

# News Updates

Information and analysis of developments in Tibet



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## The Panchen Lama's Last Speech: Full Text

Translation from Tibetan of the 10th Panchen Lama's Speech given at Shigatse, January 1989 (TIN Ref: Doc 11(P), 17(P)) Note that a version was also published in Chinese by Xinhua.

Honourable leaders, guests, spiritual friends, comrades and friends:

Today, here in the grand monastery of Tashi Lhunpo, I hereby declare open the Tashi Namgyal shrine containing the renovated tombs of the Fifth, Sixth, Seventh, Eighth and Ninth Panchen Lamas.

On this solemn occasion my comrade leaders from the various Departments of the Peoples Republic of China [Krung dByangs], comrade Hu Jin Tao and the TAR's Party, Political and Military leaders and comrades and the comrades of their different departments, the heads and leaders from Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan provinces as well as the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties therein, the venerable lamas and incarnate lamas from the Tibet-Mongolia areas, representatives of the monasteries and all other distinguished guests from other areas - all of you who have braved both long distance and high altitude to be here - in short, members of the highest echelons of the PRC downwards representing both Party and Government, the religious personalities, and the large gathering of devout people - this gathering is a symbol of your sense of collective responsibility and appreciation for the successful renovation and opening of the Tashi Namgyal Shrine housing the tombs of all the Panchen Lamas, from the Fifth to the Ninth.

This is a strong proof of the Party's correct Nationalities and Religious Policy. Moreover your august presence here for the opening ceremony of our shrine lends both dignity and solemnity to the occasion. This gives me great pleasure.

In my capacity as the true lineage holder of the Panchen Lamas and as the Democratic Chairman [Kru Ren] of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and on behalf of the Democratic Management Committee of Tashi Lhunpo [bkras lhun dmangs bDag 'u Yon lhu Khang]; abbots and teachers, the assembly of monks and on behalf of Snow Range Development Foundation and the functionaries of all their branches [Bod Gangs rgyan Dar sPel sPyi sDom mThun gNyer Khang ma lag rnam kyil las bzo yongs rZhogs]; and in my capacity as the chairman [Kruren] of the Renovation Committee of the Tashi Namgyal shrine; and on behalf of all those responsible for the work - comrades, workers, Tibetan and Chinese skilled builders and labourers, I welcome you all, thank you all and express my deep sense of appreciation.

Today is an important occasion from the point of view of history [Lor gyus], an occasion of happiness that inspires many thoughts. I, the tenth Panchen, Choekyi Gyaltzen, being the authentic holder of the lineage, find special reason to feel happiness and satisfaction in wishing to draw your attention to several things.

First of all, I will briefly present an account of the need and gradual progress of the renovation [gSar bZhengs] of the Tashi namgyal shrine to house the tomb of the Panchens. As you all know, Tsang Tashi Lhunpo, the magnificent congregation, is one of the four great monastic centres of Tibet. It is also widely known as one of the six great centres of the Gelugpa sect throughout the whole of the Tibetan areas.

This is not only a focus of the Yellow Hat sect tradition - preserving, continuing and promoting the teachings of the Buddha - but also an autonomous centre for the political and spiritual domain of the successive Panchen Lamas. It is also one of the major historic nationalities cultural centres of the Motherland.

Here in Tashi Lhunpo are the statues of Thubwang Dudulma [Thub dbang 'dud bdul ma], the Buddha that subdues demons, commissioned by Je Gendun Drup [rJe dGe 'dun 'grub]; the world's supreme gold and brass gilded statue of Maitreya; the statue of Kadong Champa [dG'a gDong Byams pa], well known as the necklace ornament of Lha Tshangs pa; the orange robed Talking Tara; Vajradhara, the opponent of spirits [gDon]; and similar holy relics and artefacts that symbolise the body, voice and mind [sku gSung Thugs] of the Buddhas running into several thousands - especially the stupa entombing the holy remains of Je Gendun Drup [rJe dGe 'dun Grub]; the stupas containing the embalmed remains of the 4th to 9th Panchen Lamas - all these holy shrines radiate brilliance and blessings like the rays of the sun and the moon.

That is why the State Political Supreme Council [rGyal Srid sPyi Khyab Khang] had declared in 1960 that Tashi Lhunpo was one of the Major National Monuments for protection. However, during the "Cultural Revolution" the precious and holy artefacts representing the Body, Voice and Mind of the Buddha, and all other monumental articles were destroyed or damaged - in particular, the tombs, stupas and the shrines of the line of successive Panchen Lamas. This has caused very bad consequences both inside and outside the country.

