

Tara Yana

International

Winter 2008/2009

Newsletter of Tara Dhatu

A Non Profit Organization

*Dedicated To Empowering, Uplifting And Inspiring
Through The Sacred Arts*



Delegation of International Tara Dancers at Dolma Ling, Dharmasala, India 2001

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Prema has been celebrating all year. This birthday cake was offered at the Dances of Universal Peace training in Sao Paulo, Brazil

Welcome to the International Newsletter of Tara Dhatu. We invite you to explore the myriad ways our vision of Taras dancing together throughout the world is manifesting. But first, a word from our Spiritual and Creative Director, Prema Dasara

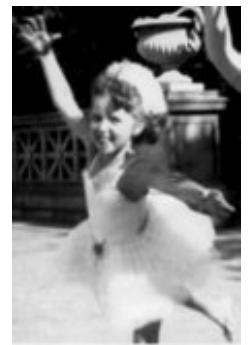
December 21st, 2008
Tara Ling, Tara Dhatu
Kanaio, Maui, Hawaii
Prema Dasara, Spiritual & Creative Director
Tara Dhatu

Today is the winter solstice and my 60th Birthday. Goodness who would have imagined that I would make it to this advanced age!!!

I am feeling my age. My hip continues to cause me to limp around and restricts walking and other common forms of movement. But my spirits soar. Taking two years off the relentless travel and teaching schedule I was maintaining for



the last 20 years is a great relief. I am able to study, to do practice and to focus on the writing that I have been longing to complete at the request of my students.



Receiving empowerment from Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche

There are three books I am working on:
 1) The Mandala Dance of Tara – HerStory
 2) The Mandala Dance of Tara – A Manual for Sky Dancers
 3) Tara and the Tarot - The 21 Praises of Tara and their correspondences to the Major Arcana of the Tarot



Teaching Tara and other sacred dances at Rumtek Monastery in Sikkim

It is exciting to finally be seeing these works take shape. I will start putting previews on the web soon. I so appreciate the loving support that makes this possible.

Myri Dakini, our Central Coordinator for South America stayed with me here in Kanaio from August through November. She scanned into my computer all the Tara photos I have from the last 20 years. I will be using these photos to illustrate the stories in the first book and will be making this available on the web.



Myri Dakini



Parvati at the computer

Parvati came over after camp and continued our transfer of VHS Tara Dance tapes onto DVDs, now archived safely. Myri spotted a dance of Goddess Saraswati I taught years ago and asked me to teach her. I was amazed at how much dancing I could still do despite my hip.

Tara's Cottage is not finished but it is far enough along to be comfortable. It has been a great blessing to be able to have my students stay with me. I do appreciate their loving assistance but more than that I am grateful for the time to teach them in depth. I am hoping that more of my students will take advantage of this incredible opportunity. After January 6th the cottage is open. Let me know if you would like to do a retreat or just come up and help out.

It is thrilling to me to see how the Mandala Dance of Tara is spreading through the world. We have so many marvelous Student/Teachers who are engaging in offerings and workshops and classes. I am happy that we can offer you a glimpse through the pages of this newsletter.

May Tara's Dance continue to turn throughout the world bringing blessings to all!



Tara's Cottage, Kanaio, Maui, Hawaii



Prema's friendship with Lama Tenzin inspired the Tara Dance. This picture was taken inside her shrine room in Kanaio, 1991

Let There Be Music!!!!



Anahata Iradah, Artistic Director Tara Dhatu

I have been on the road since July. With such frequent travels I need a sense of protection. I recite a lot of mantra! Tara's mantra comes pouring out, usually in song, to one or another of her melodies. I visualize Green Tara supporting both wings of the plane. White Tara sits peacefully on top of the airplane. Behind her Gold & Red Tara cast circles of protection. Behind them I visualize H. H. Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, H. H. Karmapa and other Tibetan teachers. In front of White Tara are a pantheon of Hindu deities and living emanations of masters and saints that Prema and I and our delegation danced for in 2001. In this way I feel safe and protected as I travel and so far each journey has found me landing in safety and into the caring arms of one or another of my friends whose community I am visiting.

Our Fabulous Kauai Retreat

I left Brasilia where I was in residence. Prema picked me up in Maui and we had several weeks to prepare for our marvelous Tara retreat in Kauai. We had a full camp. It was awesome as the work with the Dakinis gets deeper and wider and our relationship to Tara takes on even more dimensions. I introduced my new 3 part song/movement meditation called "Tara's Refuge" and I am delighted that it captivated the hearts of almost everybody there. At this very moment I am composing another dance piece this time to a 10 beat cycle that uses the 10 syllables of her mantra as the basis. You will have to come to Tara camp to receive this new gift! The dates are 17th-27th August 2009.



Dancing Padma Dakini

Fall Tour of Mainland USA

Following Camp Naue I went on an Autumn tour of the mainland US for 6 weeks. I started at the Riversong Sanctuary in Hood River, Oregon (joyfully teaching with Inayat Heartsun), and then drove up to Seattle and Whidbey Island for wonderful sharing there. After Seattle I had the pleasure of teaching at a stately home in Georgia, where Kathy and David Barnes are using their fortunate circumstances to gather spiritual community together. They managed to sleep almost 30 people at their home thus making it an

intimate residential but low cost weekend. After Georgia I went to Louisiana to assist a new mentee, Adrienne LaBry Smith in growing a Dances of Universal Peace community in Lafayette. We had a good turn out and a lot of enthusiasm, and my job in part was to help integrate the traumas of 3 hurricanes in a row where almost everybody evacuated and most were still in fear of what might happen next. My last stop of that teaching tour was in Madison, Wisconsin where I have been teaching for a very long time. Beginning in the Gates of Heaven synagogue (for the Friday night community dance) and then deepening into a day of meditation, silence and dance and concluding with a Sunday of musicianship they utilized all my talents and skills in one weekend!

Immersion in Hindu Devotion

I returned to Brazil and hit the ground running. J. Jayaraman (J. J.) arrived the same day from Tiruvannamalai in the South of India. A long term resident and librarian of the Ashram of Sri Ramana Maharishi, J. J. is a student of the Dances of Universal Peace. ONEness Project awarded us a grant to travel throughout Brazil teaching and exploring ways to transmit the Hindu tradition to students of the Dances of Universal Peace. We did extensive teachings, audio recordings, video taping and all of this will be available soon on a DVD called "The Mantra & The Flame." J J's wisdom from the Vedas and Dharma traditions of India is profound.



Anahata and J. Jayaraman



Dances of Universal Peace Reunion in Curitiba

We went to Curitiba for our DUP re-union weekend, to Terra Mirim, Bahia to connect with the teenagers and our beloved friends there, then to Brasilia and Alto Paraíso and finally to Integria, a beautiful retreat center in the South. It was here that I had the most wonderful experience of seeing the fruits of my teaching.

We arrived to a roomful of Janete and Elen's personal students. I knew that Elen and Janete were practicing their leadership of the Dances, but I had no idea of the extent of

their dedication. They teach together and share every opportunity they can get (at places like the University of Peace) and are developing real mastery, sensitivity and vision for their work over the long term. Their students had a love for the Dances that touched me deeply.

In Concert

In addition to all our teaching we had one delightful night in Brasilia where we offered a public concert. With J J on moringa (clay drum), myself playing guitar, Aradna singing, we managed to allure Dr. Gisele to take off her white coat and become our drummer! Having translated every piece of music, given me endless rides to the recording studio, coaching Aradna in the Portuguese phrasing, she knew the material intimately and with little protest sat on the stage like a professional! I haven't performed for well over 15

years, so it was a pleasant surprise to find out just how much I enjoyed it. I was transported to the heavenly realms... I can't speak for the audience!

Training the Musicians

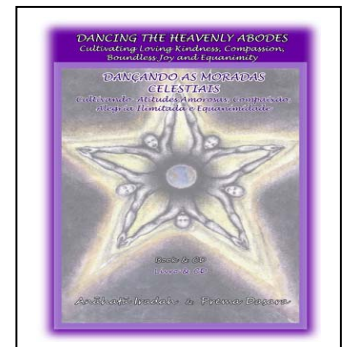
As soon as J. J. went home I returned immediately to the USA for 2 more weeks of teaching. I went again to Louisiana, this time to assist 15 developing musicians in

accompanying the Dances of Universal Peace. It was an intensive but fun weekend. On the Saturday night we had a public dance meeting. We invited the community to come and had a lovely circle. All the musicians took turns weaving in and out accompanying the dances on drum, guitar and harmonium. The musicians were also the leaders, so the 15 participants launched what we hope will be the 1st Louisiana inter-city meeting. Each month the group will travel to different parts of the state to present a co-lead meeting so in this way New Orleans, Lake Charles, Lafayette and Baton Rouge will benefit from the strength of the group leadership.

After a short visit with Lilliha (Queen of the Swamps) I flew across the country for my first visit to cool Phoenix! I had only ever been to Phoenix when it was hot hot hot, but never in the cool weather. It was fantastic and another joyous re-union with a community I have danced with for so many years. I made beautiful music with Shivadam, husband of Parvati and was hosted by Amina and Tom. Then it was another big trip back to Brazil.

Dancing the Heavenly Abodes

All of this travel is punctuated with some accomplishments. In 2008 Prema and I were able to publish a new expanded and bi-lingual version of "Dancing the Heavenly Abodes." Due to the great type-setting help of MyriDakini and the formidable translation skills of Gisele we are now able to offer 15 dances from the Buddhist tradition in both Portuguese and English, with full attunements and music.



Aradna, Anahata, Gisele and JJ in Concert

Teaching the Teenagers

My work in Terra Mirim, Bahia with the teenagers is going really well. They are now leading with authenticity and power. They are going out into their communities to spread a special vibration of hope, vitality and peace. My next step with them is to bring their musical skills up to the level of their dance leadership. I want to thank all the donors who have contributed towards this work and especially ONEness Project for their on-going support and Johanna Leseho, one of our Canadian Taras who has taken a special interest in this project. If you would like to see them in action, you are welcome to come to Centro Paulus, São Paulo, Brazil and be part of our group in 2009, as a one time participant. The dates are May 16th-23rd.



