

THE SHEPHERD'S SEARCH FOR MIND

Obeisance to all Gurus

ONE day, Jetsun Milarepa descended from the Great Light Cave to the Happy Village of Mang Yul for food and alms. Seeing many people in the center of the village, he said to them, "Dear patrons, please give me some food this morning." They asked, "Are you the much-talked-about yogi who formerly resided at Ragma?" He replied, "Yes, I am." Then a great respect for him arose within them and they cried, "Oh, here comes the wonderful yogi!"

Among them was a married couple who had no children. Inviting Milarepa to their house, they served him and said, "Dear Lama, where are your home and relatives?" Milarepa replied, "I am a poor beggar who has disavowed his relatives and native land and has also been forsaken by them." Then the couple cried, "In that case we would like to adopt you into our family! We have a good strip of land which we can give you; you can then marry an attractive woman, and soon you will have relatives." Milarepa replied, "I have no need of these things, and will tell you why":

Home and land at first seem pleasant;
But they are like a rasp filing away one's
body, word, and mind!
How toilsome ploughing and digging can become!
And when the seeds you planted never
sprout, you have worked for nought!
In the end it becomes a land of misery—
desolate and unprotected—
A place of Hungry Spirits, and of haunting ghosts!
When I think of the warehouse
For storing sinful deeds,

It gnaws at my heart;
 In such a prison of transciency I will not stay,
 I have no wish to join your family!

The married couple said, "Please do not talk like that! We will find you a fine girl from a prominent family, who is fit to be your bride and who will suit your taste. Please consider this." Milarepa sang:

At first, the lady is like a heavenly angel;
 The more you look at her, the more you want to gaze.
 Middle-aged, she becomes a demon with a
 corpse's eyes;
 You say one word to her and she shouts back two.
 She pulls your hair and hits your knee,
 You strike her with your staff, but back
 she throws a ladle.
 At life's end, she becomes an old cow with
 no teeth.
 Her angry eyes burn with a devilish fire
 Penetrating deep into your heart!
 I keep away from women to avoid fights and
 quarrels.
 For the young bride you mentioned, I have
 no appetite.

The husband then said, "Dear Lama, it is true that when one grows old and close to death he has not the same capacity for enjoying life or for being pleasant as when he was young. But if I have no son, my grief and disappointment will be unbearable. How about you? Don't you need a son at all?" Milarepa sang in reply:

In youth, a son is like the Prince of Heaven;
 You love him so much that the passion is
 hard to bear.
 In middle age, he becomes a ruthless creditor
 To whom you give all, but he still wants more.
 Driven from the house are his own parents,
 Invited in is his beloved, charming lady.
 His father calls, but he will not answer;
 His mother cries out, but he will not listen.
 Then the neighbors take advantage, spreading
 lies and rumors.

Thus I learned that one's child oft becomes
one's enemy.
Bearing this in mind, I renounce the
fettors of Samsāra.
For sons and nephews I have no appetite.

Both husband and wife agreed with him, replying, "What you have said is indeed true. Sometimes one's own son becomes an enemy. Perhaps it would be better to have a daughter. What do you think?"
In answer Milarepa sang:

In youth, a daughter is like a smiling,
heavenly angel;
She is more attractive and precious than are jewels.
In middle age, she is good for nothing.
Before her father, she openly carries things away;
She pilfers secretly behind her mother's back.
If her parents do not praise her and satisfy
her wants,
They will suffer from her bitterness and temper.
In the end, she becomes red-faced and wields
a sword.
At her best, she may serve and devote herself
to others;
At her worst, she will bring mishaps and disaster.
Woman is always a trouble-maker;
Bearing this in mind, one should avoid
irretrievable misfortunes.
For women, the primary source of suffering,
I have no appetite.

The husband and wife then said, "One may not need sons and daughters, but without relatives, life would be too miserable and helpless. Is that not so?"

Milarepa again sang:

At first, when a man greets his relatives,
He is happy and joyful; with enthusiasm
He serves, entertains, and talks to them.
Later, they share his meat and wine.
He offers something to them once, they may
reciprocate.

In the end, they cause anger, craving, and
 bitterness;
 They are a fountain of regret and unhappiness.
 With this in mind, I renounce pleasant and
 sociable friends;
 For kinsmen and neighbors, I have no appetite.

