

Story of an ex-NKT monk, once Gyatso bodyguard responsible for taking a bullet

Appeared on Buddha Chat blog, 6/8/08

Is it all in my head or not ?

Over the last 6 years. It has taken me some time to be able to build up the courage and openly express the way I felt and more importantly what I have encountered over the period of time I have been a member of this tradition. I have now left the tradition and feel able to talk and discuss this matter with out being controlled by fear. I do not wish any thing from the NKT nor is my intention to harm any one. All I hope for is to be able to express how I feel and my experience with out some one saying it's all in my mind. It is my hope that I may be able to live my life with out fear once more. Furthermore, it is my hope that I may once again embrace and enjoy my life and be free from fundamentalist ideology. When I first met the NKT it was due to reading several books by HH. The Dalai Lama. For some time I had been studying his texts and trying to practice them to the best of my ability. I had a strong connection with Chenrezig and also strong devotion towards HH. I prayed regularly and made offerings to images of HH and Chenrezig so that I may be able to enter in to Lama Tsongkhapa's doctrine and take ordination. I found the NKT in the north of England and felt totally comfortable as they were also Gelug or so I thought. Shortly after enrolling on a study program I came in to contact with the issue surrounding Geshe Kelsang and HH. I couldn't understand why it was happening and was told it was due to HH destroying the Gelug lineage. I was told that Maras possessed HH and that he planed to have Geshe Kelsang assassinated. I couldn't figure out what was going on, HH was and still is I may add a great source of inspiration to me however, I felt as though I was placed in a position to embrace Geshe Kelsang as my Root Guru and renounce HH and the Tibetan traditions. I was told that it was best to only stick with Geshe Kelsang's books as they were pure and coming from the heart of Lama Tsongkhapa and not mixed with worldly concerns. I was also introduced to the view that Geshe Kelsang is the manifestation of the Wisdom Buddha Manjuhsree and non other than Je Tsongkhapa himself. I found the whole thing disturbing as I viewed HH and still do as the living Buddha of compassion Ven. Aria Chenrezig. People were openly mocking him and declaring the Tibetan traditions to be a broken lineage due to practicing worldly Dharma. On account of to my ego being so desperate to believe that I could once and for all over come suffering I requested ordination. Some 6 weeks after I met the tradition.

My ordination request was granted and a western teacher asked me if I would start to teach. I couldn't believe what I was hearing I was asked to teach Dharma after a few weeks of being in the tradition I declined the offer as I found this to be insane. I had always had a strong sense of respect for Tibetan ritual and practices. The fact that many Outstanding yogi's had practiced and engaged in the same rituals for hundreds of years suggested to me that it was the best way of doing things. However, every thing Tibetan was taken away.

Even to mention the word Tibet caused harsh glances from people. I resorted doing my Pujas in secret reciting in Tibetan quietly as so not to be discovered. The Gelug Lineage Lamas on my shrine were also kept secret as we were being dictated to what we were allowed on our " Qualified Kadampa shrine " as they were called. No images of HH were allowed. A friend of mine refused to remove images of HH The Dalai Lama and Ven Geshe Tetchog he continually received problems as a result. Geshe Tetchog was his root Lama as he had received Heruka and Vajrayogini initiation from him. I understood anything Tibetan was a no go straight from the beginning but I couldn't understand why. All I was

repeatedly told was the Tibetan traditions had degenerated and that the future Of Lama Tsongkhapa's doctrine lay with the NKT and Geshe Kelsang. By this time I had been introduced a little to the tantric path. I had a strong desire to engage in Heruka Body mandalla practices looking back it was like I had tunnel vision for that empowerment was all I wanted. I didn't care what happened to me as long as had the opportunity to receive that initiation. I received ordination and moved to the Madhyamaka center in Pocklington York.

