

~ *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 Yogin* translated by Matthieu Ricard