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The following Open Letter was posted on Dec 9th 1997 to the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala and to the Office of Tibet in London.

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Open Letter to H.H. the Dalai Lama by Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

Your Holiness,

For over eighteen years you have been continually speaking out against the practice of Dorje Shugden, saying that this practice is bad. Due to your high position, many people believe what you say. If Dorje Shugden practice is really harmful, then this implies that both Je Phabongkhapa and Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche made a big mistake and misled their disciples. If they were wrong then the entire Gelug tradition is incorrect.

As you know, all practitioners of the Gelug tradition, including yourself, are directly or indirectly the disciples of these two Lamas. Your assertion that the practice of Dorje Shugden is harmful has already destroyed the reputation of these two Lamas and of the Gelug tradition.

In particular, beginning in 1996 you have been speaking out publicly against the practice of Dorje Shugden, saying that he is a harmful spirit and harms both the cause of Tibetan independence as well as your health. Your speech has caused the Tibetan people much anxiety, and they have become angry, blaming Dorje Shugden practitioners for their problems, difficulties, and lack of freedom. So, in order to fulfil your wish, which is to destroy the practice of Dorje Shugden, the government-in-exile and many individual Tibetans are engaged in an organized campaign to destroy this practice by whatever means they can:

- (1) Removing statues and images from Temples, and destroying them;
- (2) Organizing forced-signature campaigns to make people promise to stop this practice;
- (3) People who refuse to sign and give up their practice receive abuse and threats, lose their jobs, lose their allowances, are expelled from their monastery, are beaten, etc.;
- (4) Those who continue with their practice are treated like outcasts in their own community, like the Jewish people in Germany under Hitler's rule.

In this way, internal harmony within the Tibetan settlements has been destroyed. But this problem is no longer just a Tibetan problem; it has become an international one. Many thousands of people are now experiencing suffering, confusion, and loss of faith. You travel throughout the world and everywhere you speak out against the practice of Dorje Shugden, destroying the reputation of Gelugpas everywhere.

This situation became increasingly difficult for us to bear, and so, for these reasons the NKT here in the west, and Tibetans in India, organized peaceful demonstrations last year. The demonstrations intended no disrespect to you, but rather were an indication that you had made a mistake in banning this practice, and a request to you to lift the ban. Immediately after the demonstrations the NKT stopped all activity related to this issue, in the hope that you would

reconsider your actions and agree to lift the ban.

However, your organization has continued to spread false information in western countries, saying:

- (1) The NKT is working for the Peoples' Republic of China;
- (2) The NKT is receiving large sums of money from the Chinese;
- (3) The NKT is sectarian;
- (4) The practice of Dorje Shugden is sectarian and disruptive of communal harmony;
- (5) The practice of Dorje Shugden leads to the degeneration of Buddha's teachings;
- (6) 'Research suggests' that association with the practice of Dorje Shugden attracts misfortune;
- (7) H.H. Trijang Rinpoche changed his mind and rejected the practice of Dorje Shugden;
- (8) Worship of Dorje Shugden harms Tibetan independence and the Dalai Lama's life;
- (9) The practice of Dorje Shugden is innately disruptive and divisive.

I clearly understand that the purpose behind all this negative publicity is to destroy the NKT and the practice of Dorje Shugden in the west. The reputation of the NKT and of Dorje Shugden practitioners in the west has been severely affected because people believe these statements, which are simply lies.

In April of this year **one article appeared in Newsweek magazine** in which you made unpleasant and humiliating statements about the NKT and myself. As you know this magazine is published in almost every country in the world, in many languages. There can be no purpose for this other than to destroy the NKT.

At that time, I made the decision to **clarify this religious issue in public**. Nowadays, there is much debate and argument about you, myself and Dorje Shugden, which is causing the reputation of Buddhists world-wide to degenerate. This is shameful; this problem has not been created by the Deity Dorje Shugden but by human beings under the influence of delusion. No matter how much everyone debates and argues, it seems that there is no solution; instead the problem is getting worse.

I have written to you several times asking for valid proof of your statements that Dorje Shugden is harming the Tibetan cause and your life. I have not received a reply from you. I did receive one letter from your office in Dharamsala, trying to prove your assertions about Dorje Shugden by quoting from books written by other Lamas that say he is a worldly spirit. The quotes never mention that the practice of Dorje Shugden could harm either the Tibetan cause or your life. Since many other Lamas have said and written that Dorje Shugden is a manifestation of Buddha Manjushri, the above reason is clearly not valid.

Your ban on the practice of Dorje Shugden is a direct attack on religious freedom. This is against the UN 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights', and also against the law in democratic countries such as the United States. You are also engaging in Deity discrimination, which breaks the constitutional law of India.

If the worship of Dorje Shugden is really harming the Tibetan cause, your people and your life, then you have good reasons for this ban, but I need clear evidence from you. Until now this has not been forthcoming. I do not want this situation

to deteriorate any further, and would like to see this problem come to an end as soon as possible. This completely depends on you.

It seems that there are only two possibilities here: either you can give valid reasons proving that Dorje Shugden is harming the Tibetan cause, your people and your life; or you should accept that you have made a mistake and publicly retract your statements. If you are really a Bodhisattva and love your people and truly want Buddhadharma to flourish throughout the world then you must solve this problem.

Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

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