

Noble Tara,
The Liberating Mother

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The Liberating Mother

An Oral Commentary on the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*

Sera Jey Geshe Ngawang Tenley

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This book is based on a transcript of oral teachings on the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* given by Sera Jey Geshe Ngawang Tenley at Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies in Medford, Massachusetts in March 2013. Geshe Tenley's commentary was primarily in Tibetan. The teachings were interpreted into English by Damchoe Thubten, who also kindly helped in clarifying the meaning of many phrases and words during the editing of the transcript. The task of bringing the transcript into the grammatically-correct printed English text you now hold in your hands was shared between a team of dedicated students.

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Photo: Ven. Tsunma Jampa Dolkar

Geshe Tsulga and Geshe Tenley, Sera Jey Monastery, ca. 1998

Preface

In 2013, I was asked to give teachings on the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* by the students at Kurukulla Center. One of my students started making notes from those teachings. Later, she and several other students requested my permission to make a book from the oral teachings. I am sure there are many mistakes, but perhaps there will be some benefit to people like myself.

I do not have any knowledge of nor experience with the practice of Tara, but I do have strong faith and confidence in her. My mother taught me the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* when I was very young, word by word. I have been reciting the praises since I was eight or nine years old. Many times in my life I have had experiences which I am sure are a result of the blessing of Arya Tara.

Sera Jey Lharam Geshe Tsulga was my uncle and my root guru, and I received both the oral transmission and the commentary from him. I do not have much knowledge to share but I am sure there is a blessing because of the unbroken lineage which I received from my teacher.

I would like to dedicate all the merit to His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Lama Zopa Rinpoche, and all my root gurus. I would also like to express my appreciation for the efforts of the students who worked on this project. Due to the merit of their efforts, may all their wishes be fulfilled.

I hope you receive some benefit, and I also hope you will continue to study, take refuge in, and pray to Mother Tara for the benefit of all sentient beings.



Geshe Ngawang Tenley

Contents

DAY ONE.....	11
Introductory Teaching	13
Verse 1	18
Verse 2.....	22
Verse 3.....	24
Verse 4.....	26
Verse 5.....	28
DAY TWO	31
Introductory Teaching	33
Verse 6.....	38
Verse 7.....	40
Verse 8.....	43
Verse 9.....	45
Verse 10.....	47
Verse 11.....	49
Verse 12.....	51
Verse 13.....	52
Verse 14.....	53
DAY THREE.....	55
Introductory Teaching	57
Verse 15.....	59
Verse 16.....	61
Verse 17.....	64
Verse 18.....	66
Verse 19.....	68
Verse 20.....	70
Verse 21.....	72
PRAYER OF THE BENEFITS.....	74
A BRIEF PRAISE TO THE TWENTY-ONE TARAS.....	78
CHART OF THE CATEGORIES	79
APPENDIX A, Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (English).....	81
APPENDIX B, Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (English Chantable).....	85
APPENDIX C, Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (Tibetan Phonetic).....	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY	93

Day One

March 17, 2013

INTRODUCTORY TEACHING

Motivation

Good morning, everyone. Today we're going to discuss how to practice Dharma in relation to the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*. First, I will recite it once as a transmission. If you have received a transmission from an unbroken lineage, then reciting it is more beneficial and meritorious and contains more blessings. I received this transmission from Choden Rinpoche, and I also received both the transmission and the commentary from Geshe Tsulga-la. Before we start, you should set up a proper motivation. Think: "I must achieve the state of full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. For that reason, I'm going to receive this transmission and engage in the practice of Tara."

[Geshe Tenley gives the oral transmission.] Let's all recite this together one time.

[Everyone recites the "Praises to the Twenty-One Taras" in English, then recites the "Prayer of the Benefits."]

The *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* comes from a sutra which was composed by the Buddha. The origin story is from the translated teachings of the Buddha, from a section on tantra. There are thirty-five chapters, and

according the First Dalai Lama's commentary, the third chapter of that teaching on tantra explains the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*.

You don't need to have received an initiation in order to recite or do the practice of the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*. If you recite it and make requests or prayers, you will receive the blessings.

Do you understand what the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* are talking about? Usually the praises are very difficult to understand—perhaps we don't understand them when we recite—we just say “blah, blah, blah...” Maybe it's easier to understand in English, but in Tibetan it's very hard.

Tara is a female Buddha who lived many years before Buddha Shakyamuni, during a time when there was a Buddha called *Dundubhisvara* or “Sound of the Drum.” Tara's name at that time (before she achieved enlightenment) was *Yeshe Dawa*, which means “Wisdom Moon.” During that time, she made many offerings and prayers to the Buddha and the Sangha and made a commitment to work for the benefit of sentient beings in every lifetime in a female form. Some of her friends tried to persuade her to be reborn in a male form, but she refused, saying that there were so many buddhas and bodhisattvas in the male form already. She vowed to take rebirth in the female form until the very last sentient being achieved enlightenment. In the presence of Buddha Dundubhisvara, she generated the mind of enlightenment, or bodhicitta, and benefited numberless sentient beings. She received the name Tara, or “The Liberator,” because Buddha Dundubhisvara said, “You will help so many sentient beings to be free from cyclic existence and suffering, therefore, your name should be “The Liberator.””

How did the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* come about? At one time, Manjushri was receiving a teaching from Buddha Shakyamuni, and he asked Buddha Shakyamuni about Tara. Manjushri said “I have heard about the deity Tara—her name is mentioned in the sutras. It is mentioned that

she has benefited so many beings and freed them from cyclic existence and suffering. What is the history of Arya Tara?” Buddha Shakyamuni then said, “Venerable Arya Tara is a female buddha who was enlightened a long time ago. Later, during Buddha Amitabha’s time, Buddha Amitabha offered a praise to her and the praise was written in this way.” Shakyamuni Buddha then recited the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*.

You might have seen the pictures of the twenty-one different Taras. There are many different versions—different shapes and colors—but they’re all essentially the same. Tara can appear in different forms and different aspects based on sentient beings’ karma. The one that is well-known to all of us is Green Tara—there is also a White Tara. If we engage in this practice and pray to Venerable Arya Tara, all our wishes, temporal and ultimate, will come true. The temporal benefits are mentioned in the *Prayer of the Benefits*—“those who wish for a child will have a child; those who wish for wealth will have wealth,” and so forth. Temporal benefits have the function of removing obstacles or hindrances and destroying all unfavorable conditions. That’s what we need, right? However, the ultimate wish is to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, which can be achieved through the practice of Tara.

Since this topic is included in the teachings of the Buddha, it is also contained in the commentaries. If we try to read only the root text without referring to a commentary, we will not understand much of it. Trying to comprehend the root text is like biting a stone. If you’re not careful, you might break your teeth. Then you’ll have to go to the dentist!

There are several different commentaries on the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* in the Kangyur and Tengyur, but there are only a few written by Tibetans. Gyalwa Gendun Drup, the First Dalai Lama (1391–1474), wrote a commentary, but I am not sure if it has been translated into English. Based on the commentary by the First Dalai Lama, we will discuss as much

as we can. The commentary breaks down the ten-syllable Tara mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA by giving a detailed explanation of the entire twenty-one praises. The first line of the twenty-one praises is:

OM JE TSÜN MA PHAG MA DRÖL MA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
OM I prostrate to the noble transcendent Liberator

This is the homage to Venerable Arya Tara, which also includes a brief explanation. OM consists of three letters: AH, O, and MA, which symbolize the qualities of Buddha’s holy body, speech, and mind. It also indicates the enlightened qualities of Arya Tara’s body, speech, and mind. At the moment, our body, speech, and mind are contaminated by delusions. We can be free from these contaminations and achieve a fully enlightened body, speech, and mind.

“Noble” is referring to someone who is at the highest level, such as a king, minister or leader. A benevolent king is called “noble” because he rules sentient beings with compassion and great kindness and leads them to a better life, therefore he is called JE which means noble or venerable leader.

TSÜN means making effort. We have to make effort to engage in the practice by observing vows and morality. Of course, Arya Tara does that, so she is called JE TSÜN. Through observing these moralities purely, she has subdued her body, speech, and mind and she is not stained by the delusions. You may have heard nuns being called the honorific term *Tsünma* or *Tsünma-la*. That name is for someone who is making an effort to observe the vows very purely. *Tsünma* is for nuns and *Tsünpa* is for monks.

PHAG MA means transcendent, superior, or higher than ordinary beings—even higher than hearers, solitary realizers, or bodhisattvas—the highest, fully enlightened beings. In Venerable Arya Tara’s case she is fully

enlightened, so she is the highest; nobody can transcend her. “Liberator” indicates that Tara liberates sentient beings from the fears of cyclic existence and the suffering of the lower realms.

“Prostrate” has physical, mental, and verbal aspects. The physical aspect is making prostrations, such as bowing down. The mental aspect, in Tibetan, is CHHAG, which means to sweep away the delusions. You are making a request to Venerable Tara, or to whichever deity you are making requests or prostrations, to help you sweep away all the delusions. TSHÄL means “I wish that”—I wish that all the delusions and the unwanted and unfavorable conditions be removed, cleared and swept away. LO is the completion of the word about making prostrations, and its function is just to complete the word—it doesn’t really have a meaning. DROL MA means “Liberator,” the one who liberates from all the suffering. She is called “Liberator” because she is protecting all sentient beings from suffering.

There are three main categories in the praises: History, Holy Bodies, and Enlightened Activity. The History category has only one verse (Verse 1). The next category (Holy Bodies) is divided into Enjoyment Body and Truth Body. Enjoyment Body is further subdivided into Peaceful Aspect (Verses 2–7) and Wrathful Aspect (Verses 8–14). Truth Body has only one verse (Verse 15). The third category (Verses 16–21) refers to her enlightened activities.

Heroic Tara

CHHAG TSHÄL DRÖL MA NYUR MA PA MO

Homage! Tara, swift, heroic!

CHÄN NI KÄ CHIG LOG DANG DRA MA

Eyes like lightning instantaneous!

JIG TEN SUM GÖN CHHU KYE ZHÄL GYI

Sprung from op'ning stamens of the

GE SAR JE WA LÄ NI JUNG MA

Lord of three world's tear-born lotus!

The first Tara is called *Tara Pamo Rabtu*, which means “heroic.” She has a white-colored body and has a slightly wrathful aspect with a smiling face. To whom do you pay homage? To the Tara that is Swift and Heroic. Tara is the Liberator, she who liberates all sentient beings from suffering.

Do you remember the example of our life being impermanent like lightning in the sky? Tara's blessings for sentient beings are instantaneous like lightning, so whoever prays to her or seeks help will immediately receive help—like lightning, very fast.

There is a story of a woman in India who had very strong faith in Arya Tara. In India, people use wood for fuel to make fires, and one day she went with her daughter into the forest to cut firewood. While the mother

was chopping wood, she left her daughter on the ground, and a tiger came and snatched the daughter away. The woman didn't have any other means of help, but because she had very strong faith in Tara and always prayed to her, she made a very strong request to Tara to protect her daughter. At the moment she made her strong request, the tiger dropped the little girl, became very peaceful, and started to play with the child with its tail, just like cats do when they playfully run their tail around people's faces. Because of this type of quick effect, Tara is called "swift" and "heroic."