The couple then said, "Indeed, you may not need kinsmen. However, since we own a great deal of property, would you like to have and take care of it?" Milarepa replied, "As the sun and moon never stop to brighten one small place, so I devote myself to the welfare of *all* sentient beings. I cannot, therefore, become a member of your family. By merely beholding me, both of you will be benefited in this and future lives. I will also make a wish that we may meet in the Pure Land of Oujen."

Milarepa then burst into another song:

Wealth, at first, leads to self-enjoyment,
 Making other people envious.
 However much one has, one never feels it is enough,
 Until one is bound by the miser's demon;
 It is then hard to spend it on virtuous deeds.

Wealth provokes enemies and stirs up ghosts.
 One works hard to gather riches which others
 will spend;
 In the end, one struggles for life and death.
 To amass wealth and money invites enemies;
 So I renounce the delusions of Samsāra.
 To become the victim of deceitful devils,
 I have no appetite.

These songs gave the couple unshakable faith in Milarepa and they gave away all their possessions for the sake of the Dharma. They began to practice the Jetsun's teachings and were forever released from falling into the three lower Realms. When they died, they entered the Path [of Bodhi] and step by step approached Buddhahood.

After this, the Jetsun returned to the Bodhi Cave of Ragma. His former patrons gave their services and offerings to him, and he remained there in an inspired mood.

One day, two young shepherds came to him. The younger one asked, "Dear Lama, have you a companion?"

Milarepa replied, "Yes, I have."

"Who is he?"

"His name is 'Friend Bodhi-Heart'."

"Where is he now?"

"In the House of the Universal Seed Consciousness."¹

"What do you mean by that?"

"My own body."

The elder boy then said, "Lama, we had better go, as you cannot guide us." But the younger one said, "Do you mean this Consciousness is mind itself, and that the physical body is the house of the mind?"

"Yes, that is correct."

The boy continued, "We know that although a house usually belongs only to one person, many people can enter it, so we always find a number of people living in one house. In the same way, is there only one mind in the body, or are there many? If there are many, how do they live together?"

"Well, as to whether there is only one mind in the body or many, you had better find that out by yourself."

"Revered One, I will try."

At this point, the boys took their leave and went home. Next morning, the younger boy returned and said to Milarepa, "Dear Lama, last night I tried to find out what my mind is and how it works. I observed it carefully and found that I have only one mind. Even though one wants to, one cannot kill this mind. However much one wishes to dismiss it, it will not go away. If one tries to catch it, it cannot be grasped; nor can it be held by pressing it. If you want it to remain, it will not stay; if you release it, it will not go. You try to gather it; it cannot be picked up. You try to see it; it cannot be seen. You try to understand it; it cannot be known. If you think it is an existing entity and cast it off, it will not leave you. If you think that it is non-existent, you feel it running on. It is something illuminating, aware, wide-awake, yet incomprehensible. In short, it is hard to say what the mind really is. Please be kind enough to explain the meaning of the mind."

In response, Milarepa sang:

Listen to me, dear shepherd, the protector

[of sheep]!

By merely hearing about sugar's taste,

Sweetness cannot be experienced;

Though one's mind may understand

What sweetness is,

It cannot experience directly;

Only the tongue can know it.

In the same way one cannot see in full
 the nature of mind,
 Though he may have a glimpse of it
 If it has been pointed out by others.²
 If one relies not on this one glimpse,
 But continues searching for the nature of mind,
 He will see it fully in the end.
 Dear shepherd, in this way you should observe
 your mind.

The boy then said, "In that case, please give me the Pointing-out-Instruction,³ and this evening I will look into it. I shall return tomorrow and tell you the result." Milarepa replied, "Very well. When you get home, try to find out the color of the mind. Is it white, red, or what? What is its shape? Is it oblong, round, or what? Also, try to locate where in your body it dwells."

The next morning when the sun rose, the shepherd drove the sheep before him, and came to Milarepa, who asked, "Did you try last night to find out what the mind is like?" The boy replied, "Yes, I did."

"What does it look like?"

