

A Literary Magazine from Bhutan

Tashi Tagye V



Paro College of Education

*Creative Writing
Workshop*

Spring 2012

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Introduction and Acknowledgements

Tashi Tagye V: Literary Magazine From Bhutan, is a creative magazine from a creative writers' group which was held at Paro College of Education from 11th April to 6th June, 2012. It is a collection of poetry, prose and original artwork.

Organized by Dr. Gretchen Legler, a Fulbright Professor of Creative Writing from the University of Maine Farmington, USA, the creative writing workshop brought this magazine which inspired us to write with an open and positive mind.

We enjoyed being taught by Dr. Legler immensely. So we will hold her in our heart with deep gratitude, respect and love. With her unflinching support, it subverts the silhouette of our ignorance, unfurls the petals of knowledge in continuum, and realigns our thoughts to blacken the white, so, thank you Dr. Gretchen Legler for your time, expertise and patience.

The possibility of being a creative writer and coming up with this magazine is also credited to another very right-hand and mentor, Thubten Gyatsho, Director of Paro College of Education.

We also would thank our knowledgeable lecturers, Mr. Karma Wangchuk and Ms. Lhazom Dema, for their supportive arms and being a pillar of inspiration all along the journey of learning. We also like to thank Ms. Ruth for her beautiful songs.

Writing is one way to undress our dark-side-inclined mentalities and immerse ourselves into the pool of all knowing because with lines engendered from true heart we have the power to heal the inner wounds.

Also it has rays to stick others' relentless mind in search of invaluable treasure to remind them timely what the life is all about.

Reading and writing is a twosome torchlight in the realm of education, so we wish you happy reading. All of you!

Thank you

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Absurdity of Human Life

Life is uncertain, but death is certain, yet we human beings wittingly fritter away our transient life carelessly and thoughtlessly. Are humans aware that our lives are numbered right from the birth?

As each day passes and each season changes to another, we are heading one step closer to the abyss of death. Death is waiting silently and it's attached with every human being like a shadow, counting down the number of their host.

Humans are afraid of death, yet they don't realize until their last moment. When their faces are wrinkled, hairs turned into white, all the youthful energy drained out, and enthusiasm or zeal for the life is completely exhausted.

As humans walk steadily towards the abyss of death, they are gripped by the fear 'till they breathe their last. It's too late at the last moment to gain introspection over our lives and feel remorseful over our deeds and actions.

Death keeps on pressing us with its ineluctable force; we are left helpless and powerless.

Hence, we should beware of

death and always welcome it without fear and anxiety. We should embolden and armor our souls with bravery and fortitude. But how do we do that?

It's not simple and easy to face and accept death fearlessly and willingly. It takes hearts and souls that have transcended beyond the realm of death, which have been fortified and hard-



ened with layer upon layer of spiritual deeds and actions. Contrarily, who cares about being devoted spiritually and religiously, when our souls are young and energetic?

An infinite portion of humanity still prefers to remain in the dark , blinded by veils of ignorance, anger, greed, jealousy and attachment.

We are deeply engrossed in unrealistic materialistic quests; nobody seem to be aware that materialism is meaningless and governed by the nature of impermanence. We are born alone in this world and we shall egress this world alone, leaving our endearing bodies.

When death comes, we are not entitled to even take our own bodies. Wealth, fame and glory garnered and hoarded with much toil, sweat, blood and hard work are to be renounced, because we have no power and authority to take those things with us, when death separates our souls and bodies.

Our ephemeral lives are running like a flowing river, waning like a crescent moon, disappearing like illusive clouds and receding like melting snow, yet humanity greedily and longingly keeps on amassing the wealth, fame and glory.

So, let us denounce our quests for materialistic wealth and embrace spirituality as our true companions for the present and future.

Karma Gyeltshen

First Word



Photo by: Ruth Hill

The era for schooling
Was not as funny and enjoyable
As I thought in the times of yore
With the love and care
Knotted with a mom and dad

It was sorrowful to depart,
But my faith of education
Could defeat my unhappiness
And pushed me on my journey

When I first joined the school channel
I vividly remember the words
My beloved uttered in my ear:
“Always be a good boy and
Study hard.”

