

## CHAPTER X

## THE MEDITATION IN SOLITUDE

*Telling of how Jetsün entered into Solitary Meditation in the Mountain Solitudes; of the Outer Experiences, and of the Psycho-Physical Results which Ensued; and of his Songs Recording each Event.*

RECHUNG then asked Jetsün in what places he had meditated and practised penance and devotion.

In reply, Jetsün said: 'The next morning, my teacher's son provided me with a bag of flour and some seasoning of butter and cheese and other provisions, saying, "Let these serve thee as food during thy devotional seclusion, and pray for us, too." Provided with these, I started forth, and went and sat in meditation in a spacious cave which existed in the hill-side behind mine own house. The provisions being used rather sparingly—only as an admixture—my constitution became exhausted and very weak, but I made great progress in my devotions. Thus the food lasted for some months. When it was all exhausted, I was unable to go on long provisionless. So I thought that I should go and beg some butter and cheese and other provisions from the herdsmen who dwelt on the upper parts of the hills, and some grain or flour from the cultivators who lived on the lower parts. Thus I should not have to starve altogether, and could go on meditating.

'On going to the herdsmen to beg, I came to the entrance of one of those yak-hair tents, and begged the inmates to grant alms of seasoning, butter, and cheese to a devotee. As ill luck would have it, this turned out to be the tent of mine aunt, who at once recognized me. In displeasure, she let loose her dogs, which I kept off with a stick, pelting them with stones. Thereupon, she issued out herself, armed with a tent-pole, crying, "O thou disgrace to a noble father! Thou seller of thy kindred's lives! Thou destroyer of thine own country! Why dost thou come here? To think that thy noble father should have begotten a son like thee!" Saying this, she belaboured me as hard as she could. I turned back in flight, but, weak from want of food, I stumbled against a stone and fell

into a pool of water, and nearly died. She, however, continued raging. I got up as best I could, and, leaning my body against my staff, sang the following song to mine aunt:

"At the Feet of my Kind Father Marpa I bow down!

"In the unhappy home, amid the melancholy nook of Tsa,  
We three unfortunates—a saddened mother and two orphans—  
Were scattered far, as peas are by a staff.  
Were ye or were ye not the cause of this,  
Bethink yourselves, O ye aunt and uncle?

"Whilst I, as mendicant, was wandering afar,  
My mother died, by poverty's keen sword;  
And, begging food and cloth, my sister strayed.  
Unable to destroy the longing to behold them,  
Unto this prison, mine own native land, I've come again.

"Forever severed from me hath my loving mother been;  
Because of sorrows hath my sister wandered off;  
So was my heart with deepest anguish pierced.  
These miseries and sorrows which we three endured—  
Were they not due to you, our relatives?

"These sufferings unbearable have led me to the life religious;  
Yet whilst I meditated, in the solitudes of lonely hills,  
Upon the Sacred Teachings of my Gracious Marpa,  
My provisions grown exhausted, no food had I to keep  
alive this transient form,  
And thus went forth to beg for alms.

"Like a dying insect attracted to the entrance of an ant-hill,  
Here have I come, before mine aunt's door-way;  
And thou dost set ferocious dogs against my weak, im-  
poverished body,  
And dost thyself join in the fierce attack.

"By thy rude curses and thy threats,  
The grief, deep in my heart, thou stirrest anew;  
By thy repeated strokes, made with thy tent-pole,  
Thou fillest my poor body full of pains and bruises,  
And hast almost deprived me of my life.

“ Good cause have I for anger 'gainst thee,  
 But the commandments of my *Guru* I'm fulfilling;  
 Be not so vengeful, O mine aunt,  
 And food for my devotions give to me.

“ O Marpa, Lord! O Thou the Merciful!  
 By the power of Thy Grace, cool down Thy suppliant's wrath!'

' On my singing this, half in song and half in weeping tones, a girl who had come behind mine aunt could not refrain from shedding tears. Mine aunt also was struck with remorse and shame, and she went inside and sent me a roll of butter and some powdered cheese-flour by the girl.

' Going round to the other tents to beg, I could not recognize any of the occupants, but they all seemed to recognize me. Staring hard at me, they each gave me a handsome quantity of alms, with which I returned to my cave. From mine aunt's behaviour I could judge what would be mine uncle's,<sup>1</sup> so I resolved that I would not go in his direction on any account. But happening to go to beg from the cultivators of the upper Tsa Valley, I chanced to come right on the door of mine uncle's new house, whither he had removed [after his disaster]. He, knowing me, rushed upon me, crying, "Though I be like an old corpse, yet thou art the very man I have wanted to meet." With deadly purpose, he flung at me a stone which nearly hit me. I turned and fled, but he flung at me as many stones as he could, with whatever strength he possessed. I continued my flight, but he came out armed with a bow and arrows, saying, "Thou trafficker in lives! Thou traitor!"<sup>2</sup> Hast thou not destroyed this country? O neighbours, countrymen, we have now got hold of our enemy; come out quickly!" With that he began shooting at me, while some of the youths of the place began to pelt me with stones. I, on my part, was afraid that I might fall a victim to their wrath and vengeance as a retribution for having employed black magic against them. So intending to intimidate them with my black-magical power, I cried out loudly: "O my Father, and ye *Gurus* of the Karg-

<sup>1</sup> This is the paternal uncle who robbed Jetsün of his inheritance, and whose house and wedding party Jetsün, in revenge, afterward destroyed by black magic.

