

**A
BRIEF
HISTORY OF
OPPOSITION TO
SHUGDEN**

Edited and Compiled by
The Dolgyal Research Committee

Measures Taken by Various Learned
Non-sectarian Scholars and Great Practitioners
Against the Practice and Propitiation of
Dolgyal or Shugden

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PREFACE

This leaflet, dealing with the measures taken by various learned scholars and great practitioners against the practice and propitiation of Dolgyal or Shugden, has been extracted from the book : **Research on the Evolution of Shugden entitled : Clouds of Offering Pleasing the Impartial** for direct and easy reference.

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Although some general accounts and stories about gods and spirits may be related to (somebody's) pure vision, most of them arise because of the variety of human perception and imagination, thus, they are obscure phenomena. If we regard everything as pure vision and disregard day to day, ordinary, worldly human experiences, we will have no way to explain these things. Moreover, (the worship of Dolgyal) is a crucial issue that we cannot just sit back and ignore, without investigating whether such practice has harmed or helped our society.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has stated in one of his talks on the process of practice and propitiation of dharma protectors, "If it is said that there are uncommon and inconceivable secret events, let us first develop a refined consciousness capable of experiencing such mystical things. If we had such a consciousness we could then make use of them, but we simply have to go by popular conventions. If the person is at an ordinary level, but the object of experience is something of inconceivable secrecy, then he can't experience it."¹ As His Holiness the Dalai Lama points out, even though people who recognise Gyalchen Shugden as reliable, and particularly those who say that Shugden is the protector of Gelugpas, assert that this is profoundly secret issue, it has created and is creating many problems on an ordinary human level. Therefore, His

¹An excerpt from a talk given by His Holiness on 18th July 1980 at Sera Monastery to a selected group containing abbots, ex-abbots and senior monks of Sera Jey and Sera Mey and the members of the standing committee of the Tibet Youth Congress, Bylakuppe. See page 99 of the book *Collection of All the Talks by His Holiness on the Propitiation and Practice of Dharma Protectors*.

Holiness the Dalai Lama has farsightedly given advice and guidance regarding the practice and propitiation of dharma protectors. The validity of this advice is proved and supported by actual historical events.

The second volume of the *Heavenly Garment* (Dukulai Gosang) describes how the Great Fifth Dalai Lama performed peaceful and wrathful activities in 1674, the wood-tiger year :

“The Gyalpo of Dol Chumig Karmo has intensified its harmful activities and also many deceptive activities of this evil and hostile spirit are being observed. In Namgyal Monastery, following the specially targeted ritual, a ritual fire offering was lead by the Vajra Dra-na Cho-je (Brag-sNa-Chos-rJe)².”

Also in 1675, the wood-rabbit year :

“Because of strong indications of disturbances from disembodied beings, recitation of 10,000,000 wrathful mantras targeting evil forces in general and particularly the interfering spirit of Chumig Karmo have been recited, followed by the performance of a ritual, fire offering according to the practice of Rigzin Dorje Drag-po-tsal by Namgyal Monastery at which Gelong Lodro Gyalwa acted as Vajra Acharya. Thus, means ensuring the welfare of the citizens of Tibet have been accomplished.”³

Again in 1675, the wood-rabbit year :

“It is well known that at Dol Chumig Karmo a very powerful perfidious interfering spirit (*dam sri*), born due to distorted prayers, has been harming the teaching of the Buddha and sentient beings in general and in particular. The harmful activity has intensified since the fire-bird (year) [1636] and (the spirit) has been successful in many of his missions. But hardly anyone had taken any action, as if this did not concern them. So, at the end of the earth-bird (year) [1648] a new shrine was constructed at Dol Chumig Karmo and articles were placed there in the hope that it would become a place for the Gyalpo to settle. However, his harmful activities only intensified and recently many lay and ordained people have been afflicted with diseases and a few monks have died. Therefore, all the monks unanimously decided that a fire ritual should be performed.

Consequently, two groups of practitioners were organised. One was led by Nagrampa Dhondup Gyatsho, who acted as the Vajra Acharya of (a performance of) the Dorje Drolo ritual and the other was led by Nangjung Ngagchang Losang Khyentse, who acted as the Vajra Acharya of (a performance of the) Yangsang Karma Dragpo ritual. Likewise Rigzin Pema Thinely of Dorje Drag, Dharma King Terdag Lingpa, Vugja Lungpa, Drigung Tulku Rinpoche, Katshal Zurpa Ngari Konchok Lhundup and Palri Tulku performed the Wrathful Lama, Yamaraja, Phurba, Loktri practice for seven days, at the conclusion of which a fire-ritual was performed during which the

²Dukulai Gosang, Volume Kha, Tibetan Publication, Folio 157 back, line 5.

³Dukulai Gosang, Volume Kha, Tibetan Publication, Folio 239 back, line 1.

'perfidious interfering spirit' and his entourage were burnt. Everybody was convinced (of its success because of) the appearance of wonderful sings and the smell of burning flesh that everybody witnessed. Thus, many sentient beings were explicitly granted the gift of fearlessness because their lives were saved. And indirectly these creatures (*byung po*) were delivered to the peaceful state of being released from having to experience the intolerable suffering of bad state of rebirth due to their increasing negative actions.

