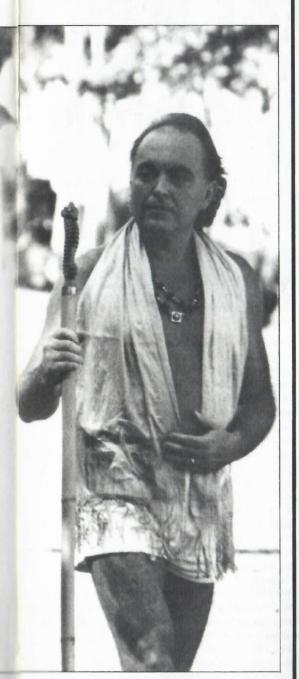


IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FREE TRADITION OF CRAZY ADEPTS

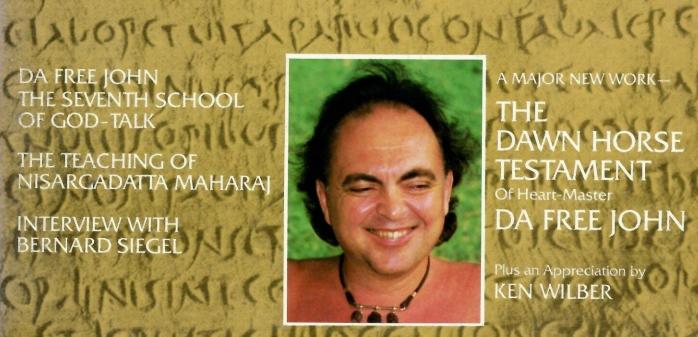
MASTER DA FREE JOHN



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In one passage of his masterwork The Dawn Horse Testament, 1 Master Da Free John points to certain of the "Great Individuals" of the Hindu and Buddhist traditions as his "likenesses". He indicates that, though there are no Western precedents for his Teaching Work, it can be understood in the context of the lives and Teachings of these traditional Teachers. In the following article some of the Hindu and Buddhist Adepts specifically mentioned by Master Da are discussed. The examination of these Adepts brings to light the traditional precedents for the extraordinary Teaching Work of Master Da Free John, particularly among the Tantric Adepts.

The sequel to this article, to appear in the next issue of The Laughing Man, will focus on the Chinese and Japanese Adepts mentioned by Master Da, as well as the Teachers who were influential in his own Realization.

PART ONE

aster Da Free John is, by his own testimony, a God-Realized Adept who Teaches in the Crazy Wisdom manner. He is, in fact, the first "Crazy" God-Realizer to be born in the Western world. In order to understand his life and Work we need to look beyond the horizon of secular humanism on the one hand and religious provincialism on the other, which are both informed by the ideology of scientism. Within the context of scientific materialism, which poses as a total belief system, the tradition of Crazy Wisdom has no credibility, since the pursuit of spiritual values is itself debunked.

To be sure, Crazy Wisdom of a sort once had its place within the Christian tradition—witness the Fools for Christ's Sake (who expressed their spirituality through acts of divine foolishness). However, in the course of Christianity's battle with the growing secularism of the last three centuries, it has increasingly lost its experiential dimension together with a sensibility for the usefulness of spiritual practice, guidance, and the "foolish" wisdom of true men of God.

If we want to learn about the phenomenon of Crazy Wisdom, we would do best to turn our attention to important Eastern Adepts and traditions. They will

 The reference is to pp. 134-36 of The Dawn Horse Testament. This revelatory work is introduced to Laughing Man readers in this issue on pp. 10-16.



CRAZY WISDOM TEACHING

MASTER DA FREE JOHN

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE FREE TRADITION OF CRAZY ADEPTS

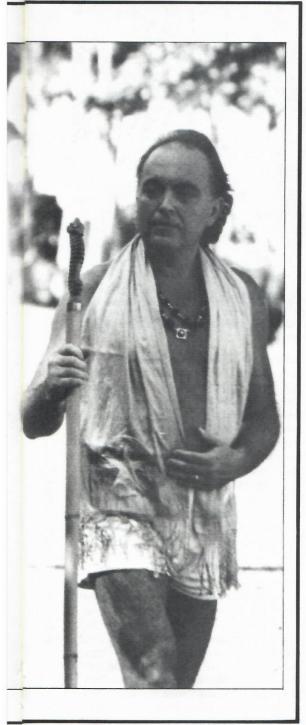
by the editorial staff of THE LAUGHING MAN

help us to better understand and appreciate the enormous significance of Master Da Free John's unusual Teaching Work. In *The Dawn Horse Testament* (pp. 134–36), the Adept Da Free John has pointed to a number of Eastern spiritual giants as paralleling his own Teaching style or as illustrating a particular feature of his Work with devotees. He invites the readers of his final testament to see his "likeness" among certain

Buddhist and Hindu Adepts, and he understands himself as standing in this free lineage of Teachers.

At the same time, however, Master Da Free John emphasizes the uniqueness of his own Teaching, which is no mere eclecticism but is born of his Transcendental Realization and specifically intended to meet the needs of contemporary humanity.

Among the Hindus, he asks us to



compare his Teaching Demonstrations or "Play" in the first instance to that of the God-intoxicated "Bhaktas", or "Lovers" of God, epitomized by the cowherd maidens or "gopis" in the Krishna legends and of course by the God-Man Krishna himself. The maidens' hearts are so completely captivated by the Divine that they are apt to discard custom and common sense in their longing to be united with the Supreme

Person of Love. Real love, they teach us, is unreasonable. And the Compassion or Love of the Adept-Teacher for his devotees is just that: in ordinary human terms it makes no sense whatsoever, because it is so unconditional and so unwaveringly committed.

