

Rimé movement

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Rimé is a Tibetan word which means "no sides", "non-partisan" or "non-sectarian". In a religious context, the word ri-mé is usually used to refer to the "Eclectic Movement" between the Buddhist Nyingma, Sakya, and Kagyu traditions, along with the non-Buddhist Bön religion, wherein practitioners "follow multiple lineages of practice." The movement was founded in Eastern Tibet during the late 19th century largely by Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo and Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye, the latter of whom is often respected as the founder proper. The Rimé movement is responsible for a large number of scriptural compilations, such as the Rinchen Terdzod and the Sheja Dzö.

The Rimé approach

Most scholars of Buddhism explain Rimé as an "eclectic movement", however one scholar has suggested that this is an inadequate rendering, saying "In fact this Rimé movement was not exactly eclectic but universalistic (and encyclopaedic), rimed (pa) (the antonym of risu ch'edpa) meaning unbounded, all-embracing, unlimited, and also impartial." One of the most prominent contemporary Rimé masters, Ringu Tulku, emphasizes the message of the original Rimé founders, that Rimé is not a new school. It is simply an approach allowing freedom of choice which was always the majority practice within the history of Tibetan Buddhism. The Karmapas, Je Tsongkhapa, the Dalai Lamas, Sakya lineage heads and major Nyingma and Kagyu figures took teachings and empowerments from various schools and lineages.

The movement's name is derived from two Tibetan words: Ris (bias, side) and Med (lack), which combined expresses the idea of openness to other Tibetan Buddhist traditions, as opposed to sectarianism. The Rimé movement therefore is often misunderstood as trying to unite the various sects through their similarities, which was not the case. Rimé was intended to recognize the differences between traditions and appreciate them, while also establishing a dialogue which would create common ground. It is considered important that variety be preserved, and therefore Rimé teachers are generally quite careful to emphasize differences in thought, giving students many options as to how to proceed in their spiritual training.

Ringu Tulku describes these points which are often misrepresented:

Ris or Phyog-ris in Tibetan means "one-sided", "partisan" or "sectarian". Med means "No". Ris-med (Wylie), or Rimé, therefore means "no sides", "non-partisan" or "non-sectarian". It does not mean "non-conformist" or "non-committal"; nor does it mean forming a new School or system that is different from the existing ones. A person who believes the Rimé way almost certainly follows one lineage as his or her main practice. He or she would not dissociate from the School in which he or she was raised. Kongtrul was raised in the Nyingma and Kagyu traditions; Khyentse was reared in a strong Sakyapa tradition. They never failed to acknowledge their affiliation to their own Schools. Rimé is not a way of uniting different Schools and lineages by emphasizing their similarities. It is basically an appreciation of their differences and an acknowledgement of the importance of having this variety for the benefit of practitioners with different needs. Therefore the Rimé teachers always take great care that the teachings and practices of the different Schools and lineages and their unique styles do not become confused with one another. To retain the original style and methods of each teaching lineage preserves the power of that lineage experience. Kongtrul and Khyentse made great efforts to retain the original flavor of each teaching, while making them available to many. Kongtrul writes about Khyentse in his biography of the latter.... When he (Khyentse Rinpoche) taught, he would give the teachings of each lineage clearly and intelligibly without confusing the terms and concepts of other teachings.

Rimé was initially intended to counteract the novel growing suspicion and tension building between the different traditions, which at the time had, in many places, gone so far as to forbid studying one another's scriptures. Tibetan Buddhism has a long history of vigorous debate and argumentation between schools and within one's training. This can lead a practitioner to believe that one's school has the best approach or highest philosophic view and that other lineages have a lower or flawed understanding. The Rimé approach cautions against developing that viewpoint, while at the same time appreciating that the debate and discussion is important and that arguing which views are higher and lower is still valid discourse.

Jamgon Kongtrul summed his view:

The scholars and siddhas of the various schools make their own individual presentations of the dharma. Each one is full of strong points and supported by valid reasoning. If you are well grounded in the presentations of your own tradition, then it is unnecessary to be sectarian. But if you get mixed up about the various tenets and the terminology, then you lack even a foothold in your own tradition. You try to use someone else's system to support your understanding, and then get all tangled up, like a bad

weaver, concerning the [view](#), [meditation](#), conduct, and result. Unless you have certainty in your own system, you cannot use [reasoning](#) to support your [scriptures](#), and you cannot challenge the assertions of others. You become a laughing stock in the [eyes](#) of the learned ones. It would be much better to possess a clear [understanding](#) of your own [tradition](#). In summary, one must see all the teachings as without contradiction, and consider all the [scriptures](#) as instructions. This will [cause](#) the [root](#) of [sectarianism](#) and prejudice to dry up, and give you a firm foundation in the [Buddhas teachings](#). At that point, hundreds of doors to the eighty-four thousand teachings of the [dharma](#) will simultaneously be open to you.

A [rimé practitioner](#) may take [empowerments](#) from numerous [lineages](#) and living [masters](#), though it is not a requirement to do so.

Rimé's founders

Two of the founding [voices](#) of [Rimé](#) were [Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo](#) and [Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye](#), both from different schools. (The epithets [Jamyang](#) and [Jamgon](#) in their [name](#) respectively indicate that they are considered to be [emanations](#) of [Manjushri](#). [Jamgon Kongtrul](#) was from the [Nyingma](#) and [Kagyu traditions](#), while [Wangpo](#) had been raised within the [Sakya order](#). At the [time](#), [Tibetan](#) schools of [thought](#) had become very isolated, and both [Wangpo](#) and [Jamgon Kongtrul](#) were instrumental in re-initiating dialogue between the sects.

