

Artist Statement

Pema Bhum Translated by Tenzin Dickie

Twent to school during the Cultural Revolution. It was also during the Cultural Revolution ▲ that I started to be interested in calligraphy, and to learn and practice calligraphy. The Chinese Communist regime had an incredible number of political slogans, especially so during the Cultural Revolution, many more than even the commercial advertisements we see these days. These political slogans were not just for revolutionaries to proclaim loudly. Written on strips of paper of varying sizes and posted in public places, they could be seen at squares, village centers, intersections, on the main streets in the towns, and even on the walls and doorways of people's homes. We also had something called Big Character Posters. There was no printing technology or facility available at the time, so all of these signs were handwritten. They were posted on walls everywhere, so that wherever you went there was no way to escape these slogans.

I think this was in the first three years of the Cultural Revolution. I was young so the job of writing these signs and slogans and Chairman Mao's quotations could never have been mine but every day from morning till night, I saw these handwritten signs and slogans and posters. But after about six or seven years, I actually became one of the people writing these political signs and slogans. At the time I was a Chinese government official in a nomadic area, and the area had very few people who could read or write Tibetan or spoke and knew Chinese. Because I not only knew Tibetan but also knew some Chinese, I was always given the work of translating the signs and slogans, and writing them out on large pieces of paper and putting them up on the streets for everyone to see.

Whenever there was a new political campaign, there were many new political slogans. During the time that I was in the nomadic area, the following campaigns took place: the Anti Lin, Anti Confucius campaign, the campaign against the Water Margin classic, In Agriculture, Learn from Dazhai and Limit the Rights of the Bourgeoisie campaigns, the campaign against the Gang of Four, and so on. For all of these successive campaigns, we had to write the slogans in big letters, translating them from Chinese to Tibetan. We also had to write the big-character posters. All the government staff had to write them. Because we then had to paste these posters on the walls in public places where they were seen by everybody, everyone tried to make their handwriting as nice as possible. But most people didn't know how to write big letters with ink brushes. Some of my friends from the office would have me write their letters and posters instead. Although they didn't think to compliment me and say that my handwriting was nice, they often remarked how lightly,

easily, and quickly the words flowed from my brush, and how I managed to keep my lettering so even. Some of them even shook their heads in surprise.

In 1974 I learned some amazing things about Tibetan calligraphy. It was the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Chinese Communist government in that nomadic area. In order to show the progress and the happiness that the nomads had achieved in that time, an exhibition was organized. One of the key designer-artists on the exhibition staff was a lama from that county. His name was Shingsa Kelsang and he had been assigned to reform through hard labor. He was a scholar who was an expert in the traditional fields of knowledge, and a master of many disciplines. For instance, he was an expert in Tibetan medicine. Shingsa Kelsang was also an expert calligrapher and knew many different calligraphic scripts. I was one of the translators working on the Chinese to Tibetan translations of all the exhibition materials. Shingsa Kelsang wrote all the exhibit titles in beautiful calligraphy. I asked him many questions about these titles, about their length and size and so on. It was astonishing for me to learn that there were so many different Tibetan calligraphic scripts. In total, we ended up using twenty-seven different calligraphic scripts in that exhibit. The Lama had a special method for writing the Uchen script; his letters stayed within the prescribed proportions yet he still managed to write very quickly. I learned his method and not only picked it up but actually used it in the exhibition.

We had a name for these masters of calligraphy. We called them the masters of letters. To become a master of letters, you had to learn of course all the basic fundamentals from your calligraphy teacher, but that didn't make you a master. After you have learned all the different calligraphic scripts that the teacher has to teach, then you have to fill up book after book with your calligraphy practice. There's even a saying, "Write the first book and throw it into the wind. Write the second book and throw it into the water. Write the third book and burn it in the fire. Write the fourth book and offer it to your teacher." Until you have achieved calligraphic mastery, you are not a master. Only after much practice and filling up of many notebooks meant to be thrown away does one finally write in a notebook that may be offered to the teacher.

I didn't have a real calligraphy teacher that I studied with as such. In the 1980s, I was one of three students to whom Alak Tseten Shabdrung taught Lantsa. That was about it. But my whole life, I never stopped paying attention to calligraphic style, and the aesthetics of calligraphy, and the different kinds of calligraphic scripts out there. I also didn't study and practice like in the old ways when they filled up book after book in their practice, but writing and exploring different scripts has always been a deep interest of mine.

Tibetan writing and calligraphy is an amazingly rich field. These days Tibetan calligraphy seems to be used mainly to decorate something and isn't practiced so much as its own art form. In the old days at Latse Library, we had many cultural programs and events, and when we were making the posters, I tried to play with the ways each letter can stack to produce something new and unique. Not a lot of people took notice, but those who did seemed to appreciate it. I still continue to try

out different ways of writing a word, sharing them with the public by putting out the calligraphy on paper, bags, and T-shirts for Latse.

