

Who is the father of Desi Sanggye Gyatsho?

Jigme Samdrub

From the time Desi Sanggye Gyatsho was eight years old, the Fifth Dalai Lama started taking care of him with great attentiveness. The Desi received education from various scholars, such as the Great Fifth himself, Desi Trinle Gyatsho, Peden Phuntshok and Ngawang Phuntshok. Especially since the Fifth educated him in Tantra and Sutra and political science, the Desi became an excellent scholar in both religious and secular affairs.

In 1679 when the Desi was twenty-six years old, the Fifth Dalai Lama awarded him the highest Tibetan administrative rank, Desi, and gave him the power of attorney to act on his behalf, events that are preserved in writing on the third floor of the Potala Palace. Some people, particularly in the Kagyudpa school, were envious about this preferential treatment, and spread rumors about the relationship between the Fifth and the Desi to the extent that the latter was the son of the Fifth, etc. Unfortunately, later Tibetan historians have not carried out any research on the basis of these rumours, saying simply that “some claim that the Desi was son of the Fifth”, or else asserting that the allegations were untrue without providing any evidence.

Due to the earlier conflict between the Fifth and the Tsangpa Desi, a supporter of the Kagyudpa, members of the Kagyudpa school spread rumors about the Fifth and Desi Sanggye Gyatsho which were later cited by Giuseppe Tucci and by Wang Yao of the Central University for Minorities. The Tibetologist Bangsin in his *Development of Tibetan Buddhism* wrote that: “it is said that the Fifth was the father of Desi Sanggye Gyatsho”. We have no right to blame those scholars for making such mistake, since they may not have had access to the relevant materials or else were not familiar with the concerned topic. This paper will discuss the subject by comparing various sources as follows:

1. The birth year and month of the Desi
2. Nine months of the Great Fifth before the Desi was born
3. The relationship between the Fifth and Desi's family
4. Conclusion