

## The *Rimé* Activities of Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781-1851)<sup>1</sup>

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**N**on-sectarianism (*ris med*), especially in the Tibetan Buddhist context, is most often associated with the lives and works of a group of nineteenth-century religious luminaries from the Kham region of eastern Tibet. Referred to collectively as the “non-sectarian movement” by contemporary scholars, this group consisted of Jamgön Kongtrül, Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo, Chokgyur Lingpa, Dza Patrul, Ju Mipham, and others.<sup>2</sup> Yet, approximately three decades prior to the non-sectarian activities of Jamgön Kongtrül and his contemporaries, there was a figure fervently advocating non-sectarianism in north-eastern, central and western Tibet: the renowned poet-saint Shabkar Tsokdruk Rangdrol (1781-1851). While both Tibetan studies scholars and Tibetan Buddhists alike have noted Shabkar’s non-sectarian tendencies in general, this topic has remained largely unexplored in the scholarly literature. Because Shabkar’s non-sectarian activities were so prolific, I argue that it is necessary to take serious consideration of Shabkar’s non-sectarian activities as a part of the history, nature, and extent of non-sectarianism in Tibetan Buddhist history as a whole.

This essay provides a detailed articulation of Shabkar’s non-sectarianism as presented in his two-volume spiritual autobiography.<sup>3</sup> In this essay, I demonstrate that in his *Life*, Shabkar portrays

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank V.V. Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, V. Lama Tashi Dondup, Gyelwé Yongdzin Lama Nyima Rinpoche, Khenpo Chonyi Rangdrol, the *sangha* of Takmo Lujin monastery, and my teachers and friends from Amdo—without them my fieldwork and study of Shabkar’s writings would not have been possible. All errors are my own entirely.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, “Jam mgon Kong sprul,” 237-247, 235.

<sup>3</sup> While the first volume of Shabkar’s autobiography has been translated into English and French by Matthieu Ricard and his team, the second volume remains yet to be translated. Throughout this essay, I will be referring to Shabkar’s *rnam thar* as either “spiritual autobiography,” “autobiography,” “life story,” or *Life*. All passages quoted from Shabkar’s *Life* are my own translations from the Tibetan original. However, in the case of the first volume, I have also provided the page

non-sectarianism not as an abstract intellectual concept, but as an integral aspect of a Buddhist life properly lived. Shabkar's articulation of non-sectarianism is also quite complex in that it is multivalent. Rooting his non-sectarian outlook in Buddhist cosmogony, the principle of reincarnation, and revelatory visions, Shabkar expresses his non-sectarian values through a variety of literary genres including oral sermons, song-poems, and life narrative. Shabkar's choice of literary media made his message accessible to a wide audience in premodern Tibet. Through this multivalent approach to conveying non-sectarianism in his life story, Shabkar paints a vivid and embodied picture of what it means to practically implement non-sectarian values into one's attitude, lifestyle, and spiritual practice, and makes a strong case to readers for the necessity of adopting a non-sectarian attitude.

### **Shabkar and the Nineteenth-Century "Non-Sectarian Movement"**

One of the first questions that comes to mind when considering Shabkar's non-sectarian paradigm is the following: is there a link between Shabkar and the nineteenth-century "non-sectarian movement" in Kham? At present, we have yet to identify evidence of direct contact between Shabkar and the non-sectarian masters of nineteenth-century Kham. However, one event in the life of Dza Patrul suggests at least a slight—albeit symbolic—connection between Shabkar's activities and those of Jamgön Kongtrül and his colleagues. Near the end of Shabkar's life, his reputation had spread to Kham, a region that he had never visited despite his extensive travels across the Tibetan plateau. It is said that Patrul Rinpoche was so inspired by stories of Shabkar that he journeyed northwards to Amdo with the hopes of visiting him. Unfortunately, Shabkar died while Patrul Rinpoche was en route. An oral tradition depicts Patrul Rinpoche then prostrating himself one hundred times in the direction of Amdo.<sup>4</sup> This incident implies a loose and informal connection between Shabkar in Amdo and the non-sectarian spiritual teachers centred in Dégé, Kham.

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number for the Ricard translation so that readers can consult alternative translations and the passage's greater context.

<sup>4</sup> Ricard, xv, xxv n. 6. Ricard notes that this was found in short biographies of Dza Patrul by Rdo grub bstan pa'i nyi ma (1865-1926) and Mkhan po kun bzang dpal ldan (1879-c.1940). He also notes that the oral tradition is recorded from Tulku Urgyen Rinpoché.

Furthermore, future research may potentially reveal a more concrete connection between Shabkar and the “non-sectarian movement” in Kham. Shabkar and members of the “non-sectarian movement” share a link to the teachings of the revered Nyingma treasure revealer Jikmé Lingpa (‘Jigs med gling pa, 1730-1798). Dza Patrul was the incarnation of the verbal aspect (*gsung gi sprul sku*) of Jikmé Lingpa and Jamyang Khyentsé was the incarnation of Jikmé Lingpa’s mind aspect (*thugs kyi sprul sku*).<sup>5</sup> In turn, Jamyang Khyentsé was essentially inseparable from much of Jamgön Kongtrul’s work. Shabkar’s root lama, the Dharma King Ngagki Wangpo (Chos rgyal Ngag gi dbang po) was a lineage holder of Jikmé Lingpa’s *Longchen Nyingthig*.<sup>6</sup> T. Yangdon Dondhup and others have also noted that the Dharma King was a close disciple of Do Drupchen (rDo grub chen), who was one of Jikmé Lingpa’s main disciples.<sup>7</sup> Many important spiritual masters from the Rebgong *ngakpa* community to which Shabkar belonged were also direct disciples of Do Drupchen, some even travelling to Kham to receive teachings.<sup>8</sup> Thus, through this shared spiritual forefather, there may be possible links between Shabkar and the great non-sectarian masters from Kham. At present though, it seems that Shabkar was working in isolation from his Kham counterparts.

### Sectarianism in Shabkar’s Life

Sectarian tensions between the Nyingma and Geluk clearly existed in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Amdo. In a broader context, Drakgönpa Könchok Tenpa Rabgyé (Brag mgon pa dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas, 1801-1866) criticized Rigdzin Palden Tashi’s (Rig ‘dzin dPal Idan bkra shis, 1688-1743) religious orientation in the *Religious History of Amdo* (*mDo smad chos ’byung*).<sup>9</sup> With regards to the Rebgong area in particular, the conflict between Rigdzin Palden Tashi and the abbot of Rongwo (Rong bo) monastery, Khenchen Gendün Gyatso (1679-1765), is well-known, for example.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps due to the Vajrayana Buddhist ideal of pure perception (*dag snang*),

<sup>5</sup> Ricard, “Translator’s Introduction”, xxix n. 43.

<sup>6</sup> Ricard, Appendix 4, 569.

<sup>7</sup> Dhondup, 49.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* Drakgönpa Könchok Tenpa Rabgyé was a throne holder of the famous Gelukpa monastery Labrang in Amdo, while Rigdzin Palden Tashi was an important Nyingma *ngakpa* leader in Rebgong. For more information see Dhondup, 47.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

Shabkar does not document any significant moments of acute sectarian rivalry in his *Life*. However, a close reading of Shabkar's autobiography reveals definite sectarian tensions in nineteenth-century Tibet.

The most blatant example of sectarian conflict depicted in Shabkar's *Life* involves the Nyingmapas and their critics. While in Amdo, a Mongolian or Chinese follower from Gomé (sGo me) asks Shabkar why the Nyingmapa are subject to such frequent criticism.<sup>11</sup> In reply, Shabkar engages in a lengthy discourse admonishing such criticism, defending the veracity and purity of the Nyingma teachings. To support his argument, he includes lengthy quotations from Chengawa Lodrö Gyaltzen (sPyan snga ba Blo gros rgyal mtshan), Marpa, Milarepa, Kalden Gyatso, and others. This is a clear example of sectarian slander directed towards the Nyingmapa that Shabkar felt compelled to refute.

One event in particular gives us a glimpse into the subtlety of how sectarian biases manifested in traditional Tibetan religious environments. Once, after he had returned to Amdo, Shabkar sent monks to Labrang Tashikhyil (Bla brang bKra shis 'khyil) to make a general offering of money and tea to the monastic community there.<sup>12</sup> Unbeknownst to Shabkar, one of the monks in the party that he had sent was a *samaya*-breaker who had been expelled from Labrang monastery earlier. When the monks who had expelled him saw him, they refused to drink from the hand of the *samaya*-breaker and thus the monk left. Because Shabkar's monks were Nyingmapa and Labrang monastery is a Gelukpa institution, some people ignorant of the true circumstances of the situation misinterpreted the situation and thought that the monks refused to drink because of sectarian attitudes (*grub mtha'i phyogs ris byas*). The very fact that this misunderstanding even occurred indicates that there were some people during that period who took sectarian identity so seriously that they believed a monk would not receive an offering of tea from another monk solely based on sectarian affiliation.

<sup>11</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 115.4-5: *yang nyin cig dad gtong blo gros che ba'i sgo me'i mtshams pa rig gsal sogs dad can slob ma sngags 'chang mang pos/ gsang sngags snga 'gyur 'di la khas gtong mkhan mang po 'di ci las byung ba yin nam snyam/*.

