

DREAMS COME TRUE

Tales of Adventures within a Tale of Adventures

**Translated from the original
modern ornate colloquial Tibetan**

by

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To

Ilse

Edith, Nora

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Introduction

The German poet Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's motto,

Wer den Dichter will verstehen, muß in Dichters Lande gehen

(He who wants to understand the poet must go into the poet's realm)

taken from his notes to his *Westöstlicher Divan* (West-East Divan) written in 1819, reveals a profound insight and a startling challenge. By going into a poet's realm, the reader leaves behind his or her commonly accepted reality and, if not becoming a visionary, becomes at least an outsider. As such, he easily and more often than not is deemed to be a threat to the establishment and hence becomes a target of the twin forces of politics and religion. The interplay of these forces has only too often made them indistinguishable from each other. Whether positive or negative, they have had a tremendous impact in shaping mankind's social and cultural life. Positive, they have promoted the fine arts and great literature; negative, they have corrupted each other and in their holy or, if one prefers, unholy alliance and cunning collusion done much to destroy man's creativity and spirit. Politics starts with its addict's fear of anything that goes against his paranoid notion of self-importance, and ends in costly follies, mostly military (mis)adventures and economic-fiscal (mis)calculations. Religion in its monotheistically organized dogmatism feels itself called upon to crush the so-called heretic and to impose its particular idiosyncrasy on others by not allowing any other opinion to be entertained or voiced. In the secular (political) sphere this negativity manifests itself "humanely" in banishing, exiling, relocating or deporting the power-hungry ruler's or despot's opponents, and "savagely" in physically exterminating them. In the intellectual (spiritual-religious) sphere this negativity manifests itself in the prohibition to read and/or write anything that does not conform to its supposedly sacrosanct dogmatic fictions. In either case, man's uniquely human capacity of imaging is not only denigrated, but also severely curtailed. Fortunately, however, man is too complex and too resilient a phenomenon to be reduced to a political and/or religiously dogmatic preconception.

The above harsh words are particularly pertinent in dealing with Tibet's cultural history. With the ascendancy of Buddhism, partly due to its ability to offer what was not readily available in Tibet's pre-Buddhist (Bon) worldview, one of the first actions of the so-called and much extolled "religious kings" (*chos-rgyal*) (of whom some were engaged in constant warfare and speeding

up Tibet's economic decline), was to send those who had any leanings toward the pre-Buddhist Bon ideology into exile. Another action of far-reaching consequences was the insistence on what was considered to be of strictly Indian origin to be authentically Buddhist. This led, on the one hand, to the preservation of Buddhist texts, lost over the years in India, in their Tibetan translation; on the other hand, it led to the suppression of anything deemed, rightly or wrongly, not to be Indian in origin, with the inevitable consequence of a growing intolerance that has lasted well into the modern age.

In the sphere of narrative literature the above mentioned restrictions made imaging new themes and artistic forms impossible. Except for the material in the bardic epos of the legendary Gesar (= Kaisar = Caesar), all the topics in popular narratives are taken from the Buddhist canon. Even in the linguistic presentation of these topics the Indian influence is unmistakable and paramount, although the Tibetan language belongs to a different (Tibeto-Burmese) language group than Sanskrit (Indo-European). Thus, in the present narrative that follows the Sanskrit *kathā* form of prose alternating with verse, two features stand out prominently. The one goes back to the *Ka-khasya dohā* by Saraha (of unknown date, but likely belonging to the 8th or 9th century CE), in which each verse begins with and is followed up by a letter of the Sanskrit alphabet adapted to the Tibetan one (*ka, kha, ga, nga* and so on). This feature is inimitable as far as our language is concerned and hence untranslatable. The other feature is the so-called *yamaka* (Tib. *zung-ldan-gyi rgyan*), a peculiar repetition of a group of letters/syllables which may occur in the beginning of a metrical line, in the middle, and at the end. I have preserved this "ornament" (Tib. *rgyan*, Skt. *alamkāra*) and tried, as far the English language allows, to place its translation at a place corresponding to the Tibetan original text.

Told in modern colloquial Tibetan, the five stories that make up the *Dream Come True* narrative, exemplify the story-teller's art of transporting the listener-reader into an enchanted world of which he becomes a participatory presence. His presence implies that this literary work of art is instructive, which is not the same as propagandizing, sermonizing, or proselytizing. Its instructive mode is the highlighting of the fact that all our actions have their consequences and that we as their perpetrators play a significant role in this ongoing drama. That is to state it succinctly, in our habitual, unthinking mode of being and conducting ourselves, we tend to make a mess of everything we touch, but once we start thinking we have the means at hand to get out of the mess into which we landed ourselves. There is no extramundane or meta-

physical hocus-pocus to do or to assist us in the work we have to do ourselves. Rather, the mess we have created comes as a challenge to cope with and eventually to overcome and clean up. That is the deeper meaning of karma that, in modern abstract diction, can be stated to be the principle of universal connectedness and its expression in the principle of complementarity that, restated in terms of aesthetically moving imagery, states that where there is darkness, there also is light, poetically and feelingly spoken of by the German poet Friedrich Hölderlin:

Wo aber Gefahr ist, wächst
Das Rettende auch
(But where there is danger, there also
Grows that which saves).
Patmos (1803, printed 1808)

It is this principle of complementarity that not only pervades the whole of Buddhist experience- and process-oriented thinking, but also works in the social sphere described in the present narrative as the interaction of the merchant and the aristocracy strata, each defining and needing the other: the merchant needs the aristocracy for its protection on his far-flung trading ventures, and the aristocracy needs the merchant for its and, by extension, its realm's prosperity. Most intriguing, however, is the author's realization of what may be called this complementarity's stratified autonomy, couched, as is to be expected in narratives, in mythopoeic language.

There is the limited, terrestrial, inhabitable world of ours and the seemingly unlimited supraterrrestrial world that still forms part of the overall perishable universe as the whole's closure onto itself. Both realms meet and fuse into each other in a *tertium quid*, a heavenly-paradisaic dimension. Both the terrestrial and supraterrrestrial realms have their own organizing principle, in one case it is the king (*rgyal-po*) 'A-dza-spa-ti, in the other case it is the supreme and sublime Lord of the perishable world (*'phags-mchog 'jig-rten dbang-phyug*). And while the king had a son who was transported into the heavenly-paradisaic dimension that caused his father's grief, the supreme and sublime Lord had a daughter who lived in her father's realm that, though perishable, was indistinguishable from the inhabitable world's heavenly-paradisaic dimension, where the two children enjoyed each other's company.

Prologue

In the vast circle of karmic actions that is this world of probabilities,
Happiness and sorrow, the rise and fall of our fortunes prove to be incomprehensible in this world of probabilities.

May, on the crown of my head, stay on victoriously the stalwart hero
who delivers¹ from this world of probabilities

Those who are fettered in the encircling bonds of their attachment to
this world of probabilities.

Chapter One

An account of what happened when Ka-ti, the merchant's son, went trading

Having obtained a human existence in this perishable world
One grows up in company with happiness and misery;
The enjoyment of the magnificence of happiness, joy, and pleasures
Is the result of one's labours in tiring karmic actions.

This human existence presenting a unique occasion and right juncture¹ so difficult to obtain,
Is such that it is a coming together and a falling apart (of diverse elements) and there is nothing that does not follow this rule.
Thus, an account of what happens in the wake of this coming together and falling apart
Will here be summarized as follows.

In the country of Pa-ru there once lived a merchant named Ra-ti whose far-flung trading expeditions had brought him great wealth. He had a daughter called Dzi-na and a son called Ka-ti. From the time they were little he loved them equally and guarded them like the apple of his eye. He fed them with tasty dishes, delectable sweetmeats including the choicest grapes, and dressed them in garments made of the finest silk. Thus by rearing dutiful descendants, caring for their parents as long as they lived and serving his country he led a worthy life.

At that time King rDa-dan sba-dur and his Queen Do-ta-ni ruled over a small country called Ru-ta far to the west of Pa-ru. They had a son, Ca-le-rata by name, and the time had come to find a bride for him. Since Ru-ta was such a tiny kingdom, there was no prospect of procuring a bride from a large kingdom. There also were no other smaller states nearby. Moreover, any prospective bride needed to have a loving disposition, impeccable ancestry, great beauty, and youthful charm. One day, therefore, the king summoned his ministers and addressed them as follows:

I ask all you ministers assembled here to listen to me.
For many years my queen and I have showered favours on you.
Now it is my turn, honorable ministers, to seek your advice
And ask you to express your concern for me freely.

Since my queen and I have no grandson to carry on our lineage
Our family will be wiped out like land that is swept away by a flood
rushing down from a high mountain.

A critical moment has arrived in the life of our noble son:
Since ours is a small kingdom he will not get a consort of high stand-
ing.

Therefore I bid you to confer amongst yourselves to arrange to bring a
bride here.

She may not be of royal birth, but should come from an honorable and
benevolent family,

Be in the prime of youth and fully endowed with the eight qualities
pertaining to an intelligent woman,

Honor her parents and have a loving disposition to her underlings.

When the king had finished speaking, the assembled ministers turned to
each other. "It is not right," said one of them, "to introduce into the royal
lineage someone who is not of royal blood."

"A misalliance with a person of bad ancestry," said another, "leads to a
bad character in the royal offspring."

"It is not proper," said still another, "to install a commoner as queen."

While all the ministers were still talking about how they felt about this mat-
ter, Me-ri-po, the chief minister, reverently folded his hands before his breast
and began to speak:

Your Majesty, if I may be so bold and ask you to attend to my words:
All people who are born into this world
Can be classified as rulers, ministers or commoners,
But whether a particular individual turns out to be a master or servant
depends on the strength of his devotion.

This, however, works in mysterious and arbitrary ways,
So that one person's hopes to become a leader are dashed and he is
kept in servitude, while a servant ascends a king's golden
throne.

Do not believe those who claim that only a person of royal descent is
suitable to carry on the royal line.

The fitting response to those who insist that royal birth is indispensa-
ble for becoming a king is that the strength of one's personal
merits cannot be weakened by anybody.

Thus when previously accumulated karma and aspiration match,
A person without a royal pedigree may rise to become a king:
The histories of past dynasties provide many examples where royal
descent was not always necessary to establish a new royal line.
The realm flourishes, prospers, and expands even when a commoner is
elevated to be its queen.

I need not belabour the details,
For my meaning is clear to one of your knowledge and sagacity, oh
King.
How can a dull-witted fellow like me presume to direct what course to
follow
To a person with such power and great wisdom as yours.

When the chief minister had finished giving this candid and forthright account of his own point of view and experiences, the king, in turn, recalled other precedents recounted in the old histories and took careful stock of his own power, wealth, and the size of his kingdom. He became very happy: “Indeed, indeed; what the minister has said is most pertinent. There is hardly any difference between what I have been saying all along and what minister Me-ri-po has just said. The next step therefore is to cast lots to investigate further the auspiciousness of the project. Choose from among you the one who is the wisest in these matters; he should then undertake to find a girl who is of high standing, possesses modesty and intelligence, and all the other qualities needed to ensure outstanding progeny as befits my son regardless of cost or distance.”

Consulting among themselves according to the king’s instructions, the assembled ministers decided unanimously that chief minister Me-ri-po was the only person suitable for this enterprise, and so they asked him to undertake the mission. Since the chief minister himself had secretly hoped that he would be the one to bring about a successful outcome of this important task and, furthermore, was convinced that he would accomplish it to the full satisfaction of the king and the other ministers, he announced his acceptance of the mandate and his commitment as indelible as a painting, with the following words:

Once I have my words that after due deliberation come out of my
mouth,
Turned into an unalterable oath,
I shall not tarnish it with careless talk or hypocritical remarks,
But hold it for the good of future generations.

I shall fill the king's and the people's mental-spiritual treasuries
With the gorgeous crop of desires fulfilled,
Just as the king protects this country of ours
In the manner of the sun spreading its light over a lotus pond.

For prince Ce-la-ra-ta
Who combines royal lineage with great beauty and
Who is the priceless jewel to protect this realm,
I shall fetch a most intelligent girl to be a model for future generations.

I do not have to travel from country to country;
I shall go from here to Pa-ru.
Where there lives an intelligent girl, worthy of
Our illustrious prince.

When she has become the consort of our prince.
She will protect the populace by spreading the highest standards of
morality, while
I have the ability which none else has
To bring the young lady here.

Therefore, the fulfilment of the king's intention
Is my primary concern.

After the minister had stated his determination so freely and naturally, the king, the queen, and the other ministers voiced their thoughts and feelings: "Chief minister Me-ri-po is the foremost counsellor amongst the ministers. He honors his king and his queen in every way. Moreover, he is a benevolent landlord who lovingly cares for his people. Therefore we do not have the slightest doubt that he will succeed in bringing home a modest and intelligent bride, who will care properly for our realm without bringing grief on us, and who will also be able to let our people share in the benefits that flow from such joy and happiness."

The king saw to it that everything needed for the minister's journey to find a bride for the prince was assembled and organized. The quality and quantity of the equipment and provisions were as follows:

A joyous minister, riding on a joyous swift horse
To a joyous house, is to invite a joyous girl.
Who does not delight in the joy of joys
Brimful with the joys of joyous ministers and people?

Now the chief minister thought: “I understand
The mission I have been entrusted to execute.
My mind rejoices in having heard that
The required modest and intelligent girl lives in Pa-ru.”

Accordingly, the minister took along lavish gifts
And set out to bring the bride from Pa-ru.

For the loving parents of the maiden
There were among the necessary presents, horses and elephants,
Jewels and gold, turquoises and pearls, silken dresses
And many other priceless gifts.

“Once you have delivered these presents into the hands of the girl’s
parents,
Finalize the intelligent girl’s betrothal.

If you succeed in bringing this modest and intelligent girl into my
kingdom,
I shall give you, my chief minister,
Horses and precious jewels and whatever you need for your enjoy-
ment as long as you are alive.
This is my firm promise.”

Bearing the king’s orders and instructions well in mind, the minister began making elaborate preparations for his journey three days hence when there would be an auspicious conjunction of the bright sun, the planets, and the stars. After he had sorted the clothes, provisions, and costly ceremonial scarves into a hundred mule loads he set out with a retinue of a hundred retainers, servants, horses, and mules for the country of Pa-ru.

After a month’s journey he arrived in the country of Pa-ru. When he had come to a wide meadow with beautiful flowers, he set his horses and mules loose to graze. As he was sitting at ease in his tent on which a gold finial decorated with a jewel flanked by deer to indicate his rank was mounted, an envoy came from Ra-ti, the wealthy merchant of Pa-ru. This messenger was dressed all in white and rode on a white horse. He said:

You (seem to be) a stranger who has come from afar,
From where have you come and
For which purpose have you come?

This meadow named Yangs-rgya-can, where you stay now,
Is not a meadow where any stranger can go as he likes.

This precious meadow is the private property of
Pa-ru's wealthy merchant Ra-ti.
From ancient times until now, no large caravan nor
Even a single horse has been allowed to graze here.

Now you people ruthlessly and inconsiderately
Have let loose a hundred horses and mules.
If you do not instantly drive them out from here
At least make sure that they do not roam about freely.

From these words the chief minister Me-ri-po gathered that this messenger had been sent by the wealthy merchant Ra-ti of the country of Pa-ru, and he thought: "In this man I have found the opening to accomplish my purpose." He invited the messenger to come into his tent and, after regaling him with a sumptuous meal, began to converse with him:

Welcome, welcome!
The omen of a messenger, clad in white and riding on a white horse,
Looking after my white mission
Has now materialized.

I am Me-ri-po, chief minister of
The king in the west;
At the behest of my king
I have come to welcome (our future) queen.

I have not camped here out of the desire to vandalize
Or annex this meadow.
I have come with many presents for the (future) queen
Who is smitten by the ceremonial arrow of magnificence.

Thus, this (place) is not one where
These hundreds of horses and mules will be (permanently) stationed.
I have to wait in this meadow Yangs-rgya-can
Until my mission is completed.

Since I do not wish to disregard the honorable messenger's bidding,
Tell me where does your wealthy merchant reside and (remember)
That the (future) queen I am looking for
Lives in the home of this wealthy merchant.

The messenger was so thunderstruck by these words that he was unable to utter a single word, but instead stood there staring blankly. After a while

understanding dawned on him. “Well, if the queen you seek resides in our house, I shall do my best to advance your quest. This is a very auspicious undertaking, I shall make the necessary arrangements that you can meet the illustrious merchant without delay,” he assured the chief minister.

Chief minister Me-ri-po now instructed his retinue to assemble the gifts he had brought to further his bid for a bride. After he and the merchant’s envoy had agreed that the chief minister would visit the wealthy merchant the day after next when all the preparations would be complete, the latter returned to his master and told him: “The travellers who have just arrived at the great meadow are the chief minister of the king of Ru-ta and his retinue. They have come from far away, enduring many hardships in order to ask that your daughter become the wife of their crown prince and the future queen of Ru-ta. They will visit your house the day after tomorrow.”

The wealthy merchant Ra-ti was overjoyed, made the necessary preparations and waited for them to come.

As soon as the chief minister riding a magnificent horse arrived at the door, the merchant welcomed him and invited him into his house. When all the reception formalities had ended, the chief minister seated himself on a cushion that was almost a throne, twirled his moustache with his right hand and laid his left hand on his knee like a lion’s paw; he directed his retainers to bring forth a hundred ceremonial scarves, a hundred leopard skin carpets, a hundred gold coins, and a hundred armored elephants, all of which were displayed both inside and outside. After the presentation of the gifts the chief minister raised the topic of taking the merchant’s daughter Dzi-na back to Ru-ta as the bride of the crown prince.

In the vast country of Ru-ta
There lives the great king, rDa-na sba-dur by name,
The universal monarch of a trichiliocosmos² —
Who to his destitute subjects is like a father and mother.

From among his ministers I am the one
Who is the jewel in this great king’s crown.
Now I have come here on behest of this king;
The purpose is not (to offer) a multitude of proposals, but a single one:

That is, here has been born a priceless jewel,
The foremost among intelligent and modest girls.
She is to become the queen in our kingdom,
As has been predicted by astrologers and soothsayers.

The (crown prince's) father is advanced in years and soon
Will retire from actively ruling his country.
The son, in the prime of his youth,
Will soon ascend the throne.

