

Tape 173: Dilgo Khyentse (Suvajra & Sangharakshita)

Sangharakshita: ... was from Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche that I received myself the Amitabha initiation and of course Dilgo Khyentse himself died not so very long ago, and we were originally informed that he was going to be cremated on the 6th of this month, that is tomorrow...

Other: Friday.

Sangharakshita: Sorry Friday. And we therefore thought that it would be a good idea, or I thought it would be a good idea, if we could have a short retreat the last day of which would coincide with the actual cremation. So Paramartha sent out letters, as you all know, inviting people to participate. But in the mean time we learnt that Dilgo Khyentse's cremation had been postponed indefinitely. The most recent information of course being that it's going to be another year at least before he is cremated, and that meanwhile the body is being returned to Bodhnath, in Kathmandu. But, since people had been informed and since people had responded, we thought, well, let's just go ahead. It would be good to have the retreat anyway. And if of course the cremation is held in a year's time, we can always have another little retreat. *Laughter.*

So that's just the why and the wherefore. And we also thought it would be appropriate if Suvajra [Suvajra] and myself said a few words. Because obviously I did have some personal contact with Dilgo Khyentse, well 30 years ago now. Suvajra has had a very much more recent contact and if I may say so, knows quite a bit more about Dilgo Khyentse than I know myself... So Suvajra is going to be the first speaker, and I'm going to add just a few words of personal reminiscences afterwards... I mean, I don't suppose I need introduce Suvajra... Suvajra is Suvajra.

Suvajra: I had thought the roles were going to be reversed. That Bhante would speak much more about his reminiscences, and I would give a little bit in the background. Some of you might have heard some of what I'm going to say tonight from my previous talk on Bhante's teachers. So if you imagine, we're going to extract that part of the talk I gave, and take away, we'll have that minus Bhante's personal reminiscences, because you'll do that yourself.

So it'll be a short little introduction, to give you the context for Bhante's reminiscences. And also to give you some idea of the tradition to which Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche belonged.

So I'm going to start by reading his name. Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche's name translates as Glorious Excellent Victory Banner of the Teaching of the Changeless Supreme Vehicle. It's beautiful isn't it. Jigme [?? - in a book it says Gyurme Thekchog Tenpai Gyaltzen] At least that's only one of his names. One of the others which can be published is called Lord of the Dance Radiant Embodiment of the Sutras and Mantras. Padma... (??). I don't know if the pronunciation is correct, but it's perhaps near enough.

Those are the 2 names that he was given during his life as a monk, and as somebody who was a recipient of Vajrayana initiations. There were other names which he was given during his lifetime and the one of course which everyone usually knew him by

was Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, or Dingle Khyentse Rimpoche. And the name Dilgo, or Dingle, comes from his family. He belonged to a very aristocratic, almost a minor royal family of eastern Tibet. And the family was called the Dingle Family. So that seems to be where his name came from. And he was born in 1910. So dying this year, in 1991, makes him, or made him, 81 years old when he died.

So quite a venerable, ripe old age. And he seemed to be active right the way up until the end of his life. I mean just to within a few days of him dying, he seemed to be very active.

And of course being Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, he wasn't just a R, somebody who is regarded in great veneration. The name Rimpoche means something like the Precious One, and is usually applied to somebody who is seen as embodying the spirit of a bodhisattva, but he was also regarded as being a tulku. And some time in his youth, he was recognized as being the emanation or the rebirth of Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo. And Jamyang Khyentse Wangpo is the first Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, not the second Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, which was Bhante's own teacher back in the 1950s. Jamyang Khyentse Choki Lhodrup, as your teacher was called, was an incarnation of the first Jamyang Khyentse. Jamyang Khyentse The Great, as he was called, so I'll refer to him as Jamyang Khyentse The Great.

So I'm, going to say a little bit about Jamyang Khyentse The Great and the context in which he arises. And that'll give you some idea as to who Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche is, because he is seen to be a direct emanation, or incarnation, of Jamyang Khyentse The Great. As far as I understand Jamyang Khyentse The Great wasn't recognized as a tulku when he was younger. At least not initially. He seemed to have been brought up as a Sakyapa monk, and some time in his youth, I think in his teens, he and two other monks were in a class together. The class being led by one Rimpoche, Gyeltse Rimpoche, and Gyeltse apparently said to these 3 monks: you Jamyang, you come and sit here. You Jamgong you sit there, and you Petrul you sit there. And apparently he said to them that Jamyang, Jamyang Khyentse, was Vairocana, and that Jamgong, who became Jamgong Kontrul, another great lama, was an emanation of... er... - this part just came to me - another, another famous bodhisattva. And Patrul he recognized as being Vimalamitra. And apparently that was it, they were just recognized from then on as being emanations of those 3 great bodhisattvas and teachers. And later on it seemed that Jamyang Khyentse was also recognized as being primarily an incarnation of Manjusri. Now these 3 young monks, they formed a great friendship. Jamyang Khyentse had come from a royal family himself, or at least a very rich aristocratic family, and he was very well to do, he had you know, quite sort of rich clothing. Jamgong Kont was a monk from another monastery, in fact even from another tradition. And he was very very poor, and his clothing was just holding together, I mean only just holding together apparently. And Patrul Rimpoche was middling, and he was a Nyingmapa monk. And Jamyang Khyentse himself was a Sakyapa monk. And they were all studying together in a Sakyapa monastery. Jamgong Kontrul had gone to this monastery in order to take up a new position as a sort of a cleric. And he was going to sort of keep accounts, and things like that. And Petrul had come to the monastery to learn from this particular teacher. So the 3 of them found themselves in this class together, and they formed a friendship. And the friendship seemed to be, well from all accounts, from what I can gather, seemed to be a real spiritual friendship between the 3 of them. They had a definite aspiration

towards the ideal of Buddhahood, towards the Bodhisattva Ideal, and they just compared their experiences, and they tried to help each other on their way. And in the midst of all this, apparently Jamgong Kontrul was quite bitter, and speaking against the monastery, against the Sakyapa monastery, who insisted that he get reordained. Because he had been ordained as a Kargyupa monk, and having gone to the Sakyapa monk was asked to be reordained. And he thought, well no, I've done it already, I've gone forth, I've gone for refuge, and that should be enough. That was his position. I mean it would be quite interesting to look at that in the light of our own position within this order.

