



A COMMENTARY ON

Praises to the Twenty-one Taras

**KHENSUR RINPOCHE
LAMA LHUNDRUP RIGSEL**







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Twenty-one Taras**

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LAMA LHUNDRUP RIGSEL

A COMMENTARY ON

Praises to the
Twenty-one Taras

TRANSLATED BY
VENERABLE TENZIN GYURME

EDITED BY
LOBSANG DROLKAR



Amitabha
Buddhist Centre
阿弥陀佛佛教中心

Dedication

Through the merit created by preparing, reading, thinking about and sharing this book with others, may all teachers of the Dharma have long and healthy lives, may the Dharma spread throughout the infinite reaches of space and may all sentient beings quickly attain enlightenment.

May the merit created also be dedicated to the quick return of the unmistakable reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsel. May all favourable conditions for the successful completion of the stupas to be built in his memory arise immediately.

In whichever realm, country, area or place this book may be, may there be no war, drought, famine, disease, injury, disharmony or unhappiness, may there be only great prosperity, may everything needed be easily obtained and may all be guided by only perfectly qualified Dharma teachers, enjoy the happiness of Dharma, have love and compassion for all sentient beings and only benefit and never harm each other.

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Publisher's Acknowledgements

Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup's long and enduring relationship with Amitabha Buddhist Centre began in 1998 where, for the first time, he presided over our annual Vesak Day Celebrations. For the next twelve years, he was to grace this special event without fail as well as revisiting us in October for our annual Medicine Buddha Dharma Celebrations that started in 2007.

It is impossible to count the number of people Khensur Rinpoche brought to the Dharma and the number of the students he had guided, advised and benefited over the years. He was a deeply loved and highly respected lama who radiated great kindness, compassion and wisdom, inspiring everyone with his joy in and devotion to the Dharma.

Ever humble and self-effacing, Khensur Rinpoche rarely had his teachings published. Therefore we are extremely pleased to be able to offer this commentary by Khensur Rinpoche on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* that was taught over three sessions at Amitabha Buddhist Centre in May 2005.

We wish to thank Venerable Tenzin Gyurme for translating the teachings.

This book had been compiled by a team of dedicated volunteers to whom we are extremely grateful: Phuah Soon Ek, Stephanie Ng and Angie Xiao for transcribing the teachings; Soh Seok Keim for her editorial support; Lobsang Drolkar for editing the transcripts; and Paul Lim for his assistance in proof-reading. The responsibility for any errors in this book is entirely mine.

We thank *Mandala* magazine for their kind permission to use extracts from their article on Khensur Rinpoche, *Mother, Father, Teacher, Friend: The Incomparable Kindness of Kopan's Treasured Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsel* in its October – December 2011 issue.

We also wish to thank Nick Ribush of Lama Yeshe Wisdom Archive and Tom Truty for their assistance in providing additional editorial materials and the FPMT Education Department for their kind permission to use the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* and the *Prayer of the Benefits from Essential Buddhist Prayers, An FPMT Prayer Book, Common Centre Practices*, Volume 2, 2009 edition and extracts from *Benefits and Practices related to Statues & Stupas* by Lama Zopa Rinpoche, copyright: FPMT, Inc. 2003.

Ng Swee Kim
Publications Group
Amitabha Buddhist Centre
3rd April 2012



Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi making offering at long life puja

Foreword

KHEN RINPOCHE GESHE CHONYI

The fact that today I am a monk who has been able to complete my geshe studies is due in no small part to Khensur Rinpoche's wise advice and guidance at important turning points in my life.

At the age of 16 I questioned the purpose of my life as a young monk. I felt I knew nothing and my brother suggested that I leave the monastery and go to high school. At that time, Khensur Rinpoche counselled me: "However much your brother studies or however much money he makes, it won't help in his future lives. You will reap the benefits in your future lives by staying here and reciting prayers." That advice was very helpful for my mind and I stayed on in the monastery.

In 1980, Lama Yeshe and Khensur Rinpoche had the idea that some Kopan monks should attend Sera Je Monastic University in South India to further their studies. Four monks were chosen and I was one of them.

I hear that some Singapore parents would go abroad with their children to settle them in when they leave home for the first time to study overseas. In the same way, Khensur Rinpoche accompanied us to Sera. Of course, the journey was far less comfortable than flying in an aeroplane as we had to travel by bus and train for over 50 hours! We had no train reservations and the trains were always so full. One time, we even had to pull Khensur Rinpoche into the train carriage through a window.

Khensur Rinpoche stayed with us for two weeks at Sera Je and sent us off to debate every evening. One night I returned and told him I couldn't stay on. I complained that I couldn't understand or learn anything, I found the debates boring, I had no friends and the food was bad. His reply? "How can you say that when you have been here for less than two weeks! After three years, you will know whether this is the right place for you or not."

Discouraging me from returning to Kopan made me come to my senses. Due to that kindness, I ended up spending 18 years in Sera Je where I had the opportunity to study the teachings of the Buddha in-depth and today I have the great honour and privilege of serving Kopan Monastery as its abbot.

I am therefore most delighted and happy that Amitabha Buddhist Centre has decided to publish this commentary by Khensur Rinpoche on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. The practice of Tara is highly respected and revered for its effectiveness in fulfilling Dharmic wishes and clearing hindrances for sincere and devoted practitioners.

Like the great holy beings of the past, Khensur Rinpoche had great faith in and devotion towards Mother Tara. This commentary therefore bears the special blessing of his personal experience with the power and effectiveness of the practice of Tara.

Mother Tara is also a very popular practice among Khensur Rinpoche's students in Singapore. I am sure this commentary will further deepen their understanding of the inconceivable qualities of Mother Tara's holy body, speech and mind and thereby enhance the quality of their practice.

I pray that whoever sees, hears or thinks about, studies or even merely remember the existence of this commentary will be able to attain the state of Mother Tara without delay and

be quickly reunited with the unmistakable reincarnation of
Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup.

2nd April 2012
Singapore



Biography

OF KHENSUR RINPOCHE
LAMA LHUNDRUP RIGSEL

Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsel was born in Tibet in 1941 to a poor peasant family. He joined Sera Monastery while still a boy and left for India in 1959. While at Buxa Duar in India, he met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche and studied with great masters such as Geshe Rabten and others.

In 1972, he was requested by Lama Yeshe to look after a small group of 30 young monks in Kopan Monastery, Nepal. Thus began Khensur Rinpoche's 40 years of service in various capacities at Kopan. This culminated in the title of Khen Rinpoche (abbot) being officially bestowed on him by the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2001 although he had been the de facto abbot since the time of Lama Yeshe's death in 1984. He remained in this position until July 2011 when the responsibility of the abbot of Kopan was passed on to Geshe Thubten Chonyi.

Khensur Rinpoche received his geshe degree from Sera Monastery in 1987. He travelled to Sera Je for the final debate and his debate was reputedly one of the most memorable in Sera's recent history.

Kopan Monastery grew from strength to strength under Khensur Rinpoche's leadership and guidance. Since 1972, nearly 800 monks have been educated there, including the 370 in residence today. Kopan House at Sera Monastery, part of Tsawa Khamtzen, now houses around 80 Kopan monks on their way to becoming geshe. Kopan monks also study at Gyume Tantric College and at the Central University of Tibetan Studies in Sarnath. Six resident geshe of FPMT centres are from Kopan.



With Jangtse Choje Lobsang Tenzin Rinpoche

One of Khensur Rinpoche's most significant accomplishments was establishing the philosophy studies program that leads to a geshe degree at Kopan. This program has been officially recognised in 2010 and has produced, to date, 15 rabjampa geshe with many more studying towards this degree. As a result of Khensur Rinpoche's dedicated efforts, Kopan Monastery joins the three great Gelug monasteries (Sera, Ganden and Drepung) and Tashi Lhunpo as institutions bestowing geshe degrees to its monks.

With the same foresight, Khensur Rinpoche also started the philosophy studies program for the nuns of Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery, which was established in 1986. In a few years' time, the first nuns will be graduating and obtaining the rank of geshema, thanks to Khensur Rinpoche's vision. To date, the nunnery has educated over 450 nuns with 350 nuns currently in residence.

Khensur Rinpoche helped to establish the Nepal Gelug Great Monlam Prayer Festival that Kopan hosts every year. He also helped to create the Nepal Gelug Education Forum attended every year by all the Gelug monasteries in Nepal to debate during the Jayang Guncho, the annual inter-monastic debates. In 2010, the first Gelug Exams, an important step in continuing the philosophy studies at Sera Je, were held for the participating monasteries.

In addition to the hundreds of monks and nuns that Khensur Rinpoche looked after, many more were his students in Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and Taiwan where he travelled regularly to give teachings. Several thousand students have also attended the annual meditation and other Dharma courses at Kopan over the years. Khensur Rinpoche's impact on these students, through giving refuge vows, teachings and advice, is incalculable. These students in turn have gone on to benefit many others with their newfound Dharma understanding and knowledge.



Tooth relic

In this way, Khensur Rinpoche (or Lama Lhundrup as he was more widely known) tirelessly served his gurus and carried out their holy wishes, fulfilling their vision for Kopan. Khensur Rinpoche was much loved for his great compassion, kindness and wisdom, and deeply venerated for his unceasing concern and care for everyone who sought his help and advice.

In January 2011, Khensur Rinpoche was diagnosed with cancer and he passed away on 7th September 2011.

Amazing relics from Khensur Rinpoche

Although Khensur Rinpoche was always extremely humble and modest, his perfect qualities and the power of his spiritual accomplishments manifested in the amazing number and quality of the relics found in the ashes after his cremation. In death as in life, Khensur Rinpoche never stopped in his work to benefit all sentient beings.

The benefit and the blessing of merely seeing the relics of such a holy being cannot be adequately described. The benefit of being actually blessed with them is therefore even more inconceivable.

What are relics and how do they come about?

Relics are the remains of holy beings who have devoted their entire lives to virtuous spiritual practice and who have achieved very high spiritual attainments. They manifest relics as a means of passing on the blessings of their body, speech and mind.

Relics can only come about through the most intensive Dharma practice with the purest of motivations to benefit others at all times. They are the result of having achieved



Conch relic

realisations, with making very strong prayers and observing pure morality over countless lifetimes.

There are many different types of relics: some are bones or teeth, others are like blessed pills, appearing like pearls, jewels or crystallised deposits. They can also spontaneously multiply over time as have occurred with many of Khensur Rinpoche's relics. This is said to be an indication of the power of his realisations.

How do relics benefit us?

Due to the power of the qualities and spiritual attainments of the holy being who produced the relics, merely seeing them (even in photographs), thinking about or remembering them can help us accumulate extensive merit and purify our negative karma.

Therefore, as and when we have the good fortune to see Khensur Rinpoche's relics, we are advised to think in the following way:

- At this time, Khensur Rinpoche is benefiting me by emanating relics that will ultimately lead me to liberation and enlightenment.
- I rejoice deeply in the deeds and realisations of Khensur Rinpoche.
- May I be able to become like him, always working selflessly for the welfare and benefit of others, in this and all future lives to come.



**Praises to the
Twenty-one Taras**

(LITERAL ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

OM JE TSÜN MA PHAG MA DRÖL MA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
OM Homage to the Venerable Arya Tara.

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

Homage to you, Tara, the swift heroine,
Whose eyes are like the instant flash of lightning,
Whose water-born face arises from the blooming lotus
Of Avalokiteshvara, protector of the three worlds.

