

Naropa - His Life



By Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche from: Kagyu Life"International", No.4, 1995

First Chapter: Naropa's Search For Tilopa

Naropa was a scholar in the tenth century. There are different opinions on where he was born. Some biographers say he was born in Bangladesh, but according to Marpa, one of his main students, he was born in Lahore, India. His family was very powerful and rich. At that time, it was common for people who worked for such families, to refer to the master as king. Therefore, some biographers claim that Naropa was a prince.

Naropa's childhood and marriage

In the first part of his life, young Naropa studied everything according to a Brahmin tradition. His father was probably a Buddhist because Naropa received Buddhist training at home. One day he requested permission of his father to take ordination to become a monk. His father refused.

To make his father give him permission, he said, "If I cannot become a monk, I want to marry a girl who comes from a Brahmin family, who is a Hindu, who has love and compassion. Her name is Sangmo and she is blond." He added also that the girl must be 16 years old.

His father thought that he could never find such a girl, so he consulted a friend. The friend told him not to worry, that India is a big country, and it should be possible to find this girl somewhere.

The friend started to search everywhere. One day he saw a group of girls who were picking flowers. At that time picking flowers normally meant that one was preparing them as offerings to the gods or deities. This indicated they were Hindus. It started to rain and all the girls left. They had to cross a river so they lifted up their skirts. One of them did not lift her skirt; she just walked through the water. In that way the friend noticed that she was different from the

others. On the other side of the river was a beggar sitting on the road to whom this girl gave some food. The friend also noticed that she had blond hair. He went to her and asked from what family she came. She told him she was from a Brahmin family, her name was Sangmo, and she was sixteen years old.

The friend was very happy. He returned and reported that he had seen the girl. Naropa's father, full of joy, told Naropa the girl was found and soon he would invite her to come. A delegation was sent to the girl's parents to ask them for the girl as a wife to Naropa. They brought with them a hundred elephants carrying all kinds of gifts: silver, gold, everything precious. In that way she married Naropa.

Naropa was a house-holder until he was 25 years old. Then he and his wife agreed that they both would be ordained and he went to Nalanda University.

Nalanda University

At Nalanda, he studied Buddhist philosophy, both Sutra and Tantra. He became the greatest scholar of Nalanda. At that time it was a tradition that scholars from other religions (e.g., the Hindu religion) would challenge Buddhist scholars in debate. Whoever won the debate would become the teacher of the loser and his students. Therefore it was essential that the debaters knew the topics very well. In the whole of India it was like that. If the scholar was not qualified, it was a risky affair.

For that reason the four best scholars at Nalanda University would be selected to debate. Each scholar was responsible for each of the university's gates in the four directions. Naropa became a great scholar for the North gate and engaged in many debates. He also taught and acquired disciples. He himself was convinced that he was a great scholar.

One day when he was sitting and reading his texts, a shadow suddenly fell on the book. He turned and saw an extremely old and ugly woman. She asked him, "What are you studying? What are you reading?" He replied, "I am studying Guhya-samaja tantra." She asked, "Can you read the words?" "Yes," he answered and started to recite the text.

On hearing that she became so happy that she jumped around and started to dance. Naropa thought: "She became so happy when I told her I can read, I will also tell her I can understand it." He said: "I also understand the meaning."

She then became very sad and started to cry. Naropa said, "You were so happy that I can read, but now you are so sad because I said I understand the meaning. Why?" She answered, "I'm sad because a great scholar like you is lying. This is very sad. Today in the whole world, there is nobody but my brother who understands the meaning of the words." Naropa then asked who her brother was and where he lived. She answered, "My brother is Tilo Sherab Sangpo. It is uncertain where he lives, but if you want to meet him, I will help you."

On hearing the name of Tilopa, Naropa felt a strong devotion that he had never experienced before. The only thought he had in his mind was to find Tilopa. He wanted immediately to go and see him.

He went back to the University and asked for permission to leave. He said he was going to meet Tilopa. All the scholars of Nalanda University pleaded with him to stay and for three months he could not leave. In his dreams he got many signs that he should go. Finally, he told them he was sorry but that he had made up his mind, and that he would leave no matter who asked him to stay. He agreed to stay until he had completed the teachings he had already started, but he would not initiate any new teachings.

The search for Tilopa, and the 12 minor hardships

Naropa left Nalanda University to look for Tilopa. He received a prophecy that he should meditate on Chakrasamvara and complete that meditation. He then would get indications where to find Tilopa.

He went to a cemetery in southern India where he meditated for six months on Chakrasamvara. Finally he received a prophecy by dakinis telling him that to meet Tilopa he should go east. Enduring many hardships he travelled east, but he did not find Tilopa.

