



Songs of Jampa Dorje

DPress 2002 Sebastopl

Art by Claude Smith

*In Memory of
Philip Whalen
(1923-2002)
&
Joe Saviers
(1950-2002)*

SITTING IN THE SAN JUANS

taking teaching from Tulku Sang-ngag
who was incarcerated in Chinese prisons for ten years.

He relates how happy he was when he discovered
the blissful state of samadhi and could enter it
while he was working at cutting logs
but how this got him into trouble with the guards
and the beatings he received.

He teaches us how to enter this state
with a breathing practice called *tsalung*
but while he is teaching this practice, a pickup arrives,
and the port-a-potty man pumps out the honey box.

Tulku Sang-ngag is explaining how the seed syllable
in the crown chakra melts into nectar
when the odor of shit wafts through the yurt.

Eyes roll, noses lift, but everyone seems determined
to maintain their composure as they realize
the essential unity of the relative and the absolute.

Then, the lama laughs, and we join him.

DECISIONS, DECISIONS

So many decisions, so much chance for derision—
the deadly wind of praise and blame.

Birget's luscious Tara statue stands before the throne,
but Tulku Sang-ngag says he would prefer it on the altar
with the mandala offering placed in a lower position.

He does not mention which direction
the Tara statue should stand on the altar.
Should it face the lama when he's teaching
or should it face the entrance?

I opt for Tara facing the throne— wrong.
Rinpoche gives a lion's roar of laughter
when he finds he must prostrate to Tara's butt.

PARTY DOWN, RINPOCHE

And night time is a time for song and dance.
After the Riwo Sangchod Retreat,
we party at Tsultrim's and David's new house.

Tulku Sang-ngag feels expansive and dances
the Warrior Dance of King Gesar,
jabbing at the air with an African spear.

Ani Tersing translates one of the tulku's poems.
Although her English falters,
her voice is star-flecked.
She knows more than she knows she knows.

"Red bird...big bird...a vulture...eating
dead people on the mountain."

We are inspired to sing 'Blackbird Singing'
and, much to David's chagrin,
'Row, Row, Row Your Boat' and, then,
'Om Tare Tutare' to flute and drum.

Given the right rhythm, even the dead can dance.

EVERYTHING IS PEACE

I enter the quiet where flies buzz
and leaves rustle in their immortality.

The silence ends at a yellow bird,
a Western Tanager— I looked him up—
atop a stalk of last year's mullein.

Each moment has its own climax.

A FLOATING REFLECTION

I drift in infinite space,
or no space,
an illusion of myself
in an obscure place—

Emptiness holds me up.

HUM OF AN INSECT

During pointing out instructions
a fly flies in my mouth,
and I wonder if I will ever get it.

Stabilize in rigpa, that is.

I'm sitting, and then the fly flies in,
and I sit with this fly in my mouth,
all revved up, but I'm sitting still,
and the fly walks out of my mouth
and along my upper lip and onto my nose
and then buzzes off into the limpid, blue sky
and I am left feeling empty
and a trifle confused.

During the question and answer period,
I ask Rinpoche, "If I am sitting in rigpa
and the fly is inside me, is the fly in rigpa?"

Tsok Nyi says, "We'll have to ask the fly."

SAMSARA IS AN AIRPORT

Samsara is an airport surrounding a delayed flight.
I'm stretched out with my eyes closed
listening to the travelers and the intercom.

"...want my money back..."

"...want to be in San Francisco, now..."

"...really no reason for this..."

"...is it a red color code, today?"

"...is it really raining there?..."

"...will my luggage arrive?..."

"...will the pilots for flight 2807
please report to Gate A6?..."

All this inside me.

DIRGE

everybody knew
your friends knew

your family
your psychiatrist knew

but you kept drinking
and drinking and drinking

and now your friends say prayers
by the oven where you are cremated

and we did a puja in the gompa on a full moon night
Tashi heard your voice, it was raining through sunlight

two rainbows appeared, so she put flowers on the shrine
and Jack got a message, "What's up with the dead flowers?"

