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His Holiness The Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa's Journey To Freedom

A number of stories have appeared in the press about His Holiness Karmapa's journey to freedom in India. Much of the reporting seems accurate, but there is also conflicting information in different reports. Accordingly, we have undertaken to verify the information in the press by consulting sources close to His Holiness Karmapa, Orgyen Drodul Trinley Dorje. Based on our investigation, we have pieced together the following facts which we believe to be reliable.

Route Out Of Tibet

The route for His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwang Karmapa's journey to India appears to have taken him to the western border of Tibet, through Nepal and into India. As best we can determine, His Holiness traveled through western Tibet and crossed the border of Nepal into Mustang. The route required the party to trek for more than 30 hours over Nepalese territory, after which they were able to travel part of the way using public transport. His Holiness apparently crossed the Indian border near the Birganj-Raxaul Bazaar crossing point through Bihar and then Uttar Pradesh and then travelled through the cities of Gorakhpur, Lucknow and Delhi, ending his journey in Dharamsala.

(See the following maps to follow the route:

Tibet (<http://www.schneuwly.com/images/map/maptibet.gif>),

States of India (<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/india/h3i00.htm>),

Nepal (<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/dest/ind/graphics/map-nep.htm>),

Bihar (<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/bihar/h3s0505.htm>),

Uttar Pradesh (<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/uttarpradesh/h3s3105.htm>),

Haryana (<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/haryana/h3s1205.htm>),

Himachal Pradesh (<http://www.mapsofindia.com/maps/himachalpradesh/h3s1306.htm>)).

Meeting With The His Holiness The 14th Dalai Lama

Our best information indicates that as soon as His Holiness Karmapa arrived in Dharamsala, he met with His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and expressed his reasons for fleeing Tibet, and his desire to stay in India. This was communicated verbally as well as in written form, via a letter. Since then, the Karmapa has met His Holiness the Dalai Lama five times.

The Indian Government And The Karmapa

According to the sources with whom we spoke, His Holiness Karmapa presented a letter to the Prime Minister of India, which included the reasons he had fled to India, and which appealed to the Indian government for asylum and refugee status. Due to the overwhelming attention paid to the Karmapa upon his arrival, the central government of India, as well as

the local state government, have been very cautious in responding and much concerned about security. Controls on visits and trips have been very tight.

His Holiness Karmapa's Letters

We understand that His Holiness Karmapa did leave either one or two letters in Tsurphu, Tibet, before his escape. It seems that His Holiness has also submitted a letter to His Holiness Dalai Lama and to the central government of India. We believe, based on a construction of different comments made to us, that His Holiness Karmapa explained in the letters that his main reason for fleeing to India is to serve the teachings of the Buddha, and to benefit many sentient beings. We also understand that His Holiness requested that he be provided refuge in India, and that he expressed the wish that the Indian government grant him asylum.

Meeting With Foreign Students And International Press

According to numerous sources, the Tibetan government in exile has been instructed by the central government of India to require that His Holiness Karmapa, as well as His Eminence Tai Situ Rinpoche and others close to the Karmapa, refuse invitations to meet or speak with any members of the press. In general, because of the sensitivity of the situation, the Tibetan Government in Exile has also been reluctant to make any clear comments until now. However, in response to extensive and misleading public statements by those who oppose the Karmapa, Mr. Tashi Wangdi, minister of Religious and Culture of the Tibetan Government in Exile, did give some short interviews to some members of the international press, at which time he explained that there is only the Karmapa, and there is no other Karmapa.

In addition, His Holiness was originally instructed not to provide any audiences to any foreign students.

Buddhist Masters And Tibetan Organizations Welcoming His Holiness

According to our sources, all the high lamas of the Kagyu lineage, as well as the lineage heads of the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism, have welcomed His Holiness the Seventeenth Gyalwa Karmapa. All the heads of Tibetan organizations in the Himalayan region, as well as the public, have visited His Holiness Karmapa. Kagyu followers unanimously expressed the wish that His Holiness visit Sherab Ling, seat of H.E. Tai Situ Rinpoche, which is a two-and-one-half hour drive from Dharamsala. The Tibetan Government in Exile has indicated that the Indian government has some concern about letting His Holiness visit Sherab Ling. The prevalent opinion among the Tibetan public is that the Chinese government is doing its best to discredit His Holiness Karmapa in order to undermine his ability to gain refugee status and to preclude him from obtaining asylum in India. Numerous reports in the Indian and international media have been filled with information which appears in some part to originate from the Chinese government's attempt to preclude His Holiness from staying in India.

His Holiness Karmapa's Visit To Sikkim

The Sikkimese Buddhist public, as well as Rumtek and other monasteries there, have requested that His Holiness visit Sikkim soon. They have been preparing for the visit of His Holiness for a long time.

Daily Activities Of His Holiness The Seventeenth Karmapa

It is said that His Holiness engages daily in his practices and prayers without any interruptions. He is also very keen in spending time in composing many poems and he has already learned how to input Tibetan into a computer by himself.

Developments In Allowing Foreigners To Meet With His Holiness

Recently, it has been agreed that some foreign students can now get public audiences with His Holiness, but His Holiness is still barred from providing personal interviews or answering questions. However, we believe that this situation can change any time in accordance with the wishes of the government of India and the Tibetan government in exile.

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