Tara liberates swiftly because she has equal compassion for all sentient beings without any bias; without giving more to one or less to others. She is called heroic because she possesses unlimited power to liberate all sentient beings.

What she looks like and where she came from is addressed in the next three lines. She has "eyes like lightning instantaneous, sprung from opening stamens of the Lord of three world's tear-born lotus." She looks at sentient beings with compassion and with the wish to benefit them at all times. The beings that are apprehended by Arya Tara are impermanent and disintegrating moment by moment.

Where did she come from? Where was she born? The praises say "the Lord of three world's tear-born lotus." This can be explained in two ways. In one explanation the three worlds are the three realms—the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm. The "three worlds" can also be explained as the terrestrial, sub-terrestrial, and celestial realms.

Who is the Lord of these three worlds? Here it is referring to Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion. A long time ago, Avalokiteshvara meditated on compassion and bodhichitta and he began to liberate sentient beings. He prayed for all sentient beings to be free from cyclic existence. After doing this for a long while, he thought perhaps there may not be many sentient beings left. When he opened his eyes, he saw

that there were still numberless sentient beings suffering in cyclic existence, and he became dejected. The compassion he felt towards them made him cry, and tears ran from his eyes. He shed so many tears that they formed a lake, and from the lake there sprung a lotus—from that lotus Arya Tara was born. Tara emerged from the lotus and said to Avalokiteshvara, “Please don’t feel hopeless. Please don’t worry. I will help you liberate sentient beings from cyclic existence.” This is how Tara came about in this world, during Buddha Shakyamuni’s time.

The “Lord of three world’s tear-born lotus” refers to the lake that was formed by Avalokiteshvara’s tears. The lotus came from the lake and then Tara was born from the lotus. To that Tara you make prostrations and pay homage. The next time you recite the words, you should understand this and have it in your mind. That’s the explanation of Arya Tara’s origin.

Now we will move on to the next section, which describes her holy bodies. This has two subheadings: 1) offering praise to the enjoyment body and 2) offering praise to the truth body. When a being achieves enlightenment, one of the bodies they achieve is the enjoyment body, which we, as ordinary beings, are not able to see. An enjoyment body can have either a wrathful or peaceful form. Whatever realizations or knowledge a being has achieved (i.e., their compassion, wisdom, or understanding of emptiness), are known as the truth body. It is good to understand these outlines and subheadings, so you can understand easily what is meant when these terms are used.

The praises to the peaceful enjoyment body have six categories: 1) Verse 2, praising Tara in terms of her aspects and appearance—how she appears with lights, etc.; 2) Verse 3, praising the complexion or color of her body and her mudras or hand gestures; 3) Verse 4, praising her in terms of how she is respected—not only by us, but also by the buddhas and bodhisattvas; 4) Verse 5, praising her in terms of how she destroys all

NOBLE TARA, THE LIBERATING MOTHER

unfavorable conditions; 5) Verse 6, praising in terms of how she is venerated by the great gods of the worldly beings; and 6) Verse 7, praising how she destroys negative forces. It might take some time, but if possible, you should memorize each category, type of appearance, face, and hand symbol or mudra that Tara assumes.

Having a White Complexion

CHHAG TSHÄL TÖN KÄI DA WA KÜN TU
Homage! She whose face combines a

GANG WA GYA NI TSEG PÄI ZHÄL MA
Hundred autumn moons at fullest!

KAR MA TONG TRAG TSHOG PA NAM KYI
Blazing with light rays resplendent

RAB TU CHE WÄI Ö RAB BAR MA
As a thousand-star collection!

The name of this Tara, *Karmo Dangden Drolma*, means “having a white complexion.” The example given here is of an autumn moon, which when full appears brighter and whiter than at other times of the year. This verse describes Tara’s face and compares it to not just a partially full, but a full autumn moon, in order to demonstrate that her face is very beautiful. If just one moon is that bright and clear, then imagine how clear and bright a hundred moons combined together would be. Tara’s face is like that—that’s how beautiful it is.

KAR MA TONG TRAG TSHOG PA NAM KYI

Blazing with light rays resplendent

RAB TU CHE WÄI Ö RAB BAR MA

As a thousand-star collection!

When we look at the sky at night, it seems that the stars are smaller than the moon, but scientists tell us the stars are larger than the moon. The stars are very far away, so they don't appear to us as larger. If you were to collect thousands of stars together, they would be incredibly bright—that's how Tara's body is described.

Tara liberates sentient beings from all unfavorable conditions and unwanted situations by blazing powerful light rays from her body. If we pray to this Tara, we will have a very beautiful face like the autumn moon at its fullest expression, and a radiant body, like a thousand-star collection. There is a prayer to Tara by the First Dalai Lama in which he mentions that in comparison to Tara's beauty, not even thousands of gods and goddesses or the most beautiful women would be fit to be her slaves. The goddesses are said to be perhaps a million times more beautiful than human beings. If these goddesses are not even fit to be her servant, what need is there to mention humans? Even if you put on a lot of makeup, it won't work! If one prays to Tara, however, one can receive blessings to become like Tara and become beautiful like her. We will have this kind of beautiful form, and not require any perfume or makeup—you can give them up. You can save money, and also save time! It takes a lot of time to put on makeup, right? If one practices this kind of Tara, then one will not be afflicted by any kind of harm.

Golden Complexion

CHHAG TSHÄL SER NGO CHHU NÄ KYE KYI
Homage! Golden-blue one, lotus

PÄ MÄ CHHAG NI NAM PAR GYÄN MA
Water born, in hand adorned!

JIN PA TSÖN DRÜ KA THUB ZHI WA
Giving, effort, calm, austerities,

ZÖ PA SAM TÄN CHÖ YÜL NYI MA
Patience, meditation her sphere!

The third verse praises Tara in terms of her hand symbols and the color of her body. The name of this Tara is *Ser Dhokchen*, which means “golden complexion.” Gold is referring to the quality, not the color—gold signifies very good quality. “Golden-blue one” signifies a very beautiful, bluish-colored body. “Lotus water born, in hand adorned” refers to her holding a lotus, a plant that is born from and grows in the water. Tara’s ring finger is touching her thumb, and with these fingers she holds a lotus stem. In most of the Tara images you will see, her hand is resting at the level of her heart, and she holds the stem of a flower with her ring finger and thumb together. The flower stem curls around and the flower blossoms near the level of her ear. The lotus symbolizes both her great compassion and the

wisdom realizing emptiness. This verse pays homage to the Tara who has a very good-quality, bluish complexion and is holding a lotus in her hand.

“Giving, effort, calm, austerities, patience, meditation her sphere!” refers to the cause that gives birth to this kind of body, which is “giving,” or the practice of generosity and effort. “Calm” refers to calm-abiding concentration. “Austerities” refers to going through hardships; “patience” is meditation on the perfection of patience, and “meditation” is concentration. Through these practices, one will achieve this kind of body. In Tibetan, the meaning of these praises is very difficult to understand because it is written in a very poetic style. In English, it’s a little easier—it’s not completely clear, but it’s clearer. If we think about the meaning of the words as we recite, the practice will be more beneficial.

The Tara With the Crown

CHHAG TSHÄL DE ZHIN SHEG PÄI TSUG TOR
Homage! Crown of tathagatas,
THA YÄ NAM PAR GYÄL WAR CHÖ MA
Actions triumph without limit
MA LÜ PHA RÖL CHHIN PA THOB PÄI
Relied on by conquerors' children,
GYÄL WÄI SÄ KYI SHIN TU TEN MA
Having reached ev'ry perfection!

This Tara is called “The Tara with the Crown” or *Tzuktuchen*. She has a golden color complexion, and resides on a crown of tathagatas, or buddhas, benefiting sentient beings by residing there. This verse praises Tara in terms of how even the buddhas and bodhisattvas pay homage and respect to her. She takes her place on the crown of the tathagatas, having eliminated all the delusions and obstructions and having benefited numberless sentient beings.

This verse also shows that all the tathagatas respect and pay homage to Tara by always placing her on their crown. A crown of tathagatas is always a crown, right? It can't move here and there. Arya Tara is like this crown, steadfast and continually praised by even buddhas and

bodhisattvas. “Having reached every perfection” could also mean that those who have reached and are continually practicing the six perfections or ten perfections, such as bodhisattvas, the conquerors’ children, also rely on Venerable Arya Tara. It is also said that Arya Tara is the embodiment of all the compassion or bodhicitta and wisdom realizing emptiness of all the buddhas. Since all the buddhas and bodhisattvas are born from this compassion and wisdom, Tara is known as the mother of all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. If Arya Tara is relied on by the buddhas and bodhisattvas like their own crown, it goes without saying that we should also rely on her.

The Tara Who Utters the Letter HUM

CHHAG TSHÄL TUTTARA HUM YI GE

Homage! Filling with TUTTARA,

DÖ DANG CHHOG DANG NAM KHA GANG MA

HUM, desire, direction, and space!

JIG TEN DÜN PO ZHAB KYI NÄN TE

Trampling with her feet the seven worlds,

LÜ PA ME PAR GUG PAR NÜ MA

Able to draw forth all beings!

The fifth verse describes the Tara who tramples all unfavorable conditions. This Tara is called “The Tara Who Utters the Letter HUM” (*Hung Dra Drokpa Drolma*). As you can see, the Twenty-One Taras have different-colored bodies—this Tara has a yellow-colored body. TUTTARA refers to the quality of speech. From the excellent qualities of her speech, tremendous light radiates. HUM is her combined peaceful, wrathful, and increasing activities. TUTTARA radiates all the excellent qualities of her speech, and, uttering the letter HUM, she performs all increasing, peaceful, and wrathful actions.

“HUM, desire, direction, and space” and “trampling with her feet the seven worlds, able to draw forth all beings” refers to the five desire realms and the two form and formless realms. “Desire” is the desire realm, “direction” is the form realm, and “space” is the formless realm. The five desire realms are the hell, hungry ghost, animal, human, and desire realm gods. In the upper realms, there are form realm gods and formless realm gods, which makes seven worlds. There are many ways to describe the seven worlds—they can also be divided into 1) hell beings, 2) hungry ghosts, 3) animals, 4) humans, 5) demigods (*asuras*), 6) gods (*suras*) and 7) intermediate state or *bardo* beings. Tara draws forth the beings that dwell in the seven worlds by benefiting them and leading them to liberation or enlightenment, without leaving anyone behind.

“Trampling with her feet” refers to destroying all unfavorable conditions and negative forces that obstruct one from achieving enlightenment or liberation. With this quality she protects all sentient beings without exception. Some texts say this Tara is Kurukulla.

The meaning of “Liberator” is to free from the suffering of cyclic existence and the lower realms. A liberator is swift and heroic. If we pray to someone like that, it is definite that all our wishes will come true very soon. The sutra mentions particular fears from which Tara liberates, such as the sixteen fears and the eight fears—we may come across these later.