I found it very exiting, as every thing was new however, as soon as I was settled then the reality hit home. I was working all the time and I had very little time for meditation and I became exhausted. I couldn't cope I felt suicidal alone and frightened I couldn't talk to any one as I was told that as an ordained person I was not to show how I was feeling as it would destroy the faith of others. Out of a community of 40 only myself and one other person were ordained. One young man from Bradford has slit his wrists due to the depression he was experiencing. He was told he would have to leave if he did not overcome his depression. One other man had a severe nervous breakdown. The response from those managing the center and the teacher was that it was the ripening of negative karma. I couldn't understand what was happening however I knew I had made a grave mistake. Around this time I got a call from one of my close friends she told me her mother and father had both died in a house fire that evening. I packed my belongings and went down to the dharma center they both lived in to see them. Because we had just purchased the center no one was living in the center at that time, so she and her husband were both on their own. I helped to try and comfort them both and went to identify the bodies. Three days after being away I received a call from Madhyamaka center saying if I did not go back I was to be expelled from the Foundation program. I was furious I could not believe that fact that both my friends needed me after such a traumatic experience. I was told I must go back to Madhyamaka center or face being unable to undertake my weekday studies. Both the center, management and resident teacher new I was helping and trying to comfort them both and that I was going to be a few days but they insisted I return, reluctantly I went back. On arrival I was stunned to be told that I had done the right thing in coming back to the center. I know this all sounds mad but with every one asserting the western resident teacher was a emanation of Geshe Kelsang and therefore an emanation of Lama Tsongkhapa, it all became quite convincing and confusing so I just went along with what every one said. I found if I went along with what was said I was accepted, like I said previously my ego wanted to feel loved and wanted. I new how to play game and quickly learnt how get what I wanted. At this point I was asked to take charge of raising funds for the center I felt like I was given a special role and I was full of pride at been asked to take on this position. I plunged myself deep into this work mainly due to the fact that I was claiming benefit because I was told that it was better for me to work for the center full time rather than working out side. I was told that this would aid my spiritual development and would increase my merit and purify my mind. Very soon I was raising lots of money I had a market stall a small merit shop I called it. I noticed the more money I was raising the more I was accepted. I didn't realize I was being manipulated at the time. I raised several thousand pounds for both the NKT's international temples project and for the refurbishment of one of the Tantric Gompa's. The more recognition I receive the more I worked to raise funds I became almost like an addict my ego being desperate to be accepted and to feel wanted. As I became more accepted I was given the opportunity to be apart of Geshe Kelsang's personal security team whilst he was giving teachings and granting empowerments at festivals. It was around this time things started going very serious and extremely disturbing. I was introduced to another monk who was the head of the team and Geshe Kelsang's personal bodyguard.

My role along with another monk was to act as a shield to protect Geshe Kelsang. I was

