

The Heart-beat of a New Generation: A Discussion of the New Poetry

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1

In relation to what comes earlier, we generally say that what comes later is new. It is also like that with what is called new and old poetry. Compared to the "songs" (mgur) of the Dunhuang manuscripts, the manuscripts of the poetic compositions (snyan rtsom) of the "discoverers of hidden treasures" (gter ston pa) are new; and compared to these, the "religious songs" (gsung mgur) of the yogis are new; and again compared to these, the poems in the style of the "Mirror of Poetry" (snyan ngag me long ma) are new. In this essay, I am not speaking of this sense of "old" and "new" which is familiar to scholars. However, experts and, in particular, many scholars dwelling in exile, both old and young, are not only unfamiliar with the New Poetry, but do not even wish to examine it. The few who have a little interest in it have difficulty recognizing the flavour of traditional Tibetan poetry in this style of composition.

Not even ten years have passed since this new style of composition began to spread. According to the documents we have, the first poem in this style of composition was composed by the brilliant writer, Don-Grub-rGyal, now deceased, and appeared in the second number of "Light Rain" (sbrang char) for 1983. Even now there is still no common name for referring to this style of composition. Some say the "new poetic composition," some "free poetry," some "contemporary poetry." However, the vigour with which this

style of composition has spread is amazing. This is illustrated in something said by the Tibetan poet 'Ju-sKal-bZang:

The educated write contemporary poetry. The uneducated also write contemporary poetry. University students write contemporary poetry. Elementary school students also write contemporary poetry.

What he says here is very true. There are nearly thirty newly published journals within the three provinces of Tibet. In the two years, 1984 and 1985, more than forty pieces of New Poetry appeared in "Light Rain" alone. Likewise, if we include new poetic composition in other poetry journals, and in unofficial journals of literary societies not associated with the government that have appeared up to now, we are able to estimate a huge number.

To date all that has happened is the new style of composition has been called the "roar of victory" by those who love it, and the "anguished cries of hell" by its detractors. The composers of this new style of composition have been patient, but, regrettably, scholars both within and outside Tibet have not given them the urgent attention that they deserve. It is difficult to say whether there are ten scholarly articles on the New Poetry inside Tibet. In Dharamsala, at the Tibetan Library, no more than three scholarly articles have been sent from Tibet about the New Poetry. The majority of the scholars of exile society have adopted the principle of completely ignoring this new style of composition.

In his introduction to the Tibetan translation of Tagore's "Gitanjali," Zam-gDong Rinpoche shows his irritation with the lack of development in Tibetan poetic composition when he says:

Because of the gradual spread over ten centuries of the principles of "ornamental words", many new literary forms could not win a place in the Tibetan language; hidden behind the veil of the last one thousand years, we continue in the steps of the Sanskritic rules of ornamentation (tshig don rgyan).

Rinpoche expressed these sentiments on 6 June 1983. That year, in the second number of "Light Rain", the first piece of New Poetry appeared in Tibet: "Waterfall of Youth" (lang tsho'i rhab chu). However, Rinpoche did not notice this event. Nine years have passed since then, and some hundreds of poems have appeared; still, the regrettable situation is that he remains silent on this subject.

2

sNyan Ngag is the designation used for "poetry" within literature itself. Everything in literature depends on the labour of the mind. When we ask where this "mind" comes from, our sophists, with their dry intellectual terms, proudly give an explanation. However, they are mistaken. The dry terminology teaches nothing except a general system of mental phenomena applicable to the mind of all human beings in all times. The mind in literary composition demands a psychology in which it is impossible to substitute the particulars of one place, time, and person, for another. Feelings of joy and sadness from ancient times cannot take the place of contemporary feelings of joy and sadness. A variety of modern feelings of joy and sadness fill the modern mind. Herein lies the inner meaning and characteristics of the modern mind.

Therefore we must say that the psychology revealed by the New Poetry is determined by the modern condition. At this time one question naturally arises: what are the characteristics of this psychology revealed by the New

Poetry? Put another way, what psychological causes and conditions give rise to the New Poetry? This question broadens and deepens the problem we need to resolve. There is no way to adequately address this problem in a short space, having done just a little research; here we are able to give only a few rough ideas.

All Tibetans, both inside and outside of Tibet, share a common sorrow -- their homeland is occupied by another. In addition to this, Tibetans inside Tibet also bear the sorrow that comes from being forced to hide the anger they feel toward the plunderers of their homeland and the murderers of their fathers; they can never show their real face and must bow respectfully to those in power. There is also a special suffering for writers and poets. Suppressing the fire of hatred in their hearts and pretending to smile, they must use their pen, which is their soul, to sing songs of praise to the bloody hand that murdered their fathers. Tibetans in exile, though they are unable to take revenge, have the desperate satisfaction of expressing their anger by cursing and exposing the crimes of their enemies. However, poets inside Tibet are denied this satisfaction. I think that this suffering that fills the mind is being experienced by Tibetan scholars for the first time in Tibetan history. Material prosperity can only partly erase this suffering from the minds of scholars. To eliminate this suffering, a doctrine providing a basis for belief and hope is necessary.

Scholars inside Tibet are presented with two formerly prevalent doctrines. The first is Marxism-Leninism. This doctrine, however good or bad it is in reality, was brought to Tibet by armed military force. When a doctrine comes associated with military force, people inevitably fear it. Actually, in order to spread this doctrine in Tibet, an ocean of blood has been spilled and a mountain of corpses raised. In order to consolidate this doctrine in Tibet, the communist Chinese have applied the theory of "without destruction

nothing can be established." Contemporary writers in Tibet remember in minute detail all the damage that has been done to classical Tibetan culture, the torture of scholars, and so on. In short, this doctrine is associated in the minds of all Tibetans with destruction, torture, poverty, and famine. A doctrine which provokes fear cannot possibly help to remove the suffering of the mind.

