

Lama Caroline

The elements & me

**Introduction to the gross,
subtle and very subtle elements**

EH BAM LAM RAM YAM

Transcript - day 1

Lama Caroline

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Introduction to the gross, subtle and very subtle elements
Kunpen Lama Gangchen, Albagnano, Italy

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Transcript: Introduction to the gross, subtle and very subtle elements
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Lama Caroline, Dorje Kanyen Lhamo, was born in England in 1965. As a child she was fascinated by science, astrology and space exploration. Whilst at the university of London, she began to feel that the scientific approach to reality was too external and conceptual and so began to investigate reality through Buddhist meditation and explore inner space.

From 1986 to 1991 she studied Gelugpa Buddhism in Cumbria, England, with Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. Then in 1991 she met her spiritual master, Lama Gangchen Rinpoche, and, impressed by his open modern approach to spirituality, she began to study and collaborate with him. For the past 28 years she has accompanied him on numerous teaching tours and pilgrimages worldwide, promoting non-violence, non-formal education, the NgalSo tradition of Tantric Self-Healing and an inter-religious spiritual forum for world peace. She is the chief editor of Lama Gangchen Peace Publications, which publishes books on Buddhism, peace media and peace education. She is presently editing the NgalSo Gyatso – the collected works of Lama Gangchen that form the basis of the NgalSo tradition.

In August 2000, in Tibet, she was recognised by Lama Gangchen as Lama Dorje Khanyen Lhamo (Goddess Who Upholds and Transmits the Vajra Speech of the Buddha) and is one of the two lineage holders of the NgalSo teachings.

She has done numerous meditation retreats of the Mahayana and Vajrayana traditions and teaches courses and workshops on Buddhist philosophy, tantra, medicine, yoga and astrology. She has a diploma in Inter-religious Studies from the Open University (UK), an MA (with merit) in Buddhist studies from the University of Sunderland (UK) and is about to embark on a BA in Tibetan and Sanskrit.

We were very fortunate to receive a commentary on the Five Supreme Healers and Five Element Mothers during a course from the 2nd to 12th August 2017 at Albagnano Healing Meditation Centre in Italy. The course was given by Lama Caroline who since 28 years has worked alongside Lama Gangchen recording his teachings and producing the books and sadhanas we now have. The following is a lightly edited transcript of the second half of this course - concentrating on the Great Element Mothers and the element absorption practices.

To follow this text it will be useful to have the following books and sadhanas from Lama Gangchen Peace Publications:

- *Making Peace with the Environment*
- *Crystal massage method to create the pure energy form of light and nectar - the secret commitment assembly of Guyusamaja*
- *The process of death, bardo and rebirth according to tantra*

Day 1

For every emotion we have there is an energy that sustains it. This energy is called a *prana*, a wind or energy. Every emotion needs something to carry it. Mind without wind, without energy, cannot exist. The Mothers and Fathers are like two sides of the same coin. If we look at a Self-Healing *thangkha* we can see the Five Fathers, the Five Supreme Healers, and the Five Mothers, the Five Elemental Mothers. When we understand about these ten aspects, we actually understand how we can become a Buddha. The real essence of tantra is to understand these ten aspects. By understanding these and the three transformations, the transformation of the death, bardo and rebirth process, we will know very well what tantra is. In these next days we are going to take a look at the Five Element Mothers, and as we already know there are many different kinds of element meditations that Rinpoche has introduced us to over the years, so we will look at these - how they work, what they do and so on.

First, let me tell you a bit of background. In 1992 Rinpoche came back from the Borobudur UNESCO world heritage site in Indonesia with the idea for the NgalSo Self-Healing practice. It was new and very wonderful and we started going all around the world with Rinpoche sharing the practice. About a year after this Rinpoche basically said: *ok now we need something else - we need to make the second part which is about the five elements*. Rinpoche wanted to make a book about the elements and so we spent a whole year putting together the information - it takes a lot of time to extract all the information from the Tibetan tradition because there aren't any books specifically about the elements. The element practices are really important, and we need them for many different reasons. Nowadays, the elements are getting weaker, there are more environmental problems, people are sicker than before - for all these reasons we need to work more with the elements. Rinpoche asked me to look through all the different tantras

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- Guyusamaja, Heruka, Vajrayogini, Chittamani Tara, Kalachakra the medical tantras, everywhere - and to extract all the element systems so we could make something useful for people. That's how this book *Making Peace with the Environment* came about. Actually, *Self-Healing 2* and *Making Peace with the Environment* should be one book about the ten buddhas: the Five Fathers and the Five Mothers - then we would really understand how to transform our ordinary self into a buddha.

In *Making Peace with the Environment*, Rinpoche put first the wishing path of the seven eco-moralities, what we call the Seven Limitless Meditations. This sets our motivation. Traditionally, there is something called the Four Limitless Meditations at the beginning of any Mahayana practice: limitless love, limitless compassion, limitless joy and limitless equanimity.

May all beings have happiness and its causes. (limitless love)

May all beings be free from suffering and its causes. (limitless compassion)

May all beings never be separated from the great happiness that is beyond all misery. (limitless joy)

May all beings always dwell in equanimity, unaffected by attraction to dear ones and aversion to others. (limitless equanimity)

These Four Limitless Meditations were made by Buddha Shakyamuni. They are things we need to meditate on in order to develop empathy towards others, which is one of the fundamental bases for our spiritual development. We need to think about all forms of life: all human beings and other kinds of beings. We need to open up our hearts, and extend our circle of caring to develop empathy towards other people and beings: for example, towards birds, bees, animals, people from other continents, people we don't know and so on. This is fundamental if we want to grow as a spiritual practitioner. Here in this book we have seven meditations because Rinpoche added three more. He added limitless health, ecological regeneration and peace.

Why? Because we don't have these things anymore. But, we need the basis of good health, a good environment and peace in order for everything to be ok and as a basis for our spiritual development.

May all beings recover from the sicknesses of mind and body pollution and enjoy relative and absolute health now and forever. (limitless health)

May all beings relax in a pure and healthy outer and inner environment now and forever.(limitless ecological regeneration)

May all beings enjoy inner and world peace now and forever. (limitless peace)

Rinpoche came to the West about 35 years ago. He is a reincarnated Tibetan lama, brought up in a monastery in Tibet. He got to India when he was in his 20s after the cultural revolution. He studied in Varanasi, at the Sanskrit University, together with Kyabje Song Rinpoche, a very high, famous lama. He was together with him for many years in India acting as his attendant. Sanskrit is incredibly difficult, and Rinpoche says that he never really went to the classes - he used to spend all his time going around helping people and doing retreats or pujas with his guru. Every year he used to fail all the exams. But, for the final exam he actually studied and came first! Amazing! Having studied Sanskrit myself I can tell you this is really, really difficult to do. But that's what he did when he was in his 20s. What it shows is that Rinpoche has the most incredible memory, because you have to memorise a minimum of 120 pages of verbs. This really shows the quality of his mind. After this Rinpoche started to travel around India and Sikkim in the Tibetan communities as a healer, because since many lifetimes Rinpoche has this tendency, this quality, to be a healing lama. This means that when people ask: *oh, can you help me, I have this problem, please pray for me*, of course we try to do something but, when Rinpoche does it, something really works. People quickly recognised Rinpoche's quality, that his healing prayers really worked, and that he had deep knowledge of the Tibetan medical system which is similar to Ayurveda. Many

people started to come to him for help and he became particularly famous for curing people's eyes. He has a practice called Open Eye Chenrezig, that we also have now thanks to him. For us it's not such a big deal if we have an eye problem, we just think we're getting older and we need glasses or that we need to go to the hospital. In Asia it is a much bigger problem because people at that time didn't have access to all the help we have. People couldn't just go to the optician and get everything sorted out like we can. There were no good medical facilities. Rinpoche was going around healing people's eyes. There were more problems of cataracts and infections, because there was a lot of dust. Rinpoche discovered that he could help people by curing their eyes. One of the people he helped was the Queen Mother of the Sikkimese royal family. She had an eye problem so they requested Rinpoche to help and her eyesight recovered. Through this he became more famous in the Tibetan community and around the Himalayas. Many people started to go to him for healing - not just the eyes of course, also for many other kinds of sicknesses but particularly he was famous for healing eyes.

Rinpoche studied Tibetan medicine, it's like Ayurveda, and we could also do this to understand more about the elements - about how the emotions and elements function in the body. The Tibetan medical system is based on this idea. They have a whole system about what to eat to be healthy, what kind of lifestyle to follow, and then they also have herbal medicines which is a kind of the last resort. Basically, we need to bring ourselves back into health by taking care of our emotions, our elements, our diet, our behaviour and so on. Rinpoche has a very profound and excellent knowledge of this system which he has been able to apply to help others. It is possible to become a doctor in the Tibetan tradition. It takes 7 years, like in the west, if we do it in a Tibetan medical college. I think Rinpoche, as an incarnate lama, did it much quicker than that because he had the impression from other lives. On top of this, in our Ganden Nyengu spiritual tradition - passed down through the great masters of our lineage such

as Pabongkha Rinpoche, Song Rinpoche and so on - there are many incredible tantric healing practices that are fortunately still unbroken. They are very powerful and still work.

