



Tibet in Exile

In March 1959, the Dalai Lama, together with his two teachers and family, succeeded in escaping from the besieged Summer Palace in Lhasa. The escape route was secured by the guerrilla organization of the Khampas (East Tibetans), who suffered severe losses in the process. Approximately 100,000 Tibetans followed the Dalai Lama to India, and about 1,500 found refuge in Switzerland in the 60s.



Geshe Rabten

In exile, a new government was created according to democratic rules, and the great monastic universities were rebuilt. By these efforts, the Tibetans were able to maintain their culture. The political efforts to regain a free Tibet, however, have been without success.

In the 60s and 70s an increasing interest in Buddhism led to many new contacts between exile Tibetans and the western world. The first appearance of the Dalai Lama in front of a large western audience took place in 1979 on Mont-Pelerin near Lake Geneva, following an invitation by Ven. Geshe Rabten [*very eminent lama who is also a strong Dorje Shugden practitioner. It should also be noted that this event took place three years after His Holiness first spoke against Dorje Shugden in 1976*]. This event was followed by further visits to the west.

Buddhism became known as a religion of tolerance, peace, and reason. Thanks to a growing number of new Dharma centers and Tibet support groups, a broad spectrum of the population was made aware of issues that concerned the Tibetan people. Tibetans were viewed favorably by many western people and were seen as a peaceful, friendly, and unjustly oppressed people.

Causes of the current conflict

In March 1996, the Dalai Lama announced a ban against the worship of the Buddhist deity Dorje Shugden, declaring that such worship posed a "*danger to his life and the cause of Tibet*". The exile government then began to enforce this ban. Houses were searched and a signature campaign was carried out. People were coerced into signing their name





agreeing to abandon all worship of this deity from then on. Those refusing to sign were openly declared enemies to the cause of Tibet and as endangering the life of the Dalai Lama. The consequences were dire for those who stood by their faith: employees of the



exile government were pushed out of their jobs and children of uncompromising parents were denied school attendance. Even the constitution of the exile government was adapted to this change of policy: *"The presiding judge of the Judiciary Commission ... must not be a worshipper of Gyalchen Shugden ..."*

Dorje Shugden is one of many Buddhist deities worshipped as a protector of the teachings of Buddha. He is worshipped by many of the most venerated Masters of the Gelug and Sakya traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as by many monasteries, families and entire regions. The Dalai Lama himself has a close connection with this deity. His own teacher, Trijang Rinpoche, one of the most

revered Buddhist Masters of recent times, and Geshe Rabten and Lati Rinpoche, two highly regarded Masters who were selected in 1961 by the Dalai Lama to be his religious assistants, are all worshippers of Dorje Shugden. Moreover, entire departments at the monastic universities of Sera and Ganden, as well as most families in entire regions like Chatring (East Tibet) have been worshipping this deity for centuries.

The actions of the Dalai Lama were seen as shocking because Buddhism is a religion of tolerance, not dogma or force. No Lama has the right to change the content of religious doctrine. **Differences in opinion are resolved with clear logic in public debates.** The use of political power to impose religious opinions is unthinkable.

The events since 1996 have created deep divisions, as well as conflict and suspicion, in all levels of Tibetan society: in families, monasteries, and schools.

Background

The background to the reasons for the Dalai Lama's actions has become a source of much speculation. One easily recognized factor is the



His Holiness Kyabje Trijang Dorje Chang





increasing influence of the state oracle [*Nechung*] over the Dalai Lama since the 70's. The Tibetan state oracle goes back to a pre-Buddhist shamanic deity. In Tibetan history this deity has proved helpful at times, but at other times has been destructive. **For this reason, the state oracle was not consulted during the Dalai Lama's escape in 1959. All details of the remarkable escape were arranged by Trijang Rinpoche in connection with an oracle of Dorje Shugden. After the successful escape, the Dalai Lama expressed his gratitude towards Dorje Shugden. This apparently caused the state oracle to become jealous and to begin defaming Dorje Shugden.** [*This is what they have accused Dorje Shugden of!*]

The Dalai Lama fell increasingly under the influence of the state oracle. In recent years there have been three more oracles, including a young woman who grew up among the Chinese in Tibet. All these oracles currently live together with the Dalai Lama in his palace compound, and the Dalai Lama seems to base most of his political decisions on the statements of these oracles.

