

ང་དང་ཁ་བའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད། (Tales of Myself and Snow)

འཆི་མེད། Chimé

(Translated from Tibetan by Tashi Dekyid Monet and David Germano)

Abstract: In this essay, we offer a translation of the famed Tibetan contemporary poet Chimé’s poem, “Tales of Myself and Snow,” written in 2012 in twenty stanzas of traditional metric verses. The essay introduces the poem with biographical notes on the author as well as our interpretation of the poem’s key themes based upon extensive interviews with the author. We read the poem as deeply embedded in the author’s relationship with her Tibetan homeland and Palden Lhamo—a principal female protective deity of Tibet and the Tibetan people. These stanzas trace a pilgrimage across the landscape of Tibet and its seasons of life and death, as well as across the landscape of her own body and mind, with poetic creation acting as the beating heart of the pilgrim driving her forward to this goddess whose usual dark body is reimagined as white as snow.

Keywords: Chimé, winter, Palden Lhamo, spiritual protectors, Tibetan language, Buddhism

Translators’ Introduction

Chimé (འཆི་མེད།) is the pen name for Pematso (པམ་མཚོ།), a

famed contemporary poet and Tibetan language teacher from Rebgong, Amdo. She is among the first Tibetan women writers educated in the secular schools in Tibet and is one of the most well-known Tibetan poets living today. She graduated from Qinghai Nationalities Institute in 1987 and taught in Rebgong for over three decades. Chimé has composed many important essays in addition to her powerful books of poetry. “Tales of Myself and Snow” (ང་དང་ཁ་བཞི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད།) is a poem from Chimé’s first collection of poems, *Dreams of the Moon* (ཁྲི་བཞི་མི་ལམ་), published in 2012 in Ziling (Xining). She published a second book of collected poems, *The Youth of Water* (རྒྱུ་ལང་ཚོ།) in 2016, while one of her most famous poems, “The Ring” (ཨ་ཁོང་།) was separately published in 2017 and subsequently translated into English and powerfully interpreted by Dr. Lama Jabb. A third book of poetry and essays was published in 2023, *The World in a Copper Mirror* (བཟའ་གྱི་མེ་ལོང་ནང་གི་འཛིག་རྟེན།), which concludes with her autobiographical reflections and thoughts on the creative process (the latter was also separately published in a bilingual edition in 2023 with English translation by Rongwo Lugyal with the same title). Her poems have been awarded the highest recognitions for Tibetan literature in China, including the 2015 Wild Yak Prize for Literature and the 2017 Annual Award for Nationalities Literature from the China Writers’ Association.

Chimé's life has been marked by intense suffering and loss, which have left indelible marks on her poetry. She grew up in the violent chaos of the Cultural Revolution, during which her mother and family were especially brutalized as a result of their previously privileged social status. Her father was unfairly imprisoned and died as a result when she was just six. Chimé's mother was forced to give her

away when she was nine, such that she was raised as a foster child by an older couple. Her mother later passed away when she was seventeen. In Chimé's adult life she has suffered as a female writer at the hands and words of a misogynist Tibetan world, including over a decade of enforced silence as an author that she alludes to in her autobiography. There have also been private sufferings at the scale of her childhood, but which are not ours to share. This is the personal context for the dark vein of suffering, loss, betrayal, and grief which runs like black quicksilver through her writing. That said, "Tales of Myself and Snow" is actually one of the more joyful of her major poems with its lovely descriptions of a vibrant natural landscape interwoven with the pervasive figure of birds embodying the compelling power of poetic creation. Despite this, her personal grief is still evident, such as in the poem's second stanza characterizing the poem overall as words of her own sorrow, which in the next-to-last stanza transmutes into the yearnings of Tibetan souls across the plateau against the background of "these chaotic times" when "the darkness of opaque paths conceal the land which holds us." It also manifests in her reference to the rarity of "friendship without deceit," and her twice entertaining her own death or living death in evocative and violent images, "this desiccated cairn, a barely standing thing, a body separated from mind," and "the terror of the body's flesh and skin being rent asunder."

