

A Collection of Prayers to Tara

Jason Espada, editor

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Introduction

An Introduction to the Bodhisattva-Divinity Tara

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Introduction

I've assembled this set of prayers to Tara from various sources over the years, and added a few of my own to the collection, as well as an introduction to Tara. These are the thoughts and prayers that speak to me the most, and help me to get in touch with Tara, and benefit from her presence.

I find myself drawn to Tara practice especially when things are uncertain, jeopardous, or chaotic in any way. When we see accidents, or see or hear about misfortune of some kind, it really calls out for this kind of loving protection. She seems to calm the situation, or at least to calm me and to impart strength in the midst of it all, and for me, this is of inestimable value.

This is a very rich practice, as anyone with an affinity with Tara can tell you. It is multi-faceted, and yet simple to do. The Divine Feminine, Tara energy has a reputation for being easy to connect with. Many people have had this experience, at times myself included, hence this small book.

Readers are encouraged to search for the translations and prayers that work best for them, or to write their own. What will work for us is such a personal matter, and something we each need to discover for ourselves. The most well known traditional prayers are offered here because of their efficacy for people over the centuries. If we connect with them, we may find that the blessings of that tradition is felt as a help to us as well.

May all beings benefit.

Note for this edition:

Following the prayers, I've added three commentaries to Tara practice by my esteemed teachers, Lama Lodro Rinpoche, and Geshe Wangdu. This is to offer another way for people to connect with her practice. Instructions on visualization and mantra recitation are covered. If a Tara empowerment of any kind is offered, this can surely help us as well. I'd recommend anyone with an interest to attend.

An Introduction to the Bodhisattva-Divinity Tara

In order for us as Westerners to engage in practices that have come from the Tibetan Buddhist Tradition, without misunderstanding their nature or purpose, there are a few ideas that need to be spelled out. As Americans, we have certain common ideas, and so the same questions naturally arise, and these can be addressed at any point, but probably the earlier on in our study the better.

I would like to introduce Tara as an example of a practice that can be beneficial, and, when I think of doing this, I can see right away the kinds of questions I would propose we consider so the communication can have a better chance of success.

First, as with any divine being – bodhisattva, we have the question, ‘Who is Tara?’ Of course we can see that there are different ways to answer this kind of a question, there are different levels to it. When we speak about the ultimate nature of anything, be it God, or Buddha, then this is a really deep question, maybe taking a lifetime to ask or to answer. If we are asking this type of deep question, this holds up a mirror to our own self. We can ask, ‘Who am I?’, and ‘Who do I conceive myself to be?’

Then again, especially if we are beginners, we really need more of an answer in terms of what we can all easily recognize and understand and work with. Maybe this approach will be helpful: using the simplest, least esoteric language to describe something that is both accessible and also profound.

Historically, and now in Western culture too, Tara is regarded as a protectress, a savior, a benefactor. The practice of calling on Tara in times of need has been successful for many people. She is called on to help liberate us from problems, and especially from fears. She has a reputation for quick action, for responding very quickly, with loving kindness and compassion.

Her practice can be done in different ways - with prayer, or through visualization and mantra recitation. Tara’s mantra is Om Tare Tuttare Ture Soha (pronounced Om Tah-ray Too-tah-ray Too-ray So-ha).

A person can also simply think of her and feel her presence with faith and devotion.

Meditators will tell us that we all have Tara within us; that all these qualities and wonders are contained within our fundamental nature. They tell us that if we do the practice these qualities awaken and are expressed in the world, and that in a sense we become Tara, and this I don't doubt. For the time being though, let's just stay with the outer, common belief and function – that – calling on Tara works, increasing the Tara energy in our lives works, even if we don't know all of why or how it does.

If we have some karmic affinity, and some receptivity or openness, and we give these methods a fair try, we can see the result for ourselves.

‘If I could only give you the moon...’

Another question that often comes up when talking about any of the bodhisattva-deity practices (calling on Tara for example, praying for a husband or a wife, or for health, or wealth) is, ‘How is this Buddhist?’, and I think I'm just now able to say what I've been thinking and feeling for a while now – that Tara (or Tara energy) is of a certain class, or kind I can call ‘Bodhisattva Sangha. The word bodhisattva means someone who is dedicated to helping others in the fullest possible ways, and sangha means a spiritual community.

As a member of the Bodhisattva Sangha, Tara responds as we would, with kindness, to someone asking for something... If they ask for water, we give them water; if they ask for a coat, we give them a coat...

There's a zen story about a monk who was told that a thief was coming, and so he threw his bowl and his robes out the window as the thief approached. The thief scooped them up, somewhat startled, I'd imagine, and the monk called after him, saying, ‘If I could only give you the moon!...’

Such is the wish of Bodhisattva Sangha – their deep wish is for our true happiness, our freedom, peace and health, and so if we ask for food or shelter or medicine, they give us these without holding anything back, as a mother or father would give to their child, or a friend to a friend. They give out of their great means. They will give to us according to our needs, and they will give to us as much as we can receive.

Their wish for us includes both the relative, provisional, day to day needs, and also those things that are of ultimate benefit, such as teachings and encouragement, and good conditions for spiritual growth. Their love and their kind wish for us is of one nature.

I heard someone give the definition of blessing, in the Buddhist sense, as that which removes obstacles to spiritual practice, which I think is a good definition because it includes both relative and ultimate things.

Making a distinction – the word ‘deity’

If I had to choose one term that isn’t translated well from Eastern culture to Western culture, it is the word ‘deity’. More often than not, translators are not communicating the intended meaning. The reason is this: whether or not we identify with the Western religious traditions, as Westerners we have ideas about God as part of our culture. We have all these associations, automatically, for the word God and its synonyms that, in this case does not apply. When trying to understand what words are referring to that come from non-theistic cultures, some effort is needed to get at a clear sense of their meaning.

We can say for certain that Buddhism does not make use of the idea of a creator God, all powerful, and all knowing. It does however have teachings, and it does make use of practices that call upon and access what can be called ‘help from the other side’. There is calling upon beings that help.

When Tibetan teachers speak in English, sometimes they don’t translate the word ‘yi-dam’, and they explain it as keeping the bodhisattva – divinity ‘tight’, or ‘held tightly in the mind’, as a method of meditation, as a path, as a means of benefit.

A first level bodhisattva, in some teachings, is described as having at least the experience of insight into the cause of the end of suffering, that freedom and joy. And Buddhist teachings on what is called refuge tell us that if someone or some being is still subject to suffering or change, then that is not a reliable source of protection in the long term. We should seek true refuge, true and lasting protection and support. This, in Buddhist teachings, is what distinguishes Buddhas, or enlightened beings as true refuge.

Perhaps, rather than use the word ‘deity’ (sticky, or perhaps misleading as it is) I would propose the term ‘divinity’ – since we do have the idea that the sacred can be here in this world; that it is here for us, available, and to be received with deep respect. The sense of divinity can be cultivated and awakened throughout our lives.

One more thought: regarding a question such as ‘Where is Tara?’ We usually divide the world up in our thinking in ways it is not actually divided. We say there is an inside and an outside to our life. Looked at energetically though, the so-called inside and outside are one.

If we think of Tara as an archetype (an aspect of the universal soul we all share) this can have connotations of being purely something inside. My sense is that it’s truer to say that Tara, and the other Buddhas, Saints, or Bodhisattva Sangha exist in the realm of one-ness, where the inside and outside are both included, where they are one. I think this accounts, at least in part, for the effectiveness of these methods.

A note on the prayer that follows:

I usually don't comment on anything I write out that is more lyrical, since these sorts of things should speak for themselves, but in this case maybe it would add something to say the following.

I had the idea that describing a bodhisattva, or a guardian or benefactor can be likened to talking about a person. We may say the person has this quality, or likes to go here or there, or spend their time like this... all of which would be for the sake of trying to give us some idea of the person. All the different things we could say would be to introduce us to the essence of the person. So it is with this poem about Tara; the different aspects or qualities mentioned refer to something that is one essential nature – that is Tara.

The purpose of writing this, and reflecting on it is to get in touch with what is being talked about.

One more thing that may be worth mentioning is that much of this seems very personal, and it is in a way, but what has surprised me is that after having some experience and then reading a little about others' experience, there are some things that feel the same, or very similar. Like we are talking about the same thing. And so here I am writing this out and sharing it with others – with the hope that it brings others too, my dear family and friends, the same, and greater, benefit.

In Praise of Tara

Holy Tara, Protector of living beings,
 May your blessings flow throughout all of our lives
 and by Your Compassionate Activity,
 may all the needs of all beings
 be completely fulfilled now

Tara
 Your beauty tames the minds of living beings.
 You draw all beings to yourself.
 Your virtue calms their fears and brings them all fresh happiness.

You are the one who makes what seems to be the impossible
 entirely possible
 You conquer disbelief, and dispel doubt
 without leaving even a trace
 You are miraculous activity, beyond comprehension.

You are 'swift to regard', quick to respond,
 the remover of obstacles.