"Well, it is limpid, lucid, moving, unpredictable, and ungraspable; it has no color or shape. When it associates with the eyes, it sees; when with the ear, it hears; when with the nose, it smells; when with the tongue, it tastes and talks; and when with the feet it walks. If the body is agitated, the mind, too, is stirred. Normally the mind directs the body; when the body is in good condition, the mind can command it at will, but when the body becomes old, decayed, or bereft, the mind will leave it behind without a thought as one throws away a stone after cleaning oneself. The mind is very realistic and adaptable. On the other hand, the body does not remain quiet or submissive, but frequently gives trouble to the mind. It causes suffering and pain until the mind loses its self-control. At night in the state of sleep the mind goes away; it is indeed very busy and hard-working. It is clear to me that all my sufferings are caused by it [the mind]."

The Jetsun then sang:

Listen to me, young shepherd.
 The body is between the conscious and
 unconscious state,
 While the mind is the crucial and decisive factor!
 He who feels sufferings in the lower Realms,
 Is the prisoner of Samsāra,
 Yet it is the mind that can free you from Samsāra.

Surely you want to reach the other shore?
Surely you long for the City of Well-Being
and Liberation?
If you desire to go, dear child, I can show
The way to you and give you the instructions.

The shepherd replied, "Certainly, dear Lama, I have made up my mind to seek it." Milarepa then asked, "What is your name?"

"Sangje Jhap."

"How old are you?"

"Sixteen."

Thereupon the Jetsun gave him the teaching of "Taking Refuge,"⁴ explaining briefly its benefits and significance. He then said, "When you get back home this evening, do not stop reciting the Prayer; and in the meantime try to find out which takes refuge, the mind or the body. Tell me the result tomorrow."

The next morning the shepherd came and said to Milarepa. "Dear Lama, last night I tried to find out which of these two takes refuge, the body or the mind. I found that it is neither of them. [I observed the body first.] Each part, from the head down to the toes, has a name. I asked myself, 'Is it the body as a whole which takes refuge?' It cannot be so, for when the mind leaves the body, the latter no longer exists. People then call it a 'corpse,' and certainly it cannot be called a 'refuge-seeker.' Furthermore, when it disintegrates, it ceases to be a corpse; therefore, it cannot be the body which takes refuge in Buddha. I then asked myself, 'Is it the mind that takes refuge?' But the refuge-seeker cannot be the mind, as the latter is only the mind and nothing else. If one says that the present mind is the [real] mind, and the succeeding one is the one which takes refuge, there will be two minds; and names for both, such as the 'present mind,' and the 'future mind' should then be given them. Besides, when the act of 'Refuge-seeking' takes place, both the present and succeeding minds have passed away! If one says both take refuge, then the mind will [become something immutable] which never [grows] or ceases to be. If that is so, then in all the lives of the past and future in the Six Realms of Saṃsāra, we need nothing but this 'Refuge-seeker.' But I cannot remember anything in my past life; nor do I know what will take place in my future one. The mind of last year and yesterday are gone; that of tomorrow has not yet come; the present flowing one does not stay. Pray, my teacher, please give me an explanation! I submit everything to you; you know everything, you know what I need!"

In answer to his request, Milarepa sang:

I sincerely pray to my Guru
 Who realized the truth of Non-ego,
 I pray with body, words, and mind;
 I pray with great faith and sincerity.
 Pray bless me and my disciples,
 Enable us to realize the Truth of Non-ego!
 Pity us and deliver us from the plight of
 ego-clinging!

Listen carefully, dear shepherd.
 Clinging to the notion of ego is
 characteristic of this consciousness.
 If one looks into this consciousness itself,
 He sees no ego; of it nothing is seen!

If one can practice the teaching of Mahāmudrā
 And knows how to see nothing, something will
 be seen.

To practice the teaching of Mahāmudrā
 One needs great faith, humility, and zeal
 as the Foundation.⁵
 One should understand the truth of Karma
 and Causation as the Path.⁶
 In order to achieve the Accomplishment,⁷
 one should depend upon a Guru
 For the Initiation, Instruction, and Inner Teaching.

It requires a disciple possessing merit⁸
 to receive the teaching;
 It requires a man who disregards discomfort
 and suffering;
 It requires the courage of fearlessness,
 the defiance of death!
 Dear shepherd, can you do these things?
 If so, you are well-destined;
 If not, it is better not to talk about the subject.
 This ask yourself, and think carefully.

When you sought the "I" [last night] you
 could not find it.
 This is the practice of Non-ego of Personality.
 If you want to practice the Non-ego of Existence,⁹

Follow my example and for twelve years meditate.
Then you will understand the nature of Mind.
Think well on this, dear boy!

