



## Dorje Shugden

Dorje Shugden is a spirit or mundane Dharma protector that some believe is a fully enlightened being. He has become a rallying cry for some who wish to return Tibet to a theocracy (His Holiness the Dalai Lama wants democracy) with one school or sect as the official 'church'. No FPMT centre does this practice and all fully support His Holiness the Dalai Lama's wish that this practice not be done. For more information, see <http://www.tibet.com/dholgyal/index.html>.

### Dorje Shugden Practice

*A student asked Rinpoche questions about the practice of the protector Dorje Shugden. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had asked his students to stop performing this practice. Many students had received initiations from their gurus and taken commitments to perform the practice before His Holiness made this request. The student had decided to stop performing the protector practice, but was concerned about the impact on his relationship with the gurus who had given him the initiations and commitment to do the practice. Rinpoche commented as follows.*

With regard to your question about the protector and your concern about not generating negative thoughts and losing faith toward other lamas, the decision that you have taken is correct.



*Lama Zopa*

Kopan Monastery had been performing the Dorje Shugden practice from the beginning, as this was **Lama Yeshe's main** [*he had several but DS was the most important*] **protector, on whom he relied whenever he needed help for anything** [*for help on anything, not just mundane*]. But since His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the one who holds, preserves, and spreads the entire Buddhist Dharma – both the lesser vehicle and the Mahayana, Paramitayana, and Secret Mantra Vajrayana – without the existence of His Holiness, not only Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism but Buddhism in general would suffer in the world. It would be similar to when children are left behind when their parents die. It would be like that.

Therefore, support for His Holiness becomes very important. Another thing is that His Holiness is the main source of world peace. In this aspect, His Holiness gives so much peace and happiness to so many millions and millions of people in this world. This aspect of His Holiness is the greatest inspiration, bringing many millions of people's hearts toward Buddhism. Even though we have many high lamas, not everyone is able to manifest this particular aspect, even though from my side the virtuous friends are of the same essence.

Therefore, it becomes very important to support His Holiness and to fulfil His Holiness' wishes. For that reason, Kopan Monastery stopped doing this practice. This was done for

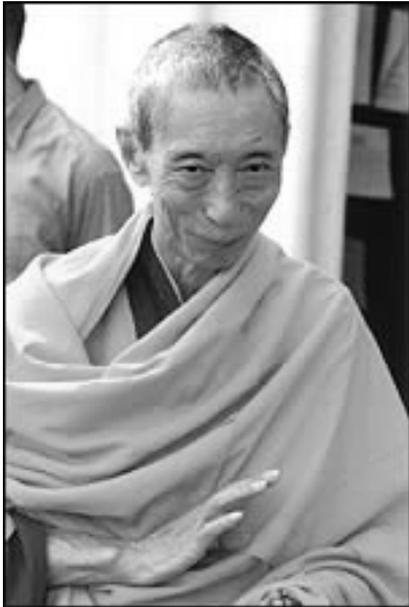




His Holiness. **This does not mean that Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo, His Holiness Trijang Rinpoche, and His Holiness Zong Rinpoche have made mistakes. It does not mean they are wrong. Nor does one have to look at the protector as evil.** For us ordinary people it is difficult to judge, because we cannot see these lamas' minds.

Another side of the teaching is that it is mentioned that the protector is an Arya Bodhisattva, a manifestation of Manjushri. So, then, there is **also the risk of our creating very heavy karma in that context.** [*for having bad thoughts about an enlightened being*]

In addition, if one has received teachings, initiations, and so forth from Geshe Kelsang Gyatso\*, including the practice of Dorje Shugden, there is a way of practicing *lam rim* in relation to this situation. In the *lam rim*, it says that the Buddhas – for example, Buddha Vajradhara, Guru Shakyamuni Buddha, and so forth – manifest in ordinary form and guide us to enlightenment. That means they manifest in an ordinary aspect that shows mistakes, such as having delusions, performing mistaken actions, and so on. One can also think in this way about the situation, according to the *lam rim*. In reality, there is no mistake here, but the guru is showing the aspect of making mistakes, like a movie actor.