At that time a testimony was written to indicate that these creatures or evil spirits were without protection and refuge and (consequently) Namgyal Monastery, Dorje Drak Monastery, Dardhingpa Monastery recited mantras to negate the evil forces."⁴

As mentioned above, this testimony is found in the volume Da of the Fifth Dalai Lama's Collected Works under the title *Compendium Of Offerings, Fulfilment, Confessions and Eulogies etc. to the Unobstructed Wrathful and Powerful Committed Ocean of Dharma Protectors entitled "Spontaneous Fulfilment of The Four Sublime Activities"*.

"Because of the meddling of Lag Agyal of Gekhasa (his mother), the false reincarnation of Tulku Sonam Geleg Palzang (Tulku Dakpa Gyaltzen) got his way and because of distorted prayers he became a perfidious interfering spirit (*dam sri*) and brought serious harm to sentient beings. Therefore, a total of seven groups of practitioners led by Dorje Drag Tulku and two groups of practitioners of Phende

Legshe Ling (Namgyal Dratsang) performed a ritual fire offering and burnt the interfering spirit. This is the testimony I had written that time :

To the deities, Six Armed Mahakala, Karmaraja and Magzor,

To the oathbound protectors The Four Faced Mahakala, Chamdral Begtse, etc.

Who have been propitiated and whose practice (has been done)

I offer this sublime libation.

The so-called Drakpa Gyaltzen pretends to be a sublime being, even though he is not,

And since this interfering spirit and creature of distorted prayers

Is harming everything - both the dharma and sentient beings -

Do not support, protect or give him shelter, but grind him to dust.

To the female protectors like Nodjin Yangghaza, etc. and

Gyalpo Ku-nga, Khyabjug, Dorje Leg and particularly Nechung and his entourage.

I offer this sublime libation

The so-called Drakpa Gyaltzen pretends to be a sublime being, even though he is not,

And since this interfering spirit and creature of distorted prayers

Is harming everything - both the dharma and sentient beings -

⁴Dukulai Gosang, Volume Kha, Tibetan Publication, Folio 257 back, line 1.

Do not support, protect or give him shelter, but
grind him to dust.

To Tse-mar etc. and the seven Barwa brothers
And likewise Setrab of Sangphu etc. – the
wrathful gods and spirits among whom this
negative spirit seeks support –

I offer this sublime libation.

The So-called Drakpa Gyaltsen pretends to be a
sublime being, even though he is not,
And since this interfering spirit and creature of
wrong prayers

Is harming everything both the dharma and
sentient beings –

Do not support, protect or give him shelter, but
grind him to dust.

Having agreed before the root and lineage lama
Vajra Dharas

To increase what is good and beneficial to
sentient beings and the dharma,

If you protect this perfidious interfering spirit,
Will you not cause your own past pledges to
degenerate?

There are groups of evil spirits who display
various unsuitable miracles

In the form of human and, cattle disease,
hailstorms, famine, and drought.

May their power and ability

Their body, speech and mind be smashed into
tiny particles.⁵

As is evident here, from 1657 the fire-bird year, a
perfidious interfering spirit at Dol brought harm to the
teaching and the sentient beings in general and in particular.
In 1669, the earth-bird year, activities to pacify the spirit
were performed with the construction of a new house and
the placing of (relevant) articles, but to no avail. In the
beginning of 1674, the wood tiger year, and 1675, the
wood-rabbit year, two specially targeted rituals were
performed and finally, at the end of 1675, the wood-rabbit
year, seven groups of practitioners performed fire rituals
and destroyed it forever.

Subsequently, many indisputably learned scholars and
great practitioners who purely practised and maintained
the philosophical views and tenets of the Gelugpa also
continued to act against it. For example, in the biography
of Trichen Ngawang Chokden⁶ composed by Changkya
Rolpai Dorje⁷ entitled *The Melodious Speech of Realised Sky*

⁵The original Tibetan can be found on page 148 front and back (English pages 423 and 424) of the volume Da of his Collected Works published in Gangtok, Sikkim.

⁶Trichen Ngawang Chogden also known as Chentsha Ngawang Chogden (1677-1751) entered Sera Samlo Monastery when he was 15. He became the disciplinarian of the Gyume Tantric College when he was 29 and became the abbot of Tholing Monastery in Ngari. He then restored thousands of stupas which are constructed during Lochen Rinchen Zangpo. At 43 he became the abbot of Gyumed Tantric college. At 52 he became the tutor of His Holiness Gyakwa Kelsang Gyatsho, the Seventh Dalai Lama. He gave all his profound teachings to Changkya Rolpai Dorjee. In 1739 when he was 63 he became the 54th Ganden Throne Holder.

⁷Changkya Rolpai Dorjee (1717-1786) was a scholar of great reputation and was recognised as the reincarnation of Changkya Losang Choedan by Konchog Jigme Wangpo. He wrote more than 189 major and minor works. He had many eminent students like Thukan Losang Chokyi Nyima.