Your daughter has been chosen
To be the queen in our kingdom:
On the tree that bears the fruits of former acts of generosity
The fruits of merits and happiness to be enjoyed in this life have cer-
tainly ripened.

Therefore, as predicted, I have come here
To take home your intelligent daughter.
The hundreds and thousands of gifts (I have brought)
Are precious items decided upon by my king and queen.

Once these precious items have met the approval of (her) parents
They may be enjoyed by them. So grant me the privilege to take your
daughter back with me.

Ra-ti, the girl's father, was delighted at this impassionate entreaty exceed-
ing the passionate joy of a peacock at the monsoon's first rainfall. He thought
to himself: "However wealthy I may be, I am still only a commoner engaged
in trade; the kingdom of Ru-ta may be tiny, but it is still a kingdom. The re-
ward for my past acts of generosity has risen like the sun over my head. I
must definitely accept this minister's proposal and be happy about it." Openly
he said:

Friends, having come here as uninvited guests!
Me-ri-po, the chief minister of the king in the west,
Entrusted by his great king to find a bride
Has turned out to be an ornament to our merits.

In examining this proposal
I must be sure that it is straightforward like a straight arrow.
If it is an apparently straight proposal put on a crooked bow
It has no chance of finding favour in my mind.

Therefore, without making any subterfuges or engaging in idle talk
I want to state matters in a candid way:
Among my children
The eldest one is a girl, the youngest one is a boy.

I had not even considered giving away my daughter in marriage and
Under no circumstances did I wish to send her abroad.
But how can I not give her as the bride to the king's son in the west
When this has been predicted by astrologers and soothsayers?

I am powerless to stop by force
This affair that is the powerful working of their karma.
Therefore I have to accede to the suitor's request and
Give him my daughter whom I hold dear like my heart.

I shall live on, but now I have to make this request:
In giving my daughter to the king's son
I have no doubt they will love each other,
But the royal parents, too, should in their love
Lovingly take care of my beloved daughter.

To my daughter I give as a bride's dowry
Half of all my precious possessions.
I give this for the sole enjoyment of my daughter,
Not because kings like wealth.

Although (this dowry) is not much, but rather like a flower offered to a
deity,
May the king and his chief minister be pleased to accept it.
On the fifteenth day of this month,
When the planets and stars are in auspicious positions, I shall send my
daughter.

The dowry that is not dispatched (with her) to the kingdom right now
Because of its amount, I shall make ready (and send on later).

To the joyous minister I give as a parting present
Many silken garments together with a thousand gold coins;
Although this is not much, it is (meant as) an expression of my esteem.
May he be pleased to accept this gift in a joyous mood.

Chief minister Me-ri-po accepted the bride's dowry and other gifts with pleasure and, in turn, offered the bride's parents gold, turquoise, pearls, and other precious goods. They then had a frank and friendly discussion regarding the loving care the daughter would receive from the king and queen and their son as well as the ethical principles the girl had received from her parents.

On the fourteenth day of the month, as host and guests enjoyed a magnificent and lavish farewell banquet, chief minister Me-ri-po dispatched a letter to his king by express courier to announce the successful completion of his mission. His own kingdom should therefore make everything ready to receive the party and make sure there would be available drinks of welcome at the first and second stops within the country.

On the fifteenth day, early in the morning when the stars and planets were in their most auspicious positions, the entire party set out with five hundred horses and mules carrying the bride's dowry and the gifts for the king and queen of the kingdom of Ru-ta in the west.

When they had travelled for more than twenty days through fierce snow storms and icy winds, the girl began to sing mournfully. In one song she sang about the grief she felt at leaving her parents, in another she wondered sadly why she had not yet met her betrothed and seen his face after travelling so long and so far.

In this region where white clouds slowly pile up
On the high peaks of huge mountains,
My mind is deeply perturbed about the well-being of
My parents who had looked after me with love and affection.

Here in this northern barren country at the edge of the inhabitable
world
Into which I, the jewel in my parents' thought, have been led,
My mind that should have been full of love at being welcomed as a
bride, has grown tired
And even my looks and natural beauty has deteriorated.

Alas, if my loving parents were to know this
They would, in their compassion, be so sad in thinking of their be-
loved daughter.

Although I am afraid of meeting the prince who is the lord of my beau-
tiful body, (I am horrified)
To be lost and alone in this dreary valley.

Alas, there is here no one nor any place where and
With whom I could have a heartfelt talk about my mind's sadness.
While we proceed speedily, riding on swift horses,
My thoughts turn to the prince with whom I am karmically connected.

Once the prince sees my gracefulness, my beauty, and my youth
I shall be filled with happiness and my joy will mount.

Seeing that her mind was so filled with sad thoughts that the tears would flow on her lap as she looked at her face in a mirror, the chief minister remembered that he had promised her parents to cosset her with tender care. So he told her many stories in order to dispel her sadness. In addition he assured her that she would meet the noble prince in person in no more than five days, and he told her that the king, the queen, the ministers, and the whole populace were making elaborate preparations to welcome her. And so, in a moment, the girl's sadness turned into happiness and she told him that his comforting words had deeply touched his heart.

That evening they arrived at the meadow Yangs-rgya-can where they spent the night. There she relaxed and engaged in a long and detailed discussion with chief minister Me-ri-po about the duties of a king, the duties of the queen, the duties of the ministers, and the joy and happiness of their subjects.

The next day they set out from the meadow Yangs-rgya-can. At a place approximately three days' march away from the capital of Ru-ta they were greeted by the populace offering them a drink of welcome. On the second day they were offered another drink of welcome. On the third day, early in the morning, they arrived at the capital of the kingdom of Ru-ta. There the drums were beating on the palace roof, banners were waving and joyous songs were sung. Standing on both sides of the road, the people offered them drinks of welcome, while dancing girls sang melodious songs. As soon as the returning party had extricated itself from the flirtatious enticements of the dancing girls, the deputy chief minister walked down the steps from the palace gate to welcome them and to invite them to enter the great reception hall supported by four pillars and eight beams.

There the government officials headed by the ministers were sitting on the right on cushions covered with tigers' skins; on the left on cushions covered with leopards' skins sat their relatives headed by the queen. In the center the king sat on a throne, and his son and the bride each sat on smaller thrones to his right. The bride's gifts and dowry, brought on five hundred horses and

mules, were put on display for the entire court during the elaborate and colorful wedding ceremony. When all the formalities had been concluded in the great hall, the guests were invited to go to the men's and women's quarters. There, whilst singing melodious songs, servant-girls served beer, offered drinks, and set out dishes loaded with delectable food which everyone present heartily enjoyed. After seven days the guests left for home with many good wishes.

There, in the famous and renowned country Pa-ru
The famous and renowned wealthy merchant Ra-ti lives.
His famous and renowned trading ventures spread far and wide;
His famous and renowned treasure houses are overflowing.

All the wealth and possessions the parents had left behind
Became a magnificent ornament of the son left behind;
Spent completely were the riches left behind,
Reduced to the status of a beggar became the son left behind.

As the prediction had foretold, the wealthy merchant Ra-ti, at the height of his power and influence, was struck down by a severe illness during a lucrative trading expedition to India and soon died. Not long afterwards Ka-ti's mother also died and the boy was left to manage his estate by himself. If his youth had made it difficult for him to travel abroad, it presented him with equal problems now at home. Instead of shouldering the responsibilities that beset him from that time on like a donkey that must bear loads whether they are light or heavy, the responsibilities grabbed him by the neck. Lacking worldly experience or any knowledge of trading, he thought only about frivolous things. He frittered away his capital among big and small merchants. When at last he thought of setting up his own business, he not only had no cash, but there was also no one who would return any of the capital he had lent. What little remained of his capital he squandered until all his wealth and properties were lost. He wandered around in rags like an alley dog, his hair unkempt and infested with lice and nits.

One day, Bhi-ya-ne, the former steward of the boy's household, moved by overwhelming pity to point out a possible path for the youth, gave voice to these heartfelt sentiments:

Oh my, oh my! Listen, my boy:
Formerly you were like a young god,
Now your clothes are tattered and your hair is unkempt;
Even my stewardship has gone down the drain.

Oh my! Thinking of how you have made a mess of your whole life
I feel grief welling up from deep within me.

When you were still living with your caring parents
You hardly dared to put down your feet on the solid earth.
Now you have become a dirty fellow, lower than the lowest, and
Worse than an insect in a swamp.

You are no joy for the eyes and nobody is going to be impressed by
you.
Yet it would be improper to turn you out; you are too pitiable a per-
son.

Ka-ti, my little boy, because a bigger fool than you
Can hardly be found in this world, I shall give you some good advice.
Listen attentively to each word I say:

In the kingdom of Ru-ta, your older sister
Lives as the duly acclaimed queen.
Call on her and once you have implored her to give you shelter
And begged her not to cast you out, your life will be happy again.

Since Ka-ti had been just a little boy when his sister had been sent away as a bride, he had not really understood what was happening. Now that both his parents were dead and he had whiled away his adolescence with frivolous play, he still had no real grasp of the implications of his situation. It was the steward Bhi-ya-ne's words that opened his eyes. He realized he had no other alternative but to seek out his elder sister. Once he had decided on this course, he set out for Ru-ta, asking for alms as he wandered along the road.

When he reached Ru-ta, he asked the palace guards to inform his sister Dzi-na that Ka-ti, son of the wealthy merchant Ra-ti, had travelled far in search of his sister because he had been reduced to extreme poverty and he wished to implore her for assistance. When the guards had presented his petition to queen Dzi-na, she jumped high into the air with joy, but sorrow made her eyes fill with tears. She rushed down the large flight of stairs and jumped over the smaller steps. As soon as she saw her younger brother Ka-ti looking like a pitiable beggar, she embraced him and, weeping bitterly, fainted. Immediately her maidservants fetched water to revive her. She took her brother by the hand and led him into the palace. There she bade her servants to cut his hair, bathe him and dress him in silken garments making him look as

handsome as her husband, the prince. After plying him with delicious food and surrounding him with attentive service she made him rest and recover in a small room scented with medicinal powder.

After he had stayed at his sister's residence for some time, the following thought occurred to him: "I have the body of a marriageable man. But lusting after my sister because she is a woman would be most contemptible of me. Instead, I shall ask her help to become self-supporting." So he went to his sister and explained:

Well, listen my dear sister who have been caring for me in excess of what a mother might have done;

Your kindness has been deeper than the ocean and higher than a mountain.

Even if I were to spend my whole life in the center of your heart in an attempt to repay your boundless kindness

I would only sleep and rest whilst feeding on worldly ways that contravene all ethical norms.

Apart from the fact that such conduct only reflects an ordinary person's character, it would never measure up to a decent person's conduct.

Therefore, my dear sister, I want you to do me a favour:

The happiness of leading a life in which I excel is nowhere else to be realized than in myself,

But unless you fulfil my request I shall not succeed.

I do not want to live as a parasite of whom everyone is ashamed;

Rather I have the idea of accomplishing something myself;

Therefore I beg you, my dear sister, to lend me some capital

With which I will do some trading and compete with others in the world.

His sister tried to dissuade him from going abroad to trade and implored him:

Oh dear, dear brother, listen to me!

You are the heart in my breast;

If you go abroad, this heart in my breast

Will be no more. Don't let it come to this.

I will fulfil any expectation you may have and

Provide whatever you need for your enjoyment.

Your reckless setting out to become a trader

Is utterly inappropriate. Stay here.

Wherever you go you will find
That worldly affairs are very troublesome.
If you wander into what is the source of all troubles
I shall die from worry.

When all her entreaties failed to move him from his resolve to go trading abroad and make himself independent, she realized that she was powerless against the power of his karma. Reconciling herself to it, she provided him with ten bags of gold coins together with assorted merchandise, and arranged for him to accompany other great merchants on a trading mission to the kingdom of Sing-ga.

After travelling for twenty-five days the caravan reached the capital of Sing-ga which was surrounded by two-storey high walls. Since it was already dusk, Ka-ti's fellow merchants suggested they spend the night in a small village nearby. Ka-ti told them they could do so and enter the city on the morrow, but he himself would try to reach the city that very night. He loaded his horse with two bags of gold coins and some spare clothes, entrusted his companions with the remainder of his goods and made for the big city. Just as he reached the city wall, the main gate slammed shut.

Now Ka-ti was in a quandary. Looking around he spotted an enormous willow tree. He tied his horse to the trunk and lay down under the branches to sleep. Suddenly several people appeared on the top of the wall, talking all at once as they tied a rope around a long wooden box before lowering it. Just as the box was about to hit the ground with a loud crash, they shouted: "There, take this!"

After the people on the wall had left, Ka-ti, wondering what the box contained, went to investigate. It was a very big box. Upon opening it, he discovered a person lying inside it. When he looked more closely he could see, in spite of the darkness, that the person's body was completely covered with wounds though it was still warm. Thinking he ought to try to save that person somehow, he bound up the wounds with the clothes he had loaded on his horse. Early next morning he took another look and saw that the person was a beautiful girl with wounds all over her body. Immediately he loaded his horse by balancing his bags of gold and clothes on one side and the box, which he provided with an opening for ventilation, on the other. He entered the city as soon as the gate opened, took a room at an inn and asked for the whereabouts of a competent physician. Learning that one was close by, he

went to the clinic where a hundred patients were already waiting. When the physician arrived he noticed that Ka-ti was dressed differently from the local people. So he took him aside saying: “You don’t look as if you came from here. Which kingdom have you come from?” Pleased by Ka-ti’s clear account, the physician invited him inside and they engaged awhile in friendly conversation until the physician got up and told the waiting patients: “I hope you won’t mind if I ask you to come back at another time. A serious illness has befallen a person who has just come from a far-away country.” The assembled patients said: “If a stranger with a severe illness has come from afar under great hardship, you must attend to him at once. We’ll come again later.”

The physician followed Ka-ti to the inn where he was staying. He examined the patient carefully. Finding that despite the grievous wounds there were no internal injuries, he promised that he would be able to heal the patient in less than a month. Ka-ti, too, was very happy that he would be soon back on the road in quest of his yearnings, and he gave the physician a hundred gold coins as a token of his appreciation.

From then on the physician came regularly to look after the girl’s health which improved from day to day. Once, as Ka-ti and the girl, whose name was Pi-shu-na, were sitting together, she said to Ka-ti:

Unreservedly I give this body whose life has been prolonged
To Ka-ti who is the lord by whom this life has been prolonged
When he searched for the realization of the power by which life has
been prolonged
As the merits by which life has been prolonged were coming to their
fruition.

Without the strength of turning away the compelling power of karma
I was led and brought to this dismal place of the dead by the compelling
power of karma.
Having obtained a new lease on life by the compelling power of
karma
I now give myself to you by the compelling power of karma.

In return for her solemn pledge, Pi-shu-na exacted three promises from Ka-ti: one, he must not stay away from home; two, he must not get drunk anywhere; three, he must never ask her how she had got her wounds. Ka-ti promised fervently.

For a long time the two enjoyed unalloyed happiness, but one day when Ka-ti was in the market shopping, a depression seized his mind, even changing his mien. When he returned home, the lovely Pi-shu-na wondered what was the matter with him and she questioned him:

Usually your face is like the moon,
Shining in a white light, and your mind is open and relaxed.
Now your face is gloomy and your breath comes feverishly.
Could it be that your body is afflicted by a virulent disease?

Or is your mind upset by something?
Or has something happened
That did not work out as you had expected?
Without concealing the least detail tell me straightforwardly.

Ka-ti sighed deeply and replied:

Formerly adorned with splendor and wealth
I have met you, oh lovely one, through the power of karma.
Now, our wealth and our property
Is about to be used up. Therefore, I am deeply worried.

Even if we were to go to distant places in this human world,
How would we henceforward spend our life?
It is for this reason that this unbearable mental anguish
Has strongly contorted my face, oh lovely one.

Fair Pi-shu-na responded to Ka-ti's lament: "You need not let your mind be troubled over food and clothing. I know how to provide the means for our livelihood. Next to a large market-place north of our house there is a three-storey high merchant's mansion which is so elegant that one would never tire of looking at it. In this house lives an old bearded merchant. Hand him this letter from me. The old merchant will give you a bag filled with gold coins." Obediently Ka-ti went as Pi-shu-na bade him and found the magnificent house just as she had said. He entered the house and met the bearded merchant who was so delighted when Ka-ti gave him the letter, that he invited him to stay a while. After he had served Ka-ti with a lavish repast, he sent him away with two bags full of gold coins, saying: "If you need more cash in the future, come back." Ka-ti went home greatly astonished.

As before, Ka-ti and Pi-shu-na spent another year in great happiness, together 'eating the grass of a meadow on a mountain and drinking the water of sorrow and frustration.' One day Pi-shu-na said to Ka-ti: "If you go a little

to the west of the house you visited before, you will find an even more palatial mansion. In it lives a handsome young merchant. Dress elegantly, take plenty of money with you, and enter the house under the pretext of doing some business with him. When he has become acquainted with you as a fellow business man, you may make your trading proposal. Even if you dine together, you must not spend the night there, but come back here instead.”

As bidden, Ka-ti found the mansion where he met a charming young man whom he asked: “Are you the merchant to whom this house belongs?”

“Yes,” replied the young man and then proceeded asking Ka-ti: “Where have you come from? You do not look like a local citizen. But since you are now in this kingdom, perhaps we could set up a trading partnership?” After having invited Ka-ti to come inside, he proposed: “You may obtain your stock of trading goods here on a regular basis. Since you are a distinguished person, it would be most proper for you to stay at my house.”

Ka-ti considered this proposal of an on-going trading partnership and said: “Transferring my business to your place may be a little complicated because I have many associates. It would be easier if I did what you propose tomorrow or the day after.”

The merchant was agreeable and said: “That’s fine. But since this is the first time that we have met, let us not pursue negotiations on an empty stomach, for the proverb says: ‘Do not discuss weighty matters with someone who has an empty stomach.’ Tonight I would like to offer you a simple meal so that we can further our acquaintance in a relaxed setting.

