

Interview with His Holiness the Dalai Lama Tara Dance Pilgrimage - Oct 1998

Prema Dasara and Anahata Iradah led a group of fifty Tara Dancers and musicians on a pilgrimage to Dharamsala, India at the invitation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He had asked them to offer the Mandala Dance of the 21 Praises of Tara at the 38th Anniversary of the Tibetan Children's Village. This annual event is attended by most of the Tibetan population of the area. After the offering His Holiness met with the group. Prema and Anahata asked questions, His Holiness generously responded. The material is lightly edited.

His Holiness:

Were you tired in the sun? I felt it - strong!!

Thank you. I very much appreciated your dance, and I am sure many Tibetans celebrating today, they enjoyed it.

Even more than that, when you were performing there, coming from the United States and so many developed countries, with your grace and then having to dance in that dust.....that reflected in my mind.

In reality we here are refugees, a refugee community. We depend on others for help. But our cause is a just cause. Therefore seeing all of you from many parts of the world, people with good heart, expressing concern and solidarity, moral support I consider your presence here, in the dust, in the sun.....no fan, no air conditioning - nothing (laughter). Certainly it brings some clear indication of moral support, world wide moral support. I think many Tibetans, certainly have that feeling.

So I really enjoyed. Thank you very much, Thank you very much, thank you. (laughter)"

Prema:

Your Holiness, could you perhaps give us some teachings about Tara and the dance?

His Holiness:

There are 21 different manifestations of Tara each having a different purpose. Some are for long life, wealth, to cure illness, expel evil spirits, rescue from poisons. There are different purposes, different forms, different colors, different elements of Tara. There are two or three different traditions all coming from India.

Basically, the Goddess Tara is a manifestation of Buddha energy. According to the Guhyasamaja Tantra, our ordinary physical constitution is composed of the 5 Buddha families. In the Guhyasamaja mandala, the different parts of our constitution become the 32 Guhyasamaja deities.

Tara is our inner air. Our inner wind or air ultimately is Tara. Air, according to Guhyasamaja, means energy. All energy, all movement entirely depends on air or the inner winds. Even the movement of our consciousness combines with that energy.

When that energy manifests as the Goddess Tara, when we meditate on Tara it means we meditate on energy. This is the practice and understanding of Tara on a deeper level. This is the explanation according to Guhyasamaja.

Traditionally the Goddess Tara is considered a very energetic angel or deity. Because of that, Tara meditation or Tara Yoga can perform many purposes.

When you perform the dance of Tara you must first create positive motivation, compassionate motivation, a sense of caring, a sense of concern. With that motivation you will find when the performance is taking place, there will be some kind of feeling of blessing from Tara.

It will certainly bring a positive atmosphere, a vibration. It does not matter whether the members of the audience are believers or non believers. There will be some kind of vibration, invisible energy. What is most important is a sense of motivation. Before performing, cultivate or shape the purpose of your motivation.

Then you can carry your performance with inspiration and perspiration.
(Laughter)"

Anahata:

Your Holiness, the world looks at you in awe. Your peaceful response, year after year, towards the brutal Chinese invasion of your country. I would like to know how you do it, how have you maintained this practice consistently?

His Holiness:

Just this morning I mentioned a sense of commitment, a sense of obligation, a sense of determination. These develop from your basic belief for basic practice.

These things cannot come through regulations, discipline or rules you should do this, you should not do that. This must be developed through training, not blind faith, through analytical meditation.

Once you have the full conviction that this is the right way, this will bring us inner peace, this brings me inner happiness, inner strength then you can practice diligently.

Knowing this also brings happiness or inner strength to others. Basically we are all the same - same potential, same nature - mentally, emotionally, physically, generally speaking.

In my own case as a Buddhist and member of the Tibetan community, whether Buddhist or not, traditionally, we describe other beings simply as 'mother sentient beings'. Small insects we call 'mother sentient beings' - it's good. Mother here is a symbol of dearest love. This bring us an attitude to all sentient beings, very close as close as your mother or your father or someone closest in your heart.

If you describe other sentient beings, not only human beings, but all sentient beings in this way you eventually familiarize your mind to some kind of close feeling irrespective of what their attitude is towards you. One individual may be very hostile. But from our view point, from our side, whether they realize or not, whether they know or not: there is a circle of life - rebirth. I think "these are sentient beings just like myself who want happiness, who do not want suffering. They have the same potential to overcome suffering to achieve permanent happiness."

These realizations, these concepts I practice deliberately and meditate upon them. This is very useful in the field of politics, for the national freedom struggle. It is useful in every field dealing with sentient beings.

When I use the expression Chinese Brothers and Sisters, I mean 'mother sentient beings' and I disregard their attitude. This is very useful.

This morning I mentioned that we must develop a sense of compassion towards others, of kindness towards others. But it does no good to simply say you need to develop these things. You need to be willing to go through the process of practice year by year, moment by moment, so that it becomes part of your life, part of our life, part of our way of thinking.

Some modification is needed, of course, according to the circumstances. Basically you have this energy, power you can use, different forms, different levels. As a friend, these things, if we carry regular effort constantly, life can change. Mental attitude definitely can change, way of thinking, that certainly influences your way of life.

Whether a Westerner or Easterner, or Southerner - no difference. All these differences I believe are artificial differences. Basically we have the same brain and the same heart. (Looking at Dean, one of our pilgrims with his long hair and beard, His Holiness scratched his own shaven face) Although looks, big differences, your face and my face, looks big differences (laughter)

Thank You. Thank you. Thank you very much. I appreciate all your work."