

Speech Delivered by His Holiness 14th Dalai Lama to the Second Gelug Conference (Dharamsala, June 12th 2000)

We meet here today with Ganden Tri Rinpoche, the representative of Jamgön Gyelwa (Lama Tsong Khapa), chiefly gracing us with his presence. The abbots representing the three seats of Sera, Drepung, Ganden, as well as those of Tashi Lhunpo, Gyutö and Gyumei tantric colleges have joined us; as have abbots and former abbots who are here on behalf of the various other Gelug monasteries. It seems though that the Manali representative has not been able to join us though (laughter)¹. Anyway as well as all of these guests I also have been able to attend this Gelug conference. The organisation of these international Gelug conferences and the general concern for the maintenance and promotion of the teaching is admirable. I would like to thank all of you for your concern and for having put in such hard work. Given the significance of this event, I would like to encourage everyone, for the space of these few days, to dispense with ostentatious posing and the empty formalities of ceremony. Let's try to get to the heart of the matter. We have now gained quite a bit of experience. So let us utilise that to focus on what problems we face and give some thought to how we can improve things. Our consideration of these matters should be careful. I have high hopes that this will prove to be an open forum for the discussion of the important issues and will generally prove to be a success.

I would like to say something about Zöpa Rinpoche. Rinpoche spends his time travelling all over, spending a little time in all sorts of places. All of this is something that he takes upon himself in the service of Dharma. He really works extremely hard. A superficial look at Rinpoche may sometimes give the impression of someone who is a bit lightweight, but in reality he is a very shrewd and high-minded individual. That is what I see in him. He has shown a great deal of concern for and served the Buddhist tradition in general, that of Lama Tsong Khapa in particular and indeed the cause of the Tibetan people. With so many people gathered here, I would like to take this opportunity, to thank him for what he has done (applause).

I have seen notes that Rinpoche took of a teaching. It was written in a fine hand and the subject matter was lofty. However with clarifying notes here, there and everywhere, it was difficult to plough through. Actually that happens with me sometimes. I make notes on something, then when I come to read it later, it is all very difficult to figure out. Anyway thank you Rinpoche.

I have heard that Rinpoche lays a special emphasis on the *Stages of the Path* when it comes to putting into practise the things that one has learnt about Buddhism. This conforms with what I myself have been encouraging for some time. The tradition of various Lamas giving *Stages of the Path* teaching in the debating ground of the main monasteries is something that has existed for a long time. Although the abbots still observe this, it has been relegated to a position of relative unimportance in latter times, becoming a bit of a formality. Now of course those who are engaged in philosophical study could perhaps be forgiven a little. There is a general feeling that they should be devoting themselves to detailed analysis of the finer points of the texts. That being said, when we look at some of the chapters of an important philosophical text like *Madhyamakavatara*² for instance; in lets say the chapter concerned with the perfection of patience there is a wealth of material relating to practise. There is no real point in debating the information contained in those sections. The words instead require some explanation from the teacher.

Now when those monks studying in the monastic colleges do reach the more complicated sections, like for example from the sixth chapter of *Madhyamakavatara* onwards there is another problem. There is a heavy bias toward focussing on certain more philosophically challenging sections of texts - in *Madhyamaka* for example, Chandrakirti's defence of *Buddhapalita* against *Bhavaviveka*. This being the

¹ A reference to the Gelug monastery in Manali where the worship of Shugden continues unabated.

² Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nāgārjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle Way'*

case the students often don't get a clear presentation of the text as a coherent whole and subsequently can't see it that way themselves. It is quite possible that this is having a detrimental effect; that this contributes to the real import of the text not making an impact upon their minds and consequentially there being a lack of integration. All of these points relate to the approach that Rinpoche encourages. Let me give you an illustration of this lack of integration. Some time ago I met the director of a Dharma centre in America. This person spoke to me, initially a little reticently about their original plan to have a monk at their centre because they initially lacked anyone who was ordained. The person eventually started to be more open about what had transpired. Apparently a Geshe from Sera Je went there. After him there was a new Geshe, someone from Gomang I believe. The centre made all the arrangements for getting him there. There was quite a bit of work involved in acquiring the necessary visa to stay and the Green Card, to work. So the centre therefore took it upon itself to organise all of this. Once everything had been settled and he was firmly ensconced there, one day he said that a relation of his had arrived and that he must go to meet them. They never heard from him again and there was no way to find him. Such a disgraceful way to act! Now if it was the case that some circumstance had arisen whereby the person was not able to work at the centre, the very least they could have done was to clarify the situation and apologise. But to run off, without so much as a by your leave. Someone who bears the title of Geshe acting in such a way is just scandalous. Why do such things happen? It is because the individual has not been able to bring their book learning into their everyday life, practising what they have learnt. It all goes back to what the Kadam Lamas used to say. In answer to the question as to whether there should be any disparity between one's own temperament and the Dharma ideals they said that there should not. That one should not allow for any discrepancy. What one has to aim for is to create a harmony between one's mind and the Dharma through continued and regular exposure to the *Stages of the Path*. If one's exposure is only desultory and erratic one can not hope for it to be effective. Just as an irregular dependence upon a particular medicine is not going to prove effective for a person who is chronically ill. It seems that for some then the subtle analysis of philosophical issues does not help to change their character. I suspect that this is what's to blame for a lot of the rot that sets in.

As there is already the tradition of the Abbot in the larger monasteries giving *Stages of the Path* teachings, the significance of what is taught should be emphasised and the exercise undertaken with conscientiousness. However what is even more important is how the daily classes on textual analyses are conducted. For example with a work such as Gyeltsab Je's Prajnaparamita commentary (Namshei Nying Gyen), the author continuously links the material to the *Stages of the Path*. Now when dealing with texts like Lama Tsong Khapa's commentary to Madhyamakavatara (Uma Gongpa Rabsel) or his Exposition of Definitive and Interpretive Teachings (Drang Nge Legshey Nyingpo) the same is true. What these works themselves make perfectly clear is that it should be for the sake of controlling one's own mind that they should be studied. It must therefore be stressed that the authors did not compose them merely as some sort of intellectual exercise. The real point of these texts - that is to say their use as a means to affect some real change in the mind - needs to be emphasised. The very fact that we are still aware of who Lama Tsong Khapa was is due to his having engaged in a practise which incorporated the stages of study, contemplation and meditation in a single-pointed quest for the development of intellectual and experiential insight. Then it was this practise that, even on the level of ordinary appearances, yielded his attainment of realisation. It is because he really put into practise the material that he studied. It is not merely due to his intellectual achievements that he is celebrated even today. It is incredibly important to consider these points.

There was an idea that I had about having a Gelug Prayer (Mönlam) festival in Bodh Gaya that I happened to mention to Tri Rinpoche. Of course there is the danger of this being seen as something engaged in just to provide some material benefit. But anyway, we can see for example how, due to the efforts of Penor Rinpoche, there is a (Nyingma) festival that has become quite an affair and lots of accommodation for the participating monks has been built. Bodh Gaya is of course a very holy place, but there is nothing going on there all the year round. My mention of it was only in terms of discussing its feasibility. I was not giving some definitive pronouncement on it. If the Gelug could have something

there regularly, something like what the Nyingma and others organise at present, the accommodation is more or less already there. We are all followers of the same teacher after all. The facilities in Bodh Gaya seem to improve yearly and I believe that things could come together to make it successful. One could count on three, four or five thousand monks from Sera, Ganden and Drepung.

I think that Tri Rinpoche's idea though is also a good one³. There is a place between Mundgod and Bylakuppe, the name of which escapes me. I think it must be the place situated on a hill that is being referred to. If this could be organised, yes, it would be good to start up some institute there. I'm not sure whether the students would actually want to stay there though, being as it is neither part of one monastery nor the other. Anyway these are things which can be considered. It is not up to me to decide.

Now it is about six hundred years since Lama Tsong Khapa lived in Tibet. About three hundred years earlier, Dipamkara Atisha founded the great Kadam tradition. It was this school that Lama Tsong Khapa used as his foundation. He started a tradition that emphasised tantric study that concentrated on practices of the three deities, Guhyasamaja, Heruka Chakrasamvara and Yamantaka.

“May this tradition of the Conqueror, Losang Dragpa,
That teaches the outward, calm and controlled demeanour of the hearer,
And the internal poise associated with the two stages of the yogic practitioner,
And adopts both Sutra and Tantra as mutually complementary paths flourish.”

