naropa had finished singing this very strange song, he said, "You have to come back to India once more because I have many other instructions for you. If you do not return, you will never know the meaning of this song." Marpa didn't get a chance to further inquire about the song and just kept it all in his mind. Naropa then said, "Just don't forget." So Marpa went to Tibet remembering all of this, but not understanding a word of it.

When Marpa arrived in Tibet, he went to a place called Tsang and there he met the third pillar, a man from the district called Tsang Rang whose name was Meton Sonam Gyaltzen. Meton's disposition in teaching and practice was luminosity and so Marpa gave Meton the Chakrasamvara empowerment and instructions. His name was Meton Tsönpö. Following this, he went back to his own home of Lhotrak where he met his most famous disciple, the fourth pillar, Milarepa. Marpa put Milarepa to the task of building a large stone mansion of nine stories for his eldest son, Darmadode. Milarepa went through many difficulties and hardships because Marpa asked him twice to take it down. These tasks were necessary for Milarepa's spiritual development.²²

After Milarepa had gone through the tremendous difficulties of building the house, Marpa treated him as a true disciple and sent him to practice in a little cave near his house. While Milarepa was in the cave in Taknya near Lhotrak, Marpa had a dream one night in which he saw three very beautiful dakinis singing a song in which they explained in great detail the meaning of the spiritual song that Naropa had sung to him before leaving India. They said,

The man who is a flower in the sky represents all the jnana dakinis. The instructions that come from these dakinis are called the "whispered lineage of instruction of the dakinis" which concerns the emptiness of all phenomena and is represented by the son of the barren woman riding the horse. The great qualities that arise in one's mind after practicing the instructions are gained not through words, but through the actual understanding of practice. This is symbolized by the whip made with tortoise hair. The dagger with which the enemy was killed represents the unborn nature of all phenomena.

The killing of the enemy within the true essence was done by Tilopa. Tilopa symbolizes the dumb person because when he realized the very essential nature of phenomena, he couldn't pass this instruction on through words. The blind man who began seeing was Naropa because Naropa was blind and then through Tilopa's instruction was able to see the truth of phenomena. The lame man who started running and jumping represents Marpa because he was unable to move within the realm of the essential truth of phenomena, but through the deep instructions he became able to do this. Finally the sun and moon dancing refers to the yidams, Hevajra, Chakrasamvara, and Mahamaya.

So this explanation provided by the three dakinis who appeared in a dream to Marpa gave him the symbolic meaning of everything in Naropa's strange spiritual song. When Marpa woke up, he suddenly felt that this dream was a sign that he should go back to India very soon. Meanwhile, Milarepa was still practicing in retreat nearby. One night Milarepa also had a dream in which he saw a girl with a bluish body wearing bone ornaments and very fine golden hairs above her lip. She said to him, "There is a very, very important instruction which makes it possible to achieve Buddhahood without terrible hardships. This is the instruction on the transference of consciousness and resuscitation of a corpse and is called the *phowa* instruction. You should definitely obtain this instruction by asking your guru to give it to you." So Milarepa asked Marpa for this instruction and since this was a practice Marpa had not yet received from Naropa, Marpa took this as another sign that he should return to India very soon.

Following these two dreams Marpa began to get ready to go to India. As told in the *Rain of Wisdom*, all of Marpa's disciples tried to dissuade him from going. They said, "You are no longer a young man. It's very difficult for an elderly person to travel all that distance. You've told us time and time again how difficult the journey is and it will be very dangerous if you try to go there now on your own. If anything happens to you, then all the instructions will be lost for us. Please don't go. Stay here. We are already very

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

satisfied with the instructions we have here in Tibet. We don't need anything more. Please stay here and send your son Darmadode instead."

So they pleaded and pleaded with him, but Marpa said, "No, I have to go and I must go myself. If I were to send my son Darmadode who is very young and inexperienced with travelling, it would just cause me much worry about his safety and whether he would be able to get the instructions. So I must go myself. Anyway when I left Naropa, I told him that I would return, not that I would send him my son. We have a saying that even if a trader is very old, he is also very experienced. He knows the way well and so he won't get into trouble. I know the way and even if I die, I'm going to go." Then Marpa sang a spiritual song:

I pay homage to Naropa and Maitripa. Now I'm going to revisit my master Naropa. I promised to go and it is very important for me to go there now. The dakinis have pointed the way for me. Also when I think of my guru, I can't help but go. There is no way for me not to go. The way is difficult indeed.

First there is a very wide, long plain of plains. It's very, very broad and even horses get tired traversing it. But I have no fear of travelling there because I have a special instruction that will enable me to ride the horse of prana with my mind. So I can travel through this plain very easily.

On my way to India, there will be the high passes that are very cold and sometimes frozen. But I do not fear them because I have the instructions of tummo which provides me with a great blazing fire. No clothes of any kind could ever compare with this. So I know there will be no trouble on my way to India.

There is great heat and I am not afraid of this in Nepal because I have instructions to experience everything as being of one taste. I feel everything exactly the same whether it is hot or cold. This is better than any ordinary remedy, so I'm not afraid. There will be no trouble on my way to India.

Marpa Gains Eight Disciples

The great Ganges River is very wide and frightening, but I have no fear because I have the instructions that make it possible for me to fly, for my mind to ride over anything. No boats of any kind could match this. So I'm going to India and there will be no trouble crossing the Ganges.

Although there is much famine in the savage lands of India, I'm not worried because I have an instruction which enables me to live on just a few drops of water. No ordinary food or drink could ever compare with this. So I will travel to India and there will be no trouble.

On the way there may be robbers and thieves in the wild and remote places. But I have the instructions that enable me to render robbers harmless. No ordinary human strength can be matched by this power. So I will go to India and there will be no trouble.

Why do I go to India? I'm going to India because my great teachers Naropa and Maitripa are in India. Kukkuriipa is also in India. And the very precious statue, the Mahabodhi statue is also in India. So whatever happens, no matter what fate I meet, I'm going to India. Even if it costs me my life, I am going to India.

Chapter 6

Marpa's Third Visit to India

Marpa's third visit to India was fraught with difficulties. He had to go through tremendous hardships and troubles and only because he was so full of confidence and devotion to his lama was he able to endure this trip. As a result of his wish to practice, the dharma and his diligence in the practice became even greater making it possible to achieve the ultimate realization.

When Marpa arrived at the border of Tibet and India, he met the great teacher Atisha. He felt great faith in Atisha who was a very good monk and a very great pandita. Atisha was one of Marpa's thirteen teachers in India. He received an empowerment from Atisha and afterwards they spoke together. Marpa asked where Naropa was and Atisha replied, "He has started to live like a yogi." At one point in their lives greatly accomplished beings start to behave in a way which is completely beyond the grasp of ordinary people.²³ Everything they do is within the realm of miracles and the extraordinary and their behavior becomes totally unpredictable. One can't even tell where they are and where to meet them. They might be living at the top of the mountain or on a beach or on the bank of a lake. But at this point it is sometimes possible for disciples with great faith to meet their teacher. But sometimes they still cannot meet them even with great faith. Atisha explained that Naropa had taken up this kind of life and that presently he was mostly likely teaching nonhuman disciples (such as dakinis and dakas). "Therefore," Atisha added, "it would be very difficult for you to meet him and, in fact, Naropa doesn't even know that you are coming. So maybe you might be better off staying with me for some time and working on translations and then going back to Tibet. Maybe that would be a better and more beneficial course of action."

Marpa was saddened by this news but said, "Well, no matter whether I actually get to meet him or not, I have to go because I

promised that I would return the last time when I met Naropa. I really must go and try to meet him." He felt a very strong conviction, an intuitive feeling that he would get to meet Naropa even though Naropa had now taken up the life style of a yogi. So he carried on with his journey and reached Nepal.

In Nepal he met two lamas from his previous journeys and he asked them where Naropa could be found. They gave the same answer as Atisha saying, "These days it seems that Naropa is living the life of a mahasiddha, so it will be very difficult to meet him. You might not get to see him at all." As soon as Marpa heard this, his heart sank and he felt utterly depressed. But at the same time he felt that he ought to try and asked the two lamas, "Do you think that means I won't get a chance to meet him again?" The two lamas replied, "Well, there is something in your favor because you are the kind of disciple who has always kept his dharma commitments perfectly, so your link with your lama is perfectly intact. Also your lama, Naropa, has the wisdom, which is all-seeing, the highest kind of spiritual perception. So when there is the connection of a disciple who has kept all of his dharma commitments and a lama who has spiritual vision, it is possible that you will meet him if you really make prayers of offering."

So Marpa continued on and arrived in India. He went straight to Naropa's dwelling and found Naropa's servant, Prajnasimha. Marpa spoke with him, but the servant said, "What a shame. You arrived too late. Naropa left last year on the fifteenth day of the first month." Then Marpa said, "Well, I've come because I've been given the order to try to find the teachings of the whispered transmission of the dakinis. Do you know if this teaching is still taught here in India?" The servant replied that he had heard of many different kinds of instructions, but had never heard of this particular teaching. But he added, "When Naropa left, he said that you would come and asked me to give you his *vajra* and bell and *thangka* of your yidam, Hevajra. But unfortunately, the vajra and bell have been stolen but I have kept the *thangka* very carefully and here it is." He gave Marpa the *thangka* and Marpa felt such an amazing outburst of faith and devotion towards Naropa that he broke into tears. Then the servant told him not to forget that Naropa had the eyes of wisdom, and could see him and hear his prayers. Then he said, "I feel quite sure that if

you pray to him, you will meet him." Marpa then went to see Maitripa who said more or less the same thing: if Marpa prayed to Naropa, he might get to meet him.

Then Marpa went to visit some other masters from whom he had received teachings previously. He went to see Kukkuripa and several others and received instructions from them. He also asked each of them if they could give him a special method to find Naropa. All of them said the same thing; if he prayed to Naropa and felt enough genuine faith and devotion, he would get to meet him.

Marpa continued his search for eight months. Sometimes he was completely on his own and sometimes he was accompanied by Sechen and sometimes he was accompanied by lama Pundrakpa. He would go from forest to forest, from mountain to mountain, on and on and on. But he never found Naropa. Sometimes he would suddenly have the impression that he had seen Naropa or had heard some of Naropa's words coming from space. Or he would have dreams of Naropa, but he never actually met him. It was just an impression that he would get from time to time.

After eight months of searching, Marpa came to the point where he was very desperate. One day while sitting very depressed reading a book, he got this very, very strong feeling that he was going to meet Naropa. He jumped up to his feet and ran to a forest nearby looking here and there for Naropa. All of a sudden he came upon a shepherd and gave the shepherd a big piece of gold and said, "Please tell me if you've seen or heard anyone called Naropa." And the shepherd replied, "Well, I think he must have gone through here because these could be his footprints" pointing down to two footprints in the rock.

