

*Chariot of Faith  
and Nectar for the Ears*

*A Guide to:*

*Sekhar Guthog Tsuglag Khang  
Drowolung Zang Phug Tagnya*



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*Practice Requirements:*

Anyone may read this text.

# *Chariot of Faith and Nectar for the Ears*

*A Guide to Sekhar Guthog, Tsuglag Khang,  
Drowolung, Zang Phug, and Tagnya*

NAMO SARVA BUDDHA BODHISATTVAYA

Homage to the buddhas and bodhisattvas!  
I prostrate to the lineage lamas, upholders of the precious Kagyu,  
The pioneers of the Vajrayana Vehicle  
That is the essence of all the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni.

Here I will write briefly the story of the holy place of Sekhar Guthog, together with its holy objects.

The Glorious Bhagavan Hevajra manifested as Tombhi Heruka and set innumerable fortunate ones in the state of buddhahood in India. He then took rebirth in a Southern area of Tibet called Auspicious Five Groups (Tashi Ding-Nga) at Pesar.<sup>1</sup> Without discouragement, he went to many different parts of India where he met 108 lamas accomplished in study and practice, such as Maitripa and so forth. He brought back all the quintessential teachings of those yogis that are in turn the essence of all the tantras.

Naropa, Maitripa, and other yogis appointed him as their regent in the Land of Snow to subdue the beings there. He settled in Drowolung in the manner of the Glorious Hevajra, surrounded by nine dakinis and the other deities in the middle of the celestial mansion. From there, he ripened and liberated innumerable fortunate disciples.

The glorious Guhyasamaja manifested in India as Jampäl Shenyen, and then took rebirth in Mangyul Gungthang in Tibet as Milarepa. He performed many violent deeds in Central Tibet, and when he heard the name of the Great Lhodragpa,<sup>2</sup> he developed an unbearable faith and went quickly to meet him. There, in order to purify his obscurations, Marpa made him build the Round Sekhar.<sup>3</sup>

Milarepa undertook the task given by Marpa to build a tower, and when he had already built up half of the building, Marpa told him to destroy it and to take back all the stones to the original place, so he did. Next Marpa told Milarepa to build a nine-story building with a square base and a pagoda-style roof, and he promised he would not make Milarepa destroy it as before. When he had completed the seventh floor, his back was covered with wounds and he was unable to carry the building material on his back any longer, so he carried it on the front [of his body]. Dagmema<sup>4</sup> could not stand that sight, so she sent Milarepa with an offering to see Lama Ngogpa. Marpa arranged for somebody else to build the last two floors of the building.

Later Marpa told Milarepa that, had he been upset nine times and built a nine-story building, in the future he would have been able to obtain liberation without meditation, but since he got upset seven times and built until the seventh floor, he would have to progress through meditation and would have four disciples with his same level of realizations. His followers would also have an uninterrupted stream of realizations. After that, Marpa gave all the remaining instructions and initiations, and said: "I gave the treasure of my instructions, because you are the one who accomplished whatever I taught. You are the Great Mila Dorje Gyältsen!"

### *Regarding Milarepa's biography*

Milarepa went to Lhodrag in 1078 and met Marpa for the first time. Marpa offered him *chang*<sup>5</sup> and he drank the whole jug, symbolizing his ability to receive all the instructions and lineages from Marpa. First, Marpa made him build various buildings in different shapes (circular, triangular, half-moon shape, and so on) and made him destroy them at a later stage. The last building to be built by Milarepa is this Round

Sekhar. Also, Marpa expelled him many times from the place where he was giving initiations to all the other disciples. Milarepa spent six years and eight months at Marpa's place, and was disappointed seven times. When Milarepa left, Marpa told him: "If we were to weigh the instructions I gave you and those I gave to the other disciples, yours would be three times more!" Marpa sealed a scroll of paper with instructions and told Milarepa to open it only in case of extreme distress. Also Marpa went to see Milarepa off at the Dharma Pass.

After that, Milarepa left and went quickly to practice at Zangphug, Tagnya, and Dzong Drug. While he was meditating in a cave in Tagnya, he received the prophecy that he had to practice the transference of consciousness. At that time, Marpa was motivated by the dakinis, and so he went to India three times.

