

Journal of Buddhist Ethics

ISSN 1076-9005

<http://blogs.dickinson.edu/buddhistethics/>

Volume 21, 2014

The Politics of “Compassion” of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Between “Religion” and “Secularism”

Masahide Tsujimura

Kobe University

Koyasan University

Copyright Notice: Digital copies of this work may be made and distributed provided no change is made and no alteration is made to the content. Reproduction in any other format, with the exception of a single copy for private study, requires the written permission of the author. All enquiries to: cozort@dickinson.edu.

The Politics of “Compassion” of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: Between “Religion” and “Secularism”¹

Masahide Tsujimura²

Abstract

Since 1959, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has expressed the view that democratic reforms should be gradually carried out in the Tibetan political system. He did this by enlarging the connotation of the traditional Tibetan concept of *chos srid zung 'brel* (union of *dharma* and polity). This pa-

¹ I would like to express the deepest appreciation to Prof. Daniel Cozort, Prof. Adam Miller and anonymous reviewers who provided helpful comments and suggestions. I also owe a very important debt to Prof. Yoshito Takahashi and Prof. Yoshihito Muroji who gave me invaluable comments and warm encouragements. I am grateful to Prof. Toji Kamata, Prof. Takako Yamada, Prof. Naoji Okuyama, Prof. Masakazu Tanaka, Prof. Hitoshi Ochiai, Dr. Tatsuya Yamamoto, Mr. Thupten Tenzin, Dr. Ryosuke Kobayashi, Dr. Shun Hidaka, Dr. Kengo Konishi, Prof. Kazuo Kano, Prof. Seiji Kumagai, Dr. Akinori Yasuda and Dr. Thupten Gawa.

² Research Institute for Economics & Business Administration, Kobe University. Email: mtsujimura@rieb.kobe-u.ac.jp. The Research Institute of Esoteric Buddhist Culture, Koyasan University. Email: tsunke0211@yahoo.co.jp.

per³ will examine how the Dalai Lama succeeded in maintaining the traditional political concept of *chos srid zung 'brel* in a modern Tibetan democracy by employing the idea of “compassion” to link “religion” and “secularism.”

Introduction

One of the most important events in Tibetan history was the retirement of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama from politics in 2011. This marked the end of his political authority, which the successive Dalai Lamas had held since the Fifth Dalai Lama (seventeenth century). In remarks he made at the time of his retirement during a public address in Dharamsala on March 19, 2011, he said, “In my letter⁴ to the Tibetan Parliament, I suggested that the title of Ganden Phodrang⁵ Shung will have to be changed. Ganden Phodrang will remain but it will not take any political responsibilities as we are now a democratic establishment”⁶ (*Collected 20*).

³ The present paper is a revised and annotated version of the Japanese article “Dalai Lama 14 *sei ni okeru 'syu-sei-wagou' [chos srid zung 'brel] ni tsuite*” (“The Union of Dharma and Polity” (*chos srid zung 'brel*) in the 14th Dalai Lama).

⁴ The Dalai Lama delivered his message to the Fourteenth Assembly of the Tibetan People’s Deputies on March 11, 2011. He said in this message, “As a result, some of my political promulgations such as the Draft Constitution for a Future Tibet (1963) and Guidelines for Future Tibet’s Polity (1992) will become ineffective. The title of the present institution of the Ganden Phodrang headed by the Dalai Lama should also be changed accordingly” (*Collected 15*).

⁵ The traditional Tibetan government that is led by the Dalai Lamas is called the Ganden Phodrang (*dga' ldan pho brang*). The term itself was originally the name of the monastic institution of the Dalai Lama.

⁶ *kha sang spyi 'thus la sprad pa'i yi ge'i nang dga' ldan pho brang gi gzung zer ba'i tshig de bsgyur bcos gtong rgyu chags kyi red zer ba de dga' ldan pho brang phyir bsdu byed dgos pa'i skad cha min/ dga' ldan pho brang mu mthud gnas kyi red/ 'on kyang chab srid kyi 'gan dbang*

To understand the significance of this historical event, it is useful to understand the Tibetan concept of *chos srid zung 'brel*. Samdhong Rinpoche, former prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile, points out that this concept characterizes the unique Tibetan political system. He translates this term as “the union of *dharma* and polity.”

