

The crossroad

Everybody in their lifetime comes sometimes to a crossroad. So it is with me.

It is a time for new choices and commitments. A moment where it is like the time is suspended to let choices happen. Both short and long, this moment should be fully used to open a future of intelligence and generosity. It is also a time of real loneliness. When facing the great choices of one's life one is always alone. We may be helped and guided but the decision remains ours and ours only.

When in 1976 I decided to wander to find a Master it was in a mixed feeling of joy, apprehension and unconsciousness, alone with my first great decision. Later in 1978, when I decided to consecrate my life to practice I relied upon the Dharma, Gyalwa Karmapa and Guendune Rinpoche.

From then on my life followed a steady course for almost thirty years. Thirty years of training, learning about myself and others under the loving guidance of Guendune Rinpoche and Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. These were the teenage years of my path .

Guendune Rinpoche passing away marked the end of adolescence and the beginning of adulthood, the time of responsibilities. At that point Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche became my sole support and his vast and deep advice has enlightened my choices in a new way.

He regularly sent me towards people to share the Dharma. Slowly my confidence in the future of Dharma in the west grew and the way to spread it became clearer. Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche's requests were more and more precise and I could see with more accuracy how obvious they were.

I was torn apart between answering positively to Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche's requests and keep the commitments I received from Guendune Rinpoche. The Gyalwa Karmapa gave me the answer when he asked me if I had already found someone to take over the responsibilities in Kundreul Ling after me. From this point I begin considering a possible transition. It took time for things to take place but finally, thanks mainly to Jigmé Rinpoche, this community reacted in an adult and courageous way. The transition was properly done.

When in 1977 the XVI Gyalwa Karmapa told me to stay with Guendune Rinpoche, study Milarepa's biography and follow his footsteps, things were crystal clear. With time I found myself more and more entangled in the centers administrative responsibilities. One day as I opened myself up to Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche about this situation I told him that I was afraid I had gone astray for instead of following «Milarépa» I was as busy as «Marpa». He looked at me for a while and after a pause to consider the question he told me : « If one can really be Marpa it is better. ».

For me the monastic ideal is withdrawing from the world to free oneself from its suffering which is connected to its alienating nature. This is achieved through a life of simplicity, strictly controlled mind, speech and actions.

My life since the end of the retreat years has been activity and commitment in the world. I am trying to weave a positive and enlightening network of actions for this world. To leave this world is not as important as serving beings as long as there is a need. I try to follow the ideal of the Bodhisattva and the guidelines given by my Masters.

My monastic statute was connected with the responsibilities in Kundreul Ling, one couldn't be without the other. It was time for me to reconsider the new situation. I have given up the monastic life at the same time as I left the monastery's responsibilities.

My path today is that of an apprentice Bodhisattva in the world. There are so many people in this world who are looking for the Dharma, so many ways to offer them an access to it without also having to struggle with the cultural gap and a tradition that sometimes is repelling.

Meeting other beings freely, simply, guided by the Dharma and the Masters, Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche and Gyalwa Karmapa, this is my aspiration for the coming years.

Giving up certainty and a form of numbness which comes from the routine, to invent new paths. Take time. I am persuaded that, as far as I am concerned, the Dharma must adopt a form that is direct and lighter in its structure.

Maybe that is what finding Milarepa is all about?

I will try, and your friendship is precious to me. I don't know but I'll dare!

Happy trails.

With love,

Tsony