



MILAREPA THE TIBETAN *YOGĪ*

Described on pages xxvi-xxvii

INTRODUCTION

(from the Tibetan)

by

RECHUNG, DISCIPLE OF MILAREPA

Obeisance to the *Guru*!

[HEREIN] I wish to narrate the history of a Great *Yogī*, who lived in this high snow-clad table-land of Tibet. [He was] one who had been profoundly impressed from his early youth by the transient and impermanent nature of all conditions of worldly existence, and by the sufferings and wretchedness in which he saw all beings immersed. To him existence seemed like some huge furnace wherein all living creatures were roasting. With such piercing sorrow did this fill his heart that he was unable to feel any envy even of the celestial felicity enjoyed by Brahmā and Indra in their Heavens, much less of the earthly joys and delights afforded by a life of worldly greatness.

On the other hand, he was so captivated by the Vision of Immaculate Purity, by the Chaste Beauty found in the description of the State of Perfect Freedom and Omniscience associated with the attainment of *Nirvāna*, that he cared not even though he should lose his very life in the search on which he had set out, endowed as he was with faith, firm and full, a keen intellect, and a heart overflowing with all-pervading love and sympathy.

[He was] one who, having had the advantage of holy and sacred teachers, stored up the life-giving elixir that fell from their lips, and tasted it for himself in the delightful solitude of mountain retreats, thereby obtaining emancipation from the toils of Ignorance, [so that] the seeds of Experience and Inspiration sprouted up in him and attained to full growth.

[He was] one who, having thrown aside all concern for

worldly prospects, ease, name, and fame, resolutely devoted himself to the single object of raising the banner of spiritual development to such a height that it might serve as a guide for future followers on the Path, as a signal sufficient to save them from worldliness and dilatoriness, and to urge them onward on the Upward Way.¹

[He was] one who, having been favoured by gods and angels, triumphed over the difficulties of the Path, obtaining transcendent pre-eminence in spiritual truths and such depth of knowledge and experience therein that religious devotion became second nature to him.

[He was] one who, by his profound reverence for and sincere belief in the Lineal *Gurus*,² obtained their grace and spiritual support, and nomination as their adopted spiritual successor in the promulgation of the Spiritual Truths, thereby manifesting super-normal powers and signs of an incomparable nature and unmistakable significance.

[He was] one who, by the power of the greatness of his fervent, sincere, and altruistic love and compassion, was endowed with the power and gift of inspiring even unrighteous, worldly, sin-hardened, sceptical scoffers and unbelievers with involuntary emotion of soul-stirring faith, causing each hair on their body to stand on end in thrilling ecstasy, and making the tears to flow copiously from their eyes, thereby sowing in them the seed of future redemption and enlightenment, and causing it to sprout up in their heart by the mere hearing of his history and name. Thus was he enabled to reclaim, redeem, and protect them from the pains and terror of this low, worldly existence.

[He was] one who, having mastered the mystic and occult

¹ The Upward Way is the Path of Renunciation (Skt. *Nivṛitti-Mārga*) leading to *Nirvāṇa*, the Noble Eightfold Path, the *Via Sacra* of the Buddhas; whereas attachment to worldliness is the Path of Enjoyment (Skt. *Pravṛitti-Mārga*).

² The Lineal *Gurus* are those of any School who are in apostolic succession, Milarepa himself being the fourth in the Kargyütpa Line, as explained in our Introduction. The importance of the spiritual succession is likewise recognized in Brāhmanism with its three lines of *Gurus*, the *Divya*, *Siddha*, and *Mānava*, the essential esoteric teachings being handed down not in books, but from *guru* (teacher) to *shishya* (disciple). This process of transmission is known in Sanskrit as *Pāramparya-krama*.

sciences, had communicated to him by the *Ḍākinīs*¹ continuously the four blissful states of ecstatic communion,² thus furthering his spiritual growth.

[He was] one who eventually rid himself of the Twofold Shadow [of Illusion and *Karma*³] and soared into Spiritual Space, till he attained the Goal wherein all doctrines merge in at-one-ment.

