

THE SHUGDEN ISSUE

Policy

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POLICY

- Those in service or teaching in FPMT centers and projects do not engage in the practice of Shugden.
- Centers must prominently state this policy on their websites and notice boards.
- Projects such as hospice services or international projects may decide whether displaying this policy is appropriate for their mission. If displaying the policy is not consistent with the project's mission, the project should display a photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the main pages of their websites to help indicate that the project or service respects His Holiness.
- Students regularly attending FPMT centers should not practice Shugden.
- FPMT teachers and key staff should not attend teachings by teachers who are known Shugden practitioners.
- Center members should be made aware of this policy. If possible, members with voting rights should also commit to following this policy.

Background

FPMT has made a commitment to support His Holiness, because of understanding the reasons why His Holiness has advised against this practice. Due to our commitment, we do not share our materials and facilities with those who knowingly continue to practice Shugden against this advice.

It is essential that students who regularly attend programs at the center, and those considering attending ongoing programs such as Discovering Buddhism and Basic Program are made aware of this policy and the reasons for the policy.

An explanation about this issue from His Holiness and other lamas is available on the FPMT website. The Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama has asked FPMT to use the Three Reasons as our main advice and response to questions about Shugden. In brief the Three Reasons are:

1. The danger of Tibetan Buddhism degenerating into a form of spirit worship.
2. Obstacles to the emergence of genuine non-sectarianism.
3. The practice is especially inappropriate in relation to the well-being of Tibetan society.

More information about the Three Reasons, and His Holiness Advice against the practice of Dolgyal (Shugden), is available at www.fpmt.org/organization/announcements/shugden.

Guidelines on How to Inform Students

Centers and projects can use their discretion as to how to make information about this issue available to new students. Recommendations include:

- Include the information in the library.
- Ensure that receptionists and greeters know how to answer questions about the FPMT policy on the practice of Shugden, or at least ensure that the receptionists/greeters know to whom to refer anyone asking questions.
- Include this policy at the end of any courses for new students, such as Buddhism in a Nutshell, Discovering Buddhism.
- Educate all students about this policy and the reasons supporting it if His Holiness or Lama Zopa Rinpoche is coming to the area to teach.

Additionally, it is recommended that:

- Centers should put the additional information and/or the relevant links mentioned above about this policy on their websites.
- Centers and center publicity should include photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama so that it is clear that the center supports His Holiness.
- Social service and international projects, should use a photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama together with this quote:

"To meet the challenge of our times, human beings will have to develop a greater sense of universal responsibility. Each of us must learn to work not just for his or her own self, family or nation, but for the benefit of all."

His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

- Center libraries should not contain books by known Shugden practitioners Geshe Kelsang Gyatso (New Kadampa Tradition) and Gangchen Rinpoche. The purpose of this exclusion is to avoid generating confusion among students about who is a reliable Tibetan Buddhist teacher.

- Directors, teachers and SPCs of a center should make themselves knowledgeable about the issue, the policy of FPMT, how and when to speak about these topics, and about the teachers and organizations involved with this practice in their countries. If people come to our center having had difficult experiences with teachers or organizations involved with the Shugden practice, or if they have worrying questions, the center should know how to react or where to seek counselling.

Buddhist Unions and Organizations

Ideally Buddhist unions and organizations should not include Tibetan Buddhist groups who are acting in opposition to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice by engaging in the practice of Shugden/ Dolgyal.

If center or project directors are involved in discussions with Buddhist unions or organizations about whether such groups should join Buddhist unions or organizations, they should try to ensure that groups engaging in the practice of Shugden/ Dolgyal are not invited to join. This is because FPMT is committed to following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice and supporting His Holiness the Dalai Lama's work, and groups engaging in the practice of Shugden/ Dolgyal are undermining that work.

Also, it is important to alert Buddhist Unions that, as His Holiness the Dalai Lama advises against the practice of Shugden, if they ever wish to invite His Holiness the Dalai Lama to visit, their invitation will be declined if they include groups which support the practice of Shugden.