<sup>2</sup> Literally, 'tripper up of feet'.

yütpa Sect! O ye myriads of blood-drinking and faith-guarding Deities! I, a devotee, am pursued by enemies. Help me and avenge me. Although I may die, ye Deities are immortal."

' Thereupon, all of them were terror-stricken; and they caught hold of mine uncle, some who sympathized with me intervening and acting as mediators, while those who had stoned me asked my forgiveness. Mine uncle alone would not consent to give me any alms, but the rest gave me each a handsome amount, with which I returned to the cave. I thought that if I remained there any longer I should only be stirring the anger of the people; so I resolved to go elsewhere. But that night I had a dream which directed me to stay there a few days more, and this I did.

' Zesay (to whom I had been betrothed in my childhood), hearing about my being there, came with some nice food and drink to meet me. She wept copiously and embraced me. When she had told me of the manner of my mother's death and about my sister's straying, I was greatly saddened, and wept bitterly. I said to her, "How constant thou art, that thou shouldst not have married yet." She said, "People were so afraid of thy Deities that no one dared to ask my hand in marriage, nor would I have married even had any one proposed to me. That thou hast taken to this religious life is admirable; but what dost thou intend doing with thy house and field?" I understood her desire, and thinking that since, by the grace of my *Guru* [Marpa the Translator], I had given up worldly life altogether, praying for her might suffice from a religious point of view, but that I should say something to her which might settle her doubts from a worldly standpoint. So I said to her, "If thou meet my sister, give them to her; until she cometh, thou mayst enjoy the field thyself; and, if my sister be dead, then thou canst have both the house and the field for thine own." She asked me, "Dost thou not want them thyself?" And I replied, "I shall find my food as the mice and birds do theirs. or I shall fast and starve, therefore I need not the field; and, as I shall dwell only in caves and lonely solitudes, I have no need of a house. I realize that even though I should possess the whole world, at my death I should have to give up every-

thing; and so it will confer happiness in this and the next life if I give up everything now. I am thus pursuing a life which is quite opposite to that followed by the people of the world. Give up thinking of me as a living person."

'She then asked me, "Is thy practice also opposed to that of all other religious persons?" And I replied, "I am of course opposed to those hypocrites who have assumed a religious garb only for the sake of the honour attending it, and—their aim being merely the acquisition of wealth, fame, and greatness—have succeeded in getting by heart the contents of a volume or two; and who, having strong party feelings, strive for victory for their own party and defeat for the opposite party. But as for those who are sincere devotees, although they be of different sects and creeds, if their principle be not like the one mentioned above, then there cannot be much disagreement between the aim of the one or the other, so I cannot be opposed to any of them. On the whole, if they are not as sincere as myself, then they must, of course, be opposed to my creed."

'On this, she said, "Then how is it that thy practice is so poor and miserable—much worse than that of the meanest beggar? I have never seen any one like this before. To what particular doctrine of the Mahāyāna Sect dost thou belong?" I told her that it was the highest creed of the Mahāyāna; that it was called the Path of Total Self-Abnegation, for the purpose of attaining Buddhahood in one lifetime;<sup>1</sup> and that to attain Buddhahood thus we must scatter this life's aims and objects to the wind.

'She said, "Indeed, I see that the practice of thy doctrine and theirs is quite opposite; and from what I hear and see of thee it appeareth that the practice of the *Dharma* is not altogether a very easy matter; theirs would have been an easier path to

<sup>1</sup> It is one of the teachings peculiar to Mahāyāna Buddhism, as taught throughout *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, that simultaneously with realization of the unreality of all *sangsāric* (i. e. worldly) existence Perfect Enlightenment, Buddhahood, dawns; and that this supreme attainment is possible for any *yogic* devotee sufficiently advanced on the Path to make the Great Renunciation and win the Great Victory in a single lifetime, as Milarepa is later on shown to have done.

tread." I replied, "The *yogī* who still retaineth a love of the world would not attain to mine ideal of a sincere devotee. I am of opinion that even those sincere Truth-seekers who still cling to the yellow robe retain a little love of worldly fame and honour; and even though they do not retain it, yet am I convinced that there is [between me and them] a vast difference in regard to the speed and efficacy of attaining Buddhahood. This, however, thou wilt not comprehend just now. So, if thou think thou canst, thou shouldst devote thyself to a religious life; but if thou feel unequal to the task, then thou canst enjoy the house and field as I have already said, and hadst better go home." She replied, "I cannot accept thy house and field which thou shouldst give to thy sister. I should like to be a devotee, but such a devotee as thou art I cannot be." Having said this she went away.