Farers called *The Great Drum of the Celestial beings* he states :

“Earlier, a very vicious and evil spirit (here it doesn't mention that this spirit is Dolgyal, but that it is Dolgyal who is referred to is clear from the biography of Changkya. Also, the time refers to the period when Trichen Ngawang Chokden was the Ganden throne-holder) possessed a man from Draksep (a place very near to Ganden) and some unstable former-abbots, and monastic hostels also worshipped it by simply invoking and propitiating it. On the top of the Jangtse mountain a cairn for invoking spirits was also built. Seeing these as extremely inappropriate he issued an edict to the assembly of monks that from the time of Je Tsongkhapa there had been no tradition of propitiating worldly spirits and protectors within the premises of this seat of learning and so, henceforth, nobody would be allowed to engage in such deeds. The cairn was also destroyed (this is very clearly mentioned in the biography of Changkya) and the stones and earth of which it was made were taken back to the places from where they had been taken. The medium was invoked to come into trance henceforth. Dolgyal too said, “If this is Tri Rinpoche's order, I have no choice but to accept.” This evil spirit then fled to sTag-rTse-Zhol. (Tri Rinpoche) himself then went into retreat for sometime and subsequently established the practice of Dharma Raja's ritual cake offering composed by the Omniscient Gendun Gyatso (the Second Dalai Lama) as a regular religious practice of monastic assembly. As a result of having transgressed Dharma Raja's words, a former-abbot who had propitiated this evil spirit immediately

expired. The monastic hostels also experienced many misfortunes and this led to the end of such practice and became a contributory factor in the purification of the monastery and the place.”⁸

As is evident in the above statements Trichen Ngawang Chogden placed restrictions (on the practice of Dolgyal) and asked monks not to practice or propitiate such evil spirits within the Ganden complex. It was in 1740, the iron-monkey year and the second year of his incumbency as the Ganden Throne Holder that he dismantled the cairn of the spirit situated on the peak of the Jangtse mountain.

What is the source to prove that this evil and harmful spirit whose practice was restricted in Ganden was none other than Dolgyal? In the biography of Changkya Rolpai Dorje composed by Thukan Choekyi Nyima (1737-1802)⁹ entitled *Beautifying Ornament of Ganden* we read :

Reaching the site of the cairn to Machen, he explained in detail to Thukan Lobsang Choekyi Nyima as follows :

⁸The biography of Ganden Throne Holder Achi Thu Nomenhan, whose actual name is Trichen Ngawang Chokden, composed by Changkya Rolpai Dorje entitled *The Melodious Speech of Realised Sky Ears called The Great Drum of the Celestial Being*, Chinese Publication, Folio 66 back last line.

⁹Thukan Losan Chokyi Nyima (1737-1802) was recognised as the reincarnation of Thukan Ngawang Choekyi Gyatsho by Konchog Jigme Wangpo. He received novice monk ordination from Changkya Rolpai Dorjee when he was 13 and entered Drepung Gomang Monastery when he was 19. He studied with more than 30 eminent scholars like Panchen Palden Yeshe, Kunchen Jigme Wangpo, Phurchog Jhampa Rinpoche, Changkya Rolpai Dorjee, Sakya Dagchen Kunga Lodro etc. He was appointed as the abbot of Zhalu Monastery by the Tibetan Government and also became the 34th abbot of Gonlung Monastery. When he was 53 he became the throne holder of the Kumbum Monastery. He wrote more than 500 treatises, which are preserved in 15 wood block printed volumes.

“Je Lama (Tsongkhapa) and his students do not propitiate worldly gods and protectors and hence even the cairn of Machen, the deity of his birthplace, is not included within the limits of the circumambulatory (path at Ganden). (However,) in the past some Ganden Throne Holders propitiated Dolgyal (Shugden) and experienced misfortunes, consequently Tri Chen Dorje Chang dismantled Dolgyal's image and shrine and banished it from the monastery.”¹⁰

As mentioned here, when Changkya Rolpai Dorje went on a pilgrimage to Ganden Monastery he clearly mentioned the name of Dolgyal to Thukan Choekyi Nyima. This clearly proves the point.

Again in the Toe - 'Bril by the late Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche we find : “In the central part of Tibet shortly after the passing away of Phurchog Je Ngawang Jhampa, Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltsen, and Longdol Lama Rinpoche, the survival of the tradition of listening and instruction on the stages of path to enlightenment was in a critical condition. It was at that time that Nyungne Lama Yeshe Wangpo intentionally appeared to uphold and disseminate this teaching. This sublime being received ordination from Yongzin Kachen Yeshe Gyaltsen and thus received the name Yeshe Wangpo.”

As the text clearly shows, the three lamas mentioned above were at that time the principal practitioners and teachers of the *Stages of the Path to Enlightenment* and also

¹⁰In the biography of Changkya Rolpai Dorjee found in the Collected Works of the great Gelugpa scholar, Thukan Chokyi Nyima, Lhasa Publication, Folio 121 to 122.

the ones who sustained the practice of the pure Gelug tradition. Thus, they enhanced the Yellow Hat teaching and their being universally worthy of respect and veneration is undisputed. Let us analyse these three eminent Lamas' views of Dolgyal.