Even though I’m not familiar with all the terms and the details, I think if we can have discussions like this, it might be of some benefit. If you recite and listen to the praises again and again, they will stay in your mind, and you can then begin to understand what the praises mean and start to feel that they make sense—that will give you more confidence when you are doing the prayers. If you just listen to the praises once and don’t think about them again, you’ll forget very soon.

If we pray to Tara, she will grant these temporal wishes—she not only grants these wishes, she grants them quickly. Tara has the power to accomplish all your wishes, temporal or ultimate. If you pray to Tara to have a child or wealth just for yourself, to have a comfortable life, then that becomes worldly concern. But if you instead say “I want to have wealth so I can help other people,” or if you pray for health in order to benefit others and practice Dharma, that’s not a worldly concern, so it depends on your motivation. The things that happen in the next life are determined by the actions you have created in the past. If you pray to Tara for things like health and wealth only for this life, then that’s what you will receive, and you won’t have anything left for the next life.

Once someone asked Lama Atisha, “What happens if you pray for this life?” Lama Atisha replied, “You will only receive things in this life.” They then asked, “What will happen in the next life?” He replied, “Next life you’ll fall into the lower realms because you haven’t prayed for the next life. You have only created non-virtuous actions in the past, so that will lead you to the lower realms.” For something to become a Dharma practice, you have to think about future lives. But that doesn’t mean you can’t think about this life at all.

The *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* are very short, like a poem, and very difficult to understand. But maybe there is a little benefit to hearing this explanation. As they say, “Better than nothing!”

Day Two

March 24, 2013

Motivation

We are very fortunate to have this opportunity to study again today. In order to achieve enlightenment and be free from suffering, we need to know how to be free from suffering and how to achieve enlightenment—that’s why we study and work together. Whenever we do virtuous, positive things, it’s very important to create a perfect motivation, and when we finish, to dedicate our merits to achieve enlightenment.

First, think about how all beings are the same as us in wanting happiness and success and in not wanting suffering or problems. We would like to help others, but at the moment we have no power. It’s as if we are mired in mud or stuck in the bardo. When we’re stuck in mud, even though we’d like to save someone, if we try to take a step, we’ll sink down together with the person we’re trying to help. It is only when we achieve enlightenment and buddhahood that we will we have the power and ability to help all sentient beings. Think, “May I free all sentient beings from suffering and achieve enlightenment. In order to do that, I must first achieve enlightenment and buddhahood. Therefore, I will do my best to practice meditation. Today I am going to receive teachings, study, work for the benefit all sentient beings, and make progress towards enlightenment.”

Sometimes we have obstacles, or demons create obstacles for us and block our success in whatever we want to do. When this happens, we need to create merit by praying to the Buddha, to bodhisattvas, to our gurus, and to deities that can be helpful for us. There are many different deities to pray to, but today we are going to make prayers to Mother Tara. Just as there are male and female people, there are also male and female buddhas. Arya Tara is a female buddha who is the embodiment all of the buddhas' enlightened. Because Arya Tara is the wisdom realizing emptiness and compassion that has arisen in the form of a deity, she contains the blessings of all the buddhas, and if we pray to Mother Tara, our prayers will be accomplished much faster.

Tara is a deity that is practiced in all the traditions of Tibetan Buddhism—Sakya, Nyingma, Gelug and Kagyu. She is the enlightened action of all the buddhas who comes forward to complete all the tasks, and whenever we pray to her or rely on her, she will immediately help us. For some deities, you can't engage in the practice if you haven't received the initiation of that particular deity. To do the practice of Venerable Arya Tara, no initiations or empowerments are required. The most important thing we need is to have devotion or faith. If we don't have strong faith and we pray with doubt in our mind, saying to ourselves, "Maybe there is such a thing, maybe there is no such thing, but I'll just pray anyway," it will be hard to accomplish whatever we're praying for.

Some people expect things to happen quickly, and when something doesn't happen immediately after they pray, they lose hope and think, "There's no such thing as a deity who can accomplish my prayers." This happens because of not having strong enough faith in the deity. In addition to our prayers, we also have to have the strong support of merit in our mind. If we don't have that, no matter how much we pray, we won't accomplish anything. While you are sitting cross-legged, feeling pain in

your knees and doing prayers and practices, you are accumulating a great amount of merit. If you meditate or contemplate on death and impermanence, selflessness, and emptiness, you'll also accumulate wisdom.

All compounded things, or things that come together due to causes and conditions, have the nature to disintegrate and perish. Things don't remain forever; they continue to disintegrate moment by moment. There are different levels of impermanence—some are subtle and some are gross. Gross impermanence can be easily understood or seen, but subtle impermanence is more difficult to understand or see. Changes in the weather, in the color of leaves, leaves falling in the autumn and growing again in the spring, and people growing old are examples of gross impermanence. In regard to aging, we can easily see the difference many years makes, but we are actually growing older every day and every moment. However, that process is very difficult to see, as it happens very gradually. Changes that happen during the day—for example, morning transforming into afternoon and evening—those are changes are quite easy to see. But changes that happen in the space of a day don't happen instantly. They happen through many hours, minutes, and seconds and it's very hard to see these changes happen.

Everything that is impermanent has the nature of disintegration. But our mind has a mistaken way of looking at reality, thinking, "I will live forever. I am not going to die, or at least I'm not going to die today." The kind of mind that grasps at the permanence of one's life is a mistaken mind. Most of us think, "Oh, I will live to be sixty, seventy, or maybe eighty years old." Because we have a mind that thinks to itself "I'm going to live for a long time," we are not able to engage in Dharma practice. What will happen if we have to die without being able to practice Dharma? If we haven't practiced Dharma, we haven't accumulated any virtue, and

we haven't accumulated any merit or wisdom. But we have accumulated something. If we haven't accumulated wisdom or virtue, what have we accumulated? There is not much doubt that we have performed many non-virtuous actions—we create them from the time we wake up until we go to sleep, even during sleep.

In Buddhism we accept that there are future lives. Because of this, the kind of life we're going to have in the future depends on the causes we create right now, in this life. There could also be causes created in our previous lives. We don't know what we've created in the past, or if we have even created any good causes to have a fortunate rebirth in the future. Because we can't rely on this, we have to create causes in this life that will ensure we'll have a good rebirth. It's the same when we study: our results on the exam depend on how well we've studied during the class. If we have earned good grades, it's easier to find a good job. All impermanent things come from causes and conditions, so we need to create good causes and conditions. If we have not created virtuous actions, the only things we have created are non-virtuous actions.

Non-virtuous actions will lead us to unfortunate rebirths in the lower realms, of which there are three types: the hell, the hungry ghost, and the animal realms. Of those three, we don't see the hell and hungry ghost realms, and we don't know where they are, but we can see the animal realm. In the animal realm, we can categorize the beings there into wild and domestic animals, or animals that are not owned by people and those that are owned by people. Those that are owned by people don't have any freedom and are controlled and exploited. If animals live in the wild, they are always in fear of being harmed or killed by other beings, small ones by bigger animals or big ones by many small ones. In order to prevent a rebirth in such an unfortunate state, we should create virtuous actions, which are the cause to have a good rebirth. Creating virtue is not easy. You

have to have strong faith and devotion and a reason why you want to create these virtues, and you also need to have inspiration or interest in doing it. Because we are constantly influenced by non-virtuous actions, it's very difficult to create virtuous actions. In order to successfully accumulate virtuous actions, we need to pray to powerful beings like Arya Tara.

[Students recite the "Praises to the Twenty-One Taras" in English while Geshe-la recites it simultaneously in Tibetan.]

If you can think of the meaning after hearing the explanation of these verses, when you recite it later it will be more beneficial.

Victorious Tara

CHHAG TSHÄL GYA JIN ME LHA TSHANG PA

Homage! Worshipped by the all-lords,

LUNG LHA NA TSHOG WANG CHHUG CHHÖ MA

Shakra, Agni, Brahma, Marut!

JUNG PO RO LANG DRI ZA NAM DANG

Honored by the hosts of spirits,

NÖ JIN TSHOG KYI DÜN NÄ TÖ MA

Corpse-raisers, gandharvas, yakshas!

The name of this Tara is *Nampar Gyalma Drolma* or “Victorious Tara,” and she has a dark-red-colored body. There are two enjoyment bodies, wrathful and peaceful. This verse praises Tara in reference to her peaceful aspect.

The first line pays homage to the Tara who is praised by the great worldly gods of the ten directions. Indra and his retinue, (including the gandharvas) guard the eastern world; the fire god Agni guards the southeast world; Yama guards the southern direction; the walking dead guard the southwest; the water god, King of the Nagas guards the western world; Marut the wind god guards the northwest; and the yakshas such as Vaishravana guard the north. Spirits in the retinue of Indra guard the

northeast, Brahma protects the world above, and the earth goddess Tenma guards the world from below.¹ These gods praise Arya Tara with veneration.

This Tara will eradicate all sufferings of the mind and body, remove all external and internal obstacles, and protect you in this and future lives. In short, we can say, “I am going to pay homage to the Tara who is praised by all these great worldly gods and spirits.”

¹ Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche, *The Smile of Sun and Moon*, (Boca Raton: Sky Dancer Press, 2004), 63.

The Tara Who Destroys Others

CHHAG TSHÄL TRÄ CHE JA DANG PHÄ KYI
Homage! With her TRAD and PHAT' sounds

PHA RÖL THRÜL KHOR RAB TU JOM MA
Destroying foes' magic diagrams!

YÄ KUM YÖN KYANG ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
Her feet pressing, left out, right in,

ME BAR THRUG PA SHIN TU BAR MA
Blazing in a raging fire-blaze!

Verse seven praises Tara with reference to how she destroys all opponents. This Tara is called *Zhen Jompa Drolma* or “The Tara Who Destroys Others.” She has a wrathful appearance and a black-colored body.

For those who can be subdued in a peaceful way, Tara subdues with a peaceful aspect. For others who can only be subdued wrathfully, she appears in a wrathful aspect. A peaceful manifestation of Tara can also subdue beings in a wrathful way. The word TRAD means to subdue or to destroy, and PHAT means to burst apart or split. By uttering the very powerful mantras TRAD and PHAT, all opponents, magic diagrams or witchcraft, black magic, and even all the bad intentions and bad actions of others are destroyed. Some people have nightmares or very frightening

dreams that wake them up or make them very afraid. If they go to sleep by thinking about or praying to this wrathful Tara, they will not have nightmares.

“Her feet pressing, left out, right in” is the position in which Arya Tara sits. The left leg stretched out slightly symbolizes the wisdom realizing emptiness and the right leg bent symbolizes great compassion towards all beings. Tara presses all the unfavorable conditions and opponents under her feet by the power of her great compassion and by her wisdom realizing emptiness. The fire of her wisdom and great compassion blazes forth and burns all opponents and negative forces. The recitation, meditation, and visualization of the powerful mantras TRAD and PHAT, as well as prostrations to this Tara, will destroy all the magic diagrams, vicious intentions, and poisonous thoughts of others.