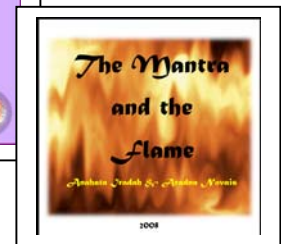
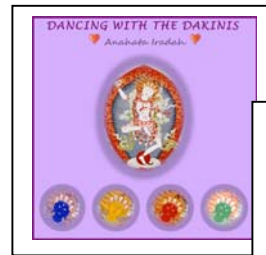
Gilnei is an excellent dance leader and drummer



Eliandra, Ana Paula, Silvia, Camilla learning to lead Dances of Universal Peace

New Releases

2008 saw the release of 4 CD's. "In the Garden of the Jewel Dakini," "Dancing with the Dakinis," "The Mantra & The Flame," and "Tara Dhatu Teaching Series #1." These CD's reflect many years of work and practice and contain jewels of inspiration. We could not have accomplished these recordings without the loving care of Aradna Heloise Novais, our Brazilian songbird. Aradna participates in all our bi-lingual recordings. We are most fortunate to have discovered a new recording circumstance. In Brazil we are recording with a beloved new friend, a brilliant and sensitive technician and recording engineer Mauricio Fonteles. Mauricio is like a dream come true.



Projects to Complete

These next few months I am hoping to complete 3 projects:

1) **"21 Taras" video/DVD.** This work promises to be very special and inspirational. The project is divided into 3 sections. 1) A video interview with Prema about each of the 21 Taras and their correlation to the Major Arcana of the Tarot. 2) Dancers from all around the world manifesting as Tara. Using footage from about 40 different locations I am weaving a tapestry of Tara that is set to an original score, which I wrote. It is really beautiful and empowering to watch each woman emerging as the Goddess. 3) Each segment is then separated by a short interview clip of teachers like H. E. Tai Situ Rinpoche and practitioners who talk about their relationship to Tara and the Dharma.

I still need to raise some funds to complete this project. \$5,000.00 will allow me to complete my video edit, do the color corrections, generate professional audio, author the DVD and prepare it for re-release. If you would like to make a tax-deductible donation of any amount through Tara Dhatu or a personal donation to me, please contact me at anahatara@mac.com

2) **Tara Song Book.** The Kauai Taras are behind a movement to generate the music of Tara into a print format that will allow other musicians to read the score and to see exactly what I do as a musician. They are committed to raising the money for the "Mandala Dance of the 21 Praises of Tara" music. However Prema would like to expand the vision to have the music of many of our other pieces of devotional music available too. We need to raise an additional \$500.00 to manifest this project.

3) **The Mantra and The Flame.** This project is based upon the work I did with J J. The goal is a DVD that will help all leaders and practitioners of the Dances of Universal Peace to understand the Hindu tradition more fully. With depth and clarity J J explains the mantras used in our dances and gives historic over views and windows into the Vedas and the meaning of mantra. On this DVD many Dances of Universal Peace will be shown so that the viewer can embody the work. J J himself has promised to assist with the manifestation of this project.



Deep Bow to our Precious Sponsors

Finally, from my heart, I want to thank the many sponsors who are taking care (from afar) of children and circumstances that Tara Dhatu has taken on.



None of this would be remotely possible without the infrastructure of Tara Dhatu and the day by day, minute by minute, breath by breath support of our Queen of the Swamps, the delightful Mz. Lilliha Nancy Heringon.

I want to thank each of you for your confidence in me, and your dedication to these circumstances with people who are truly directly benefiting from your generosity.

Ya Fattah, may the way be open for you to also receive the blessings you are giving.

I am currently looking for a sponsor for Sarina Lama, a little girl under the care of Pabitra in Kathmandu. If you interested, contact me at anahatara@mac.com.



Pabitra's Children in Nepal, sponsored through Tara Dhatu

I am also looking for additional sponsors for children of the Ecological School in Bahia, Brazil. You may view these children at:

<http://www.taradhatu.org/charity/ProjectTerraMirim/spstageone.html>

It is a pleasure to be the Artistic Director of an organization that can bring so much joy and benefit to so many. Our mandate is to inspire humanity through the sacred arts, and it is certainly a sacred art to love and care for our fellow beings. Under the devoted spiritual direction of Prema Dasara I feel Tara Dhatu is on target for another decade of auspicious accomplishment.

Om Tare!

Tara Dances At the Temple of the Sun Goddess

Togakushi, Japan Oct 08

**Felicity Oswald (Tarama), Level 4,
Mentor in Japan**

After a swift ride on the bullet train from Tokyo, we wound our way up and up the narrow twisting country roads to the far western side of Nagano prefecture. Ripe golden rice fields gave way to steep heavily laden orchards of ripe apples and bright orange persimmon. Finally the ancient forests and shrines of Togakushi revealed themselves and the generous owner of the temple inn where we stayed welcomed us with a drive around the surrounding area.

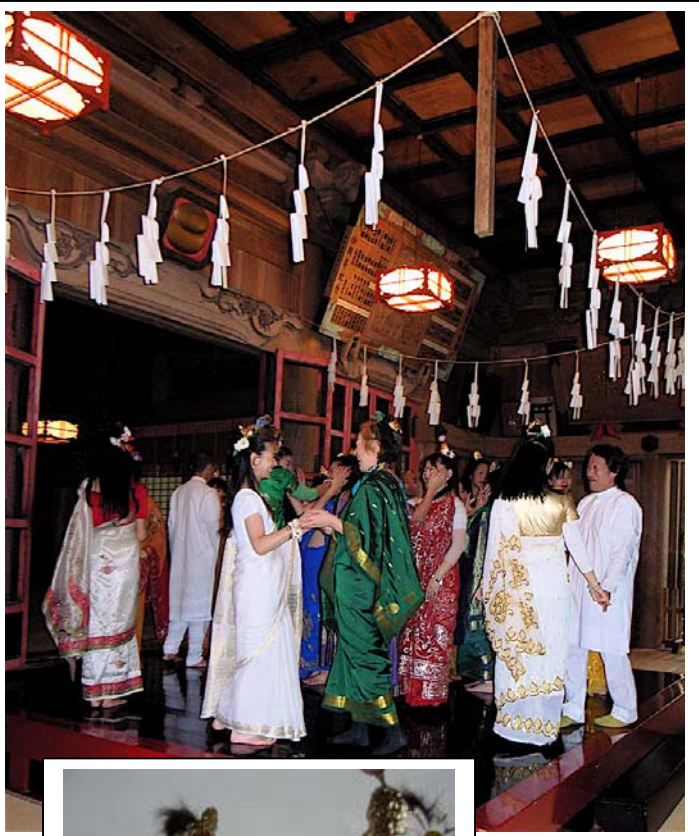
First we went to Hokosha Shrine, the oldest building in the area set in a huge steep forest of ancient cedar. We were excited to see the beautiful black and red lacquer stage inside this large, old wooden building. This was where we were going to dance, the place usually reserved for traditional Kagura and Shinto dances.

By afternoon our group of 17 women and three men had gathered in the rambling inn with a giant thatched roof. This area is famous for the Togakushi Shrines which honor the cave where the Sun Goddess, Amaterasu had hidden when disgusted by her brother, the wind god's indiscretions. The world went dark and what did the other gods do in their quandary? They had a party!! They drank and sang, exhorting the beauty and radiance of another even more beautiful goddess than the Sun Goddess, Amanouzume. This beauty did a 'ribald' dance culminating in a flash of her fanny! They all screamed with laughter and the curiosity of the Sun Goddess finally got the better of her. At last Amaterasu opened the door to her cave and peeked out. Light returned to Earth. The Gods quickly slammed the door of the cave shut behind her and it has now become Togakushi mountain.

The owner of Inn was also not only a Shinto priest and dancer of Kagura but we later found out that he was also a ninja. The area is a famous training ground of ninja, the CIA of the paranoid Edo period and their fond-of-intrigue shoguns. We spent the next two days dancing, eating, enjoying the hot baths and exploring this beautiful mountain area. Then we bundled into cars and went to the shrine where we dressed and made up in a beautiful room full of ancient masks and costumes used by the shrine dancers.



Our Ninja Host



After filing into the main hall, the shrine master performed a ceremony for us, our inn master beating the huge drum at the side of the hall. We noticed as he crossed the room that his feet hardly touched the ground. "Did you see that," Izumi and I said to each other!

Our dance was truly splendid, everyone shining and spreading their light into the world. After changing we descended the steep stairs in front of the shrine and retired to our inn for our final sharing. I had asked each person to write a poem that expressed something about their Praise or role as protector. Japan has a very strong tradition and love of poetry and it was incredibly moving to hear each person's sensitive and lyrical verses.

That night we were entertained by our inn keeper. We tapped his incredible knowledge of the area, it's myths and legends. He mentioned the ninja traditions and we knew we were with the real thing when he flew over a person lying on the floor. When he left the room later that



Invincible Courage meets Joy and Laughter

night, it was as if he was never there. We realized that he had taken all of himself with him. What incredible training at such subtle levels!

The next morning we walked through the beautiful autumnal forest to an avenue of giant cedar trees. The scale was overwhelming, the roots huge twisted and tangled limbs that covered with thick velvet green moss.

The natural beauty of such places awes and nourishes in deep and lasting ways. Next May we plan to dance at Miho Matsubara, a beautiful black sand beach and ancient pine tree overlooking the ocean. In October we will dance either at Mt Fuji or Mt Koya in October.

But we are most excited about the possibility of dancing in May 2010 at THE Grand Shrine of Ise, the equivalent of the Vatican to the Japanese. I envision two mandalas of women from all over the world dancing in a huge vajra with a circle of protectors. Please join us for a special journey in a very sacred and beautiful place with the gorgeous Japanese Taras!



The path of the giant cedars to the outer Togakushi Shrine.

