

# 'Share the sweets' An introspective analysis of copulas following adjectives in Modern Standard Tibetan

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## Introduction

**M**odern Standard Tibetan displays a threefold evidential contrast among 'personal', 'testimonial' and 'factual'. These evidential contrasts are found in the copula system (Table 1) and the system of auxiliary verbs (Table 2).<sup>1</sup>

	Existential copula	Essential copula
Personal	<i>yod</i>	<i>yin</i>
Factual	<i>yod-pa-red</i>	<i>red</i>
Testimonial	<i>ḥdug</i>	<i>red-bźag</i>

*Table 1: the Tibetan copula system*

	Future	Present	Past	Perfect
Personal	<i>V-gi-yin</i>	<i>V-gi-yod</i>	<i>V-pa-yin / byuñ</i>	<i>V-yod</i>
Factual	<i>V-gi-red</i>	<i>V-gi-yod-pa-red</i>	<i>V-pa-red</i>	<i>V-yod-pa-red</i>
Testimonial	---	<i>V-gi-ḥdug</i>	<i>V-son</i>	<i>V-bźag</i>

*Table 2: The Tibetan verbal conjugation system*

In general, the existential and essential copulas of a given evidential category (e.g. ཡིན *yin* and ཡོད *yod*) are in complementary distribution, with the essential copula used for equating two noun phrases (e.g. ལྟེན་པར་འདྲེན་པའི་ཡིན་པ་ *lton-par-dreñ-pa'i yin-pa*).

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<sup>1</sup> See Tournadre & Dorje 2003 and Hill 2013.

ལྷན་བསྟན་ ཡིན *na thub-bstan yin* 'I am Thuptän')<sup>2</sup> and the existential copula used for location and possession (རྒྱ་ནག་ལ་ཡོད། *Rgya-nag-la yod* 'I am in China', དེ་མང་པོ་ཡོད། *deb man-po yod* 'I have many books').<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, both existential and essential copulas occur in attributive function (e.g. རབ་དེ་པོ་ཡིན། *na bde-po yin* 'I am fine.' and ཇེ་འདི་ ཞེས་པོ་ ཡོད། *ja hdi zim-po yod* 'This tea is good (in my opinion)').<sup>4</sup> Thus, in the syntactic context of noun plus adjective, the number of contrasts increases from three to six.<sup>5</sup>

In this article, the lead author, Sonam Dugdak, imagines introspectively how the six Tibetan copulas (Table 1) are used after the same adjective in a very similar way by his mother, and how the context and pragmatics gives the copulas a different meaning subtly. Because "Tibetan is particularly sensitive to situation and environment, as well as the sources of information on which a speaker's assertions are based",<sup>6</sup> his mother's use of the attributive meanings of copulas are embedded in specific contexts.

## 2. Imagined use of the six copulas

Scene 1: I have some sweets and my mother wants me to share them with my brother; So she may praise me and ask me to share with my brother: རེ་བུ་ ཡག་པོ་ཡིན། རོ་ རེ་ལ་ལ་ ཉན་པོ་ཡིན། ལྷན་སྐྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ར་ མཉམ་དུ་ བྱེ་རེ་ལ་ བགོ་བཤའ་ རྒྱག་གྱི་ རེད། *naḥi bu yag-po yod/ kho naḥi kha-la ṅan-po yod/ spyun-skya chuñ-ṅa mñam-du bye-ril bgo-bśa rgyag-kyi-red* "My son is a good boy, he listens to me, he will share sweets with his younger brother."

Scene 2: I gave some to my brother but my brother complains to my mother that I only gave him a small piece and my mother may say; རེ་བུ་ ཡག་པོ་ཡིན། རོ་ས་ ལྷན་སྐྱུ་ རྒྱུ་ར་ལ་ བྱམས་པོ་ བྱེད་ནས་ འདྲ་འདྲ་ ལྷན་གྱི་རེད། *naḥi bu yag-po yin / khos spyun-skya chuñ-ṅa byams-po byed-nas ḥdra ḥdra sprad kyi-red* "My son is a good, he treats his brother with love and will share equally (sweets) with his younger brother."

