

## **Tara the Liberator**

By [Kyabje Lama Zopa Rinpoche](#) at Nepal, May 1987 (Last Updated Jun 19, 2014)

### *The ultimate meaning of life*

First I would like to thank everybody from my heart for coming to this meditation course. I rejoice greatly that you want to make your life beneficial for other sentient beings by developing your mind, that you are concerned about the happiness of others. I thank all of you from my heart.

You do not do meditation courses and spiritual practice to have a healthy body, and not even to have temporary peace of mind; you do spiritual practice to have everlasting mind-peace, with ultimate liberation from mental afflictions, or disturbing thoughts. At this time you have a precious human body. Using this to obtain even the ultimate happiness of everlasting liberation from all problems and their causes—disturbing thoughts and action-result, or karma—is still not the ultimate purpose of your having this precious human body. The real purpose of taking this precious human body at this time is to avoid giving harm to other sentient beings; and on the basis of that, to benefit all other sentient beings, each of whom wants happiness and does not want suffering.

Having this pure attitude of wishing to avoid harm to others in the very depths of your heart, you then act to benefit them without discrimination. You do not recognize some beings, such as relatives and friends, as close and help them, but others as enemies and not help them—or even harm them. Rather than these discriminating thoughts, you have a pure attitude of loving kindness, thinking to benefit all sentient beings equaling the extent of infinite space. With the attitude of loving kindness and compassion towards all living beings, you should also act to benefit them equally. This is the main purpose for which we have taken this precious human body. This is the ultimate meaning of life.

### *Everlasting happiness*

You should live each day, each hour, each minute, in order to accomplish this ultimate purpose. This is why you try to be healthy and to have a long life. The purpose of everything you do—sleeping, waking, wearing clothes, eating, sitting, walking, having medical treatment—is to develop the good heart towards every sentient being, and to act to benefit each of them equally. Other living beings are exactly the same as you in wanting even the smallest comfort and not wanting the smallest discomfort, even in a dream. They are exactly the same as you.

Just as you want to eliminate all your suffering and to obtain happiness so does every other living being. They are exactly the same as you. Therefore, you need to eliminate their suffering and obtain their happiness.

And again just like you, other living beings want the greatest, longest-lasting happiness. When you go shopping, you try to buy the best quality, longest-lasting goods that you can. Like this, every being wishes to have the greatest, longest-lasting happiness—and that means great liberation. *Great liberation* means removal of the two obscurations: the obscuration of the gross disturbing thoughts and the obscuration of the subtle mental stains. When the cessation of these is established on the mind, this is the purest happiness of full enlightenment.

Why is the happiness of full enlightenment everlasting? Because once the obscurations, the cause of suffering, are completely removed, it is impossible for suffering to recur and happiness to degenerate. Because the cause of suffering has been removed, it is impossible for suffering to return.

For example, why is our mind controlled today by disturbing thoughts such as ignorance, anger and attachment? Our mind is obscured by these because they are the continuation of the mental afflictions, or disturbing thoughts, that existed yesterday. Because we did not remove yesterday's disturbing thoughts, the continuation of these—today's disturbing thoughts—has arisen.

It is the same with our previous life: If we had completely removed disturbing thoughts by actualizing the remedy of the path within our mind in our previous life, it would have been impossible for us to be born with these mental afflictions in this life. There could be no such evolution if we had ceased the continuation of disturbing thoughts. With nothing to cause disturbing thoughts in this life, there would be no disturbing thoughts—and no unhappiness or problems in this life.

For example, if a cloth that had been dirty for many days was completely cleaned yesterday, there would be no continuation of yesterday's dirt. In the same way, once the disturbing-thought obscurations are completely removed, it is impossible for them to arise again since there is no cause, and it is impossible to experience suffering again. This is the everlasting happiness of liberation. As I mentioned before, the ultimate purpose of having this precious human body is to liberate all living beings from all obscurations, or mental stains, and lead them to the greatest liberation of full enlightenment, which is everlasting, peerless happiness.

### *Developing the mind*

Now, in order to accomplish this great work for other living beings, you have to develop your own mind by putting effort into listening to, reflecting and meditating on the teachings. And in order for you to lead other beings to this peerless happiness of full enlightenment, they have to follow the path. Therefore, to lead them in the path to full enlightenment, you must reveal the teachings to them. In order to reveal the teachings, the means to guide them in the path to full enlightenment, you yourself must see very clearly, without the slightest mistake, the level of mind, characteristics and karma of every single living being. As living beings have various levels and characteristics of mind, the methods you reveal to them also have to be of various types. Again you must realize clearly, without the slightest mistake, all the various means to guide living beings.