But that was what he regarded as... The three of them apparently started speaking about how dreadful it was that Tibetan Buddhism, which really was just one Buddhism, had broken into so many streams. 4 major ones and many minor ones. And they formed the idea to try and bring together the streams of all the practices within Tibetan Buddhism back together again. So after their primary education was complete, they set out in different directions, and they set out to gain initiations from all the major lamas and even minor lamas in Tibet to bring together all the streams of Tibetan practice. Tibetan philosophy seemed to have maintained itself in one main stream, but the practice had severed and divided into many many substreams. And each of them had to travel quite a long way, to... well to bring back all the teachings that had got separated.

There is one story of Jamyang Khyentse, apparently he found a young shepherd who couldn't read and he couldn't write, and he had a particular teaching that nobody else had. And Jamyang Khyentse apparently wanted the initiation for it. So to do it properly, apparently he had to first teach him how to read and write. So after teaching him to read and write, then got him to go through the initiation. Satisfied with that, off he went and subsequently met with his 2 other friends, Patrul and Jamgong, and exchanged that teaching, and of course all the other teachings were exchanged, until all 3 had exactly the same teachings, they had brought them all together again.

So that was what the 3 young lamas were up to. And those 3 were perhaps the 3 most famous lamas of the 19th century, certainly in Eastern Tibet. And they formed what was known as the Rimé tradition, or the Rimé movement, which has been translated as the non-sectarian movement. And I think of the three, perhaps Jamyang Khyentse The Great was the most famous of them all.

He died in 19.. sorry 1896, and quite soon after then, another Jamyang Khyentse was recognized, Jamyang Khyentse Choki Lodro - now I'll call him just Jamyang Khyentse. The Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche that was your teacher, Bhante. He was born just quite quickly after 1896. But apparently Jamyang Khyentse The Great had predicted that he would have 5 incarnations, or 5 emanations. One for body, one for speech, one for mind, one for guna, and one for karma, or quality and action, or essence and action. So, Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, Bhante's teacher, was the activity emanation of Jamyang Khyentse The Great, and Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, who was born later, well in fact 14 yrs after Jamyang Khyentse The Great's death was recognized as the mind incarnation. And he was recognized by one of Jamyang Khyentse The Great's disciples. Apparently he saw this young, aristocratic monk, or boy as I think he was at that time, and said "right, I know this one. This one is Jamyang Khyentse" and quite quickly after then of course he was taken to the

monastery and educated in the way that most of the young lamas are. Probably his education was not too different from the sort of education that Dhardo Rimpoche had had.

And he excelled in his education, and very early in his youth, in the middle of his - it seems to be quite a common story, but anyway - in the middle of his studies, he came down very very ill, very seriously ill, he was almost on death's door. And somehow they got him back to good health, and his physician said "this illness will recur unless you get married" so he instructed that when Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche grew older, he should marry. And of course according to the instruction of the physician he did marry. And as far as I know he had a conventional wife, not, I don't know whether his wife was partner in the, er, in the Tantric initiations and Tantric rituals that some lamas go through. I think she was a conventional wife and he had by her at least 2 daughters. I don't know whether he had any more... I think it was just 2 daughters.

And as an incarnation of Jamyang Khyentse, he got to be well known in eastern Tibet. I wouldn't say very well known, but he got to be well known. He was brought up in the Nyingmapa tradition, and he had been recognized by Ningpan (?), who was a Nyingmapa lama himself, Ningpan Rimpoche (?), and he was brought up as part of the Nyingmapa tradition. But as he grew older, and as he appreciated what Jamyang Khyentse had been doing, Jamyang Khyentse The Great had been doing in his previous life, he thought he too should not maintain strict limitation within just one school, that he should actually receive teachings, and he received initiations from all the other teachers. And he thought that what he should do is he should try to regain all the teachings which the previous 3 lamas, Jamyang Khyentse The Great, Jamgon Contrul and Patrul Rimpoche had gathered together. He should receive all those teachings. So that's what he did. He set out to look for the disciples of those teachers and receive back again the teachings, and to continue the work of hunting out rare and precious teachings. And this activity with I think not just Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche but with your own teacher Jamyang Khyentse, that activity went on for almost all their lives, just, you know, continue looking for another thing that had been missed, to bring it back in to the stream, to the main stream. I'll come back to this just later on in the story.

Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche in his youth, he also formed a friendship with the new Jamgon Khyentse Rimpoche. Again there were 2 or 3 other incarnations of JamgongK, we'll call him The Great as well, Jamyang Khyentse The Great, the previous one. And he formed a strong friendship, spiritual friendship it seemed to have been, with Jamgong Kontrol, one of the Jamyang Khyentses, and he took your teacher Jamyang Khyentse, to be his teacher as well, because he would have been recognized 10 to 14 years before him as a lama. He'd been born 10 to 14 years before him as a lama. So of course by the time he was, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, was 20 years old, of course Jamyang Khyentse was well into his teaching phase, he was already between 30 and 34 years old, and already imparting many of the initiations which he'd received. So Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche took as one of his main teachers Jamyang Khyentse. One of the other main teachers he took was Tarthang Tulku who was the, this is.. I'm sorry not Tarthang Tulku I beg your pardon, Trungpa Tulku Rimpoche as the 10th Tulku Rimpoche, not the one that we are familiar with from America, but his predecessor, or the previous incarnation. And Tarthang Tulku was the chief abbot of the Surmang group of monasteries in eastern Tibet, which had many of the famous Nyingmapa lamas, and Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche spent many

years just in that group of monasteries learning underneath all these different lamas. But mainly with Tulku Rimpoche. And it's because of that connection with Tulku Rimpoche, that later on with the 11th tulku, the tulku which came to the West and settled in America, that that Tulku Rimpoche took Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche as being his teacher. So the teachings sort of like leap-frogging forward. You can get the impression that, you know, whatever had been passed to Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, he'd pass it on to Tulku Rimpoche, and Tulku Rimpoche would pass it on to his disciples.

So apart from that, I don't know much more about his life in Tibet. You know people came from all around to receive teachings from him. And sometimes when you pick up books by different lamas, or different Tibetans who are telling their life story, you sometimes hear that they went to such-and-such a monastery, and there was an initiation, or set of initiations, from Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. Or maybe they had initiations from Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche alongside many other tulkus, and among the tulkus who are often mentioned, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche often appears. I've just finished reading a biography by Lady Jamyang Shakya, who is the wife of one of the main Sakyapa lamas, and you know she tells how her husband, who is being groomed to be the leader of the Sakyapa sect, the Sakyapa school, he decided to go to eastern Tibet and study with Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche and so off they went to eastern Tibet. And she describes sitting with Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche alongside all these other tulkus. She was the only woman there but she sat with all the other tulkus, and she names them all, and of course Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche is there with the rest of them, all receiving initiations from Jamyang Khyentse, who was very very famous.

So, later on of course, trouble comes in Tibet, in the 1950s and I think it's round about 1957, 1958, that Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, along with many other Nyingmapa lamas in eastern Tibet - because it's eastern Tibet that suffered many of the difficulties first of all - decided that you know look you know, it's just not on staying here, and decided to leave. Jamyang Khyentse himself sent notes to his main disciples saying he was leaving the West, the East, of Tibet, there was no point in being there, in fact there was no point in being in Tibet, and he was going to go and settle in India, and many of his disciples followed suit. And I think that was part of the reason that Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche came out of Tibet. But he left a bit later than Jamyang Khyentse Rimpoche, and because of that, he like many of the others, had great difficulty in actually getting out of Tibet, and it was quite a close thing. One of these you know gruelling stories, of you know climbing over passes, and sliding down glaciers and whatnot, and only just making it Bhutan before the Chinese get to them. And when he arrived, with his wife and his family, he was apparently very very poor. He took, he brought almost nothing with him from Tibet, just as I understand just a few texts, and a few little belongings was all he managed to escape with. And I think he was admitted entry into Bhutan, or at least into India, travelled through Bhutan, where he settled in Kalimpong.

And that's where your story will take over, and I won't say anymore about that part. And he lived in Kalimpong for some years, and during some of the years, I don't know whether he was in Kalimpong, I don't know where he was, but he had a premonition or he had a vision of some sort. And the vision was that he saw a monastery being built in Bodhnath in Nepal, just outside Kathmandu. And he decided

well we've got to build this monastery, and he set about and he built this monastery, in Nepal. And that became his main seat. There were a number of smaller, other monasteries where he'd give teachings, and go round making sure that his monks and his disciples were getting on okay, but the main seat was this, well it turned out to be quite a large monastery, in Nepal.

And he got to be quite well known, especially as some of the Nyingmapa lamas, the more famous ones, had died. And people began to rely on him more and more to pass on important initiations. In fact the Dalai Lama himself received some initiations from him, which he wouldn't have had those initiations otherwise, because only Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche had had them by that time. But also the Dalai Lama regarded it was very important that he receive even teachings that he'd had from other people, that he should also have them from Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, because he thought that his understanding and appreciation of Buddhist teachings was quite incomparable really.

One of the things that Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche spent his life doing was studying and writing. Apparently his writings are quite extensive. I saw a pile in one of the monasteries of texts that he'd apparently written, which was you know like Tibetan texts, these book, loose-leaf book things. The pile was sitting about this high, and this was Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche's writing. He wrote commentaries on the various lineages which had come down to him, the various philosophical teachings, the basic texts of the Hinayana. He wrote commentaries upon many, many things. He also wrote poetry, and if you get a chance to hunt out a little, it's like a soft back magazine, not just an ordinary magazine, quite an upmarket magazine, called Maitreya, I think it's called Maitreya, the magazine. In there there are two or three poems, which have been translated, by Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. Beautiful poems. One of them is written for Trungpa Rimpoche, the Trungpa that went and settled in America. But the impression you get from the poem, is a very very strong empathy with nature. The images that he uses are very akin to the images that the seventh Dalai Lama uses in his poetry, where he sort of, you know, reflects upon trees, and reflects upon streams. And those things which inspire things to him. So his poetry seems a bit like that.

