

PREFACE

by Ösel Tendzin

The power, beauty, and intimacy of *The Rain of Wisdom* is based on the tradition of devotion. In the Kagyü lineage, devotion is the proclamation that enlightened mind can be transmitted. This proclamation has resounded from the time of the Buddha to the present.

Transmission of enlightened mind depends on the relationship between guru and student. In our time, such a relationship has become suspect, because we see a conflict between freedom and surrender. But in order to be free, we must first surrender to what we are, to our heritage. And the relationship between student and guru is analogous to the relationship we make to our past.

This connection is neither imitation nor mimicry. It is the understanding that nothing is lost: everything that has happened in our past is totally real in every moment. This is not purely genetic, not simply memory. It is the continuity of who we are. This continuity is known as buddha nature—intrinsic awakened mind. The way to realize this mind is through relating with the heritage of lineage. And we make this relationship through the guru, who *is* the living spokesman of the lineage.

When we read these lineage songs, it would be reasonable to think we might find them difficult to understand. Because we have grown up in the West, their language may seem strange or mystical or completely nonsensical. In fact, without proper training, any genuine relationship to these teaching-songs is improbable. If approached on an anthropological or cultural level, we end up with an imitation of a foreign philosophy and lifestyle. And an academic viewpoint is equally unreal, because scholarly understanding is totally ghostlike appreciation.

Yet simply reading the songs produces a definite spark, not dependent on any reference or approach. The point is that when the truth is uttered, it needs no explanation. It is fearless.

But though a first reading may produce intuitive understanding, we need to study further to comprehend clearly. The proper path of study is threefold, involving language, meaning, and training. The language is simple trust. The meaning is faith. The training is devotion.

The journey to awakening begins by listening to the dharma. Simple trust refers to the power of the language of dharma—a language that awakens intelligence on the spot, that shocks us because it is true. And the truth of the teaching inspires trust in the teacher—not because of charisma, but because he communicates directly. This is our first taste of sanity, our first inkling of devotion. This is the first time we meet ourselves without

preconceptions and glimpse our own intelligence. This is our entrance into the hlnayana path, where practicing the dharma is based on simple trust.

The teacher tells us how to realize our integrity through the practice of meditation. Following the teacher's instruction means that we trust our mind. And once we trust our mind, we begin to feel wholesome, healthy, and sane.

But a question arises—do we really understand what sanity means? At this point we experience doubt. We start to feel that our relationship with the teacher and the teachings is shaky and uncertain. The teacher becomes the embodiment of our doubt. But since he offers no resistance to our uncertainty, the doubt is revealed as an expression of intelligent struggle. And since we already trust our intelligence, we do not have to discard our doubt. In fact, doubt becomes the seed of faith, and at this stage the teacher becomes friend as well as teacher.

So doubt is both our teacher and our friend. When doubt meets trust, we begin to give birth to awakened heart. The teacher, who accommodates our hesitation, becomes the spiritual friend, to whom we can expose our fears of being open and tender.

Faith, at this stage of practice, simply means not panicking when sanity is threatened by emotion. The very emotion we experience could lead us to make friends with ourself. But we need something to reflect on, a mirror without distortion. We look at the teacher as we look in a clear mirror. We doubt whether the image we see is really who we are. On the path of the mahayana, the teacher mirrors our doubt and reflects our intelligence.

Real faith is looking in the mirror, perhaps doubting what we see, but not turning away. Practice is relating to whatever we see as an accurate reflection—because we know the mirror is flawless. For doubt to become faith, we have to trust the phenomenal world as much as we trust ourself.

Because we are willing to expose ourself to the teacher, and because the teacher is willing to reflect our hesitation and doubt without judgment, we begin to realize the meaning of our existence. As we examine ourself, the mirror, and the world between, we discover a new way of seeing; we discover prajña, discriminating awareness. And with the clear eyes of prajña, we discover egolessness.