'Mine aunt, coming to learn that I did not care about my house and field, after a while began to think that since I professed a determination to adhere to my *Guru's* command, she might perhaps be able to obtain them for herself. So she visited me, bringing with her a quantity of barley-flour, butter, *chhang*, and other food, and said, "Some time ago I treated thee unkindly, being steeped in ignorance; but as thou, my nephew, art a religious person, thou must pardon me. If thou wilt allow me, I will cultivate thy field, and supply thee with food." To this I agreed, saying, "So be it; please supply me with the flour of twenty measures of barley per month; the rest thou canst enjoy; thou mayst cultivate the field." She went away delighted with the bargain. For two months she supplied the flour as agreed; then she came again and said, "People say that if I cultivate thy field perhaps thy Tutelary Deities may injure me because of thy magical power." When I satisfied her, saying, "Why should I practise sorcery now? Rather wilt thou be acquiring merit if thou continue to cultivate the field and supply me as thou art doing," she at once said, "In that case, wilt thou kindly reassure me by taking an oath that thou wilt not practise sorcery any more. Thou canst have no objection to doing so." I was not sure what she intended doing; but, as I considered it consistent with my calling to

please others, I reassured her by taking the oath in accordance with her wish, at which she went away quite pleased.

'All this while, in spite of mine unremitting perseverance in meditation, I was unable to obtain signs of any improvement or growth in my knowledge or experience of Ecstatic Warmth; and I was becoming anxious as to what I should do next. One night I dreamt that I was engaged in ploughing a very stiff and hardened plot of land, which defied all mine efforts; and, despairing of being able to plough it, was thinking of giving up the task. Thereupon, my beloved *Guru Marpa* appeared in the heavens and exhorted me, saying, "Son, put forth thine energy and persevere in the ploughing; thou art sure to succeed, despite the hardness of the soil." Then Marpa himself guided the team; the soil was ploughed quite easily; and the field produced a rich harvest. The dream gave me great pleasure on my waking up.

'Thereby the thought arose in me that dreams, being illusory reproductions of one's own thoughts, are not regarded as real even by stupid and ignorant boors, and that when I thus allowed a dream to affect my temper I must be more silly than the greatest fool. But as it seemed to be a sign that if I continued to meditate with zeal and perseverance mine efforts would be crowned with success, I was filled with pleasure, and in that mood I sang this song to impress the true interpretation of the dream clearly on mine own memory:

"I pray to Thee, O Gracious Lord!

Grant that this mendicant may cling successfully to solitude.

"I put upon the field of Tranquil Mind

The water and manure of a constant faith,

Then sow it with unblemished seed of a heart immaculate,

And over it, like pealing thunder, reverberateth sincere prayer;

Grace of itself upon it falleth, like a shower of rain.

"Unto the oxen and the plough of Undistracted Thought

I add the ploughshare of [Right] Method and of Reason.

The oxen, guided by the undeluded person,

And with firm grasp of undivided purpose,

And by the whip of zeal and perseverance goaded on,  
Break up the hardened soil of Ignorance, born of the Evil  
Passions Five,

And clear away the stones of the hardened, sin-filled nature,  
And weed out all hypocrisies.

"Then, with the sickle of the Truth of *Karmic* Laws,  
The reaping of the Noble Life is practised.  
The fruits, which are of Truths Sublime,  
Are stored within the Granary to which no concepts can apply.

"The gods engage in roasting and in grinding this most  
precious food,  
Which then sustaineth my poor humble self  
Whilst I for Truth am seeking.

"The dream I thus interpret:  
Words bring not forth True Fruit,  
Mere expositions do not yield True Knowledge.  
Yet those who would devote themselves unto the life religious,  
In meditation must exert their utmost zeal and perseverance;  
And if they will endure hardships and strive most zealously,  
And seek with care, the Most Precious can be found.

"May all who are sincerely seeking Truth  
Untroubled be by obstacles and interruptions on the Path."<sup>1</sup>

'Having sung this, I made up my mind to go and carry on my meditation in the Dragkar-Taso Cave. As I was about to start, mine aunt came up with sixty measures of barley-flour, a ragged dress of skins, one piece of good cloth, and some butter and grease mixed up into a ball, and said, "My nephew, these are in payment of thy field, which thus is disposed of. Take them and go away to a place far beyond my sight and hearing, for the neighbours are saying to me, 'Thöpaga hath wrought much mischief upon us before this; and if thou must still have dealings with him and serve him, we are certain that he will do us more harm and perhaps kill the remaining people of the place. Rather than this, we will kill both of you.' So it is safer for thee to flee away into some other country.

<sup>1</sup> Or: 'in their quest for Truth'.

If thou do not go, why should they sacrifice me? But there is not the least doubt that they will kill thee."

'I knew that the people would not speak in that fashion, and so I said to her, "If I were not faithful to my religious vows, I would not refrain from practising sorcery to regain possession of my field, especially as I have not sworn to refrain from doing so under these circumstances. Being possessed of such magical powers, I could with the greatest ease stretch thee out a pale corpse in an instant; yet I will not do so, for on whom should I practise my patience if not on those who have wronged me? If I should die to-night, what could I do with the field, or with these few articles themselves? Patience is said to be the shortest path to obtain Buddhahood, and thou mine aunt art the very person on whom I must practise my patience. Moreover, ye, mine aunt and mine uncle, have been the means of bringing me to this life [of renunciation]. I am sincerely grateful to both of you, and in return for these deeds of yours I will ever pray for you, that ye may obtain Buddhahood in your future lifetime. Not only can I give to thee the field, but the house, too." Then I explained to her everything explicitly, and ended by saying, "As for me—whose life is devoted to the search for Truth—I require only my *Guru's* instructions and nothing more; so thou art welcome to both the field and house." And I sang to her the following song:

"O Lord, my *Guru*, by Thy Grace do I the life ascetic live;  
My weal and woe are known to Thee!

