

Poem for Mothers

In May 2008 the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa paid his first visit to Karma Triyana Dharmachakra, his seat in North America. During the year before his visit, I edited a number of his teachings, and in one of them he spoke of the fact that he is now separated from his mother, who remained in Tibet when he escaped to India. In his teachings Ogyen Trinley Dorje has spoken of his love for his mother and his support for women.

In Buddhism, we are taught that at some time all beings were our mothers. It has occurred to me that, if all beings are our mothers, then it must be true that we are also theirs.

As I lie dying,
I call my mothers of the three times,
All the past buddhas and all of the sinners,
Everyone I know and have known,
And all the beings of the future.

I have looked for you on my in-breath
And called you with my out-breath,
Trying to thank you, my mothers,
Knowing that we only meet
In the black and empty universe.

Did you know me, Mary?
Do you still love me, Mommy?
Will there be another child for me?
I have a big black hole within my chest,
And the wild wind rests there.

I embrace you—babies, ancestors,
Mothers—I am your mother, too.
I wrap my arms around you,
And hold you in my heart, which is the universe.

*Sally Clay
for His Holiness, the 17th Gyalwang Karmapa
On his first visit to Karma Triyana Dharmachakra
May 19, 2008, Vesak*