

The text of the leaflet is in blue. The 'refutations' from the NewKadampaTruth blog are in black. Replies to the 'Refutations' , created by a group of people, are in brown.

Reply to: **Bodhisattva Refutations**

September 9, 2008

Recently at a **Bodhisattva Centre** (Brighton) Open Day, two people handed out leaflets to newcomers in order to dissuade them from attending the Centre's Buddhist meditation classes. Many of their complaints stem from their dislike of the open opposition of many New Kadampa Tradition students to the Dalai Lama over his ban of one of their spiritual practices. It is understandable that some people might wish to protest in support of the Dalai Lama and it is their freedom to do so.

1. We were not protesting in support of the Dalai Lama and we were not trying to 'dissuade' newcomers. We handed out leaflets in support of freedom of information so that members of the public new to the NKT would be knowledgeable of the activities of its members and able to make an informed decision about the NKT. You may note that the only websites referred to on our handout belong to the NKT and the WSS. We have no affiliations to any particular religious or spiritual group. We are concerned citizens.

Moreover, the New Kadampa Tradition and Bodhisattva Centre have not claimed to be a faultless organizations. However, the information these two people were handing out was largely incorrect and misleading, so we need to address it

here. Please let us know if you have any more questions about any of the issues raised below.

This leaflet has also been copied and pasted onto a couple of other websites.

Replies to: [Information about Bodhisattva Centre](#)

(We thought you might like to know)

The Buddhist Centre you are about to visit is one of the larger residential Centres of the New Kadampa Tradition.www.kadampa.org You may notice that the publicity for this Open Day does not mention the NKT or any Registered Charity information about the Centre.

This was not a deliberate omission. Bodhisattva Centre was not trying to hide the fact that it is a member of the New Kadampa Tradition or a registered British charity, and these facts are very clear from all the other Centre publicity.

2. The publicity was specifically aimed at visitors new to the centre, therefore not including the name of the organisation on the publicity was misleading.

If you commit to study with the NKT at Bodhisattva Centre you will only study the books of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. The original texts they are based on are also available in many other Buddhist traditions.

Geshe Kelsang's books form the basis of the three NKT study programmes (the General Programme, Foundation Programme and Teacher Training Programme) but outside of their studies NKT students can and do read what they wish. Everyone has freedom to do as they choose. Please see [New](#)

[Kadampa Truth](#) website for more information on this.

It is reasonable and consistent with other traditions of Buddhism to study only the books of that tradition — for example, you don't study Zen texts in a Theravadin monastery. Geshe Kelsang's books are based on Je Tsongkhapa's commentaries to Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings, which are mostly in Tibetan. Some translations are available but most are not. For example, Geshe Kelsang's Tantric books have no precedent; such detailed instructions are not generally or easily available, even in the Tibetan tradition. Geshe Kelsang has received requests for *Guide to Dakini Land*, for instance, to be translated into Tibetan so that Tibetan practitioners can benefit from it.

Geshe Kelsang has never claimed that his books are his original work. In Buddhism there is no original work because the teachings should be able to be traced back in their entirety to the word of Buddha. In *Joyful Path of Good Fortune* for example, Geshe Kelsang says in the Preface:

I received these teachings from my Spiritual Guide, Trijang Dorjechang, who was an emanation of Atisha; thus the explanations given in this book, *Joyful Path of Good Fortune*, actually come from him and not from myself.

Geshe Kelsang's books are the most complete set of instructions on attaining enlightenment available in the West and have been highly regarded by people of varying traditions over many years. You can check the book reviews on Amazon to see for yourself some of the benefit people derive from these books.

3. If you study with other Tibetan organisations you will be reading books from several Tibetan traditions and certainly not

just commentaries by one teacher. If there is nothing 'original' in Buddhism then what is the difference between a Zen and a Theravadan text? What then is the place of Je Tsongkhapa? How can Geshe Kelsang claim to have 'designed three special spiritual programmes' 'especially suited to the modern world' [one of which is designed for people to become 'authentic' spiritual teachers] without producing anything 'original'? Are you also implying that you cannot become enlightened in the west without Geshe Kelsang's books as his instructions are the 'most complete'?