The shepherd said, "I offer you my body and my head. Please make me understand my own mind definitely and clearly." The Jetsun thought, "I shall see whether this child can really practice," and then he said, "First pray to the Three Precious Ones, then visualize an image of Buddha in front of your nose." Thus Milarepa gave the shepherd the instruction of concentration and sent him away.

There was no sign of the boy for seven days. On the seventh day, his father came to Milarepa, saying, "Dear Lama, my son has not come home for a week. This is very unusual. Wondering whether he was lost, I inquired of the other shepherds who had been with him. They all said that he had come to you for the Dharma, and thought he had then gone home. But where is he?" "He was here," replied Milarepa, "but has not come back now for seven days."

The father was deeply grieved and wept bitterly as he left Milarepa. Many people were then sent out to search for the boy. Finally, they found him in a clay pit sitting upright with his eyes wide open staring straight in front. They asked him, "What are you doing here?" He replied, "I am practicing the meditation my Guru taught me." "Then why have you not returned home for seven days?" "I have only been meditating a little while, you must be joking!" As he said this, he looked at the sun and found that it was earlier than the time he had started to meditate. In his bewilderment he asked, "What has happened?"

From that day on, the boy's family had great difficulty with him, because he had almost completely lost the notion of time. What appeared to him to have been only one day, was the passing of four or five days to others. Many times his parents sent people out to search for him. Thus both he and his family began to feel miserable. At this juncture they asked him whether he wanted to live with Milarepa for good. He said that he would like nothing better. So they provided him with food and sent him to the Teacher.

Milarepa first gave him the Precepts of Five Virtues,¹⁰ preached the doctrine of Dharma, and then granted him the teaching of the Innate-born Wisdom.¹¹ Through practice, the boy gradually attained good meditation experience and Milarepa was very pleased. [In order, however, to clarify the boy's misapprehension on the nature of true Realization], he sang:

I bow down at the feet of Marpa,
He who received grace from Nāropa and Medripa.

Those who practice the Dharma with their mouths
 Talk much and seem to know much teaching,
 But when the time comes for the perceiver to
 leave the deadened body,
 The mouth-bound preacher into space is thrown.

When the Clear Light¹² shines, it is cloaked
 by blindness;
 The chance to see the Dharmakāya at the time
 of death
 Is lost through fear and confusion.

Even though one spends his life in studying
 the Canon,
 It helps not at the moment of the mind's departure.

*Alas! Those proficient yogis who long
 have practiced meditation
 Mistake the psychic experience of illumination
 For Transcendental Wisdom,
 And are happy with this form of self-deception.¹³
 Therefore when at death the Transcendental
 Wisdom of the Dharmakāya shines,
 These yogis cannot unify the Light of
 Mother-and-Son.¹⁴
 Since meditation cannot help them as they die,
 They are still in danger of rebirth in
 lower Realms.¹⁵*

My dear son, best of laymen, listen to me carefully!

*When your body is rightly posed, and your
 mind absorbed deep in meditation,
 You may feel that thought and mind both disappear;
 Yet this is but the surface experience of Dhyāna.
 By constant practice and mindfulness thereon,
 One feels radiant Self-awareness shining like
 a brilliant lamp.
 It is pure and bright as a flower,
 It is like the feeling of staring
 Into the vast and empty sky.
 The Awareness of Voidness is limpid and
 transparent, yet vivid.*

*This Non-thought, this radiant and transparent
experience
Is but the feeling of Dhyāna.
With this good foundation
One should further pray to the Three Precious Ones,
And penetrate to Reality by deep thinking
and contemplation.¹⁶
He thus can tie the Non-ego Wisdom
With the beneficial life-rope of deep Dhyāna.
With the power of kindness and compassion,
And with the altruistic vow of the Bodhi-Heart,
He can see direct and clear
The truth of the Enlightened Path,
Of which nothing can be seen, yet all is
clearly visioned.
He sees how wrong were the fears and hopes
of his own mind.
Without arrival, he reaches the place of Buddha;
Without seeing, he visions the Dharmakāya;
Without effort, he does all things naturally.
Dear son, the Virtue-seeker, bear this in-
struction in your mind.*

Milarepa then gave the boy the complete Initiation and verbal instructions. After practicing them, the boy attained superlative Experience and Realization. He was known as one of the "Heart-Sons" of the Jetsun, Repa Sangje Jhap.