All this time, our whole notion of who we are, what the teacher is, and what the world is, has been based on preconceptions. Prajña, true faith, penetrates the veil of ignorance and uncovers the deception of believing in the teacher as savior, in ourself as confused, and in the world as solid fact. At this moment, free from egocentric perceptions of existence, we experience sunyata.

From the openness of sunyata we see that both self and the world are empty. We can surrender, because there is nothing to lose or defend. Neither our sanity, nor the world as it is, need be affirmed or rejected. When freedom and surrender are seen to be the same, compassion arises as the natural expression of enlightened mind. We realize that as long as others suffer, our fulfillment as human beings is incomplete.

Generally speaking, our most precious possession is our human body, through which we appreciate the world. Yet our appreciation depends on a consciousness that is fickle and untrustworthy and constantly changing. We cling to existence by allegiance to some particular manifestation of consciousness. This tendency to cling is very subtle. Even the liberation arising from the experience of sunyata and compassion could become subtle clinging, and therefore must be surrendered.

At every stage of the path there is always some subtle ignorance, some knot that we feel must be untied. But when we look, we cannot even find it. Realizing this, the only thing we can do is seek a genuine guru who can untie the bonds of ego. Finding such a guru, we can begin to train on the vajrayana path of devotion. The unbreakable commitment between guru and disciple, called samaya bond, is the vehicle for that training.

The great lineage holder Naropa had achieved the highest understanding of the sutras and the tantras. He was considered one of the greatest scholars of Nalanda University, with penetrating insight into the dharma. But he, too, felt this subtle clinging. He realized that the conventional path could not totally fulfill his desire for complete enlightenment. Hearing the name Tilopa, he left behind position and fame to search for him.

Tilopa lived by a river, eating the fish entrails discarded by local fishermen. Finding him thus, Naropa was shocked, but nevertheless asked for teachings. Tilopa said he had nothing to teach, but if Naropa wanted to follow, it was up to him. Thus began twelve years of intense training, during which Naropa was humiliated, disappointed, rejected, and even beaten to the point where he nearly died. He was asked to perform actions considered outrageous by conventional standards. His stubborn reluctance to release the final vestiges of ego had to be exposed.

Naropa's great desire for enlightenment, his trust in his own intelligence, and his faith in his understanding of the emptiness of phenomena all led to his great devotion to Tilopa. When that devotion became unconditional and self-existing, not even depending on the guru for confirmation, he then achieved the unsurpassable mahamudra, the realization of awakened mind. Through complete devotion he attained buddhahood.

Accepting life fully is the same as accepting our teacher as guru. Only a human being who has trained in the path of simple trust can surrender to the faith that the phenomenal world is accurate and true. Only then can he or she offer the apparition of ego to the uncompromising scrutiny of the guru. The guru demands that we manifest our true nature, our buddha nature, our enlightened mind. Anything short of that is unacceptable.

In *The Rain of Wisdom* we see how the great lineage holders dedicated their lives to the three yana path and achieved enlightenment for our benefit. Their songs are spontaneous expressions of luminous mind, a great treasure, and a source of constant inspiration for our practice.

As a descendant of the victorious ones, I take genuine pride in introducing the glorious *Rain of Wisdom*. I have written this preface based on the teachings I have received

and the practice transmitted to me by my guru, Vajracarya the Venerable Chögyam Trungpa, Rinpoche, the Eleventh Trungpa.

On behalf of all his students, I would like to express our immeasurable gratitude for his dedication and loyalty to us over the past ten years. Without his unceasing effort, the precious gem of the dharma would not have been discovered. Because of his compassion and insight, the incomparable vajrayana teachings are firmly planted in the Western world.

Meeting my guru
I heard the dharma.
Recognizing the dharma as true
I had faith in him.
Realizing the path to awakening
Depended on his instructions
I did not hesitate.

Vajra Regent Ösel Tendzin