

White Tara Teachings

Ensenada, Mexico

January 2020

Public Talk

given by Lama Chonam

Commentary on

The Sadhana for the Wish-Fulfilling Chakra,

Noble Mother Tara

given by Sangye Khandro

Lama Chonam

January 17, 2020

The Buddhist way of study has three steps: hearing, contemplation, and meditation. Always make sure that the mind is available when you are hearing teachings, when you contemplate, and when you meditate, without distraction and without being mixed with other feelings.

Feelings means the five poisons, like attachment, hatred, delusion, pride, and jealousy.

Vajrayana teachings have two categories: the wisdom deity and the worldly deity. Most other religions say “gods.” But both worldly deity, or worldly god, and wisdom deity are in Buddhist presentation and practice. When the wisdom deity is explained, this wisdom deity is beyond ordinary mind, beyond concepts. However, in order to understand that level, you use your mind. Otherwise, there is no way to understand that level. When you pursue that goal and the way to remove obstacles or fulfill one’s wishes, then there is object and subject. We are not calling to a worldly god, but worship or pray to a similar idea to remove obstacles. Both categories are necessary because both depend on individual’s minds. Individuals’ minds have many, many different levels. If you present only the wisdom phenomenon, which transcends mind, it is inconceivable and difficult to understand. So first, we introduce object and subject; and then from there, you will understand the level of wisdom mind.

The wisdom deity is also buddha. *Buddha* means awakened one. *Awakened one* is not just only always male awakened one or female awakened one, female buddhas or male buddhas. There are both male and female bodhisattvas. When they are enlightened as buddha, there are only two goals or activities to accomplish: to benefit others and to propagate or maintain the wisdom teachings. Those two are really the job of buddhas and bodhisattvas. In order to accomplish that and manifest it also, Buddhist literature and teachings speak of four enlightened activities: peaceful, enriching, magnetizing, and wrathful. In order to accomplish enlightened activities or in order to benefit others, there are those four choices, four ways to benefit. That is why buddhas appear as peaceful or wrathful. Sometimes buddhas are semi-wrathful, not completely wrathful, and not completely peaceful. All of those, even deities seen

as wrathful, come from compassion. This compassion is not what ordinary practitioners call *compassion*, which is based on an object and subject, mostly with attachment. A buddha's compassion is unconditional love, which is why it manifests.

Why are a buddha's love and compassion different from ordinary love and compassion? Because they realize the nature of phenomena, which is emptiness. With the view of emptiness, the love and compassion is simultaneous. When put into words, there are two things: love and compassion, and emptiness. But in Buddhist philosophy, this love and compassion, or compassion and emptiness, are indivisible, inseparable. That view is the mind of the buddhas. Because of that, buddhas have wisdom that knows everything, does not depend on distance, does not depend on timing, and also is not blocked by any obstruction, mountains, trees, or walls; they see through everything always. For that kind of wisdom mind, the love also is not biased. It does not depend on race, location, looks, and being rich or poor. Whoever praises buddhas and bodhisattvas, they are there, ready for us, with that kind of love and compassion.

As I said, the male and female buddhas manifest the four enlightened activities to benefit others; but in Buddhist teachings, Mahayana and especially Vajrayana, there is no difference between the capability of males or females to accomplish the state of enlightenment or to be buddha or bodhisattva. But in Hinayana and sometimes also because of the culture, there is a presentation that males can do better than females to pursue the path and accomplish the goal.

I am going to tell a story. This is a story from the tantras, ancient literature of India put together by a well-known scholar named Jonang Taranatha. There are many, many stories of Tara. How did Tara come about? Tara is a female buddha, but not just because she came from an important family or had good looks and was suddenly called Tara the Dakini. She earned her name and state of enlightenment through many, many eons. How so?

Many, many eons ago, there was a fully awakened buddha called Ngadra, the Sound of the Drum. At that time, the human life was one thousand times, longer than our lives. One girl, a princess, was devoted to the followers of that Buddha Ngadra. She was also the daughter of a king of that region. Like her, when we pursue the path of the buddhadharma, there are two goals: to purify negative karma and to accumulate virtue. When you focus on accumulating virtue or merit, then naturally, simultaneously, we purify negative karma. The result of that is that our minds become compassionate, full of knowledge or wisdom, and just naturally cleanse. That is what she was doing, accumulating virtue. Also, the most powerful way to do that is to respect the noble sangha. You make an offering, serve, and engage in all of these positive activities. She did this for many countless years.

All the buddhas and bodhisattvas knew how much the princess had done. There was a chance that whatever she prayed for would then come true. Some bodhisattvas encouraged her, "You must pray to take rebirth as male practitioner, and then you can be of more benefit and

you will do more.” She did not answer for a while. When she finally answered, her answer was not an ordinary answer. She literally said:

You are giving advice according to ordinary mind, object and subject, and identifying or fixating with characteristics. Actually, there is no existence of male or female; that is just your own phenomena. There is nothing other than the state of enlightenment, or wisdom. There is no existence to such thing, no self, no others. Even saying *male* or *female* is meaningless and does not make any sense. This is the ordinary, deluded mind’s way of thinking.

Therefore, there are many male bodies pursuing enlightenment and practice and very few female bodies that support the pursuit of this kind of goal. That is why I will work to benefit others in the support of a female body until samsara is empty. I vow to only take rebirth only as a female and will practice to benefit others.

She made that kind of commitment and took a vow. I am not saying that Tara has a biased view and will only protect and liberate females, but not males. Tara is equal toward males and females. Both male and females can pray to her and receive blessings from Tara directly. Also, Tara is accepted by all major schools in Tibetan Buddhism and does not depend on a particular lineage. Every monastery, every practitioner, practices Tara.

In many cultures the relationship between mother and child is very special and different from any other relationship. The child can trust the mother one hundred percent and expect that their wishes will be fulfilled one hundred percent when they are sick, when they are hungry, or when they have difficulty. For mothers, there is no hesitation, just unconditional love. For mothers, it is more important than herself, the most important, to fulfill those wishes.

When we pray to Tara, there is that kind of relationship, swift, powerful, and unbiased. Why did buddhas and bodhisattvas actually become buddhas and bodhisattvas? Because of the combination of indivisible wisdom and compassion, they became wholly perfected buddhas. Because of their unconditional compassion, whatever benefit you receive from buddhas and bodhisattvas is not biased. Because of their wisdom and unconditional love, there is no delay. It does not depend on conditions and circumstances; it benefits always. There is no obstruction. With both, there is incomparable power. It is called omniscient wisdom, love, and power, and the combination of these three is what the buddhas accomplish.

When we see different parts of something, then we put it into different categories and associate different cultures or different parts of the world. When we hear the name *deity* or *god* or see an image of deity, we also put these in some kind of cultural category or associated area. Actually, if we are praying to a wisdom deity or awakened one, it is the embodiment of this love, wisdom, and power. That really has nothing to do with and is not stuck with the culture or ordinary mind.