And as to what is achieved through the adoption of such a practice, we have the words:

“May this tradition of the Conqueror, Losang Dragpa
That takes the emptiness explained in the Causal Vehicle (sutra),
And the great bliss that is achieved through the Resultant Means (tantra),
Conjoined with the essence of the collection of eighty-four thousand teachings flourish.”⁴

Having all of these features then, this doctrine is a consummate one. It incorporates study, contemplation and meditation in balanced, equal measure and this is what makes it so remarkable. When it comes to detailed study of the great texts, it is the Sakya and Gelug systems which are the most developed. Of course it would be correct to say that the Gelug tradition is in reality derived from the Sakya. That being said, we could probably judge the Gelug commentarial elucidations to be the most profound and the best. All of the Tibetan traditions attempt to engage in a practice that has appreciation of emptiness, but also the interdependence of phenomena. But when it comes down to a coherent exposition of how those two are inter-linked, it is the presentations of Lama Tsong Khapa that stand out. In the Dzogchen tradition, we find a special treatment of the emptiness component within the unified view. The same can be said about the treatment in the Highest Yoga Tantra. However, explaining exactly how the interdependence of things – how they are on the level of appearances – can itself be used as a reason to establish their ultimate, empty nature, is something peculiar to the works of Lama Tsong Khapa. This was not a case of Je Rinpoche having been innovative and creating something new. Now it is possible that subsequent figures within the Gelug might be open to the charge of introducing new ideas. But this is not so with Je Rinpoche. The way that he explains things is just like we find in Buddapalita, the Auto Commentary to Madhyamakavatara and Prasannapada⁵. His works represent a simplification and clarification of the philosophy set out in those works, but it is the same view, not something new. I feel that if the original teachers were here now, if

³ Apparently to set up an alternative venue for a Gelug prayer festival in the South of India, that could also act as a place of study.

⁴ From the prayer *Lozang Gyeltenma* by Tsunpa Könchog Tenpai Drönmei

⁵ The first of these texts is by the author of the same name. The latter two are by ChandrakArti. The third text is the *Clear Words* (Madhyamaka) commentary.

Chandrakirti, Buddapalita and their master Nagarjuna were here now they would express their wholehearted agreement and satisfaction with the way that Je Rinpoche explained things. His works on the middle way are an encapsulation of the view of Nagarjuna, Aryadeva and particularly of Chandrakirti. The original texts, for example Prasannapada is very bulky. But Je Rinpoche's commentary is brief in comparison. This is only a contraction of the words though. Indeed when we read through Buddapalita, we can sometimes actually get the feeling that it is one of Je Rinpoche's works that we have. This is a special feature, something that really distinguishes these works from others. If we look at another of Je Rinpoche's works, something like his *Golden Rosary of Eloquence*, we see his brilliance really shining through in his ability to survey and summarise the whole Indian Prajñāparamita commentarial tradition. The profundity of these works is such that they really are a delight for those well versed in the subjects. That is what lies at the heart of this tradition.

Then on the Tantric side there are the three main deities, Guhyasamaja, Heruka Chakrasamvara and Yamantaka as well as Kalachakra. Of those it is Guhyasamaja that is the chief. There is a saying in the Gelug:

'If one is on the move it is Guhyasamaja. If one is still, it is Guhyasamaja. If one is meditating, it should be upon Guhyasamaja'.

So whether one is engaged in study or practice, Guhyasamaja should be one's focus. It is very significant that if we look at the eighteen volumes that comprise Je Rinpoche's collected works, we find that five volumes of them are devoted solely to Guhyasamaja. So this tradition of practise of Guhyasamaja has been passed down through Je Rinpoche and his main disciples, via Jetsun Sherab Senge⁶ and occupies an exceedingly important position in the Gelug. Je Rinpoche used the earlier Kadam as his foundation and supplemented that with an emphasis upon the study and practice of Guhyasamaja and this is how the tradition has remained for the past six hundred years. That the insights of earlier spiritual figures have been handed down to us by means of this tradition and thus continue to the present day is something that is very laudable.

Now if we look at the institutions of study in the Gelug that have played a major role in the upholding of traditions; the most important ones in the central area of Tibet have been Sera, Drepung, Ganden and Tashi Lhunpo. In the Amdo (and Kham) areas it was mainly Tashi Khyil. Now Kumbum was supposed to be one of the centres of study, and it did originally produce some scholars, but later on there was not so much of note there. Mongolia we find also has given rise to a multitude of scholars, maintainers and promoters of the doctrine of Je Rinpoche. Now later, at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama⁷ – the Fifth became a 'Drepung Geshe' (the name applied to the throne-holder at Drepung). Anyway as that 'Drepung Geshe' assumed the reins of power in the state it represented a huge gain for the Gelug tradition (laughs). Now the Fifth himself practised both Dzogchen and the Sakya *Non-Ascertainment within Appearance and Emptiness*. Indeed it seems that in the latter part of his life his main emphasis was very much upon Dzogchen. But anyway it was still the Gelug tradition that benefited most from him and particularly Drepung monastery. The Fifth Dalai Lama's regent, Sangye Gyatso is said also to have wanted to improve things at Sera monastery, but didn't get time. So Sera lost out, didn't it? (laughs).

Anyway the seats of learning have continued to produce scholars and maintainers of the teachings. As to the monk populations of those monasteries – there was supposed to be 7,700 at Drepung. Actually it was probably more like eight thousand. According to Loseling ex-abbot Pema Gyeltsen there were some five thousand at Loseling alone. But he would go on to say that of those only about a thousand were genuinely studying. So what about the other four thousand? Probably they just wandered around, wasting time, not studying. This also was during a period when Gen Pema Gyeltsen (as the abbot) had tightened things up and the education was going well. But even by his estimates, there were no more than a thousand monks seriously engaged in studying. Now what was left of those monks by the time we came into exile and they gathered at Buxa⁸? Well it was very sad: it was really just last remnants of what

⁶ A direct disciple of Je Rinpoche, who was responsible for founding the Gyumei Tantric College near Lhasa.

⁷ Lozang Ngawang Gyatso (1617- 1682)

⁸ A place in Northern India where monks from the main centres of study etc. congregated soon after coming into exile.

there had been before. At that time though Gen Pema Gyeltsen was someone who really stood out as one who took things into his own hands. Just in terms of his approach to Dögyel for instance. For some time he was the only one - a lone voice against the worship. Even I was involved in the propitiation at the time. Ling Rinpoche did go through the motions, but in reality his involvement was reluctant. As far as Trijang Rinpoche was concerned, it was a special, personal practice and Zong Rinpoche was also similarly involved. But Pema Gyeltsen was resolutely against it. He did have one person who acted as his right-hand man at the time. That was I believe the Abbot of Shartse, who was called Gen Kharu. Anyway the monks remained in a sorry state in Buxa for some time. There were many of them who were ill. After some time I suggested that we try organising things a little. Some decided to try to organise, others were just waiting around. The conditions really were abject. There were many that were ill, it was a far-flung place. The environment was harsh and the accommodation very poor. Despite all of the difficulties, people pulled together. The thing is, they had faith and confidence in the Dalai Lama. I myself did not make it to Buxa. You were there weren't you Rinpoche? And the minister of religious affairs would visit there, the poor old man..... Everyone worked so hard. Anyway, eventually people moved to the South. The lay people worked very hard to set things up. Once the settlements were organised and the harder work was over the monks began to go down (laughs). Actually the monks originally worked very hard in the fields doing the agricultural work. When I went once there was that one Amdo monk wasn't there in Gomang? I remember that he debated on the subject of the mind-base consciousness. He put forward his argument very well and spoke in such pure Amdo tones. Later he was sent to drive the tractor and some time after that disrobed. What a waste! He was probably the only Amdoer there at the time. Later I don't know what happened to him, I didn't see him again. So at that time those who had a degree of scriptural learning found themselves slaving with agricultural work. Anyway, things gradually improved. Things actually came good for people. Finally there was a system for the newer monks to fall into and a place for them to study seriously. Most of the new monks came from Tibet. It was the large number of newcomers who provided the boost in numbers and these new people also contributed a lot in terms of work.

Meantime the Buddhist teachings (in the form of the different traditions) and also the Bön tradition were gradually starting to make inroads into other countries of the world. The Gelug, of course, is one of these traditions that started to have an impact abroad. Now all of this has been good of course. Geshe Zöpa was amongst the very first wave of teachers to go abroad. He has been there as a monk all of this time, wearing the robes of the Buddha. He has been steadfast, seemingly changing little. This is very admirable. He and others like him have been able to be of great service to the Buddhist teaching and to the tradition of Lama Tsong Khapa in particular. As I mentioned earlier "Outwardly calm and controlled, with the demeanour of a Shravaka" he has kept pure moral discipline. As for how much internal development there has been of Bodhicitta and the two stages of Mantra practice, well let's not go in to that too much (laughs). The point is that he (and others) have displayed this pure moral discipline, which is the very foundation and root of the Buddhist tradition. They have been of service in this very practical way and have done a lot for the protection and promotion of the teachings. I would like to thank them for their behaviour and contribution.

It has been forty-one years since we came into exile. Of that first generation to be born in exile most have themselves become parents or are even approaching middle age. Such is the nature of the passing of time. Actually that clock isn't working is it? The batteries must have run out. I wondered what it was. It said six o'clock some time ago and that is still what it says. Now if only our lives were like that: no change at all. Anyway the fact is that life continues. Things are changing moment by moment. We look at figures like Gen Pema Gyeltsen, Gen Nyima Rinpoche and great scholars and practitioners from all of the traditions. They are no longer with us. They exist only as memories for us. We may reflect upon them and their kindness, but that is as far as it can go. Now when we think about how best to honour their memory, it is clear that we must take care to preserve their legacy. I would like to encourage everyone to continue to work hard. We have to learn from experience. We must see what faults there

are, what needs rectifying and what there is that needs to either added or dispensed with. (Break in recording)

Now let me address the subject of Dögyel. There is a tradition amongst some of saying; ‘Yes, we must follow the Dalai Lama’s orders’. Now if the suggestion is that it is a case of following someone just because they are a figure of authority, I do not agree. Even when dealing with the instruction of the Buddha, we are taught not to follow it blindly. If upon investigation it turns out to be a statement that is acceptable literally, then we should act upon it. If not, then we must interpret the meaning. So if someone, without giving any thought to the reasons behind what I say, wants to follow it just because I have said it, I would tend to feel that that is neither in the spirit of the Buddhist way of doing things. It is particularly at variance with the Mahayana approach. The issue here is not just whether people should be following my instruction or not. There are reasons to be considered here. I have drawn attention to things that have been overlooked. But people must be aware of the reasons for my doing that.