You are our protector
 You are grace and blessings,
 the relative and ultimate liberator of beings

Your beauty inspires uprightness of moral character
 You pacify habit energy
 We shed our skins, lose our old ways,
 like leaves falling off of trees

You bring new birth, and give new strength
 You purify the mind - like the stream-clearing jewel
 You uplift and brighten the mind
 For those with positive aims,
 You are their Great Benefactress

You set all things right

You bring about reconciliation without impediment
 without anything blocking it
 You bring harmony to every surrounding circumstance

You help us to gather all positive conditions
 You bring out the best that is in us all
 You make all practices effective
 It has always been this way
 It is this way now
 It will always be this way

You are the spring-like feeling of 'yes',
 the sum of all optimism,
 joyful positive energy,
 the feeling of 'I can'

Tara,
 May your blessings completely illuminate all of our lives
 and may all the needs of all beings
 be completely fulfilled now

O, Bright Virtue!
 You are light
 You are grace in my life
 and subtle nourishment
 The blessing of all the women who have ever wished me well

You are instinctive love,
 all-accommodating
 naturally inclusive
 comprehensive
 You are embodied enlightened intelligence,
 intuitive awareness, the heart awake,
 and the flourishing of joy

You are playful, youthful, joyful, quick, charming, elegant, inspiring, wise,
 warm, strengthening, encouraging, healing,
 calming, stabilizing;

How can I call you? Tara - hope, positive energy, joyful, pure,

wholesome energy

With your rivers
nurture my limbs, these fields
With your warmth, your light
bring about the total flowering of goodness...

Tara,
May your blessings be established in all of our lives

Because this is Divine Feminine energy, quick to respond
with magical activity,
the equivalent of the patron saint of lost causes,
grace,
spiritual beauty bringing light, giving hope,
removing obstacles,
calming fear, pacifying suffering,
and protecting
bringing harmony to every surrounding circumstance,
bringing life, health, happiness, good fortune, and stability

and, being the Spring-like sum of all optimism, inspiring,
positive energy,
enabling all the good things we would do to become effective,
to become fulfilled,
to become complete,

this is called Green Tara

May all share in these blessings...

A prayer to White Tara

About White Tara

White Tara is a form of Tara, and is done for healing.

Here is a description of the quality of White Tara:

Because this is utterly peaceful and pure, soothing, pacifying, healthy and healing, and nourishing, giving in abundance, with much love and joy, with the pure elements in balance, giving that, it is called White Tara;

May all beings have the blessings of a strong constitution, excellent resistance, and, if necessary, great powers of recuperation...

{This can be followed by her mantra:

Om Tare Tuttare Ture Mama Ayur Punya Jhana Pushtim Kuruye Soha

and

Om Tara Tuttare Ture Soha}

The Twenty-One Verses in Praise of Tara

{The Four Line Prayer to Tara}

Om, homage to the Transcendent Accomplished Conqueror,
the Goddess Tara.

Homage to Tara who is the Heroine,
the Liberator tare

She who calms all fears with tuttare

She who bestows all success with ture

To soha and the other syllables

I offer the greatest homage

1.

Homage to Tara, she swift and fearless,
whose eyes flash like lightening,
born from a lotus in an ocean of tears of Avalokiteshvara,
Lord of the Three Worlds.

2.

Homage to She whose face is made of
one hundred full autumn moons,
and blazes with the dazzling light of a
thousand constellations.

3.

Homage to She with hands adorned by lotus flowers,
golden blue Tara,
embodiment of the Perfections,
generosity, joyous effort, pacifying discipline,
patience, meditation, and wisdom of the ultimate.

4.

Homage to She who crowns the heads of all Buddhas,
whose action is victorious without limit.
Attained to every perfection,
the Bodhisattvas themselves rely upon you.

5.

Homage to She who, uttering tuttare and hum,
tramples to dust under her feet
the seven worlds of desire, form and space,
and has power to invoke all forces.

6.

Homage to She who receives the offerings of Indra,
Agni, Brahma, Vayu, and all the great gods.
The spirits, zombies, scent-eaters and yakshas
before her sing praises.

7.

Homage to She who, uttering hrad and phat
thoroughly shatters external threats.
Her right leg drawn in and left extended,
she blazes amidst darting flames.

8.

Homage to Ture, who vanquishes the great fears,
the mightiest devils.
With a wrathful twist of her lotus face,
she slays all foes without exception.

9.

Homage to She exquisitely adorned by the hand mudra
Three Jewels at her heart.
Her glorious wheel fills all directions
with an overwhelming burst of light.

10.

Homage to She brilliant with joy,
her radiant crown the source of a garland of light.
Smiling and laughing she utters tuttare
and overpowers devils and gods of the world.

11.

Homage to She with power to invoke all the armies of local protectors.
With face fiercely wrinkled and a vibrant hum
she brings freedom from every poverty.

12.

Homage to She crowned by a crescent moon,
 her head ornament dazzling bright.
 From her hair-knot Buddha Amitabha
 constantly beams forth streams of light.

13.

Homage to She who dwells within a garland of flames
 like the aeon ending in fire.
 Her right leg stretched and left withdrawn,
 joy of her followers and scourge of their foes.

14.

Homage to She whose feet pound
 and palms of hands press upon the earth.
 With a wrathful glance and the sound hum
 she subdues all in the seven dimensions.

15.

Homage to the blissful virtuous, peaceful one,
 She who acts from within Nirvana's serenity.
 With the pure sounds svaha and also om,
 She annihilates even the greatest evils.

16.

Homage to She whose followers are joyous,
 who utterly destroys the forms of enemies.
 The knowledge letter hum and the ten syllable mantra,
 arranged on her heart's wheel
 bestow liberation.

17.

Homage to Ture, she with pounding feet,
 whose essence is the seed letter hum;
 who causes Meru, Mandhara and Vindhya Mountains
 and all the three worlds
 to tremble and quake.

18.

Homage to She who holds in her hand a
moon resembling a celestial lake.
Saying Ture twice and also the sound phat,
she dispels poisons entirely and forever.

19.

Homage to She upon whom the kings of gods and spirits rely.
Her armour, radiating joy to all,
she soothes conflicts and nightmares as well.

20.

Homage to She whose eyes like the sun and moon
are brilliant.
Saying hara twice and also tuttare
she calms and quells the most fearful disease.

21.

Homage to She whose three natures are made perfect
with serene strength,
able to eliminate demons, zombies and yakshas,
O Ture, most exalted of the supreme.

This is the Praise with the root mantra, and these are the
Twenty-one Homages.

From the preface to Skillful Grace – Tara Practice for our Times, by Tulku Urgyen

Sublime and noble Lady with your circle,
 Lovingly regard me with compassion, free of thought.
 Bless me so the aims of all my prayers
 Can be fulfilled without obstacles.
 May the Buddha's teachings spread and flourish!
 May its holders live in harmony and good health !
 May obstacles that threaten them subside!
 May their teachings and practice prosper!
 May sickness and famine, fighting and strife, all recede!
 May spiritual richness increase even further!
 May the spiritual rulers' kingdoms expand!
 May every country, near and far, have harmony!
 Protect us from untimely death and the sixteen threats,
 From menacing dreams and sinister omens,
 From the miseries of samsara's lower realms,
 From every peril, now and always!
 Increase our life, merit, capacity, experience and realization!
 May harmful notions not intrude!
 May the twofold awakened mind arise, free of effort!
 May our aims be fulfilled in accordance with the Dharma!
 From now until supreme enlightenment,
 Always guard us with your kindness
 Like a mother protects her only child.
 May we be indivisible from you.

A Song of Longing for Tara, the Infallible, by Lama Lobsang Tenpey
Gyaltsen

From my heart I bow to Divine Mother Tara, essence of love and compassion, the most precious objects of refuge gathered into one. From now until I reach enlightenment, hook me with your great love and kindness to liberate me.

By the witness of the Three Jewels, not just from my mouth but from the depths of my innermost heart and bones, I pray to you morning and evening. Show your blissful face to me, Loving One. Grant me the nectar of your speech.

Great gurus and small gurus cheat us with their made-up teachings, selling Dharma, teaching without comprehension, not observing who is qualified and who is not, being concerned about their own happiness and the eight worldly concerns. Since I can no longer trust friends of this degenerate age, you are my principal guru. Inspire me, Divine Mother, essence of love. Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

I take refuge in you, Tara; like you, no Buddha could ever deceive me. But understanding the odd character of these times, most Buddhas have gone into the bliss of nirvana. Even though they have great compassion, we have no connection. Since for me there are no other deities, you are my principal deity. Bestow realizations upon me, Divine Mother, essence of love, arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

Most Dharma protectors do not show their powers. Tired of those who invoke them, they do not act. Other protectors, lacking insight but proud of their power, may be friendly for a while but will later do me harm. Since I cannot rely on other protectors, you are my principal protector. With divine action, Wisdom Mother, essence of love, arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

To ordinary view the names of objects are the same as their meaning. Like this, they produce afflictions and bind us to samsara. When it is time to die, unless I understand the true nature, could a wish-fulfilling gem enable me to carry even a sesame seed with me? Since I do not trust in illusions, you are my real richness. Please grant my desires, Divine Mother, essence of love. Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

I cannot rely on non-virtuous friends for even a day. They pretend to be close to me and all the while they have in mind the opposite. They are friends when they wish it and enemies when they don't. Since I cannot trust in this kind of friend, you are my best friend. Be close to me, Divine Mother, essence of love. Arouse the great power of your compassion and think of me.

You are my guru, my yidam, my protector, my refuge, my food, my clothes, my possessions, and my friend. Since your divine quality is everything to me, let me spontaneously achieve all that I wish.