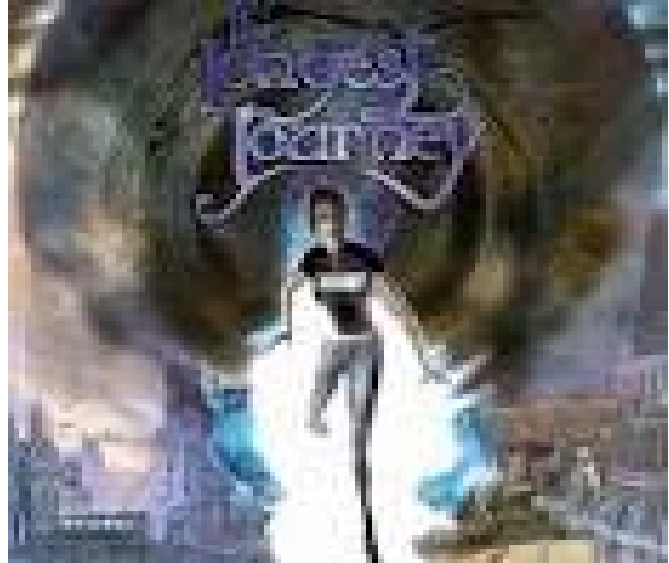
Dawa

My Longest Journey

It was in the year 2008. The mountains wore a thick snow jacket and the sky was filled with bright stars. From the chinks of the curtain I could see the bright light of the moon flowing into my dark room.

It was hardly 7:30; my elder brother and I were already on the bed. Our murmuring filled the silence of the room. Our eyes were twinkling with excitement and our hearts were filled with joys.

The next day as the sun kissed the western horizon, the day would finally come. "Tring..." as the alarm rang, I was first to open my eyes. I pulled the soft red rose blanket off my brother. He was still



Source: Tap-repeatedly.com

chained in dreams and fairies, as he pulled back the blanket over again. Then I whispered in his ears, "Wake up, before we get late," the words went like a magical spell, making his eyes open within seconds.

We hurried to the restroom, brushed, and wore our delicate skin. Mother started to shout, "Breakfast is ready and hurry up." We gulped our breakfast and picked our pack lunch. I could sense the smell of fresh baby beans mashed with cheese inside the neatly packed lunch box. "Hurray." Finally it was time for us to travel in the bus; a long journey I had dreamed of ever since I was a child. I was visiting my grandmother in Samdrup Jongkhar.

My father dropped me and my brother at the bus station. Excited, we waved goodbye bearing chill winds through the open window of the bus. Our seat was just behind the driver. Many people were wearing furry coats and they looked funny. My brother was a dreamer so he spent most of the time sleeping in the bus, so I started to read a book.

After an hour or two the bus stopped. The driver told us that something was wrong with the tires. Everyone started to walk off the bus to refresh. I tugged my brother, but he didn't respond.

Since he would not wake up, I started to walk. Suddenly I realized I was far into the wood, tall leafy trees surrounded me, flowers of pink, yellow and red lifted me. Alas! I was lost. With much difficulty I stepped one step, then suddenly I heard a sound. "Creak..." I found I had stepped on an old lamp.

To study the pattern I rubbed the lamp. Out came a smoke, thick black smoke. In the smoke stood an old man with a blue body and a tail instead of legs. He bowed in front of me and said, "Thank you for setting me free," and asked "What do you wish?"

Then my lips curved with smile as I knew it was a Genie. I said I wanted to see heaven, the god and goddess. Out of magical poses he brought out a flying carpet. He was on it flying higher than the ground, hard for me to climb. He laid his hand down to pull me, but it was really hard for me to climb.

I felt as if my hands were being pulled apart from my body, so I shouted, "Let go of my hands." As I opened my eyes I was on the floor of the bus flipping the pages of *Aladdin* in the air.

Rinzin Jamtsho

My Lovely Mother



The person I have known,
The heart that beats for me,
The care that molded me,
The feeling that is unbroken,
The touch that heals every pain,
The words that are a miracle,
The warmth that subdues every cold,
The source of strength when I am weak,
The glittering rays when it's dark,
...It's only my lovely Mother.

Rinzin Jamtsho

Silence Begets Separation

Today and tomorrow I may
Feel void without the
Glimpse of thee

My lips are trembling and
Calling your name.
No doubt, it simmers in my
Heart beats when you
Are not here for long.

You left with the beacon of pain
That I shall never forget.
You did my homework projects
But yet I never knew that you
Would leave me unheard.

Our love was so benignant that
We could encounter the shooting
Star beneath us verily.

The darkened part of affliction has
Bloomed between you and me
You intended, never had fallen
For me and yet that was
Our unrequited love

Now I don't need your shoulders
As I have found untamed intimacy
In love.

Three years of thirsty tears that
I confronted, taking the swordfish
Home unwittingly.

Those memorable days just linger
By with the accent of loneliness
And sadness.

