

The Songs of Milarepa - Session 1

1 The Song of the Six Remembrances of the Guru

Remembering you, father Marpa, dispels my anguish;
This beggar's song of longing just suddenly came:

In the east at Chonglung Red Rock
A white rain cloud hovers above.
Underneath that floating white cloud
Lies the great site, the hermitage of Drowo Valley.
In back is a mountain like a great majestically poised elephant,
And the mountain in front is like a great majestically poised lion.

Upon the throne of the great Amolika Rock,
Upon a cushion of *krishnasara* deer skin,
Who is it that sits in that place?
It is Marpa the Translator who sits there.
If, right now, I could meet you, how happy I'd be!

Though my devotion is weak, I wish to meet him,
Though my longing is weak, I wish to meet him.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

Lady Dagmema, who is dearer than my own mother,
If right now I could meet you, how happy I'd be!
Though the journey is long, I wish to meet her.
Though the path is hard, I wish to meet her.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

The profound tantra of Hevajra,
If right now it could be taught, how happy I'd be!
Though my prajna is slight, I wish to hold it.
Though my intellect is slight, I wish to recite it.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

The four symbolic abhishekas of the whispered lineage,
If I could receive them now, how happy I'd be!
Though my offerings are small, I wish to receive them.
Though I cannot offer an initiation gift, I wish to request them.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

The profound instruction of the Six Dharmas of Naropa,
If right now they could be taught, how happy I'd be!
Though my fortitude is weak, I wish to receive them.
Though my endurance in meditation is feeble, I wish to receive them.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

Dharma friends gathered with faith from Ü and Tsang,
If I could see you now, how happy I'd be!
Though my experience and realization are slight, I long to discuss.
Though my understanding is inferior, I long to discuss.
Whenever I think, I remember the noble guru.
Whenever I meditate, I remember Marpa Lotsawa.

Though this beggar knows that within devotion we are inseparable,
I am unable to bear this torturous longing
Of remembering my guru within my heart.
My breath is seized in my chest, I cannot speak!
Kind one, please take away your son's sorrow!

2 Lord Marpa's Response

Then, on the point of a cloud stretched out like a banner of five-coloured cloth sat Lord Marpa before him, riding on a white lion adorned with many ornaments, and appearing even more splendidous than when Milarepa had been with him in the past.

"My son, Great Sorcerer, why have you called out to me with such anguish?
Have you lost trust in the supreme jewels of the Guru and Yidam?
Have you been chasing your thoughts - the objects of adverse conditions?
Have the obstacles of the eight worldly concerns corrupted your retreat?
Are the demons of hope and fear getting to you?

Above, have you offered service to the Guru, the supreme jewel?
Below, have you shown generosity to the sentient beings of the six realms?
In between, have you purified your own obscurations and negativity and given rise to excellent qualities? Have the conducive conditions for these not arisen?

Whatever it may be, you and I are inseparable. So, through your practice, benefit the teachings and beings."

3 Milarepa's Song of Joy and Devotion

Seeing my father guru and hearing his speech,
This beggar's depression dawned as a wondrous experience.

Remembering my guru's life example,
From deep down, devotion and realisation arose.

I truly received his compassion and blessings,
And non-dharmic appearances, all of them, ceased.

My longing song of remembering the Guru
Pained the ears of the Jetsun and yet,
This beggar couldn't help it; I would do it again.
Please continue to hold me with your compassion!

The practice of persistence and endurance in hardship,
This is the service to please my father Guru.

Wandering alone in mountain retreats,
This is the service to please the Dakinis.

The genuine Dharma, free of self-regard,
This is the service to the Buddha's teaching.

Making life and practice entirely equal,
This is how I'm generous to protector-less beings.

With endurance, I'm joyful and when sick I'm happy to die:
This is the broom that sweeps away karma, obscurations, and non-virtue.

The austerity of giving up food obtained through harm,
This is the conducive condition for experience and realisation.

Father Guru, I repay your kindness through practice.
Protect your son with compassion, Lord Guru.
Grant your blessing that this beggar may keep to mountain retreats.

Remembering that his Guru Marpa had pointed out that all phenomena are one's own mind and that mind itself is luminosity-emptiness, Milarepa manifested fearless confidence and sang this song of realisation:

4 The Song of Having Confidence in the View

Father, victorious over the armies of the four maras,
I bow at the feet of Marpa the Translator.

People call me a human, but
I am the son of the great snow lioness.
In my mother's womb, I perfected three powers.
When I was a baby, I slept in my den.
When I was a youth, I guarded its gates.
As a full-grown lion I wander in snowy heights.
I have no fear of stormy blizzards.
I'm not afraid of steep rocky cliffs.

People call me a human, but
I am the son of the *garuda*, king of birds.
While inside the egg, I developed my wings.
When I was a baby, I slept in the nest.
When I was a youth, I guarded its gates.
A full-grown *garuda*, I fly in the sky.
I have no fear of the sky's expanse.
I'm not afraid of narrow ravines.

People call me a human, but
I am the son of the colossal whale.
In my mother's womb, my golden spots grew.
When I was a baby, I slept in the nest.
When I was a youth, I led the school.
A full-grown great fish, I roam the vast sea.
I have no fear of the sea's mighty waves.
I'm not afraid of hooks or nets.

People call me a human, but
I am a son of the Kagyu Gurus.
In my mother's womb, I gave rise to faith.
When I was a baby, I entered the gateway of dharma.
When I was a youth, I put effort in study.
An adult, I wander in mountain retreats.
Though ghosts may be savage, I am not afraid.
Though demons play many tricks, I am not afraid.

When the lioness stands in the snow, her paws do not freeze.
If the lioness's paws froze in the snow,
Her perfected three powers would be of little use.

The flying garuda cannot fall from the sky.
If the great garuda could fall from the sky,
Its broad wingspan would be of little use.

When the whale swims in water, it cannot drown.
If the great whale succumbed to the water and drowned,
Being born in the water would be of little use.

Iron boulders cannot be destroyed by stones.
If iron boulders could be destroyed by stones,
For smelting and refining, they would be of little use.

I, Milarepa, have no fear of ghosts.
If Milarepa had fear of ghosts,
Realising the abiding nature would be of little use.

You band of ghosts, demons, and obstructing spirits here,
How sublime it is that you've come at this time.
Don't hurry; relax and stay for a while.
Let's chat about everything under the sun.

You're hurried? Aw! You can stay just one night!
We'll vie in a contest of all our three gates
And we'll see the difference between virtue and non-virtue.

I won't let you leave until you've made some obstacles.
If you should go back without making obstacles,
How ashamed and embarrassed to have come here you'll be!