

ཇི་ལྟར་གྱི་མཚོ་བ་ཚུ་ཅན་གྱི་ཕྱུ།

Just as water from a salty ocean

ཕྱུ་འཛིན་ཁ་ཡིས་སྒྲངས་བས་མངར་བར་འགྱུར།

Becomes sweet upon being lifted into clouds

བརྟན་པའི་སེམས་གྱིས་གཞན་གྱི་དོན་བྱེད་དང།

A stable mind that works for the benefit of others

ཡུལ་གྱི་དུག་གྲང་བདུད་ཅིར་འགྱུར་བ་ཡིན།

Transforms the poison of dualistic objects into ambrosia.

### *The Life of Saraha*

*The account of his life by Karma Trinle (1456-1539). (all italics are additions by Herbert Günther, partly of his own and of Karma Trinle's commentary):*

The Great Brahmin Saraha was the youngest of five sons born to the Brahmin Pangpa Püntsoḳ and his wife, the Brahmini Pangma Püntsoḳ in the South, in India, *in the country of Vidharba.*

*The five brothers were well versed in many subjects, but excelled in the knowledge of the Vedas.* Therefore King Mahapala was pleased to honor them as worthy persons.

At this time Hayagriva had assumed the form of the Bodhisattva Ratnamati in order to provide spiritual training for those capable of becoming instantly spiritually awakened. Thinking that the Great Brahmin might accomplish his purpose, he appeared *in the guise of four Brahmin girls and one female arrow smith, all of them dakinis.* Four of them took up their place in a park, while one remained behind in a marketplace. When the five brothers came to the park the four Brahmin girls approached them and asked them where they had come from, where they were going, and what they were doing. Being answered that they had not come from any particular place, were not going anywhere, and also were not doing anything special, the girls inquired about their caste. The brothers declared themselves to be Brahmins and recited the four Vedas on the spot. Four of them asked the girls whether they would like to have them as their consorts and when the girls consented they went away together.

*The youngest brother thought of becoming a monk and asked the king for permission. Having obtained it, he became a monk with Rahulabhadra, the son of the Baghawat and Mahayana Srikirti, through intense studies he became a noted scholar in countless subjects. Not only did he become famous as the Brahmin Rahula, he also became the spiritual master of the teacher Nagarjuna and other illustrious persons.*

*Once when this Brahmin Rahula was roaming in his district and had come to a garden, the four Brahmin girls approached him with cups of beer and begged him to drink them. Though protesting, he succumbed to their entreaties and drank the four cups in large gulps. He had four particularly pleasant sensations' and, as had been prophesied about him, he met the Bodhisattva Sukhanatha face to face. Blessed by him he was exhorted: "In this city there lives a mysterious arrow smith woman who is making a four-piece arrow. Go to her and many beings will profit by it." With these words the vision disappeared.*

*Through the sustaining power of this vision, the mystic awareness of the spontaneous co emergence of both transcendence and immanence was born in him. Thinking that he would have to act after this instantaneous realization of liberation, he went to the great marketplace and there saw a young woman, cutting an arrow-shaft, looking neither to the right nor to the left, wholly concentrated on making an arrow. Coming closer he saw her carefully straightening a reed with three joints, cutting it both at the bottom and at the top, inserting a pointed arrowhead where she had cut the bottom into four sections and tying it with a tendon, putting four feathers where she had split the top into two pieces and then, closing one eye and opening the other, assuming the posture of aiming at a target.*

*When he asked her whether she was a professional arrow smith she said: "My dear young man, the Buddha's meaning is known through symbols and actions, not through words and books." Then and there the spiritual significance of what she was doing dawned upon him.*

*The reed is the symbol of the uncreated; the three joints, are the symbol of the necessity to realize the three kayas;' the straightening of the shaft, is the symbol of straightening the path of spiritual growth; cutting the shaft at the bottom, is the symbol of the necessity to uproot samsara, and cutting it at the top, is the symbol of eradicating the belief in a self or an essence;*

*the splitting of the bottom into four sections, is the symbol if the need of being marked by "motivatedness," "non-motivatedness," "unborn," and "beyond the intellect";' inserting the arrowhead, is the symbol of inserting the arrowhead of wisdom;*

*tying it with a tendon, they are the sign of being fixed by the seal of union of opposites; splitting the upper end into two, is the sign of skillful means and wisdom;*

*inserting four feathers, is the sign the four : view, meditation, conduct and fruit;*

*opening one eye and closing the other, is the sign of shutting the eye of consciousness and opening the eye of awareness;*

*the posture of aiming at a target, the sign of the necessity to shoot the arrow of nonduality into the heart of the clinging to duality.*

*Thereupon he was famed under the name of Saraha.*

*Because of this understanding, Brahmin Rahula's name was to become "Saraha"; in India, SARA means "arrow" and HA(N) "to have shot." He became known as "He who has shot the arrow" because he had sent the arrow of non-duality into the heart of subject and object.*

*Then he said: "You are no arrow smith woman; you are a teacher of symbols." He united with her and entered into yogic activity.*