He was about to give up because it was too difficult and he did not have any strength left. Then he heard a voice that told him that laziness is the work of demons. Only if he gave up laziness, would he meet Tilopa and get enlightened.

From this point on, every event and everything told in connection with Naropa's life story are actually teachings on the path to enlightenment. They describe exactly what Tilopa taught Naropa and what is necessary for someone to reach enlightenment. The first thing one has to give up is laziness, because otherwise one has no chance of reaching enlightenment; there is no enlightenment combined with laziness.

Naropa gave up laziness and became very diligent. As he continued his path he prayed to Tilopa day and night.

1) Not long after that, he arrived at a narrow path with a rock on one side and a river on the other. He met a sick woman lying on the path. She had leprosy so bad that her feet and hands had nearly disappeared. She had infected wounds all over with blood and pus coming out everywhere. She was blocking the narrow path. She said to him, "I'm sorry, but I can't move, so you should move me, walk over me, or go another way".

There was nothing he could do, so he held his nose, looked away because it was so disgusting to look at her, and jumped over her. Immediately she disappeared, and a voice came from the sky telling him, "If one practices the Mahayana path, one has to have love and compassion. If one does not have love and compassion, one does not practice the Mahayana path and will not be able to get the result of that path. One will also never be able to find one's teacher. All sentient beings are like one's parents, that is why in order to practice the Mahayana one may not exclude even one single sentient being." He thereafter continued developing his Bodhicitta and tried to increase his love and compassion.

2) Again he went towards the east in order to find Tilopa. He came to a river where he met a ferocious dog with wounds full of worms. The dog was aggressive and barked angrily at him. He tried to send the dog away but it would not move. At last he jumped over it, because he wanted to continue his search for Tilopa. Immediately a voice told him, "If one does not understand that all beings in the world, from all six existences have been one's parents at one time or another, then one will never be able to meet a good teacher, not even a bad teacher." These events were Tilopa's teachings.

3) The next person he met was carrying a heavy load. Naropa asked him if he knew Tilopa and his whereabouts. The man told him to go to the other side of the mountain where he would meet somebody able to answer his question. That person would be cutting and smashing the heads of his parents on rocks.

He went there and met the man who was busy smashing the heads and asked him about Tilopa. The man said that he knew where Tilopa was but that he could only tell him if Naropa would smash some heads himself. Naropa thought, "I am a monk, a pandit. I come from a very high cast. How can I smash heads?"

At the moment he thought this, everything disappeared. Again a voice from the sky told him that to get any kind of realization he had to give up his ego-clinging and his pride. Without understanding that there is no real self, no real individual, he could never get any realization. At this point Naropa realized that everytime he met someone, there was a lesson to learn. He promised himself that from then on he would try to learn the lesson.

4) He continued and met two people who had captured a third person and tied him up. They were cutting open his stomach, his intestines were pouring out, and he was screaming. Naropa went over to them and asked if they knew about Tilopa. The men said that they knew, but that Naropa had to cut the intestines first. Naropa could not bare the pain of the person and refused to cut the intestines. The people vanished and this time the voice told him that the whole root of Samsara is attachment, conceptual clinging, clinging to the notion of a real I, which he should get rid of.

Tilopa was confronting Naropa with some very extreme situations. In order to give him very direct teachings. To get rid of smaller attachment and disturbing emotions is not so difficult, but in very extreme situations one should be able to keep one's mind clear without falling into any kind of reactions. This is very difficult.

5) Naropa reached a place where he saw a terrifying scene of one person pouring hot water into the open stomach of another person. The latter was screaming and blood was flowing. Naropa asked if they knew where Tilopa was. To get an answer he first had to pour more water into the stomach. Again he could not do it.

This time after the people had vanished, he was told by the voice in the sky that the teachings of the lamas are like the flow of water and that they have to be used to purify the impurity of one's own mind. It cannot be done through purifying anything outside.

The impurity of his mind that he should have purified at this time was his clinging to the concept of himself as a monk.

6) Naropa continued and came to a beautiful town with a king who knew about Tilopa, but wanted him to stay in his palace for a while before giving him an answer. Naropa accepted and stayed there for a long time, making prayers for the family, and living in very comfortable conditions.

One day the king asked him to marry his daughter. As a monk, Naropa refused. The king insisted and finally got very upset at his refusal and had him beaten. Naropa got very angry and started to do his Chakrasamvara recitation in order to make black magic against the king. Just as he started, the whole town disappeared and there was only sand left.

The teaching from this was that one must abandon desire and anger. Otherwise it will not be possible to meet a teacher and without a teacher, no liberation is possible. Naropa had just demonstrated his desire by staying for so long and his anger by getting upset when he was beaten. Once more he did not understand that it was not real, and he was taught that he should understand the dreamlike nature of everything.