INTO THE LION'S MOUTH

It's a very relaxed atmosphere in Hidden Valley.
Des and Norbu are playing "Lion."
They are making growling noises.
Horses graze in the shade of the big elm.
We've had a short puja, and we're all laid back.

I pluck up the courage to ask Rinpoche for a teaching
on the *Dance of the Three Vajras*, which I'm learning.
Mind transmission of OM AH HUM as the essence
of the Five Seed Syllables of Samatabhadra.
Inner, outer, secret, and innermost secret
oral instructions on the Vajra Dances.

The body is a mandala, the world is a mandala,
the movement, a dance of light and rays and sound.
Manifesting as Tara or Avalokitesvara,
receiving the blessings of the siddhis.

Purification of all realms occurring
as we move through Samsara,
and while we dance we are manifesting
The State of Natural Perfection, our true nature,
the actualization of the Energy of Dharmadatu.
I shut up after this and enjoy the picnic.

When I get back to the mandala,
I no longer have to look at my feet.
I am transported into a realm of clarity and movement.
The sky, the clouds, my breath, the scent of rabbit ear sage,
A La La Ho.

PROTECTOR OF THE BENT

a heart vowed to eradicate hells,

if I don't help who will?

warrior of the byways
plunging into black chaos

into the unknown
into the matrix of the world

I watch where I step—

if it's green with whiskers
it's probably a Leprechaun

if it's soft and steamy
it's probably a cow pie

SKYLINES

Sky in my mind
Sky in my voice
Sky in my heart

Walking the path
our fingers touch
beneath the stars

We make funny sounds
in the serious stillness

Much laughter
much joy
pervasive and empty

1-800-BUDDHAS

for Joe

you have reached the offices
of Guru, Dharma & Sangha
this is a recorded message
if you have a touch-tone phone
press the appropriate button

having pure intention
and you want to take refuge
press 1 for Hinayana
press 2 for Mahayana
press 3 for Mantrayana
press 4 for Dzogchen

if you miss part of the transmission
it will repeat itself upon completion
if you have any questions
press the # key, and a Bodhisattva
will come on the line to assist you

for those with desire-attachment
or guests of karmic payments
we suggest dialing our new number
1-900-Distract

press 1 for a crazy-wisdom bitch
press 2 for yidams in leather
press 3 for assorted hindrances
press 4 to be listened to attentively

RAINBOW HEART

for David

84,000 passions give rise
to flowers, rivers and mountains

appearing in a rainbow sphere
dancing with bell and drum

she feeds her demons
and dissolves duality

white feast
red feast
black feast

essence of the elements
conquest over hope and fear

AND PUS FOR THE HUNGRY GHOSTS

I'm sitting, happily reading
in a mandala of sunlight
a goddess with golden hands
feeling neither anger
nor joy
my forgiving heart
sends out a secret mantra
to prevent war

DHARMA TALK

Blue flurry near where
my prayer flags flutter.
A jay drinks
from one of my offering bowls.

I try to teach this jay to chant
without much success.
He nods inquisitively
then continues his way beyond training.

SIT LIKE A MOUNTAIN

I'm in the tent of self-produced mind
late at night, candles flickering
soaking up his mind essence, like
being in Tibet a thousand years ago
with Guru Rinpoche, tough and gentle.

He taught three words that hit the vital point
Lama Wangdor, doing it the hard way

sitting on his ass in a cave for twenty years
until his bone touched the stone
listening to waves of bliss-emptiness
crash on the shore of nirvana.

Noise floods in from the street
here in the pure land of Santa Rosa.
One taste in the supermarket aisle—
and new asanas for highway maneuvers.

TARA-PEACH TRANSMISSION

Adzom wants to learn how to can peaches.
Tsultrim is telling him how, step by step.
Erik translates. Adzom takes notes,
while giving Tsultrim a short version of the Tara practice,
which he wants included at the end of the main text.
I sit outside the tent, chuckling to myself,
waiting for the text to emerge,
so I can run off another edition of the book.

Adzom is transmitting it word by word.
Tsultrim writes down each word in phonetic Tibetan,
and Erik translates it into English.
Then, another step in the process of canning peaches,
and Erik translates that into Tibetan,
and Adzom writes it down in his notebook.
Then, another line of the Tara practice,
and Tsultrim writes that down, and Erik translates.