Behind the main house there was a large pavilion surrounded by flowers and trees. Leading Ka-ti into the pavilion, the merchant ordered his servants to serve them a lavish dinner. They consumed large quantities of beer and arak, while beautiful young servant-girls regaled them with songs and refilled their cups. Since Ka-ti thought that the merchant’s bearing was that of a cultured person and that his ideas were congenial, he stayed on eating and drinking. At length the merchant rose and said politely: “Now that we have become good friends, allow me to call my wife to join us for a joyous celebration.” Ka-ti gladly consented.

In a little while the merchant’s wife, accompanied by two of her maids, came. Before sitting down beside her husband, she politely entreated Ka-ti: “Please, honor us with your joyful company.” As Ka-ti looked at her closely, he saw to his horror that her face was dreadful: coal-black with gleaming white teeth. Although he was afraid to stay, he could not leave because they

were watching him closely. After the husband and his wife had drunk a lot of beer and arak, they began to make love quite openly. Since Ka-ti had also been generously plied with beer and arak, he became too drunk to return home and had to spend the night there.

Next morning Ka-ti got up early, took leave of his two hosts, and returned to his own lodgings. With a friendly mien Pi-shu-na asked him: "Did you enjoy yourself yesterday?" Ka-ti described the revelry to her in detail. After that the two continued living together as before. One day Pi-shu-na said: "Recently your merchant friend treated you to a sumptuous repast. Now it is time to act in accordance with the proverb: 'If you do not give a blow in exchange for a blow, those who deal you blows will increase in number; if you do not give a present in return for a present, those who offer you presents will grow fewer in number.' Go tomorrow morning and invite the merchant and his wife to a banquet at our place." Next morning Ka-ti put on his finest clothes and went to invite them. On the way there, he felt somewhat uneasy that the banquet would not be ready, because hardly any preparations had been made the night before. But when the couple arrived at his door all the valances and curtains in the inn had been replaced. Bowing deeply, many footmen conducted them upstairs where the furniture was of the finest quality and the table-ware and beer and arak cups were set out very elegantly. When Ka-ti went to find his wife and see what she was doing, he discovered her in the kitchen preparing the food. She told him: "You go upstairs and entertain your guests. Make them drink and drink again the welcoming beer. But you yourself must not drink much. Do not worry about the food; I shall send it up first thing. In the meantime, please, relax and enjoy yourself." Following her words, he went upstairs where his guests were waiting, and plied them with food and drink. The couple, in turn, cheered him on with songs and made him drink plenty of beer and arak. In the end all three were so drunk that they just crawled away on all fours and fell asleep.

When Ka-ti woke up at dawn and looked around, he saw that his guests' throats had been cut and their heads had been put on the table. Horror-stricken at this sight, he trembled with fear. Wondering where his wife could be, he began to search for her, but could not find her anywhere. Moreover, all the servants, the furniture and household goods from last night had vanished. Alone and reduced to penury, he grew exceedingly depressed. He was filled with terror at the thought that he might be guilty of murder. Then, recollecting one of the maxims that the Most Precious One had once given to

mankind, he once again set out to look for his wife, but again he could not find her anywhere. Since he could not afford a place where to sleep, he spent the night hungry in one of the forsaken alleys. Many thoughts tormented him. Finally it occurred to him that the great merchant who had given him the gold coins on behalf of his wife, might know where his wife had disappeared to. The next morning he went to the merchant's big house; bowing reverently and kneeling before the merchant he implored him:

Formerly, I brought a sealed letter
To you, oh great merchant.
After having delivered it I received
Two bags with gold coins from you.

The beautiful girl for whom the money was meant
Has disappeared like a rainbow in the sky.
If you do not tell me where she lives
My heart will be torn asunder with grief.

Let a garland of waves of straight words
Surge from the depth of the ocean of your kindness.
If you do not tell me where she is
I, this young man, will be on the brink of death.

The merchant replied:

It's very difficult to search into the whereabouts
Of this brilliant girl who sent the letter.
This matter is not something one should ask about.
It's better not to say much and to keep quiet.

My son, I understand that you are
A man of standing from another kingdom.
My son, let me give you some capital and travelling expenses and
Take from here whatever you may need.

Without further talk return to your own country
And engage in profitable trading.
When tongues are wagging too much, there is the danger that they
may ruin someone;
When male birds get too excited, one or the other is going to be
caught in the fowler's net.

After the great merchant had spoken these words, Ka-ti again bowed reverently and said:

I have come from a distant country and
My previous karma has tied me to this girl
For this reason, we two have been
Bound to each other in love for a whole lifetime.

If I do not find this girl,
My life is about to crumble.
Oh great merchant, in your kindness,
Save my life with love and compassion.

The eminent merchant twirled his moustache with his right hand, but shook his head whilst pondering Ka-ti's supplication. Finally he said: "Listen carefully. Since your own life is already at risk, it would not be proper for me to put yet another person's life at risk. Know then, the girl you are seeking is the daughter of the great king of our kingdom of Kha-kram. Our king has no son and only this daughter. A couple of years ago his daughter disappeared and, although the king issued a royal proclamation and posted many public notices, nowhere could she be found. But now she has calmly come back of her own account. Fearing that she might disappear again, her parents are keeping her in a luxurious pavilion in the middle of a beautiful flower garden and grove near their palace. The entire place is surrounded by soldiers and servants so that no one can get in or out. Once a week, princess Pi-shu-na goes to visit her parents. A hundred fully armed officers and soldiers march before and behind her palanquin. An equal number of maidservants surround her. Your life would be forfeit if you tried to meet her. Instead, accept this sum of money here and return to your own country, Before, I gave you money on behalf of the princess; now, the money I offer you is also on behalf of the princess, for I am her trade representative."

Completely distraught at these words, Ka-ti left without taking any money to cover his travelling expenses. Instead, he begged his way, enduring hundreds of hardships, till he reached the princess' palace where he waited daily outside the gate. One day, the princess was borne through the gate on a palanquin in the middle of a splendid cavalcade of horses. Although Ka-ti could see her, there was no way he could attract her attention. As she was returning that evening he stepped in front of her palanquin, regardless of what this might mean for his life. The princess gave no sign that she recognized him, but the officers stopped him by brandishing their swords. There was absolutely no way of getting into the palace. The second week passed like the first one. When in the morning of the third week he had stationed himself in front

of the palanquin and started shouting over and over again: "Please grant me, this poor beggar, out of love and compassion, an audience," he did not get an audience. Wailing as before, he waited and waited. When, in the evening, the princess returned from her visit to her parents, she went into her palace without deigning to utter a single word. After a while, an officer came out of the palace door and said: "What does this mean that you, like an insane person, stand here clamoring all day?" Ka-ti answered: "Since what I, this confused person, hope for is nothing more than to have an audience with the exalted princess, I, this stupid person, ask you to take kindly to my request and help me in having my expectation fulfilled." Moved by this request, the officer said: "Well, come in. But when permission to have an audience in the large hall has been granted, you must not look straight into the face of the princess in front of you, but must lower your eyes and look into the shining mirror that is placed next to the throne on which she sits and grants you an audience." To this Ka-ti readily agreed. Then the officer requested the princess to be seated on the throne. Beautiful maidservants stood to the right and left of the throne. When Ka-ti had knelt down before the mirror, by granting an audience the princess addressed him: "What is the meaning of your standing and clamoring at the palace door day by day? Tell me frankly and do not conceal anything."

Ka-ti replied:

A person whose mind strives for bright and wholesome actions and
Whose considerate conduct is as vast as the sky, is a rarity in this
world.

From fear that such a person might encounter hardships
My mind is tormented by deep worries.

After struggling with villains, that person's physical radiance
Increasing steadily, has now arrived at the capital.
Together with her loving parents, she
To her heart's content enjoys the splendor of a million-fold joy and
happiness

She who radiated a hundred thousand light rays of soothing rays
Into the center of my mind engulfed by darkness, and
Whose favours, like those of a charming spirit of the air, I enjoyed,
Should have compassion with me and not cast me away.

As Ka-ti continued imploring her with many laments, the princess ordered her attendant officer: "Officer, furnish this sick man with lots of food and

drink. When he has had his fill, bring him and my personal physician to my private chambers.”

The officer did as he was bidden. After he had given Ka-ti some food, he conducted him and the physician to the princess. The princess addressed the physician: “This man is suffering from a severe illness; I charge you to perform a correct diagnosis.”

The physician’s hair was white as a conch shell and his beard reached down to his chest. He took Ka-ti’s hand, felt his pulse, and examined him carefully. Finally, he sighed deeply and said unhappily to the princess: “In this world, oh princess, you alone are the medicine needed for this patient. There is no other treatment.” The princess, embarrassed by recollections of past intimate delights, dismissed the physician abruptly: “Go! In due course I will see about your unwarranted diagnosis and prescription.” The physician rose from his seat, took his walking stick in his hand, put the bag containing his medical instruments under his arm, and left the room. The maidservants, one by one, followed the physician. After all of them had left, the princess went up to Ka-ti and addressed him with a radiant smile:

“Greetings, Ka-ti! You who have saved my life as it was driven away
by the inexorable force of karma,
Listen carefully to my words.
It’s true, we have become marital friends in this life,
But let us pray that again and again for many generations we will be
consorts.

Let us remember deeply in our hearts that in this world
Whatever has come together has to come apart and that there is
nothing permanent and stable.
Let us keep in mind this principle of union and separation
Since we two have received a concrete lesson in this union and separation.

“We were separated because twice you broke your promise. Since we have been reunited through the grace of the Most Precious One, let us strive to deserve spending the rest of our lives in happiness.”

Having made these resolutions and pledges, Ka-ti and the princess lived together for a long time without her parents’ knowledge. Gradually Ka-ti’s fears eased.

Then, one day he asked the princess:

What is the meaning of your having become a royal person and (what is the meaning)

Of this royal person, after the infliction of severe wounds,

Being thrown over the city wall?

Please, tell me frankly.

Shaking her head and weeping bitterly, the princess responded to Ka-ti's request: "Now I must reveal my disgraceful story to you who were so kind to bring me back to life. I am the beloved and only daughter of the king and queen of this great kingdom. When I was a young girl, a young milk vendor named Khra-rgyas-bzang-po lived near our palace. I used to give him presents and money for clothes and in due course fell in love with him. When I got to know him better, I advanced him a large sum of money and sent him on a trading mission to many kingdoms in India. Once he had amassed a private fortune, he set up many trading depots in India and built himself a new house here. He ran an underground tunnel from his house to the palace which allowed us to have intimate relationships. But after some time his behaviour toward me became more and more boorish and he constantly heaped abuses on me. Our contacts grew more and more perfunctory and finally ceased all together.

"But one day he showed up again at my place and said: 'Tonight I am giving a banquet more lavish than any one before. Please come!' Recalling our earlier friendship, I gladly accepted his invitation. I used the tunnel to go to his house and waited for meals to be served. Instead he treated me to a scowling face, quite unlike his usual countenance, and berated me with curses until a woman with dishevelled hair, a coal-black face and a fearsome expression appeared at his side. As the two fondled and embraced each other, all the time growing ever more intimate, they continued abusing me. With the words: 'You demoness, see whether you can escape death,' they winked at each other and, pulling out their daggers, stabbed me repeatedly. When I fainted, they put me in a box which they threw over the city wall. You helped me escape certain death by the consummate kindness with which you gave me food and drink and provided medicines to heal my wounds. But have no fear: though I did indeed perpetrate the odious crime of murdering these people, it was only for revenge.

"But it is quite impossible for the two of us to continue living in this country. Should my parents hear of our relationship, your life would be in peril and I would be in great trouble. Take, therefore, these gold coins and buy two

horses. Tomorrow night, wait under the canopy over my door, and we will escape together.”

As instructed by her, Ka-ti bought two pure-bred horses and two saddles and waited under the canopy. Almost immediately the princess let herself out and joined him. Mounted on their horses, the two rode all night long through a dense forest. By morning, the princess was so weary and thirsty that she could not ride any further. Ka-ti found a dry grassy dell where he left the princess and the horses in the shade of a huge tree while he went to look for water. When he brought back some water, the princess and the horses had vanished. Although he searched all over the place, he could find no trace of them.

Overcome by grief and sorrow, he climbed up a steep cliff. As he was about to jump, an old man with a white moustache grabbed him from behind, saying: “It would be a mistake to jump now. Altogether there are four people who are afflicted with the same suffering. On the evening of the fifteenth day of the fourth month you must meet the other three in Bung-ba-can, a forsaken spot to the south of here. If you send up a prayer to the Three Jewels after each of you has given a full account of your life and suffering, it will come to pass that your aspirations will be fulfilled.” Ka-ti heeded the old man’s words and did not jump off the cliff, but waited until evening before setting out for the forsaken and eerie place he had been told of.

Chapter Two

An account of what happened in the search for the princess of Dzo-pad

No sooner had the first traveller, the merchant's son Ka-ti, concluded the account of his life and misadventures (as reported in the preceding chapter), in the lonely spot Bung-ba-can which lies deep in the vast forest at the southern end of the inhabited world in the mighty kingdom of 'A-dza-du, than another young man raised his head and began to tell the story of his misfortunes.

My name is rDi-bam and I am the only son of the great king Rigs-ldan and his queen Ra-ti. As a child I studied the five minor sciences so diligently that I completed my studies of the five major sciences¹ by the time I was seventeen. At that time it occurred to me that since the gulf between the rich and the poor, the high-born and the low-caste, challenged all understanding, it would be a meritorious act to open one's purse to the destitute to lighten their misery. Therefore, one day I sought out my father and addressed him humbly with folded hands:

Greetings, revered father, please hear me out!
The thought to hand out charitable donations without ostentation
Has suddenly, quite out of the blue, occurred to me.
Will it offend you if I make a request to do that?

My father, the king, answered:

Tell your father frankly and without prevarications
What is on your mind.
I am not a pauper who drinks only black tea;
As long as your wish has a solid purpose and you are not just mixing
fish and turnips, I will grant it.

My father's willingness to consider my wish as not just a capricious whim, but actually as a serious endeavour to preserve the good and discard the bad, made me very happy. Since this made my objective so much simpler, I put the following request to him: "In order to ensure prosperity and well-being in this life and the next, I want to make lavish charitable donations. To this effect I would like you to order a hundred booths to be built near our respective palaces, station a servant at each booth to give a gold drachma to everyone who comes asking for alms."

My father, the king, responded: “You are a son after my own heart. Although you are still very young, your determination is so strong and your intention so altruistic that I cannot stop you. I shall try to fulfil your wish with one stroke of my pen.” Right away he decreed that a hundred booths be built so that the alms-giving was to be under way.

Soon the reports of such largesse were spread far and wide by the countless beneficiaries. One day as I visited the site where the booths stood, I saw a beggar who had come a long way. His hair was white as a conch shell, no teeth gleamed like pearls in his mouth, and he leaned heavily on a stick. He walked deliberately from one booth to the next, collecting a drachma from each. As soon as he had amassed a hundred gold drachmas in this way, he went around a second time, and yet again a third time always pocketing a drachma. When he came to the first booth for the fourth time, the attendant protested: “You have already received three hundred gold drachmas. If you let your greed incite you to claim even more gold, you may well run into difficulty when you try to carry it all away. I will not give you any more today, but you may come back again tomorrow for another donation.”

Upon hearing this rebuke, the old beggar flung the canvas bag in which he had stowed the three hundred gold coins on the ground and berated him scornfully: “Kindly keep your vainglorious pretence of being a donor to yourself in the future. A month’s journey from here lives princess Te-kha-no, the daughter of the king of Dzo-pad whose power is as great as a god’s. Now she is a person whose words and deeds match; she is far superior to you in the lavishness of her donations. Her way of giving alms is to arrange a sumptuous reception for anyone who enters the kingdom and stays there for a day; moreover, as he is leaving next morning he is presented with ten gold drachmas.” With these words he stalked away angrily without a single drachma.

As I was listening to this tirade, I became convinced that the princess Te-kha-no of Dzo-pad was a real manifestation of a superior spiritual being,² whom I ought to meet to improve my own standing. After some hesitation and trepidation because after all I was a stranger to her, I decided to seek out her country. One day, at about midnight I set out alone and secretly. I had travelled for almost a month before I finally reached the outskirts of the kingdom of Dzo-pad, where I found a very clean inn for the night. The inn-keeper, a young man, greeted me courteously as he led me inside. There I enjoyed a delicious meal, followed by a deep sleep under soft silken blankets. As I was about to leave next morning after breakfast, the young inn-keeper

handed me ten gold drachmas. When I demurred and tried to return them to him, he reproved me: “Sir, it is most discourteous of you to decline accepting these coins; they are a present from our king’s daughter Te-kha-no.” In the end, when I still refused to accept the gift, he said: “Well, if you won’t take them now, I shall just put them in a bag, seal it, and hold it for you to take with you on your return.” After I had also set my seal on the bag, he placed it in his strong-box for safe-keeping.

The same sequence of events happened at each inn where I stayed for the next four weeks so that, in the end, I had acquired twenty-eight bags of gold drachmas on deposit. On the twenty-ninth day I reached 'Bi-ra-ni, the capital of the kingdom of Dzo-pad. Near the city walls a stately palace stood behind an imposing gate. The steward, an old man, bade me enter. After I had been served with refreshments, he inquired solicitously whether I had been received properly at each inn. Once I had assured him that I had met with nothing but courtesy and that I was most grateful for the way I had been treated, he probed: “You may state freely the purpose of your visit.”

I replied: “I have come a long way to meet the famous princess Te-kha-no, because reports of the lavish nature of charitable donations in your country have reached my own country. Would you, therefore, be so kind as to arrange a meeting for me with the princess Te-kha-no, the manifestation of a superior spiritual being?”

The steward responded: “You are making a very dangerous request. Why? Look at the proclamation by the princess Te-kha-no on the banner above the palace gate: ‘Whosoever passes the test successfully will receive the hand of the princess in marriage.’ Many have come and suffered great hardships as they tried to fulfil the conditions, but nobody has yet succeeded. Since the task is so difficult, it would be better for you to dismiss the idea of a meeting with the princess and return home safely, as the proverb advises: ‘A comfortable couch is more enjoyable than the back of a wild horse.’”

But since I refused to be deflected from pursuing my ambition of meeting the princess in spite of his earnest warning, he went at last to report my arrival to the princess. Returning shortly, he asked me to follow him as the princess had agreed to grant me an audience. On the first floor of the three-storey high palace a maidservant led me into the reception hall where the princess sat. To me she appeared like a goddess come to earth, and I could not take my gaze off her.