Of the many revered Saints and Sages who represent the "bhakti" tradition, Master Da Free John singles out Kabir, Tukaram, Chaitanya, Ramanuja, and Ramprasad. Born into a Moslem family of low social status, Kabir (1440-1518) has been hailed as the "Father of Hindi literature". A married householder who earned his livelihood from weaving, he became one of the most influential figures of northern India, and his Teaching did much to synthesize the many different religious traditions of his day. He spoke the language of the ordinary people, infusing it with the brightness of his spiritual Realization. In many of his popular verses, Kabir extols the supreme Help afforded by a true Master and praises the devotional attitude in the disciple. He sings of the "dice of Love" which are to be cast on the body as the board, according to the throw learned from the Heart-Master.

The great Master of God-intoxication was Chaitanya (1486–1553), whose life story reads like a recapitulation of the sports of Krishna. For the last twelve years of his life, he is said to have lived in perpetual devotional ecstasy or "Divine Madness" ("divyaunmada"). A tall, muscular man, he considered himself the "bride" of Krishna. Chaitanya demonstrated in his own life how the dry ritualism of his brahmanical peers could be turned into true worship. Lost in God, he would dance, often in public, and with his entranced dance attract others into God-Communion.

Tukaram (1608–1650), who was a farmer by trade, is reported to have received his spiritual initiation from Chaitanya in a dream. Tukaram's all-embracing love and forbearance and his special compassion for animals compare with the saintliness of St. Francis of Assisi. And he had much to be forbearing about, for his envious contemporaries from the upper classes condemned and reviled him for his spontaneous witnessing of the Love of God. Oblivious to the misunderstanding and spite of his detractors, Tukaram bequeathed to his fellow men and posterity many wonderful songs and chants in praise of the Divine and the spiritual Way. The woman saint Bahinabai exclaims in one of her songs that "Jnanadeva [Jnaneshwar] laid the foundation, and Tukaram became the pinnacle."

Much earlier than these Teachers was Ramanuja (1017-1137), son of a South Indian merchant, who taught that God is One but Personal and characterized by attributes. He praised wisdom ("jnana") but asked that it mature into love-devotion ("bhakti"). Like Master Da Free John, Ramanuja recommended unqualified self-surrender to the Divine ("prapatti"). The true devotee will resign even his struggle for Liberation, realizing that his life is not his own.

The Bengali Poet-Saint Ramprasad Sen (eighteenth century), like Sri Ramakrishna (who is discussed below), was a devout worshipper of the Divine in its female aspect—the Great Mother. In his poems, which he himself put to music, we find Ramprasad chiding and pleading with the Goddess who, in her ecstatic Dance, seems remote from the suffering and passion of the devotee. He was, as all spiritual practitioners are prone to be, a querulous lover who asked for the attention of the Divine.

Master Da Free John has also lived as a great bhakta. His love issues from and terminates in the Unconditional itself. The following is an excerpt from an account of a remarkable evening in which Master Da called into his quarters a renunciate devotee whom he had been intensely instructing. In it he dramatizes the mood or "bhava" of Love that is the constant context of his Teaching. The incident took place on Nukubati Island, Fiji, in the Fall of 1983 and is related by the devotee himself, Daji Advaita Bodha Deepika.

I let my heart go. Tears of gratitude fell from my eyes. Overcome with love, I held his face between my hands. He laughed, in Love, with tears of God falling down his face. He spoke the words of Love to me.

He said, "I Love you. And I will not let you suffer. I cannot let you go to hell. I will reincarnate forever and wherever to free my devotees. I Love you all.

"But it pains me so to see you suffer. Why do you resist my Help? Why do you turn from me?

"You must Love."

Then examining the modest room, he said, "Isn't it a wonder that God is visible to us even here in this world of the Mother. Look at these walls and the ceiling, even Nature itself. Everyone and everything inheres in the Radiance. Even here. Even now. Isn't God a Wonder! Isn't God a Beauty!

"This is not heaven. Still God is completely evident. But I can tell you there is a Place of Infinite Happiness and Love, a Place where there is no fear, no suffering, no death, no separation. I tell you there is such a Place. I have come from that Place to help you live there, too. But you must love. Will you do that for me?

"I Love my devotees. If they would only understand and turn to Me in love, their lives would be transformed.

"Tell me, do they know how much I Love them? Do they know how terrible purgatory is? Do they? Do they know? Do they really know that I Love them?

"Do they know who I Am?

"I Love them all.

"I Love all my devotees."2

While the bhaktas demonstrate the universal need of loving attachment to the Divine, the "jnanis" or Realizers of Transcendental Wisdom demonstrate the superlative virtue of renunciation of all clinging to the finite or imperfect realm. Master Da Free John mentions Shankara (788-820), who, from a Realizer's position, critiqued the philosophical and religious traditions of his day and singlehandedly brought about a decisive cultural renaissance. He and other jnanis like him gave overwhelming testimony to the fact that spiritual renunciation is not synonymous with an inactive, purely contemplative life. Shankara wrote a whole string of Sanskrit commentaries on the sacred Hindu literature and numerous devotional hymns, and he founded five important monasteries. His short but creative life demonstrates the cathartic and aligning power of a God-Realized Adept.

The same demonstration can be seen in the life of Jnaneshwar (1275–1296), who did for the Marathi culture what Shankara accomplished for the larger Hindu culture. Jnaneshwar's major work, the *Jnaneshwari*, is counted by many as among the finest poetic creations of world literature; it is also a marvelous repository of deep esoteric knowledge. A brahmin by birth, Jnaneshwar broke out of the elitism of his class and shared his astonishing learning and innate Wisdom with the illiterate majority by composing his works in the vernacular.

In his Dawn Horse Testament, Master Da Free John further points to the great "Spirit-Baptizers", those Adepts who initiate others by Imparting to them, or Awakening in them, the Life-Force or Shakti that then continues to effect the miracle of their spiritual transformation autonomously. This esoteric means of "shaktipat" ("descent of the Force") is accomplished by the Teacher's word, touch, or glance.