In Phurchog Ngawang Jhampa's¹¹ (1682-1762) work The Catalogue of the Establishment of the Four Monastic Seats and the Lower and the Upper Tantric College entitled “White Lotus Rosary” we find at the end of the account of the history of the Ganden Monastery :

“Thus, at the time when Je (Tsongkhapa) himself was alive, apart from those dharma protectors who are bound by oath and are mentioned in the tantras themselves, no objects for propitiating or seeking the help of harmful negative worldly spirits, who would express their wrath on even very minor matters, were ever installed within the premises of this monastic seat. As a result, all the members of the community, both Lamas and disciples lived in harmony and the tradition of study and practice flourished. Even (the cairn) to the spirit of Tsongkhapa's birthplace was placed outside the monastery. However, nowadays, many people who consider themselves to be followers of Tsongkhapa, and who adopt the three robes of a fully ordained Buddhist monk, go for refuge in ghostly spirits. They will have to face the consequence of meeting with great misfortune. Therefore, if we, the ordained sangha,

¹¹Phurchog Ngawang Jhampa was born in 1682 in Chabdo and passed away in the year 1762 at the age of 81. He received his Bhikshu ordination from Panchen Losang Ye he at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. He was the 53rd lama of the lamrim lineage and was author of 52 published works.

properly guard our precepts and vows, the guardians who are bound by oath and who have earlier seen the Buddha will help and support us without hesitation.”¹²

Phurchok Ngawang Jampa’s statement, “nowadays, many people who consider themselves to be followers of Tsongkhapa, and who adopt the three robes of a fully ordained Buddhist monk, go for refuge in ghostly spirits. They will have to face the consequences of meeting with great misfortune” clearly indicates that they will encounter misfortunes and thus he strongly criticised this practice. That this ghostly spirit referred to by Phurchog Jampa is none other than Dolgyal is clearly indicated by the two accounts of Changkya and Thukan.

The biography of Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltzen¹³ entitled *The Day Light Opening the Lotus of the Buddha’s Teaching* composed by the Eighth Dalai Lama, Jhampel Gyatsho, also says :

“With regard to Dharma protectors too, it is not enough to have the name of a dharma protector. The three, Mahakala, Dharmaraja and Vaishravana, who were exclusively appointed by Je Tsongkhapa, are sufficient.

¹²In the Catalogue of the Establishment of the Four Monastic Seats and the Upper and Lower Tantric College composed by Phurchog Ngawang Jhampa entitled White Lotus Garland, Wood Block Print Folio 13 back line 1.

¹³Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltzen was born in 1713 and passed away in 1793. He received his novice monk ordination from Panchen Losang Yeshe at the age of seven and received Bhikshu ordination from the accomplished master Losang Namgyal. At the age of 21 he visited central Tibet and received teachings from Phurchok Jhampa Rinpoche. At the age of 62 he became the tutor to the eighth Dalai Lama, Gyalwa Jhampal Gyatsho. When he was 77 he established the Dip Tsechok Ling Monastery. He passed away at the ripe age of 81. His published works consist of 19 volumes containing compositions on 159 sections.

This is because the lineages of all the Buddhas can be summarized into three lineages : Tathagata, Vajra and Lotus. The wrathful manifestation of these three are : Dharmaraja, Vaishravana and Mahakala. This is so because Dharmaraja (Damchan Choegyal) is the one who distinguishes between wholesome and unwholesome deeds, therefore he is the dharma protector of the path of the individual of initial mental scope, in which the main teaching concerns the law of cause and effect, what is to be adopted and what is to be discarded. Vaishravana is the dharma protector of the path of the individual of middling mental scope in which the principal teaching concerns the three higher trainings. And Six Armed Mahakala (Yeshekyi Gonpo Chagdruk) is the dharma protector of the path of the individual of great mental scope, in which the primary teaching is the instruction on meditation on the awakening mind or *bodhichitta*. We need no other dharma protector than these three.”

Again, in the above biography, after giving instructions to Panchen Rinpoche’s attendants about how Panchen Rinpoche should study and practise, we find : “Especially those from Tashi Lhunpo are being misled by this new dharma protector. Therefore, the dharma protectors which were practised and propitiated by Panchen Losang Choegyen should be enough. On the other hand, if you newly propitiate an evil ghost, it will become a great source of trouble, therefore you should all pay special attention to this.”¹⁴

¹⁴The biography of Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltzen entitled *The Day Light Opening the Lotus of the Buddha’s Teaching* composed by the Eighth Dalai Lama, Jhampal Gyatsho Folio 187.

Thus, he gave clear guidance based on his innermost feelings. The statement, “if you newly propitiate an evil ghost, it will become a great source of trouble,” refers only to Dolgyal for there is no other spirit to which it could refer.

In the various records of the teachings that he had received and in the *Lists of Ocean of Dharma Protectors* found in the *Collected Works of Long Dol Lama Rinpoche* we do not find even a hint about Dolgyal. From this it can be safely concluded that he did not practise or propitiate Dolgyal.