You will be taught to meditate on 'absorbing the Guru' (who is manifest in this life as Geshe Kelsang Gyatso) into the depths of your mind and to reinforce this meditation with the protection of Dorje Shugden in the practice of Heart Jewel (daily) or Wishfulfilling Jewel (daily) and Kangso (monthly). This practice is the 'essence of Kadampa Buddhism' as taught by the New Kadampa Tradition.

It is your choice who your spiritual teacher is and no one can dictate this to you.

4. We are not trying to 'dictate' anything to anyone. We are giving information on the practices that you will be engaging in if you practice with the New Kadampa tradition.

The practice mentioned here, Heart Jewel and so on, is a traditional practice of the Gelug (Virtuous) tradition of Je Tsongkhapa, which is the tradition Kadampa Buddhists follow. This tradition has been followed for nearly 400 years by both Tibetans and Westerners.

5. Which 'Westerner' followed the tradition of Dorje Shugden nearly 400 years ago? When did the practice of Dorje Shugden as a 'Buddha' actually start? You say that the teachings should 'be able to be traced back in their entirety to the word of the

Buddha' but he lived more than 2,000 years ago.

The Dalai Lama has requested, in order to maintain peace and harmony in the communities of all Tibetan Buddhist traditions, that practitioners of Dorje Shugden should not attend his teachings or view him as their Spiritual Guide. He has not banned the practice. This recommendation does not affect anyone in the NKT. The NKT has always emphasised its complete independence from Tibetan society even though the lineage of the teachings is given as Tibetan.

Without justification, the Dalai Lama has banned the centuries-old practice of Buddha Dorje Shugden that was practised by his own Teachers and, in doing so, has caused a schism in the Buddhist community that has destroyed peace and harmony rather than maintained it. Even though, when questioned by the Western media, the Dalai Lama has claimed not to have banned the practice, well over a thousand monks who refuse to give up their faith have been expelled from their monasteries and lay people are being ostracized and persecuted by their communities — which clearly indicates that it is much more than a “recommendation” or “request”. Please see this [video](#) for speeches he has made on the subject, or read what he has said in his own words on a [website](#) about this issue.

This “recommendation” or ban does in fact affect the NKT adversely because the Dalai Lama is using his fame and exposure in the West to spread the view that the practice of Dorje Shugden is cult-like and non-Buddhist — hence, practitioners of this traditional and popular Protector Buddha are being smeared with these associations both in the East and in the West, unjustifiably so.

The NKT recognizes that there is a difference between Tibetan society/politics and the Buddhism that came through Tibet,

just as there is a difference between politics and religion in general. Buddhism started in India with the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni and those teachings moved through Tibet and are now in the West. Consequently, although there are many lineage Teachers of Buddhism who are Tibetan, Buddhist teachings did not originate there and do not belong to Tibet or any other country. The NKT is a global Buddhist tradition that follows the traditional teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni as transmitted by both Indian and Tibetan Masters through to our present-day Teachers in different countries.

6. The NKT follows a tradition taught by one Buddhist master.

The NKT is not a Tibetan organization and is not bound by Tibetan feudal society or politics.

7. Long term practitioners, including people ordained and practising moral discipline in the NKT, can be made homeless and/or ostracised by their previous community if the Resident teacher finds their criticism inappropriate. What difference is there between the actions of particular Centres in the NKT and the actions in India? The difference is that the British government commits to looking after people who have to leave NKT Centres without anywhere to go. Therefore your complaint should be to the governmental authorities who do not support monks and nuns who have been asked to leave their monasteries. Your complaint is to the Dalai Lama's function as a governmental leader, not as a Buddhist teacher.

However, members of the NKT, under the name of the Western Shugden Society (WSS) have organised and paid for frequent and persistent demonstrations all over the world against the Dalai Lama accusing him of not being a Buddhist, of lying and hypocrisy.

The WSS and the NKT are not the same.

8. The monks and nuns and senior teachers in the NKT who are demonstrating would not have done this if Geshe Kelsang Gyatso had not told them to do so. If any senior teachers do anything seriously against his wishes he would withdraw the ‘authority’ he has given them. Kelsang Pema, his personal assistant and the main spokesperson for the WSS, who came to Bodhisattva Centre to talk to the community to encourage them to engage in the protests, would not have done so without his permission. Also, the letter from Kelsang Nyingpo, the Resident teacher at Bodhisattva Centre, to visitors on the Open Day, written as a response to our leaflet, stated...”You may be interested to visit the following websites for further information about our Centre, our tradition – the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), the WSS:’ This indicates that the WSS is congruent with the NKT. And if Geshe Kelsang is not appearing in the demonstrations, is this because it is against the Internal Rules of the NKT or because he does not see the need to engage in protest?