As soon as Marpa saw the footprints of Naropa, he felt tremendously happy and his devotion to his teacher grew greater and greater. With longing, he looked up into the sky and saw a beautiful sandalwood tree in front of him. In the sandalwood tree, he saw the complete *mandala* of Hevajra. It was very small, but all the details were completely there. There was Hevajra and the nine deities that make up this *mandala* each with its specific color and specific attributes. Immediately Marpa knew that this must be an emanation of Naropa. So he prostrated to this *mandala* and made prayers and offerings. Then he saw Hevajra's consort, Nairatmya in the *mandala*.

In her heart was the mantra of Hevajra in a very small circle. The mantra wheel was actually a wheel of eight syllables) was there, very, very tiny but very clear and complete. It was as though it had been drawn with the tip of a hair because it was so fine. And from the mantra radiated lights of all colors which penetrated Marpa's heart. When this light came into him, he felt that he had received all the blessings of body, speech, and mind of Hevajra.

This, of course, filled him with very great joy and happiness and reinforced his longing for his guru. He kept on praying and praying to Naropa and in a flash, Naropa appeared in front of him in the dress of a mahasiddha with all the bone ornaments saying, "Here I am. I've come to you."

Marpa was so happy when he saw Naropa that he fainted. When he came to, he immediately made a mandala offering with all the gold that he had carried from Tibet. But Naropa said, "I'm not interested in gold and don't need gold." But Marpa replied, "I know a lama doesn't need gold. But I need to complete the accumulation of virtue. Also all my friends and disciples in Tibet who contributed to this offering have to complete their accumulation of virtue. So please, for our sake, accept this offering." Naropa then took the offering and said, "Now I offer all this to my guru and the three jewels." Saying this he took the gold and threw it all over the forest. At this point, Marpa felt, on one hand, very happy that his guru had accepted the offering and, on the other hand, thought that it was a waste of having gone through so much hardship to get all this gold together. He also thought of all the difficulties his disciples who had helped to collect the gold had.

Then Naropa joined his hand at the level of his heart as in a gesture of prayer. He opened his hand and said, "Don't worry, the gold is not wasted. I don't need it. But if somebody wants it, it's here" and all the gold was again in his hands. Then once again, Naropa said, "I do not need gold, but if anyone wants it, here is some gold." He stamped his foot and everything around him turned into gold. After he had done this, he said, "It seems that you've been brought to me through the great kindness of Tilopa." He then quoted a prediction that had been made by Tilopa concerning Marpa: "At the monastery of Phullahari the great son of pure intelligence would dispel the darkness of ignorance in the mind of the intelligent one,

Marpa, Chokyi Lodro. It would dispel the darkness in the mind of the intelligent one and then the great brilliance of jnana would shine." Naropa then added, "This means that we have to go together to Phullahari (which in Tibetan is "the flower with a very beautiful, colorful radiance") and I will transmit all the instructions to you." So both of them, spiritual father and son left together for Phullahari.

At Phullahari, Marpa requested Naropa give him the instructions of the whispered transmission of the dakinis and on the phowa practice for the transference of consciousness and resuscitation of a dead corpse with one's consciousness.²⁵ When Marpa made this request, Naropa asked him if this idea was his own or whether he had been told by the dakinis to request this teaching. Marpa replied, "No, this is not my own idea and the dakinis didn't tell me to get these teachings. It is my disciple, Thöpagpa who was told by the dakinis to receive these teachings." Then Naropa explained, "How amazing Tibet is this dark, northern land where the Buddha's teaching were not known. But now there is a person who is like the sun rising in that dark country. I bow down in homage to this person named Thöpagpa." Thus Naropa bent his head three times in the direction of the north and while he was bending his head, all the landscape such as the mountains and trees took the same shape and bent towards the north where Tibet was.

While Marpa was with Naropa at Phullahari, he also received the complete empowerments and instructions for the several kinds of Chakrasamvara practices: the mandala with sixty-two deities, the mandala of thirteen deities, the mandala with five deities, and the mandala of Chakrasamvara alone with his consort. For the Chakrasamvara mandala, the empowerment was given with the help of a mandala drawn on the crown with various colors depicted in colored sands. He also received the whole cycle of mandalas for Vajrayogini practice: the one with fifteen deities, the one with seven deities, the one with five deities, and the one with Vajrayogini alone as the deity. For the Vajrayogini mandala, the picture of the mandala was made with yellow powder. After receiving all these instructions on the mandalas, Marpa had received the complete instructions of Naropa.

Following this, Naropa told Marpa that everything he had taught him up to now had been like the outer skin of a person. But what he

had just given him was the very essence of all the teachings. He said, "This should be kept as a single line of transmission, being transmitted only from one teacher to one disciple, and so on. It should be kept like this for thirteen generations, and if this is done, the teaching will later spread and develop in a very strong and very beneficial way." Marpa at this point felt completely convinced that what he had been given was really a very special method of practice. As far as his understanding was concerned, it was the same now as it had been before. But the methods that he had been given made a great difference insofar as realization could be obtained very quickly. So this instruction wasn't different in the nature of the realization, but rather that the realization could be attained much more quickly. Naropa continued saying:

In my days, I went through many difficulties. I had to endure twelve great hardships and twenty-four very difficult tasks. This was done by my guru, Tilopa, to test my faith and devotion. You also had to go through a lot of difficulties. You've come to India three times at the risk of your life and you have had to endure many difficulties and face a lot of fears also. But Tilopa had told me that you were the kind of disciple who would be capable of putting up with such hardships. That is why I put you through these difficulties and I now appoint you as my representative.

Then Naropa said to Marpa, "Now look up into the sky. There is the complete mandala of Hevajra in nine aspects." When Marpa looked up, he saw the whole incredibly clear and vivid mandala of Hevajra right in front of him in the sky with the nine aspects. Naropa then said, "Now your yidam has come. Where will you prostrate first? Are you going to prostrate to the yidam first or to me first?" Marpa was so overwhelmed with the vividness of the presence of the yidam, that he prostrated to the yidam first. Naropa then simply commented, "If there is no guru, then there won't be any buddha. All the thousand buddhas of this con depend on their guru to become buddhas. The yidam is only the emanation of the guru. You should know this and you have made a minor mistake this time. This means that your family line will not be very long." Although Marpa had

seven sons, it meant that his family line wouldn't carry on. But Naropa added that since Marpa had prostrated to his yidam, this meant that his dharma line would be very great and that it would continue for as long as the Buddha's teachings would remain on this earth. So he said, "Rejoice, because your dharma line will be very great and very strong and very long."

However, Marpa felt a little upset and depressed because he thought, "I've been studying all these years and know very well that the yidam is much less important than the guru. When I meditate, I always visualize myself as the yidam with the guru being on top of my head. I know very well that the lama is the most important one. I also experienced this very strongly when I saw the mandala of the yidam in the sandalwood tree. This wasn't half as meaningful to me as meeting with my guru later on. Why have I made such a mistake today? There must be something wrong with me."

While Marpa was with Naropa, he became quite sick physically. All of his dharma friends and the other disciples of Naropa said, "We should ask the guru to do a spiritual practice to help your health." But Marpa replied, "Well, that wouldn't be suitable because now I've given the guru everything I had and I don't have any more offerings to present to him to make prayers for me. But I feel that if this is the right time for dharma to develop in Tibet, I'm not going to die here. If the protectors of the dharma are truly protecting the teachings, then they won't allow me to die here in India. Also there is nothing better for healing me than praying to my guru and the three jewels." With this attitude Marpa got better and overcame his illness.

However, Marpa's sadness was still there. To dispel this very sad feeling Naropa put on a large offering feast and during this feast, Naropa gave some very profound instructions on the Six Yogas of Naropa to show just how incredibly fortunate Marpa was. He gave these instructions:

You are very fortunate because you have a very precious human birth. But even more fortunate is that you have the instructions on mystic heat (Tib. *tummo*) practice through which you can meditate on a deity as being just a creation, a conjuration. You can meditate on

the three *nadis* and the four *chakras*. Through these meditations you can gain the experience of bliss, clarity, and emptiness. Did you benefit from these tummo instructions?

You also have the second instruction on the *illusory body* through which you can meditate outwardly on the emptiness of all phenomena. Inwardly, you can have experiences that are completely ineffable, that cannot be expressed in words. Did you find these instructions on the illusory body of help?

You have the third instruction on the *dream practice*. Through this practice when you meditate on the letter AH in your throat, you can have experiences that are the manifestation of your subconscious mind becoming alive. Have these instructions been of help to you?

The fourth instruction you received allows you to be able to understand the instant between sleep and dream, and at this instant, the mind is present in its true nature with the experience of great clarity, which is more peaceful. This is the instruction on the luminous quality of the mind. Did this instruction benefit you?

You also received the fifth instruction through which you learned that at death consciousness has to leave the body. But if it leaves the body through one of the eight inferior apertures, the mind will go back to samsara. But if it goes through the ninth aperture,²⁴ it will follow the path that leads to mahamudra realization. Did this instruction on phowa benefit you?

Finally, you also received a sixth instruction. This is the instruction which teaches you how to use the dream state to train for the *bardo* experiences so that during the *bardo* you can be liberated into the realization of the sambhogakaya or the nirmanakaya. Did this instruction on the *bardo* benefit you?

These six instructions you received are very special. They do not allow for any mistakes and won't lead you astray. These are the very highest instructions and you

received them. So now you have no reason to be unhappy.

Then Naropa empowered Marpa as his representative and gave a great feast saying:

Before I had a special realization, and now you have gained this same realization that the five aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*) are the five *buddha families* and that the five aspects of kleshas are the five wisdoms. In the future, in Tibet you will uphold both the teachings of the *sutras* and the tantras, but in particular you will shed the light of day on the vajrayana teachings. Your family line will be broken, but your spiritual lineage will grow more and more for as long as the Buddha's teachings are present in this world. These teachings will never diminish. Some may look upon you as a man with many worldly attachments, but you know what is the truth because you have realized the true nature of phenomena.

How others see you is like a coiled snake that looks like a knot. But all the snake needs to do is uncoil his body and the knot is gone all by itself. In the same way, from the outside it may look as though you are involved in worldly things. But because you understand the actual nature of phenomena, nothing can bind you. Everything, automatically frees itself.

Naropa added that in the future Marpa's line of disciples will be very great and splendid. He said, "Your spiritual sons will be like the lion cubs or like the *garuda* and they will become better and better, as the son will be better than the father and the son of the grandson will be better than his father. The next time we meet, we will always be together and never separate. So Marpa, don't be depressed, but rejoice and be very happy."

These words were actually spoken in prose, but he accompanied this with a spiritual song which says about the same as the prose.

Marpa is Empowered

Naropa empowered Marpa as his representative. He predicted that later on in Tibet, Marpa would have a very prosperous and strong spiritual line and that his disciples would become better and better as time went on so that this spiritual lineage would be like the stream of a very great river.