OM CHAG TSAL JETSUN TARE
OM Homage to Jetsun *TARE* Goddess
Wash jars, rinse. Place jars in hot water.
TU TA RA E YI DUNG WA KUNCHOB
TU TA RA E Save from all suffering
Pack the sliced peaches into hot jars.
TUGJE TOGMED TURE PALMO
Unimpeded compassion *TURE* Glorious One
Leave one finger of space at top of jar.
DAK LA DRUPCHOK TSOL CHIK SWA HA
Grant me the ultimate siddhi *SWA HA*

Cover with boiling sryup, leaving headspace.

DEJA VOODOO

for Ashlee

o, never always
would the mind
let go

even the grass
will attain
liberation

WARM LIGHT

for Brent

spring soon
still winter

still winter stillness
the brown ground moves

bees have no attainment
bees have no non-attainment

THINGS CHANGE YET ARE ONE

Mountain Blue Bird
Varied thrush
Starling
Stellers Jay

A jay and a lizard in a fray,
Lizard tugged by jay.
Jay pecks yet kept at bay.
Clap of hands— jay flies away.

Porcupine
Red Squirrel
Shrew
Wood Mouse

Lists never end, nor do difficulties
and obstacles.
Not easy to outwit the fox of desire.

ADDLEHEADED IN SAFEWAY

beyond joy and woe
where I can do what I do
without having to lie

Jigme Lingpa arises in the eggplants
transmits mantra to my inner idiot

OM AH HUM OM AH HUM
WICHA TYE TYE WICHA TYE TYE
CUMA ROMA CUMA ROMA HEY HEY

coming before coming before
coming way before coming

SPACE & LONGING & A FEW FLASHES OF LIGHT

for Jane

Early morning in the garden
different intensities of color
grass and stone.

So hot— no hurry— heavy air
water-loaded air moving slowly
across the yard.

Practice no-resistance
just a fan and a hammock
in Tornado Alley.

BACK FROM A RETREAT

This morning, feeling
that I am finally integrated into my normal,
Santa Rosa routine body,
noticing the levels of protective shield forming,
able to get through the day,
driving the freeways,
maneuvering the shopping lanes,
reduced awareness of the intense abrasives and chaos,
still a few reverberating visions lingering
at the threshold of the doors of my senses,
but my clam shell is nearly in place,
once again robotic responses to samsaric stimuli
are practically automatic.

BASELINE

I've been told. I've been shown.
It's been pointed out— the path, the fruit.

I see a little dog.
I wonder why he doesn't have a tail.
I wonder why he doesn't have any hair.
I wonder why he doesn't have any eyes.
I wonder why he doesn't have a head.
I wonder why he doesn't have any feet.
I wonder how he is trotting down the street.

As Jigme Lingpa says, "Through examples,
one recognizes the meaning.
Through signs, one comes to believe."

A SIGN

I'm walking up a trail, deep in conversation with Debbie.
We are talking about *tigles*, tiny rainbow spheres,

when I see a little flash of light shooting down the trail,
and a young chipmunk runs under my boot.

With its spine crushed, blood running from its mouth,
and it writhing in the dust, I tell Debbie to walk ahead.
She'll not want to watch what I am going to do.

I've lived on farms.

It's reasonable to put down a suffering animal.

A blow to the head with a rock, and the creature is still.
I dig a small hole, put in a few leaves to make a cushion,
and lay the body of the chipmunk in its grave.

I say a mantra.

I cover it with earth and place a cobble on top.

During one Dharma talk, the subject of killing comes up,
the difference between accidental and intentional acts of killing,
so I tell about it, and Adzom says, the first act was accidental
& didn't involve me in the chipmunk's karma in a negative way,
but that my intentional act of "putting it out of its misery"
was more serious in its repercussions, that I should have left it
to "burn out its karma" without interfering in the process.

Such is the difference between the East and the West.

My chances of being reincarnated as a chipmunk are very good.

PARDON MY FRENCH

We are studying the Ngöndro text,
and Erik suddenly chokes and says
that we shouldn't say the next line.