Although I am overwhelmed by my habitual, uncontrolled mind, please cut off these self-centered thoughts so I will be able to give my body and my life millions of times without difficulty to each sentient being. Inspire me to be able to develop this kind of compassion to benefit all.

Empower me to cut the root of samsara, self-grasping, and to understand the pure doctrine, the most difficult Middle Way, free from the errors of extremes.

Inspire me to practice as a bodhisattva, turning away from what is worldly, dedicating all my virtues to teaching living beings, never for even one instant thinking of just my own happiness. Let me wish to attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all. Empower me to actualize as much as possible the most subtle vows and to keep them without a careless mind, thus becoming the most perfect bodhisattva.

Outwardly, let me be simple in my practice, while inwardly, actualize the depth of the diamond vehicle with the strong wish to practice the two stages. Inspire me to attain enlightenment quickly for the benefit of all.

Divine Wisdom Mother Tara, you know everything about my life— my ups and downs, my good and bad. Think lovingly of me, my only mother.

I give myself and all who trust in me to you, Divine Wisdom Mother Tara. Being completely open to you, let us be born in the highest pure land. Set me there quickly with no births in between.

May the hook of your compassion and your skillful means transform my mind into Dharma and transform the minds of all beings, whoever they are.

They have all been my mother, the mother of one unable to follow the Conqueror's teachings.

By reciting this prayer three times a day and by remembering the Divine Wisdom Mother Tara, may I and all beings who are connected to me reach whatever pure land we wish.

May the Three Jewels and especially the Divine Wisdom Mother, whose essence is compassion, hold me dear until I reach enlightenment.

May I quickly conquer the four negative forces.

If, as long as you live, you recite this prayer three times every day, not just from the mouth (in words only) but strongly linked with your mind, you will have close connection and will see Tara's face. No hindrances will be experienced and all wishes will be fulfilled. You will have a close relationship with all Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and they will hold you dear. If you recite the "Homage to the Twenty-one Taras" and this prayer, you will attain the Divine Liberating Mother.

Colophon: This prayer to Venerable Tara, in heart words making his own requests and also non-deceptive to others, was composed by the Buddhist monk Lobsang Tenpey Gyaltzen, in his nineteenth year, the Water Mouse year (1852), on the third day of the miracle month (second month of the lunar calendar) at Bengar Namgyal Ling. It is sure to have great benefit.

Praise of Arya Tara, by Palden Atisha

Homage to the Venerable Arya Tara!

1. Gods and asuras with their crowns bow down to Your lotus feet;
Liberator from all problems,
Mother Tara - homage to You!

2. On those Avici's fire torments,
filling them with a blazing net,
Your compassion rains down nectar -
Tara, further homage to You!

3. To those tired of clinging long,
again and again,
among the six Destinies,
You grant the rest,
supremely pleasant, of Great Bliss.

4. Goddess who works the weal of others!
Just to think of You dispels problems!
You, endowed with love and compassion,
liberate from samsara's bonds.

5. Goddess who at all times is impartial towards sentient beings,
On the whole crop of migrators
You rain incessantly –
homage to You!

6. Like the sun and moon,
dispeller of distress of darkness
for all migrating sentient beings, Supreme Goddess -
homage to You!

7. On a lotus and moon seat
Immaculate as an utpala,
Your body blue-green coloured, graceful,
You hold an utpala –
homage to You!

8. Three countless eons

You've gathered Merits and Wisdom,
Cast off all the hindering obscurations,
And with the four Means of Attraction attracted migrators,
O compassionate Mother –
homage to You!

9. Bodily faults gone,

You have the Marks and Signs;
Faults of speech gone, like kalavinka's strains;
Faults of mind gone, You know all knowable things.
Blaze of fortune and glory –
homage to You!

10. Like the water-cleaning gem, Goddess,

You forever clear
The mud of sentient beings' mind
and strive for their welfare –
homage to You!

11. Those who do retain Your name, praise You,

and do practice You,
Always do You make fruitful,
Unforgetful One – homage to You!

Summary of the way Tara protects from the sixteen kinds of fear, based on a teaching by Taranatha, summarized by Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso Rinpoche

1. Protecting from the fear of enemies

When a warrior from Oddivisa,
who fell asleep in a grove,
was surrounded by enemy soldiers,
You, Liberatrice, protected him.
I pray, protect me as well.

2. Protecting from the fear of lions

When a wood gatherer went into a forest, he met a lion who was about to eat him.
Noble One, you protected him.
I pray you protect me as well.

3. Protecting from the fear of elephants

A girl, at the age of twelve,
was bound in the trunk of a fierce elephant.
Remembering the name of the Liberatrice,
she was protected from her fear.
I pray, protect me as well.

4. Protecting from the fear of fire

Because a householder, full of anger,
got his house set on fire by an enemy,
Liberatrice, you protected him.
I pray, protect me as well.

5. Protecting from the fear of poisonous snakes

A prostitute, frightened by a snake,
because she merely remembered the name of the Noble One,
You protected her from the fear of snakes.
I pray, protect me as well.

6. Protecting from the fear of robbers and thieves

In an area of Gujrat, travelled a merchant of great wealth.
You protected him from his fear of a thousand robbers.
I pray, protect me as well.

7. Protecting from the fear of prison walls

A thief, being thrown into the dungeon of a prison by the king,
and suffered great pain,
Noble One, you protected him.
Likewise, please, protect everyone as well.

8. Protecting from the fear of ocean waves

In a large ship, in the Southern Ocean,
five thousand merchants were carried away by the waves.
They were also protected by the Noble One.
I pray, protect me as well.

9. Protecting from the fear of flesh-eating demons

In a temple, in the East, only shravakas were living.
As you protected them from the fear of flesh-eaters,
so I pray, protect me and others.

10. Protecting from the fear of leprosy

A person with leprosy,
left alone by his relatives and doctors,
and also five hundred afflicted brahmins,
Noble One, you protected them all.
Likewise, I pray, protect me, and others from disease.

11. Protecting from the mischief of Indra's messengers

Indra was the protector of the Eastern regions.
His messengers were hoards of gandara demons.
As you, Noble One, protected from them,
protect from all fear of Indra's messengers.

12. Protecting from the fear of poverty

Like the extremely poor brahmin,
 who you protected from his fear of poverty,
 I pray, protect me and all sentient beings from the fear of poverty.

13. Protecting from the fear of being separated from relatives

A brahmin, with many relatives and great wealth,
 one day, suffered the pain of being separated from his relatives.
 As You, Noble One, protected him,
 I pray, so protect from all suffering
 of being separated from relatives.

14. Protecting from the fear of the king's punishment

A householder with great wealth,
 was arrested due to the king's punishment.
 The compassion of the Noble One liberated him as well.
 Likewise, liberate from all fear of
 the king's punishment.

15. Protecting from the fear of vajra-bolts

Because of the yaksha's rage,
 twenty-one iron sky bolts fell from the sky.
 The compassion of the Noble One
 protected also from these.
 Likewise, protect from all fear of vajra-bolts.

16.

Protecting from the fear of ruination of one's aims

When a householder, who did not accomplish his aims,
 was full of pain and unhappy,
 You, Noble One, protected him.
 Likewise, I pray, may you protect me and others.

This summarizes the words of commentary.

Supplication to the Seven Aspects of Protectress Tārā, by Lord Jigten Gönpo

Noble Lady, Mother Goddess Tārā,
 you dwell within the mother, the unborn dharmasphere.
 Giver of ease to all sentient ones,
 please protect me from all peril!

Mother Goddess,
 please protect sentient ones who wander cyclic existence—
 my mothers whose minds have fallen under the sway of afflictions,
 unaware that they themselves are *dharmakāya*.

Authentic Mother Goddess,
 please protect those
 in whose being Dharma has not arisen from the core—
 those who, following after [mere] expressions,
 have been deceived by base doctrines.

Mindful Mother Goddess,
 please protect those distracted with base actions—
 those who, having seen the natural mind,
 so difficult to comprehend,
 do not habituate it.

Goddess of Nondual Mind,
 please protect those who, no matter what they do,
 are bound by imprints of dualistic grasping at the mind
 that is self-arisen non-dual wisdom.

Omniscient Mother Goddess,
 please protect those ignorant of the meaning of knowable things—
 those who, though having dwelt in the true meaning,
 are unaware of causes' and effects' interdependence.

Complete Buddha Mother,
 please protect those persons—
 disciples yet [unaware] that all things,
 endowed with the attribute of unelaborated space,
 are inseparable therefrom.

When Lord Jigten Gönpo beheld a vision of the Seven Noble Tārās in the Échung Cave, he supplicated them [with this prayer, which] is known as Supplication to the Seven [Aspects of] Protectress Tārā. It is renowned for its exceedingly great blessing.

This was translated by Ari-ma in 2008 relying on commentary by Garchen Triptrül Rinpoché.

Homage to Tārā, by Lord Atisha

Om! Homage to you, protectress from the eight perils!
Homage to you, one blazing with auspicious splendor!
Homage to you, blocker of evil destinies' door!
Homage to you, guide to the higher realms!
You have always aided me.
Pray protect me yet further with compassion!

This was spoken by Great Pandit Atisha.

At the request of Garchen Rinpoché, this was originally translated by Ari-ma in 2003.