That is in order to perform the enlightened activities manifested in that way. For example, if you are dreaming that some different deity or different image comes to help remove obstacles and show direction when you get lost, when you need help, you definitely gain confidence. That is because the indication of Tara, of Avalokiteshvara, or something like that, right away you are able to associate with the indication. If someone has an open mind and sees the deeper meaning, especially with Buddhist teachings, it is really not completely focused on the outside, but on the inner meaning or quality of the mind that is revealed. Externally, we use other methods: sound, images, the way of sitting, and way of thinking. All these many things that support us actually reveal the inner quality of our mind, like Tara's image.

If someone prays to Tara in a dream, in the real lifetime, if something has happened, she responds. This has happened throughout generations; there are many, many stories to tell you. She has protected people from the eight fears, or sixteen fears, dangers, obstacles, protected from thieves, poisonous snakes, freed them from jail, from ocean danger, from demonic forces, and from disease. Not only that, she also brings prosperity in life and extend one's life, longevity, all of those, so many wonderful things.

That is why twenty-one Taras emanate from one Green Tara. Because of your karma and Tara's blessings, you have a beautiful statue here [in Ensenada]. Even if you are not worshipping or meditating every day, you have her when you need her. As human beings, our minds are stuck with hope and fear, always hoping to accomplish something, to get through something. Always, there is fear that this will happen or that is not going to happen. Always, there is something to hope for or fear. When you have hope and fear, you must remember Tara.

Tara is not just, "Oh, this just happened many, many thousands or millions of years ago. Why bother now?" If you pray, if you believe, there is a real connection. With Tara, within us or with us, in front of you, or within you, the nature of your mind is Tara. Sangye will tell the story of this Tara image. It is really amazing. I hope you listen, because in this lifetime, our lifetime, this happened.

Thank you. Thank you very much for coming. It has been an opportunity to think about Tara and the dharma together. Hope to see you again very soon.

Sangye Khandro
January 18, 2020

As Lama Chönam mentioned last night, Tara was a practitioner like you and I, who worked hard over countless series of lifetimes to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. In fact, dharma is precisely that on the path. That is what we are doing. We are working to remove the obscurations, the clouds that are covering our wisdom buddha nature and to rekindle and blossom our wisdom buddha nature through the accumulation of merit. This means no matter

where we are on the stages of the path, until this process is perfectly complete, we will not stop doing that. We will continue to practice the tools of dharma to be able to completely and fully blossom who we really are, which is a fully awakened buddha.

Those practitioners who have advanced in this process and who enter the stages of bodhisattvahood make prayers. We also make prayers; but when they make prayers, those prayers are much stronger. They carry a real punch, true potency. Tara was not known as Tara until she awakened. Tara/Drolma means *liberated female*. In the feminine gender, it is *the liberated one*. She made the prayer to always be reborn in a female body until all living beings are lifted from samsara, until suffering ends. This prayer came true, and hence we have the presence of Tara in this world.

All of this is being explained from a relative point of view, from an ordinary point of view, you might say. But from an absolute point of view, Tara really is an awakened female. As Lama Chonam mentioned last night, there is no longer any bias or gender distinction, or any kinds of divisions in the state of awakening. The state of awakening is evenness and purity, omniscience, compassion, and potential, and emptiness and awareness. According to the Great Perfection, we say *emptiness and awareness*; according to Anuyoga, *bliss and emptiness*; according to Mahayoga, *appearances and emptiness as nondual*, inseparable. But in the Great Perfection, we emphasize awareness, *rigpa*. *Rig tong*, empty awareness, is nondual in the state of dharmakaya, which is the absolute Tara, the *yum chenmo*, or Great Mother, Prajnaparamita, the source of everything.

When Buddha Shakyamuni gave the second turning of the dharma wheel, this is when he manifested as *yum chenmo*, which means the Great Mother, Prajnaparamita. What this really means is the state of emptiness or dharmakaya, which is deathless, the state that has gone beyond death. Why? Because of having transcended samsara. And so it was that Buddha revealed for the first time as Buddha Shakyamuni, our great teacher in this world, what is this state of absolute truth.

This state is the Great Mother. We use this terminology on this occasion because of really emphasizing Tara, absolute Tara. The dharmakaya is the Great Mother. As sambhogakaya, the Great Mother manifests as the twenty-one Taras. Each of the different emanations of Tara, as mentioned last night in the public talk, serve a specific function to be able to connect in a specific way as a method to meet the needs of sentient beings according to their prayers and their level of faith. So, we have different colors of Tara and slightly different mantras. We always have the basic mantra, but each manifestation of Tara has slightly different syllables to the mantra, different sadhana practices, and different visualizations. All of this is the same in that it is the sambhogakaya manifestation of the Great Mother, the dharmakaya state of awakening.

Nirmanakaya means coming into the six realms of sentient beings, in our case the human realm. Then, there are incarnations of Tara who come into the world, still rupakaya, but who take an impure body to be like us, in order to connect with us, and bring us on the path that leads to liberation, such as, to name a few, Mandarava, Yeshe Tsogyal, and so forth.

This is where faith comes in. In Vajrayana, with the practice that we have chosen, that we are relating to right now, one has to really believe with confidence, faith, and devotion. Because we are not talking about just the nirmanakaya emanations, in other words just only relating to the human form of teachers who are teaching and inspiring us and from whom we are learning very important things. Of course that connection is necessary, because that is how we connect to sambhogakaya and dharmakaya. However, we really do not know what that is right now because we are blocked by our ordinary dualistic mind, which is why we are practicing just to begin with.

So, we have to hear the teachings on what is this sambhogakaya. Where does sambhogakaya come from? Dharmakaya? We have to learn. Then, we have to practice, and we have to pray with faith and devotion, as mentioned last evening. We have to have the ring of faith, so that the hook of the enlightened being's compassion can grab us and lead us on the path. Like that, Tara herself has the full commitment to guide and liberate all beings who pray to her, who practice her liturgy. This is not just left on a relative plane. This takes us to the celestial realm of pure lands. It leads us to see and know sambhogakaya, and that leads us to the deathless state of dharmakaya. If not while we are still alive, at the moment of death, we will know that or in the bardo we will know that. It is for sure if we just connect with this level of practice. We have to have confidence in this method and that is why we are doing it.

The practice that we are going to be learning is called *Drolkar Yidzhin Khorlo, Noble Tara called the Wish-Fulfilling Cakra*, White Tara. This is a terma revelation of Duddul Rolpa Tsal Rigdzin Duddul Dorje, who is from the southern area of eastern Tibet near Gyarong. He lived from 1615 to 1672 and was a disciple of Tertön Jaton Nyingpo. He was also a teacher of Vidyadhara Jigmed Lingpa. He was a very well-known and highly respected treasure revealer. This White Tara is one of his well-known treasures. He was also known for having built a new Kathok monastery in 1656, and later he actually reincarnated as Kathok Gyalse Sonam Deutsun, who was the lineage holder of the Kathok lineage. He then reincarnated as Heruka Dudjom Lingpa, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, and now Yangsi Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche. We have to know some history of our practice, right? This is very condensed, but gives you the main points.

I will give the reading transmission for this practice. All you have to do is listen. You might take notes; you will see that there is a lot of supplementary information that has been put in this liturgy. The one who did that is Jigdral Yeshe Dorje. He is the same stream of consciousness, just taking a different rebirth. All those reincarnations are tertons, and it is the same being; so he has the full authority to do that. Otherwise, he would never even attempt to do that.

