

1. Human Realm/Bardos of Illusory Body and Dharmata

The all-pervasive display of rainbow light becomes more solid. Gesar, Dzedden and Kyang Ko Kar Kar feel their inner experiences becoming more concrete and irritating. They long to control their journey by using their intelligence and for situations that confirm the reality of their desires and intentions. But no matter how vivid, the things they encounter, this aim eludes them. Thus, they journey in the Bardos of Illusory Body and Dharmata and enter the Human Realm.

Below a pale blue sky, the terrain and landscape differ from that of the animal realm only in the many alterations which humankind has made. Rivers are dammed near their source and directed into canals. At their mouths are great populous cities filled with temples, palaces, universities, market places, the house of merchants and artisans and the hovels of the poor. Plumes of smoke rise from factories, turning out cloth, pottery, furniture, tools, weapons and all manner of goods. Acres and acres of land have been turned into pastures, farms and orchards. Villages and small towns crisscross all but the most inhospitable terrain. Nomads drive their herds across vast plains. Hunters track their prey through jungles and tundra. Mountains are honeycombed with mines. Ocean-going ships plow across invisible sea-lanes. Prayers, curses, laughter, tears and, sighs fill the air.

It is the nature of those in the human realm to live together, and they are capable of changing their immediate circumstances in accord with their desires and ideas. They use intellect to gain mastery over their phenomena. Passions and the thought forms they contrive to satisfy their desires or avoid their frustration dominate their minds. It is often impossible for them to distinguish between the reality of thoughts and the reality of the physical world. Their restlessness often causes them to alter or abandon whatever circumstance in which they find themselves.

Because they are capable of changing their lives in accord with their aspirations, their imaginations are often stirred to emulate the examples of other realms. Some cultivate spiritual detachment and bliss, some revel in the luxury, power and ease of the gods, while others live in constant striving for such a way of life. Many however, like animals exploited by those who dominate them, struggle for survival and only dream of happiness; others have a life marked by unslaked craving; and still others are abandoned to a life of rage and crime in circumstances of violence and sudden death.

Dzedden stares down at this realm where she suffered so. Memories flood her mind as she watches the many lives of those who are there and she cannot decide whether to smile or sneer. But for Gesar and Kyang Ko Kar Kar, this world recalls the lures and artifices with which the Kingdom of Hor had ensnared the world, and so Gesar sings to his mother in a soft clear voice.

***Suspended in the central channel of luminous emptiness,
We float in the avadhuti of the Lord of Death,
The inner path of Vajrasattva:
This is the luminous pathway of the bardos,
The natural union of duality and the awakened state.
Nothing here can be eluded or grasped.***

***Alternating between reality and unreality,
Projecting mental images of truth and bliss,
Striving to realize them,***

***Here you struggle in the Human Realm.
In the endless continuum of bardos
This realm and those who dwell here arise
From solidifying the Illusory Body and Bardo of Dharmata***

***Endowed with the powers of change,
Moved by waves of passionate longing, rage, fear, and despair,
Ideals, nostalgia and dramas shape and encase your perception,
You and the realm itself
Are constantly changing.***

***Creating systems of thought and action,
Following spiritual and secular paths,
Endowed with great intelligence and the power to change,
You seek to establish a reality that will not change.***

***Searching for the truth
In the mirror phantasmagoria of self and other
Here, you live in the relentless duality of the Human Realm.***

***This duality can never be resolved:
It is the display of that
Which is beyond duality and beyond mind.***

***So enter the great stream of reality itself,
The endless succession of the bardos,
Which is formless, filled with every quality, and does not cease:
The life beyond life,
It cannot be ignored.***

Dzeden turns her face away and weeps. But as they hover above the Human Realm, a sensation born from a mixture of longing and happiness suddenly seizes Gesar's heart. He points to a place on the Northern border of the Southern continent that lies below them. "Look," he whispers urgently. "Look."

There, like a bright mirage hovering faintly above the rolling desert plains, stands a vast, glittering circular ring of snow-covered mountains. Within it is an immense rich land, filled with emerald green fields and dense forests and divided into eight equal parts by broad silver streams. Each of these eight sections is a kingdom with its own traditions, capitol, villages, streams and lakes, pastures and farmland. This is the Kingdom of Shambhala.