Supplication to Tārā That Spontaneously Accomplishes Hopes

Namo Arya Tāraye!

Mother of the three times' Victorious Ones, Lady Tārā!

Protectress from the eight perils,

compassionate goddess,

you whose hundred names give refuge from fear and suffering,

think of me with compassion!

Noble Lady,

in every circumstance of this life, future lives and in between,

hold with inseparable compassion all those well or ill connected to me!

Pacify outer, inner and secret obstacles

and bless us that our intentions be spontaneously accomplished!

Considering the purpose of others, Old Gar fleshed out these words that were spoken by Ösal Dorjé. This was translated by Ari-ma in November, 2015.

Supplication to Tārā, by Garchen Rinpoché

O, mama of the three times' Victors,
 you whose great love for all sentient ones
 is like a mother's love for her child!
 Through your affection,
 the two obscurations of wayfarers and myself are cleansed
 and the two accumulations are perfected.
 In all lifetimes,
 the eight or sixteen perils' discord is pacified
 and practice, merit, spiritual teachings and endowment increase.
 Fully released from the iron shackles of self-grasping,
 may my altruistic intent and benefit to beings
 become inseparable from yours!
 Accomplish whatever petitions are made by disciples endowed with samaya!

*This was written by Könchok Gyaltzen, the one named "Gar." This
 supplication was originally translated by Ari-ma in 2005.*

Ode to Tara, by Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche

O!

Great Bhagavati Arya Tara,
Dispel all the defilements of myself and all sentient beings.
Lead us to achieve enlightenment swiftly.

In our lifetimes may we experience favorable circumstances.
May outer and inner obstacles to enlightenment,
Such as disease, untimely death, nightmares, bad omens and fears, be
dispelled.

May our minds turn to the dharma.
Force us to be diligent, compel us see your face.
Provoke us to realize shunyata, the ultimate Bodhicitta.
Cause our rebirth in the realm of Amitabha.

How beautiful you are!
How powerful!
How infinite!
May we become like you.

Through this supplication, wherever we may be,
May there be no poverty, famine, or disputes.
May the dharma prevail

Dzongsar Khyentse Rinpoche composed this ode to Tara on April 3, 2017

Prayer to Mother Tara, by Amrita Nadi

You who are our Protectress, our Refuge from
the storms of samsara,
please listen to my plea:

We are all caught up in the snares of our
conflicting emotions. We flounder in the sea of
anger, fear, jealousy, self-pity and the need to retaliate.
Like the sun and moon dispel the darkness of the night,
we need Your Loving Light to dispel the darkness
of our confused minds.

We feel helpless to make this world a better place
for all sentient beings, and need Your Guidance
and Your Grace.

Please bless us so we may learn to forgive, to nurture,
to selflessly care for others, no matter how small or
seemingly insignificant.

Dearest Guide through samsara's treacherous waters,
we especially need Your blessing to open our heart to those we have labeled
different, unworthy, or our enemies.

Tara, our Saviouress, please do not desert us – our world needs Your
Wisdom and Compassion.

Please take all suffering beings into Your Loving Arms and protect us,
nurture us, and awaken us to our true nature of spontaneous Compassion and
Loving-Kindness for all.

Praise to Tara, our Dearest Mother,
the Protectress of the World!

Om Tare Tutare Ture Soha!

Tara, Giver of Joy and Peace

Tara

Mothers pray to you
and children pray to you

Merchants pray to you
and travelers pray to you

Doctors, and lawyers and judges pray to you
the innocent pray to you
and the guilty pray to you

Students and scholars pray to you

Artists pray to you

the dull and the brilliant pray to you,
the humble and the proud

married people pray to you
and single people pray to you

those who are sick
and those who are healthy pray to you

healers pray to you
and those with a loved one in need
pray to you

kings and street sweepers pray to you
the living and the dying pray to you

the wealthy and the destitute pray to you
the young and the old,
the high and the low

all reach out their hands to you
all turn to you,
as their closest protector, guide and refuge,
as their benefactress in times of need,
and they turn to you in gratitude
as their patroness in times of success

All these prayers you hear
and you respond in visible and in invisible ways -
ways beyond the scope of ordinary conception

Although you are the most exalted one,
we run to you in total trust and confidence
like a child to a parent

going with total trust,
like a favored one
in the presence of an enlightened ruler

we go to you,
and rest
we are sheltered by you
cared for
and protected

And though your name can be said simply
and your divine qualities can be so easily known,
the depth of your wisdom, compassion, and activity,
is such that lifetimes of study and practice,
until we ourselves become more like you,
are just a beginning, in truth

and so our everyday appeals
are for more simple things

we ask:

O Tara, Joy of the World,
let your presence be more fully known by us

clear away whatever obstacles there may be
and let the light, comfort and inspiration that you are be known
ever more fully by us now

pacify suffering conditions
and help us to live well
encourage us to outdo
what we thought was possible before

stabilize whatever we have now
of health, virtue,
wisdom and good fortune,
and increase, to meet our needs,
whatever we may lack

O Glorious Tara,
hope of the world,
to you we all pray,

May your blessings be upon us all,
so that we can, each one of us, achieve our aims,
and peace,
and fulfillment

Homage to Wisdom Mother Tara

Although like everything else we wrongly project our notions onto,
 You are without independent existence –
 yet you appear, intimately,
 for the comfort and continual benefit of countless beings
 How marvelous!

Like a rainbow appearing in the completely sun-filled sky:
 due to the needs of living beings, enlightened compassion,
 and our faith,
 You appear, and benefit, unmistakably, and immeasurably

You are one with the mind of all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas,
 You are one with the vast, kind nature of all Gurus, Saints and Sages,
 You are one with my own Root Guru, inconceivable and immeasurable in
 his compassion and wisdom, and yet appearing,

You are beyond duality, beyond concepts,
 You are that which is
 beyond simple grasping and clinging,
 You are one with our own bright, fundamental nature

Therefore, in addition to attending to all our worldly needs,
 You liberate from all mistaken views
 This is the Supreme Gift that you give
 awakening the merely labeled ‘us’ to the merely labeled ‘wealth of
 unchanging happiness’
 ungraspable and non-deceptive,
 Homage to you, Wisdom Mother!

Appearing in many forms, your activity is unmistakable –
 liberating us from fears, deprivation, and wrong views-
 that transcendent function
 Awakening fundamental joy without limit,
 and harmony, and peace

We give you this name and these forms to talk about you,
but really, you are completely beyond anything we could say
However, needing a way to call upon you, in times of need
and in times of joy,
this name, and these forms,
and these practices have appeared to our minds
not to be grasped too tightly, but, here for us,
without any doubt,
bringing relief and benefit
How extraordinary! Miraculous!
What amazing good fortune!

Healing, comforting, inspiring,
opening the Way, opening the heart,
completely fulfilling your relative and ultimate motivations,
and our needs
effortlessly, on your part,
spontaneously, for that is your nature,
and, from our side, without grasping, without clinging,
seeing that you are always inseparable from us

With your love, compassion, wisdom and grace,
you are teaching, healing, and inspiring,
beyond concepts,
and so these concepts are here to be held lightly
and with great gratitude

O, Tara
I pay homage to you!

The Five Line Prayer to Tara

Om, homage to the Transcendent Accomplished Conqueror,
the Goddess Tara.

Homage to Tara who is the Heroine, the Liberator tare

She who calms all fears with tuttare

She who bestows all success with ture

To soha and the other syllables

I offer the greatest homage

Tara Mantras

The Green Tara Mantra

Om Tare Tuttuare Ture Soha

The White Tara Mantras

Om Tare Tuttare Ture Mama Ayur Punye Jhana Pushtim Kuruye Soha

Om Tara Tuttare Ture Soha

The Yellow Tara Mantras

Om Vasudhara Soha

Om Vasudhara-ni Soha

Om Tam Soha

The Red Tara Mantras

Om Tare Tuttare Ture Samtara Hri Soha

Om Tare Tam Soha

A Tara Mantra for healing

Om Tare Tuttare Ture Sarva Jhavan Bhayah Shantim Kuruye Soha

The Condensed Ritual of Green Tara, with commentary by Lama Lodo

[Note: It's traditionally taught that what's called 'self-generation' - where one visualizes oneself as the deity - should only be done by those who have received the initiation of a particular deity, but that 'front generation' - where one visualizes the deity in space above and in front of oneself - can be done by anyone.]

Condensed Ritual of Green Tara

The word 'sang' in 'sang-gye' ('bud' in 'buddha') means completely pure, like a cloudless sky; no self-cherishing, no greed, pride, jealousy, doubt, ignorance, hope or fear; free from evil, free from afflictions.

'Gye' ('da') means increase, flourishing, clear mind, completely pure, stainless, and rich; completely adorned with wisdom and compassion, boundless wisdom and compassion.

In that kind of mind we take refuge. In that quality of mind we take refuge.

The Dharma (speech) is the truth freeing sentient beings from suffering and bringing them to enlightenment. It has this perfect pure property.

Sangha (body) means harmony, especially in groups.

You should have confidence, trust that you are under her protection.

Bodhicitta means the heart of enlightenment- it means altruism. You're willing to bring all sentient beings to enlightenment.

