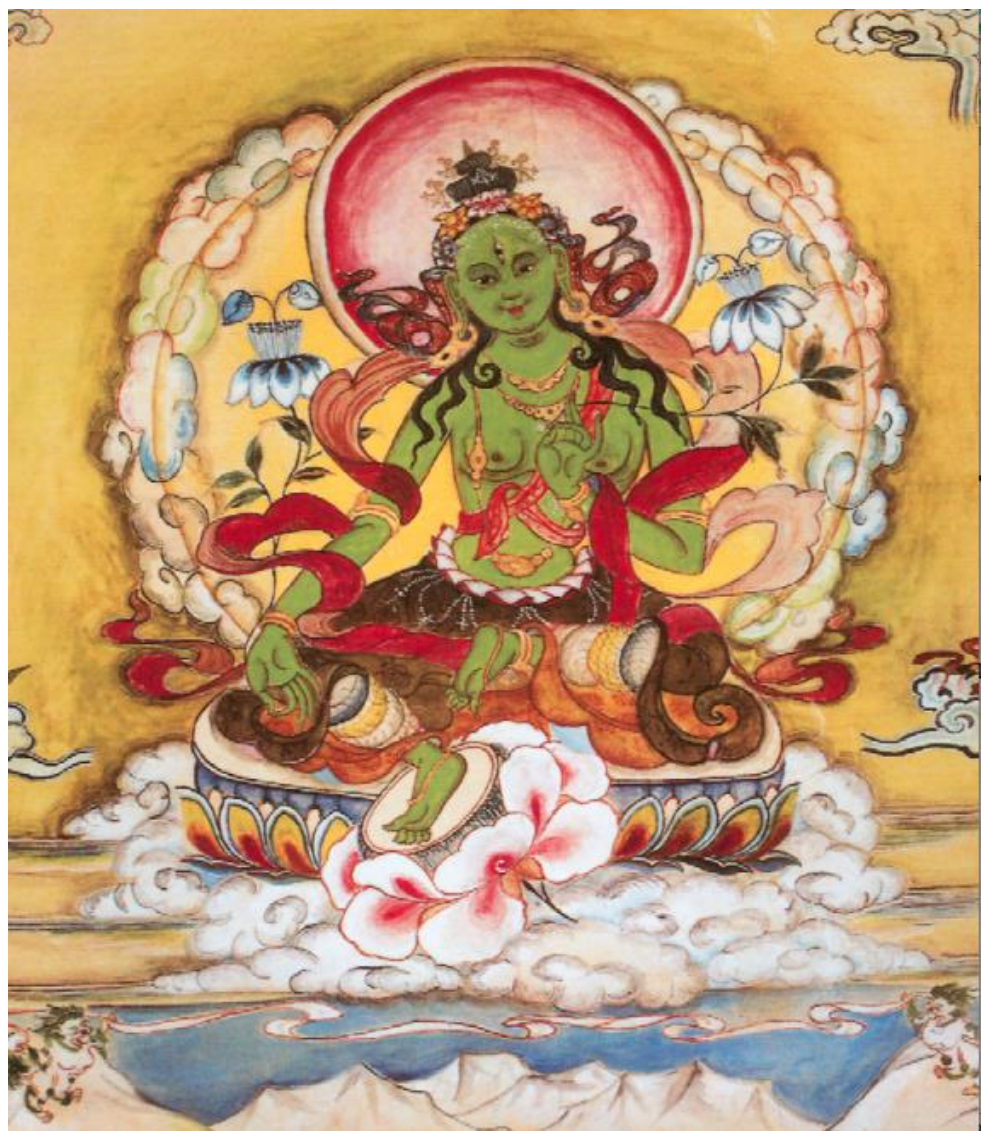


BUDDHA TARA
LIBERATOR
FROM THE
FEARS OF
SAMSARA
LAMA YESHE
AND LAMA
ZOPA
RINPOCHE

Painted by Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche when he was a young boy



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1. TARA THE LIBERATOR

LAMA ZOPA RINPOCHE

RELYING ON TARA

There are so many inner obstacles to the development of our mind, and these inner obstacles create many outer obstacles. Therefore, for the success of your Dharma practice, of your actualizing the graduated path to enlightenment, you must rely upon a special deity, or buddha, such as Tara. All the actions of the buddhas have manifested in this female aspect of Buddha, Tara the Liberator, in order to help living beings to accomplish successfully both temporal and ultimate happiness.

Many Indian yogis relied upon Tara. By taking refuge in Tara, they completed the path and did great works for the teachings and for living beings, leading uncountable numbers in the path to temporal and ultimate happiness. For example, the great pandit Lama Atisha, who completed the whole graduated path to enlightenment, relied upon Tara.

Lama Atisha was invited by the religious king of Tibet, Yeshe O, to re-establish and spread Buddhadharma in Tibet. Lama Atisha also wrote the text, *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment*, which established the term *graduated path to enlightenment*. By listening to, reflecting and meditating on *Lamp for the Path of Enlightenment*, so many people have achieved enlightenment.

