Statement of Buddhist Organisations in the UK on the Protests against His Holiness the Dalai Lama by the International Shugden Community/New Kadampa Tradition

London Wednesday 17th June 2015

We the undersigned UK Buddhist Organisations formally dissociate ourselves from the protests against His Holiness the Dalai Lama which are being staged by the International Shugden Community/New Kadampa Tradition.

We remain convinced that differences of opinion among Buddhists should be expressed in a peaceful, respectful, truthful and reasonable manner. We are very concerned about the protesters’ aggressive, misleading and unethical behaviour and the false image being presented to the public.

The UK Buddhist Organisations signed up to this statement express their respect and support for His Holiness’ stance on promoting wider religious harmony between the religious traditions and on promoting mutual respect and admiration between the Buddhist traditions. The UK Tibetan Buddhist Organisations signed up to this statement further express their complete confidence in His Holiness the Dalai Lama and in his advice on the divisive and dangerous nature of the worship of Dholgyal/ Shugden.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is committed to promoting religious harmony and understanding among the world’s major religious traditions, and mutual respect and admiration across the Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Given this position His Holiness has taken a strong stance when it comes to sectarian intolerance.

The Dholgyal/ Shugden controversy
The propitiation and worship of Shugden has a long history of sectarian disharmony between the Geluk (1) and the other Tibetan traditions. Given this history, and at this crucial time for the future of Tibetan Buddhism when the need is for greater harmony and co-operation, His Holiness has advised of the negative influences of this sectarian and divisive practice, and has asked his students not to propitiate or worship this entity. Whether or not his advice is heeded, His Holiness has made clear, is a matter for the individual to decide (2). Contrary to the protesters’ claims, His Holiness has not banned this practice. He has neither the power nor the authority to do so.

Neither Amnesty International (1998) nor the Supreme Court in Delhi (2010) was able to ascertain a violation of human rights when checking on claims that Shugden devotees have been subject to systematic discrimination and infringement of their human rights within the exile Community.

Who are the International Shugden Community/New Kadampa Tradition?
Since early 2014 a highly sectarian group calling itself the International Shugden Community (ISC) has been staging aggressive protests during His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s visits to America, Australia and Europe.
The ISC is the latest in a series of front organisations set up by members connected to the Ulverston, Cumbria based UK religious charity known as the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), itself under the guidance of Kelsang Gyatso (3). This highly materially successful group claiming 1,200 groups worldwide has a long history of antagonism to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and rejects his authority.

The NKT is composed in the main of non-Tibetans who have little or no ability to speak or read Tibetan language and therefore little or no access to Tibetan Buddhist culture except through the writings of their supreme leader Kelsang Gyatso.

Though following an ethnic Tibetan teacher and utilising Tibetan Buddhist methods the NKT does not count itself as a Tibetan Buddhist Organisation, which leads one to wonder why they do not simply ignore the Dalai Lama, in the same way that protestant Christians generally ignore what His Holiness the Pope says.

**What is the aim of the ISC/ NKT?**

The aim of the International Shugden Community/ New Kadampa Tradition is to destroy the religious and moral authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. This also suits the Chinese Communist Party very well, a fact noted as far back as 1996 in Madeleine Bunting’s article of 6 July 1996 entitled “Shadow Boxing on the Path to Nirvana” (4).

**Notes for Editors**

1. There are four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, the oldest the Nyingma (8\(^{th}\) century), then the two newer ones the Sakya and Kagyu (11\(^{th}\)/12\(^{th}\) centuries), with the most recent the Geluk (14\(^{th}\)/15\(^{th}\) centuries). There is an even more ancient tradition, that of Bon, and a number of surviving smaller schools.

2. The Dalai Lama’s advice on Dholgyal/ Shugden can be found on his official website

   http://www.dalailama.com/messages/dolgyal-shugden

3. More information on the history of these front organisations (International Shugden Community 2014 – 2015, Western Shugden Society 2008 – 2014, Shugden Supporters Committee) and of the New Kadampa Tradition itself and its Supreme Leader Kelsang Gyatso can be found on Tibetan Buddhism in the West

   [http://info-buddhism.com/Western_Shungden_Society_unlocked.html](http://info-buddhism.com/Western_Shungden_Society_unlocked.html)


   “The SSC’s [Shugden Supporters Committee] campaign against the Dalai Lama is a dream scenario for the Chinese Government. In 1993, they decided their best tactic for Tibet, this most troublesome province of the People’s Republic, was to divide the Tibetans among themselves. Eighteen months ago, Chinese documents began to appear undermining the Dalai Lama as a religious authority, indicating a shift of strategy. The SSC insist in their press releases that they have no connection with the Chinese. But are they inadvertently doing the Chinese’s work for them?”
Signatory Buddhist Organisations

The Awakened Heart Sangha
The Buddhist Society
Lelung Dharma Centre
Lam Rim Wales
Lam Rim (Wilts and Glos)
Bodhicarya (West Sussex)
Bodhicarya (Somerset)
Samye Dzong
Cham Tse Ling Preston