2

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHHAG TSHÄL TUTTARA HUM YI GE
DÖ DANG CHHOG DANG NAM KHA GANG MA
JIG TEN DÜN PO ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
LÜ PA ME PAR GUG PAR NÜ MA

Homage to you, Tara, who with the letters TUTTARA 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

CHHAG TSHÄL GYA JIN ME LHA TSHANG PA
LUNG LHA NA TSHOG WANG CHHUG CHHÖ MA
JUNG PO RO LANG DRI ZA NAM DANG
NÖ JIN TSHOG KYI DÜN NÄ TÖ MA

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

CHHAG TSHÄL TRAD CHE JA DANG PHAT KYI
PHA RÖL THRÜL KHOR RAB TU JOM MA
YÄ KUM YÖN KYANG ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
ME BAR THRUG PA SHIN TU BAR MA

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

CHHAG TSHÄL TURE JIG PA CHHEN PO
DÜ KYI PA WO NAM PAR JOM MA
CHHU KYE ZHÄL NI THRO NYER DÄN DZÄ
DRA WO THAM CHÄ MA LÜ SÖ MA

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

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 THRUG MA

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

CHHAG TSHÄL RAB TU GA WA JI PÄI
U GYÄN Ö KYI THRENG WA PEL MA
ZHE PA RAB ZHÄ TUTTARA YI
DÜ DANG JIG TEN WANG DU DZÄ MA

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

11

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI KYONG WÄI TSHOG NAM
THAM CHÄ GUG PAR NÜ MA NYI MA
THRO NYER YO WÄI YI GE HUM GI
PHONG PA THAM CHÄ NAM PAR DRÖL MA

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

12

CHHAG TSHÄL DA WÄI DUM BÜ U GYÄN
GYÄN PA THAM CHÄ SHIN TU BAR MA
RÄL PÄI KHUR NA Ö PAG ME LÄ
TAG PAR SHIN TU Ö RAB DZÄ MA

Homage to you, Tara, whose crown is adorned
With the crescent moon, wearing ornaments exceedingly bright.
From your hair knot the buddha Amitabha
Radiates eternally with great beams of light.

13

CHHAG TSHÄL KÄL PÄI THA MÄI ME TAR
BAR WÄI THRENG WÄI Ü NA NÄ MA
YÄ KYANG YÖN KUM KÜN NÄ KOR GÄI
DRA YI PUNG NI NAM PAR JOM MA

Homage to you, Tara, who dwells 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

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI NGÖ LA CHHAG GI
THIL GYI NÜN CHING ZHAB KYI DUNG MA
THRO NYER CHÄN DZÄ YI GE HUM GI
RIM PA DÜN PO NAM NI GEM MA

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

CHHAG TSHÄL DE MA GE MA ZHI MA
NYA NGÄN DÄ ZHI CHÖ YÜL NYI MA
SVAHA OM DANG YANG DAG DÄN PÄ
DIG PA CHHEN PO JOM PA NYI MA

Homage to you, Tara, O 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

CHHAG TSHÄL KÜN NÄ KOR RAB GA WÄI
DRA YI LÜ NI NAM PAR GEM MA
YI GE CHU PÄI NGAG NI KÖ PÄI
RIG PA HUM LÄ DRÖL MA NYI MA

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

CHHAG TSHÄL TURE ZHAB NI DEB PÄ
HUM GI NAM PÄI SA BÖN NYI MA
RI RAB MANDHARA DANG BIG JE
JIG TEN SUM NAM YO WA NYI MA

Homage to you, Tara, stamping your feet and proclaiming TURE.
Your seed syllable itself in the aspect of HUM
Causes Meru, Mandhara and the Vindya mountains
And all the three worlds to tremble and shake.

18

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHO YI NAM PÄI
RI DAG TAG CHÄN CHHAG NA NAM MA
TARA NYI JÖ PHAT KYI YI GE
DUG NAM MA LÜ PA NI SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, who holds 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

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHOG NAM GYÄL PO
LHA DANG MI AM CHI YI TEN MA
KÜN NÄ GO CHHA GA WÄI JI GYI
TSÖ DANG MI LAM NGÄN PA SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, upon whom the kings of the assembled gods,
The gods themselves and all kinnaras rely;
Whose magnificent armour gives joy to all,
You who dispel all disputes and bad dreams.

20

CHHAG TSHÄL NYI MA DA WA GYÄ PÄI
CHÄN NYI PO LA Ö RAB SÄL MA
HARA NYI JÖ TUTTARA YI
SHIN TU DRAG PÖI RIM NÄ SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, whose two eyes – the sun and the moon –
Radiate an excellent, illuminating light;
By uttering HARA twice and TUTTARA,
You dispel all violent epidemic diseases.

21

CHHAG TSHÄL DE NYI SUM NAM KÖ PÄ
ZHI WÄI THÜ DANG YANG DAG DÄN MA
DÖN DANG RO LANG NÖ JIN TSHOG NAM
JOM PA TURE RAB CHHOG NYI MA

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,
O TURE, most excellent and sublime!

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

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

Colophon:

Literal English Translation of the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* by Lama Thubten Yeshe and originally edited by Sylvia Wetzels, January 1979. Extracted from the Chittamani Tara sadhana published for retreat in August 1979 by Publications for Wisdom Culture at Conishead Priory, Ulverston, Cumbria, England.

Prayer of the Benefits

Whoever is endowed with devotion for the goddess
And recites this with supreme faith,
Remembering it at dawn upon waking and in the evenings,
Will be granted all fearlessness,
Will perfectly pacify all negativities,
And will eliminate all unfortunate migrations.

The multitudes of conquerors,
Will quickly grant us initiation:
Thus endowed with this greatness
One will eventually reach the stage of a buddha.

If affected by the most terrible poison,
Whether ingested, drunk or from a living being,
Just by remembering,
One will be thoroughly cleansed.

It will pacify all the sufferings of torments
Caused by spirits, fevers and poisons,
And by other beings as well.

If this prayer is recited two, three or seven times,
If you wish for a child, you will get a child;
If you wish for wealth, you will receive wealth.
All your wishes will be fulfilled
And all obstacles pacified.

Prayer of the Benefits

Colophon:

Prayer of the Benefits from the *Abbreviated Four-Mandala Ritual to Chittamani Tara*, composed by Kyabje Trijang Rinpoche of Gaden, at the request of Tsering, the son of officer Nyemo (a district of central Tibet), who is endowed with faith and a superior virtuous attitude.

Translated from Tibetan by Fabrizio Champa Pelgye at the request of the Education Department of the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition.



First Session

THURSDAY, MAY 26, 2005

At this time we have obtained this human life of leisure and opportunities that is difficult to find but once found has great meaning. At this time we have met with the perfectly qualified Mahayana guru who can show us the complete and unmistakable path, without any missing elements, i.e., he shows us a path that can lead us to the state of full enlightenment.

After having found such an opportunity, we need to take the essence from this life. The best way of taking the essence from this life is to make this life most meaningful. We need to strive to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

In order to achieve the state of full enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings, we must practise the vast and profound Mahayana teachings. But in the course of practising the Mahayana teachings to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, which is the path to enlightenment, sometimes we may meet with all sorts of hindrances and obstacles. There may be both outer and inner obstacles such as life obstacles and other problems. We need to pacify all these different kinds of obstacles in our quest for enlightenment.

We also need to gather all the favourable conditions in order to have success. In order to achieve this, we need to rely on the special meditational deities, someone to whom we can pray and make a wholehearted request for our wishes to be fulfilled, such as success in our Dharma practice and so forth.

The deity here is Tara. We should think, “In order to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am now going to listen to this commentary on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*.”

In essence, the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* expresses the different qualities of Tara—the qualities of her holy body, holy speech and holy mind—and praises her by way of these twenty-one verses of homage. You should think, “It is for the purpose of achieving enlightenment that I am going to receive this

commentary.” You should do so with a mind of faith. While receiving the teachings, you should feel very happy, delighted and enthusiastic.

Today I will offer a short explanation of the meaning of the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*, a prayer that I guess most of you know. This prayer contains twenty-one verses. Here you will find the twenty-one different aspects or forms of Tara, each holding different hand implements.

Tara is a deity whom all the holy beings of the past had relied upon. The great Indian masters of the past, such as Atisha, relied on Tara as a special deity. The great Kadampa masters of Tibet, Lama Tsongkhapa and all the lineage gurus relied on Tara. In short, when you look at all the holy beings of the four different traditions—Nyingma, Sakya, Kagyü and Gelug—they had relied on Tara as their special deity. They all received blessings and attainments just by doing the practice of Tara.

When we rely on Tara, whatever wishes we have will quickly be accomplished. We may wish to have success and all the favourable conditions for our Dharma practice. We may wish to pacify obstacles or, in relation to our worldly life, to have success in business. In short, whatever activities we need to engage in, when we make prayers to and rely on Tara, because of her enlightened activities, she will respond very fast and all our wishes will be quickly accomplished.

In general all the buddhas have the same level of realisations in terms of the obstructions that they have abandoned. In terms of their realisations, they are all the same. But there is a difference in the prayers that they made while they were on the path. Due to the special prayers that Tara made while practising on the path to enlightenment, if you were to rely on Tara by praying to her to accomplish whatever activities you do such as business, Dharma practice and so forth, it is said that our wishes will be granted more

quickly. In fact, Tara is a deity whose practice is easier to do and you can get faster results.

“Je tsün dröl ma” is translated in English as the noble liberator, Tara. Tara is a special deity and, just by thinking of her, seeing her form and reciting her mantra, not only will our temporal wishes be accomplished very quickly, it goes without saying that our negative karma accumulated over many eons will also be purified. Also by thinking of her, seeing her form and reciting her mantra, the potential is also placed in our mind for us to achieve the state of full enlightenment.

Whether we want to achieve our own purposes, or we want to achieve the purposes of other sentient beings, or whatever wishes we may have with regard to whatever activities we need to do, when we make heartfelt request with faith to Tara, whether it is a short-term goal or a long-term objective, they will succeed quickly.

Tara is unlike worldly gods. Worldly gods do not have this kind of power. Even if they have some power, they may benefit us temporarily but they may not help us continuously.

Tara is not like that because she is an infallible object of refuge. That means she will never cheat any sentient being. In terms of achieving short-term and long-term goals, she is the one we should rely on because her sole reason for her existence is to benefit sentient beings. From our side, when we make our requests with faith, without doubt, all our wishes will naturally be accomplished very quickly.

When we talk about the enlightened activities that the buddhas perform for sentient beings, they are effortless and spontaneous, i.e., they do not need to think about when to do them. So we should not have any doubts.

When we have doubts about Tara’s abilities, it will only become an obstacle for us to achieve our wishes especially

since this practice is related to Mahayana tantra, the tantric teachings of the Buddha. The tantric teachings of the Buddha are accomplished through the power of faith and conviction. There is no reason to entertain any doubts. From our side, we should have the belief and conviction in Tara. It is said that by relying on Tara, our wishes will be accomplished very quickly. By thinking of these benefits, keeping them in our mind and remembering them all the time, we then rely on Tara.

When we rely on Tara in such a manner, whatever problems we may have, for example, when we are sick, she can pacify our sickness. When we are mentally unhappy, by praying to Tara, she will help us. Whatever goals we may have in terms of our Dharma practice, all the experiences and the realisations of the path that we want to generate, by relying on Tara, all of these will be accomplished. We should remind ourselves all the time by thinking, “I am going to rely on Tara, my special meditational deity, and I am going to accomplish this practice.”

So now we are going to look at the actual twenty-one verses of the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. This commentary is divided into three parts:

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(The complete outline of the commentary can be found on page 109.)



1. The brief exposition of these praises
2. An extensive explanation of these praises
 - A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend
 - B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects
 - 1) Praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect (complete enjoyment body)
 - a. Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect
 - i. Praising Tara with reference to the brilliance of her holy face and the mass of light blazing from her holy body
 - ii. Praising Tara with reference to the colour of her holy body, the implements she is holding and the causes that bring about the attainment of the state of Tara
 - iii. Praising Tara with reference to the respect that is shown to her by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas
 - iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she overcomes all opposing factors
 - v. Praising Tara with reference to how even the great worldly gods worship her
 - vi. Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys all opponents
 - b. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect (truth body)
 - C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities

1. The brief exposition of these praises

OM JE TSÜN MA PHAG MA DRÖL MA LA CHHAG TSHÄL LO
OM Homage to the Venerable Arya Tara.

The brief exposition of these praises specifically refers to “OM Homage to the Venerable Arya Tara.” This line is expressing the quality of Tara.

