



CENTER FOR STUDIES ON NEW RELIGIONS

False Accusations Against the Innocent

**Letter to the editor in response to the article 'Cult Mystery'
that appeared in *Newsweek International*, the 28th of April 97,
and in *Newsweek USA*, 5th of May 97**

Allow me to introduce myself; my name is Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Since July of last year NKT people, including myself, have remained peacefully without any further involvement in the Dorje Shugden controversy. We received messages from many people, including some Tibetans in London, thanking us for leaving the controversy in peace and indicating their appreciation. Now we are very surprised by [this article in *Newsweek*](#), which includes very unpleasant quotations from Robert Thurman and HH the Dalai Lama, and which causes new problems to arise.

We find that most of the information in this article is false. Amongst other things, for example, it says that the First Dalai Lama was Je Tsongkhapa's nephew. We believe that Je Gendundrub became the First Dalai Lama. Are you saying that Je Gendundrub was Je Tsongkhapa's nephew? If so, this is incorrect.

Robert Thurman is quoted as saying: "I think there's no doubt that Shugden was behind the killings." Of course, killing people is very bad, and I utterly condemn these appalling murders, but by reading the letter addressed to HH the Dalai Lama known as the 'Mongoose Canine Letter', we can clearly understand that HH the Dalai Lama has many enemies, so why are only Shugden supporters suspected? It is a great pity that Lobsang Gyatso who was a 70-year old Geshe died in the most horrible of circumstances, seemingly because HH the Dalai Lama has many enemies.

Thurman continues: "It would not be unfair to call Shugdents the Taliban of Tibetan Buddhism." This really is a false accusation against innocent people. We have never done anything wrong. We simply practise our own religion, as passed down through many generations. But since HH the Dalai Lama encouraged people to stop worshipping Dorje Shugden, claiming that this practice is bad, we have been insulted as 'sectarian' and 'fanatic', and have received constant criticism, humiliation, and threats from many people. In this way, we are indeed becoming as Geshe Dragpa Gyaltzen says, like the Jews of Tibetan Buddhism - victims of irrational persecution.

Many thousands of disciples of Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, the Spiritual Guide of the present Dalai Lama, have suffered under this treatment but we do not wish to give up this practice because it is a commitment received from our root Gurus, and because we know from our own experience that it is a very meaningful practice for the development of spiritual realizations. So now we are in a very sad and difficult situation.

Thurman also says: "Once you get involved (in the NKT), you're told you have to devote your lives to the cult, because the god gets very angry if you don't attend to him every day. It's really bad stuff, the way they're draining money out of people." This is completely untrue: can Thurman please give the name of even one person within the NKT who says this nonsense, and can he provide proof of a single instance of the NKT pressuring anyone to give money?

HH the Dalai Lama says: "That cult is actually destroying the freedom of religious thought. Say I want to practise Nyingma. They say this Protector will harm me." This is also completely untrue. We would like to ask HH the Dalai Lama: who are these Shugden practitioners saying these meaningless things? His words are causing disharmony between Shugden practitioners and Nyingma practitioners. Why is HH the Dalai Lama creating this new problem? Until now there have been no problems between Gelugpas and Nyingmapas, and there has been no arguing or criticism. Some scholars debate with each other, such as the well-known Gelugpa scholar Yonten Gyatso and Dongthog Tulku, a scholar from another tradition, who conducted a debate by letter over a number of years. They have written many books replying to each other's assertions, but this does not mean they are criticising each other. They are simply clarifying the doctrines of their own traditions, with good motivation. There is nothing wrong with this. I would like to ask: what is the problem between the Nyingma and Gelug traditions? There is none. The majority of people from both traditions naturally live in harmony, so why is HH the Dalai Lama destroying this harmony by saying things like "Shugdents say you should not even touch a Nyingma document"? Although we concentrate on our own tradition we respect all other Buddhist traditions, including the Nyingma, and we rejoice very much in their sincere practice.

The article says: "the Yellow Hats were far more grand than the austere Red Hats in their clothes and magnificent palaces, but the Dorje Shugden sect would become grander still." Again, this is untrue. The majority of Gelugpa practitioners, including Shugden practitioners, live simply and practise sincerely and are not interested in politics. Within the exile Tibetan community, it is HH the Dalai Lama alone who has power. He controls every aspect of Tibetan society.

The article also says that the NKT has been "denounced by the London press and HH the Dalai Lama as a cult that fleeces its own followers". One or two English newspapers in 1996 made claims of financial wrong-doing by the NKT. These claims were unsubstantiated and we deny them entirely. What proof does HH the Dalai Lama have for saying this?

HH the Dalai Lama claims: "Nobody would pray to Buddha for better business, but they go to Shugden for such favours - and this is where it has become like spirit worship." This is not true. Many Tibetans pray to other Buddhas such as Tara and make prayers to other Dharma Protectors for success in business and for the removal of obstacles. Why are Shugden practitioners singled out? Particularly, in the Kadampa tradition we do not pray for worldly attainments such as wealth, reputation, success in business, etc., we pray for the welfare of all beings and the attainment of spiritual realizations.

HH the Dalai Lama is also contradicting himself. He previously regarded Dorje Shugden as a Buddha, and composed verses of praise to him that can still be seen today. It is his responsibility to resolve this contradiction.

Now, my main point is that people should know that all the present problems regarding Dorje Shugden within the Mahayana Buddhist world have no creator other than HH the Dalai Lama. He is the source of all these problems because it was he who first publicly claimed that Dorje Shugden is an evil spirit who harms both himself and Tibetan independence, and many Tibetans believe what he said. It is HH the Dalai Lama's wish to destroy the practice of Dorje Shugden, and to fulfil his wish Tibetan people within the exile community have removed statues and destroyed them, coercing other Tibetans to abandon this practice. If HH the Dalai Lama had not engaged in this policy of religious discrimination there would have been no basis for these problems. I clearly understand that the responsibility for this lies with HH the Dalai Lama.

If the practice of Dorje Shugden is harmful then it follows that Je Phabongkhapa was not an authentic Buddhist master, and if he was not then there is no doubt that his heart disciples, Kyabje Ling Rinpoche and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche (the Senior and Junior Tutors of HH the Dalai Lama) were also not authentic. These three Lamas are the most important Gelugpa Lamas of recent times. If these three are not pure Teachers then there is no doubt that the entire practice of the Gelug Tradition is invalid. This is the main issue that needs clarification.

HH the Dalai Lama alone has the power to solve all these problems. If he stops completely his policy of religious discrimination and gives religious freedom, these problems will be solved automatically. I believe that he will do this soon because I believe that he has compassion for his people.

Please do not think I am criticising HH the Dalai Lama in a negative way; I am writing this simply to clarify the situation.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso
Spiritual Director of the New Kadampa Tradition

[Although the Newsweek article you do not refer to me as a Geshe, I am a Geshe. If you wish to understand how I became a Geshe I will be happy to provide you with details.]

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