Generosity is dedication

Ethics is altruism thought

Patience is applied physically, and mentally

Diligence is striving joyfully, understanding the benefit of the practice

Concentration- each word, bring the meaning in your mind, and focus one-pointedly on the deity

Wisdom all is seen as emptiness. This is called view. The deity, all phenomena, they are not inherently existent. The nature of the deity, the nature of all phenomena is emptiness, clarity.

The first, refuge, is for devotion, protection, blessing. The second, compassion and kindness is to help release other sentient beings from suffering.

Until Enlightenment I go for refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and the sangha. By the merit I have accumulated through generosity and other virtues, may I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

(Three times)

The Four immeasurables

We wish others to be completely and permanently happy, all limitless beings, and for them to have no suffering, not temporarily, but permanently. All without exception I wish them all to have bliss and joy, and evenness. (not dependent on conditions)

May all sentient beings have happiness and the cause of happiness. May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. May all sentient beings never be without the supreme bliss which is free from all suffering. May all sentient beings live in the great equanimity which is free from all attachment and aversion.

(Three times)

(emptiness and appearance)

We see ourselves as Tara, not as a physical form, but as a transparent body. The right hand is in the 'excellent giving mudra', and the left hand is in the 'excellent protection mudra'. She looks with compassionate eyes. She is transparent like a rainbow. Her green color represents multiple activities.

Light emanates from ourselves as Green Tara and goes to the buddha lands, and all the Buddhas, bodhisatvas, lineage holders, dakas and dakinis, protectors and defenders of the dharma who possess the eye of transcending awareness, all of them emanate Green Taras, which return to you and all of them merge with you like rain dissolving into an ocean.

OM Homage to the Transcendent Accomplished Conqueror,

the goddess Tara. Homage to Tara who is the Heroine TARE. She who dispels terror with TUTTARE. She who grants all benefits with TURE. Salutation to the syllables SOHA.

(This condensed homage for Tara prayer was composed by Drom Rinpoche*, and contains great benefit. [Drom Rinpoche was one of the great disciples of Atisa, and was an emanation of Chenrezig.]

Recite to close the door to the hell realms, 'till the god realms.

We may do this 10 or 15 minutes, but we do it perfectly; a short time, but precisely, perfectly, as well as you can.

This realm is the pure realm, all sound mantra, form, the form of the deity, and mind completely free from grasping.

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

Venerable Noble Drolma, may I be known by you. Please clear away all the conditions of disputation and swiftly fulfill all wishes.

([Recite] the Hundred Syllables)

**OM BENZRA SATO SAMAYA MANUPALAYA BENZRA SATO
TENOPA TITA DRIDHO MEBHAWA SUTOKAYO MEBHAWA
SUPOKAYO MEBHAWA ANURAKTO MEBHAWA SARWA SIDDHI
ME PRAYATSA SARWA KARMA SU TSA ME TSITA SRI YAM
KURU HUNG HA HA HA HA HO BHAGAWAN SARWA
TATHAGATA BENZRA MA ME MUN TSA BENZRA BHAWA
MAHASAMAYA SATO AH**

(AND:)

Kindly forgive me for whatever faults I have done here, for whatever I have been unable to do, and for whatever unwholesome deeds I have unknowingly committed. My mind and the diety are inseparable. Let mind rest in the primordial dharmadhatu.

(Thus, guard the view of the true nature.)

We let the mind rest without any kind of artificial thought, as it is.

Don't worry about it being not good, don't get excited if it is good. Just let the mind relax, without grasping or holding.

The mind has no location, no shape, no color. This is the nature of the mind, dharmadhatu. Luminosity, it is joy and bliss. Never grasping or holding, it is very present.

We do not need effort. We do not need to fix it or adjust it. We just relax, without any idea, concept. We leave mind as it is; bright, shining, joyous.

(Then dedication:)

Through this virtue I will quickly accomplish the Noble Drolma, and then may I establish each being on that level without exception. Through this merit may we become omniscient. After attaining this, may we defeat the enemies which are the faults: the turbulent waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death, and may we liberate all beings from the suffering of the ocean of existence.

Bodhicitta is precious, may it arise in those in whom it has not arisen. In those in whom it has arisen, may it not be damaged. May it ever grow and flourish.

Notes from the Green Tara Commentary, by Lama Lodu Rinpoche,
November 17th, 2007

Green Tara is the embodiment of all the activities of the Buddhas. In this age, there are so many problems, and she is more effective. She brings immediate accomplishment.

Tara dispels obstacles. Any fear can be dispelled, definitely.

The Condensed Ritual of Green Tara

All paths have love and compassion, but there are three things that make the Vajrayana Buddhist path distinct: the beginning, the actual practice, and the conclusion.

What makes it different?

First is refuge and the generation of bodhicitta;

Second is the actual practice, based on that – the view is emptiness, emptiness without nihilism – saying mantra, making offerings, engaging in purification, and accepting everything as mere appearance, but in actual essence is emptiness. Avoiding the two extremes is to unite the absolute and the relative bodhicitta.

And third is the dedication. Practice accumulates great merit, but we don't hold onto it for ourselves, immediately we dedicate it for all sentient beings without exception. Close, indifferent, enemy, it doesn't matter.

We dedicate that this free all sentient beings from suffering, forever, and that they attain enlightenment forever, never returning to samsara.

No matter what sadhana we practice, there are these three elements.

A single mantra can bring infinite purification and accumulation of merit, infinite benefit. This is what makes tantric practice profound.

Taking Refuge

The Buddha, Dharma, and Excellent Assembly, these three are the object of refuge.

The Buddha is totally awakened one, free of ego, there are no afflictions. In addition, he is completely full of wisdom and compassion. Wisdom, but not just in the ordinary sense. What he needs to know, he knows. He can perceive the three times of the individual, can see all the situations of sentient beings. That is pristine wisdom, and a great sense of compassion.

He sees everyone is not existent as we see them. That is an illusion. Ordinary beings don't see things and so they suffer.

With wisdom he sees the situation of sentient beings, and with compassion he is willing to benefit sentient beings.

To benefit one sentient being, he can go to the hell realms a million times. He will enjoy doing that and not be discouraged.

Knowing the quality of the Buddha, that brings devotion, and with devotion, the Buddha's blessing and compassion is always there.

The Dharma is the Buddha's word, teaching the right path. That is our refuge – following the Dharma, naturally, we are protected. This we need to study and learn. Then we should reflect, then meditate.

The Noble Sangha are the Arhats and Bodhisattvas on their way to enlightenment. They are a pure and good example. They study with faith and trust. Their wisdom we follow.

These Three Jewels are the general Buddhist refuge. The Vajrayana in addition has the Three Roots, of the Lama, the Deity and the Dharma Protector.

We take refuge until enlightenment. Until we attain enlightenment, we need the Dharma and Sangha. These are the temporary refuge, but we need them. It's like needing a boat, and sailors to cross the ocean. When we get to the other shore we can let go, and not cling to the boat or sailors.

Also, my intention is not just for myself, but for all sentient beings.

‘By the merit I have accumulated...may I attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings’

Purification, generosity (meaning all Perfections) that is called bodhicitta. This is relative bodhicitta.

Our aim is to benefit sentient beings – that is Generosity.

Morality- when we practice, we need to have discipline, mentally focusing on the meaning, with respect and devotion and compassion. That is morality.

Patience – thirsty, hungry, if it doesn't endanger your life during the practice, simply, you take it.

Diligence – not lazy, but with serious practice you gather your mind, speech and body. Practice needs effort.

Concentration – if your mind is not concentrated, there is not much result. We cultivate love and compassion to free all sentient beings. That is concentration.

The first five Paramitas are relative bodhicitta, meaning there is something we have to think. You need some object and subject.

The last Paramita is Wisdom – absolute bodhicitta, because all these – refuge, bodhicitta, we don't grasp as real. They are mere appearance, not tangible. Over all this is emptiness. That is absolute bodhicitta.

Refuge and bodhicitta makes your practice genuine.

That is the preliminary in any sadhana, refuge and generating bodhicitta.

Until Enlightenment I go for refuge in the Buddha, dharma, and the sangha. By the merit I have accumulated through generosity and other virtues, may I attain Buddhahood for the benefit of all sentient beings.

(Three times)

Next are the Four Measureless Contemplations.

Loving kindness means you wish all beings have happiness, and that you will cause them to have happiness.

Compassion means you wish sentient beings to be free of suffering and the causes of suffering, and that you will cause them to be free from suffering. Free from suffering, and that they never return again to suffering. You wish that they have happiness that lasts.

Third, you rejoice in their happiness. We pray that their happiness will last for them until enlightenment.

Fourth, we make these wishes not just for some, not just for those who are close to us, because of desire, and not excluding those who are far from us, because of anger, or those we are indifferent to, but we have this wish for all beings, the same, equally.

We rejoice in the happiness of all equally, and pray that they all be free of suffering – that is compassion, and have happiness equally – that is loving kindness.

Love pervades all equally; compassion pervades all equally. That can cause bodhicitta to arise in your mind.

That attainment is called a wish-fulfilling gem.

Making bodhicitta more firm, more steadfast, more pervasive makes your practice powerful and effective. Bring this to your mind precisely and perfectly, and that can destroy your affliction quickly.

Just observe and you can tell how your practice is doing. If you are becoming more calm and serene and clear; if you have more devotion and compassion, these are good signs.

