Singing Ice

Ladakhi folk songs about mountains, glaciers, rivers, and streams
Singing Ice

The white, snowy Kang Rinpoche on the right
May it remain without retreating
May it remain unchanged and steady
May it remain without retreating
May it remain unchanged and steady
May it remain without retreating

The Lake Mapham on the left
A brimming water offering
May it last unchanged
This water offering
May it last unchanged
This water offering

Excerpt from The Monastery in the Ravine, folk song collected by Morup Namgyal in Ladakh
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Hymn Praising Our Spiritual Abode
While we were at Drang Drung, we asked villagers why it is called that. They said when a stone falls, the noise it makes is drang drung, drung drung. So we called it thus.

This songbook emerges out of an encounter with Morup Namgyal in Leh, Ladakh, a well-known folk singer whose music practice has contributed to the revival of Ladakhi and Tibetan cultural traditions. Also known as the “Song Collector”, Mr. Namgyal has been saving and singing traditional folk songs that reflect the changing environmental conditions of Himalayan mountains and its peoples.

After spending the day with Morup Namgyal and listening to his many stories, some of which were accompanied by his plaintive singing, he opened up his archive to us—a handwritten folio of songs, now long forgotten, that are stored on faded scraps of paper gathered since the 1960s. These songs and their chronicles of environmental change are fated to disappear like the glaciers that Morup Namgyal sings about in his soulful words of mourning and loss.

It is this combined urgency to both preserve and share the environmental knowledge embedded in materials—in stories and in songs, in the sounds of the wind and tumbling of glacial streams, in the soft silence of snow and the rumble of falling rocks—that guided the making of this songbook.

This songbook is supported by the British Council through their Creative Commissions initiative of 2021–22 and is part of the broader Listening to Ice project which brought a small team of scientists and researchers from India and the UK together to conduct fieldwork and deep listening workshops at Drang Drung Glacier in the Zanskar region of the Karakoram Range in the Himalayas. Using various acoustic methods, Listening to Ice set out to monitor and record the impacts of climate change on glaciers and engage with affected mountain communities. In bringing scientific research and local knowledge of glaciers together, Listening to Ice aims to generate new insights into our current ecological condition.

The collaboration with Morup Namgyal makes a significant contribution towards this goal and we are thus very grateful to him for sharing his time, insights and wisdom with us. Our hope is that this songbook will fall into many hands and be used widely for learning and teaching others about the environmental histories of Ladakh that are recorded in its poetry and rhythms.
Notes on the translation

When we embarked on creating this book of songs about mountains, glaciers, rivers, and fields, the initial idea was to type up the songs from Morup Namgyal’s carefully-preserved handwritten notes and translate them into English. Jigmet Singge, who was coordinating the book project locally, quickly pointed out that most young Ladakhis would struggle to read the Ladakhi versions because the written language was in the Tibetan script, usually reserved for religious scriptures. Consequently, we added a transliteration of the Ladakhi into English, a task enthusiastically undertaken by Kunzang Deachen who has been working with us previously on the Listening to Ice project at Drang Drung glacier.

Kunzang had her mother Stanzin Yangdol, a student of the scriptures, read out the songs as she transcribed them in English. There are few precedents for how to approach this situation, and as we learnt, there is also little consensus on how Ladakhi is to be written in and read from the Tibetan script. Many of the songs were typed up in Leh by Lobzang Tsering and Tsering Sonam who alerted us to what might appear as spelling mistakes to some because spoken Ladakhi is quite different from the more classical Tibetan.

When they were busy, a chance encounter in Delhi with Tenzin Phuntsok led us to Lobsang Choegyal, both of whom are native Tibetan speakers. From their perspective, the songs had glaring spelling errors. The translator of the songs, Tashi Morup, assured us that such errors were quite acceptable within one school of thought on Ladakhi linguistics. There are no defined conventions for written Ladakhi and the scholar Khanpo Konchok Phandey edited the text to a form that is widely recognised.

Niyati Dhuldhoya, who edited the translations, pored over each song with Tashi, often for hours in efforts to capture their sonorous essence in English. While we were occupied with transcribing the texts and fonts as well as grappling with spelling, Niyati reminded us that these were texts intended to be sung out loud.

Designer Radha Pandey has brought all of this together beautifully in laying out this book with the Ladakhi alongside the transliteration for ease of reading.

