

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Four Traditions of Tibetan Buddhism: A Satirical Counsel by Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyatso (1846–1912)*

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Abstract: In this short composition, Mipham Namgyal Gyatso, - an eastern Tibetan polymath and *rimé* master of the nineteenth century, - combines satire, humor and heartfelt advice to satirically tease the four major Tibetan Buddhist traditions, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses. Read alongside other writings containing sectarian humor and criticism, particularly from the fifteenth century religious critic, Drukpa Kunlek, Mipham's short tract not only helps one get a sense of Tibetan religious humor, but also gives insights into Tibetan religious culture and history.

Introduction

When Lama Sherab Gyatso (ལྷ་མ་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ 1905–1975) asked Amdo Gendun Chöphel (ཨ་མདོ་དགེ་འདུན་ཚོས་འཕེལ་ 1903–1951), who was more learned, Tsongkhapa (ཙོང་ཁ་པ་ 1357–1419) or Ju Mipham (འབྲུ་མི་པམ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ 1846–1912), he replied:

I thought this over several times. Both of them are equal in their mind being emanations of the Buddha and in having visions of Mañjuśrī. If both were alive today and had a debate, Tsongkhapa would, I think, probably be wiser in debate as he spent longer in dialectical centres. As for general sagacity, depth of understanding, style of exposition and so forth, Mipham is terrific. I am being serious. If others hear this, it may conflict with their opinions.¹

* ལུབ་བསྟན་ཤེས་རབ་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 1988, 378; and also 2002, 223: གོ་དེ་ངས་བསམ་སློམ་མང་པོ་མང་པོ་བཏང་རྒྱ་བྱུང་། ཁོང་གཉིས་ལུགས་སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རྣམ་འཕྲུལ་ལ་འཇམ་དཔལ་ཞལ་གཟིགས་པ་འདྲ་འདྲ་རེད། དེང་སང་གཉིས་ཀ་བཞུགས་ཡོད་ན། ཙོང་པ་ཞིག་མཛད་ན་རྗེ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་གློ་སྟོང་རྒྱན་རིང་མཛད་ཚང་མཁས་པ་མི་ཡོང་ངམ་སྟམ་གྱི་ཡོད། ཚ་བའི་རིགས་པའི་ཚལ་དང་། གོ་སྟོབས་བཤད་སྟངས་སོགས་མི་པམ་འཇིགས་གི། གཞན་གྱི་གོ་ན་དགོངས་པ་འགལ་ཡོང་། ངས་ངོ་མ་བཤད་ནི་ཡིན།

Whether or not the comment and judgement made by Amdo Gendun Chöphel is true and accurate, Ju Mipham is undoubtedly one of the greatest polymaths that Tibet ever produced. Although he became a scholar of exceptional learning, a prolific writer, a great debater, we do not have any record of his having received a systematic education. In the biographies devoted to him and among the communities of his followers, Mipham is regarded as an incarnation of Mañjuśrī and as a child prodigy who grew up into a protean of unparalleled erudition.

His works, compiled into thirty-two volumes by his followers, include writings on ontology, epistemology, soteriology, logic, doxography, language, poetry, letter-writing, medicine, astrology, yoga, monasticism, mysticism, meditation, magic, and monastic rituals.² Beside his scholarly output, he was also a serious practitioner full of meditational insight. For adherents of the Nyingma school, he therefore occupies something like the position held by the great scholar and luminary Tsongkhapa in the Geluk school. However, Mipham's literary interest went beyond the general religious fields that occupied most Tibetan scholars. He is one of the few scholars who showed keen interest in popular cultures such as arts, crafts, divination, songs, and dances. Even the art of love making did not escape his imagination as he was one of very few Tibetan scholars to write a *kāmasūtra*, although Amdo Gendun Chöphel, another Tibetan author on love making amusingly remarked:

What Mipham, the monk, wrote through hearing
 And promiscuous Chöphel wrote from experience.
 The difference in effectiveness and precision between the two
 Can be known only if the passionate lover tries them in practice.³

Among Mipham's numerous miscellaneous works is a short *shaldam* (ཞལ་གདམས་ lit. "oral advice") which is very amusing and yet very profound. It does not have a proper title and is catalogued as

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1. This paper was initially presented at the 8th seminar of the International Association of Tibetan Studies in Bloomington in 1999 and submitted for publication in its proceedings, which never came to light. I am grateful to the Journal of Tibetan Literature for the opportunity to finally have it published after a quarter of a century.
 2. Mipham's works were preserved in Dergé, Dzogchen, Shechen, Kaḥthog, Azom Chögar, Palpung, Hor Lakar, and Dzongsar. Kunzang Chödrak, who wrote གངས་རིའི་ཁྲི་ལྷ་བའི་སེང་གེ་གཅིག་ལུ་འཇམ་མགོན་མི་མཐོག་ལྷན་པའི་མཚན་ལྷན་གྱི་དཀར་ཆག་ལྷ་འགྲུལ་བསྟན་པའི་མཛོལ་རྒྱན། (*A Brief Hagiography of Jamgön Mipham Gyatso, the Sole Lion of Speech amid the Snow Mountains and the Catalogue of his Works Called the Ornament of Ngagyur Teachings*), claims Mipham's works to number thirty-two volumes, symbolizing the thirty-two marks of the Buddha. The set published by Shechen monastery in Kathmandu around 1987, the version used when this article was first written, has only 27 volumes, as some esoteric works are said to have been excluded from the collection. However, recent versions including the one published by Gangchen Rikshung Penying Nyurkyop Lhent-sok in 2007 have 32 volumes. See Karma Phuntsho 2007 for more details on his life and works.
 3. དགོ་འདུན་ཚོས་འཕེལ། 1969, 98: མི་མཐོག་བཅུན་པས་གསན་ནས་བྲིས་པ་དང་། །ཚོས་འཕེལ་འཆལ་པོས་ཟུང་ནས་བྲིས་པ་གཉིས། །བྱིན་རྒྱལ་གནད་ཀྱི་ཚན་ལ་མི་འདྲ་བ། །ཆགས་ལྷན་པོ་མོས་ཉམས་སུ་བྲངས་ན་ཤེས། །

An Amusing Discourse Composed as a Result of Talking with a Friend (གོགས་དང་གཏམ་སྒྲིབ་བའི་རྒྱན་ལས་མཚར་གཏམ་དུ་བྱས་པ།).⁴ It is a peculiar mixture of satirical jest and sincere advice that he wrote after conversing with a friend, whom we cannot identify. Mipham presents his work in three different modes and stages: panegyric aphorisms, sarcasm and humor, and admonition and advice. I shall, in the following passages, translate and discuss this work, and compare Mipham’s observations with those of others wherever such effort helps to throw more light on the topic. This paper will not attempt to carry out any discussion on the genres, styles, and moods of Tibetan literary culture present in Mipham’s piece. It shall also not delve into historical background other than to make brief mentions when essential for the context.