<sup>12</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 896.4-897.1: *bla brang bkra shis 'khyil la 'gyed phogs mang ja gya nom pa bcas grwa pa mang pos khyer bas/ nged tshang gi grwa pa sna tshogs pa yin gshis/ nang na bla brang gi tshogs nas phud btang ba'i dam nyams gcig yod pa de nged tshos ma shes par rgyus yod byed du btang bas/ de 'phud mkhan tshos mthong nas grwa pa dam nyams de'i lag nas 'thung tshul med ces gtong du ma bcug par phyir log byung/ 'ga' res de yin par ma shes par grub mtha'i phyogs ris byas [897] nas ma 'thung ba red zer/ gang yin yang dge ba'i kha 'gegs shig byung/ gtong ma thub bar 'gyod pa skyes/. Ricard, trans., 507.*

However, in most cases, sectarianism is not explicitly depicted, but rather, must be inferred from Shabkar's repeated admonitions *against* sectarian attitudes throughout his autobiography. For example, in his song of farewell to the people of Kyirong (sKyid rong), Shabkar tells the lamas there not to engage in sectarianism by dividing the Buddha's teachings into categories of "good" and "bad."<sup>13</sup> To the general populace, he advises them to refrain from hostility (*ma sdang*) towards the tenet systems of others since the teachings of all tenet systems are the teachings of the Buddha.<sup>14</sup> In Lhasa, Shabkar advises, "There is no holy Dharma that is not profound/ People of Lhasa, do not be sectarian, there is no point."<sup>15</sup> As part of his final testament, he advises disciples, "Disciples who after listening, reflecting, and meditating upon the teachings/ Engage in sectarianism after several years/ And belittle the Dharma of others./ Do not abandon the Dharma and accumulate negative karma."<sup>16</sup> Through his frequent mention of the need to be non-sectarian, it is clear that Shabkar was trying to oppose existing sectarianism.

One of Shabkar's most critical indictments of sectarianism in his autobiography occurs in a song sung while on retreat on Mahādeva Island in Lake Kokonor. The song suggests that Tibetan Buddhists have fallen from a golden age when all the Buddha's teachings were once understood as non-contradictory. In this fallen age, Buddhists are engaged in sectarian bias and rivalry:

Due to the kindness of holy forefathers of the past,  
 In the snow ranges [of Tibet]  
 Many profound Dharma teachings spread.  
 However, Dharma practitioners,  
 Having grasped [the teachings] as contradictory – like hot and  
 cold,  
 Engage in sectarianism – attachment and aversion.

Some of the Holy Ones have said  
 That Madhyamaka, Dzokchen and Mahāmudrā  
 Are like sugar, molasses, and honey –

<sup>13</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 675.1-.2: *bla ma rnam kyis chos la bzang ngan phyel/ grub mtha'i phyogs ris ma byed skyid grong ba/*. Ricard, trans., 386.

<sup>14</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 675.4: *thams cad nang pa sang rgyas bstan pa yin/ grub mtha' gzhän la ma sdang skyid grong pa/*. Ricard, trans., 386.

<sup>15</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 840.2-.3: *dam pa'i chos la mi zab gang yang med// don med phyogs ris ma che lha sa ba//*. Ricard, trans., 478.

<sup>16</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 952.3-.4: *thos bsam byas pa'i slob ma yis// lo 'ga'i 'phro nas phyogs ris byas// gzhän gyi chos la smad ra btang// chos spong las ngan ma gsog cig/*. Ricard, trans., 534.

Each being as good as the other.

Thus, I have listened to and contemplated  
 On all the teachings without sectarian bias.  
 Sectarian practitioners with attachment and aversion  
 Please do not scold me.

When the sunlight of pure perception  
 Spreads on the lofty white snow mountains  
 [That are] Madhyamaka, Dzokchen and Mahāmudrā,  
 It is certain that a river of blessings will arise.<sup>17</sup>

Here, Shabkar notices that followers of Buddhism engage in sectarian rivalry, having “grasped [the teachings] as contradictory,” and criticizes them for doing so. The non-sectarian sentiment captured in this song permeates Shabkar’s entire autobiography.

### **The Foundations of Non-Sectarianism: Cosmogony, Reincarnation, and Revelatory Visions**

Against this backdrop of existent sectarian attitudes, Shabkar promoted non-sectarianism fervently throughout his life. In his autobiography, Shabkar grounds his non-sectarian views in Buddhist cosmogony. Following the traditional verses of homage (*mchod brjod*) and a brief “setting of scene” (Skt. *nidāna*, Tib. *gleng gzhi*), the second volume of Shabkar’s *Life* continues with a section entitled “The History of the Turning of the Wheel of Dharma” (*Chos 'khor bskor ba'i lo rgyus*). Here, Shabkar describes the beginnings of the universe, the Buddha, and sentient beings using traditional images from the Dzokchen tradition. As this fifteen-folio-page section is too long to quote in this essay, I will cite an excerpt from the poem at the end of the section that summarizes its contents:

All that exists—the phenomena of *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*—  
 without exception,

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<sup>17</sup> Zhabz dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 231.5-232.2: *gangs can khrod du sngon gyi// dam pa gong ma'i drin las// zab chos mang po dur kyang// chos pa phal gyis tsha grang// bzhin du 'gal bar bzung nas// sdang zhen phyogs ris byed pa// dam pa 'ga' res zhal nas// dbu ma rdzogs chen phyag chen// ka ra bu ram sbrang rtsi// gang gi gang [232] bzang red gsung// des na bdag gis kun la// phyogs med thos bsam byed pa'i// sdang zhen phyogs ris mkhan gyis// bdag la bka' bkyon ma gñang// dbu ma rdzogs chen phyag chen// lhun stug rab dkar gangs la// dag sñang nyi 'od brdal na// byin rlabs chu rgyun 'byung nges//Ricard, trans., 138.*

Are like the rainbow in the sky, the moon in water,  
 The reflection in a mirror.  
 [They] seem to appear, but are empty; seem to be empty, but  
 appear—how wondrous!

The non-dual, appearing, yet empty phenomena of *saṃsāra* and  
*nirvāṇa*

Abide as one taste with the expanse  
 Which is the ultimate truth, the *dharmadhātu* that is like the sky.  
 In the same way, all the buddhas of the ten directions and  
 three times  
 Abide in the state of the *dharmakāya* that is like the sky.  
 For example, like putting water in water,  
 Or like mixing sky with sky, they are inseparable and one taste.

From within the mixture, and never wavering,  
 The *rūpakāya* suitable to those who are to be tamed emerges  
 like a rainbow.  
 Turning the wheel of whatever Dharma is most suitable,  
 It works for the benefit of beings equal to the sky—this is said.

In particular, our Teacher, the Compassionate One,  
 Achieved buddhahood many immeasurable kalpas ago—  
 This was perceived by his extraordinary disciples.  
 Then, he emanated in a body appropriate for the beings to be  
 tamed, and worked for the benefit of beings;  
 For example, as Samantabhadra, Vajradhāra, Śākyamuni, and  
 so forth,  
 Buddhas, bodhisattvas, the scholar-siddhas of India and Tibet,  
 and lamas, and so forth.

This is said not once, but again and again,  
 In the *sūtras*, *tantras*, and treatises.  
 Reflecting on this, we should train in faith, devotion, and pure  
 perception,  
 Making offerings, giving praise, and rendering service to all  
 Dharma and people.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 35.3-36.3: : *snang srid 'khor 'das chos rnams ma lus pa// nam mkha'i 'ja' dang chu nang zla ba dang// me long nang gi gzugs brnyan ji bzhin du// snang bzhin stong la stong bzhin snang ba mtshar// snang stong gnyis med 'khor 'das chos rnams kyang// don dam chos dbyings nam mkha' lta bu yi// dbyings su ro gcig gnas pa de bzhin du// phyogs bcu dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyang// chos sku nam mkha' lta bu'i ngang nyid du// dper na chu la chu bzhag nam mkha' la// nam mkha' 'dres bzhin dbyer med ro gcig tu// 'dres pa'i ngang las nam yang ma g.yos bzhin//*

In addition to depicting the ultimate nature of the universe, this passage also puts forth the idea that all buddhas, bodhisattvas, scholar-siddhas, and spiritual teachers are manifestations of the primordial Buddha inseparable from the *dharmadhātu*. It places emphasis upon the common origin of all spiritual guides, the ultimately trivial nature of sectarian divisions, and the importance of training in pure perception towards all teachings and individuals. Most significantly, Shabkar roots these statements in Buddhist cosmogony. Similarly, at another point in his autobiography, he writes:

Thus, if one has belief, one will understand the many buddhas of the ten directions and three times, the bodhisattvas, the scholar-siddhas of India and Tibet, the lamas, and spiritual friends to be emanations of the Teacher, the Buddha, the Bhagavan. Having understood that, one will train in faith and pure perception towards all Dharma and people, making offerings, giving praise, and being of service. If one does that and simultaneously requests the blessings of the Victor and Sons, one's mental continuum will naturally ripen and be liberated.<sup>19</sup>

In this passage, Shabkar presents Buddhist cosmogony, a non-sectarian outlook, and spiritual enlightenment as being intimately linked. By grounding the idea of pure perception and non-sectarianism in Buddhist cosmogony and soteriology, Shabkar presents a strong argument for the importance of non-sectarian attitudes.

Shabkar also implicitly argues for the importance of a non-sectarian outlook in his discussion of his past incarnations. Prior to leaving central Tibet for Amdo, Shabkar's patroness Drölma Ky-

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gang 'dul gzugs sku 'ja' tshon bzhin du shar// gang 'tsham chos kyi 'khor lo rab bskor nas// mkha' mnyam 'gro ba yongs kyi don mdzad gsungs// khyad [36] bar bdag cag ston pa thugs rje can// thun mong ma yin gdul bya'i snang ngo ru// dpag med bskal pa'i sngon nas sangs rgyas te// kun bzang rdo rje 'chang dang thub dbang sogs// sangs rgyas byang sems rgya bod mkhas grub dang// bla ma la sogs gang 'dul sku ru sprul// 'gro don mdzad ces mdo rgyud bstan bcas nas// lan cig ma yin yang yang gsungs tshul rnams// bsams nas chos dang gang zag thams cad la// dad gus dag snang sbyongs bzhin mchod bstod bkur//. A statement similar to this, but in brief, can also be found in Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 18.1: deng sang snyigs ma'i dus 'dir gang la gang 'dul gyi bla ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen du ma'i sku ru sprul nas 'gro ba'i don mdzad par gsungs te/. Ricard trans., 8.