This is all to say, that the songs have already had quite a journey, from being sung to Morup Namgyal many decades ago during his travels and his work at All India Radio, to being written down on scraps of paper and in his notebooks, to now being typed up in Bodhi and transliterated to English. Our sincerest apologies if something may have been lost along the way, but we hope that the songs find new voices and new audiences as they come together for the first time in this collected volume, which is dedicated to the sounds of ice and the songs of local communities.
Born High Above the Valley

Phu dey ru chhags pa po
Gangs ri kar po
Gangs ri wey kar po
The white glacier
Formed down below in the valley
Dou dey ru khil wa po
The turquoise lake
May it remain steady and unchanged
Gyur meyd rtan po ru jug shig
The high mouth of the glacier
We look upon its blessed pillars
May it remain steady and unchanged
The one who protects us all
Inside dwells the Buddha

Walk around it clockwise
All our bodily sins are washed away

Sparkling in the front
A turquoise lake brims

Prostrate before it
Our parental cares are repaid

High above rises the Gonpa Tso Parapu
Inside dwells the Lama
The Monastery in the Ravine

A monastery seems to appear in the yellow ravine
May it remain unchanged and steady

The white, snowy Kang Rinpoche on the right
May it remain without retreating

You, the man, are a golden crown
I, the girl, am a silver pipe

If I don’t settle in your heart
I, the girl, will pray to the gods

May it remain unchanged
This monastery seems as if manifested by faith
May it remain unchanged and steady

The sandalwood tree in front of the monastery
A self-sustaining sapling

May it remain unchanged and steady
May it remain without retreating

The Lake Mapham on the left
A brimming water offering

May it last unchanged
This water offering

1 The Ladakhi name for Mount Kailash
2 The Ladakhi name for Lake Manasarovar
Song of Choskor (Alchi)

Me, the boy’s father, whiter than the snow mountain
Tundup Pheley, my father, whiter than the snow mountain

My wishes fulfilled
Tundup Pheley’s wishes fulfilled

The turquoise lake below
The turquoise lake of Choskor

Me the boy’s mother is like the turquoise blue lake
Mother Choskyong Dolma is like the turquoise blue lake

You gave me this beautiful crown to fulfill my needs
You gave me this golden crown to fulfill my needs

My mother’s wishes fulfilled
Mother Choskyong Dolma’s wishes fulfilled

The white mountain of the small valley
The snowy mountain of Choskor

The turquoise lake of Choskor
The turquoise lake below
O Mother, O Mother
Mother Dolzang Lhamo

You gave me many turquoises and precious stones
You gave me many white turquoises
Sacred objects lie inside
The Avalokitesvara is enshrined inside
ནང་དེ་ན་ནང་རྟེན་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
ཡི་དམ་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ།

In the middle of the beautiful meadow
Stands a small monastery like a golden vase
스ྤང་ལྗོངས་ལ་བདེ་མོའི་དཀྱིལ་ན།
དགོན་ཆུང་གསེར་རི་བུམ་ཚང།

Sacred objects lie inside
The Avalokitesvara is enshrined inside
ནང་དེ་ན་ནང་རྟེན་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
ཡི་དམ་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ།

Drinking this blessed water
Can bar the way to hell
ཆུ་འདི་ལ་བྱིན་རླབས་འཐུང་ཚད་པོ།
ངན་སོང་མྱོང་དོགས་མེད།

Drinking this blessed water
Can prevent a life of suffering
ཆུ་དེ་བྱིན་རླབས་འཐུང་ཚད་པོ།
བར་དོ་མྱོང་དོགས་མེད།

At the end of our small village
Flows turquoise blue water
ང་དང་ཡུལ་ཆུང་ངི་མདོ་དེ་ན།
གཡུ་མཚོ་སྔོན་མོ་རྒྱུག་géད།

At the end of the Nye Valley and Basgo village
Flows the Indus River
ཉེ་དང་བ་མགོའི་མདོ་དེ་ན།
སེངྒེ་གཙང་པོ་རྒྱུག་géད།

In our small heavenly valley
Does the white glacier form
In the high Nye Valley and the Basgo village
Three tiers of the glacier forms
བ་མགོའི་ཕུ་སྟོད་ན།
གངས་རི་ལ་སུམ་བརྩེགས་ཆགས་ཡོད།

When the white glacier forms
It brings good fortune to our small village
Ngey dang la yul tchung ngi sod dey
Gangs ri la sum rtseygs chhangs yod

If three tiers of the glacier form
Good fortune is brought to Nye and Basgo
Nga dang la yul chhung ni go na
Gangs ri kar po gun chhags yod

At the top of our small village
Sparkle springs one hundred and eight
ང་དང་ལ་ཡུལ་ཆུང་ངི་གོ་ན།
ཆུ་མིག་བརྒྱ་དང་བརྒྱད་རྩ།

At the top of the small Basgo village
Spreads out a lush green meadow with one hundred and eight springs
བ་མགོ་ཡུལ་ཆུང་ངི་བསོད་བདེ།
སྤང་ལྗོངས་ཆུ་མིག་བརྒྱ་རྩ།

In our small heavenly valley
Does the white glacier form
In the middle of the green meadow
Stands a small, heavenly monastery
ཁྲེ་རྗེ་ལོ་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
དགོན་ཆུང་ལྷ་ཡི་ཕོ་བྲང།

In the middle of the beautiful meadow
Stands a small monastery like a golden vase
ནང་དེ་ན་ནང་རྟེན་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
ཡི་དམ་ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ།

In our small heavenly valley
Does the white glacier form
In the middle of the green meadow
Stands a small, heavenly monastery
ཁྲེ་རྗེ་ལོ་བཞུགས་ཡོད།
དགོན་ཆུང་ལྷ་ཡི་ཕོ་བྲང།

In the high Nye Valley and the Basgo village
Three tiers of the glacier forms
བ་མགོའི་ཕུ་སྟོད་ན།
གངས་རི་ལ་སུམ་བརྩེགས་ཆགས་ཡོད།
The Buddha of the past stands in Basgo.
The Buddha Marmayzad stands in Basgo.
The Machig Paldan Lhamo helps us triumph over evil.