You can find out more about the [WSS on Wikipedia](#). The [WSS is independently funded](#). The WSS is an ad hoc coalition of Dorje Shugden practitioners from many different countries, including many Tibetan practitioners of Dorje Shugden. Its aims are fourfold:

- ❖ To give freedom to practice Dorje Shugden to whoever wishes to rely upon this Deity.**
- ❖ To stop completely the discrimination between Shugden people and non-Shugden practitioners.**
- ❖ To allow all Shugden monks and nuns who have been expelled from their monasteries and nunneries to return to**

their monasteries and nunneries where they should receive the same material and spiritual rights as the non-Shugden practitioners.

9. If you live in a residential centre of the NKT you are also not allowed to engage in the religious practices of another tradition. For instance, you would not be allowed to have a picture of the Dalai Lama on your shrine. What difference is there in this and in the situation in India? The difference is that there is a wider culture of tolerance outside the religious institution.

❖ **That the Dalai Lama tell in writing to the Tibetan community throughout the world that they should practically apply the above three points.**

The Dalai Lama has been requested to discuss this issue but no reply has ever been received, which is why the WSS has had no choice but to organise demonstrations to raise public awareness of this problem.

10. Geshe Kelsang Gyatso also does not answer many questions that are put to him in letters and emails from many students who may be under great distress when they write to him and in need of spiritual support. If there is any difficult experience or criticism of his teachers or his centres in these letters he does not generally reply at all. Would you say that this is proof that these, perhaps uncomfortable questions based on experience are therefore true? The FPMT has not replied to your comments about them on your site. You have assumed that this means that they are true. Are you saying that anyone who does not reply is automatically guilty? If so, then this would also apply to Geshe Kelsang.

Unfortunately, there is clear evidence that the Dalai Lama is lying and being hypocritical about this issue. For example he has said that there is no ban on Shugden practice (there is) and

he talks constantly in public about religious freedom, love and tolerance while, under his orders, his people are being discriminated against and denied basic human rights if they refuse to give up the practice of this traditional Buddhist Deity.

See. No 9. above

The NKT is not allowed, under British Charity Law, to engage in political activities such as public protest. Some of the prominent members of the WSS who have been protesting are Gen Kelsang Khyenrab, Deputy Spiritual Director of the NKT, Kelsang Rabten, National Spiritual Director of NKT Australia, Kelsang Pema (the main public spokesperson) personal assistant to Geshe Kelsang Gyatso for more than 8 years, and the current resident teachers of Bodhisattva Centre and centres of the NKT in Bexhill, Huddersfield, Wales, London, etc as well as many residents of this NKT centre in Brighton.

The NKT has not engaged in any political activity. As mentioned, the WSS is an independent body that is not affiliated with the NKT. Even so, WSS demonstrations are not political but are spiritual actions to stop the pure spiritual tradition of Je Tsongkhapa from being destroyed by political interference by the Dalai Lama. The **demonstrations are loud but peaceful.**

11. It is reported that these loud but peaceful demonstrations have been so loud as to interrupt the teachings of the Dalai Lama. Was the intention to stop the teachings? Why continue with hours and hours of 'loudness' if the people you wish to reach are trying to listen to Dharma? Are you saying that no-one should listen to the Dalai Lama? That his teachings are so contaminated that you should interrupt them? Can you imagine the difficulties that this would create for the Dalai Lama himself, trying to maintain the peaceful minds of Tibetans who,

understandably, are visibly upset when mostly western NKT Sangha interfere with his teachings, which they may have waited many years to receive, about a Tibetan issue which is minor compared to the problems they are having as a culture with the Chinese state authorities? It was often said that the practice of Dorje Shugden would shorten the life of the Dalai Lama. This recent tour seems to be proving that prediction to be correct as the Dalai Lama is now seriously exhausted.

