

Meditation on Arya Tara

(for people who have received the Tara initiation)

Refuge and Bodhicitta

I take refuge until I am enlightened in the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. By the positive potential I create by practicing generosity and the other far-reaching attitudes, may I attain Buddhahood in order to benefit all sentient beings.

The Four Immeasurables

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were to abide in equanimity, free of bias, attachment and anger. May they abide in this way. I shall cause them to abide in this way. Guru Tara, please inspire me to be able to do so.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings had happiness and its causes. May they have these. I shall cause them to have these. Guru Tara, please inspire me to be able to do so.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were free from suffering and its causes. May they be free. I shall cause them to be free. Guru Tara, please inspire me to be able to do so.

How wonderful it would be if all sentient beings were never parted from upper rebirth and liberation's excellent bliss. May they never be parted. I shall cause them never to be parted. Guru Tara, please inspire me to be able to do so.

The Actual Practice

In the space above, on a luminous jeweled throne, lotus and moon seats sits my root guru who is endowed with the three kindnesses, inseparable from the Venerable Tara, emerald green with one face and two arms. Her hands are as tender and soft as the leaf of the blue utpala flower. Her right hand is in the gesture of supreme giving, fulfilling the wishes of all beings. Her left hand, as tender as young ivy leaves, is at her heart in the gesture of the Three Jewels. She is always present in order to liberate all living beings, but is never affected by the defects and shortcomings of cyclic existence. To symbolize this, her two hands hold blue utpala flowers.

She is extremely beautiful, representing all goodness in visible form, wearing a variety of jeweled ornaments, like an emerald mountain engulfed in the lights of the rainbow. She is clad in heavenly silks, fine, smooth and light, the clothing of the gods. To symbolize the union of method and wisdom, she sits with her right leg slightly extended and her left bent.

In her hair is Lord Amitabha, like a ruby crown ornament with rays of light that completely fill all the immeasurable realms, causing countless beings to ripen and attain liberation. She sits amidst an aura of light, adorned at the three places with the three vajras.

The syllable Hum emanates rays of light from her heart. The Buddhas and bodhisattvas from the ten directions are invoked in front of the Bhagavati and are absorbed. Dza hum bam ho. She becomes the embodiment of all three objects of refuge.

Seven Limb Prayer

I bow at the feet of Arya Tara, who is endowed with all the marks and signs of a Buddha. Her speech has sixty beautiful melodies. Her mind pervades all phenomena and has great compassion for all living beings.

Whatever offering substances exist in the immeasurable realms of existence, in addition to whatever I have arranged in reality here, are transformed into Samantabhadra offerings. I offer these to please the Lady Tara and the whole assembly of deities.

I confess with great regret and repentance whatever destructive acts I have done with my body, speech and mind under the influence of the three poisons and other afflictions. Please cleanse me of my negative imprints with the water of your great compassion.

I rejoice from the depths of my heart in whatever constructive imprints there are in cyclic existence and nirvana, and especially in the qualities of the body, speech and mind of the Lady Tara.

Please light the lamp of Dharma of the three vehicles for the beings who are completely engulfed in the thick gloom of the three poisons, who wander in the three lower realms of life without rest, and who are constantly afflicted by the three types of suffering.

Please look with your great compassion at beings such as myself and others who are in despair, being tortured from hundreds of unbearable sufferings. Please remain in this existence until samara is empty.

I dedicate all the constructive imprints and energy and whatever merit has been accumulated through the practices of prostrating and offering to the Lady Tara and her assembly so that all the father and mother beings of the six realms are liberated from the sufferings of cyclic existence and attain the state of a Buddha's full enlightenment.

Mandala Offering

This ground, anointed with perfume, flowers strewn,
Mount Meru, four lands, sun and moon,
Imagined as a Buddha Land and offered to you
May all beings enjoy this pure land.

The objects of attachment, aversion and ignorance - friends, enemies and strangers, my body, wealth and enjoyments - I offer these without any sense of loss. Please accept them with pleasure, and inspire me and others to be free from the three poisonous attitudes.

Idam guru ratna mandala kam nirya tayami

Praises to the Twenty-one Taras

OM I prostrate to the noble transcendent liberator.

