

*“The Dalai Lama was indeed an absolute dictator;
more so as regards his own country than Herr Hitler
and Signor Mussolini in theirs.” — Sir Charles Bell*

Triumphalism in Tibetan Buddhism

*The Philosophical Debate fueling
the Dorje Shugden Controversy*

*An Independent Investigation
researched by Michael-James B. Weaver*

(Revised January 27th, 2026)

“Bodhisattvas should follow my example. I renounced my kingdom and attained complete enlightenment. You must be aware of how close the relationship between renunciation of the world and the eventual attainment of supreme enlightenment is.”

“Father, I am no longer the son of one family, one clan, or even one country. My family is now all beings, my home is the Earth, and my position is that of a monk who depends on the generosity of others. I have chosen this path, not the path of politics. I believe I can best serve all beings in this way.”

— Siddhartha Gautama¹

“Whoever fights against the Shugden spirit defends religious freedom. I compare this definitely to the Nazis in Germany. Whoever fights them defends human rights, since the freedom of Nazis is not freedom.”

— The 14th Dalai Lama²

¹ Translations by Thich Nhat Hanh, *Old Path, White Clouds: Walking in the Footsteps of the Buddha*.

² An example of [Godwin’s Law](#), this quote is taken from the Dalai Lama’s interview with the well-known, long-time Tibet observer, Klemens Ludwig (“Auch im Buddhismus gibt es gute und böse Kräfte” [*Even in Buddhism there are Good and Evil Forces*], *Esotera*, May 1998, p. 82). The English translation is very precise. In German it reads, “Wer also den Shugden-Geist bekämpft, verteidigt die Religionsfreiheit. Ich vergleiche das durchaus mit den Nazis in Deutschland. Wer sie bekämpft, verteidigt die Menschenrechte, denn die Freiheit der Nazis ist keine Freiheit.”

Contents

- 1400's- 1900's – *On the Horns of a Tetralemma* (p. 5)
- Early 1900's – *A Portrait of the 13th Dalai Lama* (p. 28)
- 1959 – *The Dalai Lama's Letters* (p. 42)
- 1959 – *Analysis from 'The Making of Modern Tibet'* (p. 56)
- 1960's-1990's – *Politically-Motivated Non-Sectarianism* (p. 60)
- 1960's-1990's – *Theocracy-in-Exile* (p. 67)
- 1978-1980 – *Like Mexican Catholicism Gone Mad* (p. 74)
- 1996-1998 – *A Gandhian Perspective* (p. 77)
- 2010 – *Vegetarian between Meals* (p. 82)
- 2010 – *The Return of the King?* (p. 85)
- 2014 – *Social Boycotts vs. Social Discrimination* (p. 88)
- 2014 – *Criminals in History*³ (p. 90)
- 2019 – *Like a God Transformed into a Demon* (p. 91)
- 2019 – *Battle of the Hero Narcissists* (p. 94)
- 2019 – *Barely There: Only as an Appearance* (p. 103)

³ “To repeat Lionel Tiger’s definition: ‘Males bond in terms of either a pre-existent object of aggression, *or a concocted one.*’ The whole business of politics and government as conducted by males hinges around the process of identifying or inventing the kind of leopard that will unite the greatest possible number of men in the tightest possible bond.” (Elaine Morgan, *The Descent of Woman*, p. 215; emphasis hers)

JE TSONGKHAPA: "THE UNION OF THE TWO TRUTHS"

Nihilism	The Middle Way	Eternalism
Utter Non-existence	Ultimate Non-existence → ← Conventional Existence	Inherent Existence

Ultimate truth is emptiness of inherent existence, and emptiness accepts the existence of phenomena that are merely imputed in dependence upon a valid basis of imputation. It is dependent relationship itself that is used as the reason for establishing lack of inherent existence. Likewise, the absence of inherent existence is what makes the conventional existence of any phenomenon even possible. Being mutually supportive, there is no contradiction whatsoever between the two truths. Emptiness is a non-affirming negative; this means that in the process of negating the inherent existence of any conventional phenomenon, emptiness itself is not conceived as inherently existent, so there is no reason to negate even a conceptual image of emptiness, in favor of a non-conceptual nothingness.

GORAMPA: "NEITHER EXISTENCE NOR NON-EXISTENCE"

Nihilism	The Middle Way	Eternalism
Non-existence	Neither Existence → ← Nor Non-existence	Existence

What Je Tsongkhapa considers to be the two truths are in fact two more extremes. We, like Nagarjuna, negate all views: existence, non-existence, both, and neither. We agree that the existence of any phenomenon (whether conventional or inherent) is negated by emptiness. If one then takes emptiness of inherent existence as ultimate truth—as Tsongkhapa does—one falls into nihilism, since there is no transcendent reality other than this ‘emptiness’. Since for us it is an affirming negative, emptiness affirms its own existence, which must also be negated in turn. In this way, all conventional truths including emptiness of inherent existence are to be negated. Ultimate truth is ineffable and indescribable—not even really as “neither existence nor non-existence”—such that anything that could be said about it is conceptual ignorance, not wisdom. Ignorance and wisdom are invariably contradictory, and thus the two truths can never coexist.

∞ ON THE HORNS OF A TETRALEMMA ∞

As a proponent of the Prasangika-Madhyamika school of Buddhist philosophy, the Dalai Lama takes the position that it is impossible to be liberated from rebirth without understanding the doctrine of emptiness as it is presented by that school; even other Buddhist philosophical schools (and hence all non-Buddhist traditions) are incapable of providing the insight required for liberation. Thus, even in the context of dialogue, he, like other Buddhist modernists before him, maintains a certain Buddhist triumphalism. (Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*, p. 187)

How would you respond if your Spiritual Guide threatened to harm *himself* or *others* if you did not adhere to his spiritual teachings? While non-violence is at the heart of Buddhadharma, today there is a spiritual ‘civil war’ happening within Tibetan Buddhism called the Dorje Shugden Controversy, in which Westerners “have become foot soldiers in a Tibetan feud” (Bunting 1996). In essence, what they are both fighting over is whether conventional truths survive enlightenment intact. (Gelugpas say *yes!*) How much would it matter that you’re on *the winning side*, especially if your Lama’s very own health and long life were threatened by which side you choose? (Not to mention your own rebirth in Vajra hell if you choose improperly!) Would you rally to his cause? How far do you take the fight to the other side? At this point, do you interact just to make the other to feel defeated? Does your emptiness justify your meanness?!

Introduction

This essay assumes you are already somewhat familiar with this controversy (as outlined on previous 4), my aim here being to put the topic back into its philosophical context by tracing it to its doctrinal roots. Understanding the overlapping relationships between **the four traditions** of Tibetan Buddhism (Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyu, and Gelug), the **four philosophical schools** that Buddha taught (Vaibhashika, Sautrantika, Chittamatra, and Madhyamika), **the three turnings** of the Wheel of Dharma (four noble truths, emptiness, and Buddha nature), and **the three vehicles** (Hinayana, Mahayana, and Vajrayana) is truly head spinning, but absolutely necessary to keep one's bearings.

Most philosophical debates and past schisms within Buddhism seem to be rooted in the question over which of the above constitutes the 'highest' teachings, the means by which the other levels are to be understood. For example, Theravadin Buddhists accept only the first turning of the Wheel of Dharma, the latter two being considered heretical by them. There are similar debates within Mahayana Buddhism about which teachings are best, and this is what started the Dorje Shugden Controversy as well.

Stephen Batchelor says, "For the followers of Shugden this is not an obscure metaphysical disagreement, but a life-and-death struggle for truth in which the destiny of all sentient beings is at stake" (*Letting Daylight into Magic*, p. 65). Sounds important. Indeed, the current Dalai Lama has publicly threatened to take his own life if his followers do not follow his 'advice' and renounce Dorje Shugden, as the next four quotes describe:

One of the first public manifestations of the Dalai-Lama's state of mind was his refusal, after the Tibetan New Year of 1976, of the long life offerings made by the Tibetan government. Traditionally, the Dalai-Lama accepts such an offering after the new year as a sign of the pure bond (*dam tshig tshan ma*) that exists between him and Tibetans: this bond is based on his commitment to continue his work as Dalai-lama and the Tibetans' allegiance. His refusal signaled in effect that he thought that the bond had been undermined and that the behavior of Tibetans was incompatible with his remaining as Dalai-Lama. When pressed by the National Assembly to accept the offerings, the Dalai-Lama sent back even stronger signals, mentioning dreams in which dakinis had entreated him to return to the pure realms. The refusal of the offerings of long life was already bad enough. The mention of these dreams was akin to a declaration of intention to abandon this world and his role therein. This sent the Tibetan community into a veritable ritual frenzy. The state oracle of Ne-chung ordered Tibetans to recite an enormous number of mani, the mantra of the bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara of whom the Dalai-Lama is said to be a manifestation. (Georges Dreyfus, *The Shuk-den Affair*, pp. 257–258)

The Dalai Lama's opposition to the worship of Shugden became more pronounced in 1996. He made strong public statements against the practice during teachings at the celebration of the Tibetan New Year. At a tantric

initiation in a Tibetan refugee settlement in south India, he requested that those who did not disavow the deity leave the ceremony. Because of the powerful link that is established in such an initiation between the initiating lama and the initiate, he refused to give tantric empowerments to devotees of Shugden; to do so, he stated, would endanger his health and shorten his life. He said on March 4, "It is good that paying attention to my health you have passed a resolution regarding this matter. Danger to health does not exclusively mean an armed attack. This type is extremely rare in Tibetan society. If there is continued indifference to my injunctions, then there would not be any point in my continuing to live silently as a disappointed man. This would be a more apt interpretation." That is, because the Dalai Lama is said to be able to decide when he shall die, he suggested that if his people do not heed his warnings, he might die soon. (Donald Lopez, *Prisoners of Shangri-La*, p. 192)

In 1996, the Dalai Lama said:

If there are people in the audience who are worshippers of Shugden, I request them to leave, as the initiation is not going to benefit them, it may shorten my life. If you wish a speedy death of your Dalai Lama, then I have no objection.

Indian anthropologist R. P. Mitra comments that "This has an effect of isolating the followers of Shugden. The implication was that if you are worshipping Shugden, you are against the Dalai

Lama” (*The Politics of Religion: Worship of Shugden Among the Tibetans*, p. 50). Again, when asked how it is that *other* people worshipping a deity of their choice could possibly imperil *his* life, the Dalai Lama answered:

You should not think that dangers to my life come only from someone armed with a knife, a gun, or a bomb. Such an event is extremely unlikely. But dangers to my life may arise if my advice is constantly spurned, causing me to feel discouraged and to see no further purpose in living. (*Dalai Lama: Man, Monk, Mystic*, pp. 193–194)

The Dalai Lama’s threat of imminent suicide if you will—if the Tibetan people spurn his ‘advice’ about Dorje Shugden is a winning strategy with a 99% success rate, according to him (“*Dalai Lama Fans Clash with Protestors*,” *The New York Times*, July 2008). Although formally retired from politics since 2011, the Dalai Lama [put his life on the line again](#) in order to influence the 2016 general election for the Tibetan exile government, in a public scolding by the state oracle Nechung which, two weeks later, resulted in [His Holiness reaffirming to live to be 113 years old!](#)

Even though this may be ‘normal’ for Tibetans, isn’t that just a form of blackmail? Going back decades (1976/1996/2016), it is an alarming pattern for any spiritual leader, especially one with such political clout.

Background

Please note that the following loosely threaded notes and quotes attempt to lay out in some linear fashion what amounts to a three-dimensional game of chess! To the uninitiated, I would highly recommend Constance Kassors' very readable article [*Gorampa Sonam Senge on the Refutation of the Four Extremes*](#) for a summary of the debate.

There is also a very informative video series of lectures given by Professor Guy Newland at Sravasti Abbey called *Varieties of Tibetan Madhyamaka*. In the final, ninth part of this series, called "[*Recent Developments*](#)," he discusses the last century of Tibetan Buddhism. He talks about the approaches of the current Dalai Lama and his predecessor to unite the Tibetan people. He also explains the background of the Dorje Shugden controversy from the 1800s onward, at least how it is described by those who support the Dalai Lama's narrative, most notably the work by Georges Dreyfus. (See "[*Among Shugden Texts*](#)" for a substantial rebuttal of Dreyfus, showing that Dorje Shugden was viewed as an emanation of Avalokiteshvara, Manjushri, and Vajrapani in sadhanas composed by illustrious Lamas and Throne Holders long before Je Phabongkhapa was born. See also pages [91-93](#).)

The Tetralemma

According to John Powers, Je Tsongkhapa's new tradition was an "attempt to determine which teachings and practices should be considered normative" (*Religions of the World, "Gelukpa Tibetan Buddhism,"* p. 533). Guy Newland points out that — in the English translation of his Lamrim Chenmo (*The Great Treatise on the Stages*

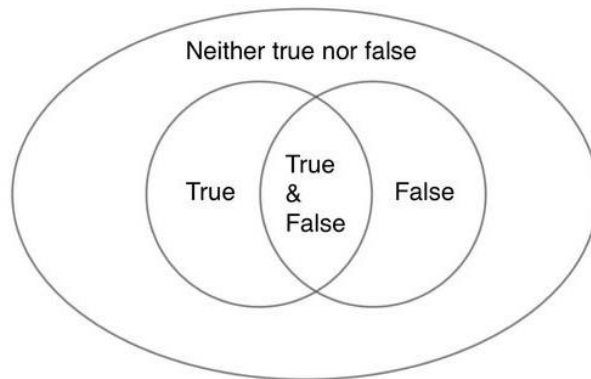
of the *Path to Enlightenment*, vol. 3, chapters 10–16) — for some 80 pages Je Tsongkhapa explains that, by misidentifying the middle way, “Most of those who today claim to teach the meaning of Madhyamaka” misinterpret the tetralemma and thus have completely misunderstood Buddha’s teachings (ibid., vol. 3, p. 127):

You refute the position that things exist $\sim(\mathbf{p})$ and you refute the position that things do not exist $\sim(\sim\mathbf{p})$; you then say, “It is not the case that they both exist and do not exist $\sim(\mathbf{p} \ \& \ \sim\mathbf{p})$.” If you now continue with the refutation, saying, “It is also not the case that they are neither existent nor non-existent $\sim(\sim\mathbf{p} \ \vee \ \mathbf{p}) = (\mathbf{p} \ \& \ \sim\mathbf{p})$,” then you explicitly contradict your own position . If you then stubbornly insist, “Even so, there is no fallacy,” then the debate is over because we do not debate with the obstinate. (Je Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise*, vol. 3, p. 189; amplified by Michael Weaver)

The above quote by Je Tsongkhapa recalls Chandrakirti:

But if the opponent did not desist even when confronted with a contradiction in his own position, then too, as he would have no shame, he would not desist at all even when faced with a logical reason and example. Now for us, as it is said, there is no debate with someone who is out of his mind. (Prasannapada 15:9–10)

According to Tom J. F. Tillemans (*How Do Madhyamikas Think?*, pp. 132–133), the debate centers on the question of double negation and whether negating the fourth ‘corner’ of the tetralemma implies by logical necessity an affirmation of the third. Interestingly, the third and fourth corners concern the *law of excluded middle* ($p \vee \sim p$) and the *law of non-contradiction* $\sim(p \ \& \ \sim p)$, which are axiomatic tautologies.



Karma Phuntsho summarizes things for us in *Mipham’s Dialectics and the Debates on Emptiness: To Be, Not to Be or Neither* (p. 91):

Translating this method into symbolic logic, one could say Emptiness is taught to be $\sim x$, $\sim(\sim x)$, $\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ and $\sim\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ where the proposition x denotes the first extreme, existence. Mipham took this denial of the four extremes in the Indian sources literally and thus understood Emptiness to be without the extremes of x , $\sim x$, $(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ and $\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$. The Gelukpas however argued that it is full of logical contradictions to take the application of the tetralemma literally and thus supplied qualifiers to the extremes negated. Holding Emptiness to be $\sim x$ is not valid as it annihilates conventional existence, conventional self, etc. In addition, $\sim(\sim x)$

contradicts with $\sim x$ because by the rule of double negation it becomes positive, thus, implying x ; the third denial, $\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ is tautologous to $\sim x$ and $\sim(\sim x)$, and $\sim\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ contradicts with $\sim(x \ \& \ \sim x)$ because it implies $(x \ \& \ \sim x)$.

It should be noted, as Constance Kassor points out, that “Gorampa makes an important distinction between twofold dilemmas and fourfold tetralemmas, arguing that they must be understood in terms of qualification and non-implicative negation in each, respectively,” and so “Gorampa argues that one should understand apparent contradictions as being qualified in terms of the two truths when talking about a twofold dilemma involving two extremes such as permanence and annihilation (see MMK XVIII.10–11, above). One should not, however, make such distinctions when talking about the fourfold tetralemma, involving four extremes such as existence, non-existence, both, and neither” (*Is Gorampa’s “Freedom from Conceptual Proliferations” Dialetheist?*, pp. 407, 404).