When Marpa had received this empowerment as the representative of Naropa and had received this prediction, he felt very happy. But at the same time he had mixed feeling about what was going to happen from now on. He would have to go back to Tibet, facing all the hardships of the journey and this caused him to be unhappy and tense. Thinking of his guru and his dharma friends that he would have to leave behind, he felt sad. But then thinking of all the instructions and great teachings he was bringing back to Tibet, he again felt very happy.

So with this very mixed state of mind of being very happy and very sad, he sang a song of farewell to Naropa. He sang a song with a musical tune that imitated the humming of a swarm of bees far away:

The gurus are very kind to beings. But among all of them, the kindest is my guru, the mahapandita Naropa. He is like a jewel who adorns my head. And I, Marpa the Translator from Tibet, came to meet Naropa. The fact that this meeting here in India was made possible by virtue and many prayers made in the past. Not only did we meet, but we stayed together for sixteen years and seven months. All that time we were only apart from time to time. And during all that time together, our relationship was extremely positive and beautiful. The lama never showed any displeasure or any dissatisfaction towards me. And I, the disciple, always tried to respect him as much as I could.

We stayed together in the monastery at Phullahari. At this monastery, Naropa gave me the complete four empowerments. He also gave me the complete transmission of the instructions of the *whispered*

lineage. Besides these instructions, I also practiced the great means for achieving realization in one lifetime and came to realize the very nature of my mind.

Now I have to go back to Tibet. Since my guru has predicted that I will be able to help many beings and disciples and since I have been appointed as his representative, I'm going with great joy. But at the same time, there are three things that I will miss. First, I shall miss all the great mahasiddhas who were my teachers, and most of all Naropa and Maitripa. Now I have to leave them behind in India, but I shall keep on thinking of them and I will keep on missing them. Second, I shall miss all my dharma brothers and sisters that I will leave behind in India. There is particularly my dharma friend Jigme Dragma. Then there are all the other yogis and yoginis that I have to leave behind. But I will keep them in my mind and I will miss them.

Also I have to leave Phullahari behind and all the other very special places where the mahasiddhas live. Now I have to leave them behind in India, but I will keep them in my mind and will miss them.

Marpa continued his song saying that there were three things that he feared on the way back to Tibet. The first thing was the great Ganges River.

It is very wide and very hard to cross, and even now thinking of it, I am afraid. Then at the border between India and Nepal, there is a great mountain called the Ushed Mountain. This is a great desert area where robbers and thieves wait in ambush for people who go by. Even now just thinking of it, I feel frightened. Then at the border between Nepal and Tibet are the impossible custom's officials. They are so difficult to deal with that even now, just thinking of them, I feel frightened.

On the way to Tibet, on the road itself, there are three things that I am worried about. The first will be the

hundreds of very narrow and steep paths and bridges that I will have to go over. Just thinking of it now, I feel frightened. Then there will be hundreds of very high passes that are extremely frigid. And just thinking of it now, I feel frightened. Finally, there will be hundreds of very, very long and seemingly endless plains, one after the other. Just thinking of this, I feel frightened.

After the three reasons for being fearful Marpa added the three reasons for feeling very happy:

The first reason is having learned everything about Sanskrit and thinking that in Tibet I may be able to gather together many fellow translators.

The second reason for being glad is having studied hundreds of different tantras and their commentaries, particularly the Hevajra tantra and the Mahamaya tantra. I feel very happy at the thought of being able to gather many great scholars in Tibet to discuss these. Finally, having received hundreds of instructions for practice, and particularly on the whispered transmission of the Mahamaya teaching. I feel very happy at the prospect of gathering many great meditators around me to teach these.

Then Marpa continued:

There are three very special things I have learned. The first is that I received hundreds of instructions on the bardo teaching. I received not just the sacred transmission of the teaching, but also the teaching enriched with all the instructions and all the commentaries that can deepen the understanding of this practice. To have received this is really quite wonderful. The second special teaching was that is that I received hundreds of teachings on the protectors who look after the Buddha's teaching. This is truly a wonderful thing. The third special teaching was that I received all the profound

instructions on Guhyasamaja, and on the five levels of the completion stage. Receiving hundreds of instructions on this is truly a wonderful thing.

Because of this, I feel truly, deeply happy. But how did I come to receive all these instructions? It was entirely due to the tremendous and deep kindness of my guru. Without my guru I couldn't have gotten any of these instructions. Presently, I am not able to repay such kindness. But later when I return to Tibet, I will spread all these teachings that have been given to me, and this will be my way to repay the great kindness of my guru.

Then Marpa prayed to Naropa to remain with him always saying: "Please, always be above my head, and give me your blessing that I may not meet with any great difficulty or obstacles on my way back." And Marpa concluded with, "I will not meet my guru or my dharma friends again in this lifetime. But I pray that later in the next lifetime, we may meet together in the pure land."

When Marpa had taken his leave from Naropa, he went to see Maitripa. From Maitripa, he received the Hevajra empowerment. And during this empowerment, there was a rain of heavenly flowers that fell from space and a very exquisite scent of sandalwood suddenly came from nowhere. There was also a little fire of pine wood that went on burning for seven days without interruption. At the same time very beautiful music could be heard coming from nowhere.

Following this Maitripa gave Marpa the Chakrasamvara empowerment. During the empowerment, the songs of dakas and dakinis could be heard. At the point in the ceremony when one has to give the *torma*s, seven red wild animals appeared, being the manifestations of the dakinis and protectors, to receive the *torma* offering. Finally, Maitripa said to Marpa, "Now you have received all these instructions, but they shouldn't be given to anybody in India."

Chapter 7

Marpa Returns to Tibet

Marpa returned to Tibet going again through Nepal and he reached his home ending his third journey to India. The next part of his biography tells how through his very great intelligence, he was able to realize the essential nature of phenomena.

When Marpa returned to Tibet, he spent time doing the practice. After that, he was forced by circumstances to show miracles to other people. This happened because there were a few people who didn't have any confidence in Marpa and said, "Well, he's just been to India but in fact all he did there was to learn a lot of tricks and is just deceiving us. In fact, he is not changed, he is just as negative as he ever was." And they were saying so many bad things about him, he could see that they were developing a very negative attitude toward what he was saying. So in order to make them change their minds, he had to demonstrate some miracles using what he knew through Naropa's instructions.

Also to eliminate the negative attitude of these people, he sang a spiritual song in which he explained all the various instructions he had received from Naropa:

I, Marpa Lotsawa went to India and there I was able to receive all of the profoundest teachings. I received the king of tantras, the Hevajra tantra. I was able to receive this from the great mahapandita Naropa himself. I also received all the teachings on Danzhi and one particular aspect of this which is the instructions on ejection and transference of consciousness. Also, I was given the instructions on dream meditation and the meditation on the great luminous clarity. I was given these instructions along with all the clarifying commentaries. Also, I was given the king of all the

instructions for understanding the very nature of the mind, the subtle heat instruction. So all this I received in India.

I was given the very precious instructions on gaining control of my prana. And I also learned how to get rid of sickness and diseases that could affect my body. I also learned that my body was the very mandala of the deity, and I was given instructions on how to develop and increase the power of my vital energy and all the systems that convey this vital energy in my body.

Now all of you who feel distrust for me, and who feel unhappy about who I am or what I have done, you don't need to have this lack of trust and confidence. You can appreciate the value of what I received.

And once Marpa had told them about all this, then most of them felt very great respect for what Marpa had received. They realized that these were all the very profound teachings of the tantras. As a result, they felt a great desire to practice them and began to realize the value of these teachings. That is how many of his students were able to engage in the practice in a very positive way.

Chapter 8

How Marpa Lost His Son

Raising bodhichitta

In the text there is a very interesting example on how we should begin studying the dharma. Once upon a time in India there used to be a small island which was a few days journey away from the continent on a sailboat. Many people used to travel there because this island was famous for having a lot of very precious things on it such as diamonds and gold. So many people would go there but they sometimes had to face a lot of difficulties such as great storms on the way. But they would face all those dangers because they so much wanted to get to the island and collect all the precious things they could find there.

Now imagine that someone would take all the trouble to make the journey there, face all the hardships on the way, and when arriving at the island, forget all about why they came. They would never get the jewels and go back not taking anything with him. Someone like this would be a fool because he would have wasted a great opportunity and would have to go back again to get the jewels.

In the same way, we now have a great opportunity. It's like it is the time when all the jewels are in front of us and all we have to do is to make effort to remember and to use them. This is our chance. If we think "Well, maybe I'll do it later," there might not be such an opportunity. So we should use the opportunity now without being careless or inattentive, because this is our great chance. Throughout all our activities we should take care not to be lazy and careless. Whether we are receiving teachings or meditating or reciting mantras or making prayers, we should do it as carefully and as properly as we can without thinking, "I can just take it easy. It's not very important." What we must do is try to really focus very clearly on what we are doing and try to direct our mind, our body, our

speech, in the direction of dharma in order to put our whole self into our practice, and think that we want to do this now, right now. And if we do this, then, of course, we will obtain the results of our diligent efforts.

In one of Milarepa's poems it is said that laziness is the enemy. It is like the deep sleep of a corpse which is of no benefit at all. Laziness makes us think that it might be very nice to let oneself not do anything which seems like a very pleasant course of action. But really, it is very short-sighted because in the long term, this attitude can hurt us and make things more difficult. Milarepa continues on saying, "Do you know that this is a major obstacle. It is an obstacle because it will prevent us from practicing properly." In other words, laziness prevents us from eliminating suffering. We know that this is a major obstacle? And if we do, we must do everything we can to reject it.

Marpa's Son

In the previous chapter we saw how Marpa himself found his deep realization through practice. The next part of the story deals with the events connected with Marpa's son and what lead to the termination of the transmission of the four instructions on the ejection of consciousness and the resuscitation instructions in Tibet. Through the difficulties with Marpa's son, Darmadode that arose, it was impossible for these teachings to develop and to be practiced in Tibet. The death of Darmadode was, of course, very tragic for Marpa, his disciples, and his wife. Although the event itself was extremely painful and negative, it had one positive result which was to instill a very deep sense of renunciation in all those who were left behind. Marpa had seven sons and of these, six displayed no great intelligence, courage, or compassion. They were like anyone else. One of his sons, Darmadode however, was quite extraordinary.

Before Marpa left India for the last time Naropa advised Marpa to spend three years in retreat with his son and to give him the full transmission of all the instructions that he had received. Marpa and his son went into retreat in the town of Lhotrak. While they were in retreat there was a very special festival being celebrated nearby. Some people came to Marpa's house and invited Marpa to come, or

if he couldn't come, they invited his son. But they insisted that one of them should come. Marpa's wife told the guests that based on Naropa's advice, they had to stay in retreat together for three years, so they couldn't go to the festival, however, they could send one of Marpa's close disciples.

The negative forces, however, were actually working directly on Darmadode, and he suddenly began developing a feeling that he would really like to go to that festival. He felt he was in his prime of youth and this would be a highlight in his life. He was young, in good health, so then why shouldn't he go to the festival and enjoy himself? He developed this urge to go and that night he dreamt that an old woman was holding a stake in her hands and she was saying that she was on the way to the festival because she really wanted to go. Darmadode thought, "Well, if that old rake wants to go to the festival and since I much younger than her, I should go and have a good time there."