Definitions of *chos srid zung 'brel*

The term *chos srid zung 'brel* can be divided to three parts: “*chos*,” “*srid*,” and “*zung 'brel*.” Although “*chos*” can be translated as “religion” in English, this translation is not sufficient. The appropriate English word for *chos* depends on the context; therefore, several definitions of *chos* are examined below. “*Srid*” can be translated as “polity,” and “*zung 'brel*” as “union,” “combination,” “together,” and so forth. *Chos srid zung 'brel* is not an original concept of the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. According to Samdhong Rinpoche:

Since the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet through royal patronage and initiative, the unique and the famous expression “*chos srid zung 'brel*,” meaning the union of *Dharma* and Polity became the popular expression for describing the culture of state policy. Consequently a large share of state power and revenue was utilized for maintenance and promotion of universal heritage and welfare of monks, monasteries, temples, religious institutions, etc. Many Westerners misconstrued the ancient Tibet and state with theocratic form which is not true since Buddhism is an atheist religion. (*Tibet* 34)

'khyer te dga' ldan pho brang gi gzung ngam/ sgrig 'dzugs zhes brjod na 'grigs kyi med/ de phyir bsdu byas/ da cha nga tsho mang gtso'i gzhung chags yod/ (gong sa 41)

Chos srid zung 'brel can be understood as a concept that characterizes and directs the nature of the Tibetan polity. However, this concept has several definitions, as follows.

The Tibetologist Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las says, "It is not the proper meaning of *chos srid zung 'brel* that someone belonging to a certain religious sect (*chos lugs*) takes the reins of government (*chab srid*), but one person takes the reins of government (*srid*) and a religious sect (*chos*) as the top leader (*'go gtso*) of both" (3–4).

The Tibetologist Hor gtsang 'jigs med points out that *chos srid zung 'brel* has three definitions (26). First, after the period in which the king (*rgyal po*) of the state (*yul khams*) and the top leader of a religious sect (*chos bdag*) are separate, one person attains both the position of the king and of the top leader of the religious sect. Such a system (*lam lugs*) is the first definition. The second definition is the political system based on the essence of a particular religion (*chos lugs*). The third definition appears in Article Three⁷ of the *Charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile 1991*: "The future Tibetan polity shall uphold the principle of non-violence and shall endeavour to promote the freedom of the individual and the welfare of

⁷ The full text of Article Three of the *Charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile 1991* reads: "The future Tibetan polity shall uphold the principle of non-violence and shall endeavor to promote the freedom of the individual and the welfare of the society through the dual system of government based on a Federal Democratic Republic. The polity of the Tibetan Administration-in-Exile shall conform to the provisions herein after specified. No amendments to this Charter shall be made except as specified in the Articles of Chapter XI of this Charter" (1). Tibetan original text: "don tshan sum pa/ chab srid kyi rang bzhin/ ma 'ongs bod kyi chab srid ni 'tshse med zhi ba'i lta bar gzhi bcol ba'i thog rang dbang dang/ spyi tshogs bde don/ chos srid zung 'brel/ mang gtso mnyam 'brel/ yul mi'i rgyal khab cig tu bya rgyu yin gshis/ btsan byol bod mi'i chab srid kyang de dang phyogs mthun bya rgyu dang/ gsham 'khod le'u bcu gcig pa'i don than khag gzhir bzung ma gtogs bca' khrims 'di la sgyur bkod gtong ryu min/" (btsan byol bod mi'i bca' khrims 2005 [1991] 1)

the society through the dual system of government based on a Federal Democratic Republic” (1).

Among these three definitions, the first one is similar to that expressed by Dung dkar blo bzang ‘phrin las. The second seems to be one that Dung dkar blo bzang ‘phrin las rejects, namely that someone who belongs to a certain religious sect takes the reins of government. According to Hor gtsang ‘jigs med, this definition appears in the *Constitution of Tibet (bod kyi rtsa khrims)* that was enacted in 1963. Article Two of this constitution states, “Tibet shall be a unitary democratic State founded upon the principles laid down by the Lord Buddha”⁸ (3). Samdhong Rinpoche’s explanation that “Since the establishment of Buddhism in Tibet through royal patronage and initiative, the unique and the famous expression *chos srid zung ‘brel*, meaning the union of *Dharma* and Polity became the popular expression for describing the culture of state policy” (*Tibet* 34), can be considered equivalent to the second definition given by Hor gtsang ‘jigs med. The third definition, which appears in the Charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile (1991), differs from the first and second definitions. The concept of religion (*chos* or *chos lugs*) in the first and second definitions refers only to Buddhism; however, the third definition refers to more than just Buddhism (Hor gtsang 27).