[He was] one who, having attained to omniscience, all-pervading goodwill, and glowing love, together with the acquisition of transcendental powers and virtues, became a self-developed Buddha, who towered above all conflicting opinions and arguments of the various sects and creeds, like the topmost gem that adorns the Banner of Victory.⁴

[He was] one who, having adopted the peerless *Vajra* Path,⁵ gave himself to assiduous endeavour, and attained the utmost height of spiritual experience and knowledge.

¹ The *Ḍākinī[s]* (Tib. *Mkah-'gro-ma*—pron. *Kah-'gro-ma*) are fairy-like goddesses of various orders, possessed of peculiar occult powers. Many of them are the chief deities invoked in the rituals of Tantricism, both Hindu and Buddhist. In other contexts herein, *Ḍākinīs* has been translated as 'angels'.

² These, the four stages of *Dhyāna* (Tib. *Bsam-gtan*), have been given by the Translator as follows: (1) Analysis (Skt. *Vitarka*); (2) Reflection (Skt. *Vichāra*); (3) Fondness (Skt. *Prīti*); and (4) Bliss (Skt. *Sukha*). These are the four progressive mental states leading to the complete concentration of mind producing ecstatic Illumination.

³ Illusion (Skt. *Māyā*: Tib. *Sgyūma*—pron. *Gyūma*), or the universally human animistic belief that phenomena in worlds, hells, and heavens are real, and that the ego (itself a *karmic* conglomerate of characteristics acquired during incalculable aeons through experiences in the *Sangsāra* of phenomena) is real, is the Twofold Shadow hiding Reality, which, being non-*sangsāric*, cannot be realized either while one is immersed in existence on Earth or in any after-death paradise—not even in the Heaven of the Semitic Faiths (Judaism, Christianity, Islam), which is within the realm of phenomena, of appearances, of personality, of sensation, of things. *Nirvāṇa* is beyond Nature, beyond phenomena. It is the 'Unbecome, Unborn, Unmade, Unformed'—the One Reality.

⁴ This is one of the eight symbols of Northern Buddhism, called the Eight Glorious Emblems, which are: (1) the Golden Fish, (2) the Royal Umbrella, (3) the Conch-shell Trumpet of Victory, (4) the Lucky Diagram, (5) the Banner of Victory, (6) the Vase, (7) the Lotus, and (8) the Wheel of the Law. The Banner of Victory (Tib. *Rgyal-mts'an*: Skt. *Dhvaja*) symbolizes Victory over the *Sangsāra*, or the attainment of Perfect Enlightenment—*Nirvāṇa*.

⁵ The *Vajra* (or 'Immutable') Path (Skt. *Vajra-yāna*) is the Path of Mysticism as known to the Kargyütpa Sect, in which Milarepa is one of the Great Dynasty, or Line, of *Gurus*.

[He was] one whose fame of surpassing merit, being hymned by gods and angels, hath filled all the ten divisions of the universe¹ with the waving of the Banner of Fame, and with the reverberating tones of the Melody of Praise.

[He was] one whose physical body was pervaded by the descending bliss down to his very toes, and by the ascending bliss up to the crown of his head, where both merge in the moon-fluid bliss, thence rebounding and coursing down the three principal nerves, uncoiling the coils of the nerve-centres, and then finally enlarging the minutest nerves and changing them all into so many actual median-nerves.²

[He was] one who thus was able to expound fluently the meanings and ideas contained in the twelve collections of *Sūtras* and the Four Scriptures, and to render them into metrical stanzas to be sung in the rites and ritual of the *Vajra* Path.

¹ These are the four cardinal points, the four mid-way points, and the nadir and zenith.

