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NGALSO
Path to Enlightenment

Teachings and meditation A brief history of Buddhism Lama Caroline

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Introduction and Guru Yoga

Hello everybody. We're here in Gangchen Labrang in Albagnano, in Lama Gangchen's personal gumpa. We're going to do some prayers to connect us with His holy energy. Yesterday, Vesak, we started to talk about the NgalSo system and we hope never to stop. First we're going to do some prayers and Guru Yoga. Rinpoche always said: *You can phone me or you can connect heart-to-heart*. So unfortunately the telephone line is no longer available but the heart telephone is very much available, so we're going to do Guru Yoga. I think we'll have to put His telephone in the stupa, His Holy telephone! (*laughing*). He helped so many people on the phone – people calling day and night, incredible! I have known Rinpoche for thirty years and people used to call continuously – 24 hours a day, seven days a week – even in the middle of the night. They used to call and say: *Oh, Rinpoche, I'm afraid*, and He would pick up the phone and answer them. Anybody else would say: *No sorry, I'm sleeping*. But Rinpoche would answer: *Yes, yes. No problem, just tell me, anytime just call me*. It's true, they did (*laughing*). That's why He's a high holy being and we're not (*laughs*) because we're not totally available like He was but we're learning, we're all learning. Rinpoche loved us all very much and accepted all of us. It's true – he accepted everybody exactly the way they were. He would try to help us to change and become more positive but many things He just accepted. So now we're going to call Rinpoche from the heart telephone.

Reciting together the preliminary practices from NgalSo prayerbook: The six dharmas of preparation, pages 6 through 124, plus

tayatha gate gate paragate parasamgate boddhi soha (x3)
om bekansde bekhansde (x3)
om maitreya maitreya mahamaitreya arya maitreya soha (x3)
om ah hung karuna karuna mahakaruna arya karunaye soha (x3)
om tare tuttare ture mama ayur
om tare tuttare ture soha (x3)
khorwa ... tare..
om mani peme hung (x many)
om wagsiwari mum (x many)
om vajrapani hum (x many)
om maritse mam soha (x many)
om vajrasattva samaya...
migtsema...
namo gurubye...

Preliminary practices continue from page 16

losang gyalwa...
lochog sangpo
om ah guru Vajradhara sumati muni shasane karma utta vardanaye shri bhadra
var samaniye sarwa siddhi hung hung (x3)

Method to develop the inner guru (page 19-22)

khyoni lama... (x3)
lama khyen lama khyen... (x3)

Now we imagine Rinpoche is in front of us – if you like you can imagine He's here on His throne [*indicates the throne behind her*]. He's everywhere actually. And from Rinpoche's body, speech and mind chakras come white, red and blue lights and nectars that dissolve into our three chakras purifying our body, speech and mind. Then comes a rainbow of five lights and nectars. So we get all the combined blessing together. Many, many times we have received initiation from Rinpoche, so this is the same.

[pause for meditation]

Now we imagine that Rinpoche and the rainbow body comes to the crown of each and every one of our heads and then dissolves through our crown through the central channel and sits in our heart. He is always with us, every moment.

pa khyo kyi ku dang dag gyi lu
pa khyo kyi sung dang dag gyi ngag
pa khyo kyi tug dang dag gyi yi
don yer me chig tu jin gyi lob

ma khyo kyi ku dang dag gyi lu
ma khyo kyi sung dang dag gyi ngag
ma khyo kyi tug dang dag gyi yi
don yer me chig tu jin gyi lob

[pause for meditation]

Om ah guru vajradhara sumati muni shasane karma uhta vardanaye shri badhra var
samanya sarwa siddhi hung hung (x3)

Vesak Celebrations

OK. Hello everybody. Now we're going to continue what we started to talk about yesterday. Yesterday was Vesak, the super-moon of May, Buddha's holy moon when we celebrate the moments the Buddha was born, achieved awakening and passed into *parinirvana* – a very special moment. Lama Gangchen loved Vesak. We did many Vesak events; He always made a big importance of this, gathering together with many Buddhist teachers from many traditions. And as Carmen was saying yesterday many different people of all different religions. We did many times in Milan before we moved to Albagnano. In 1988 Rinpoche made the Kunpen in Milan, and He was in Milan until 1999 or 2000. For many years we made the Vesak celebration in Milan, didn't we, Carmen?

[Carmen: and we continue to do it in Milano every year, besides this year. We have been doing it even staying here in Albagnano. But every year we did Vesak in Milan. This year is the first time, because of the lockdown, we didn't do Vesak. Usually we do. Also according to the Italian Buddhist Union they encouraged the centres to celebrate Vesak. So also in that sense we did together with the Union of Buddhists.]