Scholars differ in their opinions about when the concept of *chos srid zung ‘brel* began, depending on the meaning. Rdo rje dbang phyug points out that there are three different views concerning when the concept was established (92). The first is that *chos srid zung ‘brel* started with ‘gro mgon chos rgyal ‘phags pa, who was the head of the *sa skya* school and the teacher of the Mongolian emperor Kublai Khan in the thirteenth century. The second view is that this concept came from sron

⁸ *bod ni ston pa sangs rgyas kyis legs par gsungs pa'i dam pa'i chos kyi dgongs don rtsa bzung dmangs gtso gcig sgril gyi rgyal khab cig byed pa/ (bod kyi rtsa khrims 1963 11)*

btsan sgam po, who was the thirty-third king of Tibet and who brought Buddhism to the country. The third view is that it came from gnya' khri btsan po, who was the first king of Tibet.

The view that *chos srid zung 'brel* began with gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa is based on the definition given by Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, or on the first definition given by Hor gtsang 'jigs med. It is a system in which one person attains the position of both the king and the top leader of the religious sect. Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las (69) and Hor gtsang 'jigs med (41) both express this view.

The position that *chos srid zung 'brel* began with sron btsan sgam po is based on the second definition given by Hor gtsang 'jigs med. It is the political system based on the essence of a particular religion, especially Buddhism. According to *ma ni bka' bum* (103a1-103b3), sron btsan sgam po established "the sixteen pure human laws" (*mi chos gtsang ma bcu drug*) based on Buddhism. Samdhong Rinpoche (*Tibet* 34) takes this position.

The opinion that *chos srid zung 'brel* started with gnya' khri btsan po is different from the others. The era of the first king, gnya' khri btsan po (second century B.C.E.), was before Buddhism arrived in Tibet (seventh century C.E.); however, the Bon religion existed at that time. Therefore, as Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las points out, there was a union between Bon and the polity at that time (6). However, this system cannot be regarded as *chos srid zung 'brel*, because the religion of this system was Bon, and part of the term, *chos*, means Buddhism. According to Samdhong Rinpoche's definition, the *chos* in *chos srid zung 'brel* has not been traditionally interpreted as Bon. However, based on the third definition presented by Hor gtsang 'jigs med, the political institution mentioned by gnya' khri btsan po can be regarded as *chos srid zung 'brel*.

The third definition is found in the Charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile (1991), and it includes the other two definitions of *chos srid zung 'brel*. The differences among the three definitions originated from the change in the political system and the extended concept of *chos* in *chos srid zung 'brel*.

Democratic Reform

We can see the change in the political system between the first and the second definition of *chos srid zung 'brel*, which is given by Hor gtsang 'jigs med. According to the first definition, if one person does not assume office as both the top leader of the religion and the polity, this system is not called *chos srid zung 'brel*. This is the most conservative view. The Tibetan government, which was called *dga' ldan pho brang*, continued from the Fifth to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, realizing the first definition of *chos srid zung 'brel*.

The Fourteenth Dalai Lama, however, thought that this political system, which had lasted for more than 300 years, should be changed to a modern democratic system. In the preface to the *Constitution of Tibet* (*bod kyi rtsa khrims*), he stated the following:

Even prior to my departure from Tibet in March, 1959, I had come to the conclusion that in the changing circumstances of the modern world the system of governance in Tibet must be so modified and amended as to allow the elected representatives of the people to play a more effec-

tive role in guiding and shaping the social and economic policies of the state.⁹ (v)

The Dalai Lama started democratic reform as soon as he took refuge in India. This reform took place three times—in 1960, 1990, and 2011. According to Margaret Nowak, in January 1960, the Dalai Lama showed his plan for reform to many Tibetan people in Bodh Gaya. This plan called for three representatives each from the three traditional Tibetan regions (*chol kha gsum*), namely *dbus gtsang*, *mdo stod*, and *mdo smad*, and one each from the four Tibetan Buddhist sects, namely *dge lugs pa*, *sa skya pa*, *bka' brgyud pa*, and *rnying ma pa*, to be elected, and these thirteen people would constitute the political body. Elections were held, and the first elected representative body in Tibetan's history, the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD), was established on September 2, 1960. The Tibetan exile community observes this historic date as Tibetan Democracy Day (Nowak 177-179). This was the first step in democratic reform.

The second was carried out from 1990 to 1991. Ten representatives each from the three traditional Tibetan regions, two each from the four Tibetan Buddhist sects, two from the Bon religion,¹⁰ two from Europe, one from North America, and three who were appointed by the Dalai Lama, a total of forty-six representatives,

⁹ The *Constitution of Tibet* was published in two editions, Tibetan and English. There are some differences between the two. This passage is from the English edition, because it is more straightforward than the Tibetan edition.