He was also regarded as being a terton. So you probably remember that there are teachings called termas, which were the teachings which Padmasambhava had hidden, because his disciples in the world weren't ready for the teachings, they were too advanced, they were too difficult, or the time was just not ripe for those teachings. So he hid them in various places. He hid them in the rocks, he hid them in the sky, he hid them in the water, he hid them in the sun and the moon. So apparently in his youth, as a young man, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche was hailed as a terton. Now why, well presumably because he had discovered a terma, or at least one terma, maybe several termas. But which were the termas, and how many he discovered, I don't know. But I know from what's written about him, he was regarded as a terton, somebody who takes out the treasures and interprets them. Sometimes it's regarded that the taker-out couldn't actually interpret them himself, he's got to look for his other half who can actually interpret them. He's not called a terton, he's called something else. A terton is one who can take out the treasures, but can also decipher what's there. Because sometimes all that's there is just a little syllable, or a phrase, or even just a symbol. From that the terton is able to decipher what the secret teaching is.

So as I said he became very popular, became very well-known as many other famous lamas died, you know during the last ten, 15, 20 years. And he was requested to come to the West several times and teach, and he spent quite a lot of his time teaching in the Kargyupa monasteries, especially the monasteries connected with Trungpa Rimpoche and Akon Rimpoche in Scotland, in Samye Ling. He spent quite a bit of time, you know, with those students, but also with some of the Nyingmapa students in the West. He was popular with people because of his friendly attitude. He was quite a dignified man, very dignified apparently. And you know, people were very impressed by him. But he was also very very friendly. He was a very imposing man. I won't describe him very much, apart from just the impression which I got from seeing him a couple of years ago in Nepal. And when he travelled about, apparently he had a reputation - which I don't know if it's true - but I'll tell you what the reputation was anyway. The reputation was that he'd be willing to put himself out for people who were interested. But for those people who weren't interested, he wouldn't put himself out. Apparently what happened was on one occasion he flew into Hamburg and he was supposed to be met by a reception committee, and taken off to such-and-such a place and you know all the sorts of things that Tibetan lamas do he was going to do. He arrived at Hamburg airport and was ushered into the VIP lounge, and there were just two or three people there. And apparently they didn't show very much interest in what he was going to be doing. So he just stayed a few hours in the VIP lounge, and instructed one of his disciples to go and book a ticket onto the next plane and he left several hours later. He just spent several hours. But in one of the other places on that same tour, he was wanting to be spending three or four days, but such was the interest that people had that he thought 'well I'll stay longer' and he just stayed as long as he wanted and then moved on to the next section of his tour. So he gained this reputation, and whether it's actually justified, or whether it just comes about because of these one or two of these particular instances, I don't know, but he had this reputation of being willing to put himself out. And in some ways, you know, I sort of regret that I didn't put myself out a bit more, when I met him. I'll tell you the story in a minute, well no in fact I can tell it now. When Yashomitra and I were travelling up in the foothills of the Himalayas, we had been going to see Dhardo Rimpoche but we decided not to go and see him, because Dhardo Rimpoche was too ill. So instead we'd go across to Kathmandu, and we'd see Amoghacitta, have a look at the Tibetan monasteries there, and maybe even see if we could see Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. As luck would have it, Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche was in his monastery in Bodhnath, just outside of Kathmandu and we went up and there was a very large reception room in which there were many many monks, well not many there were about twenty or thirty people, sitting around this lounge, many of them monks, and there were a number of Western disciples. I'm afraid we weren't at all impressed by these Western disciples. Some of them seemed to be in very odd states indeed. And I felt quite embarrassed sitting there in the lounge, to be associated with these quite odd, strange characters. And as we were sitting there, well we were told first of all that we probably wouldn't be able to see him, but if we waited he might have a space, because what he was doing was he was passing on teachings to some lamas, some tulkus who had come to visit. You know we could hear various things going on behind the glass partition. And that after these lamas had gone, another set of tulkus would appear and he would give those ones initiations and pass on teachings. But in the space in-between maybe we might get a chance to see him. And one sort of Western nun she sort of looked after us, and she said 'you know, just wait.' She'd had some contact with the FWBO, in fact

she passed on all her furniture to the FWBO when she sold up in London to go out to Kathmandu she passed on all her furniture to Buddhadasa's shop, you know we did this second-hand business. So we'd had some bit of contact with her (LAUGHTER). The glass doors open and out come all these lamas, maybe about ten or twelve lamas coming out. And everybody else who were also waiting in this reception area sort of swept in, and we were sort of you know 'in you go, now is your chance'. And so were just sort of, we were standing in the back and we had quite a chance just to watch Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche sitting by a very large bay window, sitting at one end of the bay window, on an upraised bed, sort of couch thing. And a very very big man, undressed right down to his waist. And it seems this is very common for Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. I don't know what it was like in Bhante's day, but certainly many of the photographs you see - and I've hunted through lots of the magazines that you know have got photographs of him, and many of them you see him just sort of undressed down to the waist. There's one photograph him where he's even slept/slapped?? to the side of a stupa, and he's supported in the countryside by some people on this side, and some people on this side. And he's standing there, and all he's got on is of like this petticoat, that's all. He's got you know, he just seemed to, well according to one woman I spoke to just at the first opportunity, he would just take off his robes off and he would just be on his throne, and just cover himself over with a blanket, and just have this little petticoat underneath. Well, big petticoat actually (LAUGHTER) and there he was just sitting there with this big blanket over him. And just a smattering of grey hair over the top of his head, and very full-chested man, you know quite a, a very deep voice. You could hear him, you couldn't hear what he was saying, but you could hear him across the other side of the room, you know quite a barrel-chested man, this big deep voice. You know several people went up to meet him. There was one man I noticed particularly went up to meet him, and I just watched the two of them, obviously they knew each other, and known each other - you could tell from the recognition on Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche face, and the way they laughed together, that there was no sort of awkwardness between the 2 of them, and there was no sort of unnatural standing on ceremony by the visitor, by the disciple to Rimpoche. You know he was just quite happy to listen to the man, they had a joke here and there, and then the man sort of bowed down, received the traditional scarf as a blessing, and off he went, and the next people went forward. And in due course, well the woman who was looking after us, the Western woman, just sort of nudged us and said 'now is your chance, go forward now'. And as we went forward, each of us with our scarves at the ready, that very moment, as we were just bowing down, Khyentse Rimpoche's physician passed him a big metal spoon full of medicine, which he had to pop into his mouth. And it was a foul-tasting medicine, obviously, because as we were bowing down, each time we were coming up, we could see that he going 'urgh, argh' (LAUGHTER) and having taken one spoon of it, I think he had to take a second spoon. And of course by this time we had finished our prostrations, we had passed across our scarves which we had laid?? in front of him, and we started to tell his interpreter who we were, where we'd come from, who our teacher was, and why we had come to visit Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche. All the time he was sort of 'urgh' trying ?? obviously very bitter medicine and you know, as we went on explaining the story he sort of took some sip of some water or something to wash down the medicine, and well he said 'oh, it's very good to hear that you're disciples of Sangharakshita, and where is S now, is he in America?' 'No, he's in England' 'Ah that's very good. Sangharakshita, yes.' And then I asked a question which I'd personally come to ask, and that was would Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche tell the story

