



(LAS 7285)

## LYRICHORD ARCHIVE SERIES

### THE SONGS OF MILAREPA

#### *Tibetan music from the Mahayana Buddhist Nunnery, Tilokpur*

The beginning of the 10th Century saw the end of Tibetan military and political power in countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Kashmir, and various neighbouring Chinese provinces, where, under the reign of the 'Religious Kings', the Tibetans had been the ruling influence for two or three centuries.

The Tibetans, due to the collapse of their Dynasty and the resultant domestic troubles, withdraw behind borders which, although in some regions ill-defined, remained more or less the same up to the 1950's.

Although at the time the Buddhist faith was widespread in Tibet, the religion now went into a decline, and it was not until the arrival of the great Indian teacher and philosopher *Atisha*, in 1042, that the religion was fully restored.

The *Tilokpur nunnery* in *Himachel Pradesh*, India, was founded in the 1960's. It houses about thirty nuns and novices of the *Kagyupa* sect, and is situated near the cave of *Tilopa*, a 10th century Indian Buddhist guru.

Tilopa passed on his teachings to *Naropa*, a Kashmiri Brahmin who was converted to Buddhism, later to become Abbott of *Nalanda* University. In old age *Naropa* retired to meditate, being succeeded as Abbott by *Atisha*.

The Tibetan *Marpa Lotsava*, ('the Translator') was born in 1012. Whilst on pilgrimage to India he met and became the pupil of *Naropa*, translating, under his guidance, many religious works into Tibetan. On return to Tibet *Marpa* became the teacher of *Jetsun Milarepa*, one of the most famous of Tibetan gurus.

Milarepa and Marpa were largely responsible for the founding of the Kagyupa Sect, (or Sect of the Whispered Transmission). The Tilokpur nuns carry on the tradition of the teachings being transmitted orally from guru to guru, and also study the teachings of the female Boddhisatvas such as *Jetsun Dolma*, and of mystics such as *Nigu*, Naropa's sister.

During his period of meditation and withdrawal, Milarepa composed many religious songs, known to Tibetans as "The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa." Two of the songs on the record are attributed by the nuns to *Dakpu Rimpoche*, Milarepa's disciple. These songs are normally performed on the birth and death-days of specific lamas.

By returning to Tilokpur, the home of Tilopa, the nuns have completed a thousand year cycle in the history of his teachings.

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### 1. MILALADUP (Milarepa's Prayer) 17:53

Told by Milarepa to his disciples, to be recited after his death. "Now he is dead and no longer to be seen." The prayer asks for release from the sufferings of the world.

This is a much shortened version of the full length prayer, which lasts for a day. The instruments used are:

- 2 pair *Rol-mo* (hand cymbals)
- 1 *Na* (double headed frame drum beaten with a curved stick)
- 1 *Drill-bu* (hand bell)
- 1 *Darung* (skull drum)

### 2. YOU WILL KNOW ALL EVENTS OF THE FUTURE (Marpa to Milorepa) Attributed to Milarepa 3:15

Milarepa, having completed his studies under Marpa, asks to be allowed a short visit to his home. Marpa acquiesces. "You may do as you like. Make sure you study carefully; you are destined to be a great lama." Marpa predicts that Milarepa will have a dream in which he will see all events of the future. Milarepa sets off home, accompanied part of the way by other disciples of Marpa. At Sarwaylangwo, the others return to the monastery, Milarepa going on home. As predicted, he dreams of the future. Later, Milarepa retires to a cave to live a hermits existence, eating only nettles, meditating on the teachings.

### 3. PLEASE RETURN Attributed to Dakpu Rimpoche 6:35

This song tells of an incident in the lives of three of the Rimpoche's pupils. Whilst performing a prayer one day, the three make an offering of chang (rice beer) in skull cups. On drinking the chang, they gain knowledge. However, for drinking beer, and thus breaking their monastic vows, they are banished from the monastery by a senior lama. Dakpu Rimpoche, knowing of their experience, rebukes the lama, and recalls the three exiles who, overjoyed at their pardon, perform a dance. According to Tibetan folklore, the footprints they left as they danced may still be seen at Talagumpa, in Northern Tibet.

#### 4. WE ARE SO GLAD Attributed to Dakpu Rimpoche 3:00

On their return to the monastery, the three perform a prayer, firstly in honour of the gurus of the time, and secondly to the various deities. The song tells how the three disciples will symbolically stamp out evil with their feet as they dance, gaining enlightenment step by step.

#### 5. MAHAKALA "The Great Black" 10:16

Mahakala is the Sanskrit name for the Tibetan deity Nakpo Chhenpo, a protective or peaceful deity for all sects, but accorded a special place by the Kagyupa. Mahkala also takes on an earthly form, Karmapakshi. The prayer is for the salvation of all sentient beings, and begins by asking Mahakala to attend the ceremony.

This is an example of a prayer which may be commissioned. It is specially performed on the 29th day of every month, Mahakala's day. A fast follows on the 30th.

The instruments are as in Milaladup -- A shortened version of the full length prayer.

*The performers: Omzela Kusang Wangmo (Head nun), Chungchub Choden, Karma Hosey, Tusltim Zangmo, Tenzing Choden, Pema Wangmu and Nawang Choden.*



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27 Main St. Ste. 6

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