Activating Feminine Energy in Spiritual Practice

Kadampa Center, August 25, 2020

Activating Feminine Energy in Spiritual Practice

- Male & Female Energy Ratio
  - Male Energy – "directed, focused, goal-oriented, productive, and outward thrusting…It corresponds with linear, left-brained thinking, and with doing."

    - Shepherd Hoodwin

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- Male & Female Energy Ratio
  - Female Energy – "creative, process-oriented, unstructured, and inward-drawing…It corresponds with circular, right-brained thinking, and with being."

    - Shepherd Hoodwin

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- **Sutra and Tantra Presentations of Male & Female Energy**
- Exploration of the Buddha Tara as a Means to Activate Feminine Energy

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- **Sutra and Tantra Presentations of Male & Female Energy**
  - The goal in both is unification, totality
  - Feminine energy needs emphasis in our culture

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1. Sutra Presentation

- Two elements of the <u>path</u> (like the two wings of a bird):
  - **Wisdom** (Feminine) – Transcendental wisdom realizing emptiness
  - **Compassion/Method/"Virtue"** (Masculine) – Practices of generosity, morality, and so forth

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1. Sutra Presentation

- Two elements of the result:
  - **Collection of Merit of Wisdom** – Truth Body (Dharmakaya), the personal dimension
  - **Collection of Merit of Virtue** – Form Body (Rupakaya), the interpersonal or social dimension

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2. Tantra Presentation

- Two elements of the path are combined in one mind:
  - **Wisdom** (Feminine) – Path Clear Light
  - **Method** (Masculine) – Impure Illusory Body

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2. Tantra Presentation

- Two elements of the result, the complete unification of nondual wisdom with great bliss:
  - **Result Clear Light** – Truth Body (Dharmakaya), the personal dimension
  - **Pure Illusory Body** – Form Body (Rupakaya), the interpersonal or social dimension

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2. Tantra Presentation

- Lama Yeshe in *Introduction to Tantra (pp.18-19)* on the tantric presentation of the male and female energies

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- Sutra and Tantra Presentations of Male & Female Energy
- **Exploration of the Buddha Tara as a Means to Activate Feminine Energy**

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- **Exploration of the Buddha Tara as a Means to Activate Feminine Energy**
  - **Introduction to Tara**
  - Tara can be understood on many levels
  - The wisdom that liberates us and all beings
  - The mantra of Green Tara
  - The eight dangers and how Green Tara protects you from them

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- **Introduction to Tara**
  - **Tara** in Sanskrit means "star," from the root that means "to guide across," thus showing her liberating activity
  - "Tara the Liberator"

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- **Introduction to Tara**
  - **Tara** symbolizes the awakened activity of the buddhas
  - **Green Tara** in particular eliminates obstacles and brings success

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- **Exploration of the Buddha Tara as a Means to Activate Feminine Energy**
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  - The wisdom that liberates us and all beings
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- **Tara can be understood on many levels**

1. **As a person/historical figure**
2. As a manifestation of enlightened qualities
3. As our buddha potential in its fully evolved state

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Tara is an emanation of bliss and emptiness. Within the sphere of emptiness – the absence of inherent existence – blissful wisdom realizing emptiness appears in the form of Tara.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.19

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By appearing in this physical form of Tara, the wisdom of bliss and emptiness of all Buddhas inspires us to cultivate constructive attitudes and actions.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.19

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By understanding the symbolic meaning of Tara's physical characteristics, we gain confidence in and are moved to follow the path she teaches, generating her qualities within ourselves.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.19

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If we think about the qualities of a Buddha, how would those qualities look if they appeared in color, shape, and form? Even though all Buddhas have the same internal traits and qualities, they appear in different manifestations to emphasize certain characteristics.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.19

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- **Female form** symbolizes wisdom
- **Green color** symbolizes activity and success
- **Body posture** expresses her inner realizations and outer activities
- **Hand mudras** of granting supreme realizations with right and the Three Jewels with left

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- **Lotuses** held in her hands symbolize purity and power; also the development into Buddhahood (bud, open, fully open)
- **Ornaments** of jeweled necklaces, armlets, anklets, earrings, and crown indicate that the six perfections are integrated fully in her being and that they adorn every activity

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- **Outward extension** of right hand and foot emphasize compassionate activity (method)
- **Inward drawing** of left hand and foot closer to her indicates her inner peace gained through realizing emptiness (wisdom)

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Tara is also adorned with three syllables: OM at her crown chakra, AH at her throat chakra, and HUM at her heart chakra. These three syllables embody respectively, a Buddha's physical, verbal, and mental faculties. They also represent respectively the Sangha, Dharma, and Buddha Jewels of refuge.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.22

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These syllables serve as subtle objects upon which a meditator may focus; they also remind us of the qualities we are developing within ourselves as a result of practicing the Buddha's teaching. In this way, each characteristic of Tara's form illustrates the path to Buddhahood and its resultant qualities.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.22