¹⁰ Representatives of Bon had already been included in 1977. According the Tibetan Parliamentary & Policy Research Centre (TPPRC), "the strength of The Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies (CTPD) increased to 17 during the 6th and 7th CTPD with the addition of a Deputy for *bon*, the pre-Buddhist religion of Tibet, on October 5, 1977. Thus, in addition to the four Buddhist traditions, followers of the Bon religion also came to have a separate Deputy in the CTPD" (TPPRC 29).

constituted the political body in 1991 (TPPRC 42-43). The most important aspect of this reform concerned the political authority of the Dalai Lama. On May 11, 1990, he spoke at a special congress in Dharamsala:

From now on, the people's decision will be final. I feel that the Dalai Lama should have no role here. The future Assembly will be entrusted with the power of appointing the Kalons.¹¹ (*Political* 263)

Ever since the exile of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people in 1959, the Tibetan community in exile, had rejected the Dalai Lama's suggestion that the Dalai Lama's own political power should be restricted. However, in this address, the Dalai Lama announced that he was renouncing the supreme authority vested in him to approve the members of the assembly and supervise its functioning (Bhattacharjea 10–11).

According to Margaret Jane McLagan, this democratic reform was not carried out by the Tibetan people themselves, but was regarded as a "gift" bestowed on the people by the Dalai Lama (227–229), who firmly believed that democratization was necessary for the Tibetan community in exile to survive within the international community ("Buddhism" 5–6).

When the first reform was carried out, however, one issue emerged. As long as *chos srid zung 'brel* was understood as a principle according to which one person held the position of both the political leader and of top leader of the religious sect, democracy could not be based upon *chos srid zung 'brel*. To resolve this issue, *chos srid zung 'brel* was redefined as a political system founded on the essence of a particular religion, which was not needed in order for one person to take office as both the top leader of the religion and of the polity. If this was

¹¹ "Kalon" (*bka' blon*) means "minister."

the case, it was possible to maintain consistency between democracy and *chos srid zung 'brel*.

According to the preface of the *Constitution of Tibet (bod kyi rtsa khrims)*, written by the Dalai Lama, the enlarging of the definition of *chos srid zung 'brel* was the result of the need for political modernization, especially democratization. It appears that this change did not arise from the inner logic of *chos* (Buddhism). The Dalai Lama, however, said that

Democracy is common to Buddhism preached by Buddha,
and never contradicts Buddhism.¹² (*rgya che'i* 457)

The *Constitution of Tibet (bod kyi rtsa khrims)* states that, "it is deemed desirable and necessary that the principle of justice, equality and democracy laid down by the Lord Buddha should be reinforced and strengthened in the government of Tibet."¹³ As Jay L. Garfield remarks, the community of Buddhist monks was managed through a democratic system that followed the *Vinaya* (207–208). The Dalai Lama is, of course, familiar with the *Vinaya*:

In fact, strictly speaking, every rite concerning the maintenance of monastic practice must be performed with a congregation of at least four monks. Thus one could say that the *Vinaya* rules of discipline that govern the behavior and life of the Buddhist monastic community are in keeping with democratic traditions." ("Buddhism" 4)

¹² *mang gtso ni bcom ldan 'das kyis gsung pa'i nang pa sangs rgyas pa'i chos dang mthun pa zhig yin pa las/ chos dang 'gal ba zhig rtsa ba nas ma red/*

¹³ *bod kyi chab srid 'dzin skyong bya phyogs ni bdag cag gi ston pa thugs rje can gyis legs par gsungs pa'i dam pa'i chos kyi dgongs don drang bden dang/ 'dra mnyam/ dmangs gtso bcas kyi gzhi rtsa'i bus shugs je che je cher gtong rgyu'i blo 'dod dngons yod de don nges par dgos pa yin/ (bod kyi rtsa khrims 9-10)*

The process of democratization initiated by the Dalai Lama was thus the result of not only modernization but also Buddhist logic.