Even though the Glorious Naropa had gone to the Khachö Pure Land, due to the strength of Marpa's devotion and disregard for all hardship, he was able to meet him. Naropa told Marpa that Tilopa once prophesied that in Pushpahari Monastery he, Naropa, would dispel the darkness of ignorance with the light of the self-liberated wisdom of a disciple, Marpa, so they should meet again there. In Pushpahari, Naropa told Marpa that in the past, the dakinis prophesied the arrival of Marpa as a disciple of Tilopa. Later, Tilopa himself prophesied to Naropa the arrival of Marpa as a disciple, and finally, now Naropa prophesied, "An extraordinary disciple of your disciple will come, and he will spread the teachings extensively."

Naropa gave the complete instructions on *The Wish-Fulfilling Jewel of the Whispered Lineage*,<sup>6</sup> *The Five Cycles of Instruction of the Mind Lineage*,<sup>7</sup> *The Indivisibility of Mind and Wind in the Completion Stage*,<sup>7</sup> *The Transference of Consciousness and Entering a Corpse*,<sup>8</sup> and so on. At that time, Marpa told Naropa about his disciple Milarepa. Naropa folded his hands at his heart and sang, "I prostrate to the one called The One Longing for Hearing,<sup>9</sup> who is like the snow mountain hit by the sunlight in the pitch darkness of the northern country, Tibet!" He then closed his eyes and bowed three times. Also the Indian mountains and trees bowed three times toward Tibet. It is said that even nowadays the mountains and trees at Pushpahari are bent toward Drowolung.

Naropa also told Marpa that for thirteen generations his disciples will go to the Khachö Pure Land and many of his followers will be *arya bodhisattvas* realizing the meaning of secret mantra. Most of them will externally behave in the manner of studying the teachings, while some others will uphold the teachings through other behavior. He then blessed Marpa by placing his hand on Marpa's head, and spoke the following prophecy: "You Dharmaraja Marpa Lotsawa, who practiced correctly and has karmic connection, listen! Go back to Central Tibet where you will meet the fortunate disciple on the slope of a mountain adorned with many medicinal plants, incense herbs, and so on. Go there and work for the welfare of sentient beings. My son, you will indeed accomplish the benefit of all beings! At Drowolung, the Zang Phug cave is crowded with *dakinis* like the sky with billowy clouds. Marpa's castle is like the universal stupa, the residence of all the fathers of the Kagyu tradition and the source of faith for all beings. The main entrance to the north symbolizes the coming of your disciple from that direction; the lower door symbolizes the end of *samsaric* existence; and the upper door the path to liberation. This Dharma tradition will flourish!"

Let me describe briefly the holy objects present in this holy place. In the Vairochana chapel, the main object of worship is Vairochana. It is decorated with frescoes representing the Thousand Buddhas. In the innermost part of the private apartment, there is a statue of Marpa himself, at his right is Milarepa and at his left is Dagmema. The frescoes represent the deities of the highest yoga tantra painted by Trulku Menthepa. Above this, in the next story, the main holy object is Buddha Shakyamuni. At his sides are Chöwang Lhundrub and Amitayus. The frescoes are the Sixteen Arhats. Again, above this in the central chapel, the main object is a statue of Marpa crafted by himself known as Tsarima. It is as though Marpa himself is residing there. At his right is his son Darma Dode, his wife Dagmema, and Amitayus. At his left is the Venerable Milarepa and Rechung Dorje Dragpa. The frescoes are Marpa with his son and wife surrounded by the main four disciples,<sup>10</sup> and the three: the Abbot, the King, and the Teacher.<sup>11</sup> Above this, the main objects are Buddha Shakyamuni, Chenrezig, Amitabha, and Tilopa. The frescoes are the Kagyu lamas.

On top of this in the Kagyu Residence there is Buddha Vajradhara surrounded by all the Kagyu lamas and the female Dharma protector Khasung Lhamo. On the very top of the building, like the pure field Ogmin, the stupa known as Tashi Phuntshog Gyatso Phel contains Buddha's relics and hairs, as well as nails and bones of previous Kagyu lamas, and many other holy relics.