² This paragraph refers to the *yogic* process, as in *Kuṇḍalinī Yoga*, of developing the psychic nerves (Skt. *nāḍī*) and psychic nerve-centres (Skt. *chakra*) of the human body. The psychic nerve situated in the hollow of the spinal column (Skt. *Brahma-danḍa*) is the chief, or median nerve (Skt. *suṣūmṇā-nāḍī*), and interconnected by it are the psychic nerve-centres, wherein are stored, like electricity in dynamos, the vital force (Skt. *prāṇa*), upon which all psycho-physical processes ultimately depend. Once the psychic nerve-centres have been awakened or uncoiled, beginning with the first, known as the Root-Support (Skt. *Mūlādhāra*) of the median-nerve, situated in the perineum, wherein the mighty occult power personified as the Goddess Kuṇḍalinī lies coiled like a serpent asleep, the *yogī* experiences Illumination. The Kuṇḍalinī, or Serpent, Power, having risen through the median-nerve and uncoiled the Root-Support, continues its upward course, penetrating and setting into psychic activity the second nerve-centre, called in Sanskrit the *Svādīśṭhāna*, which is the centre of the sex-organs, then the third, or navel nerve-centre, the *Maṇipūra-chakra*, then the fourth, or heart nerve-centre, the *Anāhata-chakra*, then the fifth, or throat nerve-centre, the *Vishuddha-chakra*, then the sixth, the *Ājñā-chakra*, situated between the eyebrows like a third eye, until, like mercury in a magic tube, it reaches the brain psychic nerve-centre, called the Thousand-Petalled Lotus (Skt. *Sahasrāra-Padma*), which is the Supreme, or Seventh, of the centres. Therein a subtle transformation is effected, in which the moon-fluid, or transmuted sex forces, are psycho-physically all-powerful. The divine bliss, arising from the Illumination, descends as heavenly ambrosia to feed all parts of the psychic body, even to the very toes. All the psychic nerve-centres are uncoiled, or set into functioning activity, and the smallest of the psychic nerves, compared to their undeveloped condition, are like median-nerves in the ecstatic condition of body such as Milarepa commonly enjoyed.

[He was] one who, having all his ideas and concepts merged with the Primal Cause, had eliminated the Illusion of Duality.¹

[He was] one who, being well versed in the science of mind and intellect, read external phenomena like a book.

[He was] a being boundlessly endowed with grace, omniscience, and power, and able to develop and emancipate even dumb beasts by preaching to them.

[He was] a being who had passed beyond the need of observing worldly rules, artificial conventions, and flattery, reverently worshipped by all rational beings [gods and men] with profound obeisance, while he remained tranquil, dignified, and attentive.

[He was] a being most diligent and persevering in meditation upon the Rare Path, not excelled by, but rather excelling all other Great *Yogīs* and Bodhisattvas² of his own day who were similarly blest, becoming an object of worship even to them.

With the deep, thundering roar of a lion³ he proclaimed the Truth of the realizable fact of the illusoriness of the Ego,⁴ in the full assurance of its realization, awing and subduing beings and creatures of evil and selfish disposition, and revelled in freedom in the limitless and centreless sphere of the heavens, like an unbridled lion roaming free among the mountain ranges.

Having acquired full power over the mental states and faculties within, he overcame all dangers from the elements without, and directed them to his own profit and use.

Having obtained transcendental knowledge in the control

¹ The Primal Cause is Primordial Mind, the One Unity. All pairs of opposites being but concepts of the mundane mind, even the ultimate pair of opposites—*Sangsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*—when viewed by the supra-mundaneness of Enlightenment merge in at-one-ment, and Duality is realized to be Illusion.

² A Great *Yogī* (or Saint) is one who has attained mastery of the Occult Sciences; a *Bodhisattva* is one who, having progressed far on the *Bodhi* Path leading to Buddhahood, is destined to become a Buddha, or 'Enlightened One', and to teach the Way of Enlightenment to beings who are unenlightened.

³ The proclamation of the Truth by one who has attained to *Bodhic* Enlightenment is figuratively known among Buddhists as the 'Lion's Roar' (Skt. *Singha-Nāda*).

⁴ See p. 38¹, following.

of the ethereal and spiritual nature of the mind, he was enabled to furnish demonstration thereof by flying through the sky, by walking, resting, and sleeping [upheld by levitation] in the air.

