

Foreword for a Book on Dolgyal/Shugden

by Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche

In this letter, Rinpoche gives extensive reasons supporting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice not to practice Dolgyal (Shugden). The book itself is a compilation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings advising why not to practice Dolgyal, given between 2000 and 2007, and is only available in Tibetan and Mongolian. The Tibetan title of the book is Dolgyal sGor Lam sDon Ga-sLob kNyi-pa.

I am very happy that the monks of Idgaa Choizinling in the Mongolian city of Ulaanbaatar have translated into Mongolian the second book by His Holiness the Dalai Lama advising not to practice Dolgyal. This is good for oneself and others in this life and in all future lives. In order to definitely spread this advice in Mongolia, the former Namgyal Monastery Abbott Kyabje Jhado Rinpoche promised to print this, which is extremely kind.

The Idgaa Choizinling monks thought this would be a very, very special protection for the Mongolian people, as well as for those in other countries, to prevent deep damage and also an offering to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, for the success of His holy wishes. They also felt this would be a protection for individual people as well as for the teachings of Buddha, by keeping the teachings pure.

As I was asked for a foreword by the *gekyö* of Idgaa Choizinling, in the beginning I mentioned that it would be a few pages long, but it got a bit longer. I hope it is of some benefit to the readers' minds.

If the Idgaa Choizinling monks didn't bring this knowledge into Mongolia possibly no one would. So this is very precious and people are extremely lucky to be able to receive this advice from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

For the world in general and especially for the people of the Snow Land of Tibet to have concordant thinking, without bias, in friendship and like a family in a harmonious relationship that is completely unified as one and to preserve and disseminate the stainless, precious teachings of the Buddha in this world, I, bearing the name of a reincarnation, Thubten Zopa, humbly present, in love and friendship, these honest true facts.

For the benefit of those who do not understand, in order to discover this, please undertake an honest investigation without the stained mind of biased discrimination.

This reliance on Dolgyal, be it by pure Dharma practitioners or by those for business or financial reasons, I wonder if this has not been more harmful than the forceful annexation of Tibet by the Chinese Government and the destruction of the teachings of the Buddha.

We may ask, "Why is this?"

Many of those who rely on Dolgyal have received teachings and initiations in the presence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and have relied on His Holiness as their most kind Guru (Virtuous Friend). Nevertheless, later they have come to regard His Holiness as an enemy.

As you know very well, if you see your root Guru as an enemy, you have to experience the sufferings of the evil gone realms (lower realms) endlessly.

As it is stated in the *Root Tantra of Guhyasamaja*: “Even if you accumulate the five most heinous negative karmas (without break of another life), it is still possible to attain the state of a Buddha in this life. But, if you have despised your Guru, it is impossible to attain buddhahood in this life.”

If one belittles or criticizes the Guru, one belittles and criticizes all the Victorious Ones. If one first relies on a Guru and then later makes mistakes in devoting to that person as a Guru it becomes an extremely great loss in one’s life, because the Guru is the action of all the Buddhas to subdue oneself. Manifesting as the Guru, the Guru is the form of action of all the Buddhas. Even the teacher who teaches you reading, even that teacher, even if you secretly despise and criticize, then you have criticized or belittled the Guru, and that becomes the same as belittling or criticizing all the ten-directions Buddhas. This is from the text *The Essential Nectar*.

One’s Virtuous Friends are the actions of all the Victorious Ones manifesting as one’s own Guru. Not having respect for them is like not having respect for all the Victorious Ones. There is no heavier ripening aspect result.

After having had the thought “This is my Savior,” one becomes the disciple and then belittling that Guru is the same as having belittled all the Buddhas, and from that one will achieve suffering all the time. For many eons one will not meet with a Virtuous Friend or the precious teachings of the Buddha, and one will be reborn in the inexhaustible hells for many eons and have to experience unfathomable suffering.

