



THE THIRD KARMAPA, RANGJUNG DORJE

A Little Song:
*I Burst Out
Laughing!*

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This Little Song, I Burst Out Laughing
By The Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorje

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This Little Song, I Burst Out Laughing

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Oṃ sarva svasti siddhi hūṃ

To the great meditator who lacks the five wisdom kāyas,
whose five and three poisons erupt from the very root—
what a waste!

And yet the five poisons, dawning as wisdom itself, are right under your nose!¹
Seeing this, I, the lone yogin, burst out laughing.

Not having realised this path to liberation,
and carrying no provisions for the next life—
what a waste!

And yet the experience of Mahāmudrā is right under your nose!
Seeing this, I, the great meditator, burst out laughing.

To the great meditator forever fussing with this and that,²
failing to attain awakening, the path of liberation—
what a waste!

And yet Buddhahood is right under your nose!
Seeing this, I, the lone siddha, burst out laughing.

To the great meditator yet to renounce worldly ties,
not realising the ultimate—
what a waste!

And yet the Buddhahood of the five kāyas is right under your nose!
Seeing this, I, the realised one, laugh in shame.

¹ “Right under your nose.” This renders the recurring Tibetan *rtsa na ta le gda*, which conveys something immediately present, close at hand, and vividly apparent. The colloquial English was chosen to preserve both the immediacy and the lightly mocking tone of the refrain.

² “Forever fussing with this and that.” Tibetan *bya byed* has a broad sense of activities, undertakings, or busyness. The freer “fussing with this and that” was chosen to preserve the dismissive, almost teasing force of the stanza rather than render it plainly as “engaging in activities.”



To the great meditator who squanders a lifetime in town,
 rattling on in frenzied chatter—³
 what a waste!
 And yet the secluded mountain retreat is right under your nose!
 Seeing this, I, the lone ngakpa, burst out laughing.

To the great meditator entangled in the eight worldly concerns,
 blind to the ultimate truth—
 what a waste!
 And yet release from the knot of such worldly concerns
 is right under your nose!
 Seeing this, I, the monk, burst out laughing.

To the great meditator who settles down and takes to drink,⁴
 failing to attain Buddhahood in this very life—what a waste!
 And yet primordial wisdom, the path to liberation,
 is right under your nose!
 Seeing this, I, Karma Pakshi,⁵ burst out laughing!

To the great meditator who lies corpse-like in ignorance,
 untouched by the guru's blessing—
 what a waste!
 Seeing this, I, the three kāyas, burst out laughing.



COLOPHON

This little song, I Burst Out Laughing, arose from the expanse of wisdom. Thus it was said.

³ “Rattling on in frenzied chatter.” The Tibetan literally evokes the mouth “blazing fiercely.” The English renders the behaviour implied by that image rather than reproducing the metaphor directly, in order to retain the stanza’s immediacy and comic contrast with the mountain retreat.

⁴ The source reads *rten 'cha' chu 'thung*, a difficult and uncertain phrase. We have emended *chu* (“water”) to *chang* (“alcohol”), yielding “settles down and takes to drink.” Gamble likewise treats the line as problematic, changing the preceeding line see to compensate Gamble (2013).

⁵ The reference to Karma Pakshi, the Second Karmapa, raises some uncertainty over the identity of the speaker, though it may also be a playful use of one of several elevated self-designations in the song. Since the song is preserved in Rangjung Dorje’s collected songs, we have followed that attribution here.



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Primary Source

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Secondary Source

Gamble, Ruth Ellen. 2013. *The View From Nowhere: The Travels of the Third Karmapa, Rang byung rdo rje in Stories and Songs*. PhD thesis, The Australian National University.



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