A further member of the close group surrounding the Dalai Lama is Gyalo Dondrub, the elder brother of the Dalai Lama. In Tibet, the family of the Dalai Lama was respected, but had no political power. Gyalo Dondrub, however, has used the changed situation in exile to gain a powerful influence over Tibetan politics. He is continuously occupied with "secret" business behind the scenes, and although he maintains contact with the CIA, he is the only direct contact the Dalai Lama has with the communist leadership in Beijing. He is regarded as the "secret boss", and his role, as well as his goals are unclear.

In Switzerland

A similar signature campaign was also carried out in Switzerland. Many families, which had the tradition of worshipping Dorje Shugden for centuries, as well as those who didn't, refused to sign their names renouncing this practice. Those signatures that were gathered were then handed over to the Dalai Lama during his brief visit to Switzerland in 1996. In a private meeting in Caux near Montreux, the Dalai Lama urged his representatives to "*continue these efforts in a clever way. We should ensure that future generations will not even know the name Dholgyal*" (Dorje Shugden). (These statements have been verified through notes made by representatives present at the meeting.)

Violence, Destruction and Death

Nothing fans the flames of the fanaticism of Tibetans more violently than the thought that the Dalai Lama could be in danger. The Dalai Lama deliberately gave this as a reason justifying the ban of Dorje Shugden, and thus triggered within a few weeks, fights, the destruction of statues and houses, and assassination attempts through rival mobs. The repeated pleas of concerned individuals were ignored by the Dalai Lama.





In one incident, in June 1996 in Dharamsala, the **retired Tibetan Minister Kundeling expressed his worries about the new direction of the exile government. As a consequence, while in his own home just a few days later he was nearly stabbed to death in an attempted assassination.**

In February 1997, the director of the School of Dialectics in Dharamsala and his two assistants were murdered. Worshippers of Dorje Shugden were immediately suspected, but although the director had supported the Dalai Lama's new direction by many defamatory writings, he had attacked many who had criticized the exile government and in so doing he had attracted many enemies. Although he was very close to the Dalai Lama, he was also known as a troublemaker. A few months earlier, he had been denied entry into Mongolia for this reason.

Manipulation of Public Opinion

The Indian press initially reacted with critical reports regarding the new developments in the Tibetan community. From the west came concerned questions about how the actions of the exile government could be compatible with freedom of religion and democracy. The exile government soon carried out an extensive campaign to shape public opinion. These were aimed especially at Tibet support groups, Buddhist centres and the western media. The Indian police force was also greatly influenced.

The original reasons for the belief that "*the worship of the deity is a danger to the Dalai Lama's life and the cause of Tibet*" was quickly questioned in the west. How could the worship of a deity endanger the Dalai Lama? What is the cause of Tibet? Is it a political or a religious issue?

New justifications were created which sounded **more credible to western ears**. Dorje Shugden was depicted as an evil spirit who destroyed the harmony of the Buddhist traditions of Tibet. **Historical facts which contradict these statements were manipulated** [for example, the success of His Holiness's escape from Tibet, and the accurate advice involved was credited to Nechung]. The fame and respect of the Dalai Lama seemed to be enough to make it easy for the exile government to spread false statements. When Walt Disney Productions made the film "**Kundun**", which tells the story of the Dalai Lama, they consulted the exile government. Decisive historical events in the Dalai Lama's life were misrepresented in order to justify the exile governments current anti-Shugden campaign. There are still eye witnesses alive who can verify these falsifications.

Representations of Dorje Shugden which are closer to reality can be found in many writings of important Tibetan masters of the past 300 years. There has also been a study carried out at the University of Tokyo in 1995 which describes in detail the relationship





between the 5th Dalai Lama and Master Dragpa Gyaltsen, the historical source of Dorje Shugden.