Chimé's poems are also deeply spiritual in character but engage enduring Buddhist themes in compelling ways that are uniquely personal rather than simple evocations of Buddhist terminology and themes as articulated in the classical literature. Thus, her evocation of suffering and grief in "Tales of Myself and Snow" echoes the first noble truth of suffering, a primordial concern

to which Buddhist meditations endlessly return. This pattern is also exemplified in the entire poem being cast as a prayer and supplication to the Tibetan goddess and protectress Palden Lhamo (པདའན་ལམོ་མོ།, literally “Glorious Goddess”) in the context of a deep meditation on grief, solitude, Land, and the nature of art itself. The poem weaves seamlessly through her own life, the Tibetan people, and the vast Tibetan landscape with its swirling storms of snow. In interviews with Chimé in the summer of 2022, she related that the inspiration for the poem occurred in a dream in the winter of 2010. That night she dreamed of a snowfall and woke up to find it was indeed snowing outside, which she interpreted as a sign of Palden Lhamo communicating with her. The poem is thus centrally concerned with Tibetan place-based relationships and the role of Tibetan more-than-human communities in Tibetan lifeways and ways of knowing.

Palden Lhamo, never explicitly named in the poem but rather addressed primarily by Chimé simply as protectress (བདག་མོ།), is one of the most important female divinities in Tibet, as well as its most famous spiritual guardians, regardless of gender. She was, and is, also closely associated with the Tibetan people and their protection as a people. Her typical iconographic representation is a dark blue figure with fierce appearance, including a crown of five skulls and often holding a skull cup full of blood. While the title represents a category of tantric female divinities who can take many visual forms, including at times being white or red in color, the overwhelming majority of depictions are fierce in demeanor and dark blue in bodily color. Indeed, Chimé’s earliest relationship with Palden Lhamo emerged in the context of nightmares she had as a teenager, in which she was chased

by a fierce dark nomadic woman, who whistled and tried to paint her black with charcoal but never caught her. A tantric teacher told her that the nightmares were indicative that Palden Lhamo was seeking a relationship with her, and after Chimé began offering juniper incense and chanting to the goddess, as well as later performing visualizations and meditations centered on her, the nightmares ceased and gave way to a life-long relationship and inspiration.

Of particular importance in the present context is that Palden Lhamo is often considered to be a fierce emanation of the goddess Sarasvatī (དབྱངས་ཅན་མ། དབྱངས་ཅན་ལྷ་མོ།), the goddess of knowledge, music, and poetry with a deep and enduring relationship to speech and artistic inspiration, as well as secondary associations with healing and protection. In Tibet, she is also identified as "Melodious Savioress" (Tibetan དབྱངས་ཅན་སྒྲུབ་མ།, Sanskrit tārā sarasvatī), identified in some enumerations as one of the twenty-one forms of Tārā, the most important of all female divinities in Tibetan Buddhism and also a goddess closely connected to the protection and sustenance of the Tibetan people and Land. Chimé in fact understands her own poetic vocation, as well as her life-long relationship with Palden Lhamo, to be fundamentally linked to a ritual initiation to Sarasvatī which she received as a college student many years ago from a famous Buddhist lama, who oddly summoned her to the initiation without explanation (only later did Chimé come to recognize the relationship of Sarasvatī and Palden Lhamo). The relationship between Sarasvatī, Palden Lhamo, and her own art has thus been a topic of deep reflection for her entire adult life. These reflections, and poetic meditations, have also been interwoven with a life-long concern for the agency and rights of

Tibetan women, coming to terms with her own grief at unimaginable losses, and her deep love of the Tibetan language, people, and Land.