Ironically, the Dalai Lama was teaching on *The Great Treatise* at Lehi University in New York during the first protests by the Western Shugden Society in April 2008. Professor Newland comments that, because of the diverse nature of the audience—Gelugpas, non-Gelugpas, Christians, atheists—the Dalai Lama simply skipped over this rather ‘sectarian’ section of Je Tsongkhapa’s text—with no comment, as if these 80 pages had never existed!

Connecting the Dots...

Without mentioning names, in that section of *The Great Treatise*, Je Tsongkhapa in particular condemns the Jonang school of Tibetan Buddhism as taught by Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen. The Wikipedia article on the Jonangpas says this about the doctrinal and philosophical reasons for their later suppression by the Gelugpas:

While the Gelugpa embraced the Jonang teaching on the Kalachakra, they ultimately opposed the Jonangpa (followers of the Jonang) over a difference in philosophical view. Yumo Mikyo Dorje, Dolpopa Sherab Gyeltzen and subsequent lamas maintained shentong teachings, which hold that only the clear-light, non-dual nature of the mind is real and everything else is empty of inherent existence. The Gelug school held the distinct but related rangtong view that all phenomena are empty (of inherent existence) and no thing or process (including Mind and its qualities) may be asserted as independent or inherently real (neither may phenomena be asserted as “unreal”).

For the Jonangpas, the emptiness of ultimate reality should not be characterized in the same way as the emptiness of apparent phenomena because it is prabhāsvara-saṃtāna, or “clear light mental continuum,” endowed with limitless Buddha qualities. It is empty of all that is false, not empty of the limitless Buddha qualities that are its innate nature.

In Je Tsongkhapa's interpretation of Madhyamika, the teachings of the Third Wheel (i.e., Chittamatra) such as "Buddha nature," "clear light mind," and "self-cognizers" are not Buddha's final teaching. Other Madhyamikas disagree, because they interpret the tetralemma differently from him, though both sides believe they are correctly following Nagarjuna's view. As we shall see, all of these various points of contention tie back together, centering on Je Tsongkhapa's interpretation of the tetralemma. Alex Wayman brings up negation in discussing "the old debate about 'discursive thought,'" a topic which will come up again further down below (and manifests nowadays as a debate on what constitutes 'mindfulness' in Buddhism):

Tsong-kha-pa does not mention that the opposing position shows a deficient education in the use of grammar and the meaning of words, although this appears to be the case. That is to say, when such an expression as *amanasikara* occurs in these texts—it did!—a reader might think it means "no *manasikara* (attention to something)." But the Sanskrit negation a/an- is susceptible of six different interpretations according to the Sanskrit grammarians. For example, the expression *akaka* does not mean 'no crow,' but 'not a crow,' i.e. any bird (or other creature) that is not a crow. The expression *adharma* (contrasting with *dharma*) does not mean 'no *dharma*' but 'bad *dharma*.' And in the '8,000' scripture, the term *acitta*, as was previously mentioned, does not mean 'no mind' (at all) but 'no thinking' (in that case). (*Ethics of Tibet*, pp. 14–15)

Je Tsongkhapa's apparent 'innovations' concerning the Madhyamika school's understanding of the tetralemma continued to be debated posthumously by the Sakya monk Gorampa (who was born 10 years after Tsongkhapa's death); and with the Dorje Shugden controversy it continues unabated today, although most are not well versed in the philosophical quandary that started it.

For example, the *no-mind* debate rages in present day, pitting Dzogchen as an instantaneous path, against Lamrim as a gradual path:

According to the theory of the gradual path exposed in such a scripture as the *Dashabhumika*, one must first get rid of defilement, by getting 'no discursive thought' namely, of stinginess, etc. And yet with this 'no discursive thought' one still has 'discursive thought,' namely, of the 'three spheres.' It is true that one must also get rid of this kind of discursive thought in order to be 'enlightened.' However, the partisans of 'no discursive thought (at all)' do not explain it in this way, but claim there is an 'instantaneous' enlightenment which does not require the gradual path. Certainly, according to Indian Buddhism one must follow this gradual path in order to reach the 'instantaneous enlightenment' at its culmination. Therefore, the position of the Chinese party in the dispute might be correct (but we need not concede this) as a non-Buddhist system—it is certainly not correct as a Buddhist system. (Alex Wayman, *Ethics of Tibet*, p. 16)

In a paper by Yasuo Deguchi, Jay L. Garfield, and Graham Priest, called “*How We Think Madhyamikas Think*” (p. 7), they explain:

Ultimate reality, if there were one, would be that which has *svabhava*. There is no such thing. Since there is no ultimate reality, there is not truth about it. **To reject this argument one would appear to have to accept that some things have *svabhava*. No Madhyamika can accept this.**

That is, Je Tsongkhapa’s particular brand of Madhyamaka is the “**one, pure Dharma**” that Dorje Shugden is supposed to protect. Because of this and also its Dzogchen teaching of an inherently existent, self-cognizant awareness, Dorje Shugden’s wrath seems particularly aimed at any Gelug practitioner who would entertain Nyingma scriptures, as described by Stephen Batchelor in *Tricycle*’s coverage of the first round of protests in the mid-to-late 1990s:

The Nyingma teaching of Dzogchen regards awareness (Tib., *rig pa*) as the innate self-cognizant foundation of both samsara and nirvana. *Rig pa* is the intrinsic, uncontrived nature of mind, which a Dzogchen master is capable of directly pointing out to his students. For the Nyingmapa, Dzogchen represents the very apogee of what the Buddha taught, whereas Tsongkhapa’s view of emptiness as just a negation of inherent existence, implying no transcendent reality, verges on nihilism. For the Gelugpas, Dzogchen succumbs to the opposite extreme: that of delusively clinging to something permanent and self-existent as the basis of

reality. They see Dzogchen as a return to the Hindu ideas that Buddhists resisted in India, and a residue of the Ch'an (Zen) doctrine of Hva-shang Mahayana, proscribed at the time of the early kings. Moreover, some Kagyu and Nyingma teachers of the Rime ("impartial") revival movement in eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century even began to promote a synthesis between the forbidden Jonangpa philosophy and the practice of Dzogchen. (*Letting Daylight into Magic*, p. 65)

For Tsong-kha-pa, Atisha and the Kadampa teachers (geshes) are high authority. Tibetan scholars not of this line whose opinions he cites, generally for refutation, go unnamed.... Tsong-kha-pa is not the father of sectarianism in Tibet (the honor probably belongs to Drom-tön), but he carries it a long march forward into what passes in Tibet for modern times, and which has been characterized not merely by vitriolic exchanges between scholars, but by competition for taxes and patronage, confiscation of monastic property, forced conversion, and armed warfare. (Mark Tatz, *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics*, pp. 36–37)

In most of those "vitriolic exchanges" between scholars—as demonstrated by Je Tsongkhapa himself in *The Great Treatise*—the biggest insult of all is to present the other Lama as subscribing to a non-Buddhist philosophical view. Thus, both cast the other as a nihilist, following not after Buddha but after teachings similar to the Chinese monk Hashang Mahayana, who had disseminated Zen in Tibet in the late 8th century. Alex

Wayman says, “Indeed, the Tibetan author [Je Tsongkhapa] obviously condemns the Chinese party’s [Hva-shang’s] viewpoint in no uncertain terms, and by implication thereby rejects certain contemporary theories of other Tibetan sects” (*Ethics of Tibet*, p. 14). Carrying on this tradition, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso refers to Hashang several times in his books. The connection between Hashang and the discussion on “ascertaining the negated object” is made clear in *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* (p. 519). In more detail:

Before Hashang came to Tibet, a very pure Buddhadharma flourished there. Many people correctly identified the middle way, and as a result gained profound realizations. However, Hashang’s view quickly spread and as a result many Tibetans found themselves without the means to practise either the profound path or the vast path. By meditating on nothingness instead of emptiness they had forsaken the profound path; and by abandoning all conceptual minds, including love, compassion, and bodhichitta, they had forsaken the vast path. The path to enlightenment was blocked for them. Even the practice of observing the laws of karma was lost. (Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Ocean of Nectar*, p. 171)

Ironically, whilst decrying a ‘ban’ on Dorje Shugden practice, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso continues, “King Trisong Detsen then issued a proclamation declaring that from then on all Tibetans were to follow the teachings of Nagarjuna. However Hashang’s heresy was not completely expunged, and even today there are many who advocate this view” (*ibid*, p. 172). Zen Buddhism was

thereby banned from being practiced in Tibet, which Tibetans still consider a heresy. The history behind this no doubt informs the NKT's internal document *Notes on Teaching Skills* (composed by Neil Elliott—now Gen-la Kelsang Thubten—in 1992, a year after the NKT's founding), which says on page 26:

Breathing meditation is important, but we should not be hesitant about introducing analytical meditation. It is important at a very early stage to explain that this is the uncommon characteristic of our tradition. We do not just meditate on our breath, or on an empty mind.

In *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* (p. 21), Geshe Kelsang Gyatso relates a story by Je Phabongkhapa (his spiritual grandfather) which places heavy emphasis on “practical” Lamrim meditations, rather than merely non-conceptual breathing meditation. In more detail:

We practice breathing meditation at the beginning of a sadhana to eliminate impure minds and bring the mind to a neutral state. From that neutral state we can then easily generate a virtuous state of mind. If we do not first pacify our impure conceptual minds we will find it very difficult to generate pure minds. For example, if we wish to dye a piece of cloth that is already coloured, we will find it very difficult to achieve the colour we want without first bleaching the cloth. Pacifying the mind with breathing meditation is like bleaching cloth. If we use breathing meditation in this way, as a preliminary to more practical types of meditation, it is very helpful; but if we adopt breathing meditation as our main practice we will not attain any lasting results.

We may temporarily pacify our mind and achieve a degree of inner peace, but unless we subsequently engage in practical meditations on the stages of the path — such as meditations on renunciation, compassion, bodhichitta, or emptiness — we will never bring about any lasting changes in our mind but will remain ordinary beings constantly prone to suffering. (Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, *Great Treasury of Merit*, p. 47)

Pure wizard blood is counting for less everywhere, I'm afraid:

Apart from the doctrine of Manjughosha Tsongkhapa alone, these days the views of all Sakyas, Kagyus, Nyingmas and so on are erroneous. They are not even Svatantra or Cittamatra, let alone the view of Prasanga Madhyamaka — meditating only the nihilist view like tirthikas [non-Buddhists] and Hashang. If one upholds the nihilist view, the result is nothing other than going to Avichi hell. Since they can't recognize subtle lethargy, even their meditation is defective. Apart from the thunderous noise of their pretentious boasting about profound secret mantra, they don't even know the direction of bliss and emptiness, luminosity, union and so on. Since for them liberation and path of omniscience does not exist, realization will not arise even if they practice for a thousand years, as pointless as wishing for butter by churning water. (Je Phabongkhapa, *Letter to the novice Nyu'u Tshalmo Trang*)

Notice Je Phabongkhapa's claim about non-Gelugpas, for whom a virtuous mind "does not exist," that phrase being a reference to

their interpretation of the tetralemma, which Gelugpas feel negates even conventional truths such as karma. I can trace Je Phabongkhapa's strong words back to Je Tsongkhapa himself, who stated his opponents' assertions as follows:

Most of those who today claim to teach the meaning of Madhyamaka say that all phenomena ranging from forms through omniscient consciousness are refuted by rational analysis of whether production and such exist as their own reality. For when reason analyzes anything that is put forward, there is not even a particle that can withstand analysis. Also, all four possible ways that something could be produced — as an existent effect, a nonexistent effect, and so forth — are refuted, and there is nothing that is not included in these four. Moreover, these persons assert that a noble being's sublime wisdom which perceives reality perceives production, cessation, bondage, freedom, and so forth as not existing in the least. Therefore, since things must be just as this sublime wisdom knows them, production and such do not exist. (*The Great Treatise*, vol. 3., p. 127)

As I said before, because all of these topics overlap, it is also a debate about which teachings of Buddha are definitive and which are merely provisional or interpretative. In *The Development of Buddhism in India* (p. 19), Kagyu Lama Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche explains:

The third turning of the wheel of dharma is also called the teachings that gave complete clarification. These teachings were given in Shravasti and other places in

India in the presence of all the great bodhisattvas. These teachings revealed that Buddha-nature is present in the mind of all beings. We may wonder why this was taught last. The reason is that in the second turning, the Buddha taught that everything was empty of inherent nature. This teaching could lead to the belief that the goal of the Buddhist path – nirvana – is actually simply complete emptiness or annihilation. To avoid this mistake, the Buddha gave this third set of teachings showing that the mind is not just nothingness. When one achieves Buddhahood, the original intrinsic luminosity of the mind becomes manifest. This luminosity or clarity of the mind means that the mind is not a dark, obscure thing by nature, but it has its own inherent, intelligent clarity. Once one has removed the veils, the thick shroud of ignorance, the inherent clarity of the mind, this brilliance of the intelligence of mind, will shine in its fullness. Once this clarity of the mind has manifest, then one can understand all things of nirvana and samsara very clearly. One has the understanding of phenomena and this knowledge is accompanied by the greatest of bliss and peace.

In contrast to this, in his glossary entry for Wheel of Dharma, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso states categorically that “Buddha’s final view is that of the second Wheel” (= Madhyamika-Prasangika), not the third (= Chittamatra):

Buddha gave his teachings in three main phases, which are known as ‘the three turnings of the Wheel of

Dharma'. During the first Wheel he taught the four noble truths, during the second he taught the *Perfection of Wisdom Sutras* and revealed the Madhyamika-Prasangika view, and during the third he taught the Chittamatra view. These teachings were given according to the inclinations and dispositions of his disciples. Buddha's final view is that of the second Wheel.

In *Clear Light of Bliss* (pp. 153–154), Geshe Kelsang Gyatso gives the theological significance of this, cautioning against confusing the mind's ultimate nature (emptiness of inherent existence) with its conventional nature (clarity and cognizing), confusing emptiness of inherent existence with emptiness of mind (as Hashang had done), and thus confusing Buddha's ultimate intention with a mere provisional teaching. Or worse, confusing Buddhist teachings with non-Buddhist teachings:

The first Panchen Lama was a highly realized practitioner who always behaved in a very humble manner, but when writing about the need to refute mistaken and misleading teachings he was quite direct:

*As we cannot perceive the mindstream of others
We should strive to appreciate the teachings of all;
But I cannot accept those who spread wrong views
And through these wrong views lead many astray.*

What the Panchen Lama wrote several hundred years ago is particularly applicable today. If pure Dharma is to flourish in western countries it is essential that we

examine our beliefs carefully to ensure that they are fully in accordance with the pure teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni. The ugly, unfortunate result of not understanding pure Dharma and of following misleading teachings that pretend to be pure Dharma is sectarianism. This is one of the greatest hindrances to the flourishing of Dharma in the west. Anything that gives rise to such an evil, destructive mind should be eliminated as quickly and as thoroughly as possible.

It should be noted that Geshe Kelsang Gyatso mentions perhaps a reconciliation of sorts by Tantric practitioners:

Buddha also says in the Sutras:

*External objects do not exist,
Mind appears as various things,
Such as bodies, enjoyments, and places;
I explain these as only mind.*

Here, ‘only mind’ means that everything is just a manifestation of mind. If our mind becomes full of bliss, all phenomena that appear to our mind are mere manifestations of our mind of bliss, because besides this they do not exist at all – like things in a dream. Generally, Highest Yoga Tantra is based on the Madhyamika-Prasangika view but, unlike Sutra Prasangika scholars, many Tantric Prasangikas also accept the Chittamatra view that forms are the nature of mind. (*Tantric Grounds and Paths*, p. 142)

In *Ocean of Nectar* (p. 222), Geshe Kelsang Gyatso lists “Since all phenomena lack inherent existence there are external objects” as one of eight profound points unique to the Madhyamika-Prasangika school.