(Obvious break in recording)

I thought that it would be helpful to people if I were to extract relevant quotes and put them together. This whole issue is one that has dogged us for three hundred and sixty, perhaps close to four hundred years. It is not something new. I would here like to add something to what I usually say. There are some words that we find in a work by Gunthang Rinpoche called, Töpa Dön Denma (Meaningful Praise).

“Though the traditions of the father remain excellent,
At present, they are besmirched with the dark dust of pollution.
And many false spiritual guides
Lead beings to the abyss of disaster of grief.”

Now when did Gunthang Rinpoche⁹ live? He was a contemporary of Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen¹⁰.

(Break in recording).

Anyway he was a student of Könchog Jigmey Wangpo¹¹. He in turn was a disciple of Changkya Rolpai Dorje¹². Now if we look into the meaning of that quote, what do we find? “Though the traditions of the father (Je Rinpoche) remain excellent”. Now this is not a reference to anyone in the Kagyu, Sakya or Nyingma traditions. It is definitely referring to some situation relating to the Gelug tradition itself. Anyway, at this time it is the likes of Chankya Rolpai Dorje, Gunthang Rinpoche, Gyalchok Kelzang Gyatso¹³ who were the real leading lights in the Gelug tradition.

So who is it that, in the era of the above great spiritual figures is being accused of leading people astray? It is this that I wanted to look into. This was the time when the problem with Miwang had just about settled down¹⁴. At that time there was a figure named Lelung Shaypai Dorje¹⁵ He was someone of the Gelug tradition, a Drepung Lama. He reached a certain level of attainment in his tantric practices and at some point he began to teach unruly practices to his disciples in the monastery. There was some rot that set in as a result of all this. I think it was Purchog Ngawang Jampa¹⁶ who criticised him. He said

⁹ Gunthang Könchog Tenpai Drönmei (1762 – 1823)

¹⁰ Yongdzin Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713 – 1793). Tutor of the Eighth Dalai Lama

¹¹ Konchog Jigmei Wangpo (1728 – 1791)

¹² Changkya Rolpai Dorje (1717 – 1786)

¹³ The Seventh Dalai Lama (1708 – 1757)

¹⁴ The ‘problem’ being referred to was essentially a civil war between 1727-8. ‘Miwang’ was Po Lhawa Sönam Tobgyel 1689 – 1747. He was originally a minister who in this tumultuous period took control of one of the factions. The support of many different groups was enlisted in the struggle, but it is commonly thought that it chiefly boiled down to rivalry between the U and Tsang areas. Po Lha was from Tsang and was the champion of that side. Supporting it and the Panchen Lama over the Lhasa aristocrats, officials and the Seventh Dalai Lama. Po Lha was favoured by the Chinese. The Seventh Dalai Lama was exiled after the war. Po Lha ruled and brought about relative peace.

¹⁵ Lelung Lozang Trinlei (1697 – {approx.} 1747). Note that he became the court Lama of Po Lha.

¹⁶ Purchog Ngawang Jampa (1682 – 1762) was another teacher of the Eighth Dalai Lama, who was from Sera Je.

that there were some during that time who, whether of not they actually had any degree of realisation, had become completely overbearing. He condemned Lelung for having sullied many of the monasteries, drawing them into things that did not concern them. This is something that appears in the biography (of Purchog Ngawang Jampa). Now it is quite possible that the above quote is related to these events.

Alternatively, we could look at this as a reference to a different situation. We must look at what Purchog Ngawang Jampa wrote and also at the actions of Trichen Ngawang Chogden¹⁷. When we put these together with the fact that Chankya Rolpai Dorje mentions Dögyel by name and Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen also talks of “this new spirit, this evil ghou!”¹⁸, there must be a strong suspicion that this is a reference to the worship of Dögyel having found its way into Tashi Lhunpo monastery. It is difficult with so few of the older generation left to consult. This matter is really worthy of a bit of research. Panchen Palden Yeshe¹⁸ was a disciple of the Seventh Dalai Lama. I don’t know whether that Panchen Rinpoche had any real links with Trichen Ngawang Chogden, but the actions of the latter make it clear that the worship was around¹⁹ at that time. Then there are accounts of a house (associated with Dögyel) being demolished²⁰ at the time when the young Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk²¹ was at Tashi Lhunpo. Anyway, what is clear is that when he was young, the worship had found its way into Tashi Lhunpo. I believe that it is highly unlikely that it was there at the time of Panchen Palden Yeshe. Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen’s comments go back to the time when Panchen Tenpai Nyima²² was young. He refers to the worship of a new spirit at Tashi Lhunpo that was leading people astray. These references could not have been to Begtse and certainly don’t refer to Palden Lhamo. I also do not believe that they refer to the protector deity Brahma²³ because Panchen Palden Yeshe devotes quite a lot of his writing to ritual practices relating to this protector. There has been a degree of disagreement as to whether Begtse was to be identified with Jowo Chinga or not. But whatever the case, practices relating to Begtse were already around at the time of the First Dalai Lama²⁴. So that really must lead us to the conclusion that Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen’s reference is to Dögyel.

So when did it start? If we look at the quote by Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen, it seems likely that the corruption began at Tashi Lhunpo. If we look at what Purchog Ngawang Jampa says though, the suggestion is of the tradition first occurring in Ganden. Initially however there was absolutely no such ritual surrounding propitiation of such a worldly spirit. If you look at Je Rinpoche’s birth-deity²⁵, Machen Pomra, even temples and practices relating to this deity had to be outside and were not allowed within the confines of Ganden monastery. It was later on though that these things crept in. By the time of Purchog Ngawang Jampa, he is blaming the proliferation in some quarters of a wholehearted devotion to Dögyel for various problems relating to education in Ganden. Likewise if we put together what is said in the biographies of Trichen Ngawang Chogden and Chankya Rolpai Dorje, it is clear what the references are to. So maybe the words composed by Gungthang Rinpoche are directed to all of this. It is something that is worthy of some historical research. It seems that this is the more likely explanation.

Now some suggest that it was Pabongkha Rinpoche who was responsible for popularising the propitiation in the main monasteries (and use this as a justification). This also needs to be looked into. When exactly is it that he is supposed to have done this? Was it meant to be in the latter half of his life? If the suggestion is that it was in the earlier part of his life, we find for example in Trijang Rinpoche’s biography an account of something that occurred when he was very young. He spoke of a time when he

¹⁷ Trichen Ngawang Chogden – was the fifty-fourth Ganden Throne-Holder and the tutor of the Seventh Dalai Lama.

¹⁸ Panchen Palden Yeshe (1738 – 1780). There are three different systems of calculating how many Panchen Rinpoches there have. According to the two most common ones today, this was either the third or the sixth Panchen Lama.

¹⁹ Trichen Ngawang Chogden acted against the worship of Dögyel, having a propitiation house demolished, statues removed and banning the worship in Ganden monastery.

²⁰ The exact circumstances and location of events here is not clear to me.

²¹ Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk (1855 - 1882) was either the fifth or the eighth Panchen Lama.

²² Panchen Tenpai Nyima (1782 – 1853) was either the fourth or the seventh Panchen Lama.

²³ These three are other tutelary deities found within the Gelug tradition.

²⁴ Gyelwang Gendun Drub (1391 – 1474).

²⁵ This is a form of guardian deity associated with people, the identity of which is decided by which day one was born on.

was at Chusang (in Tibet). Pabongkha Rinpoche was also there at the time and he had just completed a *Secret Hayagriva* retreat. Trijang Rinpoche recalls him distributing lots of red pills after that retreat. So anyway, in the earlier part of his life he was practising in a non-sectarian way. He also took teachings on the *Sangwa Gyachen* and also gave the *Dojoi Bumsang* empowerment. Now the latter of these is a thoroughly Nyingma teaching. *Sangwa Gyachen* on the other hand is not teaching that either the Nyingma or Gelug lay exclusive claim to. Whatever the case, the fact that Pabongkha Rinpoche was, during the earlier part of his life, practising in a non-sectarian fashion is quite clear. It was only after his involvement with Dögyel began that his rejection of the Nyingma came about. The question that we must ask ourselves is what effect his involvement with Dögyel had upon his work and achievements. Was it something that did more harm or good? Think about it. During the earlier part of his life the Thirteenth Dalai Lama²⁶ really had a special place and high hopes for Pabongkha Rinpoche. Later on though, Pabongkha became the object of his criticism. Some might have us believe that it was jealousy that was responsible for this. However in reality it is clear that it is the Dögyel issue that was the root of the problem. So did Pabongkha's involvement aid or hinder what he was trying to achieve? This is the crux of the matter. Now of all of Pabongkha Rinpoche's disciples, Trijang Rinpoche can really be seen as the main one and his real spiritual heir. There are those who suggest that because these two obviously pushed the worship of Dögyel that its importance is unquestionable and that therefore it is fitting that others should also get involved in it - that the worship is validated by those two figures' association with it. To listen to these people you would get the impression that their worship of Dögyel was the most important thing that these two did in their lives; their main contribution. That is ridiculous, it was not like that at all. One just has to look at the works that they composed, like the *Stages of the Path* by Pabongkha or that of Trijang Rinpoche. They were really both masters of and heirs to that tradition. I took many *Stages of the Path* teachings from Trijang Rinpoche. It was quite evident that there was something quite distinct in his way of explaining, something very special about it. In terms of Tantra as well he was a master, particularly of Heruka Chakrasamvara, and that he was a great yogi is a generally accepted fact. So the real contribution and achievement of both of these two figures was in terms of their mastery of the *Stages of the Path*, *Mind Training* and Heruka practise. Dögyel was only ever a secondary thing.