Master Da Free John mentions an individual barely known in the West, Maharishi Brahmananda Brahmachari. Brahmananda, of Gangonath, Baroda (India), who died in 1906, is known to have



Left to right: Kabir (1440-1518), Chaitanya (1486-1553), Tukaram (1608-1650)

activated the spiritual process in others by his mere glance. A man of miracles, Brahmananda lived in extreme austerity in a remote cave, though during a severe famine he was found dispensing food to thousands of victims from a seemingly inexhaustible stock.

Stories of spontaneous initiation are told of many of the Adepts referred to in *The Dawn Horse Testament*, whether they be bhaktas, jnanis, Yogic Siddhas, ³ Tantrics, "Avadhoots," 4 or Adepts of Divine Shaktipat. These Realizers are all communicators of the Radiance of the Divine Being, and, as the Hindu and Buddhist scriptures repeatedly affirm, their mere physical proximity is often enough to bring about spiritual experiences or a change of heart in others.

Since the beginning of his public Teaching Work in April 1972, Master Da Free John has described himself as a Siddha, a Perfected or God-Realized Adept. In his very first public talk, he explained:

The great Siddhas, men of radical understanding, are those who live consciously

- 3. "Siddha" literally means a fulfilled or perfect one. A Siddha is one who has Realized God permanently and beyond doubt. Master Da Free John uses the term to refer to the Free Adepts who have appeared throughout the manifest worlds and in many cultures historically on Earth and who, because of their own Awakening, naturally are moved to Awaken others through the spontaneously transmitted Consciousness, Presence, Power, and Intelligence of the Divine Being.
- 4. The Sanskrit word "avadhuta" means literally "shaken off". In the Hindu tradition, an Avadhoot is a Crazy Adept, one who has cast off all clinging, including the attachment to social conventions, and lives in "Divine Madness".

as the Heart. They function as the Heart for living beings. And that function is simply relationship, unobstructed flow. The pressure of the presence of such a one stimulates and intensifies the flow of force in living beings. All obstructions tend to fall away in the presence of this force. Where it moves there is either surrender or flight in its path. The Siddhas communicate the living Force of Reality. They live it to living beings. They simply live the natural state of enjoyment with other beings. And those who stay to live in friendship with the man of understanding tend also to understand. ⁵

In his early testimony "The Gospel of the Siddhas," written on March 1, 1973, Master Da Free John declared himself to be the "Siddha-Guru, the Prasad,6 the Object and Process of Meditation for my devotees." His declaration is in consonance with the ancient esoteric tradition of Guru-Yoga, or the Way of self-transcendence and ultimate God-Realization through the spiritual, Transcendental, and Divine Transmission of the Guru or Spiritual Master. The God-Realized Teacher's spiritual Presence is itself the instrument of his devotee's transformation. It is his constant gift of Grace and the very secret of the relationship between

- 5. Bubba [Da] Free John, *The Method of the Siddhas*, rev. ed. (The Dawn Horse Press, 1978), p. 5.
- 6. The Sanskrit word "prasada" means "offering" and refers to the "gift of Grace" of the Adept-Teacher, the gift of himself to devotees.
- Bubba [Da] Free John, The Method of the Siddhas, p. 322.

 Daji Advaita Bodha Deepika, "Love," Crazy Wisdom, vol. 3, no. 1 (January 1984), p. 13. "The Siddhas communicate the living Force of Reality."

DA FREE JOHN









Left to right: Ramanuja (1017-1137), Shankara (788-820), Jnaneshwar (1275-1296), Brahmananda Brahmachari (?-1906)

Master and disciple. Master Da Free John writes:

The relationship to the Guru is Satsang [Divine Communion]. That is the discovery. That is the process. That is the secret of the Siddhas.⁸

Traditionally, a Siddha is one who is "Accomplished" or "Perfected" in the Mood of God-Realization and who, therefore, has the Power (or "siddhi") to Bless the spiritual discipline (or "sadhana") of others who respond to him so that they too may become Perfected. The Sanskrit words "siddha", "siddhi", and "sadhana" all stem from the same verbal root, namely "sidh" meaning "to hit (a mark)". Thus, both the accomplished Adept and the aspirant following the Way Taught by his Teacher are involved in a process that transcends the conventional ways of the ego. And, as Master Da Free John reminds us, the ego is the selfwilled movement away from Reality, which is what is meant by "sin". As he puts it, to sin is "to miss the mark".9 The "mark" in question is of course the Real, or God, the Transcendental Being-Consciousness. The Siddha is he who always meets or "hits" the mark—that is, one who is never separated from God.

By virtue of his Identity with the Supreme Being-Consciousness, the Siddha enjoys all kinds of extraordinary powers or siddhis. In some traditions, a whole spiritual technology has been created around these powers. Thus, Master Da Free John refers to the "Yogic Siddhas", or those Adepts who follow one or another form of yogic discipline, which involves the manipulation of the Life-Force and the employment of powers for the purpose of Teaching others.

Although various great Siddhas have appeared over the centuries in the Buddhist tradition, we can also point specifically to the eighty-four Mahasiddhas or "Great Adepts" of northern India-the figure eighty-four being more of symbolic than historical significance. These illustrious Masters, who lived between the seventh and the twelfth centuries, were all propounders of the form of Tantric Buddhism known as Vajrayana. They not only embodied the highest Buddhist ideal of Realization but also were famous for working miracles among their devotees and the general population alike. The Tibetans have preserved fragments of their biographies, but much of the material is purely legendary. Nonetheless, these individuals undoubtedly existed. Among them we find such well-known Adepts as Saraha, Kanha, Nagarjuna, Busuku (also known as Shantideva), Minapa (or Matsyendranatha), Gorakhnath, Naropa, and Tilopa.

Master Da Free John refers to the last three by name. Although mentioned in the Buddhist pantheon of Siddhas, Gorakhnath (tenth century) more fully belonged to the Hindu tradition. Very probably he lived a householder's life, but as a Master of the Life-Current he undoubtedly practiced the high art of transmutation of the sexual energies. He founded the school of hatha yoga, which acknowledges that the body is a temple of the Divine.