As mentioned earlier, each side considers the other’s interpretation of what constitutes ultimate truth to be nihilistic (in other words, non-Buddhist!), and neither side considers it ‘sectarian’ to dispute non-Buddhist teachings and teachers upholding non-Buddhist views. Accordingly, Gorampa’s texts (like Dolpopa’s) were banned by the Gelugpas. (Yet more historical irony, as this set yet another precedent for declaring Dorje Shugden a heresy!) Here’s why:

Even a serious scholar as Go rams pa cannot resist suggesting, for example, that Tsong kha pa’s supposed conversations with Manjushri may have been a dialogue with a demon instead. (Donald Lopez, *Freedom from Extremes*, p. 17)

Gorampa goes so far as to speculate that Je Tsongkhapa received “false doctrines taught by a demon who, skilled in deception, has taken the form of a tutelary deity” (ibid., p. 201). Thus, Gorampa viewed Je Tsongkhapa’s Wisdom Buddha *as a demon!*

The extent of Gorampa’s philosophical influence is particularly apparent in modern-day Tibetan Buddhist institutions; Sakyapa monastic institutions, such as Sakya College in Dehradun, India, regularly educate scholars from the Kagyu and Nyingma traditions in Madhyamaka philosophy. Kagyu and Nyingma

institutions, in turn, often invite Sakyapa khenpos to instruct their monks in philosophy. (Constance Kassor, *Gorampa on the Four Extremes*, p. 122)

I began this article with the supposed Buddha of Compassion threatening to harm himself, in the face of a so-called Buddha of Wisdom threatening to harm others. It is sad to see spiritual ‘leaders’ resort to emotional blackmail and physical violence when it is, quite literally, *much ado about nothingness*. Neither is an example I would personally wish to follow, as they don’t seem to practice what they preach. I also remain generally unimpressed by followers on both sides. They both shun you if you do not advance their cause, or if you don’t approach the issue in strict black-or-white terms. The Dalai Lama has said, “[W]e can see that the limits of the fundamentalists lie in their inability to tolerate even the idea of dialogue,” from which I conclude that both sides have become rather entrenched in their positions! I really can’t tell them apart!

Bön teacher Tenzin Wangyal cautions that even a 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. (*Wonders of the Natural Mind*, p. 22)

∞ *A PORTRAIT OF THE 13TH DALAI LAMA* ∞

In his book *Beyond Dogma*, the current Dalai Lama is asked about what international political action he advocates to prevent Tibetan genocide. In part, the Dalai Lama responds:

As a Buddhist I am in the habit saying that we have three refuges: the Buddha; the Dharma, the teachings; and the Sangha, the monastic community. We can now include a fourth one: the international community. Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha are terms which may seem mysterious to you, but at the level of active support the international community becomes a fourth refuge, one we greatly need. (p. 125)

The 13th Dalai Lama (1876-1933) also tried this non-spiritual approach: first seeking refuge in the Russians for protection from the invading British; then, when “hope of aid from Russia was dashed to the ground,” warming up to the British for recognized independence and protection from the Chinese; then, in the closing years of his life, turning strongly towards China and weakening relations with the British! Indeed, this life-long political juggling act made it difficult for the Dalai Lama to practice the Buddhist teachings he had memorized as a child:

On one occasion I quote to him the lines out of Ajax of Sophocles, describing the instability of friendship; for an enemy may later become a friend, and a friend turn into an enemy. Without a moment’s hesitation he quotes an old Tibetan saying, which runs as follows:

Even the friend may sometime become a foe
Even the foe may sometime become a friend;
Remembering this, bear enmity to none.

Yet still, Bell notes that after Tibet's fighting with the Chinese:

It was necessary to persuade the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government to spare the lives of these two [Chinese] men, whatever their past history might have been, because if they put them to death they would thereby sow the seeds of great future trouble for themselves and for us. So I went so far as to say, "Even if a man oppressed me, plundered my goods, and killed my children, I should still try to keep calm and consider how it would be best to deal with the matter." On this the Dalai Lama sat back in his chair, laughed consumedly, and said that he quite agreed. (p. 142)

Had the Dalai Lama become so far removed from the teachings of Je Tsongkhapa (quoted below), that a Christian foreigner was the one to remind him of his vow to abandon killing, especially when done out of political retaliation?

*I seek your blessings to complete the perfection of patience
So that even if every living being in the three realms,
Out of anger were to abuse me, criticize me, threaten me,
or even take my life,
Undisturbed, I would repay their harm by helping them.*

Perhaps this should not be so surprising. When Bell asked the 13th Dalai Lama, "In which Dalai Lama's time did the first

Panchen Lama live?" he replied that he did not know (p. 127). What was it that caused the 13th Dalai Lama to compromise on the religious ideals taught to him as a youth?

Though murder in Tibet is not uncommon, the Dalai Lama abolished capital punishment, except for an attempt to poison himself, or other very serious crime against the religion, such a crime occurring only once in every five or ten years. Until the time of his flight to India, while the ideals of his youth were still strong within him, the Dalai Lama, as he himself informed me, allowed no capital punishment in any circumstances. Later on, however, as he became more and more immersed in the difficulties of administration, he found that capital punishment was occasionally unavoidable. (p. 179)

Opening the chapter entitled *Full Control*:

Probably the most difficult of all the Dalai Lama's tasks in his home administration lay in restraining his own monks. They had been accustomed to exercise great power in the secular administration, but he was determined to restrain them from political activities, except within certain well recognised limits; for instance, the Parliament. Indeed, this latter power he also held in check, because he seldom summoned the Parliament, when he was older and found his authority secure beyond all question. He would never admit the argument that religion and politics are inseparable. But religion was over all, Buddha was over all; and that

was the role that he represented and filled. Himself a monk, he reduced the worldly power of the monks around him, and to that extent he increased the authority of the lay officialdom.

The King of Bhutan, a neighboring state, allows the Church no great influence in politics. This king and his people are of Tibetan stock, and follow devoutly the Tibetan religion.

In fact, the idea has long since passed into a Tibetan saying, "Religious affairs and secular affairs stand apart from each other." Ye cannot serve God and Mammon. The Dalai Lama undertook both, but he stood above the law; and even of him you would hear criticism on this account from those who were traditionally opposed to Lhasa, as in Tashi Lhunpo, and from those outside the range of his secular authority, as in Bhutan and Sikkim. (p. 191)

And, ending the chapter entitled *Full Control*:

The Dalai Lama was indeed an absolute dictator; more so as regards his own country than Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini in theirs. To gain his position he could not make use of oratory, as they did; still less of the radio, even if arrangements for broadcasting had existed. But he had greater resources than either oratory or wireless. For he could reward or punish, both in this life and in future lives. "Does it not matter to you whether you are reborn as a human being or as a

pig? The Dalai Lama can help to secure that you will be reborn as a human being in a high position, or, better still, as a monk or nun in a country where Buddhism flourishes.”

Nothing is more important to a Tibetan than his birth in the next life, for indeed, if his life has been evil, and there is none to intervene on his behalf, he may even be condemned to hellish experiences for a thousand years or more. In these circumstances it will be readily understood that the Dalai Lama’s power was almost irresistible. Yet even all this would not have given him that commanding position on the secular side, unless he had possessed a strong will, a good constitution, and a real love of politics and administration. (p. 197)

Bell adds later that “as for the outstanding advantages of his position, he takes them for granted. His people are assured of his divine pre-eminence, his power over this life and the next. What a lot he owes to that!” (p. 372).

Then, in 1914, the first World War broke out. In spite of his precarious position, the Dalai Lama offered a thousand Tibetan soldiers to fight on the British side. Rather pathetically, when offering these men, he wrote that he could not send rifles with them. There were not many rifles in the whole of Tibet, and it would have been suicidal to let any of those rifles go. It was indeed not possible to accept this offer of soldiers, but many Tibetans joined the hospital and ambulance corps.

The Dalai Lama also ordained that certain religious services should be held in the main monasteries throughout Tibet for the success of British arms. This may seem a trivial matter, but, as a matter of fact, the monasteries had to be paid for this service, and the expenditure on this by the Tibetan Government, hardly able to find money for its own needs, was considerable.

In one of the verbal messages that I received from His Holiness, while telling me about these religious services, he added, "We have transferred privately to the credit of the British Government a number of the services which have been held for the Tibetan Government. If we had held all of them for the British, our people would have thought that the British troops must be in desperate straits, and would have been greatly anxious as to the result of the war."

...The Panchen Lama's Government, though unfriendly towards the Government at Lhasa, wished still to remain on terms of close friendship with the British. It is said that while [Chinese] anti-British reports were circulated in Tibet, the Panchen Lama held religious services for killing the enemies of the British in the war. That is a dangerous thing for any lama to do, because it is believed that those who hold such services are themselves likely to die soon. (pp. 235-236, 237)

Are the karmic ramifications for "religious services for the success of British arms" and "religious services for killing the enemies of the British" really that different?

As far as the supernatural cause that led to the Dalai Lama's death, we can read [the speech by Helmut Gassner](#) (pp. 7-8), as well as [an essay by Trinley Kalsang](#), which tell of the vengeful spirit of a monk killed by the Tibetan government who occasionally steps into the medium of Nechung, the State Oracle, giving the Dalai Lamas disastrous advice; this theory is still widely accepted today among Tibetans:

Now rumours began in Tibet as to the cause of the illness and its nature. The traders coming down from Tibet with their strings of mules carrying the yearly supply of wool, yak tails, skins and other products, brought their own stories with them.

It appeared that the Precious Protector had gone to the Field on the last day of the tenth Tibetan month, corresponding with the middle of December. The day of the week was Sunday. According to Tibetan ideas, if a man dies on a Sunday or a Tuesday, it is an evil omen. People say, "He died on a stormy day." The family may expect much sickness and other calamities.

As the Dalai Lama has no family, it seemed to many Tibetans that this passing away on a Sunday portended evil to the Government of Tibet, and through the Government to the whole country.

All reports agreed that the Precious Protector's illness had been short.

Among stories that were then being passed from mouth to mouth, the following might be related. At the end of February, 1934, Palhese, coming for his daily talk, asked me with suppressed eagerness, "Has Rai Bahadur Norbhu told you about recent happenings in Lhasa concerning the passing of the Precious Protector to the Field?"

"He has told me about the medium of the Nechung Oracle giving the Precious Protector medicine which injured him."

Says Palhese, "It is about the medicine that I wish to speak. It was given at the instigation of a tulku from Nyarong (a province in eastern Tibet), who has been reborn as a devil. It did indeed do injury; in fact, it made the Precious Protector an 'Is Not.'

"At the time when the Tengyeling Regent was ruling, this tulku held religious services to promote the interests of Tengyaling and destroy the Precious Sovereign. The tulku was arrested, put in prison, and given many severe floggings with the usual leather thongs on his bare skin, so that his flesh hung in strips after each flogging. But he was a Lama of great learning and ability, and he used to meditate on 'the void.' So it was noticed that during each flogging, severe though it was, he uttered no exclamation of pain, not even the smallest sound. And what was still more remarkable, by the next day his flesh had entirely healed.

“At length, however, angry at this treatment, the Nyarong tulku asked the warder in charge of him for a small knife to cut a lump out of his boot. The warder gave it. When the lama went to pay a call of nature, he used the opportunity to cut his throat. The warder rushed up to seize him, so the lama jumped out of the window of his cell, which was two floors above the ground. The fall killed him.

“Passing from life thus, in anger at the treatment he had received, he reincarnated as a devil, and being of great learning and ability, as a powerful devil. So a high lama of eastern Tibet was engaged to catch the tulku’s mind, put it in the ground, and build a choten over it. This was done; the choten was strongly built, and the necessary articles—religious books and the like—were placed inside it. But a day or two afterwards a great vertical crack was seen in the choten. There had been no earthquake or thunderstorm, and it was clear that the devil was one of great power, and so the mind was able to crack the choten and escape through it.

“Later on, it was noticed that the prophecies issuing through the prophet of the Nechung Oracle were wrong and harmful. At the time of the British military expedition to Lhasa in the Wood Dragon year, he gave out that the Tibetan Government should send soldiers to fight against the British, but that the soldiers should not fire their rifles; this was what happened at Guru [The place, about twenty-eight miles beyond Pari,

where fighting first broke out between the Indian and Tibetan troops]. This and other counsels were not the true utterances of the Oracle, but were put into the mind of the prophet by this evil. And it was this devil who instigated the prophet to give this deadly medicine. There are in Tibet those who can see and recognise deities and devils, and those recognised the devil by their own methods, while the high lamas did so by their power of divination.

“That prophet had been dismissed after the British expedition but two or three years ago the Precious Protector reinstated him, allowing the deity to come again inside him.”

This is the only instance which I heard that a tulku had been reborn as a devil. (pp. 435-437)

Tenzin Peljor says, “One of the sources NKT/WSS are using is Sir Charles Bell, but Bell is clear that the 13th Dalai Lama was a good ruler, who worked extremely hard and selflessly as the servant of his people. (Do you need some quotes?)” *Well, yes!* Bell calls the Dalai Lama ‘selfless’ only once, and it is his only substantial praise of the Dalai Lama after 440 pages, with only 3 pages of the 13th Dalai Lama’s biography left to go! Even then, this is mentioned more in passing, so as to guess the natural cause of the Dalai Lama’s demise:

When we were in Lhasa in 1921, Kennedy, from such reports as reached him, thought that the Dalai Lama’s heart was weak. In 1934, Harnett, from what I told him,

thought that the symptoms of the Dalai Lama's last illness perhaps indicated uraemia or pneumonia, aggravated by the giving of wrong medicine. In his advanced years and growing weakness he may well have caught a chill, going backwards and forwards at night between Clear Eye Palace and Jewel Park Palace. The season at this time was mid-December.

It would be equally true to say of this selfless ruler that he died of overwork in the service of his country. The overstrain of this was aggravated by his quick temper, checked more and more from bursting out as he grew older; but the strain was always there. And he had suffered those two hard periods of exile, hard for the body and hard for the mind. (p. 441)

Turn the page, and Bell provides a few other *Opinions on His Rule*:

Thus the Thirteenth Dalai Lama passed to the Honourable Field. Within a few months of his death he came to be called "The Great Thirteenth," equal to, if not greater than, him whom men had always called "The Great Fifth."

During his life Tibetan opinion was divided regarding his administration. The great Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, focusing the ideas of the Panchen Lama's party, was against him. So was that portion of the Tsang province which lies under its shadow, as well as the supporters of the Tengyeling Monastery, and the greater part of Drepung Monastery. A number of those living outside

the boundaries of his secular rule, for instance in Bhutan and Sikkim, were glad to show their independence by criticism. This antagonism came from the educated classes; to the peasants he was above criticism, just the Precious Protector, the Inmost One.

In order to strengthen Tibet internally and externally he found it necessary to impose fresh taxation, and no country dislikes increased taxes more than Tibet does.

The commonest criticism was that he should have confined himself to the purity of the spiritual rule, and appointed a Regent to hold the dirty reins of worldly government. Neither from Asiatic or European did I ever hear the smallest whisper against his moral character. Still, Kazi Dawa Samdrup, a learned Bhutanese, was one of several who expressed the opinion that by taking up the secular rule the Dalai Lama became more earthly, and when he went to the Honourable Field, would have to work hard to regain his previous spiritual position. (p. 442)

In the closing paragraphs, Bell asks, "Was the Dalai Lama on the whole a good ruler? We may safely say that he was, on the spiritual as well as the secular side" (p. 444). One reason he gives for each is that (a) the Dalai Lama "diminished [the monks's] interference in politics," and, ironically, thereby "increased the spirituality of Tibetan Buddhism," and (b) the Dalai Lama "built up an army in the face of opposition from the monasteries; prior to his rule there was practically no army at all."

I have often read that ‘conservative monastic elements’ had opposed the 13th Dalai Lama’s “modernist-leaning reforms, which attempted to turn Tibet into a modern state through the assimilation of foreign ideas and institutions (such as an efficient standing army and Western-style education)” (Kay, p. 43), yet Bell says that “The Dalai Lama had no wish to develop his country on Western lines; in fact, he had a horror of that” (p. 190). The only ‘reform’ that the monastic establishment was opposed to, according to Bell, was building an army! He only mentions the closing of the English school in Gyantse in connection with the Dalai Lama taking political refuge in China.

According to tradition, Guatama was offered the choice of being a World Conqueror or a religious mendicant evolving into the Buddha. He chose religious poverty rather than great wealth and world sovereignty. So did Christ. But here a whole nation did so—Tibet. Has any other nation stood on this high level? (p. 34)

We may rightly ask why the 13th Dalai Lama himself was not able to stand on that level, and whether from a spiritual perspective this degeneration of his refuge vows (i.e., seeking a fourth refuge) caused Tibet’s fall to the Chinese. Perhaps the answer comes from his previous incarnations, who Bell claims, also felt “that their sanctity was tarnished by the dirt of worldly administration” (p. 65).

What was the Dalai Lama’s own attitude to his status in the Buddhist world? Did he himself believe that he was supreme among Buddhists, a god on earth? Among Tibetans and other Asiatics he claimed this supremacy

in every word and deed. As for myself, it was undesirable and unnecessary for me to ask such a question. My chief duty was to promote friendship between Britain and Tibet, a duty doubly strong in these days when so many injure our fatherland by ignorant criticism of those whose forms of government or rules of conduct differ from our own.