Besides benefiting the Tibetan practitioners who are experimenting on and accomplishing the path to enlightenment, Lama Atisha's text is nowadays even benefiting extensively in the West. The light of this lam-rim teaching has dispelled so much ignorance, even in the minds of many thousands of people living in the West. Because *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* integrates all

the teachings of Buddha into a step-by-step practice by which anyone can achieve enlightenment, many practitioners have been able to use it to train their minds in the path to enlightenment.

Even though Lama Atisha passed away a long time ago in Tibet, he is still benefiting us by having given us the opportunity to understand the teachings of the graduated path to enlightenment. Understanding and practicing this path gives you confidence and much happiness. By understanding the cause of happiness, you have the opportunity to obtain whatever happiness you wish. These are Lama Atisha's actions benefiting all living beings.

Lama Atisha was able to offer these extensive benefits to living beings and the teachings through depending upon Tara. Throughout Lama Atisha's life, Tara always gave him advice. When Lama Atisha had to make decisions about doing works for living beings – such as traveling to Tibet – he always asked Tara, and then followed Tara's instructions. Like this, even present-day Tibetan yogis who are actualizing the graduated path to enlightenment, having great success in developing their minds, also rely upon Tara.

THE BENEFITS OF TARA PRACTICE

Tara is quick to grant success in obtaining the ultimate happiness of enlightenment. You receive much good merit, or cause of happiness; it prevents a suffering rebirth in your next life; you receive initiation from millions of buddhas; and you achieve enlightenment.

Besides these, however, Tara practice has many other benefits. Reciting the Twenty-one Taras' prayer with devotion, at dawn or dusk – or remembering Tara, singing praises and reciting mantras at any time of the day or night – protects you from fear and dangers, and fulfill all your wishes. If you pray to Tara, Tara is particularly quick to grant help.

There are also many temporal benefits from Tara practice, either reciting the Tara mantra or the Twenty-one Taras' prayer. Tara can

solve many problems in your life: liberate you from untimely death; help you recover from disease; bring you success in business; help you to find a job; bring you wealth. When you have a really serious problem, such as a life-threatening disease, if you rely upon Tara, very commonly you will be freed from that problem; you will recover from that disease. If you eat poison, if you rely upon Tara, the poison will not harm you. By doing Tara prayers and mantras, couples with difficulty having a child can have a child – and whichever they want, a son or a daughter. These are very common experiences. Through Tara practice, you can obtain any happiness of this life that you wish.

If you recite the Twenty-one Taras' prayer once every evening, it is impossible – I can put my signature to this! – for you to die of starvation. It is also a very common experience for lay practitioners, monks and nuns with financial difficulties to have such problems relieved by doing Tara practice. In my personal experience, I have seen many instances of people who have prayed to and taken refuge in Tara and been saved from the danger of untimely death from disease without taking medicine.

TARA'S MANTRA

The Tara mantra is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. The rough meaning of TARE TUTTARE TURE is “To you, embodiment of all the buddhas' actions, I prostrate always [whether I am in happy or unhappy circumstances] with my body, speech and mind.” Or: “I prostrate to the Liberator, Mother of all the Victorious Ones.” Tara is the mother of all the *Victorious Ones*, or buddhas. Why are buddhas called Victorious Ones? Because they are victorious over the two obscurations.

All the paths – Lesser Vehicle, Mahayana, Paramitayana, tantra – from the beginning up to enlightenment are contained in TARE TUTTARE TURE. All the outlines of the lam-rim meditations are contained in this mantra.

THE MEANING OF OM

Tara's pure vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind are signified by OM.

THE MEANING OF TARE

TARE means liberating from samsara. This *samsara* means these aggregates: the aggregate of form, or the physical body; of feeling; of recognition; of karmic formations; and of consciousness. These aggregates, on which the I is labeled, are caused by the contaminated seed of karma and disturbing thoughts. Under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, the past-life aggregate of consciousness circled to this life. Because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of karma and disturbing thoughts, on meeting desirable and undesirable objects, the different disturbing thoughts such as attachment and anger arise. As the seed of the disturbing thoughts is there, you again create karma. And the karma and disturbing thoughts again cause the aggregate of consciousness to circle, or join, to the aggregates of the next life.

Even though this gross body has no continuum into the next life, the aggregate of consciousness does continue to the next life. From life to life, it continuously circles. From one life to the next, from the past life to the present, the aggregate of consciousness circles. It joins to these present aggregates, then later joins to the aggregates of the next life. This is why these aggregates are called samsara, or cyclic existence.

So, TARE shows that Mother Tara liberates living beings from samsara, from true suffering, or problems. You can relate this to the particular sufferings of human beings: birth, old age, sickness and death; meeting undesirable objects and experiencing aversion; not finding desirable objects or finding them but gaining no satisfaction. No matter how much pleasure you enjoy, there is no satisfaction. No matter how much you follow desire, there is no satisfaction at all.