It was Tilopa who, about the middle of the tenth century, founded the prominent Kagyupa school of Tibetan Buddhism. He passed on his Teaching of the "Mahamudra" ("Great Seal")—the unconditioned Reality—to Naropa, Naropa, in turn, Transmitted the Teaching and the Realization to Marpa, and Marpa to Tibet's great Yogi-poet Milarepa. From Milarepa the esoteric doctrines and practices were handed down in unbroken succession to the present Masters of the Kagyupa lineages.

Older than the Kagyupa is the Nyingmapa school of Tibetan Buddhism, which goes back to Padma Sambhava (eighth century), the first to Teach Buddhism in Tibet and one who is venerated there as the Guru Rimpoche or "Precious Teacher". Padma Sambhava, the "Lotus-born", was an Indian-born Master who combined spiritual accomplishment with erudition. He is remembered as one of the greatest Siddhas of all time, endowed not only with the Divine Power to Liberate others, but also with a plethora of vogic powers. The extant biography is, however, largely a symbolic account. Padma Sambhava, like all the other Siddhas, was a Master of Vajrayana, the Buddhist form of Tantrism, the spiritual orientation that shaped medieval Hinduism, Buddhism, and to some degree Jainism.

Tantrism is not easy to define. It comprises a great variety of philosophical doctrines and spiritual practices. Perhaps its single most outstanding characteristic is its

8. Ibid., pp. 137-38.

9. Da Free John, Love of the Two-Armed Form (The Dawn Horse Press, 1978, rep. 1985), p. 98.

experimentalism: in their spiritual aspirations, the Tantric Masters and practitioners were (and are) willing to adopt means that the conventional (often puritanical) mind tends to reject as antithetical to a religious life, such as alcohol and sexuality. For the Tantric Adept, there is only the One Reality. All the divisions, contrasts, and conflicts that make up conventional life are simply the corollary of un-Enlightenment. From the Enlightened point of view, however, everyone is already Saved, Liberated, or God-Realized. There is no real opposition between the Ultimate Reality ("nirvana") and the realms of conditioned existence ("samsara").

Therefore, there is nothing in Nature that is not sacred. Thus, sexuality in itself is not sinful. What is sinful is Man's turning away from the Real and his deployment of sexual gratification to that end. Neither is the use of alcohol in itself sinful. Or the enjoyment of ordinary pleasures. Asceticism—the castigation of the flesh and flight from the world-is not essential to true spiritual life. What matters is our fundamental orientation: our attention can be turned either toward or away from the Real, or God. Because of its inherent unconventionalism and the occasional libertinism to which it gave rise, Tantrism has frequently come under attack and been subject to misunderstanding and suppression on the Indian subcontinent, with the notable exception of Tibet, where it flourished for many centuries until the Chinese invasion.

Crazy Wisdom epitomizes the spirit of Tantrism, which recognizes that the universe is a sacred event, that the body is the "temple of the Divine", and that Reality transcends the categories of the human mind and therefore conventional notions of good and evil. In this sense, Master Da Free John is an Adept-Teacher of the highest form of Tantrism, and he himself has thus characterized his Teaching. Perhaps it is first and foremost this age-old esoteric tradition that Master Da Free John points to when he says in The Dawn Horse Testament (p. 134): "My Play Is Unique In This Western Circumstance, but I Can Be Understood In The Light Of The Great Tradition." For, although we can see parallels of his Realization and Work among such saintly men as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, and Ramana Maharshi, his basic attitude is not ascetical but entirely body-positive and sex-positive.

The Crazy Wisdom style of Teaching presupposes a life-affirmative disposition in both the Teacher and the devotee, because Crazy Wisdom is the Adept's spontaneous attempt to confront the conventional personality with his or her particular (and unnecessary) self-limitations.

The Crazy Wisdom style of Teaching presupposes a life-affirmative disposition in both the Teacher and the devotee.

Master Da Free John's Crazy Wisdom style of Teaching is in the manner of the Indian "Vira", 10 or "Spiritual Hero". The Vira manifests a creative, Heroic attitude toward experience and bodily life. He is bound by no rules, but instead faces each moment without preconceptions. He does not seek to suppress, escape, or bypass any part of functional life, but by the Power of his spiritual Realization, he converts or purifies and sublimes every circumstance. His existence is bathed in the Well of Being, the uncreated Radiance from which he draws his immense vitality.

Traditionally, discipleship under a Vira-Siddha is prized as the most direct route to God-Realization. Through the intensity, passion, and Crazy Wisdom of his Teaching Work, he penetrates directly to the heart of what binds his devotees, freely encountering, when necessary, even those areas of life beyond the bounds of conventional social taboos. Under his skillful instruction no experience reinforces self-bondage and suffering, but every situation is revealed as the manifestation of Liberation and Enjoy-

10. "Vira" is a Sanskrit term meaning "Hero", "Man", or "a Man of Power". It is traditionally used to designate a Realized Adept, the Divine Man, who demonstrates the Heroic Way of the Realization of the Ultimate Truth of Man and the universe.

The term "Vira" is also a specific designation for Adepts and advanced practitioners of the Tantric approach to Realization. The Realized Adepts demonstrate the Way as a whole, and the advanced practitioners simply pursue the ultimate fulfillment of the Tantric Way.

ment. For him, every circumstance simply serves as the battlefield of the difficult struggle involved in self-transcending spiritual practice, and this heroic attitude is inculcated in his devotees.

That Master Da Free John is just such an uncompromising Spiritual Hero is attested to by those who have been fortunate to experience his Crazy Wise Teaching Work. He has continually, vigorously, and freely devoted himself to the Liberation of his devotees, submitting himself willingly to their own conditions and limitations in order to serve them. He has always lived and Taught fearlessly, seeing only the Divine in all beings and situations, and thus dissolving the apparent binding power of conditional experience.