Built by the people of this village
Stand the Buddhas of three eras

The golden-eyed fish in its water
Bring you onto the path of enlightenment.

The birds around depend on the water
And are admitted onto the path of nirvana.

In the middle of our village
Lies the shrine built by the Lion.

With sacred objects enshrined there
Inside is a statue of the Machig Paldan Lhamo.

There are sacred objects enshrined there
Inside is the copper-gilded statue of the Maitreya Buddha.

The Buddha of the future stands in Basgo.
The Maitreya Buddha stands in Basgo.

Built by the people of Basgo
Stand the Buddhas of three eras.

The Buddha of the present stands in Basgo,
The Buddha Shakyamuni stands in Basgo.

We, the people of Basgo, the young and old
Protect us all.
Our young men built
The magnificent silver stupa

Our young men built
The magnificent silver stupa

Our young men built
The magnificent silver stupa

This noble community in Basgo
Give us your blessing

The Ladakh Scouts and ITBP built
The golden stupa Namgyalma

For all our young men
Protect their lives and bodies

For the young men of Basgo
Give them strength and praise their bravery

3 King Singhe Namgyal, known as the Lion, was a 17th-century king of the Namgyal dynasty and ruled Ladakh from 1616 to his death in 1642

4 A female Ladakhi deity
Three turquoise hues, a blessing for the village

In the middle, a crystal white stupa stands

The white glacier with three layers, each of a different hue

In the middle, a crystal white stupa stands

A crystal white stupa of three hues

The three hues, a blessing for the Gyakhar Smugchung village

The three hues, a blessing for the Gyakhar Smugchung village

In the middle, a crystal white stupa stands

A crystal white stupa of three hues

Three crystal hues, a blessing for the village

Three crystal hues, a blessing for the Gyakhar Smugchung village

Down in the valley, a turquoise lake formed

Three turquoise hues on the turquoise lake
Song of Sre Dang Puri

In front of the small, joyful village
There is a sacred, pure land

In front of the happy land of Menser
There is the sacred Sre Dang Puri

The sacred object outside, the white crystal mountain Tisi
The sacred object inside, the Buddha

Let us go clockwise

Around the sacred Buddha inside
Let us prostrate ourselves in respect

The lake is not as lofty as the glacier
But it is happy in its place

Offerings from the middle of Mapham Lake

This is a phrase in Ladakhi used at the end of an invocation or prayer
The Rising Sun

Look to the east, where the sun rises
Like white grains settled on the land

This land is a sacred, worthy land
This sacred land of white snow is Tisi

The land where I pray for my sins
The land of blessings for the wealthy
The land of unanswered prayers for poor me

Look to the south of the sun
The blue sky settled on the land

This land is a sacred mountain
This is the sacred Mapham Lake

The land where I pray for my sins
The land of blessings for the wealthy
The land of unanswered prayers for poor me

Look to the west, where the sun sets
Black smoke settled on the land

This land is a sacred mountain
This sacred land is Puspa Hari

The land where I pray for my sins
The land of blessings for the wealthy
The land of unanswered prayers for poor me

Look to the north of the sun
The white conch shell spreads out across the land

This land is a sacred mountain
The sacred Monastery of Eight Pillars

The land where I pray for my sins
The land of blessings for the wealthy
The land of unanswered prayers for poor me

Look to the east, where the sun rises
Like white grains settled on the land

This land is a sacred, worthy land
This sacred land of white snow is Tisi

The land where I pray for my sins
The land of blessings for the wealthy
The land of unanswered prayers for poor me
The Old Mountain