With a radiant smile she inquired solicitously: “Where have you come from? Did you encounter any hardships on your journey? Why have you sought this meeting with me?”

To these and many other questions I replied: “I am the son of the king of sBag-tag. Ever since I was a little child I enjoyed giving alms, so I asked my father for permission to give on a more lavish scale. At my request he had a hundred booths built at each of which anyone who came received a gold drachma. One day an old beggar came who disdainfully rejected the donation I offered, claiming that the donations in your country were far more generous. Since I wanted to discover for myself how superior they were, I disguised myself as a beggar and set out secretly without telling my parents, subjects or serfs. When I arrived here at your palace, your steward told me that you had promised to marry whosoever carried out a task for you successfully. Will you not tell me what is on your mind?”

The princess smiled at me even more tenderly. “Your earlier actions and present devotion prove that surely you are without peer, so I shall confide in you without reservation. Forty days south of here lies the great kingdom of U-ta-ya-na. There, each month on the fifteenth day, the king and queen, the nobility and the common folk assemble on the wide plain Pad-thang. An enormous throne is erected between the thrones for the king and the queen. After everyone has been plied with lots of food, tea, and beer, everyone sits in fear and trepidation. After a little while a menacing youth comes riding out of the deep forest on a gigantic red bull, brandishing a small dagger in his right hand and holding a human heart in his left. In the center of the waiting crowd he dismounts, gives the animal some vicious blows with the blunt edge of his dagger and ties it to a tree. Without a word he ascends the empty throne. As soon as he has eaten and drunk his fill, he jumps up and throws the human heart in his hand at random into the waiting crowd. He grabs whoever is struck by the heart, slits his throat, rips out the heart, and rides back into the forest after having given his bull another sound beating. No one has ever been able to elicit a single word from him or find out why he does so. This heinous crime of killing a person on the fifteenth day of each month, deeply perturbs me who has always striven after the good and wholesome. By now many people have undergone tremendous hardships to solve the mystery, but none have succeeded. If you can uncover the reason for this evil man’s evil action so that he may be subdued the way the Buddha overcame Mara, the

Evil One, our present and future lives will benefit, and I shall gladly give myself to you for the rest of my life.”

Carefully I weighed her words and assured her that I would be bound by whatever was best for our present and future lives. With a deep bow I took my leave of the princess, declaring: “If this is your will, I shall do my utmost to fulfil it even if it costs me my life.”

It took me more than forty days during which I encountered a hundred difficulties, but at last I reached the large and spaciouly laid-out capital of the kingdom of U-ta-ya-na, where I rented a room in an inn at the edge of the city. Although I questioned the woman to whom the inn belonged closely, she could not tell me about the young man on the red bull anything else than what I had already learned from princess Te-kha-no.

Precisely as princess Te-kha-no and the woman at the inn had told me, on the fifteenth day of the month, a sad-faced king and queen together with their anguished nobles and wailing populace assembled on the plain of Pad-thang to wait in fear and trepidation. Before long, loud crashing sounds came from the dense forest that covered the surrounding foothills and a young man charged onto the plain, riding a red bull, brandishing a short dagger in his right hand and holding a gory human heart in his left hand. Dismounting, he thrashed the bull soundly with the blunt end of his dagger and tethered it to a tree. Then he ascended the empty throne in the center. Instantly servants rushed to offer him all sorts of tasty dishes, tea, and beer. As soon as he had eaten the last bits, he jumped up with a loud shout and flung the gory human heart into the crowd. Immediately he seized the poor wretch who had been struck, slit his throat and ripped out his heart. Holding the two hearts, he gave the bull another beating and disappeared back in the forest. As I tried to follow him to ask him to explain his bizarre action, many people in the crowd grabbed me, shouting and wailing: “Are you mad that you want to throw away your life?” and would not let me go.

Exactly the same sequence of events took place the next month. Once again people restrained me as I tried to follow the youth into the forest, so that I was unable to carry out my purpose and had to return to where I was lodged.

When another month had passed, and it was again time for the cruel youth to select another victim, I rose very early and hid in the dense forest enclosing the road along which he rode his red bull, brandishing his dagger and a hu-

man heart. With a low bow I stepped fearlessly out onto the road and knelt before him as he was returning from the site of his gruesome act. With frightful bulging eyes he stared at me and, uttering a blood-curdling cry, raised his dagger as if to strike me. But abruptly he dropped his hand and went on his way. Resolutely I followed him. Hearing my footsteps behind him, he stopped, but raised his dagger the moment I approached him closer. When I, in turn, paused, bowing my head deferentially, he asked: "Why have you come here to threaten my life?"

"I have come from far away," I replied. "My sole purpose is to find out why you commit such hideous crimes here. If you want to kill me before I discover your reasons, do so now." He stood still for a moment sunk in deep thought, then just continued on his way without answering me.

Again I followed. At long last we emerged out of the forest where the trees had grown together so closely that one could not see the sky. Before us lay a wide-open meadow in the center of which there stood a high-walled structure that was buttressed at each of its four corners by formidable towers with gates. As the youth stepped in front of the one on the east, the gate opened by itself and closed as soon as he had passed through. When I looked through a crack in the door, I saw many servants rushing from the rooms along the passage to meet him and politely ask for his orders. As soon as he had removed his outer garments, he came back out. Again he gave the bull a severe beating with the blunt edge of his dagger, but this time he patted and fed the animal before going back inside. Almost immediately a servant appeared. He invited me to come in and led me to the youth's private chamber. My first glance fell on the hearts of all the people he had killed, neatly laid out in ceremonial vessels. The youth, seated on a high throne, greeted me with a radiant smile: "Welcome, my friend! I hope you are not too fatigued from your journey!"

After such a gracious reception we were soon immersed in an animated conversation, but suddenly, his face turned dark red and he rushed out abruptly. One of his attendants nodded urgently to me to leave. The servants, too, were all running for cover to their rooms. Following their example I hid in an empty room and bolted the door. Through a crack I saw the youth again beat the bull. When his fury had spent itself, he returned to his throne and ordered a servant to call me back. This time, after plying me with food, tea, and beer, he questioned me closely with the most amiable expression of

concern on his face: “Where have you come from? Won’t you tell me frankly?”

Clasping his hand in mine, I began: “I am prince rDi-bam of the great kingdom sBag-tag. Ever since I was a little boy it has been my earnest desire to enhance my character and talents. So it occurred to me that in this respect it would be helpful and meritorious if I were to make lavish charitable donations. My father supported my intention enthusiastically. But one day, as I was watching the distribution of alms, an old beggar contemptuously tossed on the ground the bag containing three hundred gold drachmas he had received and began to revile me, suggesting sneeringly, “Keep your pretence of being a generous donor to yourself.” Instead, he claimed that nothing could equal the generosity of the princess Te-kha-no of Dzod-pad, a great kingdom about a month’s journey away from my own. She, according to him, provided anyone who came with an ample dinner, a comfortable night’s lodging at an inn, and a present of ten gold drachmas at his departure the following morning. Having extolled her virtues, he stalked away.

I got the feeling that if such a generous and spiritually awake princess existed, I ought to meet her as she had to be a concrete manifestation of a superior spiritual being. Unable to shake off the urge to meet her, I disguised myself as a mendicant and set out secretly one night for her kingdom. Within a month I reached her kingdom, and just as the beggar had claimed, at each inn I was met with a splendid reception and on my departure I was given ten gold drachmas. When I finally arrived in the capital of Dzo-pad I was warned by her steward that the princess had imposed a stringent condition that no one yet had been able to fulfil. Undaunted, I insisted that he inform the princess of my wish to meet her. At the audience she eventually granted me, she explained that it was her wish that someone uncover the reason for your heinous crimes and that, since the matter preyed so heavily on her mind, she would meet all expenses for the journey. She also asked that I hurry back if I was successful, for she would then give me her hand in marriage. Having travelled hither and yonder searching for you during the last six months, I am delighted to have found you at last. Will you not tell me what troubles you and compels you to act the way you do?”

The young man who had come riding the red bull sighed deeply and sat for a while absorbed in thought before replying: “Well, my dear young prince, hear my story. I, too, am a prince of the mighty kingdom of Ku-sha-ya. On my birthday my parents consulted soothsayers and astrologers who

predicted that, since I had been born with such an auspicious accumulation of merits, that there was not the slightest doubt of my becoming the universal ruler of this trichiliocosmos. But because Mara would put so many and such enormous obstacles in my path until I reached my fifteenth birthday, they recommended that until that date I stay, without ever seeing the sun or the sky, in a high and spacious palace hidden in a peaceful and secluded grove. There I was to be instructed in the five minor and five major sciences* by competent teachers, while servants, maids and others looked after my physical comforts. If their calculations and predictions were heeded, they claimed, no more pitfalls would obstruct my path to becoming a universal ruler after I turned fifteen. Following their advice, my father promptly ordered the immediate construction of such a palace in which I was reared with loving kindness.

I was almost fifteen years old, when suddenly one day as I lay dozing on my throne, I began to wonder from my rather limited perspective whether the size of what was called the human world wasn't identical with the room in which I lived. Suddenly my eyes were dazzled by a brilliant light that radiated from the ceiling. As I watched in astonishment, I saw four herons carrying down from an opening in the center of the spreading rays a jewel-encrusted throne on which a beautiful young goddess was seated.

“Dear son of a god, are you happy?” she asked. Upon my reply, “Now I am,” she joined me on my throne, while the herons, at a nod from her, flew up into the sky and vanished. But as we were delighting in all the pleasures and intimacies of a married couple, a heron swooped down out of the sky and whispered something into her ear. Sadly she told me: “Alas! My father has just discovered our affair; this will make it very difficult for the two of us to meet again, but since you are like a young god without compare, I rely on you to employ all your ingenuity to devise some stratagem that will bring us together again.” As her tears streamed down her cheeks like water from a fountain, the herons bore her back up into the sky. Again and again she looked back, waving her hands piteously until at last she disappeared from sight.

From that time on, my mind was assailed by ceaseless torment. Like an idiot I could neither remember nor plan ahead. At mealtime others had to feed me. I became so emaciated that for a year I hovered between life and death. My parents, the ministers and the common people were all weighed

down with grief for none of the medicines and religious rites were of any avail.

One day, as they were completely at a loss what else they might try, a famous merchant from our city returned from one of his trading ventures that had led him to visit many countries. During an audience with my parents and the ministers he reported: "In the great city of sBa-na in a far distant country there is a large lake. Once a year people from all parts of India go there by the thousands and ten thousands to bathe in it, and all their illnesses are cured. It would be good if our noble prince accompanied me on my next trip; he surely will be cured of his illness if he bathes in the lake. Please consider my advice carefully."

Since the nobles and their subjects were all in favour of the plan, the servants soon assembled everything necessary for my physical and spiritual well-being and loaded it on horses and mules. Every day, while I was travelling with the merchant, I practised swimming and deep breathing. I also received ablutions from priests until, after a six month's journey, I arrived at the city of which the merchant had spoken, and stayed there at the lake.

One day a self-propelled boat brought ashore a tall aged hermit from the center of the huge lake. With their hands folded devoutly all the people waited eagerly for him because of his saintly reputation. Everyone waiting there received an ablution from a pitcher he carried in his hand, but when he came where I was standing, he looked at me intently and with the words, "Wait here a while," he walked on without pouring me an ablution. After he had served everyone else he came back and told me to follow him to the boat. When there was no one left who wanted an ablution, the boat took us back to the center of the lake. There we entered a labyrinthine cave at the foot of a towering mountain. Here we stayed for two or three days merely dining on all kinds of fruit. At the end of that period the tall saint said to me: "You are deeply troubled and afflicted with a serious mental disturbance day and night. Take this bunch of keys, open each of the doors of the hundred caves here, go inside and look around."

I took the bunch of keys and, as instructed, I opened each door and looked around. In some of the caves there were a variety of gold statues. Others held wondrously worked silver and porcelain shrines and lustral ewers studded with turquoise, coral, pearls, onyx, sapphires, diamonds and rubies as well as an endless array of silk and brocade garments. All were of finer

workmanship than any human eye had ever seen. I had surveyed ninety-nine caves, when I noticed that I lacked the key to the last one.

Tired from my exploration I wandered about in a nearby orchard replete with all kinds of fruit trees. In one corner I sighted a man, so emaciated that he looked like a skeleton, shackled and hanging from a tree. Curious, I drew closer and noticed that he was barely alive. The thought that he might be a source of help made me very happy. As soon as I had cut him loose and taken him by the hand, he said: "Since I could not find someone to whom I might give this key, I had to hang here hovering between life and death. Please take this key right away." He had hardly finished speaking when he died. Overcome with grief I stayed there a while, weeping bitterly. Then I dug a pit and buried him. With the key in my hand I retraced my steps. Now I was able to open the door of the last cave I had seen earlier but not been able to open. Entering the cave, I discovered an enormous stack of books of different sizes. There were books on the ten sciences as well as a book on magic, filled with spells and incantations for summoning or dispersing gods, demons and men. I studied these and memorized one in particular. When I tested its efficacy I found that it worked immediately. So I put the book into my pocket and left.

It occurred to me to use one of the spells to return to my own country. Before I had finished reciting the spell the third time, a fierce storm arose. I fainted and when I regained consciousness I found I had been transported to this mansion. Servants hurried eagerly to serve me. As I was enjoying the food, tea, and beer they had offered me, I recited the spell for summoning any deity I liked from the realm of the gods. Immediately as the sky became as bright as a mirror and the earth was clear of dust, a figure, clad in the robes of the king of the gods, descended and asked courteously for my command. I charged him to bring the goddess Si-ti-na-wa instantly to me. He took my order and departed. That evening, just as the sun was about to set, four herons brought the goddess seated on a throne encrusted with gems. As soon as we were seated side by side on the throne, the herons flew up into the sky and disappeared. The goddess Si-ti-na-wa told me: "Now that you have acquired this precious book of spells that gives you power over all human beings in the inhabited world and all the gods and demons of the heavenly worlds, you must keep it constantly by your side as if it were your shadow and never let yourself be parted from it. Should it get lost, we can

never be united again.” We began to embrace and caress each other, enjoying ever greater amorous delights as the goddess lost her shyness.

Suddenly a loud voice that seemed to come from nowhere and everywhere thundered behind me: “It is a sacrilege to make love with the most precious book of spells in the world on your body.” Frightened, I took the book of spells out of my pocket and placed it down behind me. Instantly a terrifying demon grabbed the book and as he did so, the goddess vanished, too, who knows where.

Later two demons sprang up behind me and flung the book of spells violently back and forth between them before finally throwing it away. Although I was powerless to stop them, I cast a spell on the demon standing closest to me and turned him into a bull. That demon is now this red bull. By maltreating this bull I take my revenge on the demon for having deprived me of the goddess. From that time onward my mind was plunged into darkness and I began committing the vile crime of killing one person a month on what would otherwise have been an auspicious day and time. I was convinced that eventually a wiser person would deliver me from my villainy, that I might be reborn into the realm of bliss by seeing through my vile acts. This is the reason for my black deeds.”

Deeply moved and feeling almost overwhelmed with compassion, I said: “Since I understand your condition completely, your mind may be happy and at peace again.”

The prince of Ku-sha-ya, in turn, declared: “Since it is certain that your desire to win the princess Te-kha-no, a superior spiritually awake person, will be fulfilled, there is no need for you to worry.”

After I had packed some provisions for my return journey and put them on my shoulders, the prince of Ku-sha-ya and I touched our foreheads and took leave of each other.

I travelled far and wide through big cities and small villages, through forests and deserts, even to many islands. Though I came ever closer to the kingdom of Dzo-pad where I was again to meet the princess Te-kha-no, this superior spiritually awake person, it was still a long way and my provisions began to dwindle. Before I was able to reach my destination, they were all used up; my clothes were in tatters and I felt bitterly cold. Thus assaulted by cold and hunger, my strength gave out and I hovered between life and death. In my desperation that there was no way I could achieve my life’s aim and

only death seemed to be a way out, I climbed to the top of a high and steep mountain and was about to jump down into the ravine when an old man, whose hair was as white as a conch shell, grabbed me from behind and said: “There is no point in throwing away your life so foolishly. Go to Bung-bacan, an uncanny spot in the south, on the night of the fifteenth day of the month. There you will meet three other persons who have experienced as many misfortunes as you. When you have all sent up your prayers, your wishes will be fulfilled.” With these words he faded away like a rainbow.

Now I am here in my misery, having begged my way as I tramped along the road.

Chapter Three

An account of what happened when prince rDa-ma-pa-tra pursued a deer

As soon as the first two travellers who had come to Bung-ba-can, an eerie spot in an immense forest near a great kingdom in the south, had finished narrating their misfortunes, a handsome young man standing nearby spoke up: “I have been listening to your stories, now let me tell you mine. Please listen.”

