

THE THIRD KARMAPA, RANGJUNG DORJE

A Song to
*Encourage
Myself*

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By The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

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Namo Guru!

From saṃsāra's ocean of suffering,
You lead us to the isle of liberation.
Lord Guru, supreme among refuges,
Buddha, to you I bow!

I, this yogi dwelling here,
Have gained a perfect human life,
With all its freedoms and advantages.¹
I have met the Mahāyāna lamas
And am versed in the Victor's teachings.
If I do not devote myself to practice now,
But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

The three pure trainings have taken root within my mind;
I know well what to adopt and what to abandon.
My karma certainly bodes well for lives to come,²
And what is to come lies in my own hands.³
If I do not devote myself to practice now,
But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

¹ The “freedoms and advantages” (*dal 'byor*) are the eight freedoms and ten advantages that make a human birth precious and suited to Dharma practice. Reflecting on their rarity is the first of the four thoughts that turn the mind towards the Dharma.

² We have read *nyid* as *nges*, since *nyid* does not work as a verb here; *legs par nges* (“certain to be good”) fits both the grammar and the sense of the stanza.

³ The Tibetan reads *rang la rang dbang yod pa la*, literally “having mastery over oneself”. Since Rangjung Dorje understands well what to adopt and what to abandon, his karma bodes well for future lives; we have therefore rendered the line with the more idiomatic “what is to come lies in my own hands”.



My nose-rope has not slipped into another's hands.⁴
 I crave neither food nor possessions.
 People everywhere hold me in esteem.
 I have won this freedom for myself.
 If I do not devote myself to practice now,
 But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

I am skilled in writing on the Victor's words;
 I know how to meditate on the essential points of concentration,⁵
 And how to dispel the faults arising in meditation.
 The learned sing my praises.
 If I do not devote myself to practice now,
 But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

My partisan views have fallen away;
 I have cast aside meditation that seeks mere peace.
 My conduct knows neither recklessness nor hypocrisy;
 Thus, I am free from hope and fear.⁶
 If I do not devote myself to practice now,
 But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

Saṃsāra appears like a conjurer's illusion;
 Nirvāṇa, no more than a mirage.
 I know cause and effect arise dependently,
 And arising and ceasing are like combing the sky.

⁴ The nose-rope (*sna thag*) is the rope by which a yak or other animal is led. To let one's nose-rope slip into another's hands is a common Tibetan idiom for losing one's independence and being at someone else's beck and call. Here it refers to the yogin's independence from patrons, obligations and worldly ties, spelling it out more directly as freedom (*rang dbang*) later in the stanza.

⁵ The term *samten* (*bsam gtan*; Skt. *dhyāna*) means, at its most basic, a state of deep, one-pointed concentration in which the mind is stable and calm, serving as a foundation for wisdom. Its precise sense depends on the view in question. In the Abhidharma, it denotes the meditative absorptions of the form and formless realms. In the Mahāyāna, it is the fifth perfection, a one-pointed mind that serves as the basis for special insight. In the Vajrayāna, it refers to the meditative stabilisations of the generation and completion stages. In Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, it is refined into "non-meditation" (*sgom med*), effortless resting in the natural state of mind. Since Rangjung Dorje was a master of both Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, and the following line speaks of dispelling faults of meditative experience (*nyams*), it is probable he is using the term in this last sense. See Tsadra Foundation, "[Key Terms/Dhyāna](#)".

⁶ The Tibetan reads *'bras bu re dang dogs pa bral*, literally "the fruit is free from hope and fear". In the traditional sequence of view, meditation, conduct and fruit, the fruit is the result of practice, which here is Rangjung Dorje's own freedom from hope and fear regarding any outcome. We have rendered it as "Thus, I am free..." to make this clear in English.



If I do not devote myself to practice now,
But succumb to laziness, I bring only harm upon myself.

This song to encourage myself
I sang in solitude near Tsari,
While staying there in winter retreat,
Practising meditation.
May every fault of distraction be purified!
May joyful perseverance arise in my mind!



COLOPHON

This was sung as a melody by Rang Dorje as a means of encouraging himself.



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