<sup>2</sup> See Tournadre & Dorje 2003: 119-122.

<sup>3</sup> See Tournadre & Dorje 2003: 119-122.

<sup>4</sup> See Tournadre & Dorje 2003: 119-122.

<sup>5</sup> See Chang & Chang 1984: 614-616, Garrett 2001: 70, 91, Chonjore 2003: 207, and Tournadre & Dorje 2003: 118-122.

<sup>6</sup> Tournadre & Dorje 2003: 118.

Scene 3: I gave him little bit more but my brother still complains to my mother and starts crying, I am not sharing equally. My mother is bit annoyed and say; རེ་བུ་ཡག་པོ་རེད། ལོས་ སྐྱུན་སྐྱུ་རྒྱུང་ང་ལ་ བྱམས་པོ་ བྱེད་ཀྱི་མ་རེད། ཨ་མའི་ལ་ ལ་ ཡང་ ཉན་གྱི་མ་རེད། དེོས་ནས་ རེ་བུ་ ཡིན་ན་ *nahi bu yag-po red / khos spyun-skya chuñ-ña-la byams-po byed-kyi-ma-red / a-mahi kha-la ñan-gyi-ma-red/ dños-nas nahi bu yin-na* "My son is a good, he doesn't treats his brother with love and will not listen to mummy. I wonder is he really my son?"

Scene 4: I protest that I gave him enough, so then my mother may pay attention to my brother to console him; རེ་བུ་ ཡག་པོ་ ཡོད་རེད། ལོ་ རུ་གི་མ་རེད། ཨ་མ་ལ་ཤོག། *nahi bu yag-po yod-red / kho ñu-gi-ma-red/ a-ma-la sòg* "My son is a good, (he) doesn't cry. Come to mummy."

Scene 5: My brother goes to my mother to be consoled. She may console him further by saying; རེ་བུ་ ཡག་པོ་འདུག་ ལོ་ རུ་གི་ མི་འདུག་ ཨ་མས་ བྱམས་པོ་ བྱས་ ནས་ ཨ་མ་ མཉམ་དུ་ ཉོག་ང་འགོ་ *nahi bu yag-po hdug kho ñu-gi mi-hdug a-mas byams-po byas-nas a-ma miñam-du ño-gar hgro* "My son is a good, he is not crying, mummy will be nice to him and we will go together to buy sweets."

Scene 6: I feel left out and feel I am missing more by not sharing the sweets. So I might go and share more with my younger brother. And my mother may say to me: རེ་བུ་ཡག་པོ་རེད་བཞག་ ཨ་མའི་བུ་མ་རེད་བསམ་བྱུང་། *nahi bu yag-po red-bzag a-mahi bu ma red bsam byuñ* "My son is a good, I thought he is not mummy's son."

### 3. Discussion

In this section we offer a few remarks to further elucidate the meaning of each copula as they occur in the story 'share the sweets'.

#### ཡོད་ *yod*

Scene1: རེ་བུ་ཡག་པོ་ཡོད་ *nahi bu yag-po yod*, here use of ཡོད་ *yod* is to endear me to my mother and feel closeness to her by use of first person possessive. She wants to encourage me to do as she says by praising me and showing her approval of my good behaviours. It often works a charm as kids usually want to impress their mother for her affections.

The copula ཡོད་ *yod* after adjectives occurs naturally in a reminiscence

about something personal, an object or experience or feeling; for example: བོད་ཀྱི་ཀྲུ་མུ་ཞིམ་པོ་ཡོད། *bod-kyi ku-sū zim-po yod* "Tibet's apple are delicious" or དབྱར་ཀར་འབྲོག་ས་རྒྱུད་པོ་ཡོད། དགུན་ཀར་རྒྱུད་པོ་མེད། ཟླུ་མ་ཚོ་ཡོད། *dbyar-kar ḥbrog-sa skyid-po yod / dgun-kar skyid-po med/ grañs-po yod/* "Summer at nomad pastures is very pleasant. Winter it is not pleasant, it is cold." In such situations ཡོད་ཟེད་ *yod-red* may also occur but sounds less personal. The sentence བོད་ཀྱི་ཀྲུ་མུ་ཞིམ་པོ་ཡོད་ཟེད། *bod-kyi ku-sū zim-po yod-red* "Tibet's apple are delicious" is a statement rather than a description from memory.