I am the son of the king Ma-ni-ra-ta and his queen Ma-rdzi-sbi-na of the great kingdom rDa-ma in the east. Ever since I was a little boy I was interested in all kinds of sport. One day when I was eighteen I wanted to go hunting deer in an area of our country that was densely forested. After I had received permission from my parents, I set out for the jungle with fifty companions. All of us were armed with solid bows and arrows, small daggers, and spears. There were so many deer there that everyone in our group could chase any deer he liked best. I, too, chased a deer for a long time, until it ran away so fast that I could not see where it went. Instead, I spotted a musk deer and pursued it. After I had shot an arrow at it, it continued to run with the arrow in its side until it disappeared in the dense forest. When I looked around I could not see a single one of my companions. Since the sun, too, had almost disappeared from sight, it was impossible to tell whether I was going north, south, east or west, and so I wandered for a while blindly through the forest. At last I came to a wooden hut; in front of the door were traces of a fire. Entering the hut, I saw what looked like a goddess sitting on her throne with a radiant smile on her face and so beautiful that I could not take my eyes off her. Puzzled that she did not respond to my question where she had come from, I touched her and discovered that she was a clay statue. I stayed on in the hut for some time, undecided whether I should leave or where I should go. After a while an old, white-haired man appeared. I asked him: “What are you doing here? Why was this life-like statue of a beautiful woman erected here?” The old man stared at me with wide-open eyes and, having thought for a while, asked me: “From where have you come?” I told him: “I am the crown prince of the kingdom of rDa-ma. My name is rDa-ma-pa-tra. I came into this forest with fifty companions to hunt deer. But then, all of a sudden, I could not see anyone. As I was searching for them alone and lost in this forest I stumbled on this place. I don’t know whether I will ever get out of this for-

est. Please tell me honestly why you are living here alone?" The old man replied: "I was the chief trader in the capital of the country of Cin-kru'u and used to trade in many different kingdoms. Anyhow, I will tell you everything and conceal nothing. Six days and nights from here, there lies the kingdom of Ka-bi-ya. Its king Lag-no and his queen Yang-ka-ma have one daughter called Na-ju-ra. When I visited their country on a trading venture, the king and the queen and the princess saw that all my goods were of an especially fine quality. Since they did not simply pay for what they purchased but also helped me financially, I went there every year, bringing with me goods I had acquired in other countries. I did not even have to look for accommodation in an inn, but stayed at the palace. Their daughter Na-ju-ra was particularly kind to me. So one day I asked her whether there was some favour I might do for her. Princess Na-ju-ra replied: "I do have an errand for you. Will you be able to accomplish it? " I promised her that whatever she asked, I would accomplish. The princess then continued: "Listen carefully as I tell you what I want you to do. When you go down this valley, you will come to a huge park surrounded by many armed guards. Find out who is their captain. If you show him this letter of introduction he will let you into the park. In the western corner of the park you will find a man shackled and hanging from a big tree. Give him this letter and bring me his answer." With the promise to do so I left her. I handed the letter of introduction to the captain of the armed guards who let me enter the park. It was rather difficult to locate the man, but finally I found him tied up and hanging from a big willow tree at the corner of the park. When I went up to him and looked more closely, I saw that he had been hung up with a rope under his arms. At once I undid this rope and gave him the princess' letter. The man, reduced to skin and bones, was almost on the point of death. When he had read the letter, he exclaimed: "Now my ambition has been fulfilled in the best possible manner. This is the reason I have stayed alive till now. I thank you very much and pray that you may be happy and have success in all your dealings." With these words he gave me back the food basket I had brought and instantaneously passed from this world into the next. I was terribly afraid and did not know what to do. When at last I returned to the palace, I told the princess all what had happened. As her tears flowed profusely, princess Na-ju-ra declared: "The two of us can no longer stay in this country; we must escape into another one." She gave me some bags filled with silver and gold drachme to arrange for our escape and told me: "Purchase whatever we shall need for our flight. On the evening of the fifteenth day of this month we shall meet at Ho-ra-sa-gnas." As advised, I

bought horses, saddles, food, clothing, and other supplies and proceeded to Hor-ra-sa-gnas. Although I waited there as agreed upon, princess Na-ju-ra did not arrive on time. Much later I learned that the commander-in-chief of the army of that country had discovered everything: the letter and food I had brought to the man who had died in the park on behalf of the princess, as well as all the preparations I had made for her escape. He posted guards to make it impossible for the princess to meet anyone; he even sent some of his underlings to arrest me. After they had fettered me, he had me beaten mercilessly and thrown into a narrow prison cell. When the parents of the princess learned that I had been condemned to death, they commuted the death penalty into banishment. This is the reason why I have been living here in this forest. Lest I forget the favours the princess once showed me, now that I am old, I have erected this statue in memory of her past kindness. I shall spend the rest of my life here foraging for fruit and hunting deer.”

By now I was so captivated by the princess’ beauty, that I wanted to find out what was behind the story of the man hanging from the willow tree. I decided to visit her country. After travelling for about six days and nights I reached the outskirts of the capital. I rented a room at an inn where I spent the night. Early next morning I joined the crowd outside and asked for the whereabouts of the princess. The people told me that the commander-in-chief held her in a fortress-like palace he had built at the city limits. To further his ambition and vent his spite on her he made it impossible for anyone to contact her. In addition, he had stationed many armed guards around the fortress-like palace. Every ten days she would visit her parents, riding in a palanquin flanked by her bodyguards. On the designated day I waited beside the road that led from her fortress-like palace to her parents’ palace. After a while the princess arrived, sitting in a palanquin in the center of a cavalcade that seemed to flow along like a string of pearls. Before she arrived, however, a stern young officer, brandishing a long spear, cleared away the crowd blocking the road. I went up to him, knelt down before him and, hoping to make some enquiries, waited with bowed head. He stared at me, but did not say a single word and continued to clear away the crowd. I followed the officer to the palace. After he had escorted the princess inside, he came back out and, brandishing his spear at me, asked: “What are you doing here?” I knelt down in front of him and replied: “I am a prince from a distant kingdom. I have come here to see the face of the beautiful princess who is famous throughout the human world, and have a private audience with her. If I do not meet her,

my life is pointless. Therefore, oh great officer, look kindly on me, a humble supplicant, and help me to meet the princess. For pity's sake do not forsake me."

The officer was moved by my words and looked at me with compassion. "Wait here a while," he said. "Whether or not she will decide to meet you, I shall inform her of your desire." He went back inside the palace. A little later he returned and waved to me. I approached him and he led me inside where he seated me in the corner of a room and served me as much food and drink as I wanted. A young and charming maidservant came and told me to follow her. Gathering up my courage I followed her upstairs to the princess' private chamber. With a radiant smile on her face, the princess was sitting on a golden throne in the center of a room with four pillars and eight beams. The dour officer and all her maids left the room the moment she opened the audience by asking me: "Why did you come here and ask to see me? Tell me everything without holding back anything!"

Responding to her request, I began: "I am the crown prince of the great kingdom of rDa-ma to the east of here. Some time ago, after having obtained my parents' permission, I led fifty horsemen on a deer hunt into the jungle. During the hunt we became separated and I lost my way in the trackless forest. As I was wandering alone and lost, not knowing whether I was going north, south, east, or west, I came across an old man who was safeguarding a statue he had made of you and, on my asking him, told me a little of your history. As soon as I saw the statue of you, I was so enraptured by it that I decided to come here to meet you in person in order to learn the reason for your actions. Please enlighten me about your past and explain your motive."

The princess responded: "Yes, I shall tell you my story and explain my actions. Listen carefully. I am Na-ju-ra, the daughter of the king and the queen of this kingdom. My parents loved me dearly and I spent my youth happily. When I turned seventeen, the commander-in-chief of our armed forces approached my parents with the request that I should marry his son. To make sure of their consent he even planned to use his troops to kidnap me. Why, you may wonder, was I opposed to this man's idea? He was a tyrant with no respect for the law. He was a glutton who abused and tortured our people. He ignored the principle that all actions have consequences. He defiled whatever was good, turning white into black. He had no compunction whatsoever about killing another person. His son followed exactly in his footsteps as a

dog follows its master. He is a coarse, vulgar boor. Fleeing to another country seemed preferable to becoming the wife of such a man.

As I was deliberating how best to carry out my plan to escape, I remembered a young and brave hunter from one of the villages in our kingdom, who might help me and be my guide on our flight. I often invited him to the palace and continually showered presents on him until he came to trust me and agreed to do what I wanted.

Alas, our evil commander-in-chief learned of our friendship and his loyalty to me. So one day he captured the young hunter, threw him into prison and tortured him viciously before having him bound and hung from a tree lower down the valley. Since he was given nothing to eat or drink, he was on the point of death. As soon as I found out this state of affairs I regularly sent food and drink to keep him alive through one of the officers guarding him. But the restrictions grew ever more stringent until even that became impossible. When the commander-in-chief discovered that the merchant you met in the forest had given the hunter the letter I had written, he had him banished to another region. After having received my letter and eaten some food, the hunter passed from this world into the next. The commander-in-chief intensified his vigilance even more and put me under house arrest here in the corner of the palace, where I have been stuck to this day. Since you, a great prince who can muster forces from another country, have fallen in love with me, I depend on you to devise some means of escape for us that we may stay together. Were the evil commander-in-chief to find out about you, we both would be subject to a kind of persecution that neither of us would want. Once you have bought two horses with saddles and loaded them with provisions we shall live as fugitives. The mighty power of our karma binds us together inextricably.”

Obedying her instructions, I returned to the inn where I was staying and saddled and loaded the horses I had bought. At the appointed hour I waited by a side-door in the wall behind the palace. The princess came stealthily out of the side-door and we two set out together. We moved slowly since the princess had never been outside and felt uncomfortable in her heavy riding clothes. Before we had travelled half-way to our destination, it was already dawn and we grew terribly afraid of being pursued. Just then we noted that the door of an elegant house in front of us was standing open. Instantly we went inside. When we had gone up to the top storey, we were met by many servants who hastily wiped the tables before assiduously providing us with an

excellent meal. I was thoroughly amazed and I was sure that we had been granted this meal and refuge through the kindness of the Three Jewels. Hardly had we finished enjoying our meal, when there was a big commotion. When I looked outside through the corner of a framed window, I saw many people rushing about in all directions.

Abruptly the door which we had closed, flew open. Looking up I saw an old woman standing there peering around furtively. At that very moment, a formidable young soldier, holding a long spear in his hand and carrying a bow and arrow in his sash, smashed the lower door with a rock and mounted the stairs to the top storey. I was sure that the princess and I would be killed. Overcome with fear, we embraced each other and stood there waiting. To our surprise, the soldier bowed politely and with a smile on his face asked the princess whether the journey had tired her. He then begged her to relax and said: “Dear princess, I was once one of your royal father’s senior officers. It was the evil commander-chief who not only tormented you because of your fortitude, but also brought about the dismissal of many ministers and officers, all of whom he had flogged till they were unable to get up and stand by themselves. In their place he installed ignorant, incompetent, and downright stupid people. Crooks were given high offices. As a result, the kingdom deteriorated day by day and the populace was plunged into a dark pit of misery. I, too, had to eke out my livelihood by hunting. When I came here, I waited at some distance and when I saw that the door had been closed I knew that you had arrived and I felt very happy. The old woman you noticed had been tempted to risk her present and future lives by her greed for the five hundred gold drachme set on your head. I killed her on the spot and buried her in an underground pit. For now I invite the two of you to stay here for a few days while you relax and recover from the strain of your flight, before proceeding on your way. Till then I offer you my services out of gratitude for the benefits I have received from your noble parents, even if what I do for you might mean death for me.”

One day, a spy whom the officer had sent, came and reported: “Along the wall of the city armed guards have been stationed on a twenty-four hour alert. No news can get through.”

The officer (whose name was bTsan-dar) looked reassuringly at me and said: “I’ll find a way.” He took some gold and silver coins and went out of the house. After some time he returned and instructed us: “When night falls we must be ready to leave.” Shortly before midnight he had saddled the

horses on which the princess and I were to ride, while he himself, in full battle dress, rode on another horse. When we approached the northern gate, many soldiers were waiting in battle formation. The guardian of the gate (whose name was Ka-na-sbi) had previously been the commander of the bodyguards of the princess. Pretending to go into battle, he actually opened the gate. After the two officers, bTsan-dar and Ka-na-sbi, had fought a short mock battle, the guards' officer pursued us for a little while before bowing respectfully to the princess and turning back.

The three of us, the officer bTsan-dar, the princess and myself travelled for many days and nights, till at last we reached the border of my kingdom rDa-ma. From here I sent a special messenger with an express letter to my parents. Full of joy that their son was about to return, they ordered the ministers and the populace to make arrangements for our reception. Already two days before we were due to arrive, people lined the road as singers and dancers prepared to welcome us. Alas, the river Ban-da happened to be in spate. On the opposite banks the king and queen were waiting to receive us. As the three of us, the officer bTsan-dar, the princess and myself, began to ford the river, the officer's mare was suddenly caught in a whirlpool. When the foal, on which the princess was mounted, tried to follow its mother, they were all swept away by the current and lost. Full of despair and grief, I did not want to go back to my home country. Instead, I turned back into the forest and climbed a high mountain from which I was prepared to jump down into a ravine. Suddenly a hermit saint, whose hair was a white as a conch shell, grabbed me from behind and said: "There is no reason whatsoever for you to take your own life. The misfortune that has befallen you is an obstacle put in your way by Mara, the Evil One. Stay alive in the human world. There are three other persons like you in a secluded place, Bung-ba-can by name, in the forest of the great kingdom 'A-dza-du in the south. On the evening of the fifteenth day of the fourth month, together you will all meet the king 'A-dza-spa-ti, and when all four of you have told your misfortunes and life stories to each other, your desires will assuredly be fulfilled. You, too, must go there."

I took his words to heart, which is why I am waiting here now.

Chapter Four

An account of why a collar of jewels was placed round a fine dog's neck

Prologue:

There is no scale so small that its beam will not rise high when a heavy load is placed on it;

Those whose deeds are as wicked as the untamed wilderness from which they sprang cannot escape the weighing beam

That judges a life spent disregarding the connexion between cause and effect and defying the restraints of law and custom.

When you are old and sick, your flesh has withered and your mind is weak, all this is but the changing colors of the samsaric rotation of cause and effect.

Habitual deceit is the mark of the vulgar.

Discarding the good examples set by their parents, they harmed their younger brother.

Although a spider's web may be destroyed a hundred times, a hundred times it will be rebuilt:

Just so will the mean and dishonest end up in a cage.

When each of the three travellers had finished giving a complete account of his ancestry and his misfortunes, they asked with one voice: "Now that we have told each other our woes, where is the great king 'A-dza-spa-ti we were told to meet?"

Just then a tall man walked up from behind a huge tree. "Friends," he said, "you have come from far-away lands; I hope you did not encounter hardships on your way here. Now I entreat you to listen to my story."

I am 'A-dza-spa-ti, king of 'A-dza-du in the south of the inhabitable world, which I have ruled now for many years. My subjects have enjoyed all the benefits of harmony and prosperity. One day not too long ago my ministers and I took a break from our duties and visited a pleasure park. As I looked into a full-length mirror in a pavilion I realized that I had grown old and the noose of death was close at hand.

White hair is the chief emissary of the Lord of Death:
I grow sad at the thought that soon body and mind must part:
Mute and silent — a block of wood —
No longer the cheer of even a sip of tea or beer — one has become a
fish out of water, cast up on dry land.

Such thoughts filled me with great sadness. I returned to my palace thinking deeply about the best course to pursue since I had no son to continue my royal line. Summoning the wise elders from among the ministers and commoners, I told them: “Till now I have ruled this kingdom according to Buddhist tenets and the populace has been loyal to me and loved my rule. What more is there to say? But, now as I am getting on in years and the hair on my head has turned white, there is no one to continue the royal line. So now I want to consult with you how to find a way to acquire the son I desire, and ask you also to take any steps that are appropriate.” In response the ministers and commoners folded their hands respectfully and applauded my request with loud shouts of approval.

rBa'o-rud, one of the ministers, declared: “Since this is a matter of utmost importance for the prosperity and wellbeing of our kingdom, let us begin by preparing the proper religious rites, making lavish donations to the poor, and offering many prayers to propitiate the serpent spirits in order to do everything possible to bring about the birth of a prince.” Some of the other ministers and commoners suggested that a son would surely be born if the queen took a young man of noble birth. Others recommended inviting lamas, monks and saints from abroad and treating them with the greatest possible respect, letting them offer prayers, perform the proper rituals or retire in solitary meditation that might bring about the fulfilment of our hopes. After they had all presented their opinions on what ought to be done, I told them: “I have taken careful note of all that you have said. Therefore I now ask that the nobles honor and pray to the Three Jewels and make donations to the lamas and monks, while the commoners give generous alms to the poor so that our common desire may soon be fulfilled.” All of the assembled ministers and commoners promised to do as I had asked and left to go about their duties.

In due course the queen gave birth to a son after she had carried him in her womb for nine months and ten days. On that occasion there appeared in the sky a rainbow-colored canopy and there was a shower of blossoms; many different kinds of lovely flowers sprang out of the ground as auspicious

omens. The gods themselves came to bestow their favours and bathe the child. The whole populace rejoiced and sang songs of praise.

Now the prince has emerged from the womb,
Burning care and pressing worries have been put to rout.
May the little boy grow up without fear
So he will not be afraid of enemies swarming around like a pack of
foxes.

When complete and perfect service is required
There will be no problem as regards his good fortune and qualifica-
tions.

The grief and despair of childlessness has surrendered
To the joy that an incomparable warrior king has arrived.

The boy who has been born will perpetuate the prestige of his house
Like solid gold, not brass masquerading as gold.
Look how all the kinsmen and happy friends have gathered to rejoice
and how

The earth reverberates with the voices of the serpent spirits.

To preserve the power of this wonderful kingdom
May the mother's newborn babe strive diligently.

After a week had passed, custom decreed that it was time to go and bathe the prince in the Brahmaputra river. Many ministers and commoners gathered in a circle to watch as the prince was bathed to the accompaniment of drums, cymbals, conches, flutes, and other musical instruments. All on a sudden there was heard another sound of drums, big and small cymbals, guitars and flutes coming from deep within a rainbow that had appeared without warning in the sky, and many goddesses were seen showering flowers, like snowflakes blown about by the wind, on the prince before they suddenly lifted him and the cradle in which he was lying, up into the sky and vanished.

Though the ministers and commoners were deeply grieved and perturbed by the loss of the prince, all they could do was to return home sorrowfully and in deepest mourning.

A week later, at exactly the same time of day as the prince had been snatched up into the sky, a throng of goddesses appeared beneath a rainbow-colored canopy. One of them beckoned me to join her by the river-bank. When I went there accompanied by the ministers and commoners, we found a different cradle, decorated with precious stones, in which a divine child was fast asleep. Their joy knowing no bounds, the ministers and commoners of-

ferred their humble thanks with many prayers and carried the child with the cradle to the palace. For a week all was well until the queen and I went again to bathe the child. As before, there appeared a rainbow-colored canopy, the gods bathed the child and snatched him up into the sky before vanishing. For several weeks, gods and goddesses came and went this way, but then at length many months passed without a sign of them. Tormented by disappointment, I became quite demented.

One day I climbed all alone up to the top storey of the palace. Just as I was about to fling myself down from the roof, a hermit-saint in white robes grabbed me from behind and said: "There is no reason for you to jump off the roof. Soon, on the fifteenth day of the fourth month, you will meet three other persons who have suffered misfortunes like you. Go to the solitary place Bung-ba-can of 'A-dza-du in the south. Once you have told each other your misfortunes and prayed in unison, your fondest wishes will be granted." With these words he vanished like a rainbow in the sky.