That completes the verses that praise Tara in a peaceful way. There are also seven verses of praise in reference to the wrathful aspect of Tara. We can see that buddhas appear in different aspects. Some have a peaceful and some have a wrathful appearance, and this is dependent upon sentient beings.

Arya Tara has great power and is also very quick to grant blessings or answer prayers. There is a story about this: once there was a meditator who was meditating up in his cave. One day a beggar came to beg for food, but the meditator didn't have anything to give, and he felt very sad for not being able to help. He thought, “A sentient being came to me with great hope to find some food and I'm not able to help him. What a shame.” He then asked the beggar to step outside, and he closed the door and prayed very strongly and earnestly to Arya Tara to grant him siddhis and realizations to help this person. He closed his eyes and prayed very strongly in front of the Tara image in his meditation room. While he was making these strong prayers with his eyes closed, he heard the sound of

something dropping in front of him. He opened his eyes and saw gold crown ornaments, a necklace, bracelets, and anklets, so he grabbed the ornaments and gave them to the beggar. This is one of these stories related to the *Prayer of the Benefits* where it says, “Those who wish for wealth will receive wealth.”

The first of the next seven verses (Verse 8) praises Tara with reference to how she purifies the maras and the two obstructions; Verse 9 praises Tara with reference to the implements that she holds in her two hands; Verse 10 praises Tara through her crown ornament and the sound of her laughter; and Verse 11 praises Tara with reference to how she accomplishes different activities by employing the ten directional protectors. Verse 12 praises Tara with reference to her crown ornament. Verse 13 praises Tara with reference to her wrathful posture of abiding, and Verse 14 praises Tara with reference to how light radiates from the syllable HUM at her heart.

Tara Who Gives Supreme Power

CHHAG TSHÄL TURE JIG PA CHHEN MO
Homage! TURE, very dreadful!

DÜ KYI PA WO NAM PAR JOM MA
Destroyer of Mara's champion(s)!

CHHU KYE ZHÄL NI TRO NYER DÄN DZÄ
She with frowning lotus visage

DRA WO THAM CHÄ MA LÜ SO MA
Who is slayer of all enemies!

This Tara is called *Wangchog Terpe Drolma* or “Tara Who Gives Supreme Power,” and she has a reddish-black body.

Her eyes are not peaceful and long, but more round and open, and there are wrinkles on her face, showing anger. She grants supreme power and has a very wrathful look. “Homage!” at the beginning of the verse indicates the Tara to which you will be paying homage. To this Tara who is very beautiful but wrathful in aspect, who overcomes the four maras by reciting the mantra TURE, who kills all the enemies of liberation and enlightenment, I prostrate.

TURE is a mantra and a Sanskrit word which means swift or fast, like lightning in the sky. “Very dreadful” means very scary, frightening or

wrathful, and that can either apply to Tara or it can apply to beings that are notorious for being very bad. Tara can subdue even those who are very wrathful, and she also appears in that aspect to subdue those who need to be subdued in a wrathful way. TURE is swift in granting the blessings of her holy body, holy speech, and holy mind. “Destroyer of Mara’s champion(s)!” refers to the four types of maras: the maras of the Lord of Death, the maras of the aggregates, the maras of the delusions, and the maras of the Devaputra, or the sons of gods. These four maras are destroyed by this wrathful Tara by reciting the sound TRAD. “She with frowning lotus visage” means she has a very beautiful face, but in a wrathful aspect. “Slayer of all enemies” is referring to the inner enemies—the delusions, the afflictive emotions, and the obstructions. There are two major enemies that Tara destroys: the ones which obstruct us from achieving liberation—the afflictive emotions or delusions in our mind—and the obstructions to knowledge, the deluded obstructions.

Tara Granting the Supreme

CHHAG TSHÄL KÖN CHHOG SUM TSHÖN CHHAG GYÄI
 Homage! At the heart her fingers,

SOR MÖ THUG KAR NAM PAR GYÄN MA
 Adorn her with Three Jewel mudra!

MA LÜ CHHOG KYI KHOR LÖ GYÄN PÄI
 Light-ray masses all excited!

RANG GI Ö KYI TSHOG NAM THRUG MA
 All directions' wheels adorn her!

The ninth verse praises Tara with reference to the implements she holds in her hands. This Tara is called *Sengdeng Nagchi Drolma* or “Tara Granting the Supreme” and she resides in the pure land. Some translations call her the “Tara of the Redwood Forest.” The trees in that forest have a special quality and a special smell. Some say the trees make the sound of the Dharma. In Tibetan we call it a *sengdeng* tree, or “acacia” in English. According to the Tengyur, she is “*padme raga*” colored (the color of a ruby lotus blossom), but she is normally known as Green Tara.

This verse pays homage to the Tara who is in the prime of her youth, sitting in the half lotus position, cross-legged, the left leg out and right bent in. She is adorned with precious gems and wearing divine garments, very fine and smooth to the touch. In her left hand she is holding an *utpala* (blue) lotus with her thumb and ring finger, and the index finger, middle

finger and little finger are straight up, symbolizing Three Jewels. The stem of the lotus flower curves down and then up, and the flower blossoms at the level of her ear. That fully-blossomed flower shows that she has the full realization of emptiness, the wisdom realizing emptiness, the great compassion of bodhicitta, and is continually looking at sentient beings with great compassion. The way she sits is meant to convey the message “Don’t be afraid. I will always be there to help you and protect you.” Her right hand is in the mudra of granting the supreme realization. Some prayers say that the mudra of granting supreme realization changes into the mudra of granting refuge.

MA LÜ CHHOG KYI KHOR LÖ GYÄN PÄI

Light-ray masses all excited!

RANG GI Ö KYI TSHOG NAM THRUG MA

All directions’ wheels adorn her!

These lines indicate that she has the power to protect the beings in all directions. In India, some young girls and boys were going into a forest to chop wood and pick flowers. A ten-year-old girl went to pick a flower, and she came across a wild elephant. The elephant caught her in his trunk and carried her away. The girl had heard about Tara and since she was very frightened, she prayed to Tara. Just by remembering and taking refuge in Tara, she was released by the elephant. She went back to the village, and everyone was very surprised that she had escaped. Normally a person would have been killed by a wild elephant, so they thought she must be a very, very lucky person. She later became the queen of that kingdom.

Tara Dispelling All the Torments

CHHAG TSHÄL RAB TU GA WA JI PÄI

Homage! She so joyous, radiant,

U GYÄN Ö KYI THRENG WA PEL MA

Crown emitting garlands of light!

ZHÄ PA RAB ZHÄ TU TA RA YI

Mirthful, laughing with TUTTARA

DÜ DANG JIG TEN WANG DU DZÄ MA

Subjugating maras, devas!

This Tara dispels the torments of other beings and is called *Nyangen Thamche Selwai Drolma* or “Tara Dispelling All the Torments.” She has a red-colored body. The verse praises Tara with reference to her crown ornament and the sound of her laughter. “She so joyous” means very happy. She is very happy and joyous when she sees someone who is practicing Dharma, engaging in virtuous actions, and refraining from engaging in non-virtuous actions. Through the light radiating from her crown ornament, she subdues those who go against the Dharma, who don’t practice Dharma, who don’t engage in virtue, and who continually engage in non-virtue.

With eight different types of laughter she can both gather sentient beings to her and subdue or subjugate those who engage in non-virtuous actions. The laughter of TUTTARE and mantras such as HA HA, HEE HEE will lead all beings to liberation and enlightenment. She also subjugates the maras and devas—Devaputra and other gods—as well as the devas who are afflicted by strong delusions. All the negative forces that obstruct one from achieving liberation and enlightenment will be subdued.

There is a story of a trader who benefited from praying to Tara. He was traveling and stopped to rest and sleep. While he was sleeping, enemies and thieves surrounded him. He was about to be captured and didn't have any other avenue of help but to pray to Tara. So that's what he did. At that moment, Tara appeared in the sky, and a large gust of wind emanated from her feet and blew away all his enemies.

Tara Who Hooks All Beings and Dispels Destitution

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI KYONG WÄI TSHOG NAM

Homage! She able to summon

THAM CHÄ GUG PAR NÜ MA NYI MA

All earth-guardians' assembly!

THRO NYER YO WÄI YE GE HUM GI

Shaking, frowning, with her HUM sign

PHONG PA THAM CHÄ NAM PAR DRÖL MA

Saving from every misfortune!

Verse 11 is the fourth verse of praise in reference to the wrathful aspect of Tara. The name of this Tara is *Drowa Thamche Gugsbing Phongpa Thamche Selwai Drolma* (abbr. *Gugpai Drolma*) or “Tara Who Hooks All Beings and Dispels Destitution.” She has a golden-red body. She summons the protectors of the ten directions to accomplish activities that benefit beings practicing Dharma as well as those beings who help to increase the teachings of the Buddha. The ten directional protectors are those who protect the four cardinal directions, the four ordinal directions, plus above and below. She summons these protectors and compels them to work for

the benefit of sentient beings and not cause any harm. “Misfortune” refers to those who are lacking wealth or merit. For those who lack wealth, she grants wealth, and for those who lack merit, she grants merit. Right now, we are lacking liberation and enlightenment. For those who don’t have liberation or enlightenment, this Tara will help them to achieve it.

Tara Who Grants All Auspiciousness

CHHAG TSHÄL DA WÄI DUM BÜ U GYÄN

Homage! Crown adorned with crescent

GYÄN PA THAM CHÄ SHIN TU BAR MA

Moon, all ornaments most shining!

RÄL PÄI THRÖ NA Ö PAG ME LÄ

Amitabha in her hair-knot

TAG PAR SHIN TU Ö RAB DZÄ MA

Sending out much light eternal!

Verse 12 praises Tara with reference to her crown ornament. The name of this Tara is *Tashi Thamche Jinpai Drolma* or “Tara Who Grants All Auspiciousness” and the color of her body is gold. To which kind of Tara are we paying homage? To the Tara who is “adorned with crescent moon.” Her hair is very smooth and silky and adorned with the crescent moon, on top of which is the lord of the Buddha family. There are different families of buddhas, and the lord of the family to which Tara belongs is Amitabha Buddha. “Sending out much light eternal!” indicates that she is continually emanating blessings and realizations and causing everything to be auspicious for sentient beings.

Thoroughly Ripened Tara

CHHAG TSHÄL KÄL PÄI THA MÄI ME TAR
Homage! She 'mid wreath ablaze like

BAR WÄI THRENG WÄI Ü NA NÄ MA
Eon-ending fire abiding!

YÄ KYANG YÖN KUM KÜN NÄ KOR GÄI
Right stretched, left bent, joy surrounds you

DRA YI PUNG NI NAM PAR JOM MA
Troops of enemies destroying!