*"Till yesterday I was not a real Brahmin, from today I am"-with these and similar words he departed *with her* to the charnel grounds.*

*When on the occasion of some people celebrating a feast gathering he was asked over and over again, so he sang the song of the vajrakapala. Moreover, he sang more vajrasongs and dwelled in company with the arrow smith woman in the cremation grounds, a great number of people who had gathered to watch in faith gained an understanding of the meaning of reality by merely hearing the word "Reality" and went into bliss.*

*At this time, all *dirty-minded* Indians vilified and slandered him: "The Brahmin Rahula since he can not bear the hardships of ascetic practice, his pure conduct is degenerated. He is with a low-caste woman, has inferior conduct and runs around like a dog in all directions."*

*When the king heard these slanders he issued orders to his subjects, headed by Saraha's four Brahmin brothers that they should try to persuade the Great Brahmin to give up his scandalous behavior and, by acting decently, to help the people in the realm.*

*It was then that on behalf of the people he sang the one hundred and sixty verses constituting the "People Doha", thereby setting them on the right path. When the king's queens entreated him in like manner he sang the eighty verses forming the "Queen Doha", making them understand the meaning of the natural state.*

*Then after, the king himself came to beg the Great Brahmin to revert to his earlier behavior, and it was for the sake of the king that Saraha sang the forty verses known as the "King Doha". As Saraha led the king and his entourage on the path of Suchness. Through the many Vajra-songs that he sang he acted to the measurable benefit of beings and they obtained the rainbowbody. These days the resident of Shri Parvati in the south were fortunate, they met him and then existed.*

*The country of Vidarbha became empty instantly.*

*Here some excerpts from the commentary of Karma Trinle: According to Karma Trinle, some were of the opinion*

*that The Three Cycles of Doha were indeed sung by Saraha, but were not divided into larger and smaller poems as they all were merely expression of his mystic experience. At a later time they were written down by Saraha's disciple Nagarjuna for the sake of instruction discussed in the form of three treatises varying in size. Others however, claimed that Nagarjuna cannot be held to have arranged the songs into treatises; they were put so by Saraha for the benefit of Maitripa, after Saraha had realized spiritual freedom and recited the songs to Maitripa as an instructive injunction.*

*Karma Trinle himself rejects these views in favor of the position held by Rangjung Dorje or whom The Three Cycles of Doha were the authentic works of Saraha.*

*Those who pretend to such criticism, he says, are "ignoble persons" in claiming that*

the "King Doha" and "Queen Doha" are not authentic works of Saraha, and that the term "Three Cycles of Doha" does not refer to three distinct works but to a process of initiation necessary- for spiritual maturation -a process which moves from instruction to guidance for appropriating the instruction into one's own life. *According to this view*, the first cycle is an initiation into the spiritual meaning of Vajravarahi and proceeds by way of the four symbols used in the Dohas; the second stage is an explanation of the "People Doha" along with Maitripa's commentary on it; and the third cycle makes use of the four symbols to offer guidance or "instruction with pebbles."

If this is the meaning of "Three Cycles of Doha", then the two remaining works "*King Doha*" and "*Queen Doha*" are forgeries. To substantiate their case, these critics note that the index to the Tengyur by Butön [1219-1364] includes only the "People Doha" and that there is no Indian commentary on the other two works. They further observe that while in India Rechungpa [1083-1161] found only the "People Doha"-because Lingrepa[1128-1188], an authority on Tantra, had written a commentary on this Doha" but not on the other two--whereas on return to Tibet he found all three works with Balpo Asu. They conclude that the two additional works may well have been composed by Lama Balpo himself.

All this sort of subversive talk reflects on the ignorance of those who hold such views, for even though the verses do not occur in Ling's commentary, they do appear after the main body of the text in other works. Moreover, many entries have been omitted in the index to the Tengyur. Were this proof that they had never been written, or were the mere absence of an Indian commentary sufficient to argue against the authenticity of a text, the number of spurious works would increase greatly. Hence the works are of Indian origin. They must be considered authentic since such wise persons as Rangjung Dorje and others have written commentaries on them based on older commentaries by scholars such as Parphubaz and Tsang Nagpo which are known to be authentic, and since many later scholars such as Mati Panchen [ca. 1334] and Yidjang Risepa have continued to produce commentaries on them."

*The tradition of the Dohas in Tibet goes back to Marpa, who studied them in India under Maitripa and later transmitted his knowledge to his favorite disciple Milarepa. In so doing, it would appear that he did not provide Milarepa with anything like a detailed explanation. In this regard Karma Trinle notes:*

Of the four illustrious and famous disciples of Maitripa, Lord Marpa distinguished himself in the study of the Dohas. Having experienced for himself what the teaching was about, he handed it down to Milarepa and others, though he did not translate the three works or offer instruction on their content.