<sup>19</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 28.3-6: des na yid ches par byas na/ phyogs bcu dus gsum gyi sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' rgya bod kyi mkhas grub/ bla ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen ji snyed cig mchis pa rnams/ bdag cag gi ston pa sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi rnam 'phrul du go nas/ chos dang gang zag yongs la dad gus dag snang sbyongs bzhin mchod bstod bkur na/ rgyal ba sras bcas kyi byin rlabs dus gcig la zhus nas/ rgyud rang bzhin shugs kyis smin cing grol bar 'gyur ro.



idzom (sGrol ma skyid 'dzom) requests that he sing a supplication prayer to his past incarnations. Shabkar sings:

In the time of the Buddha he was the Noble Avalokiteśvara.  
 In India he was Mañjuśrīmitra.  
 In central Tibet, he was Drenpa Namkha.  
 In the Kagyu teachings, he was Milarepa himself.  
 At the time of the Kadampa, he was the glorious Gyalsé  
 Thogme.  
 In the Ganden teachings, he was the Lord Lodrö Gyaltshan.  
 In response to beings non-sectarian, he manifested as Tangtong  
 Gyelpo.  
 Nowadays, the Protector of Beings Shabkarpa . . .<sup>20</sup>

As in his present life, Shabkar refused to limit himself to a single sect in his multiple past incarnations. In this supplication prayer, he tells us that in previous lives he was: Avalokiteśvara during the Buddha's time, Mañjuśrīmitra in India, Padmasambhava's disciple Drenpa Namkha in eighth-century Tibet, Milarepa of the Kagyu sect, Gyalsé Thogme of the Kadampa sect, Lodrö Gyeltshan of the Ganden sect, and the non-sectarian figure Tangtong Gyalpo. This simple supplication prayer to Shabkar emphasizes to us the possibility of spiritual masters reincarnating across sectarian lines. Thus, if spiritual masters can indeed reincarnate across sectarian lines, the boundaries that separate the different sects in Tibetan Buddhism can no longer be viewed as absolute. Following this line of logic, it would be unwise to overly emphasize sectarian affiliation in the present life because an individual's identity is not bound by the confines of a single life, but rather, encompasses multiple lives.

Finally, the most powerful argument for non-sectarianism in Shabkar's autobiography occurs in the form of a dream-vision. After deciding to compose the *Emanated Scripture of Orgyan* (*O rgyan glegs 'bam*), Shabkar prays to his spiritual forefathers. At dawn, Padmasambhava appears to him in a vision surrounded by a retinue of innumerable buddhas. Padmasambhava reveals to him that he had actually revealed himself to Shabkar numerous times in the past, but in different forms. First, he appeared as Tsongkhapa (Tsong kha pa) on Mahādeva Island to give him teachings on the *Stages of the Path* (*lam rim*). Then, he appeared as Atiśa at Tashi Nyamgaling (bKra shis

<sup>20</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 826.5-6: *sangs rgyas dus su 'phags pa spyan ras gzigsl/ rgya gar yul du 'jam dpal bshes gnyen mchog/ bod yul dbus su dran pa nam mkhar gyurll/ bka' brgyud bstan la mi la ras pa dngosll/ bka' gdams dus su rgyal sras thogs med dpall/ dga' ldan bstan la blo gros rgyal mtshan rjelll/ ris med 'gro ngor thang stong rgyal por sprull/ da lta'i dus 'dir 'gro mgon zhabs dkar ba//* Ricard, trans. 471.

nyam dga' gling) in the mountain retreat by the Machu river to bestow upon Shabkar the empowerment of the *Sixteen Spheres* (*thig le bcu drug gi ting nge 'dzin gyi dbang*) and teachings on the *Collected Sayings of the Kadampas* (*bKa' gdams glegs bam*). This final time, Padmasambhava reveals that he appears in his "true form" (*zhal dngos su bstan*) and bestows upon Shabkar the "teachings in actuality" (*chos dngos su gnang*).<sup>21</sup> Although this could be interpreted as a statement of Padmasambhava's teachings being more ultimate than Tsongkhapa's or Atiśa's, such a reading would not be in accord with Shabkar's general attitude of ecumenism throughout his life and works. Considering this incident from the lens of Shabkar's non-sectarian attitude, it becomes a statement about the validity of all the different tenet systems (*grub mtha'*) in Tibetan Buddhism: all the different sects of Tibetan Buddhism lead back to the teachings of Padmasambhava and by extension to the historical Buddha. This episode represents a powerful statement of non-sectarianism based upon a revelatory vision, which is a valid form of knowledge in traditional Tibetan Buddhist culture.

### Communicating Non-Sectarianism: Oral Sermons, Song-Poems, and Life Narrative

With his argument for the importance of non-sectarianism rooted firmly in Buddhist cosmogony, reincarnation, and revelatory visions, Shabkar expresses his non-sectarian views through a variety of genres: oral sermons, song-poems, and life narrative. Since the majority

<sup>21</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 363.6-365.2: *o rgyan gyi gu ru padma 'byung gnas la* [364] *'khor phyogs bcu'i sangs rgyas dang byang chub sems dpa' bgrangs las 'das pa'i tshogs kyis bskor ba'i zhal gzigs pa'i snang shar/ de dag rnams la dngos su 'byor ba dang yid kyis sprul pa'i mchod pa rgya chen po phul nas rab tu gus pas thal mo sbyar te/ bdag gis chung nas bzung ste dus da bar du gsol ba btabs kyang lha zhal da bar du mi gzigs pa thugs rje re chung zhus pas/ zhal 'dzum pa dang bcas te dgyes bzhin bka' bstal ba/ kye rigs kyi bu nyon cig/ ngas sngon khyod ky'i bstan 'gro'i don chen 'grub pa'i rten 'brel du/ thog mar mtsho snying nas rje rin po che'i rnam par bstan nas rgyud byin gyis brlabs te lam rim gnang/ de'i rjes su rma 'gram ri khrod bkra shis nyams dga' gling na 'dug dus jo bo rje'i rnam par bstan nas/ thugs ka'i sgo phyegs thig le bcu drug gi ting nge 'dzin gyi dbang bskur bka' gdams glegs bam gnang/ da ni zhal dngos su bstan nas chos dngos su gnang ba yin pas dga' bar mdzod cig/ spyir rgyal ba thams cad ye shes ky'i klong du ro gcig cing/ sgos su nged rnam pa gsum thugs rgyud gcig tshul khyod kyis sngar shes pa de ka ltar yin la/ khyad par phyogs bcu'i rgyal ba sras dang bcas pa ma lus [365] *pa rang gi drin can rtsa ba'i bla ma'i rnam 'phrul du go dgos shing/ rtsa ba'i bla ma yang rang gi sems ky'i rnam rol/ sems nyid ky'i ngo bo yang gdod nas stong pa nam mkha' bzhin 'dus ma byas shing lhun gyis grub pa/ brtan g.yo kun la khyab pa/ 'khor 'das ky'i 'char gzhir gyur pa stong gsal chos sku ru ngo shes chos ky'i gting go ba yin gsungs//.**

of Shabkar's original audience consisted of the largely illiterate Tibetan populace, his use of multiple literary modes to convey his message was important in that it allowed for maximum comprehension and receptivity by a large and wide audience. Shabkar's methods for expressing his ideas resonates with the fundamental place of song, verse, oral literature, and story-telling in Tibetan culture, making his chosen media highly efficacious.

### *Oral Sermons*

The second volume of Shabkar's *Life* contains two sermons devoted to the topic of non-sectarianism. The impression gleaned from these two prose sermons is that Shabkar's understanding of non-sectarianism is vast in scope, encompassing religious traditions other than Buddhism. He also holds the slightly more radical view that *all* religions are manifestations of the buddhas. To a mixed group of Bönpos, Buddhists, *Ngakpas*, Chinese, Tibetans, and Mongols, Shabkar says, "Thus, one should know all the tenets of the religions of Buddhism and non-Buddhism—for example, other religions, Bönpos, the Chan Buddhists, the Nyingma, the Kagyus, the Sakya, the Geluks, and so forth—to be the emanations of the buddhas and bodhisattvas."<sup>22</sup> Shabkar uses a variety of sources to support this point of view, quoting from the *Tantra of the Enlightenment of Mahāvairocana*, as well as from the writing of Drukpa Kunlek ('Brug pa kun legs), Gyelbu Lodröpel (rGyal bu Blo gros 'phel), Chenngawa (sPyan nga ba), Lama Zhang, Milarepa, and Götsangpa (rGod tshang ba). In particular, the *Tantra of the Enlightenment of Mahāvairocana* is used to buttress the claim that there were two aspects to the teachings of the Buddha: "the lower vehicle of the heretics, and the supreme vehicle of the buddhas."<sup>23</sup> Thus, for Shabkar, all religions are

<sup>22</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 105.5: 105.5: yang nyin cig ban bon sngags gsum/ rgya bod sogs gsum sogs kyi mi sna mang po 'tshogs pa'i dus shig lal/ 108.2-3: des na phyi rol pa/ bon po/ hwa shang/ rnying ma/ bka' brgyud pa/ sa skya/ dge ldan pa sogs phyi nang gi chos lugs grub mtha' thams cad thub dbang sras bcas kyi rnam 'phrul du shes par byas/.

<sup>23</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 105.6-108.1: 'o bdag bcag gi ston pa thabs mkhas la thugs rje che ba de nyid kyi mkha' mnyam gyi sems can thams cad mngon mtho lha mi'i go 'phang dang/ mthar thug nges legs thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa [106] sangs rgyas kyi go 'phang thob par bya ba'i phyir/ gang 'dul gyi sku'i bkod pa cir yang bstan nas gang 'tshams kyi chos ston pa yin tel' rnam snang mngon byang las/ nga yi bstan pa rnam gnyis tel' dman pa mu stegs theg pa dang/ mchog gyur sangs rgyas theg pa'ol/ zhes gsungs/ sngon sangs rgyas kyi rang gi bstan pa'i che ba 'byin phyir/ rgyal po rkang pa bryad pa'i sras su sku'i skye ba bzhes pa'i tshul bstan nas/ mu stegs pa'i gzhung lugs thams cad gsungs pa yin skad/ des na dad gus dag snang byed pa ma gtogs smad cing spangs mi rung ste/ rnam snang mngon byang las/ mu stegs can la smod mi bya/ mu stegs can la smad gyur nal/ rnam par snang mdzad ring ba'i rgyu/ spyen snga bas/ mu stegs lam gyi gtso bo rnam kyang/ sangs rgyas byang sems kyi

considered to be the enlightened activities of the buddhas. By conceiving of all sects within and outside of Buddhism as ultimately originating from the same source, it compels individuals to respect all sects and religions.