There is another issue at question here. Even if something is or was performed by great spiritual teachers of the past, if it goes against the general spirit of the teachings, it should be discarded. This is a point that Je Rinpoche made again and again, saying that "The purpose of having personal advice instruction is to have a digestible abridgement (of the teachings). One should never forsake the essential meaning of the great texts"²⁷. What I have been saying comes back to this point. Some make out as though they have some secret personal instruction. Who was superior to Nagarjuna and Asanga or each of their spiritual sons when it came to composing abridged instruction of the teachings? Now if that is the case, when someone comes along and suggests that there was some other instruction, distinct and different from them, one really has to consider whether that isn't something that one should be wary of. Personal instruction traditions are there to help us gain understanding of the great texts. They should be helping us to comprehend what the final intention behind what the Buddha taught was. They should not be going against that or causing harm. These are the types of things that we have to reflect upon. Personal instruction traditions are meant to help us get to the heart of the matter, help us to understand easily the meaning of the teachings. For example the *Abhisamayalankara*²⁸ is counted as a personal instruction in the sense of it being something which is there to help us fathom the meaning of the Buddha's teaching. It is not meant to be offering us some instruction distinct from that.

My position on Vajrayogini is also related to these matters. I cannot accept what some say. Namely that Vajrayogini was the main and clandestine practice of Je Rinpoche. It is not as though I do not have any faith in Vajrayogini. I do Vajrayogini practice, I do the Heruka body mandala practice and they go

²⁶ Gyelwang Tubten Gyatso (1876–1933)

²⁷ This seems to be a paraphrase of some advice given to Je Rinpoche when he had a vision of Mañjushri.

²⁸ (Tib. Ngöñ Tog Gyen) attributed to Maitreya

well. I have done the full Vajrayogini retreat and I did get certain signs. There was nothing spectacular you understand, but something at least. They involve profound practices these, such as working with the *Inner Fire*. Milarepa, who felt it to be the foundation of the path, particularly stressed this latter thing. Meditation on the inner fire is something that comes up in all the practices of the Highest Yoga deities. A special section set aside for the visualisation and working with this inner fire at the end of the mantra recitation indicates its pride of place. It figures in the Vajrayogini, as in the other generation and completion stage practices. They are profound practices. I have faith in them and I do them myself. But some people try to make out as though Vajrayogini is in fact not really a Sakya practice. However, they can point to no texts on the subject by Je Rinpoche or his main disciples. These people are therefore forced to resort to a line of reasoning in which they go through eliminating each of the other Tantric practices, and come up with the conclusion that it was this one that was Je Rinpoche's chief practice, but that he performed it covertly. In reality, this is a Sakya teaching. We also have the question about the inclusion of two verses ("Yi ong lang tsoi....." and "Drib drel lhen kye.....")²⁹ in Lama Chöpa, but we don't need to go into this any further than that. It would be interesting to find out just when and who was responsible for that later inclusion of the words. What we need is to do some sort of research into the matter: just like the type initiated by Tsultrim Kelsang in Japan³⁰. In a similar vein, it would be worthwhile looking into just who was responsible for first coining the epithet 'Protector of the teachings for the Conqueror Mañjushri (Je Rinpoche)' for Dögyel. What were the circumstances of its being given? Was this the culmination of an authoritative spiritual figure following the correct procedure of ordering (the protector into service) and assigning (to it certain duties)? That certainly can't be said of Pabongkha. He did not go through this procedure. Rather, it is said that, intimidated by Dögyel's aggression towards him he halted his practise of Dojoi Bumzang. That is hardly something to be proud of is it? I also had cause to enter into a discussion of these matters with the chief attendant of the former Rikgya Rinpoche. Rinpoche had been heavily involved in the worship. Not so long ago the attendant told me that later Rinpoche had given up the ritual. He went on to say that anyway his whole involvement in the thing came about in rather questionable circumstances. According to the attendant it had been due to Dögyel inflicting some injury upon him that he had begun. Frightened that he might experience further harm, Rinpoche decided to take up the worship. That is repugnant isn't it? It is a complete reversal of how things should be. It is meant to be that some realised being, without bowing down, without fear, with good reasons for what he is doing draws the worldly deities to him and brings them under his control and influence. He is supposed to be the one who is in control. It is him who is supposed to give the orders and assign the spirit to certain duties. So who was it that gave this name? It was not any of the Ganden Throne-Holders who was responsible for this. It was not Je Rinpoche or one of his main disciples. It was not the chief Lama of Tashi Kyil in Amdo or one of his main disciples. The practise was completely unheard of there. Now I do not suggest that Kumbum is generally to be taken as any sort of example, but still, the likes of Tongpön Rinpoche were not responsible for this. My brother Tagtser Rinpoche, for instance was the abbot there for a number of years and said that he had never even heard of it whilst he was there. It is true that the former Kirti Rinpoche dabbled in the worship. But that was just a case of following a tradition that others around him were engaged in. There was no sort of whole-hearted commitment. On inspection then, the origins of the whole thing are found to be very murky and there seems to be no reliable source for it.

Now I would like to say something about Trijang Rinpoche. He and Karmapa Rinpoche were very close. He himself related one incident that occurred after we had moved here. He said that on the previous day he had received a bit of a shock. Karmapa Rinpoche had turned up out of the blue just as he was doing Dögyel propitiation. When he heard that Karmapa Rinpoche had arrived, he said that he had to hurriedly clear away all of the offerings in order to conceal them. The reason was that Karmapa Rinpoche was not at all keen on Dögyel. Think about this. What sort of a tutelary protector for the Gelug

²⁹ Lines that are seen to relate to the Vajrayogini practise.

³⁰ A well-known Tibetan scholar who works in a university in Japan.

is it that one has to conceal when a Kagyu Lama arrives? The Gelug tradition has the Six-Armed Mahakala as a tutelary deity. It also has Damchen Chögyel (Kalarupa). If it had been Mahakala there in full view, Karmapa Rinpoche would have been quite happy. He would probably have offered a symbolic libation to him. I don't know whether the same is true for Damchen Chögyel (Kalarupa). In the Nyingma they do use the name 'the animal-headed protector'³¹. For example there is that account of Alak Jigmei Samten. During his life, in Rebgong in Amdo there was a history of some mantra practitioners casting spells against others. Alak Jigmei Samten had decided to do the Yamantaka protection-circle ritual. Now there was someone called Rongpo Rebgong Gyawu who was opposed to the Gelug and was casting spells. At the time that Alak was meditating on the mandala of Yamantaka, one of Rongpo Rebgong Gyawu's students had a dream. In it there was a Lama who was riding a horse. He wore a hat. But as he went along a crow swooped down and took the hat off him. The student related this dream to his teacher. He responded, 'Hmm, the Gelugs are casting spells. But they won't be able to subdue Gönpo Phulug'³². Anyway, if it is that animal-headed protector that they have enlisted, it will be no match for me'. However maybe he miscalculated and the protector did harm him, because not so long afterwards it seems that he came to an untimely end. Anyway the point is; the real tutelary deities of the Gelug are those that have been appointed to the task after the ordering and assigning process approved by Je Rinpoche. They are the established guardians. One can engage in propitiation of them openly and with pride. There is no need to hide them from anyone, whether the person in question is a Kagyu, Dzogchen or Sakya practitioner. There should be no need to have to conceal representations of any protector in some dark corner. It makes me laugh to think about Trijang Rinpoche scurrying to collect his offerings, saying to his attendant, 'put this one away...and this one...and this one'. But having to hide like that seems to be a rather sorry state of affairs.

