

THE BEAUTY OF GRAMMAR & POETRY IN DHARMA

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From 1961 until 1965 I studied with Sakya abbot in Lhasa. There was a lot of fear even to study like that – fear for the person teaching, fear for the student. I was the only one studying with this lama.

I studied grammar and poetry, then Sanskrit. You study what is known as study of the sound. There is another Sanskrit study where you put the letters together in the form of mantras. I also studied white astrology. I didn't study medicine at that time, but when I was back in my home town my teacher was a doctor, so from having lived together with him I knew for what sickness what kind of medicines would work.

The more well-versed in grammar you are, the more capable you are to read the scriptures, to get an in-depth understanding of the Dharma. There's a way that through the study of the fine details of grammar you get a fine insight in reality. Grammar is very deep in Tibetan, so your insight is sharpened. And when you read texts you know exactly where the spelling mistakes are; Tibetan spelling is not like Western spelling – it's very subtle.

Learning poetry allows you to do prayers and praises in the most eloquent and effective way, where you take examples and analogies and form the analogy into a praise. And you can compose very poetically.

When you study poetry, there is a way you learn the art of a certain way of writing and reading, where if you read the lines forward there's a meaning, and if you read the lines backwards there is also a meaning. Both ways convey a meaning.

There is one composition of Lama Tsong Khapa known as *The Thought Training of the Great Sound of Poetry* that can be read forwards and backwards; both ways you can read and teach on it. Lama Tsong Khapa was a great poet – there's nothing Lama Tsong Khapa didn't know! He's the all-knowing mind.

Most of what I've written are the long-life prayers for many lamas, and auspicious verses for new buildings. Many people have asked me to compose books, but I don't like to do that. The main purpose of learning poetry, grammar and astrology is to understand Dharma properly, and to put it into practice. I didn't learn it to compose books. When people ask me I say we have so many books – we have enough books. What's lacking is practicing the instructions in the books.