- The first syllable, “OM,” is made up of three parts: A, U, M. These three elements make up the syllable OM. OM represents the holy body, holy speech and holy mind of the object of one’s prostration; in this case, Tara.
- “Je tsün”: “Je” refers to the fact that she is the supreme mother of all the buddhas. “Tsün” is usually translated as venerable or noble. She is the noble one because she possesses the three classes of vows. They are:
 1. the individual liberation vows (or the pratimoksha vows)
 2. the bodhisattva vows
 3. the tantric vows
- She is an Arya (or superior being) because she does not abide in the extremes of samsara and nirvana. That means she is free from both the extreme of cyclic existence and the extreme of nirvana. Therefore she is called an Arya.

This line is sometimes translated as, “OM I prostrate to the noble transcendent liberator.”

- Tara is the liberator because she saves all sentient beings from suffering.

- When we say, “I prostrate,” it means to pay homage with one’s body, speech and mind. The Tibetan word for prostration is “*chhag tshäl*.” When we investigate the meaning of these two words individually:
 1. “*chhag*” refers to getting rid of all the faults in one’s mental continuum.
 2. “*tshäl*” refers to beseeching her to bestow realisations upon oneself.

In essence, the first line is saying, “I am prostrating to the one who is the supreme mother of the victors; who is in the nature of the holy body, holy speech and holy mind of all the buddhas.” Thinking how Tara is the same as all the buddhas and how her enlightened activities in benefiting sentient beings are faster and quicker than the other buddhas, you prostrate to Tara who possesses all these qualities.

On the basis of remembering the qualities of Tara’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind, and her enlightened activities with her perfect compassion and perfect power, we go for refuge in and rely on Tara wholeheartedly. When we can do this in our mind all the time, that would be wonderful.

We have now covered the first part of the commentary: the brief exposition of these praises.

2. An extensive explanation of these praises

Now is the second part of the commentary: an extensive explanation of these praises. This is divided into three parts:

- A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend
- B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects
- C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities

A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend

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

Homage to you, Tara, the swift heroine,
Whose eyes are like the instant flash of lightning,
Whose water-born face arises from the blooming lotus
Of Avalokiteshvara, protector of the three worlds.

“Homage to you, Tara, the swift heroine”: to whom are we prostrating? We are prostrating to the liberator, Mother Tara. Why is she called the liberator? This is because she takes sentient beings out from cyclic existence.

In this verse, Tara is known as “Tara, the swift heroine.” Here, “swift” is used because her enlightened activities in benefiting sentient beings are faster and quicker than all the other buddhas. Therefore she is known as “the swift heroine.” “Heroine” means she destroys the host of maras without leaving any behind.

“Whose eyes are like the instant flash of lightning”: the “eyes” here refer to the wisdom eyes. Her wisdom eyes are likened to an instant flash of lightning. They are as fast and as quick as a flash of lightning because she sees each and every object of knowledge in an instant, i.e., she comprehends all phenomena instantly. Therefore her “eyes are like the instant flash of lightning.”

Next we go to the last line, “Of Avalokiteshvara, protector of the three worlds.” The three worlds are:

1. the world of nagas
2. the human world
3. the world of the gods

It is Avalokiteshvara who is the “protector of the three worlds.”

Now back to the third line, “Whose water-born face arises from the blooming lotus”: the “Whose” here refers to Tara. This line refers to the origins of Tara, the legend of how Tara came about. It is said that a long time ago, after Avalokiteshvara had achieved enlightenment, every day he was able to liberate countless sentient beings from cyclic existence, leading them from happiness to happiness, to liberation and to enlightenment.

After having worked for sentient beings in such a way every day for many eons, he decided to investigate with his omniscient mind and see how many sentient beings were still left behind. From his investigation, he realised that there were still so many sentient beings left. He became discouraged, saying, “I am not benefiting sentient beings. I still cannot benefit all these sentient beings.” He began to cry and tears fell from his holy eyes. The tears fell on the soil and a tear became a lotus. The lotus bloomed and inside the lotus was Tara.

Tara said to Avalokiteshvara, “Please don’t worry. I will help you in your quest to lead all sentient beings to enlightenment.” Tara made this promise. This verse is praising Tara by referring to the legend of how she came about.

When Tara was training on the path, before she became a buddha, she entered the path by first generating bodhicitta, the altruistic intention to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings, in the presence of many buddhas. At that time she was known as Yeshe Dawa.

The soon-to-be Tara generated bodhicitta in the presence of a buddha named the Tathagata Sound of the Drum. She made many offerings to this buddha and finally generated bodhicitta. After having generated bodhicitta, she entered into meditative equipoise for a very long time and she finally attained a special kind of patience or forbearance that was able to withstand all the unfavourable conditions and circumstances.

She continued to practise and one day she achieved the concentration called the concentration that liberates migrating sentient beings. After achieving this particular concentration, in just a single morning, she was able to lead countless numbers of sentient beings to the Dharma. She continued to engage in these activities of liberating sentient beings and she finally got the name, the “liberator.” This is how she got this name, the “liberator” or Tara.

With her special concentration, she was able to subdue the host of maras and all sorts of different gods such as Ishvara, Shiva and so forth for a very long time. Doing that for a long time, she got the name, “the swift heroine.”

Through practising for a long time she achieved the six perfections and finally she achieved enlightenment. At the time of her enlightenment many buddhas gave her empowerments. From that time on she was called the mother of all the buddhas.

Now you know how Tara came about. According to legend, Tara was born from the tear of Avalokiteshvara. When Tara emerged from the lotus, she said, “I will help you to free all sentient beings.” Tara said, “Just by reciting my name, reciting my mantra and remembering me, you will purify all obscurations, you will be quickly freed from all fears and from the different kinds of suffering and you will quickly find yourself out of cyclic existence.”

By relying on Tara, one's lifespan will also be increased. So if you want a long life, you should rely on Tara. There are many accounts of past holy masters who initially had very short lives and somehow, just by relying on Tara, by practising Tara, they gained visions of Tara and were able to live for a very long time. There are many accounts of such holy beings extending their lifespan through the practice of Tara.

As I mentioned before, the great Indian masters of the past had relied on Tara. When we look at the earlier masters in Tibet and the great Kadampa masters, all of them relied on Tara. The great Lama Tsongkhapa and all the holders of his lineage up to this day rely on Tara as their special meditational deity.

The great Kadampa master Dromtönpa had a vision of Tara who made the promise, "I will personally support and help all future followers of your Kadampa tradition." Since we are the followers of Lama Tsongkhapa who is part of this earlier Kadampa tradition, we are the objects of that promise. When we rely on Tara with wholehearted faith and conviction, we will experience her enlightened activities quickly. This is a short explanation of the origins of Tara.

B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects

This section, praising Tara with reference to her aspects, is divided into two main sections: (1) praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect (complete enjoyment body) and (2) praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect (truth body).

Praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect is further divided into two sections: (a.) praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect and (b.) praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect.

**1) Praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect
(complete enjoyment body)**

a. Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect

Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect has six parts,
the first of which is:

**i. Praising Tara with reference to the brilliance of her holy
face and the mass of light blazing from her holy body**

2

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

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.

“Homage to you, Tara”: whom are we prostrating to now? We are prostrating to Tara whose holy face is like “one hundred full autumn moons gathered together.” An autumn moon is very white, beautiful and round like the full moon that is not obscured by clouds. Furthermore the brilliance of her holy face is not just like one moon but like one hundred of such beautiful perfect moons. Her holy face is as bright as if it is “blazing with the expanding light of a thousand stars assembled” together. So we are prostrating to someone who has such a beautiful face.

Tara possesses this kind of brilliance and splendour. Anyone who looks at Tara with her beautiful body will agree that she is splendid and brilliant. Her aspect is so peaceful and calming. Just by thinking of these aspects of Tara and looking at her, all the negative emotions, such as attachment and anger in our mind, will be pacified naturally. We should try to visualise the aspects mentioned in this verse and make requests to Tara. We then visualise that we receive Tara's blessings.

When we can practise in this way, we will get the benefits of increasing our lifespan and our merit, purifying our negative karma and obscurations and so forth.

How did Tara get such a beautiful, pleasant face and perfect body? It is through practising patience for the benefit of sentient beings and practising morality for many eons. When we practise like Tara, i.e., practise patience for the benefit of sentient beings uninterruptedly and observe the practice of morality, then even while we are training on the path, we too will get a beautiful radiant body. At the time of the result, we will get a beautiful perfect body like Tara.

ii. Praising Tara with reference to the colour of her holy body, the implements she is holding and the causes that bring about the attainment of the state of Tara

3

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

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.

We are now talking about the twenty-one different aspects of Tara. You need to try and remember this.

“Homage to you, Tara, born from a golden-blue lotus”: this particular Tara’s holy body is golden in colour with a bluish hue. Her body is likened to the gold of the River Tsambu that is said to be very clear, refined and pleasant to look at. You meditate on this Tara with this verse.

“Whose hands are beautifully adorned with lotus flowers”: her hands are adorned with water-born lotuses. In her left hand, she holds a lotus stem with her thumb and her ring finger. The lotus blooms beside her left ear. Within the fully opened lotus, there is a half-opened lotus and a bud. These symbolise the buddhas of the three times (the past, present and future). The lotus that Tara is holding in her hand is not like the lotus that we find in this world. It is the manifestation of her wisdom.

This verse is praising Tara by referring to the colour of her holy body, i.e., golden in colour with a slight blue tint and the implement she is holding, i.e., a lotus.

Now we refer to the causes that bring about the attainment of the state of Tara (or Tara-hood). The causes are practising the six perfections mentioned in the praise: giving, joyous effort (or perseverance), asceticism (or the practice of morality), the practice of wisdom, the practice of patience and the practice of concentration. Tara trained in these six perfections over a very long period of time. Finally she perfected them and attained enlightenment.

The state of Tara therefore came about through the practice of the six perfections.

Tara became enlightened through the practice that involved the union of both method and wisdom. Method here refers to the practice of great compassion and bodhicitta. Wisdom refers to the wisdom realising emptiness. With the union of method and wisdom, she practised the six perfections and attained enlightenment.

What does this mean for us? This means that if we want to become like Tara, we need to train in these six perfections and engage in the path that involves the union of both method and wisdom, i.e., great compassion and bodhicitta, combined with the wisdom realising emptiness. When we practise the six perfections, conjoined with both method and wisdom, before long, we too will also achieve the state of full enlightenment. Without practising these six perfections, there is no way we can become like Tara.

The practice of generosity does not necessarily depend on having something to give. Generosity here refers to a state of mind, the willingness to give. The practice of generosity is increasing the willingness of the mind that wants to give. When we talk about giving, we develop the wish to increase that state of mind such that we can give our body, our possessions and our roots of virtue to all sentient beings. Even if you have a lot of possessions, but when you give, you do not have this willingness or desire to give, this is not the practice of generosity.

Joyous effort or perseverance is cultivated with the welfare of others in mind. Joyous perseverance is the mind that is enthusiastic about virtue, a mind that is enthusiastic about Dharma, a mind that is enthusiastic about helping other sentient beings and engaging in the activities of

listening to, reflecting and meditating enthusiastically on the Dharma with the motivation of achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Anything that you do enthusiastically with the motivation of achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings is the practice of joyous perseverance.

What is morality or ethics? Ethics refers to the mind of protection. It is not just referring to the mind that wants to abstain from negative actions such as the ten non-virtuous actions. It is not limited to that. Here we are talking about the Mahayana practice of ethics that has two major elements:

1. Refraining from following one's self-interest, i.e., stopping self-cherishing
2. Protecting one's mind from following after the thought that grasps at phenomena to be truly existent

When we practise in such a way, then our practice of morality will be stainless and become the Mahayana practice of ethics.

There is no need for me to say much about the remaining perfections, the practice of patience, concentration and wisdom, as most of you have studied the Dharma and know what these are.

iii. Praising Tara with reference to the respect that is shown to her by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas

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
GYÄL WÄI SÄ KYI SHIN TU TEN MA

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.

Who are we prostrating to now? We are prostrating to Tara who is the victorious crown pinnacle of the buddhas because she is the mother of the victorious ones. This Tara abides in the manner of being completely victorious over all disharmonious or unfavourable conditions and all opposing forces.