Despite the fact that it was Pabongkha, Trijang Rinpoche and Zong Rinpoche who were promoting Dögyel, I am of the opinion that there has not been a single substantial benefit whatsoever for the Gelug tradition that can be attributed to this whole worship. Quite the contrary is true. As a result of it, those who are ready to criticise and badmouth the Gelug tradition have increased. In the context of the education within the monasteries, their attempts to promote the teachings and preserve the Buddhist doctrine, there is not a single benefit that can be pointed to as having derived from it. If there were anything truly beneficial to be gained from the worship, would it not be fair to expect that those religious figures that were renowned for their most pure maintenance of the doctrine of Je Rinpoche and his chief spiritual sons would have something positive to say for it? But do we find any such statements by individuals such as the former Denma Locho Rinpoche in Drepung, Tongpön Rinpoche or those of a similar stature? No, we do not. So no one can use the argument that those who steered clear of the worship have been those who were the less learned or whose practice of moral discipline was inferior, whereas those who were involved have been the more scholarly and those who have kept their discipline more strictly. Anyway, I am of the opinion that Pabongkha and Trijang Rinpoche's promotion of the worship of Dögyel was a mistake. But their worship represents merely a fraction of what they did in their lives. Their contributions in the areas of Stages of the Path, Mind Training and Tantra teachings were considerable. Their contribution in these areas was unquestionable and in no way invalidated by involvement with Dögyel.

I am not someone who tries to claim that I should be counted amongst the ranks of the scholarly or accomplished beings. I do however feel that my approach to this issue (i.e. differing on one point, whilst retaining respect for the person in question) is completely in line with how such great beings from the past have acted. I often reflect upon these words:

“Vasubhandu, who had the welfare of beings at heart,
Due to his personal leaning,

³¹ A rather unflattering epithet for the Gelug protector Damchen Chögyel that some followers of the Nyingma tradition are said to use.

³² An unidentified protector spirit that was presumably supporting Rongpo Rebgong Gyawu.

Explained (the Prajñāparamita /Abhisamayalankara),
In terms of the internal (mental) existence of all things.”

“He who was counted amongst the ranks of the aryas,
And was known as ‘freedom’.
Seeing that what (Vasubhandu) had done was not how it should be,
He scrutinised with a ‘middle way’ judgement.³³

So Arya Vimuktisena, whose teacher was Vasubhandu, saw that Vasubhandu’s manner of explanation of the Abhisamayalankara had been more affected by his own personal bias towards a particular position than being a true reflection of the author’s ultimate intent. He therefore composed a commentary refuting that view, displacing it with a Madhyamaka interpretation. Now was this a case of a corruption of the spiritual guide – disciple relationship on Arya Vimuktisena’s part or of him showing disrespect for Vasubhandu? It was neither of these things.

Then we could look at accounts of the relationship between Jowo Je Atisha and his teacher Serlingpa. Serlingpa was the teacher who Atisha himself accredited as the one who helped him most in his quest to generate bodhicitta. In this area he was like his root Lama. Despite this, on the philosophical level they were at variance. Serlingpa held the Cittamatra view. Accounts have it that Serlingpa congratulated Atisha for his practise of bodhicitta, whilst informing him that as far as his philosophical view was concerned he was incorrect. Atisha said though that Serlingpa’s instructions only served to boost his confidence in the correctness of the middle way view.

Likewise, we have the case of Dharmakirti. Vasubhandu had many students, one of whom was Dignaga. He was said to have been the one who surpassed even his own master in terms of his understanding of Pramana. Dignaga then had a disciple called Ishvarasena. He in turn had Dharmakirti as a student.

Dharmakirti heard explanation of Dignaga’s Pramanasamuccaya text from Ishvarasena, but rejected Ishvarasena’s interpretation. He then incorporated Ishvarasena’s views as the objects of attack in sections of his Pramanavarttika. Thus, when it comes to helping to clarify the doctrine, creating, and rectifying mistakes, even one’s own teacher may come under criticism. One can see it in terms of one’s teacher having given certain instructions directed at a few specific individuals (when there is a need to give a different message). Whilst this might generally work though, it would be difficult to square in the above-mentioned case of Vasubhandu. At least in the way that Haribhadra has put it, it sounds as though it was Vasubhandu’s own bias (as opposed to consideration of any particular disciple) that led him to interpret things in the way that he did. Anyway, whether the original reasons for certain interpretations were due to individual students, other considerations or plain misunderstanding, it may prove necessary for later individuals to clarify things. Rectifying, clarifying and the like are generally accepted approaches for the learned and completely in step with the correct general approach to the teachings.

This is way to proceed and help to guard against decline. Anyway, going back to the quote from Gungtang Rinpoche, after the above-mentioned words we find;

"Alas, when I reflect on how,
The burgeoning wealth of the Gelug tradition,
Has been accompanied by a meagre amount of teaching and practice,

³³ These verses are from the ‘Clear Meaning’ commentary (Tib. Drel Wa Dön Sel) by the Indian scholar Haribhadra. Within the Tibetan traditions, this is the most well-used of the Indian commentaries on the Prajñāpāramitā / Abhisamayāṅkara . In the opening section (from which these verses are taken) Haribhadra refers to various teachers who have been instrumental in the passing on of the tradition (by composing works related to the subject). Whilst acknowledging the debt owed to Vasubhandu in the first verse here, he also states clearly that, in his own opinion, Vasubhandu erred when he explained the final view expressed in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras and Abhisamayāṅkara as being that of the ‘Mind Only’ view. In the second verse he refers to Arya Vimuktisena, a later scholar who, because he explained things in accordance with the ‘Middle Way’ view, got them right and thereby corrected Vasubhandu’s mistake.

I am lead to despair."

Rather melancholy isn't it?

Next though we have these words of consolation:

“Though it may be hard to find
Explanations of this profound and vast meaning exactly as it is,
The un-erring works that you (Je Rinpoche) composed
Provide relief and solace.”

Je Rinpoche went through great hardship to achieve what he did. He engaged in a great deal of study and contemplation in equal measure and without prejudice. Finally he realised the full import of the Buddha's words. Then he set all these forth in his own works. Now if from our side we are not up to understanding them, that is a different matter. But everything is there, laid out for us in those works, ready for us to see, to contemplate or to meditate upon. Just like the last line of the above quote. Kangsar Dorje Chang for instance used to go regularly in the winter to a place called Chagsam Chor. While he was staying there, for the period of a month he would go through all of the works of Je Rinpoche, reading and reciting them with great care. That is what we should be doing. That was really something praiseworthy. What we tend to do these days is go through bits at different times. Going through all of the works is something that I would do if I had more time. As it is, I have probably only been through once fully. This relates to what I mean when I talk about sticking close to and preserving what we find in the eighteen volumes of Je Rinpoche's works.

(Break in recording)

This is why I believe that Gen Tongpön's criticism was valid. It may be true that Chöpa Dönden was a great practitioner, who was giving instruction in accordance with his disciples' predispositions. Ling Rinpoche for example took Chöd teachings from him (although the text that was being used at the time, remained unidentified). It seems to be the case that with monks getting involved in the practice though, doing all sorts of things, making lots of noise with their chanting etc. that this was having an adverse affect upon the study and education at Drepung in general. This seems to be why Tongpön Rinpoche finally came out against it. I believe that there was good reason for what he did. If someone is following the Gelug tradition, what on earth is the point of discarding what is in those eighteen volumes of Je Rinpoche's works and getting involved in some unrelated 'personal instruction'? That is what I think. The same is true with the Vajrayogini practice. In general it is important, but for example this is a criticism directed at the Tantric colleges. What is the point of putting aside the practices of the main three deities that have been so meticulously set forth and spending one's time doing pleasant-sounding Vajrayogini recitation? It is what is contained in Je Rinpoche's works that those following the Gelug tradition should cherish above all. It should be what we actually find in those works that we should be emphasising and focusing upon. Meditation and contemplation should be upon those.

Actually this brings me to a point that I have wanted to mention for a while. Of course there is the perennial problem of insufficient time. However when a teacher is going through a particular text, it is very important that they link it to the original (Indian) texts by means of the works of Je Rinpoche. For instance, when someone is teaching about the Middle Way, it would be most helpful if they would go through the Auto-Commentary to Madhyamakavatara. This should be done in conjunction with Je Rinpoche's commentary to Madhyamakavatara, matching them line by line to gain a thorough comprehension of what the Auto-Commentary actually says. Likewise, when studying Je Rinpoche's commentary to Prasannapada one should go through the Buddhapalita and Prasannapada commentaries themselves, linking them to the relevant sections in Je Rinpoche's work. They should act as the basis for the study. Then Nagarjuna's root text on wisdom can be used as an aid. The thing is that one should be using the original Indian texts as one's foundation. Je Rinpoche's works, with their excellent way of explaining things bring all of the essentials of these works together. Thus allowing us to understand

them. One should work with the commentaries of Buddhapalita as well Chandrakirti and also Bhavaviveka when relevant. If we pursue things in this fashion, then when we study the Middle Way view we come to appreciate exactly how the Madhyamakavatara helps us to access Nagarjuna's root text on the Middle Way on both the profound and vast levels. It is at that point that we can genuinely get a sense of coming close to what Nagarjuna was getting at. Then it will be as though we have formed some emotional bond so that whenever we hear his name this is a special feeling induced. I make no claims for myself; I have no experience, no realisations or anything. But Je Rinpoche's explanations of emptiness and interdependence do inspire faith in Nagarjuna. We will come to understand his sentiments when he announced,

“I prostrate to Gautama,
The one who, due to love and compassion,
Dispensed with all ‘views’,
And taught the holy Dharma.