The Dorje Shugden Devotees Charitable and Religious Society

In the months following March 1996, monks of the monasteries affected by the ban attempted to negotiate with the Dalai Lama, but to no avail. In June 1996, the Dorje Shugden Devotees Charitable and Religious Society was established. **Their aim was to use historical facts in their struggle against the exile government's intensive spreading of false information. For some authors who have contributed to the preparation of these historical records, the consequences have been tragic.** The house of the retired teacher Dr. Thubten from the Tibetan settlement of Clementown was barricaded by a mob, bombarded with stones and set on fire. Although Dr Thubten and his family managed to escape with minor injuries, a monk who was with them was hospitalized with severe head injuries. Dr. Thubten, a respected Tibetan teacher with 33 years of service, now lives in reduced and difficult conditions in Delhi. The reason for the hostility against Dr. Thubten is that he had criticized the exile government's new policy regarding Dorje Shugden.

The Dorje Shugden Society was also advised to take the case to the highest court in India, because the new direction of the exile government obviously violates the Indian law of freedom of religion. Although all the necessary documents for such a case have been prepared, no serious measures have been taken - presumably out of respect for the Dalai Lama.

Thus, it came as no surprise that after the murder of the director of the School of Dialectics, the exile government made great efforts to directly incriminate the leading monks of the Dorje Shugden Society, in the hope of eliminating their obstinate opposition. Although the details of the murder remain unclear, a connection to the Dorje Shugden Society could not be proved. The exile government has nevertheless been successful in influencing worldwide media to such an extent that the worshippers of Dorje Shugden are described as "violent fundamentalists who are after the blood of the Dalai Lama".

The paradox of the story: The teacher and two assistants of the Dalai Lama, as well as all of those who made the Dalai Lama's escape out of Tibet possible, and most of the Khampa guerrillas who gave up their lives to create a safe path to India for the Dalai Lama, were worshippers of Dorje Shugden. How can these people be said to be the ones endangering the Dalai Lama's life?





A Conflict with a Solution

This conflict was started by the Dalai Lama. It can be ended by him at any time, if he grants his people unlimited freedom of religion. Up until now, the Dalai Lama has done nothing to settle the dispute. The exile Tibetans are dependent on the good favor and support of the west. However, if the western media recognized and accurately represented the current behavior of the Tibetan exile government, many of those who are currently in positions of power might lose their influence.

Influences in Tibetan Exile

At the age of 16, His Holiness the Dalai Lama became responsible for the politics of a Tibet which had already been occupied by Chinese troops. Of his two teachers, it was Trijang Rinpoche in particular who instructed His Holiness not only in religious matters, but also in political procedure and conduct. Many of the speeches made by His Holiness the Dalai Lama up to the late 70's were composed with the advice and help of Trijang Rinpoche.

In old Tibet, political matters were in the hands of the nobility. After the successful escape from Tibet, it was these families in particular who established settlements, schools and political representation in foreign countries.

Gyalo Dondrub, the Dalai Lama's elder brother, used the new situation in exile to gain more influence than had previously been possible for him. Phala, Surkhang and Yuthog, experienced nobles from the old Tibet, achieved great benefit for the Tibetan people in exile. They, however, stood in the way of Gyalo Dondrub's striving for increased power. In the mid 60's, the Dalai Lama's brother succeeded in setting public opinion against Surkhang and Yuthog, who were thus forced to leave India and move to Taiwan. Phala was assigned representation in Switzerland and thereby lost his direct influence in India. In order to gain further influence, Gyalo Dondrub also had to break the close contact between Trijang Rinpoche and the Dalai Lama. This may have been the purpose of his attempt to marry the Dalai Lama to an American woman.

Oracles and Deities

Another person who sought influence in exile was the Tibetan state oracle. **The flight from Tibet had been successful thanks to the oracle of Dorje Shugden. The Dalai Lama, therefore, exhibited an increasingly strong connection to this deity, which thereby limited the power and significance of the state oracle.**





Tibetan Buddhism recognizes various types of deities. Supramundane deities are aspects of Buddha who generally cannot be contacted directly. Worldly deities are beings invisible to humans, yet nevertheless have a close connection with this world and with the fate of mankind. Some of these help humans; others hurt them. Their perceptive faculties regarding past, present and future are higher than those of ordinary humans. By means of oracles, such deities can be contacted.