## *Drowolung*

This excellent holy place of Drowolung used to be called the Leaves Garden. This holy place is located on the mountain slope where a hundred kinds of medicinal plants are growing. It appears like a self-generated *amonig*<sup>12</sup> throne supported by lions. The lower part of these hills is adorned with many kinds of plants and colorful flowers that provide the main ingredient for *chulen*<sup>13</sup> pills.

As described first by Naropa and Maitripa and later by Marpa, Jetsun Mila, Rechungpa, Je Mikyö Dorje, and Jetsun Tsuglag Phrengwa, Drowolung's nature is the same as the twenty-four holy places, and it's also inseparable from the glorious Oddiyana. It is a gathering place for all dakas and dakinis. Here Marpa with his son and wife spent most of their time, so it's full of blessings and is also the origin and source of all the Kagyu lineages and accomplishments. It's really a matchless place!

As a sign of the continuity of the Buddhist teachings, at its right is a mountain range with the shape of an elephant lying down and facing towards India. As a sign of the defeat of demons and the non-Buddhist, at its left are some mountains with the shape of a poisonous snake going and facing downhill. At its back are hills resembling a white curtain, and in the front is a stream symbolizing the flowing of accomplishments.

The main object of worship is an image of Marpa called Meaningful to Behold crafted by himself and representing him at eight years of age. At his right is his son Darma Dode, the very holy image of the omniscient Kelsang Gyatso given by Je Ngawang Lobsang, and the statue of Dagpo Gomtshul. At his left is his wife Dagmema, Je Mila, and so on.

The assembly hall contains so many scriptures; the reason being the following: The female spirit Kanyen Dusöl Lhamo used to inflict the people and cattle of Tsenpro Tamshol with terrible diseases. Different lamas and exorcists had tried, but could not subdue her. A lay practitioner and oracle holding the five vows predicted the presence in Drowolung of a special holy being called Marpa Lotsawa, unequalled in the three realms, who, if invited, would benefit their area greatly. Marpa arrived there, made offerings to the Three Jewels, and motivated the people to abide by virtue by giving oral transmission of mantras. He purified the area through rituals, and the contagious diseases were finally healed. The local people offered him piles of sacred texts and told him, "You are so great and have so many miraculous powers, so use them to take all these volumes back with you!"

Marpa accepted and gave his mala to a relative, saying, "You take this mala with you to Drowolung, but don't look back until you reach there!" Then Marpa himself took off into the sky with all the volumes flying together with him like a flock of birds. When the relative arrived at an arrow distance from Drowolung, he looked back, so at that same moment, all the volumes fell down from the sky on a mountain known as Dharma Pass.<sup>14</sup> Later, Marpa had the villagers of that area take the scriptures to Drowolung.

### *Marpa Lotsawa's biography*

He was born in Lhodrag, and by the age of twelve, he had mastered the skills of writing and reading. At fifteen, he went to Tsang Nyugu Lung monastery, where he became a translator under the guidance of Gö<sup>15</sup> and Drog.<sup>16</sup> After that, he traveled to Nepal and spent three years there. There he received tantric teachings from Chi Therpa. He went to India a few times where he met Naropa, Maitripa, Päl Shi Zangpo, and so many other scholars and yogis. He received all the teachings and then returned to Tibet.

Marpa requested the local ruler Jowo be given the areas of Drowolung, Kyilsup, and Zang Phug, to establish monasteries. Also he requested as his residence Dase and Sakyag, and was granted all.

Drowolung is the source of all the practice lineage, the study center for the upholders of the meaning lineage, the place from where all the scholastic lineages spread, and the origin of the oral lineages. It's a peerless holy place in the three realms. It's said there is more benefit in practicing one session of concentration here than a whole lifetime of practice in another place. Marpa is the only one who upheld the complete teachings of the Buddha during the later diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet. His numerous followers started all the different sub-schools of the Kagyu lineage.

Among the many prophecies given by Naropa to Marpa, here is another one concerning Drowolung: "There is a cave similar to a copper container turned upside down. One person can fit inside, and there is wood just enough to warm that person up. There is water to quench that person's thirst, and there is a self-generated oven on the rock."