The other doctrine is Buddhism. This has been associated with the history of Tibet for more than a thousand years. It is difficult to estimate fully how much human life and material prosperity the Tibetan people have expended on this. Though this doctrine has brought some unrest and warfare to us, it has also provided not a little happiness and hope to the minds of Tibetans. Regrettably, the crucial question of the life or death of the Tibetan people will also determine the life or death of Buddhism. Put aside the idea of Buddhism saving the Tibetan people; Buddhism cannot even save itself. Reversing this, everyone clearly understands that for the purpose of saving religion the Tibetan people have expended much life and material prosperity. When the Tibetan people, made desperate by their condition, query religion, the answer they receive is "Your experiences are the fruits of your actions." Poets inside Tibet know what kinds of difficulties their ancestors went through for the purpose of inviting Buddhism to Tibet, and how they honoured and served religion from generation to generation. Wearing sheep skins, their ancestors made offerings of fine silk; drinking plain tea, they made offerings of the butter and milk. Staying in yak-hair tents, they constructed countless temples. Now Buddhism is only able to answer in this way. They are disappointed and think for the first time: "Well then, what use is Buddhism? In this world there is no other hope for refuge except for oneself."

The minds of the poets are cold and empty. Though they have experienced a defeat, they have also achieved a victory. As for the defeat: being without a foundation and refuge in

one's mind is like being a young calf abandoned on an empty field. As for the victory: being without any limitations on thought is like being a bird set free from a cage. Speaking of the disappointment poets feel now toward both Marxism and Buddhism:

Sophists, Your profound systems have opened the door of my mind.

Thank you. Prophesiers of the future,

Your grandiose predictions,

Your fierce arrogant mind,

Have provided me with stimulation.

Thank you. Gods of my destiny,

What a joke you've played on me. Thank you.

For this generation of poets it will not be a brief separation from the above-mentioned "sophists," "prophesiers," etc. They will certainly never return to them. They will foretell their own future; their own destiny will be their guide.

3

Whenever a reader encounters a piece of literature (rtsom rig) or religious commentary (bstan bcos) a title comes associated with it. What are these titles of religious commentary and literature that the reader encounters? Ancient Tibetans paid attention to the assignment of these titles. When Atisha (982-1054) came to Tibet he inquired about the way the titles of religious commentaries were assigned. Tibetans gave several answers. However both the question and the answer at this time was directed toward the theory of religious commentary. Therefore it cannot be compared to the attributes of imagery and feeling in the

composition of poetry, etc. There is also no special custom of giving a title to the rare type of small poetic composition that does not satisfy the definition of a large sarga (sa rga chen po = "chapter") according to the theory of the "Mirror of Poetry" (snyan ngag me long ma). Nor is there a custom of giving a title to the "songs" (mgur) of the yogis that were not influenced by the "Mirror of Poetry." For example, in the collection of songs, etc., of rJe-Mi-La-Ras-Pa (1040-1123) and 'Brug-Pa-Kun-Legs (1455-1529), though we expect a general title for the collection, it is rare to give a title to a particular song of this type.

The assignment of Tibetan literary titles has been transformed through the influence of the "Mirror of Poetry." In most literary titles I would suggest there are two components of "base" (khyad gzhi) and "attributes" (khyad chos). For example, in the case of the "Annals of the Songs of the Spring Queen" (deb ther dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu byangs), "annals" (deb ther) is the base component; "Songs of the Spring Queen" (dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs) is the component of the attributes. In all titles of this kind the attributes are regarded as more important than the base. For example, although "The Golden Rosary of Elegant Sayings" (legs bshad gser 'phreng) is only the attribute- component of a title, this religious commentary is known by this title. The base-component shows what the contents of the literary work are; the attributes-component indicates, for the most part, how the expression of the contents of the work, and the mode of expression, will benefit the mind of the reader. What comes to mind when we encounter this kind of title are the advertisements of the benefits of commodities in the advertisements in modern newspapers and journals. Without considering the reader, the authors of these literary works have already decided the benefit of their works. This is the reverse of the procedure in contemporary culture. With contemporary literary works the reader is the one who appraises its comparative value. Readers, having read these

literary works, appraise their value by the feelings they produce in their minds and by the specific features they show in comparison to other literary works. However, these appraised values are never transmitted in the title-portion of the literary work. Before the reader encounters the work he has appraised the value of the author's literary work. Moreover, the appraisal of the value of a literary work from the title-portion is characteristic of the influence of the "Mirror of Poetry" in Tibet up until now.

In general, the assignment of titles is being transformed in all contemporary fields of literature. In the field of the New Poetry a complete transformation has taken place. A new way of assigning titles has appeared along with this new way of composing poetry. Writers of the New Poetry do not consider their poems to be like "The Songs of the Spring Queen"; nor do they think about following the experts of "ear ornamentation" (rna rgyan), etc. The title-portion of their works does not come from these sources. There are three sources for the titles of their works: (1) the particular feelings, sensations, and thoughts expressed in their literary works, and how these appear to their minds; (2) how they are able to attach or impart these feelings, sensations, and thoughts to specific external objects; or (3) otherwise, how these feelings, sensations, and thoughts are able to be clearly and powerfully expressed by some phrase in the literary composition or its title. Whichever of these three applies, the particular feelings, sensations, and thoughts expressed within the literary work are the foundation for the assignment of a title. When we reach this point, we are able to express the principal difference between the assignment of titles in the New Poetry and in traditional literary works. Writers of traditional literary works assign titles by anticipating the feelings that will come to the reader. In the New Poetry, writers assign titles in accordance with their own mental processes. In the former, titles are given while thinking about how to get the attention of the reader; in the latter, titles are given while thinking about

the way thoughts appear in the writer's own mind. The titles of traditional literary works each need long expressions, while in the literary works of the New Poetry a single word or a few short words are allowed for a title. The previous principal distinction rests on this. In former times the attributes of the title became more important than the base; it was possible to have several attributes on one base. Also, one attribute could not be expressed without depending on a lot of words -- i.e., by one word alone or a few words. In later times, the base of the title has come to be regarded as more important than the attributes -- so much so as to not even give the status of title to the attributes. Because there is never anything but this base, the title has no use for a lot of words.

