

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdI4DMRFkm4>

(The section, where Ogyen Dorje talks about his own perception of himself as a Karmapa incarnation or Tulku is highlighted by bold letters.)

The 'alternative' 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Dorje's speech

in his 'special' video broadcast from march 2018



The picture shows the 'alternative' Karmapa Ogyen Thrinley Dorje. Photograph from the video.

Today is the last day of the 35th Kagyu Mönlam Chenmo. And so, just as I have requested of him, this year His Eminence Goshir Gyaltsab Rinpoche has gone to unfathomable efforts to come and preside over the Kagyu Mönlam. My original plan was that Rinpoche only needed to attend a few of the most important events and did not need to come to everything, but Rinpoche has, whenever he has been able, come to preside over the sessions whenever he could without missing a single day. This is extremely kind of him, so on the behalf of all the monastics and the lay people, who have attended the Mönlam, I would like to express my deepest thanks to Rinpoche.

Likewise, Kyabje Mingyur Rinpoche showed us the kindness of giving meditation instructions during the pre-Mönlam teachings. And then, since then, during the time of the Kagyu Mönlam, Rinpoche has also put in a lot of effort to come to many different events, both large and small. So, I would like to once again thank Rinpoche on behalf of everyone.

This year, even though I was not there, everyone in the Mönlam organising committee has taken on the responsibilities for their individual teams and co-operated – working together – just the same as they would, if I were there. The results, their work has produced, are no different than how they would have been, were I there, so I would like to take this opportunity to give my heartfelt thanks to Lama Chödrak, foremost amongst the Mönlam workers and all the other workers as well. Thank you very much.

Likewise, the monks and nuns from the various monasteries, despite the fact that the weather has been very hot, [they] have been very exemplary and praiseworthy in all respects during this Mönlam in terms of their motivation, conduct and everything else, even in the heat. So, I would like also to say thank you very much to all of you as well.

Likewise, the faithful people who have come from foreign countries, this year there have been many changes in the Mönlam dates. This has caused you difficulties financially. Once you have arrived here, the weather has been hot, and that gives you even more difficulties. But all of you participating makes the Kagyu Mönlam into an international event. I think it shows that no matter where in the world we are from, our wishes are in unison – our wishes for world peace are in unison. Our wishes that all sentient [beings] be happy are in unison, and so I would like to thank you all deeply.

Likewise, the place where we hold the Mönlam is the sacred site of Bodhgaya, the noble land of India. The government of India, the federal government as well as the state government of Bihar and the local administration have all provided a great deal of assistance. Likewise, the administration of the Mahabodhi temple has also continually supported us not only in the past but also in the present, so I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and thanks to all of them.

So today at first, I didn't think I needed to say too much. But now I would like to take this opportunity to say a few things, and I think that maybe it will bring a little bit of benefit. So, the main thing to talk about is that many people have been asking, when the next Kagyu Mönlam, the 36th, will be held. They have also been asking that the time be fixed and not changed. Quite a few people have said this, and generally from our point, we have gone to a lot of effort to have a definite schedule that didn't change, but sometimes there are events with other Lamas, other great Lamas and Mönlams from other lineages, that are being held at the same time, and when they conflict with each other, then it is not very easy for us or for them. And for that reason, we have had to postpone or change our dates for such reasons several times. Even though we have not wanted to reschedule, there have been situations where we have no choice, but to do so. But we are doing everything we can to avoid having to change our dates in the future. In the next few days, we will have meetings to decide on a fixed time for the [next] Mönlam. We will have free discussion about the schedule in the meetings and do our best to make a decision as soon as we can. And once we have decided, we will announce it immediately over the internet, so that everyone can make advance preparations to come to the next Mönlam. So we will try our hardest to inform you as soon as we can.

This year I did not really have the opportunity to attend the Mönlam in person. However, as I have already said, the Mönlam has been excellent and well organised, no different than if I were there.

[Ogyen Dorje here abruptly change the subject of his speech. As if the following words of his would explain, why he is not present at this Kagyu Mönlam.]

Ogyen Dorje about being a Tulku of Karmapa

And when I think about it, I was recognised as the Karmapa at the age of seven. And then at the age of 14, I was separated from Tibet and came to the noble land of India.

