

TENZIN KUNKYI



Practical Poems

January 2024

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The following poems were written as I struggle to bring my mind to reflect on the teachings I had the honor and good fortune to receive over the years through the kindness of the Buddhas and their emanations in this world.

It took some twenty-five years after taking refuge for me to become ordained, at last, regardless of my early longing to do so. In the meantime, I had the great fortune to be guided by truly enlightened teachers, namely Dagpo Lama Rinpoché and Ratö Khyongla Rinpoché. Both combined rigorous traditional training in Tibet and an open mind to teach Westerners. Along the way, I met many teachers and friends, who have helped and inspired me to study while pursuing a career. Although my mind today is not tamed and no longer as quick as it was, my teachers have created ideal conditions for me to study as a Western nun, and I will never be able to repay their kindness.

Through the blessing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the kindness of my teachers, I have been accepted to join Jangchub Choeling Nunnery in Mundgod (Karnataka), where, with a heart full of gratitude and free from worries, I can study in the company of sisters

who at times may kindly giggle at my old age, but who debate with me as an equal partner.

I also want to express my gratitude to all my teachers and friends at the College for Higher Tibetan Studies, at Sarah, Dharamsala, where I learned Tibetan language and culture.

I am not skilled in writing nor in rhetoric, and have little knowledge, but with a sincere heart I wish to better myself so I can begin to help others and not hurt them.

Jangchub Choeling Nunnery

January 2024



Ratö Khyongla Rinpoché and Dagpo Lama Rinpoché
Veneux-les-Sablons (France)
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Wild West

To Gakyi

The wave of your red robes
Brightens the grey damp street
Unobstructed by hair or make up
Your smile opens wide onto your soul.

Even to the agnostic
Seeing you brings peace.
The sweet fragrance of ethics,
Perhaps, opens a window to their soul.

No sleeves, no zipper,
No buttons, nothing tight,
Nothing but a belt to tie
You to your vows.

Maybe they feel the compassion
Flowing from your heart,
The love that cools their pain
Whether felt or not as yet.

As you breeze gently by
You grant them time enough
To sense that there might be
Another way of life.

Keep Walking Sister!

Jangchub Choeling Nunnery
January 2024

Refuge

In the jewels of refuge
I find hope.
Within the monastery
I feel safe.

Safe from the demons
That swarm over the mind,
Safe from the world
That triggers them.

Within the precepts
I find freedom.
Through the care of teachers
I learn wisdom.

Wisdom to know suffering,
Reason to love others,
Space to grow and give
To trust and get rid of

A tortured ego.

New Delhi
October 2023

Breathing in an Old Jeep

Sitting in the corner of the crowded jeep,
Invisible. Like all women when they age.
Breathing in, I absorb all your miseries,
Lost illusions, broken hopes, and worries,
Jealousy, greed, anger, and pride,
I take all of them in.

Invisible old woman in the crowded jeep,
The dark river of your grief flows
Into my heart and dissolves
My own pain into light.

Invalid old woman in rags,
Cramped in the corner of the jeep,
Breathing out, I let the light flow out,
Millions of sparks from my heart to yours,
Giving you strength against miseries and foes,
Soothing your pain, lightening your woes.

When we reach, pay our fare, and leave,
No one will remember the old woman in red
Walking away slowly telling her beads,
Praying that your wishes be fulfilled,
Her heart grown bigger with the joy of giving.

Dharamsala
December 2022

So You Study Emptiness

Don't you see the world ablaze
Don't you hear children crying
Rockets and bombs falling
Mothers wailing?

Don't you see the war raging
And the beasts fleeing
A man-made danger
They can't conceive?

How dare you sit in peace
And read and reflect and
Read and debate and
Then, sit again?

You say you study
Emptiness to find love
To find compassion
To be free from tyranny.

Yes!

So I may love you
And your foes equally.
So I may show you the path
That freed many.

May help you break free
From the self that enslaves
And craves praise, and
Thrives for itself only.

Break free from the blind I
Which can't stand blame nor
Pain but cherishes their sources
And cuddle their roots.

Pray come sit with me, and
Watch your breath silently
Find the space to be set free
Sow the seeds to be happy.

Jangchub Choeling Nunnery
December 2023

Like Honey on a Razor Blade

Through the darkness of ignorance
The blade beneath the sweetness
Goes unseen. Only when the tongue
Bleeds, do I wonder how? why? where
Does this suffering come from?

Yet mere sweet feelings
Night and day, I seek. Wait!
Feelings are nothing. A mere result!
They don't exist and they don't last.
Good, bad, neutral, aimlessly they flicker.

Now that I know about the blade beneath
Slowly more thoughtful I grow.
Honey becomes bitter tinged
The craving lessens a bit.
Over causality, the mind ponders.

Pleasantness stems from virtue;
Suffering from evil thoughts;
Indifference from ignorance.
Love others, wish them well,
From there, reap your bounty:

Happiness.

Bangalore
December 2023

Waking up Old

A friend sends a photo she took.
Check this! It captures your looks.
Hold on! Who's that old one there?
It can't be me!

Two fingers on the screen,
And the pic pops up
Now I see all the lines
The deep, the fine,
And the tiny ones.

The hair too scarce
The lips too thin
The waist too thick
The skin too loose
The shoulders sloping.
It can't be me!