*Atisha also studies the dohas and was about to teach them when he was requested by Dromtönpa not to do so, on the ground that the Tibetans might take them too literally and endanger their morals in the process. Thus Maitripa's commentary was translated into Tibetan, but\_ the Dohas themselves were not taught as such. Similarly the Shije system which goes back to Dampa Sangyā and accepts the Dohas, was more concerned*

*with appropriation of the content of the Dohas than with their actual promulgation.*

*Continuity in the teaching of their content is accredited to the Indian Vajrapani (b. 1017), who was the teacher of several Tibetans. His exploits are merely hinted at by Karma Trinle, but a more detailed; more intelligible account is found in Gö Lotsawa's Blue Annals. Without the latter, much of what Karma Trinle writes remains un-intelligible. Vajrapani's influence centered on three persons who were to acquire great fame and contribute much to the development of buddhist thought in Tibet. They were the Nepalese Asu (commonly known as Lama Balpo), Rechungpa, and Ngaripa, through whom the continuation of the teaching as well as the practice of realization was established. Karma Trinle again informs us:*

*The tradition that originated with Balpo Asu came to be known as the Bal method of the Dohas; that which derived from Rechungpa, who had studied the subject under Tipupa, was known as the Rechung method; and that which spread through Drushulwa, who had studied under Ngaripa, became known as the Par method, since it was Parphupa a direct disciple of Drushulwa who had arranged the Three Cycles of Doha into treatises with accompanying manuals. As these three methods were developing, Ngaripa and Rechungpa also studied under Lama Balpo. Thus although the methods of teaching appear to be different in each case, the latter two traditions of Ngaripa and Rechungpa stem from Balpo, who had studied under Vajrapani, and accept Balpo's interpretation. This is how our own tradition came to be considered as consisting of three methods. My teacher, Trulchig Chenpo, explained solely the Par method and followed the text as embodied in the latter's commentary.*

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*Ngaripa had studied in India, but on the advice of Vajrapani went to Lama Balpo for further studies. At first he thought he detected a difference between Vajrapani's and Balpo Asu's teaching, but the deeper he searched the more he realized that there was no essential difference between them, and therefore accepted Balpo Asu's interpretation. The implication is that Balpo, a native Nepalese probably of Tibetan stock, had interpreted the teaching of Vajrapani in the light of his Tibetan background. Ngaripa recognized the difference but justified it on the assumption that the Indian and the Tibetan scholars shared Buddhism as a common ground and ultimate aim, which then cleared the way for him to accept the Nepalese-Tibetan way as more suited to his Tibetan character.*

*It is significant that Ngaripa noted the difference between Indian and Nepalese-Tibetan states of thought. It does much to discredit the long-cherished myth that the Tibetans were mechanical translators of Indian texts who considered the ideas and images behind the words as discrete entities that could be simply lifted out of one context and placed into another with no loss in meaning -a myth, one might add, that is not without its adherents among modern dictionary fundamentalists. The Tibetans were well aware of the fact that the words through which concepts are communicated belong to a specific realm of discourse and that although "one word may have two or more functions, one of its functions cannot change places with another.*

*Ngaripa's direct disciple was Drushülwa, about whom little is known. Drushülwa's disciple was Parphupa, who was born in Yorpo and belonged to the ancient family of Nga. His proper name was Lodrö Senge, but he became known as Parpupa because he founded a monastery at Parpu. Under Drushülwa, Parpupa was introduced to the teaching of tantra, as a number of commentaries and explanatory works on the Dohas testify. Under Bu Lotsava he studied logic and epistemology, and then met Pamo Drupa, who was a follower of one of the mind-only schools of Buddhism. This mind-only interpretation was taken over by Parphuba in his writings about the Dohas. Karma Trinle's teacher also taught the Par method, which accounts for a similar strain in the latter's writings. Here again it should be noted that the Tibetans developed this line of thinking in their own way, so that several distinct variations from the Indian prototype can be observed.*

*After Parphuba the tradition of the Dohas continued through his direct disciple Gyergom of Nyephu shugseb, a monastery Gyergom had founded and resided at for some twenty-six years. Gyergom's disciple was Sangyā Dön, alias Rinchen Nyingpo, who served as abbot of Nyephu Shugseb for many years. He was succeeded by his disciple Bragburba, the latter by Rila Jönrin, better known as Shugsseb Rirab because of his time as abbot at the Shugseb monastery. Thereafter the tradition passed through Lama Könchog Dorje, Chögwa Palsherab, Jakölwa Jostan, Lama Mönlampa, Taglung Chörje Ngagi Wangpo, Je Shara Rabjampa Södnan Senge, and Trülshig Sangyā Samdrub, -who was the teacher of Karma Trinle.*

*While following in the line of his teacher Sangyā Samdrub, 'Irinle also incorporated the teaching of Chödrag Gyamtso (1454-1505), the seventh Karmapa hierarch and an adherent of the Kar method that had begun with Rechungpa and continued through Tüsum Kyenpa, Drogön Rechen, and his successors." Since Karma Trinle expresses his indebtedness to the seventh Karmapa, whose instruction he says he frequently obtained, we may safely date his commentary on the "King Doha" to the second half of the fifteenth century. From Karma Trinle works it also becomes evident that Balpo Asu and Kyemed Dechen are one and the same person. In two places Karma Trinle refers to the "previous commentary" and there he quotes the exact words of Kyeme Dechen.*