Tara Abbey Consecrated by Dancing Nuns

December 9, 2008

Andrea Abinanti, Level 3,
Kathmandu, Nepal

For the last three years I've been working with a group of nuns from Thrangu Tara Abbey Nunnery in Nepal.

Last year in November we were requested to present an offering for Thrangu Rinpoche's birthday celebration, held in Nammo Buddha. It was a magnificent day, the mountains were crowning the horizon, the sky was azure. All were awestruck as the nuns walked out in their brocade skirts, long flowing hair and crowns.



Thrangu Rinpoche was pleased. He gave his blessing for the training of the nuns to proceed.

The nuns of Tara Abbey are committed to maintaining the Mandala Dance of Tara as a tradition in their nunnery. When talk arose of the consecration of their new and magnificent shrine room it was fitting that we were invited to offer the Dance.

I developed a choreography to accommodate the fact that our audience would be sitting in a circle around the dance area and the nuns rose to the occasion

magnificently. We began our preparations with a short retreat during which time we accumulated 1,590 recitations of the Twenty-One Praises and 115,500 recitations of the mantra. We consider it of utmost importance that part of the dance training includes prayers, meditation and mantra recitations.

The young Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche presided over the opening ceremony. It was a large audience, with close to a thousand people. Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche and Thrangu Rinpoche watched from above. The horns (gyalings) began to blow, accompanied by the chanting of "Om Tare Tuttare Ture Soha." The gyaling players led the dancers on to the courtyard. The audience remained silent as the dance blossomed and Tara wove her blessings through the dancers.

Before the dance was complete, distributors of katas (ceremonial white scarves) appeared. This is a common Tibetan custom that I was not prepared for. They walked from nun to nun, placing katas around their necks as they twirled and moved from position to position. The nuns didn't lose their concentration! I was so impressed! As the nuns walked off the courtyard they all gathered around a mike and continued to chant the mantra. The audience joined in. The nuns were radiant!!!

That evening as I was contemplating the day's activities I realized that the commitment Prema had made to the previous Jamgon Kongtrul Rinpoche, to teach Tibetan women the dance, had been fulfilled. May the power of this dance, this offering, bring peace and balance into the world!



From The Swamps of Louisiana Headquarters Of Tara Dhatu International

Lilliha Herington, Central Coordinator, Tara Dhatu International

Welcome to the office of Tara Dhatu International. I apologize for the condition of the lawn. I have not finished clearing up from the last hurricane. Don't worry about the dogs. They are harmless. Just a little overenthusiastic! And I hope you don't mind cats. They love to pile up on the bed when I am on the computer.

Computers! When I rant about the tyranny of computers, I remind myself that without computers my life in rural Louisiana would be very different. When I came here in 1997 to take care of my parents, I thought that I had danced my last Tara Dance. If anyone had told me that there would be not one but two active Tara circles in this crazy state, that I would travel to India and Nepal, attend Kauai Tara Camp twice and know personally Tara sisters from all over the world by 2008, I would have said,



Lilliha at Atisha School, one of Tara Dhatu's Humanitarian Projects

Prema and Anahata and with their work. It is a multi-faceted job, NOT a job for somebody who likes to know what is going to happen next or who likes exact guidelines. You need to be able to hang loose and let imagination and instinct guide you when you meet a situation for which there is no handbook. You need good help.

Meet the Tara Dhatu International Board of Trustees. We depend on Jessica Gray and Parvati Forrest Burke to help keep the business going. These two fabulous young women are level 3 members in the Tara Dance Student/Teacher Program, have jobs and families and

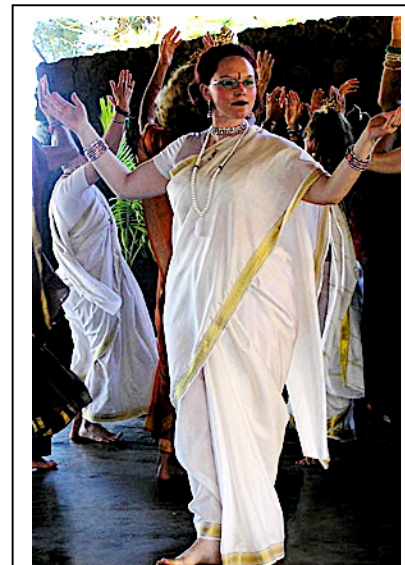


Lilliha's official picture

"Impossible.

" The thought of those two exotic creatures Prema Dasara and Anahata Iradah visiting happily with my father while my brother checked out Beloved Elephant right here in the Swamp, well, that was beyond imagining.

Today, both parents are gone and I have been left with a unique living situation that allows me the opportunity we all wish for, the opportunity to practice right livelihood. As Tara Dhatu director, I am directly involved with



Parvati Forrest Burke



Jessica Zebrine Gray

are much-loved leaders of their own Tara circles. Together with Anahata and Prema the five of us meet monthly in what we call cyber meetings (no two of us live in the same place) and enact business correctly, following the guidelines for non-profit organizations. Everyone brings different skills and knowledge to Tara Dhatu and is willing to be flexible and open.

Our beloved CPA Gail Lowe lives in Flagstaff. She says that she has never had a client like Tara Dhatu but she is never fazed by unusual transactions like getting money to Nepal to refresh our Wealth Vase or setting up the numerous impromptu fundraising projects. She always knows the right way to do these things.

Then there is the person who has refused the title of Database Manager. Jackie Johnson, my roommate during the 2001 India/Nepal pilgrimage, has designed a beautiful database for Tara Dhatu membership, our Student/Teacher Program, and the 4,000 other names that have accumulated over the years. She edits the database from Nipomo, California where she also takes care of her 91-year-old mother. It is a huge job and I am deeply grateful to her for taking this on.

The many friendships I have formed through Tara Dhatu delight and sustain me when I feel the isolation that comes with living in a part of the country where anything outside the norm is viewed with suspicion and fear. I love it that I have met personally many of the Taras who were just names to me when I first began this job. Now, when I write to Brazil's Central Coordinator MyriDakini, I remember the fun of having a tent next to hers at Tara Camp.

I prefer the title of Central Coordinator to that of Director or CEO, although it tickles me to be able to call myself CEO of an international organization as I sit here in the back bedroom of this funky, 30-year-old mobile home in the country. I help keep the Tara Dance Student/Teacher Program going, arrange raffles and fundraisings, answer questions and send information to Taras from Australia to Russia, monitor finances, act as registrar for Tara Camp and other events, and try to keep track of Prema and Anahata.

Along with the Tara Dhatu work, I have begun assisting with the Dharma Emporium. There is a fabulous treasure of dharma items in my quilting Hovel. Tara Dhatu International is also the home of a mini-animal sanctuary and of one of the few Jizo gardens in the United States. This land supplies the clay I use to make my Jizos. There are Tara and Kwan Yin shrines scattered around the huge pond. My big string of Medicine Buddha prayer flags survived the two September hurricanes.

Many articles in this newsletter mention how Tara pops up in the most unexpected times and places. I never expected her to penetrate the deep south of this country!

I am grateful to Prema and Anahata for enlisting me in this work.

I am grateful to all of you for your devotion and words of appreciation

.....and for all the different ways in which you

Manifest Tara.

Dancing the Labyrinth

Jessica Zebrine, Level 3, Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Our dance circle was invited by an interfaith group to offer a dance demonstration in the new labyrinth that has just opened in Baton Rouge City Park in October 2008. This was a powerful opportunity to reach out to our greater community.



Jessica's biggest news this year is Ariana.

We began by dancing Refuge & Shantidevi's Bodhicitta prayer. Then we invited everyone who had gathered to watch to dance with us as we offered several simple Dances of Universal Peace.

We led the group in the short version of the Qualities of Tara. Dancing on this place of power, this sacred symbol built into the earth, we could feel the blessings multiply. As we danced, a shining crescent moon rose. It was perfectly visible between my hands as I danced the mudra of "Creative Wisdom" and visualized the moon.

We completed the evening by walking the labyrinth while chanting the 4 Immeasurables: Metta, Karuna, Mudita, Upekkha. It was a truly powerful evening!

*May you be safe
May you be happy
May you be healthy
May you know peace*

Tara Is Dancing in French Louisiana

Adrianne LaBry Smith, Level 2, Lafayette, Louisiana



Tara is alive and well in the heart of Acadiana. Monthly dance gatherings at Katog Choling Tibetan Cultural Center have continued for the past two years. Women, men, children and adults dance the qualities of Tara the first Wednesday of every month with sincere devotion. Many of us are deeply aware of the transformation taking place in our lives as a result of this practice and are grateful for the support of Prema, Lilliha, and Anahata in seeding the practice here. And our circle is widening.

This past fall dancers, some new to sacred dance and some experienced, gathered for a Dances of Universal Peace weekend in Lafayette, Louisiana. Because several dancers present were Tara practitioners, Anahata made sure to include the

Tara Mantra as part of the weekend repertoire.

With the blessing of Khenrül Lodro Thaye Rinpoche, members of Choling sangha were to offer the Dance of



Katog invited

Tara's 21 Qualities at a community Christmas celebration in Lafayette, LA, "Noel Acadien Au Village" (Acadian Christmas at the Village). This year the organizers of "Noel Acadien Au Village" wanted to feature various cultures present in our community. Lovely manifestations of Tara appeared in living color on the evening of December 15th. Those present were moved by the offering, so were the dancers.

In the Heart of Brazil - the Light of Tara

Khenpo Khatar is one of those rare treasures, a traditionally schooled Lama who has lived and taught in the west for a long time. He knows the western mind and has for many years sought to offer his teachings in ways that are relevant to his western students. I have offered several Tara Dances in his monastery in upstate New York, the “seat” of the Kyalwa Karmapa. One year while teaching there I was given a booklet of a teaching he had given about the inner meaning of the traditional Tibetan Buddhist eight precious offerings. Using his teachings I composed a prayer that I said every day for many years when I made my water bowl offerings in the morning at my shrine.