This is the backdrop for the poem's evocation of the protectress, who Chimé reimagines as a goddess of snow, hence as white in color as the blizzards of snow descending upon the Tibetan Land as she sleeps. She also evokes the goddess as present in white bones, imaging the bones of a frozen winter landscape animated by her divine spirit. Overall, the poem explores Tibet as a people and a Land, with the Protectress intimately intertwined with a Land that she both blesses and of which she herself is an expression. We discern in it a recasting of the primordial Tibetan story of the Tibetan plateau as a fierce female demoness who must be violently tamed by temples and the constant reiteration of Buddhist esoteric rituals of subjugation. Here the Tibetan landscape, blanketed by snow in the dead of winter, merges with Palden Lhamo, such that her typical dark blue body is now the uncharacteristic whiteness of Tibetan snow, also imaged as the whiteness of bone and conch shells. Thus in the poet's repeated beseeching of Palden Lhamo, the protectress, we would suggest she is also implicitly evoking the Tibetan Land as divine, thereby undoing the original subjugation of a female gendered Tibetanness, as well as the Buddhist fissuring of Land as the subjugated subject of Buddhist ritual mastery. Instead, the female, and Land, are the divine, who she implores for a vision, for a relationship, and for acknowledgement throughout the poetic meditation. The whiteness may also evoke Palden Lhamo's inner core as the goddess of poetry, Sarasvatī, who is typically painted and visualized as white, and who is here clearly present as Chimé explores the intimate connections of Palden Lhamo to the act of poetic creation and inspiration.

While the opening two stanzas portray the immediate context of the poem in a snowstorm in the dead of winter, it isn't until the fourteenth stanza that winter reemerges in the specter of Palden Lhamo's white bones. In between, the Land of Tibet is evoked in lovely and joyful terms outside of winter (stanzas three, four, seven, nine, ten, and eleven). Once winter returns with those white bones, it is next described as a delightful emissary of Palden Lhamo (stanza fifteen), but then immediately is imaged as the conch-white protectress contrasted to a reference to the poet's own violent death (stanza sixteen), after which it concludes in stanzas eighteen and nineteen with a silent, possibly ominous dark winter landscape at nighttime with "massive mountains in natural alignment, draped by snow" and "souls roaming across the four regions of Tibet." This poem thus begins with the death of winter, returns to vibrant life, and concludes with a fervent prayer across a still winter landscape. Across this changing landscape of Tibet, two threads weave a tapestry of reflection—the nature of poetic creation and the intense hope for a vision of Palden Lhamo. The first two stanzas self-consciously refer to the process of writing as "tales of myself and snow" described as "words of my own sorrow" that she offers as "sustenance for the winds so intimate with snow." The fifth stanza imagines poetic creation as the supreme goddess unraveling her natural freedom from within her body, which becomes "designs falling to the surface of a mirror" (stanza six) and melodies stemming from "the exquisitely blissful vast matrix of body and speech" (stanza eight). She brings forth two exemplars of Tibetan female poets from ancient times, each vividly evoked with colored landscapes of turquoise and red copper respectively, who this time constitute "tightly woven knots of composition in naturally free speech" (stanza nine). She then images

the poets as “a feathered flock” flying through a forested landscape with song and dance (stanza eleven), before returning to the image of poetry as sketches upon the mind’s crystal mirror (stanza twelve) that constitute her gift, though people understand her inspired words in a hundred ways due to divergent karma (stanza thirteen). She then in the final verse (twenty) vividly describes speech blossoming into the mind’s seeds via letters at her fingertips, asking Palden Lhamo to witness the moment.

Palden Lhamo herself appears first implicitly in the images of snow falling in the first two verses but then is explicitly evoked in verses four and five as the protectress of all life and the inspiring muse behind Chimé’s own poetic capacities. Verse eight addresses the goddess directly, linking her to the stirring of melodies within the poet, and in a dramatic image asks her for inspiration, even if the poet is just “this desiccated cairn, a barely standing thing, a body separated from mind?” (stanza ten). The protectress is then addressed in every stanza from the twelfth to the final, twentieth stanza in an intensifying crescendo, as the poet asks her to acknowledge her own poetic acts (twelve), inquires as to when a personal vision will be forthcoming (thirteen), requests a presence in the naked white bones of winter beyond all guile and betrayal (fourteen), asks how snowfall could be anything but emissaries of the protectress’s impending arrival (fifteen), claims that even death would be nothing in the face of such an embrace (sixteen), requests her to come this moment in a blaze of flames (seventeen), plaintively asks if she thinks of we Tibetans as the winter landscape sleeps in the dead of night (eighteen), supplicates for a collective encounter for all Tibetans (nineteen), and then concludes by asking her to witness with joy the poet’s own poetic acts of

transmutation.