Since individualism has become the philosophy of the day (so that even self-declared spiritual practitioners resent and sometimes oppose the Teacher's "interference"), it is important to understand the nature and rationale of the Crazy Wisdom style of Teaching. Far from manipulating or diminishing his devotees, the Crazy Adept confronts them with their habitual withdrawal from Reality in order to set them Free, in the process constantly giving of (and risking) himself.

At the same time, serious practitioners understand that the spiritual process is a continuous trial or ordeal in which the ego cannot ultimately be victorious. The Adept-Teacher is always Working to bring about a crisis of consciousness in his disciples, because this is the only way in which a person can break through his or her self-delusions and self-defenses and begin to "hear" and "see".

The necessary freedom and potency of such instruction is illustrated in the following story of Master Da Free John's Work with a devotee who served him as physician. One evening this doctor examined a sinus condition that was affecting Master Da. Falling into his rote bedside manner, he casually asked Master Da Free John, "Does this hurt?" while striking his sinuses sharply (which in the case of a sinus infection would be very painful). The Master did not say a word, but instead immediately struck the doctor-devotee in the stomach, asking the same question, "Does this hurt?" The devotee was instantly awakened to his whole psychological state—his nervous insensitivity to the Master and his role-playing.

11. In the Teaching of Master Da Free John, "hearing" and "seeing" are technical terms that describe the beginnings of spiritual awakening. "Hearing" is the process wherein one understands his own egoic activity of self-contraction to the point where he intuits the native Freedom of Divine Consciousness. "Seeing", which follows upon hearing, is the emotional conversion of the being to love.

This lesson helped him to turn around his entire approach to the "doctor-patient" game.

Master Da Free John has often commented that this Work is dangerous to himself. For, in order to Teach in the Crazy Wisdom manner, he must incarnate fully in the human body, experience the ordinary states, and suffer the conventional limitations—the fear and the pain—of the unEnlightened individual. More than that, in order to Communicate the Real to others, Master Da Free John identifies with their condition. As he states in an essay written on March 19, 1975:

What I do is not the way I am, but the Way I Teach.

What I speak is not a reflection of me, but of you.

People do well to be offended or even outraged by me. This is my purpose. But their reaction must turn upon themselves, for I have not shown them myself by all of this. All that I do and speak only reveals men to themselves.

I have become willing to Teach in this uncommon way because I have known my friends and they are what I can seem to be. By retaining all qualities in their company, I gradually wean them of all reactions, all sympathies, all alternatives, fixed assumptions, false teachings, dualities, searches, and dilemma. This is my way of working for a time. Those who remain confounded by me, critical of me, have yet to see themselves. When their mediocrity is broken, when they yield their righteous reactions and their strife toward all the consolations of the manifest self, they may see my purity.

Freedom is the only purity. There is no Teaching but Consciousness itself. Da Free John as he appears is not other than the possibilities of men. 12

Many years have elapsed since this Confession. The "time" for working in this difficult, "muscular" way has indeed passed, and Master Da Free John is now in the hermitage phase of his Work. But the lessons generated during the period of Crazy Wisdom Teaching are not forgotten, and they will continue to make their point and inspire future devotees. Of course, the Adept is always Teaching whenever he encounters a devotee or even any being who is blind to the Glory of God. And the renunciates who practice in his personal Company in the hermitage setting appreciate his continuing Instruction of them as the unpredictable Play of a Great Trickster.

One evening in the fall of 1983, while dancing ecstatically, one of the male devotees living on Translation Island, the Hermitage Sanctuary of The Johannine Daist Communion, fell and cracked two ribs. The next day Master Da Free John noticed that the devotee was clutching his chest in pain whenever he laughed. The Adept inquired of the cause, the practitioner informed him, and nothing more was said. Two weeks passed, and the devotee's ribs were still painful. At that time, Master Da Free John happened to consider with him a particularly dramatic emotional incident in his past. During the consideration the devotee was relieved of long-standing emotional trauma-the guilt, anger, sorrow, and shame that had kept him emotionally bound for many years. Miraculously his painful cracked ribs were also healed.

After the confrontation with that devotee, Master Da Free John lay down to rest. Soon he began to feel an ache on the left side of his chest and sharp pain when he breathed. The resident physician was called to examine Master Da and found that two ribs had fractured spontaneously. They were the same ribs and fracture sites as in the devotee's case! Such manifestations in the Adept's body cannot be understood by the conventional mind. They can be comprehended only in the context of the Heart-Master's spontaneous love and sympathy for his devotee.

In his sublime Effort to Communicate the Transcendental Being-Consciousness to others and to break down their resistance to Grace, Master Da Free John is guided by his Wisdom and Compassion, as were the truly great Masters of yore. This, too, can be appreciated only in the context of the Great Tradition of spiritual practice. When one studies the traditional accounts of the heroic struggle of such exemplary spiritual figures as Milarepa, Naropa, or Vivekananda, one can witness the equally heroic struggle of the Teacher who infallibly conducts his devotee across the numerous hurdles of spiritual life.

The Master, steeped in the Realization of God, is ever intent on Liberating his devotee. Founded in transcendental Wisdom, the true Master intimately understands the disciple's heart and, stirred to Teach by transcendental Compassion, he constantly puts the devotee to the test, confronting him with the self-imposed limitations that prevent his full Enlightenment. The Guru's Work is best captured in the story of Milarepa's discipleship under Marpa "the Translator". 13

When Milarepa approached the famous Lama for spiritual instruction, Marpa had the young aspirant build a house high up on a mountain ridge. The building was half finished when Marpa told Milarepa to demolish it and return stones and earth to their original place. Then he had him start building a similar structure on a different mountain ridge. Again, halfway through Milarepa's efforts, Marpa ordered him to disassemble the building brick by brick and start up elsewhere. Growing exhausted from his labors and suffering the meaninglessness of his task, Milarepa entreated his Guru to consider the shape of the house and its location well. Marpa explained that he had been tipsy when he had given the previous orders and reassured him that this would definitely be the final site.