There is a place in your heart
And I know I will live on till our
Ecstasy.

No matter if our fate cannot zip
Us together but our love will
Never get ruined.

Tshering Zangmo "A"

Those Moments

Bygone are those days
Remembered, very little
I was then a small kid
Too old for the breast feeding

In the enfolding arms of a rural environment
Right in the center of the scattered village
My play fields were those jungles
Standing tall, thick and bushy
A doggy, a piggy, and a pussy
Became playmates almost all the time

Special events were marked,
Very much entertaining and pleasurable
Every person in the neighborhood assembled,
To commemorate as one union

I was a youthful to dance and chant
On the top of the strength and prickly voice
Elders in a line, became an audience
On the flat timber floor
With the Bangchang and ara
Flooding out of the basin like mug and
Breaking the collection of gossip

It was a wonderful social gathering, I guess!
Living seemed to be joyful and splendid
When small, and I had no responsibility
Now, tension lingers,
Far away are the distant
Reliefs are those moments

Dawa

To Me

Hard to confess
Gazed for almost
quarter to dozen years

Several times I
wailed, but
It has fallen into
deaf ears

And you miss the
chance to hearken
I swayed with full
adorned

Showcasing my top
talents
To drag your
attention
It was too futile
and vain

I hate to feign
being woe
And free from
disquiet
On the name of
you

Really you are
a prototype
For that I bestow
you with heart antique

Hind limbs of my
powerful heart
Still hang and
function with single feet

These all lead to
the un-stability of my humble heart

I feel ashamed of myself
Exploring my
innocent mystic

But I don't lament
for all
As far as truth
contains in it

Void is being
created and inching
In every furnace
of my heart

To welcome your
heart in full elation
But it is only
within myself

Presence of you
only complicates
carried away fully
by your charm

should I go on
wrong doing
You should behold
all the responsible

I solicited myself
To seclude and for austerity
There the conflict
arises
Not to let you know

Silently I
consolidated the fragments of my heart
One day someone
will come with full swing

To content you
Now it's your turn
To fill the void of
holed heart

And to pull the
other limb of my heart
Making it more fit
and feeling
sympathy on unspoken emotion

Sangay Wangdi

The Shadow in Me

He smiles on me with a shine,
Glitters my path so well and fine
Pours me with the rain of love,
Gives me the ray of hope to move
He's the shadow in me!

I freaking go in a wrong path,
He washes my sins and
Disguises me into a pure being,
The light emitted in the path I'm going.
He's the shadow in me!

A meaningful creature I've been set as,
Feels like I'm the best companion he has.

I'm lucky to have him within me,
I feel his presence even if I can't see.
He's the shadow in me!

He dwells in my noble actions,
I willingly take his decisions
He believes in me and that's the bond,
Takes me out of the sorrowful pond
He's the shadow in me!

The one who's referred as he,
Will be always deep within me
He the precious gem I own,
Never want to have it blown
He's the shadow in me!
Who is he???.....he's my god!



Tshewang Zangmo

My Country



Bhutan...

The beautiful country, I was born in
That is perched between two gigantic countries
China to the north and India to the south
Green and fresh pasture fills the land
Homes for numerous lives
Growing abundant medical herbs
Ruled by the heroic Wangchuck dynasty
GNH lights every soul that lives and
Smiles glitter, reflecting purity of everyone's hearts
It's Dharma land,
Flourishing with its unbroken chain.

Kencho Dorji

Spring



Art by: Karma Wangchuk

How beautiful a season you are
Blooming, blossoming with nature of all kinds!
You are world-gorgeous and wonderful
With you vivid colors

In a beautiful garden,
All roses, tulips and lilies are blooming,
Bees are buzzing,
And butterflies are fluttering
Through the sweet lilies.

The sky is so clear,
Birds of all kinds unfold their wings
And divide the high sky
With their beautiful songs.

All vales and woods are green;
Cherry, apple, and pear trees blossom;
Their branches are dancing,
And the leaves are swaying in a gentle breeze.

You are so beautiful
I fall in love with you!
The beauty of spring
Can't be measure by anything.

You make me feel alive;
I am just with you,
But, alas, you pass from me
Without a single word.

Oceans of tears
Just role on my cheek,
So please come back to me—
You are my beautiful spring.

Kencho Dema



Photo by: Ruth Hill

Wishes

As I experience the true contentment
Amongst the educated society,
It is only you, my beloved
Who urged me to this juncture
From the darkness of the isolated rural village.