Whatever one experiences is created through one's own emotions of desire and anger. These create the world we experience which has no true essence. Since beginningless time it has never existed.

7) Naropa was now convinced that it was Tilopa he met everytime.

Praying to Tilopa, he continued travelling East. Finally he came to a big forest. A deer rushed by, followed by barking dogs and a hunter. Naropa asked him if he knew Tilopa and where he could find him. The man replied, "Yes I do, but first you have to kill one antelope."

Naropa still had some doubts in his mind because he was a monk and not supposed to kill any living being. At the same moment, the antelopes and dogs disappeared and the hunter told him that he had to overcome the clinging to his self. Like the arrow that kills the deer, his understanding should make an end to his clinging to an I.

He should free himself from doubts. As long as he still had doubts in his mind he would not be able to meet his teacher.

8) Naropa came to a lake where he met an old couple. He asked them if they knew Tilopa and where he could find him. They said they knew him, but first they wanted to invite Naropa into their house for a meal.

The wife was preparing the meal, putting live frogs and fish into boiling water. Naropa was offered the soup. Seeing the animals being boiled, he had doubts if he as a monk could eat it. Furthermore as he was a monk he was not supposed to eat in the evening time. When he looked at the soup the husband said to his wife, "This man is following the lower school of Buddhism, Theravada, so he is not allowed to eat in the evening."

Then he took the frogs and the fish and threw them up in the air where they dissolved into rainbows.

The old man told Naropa that as long as he had the smallest concepts of the lower path left in his mind he would not find his lama. Before he disappeared he said that he would kill his parents the next day.

This teaching meant to show the necessity for Naropa to let go of his clinging to ideas and concepts of the lower vehicle (Hinayana or Theravada).

Naropa expected to meet somebody killing his parents who might know where Tilopa was. This time he was prepared and determined to do whatever he was asked and find out where Tilopa was.

9) The next day he did meet a person killing his father with a trident and digging a hole in the ground to bury his mother alive. The parents were screaming to Naropa, "Please, help us. We have been so kind to our son and now he wants to kill us. Please, help!"

Again Naropa asked for Tilopa. The man knew about him, but wanted Naropa to help him bury

his mother first. The screaming and the pleading of the parents were too much for Naropa; he still had some small doubts in his mind. Immediately the parents disappeared. The man then taught him that he had to completely dissolve any kind of dualistic concept, any kind of clinging to object and subject.

This man told Naropa that the next day he should go begging for alms.

10) Naropa thought that it meant that he would meet a begging monk who could help him to find Tilopa. Therefore he went to a monastery. When he reached there, he met a few monks. One of the monks living in the monastery had met Naropa before and the others had heard about him since he was a famous scholar from Nalanda. So they invited him inside.

Again he asked if they had heard about Tilopa and where he could find him. They never heard about this great teacher but they knew about a poor beggar called Tilopa.

Naropa was sure he would meet his teacher. With some monks from the monastery he went to a place where a man was sitting on the ground. Sometimes he would take a frog, throw it into the fire, and eat it. As Naropa was convinced that this was his teacher Tilopa he started prostrating in front of him and asked if he could be his disciple.

The man agreed, took a handful of lice from his body, gave them to Naropa, and told him that he had to give up all concepts. He then asked him to throw the lice into the fire. The monks from the monastery were all looking at him, so Naropa hesitated. The beggar then told him that if he did not burn all 51 mental events arising in a mind functioning on its ordinary level he could not meet the right lama.

11) Naropa continued his journey and the next day he arrived at a very strange place with lots of people who did not look like ordinary people. One person was speaking without a tongue; another was deaf, but listening to a sound; a blind man was watching; some were walking without legs, and some corpses were dancing. There were all kinds of weird appearances.

He got quite distracted looking at these phenomena. Suddenly he realized that he was distracted and that he should instead pull himself together and concentrate on finding Tilopa.

The moment he realized that everything disappeared. He was told that how he was looking for his lama was not the right way.

"The lama you want to find is a realized being. In order to find him you have to concentrate your mind on him. Whenever you do so he will be there. Now you were just looking at these strange appearances and you got distracted."

"These strange beings you saw symbolized that there is no real subject and object.

The blind man watching symbolized that if you want to understand the nature of mind, the Mahamudra, you must realize that there is nobody looking at anything, you must go beyond the idea of somebody looking at something.

The person speaking without a tongue and the deaf listening to a sound symbolized that realization as such can never be expressed by words.

The man walking without legs symbolized that the nature of mind is beyond coming and going. It is not coming from anywhere and also not going anywhere.