Rinpoche's teachings about Buddha Shakyamuni

Rinpoche – Lama Gangchen, always used to say to us that even to understand one Buddha is enough. He used to say we're trying to learn Tibetan Buddhism. For this we need to go back to the historical Buddha Shakyamuni. He used to emphasise a lot in the early days just **om muni muni...** for us to connect with the historical Buddha. In Tibetan Buddhism we have millions of different buddhas – green, blue, orange, all kinds, and He used to say

what we need to know is about the Buddha – the story of the Buddha, the Peace teachings of the Buddha. When we first met Him, He was very much emphasising we should know about Buddha Shakyamuni.

Yesterday we were talking a little bit about the life of the Buddha, His story. There's many more things to add. We already have one beautiful book that we prepared here - the Lalitavishtara. We have to translate that into Spanish, Portuguese, Italian... into many languages. We have many things to do. While Rinpoche is – let's say - on holiday, we're not on holiday [*laughing*]. Actually He's not on holiday, let's say he's busy in other places, helping other people. I just want to add one or two things that Rinpoche always used to say about the story of the Buddha. Yesterday we were saying that the Buddha after He achieved enlightenment under the Bodhi tree – He spent 49 days there taking in what had just happened. He said:

*The nectar of the Dharma I obtained is
profound, immaculate, luminous, and unconditioned.
Even if I explain it, no one will understand.
I think I shall remain silent in the forest.
That which is free from words cannot be understood through words,
likewise, the nature of phenomena is like space,
totally free of the movements of mind and intellect.*

After he arose from mediation after those 49 days He walked to Sarnath because He wanted to give the dharma teaching to the five *sadhus* who were in His former yoga class. But Rinpoche always used to say that on the way He met two Burmese businessmen and that actually His first teaching was to these two Burmese businessmen on the way to Sarnath. In this story, there was a merchants' convoy. These Burmese merchants led a whole convoy of oxen laden with silks and all kinds of spices. They were going – I don't know where – let's say to Varanasi. On the way they met the Buddha and they thought: *Wow! This person is a special person.* Immediately they said: *Oh, you're a holy being! How can we improve our business?* [*laughing*]

The Buddha's point of view is that He wanted to relieve suffering in all ways; like Rinpoche: any problem, whatever problem you had He would try and solve it. Rinpoche did exactly the same. He said: *Yes of course I'll help you* and He taught what's called the *Sutra of the Ten Directions*, which nowadays we have translated as part of our NgalSo Astrology practices sadhana. The Buddha – and Rinpoche – were always very interested in how to integrate the Dharma into daily life; they had total acceptance of people. People have this idea of Buddhism that you have to completely change your lifestyle, you have to do this and that just to be a Buddhist. No! Actually buddhas accept whatever you are is okay: we start from there. This is completely true, isn't it? This is how Rinpoche was. Of course, you have to change inside! [*laughing*]. Rinpoche used to say: *you don't need to change your house, your partner, your job* – you need to change inside.

Rinpoche said many times in His teachings that the Buddha's first teaching was not at Sarnath of the four Noble Truths. The Buddha's first teaching was about astrology given to

these two Burmese businessmen on the road to Varanasi. He was also showing that astrology is something useful for us; it's a useful tool in daily life. In this *Sutra of the Ten Directions* basically wherever you go you imagine there's a Buddha in front of you (looking at us, smiling). Rinpoche used to say that we need spiritual company, that we are lacking spiritual company. It's this idea that the holy beings are with me. He used to say in modern life, let's say in a city of millions of people, we feel completely alone: we need spiritual company. So that's one thing I remembered that I omitted to say yesterday, that Rinpoche used to say a lot – about the story of the Buddha.

After Siddhartha achieved enlightenment, He became a Buddha – an Awakened One – and according to the ancient texts, He had thirty-two major marks and eighty minor signs that showed His special qualities. I was thinking about that yesterday: Rinpoche didn't have the big ear lobes and the blue curly hair and stuff like that, but He did have some special signs that He also used to show people. So I thought I'd talk about that a little bit. In the Buddhist texts we have this idea of the three bodies of the Buddha: *dharmakaya*, *sambhogakaya* and *nirmanakaya*. We'll talk about this a lot, bit-by-bit. Basically what they say is that for us to see a Buddha in human form as somebody we can relate to is incredible good fortune. We're lucky we can see our Guru as a human; not as a dog, for example, because our karma is probably at dog level! And we were very very lucky that we could see a wonderful manifestation like Rinpoche – so kind, so wonderful in all respects... full of humour, so kind, very human. The best of humanity.