Also, nothing in samsara is definite. You have to leave the body again and again, and take another body again and again. Like this, again and again you experience the suffering of joining to another body.

Your present-life mother came from her mother, your grandmother; your grandmother came from another mother; and that mother came from another mother. It is the same with your father. You can see this body that you have now as a collection of all the sperm and blood that has continued from parent to child for inconceivable generations since this earth evolved, since human beings began. This collection of sperm has come to you through your father, your grandfather, your great-grandfather, and so on. It is the same with the blood, which has come to you through your mother, your grandmother, and so on. Since this body you have now is a continuation of all this sperm and blood from all these other beings, there is no essence to cling to; there is no reason to get attached to this body, this samsara. The waste from all the toilets in a big city is collected into one big sewer – the body is just like this sewer.

By joining again and again to the body like this, again and again you experience problems. If you have high status, you fall down to low status. Again and again this happens. When you are born, you are born alone without any companion; when you die, you also die alone. Even this body does not accompany the consciousness; the consciousness has to go alone to the next life. All these are the problems of true suffering. If you rely upon Tara by taking refuge in her and doing Tara practices – such as the recitation of mantra or praises – with TARE, Tara liberates you from all these true sufferings.

In regard to the lam-rim, TARE is the graduated path of the lower capable being.

THE MEANING OF TUTTARE

The second word, TUTTARE, liberates you from the eight fears. There

are eight fears related to external dangers from fire, water, air, earth, and also from such things as thieves and dangerous animals. However, the main dangers come from ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, miserliness, doubt and wrong views. These eight disturbing thoughts that you have in your mind are the main dangers. By taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you are liberated from these eight internal dangers, these eight disturbing thoughts. In this way, you are also liberated from external dangers, as these external dangers come from the inner disturbing thoughts.

This second word, TUTTARE, which liberates you from the eight fears, frees you from the true cause of suffering: karma and the all-arising disturbing thoughts. *All-arising* means that disturbing thoughts bring all the sufferings. By taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you are liberated from the true cause of suffering: this is the meaning of TUTTARE.

Again, in regard to the lam-rim, TUTTARE is the graduated path of the middle capable being.

THE MEANING OF TURE

The third word, TURE, liberates you from disease. Now, of the Four Noble Truths, TURE shows the cessation of suffering, which is the ultimate Dharma. In terms of liberating from disease, the actual disease we have is ignorance not knowing the absolute nature of the I, and all the disturbing thoughts that arise from this ignorance. These are the actual, serious diseases that we have. With cessation of all these diseases of disturbing thoughts, all the true sufferings, all the resultant problems, are also ceased. By liberating us from disease, TURE actually liberates us from the true cause, disturbing thoughts, and also the true sufferings.

How can we achieve this ultimate Dharma, this true cessation of the cause and result of suffering? What can lead us to this state, the cessation of suffering, which is the meaning of TURE? You achieve this

by practicing the true path. As revealed in the Lesser Vehicle paths of the Hearer-Listeners and Self-conquerors, and in the Mahayana path, the true path is the wisdom directly perceiving emptiness. This is the absolute Dharma. Actualizing this wisdom within our mind leads us to the state of cessation of suffering. This true path is contained in TUTTARE, which liberates us from the eight fears – the word *liberates* indirectly indicates the true path. And as I have just explained, the third word, TURE, liberates you from the actual disease, the disturbing thoughts.

In regard to the lam-rim, TURE is the graduated path of the higher capable being.

THE MEANING OF SVAHA

The final word SVAHA means establishing the root of the path within your heart.

In other words, by taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you receive the blessings of Tara in your own heart. This gives you space to establish the root of the path, signified by TARE TUTTARE TURE, in your heart. By establishing the path of the three capable beings within your heart, you purify all impurities of your body, speech and mind, and achieve Tara's pure vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind, which are signified by OM. Your body, speech and mind are transformed into Tara's holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

This is the rough meaning of OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA.

The conclusion is that by taking refuge in Tara, doing Tara practices such as recitation of the Tara mantra, and practicing the path contained in that mantra, you can achieve the fully enlightened state with the four kayas, which is the cessation, liberated from the two obscurations.

TARA THE MOTHER

Tara is called *Mother* because it is the mother who gives birth to children. The actual meaning of Tara is the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, which sees the absolute and conventional truth of all existence. This is the absolute guru, the real guru – and we should understand this real meaning of guru. Now, even though they have different aspects and different names, all the buddhas are born from this transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, which is the dharmakaya. In reality, every buddha is the embodiment of this absolute guru: one manifests in many; many manifest in one. The absolute guru manifests in all these various aspects of buddha; the essence of all buddhas is the absolute guru. The real meaning of guru, the absolute guru, manifests in ordinary aspect as the conventional-truth guru, the lama from whom you receive the teachings directly.