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➨**Tara can be understood on many levels**

1. As a person/historical figure
2. As a manifestation of enlightened qualities
3. **As our buddha potential in its fully evolved state**

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Our extremely subtle mind and body have the potential to transform into the fully enlightened body and mind of a Buddha. When we visualize Tara and regard her as the resultant Tara that we will become, we are inspired to train our mind in the path leading us to this result.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.23

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  - Introduction to Tara
  - Tara can be understood on many levels
  - **The wisdom that liberates us and all beings**
  - The mantra of Green Tara
  - The eight dangers and how Green Tara protects you from them

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- **The mantra of Green Tara**

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA

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- **The mantra of Green Tara**
  - **OM** – enlightened body, speech, and mind of Tara and all the buddhas

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- **The mantra of Green Tara**
  - **TARE TUTTARE TURE** – all have the meaning of "to liberate"
  - In one interpretation, they are referring to liberation from obstacles to generating the paths of the three levels of practitioner
  - In another, they refer to banishing the obstructions to generating the realizations of the three principal aspects of the path

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- **The mantra of Green Tara**
  - **TARE** – liberating from suffering (1st Noble Truth - Suffering)
  - **TUTTARE** – liberating from the eight dangers (2nd Noble Truth - Causes)
  - **TURE** – liberating from disease, especially ignorance (3rd Noble Truth - Cessation) – all of which is arrived at through the 4th Noble Truth - Path

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- **The mantra of Green Tara**
  - **SVAHA** – "may this happen!"

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- **The eight dangers**
  - **These are obstacles on the path**
  - **Each of these eight have external and internal aspects**
    - **The external ones threaten our life or our property**
    - **The internal ones endanger us spiritually**

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- How does Green Tara protect you from these eight dangers?
  - Depending on Tara's wisdom by which she guides you, YOU liberate yourself from these
  - While we can ask Tara to save us from these dangers, we are actually calling upon our inner Tara, the seeds of our own wisdom and compassion

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- How does Green Tara protect you from these eight dangers?
  - First we practice the temporal antidotes for each of them and then the ultimate antidote of wisdom realizing emptiness
  - These are taught by the Buddha to help us reduce and eventually eliminate them

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- **How does Green Tara protect you from these eight dangers?**
  - **The real protection then, is the Dharma, the true paths that are realizations of emptiness and the true cessations that occur on the basis of those**

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The following eloquent verses requesting Tara to protect us from the eight dangers are extracted from "A Crown Ornament for the Wise," a hymn to Tara. It was composed by Gendun Gyalwa Drubpa, the First Dalai Lama (1391-1475), after he had completed a meditation retreat on Tara.

- Ven. Thubten Chodron, *How to Free Your Mind*, p.42

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1. The Lion of Pride

Dwelling in the mountains of wrong views of selfhood,
Puffed up with holding itself superior,
It claws other beings with contempt:
The lion of pride - please protect us from this danger!

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2. The Elephant of Ignorance

Not tamed by the sharp hooks of mindfulness and vigilance,
Dulled by the maddening liquor of sensual pleasures,
It enters wrong paths and shows its harmful tusks:
The elephant of ignorance - please protect us from this danger!

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3. The Fire of Anger

Driven by the wind of inappropriate attention,
Billowing forth swirling smoke-clouds of misconduct,
It has the power to burn down forests of goodness:
The fire of anger - please protect us from this danger!

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4. The Snake of Jealousy

Lurking in its dark pit of ignorance,
Unable to bear the wealth and excellence of others,
It swiftly injects them with its cruel poison:
The snake of jealousy - please protect us from this danger!

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5. The Thieves of Wrong Views

Roaming the fearful wilds of inferior practice
And the barren wastes of absolutism and nihilism,
They sack the towns and hermitages of benefit and bliss:
The thieves of wrong views - please protect us from this danger!

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6. The Chain of Miserliness

Binding embodied beings in the unbearable prison
Of cyclic existence with no freedom,
It locks them in craving's tight embrace:
The chain of miserliness - please protect us from this danger!

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7. The Flood of Attachment

Sweeping us in the torrent of cyclic existence so hard to cross
Where, conditioned by the propelling winds of karma,
We are tossed in the waves of birth, aging, sickness and death:
The flood of attachment - please protect us from this danger!

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8. The Carnivorous Demon of Doubt

Roaming in the space of darkest confusion,
Tormenting those who strive for ultimate aims,
It is viciously lethal to liberation:
The carnivorous demon of doubt - please protect us from this danger!

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Dedication

Through these praises and requests to you

Quell conditions unfavorable for Dharma practice

And let us have long life, positive potential, glory, plenty,

And other conducive conditions as we wish!

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Some concluding advice from Ven. Thubten Chodron:

- Uniting our requests with wisdom of emptiness of the three spheres
- While requesting Tara, invoking our internal wisdom and compassion – the greater our wisdom of ultimate reality, the more Tara can inspire us to deepen our realizations