*Geshe Kelsang Gyatso*

Thinking in this way and relating the situation to that part of the *lam rim* helps keep one from losing faith, from losing guru devotion. It only inspires one. Why? Because without the ordinary aspect that shows mistakes, we have no other way to be guided. There is no other method for the Buddhas to guide us to enlightenment.

Another way to look at this situation is that although in reality there is no mistake on the guru's part, nevertheless we **see mistakes according to OUR karma.** The guru shows mistakes because we only have the karma to see this manifestation at this moment, and nothing else.

In this matter, that aspect becomes most precious and important for us, for our minds. As it is mentioned by Gyalwa Ensapa, "Until one becomes separated from evil karmic obscurations, even if all the Buddhas without exception directly descend in front of one, one will not have the fortune to see the supreme holy body, adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications, but rather only the present appearance (the ordinary view)."

Even if a guru kills another guru or kills many millions of people, as Hitler or Mao did, since one has made a connection with him or her, one should never lose faith from one's own side. Unless from his or her side the virtuous friend tells you, "Now I am no longer your guru. You should not follow me anymore," unless he gives this permission, one must not give up one's faith in that teacher.

One time, after I had listened for three days to one person's teachings, that person told me not to follow him. The bodhisattva Khunu Lama later explained to me that it was **acceptable not to follow that person, but important not to criticize, to keep the mind in**





## equanimity regarding him.

It is said in the tantric teachings, “If one thinks one’s own guru is bad-tempered, one will be reborn in the hell realms for 60 eons.” If one does not cultivate devotion after one has made a Dharma connection – which means having received teachings with the recognition of guru and disciple – then it is said in the teachings that one will be reborn as a dog one hundred times, and then be reborn in a lower caste – or, as His Holiness Zong Rinpoche mentioned, as a scorpion. This applies even if there are no negative thoughts arising toward the guru, such as heresy or anger, but one still does not develop devotion and follow the teacher after listening to even just one stanza, even if one no longer regards that teacher as one’s guru or forgets one’s guru-disciple relation.

The conclusion is that both ways of looking at the situation with the guru are correct, because there is a purpose to both: that is, to benefit others. These ways of thinking are what protect our mind from the heaviest karma.



*His Holiness Zong Rinpoche*

### Action Against Lamas

*A student who had very heavy obstacles in his life, and felt like he was being attacked by spirits, had taken it upon himself to force lamas who were performing the protector practice, Dorje Shugden, to stop. Rinpoche sent him the following advice.*

My very dear Jimmy,  
Thank you very much your kind letter. I appreciate you following His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s wishes. That helps Tibet, and also helps your growth – not physical growth, but spiritual growth. You made a wise decision. That is very important: thinking big for the future of the teachings of Buddha and for sentient beings.

If those other lamas are your gurus – that means, if you have received initiations or teachings from them, with the recognition that you had a guru-disciple relationship and that person is the guru and you are the disciple – then if you get angry or generate heretical thoughts toward that person, it is not good.

In Lama Tsongkhapa’s *Lam-rim Chen-mo* (The Great Treatise on the Stages of the Path to Enlightenment), it says, “**Even simply generating non-devotional thought, to think of the guru as an ordinary person, is an obstacle.**” So, you can imagine what it is like if you generate heresy and anger toward your gurus and criticize them with a negative mind. This is creating the heaviest obstacle to realizations on the path to enlightenment, and the heaviest obstacle even to this life’s happiness, as well as to future lives’ happiness. **There is no need to mention liberation or enlightenment.**

The other thing is that in this life, by generating heretical thoughts or anger toward the guru, one experiences heavy sufferings, especially sickness, and many catastrophes, one after the other. Also, when you die, it is in such a terrible way. It is very terrifying, not peaceful, and there is the most unbearable suffering in the hell realms. Not only that, but it lasts for





such a length of time, for eons.