The reason for the above may be given from a religious point of view. All the successive Panchen reincarnations had turned out to be profoundly learned and great proponents of Buddhism, inspiring deep faith and reverence from all - lay and ecclesiastical, male or female - thus attaining religious pre-eminence as protectors of Buddhism.

From a political point of view, all the Panchen Erdeni lineage-holders have proved to be lovers of the Motherland [Mes rGyal dG'a Zhen] and promoting and protecting the unity of the Motherland, promoting friendly relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples and promoting unity among the Tibetan people themselves. Such manifestations of their great achievements are recorded in history, of which the accounts might be narrated one by one like counting the beads of a rosary.

For example, the Sixth Panchen, Palden Yeshe, had, to help promote and consolidate the friendly relations between the Tibetan and Chinese people and other brotherly nationalities of the Motherland, braved the risk of long distance travel by crossing rivers, mountains and plains with an entourage of lay and ecclesiastical followers, numbering over a thousand, to the capital city of Emperor Chen Lung on the occasion of his seventieth birthday. The two had discussed both religious and political issues. Emperor Cheng Lung, for his part had, in deep reverence of the Panchen's life and work, paid great tributes and made lavish gifts. However, in the course of performing such a patriotic task, the Panchen was, unfortunately, struck by smallpox, and the disease claimed his life whilst he was in Peking. This is recorded clearly in the Annals, and succeeding generations of people have continued to pay tribute and homage to him.

Again, when Choekyi Nyima, the 9th Panchen Lama, was approached and intimidated by the British imperialists in their devious attempt to separate Tibet from the Chinese Motherland, His Holiness stood firm in his resolve and categorically told the invaders that Tibet was a part of China and therefore, he would not enter into any discussion [or treaty?] with anyone in betrayal of Zhongguo [China]. He had, likewise, worked for the protection and consolidation of the unity among the Tibetans and told the invaders in no uncertain terms:

"According to tradition, the major issues relating to Tibet concern both the Victorious Father and the Son, that is to say, it is necessary for both the Dalai Lama and Panchen Erdeni to confer. Since His Holiness Thupten Gyatso the 13th Dalai Lama is not in Tibet at this time, I alone cannot make a decision."

He has thus set a high personal example to future generations by his lofty character and by his clear understanding of the interests involved in upholding the integrity [gChig 'gyur] of the Motherland, and in protecting and promoting the friendship of the nationalities.

More recently, because of the deepening conflict between the Nationalists [rGyal gChes] and the Imperialists [btsen Nye] in Tibet, between Integrationalists [literally, 'unitists'] and Splittists, conditions became impossible for the Panchen to remain in Tibet. Thus he was forced to go inland to the mainland where, during the course of fifteen years stay, the Panchen travelled extensively, braving all risks by visiting people in the areas that lie between the south and north of the Drichu river on the one side, and the Great Wall of China on the other, proclaiming that Tibet was an inalienable part of China.

At the time when the Imperialists' surrogates [bTsan rGyal Ring Nugs Pa] promoted splittist propaganda activities, the Panchen Lama promptly denounced them categorically and thus proved himself an impeccable model of the power of Tibetan Nationalism and a standard bearer par excellence.

The wanton destruction of the tombs and the shrines of great nationalist spiritual leaders like him, whose life and work shine so brightly, as recorded in the Annals, brings great damage to the name and honour of our Party and Government, and spreads the poison of bad feeling and resentment in the hearts of the religious-minded whose loyalty and interests are deeply hurt.

In view of such reasons, in my capacity as the undisputed lineage-holder of the Panchen Lamas, and as a confirmed Nationalist, it is my bounden duty to shoulder the onerous responsibility of overseeing the task of restoring the shrine housing the tombs of the successive Panchen Lamas. This is a responsibility that I can neither shirk nor delegate.

Therefore, in 1982, with the kind support of the Central Authorities [KrunG dbyangs] and by the power of the spontaneous love and welcome of the Tibetan people, I had a chance, after eighteen long years, to come to the self-administered Tashi Lhunpo [Rang sKyongs gDn sa bkra Shis Lhunpo] where, during the "Cultural Revolution", the tombs of the Panchen Lamas had been destroyed with pieces thrown away or into the river. At that time a few devout believers had, at the risk of their own lives, through all means of cleverness and resourcefulness, salvaged the damaged pieces of the tombs and hidden them away for safety.

During my visit in 1982 these very people came voluntarily to offer the hidden pieces of the tombs. They said to me:

"You are the only and rightful owner of these tombs. We beg you to receive these pieces and to renovate the shrines so that we might have objects of worship".