The next day he told his parents that he really wanted to go to the festival. Of course, his parents weren't too keen because they knew that it might not be the right thing. But they finally conceded by saying, "Well, if you do want to go, you may go, but there are several things that you really must not do at any cost." First he shouldn't sit in the main seat which in Tibet is the first row near all the action. He shouldn't teach dharma, he shouldn't drink any alcohol, and he shouldn't do any horse racing or jumping. So they said, "If you do that, then you may go." Darmadode agreed and went.

When Darmadode went to the festival, people began to ask, "Who is that man?" and when they found out it was the great Marpa's son they said, "Oh, please, you must come and sit here at the head of the row." So they sat him in the best seat. Once Darmadode was seated there, then some people said, "Well, you should tell us a little bit about dharma, maybe say a few things." And of course, he got talking, and started saying many things. And after he had been talking he became thirsty. Somebody came around and offered him some beer and he had a little bit here, a little bit there, and in the end he drank quite a lot. His uncle who was at the festival had a very excellent horse. The people all said, "Well, you must try the horse. You are very good at spiritual things, but it's not enough

to be a spiritual expert. You should also try to develop some physical abilities by showing us how you can do at horse racing." They continued, "You really must try that horse." Darmadode remembered what his parents had said and he thought, "I can't go." But then at the same time, everything was carrying him towards the race so and he said, "Okay, I'll try it."

At that point, Marpa's student Milarepa who was also attending the festival realized that Darmadode was really getting very carried away and that he had disobeyed several of his parents' instructions, so he said, "Come on, let's go back now. It's better to go back."

But Darmadode went on to ride the horse and by that time he was already quite drunk and he couldn't really handle the horse. The horse was tied down by a rope, and he said to the others, "Well, you ride ahead and I will catch up with you." The others started riding and when Darmadode was riding there was a bird who was startled and began to squawk like crows do when they suddenly scream quite loud when they fly. The horse became frightened and threw Darmadode to the ground and he hit his head. It was said that when his parents came, his head was broken into eight pieces.

Darmadode's mother asked Marpa if he could do something because he was very expert in the medical science. But Marpa had to admit that he couldn't do anything, but he said to his son, "Please do not forget your instructions." But at that point, Darmadode was already quite far gone moving in and out of consciousness.

Marpa who had a great deal of hope that his son would be able to help so many beings by carrying on his teachings was extremely distressed and sad. Previously, a couple who had a child who had recently died were suffering a great deal at that time. Marpa had advised them that this was just the nature of phenomena in samsara, that samsara is like a magical illusion or a dream and that the death of their child should be viewed like the death of a child who is born and dies in the course of a dream. When this couple heard that Marpa's son had died, they came to see him and said very respectfully, "But this death of your son also is merely a dream, a magical illusion." And Marpa replied, "That is true. But among dreams this was a very great dream and among illusions, this was a great illusion." He then added, "I'm not suffering because it is painful to me to be separated from my son and I'm not suffering

because I'm afraid that he's gone to the lower realms. I'm suffering because his death is a tremendous impediment to the vast benefit for beings and the teachings of the Buddha." Because of the realization of Marpa and the realization of Darmadode, this adverse situation was not a particular problem for them personally. Darmadode said next, "There is no need to be so sad." And he sang this spiritual song:

Everyone must die someday. But now, through the very great kindness of my father Marpa, I will not have any suffering when I die because of the instructions you gave me. So I do not have any worry about dying. My only worry is I will be unable to repay the great kindness of my father and mother. My dying request is that please do not be upset, my parents. I haven't forgotten the instructions that my dear father has given me; the teachings on the tantras and their commentaries and the teachings of the Six Yogas of Naropa. They are all present, completely alive in my mind. I have no fear concerning the bardo or concerning what will happen in my future life. And now I make a prayer that in the next life, we may all be able to meet in a pure land.

Since Darmadode possessed the instruction of the ejection of consciousness, the instruction for transferring one's consciousness into a corpse and resuscitating the corpse, he asked the other disciples of Marpa to go and find a corpse for him. So they went in search of a corpse, but they couldn't find anything suitable. All they found in the cemetery was a little baby's body, and the parents were upset when they saw the child moving and thought it was a ghost taking possession of the body, and they blinded the body with needles. Then it was obvious that it would be of no use to carry on living in such a body. So Marpa's son didn't enter that corpse. Because Darmadode did not enter another human body the instructions of ejection of consciousness and resuscitation didn't develop in Tibet.

But later on, Marpa's son transferred his consciousness into the corpse of a pigeon, and he flew to India and alighted in the cemetery

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

of Sitavana or "Cool Grove." There he found the body of a child of a Brahmin family and he entered that dead body. When the dead body rose and started walking, the people who were working in the cemetery were terrified. Fortunately Darmadode could speak some of the local language and he said, "Don't worry, I'm not a ghost. I'm just someone who's come back to life."

Then the people working in the cemetery were most impressed, and they took the child to the parents and the parents were overjoyed because all of the sudden they had gotten their son back. Later, of course, they noticed that their son wasn't quite the same as before. He suddenly seemed to possess qualities that he never had before, and his way of thinking was also quite different and quite extraordinary. So they asked him all sorts of questions and the child told them the whole story. He told them that he had transferred his consciousness into the body of a pigeon, and then from the body of a pigeon into the corpse of their son. And that is when he was given the name of Tiphupa which means "the pigeon one."

In the meantime, back in Tibet, everybody was extremely saddened by what had happened. Darmadode's mother, Dagmema, and Marpa and all the disciples were really grieving over the death of Darmadode. It came to such a point that Marpa had to sing a song to try to dissipate their grief and he sang:

Yes, we have lost Darmadode who was a very exceptional son, but we have to understand that everything in the world, everything in life is like this. Everything is just an illusion. And this situation should show it to us very clearly. It is part of the very nature of conditioned existence that things cease, and this is a very clear example to us. So we shouldn't grieve.

What we should do, which is far more important, is to practice dharma. We possess the rarest and most precious jewels of the teaching. We have all the whispered lineage instructions. And we have all the teachings of the tantras. So although we have lost Darmadode, we must use this teaching.

Naropa had predicted that my family line would be broken, but he also predicted that my spiritual lineage would

How Marpa Lost His Son

be very strong and very great. So what we have to do now is to work for what will be very beneficial, not only in the short term, but in the very long term.

When Marpa had spoken in this way, his wife Dagmema and all his disciples felt a very, very strong sense of renunciation, and also a very deep wish to practice as properly as possible. They all then started practicing with very great, intense diligence.

In Marpa's biography, the story of the great suffering of Marpa and Dagmema and their students at the time of the death of Darmadode is intended to be an example for our own situations as practitioners. Although we meet and receive extraordinary instructions from great gurus, nevertheless we encounter obstacles and extremely adverse conditions. At this point we may find ourselves thinking: "Why is this happening to me? I'm a practitioner, this shouldn't be happening," and we start to blame ourselves. We begin to think that something is wrong with the way we are practicing. This can happen to an individual and it can happen to a whole spiritual community. What's important to understand that the arising of obstacles is not contradictory to the path of dharma. According to the dharma one can overcome obstacles and overcoming them means being trained to the point where obstacles neither harms you in your practice nor in your worldly affairs.

How the Teachings of Marpa Spread

One day Marpa and some of his disciples were together and some of his main disciples asked Marpa what would happen to the Kagyu tradition. They said, "Now your son, the great bodhisattva Darmadode, is no longer with us and you are getting older; we are wondering how the teachings of this oral transmission lineage will be transmitted in the future."

Marpa answered that Naropa had predicted that his own family line would stop, but that his spiritual line would develop and be very strong. So he said, "In order to see exactly what's going to happen in the future, I would like all of you to be attentive to the dreams you are going to have tonight." Then among the greatest dreams that they

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

had. Milarepa had one dream that was particularly significant. Milarepa told them of his dream in the form of a spiritual song:

Following my guru's request, I looked at my dreams and this is what I saw. In the middle of Tibet, I saw a very high snow mountain that was pointing right into the sky. On either side of this mountain peak were the sun and the moon. Then to the east I saw a great pillar standing and on top of the pillar was standing a lion. The lion had a very thick and very beautiful mane. He was gazing into space. Then the lion jumped onto the mountain. To the south, I saw another pillar on which a tiger was standing and the tiger was roaring very, very loudly. He had very beautiful fur arranged with very beautiful designs. Then the tiger jumped into a forest. On the western side was another pillar on which was standing a garuda. The garuda had great wings and feathers and was gazing into space as it flew into the sky. On the northern side there was another pillar where a vulture was standing. I saw a vulture giving birth to young ones, and then these gave birth to others, so that in the end, the whole of the sky was filled with vultures. In the end they built a nest on the rock.

When Milarepa had finished telling his dream, he said, "This is what I saw, and I feel this might be a good dream, but would the lama be kind enough to interpret the dream and say whether this was good or bad." Marpa interpreted the dream in this way:

The snow mountain is myself, Marpa. And the fact that it was very great indicates the great development of the Kagyu teaching. The fact that it goes right into the sky shows the fact that the mahamudra view is very profound. The sun and the moon on either side of the mountain signify the very brilliant clarity of the mind that can be experienced in meditation.

Each of the pillars represents one of my main disciples. The eastern pillar represents Dorje Tsultim

How Marpa Lost His Son

and the lion on the pillar shows that Dorje Tsultim has the qualities of a lion which is being completely fearless and the qualities of his practice are excellent and incomparable with anybody else.

The southern pillar represents my other disciple, Ngoktön Chödor. The tiger on the pillar represents his tiger-like quality, and the very clear and beautiful fur on his body shows that he will keep the instructions of the whispered lineage very clear and unspoiled.

The western pillar represents Meton Tsonpo, and his particular quality is garuda-like. The fact that he flew into the sky shows that his view will be as great and vast as the sky.

The northern pillar represents my other disciple, Milarepa, and he has particularly vulture-like qualities. The fact that the vulture was giving birth to baby vultures shows that he will have a very excellent disciple. The vultures filling the whole of space signifies that his teachings will fill the whole of the world, spreading everywhere and that he will have many very, very excellent disciples, some being better than the master. And then the disciples of those previous disciples will be even better, so that the line will become better and better. The fact that the vultures in the dream alighted on a rock and built their nest on the rock signifies that Milarepa will have a very long life without any obstacles to his longevity.

Following this, the disciples of Marpa practiced all their instructions with even greater care than before. Of course, they always respected all the instructions that had been given, but now their diligence was reinforced and they practiced day and night very intensively.

Marpa then started wondering how he should distribute the various instructions so that they would benefit people in the best possible way in the future; like who should receive this particular instruction or who should receive that particular one. He decided to examine the signs that could indicate to him which were the best possible person for the transmission of particular teachings.

