

Green Tara Oral Transmission and Teaching

8 Feb 2025, 2.30pm – 4pm, Karma Kagyud Buddhist Centre, Singapore

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Introduction – why oral transmission/empowerment/initiation is necessary

Today, our program is to give you the oral transmission of this Green Tara text. We do this prayer every Sunday. Besides every Sunday, I guess some of you are also doing this practice at your own place, probably daily or once a day, or occasionally. Anything involving Vajrayana's practice or sadhana practice that you wish to do, first you must receive oral transmission. If possible, you also must receive the empowerment or initiation. This is very important because, we call it transmission. Transmission is a form of blessing also. Transmission is also a form where the earlier masters who have practiced these and obtained realization, so that kind of blessing or realization, process of realization, method of realization that is transmitted to the next disciples. So once you have received this transmission, then it becomes very powerful in the sense that each time you practice properly, you will also be able to get every blessing and realization according to the text.

The Tara is especially very popular and very important practice of Vajrayana, tantra. In the early times, Buddha Shakyamuni has given this tantra, tantric method. The Buddha has spoken and given more than 100,000 thousand tantras. At one time in India, most of the Mahasiddhas practitioners practice Tara as their personal yidam or personal practices. Later, all those tantras spoken by the Buddha in the counts of more than hundred thousand, somehow did not transmit to the next disciples. So therefore, many of those tantras are no more in the practices and disappeared. However, some of the important practices of the Taras are still preserved. They were preserved in India during the

Nalanda's and Vikramashila's and all those great masters time and who have been practicing them. These methods of practices were later brought into Tibet.

Spread of Tara's practice into Tibet

They came to Tibet in three or four different timings. One of the most important sources of this Tara is Atisha's time. During Atisha's time, it was the later revival of Buddhism in Tibet. During Guru Rinpoche's time was when Buddhism started in Tibet earlier. In between there were also a few different timings that the methods of this Tara were brought into Tibet and practiced. Since then, gradually, the practice of Tara has become very popular in Tibetan Buddhism and every Tibetan knows how to recite 21 Homage. Every child of Tibet knows this. The moment they can speak, they can recite OM MANI PADME HUNG. Likewise, every Tibetan, then they grow a bit older, then they follow their parents' recitation of 21 Homage. The children pick up the recitation of 21 Homage. Basically, it is not only in the community of the sangha who practices Tara, but it is all the laypeople in Tibet who practice this Tara and 21 Homage.

Reasons to practice Tara

The reasons to practice of the Tara according to the Tara's tantra - it said that the ultimate essence of Tara is Prajnaparamita. And Prajnaparamita is the sole cause of enlightenment to realize the true nature of oneself and true nature of phenomena. Knowing it, one can attain enlightenment. This is Prajnaparamita, which is based on Buddha Shakyamuni's second sermon of teachings, that is all about Prajnaparamita. The ultimate essence of Tara is Prajnaparamita. To practice and engage with the Tara is to apply that prajnaparamita, that kind of shunyata, that kind of emptiness approach and emptiness, inseparable of loving-kindness and compassion, that kind of development can be brought into our minds, and finally we can actualize that prajnaparamita and become inseparable of loving-kindness and compassion. Emptiness that has the essence of love and compassion. So that togetherness is the sole cause of enlightenment. So this is within the practice of Tara.

Relatively, the practice of Tara as a sadhana, we take it as an enlightened aspect or a yidam. We engage this is like we are getting close to Mother Tara in the Sambhogakaya form of Tara. It is mentioned in the tantra that whoever practices Tara, the Mother Tara is always with you, with us. She will always protect us, she will always bless us so that we can eliminate all our obstacles, obscurations, defilements, everything and we can increase our wisdom, perfect wisdom to attain enlightenment.

Types of Fears

Particularly it is mentioned that we can be protected from the types of fears. Protection from the eight major fears and sixteen minor fears by the practice of Tara. That is being mentioned.

The eight major fears are

1. lions,
2. elephants,
3. fire,
4. snakes,
5. water
6. chains,
7. thieves,
8. demons.

Or in a way, another version of the eight major fears is:

- i. fire,
- ii. water,
- iii. poison,
- iv. weapon,
- v. war,
- vi. enemy,
- vii. poverty or so-called hunger and
- viii. death.

These are the eight major fears. Sometimes we interpret these lions, snakes and so on as defilements like pride, jealousy, ignorance, desire, hatred, that kind of defilements interpretation. These are the eight major fears that we are protected from.