Two years ago Anahata set it to music and the dance of the 8 Precious Offerings gave birth to itself through us. It was deeply fulfilling to me to know that Myri Tara and her group of Tara Dancers offered this to Khenpo accompanied by Anahata herself playing the music she wrote for the text.

-Prema

Dancing for Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche

Myri Dakini, Brasilia, Brazil , Central Coordinator, Tara Dhatu South America

Throughout our world we all seek peace and justice. We long for integration and harmony between humanity and nature. Sharing in this aspiration, our group of dancing Taras in Brasilia, the heart center of our country, turn the wheel of praises of the Goddess Tara. In a choir of many voices, we affirm our motivation and we renew our commitment and vows with Tara in working for a clear mind to benefit of all beings!

In our weekly meetings we live deeply the danced praises. On special occasions we make dance offerings to lamas, masters and friends. With the presence of the great Rinpoches during an offering the blessings are infinitely multiplied.

This year we had the most auspicious opportunity to dance the “8 Precious Offerings” for Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche. He gifted us with his teachings and blessed our work with Tara. In Khenpo Karthar Rinpoche’s words, “The Goddess Tara is a powerful deity that acts to benefit all beings. It touches people deeply to be in contact with the Goddess, it transforms their world, changes them.

“It is rare to see such a concrete and visible manifestation of the Goddess Tara. This dance and music with Her mantra provides a sense of protection. It makes it possible for anyone watching to have contact with Tara and experience Her manifestation.

“The offering dance with its special, profound meanings is a sublime vehicle to bring this manifestation of Tara’s blessings. Each dancer is a sincere practitioner with the sublime motivation to benefit all beings. This is what brings the power to change the world!”

End of the Year Offering

MyriDakini - Brasilia, Brazil

At the end of the year we have established a tradition of offering the Mandala Dance of Tara to friends and family. This year was an especially beautiful offering. We inaugurated a new set of gold costumes. We dedicated the offering to Prema, for her good health and long life. Om Tare!!



Myri Dakini



Sujani



Gisele



Tete

Tara Dances

In the South of Brazil

**Leila Yeshe Dawa Francischelli, Level 4 Mentor,
Regional Director, South Brazil**

In the Southern region of Brazil thirteen Student/Teachers are dedicating their lives and energy to keep the Tara Mandala Dance expanding and benefiting all beings.



Curitiba, Florianopolis and Porto Alegre, the main cities in this area, have regular circles of practice, and many different activities including retreats and public offerings of the Tara Dance, many supported by local Lamas from different lineages.

Argentina also had regular Tara Dance activities this year!

It is so wonderful to witness the Sangha increasing and spreading, with the sincere motivation of manifesting wisdom and compassion.

May the sublime qualities of Tara, the Great Mother, inspire and guide us all, so that we can manifest our full potential until all beings are free!

Honoring Two New Level 4 Mentors

Prema Dasara

For over 20 years I have nurtured the vision of circles of empowered women all over the world dancing Tara's Praises. It quickly became obvious that I could not lead all of these circles and that training others to lead was an essential part of the work I had to do.

Out of this necessity the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program was born. I began initiating and training women to lead circles of dancers in the preliminary practices. As they gained in confidence and a deeper understanding of the practice itself they "graduated" through levels of responsibility.

A few years ago I realized that some of these more senior dance leaders were ready to initiate student/teachers themselves and I added a new "level" to our program: Level 4, Mentor. These women have demonstrated a dedication to the practice and a deep understanding of its significance. They have also indicated a willingness to help others to be able to lead circles.

The dance continues to spread through the world in this organic fashion. There is no standard time frame for graduations. When a Student/Teacher demonstrates the ability to lead in a deeper way and is willing to take on more responsibility, then I inform them of my decision to increase their level.

In Brazil we have an exceptional situation. Because there has been so much activity and interest in the program it quickly became obvious that we were going to have to have a section of our organization dedicated to the development there.

Myri Dakini assumed the position of Central Coordinator for South America. Maria Ache became one of our first Level 4 Mentors and assumed responsibility for the smooth functioning of the Student/Teacher Program in the country. She created Tarayana Brazil, a newsletter for and about the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program. This newsletter is based on her creative gesture.

This year we decided to separate the work of managing the Brazilian Student/Teacher Program into regions and appointed regional directors. Maria assumed responsibility for the North, Myri for Central Brazil and Leila Yeshe Dawa Francischelli for the circles in the South. This has been working marvelously.

In order to reflect their position and dedication I would like our dancing community world wide to send congratulations and thanks to Myri and Leila for they are now listed officially in our Student/Teacher Program as Level 4 Mentors.

Eh Ma Ho.

Immeasurably Wonderful.

NEWS FLASH

Leila has been accepted to enter a three-month closed retreat. In her absence Dhanya Mary will assume responsibilities of organization in the south and at Leila's request is now a Level 2 Student/Teacher. Thank you and congratulations, Dhanya.



Parvati's Tara Dancing Tour

Parvati Forrest Burke, Level 3 – Phoenix, Arizona

Carry yourself on a silver platter of clouds
All of your life's experiences...
Risk and Rise!
Born of birthing, we are dancing not dying!
The call to come pushes from within
and each spins again
Om Tare!
No flesh to bind we risk and rise
Rainbows we each to guide!
Parvati



Dancing in Portland, Oregon

I began my little tour in Portland with a one day workshop on Saturday October 18th. The call was to “Luxuriate in the Spacious Truth of Being”.

This day, though full to the brim with the beauty of the practice and the warmth and sincerity of the participants, was absolutely luscious with the sweetness of delving deep with no concern about impending performance.

We spent time on examining our sources of refuge, on understanding the four thoughts that turn the mind, and we enjoyed the nurturing of free dance to music chosen to evoke the teaching of the five Buddha families' wisdoms. We dove into the 21 Taras with the dance of Tara's qualities as each woman was born again and again from the small mandala we were able to form with our five participants.

It was heartwarming to have Dena, our event organizer, dancing with her pre-teen daughter Sienna as a rite of passage. It was also special to have Kathleen join us in her new home city after having danced Tara for many years in the Phoenix area. Equally special was the opportunity to welcome and dance with a brand new Tara sister, Carolyn. All was sealed with the purifying kiss of the short Mantra Dance of Vajra Sattva.



Tara is Dancing in Seattle at the Sakya Monastery

Her Eminence Dagmo Kusho Jamyang Sakya at Sakya Monastery requested that a Tara Dance be offered at the monastery every year. Thanks to the efforts of our valiant organizer, Gail Frederickson, we had the honor of dancing in the monastery's incredible shrine room.

H.E. Jamyang Sakya offered an evening of teachings on the 21 Taras the Wednesday

prior to our week-end event. Truly we began our retreat feeling inspired and supported by the Divine Mother. Our Mandala of twelve was a beautiful balance of new Taras and long time Taras and so the flow of faith and surrender was perfect. We were able to send out the light with ease!

Sunday morning the Mandala sponsored a Tara Empowerment with H.E. Jamyang Sakya. It is very special to receive an empowerment from someone who is considered an emanation of Tara. This traditional ritual took us straight to Tara's pure land and added a special glow to our offering later that evening.

Expansion and Contraction

Tara Circles in Seattle

Phyllis Moses, Level 1, Kirkland, Washington

Phyllis Moses has danced Tara on Maui from the very early years of the dance. She moved to Seattle to raise her son and on occasion was able to join the Dance on the mainland. Now she has joined the Student/Teacher Program and has assumed leadership of the circle in the Seattle area.



Through the years there have been various wonderful people holding the Tara Dance meetings in the Seattle area, but then it lapsed for a while... until Tara shouted in my ear that it's time again. So, with her grace, the monthly meetings have begun at my house.

Riding on the inspiration of our dance at Sakya monastery with Parvati, we gathered last month to sing, dance, meditate, and share our aspirations to dance for Ponlop Rinpoche and perhaps the Karmapa when he returns to Seattle.

The Dance continues to deepen each time I participate in it. Different 'flavors' are brought out by different teachers, and the different women in the Mandala. I was in the circle years ago when Parvati 'graduated', and it felt quite precious to dance in a circle led by her. One of the things I love about the Tara circle is that we all learn to work in harmony. It is such a sweet feeling to experience that and to demonstrate that to our audience. The power of the mudras sinks in deeper each time the mandala comes together. I really felt the link that when I'm truly in 'serene peace,' there's definitely an element of feeling 'all victorious!'

In The Mandala

Alanah, a Tara Dancer, Seattle, Washington

Participating in the Mandala Dance of the 21 Praises of Tara was spiritually rewarding and inspiring. Parvati is an excellent teacher. She led us with wisdom, compassion and power.

Her presence and the presence of all the Tara Dancers inspired me to engage with Mother Tara's inner and outer qualities in a tangible and remarkable way. I found using movement and song in an "alive" mandala brought me closer to understanding Mother Tara and how she looks upon all living beings with absolute unconditional love. It was an honor to witness the transformation in others and in myself, and then to offer the energy to an audience. My heart is filled with joy and gratitude for the opportunity.

Dreaming the Dancing Women

Carey Avery, Level 0 Student, Phoenix, Arizona

It was about ten years ago when the dancing women first came to comfort me. We were 500 miles away from my mother's home when a call

came that there was trouble and she needed to return quickly. As we drove through the night, I lay down to get some rest. My mind was restless with emotions, and as I drifted into sleep, the women came. They were dancing in a clearing and I had an overwhelming feeling of love directed toward me.

When I dance a Tara weekend offering, my dream comes to life. Those dancing women have come for me again and I have joyously joined them.

Thanks to Parvati for guiding us and reminding us that the purpose of the practice is to benefit all beings. With this uppermost in mind, I was able to dance as Tara with less self-consciousness than in the past. It was less about “How do I look? How is my dancing?” and more about “Dancing this praise is an opportunity to benefit the audience, the other dancers, and my community.” Thank you to the other Taras and Protectors. Dancing with you is a beautiful gift.