One-third into the project, Milarepa's worst fears came true. His Teacher ordered him to start all over again. By now, Milarepa had painful sores on his back from carrying the heavy boulders, but he did not dare complain lest he get the brunt of Marpa's apparent short temper. At this

12. Da Free John, Forehead, Breath, and Smile (The Dawn Horse Press, 1982), p. 50.

13. For the full story of Milarepa's life see *Tibet's Great Yogi Milarepa*, ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1969).





Marpa (1012-1097)

Milarepa (1040-1123)

point, Marpa's wife interceded, begging her husband to have pity on the youth. The illustrious Guru agreed to impart to his devotee some exoteric religious instruction, telling him that if he wanted more, he would have to earn it. The next day, Marpa took him to a new spot, ordering him to erect what was to be a seven-story building. Milarepa obeyed.

It so happened that several other disciples had carried a large boulder to that site, which Milarepa used as a cornerstone. When Marpa, much later, discovered that his disciple had received help, he instructed him to remove the cornerstone by himself and return it to its original location—only to have him singlehandedly carry it back all the way and replace it as part of the building.

Of course, Milarepa's trials did not end here. Marpa next insisted on having a tenstory annex built. On seeing the inflamed sores on his devotee's body, he merely suggested the use of padding so that the work could be continued. Now Milarepa seriously contemplated suicide, and he even made a clumsy attempt at leaving the hermitage, which merely resulted in his being severely beaten by Marpa. Repeatedly Milarepa asked for initiation, but was each time driven off. Marpa wanted a worthy gift from his devotee—gold.

While Milarepa never doubted his Guru's Enlightenment, he began to feel that he would never be granted initiation by him. So, at one point he stole away in search of a more compliant Teacher. But he felt mysteriously attracted back to Marpa—only to leave again a short while later with a forged

letter that would get him initiation through one of Marpa's chief disciples. But Milarepa had to discover that without the Adept-Teacher's Blessing, spiritual practice remains barren. He returned, shamefaced.

Marpa, in the end, took pity on him. He told Milarepa that he was quite right in trying to obtain spiritual initiation by any means, and also that the Guru's anger was not simply a negative emotional state but a Blessing act. He explained further that had he been able to plunge Milarepa into utter despair a ninth time, his disciple would have attained Enlightenment on the spot. Then Milarepa received the long-desired secret teachings and initiation. In many of his countless songs, famous throughout Tibet, Milarepa expresses his gratitude for Marpa's compassionate Work with him, even calling the great Teacher "kind Marpa".

It is clear from Milarepa's biography that Marpa was no callous individual. He was profoundly concerned about his disciple and surreptitiously shed tears for him. Yet, he knew what it would take to convert Milarepa from a young, proud sorcerer (who had caused considerable harm to others) into a person irrevocably devoted to self-transcending practice and ultimate Enlightenment. Marpa's own discipleship had been no easier. He gave up most of his possessions to undertake three long journeys to India, filled with hardship, in order to receive Guru Naropa's Blessing and instruction-and not without being tested either, 14

14. For Marpa's story see *The Life of Marpa the Translator*, translated by the Nalanda Translation Committee (Boulder, Colo.: Prajna Press, 1982).

And Naropa's discipleship under Tilopa, as related in the traditional biography, serves, like Milarepa's pupilage, as an archetype of the sacred ordeal that the earnest devotee voluntarily adopts when he submits to the Wisdom and Compassion of an Adept-Teacher. ¹⁵ Naropa's biography is, however, more symbolic than literal.

Tradition records that Naropa, of royal birth, had the impulse to renounce the world already as a child, but married and lived the life of a householder in order to appease his parents. After eight years of marriage and with his good wife's consent, Naropa, then only twenty-five, at last fulfilled his desire for a renunciate life. Nine years later, the now-famous scholar was voted abbot of Nalanda, the greatest of all seats of Buddhist learning. Only eight years later, in 1057 A.D., Naropa realized that although he knew the Buddha's Teaching better than most, he had missed its real import. He resigned his prestigious post and set out to meet his Teacher Tilopa, who had been revealed to him in a vision.

His search for Tilopa was arduous and full of miracles in which the great Master appeared to Naropa in different guises and in ever more terrifying aspects. Because of his scholarly proclivities, Naropa failed to understand the hidden significances of these encounters, and he despaired of ever meeting his Guru in the flesh. He was about to discard his body, which he felt to be an obstacle in his search, when Naropa reappeared in his real form. Accepting Naropa

15. For Naropa's life story see *The Life and Teachings of Naropa*, trans. by Herbert V. Guenther (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1963).



Tilopa (988-1069)

Naropa (1016 1100)

as his disciple, Tilopa reassured him that ever since the first vision they had never been apart, but were "like a body and its shadow."

And then began Naropa's spiritual ordeal. Out of his great Compassion for his worthy devotee, Tilopa spontaneously created incident after incident in which he tested Naropa's commitment to the difficult practice of self-transcendence. He expected his disciple again and again to risk himself, with his whole body and mind, in the spiritual adventure. And time after time, Naropa, unfailingly trusting the Wisdom of his Teacher, complied. The biography describes how Naropa had to confront his emotional and physical limitations, pain, and even death. Every Teaching Demonstration entailed the same lesson: that the "I" that identifies with, and clings to, the bodymind is an apparition, and that the experienced world of duality is not other than the Great Reality, the Buddha.

Hakuin's (1685–1768) story is similar. One day Hakuin went to his Master, Shoju, to demonstrate his understanding of Zen. Engaged by Shoju in a fierce dialogue, Hakuin recoiled more and more and the Master grew seemingly angrier by the minute. In the end, Shoju threw him over the porch of the house. Hakuin fell several feet, hitting his head against a stone wall. Shoju stood over his disciple, laughing mightily, which brought Hakuin around again. But even then, the old Master berated him, calling him names.

In his desperation, Hakuin seriously contemplated leaving his Master—a predictable reaction of the ego resistive to

surrender. Then the unexpected happened. During his begging-round, a woman refused to give him any rice. Absorbed in thought, he continued standing in front of her house, which she mistook as a sign of juvenile impudence. She swung a heavy broom at him, knocking him down on the ground.