One morning he examined the signs. In his meditation he looked at what each one of his main disciples was doing at that particular moment. What he saw was a very strong indication of how he should pass on the teachings. Marpa saw that Ngoktör Chödor was engaged in the study and practice of the commentary of the Hevajra tantra. He saw that at the same time Dorje Tsultrim Wangnge was practicing the ejection of consciousness. He saw that Meton Tsonpo was practicing the instructions on the brilliant clarity of the mind, and finally he saw that Milarepa was practicing tummo. This then was an indication to him who would specialize in that particular aspect of the teaching. He decided to give each one the instructions on the teachings that they were practicing at the time when he had examined various signs to give an indication of how to transmit the teaching.

Having decided this, Marpa proceeded to give the various instructions to each of the four main disciples. To Ngoktör Chödor he gave the full instructions on the Hevajra and the Chakrasamvara tantra. These were the very precise and extensive instructions on the tantras and their various forms. As a help for their progress or *samaya support* for this activity, Marpa presented Chödor with the six bone ornaments of Naropa together with Naropa's ruby *mala* and Marpa's own copies of the original tantras. Marpa said to him, "Your particular way of helping beings in the future will be through explaining the tantras. So try to do your best in that direction."

To his other disciple, Tsurton Wangnge, he gave the complete ejection of consciousness instructions, and as a token of this specialization in the phowa practice, he gave him some hair of Naropa and the crown of five pieces made of bones that Naropa used to wear on his head. He then said to him, "Your particular way of helping beings will be through the ejection of consciousness instructions. So please do your best in that direction."

Then to Meton Tsonpo he gave all the instructions on luminosity or the great clarity of the mind. As a sign of his specializing in that line of teaching, he presented him with the vajra, bell, and *dharmaru* that had belonged to Naropa. He also asked him to spread the teachings of the bardo.

Finally, he gave Milarepa all the instructions on tummo practice, and as a sign of Milarepa's specialization in that teaching, he

presented him with the clothes of Naropa as an auspicious sign for his realization of the view of mahamudra and with the hat that had belonged to Maitripa. Marpa said to him, you must go and live in solitary places, and practice tummo instructions until you have achieved the full realization of the view and meditation. This is how you will be able to help all beings.

After Marpa had given the various teachings, most of the disciples went to their own residences to practice. But Marpa told Milarepa to remain for a short period of time. Although Marpa had given all of his instructions to all of his close disciples, in accordance with Naropa's prophecy, he gave Milarepa the special empowerments, transmissions, and instructions for the oral lineage of Chakrasamvara which was governed by a command seal.⁷⁸

Chapter 9

Marpa Teaches Through Miracles

We come to the third aspect of the biography, which is showing how through his very great realization Marpa was able to do all sorts of miracles. He achieved the highest realization or the ultimate fruition of the path. This realization wasn't something that he experienced just himself, but it was something that could be shown to others so that they would also have confidence in the path. So even ordinary people could see the signs of Marpa's great realization.

Among the miracles of Marpa, the most remarkable one is still possible to experience at the present time. This is the extraordinary spiritual line that he gave birth to. Think of all the people who have been able to achieve the ultimate realization since Marpa's time and then how many also were able to achieve the more ordinary type of spiritual accomplishment, and even how many people just began practicing because of Marpa. This in itself is a very special achievement which we could say is a miracle that testifies to Marpa's realization.

If we consider how many disciples Marpa had during his lifetime, then each one of these had many disciples himself. Take, for example, just one of Marpa's disciples, Milarepa. He had so many disciples and he gave so many teachings and instructions, that in turn, his disciples were able to do the same thing. And in the end you can see this tremendous spreading of this wealth of teaching that Marpa began in the first place.

The very special quality of these teachings is that they can truly communicate this realization to others. We learn from these teachings that it is possible to give up our negative emotions and that it is possible to achieve spiritual accomplishments. But most of the time this seems a very far away, almost impossible for us to achieve. It seems that our negative emotions are so deeply engraved in our mind, that it seems almost hopeless. But with the very special

instructions that have been transmitted from Marpa and through his lineage, it is actually possible to eliminate our negative emotions. We also hear about the different aspects of spiritual accomplishment, the ordinary aspect and the supreme aspect which is complete realization, and these seem really so far away. But once we know that there are very great masters who experienced it themselves, and then passed on these very profound instructions which make it possible to actually realize it ourselves, then we see that this is quite possible even for ourselves.

So when we speak of Marpa's special miracles we could refer to the miracles that he did physically or through the power of his mind, such as clairvoyance. But in fact, the greatest, the most remarkable of all these miracles is that he was able to show this possibility of realization to so many other beings.

Marpa has been dead for almost a thousand years. But we still have his teachings, and this is the direct result of his activity. Even today we can receive instructions for the very profound teachings of the Six Yogas of Naropa, the mahamudra instructions and so on. It is because of Marpa that we can hear such teachings, and then that we can practice them. So depending on our diligence and energy, we may be able to achieve any level of spiritual accomplishment. This spiritual accomplishment is not just understanding the words and concepts of the practice, but we are able to personally experience what it means to actually be free of the negative emotions and to truly understand the nature of reality. All this was made possible through Marpa's enlightened action. This is why it is said this is his greatest miracle.

Why is this type of miracle more special than all the other miracles? Consider, for example, the miracles that can be manifested physically. They will help the people who see them to have more devotion, but the effect of such powers, are very temporary. It's just at one point in time some people will gain more inspiration, more faith, more devotion because they witnessed a miracle. In contrast to these physical miracles, "the miracle of speech," has endless results. From the time that the teachings were given, for generations afterwards until the Buddha's teachings disappear from the face of the earth, the teachings will be available for everyone to practice and achieve the fruition of these teachings.

So this miracle of speech surpasses the other kinds of miracles, because its effect is never exhausted for as long as the whole of the Buddha's teachings are present. It also is something that can go on expanding more and more.

However, that doesn't mean that Marpa was capable of doing only this type of miracle, because it is quite clear from his story that he did do quite remarkable "ordinary miracles." Milarepa had several experiences of Marpa displaying miracles. Sometimes when Milarepa came to see Marpa, he saw Marpa as the form of one of the deities. Sometimes he didn't see anything at all because his body was totally invisible. At other times Milarepa saw him in the form of very brilliant lights and rainbows. Whenever Marpa showed him this kind of miracle, he would say to Milarepa, "Did you see my miracle? Did you believe in it?" And Milarepa would answer, "Yes, I can see you are a very special lama and I did see your miracle. And I can't help believing in it."

Marpa also showed his other disciples miracles from time to time. Marpa Golek would sometimes see Marpa in the form of Hevajra. Sometimes he and others saw him in the form of Chakrasamvara, the form of Guhyasamaja, or in the form of Vajravahni. When some of Marpa's disciples saw him in these various forms, they asked him questions such as, "Why did we see you in the form of Hevajra or Chakrasamvara?" Marpa would answer something like, "Well, it is likely that you may have seen me like this because at the time, I may have been visualizing this particular deity. At this same time, you must have been feeling very open and full of trust towards me, and the meeting of these two things at the same moment could produce this kind of vision."

Some other disciples didn't see Marpa in the form of various deities or yidams, but they would see very unusual things. At the place where Marpa was sitting they would see a great fire or they would see very, very clear water or they would see rainbows, or they would see nothing at all, or just a brilliant light. These students also asked Marpa how come they were seeing these things. They said, "We do not see you in the form of a yidam, but we see clear water or fire or light. What does that mean? Does that mean we are impure or we're pure?" And Marpa, in one of his spiritual songs explained that:

When someone is undergoing a process of purification, there is a transformation of his whole system whereby his inner subtle channels and all the vital energy that circulates, all of this has to undergo a complete process of purification. While this process of transformation is taking place, then it is possible to see such things as what you have seen.

In your body, you have the very central channels, and within them a circulation of energy is taking place. What is propelled by these vital currents is bodhichitta, the vital energy. When one practices meditation and particularly when one uses the tummo instructions in combination with the various postures and movements that one is doing, then one's mind is in a state of very great clarity. At that point, it is possible for those who are developed enough spiritually to have these experiences of seeing light, fire, rainbows, and so on.

Sometimes when Marpa was inside the room and the doors and the windows were closed, he could be seen walking through the walls as if there were there was nothing there. One of his sons used to make jokes about this saying, "Oh, if you were a thief it would be really convenient because you could just come and go without being stopped by walls or anything."

So this was a very brief account of Marpa's miracles by way of his pure body, speech, and mind. Only a brief account is given because the most important thing about Marpa is the teachings that he left us. We can experience these ourselves, and the other miracles won't make a tremendous difference to our faith, because our faith can be aroused and developed just on Marpa's teaching.

So this finishes the third main part of Marpa's life story.

Chapter 10

Marpa's Passing into Nirvana

Now we come to what would be a fourth part of Marpa's biography, if you count in terms of three divisions of the biography. There was one part of his birth, and the three points explaining the praise, now an extra part which tells us how Marpa passed away. Actually the title of this part is how after Marpa had worked for the sake of the teachings and beings, his body dissolved into *dharmadhatu*.

The time of his passing was on the fifteenth day of the first Tibetan month of the year, when Marpa was 88 years old, at dawn when the sun was just reaching the top of a nearby mountain. He wasn't sick at all and felt tremendously happy and joyful. He told one of his disciples, Marpa Golek, to prepare many beautiful offerings. Looking incredibly happy and smiling, he folded his hands at his heart as when we do when we make an offering and he said, "Now I can go and join Naropa and all the dakas and dakinis." And then he passed away just sitting in meditation. It is said that when he passed away, many very beautiful things appears, like the sky suddenly filled up with rainbows and there was a rain of flowers. Very unusual divine music could be heard, and very beautiful fragrant smells could be smelled. So this is how Marpa passed away.

We have reached the end of Marpa's biography, and it is important to remember that Marpa appeared to most people as a very ordinary man. It was only to his very close disciples who were spiritually ready to understand, that he showed miracles and special things. Marpa had thirteen gurus in India with the main ones being Naropa, Maitripa, Kukkuripa, and Yeshe Lingpo. He had seven sons. But of his sons only one of them was really important in terms of the dharma, and that was his son Darmadode. The others didn't do anything outstanding in connection with dharma so Naropa's prediction that he had no family line, but he had a very strong line of spiritual sons, his disciples was correct. Marpa had eight main

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

disciples, four of who were the pillars of the teachings, and four disciples who had a special connection with Marpa from a past lifetime.