Panegyric Aphorisms

Mipham begins with a salutation to his tutelary deity Mañjuśrī and a verse in which he extols the four great traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. He considers the four schools to be the outcome of the activities (*karma*, འཕྲིན་ལས་) of the Buddha and the skill-in-means (*upāyakauśalya*, ཐབས་ལ་མཁས་པ་) of the bodhisattvas. The four traditions in order of their historical origins are Nyingma (རྣིང་མ་), Kagyü (བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་), Sakya (ས་སྐུ) and Geluk (དགེ་ལུགས་) or Genden (དགེ་ལུན་). He says:

Through the activities of the Conqueror
And the skillful means of the Conqueror’s sons,
The four new and old denominations of the Conqueror’s teachings are formed.⁵
Victory to those who nicely formed the means to [the state of] the Conqueror.⁶

Mipham then praises the four traditions for their special transmissions and for the emphasis laid by each of them on view (ལྟ་བུ་), meditation (སྒོམ་པ་), recitation and *sādhana* practice (བསྟོན་སྦྱབ་), and conduct (སྦྱོང་པ་). Through very brief and elegant formulae, Mipham gives an overview of the significance and specialization of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism as follows:

Gendenpa are holders of the *sūtra* transmissions, Nyingmapa are holders of the

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4. See མི་པམ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 1987, vol Ga/12.390–394 and མི་པམ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 2007, vol. 7.229–733. In the former version, this work, with two other minor works, are attached to the text of གཞན་སྤོང་ཁས་ལེན་ལེང་གའི་ང་རྟོ། (*Lion’s Roar on the Assertion of the Other Emptiness*), and all four carry the margin title གཞན་སྤོང་།. This work was separately published for free distribution in 1987 and 1996. See མི་པམ་རྣམ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 1996, 5–10. For Adam Pearcey’s English translation, see <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/satirical-advice-four-schools>.
 5. Mipham, by “four new and old denominations” (གསར་རྣིང་མ་སྐུ་སྐུ་བའི་), refers to the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism: Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü and Geluk.
 6. Appendix, para 1. The stanza of the composition uses the word རྒྱལ་ to begin all four lines.

mantra transmissions, Kagyüpa are holders of transmission of meditational-practice, and Sakyapa are holders of transmission of exegesis. Sakyapa are masters of learning, Gendenpa masters of speech, Kagyüpa masters of realization, and Nyingmapa masters of spiritual power.

How marvelous are the four lineages!

Nyingmapa are those with the view free from extremes, Kagyüpa are with persistent practice, Gendenpa are with wholesome conducts and Sakyapas are with virtuous practice of meditation and recitation.

Although all have all the aspects, they emphasize their own particular practices.⁷

Mipham ascribes to the Gelukpa special achievements in conduct (སྦྱོང་པ་), speech (སྐྱབ་པ་) and *sūtra* (མཛད་); the Sakyapa with *sādhana* practice and recitations (བསྟེན་སྐབ་), learning (མཉེན་པ་) and doctrinal exposition (བཤད་པ་), and the Kagyüpa with persistent meditation (སྦྱོམ་པ་), practice (སྐབ་པ་) and realization (རྟོགས་པ་). The Nyingmapa are associated with the cultivation of a correct view (ལྟ་པ་), spiritual power (མཐུ་) and *mantra* teachings (སྐྱུགས་).

The general attribution of the Gelukpa with the transmissions of *sūtra*, power of speech, and good conduct and other schools with other qualities would appear to be well founded. The Gelukpa monasteries, especially the “three great seats” (གདན་ས་གསུམ་)—Sera (སེ་ར་), Drepung (འབྲས་སྐངས་), and Ganden (དགའ་ལྷན་)—as we know, even today emphasize the study of *sūtrayāna* by means of rigorous verbal debate. Education through writing is little known in the Gelukpa monasteries, and pupils who studied language and grammar are even said to have been punished before the monastic body in former times. The Gelukpa are also very conscientious and vigilant of their external conduct and behaviour in order to maintain a good image before the lay world, thus maintaining a strong practice of monastic discipline.

Conversely speaking, adherents of the Nyingma tradition lay stress on the teachings of secret *mantra* and place top priority on the viewpoint of Great Perfection (རྫོགས་ཆེན་), which is considered to be free from all extremes and elaboration and to be the highest of all views. Mystical practices take precedence over monasticism. Besides, there are many accounts of how Nyingma yogins possess *thu*, or spiritual power in performing magic and sorcery. Mipham himself claimed to have the power to kill as many people as he liked in a single day, though it goes without saying that he would never have used that power.⁸ We can see, through these differences in outlook and emphasis, why the Geluk school has more monks than the Nyingma, and why the Nyingma has more yogins than the Geluk.

7. Appendix, para 2.

8. གུན་བཟང་ཚོས་གྲགས། 1987, 653: ཕན་ལ་ཞལ་ཅིང་དུའང་རྗེ་མ་པ་ཡིན་ན་བསྟེན་སྐབ་མཐར་ཕྱིན་རྣམས་པའི་རྟོགས་ཐོན་དགོས་པ་ཡིན། ལྷོད་ལ་རྣམས་པ་ཅི་འདྲ་ཡོད། ངས་ནི་རྣམ་སྟོན་ལ་འཛོམས་པ་མ་གཏོགས་ཉིན་གཅིག་ལའང་མི་དུ་གསོད་དགོས་ཀྱང་གསོད་ཐུབ་གསུངས།

In the same way, Mipham attributes to the Sakyapa power of learning, exegesis, *sādhana* practice and recitation. The Sakyapa, since the time of the five great masters (ས་སྐྱ་གོང་མ་རྣམས་ལྟ་བུ་) were well-known for their erudition and exposition.⁹ Unlike the Nyingmapa and Kagyüpa who strive for uncontrived and effortless meditation of Dzogchen and Mahāmudrā, the Sakyapa specialized in elaborate *sādhana* practices involving long recitations and chanting. On the other hand, the Kagyüpa place priority on meditation and are renowned for their lofty realization. For them, study, exposition, and debate are secondary to meditation and practice.

These formulae of Mipham, therefore, clearly reflect the general trends and characteristics of each of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism. They provide insight into the special achievements of the adherents of the four traditions and the emphasis laid by them on different aspects of Buddhist study and practice. We find a similar presentation in another short piece by Mipham written in 1896.¹⁰ In it, Mipham attributes the transmission of meaning (དོན་བརྒྱུད་), high views (ལྷ་བ་མཐོ་སྒྲིགས་), firm conducts (སྦྱོང་པ་བརྟེན་པ་), and spiritual power (རྣམ་པ་) to the Nyingma tradition which, he claims, has more tantric practitioners (སྤྲུགས་པ་མང་), most of whom pursue the state of wisdom holders (ཕལ་ཆེར་རིག་འཛིན་ས་སྒྲིགས་) and reach spiritual attainments (གྲུབ་པ་ཐོབ་). The Kagyü tradition prioritizes devotion (མོས་གུས་), blessings of the lineage (བརྒྱུད་པའི་བྱིན་ལྡན་བས་), perseverance in practice (སྦོམ་སྤྲུག་ཆེ་བ་), produces many spiritual adepts (གྲུབ་ཐོབ་), and is often aligned with the Nyingma (རྗེ་མ་པ་དང་འདྲ་མ་འདྲེས་). The Gendenpas, he states, focus on learning (མཁས་ཚུལ་), delight in analytical meditation (དབྱུང་སྦོམ་) and debate (ཚོད་པ་), hold exemplary appealing conduct (སྦྱོང་པ་མིག་ལྡོས་མཛེས་པ་), have a large following (འདུ་མང་), own wealth (འབྱོར་ལྡན་), and put effort in study (དཔེ་ཆ་སྦྱང་ཚོལ་). He says the Sakyapas emphasize recitation and practice (བསྟོན་སྦྱབ་), and many of them obtain spiritual blessings (བྱིན་ལྡན་) through visualization with chanting (བཟླས་སྦོམ་). They take pride in their tradition (རང་ཕྱོགས་ཆེ་འཛིན་), carry out excellent regular practice (རྒྱན་གྱི་ཐུགས་དམ་བཟང་), and possess qualities of all other traditions they may compare with.