### ཡིན་ *yin*

Scene 2: In this scene my mother is declaring her support for my reputation as a good boy contrary to my younger's complains by saying; འདི་བྱ་ཡག་པོ་ཡིན་ *ñahi bu yag-po yin*. She also wants me to know that she is still backing me to do the right thing. Here use of ཡིན་ *yin* is more appropriate as a declarative statement is the strongest support to show that you will not accept other's misrepresentation. Therefore other copulas will not have same connotation of support.

### ཟེད་ *red*

Scene 3: My mother wants to still give me some chance to be good but she is disappointed and being a little sarcastic in saying; འདི་བྱ་ཡག་པོ་ཟེད་ *ñahi bu yag-po red*. She knows I have not been good because I made my younger brother cry and I ought to know that is not good. Her use of ཟེད་ *red* is opposite to the use of ཡོད་ *yod*, in that ཟེད་ *red* seems to distance herself from me and feeling appears neutral rather than endearing.

Therefore ཟེད་ *red* is "contradictional" because often when Tibetan use ཟེད་ *red* with adjective a contrary statement may often follow. For example, རྒྱ་གར་གཞུང་ཡག་པོ་ཟེད། ཡིན་ནའང་བོད་རང་བཙན་ལ་ངོས་ལེན་མེད་ཟེད། *rgya-gar gžun yag-po red / yin-naḥaṅ bod ran-btsan la ños len med red /* The government of India is good; however it does not accept Tibetan Independence."

### ཡོད་ཟེད། *yod-red*

Scene 4: Now that my mother has distance herself from me, she concentrates on my younger brother. She says འདི་བྱ་ཡག་པོ་ཡོད་ཟེད། *ñahi bu yag-po yod-red* to my younger brother, more for my benefit to show a

fact about a good boy, who does what mother, says. If she was saying for my brother's benefit then she would probably use ཡོད་ *yod*, to be more personal.

Thus ཡོད་རེད་ *yod-red* is used for factual statement and it could be factual based on your own knowledge or others. However, when used it appears more like general knowledge rather than something personal. For example; if say: ལོན་ཏོན་སྐྱིད་པོ་ཡོད་རེད། *lon-ton skyid-po yod-red* "London is nice", it seems like general fact contrast to ལོན་ཏོན་སྐྱིད་པོ་ཡོད། *lon-ton skyid-po yod* "London is nice", it sounds like I have live in London.

### འདྲུག་ *hdug*

Scene 5: My mother is now focused on my brother and as he comes into her view; she can testify: རེ་བྱ་ཡག་པོ་འདྲུག་ *nahi bu yag-po hdug* and also to encourage him to stop crying, if he has not already done so. Also for my benefit, she is testifying to her factual statement in scene 4. Therefore འདྲུག་ *hdug* is testimonial as you confirm a fact by what you see. You can imagine that prior to scene 5, me and my brother are nearby but not within my mother's line of sight. Since, my brother came to my mother, she can testify, he is good and not crying. Prior to seeing him, it would be incorrect to use འདྲུག་ *hdug*.

### རེད་བཞག་ *red-bzag*

Scene 6: Now that my mother has got my attention in scene 5 and I want to reveal, I am really a good boy who listens to his mother and share more of my sweet with my brother. My mother is happy to reveal that རེ་བྱ་ཡག་རེད་བཞག་ *nahi bu yag-po red-bzag*, this to take back what she said earlier about maybe I am not so good. Throughout these dialogues she is speaking indirectly at me, letting me know her thoughts.

### *Brief Biography of Sonam Dugdak and his family*

For the reader to better understand Sonam Dugdak's linguistic background, he provides the following first person narrative of his background.