1. Homage to Tara swift and fearless
With eyes like a flash of lightning
Lotus-born in an ocean of tears
Of Chenrezig, three worlds' protector

2. Homage to you whose face is like
One hundred autumn moons gathered
And blazes with the dazzling light
Of a thousand constellations.
3. Homage to you born from a gold-blue lotus
Hands adorned with lotus flowers
Essence of giving effort and ethics,
Patience concentration and wisdom.
4. Homage to you who crown all Buddhas
Whose action subdues without limit
Attained to every perfection
On you the bodhisattvas rely.
5. Homage to you whose TUTTARE and HUM
Fill the realms of desire, form and space
You crush seven worlds beneath your feet
And have power to call all forces.
6. Homage to you adored by Indra,
Agni, Brahma, Vayu and Ishvara
Praised in song by hosts of spirits,
Zombies, scent-eaters and yakshas.
7. Homage to you whose TREY and PEY
Destroy external wheels of magic
Right leg drawn in and left extended
You blaze within a raging fire.
8. Homage to you whose TURE destroys
The great fears, the mighty demons
With a wrathful frown on your lotus face
You slay all foes without exception.
9. Homage to you beautifully adorned
By the Three Jewels' gesture at your heart
Your wheel shines in all directions
With a whirling mass of light.
10. Homage to you, radiant and joyful
Whose crown emits a garland of light
You, by the laughter of TUTTARA
Conquer demons and lords of the world

11. Homage to you with power to invoke
The assembly of local protectors
With your fierce frown and vibrating HUM
You bring freedom from all poverty.
12. Homage to you with crescent moon crown
All your adornments dazzling bright
From your hair-knot Amitabha
Shines eternal with great beams of light.
13. Homage to you who dwells in a blazing wreath
Like the fire at the end of this age
Your right leg outstretched and left drawn in
Joy surrounds you who defeats hosts of foes.
14. Homage to you whose foot stamps the earth
And whose palm strikes the ground by your side
With a wrathful glance and the letter HUM
You subdue all in the seven stages.
15. Homage to the blissful, virtuous, peaceful one
Object of practice, nirvana's peace
Perfectly endowed with SOHA and OM
Overcoming all the great evils.
16. Homage to you with joyous retinue
You subdue fully all enemies' forms
The ten-letter mantra adorns your heart
And your knowledge-HUM gives liberation.
17. Homage to TURE with stamping feet
Whose essence is the seed-letter HUM
You cause Meru, Mandara and Vindya
And all three worlds to tremble and shake.
18. Homage to you who holds in your hand
A moon like a celestial lake
Saying TARA twice and the letter PEY
You dispel all poisons without exception.
19. Homage to you on whom the kings of gods
The gods themselves and all spirits rely
Your armor radiates joy to all
You soothe conflicts and nightmares as well.

20. Homage to you whose eyes, the sun and moon,
Radiate with pure brilliant light
Uttering HARA twice and TUTTARA
Dispels extremely fearful plagues.
21. Homage to you, adorned with three natures
Perfectly endowed with peaceful strength
You destroy demons, zombies and yakshas
O Ture, most exalted and sublime!

Thus the root mantra is praised
And twenty-one homages offered.

The Condensed Praise (optional)

OM to the transcendent subduer, Arya Tara, I prostrate.
Homage to the glorious one who frees with TARE;
With TUTTARA you calm all fears;
You bestow all success with TURE;
To the sound SOHA I pay great homage.

Request for Protection from the Eight Dangers (optional)

Dwelling in the mountains of wrong views of selfhood,
Puffed up with holding itself superior,
It claws other beings with contempt,
The lion of pride – please protect us from this danger!

Untamed by the sharp hooks of mindfulness and introspective alertness,
Dulled by the maddening liquor of sensual pleasures,
It enters wrong paths and shows its harmful tusks,
The elephant of ignorance – please protect us from this danger!

Driven by the wind of inappropriate attention,
Billowing swirling smoke-clouds of misconduct,
It has the power to burn down forests of goodness,
The fire of anger – please protect us from this danger!

Lurking in its dark pit of ignorance,
Unable to bear the wealth and excellence of others,
It swiftly injects them with its cruel poison,
The snake of jealousy – please protect us from this danger!

Roaming the fearful wild of inferior practice
And the barren wastes of absolutism and nihilism,
They sack the towns and hermitages of benefit and bliss,
The thieves of wrong views – please protect us from this danger!

Binding embodied beings in the unbearable prison
Of cyclic existence with no freedom,
It locks them in craving's tight embrace,
The chain of miserliness – please protect us from this danger!