Likewise, many faithful followers from the Tibetan and Mongolian areas as well as many national and international dignitaries expressed their wish and hope for an early reconstruction of these shrines and tombs.

Therefore, I approached my comrade leaders of the Central Authorities [KrunG dByangs] with these requests:

- that the reconstruction of one, grand common tomb from the collected remnants of the original tombs of the Fifth to the Ninth Panchens might be considered,
- that the Central Government help the project by financing it,
- that the TAR Government, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and I myself be given joint responsibility for the reconstruction project, and
- that I personally be given principal responsibility to renovate the tomb.

The proposal received the most sympathetic and [word unclear] consideration from my comrade leaders of the Central Authorities [KrunG dByangs] who granted official approval for the project. Thereafter, taking full responsibility, I established the Administrative Office ['aGo 'khrid Las Khungs] and the Executive Office [Las bstr Las Khungs]. During the four years of planning we received help and support from all quarters, especially from the Party and Government leadership of the Shigatse area. With the active support of the leadership, and of the large number of Tibetan and Chinese artisans and labourers who worked very hard, we completed the project according to the specifications of the plan. We named the shrine: Tashi Namgyal, The East Shrine of the Panchens [Shar Panchen sku gDung bkra shis nam rgyal].

The bulk of the expenditure for this tomb has been provided by the state. Tashi Lhunpo monastery itself has contributed a large sum and the balance has been accounted for by the Snow Lion Development Fund. Here, I would once again thank the Party and the Government.

Now I would like to express and reiterate my personal opinion or my own position with regard to the despicable vandalism of completely destroying the tombs of the Panchen Lamas during the so called " Cultural revolution " and the present period of revival under the aegis and guidance of the Party and the Government. [Tang dang rGyal Khab kyi thugs 'khur]

1. Large scale destruction of the major religious monuments like the tombs of the Panchen Lamas and other holy artifacts in Tashi Lhunpo as well as the large scale destruction of the holy artefacts symbolising the Body, Voice and Mind of the Buddha in most of the monasteries in Tibet and Tibetan-inhabited areas had taken place mainly during the "Cultural Revolution" and others during the successive political upheavals.

Whether viewed from the perspective of Tibet or from the perspective of the monasteries as centres for the preservation and promotion of Tibetan people's culture or from the perspective of the Tibetan people's deep religious faith and attachment to spiritual values, the destruction of the monasteries and the holy artefacts therein, these have all been systematically perpetrated under Leftist policies towards religion. This is a total mistake committed both at the level of the collective and at the level of the individuals concerned. There is no doubt whatsoever that evil consequences will follow as a result of such mistakes.

However, it is inappropriate to say that the destructive forces of the "Cultural Revolution" was directed solely against Tibet or against the Tibetan nationality because the spate of wanton destruction and vandalism that took place in Tibet and Tibetan-inhabited areas also took place all over the country at the national level and in all the areas of the 56 Nationalities including the Chinese, during the Cultural Revolution. It is all the more wrong to describe the event as the complete destruction of Tibetan culture by the Chinese because it is hard to justify the argument that the Chinese are responsible for the catastrophe and the complete destruction of a culture that is a part of the Chinese culture.

Therefore, any attempt(s) to incite nationalistic sentiments and to sow seeds of distrust in order to undermine the relationship of the Nationalities on grounds of the general destruction caused during the "Cultural revolution" and by referring to the destruction of religion and monasteries in particular, would be considered nothing but the attitude of those with ulterior motives.

2. The "Cultural Revolution" was a colossal mistake and a catastrophe. There have been similar periods of catastrophe in history, for example; if we consider the early history of Tibet's Puryal kingdoms, Langdharma destroyed Buddhism and Tibetan culture and literature. If we look at the world scene, we have the remains of the Roman civilization, the Mayan Cultural remains and the Babylonian civilisation [Paa Yis kLun] - all of which stand as testimony to the effects of evil winds of history or occurrences of periodic catastrophe.

Those who cite the examples of such historical catastrophe to scare people, and who even go to the extent of imputing genocidal motives, are committing an exaggeration that betrays their own ulterior motives.

3. The main aim and purpose of renovating the monastery and opening the religious door is to satisfy adequately the spiritual needs of the masses of believers and to preserve and promote the teachings of Lord Buddha as enshrined in the Sutras and the Tantras. It is neither a renovation work merely to hold religious functions nor is it an attempt to follow the traditional old society's custom of renovating and opening monasteries. Rather than feel concerned about the number of monasteries in comparison to the past, my chief concerns are :

(a) whether or not the monasteries can truly become centres of continuing study and propagation of the fundamentals of Buddhism [Lungs rtogs gnyis];

(b) the success or failure to avoid negativity and to accumulate merit, which is the essence of Buddhism;

(c) subduing the self and devoting oneself to others.