THE CHAKRASAMVARA GOING TO THE TRUNGPA LINEAGE

We might view this biography is from the point of view of ordinary appearances and see how Marpa was born, what he studied, how he practiced, what he taught, and the circumstances surrounding his passing away. However, if we look beyond ordinary appearances we discover that before Marpa was born, he was the Indian siddha known as Dombhi Heruka, and as is mentioned briefly in Marpa's biography. This siddha performing such actions as riding around on a tiger and using a poisonous snake as a whip to direct the tiger. Following that lifetime, he was reborn as Marpa and then afterwards he was reborn again in Tibet as Trungmase Lodro Rinchen who was a student of the fifth Karmapa, Deshin Shekpa. The Karmapa at one point made the statement that of the many profound lineages which he held, the most profound lineage was of Chakrasamvara and the Karmapa presented this lineage to Trungmase Lodro Rinchen to keep and protect. The lineage of the Trungpa tulku are the emanations of the body, speech, and mind of Trungmase Lodro Rinchen. So, although we've talked about the external circumstances of Marpa's life, what we're really talking about is Trungpa Rinpoche. Among all the instructions which have been presented to the students of Trungpa Rinpoche in the gradual format in which he presented them, the final or ultimate instruction of his presentation has been the abhisheka and sadhana of Chakrasamvara. And this was the innermost pith of Naropa's instructions entrusted by him to Marpa and entrusted by the fifth Gyalwa Karmapa to Trungmase Lodro Rinchen and from then on down, it has passed primarily through the lineage of the Trungpas.²⁵

How the biography was written

The way this biography came to be written was that some of Marpa's disciples like Milarepa and Marpa Golek had made some notes on Marpa's life and these notes were used by a great

Marpa's Passing Into Nirvana

mahasiddha who then wrote the biography. In Tibet there were three very famous mahasiddhas who were called "madmen." There was the Madman of Tsang, The Madman of Druk, and the Madman of central Tibet. It was the Madman of Tsang named is Tsang Nyön Heruka who used these notes to compile the biography of Naropa.

Concluding Statement

Marpa has passed away and there is nothing left of him outwardly, but his all-seeing mind, his pure intelligence is still here. Whenever we do anything positive and negative with our body, speech, or mind Marpa can see all of it as clearly as if it were in the palm of his hand.

We must also consider that because Marpa went through so many difficulties in order to obtain the teachings for the sake of all beings that he must naturally be concerned with the way in which these teachings are being practiced and the way people who practice his teachings are getting on. He wants to see whether they are doing things properly, whether or not they are able to reduce their negative emotions and whether they are gaining some understanding or not. One could say that his hopes concerning the quality of the practice of disciples are in proportion to the great hardships that he went through to receive these teaching. If Marpa sees that we can't do that or that we don't take the trouble to do it, then he feels very saddened.

We shouldn't believe that when we do things, it makes no difference because no one is aware of it. Not only Marpa, but all the other buddhas and bodhisattvas are also aware of our behavior. Everything we do, they can see and they can understand it very clearly. So we should think that out of respect of their complete knowledge of our actions, words, and thoughts, we should try to act as properly as possible. Keeping Marpa's teachings in mind, we should always try to act and think and speak in the best possible way.

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

A Brief Biography of Thrangu Rinpoche

Thrangu Rinpoche was born in Kham in 1933. At the age of five he was formally recognized by the Sixteenth Karmapa and the previous Situ Rinpoche as the incarnation of the great Thrangu tulku. Entering Thrangu monastery, from the ages of seven to sixteen he studied reading, writing, grammar, poetry, and astrology, memorized ritual texts, and completed two preliminary retreats. At sixteen under the direction of Khenpo Lodro Rabse he began the study of the three vehicles of Buddhism while staying in retreat.

At twenty-three he received full ordination from the Karmapa. When he was twenty-seven Rinpoche left Tibet for India at the time of the Chinese military takeover. He was called to Rumtek, Sikkim, where the Karmapa had his seat in exile. At thirty-five he took the geshe examination before 1500 monks at Buxar monastic refugee camp in Bengal, and was awarded the degree of Geshe Lharampa. On his return to Rumtek he was named Abbot of Rumtek monastery and the Nalanda Institute for Higher Buddhist studies at Rumtek. He has been the personal teacher of the four principal Karma Kagyu tulkus: Shamar Rinpoche, Situ Rinpoche, Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Gyaltsab Rinpoche.

Thrangu Rinpoche has traveled extensively throughout Europe, the Far East and the USA; he is the abbot of Gampo Abbey, Nova Scotia, Canada, of Thrangu House, Oxford, in the UK. In 1984 he spent several months in Tibet where he ordained over 100 monks and nuns and visited several monasteries. He has also founded the monastery, Thrangu Tashi Choling in Boudhnath, a retreat center and college at Namu Buddha, east of the Kathmandu Valley, and has established a school in Boudhnath for the general education of lay children and young monks. He built Tara Abbey in Kathmandu. In October of 1999 he consecrated the College at Sarnath which will accept students from the different sects of Buddhism and will be available to western students as well.

Thrangu Rinpoche has given teachings in over 25 countries and is especially known for taking complex teachings and making them accessible to Western students. Thrangu Rinpoche is a recognized master of Mahamudra meditation.

The Glossary

abhisheka (Tib. *wang*) To do a vajrayana practice one must receive the empowerment or abhisheka from a qualified lama. One should also receive the practice instruction (Tib. *tri*) and the textual reading (Tib. *lung*).

aggregates, five (Skt. *skandha*, Tib. *phung po nga*) Literally, "heaps." These are the five basic transformations that perceptions undergo when an object is perceived. First is form which includes all sounds, smells, etc. everything that is not thought. The second and third are sensations (pleasant and unpleasant, etc.) and identification. Fourth is mental events which actually include the second and third aggregates. The fifth is ordinary consciousness such as the sensory and mental consciousnesses.

anuttarayoga tantra (Tib. *nal jor la na me pay ju*) There are four levels of the vajrayana and Anuttarayoga tantra is the highest of these. It contains the Guhyasamaja, the Chakrasamvara, the Hevajra, and the Kalachakra tantras.

Atisha (982-1055 C.E.) Was a Buddhist scholar at Vikramashila University in India and came to Tibet at the invitation of the King to overcome the damage done by Langdarma. He helped found the Kadam tradition.

bardo (Tib.) Literally, bardo means "between the two." There are six kinds of bardos, but here it refers to the time between death and a rebirth in a new body.

bindu (Tib. *rigle*) Vital essence drops or spheres of psychic energy which are often visualized in vajrayana practices.

bodhichitta (Tib. *chang chup chi sem*) Literally, the mind of enlightenment. There are two kinds of bodhichitta: absolute bodhichitta, which is completely awakened mind that sees the emptiness of phenomena, and relative bodhichitta which is the aspiration to practice the six paramitas and free all beings from the suffering of samsara.

bodhisattva (Tib. *chang chup sem pa*) Literally, one who exhibits the mind of enlightenment. Also an individual who has committed him or herself to the mahayana path of compassion and the practice of the six paramitas to achieve Buddhahood to free all beings from samsara.

bodhisattva levels (Skt. *bhumi*, Tib. *sa*) The levels or stages a bodhisattva goes through to reach enlightenment. These consist of ten levels in the sutra tradition and thirteen in the tantra tradition.

Cakrasamvara (Tib. *korlo dompa*) A meditational deity which belongs to the Annuttarayoga tantra set of teachings.

cakravartin (Tib. *koro gnyur wa*) Literally, the turner of the wheel and also called a universal monarch. This is a king who propagates the dharma and starts a new era.

central channel

completion stage (Tib. *dzo rim*) In the vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the development and the completion stage. The completion stage is a method of tantric meditation in which one attains bliss, clarity, and non-thought by means of the subtle channels and energies within the body.

daka (Tib. *khandro*) A male counterpart to a dakini.

dakini (Tib. *khandroma*) A yogini who has attained high realizations of the fully enlightened mind. She may be a human being who has achieved such attainments or a non-human manifestation of the enlightened mind of a meditational deity.

dharmata (Tib. *chö nyi*) Dharmata is often translated as "suchness" or "the true nature of things" or "things as they are." It is phenomena as it really is or as seen by a completely enlightened being without any distortion or obscuration so one can say it is "reality."

five buddha families (Tib. *rig nga*) These are the buddha, vajra, ratna, padma, and karma families.

generation stage (Skt. *utpattikrama*, Tib. *che rim*) In the vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the development and the completion stage. This is a method of tantric meditation which involves visualization and contemplating deities for the purpose of realizing the purity of all phenomena. In this stage visualization of the deity is established and maintained.

dharma (Tib. *chö*) This has two main meanings: Any truth such as the sky is blue and secondly, as used in this text, the teachings of the Buddha (also called Buddha-dharma).

dharmadhatu (Tib. *chö ying*) The all-encompassing space, unoriginated and without beginning, out of which all phenomena arises. The Sanskrit means "the essence of phenomena" and the Tibetan means "the expanse of phenomena" but usually it refers to the emptiness which is the essence of phenomena.

dharmakaya (Tib. *chö ku*) One of the three bodies of Buddhahood. It is enlightenment itself, that is wisdom beyond reference point. See kayas, three.

dharmata (Tib. *chö nyi*) Dharmata is often translated as "suchness" or "the true nature of things" or "things as they are." It is phenomena as it really is or as seen by a completely enlightened being without any distortion or obscuration so one can say it is "reality."

disturbing emotions (Skt. *klesha*, Tib. *nyön mong*) The emotional obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) which are also translated as "poisons." The three main kleshas are (passion or desire or attachment), (aggression or anger); and (ignorance or delusion or aversion). The five kleshas are the three above plus pride and (envy or jealousy).

dream practice (Tib. *mi lam*) One of the Six Yogas of Naropa (See Six Yogas of Naropa)

doha (Tib. *gur*) A spiritual song spontaneously composed by a vajrayana practitioner. It usually has nine syllables per line.

dream practice (Tib. *mi lam*) An advanced vajrayana practice using the dream state. This is one of the Six Yogas of Naropa (See Six Yogas of Naropa).

eight worldly dharmas (Tib. *jik ten chö gysh*) These keep one from the path; they are attachment to gain, attachment to pleasure, attachment to praise, attachment to fame, aversion to loss, aversion to pain, aversion to blame, and aversion to a bad reputation.

empowerment (Tib. *wang*, Skt. *abhisheka*) To do a vajrayana practice one must receive the empowerment from a qualified lama. One should also receive the practice instruction (Tib. *tri*) and the textual reading (Tib. *lung*).