As we read the poem, we began to think of it as a contemporary version of a Buddhist scripture, a sūtra or a tantra which always begin with a narrative frame (སྒྲེང་གཞི།) that lays out the sublime teacher, retinue, teaching, place, and time framing the ensuing dialog in which an interlocutor asks a Buddha questions, and the Buddha responds. Just so, the poet begins by detailing a place (Rebgong in Tibet) and a time (the dead of winter), while the teacher is Palden Lhamo and the retinue is the same as the interlocutor, namely Chimé herself, who poses six questions and requests to Palden Lhamo. In a distinctively modern inversion, however, her questions are unanswered, left lingering on the page, chasms of uncertainty compared to the confident, lengthy sermons that usually ensue in Buddhist scriptures when questions are posed. The teaching itself is explicitly about the interweaving of Land and person, betrayal and suffering, the hope for redemption, and the process of poetic inspiration and creation. Indeed, Palden Lhamo clearly functions in part as a poetic muse for Chimé, inspiring her poetry and acting as a religious subject of veneration. The English word muse ultimately derives from the Greek word mousa, which literally means song or poetry, as well as nine sister goddesses of knowledge and the arts. Such connection of divinity to inspiration for composition is a long standing one in Tibetan Buddhism, as visions of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Goddesses might inspire a composition or revelation, while in the Tibetan revelatory treasure (གཏེར་མ།) tradition, historically concealed and later revealed scriptures were mediated by various male and especially female guardian spirits tasked with protecting and then facilitating recovery of the texts in question. The preponderance of such

texts was in fact in verse, such that divinely-inspired Buddhist poetry has a long history in Tibet. Indeed, the treasure tradition is pervaded by accounts of the deeply symbolic and mysterious processes of revelation, which can be interpreted in terms of accounts of a poetic process of inspiration and creation.

The poem's fifth stanza on unraveling knots of blockage in the body resulting in spontaneous songs of creativity and freedom are a long-standing theme in terms of subtle body meditations unleashing spontaneous compositions of esoteric songs. The ninth stanza then beautifully inverts this by imaging poetic compositions by historical Tibetan women as “tightly woven knots of composition in naturally free speech,” suggesting the specificity of their experience constitute intricately woven knots of value in their poetic expressions, not obstacles to be dissolved. The poem then concludes with a lovely image of mind running like a dark ink through letters, speech, fingers, and pen to become a poem, transforming her grief into a redeeming vision of the protectress, and of the very soul of Tibet and Tibetans. These twenty stanzas then, are a pilgrimage across the landscape of Tibet and its seasons of life and death, and the landscape of her own body and mind, with the act of poetic creation constituting the beating heart of the pilgrim driving her forward to this goddess with a body white as snow. Unlike a Buddhist scripture, the questions and pleas to the Buddhist divinity are never answered, and the poem concludes with two requests posed to Palden Lhamo, asking that she rejoice and witness the Tibetan poetic process that flows through Chimé in the very act of poetically invoking the protectress. Yet, in a sense, Palden Lhamo has been talking throughout the poem, manifesting in the medium of the Tibetan Land's vibrant agency present stanza after stanza, as well as

internally as the dynamic force that stirs within the poet to give rise to the poem itself.

ང་དང་ཁ་བའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད།

1. མེ་ཉོག་ཟེ་བ་ལྡེམ་མེ་དབྱར་གཞུང་གི།
ཡིད་འོང་དུས་ཀྱི་ནམ་པ་མི་མཐོང་བའི།
གང་རྒྱུང་གངས་ཆར་དགྲིགས་པའི་དགུན་དཀྱིལ་ནས།
ང་དང་ཁ་བའི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད་འདི་ལྟར་བྲིས། །

2. ལྷ་བ་ལྷ་བ་འཕུར་བའི་ཁ་བ་ལེབ་མའི་ཚོགས། །
དོན་བ་བདག་གི་སྒྲུབ་ཁུང་འགམ་དུ་བབས། །
རིག་བྱེད་གཏམ་རྒྱུད་མིན་པའི་སྐྱོ་སྐྱེང་འདི། །
ཁ་བའི་རུམ་ལ་ལྷ་གས་པའི་ཟས་སུ་འབྱུལ། །

