

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's Prophecies

The 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa Dezhin Shegpa (1384-1415) prophesied events that happened hundreds of years after his time; a powerful example being the current Dalai Lama's fall from power and the subsequent bloodshed that swept through Tibet. When the Chinese communist invasion of Tibet happened in 1959, the Dalai Lama escaped to India. He was forced to leave his people, many of whom died tragically. These are now facts of history. In addition, Karmapa Dezhin Shegpa's foresight into today's problems in the Karma Kagyu is particularly relevant in our time.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies are recorded in *The Biography of the Fifth Karmapa Dezhin Shegpa* – a Karma Kagyu classic. The author of the biography is unknown. The original has been missing ever since the communist takeover of Tibet. Only the chapter containing the prophecies is still available today. Owing to its popularity, many copies of the chapter were made. Those copies can be found outside Tibet, in the Himalayas, and elsewhere in the world. The current Gyalsap Rinpoche commissioned a modern-day printing of this chapter in the traditional Tibetan woodblock format. The new woodblock copy is stored in the woodblock house at Rumtek Monastery.

The current Situ Rinpoche and his supporters have seized upon one particular Sanskrit word in the prophecy, “natha”, which they claim means “nephew.” Because the current Shamarpa is the nephew of the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa, Situ Rinpoche's supporters have used this word to suggest that Shamarpa is the villain who poses a danger to the Karma Kagyu, as prophesied by the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa. While those who have knowledge of Sanskrit and Tibetan can recognize the flaws in this argument, non-Tibetans are somewhat at a disadvantage.

In 2004, Wisdom Publications released *Karmapa, the Politics of Reincarnation*<sup>1</sup> by Lea Terhune, Situ Rinpoche's American disciple and former secretary. In this book, the abovementioned interpretations of the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies are presented as well as other creative versions of Tibetan history.

To better understand the prophecies in light of the controversy of the two 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapas, a Gelug scholar named Geshe Dawa Gyaltsen decided to research the facts, relying on the original Tibetan writings rather than on recent interpretations proffered. Geshe, nephew of Mipham Rinpoche and cousin of the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa Thaye Dorje, is a devotee of H.H. the present Dalai Lama. My findings also confirm that Geshe is against Dorje Shugden, a deity whom the Dalai Lama rejects.

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<sup>1</sup> This publication will henceforth be referred to as KPR.

During his research, Geshe studied the prophecies of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapas, as well as Chokgyur Lingpa's visions. He also examined the evidence presented by Situ Rinpoche's side in support of Situ Rinpoche's recognition of Ogyen Trinley as the 17<sup>th</sup> Karmapa. Geshe wrote down his findings, analyses, and conclusions in a small booklet in Tibetan.

Some Karma Kagyu followers wanted to make this booklet more widely available, in order to clear up certain misinterpretations. However, Mipham Rinpoche objected to its publication on the grounds that the booklet might cause tensions within the Tibetan communities.

Since most Tibetans already know the ins and outs of the Karmapa controversy, the decision not to distribute Geshe's booklet would not affect them. Tibetan speakers have the same access to the history books and original commentaries as Geshe did, and are able to consult the Tibetan scholars living in their midst. While they may not always speak openly about it, Tibetans understand the intricacies of the controversy. Those who side with Situ Rinpoche's version of events do so with open eyes.

However, non-Tibetans do not have the same ability to verify the information they are given. Geshe Dawa Gyaltzen's commentaries, if translated into English, would help a wider audience to develop informed opinions. We thus appealed to Mipham Rinpoche to allow some of Geshe's articles to be translated into English, providing him with examples of inaccuracies in recent publications about Karmapa, including *KPR* and Mick Brown's *The Dance of 17 Lives*.

Mipham Rinpoche argued at first that it is the readers' responsibility to question everything they read, and to approach any information provided with a critical eye. Nevertheless, the point was made that when it comes to Tibetan issues, language and cultural differences make it difficult for non-Tibetans to judge what they see in print. Commentaries in the readers' own language are necessary to clarify the facts. Mipham Rinpoche finally consented, and Geshe gave his permission for his commentaries to be translated for this book. These include his commentaries on the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies, the 16<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies, Chokgyur Lingpa's Visions, Guru Rinpoche's predictions in this part of the book, and "Limitless Negative Karma" (in Part Four under this cover).

In this chapter, the edited translation of Geshe Dawa Gyaltzen's analysis (section II) will follow the English translation of the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies (section I). In addition, the chapter will conclude (section III) with a short excerpt from *KPR*, in which Terhune references the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa's prophecies, and offers a curious translation of a Sanskrit word, "natha". I will present Khenpo Tsering Samdup's comments on the translation, and his explanation of the original Tibetan word used by the 5<sup>th</sup> Karmapa. Khenpo Tsering Samdup is the principal of Diwakar Vihara, a Buddhist college in Kalimpong, India, and has given his permission for his comments to be included here.