- father tantra** (Tib. *pha gyü*) There are three kinds of tantras. The father tantra is concerned with transforming aggression, the mother tantra with transforming passion and the non-dual tantra with ignorance.
- five aggregates**, see aggregates, five
- five buddha families** (Tib. *rig nga*) These are the buddha, vajra, ratna, padma, and karma families.
- four empowerments** (Tib. *wang shi*) These are the vase, the secret, the wisdom-knowledge, and the name empowerment.
- Gampopa** (1079-1153 C.E.) One of the main lineage holders of the Kagyu lineage in Tibet. Known also for writing the *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*.
- ganacakra** (Tib. *tog kyi kor lo*) This is a ritual feast offering which is part of a spiritual practice.
- garuda** (Tib. *khyung*) A mythical bird which hatches fully grown.
- generation stage** (Skt. *utpatikrama*, Tib. *che rim*) In the vajrayana there are two stages of meditation: the development and the completion stage. This is a method of tantric meditation which involves visualization and contemplating deities for the purpose of realizing the purity of all phenomena. In this stage visualization of the deity is established and maintained.
- guru** (Tib. *lama*) A teacher in the Tibetan tradition who has reached realization.
- guru yoga** (Tib. *lamay naljor*) A practice of devotion to the guru culminating in receiving his blessing and blending indivisibly with his mind. Also the fourth practice of the preliminary practices of ngöndro.
- Guhyasamaja tantra** (Tib. *sang pa dus pa*) This is the "father tantra" of the anuttarayoga which is the highest of the four tantras. Guhyasamaja is the central deity of the vajra family.
- heruka** (Tib. *trak thung*) A wrathful male deity.
- Hevajra tantra** (Tib. *kye dorje*) This is the "mother tantra" of the Anuttarayoga tantra which is the highest of the four yogas.
- hinayana** (Tib. *tek pa chung wa*) Literally, the "lesser vehicle." The term refers to the first teachings of the Buddha, which emphasized the careful examination of mind and its confusion.
- idiot compassion** This is the desire to help others but it is not accompanied by sufficient wisdom so what one does may not

- really be beneficial. An example is teaching someone who is hungry to fish, yet the person receives bad karma for killing the fish.
- illusory body** (Tib. *gyu lu*) One of the Six Yogas of Naropa. See the Six Yogas of Naropa.
- jnana** (Tib. *yeshe*) Enlightened wisdom which is beyond dualistic thought.
- Kadampa** (Tib.) One of the major schools in Tibet. It was founded by Atisha (993-1054 C.E.).
- Kagyu** (Tib.) One of the four major schools of Buddhism in Tibet. It was founded by Marpa and is headed by His Holiness Karmapa. The other three are the Nyingma, the Sakya, and the Gelupa schools.
- kalpa** (Tib. *kal pa*, Skt. *yuga*) An eon which lasts in the order of millions of years.
- karma** (Tib. *lay*) Literally "action." Karma is a universal law that when one does a wholesome action one's circumstances will improve and when one does an unwholesome action negative results will eventually occur from the act.
- kayas, three** (Tib. *ku sum*) There are three bodies of the Buddha: the nirmanakaya, sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. The dharmakaya, also called the "truth body," is the complete enlightenment or the complete wisdom of the Buddha that is unoriginated wisdom beyond form and manifests in the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya. The sambhogakaya, also called the "enjoyment body," manifests only to bodhisattvas. The nirmanakaya, also called the "emanation body," manifests in the world and in this context manifests as the Shakyamuni Buddha.
- klesha** (Tib. *nyön mong*) The emotional obscurations (in contrast to intellectual obscurations) which are also translated as "poisons." The three main kleshas are (passion or desire or attachment), (aggression or anger); and (ignorance or delusion or aversion). The five kleshas are the three above plus pride and (envy or jealousy).
- kriya tantra** (Tib. *ja way gyü*) One of the four tantras which emphasizes personal purity.
- lama** (Skt. *guru*) A spiritual teacher.
- lotsawa** This is Sanskrit for "translator."

- Mahamaya tantra** (Tib. *gyu ma chen mo*) The mother tantra of the annutarayoga tantra which is one of the four main tantras in Tibet.
- mahamudra** (Tib. *cha ja chen po*) Literally means "great seal" or "great symbol." This meditative transmission emphasizes perceiving mind directly rather than through skillful means.
- mahapandita** (Tib. *pan di ta chen po*) A very great Buddhist scholar (pandita).
- mahasiddha** (Tib. *drup thop chen po*) A practitioner who has a great deal of realization.
- mahayana** (Tib. *tek pa chen po*) Literally, the "great vehicle." These are the teachings of the second turning of the wheel of dharma, which emphasize shunyata, compassion, and universal buddha nature.
- mala** (Tib. *tregwa*) A rosary which usually has 108 beads.
- mandala** (Tib. *chin kor*) A diagram used in various vajrayana practices which usually has a central deity and four directions.
- mara** (Tib. *du*) Difficulties encountered by the practitioner. There are four kinds—skandha-mara which is incorrect view of self, klesha-mara which is being overpowered by negative emotions, matyu-mara which is death and interrupts spiritual practice, and devaputra-mara which is becoming stuck in the bliss that comes from meditation.
- Marpa** (1012-1097 C.E.) Marpa was known for being a Tibetan who made three trips to India and brought back many tantric texts including the Six Yogas of Naropa, the Guhyasamaja, and the Chakrasamvara practices. His teacher was Tilopa and he founded the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.
- Milarepa** (1040-1123 C.E.) Milarepa was a student of Marpa who attained enlightenment in one lifetime. His student Gampopa founded the (Dagpo) Kagyu lineage.
- mother tantra** (Tib. *ma gyu*) There are three kinds of tantras. The father tantra which is concerned with transforming aggression, the mother tantra which concerns transforming passion and the non-dual tantra which concerns ignorance.
- mudra** (Tib. *chak gya*) In this book it is a "hand seal" or gestures which are preformed in specific tantric ritual practices to symbolize certain aspects of the practice being done.

- Nagarjuna** (Tib. *Indrup*) An Indian scholar in the second century who founded the Madhyamaka philosophical school which emphasized emptiness.
- Naropa** (956-1040 C.E.) An Indian master who is best known for transmitting many vajrayana teachings to Marpa who took these back to Tibet before the Moslem invasion of India.
- nirmanakaya** (Tib. *tulku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha and the nirmanakaya or "emanation body" manifests in the world and in this context manifests as the Shakyamuni Buddha. See kayas, three.
- nirvana** (Tib. *nyangde*) Literally, "extinguished." Individuals live in samsara and with spiritual practice can attain a state of enlightenment in which all false ideas and conflicting emotions have been extinguished. This is called nirvana.
- pandita** A great scholar.
- partial compassion** The desire to feel sorry for and want to help others, but only if they are of a certain gender, race, ethnic group, etc.
- phowa** (Tib.) An advanced tantric practice concerned with the ejection of consciousness at death to a favorable realm.
- prajna** (Tib. *she rab*) In Sanskrit it means "perfect knowledge" and can mean wisdom, understanding, or discrimination. Usually it means the wisdom of seeing things from a high (e.g. non-dualistic) point of view.
- prana** (Tib. *bindu*) Life supporting energy.
- root lama** (Tib. *tsa way lama*) A teacher whom which one has received the instructions and empowerments that form the core of one's practice.
- rupakaya** (Tib. *zuk kyi ku*) The form bodies which encompass the sambhogakaya and the nirmanakaya.
- sadhana** (Tib. *drup tap*) A tantric ritual text which details how to attain meditative realization of a specific mandala of deities.
- samadhi** (Tib. *tin ne zin*) Also called meditative absorption or one-pointed meditation, this is the highest form of meditation.
- samaya** (Tib. *dam sig*) The vows or commitments made in the vajrayana which can be to a teacher or to a practice.
- sambhogakaya** (Tib. *long chö dzok ku*) There are three bodies of the Buddha and the sambhogakaya, also called the "enjoyment

body," is a realm of the dharmakaya which only manifests to bodhisattvas. See the three kayas.

samsara (Tib. *kor wa*) Conditioned existence of ordinary life in which suffering occurs because one still possesses attachment, aggression, and ignorance. It is contrasted to nirvana.

sangha (Tib. *gen dun*) These are the companions on the path. They may be all the persons on the path or the noble sangha, which are the realized ones.

Saraha (about 9th century) One of the eighty-four mahasiddhas of India who was known for his spiritual songs about mahamudra.

siddha (Tib. *drup top*) An accomplished Buddhist practitioner.

siddhi (Tib. *ngodrup*) Spiritual accomplishments of accomplished practitioners.

Six Yogas of Naropa (Tib. *naro chödruk*) These six special yogic practices were transmitted from Naropa to Marpa and consist of the subtle heat practice, the illusory body practice, the dream yoga practice, the luminosity practice, the ejection of consciousness practice, and the bardo practice.

skandha (Tib. *pung pa*) Literally "heaps." These are the five basic transformations that perceptions undergo when an object is perceived: form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness. First is form which includes all sounds, smells, etc. everything we usually think of as outside the mind. The second and third are sensations (pleasant and unpleasant, etc.) and identification. Fourth is mental events which actually include the second and third aggregates. The fifth is ordinary consciousness such as the sensory and mental consciousnesses.

spiritual song (Skt. *doha*, Tib. *gur*) A religious song spontaneously composed by a vajrayana practitioner. It usually has nine syllables per line.

subtle channels (Skt. *nadi*, Tib. *tsa*) These refer to the subtle channels which are not anatomical ones but ones in which psychic energies or "winds" (Skt. *prana*, Tib. *lung*) travel.

subtle heat (Tib. *tummo*) An advanced vajrayana practice for combining bliss and emptiness which produces heat as a byproduct.

shunyata (Tib. *tong pa nyi*) Usually translated as voidness or emptiness. The Buddha taught in the second turning of the wheel

of dharma that external phenomena and internal phenomena or the concept of self or "I" have no real existence and therefore are "empty."

sutra (Tib. *do*) These are the hinayana and mahayana texts which are the words of the Buddha. These are often contrasted with the tantras which are the Buddha's vajrayana teachings and the shastras which are commentaries on the words of the Buddha.

tantra (Tib. *gyu*) The texts of the vajrayana practices.

thangka (Tib.) A Tibetan religious scroll.

three jewels (Tib. *kön chok sum*) These are the Buddha, the dharma, and the sangha.

Tilopa (928-1009 C.E.) One of the 84 mahasiddhas who became the guru of Naropa who transmitted his teachings to the Kagyu lineage in Tibet.

tulku (Tib., Skt. *nirmanakaya*) A manifestation of a buddha that is perceived by an ordinary person. The term has commonly been used for a discovered rebirth of any teacher.

tummo (Tib.) An advanced vajrayana practice for combining bliss and emptiness which produces heat as a byproduct.

torma (Tib., Skt. *balī*) A ritual object made of dried barley and butter and put on the shrine used as a symbolic offering to the deities.

vajra (Tib. *dorje*) Usually translated "diamond like." This may be an implement held in the hand during certain vajrayana ceremonies, or it can refer to a quality which is so pure and so enduring that it is like a diamond.

Vajradhara (Tib. *Dorje Chang*) The name of the dharmakaya Buddha. The teachings of the Kagyu lineage came from Vajradhara.

Vajravahini (Tib. *Dorje Phagmo*) A dakini who is the consort of Chakrasamvara. She is the main yidam of the Kagyu lineage and the embodiment of wisdom.

