



# **The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa: The Life-Story and Teaching of the Greatest Poet-Saint Ever to Appear in the History of Buddhism**

*Garma C.C. Chang*

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Tibetans accord *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* a classic status comparable to that of the *Mahabharata* and the Bible, and revere its author as probably the best single exemplar of the religious life. Milarepa was an eleventh-century Buddhist poet and saint, a cotton-clad yogi who avoided the scholarly institutions of his time and wandered from village to village, teaching enlightenment and the path to Buddhahood through his spontaneously composed songs. Wherever he went, crowds of people gathered to hear his sweet sounding voice "singing the Dharma."

*The Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa*, says the book's translator, "has been read as the biography of a saint, a guide book for devotions, a manual of Buddhist yoga, a volume of songs and poems, and even a collection of Tibetan folklore, and fairy tales." With titles like "The Salvation of the Dead," "A Woman's Role in the Dharma," and "Challenge from a Wise Demoness," Milrepa's poems are filled with fascinating tales of miraculous encounters and colorful imagery, and present a valuable insight into the living quality of Tibetan Buddhism. Central as this book is to Tibetan culture, the arcane dialect and obscurity of many original passages daunted translators for centuries; this was the first complete version of the classic to appear in the West.

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