Since many dedicated NKT practitioners naturally practice Dorje Shugden in accordance with tradition, of course as individuals they are supporting the aims of the WSS, along with a large number of non-NKT Dorje Shugden practitioners, including Tibetans. However, the NKT charity is not organizing any demonstrations.

12. As individuals, these people would not do any of this without Geshe Kelsang Gyatso's instructions. Are you saying that without Geshe Kelsang, all these people, which include the majority of the ordained and non-ordained senior teachers of the NKT, would have organised a world tour to follow the Dalai Lama, with all the transport, food and accommodation costs that this entails, including feeding the 'chorus' who can be chanting for up to twelve hours at a time? These people are absent from their communities and their commitments as teachers, etc for long periods of time. Can this be done without the support of the NKT? Many of these people receive NKT sponsorship to be teachers, admin directors, educational programme co-ordinators. Are they not receiving their usual stipends and food, transport and accommodation costs whilst they are protesting?

13. What does the word 'naturally' mean in this context?

In the last two years many high level teachers of the NKT have left under suspicion of sexual misconduct including Gen

Samden Gyatso, the previous long term Deputy spiritual director of the NKT as well as at least two Resident Teachers of Bodhisattva Centre.

It is true that Samden and two Resident Teachers of Bodhisattva Centre have left due to an inability to keep their vows of celibacy, and this is deeply regretted. Bodhisattva Centre has indeed been far more adversely affected by this behaviour than other NKT Centres. Geshe Kelsang is aware of this and has appointed a new teacher who has good moral discipline.

14. The last three Resident teachers have left Bodhisattva Centre through problems with moral discipline. Geshe Kelsang appointed all of these teachers. Have the causes of this lack of moral discipline in very long term practitioners been addressed? The new Internal Rules require the educational programme coordinators to aid in creating an environment suitable for the teacher to be able to practice moral discipline. How is this implemented? Are there clear guidelines? Is it possible for a westerner to maintain moral discipline in a context where no criticism from their community is viewed as appropriate even when senior Sangha may be inappropriately developing intimacy? How can the Sangha be supported to keep their moral discipline, especially after many years of practice? Why not give training in management skills and charity law to your teams so that the centres are run within guidelines created in our society? Is moral discipline openly discussed in the NKT? What happens when a particular relationship between a student and a teacher breaks down? Are there other mentors who will support that person to keep their ordination vows?

15. Why the custom of asking nuns, often young, to be personal assistants to senior monks to help with their daily needs? Surely

this method of reducing the sexism of Tibetan Buddhism, a worthy aim, is not working?

It is worth noting that, unlike many religious leaders, even within Tibetan Buddhism, Geshe Kelsang himself has never had any accusations of impropriety leveled against him in terms of his moral behavior. The overwhelming majority of the 700 monks and nuns in the NKT do keep good moral discipline, and “many high level teachers” is a large exaggeration. Please see the [New Kadampa Truth](#) website for more information.

16. You are also using the word 'many'...

17. Does Geshe Kelsang Gyatso have any duty of care towards the people he ordains? Is there sufficient support for teachers who may be asked to go abroad to teach in a culture radically different from their own? What systems do you have in place to support Sangha who may be physically or mentally ill or have just become elderly and may even have worked for the NKT for twenty years or more?

So why is the WSS protesting against the Dalai Lama's advice at a time when Tibetans are being imprisoned, tortured and murdered for trying to preserve their own culture which includes these precious Buddhist teachings?

This is a different issue because Bodhisattva Center is not part of the WSS and the Tibetan problem has nothing to do with the WSS. While they have compassion for the plight of the Tibetan people, neither the NKT nor the WSS have any political affiliations. If the Dalai Lama is undermining his own and others' attempts to preserve Tibetan culture by his illegal ban and persecution of his own people, that is not the fault of the WSS but of the Dalai Lama.

18. If Tibetan problems are nothing to do with the WSS then why are you protesting against the Tibetan political leader about his management of Tibetan monasteries? There is no ban on practising Dorje Shugden for NKT practitioners. Do you wish to have the approval of the Dalai Lama? Concern for the 'Tibetan people' is a 'political' cause but concern for Dorje Shugden practitioners is not?