The Dalai Lama's Interpretation of *chos srid zung 'brel*

In the first and second definitions of *chos srid zung 'brel* given by Hor gtsang 'jigs med, *chos* refers only to Buddhism. As *The Relationship between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*, one of the most important early studies of *chos srid zung 'brel*, has demonstrated (Cuppers 2004), the traditional interpretation of *chos* is Buddhism. In the third definition of *chos srid zung 'brel*, however, *chos* does not refer only to Buddhism. The Dalai Lama issued "Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and Basic Features of Its Constitution" ("ma 'ongs bod kyi chab srid lam ston dang/ rtsa khrims snying don/"), on February 26, 1992. In the English version of this document, *chos* is translated as "spiritual values":

Nature of Polity: The Tibetan polity should be founded on spiritual values and must uphold the interests of Tibet, its neighboring countries and the world at large. Based on the principles of Ahimsa, and aimed at making Tibet a zone of peace, it should uphold the ideals of freedom, social welfare, democracy, cooperation and environmental protection.¹⁴

Although it can be considered that "spiritual values," in this context, means the unique Tibetan spiritual heritage, which is based on

¹⁴ *chab srid kyi rang bzhin// 2/ bod kyi chab srid rang bzhing ni/ bod dang/ nye skor yul khag 'dzam gling khyon yongs kyi phan bde'i ched/ 'tsho med zhi ba'i lta bar gzhi bcol ba'i rang dbang dang/ spyi tshogs bde don/ chos srid zung 'brel/ mang gtso/ mnyam 'brel/ khor yug srung skyob dang bcas pa'i zhi bde'i bsti bnas shig bskrun rgyu/ ("ma 'ongs" 285)*

Buddhism, the statement does not declare that “spiritual values” are exclusively Buddhist. Therefore, the interpretation of *chos* as “spiritual values” is not restricted to Buddhism, as it is influenced by the Dalai Lama’s outlook on religion.

In the materials available to this author, which were issued after the Dalai Lama’s exile, *chos srid zung ‘brel* is found in his statement made on June 15, 1960. Here, the Dalai Lama defined *chos srid zung ‘brel* as follows:¹⁵

“Two systems” (*lugs gnyis*) means religious system (*chos kyi lugs*) and political system (*srid kyi lugs*). “Unity” (*zung ‘brel*) means holding two systems together without separating them.¹⁶ (*slob grwa 16*)

The Dalai Lama does not reveal the meaning of *chos* here. However, in his remarks in 1959, there is a passage in which he said, “The very *chos* can eliminate much suffering”¹⁷ (*slob grwa 2*). Because the main object of Buddhism is to be free from suffering, the possibility that he regarded *chos* as a Buddhist concept cannot be denied.

Later, on January 26, 2000, the Dalai Lama issued a statement about *chos srid zung ‘brel*, providing one of the most detailed explanations of his view on this principle (“*spyi nor*” 9–10). In this statement, he says that the Tibetan political system, which had been in place since the first king of Tibet, *gnya’ khri btsan po*, could be considered as divided into two parts, according to the roles of two kings. One is a layman, and the

¹⁵ Rdo rje dbang phyug quotes this passage and regards this as a definition of *chos srid zung ‘brel* (89). Chab brag lha mo also follows this definition (77).

¹⁶ *lugs gnyis ni chos kyi lugs dang/ srid kyi lugs de gnyis la zer ba yin/ zung ‘brel ni chos srid kyi lugs gnyis po ‘di ya ma bral bar ‘dzin skyong byed pa’i don yin/*

¹⁷ *sdug bsngal mang po zhig sel thub pa ni chos kho na yin/*

other is a monk. Kings gnya' khri btsan po and sron btsan sgam po, King khri srong lde'u btsan, and so forth are laymen. In contrast, 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa, the Dalai Lama, and so forth are monks.

The Dalai Lama regards 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa as initiating the turning point of *chos srid zung 'brel*, because he was the first king who unified the throne by bringing together the religious sects and political institution. The Dalai Lama considers the political system as it has existed since 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa as an essential (*ngo bo*) part of *chos srid zung 'brel*. However, he views the political system over which the laymen kings presided before 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa as conforming to *chos*, as part of *chos srid zung 'brel*. Moreover, *chos* is not limited to Buddhism. In the event that a king governs conforming to the Bon religion, the Dalai Lama calls it *bon srid zung 'brel*, and he regards it as a type of *chos srid zung 'brel* (“spyi nor” 9–10).

The Dalai Lama's view of the Tibetan traditional *chos srid zung 'brel* is that a political system that conforms to the *chos* principle (Buddhism or Bon) is included in *chos srid zung 'brel*. Essentially, *chos srid zung 'brel* is a unique concept that characterizes the Tibetan political system; however, the Dalai Lama's understanding of it extends beyond this.