The dancing corpses symbolized that you must free yourself from the idea of a perceiving object and a perceiving mind."

12) Naropa realized that it had all been a creation of his lama and that he had not really understood what was going on. He felt sad and he regretted that he had not been able to understand it. He decided that from now on he had to stay at this place and meditate.

So he did, but since he still did not meet with Tilopa, he lost all his courage. Naropa thought he might not be able to meet his teacher in this life, so he decided to make very strong wishes that he would be able to meet him in his next life, and he was planning to kill himself.

He took a knife, put it to his throat but in this moment a bluish man with red eyes appeared in front of him. Naropa realized that this was Tilopa himself. Full of devotion he opened himself to Tilopa and asked why he had not appeared before and why he had not been able to see him.

Tilopa told Naropa that since the time he started looking for him, he had always been with

him. Whomever he had met had always been Tilopa himself. Only the obscurations in Naropa's mind had prevented him from seeing his teacher. Now he was free of obscurations and was able to see Tilopa.

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Second Chapter: Naropa's Time with Tilopa. The Twelve Major Hardships

By Khenpo Chodrak Rinpoche

In the first part it was told how Naropa endured twelve minor hardships to meet Tilopa. Here, Khenpo Chodrak continues the explanations about the twelve major hardships Naropa had to undergo before he reached complete enlightenment.

Tilopa gave Naropa the four complete transmission lineages. Then Naropa started practicing the teachings. The next twelve hardships which he had to undergo happened during the time he stayed with Tilopa, who was guiding and helping him overcome all the obstacles he would encounter while practicing.

As explained in the first part of the article, through these 24 hardships, Naropa is taken through the path of junction. In relation to Vajrayana practice, this corresponds to receiving the 4 empowerments: the body-vase empowerment, the speech-secret empowerment, the wisdom-awareness empowerment, and the word-empowerment.

Each empowerment was given to Naropa through different signs or symbols, indicating their respective meaning.

The first Empowerment given through eleven different signs

Finally having met Tilopa, Naropa offered a mandala to him, requesting him to give empowerment. From then on, whenever Naropa offered a mandala, Tilopa showed him a sign. All together he showed him eleven different signs by means of which he transmitted the vase-empowerment to Naropa.

1) The first time Naropa offered a mandala, Tilopa asked him to get one meter of cotton cloth and some sesame oil. The oil was poured on the cotton, then they each held one side and set it on fire. Tilopa then asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa replied that he had understood that the fire is like the instructions of the lama, and the cotton cloth is like the concepts of his mind. The burning of the cotton shows that concepts are to be abandoned. The ashes of the cotton cloth, which is still in the shape of the cloth, shows that things appear but at the same moment they do not exist. Likewise, in terms of the generation process of yidam-meditation, one should understand the union of appearance and emptiness of the yidam-deity.

2) Tilopa held a crystal in his hand and showed it to Naropa, then asked what he understood.

Naropa explained that he understood that the mind of the disciple should be completely pure; there should be no broken commitments in the relationship between teacher and disciple. The disciple should also be free from any kind of cunning.

3) Tilopa then handed a string full of knots to Naropa and asked him to untie them. Naropa did it and gave the string back. Tilopa threw it aside and asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa replied, "All beings are tied by the eight worldly dharmas, and we need to untie them." (The eight worldly dharmas are: praise / criticism; fame / disgrace; gain / loss; happiness / misery) "Once we have done so we have to remain natural and rest the mind in itself without being artificial. We have to get rid of all our expectations, hopes and fear."

"We always hope to be praised and we are afraid of being criticized."

"We are looking for fame and we are afraid of being disgraced."

"We want to gain something and we are afraid of losing it."

"We are striving for happiness and we are afraid of misery."

4) Then Tilopa took a precious jewel and put it on his head. He then put it in front of him and focused his mind on it for a long time without moving. Afterwards, he asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa said that he understood it to mean that the lama is like a wish fulfilling gem, since through him it is possible to develop all ordinary and extraordinary siddhis and accomplishments. Putting the jewel on his head meant that one should never be separated from the lama; one should always think that he is there. Looking at the gem for a long time without movement signified that one's devotion and faith to the lama should be unchanging, and that this is necessary until one has reached full enlightenment.

5) Naropa offered another mandala to Tilopa and requested an empowerment. Tilopa filled up a clay cup with water, handed it to Naropa and asked him to drink all of the contents. Tilopa again asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa said that he understood it to mean that the student's mind is disturbed by all the disturbing emotions, whereas the instructions from the lama are to cool down the disturbed mind. The mind needs to be washed using the instructions.