There's a mistake in the phonetic Tibetan.
A word is misspelled, which has then become
a colloquial term, so that the line reads
"naturally arising Fuck Body."

ON THE ROAD HOME

Driving through the small village of Gem,

I point to a twenty-foot stack of elk antlers
in front of a shop, probably a tannery,
where there's a sign, "The Buck Stops Here."

Lama Gyurme Tsering's eyes get really big,
and his mantra machine kicks into overdrive.
Within a mile, a huge rainbow arcs across the road.
"Man, Tsering, you liberated a whole herd of dead elk."

STUFF OF LEGENDS

It's getting late, going on midnight.
Where is my ride?
I phone camp, but no one picks up,
so I keep on printing.

I'll hike back— only fifteen miles.
Shouldn't take but half the night.
I'll make it in time for the puja.

But I don't have a coat.
What can I use to keep warm?
This door cover with an eternal knot embroidered on it?
I see myself walking all night wrapped in a door cover,
carrying a box of Tibetan texts along the county road.

Then, I'm hiking the last three miles,
wishing I knew how to do yogic fast walking,
when I encounter a mountain lion in the dark.
All that's found of me are shreds of the door covering,
the scattered texts, and a leg bone,
which makes a good thigh bone trumpet.

AND HERE I AM

mistakes in my mind
but light in my heart

Ol' Dog
dancing to a drum

with feathers on

"Look!"

I'm growing wings

I'm

falling in love

CHACO RIVER BEING

for Gaela

what is it
gives pleasure
in a minim?

don't ask,
let's not
force it

OL' DOG AT THE END OF SUMMER

not sure which side's up
doing my doggie thing

going to town to print some poems
only it's Labor Day

and the streets are empty
except for flags

I flap about
have a cup of tea

figure, since it's Labor Day
I'll honor the struggle

lucky me, others mostly
have to work harder to make

ends meet

BIG MAP

summer signing off with a scorcher
kids hit the water with a vengeance

at the city pool, parking places full
cars soaking up the sunshine

I'm sitting here, feeling transparent
and not particularly real

maybe it's all this talk of war
the West Nile virus in our blood stream

or the battle around who's
going to pick up the garbage

how can I take myself seriously
when everything's the world

everywhere it's happening
everything is everywhere?

PRAISE AND BLAME, LOSS AND GAIN

To be peace— empty, clear, compassionate in this
Jumble of good and evil and not escape through sleep
Through normalcy, through wrapping myself in the flag

A prayer tree flutters in our town square
Prayers for war to disappear in this warm breeze
The leaves are prayers blowing in the deadly winds

BUDDHA'S LAST WORDS

This stuff is just stuff.

Keep on keepin' on.

TELECOSMOS

the sunshine
beyond the actual sun

is a song you sang
along the San Juan

a canticle of water and air
a riff of iridescence

COASTWALK

I walk along the lost coast
I become limpid blue sky

seaweed seaspray
seagulls and sand

dry wet high low
empty full fast slow

bored blissed

AT COLD MOUNTAIN BOOKSTORE

for Charles & Nancy

At my reading
a man named Neah
asks if he can say
a few words.

I say, "No," and
he turns away.
And then,
the mist clears,

and I ask him to do
his thing—
a bit from Jung
on the *eternal fountain*.

Try and buy the well,
and it dries up
and then springs up
somewhere else.

My shadow and I
make a wise choice
on this western face
of Cold Mountain.

POEM WITHIN A PLAY WITHIN A STORY

I went to an art opening by Claude Smith in
Railroad Square
in Santa Rosa. His show was titled *Wabisabi*,
which is a Japanese Zen
phrase referring to the beauty of things
impermanent, imperfect,
and incomplete. The artworks were found
objects,
stained ceiling tiles, tattered awnings, a
large film box
with the corner torn out revealing the
word "signature,"
rusted metal, busted shingles. Claude's
expertise is in
presentation and juxtaposition.
When I lived on the ranch in Ellensburg,
I began collecting
junk I found laying around, and I attached
it to the old
outbuildings until I had them completely
covered with bones,
rope, barbed wire, twisted metal, old farm
implements, broken