After this encounter I spent my days at ease in my palace. One day, a merchant from one of the territories of my kingdom came to sell me some goods he had bought during his travels through India. I bought a diamond the size of a magpie's egg which I showed to my ministers. Every day I would open the lid of the box in which the diamond nestled and feel exceedingly happy as I looked at it again and again. One day as I was holding a durbar in the audience hall, Ti-ta, a minister of mine who had recently returned from home leave, came to pay me his respects.

With great delight I showed him my jewel, but the noble Ti-ta said: "Your Majesty, it is not seemly that you value this tiny gem so highly and constantly show it to everyone. Your Majesty may not believe this, but in the south, in the city of Dza-nan, there lives a merchant who owns a black dog with a collar round its neck on which there are seven priceless gems the size of a hen's egg. Were the people who live there to learn of your behaviour, would not you become an object of scorn?" Furious at this remark I retorted: "You are suggesting that you do not think my gem is good enough to put on a dog's neck? You are mocking me." With these words I ordered him to be thrown into prison for three years and added that, if at the end of the three years he could not explain why a dog wore a collar with seven gems around his neck, he was to be executed.

At that time, the minister's household included his wife, her older brother, and his young daughter Ka-si. Trying hard to present an untroubled front as they struggled to keep up their spirits, the minister's wife and her brother avoided telling the daughter how grave matters were, though she constantly asked why the father was in prison. Once her mother told her bluntly: "If you were a boy I would tell you, but since you are girl there is no point in doing so." Finally her uncle thought that, whether a girl could do something or not, there was no doubt that hiding the truth from her would only make her extremely despondent and so he explained to her: "Your father disparaged the king's gem by claiming that in the city of Dza-nan in the south a merchant had put a collar with seven much larger gems, each the size of a hen's egg, around his dog's neck. This is the crime for which your father has been put in prison."

The daughter responded: "My father is an honest man. I will find out why he made such a claim. Let me have appropriate gifts to take with me so that I can set out right away for the city of Dza-nan in the south to find the merchant who has put a collar with seven gems around his dog's neck." From her words her uncle gathered the impression that she would be content if he allowed her to go, whether her endeavour met with success or not – for does not the proverb say: "Either the little yak dies or he brings the white salt." He talked the matter over with her mother and together they decided to let her go to the city of Dza-nan in the south, disguised as a boy accompanied by muleteers guiding two trains of horses and mules.

After travelling for a month, they arrived at Dza-nan where they stayed at an inn. The next day the girl left the muleteers at the inn and went out by herself into the teeming streets to ask for the whereabouts of the merchant who had put a collar with seven gems around his dog's neck, but she did not find out anything. For three or four days she searched constantly before she learned that in one of the market places there was a large trading emporium where some hundred merchants lived. She went there and asked an old merchant: "Where does your noble patron live?"

"He lives in the big mansion opposite this building," he replied and, in turn, asked her: "Do you want to meet him?"

Since the girl said that such was indeed her wish and further asked him to point out the way, he himself escorted her there. When she entered the mansion she saw the merchant sitting on a chair studded with pearls. Although he was somewhat advanced in years, his face was smooth and his mien friendly.

After she had made her obeisance, the merchant asked: “Young man, what country have you come from and what is your business?”

She replied: “I have come from the kingdom of Dzo-pad. My father is now too old to go on trading ventures himself, so I have to do so myself. Since I have heard many reports of your generous aid to travellers from all over, I have come to ask for your kind help as I have no trading experience.”

The merchant’s face lit up as he said: “Set your mind at rest, my son. I shall be glad to offer you my services to help you sell your merchandise with no obligation. If you are staying at an inn, it would be best if you and your muleteers moved here since there are many bad characters in this city.”

The girl thanked him profusely. The next day she led her muleteers to the new place. The merchant looked after her with great care, offering her much help and even invited her to eat and drink with him. As time went by, the merchant became very fond of the girl. So one day he asked her: “Would it not be a good idea if you became my adopted son? I have no son myself. The two of us have grown close and as I have come to know you well, I thought that you are the sort of person who might like to become my adopted son. If this is indeed the case, I would hand my property over to you. What do you think?”

“You have been kinder than my natural parents,” replied the girl. “I would indeed like to be your adopted son as you suggest.” Overjoyed by her answer, the noble merchant handed her all his keys and gave her many valuable instructions on how to conduct her business.

For more than a year the girl devotedly served the merchant. One day she followed him when he went into the assembly hall. There, sitting on a throne, she saw a black dog wearing a collar studded with seven priceless gems, each the size of a hen’s egg, exactly as her father had described the situation. Two iron cages with a prisoner in each stood in front of it. The dog was served the choicest food, while the leftovers were fed to the wretched prisoners. Immediately she realized that she had found the answer to the mystery of why her father had been put in prison. Now it was time to find a way to return to her own home. Accordingly, one day she said to the merchant, “It is such a long time since I have come here that the worry whether I shall see my old parents again oppresses me day and night. But you have been kinder to me than my own parents, so I cannot bear to be separated from you. What can I do that I may feel happy again?”

“Since you have told me your true feelings,” responded the noble merchant, “I shall think about the problem and find a way.” The next day he said: “Your wish to go and see your parents again is a very important one. Leaving me here behind, however, is also not something to be taken lightly. To set both our minds at rest, I shall accompany you and do some trading myself. Besides, it is time you explained to your parents how you became my adopted son. Go and make the necessary arrangements for our journey; see to it that the servants ready the horses and mules as well as the merchandise we shall need.”

So many of the country’s great and small merchants entrusted the two with their goods that, when the time for their departure was announced, more than a hundred merchants with their servants accompanied them as they set out. The merchant took along with him his beloved and trusty dog, its throne, and the two prisoners inside their cages.

After travelling for more than a month, they reached the renowned kingdom of 'A-dza-du and spent the night on a meadow named Yangs-rgya-can. As the meadow was situated close to the girl’s home, she suggested to the merchant: “Let me go ahead and announce to my mother and uncle that a noble merchant has arrived, so that they may make arrangements for a proper reception the following day.”

As soon as he had assented, she went ahead to her father’s house. She asked her mother and uncle after her father’s health, and when they had assured her that he was well, she told them that she had brought with her the merchant and the dog with the collar with seven gems that her father had described. They were overjoyed at her news and said: “Although you are only a girl, you have carried out your task better than any man. You must invite this noble merchant to our house for tomorrow when we shall prepare a lavish banquet.” The girl spent the night in her old home describing her adventures to her mother and uncle.

At the same time as the girl returned to the meadow to invite the merchant to her parents’ house, I happened to climb up to the top storey of my palace. Looking around, I saw that the meadow was filled with a large gathering of people with smoke rising from many fires. Since I had no way of knowing whether they were merchants or an army, I summoned my ministers and ordered them to find out what was going on. When some of my officials went there to inquire, the merchant told them: “I have come here in

peace to trade. If the king is angry because so many traders and horses are camped on this meadow, I beg to offer my apologies.” My messengers reported back to me the exact words the merchant had said. However, when I heard that a dog wearing a collar with seven gems sat at the head of the merchant’s table and that in front of the dog there were two persons locked up in cages, I became furious again. I despatched one of my ministers and some more messengers with orders to bring the merchant, the dog, and the two cages holding the prisoners immediately before me. In defiance of the law that forbade man or beast to camp on my meadow, I charged, these people had consumed the grass, drunk the water, and run all over the meadow like a beggar afraid of a dog; and to top it all off they had made a travesty of justice and convention by venerating a dog as a god and putting human beings in cages.

The minister and a judge duly went to the merchant’s camp and, precisely as I had ordered them, brought all back to the assembly hall in my palace. After I had made the merchant kneel at my left, had the two cages with the prisoners inside placed in front of me, and the dog wearing a collar with seven gems sit to my right, I seated myself on my throne and commanded: “An immediate explanation, if you please: Why have you taken possession of a meadow that does not belong to you? Why are you meting out a punishment that flies in the face of convention? Why does the dog wear a collar with seven gems? Remember, if you do not have a convincing explanation, you will be executed.”

The merchant folded his hands deferentially and kept his head touching the ground, but he was unable to utter a word. I turned to the young man and ordered him to state his case. He bowed thrice to me before he knelt and began: “Your Majesty, pray listen to me. I am the daughter of Your Majesty’s subject, the noble minister Ti-ta.” As the speaker mentioned the word “daughter,” the merchant jumped up in shock and stood there stunned with his eyes staring wildly. The girl continued: “Because my father dared to say that there was a merchant in the country of Dza-nan who had a dog that wore a collar with seven gems, each the size of a hen’s egg, when he saw you setting such store by the little gem in your possession, you had him imprisoned for three years with the threat of execution at the end if no one produced a reason for his claim. I investigated the matter thoroughly and I have brought the merchant and the dog with the collar with seven gems as evidence for the truth of my father’s claim. I beseech Your Majesty to set my

father free.” With these words the girl stripped off her man’s robe and stood there elegantly clad like a lady. I was so amazed that at first I could not say a word, but at last I managed to say: “Well, to be sure, quite so,” and asked the merchant to explain frankly why he had acted the way he had.

The merchant began: “Since my life is at stake, I have no choice but to reveal everything. Your Majesty, I am a man who was cheated by relatives whom I loved. I come from the city of Dza-nan and on my father’s side I am descended from a long line of merchants. My name is Sag-sba-ra-si and I am the youngest of three brothers. The two men you see before you are my older brothers; they are in these cages because they misappropriated and squandered all the wealth my parents had amassed, by drinking, gambling, and doing nothing but roaming about day and night like dissolute vagabonds. I did not lightly disregard the claims of kinship: I did my best to serve and obey them dutifully, but all I got for my pains were curses and blows that day by day grew more vicious. In barely a year they had wasted all the wealth my parents had saved by their riotous living. They never did a stroke of work, but accused me, who did all the work, of being useless and fit for nothing. Again and again they told me that I had no claim to the estate, not even one as small as a sesame seed. Rather, I should remove myself from our parents’ house if I knew what was good for me. I knelt before them and implored them with tears in my eyes not to go ahead with such a cruel plan that went against anything decent and merely promoted evil and its consequences. I promised them that, since the three of us were all children of the same parents, I would continue to serve them by kindling the fire, fetching the water, and doing the cooking. Arrogantly and callously they retorted: “Even if you shed tears of blood, the two of us just won’t listen to you!” Then they thrashed me severely and threw me out of the house. There was nothing left for me but to leave for good.

A black dog that had belonged to my parents followed me. While I sustained myself by begging, we two, the dog and myself, stayed in a ramshackle hovel. Several months went by in this way and I grew curious what my older brothers might be up to. So I made some discreet enquiries. They had, I learnt, consorted with crooks, frequented all the brothels in town, and amused themselves with gambling and drinking. In no time at all, they had to sell our parents’ house to total strangers, but the money they received they squandered on more vices. When I approached them and asked whether the report

about their lifestyle was true, they did not reply and with bowed heads crept away in shame.

Sag-sba-ra-si continued his story: “While I was working as a humble washerman, some of the town’s people took pity on me and suggested: “Might it not be a good idea for you to earn your livelihood by engaging in a trading venture? If you don’t have the capital, we can help by each of us contributing a small sum.”

“If this were indeed possible,” I replied, “it would be splendid, and I would deeply appreciate it.” Taking the capital they had collected as a loan, I started trading and had such good fortune that within one year I was able to pay off the loan and even set up a small trading post. I got married and lived in modest comfort. While I was out shopping one day, I saw a large crowd gathered in the market place. Curious, I joined the crowd to see what was going on. A man was thrashing two men he had caught and shouting: “If you return me my money immediately, I won’t say anything, otherwise I shall take you to court!” Pressing closer, I saw that the two men were my older brothers. Unable to bear such a sight, I asked the man who was beating my brothers: “What have they done?”

The man replied: “These two borrowed money from me quite some time ago and they have still not returned it. Only today have I finally been able to find them after searching for them everywhere. I am determined not to let them go.”

When I offered to pay him what they owed him if he would let them go, he looked at me sharply before saying: “If you are willing and able to stand surety, I shall let them go.”

Together we went to my house and I paid off my brothers’ debts. I then invited my two brothers to regard my house as their home, supplied them with food and drink and even provided them with good clothes so that they could again live well and happily. One day, however, they confronted me: “Unless the two of us engage right away in a bit of trading, we will just be an endless burden on you. Please advance us some capital and send us out on a trading venture. We have abjured our previous ways and from now on we intend to lead virtuous and productive lives. We would be ever so grateful for your help.”

“If what you say is indeed the case,” I replied, “I shall be glad to help you, for are we not children of the same parents?” After advancing them

some capital, I entrusted them to the care of some other merchants and sped them on their way with all good wishes. Some months later the merchants were to return. Sure that my brothers would be with them, I sent my wife one month's journey ahead to meet and welcome them on their arrival. One by one all the merchants arrived, but my brothers were not with them. On the last day of the month my wife asked the merchants what had become of my two brothers. "As soon as those two had left this country," the merchants informed her, "they did not engage in any trading. They just roamed about carousing and enjoying themselves carelessly and aimlessly; we have no idea where they went once they had used up their capital."

Though my wife reported all this to me when she returned, I could not put the fact out of my mind that those two were my closest relatives and that somehow I ought to save them from the misery that pervades the human world. Taking some merchandise to trade, I and my wife travelled to the capital of the country where they had gone. There I spent many days searching for them in vain and I became very despondent. One day, two men dressed in rags and carrying a heavy load appeared out of a side-street. When I approached them to look at them more closely, I realized that they were my two older brothers. They shed copious tears as if they were ashamed. Out of the goodness of my heart I led them to an inn where I provided them with new clothes so that they looked respectable once again. I converted my capital into the local currency and we lived together for quite some time.

One night, as my wife and I were sleeping, my brothers seized a dagger, a rock, and whatever other weapons they could lay hold of, and, without provocation, murdered my wife and wounded me badly. No one came to my aid except this dog who saved me from certain death by leaping furiously on my brothers and biting them ferociously with its teeth. Nobody can match this dog's devotion to me. My two brothers snatched up all the valuables they could carry and disappeared. Although kind neighbors nursed me back to health and gave me food and clothes, nothing could change the fact that my wife had been murdered. Since the dog had also been hurt so badly by a dagger thrust into him that he could not move, we were left stranded for many days in that country.

Tears of grief ran down the merchant's face as he recounted his harrowing tale of hardships and misery. He paused saying: "For the truth of my account, just ask these two here!" The two lowered their heads, but did not say a word.

The merchant resumed his tale. “When the dog and I had recovered, I bought a few surplus goods and went back to trading. Luck favoured me. I invested in as much merchandise as possible and set sail for a small island in order to do some trading there. Since the harbor was large, there were many dock-workers to haul in the ships and tie them to the piers. As I looked around among them, I saw my two brothers in the throng. When I walked up to them, they stood there with bowed heads and did not say a word. I addressed them: “Till now I have suffered no end of grief from your villainous conduct. Do you think that it is possible for me to have still some kindly feelings for you?” The two pleaded: “So far we have dismissed all thoughts about actions having consequences; we have broken all laws. Petty self-indulgence and greed led us to commit crimes that endangered the life of our younger brother. From now on, however, we will respect the rules governing actions and their consequences. We shall bear in mind our younger brother’s kindness and serve him diligently. Do please take us with you.”

I hoped that this time their deeds would match their words and told them that I would think seriously about the matter. Since we were all children of the same parents, it seemed to me that I should not hold their former misdeeds against them, and so I again took the two with me. I gave them new clothes and had their hair trimmed. For several months we travelled by ship. During that time their behaviour was entirely different from what it had been before. They treated me with loving respect and were eager to be helpful. They even claimed that their younger brother’s conduct was truly that of a superior being and ought to be emulated, and so we voyaged together amicably.

One day, the older of the two leaned over the railing of the ship and peered into the ocean. Seeing a host of strange creatures, he called us to come and have a look. The younger did so and exclaimed: “Just look at all the strange beasts! This ocean is just teeming with odd creatures.” When I also leaned over to look, the two seized me by my feet and heaved me overboard. Although I paddled frantically, the ship speeded farther and farther away from me. Suddenly my hand felt something hairy and soggy rise out of the ocean. As I looked closer, I saw that my dog was stretching out its tail to me; in an attempt to save me, he had jumped overboard at the same moment I was thrown in. Gratefully I grabbed his tail firmly and for more than an hour we swam together until at last we were able to climb ashore on a deserted beach. I was so weary and hungry that I fell asleep for a long time.

When I woke up I saw a large city teeming with people in the distance, and with my dog I staggered toward it. We went to the market place to beg for food, but hardly anyone was willing to give us a morsel. There in the crowd I saw my brothers clad in elegant robes. I went up to them at once to embrace them for I could not suppress my loyalty to my kinsmen, and I implored them: "I am about to die of hunger! The two of you are my closest relatives, so please think of me kindly and offer me some compassion and a little help."

At first the two were utterly amazed that I had survived and landed here after they had thrown me overboard, but they soon recovered from their shock and, in their anger at my still being alive, they shouted: "A thief, a nasty thief has come here," and pelting me with stones dragged me to court. The judge, whom they had bribed heavily, took their side and I, an innocent man, was thrown into prison for more than a month on a trumped up charge about which I could not do anything. For all that time, my dog dauntlessly stole bread from the market place and pushed it through a crack in the door with its nose so I would not starve. This dog cared for me with greater devotion than my own parents.

In return for the lavish and tempting bribes my two older brothers had given him, the judge decreed: "Decent people cannot live if criminals like this one are not exterminated. He must be executed!"

The next day a group of people came to the prison and unlocked the door to the sound of drums and cymbals. As I was wondering what this might portend, I was fettered and dragged into court.

The judge proclaimed: "This criminal has not only stolen all his brothers' property, he has killed wild yaks to set up their tails as prayer flags, and he followed his two brothers to this country in order to murder them. These crimes are so heinous that the court, after careful deliberation, has decided that the perpetrator must be executed. This verdict must be carried out at once." Immediately a placard with the verdict was fastened to my back and I was led through the crowd in the courthouse to the execution site. Just as everything was ready for my execution, a detachment of ten cavalry officers suddenly appeared shouting: "All sentences must be stayed immediately! The king," they told the judge, "has today suddenly been struck with a severe illness and has declared a general pardon for all criminals. This man must be released at once." This general amnesty allowed me to go free.