Vajrayogini (Tib. *Dorje Palmo*) A semi-wrathful yidam.

vajrayana (Tib. *dorje tek pa*) There are three major traditions of Buddhism (hinayana, mahayana, vajrayana) The vajrayana is based on the tantras and emphasizes the clarity aspect of phenomena and is mainly practiced in Tibet.

yidam (Skt. *ishtadevata*) A tantric deity that embodies qualities of Buddhahood and is practiced in the vajrayana. Also called a tutelary deity.

yogatantra (Tib. *naljor gyi gyu*) Literally, "union tantra" and refers to a tantra that places emphasis on internal meditations.

yogi (Tib. *naljorpa*) A Buddhist practitioner who has chosen an unconventional path of practicing.

Glossary of Tibetan Terms

Pronounced

Bardo
bya ba gyu
cha ja chen po
chang chup sem pa
chang chup sems
che rim
chin kor
chö
chö kyi wangs
da po
do
dorje
dorje gur
dorje tek pa
drup chen
dzog rim
grong 'jug
gur
gyu lu
gyu
Kagyu
kal pa
khandra
khyung
kon chok sum
kor wa
ku sum
kye dorje
lama
lay
lung
mi lam
na bor pa
na ro cho drug

Transliterated

bar do
bya ba'i rgyud
phyag rgya chen po
byang chub sems dpa'
byang chub kyi sems
bskyed rim
dkyil 'khor
chos
chos dbyings
mkha' 'gro
mdo
rdo rje
rdo rje gur?
rdo rje theg pa
grub thob chen po
rdzogs rim
phowa

sgyu lus
rgyud
bka' brgyud
bskal pa
mkha' gro ma
khyung
dkon mchog gsum
'khor ba
sku gsum
kye' rdo rje
bla ma
las
lung
rmi lam
rnal 'byor pa
na ro chos drug

English

intermed. stage
kriya tantra
mahamudra
bodhisattva
bodhichitta
develop. stage
mandala
dharma
dharmadhatu
daka
sutra
vajra
dohas
vajrayana
mahasiddha
completion
ejection consc.
doha
illusory body
tantra
Kagyu
kalpa
dakini
garuda
three jewels
samsara
kayas, three
Hevajra tantra
guru
karma
ritual reading
dream practice
yogin
six yogas Naropa

A Spiritual Biography of Marpa

nam tar	nam thar	biography
nsi jot ls ns mr pay ju	mal 'byor bla na med pa'i	Anuttarayoga
pan di ta	pan di ta	pandita
phowa	'pho ba	ejection of conse
pung pa	phung po	skandha
rinpoche	rin po che	incarnate lama
sang pa dus pa	gsang ba 'dus	Guhyasamaja
she rab	shes rab	prajna
thangka	thang ka	scroll painting
tong pa nyi	stong pa nyid	shunyata
torma	gtor ma	ritual cake
tri	'khrid	practice instruct.
tsa way lama	rtsa bai bla ma	root lama
tummo	gtum mo	subtle heat
wong	dbang bsku	empowerment
yeshe	ye shes	wisdom
yidam	yi dam	meditat. deity

The Notes

By
Clark Johnson, Ph. D.
(unless otherwise noted)

1. The Tibetan words are given as they are pronounced, not spelled in Tibetan. For their actual spelling see the Glossary of Tibetan words.
2. *The Life of Marpa the Translator* by Tsang Nyön Heruka and translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1986.
3. The Buddhist belief about reality is different from our ordinary view. Normally we believe that the objects outside of us such as trees and rocks and people are solid, fairly unchanging, and real. However, Buddhists believe that external phenomena are actually empty and have the nature of illusion. To give an example, if we and all our friends look at a chair we all see it as solid, made of wood, and brown in color. However, physicists will tell us that actually the chair is really made up of 99.99% space with atoms which cannot be located in any specific place moving at incredible speeds and flying off the chair all the time. Not only that but the wood is actually composed of atoms of carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen and the brown color is simply a wavelength of radiation at human (not animal) eyes sees as "brown." Thrangu Rinpoche gives the example of Milarepa who actually realized the true empty nature of external objects and was therefore able to do things such as put his hand through rocks.
4. This biography of Marpa is based on *The Life of Marpa the Translator: Seeing Accomplishes All* (Tib. *ra byur mar pa lo tsa namtar tong ba don yod*).
5. This event occurred in Parping in Nepal and today there is a Hindu Vihara (with a Vajrayogini statue that Marpa is said to have meditated in front of) where this is said to have occurred.
6. This "connection by previous relationship" is a type of a link that persons have with a lama which is not a relationship in terms of cause and effect (karmic results), but comes out of a previous relationship. It comes from a habit of the past, like if you had in

- a previous life a lama and had received his or her instructions, worked with them, had faith in them, and aspired to be with them to receive teachings. This will then make you to want very strongly to return to this lama and receive these teachings again and to be with the lama again. So one's task that was started together wasn't completely finished and one has the desire to carry one with this relationship. It's like starting a joke and not quite finishing the joke and wanting to continue until it's completely told. So the disciple's relationship with a given lama leaves a very strong imprint in their subconscious and then in the next lifetime suddenly the subconscious memory wakes up and then one wants to be again with that particular lama and receive teachings from the lama.
- Thrangu Rinpoche
7. The tantras have been classified into four broad groups: The kriyatantra (translated as the "action tantra"), the caryatantra (translated as "performance tantra"), the yogatantra (or "union tantra") and the highest anuttarayogatantra ("unsurpassed union tantra"). The anuttarayogatantra often called just the anuttara-tantra is considered the highest set of tantras.
 8. In the Tibetan system there are subtle energies (Skt. *prana*, Tib. *lung*) which move along subtle channels (Skt. *bindu*, Tib. *tsa*) which are not anatomical, but more like meridians in acupuncture. In the higher tantric practices there are exercises which are designed to move these energies around so that they make the practice to go better.
 9. Vajradhara (Tib. Dorje Chang) is the dharmakaya emanation of the Buddha. Tilopa who was an emanation of Chakrasamvara received these teachings by visiting a dakini in the sambhogakaya realm.
 10. *Chanting the Names of Manjushri* (Skt *Manjushri Nama Sangiti*) has been translated by Alex Wayman and "is probably the most revered and recited tantric text among all the Tibetan Buddhists sects." (p. 28).
 11. Saraha is said to have originated the mahamudra lineage and his spiritual songs have been translated by Conze in *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*.
 12. This is Niguma who was either Naropa's wife or Naropa's sister (the word is the same in Tibetan). She was one of the great

The Notes

- tantric practitioners and went on to teach the Six Yogas of Niguma.
13. Tilopa was founder of the Kagyu lineage and teacher of Naropa. Naropa's twelve ordeals are described in Guenther's *The Life and Teachings of Naropa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963.
 14. We prefer to use the word emptiness instead of voidness because the emptiness of shunyata is emptiness of inherent nature means that on the ultimate level things do not exist, but on the relative level they do appear.
 15. The Buddha's mind is the dharmakaya but ordinary beings because they have many disturbing emotions and false views of the nature of reality cannot communicate directly with the dharmakaya. So the Buddha has the sambhogakaya which is a pure realm which can be visited by highly realized beings (buddhas and bodhisattvas) to receive teachings. In fact, Tilopa visited one of these realms to receive teachings. Finally, ordinary beings must rely on a human to receive teachings and this is the nirmanakaya with the Shakyamuni Buddha being the "supreme nirmanakaya." Clearly, if the Buddha had little compassion to help other beings he would not have created the sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya.
 16. Praying in the Buddhist context is different from praying in a theistic sense. When we pray in Buddhism to receive blessings, we are praying that we will open up our mind to receive whatever energy that is created by the great masters of the lineage. When we pray to god in a theistic sense we are trying to please the god so that the god will reward us for our devotion.
 17. Yidam meditation is a meditation in which one visualizes a deity such as Padmasambhava or Avalokiteshvara or Tara. In this vajrayana practice, called a sadhana, one creates the deity through visualization and does the practice and in the end one dissolves the deity (usually into oneself) to represent the inseparability of the deity and oneself.
 18. In fact Newe Lotsawa was so jealous when he realized that Marpa knew more that he did that he bribed a boatman to throw all of Marpa's texts in the river. However, Marpa had learned these texts by heart so they were not lost.

19. Placing something on one's head is a sign of respect. Tibetan will usually touch a Buddhist text or picture to the top of their head after looking at it.
20. Ordinary mind (Tib. *thamel gyi shepa*) is the original mind before it has been masked by disturbing emotions and misconceptions about reality. It is not the mind as we ordinarily think of it with all its thoughts and confusions.
21. The Hevajra, the Guhyasamaja, and the Mahamaya teachings were the three major tantric teachings that Marpa received in India. These along with the Six Yogas of Naropa and the Mahamudra teachings are the major practices of the Kagyu lineage.
22. Marpa made Milarepa build two towers of stone. After Milarepa had finished each one, he made him tear it down and put each rock back where it came from and start over. The third tower remains standing in Tibet (unless it was destroyed by the Chinese).
23. This practice will be described later on in the chapter on Marpa's eldest son Darmadote.
24. This refers to phowa practice. At the time of death, it is said that the mind must leave the body through the aperture at the top of the head if one wants a higher birth. If the mind leaves through any other orifice such as the eyes, the ears, the mouth, or the anus one will be reborn in a lower birth.
25. [This given at Gampo Abbey in Canada] So I have explained a little bit about the connection between the biography or namtar of Marpa and that of Trungpa Rinpoche. In this connection, as I said earlier, I would like to express my appreciation to all of you for your great care in the maintenance of the archives, the tapes, videotapes, photographs, transcripts, the published books and texts, and so forth. If you ask, "Is it enough to take care of the texts and so forth that you have received at this point?" The answer is, "No." because that's just the first step. After the first step, then you have to take the second step, which is that these teachings that are contained in the archives must be properly propagated. Those that should be published must be published, those that should be made available should be made available in the appropriate manner. The importance of Trungpa Rinpoche's

The Notes

writings and talks and so forth cannot be overemphasized. In this context, the following little story is pertinent.

In the early part of the twentieth century, there was a great scholar and teacher from Amdo named Gendun Chopel. Towards the end of his life, when he realized he was dying, he said to his students—by the way, Gendun Chopel smoked: "I wrote some things down on cigarette packages. Don't lose them."

However, if you ask, is just making the teachings available enough, the answer again is "no." After the second step, you have to take the third which, in this case, is that you make use of these teachings by studying them and training in the study of them as intensively as possible. Having taken that step, that step still is not enough because then finally you have to practice them and actually implement the meaning of the teachings in your life. And that still is not enough, because then you have to train yourself to the point where you can teach them to future generations. In order to do this, you should develop courage and strength of mind so that you can aspire that Trungpa Rinpoche's teachings will be undiminished until samsara is totally emptied. You could also reflect on the fact that this responsibility of maintaining and propagating his teachings does not rest with just one or two people. It's a responsibility that rests with all of you and if you view this as service to your root guru, it is that; if you view it as your practice, it is that. It's also the best possible inheritance you could leave your children and your other descendants.

--Thrangu Rinpoche

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