I pay you bottomless sense of adoration and admiration.
You were everything.
You transformed and shaped me
Into the person I am today

You were the basic pillar of my position
The source of an inspiration
The channel of guidance

Sweet honey
The breathe of my life
The glow in my darkness
The bridge that connected me
The shoulder I could lean on
The water that extinguished the thirst.

You were a role model
An example.
You were the food that contented the hunger,
A valuable diamond,
An alternative parent,
The educator of all the knowledge AND
Source of the reliable wealth I possess...
YET, you shall stay, implanted in my heart as the whole lot.

As I reflect with more thinking ability
I feel tremendously sorry for the late realization.
I wish I could,turn back the clock
I wish I had expressed those words.

Dawa

What Can I Do as a Lover?

I can give you my love,
But I can't give you a million dollars.

I can give you my heart,
But I can't give you gold and diamonds.

I can give you my life,
But I can't give you elixir to immortalize your life.

I can give you my services,
But I can't give you a butler and maid.

I can shed tears for you,
But I can't give you pearls and turquoise.

I can share my laughter with you,
But I can't give you a comedian and clown.

I can share my warmth with you,
But I can't give you a heater in every room.

I can share my happiness with you,
But I can't give you a palace and a throne.

I can give you my trust,
But I can't give you liberty to go beyond.

I can give you my comfort,
But I can't give you a washing machine and a Prado.

I can share my wisdom with you,
But I can't give you enlightenment.

I can share my luck with you,
But I can't give you a magic wand and miracles.

I can give you my strength,
But I can't give you superhuman power.

I can share my ideas with you,
But I can't give you ingenuity.

I can give you my respect,
But I can't give you name and fame.

I can give you my commitment,
But I can't give you sandals and handbags.

Karma Gyeltshen

Democratizing the Flies' World

The world belongs to spiders and flies. There were no spiders ,in actuality. The king of flies was a fly.

As the time unfurls it wings over the world, their society was democratized and paper work was finalized so that they could elect their leader. From the fly's body, some flies were selected to lead their colony.

Thousands of impeccable promises were made and propogandas floated in every nook and corner of the atmosphere. It was so promising and enticing that every fly was drowned.

They were then empowered. The outset of impression deserved praise. But, they began overpowering themselves and began formulation of retrogressive policies and legislation of rules that were perilously unsupportive.



Then to everyone's disgust, they turned priggish and the elected files turned to spiders so mysteriously.

For your information there were classes of flies. One who "sucks" on something good for them, but not for others, were known as "sucking flies." Others were not. Here we have nothing to do with non-sucking flies.

The spiders in power thought that sucking by this group of flies was socially a bad system and thought of banning sucking.

Unanimously sucking was thus illegalized . Rules were formulated and traps were set. With all their might gathered for eons, webs were built to trap the breach. Web-traps were firmly and complexly webbed and set to function.

As always, it went as smooth as river flow via plains and so vibrant at its outset. Nevertheless sucking flies could not forgo sucking. It became their daily ritual and they started suffering from withdrawal syndromes.

Sucking evolved again. Sucking flies were automatically trapped in the web-trap and hijacked. Their freedom was seized and their wings cut off.



But it so happened that all big and strong flies defied the web-trap and escaped and all small incapable ones got trapped.

How hard the spiders tried to stop the breach, but it was beyond their control and some small flies managed to escape along with big flies through holes created.

Then and there aroused revolution and all the sucking flies escaped. The spiders were disappointed and were all mad. All the web-traps were destroyed completely and it so happened that spiders had to reset their traps.

But this time, the traps were made flexible such that “sucking flies” were trapped only on certain ground.

All flies lost their trust in the spider’s bureaucracy. Thence forth they were regarded incapable of ruling and are waiting for next round of election.

Finally there came a system of favoritism and plutocracy; and the notion was hypocritical. The fly society, which otherwise was a harmonious society, turned to dystopian society, so chaotic and haphazard.

Singay Namgay

Mother

You are the fish's red gills,
The flame tree's spread to me,
The fried plantain smell
Replenishing.
"Go to your wide future," you said.

You kept me away from children who were rough,
Who threw words like stones.
I irked you, and I promised
That I liked you better.

To put the world between us
We parted, I here and you home;
"Take care," you said, "Study hard."
"I will, no fear," I said.

Here, where flowers blossom
And the birds chirp,
I that loves you
Will be back soon,
Because I fear to lose you
Dear Mother.

Phub Dorji

Love— a Dreadful Disease

When people hear the word LOVE many of them feel and think that love simply means romantic relationship leading to marriage.

When I utter about LOVE, the word is very strong in psychology as it affects thinking, analyzing, emotional and spiritual behavior.