Golden Spiral in Phoenix

Parvati

On my return home to Phoenix, the golden spiral spun round again on the 1st and 2nd of November. Our beautiful Mandala of ten was gifted to have Tara Dhatu's long time charity director, Joni as the central Tara while I was fortunate enough dance with protector Earl.

I had been inspired to ask the local Emaho Foundation, under the direction of Zachoeje Rinpoche, to be our host. The center's shrine room was the perfect aid for us as we worked with the practices to move deep into Tara's paradise. Most gloriously Rinpoche offered us a very special Empowerment of the 21 Taras. He laughed as he explained that he had gone into his texts to find the Green Tara Empowerment and found to his surprise and delight the text for the 21 Praises!

Having been thus charged, our Mandala danced with wonder and glory at the magic that abounds in this web of unfolding.



Each gathering has a special chemistry, each dance is a true spiritual practice. I finished my mini-tour with a renewed awareness of the rare and precious nature of this practice. In the time between the Portland and Seattle offerings I spent time with my father who was newly diagnosed with stage four cancer. The relevance and importance of diligent relationship to practice was shown clearly to me. What a rare and precious gift these teachers, teachings, and sangha! Homage to Mother Tara in deep gratitude for these opportunities newly past and for those that are already being planned for 2009!

Parvati will be teaching in Silver City, New Mexico and Salt Lake City, Utah this spring. She is open to traveling to other areas to offer the weekend workshop of the Tara Dance Empowerment and Offering.

Report from our Charity Director

Joni Haug is stepping down as our Charity Director. She has worked selflessly for ten years, managing our many Charity outreaches. She has been a long time member of our Tara Dhatu Council and has supported our vision in a myriad of ways.

I asked her to share some of her Tara Dance story with us, and to bring us all up to date on what will soon be called our Humanitarian Outreach. We are looking for someone to take over from Joni but to assure a smooth transition, Lilliha Herington our Central Coordinator for Tara Dhatu will be managing the accounts.



Joni Haug, Tara Dhatu Charity Director.

Joni's story:

My first experience of the Mandala Dance of the 21 Praises of Tara was in June, 1995 when Prema Dasara offered a full mandala with a circle of 22 protectors during a celebration of International Tibet Week at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, AZ. I had been hearing of this powerfully transformative and sacred Buddhist dance from my friends for several years, but had always been out of town when it was presented.

That year, however, I was home tending to our new baby, so I joined in the festivities as an audience member. The Dance was held in a beautiful old auditorium on the university campus and I felt so blessed to be there. Our baby, Seva, had been born 3 months premature, had spent the remaining 15 weeks of her gestational period in the neonatal ICU. She had only been home from the hospital for a couple of months. She was still receiving breast milk through a feeding tube, supplemental oxygen, and was on a heartbeat monitor for apnea. She required my love and care 24 hours a day, and this was my first time away from her.

I'll never forget the profound magic of that first Dance offering. From the audience, it seemed as if my friends had been transformed into the Goddess herself, resplendent in their colorful silk saris, adorned with jewels and golden crowns, their faces radiant with smiling light! The throb of music and chant began and the crescent moon of dancers and protectors wound their mysterious way forming an undulating, pulsating womb of prayer and blessing.

Over and over the dancers held up their open palms in the sacred ubhaya mudra of "Fear Not!" and whispered softly the incantation "faith, surrender, send out light." Each time I could see the light of healing streaming out into the world and knew that our world was being restructured and re-formed. I felt that brilliant and holy light stream through me, nourishing the deep and wounded places within my heart and spirit, healing the trauma of an early childbirth and blessing me as a new mother, giving me courage and a renewed capacity to carry my own divine light and strength back to my beautiful baby and into my family and my life.

I vowed that I would learn to dance this amazing and powerful dance.

The following year Prema returned to Flagstaff to teach and offer the Tara Dance, and she brought with her the beloved and talented Anahata Iradah, who would bring many blessings and gifts of music and

generosity to the organization of Tara Dhatu, Inc. Inspired and enthused by this profound practice, I attended the next Tara Dance Summer Camp in 1998, held that year on glorious Maui.



*One of the nuns of
Lobersing*

That summer was a time of change for Tara Dhatu. The Council of Trustees on Maui that had given birth to the organization and had been nurturing it for several years was passing the torch to a group of women in my hometown of Flagstaff. While swimming under a glorious Maui waterfall Prema asked me if I would manage fundraising efforts for a small group of elderly Tibetan refugee nuns who lived in extreme poverty in the jungles near Lobersing, India. Prema had vowed to support them in their practice for the rest of their life.

Prema shared with me the plight of Tibetan refugees living in exile in India, their many trials and the risks they took to leave the oppressive and violent conditions of the Chinese regime in their homeland to seek refuge in India and Nepal. She told me stories about the nuns of Lobersing. These elderly women had been students of Ani Jetsun Dolma, a woman who had achieved great spiritual attainment as a Tibetan tantric yogini. Hearing their stories, I agreed whole-heartedly to help in any way that I could, and thus I stepped into the role of Tara Dhatu's first Charity Director.

In the autumn of 1998, Prema and Anahata led a group of Tara Dancers on a pilgrimage to India and Nepal. On that journey they danced for H.H. Dalai Lama and made many connections with Tibetan refugee organizations in need. They asked me if I would be willing to manage these connections and soon the small commitment to the nuns of Lobersing had expanded into a full charitable effort that included sponsorship programs at Atisha Primary School and Khachoe Ghakyil Ling Nunnery in Nepal. In Dharmasala, India we began a sponsorship program with the Tibetan Children's Village and Dolma Ling Nunnery.



Teaching the nuns of Kopan



*Tara Dhatu sponsored desks and
chairs for these children at Atisha
School*

Following the South India pilgrimage of 2001, the monks of House number 114 at Ser Je Monastery were added to Tara Dhatu's charitable work. This house was headed by Geshe Lotzun who had little support for the 65 refugee monks who lived there and sought higher education in the nearby university monastery. Their house was dilapidated and in great need of a full reconstruction. The Tara Dhatu Charity Projects Committee and project co-director, Wahaba Karuna, were able to help them accomplish that through the kind generosity of Tara Dhatu members and supporters!

During my tenure as Charity Director from 1998 - 2008 Tara Dhatu Charity Projects committee has been fortunate to raise a total of \$203,750.89 thanks to your generous donations as sponsors or general donors for projects at each of our sponsored locations. I cannot thank you enough for your support over the past 10 years, for your donations large and small.

Life is change, and the past 10 years have brought many changes to my own life as well. My little premie has grown into a precocious 14 year-old girl and my son, Asher, is now a freshman in the Honors College at University of Arizona! A couple of years ago, we also took into our home and hearts a young man from

Puna, India who is now a freshman at State University of New York at Geneseo. My personal life has expanded, my work as a healer and therapist has grown, my devotion to my yoga practice and teaching yoga has expanded.

At this time, I realize that it is necessary for me to pass on the torch of this sacred work as Charity Director. I will be stepping down from this position at the end of this year, but will still remain connected to each one of you, to Prema and Anahata, and to this most precious dance practice. I remain a student in the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program and will continue to teach yoga and other sacred practices when invited to do so at our yearly retreats on Kauai.

I invite each of you to support our Humanitarian Outreach by making a tax-deductible donation for the benefit of Tibetan refugees or to consider becoming a sponsor. For more information on sponsorships, please contact Lilliha Nancy Herington at: theswamp@centurytel.net



Tara Dhatu sponsored costumes for these Tibetan Refugee children of Atisha School

Please send donations to:
Tara Dhatu Charity Projects
PO Box 367
Flagstaff, AZ 86002 USA

I am most grateful to each of you and look forward to dancing with you very soon,

Joni Haug

Tara is Dancing in a Nursing Home

November 16th 2008

**By Marie Elena Gaspari, Level 3, Lotus Circle
Berkeley, California**

“Some of us no longer belong in mainstream society; this isn’t anyone’s fault. We are old now, or sick. A strange, unfamiliar life has been created for us in nursing homes. Our family and friends have jobs and responsibilities. They have no time to give to their sick and elderly friends. This is just the way it is.”

-Nursing Home Resident, Darlene Anatolia, aged 69

For the past four years I have been assisting Darlene Anatolia, a resident at the Danville Nursing and Rehabilitation Center, in the writing of her book, ‘The Anointed Ones’.



Marie Elena Gaspari

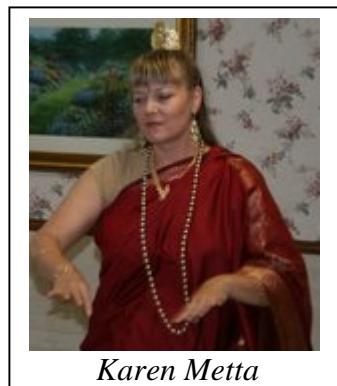
Darlene has heard me speak of the Tara Dance over the years, and has always expressed great interest in seeing the Mandala. She is a generous supporter of our Lotus Circle Costume Fund, and has always wanted to see us dance in our very own Lotus Circle saris. Unfortunately, like many elderly people, she is not physically able to attend our performances.



When I contacted the members of The Lotus Circle with the idea of offering the Tara Dance at the nursing home I was a little hesitant, knowing that illness, old age, and institutions make some people very uncomfortable. However, after making inquiries, I immediately received seven thoughtful and compassionate phone

calls. All of these Tara dancers told me how much it would mean to them to share the power and beauty of the Dance with the elderly!

Karen Metta, Level 3 in the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program, agreed to lead a Crescent Mandala formation of dancers. This was Karen Metta's first time in leading the Dance without the presence of Prema or Anahata.



Karen Metta

We were blessed with the participation of Eana Rose, a level four student teacher, who was in the Bay Area on an extended visit and gave Karen lots of tips and support.

On the day of the performance, the activity room filled with eager residents in wheelchairs, and guests in folding chairs. The staff who were on break stood along the back wall, and those on duty, stole brief glimpses through the doorway. The piano became an altar, draped with gold and purple satin cloths. Autumn flowers framed a thangka of White Tara.