The formulaic descriptions Mipham presents in these two texts are often used nowadays to address the four great traditions on ceremonial occasions by Tibetan writers and speakers. Some of them have become standard terms and phrases to describe the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. It is also quite likely that these phrases served as models for presentations of a similar kind constructed by scholars like Bötrul Dongak Tenpai Nyima (བོད་སྐུལ་མདོ་སྤྲུག་པའི་ཉི་མ་ 1900?–1959), Khyentsé Chökyi Lodrö (མཁྱེན་བཟེ་ཚས་གྱི་སློ་གོས་ 1896–1959) and others, whom were followers of Mipham.¹¹

9. The five great masters of Sakya were: Kunga Nyingpo (ཀུན་དགའ་སྟིང་པོ་ 1092–1158), Sonam Tsemo (བསོད་ནམས་ཚེ་མོ་ 1142–1182), Drakpa Gyaltsen (གྲགས་པ་སྐུལ་མཚན་ 1147–1216), Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen (ས་སྐྱ་པཎྌི་ཏ་ཀུན་དགའ་སྐུལ་མཚན་ 1182–1251) and Chögyal Pakpa Lodrö Gyaltsen (ཚོས་སྐུལ་འཕགས་པ་སློ་གོས་སྐུལ་མཚན་ 1235–1280)

10. མི་ཕམ་རྣམས་སྐུལ་སྐྱོད་ 2007, 32.410.

11. བོད་སྐུལ་མདོ་སྤྲུག་པའི་ཉི་མ་ 1996, 68: དེ་ཡང་ཟབ་རྒྱས་བཤད་པའི་བཀའ་བབས་ས་སྐྱ་པ། ལྷོ་སྦོང་རིགས་པའི་བཀའ་བབས་རི་བོ་དགེ་ལྡན་པ། ཉམས་ལེན་སྐབ་པའི་བཀའ་བབས་འགྲོ་མགོན་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པ། མདོ་རྒྱུད་མན་ངག་གི་བཀའ་བབས་གསང་སྤྲུགས་རྗེ་མ་པ།

Mipham then goes on to say that all four schools profess the various aspects of Buddhist teachings and practice and that the differences between the four traditions lie only in their specialization and emphasis. Meditation is not unique to the Kagyüpa, just as debate is not unique to the Gelukpa and so forth. He wants to inform his readers that the different qualities he attributed to the four traditions are not unique to each school. Perhaps to design grand and hyperbolic formulae of address to the four traditions, he selected and generalised in these formulae the primary focus and strengths of their religious training and achievements.

Mipham, in a playful manner, then turns to make remarks on the petty differences the four traditions have in chanting. He says:

The Nyingmapa do their chanting through their noses,
 The Sakyapa utter through their lips,
 The Gendenpa stress the guttural tone of the throat,
 The Kagyüpa squeeze their throats and chant.¹²

These remarks, like the attribution of different qualities to the four traditions as outlined above and the imputation of faults and weaknesses to be mentioned later, have to be understood in very general terms. They are not exact descriptions, but rather amusing portrayals of the styles of chanting and recitation practiced by each tradition. Yet, it is obvious to a keen listener that the Nyingmapa chant with a more nasal accent than any other. The same is also partially true for the labial emphasis of the Sakyapa, and very much so in the case of the guttural tone of the Kagyüpa and Gendenpa.

Mipham, with his inquisitive wit and versatility, goes on to display the significance and role that each tradition has in *Buddhadharma* as a whole. Taking the Buddha's teachings, *sangyé tenpa* (སངས་རྒྱལ་བསྟན་པ་), as a person, he compares the four traditions with different constituents of a human being.

The Gendenpa are like the body of the teachings as they encompass all scriptures and paths. The Sakyapa are like the eyes of the teachings because they combine the *sūtra* and *mantra* teachings. The Kagyüpa are like the heart of the teachings as they coalesce devotion and practice. The Nyingmapa are like the life-force of the teachings as they possess the profound purport of the *gyüdé* and *drupdé* teachings.¹³

See also འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁའ་ལྷན་པའི་ཨོམ་གྱི་སློབ་མོས། 2012, 9:55: བཤད་པའི་བཀའ་བབས་ས་སྐྱུ་དགེ་ལྷགས་གཉིས། །སྐྱབ་པའི་བཀའ་བབས་བཀའ་རྙིང་
 །ཞེས་གསུངས་ཀྱང་། །དོན་ལ་སྟོན་བྱོན་མཁས་པས་འདི་ལྟར་གསུངས། །གངས་ཅན་བསྟན་པའི་སྲིལ་འབྱེད་རྙིང་མ་པ། །བསྟན་འཛིན་བྱི་བའི་འབྱུང་གནས་
 །བཀའ་གདམས་པ། །ཡོངས་རྒྱུགས་བསྟན་པ་རྒྱས་མཛད་ས་སྐྱུ་པ། །ཟླ་མེད་གྲུབ་པའི་གསང་ལམ་བཀའ་བརྒྱད་པ། །ལེགས་བཤད་སློབ་འདི་ཉི་མ་ཙོང་ཁ་པ།
 །ཟབ་རྒྱས་རྒྱད་ལྗེའི་མངའ་བདག་རྗེ་ཞེས་གཉིས། །ཞེས་སུ་བཤད་འདི་དོན་ལ་གནས་པར་འདུག། See also Michael Aris 1997.

12. Appendix, para 3.

13. Appendix, para 4. *Gyüdé* (རྒྱུད་ལྗེ) and *drupdé* (སྐྱབ་ལྗེ) are two categories of treatises considered by the Nyingmapa to be *Mahā-yo-*

The reasons Mipham provides for comparing the Geluk and Sakya to the body and eyes respectively in this analogy are perhaps far-fetched and general although his comparison of Kagyü and Nyingma with the heart and life-force is quite convincing. As all four schools enshrine the treatises and paths and *sūtra* and *tantra* and not just the Geluk and Sakya, it is clear that Mipham is simply attempting to show, through a different but interesting device, the significant part played by each school in Tibetan Buddhism.