We do not really have to describe in detail about the eight major and sixteen minor fears. Somehow, the minor fears refer to the daily obstacles that we face. For instance, physically unwell; or people who cause some kind of disturbances or obstacles; misfortunes, all those day-to-day problems. With the practice of Tara, one can be protected from them. So, in this way, there are many benefits of Tara. This is because when Mother Tara developed her enlightened attitudes, she made the wish that whoever is suffering, she will be there to relieve their suffering and give joyfulness. So this during her development of bodhicitta.

Tara's origin

To tell the story of Tara in the very early time, different aeons or different kalpas ago, there was a Buddha called Ngadra which means the sound of the drum. She was a princess. All along she has great compassion and loving attitudes towards others. When she was a youth, there was a Buddha was in the vicinity. She had a strong wish to see this Buddha. Once she saw this Buddha, she developed her great devotion to the Buddha, and she wished to develop her enlightened attitudes, and she wished to attain enlightenment like that Buddha. So this Buddha was very compassionate and accepted her as a disciple and gave her bodhicitta as well as all the methods of practice. From there, she developed her enlightened attitudes. Particularly her love and compassion are rendered to all sentient beings and since then, she tried to benefit sentient beings. She tried to benefit others. Every moment of her days, from early morning, she is helping others spiritually and in materially. She has helped so much and eventually all the arhants near to this Buddha said "You are very remarkable, very excellent practitioner especially to benefit sentient beings. Nobody can challenge you. But you are a female. So if you wish to be a male to benefit sentient beings, you can request to the Buddha. This Buddha can make you into a male form and then you can benefit others." She refused and she said "there is no need to be a male. Ultimately, there is no male and no female. There is no self, there is no birth and death. So it is pitiful to grasp as a self and male or female form. All these are because we are in the confusion state of the mind. To me, as what I am, I will continue til I attain enlightenment. Even if I attained enlightenment, I would attain enlightenment in this way, in this form. She refused to be a male. Each time, every moment she benefitted sentient beings with her own samadhi, her own meditation, she gradually developed so many different levels of higher samadhi or the meditative attainment. Her ability to benefit sentient beings also increased. In one moment, she can benefit hundreds and thousands of others through her spirituality and her blessings or her blessings materially. Until the Buddhas of the ten directions, all the Buddhas admire her, all the Buddhas announced her as a Tara. Because she is remarkable, she is saving all sentient beings so rapidly, so instantly.

Names of Tara

She is a saviour of all sentient beings. So the saviour in Sanskrit means Tara. Tara also means 'cross-over'. All the Buddhas gave her the name of Tara. Later, Buddhas also gave her another name called Nyurma. Nyurma means she is very instant. The moment you pray, the moment you have devotion, she is always present, and she can relieve various types of sufferings and fears. The Buddhas said she is very fast and so she is called Nyurma. Nyurma is in Tibetan. In English it means swift, immediate. She is called Drolma, Nyurma, Palmo. Palmo means brave, lots of courage. She is courageous to relieve the suffering of sentient beings. Any kind of fears like demons, monsters or natural disasters,

she is willing to assist and help in everything to protect the practitioner. So she is called Palmo. In Sanskrit it is called Veera which means a courageous person. Three names – Drolma or Tara, Nyurma (swift), and Palmo (courageous). Continuously she benefitted sentient beings. When she attained enlightenment, she has these Dharmakaya, Sambhogakaya, Nirmanakaya manifestations to benefit sentient beings. Right now we are practicing the Green Tara as a sadhana and meditation on Green Tara, all these is her Sambhogakaya form that we are practicing.

Then there are many manifestations in the real human life or different forms to benefit all persons' needs. These can be Nirmanakaya's form. That is why, once enlightenment is attained, there are many ways to help or to benefit all.

When we practice Tara or when we practice any of the yidams like Avalokiteshvara or Medicine Buddha, these are ways of Sambhogakaya form. Sambhogakaya's form is not the real person's appearances. We are not describing about a real person's appearances. Because the real person is already enlightened. When enlightened, one is in the state of Dharmakaya. Dharmakaya cannot be described as emptiness. Within the emptiness, there is sambhogakaya forms. That is appearances. So this sambhogakaya is no more that historical person. And the sambhogakaya becomes the enlightened quality. The qualities of the enlightenment that appears. Each aspect of the figure or appearances is symbolized by each quality of enlightenment. Then these qualities are described as Green Tara. These qualities are described as White Tara, these qualities are also described as thousand-arms, thousand-eyes Avalokiteshvara. These qualities also describe the four-arms Avalokiteshvara. These can be described as wrathful appearances, these can be described as semi-wrathful appearances, many hands, many heads, etc that can be described. That is not the real person or historical person who has such and such things. But these symbolizes the enlightenment. Enlightened qualities, enlightened functionalities of how it benefits sentient beings.