Shabkar does not leave this prose teaching to the abstract realm of ideas and scriptural citation. The very end of his sermon incorporates the concept of non-sectarianism into the context of his own life. Shabkar attempts to convince his audience about the benefits of adopting a non-sectarian attitude by using his own life as exemplar:

In that way, having abandoned all the activities of this life since youth, I wandered happily through directionless kingdoms and through unfixed mountain ranges. At that time, having taken the lowly position of a beggar, I respected all individuals. I went about training with faith, devotion, and pure perception in whatever Buddhist and non-Buddhist tenet systems. Because of this, wherever I went, many beings made offerings, praised, and served me, and I accomplished benefit for myself and others. Thus, you should do as I did, and it will be good.<sup>24</sup>

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*bstan pa yin pas smod par mi bya gsungs/ phyi nang gi chos gang la chags sdang med pa ni/ bstan pa 'dzin pa'i mchog yin tel yum las/ gang dag sangs rgyas kyi chos rnams la rjes su chags pa yang med la/ mu stegs can gyi chos la khong khro ba ma mchis pa de dag gis chos yongs su 'dzin pa'o// gang dag chos thams cad la dbang bsgyur yang/ chos dang chos ma lags pa'i 'du shes la mi spyod pa de dag gis dam pa [107] pa'i chos yongs su 'dzin pa'o// zhes gsungs/ yang ston pa sangs rgyas kyi bon gyi ston pa gshen rab sog su sprul nas bon gyi gzhung phul cher bstan pa yin skad/ 'brug pa kun legs kyi/ gshen lha 'dod dkar spyan ras gzigs dbang yin// gtsang ma'i bon dang chos la khyad par med// gsungs/ rgyal bu blo gros 'phel gyis/ rgya gar nang ba'i blo ngo na/ nga ni mgon po spyan ras gzigs// blo gros 'phel zhes 'bod par byed// bon po gshen lha 'od dkar zhes// da lta lcags 'bar bu ru 'bod// phyi pa dbang phyug chen po zhes// chos kyang de dang mtshungs par smra/ zhes dang/ spyan snga bas/ bon po'ng nang pa'i khyad chos rnams khas lan par 'dug pas nang pa la the bar mngon no gsungs/ zhang g.yu brag 'gro mgon gyis/ 'o skol bon la'ng re chod mi bgyi'o zhes gsungs/ des na bon la'ng dad gus dag snang byed pa ma gtogs khas gtan nas gtong bar mi bya'o// gal te grub mtha' gzhan la smad na mi des bslab tshad tshul 'pho ba yin pas/ nam yang thar pa thob mi srid de/ rje mi la ras pa'i zhal nas/ mkhas btsun thams cad thugs mthun par/ pho [108] rus chags sdang byed pa rnams// bslab tshad chu la 'bob yin// chos la dkar nag med pa la// grub mtha'i kha 'dzin chos la smod// thar pa'i 'ju thog chad pa yin// gsungs sol.*

<sup>24</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 108.6-109.3: *ngas kyang gzhon nu'i dus nas tshe 'di'i bya ba thams cad blos btang nas phyogs med kyi rgyal khams gang bzang dang/ nges med kyi ri [109] khrod nyams dga' rnams 'grims dus/ sprang po bzhin dman sa bzung nas thams cad spyi bor khur/ phyi nang gi grub mtha' gang la'ng dad gus dag snang sbyongs bzhin song bas/ gang du song kyang de dag thams cad kyi nga la yang mchod bstod bkur nas rang gzhan gyi don thams cad 'grub pa byung/ des na khyed rnams kyi kyang de bzhin gyis dang bzang gi zhes bshad pas/.*

The disciples seem convinced, and in reply to Shabkar's teachings, they say, "It is wondrous that even toward Buddhist and non-Buddhist tenet systems you have no sectarian bias. We pray that it will turn out like this for us also."<sup>25</sup> By situating non-sectarian ideals in the context of a life lived, Shabkar demonstrates how a potentially abstract idea can become a lived reality.

The second non-sectarian sermon occurs when Shabkar gives advice in response to a request from Lama Zhenpen Özer (gZhan phan 'od zer) of Tsakho (Tsha kho), whom Shabkar describes as an individual without sectarian bias (*chos la phyogs ris med pa*). Shabkar proceeds to give a general history of Buddhism in India and Tibet, focusing on how the teachings of a single teacher split into many different sects. Shabkar emphasizes, "All of these branches of approximately eighteen different tenet systems proliferated from the teachings of the Buddha as does two butter lamp flames splitting from a single one."<sup>26</sup> Emphasizing the fact that all the different tenet systems originated from a single teacher – the Buddha – Shabkar encourages people to "not have even a hair's worth of wrong views, doubts, jealousy, competitiveness, but rather, to have faith, devotion, and pure perception towards them all."<sup>27</sup> The central tenor of this sermon is very similar to the previous one in that all the different sects of Buddhism are traced to a single source – the Buddha himself. However, it differs from the previous sermon in that it focuses exclusively on Buddhism. It is notable that after saying this sermon in prose, Shabkar repeats it in verse form. This song-poem begins as follows: "I supplicate to the spiritual friends/ Who do not adopt sectarian attitudes towards the Dharma sects old and new./ Please bless in order to pacify the attachment to friend and enemy/ Regarding all the tenet systems that spread in Tibet."<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 109.3-4: *de kun gyis khyed phyi nang gi grub mtha' gang la'ng phyogs ris med pa ngo mtshar chel nged rnams kyis kyang de ltar yongs pa'i smon lam 'debs zhes.*

<sup>26</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 412.5-6: *grub mtha' mi 'dra ba bco brgyad tsam zhig gyes pa 'di thams cad/ sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa las mar me gcig las gnyis mched pas/.*

<sup>27</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 412.6-413.1: *phan bde'i 'byung gnas sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa rin po che sgo sna tshogs nas phyogs dus gnas skabs kun tu dar zhing rgyas par byung ba la/ log lta the [413] tshom phrag dog 'gran sems sogs spu tsam yang mi byed par thams cad la dad gus dag snang sbyangs nas/.*

<sup>28</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 413.2-3: *gsar rnying chos la phyogs ris ma mchis pa'i// dge ba'i bshes gnyen rnams la gsol ba 'debs// bod du dar ba'i grub mtha' thams cad kyi// nye ring chags sdang zhi bar byin gyis rlobs//.*

### A Song-Poem

One of Shabkar's clearest articulations of his non-sectarian views in his *Life* occurs in one of his song-poems. In response to a request for advice from a group of disciples and patrons from Shartsang (Shartshang), Shabkar sings the following song that promotes a non-sectarian approach to Buddhism:

[I] pay homage to the Lord of the Teachings—the Teacher-Buddha,  
And to the holder of the teachings—the scholar-siddhas of India and Tibet.  
Please grant your blessings so that the essence of the teachings—  
Madhyamaka, Dzokchen, and Mahāmudrā—spreads and increases.

Dzokchen, where *saṃsāra* [and] *nirvāṇa* are perfected in the mind,  
Mahāmudrā, that is free from abandoning and adopting existence and liberation,  
Madhyamaka, that is free from the eight extremes of conceptual elaborations –  
These three views have been famous in Tibet since before.

It is said that the heart son of Milarepa, Rechung Dorjedrak  
Did not have sectarian bias [towards] the view of Dzokchen,  
Did not negate nor prove the views of Mahāmudrā,  
And did not identify the view of great Madhyamaka.<sup>29</sup>

It is said that the Dharma Lord Tsangwa Gyará (gTsang ba rgya ras)  
Bathed in the assurance of the view of Dzokchen,  
Saw the essence of the view of Mahāmudrā,  
And slept within the view of great Madhyamaka.

It is said that the great *paṇḍita* Losang Chögyan (Blo bzang chos rgyan)  
Was a *yogin* with knowledge and experience

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<sup>29</sup> This stanza is getting at the idea that the enlightened experience cannot and should not be described in words. As soon as one can “identify” or “establish” (*ngos bzung*) it, it is evidence that one has not truly realized it. I would like to express my gratitude to V. Lama Tashi Dondup for providing this illuminating view on this poem.

In all views such as Madhyamaka, Dzokchen, Mahāmudrā—  
the three.

If he analyzed them, his thoughts would fall into one.

Thus, I trained in pure perception and practiced whatever I  
could of

Madhyamaka, Dzokchen, and Mahāmudrā.

May subsequent generations also train in pure perception

And from practicing whichever attain buddhahood!<sup>30</sup>

In this song, Shabkar suggests that different tenet systems – Madhyamaka, Dzokchen, and Mahāmudrā – lead to the same truth.<sup>31</sup> For this reason, individuals should practice pure perception towards all sects and can practice whichever tenet system of Buddhism that they feel the most affinity towards. This idea draws from the earlier idea of all the different tenet systems originating from the single flame of the Buddha himself.