An oracle is a human being whose body can be used by a supramundane being appearing in the aspect of a worldly deity, or by a worldly deity. The deity puts the mind of the human into an unconscious state and then uses the body of this human to provide consultation. **One can imagine the great benefit humans can derive from such a deity if the deity is a powerful being in complete control of the oracle's body, and is a being with perfect perception of situations and developments and solely driven by the desire to help humans to achieve a wholesome life.** If the deity is less powerful and the mind of the oracle remains active during consultation, then it is uncertain who speaks: it may be the deity, but it may also be the ordinary human being. Moreover, if the deity or still active oracle is motivated by selfishness, then its responses will hardly be of use to humans and can be the source of tremendous disturbance to a society.

In Tibet there were hundreds of oracles with deities of varying quality. The Tibetan state oracle (Netchung) was said to have been a shamanic deity that was overcome by the Indian master Padmasambhava and then forced to protect Tibet. Many decisions in Tibet's history have their source in statements by the state oracle. Sometimes the advice was beneficial; at other times it was fatal. When the British army marched towards Lhasa at the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, the state oracle was consulted. **The British, under Lieutenant-Colonel Younghusband, had no intention to attack the Tibetans. The state oracle however advised, "Now the time has come to destroy the enemy." The Tibetan army attacked, suffered extensive losses and was defeated within a few hours. The 13th Dalai Lama was very displeased with the state oracle and forbade further prophecies for a long time.**

Dorje Shugden is considered the incarnation of the Master Dragpa Gyaltsen, who appears in the form of a worldly deity. Dragpa Gyaltsen and the 5th Dalai Lama were masters of similar rank at Drepung Monastery, although Master Dragpa Gyaltsen enjoyed far greater popularity and renown than the 5th Dalai Lama. The chief minister of the 5th Dalai Lama is said to have murdered Dragpa Gyaltsen in 1656 out of jealousy, unable to accept a possible rival to his own protégé. Master Dragpa Gyaltsen took rebirth in the form of the deity Dorje Shugden **with the purpose of protecting the teachings of Buddha in general, and in particular the teachings of Master Je Tsongkhapa.**





There exist several oracles of Dorje Shugden. Through his oracle of Panglung Monastery, Dorje Shugden gave precise instructions for the escape of the Dalai Lama in 1959. Panglung Rinpoche, the head lama of Panglung Monastery, is now a teacher at the University of Munich, and the oracle of Panglung now lives in Taiwan.

Oracles in the Exile Government

In the 70's, the state oracle gained increasing influence over the decisions of the Dalai Lama. **Repeated prophecies were made that Tibet would gain its independence within a few years. The predicted time has since long passed, but Tibet's independence has not been achieved. It is known that the uprising of the Tibetans in Lhasa in the eighties took place as a result of the advice of the state oracle. The consequences were devastating, as many Tibetans lost their lives, and nothing was gained.** The recent conflict concerning the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama is also attributed to the state oracle, who advised that the identity of the boy be announced before he was brought out of Tibet and into safety.

The state oracle blames its failures on Dorje Shugden: *"Everything would have occurred as I predicted if Dorje Shugden had not prevented it."* [one confused spirit changed the karma of a *whole* nation? That doesn't sound supramundane but VERY mundane] These statements seem to be taken seriously by the exile government and this may be the actual source of such phrases as, *"The worship of Dorje Shugden damages Tibetan matters."*

Oracles have played a role in Tibetan history for a long time. Their influence, however, has never been as dominant as now in Dharamsala.

Those Surrounding His Holiness the Dalai Lama

In recent years three further oracles have joined the state oracle. In addition to Gyalo Dondrub, the narrow circle around the Dalai Lama seems to consist of more and more people attempting to use the Dalai Lama merely for their own selfish purposes. This development has been noticed with great concern within the Tibetan community. On July 15, 1997 a Tibetan went on hunger strike in order to draw attention to the dangers posed by those surrounding the Dalai Lama. It was said that groups of Tibetans were forming in Dharamsala with the intention of violently opposing the actions of those Tibetans who disagree with the present policies of the Tibetan government.