The old, red mountain cave
Unchanging, steady

The old monastery
The grand old monastery

The old, black mountain
Unchanging, steady

The old, lush mountain
Unchanging, steady

The old mountain
The old, lush mountain

The old mountain
The old, red mountain

The old, lush mountain
Unchanging, steady

What a joy to see
The magnificent vulture

What a joy to see
The flock of birds

What a joy to see
The herd of mountain goats

What a joy to see
The big old ibex
The grand old monastery
Unchanging, steady

The old Khadtsa Monastery
Unchanging, steady

What a joy to see
Our wholesome sangha

The old glacier
The old Onpo glacier

The old glacier
The old Shaway glacier

The old Onpo glacier
Unchanging, steady

The old Shaway glacier
Unchanging, steady

The old water
The old gurgling water

The old water.
The old milky water of Shiti

The old gurgling water
Unchanging, steady

The milky white waters of Shiti
Unchanging, steady
What a joy to see
The people of the Tia village
What a joy to see
The devout people of Tia
The old tree
The old juniper tree of God
The old tree
The Gyugtha juniper tree of God
The old tree
The Gyugtha juniper tree of God
Unchanging, steady
Unchanging, steady
What a joy to see
The generous protector
The blessed mountain gazing up at the sky
Above the blessed mountain, the sky, sun and moon
The blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed mountain gazing up at the highland grass
The blessed mountain gazing upward to the high lake
The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma

The blessed mountain of glaciers and crystal white ice
The blessed mountain gazing upward to the high plains
The blessed mountain with the high plains and wild ass in the valley

The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
O blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed one gazing upward
On the cliff of the blessed mountain, the vulture seated
The blessed mountain gazing upward

The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma
Blessed one gazing upward

The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma
The blessed rocky mountain gazing upward

The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma
The blessed mountain gazing upward to the highland grass
The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom

The blessed mountain of the lake and golden-eyed fish
O blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
O blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma
The blessed mountain gazing upward to the high lake
The blessed mountain of the lake and golden-eyed fish
O blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
The blessed mountain with the highland grass and wild yak at the bottom
O blessed mountain singing a song

The blessed mountain like me, the girl Sodnam Dolma
The blessed mountain gazing upward to the high lake
The display of the golden sheep brings luck
The gait of the golden sheep brings glory

The vast grassland, the grassland
The open desert, the dry land

The vast sky above, the open sky
The open rocks, the rocks

The large rocky cliff, the large cliff
The rocky cliff shows off the vulture

The display of the sun and moon brings luck
Their light intermingling brings glory

The display of the vulture brings luck
The vulture's skilled flight brings glory

The vast snow mountain, the vast mountain
The open desert, the dry land

The vast snow mountain shows off the snow lion
The roar of golden-haired snow lion brings glory

The display of the sun and moon brings luck
The gait of the golden sheep brings glory

The vast lake, the lake
The open lake, the lake

The display of the little fish brings luck
The golden-eyed fish brings glory

The vast snow mountain shows off the snow lion
The roar of golden-haired snow lion brings glory

The large rocky cliff, the large cliff
The rocky cliff shows off the vulture

The vast snow mountain, the vast mountain
The vast lake, the lake

The vast grassland, the grassland
The vast desert, the dryland

The open rocks, the rocks
The open rocks show off the golden sheep

The vast grassland shows off the little wild yak
The open desert shows off the little wild ass

The vast lake shows off the little fish
The open lake shows off the little fish

The display of the little fish brings luck
The open lake shows off the little fish

The display of the wild ass brings luck
The white stripes of the wild ass bring glory

The display of the yak brings luck
The stout animal brings glory

The vast sky above, the open sky
The open sky shows off the sun and moon

The vast grassland shows off the little wild yak
The vast desert shows off the little wild ass

The open lake shows off the little fish
The vast lake shows off the little fish

The display of the little fish brings luck
The golden-eyed fish brings glory

The vast grassland shows off the little wild yak
The vast desert shows off the little wild ass
The flowing mane of the lion
Adorns the crystal brangyas

A flock of mountain goats
Adorns the crystal brangyas

High on the old mountain
The gods lay out a beautiful plan

High above the blue lake
The gods lay out a beautiful plan

The sun and the moon
Are a crystal dang gyas in the sky

The many stars spread out across the sky
Adorn the crystal brangyas

The big, old ibex
Is like a crystal brangyas on the mountain

A flock of mountain goats
Adorns the crystal brangyas

High above the blue lake
The gods lay out a beautiful plan

The lion in the snow
Is like a crystal brangyas on the peak

The gods lay out their plan
High on the ancient mountain

The sun and the moon
Are a crystal dang gyas in the sky

The many stars spread out across the sky
Adorn the crystal brangyas

The big, old ibex
Is like a crystal brangyas on the mountain

A flock of mountain goats
Adorns the crystal brangyas
High in the grand palace
The gods lay out their plan

High above the magnificent town
The gods lay out their plan

The mighty lord
Is a crystal brangyas standing before his people

A magnificent shoal of fish
Adorns the crystal brangyas

The stout animal, the dzo
Is a crystal brangyas grazing in the grassland

Five kinds of flowers
Adorn the brangyas

The golden-eyed fish
Is a crystal brangyas on the blue water

A sweet made at celebrations such as weddings
The High Mountains

Phu ya gi ru gangs ri kar po ma chags na
In the high mountains, if the glacier does not form

Do ma gi ru uu tso ngon mo chi la khil
In the low lands, why should the turquoise lake form?