Not only that, when one is not a bodhisattva, getting angry at a bodhisattva, even for a second, destroys a thousand eons of roots of virtue, as stated by the great bodhisattva Shantideva:

Whatever wholesome deeds,
Such as offering to the Buddhas and generosity,
That have been amassed for a thousand eons
Are destroyed by one instant of anger.

This is in dependence upon the power of the object, which becomes very powerful with a Buddha; even more powerful than this is one’s Guru. Due to this, for many eons one will never meet with a Virtuous Friend and never meet with the teachings of the Buddha as well.

Therefore, relying on Dolgyal is extremely harmful to oneself. I think this is also a great harm to the world in general, as well as to sentient beings and to the teachings of the Buddha.

Dolgyal is one who, in the past, broke samaya (pledges) and made harmful, mistaken prayers to the teachings of our Founder/Teacher: Buddha. This has been stated by one who knows the past and future.

Those who strongly practice Dolgyal eventually end up dying in the most dangerous manner. For example, Geshe Yeshe Wangchuk, learned in scriptures and from the great seat of Sera Me Monastery, who invited the reincarnation of Pabongka Rinpoche to Tibet and made the incarnation take the life-entrusting initiation of Dolgyal and the Heruka Body Mandala from Gonpa Sa Rinpoche. One day when travelling in a vehicle, they came up on a pass and although there were many people in the vehicle, he alone fell out of the window, down the cliff and died.

Again, a business man, Dorje Gyaltsen, who was a very strong practitioner of Dolgyal in secret, when tormented by sickness, he asked his wife to go to the usual place to propitiate Dolgyal. Not having known that he was a daily practitioner of Dolgyal, his wife, although very shocked, had no choice but to comply with his wishes to go and make the tea offering (relying on Dolgyal for the success of actions) on his behalf. Then directly from the mouth of the sick person came the words, “Up until now, Dolgyal has deceived me. I can see the actual ghost form of that vicious one. I have been deceived. I have been mistaken until now. I apologize and confess to my Gurus.”

As he took his last breath, there were great fearful appearances and he died foaming at the mouth with an expression of being strangled. In the end, when his body was taken to the cemetery to be given to the vultures, even the vultures flew away without feeding on his flesh.

The other is the one whose kindness is greater than the Buddhas of the three times, the one whose name is difficult to mention, my great virtuous friend Gen Thubten Yeshe, who was a strong practitioner of Dolgyal. When passing away, before his last breath, he showed very clearly the expression that Dolgyal was not perfect. This has been my personal experience, from being together at the time of his passing away.

For further information on this please read the letter recently sent from Tibet.

Here you have no one to point a finger at out of biased thoughts of discrimination. For these signs of misery and downfall you can point your finger only at Dolgyal, for these are very clear signs. These are just examples.

The letter from Tibet

A collection of stories on manifested inauspiciousness in relation to Dolgyal.

In 2007, when visiting relatives in Baa Thang, I accepted an invitation to visit Sangwa Khato in the region of Baa, a town of twenty families. There, I heard directly from the people of the place about the manifested inauspiciousness in relation to Dolgyal.

Ten years ago, for the sake of timely rains and plentiful harvest in the region, they requested Baa Lakha Rinpoche for a divination of the prayers to be undertaken. Rinpoche advised them to build a stupa at a site seen from every direction. The stupa was built on top of a hill, in the upper part of the region. This was struck by a lightning, which destroyed half of it. When the people of the region rebuilt the stupa, again it was struck by a lightning and half destroyed. When they rebuilt it again, before long the stupa on its own became crooked.

At that time Drakara Chopel, who had spent some years living in Drepung Monastery in South India, became suspicious. So he had the inside fillings of the stupa searched and found a thangka painting of Dolgyal. Everybody suspected that this was the cause of it all. Those who identified with this burnt the thangka.