Thinking about how it was, when I went from being a little boy, who didn't really understand what a Karmapa is, to being brought and put on the Karmapa's throne and gradually having to take the responsibilities, that entails. From my perspective, the Karmapa has a history of over 900 years, and there have been 16 incarnations. To have qualities and abundant realisations such as they did and activities such as theirs, I don't even have the confidence, that I can hope for such. And I don't, for myself, really believe that it will ever happen. But because I have received the blessings of the Karmapa to some degree, I have done my best. I have done my best, but I am an ordinary person. So, no matter how much hard I try, there are many situations, where that is not enough, where it is beyond me. Many people think to themselves that being the Karmapa, you know, is like some incredible thing, but for me, that hasn't happened.

Even if I am the Karmapa, the situation is still, that I really need to try hard. Gyalwa Khyuntsangpa [a student of Rechungpa] said, "Even the rebirth, the reincarnation of a Lama or a Tulku, should spend 12 years of purification, practising meditation to purify their remaining obstacles. It is necessary to practise meditation and accomplishment and retreat".

So, even if one is a Tulku or a reincarnation of a great Lama, you have to put in such efforts.

For me, I don't have any reasons or any basis to say, that I am the reincarnation of any great Lama, and since I am an ordinary person, I have to put in incredible effort even more than other people. But no matter how much effort I make, it is never enough, it is never OK. It never really reaches a level, where it is sufficient.

And for one side, this is because people have such high limitless hopes in me. On my own part, I do my absolute best to try to live up to them. And I do this as much as I can with a pure motivation. When I was little, a lot of people came to give me advice. They would say, "You have to be really careful. There are many people who have said to be the Karmapa, so you have to be your best." So many people said this, but for my own part, I never had the motivation, that I should compete with everyone else said to be the Karmapa and therefore be careful.

From my own point, I have had a pure motivation, whatever I am, making my best efforts no matter what. Even when I was studying in Tibet, in terms of my education, my tutors – my teachers and my tutors – the way they paid respect and so forth, were not the greatest. And

once I arrived in India – one reason I came to India was to study and to receive the Dharma lineages, that is why I came. So once I arrived, it should have been better than it had been in Tibet, but in terms of my education, there were many gaps. From one perspective, the fault was my own for being too lazy. And also, I am pretty smart, and since I am pretty smart, no matter what I study I immediately get a little bored and think, “I get it.” Then I immediately feel disinterested. In addition to that, the Lamas and Khenpos, whom I’ve studied with – we invited the best Lamas and Khenpos amongst our Kagyus, but the best Lamas and Khenpos have their own monasteries, their own Dharma centres, that they have to maintain and take care of, they have activity. Hence, they could not spend all of their time with me. So, for these reasons, sometimes I would have classes, sometimes I would not and this happened frequently.

In the past, I had the thought that if I went to a Gelugpa monastery, matriculated so to speak and followed the curriculum, I would have become a good scholar. But later when I thought about it, if I had gone to a Gelugpa monastery and gone through the studies, on the one side, there would have been nothing wrong with it. But on the other, since I have the title Karmapa, if the Karmapa were to go to a Gelugpa monastery to study, people would say that. Then in the future, if someone with the title of the overall head of the Kagyu were to do this, it’s like there would be a bit of a problem that would happen, historically. [Ogyen Dorje say this, even his official residence in India is in a Gelug Monastery, the Gyuto Tantric University.]

So, I have had many different discussions with Gelugpa geshe, but I’ve never matriculated in a Gelug monastery. So, this is one issue. My own studies have not all been that high quality or good. Mainly, what I know, has come from me taking interest and putting the effort into it. I’ve never had any properly organized, thorough education. So, that’s one issue.

So, another issue is that, when I was recognized as Karmapa, when I was seven, I was just a little boy. From the time I was little, I grew up in Tsurphu Monastery. And when I was little, all the people around me were adults. So I had to do whatever they told me to. And I couldn’t say, what I needed to do. At first, of course, I didn’t know what I needed to do. And in addition to that, other than listen to them, I never had any freedom to say, what I should do or should not do.

Actually, when I was little, I did have a lot of hard times. For example, in terms of power, it’s the *changtso*, who had all the power. [The *changtso* is the manager of the *lhabrang*, the Lama’s organisation.] And when people would come to give me gifts, they first of all had to take them to the *changtso*, the *changtso* would take them out and open all the gifts first. And those people were suspicious that there might be a bomb or poison or something like that. So, they would take them out and check to see whether, they take the gifts out to make sure that there was no bomb or poison. And once the gifts had been taken away, they were never brought back, almost all of them. Also people would come and give money and say, it was for me to give to my parents. Those who knew my situation would give the money surreptitiously. At that time, there were always a lot of people around, right? So without knowing,

they would quickly slip it under my cushion, slip it under my cushion secretly. That is, what it was like. So, that is what it was like, when I was little.