of his life before I left Kathmandu. So he said 'well how long are you in Kath for'. So I said well I'm in Kath for just a few days. So he said well that in that case it just wouldn't be possible. He didn't say no. He didn't say no he wouldn't do it, but he said well in this case it wouldn't be possible within the next few days. And what I should have said, I think now I should said, well look I'd be willing to come back, if you tell me when to come back, I'll be willing to be there to receive that story, if you tell it. But in fact all I said was, well you know, Rimpoche please tell your life-story before it's too late, because you never know what's going to happen. And he thanked us for the visit, gave us each a scarf, myself, Yashomitra, and the young Nepalese friend that we'd come with, and we made our bows and then we left the room. And that was our very pleasant and, well in some ways very encouraging visit to Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche and although he was having medicine at the time when we met him, he was always able to listen to what was going on and to respond in an appropriate way, and to me respond sensitively. So you know I certainly appreciate that and I was quite glad just to have seen him there, and see, well here he was 79 years old and still working as he had been working for the whole of his life, just learning and teaching. So that's my story of Dilgo Khyentse Rimpoche, and I think you can fill in some more personal impressions, Bhante, of when you met him in Kalimpong.

Sangharakshita: I'll fill in some very small gaps....(SIDE 2) well, just before coming down from upstairs, I was reflecting about this occasion and it occurs to me that there are 2 kinds of talks, or 2 kinds of lectures. One, one might say, is the product of perspiration, and the other is the product of inspiration. Clearly Suvajra's talk has been the product of quite a lot of perspiration. And quite lot of inspiration too. But in my own case, I have to admit that this little talk of mine, is not the product of any perspiration at all, and I'm afraid probably not very much in the way of inspiration. But it did occur to me that in some ways that's not altogether inappropriate, inasmuch as I'm going to be talking about Dilgo Khyentse. One certainly doesn't associate perspiration with Dilgo Khyentse, except perhaps in the quite literal sense, because Suvajra was talking about his habit of stripping himself to the waist. I can't really throw much light on this, because I don't remember him ever doing it when I saw him. But what I do remember is seeing, many Tibetans, many Kambars, from his part of Tibet, that is to say Eastern Tibet, walking down the high street in Kalimpong in the depth of winter, as we would have called it, when it was very very cold, stripped to the waist and perspiring. So it does occur to me that inasmuch as Dilgo Khyentse came from Eastern Tibet he may just have felt very very hot in India, and even in Nepal and therefore divested himself of his upper garments whenever he conveniently could. But the petticoat by the way is not exactly a petticoat. It's a Tibetan monk's undergarment, such as Dhardo Rimpoche used to wear, in fact they sometimes wear several of them, because Tibetans believe in having a number of layers of clothing not just one or two thick items of clothing. And they wear these petticoats as you chose to call them under their lowest robe. But anyway that's by the way. That's all I can really think of to say on the subject of Dilgo Khyentse and perspiration.

But I say that one doesn't associate Dilgo Khyentse with perspiration in a literal sense because he never seemed to be in a hurry. He was always very leisurely, very easy-going. Very relaxed, very calm. There was nothing dramatic about him, nothing sudden, he was a very unobtrusive sort of person. Though so big, he never imposed himself. And I think it's because of that quality, that I can't remember my first

meeting with him. There was nothing dramatic about it. It's as though he sort of, quite gradually became within the sphere of my experience in Kalimpong. I can't remember as I said the first meeting, and I can't remember anything very dramatic at all happening in connection with my experience of him. He sort of just, imperceptibly, hove into sight you might say. And as far as I can make out, he hove into sight so far as I was concerned, late 50s, early 60s.