6) When Naropa requested the vase-empowerment, Tilopa took water from a container and put it into many smaller containers. He then took the water and poured it back into the single container again. He asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa answered that he understood it to mean that to ordinary eyes there is a variety of appearances, but the empty essence of whatever appears is the same - there is only one essence.

7) At another instant Tilopa demonstrated the mudra (hand gesture) of triangle (this mudra represents the source of all dharmas) and asked Tilopa what he understood.

Naropa said that he understood it to mean that all phenomena, both inner and outer, do not involve defining characteristics. The second quality is that this nature of phenomena is emptiness. Thirdly there should be no hope, fear, or aspirations.

8) Then Tilopa showed the mudra of a ring and asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa said that he understood it to mean that everything is included in the Dharmakaya, and that there is nothing different from this Truth-body.

9) Tilopa pointed with his fingers to his heart and then let his head fall down. He asked Naropa what he understood.

Naropa said he understood it to mean that the quality of the Dharmakaya is nothing different from the nature of one's own mind.

10) Then Tilopa brought a snake and he tied a knot in the snake and put it on the ground. On its own the snake untied the knot. He asked Naropa, what he understood.

Naropa answered he understood it to mean that, even though our mind is the Dharmakaya, the Truth body itself, it is tied up through the illusion of the perceiving mind and the perceived object as being different. By the mind untying itself, it is possible to be liberated from this impure concept. In fact, that is the only way to do it. It cannot be done from the outside. It has to be done by the mind itself.

11) Tilopa then pretended to be unable to speak. Naropa interpreted it to mean that once the mind untied itself from these nodes of dualistic views, many experiences will come. However, these experiences and realizations are something which cannot be expressed in words.

After having shown these eleven signs, Tilopa took a branch with fruit, held it up and showed it to Naropa, asking what he understood.

Naropa said he understood it to mean that when he experienced the fruits of meditation, he

should not just keep them for himself. This fruit is something which should be available for all beings; it should be shared with others like the fruits of a tree which everybody can eat.

All these different signs or symbols were given over a period of several years, and every time Naropa requested the empowerment, Tilopa would give some kind of signs. For each of the eleven signs he showed Naropa, he never either confirmed or rejected his answer. He never said whether Naropa had understood it in the right way or not. He just left it the way it was.

Later, when Tilopa was sitting, he began to smile and laugh. Then he said to Naropa, "You know, it is exactly as prophesied by the dakinis, you understood everything in the right way. Whatever I showed you, you had the right understanding." Then he told him, "You should understand that everything which appears is not different from your own mind. Even when whichever yidam or Buddha-aspect you meditate on appears, the essence of that yidam or Buddha-aspect is not different from your own mind."

In this way he gave him the first of the empowerments, which is the vase empowerment.

The meaning of the vase empowerment is to understand that appearances and emptiness are inseparable.

The second and third empowerments, the speech-secret and wisdom-awareness empowerments, were also each given through eleven different signs.

Tilopa gave Naropa the second empowerment, the speech-secret empowerment, which is that sound and emptiness are inseparable. He explained to him that all sounds and all mantras are in essence empty. He gave him permission to practice the methods of working with the energies in the inner channels and told him to do that practice.

Then he gave him the third empowerment, the knowledge-wisdom empowerment. He introduced him to the meaning of the original highest wisdom, which means the understanding that clarity and emptiness are inseparable.

These twenty two signs are explained in detail in the extensive version of Naropa's biography.

The fourth Empowerment, given by means of the Twelve Major Hardships

Naropa then meditated on the meaning of the empowerments. After one year, Naropa came to Tilopa again and told him, "Now I have accomplished the meaning of the three empowerments, which are called the empowerments that ripen the immature mind."

1) He then asked him for the fourth empowerment which liberates the mind, the introduction into Mahamudra. Tilopa looked at him in a special way and left. Naropa followed him.

They went to a temple that had many stories. Tilopa went up and Naropa followed right after him. When they got to the top Tilopa just sat down resting against the wall. He said, "Well, if I had a devoted student, he would jump from here."

Immediately Naropa jumped. When he landed he broke all his bones and was lying in pain, really suffering. So he thought, "OK, I will not become enlightened in this life." He started to make prayers that he would be able to meet Tilopa in his next life.

While he was praying, Tilopa appeared next to him and asked, "What happened to you?" Naropa said to him, "I jumped, because my lama told me to do so and now I am lying here in so much pain with all my bones broken. It is terrible. I feel like I am half dead."

Tilopa then told him, "Well, you know the body is actually a result of your actions and your disturbing emotions. That is what creates your physical body. In a way, it is not so important if you have it or not. However, I have some methods which I learned from the dakinis." He ran his hand over Naropa's skin and completely healed him. After that, Tilopa gave him all the teachings of the Demchog-Tantra. Tilopa then told Naropa, "What you should meditate on now is to free yourself from the clinging of the mind."