As Khedrup Sangye Yeshe explained: “Before the guru, there is not even the name ‘Buddha’”. The whole *Guru Puja* expresses that the foundation is the guru, the *dharmakaya*, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness. From the very beginning, while experiencing great bliss, we manifest as the guru-deity. Even the front-generation merit field comes from inseparable bliss and voidness, and from this merit field we take initiation; we request to be granted blessings to generate the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment from beginning to end; and we also make the four types of offering (outer, inner, secret and absolute). We train our mind with these meditations, which evolve from non-dual bliss and voidness.

First we meet the guru externally and separately. After receiving teachings, we listen, reflect and meditate on the path that is revealed by this guru. On the basis of correct devotion to the guru, we gradually actualize the remedy of the path and remove our obscurations. When our obscurations are completely removed, we

meet the guru mentally.

On the basis of actualizing the Three Principles of the Path, we receive the four perfect Highest Yoga Tantra initiations, which definitely plant the seeds of the four kayas within our mind. This allows us to practice the unification of the clear light and illusory body. By gradually actualizing this path, we can completely cut off even subtle dual view, ceasing even the gross minds of the white, red and dark visions, which are more subtle than the preceding gross minds but gross when compared to the subtle mind of clear light.

When you achieve *dharmakaya*, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, you have achieved the guru. You have achieved the wish expressed in our usual dedication prayer: “Due to all these merits may I quickly achieve the guru-Buddha’s enlightenment, and lead every single living being to the guru-Buddha’s enlightenment.” In reality, by training your mind in these meditations, developing your mind in the path, your mental continuum actually becomes that of the guru. In the future, you actually become the guru you have been visualizing.

So, all the buddhas are born from the absolute guru, the transcendental wisdom of non-dual bliss and voidness, which is the actual meaning of *Mother*. This transcendental wisdom, this completely pure subtle mind, manifests in this female aspect that is labeled “Tara”.

VISUALIZING TARA

When you recite the mantra, visualize Tara in space in front of you, level with your forehead, at a comfortable distance of about one body-length. As I mentioned when explaining the mantra, first think of the transcendental wisdom of great bliss of all the buddhas, which fully sees all existence. Think of this holy mind of *dharmakaya*, the absolute guru. Because the holy mind of all the buddhas, the absolute guru, is bound by great compassion for you and all living beings, who

are obscured and suffering under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, it manifests in this particular female form of Tara. This happens due to compassion. Just as you act under the control of anger and attachment, the buddhas work for you and other living beings under the control of compassion.

The holy mind of all the buddhas manifests in this female aspect, Tara. What does this aspect look like? Tara is in the nature of green light, with one face and two arms. Her face is very peaceful, with a slight smile. Her hair is very dark, half tied up and half loose, and decorated with an utpala flower at the crown. Tara is adorned with jewel ornaments of necklace, bracelets, armllets, anklets, and so on. Her eyes, very loving and compassionate, are not opened widely but are fine and a little rounded. Tara's eyes express compassion for you, like the look of loving kindness a mother gives her beloved only child. Tara's right hand, holding the stem of an utpala flower, is in the mudra of granting sublime realizations. Her left hand holds the stem of another utpala flower, with three fingers standing upright to signify refuge in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

With fully developed breasts, Tara is adorned with a jewel necklace and also with jewel garlands and various scarves. Her right leg is stretched out, and the left one contracted. Behind her is a moon disc. Tara is adorned with the complete holy signs and exemplifications of a buddha. On her forehead is a white OM, essence of the vajra holy body; at her neck, a red AH, essence of vajra holy speech; and at her heart, a blue HUNG, essence of the vajra holy mind.

White nectar beams come from the OM, strike your forehead, and enter inside you to purify all the obscurations and negative karmas you have accumulated with the body from beginningless rebirths until now. From the AH at Tara's throat, red nectar beams are emitted and strike your own throat; all obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your speech are completely purified. Then, from Tara's heart syllable HUNG, blue nectar beams are emitted and enter

your heart; all the obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your mind from beginningless rebirths until now are purified. Out of compassion for you and all living beings, Mother Tara has purified you. Concentrate on this as you recite the mantra: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. Or if you wish, you can visualize Tara on your crown as in the short Tara sadhana.

When you finish the meditation, pray to Tara: “Without delay of even a second, may I become Tara and in each second free uncountable numbers of living beings from all their sufferings and lead them to full enlightenment.”

Pray to achieve this through generating bodhicitta, the wish to achieve Tara for the sake of other living beings. Because you are not following the selfish mind but have changed your attitude to one of using your life to serve others, to obtain their temporal and ultimate happiness, Tara is extremely pleased with you. Your practicing the loving, compassionate thought of bodhicitta and morality, which means keeping your vows, please Tara the most. These essential Mahayana practices are the best offerings you can make to Tara; these bring you closer to Tara, so that she quickly helps all your actions to succeed. How much Tara helps you depends on how much you practice the essence of the Mahayana teachings.

So, because of your attitude of bodhicitta, Tara is extremely pleased with you; she melts into green light, enters through your forehead, and absorbs into your heart. Think: “My body, speech and mind have been blessed to become Tara’s vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind.” By receiving the blessings of Tara with a calm, devoted mind, you plant the seed to develop your mind and actually achieve Tara.