Do ma gi ru uu tso ngon mo ma khil na
If the turquoise lake does not form

Shing zad ni dong po jig ni la thungs
In the low lands, why should the sandalwood tree grow?

Shing zad ni dong po jig ni ma thungs na
If the sandalwood tree does not grow

Ja tang ji u rigs mang po jig ni chi la bab
Why should the singing flocks of birds fly in?

Mey mey kheyn kheyn no kheyn pa
O old wise man, ocean full of wisdom
chan ni gya tso kheyn

Ma gi ji u la lta wey mig chig sal ang lags
Give the birds eyes to see

Mey mey kheyn kheyn no kheyn pa
O old wise man, ocean full of wisdom
chan ni gya tso kheyn

Ma gi jiiu la phur wey shog pa rig sal ang lags
Give the birds wings to fly
Ripened, ripened, to a golden hue it has ripened
This golden hue ripens in the royal house of Mulbeck
Now we dance!
Move round and round to the right
Raise our right sleeves and go round to the right
Move round and round to the left
No one worries in Mulbeck town
Our lord, he is the suppressor of demons
Minister Tsewang Tundup, he is the suppressor of demons
In our small valley lies the white glacier
Our generous lord is like the white snow mountain
Minister Tsewang Tundup is like the white snow mountain
In the valley spreads out a blue lake
Our noble lady is like the blue lake
The noble Yangchan Tsom is like the blue lake
Our land has ripened to a golden hue
The soft, grassy meadow unfolds
The animals graze on it
Their herders take care of them

From high on the precious mountain
Being conscious of impermanence

Desire, like water, is everywhere as I contemplate
This present life is but a dream I see

The sounds of their songs and flutes
The servants of the worldly cycle

Their noisy activities fill the land
And I, a mendicant in retreat, see them

An enlightened human meditates on compassion
And meditates with unfaltering focus

At the top of the valley, the lofty white peak of the Almighty
At the bottom, many devotees stand

In the distance, the glacial mountain adorned with white flags
In the front, the dense wood gathers

The branches of the trees are captivating
Filled with the songs of different birds

As the fragrant breeze flows
The birds on the branches dance

And on the tops of tall trees
The monkeys play games

The North-West Fortress of Solitude

Phu na lha tsan gangs kar pho
Doh na yon dag dad ngan mang
At the top of the valley, the lofty white peak of the Almighty
At the bottom, many devotees stand

Gyab ri dar kar yol bas chad
Dun na gos dod nags stal spungs
In the distance, the glacial mountain adorned with white flags
In the front, the dense wood gathers

Spang shong niu sing che la yeyngs
Ti ngan idong padma la
Bungpa nganpe dar dir chan
The grassy meadow spreads out beautifully
Down to the fragrant, enchanting lotus
And the bee humming over it

Zingbu steyng ka chu dhop la
Chu ja jin pa skyogs nas sta
At the brimming pond
The water bird turns to gaze

Jon ching gyaspey yalga la
Zes pey ja tsongs skad ngyan gyur
The branches of the trees are captivating
Filled with the songs of different birds

Tijim seyr bus tab pa la
Rsta shi yal ga e gar stabs jeyd
As the fragrant breeze flows
The birds on the branches dance

Tho jing salwey jon shing tseyr
Ta tigu yang stal na tsongs jeyd
And on the tops of tall trees
The monkeys play games
For most, thinking about the world brings meaning
And this is the belief of a mundane cyclic existence

I move past the mundane desire impatiently rising in the mind
And find joy, peace and compassion
Below young men and women
Singing auspicious songs