Later, upon further investigation of the Dolgyal thangka, they suspected the old monk Sangwa Kalsang from the area, who in the past was a practitioner of Dolgyal. But then, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama advised a few times about the necessity of stopping the practice, some of them pretended to have stopped the practice. But in reality they had not done so and did the practice in secret. The Dolgyal thangka was placed in the stupa secretly, without the knowledge of the ordained and lay people of the region.

One day this old monk went to the home of a family to do the prayers of dispelling interferences with the ritual cake (*torma*), but when he went to throw the ritual torma, all of a sudden he lost consciousness and died in a state of inauspiciousness.

For the last six or seven years, since the rebuilding of the stupa, nothing of the sort has happened. The people of the region say in unison that they have had timely rains, good harvests and the whole area has been completely rejuvenated.

In the past, the temple of the town used to have a statue of Dolgyal, which the people of the area had taken outside the walls of the temple and buried within four solid walls. I have destroyed this statue and the walled encasement so that nothing remains of it.

Again, under the jurisdiction of Dho Kham Lithang region in the town of Drarukha, there is a small monastery called Zangcho Dratsang. At this monastery is a monk from Pompora House in Sera Me Monastery, South India, a Dolgyal practitioner by the name of Lobsang Norbu. After attaining a small level geshe degree, he returned to his hometown. Although he had used his title of geshe to become the principal person of the monastery, the ordained and lay people of his hometown did not like Dolgyal practitioners at all. He had also stated that he did not practice Dolgyal. But everyone, beginning with the ex-abbot of the Dratsang, Lama Jamyang, the entire ordained and lay community suspected him of being a practitioner.

To deceive the public and in order to have a huge gathering, one day, he announced the teachings on Maitreya's Wheel of Dharma. On the day of the actual event, during

a break in the sessions, a dog came and broke the hands of some of the statues that had been made from blessed clay. These statues were the holy objects of the temple. There has been such news of inauspiciousness.

Then, before long, lightning struck the monastery, broke the pole holding the victory banner in half and threw it in front of the monastery. After this, one night without any known reasons, the monastery caught on fire. Although the monastery was situated in the middle of the town, nobody noticed the fire. At daybreak, all that remained was the charred ground; everything had been burnt to ashes. There was such inauspiciousness.

These stories of actual events in the past, I offer to the Jewel of our world, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, in support of His Holiness' strong discouragement of Dolgyal practice and hoping in some small way to help.

Presented with respect and prostrations on the 12th of November, 2011.

Although His Holiness the Dalai Lama did the practice of Dolgyal earlier in his life, after many years of examination he came to the very clear conclusion that this practice is very harmful to the Dharma and sentient beings. His Holiness' advice not to practice Dolgyal has been greatly criticized and contradicted by some of the highly learned geshe of the main monasteries, who have written many books on this issue and publicized them well.

Recently, due to a highly learned scholar, Jangtse Geshe Gen Drati, criticizing His Holiness over this issue, his monastery staff went before their protector Dharma Raja (Dhamchen Choegyel) and requested an answer sign as to whether it was better to expel the geshe from the monastery or not. When it was answered that it was better to expel him, as the dough ball containing that answer came out, his writings criticizing His Holiness were read before the entire assembly of monks and he was expelled.

This kind of heavy negative karma, which brings the experience of unthinkable, inexpressible suffering for many eons, is mainly due to the mistake of relying on Dolgyal practice.

More kind than all the Buddhas of the three times, Refuge and Protector, Lord of the Victorious Ones, the All Knowing One, the Highly Seeing Sublime One, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, has been prophesied by our Founder, Buddha, the Destroyer Qualified Gone Beyond One. This was prophesied to a close entourage of the bodhisattva whose name was Limitless Supreme Awareness.