When he regained consciousness, he found that his inner eye had been opened. Overjoyed, he returned to the monastery. Master Shoju instantly recognized the transformation in his devotee. He gently slapped his back and said, "You have it now, you have it now." Today, Hakuin is remembered as the father of the Japanese Rinzai school of Zen and the greatest of the Japanese Masters. He is also remembered as a dynamic personality who combined acute self-understanding with a proneness for mystical rapture and great poetic talent with a sharp intellect.

As Hakuin demonstrated during his years of spiritual search, it takes a great resolution, determination, and much self-discipline as well as superb discriminative intelligence to engage spiritual practice under the guidance of a true Master, who is intent on his devotee's Liberation or Awakening. Discernment, in particular, is essential, since the Guru cannot replace the necessary struggle with oneself. Nor must he be turned into an object or source of mere belief. Rather, the Guru is, in Master Da Free John's simile, the morning light by which we awaken from the dream of life. He says:

16. This story is told by D. T. Suzuki in *Essays in Zen Buddhism*, first series (New York: Grove Press, 1961), p.

The Guru is like the sunlight in the morning. He intensifies the light of morning until you awaken. Until the light awakens a man, even the true light of consciousness, he continues to dream, he tries to survive within the dream, manipulates himself within the dream, pursues all kinds of goals, searches, none of which awaken him. The Guru, the one who would awaken you, is not a person, he is not an individual within the dream. He is your very Consciousness. He is the Real, the Self, he is the Light, he is the true waking state, the Heart, breaking through the force of dreaming. 17

And that Reality, the Transcendental Condition, is not orderly, predictable. "The Self, the Heart is perfect madness," states Master Da Free John. 18 That is to say, Reality is a multidimensional process that cannot be grasped by the mind. Whenever we give It form, we can be sure that we have merely created pictures of It, while the Real has escaped us. The Divine Reality cannot be depicted or pinned down. This fact should help us understand why the great God-Realized Adepts of mankind do not have to look and act a certain way. The conventional mind tends to depict religious heroes in its own (idealized) image—as gentle mentors oozing with comforting manners and words. But even the twentiethcentury Adept Sai Baba of Shirdi, generally depicted as the epitome of such gentleness, vented his anger regularly for the purpose of instructing his devotees forcefully.

17. Da Free John, The Method of the Siddhas, p. 151.18. Ibid., p. 19.

When Master Da Free John declares the Self, or Reality, to be mad, he means that It is arational (not irrational!), that It transcends the categories of the rational mind, especially its commonsense version. Inasmuch as the God-Realized Adept's Teaching Work is informed by That Which is Real, he may at times engage in action that breaks the rules and regulations created by the conventional ego to keep itself and its life-circumstance in check. He may easily appear to be crazy. But his "craziness" is Divine Madness, Crazy Wisdom, Holy Folly. It is a spontaneous attempt to convey to others the perfect Freedom of the Real and the ultimate playfulness of existence.

It is from this perspective—and from this perspective only—that we can begin to understand the anger of a Jesus or a Marpa, the "crazy" conduct of the Fools for Christ's Sake, the flouting of social convention by the Indian Avadhoots, the trickster-like play of Krishna, and the paradoxical behavior of the Chinese and Japanese Masters. It is also the only perspective that allows one to appreciate, if not always comprehend, the Crazy Work of Master Da Free John.

Crazy Wisdom, to be sure, is an authentic phenomenon in the long history of religion. It makes its appearance not only in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Zen but also in the Middle Eastern traditions of Hasidism, Sufism, and not least Christianity. More than that, Crazy Wisdom is a legitimate way of Communicating the Real. Its legitimacy becomes apparent when one moves beyond the cultural ideologies and inadequate models of Man and embraces a wider, spiritual understanding of the human destiny. The Crazy Wisdom manner of Teaching by the great Adepts of mankind is of inestimable value to the spiritual evolution of the individual and the human race as a whole. One can look upon Master Da Free John's Teaching Work and life as an attempt to demonstrate this truth to a skeptical postindustrial civilization that has lost its spiritual anchorage and is oblivious even to the unorthodox "Crazy" Teachers of its own heritage—the Fools for Christ's Sake.

Why does Master Da Free John point only to Eastern Masters when Crazy Wisdom is by no means alien to Christendom? The answer must lie in the fact that the Crazy Wisdom style of Teaching only flourished in the Eastern hemisphere, whereas the growing individualism since the Renaissance and the consequent emphasis on personal (egoic) freedom, rather than transcendental Liberation, has undermined the ancient Master-devotee relationship in the West. Even the Fools for Christ's Sake belong to the Eastern branch of Christianity.



Drukpa Kunley (1455-1570)

In addition to the luminaries of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition already mentioned-Padma Sambhava, Tilopa, Naropa, Marpa, and Milarepa-Master Da Free John also singles out Drukpa Kunley as one of his likenesses in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. Drukpa Kunley (1455-1529) is one of the most celebrated of "Mad Yogis" ("nyonpa") of Tibet and Bhutan. His secret biography has been circulated among practitioners of the Kagvupa school for centuries, and his ribald songs and anecdotes from his unconventional life are the common property of the Tibetans and Bhutanese. Drukpa Kunley was, like Saraha (of whom he is deemed a reincarnation), a fearless critic of the profane follies of his contemporaries, not least his monastic brethren and ecclesiastic authority.

Having attained Enlightenment at an early age, Drukpa Kunley experienced the world as literally being coessential with the Transcendental Reality or Nirvana. And, like all Realizers, he was moved to alleviate the essential unhappiness of the multitudes, both inside the numerous monasteries and in the homes, fields, and taverns, who failed to perceive the Divine Play, or essential Emptiness, in everything. Drukpa Kunley was a vociferous critic of conventional religion, with its enslaving mind-set that substitutes rituals, moral prescriptions, and ecclesiastic hierarchies for Reality and actual spiritual discipline.