Thus, among those who practised the pure Gelug teaching Phurchog Ngawang Jampa and Yongzin Yeshe Gyaltzen had actually raised objections to the practice of Dolgyal and Long Dol Lama Rinpoche never practised or propitiated it. When we reflect carefully on how those who maintained Gelugpa thought and practice purely have clearly pointed out the mistakes of going for refuge to wrathful worldly spirits (and protectors) other than Mahakala, Dharmaraja and Vaishravana, who were appointed by Je Tsongkhapa himself, it is clear that there is not an element of truth in contemporary statements that it is improper for a Gelugpa not to propitiate Dolgyal, or the claim that those who do not propitiate Dolgyal are either not Gelugpas or that the Gelugpas will not be able to manage their own affairs.

Likewise, many great and non-sectarian lamas from the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism have advised

against this practice. Here are a few examples. We have recounted earlier that during the time of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682) many great lamas and practitioners performed ritual fire offerings and eliminated Dolgyal forever. Particularly in the work of Min-ling Lochen Dharma-Shri (1654-1717) the *Biography of Terdag Lingpa Gyurme Dorjee* entitled : *Chariot of Faith*, we find :

“From the 10th of the sixth month he accomplished the retreat and mantra recitation of Phurba and the perfidious evil spirit known by the name Dolgyal was destroyed so completely by means of a fire ritual, that only the name remained. At that time, on the occasion of summoning and entrance the lamentation of a dying person (could be heard), and on the occasion of the offering through the overpowering recitation of Ho, there was a clear indication when everyone became aware of the smell of a burning corpse.”¹⁵

It is also clearly mentioned in the related documents that Do Drak Rigzin Pema Thrinley (1640-1718), a contemporary of Terdag Lingpa Gyurme Dorje, performed a wrathful ritual fire offering, so we did not repeat it here.

Because some followers of Sakya Morchen Kunga Lhundrup propitiated Gyalchen Shugden, gradually some Gelugpa lamas also began to propitiate it. When various calamities and disturbances arose because of the propitiation of Shugden, Derge Zongsar Khyentse Jamyang Choekyi

¹⁵The biography of Terdag Lingpa Gyurme Dorjee entitled : *Chariot of Faith* composed by Minling Lochen Dharma Shri, Page 77.

Lodro, alias Pema Yeshe Dorje, who was a non-sectarian practitioner who mainly practised the Sakya tradition, wrote in his composition : *Inducement Dedicated to the Prefidious Evil Spirit and Kordag*¹⁶ :

“Kye¹⁷! I offer this ransoming ritual cake of spine
joints
In lieu of flesh, blood, body and life
To all existent and visible evil spirits,
To Gyalpo Shugden, the Kordag,
To Dawa Senge Zang, the annihilator
To the Gyaldre and the nine hosts of Bagu and
his retainers,
To Tegyal, Lakyab and Dragdre,
To the Gyalgong, Evil Spirit and the perfidious
ones and
To the male and female ghosts of the dead and
the living.¹⁸

If we examine these verses then it becomes very clear that what is known among many learned lamas and practitioners as Gyalchen Shugden is categorised here as Kordag, Gyalgong, Byungpo, Prefidious Spirit, Ghost of the Dead and is treated as someone who has to be bribed and paid off. Moreover, the Khangsar Khenpo, Ngawang Yonten Gyatsho, the sixty-sixth throne holder of Ngor Aewam Choedan, who was the student of Aewam Khangsar

¹⁶One who enjoys offering of others, while leading a morally corrupted life.

¹⁷An emphatic way of summoning or calling someone.

¹⁸Derge Zongsar Khyentse Jamyang Choekyi Lodro's composition : *Inducement Dedicated to the Prefidious Evil Spirit and Kordag*, volume III, English page no. 359.

Khenchen Ngawang Lodro Shenphen Nyingpo (1876-1952) and Ngor Klu Ding Khenpo, Jamyang Thubten Lungtok Gyaltzen, and many renowned and learned Sakya Lamas have even performed wrathful practices to destroy the shrines of Shugden and have banished him.

Also, the biography of the fifth Panchen Lama, Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk (1855-82) states :

“On the sixth day of the sixth month of the Water-bird year (1873) he told his younger brother and his personal attendant, “These days in the chamber on the roof of the Dechen Phodrang various activities of Dolgyal are being performed, therefore, on 9th the chamber should be dismantled and closed.”¹⁹

Also, in the code of rules of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery composed by Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk in the 15th Rabjung of the Fire-rat year (1876) we find the following statement :

“Recently, it seems some cases of invoking ghosts (through mediums) within the compound of the monastery have taken place. In future, except for special dharma protectors like the Lamo Choekyong, (or Lamo Tsangpa, a special protector of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery) summoning different kinds of spirits to enter into mediums will be prohibited. Dharma protectors should be Vajra protectors possessing transcendental wisdom. Propitiating and taking refuge in evil spirits and ghosts like Dolgyal,

¹⁹Biography of the Fifth Panchen Lama, Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk, Page 223 back.

that are wandering hungry spirits, contradicts the fundamental precepts of taking refuge in the Three Jewels, which is what distinguishes a Buddhist. Therefore, such practices should be given up.