told that it was my responsibility to take a bullet in order to protect Geshe Kelsang if and when the threat arose. Myself and my other colleague also a monk was given stab proof vests to place under our Donka. In the temple we rehearsed what would happen if some one tried to assassinate Geshe Kelsang. I was told that we were creating the cause to become Dharma protectors in the future. I asked how serious the threat was and I was told sternly that HH The Dalai Lama had placed a contract out to have Geshe Kelsang assassinated. During the festival I also had to be trained in how to search for and identify bombs and other incendiary devices. This whole thing was becoming absolutely insane. However, I was told that it was necessary to protect Geshe'la and to protect LamaTsongkhapa's doctrine. Again as I wanted to be accepted I accepted my job Wore my stab proof vest and was ready for confrontation. I believed this to be perfectly normal as every one was responding as though this was perfectly rational. I then found out I still had to pay to go to the festival also. I found many of my friends from Manjushri center were coerced out of their rooms even though they had paid their rent. Many of them had to camp however they were given a £10 discount on the price of the festival. Their rooms were then rented to European and American guests at a rate of £50 per night. I new things were wrong I attempted to say something but I was informed I had no reliance and faith. In 2002 I was asked to collect some images for Russia as the NKT was aiming to expand its base. I had collected around 3000 images of Buddha in order to send over as the people of Russia had no finances to purchase any imagery for shrines and so on. I was told not to send them and to burn them the images were by the artist Andy Weber. The reason being an e-mail had been sent to all the Centers from Geshe kelsang stating that his work was not qualified. Again In 2002 Ven Lama Zopa was planning on giving teachings in Leeds all of the community of Madhyamaka center was summoned to the Gompa. Our western teacher had an e-mail from Geshe Kelsang stating that we were free to attend however, if we did he could not accept this and that he would no longer be our teacher. I was stunned at festivals we are told that we live in a free society and that we have freedom of choice this is what Geshe Kelsang always says to us. However, on this occasion he was telling us the exact opposite. Also up in Ulverston people were told at Manjushri center they were not allowed to go to the Heruka and Vajrayogini empowerments that were being planed to be given by Geshe Tetchog in Grange Over Sands. This was a time of great paranoia I felt. The response was to place empowerments and events near to where the FPMT lamas planed on giving teachings. The ideology was to grant empowerments and teachings at a discount so that Many NKT members would attend NKT events rather than the FPMT ones. I am sure they would deny this however I was assisting in the organization of on of the events in Blackpoll a Chenrezig empowerment. My two friends who had just lost both parents were also made to organize the event the strain on them was horrendous. In the space of around three weeks different empowerments and teachings were given all over Lancashire. We flooded the towns and city's with publicity as every one was becoming paranoid thinking that the tradition was going to be taken over. This air of paranoia was confirmed when I was told by my teacher from Madhyamaka center that "HH The Dalai Lama was evil and that Ven. Lama Zopa and other FPMT Lama's are just waiting like a pack of wolves to take over the tradition as soon as Geshe Kelsang passes away" This was the person I had been led to believe was a living Buddha. Again people were discussing the previous appalling demonstrations that the tradition made directed towards HH. It was as if people were becoming exited at the anticipation of confrontation. I knew things were far from ok and I however I was frightened to leave as we were all aware of people we knew who had left and had become ill with depression and in some cases had nervous breakdowns. Again the severity of leaving the tradition was emphasized on many occasions stating that those who reject the Dharma were destined to experience unimaginable misery not only in this life but also in all future lives. At that time future lives did not bother me however I was