3. གནས་གཡང་ཆགས་ཀྱི་རེབ་གོང་གསེར་མོ་ལྗོངས། །
གོས་དུར་སྒྲིག་གི་རྒྱལ་མཆན་བསྐྱེངས་པའི་ཡུལ། །
གནས་ལྗ་རིག་གི་ཡུལ་དབུས་མ་ག་རྟ། །
དུས་ད་ལྟའང་ངོ་མཆར་བཀོད་པས་སྦྱག། །

4. སྒོད་རི་རྩེ་ལ་གཡང་གི་རེ་ཁྲ་བཀ།
བཅུད་སྐྱེ་རྒྱུ་ལ་བདག་མོས་དངོས་བྱུང་བསྐྱུལ། །
དཔལ་མཛེས་སྦྱག་གིས་སྒྲིང་བདུན་ཐེག་ལེར་བརྒྱུམས། །

ཡིད་མཆོ་སྒྲིང་ལ་སྒྲོན་པའི་རྒྱབས་རིས་འགྲུ། །

5. སེམས་སྒྲོང་དབྱིངས་ནས་བསྒྲོམས་པའི་ལྷ་མོ་མཆོག། །

ལུས་བྲོད་ལམ་མེ་གེ་བར་བསྐྱེལ་བ་ན། །

ངག་རང་གྲོལ་གྱི་མདུད་རྒྱ་སྒྲོད་ཤིག་གེར། །

སེམས་མ་གྲོམས་པའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་སྤང་སྤྱར་ཐལ། །

6. དདུལ་མེ་ལོང་གི་ངོས་སུ་བབས་པའི་རིས། །

གསོན་མི་ཡུལ་གྱི་གཏམ་རྒྱུད་མི་གཙང་བ། །

ཡིད་དྲུང་དྲུང་གིས་བརྗོད་པའི་དོན་ཅུབ་ལ། །

གཞོང་བག་མེད་གྱི་བྲེད་ཤ་མི་མངོན་ཅམ། །

7. རི་གངས་དཀར་གྱི་ཅོད་པན་ཐོད་ལ་སྒྲངས། །

སྤང་གཡུ་མདོག་གི་ས་གཞི་གདན་དུ་བཏིང་། །

ཤེལ་རྩ་ཆབ་དང་ནགས་རྩ་རྩབ་གྱིས་མིད། །

གྲོགས་འདབ་ཆགས་ལས་མེད་ཀྱང་སྤྱིད་སྤྱང་ཆེ། །

8. ངའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་བདག་མོ་ངོ་མཆར་མ། །

ཡིད་སྤང་སྤྱིད་གྱི་ཁམས་ལ་ཉམས་རོལ་པའི། །

གནས་ལུས་ངག་གི་སྒྲོང་ཡངས་བདེ་ཆེན་ནས། །

གདངས་མཐའ་མེད་གྱི་ཚུམ་རྟོག་བདག་ལ་བརྟེས། །

9. ལྷོ་གཡུ་མཆོ་ཡི་ངོགས་སུ་སད་མ་ཀར། །

ཟངས་མཁར་དམར་གྱི་རི་ན་ལ་བ་གྱི་སྒྲོན། །
ཡིད་རོ་མཉམ་གྱི་མགུར་ལྷ་སྒྲན་ལྷང་ལྷང་། །
ངག་རང་གྲོལ་ལ་ཚུམ་མཐུད་དམ་སེ་བཞུགས། །

10. གྲོང་རི་གསེབ་ནས་འཁྱེམ་པའི་རྣམ་ཤེས་ལ། །
རྫོད་བདེ་དགྱིལ་ནས་སྒྲོལ་བའི་བདག་མོ་ལགས། །
ལུས་སེམས་བྲལ་གྱི་བེམ་པོ་མ་འགྲེལ་ཅམ། །
ཐོ་སྒྲུལ་པོ་ལ་དངོས་བྱུང་ག་རེ་གནང་། །

11. ཉགས་ལོ་འདབ་ནས་འཕུར་བའི་འདབ་ཆགས་ལྷ། །
མགྱིན་དབྱངས་བདུན་གྱི་འགྲུར་བ་སྣ་ཆོགས་ཤིང་། །
ལུས་སྒྲུ་སྒྲུག་གི་གཤོག་བྱང་མཁའ་དབྱིངས་སུ། །
གར་སྒྲངས་སྒྲབས་གྱིས་སྒྲིག་པ་ཡི་གར་འོང་། །