Tara's appearances and symbolism

In that sense, now Green Tara's sambhogakaya's form is such that she is green in colour. I think you have seen Green Tara's appearances. She is green in colour. Not like our complexion. She is green. She is very beautiful, her colour is green. What does this green symbolize? Green is the colour of activities, colour of action. She is green because she can fulfill every activity that we requested or needed. Within the worldly aspect of activities, and within the enlightened activities, she has the ability to fulfill all these activities. Therefore, she appears as green in colour.

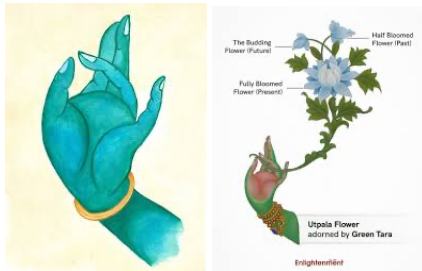
Then this Green Tara is green in colour with one face. You can see some have three faces or many faces etc. Green Tara has only one face. This one face symbolizes that all the phenomena within the universe and beyond, she can see instantly. Within an instant, she knows every phenomenon and what it is. Only enlightened ones can have that kind of ability. Within the universe and beyond, everything that is not obstructed, instantly she can see and know. That is symbolized by the one face.

When a person is in a terrible state and just call Tara, instantly, somehow that person is saved from the terrible state. There are many such stories. In the early times, around Bodhgaya, there was a monk in yellow robes, a Theravada monk who did not believe in the existence of Tara. One day when he was crossing the Niranjana River, he was drowning in the river and was about to die. He was thinking perhaps now nobody can help me. Perhaps if I call this Tara, I can get help since I am in a desperate situation of life and death? So, then he just called Tara, he asked Tara to help him. Initially he did not believe in Tara. Instantly there was a pulling sensation, and he was brought into the shallow waters. Then he saw Tara who was in front of him. Tara said to him “When you are enjoying, you don’t believe in me. But now you are desperate, you are calling me. So, I saved you.” Since then, he became devoted to Tara. There are so many such stories in those times in India. Even Atisha’s whole life, he was so close to Tara. Every small problem or doubts, Atisha always ask Tara. And Tara helps him. For instance, when Atisha wished to go to Sumatra to get bodhicitta practice, Atisha asked Green Tara. Tara advised him to go proceed and he will get the results. That was how he met Lama Serlingpa. Tibetan king invited Atisha to Tibet. Again, Atisha asked Tara who said, “If you go there, it will benefit them a lot, but your lifespan will be shortened.” There are many such instant help from Tara. She knows all phenomena in one instant. She knows everything, what is happening.

She has two arms, two hands. These two hands symbolize ultimate truth and relative truth. This means she has accomplished ultimate truth – meaning she has attained enlightenment. And she has also accomplished relative truth – relatively through many manifestations to benefit every sentient being to protect them from their fears and sufferings. The two hands symbolize the ultimate truth and relative truth.

Tara’s two hands – her right hand is outstretched like in a giving mudra posture. That symbolizes whatever siddhis or accomplishment that everyone has requested, she is willing to give that accomplishment or siddhis. Her left hand is holding the root of the

Utpala flower. Utpala flower is a lotus, blue lotus. She is holding the lotus which symbolizes the joy, meaning she bestows and give joy to everyone who practices Tara.



The remaining three fingers of her left hand is like that. (Rinpoche demonstrates). So these three fingers symbolizes Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, the Triple Gem. This means the qualities of the Triple Gem are within Green Tara. Green Tara also symbolizes Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.

Her right leg is outstretched, a little bit downwards. This is to abandon all unfavourable circumstances. She is free from every defilements and all unfavourable circumstances are all freed. Not only does she symbolize that, but those who practice Tara or meditate upon Tara can accomplish that kind of freedom from defilements.

Her left leg is bent like in a seated crossed legged posture. Her leg is bent inwards. This symbolizes that she possess all the enlightened qualities. All the qualities of enlightenment is within her. Another explanation of her outstretched right leg and bent left leg is that this symbolizes emptiness and compassion. Unity of emptiness and compassion.