Also, from the Guhyasamaja Tantra Treasure, Founder Vajradhara said to the Dharma King Indrabhuti and so forth,

Amongst the limitless entourage of bodhisattvas, listen Limitless Supreme Awareness. You, bodhisattva, are a great founder of transmigrating sentient beings. Until samsara is empty, till then, you will become the holy object of refuge and savior

of transmigrators. Especially in the country of Snow Land, you will take birth in a holy body of form to disseminate the teachings of the Three Baskets of Dharma and enjoy benefitting transmigratory beings. Limitless Supreme Awareness, the Snow Land is the place to be subdued by the bodhisattva mahasattva Arya Avalokiteshvara. This region of the Snow Land is the place that will be subdued by you. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara Limitless Supreme Awareness, in this place you will brightly illuminate the Dharma teachings of the Three Baskets and the unsurpassable Vajra Vehicle.

It has been thus stated.

If I further clarify this sutra quotation, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Geshe Sopa's center, Deer Park, to give some teachings, one day the staff of the center had an audience with His Holiness. They expressed to His Holiness that His Holiness has stated many times that he himself does not have bodhicitta and the realization of the right view. They said, "If His Holiness does not have the experience of these realizations, then ordinary beings like us don't have any hope." At that point, His Holiness felt unbearable (compassion, not wanting them to lose faith) and it slipped out from his holy mouth that His Holiness did remember that in a past life His Holiness was a bodhisattva in the entourage of the Buddha in the arya land of India. His Holiness gave a very clear answer.

Therefore Tibetans from the Snow Land ought to know that they are unbelievably fortunate. In short, not just Tibetans, in this world many millions of people for eon after eon are led to peace and happiness, liberation and the state of omniscience. His Holiness does unbelievable great activities unlike any other great holy being preserving the teachings of Buddha.

If the Precious Victorious One, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is not the actual Buddha and Arya Avalokiteshvara, then you can say that in this world there is no emanation of Buddha benefiting sentient beings. In this way bodhicitta and the entire teachings of the Buddha become false. Therefore, practicing Dolgyal and practicing the teachings of the Buddha become contradictory to oneself—one is practicing that which is false by regarding it as truth.

At the great seat of Gomang Monastery College, one great Lama who strongly practiced Dolgyal took the great responsibility and spread the practice. Due to that he broke His Holiness's advice and became against His Holiness. When he passed away his heart cracked apart into many pieces, his eyeballs came out and so forth. This is just another example.

It is not only His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who after many years of examining, has advised against the practice of Dolgyal. Many others, who are like one sun rising eliminating the darkness in this world, who have done great extensive works for the teachings of Buddha and transmigratory beings, such as Khachen Yeshe Gyeltsen and Thugkyen Losang Chogy Nyima and many other high valid Gelug lamas and so forth, have also advised to stop the practice of Dolgyal. You can understand this if you look in the collections of their teachings. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has put together the advice that those great holy beings have given, and if you want to read them, please request the Private Office for the texts.

There have also been learned geshees and valid lamas who have practiced Dolgyal. For example Kyabje Pabonka Dechen Nyingpo, who did extensive benefit for the teachings of Buddha and transmigratory beings. People believed it was because he practiced Dolgyal that he was able to bring this extensive benefit through his holy actions. But this is a complete hallucination, without examining the facts, and because of it, many people have just practiced Dolgyal with blind faith.

In the past, Kyabje Pabonka Dechen Nyingpo practiced Most Secret Hayagriva, the circle of Dharma from the pure appearance of the Fifth Dalai Lama, but later stopped that practice. One day he told his attendant, “Tomorrow a fat monk will come to see me. Don’t allow him into my room.”

He said this precisely, but the attendant forgot what he said and when the fat monk came the next day, he allowed the monk to go into the room (this was as an obstacle for those not practicing Dolgyal and especially for those practicing Dolgyal). Later, when the attendant entered the room, it seemed the lama was not happy and looked sort of possessed. The thangkas of Most Secret Hayagriva and others had been taken down and the lama had changed in his actions.

But Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche and Kyabje Dechen Nyingpo are Buddha. Their practice of Dolgyal is the act of showing ordinary aspect for us. Showing ordinary aspect means showing mistakes. Otherwise there is no other meaning of showing ordinary aspect. Without showing this ordinary aspect for us, there is no method to guide us from samsara. Showing the aspect of having mistakes is what leads us to enlightenment. It is so extremely kind of the Guru to show this; it is like the Guru is giving us skies filled with wish-granting jewels.