4

Many hundreds of years have passed since we became accustomed to metrical composition with equal numbers of lines (tshig gi rkang pa mnyam pa) and equal meter (tshig gi gcod mtshams mnyam pa), etc. Now, in the new style of poetic composition suddenly the habits of many hundreds of years of metrical composition are completely contradicted. We see the line length and meter expand freely without discipline; we feel we do not know how to read these poems and we do not know how to appreciate their flavour. In fact, it is not the case that similar metrical styles are unknown in Tibetan literature. In the Dunhuang "treasure songs" (gter mgur) and early "songs" (mgur) of the yogis we also see an unequal number of lines, an unequal number of syllables, and unequal meter. However, there are important differences between the metrical composition of earlier times and their contemporary form. Most ancient metrical composition did not consist just of words, but had a melody (dbyangs rta) associated with it. Now, when we say "glu," "mgur," and "gzhes," in fact these are the distant descendants of ancient metrical composition. In a specific metrical composition there is not a great deal of freedom in the choice of words that fit the

associated melody. These words must accord with the rhythm of the melody, the rests, the modulation of breath, etc., of the "glu," "mgur," etc. Therefore, it is possible to derive the meter and length of the verses in accordance with the meter and length of the melody. Not only that, but it is likely that at that time glu and mgur were also performed as dance (bro). At that time metrical composition had no choice but to harmonize melody, dance, and word. There is no counterpart in contemporary poetic composition, which derives primarily from the modulations of the mind. We all have similar experiences. In the rhythmic changes and modulation, etc., of the mind there are variations in duration and force. We are not able to manipulate these in the same manner as we manipulate a composition. If we want to adjust the flow of the mind to accord with the rhythm of composition, then we must greatly limit and modify it. The traditional writer ignores much of the reality of his mind when he focusses on the composition; in order for us to read this literature and mentally experience this reality we must also participate in the defective psychology of the writer.

Writers of contemporary poetry believe that feelings in the mind are more important than combinations of words in the creation of a poem. Composition is a tool for clarifying or expressing the living mind; therefore, composition must follow the feelings in the mind. The modulation and force of feelings in the mind are independent; therefore, it is not possible for them to be determined in accordance with the requirements of meter, as in our traditional poetic composition. Thus, if we make a poem whose composition respects from the beginning the rhythms of the feelings in the mind, then we will have inexhaustible flavours for poetry. Reversing this, if we let the feelings of the mind strictly guide us through the individual composition, then it will not be possible for that poem to express artificial conceits and inflated heroics.

Contemporary poets believe that the words of the poem will follow the succession of the feelings in the mind as they fully unfold and develop. By the power of the rhythm of feelings in the mind, they are able to entirely express these feelings with just a few words. By the force of the earlier sentences the meaning of the later ones comes naturally. Because of this, in the New Poetry, if the earlier lines in the poem are long, then the later lines are shorter, and if the earlier lines are short, the later are longer, etc. In Don-Grub-rGyal's "Waterfall of Youth," the writer illustrates this by drawing the attention of the reader to a waterfall in a steep rock face.

Look

Pure white waves of bubbles

Drops of light, the pattern of a peacock feather

A parrot's feather wings

A painting on silk

A rainbow.

Here, do we think that because the first two lines of these few words of poetry are longer and the three later lines are shorter that this poem lacks the flavour of poetry? If we were traditional poets, it is possible that we would adorn the three later lines with unnecessary word ornamentation to make them compatible with the two earlier lines. Is this necessary? If a short line is able to completely express what is said in a longer line, then it has fulfilled its responsibility. From the point of view of the words, the sign of unadulterated poetry is not one word too many, not one word too few. As far as what has been said here, if we add to just these words this ability will be lost.

In his biography of dGe-dun Chos-'phel (1903-1951), Rag-ra Rinpoche cites dGe-dun Chos-'phel's opinion that, although

one might understand a particular people's written language, if one did not understand the spoken language, one would be unable to appreciate the flavour of the poetry. This implies that, even if one does not use the spoken language in poetry, it should not be held in contempt. The primary reason that many readers find the poetry composed by dGe-dun Chos-'phel pleasing is because it is somehow in harmony with the spoken language. When in the course of our lives we speak of the warmth of the sun in the day and the clear light of the moon at night, we are giving expression to the living form of both the sun and the moon as we have perceived them. But in school we learn to use "jewel of the sky" (nam kha'i nor bu) for the sun and "lord of the stars" (rgyu skar bdag po) for the moon, and practice substituting the one name for the other. In the first case, a human subject encounters an object, and acquires experience through the sensations of the mind and the body; from this, the sensations of the mind and body come to be associated with the name. In the second case, just learning a name in isolation, there is no way we can experience sensations of the mind and body. Therefore, the use of words and names that are able to draw the experiences of the body and mind into the imagination in poetic compositions that value images and feelings is very important. However, under the influence of the "Mirror of Poetry" it became difficult to incorporate Tibet's own spoken language into poetry. Now, the New Poetry has changed that. In the New Poetry, the principles (tshig 'gros) and expressions (mngon brjod) of the "Mirror of Poetry" continue to be used; but along with that the spoken language is much more in evidence.