We know that Nagarjuna was not mistaken. He was not naïve or foolish. We can eventually get some feeling for this and what occurs to us is the thought: ‘well if such a celebrated master as Nagarjuna praises the Buddha for his teaching on dependent relations, there must be something in it’. I feel then that it is essential, when we are engaging in study, to look at those works that are the fruit of Je Rinpoche's endeavours. Exactly how what he taught can be traced back to what Nagarjuna said needs to be set forth in fine detail. Otherwise, what has tended to happen is that even though people have made use of his commentary to Madhyamakavatara, due to the question of time or whatever, Prasannapada has not been utilised so much.

This was Gen Tonpön's way of doing things. This is what he kindly bequeathed to us. It is something worth reflecting upon. Apart from that I don't think that there is much else. The purpose of coming together and mentioning these things is to impress them upon and keep them fresh in the mind. We have to reflect on the important things that have occurred, what lessons there are to be learned. I have taken some time to go through things today. I know that many of you are aware of these things, but because a large number of representatives have come from the more far-flung places, it is worth reminding ourselves of them. My reasons for clamping down on Dögyel are related to what I have stated here. I don't want people to just treat it as a duty purely because it is something that I have said. It is not something that I am encouraging people to accept blindly. That would be completely against the democratic spirit. It would also be going against the approach that is encouraged in the Buddhist tradition. I am talking about viewing the evidence intelligently here. But if we can't reach an impartial decision any other way, we could do this. On the one side, we put Pabongkha, Trijang and Zong Rinpoches. On the other, we put Purchog Ngawang Jampa, Trichen Ngawang Chogden, Chankya Rolpai Dorje, Kachen Yeshe Gyeltsen. Then we weigh them up against each other. Which group's opinion is it that we believe carries the more weight and we place more credence in? It is clear. If Trijang Rinpoche and Pabonkha Rinpoche were to look, in depth, into the words of Ngawang Purchog Jampa, there is no way that they would be able to ignore it, they would without doubt be forced to acquiesce. Similarly, we could take Pabongkha's root Lama, Jampel Ngödrub Gyatso. He may have made the occasional libation offering, but basically he was not someone who was involved in worship of Dögyel. At some point there were two monasteries under his administration, one in the south, one in the north of a particular area. One monastery was engaged in the worship of Dögyel, whereas the other was not. The latter one was the place where he stayed. When there was some opposition to the worship, Jampel Ngödrub Gyatso resolved the issue by ordaining that the image of Dögyel was to be placed outside the monastery, he did not let the worship continue inside. We have to put all these bits of evidence together, add them all up. Once a year, I put questions to the Nechung oracle. As many have suggested that the whole tradition of

'life offering'³⁴ in relation to Dögyel practice sprung from a vision that Tagpu Dorje Chang had, I wanted to query this. I posed the question that, if this indeed were something that can be traced back to such a vision, wouldn't it be something that can be relied upon? The response was that visions are of two types. There are reliable ones that come due to blessings of higher powers and those that are in the nature of hindrances. This, it was stated, was a case of the latter. It was made quite clear then and events seem to have born this out. We have to analyse all of these points. What sort of relations have there been with Ganden Podrang³⁵ for the last three or four hundred years? Actually we could put those relations with the government to one side. After all, there is one school of thought that suggests that the friction arose due to the Fifth Dalai Lama's practising in a non-sectarian fashion. Let us look elsewhere. Again returning for instance to Purchog Ngawang Jampa. He was the principal disciple of Drukang Geleg Gyatso³⁶. He was a spiritual heir to the *Stages of the Path* teachings, an incredible master of learning and practice. He was also someone with an intense passion for the Gelug tradition. In light of this, one has to consider his opinions on the matter. Then how much have recent events related to this issue benefited the Gelug tradition? It has increased the critics of the Gelug. Now there is a prevalent view that fundamentalism is common in the Gelug. There is also the feeling that this hard-line attitude has come about due to a spirit having issued orders that people who follow the Gelug should have nothing to do with the Nyingma. This is all seen to have come about due to something akin to intimidation.

There is another related subject, that I had cause to mention to some of you a few days ago. That is the discussion of religious freedom, freedom of faith. Let me talk about my own experience. When I was younger, I developed a great deal of faith in the *Bodhicitta Aspiration* and took the transmission from Kunnu Lama Tenzin Gyeltsen. Then I received the teaching of "A Guide to the Bodhisattva's Way of Life" (*Bodhisattvacaryavatara*) from him and after that there was the *Thirteen Great Texts*. Apart from the transmission that was passed on to me by my personal tutors, I took the *Thirteen Great Texts* transmission from Tenzin Gyeltsen. Then I thought of taking the *Secret Essence Tantra* from him as well. I happened to mention this to Ling Rinpoche one day, but he discouraged me. He told me that it was rather controversial and that it would be better not to take it. Now what actually had happened was that Ling Rinpoche, being rather timid, seems to have been under the impression that if I were to take the transmission, Dögyel was likely to have responded by inflicting some harm. I was the one who was pushing to take this. *The Secret Essence Tantra* is, I believe, one of the texts that Butön Rinpoche³⁷ decided to exclude from the collection of the Kangyur. But it is a text that the Nyingma and Karma Kagyu treat as authentic. Anyway Ling Rinpoche's opposition to me receiving the transmission of that Tantra was based upon his fear of Dögyel. So what happened was that though I wanted to take that Tantra, because of someone's fear of Dögyel, I was unable to. My rights to freedom of religious choice were thus violated. Later on I looked into the Dögyel issue in detail and at the end of a process of investigations, finally decided to end my involvement. Once I had dispensed with it, I was in a position to engage in a less sectarian approach and take teachings from different traditions. In particular, I was at the time interested in receiving a Purbu³⁸ empowerment. I decided to do a divination about this and it came out positively, so I went ahead with it. Many of you know already about this. Anyway this was a very important issue at the time. There is one special guardian deity of Tibet. The name of the deity is Jowo Wotei Sangpo – the Kyidrong Jowo. It was in a series of visions that the Fifth Dalai Lama had of this deity that he is said to have received teachings and transmissions relating to Sangwa Gyachen. The

³⁴ The ceremonial offering of oneself to a particular protector. The formalisation of a life-long bond and commitment to it.

³⁵ 'Ganden Podrang' was originally a name conferred at the time of the Second Dalai Lama. This 'Ganden Palace' was from then on the residence of the Dalai Lamas. In 1642, at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama and with the backing of Gushri Khan this became the seat of power for the Tibetan administration. The name still refers to the Tibetan government (in exile).

³⁶ Drukang Geleg Gyatso (1641 – 1713)

³⁷ Butön Rinpoche was one of the main figures responsible for the collating of the Kangyur and Tengyur (the Tibetan translations of the teachings of the Buddha and the Indian commentaries to those). It seems that he decided that some texts which had been counted as authentic tantric teachings were questionable in their origin and therefore should not be included in the Kangyur. Here then is a work that he excluded, but that some of the traditions hold to be authentic.

³⁸ Usually counted as a Nyingma deity.

main statue of this deity is one from Kyidrong (a place close to the Nepalese border in Tibet). Let me relate something of my experience with the statue. It was people from Dzonga Chö De³⁹ who, despite many difficulties, brought the statue out from Tibet wasn't it? For some time the statue was with me in Dharamsala. Then when the rest of you went down to the settlements in the South I thought it would not be fitting for me to keep it privately. So I decided to do a divination before the statue to ascertain whether the statue should go down with the Dzong Ga Chö De or stay with me. The response was the deity indicated that whilst it was true that those people had gone to a lot of trouble to bring the statue out safely, still maybe it would be 'happier' if it stayed with the Dalai Lama for the time being. Thus the Jowo accepted to grace me with his presence (laughter), whereas Dzong Ga Chö De had to go down to the South empty-handed. Now this Jowo was traditionally one of the main deities that the Dalai Lamas would rely upon. Apart from that Palden Lhamo is held very highly and there is one thangka, which became a special and precious object at the time of the Second Dalai Lama, and has been so ever since. When the Fifth Dalai Lama had seemed already to have breathed his last, the regent, Sangye Gyatso, fell into a state of desperation. The Red Potala had not yet been completed and there were many other important matters that had been left unresolved. Sangye Gyatso pleaded that he did not know how to continue. Only then did the Fifth Dalai Lama seem to return to life, to give his parting advice. He told the regent that when it came to the less important matters, there was nothing that Sangye Gyatso's own wisdom would not be up to working out. When it came to momentous decisions, he was told to direct all of his questions to Palden Lhamo by performing divinations before the thangka in question. This thangka is thus held in very high esteem. When I escaped from Tibet I carried this thangka with me personally. I had it on one shoulder and a gun slung across the other. I was supposed to look like one of the guards in a detachment. One attendant was made out to look like some sort of military leader and we his escort. I had to take off my glasses. It would not have been good for light to reflect off them. At some point, I remember, we had to cross some water in sparse moonlight and I came close to being unseated. Both the thangka and the gun just seemed to keep on getting heavier and heavier as we went along (laughter). Anyway the thangka, being considered as an object of great spiritual significance, was brought with us. For this important divination, we also invited the Nechung oracle. Then there was my tutor Ling Rinpoche. Trijang Rinpoche was not in Dharamsala at the time. I think that he was in Varanasi. Otherwise he would also have been consulted. Anyway, Ling Rinpoche was here and so was invited to the divination ceremony. I brought them all together. Yongdzin Rinpoche then in his capacity as my own main source of refuge was invited for the ceremony. Then there was the Jowo statue representing the special guardian deity for us in Tibet. The blessed Palden Lhamo thangka was brought (Palden Lhamo having been the main protector for the various Dalai Lamas since the time of Gendun Gyatso). The other of the 'official' protectors, Nechung Dorje Dragden was also there. I made it clear what issue it was that the consultation was about. Now of course on one side it may have looked as though I was hedging my bets; not putting my total confidence in my tutor, not being completely sure of Nechung or relying totally upon Palden Lhamo (laughter). All of them were witnesses for the performance of this divination ceremony. So with them presiding over proceedings, I performed a divination about the taking of the Purbu initiation. It came out favourably, I took the empowerment and my ties with the Nyingma were forged from that time onward. I got involved with Nyingma ritual. In these circumstances then, from that time henceforth, I was allowed to fully exercise my right of conscience and religious freedom. If we clamp down on something that is inhibiting religious freedom, we are thereby safeguarding that religious freedom, aren't we? For example, in Madhyamaka and Pramana texts, it refers to 'Reaching the truth reality through a process of elimination'. Likewise here, by acting against that thing which is inhibiting religious freedom, we are protecting that religious freedom.