Love has got different meanings in the context of human ages. To make it more complex but understandable, let's assume that a 17-year-old boy is in love with a girl of the same age. To them love means getting together and enjoying at their fullest point. They cannot conceptualize the meaning of love because they are at teens and they cannot analyze it properly.



But when a man loves a woman, he may have different reasons and better meaning behind loving her. Maybe he wants her to marry him and live together happily. To my understanding LOVE is an attraction of feeling towards someone and wanting him/her to be with you. Love doesn't mean always loving a person; it can be a love for nature, things, place, etc.

I will now share how love affects one's humble soul and leads to a dreadful disease which cannot be cured until and unless a particular person is willing to be with you.

Consider this—when a boy truly loves a girl and he tries to confess his true feelings to her and if she is heedless to him, then the disease of love starts growing in the soul of that dejected boy.

He will be ill mentally; as a result of mental illness he will do unpredictable things which is not expected by his loved and caring ones. When he tries to get his love back, if she baffles him and hurts him, then the situation worsens.

As a result the poor boy's life would be ruined by the fake love and he will be traumatized by meaningless love.

It's the nature of human beings to love someone and to be in love because we are not enlightened with halos around us. Be it a girl or a boy, we should not punish him/her without any reason and without harming ourselves.

When someone in your life comes and approaches you, don't leave him/her in trauma, instead try to understand his/her true feelings and true love to you.

Dawa

Silent Words of My Heart

— *Dedicated to my late friend who passed away on
September 11, 2011*

I know that life and soul are full of ups and downs and nobody understands my feelings but me. I bore it in silence, but it was seen through my eyes; I hid it with my smiles. I piled up things I wanted to say just on my lips, hiding with grace, keeping it all inside. But you read it.

My friend, you may be brave enough to defeat me, you may be wealthy enough to buy me, but promise me that you will never compare me with your other friends.

You left me behind when I was in need of you. I kept quiet, but the unspoken words pierced my fragile heart and tears clung upon my cheeks.

Good friends are never forgotten. Good friends are forever good. "God sees the truth but waits." Truth can't hide. It naturally comes out one day.

You could have smiled at me before you left. We should together weep with equal drops of tears. Only if you could have understood my feelings, you could have valued my feelings. If by virtue, god has taken you from me, I will be true to you. You left me forever daring not to find anyone like you used to be. I miss you so much.

Phub Dorji

The Unrevealed

Word to secret angel, unrevealed
The gate to success, barred by faith
But heart to you, hath not yet shriveled
A cause for my consciousness to faint.

Life never glows
But, faiths' wind forever blows

Heart does sing hard
And, leaves yours' unheard.

Words do echo
Which you do perceive as hiccups.
But mine shall never fade,
Though it be wade.

Thence my heart felt,
Both of us are at fault.
Mine is "unrevealed"
Whilst yours is "unnoticed"
But, whence shall I disclose
The truth of eternity.
Yes! prior to its close
It shall unfurl it leaves to ye.

Hence ye and I shall dance by the sea
Where the whole world will have its see.
Mine and thy life shall then glow
So then we shall share faith's blow.

If it shall grow
It must then glow.

Singay Namgay

What's in My Heart?



You are like the glistening dawn,
That had my heart drawn;
It's heedless to everyone,
What my heart feels.

I bet they'll simply be amazed
Lost in the mystic maze
If they look deeply
They know I love you truly.

With true promises,
You stole my heart.
I believe only your smiles
Could peck at my heart.

Love grew like a crescent moon,
Never to be relinquished soon.
Gaily I swim in your love
With fondness of your hugs and kisses

Phub Dorji

The Life I Had

When I close my eyes,
I remember the tears,
That rolled from my eyes.
And I remember,
No one ever showed up
When I needed them the most,
I was all alone.
I don't know where I made wrong!
Everyone blamed me badly;
Each word drags me in hell.
It wasn't the truth actually,
But thoughtless lies,
And I am tired of explaining.

I lost both the feelings of
Daylight and night,
My heart aches,
When I go deep in thought,
But I keep reminding myself;
That there is no reason for all this pain,
It forced me to step backward,
Instead I moved on...
It was a great challenge,
Speaking to the whole world,
And I believe one day or other,
People may come forward for my word,
Saying...
'Yes' you have been always right,
In whatever decision you have made.



Photo by: Tsheten

Tshelten Zangmo

Women's Life

People say best men are molded out of faults,
And, for the most, become a much more than better
For being little bit outlandish.

Being a woman is a terribly difficult task,
For it consists principally in dealing with men
If you want to know what a man is really like,
Take a notice how he acts when he loses money.