These days – sorry I'm not preparing anything because I can't. My mind is like this [*laughs*]. For example, maybe you noticed, maybe you never noticed – Rinpoche didn't have any eyebrows. If you look on all the photos there are no eyebrows. I had the fortune that I spent a lot of time with Rinpoche. Basically, whatever came into my mind I could ask him and He would reply. One time I said: *Rinpoche, why don't you have any eyebrows? like you do!* [*laughing*]. He said: *Well, this is because in my previous life when I was Truphu Lotsawa I was a leper.* He had leprosy. So that's a very interesting story of one of Rinpoche's many lives recognised as a high holy being. We have a biography of Rinpoche's past lives; maybe there are 13, 14, 15... many many lives of Rinpoche. One of these lives in the 11th century was somebody called Truphu Lotsawa, who was a very famous Tibetan Kagyupa Master who helped to bring Indian Buddhism to Tibet. Slowly, we will tell all these stories in detail. In the 11th century in Tibet (also in Europe) leprosy was very common. It was the plague of the time. Rinpoche said that in that lifetime when He was young – about 20 years old or something, He contracted leprosy. If you're a leper everybody rejects you. He thought: *What can I do? I will go into retreat.* And He spent His time meditating on what we call *tonglen*. That means taking the suffering of others and sending all your merit, all your positive energy to them – all the sickness and suffering you take into you: *May it ripen upon me and all my positive energy, my merit, my happiness I give to the others.* He spent three years meditating on this and after three years, He recovered from the leprosy. We, who follow the Ganden Gelugpa tradition, have heard many times the *lojong* teachings. At first they were secret teachings for lepers. They became famous because many people were getting cured of leprosy. Rinpoche was one of them, actually, in that lifetime. So He was cured of leprosy. After that He became a famous Buddhist teacher called Truphu Lotsawa, who had a very big connection with Chenresig, with NgalSo Self-Healing – we'll talk about this another time... incredible things – and

also with Buddha Maitreya. Another famous person who had leprosy and who was cured through the lojong teachings and Chenresig practice was Gelongma Pälmo, a female Buddhist teacher. Gelongma Pälmo means something like Glorious Lady. She was a fully ordained nun. She started many lineages of Chenresig practice. Actually, Rinpoche was very fond of these and when He was in Milan in the beginning, in Kunpen, when He was doing all those Chenresig mandalas, He was doing all these practices from the lineage of Gelongma Pälmo – from the Chenresig, from the lojong practice. When He used to make all those sand mandalas around the world. In the late 1980s – 1988, 1999. At this time He was making many Chenresig sand mandalas throughout Europe.

In the lojong practice: if I do it, for example, I can maybe imagine but I'm not sure that I can actually receive the sickness of others; but high beings – high bodhisattvas, high buddhas – can actually take the sufferings of others. And very probably that's what Rinpoche has just done. In order to save many many people. Now, I mean like two weeks ago when he passed into paranirvana. Rinpoche's whole life was that. Putting other people first, wishing to remove their suffering in any way whatsoever. His whole life, day and night, 24 hours. Ever since we have known him, we didn't see a single moment that He wasn't doing that.

Rinpoche had that yellow lama shirt and at one point, during the last, let's say, ten years of His life, He would start to take it off and turn around and show us a star that He had on His back. He used to have four moles – it looked like the Southern Cross constellation, actually, and He used to say this was a very important astrological symbol. Maybe a connection with Brazil and South America! [*laughing*], because we don't have that constellation in Europe.

[*Carmen: He used to say: Look at my constellation*].

That was when He started doing the *Lords of the Constellations* practice. In Borobudur was the first time He started to show that. [*Lama Caroline asks Cosy, Rinpoche's long-time secretary, if she remembers.*] Between us all [*the others in the room who were with Rinpoche at that time*] we are like one brain and between us all we can remember the story together [*laughing*].

Cosy was just saying that one time when Rinpoche was in San Paulo and there was an important rabbi [*or professor, thinks Bebel who was also there*] was just studying the *kaballah* and He said that this four moles on Rinpoche's back like the Southern Cross meant that Rinpoche was chosen, let's say, by the gods to come in to this world and help many people. There's a lot more to say about this kind of thing but let's continue because]really, we'll never finish now that we've started.

Importance of the life-story of the Buddha

OK, Rinpoche used to emphasise very much the importance for us of the life of the Buddha. So after the Buddha achieved awakening, He spent 45 years going around North India and the Buddha used to speak in the common language, Prakrit. He didn't speak in Sanskrit – that's what they made his mahayana teachings afterwards to make it more posh – but He spoke middle Indian. He wanted to speak the language of the common people.