The essence of the art of calligraphy is not just about how beautiful it looks. Calligraphy must inspire a feeling and a recognition in people's hearts. I think that this "Nga Mandala" is an example of what I mean.

[발·동네·디디·피지데·디워드] धर्'य'त्रुय'व्या

क्ष्मान्द्र-इट्-अट्-स्री रेग्-ग्रुब-ग्रुब-पहेते स्निप्याया स्याप्य अट्-स्-र्रे रेट्। नेट-अट-ग्रीक्ट-यमान्य पहेते पहेता वर्षे र्वमायान्त्री भूषानी.कु.के.केट.ब्रा.कूष्पमाग्री.हैट.ज.हीयायया.चु.स्यायायाह्मायायात्री.व्याची. देशायात्यः र्क्षद्र। ध्रियाः क्षेत्रः र्क्षयायायः चेत्रः पादेवाः स्प्रेत्। देः तुषाः देहः यहः यहः प्रवितः व्यक्षयाः क्ष्याः स्वरः चीयाः स्वरः स्

दे-वै-देग-ग्वका-पहेते-विग-अते-वें-ग्रुअ-उंअ-ग्रु-देन-देन| दे-तुका-द-वें-वुक्त-व्रुप्त-व्रुप्त-व्रिग-द्र्या-द्र्य-व्राक्त-व्र्या-व्र सरा अद्रः गुतुः बितैः गुषुटः चत्त्रा श्रुः विग्रायाया श्रुरः कृतः विश्व हुते विग्राया स्रीतः विग्रायाया विन्ताया विन्ताय विन्ताया विन्ताय विन ह्मा पर क्या यहका क्या का उत्तर परि पर दु है कें अवहर मी रेट्रा है क्या कें हुमा पहुन र्ड्या ग्री हे का कुर हा पर प्रिया यथा या ब्रैं र क्रुति करा श्रेन ग्री तर्रेन क्रिंग ने नग तर्री बावब ग्री ग्रम सुर र्हन सेंट । ने न्सर र ते तर्रेग र ति साक बिग व क्राग्वा र वी ग्रुट् विषयायाधीत। दे व र्द् पेया मे वही स्यापित स्वरास्ति है स्वरास है स्वरास्ति है स्वरास्ति है स्वरास्ति है स्वरास्ति है स्वरास है स्वरास्ति है स्वरास र्चर-धिन-प्रांत-भेषा मु-धिन-मु-भूर-गुट-रुद-र्च्य-भेष-ग्री-र्धर-धूराषा कर-श्रीर-ग्री-दर्घर-ळेन-दे-र्मा-मु-धिन-व्या-प्रांत-धिन-यानश्चरानारा दे विवास के दारी होराया है का स्वास है का स्वास का स्वास है का स्वास है के स्वास है स्वास है के स्वास है के स्वास है के स्वास है के स्वास है से स्वास

त्र्वा,िर्यंत,र्यु,र्यु,र्यु,रूट्,र्यालटा, जुर्य,र्यायाविट,र्याया.र्टा, क्रि.स्योयायोवे याचीयायाचीयाया खुट. लबाहरान्त्रें तार्श्वें तार्श्वें तार्शें तार्शें तार्शें तार्थें तार्शें तार् वयान्त्रभुरावयां में निर्माण केवारा मुलावया वर्षा प्रमाला प्रमुद्दा धिया केवार्याया स्माला स्माला स्माला प्रमाला प्रमाला प्रमाला स्माला बित्रवास्त्रात्रात्रात्री, त्र्यूवा दे, त्या द्विवाहेवा श्री. गुवाबीवा अहेट. त्रित् हीया स्वापा स्व ह्या गुरा धेना मह्म न प्याप्त प्राप्त विषय होता धेर र प्याप्त के स्वाप्त होता है से प्राप्त है से स्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से स्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से प्राप्त है से स्राप्त है से स् विष्यार्भेगमार्थः तमातः देशादीः तम् वाद्याः द्याः त्याः तदीः तुः तह् गः गः व्याः विष्यः क्षेत्रः विष्यः विष्याः गञ्च गमाः वाद्याः विष्यः विष्याः व

डेबान्बनान्सून्यानुबायादी, इत्यापन्य दिवाश्चितास्त्रेन्याधी में प्राप्तान्यमुन्यादीन सून्या सून्यायादी विद्याप <u> พदःचन्द्रभीः भेद्र। वः द्रावः न्यां भ्रीयः इदः यदयः नुस्या भ्रीयः सम्दर्भः देः मध्यमः मध्या चीदः भीः भेद्रा</u>

