



# THE DHARMA OF DANCING

*Festivities erupted after an intensive meditation course some years ago at Chenrezig Institute in Australia, led by Lama Zopa Rinpoche. People picnicked, sang, danced in the gompa, played music and hung around eating. Then LAMA YESHE gave them the following advice ...*

Dance Photos: Kristina Dogge

## *Today you've been playing and dancing.*

If you have inner awareness, you'll see that your ego has been reacting in a certain way. One song is a favorite, another song you dislike; I am sure each of you has had this experience. When you dance, there are certain moves you like; you think they're good; they make you happy. There are other dance moves that you feel are stupid, no good. That's the way you feel, and every time you dance, you're reacting in your mind. What Buddhist meditation allows you to do is to see that good dancing has value but so does bad. There's nothing to react to emotionally.

Also, the main reason I agreed to this festival, with its dancing, fun and games, was that I thought you could learn something, test and examine yourselves after doing the meditation course.

Each of you should check up: you've done many things today – have any of them really made you happy? Ask yourself this question, right now: do you feel that what you've done

today constitutes a really happy life? Exhausting yourself through singing and dancing – is the exhausted life a happy one? This is very simple: your mind interprets, "Today is festival day; we're happy. Today we're going to get cake. We can give up morning meditation; nobody's pushing us to meditate." So you simply hang about, wandering aimlessly here and there, looking around. Do you think that's happy?

Let's say that you've been dancing for a while and suddenly stop. Your ego reacts, "Oh, now my pleasure has gone." Many people's ego will react like this, casting them into the same old darkness. They're up, full of energy; suddenly the party finishes and they come back down. This up and down comes from ego, not understanding what is real happiness or the reality of life.

All such activity has to change; nothing lasts. Somehow you have to learn to let your pleasures go without grasping at them neurotically. This is very important. That's why Buddhist philosophy teaches that the whole world is like an illusion – you cannot hold an illusion permanently; there is no solidity.

What you enjoy from moment to moment cannot be held permanently. Its nature is impermanent, transitory; it passes, passes, goes, goes, finishes, finishes. That's the whole reality of life.

The Western ego suffers greatly because of the quickly changing nature of society. When you find you cannot function because society is moving so quickly, you blame society. The nature of society is that it is going to change; it is your own nature to change; it's the nature of weather to change. Therefore, it is very important that your attitude is such that you follow the middle path and avoid extremes. But doing that is not an easy job; you need penetrative wisdom.

That's why we say meditation is worthwhile. Meditation does not mean going into a cave. Just contemplate the movement of your own actions – your breath, thoughts and everything else. That's enough. Also, don't think that you are irreversibly confused and unclear. That, too, is wrong. Your mind has clarity; clarity is your mind's ability to receive reflections of good and bad. Everybody has that, even children. When children play, they have some kind of discrimination. That is the beauty of their consciousness. You can contemplate on your ability to discriminate; that is the clarity of your mind. Contemplate on that. If you believe that you are confused all the time, of course, you'll be confused.

**Student:** Lama, today we were dancing in the gompa and I had a good experience. It combined what you talked about in meditation. There was the action but there was stillness as well. I was exhausted, but I also got energy from it.

**Lama:** Well, that's beautiful; I'm very happy. That was my idea in having a festival, for people to relax and enjoy themselves. We should not think that we are meditators, exclusive, special people, and that the rest of society is dirty, sinful and negative. That's wrong, isn't it? We are down to earth, and understand and can relate with people. That's good. Anyway, the purpose of Chenrezig Institute is to serve the people in society. We all come from society and therefore we need to help the society.

**Student:** I'm still not sure what you are suggesting is the most suitable social life for the Western mind. You seem to be suggesting that dancing and such activities are bad.



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your ego identifies  
that now, after  
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conception.*

**Lama:** No, I'm not saying that they are bad. Dancing is normal; it is good. But I want you to understand, my point is that if in dancing today your ego identifies that now, after suffering for ten or fifteen days in the prison of meditation, today is the happy life, if your ego interprets in this way, that is a wrong conception. The reason I am using this example is that it is fresh from our experience today. So our experiences are our resource from which we see what is reality. Normally, I use as examples whatever is close. If I see a flower somewhere, to make a point I hold up that flower. So, we were dancing today, and I use this energy as an example to demonstrate reality.