I gave a brief introduction, the music began, the dancers entered, and... Om Tare! The fluid grace of silken saris - cobalt blue, emerald green, shimmering white, brilliant red, and, radiant gold - illuminated the square, white, room. The ordinary world did indeed fall away, and Tara's infinite presence permeated the space. Tara drew the audience into her compassionate core.

There were audible gasps at the powerful, "Hung!" uttered by a wrathful Tara. The unexpected sounds of Tara's joy and laughter sent a surprised ripple of delighted smiles through the audience. And finally, with hands stilled in an exquisite mudra for the moment of one breath, was Tara of Complete Enlightenment.

When the Dance finished, residents, friends, and staff came forward. Unsteady hands reached out to touch us. Many had comments to share.



"Thank you for bringing your beautiful dance!"
 "You are all so different; tall, short, dark, light, skinny, curvy! You've really shown me that everyone is a goddess."
 "I was completely absorbed!"
 "You have opened my eyes. I didn't know there was so much more to learn about Buddhism."
 "We made wishes! We made wishes while you were dancing because you said Tara was a wish-fulfilling deity!"
 "Thank you for remembering us, I used to love to dance."

The elderly are one of the many groups in our society that have been institutionalized, marginalized, and excluded from the mainstream. I first came across the term

“the excluded” in China Galland’s writing, and it still brings me to tears. Tara vowed to remain with us until all sentient beings have attained enlightenment. Her embodiment of wisdom, compassion, and power is all-inclusive; no one is excluded.

We will use this performance as a model for simple, crescent formation offerings of the Tara Dance that our Lotus Circle can perform at the request of other members of our community.

Om Tare!!

Tara Is Dancing At Last in London

November 2008

Suzanne Messinger, Level 1

For years we have aspired to share Tara’s Dance in London. Finally all the pieces came together. We held it at Jamyang (an FPMT Dharma Center) in their Tara Room. It has a very warm, welcoming atmosphere and everyone there at Jamyang was very supportive. They were thrilled for us to be having the practice there.



We set up a shrine, with candles and my silver purifying mind bowl. When the bowl is filled with water, one’s face is reflected back, clear and still.

Faye, from the Dances of Universal Peace community, and Elizabeth supported me throughout the evening. We had a number of key people getting lost, which gave a spontaneous atmosphere to the gathering. I shared the October Full Moon, ‘Why emanate as Tara?’ teaching.

We played the DVD, “Dance The Goddess,” to introduce everyone to the Dance of the Qualities and to give an idea of the extensiveness of the organization around the world. We danced through the Qualities, skirts swirling, jewelry tinkling. It was delightful.

Faye persuaded me to lead the spiral Mandala. I was so happy to have the diagrams of the different Mandalas as we had eight dancers that night. I was able to watch everyone and guide them to their places in the spiral without too much problem. This was great practice for me.



Outdoor garden at the Jamyang Center

Once the women got the idea they became totally involved. They felt wonderful afterwards. Everyone is committed to continue and we have already chosen a date for January.

I am so grateful. It was without doubt the empowerment of the Kauai Camp this year that gave me the confidence to set this up. I was amazed that I was able to lead the singing. I thought I could not sing, but I got much encouragement from Anahata at the Camp. Singing helped the women to settle and they became lighter, more joyous with the chanting. We then created a lovely atmosphere and energy, as usual with Tara.

So there it is. Tara is Dancing in London at last.

Spring. Faith and TV



Rio de Janeiro, November 2008
Maria Ache, Level 4 Mentor, Coordinator
Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program
South America

Maria Ache was invited to present the Tara Dance on TV as part of a program on Alternative Health. The show was about the place of faith in healing. It was broadcast throughout Brazil and has brought many enthusiastic responses from people from all areas of this vast land.

Our Rio circle of Tara dancers was all set for this opportunity having just danced our annual Spring

Mandala. We prepared our beautiful flower crowns to dance in the Solar Room of the famous Botanical Garden in Rio.

It's always difficult to deal with cameras, artificial lights, make up and everything else that comes with a TV program. I was most anxious about doing the practice in a discontinuous way since the final time would be edited to 11 minutes. And then there was the wish to speak about everything and everybody. Would I forget to acknowledge someone's important contribution or some important detail?



It was a live recording but some how, improvising all the way, we were able to keep the focus, the sincerity of our motivation. The fear of saying something silly was overcome by our opened hearts, beating together as one. I could feel the support of the group and, as always, Tara did everything else.

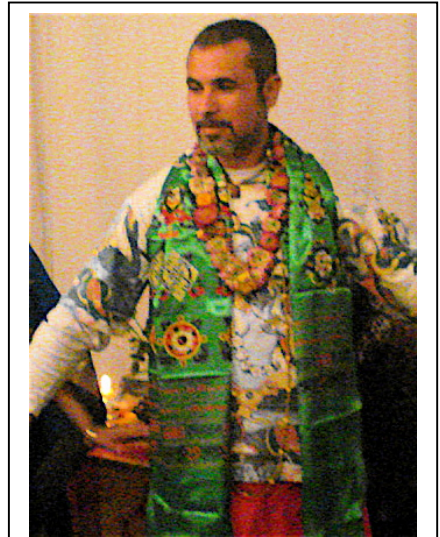
Since the subject of the show was faith I opened our offering by saying that our faith came from the Buddhist understanding of the true nature of every being. We are all capable of manifesting wisdom,

compassion and power! Tara's practice is not a ritual where the deity is out of us but as an archetype that inspires us and reminds us of our own primordial nature.

The Dance began and we went through the challenges of vanity, dispersion and the strangeness of the whole situation. We never lost the perspective that the program could help to touch many hearts and bring new practitioners to the path of dharma.

Some of us were interviewed. Magno, our male protector spoke eloquently about how it is for a man to work with the feminine as a protector in the Mandala. I showed some video clips produced by Anahata of images of women from many countries dancing.

Our circle of Taras truly felt the blessing of Spring. Like beautiful flowers our desire to share our love, wisdom and beauty was given full expression. May this offering benefit all beings.



Magno, Protector

Teaching Tara to Seventh Graders

Kunchog Bailey – Level 2, Salem, Ohio

Recently I had the opportunity to talk about Buddhism to six groups of seventh graders. I formerly had taught a meditation class at a Holistic Center in Canfield, Ohio and one of the students that attended regularly asked me to speak to his daughter's seventh grade classmates about Buddhism.

The last ten minutes of the talk I presented the Tara Dance and the kids participated by joining me on the floor or dancing in their seats.

I wasn't sure how Tara would be received in this middle to upper class suburban school but she went over as always with blazing glory.

I had prepared so hard for this event only to realize that all I needed to do was let them experience the dance and the teachings. I was impressed that the school and their teachers allowed them this experience of introducing them to other religions. It is so needed in our world.



Kunchog Bailey and Julie Thomas

It was a great gift to talk to these young people about their true nature. I told them that our lives are like a diamond on the side of the road covered in mud. If you don't pick it up and clean it off you will never reveal the preciousness of the stone.

I shared with them what it was like for me to be their age and have such poor self-esteem. They were very responsive and asked many questions. I was completely exhilarated by the experience.

I pray I may be able to continue sharing this profound work of Tara.

Tara Continues to Turn in Youngstown

Julie Thomas, Level 3, Youngstown, Ohio

I am so grateful for the presence of Tara in my life. I am happy to report that the Tara Dance continues to be offered in Youngstown on a monthly basis. Although the attendance for the dances over the past couple of months has been erratic, folks still express enthusiasm in attending. I guess the low attendance is part of the natural flow of how things unfold in a community.

For me personally I feel an incredible sense of joy and bliss about this dance that has helped me to deepen my connection to Tara and to the innate wisdom, compassion and power within myself. I feel truly enriched by it and blessed to offer and share it with others. It has opened many doors for me, brought many different people into my life and taken me to places I would not have otherwise traveled to! In difficult times Tara has been a wonderful source of refuge for me and I feel protected by her beautiful, compassionate and wise presence. She is my inspiration, my model, the great mother and she is whom I aspire to manifest as.



The size of the group doesn't matter, it's the spirit of the dance

Announcing Kauai Tara Camp August 17-27th 2009

Our yearly camp on Kauai has fulfilled a deep need for our international sangha to meet each other and to go deeply into the dharmic practices that uphold our dances.

Each year has opened the vision of how to use our practices in our developing circles of dance and in our daily life. We have worked with powerful, transformative practices and shall continue to do so.





This year our focus will be the 21 Praises of Tara. We will include the Brazilian Dances of the Tarot, using that material to open us to the precious correspondence of the Major Arcana of the Tarot and the 21 Praises of Tara.



We will work on how to choreograph a praise and how to guide others in that process.

We will include the Dakini wisdom in our day to day explorations. And of course we will enjoy the primal natural beauty of Kauai's North Shore.

Dancers, remember that coming to this camp is a community blessing. Whatever you gather in experience and insight you will share in your community, so if your finances are challenged you can request friends, neighbors and supporters to make non-profit donations towards your camp attendance.

So write these dates on your calendar!

August 17th-27th, 2009

And just to entice you further, visit the web sites of this years camp....

Album 1 – Celebrate the Divine Feminine

<http://tinyurl.com/438wrf>

Album 2 - The Dakinis Are Dancing -

<http://tinyurl.com/44gqbs>

Album 3 – Three Magnificent Mandalas -

<http://tinyurl.com/3utcsj>

Album 4 – Meet the Taras -

<http://tinyurl.com/3gmnk5>

Album 5 – Ke'e, the Kitchen, the End

<http://tinyurl.com/4blfmg>



Lilliha is the registrar.

Get your name on her list as soon as you can!

theswamp@centurytel.net

See you there!!!!

Letter from a camper at our 2008 camp:

As a newcomer to Tibetan Buddhism, I have been going to classes to learn and to practice the teachings. But the week-long Tara Camp put it all together for me in a way that I was able to GET IT! It was the "ah-hah" moment! The teachings were brought home to me at last. The teachings, the dancing, singing, marvelous dakinis just made magic for me. The woman that entered camp is most certainly not the one who departed. I see oneness in everything. I see teachings everywhere. I have never felt so comfortable in my own body, so comforted by a spirituality with such open arms (a thousand of them!), nor so comforted by the teachings!