Likewise he was able to produce flames of fire and springs of water from his body, and to transform his body at will into any object desired, thereby convincing unbelievers and turning them towards religious pursuits.

[He was] a being perfect in the practice of the four stages of meditation,¹ and thus able to project his subtle body so as to be present as the Presiding *Yogī* in all the Twenty-Four Holy Places where gods and angels assemble, like clouds, for spiritual communion.²

Being fearless in the knowledge of the indestructible nature of mind,³ he was able to dominate gods and elementals of the eight different kinds, and make them carry out his commands instantaneously, in the fulfilment of the four classes of duties.⁴

[He was] a master architect, well versed in the exposition of the Science of the Clear Void of Mind,⁵ wherein all forms and substances have their cause and origin.

¹ These are the four stages of *Dhyāna*, already given above, on page 33².

² These are the Twenty-Four Places of Pilgrimage (cf. p. 164), known also to Hinduism. With them are sometimes included the Eight Great Places of Cremation in India, where, if the cremation takes place, there results a more spiritual liberation and a consequent better rebirth than from cremation elsewhere. Taken together, they constitute the Thirty-Two Places of Pilgrimage (cf. p. 133), whence there are believed to emanate magnetic-like forces which aid psychic development and make devotion more meritorious and communion, of a telepathic sort, with such spiritual beings as naturally assemble there, very real. To Great *Yogīs*—as was the case with Milarepa—is commonly attributed the power of visiting these Sacred Centres of the Earth (comparable to the Psychic Nerve-Centres of the human organism) with an invisible or subtle body, in order to preside over, or take part in, the divine conclaves.

³ This refers to the Mahāyāna doctrine that the state of mind as realized in the ecstatic illumination of Buddhahood is the only Reality. It is beyond the state of mundane and illusory or impermanent mind, which man, immersed in the *māyā* of *sangsāric* phenomena, alone knows. Being supra-mundane, it is beyond Nature (which is the Child of *Māyā*), beyond the *Sangsāra* (the phenomenal Universe); and so, subject neither to modification nor destruction, it is the Immutable, the Indestructible.

⁴ These are: Love (Skt. *Maitreya*), Compassion (Skt. *Karuṇā*), Rejoicing (Skt. *Muditā*), and Almsgiving (Skt. *Upekṣā*)—the four duties of a Bodhisattva.

⁵ Here Mind is viewed as the Void (Tib. *Tong-pa-nyid*: Skt. *Shūnyatā*), which, however, is not the void of nothingness, but the primordial Uncreated,

[He was] a deeply skilled physician, well practised in the art of curing the chronic diseases of the [unenlightened] mind by applying the medicine of the Five Divine Wisdoms.¹

[He was] an accomplished interpreter of the good or evil significations of the sounds inherent in all external and internal elements, while knowing each of them to be Audible Space.²

Unformed, incapable of being described in terms of phenomenal or *sangsāric* experience. In so far as it is the Uncreated, no attributes known to the finite world or mind can be given to it. As the *Dharma-Dhātu*, or 'Seed of Truth', it is the Source of the *Sangsāra*, or universe of phenomena. As the *Dharma-Kāya*, or 'Body of Truth', it is the Qualityless. It is the Thatness, the Norm of being, the Cause and Origin of all that constitutes finiteness.

