



The Shamarpa

Statement from Shamar Rinpoche, lineage holder of the Karma Kagyu Lineage, regarding Lama Ole Nydahl's teaching activity in the West for the past 40 years

When Lama Ole and Hannah became the disciples of H.H. the 16th Karmapa in 1969 in Nepal, I was 18 years old.

They immediately volunteered to organize and help with the many people at the initiations His Holiness gave. From then on, they used to see Karmapa every day. When visitors came they waited outside, and the moment there was free time they were received back into Karmapa's room. Wherever Karmapa taught and gave initiations he treated Hannah and Ole in a special way, placing them in the front row and calling them "my two hippies".

On their way to Rumtek for the first time, Hannah and Lama Ole decided to take a shortcut and walked over the hills, as there was no public transportation that day. They got lost in rice fields and it became difficult to come out again. A crow appeared, always flying and landing ahead and thus guided them through the fields until they saw the monastery. It was a many-hour tour but they arrived before night time.

Every day from then on, Karmapa taught them Dharma and requested Tenga Rinpoche to assist. Even though I was very young, I also gave them instructions such as explanations on Gampopa's *Jewel Ornament of Liberation*. Karmapa asked them to do the Four Foundational Practices and later the Guru Yoga on the 8th Karmapa Meditation in 4 stages.

At this time it was very difficult to renew visas for Sikkim, so Karmapa sent Lama Ole and Hannah to study with Kalu Rinpoche in Sonada in order to use the time well.

In total, they spent three years in the Himalayas receiving teachings, meditation instructions and practicing during all this time.

In 1972 Karmapa told them to go back to the West and introduce Buddhism to the people there. I remember that Lama Ole asked Karmapa if he could really teach as he was not a monk and didn't wish to be one. Karmapa confirmed that Lama Ole should teach the Dharma as a lay-person, thus being a Genyun Bodhisattva, and sent them home with a letter of recommendation to the Queen of Denmark, Margaret II.

Back in Denmark, Hannah and Lama Ole used their inheritance to purchase a house which they placed in a newly formed Karma Kagyu Trust and thus started the first Buddhist center in Copenhagen. It was the time when His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Europe for the first time. His Holiness inaugurated the center, which was a remarkable occasion.

According to Karmapa's wish, Lama Ole began founding Karma Kagyu centers in the Western world. By 1991 there were already 94 centers, which he offered to the Karmapa Charitable Trust in Sikkim, an entity established by the 16th Karmapa to manage the Karma Kagyu assets. Shortly after that, when the controversy about the Karmapa title appeared, Lama Ole had to safeguard the centers from possible claims by supporters of the Chinese-approved Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley. In consequence, Lama Ole created the Diamond Way organization in the West.

Until today, Lama Ole is a genuine teacher, passing on the teachings exactly as he himself received them from the late 16th Karmapa, Kalu Rinpoche, Tenga Rinpoche and myself. I witnessed that he even reminds people during the blessing line at initiations not to put pictures of Buddha aspects unprotected in their back pockets.

Today Lama Ole follows the advice of the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Thaye Dorje by, for example, not eating meat on full moon.

In many ways, Lama Ole motivates his students by his own example. For instance he lately encouraged them to be more moderate in drinking alcohol. And for that reason he stopped drinking himself.

It has been my observation that Lama Ole has been criticizing radical Islam already since the 70s and early 80s. Although he has been publicly expressing his concern, he has not organized any political or anti-religious activity but instead has often requested prayers and wishes from us. After so many unnecessary killings, nowadays the world understands why. In general one shouldn't discriminate, however if there is a danger of a radical religion or political ideology one should warn against it with a good heart. From a Buddhist perspective if someone sees danger, is purely motivated, and voluntarily points it out, it is not wrong conduct.

One can always search for faults within the human existence and there are many such examples in the spiritual world. In Lama Ole's case, however, I see no misuse of the teacher's position. The Diamond Way Buddhist centers are free from any scandals or fabricated teachings.

I want to express my appreciation for Lama Ole's forty-year-long work to transmit the Buddha's teachings to the West for the benefit of all beings. I make wishes that Lama Ole's activity continues to grow.

Yours,

Shamar Rinpoche