१९०७ व्यू ४.८.ज. तूर, मी.लाग पञ्चिषायाता.चेया.क्रेया.क्रेयाया.केट.याटया.ता.वीया.चीटा। व्यू.टे.वी.व्यूचा.विया.टी.वा.मी.वया.ट्या.यावीटा पर्वगमानमानिकार्याः देशानिकार्याः प्रमानिकार्याः प् र्ह्मेत्र केन : तृ : त्र में अर : ह्मेत्र : ह्मेत्र : ह्मेत्र : हे : त्र : अहेत्र : क्षेत्र : ह्मेत्र : हमेत्र : हमेत देते.म्.अ.ध्या.लुबा.लुबा व्रिट.बी.अक्ष्य.ज.चेट.चचत.श्रय.चचट.चेरा व्रिट.श्रेचळ.ट्रे.इश्चेश्व्यवा.च.ट्य.झ्य.झूर.चर्ग्रद मञ्जाकाञ्चारात्र्वी पातान् रुटा अविकारा विमारेत। टार्वी त्रोअकाञ्चेत्र ग्री वटार्ने व मुर्गिषमा त्रा विमार्गि मुन्ने रायावर ढ़िना धेरा त्रोयता हूँद ग्री थे कंद से संदेशिय ग्रीट स्थल हा साविट ग्रीय सहित स्था ग्री धिन ग्रीय त्री। ट्रेय थे कंद शुःषि गुरु देन हुर द्वेर भ्रेर याञ्च अपिर या नगर यदी अर दें लु द्वेष श्री थें प्रे दे दुष देंद श्री थेंग मे नुमें पर के सामार से र तर्वा यहार प्राप्त व्यवस्था विष्ठा वि कु.भु.स.चर्ष.क्रीय.स्याल्या रेचे.व्य.क्री.ल्या.चेच्यय.स्या.स्या.स्या.स्या.स्या.स्या.स्या.च्या.स्या.स्या.स्या. विगायरुग दे राय ग्रामाञ्चरका हे अर्ग्धे गया संस्थान स्वास्त्र स्वास्त्र स्वास्त्र स्वास्त्र स्वास्त्र स्वास्त्र

. चूर-भी.लुब.चर्चिष्यात्रप्राप्तात्रप्राप्तात्रपूर-श्रुप-श्रिप-श्रुप-श् तुःत्युरानातान्वो म्वाविषानी अनुवाववान्याराष्ट्रीन ग्रीका धिषा गञ्जावारा नुः अति त्यत्री सूरका कार्कराना विषा सुरान् वीका है। र्द्या ग्रीलान् न्त्रा त्या व्याप्त न्त्र श्रीत्र स्वी मित्र श्री स्वाप्त स्वाप्त स्वी स्वाप्त स्वी स्वाप्त स्व विषायाः हो। यदी धिषा गञ्जषाळं दासून विषा धिदायते परा दार्च स्वायाधिन या। देवी स्वाञ्च त्राया वार्षा स्वाया स्व हैं अट·र्सःचैल·दलःक्षेत्रःयेद्ग्यीलःगधुमःहेल। गविःदलःदमेःमदःयःङ्यदःयुवःवुःदेदःखेदःयदेःधेमःगचुमलःढदःथ्दःग्रीः र्यः है : बिया विशे : सूर्य : परि : दें द : धिदा

८:४८:बीलाधीनामञ्जूनलाग्नी:५वो.मदादीनाम्बुदारीटार्यरायद्गेदानुदान् विःरायस्य प्रमुदार्विः द्वारायस्य विवास्य विवास षात्मम् के निया में प्राप्त के प्रमानिक के रट.चीय.लुच.चर्चियय.ची.पद्मी.पीचय.रट.शह्य.क्र्य.पर्ट्य.क्षेट्या लुच.चर्चिययची.पत्रायायायव्यापाट्ट्य.पाट्ट्य.हीट.ता શુ. છુ. તા. ત્રાજ્યતા. જ ને. તા. શુંના ન. ૪ ને. તા. શુંતા. શુંતા याचुरा धेदादाधारा धेरा माच्याया द्वारा हिताया है। क्वारा हिता है। क्वारा है। क्वारा है। क्वारा है। क्वारा है।

प्रचीता श्राट. त्रा. श्रीता श्रीटा बुटा। ताथा प्रचीता श्री विया यश्चे चाथा प्रचीत्री प्रचाया प्रचाया प्रचीता श्री विया प्रचीता विया प्रचीता विया प्रचीता विया प्रचीता विया विया प्रचीता विया विया विया विया विया व वर् वर् वर् हुद सेंद साथित परि इसपा ने पेंद वर्ष चुर्या दे त्या में क्षूद चुर सायद सद में चुर से दा पिद दे प्र चेत्रसम्बर्चित्रक्षेर्तम् स्वर्धेन्यायद्वरस्य । त्याक्षुंदर्नु क्षेम् मुठेग् मी धेम् त्युः क्षेम् स्वर्यत्युं सेद्रस्य स्वर्धित् स्वर् राता है धेरा विराजिया विराजिया