Fortune does not change men, it unmasks them
The men that women marry,
And why they marry them, will always be
An unresolved mystery to the world.

Sigh no more ladies, sigh no more
Men were deceivers ever
One foot on the sea, and one on shore,
To one thing they are constant never.
Remember! Your father is also a man.

I am what I am today, because of the
Choices I made yesterday.
So never give chance to others to hurt you,
For they didn't create you.

And, I shall pray for well being in their future.
And, I shall never pray for being born as a man ever.
Oh! God bless me to fulfill my desires'
And, to those who worship you.

Sonam Choki Wangmo

Does it sound Right?

“Hey Dawa! It does not look nice, why don’t you remove it, you look like tourist guide,” said two of my college friends. I was taken aback to hear it, as far as my right and respect to the national identity concern.

“Why?” I asked, but they didn’t give me any concrete reason.

Then I was wondering, what was the blunder in wearing a national flag stripe around my neck to hang my college ID card? What fault did I commit, as a proud Bhutanese, hanging my national flag with respect, and having its importance in the mind. Maybe it appeared odd or nonsensical, but no matter whatever the hidden reason it be, I loved to put it on.

Including me, many Bhutanese do have reverence and loyalty for our national identity, be it in the office, the dzong, the school, the institute and in any social context within Bhutan. The exclusive significant and indigenous implication our flag has gives us a separate boundary of self-governing and wealth in culture.

The national fortification of culture could be a reason why I guess it is important to protect and uphold our unique culture and national identity. The issue raised in one of the K₂ weekend magazines regarding the mistreatment of national identity in commercial was disrespectful.

The print of national flag on the shoe, do we think, it is morally right treatment? I think it is totally against the constitution of Bhutan and most contempt which needs deep thought over it.

We being as Bhutanese if we don’t argue and defend our values and give correct treatment to any identity, who would you think will behalf us to protect? I guess none other than me, you and all the Bhutanese.

Within the friends I have intermingled in schools and college until today, I heard many times the praise and hopeful statement, when clothed in western fashion such as logo on the chest, scarf with western flag on the head and other latest trend cloths. Nonetheless these days, it was shocking to hear from my thoughtful friends at the Paro College of Education, complaining about the national flag strip being dangled around the neck. Does it sound right? I think it is a time for us to give deeper thought to where we are heading .

Dawa

Symphony of Inner Contemplation in the Heart of the Crestfallen

The world outside my confined room was fast asleep, but then I could still make out the rasping sound created by the motor vehicles plying on the road. The dogs in the street, having nothing to do, howl their night away.

Nothing bothers me much, only my distorted enigma and overwhelmed trance which crest unremittingly. Of course the cicadas listlessly buzz which is a melody of despair for me, but I have to wave away the humming mosquitoes pestering me constantly.

Switching back to all the magnificent split seconds, anticipating good things to turn out again, I remained quite a long time in this paralytic moment. I questioned myself several times and invoked the almighty for the resolution, but questions remained as questions only. And that was the moment I thought that many questions in my life don't have answers and perhaps questions themselves are answers for me.

Leaving aside the ripples of soreness thundering in me, I paved an intimidating path to make an insightful decision in my life. The decision was slapdash and artless, made in the impulse rather, than in sound judgment.

The idea was uncanny, yet inspiring. I guessed it would wake me from a long-drawn-out dream of agony in the company of wrecked love and give me some solitary time to contemplate on certain existential questions and to seek some sort of answers to the long running question of my life.

Anyhow, after long duration of being in a nocturnal state, I managed to get in some somber sleep, because my coveted mind was set to a new era in pursuit of inner contemplation and impermanence of all compounded things, which aroused my mind and gave me enough prospects to proceed with another dawn of my dream.

The very next morning, as the somber dawn jerked me back to reality, I opened my eyes asking myself a question: What is it that I am looking for in my life? For an interlude, I closed my eyes and flashbacks began giving rise to all those pains again.

For a while I thought about every good moment I had had in my life— well grounded family and friends, hanging out with friends at parties, winning trophies and so on. The mixed kinds of feelings unrolled, making me almost crazy with all those materialistic things.

I banged my head hard on the table and said to myself, "Go ahead with your dream," the dream to find inner peace—and it came as blessing in disguise when finally I remembered the

words of wisdom of Buddha written in the book *What Makes You Not a Buddhist* by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche. He writes: "All compounded things are impermanent. All emotions are pain.. All things have no inherent existence. Nirvana is beyond concepts."