A second point is that any clamping down on the worship of Dögyel does not amount to any form of restriction of freedom to practise Buddha-Dharma. What we are talking about here is the propitiation of

³⁹ A monastery in Tibet that was later re-established in India.

a spirit. It is a misuse of the term 'Buddha-Dharma' to refer to such a thing in this way. Even if we were to take a very liberal interpretation of the term 'Dharma', and include such things as propitiation of spirits and nagas, this still would not qualify. Even in those terms, this tradition is a perverse one....

(Break in recording)

This is not an authentic tradition, but a mistaken one. It is leading people astray. As Buddhists, who take ultimate refuge in the three jewels, we are not permitted to take refuge in worldly deities. If one were to decide to enlist the help of a worldly spirit - that is to say, to get such a spirit to assist us on a temporal level, to succeed in short-term affairs - then the spirit that is called upon should be an approved one. It should be one that was brought into service by a realised being who has gone through the process of ordering and assigning. It should certainly not be one that is so controversial and has come to prominence through intimidation. This is not an immoral practice. If one reflects on all of these things, one will come to see that what we have here is not a question of freedom to practise Buddha-Dharma. Whatever though, at the end of the day, if one chooses to fly in the face of all the reasoning and still wants to get involved in this form of worship, there is nothing that anyone can do about it. It is a matter of personal choice in which one can exercise one's right. No one is going to say that one is not allowed to worship it. Whether one chooses to accept religion or not, is a personal decision. Whatever form of spirit worship one wants to do, it is up to oneself. Even if one chooses to close one's eyes to the evidence, without caring about the results of one's actions, perform things that are going to damn you, it is not up to me, and I can do nothing about it. It is like the words, "I, Kachei Palu, have disclosed my secrets here, but whether you choose to listen or not is up to you"⁴⁰.

It is necessary to clarify these matters. Otherwise some of you might have your suspicions. Maybe there are still some of you who, in seeming deference to the Dalai Lama make out as though you agree and follow me in this, but who privately harbour other thoughts. Others of you may be thinking, 'well I am not sure of the reasons, but as it is something that the Dalai Lama has instructed, I must abide by it'. I want to stress again that I do not support this attitude at all. This is a ridiculous approach. This is a position that one should come to by weighing the evidence and then using one's discernment about what it would be best to adopt and what best to avoid. Now when it comes to my own acting against the worship of Dögyel; well I made an official announcement to government workers. I made an announcement and there was a video.....

(Break of a minute in the recording).

After that, was it about two years ago that the Shartse geshe, Tsultrim Gyeltsen who requested the *Sixteen Drops of the Kadam* empowerment. When that was finished, I did the meditational retreat associated with the practice. There were indications that this was successful. The next night I had an incredibly clear dream of Trijang Rinpoche. In this he was acting particularly affectionately toward me. There was a *Stages of the Path* text, which had notes of his on some of the pages. He gave me the pages and said, 'These will prove useful in the future'. That put me at ease. I feel that what I am doing is in accordance with what Trijang Rinpoche would have wanted. I feel that what I am doing is the correct course of action. He followed the system dictated to him by his root Lama, of whom he was the special disciple. Now doing what I am doing, being open about all this is, I feel, in line with what he would really have wanted. I used to have some dreams when I was in Tibet that seemed to show signs that I had some link with the Fifth Dalai Lama. More recently, after the turmoil that ensued after taking action against the worship of Dögyel I had another dream. In it, there was a thangka portrait of the Fifth Dalai Lama. As I was looking at it, after some time it turned into the real thing. He came toward me and handed me a ceremonial scarf. It was incredibly long. When I woke up what I felt was that I was completing something that had been left over from the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. Again, convinced that I am acting in accordance with his wishes and that he would be happy with me, I feel at ease with my decisions. So these days when the Dögyel Association state that they have no quarrel with anyone except the Ganden Podrang - Tibetan government established by the V Dalai Lama, that turns out to be

⁴⁰ A line that the Dalai Lama commonly quotes from a work of (non-religious) aphorisms attributed to a certain 'Kachei Palu'.

absolutely true. It was the Ganden Podrang who originally demolished *Simkang Gong*⁴¹. Now almost four hundred years later, they are agitating over that. They are directing their case against the responsible party. I am not quite sure in which court they intend to have their case heard though (laughter). The basis for the dispute is a historic one. That is about all I have to say.

Perhaps some of you are a little tired after we have gone on for such a long time, but we don't get a chance to come together very often. The Dögyel issue is not so incredibly important, but because it gives rise to so much baseless rumour in various circles, I think that it is best to bring it into the open and discuss it when we get the chance. Now Tashi Wangdu (a minister) you are always saying that one needs to do things in accordance with the instructions of the Buddha. Of course that is correct, but it should not be in a stupid way. As I said, I don't want people just to use the fact that I have said something as the reason that it should be followed. This is not an issue of power and its misuse.

Now my reason for inviting the representatives of the other Tibetan traditions from the assembly of peoples' deputies is this. I think that whenever one tradition has a conference it would be advisable to have representatives from the other traditions present to view the proceedings. As I have been saying this for a while, there has been some positive effect. Now what we are having at present is a Gelug meeting. This is convened in the presence of the other representatives. This is a forum for Gelug people to speak their mind, brag a little or whatever. The point is that doing it this way everything is out in the open, not hidden from view. Without this, others may generate suspicions as to what was said. They may project that this was a place for scheming. The danger of exaggerated rumours beginning is thus diminished. There is no reason for scheming. Let me say something else. I mentioned it to some of you, but the majority of you were not present. The very first Dharma conference that we had was in the sixties. Now I think that there are almost none of those other lamas and abbots who attended left. Dudjom Rinpoche was there as was Drugpa Tugse Rinpoche. There was Khen Rinpoche and Karmapa Rinpoche. Of the abbots of the three seats there were Gen Pema Gyeltsen, Gen Nyima Gyeltsen and the Mongolian Gen Lozang. I heard that in Buxa, if someone gave some offerings, rather than save it Gen Losang immediately had momos made. Is that true? (laughter). Of course if there was someone who gave some money as an offering to the monastery, maybe it should have been saved. Instead he would spend it straight away on momos. There was that one from Sera Je (unidentified). The old bloke wasn't there? At the conference he was relating to everyone the activities at Buxa. Whilst doing this he mistakenly said, 'ten, twelve, thirteen o'clock'. Of course there is the twenty-hour hour calculation system. But it was not that. He just got it mixed up.....'nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen o'clock'(laughter). It sounded so funny. Anyway the conference was held at Dharamsala. It was meant to be non-sectarian, so we had representatives from all of the traditions. We also had representatives from the Bön tradition there. There was no one at all who was really demanding equal status for the Bön tradition there, but it was only fair that they be invited as well. There was the Bön abbot of Ral Ling. He wore a black lower robe. He was a very humble, fine man. He was very old. There was someone else representing them as well. He was a well-built man who said that he had spent a number of years at either Loseling or Gomang. So we had this meeting and broke up. Dudjom Rinpoche had come from Kalimpong. On his return someone who was one of his students or benefactors turned up. He approached Rinpoche and making out as though he had some earth-shattering news announced, 'Oh, it seems that they have been having a conference in Dharamsala. It must mean that they plan to convert everyone to the Gelug tradition'. Rinpoche responded by saying, 'What are you talking about? It was a non-sectarian meeting. All the traditions were there and participated and were granted equal respect. I have just come back from there. What do you mean by saying that there is a plan to convert everyone to the Gelug tradition?' This is what he told me later. The person said that this was the rumour that was going around. So you see, you can have situations like that. A rumour for which there is absolutely no basis whatsoever, something being completely made up. So we have a Gelug conference here. Gelug

⁴¹ 'Zimkang Gong' was the residence of Trulku Dragpa Gyeltsen (a figure who, for various reasons is seen as intimately connected with Dögyel and the worship) that was demolished on government order at the time of the fifth Dalai Lama.