I never really felt, that I had any freedom of my own. And then I came to India. So, when I came to India, India is a free country, a democracy. So I had hoped that once I arrived, I could do what I wanted. That was my hope. But when I first got to India, none of us had any knowledge about India. And at that time, the people who advised me, my guides, the people who advised me, even though they definitely had pure motivation, there was none who was able to guide me, who was a hundred percent reliable. They didn't know how things were done. So I had no one to guide me. So when we first began discussions with the Indian government, there was disharmony and disagreement in the discussion, and this probably caused some suspicions. In any case, I've spent 18 years in India. And during this time, I have had continually difficulties and hassles, as you all know. They said, that I was sent by the Chinese, or that I was a Chinese spy. Many things have happened. But even though many things have happened, I still have done, what I could. And the reason, why I stayed, up until now is because I feel like, I must not give up on the teachings, the Kagyu teachings. Likewise, I've thought to myself that this is for the benefit of Tibet, for the benefit of all sentient beings. Thinking in this way, I stayed.

Also from another perspective, when I arrived in India, it was very fortunate. I had the fortune to meet His Holiness the Dalai Lama and hear his teachings. I had many opportunities to receive profound Dharma teachings from Jamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltzab Rinpoche. Likewise, I've had the opportunity to receive profound Dharma teachings from Tenga Rinpoche, Bokar Rinpoche and Yongzin Thrangu Rinpoche. And I feel that all of this has been very, very fortunate. But otherwise, I live is at Gyuto Monastery and the [Karmapa] heart sons, they live elsewhere. Situ Rinpoche lives in Sherab Ling, Gyaltzab Rinpoche lives in Sikkim. There's never been a place for all to spend an extended period of time at the same place. It's like we've all been scattered. When I read the lives of the previous Karmapas, the Karmapas and their heart sons all stayed together. Wherever they went, they were together. Whether its by teaching Dharma, or by taking care of each other. It was like, at that time, they all took care of each other, but this has never happened with me. And for me, this is something I feel very disappointed about.

Then, to speak bluntly, after the 16th Karmapa passed away, we had a great rift in our Kamtsang [another name for Karma Kagyu] lineage. I don't need to say anything any more about the old situations. But because of this, we have had some disagreements among the *lhabrang*s. Many things have happened, since I arrived in India. Some of you know, some don't. There has been a lot of disharmony among the *lhabrang*s, and this has also caused me a lot of worries. On one occasion, I invited Jamgon Tai Situ Rinpoche and Goshir Gyaltzab Rinpoche to come to Delhi, both Rinpoches are like the moon and the clouds in the sky. They are not stained by any faults, but those who are underneath them, their attendants, I told them to tell their attendants, their people under them, that we have had a great disaster in the Kamtsang lineage. Such has

never happened before. We've had a huge conflict. We've had a terrible violation of samaya, please do what you can to avoid that again. This is what I asked both Rinpoches. And they promised to do as I asked. Actually, to make such a request is like teaching Avalokiteshvara [Chenrezig] the Mani mantra, you shouldn't have such disrespect, but I was too petty, too small minded and asked.

Also thinking that maybe it would be of benefit to the Karma Kagyu teachings, I went to see Kunzig Shamar Rinpoche. And when we were arranging a meeting, on our side shall we say, there were people who had said it would not be okay to make a bad connection. Quite a few people said this. Some who were nearby said this vociferously. But I ignored that, and I went to meet Shamar Rinpoche. And when we met, there was no really specific result, that you could point to. But now, Rinpoche has passed away, and I do feel a bit of comfort in my mind, that at least I was able to meet Rinpoche and tell him what I thought. So, this gives me a little bit of comfort.

In general, we all know how important the Shamar Rinpoche has been in the history of the Karma Kagyu. But in the last few years, in the last couple of decades, so many events have occurred, that many people say we should not recite long life prayers for Shamar Rinpoche, and that we should remove the Shamar Rinpoches from our lineage supplications. But I think, that is really not seeing the important points, because Shamar Rinpoche is not just the recent 14th Shamar Mipham Chokyi Lodro. The Shamar Rinpoche is a part of the old lineage of our Karma Kamtsang, the lineage from Khedrup Drakpa Sengge to the present. It is not the name of a single person, it is not a single person.