This Tara also abides in the manner of having abandoned the two obstructions, the afflictions and their imprints. She has “attained the transcendent perfections without exception,/ And upon whom the sons of the Victorious Ones rely,” in the sense that the victorious ones who have completed the ten perfections rely on Tara.

There are ten grounds on the path to enlightenment. The bodhisattva on each ground attains a particular perfection, starting from the perfection of generosity on the first ground. Each ground has a particular perfection. When a bodhisattva arrives at the tenth ground, that bodhisattva has attained the ten perfections. It is said that all the different bodhisattvas abiding on the different grounds respectfully rely on Tara. This is the explanation of the last two lines of this verse, “Who have attained transcendent perfections without exceptions,/And upon whom the sons of the Victorious Ones rely.”

When Tara is the object of prostration and homage of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, it goes without saying that we sentient beings must pay attention to this. We need to remember how Tara is different from all the buddhas in the

sense that her enlightened activities are quicker and faster. We should pay attention to this while respectfully paying homage and respect to Tara.

iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she overcomes all opposing factors

5

CHHAG TSHÄL TUTTARA HUM YI GE
DÖ DANG CHHOG DANG NAM KHA GANG MA
JIG TEN DÜN PO ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
LÜ PA ME PAR GUG PAR NÜ MA

Homage to you Tara, who with the letters TUTTARA 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.

We are now paying homage to “Tara, who with the letters TUTTARA and HUM”: “TUTTARA” refers to the mantra garland OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA that is encircling her heart. The syllable HUM which is the physical form of the realisation of compassion and wisdom in her holy mind is at her heart.

She fills the entire cyclic existence of “desire, direction and space” with the resonating sound from the syllable HUM together with the light emitted from the mantra garland OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA at her heart:

- “Desire” refers to the desire realms that are made up of the five types of migrators: the hell beings, hungry ghosts, animals, humans and the gods.

- “Direction” refers to the form realms.
- “Space” refers to the formless realms.

Not only does Tara fill the seven realms with the sound from the syllable HUM and the light from the mantra garland, she also tramples on the seven worlds with her holy feet to control effortlessly all the beings in these realms.

Now we know how Tara fills the entire samsara with the light rays emitted from her mantra garland. The sound from the syllable HUM at her heart resonates throughout samsara as well. Therefore she is able to hook and control all sentient beings for their benefit. Tara is working for us all the time. The light rays from her mantra garland are constantly shining on us and the sound from the syllable HUM at her heart is resonating and filling the whole world even though we do not hear it. When we keep this in mind and have faith and belief in this, then Tara is always with us, working for us.

v. Praising Tara with reference to how even the great worldly gods worship her

6

CHHAG TSHÄL GYA JIN ME LHA TSHANG PA
LUNG LHA NA TSHOG WANG CHHUG CHHÖ MA
JUNG PO RO LANG DRI ZA NAM DANG
NÖ JIN TSHOG KYI DÜN NÄ TÖ MA

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.

These are the names of the worldly gods: Indra, Agni, Brahma, Vayu and Ishvara. They are called the ten directional protectors, i.e., they are the protectors of the four cardinal directions, protectors of the intermediate directions and the protectors of the above and below. For example, Indra is the worldly protector of the eastern direction, Agni (or the fire-god) is the worldly protector of the southeastern direction, Brahma is the worldly protector of the above and the wind-god is the worldly protector of the northwestern direction. Then there is the lord of death, all the different nagas and so forth and the powerful Shiva. Even all these worldly protectors and gods pay homage to and venerate Tara.

The hosts of different classes of spirits also venerate and pay respect to Tara: such as Wangden, surrounded by his entourage of spirits; the worldly cannibal god, Shinpo with his entourage of raised corpses or zombies; Indra with his retinue of smell-eaters; and Shiva with his entourage of harm-givers.

When we have the faith of conviction and belief in Tara, we will not be harmed by humans and non-humans of the different classes of spirits. Why? Because they all venerate and take refuge in Tara.

It is the same as having a statue of Tara at home. We will receive the same kind of benefit. What we need is the faith of conviction and belief. When we don't have faith and, on top of that, we do not live an ethical life, not keeping our vows, we will not receive the benefit. When we live an ethical life and we have the faith of conviction and belief in Tara, there is no way we can be harmed by all these different kinds of spirits.

vi. Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys all opponents

7

CHHAG TSHÄL TRAD CHE JA DANG PHAT KYI
PHA RÖL THRÜL KHOR RAB TU JOM MA
YÄ KUM YÖN KYANG ZHAB KYI NÄN TE
ME BAR THRUG PA SHIN TU BAR MA

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.

“Homage to you, Tara, whose TRAD and PHAT”: with these two syllables, TRAD and PHAT, Tara is able to overcome all the different kinds of black magic. For example, just by uttering PHAT from her holy mouth, she is able to liberate and destroy all black magic and opposing forces.

Just by uttering these two syllables, TRAD and PHAT, she is able to destroy instantly “the magical wheels of others,” i.e., all the black magic, curses, evil intentions and so forth directed against you.

She is sitting with her right leg bent and left leg outstretched. This symbolises both method and wisdom. With her two legs, she suppresses all the black magic and curses that people have directed against you and with the raging fire emanated from her holy body, she burns up the black magic and curses till not even an atom of them remains. Her manner of sitting with her right leg bent and left leg outstretched is a peaceful posture. But even though this is considered to be a peaceful aspect, she is slightly wrathful as she is sitting “within a whirl of fire.”

When we find that our body and mind are affected by some supernatural forces such as black magic, or our house is

“tainted” in some way, what we need to do is to visualise Tara in this slightly wrathful aspect sitting within a whirl of fire, and pray to and request her to pacify all these harms. Imagine Tara uttering the syllables TRAD and PHAT. By just uttering these syllables, she subdues all these supernatural harms. Then visualise that the fire emanated from her holy body comes into oneself and rages through the entire environment, completely pacifying and destroying all these harms. You can visualise that they all dissolve into Tara. The benefit of doing this is that you pacify all these obstacles and harms and, at the same time, transform the minds of these harm-givers with love and compassion. It is good to remember this.

We should always have faith in her and always make requests and pray to Tara by seeing her as inseparable from one’s own root guru. When we do this with faith, whatever wishes we have will be accomplished naturally. There is nothing that cannot be accomplished when we do this.



Second Session

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2005
(MORNING)

Before we start the session, it is important to generate a very pure motivation. We should think of how all the kind mother sentient beings whose number is equal to infinite space have been kind to us since time without beginning. They have also been very kind to us in the present time. Because our kind mother sentient beings are under the control of their negative emotions, especially self-grasping and self-cherishing, they have suffered since time without beginning and they are still suffering from all sorts of different problems. Since this is the case, we must free them from all this suffering and the causes of suffering.

You should think, “I am going to do that by myself alone. However at the present moment I do not have the power and the ability to do so. Without attaining enlightenment myself, there is no way I can help to free all sentient beings from all their suffering and the causes of suffering. Therefore, by all means, I must attain the state of full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.”

Even though we may generate the thought to achieve the state of full enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, at the present moment, we have not yet realised the true nature of reality. We do not know the true nature of how things actually exist in reality. We have this wrong consciousness grasping at ourselves and all phenomena to be truly or inherently existent. But although we grasp at ourselves and phenomena as existing inherently, in reality, they do not exist in the way they appear to us. Our self-grasping conception is a wrong consciousness and we need to eliminate it.

In short, in order to achieve enlightenment, in order to have success in our Dharma practice, in order to gather all the perfect conditions and to eliminate all the obstacles that we may meet along the path, we need to rely on this special deity, Tara.

So with a mind of faith, remembering Tara and the qualities of her holy body, holy speech and holy mind, we should think, “Tara is the supreme mother of all buddhas. For the purpose of achieving enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings, I am going to engage in the practice of Tara.” With this motivation, we should have faith and, with a happy mind, listen enthusiastically to this commentary.

This explanation of the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* is a Mahayana teaching. Among Mahayana teachings, it is a teaching of the Mahayana Secret Mantra. Obviously the motivation for listening to and engaging in such a practice is to have the thought to benefit others, to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

At the same time, we can reflect on how all phenomena including ourselves exist but do not exist inherently, i.e., they do not exist from their own side. That means all phenomena come about through causes and conditions. It is the same with the object of refuge, Tara. She does not exist from her own side, i.e., she does not exist inherently. It is also the same with the goal of enlightenment that we are trying to achieve. It exists but it does not exist inherently. It comes about through causes and conditions.

The goal here, Tara-hood, i.e., full enlightenment, is to be achieved by engaging in the path that contains the practices of the union of both method and wisdom. According to tantra, it is achieved through the path of non-dual profundity and clarity. By travelling on such a path, we can then achieve the state of Tara-hood.

The Tara that we visualise and the state of Tara that we are trying to achieve are expressions of the holy mind of Tara, the truth body of Tara, i.e., a state characterised by the complete pacification of ordinary appearance and ordinary grasping. This

is the Tara that we meditate on and this is the state of Tara that we are trying to achieve.

Now what we should do is to remember Tara. Abiding in the space in front of us, we visualise Tara to be inseparable from our root guru. At the same time, with a mind of faith, remember the qualities of her holy body, holy speech and holy mind and generate the thought, “When can I achieve this state of Tara?” It is good to keep this in mind while listening to these teachings.

We have been looking at praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect. That is divided into two: (a.) praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect and (b.) praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect. We have completed the section: “Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect.” Now we will look at praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect. This section has seven parts.



2. An extensive explanation of these praises
 - A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend
 - B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects
 - 1) Praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect (complete enjoyment body)
 - a. Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect
 - b. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect
 - i. Praising Tara with reference to how she purifies all the maras and the two obstructions
 - ii. Praising Tara with reference to the implements she holds in her two hands
 - iii. Praising Tara through her crown ornament and the sound of her laughter
 - iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she accomplishes different activities by employing the ten directional protectors
 - v. Praising Tara with reference to her crown ornament
 - vi. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful posture of abiding
 - vii. Praising Tara with reference to how light radiates from the syllable HUM at her heart
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect (truth body)
 - C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities
 - 1) Praising Tara through the enlightened actions of both her peaceful and wrathful mantras
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to how she shakes the three realms
 - 3) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates poisons
 - 4) Praising Tara with reference to how she dispels quarrels and bad dreams
 - 5) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates different epidemic diseases
 - 6) Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys spirits and zombies

b. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect

i. Praising Tara with reference to how she purifies all the maras and the two obstructions

8

CHHAG TSHÄL TURE JIG PA CHHEN PO
DÜ KYI PA WO NAM PAR JOM MA
CHHU KYE ZHÄL NI THRO NYER DÄN DZÄ
DRA WO THAM CHÄ MA LÜ SÖ MA

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.

“Homage to Tara”: we are paying homage to Tara who is called “the great fearful one.” “TURE” is the expression of her holy speech. With the roar of the sound TURE, she “destroys the mighty demons completely.”

In this verse Tara is depicted in a very wrathful aspect. With this wrathful aspect she is able to destroy the mara that is extremely difficult to subdue. Which mara is this? It is the mara of the afflictions, which is the most difficult to destroy among all the different hosts of maras.

Her holy face is a “water-born face.” Here “water-born” refers to a lotus. Her face is likened to a very big lotus. At the same time, it is in a wrathful aspect. With that expression, she is able to slay completely, without exception, all external enemies.

Mara is translated as “demon” here. There are four kinds of maras:

1. Mara of the afflictions
2. Mara of the aggregates
3. Mara of death
4. Mara of Devaputra

Of these four maras, the worst and the most difficult to subdue is the mara of the afflictions because the afflictions, our negative emotions, are the causes of all our suffering. When we look at all the different kinds of negative emotions we have, the root of all these negative emotions is the self-grasping conception together with our self-cherishing. All the other afflictions such as pride, anger, jealousy and so forth, arise under the power of the self-grasping conception and self-cherishing.