Likewise, my primary concern is not the numbers of monks and nuns but rather their quality in terms of their adherence to strict religious discipline; ['dul Khrims gTsnags] pure moral responsibility; study, contemplation and reflection through debates and compositions; engaging themselves whole-heartedly in the pursuit of Sutras and Tantras- thus following the oft repeated teachings of Buddha Shakya Muni and TsongKhapa, the Victorious One from the East. Only thus could the fundamentals of Buddhism be continued and promoted.

4. The essence of Buddhism is :

" Refrain from committing any negative act,  
Accumulate as much merit as you can,  
Subdue your mind completely,  
Enrich the whole land with plenty,

Bring peace to all sentient beings,  
And realize the two purposes successfully."

So, the aim of our efforts to renovate the shrine and tomb of the Panchen Lamas, who had distinguished themselves in the religious sphere as learned, persevering and model scholars by preserving, propagating and promoting Buddhism, and in the political sphere, by continuing the tradition of boldness in patriotism [rGyal dches kyi snying stobs] and of exemplary contribution to the progress of the country and well being of the people, is to afford us an opportunity to remind ourselves, with gratitude, of their kindness. As the saying goes:

"Lives of the past Buddhas inspire the practice of those who are to follow the path in future."

We too, may take encouragement from their examples to follow them and to guide successive generations of through sheer personal effort.

Expecting personal recognition or widespread fame is not at all my aim. If it were, the succeeding Panchen lineage-holders would be entitled to feel shame.

If I may, I would once again like to comment briefly upon the political reality/implications of the renovation of the shrine housing the tomb of the Fifth to the Ninth Panchen Lamas.

As stated earlier, the successful renovation of the Tashi Namgyal shrine has been made possible the enlightened vision and responsibility of the Central Authorities [KrunG dByangs], the whole-hearted support and help of the TAR Party and the People's Government, the support of the Shigatse Regional Committee and the Zhing Hru'u and related departments, and the Tashi Lhunpo and branch monasteries who conscientiously pooled their efforts through their Renovation Committee members, Executive Office staff, skilled Tibetan and Chinese professionals, craftsmen and workers - all of whom have individually and jointly contributed to make this project such a success.

Therefore, this well designed, majestic East Tashi Namgyal Mausoleum of the Panchen Lamas is a national and concrete testimony to the noble and correct Nationalities and Religious policy held by the Chinese communist party [KrunG Go'i Gung Phrn gyi]. It is also a symbol of the friendship between the two great peoples of Tibetan and China as well as the symbol of the patriotic tradition [rGyal gChes ring lugs pa] of Tibet's large number of religious followers and lay people. I feel justified to claim, without exaggeration or bragging that this is an achievement resulting from the joint efforts of the Tibetan people and the Chinese people. Anyone present here who has come to the shrine for blessings or on a visit, if objectively minded, will not fail to realize:

- the correctness of the Party's Nationalities policy
- the importance of the friendship between the Tibetan and Chinese people;
- the need for continuing the policy of upholding [rgyal gChes ring lugs] national patriotism.

I have no doubt about these.

I believe that this majestic and grand Mausoleum Tashi Namgyal which enshrines the holy remains of the Panchen Lamas would bless Tibet and Tibetans in all areas, promote their friendship, development and march on the path of progress till eternity.

Before concluding this talk, I wish once again to express my deepd respects to the leaders of the Central Authorities [KrunG dByangs] and to the comrade leaders of Tibet for taking responsibility and supporting the renovation of the mausoleum.

- I thank the Shigatse Party, Political and Military comrade leaders for providing all the necessary assistance;
- I thank all those concerned with the renovation project - leaders, members of the Tashi Lhunpo monastery and its branches;
- I thank all of you who have come from far away places, braving acclimatisation risks to participate in the opening function of the Tashi Namgyal Mausoleum of the Panchen Lamas;
- Honourable guests, spiritual friends, comrades, friends, I thank you all.

Finally, I pray that all those present may enjoy good health and success in their endeavours. Tashi delek.

- end -

See also "Retrospective: Political Statements by the Panchen Lama" in *Reports from Tibet, November 1990 - February 1991*, TIN News Update, Tibet Information Network, London, 20 February 1991.