We call Rinpoche a lama healer, so let me explain exactly what a lama healer is. If somebody goes to a Tibetan doctor because they are sick, there are different classes of illness. There are normal illnesses such as heart or liver problems, normal sicknesses based on our diet, behaviour, ageing etc. For these sicknesses there is a solution, of course ultimately we are all going to die, but there are ways to deal with normal health problems. But, there are other kinds of sickness that even if we go to the doctor and have the best medicines and so on, it's not getting any better. There is a whole category of difficult to cure illnesses, that actually in the west we don't really have a solution for. Nowadays, there are many kinds of psychological problems, many kinds of complex illnesses and we can go to whatever doctor we like, we can try allopathy, homeopathy, we can go to the Chinese doctor, we can try Ayurveda, we can follow all the diets we like - but we don't get better. Finally, we just spend a lot of money but we don't get better which is very frustrating and exhausting. A lama healer, like Rinpoche, has something extra. They know how to deal with sicknesses in a different way. Why? Because they see reality in a different way from other people. There is a whole other world of energies and beings which normal people have no understanding of whatsoever. If we contact this world in a wrong way we get sick. Rinpoche knows how to deal with these kinds of energies and has healed many people all over the world as a result. It's not exactly a miraculous cure because there is a whole system behind it, it's a very clear system, but for people who don't know it's like wow, amazing!

This system is actually based on many years of meditation, practice and understanding. That's why if we don't train in it, we can't just do it. I've been together with Rinpoche for many years and I've seen him heal all kinds of people of all kinds of difficult to cure sickness,

both psychological and physical. Many people who should have died many years ago have lived much longer than expected thanks to his support. For example, Rinpoche has this famous Gangchen Rilbu - the red and white pills - that are actually based on various kinds of plants, medicinal substances, and blessed by meditation. Throughout the Himalayas, this pill is so famous! We have them and we can't even be bothered to take them, we're spoiled, but as Rinpoche reminded us recently people in Kham, in East Tibet, will exchange a yak for just 2 of these pills. They understand how powerful they are to heal.

Many of us have been to Tibet with Rinpoche and of course we have seen this monastery and that monastery, mountains and yaks and other things - but more importantly what we have seen is the incredible respect that the Tibetans have for Rinpoche. Honestly you've never seen anything like it. We have Rinpoche here and he's always so kind and available all the time: *I need this, I need that...* He's always got time for us. In Tibet there are 100,000 people queuing to see him, they spend days in a line just for one second to get one blessing off him. When you see this it really, really makes a big impression. This is the kind of master we have. Here we don't appreciate him, it's like: *oh yes Rinpoche is there let's have a croissant together with him.* We are so habituated, almost too much habituated, to be around Rinpoche that we don't see his qualities anymore. The best reason in my opinion to spend a lot of money to go to Tibet and experience a lot of difficulties is to see what an incredible master Rinpoche actually is. To see how much people in his own society actually respect him. Why? Because they know if he touches them, they will really get some healing. They are all queuing up because they know it's true, he's a great healing master and if they receive his blessings something will really change in their life. That's why they stand for one week waiting in a field in the middle of Tibet, because they know it's worth it. I'm not joking. In Buddhism we often use the number 100,000 but really I've seen this: thousands, thousands and thousands of people waiting to see Rinpoche.

As we know there are many different kinds of lamas in the world and different traditions, we have Nyingmapa, Sakyapa, Kagyupa, Gelugpa. Most lamas give teachings, make pujas and ceremonies... and of course this is wonderful because they show us the path to enlightenment. But Rinpoche is a healing lama - of course he still gives us teachings, but in a different way. It's not simply here are the Buddhist teaching from A to Z, here is the sutra, here is the Lam Rim, here is the Lojong, there are the works of Chandrakirti and Nagarjuna, and all the texts of Lama Tsongkhapa and all the great masters of our lineage and here's the commentaries of all the tantras and so on. There are lots and lots of great lamas doing exactly this, but Rinpoche has a very specific function which is to be a healing lama. When Rinpoche came to the west he wanted to show the power of the dharma, because there were already many great lamas giving incredible explanations. He wanted to show people that the dharma is true, that even in these days dharma still works, it still has energy, it still transforms people. When Rinpoche was living as the attendant of Kyabje Song Rinpoche in India, Song Rinpoche was quite hard on him. Why? Because he saw that Rinpoche had such a great capacity. All the other monks thought it was funny that Kyabje Song Rinpoche was always giving Gangchen Rinpoche a hard time, but one day Song Rinpoche said: none of you will ever reach where Gangchen Rinpoche will go in the future. He told them to have complete respect towards him. Rinpoche says he always found this a bit of a weird prediction. But it's actually true. He's spent many, many years going around the world - healing and helping so many people. He has really travelled extensively bringing dharma teachings all over the world. It's true what Song Rinpoche said.

Rinpoche has helped so many people and done so many incredible things, he really is a great yogi. He has the experience of the practice. Of course we hope that everybody has the experience of dharma, but a lot of people are just academics. It's like they're professional preachers. There are not so many yogis anymore but Rinpoche is really a yogi,

he really has the actual experience of the tantras, elements, subtle minds and winds... That's why we say he's a mahasiddha, siddha means realised person so mahasiddha is a great realised person. He really knows how to work with all the energies. Maybe it sounds like I'm a fanatic or something, but I'm basing my opinion on observing Rinpoche closely for many years. I also know many other lamas. But, I have had the good fortune, and hopefully will continue to do so in the future, to work together with Rinpoche to make the books of his teachings. I have been able to observe very closely Rinpoche, what he does and the effect of his prayers and so on. He really is a great master - and I'm not saying this in a cultish way. We're so lucky to have a living master who is sharing all the incredible essence of the yogic side of the Gelugpa tradition with us. It is not so common - it is the secret essence of our tradition and Rinpoche knows it very well and he is sharing it freely with us. Whether we pick it up or not depends on us.

After we finished making *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* and we were all doing the practice, Rinpoche said he wanted to do a book about the elements - because it was really important. At first for me it seemed a little bit strange, because at that time I knew much less than I know now. We have all these tantric systems - Guyusamaja, Heruka and so on, but Rinpoche was giving so much emphasis to the elements and I didn't really understand why at the time. Now that I can read Tibetan and Sanskrit, I can see that Rinpoche has really taken out the essence of all the yogic practices. We are so lucky. We have a kind of fascination with yogis, we see documentaries of them living in the Himalayas and we think: *oh that would be really amazing, but it's all secret and nobody can go there and what do they do and it's not possible for me.* Rinpoche has taken out the essence of the secret meditations of the yogis and is sharing them with us.

One of the major subjects of the yogic meditations is to learn how to recognise and work with the five elements - if we want to be

a yogi then that's one of the most important things we've got to do. Rinpoche has made this extremely clear. We need to do this to be healthy, in order to become happy, to become healers if that's what we want to do, or get enlightened, because the five elements are the basis of everything. We have the five elements of space, wind, fire, water and earth. Without having these five elements in balance we can't do anything because we will be tired and sick, get old and die.

Rinpoche always says if the five elements are in balance then whatever we want to achieve in life we can do it: if we want to be a super athlete, if we want to be a millionaire, if we want to be a yogi or a buddha, if we want to have a happy family. Whatever we want to do we need the five elements to be happy, healthy and in balance. Whether we want to have a happy ordinary life or the life of a spiritual practitioner and evolve in order to benefit others we must learn to take care of the five elements, it's fundamental. It's not that this idea of the elements was not there in other traditions but in ancient times it wasn't as necessary as it is now because, in ancient times, there weren't so many people and the planet and elements were in a much better condition. In ancient times there were still many trees, clean air, soil and water. There weren't lots and lots of people destroying the environment for many, many generations like there is now. They hadn't had the industrial revolution. They hadn't contaminated all the elements. They say that nowadays there are half a million pollutants in the environment - so why are we surprised that people are getting ill with cancer and other sicknesses. Half of people get cancer in their lifetime, because collectively we have put half a million contaminants into the environment. Everything we drink or breathe - and it doesn't matter if it's organic - is full of pollution. We are now experiencing the collective result of our actions.

Anyway this is why Rinpoche added these three extra limitless meditations. We need limitless health, ecological regeneration and peace. In ancient times the environment was cleaner, they knew very

well how to take care of it, but nowadays the ecological crisis has become much more urgent so Rinpoche has put a greater emphasis on these kinds of practices because we need them. The Seven Limitless Meditations are so important, from the point of view of Tibetan Buddhist healing.