As a result of having these negative emotions in our mind and with the self-grasping conception as the root, we take rebirth in samsara with these contaminated physical and mental aggregates. These contaminated physical and mental aggregates are called the mara of the aggregates. The mara of the aggregates is the result of the afflictions that we have, especially the self-grasping conception. Once we take on these contaminated physical and mental aggregates, without control and without any choice, we have to suffer. From that very moment, once we get these contaminated physical and mental aggregates, they are in the nature of suffering. They are not stable and we have no control over them whatsoever.

Because of having taken on these contaminated physical and mental aggregates, without any control or any independence on our part, sooner or later we have to die. Without choice we have to leave this body behind. Death is certain and the time of death is uncertain. This is what we call the mara of death.

Then there is the mara of Devaputra. With the negative emotions acting as the conditions, all human beings, non-human beings and the gods are tormented by the different

kinds of negative emotions. The mara of Devaputra refers to this class of worldly gods who dislike Dharma practitioners. They like to cause problems for those who are practising the Dharma. It is said that they shoot five different kinds of arrows. When any of these arrows hits us, with the afflictions in our mind acting as the conditions together with these harms from this host of spirits and worldly gods, our negative emotions increase, creating problems for our Dharma practice.

Sometimes when we find that we are unable to control our negative emotions that seem to be increasing or we think that we are experiencing some spirit harm, at that time, we should remember Tara, especially this wrathful aspect of Tara. When such things happen to us, we should do something about it. We should remember Tara in this wrathful aspect and make requests to Tara to pacify all these problems. We can also recite the mantra of Tara. With a mind of faith, we make requests to Tara and recite her mantra. We will definitely receive the blessings of her holy body, speech and mind. Even those negative emotions that manifest can be pacified and the other obstacles that we are experiencing can also be pacified.

Among the four different kinds of mara, the worst is the mara of the afflictions. It is the negative emotions and their imprints that prevent us from achieving liberation and enlightenment:

- What is obstructing or preventing us from achieving liberation? The obstructions to liberation arising from the conception of grasping at true existence.
- Together with the predispositions of these afflictions, which are called the obstructions to omniscience, they prevent us from attaining enlightenment.

Once we get rid of these two—the obstructions to liberation and the obstructions to omniscience—all the other three types of mara will be destroyed. When we destroy the four maras, we will achieve enlightenment.

The main obstacle that prevents us from achieving liberation, i.e., the obstructions to liberation, primarily refers to the conception grasping at true existence. What does this mean? It means that whatever appears to our mind, we grasp at it as being truly existent, something real coming from the side of the object. This is how things appear to our mind. Although things appear to us in this way, is this how they exist in reality? No, things do not exist in the way they appear to us.

Just think of a reflection on the surface of a mirror. Anything can be reflected in a mirror. You know that the object that appears on the surface of the mirror is the reflection of a particular object. It is not the actual object. Although it appears to be the object, we know that it is not the actual object. In the same way, things do not exist in reality in the way that they appear to us. But there is a problem: we believe they exist in the way they appear to us. They seem so real from their own side. So when we talk about phenomena, we grasp at everything to be truly existent and real from its own side, although in reality that is not the case.

Not only do all phenomena appear to us as if they are real, i.e., that they exist from their own side, we believe they are truly existent and grasp at them. What will happen then? With this appearance together with our belief in that appearance, we either have a lot of superstitious thoughts and we superimpose certain qualities on the object, which do not exist or we deny certain characteristics that do exist in the object. This is what we call superimposition and denial respectively.

When we do this, negative emotions like attachment arise. Without this grasping at true existence, there is no way that attachment can arise. But because we truly believe that the object is real, attachment arises. Only when we understand that that particular object does not exist in the way that it appears to us, then there is no basis for attachment and the other afflictions to arise. Therefore it is extremely crucial to put effort into learning how to recognise that, in reality, things do not exist truly, that they do not exist from their own side.

ii. Praising Tara with reference to the implements she holds in her two hands

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 THRUG MA

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.

“Homage to you, Tara” means, “I prostrate to you, Tara.” That refers to prostrating respectfully with one’s body, speech and mind. Here we are prostrating to Tara “whose fingers adorn your heart/ With the gesture of the sublime precious three,” i.e., with the gesture of the Three Jewels.

With her left hand at her heart and with her ring finger and thumb joined together, and the remaining three

fingers pointed upwards: this is the mudra symbolising the Three Jewels. At the same time, with her ring finger and thumb joined together, she is holding the stem of a lotus that blooms besides her right ear. Her right hand is in the mudra of granting sublime realisations and her palm is adorned with a Dharma wheel. Many light rays and nectar of different colours come from this Dharma wheel. The palm adorned with a Dharma wheel is one of the holy signs of a buddha.

This mudra of the Three Jewels reminds us that Tara is in nature the Three Jewels. The Three Jewels are the Buddha Jewel, the Dharma Jewel and the Sangha Jewel. Even though we visualise Tara in just one aspect, actually the Three Jewels are embodied within that single aspect. Her holy body symbolises the Sangha Jewel, her holy speech symbolises the Dharma Jewel and her holy mind symbolises the Buddha Jewel.

At the same time, think that the Tara we are visualising is inseparable from one's own root guru. Since Tara is inseparable from one's own root guru, then:

- the holy body of one's own root guru is inseparable from Tara and is also the Sangha Jewel
- the holy speech of one's own root guru is inseparable from Tara and is also the Dharma Jewel
- the holy mind of one's own root guru is inseparable from Tara and is also the Buddha Jewel

You can also reflect on how one's own root guru is the embodiment of the Three Jewels and how one's own root guru is also the embodiment of all the enlightened activities of all the buddhas.

iii. Praising Tara through her crown ornament and the sound of her laughter

10

CHHAG TSHÄL RAB TU GA WA JI PÄI
U GYÄN Ö KYI THRENG WA PEL MA
ZHE PA RAB ZHÄ TUTTARA YI
DÜ DANG JIG TEN WANG DU DZÄ MA

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

We are now paying homage to Tara “whose radiant crown ornament,/ Joyful and magnificent, extends a garland of light.” Tara is also able to “conquer the demons and all of the worlds” with her laughter.

We are praising this aspect of Tara who has this radiant crown ornament that is said to be very joyful and magnificent. This aspect of Tara is able to fulfil the wishes and generate joy in all those who possess faith in her. For those who do not possess such faith, she is able to overwhelm them with her splendid crown ornament. With her laughter that has the sound of the mantra TUTTARA, she is able to subdue Shiva, the lord of the desire realm, and his entire entourage.

The main cause of receiving all the benefits from and the blessings of Tara is to have faith in her. When we have faith in Tara, she can fulfil all our wishes. This also pleases her holy mind.

What about those who have no faith? She is able to subdue those without faith. Just by seeing the representation of Tara, e.g., the statue of Tara, she is able to subdue those

who have no faith. All we need is faith. Anyone who has faith and make requests to Tara, she is able to fulfil all their prayers and wishes.

All the different ornaments that Tara is wearing, such as anklets, bracelets, a crown and necklaces, are all very beautiful. They are not like our ordinary ornaments because Tara's ornaments naturally emit light rays that go out in the ten directions to work for all sentient beings. The ornaments that Tara is wearing on her body are manifestations of her holy mind and represent all her qualities.

iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she accomplishes different activities by employing the ten directional protectors

11

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI KYONG WÄI TSHOG NAM
THAM CHÄ GUG PAR NÜ MA NYI MA
THRO NYER YO WÄI YI GE HUM GI
PHONG PA THAM CHÄ NAM PAR DRÖL MA

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

We pay homage to Tara who possesses the power “to invoke/
The entire assembly of local protectors” and employ them to accomplish various activities. “SA ZHI” refers to the earth that is the place of sentient beings like humans and so forth.

There is this group of beings who are called the ten directional protectors and their entourage. They are the holders and sustainers of the earth. This aspect of Tara possesses the

power to invoke and hook the ten directional protectors and their entourage and use them to accomplish various activities.

This aspect of Tara has a wrathful holy face “whose wrathful expression fiercely shakes” the world. At her heart is the seed syllable HUM from which countless iron hooks are emanated in the ten directions, invoking and summoning all the good things such as longevity, wealth, possessions and so forth. By doing this, she is able to eliminate the suffering of poverty of all sentient beings.

When we are experiencing financial difficulties or poverty, we should remember and think of Tara. The motivation must be to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings or, at the very least, to benefit others. We then visualise this aspect of Tara and, with faith and respect, we make requests to Tara to eliminate the poverty we are experiencing.

When we talk about poverty, there are many different kinds of poverty. It is not just the poverty of wealth. There is also the poverty of the Dharma such as the poverty of experiences and realisations. We can make requests to this aspect of Tara to eliminate all these different kinds of poverty.

Visualise that from the syllable HUM at her heart, light rays in the aspect of iron hooks going out in the ten directions, hooking and summoning back all the good things such as longevity, wealth, possessions and so forth. These dissolve back into the syllable HUM at her heart, and blessings in the form of light rays and nectar enter into you. You should also visualise all other sentient beings experiencing this, especially those who are also undergoing financial difficulties and problems. While receiving the blessings, think that you are receiving longevity, wealth, possessions and so forth.

As miserliness is the cause for us to experience poverty, at the same time, think that all the obstacles, such as miserliness and its imprints, are completely purified. Think that now you

are like an inexhaustible treasure. When you think like this, all the negative karma that causes us to be poor is purified. When those karmas are purified, all the good things will come.

We can do this practice especially when we have difficulties at work, financial difficulties in business and so forth. The motivation however should not just be for one's own benefit such as wishing, "May my business do well." The motivation must be conjoined with the thought of benefiting others, to achieve enlightenment to benefit other sentient beings. Without this kind of motivation, even if you do this practice, the practice does not become Dharma.

I mentioned this particular visualisation because I thought it may be beneficial. It may also be helpful in your work and activities for sentient beings.

v. Praising Tara with reference to her crown ornament

12

CHHAG TSHÄL DA WÄI DUM BÜ U GYÄN
GYÄN PA THAM CHÄ SHIN TU BAR MA
RÄL PÄI KHUR NA Ö PAG ME LÄ
TAG PAR SHIN TU Ö RAB DZÄ MA

Homage to you, Tara, whose crown is adorned
With the crescent moon, wearing ornaments exceedingly bright.
From your hair knot the buddha Amitabha
Radiates eternally with great beams of light.

“CHHAG TSHÄL DA WÄI DUM BÜ U GYÄN”: “DUM BÜ U GYÄN” describes how Tara is adorned with a halo of light behind her head. Her crown is adorned with the crescent moon likened to the moon on the first day of the lunar

calendar. She is “wearing ornaments exceedingly bright.” The white light rays from her ornaments eliminate all the suffering of sentient beings.

Tara’s hair is very black and shining and is tied up into a hair knot. The lord of the lineage Amitabha Buddha is seated on her crown. From Amitabha Buddha light rays of different colours emanate going out to perform work for sentient beings. Tara and Amitabha Buddha are inseparable from our own root guru.

We can visualise this aspect of Tara when we are not feeling well, when we are sick, unhappy, frustrated or stressed. We visualise and remember Tara and make requests to her. Visualise light rays and nectar coming from the holy bodies of Tara and Amitabha Buddha, both of whom are inseparable from our own root guru, entering our body and mind and purifying whatever problems or unhappiness that we have. At the same time, think that we have received the blessings of Tara’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind. It will be beneficial for us to do this.

vi. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful posture of abiding

13

CHHAG TSHÄL KÄL PÄI THA MÄI ME TAR
BAR WÄI THRENG WÄI Ü NA NÄ MA
YÄ KYANG YÖN KUM KÜN NÄ KOR GÄI
DRA YI PUNG NI NAM PAR JOM MA

Homage to you, Tara, who dwells 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.

We are making prostrations to Tara who is seated within a mass of blazing fire “that resembles the fire at the end of this world age.” At a particular time in the future, our world will be destroyed by an unbelievable blazing fire. This Tara is seated within a mass of blazing fire that is likened to the very hot fire at the end of this time. This mass of fire however is actually the fire of wisdom. Tara is seated with her right leg extended and her left leg bent.