I have also observed that while passing through certain precipitous paths, which are the abodes of harmful hungry ghosts, ordinary lay people dismount from their horses, make prostrations and pay homage. In this connection, those of us who are followers of the Buddha should abandon such practices and instead generate virtuous thoughts like kindness, peace and benevolence when we reach such places and should give teachings reflecting on all conditioned phenomena being like the light of a star, a haze, a lamp etc. Then offer incense smoke as a way of making a gift. Apart from that, it is absolutely improper to act like an ordinary worldly person by making prostrations, dismounting from your horse, removing your hat and praying for short term and long term happiness. The inappropriateness of such actions is mentioned in many authentic treatises. So without undertaking these practices you should sustain your practice until it is accomplished."²⁰

Biography of Jigme Dhamchoe Gyatsho by the Dhomey scholar Tsetan Zhabdrung²¹ (1910-1985)

²⁰In the 11th volume of the series of the *Key Opening the Door to One Hundred Lorens of Land of Snow* under the title *Collection of Code of Rules*, page 125.

²¹Tsetan Zhabdrung was born in 1920 in Dhomey in Zunha district near Machu river and passed away in 1985 at Tashi Khyil Monastery. He studied with many eminent lamas, including primarily Jigme Dhamcho Gyatsho, and his learning and scholarship was renowned throughout the three provinces of Dhotu, U-tsang and Kham. He also served as Professor at the Universities of Nationalities at Tso-ngo and also at West North Nationalities University. He spent his whole life educating and encouraging his people and he published more than fifty works dealing with biography, history, religion, astrology, poetry, grammar etc.

“Some followers of Ven. Phabongkha Dechen Nyingpo Rinpoche engaged in heated argument on the philosophical tenets of the new and the ancient. They engaged in many wrong activities like destroying images of Padmasambhava and those of other peaceful and wrathful deities, saying that reciting the mantra of the Vajra Guru is of no value and fed the Padma Kathang to fire and water. Likewise, they stated that turning Mani prayer wheels, observing weekly prayers for the deceased etc. are of no purpose and thus placed many on the path of wrong view. They held Gyalpo Shugden as the supreme refuge and the embodiment of all the Three Jewels. Many monks from small monasteries in the Southern area claimed to be possessed by Shugden and ran amok in all directions destroying the three reliquaries (images of the Buddha, scriptures and stupas) etc. displaying many faults and greatly harming the teaching of Je Tsongkhapa, the second Conqueror. Therefore, if you could compose an instructive epistle benefiting all and could publish it and distribute it throughout the three (provinces) U, Tsang and Kham it would greatly contribute to counteracting the disturbance to the teaching.”²²

This letter of request is a letter sent by Jamgon Choekyi Lodro, the reincarnation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo, a great scholar of the recent past from the Kham area, to Jigme Damchoe Gyatsho of Dhomey (1898-1947). We can clearly see in this letter that by propagating inappropriate behaviour, some followers of Kyabje Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo greatly harmed Je Tsongkhapa's teaching,

²²First volume of the collected works of Tsetan Zhabdrung, Tso-Ngon Publications page 394 to 395.

therefore a request was made that an instructive epistle should be composed, carved on a wooden block and distributed to the three (provinces) U, Tsang and Kham.

Then there is also a letter of complaint that Kyabje Phabong Kha received entitled "The Logic of Diamond Silvers" whose author is unknown. We have not seen the contents of that letter in detail, but Kyabje Phabong Kha received another letter of complaint from one by the name Choeze Thubten Losang of Domey entitled "The Chariot Pulling the Three Modes of Reasoning : An Appeal made to Kyabje Phabong Kha when he was staying at Chabdo" Later, Denma Losang Dorjee wrote a rejoinder entitled "Drum Stick Invoking the Sound of the Consequence of the Great Drum Bringing a Smile to the Face of the Intelligent". An annotated description of the result of analysis of the false letter titled An Appeal Made to Kyabje Phabong Kha when he was staying in Chabdo" In that rejoinder the contents of the letter sent to Kyabje Phabong Kha are cited without missing, adding or repeating the meaning of a single word. When we reflect on the meaning of that letter it seems very probable that Jigme Dhamcho Gyatsho wrote it under a pseudonym for special reasons at the request of Jamgon Chokyi Lodro, the reincarnation of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. Whatever the case may be, that rejoinder is found in the volume Na, Lhasa block print, an appendix of Kyabje Phabong Khapa's Collected Works where you can read it in detail. Anyway, there must have been some purpose and reason for these indisputable and non-sectarian scholars to place restrictions (on this practice).