Verse 13 praises Tara with reference to her wrathful posture of abiding. The name of this Tara is *Yongsu Mimpe Drolma* or “Thoroughly Ripened Tara,” and the color of her body is red. Homage to whom? To the Tara who is residing in the blazing fire of the end of the eon, and who is sitting with her right leg stretched and left leg bent inwards. She is surrounded by all the fortunate beings for whom she continuously turns the wheel of Dharma. She also destroys the troops of enemies: the inner enemies, the grasping at a self and the grasping at true existence. Grasping at a self and grasping at true existence are the main delusions.

She Who Magnetizes Everything

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHII NGÖ LA CHHAG GI

Homage! She who strikes the ground with

THIL GYI NÜN CHING ZHAB KYI DUNG MA

Her palm, and with her foot beats it!

THRO NYER CHÄN DZÄ YI GE HUM GI

Scowling, with the letter HUM the

RIM PA DÜN PO NAM NI GEM MA

Seven levels she does conquer!

This verse is praising Tara with reference to how light radiates from the syllable HUM at her heart. She is called *Gukpa Thromo Drolma* or “She Who Magnetizes Everything,” and her body is black. “She Who Magnetizes Everything” means that whatever you wish for, you will get. To whom do we pay homage? To the Tara who strikes the ground with her palm and beats the ground with her foot. She has a beautiful face with the appearance of a lotus, with a slightly wrathful aspect. Light radiates like sparks of fire from the syllable HUM in the palm of her right hand and strikes all the beings of the seven worlds, benefiting and helping them. “Conquer” means to subdue. By subduing these beings, she leads them to the state of liberation and enlightenment.

SERA JEY GESHE NGAWANG TENLEY

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHII NGÖ LA CHHAG GI

Homage! She who strikes the ground with

THIL GYI NÜN CHING ZHAB KYI DUNG MA

Her palm, and with her foot beats it!

“Ground” doesn’t literally mean the ground—it refers to the contaminated aggregates. The line “and with her foot beats it” refers to the syllable HUM that radiates the light of the wisdom realizing emptiness, destroying the contaminated aggregates. If we pray and make requests to this Tara, we will receive these benefits.

Day Three

March 31, 2013

INTRODUCTORY TEACHING

Good morning, everybody. Happy Easter! Today is a day when kids get chocolate and special eggs. Today is also special because we have the good fortune and great opportunity to study Mother Tara, who is very special and powerful. Mother Tara has a special power to help all sentient beings, and very quickly, so it is good to know a little bit about the meaning of the words when you practice and chant the praises. When we pray to Tara, we say: “Please give us blessings and help us purify all our negative karmas, obstacles, and misfortunes. May all of our misfortunes be eliminated, and may we achieve every benefit.”

Many people recite the Tara mantra, and it’s also good to recite the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*. It’s somewhat long, so if you are not able to recite it, there is also a very short praise with just four lines.² If you are not able to do the short praise, you can just recite the mantra. Usually when we Tibetans recite the mantra in Sanskrit, we don’t know what it means. I think it is the same with prayers—usually we don’t know the exact meaning—we just hope to receive some blessings. However, if we know the meaning and think about it while reciting, it becomes more powerful and beneficial, and we receive more blessings.

The *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* can be divided into the praises that reference her 1) History, 2) Holy Bodies, which is further divided into the Enjoyment Body (peaceful and wrathful) and the Truth body, and 3) her Enlightened Activities.

² Geshe Tenley is referring to the condensed version of the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*. See p. 78.

We have already discussed fourteen of the twenty-one praises, and we have looked at the praises in reference to her enjoyment body. Now we will examine the verse (Verse 15) that references the dharmakaya aspect or truth body.³

If we pray to Tara, she has the power to quickly and successfully accomplish all our requests. Arya Tara is the enlightened activity of all the buddhas. At Sera Monastery we recite the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* quite often—sometimes every day, sixty or seventy times, for two hours—with the entire assembly of monks. This is a very good practice to remove obstacles. Have you had obstacles? An example of an obstacle is when you have a task to do, but something happens which prevents you from accomplishing your wishes, and you become stuck. We all have a lot of obstacles, right? For these types of obstacles, the practice of Mother Tara is very good.

³ See the “Chart of the Categories,” p. 79

Peaceful, Happy, and Virtuous Tara

CHHAG TSHÄL DE MA GE MA ZHI MA
Homage! Happy, virtuous, peaceful!
NYA NGÄN DÄ ZHI CHÖ YÜL NYI MA
She whose field is peace, nirvana!
SO HA OM DANG YANG DAG DÄN PÄ
She endowed with OM and SVAHA,
DIG PA CHHEN PO JOM PA NYI MA
Destroyer of the great evil!

The name of this Tara is *Shyiva Chenmo Drolma*, or “Peaceful, Happy and Virtuous Tara” and she has a white-colored body. The first word of the first line is “Homage!” To whom are we paying homage? To the Tara who is “happy, virtuous, peaceful” and “she whose field is peace, nirvana.” This Tara is happy because she doesn’t experience the result of suffering. She is virtuous because she does not create any cause for suffering, the non-virtuous actions. She is peaceful because she has pacified all sufferings from their root, including the cause of suffering, karma and delusions; and she has passed beyond sorrow because she is in the state of non-abiding nirvana. “Non-abiding” means not abiding in either the extreme of peace, which is nirvana or liberation for oneself, or in the extreme of cyclic

existence or samsara. “She whose field is peace” means she who is continually in meditative equipoise on emptiness—to that kind of Tara I pay homage.

SO HA OM DANG YANG DAG DÄN PÄ
She endowed with OM and SVAHA,

OM and SVAHA are the first and the last syllables of the ten-syllable mantra OM TARA TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. By reciting the mantra, meditating on it, and visualizing the mantra garland at one’s heart, one will destroy all the great evils. The “great evil” here is referring to both inner and outer evils—the outer evils being all obstacles, and the inner evils, great evils like delusions and obstructions.

If one visualizes Tara and recites this mantra, all negative forces will be destroyed.

The Tara Who Destroys Attachment

CHHAG TSHÄL KÜN NÄ KOR RAB GA WÄI

Homage! She with joy surrounded

DRA YI LÜ NI NAM PAR GEM MA

Tearing foes' bodies asunder,

YI GE CHU PÄI NGAG NI KÖ PÄI

Frees with HUM and knowledge mantra,

RIG PA HÜM LÄ DRÖL MA NYI MA

Arrangement of the ten letters!

Chakpa Jompe Drolma, or “The Tara Who Destroys Attachment” has a red-colored body. “Homage! She with joy surrounded” pays homage to the Tara who destroys all the inner and outer obstacles to the efforts of spiritual teachers and buddhas who are constantly working to turn the wheel of Dharma to benefit sentient beings. This Tara also destroys obstacles for all those disciples who are devotedly following these spiritual teachers and teachings. In this context, the inner obstacle is grasping at the true existence of the self or the “I.” The outer obstacle is the basis of the “I,” or grasping at the true existence of “mine”—the things we call “mine” such as “my cup” or “my water.”

RIG PA HŪM LÄ DRÖL MA NYI MA
Arrangement of the ten letters!

The “ten letters” are the ten-syllable mantra of Tara. The method to destroy all obstacles is by visualizing oneself as Tara (if you are engaging in the practice of tantra and you have been empowered to generate yourself as Tara, you can do so). For those who need to be subdued or pacified peacefully, at your heart you visualize a mantra garland of the ten-syllable mantra in a circular form. In the center of this mantra garland is the root mantra, the syllable TAM. Around the syllable TAM is the ten-letter mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. Imagine that light emanates from the root mantra and mantra garland, purifies all negativities, and subdues all sentient beings.

It is recommended that that you do the practice of the peaceful Tara with the peaceful mantra in the morning and the wrathful mantra at night. In the morning and during the day, you want to experience a peaceful time, so you do the peaceful practice and mantra. In order to pacify nightmares or frightening experiences at night, you can visualize or do the practice of the wrathful aspect.

OM NAMA TARE NAMO HARE HUM HARE SVAHA is the wrathful mantra. Maybe you have never heard it, so you can repeat after me.

[Geshe-la gives the oral transmission of the wrathful Tara mantra.]

The wrathful mantra is OM NAMA TARE NAMO HARE HUM HARE SVAHA. Instead of TAM at the heart, visualize the seed syllable HUM surrounded by this mantra. If you have not received an empowerment to generate yourself as the deity, you can visualize Tara in the space in front

of you, facing you. Surrounding the HUM at her heart is the wrathful mantra. Imagine nectar and light flowing from there, striking all sentient beings, purifying all their negativities, and removing all their obstacles. By doing this wrathful practice, there will be no bad dreams or frightening experiences. If you have problems at night with sleeping or with nightmares, recite and visualize the wrathful Tara, and recite the wrathful mantra not less than seven times. If you do this, you will definitely not have any of these problems or nightmares.

The Tara Who Accomplishes All Happiness

CHHAG TSHÄL TU RE ZHAB NI DEB PÄ
 Homage! TURE! With seed letter
 HUM GI NAM PÄI SA BÖN NYI MA
 Of the shape of syllable HUM!
 RI RAB MAN DHA RA DANG BIG JE
 By foot stamping shakes the three worlds,
 JIG TEN SUM NAM YO WA NYI MA
 Meru, Mandara, and Vindhya!

The seventeenth verse describes *Dewa Thamche Druppe Drolma* or “The Tara Who Accomplishes All Happiness.” She has a golden-red body. This verse praises Tara in reference to how she shakes the three realms. Here, “TURE” means swift or quick, and refers to that Tara who is very quick to destroy all obstacles. For beings that cannot be subdued in a peaceful way, Tara appears in a wrathful aspect. When she appears this way, she is very frightening and powerful, so this verse describes her power. She arises in this wrathful form, stamping her feet, and, through this power, she shakes the three worlds—the sub-terrestrial, terrestrial, and celestial worlds—and all the great mountains in this world, such as Mount Meru, Vindhya, and Mandara. She purifies or destroys all the inner and outer

obstacles of sentient beings and leads them to the state of happiness. To that kind of Tara, I pay homage.

Sometimes mothers show their children a little bit of a wrathful face, and then the children listen! The reason these buddhas arise in the form of wrathful deities is because there are sentient beings who cannot be subdued or helped in a peaceful way. In order to help, subdue, or tame these beings, the buddhas show a wrathful aspect. When you visualize yourself as Tara or visualize this wrathful Tara in the space in front of you, with the syllable HUM at her heart and surrounded by the wrathful mantra, she can destroy even the great mountains, such as Mount Meru, Mandara, and Vindhya.

There are twenty different mistaken views that arise in the form of mountains. These mountains exist in the three realms—the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm—and they can be either mythical or real. When this verse talks about Tara shaking or destroying these mountains, it is referring to wrong views in our mind, such as the view of the transitory collection or the extreme views. These wrong views appear to have the shape of mountains, but in reality, wrong views are in the minds of sentient beings. When we are crushed under these mountains of wrong views, we experience suffering. By paying homage to this Arya Tara, one can be free of that. If we abandon the mountains of our wrong views, we'll have happiness. That's why she is called "The Tara Who Accomplishes All Happiness."