**Student:** I was wondering how to acquire self-discipline?

**Lama:** If you can recognize how your mad elephant mind functions, you'll become disciplined automatically. When you finally recognize your own mad elephant, undisciplined mind,



you feel that you cannot go on like this any longer, always leading yourself on the wrong path and always finishing up miserable. So you question and examine your own mind, and then put some limits on the wrong attitude. When you find the right attitude coming, let go. Discipline comes from wisdom; it is not something imposed upon you by lamas or priests. For example, I have to make my own discipline; nobody can force me to stay here. If I want to go to Brisbane tonight and enjoy myself in a nightclub, I can choose. So, we need

to discipline the mad elephant mind; everybody has to. But once you reach beyond the mad elephant ego, you don't need discipline; you are already disciplined.

**Student:** Lama, I've found that dancing complements meditation and is not necessarily a temporal pleasure, that dancing can have lasting benefit.

**Lama:** I'm very happy that you've had that good experience. I am not saying that dancing itself is simply a fleeting pleasure; it depends on mental attitude. Your experience of dancing has value. If you contemplate on and remember your experiences continuously, that continued memory can keep you from depression. The thing is that if we cannot recollect good experiences, cannot maintain their value, later we can get depressed. Just as you have experienced, everybody else has to some extent had some sort of clear, blissful experience. The thing is that we can't maintain the continuity of the memory of that good experience, the clarity. Therefore, one minute we are clear, the next, polluted. That's why we need some kind of balance – so that we can hold the memory of the good experience instead of thinking garbage all the time. That's what makes us up and down. However, every human being has such clear, happy, blissful experiences. The problem is that we don't contemplate in a penetrated way or remember those experiences continuously.

**Student:** Lama, how can Westerners approach sex in a more positive, unattached way?

**Lama:** Well, the simple way is to have a giving attitude instead of a grasping one, to be more concerned with giving or sharing pleasure with another than with, "I want pleasure."

**Student:** But often that is interpreted as feeding the other person's ego.

**Lama:** No, not necessarily. Anyway, your responsibility is to develop a giving attitude. The other person may be self-cherishing, but that is his or her responsibility. Your responsibility is to abandon your uptight, grasping game. To do that, you need to develop giving. Most of the time, I tell you, the ego game between Western couples is that neither of them is satisfied by sense pleasure and then they say, "Oh, you're no good; I don't like you." They blame each other. If you are not concerned with fulfilling your own sense-gravitation attachment, it's okay. Are we communicating or not?

**Student:** It's a difficult one, though.

**Lama:** Yes, of course! That's why you came to the meditation course. It is difficult, but definitely you can learn. The thing is that Mahayana Buddhism teaches that you can touch this flower without having the neurotic, grasping mind. If you can see the possibility with this flower, ask yourself why. Then, slowly, slowly you can relate this experience to other relationships as well. First of all, the Western mind strongly believes, "I should have satisfaction from this." Let's say that I'm a Westerner and you are my girlfriend. I have the attitude that *you* should make me satisfied, otherwise *you* are the failure. Can you imagine that? Completely egotistical mind. From the Buddhist point of view, that is completely wrong. That is a completely wrong attitude: *you* are my girlfriend, so *you* should give me complete satisfaction, and if you don't give me that you are a bad lady. It's the same thing in the reverse way, with ladies too. Basically, this is wrong. First of all, I should recognize that my satisfaction comes from myself, from me, not from you, my girlfriend. If I believe that basically my happiness depends on my girlfriend – "As long as she exists, I'll be happy; if she no

longer exists, my happiness will be lost" – that is a very dangerous, deluded thought. There are many things in the Western attitude that need to be changed. ☸



Photo: Carol Witz

Edited from the Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive by Dr. Nick Ribush. For more teachings by Lama Yeshe, please go to the LYWA Web site: [www.LamaYeshe.com](http://www.LamaYeshe.com)