This aspect of Tara is able to destroy the whole host of outer and inner enemies by turning the wheel of Dharma. The inner enemy refers to our negative emotions. The outer enemy includes both humans and non-humans, and the problems and obstacles that arise as the result of the negative emotions in our mind. By relying on this Tara we can pacify all these enemies.

vii. Praising Tara with reference to how light radiates from the syllable HUM at her heart

14

CHHAG TSHÄL SA ZHI NGÖ LA CHHAG GI
THIL GYI NÜN CHING ZHAB KYI DUNG MA
THRO NYER CHÄN DZÄ YI GE HUM GI
RIM PA DÜN PO NAM NI GEM MA

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.

“Homage to you, Tara, with hand on the ground by your side,/ Pressing your heel and stamping your foot on

the earth”: With her hand in a threatening mudra, Tara wrathfully suppresses the entire world. With her two holy feet, she stamps on the earth that refers to Mount Meru and the four continents.

Her holy face is in a wrathful aspect and her hand is in a threatening gesture. From the blue syllable HUM on the palms of her hands and soles of her feet, fire and countless vajras are emanated. They go to the seven levels beneath the earth to destroy all the nagas, demi-gods, the lord of death and so on. These beings harm other sentient beings by causing sicknesses and so forth. The fire and countless vajras destroy their negative minds that have the wish to harm others. Tara pacifies their thoughts of harming others and also subdues whatever powers they have to cause such problems. Tara is able to render them harmless.

When we are harmed by these non-human beings, such as nagas or spirits, we should rely on Tara in this wrathful aspect and make requests to her. Visualise that from the blue syllable HUM in both her palms and the soles of her feet, fire and vajras are emanated and enter into us and those who are harming us. When we receive these blessings all the negative emotions, especially the thought of harming others in our mind and in the minds of those beings harming us are completely pacified and purified. Both our mind and the minds of those who are harming us become very pure and clear. Not even a single thought of harming others remain. If we do this practice when we are experiencing such harm, it is extremely beneficial.

By praising Tara with reference to both her peaceful and wrathful aspects, we have completed the whole section on praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect. Now we come to praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect.

2) Praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect (truth body)

15

CHHAG TSHÄL DE MA GE MA ZHI MA
NYA NGÄN DÄ ZHI CHÖ YÜL NYI MA
SVAHA OM DANG YANG DAG DÄN PÄ
DIG PA CHHEN PO JOM PA NYI MA

Homage to you, Tara, O 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.

We are paying homage to “Tara, O happy, virtuous and peaceful one”:

- She is the “happy” one because she has no suffering.
- She is the “virtuous” one because she does not accumulate the causes of suffering, i.e., non-virtue.
- She is the “peaceful” one because she does not have any more afflictions, the objects of abandonment, in her holy mind.
- She has “passed beyond sorrow,” a state that is characterised by the complete abandonment of the two obstructions, the obstructions to liberation and the obstructions to omniscience. She is always in meditative equipoise within the sphere of peace.

Next is the recitation of the mantra. Due to the power of the wisdom of meditative equipoise, she always remains within the sphere of peace, the state characterised by the abandonment of the two obstructions. Due to the power of that wisdom, the

mantra is manifested. As it says here, “You are perfectly endowed with SVAHA and OM.” In between SVAHA and OM, there are the other syllables, TARE TUTTARE TURE. Altogether there are ten syllables in the mantra of Tara: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA.

While visualising her, when we recite this Tara mantra with faith, even the negative karma such as the five uninterrupted heinous actions, the negative karma of abandoning the Dharma, together with the causes of those actions, which are the negative emotions such as anger and attachment, and all the very powerful afflictions together with their sufferings will be completely purified without any remainder.

This verse is praising Tara through her dharmakaya aspect or her truth body. Tara’s holy mind is always abiding in meditative equipoise within the sphere of peace. While abiding in that sphere of peace, she is able to perform activities benefiting all sentient beings spontaneously and effortlessly. Sentient beings cannot do that because when they are absorbed in meditative equipoise, they are unable to do anything else. Only a buddha can do the two things simultaneously. While in meditative equipoise, a buddha is able to engage in activities to benefit other sentient beings spontaneously and effortlessly. This is the special characteristic of a buddha.

C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities

1) Praising Tara through the enlightened actions of both her peaceful and wrathful mantras

16

CHHAG TSHÄL KÜN NÄ KOR RAB GA WÄI
DRA YI LÜ NI NAM PAR GEM MA
YI GE CHU PÄI NGAG NI KÖ PÄI
RIG PA HUM LÄ DRÖL MA NYI MA

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.

“You completely subdue the bodies of all enemies;/ Your speech is adorned with the ten syllables”: we are praising this Tara for how she turns the wheel of Dharma in order to benefit the minds of all her disciples by destroying the outer and inner enemies in their mental continua.

“The ten syllables” refer to the mantra of Tara. There are both the peaceful mantra and the wrathful mantra:

- The peaceful mantra is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA that surrounds the syllable TAM at the heart.
- The wrathful mantra is OM NAMA TARE NAMO HARE HUM HARE SVAHA that surrounds the syllable HUM at the heart.

Light rays emanate from these mantra garlands of both the peaceful and wrathful mantras and liberate us from all enemies and obstacles.

When we need to engage in the rite of pacification, e.g., when you need to pacify certain diseases, sicknesses or spirit harms, visualise Tara with the syllable TAM at the heart surrounded by the peaceful mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. Visualise that you receive Tara’s blessings and all the problems are pacified peacefully.

At times when you need to engage in wrathful activities - e.g., when there are obstacles from humans and non-humans harming the teachings of Buddha or harming the long lives of the gurus and so forth - visualise Tara with the syllable HUM

at the heart surrounded by the wrathful mantra OM NAMA TARE NAMO HARE HUM HARE SVAHA wrathfully pacifying all these obstacles.

When we need to engage in these practices, visualise the appropriate mantra and perform the relevant visualisation.

2) Praising Tara with reference to how she shakes the three realms

17

CHHAG TSHÄL TURE ZHAB NI DEB PÄ
HUM GI NAM PÄI SA BÖN NYI MA
RI RAB MANDHARA DANG BIG JE
JIG TEN SUM NAM YO WA NYI MA

Homage to you, Tara, stamping your feet and proclaiming TURE.
Your seed syllable itself in the aspect of HUM
Causes Meru, Mandhara and the Vindya mountains
And all the three worlds to tremble and shake.

“Stamping your feet and proclaiming TURE”: “TURE” here means the swift one and is referring to Tara. She is wrathfully stamping with her two holy feet.

“Your seed-syllable itself in the aspect of HUM”: this refers to how this aspect of Tara is generated. Normally when we engage in deity practice, we generate ourselves as the deity and we then visualise the deity. First, one is purified into the state of emptiness and from that state of emptiness, one visualises the seed syllable of the deity. The seed syllable of the deity then transforms into the deity itself. In the case here, from the state of emptiness arises the seed syllable HUM. This seed syllable HUM then transforms into Tara in her wrathful aspect.

We are making prostrations and paying homage to this Tara who possesses the power to shake the three worlds. The text says she “causes Mount Meru, Mandhara and the Vindhya mountains ... to tremble and shake.” These are different mountains that are the abodes of the different nagas, gods and so forth. We are now prostrating to this wrathful Tara who possesses the power to shake these very powerful mountains. Tara possesses the power to shake even the three worlds and all the beings that live within them.

I mentioned that these different mountains are the abodes of different kinds of beings especially the evil gods, nagas and so forth who harm sentient beings. I guess the reason why Tara shakes the three worlds and the different mountains is to weaken their thought and their power to harm others. By doing this she is able to render them powerless and harmless.

3) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates poisons

18

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHO YI NAM PÄI
RI DAG TAG CHÄN CHHAG NA NAM MA
TARA NYI JÖ PHAT KYI YI GE
DUG NAM MA LÜ PA NI SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, who holds 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.

This Tara, who is able to dispel poisons, holds in her hand a round moon resembling a mirror, marked with a drawing of a rabbit. By showing this to sentient beings, she is able

to eliminate the poisons abiding within them. The poisons referred to here are not just ordinary poisons but also referring to the mental poison of the negative emotions.

“By uttering TARA twice and the letter PHAT” – uttering TARA twice is referring to the two TARAS in the mantra: OM TARE TUTTARE. Instead of uttering OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA, she is uttering OM TARE TUTTARE TURE PHAT. She holds the moon in her hand and shows this to sentient beings and by uttering the mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE PHAT, she is able to remove and dispel all the poisons within sentient beings, not only external poisons but also the mental poison of the negative emotions.

There are many different kinds of poisons. We may be poisoned by others, or we may accidentally ingest some poisons or harmful substances ourselves and so forth. At those times or when you want to benefit others who are suffering from poisoning, visualise this aspect of Tara in the space in front of you. Visualise that she is holding a moon that looks like a mirror in her hand and showing this to yourself and all sentient beings as she utters the mantra OM TARE TUTTARE TURE PHAT. Visualise that you receive the blessings and that all the poisons, both external and internal (such as the mental poison of the negative emotions), are completely pacified for oneself and others.

4) Praising Tara with reference to how she dispels quarrels and bad dreams

19

CHHAG TSHÄL LHA YI TSHOG NAM GYÄL PO
LHA DANG MI AM CHI YI TEN MA
KÜN NÄ GO CHHA GA WÄI JI GYI
TSÖ DANG MI LAM NGÄN PA SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, upon whom the kings of the assembled gods,
The gods themselves and all kinnaras rely;
Whose magnificent armour gives joy to all,
You who dispel all disputes and bad dreams.

This Tara is someone “upon whom the kings of the assembled gods,/ The gods themselves, and all kinnaras rely.” The assembled gods refer to the gods of the desire realms and the form realms. The king of the gods of the desire realm is Indra. Then there are the worldly gods such as Brahma and so forth. All these gods pay respect to Tara at her holy feet with the crown of their heads.

By meditating on this aspect of Tara and reciting her mantra, with her splendour and brilliance, she is able to eliminate all problems such as quarrels, disputes or fights that you are having with others and also all bad dreams. All these will be dispelled and eliminated. When we have nightmares and bad dreams, we become unhappy. When we get into disputes and quarrels with others, with lawsuits and so on, we need to pacify these problems by relying on this aspect of Tara.

Visualise this Tara in the space in front of you. Visualise red light rays and nectar coming into you and pacifying all the nightmares, bad dreams and whatever problems you are facing such as disputes, quarrels, lawsuits and so forth. All of these different problems together with all their causes are completely purified. Not even a single atom remains. It will be helpful to do this practice when you have such problems.

We shall end the session for now. In this session, we have accumulated merit and virtue through explaining and listening to the teachings and we need to dedicate the merit and virtue we have created. How should we dedicate this merit? Please pray in the following way:

- We should dedicate this merit for the preservation and flourishing of the teachings of the Buddha.
- In particular we should pray that all the spiritual masters who are preserving and spreading the teachings of the Buddha, especially His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche, have long and healthy lives, and that all their holy wishes be fulfilled.
- Also dedicate for all the students here especially those who are serious about practising correctly. May all of them have long and healthy lives and may their lifespan, merit, realisations and experiences of the path to enlightenment increase like the waxing moon.
- Also may there be no wars, no conflicts, no famines, no problems in this world.
- In short, may all sentient beings always be able to abide in happiness.

Third Session

SUNDAY, MAY 29, 2005
(AFTERNOON)

Remember that the motivation here is to attain the state of enlightenment at all costs for the benefit of all sentient beings. In order to do that, we have to practise the teachings of the Buddha. Before we can engage in the practice of the teachings of the Buddha, we need to receive the teachings of the Buddha and to understand how to go about doing so.

Here we should think, “I am going to rely on the special path of Tara.” We cannot do without this path of Tara. These are teachings of the Mahayana Secret Mantra; it is a tantric teaching of the Buddha. We should think, “I am going to practise this path, especially the tantric path of non-dual profundity and clarity and, through this path, I am going to achieve enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.”