The Totally Victorious Tara

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHO YI NAM PÄI

Homage! Holding in her hand the

RI DAG TAG CHÄN CHAG NA NAM MA

Deer-marked moon of deva-lake form!

TA RA NYI JÖ PHÄ KYI YI GE

With twice spoken TARA and PHAT,

DUG NAM MA LÜ PA NI SEL MA

Totally dispelling poison!

In Verse 18, *Nampar Gyalwa Drolma's* body is white. “Twice spoken TARA” refers to the first part of the Tara mantra, where TARE appears twice. OM TARE is the first instance, and TUTTARE is the second.

When you recite this mantra and visualize this Tara, all inner and outer poisons can be dispelled. Imagine facing the being that is experiencing suffering due to inner and outer poisons. Visualize Mother Tara and recite the mantra. Imagine receiving blessings from Arya Tara and dispelling all sufferings, especially those caused by the inner and outer poisons.

Inner poisons are the delusions and obstructions in one's mind, and outer poisons are the conventional poisons such as food poisoning—all these can be dispelled or destroyed.

If you are affected by some kind of poison and are taking the antidote, you can also recite this mantra: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE PHAT while taking the medicine, and that will help to overcome the problem.

There are also harms caused by different kinds of spirits and nagas. In the United States, people don't generally believe in these types of things, but in Tibet and other places, they believe in spirits and nagas. It is believed that if harm is done to the land in the places owned by spirits, the spirits will cause you harm, which can be dispelled by reciting the ten-syllable mantra. In Tibet, where there are rivers, streams, or springs coming out of the ground, people say there are nagas residing in these areas. If you pollute these places by urinating in them or by doing other harmful things, the nagas will cause harm to you. Sometimes people urinate in these places and they get sores all over their body—they say that is harm caused by nagas. Sometimes there are also spirits residing in trees, and if you cut those trees, the spirits become angry and cause harm, and make you sick or cause swelling in the body. What we call allergies in the West are considered by many Tibetan people to be spirit harm.

The Tara Who Burns All Sorrow

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHOG NAM GYÄL PO

Homage! She whom gods and their kings,

LHA DANG MI AM CHI YI TEN MA

And the kinnaras do honor!

KÜN NÄ GO CHHA GA WÄI JI GYI

Armored in all joyful splendor,

TSÖ DANG MI LAM NGÄN PA SEL MA

She dispels bad dreams and conflicts!

The nineteenth Tara falls under the fourth category of enlightened activities. She is called *Dhungal Thamche Sekpa Drolma* or “The Tara Who Burns All Sorrow” and she has a white-colored body. This verse praises Tara’s ability to dispel quarrels and bad dreams.

When you are sleeping, do you ever feel as if something is pressing on your chest and you can’t move or breathe properly? If you have this kind of problem, it is sometimes referred to as “pressing by demons.” Superstitious people say that if you place your hands on your chest when you go to sleep, the demons will press on you. The idea is not to sleep with your hand on your chest. If you pray to this Tara, problems of being disturbed in the night will be dispelled.

This homage is to the Tara who is honored and respected by all the assemblies of great beings, such as kings and gods like Brahma and Indra.

Armor is metal that you wear on your body that protects you from weapons and bullets. The armor referred to here is not physical armor made of metal, but rather spiritual armor created by your refuge, compassion, loving-kindness, and bodhicitta. Taking refuge in Mother Tara, reciting the mantra, praying, meditating, and visualizing Tara is just like donning armor that will protect you from bad dreams and conflicts. There's nothing better than taking refuge in Tara for anything you need, as she conquers all negative forces. Always take refuge in Tara, recite the mantra, meditate on Tara—that way you are continually wearing this armor.

The Tara Who Grants Realizations

CHHAG TSHÄL NYI MA DA WA GYÄ PÄI
Homage! She whose two eyes bright with

CHÄN NYI PO LA Ö RAB SÄL MA
Radiance of sun and full moon!

HA RA NYI JÖ TU TA RA YI
With twice HARA and TUTTARE

SHIN TU DRAG PÖI RIM NÄ SEL MA
She dispels severe contagion!

The Tara in Verse 20 is called *Ngodrup Thamche Jungwa Drolma* or “The Tara Who Grants Realizations” and she has an orange-colored body like the color of saffron. This verse praises Tara with reference to how she eliminates epidemic disease, which is a sudden, severe outbreak of disease. Tara can appear in a wrathful or a peaceful form. Where it says “With twice HARA and TUTTARE,” HARA refers to the wrathful mantra OM TARE NAME HARE, and TUTTARE refers to the peaceful mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. This wrathful Tara has eyes that are very bright like the sun, and with light radiating from these bright eyes she dispels all negativities, harms, and epidemics.

If you want to visualize her in a peaceful aspect, imagine her eyes like a peaceful moon, with nectars and cool lights emanating from her eyes and dispelling all negativities and epidemic diseases. If you recite either the peaceful or the wrathful mantras, you can also overcome all epidemic diseases. If she can overcome all epidemic diseases and inner and outer negativities, then it goes without saying she can also help you achieve all the realizations.

She Who is Fully Complete in All Knowledge

CHHAG TSHÄL DE NYI SUM NAM KÖ PÄ
Homage! Full of liberating

ZHI WÄI THÜ DANG YANG DAG DÄN MA
Pow'r by the set of three natures!

DÖN DANG RO LANG NÖ JIN TSHOG NAM
Destroys hosts of spirits, yakshas,

JOM PA TU RE RAB CHHOG NYI MA
And raised corpses! Supreme! TURE!

The last verse praises Tara with reference to how she destroys spirits and zombies. This Tara is white in color and is called *Yongsu Dzokpe Drolma* or “She Who Is Fully Complete in All Knowledge.” This Tara has the power to overcome all spirit harms caused by yakshas and raised corpses. It is said that these spirits have the power to take away your life force. Making requests or praying to Tara is the best method to overcome these kinds of unfavorable conditions or negative forces. The practitioner meditates on Tara and visualizes the three letters adorning the body, speech, and mind (the forehead adorned with the white letter OM, the throat adorned with the red letter AH, and the heart adorned with the blue letter HUM). From

these three letters, infinite lights emanate and purify all sentient beings' negativities and spirit harms. If you pray to Tara, your life force will be brought back to you and you will have a long life and good health.

Sometimes people with harmful intent use black magic or recite words that cause harm. By doing the practice of this Tara, one can be free from all black magic. In some cultures, if someone wants to harm you, they take some of your hair and they use it to put a curse on you. Or they take some of your belongings, make a replica of you and then cause harm to that replica, which causes harm to you. They prick the replica with a needle, and you feel the pain of being pricked. I think many cultures have this type of superstition. There are some people who use certain powerful words for their black magic. By reciting these types of words, they try to gain power to cause harm to others. If we are the recipient of that kind of harm or black magic from others, praying to Tara is the best method to eliminate these harms.

TSA WÄI NGAG KYI TÖ PA DI DANG

These praises with the root mantras

CHHAG TSHÄL WA NI NYI SHU TSA CHIG

And prostrations thus are twenty-one!

The last lines are just saying that there are twenty-one praises. There are the root mantras, the peaceful and the wrathful mantras, and there are the twenty-one praises.

I hope you now have a little better understanding of the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras*. Usually we recite without knowing what we're talking about. Maybe you can understand it better in English, but the Tibetan is very hard to understand and explain. The praises are like poetry—hard to sink your teeth into!

Prayer of the Benefits

LHA MO LA GÜ YANG DAG DÄN PÄI

Whoever is endowed with devotion for the goddess

LO DÄN GANG GI RAB DÄ JÖ DE

And recites this with supreme faith,

SÖ DANG THO RANG LANG PAR JÄ NÄ

Remembering it at dawn upon waking and in the evenings,

DRÄN PÄ MI JIG THAM CHÄ RAB TER

Will be granted all fearlessness,

DIG PA THAM CHÄ RAB TU ZHI WA

Will perfectly pacify all negativities,

NGÄN DRO THAM CHÄ JOM PA NYI DO

And will eliminate all unfortunate migrations.

GYÄL WA JE WA THRAG DÜN NAM KYI

The multitudes of conquerors,

NYUR DU WANG NI KUR WAR GYUR LA

Will quickly grant us initiation:

DI LÄ CHHE WA NYI NI THOB CHING

Thus endowed with this greatness

SANG GYÄ GO PHANG THAR THUG DER DRO

One will eventually reach the stage of a buddha.

DE YI DUG NI DRAG PO CHHEN PO

If affected by the most terrible poison,

TÄN NÄ PA AM ZHÄN YANG DRO WA

Whether ingested, drunk or from a living being,

ZÖ PA DANG NI THUNG PA NYI KYANG

Just by remembering,

DRÄN PÄ RAB TU SEL WA NYI THOB

Will one be thoroughly cleansed.

DÖN DANG RIM DANG DUG GI ZIR WÄI

If this prayer is recited two, three, or seven times,

DÜL NGÄL TSHOG NI NAM PAR PONG TE

It will pacify all the sufferings of torments

SEM CHÄN ZHÄN PA NAM LA YANG NGO

Caused by spirits, fevers and poisons,

NYI SUM DÜN DU NGÖN PAR JÖ NA

And by other beings as well.

BU DÖ PÄ NI BU THOB GYUR ZHING

If you wish for a child, you will get a child;

NOR DÖ PÄ NI NOR NAM NYI THOB

If you wish for wealth, you will receive wealth.

DÖ PA THAM CHÄ THOB PAR GYUR LA

All your wishes will be fulfilled

GEG NAM ME CHING SO SOR JOM GYUR CHIG

And all obstacles pacified.⁴

There are two types of disciples or practitioners who are endowed with devotion for the goddess: those with sharp faculties and those with dull faculties. “Remembering it at dawn upon waking and in the evenings” refers to the time of day we should do this practice. It would be very good for Westerners to do this practice both before you go to work and after you come home. If we remember Tara or praise her at these times, we will

⁴ Colophon: extracted from *The Abbreviated Four-Mandala Ritual to Cittamani Tara*, by Kyabje Gaden Trijang Rinpoche. Translated from the Tibetan by Fabrizio Champa Pelgye at the request of the Education Department of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition. Edited with standard prayers added by Venerable Constance Miller, Education Department, September 2001. Lightly edited for consistency with Lama Zopa Rinpoche’s instructions and reformatted by Venerable Gyalten Mindrol, FPMT Education Department, 2006.

be granted all fearlessness, perfectly pacify all negativities, and eliminate all unfortunate migrations.

GYÄL WA JE WA THRAG DÜN NAM KYI
The multitudes of conquerors,
NYUR DU WANG NI KUR WAR GYUR LA
Will quickly grant us initiation:

This means that all the buddhas will be happy. “Conquerors” means buddhas. The buddhas will be happy and will grant initiation.

DI LÄ CHHE WA NYI NI THOB CHING
Thus endowed with this greatness
SANG GYÄ GO PHANG THAR THUG DER DRO
One will eventually reach the stage of a buddha.

In this life, one will have all the greatness of being happy, healthy, learned, and kind through remembering Tara. In future lives, one will eventually reach the state of full enlightenment.