frightened of experiencing more suffering in this life. I had got to the point of leaving but I was to frighten to. I decided I would go to Spain to help with the development of a retreat center in Andalusia. On arriving things were ok I decided to engage in a retreat on the practice of refuge in order to try and increase my faith as this is what I thought was the problem. Several weeks had passed and I went to see some friends of mine who were also ordained. I couldn't figure out how they managed this, as they were both married and living as husband and wife. One day I went to visit them I found them both intoxicated they had been drinking. The "monk" had smashed the house up in a drunken rage and the "nun" was screaming and crying. I had to defend the "nun" as the "monk" attempted to beat her. I new then that the whole tradition was a joke and that I needed to get out and fast. I came back to England and again returned to the center in Pocklington. I was told not to discuss what happened in Spain. This time however I chose to work out side of the center, as I wanted to be financially independent. My aim was to leave and to start my life again. One evening I was checking my e-mails and I decided to look up the NKT on line I found many articles of the NKT being a cult and also being at the number 1 of many sites relating to European cults. After looking through some of the sites I found an article highlighting the common characteristics of cults out of 30 questions if I remember rightly I answered 27. My previous suspicions had been answered. The next day I confronted the management about my findings as I was always told I could ask any questions. I asked them to prove I was not in a cult. I was told I must leave, as I was a threat to the harmony and faith of other practitioners with in the center. I left and handed my robes and vows back. Later I was told that people believed I had received some sort of spirit position and this is why I acted the way I did. I found life difficult adjusting back into normal living I was ex communicated from all my friends I had no refuge and I felt like my life was over. I found it hard to relate to people I used to be friends with and I just felt trapped in a bubble and not being able to interact with others. I decided to go to Manjushri center once more for help as I was feeling alone and frightened and in need of refuge. I turned up and was escorted from the premises and was told I was not welcome. I was escorted out in front of every one like a common criminal and taken to the train station. Looking back it done me good as my ego got a severe blow. However I now felt totally alone and I just wanted to end it all. I stood at a bridge in Durham city with a pocket full of tablets and contemplated jumping into the river. Thankfully I managed to get the strength to over turn this around. After I had been away for a year I decided to go back to the tradition. My family and friends were concerned however I did not listen and I moved back into a center. When I came back every one was happy to see me. I however, new this was all false as I had been on the receiving end of the truth. No one wanted to know me when I was in most need I was rejected and turned away. I new what was going on and I also knew about the manipulation. I managed to get some sort of practice together once more mainly the practice of Chenrezig. I dropped the practice of Dorje Shugdän and also the practice of Heruka. I focused manly on lamrim and the development of compassion. People wanted me to engage in my fund raising activities again however I refused. I decided to re ordain and was again granted ordination. I got to the point where I did not give a dam about the teachers or the dogmatic approach my aim was to be able to help other people going through the horrors of this tradition. Shortly after I received ordination again I was asked to go back t the center in Pocklington. I went to discuss my coming back with the resident teacher. She told my that she had a special project for me and that I was the only one that had the energy and commitment to do it. I new I was being manipulated again she wanted me to raise several thousand pounds and to purchase a building and to establish a dharma center in leads. I had my interview to move in and was told in order to move back I was expected to work 35 hrs a week I was to cook, clean and assist branch classes (this would be seen as voluntary of course) My study program, pujas, work for weekend courses and day

courses and that the director had the right to enter my room at any time without my say so. All this work was on top of the 35 hrs I was supposed to do. When I lived there before I was working 60 hrs plus a week. I thought yea right and told them I would think about it. I refused and did not go to move back to this center. I moved into a center in Lancashire I confronted the resident teacher about what I had been told and was sternly cautioned about saying any thing, as it would destroy people's faith. I confronted him about people saying that HH had paced a contract out to have Geshe Kelsang assassinated and he responded that this was the truth. He unmistakably repeated to me that this was the case this was in November just 2 months ago. During the time I have been at the center in Lancashire many people have left, over four nuns and countless lay people. For some time people have been concerned about the Teacher of Preston's NKT center. Many have wrote to NKT headquarters explaining about Lesbian pornography being found on the center's computer. I myself have found in the history after the resident teacher being on line many links to pornographic sites. The administrative director has also witnessed this like wise did the Nuns who have now left. Due to his late night Internet usage many no longer come to the center. This all came to fruition when a female he met in a chat site was invited and from America for Christmas. Again many have complained only to be told that all in your mind. This was the final straw like I have previously stated I have been in contact with Ven. Lama Yeshe Osel from Samye Ling and on his advice I have contacted you. My aim is not to cause a schism or any problems. Over the last 6 months I have been engaging in a retreat on Chenrezig collecting mantras I have collected nearly 3 million at present and my main practice is to try and cultivate the mind of compassion. Geshe'la I have left the tradition for good, as I understand that my karma has ended for the NKT. However I am frightened a little as I have had several Shugdan empowerments. Like I said previously I have stopped this practice and also the practice of Heruka. Please could you give me some advice on what practices I need to do and also how I can contact other Gelug groups within the Manchester area? I understand fully that the NKT would deny any of what I have said. I also know I am not alone due to the fact others have also told me about experiences they have had. All I wish for is to be able to practice with freedom this is the reason I have decided to leave this tradition. I understand that this is my karma and have accepted it as so. This has been a painful and confusing experience however I still have faith in Buddha Dharma and know that lama Tsongkhapa's doctrine is the truth.