After the absorption, if you wish, one-pointedly concentrate on the nature of Tara’s holy mind. Then conclude your practice by dedicating the merits to the generation of bodhicitta and to your

achievement of Tara, in order to lead every living being as quickly as possible to Tara's enlightenment.

2. MEDITATION ON BUDDHA TARA

VISUALIZATION

Visualize Tara in the space in front of me. Radiant green light body, so beautiful. Sitting on a multi-colored lotus, her left foot drawn in (like when you sit meditating) and her right foot out resting on a little multi-colored lotus.

Her left foot drawn in indicates her complete and effortless control over desire energy and her right foot out indicates her willingness and capability to get up and act for sentient beings. Often she's referred to as the Wish-fulfilling Buddha. She represents the quick capacity (represented as female) to cut through the obstacles, to get things done, to be successful. And of course to make me blissful!

Imagine Tara as beautiful as possible: young, radiant, full of energy, full of bliss. She wears colored silken garments and jewelry on her ears, ankles, arms and neck.

Imagine that she is the manifestation of my lama's mind: he is appearing as Green Tara for my benefit. As Pabongka Rinpoche says, "If the lama is not the buddha, then who is?"

PRELIMINARY PRAYERS

Then recite refuge and bodhicitta prayers, etc.

To the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha

I go for refuge until I am enlightened.

By this practice of meditating on Guru Vajrasattva

May I reach Buddhahood so as to benefit all sentient beings!

RECEIVING BLESSINGS

Now imagine, one chakra at a time, powerful, blissful light coming from each of her three chakras, entering my chakras and filling me completely, first purifying and then filling me with blessings.

Body First, Lama Tara sends powerful blissful **white light** from the **OM** at her brow chakra, which enters my brow and completely fills me. Imagine that all my problems and sufferings and heaviness of my body are purified by this light, and all the harm I have ever done to any living being with this body and all my infinite past bodies is also purified, eradicated completely, not one atom left. After a little time, imagine the light coming, this time visualizing that my body has become a blissful light body, just like Tara's; indestructible, just like it will be when I attain the deity's body, the sambhogakaya. And imagine that it's not possible to ever harm others with this body, only to benefit.

Speech Second, she sends **red light** from the **AH** at her throat chakra to my throat, which purifies all the problems of my speech: inappropriate speech, useless speech, uncontrolled speech, angry speech, criticism, the inability to express myself appropriately, and that all the harm you have ever done to any living being with my speech of this life and in infinite past lives is also totally purified, eradicated by the blissful red light, not one atom left.

Then the light comes again, and this time I imagine that I am totally full of all the blissful, perfect, compassionate, wisdom, appropriate speech of Lama Tara, such that whatever sound I utter is necessarily beneficial to any living being who hears it, all of which is my potential. Feel full of this powerful energy.

Mind Third, Lama Tara sends powerful beams of **blue light**, like the sky, from the blue **HUM** at her heart chakra, which enters my heart. Imagine that all the unhappiness of my mind: confusion, arrogance, anger, jealous, pride, resentment, hurt, anxiety, self-hate, is all totally purified, and that all my delusions, including the root

ego-grasping, which are the cause of my own suffering and of why I harm others, is totally eradicated by the powerful blue light, not one atom left.

The blue light comes again and this time I feel full of the blissful, omniscient, compassionate mind of Lama Tara, which is my potential.

Body, speech, and mind Then visualize the three lights coming from Lama Tara's three chakras simultaneously, penetrating my three places, this time feeling that even the subtlest stains of all delusion are totally eradicated, not one atom left. Feel very blissful.

Stay in this blissful state, concentrating on being oneness with the energy of Mother Tara.

BECOMING ONENESS WITH LAMA TARA

Now visualize Lama Tara's lotus dissolving upwards into her body. Then she comes to sit above my crown, facing the same way as me.

Then, out of her wish to be oneness with my mind – and she is my guru, remember – she dissolves into green light and melts into me through my crown, merging with my body, speech and mind. L

Think: I am oneness with Lama Tara's body, speech, and mind. And feel blissful.

BENEFITING OTHERS

Think: Now that I am Tara, I must lead them to enlightenment. Imagine right in front are my enemies, in front to the left, my friends, and to the right and everywhere else, all the rest of sentient beings, the strangers: above, below, left right, behind, in front – pervading space.

Think: they're all the same: they want happiness, don't want suffering, all possess buddha nature.

Now imagine from my heart millions and millions of tiny green Taras emanate out, entering the friends, enemies and strangers,

taking away all their suffering and giving them everything they need, and transforming them into their own Tara.

Imagine this, want this, as I recite the mantra as many times as I like:

OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA

Finally, all these transformed Taras absorb into me, enhancing my own Tara nature.

DEDICATION PRAYERS

Finally, dedicate all the merit, the positive energy, you have created by doing this purification to all living beings:

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May bodhichitta – from which the happiness of all sentient beings
comes –

Be generated in the minds of self and other sentient beings
without delay, even for one second.