¹ The Five Divine Wisdoms are: (1) the All-Pervading Wisdom of the *Dharma-Dhātu*; or the Wisdom born of the Voidness, which is all-pervading, symbolized in the first of the Five Dhyānī Buddhas, Vairocana, the Manifest, 'He who in Shapes Makes Visible' [the universe of matter]; (2) the Mirror-like Wisdom, symbolized by Akṣobhya, the 'Unagitated One', or by his reflex Vajra-Sattva, the 'Triumphant One of Divine Heroic Mind', the second of the Dhyānī Buddhas; (3) the Wisdom of Equality, symbolized by the third of the Dhyānī Buddhas, Ratna-Sambhava, the 'Gem-born One', the Beautifier; (4) the Discriminating Wisdom, which enables the devotee to know each thing separately, yet all things as one, personified in the fourth Dhyānī Buddha, Amitābha, 'He of Boundless Light', the Illuminator or Enlightener; and (5) the All-Performing Wisdom, which gives perseverance and unerring action in things spiritual, symbolized in the fifth Dhyānī Buddha, Amogha-Siddhi, the 'Almighty Conqueror', the Giver of Divine Power. Through the Five Dhyānī Buddhas lies the Path leading to at-one-ment in the *Dharma-Kāya*, to the Perfect Enlightenment of Buddhahood, to *Nirvāṇa*—which is spiritual emancipation from the round of births and deaths through the annihilation of the Flame of Desire.

² This paragraph refers to Milarepa's mastery of the occult science of *Mantras*, or Words of Power, based upon the physics of the law of vibration. According to the Mantrayāna ('Path of the Mantra') School, there is associated with each object and element of nature and with each organic creature, sub-human, human, and super-human, including the highest orders of deities—since all alike, being *sangsāric*, are subject to natural law—a particular rate of vibration. If this be known and formulated as sound in a *Mantra* and used expertly by a perfected *Yogī*, such as Milarepa was, it is held to be capable of disintegrating the object or element of which it is the key-note, or in vibratory accord; or, in the case of spiritual beings, of impelling the lesser deities and elementals to appear, and the superior deities to emit telepathically their divine influence in rays of grace. In *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (p. 149) there occurs the following passage, referring to the six syllabic sounds—*Om Ma-ṇi Pad-me Hūṃ* (pron. *Om Mā-ṇi Pāy-mē Hūṅ*)—of the *Mantra* of Chenrezee (Skt. *Avalokiteshvara*), the National Divine Protector of Tibet, by means of which he is supplicated:—

'When the natural sound of Reality is reverberating [like] a thousand thunders,

May they be transmuted into the sounds of the Six Syllables.'

[He was] a well-grounded mathematician who had attuned his own mental state to the unchanging level of Non-Ego,¹ while most clearly knowing all the inmost secrets and the deepest recesses of the minds of others.

[He was] a most learned professor in the Science of the Mind, having proved the Mind to be, beyond dispute, the Beginning and End of all visible phenomena, both material and spiritual, the Rays whereof, being allowed to shine unobstructedly, develop themselves, as he knew, into the three-fold manifestation of the Universal Divine Being through their own free, inherent power.²

[He was] a perfected adept in super-normal knowledge and powers, able to traverse and visit all the innumerable sacred Paradises and Heavens of the Buddhas, where, by the virtue of his all-absolving acts [of unsurpassed devotion], the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas presiding therein favoured him with dis-

¹ In the Buddhist view, the theory that there is a permanent, unchanging, eternal personal self, or ego, is erroneous. Reality implies supra-mundane consciousness undifferentiated, incompatible with individualized ego-consciousness. The supra-mundane consciousness is the All-Consciousness, to which, in comparison, the limited consciousness such as the soul hypothesis inculcates is incalculably and obviously inferior. Herein lies the fundamental difference between animistic Church-Council Christianity and metaphysical Buddhism.

² Supra-mundane Mind, being the One Reality, is the Source of Nature (or the *Sangsāra*), which, being wholly phenomenal, is in itself non-real. If the Rays, or the Inner Light, are allowed to dominate man, the mundane mind becomes transmuted into the Supra-mundane Mind, which has three aspects or manifestations: (1) *Dharma-Kāya*, 'Divine Body of Truth,' the Body of Complete Enlightenment; (2) *Sambhoga-Kāya*, 'Divine Body of Perfect Endowment,' the primary reflex of the *Dharma-Kāya*; and (3) *Nirmāna-Kāya*, 'Divine Body of Incarnation,' the secondary reflex of the *Dharma-Kāya*. The first is the Body of all Buddhas in *Nirvāṇa*; the second, of all Bodhisattvas in Heaven-Worlds; the third, of all Great Teachers on Earth.