When my two older brothers found out that I had been released from prison, they ganged up with some ruffians and harassed me wherever I went. One day, as I was begging with my dog for food, they called me: “Come here!” As soon as I approached them, they seized me and threw me back into prison. Once again the dog did everything he could to ingratiate himself with the gaolers by nudging their hands and licking their feet, but all he got were beatings. As before he stole bread in the market place and brought it to me. Each time he went to the market place to purloin some food he was beaten by the people and attacked by other dogs so that his whole body was covered with wounds.

Hearing and understanding make humans the highest beings;
Beasts have only their limbs and so are called the lowest.
Should one not revile the rotten and evil
Whose conduct is beneath an animal’s?

While I was in prison, my brothers continued to press false charges against me. With the money they had stolen from me, they offered the judge even bigger bribes. One night, they came to the prison, fettered me and took me to the top of a high mountain. There they made me stand on the brim of a deep pit and tied a rope around my waist. As soon as they had lowered me down into the pit, they cut the rope with a knife and left.

The pit was pitch-dark; wherever I groped with my hands I encountered nothing but bones. Each day my dog continued to steal bread for me in the market and toss it down to me. Every night I heard the clatter of hooves as a mysterious rider let down some food by a rope. In the meantime, my dog had made friends with a woman who came to the market to fetch water by tugging playfully at the hem of her robe. One day, when the dog had again stolen some bread, she followed it up the mountain. Looking down into the pit, she saw this wretched person who had been thrown into it. Overcome with pity she regularly lowered bread and water into the pit.

Around midnight I again heard the clatter of hooves and a long rope was lowered down by the mysterious rider with the command: “Tie this rope around your waist and come up.”

Sure that this event was a manifestation of the power of the inexorable connexion between deeds and their consequences, I tied the rope around my waist. With the cry: “May my supreme inner mentor¹ and the Three Jewels help me!” I rapidly climbed up and out of the pit.

As soon as I was on firm ground, the mysterious rider, who had brought along another saddled horse, commanded me: "Mount this horse and come!"

Immediately I mounted the horse and followed the mysterious rider. My dog, too, ran alongside. We rode on and on till dawn. Then my rescuer removed the veil and looked at me. She was such a beautiful young lady that I could not get my fill of gazing at her. However, her face became suffused with rage as she looked at me and she drew the long sword by her side. When she was about to strike, I dropped from my horse and knelt before her. Folding my hands reverently I said: "You have saved my life, so it is now yours to do with as you wish since whatever karma one has accumulated cannot be altered."

The young lady stood there pondering for a while before replying: "You are not the man I was looking for. He was a good friend of mine, and only recently he was thrown into the pit. But since our meeting today is the result of the inexorable force of karma, we have no choice but to stay together. My parents were inflexibly set on marrying me to a prince. Since this proposal did not appeal to me at all, my only option was to run away from home and escape to another country. You must bear this in mind as you make everything ready for our flight."

"Tell me," I asked her, "all about the other man you mentioned and wanted to rescue from this pit."

"I will tell you," she replied, "but it is already morning. If I do not return home in time, there will be serious trouble." She took some bread out of her pocket and gave it to me with these words: "I shall be back sometime tonight. Meanwhile take care of my horse and wait for me in the forest over there."

After the dog and I had satisfied our hunger by eating her bread, I tethered the horse in a clearing where it could munch as much grass as it liked, and settled down to wait. Around midnight the young lady rode up with another loaded horse in tow. As we ate, she explained: "I am the daughter of the king of this country. Ever since I was a little girl, I enjoyed learning the martial arts, particularly the use of spears and arrows. In our kingdom there lived the son of a small merchant who was so proficient in all the martial arts that none could beat him. For this reason I took many lessons from him and we became intimate friends. Since we were constantly in each other's company, someone hinted to my parents that this man was planning to marry me.

Enraged, my parents locked him up in prison for a long time before condemning him to death by having him thrown into the same pit into which you had been thrown. At that point I would go there secretly at night every three days with enough food to last three days. Now, when I at last had the chance to pull him out of the pit so that we might escape to another country, it is you who fell into my hands. As there is no way of reversing the inexorable force of accumulated karma, how can we resist our fate? For better or worse we must elope together.”

We quickly mounted our horses. I set the dog on my lap and together we rode for many days across mountains and rivers till we reached the city of Dza-nan. When we unpacked the young lady’s baggage, we discovered lots of gold, silver, and priceless jewels, all of which we sold to acquire the capital to set ourselves up as traders. We were successful and, in due course, we travelled to other countries for more extensive trading ventures. We lived happily together as husband and wife; our joy increased day by day.

One day, my wife whose name was sBa-rag-ta, said to me: “It has been a long time since we have come here and we have not taken a single holiday. Why don’t we go hunting deer tomorrow?”

“That sounds fine,” I replied and went to ready the horses and weapons. We arose early next morning and, after we had ridden a considerable distance, around noon we encountered a merchant accompanied by many horses, mules, and servants. As I looked closely at the two men shuffling behind this caravan, I recognized them as my two older brothers. Although anger welled up in me as I remembered all the misery they had caused me by their dissolute way of life, I could not help feeling some stirrings of pity at their present state. So I asked them: “What are you doing here?”

Lowering their heads and weeping, the two stood there remaining silent. I again asked them: “Why are you travelling in this country?”

“We are that merchant’s grooms,” they answered, “but hunger has robbed us of all our strength. He holds us in such contempt that he gives us neither enough food to fill our bellies nor decent clothes to dress ourselves. We are too exhausted to walk any further; all we can do is to lie down and die here. The evil thoughts and deeds we have perpetrated against you have come back to us in the full circle of samsara. Though there is nothing left for us but to work as slaves, that is still better than dying.”

I thought that my brothers' attitude by now had been so humbled that no harm would come from taking them along with us. Along the way I told them earnestly and repeatedly how they should lead better lives henceforth. We travelled together in this way till we stopped for lunch in a lonely valley. My brothers' evil propensities, however, had not changed in the slightest. They grabbed my long sword and stabbed me more than thirty times all over my body before abandoning me on the point of death in that deserted spot. Ruthlessly they drove away my wife whom I have never found again. Before running away, they stole all my horses and weapons. No one remained to help me except this dog who licked the blood from my wounds.

Much later in the day, a group of ten women riders suddenly appeared. Their leader, the beautiful daughter of a merchant, held in one hand a dagger and in the other a bow and arrows. "Look," she cried, "there lies a man with a dog!"

Some of her attendants dismounted and came up to me. After they had given me some water to drink, I gradually revived. Tenderly they transported me back with them and tended my wounds. When they asked me how I had come to be in such dire straits, I told them the exact cause of my misfortunes, and they redoubled their care of me. So I stayed with them for some time, but, finally, Ra-ma-na, the merchant's daughter who had brought me back to life, said to me: "The time has come for you to live happily again and to return to your own country. As a token of our esteem we want to make you a present of the provisions you will need on your journey." After many protestations I accepted the goods and, with many thanks, returned to the country of sPa-car and made my home there. I married again and the three of us, my wife, the dog, and I lived together happily.

One day, as I was taking a stroll in front of our house, I saw a man and woman walking along the highway toward me. When they stopped at the door of my house, they asked for water as they had been travelling a long time without finding any. I invited them in and, after I had offered them some food and drink, I asked: "Do you have anything to sell?"

Replying that they had many jewels for sale, they pulled large and small gems out of their bags. Curious, I asked: "Where did you get so many priceless jewels?"

"It's a very complicated story," they replied, "but we shall tell you in appreciation of your kindness."

“My name,” the man began, “is Di-ta. Having left my home country, I came to the country of Ka-ling. There I married a lovely woman, but she was struck down by a fatal illness. When she lost her hold on life, the inhabitants of that country informed me: “It is the custom of our country to inter the surviving partner of a married couple in the mausoleum along with the deceased. A high wall surrounds the mausoleum. Once the gate is shut, there is no way of getting in or out.”

Escorted by the sound of a band of flutes, conches, drums, and cymbals, my wife’s corpse was borne to the mausoleum and I, too, trembling with fear and terror, was led there in accordance with this dire custom. As I entered the mausoleum I saw that it was entirely filled with coffins. A dead body was slumped over each coffin. The cortège of friends and relatives set down my wife’s coffin among the other coffins. “Soon,” they said, “you will go to bDe-ba-can, the abode of bliss. Till then stay calm and concentrate your mind on happy thoughts.” With these words they left, and the heavy iron gate clanged shut.

After they had gone, I combed through my wife’s coffin and discovered enough food to last me for forty days.

One day, after I had used up the food and was preparing myself for my own death, I heard the wail of conches and the clash of cymbals and drums draw near. Watching from my hideout in a corner of the mausoleum, I saw bearers bring in a coffin and an old woman of about seventy before going back out. Immediately I rummaged the coffins near me for a hatchet. As soon as I had found one, I killed the old woman by hitting her over the head and extracted the forty days’ supply of food from the coffin and deposited it in the far corner of the mausoleum where I had stacked some coffins to form a snug shelter. Water trickling in from a culvert quenched my thirst. Though my situation was not too bad as far as my physical needs were concerned, my mind was tormented, and day by day I grew thinner and thinner. Routinely I killed any person brought in with each new coffin, and in this way I eked out my existence for more than a year.

One day, the undertakers had deposited yet another coffin and the surviving spouse. While the sound of clashing cymbals and drums still filled the air, I took my hatchet and went to kill the person who was leaning over the coffin, lamenting bitterly. As I pulled the person up to strike the fatal blow, I saw that this person was a beautiful young woman. I sheathed my hatchet in

my waistband and said: “There is no need to be afraid! Come with me.” Taking her by the hand, I led her to my cabin built of coffins. I removed the food that had been brought in the coffin and made her my wife. This is the woman who is with me here now.

I continued to scour countless coffins for their contents. In the coffins of high-ranking persons like military commanders and renowned merchants, were priceless gems. The very finest I took and put in these little bags I have brought here with me.

In due course the woman gave birth to a child. We were greatly worried and discussed what we should do. Though our way of living was adequate for our needs, it was out of the question for a child. Given the local custom, we could not return to the capital and live there safely. One night, as we were debating the matter back and forth, I heard the sound of a rat scrambling nearby. I followed the sound and discovered that the rat had squeezed through a small hole under the far end of the wall. Next day I took a pick and a hammer I had found in one of the coffins and began widening the opening in the wall that was ten feet thick. Two months later I had created a hole just large enough for a person to squeeze through. We hid the precious gems inside our robes and, carrying the child on our backs, we wandered through many forests. When we ran out of the food we had brought along, we picked fruit from the trees and drank water from the streams. Now that we have met you here today, we want to show you the gems so that you can examine their quality.”

Since they offered to sell these priceless gems, I bought seven to put on the collar round the neck of this dog — the protector of my life.

I helped the couple to the best of my ability; I petitioned the magistrate on their behalf. I introduced them to the captain of my ship, for we had decided that together with my dog we all would sail to my own country. As I was unloading my goods from the ship after a few days journey, I met my two older brothers yet again. They had grown very thin, their hair was matted, they were dressed in nothing but tattered loin-cloths, and they were working as lowly stevedores. “Sooner or later your evil deeds were to catch up with you; are you satisfied now?” I asked them.

Lowering their heads, the two replied: “The two of us are more miserable than the lowest beasts. We are like criminals in the hands of an angry executioner since we disregarded the principle of the direct relationship between

one's actions and their consequences. You have a refined and radiant mind, your conduct is as noble as that of superior beings. In the past we always thought words of apology were enough to avoid invidious consequences, but now we realize that retribution is real and painful. Our plight is such that we don't know whether we will live or die. Do not forsake us, take us back with the compassion of a truly noble mind."

Although I did not forget all the trouble and grief these two had caused me, I thought that, as they had suffered a lot, perhaps their attitudes had been sufficiently humbled, and said: "Forget about your past misdeeds. Turn your thoughts to higher ends and come with me. I will do all I can to keep your thoughts on what is good and noble. Be happy again. Since the happiness of each of us is assured if there is no envy, let us henceforth put our minds together so that we may all strive for fame and success in this world and the next."

My two older brothers eagerly accepted my proposal and promised that, even if they were not to become superior beings in their own right, they would serve me selflessly.

The music of sweet words can deceive the mind,
But treachery, like a sharp razor, slices the belly:
Whoever believes in returning evil for good,
Will find no buyers, no matter where he goes.

I took the two along and provided them with fine food and decent clothes. For a while we were happy and lived in a relaxed manner. But one night, at about midnight, the two entered the room where I slept. When they were about to kill me, this dog leapt at them, bit them, and barked loudly. Having taken in the situation, my servants fettered the two and led them before me. By now I had had enough of them and, in order to demonstrate the difference between evil humans and a good dog, I put these two into two iron cages and placed them in front of the dog. I seated the dog on a throne and gave it the choicest food. Not knowing what else I might give it in appreciation, I placed these seven jewels, each as big as a hen's egg, on the collar round its neck. This has been the sole reason of my action. I have had no other intention."

As he finished speaking, Sag-sba-ra-si dropped his garments so that I, the king, could see with my own eyes that on his body there were more than thirty scars. After he had put his clothes back on again, he said:

The precepts handed down by our ancestors I have respectfully obeyed and

To the best of his ability each descendant has engaged only in honorable trade.

But now — once our parents were dead —

Look at my older brothers' callous acts and greed.

Born with the potential a human body, so hard to attain, presents,

They have been concerned with naught but their pleasure;

They feel no shame that, once their corpses have been buried deep down in the earth,

The stench of their foul reputation will pollute the world.

The conduct of evil persons emulating evil evil-doers

Burns cracklingly like fire to which fuel is added;

Any attempt to check deeds that defy the connectedness of cause and effect and contravene the law of the land

Is as ineffectual as preventing a moth from flying into a flame.

Like brightly colored tethers preventing an unbroken horse from running away into the mountains,

Custody is required to keep these evil-doers from roaming far and wide.

The distinction between right and wrong must not be obliterated.

May the great king dispense justice like Brahmā.

With tears streaming down his face, he continued: "I am deeply grieved and utterly confounded. This young woman masqueraded as a man and brought me here by deceit to defend myself. This premeditated act of bringing me into the king's court here, is beyond my understanding."

"Sag-sba-ra-si," I said, "your previous and later actions were in accord with the unbreakable bond that exists between one's actions and their consequences and the laudable customs of previous generations in this world. Since I honor and admire you greatly for this, I invite you to stay here for a few months. This young woman has not deceived you, so there is no reason to feel hurt. The purpose of her action was to discover the truth. Since this is a praiseworthy endeavour, I decree that she remain your 'adopted son' as you had wanted. The false charges against her father, who is an innocent man, are being dropped this very moment. As soon as he has recovered from his ordeal, I shall install him in his previous office. As for these two criminals who have made a travesty of human behaviour by turning black white and white black, their deeds shall be made public throughout my kingdom, and

they shall be kept in these cages for the rest of their lives as you intended.
Hear and take heed.”

This concludes the story of my life.

Chapter Five

An account of how success is achieved through hardship

King 'A-dza-spa-ti of the great kingdom 'A-dza-du and the three travellers spent all night with recounting their adventures. In the morning, when the red glow from the bright sun turned the earth the color of coral, the great king 'A-dza-spa-ti said: “The three of you and I have met in this place as foretold; now let us return to my palace to rest and restore ourselves by observing dedication ceremonies, attending prayer sessions, distributing generous charitable gifts, and performing virtuous deeds. Let us go together, since the saintly hermit predicted that our wishes would be granted.”

While they were talking, the king's household discovered that their king, who had left the palace secretly the night before, was nowhere to be found. When they had searched frantically to no avail, they grew very perturbed and shouted wildly. Suddenly they saw the king approaching in the company of three other persons. Overjoyed they greeted the king and his guests reverently before conducting them into the large upper hall of the palace.

For two weeks lavish receptions were held for the three travellers. During this time vast burnings of incense rose like clouds floating in the sky, butter lamps were lit in an endeavour to enhance bright and wholesome actions, lavish donations were made to the poor, and silken flags were raised, while the solemn and virtuous rites of propitiating the gods and the serpent deities were performed. On the morning of the thirtieth day of the month, when all the stars and planets were in their most favourable positions, king 'A-dza-spa-ti, accompanied by the three travellers, sat down in the assembly hall on his golden throne studded with precious stones. In the center of the hall stood a statue, made of precious stones, of the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world¹ in his elegant posture of ease, wearing earrings and silken shawls. To the right and left of this statue were seated the spiritual mentors, monks, and hermit-saints,² and behind them the queen and the higher and lower ranks of ministers, all in strict order of precedence. As soon as the religious college students started to beat their various kinds of drums, the king and the queen and the three travellers recited this invocation in unison:

Knowing best, knowing best, — Lord of the World who knowest
best!

Let us speak, let us speak, — let us speak this word of truth!

We are tired, we are tired, — we are tired of our suffering;
Shelter us, shelter us, — shelter us from the terrors of samsara;

We are muddled, we are muddled, — we are muddled in our minds
these many years;

Be good to us, be good to us, — be good to us, oh hermit-saint;

We have gathered, we have gathered, — we have gathered, four suf-
fering persons;

Lead us on, lead us on, — lead us on to the realms of truth;

Look at us, look at us, — look at us with loving eyes;

Think of us, think of us, — think of the needs of living beings;

Forget us not, forget us not, — do not forget your task of protecting
us;

Do something, do something, — do shake the very abyss of samsara;

Remove, remove, — remove completely the belief in an ego/self;

Make us realize, make us realize, — make us realize spiritual awareness
in this life;

Let mature, let mature, — let mature the fruit of the three fore-struc-
tures (of our embodied being).

While they were intoning their invocation, a brilliant five-colored rainbow suddenly appeared in the clear sky and touched the highest point of the king's palace. On the path formed by the rainbow many gods and goddesses appeared, scattering flowers like many thousand colorful butterflies drifting in a gentle breeze. To the sweet strains of music made by an ensemble of cymbals, drums, stringed instruments and flutes, a beautiful girl, holding aloft an assortment of offerings that surpassed the imagination, was borne on a palanquin supported by four herons. When she stepped onto the ground, which became covered with lotus petals, she greeted the king and his entourage courteously and placed the offerings between the four herons at the four corners of the stately golden throne. Then she rose back up into the sky above the rows of gods and goddesses, higher and higher until she disappeared from sight.