She sits on a moon disc. The moon disc symbolizes bodhicitta. This means she has accomplished bodhicitta and thereby, she attained enlightenment. Below the moon disc is a multicoloured petalled lotus flower which acts like a seat. So this symbolizes the renunciation from samsara. She appears like 16 years old youthful looking. This symbolizes she has the ability to benefit sentient beings all the time.

These are just brief explanations about Tara. When you meditate, when you practise this sadhana, and you try to meditate Tara in front and also eventually when you meditate yourself as Tara, throughout you try to understand the clarities of Tara and symbolism of Tara as I have mentioned just now. in this way, ourself can merge with the enlightened

qualities of Tara. With this continuity, eventually we can accomplish the state of Tara which is the state of enlightenment.

Since you have strong faith and devotion to Tara, essence of Tara and the essence of your mind is inseparable, in this sense when you practice Tara daily, it is like you are in the process of merging the Tara and yourself as the same nature. Relatively, whoever practices Tara can be protected from all kinds of fears. I mentioned the eight major fears, there are also the sixteen minor fears. Every fear is somehow protected against by Tara. Once you have practised Tara, you should have full confidence that “I am practising Tara. Mother Tara is always with me, always together. Thus I have nothing to fear.” Sometimes, we are afraid of black magic, we fear invisible harm etc. once you practice Tara and you have full confidence in Tara, and all these fears of yours, you no longer need to fear all these subjects, you are totally free from fear. We should develop that kind of confidence. Being together with Mother Tara, inseparable with your own mind nature, then you should be free from all kinds of fears, free from all kinds of suspicions and doubts. We can protect ourselves from all kinds of fears in this way.

The four major fears of birth, old age, sickness and death – these are inevitable. We still have to experience them. Many of our karmic impacts of different obstacles etc, if you practice Tara sincerely, we can be protected, that is for sure.

Now I will give you the oral transmission. Oral transmission is just reading and you will just listen to what I read. That is how you will receive the transmission.

(Rinpoche gave oral transmission of Green Tara)

Procedure of Green Tara sadhana

Alright, the oral transmission is now completed. The main practice of this sadhana is the 21 Homage. You have to recite the 21 Homage firstly twice, secondly thrice and thirdly seven times. That is the recitation. In between, making offerings of mandala, making offerings of the eight offerings, and then change the visualization and recite the 21 Homage, so this is the procedure of this text.

Perhaps next time if you need, I can give more commentaries on this sadhana, how to visualize and how to practice. It will probably need a few sessions to explain. 21 Homage

is 21 verses. But here there are extra 4 verses. The extra four verses are based on OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SVAHA. Atisha made the four verses of prayers. Atisha always recite these four verses of Tara wherever he is or whatever things he do. It is a very effective way to get protection from Tara by reciting these four verses. Therefore, they are added into the 21 Homage. That makes 22 verses. On the other hand, if you do not have time to recite 21 Homage, then you just recite these four verses. It is also very effective to receive blessings.

Do you have any questions? I saw there is a question and answer session in this program.

Question and Answer

Q1. Rinpoche, you talked about the 4 phrases. Are they in the first part?

A1. Yes. These are the four.

ཨོ་ཨེ་བཙུན་མ་འཕགས་མ་སྒྲེལ་མ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚུལ་ལོ།

OM JETSÜNMA PAKMA DROLMA LA CHAKTSAL LO

Om. Homage to the noble lady Tārā!

ཕྱག་འཚུལ་དྲ་རེ་ལྷུང་མ་དཔའ་མོ།

CHAKTSAL TARÉ NYURMA PAMO

Homage to Tārā, swift and gallant,

དུག་ར་ཡིས་འཇིགས་བ་སེལ་མ།

TUTTARA YI JIKPA SELMA

Homage to Tuttārā, who banishes fear,

ཏུ་རེས་དོན་ཀྱན་གྱིན་བས་སྒྲེལ་མ།

TURÉ DÖN KÜN JINPÉ DROLMA

Homage to Turā, who fulfils every need,

སྐྱ་ལྷོ་ཡི་གོ་ཁྱེད་ལ་འདུད་དོ།

SA HÉ YIGÉ KHYÖ LA DÜ DO

With svāhā we offer you honor and praise!

Then following that,

ཕུག་འཆལ་རྒྱལ་མ་ལྷུང་མ་དཔའ་མོ།

CHAKTSAL DROLMA NYURMA PAMO

Homage to Tārā, swift and gallant,

the 21 Homage starts. Not all 21 Homage add in these four verses but some add them in.

I think there are no further questions. Everyone is thinking when can go off.....
(laughters).

End of transcript