"The whole *Sangsāra*, being e'er entangled in the Web of *Karma*,  
Whoever holdeth fast to it severeth Salvation's Vital Cord.

"In harvesting of evil deeds the human race is busy;  
And the doing so is to taste the pangs of Hell.

"The affectionate expressions of one's kith and kin are the  
Devil's Castle;<sup>1</sup>  
To build it is to fall into the Flames [of Anguish].

<sup>1</sup> That is, exclusive attachment to one's own family is selfish, the true and only family being Humanity, and for this family alone should the Bodhisattva labour. Cf. *Matthew* x. 36-7: 'And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.'

"The piling up of wealth is the piling up of others' property;  
What one thus storeth for meth but provisions for one's enemies.

"Enjoying wine and tea in merriment is drinking juice of  
aconite;  
To drink it is to drown Salvation's Vital-Cord.<sup>1</sup>

"The price mine aunt brought for my field is things wrung  
out of avarice;  
To eat them would entail a birth amongst the famished ghosts.<sup>2</sup>

"The counsel of mine aunt is born of wrath and vengeance;  
To utter it entaileth general disturbance and destruction.

"Whatever I possess, both field and house,  
Take all, O aunt, and therewith happy be.

"I wash off human scandal by devotion true;  
And by my zeal I satisfy the Deities.

"By compassion I subdue the demons;  
All blame I scatter to the wind,  
And upward turn my face.

<sup>1</sup> In the Buddhist view, all stimulants—alcoholic drinks, narcotic drugs, tobacco, and even the narcotic effects of strong tea and coffee—are not only demonstrably deleterious to the physical organism, but in exciting the nerves and the mind they give such control over the body to the lower or animal nature as to inhibit all influx of the elevating spiritual influences of the higher nature. Furthermore, sorrow, pain, and despair are to be regarded as potent means to awaken the human race to the fact that all *sangsāric* existence is, in the last analysis, inseparable from suffering, and therefore undesirable. Thus, if stimulants are used to drown all unhappiness and an artificial and deceptive feeling that everything is well with the world be engendered thereby, the opportunity of reaching the purely spiritual state of Supramundaneness, beyond the realm of sorrow, wherein there is the only true bliss, is lost—the Vital Cord of Deliverance, the golden link between the higher and the lower, is sundered, the sacred way to Olympus is closed, and human beings are left in the darkness of their unbelief, slaves to the animal within them.

Although Christianity does not, most unfortunately, prohibit the use of all such stimulants, as do Buddhism, the Higher Hinduism, and the whole of Islam, the old Jewish prophet Isaiah has approached the right view in these words: 'The priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink, they are swallowed up of wine, they are gone astray through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgement' (*Isaiah* xxviii. 7). Cf., too, Paul's *Epistle to the Ephesians* (v. 18): 'And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit.'

<sup>2</sup> That is, in the world of famished (or unhappy) ghosts (*Skt. Preta-Loka*).

“O Gracious One, Thou the Immutable,  
Vouchsafe Thy Grace, that I may pass my life in solitude  
successfully.”

‘On mysinging this, mine aunt said, “A truly religious person should be like thee, my nephew; it is very praiseworthy.” And she went away satisfied.

‘This circumstance affected me very painfully; but, on the other hand, I felt relieved of the care of my field and house, of which I had thus disposed. I resolved to carry out immediately my plan of going to the Dragkar-Taso Cave to continue my meditation. As this cave had afforded me protection while I laid the foundation of *Samādhi* (the Quiescent State), it came to be called Kangtsu-Phug (i. e. the Cave wherein he [Milarepa] was set upon his feet in devotion, or laid the Foundation). The next morning, I set forth with the articles which mine aunt had brought me as the price of my field and the little remnants of the former provisions, and came to the Dragkar-Taso Cave, which I found to be very comfortable, and therein settled myself. Having provided myself with a hard mattress seat, and spreading my bedding on it, I took the vows of not descending to any village or human habitation:

“Until I have attained to *Siddhi*<sup>1</sup>, unto this solitude will  
I hold fast;  
Of starvation though I die, I’ll not go to seek alms given in  
faith or dedicated to the dead,  
For that would be to choke myself with dust.<sup>2</sup>  
E’en though of cold I die, I’ll not descend to beg for garments.  
E’en though of misery and sorrow I should die, I’ll not  
descend to join in pleasures of the worldly life.  
Though I fall ill, e’en unto death, I’ll not descend to seek  
one dose of medicine.

<sup>1</sup> *Siddhi*, or occult powers, or transcendent or super-normal knowledge. Immediately prior to attaining Buddhahood, Gautama while still a Bodhisattva, as Milarepa is here, made similar resolutions (cf. the *Mahāpadāna Sutta*).