And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May emptiness be generated in the minds of self and others
sentient beings, without delay, even for one second.

And that which has been generated, may it increase.

As a result of the three-times' merits of myself and others,
May I, who am empty from my own side,
Achieve Guru Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, which is
empty from its own side.

And lead all sentient beings, who are empty from their own side,
To that enlightenment, which is empty from its own side,

As quickly as possible, by myself, alone.

Whatever dedication the Victorious Ones Gone to Bliss
Of the three times have admired as best,
I shall also perfectly dedicate in the same way all these roots of
virtue
So that I may perform good works.

Because of the past, present, and future merit created by me and
by the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and sentient beings,
May I, my family, students, and all sentient beings
Be able to actualize completely in this very lifetime
Lama Tsong Khapa's path of unified sutra and tantra,
Which is pure like refined gold.
May this pure teaching of Lama Tsong Khapa
Spread in all directions and flourish forever.

When I arise from the meditation, remember I am oneness with
Mother Tara; that I will watch my mind every second, purifying all
the negative thoughts and rejoicing and growing the positive; and
making the wish to bring benefit to whoever sees me, hears me,
touches me, smells me, tastes me.

By Robina Courtin from instructions of Lama Yeshe.

3. A SONG OF LONGING FOR TARA, THE INFALLIBLE

**LAMA LOBSANG TENPEY GYALTSEN. TRANSLATED BY
LAMA THUBTEN YESHE**

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 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 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 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.

4. PRAISES TO THE TWENTY-ONE TARAS

OM I prostrate to the noble transcendent liberator!

1

Homage! Tara, swift, heroic!
Eyes like lightning instantaneous!
Sprung from op'ning stamens of the
Lord of three world's tear-born lotus!

2

Homage! She whose face combines a
Hundred autumn moons at fullest!
Blazing with light rays resplendent
As a thousand star collection!

3

Homage! Golden-blue one, lotus,
Water born, in hand adorned!
Giving, effort, calm, austerities,
Patience, meditation her sphere!

4

Homage! Crown of tathagatas,
Actions triumph without limit!
Relied on by conquerors' children,
Having reached ev'ry perfection!

5

Homage! Filling with TUTTARE,
HUM, desire, direction, and space!
Trampling with her feet the seven worlds,
Able to draw forth all beings!

6

Homage! Worshipped by the all-lords,
Shakra, Agni, Brahma, Marut!
Honored by the hosts of spirits,
Corpse-raisers, gandharvas, yakshas!

7

Homage! With her TRAD and PHAT sounds
Destroying foes' magic diagrams!
Her feet pressing, left out, right in,
Blazing in a raging fire-blaze!

8

Homage! TURE, very dreadful!
Destroyer of Mara's champions!
She with frowning lotus visage
Who is slayer of all enemies!

9

Homage! At the heart her fingers,
Adorn her with Three Jewel mudra!
Light-ray masses all excited!
All directions' wheels adorn her!

10

Homage! She so joyous, radiant,
Crown emitting garlands of light!
Mirthful, laughing with TUTTARE,

Subjugating maras, devas!

11

Homage! She able to summon
All earth-guardians' assembly!
Shaking, frowning, with her HUM sign
Saving from every misfortune!

12

Homage! Crown adorned with crescent
Moon, all ornaments most shining!
Amitabha in her hair-knot
Sending out much light eternal!

13

Homage! She 'mid wreath ablaze like
Eon-ending fire abiding!
Right stretched, left bent, joy surrounds you
Troops of enemies destroying!

14

Homage! She who strikes the ground with
Her palm, and with her foot beats it!
Scowling, with the letter HUM the
Seven levels she does conquer!

15

Homage! Happy, virtuous, peaceful!
She whose field is peace, nirvana!
She endowed with OM and SOHA,
Destroyer of the great evil!

16

Homage! She with joy surrounded
Tearing foes' bodies asunder,
Frees with HUM and knowledge mantra,
Arrangement of the ten letters!

17

Homage! TURE! With seed letter
Of the shape of syllable HUM!
By foot stamping shakes the three worlds,
Meru, Mandara, and Vindhya!

18

Homage! Holding in her hand the
Deer-marked moon of deva-lake form!
With twicespoken TARA and PHAT,
Totally dispelling poison!

19

Homage! She whom gods and their kings,
And the kinnaras do honor!
Armored in all joyful splendor,
She dispels bad dreams and conflicts!

20

Homage! She whose two eyes bright with
Radiance of sun and full moon!
With twice HARA and TUTTARE
She dispels severe contagion!

21

Homage! Full of liberating
Pow'r by the set of three natures!
Destroys hosts of spirits, yakshas,
And raised corpses! Supreme! TURE!

These praises with the root mantras
And prostrations thus are twenty-one!

5. THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TANTRA

LAMA THUBTEN YESHE

Lord Buddha taught his path to enlightenment at many different levels, according to the needs and capabilities of the many different sentient beings. His most advanced teachings, given in his esoteric aspect, Vajradhara, are known as Tantrayana or Vajrayana. Tantra is the quickest vehicle to Buddhahood, full enlightenment.