Concerning the Western countries like U.S.A., I think that it can be regarded as *chos srid zung 'brel* to live by faith in God, whether Christianity or Islam. On the events of life as marriage, birth, death, etc. and work of government, the custom of swearing to God seems to be *chos srid zung 'brel*.¹⁸ (“spyi nor” 10)

¹⁸ nub phyogs rgyal khab a mi ri ka lta bur mtshon na/ lung pa re re bzhin rtsa bar mi kho rang tsho'i chos lugs ye shu dang kha che gang zhig yin na'ng/ dkon mchog la yid ches byas te man' bskyal/ dam bca' byed pa sogs byas nas 'gro ba yin dus/ ming btags ma btags ma gtogs dngos

This interpretation by the Dalai Lama is different from the traditional understanding in two aspects. First, the meanings of *chos* refer not only to the main Tibetan religions (Buddhism or Bon) but also to other religions (Christianity, Islam, etc.). Second, the meaning of *srid* includes not only the polity but also a way of living.

chos lugs ris med as “Secularism”

It appears that there was a political motivation behind the expansion of the notion of *chos srid zung 'brel*. At the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (bod mi mang spyi ‘thus lhan tshogs) on May 21, 1991, the Dalai Lama said the following:

It is difficult for us to realize the genuine democracy and essence of democracy, as far as we go on the way now in use. Regarding this, it seems that scholars understand the English word “secular” variously. In our language, this word is called “*chos lugs ris med*.” We need to consider this.¹⁹ (*spyi nor* 11)

gnas byas na chos srid zung 'brel red bsdad yod pa red/ chos srid zung 'brel gyi lam lugs nang mi zhid gi chang sa rgyag stangs dang/ skye ba nas 'chi ba'i bar 'gro stangs cha tshang byas/ gzhung gi las ka byed pa'i skabs la'ng mgo la dkon mchog gi gsung rabs bzhag nas dam bca' 'jog srol yod pa'i rim pa de dang/ ngo bo de'i ngos nas chos srid zung 'brel chags yod red bsam gyin 'dug/

¹⁹ *nga tsho mang gtso yang dag pa zhid dang/ mang gtso'i ngo bo yongs su rdzogs pa tshang ba zhid byas pa yin na/ da lta nga tsho'i 'os bsdu'i 'gro stangs kyi thog nas phran bu dka' ngal 'phrad kyi yo/ gnas tshul de 'drar bsam blo btong skabs dbyin ji'i tshig se khu lar "Secular" zhes pa 'dir mkhas pa tshos go don len stangs 'dra min yod sa red/ nga tshos bsgyur ba'i tshig nang chos lugs ris med ces bsgyur yod/ de la bsam blo gtong rgyu yod/*

The words “the way now in use” can be considered as reflecting the meaning of *chos srid zung 'brel* in the Tibetan Constitution (*bod kyi rtsa khrims*). As long as the meaning of *chos* is limited to Buddhism, “genuine democracy” cannot be realized. Therefore, the Dalai Lama might have found it necessary to introduce the concept of “secularism” in the Tibetan *chos lugs ris med*. Semantically, *chos lugs* means “religion” or “religious sect,” and *ris med* means “nonsectarian” or “without distinction.” In this context, “secular” does not mean antireligious or nonreligious. The Dalai Lama’s usage of the word “secular” is influenced by the Indian concept, as he indicates in the following statement:

Instead, my understanding of the word “secular” comes from the way it is commonly used in India. Modern India has a secular constitution and prides itself on being a secular country. In Indian usage, “secular,” far from implying antagonism toward religion or toward people of faith, actually implies a profound respect for and tolerance toward all religions. It also implies an inclusive and impartial attitude which includes nonbelievers. This understanding of the term “secular”—to imply mutual tolerance and respect for all faiths as well as for those of no faith—comes from India’s particular historical and cultural background. In the same way, I suspect, the western understanding of the term comes from European history. . . . It is a result of this history, I feel, that in the West the idea of secularism is so often understood as being antagonistic toward religion. Secularism and religion are often seen as two opposing and mutually incompatible positions, and there is considerable suspicion and hostility between the followers of the two camps. (*Beyond* 6–7)

In his speech to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, he had said,

As a superordinate concept, the core meanings of *chos* are nonviolence and peace . . . the essential teaching of each religion is based on good wisdom which we have. Based on good thinking and good action, it can reach the core meanings of *chos*, whether named *chos* or not. . . . In contrast to general democratic constitution, if we arranged our constitution based on good ideas of nonviolence and peace, it can reach the meaning of *chos srid zung 'brel*.²⁰ (*spyi nor* 11–12)

The Dalai Lama regards nonviolence and peace as values that are common to all religions, and perceives these values as *chos* in a broad sense. *Chos* is thus not limited to Buddhism. Therefore, *chos lugs ris med* here means, in a narrow sense, “without distinction among religions in a respect of nonviolence and peace,” and in a broad sense, “mutual tolerance and respect for all faiths as well as for those of no faith.”