The natural speech of a people is not learned in books. Natural speech is directly learned from nature and from human society. The ways that a people perceives nature and society have been absorbed into its speech and writing; through speech and writing we recognize the many mental experiences of pleasure, suffering, hatred, depression, etc.

that occur within nature and human society. Thus, external images and the inner living mind permeate natural speech. This is the foundation of the literary composition of a people. To the extent that a literary composition is close to a people's natural speech and conveys the life and experience of the people, it will be easily understood; likewise, to the extent that a literary composition is removed from a people's actual speech and weak in the life and experience of the people, then it will be difficult to understand. Although 800 years have passed since the "Mirror of Poetry" was translated into Tibetan, poetry has been unable to move beyond the circle of a few experts and a few monasteries. Although not even ten years have passed since the spread of the New Poetry, both those who are scholars and those who are not, as well as all of the students of universities and lower schools, enjoy writing the New Poetry. The reason for this lies in what has been explained here.

5

The second section above describes how the thinking of contemporary young poets inside Tibet has freed itself from political and religious ideologies. The attributes of this new way of thinking are revealed through the stages of composition or exposition -- and, especially, in the choice of subject-matter for poetry.

Before Tibet was transformed by the Chinese communists, most traditional poets just followed Buddhism. When they looked at the world and at their own lives, they were not able to look through their natural human eye. Not only did they see the outer world through this natural eye as if through yellow-coloured glass [i.e., the colour of monasticism], but they also saw their own minds in the same way. Because the eye was always yellow- coloured, every subject of a composition became yellow. They looked at nature, human society, and their own mind through a psychology laden with

Buddhist theory and doctrine, and this provided the foundation for their choice of subjects of composition. There is nothing in their poetry apart from praises for the three jewels and explanations of the accumulation of merit and the theories of Buddhism. Because their psychology is bound by Buddhism, their poetic composition is also bound by the theories of Buddhism. Poetry itself is not able to achieve an independent status.

The initial efforts of contemporary poets have been to liberate themselves from religious poetry. They see the whole domain of poetry as their mission, and have their own way of viewing the world, society, and human life. It is not possible to see the world of poetry through the eyes of religion; all one can see are dry definitions buried in the ratiocinating mind, not the multitude of living images from experiences of direct perception. Thus, the Tibetan poet 'Ju-sKal-bZang writes:

For advice, there is no one above one's parents.

To show reality, there is no one better than a lama.

To share a secret, only a friend will do.

But look somewhere else for a poet.

In this way, the New Poetry movement is a revolution striving for freedom within the domain of consciousness.

As soon as they are liberated from the constraints of religious and political ideology, poets experience feelings that exceed the bounds of the old world, and they must abandon it for a new one. This is expressed in their poetry:

Oh, friend!

Friend rejoicing in poetry,

Where is poetry?

Do not search in books for poetry.

It is in life's immensity.

Just mimicking from books --

Do not think this is really poetry.

We must understand four dimensions of the "life" spoken of here: (1) the dimension of the mind of a particular person, (2) the dimension of the relationship between people, (3) the dimension of the relationship between a person and society, and (4) the dimension of the relationship between a person and nature. The power of the poetic eye must reach out to each of these dimensions; the life-power and physical vitality of poetry must be sought in them. By so doing, contemporary poets have enlarged the psychological range of both the mind and the external world. When these poets investigate human psychology, the mind is devoid of even the thinnest layer of religious or political doctrine. They have penetrated the real innermost layer of the human mind. Thus, in the poetry of contemporary poets, the variety of joys and sorrows of the unembellished mind that are symbolized by love between man and woman are presented to the reader in tangible form. Here the mind of the traditional poet never ventures:

Exposing one's insides

To the wide world. How sad!

This lament clearly illustrates the differences between the psychology of old and new poets. It has no place among traditional poets. They and their ancestors over the last thousand years, through their efforts in shaping consciousness within the areas of religion, history, and poetry, have succeeded in covering the real nature of the mind of the Tibetan people in yellow. Now, having ceased these efforts for just a short time, the new literature arrives,

tearing away the covering. As it seeks out the substance of the inner layer of the mind and displays it to others, this lament arises spontaneously.

Neither is the poetry of contemporary poets a political platform for celebrating the communist party and its policies, the Party's birthday, the nation's birthday, etc. Nor is it a tool to be used by religion for reviling attachment to the round of existence and celebrating the blissful heavenly spheres. For the New Poets, who are liberated from politics and religion, the range of expression of the mind has been enlarged, and, similarly, the range of the world of external objects has been very much enlarged. The poetry of traditional poets is necessarily limited, both because the consciousness of traditional poets is shaped by religion, and thus they share the same views of nature, society, and life, and because their method of composition has its common origin in the "Mirror of Poetry." Except for a little embellishment, there is not much difference in the viewpoints of traditional poets or their procedure in composing a poem on a particular subject. It is not like this with the New Poetry. Since the outlook of the New Poets is not based on religion or politics, it is possible for one subject to have different meanings and to symbolize different things, depending on the feelings of the poets. For example, Don-Grub- rGyal's "Waterfall of Youth" and Rin-Chen-bKra-Shis's "Waterfall" are two compositions with the common subject of a waterfall. However, the actual meanings of these two poems, and what is symbolized by the "waterfall", are different. In the former poem, the nature of the waterfall expresses the youth of young Tibetans; the latter poem shows how, while appreciating the evanescence of a waterfall falling in a gorge, the poet realizes that if he wants to be able to find the way forward in life, he must experience the fear of death.

Because one subject is able to provide different meanings drawn from life, other poets, viewing the same subject at

different times and places, are able to derive still other forms. This is also the reason why contemporary poets take on a broad range of subjects. For example, if we take a "snow mountain" as the subject for a poem, traditional poets hardly ever do anything except gaze upwards from the foot of a snow mountain. Contemporary poets, however, are able to perceive a variety of images of the snow mountain by considering different aspects of time and place. For example, Don-Grub-dBang-'Bum, in his poem "Starlight Shining on the Pillow of the Earth", imagines flying through the sky; looking down from the sky the mountain takes on a new form. Thus:

Oh, oh! this mountain is a flower.
 So big, so beautiful.
 Sweet fragrance and rising form.
 Soft white folds, loose and free.
 Your stem is perpetual pure clear water.
 Verdant fields of grass surround you.
 Unmovable earth protects your roots.
 The sky-blue ocean moistens your heart.