The only mind that can see all these things fully is omniscient mind. Therefore, in order to accomplish this great work for sentient beings, this ultimate benefit of great liberation, which living beings need and are lacking, you yourself need to have omniscient mind.

For example, a teacher—whether in a school, university or monastery—teaches different subjects to various classes to educate students with knowledge of science, mathematics, engineering, biology, medicine, psychology or whatever. It is generally accepted that the more education a student has, the easier it will be for him to find a job, earn a living and have an easy life. The general aim of education is to have an easier life. And in order to educate others, the teacher himself has to be educated and knowledgeable in all the subjects he teaches. The less knowledge—or more

ignorance—you have, the more limited your capacity to educate and help others. The more knowledge you have, the more you can fulfill the wishes of other people.

If you are blind, you cannot guide others to where they want to go. If you have no arms, you cannot help your mother when she is in danger of falling down a precipice, or of being swept away by a river and drowned. Like this, in order to guide sentient beings perfectly to the peerless happiness of full enlightenment, you should first have omniscient mind.

By having omniscient mind, you also have perfect power and great compassion for every living being. Because of this great compassion, which feels no discrimination, there is no danger that you will help some beings and not others. There is no partiality in your actions. And with omniscient mind, there is the power to reveal every skillful means to guide living beings.

### *Developing compassion*

How is it possible to achieve this? For this mental continuum to become omniscient mind? You can figure this out even from this simple example: When you memorize anything, in the beginning your mind is completely ignorant. In the very beginning, you do not even know the alphabet; but with the help of a teacher and by applying effort, you gradually begin to learn. As you continue, you learn more and more. It is the nature of the mind that understanding can be developed. The mind has the power to understand gross phenomena, and even subtle existence if you attempt to do this correctly.

You have compassion for some beings now, even though you do not have fully developed compassion, which means compassion towards every living being. However, you can develop your present small compassion for these beings so that it becomes greater and greater. You can increase your compassion for these beings. By understanding the teachings and practicing meditation, you can also generate compassion for the other beings for whom you do not feel compassion at the moment. In this way compassion can be developed.

With the compassion you already have for others, with your present understanding of their wishes and the methods to fulfill them, you have some capacity to help others. Even at this present time, with this human body, with the understanding and compassion that you have, you have some power to help others. As your understanding of and compassion for all living beings develop through actualizing the remedy of the path within your mind, your obscurations will gradually become less and less, and you will gain more and more understanding. When this process is completed, you will have complete and perfect power to guide other beings.

### *Developing omniscient mind*

How is it possible to separate the mind from mental afflictions? In your everyday life you can see that even if your mind is overwhelmed by anger in the morning, this anger does not last; your mind is not continuously overwhelmed by anger. In the morning you may be angry with someone, but in the afternoon there is no anger—instead there may be attachment to that person, or indifference.

Even without meditation, disturbing thoughts arise and change. This proves that the nature of the mind is not oneness with anger, attachment, ignorance, pride or jealousy. The mind is temporarily

obscured by these, but is itself not oneness with them. If the mind itself were oneness with anger, it should be spontaneously and continuously in the nature of anger. Or spontaneously and continuously in the nature of attachment. Then, to the one object, anger and attachment would be arising at the same time.

If a mirror was oneness with the dirt on it, the dirt could not be cleaned away—this would be like cleaning dirt away from dirt. Because the mirror is not oneness with but temporarily covered by dirt, it can be cleaned with water and a cloth. The more the dirt is cleaned away, the clearer the mirror's reflection. In the same way, as you listen to, reflect and meditate on the graduated path to enlightenment, as you generate more realizations of this path, your obscurations first become gradually thinner and thinner, and are then removed completely.

The Mahayana, or Greater Vehicle, path to enlightenment has five paths: the paths of merit, preparation, right-seeing, meditation and no-more learning. And the Paramitayana path has ten levels, or bhumis. Certain obscurations are removed when you achieve the third, right-seeing path; and further obscurations are removed when you reach the path of meditation. When a bodhisattva achieves the eighth bhumi of the Paramitayana path, the gross disturbing-thought obscuration is completely removed. By developing his mind to the ninth and tenth bhumis, the bodhisattva removes even the subtle obscurations, the mental stains, or impressions, left on the mind by disturbing-thought obscurations such as ignorance grasping the I as existent from its own side.

While the I is merely imputed on the aggregates by thought, ignorance grasps the I as independent, existing from its own side. Due to imprints left on the mind, everything appears as existing from its own side. However, even these subtle obscurations are completely removed when the mind is developed to the ninth and tenth bhumis. When the remedy of the path is complete within the mind, there is not even the slightest mental stain. At that time, the mental continuum becomes omniscient mind, fully seeing all the past, present and future without the slightest mistake; all the minds and wishes of living beings; and all the various means to guide them. Without the slightest effort or mistake, one is able to guide all living beings perfectly.