Lost in details
I cannot see,
The gaze now quiet
The face more open
The smile quite bright
Even though the teeth
Are no longer white!

Aging never stops.
Yet we forget and forget
Only to be surprised
Again and again
'Til we die.

New Delhi
December 2022

Unprepared

How many lives did I waste
Serving the whims of the body
The cravings of the mind
For a quick flick of pleasure?

How many times did I travel
The road that leads only
To more craving and greed
With no end in sight?

The more pampered the body
The less suffering it can bear
The more indulged the mind
The less kindness it can share.

With old age and death looming
Now I see I learned nothing.
Comfort finally brings no ease
And to the next life unprepared

I'm gone.

Bangalore
November 2023



National Museum, New Delhi
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The Hell with Rage

From the depth of anger
Enraged and blind
The monster once again
Swarms over the mind.

Will it take over?
Will I lose control
And once again
Go down to hell?

The hell with it!
Not this time, pal.
This time you loose
Today I win.

Armed with love and
The sword of wisdom,
I'll chase you out.
This time for good.

Today I break free from rage!
And even if you manage
To stir up my mind a bit
You shall be defeated.

No harsh utterance
No hurt done
Not to me
Not to anyone.

None but you shall be hurt
Today you may take
Your villain red face
Away for good

The hell with you
You're done!

Jangchub Choeling Nunnery
October 2023

Gratitude

To Kyabje Dagpo Rinpoché

Caring for oneself, vast suffering grows
Caring for others, Bodhicitta grows
Caring for all living beings
Scores of happiness flow.

However,

For years, the alcohol of ignorance I drank.
In the arms of laziness I slept.
To the delusions of attachment I purred.
Through the flames of anger I raged.

Listening to the seven voices of pride
Lower and lower, mutilated and blind,
To a prison of darkness I fell.
What enemy threw me there?

Finding none but myself, I despaired.
Was there hope? Was there help?
Could I be freed of the shackles
Of my own mind?

Then you came.
Magnificent and humble
Your mind free and tamed,
You took my hand softly.

Lifting away all doubts
Forgiving and patient
You helped me to my feet
And pointed to another path.

A path to love,
To compassion and to freedom.
Freedom from ignorance and from
The dungeon of a deluded self.

Dharamsala
December 2021

The Miser's House

Rotten pipes bundle
Like sprouts and
Iron sheets patch
Up the yard

Old pots and pans
Rust in corners
In case they might
Find a purpose

A day labourer asked
For an old sheet
To shelter the cow who
Gives him milk

A lone woman begged
For pots and pans
She may sell
To feed her child

A puny boy cried
For some rags
To lay a bed a bit
Softer than concrete

To all I said, sorry!
I wish I could. See!
I'm not rich. I may
Need those.

Everyday more junk
Pile in the yard
Rot in the corners of
The miser's house

Generosity is a virtue
For the rich... but since
The root cause of
Wealth is giving

Next life again
For fear of losing
I'll find myself
With nothing to give.

Jangchub Choeling Nunnery
January 2024

Lion's Roar

two legs to walk
two arms to care and bear
two wings to fly and soar
two lips to smile
this is all you need

to soar and roar like a lion
to shy away from pain
to know the world's aim
and to soothe it all

Dharamsala
December 2022

Inexhaustible Kindness

Don't spare kindness!
Don't save it for tomorrow.
Spread love today,
Give it all to all.

Don't think that your smile
Is not worth a penny;
A smile to a dog or a baby
Means more than monies.

Don't worry! It won't dry out!
The more you give
The stronger it grows
And faster it flows!

If you fear being kind
Shall make you weak,
Fear that the bullies will
Surely bully you.

Behold!
Love is an armor of gold
It protects against all foes.
Let them giggle and despise,

You'll get stronger.
Seeing all beings as kindred,
There are no enemy left.
Kindness becomes inexhaustible!

Dagpo Shedrupling Monastery
May 2023

Why Write

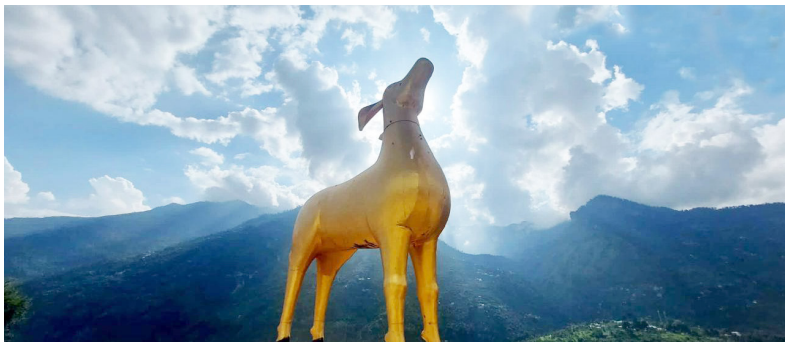
Taking their boat to lovely shores
Some write to please or
To fantasy themselves as other.
A writer perhaps!

Others write to heal
To lick their pains and sorrows
To capture and render feelings
On which they choke.

Writing may be the only cure
For me to keep breathing,
The only pill I need to
Let love grow.

Writing needs not be sold.
It's a whisper in your ears
A love song to love life,
To love life, and laugh it all.

Dharamsala
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Lay out and design Losang Gakyi

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