I certainly came into contact with him after I had come in contact with Jamyang Khyentse, it probably was after Jamyang Khyentse's death which was in 1959. And I assume I must have taken the initiative and gone to see him, because I used to call on any newly arrived Tibetan lama and in that way I made contact with so many of them, dozens of them quite literally, include I might think nearly all the eminent ones who passed through Kalimpong. But I have quite vivid memories of my actual meetings with Dilgo Khyentse in Kalimpong, because the meetings in Kalimpong all took place in the same building, which was a sort of - I think it was wooden - caretaker's cottage at the entrance to the Bhutanese gompa in Kalimpong. In Kalimpong at - ?? it's usually called, I think it's ?? - there's a quite well-built, but at that time quite neglected and deserted Bhutanese gompa, it's called Bhutanese because it was built, as far as I know, by the kings of Bhutan at a time when the Kalimpong subdivision was part of Bhutan. I think it became part of British-India only in the 1860s, it may well have been built, that gompa, at about the same time as the old Bhutan palace, which Dhardo Rimpoche occupied, they were situated fairly near to each other. But be that as it may, I first encountered him, well I encountered him a number of times that to say, in this little wooden cottage. And as far as I recollect, I must have just gone to see him. And I must have taken someone with me as interpreter. I don't know whether I took the same person on the very first visit, but certainly I took on a number of occasions when I went to see Dilgo Khyentse, I took with me Sharap Nangwa (?) or Prajnaloka, who was a Tibetan disciple of mine. I've spoken about him more than once, and he'd been a monk in Tibet. He'd given it up, he'd travelled widely, he'd been married, he'd had all sorts of adventures, and then in his relative old age he decided he wanted to become a monk again, but he didn't want to become a Tibetan monk. And for some reason or other, he'd made up his mind that he wanted to be ordained by me and be my disciple, so I ordained him eventually, with some reluctance, after trying to persuade him to be ordained by Dhardo Rimpoche, I ordained him as a sramanera, and he remained a sramanera for many years. And some years ago, when I was at that time in England, he received the bhikkhu ordination. But that was Sharap Nangwa (?), quite a character, nearly 20 years older than myself, but still a disciple. And I used to use him as an interpreter quite a lot, his English was good, he was quite a character, but that's another story, I'm not telling his story. So whether or not he accompanied me on my first visit to Dilgo Khyentse, he accompanied me on a number of visits to him, actually as interpreter. And all these visits in Kalimpong took place in this little cottage, at the entrance to the Bhutan gompa. I don't recollect that he ever came to my place. He didn't seem to go out and about much, because I remember that in the case of quite a few incarnate lamas one had to make arrangements to see them beforehand, even with Dhardo Rimpoche, and certainly very, very much so with Dudjom Rimpoche, it was quite difficult to see Dud Rimpoche. But in the case of Dilgo Khyentse one could just drop in. He didn't seem to have any visitors, he didn't seem to be known at that time, people didn't seem to take any notice of him, and I can't remember who I heard about him from, but I do know that Mr Chen had heard his name and did speak about him, but I don't know whether it was from Mr Chen that I

first heard about him. But anyway, I must have dropped in on Dilgo Khyentse. And I must have dropped in on him in that sort of a way, for 5 or 6, 7 or 8 times at least, if not many more. And I always found him sitting on his bed, you know the Tibetans have a bed which they use as a seat during the day, and there's a Tibetan sort of table by the side of the bed or in front of them when they sit cross-legged, and they get on the bed sideways. And there Dilgo Khyentse would always be. He'd always be reading, whenever I happened to drop in I'd always find him reading. And he was in a very small room, it couldn't have been, well it was even less than half the size of this room, there was a little sort of veranda as far as I remember, and then you entered this little room, and there was another little one room, and perhaps one more behind it. It was a very small place. But he sat in this first room, on his bed, just reading. And he had, I remember, quite a lot of books with him. And I do remember quite clearly, that I had the impression that he was very, very poor. I think his robes were shabby, and he had nothing, as you said, apart from his books. But I remember he always received me in the same way. He always received me with a smile, there was no great demonstration. Just a "Ah yes, hello, yes yes," just a nice smile. And he'd put aside his books. And I remember his manner was always very kindly, and fatherly and gentle, and unpretentious, unobtrusive. It's very difficult to describe it. And he had a very distinctive, a very characteristic smile, which was a very sweet sort of smile, if you look at photographs. And I of course saw him 30 years ago, but I noticed that his smile in these recent photographs is exactly the same. His smile hasn't changed at all. And in fact I could say Dilgo Khyentse himself, as regards physical appearance, doesn't seem to have changed. I mean the Dilgo Khyentse that I see in the same photographs taken 2 or 3 years ago, is the same Dilgo Khyentse that I used to visit 30 years before. And that's really quite remarkable, because it's very different in the case of Dhardo Rimpoche. The Dhardo Rimpoche that I see in recent photographs is an old man, the Dhardo Rimpoche that I remember 30 years ago was a young man. There's a tremendous difference. But not with Dilgo Khyentse. He seems to have changed as regards with appearance, facial expression, hardly at all. It's very very strange. Perhaps his hair is a bit more scanty, perhaps it's a little whiter, but I don't think there is really any other difference, except possibly, just possibly, the old Dilgo Khyentse is just a wee bit fuller in the face. But otherwise, he's just the same. The same sort of smile, the same expression. And though he didn't really know anything about me, I assume he must have asked who I was and where I came from and I must have told him, but I got the impression of someone who was very kindly, very fatherly, very unpretentious, well very willing always to meet and talk with anybody in a completely natural way. Whereas many of the incarnate lamas, maybe not so much because of personal predilection, but just because of tradition, were very very formal, even Dhardo Rimpoche when I first knew him was very very formal with all his visitors, but not Dilgo Khyentse. And he, as I said, he always seemed very relaxed. He always seemed to have plenty of time, never in a hurry. And not only a smile, as I remember, he also seemed to have almost a little twinkle in his eye. And it was very very characteristic. And then certainly on that first visit, and I think all the other visits, his wife would appear to bring the tea. I think when I knew him he had only one servant, as far as... yes he had one servant, which isn't very many for an important incarnate lama as you know. And there was his wife, and his 2 daughters. And Suvajra has mentioned that Dilgo Khyentse was enormously tall, I think he was fully 6 and a half feet. His wife was just as tall. And I think his 2 daughters, from what I remember, now... I mean they're both deceased, were even taller.