This is the story of Milarepa's second visit to Ragma, and of his meeting with Repa Sangje Jhap.

NOTES

1 This is another name for the Alaya Consciousness. See Story 4, Note 38.

2 Lit.: "Through the 'Pointing-out-Instruction' one may glimpse it." The Pointing-out-Instruction (T.T.: No.sProd.) is an essential practice of Mahāmudrā. The main concern of Mahāmudrā is the unfoldment of the essence of one's mind. To accomplish this, the disciple is given by his Guru the "Pointing-out" demonstration. This can be done in different ways with different gestures—a smile, a blow, a push, a remark, etc. This is strikingly similar to the tradition of Zen, though the style and process appear somewhat different.

3 See Note 2.

4 "Taking Refuge" (T.T.: sKyabs.hGro.): This is the basic and universal prayer of all Buddhists. It reads: "I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Dharma, I take refuge in the Saṅgha."

5, 6, 7 Foundation, Path, and Accomplishment (T.T.: gShi, Lam, hBres.Bu.): These three terms are frequently used in Buddhist Tantric texts. They have various meanings and uses. Generally speaking, the "Foundation" (gShi.) implies the basic principles of Buddhism; the "Path" (Lam.) is the practice, or way of action which is in conformity with the principles of the "Foundation"; and the "Accomplishment" (hBres.Bu.), otherwise translated as "Fruit," is the full realization of the principles of the Foundation. For example, the Foundation of the teaching of Mahāmudrā is the view that the innate Buddha-nature is within all sentient beings, without which no sentient being could possibly become Buddha regardless of how hard he attempted to practice the Dharma. "Foundation" is, therefore, the cause, the seed, the potentiality, or the original innate Suchness that exists in all beings at all times. The Path of Mahāmudrā is the practice that one follows within the framework of the basic Mahāmudrā Doctrine. The Accomplishment of Mahāmudrā is the full realization of the original, endowed Buddha-nature — the Foundation — within oneself. These three terms, in addition to their special and specific connotations, are used here, as well as in many other places throughout the book, in a very general sense to denote religious faith, practice, and achievement.

8 A merit-possessor is a good vessel for Dharma, a well-destined person. According to Buddhism, a person becomes a good vessel for Dharma in this life partly because he has performed meritorious deeds in his past lives.

9 Non-ego of existence (T.T.: Chos.Kyi.bDag.Med.): the truth of Non-being or Voidness.

10 The Precepts of Five Virtues: These are the basic precepts for all Buddhists, including monks and laymen. They are: One should not (1) kill, (2) steal, (3) commit adultery, (4) lie, or (5) take intoxicants.

11 Innate-born Wisdom: From the Tantric viewpoint, the realization of this inborn and ubiquitous Wisdom is the realization of Buddhahood itself, and so is the core of Tantric teachings.

12 At the time of death, the Clear Light of the Dharmakāya will shine for a short while, but because of ignorance and habitual clinging men cannot recognize it, thus they miss the chance of Liberation. See "The Tibetan Book of the Dead," edited by W. Y. Evans-Wentz, Oxford University Press, 1957.

13 Milarepa gave this very important warning to yogis, pointing out that there are many different *kinds and degrees* of illumination. Some are mundane, some are transcendental, some are psychic phenomena, and some are the real illuminations of Transcendental Wisdom.

14 Mother-and-Son Light: See Story 9, Note 17.

15 Buddhism claims that faith and meditation alone cannot liberate one from Samsāra. Without the complete destruction of ego-clinging, or the absolute annihilation of the habitual-thinking seeds in the Store Consciousness (Ālayavijñāna), a real Liberation is impossible. Various teachings are given by different Buddhist Schools to attain this Liberation, such as the Prajñāpāramitā of Mādhyamika; the Contemplation-on-Away-from-Subjective-Objective-Ideas of Yogācāra; the Sameness of Samsāra and Nirvāṇa of general Tantrism; and the Unification of the Mother-and-Son Light of Mahāmudrā.

16 Faith, good will, compassion, and Samādhi cannot bring one to Enlightenment without the Prajñā insight. Deep contemplation on Sūnyatā, or Voidness, is therefore absolutely necessary.