According to this prophecy, Marpa practiced meditation in this cave in Drowolung. We can still see to this day his sleeping place, the cave containing the throne from where he gave teachings to his main disciples, and the water and the tree giving him wood. The main object is an image of Marpa known as Marpa Seeing the Bird.<sup>17</sup> At his right is Darma Dode, and at his left are Dagmema, Je Mila, Mikyö Dorje, Shamar Könchog Yenlag, Pawo Tsugtreng, and Guru Tsengye.

Behind that main image and below Marpa's sleeping place, there are water springs endowed with eight qualities and known as the Accomplishing Water, Long Life Water, Medicinal Water, etc. By drinking that water, one's karma and obscuration is purified, so one can generate samadhi, increase one's merit and life, heal all sicknesses including those caused by defilements and pollution, and increase one's virtuous karma. Those springs don't overflow in the summer, don't freeze in the winter, and are inexhaustible no matter how many people drink from them.

Inside the cave, there is another long life spring that originated when Milarepa scratched the rock with his finger. The cave ceiling bears the shape of a self-generated Dorje Phagmo mandala.

## *Zang Phug Tagnya*

During the earlier propagation of the Dharma, it is said that some practitioners escaped from the persecutions of the evil king Langdarma in Central Tibet and came to meditate here. During the middle propagation, it is said that three yoginis having miraculous power resided here. One of them gave birth to a child. Later Khenpo Paltön Dragpa came and established a monastery called Orgyang Senghe Dzong. The local people referred to some footprints as those yogini's foot prints, and also, one can still see the stupa containing relics of the khenpo. Later, Marpa, an emanation of Hevajra, came here and in particular Milarepa, the reincarnation of Jamphel Shenyen, who was in turn an emanation of Guhyasamaja, came here after having completed the Sekhar Guthog. First, he gave the initiation and complete instructions of the glorious Heruka.

Marpa prophesied that Milarepa had to meditate in a red cave<sup>18</sup> facing west, not sullied by bird droppings, and where many dakinis reside. Milarepa meditated for eleven months with a butter lamp balanced on the top of his head. Then Dagmema came and told him, "Son, Thöpa Ga, you are amazing. You didn't let your meditation cushion get cold [even once] for eleven months! Now come to visit your father and relate your meditation experience."

Father, mother, and son<sup>19</sup> gathered and offered tsog, and Milarepa offered his meditative experience in the form of the seven-limb prayer and said that the place of attainments of those experiences was that cave itself.

At another time while Je Mila was in meditation, he had a vision of a dakini wearing leaves and who had a blondish moustache and beard. She told him, "Son, if you meditate in order to become a buddha, there are the Great Seal<sup>20</sup> instructions and the Six Yogas of Naropa. If you don't meditate, the instruction on the transference of consciousness is not available!" Milarepa was not sure if that was a dakini prophecy or an obstacle of a demon, so he left his meditation immediately and went to see Marpa.

Marpa listened and pondered for some time, and then said that it was a prophecy of a dakini. Both of them checked for a whole day among the rich collection of scriptures, and they found many texts on

phowa, but not even one on *gronjug*, the most specific technique involving entering a corpse.

Even though Dagmema insisted that Marpa not go, Marpa went three times to India. Even though Naropa had already passed away to the Khachö Pure Land, Marpa met him and received this teaching in Pushpahari. At that time, Naropa asked Marpa, "Is it your wish to receive this *grongjug* teaching or have you been told by a dakini?" Marpa answered that it was neither his wish nor a dakini's prophecy, but that his disciple Milarepa had been told by a dakini. When Naropa heard this, he folded his hands respectfully and recited the stanza beginning with: "In the pitch darkness of the Northern Land," etc.

This Zang Phug is also called the Prophecy Cave since it was first prophesied by Marpa, and later the dakini made the prophecy to Milarepa to get the instruction on *gronjug*. This is also the cave where on another occasion a dakini prophesied that Milarepa would have very quick attainments if he went to practice on the border between Tibet and Nepal.

Later Drikhung Chenga Lingpa came from Kailash and Lachi together with 500 monks, and they took residence in the eastern and western hills around Drowolung.

As far as the later propagation of the Dharma, when Karma Pagshi<sup>21</sup> together with his disciples was going to the Chuwo Ri,<sup>23</sup> instead of using the leather boat to cross the river flowing in front of that mountain, he flew in the sky and had a vision of Buddha Shakyamuni in the South having a big body and surrounded by innumerable other supreme emanations. Buddha was proclaiming the Mahayana Dharma, and due to this auspicious sign, Karma Pagshi made the prophecy that in the future, his doctrine will flourish in the South.