When you see the refuge, where it says NAMO, right after NAMO in the Tibetan, there is little circle, a line, and a circle. Do you see that? That is called a *ter tsak*. That indicates that this is a terma. Otherwise, at the end of sentences in Tibetan, there is a *shad*, which is a vertical line that stops the sentence. We put a period, and in Spanish you probably put a period. Tibetan does not use periods for the end of a sentence, just the end of a word. Anyway, the grammatical mark that indicates terma is the *ter tsak*. That indicates to you which part of the practice is Duddul Dorje's and which part was supplemented by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, because what he supplemented is not considered terma. He is just the reincarnation of the tertön, who made this a complete liturgy for the disciples to do it in a comprehensive way. Just take note of that; it is very interesting to some people.

Before I begin, I just want to let you know that I also connect with the lineage. Otherwise, I would not have the audacity to sit here and say anything to you about this practice, let alone give you a reading transmission. However, in 1989, when Sangyum Kusho Rigdzin Wangmo, who was Kyabje Dudjom Rinpoche's second wife and wisdom consort, visited Tashi Choling with her two dakini daughters, she called me to her room one evening and gave me this reading transmission and teaching and gave me authorization to present this in the future. She was well known as an incarnation of White Tara and also Yeshe Tsogyal. She was born in 1925 and passed into paranirvana in 2014. She was responsible for Kyabje Rinpoche's longevity and the longevity of many masters. She was famous for having visions of White Tara, at which time people would ask for divinations and then, one on one, like we see each other now, she would ask Tara. Not only that, Tara would appear to her in her dreams and oftentimes give her information about certain rinpoches having obstacles to their life. So, she would get on the phone and call them; this happened with Gyatrul Rinpoche several crucial times. She actually saved his life. She would call and tell him, "You have such and such an obstacle, do this retreat immediately," and so forth.

Anyway, that is why I am here today. For myself, I did not feel qualified to give this transmission until just this last year, in 2019. I have been doing White Tara practice since that time, not absolutely every day, but often. I would also emphasize my main practice, which, of course, is Troma Nagmo Chod. In truth, there is really no difference between any of these practices, but again we do them for specific reasons. Last year, a true obstacle with my health came up, the greatest one in my life so far, because it is potentially life threatening. It was then that I knew it was time to start White Tara practice in earnest. All last year, I did a lot of White Tara practice; after which I knew that the time to share this had arrived since I had done a requisite number of mantras and so forth.

The first time I gave the reading transmission was at our dharma center in Portland, Oregon called Dorje Ling last October. Everything went very auspiciously, and now this is the second time. Being here now in White Tara City is the perfect time and place to share this with you all. Okay, we will begin with the reading transmission. You just need to listen to the sound of the words. This will connect you directly with the lineage blessings.

[Reading transmission]

Next, we will go through the actual sadhana, so everybody please have it in front of you. The title of this practice is the *Chimed Dudtsi Bumzang, An Excellent Vase of Immortal Nectar*. If you go back to the colophon at the very end of the practice, there is a description of how it originated. It says:

This practice of the Wish-Fulfilling Jewel, Noble Mother Tara, is at the epitome of the heap of jewel-like longevity sadhanas. It is offered here as the most superb oral instructions given by the Immortal Lake Born Guru.

Of course, this refers to the source in terms of nirmanakaya in Tibet, Guru Padmasambhava. He gave this to his twenty-five disciples, including Drogben Khye'uchung Lotsawa, who is well known to have been the disciple who was a predecessor of Dudjom Rinpoche. That is why it mentions here *as the most superb instructions given by the Immortal Lake Born Guru*.

By striving in this practice, led by a chariot of merit, the blessings of Arya Tara will be received like the rising moon. Completely defeating the dark war with the maras of death, the life spans of sentient beings will rise high, like the ocean's tides. This White Tara Wish-Fulfilling Chakra is the revelation of Vidyadhara Duddul Lingpa that bestows the blessings of longevity. It is arranged in this sadhana called *Chimed Dudtsi Bumzang, An Excellent Vase of Immortal Nectar*, especially to fulfill the wish of the authentic prajna consort, Junzang Dechen Tsomo.

Jigdral Yeshe Dorje arranged this sadhana at the request of the consort, Kunzang Dechen Tsomo.

At the age of 37, on the excellent tenth day, in the seventh month, year of the Iron Dragon, I, Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, a sprout of the vidyadharas, completed this in a delightful pleasure garden in the sacred, hidden land of Sikkim that is blessed by Guru Padmasambhava.

By this merit, may all beings accomplish the wisdom kaya of the Immortal Arya Tara.

Sprout of the vidyadharas is an expression of his humility. This colophon gives us the context that this practice was composed within.

Now, go back to the beginning, which is the supplication prayer. It should be clear that White Tara is primarily the Tara for longevity. That means extending our life expectancy. Actually, there are our life essence, life force, and life expectancy. These are different terms in

Tibetan, and they mean different things. Life expectancy is not static. It is uncertain and dependent, because it is dependent upon circumstances. Even though we may have a life essence that has the strength to carry us for a very long life, let's say up into the 80s or 90s, if our life expectancy is not nourished, cared for, and really sustained to increase, then it does not matter that we have the karma to live longer; it won't happen. We will succumb to untimely circumstances. We all know this, and we know that even a little child can die. We may not grow old and then die in the way that most lucky people do, to gradually experience the dissolution of the elements in a natural sense.

Because these obstacles are facing us continuously, it is very important to have a longevity practice that we do on a regular basis. Even though many of us are getting older, it is really not just for those who are older; it is for everyone. The first and foremost important reason is that a longevity practice can increase the longevity of a precious human rebirth, and a precious human rebirth can never be underestimated. A human rebirth means somebody who has no idea about the path of virtue or dharma, or any religion for that matter. They are just not really interested in focusing on the spiritual path, and they go about their life trying to have happiness for themselves and those that they care about. That is just an ordinary human rebirth.

One stage up from that is a spiritual person, who has met the buddhadharma, has heard a lot of teachings, and is always around for the teachings. They are even around the masters and so forth, but do not practice, do not really internalize and change things so that they are actually becoming a realized person on the path to liberation. That is also just an ordinary human rebirth, because they are squandering the opportunity that is at hand for them.

A precious human rebirth has eight freedoms and ten endowments, and those are all important to know. This really means somebody who every single day of their life emphasizes their spiritual development for the welfare of attaining liberation to benefit all sentient beings. That is their motivation, and that is what they are doing with their life, no matter what it is. You do not have to be sitting on the meditation cushion formally practicing. You just have that motivation in everything that you are doing. That is a precious human rebirth, and you need that to last as long as possible for that reason.

It is very simple if we cherish our precious human rebirth because of being motivated to live a long life, to be able to practice dharma until the day that we die, hoping to achieve liberation from samsara so that we can help to liberate all beings. Until we are liberated, how do we really know or have the potential to really liberate them? We have to accomplish our personal aim first, and then we accomplish the welfare of others, simultaneously. With this intention, we have the ring of faith, and then Tara's hook of compassion, omniscience, and potential is present, hence, the practice. That is why we pray to her and do the practice every day.