That was a really special time, and I could dearly say that it brought me back to conscience from lost hopes and dreams.

I started to perceive the sky as a different blue, a different world around, and a different state of mind, in a different day, thereafter. The allure of blue sky does not perceive me any prettier than a cactus field, as it does to the effervescent mind overflowing with a concept of discovering inner mind and attainment of ultimate peace and happiness.

I made a good beginning by meditating with the vague idea of the art of meditation that I happened to hear a long time back, accidentally, but it did help me greatly to the extent that it made my mind turn

inward to make a self discovery. To me it's not a matter of plunging into the ocean of greed for external beauty of nature, but inner beauty is beyond anything that gives me pleasure in leading my life ahead with goals of achieving happiness of others.

For those in an eternal emotional sting, taking an open air and self-pitying in its luxury is perhaps better than

misery, their only soul mate in their life. The mind scape is an explored terrain of adventures for those who have good hold over it. For that is mind that struggles and arguments are settled mellifluously and put to rest. It is the mind that we weave dreams and be free from pandemonium of a distorted existence.

However, at times, it works against us, especially when we are clueless as to what goes on inside the mind of the person closest to our heart.



Photo by: Damber

Without any means to gain access we will never know what evil lurks in the minds of people or what good lies behind actions and words, and so we fall in the prey of mind snares.

For those who have been blessed with almost flawless blueprints of it, life is a no brainer for them and life has very few questions to ask of them. And for those who are less honored it is the subject of eternally perpetuated questions that life throws at them at every hour of every day. And they stared wide eyed and drooling at the futility of the black and white and sometimes colorful documentary which is their life.

For now life has changed my entire mental state which I think is a hall mark of every rational being, uniqueness to comprehend the meaning of life and practice to attain enlightenment. The great charms of realizing the bitter truth goes entirely to one who made me fall victim of love.

I thank you and I admit that you are the one who made great differences in my life. Thanks for all the time to come.

Damber Singh Mongar

Limerick

Tomorrow I am going to Paga
And before that I should reach Shabba
I'm going with Mr. Tim
He's cool and likes to swim
And I'm from the noisy town of Tabba

Tandin Wangdi

Words to my Prince

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

-Thomas Jefferson

In a season of blooming and blossoming
You and I danced together
With tones of love and care
You showed me your love in a form of perfect rose.

As the time passes
You departed from me
Like a flying bird
To a far place without a single word

In the season of fall
All the golden leaves are falling
With the mood of dancing
But so sadly there is no one to dance with me.

Now the falling leaves are ended
And the icy season has started
But you still didn't turn up
You, my prince
Please come back to me.

Guru Wangmo

The Iron Heart

The heart not armored with weapons to summon the war of territory,
But heart with the cumulus of armamentarium to conquer the war of inner story;
The heart that is righteous of what it believes is a true discovered theory,
With principles that rein the cords of indelible but unprecedented history.

The heart that is an invincible warrior of interior buried nescience,
Those mighty swords of realization, ushering into shining conscience;

That heart!

I yearn from the dawn of humanity,
Not blinded by my aphotic room of ideation for self, but at the apex of sanity.

The heart that maddens when the knowing is curtailed by factualism—

That heart!

Remaining as vibrant and juvenile as a soldier in a termite hive.
The heart that's gladdened by the windows of thinking, but was ne'er in escapism.
That heart I'd shower upon the thirsty humanity if I'm not real naïve.

O! Did I speak with much lines of ineptness on behalf of my discernment?
For it may drive the adroit into ceaseless laughter upon my words of frailty.
But I believe, not even hope, there is dawn of this heart from timeless start
If you have the traits I had envisaged, I call you the Iron Heart!

Tandin Wangdi

Sorrow

Sorrow visits me frequently,
While happiness visits me rarely,
But sorrow always visits me—
Actually how it looks I can't see

When I am filled with sorrow
No one is willing to borrow
No one is there to care
No one is there to share.

I am the only one who has to bear
While others are filled with fear
I weep, laying my head on my pillow
While others sit and enjoy under the willow.

Why not better be born as wild
Rather than being born as a child?
Sorrow only I own
Oh sorrow! Why not go away from me once.

Deki Wangmo

Heartache

—after “The Call” by Gopilal Acharya, from *Dancing to Death*

Last evening I saw my friend Karma on river bank;
She had found herself a man.

There he is walking beside her,
Too close and about to hug.

There was happiness in their walk,
And smiles on their faces.

Both, I guess
spoke of their lovely relationship.

There I stood still,
Unconscious for a while.