Whenever the idea was in the background of our talks, he would look at me with a deprecating smile, as much as to say, "I know I cannot expect you to believe it." And he was always ready to admit a lack of knowledge or lack of power in the presence of a few daily associates, such as the Court Physician. But in public it was always asserted. On the medal that he gave me it is confidently claimed ["From the Dalai Lama who holds the Vajra, Lord of all Buddhists on the earth..."]; in his Political Testament it is placed clearly on record. (pp. 216-217, [147])

I find the above interesting because the [*Resolution of the Tibetan Cholsum Convention*](#), which hopes to "ensure the fulfillment of the great religio-political visions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama," goes so far as to outrageously claim that the current Dalai Lama "is the overall head of all Buddhist traditions on this earth"! Some detractors have doubted the accuracy of this English translation, saying that a Dalai Lama would never describe himself thus, yet here it is again in all its 'glory' ... Just think of all the things this title has been used to justify!

∞ THE DALAI LAMA'S LETTERS ∞

[The following is what the Dalai Lama says in his 1962 and 1990 autobiographies to explain the correspondence between himself and General Tan in the days leading up to his self-exile. General Tan was the acting representative of the Central People's Government in Tibet and the political commissar of the Tibet Military Area Command. This is then followed by the next chapter with some analysis of relevant points from A. Tom Grunfeld's The Making of Modern Tibet. My own comments appear italicized and in brackets.]

The general's letters to me were written in friendly terms which would have seemed more sincere if I had not already been told of his rage by my ministers. He said he was concerned for my safety and invited me to take refuge in his camp.

I replied to all his letters to gain time—time for anger to cool on both sides, and time for me to urge moderation of the Lhasan people. And to this end I thought it would be foolish to argue with the general, or to point out that Chinese protection from my own people was the very last thing I needed. On the contrary, I decided to reply in a way which I hoped would calm him down. And this I could only do by seeming to accept his sympathy and welcome his advice. In my first letter I told him how embarrassed I had been at my people's action in preventing me from coming to his entertainment. In the second letter, I told him I had given orders that the people surrounding the Norbulingka should disperse, and I concurred with his point of view that these people, under the pretext of protecting me, were only working to undermine the relations between the Chinese and our

government. And in the third letter, I also added that I must separate the people who supported new ideas and those who opposed them before I could visit his headquarters.

Even if I had thought at the time that these letters would be quoted against me later, I would still have written them, because my most urgent moral duty at that moment was to prevent a totally disastrous clash between my unarmed people and the Chinese army.

And perhaps I may repeat once more that I could not approve of violence, and so I could not approve of the violent attitude the people of Lhasa were showing. I could and do appreciate the affection for me, as the symbol of Tibet, an attitude which was the immediate cause of the anger they were showing against the Chinese on that fateful day. I could not blame them for the anxiety for my safety, because the Dalai Lama represented most of what they lived and worked for. But I was certain that what they were doing could only lead to disaster if they continued, and as Head of State I had to try by every means to curb their feelings and stop them bringing about their own destruction under the weight of the Chinese army. So the advice I gave them was given with the fullest sincerity, and although my letters to the Chinese general were written to disguise my true intentions, I felt and still feel that they were justified. (Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, pp. 186-188)

Tuesday, March 10th, 1959

General Tan's first letter to the Dalai Lama:

Respected Dalai Lama:

It is very good indeed that you wanted to come to the Military Area Command [for the theatrical performance]. You are heartily welcome. Since you have been put into very great difficulties due to the intrigues and provocations of the reactionaries, it may be advisable that you do not come for the time being.

Salutations and best regards,

Tan Kuan-san

A letter arrived from General Tan Kuan-sen suggesting, in suspiciously moderate tones, that I move to his headquarters for my own safety. I was amazed at his effrontery. There was no question of doing any such thing. However, in order to buy time, I wrote him a conciliatory reply. (Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, p. 134)

[I read no effrontery in the general's letter; rather, as indicated in the Dalai Lama's reply below, the general seemed rather undisturbed by the incident and was willing to wait it out. Also, there was no suggestion at this point that the Dalai Lama move to the PLA headquarters.]

Wednesday, March 11th, 1959

The Dalai Lama's response to General Tan's first letter:

Dear Comrade, Political Commissar Tan:

I decided to go to the Military Area Command to see the theatrical performance yesterday, but I was unable to do so, owing to obstruction by the people, both religious and secular, who were instigated by a few evil elements and who did not know the facts.

This has put me to indescribable shame. I am greatly upset and worried and at a loss as to what to do. When I received your letter (this refers to the letter sent by General Tan Kuan-san to the Dalai Lama on the 10th), I was immediately overjoyed because you were not disturbed by the trouble.

Reactionary, evil elements are carrying out activities endangering me under the pretext of protecting my safety. I am taking measures to calm things down. In a few days when the situation becomes stable, I will certainly meet you. If you have any internal directives for me, please tell me frankly through this messenger (this refers to Ngapo Ngawang Jigme).

Dalai Lama, written by my own hand

[Indeed, rather than "buying time," the Dalai Lama's reply above actually adds fuel to the fire, saying that the rebels' shameless activities are greatly upsetting him, even endangering his life!]

General Tan's second letter to the Dalai Lama:

The reactionaries are now audacious enough to have openly and arrogantly carried out military provocations. They have erected fortifications and set up a large number of machine guns and armed reactionaries along the national defence highway (the high way north of Norbulinka), thereby seriously disrupting the security of the national defence communications.

Many times in the past, we have told Kasha [the governing council of Tibet] that the People's Liberation Army is duty-bound to defend the country and to protect the security of communication lines related to national defence, and therefore it certainly cannot remain indifferent to this serious act of military provocation.

Therefore, the Tibet Military Area Command has sent letters to Surkong, Neusha, Shasu and Pala asking them to tell the reactionaries to remove all the fortifications they have established and withdraw from the highway immediately.

Otherwise, they themselves will have to bear the responsibility for all the serious consequences. I want to inform you of this. Please let me know what your views are at your earliest convenience.

Salutations and best regards,
Tan Kuan-san

In his other letter, the General ordered the ministers to instruct the crowd to take down the barricades that had been erected on the road outside Lhasa that led to China. Unfortunately, this had a calamitous effect. It seemed to the crowd leaders that, by saying they wanted these removed, the Chinese were making a clear indication that they planned to bring in reinforcements which would be used to attack the Dalai Lama. They refused.

On hearing this, I decided that I must speak to these men myself. I did so, explaining that there was a serious danger that Chinese troops would use force to dispel the crowd if people did not leave very soon. Evidently my entreaty was partially successful, as afterward they announced that they would move to Shol, the village at the foot of the Potala, where many angry demonstrations were subsequently held. But the majority of the people outside the Norbulingka remained.

It was at this point that I consulted the Nechung oracle, which was hurriedly summoned. Should I stay or should I try to escape? What was I to do? The oracle made it clear that I should stay and keep open the dialogue with the Chinese. For once, I was unsure of whether this really was the best course of action. I was reminded of Lukhangwa's remark about the gods lying when they too become desperate. So I spent the afternoon performing *Mo*, another form of divination. The result was identical. (Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, pp. 134-135)

Thursday, March 12th, 1959

The Dalai Lama's response to General Tan's second letter:

Dear Comrade, Political Commissar Tan:

I suppose you have received my letter of yesterday (referring to March 11) forwarded to you by Ngapo. I have received the letter you sent me this morning. The unlawful actions of the reactionary clique break my heart. Yesterday I told Kasha to order the immediate dissolution of the illegal people's conference and the immediate withdrawal of the reactionaries who arrogantly moved into Lo-pu-lin-k'a [Norbulinka] under the pretext of protecting me.

As to the incidents of yesterday and the day before, which were created under the pretext of protecting my safety, and have seriously estranged relations between the Central Government and the Local Government, I am making every possible effort to deal with them. At 8:30 Peking time this morning a few Tibetan army men suddenly fired several shots near the Tsinghai-Tibet Highway. Fortunately no serious disturbances occurred.

As to the questions mentioned in your letter (referring to the letter of the 11th sent by General Tan Kuan-san to the Dalai Lama), I am planning to persuade my few subordinates and give them instructions. Please tell me frankly any instructions you have for me. Dalai

Sunday, March 15th, 1959

General Tan's third letter to the Dalai Lama:

Respected Dalai Lama:

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your two letters dated March 11 and March 12. The traitorous activities of the reactionary clique of the upper strata in Tibet have grown into intolerable proportions. These individuals, in collusion with foreigners, have engaged in reactionary, traitorous activities for quite some time. The Central People's Government has long adopted an attitude of magnanimity and enjoined the Local Government of Tibet to deal with them seriously, but the Local Government of Tibet has all along adopted an attitude of feigning compliance while actually helping them with their activities, with the result that things have now come to such a grave impasse.

The Central People's Government still hopes that the Local Government of Tibet will change its erroneous attitude and immediately assume responsibility for putting down the rebellion and mete out severe punishment to the traitors; Otherwise the Central People's Government will have to act itself to safeguard the solidarity and unification of the motherland.

In your letter, you said; "As to the incidents which were created under the pretext of protecting my safety and have seriously estranged relations between the

Central Government and the Local Government, I am making every possible effort to deal with them.”

We warmly welcome this correct attitude on your part. We are very much concerned about your present position and safety. If you think it necessary and possible to extricate yourself from the present dangerous position of being abducted by the traitors, we cordially welcome you and your entourage to come and stay for a brief period in the Military Area Command. We are willing to assume full responsibility for your safety. As to what is the best course to follow, this is entirely up to you to decide.

In addition, I have much pleasure in informing you that the second National People’s Congress has decided to open its first session on April 17.

Salutations and my best regards,

Tan Kuan-san

Monday, March 16th, 1959

The next days passed in a dizzying, frightening blur. I began to receive reports of Chinese military build-up and the mood of the crowd grew almost hysterical. I consulted the oracle a second time, but his advice was the same as before. Then, on the 16th, I received a third and final letter from the General, together with an enclosure from Ngabo. General Tan's letter was much along the lines of his last two. Ngabo's, on the other hand, made clear what I and everyone else had dimly concluded, namely that the Chinese were planning to attack the crowd and shell the Norbulingka. He wanted me to indicate on a map where I would be—so that the artillerymen could be briefed to aim off whichever building I marked. It was a horrifying moment as the truth sank in. Not only was my own life in danger, but the lives of thousands upon thousands of my people now seemed certain to be lost. If only they could be persuaded to go away, to return to their homes. Surely they could see that they had demonstrated to the Chinese the strength of their feelings? But it was no use. They were in such a pitch of fury against these unwelcome foreigners with their brutal methods that nothing could move them. They would stay till the end and die keeping guard over their Precious Protector.

Reluctantly, I set about replying to Ngabo and General Tan, saying something along the lines that I was dismayed by the disgraceful behaviour of reactionary elements amongst the population of Lhasa. I assured them that I still thought it a good idea that I should move to the sanctuary of the Chinese headquarters, but that it was very difficult just at the moment;

and that I hoped they too would have the patience to sit out the disturbances. Anything to buy time! After all, the crowd could not stay put indefinitely. I took care not to say where I was in the hope that this lack of knowledge would cause uncertainty and delay. (Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, pp. 135-136)

The Dalai Lama's response to General Tan's third letter:

Dear Comrade, Political Commissar Tan:

Your letter dated the 15th has just been received at three o' clock. I am very glad that you are so concerned about my safety and hereby express my thanks.

The day before yesterday, the fifth day of the second month according to the Tibetan Calendar (March 14, 1959) I made a speech to more than 70 representatives of the government officials instructing them from various aspects, calling on them to consider seriously present and long-term interests and to calm down, or my life would be in danger.

After these severe reproaches the conditions took a light turn for the better. Though the conditions here and outside are still very difficult to deal with at present, I am trying skillfully to make a demarcation line between the progressive people and those opposing the revolution among the government officials.

A few days from now, when there are enough forces that I can trust, I shall make my way to the Military

Area Command secretly. When that time comes, I shall first send you a letter. I request you to adopt reliable measures. What are your views? Please write often.

Dalai

Tuesday, March 17th, 1959

Having dispatched my replies, I was at a loss as to what to do next. The following day, I again sought the counsel of the oracle. To my astonishment, he shouted, 'Go! Go! Tonight!' The medium, still in his trance, then staggered forward and, snatching up some paper and a pen, wrote down, quite clearly and explicitly, the route that I should take out of the Norbulingka, down to the last Tibetan town on the Indian border. His directions were not what might have been expected. That done, the medium, and young monk named Lobsang Jigme*, collapsed in a faint, signifying that Dorje Drakden had left his body. Just then, as if to reinforce the oracle's instructions, two mortar shells exploded in the marsh outside the northern gate of the Jewel Park.

Looking back on this event at a distance of more than thirty-one years, I am certain that Dorje Drakden had known all along that I must leave Lhasa on the 17th, but he did not say so for fear of word getting out. If no plans were made, nobody would find out about them.

I did not begin preparations for my escape immediately, however. First I wanted to confirm the oracle's decision, which I did by performing *Mo* [divination] once more. The answer agreed with the oracle, even though the odds against making a successful break seemed terrifyingly high. Not only was the crowd refusing to let anyone into or out of the palace grounds without first searching and interrogating them, but also Ngabo's letter made it clear that the Chinese had already considered the possibility that I might try to escape. They must have taken precautions. Yet the supernatural counsels fitted in with my own reasoning: I was

convinced that leaving was the only thing I could do to make the crowd disperse. If I was no longer inside, there could be no reason for people to remain. I therefore decided to accept the advice. (Dalai Lama, *Freedom in Exile*, p. 136)

[* *In the book In Exile from the Land of Snows (pp. 216-217), it is reported that Lobsang Jimge, the medium for the Nechung spirit, did not know about the Dalai Lama's escape from Lhasa until Friday, March 20th.*]

Analysis from 'The Making of Modern Tibet'

- China concedes that the theatrical performance was set for 10 March, but emphatically denies that the Dalai Lama was coerced in any way to set that date. Beijing has maintained, in fact, that it was the Dalai Lama who set the date and, indeed, had done so *one month earlier*. For years this claim was roundly ridiculed as “communist lies and propaganda” until Dawa Norbu publically acknowledged that a former Tibetan official had confided in him that the Chinese account was correct. When confronted with this contradiction in 1981 the Dalai Lama admitted that his original story was incorrect, agreeing that he had selected the date several weeks prior to the event. (Grunfeld, rev. ed., p. 137)
- On the seventeenth [of March] some Tibetan Cabinet ministers sent a letter to Ngabo, requesting his aid in helping to move the Dalai Lama to the PLA camp. Ngabo acknowledged receipt of the letter and promised assistance. Then, suddenly, at 4:00 P.M., the Dalai Lama claims to have heard two mortar shells fired from the direction of the military camp, only to splash harmlessly into a marsh in the palace compound. A state of near panic ensued, since it was assumed—although never verified—that the Chinese, finally having come to the end of their patience, had decided to attack. The Dalai Lama recalled that at this point the hasty decision was made that he would have to flee. (Grunfeld, p. 136)
- On 2 March 1959—only days before the revolt broke out in Lhasa—the Calcutta paper the *Statesman* published a remarkable article by an unnamed author [Our Special

Correspondent, "The Pattern of Revolt in Tibet," *The Statesman*, 2 March 1959, p. 6. See *Requiem for Tibet*, pp. 164-175]. This author, proving to have exceptional sources and insight, uncannily predicted the possible course of events in Tibet in coming days. He wrote that the Khampas and refugees, alike, in Lhasa would agree that the Chinese soldiers presented little threat to the Tibetans in the holy city. In spite of this, the rebels would begin cutting off all the roads leading into the city in the event that fighting broke out. Moreover, the author surmised, the Dalai Lama would be unwilling to leave Lhasa; in order to convince him to leave, the Khampas would have to create some disturbance. (Grunfeld, pp. 142-143)

- From the very beginning, the Dalai Lama's private and public communication with Han officials remained friendly and supportive... The Dalai Lama has never repudiated the fact that he was on friendly terms with the Han for almost a decade, but now argues that his conciliatory attitudes were solely meant to avoid an outbreak of violence, playing for time in the hope that moderate solutions could be found. China cannot be blamed for thinking this explanation too convenient and too much the beneficiary of hindsight. Can Chinese officials be blamed for believing the Dalai Lama was forced to leave Tibet against his will, or that the Tezpur statement was not his own? All the evidence supported those points of view. The disbelief with which China's version of events was received in the West only reinforced China's xenophobia and distrust of the world's media. (Grunfeld, pp. 141-142)