Naropa answered him, "I know that what I need is to free myself from this clinging but I am tied up by my ignorance. Either I fall into believing that things are there or that they are not there. I cannot really get above that. So what shall I do? I know the goal but not the way."

Tilopa said, "You have to understand that the idea that things exist is false, and that the idea that things do not exist is also false. Whatever appears is illusory. What you should focus your mind on is the understanding of this illusion, and this understanding is in the continuity of your

mind."

Naropa meditated on that for one year. During that time Tilopa sometimes behaved like a child and sometimes like a crazy person. He did all kinds of weird things during that year. It was never certain what he would do. He showed this behavior in order to emphasize that everything is illusion-like and unreal, whatever happens, whether one is sane or insane.

2) After one year Tilopa came over to Naropa and said, "Why don't you ask me for more instructions?"

Immediately, Naropa started to offer a mandala and asked for instructions. Again Tilopa walked away and Naropa followed him.

They came to a big empty field. In the middle of this field there was a big fire. Tilopa went over to this fire and said, "If I had a student who was really devoted, he would jump into the fire." Naropa went into the fire and was burned. He was suffering terribly.

Tilopa came to him and asked him, "What happened to you now?" Naropa answered, "Well, my body has been burnt and my mind is suffering." Tilopa replied, "Well, to burn your ego-clinging is OK and I do have the practice and the instructions on the equality of the elements." He then touched his skin and healed him completely and the fire disappeared.

After that, Tilopa instructed him to realize that everything is of one taste, that there is no difference regarding pleasure or misery, health or sickness. All in all he taught six kinds of equalities, in the sense, that the essence of all phenomena is the same.

After that, Naropa was staying in the forest with Tilopa, who was behaving in many different ways. Sometimes he behaved like an animal, sometimes like a big yogi, sometimes like a crazy person. During that time Naropa was doing his practice. Sometimes he went into the nearest village to beg for food, and brought it back to Tilopa. In this way he also was serving Tilopa. They were living like that for some time.

3) One day when Naropa went to beg for food, there was a big party going on in town. He got some very good food which he brought back to Tilopa. Tilopa was really enjoying the food and said, "Oh, this is delicious; the food is so nice". He was talking a lot and enjoying the meal.

Naropa thought, "I have been with Tilopa for such a long time, and this is the first time that he is behaving in a normal way. He really seems to enjoy what I gave him; he is talking to me; he seems to be very happy. Maybe I should go and get more food for him."

He asked Tilopa, who then told him, "One can only go to beg for food one time. That is the tradition here. If you go, you probably will get some problems. But you can go. Why not? Take this water. If you have problems you should sprinkle the water. If they are still after you then take this wooden sword and make circles in the air. Then you will be OK. So go and get the food!"

Naropa went into town, and since he could not beg again, he had to steal the food. When he tried to leave, the people realized that he was stealing, so they came after him. He then threw the water, and it became an entire lake that appeared between him and the people who were chasing him.

Now he used the wooden sword, but, by using it, he got himself caught in an iron fence, so it was very easy for the people to catch him. First they put fire to him, and as he escaped they ran after him, caught him again, and beat him terribly. He finally came back to Tilopa completely beaten and wounded, again as if half dead.

Tilopa said, "It is no problem." He told him that he had instructions on the different kinds of commitments. He healed him first, and then gave him the instructions called Mind Mirror of Commitments.

4) Naropa stayed with Tilopa and continued to practice. One day Tilopa suddenly walked away from him. He walked to a place where there was a very deep pond full of leeches. Naropa followed him. When he reached the pond, Tilopa was sitting at the edge meditating. He went to him, offered a mandala, bowed down to him and requested instructions.

Tilopa said, "If I had a good student, he would make a bridge so I can cross over the pond."

Naropa immediately made himself into a bridge so that Tilopa could cross. As he crossed, he

stepped hard on Naropa's back and then jumped over. Naropa fell into the water. It was a terrible experience. The water was ice-cold and he nearly drowned. He was covered with leeches which started to suck his blood.

Tilopa asked him, "What is the matter now? Does it hurt? What is wrong?"

Naropa replied, "Yes, it is very painful. The leeches are eating me and it is very, very cold. It is awful."

Tilopa said, "This is no problem. I can give you instructions that will help you warm up and not feel any pain. I have the instructions on the Inner Fire, based on emptiness." Tilopa healed Naropa and then gave him the complete transmission of the Tummo practice.