Besides this example there are many ways the Guru shows the aspect of having mistakes. For example, showing the aspect of being sick so that we have to explain which foods harm and what not to eat. Another example is when there is no road or if there is a precipice and we have to explain to not go that way. There are many ways the Guru shows having mistakes. When the appearance of mistakes in the actions of the Gurus comes, it is extremely important to use that to increase devotion, as this is the cause for oneself to achieve full enlightenment, or to support and increase the Guru devotion that one has generated in one’s own mind without degenerating.

It is mentioned in the tantric text *Vajra Tent (Dorje Kur)*:

In the degenerate time, I, who am called Vajrasattva, will abide in the form of the spiritual master. With the aim of benefitting sentient beings, I will abide in ordinary form.

This is mentioned not only in the tantras but also in the sutras.

Buddha was giving a teaching on an extremely high mountain in the southern direction and at that time the bodhisattva Meaningful to Behold thought: now the Buddha is giving teachings to us, but in the future, after Buddha has passed into the sorrowless state, there will be no one who will give teachings. As he thought this, the Destroyer Qualified Gone Beyond, Guru

Shakyamuni Buddha, proclaimed, “Hi, Meaningful to Behold, when the future comes I will abide in the body of the Abbott, I will abide in the form of the Master, and in order to ripen sentient beings I will show birth, old age, disease and death.”

Even the Guru is the actual Buddha, if from one’s own side one does not look at him as the Buddha, then, as it is mentioned in the Kadampa Geshe Potowa’s *Blue Pepung*, “Even if Manjushri and Chenrezig actually descend in front of you, it won’t benefit you at all, if from your own side you do not look at them as Buddha. You cannot receive any blessings and will not receive profit, only loss.”

Like the story of the Gelong Lekpai Karma, who served Buddha for twenty-two years. In all that time he only looked at the Buddha as a liar, and as a result he was born in the lower realms, the inexhaustible hot hell realms, for eons.

Even if from the Guru’s side he is not Buddha, if from one’s own side one devotes to him as Buddha, one receives only profit and no loss. For example, the old mother actually believed the dog bone was Buddha’s tooth, generated faith, and the blessings of the Buddha’s actual tooth entered and she received Buddha’s relics from the dog bone.

In reality, in this way, the disciple can attain the path and achieve enlightenment before the Guru does and is then able to do perfect works for sentient beings.

Also, the Fifth Dalai Lama mentioned, “To the mind that is hallucinated, the opposite mind, one’s mistakes manifest in the Guru’s actions. Realize that this is one’s own mistake and abandon it like poison.”

So by seeing mistakes in the Guru’s actions, according to the Lama Tsongkhapa tradition, it becomes a support to develop Guru devotion. Please think well on these quotations.

Seeing mistakes in the Guru is like having a black mark on one’s own face and seeing it in a mirror. That is a sign that one’s own face has the black spot, not the reflection.

If the Guru takes poison, we don’t need to also eat poison. We need to examine what this means. Like the peacock, who by eating poison is able to live and become healthier and develop his magnificent color, if you are able to take poison and live, then it’s OK to take poison. If you can transform poison into nectar, you can definitely take it.

AH LA LA LA LA HO
AH HO MAHA SUKHA

From the teachings of Gyalwa Ensapa:

In short, whether we achieve great or small realization depends on whether we have meditated with great or small devotion. Therefore, may I keep as my heart practice the instruction to reflect only upon the qualities of the kind guru, source of all realizations, and not to look at faults. May I fulfill this commitment without any obstacle.