It may seem that this is a longer practice than practices that you are used to, but I am going to go over the most concise way to do it. We can also learn how to do it in the fullest sense, as a retreat. However, I would really encourage each one of you to begin Tara for a daily longevity practice. This is really important, and it really works. It is more important and less expensive than running out and buying vitamins and medicines and whatever else it is that we think is going to keep us healthy, happy, or youthful. We are not really trying to create a fountain of youth for the wrong reasons, because the motivation is precious human rebirth and believing that dharma is the strongest panacea for anything, first and foremost.

I had to look at this in my own mind last year, because of being told, “Okay, you have to take these medicines, and those medicines also have side effects.” Then, I realized, “Wait a minute, I need dharma medicine, that is what I need. I need White Tara. The time has come.” I woke up. So, I think we all have to understand that we have the best medicine of all. If we practice every day, we will have a long life expectancy free of obstacles to be able to accomplish our goals.

The supplication prayer is the first aspect of a liturgy in all cases. Supplication to the lineage masters points out to us the importance of recalling that that which one is connecting to is the wisdom lineage and that it carries the freshness and the warmth of their blessings, right down to one’s root master. This also helps to inspire us and to rekindle our faith and devotion.

To the Buddha of Boundless Light, . . .

This means Buddha Amitabha and also Buddha Amitayus, the longevity aspect of Amitabha, which is the dharmakaya buddha. Then:

Supreme Arya King of Space—Avalokiteshvara, . . .

He is the sambhogakāya. Then:

Padmasambhava, . . .

He is the nirmanakaya.

Yeshe Tsogyal—dakini of exaltation, . . .

Now the lineage masters are listed:

. . . to the Masters Drogben Lotsawa, Duddul, and Nuden Dorje,

I supplicate: please bestow the siddhi of longevity.

Now, we read the names of the masters listed here by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje, beginning with Dorje Tongdrol. I am not sure who the next series of masters are. I even asked Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal if he knew. He said he did not. So we just assume that they are important lineage holders, disciples coming from the time of Drogben Lotsawa Duddul Nuden Dorje. So:

To Dorje Tongdrol, Chimey Dorje,
Thinley Norbu, Chokyi Gyatso,
Kalzang Dorje, and Tendzin Pelgye,

I supplicate: please bestow the siddhi of longevity.

We know the following:

To Sangye Dorje, the revered root Master, . . .

This is referring to Chatral Rinpoche; Chatral Sangye Dorje, whom Jigdral Yeshe Dorje considered to also be a root guru of his.

. . . and to the supreme tutelary deity who holds the Wish-Fulfilling Chakra, . . .

This means to White Tara herself.

. . . and the oceanic assemblies of dakas, dakinis, and treasure guardians,

I supplicate: please bestow the siddhi of longevity.

We pray to them for the siddhi of longevity.

By accomplishing the path of longevity, the hordes of maras of death are destroyed, . . .

Maras of death means that demons may come and cause us to die or take us away. That term stems from the depiction of Lord Buddha Shakyamuni being besieged by maras prior to his awakening, and also the fact that the maras are actually a form of negativity that are created by the mind that believes in a nonexistent self, cherishing a self that actually, inherently has no existence. Whatever hordes of maras there may be and the mara of death is one of them, then they are certainly destroyed through the path of longevity. By accomplishing Tara, one accomplishes dharmakaya deathlessness. One accomplishes all three kayas: dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, and nirmanakaya simultaneously; but this really points to the state of deathlessness or immortality, which, of course, destroys the ordinary maras of death.

. . . and the siddhi of the life extending nectar of immortality is received.

Siddhi means spiritual attainment. The practitioner attains this ability to extend their life as though drinking the nectar of immortality, so this accomplishment is theirs. That is the reward. Next:

The indestructible life force is sealed with the vajra.

In the course of all longevity practices, you bring your life force back into you and then you visualize that it becomes sealed within a conjoined sun and moon amulet in your heart. It is

sealed in the seed syllable that resides there in the hub of the vajra. That is what this line is referring to. We will learn more about that later on when we get to that stage of the sadhana.

May the state of the Noble Tara of Longevity be swiftly attained.

That concludes the supplication prayer.

Now, we begin with what is called the *yig chung*, the small print, which says that this is composed by Jigdral Yeshe Dorje. You can tell this supplication prayer is also not the terma because there is no *ter tsak* at the end of the sentences. There is the long line called the *shad*. The practice is set forth as a traditional way of composition, whereby the author first pays homage, bows down to the deity, and then he or she states their commitment for writing. First is the homage, where he says:

OM SWA STI From your youthful vinelike, moon crystal kāya, . . .

He is paying homage to in a poetic way to Tara. *Vinelike* must mean supple, flexible.

. . . hundreds and thousands of crystalline drops of immortality nectar descend.
By annihilating the darkness of the lords of death, through this excellent virtue,
may you who are like a youthful jasmine flower increase and remain auspicious.
The essence of the enlightened mind accomplishment of immortal
vidyadharahood is this astonishing sadhana of Noble Tara that flows like an
unceasing stream of nectar. In order for the fortunate to accomplish this pure
indestructible vital essence, I will extract this essential ambrosia and pour it into
this excellent vase of clear instructions.

Jigdral Yeshe Dorje has created the image of the nectar of immortality, hundreds and thousands of drops pouring from White Tara's moon crystal kaya. He is capturing this unceasing stream of nectar, which really means the accomplishment of immortal vidyadharahood, which means deathless dharmakaya. He is capturing this stream of nectar so that he can pour it into this excellent vase of clear instructions. So, his clear instructions are likened to the vase filled with nectar to benefit disciples. This term *indestructible vital essence* means the sole bindu, which is our buddha nature, an indestructible continuum of rigpa that was never born, that never abides anywhere, and never dies; yet it is the continuum of who we are right now and always will be. In order to accomplish the pure essence of this, he is extracting the ambrosia, which is the crystalline nectar of immortality pouring from Tara's kaya, and then pouring it into these instructions presented to the disciples. The terminology is very beautiful.

I just wanted to share, Loretta reminded me, that it was actually thirty-seven years ago today, on this day, January 18, that Gyatrul Rinpoche came to Ensenada for the first time and gave empowerments for the main Tersar practices. He gave Guru Tso Kye Tuk Tig, Yeshe Tsogyal, and probably Vajrasattva. It was a major empowerment day. There were many, many

people, and he gave refuge to three hundred and fifty people. It is a very auspicious coincidence that today is that anniversary.

Okay, now we will continue on with the small print, *yig chung*, which are instructions:

In order to quickly acquire the siddhis of immortality and wisdom awareness, this practice of the Immortal Noble Tara delivers that which no other deity could possibly compare to.

This is a way of saying that this practice is considered to be the best possible longevity practice that one could do.

For those who wish to engage in this profound practice, as a preparatory stage, they should retreat to a clean, remote, pleasing environment.