5) Another year went by while Naropa practiced the Tummo teaching. Tilopa was, as usual, acting in a strange way. Then Naropa offered a mandala to Tilopa and requested more instructions from him. Tilopa told him to get ten pieces of bamboo, put molten butter on them, to heat them up in order to make them very hard, and then to sharpen them. Next, Tilopa took the sharpened sticks and inserted them all into Naropa, piercing holes into him. Then he left him. Naropa was suffering terribly.

Tilopa came back and asked him, "What happened to you?" Naropa answered, "I'm pierced by this bamboo and it is extremely painful. I think I am going to die."

Tilopa then touched him with his hand and the wounds and the pain disappeared. Tilopa then transmitted to Naropa the teachings on the Illusory Body.

Naropa practiced these teachings for one year. During that time Tilopa was behaving as usual.

6) The following year, Tilopa came to Naropa, looked at him and asked, "Aren't you going to ask me for more instructions?"

Naropa quickly got up, started to prostrate in front of Tilopa and requested instructions from him. Immediately Tilopa left. Naropa followed him and they came to a big plain with sand. Not far from them they saw a man walking on the sand.

Tilopa said, "Well, if I had a good disciple then he would go immediately and catch that man, otherwise he is going to harm me."

Naropa went to catch the man but he couldn't. He ran and ran, but could never reach the man. Finally Naropa fell totally exhausted on the ground.

Tilopa came up to him and asked "What happened?" Naropa told him that he was trying to catch the man but that he could not reach him. It was just like a phantom or a mirage.

Tilopa then said, "Well, that's how it is in samsara. Everybody is running after illusory things and always trying to attain something which is not really there. That's the problem of samsara. Now I will give you instructions on Dream-Yoga - that everything is like a dream." Tilopa then transmitted the instructions of Dream Yoga.

7) Naropa meditated for one year on the Dream Yoga. During that time, Tilopa went into meditation. He didn't eat, he didn't speak. After one year Tilopa left. Naropa followed him, offered mandalas and asked for instructions. But Tilopa still didn't speak. They proceeded and met a wedding procession of a minister's son.

Tilopa saw that and told Naropa, "Well, if I had a good disciple he would go and pull down the groom from his horse. He would pull the hair of his wife and try to get her."

Naropa had no doubts and did what Tilopa said. Of course people jumped on him and beat him up. Tilopa came back to Naropa when he was half dead. He touched him and again healed his wounds. This time he transmitted the teachings of the Clear Light.

The next year they spent together, and Naropa practiced the Clear Light yoga. Tilopa behaved in his funny ways, sometimes as a child, sometimes as a crazy person.

8) The time came when Naropa again asked Tilopa for instructions. This time, Tilopa just told him that whoever wants more instructions from him has to follow right after him. Then he left, and Naropa went after him. They were walking for a long time, and this time they met a procession with a king and queen. Tilopa said, "If I had a good disciple, he would go and pull down the king from his horse."

Naropa did it, and this time he nearly died. Tilopa came over to him, healed his wounds and said, "The reason that it is still painful is because you have not dissolved your ego-clinging. You still have some habits of clinging to the "I." Now I will give you the Phowa instructions." So the next year Naropa practiced the Phowa.

9) After that time, Tilopa left, and Naropa, who wanted more instructions, was told that he had to follow him. When they arrived at a big plane, they met a prince with a few servants, who were out for fun.

Tilopa said to Naropa, "Well, this time there are not so many people. You should go to hit the prince, take his ornaments, and then come back to me. In case there are any problems, call me."

Naropa beat the prince, took his ornaments and then ran back. But the prince's servants called for assistance and many soldiers, who were nearby, began to run after Naropa.

Naropa shouted, "Tilopa help me, protect me!" He had just reached Tilopa when all the soldiers came. Tilopa asked the soldiers, "What did he do?" They replied, "He beat the prince and stole his ornaments." Tilopa answered, "That's very bad; we should beat him up." Together they beat Naropa and he nearly died.

Tilopa then asked him what had happened.

Naropa said, "Well, I was beaten up, and though you said you would help me, you did not help me. I think I will die this time."

Tilopa touched him and healed him and then he gave him the Phowa Donjug, a kind of Phowa where you transmit your consciousness into another being who has just died.

Naropa meditated for one year on this special practice and then asked again for more instructions.

10) Tilopa told Naropa to marry a nice girl who was also a Dharma practitioner. Following this advice, he married. At first they liked each other but after sometime, problems arose and they had many arguments. Naropa became extremely worried about this situation. During this time Tilopa came to visit him and asked Naropa what was wrong with him. Naropa explained that he and his wife were having a very difficult time.

Tilopa replied, "These problems are caused by your dualistic clinging. You have to abandon dualistic clinging and passion and then rely on a tantric consort."