His message was taken up very much by the common people. The first two people He met with were merchants – by people who were not exactly so enamoured of the Hindu class system; the varnas. It's a bit like nowadays. Rinpoche came with this message of how to integrate the Dharma into modern life: speaking in a modern way, in a simple way – which is what Shakyamuni Buddha did. Many modern people of the time took up the Buddha's message. Likewise all kinds of different people in our time took up Rinpoche's message; it's a bit similar, I think.

So the story of Buddha and His immediate disciples is very interesting. Yesterday was Vesak. It's also when we're remembering when the Buddha passed into *parinirvana*; when He left the physical form. When the historical Buddha passed away He was around 80, some people say 82, 83 years old. He was super healthy. He never had anything wrong with him but, according to the Buddhist histories, He would always be going to have lunch with people. He didn't have a kitchen or a cook, no supermarket – He just used to go with His friends and people would invite them for lunch and they would eat and then the Buddha would make some dedication for their wishes and the people would ask questions. Questions and Answers. His whole life Was like this. When the Buddha was around 80-something He came to the house of Kunda, the blacksmith. The blacksmith offered one meal to the Buddha and the Buddha got sick as a result of eating this meal and soon after He passed away into parinirvana. So He also died very quickly at around the same age as Rinpoche.

[Bebel comments that Lama Michel said these days: that they offered food to the Buddha and all the disciples and entourage. In this meal there was pork meat that was infected. The Buddha understood that it was no good and He ate all this meat himself to save everyone else and this killed Him.]

All the others were OK. But the Buddha was sick for a week. During this time Mara appeared again to Ananda. Ananda was the Buddha's cousin; let's say, in modern terms He was Buddha's secretary and He spent all His life travelling around with the Buddha. He knew everything about Buddha's life. So the Mara appeared to Ananda and said: *I think now is the time for the Buddha to pass away* and Ananda didn't say anything. Ever since then we have always had this tradition of requesting the Guru to stay. That's why we made many, many long-life pujas – hundreds – with Rinpoche, always asking Him to stay, to not go away. Also when Rinpoche was sick we made many requests to Him to stay - all His disciples from all around the world. The fact that He didn't stay is not because we're not good enough but because He has a higher purpose to fulfil, for sure there are many lost souls in the bardo for Him to guide in this moment of pandemic. I'm sure. What I want to say is that all His disciples made many requests, heartfelt requests for Rinpoche to stay. In my humble opinion: all these people that die in this epidemic, I think He's guiding them in the bardo because many people are lost. Probably He thought we're all okay and all those hundreds of thousands of people dead without proper funerals needed him more. And Rinpoche's nature was wherever people are sick and suffering He must go and now there's 100, 200 thousand – it goes up every day – 300,000 people lost in the bardo with no funeral, nobody taking care. So I'm sure Rinpoche is busy taking care of all these people. When Rinpoche came to the West He said He only agreed to come if He could take care of the most sick and most incurable people of body and mind, the people with most suffering.

Also to show the power of the Dharma. I heard Him say many times He would show us the truth of reincarnation – show us directly. That was one thing He had on His list of things to do. He used to say He had to do this, because if reincarnation is true that means all the rest is true, doesn't it? [*laughing*], all the Dharma is true, refuge, karma, *bodhicitta*, it's all true [*laughing*].

So when the historical Buddha was passing away into parinirvana He gathered some of His disciples around him and He said: *I've taught everything. I haven't left out anything, I gave you all the instructions.* I heard Rinpoche himself say many times: *I'm not taking anything to the grave with me. I'm not taking anything – I like to give everything to all of you, to my disciples before I pass away.* And now we need to use what He gave us. He urged us after He passed away to practise what He taught us. He gave everything to us. Even the last teaching was Black Manjushri instruction – how to do. After the historical Buddha passed away, His disciples continued teaching the Dharma and gradually what we call Buddhism in the West developed over centuries. This is a very short version of the story!

In the first 500 years, what we now call the Theravada teachings, the *Teachings of the Elders* was more common, more popular. It was easier for people to understand. It's a bit like in the Christian tradition – the stories of Jesus and the disciples are very human somehow. It [i.e., the focus of Theravada] is the story of Ananda, Shariputra and Maudgalyayana and all those people: they used to talk to Buddha and receive profound instructions on meditation. Also it very strongly emphasises ethics, peace culture. Peace to develop ethics, peace, concentration and wisdom. The Theravada teachings are very beautiful, they are about how can I find peace for me, how can I overcome my suffering and achieve nirvana, the cessation of suffering. In what we call the first century of the Christian era or Common Era, the Mahayana became more popular in India, the *Great Vehicle*. The Mahayana point of view is: even if you do achieve nirvana for yourself only it's not so great because you're just one person; what about my mother, my father, my friends, my country? Everybody needs peace. So the Mahayana teaches everybody needs to develop wisdom, everybody needs peace. Rinpoche said hundreds of times: *We need to change our small selfish heart into the big open heart of compassion.* I think Rinpoche used to repeat the same thing hundreds of times because we're a bit slow! [*laughing*]. Slowly maybe something is going in! So Mahayana is like this. Actually the Bodhisattvas were also disciples of the historical Buddha. They were people who had this bodhisattva mind – this great heart, like Manjushri, Maitreya, Avalokiteshvara. There are many representations of them together with the Buddha. People all have different mentalities; not everything is suitable for everybody at the same time. So the Buddhist teachings came out at different times in a more public way.