This is really making reference to the opportunity to do this in retreat, which, of course, is a possibility. It is also possible to just do this as a daily practice. Whatever the case, it is always good to be in a clean, pleasing environment. Maybe it is not always easy to be in a remote environment; but on the other hand, if you are in your own room at your own altar in your own home, this can be your own place. Make sure it is clean, and make sure your offerings are fresh and the best that you can make, so that you feel very comfortable there. That is the important point.

Beginning during the sun's northern declination, . . .

This means the autumn or the fall solstice would be the best time to begin a White Tara retreat.

. . . either on the eighth day of the waxing moon or the tenth day of the waning moon, when the constellations are excellent aligned, in the early morning on an auspicious platform, erect a square-shaped mandala; and at its center, draw a lovely eight-petaled white lotus with five concentric circles. In the middle of this, place a tripod; and upon that a precious vase with a white scarf adorning its neck; and fill it with glacial spring water or water from a pure and constant lake drawn by a pure young maiden. Mix the twenty-five substances into the water.

Twenty-five substances means medicinal herbs. Sometimes you can get them from lamas, who have these little suitcases with substances. You can ask if you can get a little bit of the twenty-five substances for the water in the vase for the *bum chu*, vase water. Otherwise, you can just mix your own medicinal herbs and that will also suffice, adding a little bit of saffron.

Adorn the vase with a scepter sprig from a fruit tree. Above this, place an image of the meditation deity or place a statue of her in the mandala. In front of this, place a tormo, . . .

Here, the torma would just simply be spherical, a round torma, just round that goes up in a cone. You can put flower ornaments, and you can make round little balls that go around on the base where the plate is. Just paint it with butter; thus, it is a peaceful torma.

. . . to its right the longevity pills, . . .

The *longevity pills* are also little balls of some delicious substance. Sometimes you use tsampa with sugar and butter, or you could use any sweet, or you could use some marzipan. Oftentimes, the longevity pills are painted red, but they can also be white, just painted with butter.

. . . and to the left [of the torma] the liquor of ambrosia.

This would be any kind of delicious liquor.

Surrounding this, arrange the general and specific offerings.

That means ARGHAM, PADYAM, PUSHPE, DHUPE, ALOKE, GENDHE, NEWIDYA, SHABDA, water for drinking, water for bathing, and so forth, the bowls of water like we have on the shrine, which represent the offerings to the sense sources. If this seems overwhelmingly elaborate to you, you have two other options. The next option would be:

If you are unable to gather all of this, then upon a table covered with white cloth arrange a mandala pile of white grain.

This means very clean white rice. That means you buy the rice, then wash it, dry it, and not cook it; but make sure it is clean. Sometimes, the rice is also prepared with some saffron. So, you would put the rice down as the base for the mandala upon the white cloth, and:

Upon that, place a vase, a torma, or an image of the deity, . . .

If you do not have a vase, you could place a torma there; if you do not have a torma, then a statue of the deity; or a picture of Tara mounted very beautifully is also fine.

. . . and surround this by an arrangement of sense offerings. Generally, this daily sadhana of self-generation is meant to be unelaborate and can be accomplished solely through samadhi.

This means that you do not have to do anything. That is also an option. It depends upon what you are capable of doing. Of course, if you enjoy elaborations and want to learn and can follow this, it is very, very simple. As you know from your experience, most mandala setups are much more complex. You can do that, or you can choose to be unelaborate and just use your own mind to engage in the practice.

Having completed these preparations, then offer torma to the lords of the land and the negative elementals and establish the wheel of protection boundary.

Having completed the stages of the preparations, you are ready to offer the *kartor*, the white torma to the lords of the land, and the *gektor*, the red torma, to suppress the negative elementals. We have these two stages that come at the beginning of sadhanas. Because this is the lineage of Dudjom and in many ways falls into the category of Tersar, you can always draw from the white torma and the obstructing negativity torma sections of Khandro Tuk Tig. That means you go to the Yeshe Tsogyal sadhana, Vajrasattva, or to the Lake-Born Vajra sadhana, and you will find those liturgies in the beginning of those practices. They are not here in White Tara, but you pull them from one of those other practices. Dudjom Rinpoche did not include it here, but right now he is telling us to offer them, so that is where we would get those verses from. It would also be okay to use the Longchen Nyingtig verses to offer white and red tormas. There is nothing wrong with that, as it is also still the Heart Essence lineage of Nyingma. These are the same level of dharma, so in either case, it is fine.

The white torma is offered to appease the deities of the place. I am sure you have received these instructions before, but it is a way of asking to borrow the land, to be there and practice, and please, asking the spirits of the place to be harmonious and to help to create conducive circumstances for you to be there and to practice. The white torma is offered to them; but you imagine that from that, they are able to receive whatever pleases them, and you make the offering in accordance with that. You might think in your mind, “Well, I don’t really know what pleases them.” So you just imagine, “Whatever pleases you, whatever it may be, please partake of it. This is my expression of gratitude, and may we be harmonious here together.” Following that, you offer the red torma.

If you do not know how to make these tormas, you can also use a little dish with some rice, and you can also sprinkle the water from the vase to bless it; just use your mind. If you do not know how to make tormas, that is not an excuse that you then cannot practice. Although, we should try our best to learn because these stages are part of the tradition. They are the shapes and symbols that seem to be conducive for those different recipients according to the teachings. If we know that, it is excellent. We must try to know how to do these things. But if we do not know and we are a simpler style of practitioner, then we can use some other substance as a support; the real offering is happening in your mind, not on that plate.

Also, you do not need to have an actual vase. Many of us do not have that. If it is not possible, just choose whatever beautiful receptacle that goes up and is slim and refined that you might have in your china chest or wherever at home, a beautiful glass. In there, you put the pure, saffron-laced water with herbal substances, which you might keep in a separate jar that you make and then you keep it for these occasions. Then, you can just take a sprig from a fruit tree or some other evergreen tree is also fine, just not a thorny bush or tree in this case. A fruit bearing tree of some sort is fine. You then use that as your scepter. This makes it more accessible to us wherever we are. Also, for blessing things such as tormas, as I just said, the success of that torma offering is up to your mind, not what is on the plate. If you are just

materializing what is on the plate, you are not really getting anywhere. That is really not the pith of Vajrayana practice at all,

We should always know RAM YAM KHAM and OM AH HUNG. Do you know what those syllables do and what they mean? RAM is the syllable for fire, YAM is the syllable for wind, and KHAM is the syllable for water. You dip your scepter or sprig into the *bum chu*, into the water in the vase, and then you sprinkle, using your right hand, one, two, three sprinkles; RAM, YAM, KHAM, and you say those words. With RAM, you think, “Fire burns all impurities, YAM blows it away, disperses it, and KHAM washes every single trace of impurity that would be left.” What it means is that all the ordinary phenomena surrounding what you are doing has just been completely eliminated.

Then, with OM AH HUNG, you imagine the blessings of enlightened body, speech, and mind as OM, body, AH, speech, and HUNG, mind, showering down from all regions in space. If you can, imagine immeasurable syllables dissolving in and blessing the offerings that you are making with your mind, which could be all of space; it does not have to be just right there on that plate. OM AH HUNG is the blessing. Everything becomes the nature of wisdom enlightened body, speech, and mind. Basically, you can synthesize that down to no longer concretizing phenomena.