In his Crazy Work, Drukpa Kunley, an inveterate Tantric Master, made full use of human sexuality as a means of Instructing others in the fundamental Identity of the Transcendental Reality and the conditional world. Sexuality is recognizably the area of the greatest self-limitation, self-delusion, and maladaptation in human life. One day, so the esoteric hagiography goes, Drukpa Kunley was told the names of several beautiful young virgins in a far-off province of Tibet. 19 One named Sumchok attracted his attention, and he promptly went in search of the girl. When he had located her, he spontaneously began to sing a song pregnant with hidden meaning, offering to make love to her so that she might be Liberated. Recognizing the Mad Yogi, Sumchok responded with a song of her own, in which she begged him to help her attain Enlightenment.

Drukpa Kunley wasted no time in consummating the union, giving the girl more pleasure than she had ever known, as the biographer is not remiss in telling us. When, after a sumptuous meal, the Adept prepared to leave again, Sumchok pleaded with him to take her along. Testing the young initiate, Drukpa Kunley told her that he had no time to waste with her and that the mind of a Mad Yogi was as unreliable as "rumor of distant events." He plainly refused to take the girl with him, but promised he would return. Sumchok said that she would obey him in all things.

Thereupon Drukpa Kunley took her to a nearby cave and, after some pleading, the girl consented to remain there in perfect solitude for seven days. He instructed her to single-mindedly turn her attention to him. By virtue of the Mad Yogi's compassionate initiation and skillful means and the girl's unwavering devotion, she reached Enlightenment on the fourth day of her prayerful seclusion.

Drukpa Kunley's Tibetan biographer mentions that the Crazy Adept initiated five thousand girls in this manner. Drukpa Kunley both outraged and delighted the people. He constantly broke the rules, but his boundless Compassion was also evident in all his iconoclastic behavior. And in his spiritual Freedom, he was ever laughing and joking, infecting others with his great humor and capturing their attention with his immense storytelling skills and uproarious songs—meanwhile always pointing to the Real beyond appearances.

Much of Drukpa Kunley's biography may be fictional, but that should not blind

The following story is told after K. Dowman, The Divine Madman (Clearlake, Calif.: The Dawn Horse Press, 1983).

us to the fact that he and other Mad Yogis like him did indeed practice the high and courageous art of Communicating to others the blissful paradoxicality of Nirvana, which from the Adept's vantage point is not elsewhere (either within or up above) but here and now, amidst the ordinariness of life. And in their Teaching he and others made use of seemingly "non-spiritual" means.

Adept Kunley's sexual exploits were no personal obsession, but always initiatory incidents in which the spiritual process was awakened in the female devotee. Sexual energy has long been recognized by the experts of experiential religion as a powerful means of transmuting consciousness. As a rule, however, it was thought that the best way of harnessing the sexual energy was by controlling it through sheer willpower and discipline. Often this led merely to its repression.

But the Masters of Tantrism, like the Masters of Taoism, sought, true to their body-positive orientation, to utilize the sexual potential of male and female initiates by converting sexual intercourse into a spiritual occasion, as a trigger for bringing about profound changes in consciousness. Also, the spiritual practice of sexual intercourse ("maithuna") is a firsthand lesson in the Tantric realization that Bliss and pleasure are not mutually exclusive.

The very same lesson was taught in

Japan by Master Ikkyu (1394–1481), who argued that his "satori" deepened by frequenting "pavilion girls". He entered the brothels wearing his black robes, for he saw no distinction between the prostitutes and others, or between eating, drinking, and sexing and spiritual practice. His iconoclastic life illustrated the Zen Teaching of the One Buddha Mind that is the Essence of all phenomena.

He took to heart Lin Chi's words: "Shit and piss; wear your clothes; eat your meals . . . and in all things be ordinary, since enlightenment is in the mind, or rather the 'no mind'." ²⁰ Ikkyu's life spanned diverse areas, and his lifestyle was spontaneous and free. He was a renowned poet and is rated as medieval Japan's greatest calligrapher.

The Tantric tradition of medieval India has its roots in ancient Indian sexual rituals of an orgiastic type, and not least in the cult that created the beautiful legends of Krishna, who to this day is venerated as the chosen Deity of millions of Hindus. Whatever Krishna's historicity may be, his play with the milkmaids of Brindavan is symbolically instructive. On one level, at least, it represents the supreme attractiveness of the Divine Reality (embodied in the beautiful blue form of Krishna) and the awakened

20. Jon Carter Covell and Abbot Sobin Yamada, *Unraveling Zen's Red Thread: Ikkyu's Controversial Way* (Elizabeth, N.J.: Hollym International Corp., n.d.), p. 72.

soul's passionate response to God and forgetfulness of its worldly desires. And this is really also the substance of Tantrism and sexual initiation.

The body-positive Way is not a way of self-indulgence or self-fulfillment. It is a Way of suprapersonal love, of Realizing the Transcendental Self, not of merely gratifying the ego's desires. Mere hedonism is the way of the unregenerate being. The body-positive path, by contrast, is self-transcending discipline. As such it is renunciatory.

There is a common confusion between renunciation and asceticism. All spiritual practice is at the core renunciatory, but not every practitioner or Adept necessarily embodies the ascetic approach. The Sixth Zen Patriarch, Hui Neng, remarks in his famous Sutra: "To seek enlightenment by separating from this world / Is as absurd as to search for a rabbit's horn."21 In the Bhagavad Gita, the testament of Hinduism, Krishna is depicted as Teaching the superiority of renunciation in action over mere abandonment of action—an ideal that found its fullest expression in the high schools of Tantrism and such figures as Marpa, Drukpa Kunley, Ikkyu, and other Crazy Adepts.

21. The Sutra of Hui Neng, rev. ed., trans. Wong Mou-Lam, ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Buddhist Society, 1966), p. 41.



Master Ikkyu (1394-1481)



Krishna