Please read the section on guru devotion in Pabongka Dechen Nyingpo's *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*. Also, read the section on guru devotion in Lama Tsongkhapa's *Lam-rim Chen-mo*. Please study other Dharma books, at least these two texts and the sections that I have mentioned.

In the teaching *Commentary on the Difficult Points of the "Black Enemy of Yama,"* (Tib: *Dra-nag-ka-drel*) (see *Steps on the Path to Enlightenment*, Volume 1, page 157) it is said that after having made a Dharma connection, receiving teachings (even four words), with a recognition of a guru-disciple relationship (the other person is your guru and you are his or her disciple), if you forget to devote yourself to that person as a guru, or if you don't regard them as your guru, you will be born as a dog for one hundred lifetimes, and then you will be born into a lower rank. His Holiness Zong Rinpoche says one is born as a scorpion instead of in a lower rank.

If you did create negative karma with your teachers, please confess whatever heresy, anger, or criticism you have committed against them. Confess as quickly as possible.

If death comes before your confession, your future lives will be so difficult. Not only will you be unable to meet the guru, but you will also be unable to meet the Dharma. Not only that, but you will experience unimaginable suffering for an incredible amount of time.

The Fifth Dalai Lama advised how to practice guru devotion in this kind of situation. When you have difficulty with gurus, seeing mistakes in their actions, then think that this is the view of your own hallucinated mind. **All these appearances are your own mistakes manifested as the guru's holy actions.** Recognize it as your own mistake and abandon it, like a poison.

What is to be abandoned is one's own thoughts of seeing mistakes in the gurus, which are ordinary concepts. You can abandon this by thinking in the way His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama explained.

Gyalwa Ensapa said,

In short, whatever great or small realization one generates is due to having meditated with little or great devotion. To the qualified valid gurus, may I be able to complete the commitment without obstacles, and look at the gurus' qualities with no mistakes.

The other way is to think that bodhisattvas work for sentient beings. Their only concern is other sentient beings, without exception, no matter how evil they are. **The more evil they are, then the more the bodhisattvas cherish them, and the more concern the**





**bodhisattvas have for them.** [*by actively participating in the DS controversy, people begin to do things against their vows, begin to be more 'evil' - bodhisattvas then, according to what Lama Zopa says, should have more compassion and concern for these people who need more help to achieve enlightenment. So **think** more carefully about the high lamas' motivation for creating this controversy*] Their attitude is like this, and their action is only to work for sentient beings. That includes you. Even a very new bodhisattva who became a bodhisattva today thinks like this. Therefore, there is no question about Buddha, who completed the path, with both method and wisdom, who has omniscience, perfect power, and complete compassion for all sentient beings, including you. The Buddha will not work for himself, even for one second, but only for all sentient beings, continuously, according to the level of their minds. **Buddha works by manifesting in various forms and revealing different methods**, not only by giving teachings, initiations, vows, and so forth, but also guiding beings in many different ways, giving advice and leading you in so many ways from happiness to happiness, up until enlightenment.

Now, there is not just one Buddha. There are numerous buddhas guiding you and other sentient beings. **Who else are those buddhas than your gurus?** Who gives you teachings, vows, initiations, oral transmissions, and advice? **Who definitely brings you to enlightenment with these methods?** There is no question. If they are not manifestations of the buddhas, or Buddha doesn't manifest through them and guide you, then that means there is no Buddha guiding you. That means either you don't accept that there are countless buddhas, or you don't accept that there is even one Buddha, or you think that there is a Buddha, but he is not omniscient. Or you think that Buddha doesn't have compassion toward you, or Buddha doesn't have perfect power to guide you or to reveal methods to you.

If you think like this, it means there is no Buddha and nobody can become a buddha. All these mistakes arise, and many Buddhist teachings become falsified.