19. You seem to be objecting more to the Dalai Lama's function and actions as a leader of a country - with an obligation to provide social and material resources for his citizens - than as a religious leader. If a certain practice, or person, is creating a schism, then, as in NKT Centres, the dispute has to be solved by giving authority to certain persons and practices and not to others. These decisions are religious decisions generally made by the senior teachers, which in the case of the NKT, is Geshe Kelsang Gyatso and in the case of the Dalai Lama, after consideration with a group of Geshes and Lamas. As Geshe Kelsang seems to have no clear duty of care towards his Sangha he is not in the unfortunate position, as is the Dalai Lama, of having to expel Sangha from access to all economic benefits when making a religious decision. Therefore, decisions made by Geshe Kelsang are not seen to be removing 'religious liberty' as they do not remove all economic welfare. But those who leave or who are asked to leave NKT Centres have, until a recent change in the Internal Rules, been socially ostracised by the communities in those NKT Centres they have left, therefore on a social level, this is not so very different from the situation you describe in India.

It is not the WSS who is at fault; they are merely defending themselves against the Dalai Lama's actions.

20. Since when has the Dalai Lama attacked the WSS?

The survival of the precious Buddhist teachings does not depend upon the survival of Tibetan culture. The WSS are principally concerned that the Dalai Lama's politically motivated actions are destroying these teachings, and are therefore acting to stop him.

21. You are protesting that the Dorje Shugden practitioners are not economically and socially supported in the monasteries in India, when, say, a Nyingma or Kaygu practitioner would certainly not be supported in an NKT Centre. Even practices taught by Je Tsonkhapa such as Guhyasamaja and Yamantaka, are not considered appropriate practices in the NKT. Any teacher in the NKT has made a commitment to engage in the practice of Heart Jewel, which includes the protection of Dorje Shugden, before each teaching they give, but even an ordained Dorje Shugden practitioner and NKT Dharma teacher would not be supported economically in an NKT Centre. You are using a western concept of 'religious freedom' to justify interfering in a situation when the institution you have committed to (the NKT) does not do what you are saying that the Dalai Lama does not do – support the welfare of practitioners of practices that are not approved of or considered valid and appropriate for the benefit of the whole community.

The Dalai Lama has brought the protests on himself by banning the practice of Dorje Shugden and refusing to engage in discussion about it. Since it is the Dalai Lama who refuses to engage in dialogue, the WSS has had no choice but to act by organizing demonstrations.

22. If the WSS is not the NKT and therefore nothing to do with Geshe Kelsang, then who would the Dalai Lama need to talk to about this? Kelsang Pema? There seems to be no address or charity registration on your websites. Who runs the WSS? Who writes the NewKadampaTruth blog?

Is the WSS creating difficulties for the Dalai Lama in the public arena in order to deflect public awareness of internal difficulties in the NKT under the pretence of protecting the practice of Dorje Shugden practitioners?

Not at all. As was said before, the WSS and NKT are different organizations. The WSS exists solely because of the actions of the Dalai Lama. There is no “pretence” because the practice of Dorje Shugden practitioners is being destroyed by the Dalai Lama and action has to be taken now. The Dalai Lama has brought these difficulties upon himself through his dictatorial and illegal actions. Once he has lifted the ban, all WSS activities will cease. For more information, please see www.aboutwss.org and www.wisdombuddhadorjeshugden

23. If this ‘ban’ was illegal then surely some government or human rights association would be backing your claims.

24. Just as the resident teachers of the NKT centres of Geshe Kelsang Gyatso promote peace and harmony in his communities by quietening criticism and doubt, the Dalai Lama has needed to reduce the conflicts surrounding Dorje Shugden practice by, in consultation with other senior practitioners, withdrawing support for practitioners. He is supporting a majority view. For many years, even though the practice was already 'banned', monks and nuns who practised Dorje Shugden were still living in these monasteries.

25. If this is about religious freedom and not a political issue, why can't the NKT itself protest against the Dalai Lama? If it is a political issue then why are members of the NKT engaging in Tibetan politics when the NKT pertains to be non-political? If your protests really were about practising Dharma then wouldn't

you also protest about the lack of freedom to practise Dharma in Tibet, where your teacher originally trained before he came to teach you? If you say that the Dalai Lama should respect the lineage of teachings he was given, then are there really no teachers alive to which Geshe Kelsang pays his respects, even as a peer?