Gradually in ancient India, from the first or second centuries onwards the tantras became public. First, the Guhyasamaja Tantra; up to the 10th or 11th century when the Kalachakra Tantra came out. So it happened bit by bit: the Chakrasamvara Tantra became more popular – public – in the 8th century. It's not that it wasn't there before but they were secret teachings. Gradually over the course of time in medieval Indian society they became more known. The tantric teachings, the Vajrayana, is a special section of the Mahayana teachings. Tantra carries the idea that we can transform everything into the path

of enlightenment. Also, the tantric movement was open and inclusive of lay people – people like us, who have jobs, families and so on. Whereas the Theravada teaching was a monastic tradition basically. In the early Indian period the Mahayana was also very much emphasising monastic living, although there are some famous Bodhisattvas like Vimalakirti, there are some exceptions. There are some very famous lay bodhisattvas who are super-cool. Tantra focusses on how to transform daily life into the spiritual path. Everything, but especially death, bardo and rebirth. We need to do everything with peace and bliss. Eating with peace, looking with peace, working with peace – as Rinpoche used to say. So basically in India, the Theravada and Mahayana were monastic traditions but there were some famous lay bodhisattvas like Manjushri and Vimalakirti. There were some exceptions: there were some lay followers of Mahayana but it was the tantric tradition that became accessible to lay people. Rinpoche used to say that, in fact, the historical Buddha always taught the Vajrayana to Royal Families, to people who could not give up their responsibility because they had kingdoms to rule.

In the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth centuries in medieval India came the Vajrayana period and the mahasiddhas. Mahasiddha means someone with great realisation. Now Rinpoche liked the mahasiddhas very much! In fact, He was two Mahasiddhas himself – Laksminkara and Darikapa in His past lives. For many years we had the fortune to receive the initiations of the 84 Mahasiddhas directly from Rinpoche. It took us 12 years actually. A very appropriate way because they often say: *Oh, they were at the feet of the master for twelve years*, so it took us exactly 12 years to receive all these initiations – over twelve summers. Our Rinpoche is very famous for being the successive incarnation of both Mahasiddha Laksminkara, a female Mahasiddha, and also Mahasiddha Dharikapa. Recently, in the last year or so, His Holiness Kyabje Pabongkha Rinpoche was suggesting that Rinpoche was Dombi Heruka, another mahasiddha. He said that was according to His opinion. So we're very very lucky that we had the opportunity to know and work with, pass time with and be in the presence of such a Holy Being. So this is the short history of Buddhism, in five minutes!

For various historical reasons, from the 11th to the 14th century Buddhism declined in India but some of the Indian masters went North, to Tibet. So the late Indian Mahayana-Vajrayana Buddhist tradition continued in Tibet, basically. In the Himalaya region – in India, in Nepal in Tibet. Actually, this is called the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet. The first diffusion was from Guru Padmasambhava and Kamalashila, a great pandita. In the 11th century, great masters like Guru Atisha brought many important teachings to Tibet and also many Tibetan masters were in contact with the Indian Siddha tradition. For example there were Tibetan masters like Marpa who received the teachings from Naropa, from the mahasiddhas. In this way both the Sutra and the Tantra teachings were brought to Tibet.

From Atisha came what was called the Kadampa tradition, which was in many of what we now call the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. *Ka* means the Buddha's word, so *kadam* is something like the tradition of the sacred word of the Buddha; and they were very much into practising Sutra and Tantra but not showing many outside signs, yet they had great realisation inside. They were very much into the *lojong* practice, Chenresig, Buddha Shakyamuni, Tara – this kind of thing. Then appeared various lineages in Tibet

between the 11th and the 15th century. Then there appeared Lama Tsongkhapa, who was the founder of our Gelugpa tradition, our Ganden tradition. The Gelugpa tradition continued through an unbroken lineage down to great masters like Tagpu Dorje Chang, Kyabje Pabongkha Rinpoche, Kyabje Song Rinpoche, Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche, down to His Holiness Gangchen Rinpoche. Many great masters. Gangchen Rinpoche is the inheritor of all this great tradition. There's two things actually: one is His own lineage of personal realisation from many lifetimes and also He is the inheritor of all this great tradition of spiritual knowledge and realisation from the Ganden Gelugpa tradition.