monks tend to do more debate in the course of their philosophical studies. They can therefore be a little mouthy sometimes. This might be misunderstood and others think that there is some sort of contriving going on here. So I wanted it to be out in the open. There is nothing to be suspicious of. The motives for having a meeting of this nature are honourable. We are trying to see what improvements can be made and what changes there should be. Such events are meant to promote co-operation and understanding between people, whether they be from the Nyingma, Kagyu Sakya or Bön traditions, not create problems between them. When we first came to Dharamsala, Dzogna Rinpoche was working in the religious affairs office. The religious affairs minister was Zhesu. He was of the old school in the sense of being rather biased toward the government and particularly the Gelug tradition. He was also it seems worshipping Dögyel. So maybe the problem partly lay there. Rinpoche was annoyed by this and is later said to have criticised the way things were in Dharamsala. He dismissed it, saying that Dharamsala could not be counted upon, that there was ‘a golden parasol that has a white tip, but that white tip is crooked’⁴². He was not to be blamed. This was just a natural reaction to the situation. Anyone, from animals upward, who finds themselves in a minority, is susceptible to the fear of persecution. Watch how dogs act. If one feels outnumbered he becomes very timid, tucking his tail between his legs. Likewise we, living in human society have the same concerns. The mere fact that we are in a minority is enough to make us suspicious of the larger group's intentions toward us. The Bön people for example represent a minority amongst the Tibetans. Some people, when referring to followers of that tradition still call them, ‘the wrong-headed’ Böns. Now in such circumstances it is not surprising that they are apprehensive, is it? Such apprehension is not completely unfounded is it? After all, since the time of the Dharma kings, there have been measures brought in against them. So now we all find ourselves here together in a free country, with everyone one, irrespective of which of the three districts of Tibet they come from or which religious tradition they follow, being called upon to make an equal contribution. In such a situation, it becomes particularly important that we take especial care and show special consideration for those that, in the past, have been persecuted or who find themselves in a minority. Without such extra care, paranoid fears that others are plotting against them can easily arise in the minds of such people. Now when we compare all of the traditions we will probably find that the Gelug represent the largest in terms of number. That being the case, some fear on the part of the others would not be unnatural. Similarly, when we first came here, the people from U-Tsang were better represented and particularly those from Tö. That fact alone was enough to make people from Kham and Amdo somewhat touchy. So as I said, as the Gelug are more in number and because their strength in study....

(Break in recording)

So as I said, what we need is transparency. That is why I called the other representatives here. So over the next few days please listen well. Then there should not be the threat of baseless rumours spreading. If subsequently you should hear of people making up things about what was discussed here, please feel as though it is your responsibility to set the record straight. Some people say things purely through ignorance. However these days we also have to contend with those who spread mistruth and disinformation in a quite calculated fashion. The Chinese Communists give them money to create problems and then their grosser delusions of conceit, jealousy and so forth run riot and do the rest. So please act as impartial witnesses. That would be good.

Tashi Deleg

1 A reference to the Gelug monastery in Manali where the worship of Shugden continues unabated.

2 Chandrakirti's *Supplement to (Nagarjuna's) 'Treatise on the Middle Way'*

3 Apparently to set up an alternative venue for a Gelug prayer festival in the South of India, that could also act as a place of study.

4 From the prayer *Lozang Gyeltenma* by Tsunpa Könchog Tenpai Drönmei

5 The first of these texts is by the author of the same name. The latter two are by Chandrakirti. The third text is the *Clear Words* (Madhyamaka) commentary.

6 A direct disciple of Je Rinpoche, who was responsible for founding the Gyumei Tantric College near Lhasa.

⁴² The parasol is a religious symbol. The white tip was presumably meant to refer to the Tibetan government. In using the analogy of the ‘crooked’ tip the criticism is that the government prejudiced (toward the Gelug tradition).

- 7 Lozang Ngawang Gyatso (1617- 1682)
- 8 A place in northern India where monks from the main centres of study etc. congregated soon after coming into exile.
- 9 Gunthang Könchog Tenpai Drönmei (1762 – 1823)
- 10 Yongdzin Yeshe Gyeltsen (1713 – 1793). Tutor of the Eighth Dalai Lama
- 11 Konchog Jigmei Wangpo (1728 – 1791)
- 12 Changkya Rolpai Dorje (1717 – 1786)
- 13 The Seventh Dalai Lama (1708 – 1757)
- 14 The ‘problem’ being referred to was essentially a civil war in 1727-8. ‘Miwang’ was Po Lhawa Sönam Tobgyel 1689 – 1747. He was originally a minister who, in this tumultuous period took control of one of the factions. The support of many different groups was enlisted in the struggle, but it is commonly thought that it chiefly boiled down to rivalry between the U and Tsang areas. Po Lha was from Tsang and was the champion of that side. Supporting it in their opposition to the Lhasa aristocrats, officials etc. Po Lha was also favoured by the Chinese. The Seventh Dalai Lama was exiled after the war for his alleged support of the Lhasa faction. Po Lha ruled and brought about relative peace.
- 15 Lelung Lozang Trinlei (1697 – {approx.} 1747). Note that he became the court Lama of Po Lha.
- 16 Purchog Ngawang Jampa (1682 – 1762) was another teacher of the Eighth Dalai Lama, who was from Sera Je.
- 17 Trichen Ngawang Chogden – was the fifty-fourth Ganden Throne-Holder and the tutor of the Seventh Dalai Lama.
- 18 Panchen Palden Yeshe (1738 – 1780). There are three different systems of calculating how many Panchen Rinpoches there have been. According to the two most common ones today, this was either the third or the sixth Panchen Lama.
- 19 Trichen Ngawang Chogden acted against the worship of Dögyel, having a propitiation house demolished, statues removed and banning the worship in Ganden monastery.
- 20 The exact circumstances and location of events here is not clear to me.
- 21 Panchen Tenpai Wangchuck (1855 - 1882) was either the fifth or the eighth Panchen Lama.
- 22 Panchen Tenpai Nyima (1782 – 1853) was either the fourth or the seventh Panchen Lama.
- 23 These three are tutelary deities found within the Gelug tradition.
- 24 Gyelwang Gendun Drub (1391 – 1474).
- 25 This is a form of guardian deity associated with people, the identity of which is decided by which day one was born on.
- 26 Gyelwang Tubten Gyatso (1876 –1933)
- 27 This seems to be a paraphrase of some advice given to Je Rinpoche when he had a vision of Mañjushri.
- 28 (Tib. Ngön Tog Gyen) attributed to Maitreya
- 29 Lines that are seen to relate to the Vajrayogini practice.
- 30 A well-known Tibetan scholar who works in a university in Japan.
- 31 A rather unflattering epithet for the Gelug protector Damchen Chögyel that some followers of the Nyingma tradition are said to use.
- 32 An unidentified protector spirit that was presumably supporting Rongo Rebong Gwelwa.
- 33 These verses are from the ‘Clear Meaning’ commentary (Tib. Drel Wa Dön Sel) by the Indian scholar Haribhadra. Within the Tibetan traditions, this is the most well-used of the Indian commentaries on the Prajñāparamita/ Abhisamayalankara. In the opening section (from which these verses are taken) Haribhadra refers to various teachers who have been instrumental in the passing on of the tradition (by composing works related to the subject). Whilst acknowledging the debt owed to Vasubhandu in the first verse here, he also states clearly that, in his own opinion, Vasubhandu erred when he explained the final view expressed in the Prajñāparamita Sutras and Abhisamayalankara as being that of the ‘Mind Only’ view. In the second verse he refers to Arya Vimuktisena, a later scholar who, because he explained things in accordance with the ‘Middle Way’ view, got them right and thereby corrected Vasubhandu’s mistake.
- 34 The formalisation of a life-long bond and commitment to it.
- 35 ‘Ganden Podrang’ was originally a name conferred at the time of the Second Dalai Lama. This ‘Ganden Palace’ was from then on the residence of the Dalai Lamas. In 1642, at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama and with the backing of Gushri Khan this became the seat of power for the Tibetan administration. The name still refers to the Tibetan government (in exile).
- 36 Drubkang Geleg Gyatso (1641 – 1713)
- 37 Butön Rinpoche was one of the main figures responsible for the collating of the Kangyur and Tengyur (the Tibetan translations of the teachings of the Buddha and the Indian commentaries to those). It seems that he decided that some texts which had been counted as authentic tantric teachings were questionable in their origin and therefore should not be included in the Kangyur. Here then is a work that he excluded, but that some of the traditions hold to be authentic.
- 38 Usually counted as a Nyingma deity.
- 39 A monastery in Tibet that was later re-established in India.
- 40 A line that the Dalai Lama commonly quotes from a work of (non-religious) aphorisms attributed to a certain ‘Kachei Palu’.
- 41 ‘Simkang Gong’ was the residence of Trulku Dragpa Gyeltsen (a figure who, for various reasons is seen as intimately connected with Dögyel and the worship). Owing to a dispute with the authorities at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama the residence of this individual was demolished, they lost their life and the line of ‘trulku’ which they represented ended.
- 42 The parasol is a religious symbol. The white tip was presumably meant to refer to the Tibetan government. In using the analogy of the ‘crooked’ tip the criticism is that the government prejudiced (toward the Gelug tradition).

Some corrections made by Geshe Dorji Damdul, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, June 2006.