In our quest for enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings and in our Dharma practice, we will meet with all sorts of obstacles, both outer and inner. In order to free ourselves of all these obstacles, we can rely on a special meditational deity like Tara, who is the supreme mother of all the buddhas. She grants our wishes very quickly because her enlightened activities are very fast and quick.

Tara is a deity who has been relied upon by previous holy beings in India and Tibet. Many holy beings and practitioners who had relied on Tara had achieved realisations. What we should do is to strive in our practice of Tara on the basis of remembering the qualities of Tara’s holy body, holy speech and holy mind.

In order to know how to go about doing such a Tara practice, we need to study and learn. It is for this purpose that we are receiving these teachings on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. We will now continue from where we left off from the earlier lesson.



2. An extensive explanation of these praises
 - A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend
 - B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects
 - C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities
 - 1) Praising Tara through the enlightened actions of both her peaceful and wrathful mantras
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to how she shakes the three realms
 - 3) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates poisons
 - 4) Praising Tara with reference to how she dispels quarrels and bad dreams
 - 5) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates different epidemic diseases
 - 6) Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys spirits and zombies

3. Showing the benefits of this practice
 - A. Correct mental attitude
 - B. Timing
 - C. Actual benefits
 - 1) Benefits one receives for oneself
 - a. The benefit of turning away the different faults
 - b. The benefit of turning away the causes of suffering
 - c. The benefit of turning away the results that are suffering
 - 2) Benefits that are related to others

5) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates different epidemic diseases

20

CHHAG TSHÄL NYI MA DA WA GYÄ PÄI

CHÄN NYI PO LA Ö RAB SÄL MA

HARA NYI JÖ TUTTARA YI

SHIN TU DRAG PÖI RIM NÄ SEL MA

Homage to you, Tara, whose two eyes—the sun and the moon—
Radiate an excellent, illuminating light;
By uttering HARA twice and TUTTARA,
You dispel all violent epidemic diseases.

The “two eyes” here refer to both the wrathful aspect and the peaceful aspect.

- From the wrathful aspect, the two eyes are likened to the blazing sun. When the eyes are in the wrathful aspect, the eyes are big, red and round. The light radiating from them is hot.
- From the peaceful aspect, the two eyes are likened to the round moon. When the eyes are in the peaceful aspect, the light radiating from them is cool.

“By uttering HARA twice and TUTTARA”: HARA is a syllable that means ‘to snatch.’ By uttering HARA twice refers to:

- the wrathful mantra, OM NAMA TARE NAMO HARE HUM
HARE SVAHA
- the peaceful mantra, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA

By reciting both these wrathful and peaceful mantras, even very serious illnesses, such as epidemics and contagious diseases that are very difficult to recover from, can be pacified. In today's world, there are so many different kinds of diseases, especially those terrifying epidemic diseases. At such times, there is a need to pacify or eliminate these different diseases.

We can visualise Tara, remembering the qualities of her holy body, speech and mind with a mind of faith and recite both the wrathful and peaceful mantras. At the same time, we visualise light rays coming from Tara purifying oneself and all sentient beings of these different contagious diseases and the causes of these diseases. They are all completely purified.

6) Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys spirits and zombies

21

CHHAG TSHÄL DE NYI SUM NAM KÖ PÄ
ZHI WÄI THÜ DANG YANG DAG DÄN MA
DÖN DANG RO LANG NÖ JIN TSHOG NAM
JOM PA TURE RAB CHHOG NYI MA

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,
O TURE, most excellent and sublime!

This is explained in the context of a practitioner who is abiding in the yoga of Tara, i.e., a practitioner who is generating himself or herself as Tara:

- Visualise oneself as Tara.
- At the crown, visualise a white syllable OM in the nature of Tara's holy body.
- At the throat, visualise a red syllable AH in the nature of Tara's holy speech.
- At the heart, visualise a blue syllable HUM in the nature of Tara's holy mind.

By meditating on these three syllables at the three places, all the faults and negativities of one's body, speech and mind are completely pacified without any remainder.

“You who destroy the host of evil spirits, raised corpses and yakshas”: “dön” in Tibetan is translated as spirits. It is said in the text that there are eighteen major kinds of spirits, vampires, those with black magic and yakshas (harm-givers who steal our radiance and vibrancy). By relying on Tara, all these different kinds of harms will be completely destroyed.

In the case of someone who is abiding in the yoga of Tara and visualising oneself as Tara, by visualising the three places—the crown, the throat and the heart adorned by the three syllables, a white OM, a red AH and blue HUM—one can purify all the negativities and obscurations of the body, speech and mind together with all the predispositions and imprints of these negativities and obscurations.

One can also perform this meditation for the benefit of all sentient beings. This kind of meditation can be found when you look at the different self-generation practices in the sadhana of a deity. In this case, when we engage in the practice of self-generation with the meditation on benefiting others, we visualise the three syllables emitting light rays purifying the negativities and obscurations of the body, speech and mind of all sentient beings. After having purified all sentient beings

of their negativities and obscurations, we imagine placing them in the state of Tara's enlightenment. By engaging in such a meditation we can benefit others. We also complete the accumulation of merit very quickly.

Now for the last two concluding lines after the praises:

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

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

“The root mantra” refers to the peaceful and the wrathful mantras that we had covered earlier. There are twenty-one verses of praise together with twenty-one homages or prostrations that we had done along the way, “Thus concludes the praise of the root mantra and the offering of the twenty-one homages.”

We have now completed the commentary on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*. Now, we will explain the meaning of the *Prayer of the Benefits*.

3. Showing the benefits of this practice

A. Correct mental attitude

Whoever is endowed with devotion for the goddess
And recites this with supreme faith,

This indicates the kind of attitude that the person reciting these praises should have. What kind of attitude do we need to have? We should be someone who is endowed with devotion,

remembering the kindness of Tara. While remembering all the qualities of Tara's holy body, speech and mind, and with very stable faith and great respect, if we recite the praises with all these attitudes, all the benefits that are going to be mentioned now will actually happen.

While reciting the praises, we should always remember and bring to mind the qualities of Tara's holy body, speech and mind, her qualities of perfect compassion, perfect omniscience and perfect power. We can also reflect on how, in the beginning, Tara generated bodhicitta for sentient beings and what she did before she attained enlightenment, i.e., how she became what she is today, Tara.

Reflect on how Tara works for the benefit of all sentient beings by performing the four activities of pacifying, increasing, controlling and wrath. Remember also how Tara works for sentient beings through her different aspects while holding different implements. In fact each and every single part of Tara's holy body is always engaging in activities that are beneficial for sentient beings. There is not a single part of Tara's holy body that is not working for sentient beings. Tara possesses all these qualities.

Regardless of who makes requests to Tara, whether you are rich, poor, powerful or weak, she will help. Her love and the work that she does for sentient beings is like what a mother would do for her son. Tara is always ever ready without hesitation to help sentient beings. Tara is waiting for the right time when we have the right karma. When the conditions are there, her enlightened activities will manifest immediately.

We should always remember these different qualities of Tara's holy body, speech and mind. The more we remind ourselves of them and the more we understand the qualities

of Tara, then obviously the stronger will be our faith in Tara. The more faith we have in Tara, the stronger will be our conviction and the stronger will be our respect for and devotion towards her.

You can think, “Whatever good happens to me, that is through the kindness of Tara.” In short, the stronger our faith and our conviction, the faster she is able to help us with her enlightened activities. We can see this even in ordinary situations. When two people are very close friends and both have strong respect for and faith and conviction in one another, things will get done because the connection is there. It is the same with Tara.

B. Timing

Remembering it at dawn upon waking and in the evenings,
Will be granted all fearlessness,
Will perfectly pacify all negativities,
And will eliminate all unfortunate migrations.

This indicates the time for the practice, the time for reciting these praises to Tara. The timing does make a difference to the results.

When you are encountering different kinds of problems such as sicknesses, enemies, robbers, thieves and so forth, you should recite the praises in the evening at dusk, i.e., before the sun sets, while remembering the wrathful aspect of Tara. That will be beneficial.

If you want to purify negative karma and do not wish to take rebirth in the three lower realms, you should recite the praises in the morning at dawn while remembering Tara’s peaceful aspect.

These are some of the benefits that we can receive when we recite the praises to Tara with the correct mental attitude

and by reciting the praises at different times. In short, we will be saved from all sorts of fears, both outer and inner, and we will be granted the attainment of fearlessness. We also do not have to take rebirth in the lower realms such as the hell realms. All these will be completely pacified with the practice of Tara.

C. Actual benefits

The next section explains the actual benefits one gets from reciting the praises of Tara. This is divided into benefits that one receives for oneself and benefits that are related to others. When you perform the practice for others, they will receive the benefits as well.

1) Benefits one receives for oneself

What are some of the benefits that we receive by reciting the praises with a correct mental attitude?

The multitudes of conquerors,
Will quickly grant us initiation:
Thus endowed with this greatness
One will eventually reach the stage of a buddha.

“This multitude of conquerors” refers to seven million buddhas. Tara, together with her manifestation of seven million buddhas as an entourage, will grant us initiation with blessings of light and nectar.

What happens when we are empowered in such a way by Tara? All our enjoyments—our abode, our belongings and possessions, our body and our entourage—will become

perfect and excellent. These are some of the temporal benefits after having been empowered by Tara. The long-term benefit is that we will travel quickly along the different paths and grounds and reach the state of enlightenment.

This section is further divided into three:

- a. The benefit of turning away the different faults
- b. The benefit of turning away the causes of suffering
- c. The benefit of turning away the results that are suffering

a. The benefit of turning away the different faults

If affected by the most terrible poison,
Whether ingested, drunk or from a living being,
Just by remembering,
One will be thoroughly cleansed.

What is “the most terrible poison” referred to here? What is it that prevents us from achieving both our temporal and ultimate goals, the ultimate benefits that are mentioned here? It is the negative emotions that we have in our mind. The negative emotions, such as anger and attachment, are the real poisons that cause all the horrible suffering that we experience. The negative emotion is a very violent poison as it snatches from us our rebirth as a human or god. It is a very strong poison because it causes all the sufferings of the lower realms and samsara in general.

b. The benefit of turning away the causes of suffering

Those of us who are affected by this kind of “most terrible poison,/ Whether ingested, drunk or from a living being,” just

by remembering Tara and reciting these praises with the correct attitude, one will be thoroughly cleansed.

That is also the benefit of stopping the causes of suffering by reciting the praises to Tara with the correct mental attitude.

c. The benefit of turning away the results that are suffering

As indicated in the next verse, there is another benefit of stopping the actual results that are suffering.

It will pacify all the sufferings of torments
Caused by spirits, fevers and poisons,
And by other beings as well.

By reciting the praises of Tara, the whole hosts of sufferings such as the sufferings that are inflicted by different kinds of spirits, the different kinds of sicknesses and diseases that will last for days, the outer and inner poisons and so forth can be abandoned.

2) Benefits that are related to others

The commentary goes on to talk about the benefits that others will experience. When we dedicate this practice for other sentient beings, what are some of the benefits that they can receive by us reciting these praises?

If this prayer is recited two, three or seven times,
If you wish for a child, you will get a child;
If you wish for wealth, you will receive wealth.
All your wishes will be fulfilled
And all obstacles pacified.

What is the meaning of “two, three or seven times”?

- The “two” refers to day and night.
- The “three” means that during the day, you do three sessions and at night, you do three sessions.
- “Seven” means that in each session, you recite the praises seven times.

When you recite this prayer two, three or seven times, with the meaning that is explained, “if you wish for a child, you will get a child;/ If you wish for wealth, you will receive wealth./ All your wishes will be fulfilled/ And all obstacles pacified.”

If you are unable to do this version of the recitation, then like in the *Tara Puja*, you can recite the praises in three sections:

- You recite the praises twice in the first section.
- In the second section, you recite them three times.
- In the third section, you recite them seven times.

That is also a practice. This will work as long as you have faith and conviction and the belief that it will work. Without such strong faith and belief, even if you were to recite the praises the whole day, that is not of much use.