As a practitioner, what does that mean? You are going to try not to think that all these material things are solid, real, and true. You are going to enter into a state of pure vision, which means everything is magical. Everything is wisdom phenomena. You could pass your hand through them. They are there, they do not go away, because phenomena never go away; but because we fixate on them as true and real and we have such a concrete habit of fixation, that is what they have become for us. We made them that way. Our mind makes them that way. In truth, phenomena are not that way. Many of you here know physics. You know that every single piece of matter can be taken apart into partless atoms and dissolved into emptiness. This is already proven by science. Buddhism knew this fact thousands of years before. This is the way of practicing. The idea is that after you are saying OM AH HUNG, OM AH HUNG, OM AH HUNG, now everything is pure wisdom appearances. That is the way to practice. That is the key. Actually Vajrayana cannot be practiced in any other way. It has to be from this wisdom perspective.

A Vajrayana practitioner is always identifying the true nature of the way things are to the best of their ability. For now, of course, we use our minds to do that. But slowly, slowly, through the blessing of the practice, the mind drops away and we drop into the wisdom aspect because we are identifying what actually is. What we are doing right now is identifying what actually is not, and so that is why we are confused, lost, and suffering in samsara. The way to remedy that is to start identifying what is and building that habit. At first it is habit, but slowly it becomes what it is.

Here, then, for the red tormas, or the tormas that is offered to the negative elementals, that means those spirits who may cause obstacles, whom you may owe unpaid karmic debts to. For example, when we do chod practice, we offer our body parts, we transform them into wisdom nectar, and we call the guests to come. Well one of the groups of guests is the karmic debtors, the spirit realm. There are many such spirits that we have to believe at this point are there, but it is sure that they are there, because they outnumber beings in the human realm and even in the animal realm. In the past, the indigenous people in countries and cultures knew this, related to them, and tried to connect to, appease them, and so forth. These days, all those practices have been left behind, which is a shame. Those practices are not left behind in Vajrayana, because it is important; so you are offering them the red tormas and asking them to go away and be satisfied, to stop causing harm. You have to be a little bit strict and abrupt with them, because that is their style. But they will follow, they will go away, and you will be free from any obstacle that may have come through their presence.

Then, you visualize the protection boundary or the wheel of protection. Usually, there is a way of visualizing that is as a radiation of vajras, or phurbas in the case of Vajrakilaya practice, but that is not specifically mentioned here as something that we need to really focus on in the visualization. It is more like you imagine that with the appeasement of the peaceful inhabitants and the removal of the negative obstructers, you are now surrounded by the wisdom presence of your own pure view and that there will no longer be any kind of obstruction to your progress in White Tara accomplishment. Then, finally he sums up here by saying:

After sprinkling everything with scented pure water, take your seat on a comfortable cushion and begin your practice in a state of joyful enthusiasm.

You sprinkle all your offerings and everything there with the water, and bless with RAM YAM KHAM, OM AH HUNG, and you imagine entering into a state of pure vision, the Vajrayana view. You sit down; and with great gratitude and joy, get ready to begin.

These stages are really for doing a little retreat. You could also do them if you are going to make this a full tsok, puja practice with a gathering of vajra siblings. But if you are going to do this White Tara practice on a daily basis, just as your own daily practice, you do not need to do the tormas or any of those stages. It is mentioned here really for the retreat option.

For just doing daily practice, you would have sat down on your cushion, you would have done the supplication prayer, and now you are ready to go straight into the refuge. It is very simple. It goes from supplication prayer to refuge. When we look here at the verses of refuge, we see the *ter tsak*, which means that these are the original terma verses.

NAMO

To Samantabhadra and the canonical lineage, all the way down from Amitabha
down to the supremely kind root Master—

to all objects of refuge who are the permanent source of hope and protection,
myself and others respectfully bow down and go for refuge.

NAMO means homage. These verses are quite clear. They make reference to the kama lineage, the canonical lineage. That means the distant lineage, not terma but kama. We know that this is also terma lineage, but it belongs to kama as well, beginning with Amitabha, and can be traced all the way down to your root master. All objects of refuge are included there, and all of them, whoever they may be, are permanent sources of hope and protection. Permanent, not temporary, is the key point.

We find that kind of terminology in *ngondro*, preliminary practices: *lu me tengyi gonpo lama khen*. Guru, you who are the permanent protector, know me, undecieving, permanent guide. When we think of the objects of refuge, we think that these are representatives that will be able to guide and protect us until we are awakened ourselves and become such an object of refuge. In truth, it means that the objects of refuge are really more important than anything or anyone else, because we can rely upon them in a permanent way. They never change, they are always there, they are always reliable. That is why it is so important to always go for refuge three times, in the beginning.

There are different ways to go for refuge. We do not have time to discuss that today, but generally speaking, we can follow these words. Think about the permanent source of refuge, the lineage masters right down to our own kind and supreme root guru or gurus, and that you and all others are respectfully bowing down and going for refuge. This is just like, for prostrations, when you imagine your father of this life to your right, your mother of this life to your left, all sentient beings surrounding, all enemies if you have them in front, this huge gathering of beings in samsara just like you, going for refuge. With palms pressed together, you repeat the verses three times. Of course here, since the practice is to Tara, you are imagining Tara as the principal figure for the refuge, but she is now the embodiment of all of these sources of refuge without exception. It is really not necessary to visualize all of them; you can just simply imagine Tara, whom you probably will have in a picture on a simple shrine. You imagine Tara in the space in front.

Next is cultivating the bodhicitta, the next verses:

In order to reverse the untimely death
of all motherly sentient beings as limitless as space,
and to place all six classes in the state of awakening,
I shall accomplish this profound sadhana
of the loving mother Arya Tara.

That is really straight forward. Although you say “I,” you imagine that all beings are there with you going for refuge and making the same commitment and aspiration.

Then is the seven-branch offering prayer, which is next in the common stages of liturgies:

HO To Arya Tara, the embodiment of the Triple Gem and assembly,

I prostrate with deep faith . . .

This is the first branch, which is prostration, the antidote for pride.

. . . and offer all actual and mentally imagined offerings.

Offering is the second branch, the antidote for avarice.

Whatever negative karma and passions have been acquired are confessed.

Confession is the third branch, the antidote for anger.

I rejoice in the positive deeds engaged by all others.

The fourth branch, rejoicing, is the antidote for jealousy.

I beseech you to turn the dharma wheel and . . .

Requesting to turn the dharma wheel is the fifth branch, the antidote for delusion or ignorance.

. . . not pass into the state beyond suffering.

The sixth branch is asking the buddhas and bodhisattvas not to pass into nirvana, but to stay with us in existence; and it is the antidote for doubt. Then, finally:

Whatever virtue and merit have been accumulated

is dedicated to the welfare of all living beings.

The seventh branch is an antidote for all passions and also is the sealing of the virtue accumulated by repeating the preceding six.

Next is the section for cleansing all the offering substances with fire, wind, and water:

RAM YAM KHAM

From emptiness, your environment becomes the Akanishtha Turquoise Leaf [Pure Realm] with the fully endowed celestial palace. From within excellent vessels made of precious jewels and lotus blossoms, a vast array of outer, inner, and secret offerings billow forth like the accounts of clouds of Samantabhadra’s offerings. This treasury of space pervades the pure realms of the Victorious Ones.