Rinpoche was born in Tibet in 1941, in the metal snake year. In His past life before that He was called Kachen Sapeula, He was actually a great yogi. There's a book called *The Way of the White Clouds* by Lama Govinda. Lama Govinda met Tomo Geshe Rinpoche – the past life. And Tomo Geshe Rinpoche and Kachen Sapeula were very close friends; they called them vajra brothers. When Lama Govinda talks about going on pilgrimage to India actually Kachen Sapeula was there. Rinpoche was there too. When Kachen Sapeula, who was a great yogi, passed away, they say He went to the dakini land Khechara, for two years. His Holiness the 3rd Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche had to call him back from the Dakini land. Now we have His Holiness the 4th Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche calling back Rinpoche again! [*laughing*] When you start to look at these things, it's really incredible. His Holiness Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche is the successive incarnation of Chandaka. (We talked about him yesterday – the Buddha's charioteer.) And like all these great masters they have been connected through many many lives – it's incredible. We are following along somehow in the train of these great masters. I always heard this story that the 3rd Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche asked Gangchen Rinpoche to take care of those on the edge of the Dharma, who were especially in need. Special needs! So He really did that. He helped many people who were sick, so many people in difficult situations all over the world. But also He brought to the modern world the NgalSo Ganden Nyengyu Ear Whispered Ganden teachings in a form suitable for the modern age.

This is one of my notebooks from when Rinpoche made Tantric Self-Healing 2. I was His dharma assistant, writing everything down since 1992. Rinpoche said all kinds of incredible things. *What we need to do is not just speak about enlightenment and all these high things but the positive side effects of the practice in daily life because this is what people need nowadays.* Our tradition is aimed to reach enlightenment, to get out samsara, to achieve nirvana but He said what people need to know is the positive side effects: how it helped cure your body, your mind. He emphasised this very much – when He started to make all these self-healing teachings. First we need to become whole people, then when we become whole balanced people we can start to think about getting enlightened. So Rinpoche was also a charioteer: He opened the way. He always said, *I'm giving you the wisdom key.* In fact He made me draw a picture of somebody with a key, in a cage and opening the door. He said, *I'm giving you all the wisdom.* Rinpoche made me draw all these things to illustrate His point [*laughing*]! We have the key so we can get out of the cage we made for ourselves.

When Rinpoche first came to the West – this is true – we have recordings to prove it! He was mainly teaching **om muni muni mahamuni shakya muni soha**, one mantra. Carmen was there, tell us, please:

[Carmen: Yes, only this! The first years Rinpoche was in Italy, I met Him in Gubbio, then He moved to Milano. In Milano, in particular, He started to have some disciples coming around in the afternoon and the teaching was om muni muni mahamuni shakya muni soha. So we used to repeat the mantra very few times and it was very tiring for us! like 10 times was almost impossible! So the only teaching Rinpoche was giving was muni muni mantra and the Four Limitless Meditations. Because at that time He started also to give the Four Limitless Meditation; also He was visiting patients and giving muni muni and the Four Limitless. The body and mind and the other limitless meditation about the environment came much later. At that time, He used just to teach the traditional Four Limitless Meditations with the muni muni mantra. That's all.]

I remember Rinpoche said that at a certain point people used to say that He didn't know anything, that He only knew one mantra! Which is really funny because Rinpoche knew everything! He was one of the highest lamas and He knew every practice and He used to teach all the other lamas how to do them. But people used to say: *Oh, you don't know anything, only om muni muni mahamuni shakya muni soha!* And He would say: *Yes, yes, I only know muni muni ... ! [laughter]* What Rinpoche explained later was He was actually seeing if His tradition worked on us because: *we, the Tibetan lamas, know all this, we have this incredible spiritual tradition but how do I know it works on Western people?* So He said for the first ten years He was checking if it worked. At that time in the Kunpen centre He had Duccio, His painter, who made a huge tangkha – beautiful! Incredible. You must have seen it – it's the Bodhi tree and there's the World Peace Buddha. Beautiful! And on all the leaves it says “Peace” in 180 different languages – all the languages of the world. And out of the hand of the World Peace Buddha is coming a rainbow down to the earth. Rinpoche used to sit exactly where the rainbow was coming down from the Buddha's hand when He was teaching. It's a really big painting. I think it's still there in the Kunpen but at that time it used to be behind the throne of Rinpoche. So it was very cool. He was sitting under the Buddha's tree and the World Peace Buddha was sending him the five energies when He was talking.