- While the notion that the Dalai Lama had been abducted was considered unworthy of serious attention [by the Western and Indian press corps], so were the Dalai-Tan letters. Both Nehru and *Time* assured their respective audiences that the letters could not be anything but the cleverest of forgeries. This rush to judgement caused considerable embarrassment when China published photocopies of the letters, half of them in the Dalai Lama's handwriting, whereupon the cleric was obliged to verify their authenticity. (Grunfeld, p. 144)
- The most telling example of the lack of objectivity on the part of the [Legal Inquiry Committee (LIC) established by the CIA-funded International Commission of Jurists (ICJ)] is its treatment of sterilizations. The LIC quotes the Dalai Lama as stating that sterilization began in 1957 and was carried out on a "large scale"; "two or three villages were completely sterilized." The Tibetan leader went on to claim that "the Communist Chinese adopted these measures under the pretext of preventing certain epidemic diseases. They administered certain injections to men and women in order to make them impotent. They also forced upon them treatments to make the male and female reproductive organs functionless." In this instance the committee made its charge on the basis of a single complaint: "expert medical evidence on the details given is that the treatment described is not in accordance with any known method of sterilization. Searching clinical investigations of Tibetans who claimed to have been sterilized produced no proof that this had been done." The Dalai Lama's promises to produce evidence to back up these charges never materialized. That did not

prevent widespread publicity, as though the allegation had been irrefutably documented. In the years following the publication of the LIC's report, the Dalai Lama, Trikamdas, and the ICJ all claimed to have found proof of sterilization; yet they failed to produce a single person who could be clinically examined to verify these claims. One must keep in mind that impotency is a frequent consequence of the ravages of venereal disease, which was rampant throughout Tibet. (Grunfeld, pp. 148-149)

- In trying to sum up the events of the 1950s, the emerging evidence tends to substantiate China's view of events. The Dalai Lama's oft-stated view that China's "colonial" rule was so oppressive and murderous that the Tibetan people felt compelled to rise in one mighty swoop to cut their chains was not quite accurate. However, neither was China's claims of absolute benevolence, harmony, and freedom from feudal oppression ("a joyous liberation was stirring the ends of the land"). Perhaps it can be said that when events were depicted for public consumption, China appears to have fabricated the least. (Grunfeld, p. 149)

∞ *POLITICALLY MOTIVATED NON-SECTARIANISM* ∞

According to my understanding the Dalai Lama's main wish is to integrate the four Tibetan traditions into one. The leaders of the other traditions will gradually disappear, leaving him alone as head of Tibetan Buddhism. In this way he will be able to control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism. In the beginning this plan was rejected by the leaders of the Sakya, Kagyu and Nyingma traditions, while the Gelugpa remained neutral. Later, the Dalai Lama changed his approach. He is now trying to destroy the practice of Dorje Shugden and change the Gelug tradition, while at the same time developing a close relationship with the other traditions, especially the Nyingmapa. Gradually he hopes to fulfil his wishes in this way. Therefore this present situation has developed because many people did not accept the Dalai Lama's decision to ban the practice of Dorje Shugden. I believe that right now the Gelugpas are experiencing difficulties, but that sooner or later it will be the turn of the other traditions. (Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, talk.religion.buddhism, 19 December 1997)

We should not think that Geshe Kelsang Gyatso is simply making things up. His remarks refer to the unsuccessful United Party (1964-1973) headed by the Dalai Lama's brother, Gyalo Thondup. This political campaign took steps to unite the four Buddhist traditions in Tibet (along with the animistic Bön religion) into

one, with the Dalai Lama as its spiritual head. Their plan was ultimately rejected by the spiritual leaders of each tradition.

The Dalai Lama and his ministers had just lost their country. In exile, they wanted to create a unified Tibetan community. To achieve this new unity, exile leaders in their new headquarters in the Indian hill-town of Dharamsala began making plans to extend their control over the five religious schools of Tibet... When word of the United Party's religious reform got out in 1964, the exiled government was unprepared for the angry opposition that leaders of the religious schools expressed. To them, this unification plan appeared as a thinly disguised scheme for the exile government to confiscate the monasteries that dozens of lamas had begun to re-establish in exile with funds they had raised themselves. (Erik Curren, *Buddha's Not Smiling: Uncovering Corruption at the Heart of Tibetan Buddhism Today*)

Yet, the sentiments of the United Party still exist today. Another brother of the Dalai Lama, Thubten Jigme Norbue, has publically stated, "I think His Holiness should be limiting [Dorje Shugden worship], because he is the leader of the Tibetan people. And all these different sects, you know, Nyingmapa, Gelugpa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa—he has authority over all of these because he's the leader of the country, the leader of the people" (*An Interview With Thubten Jigme Norbu, Tricycle: the Buddhist Review*, No. 27, Spring 1998, p. 80). It is no wonder, then, that the majority of people in the West so readily assume that the Dalai Lama is the spiritual leader of Tibet, like a kind of Buddhist Pope. Yet, each tradition

within Tibetan Buddhism already has its own spiritual head; however, things have begun to change in recent generations:

Since the death of Tsongkhapa in 1419, the Ganden Tripa or ‘throneholder of Ganden (monastery),’ has been the official head of the Gelukgpa sect. Traditionally, this was an elected position. The current Ganden Tripa was appointed by the Dalai Lama. (Donald S. Lopez, Jr., *ibid*, p. 73)

The following are a number of direct quotes, which show the Dalai Lama’s intention to combine all the different Buddhist traditions of Tibet into one monolithic “Tibetan Buddhism”:

As for our own study and practice of Buddhism, depending on the direct of our interests and our capacity, we should try to study as widely as possible, and with sincere respect, as many of its traditions as we can. This helps us broaden and deepen our understanding and practice of whatever is our main tradition... Thus we must try to have a very broad and open attitude, and, based on respect and interest, study and practice as widely as we can the various traditions of Buddhism. (Dalai Lama, *The Gelug/Kagyü Tradition of Mahamudra*, p. 261)

It is well known that my whole approach is non-sectarian and in the Tibetan tradition I am particularly trying to promote simultaneously the practices of Sakya, Nyingma, Kagyu and Gelug. One person can embrace all the teachings. However, in following Dorje Shugden there is a tendency towards sectarianism

which does not work well with my non-sectarian approach. (Dalai Lama, *His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Address to the Buddhist Society, The Middle Way*, 16 June 1996, p. 246.)

People usually say that in general Gelugpas are not allowed to become Nyingmas and, in particular, once people start propitiating Dolgyal [a derogatory name for Dorje Shugden], if they engage in Nyingma practices, Dolgyal will destroy them. So, when they say this, they are taking exactly the opposite line to what I say—"We should try to practice all the four traditions in a complete form within one single physical basis." This attitude poses an obstacle to my efforts to try to introduce this good example. Therefore, I have had to put a stop to it. (Dalai Lama, *Concerning Dolgyal with Reference to the Views of Past Masters and Other Related Matters*, October 1997)

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. (Excerpt from an open letter circulated by The Network for Western Buddhist Teachers, after a meeting between the Dalai Lama and a group of twenty-two Western Dharma Teachers, March 1993)

Based on a superficial reading of the above quotes, the Dalai Lama will always win the public relations war: it is made out to be simply a good vs. evil struggle between non-sectarianism and sectarianism. When interviewed by Dr. Ursula Bernis, the Dalai Lama said, “non-sectarian [among the Tibetan Buddhist traditions Sakya, Nyingma, Kagyu, Gelug] means not only to respect but to practice [them] simultaneously” (*Condemned to Silence: A Tibetan Identity Crisis*, p. 88, emphasis mine, bracketed words hers).

A careful reading of both this and the above quotes shows that the Dalai Lama consistently defines the non-sectarianism approach as studying *and* practicing multiple traditions simultaneously. But what happens if you work out the implications of what the Dalai Lama is promoting? For example, is a Theravadin Buddhist ‘sectarian’ for not studying and practicing Mahayana scriptures? And then, is one to achieve non-sectarianism with non-Buddhist religions in the same way, by including their teachings and practices into one’s own? This must be so since the same principle would apply at both the intra-faith and inter-faith levels, and yet when asked, “Don’t all religions teach the same thing? Is it possible to unify them?” the Dalai Lama said:

People from different traditions should keep their own, rather than change. However, some Tibetan may prefer Islam, so he can follow it. Some Spanish prefer Buddhism; so follow it. But think about it carefully. Don’t do it for fashion. Some people start Christian, follow Islam, then Buddhism, then nothing.

In the United States I have seen people who embrace Buddhism and change their clothes! Like the New Age. They take something Hindu, something Buddhist, something, something... That is not healthy.

For individual practitioners, having one truth, one religion, is very important. Several truths, several religions, is contradictory.

I am Buddhist. Therefore, Buddhism is the only truth for me, the only religion. To my Christian friend, Christianity is the only truth, the only religion. To my Muslim friend, [Islam] is the only truth, the only religion. In the meantime, I respect and admire my Christian friend and my Muslim friend. If by unifying you mean mixing, that is impossible, useless.

The [*Resolution of the Tibetan Cholsum Convention*](#), which hopes to “ensure the fulfilment of the great religio-political visions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama,” goes so far as to claim that the Dalai Lama “is the overall head of all Buddhist traditions on this earth”! This resolution instructs Tibetans how to ostracize their fellow countrymen from Tibetan society if they happen to be Dorje Shugden devotees—who don’t mix their religious tradition with others. The resolution’s recommendations include regarding Dorje Shugden devotees (no matter whether they are Lamas, monks, or nuns) as second-class citizens, that they be ineligible for government programs or foreign aid, that their restaurants and shops be boycotted, and that their books and literature be banned.

We should remember that such fanaticism was ratified in the name of “Tibetan freedom” and the “safety” of a Nobel Peace Prize Laureate! Also, if monks do not sign an oath that they are not Dorje Shugden practitioners, they are expelled from monasteries controlled by the Tibetan government. (Is it ‘Tibetan Buddhism’ or ‘Tibetan government-controlled Buddhism’?) If, according to the Dalai Lama, it is okay to do Dorje Shugden practice “in private,” then why are monks obligated to declare it publically?

∞ *THEOCRACY-IN-EXILE* ∞

A number of visitors to Tenzin Peljor's blog ask about the present state of democracy within the Tibetan exile community. For example:

Do Tibetan people living in India under the Tibetan Government in Exile have a free democratic society with freedom of worship, freedom of speech and democratic control of their government? What do you think?

Referencing page 444 of Charles Bell's published portrayal of the previous Dalai Lama (1876-1933), Tenzin Peljor replies:

The Tibetans in Exile are in a transition of changing their system from 'feudal with democratic elements' (Charles Bell) to democracy. The main person who is strongly pushing that is HHDL himself, as far as I know he even 'ordered' democracy for his people, when there were to many objection in the TGIE. However, as Bell puts it, any change in the Tibetan Society must have [its] right pace and cannot be undertaken too quickly otherwise the Tibetans will be very unhappy. So now the great task to change the system from 'feudal with democratic elements' to mere democracy is in [its] first 50 years. Ask yourself how long Europeans needed to change their society from middle age to our modern time system, and how much you can expect perfections in 50 years only.

Similarly, to me, he comments:

If you read Sir Charles Bell you should have noticed that he warned that reforms in the Tibetan community must be implemented carefully and slowly otherwise, Bell says, Tibetans will become very unhappy.

So, the motor of democracy is HHDL and the speed it can be applied depends on the Tibetan community.

Granted, Bell said it would have been unfair to compare early 20th-century Tibetans' state of democracy to that of contemporary Europeans'. By extension, rather than gauging the democratization of the Tibetan exile government based on a Western timetable, why don't we look to the Tibetan psyche itself for one?

Tibet is perhaps best known for its Tibetan Buddhism. In his book *Union of Bliss and Emptiness* (p. 56), the Dalai Lama describes the courage of Tantric Bodhisattvas who work for the benefit of all: "The attitude of wishing to bring about such welfare and to place sentient beings in buddhahood is not just a relaxed state of mind, but rather one of great urgency. It is a mind aspiring to achieve enlightenment within one lifetime, and that within the shortest time possible," which the Dalai Lama says is three to twelve years.

This raises the question: If Tibetan Buddhists are prepared to forsake all of samsara for full enlightenment—within three short years, no less—how do we explain their continued attachment to a samsaric, feudal theocracy headed by the Dalai Lama? The

Bodhisattva's spiritual ideal is embedded into the very hearts and minds of the Tibetan people and is undertaken without reservation, yet the path to democracy is a major stumbling block. And, it cannot be claimed that democracy is a foreign concept to Buddhists, since Buddhists trace back democratic self-government to Buddha Shakyamuni's first spiritual community.

We can look back over the past 50 years and see whether the Tibetan exile government has met the challenge of democracy: What has changed, and what has stayed the same? This is a big question, so let's look at how it is answered by [Tashi Wangdi](#), the Dalai Lama's representative in the Americas:

Q: Professor Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche was elected the head of the Tibetan Administration cabinet—effectively a prime minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, the government-in-exile?

A: Ever since His Holiness held leadership responsibilities at the age of 16 when he was in Tibet, he wanted to bring about social political reforms. He started those reforms in Tibet. Because of the Chinese invasion and the problem thereafter with the occupation, he could not get through the reforms he wanted to implement. Then in 1959, when the situation went beyond a solution and he had to leave Tibet, as soon as he went to India he continued with the reform and promulgated a draft Constitution. A parliament was elected by Tibetans in exile. He then brought about gradual changes for the democratization of the system. The political leadership is now elected. We have had a

parliament in existence since 1961 and seven years ago we elected a Prime Minister. His Holiness describes himself as semi-retired.

Q: Retired from administrative functions?

A: Yes. The governing responsibility is now carried out by the elected political leadership.

Q: The Dalai Lama exists as a spiritual leader and essentially a figurehead, similar to Queen Elizabeth?

A: As you know, we are not seeking independence, but it's more about the future of Tibet.

Interesting how that last question was totally side-stepped. Nevertheless, there are other issues. Of course, the Tibetan Parliament is not a new institution. The pre-diaspora Parliament was described by Bell (p. 165) as an “example of the semi-democratic influence in the Tibetan Government” (which is probably what Tenzin Peljor is referring to with the words “feudal with democratic elements”). Bell (pp. 168-169) describes what follows after the parliamentary proceedings were concluded and a prevailing/unanimous decision was reached by its members:

After the Parliament at length came to a decision they reported it verbally to the Cabinet, who passed it on with their opinion to the Prime Minister, who in turn submitted it to the Dalai Lama. The Parliament kept no written record of their proceedings.

During the two and a half centuries which preceded the late Dalai Lama's coming of age, the Parliament exercised great power in Tibet. When a Regent is in power during the minority of a Dalai Lama, this Parliament is strong enough to hold the Regent in check, and sometimes even to depose him. Accordingly, during the first years of the Dalai Lama's rule, his instinct would hold him back from overruling it. In 1910 when His Holiness was still a young man, I asked him what happened when the Parliament and Cabinet disagreed. "In whose favour do you decide?" "It is good," he replied, "to make the larger number contented."

But later on he used rather to call together a committee of its leading members, and that with diminishing frequency... "The Parliament goes on talking, talking," the Dalai Lama would tell me, "and makes great delay in cutting the cord" (deciding). Especially was this so in disputes with other nations, though such disputes, if not settled quickly, caused much ill will on both sides.

Towards the end of his life, however, the Inmost One became increasingly autocratic, and would often disagree with the Parliament's recommendation. He would himself then give another order, and the matter was finally decided in accordance with this order, none daring to object.

Thus, the pre-diaspora Tibetan government had a Parliament, a Cabinet, as well as a Prime Minister (Tib. Kalon Tripa, or “Chief Kalon”)!

Since 2001, after some 40 years in exile, the Prime Minister has indeed been directly elected by the people. The Prime Minister is the head of the Dalai Lama’s Cabinet (Tib. Kashag), yet according to the **Article 20** of the Tibetan exile government’s 1991 Constitution, [*Charter of the Tibetans-in-Exile*](#), the position of the Prime Minister (and the Cabinet in general) is “subordinate to His Holiness the Dalai Lama,” with the Dalai Lama as head of state.

Article 19 states that “The executive power of the Tibetan Administration shall be vested in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and shall be exercised by Him, either directly or through officers subordinate to Him,” so in effect what does it matter if the Prime Minister is elected by the people if his main responsibility is to carry out the wishes of the Dalai Lama?

Some have championed a so-called “impeachment clause,” perhaps found in **Article 31, Section 1b**...

The Council of Regency shall exercise executive powers and authority when the Tibetan Assembly, by more than two-thirds of its total members in consultation with the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission, decides that, in the highest interests of the Tibetan Administration, and the Tibetan people, it is imperative that the executive functions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama shall be exercised by the Council of Regency;

...which puts a Regency into place when the Dalai Lama is no longer head of state. This Regency (not the Prime Minister, by the way) will rule in the Dalai Lama's stead until the next Dalai Lama attains his majority and becomes the new head of state. This system has actually been in place since the death of the 5th Dalai Lama, with no change in the foreseeable future; again, no innovative democratization there.

The current Tibetan Constitution being merely a "rough draft" applicable only for the government-in-exile, the Dalai Lamas do not expect to fully relinquish political power until their return to Tibet, supposedly solely as a spiritual leader. Until then, it's [business as usual](#)...