Auspicious and Perfect
The gardens of Deldan Karzoo

Not built but manifested spontaneously
The palace of Tsangsras Nyima

High in the clear sky
Adorned with the banners of the sun and moon

A joyous celebration
A beautiful room decorated with pillars

On the golden throne inside
The descendent of Nyathri Tsanpo

Dharmaraja Tsespal and his son
All glory to them

On the walnut tree
The humming music of the bees
Nyima Namgyal

\begin{align*}
\text{Steyng chog lha yul ngon pey} & \quad \text{The blessings of heaven upon us} \\
\text{tchang la di jim rang yongs} & \quad \text{The beer has imbibed their fragrance}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Gon mey no no skyod na} & \quad \text{In the snake-headed vessel} \\
\text{nga dang daan su la tcheyn} & \quad \text{Fill the beer to the brim}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Yog chog lhu yul ngon pey} & \quad \text{The young lord arrives} \\
\text{tchang la di jim rang yongs} & \quad \text{Let's go to receive him}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Nyi ma rnam rgyal skyod na} & \quad \text{Nyima Namgyal arrives} \\
\text{nga dang daan su la tcheyn} & \quad \text{Let's go to welcome him}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Bar chog tsan yul ngon pey} & \quad \text{The blessings of the underworld of Nagas upon us} \\
\text{tchang la di jim rang yongs} & \quad \text{The beer has imbibed their fragrance}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Seyms dey na neyn ney} & \quad \text{Lift your mug with your heart} \\
\text{tchang ka lteyn sa rang lteyms} & \quad \text{Lift your mug with your mind}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Rza ma luung tuung nang la} & \quad \text{Lift your mug with your heart} \\
\text{tchang ni rgyang sheys shig duug} & \quad \text{Lift your mug with your mind}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Ya tchu sings ma da wey} & \quad \text{Our deity descends upon the earth} \\
\text{tchang la tchu jig rang ton} & \\
\text{Take some clear ice melt} \\
\text{Mix this water into the beer}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Zangs bu kha yon nang la} & \quad \text{Use a clay pot} \\
\text{tchang ni tsag sheys shig duug} & \quad \text{To store the beer}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Ya tchu sings ma da wey} & \quad \text{Take some clear ice melt} \\
\text{tchang la tchu jig rang ton} & \quad \text{Mix this water into the beer}
\end{align*}

\begin{align*}
\text{Into an edged utensil} & \quad \text{Filter the beer}
\end{align*}
The Red Mountain

The red mountain stands at the back
With a white crystal stupa-like peak

Like the solitary retreat of the Root Guru
Like the solitary retreat of His Holiness Esheys

We are but children of the same parents
May we be born atop Zangs Mdog Spalgyiri

O, compassionate Root Guru
We are but children of the same parents
May we be born atop Zangs Mdog Spalgyiri

In the centre of our land are colourful flowers
Let us offer flowers to the Root Guru

In the centre of our land is a pure, auspicious scarf
Let us offer the scarf to the Root Guru

In the centre of the human world are many different grains
Let us offer grain to the Root Guru

In the land of Zanskar are many different grains
Let us offer grain to His Holiness Esheys

In the centre of the human world is an abundance of water
Let us offer water to the Root Guru

In the land of the Purangs is an abundance of water
Let us offer water to His Holiness Esheys

In the centre of U-Tsong is a pure, auspicious scarf
Let us offer the scarf to His Holiness Esheys

In the centre of the human world is an abundance of water
Let us offer water to His Holiness Esheys

In the centre of U-Tsong is a pure, auspicious scarf
Let us offer the scarf to His Holiness Esheys

In the land of Zanskar are many different grains
Let us offer grain to His Holiness Esheys

In the land of the Purangs is an abundance of water
Let us offer water to the Root Guru

7 A mythical copper-coloured mountain in Sri Lanka
8 One of three traditional provinces of Tibet
Me, Banka Stanzin

Stands at the top of the high pass

The gorgeous flowers lay spread out before me

I pluck the charming flowers
And make three bouquets
They adorn me, the crown of Stanzin

Me, the son of the soil
Stands at Chang La

I see Chang La Nyanpo

Me, the son of this soil, Banka Stanzin
stands at Chang la
I see Chang la Nyanpo

Across the lush knoll of Ldumbur Spangstod
Riding a white horse is a great man
Isn't he our protector, our lord?

Across the lush knoll of Ldumbur Spangstod
Riding a white horse is a great man
Isn't he our protector, Banka Stanzin?

Pick up the snake-headed beer pot
Fill it up to the brim with smooth drinks
And let us embrace my dear brother

Pick up the snake-headed beer pot
Fill it up to the brim with the elixir of arrack
And let us go welcome Banka Stanzin
The palace on top of Chang La
I, Stanzin, unfurl prayer flags on the high pass
May Serthi village be blessed

*Banka Stanzin was a minister from the Serthi village and is a well-known historical figure in Ladakh*
On Either Side of the Pass

On either side of the pass
A sandalwood tree grows
Seeing the white water flow
I have built a golden bridge over it
Dreaming that the golden bridge was already built
I, a boy, am of a sincere mind
From either side of the pass
The water, the clear water flows
Seeing the clear water flow
I dreamed that I have built a wooden bridge

La ni da yang phar log gi tsur log na
Chhu ni yang o ma chhu rgyug geyd

On either side of the high pass
The milky white water flows
O ma chhu wey rgyug tsul la lta sey nang
Ser ri da yang ser rzam tsugs pin
Seeing the white water flow
I have built a golden bridge over it
Ser ri da yang ser rzam bo taags pin sam tey
Bu tsa nga seyms ba taang po

Dreaming that the golden bridge was already built
I, Karpo, am of a sincere mind
Ya chhu seyms mey rgyug tsul la lta sey nang
Shing ngi da yang shing rzas po la tan nug sam pey

From either side of the pass
The water, the clear water flows
Bu tsa nga ri seyms ba taang po
Shing ngi da yang shing rzam po la tan nug sam pey

Seeing the clear water flow
I dreamed that I have built a wooden bridge
Kar po nga ri rang seyms kar po