May all sentient beings have happiness and the cause of happiness. May all sentient beings be free from suffering and the causes of suffering. May all sentient beings never be without the supreme bliss which is free from all suffering. May all sentient beings live in the great equanimity which is free from all attachment and aversion.

(Three times)

Next, visualization

[note: It's traditionally taught that what's called 'self-generation' - where one visualizes oneself as the bodhisattva – divinity should only be done by those who have received the initiation of a particular practice, but that 'front generation' can be done by anyone.]

Visualize deities in front, and also yourself as the deity. Or, either way, however is comfortable.

Next, breathe in and out, five times. In – pause – and exhale.

At the same time, be mindful. Realize that you are breathing in , pausing, and breathing out, and mount your mind on the breath.

Just watch your breath coming in, pausing, and exhaling. Maybe ten, maybe five times, inhale, pause, exhale, one; inhale, pause, exhale, two; inhale, pause, exhale, three; and so on.

After a while, look directly at your mind. Mind has no color, no shape, nothing tangible that you can see. All becomes completely space, empty, with no past, future, or present concept.

Before other thoughts arise, your mind appears as the letter Tam – (Tara's seed syllable) green in color, on a moon disc and a multi-colored lotus.

Think: 'This is no different from my mind'. 'My mind and this Tam is the same'.

Light goes out from the Tam and makes offerings to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, gathers all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas blessings, and returns to the Tam, making it shine even more.

Light goes out again, dispelling all the suffering of sentient beings; anger, desire, ignorance, and other afflictions.

Light returns, and instantly Tam transforms into Green Tara, youthful, delightful, in feminine aspect, transparent. She has a white Om at her forehead, a red Ah at her throat, and a blue Hung at her heart.

From her heart, light goes out, inviting the Twenty-One Taras into space in front of her. These embody all the Buddhas and bodisattvas.

Then, prayer:

OM Homage to the Transcendent Accomplished Conqueror, the goddess Tara. Homage to Tara who is the Heroine TARE. She who dispels terror with TUTTARE. She who grants all benefits with TURE. Salutation to the syllables SOHA.

(This condensed homage for Tara prayer was composed by Drom Rinpoche*, and contains great benefit. [Drom Rinpoche was one of the great disciples of Atisa, and was an emanation of Chenrezig.]

Repeat this as many times as you can.

You can also do the long homage prayer here if you prefer, depending on your time, and then the short homage. It's up to you.

Then, mantra, one thousand times, or five hundred times, or as much as you can.

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA

While reciting, focus on Green Tara. While concentrating, just think that the Twenty-One Taras are there, but just focus on the main Green Tara.

Then, the supplication prayer.

Venerable Noble Drolma, may I be known by you. Please clear away all the conditions of disputation and swiftly fulfill all wishes.

Do this as many times as you can, praying, ‘Any obstacle, hindrance, dispel; anything I need for my path, fulfill.’

Then, the Hundred-Syllable mantra, which is the King of Purification mantras. Any mistake, anything incorrect, because of ignorance, all this you regret, and this purifies.

([Recite] the Hundred Syllables)

**OM BENZRA SATO SAMAYA MANUPALAYA BENZRA SATO
TENOPA TITA DRIDHO MEBHAWA SUTOKAYO MEBHAWA
SUPOKAYO MEBHAWA ANURAKTO MEBHAWA SARWA SIDDHI
ME PRAYATSA SARWA KARMA SU TSA ME TSITA SRI YAM
KURU HUNG HA HA HA HA HO BHAGAWAN SARWA
TATHAGATA BENZRA MA ME MUN TSA BENZRA BHAWA
MAHASAMAYA SATO AH**

(AND:)

Kindly forgive me for whatever faults I have done here, for whatever I have been unable to do, and for whatever unwholesome deeds I have unknowingly committed.

Then, dismissing deities.

My mind and the deity are inseparable. Let mind rest in the primordial dharmadhatu.

(Thus, guard the view of the true nature.)

All deities dissolve into you, and you dissolve into spaciousness, completely clear. The ordinary mind is simple, natural. The true nature of mind, as it is, naked mind, has no past, no future, and no conceptualization.

It’s like the body covered with clothing, then uncovered. I, ego, I, me, are like clothes. Desire, jealousy, greed, hope, doubt – too much clothes, until we don’t even know naked mind.

No affliction, no ego, mind just as it is, ordinary mind – nothing.

My – mind – two things. Who is the I? Who is the me? Mind? Body? We say ‘My body’, but who is this I? What is mind?

It can’t be located. It is not inside. It is not the body.

The body – take it apart: head, limbs, heart, these are not the mind; skin and flesh are not the mind.

The mind has no shape, no color. The mind is completely clear, completely without any concept. Primordial awareness is our true nature.

The simple, true nature of our mind, that is Buddha – total awakening.

Because of our habitual patterns, we don’t stay in this state for long. When things are going well, it’s easy to see, but then, with grasping and holding, we think, ‘Oh, I want to keep this!’, then it is gone already. Grasping and holding is the biggest enemy. This can take you from the way it is.

Through purification, merit, and practice, this state can last longer.

Milarepa said, the view is emptiness – wisdom, meditation is not clinging, and conduct is not grasping anything that comes, ‘like drawing on water’.

Let the mind rest.

Then, dedication:

Through this virtue I will quickly accomplish the Noble Drolma, and then may I establish each being on that level without exception. Through this merit may we become omniscient. After attaining this, may we defeat the enemies which are the faults: the turbulent waves of birth, old age, sickness, and death, and may we liberate all beings from the suffering of the ocean of existence.

Bodhicitta is precious, may it arise in those in whom it has not arisen. In those in whom it has arisen, may it not be damaged. May it ever grow and flourish.

Anything positive that I have done in this session I dedicate to attain Arya Tara, for all sentient beings.

We realize also that the three spheres – the one who accumulates the merit, the merit itself, and the beings who receive the merit actually are not existent inherently, they are an illusion. This makes the merit more effective, and makes the result ripen more quickly on your path.

The Practice of White Tara – The Wishfulfilling Wheel called “Heap of Immortal Essence”, by Kyabje Pabonkha Rinpoche

One begins the practice by first taking refuge and generating Bodhicitta.

I go for refuge until I am enlightened, to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the supreme assembly. By the virtuous merit that I create by practicing giving and other perfections, may I attain the state of a Buddha, in order to benefit all sentient beings (3 times)

OM SVABAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SVABHAVA
SHUDDHO HAM

Everything becomes empty.

From within the emptiness on top of moon disc on a white lotus, my own mind is represented by the syllable TAM.

The utpala lotus with the TAM then transforms into myself as the embodiment of long life granting Goddess – White Tara.

With one face and two hands, (my) right hand is in the mudra of supreme generosity. (my) left hand is holding the stem of an utpala lotus and (I) have seven eyes; a youthful body adorned with the major and minor marks and a moon disc as a backrest.

The three points are marked by the three syllables.

From the seed syllable (TAM) light rays radiate inviting the wisdom Goddess (White Tara) and empowering deities.

(White Tara) merges into me becoming non-dual and through the initiation of the empowering deities, my crown is adorned with Amitayus.

From the (syllable) Tam at my heart, light-rays emanate extracting all life and essence of all good qualities of samsara and nirvana which dissolve into my heart.

OM TARA TUTTARE TURE MAMA AYUH PUNEY JNANA
PUSHTHIM KURU SOHA (21 times)

OM TARA TUTTARE TURE SOHA (as many times as possible)

Recite either the vowel and consonant mantra or the hundred syllable mantra.

OM AAA I II U UU RI RII LI LII E AI O AU AM AH SVAHA
 OM KA KHA GA GHA NGA
 TSA TSHA DZA DZHA NYA
 TA THA DA DHA NA
 TA THA DA DHA NA
 PA PHA BA BHA MA
 YA RA LA VA
 SA SHA SA HA KSHA SVAHA

OM PADMASATTVA SAMAYA MANUPALAYA
 PADMASATTVA DENOPA TITHA DIDO MAY BHAWA
 SUTOKAYO MAY BHAWA
 SUPOKAYO MAY BHAWA
 ANURAKTO MAY BHAWA
 SARVA SIDDI MAY PAR YA TSA
 SARVA KARMA SU TSA MAY
 TSITAM SHRIYAM KURU HUNG
 HA HA HA HA HOH BHAGAWAN
 SARVA TATHAGATA
 PADMA MA MAY MU TSA
 PADMA BHAWA MAHASAMAYA SATO HUNG PAY

One completes the practice with the dedication:

If I see the signs of untimely death, let me straight away clearly see the form of Mother Tara, the wish fulfilling wheel, and, crushing the might of the Lord of Death, quickly become a deathless vajradhara.

By this virtue may I quickly realize Guru-Buddhahood, and transfer each sentient being into that enlightened state!

May the precious Bodhi-mind, where it is unborn, arise; may that born have no decline, but develop more and more.

Translated by Ven. Geshe Kalsang Wangdu's student and translator Michael Lobsang Yeshe, after Geshe-la granted the White Tara Initiation at Tse Che Ling Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies in San Francisco on August 16, 1996.

May all holy teachers live long lives and guide us until samsara ends.

White Tara Commentary, by Geshe Wangdu, given at Tse Chen Ling Center For Tibetan Buddhist Studies, San Francisco.