Another reason for the enlargement of the range of subjects in the New Poetry is that the New Poets do not aim to eulogize, but to represent their own experiences. Except for a little embellishment, the poetic compositions of traditional poets all celebrate the same objects in the same way. Their celebrations of these objects do not depend on whether their sensibilities have really been shaped by experiences; instead, they compose poetic words of celebration on the basis of what is in books or renowned by convention. Though you will never meet the beneficent and very familiar Tibetan yak in the poems of traditional poets, they will compose many words of praise for the unfamiliar Indian elephant. Contemporary

poets are not like this. They are not guided by what is conventionally renowned, but are guided by their own experience and imagination. Therefore, we meet yaks in their poetry. Not only that, but we also find the yak's dung in their poetry. Since they count on the multitude of direct experiences, living experiences, instead of what is conventionally renowned, the range of their poetry necessarily enlarges.

6

It is not possible to discuss poetry separately from the poetry itself. Although we have not done this, up until now we have not been able to discuss a complete poetic composition. Here, we will discuss a complete poem by breaking it into parts. Primarily, we want to look at an example of the compositional structure of the New Poetry; secondarily, we also hope to examine some of the more difficult characteristics of the New Poetry from the point of view of traditional poetry.

The name of the poem we will examine is "The Silkworm and the Silk." The poet composed this poem after observing a dancer making preparations for a dance performance. Initially, the poet focusses on the silk costume rather than the dancer. This is how the dance costume appears to him:

Drops of the melting sun,
 The moon a ball of ice,
 A slice of rainbow cuts across
 A gown woven of dusk clouds.

The poet speaks of the great beauty of the sun, which furnishes humanity with a variety of images, illusions, memories, and hopes; this beauty is revealed through four of

its aspects (sun, moon, rainbow, and dusk) in the brilliant lustre of the costume. Then the silk costume is rendered more beautiful by combining the beauty of the words "melted by heat," "frozen by cold," "sliced across," and "woven." Next, the poet tells us who is wearing that costume:

Oh, slowly dress your body
Beautiful girl who sweetens my heart,

Now, the beautiful costume and the "beautiful girl who sweetens my heart" align harmoniously. When these two great beauties are joined together, beauty is added to beauty, and a beauty is achieved that devours everything. Now the poet writes:

Stirring desire even in a recluse, young tree of a body
Making even the peacock jealous, garment of rainbow
cloud
Melody of youth, variegated colours,
Oh, yes! A rain of nectar in the eye,
In the heart, a cloud-vessel of honey.

The dancer's body weakens even the resolve of a recluse. The costume outshines even the beauty of a peacock. Collecting these two beauties together is so powerful that human society is infused with the "melody of youth" and the "variegated colours." The whole world is moistened by the "rain of nectar" through joining these two beauties. All hearts are wrapped in the "cloud-vessel of honey." In thought and action no one is able to resist being drawn into each subtle facet of the movement of such a beautiful form. Thus:

This poet also

Enjoys your joyous dance.
I will make music along with you.
But --

One remembers past suffering when one is happy, and in bad times one remembers past happiness; this is the perpetual condition of the human mind. At this point the poet writes:

Ripples coiled on the bank of a pool of memories.
Once again, faded images of things past.
Undulating, moving slowly,
What moves?
Innocently, a silkworm eats a leaf,
Wriggling body, panting breath,
The instant when its life-movement stops, the last
instant,
A cocoon of new silk thread
Vomiting in a stream from its mouth.

The dancer and the spectators are lost in beauty, drunk with beauty. The suffering of human life has vanished completely from their minds. However, in the poet's vision, as the beautiful form of the dancer fades, the image of the silkworm vomiting silk thread appears, with its "wriggling body" and "panting breath." This is the truth, of course. Clothes beautify a person and a saddle beatifies a horse; accordingly, the silk cloth augments the dancer's beauty. But the silk cloth is made from the silk thread that is vomited as the silkworm ends its life. All of the ornaments that have become things of

beauty for human beings are the result of the suffering of other beings. The suffering of one is the origin of the happiness of another; the happiness of one is the origin of the suffering of another. Here the poet, beholding the reality of so-called human happiness, becomes weary and sighs. He cries at the sight of the silkworm at the end of its life, with a wriggling body and panting breath, vomiting a silk thread. Witnessing this, the dancer and the spectators ask the poet, "What's wrong?" (Khyod la ci nyes) Just as they ask, the poet suddenly wakes from the recollection of things past. So as not to spoil the pleasure of the dancer and the spectators, he wipes the tears from his eyes. Putting on a false smile, he answers:

Oh, Nothing matters.

If I become too sad, I laugh.

If I become too happy, tears flow.

Enjoy your happy dance with all your heart,

I will sing along with you.

Listen to the poem. Such truth in these lies; these lies are necessary at such moments. When we actually perceive the reality of human happiness it vanishes. In order to be happy we must depend on lies and hypocrisy. The imagination of the poet enables us to perceive the vital image of the happiness that is behind suffering and the suffering that is behind happiness. It is the nature of poets to experience uncommon joys and sufferings; thus, in the past some poets were also considered crazy. A real poet is not just someone who gives us a beautiful figure of speech, he is someone who provides new ways to perceive human experience.