Karmapa Chödrag Gyatso<sup>23</sup> asked the great yogi Chöwang Lhundrub to be in charge at Drowolung, and so he was. He made restoration of the Sekhar Guthog, and so on. His reincarnation, Tsuglag Trengwa, continued in this effort and built the golden button roof ornament of Sekhar Guthog and many residences for monks. In particular, he composed a commentary of the *Bodhisattvacharyavata* and set many fortunate disciples on the path to liberation. Still

nowadays, many practitioners engaged in the two stages of yoga are living here, and many in the future will come.

The holy beings who came here in the past in their pure vision saw most of the hills behind the Prophecy Cave as Eleven-Face Chenrezig, the one right behind the cave as Vajarayogini, the big rock on her right as White Tara, and on her left the protector Amitayus. At his left was Heruka. They saw the hill behind the private apartment clearly as Mahakala. This is a very holy place where Marpa showed many miracles and performed many times the phowa grongjug.

One time a female yak called Yangchenma that had been offered to Marpa by Ngog died in the mud around the water spring. Drikunma and Marpa performed the grongjug and took her to Lungmo. Many other similar events happened here.

In brief, as soon as one arrives here, one's mind becomes clear, virtuous conduct increases, and attachment towards food and drink weakens. Because of the auspiciousness of the mountains being long-life deities and the waters being long-life springs, this holy place is endowed with many qualities such as the fact that meditators practicing here do not experience obstacles to their life, such as untimely death, etc. This is such a special place that not only do meditators who practice diligently experience no interferences and see their virtues naturally develop, but even people who only resemble those meditators will experience the same results.

*Notes:*

1. It is said that Hevajra manifested in this time and area as Marpa the Translator. The Great Lhodragpa is an epithet for Marpa.
2. Tib. *Sekhar Dumbo*.
3. Dagmema was Marpa's wife.
4. Tibetan beer.
5. Tib. *sNyan brGyud Yid bZhin Norbu*.
6. Tib. *Thugs brGyud gDams Ngag sKor lNga*.
7. Tib. *rDzog Rim rLung Sems gNyas Med*.
8. Tib. *'Pho ba Grong Jug*.
9. Milarepa's name, Tib. *Thöpa Ga*.
10. Marpa's four main disciples were Ngogtön Chögu Dorje, Tshurtön Wangnge, Metön Tshönpo, and Milarepa.
11. "The Abbot, the King, and the Teacher" is a traditional way of referring to the three figures who were instrumental in establishing Buddhism in Tibet. The abbot was Shantarakshita, the king was King Trisong Detsen, and the teacher was Guru Padmasambhava.
12. Amonig is a particular black, square stone found in this region. Traditionally, the origin of this type of stone is said to be the Heaven of Thirty-Three.
13. Taking the Essence pills, or *chulen* pills, are used in an advanced fasting practice in which the practitioner learns to sustain themselves on only the pills and water. Some great yogis learn to subsist on the pills for a lifetime. It is said that the practice leads to increased mental clarity, as well as saving the time normally taken to gather and prepare food.
14. Tib. *Chö La*.
15. Probably Gö Lotsawa Khugpa Lhetse.
16. Drogmi Shakya Yeshe.
17. Tib. Marpa Ja Zigma. This name refers to the popular story of Marpa transferring his son's consciousness to the body of a pigeon in order to send the son to India.
18. Tib. *zang*: copper; *phug*: cave.
19. "Father, mother, and son" refer to Marpa, Dagmema, and Milarepa respectively.
20. Tib. *Chagya Chenpo*, the practice of Mahamudra.
21. The Second Karmapa Chökyi Lama (1204-1283).
22. One of the four biggest mountains in Tibet, famous for its 108 water springs.
23. The Seventh Karmapa (1454-1506).

*Colophon:*

This text had no colophon or information about the author. It is possibly by Chökyi Lodrö, the 34th Holder of the Drikung Throne, otherwise known as Könchog Tenzin Chökyi Lodrö (dkon mchog bstan 'dzin chos kyi blo gros), but it is not certain.

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# *Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition*



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