DE YI DUG NI DRAG PO CHHEN PO
If affected by the most terrible poison,
TÄN NÄ PA AM ZHÄN YANG DRO WA
Whether ingested, drunk or from a living being,
ZÖ PA DANG NI THUNG PA NYI KYANG
Just by remembering,
DRÄN PÄ RAB TU SEL WA NYI THOB
Will one be thoroughly cleansed.

Whatever poisons we have ingested, if we remember Arya Tara before we drink or eat and make offerings to her, then all poisons will be cleansed.

“If this prayer is recited two, three, or seven times” seems like it is saying you should recite the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* two, three, or seven times, but according to the commentary, “two” means two times, morning and evening; “three” means three sessions; and “seven” means reciting the Tara Praises seven times. So that means two times per day, three sessions each time, and seven recitations in each session. If we do that,

DÜL NGÄL TSHOG NI NAM PAR PONG TE
 It will pacify all the sufferings of torments
 SEM CHÄN ZHÄN PA NAM LA YANG NGO
 Caused by spirits, fevers and poisons,
 NYI SUM DÜN DU NGÖN PAR JÖ NA
 And by other beings as well.

Where the praise says:

BU DÖ PÄ NI BU THOB GYUR ZHING
 If you wish for a child, you will get a child;
 NOR DÖ PÄ NI NOR NAM NYI THOB
 If you wish for wealth, you will receive wealth.

the literal meaning is “child,” but it can also mean the two initial paths—the path of accumulation and the path of preparation. “Child” refers to the person entering the path and wealth refers to the seven superior types of wealth, or the seven arya wealths—the path of seeing. By achieving that path, all your wishes will be fulfilled, and all obstacles will be pacified.

It would be wonderful to recite the *Praises to the Twenty-One Taras* and remember all these benefits. If you don’t have time, you can do the short version or even just the mantra—OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA. This also has great benefit.

A Brief Praise to the Twenty-One Taras

[One student requests the oral transmission of the condensed Tara praises. Geshe-la gives the oral transmission.]

OM CHOM DÄN DÄ MA LHA MO DRÖL MA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
OM To Bhagavati, Goddess Tara, I prostrate.

CHHAG TSHÄL DRÖL MA TA RE PA MO
I prostrate to the liberator, heroic TARE.

TU TÄ RA YI JIG KÜN SEL MA
With TUTTÄRA, you dispel all fear.

TU RE DÖN NAM THAM CHÄ TER MA
With TURE, you fulfill all aims.

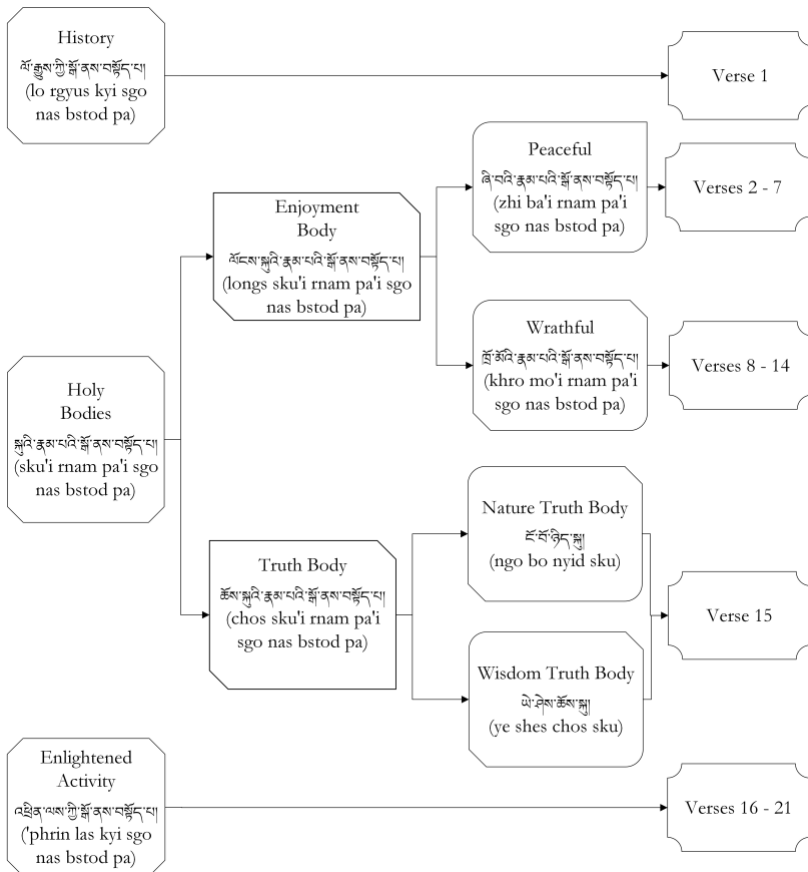
SO HÄ YI GER CHÄ LA RAB DÜ
To you with the syllables SVÄ HÄ, I completely bow.

The four-line condensed Tara praise is mainly a description of the ten-syllable mantra. It goes through the mantra “OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA,” describing the qualities of OM, the qualities of TARE, the qualities of TUTTARE and so forth. The purpose of our practice and study is to achieve the happiness we desire and be free from the suffering we don’t want, right?

OM symbolizes the holy body, holy speech and holy mind of the Buddha, free from fear and delusion. It also stands for our ordinary body, speech, and mind, which are currently overcome by fear and delusion. TARE is Tara, the swift, heroic TARE. TUTTARE expresses the eight different types of fears and bad dreams and signs. TURE accomplishes all wishes, and SVAHA plants the seed to achieve enlightenment. To these ten syllables, I pay homage.

Chart of the Categories

There are three main categories of praises: History, Holy Bodies, and Enlightened Activity. The History category has only one verse (Verse 1). The next category (Holy Bodies) is divided into Enjoyment Body and Truth Body. Enjoyment Body is further subdivided into Peaceful Aspect (Verses 2–7) and Wrathful Aspect (Verses 8–14). Truth Body has only one verse (Verse 15). The third category (Verses 16–21) refers to her Enlightened Activity.



Appendix A

Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (English Version)

OM Homage to the perfect pure Arya Tara.

- 1) Homage to you, Tara, the swift heroine,
Whose eyes are like an instant flash of lightning,
Whose water-born face arises from the blooming lotus
Of Avalokiteshvara, protector of the three worlds.
- 2) Homage to you, Tara, whose face is like
One hundred full autumn moons gathered together,
Blazing with the expanding light
Of a thousand stars assembled.
- 3) Homage to you, Tara, born from a golden-blue lotus,
Whose hands are beautifully adorned with lotus flowers,
You who are the embodiment of giving, joyous effort, asceticism,
Pacification, patience, concentration, and all objects of practice.
- 4) Homage to you, Tara, the crown pinnacle of those thus gone,
Whose deeds overcome infinite evils,
Who have attained transcendent perfections without exception,
And upon whom the sons of the victorious ones rely.
- 5) Homage to you, Tara, who with the letters TUTTARE and HUM
Fill the realms of desire, direction, and space,
Whose feet trample on the seven worlds,
And who are able to draw all beings to you.

- 6) Homage to you, Tara, venerated by Indra,
Agni, Brahma, Vayu, and Ishvara,
And praised by the assembly of spirits, raised corpses,
Gandharvas, and all yakshas.

- 7) Homage to you, Tara, whose TRAD and PHAT
Destroy entirely the magical wheels of others.
With your right leg bent and left outstretched and pressing,
You burn intensely within a whirl of fire.

- 8) Homage to you, Tara, the great fearful one,
Whose letter TURE destroys the mighty demons completely,
Who with a wrathful expression on your water-born face
Slay all enemies without an exception.

- 9) Homage to you, Tara, whose fingers adorn your heart
With the gesture of the sublime precious three;
Adorned with a wheel striking all directions without exception
With the totality of your own rays of light.

- 10) Homage to you, Tara, whose radiant crown ornament,
Joyful and magnificent, extends a garland of light,
And who, by your laughter of TUTTARE,
Conquer the demons and all of the worlds.

- 11) Homage to you, Tara, who are able to invoke
The entire assembly of local protectors,
Whose wrathful expression fiercely shakes,
Rescuing the impoverished through the letter HUM.

- 12) Homage to you, Tara, whose crown is adorned
With the crescent moon, wearing ornaments exceedingly bright;
From your hair knot, Buddha Amitabha
Radiates eternally with great beams of light.
- 13) Homage to you, Tara, who dwell within a blazing garland
That resembles the fire at the end of this world age;
Surrounded by joy, you sit with your right leg extended
And left withdrawn, completely destroying all the masses of
enemies.
- 14) Homage to you, Tara, with hand on the ground by your side,
Pressing your heel and stamping your foot on the earth;
With a wrathful glance from your eyes, you subdue
All seven levels through the syllable HUM.
- 15) Homage to you, Tara, happy, virtuous, and peaceful one,
The very object of practice, passed beyond sorrow.
You are perfectly endowed with SVAHA and OM,
Overcoming completely all the great evils.
- 16) Homage to you, Tara, surrounded by the joyous ones,
You completely subdue the bodies of all enemies;
Your speech is adorned with the ten syllables,
And you rescue all through the knowledge-letter HUM.
- 17) Homage to you, Tara, stamping your feet and proclaiming TURE.
Your seed-syllable itself in the aspect of HUM
Causes Meru, Mandhara, and the Vindhya mountains
And all the three worlds to tremble and shake.

- 18) Homage to you, Tara, who hold in your hand
The hare-marked moon like the celestial ocean.
By uttering TARA twice and the letter PHAT
You dispel all poisons without an exception.
- 19) Homage to you, Tara, upon whom the kings of the assembled
gods,
The gods themselves, and all kinnaras rely;
Whose magnificent armor gives joy to all,
You who dispel all disputes and bad dreams.
- 20) Homage to you, Tara, whose two eyes—the sun and the moon—
Radiate an excellent, illuminating light;
By uttering HARA twice and TUTTARE,
You dispel all violent epidemic disease.
- 21) Homage to you, Tara, adorned by the three suchnesses,
Perfectly endowed with the power of serenity,
You who destroy the host of evil spirits, raised corpses, and
yakshas,
Most excellent and sublime TURE.

Thus concludes this praise of the root mantra
And the offering of the twenty-one homages.

Appendix B

Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (English Chantable Version)

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 TUTTĀRA,
HŪM, 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 champion(s)!
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 TUTTĀRA,
Subjugating maras, devas!
- 11) Homage! She able to summon
All earth-guardians' assembly!
Shaking, frowning, with her HŪM 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 HŪM the
Seven levels she does conquer!
- 15) Homage! Happy, virtuous, peaceful!
She whose field is peace, nirvana!
She endowed with OM and SVĀHĀ,
Destroyer of the great evil!
- 16) Homage! She with joy surrounded
Tearing foes' bodies asunder,
Frees with HŪM and knowledge mantra,
Arrangement of the ten letters!
- 17) Homage! TURE! With seed letter
Of the shape of syllable HŪM!
By foot stamping shakes the three worlds,
Meru, Mandara and Vindhya!