No matter how much people say that the actions of the current Shamar Rinpoche were wrong, I think that we must not paint the activities of the entire Shamar lineage black. For this reason, I think that we must have a positive way of thinking about Shamar Rinpoche. I think we need to think about Buddhism in general and the lineage in the future.

Now Shamar Rinpoche has passed away, it is extremely important that there be no problems regarding his reincarnation. We have another situation or we say there are two different reincarnations, it will harm the Kamtsang lineage in general, and in future the Kamtsang will split into two factions, looking at each other as enemies, and that would not be good in any way at all. From the depths of my heart, I think we can have reconciliation. And I am doing a few things to bring that about. But it's not something for one person to do. It's so crucial that we remember that both sides need to be open. If we continue to always say bad things about each other and criticise each other, if we continue to do that, I do not think it will turn out well.

Our teachings, the Kamtsang are the same. Our Gurus are the same. The colour of our hats is the same. But if despite this, we continue to cling to our own factions, no matter how right we are, we'll have such bias towards our own sides, that we will work for ourselves, to win for ourselves [and] to defeat the others. So taking this on would be like a complete mistake. There will be nothing good about it. So, we often say there is the Shamar side and that there is the Situ side. There is one side or the other. Actually we are not on the Situ Rinpoche side, we are not on the Shamar Rinpoche side. We are all on the Karma Kagyu side.

Otherwise, we're filled with our own afflictions, the three poisons; we engage in partisanship and jealousy, and at the same time – and if at that point we say I'm on Vajradhara's side, there is no benefit to that at all [when we are still thus afflicted].

So these people say I'm pure, he's pure, he's a pure Kagyupa. But they're not pure. But whether one is pure or not comes down to the practice we have in our mind-streams [Sanskrit: santana]. It does not come down to whose side we are on. I think this is something we all need to keep in mind.

Another thing is that I am in America. I spent many months abroad, the last six months in America. There are probably a lot of people, who explain the reasons, why I stayed abroad for such a long time. But independent of anyone else's explanations – what I would like to say is, that the main reason I am staying abroad is, that when I had a medical exam in Germany, they told me, that I had a medical problem. So then I had an elderly attendant [that got sick], and for his sake I had to go to America, and once I arrived there, I had to follow up on the medical problem, they had told me about in Germany, and so that is one of the reasons.

Another matter is that, you know, for many years I've never had the opportunity to really rest – to rest both the body and the mind. Once I get back to India, there will be a lot of busyness and 'frenetic-ness,' so I would not be able to rest. So, I have stayed here to rest. So, I stayed here because I am thinking of the long term. Probably many people have said that I am staying for my own personal benefit, or that I had some insidious plan, but that is not it at all. In brief, people think that I am decisive and that whatever I am doing, they say, "He is the Karmapa," so of course they will take it as definitely the case [that Ogyen Dorje knows, what he is doing] but for me, it is not like that. No matter what decision I make, or what action I do, there's a lot I have to give up. For my own part, I have done everything I could up till now. Everything I have done, I have done with a pure motivation. I have had a pure motivation, but people will make things up. There are many people, who make things up out of dislike, so there is nothing to do about that.

But among ourselves, there are many people who give incorrect explanations, because they either do not know or do not understand, what my real intentions are. Especially now that I am staying in America, even the people, I am around here, have had a lot of anxiety. Likewise many people all over have had a lot of anxiety.

And I have actually myself been quite downcast and depressed. This is because, when other people look at what I have tried to do, they take it as a matter of course, but for my own part, I have had to give up a lot. None of it has been easy. And even though it has not been easy, and when I ignore that and keep pushing ahead – if those around me do not believe in me – then there is no reason for me to pretend and keep going. So for that reason, I have been depressed.

But when you think about it from the perspective of the future, from the time of the first Karmapa, Düsum Khyenpa to the present, the Gyalwa Karmapa has been a Lama who has engaged only in Dharma activities, not one who has been involved in politics. And now we're at a critical time for the Snow Land of Tibet — we have come to a point where it is important to put efforts into both Dharma and politics. So for this reason we definitely need a political leader or a political guide. But for me, I don't know how to give any political direction. I don't know how to do this, and since I have the title of Karmapa, it would not be appropriate. Likewise, in terms of the dharma, the way I think to myself is that one does politics to accomplish short-term aims and benefit. Political people, they're always changing. And also, politics means dividing into factions and then dividing into groups then trying to find profit and benefit. But Dharma, Dharma means not divide into factions but instead bring benefit to all sentient beings, who are as limitless as space. Its duration is that people don't change posts immediately. Dharma is for protecting ourselves in this and in future lifetimes and for guiding ourselves in this and the hereafter. So the way Dharma and politics work is completely different. Since I have the responsibility of being a religious leader, I can only contend in the direction of the Dharma.