Tilopa then transmitted to Naropa the instructions on the Karma-Mudra practice.

Next, Tilopa told Naropa that he had broken his monastic vows because he had sexual intercourse with his wife. Therefore, he had to punish himself. Consequently, Naropa took a stone and hit his penis many times until he fainted. Then Tilopa touched him and healed him completely.

Tilopa asked Naropa to give him his wife as an offering. Naropa did so, and his wife stayed for some time together with Tilopa. However, she was still in love with Naropa and Tilopa became very annoyed and beat both of them. Nevertheless, Naropa did not lose his confidence in Tilopa.

As a result, Tilopa then gave him the Illuminating Wisdom Mahamudra Instructions.

11) Tilopa left and Naropa followed him. After a long time, when Naropa was already very tired, Tilopa sat down. Naropa offered a mandala, but there was a lot of dust. There was no water, so it was not possible to bring the dust down by sprinkling the ground with water.

So Tilopa said, "Use your blood for that."

Naropa cut himself, and with his own blood he sprinkled the ground so that the dust disappeared. In this way he offered a body mandala.

Tilopa gave him the Bardo instructions.

12) Naropa practised this teaching for one year. One day, they went together to the river and Naropa asked Tilopa for more instructions. He had come to the final instruction. Tilopa took his shoe and slapped Naropa on his head. Then he said that there is nothing more to teach. "The final realization is in your own mind."

At that moment the last veils dissolved from Naropa's mind. Whatever Tilopa had realized of the nature of mind Naropa had also realized. He had accomplished the Mahamudra.

Altogether Naropa spent twelve years with Tilopa, receiving and practising his instructions. During that time he underwent these twelve major hardships, which were methods to help him conquer obstacles so that he would not fall back into samsara.

Actually it was because of Naropa's ability to follow Tilopa without any doubt, that he managed within one life to attain full realization. This is the example of the Vajrayana path. If the lama is a qualified teacher, and if the disciple is a qualified disciple, then the conditions are there with the Vajrayana methods to attain enlightenment within one lifetime.

Naropa spent the next three years with Tilopa. Tilopa instructed him in the conduct of a yogi, while training his realization in all kinds of different situations.

After that, Naropa stayed in Pulahari for 21 years. That was the time when he taught disciples. When he was 85 years old, he passed away and went to the pure land of the dakinis.

There are different descriptions of how Naropa left this world. Some say that his body stayed back, some say that it dissolved. Very close disciples of him said, "Before he died, he manifested himself in the form of Hevajra (one of the most important Yidams in the Buddhist tantra). In this form he bestowed the empowerment of Hevajra to all his disciples. After that, the whole Hevajra-mandala dissolved into him and then his Hevajra-form dissolved into the Tibetan letter "A" and finally the "A" dissolved. Then he was gone.

The 'Six doctrines of Naropa' are named so, because Naropa was the one who spread the teachings. In actuality, they should be called neither Naropa's doctrines nor Tilopa's doctrines but rather Buddha's doctrines. They belong to the completion stage of the Tantrayana, which involves visualization techniques.

The Tantra teachings of the Buddha are very wide, but the conditions for beings in our time are getting worse. People are busy more and more. So the essence of Tantra teachings is very important. Naropa was able to get the essence of those teachings and to spread them to other beings.

KHENPO CHÖDRAK RINPOCHE



Khenpo Chödrak was born in the Kham province of East Tibet in 1950. He started his studies at 9 at the Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim, near the 16th Gyalwa Karmapa Rangjung Rigpé Dorjé. When he concluded the 12-year study cycle, at 26, the 16th Karmapa appointed him as a Khenpo (great scholar of the lineage). From 26 to 31, after having completed his formation in linguistics, dialectics, philosophy and epistemology, Khenpo Rinpoché studied the Buddhist tantras. He directed the Nalanda Institute of Higher Studies of the Rumtek Monastery as well as the KIBI (Karmapa International Buddhist Institute) in Delhi; he figures today among the main teachers of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Thaye Dorje.

Langjähriges Studium und Meditation unter der Leitung von S.H. dem 16. Karmapa und anderer großer Meister des Tibetischen Buddhismus. Vom 16. Karmapa zum Haupt-Khenpo der Karma Kagyü Tradition ernannt. Leitung des Nalanda-Instituts für Höhere Tibetische Studien im Kloster Rumtek, Sikkim (Indien) und des Karmapa International Buddhist Institute in New Delhi. Seit den 90er-Jahren unterrichtete er auch in buddhistischen Zentren in Europa, den USA sowie in Südost-Asien. Spiritueller Leiter von Karma

Samphel Ling, Wien.

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