<sup>2</sup> That is, such food is unclean to a devotee, having been dedicated to a deity or to the dead.

And not one movement of my body will I give to any  
worldly purpose;  
But body, speech, and heart I dedicate to winning Buddha-  
hood.

“May the *Guru*, Gods, and *Ḍākinīs* enable me to keep my  
vows,  
And may they bless mine efforts;  
May the *Ḍākinīs* and Faith Protecting Deities fulfil my  
wishes,  
And render me all needed aid.”

‘[I added]: “Should I break these vows—seeing that it is better to die than to live a life without seeking to acquire Truth—may the Divine Beings, who protect the Faith, cut my life short immediately, and may my *Guru’s* and *Devas’s* grace combine in directing my next life to religious pursuits and endow it with the firmness and intellect necessary to enable it to surmount all obstacles [on the Path] and triumph over them.”

‘Having thus vowed, I sang this song, consecrating my  
vows:

“Offspring of Naropa and of the Saving Path,  
May [I], the hermit, cling successfully to solitude.  
“May pleasures of the world illusory not tempt me;  
But may Tranquillity of Meditation be increased;  
“May I not lie steeped in Unconsciousness of Quietude;<sup>1</sup>  
But may the Blossom of the Superconsciousness bloom forth  
in me.  
“May various mind-created worldly thoughts not vex me;  
But may the foliage luxuriant, of Uncreatedness, burst forth  
in me.

<sup>1</sup> There are states of Unconsciousness, into which a *yogī* may fall, which do not lead to Enlightenment. A like state, which, however, is not necessarily a state of unconsciousness, is experienced in the *yogic* condition of suspended animation or *yogically* induced hibernation. Although a practised *yogī* may hibernate for very long periods—according to some *yogīs* for centuries—and eventually revive in his physical form, it is not desirable that he should do so, if he be aiming—as Milarepa was—at Deliverance from the *Saṅgṣāra*.

- “ May I, in hermitage, be troubled not with mental conflicts ;  
But may I ripen fruit of Knowledge and Experience.
- “ May Mārā and his hosts disturb me not ;  
But may I find self-satisfaction in the Knowledge of mine  
own [True] Mind.
- “ May I doubt not the Path and Method I pursue ;  
But may I follow in the footsteps of my Father [Spiritual].
- “ O Gracious Lord, Embodiment of the Immutible,  
Thy Blessings grant, that I [the mendicant], may firmly  
hold to solitude.”

‘ This prayer finished, I continued my meditations, living on just a little flour mixed up with whatever food came in my way. I mentally acquired knowledge of the *Mahā-Mudrā* (Great Symbol) ; but my body, being too weak, was unable to control the *Airs* (Psycho-Physical nervous Power, or Fluid)<sup>1</sup> of my system, so that I did not acquire the Ecstatic Internal Warmth, and continued to be very sensitive to the cold.

‘ I prayed earnestly to my *Guru* ; and, one night, I had the following vivid dream, or rather vision in a superconscious state. A number of women came carrying all sorts of food with which they performed a *pūjā* (religious ceremony), saying that they had been sent by my *Guru* Marpa to instruct me in religious physical exercises.

‘ [Thus directed], I began to practise the three exercises of Physical, Vocal, and Mental Culture, and developed the Ecstatic Physical Warmth.<sup>2</sup> Thus a year went by, when, one day, I had a desire to go about for a little recreation. I was about to start forth, when I instantly recollected mine own vows, and sang to myself the following song of self-reproof :

<sup>1</sup> Skt. *Vāyu*, which, being derived from the root *Vā* (‘to breathe’ or ‘to blow’) refers to the motive power of the vital-force (Skt. *Prāṇa*).

<sup>2</sup> Here M. Bacot’s version (p. 203) is more detailed, as follows: ‘Then, in the squatting posture [or *āsana*] which resembleth the “Six Internal Hearths”, I sought the well-being of my body. By means of the condition of the breathing which giveth regularity, I sought rightness of speech. By the condition of mine own liberation which controlleth the imagination, I sought calmness of mind. After that I entered into meditation. Soon the internal heat began to come over me.’

- “ O Dorje-Chang Thyself, in Marpa’s form !  
Grant that this mendicant may cling to solitude.
- “ O thou strange fellow, Milarepa !  
To thee I sing this song of self-counsel.
- “ Aloof thou art from all of humankind  
Who might with thee sweet converse hold.
- “ Therefore thou feelest lonely and wouldst seek diversion ;  
No reason is there for thee thus to seek.
- “ Excite not thus thy mind, but let it rest in peace ;  
If thoughts it harbour, ’twill hanker after numerous im-  
pieties.
- “ To thy desire for these distractions give not way, but exert  
thine intellect ;  
If to temptation thou give way, scattered to the wind will  
thy devotion be.
- “ Walk thou not forth, but rest content upon thy seat ;  
If forth thou walk, thy feet may strike ’gainst stones.
- “ Raise not thy head, but bend it down ;  
If it be raised, ’twill seek for vain frivolities.
- “ Sleep not, but continue thy devotions ;  
If thou fall asleep, the Poisons Five, of Ignorance, will  
subdue thee.”<sup>1</sup>

