



Lerab Ling 17 October 2016

Dear Sir or Madam,

You have probably heard about the recent article in the *Midi Libre*, whose contents unquestioningly repeat the same false allegations made elsewhere about Rigpa and the Lerab Ling centre in Hérault. We would like to ask you to read this communiqué, which clarifies the position our organization takes in relation to these articles. As we have always enjoyed a warm friendship with you, the least we can do is offer you our sincerely held views of the unjust and totally false claims that are being made against us.

For several weeks, Rigpa and Sogyal Rinpoche have been the victims of a malicious media campaign based on the publication of a highly critical and extremely prejudiced book, claiming we are not only insane but violent. Last September we responded in a press release that you will find attached to this letter.

We are deeply shocked and dismayed at the way Lerab Ling and our spiritual director, Sogyal Rinpoche, have been depicted. In no way does this picture correspond to reality. The portrayal presented in the book is unrecognizable to the vast majority of our members, and to the members of the public who know us and have been benefiting from our activities for many years.

The accusations being made are consistent with sensationalist stereotypes that can easily deceive people who read them without applying their own intelligence and logic to what is being said.

They have nothing to do with Rigpa's true identity, a fact to which hundreds of people can readily attest.

We are now confronted with a real problem: how can we face these false accusations, show them to be false and reaffirm to the public who we really are and what we stand for? How should we respond to a bona fide witch hunt orchestrated by a tiny handful of people whose claims do not in any way reflect the experience of the overwhelming majority of people who actually know Sogyal Rinpoche and the work that Rigpa does?

We can only repeat even more forcefully that the names of Rigpa and Sogyal Rinpoche cannot possibly be associated with assertions of abuse and cult-like behaviour.

At the same time, it is important to know that for many centuries, when masters of Tibetan Buddhism like Sogyal Rinpoche have been confronted with false accusations, they make no public response. This attitude, which is uncommon in the West and is therefore open to being misunderstood, is rooted in the profound Buddhist tradition of training the mind in compassion, called *lojong*. The core principle of *lojong*, enacted by the great kadampa masters of the past like Atisha Dipamkara, is: "Give all profit and gain to others. Take all loss and defeat upon yourself."

This attitude, which is quite different from today's mainstream approach, is practised by masters who strive to uphold and cultivate the vision, capacity of mind and courage of a bodhisattva. Whatever happens to them, whether they are attacked, mistreated or criticized, they never lose heart and never respond or retaliate to others with anger or aggression, only love and compassion.

This principle is captured in this verse from the famous text the *Eight Verses of Training the Mind*, by Geshe Langri Tangpa:

*Even when someone I have helped,
Or in whom I have placed great hopes
Mistreats me very unjustly,
I will view that person as a true spiritual teacher.*

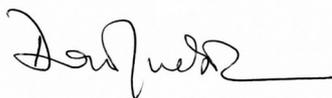
Following the advice and instructions of his masters, Rinpoche has always held the principle of *lojong* close to his heart. In the face of false accusations and criticisms of all kinds he has, on many occasions, privately expressed that he bears not the slightest resentment, anger or wish to retaliate or respond to any of the accusations, no matter how strange, shocking or untrue they seem.

For a master who practices *lojong*, a situation like this is considered an opportunity to practice its core principles. It's also taken as an opportunity to work on themselves to develop greater compassion, especially towards those who attack them. It is not, however, taken as the chance to speak out and defend oneself.

This approach may be difficult for many people in our modern day to understand and could easily be misunderstood as admission of guilt.

We sincerely hope that you will go on supporting us and we invite you to contact us if wish to, so that we can share more information and clarify any questions you may have about the claims made against us.

Yours faithfully,



Dominique Side
Head of the Congregation Rigpa Lerab Ling



Sam Truscott
General Manager - Lerab Ling Retreat Centre



RIGPA

PRESS RELEASE

RIGPA

16 September 2016

Rigpa* was recently made aware of a book written by Marion Dapsance (published by Editions Max Milo) that questions the way Tibetan Buddhism is being introduced to the West. The book specifically focuses on Rigpa centres in France and their spiritual director, Sogyal Rinpoche. We think it is important to clarify a few points in this regard.

The directors and members of Rigpa take an active interest in any publication, study, or report, that concerns Buddhism or any of the other major world religions. The topic of how Eastern spiritual traditions adapt to Western culture and society is certainly a valid and relevant one, however it is imperative that any discussion of this question be carried out in an objective and open-minded spirit. It should certainly not be based on a spurious 'investigation' that exclusively targets Tibetan Buddhism, Sogyal Rinpoche, and our members, in a highly prejudiced and biased way.

Both Rigpa and Sogyal Rinpoche categorically reject the assertions of abuse and cult-like behaviour that have been made in this book.

Unfortunately, this book merely recycles old, unfounded rumours and accusations that have been posted on the internet since the past fifteen years which, in fact, always originate from the same sources.

Once again, the same disaffected people, who are few in number, have taken the stage using every opportunity to discredit Rigpa's community and the integrity of its founder. Once again, without any sense of balance, the sincerity and intelligence of thousands of Rigpa members who have studied the Buddhist teachings in our centres over the years, has been mocked and disrespected.

Rigpa is shocked by the opinionated, incomplete, and biased approach of this book, which clearly lacks thorough and objective research of either our organisation or Buddhism in general.

In the end, one can only question the real interests of the author and the publisher who have used the occasion of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visit to France to publish and promote a controversial book about Tibetan Buddhism, a sensitive subject that certain religious and political groups take advantage of.

In fact, Marion Dapsance's studies have been financed by Chinese benefactors and her publisher, Editions Max Milo, is the very same that, during His Holiness the Dalai Lama's previous visit to France in 2011, published the book, 'Dalai-lama Pas si Zen' ('Dalai Lama Not So Zen'). This book presents a scathing and aggressive attack on the Dalai Lama, accusing him of being an agent of the CIA.

It is probably futile to even attempt to debate with those who seem primarily motivated by their desire for fame and sensationalism. Instead, Rigpa will remain focussed on its core mission to present the wisdom and compassion of the Tibetan Buddhist teachings in ways that are most beneficial to the lifestyle and needs of modern men and women.

** Rigpa is a network of centres and Buddhist groups open to the wisdom of all Buddhist schools and traditions. Under the gracious patronage of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Rigpa offers a complete path of Buddhist study and practice—in an environment that allows one to experience these teachings fully—to all those who are interested in Buddhism. Likewise Rigpa examines how the wisdom and compassion of Buddha's teachings can be used in the many areas of contemporary life. Rigpa has more than 130 centres and groups in 41 countries around the world.*