### Life Narrative: Conveying a Non-Sectarian Life

The primary medium through which Shabkar conveys non-sectarianism in his *Life* is through his own life story. In this way, the

<sup>30</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 2, 236.3-237.3: *bstan pa'i bdag po ston pa sangs rgyas dang// bstan 'dzin rgya bod mkhas grub yongs la 'dus// bstan pa'i snying po dbu rdzogs phyag gsum gyi// bstan pa dar zhiing rgyas par byin gyis rlobs// 'khor 'das sems su rdzogs pa'i rdzogs chen dang// srid zhi'i spang blang bral ba'i phyag chen dang// spros pa'i mtha' brgyad bral ba'i dbu ma stel// lta ba 'di gsum sngon nas bod 'dir grags// mi la'i thugs sras ras chung rdor grags kyis// rdzogs pa chen po'i lta ba phyogs ris med// phyag rgya chen po'i lta ba dgag sgrub med// dbu ma chen mo'i lta ba ngos bzung med// zhes gsungs chos rje gtsang pa rgya ras kyis// rdzogs pa chen po'i lta [237] ba'i phu thag khrus// phyag rgya chen po'i lta ba'i ngo bo mthong// dbu ma chen mo'i lta ba'i ngang du nyal// zhes gsungs pan chen blo bzang chos rgyan gyis// dbu rdzogs phyag gsum la sogs lta ba kun// mkhas pa nyams myong can gyi rnal 'byor pas// dpyad na dgongs pa gcig tu 'bab ces gsungs// de phyir bdag gis dbu rdzogs phyag gsum chos// dag snang sbyongs bzhin gang nus nyams su blangs// phyi rabs rnam kyang dag snang sbyongs bzhin du// gang la'ng nyams len byas nas 'tshang rgya shog.*

<sup>31</sup> I would like to thank Professor Kurtis Schaeffer for pointing out how the ideas in this song echo the “Aspiration for Mahāmudra, the True Meaning” by the Third Karmapa Rangchung Dorjé (1284-1339). This translation is quoted from the translation by Erik Pema Kunsang, 13-14: “Being free from mental fabrication, it is Mahāmudra./ Devoid of extremes, it is the Great Middle Way./ It is also called Dzokchen, the embodiment of all./ May we attain the confidence of realizing all by knowing one nature.” This is the original Tibetan text: “*yid byed bral ba 'di ni phyag rgya che/ mtha' dang bral ba dbu ma chen po yin/ 'di ni kun 'dus rdzogs chen zhes kyang bya/ gcig shes kun don rtogs pa'i gdengs thob shog.*” Khra 'gu rin po che, Khra 'gu bkra shis, 2008.

reader comes to understand how non-sectarian views might play out in an actual life lived. Although Shabkar sought spiritual connections with spiritual masters from a variety of sects by requesting empowerments, transmissions, and teachings, his main meditative training was mainly in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions. Significantly though, he received his monastic vows from a renowned Gelukpa master, and intensely studied many texts associated with the Gelukpa sect. It is also clear that in his teaching and compositions, Shabkar demonstrates an uncanny familiarity with the tenet systems of a variety of Tibetan Buddhist sects. The following section will highlight the major events in Shabkar's non-sectarian spiritual journey as conveyed through the life narrative of his autobiography.

Shabkar's early religious training was predominantly Nyingma, but he also developed close connections with prominent Geluk spiritual masters. He spent much of his childhood with the *ngakpa* community of Zhopong (Zho 'ong la kha) in the Rebgong valley of Amdo. In particular, three Nyingma teachers who taught in the Rebgong area were particularly influential in Shabkar's early spiritual training: Jampel Dorjé Rinpoché ('Jam dpal rdo rje rin po che), Jamyang Gyatso Rinpoché ('Jam dbyangs rgya mtsho rin po che) and Gyel Khenchen Rinpoché.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, Shabkar received monastic ordination from a renowned Geluk master, Arik Geshé (A rig dge bshes 'Jam dpal dge legs rgyal mtshan), who ordained him alongside Kuzhog Lhaka Trulku (sKu gzhogs Lha ka sprul sku).<sup>33</sup>

Shabkar completed his main spiritual training under the Dharma King of Urgeh, Ngagki Wangpo (Ngag gi dbang po). Despite that the Dharma King was the lineage holder of *Hayagrīva and Vārāhi: the Wish-fulfilling Jewel* (*rta phag yid bzhin nor bu*) revealed by Kunzang Dechen Gyelpo (Kun bzang bde chen rgyal po) of the Nyingma tradition, he exhibited a remarkably non-sectarian approach to Buddhist learning. Before bestowing upon Shabkar the main practice of *Hayagrīva and Vārāhi: the Wish-fulfilling Jewel*, the Dharma King instructs Shabkar to practice mind training (*blo shyong*) using

<sup>32</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 36.6, 39.2, 55.3. Ricard, trans., 20-21.

<sup>33</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 56.5-57.2: *de nas lcags mo bya'i lo snron zla'i dkar phyogs kyi tshes bryad kyi nyin snga dro'i cha la/ shing rta'i srol 'byed 'phags mchog klu sgrub kyi sprul pa/ mkhas btsun bzang gsum gyi yon tan kun dang ldan pa'i gnas brtan 'dul ba 'dzin pa chen po a rig dge bshes rin po che mtshan brjod par dka' ba byams pa dge legs rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i zhal snga nas kyi mkhan po dang/ bstan pa'i gsal byed dam pa rgyal mkhan chen dge [57] 'dun bstan pa'i nyi ma rin po ches gsang ston mdzad del dge 'dun grangs tshang ba'i dbus su/ la kha sprul sku rin po che la sogs pa'i rab byung bsnyen rdzogs pa mang po dang lhan du/ bstan pa'i go rim bzhin rab byung dge tshul bsnyen rdzogs kyi sdom pa yang dag par nom/ ming la byams pa chos dar du btags/ mkhan po'i zhal nas/ bstan 'gro la phan thogs chen po yong gsung thugs dgyes par mdzad do/. Ricard, trans. 33.*



Tsongkhapa's *Stages of the Path* (*Lam rim chen mo*), a text associated with the Gelukpa sect.<sup>34</sup> Shabkar engages in diligent study and contemplation of this text for three months before he is given his first empowerment, transmission, and instructions. In addition to studying under the Dharma King, Shabkar also receives empowerments, transmissions, and instructions from visiting lamas of different sectarian affiliations such as from the Chö (*gcod*) practitioner Könchok Chöpel (dKon mchog chos 'phel) and the third Jamyang Zhépa incarnation of Labrang monastery, one of the six great Geluk monasteries of greater Tibet.<sup>35</sup> In his description of his main spiritual teacher, Shabkar writes that the Dharma King filled him with all the teachings that he had – Nyingma and Sarma.<sup>36</sup>

After this initial period of study under the Dharma King, Shabkar is sent off to Tsézhung (rTse gzhung) hermitage to meditate. This hermitage was where the great Kagyu meditator Karma Tsewang Rigdzin (Karma Tshe dbang rig 'dzin) once practiced,<sup>37</sup> another indication of the Dharma King's non-sectarian attitudes. Within a three-year period, Shabkar manages to complete the preliminary practices in addition to the advanced practices of Trekchö (*khregs chod*) and Thögal (*thod rgal*) of the Nyingma Dzokchen tradition.<sup>38</sup> He spends

<sup>34</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 70.5-71.1: *phyi nyin nyi dros tsam la rje bdag nyid chen po'i legs bshad sa gsum gyi sgron me lta bu'i byang chub lam rim chen mo mchan bu gsum can gyi glegs bam zhig gsos dpon bzang po la 'khyer du bcug nas byong/ khyod kyis chos zhig dran nas 'ong ba la nga dga' ba yin/ nges 'byung sad sud re tsam skyes nas chos byas rung rjes nas blo 'gyur ldog che/ da khyod [71] kyis byang chub lam gyi rim pa 'di la blo sbyong ba 'di gal che/*. Ricard, trans., 43.

<sup>35</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 75.5-76.1: *de'i skabs su gcod yul ba chen po dkon mchog chos 'phel gyi mdun nas/ gcod nam mkha' sgo 'byed kyi dbang dang/ khros nag lha lnga'i dbang/ gcod gdan thog gcig ma sogs gcod kyi lung mang po dang/ stag tshang phur pa'i chos tshan las rdor sems rigs lnga rgyan gcig la brten pa'i gtum mo dang/ thabs lam bde stong gi [76] khrid bcas thob/*. Ricard, trans., 46.

<sup>36</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 75.5: *khong gi thugs kyi sras dam par dgongs nas/ gsar rnying gi gdams pa gang yod bum pa gang byo'i tshul du gnang ba rnam lhag lus med par thob pa byung/*. Ricard, trans., 46.

<sup>37</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 79.2: *nyin gcig bka' drin mtshungs med chos rgyal rin po che'i zhal nas/ da khyod kyis sgrub pa byed pa la/ sngon grub thob karma' tshe dbang rig 'dzin zhes bya ba gnam gyi thog babs pa 'thu ba'i nang du len pa sogs grub rtags mang po bstan nas/*. Ricard, trans., 49.