We also need to take care of the emotional underlying problems that cause us to be tired, uncomfortable and ill. This is a very important idea in NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing. If we have negative emotions for long enough they will make us sick. If we get very angry, constantly angry, and frustrated it's squeezing our heart chakra so the energy can't flow then one day we are going to have a problem with our gall bladder or an heart attack - then we act completely shocked about what happened. What happened is that over years and years we were feeling angry and frustrated and we were also behaving in a certain way and eating certain foods and so finally we developed a blockage inside that made us sick. Sickness doesn't come out of nowhere. It manifests as a result of our own emotions and our own behaviour. We need to take care of our emotions, so the first Four Limitless Meditations are for this: love, compassion, joy and equanimity.

One of our friends has a healing centre in England, he taught this Seven Limitless Meditation to one group of sick people he was treating but not to the others and he found that the ones who were doing this meditation were getting better much faster. This of course is what Rinpoche did when he first came to the west. He says when he first came here, he wasn't sure how the tantric methods would work on western people. He was kind of experimenting by teaching the people he met the mantra **OM MUNI MUNI MAHA MUNI SHAKYAMUNIYE SOHA** and the Four Limitless Meditations. He was advising people to just meditate on this and say the mantra and see what happened. He says that in many different countries - Italy, Greece, many countries around Europe, Spain, South America - that people were recovering from very difficult to cure illnesses. Doctors

used to bring him the most difficult cases because they thought there was nothing to lose, but some of these people actually started to get better.

Gradually Rinpoche was able to understand that even though it was a different culture, western people responded the same as the Tibetans to these healing practices. Slowly, slowly he introduced some other healing meditations such as the White Tara meditation for long life, the Open Eye Chenrezig practice, Vajrapani practice for emotional stability. For 10 years he travelled around the world like this. Then in 1992, after 10 years of traveling and healing many people, he decided to share his healing tradition with others. He did this so there would be more people able to help others. That's why he decided to write down and share his *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* and *Making Peace with the Environment* practices. He wanted to give us the true essence of his spiritual tradition so that we can also truly practice and help others if we want to.

There are many gurus and masters, but they never really give us the complete information, they give us half or three quarters but they always keep something back - it's like that missing part is what makes them the guru or master, because they know something that we don't. Rinpoche has given us everything - if we practice or not is up to us. He always says he's going to the cemetery empty handed because he's leaving all his dharma treasures with us! He's very generous because he has bodhichitta and wants the best for us. He's always giving to us the best of his tradition even to the extent that some Tibetan lamas complained to him, asking: how can you give all our precious things to western people? Rinpoche's answer was: why not, they also need to get enlightened just like us! This is true. This is the point of Buddha Shakyamuni - everybody needs to get enlightened and not just a few people. Anyway that was Rinpoche's motivation - that all of us could become first balanced and healed and then become healers, teachers and guides for others. The ball is in our court.

So, the first four of the Seven Limitless Meditations are to help us to develop empathy and open our heart. We need to take care of our emotions, this is the basis of Self-Healing. Then the fifth one: **May all beings recover from the sicknesses of mind and body pollution and enjoy relative and absolute health now and forever.** The sixth one: **May all beings relax in a pure and healthy outer and inner environment now and forever.** The message is that we need to take care of the five elements. We need two things: we need to take care of our emotions and the elements in order to be healthy and we also need to take care of the outer environment. If we are in balance we will develop peace. It's all very well to repeat: *I need peace, you need peace, we all need world peace*, but if we are disturbed, unhappy and sick then we are not in peace. Taking care of the elements and our emotions is an extremely important way to develop inner and world peace.

The problem we have is that we are so detached from the elements, from nature. I think our whole modern lifestyle has become so far removed from it - here in Albagnano it's a little bit better because we are in the countryside so we can walk in the woods and so on, but generally modern lifestyle is so disconnected from the elements that of course we are getting sick. I was in England recently and there was a news article saying that apparently half of children don't know that milk comes from cows! It was already bad in our time, but now it's much worse. We want all this stuff, material possessions, we want all this comfort but the result is that we are now almost completely detached from natural cycles. I, for example, was brought up in the countryside but then I went to live in big cities - first in London and then in Milan - and I could see that people living in cities didn't have anymore feeling for the natural environment. Somehow it is there behind, but there is no direct feeling for it anymore. We don't have the feeling of the different seasons, of the elements. When I started to do these practices with Rinpoche and learnt about Tibetan medicine - it was like a big discovery for me, to start to feel again fire and wind

and water and earth, to look at the sun and moon and the stars. We are now so far away from the elements that of course we are getting sick. We think we are so sophisticated, but we have contaminated everything. One very big result of doing the *Environment* practice is that we start to feel the elements again. Of course we know we're made of the elements but we really don't feel them anymore in our modern lifestyle. We spend our time staring at computer screens, driving around in our car, eating processed food, surrounded by plastic - of course the elements are still there, they are still alive but we need to get back in touch with them. The *Making Peace with the Environment* practice is really a big gift for us.

Let's have a look now at what Rinpoche says in the book. Recently, some people have asked me for the Tibetan text - but there isn't one because the original text is in English. Rinpoche talked and explained and I wrote it down. These books are the root texts. Rinpoche is perfectly capable of expressing himself in English. Nowadays that I can study all the Tibetan and Indian texts I understand that Rinpoche's explanation in English is actually perfect. He gets to the point. We are very lucky that he explained them easily and clearly in our own language. This book *Making Peace with the Environment* is the root text and it's perfect the way it is, and totally authentic. Maybe we can make better graphics now because we have much better technology. When we made these books we didn't even know how to switch on the computer. When we got our first computer we were like: *how do you use it, where is the on button?* Cut and paste was with a pair of scissors and glue! I also used to draw the illustrations, then we would cut them out and glue them in. That's how we made the illustrations in the first book. We didn't have all the incredible technology we have now. It was very rustic. But, everything was made together with Rinpoche with incredible feeling. Now things have moved on and so we can make better packaging, beautiful pictures and layout - but the message is the same and it is perfect.

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In our tradition there are many texts but there isn't one root text that corresponds to the *Making Peace with the Environment* book - this is Rinpoche's innovation. Many ancient Indian and Tibetan tantric texts have the element purification: **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM SHUDDHE SHUDDHE SOHA** - because in the yogic tradition there are a lot of element meditations, but they don't explain clearly like Rinpoche. Maybe in those times everybody already knew about it so there was no reason to explain. I have heard people saying that this is not a proper book. This book is not written in the Western style. This is Rinpoche's book and he decided what went in - this is his vision. Western people are not familiar with the writing style of Tibetan lamas - Rinpoche is totally traditional from the Tibetan point of view. It's nice to have the possibility to be able to explain the meaning and intention behind this book and because I worked with Rinpoche to make it I understand a little bit - but for sure not everything - of what he wanted to say. We spent years listening to Rinpoche and writing down what he said and checking it and adding things. What we did try to do in the books is keep Rinpoche's voice, because it's nicer and we wanted to keep his speech patterns as a blessing, a connection with the master.

Let's start to look at the book *Making Peace with the Environment*.

Zhing Kham Jong So

T.Y.S. Lama Gangchen

Making Peace with the Environment

The feminine energy and regeneration of the outer and inner environment according to a Buddhist Tantric view

Book 1

On the cover is this beautiful picture of Machik Labdron who is a manifestation of Prajnaparamita - the Perfection of Wisdom. She was a Tibetan yogini who studied the Perfection of Wisdom teachings when she was very young. Since ancient times, the main

essence of dharma has been to develop the Perfection of Wisdom which is embodied as the female buddha - Prajnaparamita, Mother of All Buddhas. Machik Labdron means "Unique Mother, the Light of Dron". Dron was the place where she was born and she had a very special way of meditating on reality. She had a unique way of doing what we call identifying the object of negation.

We talked about this many times before. We say that the Five Supreme Healers are the transformation and purification of the five aggregates that constitute the body and mind: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness. Based on this, our mind creates a wrong concept - which is the idea of a permanent unchanging sense of self. We see something that exists, our body and mind which is continually changing, but on top of this we project something that isn't true - a permanent unchanging self. This conceptual error is the basis of our emotional suffering because we are so out of touch with reality. All the time we are confronted by this hallucinated view of a permanent self, so we feel uncomfortable and we suffer. In buddhist meditation what we do in order to become free of suffering is to check if this conceptual error is true or not by searching for this fake or superimposed permanent self within our five aggregates. If it's real it must be findable, right? Machik Labdron had a special way of helping us to see clearly the objet of negation, the fake self, by scaring ourself!