Lightly edited.

[Note: It's traditionally taught that what's called 'self-generation' - where one visualizes oneself as the deity - should only be done by those who have received the initiation of a particular deity, but that 'front generation' - where one visualizes the deity in space above and in front of oneself - can be done by anyone.]

From August 14th, 1996:

The main motivation for receiving this initiation is that we wish to have a long life, free from illness, in order to practice Dharma for the sake of living beings.

The main focus, and the direct benefit, then, is for one's own long life; indirectly, the purpose is to practice the teachings so we can help all other living beings.

White Tara Commentary, August 28th, 1996:

I thought that it would be beneficial to go over the sadhana of White Tara, the White Tara sadhana practice, and that that would be beneficial for those who wish in the future to do a retreat on White Tara.

So there is here a very brief form of the sadhana, which I will go over first, and then I can go more extensively after that.

The brief form of the White Tara sadhana that I have now and will be commenting upon is a sadhana which the Tibetan great master Pabonkha Rinpoche has composed, and it's a very brief form, in fact only two pages. (Geshe-la, in English: 'I think it's composed especially for westerners!') (laughter).

If one were to do a retreat on White Tara, it would be highly beneficial for oneself and for others. The results would be that one's mind would be much calmer, and one would gain more knowledge and intellect, and also, the other immediate benefits would be that one would have good health, and long life, and also what we call material wealth as well. The particular, immediate benefits of doing White Tara practice are said to be that one will have success in whatever one pursues, whether it's spiritual or material-wise.

In one of the praises to White Tara, which is in the form of a prayer, or in stanzas, one of the stanzas at the end mentions that by praising White Tara, and by praising and respect, and by doing salutations to White Tara, those who wish to have children will have children; those who wish to have sons will have sons; those who wish to have daughters will gain daughters; those who wish to have possessions will gain possessions; and furthermore, all negativity and obstacles for one's practices would be all vanquished- that is one of the stanzas.

The most essential point is to do the sadhana in the proper way, with faith, and if one follows all the commitments and does it sincerely, with faith, then definitely the results will come.

Unlike other Buddhist deities, White Tara is known to be a deity which, if one follows the practice, it is one of the most simple practices. And it is very easy for us to follow and to do- not like other deities, such as Yamantaka or Guhyasamaja, other deities where the forms are even difficult to visualize.

And in fact, the mantra itself being short, one is able to complete a retreat with reciting one hundred-thousand times the mantra in one week, with four sessions or even in three sessions a day. After the retreat then of course it would be highly beneficial to do a fire puja as well, and that of course can be done in places like Vajrapani where people there can help and know about it.

Then, furthermore, one of the main benefits, again, of doing White Tara practice, especially a retreat, is that one will be very influential and powerful in helping others. One of the other deities is also Yamantaka, which is said to be a very powerful, influential practice to do. Particularly one becomes powerful and will get the abilities to help and benefit others, especially people who are sick or unwell in any way.

Now I'll go over the brief sadhana, according to the text.

The first line reads here that, after sitting down, one should do what we call taking the refuge and generating bodhicitta. And after that is done, then one should meditate upon emptiness. Particularly one should visualize oneself as becoming the nature of emptiness.

One should imagine that one's gross body, the physical body, fades away, and transforms into the nature of emptiness.

One can actually imagine that one's physical body is fading away into space. And then one should feel particularly that it is the nature of emptiness. After one's gross physical body is transformed into emptiness, then within that emptiness one should imagine that a white lotus arises from that empty space, a white lotus.

On the thangka up there, portraying White Tara, the lotus has been portrayed as being a pink lotus, however in the text it is said that the lotus should be white- a white lotus which has a thousand petals, which of course is quite enormous, quite big.

So then on top of the thousand petaled lotus one visualizes a moon-disk, a full moon-disk, which is flat on its surface.

I'd like to give a description of the significance of the lotus and the moon, and on many portraits of the deity there's also a sun-disk, however, all in common have, definitely, a lotus and a moon-disk, and I'd like to give the significance of them.

The lotus signifies renunciation. So, renunciation, to give a brief definition, is a wish, or the spontaneous wish to be free from cyclic existence, the wish to be free from that and to reach the state of liberation, nirvana. That sort of spontaneous wish or state of mind is renunciation.

Even if one is an ordinary being, without any realizations, if one were to have the renounced mind, then the faults of what we call samsara, the faults of what we call cyclic existence wouldn't hinder that person.

So the manner in which the lotus signifies renunciation is that, even though the lotus itself was born out of a pond, what we call a swamp, or a muddy pond, even though it grows out of that, when it blooms on top of the water, there's not even a bit of mud on its' petals, and it is free of the mud itself. That is how it resembles renunciation.

Having the renounced state of mind in one's continuum would be the same, where even though one is born from the cyclic existence, if one doesn't have the faults or the clinging to the cyclic existence, then the mind itself would be pure, as the lotus is pure, being unstained by the mud.

So the particular lotus we are talking about here, which resembles renunciation, is a particular lotus which grows in a swamp (which means that the whole surface is full of mud itself), and even though it grows out of a swamp, the mud of the swamp doesn't stain onto the petals.

So, if one knows the significance of a lotus, then as soon as one sees a lotus, it's a reminder of what it signifies, which is renunciation, the renounced state of mind which we should generate.

Then, the moon-disk signifies bodhicitta, the wish to achieve enlightenment. The way the moon signifies that is that, when the full moon is out in the evening, as soon as that light comes forth, whoever is out in the moonlight feels a soothing effect, and particularly when it's very dark and there's no other light around.

When the moonlight is shining upon anyone, one feels a soothing effect, and that soothing effect is felt by everyone in the moonlight. So, similarly, the bodhicitta mind, the altruistic wish to achieve enlightenment, that sort of mind itself is a powerful mind where whoever has that mind brings a soothing effect for whoever is around.

So, whatever deity, or whatever is sitting on top of a lotus and moon-disk, that deity has achieved that state of mind, of renunciation and bodhicitta.

Some deities, as mentioned earlier, have on top of the lotus a sun-disk and a moon disk. First, a sun-disk, and then on top of the sun-disk, a moon-disk. Some deities have what you call the cushion of the lotus, the sun and moon-disk, all three.

The sun signifies emptiness, the understanding of emptiness, the wisdom realizing emptiness, in this way: as soon as the sun-rays come forth, it's very bright, and it illuminates everything; similarly, whoever has that wisdom realizing emptiness, it illuminates the nature of all existence, and the nature of all existence becomes very clear to that being.

That's how, by generating the wisdom realizing emptiness, all other doubts and all other ignorant states of mind are automatically extinguished. Therefore, the sun signifies wisdom, what we call the wisdom realizing emptiness.

So, after one visualizes the lotus and then the moon-disk upon the lotus, then one visualizes the syllable TAM, which is in fact the essence of one's own mind. The syllable TAM signifies our mind.

One should visualize that this syllable is made of white, radiating light.

So that syllable TAM which one has visualized, now we should imagine that transforming into White Tara. You know how like on T.V. ads, or whatever, we see things, there's something there and sometimes, suddenly it transforms, especially on song clips, you see faces transforming into different things. So this TAM we should imagine it transforming, itself, transforming into White Tara deity.

First there's nothing, and that nothingness transforms into a lotus and a moon-disk, and on top of that the syllable TAM, right? So then that syllable TAM now transforms into White Tara deity.

The text mentions the form of the White Tara deity. It says it has 'one face and two arms...' - it may sound strange to us in the beginning to say that. Why should they be mentioning 'one face and two arms'?, because we all have one face and two arms anyway. The reason why they specify one face and two arms is because there are many deities who have many faces and many arms, so it is specifying that this particular deity is with one face and two arms.

The right hand is in the mudra of Supreme Generosity, which means that, 'If you are willing, I will give you the ability to achieve enlightenment in this very lifetime'. That mudra itself signifies that the deity is willing to grant us

the state of enlightenment. It's a mudra of generosity.

And in the left hand one should visualize the deity holding a white lotus flower called 'utpala'. The lotus stem goes out in three branches, and each stem of the branch has a different flower- one which is already opened and in full bloom, one which is about to open, and one which is just a bud. These three represent the Buddhas of the three times.

The three different buds representing the Buddhas of the three times signifies that the Buddhas of the three times all had to rely upon White Tara in order to achieve enlightenment. White Tara is the Mother Goddess for all the Buddhas of the past, present, and the future, and it's only by relying on White Tara deity that the Buddhas have achieved their state of enlightenment. So that's why White Tara is known as the Mother of all Buddhas.

And then there's seven eyes- an eye on the forehead and two eyes where you have eyes normally, one eye each on the palms of the hands and the soles of the feet.

This portrait of the White Tara deity is a very good one. I found it to be very perfect in every way, so of course if you can get copies like this, then it will be very nice for you.

In here it explains that it should be a sixteen year-old youth, the facial expression... This portrait really portrays that. Maybe we can get laser scans of this...

Then of course when we visualize the actual body of the deity White Tara, we should not visualize and imagine it as being like our body, in a gross form, but rather the body itself is a body of light.

This reminds me of a question asked to me once in Dharmasala by a western monk who had difficulty in doing a meditation, particularly a visualization where one absorbs the lama into one's self. And he was relating to me that he finds it very difficult to absorb the lama into himself. When it comes to the top of his crown it feels like it's stuck there. So then I told him that that's maybe because you are visualizing the lama in a normal gross physical body, and in fact that itself is not proper.