- 18) Homage! Holding in her hand the
Hare-marked moon of deva-lake form!
With twice spoken TĀRA 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 TUTTĀRA
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

⁵ Colophon: Translated by Lama Thubten Yeshe and edited by Sylvia Wetzel, January 1979. Extracted from the Cittamani Tara sadhana published by Publications for Wisdom Culture for a retreat in August 1979 at Cornishead Priory, Ulverston, Cumbria, England. The chantable version is based on Martin Willson's chantable translation. Additionally checked against the Tibetan by Ven. George Churinoff and slightly revised for euphony by FPMT Education Services, January 2001.

Appendix C

Praises to the Twenty-One Taras (Tibetan Phonetic Version)

༄༅། །སྐྱེལ་མའི་བསྐྱོད་པ་བཞུགས་སོ།།

OM JE TSÜN MA PHAG MA DRÖL MA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO!

- 1) CHHAG TSHÄL DRÖL MA NYUR MA PA MO
CHÄN NI KÄ CHIG LOG DANG DRA MA
JIG TEN SUM GÖN CHHU KYE ZHÄL GYI
GE SAR JE WA LÄ NI JUNG MA

- 2) CHHAG TSHÄL TÖN KÄI DA WA KÜN TU
GANG WA GYA NI TSEG PÄI ZHÄL MA
KAR MA TONG TRAG TSHOG PA NAM KYI
RAB TU CHHE WÄI Ö RAB BAR MA

- 3) CHHAG TSHÄL SER NGO CHHU NÄ KYE KYI
PÄ MÄ CHAG NI NAM PAR GYÄN MA
JIN PA TSÖN DRÜ KA THUB ZHI WA
ZÖ PA SAM TÄN CHO YÜL NYI MA

- 4) CHHAG TSHÄL DE ZHIN SHEG PÄI TSUG TOR
THA YÄ NAM PAR GYÄL WAR CHÖ MA
MA LÜ PHA RÖL CHHIN PA THOB PÄI
GYAL WÄI SÄ KYI SHIN TU TEN MA

- 5) CHHAG TSHÄL TU TÄ RA HÜM YI GE
DÖ DANG CHOG DANG NAM KHA GANG MA
JIG TEN DÜN PO ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
LÜ PA ME PAR GUG PAR NÜ MA

- 6) CHHAG TSHÄL GYA JIN ME LHA TSHANG PA
LUNG LHA NA TSHOG WANG CHUG CHHÖ MA
JUNG PO RO LANG DRI ZA NAM DANG
NÖ JIN TSHOG KYI DÜN NÄ TÖ MA
- 7) CHHAG TSHÄL TRÄ CHE JA DANG PHÄ KYI
PHA RÖL TRÜL KHOR RAB TU JOM MA
YÄ KUM YÖN KYANG ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
ME BAR TRUG PA SHIN TU BAR MA
- 8) CHHAG TSHÄL TU RE JIG PA CHHEN PO
DÜ KYI PA WO NAM PAR JOM MA
CHHU KYE ZHÄL NI TRO NYER DÄN DZÄ
DRA WO THAM CHÄ MA LÜ SÖ MA
- 9) CHHAG TSHÄL KÖN CHHOG SUM TSHÖN CHHAG GYÄI
SOR MÖ THUG KAR NAM PAR GYÄN MA
MA LÜ CHHOG KYI KHOR LÖ GYÄN PÄI
RANG GI Ö KYI TSHOG NAM TRUG MA
- 10) CHHAG TSHÄL RAB TU GA WA JI PÄI
U GYÄN Ö KYI TRENG WA PEL MA
ZHÄ PA RAB ZHÄ TU TA RA YI
DÜ DANG JIG TEN WANG DU DZÄ MA
- 11) CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI KYONG WÄI TSHOG NAM
THAM CHÄ GUG PAR NÜ MA NYI MA
TRO NYER YO WÄI YE GE HÜM GI
PHONG PA THAM CHÄ NAM PAR DRÖL MA

- 12) CHHAG TSHÄL DA WÄI DUM BÜ U GYÄN
GYÄN PA THAM CHÄ SHIN TU BAR MA
RÄL PÄI THRÖ NÄ Ö PAG ME LÄ
TAG PAR SHIN TU Ö NI DZÄ MA
- 13) CHHAG TSHÄL KÄL PÄI THA MÄI ME TAR
BAR WÄI TRENG WÄI Ü NA NÄ MA
YÄ KYANG YÖN KUM KÜN NÄ KOR GÄI
DRA YI PUNG NI NAM PAR JOM MA
- 14) CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHII NGÖ LA CHHAG GI
THIL GYI NÜN CHING ZHAB KYI DUNG MA
THRO NYER CHÄN DZÄ YI GE HÜM GI
RIM PA DÜN PO NAM NI GEM MA
- 15) CHHAG TSHÄL DE MA GE MA ZHI MA
NYA NGÄN DÄ ZHI CHÖ YÜL NYI MA
SO HA OM DANG YANG DAG DÄN PÄ
DIG PA CHHEN PO JOM PA NYI MA
- 16) CHHAG TSHÄL KÜN NÄ KOR RAB GA WÄI
DRA YI LÜ NI RAB TU GEM MA
YI GE CHU PÄI NGAG NI KÖ PÄI
RIG PA HUM LÄ DRÖL MA NYI MA
- 17) CHHAG TSHÄL TU RE ZHAB NI DAB PÄ
HUM GI NAM PÄI SA BÖN NYI MA
RI RAB MAN DHA RA DANG BIG JE
JIG TEN SUM NAM YO WA NYI MA

- 18) CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHO YI NAM PÄI
RI DAG TAG CHÄN CHHAG NA NAM MA
TA RA NYI JÖ PHÄ KYI YI GE
DUG NAM MA LÜ PA NI SEL MA
- 19) CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHOG NAM GYÄL PO
LHA DANG MI AM CHI YI TEN MA
KÜN NÄ GO CHHA GA WÄI JI KYI
TSÖ DANG MI LAM NGÄN PA SEL MA
- 20) CHHAG TSHÄL NYI MA DA WA GYÄ PÄI
CHÄN NYI PO LA Ö RAB SÄL MA
HA RA NYI JÖ TU TA RA YI
SHIN TU DRAG PÖI RIM NÄ SEL MA
- 21) CHHAG TSHÄL DE NYI SUM NAM KÖ PÄ
ZHI WÄI THU DANG YANG DAG DÄN MA
DÖN DANG RO LANG NÖ JIN TSHOG NAM
JOM PA TU RE RAB CHHOG NYI MA

TSA WÄI NGAG KYI TÖ PA DI DANG
CHHAG TSHÄL WA NI NYI SHU TSA CHIG

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Lobpon Nyima Bepa, *Tengyur Pedhurma* volume, Tantra section, Sha subsection, p. 859-907

Khenchen Palden Sherab, *The Smile of Sun and Moon*. Boca Raton: Sky Dancer Press, 2004.

Note: different texts and lineages use different classifications, colors, and names for the Taras. For the purpose of this book, *The Jewel Garland* was the reference for the categories and names of the Taras, and *The Smile of Sun and Moon* was the reference for the colors of the Taras.

Dedication

We wish to express our deepest and most heartfelt gratitude to our precious teacher Venerable Geshe Ngawang Tenley, not only for giving the original teachings, but also for allowing us the privilege of editing and publishing his first book. In Tibetan, the meaning of the word *tenley* is “enlightened activity.” Arya Tara is the embodiment of the enlightened activity of all the buddhas, and it seems to be no coincidence that Geshe-la’s great devotion to the liberating mother and his extensive activities on behalf of sentient beings is reflected in his name.

We hope this publication will be of benefit to current and future generations of practitioners and will help to create the causes for wisdom and compassion to be generated and increased within their minds. We dedicate any merit generated through this undertaking to the long, stable lives of all virtuous friends, particularly Venerable Geshe Ngawang Tenley, who tirelessly works for others and inspires us to do the same.

All mistakes in this work are our own and we ask both Geshe Tenley’s and the reader’s patience and forgiveness for these.

Wendy Cook

Kimber Fitzmorgan

Laura Haughey

Marta Łuczyńska

Jennifer Miller

Edmund Pignone



GESHE NGAWANG TENLEY was born in Kham in eastern Tibet in 1969. He was ordained in 1990 and that year, following the advice of his teachers, he began the geshe study program at Sera Jey Monastic University. In November 2008, after eighteen years of rigorous studies, he was conferred the geshe degree.

During that time, Geshe Tsultrim Chöpel (Geshe Tsulga) was the Resident Teacher at Kurukulla Center. Geshe Tsulga was not only Geshe Tenley's uncle, but also his teacher and closest mentor. It was under Geshe Tsulga's guidance that Geshe Tenley began teaching at Kurukulla Center in 2005. In 2010, following Geshe Tsulga's passing, Geshe Tenley was appointed Resident Teacher by the Kurukulla Center Board of Directors, following the advice of Lama Zopa Rinpoche, Spiritual Director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT).

During Geshe Tenley's tenure, Kurukulla Center continues to be a spiritual hub for both Western students and also people from a wide variety of local immigrant communities with Buddhist cultural and religious traditions. He has developed strong connections with religious leaders from the many different traditions in the Boston area.

As a result of Geshe Tenley's deep appreciation for His Holiness the Dalai Lama's commitment to inter-religious harmony, he initiated the Sakadawa Interfaith Celebration in 2014. This annual event brings together community members and local faith leaders representing all the major world religions.

Geshe Tenley is a member of the Medford Interfaith Clergy Association and the International Association of Non-Sectarian Tibetan Religious Traditions. He is the Spiritual Advisor for the Geshe Tsulga Non-Profit Association, and serves as Buddhist chaplain for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, MA.

Kurukulla Center

Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Buddhist Studies was initiated by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, the Spiritual Director of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), in September 1989, with Geshe Losang Jampa as Resident Teacher. Sadly, eighteen months after arriving in Boston, Geshe Jampa-la passed away.

In late 1993, our beloved Geshe Tsulga arrived in Boston to become Resident Teacher. At first, teachings were held in Geshe-la's apartments and at the Wisdom Publications office on Newbury Street in Boston, Massachusetts, USA. From 1997 until late 2001, most of the teachings were held at the Friends Meeting House in Cambridge, until January 2002, when we moved into our permanent home on Magoun Avenue in Medford. Geshe Tsulga taught extensively and with great success, energizing and developing the community for seventeen years. Sadly Geshe-la developed cancer, passing away in the fall of 2010. Following Geshe-la's passing, his nephew, Geshe Ngawang Tenley, was appointed Resident Teacher and has continued to develop Kurukulla Center's vast activities.

For over thirty years, many exceptional teachers have taught at Kurukulla Center, including His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who has visited twice. Since moving to Medford, the center has also served the local Tibetan community in many ways. Kurukulla Center continues to develop as a wish-fulfilling jewel for the people of the Boston area for future generations and for all beings.

www.kurukulla.org

www.fpmt.org