According to Lord Buddha's Sutrayana teachings, the cause of human beings' problems is desire, so it must be avoided. According to tantra, however, this very desire is used on the path to enlightenment. On the basis of strong renunciation, the great compassion of *bodhicitta*, and the right view of emptiness, practitioners take the resource of their own pleasure energy and, in the deep concentration of *samadhi* meditation, unify it with the wisdom realizing emptiness. Eventually this leads to simultaneously-born great blissful wisdom, which in turn leads to enlightenment.

PLEASURE, NOT PAIN

In tantra we are dealing with pleasure, not with pain, you must understand. The person who is qualified to practice tantra is someone who can cope with pleasure, who can experience pleasure without going berserk. This is the tantric personality. If a person is always miserable, tantra does not work for them because there is no resource of pleasure to be utilized.

We are dealing with energy that we already have. The human body is the gold-mine of tantra. It is tremendously valuable, our most precious possession. From the tantric point of view, our pleasure resource is composed of the six distinctive characteristics of a human being: the four elements (earth, water, fire, and air), the channels of

our subtle nervous system, and the blissful *kundalini* drops existing within them.

What we need is a skillful method to harness this powerful energy so that we can achieve more and more satisfaction in our everyday lives, until we discover total satisfaction, the highest happiness of enlightenment.

This bliss that we talk about is not just sentimental pleasure. It is a profound experience beyond our ordinary imagination. And it concerns the serious business of bringing the energy of the entire nervous system into the central channel.

These techniques are really something for the Western mind, I tell you. You people like to work with material, with energy, don't you? You like to play with it, fix it, change it, manipulate it. Well, tantra helps you do exactly that – but here we are talking about inner energy, your own pleasure resource.

TANTRA IS ACTIVE

Tantra is very serious, very profound, and we do need it. I tell you, we need it badly. In fact, without tantric practice, enlightenment is not possible. In this twentieth century, there is a tremendous explosion of delusion. It is our karma to have so much distraction. Good things are happening in our lives, but many bad things are happening too. We need the super-atomic energy of these techniques to lift us out of this confused, materialistic situation that we are caught up in.

In the lam-rim, you see, we present the philosophy and methods intellectually. To some extent I can convince you intellectually, but this conviction is like clouds in the sky. When the intellectual conviction is strong, you say, "Oh, yes, I'm convinced". Then the clouds disappear, and you think, "Oh, now I don't know any more. What can I do?" You are discouraged, and your spiritual practice becomes weak.

Tantra is active, and I like that. You act and you get something immediately. Inner fire is very quick; it will surprise you. With other meditations it may be very difficult to achieve any result, but with these suddenly you feel that something is happening. You might even shock yourself. They are a sensitive, quick way to convince yourself that you are improving.

WE HAVE SO MUCH POTENTIAL

“How can I meditate like this?” you might think. “I am not a great meditator. I’ve just come to this course, and what does this monk expect from me? Suddenly I’m being forced to meditate. Anyway, I have created so much negativity, how can I do advanced practices like these?” You should not think this way, okay?

I tell you, you never know what you can do. We cannot see our own potential. Maybe in a previous life you were a great meditator. You never know. Right now your mind might be completely distracted, then suddenly one day your potential opens, and you have a good meditation. This happens.

Look at Milarepa. I don’t think that you people have created more negative karma than Milarepa. How many people did he kill? Do you remember? He was a criminal, wasn’t he? He admitted it. But he had strength. He created heavy negative karma, but he was also able to have perfect renunciation, perfect bodhicitta, perfect right view. He said good-bye to samsara.

For me, Milarepa is a good example for us. Look around in the world. Sometimes those who create strong negativity, who create big samsara, have big liberation-success. And those who don’t have success in samsara don’t have any liberation-success either; they are just numb. You understand, don’t you!

My point is, you never know with human beings. You never know what you can do. Everybody should try as much as possible to do the

inner fire meditation. Try! Be brave! Even if you are not successful, at least you get some experience, and that is good enough.

SEEING YOURSELF AS A DIVINE BEING

All right now. I want you to understand that you need to strongly identify yourself as a deity, a buddha; you need to have intensive awareness of your body as the deity's body, your speech as the deity's mantra, and your mind as great blissful wisdom.

The reason you see yourself as a deity, the appearance of simultaneously born blissful wisdom – and the environment as a mandala – is to transcend mundane appearances and mundane actions. You have to actualize this transformation.

DIVINE PRIDE

If you find it a bit of a culture shock to see yourself as a deity as they are depicted in the drawings, or with a Tibetan face, don't worry. Your body is already beautiful and handsome, so leave it as it is and just change color. Actually, seeing yourself as a deity has nothing to do with Tibetan culture. When you project your usual self-pitying image, you think you are not involved with a culture, but you are. So, instead of seeing yourself in that way, transform yourself into blissful, radiant light and cultivate strong divine pride. This is important.