She has a practice called Chod, which means cutting off the self-grasping mind. In order to identify the fake self we scare ourself because when we feel or imagine that we are in danger the self-grasping and self-pitying minds appear really clearly. The fake self is there all the time but not in such a clear, manifest way. When it appears clearly we can go through the process of looking for where it is within the five aggregates and the collection of the five aggregates. The fact that Rinpoche chose the five dakinis for the cover is giving a clear message - that ultimately we need to understand the nature of reality. We need to think about why Rinpoche used that picture

of the Five Element Mothers - it's showing us that to purify our existence we need to purify the nature of reality. To make peace with the environment we need to do this and we need to work with the five elements. I can say a lot of things about this but I think we should hear Rinpoche's own words from the first part of the book. After I will explain about the Five Mothers and the five winds, about who Lochana is and so on, and then we can meditate on it. It's important to have some background first, what Rinpoche actually thinks, so we can put it all in context. Just jumping in with Guru Buddha Lochana is too fast and too far away for most people.

Why we need to heal the outer and inner environment.

In general I think science and technology is wonderful, many things we take for granted in our everyday life such as telephones, fax machines, televisions, computers and so on, have been developed through scientific and technological discoveries, research and development. There have been numerous important advancements in the field of medicine, healthcare, transportation, food production, communications and so on which can all be credited to the work of scientist and technologists. Even in remote places such as my home country Tibet, which until relatively recently was in a medieval state of material development, they are also interested in acquiring more advanced technology.

Unfortunately the development of technology has often resulted in high levels of pollution, pollution which is destructive for both our health and our environment. We have followed technology believing that it will be able to solve all our problems however it's now time to distinguish between technologies that are good for our health and environment and those which are causing us harm. Then we can choose to make, develop, promote and use green technologies which do not cause pollution or harm our health or environment.

Technology in itself is neither good or bad, this quality is totally dependent on the motivation behind its development, manufacture and upon how we use it. For example nuclear weapons were developed out of fear and feelings of aggression, as a result of this they are very negative for the whole of human

civilisation. On the other hand technology developed with the motivation of helping others such as electricity or life saving medical apparatus has a very positive effect on society.

I'm absolutely not in any way against technology but I am against the pollution that is created as a result of technology. Science and technology have brought many benefits to us and have helped us in many ways but the side effects of the pollution upon the environment and living beings is too expensive.

So we need to use science and technology in a clean and positive way. We all feel much healthier and happier when we are in a pure and balanced environment yet we spend most of our year working hard in the large polluted cities of the world. This kind of environment, although we need to stay there to make money to support our lives is somehow against our natural mind. We call the cities urban jungles but in reality they are urban deserts because there are no trees, plants or crops, nothing grows in the city and few animals are able to live there. Without the importation of food we would not be able to live in these cities. Our natural mind is attracted to natural things, to the countryside, to the mountains, clean rivers and so on. Children's television is full of animal images and nature programmes because our children are fascinated by nature and animals. I am not suggesting that we should or that we need to leave our cities or return to farming in the countryside but we have to at least acknowledge the needs of our natural mind for the wellbeing of our energy and mental and physical health.

Rinpoche wrote this when he was living in Milan, before he came to Albagnano. He is not saying we should all move to the countryside, for many people this is not possible, but he is saying we collectively need to make major changes to how we live, work, consume and so on, in order to be happy and healthy. More than half the population of the world now live in big cities and there is an increasing trend towards urbanisation. That's how it's going to go. People are gathering together in mega-cities. But, like Rinpoche says, these are deserts - they have no energy, no life... Many of us are now living in these places, so we seriously need to think about what we are going to

do. Here in Albagnano it's very nice but not everybody can live in the countryside. What we have to do is find a way to live healthily and happily whether we are in the countryside or in a big city. Rinpoche is not saying that we have to quit the city, but that we have to recognise the situation in which we are living in.

When Rinpoche made this book the situation was bad, but not as bad as it is now. At the time Rinpoche said: *I'm doing this because things are going to get worse. I'm doing this for 20, 30, 40 years in the future.* Rinpoche has always been very visionary. For example, with the *Tantric Self-Healing* practice he decided straight away to make a video tape - he wanted to make audio-visual presentations because he knew that people would want it like that. Now we have the DVD of the practice and we can find it on Youtube - it's the modern way of doing things. Some people, like me, prefer old style books but most people are already completely habituated to this audio-visual style of relating to things and with each generation it's getting more like this. Rinpoche put Self-Healing on video straight away and he insisted that we make the practices to show on a screen - because he understands this is how the things are, that we now want access things on our phone or tablet.

The same with the *Environment* book, Rinpoche said that things would get worse and that we had to emphasise the environmental element practices, which means that if we don't there will be more and more collective environmental problems. This means it will also be much more difficult to be healthy and to meditate. The more unbalanced the environment is, the harder everything gets for us. Food is getting worse, for example. Also due to the imbalance of the seasons people are getting unhealthier, this makes it more difficult to meditate and achieve enlightenment. We need more attention on this subject. Rinpoche said that it is going to be very important. We can already see that the weather is completely mixed up. Now I'm living in Spain, but when I come here to the Alps it's as hot as Spain. It's not right to come from the beach in southern Spain to the mountains and find that

the weather is the same - something is completely wrong. Rinpoche said now and in the future we are really going to need to work with the outer and inner elements. It's not optional anymore.

Rinpoche says in the book:

In our cities we live our lives deprived of the natural elemental energies of the environment. We are isolated from the cycles of day and night by electricity, we are isolated from the natural energy cycle of the seasons because there are few plants or trees to inform us of the seasonal changes. We use central heating to avoid cold weather and air conditioning to avoid the heat. We wear fashionable clothes all year round which are inappropriate for the weather conditions and seasons. Many of the foods we eat are imported from other countries because of this and the new developments in crop production we can eat foods out of season. For example we can eat summer fruits in winter or we can eat food that come from the other side of the world throughout the year. People might think this is ok and that it's great to live in city in a over heated flat, eating ice cream in December while there is snow outside. In fact all of these things are only upsetting the natural flow of energies in our body and this imbalance is what makes us sick.

What Rinpoche is actually talking about here are the concepts of Tibetan medicine. We never even consider these ideas. We were brought up with electricity and modern technology and only now are we starting to see how computers affect people's sleep cycles, how much light there is and so on. Nowadays, so many people have problems sleeping. We think the solution is to make dimmer switches for our computers to change the light spectrum and things like that. I've been five times to the Amazon, a very natural place where there isn't any electricity. It's very different just waking up and going to sleep with the sun and the moon. There you have no choice - there is no artificial light. We have electricity since 150 years, which of course we all like, but it's cut us off from the solar and lunar cycles. The cycle of day and night are actually something very fundamental for our health according to tantra. When Rinpoche first started to say these

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things, I'd never even considered them. Maybe it sounds a little bit radical, but it's actually the truth - we need to get back in touch with the cycle of day and night, with the elements, with what we eat, when we get up, when we go to bed, how much we sleep. There are many things we can do in our daily life to get back in touch with nature. Even doing small things will help us feel healthier and happier.

Modern life is so wonderful in many ways, we have all this comfort, all this great food, all these nice clothes - of course we want to keep it. But, like Rinpoche says, it's not healthy to eat things imported from the other side of the world - apart from the ecological disadvantage it's harmful to us. Just as it is in the outer world - so too it is in the inner world. We have the seasons within us. In winter we need to act accordingly, we need to put on warmer clothes, we need to eat warm things, we need to eat local food because it's got the right elements. For example if we're living here we should eat a mountain diet, it's more healthy: polenta, swedes, wild boar... If we live in southern Spain, where it's really hot, we should eat food local to there. If we live here in Albagnano and it's winter we shouldn't eat the southern Spanish diet. We might like avocado and seafood, but this is not healthy if we eat it in the winter in Albagnano. It's not being nationalistic, it's just healthier. If we want to have long life and be healthy, we have to fit our energy cycle with that of the environment. There is no point in saying: I do the Kalachakra practice, if we don't do some basic things and we continue eating everything wrong, behaving wrong - just saying the Kalachakra mantra on top off this is no good.

We need to make fundamental changes in the way that we behave to bring ourselves back into balance because now we are not! We are extremely out of balance and none of us accept it. We can choose to put our head in the sand and just ignore it - or not. But seeing how our Master is giving us this possibility to be more healthy and energetic we need to do something about it, we need to do our best to use this information. I think Rinpoche's *Making Peace with the*

Environment is important on so many different levels. Wherever we live we need to make as many changes as we can to have a happier, healthier, more energetic life. For example, according to Ayurveda and Tibetan medicine in the winter our inner heat increases and that's why we shouldn't eat ice cream. Ice cream puts our digestive fire out. If we don't have a strong digestion we get all kinds of incredible health problems. Also ice is the same. In the past only kings had ice, they would send someone to the top of the mountains to collect it. Nowadays, we have ice making machines. According to oriental medicine it is very unhealthy to eat a lot of ice. Why? Because it puts out the digestive fire and once the digestive fire is out we get sick. Oriental medicine emphasises the stimulation of the digestive heat through diet and behaviour. People often say they want to practice tummo and become great yogis and yoginis - they fantasise a lot about this - but forget it, first of all we need to become healthy. I'm not saying that we don't need a fridge, of course we need fridges, but it's all about balance. Of course we now have all these possessions and there is no doubt that we will continue to use them, but we need to understand the consequences of each thing that we do. If we take ice, we could think of it as a medicine to cool down the bile nature - but if we take too much we are increasing the cold nature in our body and it will have consequences. We need to do things with awareness.