‘ Then, having sung this song of self-reproof, I continued unceasingly my meditations for over three years, both night and day, and I could feel my spiritual knowledge expanding and improving greatly. But now my stock of barley-flour was quite expended. I had resolved on the starvation diet of twenty measures of barley-flour per year, and now even that had run out. I might have died without being able to attain Buddhahood ; this would have been a deplorable interruption

<sup>1</sup> Slothfulness and torpor are condemned as unbecoming a *yogi*. The vow not to sleep is one of twelve austerities permitted by the Buddha. But an esoteric meaning is also implied here, namely, that the devotee must not allow the hypnotic glamour of the worldly life to affect him, lest the ‘Five [or Six] Poisons’—Pride, Jealousy, Sloth, Anger, Greed, and Lust—enslave him, as they do the multitude, to *sangsāric* existence.

in mine eternal career. I considered that worldly people rejoiced over the acquirement of a *seeka* (one four-anna weight) or two of gold and felt unhappy at losing the same. Compared to that, my life, devoted as it was to the attainment of Buddhahood, was infinitely more precious. Were the entire universe to be filled with gold, still the life devoted to the attainment of Buddhahood was infinitely more precious. At the same time, it would be preferable to die in the course of my devotional life rather than break my vows. What should I do? Then the thought came to me that if I started forth in search of some article of food to sustain my life, without descending to human habitations to beg, I should not be breaking my vows. Moreover, it would be in the interests of my devotion to do so. Accordingly, I strolled forth beyond the front of my Dragkar-Taso Cave; and there discovering a sunny spot with good springs of water, with plenty of nettles growing round about—a delightful spot, commanding extensive views—I removed to it.

‘Living on nettle broth alone, I continued my meditations. I had no clothes on the outside of my body, nor any wholesome food inside. My body became shrunken to a mere skeleton; and it was greenish in hue, just like the nettle, and over it grew a covering of greenish hair.

‘I used to regard the scroll, which my *Guru* had given me, with special veneration, sometimes putting it on my head, and touching it with fondness; and this had the effect of soothing my stomach, although I had nothing to eat. Sometimes I used even to have belchings [as if I had eaten my fill of food]. Once or twice I was on the point of opening and reading its contents; but I had some signs telling me that the time for doing so had not yet arrived; accordingly, I kept it by me.

‘About a year after that, some hunters from the Kyeedrong mart chanced to come strolling my way, having failed to obtain any sport. At first they ran away, saying they had seen a *bhūta* (an evil spirit). On mine assuring them that I was a human being and a devotee, they said I did not look like one, but anyhow came to look well at me. They came up and pried into every nook and corner of my cave. At last, they

said, “Where are thy food-stuffs? Let us borrow some, and we will repay it liberally; otherwise we will kill thee.” Thus they threatened me. I told them I had only nettles, and even if I had other things—seeing that they were rude enough to insult me by lifting me up—they should not obtain them by using force. They replied that they were not going to rob me; and, as for insulting me, what should they gain by it? I said that they might possibly acquire merit. Thereupon they said, “All right; we will lift thee up again.” And they picked me up and let me fall on the ground several times over. This filled my poor weakened body with much pain; but, in spite of it, I pitied them sincerely,<sup>1</sup> and shed tears. One of them, who refrained from this heartless deed, said, “O ye fellows, this man seemeth to be a real Lāma, and even if he be not one, ye will not gain glory by ill-treating such a weak person. He hath not compelled us to be hungry. Do not act so.” And to me he said, “Hermit, it is admirable of thee to stand such ill-treatment. As for me, I have done nothing against thee; therefore remember me in thy prayers.” The others added, in fun, “As we have lifted thee up, remember to put us, too, under thy prayers’ protection.” The other one said, “Ay, ay, that he will do, ye may be quite sure—only in a different way!” They went away laughing boisterously. I had no intention or thought of cursing them; but it seemeth that divine retribution overtook them, for I came to learn afterward that the hunters had been arrested by the Governor of the Province. The leader was killed, and all, except the person who refrained from offering indignities to me, had their eyes put out.

‘About a year after that, all my clothes were worn out, and only some rags of the cloth which mine aunt had given me as the price of my field, and the sack in which the flour had been supplied, remained. I once thought of sewing the rags together and making them into a sort of bedding; and then I thought

<sup>1</sup> Milarepa here shows himself loyal to his Vow, it being essential to attainment of *Nirvāṇic* Enlightenment for the Bodhisattva to be perfected in the ‘Four Brahma Qualities’, namely, Pity, Compassion, and Altruistic Love for every sentient being, and the Indifference of equanimity towards all states or conditions of *sangsaṛic* existence.

that if I died that very night what would be the use of sewing ; better far to go on with my meditation. So, spreading the tattered skin dress underneath as bedding, I made it serve as covering for the lower part of my body [by wrapping its ends round me] as well as it could ; while I covered the upper part of my body with the ragged empty flour sack ; and, with what remained of the rags of the cloth, I covered those parts of my body which required it most. At last, all these were far too worn to be of any use at all to serve as coverings. Finally, it seemed to me that this was too much of self-abnegation, and that I must sew the rags together, but I had no needle or thread, so I twined the rags about my body in three pieces, knotted in three places, and kept in position by ends of rope tied together to make a girdle. Under this, I passed the days as well as I could ; and, at night, the ragged sack and the remains of the tattered skin dress afforded me some protection from cold.

