

The Story of Accepting the Teacher Shakyaguna

Namo Guru.

After Jetsun Milarepa went from Mangyul Kyidrong to Nyanang, his earlier benefactors there were extremely delighted and supplicated him saying, “You must always stay in Nyanang.” Milarepa then went to a place between Tsen and Doshod and stayed in a cave beneath a large, belly-like boulder.

At that time, the teacher Shakyaguna and the female students from Nyanang came before Milarepa. They asked the Jetsun, “In the other mountain retreats where you have practiced, how has your realization been enhanced? What kinds of confidence have you given birth to?” In response, Milarepa sang this song:

I bow at the feet of Marpa the translator.

From meditating in other mountain retreats,
I gained a single confidence that there is no birth,
And gave up clinging to past and future lives.
The mistaken appearances of the six realms are gone,
As I severed the misconceptions of birth and death.

I gained a single confidence in equality,
And gave up clinging to happiness and suffering.
The mistaken experiences of feelings are gone,
As I severed the misconceptions of adopting and abandoning.

I gained a single confidence in non-differentiation,
And gave up clinging to samsara and nirvana.
The mistaken notions of training on the bhumis and paths are gone,
As I severed the misconceptions of hope and fear.

The female students then asked him, “What other realization have you given birth to?”

Milarepa replied, “Female students, here is a way to give rise to practicing virtue in harmony with your understanding.” He then sang this song:

Arising from outside are the causes and conditions of parents.
Arising from inside is the alaya consciousness.
In between, we obtained the immaculate¹ human body.
We were not born in the three lower realms.

Arising from outside are the appearances of birth and death.
Arising from inside are revulsion² and faith.
In between, we recall the authentic divine teachings.

I do not stray into making enemies of friendly objects.

Arising from outside are the causes and conditions of the father guru.
Arising from inside is the prajna produced by one's practice.
In between, I give birth to the understanding of conviction.
I do not harbor doubts in the teachings.

Arising from outside are the six types of sentient beings.
Arising from inside is compassion without bias.
In between, I recall the experience of meditation.
My compassion does not stray into mundane desires.

Arising from outside is the self-liberation of the three realms.
Arising from inside is self-existing wisdom.
In between, I have the confidence of realization.
I have no anxiety in the fundamental meaning.

Arising from outside are the five sense pleasures.
Arising from inside is the prajna without clinging.
In between, my actions are of equal taste.
I do not cling to both happiness and suffering.

Arising from outside is the destruction of conditioned phenomena,
Arising from inside is freedom from hope and fear.
In between, I am free from the illness of wanting accomplishment.
I do not cling to both virtue and evil.

The teacher Shakyaguna said, "Jetsun, your realization is excellent from the very beginning! Even though I earlier saw the Jetsun's face, I did not gain conviction and confidence in the oral instructions. Now, please hold me with your compassion and grant me empowerment and oral instructions." The Jetsun accordingly granted empowerment and oral instructions and set him to meditate.

Experience arose in the teacher Shakyaguna. He then asked the Jetsun, "If there are neither appearances nor samsara, then it is not necessary to practice. If there is no mind, then knowing³ will not come about. If there is no guru, then one does not know how to practice. Please point out to me the definitive characteristics of these and the nature of mind."

In response, the Jetsun sang this song.

The definitive characteristic of appearances is non-arising.
If something arises, it is clinging onto reality.

The definitive characteristic of samsara is freedom from a fundamental root.

If there is a fundamental root, it is concept.

The definitive characteristic of mind is unity.
If there are aspects of distinctions, it is wishful thinking.

The definitive characteristic of the guru is possession of a lineage.
If one creates a lineage from oneself, it is stupidity.

Mind itself is like the sky.
Thoughts are like the warm southern clouds that obscure it.

These oral instructions of the authentic guru,
Arise as the cold north wind.

Thoughts themselves are luminous clarity
And experience dawns as the sun and moon,
Radiant, free from the ten directions and three times.
Because there is no identification,⁴ it is inexpressible and
Thus, certainty arises like the planets and stars.

At the time anything arises, there is great bliss.
The nature is simplicity, dharmakaya.
Within appearance-emptiness of the conditions of the six senses,
Arises undefiled energy without effort.
Within this relaxed nature,
Wisdom without fixation abides continuously.
What a great wonder, the inseparable trikaya.

Teacher, do not be attached to fame and happiness in this life. Do not pursue sophistry but devote yourself to practice your entire life. Follow the teachings in this way.

Because [all authentic dharma practitioners] do this, practice the meaning of the following words. The Jetsun then sang this song.

Fortunate, genuine people,
This life is deceiving, don't you understand?
Possessions are illusion, don't you understand?
Samsara is nirvana, don't you understand?
Happiness is a dream, don't you understand?
Praise and blame are echoes, don't you understand?
Appearances are mind, don't you understand?
One's mind is buddha, don't you understand?
Buddha is dharmakaya, don't you understand?
Dharmakaya is dharmata, don't you understand?

If you realize this, whatever appears is mind.
Look at your mind day and night.
Looking at your mind, there is nothing to see.
Remain in the nature where there is nothing to see.
For me, Mahamudra,
Is no more than this nature.
Not clinging to understanding, rest in the natural state.
Because meditation and post-meditation are inseparable,
I don't have stages of meditation.
Whatever appears is empty of essence.
When recollecting, there is neither holding on nor letting go.
Experiencing the taste of non-arising,
Meditate just like that.
And having that realization,
The meditation of karmamudra,
The meditation of prana, nadi and bindu,
Reciting mantras and deity meditation,
And the four Bhramaviharas⁵
Are mere methods for entering the Mahayana.
If you meditate on these as an end,
You will not abandon the root of passion and aggression.
Hence, know that appearances are one's own mind,
And mind itself is empty.
If you are not separate from realization and experience,
Discipline, offering and so forth, the accumulation of virtue
Will all be complete without exception.

The teacher Shakyaguna devoted himself only to practice. As a result, special experience and realization arose in him. The teacher and meditator became a close son of the Jetsun. This is the Song of Accepting the Teacher Shakyaguna at the belly cave in Nyanang.

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¹ Here immaculate refers to the fact that they had obtained a free and well-favored birth in connection with practicing Buddhism.

² Here revulsion means revulsion toward samsara.

³ Here the word khenpo stands for knowing. Usually, khenpo refers to a learned scholar.

⁴ There is no identification of the essence of mind in words and concepts.

⁵ The four Bhramaviharas are compassion, joy, equanimity and love.