We have all this incredible technology but we don't really know the consequences of using it. This is the Buddha's teaching, that we need to become aware of the results of our actions and then it is up to us what we do with the information. We can decide if we want to be healthy and happy, or not. Everyone can make their own choices. The Buddhist idea is to give correct information with correct ideas to everybody so people know what the consequence of their behaviour will be. Rinpoche is a healing lama, he knows very well how to take care of the health - maybe he seems like an old grandfather saying: *don't do this, don't do that*, but he knows extremely well how to become healthy. The main point of becoming healthy is to take care of our

emotions, our diet and our behaviour. Just look at Rinpoche, now he's 76, he has a small problem with his knee but for the rest he is full of energy and healthy. He knows very well how to stop illness, how to heal illness. We don't always need some special magical medicine from the other side of the world - we need to take care of our health through what we eat, what we think, and how we live. Rinpoche knows very well how to do this and we can see the result.

In the body we have the five elements that manifest as three energies that are called the three doshas, or three humours. If they are in balance we're healthy, if not we get sick and eventually we die. In oriental medicine they try and bring the five elements and three humours into balance so we can have a long, healthy and productive life. We can use this life to achieve whatever material thing we want or to seek enlightenment. The three humours are based on the five elements and are called wind, bile and phlegm. Bile is the hot energy in the body. Phlegm is the cold energy and is based on the earth and water elements. Then there is what we call the wind energy, which refers to the energies that flow in our body. These three energies depend on the elements and our emotions. The wind energy - *lhung* - is the energy of desire. All the time people say: *I'm stressed, I've got lhung, I'm anxious, I can't sleep, I'm nervous...* Tibetan medicine says if we don't want to be stressed then we need to stop wishing for so many things. If we stop desiring things we won't have *lhung*. Our continual dissatisfaction and grasping at things - *I need more, more and more* - creates this whole stressful lifestyle.

Bile is based on our aggressive feelings and aversion. Each humour is actually like a syndrome. Bile is the hot energy in the body, which is in the digestive system, and tends to rise up to the upper part of the body. So when we have a bile problem, we get headaches, fever, pain in the shoulders... Whereas the cold energy, the phlegm energy, when it gets imbalanced goes downwards so we get problems in the stomach, the lower part of the body, in our joints and so on. The fundamental

concept is to try to create balance and harmony. We need to balance this hot and cold energy in our body in order to be healthy. When one energy goes out of balance, the other energy also goes out of balance. What we need to do, through our diet, behaviour and taking care of the emotions relating to the elements, is to bring all the energies back into balance. This is just a quick explanation, but afterwards we will go into more detail. It is very important to understand this idea of the humours and the elements. Each season our energy is changing, so we need to adjust our diet, dress and so on according to the natural cycles. If we do this we will be more healthy. Now with the internet, there is so much confusing information about different diets - it's become like a nightmare in modern society. I've seen over many years with Rinpoche, that by following this idea of balancing the elements and humours we become healthier, we become happier, we age more slowly and life is a lot better. I have seen that it works.

We think that we would like to become a yogi or yogini, but now we have met Rinpoche who is a real yogi we should think: *yes, I would like to do that and have all those marvellous realisations, spontaneously arising new bliss and emptiness, I would like to experience the three transformations* and so on. To do this we need to understand how to really work with the elements on the subtle and very subtle levels. For this we are going to need a suitable basis. In the Buddhist teachings we need a basis, a simple thing, that we transform. For example, if we want to change we need to develop empathy - if we don't have empathy we can forget the high realisations. It's the same in regards to the elements, if we don't have any interest in taking care of the elements in normal life - how do we think we are going to take care of them on the subtle and very subtle levels. It's not fitting. It actually involves some personal change! We can say: *yeah yeah I'm going to meditate on Heruka, Guyusamaja, YAM, RAM, LAM BAM...* but then nothing happens. Why? Because we need to create the basis. We need to create the right causes and the right conditions on many different levels. Rinpoche has given us all the blessings and all the teachings.

If when we meditate on the earth absorbing into the water into the fire and so on, and then the subtle mind does not manifest it's because we need to create more conditions for it to do so. As Rinpoche says we need to take more care of the building blocks. When we assemble all the right building blocks, then it will happen. It makes complete sense that if we want to take care of the deeper and purer aspects of the elements that first we need to at least recognise that the elements are there. Of course intellectually we know that the elements are all around, but we need to feel them. When I was living in London and Milan I'd almost forgotten that they existed.

Rinpoche always says that he is like somebody from the 8th century who jumped into the present, which is now the 21st century. In his youth he lived in a really different world. Some of us have been to Tibet and we have seen first hand the conditions - but when Rinpoche was growing up it was not even like it is now. It was a very different kind of life, similar to our middle ages. We think that the middle ages looked bad, but actually the environment was much purer. Rinpoche left Tibet, travelled to India, then to the west and the rest of the world where he's visited all these mega cities. He has experienced the difference, so we should take his advice seriously. His reason for being with us is to help us to become healthy, to be happier, to live longer, to seek enlightenment. He himself knows what it is like to live in a place with healthy elements, a healthy environment, to have a healthy lifestyle and so on. He's studied and experienced it in this life and many other lives and knows how to do it. He's kindly sharing his wisdom with us. So let's look at what he says and try to find ways to apply it to our life. What does it mean for me? Rinpoche is one of the last of his generation of great lamas - brought up in a pre-modern Tibet. In a pre-technological world. We're so lucky that we still have a few of these great masters. Of course the spiritual tradition continues but there are not so many great masters who were born and trained in Tibet, who lived in that pre-modern world in the conditions that have now already changed, this feeling is very precious. Whilst Rinpoche is

still here with us, we really need to make the best of this opportunity to study with him and put his teachings into practice.

The Self-Healing thangkhas we have are like maps showing what we are talking about. It's like the Borobudur mandala as well. There are the Five Supreme Healers and the Five Element Mothers and it's explaining each one: their colour, mudra, the aggregate they transform, the wisdom, the element and so on. What we have to understand is that there is not only one system in the Gelugpa tradition. Many times Buddha Akshobya can be either the dharmadatu wisdom or the mirror-like wisdom, there are many possibilities because we have many tantras from ancient India. There are several systems in which different things can happen and different things can come up for different people. If we start to examine this map we can see some differences, maybe we need a map for each of the systems: Guyusamaja, Kalachakra and so on, and then compare them to the Self-Healing system. Anyway more or less this map is ok and I think it's useful - it's like the Borobudur and *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* practices. In the centre is Supreme Healer Vairochana and next to him in the Indonesia yoga-tantra style is Akasha Devi, the Great Space Mother.

Last night I was speaking to a friend who told me about some advice Lama Gangchen had given, he said: *when you die, what you are going to need is this: LAM BAM RAM YAM EH, earth dissolves into water, water into fire, fire into wind, wind into space, OM AH HUNG, clear light. Atiki Kyana, Ati Kiti, goodbye.* We are not necessarily going to have time to do all the other practices because we are dying and for sure we are not going to feel like it. Imagine, now we get a headache or flu and we totally forget about our practice and meditation so how will it be when we actually die? The best thing is to learn the essence practices! The element practices are very, very useful. The meditation of the elements absorbing into the clear light and coming back again is such an important practice. It's really a wisdom key.

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This Self-Healing map shows Supreme Healer Vairochana in the middle, then Akshobya in the east, Ratnasambhava in the south, Amitabha in the west and Amoghasiddhi in the north. So what I want to talk about now is the relationship between the Supreme Healers, their positions and the elements. It's very interesting.