### *Obstacles to success*

Now, in order to achieve this, we have to complete the realizations of the graduated path to enlightenment, or *lam-rim*. Developing your mind in the graduated path to enlightenment is the most important and most beneficial thing for you, and especially for other living beings. However, there are many obstacles even to accomplishing some small happiness in this life. Even finding a job can take many months, even years. Even in business, which is small work to obtain happiness of only this life, there are many obstacles. So of course there are many obstacles to developing your mind and achieving the everlasting liberation of omniscient mind for the sake of all living beings. There are many inner obstacles created by disturbing thoughts: the dissatisfied mind; the selfish mind; the mind of worldly concern, grasping to this life and samsaric perfections.

Worldly concern brings so many problems in this life: fear, worry, depression, even suicide. This grasping mind does not allow your everyday activities to become virtue, the cause of happiness. Besides interfering in your finding happiness in future lives, which means receiving a good rebirth, worldly concern does not even allow you to have happiness and mind-peace from hour to hour in your present life.

Even if you try to practice Dharma, worldly concern does not allow your practice to become pure Dharma. Grasping samsaric perfections also causes you to take rebirth again, so there is the suffering of death and the experience of all these problems again and again. It does not allow you to achieve everlasting liberation from suffering, and its causes.

Generally, the ignorance believing that the I, which is merely imputed on the aggregates by thought, exists from its own side is the main cause of suffering. This ignorance is the root of all suffering. But also there is the selfish mind, which does not allow you to have any mind-peace. As long as you constantly follow the selfish attitude, you do not have any relaxation, any happiness. Besides harming you, the selfish attitude gives harm to all other living beings continuously—from day to day, month to month, year to year, and life to life. It does not allow the activities of your everyday life to become the cause of your achieving full enlightenment, omniscient mind, for other living beings. In a similar way, attachment grasping samsaric perfections does not allow your everyday actions to become the cause of liberation.

The hallucinated view that believes the I to be independent, even though it is a dependent arising, does not allow you to realize the absolute nature of the I. As long as you grasp the I as truly existent, there is no way you can realize the absolute nature of the I. In this way, there is no way to escape from suffering, from samsara. Following ignorance in this way does not allow the actions of your daily life to become a remedy to samsara, to the cause of suffering and all the resultant problems.

### *Relying on Tara*

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

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

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

Besides benefiting the Tibetan practitioners who are experimenting on and accomplishing the path to enlightenment, Lama Atisha's text is nowadays even benefiting extensively in the West. The light of this lam-rim teaching has dispelled so much ignorance, even in the minds of many thousands of people living in the West. Because *Lamp for the Path to Enlightenment* integrates all the teachings of Buddha into a step-by-step practice by which anyone can achieve enlightenment, many practitioners have been able to use it to train their minds in the path to enlightenment.

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

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

### *The benefits of Tara practice*

Tara is quick to grant success in obtaining the ultimate happiness of enlightenment. You receive much good merit, or cause of happiness; it prevents a suffering rebirth in your next life; you receive initiation from millions of buddhas; and you achieve enlightenment. Besides these, however, Tara practice has many other benefits. Reciting the Twenty-one Taras' prayer with devotion, at dawn or dusk—or remembering Tara, singing praises and reciting mantras at any time of the day or night—protects you from fear and dangers, and fulfill all your wishes. If you pray to Tara, Tara is particularly quick to grant help.

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

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

### *The meaning of tare*

The Tara mantra is OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA. To explain the meaning of TARE TUTTARE TURE: TARE means liberating from samsara. This *samsara* means these aggregates: the aggregate of form, or the physical body; of feeling; of recognition; of karmic formations; and of consciousness. These aggregates, on which the I is labeled, are caused by the contaminated seed of karma and disturbing thoughts. Under the control of karma and disturbing thoughts, the past-life

aggregate of consciousness circled to this life. Because these aggregates are contaminated by the seed of karma and disturbing thoughts, on meeting desirable and undesirable objects, the different disturbing thoughts such as attachment and anger arise. As the seed of the disturbing thoughts is there, you again create karma. And the karma and disturbing thoughts again cause the aggregate of consciousness to circle, or join, to the aggregates of the next life.

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

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

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

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

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

### *The meaning of TUTTARE*

The second word, TUTTARE, liberates you from the eight fears. There are eight fears related to external dangers from fire, water, air, earth, and also from such things as thieves and dangerous animals. However, the main dangers come from ignorance, attachment, anger, pride, jealousy, miserliness, doubt and wrong views. These eight disturbing thoughts that you have in your mind are

the main dangers. By taking refuge in Tara and doing Tara practice, you are liberated from these eight internal dangers, these eight disturbing thoughts. In this way, you are also liberated from external dangers, as these external dangers come from the inner disturbing thoughts.