∞ *LIKE MEXICAN CATHOLICISM GONE MAD* ∞

“Based on a long process of careful and thorough investigation, applying different methodological devices, he [the Dalai Lama] advised against the practice [of Dorje Shugden]...” – Tenzin Peljor

What are these impressive-sounding “methodological devices”? Nothing other than casting lots (either through dough-ball divinations or dice-throw divinations), or consulting spirit-possessed oracles (all employed by the Tibetan government!). Sounds more like witchcraft—or spirit worship—than Buddhism!

“It’s all in the open now: every single dream that he’s had, everything with all the oracles. I mean, it’s all there. So, his approach has been to try to diffuse people having suspicion and paranoia about this, by being as open as he can about what his reasons are for doing things.” – Professor Guy Newland

It’s all perfectly logical to you, isn’t it? So, what was this “long process of careful and thorough investigation” that Tenzin Peljor alludes to? Here are excerpts from early talks in 1978 and 1980 by the Dalai Lama on why he changed his stance and ‘advised against’ (they hate the word *ban!*) the practice of Dorje Shugden:

- I decided to prepare for a grand invocation offering to Palden Lhamo prior to performing a dough-ball divination and then implement whatever the result indicated. I put my confidence in this dough-ball divination.

- Three things were written on pieces of paper during the actual preparation of the dough-balls for the divination. [“It is good to rely continually on Gyalchen”. “It is good to rely on Gyalchen in a very secret way”. “It is good to stop relying on Gyalchen”.] ... After the dough-ball divination I felt comfortable at heart, for I had arrived at final decision as to what I should and should not do.
- Although my own decision about what I should practice and avoid was clear-cut, I was unsure whether I should speak about the matter to others or not, so I threw a “Mo” (dice-divination).
- ... mindful of it’s [sic] importance, I had employed the dough-ball divination. I told them that now it was improper for a member of staff who was working for me and the Tibetan Government to make offerings or prayers to Gyalchen or anyone else except Gyalpo Ku-nga and Palden Lhamo.
- The next day, the fourteenth, happened to be the occasion for the State Oracle’s (Nechung’s) New Year prophecy in my private apartment. At that time I asked for guidance, saying that I was happy to have received his unequivocal declaration recently, which had been confirmed by the result of the dough-ball divination.
- I thought it would not be right for me to make a decision through a hasty divination, for they had made a request to me because they were unable to judge for themselves. Mindful of the importance of the matter I did a dough-ball divination.

- Although the importance of the Oracle's predictions and divinations is difficult to assess, considering them and omens I received in dreams, the indications were extremely clear.
- Anyway, I have come to a definite understanding of how these matters came about from both the dough-ball divinations and Nechung's predictions...
- I conducted a dough-ball examination and dice divination which were so convincing that since 1975 I have completely stopped the practice. I have not even had a portentous dream to make me wonder if the deity was vexed.
- Since the news about this will spread gradually to other monasteries, it is possible that some will say that the statue of Gyalchen in the Ganden Great Assembly Hall has been got rid of. If such people come, tell them that I have not taken this step rashly through guess work or without examining and analysing things. I did not have any previous intention to do such a thing, but on my arrival here I had that dream. Now, there is no point in giving importance to dreams for, generally speaking, we will continue to have mistaken perception as long as there is ignorance in our mind-stream. If we have mistaken perceptions while we are awake, then dreams are doubly mistaken, so there is no relying on them. However, wondering what my dream could mean I did a divination and got a result. Still, out of great concern, making the sixty-sectioned cake offering and praying fervently to Dharma Raja, I conducted a dough-ball test above the Assembly Hall and I got the results I mentioned earlier. In this way I have been extremely careful and have not acted indiscriminately...

∞ A GANDHIAN PERSPECTIVE ∞

In her book, *The Tibetan Independence Movement: Political, Religious and Gandhian Perspectives* (pp. 175-176), Jane Ardley writes about “the Dorje Shugden affair”:

During the late 1990s a dispute emerged within the Tibetan exile community that illustrates perfectly why Tibetan politics must become fully secularised. A long-standing issue in the Tibetan community has been the worship of the deity Dorje Shugden, considered to be the spirit of a seventeenth-century monk, Tulku Drakpa Gyaltzen, who protects the *Gelug* sect and its members, particularly from the influence of the *Nyingma* sect. Worship of this figure is especially popular in eastern Tibet, and the present Dalai Lama prayed to Dorje Shugden for many years. However in 1976 the Dalai Lama announced he was advising against the practice because it was promoting sectarianism, which could potentially damage the Tibetan independence movement. Twenty years later, **in 1996, the Dalai Lama went further and announced that members of both government departments and monasteries under the control of the Tibetan exile administration were forbidden from worshipping the spirit** because the ‘practice fosters religious intolerance and leads to the degeneration of Buddhism into a cult of spirit worship’. This led to a massive outcry from Shugden supporters, particularly in Britain. The Dalai Lama was accused of religious intolerance and provided an opportunity that was not

missed by Beijing, who used the dispute as a further reason to denounce the Dalai Lama. In December 1998 the first secretary of the Chinese embassy in New Delhi was reported to have visited a Tibetan settlement in southern India notorious for its support of Shugden.

Although a report by Amnesty International exonerated the Tibetan government in exile of human rights abuses, **the unfortunate fact remains that the Dalai Lama, as political leader of the Tibetans, was at fault in forbidding his officials from partaking in a particular religious practice**, however undesirable. The whole Dorje Shugden affair was an illustration of the complexities of the relationships, both religious and political, between the sects in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition. While the Dalai Lama's stated concern, that worship of the deity threatened the Tibetan struggle, is entirely valid from a political perspective, **this was not cause enough to ban it as a religious practice**. It was also difficult to justify on the grounds that China would manipulate the issue, though this was extremely likely to happen. Rather, **the Dorje Shugden affair was an example of an issue that should have remained completely in the religious arena and should not have been politicised at all**. However, given the two concepts remain interwoven in the present Tibetan perception, an issue of religious controversy was seen as a threat to political unity. **The Dalai Lama used his political authority to deal with what was and should have remained a purely religious issue**. A secular Tibetan state would have guarded against this.

While Gandhi insisted that religion and politics were inseparable, it was not this view that dominated the post-independence Indian state. Congress were resolutely secular, as they recognised that no single religion could be allowed to dominate government, having seen the damage that religio-politics could inflict during Partition. **The Dalai Lama, a staunch admirer of Gandhi, should be aware of this.** Although it was appropriate for the Gandhian infusion of religion and politics to influence the practical ‘means’ of independence, in other words, *satyagraha*, Gandhi’s religious ideas did not influence the political thinking of the state-builders of the new India.

Perhaps there is a lesson here for Tibetans: religion may have a place in the practical means of resistance and protest, but it should not play a role in the government in exile, which, it is intended, should form the government of a future Tibet. Although Tibetans inside and outside Tibet may use some form of religious ritual or religious justification in their protest, this does not mean the government in exile should interpret all protest in religious terms. Nor does it mean that religion has to then infuse political life at an institutional level. **For true Gandhian techniques to be developed, the Tibetan political process would need to become resolutely secular,** while leaving religion to continue to play a role at grass-roots level.

∞ *VEGETARIAN BETWEEN MEALS* ∞

Below are two ironic excerpts from Barry Sautman's 56-page ["Vegetarian between Meals": The Dalai Lama, War, and Violence](#), which appeared in the Spring 2010 edition of *Positions: East Asia Cultures Critique*, a journal that critically examines the histories and cultures of East Asia and Asian America.

Exile leaders term the Dalai Lama "an apostle of peace" and "true protector and savior of humanity." Western elites tout him as a "peacemaker" and "expert on conflict resolution." When, however, the Dalai Lama was asked about demands for intervention in Sri Lanka, where a Buddhist government was waging an offensive against Hindu and Muslim Tamil rebels, "he said he did not want to comment on the internal affairs of another country." Asked how Australian Aborigines should deal with the denial of their rights, he said, "It is a difficult situation. I don't know." Asked whether Western powers should bomb Serbia in response to Serb actions in Bosnia, he replied, "Very complicated, very sad. What to do, really I don't know." Asked how to solve the Israel-Palestine conflict, he replied, to a crowd's delight, "The precise answer for this question is, 'I don't know.'" Asked what can be done about misuse of Buddhism by governments, notably Burma's, he said "I don't know. Is the Burmese regime really Buddhist?" Asked about Danish cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad that sparked protests in the Muslim world, the Dalai Lama said "I think tricky

question . . . so difficult . . . I remain silent. No comment." Asked how best to end the war in Iraq and bring peace to the Middle East, he stated, "The best answer for that, I don't know." The crowd "applauded his honesty." Asked " 'what can we do to wake up our civilization to . . . global warming, warfare and religious fundamentalism,' he said 'the real answer is, I don't know.' " The Dalai Lama may have no ideas about specific conflicts or may not want to alienate patrons, but such statements have not lowered his esteem in the eyes of those constantly told of his peacemaking prowess. A Canadian journalist has noted that "one of the Dalai Lama's favorite phrases is 'I don't know,' but audiences never seem to believe him." (pp. 100-101)

...critics of the TGIE [Tibetan Government-in-Exile] and religious dissenters have been assaulted, threatened, or excluded from the émigré polity. A Tibet scholar has noted that "within the exile community there is a continuing streak of political intolerance, especially toward those who have made the slightest perceived criticism of the Dalai Lama, who risk beatings or threats of assassination." A German scholar has noted that "every criticism that challenges [the Dalai Lama's] political authority is interpreted as anti-religious," and a U.S. scholar of Tibetan history has said "accusations of disloyalty to the Dalai Lama remain a weapon in political and personal feuds in Dharamsala." A leading proindependence activist has stated that "hate

campaigns and mob violence” typify Dharamsala politics. A TPIE [Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile] member has averred that “if someone openly criticized his Holiness he would be in a difficult position. I think he would suffer a social boycott, if not be physically beaten up.” In part this is because, as another TPIE member put it, “We do not have any doubt about the Dalai Lama’s decisions. . . . He’s a supreme human being and he is god.” (p. 102)

∞ *THE RETURN OF THE KING?* ∞

On the following pages, a series of *before-and-after* photos is presented for your consideration. The first three pairs concern a deleted Wikipedia article on Tsem Tulku Rinpoche. In 2010, the DorjeShugden.com website posted an essay titled [*The Return of the King: Kyabje Drakpa Gyeltsen Rinpoche*](#), with many wondering if Tsem Tulku Rinpoche was gearing up to promote himself as the reincarnation of ... *Dorje Shugden!*

When I included information from his official website that claimed Tsem Tulku was a reincarnation of Tulku Dragpa Gyaltsen—an inference based on the claim that a previous incarnation of his was abbot of Ganden Monastery, Sera Monastery, and Drepung Monastery—within *minutes* the wording on each of his websites was changed, apparently in direct response to my ongoing Wikipedia edits. It was uncanny to experience this ‘live’ as it was happening. Luckily, the changes were so new that the original wording was still preserved in the Google cache, which I was then able to screen capture.

It seems that the article I was editing in 2010 has since been [deleted](#) from Wikipedia, and a new article on Tsem Tulku Rinpoche was created in 2014. The also-now-deleted [talk page](#) included a discussion between myself as the editor making the edits and a disciple of Tsem Tulku Rinpoche objecting to them. Because I persisted simply by citing *other* official Tsem Tulku websites—such as Kechara House (causing them to have to update *all* their websites)—he responded that I was engaging in behavior unbecoming an aspiring monk. See for yourself...

In all of his many incarnations, H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche was famous for the vastness and depth of his understanding, as well as for his strict adherence to the Buddhist vows and commitments, which he regards as the foundation of all higher attainments. While serving as abbot of the three main Gelug monasteries – Gaden, Sera and Drepung – in his previous incarnations, he firmly established the spiritual discipline that opens the mind to liberation, and emphasised serious study as the basis of successful contemplation and meditation. He was a scholar and prolific writer and many of his written works are still in use today.



H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche - esteemed high Lama and founder of Kechara

Such a combination of great compassion, wisdom and skilful means, the trademark of all great spiritual teachers, can only come about as the result of many lives of religious training, based on the altruistic aspiration to help all living beings in attaining true and lasting happiness.

In all of his many incarnations, H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche was famous for the vastness and depth of his understanding, as well as for his strict adherence to the Buddhist vows and commitments, which he regards as the foundation of all higher attainments. As abbot of Gaden and other monasteries in his many previous incarnations, he firmly established the spiritual discipline that opens the mind to liberation, and emphasised serious study as the basis of successful contemplation and meditation. He was a scholar and prolific writer and many of his written works are still in use today.



H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche - esteemed high Lama and founder of Kechara

Such a combination of great compassion, wisdom and skilful means, the trademark of all great spiritual teachers, can only come about as the result of many lives of religious training, based on the altruistic aspiration to help all living beings in attaining true and lasting happiness.

The following is a summary of the many recognitions of H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's reincarnation status as a high lama.

- At 7 months, monks came and recognised him as a reincarnated Lama.
- H.H. Kyabje Zong Rinpoche, Rinpoche's root Guru, gave verbal recognition.
- H.E. Ayang Drupchen Rinpoche gave verbal recognition.
- The Dharma Protector of Gyuto Tantric College, Dorje Yudroma, via oracle.
- H.E. Drigung Rinpoche Jetsun Lobsang Chozin, one of Rinpoche's Gurus, knew his incarnation status upon sight. He had his recognition officiated with his own personal stationery and seal. He also recognized Rinpoche as a mahasattva, which indicates that his line of incarnations go back further beyond Kensur Gedun Nyedrak
- H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche, Rinpoche's Guru and abbot of Gaden Shartse Monastery at that time.
- The oracle of Sera Monastery.
- Gaden Shartse's Dharma Protector Setrap Chen, via the Monastery's oracle, recognised Rinpoche following a request from H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche. This session has been recorded down and bears the seal of Setrap's office. It serves as Rinpoche's main recognition paper as issued by his Monastery. Rinpoche's personal seal, as well, has the official backing of Lord Setrap Chen, and hence the entire Monastery.
- Final confirmation was bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, during a special audience requested for this purpose by H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche. His Holiness also identified Tsem Rinpoche's incarnations that date further back than the official recognition of 3 lifetimes, which matches what H.E. Drigung Rinpoche has said.

The following is a summary of the many recognitions of H.E. Tsem Tulku Rinpoche's reincarnation status as a high lama.

- At 7 months, monks came and recognised him as a reincarnated Lama.
- H.H. Kyabje Zong Rinpoche, Rinpoche's root Guru, gave verbal recognition.
- H.E. Ayang Drupchen Rinpoche gave verbal recognition.
- The Dharma Protector of Gyuto Tantric College, Dorje Yudroma, via oracle.
- H.E. Drigung Rinpoche Jetsun Lobsang Chozin, one of Rinpoche's Gurus, knew his incarnation status upon sight. He had his recognition officiated with his own personal stationery and seal. He also recognized Rinpoche as a mahasattva, which indicates that his line of incarnations go back further beyond Kensur Gedun Nyedrak
- H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche, Rinpoche's Guru and abbot of Gaden Shartse Monastery at that time.
- The oracle of Sera Monastery.
- Gaden Shartse's Dharma Protector Setrap Chen, via the Monastery's oracle, recognised Rinpoche following a request from H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche. This session has been recorded down and bears the seal of Setrap's office. It serves as Rinpoche's main recognition paper as issued by his Monastery. Rinpoche's personal seal, as well, has the official backing of Lord Setrap Chen, and hence the entire Monastery.
- Final confirmation was bestowed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, during a special audience requested for this purpose by H.E. Kensur Jampa Yeshe Rinpoche.



Many of us observed that this same reverence and great respect for Tsem Tulku Rinpoche would be shown by the monks throughout the day, wherever he went. The combination of Rinpoche's immense continued work for the monastery in this lifetime and the great impact he had had in his very previous incarnation as abbot of all three monasteries (Gaden, Sera and Drepung) has left a strong and lasting impression on the minds of all at Gaden. Even Geshes, supposedly 'higher' up in academic achievements (it takes at least 14 years of study to obtain the Geshe degree), stepped aside for him and put him on the throne.



Many of us observed that this same reverence and great respect for Tsem Tulku Rinpoche would be shown by the monks throughout the day, wherever he went. The combination of Rinpoche's immense continued work for the monastery in this lifetime and the great impact he had had in his very previous incarnations as abbots of major Gelug monasteries has left a strong and lasting impression on the minds of all at Gaden. Even Geshes, supposedly 'higher' up in academic achievements (it takes at least 14 years of study to obtain the Geshe degree), stepped aside for him and put him on the throne.