Conclusion

According to the Dalai Lama, nonviolence does not only mean nonuse of physical violence.

²⁰ *gong du brjod pa'i 'tshe med zhi ba'i lta ba 'di chos kyi snying po chags yod/. . . chos lugs khag gi bslab bya'i rtsa ba ni nga rang tsho la lhan skyes kyi bzang po'i yon tan zhig yod pa 'di gzhi mar bzhag nas chos lugs kyi bslab bya rnams thon yong ba yin dus/ bzang po'i ya rabs kyi bsam blo dang spyod pa gzhi la bzhag nas bzos pa yin na/ ming la chos btags rung ma btags rung don dag chos kyi snying po'i thog slebs rgyu yin/. . . spyir brang gyi mang gtso'i rtsa khrims 'gro stangs de tsho nang bzhin ma yin par/ nga tsho'i 'di 'tshe med zhi ba'i ya rabs kyi lta ba rtsa bar bzhag nas go rim bgrigs pa yin na don gyi cha nas rnam kun nga tsho'i kha rgyun la yod pa'i chos srid zung 'brel zhes pa'i go ba de slebs thub pa zhig yin/*

Non-violence does not mean the absence of violence. It is something more positive and more meaningful. I think the fuller expression of non-violence is compassion. Some people have the impression that compassion is something akin to pity. I think that is not the correct understanding. Genuine compassion is a closeness of feeling with, and at the same time a sense of responsibility for, the other person's welfare. True compassion develops when we accept the other as a being just like us, a being who wants happiness and does not want suffering. (*Dialogues 5*)

According to the Dalai Lama, nonviolence and compassion are synonymous. However, this idea is not unique to him. Nonviolence in Tibetan is expressed as *mi 'tshé ba* or *rnam par mi 'tshé ba*. In the Buddhist text *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, Asaṅga defined nonviolence (*rnam par mi 'tshé ba*) as one of fifty-one mental factors (*sems byung lnga bcu rtsa gcig*):

What is nonviolence? It is compassion (*snying rje*) which forms part of the absence of hatred (*zhe sdang med pa*). Its function consists of not tormenting.²¹ (*Thogs med [Asaṅga] 49a–5*)

When the Dalai Lama uses the word “compassion,” he does so in the sense of the Tibetan word *snying rje*, which he defines as follows:

The wish for sentient beings to be free from suffering and causes of suffering.²² (*nang pa'i 51*)

²¹ *rnam par mi 'tshé ba gang zhe na/ zhe sdang med pa'i char gtogs pa/ snying rje ba'i sems nyid de/ tho mi 'tsham pa'i las can no//* This is my English translation from Tibetan, in reference to *Abhidharmasamuccaya The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)* (11).

²² *sems can de dag sdug bsngal dang/ de'i rgyu mtha' dag las bral bar 'dod pa'i snying rje/*

Certainly, compassion (*snying rje*) is one of the most important concepts of Buddhism as a “religion.” However, the Dalai Lama considers that compassion is common to all religions, and that everyone can be compassionate because no one wants to suffer. From the perspective of the Dalai Lama, compassion is also a “secular” concept that implies mutual tolerance and respect for all faiths, as well as for those of no faith. By using the notion of “compassion” as a bridge between “religion” and “secularism,” the Dalai Lama resolved the issue of the *chos srid zung ‘brel* principle in the democratic reform of the Tibetan political system. His is very much a politics of “compassion.”

Bibliography

Asaṅga. *Abhidharmasamuccaya. The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)*, translated into French by Walpola Rahula, English version by Sara Boin-Webb. Fremont, California: Asian Humanities Press, 2001.

Bhattacharjea, Ajit. *Tibetans in Exile: The Democratic Vision*. New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre, 1994.

bod kyi rtsa khrims 1963. India: the Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1963.

btsan byol bod mi'i bca' khrims 2005 (1991). Dharamsala: bod mi mang spyi ‘thus lhan tshogs, 2005 (1991).

Chab brag lha mo. “bod ji srid gnas pa'i bar du chos ldan rgyal khab cig,” *nor mdzod* 1 (2001), 48-84.

Charter of the Tibetans-in-exile 1991. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://tibet.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/06/Charter.pdf>> (accessed November 4, 2013).

Constitution of Tibet 1963. India: the Bureau of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 1963.

Cuppers, Christoph (ed.). *The Relationship Between Religion and State (chos srid zung 'brel) in Traditional Tibet*. Lumbini: Lumbini International Research Institute, 2004.