12. དེ་སྒྲིབ་མེད་གྱི་སྤང་བརྟན་མངོན་གསལ་བའི། །
ཡིད་དྲངས་ཤེལ་གྱི་མེ་ལོང་ངོས་གཉིས་ལ། །
ངག་རིག་བྱེད་གྱི་རི་མོ་བྲིས་པ་ཡིས། །
དོན་བདག་མོ་མཆོག་བསྐྱུ་བ་དགོངས་ལགས་སམ། །

13. ལས་འོ་སྒྲོལ་གྱི་བསྒྲོས་ཐང་མི་འབྲ་ལ། །
བརྒྱ་ཁ་གཅིག་གིས་ཐོས་པ་མི་འབྲ་ཡང་། །
དུས་བདག་མེད་གྱིས་བདག་ལ་བསྐྱུལ་བ་སྟེ། །
ཁྱེད་ནམ་ཞིག་ལ་བདག་གིས་དངོས་སུ་རྟེན། །

14. གྲོགས་བསྐྱེད་ཀྱི་བདེན་པ་མཐོང་དཀའ་བ། །
དུས་ད་ལྟའང་ད་དུང་འཆོལ་བཞིན་ཡོད། །
ཀེང་རུས་དཀར་གྱིས་འགྲང་བའི་བདག་མོ་ལགས། །
གནས་སྤྱོད་ཆ་ཙམ་བདག་ལ་གཡར་བར་ཞུ། །

15. གངས་དཀར་མོ་ཞིག་བདག་གི་སྙེས་འོག་ཏུ། །
ནམ་མཚན་དཀྱིལ་ལ་འཇུག་བ་ཨ་རེ་སྒྲིད། །
འདི་བདག་མོ་ཡི་མོ་ཉའི་འགོ་འོང་སྟེ། །
སྐྱེ་དངོས་མཇུག་གི་ཉེར་བསྐྱོད་ཅི་ལ་མིན། །

16. ཡིད་མཁའ་དབྱིངས་ནས་འོད་དཀར་འཇུག་དཔུང་ལ། །
དུང་བདག་མོ་ཉིད་ག་ལེར་བཞུད་སྐྱར་ན། །
ལུས་ཤིག་བགས་གཉིས་སྤུལ་བའི་འཛིགས་སྒྲིང་གིས། །
གསོན་མི་ཡུལ་ལ་ནམ་ཞིག་གྱེས་ཀྱང་ཆོག། །

17. གསུང་ངོ་མཚར་གྱི་དཔལ་མོ་ཡིད་འོང་མ། །
སྐྱེ་སྤྱིད་གསུམ་གྱི་བདག་མོ་ཏཱ་ཀི་མ། །
ཡིད་མེ་རྒྱབས་གྱི་སྐྱོང་ཡངས་མཆོད་བའི་མཐེལ། །
དུས་སྐད་ཅིག་སྤྱོད་ནོ་བཅེ་ལྟན་མ། །

18. གལ་མ་བསྐྱོད་པའི་ལྷན་པོ་གངས་གྱིས་གཡོགས། །
དེ་མ་རེག་པའི་ཆོ་དཀར་དབྱིངས་ན་འཇུག། །

ལམ་མི་གསལ་བའི་སྤྲུལ་སྐུ་འཛིན་མ་བཀའ། །
བག་བསྐྱུ་མེད་ཀྱི་བདག་མོས་དགོངས་ལགས་སམ། །

19. གནས་རུ་བཞེན་རྒྱ་བའི་རྣམ་ཤེས་ལ། །
དབལ་འགྱུར་མེད་ཀྱི་རྩི་ལྷུས་གསོལ་རྟེ། །
གནས་བསིལ་ལྗོངས་སུ་ཉུལ་བའི་དགོས་དོན་ཉིད། །
སྤྱོད་ངོས་མཇལ་གྱི་སྐལ་བར་སྒྲོན་བའོ། །