The characteristic of all the deities is universal love and compassion. We need love, don't we? We need compassion, don't we? We are craving for someone to love us and take care of us, aren't we? They manifest our archetypal ideal so that we can identify ourselves with the energy of universal love and compassion, actually become universal love and compassion. And then your worries about whether or not somebody loves you dissolve. From the Buddhist point of view, psychologically it works that way. When you generate the strength of love and wisdom, this unhappy energy disappears.

You can see how this works in your everyday life. If you are full of self-pity, crying and having nervous breakdowns, people don't come near you, do they? They are scared to be around you. But when you are strong in love and compassion, you can't keep people away from you! This is natural. Because we are looking for happiness, who wants to go to a miserable place, who wants to look at a miserable man or woman? I don't! You understand?

Tantra believes that we need powerful transformation. Identifying with such profound qualities as a deity's and seeing yourself as infinite, radiant light are powerful methods for eliminating self-pitying concepts and garbage-imagination.

What is our problem? Our problem is that we think, "I am the worst person in the world. I am impure. I am full of hatred, full of desire. I am ignorant". These concepts of yourself are totally negative. You must purify them. From the time you were born until now, you have been carrying your self-pitying view: cry, cry, fear, fear, emotion, emotion. Always, you are aware of your shortcomings and apply tremendous pressure on yourself. You regard yourself as worthless. You punish yourself. You project yourself as ugly – but nobody makes you ugly; other people think you are beautiful.

Tantra says that the nucleus of each human being is divine, pure. This is why it is important to identify yourself so strongly as a deity, to identify yourself as completely developed. It is very important. Instead of seeing your body as something miserable, transform it into a radiant light-body. Outwardly this might seem strange, but inwardly there is meaning. The moment you visualize this light, your dualistic concepts break down, your concrete concepts are no longer believed in.

The radiant light of the deity helps us to touch reality. This is the most important thing in the world, isn't it? Most of us are unaware; we don't touch reality. Even though we walk on this earth, we don't

touch the reality of this earth. The deity's mandala expresses inner and outer reality rather than a fantasy world of projections.

Western actors explain that when they are playing a certain person in a movie, they have to go through some experience as that person in order to express his feelings and actions realistically. Because of his training, somehow deep inside the actor is the person he is portraying, even when he is not acting. This is a good example for when you become the deity. Your psychic energy has to transform convincingly into the blissful, radiant light-body.

THE DEITY IS ALREADY WITHIN YOU

Westerners often have a problem with deities. "Why should I see myself in this way? This is just another fantasy, another delusion. It is difficult enough just to be a man or a woman. I have enough trouble in this world with my complicated views of who I am and of how to relate to a man's world or a woman's world. Now I have to change my appearance. I have to wear another mask". No! When you visualize yourself as the deity, it is not to show another manifestation. The deity is the manifestation of the profound qualities you already have within you. They are within you. To recognize and comprehend that, you visualize yourself as the deity rather than identifying with the feeling, "I am ugly. Nobody wants me".

Tantra considers it very important to knock out such symptoms of ego. There is no point in holding garbage-concepts of yourself. Everyone is perfect – you just need to recognize it. In tantra, perfection is not something coming next year; or if you are religious and do good in this life, maybe next life you will go to heaven. Heaven is now! You bring heaven into everyday life. Your home is heaven, and everyone you see is a god or goddess. To ask why you need to manifest as Heruka means that you don't understand that the quality of the deity is the quality of your own being.

YOU ARE YOUR MIND, NOT BODY

Remember, your face is not you, your blood is not you, your bones are not you. The nucleus of you, of your life, is your consciousness, your mind, your psyche. Your body is just like a robot pushed around by a computer; it is the manifestation of the computer of your consciousness. From the Buddhist point of view, your consciousness is the essence of you.

From the time you were born until now, you have manifested in so many different ways, sometimes angry like a monster and sometimes so peaceful and beautiful. These manifestations – angry-looking, jealous-looking, loving-kindness-looking, great compassion-looking, great wisdom-looking – do not come from your blood and bones; they manifest from the power of your consciousness, the power of your psyche. In the West we think that the body is the boss, don't we? We are overwhelmed by it and intoxicated by its pleasures, and we put the mind in the garbage. We end up with our mind as the slave of the body. But it's our mind that puts us in a miserable concentration camp, not our body.

The point is, the mind is powerful and can manifest anything. And when you can convincingly see yourself as handsome or beautiful, your self-pitying concepts will vanish. You will become the manifestation of your own profound qualities. Everyone can do this.

Actually, we have two bodies, as we will discuss soon: our physical body and a more subtle psychic body. Your consciousness does have the ability to manifest as a radiant light-body, and when you understand the quality of the subtle body, you can learn to manipulate the energy of your inner nervous system and to control your blood-and-bone body.

And remember that all appearances are illusory and non-dual in nature, and all the illusions are empty. Recognize that all the empty illusions are blissful in nature. Bring your attention inside to this blissful state.