I, Karpo, have a white heart
The High Pass

At the high pass
Bloom the beautiful flowers

At the high, abundant pass
Bloom the gorgeous flowers

The flowers are full of charm and beauty

My friends, though, are unaffected
The kiri lolo flowers are full of charm and beauty

The woolen cloth
Of twenty-one patterns

Phagspa Nangtso's friends
Friends twenty-one she has

Phagspa Nangtso's friends
Friends twenty-one she has

My fellow beings, though, are oblivious
The woolen cloth
Of twenty-one Chinese patterns

Friends of mine
Friends twenty-one she has
Alas, my fellow beings are not here to drink this water
The waters though flow everywhere

For Phagspa Nangtso’s prayers
Chinese patterns are no match

Springs across our vast valley
Springs that number in the thousands

The waters of this vast valley
The crystal waters number thousands

Alas, my friends are not here to drink this water
The springs though are spread all over our land

A resist tie-dye technique on wool
It is not a lady's hair like white winter
It is Skya Palmo's beautiful hair

From the top of the Barudo mountain pass
I see my village Lankartse

At the centre of Lankartse
A milky white pond is formed

Inside the milky white pond
A lady's hair like white winter is spread out

But it is not a lady's hair like white winter
It is my beautiful hair

It is not my fate to be happy
It is as written by Khuda

If I am to be happy
O Khuda, give me what I deserve

It is not Skya Palmo's fate to be happy
It is as written by Khuda

If Skya Palmo is to be happy
O Khuda, give me what I deserve

11 A bird native to Ladakh
The Lchagrasa Village

The Padum Palace belongs to Nyima Namgyal
Such a grand palace built

The people who accumulated karmic power
Undertook many good deeds

Looking at the harvest in the foreign land
Such a large pile of grains to see

The Padum Palace belongs to the lord of the world
Such a large palace was built

Looking out from the high palace
The high mountains gather majestically

The high mountain of grains to see
The warm rising sun

Looking at the harvest in the foreign land
Such a large pile of hay to see

The people of the olden days
Undertook many good deeds

The Padum Palace belongs to Nyima Namgyal
Such a grand palace built

The warm rising sun
The high lord of the world lives in the Padum Palace
The young men gather there
The people in the olden days
Accumulated many merits

The people of good merit
Accumulated many good deeds

Phuntsog of Chhagshi in our village Lchagrasa
Isn't he brave?

Phuntsog of Chhagshi in our village Lchagrasa
Brave he will always be
The Turquoise Mirror-Like Lake

The turquoise mirror-like lake
And surrounding the lake, the crystal palace, a haven

Inside on the Lion Throne
Sits the descendant of Nyathri Tsanpo12

The fearless Dharma king
Banishing worldly ignorance

Mangyul13 is full of great beings
Like stars decorating the sky

The noblemen of Mangyul
are highborn and grand

In the king’s court
The melancholic young courtiers take pleasure in the summer

May they always remain this way
May they never part

The first Tibetan king
The old name for Ladakh
Let Me Send a Gift

Let me send To you a gift

Let me send a letter

Ngas sang kal yin ley
Yang la rtags shig kyang

Let me send
To you a gift

The swelling river
And the entire ocean I will send to you

Nge ri rgyan rgyon yang ley pha ma kun ma rjeyd ley
I have not forgotten your father and mother

Ou tum la ri mey tok ley
Ma khang nang duji kun la ley
O blooming udumwari flower
Your house is in the town square

Pho pha spun nas sang dag r zun tang yin
Majing dang khon po kun la
Perhaps your clan can claim it
Your farmland and property

Pho pha spun nas sang ka tho skeyd yin
Ou tum la ri mey tok ley
Perhaps your clan can claim it
O blooming udumwari flower

Da na rkyang chhung dang tho ru kun la
Pho phu spun nas sang rga chha stad yin
Now your horses and their foals
Might be saddled by your clan

Da la zo mo dang ro yon kun la
Pho phu spun nas sang zags pa smin yin
Now your dzomo ruyon
Might be claimed by your clan

Da ma rar tse kar mo kun la
Pho pha spun nas sang ru ya sdam yin
Now your white goats
Might be tied by the horns by your clan

---

O blooming udumwari flower

Nge ri rgyan rgyon yang ley pha ma kun ma rjeyd ley
I have not forgotten your father and mother

Nge ri rgyan rgyon yang ley pha ma kun ma rjeyd ley
I have not forgotten your father and mother

---

O Karamati Pasha
Aren't you our lord?

O Karamati Pasha, the blooming face of the sky
Even if you forget me, the girl Gonimo

O Karamati Pasha
Aren't you our lord?

O Karamati Pasha, the blooming face of the sky
Even if you forget me, the girl Gonimo

---

Let Me Send a Gift

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O Karamati Pasha
Aren't you our lord?