20. ཡིད་འཕྲིན་ལམ་རུ་འཕོས་པའི་བག་གི་དབལ། །
སོར་སྤྱུག་ཅི་ནས་བཞད་པའི་སྒྲོས་གར་ལ། །
ཐུགས་མཐེལ་གཏིང་ནས་དབྱེས་སམ་བདག་མོ་མཆོག། །
སྤྲུལ་ལན་གཅིག་ལ་གཟིགས་སམ་བདག་མོ་མཆོག། །

Tales of Myself and Snow

1. Mid-summer flowers with swaying anthers,
colors and shapes of lovely times no longer visible,
enveloped by deep winter's freezing winds and blizzards,
I write these tales of myself and snow.

2. Waves of snowflakes undulating
in descent before my window tonight,
I offer words of my own sorrow rather than some ancient fable
as sustenance for the winds so intimate with snow.

3. The golden lands of Rebkong form a sacred site
where the victory banners of the saffron robes fly,
a central region for the five fields of knowledge, ancient Magadha embodied,
abundant even now in displays of wonder.

4. Sacred lines adorn mountains and rivers, the vessel,
the protectress grants spiritual attainments to all life, the elixir,
their glory and beauty encircle the seven continents,
rippling waves of prayer flow in the ocean island of my mind.

5. The supreme goddess contemplated from the expanse of an empty mind,
gathers in my throat as vivid warmth spreads through the body
the knot blocking speech's natural freedom unravels,
passing into world-imagining songs beyond the mind's ken.

6. Designs falling to the surface of a silver mirror,
impure tales of life in the human realm,
tonight my passionate expression
just barely evades fears of being shameless.

7. Taking the crown of white snow mountains to my head,
laying the ground of turquoise meadows as a seat,
drinking fully the waters of crystal slate and forest streams,
how happy, even if winged birds are my only companions.

8. Wonderful protectress of my world,
from the exquisitely blissful vast matrix of body and speech
where my mind enjoys the realm of all that appears,
the composition of melodies endlessly falls to me.

9. Queen Sadmakar at the banks of the southern turquoise lake,
and Saint Labkyidrön at the mountain of the red copper fortress:
vivid melodies of the same flavor of mind are present,
tightly woven knots of composition in naturally free speech.

10. My protectress, who has bestowed warmth and bliss via the heart
to this soul wandering through mountain villages,
what spiritual attainments will you grant to this desiccated cairn,
a barely standing thing, a body separated from mind?

11. A winged flock flying through a forest's canopy,
diverse songs modulating in seven melodies,
pairs of lovely feathered wings in the sky's expanse
rhythmically dancing, graceful and exquisite.

12. On the two surfaces of the mind's bright crystal mirror,
such images shine vividly without obscuration,
and I sketch designs of poetic knowing
to welcome you, supreme protectress —do you understand?

13. Though a hundred people will hear different things
given our distinct karmic trajectories,
these chaotic times have bestowed to me this gift,
and yet when will I meet you in person?

14. Still searching even now for this rarity,
the truth of friendship beyond deceit,
I request that you lend to me a mere sliver of it,

protectress who stands in naked white bones.

15. White snow slipping in under my pillow
in the middle of night, how delightful!
How could these visits of the protectress's emissary
not be preparations for a personal encounter?

16. Should the conch protectress slowly approach,
luminously white and smiling from the sky expanse of my mind,
I would be content even if torn from the realm of the living
with the terror of the body's flesh and skin being rent asunder.

17. Exquisite glorious lady with awe inspiring Speech,
sky dancing protectress of the three realms with your Body,
please come this very moment, loving lady,
to my heart's offering of a vast space of blazing flames.

18. A natural array of massive mountains draped in snow,
the stainless white moon smiling in the expanse,
the darkness of opaque paths concealing the land which holds us,
do you think of us, protectress who never deceives?

19. I request glorious, unchanging, adamantine bodies
for the souls roaming across the four regions of Tibet,
I pray that our very purpose of wandering in these cool lands,
be fulfilled in the fortune of meeting you in person.

20. The glories of speech transferring mind through letters,
this drama blossoming from my fingers and the tip of a pen,

supreme protectress, are you pleased from the depths of your Heart?
supreme protectress, will you read it this one time with your Eyes?