AT THE EDGE OF THE OCEAN
An Evening of Lama Doboom Tulku's Poetry
February 17, 2025
Conference Room-II, India International Centre, New Delhi

On February 17, World Buddhist Culture Trust organised a rich and meaningful celebration of Doboom Tulku's life and work to mark his 83rd birthday. Friends and close associates as well as members of the larger community gathered at his favourite place in Delhi—The India International Centre in New Delhi -- where his presence lingers in the memory of the regulars. It was therefore appropriate that the event was organised in collaboration with the IIC.

The evening began with a tea accompanied by hot pakoras and pastries and diverse people met at the Terrace Pergola. At 6:30 PM, the programme began in the elegant circular conference room II with a large poster carrying Rinpoche's smiling face on it. Academic and a longtime associate of Rinpoche's, Dr. Sudhamahi Regunathan, initiated the proceedings by introducing the participants. We began with auspicious chants in Tibetan by Geshe Tenzin Dorjee, managing trustee of World Buddhist Culture Trust accompanied by Geshe Jampa Norbu from Doboom Rinpoche's monastery: Drepung Loseling. We then had Ms. Aditi Sharma Garg, a trained vocalist in the Indian classical tradition of Dhrupad singing, making a short but powerful musical offering: she chanted from the *Prajnaparamita Hridayasutra* also called the Heart Sutra: "*Gate Gate Paragate….*" As her profound voice trailed off, she also spoke of her personal connection with Rinpoche.

Dr. Regunathan, who is also his biographer, introduced some aspects of Rinpoche's life and gave the contexts for the two books of Doboom Rinpoche's poetry that formed the crux of the programme: *Words Well Spoken: Maxims of Ocean and Moon* and *Maxims of Stone and Earth*, written during a sojourn by the sea.

She then introduced Dr. Maya Joshi, Associate Professor at Lady Shri Ram College and invited her to share her readings and reflections on these poems. She also introduced the dancer and healing practitioner Zuleikha StoryDancer from the US with whom Rinpoche also shared a warm connection. As a welcome surprise, there was Lars Alleso Moller, a celebrated saxophonist from Denmark who provided perfect musical accompaniment to Zuleikha's movements and Maya's recitation of Rinpoche's poems.

After an invocatory poem, a homage to the Guru, involving her reading and a poignant appearance of Zuleikha with a mask, Prof. Joshi spoke at some length on the poems, offering reflections based not only on her training as a professor of Literature but also as the daughter of an eminent Buddhist scholar and later as a direct associate in various academic and cultural collaborations with Rinpoche. She pointed out that the poems were akin to the *subhashit*a tradition in Sanskrit, a genre of writing that pithily expresses condensed pearls of wisdom. She traced the origins of many of the poems to Buddhist canonical literature—from The Pali *Milindpanho* to the works of later masters such as Atisha and Nagarjuna. These deceptively simple poems are undergirded by profound Buddhist concepts in ontology and epistemology, while the overarching framework is that of the Bodhisattva path with all its challenges. While grounded in classical Buddhist learning and practice, they reference contemporary events—tsunamis and astronauts, submarines and the Titanic—to comment on

a range of experiences and illuminate human nature in all its diversity. They have a timeless appeal due to the depth and range of the themes and the freshness and appropriateness of the metaphors.

From the academic mode, the event moved to a more poetic/creative mode as Dr. Joshi slowly read some particularly beautiful poems as Zuleikha and Lars took centerstage in a spell-binding jugalbandi. As the melodious music faded out, Dr. Regunathan gave a vote of thanks and Geshe Tenzin Dorjee presented all the key participants with white khatags as a mark of appreciation. The audience were left moved and were deeply appreciative of the evening.

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