The [Rimé movement](#) came to prominence at a point in [Tibetan history](#) when the [religious](#) climate had become highly [partisan](#). The aim of the [movement](#) was "a push towards a middle ground where the various [views](#) and styles of the different [traditions](#) were appreciated for their [individual](#) contributions rather than being refuted, marginalized, or banned." Many of the teachings of various schools were close to being lost and the [movement](#) set out to preserve them. However, though the [Rime movement gathered](#) together teachings from each of the various [traditions](#), it did not mix these, but rather recognised the [individual](#) integrity of each.

The [movement](#) began within a large context of increasing [domination](#) by the [Gelug lineage](#). Beginning in the 17th century, the [Gelug view](#) and politics increasingly dominated in [Tibet](#) and the minority [lineages](#) were at [risk](#) for losing their [traditions](#). At its founding, the [Rimé movement](#) was primarily non-Gelugpa [teachers](#) and at times the [movement](#) has appeared critical of [Gelug views](#). [Professor Georges Dreyfus](#) suggests this [argumentation](#) was less to create further division but was to bolster minority [views](#) that had been marginalized by [Gelug](#) supremacy. Nonetheless, [philosophic](#) commentaries by early [Rimé](#) writers tend to criticize [Gelugpa tenets](#).

However, [Rimé](#) was in its idealized presentation the re-establishment of a

rule or principle that had always been present in Tibetan Buddhism, but that had been de-emphasized or forgotten. That is: to ignorantly criticize other traditions was wrong, and that misunderstandings due to ignorance should be immediately alleviated. Ringu Tulku says:

The Rimé concept was not original to Kongtrul and Khyentse – neither were they new to Buddhism! The Lord Buddha forbade his students even to criticise the teachings and teachers of other religions and cultures. The message was so strong and unambiguous that Chandra Kirti had to defend Nagarjuna's treatises on Madhyamika by saying, "If, by trying to understand the truth, you dispel the misunderstandings of some people and thereby some philosophies are damaged – that cannot be taken as criticising the views of others" (Madhyamika-avatara). A true Buddhist cannot be but non-sectarian and Rimé in their approach.

The movement became particularly well-established in the Kingdom of Derge. Rimé has become an integral part of the Tibetan tradition, and continues to be an important philosophy in Tibetan Buddhism.

Other notable Tibetan Lamas noted for their non-sectarian approach were Patrul Rinpoche and Orgyen Chokgyur Lingpa. Shabkar Tsodruk Rangdrol, Dudjom Lingpa and the Fifteenth Karmapa Khachab Dorje who was a student of Kongtrul. Other lineage leaders gave their blessing to the movement and its founders who were considered extremely realized. Present-day Rimé movement

The movement's achievements have been very successful in the 20th century where taking teachings and transmissions from different schools and lineages has become the norm amongst many monastic students, lamas, yogis as well as lay practitioners. This has mainly been due to the proactive support of many lineage holders and various leaders such as the 13th and 14th Dalai Lamas, the 15th and 16th Karmapas, Sakya Trizin, Dudjom Rinpoche, following the "eclectic" approach of the 5th Dalai Lama "who blurred the lines between traditions":

In the West, where so many different Buddhist traditions exist side by side, one needs to be constantly on one's guard against the danger of sectarianism. Such a divisive attitude is often the result of failing to understand or appreciate anything outside one's own tradition. Teachers from all schools would therefore benefit greatly from studying and gaining some practical experience of the teachings of other traditions.

The 14th Dalai Lama has composed a prayer for the movement praising

various historic figures and lineages of Vajrayana from India and Tibet, part of which says:

In short, may all the teachings of the Buddha in the Land of Snows
Flourish long into the future— the ten great pillars of the study lineage,
And the chariots of the practice lineage, such as Shijé ('Pacifying') and the rest,

All of them rich with their essential instructions
combining sutra and mantra.

May the lives of the masters who uphold these teachings be secure and harmonious!

May the sangha preserve these teachings through their study, meditation and activity!

May the world be filled with faithful individuals intent on following these teachings!

And long may the non-sectarian teachings of the Buddha continue to flourish!

Jamyang Khyentse Chökyi Lodrö, Khunu Lama Tenzin Gyaltzen and Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche are recent Rimé masters, known for their public influence and as being advisers and teachers to the 14th Dalai Lama.

Other modern adherents include the late 16th Karmapa and Dudjom Rinpoche, both of whom gave extensive teachings from the works of Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro, as well as Akong Rinpoche who, with the late Chogyam Trungpa helped establish Tibetan Buddhism in Britain. The lineage of the late Nyoshul Khenpo Rinpoche, also a venerable master of the Rimé tradition, is represented today in the teachings of Lama Surya Das.

The 14th Dalai Lama supports and encourages a non-sectarian spirit. Major Gelug figures like Shabkar in the 19th century, and the Panchen Lamas and Reting Rinpoche in the 20th century studied Nyingma teachings along with their Gelug training. The personal and hidden lake temple of the lineage of Dalai Lamas behind the Potala called Lukhang is dedicated to Dzogchen teachings. Arjia Lobsang Thubten Rinpoche continues the Rime tradition in the United States.

Bon teacher Tenzin Wangyal cautions, however, that even this so-called non-sectarian attitude may be taken to an extreme:

“ A problem that seems very difficult to avoid involves the tendency of spiritual schools either to want to preserve their traditions in a very closed way or to want to be very open and nonsectarian; but there is often the danger that this very nonsectarianism can become a source of self-justification and lead to as closed an attitude as that of the sectarians.