By reciting these praises to Tara, all your wishes will be fulfilled and all the obstacles and hindrances will be completely destroyed. This means that new obstacles will not arise and all the obstacles that have already arisen will be destroyed.

With this, we have completed the explanation of the meaning of the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* and the *Prayer of the Benefits* of reciting these praises.

All of you are very busy as you have to work, run your business, have family commitments and so forth. However, when

you wake up in the morning, try to remember to think of Tara as inseparable from your own root guru.

You should then set the motivation for the day. The motivation should be of benefiting other sentient beings. You should set your motivation in accordance with the practice of the path of the three types of persons as taught in the lam-rim.

Visualise Tara as inseparable from your root guru. You then make requests with the motivation that whatever you will be doing for the day, “May all this work be successful.” You are not only doing that for yourself but also doing that for the benefit of others and doing it as a cause to achieve enlightenment to benefit all sentient beings.

It will be good if you can recite the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* every day because this prayer contains special blessings. All the great holy beings of the past have relied on this practice to work for the welfare and benefit of sentient beings.

If you really cannot recite the praises every day, then at least recite the mantra of Tara, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA, while visualising Tara. When you do this with faith, it contains the same blessing as reciting the praises to Tara. If you recite the mantra of Tara with faith, you will also purify negative karma and increase your merit.

Reciting the mantra of a deity is a special way of making yourself close to the deity. It is also the means of making the deity pleased with you. The main thing is reciting the mantra with faith.

It is the same thing before one goes to sleep. Try to remember Tara and also make requests to Tara.

Every day we have to eat and drink so, at that time, visualise Tara in the space in front of you, seeing her as inseparable from your root guru. You then make offerings

to Guru Tara. For those of you who have received the Tara initiation, you can then partake of the food and drink while generating, with divine pride, yourself as Tara. Since you have to eat and drink all the time, if you do this, you will accumulate merit and virtue continuously.

The main thing here is to take care of the mind each and every day of our life. Though we are very busy with going to work and so forth, all the work we do is always related to other living beings. Whatever we do in our life, when we do those activities, it will be good to do them with the thought of benefiting others.

Every day, when we wake up in the morning, we should set the motivation for the day. We should reflect especially on how we have this precious human rebirth, how it is very difficult to find and how with this human rebirth, we can accomplish great purposes. We should always remember this every day. This is something that we *must* do.

When we wake up in the morning, say, “This is the only time that I am going to get this human rebirth. Not only that. It is a matter of time before I have to leave this body as I have to die. There is no better opportunity than this to practise the Dharma. I am going to practise the Dharma.”

We have to reflect on this every day:

- how difficult it is to obtain this human life of leisures and opportunities
- how once it is obtained, it can accomplish great purposes
- how one day we have to die as death is certain
- how the time of death is uncertain

When you reflect on this every day then naturally the wish to practise the Dharma will arise in your mind. When you don't

reflect on this every day, the wish to practise the Dharma does not arise. This is the main method to encourage you to move towards Dharma practice.

When we reflect on the great purposes that we can accomplish with this human life of leisures and opportunities, we will naturally abandon all the meaningless activities of this life. When we have this understanding—when we can really understand this—then even if we happen to sit for a few minutes or half-an-hour without engaging in any Dharma practice, we will have so much regret in the mind, feeling that we have wasted our time.

When we do not have this understanding of and feeling for how these human leisures and opportunities are difficult to obtain and, once obtained, they can serve great purposes, even when we sit around and do nothing for a whole day, we will not feel troubled. Instead, we think, “So what?”

So do reflect on the meaning of the great purposes that one can achieve with this human life of leisures and opportunities. Then naturally one will abandon all meaningless activities. When we reflect on the difficulty of obtaining these human leisures and opportunities, there is no way that we can sit around and be lazy.

Why is this human life of leisures and opportunities difficult to obtain? Because the cause of achieving this human life of leisures and opportunities is difficult to create.

What is the cause? The cause is practising pure morality.

Since that is difficult, then it will be difficult to achieve such a body again in the future. Not only have we obtained a human rebirth, we have obtained a perfect human rebirth, a human life that is endowed with the leisures and opportunities.

On top of that, not only have we met with the teachings of the Buddha, we have met with the Mahayana teachings. Not

only have we met with the Mahayana teachings, we have met with the Mahayana Vajrayana, the secret tantric teachings of the Buddha.

By understanding this, we realise how precious is this opportunity that we have. Once we understand how we have this precious human life of leisures and opportunities, we will continue with our practice without getting sick of it, tired of it or bored with it. Naturally the thought of practising the Dharma will arise.

So it is very important to reflect on this every day:

- how we have this human life of leisures and opportunities
- how this is difficult to obtain
- how once obtained, it has great meaning

At the same time, think:

- how it will not last forever
- how death is certain but the time of death is uncertain

Reflecting on this every day will increase our enthusiasm for Dharma practice.

All of you are busy but when you have the opportunity, you still come to class and you are enthusiastic about your studies. I am very happy with that. Please continue to do that. You also have a good teacher. You should take this opportunity to continue your studies. Other than that I have nothing much to say. Thank you.



Appendix

OUTLINE OF THE COMMENTARY ON
PRAISES TO THE TWENTY-ONE TARAS

1. The brief exposition of these praises
2. An extensive explanation of these praises
 - A. Praising Tara with reference to her legend
 - B. Praising Tara with reference to her aspects
 - 1) Praising Tara with reference to her sambhogakaya aspect (complete enjoyment body)
 - a. Praising Tara with reference to her peaceful aspect
 - i. Praising Tara with reference to the brilliance of her holy face and the mass of light blazing from her holy body
 - ii. Praising Tara with reference to the colour of her holy body, the implements she is holding and the causes that bring about the attainment of the state of Tara
 - iii. Praising Tara with reference to the respect that is shown to her by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas
 - iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she overcomes all opposing factors
 - v. Praising Tara with reference to how even the great worldly gods worship her
 - vi. Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys all opponents
 - b. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful aspect
 - i. Praising Tara with reference to how she purifies all the maras and the two obstructions
 - ii. Praising Tara with reference to the implements she holds in her two hands
 - iii. Praising Tara through her crown ornament and the sound of her laughter
 - iv. Praising Tara with reference to how she accomplishes different activities by employing the ten directional protectors
 - v. Praising Tara with reference to her crown ornament

Appendix

- vi. Praising Tara with reference to her wrathful posture of abiding
 - vii. Praising Tara with reference to how light radiates from the syllable HUM at her heart
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to her dharmakaya aspect (truth body)
- C. Praising Tara with reference to her enlightened activities
 - 1) Praising Tara through the enlightened actions of both her peaceful and wrathful mantras
 - 2) Praising Tara with reference to how she shakes the three realms
 - 3) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates poisons
 - 4) Praising Tara with reference to how she dispels quarrels and bad dreams
 - 5) Praising Tara with reference to how she eliminates different epidemic diseases
 - 6) Praising Tara with reference to how she destroys spirits and zombies
3. Showing the benefits of this practice
 - A. Correct mental attitude
 - B. Timing
 - C. Actual benefits
 - 1) Benefits one receives for oneself
 - a. The benefit of turning away the different faults
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 - c. The benefit of turning away the results that are suffering
 - 2) Benefits that are related to others

IN REMEMBRANCE OF KHENSUR RINPOCHE

To hasten the quick return of the unmistakable reincarnation of Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigsel, Lama Zopa Rinpoche has advised on the building of two stupas. One stupa has been suggested for Kopan Monastery itself in remembrance of Khensur Rinpoche's long and devoted service, and the other, a larger three-storey high stupa at Khachoe Ghakyil Nunnery based on the Mahabodhi Stupa in Bodhgaya, India (the place of the enlightenment of Shakyamuni Buddha).

Rinpoche had this to say regarding the benefit of building stupas:

“I see the creation of stupas as being of incalculable benefit for countless sentient beings, especially for their mind streams. If one transforms or develops the mind, then all problems and suffering are transformed or ceased, because the mind is the creator of all one's happiness and suffering.

Wherever a stupa is built will become a powerful place for healing and a cause for success for whatever visitors to that place are seeking. Each person can transform their mind by coming and seeing such holy objects. In short, spending time at a stupa can become the psychology to bring peace of mind and a good heart to all beings, both young and old.

To support and contribute to creating and building stupas and other holy objects is therefore of immense benefit, not only to others but also to yourself in helping to make your life more meaningful.”

Extracts from *Benefits and Practices
related to Statues and Stupas*

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The FPMT website also offers teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Lama Yeshe, Lama Zopa Rinpoche and many other highly respected teachers in the tradition, details about the FPMT's educational programmes, audio through FPMT radio, a complete listing of FPMT centres all over the world and in your area, a link to the FPMT Store and links to FPMT centres on the web, where you will find details of their programmes, and to other interesting Buddhist and Tibetan home pages.

AMITABHA BUDDHIST CENTRE

Amitabha Buddhist Centre (ABC) is a non-profit Buddhist organisation, officially established on 1 January 1989. We are affiliated to the Foundation for the Preservation of the Mahayana Tradition (FPMT), headquartered in the United States, and which follows the Tibetan Buddhist lineage of Lama Je Tsongkhapa. Founded by Lama Thubten Yeshe and under the guidance of its Spiritual Director, Lama Thubten Zopa Rinpoche, the FPMT is devoted to preserving and transmitting the Mahayana Buddhist tradition worldwide through teaching, meditation and community service.

ABC's origins began in 1984 when Lama Yeshe visited Singapore and met several students who were interested in forming a Buddhist group. Lama Yeshe gave our centre its name.

Lama Zopa Rinpoche first came to Singapore in 1985. During a retreat in India, Rinpoche developed a very strong and sudden wish to visit Singapore. He saw how the Buddha's teachings would greatly benefit a growing number of people in Singapore. This overwhelming instinct brought Rinpoche to Singapore for the first time to establish a Buddhist centre, and that was how our close connection with Rinpoche began.

For more information, please contact us at:



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WHAT TO DO WITH DHARMA TEACHINGS

The Buddhadharma is the true source of happiness for all sentient beings. Books like this show you how to put the teachings into practice and integrate them into your life, whereby you get the happiness you seek. Therefore, anything containing Dharma teachings, the names of your teachers or holy images is more precious than other material objects and should be treated with respect.

To avoid creating the karma of not meeting the Dharma again in future lives, please do not put books (or other holy objects) on the floor or underneath other stuff, step over or sit upon them, or use them for mundane purposes such as propping up wobbly tables. They should be kept in a clean, high place, separate from worldly writings, and wrapped in cloth when being carried around. These are but a few considerations.

Should you need to get rid of Dharma materials, they should not be thrown in the rubbish but burned in a special way. Briefly: do not incinerate such materials with other trash, but alone and as they burn, recite the mantra OM AH HUM. As the smoke rises, visualise that it pervades all of space, carrying the essence of the Dharma to all sentient beings in the six samsaric realms, purifying their minds, alleviating their suffering and bringing them all happiness up to and including enlightenment. Some people might find this practice a bit unusual, but it is given according to tradition.

Thank you very much.





“Like the great holy beings of the past, Khensur Rinpoche had great faith in and devotion towards Mother Tara. Therefore, this commentary on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras* bears the special blessing of his personal experience with the power and effectiveness of the practice of Tara.”

- *Khen Rinpoche Geshe Chonyi*

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This precious commentary by Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigtsel on the *Praises to the Twenty-one Taras*, published for the first time, offers us a deeper understanding of the inconceivable qualities of Tara’s holy body, speech and mind and how her different aspects can help us overcome difficulties in our daily lives and Dharma practice.

Born in Tibet in 1941, Khensur Rinpoche Lama Lhundrup Rigtsel joined Sera Monastery while still a boy. He left for India in 1959 where he met Lama Yeshe and Lama Zopa Rinpoche.

In 1972, Lama Yeshe requested him to look after the young monks in Kopan Monastery, Nepal. Thus began Khensur Rinpoche’s 40 years of service at Kopan.

He was officially bestowed the title of Khen Rinpoche (abbot) by the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 2001. He remained in this position until July 2011.

Khensur Rinpoche passed away on 7th September 2011.