In the first part of this course we talked about entering the mandala and the experience of meeting the buddhas, like when we do an initiation and go into the mandala and the guru introduces us first to one buddha and then to another one and another one. It's like a spiritual journey or pilgrimage. First we enter the mandala in the east and meet Supreme Healer Akshobya and we develop stable awareness. Meet in this sense means that we need to develop the qualities within ourselves, it's not like meeting something outside ourselves, it's discovering it within, like a mirror inside oneself - a mind mirror. Then like the sun we go around the mandala in a clockwise direction, to the south, and we meet Supreme Healer Ratnasambhava. This is like the increase of our positive feelings and emotions, our empathy, our love, our compassion, our generosity; all our positive emotions and merit increase. Then we go round to the west, the sunset, where we meet Amitabha. Amitabha means infinite light. We are going into deep meditation, looking what's actually inside our own mind. We are developing discriminatory awareness. This is the process of searching for the fake self within the aggregates, we are trying to find what's called the view of the transitory collection - the superimposed sense of self that doesn't truly exist. We are looking for it in our body and mind. We always talk about Amitabha transforming desire, so it's like we're looking inside and finding the bliss and happiness inside, rather than seeking it outside of ourselves. Then we go to the north to meet Amoghasiddhi. As a result of looking inside and understanding there is no self - no truly existent self - and understanding how things exist, we become fearless. When we overcome fear our life becomes unblocked and we can do many more things than we thought we could. This is a bit like a spiral if we think

about it, we are entering from the east and then going in. It's like the Borobudur stupa-mandala, first we do a big circle around it and then we enter and go around until we reach the centre. Vairochana is in the central part. Vairochana represents enlightenment. For example, in the Christian tradition they have mazes in the cathedrals showing a similar thing: an inner journey going into the centre of yourself. In Buddhism this is the exalted wisdom of non-dual bliss and emptiness, the enlightenment of Supreme Healer Vairochana. We find the true essence of ourself. It's like a clockwise spiral into the essence or non-essence of our being. We also have mandalas in the western tradition because it's a universal symbol. Jung wrote many books about man and his symbols, about the symbolism of the mandala all over the world - it's very interesting.

I was just thinking about something earlier today, the male energy goes clockwise like the sun - if it turns to the right it's male energy. If it goes anti-clockwise, it's female energy, so what we are doing is going through space, wind, fire, water and earth: **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM**. It's like Rinpoche's practice. We are going through Vairochana and the space element, then if we follow the same spiral out we go to Amoghasiddhi and the wind element, then we go to Amitabha whose female energy is the Great Fire Mother, then we go to Ratnasambhava and Lochana, the Great Earth Mother, then finally we come to Akshobya and Mamaki, the Great Water Mother.

The Great Water Mother is seed syllable BAM

The Great Earth Mother is seed syllable LAM

The Great Fire Mother is seed syllable RAM

The Great Wind Mother is seed syllable YAM

The Great Space Mother is seed syllable EH

For years Rinpoche has quite rightly made us meditate on the body mandala, by going up and down through our five chakras: Amoghasiddhi, Ratnasambhava, Akshobya, Amitabha and

Vairochana. We've been doing this for years and years because we are so slow, so alienated from our true selves. Finally, due to Rinpoche's immense patience and kindness, we are starting to get the point. In the *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* practice we do:

OM AH AMOGHASIDDHI HUNG at the secret chakra.

OM AH RATNASAMBHAVA HUNG at the navel chakra.

OM AH AKSHOBYA HUNG at the heart chakra.

OM AH AMITABHA HUNG at the throat chakra.

OM AH VAIROCHANA HUNG at the crown chakra.

These are the mantras of the Five Supreme Healers. Mantra in Sanskrit means tool to transform our consciousness.

When we go around the outer circle of the Borobudur temple, we start at the secret chakra and go upwards.

OM AH SAMAYA TARA HUNG, this is the Great Wind Mother at the secret chakra, she is the consort of Amoghasiddhi.

OM AH LOCHANA HUNG, this is the Great Earth Mother at the navel chakra, she is the consort of Ratnasambhava.

OM AH MAMAKI HUNG, this is the Great Water Mother at the heart chakra, she is the consort of Akshobya.

OM AH PANDARVARSINI HUNG, this is the Great Fire Mother at the throat chakra, she is the consort of Amitabha.

OM AH AKASHA DEVI HUNG, she is the Great Space Mother at the crown chakra, she is the consort of Vairochana.

These are the Five Element Mothers.

When we go into the mandala in a clockwise spiral we enter in the east from Akshobya, then we visit Ratnasambhava, Amitabha, Amoghasiddhi and finally we enter the centre Vairochana. This is like the practice we do at Borobudur. If we start to come out backwards, anti-clockwise, following the female energy, what we are doing is: **EH** space, **YAM** wind, **RAM** fire, **LAM** earth, **BAM** water. So from this we can see where the sequence comes from, there is always a reason somewhere, we just need to keep looking until we find it.

All the things we do actually have very deep meanings. They are from an ancient wisdom tradition that goes back 2000 years or maybe even more than that. Why do you think **YAM** is wind and red **RAM** is fire? Why do these syllables correspond to these elements and colours? In Sanskrit, which is a very old language going back thousands of years, nobody really knows when it started, they have more vowels than A E I O U. They also have something called semi-vowels. They have YA RA LA VA. It's part of the Sanskrit language. Since thousands of years black YA has represented wind, red RA has represented fire, yellow LA has represented earth, white VA or WA has represented water. Since thousands of years it has been like this. Sanskrit is a very sacred science - by making those sounds in our mouth we actually cause those elements to vibrate within our body. Some very intelligent people thousands of years ago in ancient India understood this, perhaps they had a lot of free time and started to repeat YA YA YA and felt the wind energy or they did RARA RA and started to feel hot!

At the moment there is a big storm going on outside, so let's try it and make an experiment. Rinpoche says to do the six mantras and mudras and offer incense when there is a storm, so let's see if it works. It's a good opportunity because it's also a part of the *Making Peace with the Environment* practice. When we light incense we're actually offering it to the guru buddhas and the beings who protect the environment, they are called the *Naga, Tsen* and *Sadak*. We offer the incense to pacify them, to pacify the storms, the floods, droughts and so on.

**OM SARVA BI PURA PURA SURA SURA
AWARTAYA AWARTAYA HO BENDZA PARANA KAM**

**OMBENDZADHARMARANITAPRARANITASAMPRARANITA
SARVA BUDDHA KSHETRA PRATSA LINE PRAGYA PARAMITA
NADA SVABHAVA BENDZA SATTVA RIDAYA SANTOKYANI
HUNG HUNG HUNG HO HO HO SOHA**

This is called the Space Treasury Mantra. We imagine that the whole of space is full of offerings, everything is arising out of emptiness and is the nature of bliss. We put our fingers together so it's like a conch. Then we imagine that we've got this magic horn or conch and all these offerings are coming out of it. When we do the six mantras and mudras, these are related to the Five Supreme Healers and to the Perfection of Wisdom. We offer incense and all these beautiful things to make peace with the environmental guardians. We need rain, but we want balance, not too much, not too little.

OM SVABHAVA VISHUDDHE DHARMATE BENDZA SIDDHI HUNG

We start with this mudra, it's like the victory banner going in the direction with all the impossible animals. Impossible animals are hybrids made of two animals who normally don't get on at all like a lion and an eagle, or an otter and a fish. They symbolise that through the dharma, the impossible becomes possible. The victory banner is the personal symbol or motif of Rinpoche. Or, we can say, it is like a trident piercing our wrong conceptions of reality, our wrong conceptions of projecting true existence on the self, on our aggregates and on outer phenomena. With the correct view of reality we are victorious over everything so we make a victory banner or we can imagine it's a trident. We then do some kind of waving around. Like a victory banner or a trident piercing the wrong view of self, other and all phenomena.

Next we do the cornucopia again.

NAMA SARVA TATHAGATA BAYO BISHU MUKE BYE SARVA TE KAM EUGATE PARANA HEM MAM GAGANA KAM SOHA

Now we click our fingers. We are offering suitable offerings to the environmental protectors. We make a big circle, then a smaller circle then in the end, we click. We start up at the forehead level and spiral the hands as we move them down.

Then we have to cross our fingers, this represents that we're pouring nectars. It is like the spout of the bhumpa or ritual vase. We are offering nectars.

OM AMRITE HUNG PHET

**OM AKARO MUKA SARVA DHARMANAM ADYA NUT PE NA
TVAT**

It means we are offering.

**NAMA SARVA TATHAGATA AVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA
SAMBHARA HUNG**

**OM RURU PURU TZOLA TISHTA SIDDHA LOTSANI SARVA
ARTA SADHANAYE SOHA**

Everything is empty, we make the offerings which are the nature of bliss. We give the offering, we make the agreement between ourself and the beings who protect the environment, we are actually saying sorry for our behaviour, and then there is no fear and no more problem between us.

Everything dissolves into emptiness.

From emptiness arise infinite offerings that multiply.

These offerings transform into nectar.

The offerings are distributed to all beings without exception.

Let there be no arguments between beings for these offerings!

Everyone is satisfied and obtain that which they desire.

When there is a storm or if we go to a wild place, we have to repeat this mantra many, many times. We should burn incense. For example, when we went to the Amazon with Rinpoche we repeated this for hours and hours. It's helping. It's not just repeating the mantra, we have to think that we are making the offering, that the environmental beings receive bliss, we say sorry, make an agreement, then there's no more problems. The problem is finished.

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Line number 4, **OM AKARO MUKA SARVA DHARMANAM ADYA NUT PE NA TVAT** is actually a line from the Perfection of Wisdom.