When I was in Tibet, I was worried that I would have to get involved in politics. Once I arrived in India, I've always thought that if it came to me having to do political activities, I would not have the skills to do it, I wouldn't know how to do it, and I have no wish to do so. This is another important point for people to take into consideration.

In brief, from my own perspective, I don't have such qualities of abundant realisations as the previous Karmapas had. If I, even though I lack those, were to continue to pretend, to deceive people, I feel I will be accumulating severely negative karma.

I have no feeling of delight, no thought of 'I will get rich' or have power, or that many people like me. I do not have any such... feel like there is nothing, that I can have such pride in or confidence in.

So sometimes I think there is no point. There's no point to continue deceiving others. Sometimes I think it would be better to just live as an ordinary person, an ordinary Dharma practitioner. I sometimes think that and especially recently, I felt this strongly.

This is because I have worked hard for many years but I cannot work hard all by myself. A single pillar cannot hold up a single building, can it? Everyone needs to work hard and help out. We say that everyone has to have people, who take care of them. If you're taking care of somebody, you need other people to take care of you.

Without any support for yourself, there is no benefit to teaching and helping beings all by yourself. We Buddhists believe in karma – cause and effect. We believe in the view of inter-dependence. Inter-dependence means that in all situations, no matter what they may be, occur because of multiple causes and conditions. There is nothing, that

can be accomplished with a single cause or a single condition. This is something that everyone needs to take into consideration.

In brief, our Kagyu lineage in general, and in particular the Karma Kamtsang, it is like we are a big family. It is like a big family and in this family, the Gyalwa Karmapa is like the father of the family. But the father cannot take all the responsibility alone. The support of all the family members is needed. Likewise, if you think about the history of the Kagyu lineage, and in particular the Karma Kamtsang, there have been many losses. For example, when the Mongol Gushri [Khan] invaded [Tibet in 1640], their armies razed many Karma Kamtsang monasteries and many lineages of practices and explanations were lost. Such terrible events have occurred and later after 1959, there was the Cultural Revolution. So now we have an opportunity for the teachers to revive and flourish, and so I'd like to ask everyone, to ask everyone to take this opportunity as your own and to make efforts.

Sometimes people don't seem to understand, how I think. They seem to be unable to understand my perspective. It's quite possible this will happen. But the way I think, the most important thing is – I am not saying, that I can see far into the future, or that I know how to think about the long term; but as much as I can, I try to take a long term view, as I work. It is possible that some people cannot take such a long view but the leader, so called – if you are going to be a leader – once you believe in the leader, even though you may not understand all their plans and decisions, it is important to believe in them and support them. But I'm not saying you must support me. I'm not asking for you to understand me. I'm not asking you to understand me. Instead I'm saying this is a general thing, no matter who the leader may be in the future, people need to keep this in mind.

So I leave it here today. I have spoken about several different issues and if I've made any mistakes, or if I've said anything inappropriate, I beg your pardon.

So now whatever merit has been gathered during this Kagyu Mönlam Chenmo, please dedicate for His Eminence Goshir Gyaltzab Rinpoche to live long and for his wishes to be accomplished spontaneously, to be able to soon set foot in Tibet and turn the vast and profound wheel of Dharma. Likewise, for the masters of all lineages to live long, for the Sangha of the ten directions to be harmonious and have pure discipline and so forth as described in the great aspiration which is next. So please, everyone make such aspirations and dedications.

A note:

The translator of Ogyen Dorje's speech from Tibetan is not known to the editor on Tilogaard. This text is the words of the translator. To our knowledge, the translation has been done correctly. The text is edited by Lama Tendar Olaf Hoeyer.

The source material is the published video on YouTube, that was steamed to his audience at Ogyen Dorje's annual Mönlam ceremonies in Bodhgaya from USA, the 'alternative' Karmapa Ogyen Dorje's present residence. The final edition of this document was done on the 4th of April 2018.

The video on the You Tube website is found on this address:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AdI4DMRFkm4>