My mother is from Lingtham, a small village in Sikkim. In Lingtham, they speak a Sikkimese (Dränjong) dialect and the dialect is similar to Tsāngkä (Shigatse area dialect). My father is from

Dromo (Chumbey Valley), Tibet, and Dromo’s dialect is very similar to Sikkimese dialect as it is on the border with Sikkim. My parents probably learnt to speak exile “standard” Tibetan when they moved to Tibetan settlements in South India in 1975.

I was born in a Tibetan settlement in South India. In 1986, I gained a scholarship to study in UK from the age of nine. At school, there were children from a few different nationalities of Africa and Asia and we lived in our own nationality houses. We were looked after by Tibetan ladies, who were our teachers and guardians, thus helping to maintain our language and traditions. I visited my family in India almost every summer holiday and wrote home during the school term. I continue to speak Tibetan actively with members of the Tibetan Community in Britain.

**References**

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**།། བྱེ་རིལ་བགོ་བཤའ་རྒྱལ།། “Share the Sweets”**

ཁ་མངར་སྐྱགས་པའི་སེམས་ལ་གསལ།། བྱམས་ལྷང་བྱིས་པའི་ཡིད་ལ་འཁོར།།

Flatteries are clear in fool’s heart. Affections are evoked in child’s mind.

<p>ཉིན་ཅིག་ ང་ཚོའི་ཨ་ཁང་ ནང་ལ་འཆམ་འཆམ་ལ་ སློབས་དུས། ང་གཉིས་ ལམ་ཁ་ལ་ ལྷག་སོང་། ཁོང་གིས་ ང་ལ་ བྱེ་རིལ་ཉོ་ཡག་ དེལ་སློང་ནས། ཁོང་གིས་ ང་ལ་ ལྷན་སྐྱུ་རྒྱུང་ང་ བཅུ་ལ་ བགོ་བཤའ་རྒྱལ་ཞུ། ལབ་བྱུང་།</p>	<p>One day, when our uncle (maternal) was leisurely visiting our house, we met on the way. He gave me some money to buy sweets and told me to, “Share with your younger brother.”</p>
<p>ངས་དགའ་དག་བྱུང་ནས། ལགས་སོ། ལྷགས་ཇི་ཆེ་གནང་། ལབ་ནས། ལམ་སང་ ཚོང་ཁང་ལ་ བྱེ་རིལ་ ཉོ་གར་ བྱིན་པ་ཡིན།</p>	<p>I happily said, “la-so, thank you very much.” Then I went</p>