The similes he chose and the order in which he presented them could also reflect an ascending degree of his faith in the schools. The order of placing body first, eyes and heart subsequently and life-force last seem to show how the former is coarser and more peripheral than the latter and how the latter is more subtle, essential, and crucial than the former. By comparing the four traditions to these analogies in the given order, Mipham indicates the degree of his consideration in the four traditions and the importance he attributes to them. It is clear that as a Nyingma master himself, he would place Nyingma at the top of the rank, which he has often done in other works, and that Kagyü would be next as Nyingma and Kagyü share many similarities in both theory and practice. Sakya would be third and Geluk last in his ranking as he agrees with Sakya in many more doctrinal positions than Geluk, of whom he is an outstanding critic.¹⁴

Humor and Sarcasm

Mipham, having indulged in eulogy, then turns to making fun of the followers of the four schools. He begins by saying:

If I were to make a joke, the Nyingmapas accept the availability of the path of Great Perfection, through which one can achieve the state of Vajradhara without depending upon external consorts and so forth. Yet, at the same time they claim that lamas, in order to have a long life, clear eyesight and good health, and the *terton*, in order to benefit the Buddha's teachings and sentient beings, should have a female consort.¹⁵ They don't say that exposition and practice should be done for the sake of the Buddha's teachings. I think it is surprising that having a consort serves the

gatantra. *Gyudé* consists of the eighteen great tantras, the eight sections of illusory net and the four explanatory tantras. *Drupdé* comprises the five general tantras, the ten specific tantras, the five scriptures and the hundred and ten instructions, thus totalling one hundred and thirty sets. See Ngagyur Rigzod Editorial Committee 1992, 12–13 and ཞེ་ཚེན་རྒྱལ་ཚབ་འགྱུར་མེད་སློབ་མཁན་རྒྱལ། 1994, 125–134.

14. See Karma Phuntsho 2004 for Mipham's critique of the Geluk interpretation.

15. *Terton* (གཏིར་སྟོན་) or treasure-discoverers are those who claim to reveal the religious treasures hidden by Padmasambhava in the 8th century.

purpose of exposition and practice and as the cause of clear eyesight and so forth.¹⁶

He continues:

Gendenpas accept the wisdom which discerns selflessness to be the antidote to all the sufferings in existence. Yet, at the same time they say that when a practitioner is about to realize selflessness, a trepidation, due to the fear of losing the self, as though he cannot remain on the seat, will arise. In the olden days, when a practitioner attained the path of seeing or was close to generating a clear insight into selflessness before that, an extraordinary bliss is supposed to have arisen. I wonder if what happens nowadays [to the Gendenpa] is due to the evil times.

Sakyapa accept the unsurpassable mantra which, instead of depending on physical conduct, emphasizes the inner pristine wisdom. Yet, at the same time, they practice the austerity of sticking to the meditation mat during recitation at the time of practice on the path, as they would transgress the vow if they rise from it. If they have to stand up for unavoidable reasons, they are seen groping and crawling, merely keeping in contact with the mat. I wonder what would happen if they stood upright.

Kagyüpa accept *mahāmudrā* to be the pristine wisdom that wholly pervades *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Yet, at the same time they explain the etymology of *mudrā* to be a hand, as in “hand and feet.” What kind of a huge hand is that? I think it would be a great wonder if it could be seen.¹⁷

The prank Mipham plays with the Nyingmapa is quite clear and weighty. The Nyingmapas, despite the high regard they place in monastic celibacy, were always associated with more lay masters than other schools. Whether or not it is because of the influence and requirement of mystical tantric practices they adopt, most of Nyingmapas even today are lay practitioners. Mipham perhaps is the first and foremost Nyingmapa who voiced this problem, despite the fact that he was himself not an ordained monk but a prominent pornographer.

It is a common and current belief of Gelukpas that the direct experience of selflessness is tumultuous and shocking although several authoritative scriptures describe the experience as liberating and blissful. Mipham, with a strong sarcasm, pretends to blame the degenerated times for the

16. Appendix, para 5.

17. Appendix, para 6–8.

tumult and fear the Gelukpas believe to occur during the experience of selflessness. Was he trying to suggest, by associating the Gelukpa with this mistaken notion of empirical experience, that they lack practical meditation and spiritual experience or that their understanding of selflessness and emptiness is wrong? Mipham, we know from his polemical writings, was a strong critic of the Gelukpa understanding of emptiness.

The joke at the expense of the Sakyapas is obscure and needs explanation. The Sakyapas, many if not all, believed that rising up from the meditation mat in the midst of recitation and practice would violate the regulations of the *sādhana* practice, as the instructions for *sādhana* practice forbid all forms of distraction. A practitioner is encouraged to practise diligently without parting from the mat, an idiomatic expression meaning “without interruption.” Abusing the ambiguity of the idiom, some practitioners would often hold the mat to their bottom and waddle, being totally distracted from the practice and assume that they are not transgressing the *samaya*. Mipham, commenting on this loophole, asks them what grave consequences they would have if they leave the mat and move freely.

The jest on the Kagyüpas is simple but said straight from the shoulder to strike at their most humiliating defect—the lack of knowledge even about what *mahāmudrā*, the most important and central theme of their teachings, means. It is likely that Mipham used this criticism against the Kagyüpas following Sakya Paṇḍita (ས་སྐྱ་པ་རྗེ་ཏཱ་ཀུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་ 1182–1251), who ridiculed the Kagyüpas for the same reason in his *Distinguishing the Three Vows* (སྣོམ་གསུམ་རབ་དབྱེ།). Sakya Paṇḍita said:

And explaining the etymology of a hand
In order to describe *mahāmudrā*.¹⁸

Mipham then exclaims:

Hurrah! These are just jokes. The words of the noble masters have great purpose,
and every idea of the old and new traditions have specific significance.¹⁹

Mipham is cautious. He does not want his readers to be cynical and disrespectful but to respect all traditions, to understand the underlying significance and purpose of their beliefs and praxis, and to perceive the noble intentions and visions of those who introduced them.

18. ས་སྐྱ་པ་རྗེ་ཏཱ་ཀུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན། 1969, vol. Na/12. 86: ཡུལ་རྒྱ་ཆེན་པོའི་བཤད་པ་ལ། །ལག་པའི་སྐྱ་དོན་འཆད་པ་དང་། །

19. Appendix, para 9.

Admonition and Advice

At this point, Mipham begins to counsel all adherents of Tibetan Buddhism with the following admonition and advice:

Furthermore, most of the Nyingmapas are very wary about taking life, but they generally assume women to be that which need not be abandoned. I take refuge in them if they are qualified *ngakpa* (སྔགས་པ་). In general, attachment is detrimental to the Nyingma tradition. Please be careful.

Most of the Kagyüpas are indifferent to exposition and epistemology, and they like remaining solitary and simple.²⁰ I take refuge in those who have achieved liberation simultaneously with realisation. In general, ignorance is harmful to the Kagyü tradition. Please give it up.

Most of the Gendenpa are wary of alcohol and such and therefore make exemplary followers of the Buddha's teachings. However, most of them do not consider active involvement in taking life to be evil. Thus, hatred is harmful to the Genden tradition. Please be careful.