We are able to identify three stages in the development of the poem that we have explicated above. In the first stage, the

poet starts with the costume of silk; then he moves on to how the costume adds beauty to the dancer. From there he moves on to the enjoyment of beauty that the dancer provides to the world. From one beauty to another, the poet has moved toward human happiness and the radiance of human life. In the second stage, which begins after saying "But --" (de lta na'ang), the leaping imagination of the poet moves from happiness to unhappiness and from brilliance to realms of darkness. Seeking the origin of the silk, the poet sees in his imagination a miserable silkworm, with its wriggling body and panting breath, vomiting a silk thread as it expends its life. Now tears instead of ink flow from the poet's pen. From the two vital images of the miserable silkworm and the beauty of the silk, he sees the reality of human happiness. The meaning of the poem deepens, and here we are able to see a new strength of poetry. Relying on neither politics nor religion, the poet seeks the truths of human life through the leaps and turns of the poetic imagination. These truths which he seeks are not hidden within dry definitions, but are revealed to humanity through vital images from direct experience, and through the shouts of happiness and the lamentations of sorrow which suffuse them.

In the third stage of the development of the composition, the poet expresses a new meaning. So far in the poem the poet has unambiguously and movingly conveyed two images: the dancer wearing the very beautiful silk and the very miserable worm. The experience of much human happiness, where we must smile even as we are crying and laugh while we are choked up, exemplifies the contradictions of human life. While everyone enjoys the beauty of the dancer wearing such a beautiful silk gown, the poet is seized by the image of the life expended vomiting silk thread. His eyes engulfed by tears, his throat choked up with sorrow, the poet is situated in both of these two opposing mental worlds.

The inner meanings of these three stages of this poetic composition deepen and sadden from the earlier lines to the later. As they become sadder, they feel closer to what is true of life. These three stages depend on each other. As the poet moves from the earlier sentences to the later ones, the meaning expands and the images become clearer; at the same time, the earlier sentences become more powerful. For example, once the image of the miserable silkworm appears, the earlier sentences about the beauty of the silk costume are imbued with the life of the silkworm. After reading the later sentences and experiencing their flavour, if we then read this poetic composition once again, we are able to appreciate more fully the beauty of the poetic words praising the silk costume of the dancer. The reason is that when we read the poetic composition for the first time, we don't appreciate how many lives have gone into making the silk costume. When we read the poem the second time, we see how many silkworms have died, with panting breath and wriggling bodies, vomiting silk thread, to produce that silk costume. Thus, we are able to feel the presence of the countless lives that have gone into it.

The subject of the poem is enlarged in this way. The deep meaning of this poem is achieved through two leaps (mchong stabs) of the poet's imagination from an initial starting point (gzhi 'dzin sa). The initial starting point is the silk itself. After establishing a firm foundation for the poem, the poet's imagination leaves the silk and moves temporarily to the silkworm vomiting the silk thread. Looking at this for an instant, he jumps again to the dancer. Because this long leap of the imagination occurs so suddenly, many readers are unable to follow this poem. They feel that this type of poem is difficult to read.

Taking a composition like this as an example, not only is the content of this poem determined by its initial starting point and the two leaps, but so is its movement (rdzom 'gros) and structure (rdzom sgrom). The structure of the New Poetry is

determined by leaps of the imagination like those seen in this poem. Their structure follows the leaps of the imagination, not figures of speech (rjod byed tshig). Figures of speech are only tools to clarify the images and forms apprehended by the imagination.

Likewise, the structure of the poem is produced by the stages of the poet's experience and the way the imagination unfolds. For instance, in the poet IJong-Bu's "Dawn Song" (zhogs glu), the structure of the composition is produced in accordance with the development of the poet's feelings of happiness and suffering. It is the same with his poem "Prayer" (smon 'dun).

Having arrived at this point, we are now able to see the principle structural difference between the poetry of traditional poets and contemporary poets. When traditional poets consider poetic structure, they think about figures of speech and the structural foundation of doctrine. For example, "alphabetical composition" [ka rtsom = a poem with lines beginning with succeeding letters in the alphabet] and other difficult kinds of sound ornamentation based on arrangements of sounds and letters (bya dka ba'i sgra rgyan) are a very clear illustration of this. When a writer goes to write this kind of poem, he primarily considers how to organize the letters and the sound ornaments; therefore, he does not think about the progression of the specific meanings he wishes to express. As far as the organization of the letters and the sound ornaments is concerned, the poet will not have settled on what specific meanings he wishes to express; or, if he has, then there is no limit to how he must zigzag to arrive at his meaning.

Likewise, when the poet praises the lama and the Buddha, he follows the order of "body," "speech," "mind," "blessing," etc., in accordance with a specific religious doctrine. There is no other progression available to the poet. If we want to explain

this type of poetry, we are forced to put aside the poetry itself in order to discuss religious doctrine.

There is still another important difference. For the most part, when the poems of traditional poets express overt feelings of happiness and suffering, they do not express the progressive intensification and transformation of these feelings; therefore, we likewise do not see a firm relationship between these feelings. For example, with many traditional poems no damage is done if we take away a few stanzas [Sanskrit: loka] or add a few stanzas. Even if we rearrange the order of the stanzas from top to bottom, we don't feel that the order is wrong. It is not like that with the New Poetry. Of course it expresses overt feelings; but more importantly, it expresses subtle feelings, the transformation and intensification of feelings. Because the mental experiences, feelings, and images continuously mix with one another, adding or subtracting a word, or changing the word order, have to be related to the intensification and transformation of feelings.

7

Enjoying something through direct experience is not the same as enjoying it through poetry. When we enjoy an object that we perceive directly, the object is not able to have any other effect on the mind except for making us think "That!" However, when we enjoy something through poetry, it comes alive. Teeth bared and brow furled in anger, throat choking and tears flowing from sorrow, eyes popping out and mouth dropping with surprise -- not only are these feelings experienced as if we felt them in our own bodies, but our minds are unable to resist undergoing these experiences of anger, sorrow, and surprise. Here, what is expressed by the letters on a page, which are formed from matter, receives the power of life. Just as a magician creates an illusion from material phenomena, so when words receive the power of life, many different feelings arise in us. Tibetan scholars were

amazed by this. Unable to find an explanation, they were forced ultimately to the conclusion that "Everything is beautiful for poets" (snyan ngag mkhan la ci yang rgyan).