This last image of the ‘Chinese’ Panchen Lama pictured in front of a Dorje Shugden thangka is not real, but appears to have been photoshopped. It is a fake that first appeared in a 2009 article “[Panchen & Shugden](#)” on DorjeShugden.com. (So, Tsem Tulku Rinpoche was behind it?!) The true, original image (with the refuge tree thangka) originated four years earlier on [an official Chinese website](#) in 2005. Notice how the image on the left has more ‘data’ (such as a full rosary), and how the yellow Pandit’s hat worn by the Panchen Lama on the right is artificially *cropped* so as to not cover Dorje Shugden’s face. Lined up for comparison:



One of those hats doesn't look right!

∞ SOCIAL BOYCOTTS VS. SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION ∞

<p><u>Samdhong Rinpoche</u> <i>(Businesses boycotting people, creating social pariahs)</i></p>	<p><u>George Takei</u> <i>(People boycotting businesses, creating social awareness)</i></p>
<p>Everyone has the right to engage in a boycott. Above and beyond that, boycott is the best method of non-violently confronting and protesting an unbecoming action. Mahatma Gandhi, in his struggle for independence and several other causes, saw the method/s of non-cooperation/civil disobedience and boycott as the best possible option/s and therefore resorted to it/them. Gandhi-ji gave ‘boycott’ a new name in ‘non-cooperation’. Non-cooperation and boycott have a similar connotation. Therefore, in the Tibetan society, when you see the owners of stores, restaurants, monasteries put up signs saying ‘Dholgyal followers are not welcome’ at the entrances, in order for them to keep away</p>	<p>I myself am a Buddhist, not a Christian. But I cannot help but think that if Christ ran a public establishment, it would be open to all, and He would be the last to refuse service to anyone. It is, simply put, the most un-Christian of notions. We live in a pluralistic and civil society, where our social contract demands we sometimes relinquish individual liberties in the name of a more just and open society. This means that while we are all entitled to our religious beliefs, the extent and impact of those beliefs, and what we may impose because of them, stops at the tips of our noses. This also means we must learn to respect and, yes, even love our neighbors, despite our differences. I cannot help but think of Pope Francis going out</p>

<p>from having any social and spiritual fellowship with the Dholgyal followers, they are merely exercising their lawful rights and not usurping the rights of the Dholgyal followers. This we have to understand clearly. [...] The main reason for the social boycott of Dholgyal worshippers is not because they carry out that worship; such a reason is rarely used. Instead, the main pressure for the boycott comes from the fact that they engage in slander campaigns against His Holiness the Dalai Lama and openly oppose the guidance of His Holiness.</p>	<p>of the Vatican to wash the feet of non-believers, setting an example for us all: Our differences in beliefs do not truly separate us, or elevate us over others. Rather, they highlight the rich tapestry that is humanity. The doors of a school or a restaurant or a business, held open to the public, must be open to all. The days are over where some may be denied a seat at the table simply because of who they are – or in this case, whom they love. We cannot, and must not, march backward from where we have come.</p>
---	---

“There will be no change in my stand. I will never revoke the ban. You are right. It will be like the Cultural Revolution. If those who do not accept the ban do not listen to my words, the situation will grow worse for them. You sit and watch. It will grow only worse for them.”

— The Dalai Lama to Ven. Choezed-la (January 13, 1999)

“I never considered a difference of opinion in politics, in religion, in philosophy, as cause for withdrawing from a friend.”

— Thomas Jefferson to William Hamilton (April 22, 1800)

Tibetan Parliament passes resolution concerning Dolgyal

RESOLUTION (Document no. 22/English Translation)

Whereas:

Since the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, all the successive Dalai Lamas and many great masters have placed stringent restrictions on the propitiation of harmful spirit of Dolgyal for Tibet's common spiritual and political interests. Like his predecessors, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, following a long and careful investigation, has also clearly advised against the propitiation of Dolgyal. A large number of Tibetans have followed his advice and gave up propitiating Dolgyal. However, a small number of Tibetans have remained ignorant about the propitiation. In order to lead the ignorant to righteous path, the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile unanimously passed resolutions on 6 June 1996, 17 September 1997 and 15 March 2008. The majority of Tibetans – including the both monastic and lay community particularly the three monastic seats – who have acted upon the resolutions deserves appreciation.

Yet, a small number of ignorant Dolgyal propitiators have no consideration for Tibet's spiritual and political interests and the personal security of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They are being deceived by the Chinese government through monetary and material incentive and are used as political tools. They have been also instigating foreigners to carry out disinformation campaigns at every opportunity. In a recent incident in San Francisco, they employed a handful of people, who are completely ignorant about the basic principles of Buddhism, to slander His Holiness the Dalai Lama with baseless accusations. To present these misdeeds for fair and correct understanding of the Tibetan people and the people of the world who support truth and justice, it is imperative that the following resolution be passed to reiterate and implement the earlier resolutions adopted by the House.

The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, on 17 March 2014, unanimously passed the following resolution:

- (1) Reaffirms to carefully follow up the series of resolutions unanimously passed by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile on this issue in 1996, 1997 and 2008.
- (2) Recognises and resolves to collectively disseminate to all people the actual issue as per the resolution/section (B) of article 5 passed during the Conference of the Heads, Abbots, Lamas/Trulkus and Representatives of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion in 2009. It states: "Worshipping the worldly gods, particularly spirits for protection, contravenes the principle of following the three refuge in Buddhism. The conference unequivocally proclaims that any individuals or organisation propitiating Dolgyal, would not be affiliated to any Tibetan religious school."
- (3) Recognises clearly the actions of Dolgyal followers as a political tool to create discord within the Tibetan community under the influence and deception of monetary gains, and to denigrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama with baseless allegations. The Parliament would like to make it clear that the issue has nothing to do with religious freedom.

Further recognises also the Dolgyal followers and others – whose have caused grave harm to the faith and polity of Tibet under the Chinese government's ploy and in violation of the law of Karma – as criminals in history.
- (4) As advised by the intelligence agencies of the US and India on the need to ensure greater security for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan administration and the entire Tibetan people must remain vigilant. Moreover, the Department of Security, the local Tibetan administration, and the Representatives of the Offices of Tibet should maintain close coordination with the central and state government of India and concerned governments of the overseas countries respectively in advance to ensure greater security for His Holiness the Dalai Lama during his visits.
- (5) Directs the Kashag to carry out a thorough investigation into real motives of the Dolgyal followers for their recent activities in San Francisco and accordingly issue firm directives to prevent future incidents.

∞ *LIKE A GOD TRANSFORMED INTO A DEMON* ∞

“The worship of deities is inherently sectarian because it is not universal and therefore it is anti-dharma. Buddha never taught that the worship of any deities has any place in the path to awakening, let alone the worship of some random obscure medieval Tibetan gargoyle, with three eyes, fangs and a big yellow hat. Ridiculous.” – Linda Ciardiello

And, yet, Buddhist Deities such as Avalokiteshvara and Manjushri are worshipped throughout Asia, not just Tibet! Are we to just throw all of Mahayana Buddhism out the window now?) Whether it is a Bodhisattva boat captain preemptively killing a homicidal sea merchant, the self-immolation of Medicine Buddha as told in the *Lotus Sutra*, or wrathful Yamantaka adorning the head of a freshly decapitated bull, Dharma stories can sound quite gruesome at times—but all skillfully meant to tame our minds. Even Buddha Tara kicks deluded butt!

Besides, the Dalai Lama also initiates his students into wrathful Deity practices like Mahakala and Vajrayogini—both of whom have ‘vampire’ fangs. Linda does not even offer that these may have artistic meanings—symbolizing *virtuous* qualities—just some medieval gargoyles! The cardiac muscle being ‘devoured’ by Dorje Shugden shows that his own heart is bejeweled with *universal compassion* for *all* living beings, not just Gelugpas. It is a matter of [historical fact](#) that before Je Phabongkhapa was even born (b. 1878), Dorje Shugden had long been regarded as a manifestation Avalokiteshvara and Vajrapani:

*“Fast and powerful protector of the Buddhadharma...
both wrathful and virtuous.”*

– Drubwang Dre’u Lhas

*“Although having found the pure nature Dharmakaya,
by the power of compassion emanating a form, I entrust you...”*

– Morchen Kunga Lhundrub

*“He who is known as Dolgyal is not mistaken on the path to liberation,
and is in essence the Great Compassionate One.”*

– Sakya Throne Holders Sonam Rinchen & Kunga Lodro

*“Protectors of Loseling’s scholars, including Dorje Shugden,
come here.”* – Fourth Jetsun Dampa

*“Praise to the Lord of the Dharma King, protecting
Lobsang’s doctrine throughout space.”*

– Drepung Gomang’s Fifth ‘On Gyalse Rinpoche

*“Dharma Protector that is the Lord of All Power and Capability
[Vajrapani]...”* – Sera Je Dragri Gyatso Thaye

*“Great powerful protector of the Buddhadharma,
Gyalchen Dorje Shugden and retinue come here!”*

– Retreng Rinpoche Trichen Tenpa Rabgye

*“Collection of Conquerors’ power and capability, Lord of Secrets
[Vajrapani], Gyalchen Dorje Shugden...”*

– Sera Tantric College’s Abbot Namkha Tenkyong

*“Sole refuge Manjushrigarbha’s Dharma protector,
Wondrous Dorje Shugden Tsel...”* – Trehor Khangsar Rinpoche

“Gyalchen Dorje Shugden, the special emanated Protector of the Doctrine of the Second Buddha Manjunatha [Je Tsongkhapa]...”

– Rongchen Kirti Lobsang Trinley

“The Chief Dharma Protector of Conqueror Manjunatha [Je Tsongkhapa], Dorje Shugden...” – Serkong Dorje Chang

“I enthrone you as the Great King of Dharma Protectors.”
– Jigme Norbu, the Fourth Zhabdrung Mind Incarnation

“The Dharma Protector Dorje Shugden Tsel definitively is Avalokiteshvara.” – Dragshul Trinley Rinchen

If you hold that dependent production and dependent cessation would have to be essentially existent, and you use the arguments against intrinsic existence to refute the dependent-arising of production and cessation, then those arguments—like a god transformed into a demon—will be a tremendous obstacle to finding an accurate understanding of Madhyamaka. (Je Tsongkhapa, *The Great Treatise*, vol. 3, pp. 137-138)

Evidently their position is an overly literal misunderstanding of Madhyamaka texts that say, “is not existent and is not nonexistent.” There, if—as they claim—it is inappropriate to say “exists” or “does not exist,” then it would also be wrong to say, “is not existent and is not nonexistent” because Madhyamaka texts say that you should reject all four possibilities. (ibid., p. 147)

∞ *BATTLE OF THE HERO NARCISSISTS* ∞

[T]here are some occasions when I will choose to step into the world as a single, solid, ego center separate from you. Sometimes it is just pure satisfaction for me to bump my left hemisphere stuff and attitudes up against your left hemisphere stuff and attitudes, in argument or passionate debate. More often than not, I don't like how aggression feels inside my body so I shy away from hostile confrontation and choose compassion. (Dr. Jill Bolte Taylor, *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*, p. 148)

In October 2019, I briefly engaged in the comments section of a *Tricycle* article entitled “The One Pure Dharma.” (A similar 2008 article generated over 1,000 pages just in comments!) I wrote a terse introduction, admittedly to provoke a response—any response!—from a Tenzinbot, perhaps Linda or even Tenzin himself. It was Dr. Michelle Haslam, a self-described activist and hero narcissist, who responded. Her comments below are *italicized* and indented. Here is the full exchange, culminating in Tenzin Peljor's appearance; and, within a single post, I detect sock puppetry! It begins briefly stating who Linda is, and I regularly use ‘sarcastic’ remarks (Skt. *prasangika*), typical of any serious apologetic debate... “Checkmate” is character assassination, apparently!

Linda Ciardiello is a “Mindfulness Practitioner and Coach” according to a mental health group where she has been a guest speaker. This summer, I decided to research various comments

that Linda has made online since 2015 denigrating mindfulness practice as it is presented in the New Kadampa Tradition.

In the following 10-page essay, I compare mindfulness teachings in the NKT with those given in various Dzogchen, Mahayana, and Theravadin traditions (not to mention Advaita):

https://medium.com/@michaelweaver_4161/mindfulness-in-kadampa-buddhism-46f44683cb42

Seems like you're just trying to attack and character assassinate Linda I'm afraid. Might have been a bit more subtle if you hadn't started with her name and said something like 'here is an interesting article I wrote about the misunderstandings of several people...'

Buddhist definitions of mindfulness are different to those used in psychology. It's very difficult to define and this causes many problems. So I'm not entering the debate as I am not Buddhist. But I know that the NKT encourage people to hallucinate things that aren't really there, and to see the things that actually do exist as hallucinations. Neither of these practices will help people to stay grounded in the present moment or to observe what is actually happening in their environment, their thoughts or feelings

Writing style advice from a [plagiarizer](#)? No, thanks.

I understand. You want “Dharma-lite” mindfulness, i.e., mindfulness without Dharma, mindfulness without emptiness, mindfulness without selflessness. Yet, these are intertwined in Buddhism (from which secular mindfulness derived), which is why I quoted from Dzogchen, Mahayana, and Theravadin

sources which say THE EXACT SAME THING you are criticizing the NKT for. I have provided poster-size appendices in the PDF, for side-by-side comparison. I used Linda and Tenzin Peljor's OWN SOURCES, which must be pretty embarrassing, but hardly character assassination!

Most of the non-NKT quotes in the mindfulness article (and its additional quotes in PDF) I found posted in the Dharma Discussion group on Facebook. It's a good place to learn real, no-holds-barred Dharma, especially if you're not willing to do your own homework, like Linda. (That's where I was introduced to Tony Parsons, and he [Jackson Peterson] also quotes Adyashanti and Swami Sarvapriyananda, which is how they wound up in my essay.) The irony of using Dzogchen-sourced quotes to apologetically defend a Shugden-based group is not lost upon me at all. But, as Geshe-la said, "The Dharma is the same." Denigrate one, and you unwittingly denigrate them all.

One could say *samvrti* [conventional truth] is mere concealment (*samvrti*). In a certain sense it is not reality or truth at all, but merely a seeming reality. It is only relatively true in the sense that things seem to be that way to ordinary beings. Ultimately it is not true at all. (Venerable Khenpo Tsultrim Gyamtso Rinpoche, *Progressive Stages of Meditation on Emptiness*, p. 77)

The only character flaw I lament throughout all of my writings is a lack of **intellectual honesty** from people who present themselves as experts of Dharma, when it's obvious after a little fact-checking that they don't know what they are talking about, AT ALL.

It appears your intent is malicious rather than to help anyone. Of course I can't know this for sure but it certainly appears that way. You're now character assassinating me too by saying I am a plaigairizer [sic]. I had not long left a dangerous cult, had only just discovered just how dangerous it actually is, and was being harassed [sic], trolled and attacked. This tends to affect people quite a lot, in a complex variety of ways, including memory, concentration, boundaries, ability to protect themselves. I am just human and I make mistakes, especially under intense pressure. You show no understanding or empathy in relation to this when you call me a plaigairizer. [sic]

Tenzin and Linda aren't embarrassed at all, but it appears thats [sic] the main thing that you want to achieve.

Personally, I don't even practice mindfulness meditation these days. I think the mindfulness movement got way out of control and was oversold as a panacea. I don't personally find a formal practice helps me, at least at the moment, although that may shift again one day, who knows. So I don't want 'mindfulness lite' either. How can you know what I want without asking? I'd rather large organisations that claim to understand mental health would at least teach trauma sensitive mindfulness, if they are going to do it at all.

There's no need for anyone to study Buddhism to be an ethical or compassionate person either in my opinion. I have met many more people with narcissistic personalities who identify as Buddhists than I have people who have no interest in Buddhism whatsoever. Many people report this same

experience. Involvement with a group that considers itself more spiritual, more compassionate and wise than the rest of the world tends to make you more narcissistic.

“Mental health” is to blame for mass shootings and plagiarism, gotcha. (If the basis of designation fits...) Setting aside all the *ad hominem* back and forth, anything less than 100% emptiness/selflessness of ANY conventional truth is a spiritual bypass. This is the “one pure Dharma” in EVERY Buddhist tradition I have quoted. You guys wouldn’t last a day in Dzogchen Discussion (or in the debate courtyard!). If you have a doctrinal beef with the NKT, then you have one with every other Tibetan Buddhist tradition, or with Buddhism in general; pointing this out has been my only goal.

Tenzin and I go waaaaay back. [Here is an interesting article I wrote about the misunderstandings of several people in regards to NKT ordination.](#) Warning! Not for the Dharma-lite of heart ;)

<http://lifetheory.org/a-festival-of-attainments.pdf>

It’s up to other people to decide whether your writing is interesting, not you.

Spiritual bypassing is when people use spiritual teachings to avoid addressing emotional pain. For example saying ‘everything is 100% empty’ instead of offering yourself or other people understanding and warmth when in distress. As far as I understand it. Only people who are still indoctrinated by the nihilistic NKT teachings say this kind of thing. I’ve never heard a Buddhist who follows another teacher do this.

