



Lama Ole Nydahl

31. December 2015

My dearest students and friends,

Hope you have a chair nearby. This presentation will be longer than usual.

It is guided by our latest experience from the ancient Maratika caves in unique Nepal.

We would like to share this year's happenings to move ahead in the best possible way into the future: countless idealists put their faith in us, and many decisions become mature now!

All who treasure solid human growth will be pleased with the year's developments and how we pool our efforts to share the power of Diamond Way Buddhism for the good of countless friends. Already during our first step of taking refuge, that is a central point.

And nothing can bring greater benefit to the world than our liberating and enlightening activities and view.

Friends who have not yet come along with us often ask what a year travelling with the Lama may mean. Therefore, here is an account of major events with Ale, Tomek and many others from lively 2015.

Much activity was of course maneuvering to follow world-wide events which none of us can alter, while sharing Buddhist insights into the vast and concept-shattering happenings taking place throughout another year:

After visiting always-brave Israel during the year's first week, we crossed the whole of Russia in the unusually mild winter promised by our scientists, and visited breath-taking Kamchatka in the absolute East of Russia for the first time. As they use our methods, old and new friends on our way are developing deeply and well.

Then followed time with our mature students in Australia and New Zealand, where on the South Island I had the chance to try some friends' world-fastest Jet Ski on the choppy waters there. Flying from the crest of one wave to another gave the inspiration for the "egg" letter that I sent to you all. This activated a sequence of mails now democratizing our views, widening our communication, and empowering our centers.

In Hong Kong, over several years, first our Chinese students of Gyalwa Karmapa and then our English-Finnish family and their work had put us on the map of maturing idealists in the region. Thus traditional and well-informed Far-Eastern groups had manifested.

Also at this time a first visit to Vietnam was planned for 2016.

Returning to South Africa for the third time since 1978, we toured with an inspiring new group there, climbed Table Mountain in record time, and sent its beauty to all.

Back in London, we paid our respect to brave and noble Lord Pearson. We were again his guests in the House of Lords and ate with him in the Commons.

Visiting our close friend Uri Geller at his spacious mansion, we proved beyond any statistical doubt that space is information. He, Tomek and myself all drew a triangle of the same size without any instructions.

After this, we flew to the unbroken culture of Ireland, which – like the Slav cultures – is so close to my heart.

The month finished in Central Europe with lectures for thousands of students and friends. They were spread over the EC, Copenhagen, Warsaw and the Kassel Easter-course.

Exciting El Salvador greeted us, then beautiful Costa Rica, and we celebrated ten years of our work in Cuba. Venezuela followed with a Great Seal course and a fantastic gift from my lovely Ale: an exciting tour to the massive and age-old Tepuis table-mountains of Canaima and the pristine archipelago of Los Roques. You should see the incredible film our guide had taken there.

During a Mahamudra course on the rocky shore of the Pacific in Peru, we enjoyed and managed to survive 10-metre high tsunami-waves.

We visited timeless Mexico followed by wonderful Colombia, where auspicious conditions came together: a beautifully situated piece of land near Villa de Leyva had been bought, perfect for a retreat center for the region.

At that time, the documentary "Hannah" touched hundreds at several screenings in the Rubin Museum of Buddhist Art in New York. Hannah's unique story keeps inspiring large audiences at film festivals around the world.

With the guidance of Maggie Lehnert, Tomek's bright sister and our Diamond Way representative in the Buddhist part of Asia, we departed for earthquake-shaken Kathmandu, where I could bring the blessing of the 16th Karmapa. Many idealistic friends worldwide had been generous, collecting enough money for them to buy one hundred tents and ten houses, to sponsor an orphanage, and to bring help to partly destroyed Swayambhu and Rinpoche's fully destroyed Manang temple.

In Künzig Shamarpa's Sharminub retreat center, a dozen bright and impressive monks interrupted over ten years in retreat to get to know this new and Western influence.

Then, just when leaving, we witnessed a true and total wonder: Here, as we called the two-armed protector of our lineage, seven bowls of water lifted off their base and started vibrating. Hanging freely in the air in front of Künzig Shamarpa's relics, not a single drop was spilled and they settled exactly at the moment we finished our meditation. It was an unbelievable and unforgettable expression of the power of our Kagyü lineage.

Ale and I also did something to boost the courage of the locals. We spent two nights alone on the fifth floor at the top of Rinpoche's only standing house.

Most other buildings there were flattened and everybody else was sleeping in the garden – also Tomek joined us in the house for the third night.

We continued on to KIBI in Delhi and met with H.H. Karmapa. It was on the first anniversary of Shamarpa's death and I was placed next to the distinguished professor Sempa Dorje, Karmapa's precious tutor of Buddhist philosophy. It was a great honor I had in no way anticipated.

At long last we were finally able to visit and share important time with our friends in Kiev and help relieve their pain. Like in other Slav countries, Buddhism is very strong there and people give it a central place in their lives.

In Spain, Pedro Gomez had created new dimensions. In the town hall of Malaga I received the UNESCO prize for my contribution towards freedom of speech. Pope Francis was another recipient.