I loved the way, as a newcomer, the experienced women were always circling, including, supporting, and encouraging me. I loved the "now" of each moment, the impromptu ideas, teachings, and changes that occurred with grace.

I loved how the ordinary was "transformed"...a pavilion into a Temple, a woman into a Goddess.

I loved the healthy meals put together with love, prayers, and attention.

I loved Anahata's extraordinary music and choreography from the heart... global music with specific shared stories. I felt like I was holding hands with women from every part of our beloved world, holding their story, dreams, desires, pain, and faith.

I loved dancing the 21 Praises of Tara and the feeling of being born as Tara has changed me deeply. This concept seared my soul and I cannot get the music, the idea, the teachings out of my head. I have the song everywhere in my life now!

I cried and I laughed and I never felt more alive and part of something huge in my entire life!

I loved to design and create my mask. I never knew I could do such a thing! The support and encouragement was over the top!

I was absolutely stunned by the solo performances! I tasted every morsel of every offering and it satiated me in a way I never knew I was missing!



MyriDakini dances her solo interpretation of Jewel Dakini

I am totally in awe of your devotion, Prema, and your insight of long ago that you still remain so enthusiastic and personally active in all of this. You are so inspiring, funny, and devoted. What you have already accomplished is amazing enough... and you have SO MUCH MORE! Being in your presence was a gift to me... personable, approachable, and cool in a quick, hot moment. The dharma is so real and present in this camp and in bringing it all home. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Sherry Harris, resident Tara, Kauai, Hawaii



The First Time

October 18, 2008

Jane Pearl, Level 1, Ottawa, Canada

Late one evening in early October Phyllis asked me if I would lead the Tara Dance Circle for the month of October. Though I have been dancing with Phyllis for some time I was brand new to the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program and had never facilitated an evening.

Without much thought I said “yes.” When I awoke the next morning, I suddenly realized what it was that I said “yes” to. During an early morning washroom break, I was texting Phyllis some of my concerns about my ability to lead the circle. As soon as I pressed the “send” button on my mobile phone, the automatic paper towel dispenser started to spew forth towels, and the fragrance spritzer on the wall began to squirt. I got the message! Tara had her own ideas.

We met in a new space for our circle, the beautiful new home of the Palyul Dharma Centre in Ottawa. Tara is very well represented in this space, with many thangkas of her adorning the walls. There is a beautiful altar space, and a lovely feeling of peace in this room. To prepare for this offering, I spent some time in the morning in meditation. I kept getting the feeling that I should bring my laptop along to the meeting, but I could not figure out why.

I arrived at the center to set up, laptop in hand. I remembered Prema’s hint to have music playing when folks arrived. I opened the Tara cd case, only to find that it contained no disc. No problem I had the Tara music on my laptop. And when one of the dancers arrived, she had her copy of the Tara cd with her. She had had a feeling that she should bring it along with her. Well done, I thought. Tara also has “Plan B.” And “Plan C.”

We began our circle with a bit of a sit-down check-in. As each dancer told her story I realized we had all experienced the physical loss of a person near to us recently. I taught the group the 9 Healing Breaths exercise Phyllis and I had learned at Camp.

And then it was time to dance! I felt comfortable leading the “Dance of the Qualities,” but since I had the laptop with me I decided to play the DVD, Dance the Goddess. I wanted to share with our circle one of the realizations that I had had while at Tara Camp this summer. We are all part of a beautiful dance that is danced all over the world by beautiful women in various stages of Tara-ness, and it is very special... that sense of connection, community, sangha.

We sat for a bit after the dance and opened our Tara Texts, taking turns reading the Bardo Prayer aloud to each other. It was a great help, addressing that sense of loss and grief we all felt. We spent a few moments in prayer asking Tara to help our friends in the next phase of their journey.

It was time to dance again. I went to the laptop, and set it up to play “White Tara” from the Tara Dhatu Series #1 for Student Teachers CD. I pressed “play.” Oops. I had “accidentally” set up “4 Armed Chenrezig” to play. I did a quick visual check in with the other dancers, and we agreed to go with it. We sang and swayed, and at some point kinda even remembered the dance! Mmmm, yummy.

Then we sang and danced White Tara. Also yummy! And then, all too soon, it seemed, it was time to close our circle, and leave that beautiful space. I am totally grateful for the resources that are available and have been so lovingly created that helped me to lead this afternoon practice. And oh, so grateful to Tara! Om Tare!



*Jane and new friend Myri
at camp*

Tara Is Dancing In Russia

Sveta, Level 1 - Perm, Russia

Nov 2008

We had a wonderful gathering to share the Tara Dance practices in Perm. Karima came from Moscow, Shahodat from St. Petersburg and our local leaders and organizers Luybov and Sveta worked together very well. We had wonderful musicians and 50 dancers.



Shahodat, Karima, Sveta, Luybov

We are happy to keep the flame of Tara burning here in Russia.



Tara Keeps Dancing On Kauai

Sharon Gonsalves, Level 3, Kauai, Hawaii

The Kauai Tara circle is blessed to have four members of the Tara Dhatu Student/Teacher Program and a vibrant group of regular dancers. We meet in a temple that was built by Eana Rose especially for this purpose. This group has been dancing Tara for almost as long as Prema has been teaching the Dance.

We had our annual Mother's Day offering of the Dance outside in a friend's garden. It was the first time we wore the beautiful saris that Robin bought in Delhi with Prema's help and guidance.

We formed our own Dharma Bum Band to provide live music for this event. That was quite an adventure. Working from the wonderful CDs that Prema and Anahata have produced, we realized that it would be so helpful to have the Tara Dance music written out in a score.

We decided then and there to raise money for Anahata to write the “Tara Dance Song Manual” to make it easier for other musicians to play this sacred music. We have raised half the money. If you would like to make a donation to this project, contact me, Sharon, at sgonsalves@hawaii.rr.com.

Tara Camp was really fantastic. Each year the Kauai Tara circle gets more and more involved in helping with the organization of the camp, of hosting and transporting arrivals and departures. Supporting the camp is a very sweet experience as it allows us to get to know Tara sisters from around the world who come to study with Prema & Anahata, and we in turn get to share the beauty of our island home.

A month after Tara Camp we realized that Myri Dakini was only an island away, helping Prema on Maui, and asked if she could come and work with us in learning some of the more complicated dances such as Vajra Sattva and the Eight Precious Offerings.

Prema reluctantly agreed to let Myri go and with great delight we flew her over and hosted two days of classes. Robin made videos of Myri’s teachings so we could continue to work on the more subtle details of the dance. It was a fantastic experience for all of us. It deepened our practice and unified us further as a Tara community.

It was wonderful for us here on Kauai to have a visiting teacher with so much dance experience and deep attunement to the practices of Tibetan Buddhism.

If you are ever in the islands, do come and dance with us.
Om Tare

Outbreath in Australia

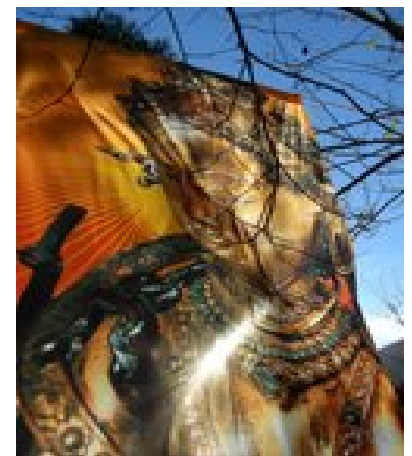
**Felicity Oswell (Tarama), Level 4 Mentor
- Sydney, Australia**

This year began with a beautiful welcome home from my dear Tara sisters. The picture shows you the beautiful sight I was surprised with on return from my 6 month sojourn overseas.



I had a melt down soon after this, kind of understandable really after the huge changes I had been through in 2007, leaving the jail where I had worked for 18 years as an art therapist, turning 50, losing the family home and my family moving to Thailand. Then there was the huge spiritual and physically challenging journey I had undertaken with my teacher Baba in Sikkim and India.

In the following month some of our group danced for Khandro Tsering Choden in the Blue Mountains while I was trying to re-group.



The beautiful banner we were gifted with.

In May we had a beautiful weekend for new people in Kangaroo Valley. A small group, a simple, balanced program and a joy for all. See the picture with the amazing banner we received from the Art Gallery of NSW when we danced for the Goddess Exhibition.

Baba came out for three months in the winter (July, August), a wonderful cozy time. We ran a week long Vajrayana course in the Valley, such a luxury to spend a week with mature gorgeous people, getting teachings, lots of amazing conversations round the fire and of course lot's of singing and dancing, ritual and good food. Baba and I left the same day, he for India and me for Japan and another great journey and Tara offering. It seems as the Australian Tara momentum has receded, the Japanese one has really been empowered.



Baba

Dec 14th is our last meeting of the year. Traditionally we have always used this time to gather by the sea, usually at my place: eat, hang out, swim, and offer our dance to the ocean and water spirits on the dramatic cliffs in front of our place. This year I have lots of firewood and I'm

looking forward to everyone coming together to celebrate the year and look to the next.

It has been hard to re-establish our group since my return. For many years we were so active and engaged with each other and in our offerings. We had processed this falling away, the out breath and fallow period in our retreat in 2007. As much as I have tried, it has been hard to re-group and have any real commitment this year. I am hoping that as with every out breath surrendered, there is an in breath and a new cycle. Right now I'm not sure what that means or how to go about it. I only know I can't do it alone.

I look forward to next year and will try my best to get to Kauai again to see all your beautiful faces. Much love to all.

Tara Turns in Germany

Lisa Staimer, Level 2 – Wuerzburg, Germany

Once a month I lead a Tara circle in Wuerzburg. This spring I taught the Mandala Dance in Augsburg. It was a special experience for me. I had a strong sense that we would have a full mandala, though a couple of weeks before the event there were only fourteen people registered. But when it was time to dance we had the full mandala of twenty-two. I had a strong feeling of Tara's assistance in that matter. It was a powerful, healing event for us all.