The way the NKT teach (it can be seen repeatedly in their videos) does this to people.

Yes, I have heard you and Tenzin go way back, I have been warned about your toxicity.

I'm not going to bother trying to explain what led to the plaigairism [sic] any further because it seems from your messages that you lack interest and empathy. I won't be replying again.

Oh, I was just using the very words that you had suggested! (I copy-pasted them from your first comment to me.) Sorry for 'plagiarizing' you (and you didn't even notice? LOL). Oh, and I thought we were going to move past *ad hominem* characterizations and actually discuss the Dharma instead.

Oh, I have been waitin' on Tenzin Peljor for 12 years to discuss these issues. (He always replies back, "I'm too busy."). So, it was worth the wait to see him expelled from his monastery this year! Oh, the deep irony...

Oh, oh, oh... Please quote some Dharma and not talk about your peelings anymore (except maybe the close placement of mindfulness of the emptiness of your feelings!); it's a bit narcissistic:

"If they [the hero narcissist] cannot be the savior, they are being denied their opportunity to shine and they don't like that at all." – Dr. Michelle Haslam*

(*or was it?!)

I'm replying a final time simply to let people reading this know that people tend to get asked to leave monasteries when they are whistleblowers of abuse or support whistleblowers of abuse, or when they realise they were actually just recruited into a cult and start to challenge the hierarchy. It doesn't mean they are of bad character or have done anything wrong.

To get expelled during the Dalai Lama's birthday puja no less! (Wow, karma's a bitch.) I was wondering what kind of *SPIN* Tenzin would put on it! And, to be "on the dole" in a sense—oh, the deep irony! That's why, with him, I've learned to always check primary sources:

To Tenzin Peljor,

We have had to note with regret that, for more than a year and a half, you have failed to comply with the agreements made in respect of the rules of the monastery. Monks who study full time are entitled to free board and lodging with a karma yoga commitment compatible with that study. You kept quiet about not attending the Masters Program full time so benefiting from privileges you were not entitled to.


We believe that this is an ethical lapse that has undermined the relationship of trust that must exist in our monastic community.

We have also received more than one report about some of the opinions and comments in your blog; they are inappropriate and have caused confusion and disharmony in our community among both monastics and laity.

We must always respect not only our own convictions, but also the place where we live and the sensitivity of the people who frequent and work there.

For these reasons, concerned about the consequences, we kindly advise you to leave this place that generously welcomed and hosted you. We will discuss and agree a timetable for this together.

With compassion,



Takden Shedrub Dargye Ling Monastery Manager, Ven. Massimo Stordi

Pomaia June 19, 2019

With regards to you, appeal to pity is a logical fallacy... I'm just not interested! As a writer, for me plagiarism is an unforgivable sin. *Shame, shame!*

Tip: Avoid pity in argumentation. It is a clear indicator that you have weak evidence for your argument.

<https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/tools/lp/Bo/LogicalFallacies/39/Appeal-to-Pity>

See you in Dzogchen Discussion!

[At this point, Tenzin Peljor chimes in, at first not realizing he is posting from a sockpuppet account. Ten minutes later, he deletes the first post by [Mark O'Connor](#), edits it, and then (re-)posts it using his [Tenpel account](#). On the next page, I have provided screen captures of the Disqus comment notifications I received via email, which he couldn't undo.] So, since 2007, I have been dealing with Tenzin Peljor's cherry picking, sock puppetry, meat puppetry, silent treatment, suppression, and—*gasp!*—[character assassination](#). (It's enough to give one PTSD!) I am glad to see that Tenzin Peljor is taking up his Dharma studies again, this time Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakosha*, specifically the chapter on karma. Perhaps when he realizes that Vasubandhu rejected *avijanaptirupa*, he can begin to appreciate the arguments presented in *A Festival of Attainments* and we can have a real discussion about NKT ordination. Ironically, in a follow-up comment to Dr. Haslam, Tenzin Peljor says, "they behave just like the narcissist donald trump uses [*sic*] to act." When you hear someone constantly saying they are the victim of a witch hunt, who does that remind you of? Donald Trump!

Evidence of Tenzin Peljor's sockpuppetry:



Mark O'Connor

Hi Michael Weaver, I didn't put a spin on it. And please don't slander me or accuse me wrongly of things I don't do.

The expulsion was based on the sole decision of Ven. Massimo Stordi. Sadly, he twisted the whole situation after he came under pressure based on Tsem Tulku trolls spamming the FPMT with false information that I am a "secret Shugden spy" who "wants to destroy the FPMT from within", who falsely claimed too that I created the petition of the nuns and set up the slanderous dagririnpoche dot com site.

In fact, I was bullied (and witch hunted) by Tsem Tulku trolls and by some fanatical FPMT members who believed their false claims (the latter in their majority at least apologised later). Two of them got a written warning by the director of ILTK. There are moves to revert the expulsion because its based on wrong reasons. For the details see these two extensive comments from July 7, 2019 and July 15, 2019: 1)

<https://buddhism-controvers...> 2) <https://buddhism-controvers...>

I can also copy and paste my reply to the expulsion but instead of adding more details, best is I think, I post the reversal when it came about. Let's see.

12:33 p.m., Thursday Oct. 17 | [Other comments by Mark O'Connor](#)



Tenpel

Hi Michael Weaver, I didn't put a spin on it nor do I put spin on things. So please don't slander me or accuse me wrongly of things I don't do. Rely on good arguments but not ad hominem. Thank you!

The expulsion was based on the sole decision of Ven. Massimo Stordi. Sadly, he twisted the whole situation after he came under pressure based on Tsem Tulku trolls spamming the FPMT with false information that I am a "secret Shugden spy" who "wants to destroy the FPMT from within", the trolls also falsely claimed that I created the petition of the nuns and set up the slanderous dagririnpoche dot com site. Then people started to complain why I can live for free in the monastery and destroying the FPMT.

In fact, I was bullied (and witch hunted) by Tsem Tulku trolls and also by some fanatical FPMT members who believed the Tsem tulku propagan da (their false claims). Some of the (temporary) fanatical FPMT members who bullied and witch hunted me apologised later personally to me. Two of them got a written warning by the director of the ILTK for their behaviour. We have settled it. There are moves by higher authorities to revert the expulsion because it was based on wrong reasons.

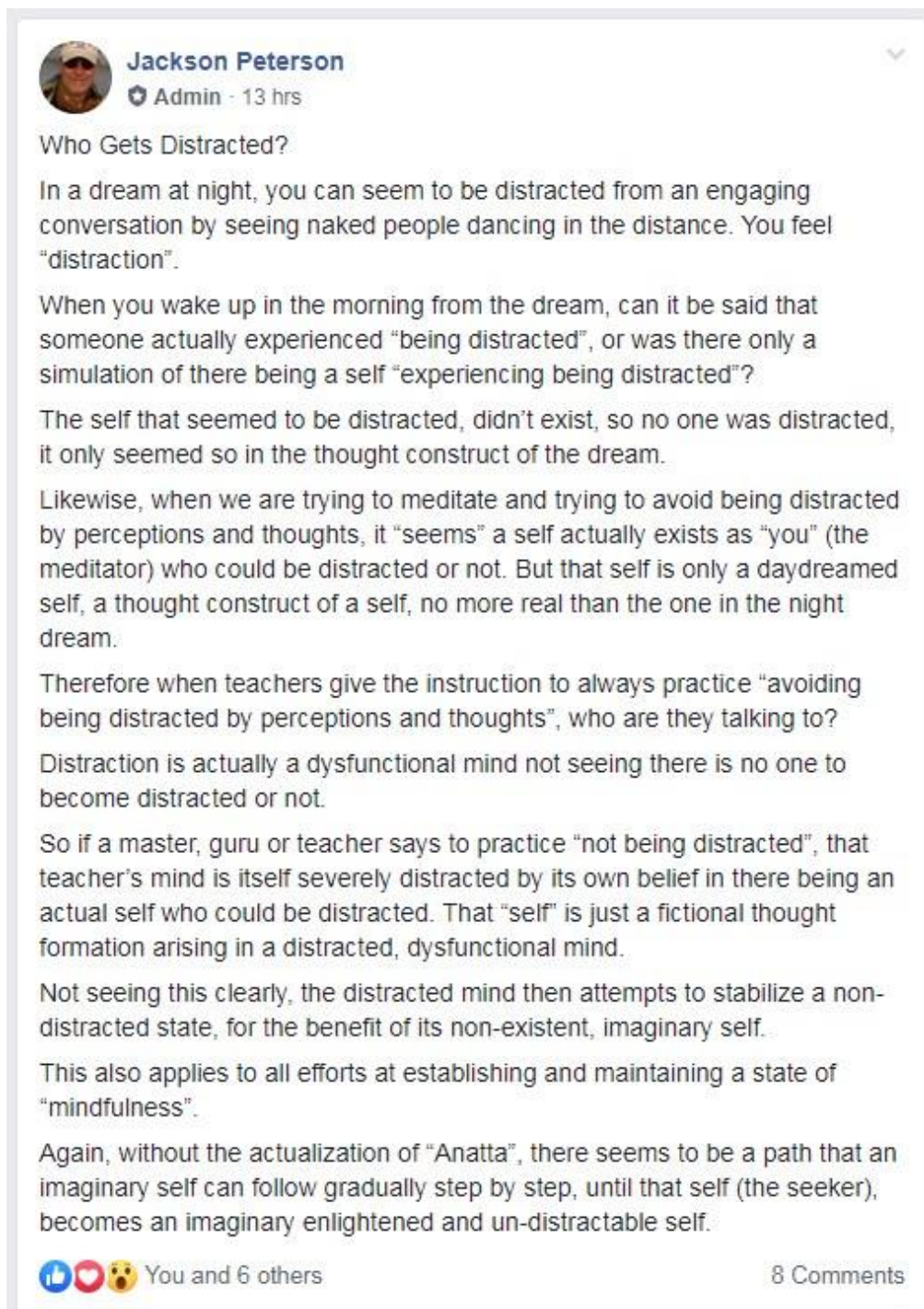
For a background see these two extensive comments from July 7, 2019 and July 15, 2019: 1) <https://buddhism-controvers...> 2) <https://buddhism-controvers...>

I can also copy and paste my reply / rebuttal to the expulsion but instead of adding more details most might find hard to follow, best is I think, I post the reversal of the expulsion when it will have come about. Let's see.

12:46 p.m., Thursday Oct. 17 | [Other comments by Tenpel](#)

∞ *BARELY THERE: ONLY AS AN APPEARANCE* ∞

In November 2019, I posted to my public Facebook newsfeed the following screen capture with the caption, “Selflessness (and mindfulness) post in Dzogchen Discussion group:”



Before proceeding, consider the following question: “Does any ‘self’ whatsoever inhere within any basis of designation?”

Kelsang Pagpa replied to the post on the previous page (his words below are in *italics*, with my replies following his):

I think this is nonsense nihilism. There is a person conventionally and that person can be distracted. These statements are the denial of conventional truth.

I describe the *Mindfulness in Plain Emptiness* essay [concerning so-called “Kadampa nihilism”] as “a ‘forced’ interfaith discussion, between people who would rather not have anything to do with each other!” It’s funny, because both you and Tenzin Peljor object to these quotations, saying that they deny conventional truths. (You’re on the same side?!)

I believe it’s just a matter of syncing up everyone’s terminology. For example, Jackson uses phrases like “a daydreamed self” and “a thought construct of a self” and “a fictional thought formation.” Is this not the same as a conventionally existent self (mere name/concept)?

Speaking ‘ultimately’, Jackson says, “The self that seemed to be distracted, didn’t exist...” and “non-existent, imaginary self.” Is this not the same as “The self that I normally see does not exist at all”?

It’s a matter of denying the gross conventional self (“the self normally perceived does not exist at all”) versus denying the subtle conventional self (“the self does not exist at all”). Only the latter would amount to nihilism, no? (This is why I chose that

specific quote by Geshe-la, on page 68 of *All the Flowers I Normally See*. The only quote by him in those 20 pages!)

Words are tricky things - phrases may, or may not, mean the same things. Without having a detailed discussion with this guy I can't say whether this view accords with Buddha's view or not. Shantideva says, for example:

*"Therefore, I will dwell alone
In a quiet and peaceful place.
Happy, contented, and with no worries,
I will strive to pacify all distractions."*

So this guy's criticism would be 'there is no self to be distracted and if a Buddhist master advises you not to be distracted, that Master is in himself distracted by his own belief in there being an actual self that could be distracted'. So now, according to our friend, Shantideva has no realizations because he's distracted by a false notion of self. That is utter nonsense!

Conventionally, distractions exist and people get distracted. To say otherwise is to deny conventional appearances to a valid mind.

Conventional truths are 'truths' only for the obscuring mind of self-grasping. (Is this also to be said of subtle conventional truths?) I believe Shantideva (and anyone who assents to a conventional 'truth') is employing a skillful means at best, because if we look for distractions or distracted people *with wisdom*, do we find any?

This is the problem: many Buddhists believe that only ultimate truth is valid and we have to speak from the point of view of emptiness all the time. This is incorrect because ultimate truths and subtle conventional truths are the same nature, therefore if we deny conventional truths, there isn't anything that is empty and we indirectly end up denying ultimate truths. Buddha taught that the highest view is the union of appearance and emptiness. Distraction is an appearance to a valid mind that is distracted and to deny this truth is nihilism. There is no spiritual path without conventional truths. Distraction is a conventional problem and therefore requires conventional means (mindfulness and concentration) to solve it.

Again, I don't think Jackson Peterson is denying subtle conventional truths, just mistaken appearances. (Can we even talk about *subtle* conventional truths, without a realization of emptiness?!) This is also true of Tony Parsons (whom I affectionately call Nobuggarjuna): All there is, is what's happening, but without any separate selves inhabiting 'behind' those appearances, which sounds like the union of appearances and emptiness to me. For both Jackson and Tony, all spiritual 'paths' are just skillful means at best (though completely unnecessary!), reinforcing self-grasping at worst—that's their argument in my own words.

I would love to see someone of your caliber discuss this with Jackson Peterson. Getting over the language barrier, even between Buddhists of different traditions, is quite an obstacle. For example, having read Je Pabongkhapa's comments about Mahamudra and Dzogchen being practiced with bodhichitta

motivation, it was interesting to do a word search for *bodhichitta* in the Dzogchen Discussion group (which goes back years and years) and check out all the posts that mention it, and sure enough, that word is used completely differently in Dzogchen.

A lot of Buddhists, for example the Sakyas under Gorampa, deny the validity of conventional appearances completely. This is an extreme. Spiritual paths are completely necessary as there is no method to abandon self-grasping other than to follow the paths that Buddha taught—they don't reinforce self-grasping, they release us from it. I'm deeply suspicious of Dzogchen as Buddha Shakyamuni didn't teach this—if they don't have a practice of bodhichitta, it's not even Mahayana Buddhism. The direct path to enlightenment is the practice of Highest Yoga Tantra.

Bodhichitta in the Buddhist sense of “May I-I-I-I-I become a Buddha for the benefit of all” or in the Advaita sense of “an unenlightened self-self-self-self-self” becoming “an Enlightened Self-Self-Self-Self-Self” is still falling into the trap of self-self-self-self-self-grasping. That's their argument, again, in my words. Remember how ‘radical’ this quote by Nagarjuna is?

The pacification of all objectification and the pacification of illusion: No Dharma was taught by the Buddha at any time, in any place, to any person. (Nagarjuna, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way* 25:24; trans. Jay Garfield, p. 334)

That's why I call Tony Parsons “Nobuggarjuna.” ☺

Bodhichitta is not a self-grasping mind: it doesn't grasp at an inherently existent I, otherwise it would be a wrong awareness and not a path to enlightenment. There is a conventional self, even for a Buddha, and if these Dzogchen or Advaita people are denying this, it's a wrong view.

I, unfortunately, see non-NKT people dismissing NKT's presentation of Dharma with an equal amount of superficial understanding of what the other side is actually saying. ☹️ I wish this wasn't so 'typical' of both sides! I believe you are using straw man arguments, just like Tenzin Peljor does. I will accept any incontrovertible reasoning, no matter who says it—just give me some good syllogisms! 😊 This is why I say, “What is most important is the recognition of our common spiritual experience and the mutual willingness to speak of it *on someone else's terms...*,” which, unfortunately, no one seems willing to do, so y'all just keep speaking past each other...

[one month later]

Kelsang Pagpa, is the basis of designation empty of the self merely imputed upon it?

Yes. The self is a mere designation upon the aggregates of body and mind—the body and mind are not the self and the self is mere name, the nature of emptiness.

So, the aggregates are empty of an inherent self and *also* empty of a merely imputed self?

Yes, self is a mere designation. There is nothing that is the self.... But there is a self.