Most of the Sakyapa are complacent with whatever empowerment and teachings they have got and strongly cling to their particular *Sakya* and *Ngor* traditions as the best.²¹ Sectarian partiality and self-importance are harmful to the Sakya tradition. Please abandon this.²²

Mipham thus points out the weaknesses, faults, and mistaken notions of the followers of the four traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. Certain earlier works, although of different style and structure, bear similar sense of humor and satirical implications to these words of Mipham. We can mention here Sakya Paṇḍita's (ས་སྐྱ་པ་རྗེ་ཉ་གུན་དགའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་ 1182–1251) refutation of *mahāmudrā* teachings of the Kagyü, the reprobation of the Kagyüpa as ignorant and stupid by the fifth Dalai Lama Ngawang Losang Gyatso (ངག་དབང་ལྷོ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ་ 1617–1682), and Drukpa Kunlek's (འབྲུག་པ་གུན་ལེགས་ 1455–1529) mockery of the Sakyapa arrogance and pride.

20. I am arbitrarily using the word “simple” for the term སེམས་རྒྱུང་ which literally means “mind alone,” i.e., without any or many material belongings, activities, etc., and “solitary” for the term རྩིག་དེད་ which literally means “chasing alone.”

21. *Ngor* is a sub-division of the Sakya tradition, that started from Kunga Zangpo (གུན་དགའ་བཟང་པོ་ 1258–1316).

22. Appendix, para 10.

Some Comparisons

Let us compare Mipham's satire with the sarcasm of Drukpa Kunlek, the foremost critic of Tibetan Buddhist praxis, by looking at two instances from his critical remarks on the four traditions. Drukpa Kunlek says in one of his songs in his autobiography:

I, the yogi, did not remain, I, the yogi, went,
I, the yogi, went to a Kagyüpa monastery.
Each person in the Kagyüpa monastery held a bottle of alcohol.
I, the yogi, held myself back fearing I may end up becoming a drunk singer.
I, the yogi, did not remain, I, the yogi, went,
I, the yogi, went to a Sakyapa monastery.
The monks of Sakya disdain all other schools,
I, the yogi, held myself back fearing I may become yoked to the act of discarding
dharma.
I, the yogi, did not remain, I, the yogi, went,
I, the yogi, went to a Gendenpa monastery.
In the Gendenpa monastery, even pure monks desire and hate each other.
I, the yogi, held myself back fearing that I may become a disgrace of dharma
practitioners.
[...]
I, the yogi, did not remain, I, the yogi, went,
I, the yogi, went to a Sangak Nyingma monastery.
In the Nyingmapa monastery, they expect blessing from mask dances.
I, the yogi, held myself back fearing that I may turn into a *pawo gommak*²³ dancer.²⁴

In another case, Drukpa Kunlek tells an incredible story which doubtlessly carries a sarcastic undertone. To an audience who requested him for an enlightening sermon, he talks about an imaginary trip he made to Srinpori, where he met three brothers, who were clinging to a statue of Cakrasaṃvara, not being able to find a proper place to dwell. He calls them, Nyampanyi Dūma-

23. A special way of taking steps and thumping the feet in the art of mask dancing.

24. འབྲུག་པ་ཀུན་དགའ་ལེགས་པ། 1978, 132: རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་མ་བསྐྱད་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་ཕྱིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་གྲ་ས་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པས། བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་ཀྱི་གྲ་ས་ན་མི་རེས་ཆང་བན་རེ་བཟུང་། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ང་ལྷུ་མཁན་ཉོ་ཆང་བའི་གྲ་ས་ཏུ་ཚུད་ཀྱི་དོགས་ནས་རང་ཚོད་བཟུང་བ་ཡིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་མ་བསྐྱད་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་ཕྱིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་ས་སྐྱུ་པའི་གྲ་ས་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པས། ས་སྐྱུ་པའི་གྲ་ས་ཚོ་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཀུན་ལྷན་དུ་བསད་ཀྱི་འདུག རྣལ་འབྱོར་ང་ཚོས་སྤོང་གི་ལས་ལ་འབྱར་གྱི་དོགས་ནས་རང་ཚོད་བཟུང་བ་ཡིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་མ་བསྐྱད་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་ཕྱིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་དགེ་ལྡན་པའི་གྲ་ས་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པས། དགེ་ལྡན་པའི་གྲ་ས་ན་གཙང་ཆགས་སྤང་མཛད། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ང་ཚོས་པའི་ཨ་ར་ཏུ་སོང་གི་དོགས་ནས་རང་ཚོད་བཟུང་བ་ཡིན། ... རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་མ་བསྐྱད་རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་ཕྱིན། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ངས་གསང་སྟགས་རྟེན་མ་བའི་གྲ་ས་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པས། རྟེན་མ་བའི་གྲ་ས་ན་ཕྱིན་ལྷབས་བགས་ཆམས་ལ་རེ། རྣལ་འབྱོར་ང་སློ་པའི་དཔའ་བོ་བསྐྱོམ་ནག་ཏུ་སོང་གི་དོགས་ནས་རང་ཚོད་བཟུང་བ་ཡིན།

jepa, or “The Unconditioned Equality” (མཉམ་པ་ཉིད་འདུས་མ་བྱས་པ་), Jangchupkyi Chöpaḷa Lopai Lekbam, or “The Text on Training in the Practice of Enlightenment” (བྱང་ཚུབ་གྱི་སྦྱོང་པ་ལ་སློབ་པའི་སྒྲིགས་བཅའ་) and Chöchöchü, or “Ten Virtuous Conducts” (ཚོས་སྦྱོང་བཅུ་). The story runs as a conversation where Drukpa Kunlek asks the three brothers why they cling to the statue for shelter and do not seek asylum among the monasteries:

“O then, wouldn’t the Kagyüpas offer you hospitality?” They answer: “All the Kagyüpas are pretty well-established in their view and meditation, but we do not want to stay with them because they are awful in conducts.”

Kunlek asks: “Why don’t you stay with the Sakyapas?” They reply: “The Sakyapas are learned, eloquent, veracious, and sharp, but instead of despising the head of this prejudice of considering oneself as excellent, they do their utmost to despise other schools. Hence, there is no room for us, who are free of discrimination.”

He continues: “You could stay with the Gendenpa.” The three brothers respond: “The Gendenpa are very good in the practice of the *vinaya* discipline, but they are overtly shrewd, prejudiced, scornful and hard to befriend as they conceive themselves as excellent.”