Here, *from emptiness* lets us know that we must be holding the view of understanding the essential, empty nature of all phenomena. It is not as though emptiness comes from somewhere else and now it is here. It is that emptiness is the nature of phenomena; and by knowing that, then the environment, the place where we are practicing, can be perceived with wisdom vision, the pure vision.

The environment is the *Akanishtha Turquoise Leaf*. That is the name of Tara's pure realm, *yulo kod*. *Fully endowed celestial palace* means the mandala is there in all of its glory. *From within excellent vessels made of precious jewels and lotus blossoms*, then all of the offerings are presented, which *billow forth* as inconceivable offerings. In other words, everything is an offering. That is what is meant by *clouds of Samantabhadra's offerings*. This reference to Samantabhadra is not the primordial buddha. It is the bodhisattva Samantabhadra. What it simply means is that space itself becomes a treasury of offerings pervading all of the pure realms and pleasing all of the awakened ones, because this is where all awakened beings, buddhas, and bodhisattvas remain. They are aware of wisdom presence, and they are aware of everything as an offering.

We can say in a simple way that *offering* means without fixation, to begin with. There is no subject that is grasping or seizing upon an object, like, "Oh, this is how I see it." As soon as you are able to apprehend it as an apprehender, then from apprehension, there becomes the recognition of it as being one way or another, identifying it. That then becomes a reaction. These are the *skandhas*, or aggregates: consciousness, form, feeling, recognition, and reaction. There is a reaction, then passions, which produce karma, which produces the suffering of samsara. All of this comes from the subject fixating upon phenomena as true and real. So *offering* means not fixating. Everything is beautiful as it is, perfect as it is, and belongs to no one. We are understanding, knowing, and then elaborating by imagining according to the sadhana, as it tells us here, *excellent vessels made of jewels and lotus blossoms*. Wondrous offerings are presented: outer, inner, and secret, so it becomes like *a treasury of space*. You can read books, such as Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's *Cascading Waterfall of Nectar*, where he discusses in great detail about outer, inner, and secret offerings, so I would recommend that.

Now you are going to do the mudras and make the offerings that are outer, the offerings that please the sense sources on an ordinary plane of existence. Those offerings begin with ARGHAM, which is a Sanskrit word and means water for drinking. PADYAM means water for bathing. PUSHPE means flowers. DHUPE means incense. ALOKE means candlelight or any light. GENDHE means scented, perfumed water. NEWIDYA means celestial food. SHABDA means sound. These are in the mantra of OM BENZAR ARGHAM AH HUNG, and so forth. You have OM AH HUNG, the three syllables of body, speech, and mind. BENZAR means vajra, which means indestructible, invincible, stable, authentic, like a diamond. We make the offerings, and they become sealed in this way. As you say each one of these, perform the lotus roll and mudras if you know them.

Then, you would perform the sky treasury mudra and mantra three times:

NAMA SARWA TA TA GA TE . . .

This mudra and mantra increases whatever you have offered to fill all regions of space, which is why we do it. Whenever you see this being done and you are doing this mantra and mudra in practice, then it is the offering section and the offerings are filling all regions of space. To make it simple, you can just think that everything, every possibility, without any fixation, is offered to all of the awakened ones in all of its purity as wisdom presence, because that is what it is. You do not have to contrive or create it in any other way other than that just letting it be what it is, but without attaching, fixating, or materializing.

[Perhaps in the future, we will make available a short video of Lama Chonam doing all of the mudras.]

Lama Chonam

Okay, I will say a few key points on this. Whenever you perform mudras, the rituals of Tersar tradition follow the Mindroling tradition, so we should follow like that. According to Mindroling tradition, the arms are always close to the body. Move only from the elbows that are close to the body. Slowly, start with a lotus mudra, lotus roll. But, usually, for OM BENZAR ARGHAM PADYAM PUSHPE DHUPE ALOKE GENDHE NEWIDYA SHABDA, you do not need to do a lotus roll with every offering; just start with it. That is the whole thing. GENDHE

NAMA SARWA TA TA GATE BHAYO BI SHO MU KHE BHYA SARWA
TA KHAM UTGA TE SAPA RA NA I MAM GA GA NA KHAM SO HA

Say the sky treasury mantra and mudra three times, like that. Some lamas move the folded hands. Some lamas do it a little bit higher. Either way, I think just move a little bit, and then snap the fingers at the end. When you make that mudra, you are emanating inconceivable offering goddesses from yourself as the deity. Then, at the end of the mantra, you would snap the fingers. The offering is made and then dissolves back to the deity.

Sangye Khandro

All the preliminaries are complete. Now, the sadhana begins with the *shunyata* formula mantra:

OM MAHA SHUNYATA JNANA BENZAR SO BHAWA ATMA KO HAM

This mantra transforms all phenomena into the nature of emptiness. As the first line says:

Self and all appearances are nonconceptual emptiness, from within which . . .

There is much that can be said here about what one is meant to do, but it is really according to your view and understanding based on teachings you have had. This could be resting in original

purity according to the view of the Great Perfection. This could be just resting in nonconceptual awareness according to the Mahayana and Madhyamaka views. Whatever the case, as I have mentioned, be without fixation, without subject-object apprehension. Simply let go, relinquish, and just drop into the nature that is nonconceptual for a moment; and that becomes the ground, the basis, from which the visualization emerges. According to the Great Perfection, there is a specific way to explain this, but I do not think it is necessary to explain all that right now. Just know that with emptiness as the basis, which we can say is also openness, this *shunyata*, this really means that there is nothing to hold on to, there is no fixating mind any longer. It is open; it is free; it is empty. Empty of what? Duality. The fixating mind is not there. So from within this awareness, or rigpa:

. . . all directions become the mandala of illuminating jewels . . .

It is not necessary to specifically think, “Oh I have to visualize that.” Just imagine *illuminating jewels*. We can think in our minds about the radiance of light illuminating everywhere, dazzling precious jewels.

. . . with five-colored light shimmering everywhere.

An indestructible, golden, one-thousand spoked wheel appears, . . .

We imagine all of this to be wisdom’s presence. There is nothing to hold onto that is material or created from conditional phenomena based on root causes or contributing circumstances. This visualization is just wisdom awareness.

. . . in the middle of which is a jeweled crystal palace.

In the midst of this great bliss manifestation of all that is desirable, . . .

When we hear the term *great bliss*, or exaltation, that also always means emptiness. If there is nothing to fixate upon, there is not going to be any blockage or bondage; and if there is no bondage, there is nothing to be liberated from. If you are not restricted, then you do not need to be liberated from restriction. There is just this openness of ecstasy or bliss. We think that our temporary states of happiness based on causes and circumstances are blissful, but they are not, because they always change and go away. In fact, they turn into their opposites. So, those temporary states are not satisfactory for us, yet we keep on trying to find that some satisfaction again and again, only to be disappointed. Now, we finally have an opportunity to know *great bliss manifestation*. The key is emptiness. All that is desirable is empty which is stated right there in that sentence.