O Karamati Pasha, the blooming face of the sky
Even if you forget me, the girl Gonimo
The Song of Seven Auspiciousness

The sky, the sun and moon, and the stars are a blessed trio
With their auspiciousness, the ignorance of the four worlds is removed
The mountain, the ibex, and the pasture are a blessed trio
With their auspiciousness, the ignorance of the four directions is removed

The meadow, the small wild yak, and the pasture are a blessed trio
With their auspiciousness, the snow spreads across the mountain
The sky, the sun and moon, and the stars are a blessed trio
With their auspiciousness, the snow spreads across the mountain

The farmland, the glacial meltwater, and the crops are a blessed trio
With this auspiciousness, the smooth intoxication of wine can be found
With their auspiciousness, the small wild yak’s joyous calls sound

The house, the beams, and the ceilings are a blessed trio
With this auspiciousness, the prosperity of our clans endures
The father, the mother, and the children are a blessed trio
With this auspiciousness, the prosperity of our clans endures

With their auspiciousness, the small wild yak’s joyous calls sound
The father, the mother, and the children are a blessed trio
With this auspiciousness, the prosperity of our clans endures

The farmland, the glacial meltwater, and the crops are a blessed trio
With this auspiciousness, the smooth intoxication of wine can be found
With their auspiciousness, the small wild yak’s joyous calls sound
The White Crystal Stupa of Tisi

The white crystal stupa of Tisi
Is the navel of the world

The sacred object inside
Banishes ignorance and suffering

Seated inside, the Nangwa Thayas14
Banishes ignorance and suffering

Underneath the blue lake of Tisi
Lies the palace of King Lurgyal Jogspo

The pure, auspicious lake
Makes the kingdom’s grain stores swell

The Purang Valley glows like blessed lamps
The yellow barley swells in the granaries

This holy land of snow
Is joyful just like heaven

\[14\] The dharma form of the Buddha
Blooming on the High Pass

The beautiful flowers blossom everywhere
The grand serchen (a flower in Ladakh) blooms everywhere

Pluck the flowers
Pluck the serchen

Make a bouquet and bring it here
Make three bouquets and bring them here

Skin the right horn of the ibex and bring it to me
The ibex’s big right horn, cut it and bring it to me
Cut the right horn of the ibex and bring it to me
The ibex’s big right horn, cut it and bring it to me

Who will this horn be offered to?
It will adorn our protector god
Who will this horn be offered to?
It will adorn Baba Zangnam Lhachen

Who should these flowers adorn?
They should adorn the chief of the village
Who should these flowers adorn?
They should adorn the palace chief Konchok Tsering

Climb up the high mountain
Climb high up the rich mountain

A flower in Ladakh
And thinking of her, my beloved heart
I look at the snow again and again

The cool breeze of spring flows again and again
My beloved hums a song

The dragon-like thunder sounds in summer again and again
My beloved bursts into laughter

The ripened grain of autumn moves in the wind again and again
My beloved springs into dance

The snow falls in winter again and again
My beloved is garlanded by a white scarf
In the grassy reaches of the mountains and valleys
My beloved hums a beautiful song

In the lonely months of summer
The bright sun scorches the earth

In the lonely months of winter
The snow freezes the earth

O black clouds, please stop the rays of the sun
They burn the face of my beloved
O sun, please give us your warmth
My beloved is cold

Ngi ma ju ju ngi zer sol dang
Nga yi ney mo ser mo skyod din

O sun, please give us your warmth
My beloved is cold
The Pearls in the White Snow

The pearls lost in the white snow
Can they be found?

The green needle lost in the green grass
Can it be found?

The red churu lost in the fire
Can it be found?
The sacred remote retreat of our mountain mother
The place where enlightenment is achieved

The mountainside filled with beautiful plants
Moves as one in the wind

The seat of enlightened yogis
The land where only I live

The red, rocky cliff of the soaring eagle
Above, the wandering southern clouds

Below, the flowing pure water
In the middle, the lazy vultures

The sacred remote retreat of our mountain mother
The place where enlightenment is achieved

The monkeys learn to play
And then go back to your places

As you, the non-human demons, gathered here
Drink the elixir of compassion

The animals learn to run
And I, Milarepa, learn to master myself

I learn the two minds of body and soul
The spirits of the land and I coexist

The birds learn to fly
The monkeys learn to play

The animals learn to run
And I, Milarepa, learn to master myself

The birds sing melodiously
In the Dragmar Chonglung Valley
Singing Ice: Ladakhi folk songs about mountains, glaciers, rivers, and streams is the result of a collaboration between Morup Namgyal and researchers Susan Schuppli and Faiza Ahmad Khan with assistance from Jigmet Singge and Kunzang Deachen at Local Futures Ladakh.

Meant to be sung aloud, these folk songs were collected by Morup Namgyal over many decades. The selection, brought together in this book, was scanned, transcribed and translated in 2022.

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Learn more about the Listening to Ice research project led by Susan Schuppli, Farooq Azam, and Faiza Ahmad Khan:

https://listening-to-ice.org/