And they were quite thin, I remember, they were quite lanky. And of course they wore these Tibetan gowns, so you can guess how long and lanky they appeared. But I remember his old wife was, oh in some ways quite like him, she was unobtrusive, unpretentious, serviceable, I think Suvajra's right in saying that she was just an ordinary wife, not a spiritual consort, not officially, but whether she was as a human being any the less for that I wouldn't like to say. But she was also friendly, welcoming, unpretentious, and the two girls likewise. Though I do remember the 2 girls, who must have been about 18 or 19 at that time were a bit awkward. Maybe it was just because they were so long and so lanky, and so raw-boned as it were, and they were unmarried at that time. At least one of them married and had a son, Dilgo Khyentse's grandson, who subsequently acted as Dilgo Khyentse's translator I believe sometimes and travelled around with him.

So yes I had this sort of, very friendly, very casual contact with Dilgo Khyentse. And I could go along and see him with Sharab Nanga, or later on with my manager Lobsang Norbu as interpreter, you know whenever I felt like it. And I must have talked about Dilgo Khyentse with Mr Chen, who of course knew, at least by reputation, all the incarnate lamas. Mr Chen may well have actually met Dilgo Khyentse in Tibet, because he'd certainly met Jamyang Khyentse and received initiations from him. And I think it must have been Mr Chen who advised me to ask Dilgo Khyentse for initiations. I've been thinking over just today, a few memories sort of vaguely come back to me, and I did receive from Dilgo Khyentse in that same room, in that little wooden cottage, the Kurukulle initiation, the Jambala initiation, and an Amitabha initiation connected with the perwa [?], or transfer of consciousness practice. And I seem to remember, I think I can be fairly certain of this, that Mr Chen knew, was well aware of the fact that I was doing my best to work for the good of Buddhism in Kasyapa's word, or in Kasyapa's injunction to me in 1950, and Mr Chen I think was well aware that working for Buddhism wasn't easy, that you needed all sorts of things, and Mr Chen of course took his Buddhism and his Vajrayana in some ways quite literally. So I do remember Mr Chen urging me to get the initiation of Jambala from Dilgo Khyentse so that wealth would come to me for the sake of my Dharma work. And to get the initiation of Kurukulle so that popularity would come to me for the sake of my Dharma work, because Kurukulle represents fascination, attraction, I mean that particular Tantric function. And Jambala obviously of course represents wealth. I can't say that I took that quite literally. But nonetheless, I mean I used to take what Mr Chen said quite seriously, so I did ask Dilgo Khyentse for those initiations, and he very kindly agreed to give me. There seemed to be no difficulty at all, quite pleased to give me whatever you wanted, and he conducted the initiation in just his own characteristic way. There was just the usual ritual, quite simple I think, the ceremony only lasted an hour or two, or each ceremony. And he was just his own you know kindly, fatherly, unpretentious self. And the old wife hovering in the backroom and just sort of helping. And as regards the perwa practice of Amitabha, Mr Chen was a great believer in this, I don't think he had had much experience of it himself, but I remember him telling me that his wife practised it very successfully in China, and I think he further told me that Dilgo Khyentse was well-versed in this practice, and it would be a good idea if I was to obtain the necessary initiation and instruction from him. It was an oral tradition and I wrote down, I still have the notes that I made on this practice. But though I've done the Amitabha part of the practice, I must admit that I've never actually done the transference of consciousness part of it, maybe that's something that I should keep for my relative old age, though of course

on the other hand, one mustn't put off these sort of things indefinitely.

But anyway these were the 3 initiation I got from him. It's possible that I received others which perhaps, I'm sorry to say, I might have forgotten, but I have made notes of all these things. I do have a notebook, or several notebooks, somewhere at Padmaloka where I've written down the dates of all the initiations I had and some particulars. So I'll have to have a look. But all this of course happened in Kalimpong, late 50's, early 60s. And I did remain in contact with Dilgo Khyentse right up to the time of my departure in 1964, as far as I recollect he was in Kalimpong all that time and remained very easily accessible. Anyway, I did come to the West as you know, and I returned to India for that farewell visit after 2 years. I spent a week in Kalimpong. and I met of course Dhardo Rimpoche, Mr Chen and other friends. I also visited Darjeeling, and at that time Dilgo Khyentse was living in Darjeeling with his wife. I don't remember the daughters being there, they may have left, one of them may have married by that time. But I remember Dilgo Khyentse living somewhere in the bazaar, again in very poor circumstances, and I went to pay him a visit. And by that time I knew that the trustees of the English Sangha Trust didn't want me back, and I told Dilgo Khyentse about this, he was one of the people I did tell. I told Dhardo Rimpoche too and Dilgo Khyentse said, I can't remember exactly what he said, but the purport of it was "Never mind, don't take any notice, just go back and carry on with your own work." Which is more or less what Dhardo Rimpoche said too. They seemed to attach, I was quite concerned, they seemed to attach no importance whatever about anything that the Trust might say, or think, or do. They seemed to think that I should, well, just ignore it, carry on with my work. This was quite definitely the attitude of both Dilgo Khyentse and Dhardo Rimpoche. They said "What are you bothering about? What is this fuss? It doesn't matter, just go back and carry on. Doesn't make any difference." So I remember that meeting, but I also remember it because Dilgo Khyentse and his wife, especially his wife, wanted to give me something as a little parting present, but they had nothing to give, they were so poor at that time. But his wife searched around and she found a little cumbar (?) knife, about so long, with a bone handle and in a little sheath with a bit of silver mounting, and she gave me that with "Oh we're very sorry, we'd like to give you something, but this is all we're able to give, please accept it." And of course I still have that in my study at Padmaloka, some of you will have seen it, but not knowing what the history of it was. Yes? So that was their parting present. But actually that wasn't the last time I saw them, because I don't know whether I returned to Kalimpong., I can't remember, but from the hills let's say I went down, I went back to Calcutta and was there for several weeks, mainly arranging to transport my books and other things to England. And I happened to visit the Bengal Buddhist Association and there in their guest quarters Dilgo Khyentse was staying, with his wife, and with a servant. So we had a very pleasant, unexpected reunion. My friend Terry de la Mere was also there, and I have a slide of that meeting. There's Dilgo Khyentse standing in the middle, towering even over Terry who was a 6-footer, and well as far as I remember I'm there too in the photographs... yes I think I am. Maybe I took it.