Some people have tried to prove that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatsho (1876-1933), did not place any restrictions on Dolgyal. In support of their assertion they cite "The Biography of Gyalwa Thubten Gyatsho entitled The Amazing Precious Garland" composed by his tutor Phurchog Tulku Jhampa Tenzin wherein it is stated :

"In the Water Dog year (1922) before the lama in charge of Dungkar Gon, the spiritual teacher Ngawang Kelsang, who abides in the natural discipline of an accomplished one, and who is respected as a lama by all sentient beings in outer Tibet, the melodious bell of whose frame resounds from place to place, Gyalchen Dorje Shugden, who is extremely strict in his commitment and pledge to guard the teaching of Jamgon (Tsongkhapa) entered the body of human being and said, "Now is the time when the Med-hor²³ are rising and if you wish to stop them it is important immediately to restore the stupas to the east and west of the central land of Tibet. This clear Vajra prophecy is being brought to the notice of His Highness (Gongsa Chenpo) by the Geshe, through Governor of Dromo."²⁴

On the basis of this statement it is said that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, far from placing restrictions on the practice of Dolgyal, in fact propitiated it. This makes it very

²³ Mongolians from the lower region like Tso-ngonpo / Kokonor are called Med-hor and those from the upper areas like Sichuan are called Tod-hor.

²⁴ The Birth Story of Arya Avalokiteshvara entitled *Annals of the Garland of Gems*. Volume V, page 620.

clear that these people have failed to understand the import of the account, because the biography of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was written by his tutor Phurchog Tulku Jhampa Tenzin. He has simply recorded how at that time the Dromo Geshe passed this information through the Governor of Dromo. He did not write that the Thirteenth Dalai Lama practised Dolgyal. This is nothing more than a prophecy of Shugden being brought to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama's notice through the Governor of Dromo.

As an example of how the Thirteenth Dalai Lama placed strong restrictions on the practice and propitiation of new gods and protectors and particularly on Dolgyal because of its being very controversial in the past, Denma Losang Dorje in his composition, "The biography of Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo entitled *"The Meaningful and Melodious Song of Brahma"* records :

"(Here is) an appeal from me, Phabong Khapa, holding the name of an incarnate, in accordance with an instruction that I have received from you through Tse Khendron Chenmo. (I am glad that) you have received my application of 22nd of the 12th month last year, and I am grateful that you have kindly clarified each and every point therein. It was entirely my mistake and I have absolutely nothing to say (to defend it). It will be my endeavour in the future to take the meaning of your instructions earnestly to heart and I ask your forgiveness for whatever mistakes I have made in my appeal."

Phabong Khapa quotes the Dalai Lama's letter : "With

regard to the three points mentioned here, there is still much ground for debate, both in logical and scriptural terms, but this is enough for the time being. With regard to your reference to making endeavour in the practice of taking refuge, first of all you are propitiating Shugden as a protector. Since they received Lamrim teaching from you at the Drepung Monastic Religious Centre last year and so made a connection with you, propitiation of Shugden among students there has greatly increased. The Great Nechung Choegyal who from the very beginning was commanded and entrusted to protect and guard this monastery, expressed his displeasure to the Drepung Lachi several times, saying that (due to propitiating Shugden) the degeneration of the Buddha dharma had been speeded up. This is the source of his displeasure. I feel that your seeking the support of a wrathful worldly spirit (to secure benefits in) this life specifically contradicts the precepts of taking refuge. Therefore, your statement, 'I want to say from the depths of my heart that it is only due to my being confused by ignorance and not that I have knowingly entered an unwholesome path and led others onto the same path.' is contradictory."

Phabong Khapa answers: "You have therefore instructed me to give you an answer. I have propitiated Shugden until now because my old mother told me that Shugden is the deity of my maternal lineage. I wish to inform you that henceforth, with intense regret (for what is past) and (with the intention of) restraining my faults (in the future), I will never again propitiate (Shugden) or make daily offerings and supporting prayers and that I will

wholeheartedly keep this commitment in the core of my heart. Whatever mistakes I have committed until now, such as having become a cause for the mental displeasure of the Great Nechung Choegyal, contradicting the precepts of taking refuge and so forth, I request you, the supreme protector, who is especially compassionate to the lowly, to regard me with love and great compassion and patiently to forgive me.

With great respect I here offer one silk scarf as a medium of request and five silver coins (to contribute to the) mandala offering."²⁵

The contents of this appeal constitute an apology from Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

Since the practice of Shugden prevailed among the followers of Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo (1878-1941), the Thirteenth Dalai Lama had issued a proclamation about the inappropriateness of such a practice. In response Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo accepted his mistakes and sent an informal appeal to His Holiness making a confession, expressing his remorse and asking for his forgiveness while promising not to propitiate the spirit or do the practice in the future. The reason that restrictions were placed on the practice is that to do it contradicts the precepts of Taking Refuge and the Great Dharmaraja

²⁵ Account found on pages 471-2 front and back of the Tibetan text of the biography of Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo entitled *The Meaningful and Melodious Song of Brahma* composed by his student, Denma Losang Dorje and published by the Nyimo Publisher Palden, Lhasa in a woodblock print. In the biography of Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo published in India the above appeal is not found.

Nechung had expressed an antipathy towards it. This is very clear from this appeal.