Sweeping us in the torrent of cyclic existence so hard to cross,
Where, conditioned by the propelling winds of karma,
We are tossed in the waves of birth, aging, sickness and death,
The flood of attachment – please protect us from this danger!

Roaming in the space of darkest confusion,
Tormenting those who strive for ultimate aims,
It is viciously lethal to liberation,
The carnivorous demon of doubt – please protect us from this danger!

Requests

I request the Bhagavati Lady Tara, the object of refuge of all. Whoever merely hears your name, beautiful as a garland of utpala flowers, and takes it as an ornament for one's own ears is protected from all types of sufferings, such as the eight great fears.

I request you who are the object of refuge of all, manifesting in various forms to liberate beings, appearing in the beautiful form of a goddess, combining together in one form the power of the wisdom and compassion of all the Buddhas.

I request the Great Treasure of Compassion. You are especially compassionate towards those who are weak, even though you are constantly venerated by Brahma, Indra, all the worldly beings and the powerful bodhisattvas.

I request you who have all good qualities fully developed, who lives up to her supreme and meaningful name. Although having obtained the body of peace, still, through the power of compassion for all living beings, you never tire of liberating beings.

I request you, who are the object of refuge of all. Even when the bodhisattvas in the countless realms of life exert themselves for the welfare of all beings, they request you, supreme goddess.

I request the great compassionate Lady Tara, who took excellent birth from the lotus face of the Lord of Compassion and who enacts activities of great compassion out of great love for living beings in these degenerate times.

I request the Great Compassionate Mother of All Buddhas. Out of great love for the ignorant beings in the north, you gave incentives again and again to Atisha, the crown ornament and chief among the 500 lords of Dharma, to visit Tibet.

I request the Lady Tara, the only deity of the Kadampa tradition who has given her own vajra word to protect the followers of Atisha and Dromtonpa, guiding and caring for the faithful ones.

I request the supreme goddess Tara, the chief deity, the very heart-drop of the Kadampa masters who expound the meaning of the Tripitaka and the four classes of tantra by means of the five points of remembrance.

I request the unequaled object of refuge, whose right foot is endowed with all signs of auspiciousness and whose big toe helps to liberate those who have fallen into cyclic existence's ocean of despair, bringing them to the state of blissful liberation.

I request you, who provides for all the needs of beings, whose right hand shows that you bestow the highest temporal state and finally the state of highest goodness, along with whatever purposes one tries to achieve.

I request Lady Tara, the union of all objects of refuge. Although there are a great number of deities with peaceful and wrathful aspects, your left hand shows clearly that you are the very combination of all three objects of refuge.

By the power of my requests to Lady Tara, the supreme deity, the guru, and the union of all objects of refuge, may I always be under the care of Mahayana spiritual guides and put their advice into practice.

May I develop full understanding of the difficulty of attaining freedoms and fortunes. May I develop strong awareness of the uncertainty of death and the precipice of the lower realms. Inspire me, so that by practicing refuge and developing a precise understanding of the functioning of positive and negative karma, I will abandon destructive actions and practice virtuous ones.

Inspire me to develop disgust for cyclic existence, to develop proper determination to be free and to train correctly in the three higher trainings. Inspire me especially to train with great care in the Pratimoksa precepts, the very root of the teachings.

Inspire me to train in the bodhisattvas' conduct. By always remembering the kindness of the mother sentient beings as extensive as space, may I generate compassion and great love, and thus generate bodhicitta. Inspire me so that having developed the power of the great bodhicitta even more, I will generate the great intention to liberate all sentient beings as quickly as possible and thus will enter the door of the highest yoga tantra vehicle and keep all commitments purely.

Inspire me to be certain that one can achieve the state of Buddha Vajradhara in one single lifetime by meditating on the two tantric stages, and thus to practice the four session yoga. Likewise, inspire me to practice the essence of the instructions of the great Kadampa masters who combine all the stages of the path—the essential meaning of all sutras and tantras—into one.

Inspire me to be able to transform into the three Buddha bodies through the teachings of the central channel of the highest yoga tantra, the very essence of emptiness and compassion of the profound path, the yoga of the drops of the most subtle unification.

Purification and Inspiration

Visualize that much radiant and blissful green light from the TAM and mantra at Tara's heart stream into you and into the sentient beings surrounding you. This light purifies the imprints of all negative actions, pacifies all disturbing emotions and attitudes, fear and anxiety, and dispels all sickness and harms from negative forces. In addition, it brings inspiration and blessings from Tara, thus enabling you to realize the entire gradual path to enlightenment quickly. While doing the visualization, recite as much as possible Tara's peaceful mantra: *om tare tuttare ture soha*.