' Thus I continued meditating for about another year, when one day there was a noise as of many people talking. On peeping out, I saw another party of hunters, carrying large quantities of meat, approach the entrance of my cave. On seeing me, those in the front cried out, " Oh, there is a *bhūta* ! " and ran away ; those in the rear said that it was not probable that there would be a *bhūta* about in broad daylight, and added, " Look again, and see whether the *bhūta* is there still." On being told that there it was still, even those old hunters who had come last, in the rear, began to be afraid. I told them that I was not a *bhūta*, but a hermit, who was reduced to this plight for want of provisions. They wished to see for themselves, and ransacked the whole place, every nook and corner being pried into. But seeing nothing but nettles, all of them were moved to veneration. They left me the remainder of their provisions, and a large quantity of meat, saying respectfully, " It is praiseworthy of thee to practise such asceticism. Please pray for the absolution of the animals we have killed, and for our own sins in killing them."

' I rejoiced at the prospect of having food such as ordinary human beings eat, and, on partaking of the food, I enjoyed a

sense of bodily ease and comfort, and a cheerfulness of mind which tended to increase the zeal of my devotional exercises ; and I experienced keen spiritual happiness such as transcended anything I had known before. I thought that the merit acquired by those who offer a few scraps of food to the lonely hermits in the solitudes would surely exceed that of the most munificent gifts to those who are enjoying plenty and living amidst human society in towns and villages. The meat I used sparingly, till at last it was full of maggots. I once thought of clearing it of the maggots and using it ; but I considered that it was not intended for me to enjoy the meat, since I should have to dispute it with maggots, which would be robbery. And I thought that however nice it might be, it was not worth my while going to the length of committing robbery for a meal ; so I allowed the maggots to take the meat for themselves, while I fell back upon mine own nettle broth.

' One night, a person, believing that I possessed some wealth, came and, groping about, stealthily pried into every corner of my cave. Upon my observing this, I laughed outright, and said, " Try if thou canst find anything by night where I have failed by daylight." The person himself could not help laughing, too ; and then he went away.

' About a year after that, some hunters of Tsa, having failed to secure any game, happened to come strolling by the cave. As I was sitting in *Samādhi*, wearing the above triple-knotted apology for clothing, they prodded me with the ends of their bows, being curious to know whether I was a man or a *bhūta*. Seeing the state of my body and clothes, they were more inclined to believe me a *bhūta*. While they were discussing this amongst themselves, I opened my mouth and spoke, saying, " Ye may be quite sure that I am a man." They recognized me from seeing my teeth, and asked me whether I was Thöpaga. On my answering in the affirmative, they asked me for a loan of some food, promising to repay it handsomely. They said, " We heard that thou hadst come once to thy home many years ago. Hast thou been here all the while ? " I replied, " Yes ; but I cannot offer you any food which ye would be able to eat." They said that whatever did

for me would do for them. Then I told them to make fire and to boil nettles. They did so, but as they expected something to season the soup with, such as meat, bone, marrow, or fat, I said, "If I had that, I should then have food with palatable qualities; but I have not had that for years. Apply the nettles in place of the seasoning." Then they asked for flour or grain to thicken the soup with. I told them if I had that, I should then have food with sustaining properties; but that I had done without that for some years, and told them to apply nettle tips instead. At last they asked for some salt, to which I again said that salt would have imparted taste to my food; but I had done without that also for years, and recommended the addition of more nettle tips in place of salt. They said, "Living upon such food, and wearing such garments as thou hast on now, it is no wonder that thy body hath been reduced to this miserable plight. Thine appearance becometh not a man. Why, even if thou should serve as a servant, thou wouldst have a bellyful of food and warm clothing. Thou art the most pitiable and miserable person in the whole world." I said, "O my friends, do not say that. I am one of the most fortunate and best amongst all who have obtained the human life. I have met with Marpa the Translator, of Lhobrak, and obtained from him the Truth which conferreth Buddhahood in one lifetime; and now, having entirely given up all worldly thoughts, I am passing my life in strict asceticism and devotion in these solitudes, far away from human habitations. I am obtaining that which will avail me in Eternity. By denying myself the trivial pleasures to be derived from food, clothing, and fame, I am subduing the Enemy [Ignorance] in this very lifetime. Amongst the World's entire human population I am one of the most courageous, with the highest aspirations. But ye!—born in a country where the Noble Doctrine of the Buddha prevaieth, yet have not so much as listened to one religious discourse, let alone devoting your lives to it; but, on the other hand, ye are striving your utmost to gain the lowest depths and the longest terms of an existence in the Infernal Regions! Ye are accumulating sins by the pound and stone, and vying with

each other in that! How foolish and perverted are your aims in life! I not only rejoice in the prospect of Eternal Bliss, but enjoy these things which give me contentment and self-approbation."