OM SVABHAVA VISHUDDHE DHARMATE BENDZA SIDDHI HUNG

NAMA SARVA TATHAGATA BAYO BISHU MUKE BYE SARVA TE KAM EUGATE PARANA HEM MAM GAGANA KAM SOHA OM AMRITE HUNG PHET

OM AKARO MUKA SARVA DHARMANAM ADYA NUT PE NA TVAT

NAMA SARVA TATHAGATA AVALOKITE OM SAMBHARA SAMBHARA HUNG

OM RURU PURU TZOLA TISHTA SIDDHA LOTSANI SARVA ARTA SADHANAYE SOHA

**dag ghi sam pay tob dang ni
de zhin shek pay jin tob dang
choe kyi ying kyi tob nam kyi
don nam gang nam sam pa kun
de dag tham che chi rig par
tog pa me par jung gyur chig**

By the power of my thoughts, by the power of the blessings of the tathagatas and by the power of the sphere of reality, may any purpose we desire, be realised without obstruction

Many western people become very fixated on a particular pronunciation of mantras as they are seeking authenticity - our tradition is totally authentic but there are many possible pronunciations. Mantras all came from Sanskrit which few people know any more. However, a long time ago the Tibetan kings actually paid very good translators to put the whole of the buddhist text corpus from Sanskrit into Tibetan. Now Tibetan people have forgotten how to pronounce some words

plus there are many regional accents. The most important thing is if there is still energy, then the mantra works. Then whether its a VA or a BA, or TVAT or TU NA, doesn't really matter. Many of the mantras Rinpoche has transmitted have incredible power. I will give you an example. Recently I had an eye problem, so Rinpoche suggested I do a retreat of 100,000 Open Eye Chenrezig mantras. I intended to do the retreat but was busy so I only had time to do a couple of sessions of the practice. Then I lost my glasses so I went to the optician and my prescription had gone from 1.5 to 1.0 in two sessions! This is why Rinpoche is famous for his eye practice!

We were starting to talk about the Great Element Mothers: **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM**. Just in case anyone wondered where it came from, this meditation is in the Yamantaka Root Tantra. It's very ancient. These meditations go back over many, many centuries. In *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* we do this element meditation lots of times: **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM**. Here, it is in relation to the mandala, starting in the centre, coming out of space, out of emptiness, the elements are manifesting, the female energies are manifesting. When we do it in relation to the body obviously it's in a different order. The sequence in the body mandala and the external mandala isn't the same. Maybe this is a good time to talk about the external outer mandala and the inner body mandala because it's very important to understand.

An outer mandala, for example, is like our gompa - it is a sacred space. In our gompa we have this incredible crystal pillar in the centre which is full of positive energy all the way out to the edge. It's a sacred space from the centre, out to the edge. This is a very beautiful representation of an external mandala. External mandalas can be different types, they can be pictures or paintings, they can be models, roof mandalas, wall mandalas. If we are interested we can see many different types of mandalas on the internet. We can have painted or printed mandalas, like here in the gompa, we can also have sand mandalas. Sand mandalas are very interesting and very

meaningful, they are maps into our mind, into our consciousness - showing us how to transform ourselves from an ordinary person into an enlightened person. The sand mandala shows us interdependence and impermanence - everything is like a sand castle - our world is impermanent, everything is projected upon heaps or collections of aggregates like the many grains of sand gathered together. We might think it's crazy making such an intricate mandala out of sand, taking a whole week or longer, then destroying it. The sand mandala is showing us the nature of our reality. We spend our whole life building up many things and then it disintegrates. I'm not being pessimistic, the Tibetan Buddhist word for world is Jigten - it means disintegrating basis. Like a sand castle. It means we shouldn't get so fixated on the external world because nothing lasts, even a big mountain, everything changes, so we should concentrate on spiritual values that do last. Now in our modern world, everybody is so fixated on accumulating external things as a source of security - but they don't last. Saying it in a more positive way just like science tells us, everything is a process, everything is in a continuous state of change.

We have external mandalas but a very important thing is that we also have body mandalas. What is a body mandala? The body mandala is a super important idea. The external mandala is there and it's the palace of the buddhas, like heaven with all the pure energies and elements. The body mandala is basically finding heaven inside ourselves. A very esoteric idea. We don't need to go to somewhere else, we don't need to go to Shambala, we don't need to go to Tibet - we can sit in our own house and find this pure-land inside of us, inside our own body and mind. Mahasiddha Tilopa said: *"I wandered through all the holy pilgrimage sites of India, I visited all the 24 holy places but I never found a holy place as blissful as my own body."* It's a very powerful idea. When we talk about a body mandala, it's actually based on the idea of meditating on emptiness. Everything goes back to the sutra practices. In the Perfection of Wisdom, in the Heart Sutra, we have five aggregates: form, feeling, discrimination, compositional factors and

consciousness or we can say our body and mind. Our body is form plus our experience of the world and then the other four aggregates are our mind. We have a body and a mind. Within these we try and find this sense of self which appears to us so strongly all the time - where is it exactly? Point to it. If it truly exists we must be able to find it! We look through these five parts of our existence and try to identify exactly where it is. When we cannot find it and there is no truly existing self, just a space an absence, and we concentrate on that - that's the meditation on emptiness and that's what cleans our mind of many levels of pain, suffering, disturbance and delusion. But we have to do it many, many times as we are so fixated on permanence.

The Five Supreme Healers or Dhyani Buddhas are not something outside of ourself. In fact the word Dhyani means meditation and this implies that we find them inside ourself. It means exalted wisdom is something inside, not outside. According to Tantra we have a gross body, a subtle body and a very subtle body and we have a gross mind, a subtle mind and a very subtle mind. The gross body and mind we know because it's the normal us. But, we also have a subtle body and mind and something even more difficult to experience which is the very subtle body and mind. In Tantra we learn to recognise, clean and use these subtle phenomena to do something positive, to go towards enlightenment. The subtle body is made up of what are called channels, winds and drops. Nowadays, many people go to the acupuncturist and we know it works on the subtle energy channels that we can't see if we cut somebody open - but anyway they seem to be there. We have subtle energy channels. The main one is the central channel, some people say that it's inside the spine, others that it's in front of the spine. This central channel goes from a this point between the eyebrows, like an umbrella handle up and around the skull then all the way down the spine to the perineum. That's the central channel, the Mount Meru, the axis mundi, the tree of life. We want to try and work with our central channel because our essential life energy is there. According to this vision of reality we also have

two side channels that curl around the central channel, like the caduceus - the symbol of medicine. This symbol actually represents the central channel and the two side channels. These three channels are something that everybody has, whether we are Greek, Roman, Indian, Tibetan or whatever. We all have the phenomena of the central channel and the side channels. In ancient times they knew this. What the caduceus is telling us - and it is on every sign of every pharmacy in Italy - is that if we want to be healed we have to look inside ourself. We need to make peace with our central channel is what it's actually saying - not just buy aspirin or this and that. On one side, it's nice we have pharmacies and we can buy all these things but we really need to get inside our subtle energy system where we can wake up our subtle body and mind. This would be a real, deep, profound healing.

Rinpoche used to say our central channel is always crying and jealous because we don't give it any attention, so it starts to make a scene and we get problems. If we give it attention, it becomes happy and we become deeply and profoundly healed on many different levels. This is a very huge and interesting subject. We have a subtle body and a subtle mind. In our subtle body the channels gather in what are called chakras. Chakra means wheel, like a junction. In the Vajrayana Buddhist system we have five chakras, because our chakras are bigger than everyone else's we don't need seven - we've just got five big ones!! I'm joking! In the yoga tradition they have seven chakras - so people always ask why we've only got five, so I always say because ours are bigger than yours - there's no space for anymore! Anyway, the Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Vajrayana system is a five system, we have five limbs (head, two arms and two legs), five fingers, five toes, five senses, five elements - it's a five system.

Tantra is a very colourful and exciting version of the sutra teachings. It's the same but using our imagination, using our subtle body, using images, using archetypes, mantras, mudras - but the basic principles are the same. The basic underlying ideas are the same, and if they're

not then we are not doing it right. In sutra we have five aggregates and in the Heart Sutra we search for these aggregates, the emptiness of: form, feelings, discrimination, compositional factors and consciousness: *Oh Shariputra in emptiness there is no form, no feeling, no discrimination, no compositional factors, no consciousness, no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind* etc etc. That's the Heart Sutra, the essence of the Perfection of Wisdom.