Although this proposition has been the conventional wisdom of Tibetan scholars for nearly a thousand years, they have not unraveled its secret. In general, many of our Tibetan scholars ignore what is evident in this proposition while preferring to explore its implications. We do not see an explanation of the evident meaning of this proposition. We encounter three difficulties in clearly understanding the proposition's meaning. First, we must understand what it is that we call "poetry." If it fulfills the basic condition, then we must call it poetry. Second, we must understand what kind of person is called a "poet." Do we call a "poet" anyone who practices the principles of the "Mirror of Poetry" and says such things as "the earthworm below the wall is a dragon" (mkhar rting gi sa 'bu nag ring la 'brug) and "the butterfly on top of the wall is a garuda" (mkhar kha'i phye ma leb la khyung)? What kind of internal and external conditions must be fulfilled to be regarded as a "poet"? Third, in "everything is beautiful" in the poetic composition of poets -- what are the conditions for being beautiful? Is it the case that the poet has already made the determination of these conditions for a particular subject before he looks at it? If so, why are we not able to see these conditions for ourselves and only the poet is able to see them? Or, is it the case that there is nothing in the external object and the poet imputes everything himself? If everything is imputed, what conditions enable us to have similar feelings with regard to the objects on which the poet's imputation is established when these objects appear before us?

By clarifying the first and second problem, we will be able to handle the third problem. In an explanation such as this, we will encounter many detailed problems. It is difficult to resolve these in a short article like this one. However, in order to clarify the difference between the way in which the principle

"everything is beautiful" operates in traditional poetry and the New Poetry, we have no choice but to deal briefly with the third problem in this article.

Initially, we must understand that the word rgyan [literally, an ornament, decoration, a beautiful thing] in "everything is beautiful" (ci yang rgyan) means "beautiful" [yid du 'ong ba -- literally, "pleasing to the mind"]. "Beautiful" here is not the same as "beautiful" in the case of a human subject encountering an object of the five sensory pleasures. The "beautiful" of the five sensory objects of pleasure comes about through the five sense powers. Phenomena of beauty such as, for example, pleasing flavours, sounds, beautiful sights, softness, etc., reside in the object itself and are characteristics that all beings are commonly able to experience. As for the principal characteristics of the "beautiful" for poetic composition, apart from the letters strung together in lines, there is no way to directly experience sweet tastes, beautiful sights, sounds, etc. in a poetic composition. However, a variety of joys are produced in the mind as if they were experienced through the direct perception of the reader. But this is not the main reason for the "beautiful" in poetry. More important is that the human mind is immersed in the subject of the poem. For example, Tshangs-dByangs rGya-mTsho [the 6th Dalai Lama] wrote:

The season of flowers has gone
Bee, don't be sad
My lover's life is spent
I won't be sad

If we directly perceive both a flower and a bee, it is difficult to say whether or not they are beautiful. However, there is no one who does not see the beauty of these two in this song. Through the flower and the bee we are able to see clearly the

torment of the lover mourning the death of his beloved; because of this, they then are beautiful.

The beauty of poetry does not just copy the objects of the five sensory pleasures. It moves from the real base (brten gzhi ngo ma) of the human mind and its constituents to reside on a new base. The specific material reality of a poem's subject does not have the innate power of life; expressing himself, the poet brings the power of life to the subject, creating new images with a new life. Being able to see new images that combine previously unexperienced thoughts and feelings is the reason for the beauty of poetry.

This kind of beauty cannot be destroyed by place, time, or condition. The beauty of an object of direct perception is established in dependence on place, time, and condition; the beauty of poetry is established by breaking free from place, time, and condition. The innate life-power of the flower is defeated by the seasons; however, when human life enters into that flower through the poem, the seasons can no longer affect it. The human mind is swayed by the desire for food, clothes, and fame; however, when it moves through the poem onto the flower, it is no longer affected by these. Beauty in poetry occurs to the extent that both the base [brten gzhi -- i.e., the subject of the poem] and the phenomena attributed to the base [brten chos -- i.e., the human feelings transferred onto the base] are completely merged with each other. The "beauty" of poetry is not experienced through logical terminology; it is experienced through directly perceived images. Because all of the secrets of the human mind appear within the images and each of the letters of the sentences that comprise the poem, the images and words that are produced by the poet's pen are like a globe of pure glass in which we are able to see the inside from the outside and the outside from the inside.

When feelings remain in the human mind, some will be muddy and unclear, some will be mixed with others and not able to stand alone, some will be unstable and will easily come and go, some will not be exhibited because they are just mental experiences which most people cannot express, and some will be basically good but will be corrupted by attachment and thus become impure; poetry overcomes these faults when feelings in the human mind are transferred to another base, where clear, well-defined, and pure feelings are displayed. However, because peoples, generations, poets, and places are different, the feelings that are transferred from the human mind, and the images and expressions that are suffused by these feelings, will be different and specific. Even for two poets born at the same time, in the same place, and of the same nationality, both the feelings that are transferred from their minds, and the base of the object to which the feelings are transferred, are different. Even within instances of the composition of a single poet these may be different.

However, within a larger domain, poetry and poets who are different in terms of place, time, and person, certainly share some basic features. In this case, what are the common features of the human feelings that are transferred (gnas spor bya'i gang zag gi tshor 'du) and the base onto which they are transferred (spor yul rten gzhi) in the New Poetry that we now speak about? First, with regard to the base onto which feelings are transferred, this was explained above in section five, when we spoke of the subject (brjod gzhi) or the topic (rtsom gzhi) of the poem. Second, we are unable to see in traditional poetry many of the common features of the feelings that are transferred in New Poetry. Also, the attitude toward doctrine of traditional and modern poets is completely opposite. These are three salient features exemplifying the new direction in poetry.