In this context, 'Universal Divine Being' is not to be regarded as like the Personal Supreme God of the Semitic Faiths, but rather as a figurative personification of all supra-mundane forces, powers, or influences, that emanate from the Void, the Qualityless, the Unmade, Unformed, and make escape from the *Sangsāra*, from Nature, possible for mankind. Within It are contained, in indescribable unity, all the Great Ones of All the Ages, the Fully Enlightened Ones, the Buddhas, the Saviours of Mankind. No concepts of the limited human mind can be applied to It, only through Realization of It can It be understood. This is the teaching of the School of Milarepa, and of all the Esoteric Buddhism of the Higher Lāmaism, of which the uninitiated European knows very little, but about which he dogmatizes very much.

courses on the *Dharma*, and listened to his in return, so that he sanctified the Heaven-Worlds themselves by his visits and sojourns there.

Appearing to the creatures of the Six *Lokas*¹ in suitable and specially adapted forms and guises, on various occasions, in accordance with their *karmic* deserts, he taught them spiritual truths in a manner suited to the intellectual capacity and mood of his hearers, wrapping these truths in parables and metaphors which were in perfect accord with the Wisdom of the Victorious Ones,² thus by his Teachings procuring their emancipation.

In short, [he was] a being who within the space of one lifetime obtained the Fourfold Personality,³ and the Fivefold Perfections⁴ which constitute the Omnipresent State of the Great Vajra-Dhara.⁵

[He was] one whose ceaseless grace and mercy were bestowed on the immeasurably countless multitude of sentient beings, for whose sake he continued setting the peerless Wheel of the Truth in motion, thereby redeeming them from the unutterable anguish and woe of the *Sangsāra*.⁶

[He was] one who reached Those dwelling in the City of the Great Emancipation,⁷ where every one existeth in indescribable

¹ The Six *Loka[s]* (or 'Planes') of *Sangsāric* Existence are: (1) the World of the Gods (or *Devas*); (2) the World of the Titans (or *Asuras*); (3) the World of Mankind; (4) the World of Brutes; (5) the World of Unhappy Ghosts (or *Pretas*); and (6) the various Hells.

² That is, the Buddhas, Who are victorious over the *Sangsāra*, or the round of death and birth.

³ The fourfold personality (or principle) consists of (1) Inhibiting evil thoughts, (2) Cutting off (or Annihilating) evil thoughts, (3) Encouraging good thoughts, and (4) Developing (or Perfecting) good thoughts.

⁴ The fivefold perfections are those which flow from the Five Divine Wisdoms of the Dhyānī Buddhas, as outlined above on page 37¹.

⁵ Tib. *Rdo-rje-ch'ang* (pron. *Dorje-Chang*): Skt. *Vajra-Dhara*, meaning 'The Indestructible (or Steadfast) Holder [of Mystic Power]', is one of the two Bodhisat reflexes of the Dhyānī Buddha Akṣhobhya, the other being Vajra-Sattva ('The Indestructible-minded One', or 'The Adamantine'). Both are esoteric deities. Vajra-Dhara is also the name of the Ādi (or Primordial) Buddha of the Gelugpa, the Established Church of Tibetan Buddhism; for the Ņingmapa, the 'Old-Style' Church, Samanta-Bhadra is the name of the Ādi-Buddha.

⁶ *Sangsāra*, or the round of death and birth, as known to mankind bound to the Wheel of Nature.

⁷ That is, *Nirvāṇa*, known in Tibetan as 'The Sorrowless State' (*Mya-nan-med*).

bliss, at the same time obtaining and developing the Fourfold Principle of Immortality.

Such was the Great Being who shone the brightest among all Great Beings, called Glorious Jetsün-Mila-Zhadpa-Dorje,¹ the lustre of whose deeds and the effulgence of whose name shone like the sun and moon themselves.

