

མཚོག་དཀར་གཞུ་མེའི་གཡབ་ཡུག།
 ལྷ་ལ་གནང་རྒྱ་ཡིན་པ།
 བྱམས་པ་སྣག་དོང་ཕྱ་མེའི།
 དོངས་པའི་ནང་དུ་བཞག་ཡོད།།

ཤར་ཕྱོགས་གོང་པོ་བར་ལ།
 མཚོ་དང་མི་མཚོ་མི་འདུག།
 བྱམས་པ་ཡིད་ལ་ཡོད་པ།
 ཏྲ་པོ་འགྲོ་འགྲོ་གཏོང་གི།།

རྒྱུང་པོ་གང་ནས་ལང་ལང།
 བ་ཡུལ་ཕྱོགས་ནས་ལང་བྱུང།
 རྒྱུང་འདྲིས་བྱམས་པའི་ལུས་པོ།
 མ་ཞོར་རྒྱུང་པོས་འབྲེར་བྱུང།།

The present Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the fourteenth reincarnation of Avalokiteśvara, the Buddhist deity who is Tibet’s special protector. Our poet, Tsangyang Gyatso, was the Sixth Dalai Lama. His predecessor died in 1682 at a very delicate time in the political relations between Tibet and its neighbors, the Mongols and the Manchus (who had conquered China in 1644 and would rule it until 1912).

To prevent Tibet from falling under the control of one of these powers, the death of the Fifth Dalai Lama was kept secret. Soon after, Avalokiteśvara was reborn for a sixth time and discovered as a small boy. His existence was kept secret and he was raised in pampered seclusion. He was not ordained as a monk until the deception was uncovered in the mid 1690s. By then his personality had developed outside the monastic tradition. For the rest of his short life, he preferred drinking and lovemaking to his tedious official duties as Tibet’s God-king. His name, **Tsangyang Gyatso**, means “Ocean of Pure Melody.” Tibet is a land of contradictions. If the gods show an earthier side from time to time, can we disprove?

In 1706, the Manchu army entered Lhasa, Tibet’s capital and holiest city. They arrested Tsangyang Gyatso and put a puppet Dalai Lama on his throne. In December of that year, while en route under guard to exile in China, he died under mysterious circumstances. There was no state funeral: his body was discarded on the orders of the Manchu Kangxi Emperor.

Several hundred short poems attributed to Tsangyang Gyatso survive. They were meant to be sung, like little jingles. My book *White Crane: Love Songs of the Sixth Dalai Lama* (White Pine, 2007) presents 120 of the most famous. Here is an additional short selection.

En face: Tibetan script for the first three poems

Dorsos: A transliteration of the Tibetan

mchog dkar gzhu mo'i g.yab yug/
su la gnang rgyu yin pa/
byams pa stag dong phra mo'i/
dongs pa'i nang du bzhag yod//

shar phyogs kong po bar la/
mtho dang mi mtho mi 'dug/
byams pa yid la yod pa/
rta pho 'gro 'gro gtong gi//

rlung po gang nas lang lang/
pha yul phyogs nas lang byung/
chung 'dris byams pa'i lus po/
ma nor rlung pos 'khyer byung//

da lo btab pa'i lo tog/
sang phod ma smin zer na/
gnam gyi sbrang char sil ma/
thugs bsam bzhes rogs gnang zhu//

nub phyogs ri bo'i rtse nas/
sprin dkar gnam la long long/
nga la yid 'dzin dbang mos/
lha bsang btang ba los yin//

This white bow in its cloth cover,
On whom shall I bestow it?
I will place it gently inside
My lover's tiger-skin quiver.

To the east, between here and Gong,
There is neither high nor low.
When love has hold of your heart,
You go, go like a stallion.

Where does the wind rise?
It rises in a far-away country.
The body of my sweet lover
Was carried here by the infallible wind.

If you say that this year's plantings
Will not ripen in the next,
Then kindly grant, I pray,
The sky's sprinkling fine rains.

From the peaks of the western mountains,
I see white clouds boiling in the sky.
It is the smoke of fragrant incense,
An offering from the one who's won my heart.

chags sdang ser snas bsags pa'i/
'dod yon sgyu ma'i nor rdzas/
chung 'dris byams pa byung dus/
ser sna'i mdud pa grol song//

nga dang ma skyes a ma'i/
gnyen sgrig lha bsang gtong rgyur/
ri de g.yon ri'i logs nas/
spa shug 'dres ma gtog yod//

khra chung mig gi 'og nas/
sbrang char sil ma babs byung/
gtan grogs khyed kyi khrel dang/
ngo tsha nga la gzigs dang//

chu mo gting tshad ring kyang/
nya mo lcags kyus lon gis/
snying sdug kha dkar gting nag/
khog pa da dung ma lon//

chu dang 'o ma 'dres pa/
'byed mkhan gser gyi rus sbal/
snying sdug sha sems 'dres pa/
dbye mkhan su yang mi 'dug//

Sensory delights, those illusory riches,
Are gathered by lust, by love and hate.
Yet, when I fell in love with her,
The knot of my lust became untied.

My and my young girl's
Wedding incense has been set loose.
From the side of this nearby mountain,
We come down united, as man and wife.

Before my eyes,
The light rain falls with a tinkling sound.
Your shame, my consort, and
Your blushing face, are plain to see.

Although the river bottom is deep,
The fish can be taken on an iron hook.
My sweetheart's bright face hides a darkness within,
No matter how you try, you can't get in.

By mixing water and milk together,
A magician can make a golden turtle.
Possessing a lover's body and spirit at the same time?
No magician can perform that trick!

rta pho rgyug pa snga song/
srab mda' 'then pa phyis song/
las 'phro med pa'i byams pa/
snying gtam shod pa snga song//

gnam la sprin pa mi 'dug/
sa la bu yug 'tshub gis/
dog pa de na mi 'dug/
gzhan la thugs lcag gnang zhu//

khang pa rtsig sha srab la/
grong pa chad las dgos pa/
bu mo ba tsang can ma/
ngu zhug rgyag pa ma gnang//

lcang ma bcag ni ma bcag/
'jom mo dkrog ni ma dkrog/
rdzong rgyab klu khang phra mor/
ltad mo lha dbang los yod//

If a stallion can run free, he soon goes.
If you pull on the reins, you can slow him down.
If you tell your secrets to the wrong lover,
Off she gallops, wild like a stallion.

There are no clouds in the sky,
Yet a blizzard whirls on the earth below.
There, no shoots of grain remain;
Let this blow fall on someone else's heart.

This house has thin walls,
The neighbors will interrupt us!
You shameless girl,
Your moans are much too loud!

Has the willow tree been cracked?
Has the thrush been scared away?
In the little palace behind the Potala,
There is a God-king putting on a play.

Note: *Tsangyang Gyatso built a park, a small pavilion, on an island in a lake which can still be found behind the Potala in Lhasa. After their invasion of Tibet in 1951, the Chinese renamed it "Liberation Park."*