Why cannot you be with these Nyingmapa then?” he asks. “Looking through tantras of Nyingma, one feels one can surely get liberated through them, but they are very overtly fussy about doing a lot of things. While conducting sermons and empowerments, they always perform mask dances. They have diminished inhibitions in so far as to attempt learning even such things as the *pawo gomnak*, the Chinese *lakdrö*,²⁵ and Nepali *zurchak*.²⁶ [The story goes on to say that there is no proper place in Tibet for the three brothers to stay.]²⁷

Unlike Mipham, Drukpa Kunlek ridicules the Nyingmapas for excessive performance of dances

25. The acrobatic style of moving topsy turvy on one’s hands.
 26. This probably refers to somersaulting towards the right and left.
 27. འབྲུག་པ་ཀུན་ལེགས་པ། 1978, 122: འོ་ན་དཀར་བརྒྱུད་པ་འདི་ཚོས་གནས་མི་འདུལ་ལམ་ལུས་པས། དཀར་བརྒྱུད་པ་འདི་ཀུན་ལྟ་སྒྲོམ་གྱི་ཆགས་ལྷགས་དགའ་མོ་འདུག་སྟེ། སྦྱོང་པ་འདི་ཀུན་སྟུག་དྲགས་གནས་མི་བྱེད་གསུང་། ས་སྐྱ་པ་འདི་ཀུན་གྱི་ནང་དུ་བཞུགས་ན་ལུས་པས། ས་སྐྱ་བ་འདི་ཀུན་མཁས་པ་དང་། བརྗོད་པ་གཙུག་པོ། རྟོན་མིགས་པ། ལུར་རྩོད་པ་འདུག་སྟེ། བདག་བཟང་པོ་འདིའི་མགོ་མི་སྦྱོང་པར། གཞན་གྱི་ལྷན་མཐའ་སྦྱོང་ཅི་ལུབ་རང་མཚན་པའི། རེད་འདུ་ཤེས་དང་བྲལ་བའི་སྦོད་ས་མི་འདུག་གསུང་། དགེ་ལྡན་པའི་ཕྱེ་རྩམས་སུ་བཞུགས་ན་ལུས་པས། ཁོང་རྣམས་པ་དམ་པའི་ཚོས་འདུལ་བ་ལ་ཕྱག་ལེན་དགའ་མོ་འདུག་སྟེ། ཨ་ཅང་རང་ལུར་རྩོད་ལྟོགས་ཞེན་ཆེས། གཞན་སྦྱོན་འདུ། རང་སྤངས་བཟང་ནས་འགྲོགས་དཀའ་མོ་རང་འདུག་གསུང་། ལྷགས་རྣམས་པ་འདི་ཀུན་ལ་བཞུགས་པ་གནང་ན་ལུས་པས། རྣམས་མའི་རྒྱུད་འདི་ཀུན་བལྟས་པས་གྲོལ་བ་རང་དེ་འདྲ་འདུག་སྟེ། གང་ཟག་འདི་ཀུན་མི་བྱེད་དུ་བྱེད་མང་དྲགས་ནས། བྱིད་དང་དབང་གང་བྱེད་ཀྱང་། འབག་འཆམ་རྒྱུད་བྱེད། དཔའ་བ་སྒྲོམ་ནག་དང་། རྒྱ་མོའི་ལག་འགྲོས། བལ་པོའི་ལུར་ཕྱག་རྩོད་ཨ་ཤེས་ལྟ་བའི། རོ་ཚོ་ལ་གཟུགས་སྟུག་པ་ཅིག་འདུག་གསུང་། See also འབྲུག་པ་ཀུན་ལེགས་པ། 1978, 461 and 466 for more religious satire.

but not for having consorts. Alcoholism seems to be the major problem for the Kagyüpas in the eyes of Drukpa Kunlek, whereas Mipham, Sapaṅ and the fifth Dalai Lama saw lack of scholasticism as the major problem that plagued the Kagyüpas. The fifth Dalai Lama repeatedly attacks the Kagyüpas, insulting them for their academic failings. He is said to have remarked that among the Kagyüpas who are dark as crows, Pema Karpo (བསྐྱེད་དཀར་པོ་ 1527–1592) is slightly grey like a raven. He also wrote in his work on poetry entitled *The Melody Which Pleases Sarasvati*:

If the Sakya masters propound a wrong exposition, why would not a Kagyü *gomchen* (སྒྲོམ་ཆེན་) utter stupid verbiage? ²⁸ Elegant words ought to come from learned ones for it is the way of the unlearned to chatter gibberish.²⁹

And he goes on:

When the news of the defeat of Trojé³⁰ through reasoning by Salo spread in the Land of Snows, the Kagyüpa were absolutely frightened, and for some their hearts throbbed even while they trod in the deserted hills.³¹

He also warns them saying:

Be careful. It is very much reprehensible for the wolf-like Kagyüpa *gomchen* to move in between the tigers and lions of Sakya and Geluk scholars whose physical strength of reasoning and scriptural citations is perfect.³²

Egotism and arrogance seem to be regarded as the perpetual problem of the Sakyapas just as sectarianism is for the Gendenpa. The Sakyapas are accused of having large egos by both Mipham and Drukpa Kunlek. If we look at the works of the Sakya masters such as Sakya Paṅḍita, this trait is evident. For example, in his composition called *The Eight I's*, Sapaṅ says:

I am the linguist; I am the logician; and I am unequalled in destroying wrong speech.

28. *Gomchen*, like *ngepa* (སྐྱེས་པ་), is a term used for lay practitioners in Tibetan Buddhist communities.
29. ལྷུ་མཚོག་ལུ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་དབང་རྒྱ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 2022, 119: ས་སྐྱེའི་བསྐྱེད་འཛིན་ཉེས་བཤད་འཆད་བྱེད་ན། །བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་སྒྲོམ་ཆེན་སྲུན་གཏམ་ཅིས་མི་ཟེར། །མང་པོར་ཐོས་ལས་ལེགས་བཤད་འབྱུང་དགོས་ཀྱི། །ཐོས་ཀྱང་སྲུ་ཙོར་སྒྲོག་པ་ངང་ཚུལ་ཡིན། །
30. This is in reference to the defeat of the non-Buddhist scholar Trojé Gawo (ཐྱོག་བྱེད་དགའ་བོ་ 13th century) by Sakya Paṅḍita.
31. ལྷུ་མཚོག་ལུ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་དབང་རྒྱ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 2022, 156: ས་ལོས་ཐོག་བྱེད་རིག་པས་བཙོམ་པ་ཡི། །གཤམ་པ་གངས་ཅན་ལྗོངས་འདིར་འབར་བ་ན། །བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པ་རྣམས་བཟོད་མིང་ཆེར་སྤངས་ཤིང་། །འགའ་ཞིག་རི་སྒོངས་ཀྱི་ལུང་ལྷིང་ཁ་སྒྲིགས། །
32. ལྷུ་མཚོག་ལུ་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དག་དབང་རྒྱ་བཟང་རྒྱ་མཚོ། 2022, 10: ས་དགའི་མཁས་པ་ལྷུང་རིགས་ཀྱི་ལུས་སྒྲོབས་རྣོགས་པའི་སྐྱག་སིང་ཁ་འཐབ་པའི་བར་དུ་བཀའ་བརྒྱུད་པའི་སྒྲོམ་ཆེན་པོ་སྐྱེས་ལྷ་བྱ་དག་རྒྱ་བ་ནི་འཚང་ཆེ་བས་བག་ཡོད་པར་བྱོས་ཤིག།

I am learned in prosody; I am the poet; and I am matchless expounding synonyms.

I know the art of timing;³³ and I am of incomparable intelligence and wisdom in knowing all Buddhist and non-Buddhist subjects.