It is not possible to decide what is New Poetry just on the basis of whether or not it is "free verse" (tshig rkang rang

mos). Primarily, we must look to see whether the new human psychology has combined with the new life-power (srog dbang) of the poetry. We cannot be certain that a poem is the New Poetry just as soon as the new life-power enters it. However, the new life-power sometimes also signals its presence in a poem. The reason this happens is that the old outer covering of the poem is ripped away by the strength of the life-power.

When we read contemporary Tibetan poetry the first thing we sense is the heart-beat of the Tibetan people. In the images and expressions of these poems we are able to see the living courage of the Tibetan people, who return to the battlefield to risk their lives, with bandaged open wounds to the body and mind. In "Waterfall of Youth," the poem by Don-Grub-rGyal, the image of the waterfall is suffused with the courage of the Tibetan people. The "body" is the waterfall and the "life-power" is the heart of Tibet. The life-power of the Tibetan people is transferred onto the image of the waterfall; the poet himself gazes in amazement at the waterfall. He exclaims:

Oh, oh, the youth of the waterfall,
the waterfall of youth.

As he says this, the poet takes the inner love of his heart and mentally transfers it to the waterfall. The waterfall is not governed by the laws of nature; it is governed by the courage of the Tibetan people. The courage of the Tibetan people is not governed by the desire for the food, clothes, and fame in society; it is governed by the character of the waterfall, flowing continuously, leaping with pride, gathering together into a new stream.

Inspired by "Waterfall of Youth," young poets born inside Tibet have composed a large number of poems that are suffused

with the new courage of the Tibetan people. Because of this, some readers are unable to feel the beauty of poetry unless they can hear the courageous heart-beat of the Tibetan people in the images and expressions of the poet. Not only has the courage of the Tibetan people opened the door to the composition of the New Poetry, but it is also responsible for the spread of the style of composition of much of the New Poetry.

The love between man and woman is another feeling that is mental "transferred" (gnas sbor) by contemporary poets. Because most traditional poets are imprisoned by the views of religious doctrine, love between man and woman is put in the domain of the afflictions; therefore, most traditional poetry does not transfer love between man and woman to its objects of praise. Sometimes, though not the direct object of their words of praise, this kind of love is simply used as an example symbolizing or illustrating the world's faults, the relationship between lama and disciple, or faith in religion. Traditional poets hold narrow and ultimately repressive views of the real love between man and woman. Because contemporary poets are not bound by any views, they treasure human nature as it really is. They see that love between man and woman is a major component of human life. The supreme example of the ability of the human mind to abandon everything and lose itself is a man and a woman completely submerged in pure passionate love. When pure love enters someone's mind, there is no room for the desire for food, clothes, and fame. The impression of that person also transforms the external world in accordance with his desires; he is able to hear the wings of the bee sadly proclaiming the end of the season of flowers and his lover's words in the sound of the falling water.

Because love between man and woman is the supreme type of love in the world in the mind of contemporary poets, love itself, or whatever is a part of it, is without shame; in particular,

there is no need to repress it. Seeing contemporary youth loving openly, old people who are bound by traditional views:

Shake their head from side to side,
The world has turned upside down.

Contemporary youth answer:

Oh,
No need to be surprised,
No need to feel shame.
What has happened
Is a joyous step
that agrees with the course of history.
Angry eyes and damning curses,
Do not obstruct and interfere.
What has happened
Is a blow struck by the fist of freedom
To the head of conservatism and cowardice.

For contemporary poets, in this confrontation between new and old views, love between man and woman is not just an illustration used in praising something else; in many poems the object of praise is love itself. The poets have transferred the appetites and passionate loves of the human mind to the images and expressions of these poems.

The way that they transfer to another base the noblest human virtues -- e.g., loving others over oneself, the courage of being able to accept hardship, humility without pride,

diligence without weariness, etc. -- is the third characteristic distinguishing contemporary and traditional poets.

In traditional poetry when making the Three Jewels, etc., the highest objects for praise, some of the attributes of the wish-granting tree, the lion, the sky, etc. are also isolated and expressed as symbols. What, then, are the principle differences between traditional and contemporary poetry? Traditional poets attach some of the attributes from an object onto the subject of the poem; the subject is made to take on a new shape. Contemporary poets, isolating various elements of the human subject, make the external object embody the new life-power. Traditional poets reconstruct formerly existing images of the subject itself with attributes from the object. Combining features that belong to the object with feelings arising in the mind of the subject, contemporary poets newly construct an image that does not belong to either the subject or the object. The difference between these two is clearly demonstrated when we compare something like the poem "The Wishes of the Tree" (ljon pa'i phugs bsam) by the contemporary poet, Tig-Ta, with any of the invocations (mchod brjod) in the religious commentaries (bstan bcos) composed by traditional poets.

From the comparison of traditional and contemporary poets we are able to see another difference between these two in the object of the "transfer of feeling" (tshor 'du spor). When traditional poets transfer the noblest human virtues, they focus on how an object is conventionally regarded by the world; therefore, they do not focus on whether or not the object has practical value in their own lives. For example, though we can see in Tibetan poetry many occurrences of the "lotus flower", the "wish-granting tree", the "cow that provides all the milk that one desires," the "lion," the "elephant," etc., we cannot see the value these have for Tibetan society. The poets transfer human virtues to these images just by following what appears in books. Contemporary poets select objects

that have practical value in their own lives and in their natural environment and transfer to these objects human virtues without regard for the reputation of the object. The poem by the poet, lJang-Bu, "May I Burn" (nga rang sbar chog), is a very good example. He takes as the subject of this poem "cattle dung," which has the attribute of giving light and warmth inside the tents of Tibetan nomads as it consumes itself and turns to ashes. Thus it is able to illustrate in a straightforward manner the human sentiment of loving others rather than oneself.

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