<sup>38</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 81.5-82.5: *bde ba'i stan la lus rnam snang chos bdun byas/ sems rnal du phab/ dge sems khyad par can gyi ngang nas thog mar skyabs 'gro dang/ sems bskyed/ yig brgya/ maNDal/ bla ma'i rnal 'byor/ phyag 'bum rnam sngon du btang nas/ tshogs rdzogs sgrub pa dag pa'i rtags ci rigs pa rmi lam du byung/ dngos gzhi byang chub lam gyi rim pa'i lus yongs su rdzogs pa [82] la 'bad pa chen pos yang yang sbyangs pas nges 'byung dang byang chub kyi sems yang dag pa'i lta ba'i gzhi zin ba byung/ de nas rta phag yid bzhin nor bu'i bskyed rim bsgoms/ sngags kyi bsnyen ba grangs tshad las lhag btang bas/ tha mal gyi snang zhen dag/ gang snang lha skur shar/ gter srung 'khor ba'i rtags mtshan sna tshogs pa byung/de nas rdzogs rim rtsa thig rlung gsum gyi nyams len la sbyangs pas gtum mo'i bde drod 'bar/ ras rkyang*

the next few years in meditative retreat in various hermitages in the Amdo region, such as Tigress Fortress (sTag mo rdzong), Géto (Ge tho), and Lhanyan Götsé (Lha gnyan rgod rtse). Around the year 1806, Shabkar leaves the Dharma King due to jealous members of his teacher's entourage,<sup>39</sup> and spends most of his time in solitary retreat, practicing the teachings that he had received from his root lama. While in retreat on Mahādeva Island in Lake Kokonor in Amdo, Shabkar received transmissions of texts of the Kadampa and Geluk traditions from Tendzin Nyima Rinpoché (bsTan 'dzin nyi ma rin po che).<sup>40</sup> From Kukyé Rinpoché (sKu skyes rin po che) and Champa Daö Rinpoché (Byams pa Zla 'od rin po che), he received transmissions of Tsongkhapa's *Stages of the Path*.<sup>41</sup>

Around the year 1810, Shabkar was devastated by news of the death of his mother, and decided to embark on a lengthy pilgrimage to central Tibet. He would also end up travelling to western Tibet and Nepal, and the trip would last a total of eighteen years. In central Tibet, Shabkar received transmissions of various classic Geluk texts from important figures such as the Seventh Panchen Lama, the Ganden throne holder (Ngag dbang snyan grags rin po che), Demo Rinpoché, Tsechokling Yongdzin Paṇḍita Kachen Yeshé Gyaltzen (Tshe mchog gling Yongs 'dzin paṇḍita bka' chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan), Trichen Lozang Tenpa Rabgyé (Khri chen Blo bzang bstan

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*thub pa byung/ rlung sems dbu mar zhugs dbu ma'i rtsa mdud grol nas/ bde stong gi nyams rgyun chad med pa byung/ khyad par rdzogs chen gyi thun mongs ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro la zla ba mang por sbyangs/ khregs chod thod rgal kho na la lo gsum tsam sbyangs pas khregs chod kyi gnas lugs rtogs/ thod rgal gyi nyams snang sna tshogs pa shar pa'i tshel nyin gcig chos rgyal rin po che'i zhabs drung du song nas/ nyams len byas tshul dang nyams snang 'char tshul rnams rim pa bzhin du zhus pas/ khong gi thugs rab tu dgyes pas zhal ras bco lnga'i bzla ba lta bu de bstan nas/. Ricard, trans., 50.*

<sup>39</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 151.4-.5: *blon po 'ga' res ngas ri khrod la phebs zhus pa yin snyam/ nga la khyed kyis dpon tshang rin po che ri khrod la phebs zhes ma zhu/ khong tsho snying mi rje'm zer/ ngas sngar de 'dra gtan nas ma zhus byas rung khong tsho yid ma ches par da dung khyod la gsal mod zer/ der nga'i sems la dang yun ring bsdad na mi bzang bar 'dug snyam pa byung/*. Ricard, trans., 95.

<sup>40</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 191.5-.192.1: *sku mdun nas bka' gdams pha chos bu chos dang rje rin po che'i gsung gi gsang 'dus rim lnga gdan rdzogs/ rim lnga gsal sgron/ yig chung nyer gcig/ paN chen blo bzang chos rgyan dang/ lchang skya rin po che'i gsung gi snyung gnas cho ga'i lung bcas thob pa'i bka' [192] drin can gyi bla mar gyur tol*. Ricard, trans., 115.

<sup>41</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 207.1-.2: *de nas ston mjug rgyud pa sku skyes rin po che la nged mtshams pa kha shas kyis zhus nas/ rje rin po che'i gsung gi lam rim chen mo'i bshad lung zhiq gnang/*; 216.2-.3: *de'i lo mkhan chen dge ba'i bshes gnyen byams pa dge legs rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i thugs sras lung rtogs yon tan du mas thugs rgyud yongs su gtams pa'i snyigs dus 'gro mgon mtshungs med byam pa zla 'od rin po che mtsho snying du phebs pa'i drung nas lam rim 'jam dpal zhal lung gi lung gnang ba'i mjug tu/*. Ricard, trans., 123, 129.

pa rab rgyas), and Tri Changchub Chöpel (Khri Byang chub chos 'phel).<sup>42</sup> In southwestern Tibet, he received empowerments and transmissions from Chuwar Rinpoché (Chu dbar mkhan rin po che Yon tan lhun grub).<sup>43</sup> He also developed a close relationship with the Seventh Panchen Lama, and met with the Ninth and Tenth Dalai Lamas.<sup>44</sup> During his travels in central, southern, and western Tibet, he received teachings from prominent Nyingma masters such as

<sup>42</sup> Seventh Panchen Lama: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 390.4: *de nas sangs rgyas snang ba mtha' yas ngur smrig 'chang ba'i tshul 'dzin skyabs mgon paN chen rin po che la/ dngul srang bcu g.yang te'u phreng ba byi ru'i rgyan can zhig dang/ rta gcig kha btags nan mdzod gcig dang bcas te skyabs 'jug gi zhu zhog 'di phul lo/*. 393.1: *zhes phul bas thugs brtse ba chen pos 'byol lan gsung shog bsrung mdud byin rlabs le'u tshan bcas bstsal/ de'i lo rjes mar lha sa ru phebs nas bla brang steng na bzhugs dus mkhan po zhi ba tshe ring gis tshe dbang zhig zhu ba dang mnyam du song nas mjal tshe dbang kyang thob pa byung/*. 790.6: *de nas nyin gcig skyabs mgon paN chen rin po ches bdag mdun du bos nas/ khyod kyis sngar yang bstan 'gro'i bde thabs su dmigs nas/ mchod rten chen po bya rung kha shor la nyams gso zhabs tog byas pa shin tu legs/ [791] da res yang sngon grub thob thang stong rgyal pos stod hor sogs mtha' dmag gi kha gnon dang/ bod kyi bstan 'gro'i bde thabs su dmigs nas gcung gi ri bo cher mchod rten bkra shis sgo mang bzhengs pa yang dus dbang gis chos 'khor bcu gsum me yis nyams song ba/ slar khyed kyi lhag bsam dag pas nyams gso zhig gyis zhes bka' phebs pa bdag gis kyang dang du blangs nas phyag 'tshal skyabs 'jug zhus pa/*. 801.1: *de nas slar bkra shis lhun por song skyabs mgon paN chen thams [802] mkhyen pa mchog mjal/*. Ricard, trans. 226-228, 456, 461.

Ganden throne holder: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 393.3: *de nas dga' ldan gser khri ngag dbang snyan grags rin po cher mdzo gcig dngul srang lnga rin chen phreng ba gcig/ dri med pa'i lha rdzas bcas phul nas mjal chos 'brel dgos tshul gyi zho shog 'di phul lo/*. Ricard, trans. 228.

Demo Rinpoche: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 397.4: *de nas bod kyi rgyal po de mo rin po cher mjal/ rta gcig dang dngul srang lnga lha rdzas bcas phul/ na' ro chos drug yid ches gsum ldan gyi lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans. 230.

Tsechokling Yongdzin Pandita: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 397.5: *yongs 'dzin paNDita'i yang sprul mchog la mjal/ dngul srang gsum lha rdzas bcas phul/ skabs gsum pa dang tsong kha brgyad cu'i lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans. 230.

Trichen Lozang Tenpa Rabye: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 397.6: *rwa sgrengh khri chen rdo rje 'chang la mjal/ mdzo gcig dang dngul srang kha shas phul/ blo sbyong don bdun ma'i lung khrid zhus/*. Ricard, trans. 230, 239 n.36.

Tri Changchub Chopel: Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 397.6: *khri byang chub chos 'phel rin po cher mjal/ dngul srang kha shas [398] g.yu byu ru gos chen gcig bcas phul. mdun nas bde mchog dril bu lha lha'i dbang dang/ bla ma mchod pa dang lam rim bsdud don gnyis kyi lung khrid rgyas par thob/*. Ricard, trans. 230.

<sup>43</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 753.6-754.1: *der bzhugs pa'i sa thob kyi byang chub sems dpa' yongs 'dzin paNDita'i thugs sras chu dbar rin po che yon tan lhun grub la mjal/ mdun nas blo sbyong bdud rtsi snying po'i khrid/ [754] gcod nam mkha' sgo 'byed dang/ thig le bcu drug gi dbang/ dge ldan phyag chen gyi lung rnam zhang po bcvo lnga'i bar du zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 434.

<sup>44</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 388.2: *de nas 'phags pa spyen ras gzigs dbang phyug ngur smig gar gyis rnam rol rgyal ba lung rtogs rgya mtsho'i gser zhal nam tshod mjal chog ces/*. Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 805.5: *de nas nyin gcig skyabs dgon rgyal ba rtshul khirms rgya mtsho'i gser zhal mjal du phyin/*

Dungwa Rinpoché (gDung ba rin po che) of Mindröling (sMin grol gling),<sup>45</sup> the Great Awareness Holder (*rig 'dzin chen po*) of Dorjé Drak (rDo rje brag), and Orgyen Tendzin Rinpoché (O rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po che) of Rina (Ri sna) monastery.<sup>46</sup>

It was during this extended eighteen-year pilgrimage that Shabkar would engage intensively with the Kagyu meditative tradition. His involvement with the Kagyu lineage had begun informally early in his life, with Lama Orgyen Trinlé Namgyel of lower Tashikhyil advising him to look to Milarepa as spiritual exemplar at the age of twelve or thirteen.<sup>47</sup> While in his teens, he also requests the transmission for Milarepa's *Life* and Collected Songs from the retreatant Jamyang Adzi ('Jam dbyangs a rdzi) residing in the mountains behind Tsang (gTsang) monastery.<sup>48</sup> Shabkar's more formal involvement with the Kagyu lineage begins around the year 1811 while in central Tibet. When the Fourteenth Karmapa Thekchok Dorjé (Theg mchog rdo rje, 1798-1868) visited Lhasa, Shabkar made offerings to him and requested the transmission for the meditation and recitation of Avalokiteśvara (*thugs rje chen po'i bsgom bzlas*).<sup>49</sup> He also requested the transmission of the Mahāmudrā prayer (*phyag chen gsol 'debs*) from the Eighth Pawo Tsuklak incarnation (dPa' bo rin po che gTsug lag Chos kyi rgya mtsho, 1785-1840)<sup>50</sup> of the Kamtsang Kagyu (Kam tshang) lineage. These two events mark Shabkar's first formal spiritual connection to the Kamtsang sub-sect of the Kagyu lineage.