Such is the Sakyapa for other scholars are mere reflections.³⁴

It is said that Drukpa Kunlek later added a *shapkyu* (འཕགས་སྐུ), or “u” vowel sign, to the *nga* (ང་) letter, thus turning them into *ngu* (ངུ), meaning “weep.” So it read: “The linguist is weeping, the logician is weeping, and the unequalled one in destroying the wrong speech is weeping,” and so forth.

In another story, Drukpa Kunlek is travelling with the Karmapa to China, and they reach a big river.³⁵ To the Karmapa’s astonishment, Drukpa Kunlek insists that he cross the river through the water although there is a bridge. Bewildered, the Karmapa asks why he wants to do that and is told: “If I walk over this bridge, one great scholar will fail to keep his word.” When the Karmapa questioned further, he said: “Sa-pan, while crossing the bridge, swore that no wiser person than he would ever walk on this bridge.” The story vividly portrays the Sakyapa reputation for arrogance and the Kagyüpa resentment of it.

So, we see through this humor and criticism, what weakness and faults the four schools had and what discrepancies and differences, conflicts, and controversies they had despite their similarities and likeness as Buddhist traditions. If we study the satire and humor carefully, they not only show the general developments in the four traditions but also draw our attention to the trends of historical changes happening to the traditions. For example, we can see that the weakness of the Nyingmapas was perceived to have changed from excessive performance of dancing in Drukpa Kunlek’s time to indulgence in lust and consorts in Mipham’s days. Is that because of the proliferation of Nyingma *tertons*, or treasure discoverers, and their many consorts?

With the Gelukpas, the problem of sectarian discrimination that Drukpa Kunlek ascribed to them seems to have changed, or at least been overshadowed by their involvement in violence and their negligence of spiritual practice in Mipham’s time. Did the new problem of violence among the Gelukpas develop because of their active roles in the political administration and due to the growth of the monastic gangsterism of the *dapdop* (དབ་དོག་)? Beside searching for such objective answers, one also needs to question the solemnity of the authors of this criticism and humor. Did

33. དུས་སྐོར་ (Sanskrit: *tatkāla or lagnakāla*), which I have freely translated as “the art of timing” is a science in Indo-Tibetan astrology and divination of reading the movement of stars in the twelve zodiac houses, and thus foretell auspicious and inauspicious periods.

34. ས་སྐུ་ས་པཎ་ཀུན་དགའ་ལྷན་མཚན། 1990, 1.683: སྐུ་པ་ང་ཡིན་ནོག་གི་བ་ང་སྐུ་བ་ངན་འཛོམས་ང་འདྲ་མེད། ཤྲིབ་སྐོར་ང་མཁས་སྐྱོན་ངག་ང་ཉིད་མངོན་བརྗོད་འཆང་ལ་འགན་མེད་ང་། དུས་སྐོར་ངས་ཤེས་ཕྱིན་པ་ཀུན་རིག་ཚམ་དཔྱད་སློ་གོས་མཚུངས་མེད་ང་། འདྲ་གང་ཡིན་ས་སྐུ་པ་སྐྱེ་མཁས་པ་གཞན་དག་གཟུགས་བརྟན་ཡིན། A similar kind of aphoristic work, called the *Sixteen I's* (ང་བཅུ་དྲུག་མ་) was written by Shapdrung Ngawang Namgyal (1594–1651) of Bhutan. See Karma Phuntsho 2013, 220–221.

35. This is an oral story that I have heard from my father. This may not be found in written sources.

Drukpa Kunlek and Mipham strictly mean what they said, or have they constructed exaggerated and colorful stories to make their writings more entertaining? Were the misconceptions, such as explaining *mudrā* as hand gesture, erroneously construed by the uneducated followers of the particular schools, or were they propounded even by the leading masters? I shall not attempt to answer these questions here, but further understanding of the socio-religious and political contexts can help us better appreciate this humor and criticism.

After admonishing the adherents of the four schools, showing their weaknesses, Mipham turns to giving very heartfelt and moving advice on how the followers of the four traditions should cherish, respect, and have affection for each other. He says:

For the Buddha's teachings in general, even if we have attachment to one's own side, it is very important to have no aversion toward others. That is because, from the perspective of our side, we are all followers of the same teacher, the Blessed Buddha. Therefore, we must have compassion and feeling of intimacy towards each other. Even for the system of doctrinal tenets, since the time of *khenlopchö sum*³⁶ through the gracious legacy of the past masters, we, in Tibet, are not only similar in accepting the four seals that define the view of the Buddha's pronouncements, but also accept the concept of great emptiness which is free from elaborations. Moreover we all claim to be followers of the mantra vehicle of the union of emptiness and bliss. Hence, we are very close, as our views and tenets are same.

If we consider our position with regard to others, amid the non-Buddhists and barbarians, who are as numerous as stars at night and with whom we differ even in insignia and dress, we Buddhists are as few as stars at day. For those of us who have meaningfully entered the Buddha's teachings, which have little time left and are about to come to an end, all must develop the feeling of intense intimacy, for hating each other leads to great strife and turmoil. Therefore, cultivate feelings of sympathetic joy towards each other just as a mother regards her child and an impoverished person sees a treasure.³⁷

Mipham provides similar advice in his other short work highlighting the fact that each of the four traditions has the power to take an individual to high levels of erudition and enlightenment.

36. *Khenlopchö sum* (མཁའན་སྐྱོབ་ཚེས་གསུམ་) refers to the triad of *khenpo*, or abbot, Śāntarakṣita (ཞི་བ་འཚོ་ 8th c.), *lopön*, or master, Padmasambhava (པདྨ་འབྲུང་གནས་ 8th c.) and *chögyal*, or religious king, Tri Songdetsen (ཁྲི་སྐོང་ལྷེ་བཙེན་ 742–796). They are the main persons who helped spread Buddhism to Tibet in the eighth century.

37. Appendix, para 11.

Thus, it is important to avoid hating others while cherishing one's own tradition. All must live in harmony like children of same parents. He concludes his short tract with these words:

All those learning the same teachings
Having followed the same teacher,
Abandoning the malicious glance of severe attachment,
May they befriend each other with joyful smiles.

Abandon whatever is outside the teachings³⁸
Whether they appear in oneself or others.
Adopt whatever conforms with the purport of the teachings
Whether they exist in oneself or others.³⁹

Through that, may the four great meditation lineages,
Which are means to the state of the Buddha,
Radiate in the Snow Mountains with the wealth of dharma
And be victorious in all directions.⁴⁰

His advice and the concluding verses are heavily laden with a message of harmony and *rimé* ecumenism (རིས་མེད་). Was Mipham a *rimé* master then? We know that his teachers, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo (འཇམ་དབྱངས་མཁེན་པ་ལྷུ་འཇམ་པོ་ 1820–1892), Kongtrul Yönten Gyatso (ཀོང་རྩལ་ཡོན་ཏན་ཆུ་མཚོ་ 1813–1899) and Patrul Ögyen Jigmé Chökyi Wangpo (པཎ་ལལ་ལྷུ་ལོ་ལྷན་འཇིགས་མེད་ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབང་པོ་ 1808–1887) were great *rimé* masters. However, notwithstanding the fact that the *rimé* movement was thriving in his time among the people he revered most, Mipham was a staunch proponent of the Nyingma school. Although he showed due respect to other traditions, he defended the Nyingma doctrine and refuted what he considered the wrong tenets of other schools in his commentaries and polemical works. However, he also shows *rimé* spirit in many of his works, as he does here. Was he really a *rimé* master then and what did *rimé* mean to him?