Because you trust in His Holiness the Dalai Lama, you have no doubt that His Holiness has limitless compassion. **You have no doubt that His Holiness and particularly what he teaches is Chenrezig manifested. He is not telling lies.** So, you have no doubt that Shakyamuni Buddha does exist, and that his path has no mistakes, and there is no doubt that there are countless buddhas. Then, think that the conclusion is: for all those from whom you have received teachings with a recognition of a guru-disciple relationship, from your side, you must have a new mind, a different mind, 24 hours every day, and think differently. Think of them as Buddha. Each and every one of them is Buddha guiding you. This is the most important thing. This devotional thought is the most precious one in your life, more precious than billions of dollars, gold, diamonds, or wish-fulfilling jewels. From this thought, you can achieve all happiness up until enlightenment, and you can bring about complete happiness for all sentient beings. You can fulfil all the wishes of all sentient beings.

Thank you very much. Sorry, you have written many times, but I wasn't able to reply quickly. Please keep my reply. It might be helpful to read it from time to time. You can also show it to others who have similar problems.

With much love and prayers...





## Forsaking a Guru

*A student wrote to Rinpoche saying that he had forsaken one of his gurus, Geshe Kelsang Gyatso\*. The student said that he was not keeping his vows and was aware of the negative karma that could result from these actions. Rinpoche answered as follows.*

Once you have made a Dharma connection with the virtuous friend, your guru, you cannot give up this relationship unless the guru himself or herself says, “Don’t come,” or “Don’t regard me as your guru.”

By giving up Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, you have created heavy negative karma in this life. Since you haven’t given me up, I suggest that you confess to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso about what happened, and devote yourself again to this virtuous friend.

According to guru devotion practice, no matter how many gurus you have, you should look at all of them as one being, one mind, and that is Dharmakaya. That view must come from the disciple’s side. You look at them as **one mind in different bodies, acting in different ways, according to the karma of sentient beings and their ordinary mistaken minds.**

This is what one should practice, if one wants profit and not loss. So, change your attitude and apologize to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Confess to him and follow him again, unless he says, “No”. This will help lighten your heaviest negative karma.

In this world, people are so afraid of getting cancer or AIDS, but they don’t think about eons of suffering in the hell realms. There is such great suffering in the lower realms that cancer and AIDS or whatever suffering one can encounter in the human realm seems a great comfort and pleasure by comparison.

Causing heresy and anger and giving up the virtuous friend is much worse than killing and waging wars. This is because the object is very powerful. One’s guru is the most powerful among all powerful objects, such as buddhas.

**The karma from forsaking one’s guru is worse than the karma generated by Hitler and Mao Tse Tung.** Mao Tse Tung caused harm to many holy beings, but they were not his gurus. In the world, someone who kills many millions of people can still achieve enlightenment in that same lifetime. But generating heresy toward the virtuous friend and **giving up one’s devotion to the virtuous friend makes it difficult to achieve enlightenment,** even if one practices tantra with much hardship. It will be like taking a rebirth in hell.

Therefore, what I am saying is this: **In the world, actions such as killing and waging war have very bad repercussions and are terrible, but the karma from these actions is mild compared to heresy and giving up one’s guru.**

You can see in the outline in the *lam rim*, even if one commits the five heinous crimes – killing one’s father, killing one’s mother, drawing blood from a Buddha, causing schism in the Sangha, and killing an Arhant – one can still achieve enlightenment, but not based on mistaken devotion to the virtuous friend. If you read *Liberation in the Palm of Your Hand*, or





Essential Nectar, particularly the *lam rim* outline on guru devotion, you will understand.

I advise you to make your negative karma smaller by apologizing with regret. Practicing Buddhism is basically your choice. If you want to be free from suffering and its causes, delusion and karma, this is what you need to do: practice the Buddhist path and the Four Noble Truths. If you don't want to be free from suffering and its causes, then there is no need to practice Buddhism. **If you don't want happiness, then don't practice virtue.**

*\*Geshe Kelsang Gyatso, a teacher in the UK, who continues to engage in and encourage the Dorje Shugden Protector practice.*