When Rinpoche first came to the West and His first centre was in Greece, in Lesbos. It was called Karuna Buddha Garden. He made a statue there of the World Peace Buddha which I believe is still there. *[Cosy: this statue was brought from Nepal. Yurgo and Yasodara, they used to run this place and she was from Nepal. Yasodara was from Nepal and Yurgo was Greek so they invited Rinpoche. So Rinpoche went there and made this Buddha Garden there. This was one of the very first things done for the Dharma in the West.] [Carmen clarifies: Karuna was the name of the Centre and then Buddha Garden – there was the garden inside of this centre that Rinpoche made the Buddha Garden.]*

Rinpoche was incredibly consistent throughout all His life, throughout all His lives, actually. Also here in Albanagno He created another Buddha Garden. He brought many Bodhi trees from Borobudur, which are around the Albagnano centre; some are really big now. Actually the last things Rinpoche created in this lifetime was the Tsering Jong long life forest in Andalucia and the Gangchen Chöpal Ling Karuna Action hospice project here

in AHMC. So He started in the West with Karuna Centre Buddha garden and the last thing that He made was the Karuna Action, which is going to be like a clinic, a hospice to take care of the sick and the dying here in Albanagno. Because Rinpoche said we have four moments in life: birth, ageing, sickness and death and we need to take care of all of these. It's our commitment as His followers to help people when they are sick, they're suffering, when they are dying. Also Rinpoche planted very many many trees in Gangchen [Tibet]... a hundred thousand trees in Tibet. Also Kachen Sapepla in His past life, apparently He made a Buddha Garden in Gangchen [Tibet].

The river of life flows from life to life

We see just this life and “that’s it” but for somebody like Rinpoche – a high being like Him – there are many lives. One of the things Rinpoche said recently, before He passed away was: *You have to see like this. This is just one moment and our life is like a river, and we have to see it's going to continue to flow.* That’s why for us as His followers, it's kind of normal to refer to Rinpoche 500 years ago! He said: *I promise I'm coming back and I am going to show you the truth of reincarnation.* We in the West think it’s just one life. The thing is with these high beings when they reincarnate, of course the body looks different. It’s different each time but the intention is the same, the deeper personality is basically the same and the wish, the dedication, the commitment. For example, Rinpoche liked gardening in His past life and He liked it very much as well in this life. So it’s true: things continue – with the high bodhisattvas, it goes like that. Rinpoche said repeatedly: *I’m coming back to Albagnano.* It's true, we all heard. So this we have to believe – No doubt. So like this. Now that we’ve started to talk about Rinpoche we’ll never finish.

Can we make our first ever NgalSo retreat again? **om muni muni** and the Four Limitless. This is what Rinpoche used to do. Why? Because He used to say that was enough to heal people. This is true actually but our mind’s need more, more more – never satisfied. But He said that is entirely enough.

[Carmen: He said this mantra, the mantra of Buddha Shakyamuni, this is a self-healing and spiritual company mantra. At that time we used to teach this mantra so I remember we prepared some booklets, some piece of paper that we used to give to people and there was written only mantra of self-healing and spiritual company. This was our first sadhana [laughter]... And below that the Four Limitless Meditations. This was our first sadhana]

For how long?

[For about ten years! At a certain point Rinpoche started to teach White Tara sadhana and Open-Eye Chenresig sadhana, saying that these were His main yidams. And so we also did one “om tare tuttare ture” retreat but that was years after. Really only muni muni was I think four, five, six years and we started mainly to recite muni muni but also a little bit White Tara sadhana, We tried to prepare the sadhana. Photocopy style, high tech! [Laughter]. We started to recite White Tara and He was teaching all the tunes]

Rinpoche used to say a lot that the **muni muni** mantra contains four **munis**. **Muni** means something like *ability*. He used to say it’s something like this – we need to develop all our qualities, our abilities. He said the first **muni** was renouncing violence. The second **muni**

was developing bodhichitta – opening the great heart. The third **muni** was understanding the nature of reality. The fourth **muni** was the generation and completions stage of tantra, the union. So the whole spiritual path was inside **om muni muni**. Rinpoche used to say: *From one Buddha comes three Buddhas, 100 Buddhas, one thousand Buddhas – all come from Buddha Shakyamuni. All are inside the mantra.*

Let's do the first ever NgalSo retreat. Let's repeat it. With Carmen, who was there:

om muni muni mahamuni shakymuniye soha (x 10)

When you used to make the Four Limitless, was it in Tibetan, English or Italian?

[Carmen: We used to do in Tibetan and Italian.]

Lama Caroline: So let's do it in Tibetan, Italian and Portuguese and English.

semchen tamche dewa dang dewai gyu dang denpar gyur chik
semchen tamche dungal dang dungal gyi gyu dang drelwar gyur chik
semchen tamche dungal mepai dewa dang min drelwar gyur chik
semchen tamche nyering chak dang nyi dang drelwai tangnyom la nepar gyur chik

may all beings have happiness and its causes

may all beings be free from suffering and its causes

may all beings never be separated from the great happiness that is beyond all misery

may all beings dwell in equanimity, free from attraction to dear ones and aversion to others.