We should visualize the lama above our head as having the nature of light, which is what is called an uncontaminated body, which is in the nature of light.

In fact it is mentioned that when we reach the third level of a bodhisattva that the physical body itself transforms into a light body, but in fact it's even more profound than that. The body of the Buddha is in fact all completely light, no stain of contamination, and it is the very nature of what we call a light body.

So therefore that is visualized, and it's even easier when we do the visualization of the body merging into ourselves.

So, although one should be visualizing one's teacher as being the actual Buddha, for that is the practice in general, when we do the meditation it shows that one part of our mind is fixed onto our guru's body as being flesh and bones, and that obstructs our meditation when we do the meditation of absorption, or merging the teacher into ourselves. So there's that conflict in our minds at that time.

Next, the White Tara deity is adorned with many jewels, head ornaments, precious jewels, and the clothes are silk garments, and of different kinds of colors. And again, even the clothing we shouldn't imagine as being like physical material, but in the form of light.

The aura on the back is shaped like a moon. Then one should visualize the three syllables at the three points, which is a white OM at the crown of the head, a red AH at the throat, and a blue HUNG at the heart.

So again, one should visualize at one's heart, even though it's not mentioned particularly here, through other sadhanas I know that one has to visualize a lotus, again a white lotus, and on top of the lotus a moon-disk, and on top of that the syllable TAM again, which is white, white light.

Then after having visualized the white syllable TAM, in white light, one visualizes light rays emanating from that TAM. The light rays go throughout all the ten directions, (which actually, literally means all directions), and then that light invokes all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas from the ten directions, and then by invoking the Buddhas and bodhisattvas from the ten

directions, the Buddhas and bodhisattvas from the ten directions merge into one's self, which is the White Tara deity.

One should imagine the merging as being like, for example, if it snows on a lake, as soon as the snowflakes hit the water, it just merges into the water. There's nothing left over. So that should be how we imagine the Buddhas and bodhisattvas all merging into ourselves, which is in the form of the White Tara deity. And we become one with all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, we merge with all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas. And then at that moment, after we have visualized that all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas have merged into ourselves, at that very instant we should very strongly feel that we have become one with all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is said that when doing this visualization, where the light rays invoke all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas from all the ten directions, it is not necessary to imagine them merging into oneself from the top of one's crown. That is not necessary. It can be merging from all directions throughout every part of our body.

Then one visualizes that the deity of initiation gives us an initiation. And after having received the initiation from the initiation deity, then on the crown of our heads, which is in White Tara's form, we imagine that the long-life Buddha Amitayus resides there.

After having visualized the Amitayus on the top of our crown, which ornaments the crown, then again we visualize light rays emanating from the syllable TAM at the heart, and this time the light rays radiate into all the directions, and not particularly to all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, but all throughout the universe, and to the five elements within the universe, the fire, water, wind, earth and space elements, all the five elements, and to what we call all the riches of the kings, all the riches and beauties of the kings and queens in this universe, in fact all the jewels and any beautiful object in the universe is invoked by the light rays emanating from our heart.

And we should imagine that the light rays are extracting all the qualities from the five elements, from all the riches and all the beauties within the universe, and it extracts it and brings forth what we call the essence back into us, in the form of light rays.

An example would be like when a magnet, a powerful magnet is put in the middle, and you have small pieces of iron all around. When the magnet is put amongst those pieces of iron, it suddenly draws in all the small pieces. That would be how we should imagine the essences, all the good qualities, the compassion and the good qualities of all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and also the good qualities of the riches and beauties of all the different parts of the universe are extracted and brought to us. And they merge into the syllable TAM.

Also at the same time we imagine that the essence of what we call the life force, the essence of merit, and the essence of all the nourishment from all the different sources in the universe are all merging into ourselves, particularly into the TAM within our heart.

One should, of course, always be aware of the fact that the syllable TAM itself is our mind, the nature of our mind.

So when we visualize and imagine all the good qualities within the universe merging into the TAM, in fact we are visualizing all the good qualities merging into our own mind. And if this is done with strong faith, in fact it is said that one will certainly receive all the good qualities, of long life, nourishment, and so forth.

I feel that extracting the essence from the five elements is actually a very factual practice. Whenever we get sick, or are unwell in any way it is said that it is because of the five elements being out of balance, or being not sufficient in our bodies. So when we visualize that we are receiving the essence of all five elements, in fact that in itself is the proper way to think of how we should be healthy, having the essence of the five elements in balance within ourselves.

So at this point, when we do this visualization, while we are still contemplating the visualization of the light rays going out in all the directions and then invoking all the good qualities, bringing them back and merging them into the syllable, while we are doing this visualization, then at this point we start doing the recitation of the mantra, the long mantra. We do it twenty-one times at the beginning.

Then after having done a twenty-one round of the long version of the mantra, then we begin the actual recitation of the actual mantra of Tara, which is OM TARA TUTTARE TURE SOHA, and at this point we begin counting, because if we're doing a retreat we're supposed to be doing a certain number of recitations.

If I were to relate from my own experience of doing a retreat, it is my own experience that I find it difficult to continue to focus on the visualization, and sometimes it can become too stressful for the mind. So I find it useful, beneficial, before beginning the recitation to try to focus very attentively on the visualization as explained in the text. And when I come to the point of the recitation, because I have focused very attentively on the visualization initially, because I have imagined that I'm doing the process of invoking the good qualities from all the different directions, then I try to relax the mind a bit from the actual visualization and just contemplate on the recitation itself.

Then, after I reach about one thousand recitations, I can go back into doing the visualization, while still reciting, but focusing more on the visualization-of sending out the light from the syllable TAM, and the light radiating out to all the directions and invoking the good qualities of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the five elements, and all the riches and long life, and so forth, and bringing that back in the form of light rays, and merging them into the TAM, doing that visualization, as explained previously.

You know, I feel that after doing some recitation, one feels that, 'I've done enough work to be able to receive more blessings'. (laughter) It's like even the visualization at that point becomes stronger.

So if one finds it difficult to maintain the visualization all throughout, then, not to be too stressful, but to remember that the main point is to have a relaxed mind, and to feel the blessings being received from all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

It is mentioned that when we do any retreat practice, the sessions should be as grain is- so for example if one had committed one's self to doing a one week retreat, let's say on White Tara, then on the first and second days the sessions are more brief, relaxed. Then as one goes into the third, fourth and fifth days, then one increases the length of the sessions, and even the focus

and the visualization should be stronger. Then as one comes to the end, one decreases the length, and if one finds it to be quite stressful, the one can be more relaxed at this time.

So if one were planning to stay for two hours in each session, one begins the first day with maybe only an hour. Then on the second day one could start increasing the length of the session.

Sometimes when I do retreat I'll go into three hours each session in the middle. So then the longest in the beginning can be like two hours. So in the beginning, one hour in a session the first day, and then increasing more the second, and then eventually coming to two hours in a session. Then at the end again decreasing the time, and coming back again to one hour.

The reason why it is said to have shorter sessions in the beginning of a retreat is that if one puts so much time and energy in the beginning, one may lose interest and one may become discouraged. So the time length is said to be like a grain, and the reason why is because the top and the bottom of a grain are pointed, and the middle is thicker. So that is how the duration of the time should be, small or short in the beginning, and then more extensive in the middle, and then short again at the end.

When we come to the middle of our retreat period, then we have to become quite accustomed to visualization, and to the actual meditation itself. Then if we extend our time we don't feel as tired or stressful. Then to decrease the time as one is ending the retreat is so that one will feel enthusiastic about doing a retreat in the future.

So then, to make it brief, at the end, after one does the visualization, then one does the mantra of the Sanskrit vowels and consonants, and then after that the Vajrasattva mantra, and then the dedication.

(Translator: I think it's the last verse of the dedication that's the verse that Geshe-la was mentioning:)

I pray that, by the power of these prayers and praises,
for all beings and myself, wherever they may dwell,
illness, demons, poverty, quarrels and wars
may be pacified,

May the Dharma and good fortune flourish

(The first verse of the dedication, I'm sorry...):

If I see the signs of untimely death, let me straight
away clearly see the form of Mother Tara, the wish-
fulfilling wheel, and, crushing the might of the Lord
of Death, quickly become a deathless vajradhara.

Then after we recite this dedication verse we can end our session. This is the most brief way of how to do a retreat on White Tara.

So even if one were not able to do a retreat on White Tara, to do the practice every morning for about half an hour, if one can do the practice and recite the mantra for, let's say, a thousand times each morning until one reaches a hundred thousand times, then that would be very beneficial in one's life, that would be very beneficial. And that could be done just as a practice, but not in a retreat form. It is similar to doing a retreat, even though it's not very strict. That could be done even if one is working, before going to work, one can do it in the morning. There is definite benefit if one is able to do that.

The particular sadhana which I have given tonight is a sadhana which has only two pages, so it's a very easy sadhana.

So I will conclude here tonight, and thank you very much, everyone. Let us do the dedication.

(dedication)

Recommended reading

Online: Layman Sherab – Tara Practice Notes;

Books: Tara's Enlightened Activity, by Khenpo Palden Sherab Rinpoche