furniture, whatever seemed to fit. *Fit*,
Belle Randall tells
me is an Old English verse form, as in
Lewis Carroll's verse
"The Hunting of the Snark," which is a
poem in 8 fits.
I've always found my found object
sculptures a satisfying
extension to my collages, a shift in scale
and a challenge
in how to engineer objects so that the
least amount of
fasteners, glue, wire, nails are used
to hold the structure
together. These "combines" are assembled
as though there is
an inner fusion of parts, a union of
forces, a merging of
disparate elements, a meshing of objects
in a metaphysic so
loose that no accident is possible. This
is the power of
hoodoo. Have you heard of hoodoo? Hoodoo?
Yes, he do. He
do what? He do whatever he wants. How?
By the power. What
power? The power of hoodoo. He has the
power. Who do?
He does. Does what? Have the power. What
power? The power
of hoodoo. This is a vaudeville routine I was
reminded of after watching the
San Quentin Drama Production of *Endgame*
by Samuel Beckett
with my 98 year old dad, who amazingly
became quite focused,
actually riveted. The main character,
Hamm, is a blind, old
man who pretty much dominates center stage
in his armchair.
He is attended by his adopted son, Clov,
who is his lackey.
Two other characters, Hamm's aged parents,

Nagg and Nell, are
contained in two barrels and make brief
appearances. The scene: bare
interior, gray light, two small windows, Hamm
in his armchair on castors
covered with an old sheet, and the two ash bins
containing Nagg and Nell.

After a brief tableau, Clove speaks at the
very beginning,

"Finished, it's finished, nearly finished,
it must be nearly
finished. (Pause.) Grain upon grain, one
by one, and one
day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap,
the impossible
heap. (Pause.) I can't be punished any
more. (Pause.)

I'll go now to my kitchen, ten feet by ten
feet by ten feet,
and wait for him to whistle me. (Pause.)"

This was so like
the actual reality of my situation, I was amazed
when Dad turned to me and said,
"I don't need to watch this. I'm aware there are
these changes."

(Note: Quote from Endgame by Samuel Beckett, Grove Press, 1970)

EARTH TERMA

I find Tulku Gyurme on the path
bent over with the dry heaves.
I'm patting him on the back
when I hear my name called,
and Adzom beckons us to come.

He points to a rock, moves his hand in a circle.
I remove the rock.
He hands me a sharp stick, and I dig.

It's daylight, but it is like a long night.

A piece of paper appears.
I can see Tibetan script bleeding in the damp.
I want to unfold this dark treasure,
but Adzom makes a gesture for fire,
both hands upturned, fingers wiggling.

I try to build a small fire with wet leaves and twigs.
Ani Sherab comes with a box of kitchen matches,
and we light the whole box and hold the paper
over the flames between two sticks.

The paper catches and curls into a question.

Adzom dances in a circle, flapping his arms.
We all bow to one another and go our separate ways.
Later, I ask Erik, who translates for Adzom,
what all this was about, and he says,
"So, you're becoming a magician's apprentice."

MORE LIGHT

my father gulps air
jaw slack, hands astray
in front of the TV
sound on full blast

he can't make out the words
but the music helps him sleep
it's Ida Lupino Month on *TCM*
May and December

his 75th Masonic Anniversary
at the Luther Burbank Lodge tonight
proud he can walk to the East
worried he won't remember the Word

how to tie his tie is a real mystery
his first car, a 1916 *Buick*
I drive into the fire
to help him

SAMSORRY

I'm looking for an exit
from this buddhadrama

an exit out
of the head

an exit in
to the heart

grasshoppers jump for joy
when the grass is liberated

ENERGY

At the end of summer
two boys and a dog
splash in the river.

Light through the leaves—
no death in them.

SAMBHOGAKAYA COWBOY

rein in your mind
there's rain in your mind

don't shy, relax
let it fall

you built it
now, it's gone

it's alright
the tears

head 'em up
herd 'em out

CARRYING MY BONES

rays of light coming out of me
as I walk down the street

I'm walking an inch above the pavement
skimming the surface

responding to the simplicity of rainbow body
while I dissolve into a welcome mystery

ahead of me, temptations pile up