When she reached the realms of the gods in the higher regions of the universe, the entire scenery was transformed and suffused with such brilliant light that the eyes could hardly bear the dazzling lustre. In this lustrous landscape the trees were full of tasty and nutritious fruits, ready to be picked; in the pleasure groves flowers in full bloom spread their fragrance far and wide; sparkling little streams meandered gently downhill; many kinds of deer

roamed freely in utter delight and joy through their sanctuaries; cuckoos and other song birds flitted from branch to branch, ceaselessly singing their melodious songs. Countless gods and goddesses, decked in their finest costumes and accoutrements, held flower bouquets in their hands as they waited to the right and left of the magnificent gate to the timeless and changeless palace of the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world, to lead the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world out of the throng of people into the interior of the palace. There the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world, resplendent with all the major and minor physical, symbolically expressive marks, seated himself on a golden throne, encrusted with priceless gems, in the center of an exquisite shrine room that was decorated with finely crafted screens and railings. To his left, king 'A-dza-spa-ti's little son who had been taken into the realm of the gods by the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world himself, sat on a golden throne. On another golden throne next to it, sat the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world's pretty little daughter; the two children were playfully entertaining each other. To their right and left there were four more thrones. King 'A-dza-spa-ti sat on a higher throne, while the two princes and the merchant's son each sat on a lower throne. The hands of all were respectfully folded in obeisance to the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world.

His mind filled with deep compassion, the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world began to explain, with a gentle smile on his face and in a sonorous voice, how their previous karma was the cause of each of their misfortunes and why each would realize his innermost desire:

“Your tale, oh king 'A-dza-spa-ti, has been self-explicatory and so I shall start with an explication of the story of Ka-ti, the son of the great merchant Ra-ti. In a previous existence you were the son of a demon, but once you were reborn into the world of humans, you thoroughly renounced, to this very day, actions that would hurt or injure others. Although you did indeed suffer great hardships when you were starving, you were saved by the love, compassion, and family loyalty of your older sister rDzi-na who had not excluded you from her heart when she became the queen of the kingdom of Ru-ta. However, since you did not wish to live out your life as someone else's dependant, you most laudably sought a means to support yourself in a way that truly reflected your abilities. Impelled by the inexorable power of karma, you found, in the course of your travels, the princess Pi-shu-na of the kingdom of rDa-ma, when she had been badly injured. Because of your excep-

tionally positive outlook you were able to use your efficacy and discriminative acumen in helping others, together with the proper use of medicines and religious rites to restore the health of the princess and to prolong her life. In spite of that, the force of the obstructions created by Mara made the princess Pi-shu-na disappear without a trace from under the willow tree where she was supposed to wait for you. When you were about to throw away your life, I sent the hermit-saint Legs-pa'i dngos-grub to prevent you from committing suicide. This was because your karma ordained that, because of your devotion to each other in a previous life, the two of you were destined to be reunited in the world of humans, though Pi-shu-na had been the daughter of a demon. Therefore, even though the power of Mara's obstructions caused the girl to vanish for a while, it is nonetheless possible to rescue her from the clutches of Mara and bring her here. I now order bDud-'dul dpa'-bo, the expert in these matters, to fetch Pi-shu-na and bring her here before me.

Displaying his wrathful appearance, bDud-'dul dpa'-bo moved with unstoppable speed and arrived instantly in the world of humans, shaking the earth and causing the mountains to tumble. Having vanquished Mara, the Evil One, he brought Pi-shu-na, whose body, no longer scarred by wounds, gleamed like the open bloom of a spring flower with dew on it, before the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world. Then and there the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world said: "Since no living being in this samsaric universe can escape the four basic tribulations³ that are the unavoidable features of life, the two of you have experienced your share of suffering of being neither dead nor alive. But now that you have exhausted your allotment of suffering, you may go on to lead a virtuous and meaningful life in the world of humans until the end of your human life-span.

With that he ordered Ka-ti and Pi-shu-na to be sent into the world of humans. At once the four herons conducted them down to the world of humans and flew up again. From that time onward Ka-ti and Pi-shu-na directed their thoughts onto the bright and wholesome things in life; although they did not embody the flawlessness of things divine, they enjoyed the inestimable wealth of joy and happiness.

Next, the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world turned to rDi-bam, the prince of the kingdom of sBag-thag: "By virtue of your noble devotion in a previous life you were born as a scion of the royal lineage of the kingdom of sBag-thag. Your past honorable inclinations let you renounce the ten unwholesome actions⁴ in this life and adopt instead the ten wholesome

ones.⁵ You not only bestowed lavish alms without the slightest qualms about the amount of riches you were giving away, but, impelled by your earnest desire to attain the highest and most virtuous level of alms-giving, you travelled to the kingdom of Dzo-pad to learn the form practised by princess Te-kho-na and, in so doing, underwent many hardships. Knowing that what really counts in this life and the next is that you act and direct your thoughts into positive channels, you were sure that the right attitude to effect this lay in you and would lead to a positive outcome. Because there were still trials you had to undergo, you fell in love with princess Te-kho-na; in order to win her, you had to meet Ri-ma-tra, the prince of Ku-sha-ya. Though you were sorely tried in the course of your quest, you dismissed all thoughts of hardship in order to discover the true status of Ri-ma-tra's spirituality. You were about to return whence you had set forth, but lack of food and torn and tattered clothes prevented you from returning to Dzo-pad where the princess Te-kho-na lived. When you were about to commit suicide, I sent the wise hermit-saint Legs-pa'i dngos-grub to pull you back from the brink of death and reveal your future.

As instructed by the hermit-saint Legs-pa'i dngos-grub, you came to the lonely place Bung-ba-can in the south of the inhabitable world. For your fervent prayers to me, I, the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world, have brought the four of you to the realm of the gods now that each of you has used up his allotted share of suffering. Now it is time for me to call my minister rKang-mgyogs stag-mo to grant you your dearest wishes."

As soon as rKang-mgyogs stag-mo arrived, the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world commanded: "Go and bring the princess Te-kho-na from the kingdom of Dzo-pad here at once."

Instantly, the minister rKang-mgyogs stag-mo left. Lifting the princess Te-kho-na into the sky, like a piece of paper blown by the wind, he brought her back with him before the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world, who said to her: "Your refined and radiant nature encouraged you to donate alms generously to the poor to ensure true bliss in this life and the next. However, in order to stop the ten unwholesome deeds, once and for all, you sent prince rDi-bam to the kingdom of U-ta-ya-na in order to uncover the reason for prince Ri-ma-tra's ten unwholesome deeds and five heinous crimes.⁶ This was a very laudable act since your only purpose was to bring about the happiness of other living beings. Now that prince rDi-bam has fulfilled your wish, here in my presence, I, the sublime and supreme Lord of the

perishable world, now bid you to give yourself to him without reservation as you had promised. In a moment I shall explain Ri-ma-tra's tribulations."

For prince rDi-bam and princess Te-kho-na it was as if the sun of happiness and bliss had risen over their heads. They were overjoyed because all their former hardships had led to the fulfilment of their fondest hopes. They bowed to the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world a hundred times with reverently folded hands before they were transported into the world of humans in the blink of a moment.

As prince Ri-ma-tra of Ku-sha-ya was not present, the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world ordered his minister 'Brug-mgo-can to bring him before him at once. 'Brug-mgo-can sped like an eagle darting through the sky. In an instant he plucked Ri-ma-tra from the world of humans and set him before the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world who asked him: "Are you Ri-ma-tra, prince of the kingdom of Ku-sha-ya?"

When Ri-ma-tra answered: "Yes, I am," the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world stated: "Up to now you have not been committing the ten unwholesome deeds because you wanted to; they were the consequences of previous actions. Since your own mind has been protected by its spiritually refined and awake quality, it is now released from its earlier suffering. As your life-long friend Ho-ne-ya is the daughter of a god, it is not easy to bring her here. However, I now command five great and fearless heroes to go with an army of a thousand gods and bring Ho-ne-ya here." As ordered, the five great and fearless heroes took an army of a thousand gods and marched into battle in single file. At the end of a fierce battle they captured Ho-ne-ya and brought her before the sublime and supreme Lord of the perishable world who said to her: "Twice you visited the world of humans to meet Ri-ma-tra, a denizen of the human world, because you had fallen in love with him. The force of the obstructions created by Mara, the Evil One, was so strong that his mind became completely unbalanced. Not only did hatred warp his normally considerate character, he even amassed an immeasurable amount of evil by heinous deeds. Therefore he will have to go back to the world of humans and make amends for his past actions. Together the two of you may go into the world of humans. Let your minds⁷ rejoice because the obstacles created by Mara, the Evil One, no longer exist."

With great joy the two embraced each other. Back in the world of humans their thoughts were directed to all that is positive and they enjoyed the wealth of true happiness.

Taking one's clue from the stories of former generations,
This mirror of the world's karmic actions, in which distinctly and
clearly is reflected
The variety of happiness and sorrow as the outcome of the relationship that holds between one's actions and their consequences to be experienced in the realms of this universe,
Is held up as a mirror to those with an open mind, wishing to understand this world of probabilities.

All the joys and frustrations, the happiness and sorrow
As well as the various pleasures and pains that occur as our varied impressions,
Are the way in which becomes manifested the force of the fierce power of one's karma that is not of one's private wishfulness.
In accordance with the words of the wise of former generations the above stories have been composed.

May the sweet flavour of this truth be constantly tasted
As it has been presented in this elegant composition
That is like the sun's rays rising over a lotus flower, the mind of those whose intelligence is still fresh,
Enriched with the sweet flavour of the honey that is the infallible relationship between one's actions and their consequences.

Notes

The purpose of the following notes is to provide explications of Buddhist key notions with which a non-Buddhist reader may not be familiar.

Prologue

¹ *sgrol-mdzad dpa'-chen* — This expression is made up of two components: *sgrol-mdzad*, a honorific form of *sgrol-byed* “to deliver,” “to set free,” and *dpa'-chen*, a honorific form of *dpa'-bo* “hero.” The *chen* in *dpa'-chen* that literally means “great”, serves to emphasize the superb moral quality of him who is referred to as a “hero.” In its mythopoeic context *sgrol-mdzad dpa'-chen* is a cognomen of *sPyan-ras-gzigs* (Skt. *Avalokiteśvara*) “He who looks at the living” in the sense of making visible their innate capacities that are invisible to ordinary eyes. This looking as a making visible is a kind of efficacy (*thabs*, Skt. *upāya*) that is always joined to an appreciatively discriminating acumen (*shes-rab*, Skt. *prajñā*).

Chapter One

¹ *dal-'byor* “Unique occasion” (*dal*) sums up what is understood by being truly human: (1) not to be a denizen of hell, (2) not to be a hungry or thirsty spirit, (3) not to be an animal, (4) not to be a member of some tribe, (5) not to be one of the popular gods, (6) not to entertain fallacious notions, (7) not to be so unfortunate as to live at a time when no spiritually awake person is around, and, worst of all, (8) to be stupid. “Right juncture” (*'byor*) sums up what affects a truly human being directly as well as mediately. That which affects such an individual directly is (1) his being a human being, (2) his having been born in a cultured environment, (3) his having his sensory equipment fully operative, (4) his having confidence in the foundation of his spiritual growth, and (5) his abstaining from committing crimes. That which affects a human being mediately is (1) the coming-to-presence of a spiritually awake (*erlichtet*) person (a *Buddhathing*), (2) this person’s illuminating teaching, (3) the validity of this teaching’s topics, (4) the incentive to attune oneself to what is being taught, and (5) the exercise of amicability and a heartfelt concern for one’s fellow humans.

² *stong-gsum 'khor-los bsgyur-ba* — “Trichiliocosmos” is the designation of an immense, three-layered world system. “Universal ruler” (Skt. *cakravartin*) is a relatively late term. In its Brahmanical context it refers to temporal kingship; in Buddhism and Jainism, though not ignoring the worldly and temporal implications, the emphasis is on what we would call the spiritual-moral. In the Tibetan term the *'khor-lo* is an abbreviation for *chos-kyi 'khor-lo* “the wheel (as the gyrating movement) of *chos* (as that which makes life) meaningful.” The term *bsgyur-ba* intimates the “transformation” of one’s self through meaning taking precedence in one’s life. This “through” is linguistically expressed by the instrumental case of *'khor-lo: 'khor-los*. To read into this essentially psychological and experiential term the notion of an utopian world improvement scheme is rankest nonsense.

Chapter Two

¹ *rig-gnas* — The five minor sciences are: (1) poetry, (2) rhetoric, (3) composition, (4) dancing, and (5) astrology. The five major sciences are: (1) the mechanical arts (like carpentry, painting and so on), (2) the healing arts, (3) linguistics, (4) logic, and (5) dogmatics.

² *byang-chub-sems-dpa'i sprul-pa* — In works claimed to be translations of Tibetan texts the Tibetan term *byang-chub-sems-dpa'* is usually replaced by its Sanskrit “equivalent” *bodhisattva* due to the Western academics’ preoccupation with and the Tibetans’ propaganda of Sanskrit-only (of which they do not have any knowledge). None of them seems to be aware of the fact that the Tibetan equivalent of Sanskrit *sattva* is *sems-can*. While the Sanskrit word *sattva* emphasizes something existent (*sat*), the Tibetan word *sems-can* emphasizes something mentalistic (*sems*), thus meaning “being of the nature of mentality” or “having a mind.” The term *byang-chub-sems-dpa'* has been explicated in the early original Tibetan texts (suppressed for political and doctrinal reasons by the once ruling clique) as “someone who has the courage (*dpa'*) to think (*sems*) of self-refinement (*byang*) and consummate perspicacity (*chub*).” The term *byang-chub-(kyi)sems* is an ontological-(existential-experiential) concept, not an epistemological-rationalistic concept as implied by its mistranslation by “enlightenment.” The term *sprul-pa* denotes a “phasmic” (brilliant) emanation-manifestation that is experienced as a kind of guiding image.

Chapter Four

¹ *bla-ma dkon-mchog* — The term *bla-ma*, like its Sanskrit equivalent *guru*, has had a checkered history before finally becoming a jocular expression. Originally, a holistic (anthropocosmic) concept that because of its “informative-cognitive” quality was even superior to a “spiritually awake” (“alight,” *erlichtet*) person thingified into a or the Buddha. This thingification started in Tibet in the late 12th century when it became part of a person’s proper name. Nowadays the term is used with reference to any Tibetan outside Tibet. Thingification and commercialism is the latest global development. The term *dkon-mchog* signifies the “Three Jewels” that in their Sanskrit version are known as Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

Chapter Five

¹ *'phags-mchog 'jig-rten dbang-phyug* — Up to the time of the collapse of the Lamaist state in 1959 this phrase has been an epithet of the Dalai Lama who has always been a more political than a spiritual figure. While in the mythopoeic, imaginal dimension this phrase refers to sPyan-ras-gzigs, the worldliness of this figure is clearly expressed by the compound *'jig-rten dbang-phyug* in which *'jig-rten* “the site of all that is perishable” refers to what we would call our “cosmic” material world, and *dbang-phyug* to its “anthropic” qualitative aspect of “having power over its richness (*dbang*) and not being stingy with it (*phyug*).”

² *bla-ma dge-slong drang-srong* — This phrase reflects a hierarchical order. None of the current translations conveys the very meaning of these three personages. In their social context the *bla-ma*, ranking highest, is best conceived of as a “mentor,” ranking next, the *dge-slong*, (usually rendered as “monk”) is a person who strives for what is positive and wholesome, and ranking lowest, the *drang-srong* is a solitary (asocial?) person who has a one-track outlook on life. The rendering of the Tibetan term by “hermit-saint” is more of a concession to Western religious preconceptions.

³ *sdug-bsngal bzhi* — The four tribulations are: (1) birth, (2) old age, (3) illness, and (4) death.

⁴ *mi-dge bcu* — The ten unwholesome actions distribute over the triad of what we call body, speech, and mind. Accordingly, (1) taking a living being’s life, (2) taking what has not been given, and (3) immoral behaviour (as a blanket term for adultery, rape, and incest) pertain to one’s body; (4) telling lies, (5) slandering others, (6) uttering harsh and impolite words, and

(7) engaging in frivolous and meaningless chatter pertain to one's speech; and (8) covetousness, (9) malevolence, and (10) wrong views pertain to one's mind. In the Buddhist context, wrong views are a person's disregard of the so-called Four Truths, the negation of the relationship between cause and effect, and the welter of mainly non-Buddhist idiosyncrasies ("philosophical" postulates) ranging from an eternalism *a parte ante* to an eternalism *a parte post*.

⁵ *dge-ba bcu* — The ten wholesome actions are the opposite of the ten unwholesome ones. In the case of a person's moral behaviour a distinction is made between a "householder" and a person who is not or is no longer a householder. For the latter celibacy is obligatory. These ten wholesome actions reflect on a person's self-respect and decorum and as such are social commitments. They are not commands that are meant to be broken.

⁶ *mtshams-med lnga* — These are (1) patricide, (2) matricide, (3) killing a "saint," (4) causing dissention among monks, and (5) making a "mystic" bleed. Both our terms "saint" and "mystic" in the Buddhist context need clarification. The term "saint" stands for the Tibetan *dgra-bcom* that is itself a hermeneutical interpretation of the Sanskrit word *arhant* meaning "a worthy person." The literal meaning of the Tibetan word is "to have overcome (*bcom*) an enemy (*dgra*)." Its Sanskrit reconstruction would be *ari-* ("enemy") *han* ("to kill"). The enemy is the instinctive-affective force within a person's psychological make-up. In artistic representations there is nothing gentle about them. Their faces are so hard that one could drive a nail into a wall with them. While in the Western context a "mystic" is a person who is absorbed in what is called a Supreme Being or God through the grace of this being, in Buddhism he is a person who "has gone into and walks over the ground and source of all that is" (*de-bzhin gshegs-pa*, Skt. *tathāgata*) through his own perception and understanding.

⁷ *byang-sems-can* — Literally, "of the nature or quality of the mind's (*sems*) self-refinement or self-refining dynamic (*byang*)."