	<p>straight away to the shop to buy sweets.</p>
<p>ང་ནང་ལ་ བྱི་རིལ་ ལག་པར་ འབྱུར་ནས་ རིག་དུས། ཨ་ཞོ་ལགས་ བུ་ལོ་ལ་ ཨ་མ་ལགས་ མཉམ་དུ་ རྒྱ་ཚ་ བཤད་ནས་ བཟང་ འདུག་དང་། དེ་ལྟར་སྐྱེ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ བྱི་ལོ་ལགས་ལ་ ཁོ་རང་གཅིག་ལུ་ ཚེད་ མོ་ཚེ་ནས་ བཟང་འདུག་ ཁོས་ ང་ མཚོང་བ་ དང་། ཨ་མ་ལགས་ ཨ་ཚོ་ ལ་ བྱི་རིལ་ འདུག་ ང་ལའི་ བྱི་རིལ་ དགོས། ལའ་ནས་རྒྱ་དུག་ནས་ ཁོ་རང་གིས་ ཚེད་མོ་བཞག་ནས་ བུ་ལོ་ འགོ་ཚེས་ བྱིད་དུས།</p>	<p>When I returned home with sweets in my hand. Uncle and mother were talking inside the house and my younger brother was playing outside by himself. Soon as my younger brother saw me he shouted, “Mummy, brother has sweets, I also want sweets.” Then he started leaving his play things to go inside.</p>
<p>དཔེ་ ཨ་མས་ ང་ལ་ རྒྱ་དཔོན་ནས། ཨ་ཚོ་འབྲུག་གྲགས་ བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ མཉམ་དུ་ བཞོ་བཤའ་བྱུག་ལྟ། དཔེ་བུ་ ཡག་པོ་ཡིད། ཁོ་ དཔེ་ལ་ལ་ ཉན་པོ་ཡིད། བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ མཉམ་དུ་ བྱི་རིལ་ བཞོ་བཤའ་ བྱུག་གྱི་ རིད། ལའ་མོང་།</p>	<p>My mother called out to me, “Brother Dugdak, please share with Bu Chunchung. My son is a good boy. He listens to me. He will share sweets with his younger brother.”</p>
<p>ངས་ བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ རྒྱ་དཔོན་ནས་ བྱི་རིལ་ བཞོ་བཤའ་ བཟུབ་པ་ཡིན། ཡིན་ནའང་། བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ ཁོ་རང་ལ་ དགོས་ཡག་ ཚང་མ་ མ་རག་ ཅོང་། ཨ་མ་ལ་ རྒྱོག་ལ་ བཤད་ནས། ཨ་མ། ཨ་ཚོ་ ཁོ་རང་ ཞེས་པ་དེ་ ཚོ་ ཉར་གྱི་འདུག་ལའ་ནས་ རྒྱ་དུག་བཟུབ་ལྟ།</p>	<p>I called Bu Chunchung and shared the sweets. However, since he did not get all the ones he wanted, he complained loudly to my mother, “Mummy, brother is keeping the tasty ones to himself.”</p>
<p>ཨ་མས་ང་ལ། དཔེ་ བུ་ཡག་པོ་ ཡིན། ཁོས་ བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ལ་ བུ་མས་པོ་ བྱིད་ནས་ འདྲ་འདྲ་ རྒྱ་དུག་རིད། ལའ་མོང་།</p>	<p>My mother said to me, “My son is a good. He treats his brother with love and will give equally to his younger brother.”</p>
<p>ངས་ བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་ མཉམ་དུ་ ང་རང་གི་ དགའ་བ་ འགའ་ཤས་ བཞོ་ བཤའ་ བཟུབ་པ་ཡིན། ཡིན་ནའང་ ངས་ ཁོ་ནས་ རྒྱུ་ལ་སྤྲོད་པ་ འགས་ཤས་ ཚུར་ལེན་ ཅོང་། ཁོ་ཡང་ རྒྱུ་དཔོན་ མ་འགོ་ཅོང་། ཨ་མ་ ཚོང་ལ་ བུ་ནས། ཨ་ཚོ་ ཁོ་རང་ མང་ང་ ཉར་གྱི་འདུག་ ལའ་ནས་ བྱིན་ མོང་།</p>	<p>I shared some of the ones I liked with Bu Chunchung. However, since I took back some of the ones I gave him earlier, he again did not like it went crying to my mother, “Brother is keeping more for himself.”</p>
<p>ཨ་མ་ རྟོག་ཚ་ བསྐྱུ་པོ་ ཚགས་ནས་ ང་ལ། དཔེ་ བུ་ཡག་པོ་ རིད། ཁོས་ བུ་རྒྱུ་རྒྱུ་དང་ལ་ བུ་མས་པོ་ བྱིད་གྱི་མ་རིད། ཨ་མའི་ ལ་ལ་ཡང་ ཉན་གྱི་མ་རིད། དོས་ནས་ དཔེ་བུ་ ཡིན་ན། ལའ་མོང་།</p>	<p>My mother is bit annoyed and said to me; “My son is a good. He doesn’t treat his brother with love and will not listen to his mummy. I wonder is he really my son?”</p>
<p>ངས་ ང་རང་ རྒྱབ་ཚ་ བྱིད་ནས། དཔེ་ ཁོ་ལ་ འདྲ་འདྲ་ རྒྱ་དུག་པ་ཡིན། ཁོས་ མ་རབས་ བྱིད་ནས་ མང་ང་ དགོས་ ལའ་ནས་ ཉན་གྱི་ མི་འདུག།</p>	<p>I defended myself by saying to my mother, “I gave him equal</p>