'I then sang to them a song about my Five Comforts :

- "Lord! Gracious Marpa! I bow down at Thy Feet!  
Enable me to give up worldly aims.
- "Here in the Dragkar-Taso's Middle Cave,  
On this the topmost summit of the Middle Cave,  
I, the *Yogī* Tibetan called Repa,  
Relinquishing all thoughts of what to eat or wear, and this  
life's aims,  
Have settled down to win the perfect Buddhahood.
- "Comfortable is the hard mattress underneath me,  
Comfortable is the Nepalese cotton-padded quilt above me,  
Comfortable is the single meditation-band which holdeth up  
my knee,<sup>1</sup>  
Comfortable is the body, to a diet temperate inured,  
Comfortable is the Lucid Mind which discerneth present  
clings and the Final Goal;  
Nought is there uncomfortable; everything is comfortable.
- "If all of ye can do so, try to imitate me;  
But if inspired ye be not with the aim of the ascetic life,  
And to the error of the Ego Doctrine<sup>2</sup> will hold fast,  
I pray that ye spare me your misplaced pity;  
For I a *Yogī* am, upon the Path of the Acquirement of  
Eternal Bliss.
- "The sun's last rays are passing o'er the mountain tops;  
Return ye to your own abodes.  
And as for me, who soon must die, uncertain of the hour of  
death,

<sup>1</sup> The meditation-band is placed so as to encircle the body and the *yogically* postured legs and thus prevent the legs dropping when the *yogī* enters into deep meditation—there being need to maintain the posture (Skt. *Āsana*), which cuts off or short-circuits certain bodily forces or currents. *Āsanas* also make the body pliant and capable of great endurance, eliminate unhealthy physical conditions, and cure illnesses.

<sup>2</sup> The Doctrine of a personal Ego or Soul; see p. 38<sup>1</sup>.

With self-set task of winning perfect Buddhahood,  
 No time have I to waste on useless talk ;  
 Therefore shall I into the State Quiescent of *Samādhi*  
 enter now."

'On hearing the song, they said, "Thou art singing of various comforts, yet, in fact, thou dost really possess a very nice voice. As for us, we cannot rough it as thou art doing." Then they went off home.

'On the occasion of an annual feast-day in Kyanga-Tsa, they chanced to sing this song together. It happened that my sister Peta was also there, having gone to obtain some food and drink. She, upon hearing the song, said to them, "Sirs, the man who sang that must be a very Buddha himself." One among the hunters said, "Ha! Ha! see how she praiseth her own brother"; and another said, "Whether he be Buddha or animal, it is thy half-starved brother's song; he is on the point of death from hunger." On this, Peta said, "Oh! my parents are dead long ago; my relatives have become mine enemies; my brother hath roamed away, and I myself am reduced to a beggar's life: what is the need of gloating over my miseries?" And she burst out weeping. Zesay came up just then, and comforted her by saying, "Do not weep. It is quite possible that it is thy brother; I also met him some time ago. Go thou to the Dragkar-Taso Cave, and find out if he be there still. If he be, then both of us will go to see him."

'Thus being led to believe the statement, she came to me at the Dragkar-Taso Cave with a jugful of *chhang* and a small vessel full of flour. On first seeing me from the entrance of the cave, she was frightened. My body was emaciated by the privations and hardships; mine eyes were deeply sunken into the sockets; my bones showed prominently; my colour was of a bluish green; my muscles were all shrunken and shrivelled; a growth of bluish-green hair covered my skeleton-like form; the hairs of my head were stiff, and formed a formidable wig; and my limbs appeared as if they were about to break. Altogether, I was a sight which inspired her with such a dread-

ful fright that she took me to be a *bhūta*. But recollecting that she had heard that her brother was on the point of death from starvation, she half doubted whether it was really myself. At last she mustered up courage, and asked me, "Art thou a human being or a *bhūta*?" I answered, and said, "I am Mila Thōpaga." She, recognizing my voice, came in and embraced me, crying, "Brother, brother!" and then fainted away for a while. I, too, knowing her to be Peta, felt both glad and sorry at the same time. Applying the best means of restoring her, I at last succeeded in doing so. But she put her head between my knees, and, covering her face with both her hands, gave way to another flood of tears, sobbing forth the following: "Our mother died in great trouble with a keen yearning to see thee. No one came near us; and I, being unable to bear the great privations and loneliness in our own house, left it to go a-begging in distant lands. I thought that thou wert also dead. I should, however, have expected that if thou were alive to have found thee in better circumstances than these. But, alas! thy circumstances are such. Thou seest what mine own destiny is! Could there be any one on the earth more wretched than ourselves!" Then she repeatedly called upon the names of our parents, and continued wailing bitterly. I tried my best to console her. At last, I, too, felt very sad, and sang this song to my sister:

"Obeisance to my Lords, the *Gurus*!

Grant that this *Yogī* may hold fast to solitude.

"O sister, thou art filled with worldly sentiments and feelings;

[Know thou that worldly] joys and griefs are all impermanent.

But I, alone by taking on myself these hardships,

Am sure to win Eternal Happiness;

So harken thou unto thy brother's song:

"To repay the kindness of all sentient beings,

They having been our parents,<sup>1</sup> to the life religious I did give myself.

<sup>1</sup> So interminably, during inconceivable aeons, have evolution and transition,

