

~ *Life Beyond Time* ~

By Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol (1781–1851)

I was in retreat. One day at noon, when the sky was clear, I walked to the summit of the hill above my cave and sat there alone. Toward the north, I saw a pure white cloud billowing over a mountain peak, like milk boiling over. At that moment the memory of my precious spiritual father overwhelmed me, and I sang this song of longing:

*To the north, a great single cloud surges over high mountain peaks
White as overflowing milk.*

When I see this, I think of my guru's kindness.

*Beneath that distant cloud rise the solitary heights of Auspicious
Hermitage.*

*The way my master once lived in that excellent retreat place
Comes back to my mind.*

*When I think of his kindness,
Tears well up in my eyes and sorrow in my heart.*

*My mind is dazed, my perception uncertain—all is hazy and unreal.
How wonderful if he were here again!*

*I am but an ordinary man, a man of scant devotion.
But still I long to meet him once again.
The master dwells now in absolute space
And his miserable son is left behind in the mire of samsara.*

*When I see the myriad flowers blooming in the meadows,
I remember the sight of the authentic master.
Then I could see him in person, inspired; now I cannot.
As I think of him over and over again, the master's presence fills my
heart.*

As I listen to the cuckoo's soft and gentle call,

I remember hearing the authentic master's voice, so deep and sonorous.

Then I could listen to his melodious speech; now I cannot.

As I think of him over and over again, the master's presence fills my heart.

I remember going to see him, having been away for months or years;

The warmth of his welcoming smile comes back to my mind.

No matter in what direction I go, I think of the master;

No matter and what solitary place I stay, I think of the master;

No matter what signs I see, I think of the master—

Always, at all times, I think of my authentic master.

As I sang this plaintive song, the cloud continued to swell until it took the form of a heap of jewels. At the top, in a tent of five-colored rainbow lights, my root guru appeared. Performing a graceful dance, his hands in the gesture of protection, he was more resplendent than ever, peerless in loving kindness. He smiled radiantly and spoke these words in a voice like Brahma's:

Noble son, you who are like my heart,

Do not despair; listen to your father's words.

*We, father and son, who came together by the power of past
prayers, are inseparable*

In the state of the luminous absolute nature.

Son, from now on,

Let the length of your practice be the length of your life;

Wander from place to place, in solitary mountain retreats;

By practicing austerities, may you help all fortunate beings.

Don't be sad, look at the mind that feels sadness.

The guru is not other than mind.

*It is mind that remembers the guru; it is mind into which the guru
dissolves.*

Remain in the uncontrived nature of mind, the absolute.

With airy and graceful movements as though dancing, he rose higher and higher until he vanished like a rainbow into the sky. The clouds too dissolved into space, and my grief dissolved along with them. I remained for a long while in a serene state beyond thought.

From *The Life of Shabkar: The Autobiography of a Tibetan Yogi* translated by Matthieu Ricard