Now let us examine Dolgyal's attitude towards the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The biography of Je Phabong Khapa composed by Denma Losang Dorje states: "In the seventh month of Hor before the Zhide Tazur²⁶ I heard someone, who seemed to be a monk in trance, (possessed by) Shugden, say twice in high triumphal tones: "it is (to be) on the Namgang (30th) after completion of the 9th" I asked Je Lama (Phabong Khapa) about this in detail and later, on the 30th of tenth month of Hor the Thirteenth Dalai Lama passed away. Therefore, (Phabong Khapa) said that this earlier pronouncement seemed to state that His Holiness would pass away on 30th of the 10th month after the completion of the 9th month."²⁷

If we analyse this, of the two possible subjects, oneself and others, the verb 'is (to be)' refers to one's own action. In terms of meaning it indicates one's mentally deciding and making a commitment to do something. So here too, if he were not setting the time, he should have said: "It *will be* on 30th after the completion of the 9th" and not 'It is (to be)'. This usage is quite clear to anyone who is familiar with the Tibetan language. Moreover, he said it twice, very distinctly, in a triumphal raised voice. This indicates his confidence in announcing that he is going to accomplish an important task on the 30th.

²⁶ Zhide refers to Reting Monastery and Tazur refers to the retired Ta Lama of that monastery.

²⁷ On page 72 back, line 1 of the appendix / supplement to the biography of Phabong Khapa Dechen Nyingpo composed by Denma Losang Dorje.

It is only fear of the Tibetan Government that prevents the author from relating this story explicitly, but what it seeks to imply is that His Holiness the Thirteenth Dalai Lama was also destroyed by Shugden. Therefore, it is very clear that this spirit is harmful in thought and deed and is bent on harming and hindering those great spiritual teachers who have realised the non-contradictory nature of all the teachings. Subsequently, His Holiness the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has spoken about the fact that propitiation of Dolgyal conflicts with Nechung, and that such practices contradicts the precepts of Taking Refuge. The truth of this is implicitly confirmed by events since the time of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama.

Let us discuss on the assertion found in the *Toe'Bril* : "When it was not caught during the fire ritual, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in a wrathful aspect asked Setrab to announce the order in the protector chapel of Sangphu. It is said that while reading the document containing the order, even the dharma protector's headgear shook with fear," and, "the display of miraculous power increased even after the fire ritual (had been performed), therefore, the Great Fifth Dalai Lama composed a short prayer of propitiation, "Hum! Unwavering from the sphere of spontaneous eternity.....".

In the Earth-bird year (1669), the Fifth Dalai Lama constructed a new shrine at Dol and tried to reform the spirit through peaceful means. Since those actions did not produce a positive result, he subsequently performed several specifically targeted practices and finally a ritual fire

ceremony was conducted by seven groups of practitioners. Through such deeds many living beings were provided with the gift of life and such hungry ghosts were indirectly liberated to the state of peace, free from the severe sufferings of the unfortunate realms.

The preface to (the great Fifth Dalai Lama's *Testimonial Statement*) also states : "this testimonial account was written at the time when the evil spirit was destroyed during a fire ritual". Thus, when it is stated so clearly in the *Heavenly Garment* (Dukulai Gosang) that the spirit was destroyed, it is unacceptable that due to Setrab's manipulation the spirit could not be burnt, that Setrab was asked to read the order and that a prayer "Unwavering from the sphere of spontaneous eternity..." was composed. If the Dalai Lama possessed such power that Setrab, to whom the wrathful spirit turned for help, was so completely petrified that even his headgear shook with fear when he received the document containing the order, it is illogical to say that the Dalai Lama made a confession and composed a prayer to propitiate the spirit. The Sangwa Gyachen (*The Collection of Extensive Secrets*) of the Fifth Dalai Lama comprising four inner volumes and 21 outer or later volumes does not mention anything about a document containing an order to Setrab and the composition of the prayer "Unwavering from spontaneous eternity..."

A list of some of the prominent non-sectarian scholars who have placed restrictions on Dolgyal's practice.

1. His Holiness the Fifth Dalai Lama
2. Choegyal Terdag Lingpa

3. Do Drag Rigzin Pema Thrinley
4. Gadong Ngagrampa Dhondup Gyatsho
5. Nangjung Ngagchang Losang Khyentse
6. Choeje Vugja Lungpa
7. Palri Tulku
8. Drigung Tulku
9. Katsak Zurpa Ngari Ngagchang Konchok Lhundup
10. The 54th Gaden Throne Holder Thrichen Ngawang Chogden
11. Volkha Jedrung Losang Thrinley
12. Phurchog Ngawang Jhampa
13. The Fifth Panchen, Panchen Tenpai Wangchuk
14. Aewam Khangsar Khenchen Ngawang Lodro Zhenphen Nyingpo
15. The Fourteenth Karmapa
16. Ngor Khangsar Khenpo Ngawang Yonten Gyatsho
17. Ngor Luding Khenpo Jamyang Thubten Lungtok Gyaltsen
18. Zongsar Jamyang Khyentse Choekyi Lodro
19. Panchen Yongzin Kachen Ang Nyima
20. The Sixteenth Karmapa
21. The Fourteenth Dalai Lama

Thus, many well-known great and learned lamas, who are unbiased in their religious outlook and the systems of philosophical tenets they propound have placed direct restrictions on this Dolgyal. Therefore, it is not just important, but imperative that those who want to review the history of Dolgyal should break out of the confinement of their one sided version to develop and promote a more complete picture.