

Tashi Choling's Bodhi Tree

Venerable Gyatrul Rinpoche

May 11th, 2015

Now you have a bodhi tree, a baby one, here at Tashi Choling; someone gave it to us. That is our amazing fortune! If you want to know why a bodhi tree is so special, look to India, to the stories of Buddha Shakyamuni's life and enlightenment. When Khenpo Namdrol comes, you can ask him, too, as well as other lamas. It is not our bodhi tree particularly that is special—except that it is special for us—but in Buddhism in general, all bodhi trees are held to be sacred and a big deal is made of them. We even have bodhi leaves included with the precious substances inside the statues here, that is how precious they are.

Even the Dalai Lama's lama, an Indian, he made a very big deal about bodhi trees. One day some of the fruit and a few leaves from the bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya fell, and he picked them up. The next time I saw him, he showed them to me, and he talked of them with such reverence and respect, saying they were more precious than stupas, telling me how there was a bodhi tree at Buddha Shakyamuni's birth, and praising them in many other ways. That really impressed me. I thought, "Wow, the Dalai Lama's own guru is saying such things. He is a real mahasiddha and an incredible scholar in addition to being an accomplished practitioner. He isn't saying these things just because he is following a Tibetan tradition or Indian tradition, or because somebody told him to think this way."

There are bodhi trees in Malaysia and other places, too, not just in India, although of course the one at Bodh Gaya is the foremost. But anywhere there are such trees, when the leaves or fruit fall, they are gathered up and kept as something very precious, almost as if they were a piece of the Buddha himself or his relics.

Now that we have a bodhi tree, don't think it is just some Tibetan trip or an Indian trip or a Chinese trip to treat it as precious. Don't give yourself horns with that kind of shallow thinking. If the Dalai Lama's own teacher had such faith in bodhi leaves, dumb guys like us should, too. Now we have not just one leaf but a whole baby tree, growing downstairs. Everyone needs to watch it carefully, being careful not to damage it. Don't be like an ox: "Oh, I didn't see that over there! I just stepped on it! Oops!" You are human beings. Treat it as carefully as if it were a delicate statue or a person, a baby for you to watch. Everybody try, okay? That is a blessing for us, our fortune. Don't destroy that!

Tashi delek!

-Gyatrul