Self-generation and Mantra Recitation

Arya Tara melts into green light and flows into me. Instantly my wrong conceptions that I and all other phenomena inherently exist and my dualistic mind and its views disappear, becoming

completely empty. Not even a trace of them remains. I concentrate one-pointedly on this empty state with wisdom that is indistinguishably one with Guru Tara's blissful omniscient mind.

Within emptiness, my wisdom manifests instantly as Arya Tara's holy body, seated upon a lotus and moon seat. At my heart is another lotus and moon seat, upon which stand the syllable *tam* at the center and the letters of the mantra clockwise at the edge. The *tam* and the mantra are manifestations of Guru Tara's holy mind, with which my mind is totally united.

Green light radiates from the *tam* and mantra letters, spreading in every direction. It purifies the destructive karma, afflictions, and subtle obscurations to omniscience of all sentient beings, who then become Tara. Again green light is emitted, the rays bearing manifold offerings to the six transcendental senses of all the Buddhas and to the sentient beings who have become Tara. The enlightened beings are extremely pleased and shower down the superlative qualities of Arya Tara's holy body, speech and mind – omniscient wisdom, supreme skillful means, and infinite compassion – in the form of a great rain of light rays,. As this rain absorbs into me, I recite the mantra and am inspired and blessed. *Om tare tuttare ture soha.*

Lamrim Meditation

Meditate on the Lamrim, the gradual path to enlightenment. You may do this according to meditation outlines. Or you may recite "The Three Principal Aspects of the Path" by Je Tsongkhapa (found in *Pearl of Wisdom, Book I*), meditating deeply on one verse each session.)

Dedication and Auspicious Verses

Due to this merit may I soon/ Attain the enlightened state of Guru Tara.
That I may be able to liberate/ All sentient beings from their suffering.

Through this merit, may the Venerable Lady Tara take care of me and all sentient beings. May we see the face of Amitabha Buddha in Sukhavati, and may we enjoy the Mahayana teachings.

O compassionate and venerable subduer, may the infinite beings, including myself, soon purify the two obscurations and complete both collections so that we may attain full enlightenment.

For all of my lives, until I reach this stage, may I know the sublime happiness of humans and gods. So that I may become fully omniscient, please pacify quickly all obstacles, spirits, obstructions, epidemics, diseases and so forth, the various causes of untimely death, bad dreams and omens, the eight fears and other afflictions, and make it so that they no longer exist.

May the mundane and supramundane collections of all excellent auspicious qualities and happiness increase and develop, and may all wishes be fulfilled naturally and effortlessly, without an exception.

May I strive to realize and increase the sacred Dharma, accomplishing your stage and beholding your sublime face. May my understanding of emptiness and the precious bodhicitta increase like the moon waxing full.

May I be reborn from an extremely beautiful and holy lotus in the joyous and noble mandala of the conqueror. May I attain whatever prophecy I receive in the presence of Amitabha Buddha.

O deity whom I have practiced in previous lives, the enlightening influence of the three-time Buddhas, blue-green with one face and two arms, the swift pacifier, O mother holding an utpala flower, may you be auspicious!

O deity, whom I have practiced from previous lives, the enlightening influence of the three-time Buddhas; blue-green, one face and two arms, the swift pacifier, O mother holding an utpala flower, may you be auspicious!

Whatever your body, O Mother of Conquerors, whatever your retinue, lifespan and pure land, whatever your name, most noble and holy, may I and all others attain only these.

By the force of these praises and requests made to you, may all disease, poverty, fighting and quarrels be calmed. May the precious Dharma and everything auspicious increase throughout the world and directions where I and all others dwell.

You who have abandoned all bodily defects and possess the signs and marks of a Buddha; You who have abandoned all defects of speech and possess a beautiful, sparrow-like voice; You who have abandoned all defects of mind and see all the infinite objects of knowledge; O brilliant mother of auspicious glory, please bring your auspicious presence to us!

(In break time, see all forms as Tara, all sounds as her mantra, and regard all thoughts as Tara's thoughts, i.e. as empty of inherent existence.)

Colophon: This sadhana was written by Bhikshu Yeshe Gyeltsen and Tashi Samten Ling. The part on the self-generation was added from a sadhana by Zopa Rinpoche. The "Eight Fears" by the First Dalai Lama was also added.