<p>ངའི་ ལ་མ་ལ་ ལམ་བརྒྱབ་ལྟེ།</p>	<p>share, but he is being greedy and wants more and would not listen (be reasonable).</p>
<p>ལ་མས་ ང་ལ་ ཡ་ མ་བྱེད་ནས། བྱ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་ལ། ངའི་ བྱ་ཡག་པོ་ ཡོད་ཅིང། ཁོ་ བྱ་གིན་ མ་ཅིང། ལ་མ་ལ་ཤོག། རྒྱུད་འབོད་མོང་།</p>	<p>Mother ignored me, and called out to Bu Chunchung by saying, "My son is a good. He doesn't cry. Come to mummy."</p>
<p>ལ་མ་ལགས་ ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ་ བྱ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་ལ་ བཞུ་གར་ སློབས་བྱུང་། ལ་ ཞང་ལགས་ ཡང་ ཕྱི་ལོགས་ལ་ སློབས་ནས། བྱ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་ལ་ བྱ་མོལ་ ཉོ་ ཡག་ དདུལ་སྤྲད་གར་ འགྲོ་དུས་ ལ་མ་ལགས་ཀྱིས་ལ་ཞང་ལ། དགོས་ མ་ཅིང་ ཁོ་ལ་ ད་ལྟ་ བྱ་མོལ་ མང་པོ་ འདུག ལམ་བློ།</p>	<p>Mother came out to see Bu Chunchung. Uncle came out too and went to give some money to Bu Chunchung to buy sweets. Mother said to Unlce, "There is no need; he has enough sweets at the moment."</p>
<p>དེ་ནས་ བྱ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་ལ། ངའི་བྱ་ཡག་པོ་འདུག ཁོ་བྱ་གི་མི་འདུག ལ་ མས་ བྱ་མས་པོ་ བྱ་མ་ནས་ ལ་མ་ མཉམ་དུ་ རྗེའ་ལ་ བྱ་མོལ་ ཉོ་གར་ འགྲོ་ལོ།</p>	<p>Then she said to Bu Chunchung, "My son is a good, he is not crying. Mummy will lovingly go later to buy sweets with you."</p>
<p>ངས་ བྱ་རྒྱུད་རྒྱུད་ལ། ཨོའི་ འདིར་ཤོག བྱ་མོལ་ གང་འདི་ དགོས། བྱ་ ཤུར་ ལ་ལྷགས། ལམ་ནས་ རྒྱུད་ བཏང་པ་ཡིན།</p>	<p>I called out to Bu Chunchung, "Oi, come here, which sweets do you want, cry baby!"</p>
<p>ལ་མས་ ཁོ་ལ་ མགྲོགས་པོ་ ལ་ཚོ་ ཚར་ལ་རྒྱགས། བྱ་མོལ་ འདམ་གར་ རྒྱགས། ལ་ནའི་ ལ་ཚོ་ ལ་ལ་ ཉན་ལྷ། ལམ་མོང་།</p>	<p>Mother said to him, "Quickly, go to your brother and choose the sweets. And listen to your brother."</p>
<p>ངས་ བྱ་མོལ་ མང་ང་ ཁོ་ལ་ སྤྲད་ཅིང་། ཁོ་ འདོད་པ་ལེངས་པ་ འདུ་པོ་ འདུག ལ་མས་ ངའི་མགོ་ལ་ བྱ་མས་པོ་ བྱེད་ནས་ ང་ལ། ངའི་ བྱ་ཡག་ པོ་ རེད་བཞག ལ་མའི་བྱ་ མ་ཅིང་ བསམ་བྱུང་། སྤྲོན་རྒྱ་རྒྱུད་ང་ མཉམ་དུ་ བྱ་མོལ་ འདུ་འདུ་ བགོ་བཤའ་རྒྱག་ བྱས་ རྗེའ་མོ་ ཅམ་པོ་ བྱེད་ནས་ རྗེའ་ཡག་ ལྷ་ལོ། ལམ་ནས། ལ་ཞང་ མཉམ་དུ་ རྒྱུད་ཆ་ བཤད་ཡག་ འགོ་རྒྱགས་སོ།</p>	<p>Since, I shared more sweets with him, he looks satisfied. Mother patted me on the head and gently said; "My son is good, I thought he is not mummy's son. Share sweets equally with your younger brother and play carefully together." Then she started her conversation with Uncle.</p>