Then I became conscious of
A congestion in my heart.
I promise I couldn't say what it was.

Dawa

Invigilation:

(from the Latin *invigilare*, to stay awake, to be watchful, to be vigilant)

Today, I am taking my friend Karma's *invigilation duty*.

Today, I am an invigilator.

Today, I invigilate. I keep watch.

For three hours I will supervise 35 Bhutanese college students as they complete their end-of-semester examinations.

I perch at the front of the small room on a straight-backed wooden chair on a raised wooden platform in front of a chalkboard. There is no chalk, but an enterprising student digs deep down into the crack between the wooden platform and the wall and manages to scrounge up a small piece.

With the chalk, I am instructed to write down the time, at half hour intervals, beginning at 9 a.m. Later I will make a fat white checkmark next to each increment as the time ticks by, and students will glance up nervously each time they hear the chalk against the board.

The room is furnished with 18 wooden tables, each large enough for two students to sit side-by-side. At the back are wooden cabinets, doors ajar. Written, graffiti style, on the front of one cabinet is: "You will not be punished for your anger, you will be punished by your anger."

First the students sign in, marking their initials in cryptic scrawls next to their names on the attendance sheet. "Madam, it is nearing the time," one anxious student says to me as I move up and down the rows matching Examination ID cards with faces, as per my instructions.

I hand out the examination papers and the students immediately begin, quietly, dutifully, bent over their tests and blank answer booklets, murmuring to themselves and they mouth the words to the exam questions.

I picked up the exam earlier in the morning from the Examination Room, where the Examination Committee had all the day's exams, staplers, answer booklets, and room keys sorted by teacher—kept safely overnight in a locked metal chest. I found my fat manila envelope next to a piece of masking tape with the initials KW for Karma Wangchuk, who had taken the day to go to the hospital in Thimphu to inquire about chronic stomach pain.

Just before the exam begins, as I am switching off my cell phone, I see a message from Karma. "Just a reminder. Da room no. is 311 at 8:30 am. Thanx." I write back: "Already here. How R U?"

The students rustle pages, scribble, stretch, cough, sniffle, shuffle their feet.

There is a knock at the door. Kencho, one of the young women who works in the college canteen, pushes open the door a crack and mouths the words “Tea”? I say yes, and accept a small white cup of the sweet, milky brew.

The windows are open to the cool sunny air and the greenery outside. There are no screens on the windows. A few flies make their way in, but no one seems to mind.

The men have pushed up the white cuffs of their ghos, and the women, too have gotten down to work, their elbows showing below the raised cuffs of their tagos and wanchus.

They are all impeccably outfitted in Bhutanese national dress, and exceedingly well-groomed. The women have thick long black hair, mostly tied back in pony-tails. The men have funky haircuts that they spike up or slick back with gel. The women are all dressed in colorful kiras—a large piece of hand-woven cloth wrapped around like a long skirt. On top they wear a short outer jacket called a tago and an inner blouse called a wanchu, held together in front by sparkling brooches and pins. The men wear their ghos—something akin to a robe (also of hand-woven cloth) cinched tight at the waist with a hand-woven belt. The gho comes to the knees, and is worn with black knee socks and leather lace-up shoes.

Halfway through the exam time, a colleague comes to give me a ten-minute break. When I return, he hands me a tiny slip of paper with his cell phone number on it. “If you have any problems or questions, please call me,” he says.

After some time, some of the students begin asking for extra sheets of answer paper. When I hand the paper to them, they take it with two outstretched palms.

At the end of the exam, as per instructions, I collect and sign all of the answer sheets, pack up the exams and leave the room. As I am heading down the stairs, the thick manila envelope in hand, a colleague, Madam Sangay, says, “Gretchen, you need to lock the door.” I retrace my steps and slide the bolt on the door into its socket in the wooden doorframe, flip down the latch, slip the lock through, then twist the golden key until the lock catches.

Back in the Examination Room, I enter my name, the number of exams I am returning, the students’ course numbers, and then wait for my efforts to be verified by another colleague from the Examination Committee. If I have not been sufficiently vigilant, I am assured that someone else will watch over me. Afterward, as I walk down to Momo Uncle’s shop to buy fat, steamed dumplings for lunch, I think about my friend Karma and wonder if anyone watching over him.

Gretchen Legler



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Ruth Hill is a river geologist and musician from Maine, USA. She spent nine months in Bhutan, in 2011-2012. From her base at Paro College of Education, she taught guitar lessons, photographed Bhutan's people and places, and wrote music. You can find her online at www.ruthhillmusic.com. Email: ruth.hill@maine.edu.

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