Until one is free from negative karma and obscurations, even if every single Buddha directly descends in front of you, you would have no fortune to see the supreme holy body, adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications, except this present appearance of the Guru (this means this ordinary appearance). To be able to see one's own Guru in the supreme holy body adorned with the holy signs and exemplifications, it is said that one needs to achieve the path of great merit of the five Mahayana paths, such as the path of contemplation of continual Dharma and so forth.

In the past some outer beings (non-Buddhists) actually met the Buddha, but they saw him as an ordinary person, not having the pinnacle or even the one fathom of light rays from the holy body or the other holy signs and exemplifications and so forth.

Arya Thogme (Asanga) saw Maitreya Buddha in the form of a female dog whose lower body was covered in wounds and maggots.

Also, Ngagpa Chöpa, the great yogi, and Getsul Tsimbulwa saw the mind-sealed deity Dorje Pagmo as an ordinary lady who had leprosy.

Even the learned and highly attained yogi Naropa, as well as all the human beings in the town, saw the highly attained Tilopa, who was the actual Buddha Vajradhara, as a beggar, burning and eating fish alive.

Do not arise heresy even for one split second in the glorified Guru's actions.

See whatever actions he does as good.

With this devotion, may the blessings of the Guru enter my heart.

His Holiness does not accept this prayer because the holy minds of Kyabje Pabongka Rinpoche, Trijang Rinpoche and His Holiness are one. It is a teaching that their holy mind is one.

As it is mentioned in the text *Calling the Guru from Afar*, by Kyabje Dechen Nyingpo,

The wisdom of great bliss of all Buddhas, one taste with the dharmakaya,

Is itself the ultimate nature of all kind lamas.

I beseech you, Lama, dharmakaya,

Please look after me always without separation, in this life, future lives, and the bardo.

This quotation is for people like me, who are extremely ordinary and filled with superstition, full of obscurations and negative karma.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the principal one who holds all the teachings of Buddha and spreads this in the world, therefore it is so important to follow His Holiness's request.

In this world there are many religions, but our founder, the great kind mighty one, Shakyamuni Buddha, said, "You should examine my teachings well, bhikshus (learned ones), like burning, cutting and rubbing gold. Then take my teachings not just out of faith."

Therefore, whatever we practice in Buddhism, we must examine it well, just as Buddha has advised, and Buddha gave us the freedom to do this. This is what I am expressing; please understand this.

Therefore, to follow the advice of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the omniscient one, this is particularly for oneself and generally for the Tibetans to be harmonious in life, under one constitution and to be in unity.

This is for problems not to arise life to life, for the sun of happiness to rise in the world, for there to be perfect peace and happiness in this world, and for oneself and others to achieve liberation from samsara and the state of omniscience. It is for the stainless teachings of Buddha to spread in this world, and especially for the stainless Tibetan Mahayana Buddhism to increase and not decrease. It is for this reason that His Holiness the Dalai Lama has advised that the practice of Dolgyal stop.

Even though some learned high lamas and geshees saw His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the enemy and criticized His Holiness's view, still His Holiness's holy speech and view did not change.

It is mentioned that the subduer of the Snow Land of Tibet is Chenrezig and very clearly explains that Chenrezig not only does the holy action of working for others and not oneself but also has great bodhicitta and powerful compassion. He only does the holy actions of guiding and saving the six types of sentient beings and showing compassion, like all the ten direction buddhas. This is the arya supreme one, Chenrezig.

In the past, when I have met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I have expressed, with my big mouth, that myself being a representative, on behalf of the whole world in general and in particular the Tibetan people, that even though the lamas and geshees have criticized His Holiness, such as by writing books against him, still His Holiness has never wavered in advising us to stop the practice of Dolgyal, so for that, from the heart, how unfathomably greatly kind His Holiness is.

By reading this letter if you get upset, then just as the great compassionate Buddha practiced the paramita of patience to the harm-givers, please practice patience and live your life with a happy mind. This is important. Thank you very much.



Written by Lama Zopa Rinpoche in Tibetan, Buddha Amitabha Pure Land, July 3–11, 2012.

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