In tantra we associate the aggregates with the five chakras. Which aggregate, which part of the body or mind is related to the crown chakra? Form. Which aggregate is related to the throat chakra? Discrimination. Which aggregate is related to the heart chakra? Consciousness. Which aggregate is related to the navel chakra? Feeling. Which aggregate is related to the secret chakra? Compositional factors. We need to know these things about form, discrimination, consciousness, feeling and compositional factors. Here, inside the skull at the crown chakra, the emptiness of the form aggregate, which we experience with the subtle blissful mind, arises in the aspect of the Supreme Healer Vairochana. The new bliss and emptiness which is the emptiness of the discrimination aggregate, arises here in the throat chakra as the Supreme Healer Amitabha. The new bliss and emptiness which is the emptiness of the consciousness aggregate, in the heart chakra, arises as Supreme Healer Akshobya. It goes on like this. A body mandala is the parts of our body or let's say the subtle mind and the chakras. The very subtle body is when they dissolve into emptiness then from that new bliss and emptiness arises the guru buddhas within the body mandala.

The basis of the body mandala is our ordinary body and mind, our aggregates. When we search for them and we can't find them, from that mind of new bliss and emptiness arises the Five Supreme Healers, the Five Element Mothers and the rest of the body mandala such as in the Guyusamaja practice. It's not like getting a tattoo or a t-shirt with buddhas on it, or imagining we are full of buddhas - we have to

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meditate on the emptiness of the parts of our body, of the aggregates, of our mind, and then out of the state of new bliss and emptiness arises the body mandala. It says this clearly in each part of the *NgalSo Self-Healing* practice: new bliss and emptiness.

In the *NgalSo Tantric Self-Healing* practice and the other main practices that Rinpoche teaches us such as *Making Peace with the Environment* we work with the Five Supreme Healers and the Five Great Element Mothers in terms of body mandalas. Here in our Gompa we are in an external mandala, it's like a map or a picture. It's nice because we can see the directions and the colours which have a very great meaning. Both types are very useful and interesting. In the practice of *Making Peace with the Environment*, we do **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM**. Great Space Mother, Great Wind Mother, Great Fire Mother, Great Earth Mother, Great Water Mother. The five elements. What I was trying to explain in a very long winded way, is it's the same as this map in the female way. We start from space, because everything manifests out of space, it is the basic element, the underlying source of phenomena. In Tibetan medicine and Ayurveda they say space gives the possibility for the other elements to dance or to move. Many times space isn't included, maybe it's because it's so obvious or they just like to keep it secret.

Question

In the Environment practice the elements are in different places.

Answer

There are many different element systems - we just have to get used to it. Like a computer has many different programmes. If we had a computer with just one programme we'd think it was very boring and ask for our money back. We want computers with many programmes that do different things. Each of these different element meditations has different results. Now I'm talking about the Self-Healing system, the system we learnt first, then we will go on to others like the very

important stupa meditation, then we will do the one in *Making Peace with the Environment* and so on. They are all very interesting, very important and very meaningful.

The first element system that Rinpoche ever taught us was **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM**. In many of the Tibetan texts they have the **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM SHUDDHE SHUDDHE SOHA** mantra and meditation. I found a Tibetan text - it's a copy of a text belonging to Rinpoche - and it says this is the practice to do when we are going around places. It says if we are going on a pilgrimage we should recite **EH YAM RAM LAM BAM** - just like Rinpoche has always showed us. These are all things that Rinpoche's guru taught him. This is the first system. This sequence of elements is also in the Root Tantra of Yamantaka. Related to our body - in our mind there is hopefully a lot of space, so the space element is here at the crown. In some Indian beliefs they say the mind is in the heart. Also in the medieval west they believed the mind, the consciousness, was in the heart. For example, when the crusaders were killed they used to take their hearts out and send them back home because they believed it contained the soul of the person. At the crown chakra is the space element. Rinpoche always says that the symbols or shapes of the elements are fitting with the actual shape of our body when we are sitting cross-legged. For example, the shape of our legs if we look down is like a half circle, a bow. So we say here is the wind mandala shaped like a half circle. The elements are related to what we call the five *pranas*, the five energy currents, within our subtle body. These five energy currents are what keep us alive. All living beings, have five energy currents. If we lose any of these five energies we die, it is not possible to live without them. These five *pranas* have been known for thousands and thousands of years in Indian culture, in the Vedic times and before.

So if we look down there is the bow shape of the wind element. In Sanskrit it's called the *apanaprana*, in Tibetan it's called the tursel lhung, the downward-moving wind. The word wind is used in the

sense of energy. This wind is found in our bladder, our sex organs, our navel, thighs, anus and all this lower part of our body. The function of this energy is to expel the urine, faeces, menstrual blood or semen, it also functions when babies are born. If we don't have this energy none of these things will happen. This energy, the downward moving wind, expels these things out of the body.

If we are sitting properly, it looks like we have a triangle, here above the buttocks. On both the backside and the front side it looks like a triangle. This is the triangular shape of the fire element. An equilateral triangle. This is called the *samanaprana* or namne lhung - what we call the equalising or fire-like wind. This is the energy of digestion, it's like the oven of the body. We talked about this earlier today. We are very much out of touch with the seasons, it's December and we're eating ice cold chocolate profiteroles while the snow falls outside. Eating and drinking ice and other cold things in winter, not following a seasonal diet, is putting out the digestive fire. We don't take care. Actually we can see that Rinpoche really takes care of his digestive fire - sitting in the middle of all those hot water bottles and wearing sheepskin boots all the time - this is probably what he is really doing, keeping his energy. It's a very important energy for our health, for our life. If we have a strong digestive fire it means that everything we eat, there are seven stages to digestion, is processed into tigel, or the essence of life which is our red and white bodhichitta drops. We need a strong digestive fire for our digestion to work properly and the final result of this chemical or alchemical process is actually having a strong aura or energy body. When we are young we can eat anything, no problem, because we have a strong digestive force. As we get older it tends to decline through our behaviour, ageing and so on. It is very important to keep this energy well if we want to be healthy.

The rib cage is like a square and we say it is like the square earth element. Here is the life-sustaining wind which is localised in the centre of our heart chakra. Wind in the sense of energy. They are

called winds because in meditation they move, we can really feel them running in our own body, like currents, like water or something. They are called winds because of this sense of movement. In the centre of the heart is the life-sustaining wind which is the earth element. Earth in the sense that if we have a strong life-sustaining wind we have a very stable life. Sometimes we see on the news that there has been a plane crash and everyone dies except one person or everybody gets sick and dies except one. That person has got good karma, good *punya* or merit and they've also got a very strong life-sustaining wind. Conversely in the winter someone might get a cold or flu and then die, maybe an older person, and that's because their life-sustaining wind is very weak so it's easy to die from a small cause. This is the basis of the long-life practices that we do, we're trying to make this energy very strong. As long as this energy is strong we can't die.

Here at the throat we visualise the water element. Why? Because we have saliva in our throat, it's wet so here's water. We relate this particular place to what we call the upward-moving wind, it is responsible for our breathing, speaking, expressing emotion, also swallowing because when we eat it has to get down in the stomach to digest.

Then there is a fifth wind which is called the pervasive wind and this gives us the ability to move. *Vyanaprana* in Sanskrit and the *kyabje lhung* in Tibetan. Let's put this simply. We need energy to survive, every being, every animal or every human needs energy. We need to breathe and we need to eat, we need energy - it's what keeps us alive. These five winds together help us to stay alive. We need to survive by breathing and drinking water but we also need food. First we need to get food, so we need to move because the food is not coming to us - so here we need our pervasive wind to enable us to go and get food. Then we need to eat it and it is the upward-moving wind that allows us to swallow it. Then we now need to digest it, we need it to give us energy. The next problem is if we keep on eating we will explode so

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the waste needs to go out, so the downward-moving wind helps all the waste to come out. This is how we remain alive. We get food, eat, swallow, digest and the waste comes out - this is what the five winds do on a physiological level.

There are two kinds of nervous system, one is the conscious one such as when we command our hand to move, and the other is the autonomic nervous system. It means that while we're asleep we're still breathing, our heart is still beating, everything is still working. It doesn't depend on our conscious thought. In yoga, in tantric practice, we learn to recognise and work with both the conscious energies of our body and mind as well as the subconscious energies. The building blocks of our existence. This is very powerful stuff. We are learning to recognise, clean and use these energies. In Rinpoche's practice we use them first for healing, to feel better, to be less tired, less stressed, and then later to be full of energy. Then there are many other deep, profound levels of amazing things we can do with these energies. When we see that the practice works it will encourage us to go deeper into it. Of course it's not good enough just to wish for these things, but to be healthy and happy is a positive side effect. s

Seven limitless prayer

Limitless love

May all beings have happiness and its causes

Limitless compassion

May all beings be free from suffering and its causes

Limitless joy

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

Limitless equanimity

May all beings dwell in equanimity, unaffected by attraction
to dear ones and aversion to others

Limitless health

May all beings recover from the sicknesses of mind and body
pollution so that they all enjoy relative and absolute health now and
forever

Limitless ecological regeneration

May all beings relax in a pure and healthy outer and inner
environment now and forever

Limitless peace

May all beings enjoy inner and world peace now and forever

The elements & me
Albagnano 2018

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