

CHAPTER TWO

The Deed of his Practicing the Truth of Suffering in its Entirety.

While in the process of life story telling, Rechungpa again asked, “O Lama, after the loss of your father Mila Sherab long ago you have encountered much hardships. Please tell us how that was like.” Milarepa continued:

When I was about seven years old, my father Mila Sherab Gyeltshen was stricken with a terrible illness. Doctors could not cure him, divine teller foretold that he would not recover and they abandoned him from treatment. Friends and relatives likewise knew he would not live long. Even my father himself was aware that he would not survive. Our relatives, kith and kins, including my paternal uncle and aunt, friend and countrymen, and neighbours all gathered. My father intended to keep my mother, sister and I, together with all his wealth in the care of a trustee highlighting a testament ensuring that his son would reclaim his patrimony. Then he read it aloud for all to hear:

“I will say it in brief and aloud. I am not going to recover from my present illness, consequently after I die my son is still young and thus, these are the arrangements through which I entrust him to care of all his relatives, especially his paternal uncle and aunt. My wealth includes the following: in the highlands, yaks, horses and sheep; in the lowlands, various tracts of land, the three-sided land among them, upon which the poor dare not even look; on the ground floor of the house, cattle, goats and donkeys; in the upper rooms, utensils of gold, silver, iron, turquoise, silk fabrics and a granary. In short my possessions are such that I need not aspire for any other man’s wealth.

“Spend a portion of these for expenses after I am gone, and the rest I entrust to all of you gathered here until my son is able to support his own household. In particular, Yab Mila entrusted him (Milarepa) to the care of both his paternal uncle and aunt. “When my son is grown big enough and able to support his own family, he shall marry Dzese, as they were betrothed in childhood. You will then return to him my patrimony, until then may all their relatives led by their uncle and aunt should know the joy the sorrows of my wife and

children. Do not let them into misery, otherwise, I shall watch you all from my grave when I die.”

With this last word, my father passed away. Our relatives performed the rites and merit making for my late father. By then in agreement they said, “Nyangsa Kargen herself should take care of the remaining wealth, while we all should provide whatever assistance she needs as best we can from our side,” said the people gathered there. My uncle and aunt said, “ Although some people are family, yet we are sincere and genuine family. We would not lead them, mother and children into misery, and in accordance with the testament, we shall assume control over the wealth.”

Without listening to the argument of my mother’s brother and Dzese’s father and brother, my uncle took away all men’s goods and aunt took the women’s, the rest they divided in half. Having robbed all the goods, they said, “You mother and children, shall serve us each in turn.” Thus, my mother and we children no longer had control over our possessions inherited from our late father,” said Milarepa in lamenting.

In summer, when it comes for working in the fields, we were on our uncle’s service, while in winter when time comes for spinning and weaving wool, we were our aunt’s servant. Our food was as worser than the food for dogs, yet our works were as heavy as work for donkeys. We wore strips of torn clothes over our shoulders tied with a jute belt. Being forced to toil the field without rest, our limbs became cracked and raw. Given only poor food and rag clothing, we became pale and emaciated. Our hair, once dangling in locks plaited with gold and turquoise, turned ashen and thin and became infested with lice. In the meantime, sensitive folks who saw or heard us all broke down in tears, however, my aunt and uncle turned deaf ear to all gossip.

As we, mother and children were beset with unending misery, my mother said to my aunt, “You are not Chungtse Paldren (Glorious Leader of the Chungtsa), but you are Dunmo Takdren (Demoness Leader of Tigers).” My aunt thus become known as Dunmo Takdren. In those days there was a proverb: When the false master aims to be master, the true master is

put like a dog.” Such is what had become of us, mother and children. Previously, when my father Mila Sherab Gyeltshen was alive, everyone, both high and low looked to see as if we smiled or frowned. Later, when my uncle and aunt become rich as kings, it was their faces smiling or frowning upon which everyone gazed. Regarding my mother, the people whispered, “How true the saying, ‘Rich husband, clever wife. Soft wool, fine woollens.’ Now that no capable man is around, it is just as the proverb says.”

While at first when Nyangsa Kargen was sustain by a caring husband, is is said she was courageous and wise, while now her wisdom has dimmed and she is completely miserable. Our inferiors all ridiculed us behind our backs just as the saying goes: “When one is beset by misery, gossip will follow in turn.” Dzese’s parents gave me new clothing and boots, said Milarepa smiling. “When riches are gone, you need not think yourself poor, since they are like dew drops in a meadow. In the past, your ancestors did not acquire wealth until later on in life. For you too, a time of prosperity will come.” Saying this the people and country men consoled us over time and again.

Then I reached my fifteenth year until which was full of miseries. At that time there was a filed given to my mother by her parents as her inheritance known by the unpleasant name Trepe Tenchung (Little Boot Sole) but producing an excellent harvest. My maternal uncle cultivated the filed and did what he could to increases its yield of barely while quietly stashing it away. With the excess he purchased a great quantity of meat, he ground a large amount of white barely into flour, and brewed a good deal of black barley into wine. This preparation with hardship was for Nyangsa Kardren and her children to reclaim their wealth.

We invited our close relatives and neighbours headed by my paternal aunt and uncle, our friends, countrymen, and neighbours, in particular anyone with knowledge of my father Mila Sherab Gyeltshen’s testament letter read at the time of his death. To my aunt and uncle we presented an entire animal carcass while to others we offered portions, larger or smaller, according to their rank. And with wine in porcelain cups for good fortune and long life, we served an excellent feast. My mother then stood up in the middle of the guests who were seated in a row and said, “All right then, when a child is born, he is named; when wine is

poured, there is talk; I also have a few words to say.” Elders seated here in a row headed by uncle and aunt, you who know of my husband Mila Sherab’s testament proclaimed at the time of his passing, please listen closely.”

My maternal uncle then read the text of my father’s testament. When he finished, my mother said, “Since the meaning of this text and its proclamation is clear to all the elders seated here, there is no need for me to recount it at length. Briefly stated, up to now both uncle and aunt have looked after me and my children with utmost care. Now, as my son and Dzese are able to support their own family, I ask that you return our wealth that was entrusted to you, that my son marry Dzese, and he then take possessions of his patrimony in accordance with his father’s testament.”

My uncle and aunt never agreed with one another, but they were reconciled in their greed, and I was an only son while they had many sons. My uncle and aunt were thus united and said, “You have possessions? Where are they? Previously, when your father Mila Sherab was in good health we loaned him a house, fields, gold, turquoise, crossbred yaks, horses, and sheep. When he died, these possessions were returned to their owner. Do you own a single piece of gold? A handful of barley? A single lump of butter? A single silken robe? Even a single she-goat? We Never saw any of these? And yet you speak like this? Who wrote the text of your testament? We were enough to sustain you truly miserable creatures so you did not starve to death. But it is as the saying goes: ‘When wicked men are granted power, they will measure out water by the ladleful.’”

My uncle blew his nose and suddenly rose from his seat snapping his fingers, shook the hem of his cloak, and stomped his foot. Then he said, “What is more, even this house belongs to us, so you and your children, get out! And he slapped my mother with his hand and struck my sister and me with the length of his sleeve.

To be continued.....