Albeit the intrinsic value of the super-normal services he rendered to those whom he met can neither be described nor limited, yet I have attempted to set forth a brief eulogy of his various deeds. The *History* [or *Biography*] will be divided into two parts: first, that dealing with his worldly career, and second, that dealing with his religious career from its beginning right to the time when he attained *Nirvāṇa*.

At the outset, I shall proceed to relate some particulars regarding his surname Mila and its origin, his ancestors, and the circumstances of his birth. Then I shall tell of the loss of his father during his childhood, which turned his relatives into enemies who robbed the orphans and the widow of their whole patrimony and plunged them into great sorrow, which served to impress the truth of the existence of Sorrow indelibly upon Milarepa's heart. Then I shall tell of his studying the Black Art, so that he might be able to kill his enemies in compliance with his mother's command.

Of these three things, I shall now set forth, somewhat at length, the first, namely a few details concerning his birth and lineage.

¹ This is a shortened combination of Jetsün-Milarepa, the ordinary name, and of Pal-Zhadpa-Dorje, the initiatory name (as given on p. 133, following).

PART I: THE PATH OF DARKNESS¹

CHAPTER I

THE LINEAGE AND BIRTH

Telling of Rechung's Dreams, which led to the Writing of this Biography; and of Milarepa's Ancestry and Birth.

AT one time, so I have heard, the Great *Yogī*, that Gem of *Yogīs*—of the *Anuttara Vajra-Yāna School*²—Jetsün-Mila-Zhadpa-Dorje, lived for a space in the Stomach-like Cave of Nyanam,³ which is now a most sacred place of pilgrimage. In that place were to be found the illustrious Great Ones, Rechung-Dorje-Tagpa, Shiwa-Wöd-Repa, Ngan-Dzong-Repa, Seban-Repa, Khyira-Repa, Bri-Gom-Repa, Lan-Gom-Repa, Sangyay-Kyap-Repa, Shan-Gom-Repa, Dampa-Gya-Phūpa, and Tönpa-Shākya-Guna.⁴ These were his disciples of the

¹ All headings throughout the *Biography*, of Parts and Chapters, and the Synopsis at the head of each chapter, have been added by the Editor, for the purpose of securing greater clearness, the Tibetan of the text itself not containing, but suggesting them.

² Or 'School of the Immutable (or *Vajra*) Path of the *Anuttara* [*Tantra*]' This is one of the distinctly Esoteric Schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, based chiefly upon that one of the two Higher *Tantras* called the *Anuttara Tantra*. The other of the Higher *Tantras* is the *Yoga Tantra*. Of both these *Tantras*, Milarepa was a practical master. (See p. 292 n.)

³ Nyanam is a town, still existing, on the Tibetan frontier of Nepal, some fifty miles north-east of Nepal's capital Katmandu, and about the same distance south-east of Jetsün's birthplace, Kyanga-Tsa, near the modern Kirong (cf. p. 52⁴). It was in the Stomach-like Cave of Nyanam that Jetsün narrated the chief subject-matter of our text which follows (cf. p. 242).

⁴ In their order as given, these names may be translated as follows: (1) Short-Mantle Like a *Dorje* (the *lāmaic* sceptre, symbolizing the Thunderbolt of the Gods, and Immutability), (2) Repa the Light of Peace, (3) Repa of Ngan-Dzong, (4) Repa of Seban, (5) Repa the Hunter, (6) Repa the Hermit of Bri, (7) Repa the Hermit of Lan, (8) Repa the Buddha-Protected, (9) Repa the Hermit of Shan, (10) Saint of Mighty Breath, (11) Master Shākya-Guna. (Cf. J. Bacot, *Le Poète Tibétain Milarepa*, Paris, 1925, p. 34.) The Tibetan term *Repa* (*Ras-pa*: 'cotton-clad one') given to eight of these disciples, as to Mila-Repa himself, indicates that they are his followers, dressed, as he was, in a robe of white cotton cloth. In virtue of the 'Vital Warmth', generated through a peculiar *yogic* control of the respiration, they were proof against extremes of cold and

highest order, all deeply practised in *Yoga*, and possessed of tranquillity of mind. There also were Lesay-Būm and Shendormo, female novices, in addition to a large number of believing laity of both sexes. And there also were the Five Immortal Goddesses of the higher order of fairies who subsequently were evolved into angels, besides several highly-gifted *yogīs* and *yoginīs*, some human, some super-human beings, possessed of superior attainments.¹ In the midst of this congregation, Jetsūn set in motion the Wheel of Mahāyānic Buddhism.