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

### *The meaning of TURE*

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

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

The conclusion is that by taking refuge in Tara, doing Tara practices such as recitation of the Tara mantra, and practicing the path contained in that mantra, you can achieve the fully enlightened state with the four kayas, which is the cessation, liberated from the two obscurations. In short, OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA means "I prostrate to the Liberator, Mother of all the Victorious Ones." Tara is the mother of all the *Victorious Ones*, or buddhas. Why are buddhas called Victorious Ones? Because they are victorious over the two obscurations.

### *Tara the Mother*

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



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

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

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

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

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

Normally children feel much closer to their mother than to their father. When they have some trouble, most children seem to scream for their mother. I don't know about in the West, but in the East even adults, when they have some severe pain or problem, rely on their mother.

My father died when I was small, and I don't remember at all what he looked like. People say that he had a beard, was very good at reading texts, and did not speak much. All I can remember clearly is my father's sheep-skin *chuba*. Everybody in the family slept under that big chuba—it was our blanket. The whole family tried to get underneath it. I can remember that very clearly. I was introduced to my father's chuba—that is all I remember.

So my mother was the only adult in our home. My sister, because she was a little older, was able to help my mother a little by taking our animals out on the mountains and bringing them back home. Otherwise, the rest of us—there were three, including me—were useless. Since my sister had to look after the animals, all the hard work was done alone by my mother.

One day my mother had to go into the forest to get firewood. We waited outside the house. Because none of us could cook, we waited outside for her to come home and give us some food. She came back very late from the forest with a very heavy load of firewood. After she returned, she could not make a fire because she was sick, with much pain. There was no fire in the stove, and no food. She lay down next to the fireplace, screaming for her mother: "Ama! Ama!" My grandmother, who was still alive at that time, lived quite near to us, maybe five or ten minutes' walk away.

The three of us—me, my brother Sangye, and another young brother who had a small piece of tail, and later died—didn't know what to do. We just sat around the fireplace looking at our mother. There was no fire; none of us could make a fire. We just sat and watched our mother.

Like this, somehow, naturally, even grown-ups call their mother when there is some really serious pain or problem. However, Tara is much closer to us than our mother.

### *The meaning of OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA*

This female aspect, Tara, Mother of all the Victorious Ones guides you and other living beings from the danger of falling into samsara or the lower nirvana, and leads you to the perfect state of enlightenment, which is qualified with the five transcendental wisdoms and the four kayas.

The rough meaning of these three words TARE TUTTARE TURE is: "To you, embodiment of all the buddhas' actions, I prostrate always—whether I am in happy or unhappy circumstances—with my body, speech and mind."

All the paths (Lesser Vehicle, Mahayana, Paramitayana, tantra) from the beginning up to enlightenment are contained in TARE TUTTARE TURE. The remedy of the path and all the obscurations it removes are contained in TARE TUTTARE TURE. In regard to the lam-rim, TARE is the graduated path of the lower capable being; TUTTARE, of the middle capable being; and TURE, of the higher capable being. All the outlines of the lam-rim meditations are contained in this mantra. In the mantra TADYA THA OM MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNA-YE SVAHA, MUNÉ MUNÉ MAHAMUNA-YE can also be related to the lam-rim in the same way.

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

### *Visualizing Tara*

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

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

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

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

White nectar beams come from the OM, strike your forehead, and enter inside you to purify all the obscurations and negative karmas you have accumulated with the body from beginningless rebirths until now. From the AH at Tara's throat, red nectar beams are emitted and strike your own throat; all obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your speech are completely purified. Then, from Tara's heart syllable HUNG, blue nectar beams are emitted and enter your heart; all the obscurations and negative karmas accumulated with your mind from beginningless rebirths until now are purified. Out of compassion for you and all living beings, Mother Tara has purified you. Concentrate on this as you recite the mantra: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA. Or if you wish, you can visualize Tara on your crown as in the short Tara sadhana.

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

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

So, because of your attitude of bodhicitta, Tara is extremely pleased with you; she melts into green light, enters through your forehead, and absorbs into your heart. Think: "My body, speech and mind

have been blessed to become Tara's vajra holy body, holy speech and holy mind." By receiving the blessings of Tara with a calm, devoted mind, you plant the seed to develop your mind and actually achieve Tara.

After the absorption, if you wish, one-pointedly concentrate on the nature of Tara's holy mind. Then conclude your practice by dedicating the merits to the generation of bodhicitta and to your achievement of Tara, in order to lead every living being as quickly as possible to Tara's enlightenment.