Huge courses in Hungary, Poland and Denmark followed, and we helped to build and fill a perfect stupa with Sherab Gyaltzen Rinpoche in Bulgaria.

In Thessaloniki we celebrated our 40 years of work in Greece with other fine groups from the Balkans.

We met again with Karmapa at the Europe Center at the biggest summer course ever – over 7,000 hopeful faces would appear there. We enjoyed the new, shiny buildings and modern architecture. They are the splendid result of Caty's untiring work, inspiring many.

Soon after, we came together with 2,000 of our powerful Russian friends in Kaluga outside Moscow, and then spent wonderful time with our unshakable friends in Graz.

That pearl of Austria and Copenhagen share the honor of being the first Diamond Way places Hannah and myself started in the West in 1972, and they were recognized as such by the 16th Karmapa.

During the following week I taught at our Western Retreat Centre in the California heartland, and then we sped north from San Francisco on powerful BMW motorcycles. There were countless curves to enjoy through the majestic Redwood forest near the coast, which we managed just as the fires broke out. Two weeks later David followed us to Europe and we continued training on two wheels across the Massif Central in France, again with Ale on the back and experienced European friends setting the course.

Then back to Karma Guen, where we enjoyed the 8th Karmapa course with Jigme Rinpoche. Following that, I gave another Great Seal course near Bologna in Italy for 800 people and then taught in the Dordogne.

After the course near Karlsruhe we again shared important time in Ukraine and toured Germany and Switzerland, finishing with the vast annual center meeting in Braunschweig.

After a short stop in Bratislava, Slovakia, to inaugurate our recently bought center, we flew to Moscow, this time officially invited by the government to represent Buddhism at a religious meeting there. This visit saw the culmination of a seven-year herculean effort, the finest result one could imagine for our work: 1,120 square meters were bought in the very center of Moscow, to be increased to 2,000 as soon as it becomes possible, purchased by our generous local geniuses.

With massive joy we then realized that the day of signing the contract was the anniversary of Hannah and myself taking refuge from the 16th Karmapa in Rumtek, only 45 years earlier.

Right after a stopover with a lecture and blessing of our new center in Vilnius, Lithuania, invited by Sherab Gyaltzen Rinpoche, we joined the opening ceremonies of his new, splendid monastery serving thousands at Nala near Kathmandu. Together with Karmapa and our high Rinpoches, we blessed 10.000 local people filing past.

After an inspiring stay in Oslo, and the first anniversary of Ale's and my marriage, a fine retreat place in central Finland appeared.

Back in Central Europe, Tomek and I had successful laser eye surgery, and later that week a crucial meeting with all friends in Immenstadt took place. Here, the classless society they worked for had in fact become quite classy over time. Beer to pay for, offered to often highly educated friends meeting in the basement after a hard day's idealistic work, and free champagne at the top of the villa to whoever was popular had disturbed quite a few. We decided that the many-level society of the EC would become a thing of the past.

Afterwards again the Americas – Miami, New York, Las Vegas, Chile and Uruguay – followed by yet another touching visit to Nepal, this time to receive an immeasurable gift from Sherab Gyaltzen Rinpoche in the Maratika caves of the Nepalese Himalayas.

One should tell little about great spiritual gifts, otherwise people will expect the same – and experiences always differ. Also the uniqueness of a situation may get lost if too frequently quoted.

All in all it became an eventful year with nearly 40 Great Seal courses and dozens of public lectures on six continents, and thousands of people being touched by the blessing of our lineage.

What is there to be remembered from 2015 which will guide us into the coming years?

The important changes now introduced within our Diamond Way, both concerning the style of daily life in our centers and as guidelines for our practical way towards personal maturity.

First, no hierarchies! All who work must be seen as equal, and everyone should do what they are best at, for the good of all. Any work should furthermore empower our people in all our centers, developing their independence and capacities.

Most important, there are no careers to be made in the Diamond Way. The only benefit of any activity is human growth, to be learned from and enjoyed by all.

Our goal is to get wiser and not just older every day.

We should feel useful in all that we do well, but no spiritual recognition can be given for worldly achievements. We go back to our relaxed yogi style and deep essence which the great 16th Karmapa blessed when Hannah and I brought his transmission to the West.

We thus secured our work and values around the world, also by broadening the Diamond Way Foundation, which serves as a model for national foundations everywhere.

To sum up the changes here: We should always include supervisory bodies to balance and check managerial decisions.

In general, working together as groups of friends gives a wide spread of knowledge. And people in our centers should have a chance to learn different skills and, when mastered, pass them on to others.

At times in history – like today – where essential humanistic values are attacked, suppressed, controlled, not appreciated, and often lost, it is important to treasure and stay aware of whatever tools we have left to use.

Here I want to share above all one insight:

We presently are losing our freedom of choice, still more due to sentimentality and laziness than to having our humanistic values under direct attack – and that may soon change.

Therefore we should help people identify with the best and finest they can fathom. That fulfills what Diamond Way Buddhism is really about.

And how to do that? Inspire people to behave like Buddhas until they become Buddhas.

We have to behave like family until we become a family.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lama Ole', written in a cursive style.

P.S. May we meet often and at exciting places!