One night, while Rechung sat meditating in his cell, he had a dream which he described as follows :

‘I was walking through a land which was said to be the Western Land of Urgyan, inhabited by angels of both sexes. The country was exquisitely beautiful and delightful, and the houses and palaces were built of gold, silver, and precious stones. I was passing through the capital of this country and noticed that its inhabitants were clad in silks and adorned with garlands of jewels and precious metals and ornaments of bone, and that every one of them was most beautiful to behold. All were regarding me with smiling faces and glances of approval, though none ventured to speak to me.

‘Among them, I encountered an old acquaintance whom I had known in Nepal as a female disciple under Tiphupa, one of my *Gurus*. She, garbed in red, was presiding over the congregation, and accosted me with words of welcome, saying, “Nephew, I am most pleased that thou hast come.” She forthwith led me into a palatial mansion filled with treasures, where I was most sumptuously feasted. She then said, “The Buddha Akṣobhya² is at present preaching the Doctrine in this Land of Urgyan. If thou, my nephew, wouldst like to hear his preaching, I will go and obtain his permission.” I was heat, and so needed to wear no other garment, even in the arctic winter of the high Himalayan altitudes of Tibet.

¹ In the Appendix (pp. 305-7) a more complete list of names of the various disciples is given.

² Tib. *Mi-bskyod-pa* (pron. *Mi-kyōd-pa*): Skt. *Akṣobhya* (meaning ‘The Unshakable [One]’), the Dhyāni Buddha of the Eastern Direction. The other four of the Five Dhyāni Buddhas are: Vairocana, of the Centre; Ratna-Sambhava, of the South; Amitābha, of the West; and Amogha-Siddhi, of the North.



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Described on pages xxvii, 42-3

extremely desirous of hearing him, and replied, "It is very kind of thee."

'Accompanying her, I came to the middle of the city, where I saw an immense throne made of precious metals and gems, and upon it, seated, the Buddha Akṣhobhya, of a beauty and majesty far surpassing in splendour the figure of my imagination on which I had been wont to meditate. He was preaching the *Dharma* to a huge congregation, seemingly as vast as the ocean. Upon seeing all this, I was filled with such ecstatic delight and bliss that I almost swooned. "Stay thou here, nephew, whilst I go and obtain the Buddha's permission," said the lady. Instantly obtaining it, she returned to conduct me into the Sacred Presence, whither going, I did obeisance to the Buddha, and received His blessing. I then sat down to listen to the religious discourse, and for a while the Holy One regarded me with smiling, benignant countenance and a look of infinite love.

'The subject on which He was preaching was the lineage, birth, deeds, and incidents connected with the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the past. The narrative inspired me with profound belief. Finally He related the histories of Tilopa, Naropa, and Marpa,¹ at much greater length than I had been used to hear them told by Jetsün, so as to impart to each person present the deepest admiration and faith. In concluding His discourse, He said that He would narrate the story of Jetsün-Milarepa, which would surpass in wonder that of any of the aforementioned beings, and invited us all to come and hear it.

'Some present said that there could be nothing more wonderful than what we had already heard, but, if anything else did surpass this, it would have to be something very wonderful indeed. Others said: "The life stories we have just heard are of persons who had annihilated their evil deeds and acquired merit during several previous lifetimes, but Milarepa was one who acquired merit and attained enlightenment not inferior to that of any of these, all in one lifetime." Others again said:

¹ Concerning these three Great *Yogīs*, whence the Kargyūtpa Sect arose, see pp. 7-8, and xvi-xvii.

