BOOK DISCUSSION
Taken Away: The Ordinary Life of a Lama
August 17, 2024
Kamaladevi Hall, India International Centre, New Delhi

Exactly six months after Lama Doboom Tulku's birthday which was on the 17th of February, his memoir, Taken Away; the Life of an Ordinary Lama, was released at an impressive function in IIC on the 17th of August 2024. The evening began with a tea for all the participants and audience, organized by the World Buddhist Culture Trust in collaboration with the India International Centre. There was also a stall for the sale of books in the foyer. The programme was held in the multipurpose hall was absolutely full in India International Centre. Many people who had known Rinpoche came attended the event as a sign of respect to his memory.

The evening was introduced by Sivapriya, editor, Bloomsbury. It was followed with prayers by monks and the release of the book by H.E. Ling Chogtrul Rinpoche. Ling Rinpoche then spoke a few words saying he had a very nice relationship with Lama Doboom Tulku, they would joke and laugh a lot. He also said that he had immense respect for his scholarship and that people with such erudition like him are rare to find these days.

The formal release was followed by a conversation between Narayani Ganesh, former editor, Speaking Tree and co-author of Taken Away, Sudhamahi Regunathan. Narayani Ganesh was very appreciative of Rinpoche's memory and his ability to be unassumingly humorous. She began the evening by commenting on the title of the book. "While it is explained in the book, I would still like to ask Sudhamahi how the title came to be," said Narayani.

"Every morning when we met, I would tell Rinpoche that we need a title and he would, in his characteristic style say, 'Title? Hmm" Title.' And the topic would move on to others. Or he would ask, "How should the title be?" One evening he had just spoken about how he had a horse called Dragyal and how he was very fond of the horse. He said when he had to go to Lhasa it was no longer possible for him to keep the horse and so it was taken away from him to be sold off. The next day morning when Sudhamahi met Rinpoche and asked her usual question about the title, Rinpoche had the answer ready, "Taken Away," he said. "I was Taken Away from my birthplace, my horse was Taken Away from me, my hermitage was Taken Away from me and finally my country was Taken Away from me. "

It is ironic said Sudhamahi that Rinpoche was taken Away before the book could be released.

She asked about the manner in which the arrangement had worked between the co-author and Rinpoche. She was also curious about whether Rinpoche had extensive notes or if he spoke from memory. "Was he supportive or critical?" Sudhamahi replied that he was always supportive, never critical, never demanding. "He appreciated every effort on my part to help write his memoirs," said Sudhamahi. "There is enough material for another book, so much discussion took place and for over 5 years of work has gone into it."

Narayani recollected her association with Rinpoche, "Though I have never met him, I have been editing his articles, sent by Sudhamahi for many years now. His last piece appeared a few months ago…" she reminisced. She further asked questions about the life of Rinpoche and Sudhamahi spoke of how Rinpoche's life had been in his hermitage, Doboom Ritro, then at Lhasa and later his escape to India. Thereafter in India, how he travelled and probed

around till he finally settled down as Director Tibet House for long years. The memoirs also contain detailed descriptions of his association with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the international travels with him.

The evening ended with a vote of thanks by Sivapriya. The audience was very excited knowing so much that was hitherto unknown to most. Some copies of the book also got sold at the venue by the Publisher.

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