Next year I will offer two workshops in the South of Germany and two in Erlangen, Bavaria.

Monlom and Tara Masks

Prema Dasara

It has long been my aspiration to have a yearly prayer festival of Tara. I would love for us to meet for five days and do the practices following the Mind Treasure Text out of which the dance arose.



Karen Metta, Level 3, Dances Buddha Dakini in a mask.

We would offer the Mandala not once but 12 times during the course of the 5 days.

I would like four different mandalas of dancers so we would need at least 88 women to join us. I would like one of those mandalas to be masked with more elaborate costumes. I would like to do this in 2010 but we need a place in which to do it. If you have any ideas, let me know.

This year at camp Janice Walfren will be guiding campers that choose to work with her in making masks of the 22 Taras of our mandala. Janice has agreed to work on the masks until we have a set of 22 that can be used in our first Monlom.

I am inviting you to sponsor a mask. \$108 will enable us to get this first set of masks made. Sponsor's names will be written inside the mask so that every time they are worn and Tara is danced the blessing will increase for the donor. You may direct any amount of offering towards the mask. My need is to accumulate at least \$108 for each mask. If we raise money in excess it will go towards making the special costumes to match the masks.

Here is the list of masks, let me know which one you would like to sponsor:



Mekare Fiske choreographed a dance for the Wisdom Dakini mask makers at Tara Camp.

0	Wisdom, Compassion And Power
1	Swift Protection
2	Creative Wisdom
3	Impeccable Virtue
4	All Victorious
5	Sublime Intelligence
6	Worthy Of Honor
7	Invincible Courage
8	Destroyer Of Negativity
9	True Refuge
10	Joy And Laughter
11	The Distributor Of Wealth
12	Auspicious Beauty
13	Irresistible Truth
14	Ferocious Compassion
15	Serene Peace
16	The Destroyer Of Attachments
17	Bliss And Joy
18	The Transformer Of Poison
19	The Remover Of Sorrow
20	Radiant Health
21	Complete Enlightenment

Mask Dancing as Deity Yoga

Mekare Fiske, Level 3 Winston-Salem, North Carolina

"But why should I emanate myself as Tara or any other deity?" you may ask. 'It is already difficult enough for me to emanate myself as a man, or as a woman. So why should I change my appearance and put on another mask, a Tara mask?'

First of all, your present face is not you; your bones and flesh are not you. Neither your blood, your muscles, nor any other part of your body are the essence of who you are. From the time you were born until now you have manifested in many different ways. None of us is static and unchanging.... None of these manifestations arise primarily from your body. They all arise from the power of your consciousness, from the power of your mind.

“We have to remember when we emanate ourselves as Tara it is not to manifest as something different from what we already are. We already have the profound qualities of such a divine manifestation within us at this moment. The reason we practice emanating ourselves as a deity is so that we can more fully recognize and cultivate these qualities... Tantra challenges this unreasonably low opinion of human potential by showing us how to view ourselves and all others as transcendently beautiful. One of the essential practices at all levels of tantra is to dissolve our ordinary conceptions of ourselves and then, from the empty space into which these concepts have disappeared, arise in the glorious light body, a manifestation of the essential clarity of our deepest being.” ~Lama Yeshe, Introduction to Tantra, A Vision of Totality

These words of Lama Yeshe so beautifully describe the essence of Ritual Mask Dancing Deity Yoga, one of my main practices. Prema has asked me to help develop a circle of masked Tara Dancers. I am excited about this possibility.

Many years ago, I lived in Bali studying movement and meditation. During this time I had the honor to meet an incredible mask maker and dancer and to study with him. It changed my life. I vividly remember the first time he presented me with a mask to dance. I held the mask in my hands and looked into it. I centered within the depth of my breath, connecting with the beauty and power of this ritual object as I had been taught. The mask was then placed over my face. I immediately felt an energetic shift. I aligned with its energy. I merged with its essence, brought forth the essence within me that was of the same vibration.

The dance that followed was one like I had never known. I "found" a part of myself in that dance.

Many comment that it must be so "easy" to dance with a mask because you are hidden, "disguised." These comments represent our patterns of self-consciousness and fear of being truly seen, and yes, this can be true on a surface level. Paradoxically, however, when one is engaged in meditative practice, with authenticity and the depth of presence, you are actually naked, more exposed, more revealed through the mask. And within that revelation, is liberation.

I danced my first Tara Dance 9 months before I lived in Bali and I began studying with Prema in depth upon my return from Indonesia. Mask Dancing and Tara Dancing ran parallel in my life for years. In 2002, I was strongly called to dance the masks I had brought back from Bali in ritual performances for healing and prayer. A most amazing thing began to happen.

As I would sit with the mask and meditate, opening myself to the archetype, opening myself to envision the story, the ritual, the "choreography" if you will, I began to realize how similar it was to what I would do when dancing one of the 21 Tara's. I decided to explore further. I had begun profound Dakini practices that were transforming my psyche and my life. I decided to make a Dakini mask and do Deity Yoga practice throughout the entire process from the conception of the mask to the ritual dance of the mask.

Everything happens within the practice itself. The inspiration for specific mask making - techniques, shape, form, and color, visualization practices that bring the energies into form, choice of music and other adornments, and the powerful sacred movement itself. As my Balinese teacher would say, "moving the energy of the mask;" moving the energy of the deity into manifestation in the world.

It all arises from the practice. And with the incredible thrust of putting the practice into physical form in such a tangible, creative, full-bodied way, we have a unique opportunity for transformation, the main principle of tantric deity yoga.

I encourage deep breathwork and visualization practices before every step of the mask making and movement process. This creates a field of spaciousness out of which the deity awareness arises. Then one enters into the realm of manifestation from a completely different view of reality. There is something sublime that happens while chanting the mantra of the deity as you are making the physical form of her sacred face, her energy, her wisdom nature; and then painting and adorning with rich color, texture, and shape. All of the senses are utilized. All of our being has an opportunity to focus.

There is profound intention, presence, awareness, creation.

And as the sacred power of Mantra itself calls the luminous body of a deity into form; we chant the sacred syllables and call the face of the deity into form within the mask.

Sound into form. Body, Speech, and Mind.

The mask is infused with the power of the deity. We have birthed our "buddha" self from our own innermost nature, and made it manifest in a face we can see before us. We have invoked and made offerings to the deity through our intent, our voice, our prayers, and through the physical materials from which we are forming the mask. Then we are ready to embody the deity.

In the next step of this practice, it is extremely powerful to do the full deity yoga visualization with the mask before you. And then with utmost awareness, put on the mask. Merge with that face, the face of the deity, your face. Use the magic of the mask to embody the deity fully, and then move. Move your entire body. Move the enlightened activity of that deity into the world. Dance your essential nature. Do not "pretend" that you are the deity. Feel from the depths of your being that you are That. Dance the wisdom. Dance the compassion. Dance the power. Dance the transmutation of poisonous emotions into wisdom nectar. Dance the world into a new state of awareness.

It is in the act of the ritual "performance" itself that a supreme act of bodhicitta is gifted. And that is our most sincere motivation. As Lama Yeshe, once again, so eloquently states, "What is the purpose of all these practices? It is nothing other than developing and expanding the dedicated heart of bodhicitta. There is no other reason for all these deities. In fact, all tantric meditations without exception are for the sole purpose of developing strong bodhicitta."

In the Mantra Dance segment of the Mandala Dance of the 21 Praises of Tara, there is a beautiful Tonglen practice in dance form. In Masked Dance Deity Yoga I dance Tonglen as well. The movements are spontaneous and organic, arising from the body of the deity, very specific to the energy of the deity that is being danced. For example, in the Vajra Dakini dance, the transmutation of anger into mirror-like wisdom was a very different energetic experience than the Padma Dakini transmutation of lust and desire into discriminating wisdom. Both the enlightened activity of the deity. both bodhicitta.

Within this body of work, Ritual Mask Dancing Deity Yoga, we are able to combine the essence of original theater (harnessing the forces of the cosmos in a ritual "reenactment" to tell the story of the Divine within) with the exquisite power of tantrayana - thinking, speaking, and acting now, in this moment, as an Enlightened Being.

Giving even more power to this work are the Masks, themselves. Ancient vehicles, revelatory devices that connect the seen with the unseen, sacred mirrors that bring the formless into form. In traditions the world

over, sacred masks are revered as holy; objects imbued with incredible power, to be honored and respected, to be interacted with in prayer and with purity of intention. In Bali, the sacred masks worn in ritual are kept in the temple, in seclusion, when not being "performed." It is important for us to remember that as with the sacred texts, these masks made within the power of our deity yoga practice are to be treated with respect and care. As a physical manifestation of your practice, the mask can have an extraordinary effect.

And then there is the cellular experience within the body, in our beautiful dancing body. With every movement and with every breath, bodhicitta. The Embodiment of the Deity.

In 2007, the deity yoga mask work I have been exploring coincided with Prema asking five of us to dance specific Dakinis at the Tara Retreat on Kauai. It was perfect. Parallel paths within my being joined with the Padma Dakini dance. This past summer at our 2008 Retreat, I was able to share this process with a small group of Tara Dancers who created their own masks and danced the Dakinis. It was phenomenal. After the first experience of "moving the energy of the mask," we sat in a circle and I asked each woman to speak of what she experienced in her body-mind as she moved the energy of the Dakini. What came forth were wisdom teachings of the Dakinis themselves; the deepest, most profound aspects of our wisdom nature brought into awareness through the body, through the mask, through the dance, through the practice.

"The deity we choose to identify with represents the essential qualities of the fully awakened experience latent within us. To use the language of psychology, such a deity is an archetype of our own deepest nature, our most profound level of consciousness. In tantra, we focus our attention upon such an archetypal image and identify with it in order to arouse the deepest, most profound aspects of our being and bring them into our present reality." ~ Lama Yeshe