After visiting central Tibet, Shabkar goes on pilgrimage to Tsari (Tsa ri). Then, he proceeds to establish spiritual links with the Drukpa ('Brug pa) sub-sect of the Kagyu lineage. He receives empowerments from Drukpa Rinpoché, the throne holder at Sanggak

<sup>45</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 398.1-2: *smin grol gling bdung ba rin po cher mjal/ gter chen gong ma'i 'khrungs rabs rnam thar gsol 'debs kyi lung zhus/ rdo rje brag rig 'dzin chen por mjal/ phyag rten phul/ bsam pa lhun grub ma dang bar chad lam sel gyi lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 230.

<sup>46</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 398.3: *ri sna dgon gyi gter ston bde chen rgyal po'i yang sprul o rgyan bstan 'dzin rin po cher mjal rta gos dngul bcas phul/ stag tshang phur ba'i dbang dang gter gсар chos skor gyi lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 230-231.

<sup>47</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 36.5: *chos ji ltar byas na legs zhus pas/ chos rnam dag cig byed na rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam thar la ltos/ khong gi rjes su kha mig yar lta gyis la chos sgrubs dang bzang gsung/*. Ricard, trans., 19-20.

<sup>48</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 114.5-6: *de nas rgyab ri'i ri khrod pa 'jam dbyangs a rdzi'i tshang gi mdun du song mjal nas zhag kha shas bsdad/ rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam mgur dang/ rje skal ldan rgya mtsho'i mgur 'bum/ rgyal sras lag len/ ang yig bdun cu rnam kyi lung zhus pas/ thugs dgyes bzhin gnang/*. Ricard, trans., 71.

<sup>49</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 398.3: *rgyal dbang karma pa lha ldan tu phebs pa dang mjal phyag rten phul thugs rje chen po'i bsgom bzlas kyi lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 231.

<sup>50</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 398.4-5: *las slob dpa bo rin po che'i sprul skur mjal phyag rten phul/ phyag chen gsol 'deb kyi lung zhus/*

Chöling (gSang sngags chos gling),<sup>51</sup> the Vajra Holder (*rdor 'dzin*)<sup>52</sup> of Chikchar, and the great siddha Damchö Zangpo (Grub chen Dam chos bzang po).<sup>53</sup> He also sings spiritual songs to the thirteen great meditative adepts (*grub chen*) at the meditative retreat center (*sgrub sde*) of Chikchar. It was during this period that Shabkar composed the *Dharma Discourse called the Beneficial Moon* (*chos bshad gzhan phan zla ba*) that was “adorned with the sayings of past Kagyu masters.”<sup>54</sup>

Following Chikchar, Shabkar would proceed to Dakla Gampo (Dwags la sgam po), the holy place of the great Kagyu and Kadampa master Gampopa. There, he visited and made offerings in the various chapels of the monastery and spent four months in retreat in the hermitage used by Dakpo Tashi Namgyel (Dwags po bKra shis rnam rgyal, 1513-87), the throne holder, descendent, and incarnation of Gampopa.<sup>55</sup> There, Shabkar would practice *Clear Light Mahāmudrā* (*'od gsal phyag rgya chen po*). Regarding his meditative experiences, he writes, “The spiritual realization of emptiness and bliss is ineffable.”<sup>56</sup> Shabkar also receives transmissions and instructions for a series of key Kagyu practices at this site from Tendzin Chöwang Rinpoché (bsTan 'dzin chos dbang rin po che), Lama Tsöndrü Chöbar (brTson 'grus chos 'bar), Tripa Rinpoché (Khri pa rin po che), and the hermit Damchö (Dam chos). After Dakla Gampo, Shabkar visits and makes offerings at Dakpo Shédруп Ling (Dwags po bshad sgrub gling), the seat of the Fifth Shamar (*zha dmar*) incarnation (1525-83) and the place where the Eighth Karmapa Mikyö Dorjé (Mi skyod rdo rje) passed away in 1554.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>51</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 422.3-4: *nged dpon slob rnams 'brug pa rin po che'i gdan sa byar gsang sngags chos gling du tshur 'ongl/ skyabs mgon 'brug pa thams cad mkhyen par mjal/ tshe rta zung 'brel gyi rjes gnang dang phyag chen gyi sngon 'gro dngos gzhi cha tshang ba'i lung khrid zhus/ zla ba gcig tsam la ngal gsos nas bsdad/* Ricard, trans., 246.

<sup>52</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 427.5-6: *skabs shig gnas der gcig char rdor 'dzin rnga sgra sprul sku rin po che'i drung nas kun mkhyen padma dkar po'i rnam thar dang mgur 'bum gyi lung zhus/* Ricard, trans. 249.

<sup>53</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 427.6: *gzhan yang grub chen dam chos bzang po la/ na' ro chos drug dang 'khrul 'khor bsre ba brgya bryad pa'i khrid zhus/* Ricard, trans., 249.

<sup>54</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 428.3-4: *da lta'i rjes 'jug rnams dang ma 'ongs pa'i ri khrod pa rnams la phan thogs pa'i chos bshad rgyas pa zhiig rtsom dgos zhes bskul ngor/ bka' bryud gong ma'i lung gis bryan te chos bshad gzhan phan zla ba zhes bya ba brtsams/* Ricard, trans., 249.

<sup>55</sup> Ricard, trans. 271 n. 41.

<sup>56</sup> Zhabs dkar, snyigs dus (2003), vol. 1, 454.5-6: *der sdod pa'i ring la/ bdag gis kyang bka' bryud kyi bla ma gong ma rnams la gsol ba 'debs bzhiin/ thabs lam gtum mo dang 'od gsal phyag rgya chen po gnyis la nyams len byas pas bde stong gi rtogs pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa byungl/* Ricard, trans., 263.

<sup>57</sup> Ricard, 271 n. 50.

In the year 1814, Shabkar arrives at Mount Kailash and begins a meditative retreat in a cave below the famed Cave of Miracles (rDzu 'phrul phug) where Milarepa once practiced.<sup>58</sup> He also visits key sites in Milarepa's *Life*, such as his birthplace, where he died, and many of the sites where he once meditated.<sup>59</sup> An incident that seems to suggest that Shabkar is the true reincarnation of Milarepa occurs when he finds the true and hidden entrance of the Cave of Subjugation of Mara (bDud 'dul phug) at Lapchi.<sup>60</sup> During this period, Shabkar also received transmissions of Kagyu teachings from Jetsun Sangyé Dorjé (rJe btsun Sangs rgya rdo rje),<sup>61</sup> Khenpo Kelzang Khédrup Rinpoché (mKhan po sKal bzang mkhas grub rin po che, the abbot of Pelgyéling ('Phel rgyas gling) monastery at the Belly Cave of Nyanang),<sup>62</sup> and Serpuk Lama Rinpoché (gSer phug bla ma rin po che).<sup>63</sup>

While on pilgrimage to Lapchi, Shabkar enhances his spiritual connections to the Drigung Kagyu when he restores a temple complex associated with the Drigung establishment that had fallen into disrepair. Shabkar writes to the Drigung hierarchs about this, and they express their great pleasure with regards to Shabkar's contribution.<sup>64</sup> In the "setting of scene" (*gleng gzhi*) of his *Life*, Shabkar in-

<sup>58</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 469.5-6: *gangs dkar gyi rgyal po ti se rdzu 'phrul phug gi zhabs rjes dkar mo'i 'og gi sgrub phug tu song stel*. Ricard, trans., 277.

<sup>59</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 622.3-4: *de nas rje mi la'i sgrub gnas 'od gsal phug/ rkang tshugs phug/ 'khrungs yul skya rnga rtswa'i khang pa ka bzhi gdung brgyad shul gyi mchod rten rnams la mjal/ zhing 'or ma gru gsum dang spre pe stan chung la bltas/*; 678.6-679.1: *de nas rje mi la'i grub gnas ri bo dpal 'bar la song/*; 685.2: *rje mi la'i gdan sa bdud 'dul phug mo che ru/ sgrub pa zhiig brgyab nas shin 'gyod pa rang mi snang snyam/*; 753.2-3: *rje mi la'i sgrub gnas brag dmar mchod lung dang/ spo mtho nam mkha' rdzong/ skyid phug nyi ma rdzong rnams la gnas 'brel bzhag/*; 753.5-6: *chu bar dgon du song/ rje btsun rin po che'i sku pur thal las bzhengs pa'i rje btsun mthong ba don ldan la mjal mchod 'bul rgya chen po byas/*. Ricard, trans., 359, 389, 396, 398, 434.

<sup>60</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 690.4-6: *de nas bdud 'dul phug gi rje btsun mi la'i sgrub phug ngo ma de la mjal du 'gro ba'i lam sgo'i mchod khang gi rgyab cig na gog nas 'gro dgos sa zhiig 'dug pas/ bdag gi bsam pa la/ sngon rje mi la' bzhugs dus 'di ma yin pa'i 'gro sa'i sgo stabs bde mo zhiig yod dgos snyam btsal bas sgrub phug gi thad ka'i mdo nas sgo rnyed de sa ro rdo ro rnams bsal ba'i shul nas/ sngon rjes mi la'i thab bzung shul gyi thab rdo rnams mthong bas/ der 'tshogs pa kun dad gus cher 'phel zhiig gnas sgo gsar du phyas song zhes snyan pa sgrog pa'ng byung/*. Ricard, trans., 398.