Dalai Lama. "Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and Basic Features of Its Constitution", issued on 26 February 1992. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://tibet.net/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/Guidelines-for-Future-Tibets-Polity-and-Basic-Features-of-Its-Constitution.pdf>> (accessed November 4, 2013).

_____. *Dialogues on Universal Responsibility and Education*. New Delhi: Library of Tibetan works and archives, 1995.

_____. *The Political Philosophy of His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama Selected Speeches and Writings*, edited by A. A. Shiromany. New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre, 1998.

_____. *spyi nor gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog gis phyi lo 1991 nas 1996 bar bod mi mang spyi 'thus lhan tshogs su bca' khrims kyi zin bris gsol ras stsal skabs dang/ gros tshogs kyi tshogs dus/ tshogs gtso sbrel po'i dam 'bul mdzad sgo bcas kyi skabs su bstsal ba'i gal che'i bka' slob phyogs bsdus/*. India: bod mi mang spyi 'thus lhan khang, 1998.

_____. "Buddhism, Asian Values, and Democracy," *Journal of Democracy* 10.1 (1999), 3-7.

_____. *srid zhi'i rnam 'dren gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog nas rgya che'i bod mi ser skya mang tshogs la blang dor byed sgo'i skor stsal ba'i bka' slob phyogs bsdebs bzhugs so// pod gnyis pa/*. Dharamsala: bod gzhung phyi drillas khung, 2000.

_____. *srid zhi'i rnam 'dren gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog nas slob grwa khag sogs la shes yon slob sbyong byed sgo'i skor stsal ba'i bka' slob phyogs bsdebs bzhugs so// pod dang po/*. Dharamsala: bod gzhung phyi dril las khung, 2000.

_____. "spyi nor gong sa skyabs mgon chen po mchog gyis bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bgro gleng tshogs chen thengs dang po'i dbu 'byed mdzad sgor btsal ba'i bka' slob," *nor mdzod 1* (2001), 1-25.

_____. "ma 'ongs bod kyi chab srid lam ston dang/ rtsa khirms snyong don/," *bod du lag bstar byas pa'i rgya dmar gyi srid byus dang bya thabs/*, 274-291. India: bod gzhung phyi drill las khungs, 2002 (1992).

_____. *nang pa'i lta spyod kun btus*. India: rigs slob lhag brtsegs tshogs chung, 2005 (1996).

_____. *Beyond Religion: Ethics for a Whole World*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Company, 2011.

_____. *Collected Statements of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on Devolution of Power to the Elected Leaders of Central Tibetan Administration*, edited by DIIR. India: DIIR Publication, 2011.

_____. *gong sa mchog gis chab srid kyi mdzad 'gan yongs rdzogs 'os 'dems byas pa'i 'go khrid tshos 'gan khur dgos pa'i gsung 'phrin dang bka' slob stsalb*. India: DIIR Publication, 2011.

Rdo rje dbang phyug. "bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel gyi brgyud rim dang bcas pa'i gnas bab las 'phros te/ 'das pa dang da lta/ ma'ongs pa'i 'gyur khyad thad phul ba'i bsam tshul 'char snang," *nor mdzod 1* (2001), 85-136.

Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las. *bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel skor bshad pa*. 北京: mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1981.

Garfield, Jay L. *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Hor gtsang 'jigs med. "bod kyi chos srid zung 'brel lam lugs la phyi mig dang bsam gzhigs," *nor mdzod* 1 (2001), 26-47.

ma ni bka' 'bum, reproduced from a print from the no longer extant *Spungs-thang (Punakha) blocks* by Trayang and Jamyang Samten, Volume 1. W19225. New York: Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, 2013 (1975).

McLagan, Margaret J. *Mobilizing for Tibet: Transnational Politics and Diaspora Culture in the Post-cold War Era*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, New York University, 1996.

Nowak, Margaret. *Tibetan Refugees: Youth and the New Generation of Meaning*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1984.

Samdhong Rinpoche. *Tibet: A Future Vision*. New Delhi: Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre, 1997 (1996).

Thogs med (Asaṅga). *chos mngon pa kun las btus pa, sde dge bstan 'gyur, sems tsam, ri*, W23703. New York: Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, 2009(1986).

Tibetan Parliamentary and Policy Research Centre (TPPRC). *Tibet's Parliament in Exile*. India: TPPRC, 2009.

Tsujimura, Masahide. "Dalai Lama 14 *sei ni okeru 'shu-sei-wagou'* [*chos srid zung 'brel*] *ni tsuite*" ("The Union of Dharma and Polity' (*chos srid zung 'brel*) in the 14th Dalai Lama), *Shukyo to Rinri (Religion and Ethics)* 4 (2009), 33-48.