At the center of this kingdom rises a high plateau surrounded by another ring of crystalline snow mountains. Near the center of the plateau, a large lake gleams like a sapphire. Behind it, at the very center of the kingdom, is the capitol city of Kalapa filling the sky with radiant golden light. This is the seat of the Rigden Kings who rule over all Shambhala from their great complex of palaces with cinnabar walls, carved golden pillars, and glittering crystal roofs and courtyards filled with laurel, cedar, peach, and cinnamon trees. Even from far away, Gesar, his mother and the Horse of Wind hear the distant chiming of the silver bells that adorn the eaves of the Kalapa Court. They smell the faint perfume of juniper incense. Gesar's heart is full of joy and he sings this song:

*Hidden behind gleaming snow walls
Of solidified hope and fear:
Shambhala. Protected by ice towers
Of concepts about reality: Kalapa.
Its gateways are the senses themselves,
Free from the limitations of self-reference.*

*Ah, how the four great elements dance and shine
In the space of the Rigden's Imperial Mind,
Here, life, death and limitation
Are the pure ground.*

*Here the passions
Are the spontaneous light of wisdom.*

*Here duality
Is the living expression of non-duality.*

*Here the path of the Realms and Bardos
Is the path of awake,
Moving in every instant of light and darkness.*

*Here the heart of all human kind unfolds
In the fullness of its own love.*

*Here in the space of the Rigden's Imperial Mind.
Resting in the natural state,
Ordinary mind,*

*Suddenly free from the ice walls of fixed thinking
And the precipices of subconscious gossip,
The senses reform themselves.
The world reforms itself.*

*The virtues of the human realm rise here naturally
In the shape of the human heart,
In the shape of Shambhala.*

*So, may all human beings see this living kingdom,
The home of the hearts of all,
The home of our heart.*

Gesar is so deeply drawn to the vision of Shambhala that he is sure it must also be imprinted on his mother's mind, and they continue their journey in the human realm.

Endless chances for accomplishment, love, conquest and gain fill the minds of the travelers. Gesar, Dzedden and the great wind horse all are exhilarated by the panoply of possibilities. But this spectacle brings with it the memory of many lives devoted to making mental projections real. They feel swamped in life after life wasted in this way.

All the pride in momentary accomplishments of mastery or rage at failures prevent those in the human realm from seeing that the painful experiences of birth, growing, old age, sickness and death cannot be manipulated or controlled. Gesar, his mother and his great steed remember the many lives of many loved ones, enemies, friends and beings whom they had only known casually whose lives had likewise been spent in difficult struggle only to find a final revelation of their wasted efforts.

Gesar's mind becomes a deep well of sorrow as he senses that even his heroic human life has somehow been a trap. All his great battles, passionate loves, compelling intrigues and triumphant exploits seem hollow. The tangible accomplishments of the kingdom of Ling will vanish in a generation. When he dies, all he brought to fruition will dissipate except as a story told for entertainment. In the end, he has merely been one of many actors in the unending theater of the Human Realm.

And as he gazes sadly into the vast expanse of human life, the ceaseless panoply of individual love, bravery, genius, treachery, splendor, cravenness and self-deception and the longing from which it rises glow like reflection in a boundariless golden mirror.

Gesar is completely engulfed as all the innumerable inner and outer qualities of his life are absorbed like so many specks of dust into this expanse of dense, radiant golden light. His mind and existence became nothing other than the golden light of the Wisdom of Equanimity.

This is the light of the purified element of earth, the light of the infinite qualities of all the Buddhas. This is the Southern Pure Realm of Srimat, The Glorious that blazes from the heart of Ratnasambhava, the wish-fulfilling jewel.

In the center of this realm, from the all-sustaining Wisdom of Equanimity of the awakened state, Gesar's being rises in the form of Ratnasambhava, yellow as gold and radiant as the afternoon sun. He holds a wish-fulfilling jewel in his right hand and sits upon the back of a great golden horse. He embraces his consort, Mamaki, and is accompanied by the Bodhisattvas Akasagarbha and Samantabhadra, Mala and Dhupa. The air around them is rich, honey-like and all-engulfing. All who have the good fortune to dwell in this realm are not limited the temporary circumstances of body and location. Their generosity radiates throughout all the realms and all the bardos to wherever it is needed.

In this form Gesar blazes through the whole of space. Dzedden feels joy rise in her heart, and the miracle horse rears in the air. Then in a voice sweet and melodious, Gesar sing this song:

RI
As thoughts vanish
When rock meets bone,
All momentary identity
All sense of inner possibility,
All outer perceptions taken to be real,
All such occasions for pride
Are absorbed into the golden ground
Of equal taste,
Absorbed and fulfilled
In the boundless qualities
Of the pure and fertile earth.

AH AH AH

So Gesar, King of Ling, his mother, Dzedden the Naga Princess and his fearless Horse of Wind, Kyang Ko Kar Kar dissipate into the ever expanding amplitude of golden ground. And at that moment, for an instant free from time, every human being experiences complete liberation.