<sup>61</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 526.4-5: *tsho mtshams pa rje btsun sangs rgyas rdo rje gnas der phebs pa'i drung nas lho brag mar pa'i snyan brgyud kyi gdams pa lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos bskor rnams kyi lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 308.

<sup>62</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 686.4: *drung nas bla ma lnga bcu pa la sogs pa'i chos 'brel zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 396.

<sup>63</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 546.3: *gser phug bla ma rin po cher mjal/ rgyal ba 'bri khung ba'i lnga ldan khrid kyi sngon 'gro'i lung zhus/*. Ricard, trans., 317.

<sup>64</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 696.3-6: *de nas gnas kyi sku gsung thugs rten yod pa'i lha khang rnams zhiig ral 'thor gsum la song/ la phyi'i grwa pa rnams kyi*

forms us that this event was actually predicted by the Fourth Karmapa Rolpé Dorjé (Rol pa'i rdo rje, 1340-1383) who prophesied, "Lord Laughing Vajra [i.e. Milarepa]/ Will flicker in the eastern region of Dokham (mDo khams)./ At Lapchi snow range,/ he will make good restorations."<sup>65</sup> Clearly, Shabkar's link to the Kagyu sect is significant, and he was conscious of highlighting this connection in addition to expressing his devotion to all other sects in his *Life*.

In addition to the teachings of the Nyingma, Geluk, and Kagyu sects, Shabkar received empowerments, transmissions, and teachings from masters of the Sakya sect and actively sought spiritual connections to the Jonang and Zhijé traditions as well. From the throne holders at Sakya monastery, Shabkar received empowerments for longevity (*tshe dbang*), Vajrakīlaya (Phur pa) and the Wrathful Guru (Gur drag).<sup>66</sup> Shabkar's *Life* does not document any instances of Shabkar receiving direct transmissions from Jonangpa masters, but records that he visited the throne of Tāranātha and ordered for the printing of his collected works.<sup>67</sup> To develop a connection to the Zhijé lineage, Shabkar visited the place where Padampa Sangyé (Pha Dam pa sangs rgyas) once meditated. At the sacred location, he read the master's four volumes of oral instructions on Pacification and tells

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*kyang tshugs ma thub par 'thor la khad yod pa la bltas pas sems kyis ma bzod par bstan 'gro la phan pa'i lhaq bsam gyi kun nas bslangs te/ phu yi gangs 'dabs la mgron khang/ mdo yi chu chan la zam pa/ bar gyi lha khang rnams la nyams gso byas/ chos grwa'i thang dkyil nas 'du khang phug mitha' la lcags ri brgyab ba'i nang du grwa shags mang po gsar rgyas byas/ 'du khang steng du gser gyi gnyujir dang/ nang du mchod rdzas bzhag pa thams cad kyi rgya song la/ dngul rdo tshad bcu gsum gyi rtsis song/ de dag rnams grub nas/ grwa pa snga sor ser khyim du shor ba rnams sdom gtsang byas te/ gnas dang dgon po'i bdag po rgyal ba'i 'bri khung yab sras gnyis la zhu shog 'di phul lo/ 698.5: ces phul bas skyabs mgon yab sras gnyis ka thugs mnyes nas gsol ras gnan sbyin rgya chen po byas byung ngo/. Ricard, trans., 402.*

<sup>65</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 19.6-20.1: *karma' pa rol [20] pa'i rdo rje'i lung bstan bka' rgya ma las/ rje btsun bzhad pa rdo rje// mdo khams shar phyogs g.yo zhing// la phyi gangs kyi rwa ba// nyams gso legs par byed dol//* Ricard, trans., 9.

<sup>66</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 783.3-5: *de nas dpal ldan sa skya'i chos sde chen por 'ong/ rje btsun ma bgres mo dang/ khri kun dga' rgyal mtshan dang/ dngos grub dpal 'bar rnams la mjal/ zangs kyi dung chen cha gcig/ sbub chol rgya gling sogs mchod rdzas dang gser dngul g.yu byir sogs nor rdzas phul nas/ tshe dbang phur pa gur drag rnams kyi dbang zhus//* Ricard, trans., 452.

<sup>67</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 800.6. The description of this stops mid-sentence in the blockprint: "*gsung 'bum po ti bco brgyad yod pa tshang ma sbar nas....*" Folio page 801 begins with the description of the next event: "*yang/ de nes bo dong bkra shis sgang khro phu'i byams chen sogs la mjal.*" Presumably, Shabkar took Tāranātha's *Collected Works* with him? Ricard, trans., 460-1.

readers that “through the blessings of [Padampa Sangyé] great benefit arose in his mind.”<sup>68</sup>

Finally, throughout his life story, it becomes apparent that Shabkar often taught Buddhism from the perspective of a variety of sectarian lineages. For example, both the *Beneficial Jewel* (*Chos bshad gzhan phan nor bu*) and *Offering-Clouds of Samantabhadra* (*Chos bshad kun bzang mchod sprin*) were composed at Chikchar retreat center at Tsari in response to a request from disciples asking for teachings from a non-sectarian point of view.<sup>69</sup> At Peudo (sPre'u mdo) monastery, Shabkar taught the views of the *śrāvakas*, *vaibhāṣikas*, *sūtras*, *madhyamaka*, *cittamātra*, and *prāsaṅgika madhyamaka* from the perspective of four different Buddhist tenet systems. Shabkar writes that the result was great understanding amongst these students.<sup>70</sup> Thus, in his *Life*, Shabkar tells the story of how he mastered the teachings and practices across sectarian lines.

### Conclusion

Gene Smith once wrote, “The roots of eclecticism and tolerance are sunk as deep into the soil of Tibetan traditions as those of sectarianism and bigotry.”<sup>71</sup> Indeed, for us to come to a balanced understanding of Tibetan religious history, it is necessary to understand both instances of sectarian rivalry and sectarian harmony. With regards to non-sectarianism, relatively little academic work has been done on the topic, with Gene Smith and Ringu Tulku providing us with the most comprehensive studies to date. Elizabeth Callahan has also made a significant contribution to our understanding of Jamgön Kongtrul's non-sectarian views in the introduction to her translation of his *Frameworks of Buddhist Philosophy* (*rGyu mtshan nyid kyi theg pa rnam par gzhaq pa'i skabs*) from the *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya*

<sup>68</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 773.6-774.1: *pha dam [774] pa'i zhi byed kyi dams pa po ti chen po bzhi bzhugs pa klog pas/ khong gi byin rlabs kyis sems la phan po byung/*. Ricard, trans., 447.

<sup>69</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 1, 428.4-.5: *grub mtha' ris med kyi chos dang gang zag yongs la dad gus dag snang 'byung ba'i chos bshad cig dgos tshul gyi rgyu mtshan rnam rgyas par zhug pa'i ngor/ lung rigs gnyis kyis brgyan pa'i chos bshad gzhan phan nor bu dang legs bshad kun bzang mchod sprin gnyis brtsams nas slob bu kun bzang la lung byed pa'i skabs su/*. Ricard, trans., 249.

<sup>70</sup> Zhabs dkar, *snyigs dus* (2003), vol. 2, 312.5-313.1: *de dus dgon pa'i dge 'dun pas zhug nas/ legs bshad snying po'i lung khrid 'chang pa la nyan nas nyi ma bco lnga song/ de dus nyan thos bye brag sma ba/ mdo sde pa/ dbu ma sems tsam pa/ dbu ma thal 'gyur pa ste/ nang [313] pa'i grub mtha' bzhi'i bzhed srol mi 'dra ba la nang byan chud pa'i gsung bshad kyis blo bskyang chen po byung/*

<sup>71</sup> Smith, “Jam mgon Kong sprul,” 237.



*mdzod*). Despite the groundbreaking contributions of these scholars and translators thus far, the history, nature, and scope of non-sectarianism remains poorly understood in Tibetan and Buddhist studies.

Discussions on non-sectarianism in Tibetan and Buddhist studies have generally focused on Jamgön Kongtrül and his contemporaries in nineteenth-century Kham. However, as I have demonstrated in this essay, the non-sectarian activities of Shabkar were so extensive in terms of their depth and scope that any serious discussion of non-sectarianism in Tibet would have to include the life, ideas, and activities of Shabkar. This essay has described Shabkar's non-sectarian outlook and activities, and the multivalent way in which he portrayed non-sectarianism in his *Life*. In this essay, I have treated Shabkar's autobiography as a representative microcosm of his Collected Works as a whole; the next stage of my research will look at non-sectarianism in Shabkar's fourteen-volume Collected Works.

Shabkar's non-sectarian activities provide an interesting counterpoint to the non-sectarian activities of Jamgön Kongtrül and his contemporaries in two major ways. Firstly, it is compelling that two eminent nineteenth-century spiritual masters advocated non-sectarianism in isolation from one another around the same period of time in two different parts of eastern Tibet. This leads to the question of whether or not the non-sectarianism "movement" was part of a larger nineteenth-century *zeitgeist* throughout Amdo and Kham, or whether these were two isolated cases of an analogous phenomenon. The answer to this question lies beyond the scope of this paper, and would benefit from future research. Another related question discussed earlier in this essay would be to further investigate the relationship between Shabkar, the non-sectarian movement in Kham, and the life, thought, and activities of eighteenth-century treasure revealer Jikmé Lingpa.

Secondly, contemporary scholarship understands Jamgön Kongtrül's main non-sectarian legacy to be his formidable encyclopedic compilations of the religious texts from a variety of Buddhist lineages in Tibet. In contrast, Shabkar's non-sectarian activities were focused less on the gathering, compilation, and practice of a variety of lineages, than on the cultivation and promotion of an attitude of non-sectarianism through literary and oral media easily accessible to the mass populace. In this way, a study of Shabkar's life and works pushes the existing boundaries of our conception of how non-sectarianism was promoted and communicated in nineteenth-century Tibet. Shabkar's style of communication is in fact closer to that of Dza Patrul's. A formal study of Shabkar's writings in relation

to Patrul Rinpoche and non-sectarianism would be an intriguing avenue of future research.

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