How did you used to dedicate or was that it?

[Carmen: finito! [laughing] This was the very first pujas we did. Not much more – it was already a lot!]

How about next time we do this, we'll talk about how to meditate on this – the four limitless meditations. What we should actually meditate on. Rinpoche explained this many many times – and then we can do those meditations together. We could talk about the effects of this because we did much research on this, actually. Next time we meet together on the streaming.

After 10 years of this Rinpoche decided that His tradition works because He saw many people were healed. We did some research and found that basically people who took natural medicine got one result; those who took that same natural medicine together with **om muni muni** and Four Limitless got better more quickly. There's a lot of proof of this. Many people that Rinpoche met in the Western world were cured and healed in the same

way that He had healed many Tibetan, Nepalese and Sikkamese people. So then He decided: *OK, my tradition works with these strange foreign people.* And so then He decided to share more of it.

Why we are doing these reminiscences of Rinpoche's early years in the West is because: we feel like doing it because we love Rinpoche, He was so fantastic. In our tradition we also have many new people, so we would like to share with you – truly – what we saw. In that way, all the people who are coming later into Rinpoche's teachings get more understanding about them. When we do one practice, one mantra we do like this or like that and I would like to share what Rinpoche – as far as I know – was thinking. What He told us. So then the newer people – will know as well. Rinpoche said: *I give you the practice; now it's yours – you can do it.* For example, when we do **semchen thamche...** you need to know what you're supposed to think. It's like the Olympic torch. Rinpoche has given all of us these incredible treasures. In the Olympics, there's this incredible flame. They come with the torch with the flame from the previous Olympics and they keep it alight to light the next one. Rinpoche came with His incredible lineage of personal realisation and all this knowledge from all these great masters and He's given us this! He has already lit the torch of dharma within us and now we need to continue to practise. He said: *Practise more deeply.* Then hopefully we grow. He said: *I wish you all grow in this time while, let's say, I'm busy somewhere else, doing the practice and then you can also pass that on in the future.* That was His wish. So our inner light becomes brighter, our torch becomes bigger through the practice. Because that is what Rinpoche was – full of light – in all senses. Full of love, full of compassion. In every sense, full of light. Also full of happiness, full of humour, full of all good qualities. We're all very lucky and we will continue.

Now, we have to make the very important Rinpoche “come back” prayer for Rinpoche's Swift Return. We're the disciples who are a little slow, special needs! – the ones that were out drinking coffee when Dharikapa went to the Pure Land. We are a little slow but we will get there [*laughter*]. Fortunately we have many many great lamas requesting Rinpoche to come back, from many monasteries all over India, Nepal, Tibet and Mongolia. But we will also do our own request. Geshe Lobsang Phuntsok made a beautiful melody, but we still have not learnt it – we're a little slow – You can also do the melody from “Gyal kun trinle”. For us Western people, we have to do what's easy.

[Recitation of Swift Return Prayer]

Rinpoche-la: *Please come back very soon for the continuation of the NgalSo teachings, for the benefit of all sentient beings, for world peace and to take care of the environment in this very difficult 21st century now.*

nyimo delek tsen delek
nyime gung yang delek shin
nyitsen taktu delek pe
kon chok sum gyi jin gyi lob

kon chok sum gyi ngoe drup tsol
kon chok sum gyi tra shi shok

Thank you very much for listening. Tomorrow Lama Michel Rinpoche will be teaching. I will probably be teaching again the day after – in two days time. We'll keep you posted. Thank you all very much. We love you all, we're all connected, one family, Rinpoche's children. We are all brothers and sisters – it's called *vajra* – it means indestructible. So it's not like a normal family. In a normal family many times we don't get on and we abandon them, but this one we cannot abandon [*laughing*]. Also Rinpoche made an indestructible promise towards us that He would take care of us. He said many times, not just in this life but in future lives until enlightenment. He said this many times. He said: *As long as Space exists, as long as sentient beings remain, for that long I will return to help all living beings*. So that obviously includes us! [*laughter*]

So tune in in two days and we will talk about how to meditate on **om muni muni** and the Four Limitless Meditations. We will be doing more of NgalSo tantric Self-Healing I! [*laughing*]. If someone has an original copy of NgalSo Self-Healing 1 please bring it! What's my friend, what's my enemy... and all these things. See you all then! Those who are listening, if you have your book, you can get it off the shelf, dust it and open it!

Thank you all very much, we'll see you all in two days.