Voice: Yes, I think you did...

Sangharakshita: Anyway, there may be others which are not included in the slide show, because they weren't particularly good... I'll have to check. But anyway, there is Dilgo Khyentse and I'm sure his wife is also there, and the servant is there... maybe

a couple of other people... Terry I think was there... yes. Perhaps I'm there, perhaps I'm not, I don't really remember, if I'm not there it must be because I took the photograph. So that was my last personal contact with him. So as you can see it was a quite unspectacular contact, in some ways it was very ordinary. But I do remember I was very impressed by him as a character. Mainly because of his lack of pretence, his unassumingness, his friendliness, and his very warm, kindly quite sweet smile, which he always had. Perhaps I should also make another point here, I don't remember seeing him laughing, he always smiled. You see lots of pictures of Tibetan lamas laughing like mad, and showing all their magnificent teeth, and I've not seen any photograph of Dilgo Khyentse like that. He smiled, but I don't know that he laughed, certainly not in any sort of way that showed all his teeth, or in a raucous sort of way. And of course, you may remember that the Buddha, according to the Pali scriptures, did say that laughter that shows the teeth is madness and that if you have cause to show your pleasure, it is enough to smile. So Dilgo Khyentse seemed to fit that perfectly, he smiled, and a really very beautiful smile, but I don't remember that he ever laughed.

Suvajra: What I saw, was a sort of laugh, very calm... not raucous...

Sangharakshita: Hmm, yes, yes. And of course Suvajra did mention the episode of the bitter medicine because a Tibetan would say that it definitely had a symbolical significance, and that he was in a way showing you something, and the medicine is the medicine of the Dharma which sometimes tastes very bitter, which you have to get down nonetheless... And perhaps even, you know, incarnate lamas don't always find it easy to practise the Dharma. Perhaps for them also, sometimes the medicine even of the Dharma is quite bitter, it's quite a bitter pill to swallow. There is of course quite a bit of sweetening, but nonetheless, medicine is medicine and has to be swallowed whether bitter or sweet, sooner or later. So yes, very likely there was a teaching there. And I further noticed, but as I said that was my last meeting with Dilgo Khyentse in Calcutta, but of course I used to read about his travels in the West, especially in America, and it's quite clear from the descriptions that people have given of him, that his behaviour in the West, when he was well-known and famous, and with all sorts of luxuries even at his disposal, when he was no longer poor, he was exactly the same. The photographs that I've seen of him in America, especially when he smiled, show exactly the same Dilgo Khyentse that I knew, and I can well understand people in the West, especially in America, being very much attracted by him. I can't help wondering though, whether they were able fully to appreciate him. Not only those people in Hamburg, but many people in America. Some people seemed to want to build him up in a way that I don't think he would have been happy to be built up. And I'm sure in his own way he just didn't permit that. So yes, I have very very positive memories of him indeed, and I was going to say that since I received the Amitabha initiation from him, I do especially associate him with Amitabha. It has just occurs to me, well after all I did receive those other 2 initiations, Kurukulle and Jambala, so yes, I suppose I could also associate Kurukulle with him because he did have that. Not fascinating aspect, that's perhaps too strong a word, but a sort of subtle attractiveness, you couldn't help liking him, or forming a favourable impression at the first glance, no doubt about that. Jambala... well, Jambala of course came to him quite late in life, and he probably didn't bother too much about him. In my own case of course I don't think Jambala is around by a long chalk yet... but I must say there has been a change over the years, and at least I'm now able to buy

almost, almost any book I fancy. And that's really my standard of measurement. And I hope that Dilgo Khyentse also, in the latter part of his life, was able to acquire any manuscript, any Tibetan manuscript he fancied to, because yes he was a very great reader. I didn't know he was a writer, I've only just know learnt that from Suvajra, and well it wouldn't be impossible I suppose that his writing should eventually be translated just as Dudjom Rimpoche on his great work on the Nyingmapa School has been translated. We may be able to read his writings one day, at least you may be able to read his writing one day. But even if that isn't possible in my own case, I certainly feel that, well I've been in direct contact with Dilgo Khyentse himself, and in a way with the essence of whatever he might have written. And he does say... stand out in my memory, as really one of the most subtly impressive people I have ever met... Well, perhaps that is the extent of my reminiscences.