There seems to be two ways of understanding the phrase *rimé*. The first form, as propagated by Jamgön Kongtrul, Patrul and others, is to study, practice, and adopt the teachings of all traditions without any discrimination. *Ri* (རིས་) in this case, can be understood more in the sense of a social institution, of a creed, a group, or a tradition. Hence, *rimé* in this context is to be without a particular tradition. The second understanding of *rimé*, as I have myself heard from senior lamas, is

38. Outside the teachings mean those that contradict the Buddhist teachings.

39. རང་and གཞན་ or “oneself and others” here should be understood as one's own tradition and the traditions of others.

40. Appendix, para 12.

to have a tradition as one's own and at the same time respect other traditions.⁴¹ The term *ri* in this case has a connotation of discrimination or sectarian prejudice as in *chakdang chokri* (ཆགས་སྣང་སྤྱགས་རིས་), prejudice through attachment and aversion.

If we look at Mipham through the grid of his philosophical treatises, time and again he presented himself as a *rimé* person of the second kind. Was he not a *rimé* follower in the same capacity as his masters? It is difficult to jump to conclusions. In the colophon of this small work, he says:

This was written, for fun and for a friend, by Mati,⁴² who is a specimen of Sakya, Nyingma, Kagyü and Geluk.⁴³

Whether Mipham was a promoter of *rimé* of the first or the second type, the overriding message of his two short compositions is a heartfelt call for religious tolerance, respect, and harmony, which remains as important today as it was during his days.

41. I am referring to H.H. Penor Rinpoché (བད་ནོར་རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ 1932–2009), Nyushul Khenpo Jamyang Dorjé (ལྷོ་ཤུལ་མཁན་པོ་འཇམ་དབྱངས་རྡོ་རྗེ་ 1931–1999), Khenchen Padma Sherab (མཁན་ཆེན་པདྨ་ཤེལ་རབ་), et al.

42. Mati is one of many alias Mipham used.

43. Appendix, para 13.

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སྟང་འདིས་དག་ལྟན་བསྟན་པ་ལ་འཛོམ་བས་གཟབ་འཛོམ་ལ། ས་རྒྱ་པ་མལ་ཆེ་དབང་བྲིད་ཐོབ་ཅམ་དང་ས་ངོར་སོགས་
རང་ལུགས་ཀྱི་བྲག་པ་རེ་ལ་མཚོག་འཛོམ་ཆེ་བས། སྟོགས་རིས་དང་མཚོག་འཛོམ་འདི་ས་རྒྱའི་བསྟན་པ་ལ་འཛོམ་བས་
སྟང་འཛོམ།

༡༡་ བསྟན་པ་སྤྱི་ལ་རང་སྟོགས་ལ་ཞེན་པ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་། གཞན་སྟོགས་ལ་སྟང་བ་མེད་པ་ཞིག་གལ་ཆེ་ལྟེ། དེ་ཡང་རང་སྟོགས་
ལ་བསམས་ན། སྟོན་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་བཙུན་ལྟན་འདས་ཁོ་ནའི་རྗེས་འཇུག་ཡིན་པས་གཅིག་ལ་གཅིག་སྟེང་ཉེ་བའི་འདུ་
ཤེས་དང་། བསྟན་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཡང་མཁན་སྟོབ་ཚོས་གསུམ་གྱི་དུས་ནས་བཅམས། སྟོན་གྱི་ཕྱག་རྒྱས་བཟང་པོ་ལས།
བོད་འདིར་ནི་ལྟ་བ་བཀར་བཏགས་གྱི་ཕྱག་རྒྱ་བཞི་ཁས་ལེན་པར་མཚུངས་པ་ཅམ་ཏུ་མ་ཟད། སྟོང་ཉིད་སྟོས་བྲལ་ཆེན་
སོར་ཁས་ལེན་པ་དང་། དེར་མ་ཟད་བདེ་སྟོང་རྒྱུང་འཇུག་སྟགས་གྱི་ཐེག་པར་ཁས་འཛེབ་པ་ཤ་སྟག་ཡིན་པས། དོན་ཏུ་
ལྟ་གྲུབ་མཚུངས་པས་ཆེས་ཉེ་བ་དང་། གཞན་སྟོགས་ལ་བསམས་ན། ཕྱི་རོལ་དང་ལྷ་སྟོན་གས་དང་ཆ་ལུགས་ཅམ་ཡང་
མི་མཐུན་པ་མཚན་སྐར་ལྟ་བུའི་ནང་ན། རང་རེ་ནང་པ་ཉིན་སྐར་ལྟ་བུའི་ཉུང་ཤེས་འདི་ཡང་། བསྟན་པ་རྗེས་ལ་ཁང་
པའི་སྟག་ཞབས་སྟེ། བསྟན་པའི་གནས་ལ་དོན་མཐུན་ཏུ་ཞུགས་པ་ནམས། །ཆེས་ཤིན་ཏུ་ཉེ་བའི་འདུ་ཤེས་བསྐྱེད་དགོས་
ཉེ། སན་ཚུན་སྟང་བ་ནི་ཕྱང་དགོལ་ཆེ་བས། གཅིག་ལ་གཅིག་མས་བུ་མཐོང་བ་དང་། དབུལ་པོས་གཏོར་མཐོང་བ་ལྟར་
དགའ་བའི་འདུ་ཤེས་བསྐྱེད་པར་བྱའོ། །

༡༢་ སྟོན་པ་གཅིག་གི་རྗེས་ཞུགས་ནས། བསྟན་པ་གཅིག་ལ་སྟོབ་པ་ཀུན། །ཞེན་ལྟའི་སྟང་མིག་སྟངས་བྱས་ནས། །དགའ་བའི་
འཇུག་གིས་འགྲོགས་ལྱུར་ཅིག །བསྟན་ལས་ཕྱི་རོལ་གྱུར་པའི་ཆ། །རང་གཞན་སྟུ་ལ་སྟང་ཡང་སྟོངས། །བསྟན་པའི་དོན་
དང་མཐུན་པའི་ཆ། །རང་གཞན་སྟུ་ལ་ཡོད་ཀྱང་སྟབས། །དེ་མཐུས་གངས་རིའི་ཁྲོད་འདི་ཏུ། །རྒྱབ་བརྒྱད་རྒྱལ་ཐབས་
ཆེན་པོ་བཞི། །ཚོས་གྱི་འབྱོར་པས་མཛེས་འབར་ཞིང་། །སྟོགས་ལས་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་གྱུར་ཅིག །

༡༣་ ཅས་ས་རྟིང་བཀའ་དག་བཞིའི་ཡིན་པ་ཡོད་པའི་མ་ཉིས། །སྟོགས་གྱི་ངོར་ཅེད་མོར་བྱིས། །མཛྲ་ལོ། །