. . . from the dynamic strength of emptiness itself, the unceasing continuity of mind

appears as a clear white syllable TAM upon a white lotus and moon seat

possessing the small ah and terma symbol to its right.

We are *in the midst of this great bliss manifestation of all that is desirable*. The terminology here is very important. *From the dynamic strength of emptiness itself* is a reference that is really unique to highest Vajrayana or the Great Perfection system, and it is pointing out to us that emptiness is not just empty, but is endowed with wisdom. All wisdom qualities are actually contained in emptiness. This view is what distinguishes the view of emptiness between Sutra and Tantra, very simply put.

Specifically, according to the Great Perfection, we understand that this emptiness of the ground, this original purity, or basic emptiness is endowed with threefold wisdom. The essence is empty, the intrinsic nature is lucid, and the quality is unceasingly compassionate. I am sure many of you have heard reference to this before. In the Longchen Nyingtig ngondro, you take refuge in these three wisdoms: *ngo wo*, *rang zhin*, and *tukje*, the essence, intrinsic nature and compassion. According to the Great Perfection, these three wisdoms are the essence of the ground of emptiness, that it is empty; that the intrinsic nature is lucid, which means it is clear light, light energy; and the quality is compassionate. For compassion, sometimes translators use the word *responsiveness*, meaning that there is a responsive or dynamic energy available in whatever way is deemed necessary. However, there is no one trying to do that; it is just a quality. The quality has this responsiveness of compassion, which makes it all-pervasive. There is nowhere that it does not exist; that that is the nature of everything and everyone.

Here, in this context, we have the pure realm of Tara, the one-thousand spoked wheel, and the jeweled palace, all being the nature of blissful emptiness. This is not because emptiness has its own dynamic strength or power, which is compassion, or responsiveness. That refers to the unceasing continuity of the mind. So in other words, we know that our mind is always going to be available. As Buddhists, we do not believe that mind is going to conclude at the time of death. Yet at the same time, according to our view, we are told that the essence of mind was never born and will never die. So, we know that it is an ongoing continuity that is omnipresent, because that is what it is. Its essence is empty, its intrinsic nature is lucid, and it is all-pervasively compassionate. That is who we are. In this context, that mind takes on the form upon a lotus and moon seat as the seed syllable TAM, Tara's heart, Tara's essence. Tara's mind is TAM.

The seed syllable of Tara is TAM. We know that there are other seed syllables, BAM, HUNG, HRI. Each one of the deities has their specific seed syllable. This means that each seed syllable is the continuum of their omniscient awareness that is deathless, that is fully awakened. In order for us to be able to relate to this and accomplish it, we are instructed to visualize in this relative way, associating certain syllables with certain deities. We should always understand that dharma methods are going to be linked with samsaric needs. Otherwise, there is no reason for dharma methods. Skillful means exist in order to free beings from their confusion.

We are born from a seed syllable. We are born from the union of egg and seed, mother and father. That is the source for our ordinary birth; and in fact, as human beings, there is a seed

syllable linked to that birth, which is NRI. Each of the beings of the six realms has a particular seed syllable linked to the cause for their rebirth there. To think of Tara's seed syllable automatically purifies the ordinary cause for human rebirth into the wisdom awareness of the syllable TAM. So, we imagine all of these sequential stages of what is, what we are being aware of, and that we have brought it to the point of the TAM, which appears with the small *ah* and the terma symbol to its right. This terma symbol, or *ter tsak*, does not have the line between the two circles; and that is how you visualize the TAM.

A white TAM syllable appears upon a white lotus and moon seat. And then from TAM:

Five colors radiate, presenting offerings to the aryas and cleansing the karmic obscurations of beings.

These two stages are very common to all practices, where the seed syllable first appears, and then immediately thereafter the light rays of five colors radiate. *Five colors* means white, yellow, red, green, and blue, the basic colors. With the radiation of light, offerings are first presented to the arya bodhisattvas to accumulate merit, and then those light rays return and reabsorb back in, bringing their blessings because they are pleased by the offerings. You receive their blessings and their wisdom awareness, which comes back into the TAM, cleansing and purifying all karmic obscurations of self and all beings.

Reabsorbing, you then appear as the Wish-Fulfilling Chakra Noble Tara.

With that now, TAM transforms into the entire image of self-nature as the deity with the TAM in your heart. You are:

. . . white in color with one face and two hands.

Your right hand is in the mudra of supreme generosity at your knee.

Your thumb and ring finger of your left hand hold a white utpala flower by the stem.

The flower is blossoming parallel to your left ear.

The blossom has a full bloom, a partial bloom, and a bud.

Your forehead, hands, and feet are marked with peaceful eyes.

Both legs are in the vajra posture, and your age is that of a sixteen-year-old youth.

The vajra posture is the full lotus position, and you are extremely lovely, perfectly beautiful in the prime of youth.

Your sapphire-colored hair is tied in a knot upon the crown,

while the remaining strands woven with flowers flow freely down your back.

Your upper garments are a vermillion-colored silken blouse.

The lower garment is a poppy-colored skirt.

Your sky-colored diadem waves in the breeze.

You wear a crown made of varieties of gems,

beautified with bracelets, anklets, and necklaces,

seated in a graceful pose within an expanse of five-colored light rays.

All of this is very clear. Of course, each aspect of the appearance of Tara has a symbolic meaning, but we can just bring it all into the nine modes of the peaceful deity. To learn more about that, you can read Thinley Norbu Rinpoche's *Small Golden Key*.

Going within to the specific aspect of the visualization within your heart as White Tara, there is an eight-petaled, closed red lotus.

Within an eight-petaled, closed red lotus in your heart . . .

Closed means that the lotus is a bud, and it will be a red lotus bud. Inside of that:

. . . is a golden crossed vajra,

in the middle of which is a diamond eight-spoked wheel.

This means that the wheel is inside the hub of the vajra. Of course, the vajra is horizontal, and in the hub, there appears an eight-spoked wheel made of diamonds.

The wheel and its rim are the color of the moon.

The white syllable TAM, complete with its appendages, is there in this core.

At the perimeter of the wheel's eight spokes

circle the eight syllables of the mantra, including the additional syllables,

emitting their natural sound; the mantra circles to the right.

The mantra is:

OM TA RE TUTARE TU RE PUNYE PUTRING AH YU PUTRING KU RU
YE SO HA

All of those syllables are lined up behind OM, so that when it starts circling, OM is leading and going in a clockwise direction. As you say the mantra, it goes around and around in a clockwise direction in the hub of the vajra in the core of your heart.

This is the self-generation, which means generating self-nature as the deity. Now, there will be the generation of the Tara in front of you. Going on:

Light radiates from the white syllable TAM.

Right now, there is only one syllable TAM, and that is yours in your heart, because you are Tara. Now, light radiates from TAM. From that radiation of light, within emptiness:

Within emptiness in the space in front appears a mandala

with a one thousand petaled white lotus topped by a moon disc.

Upon this appears a syllable TAM that transforms into the Goddess,
the Wish-Fulfilling Chakra, Noble Tara of Longevity.

Now, there is another TAM in front that transforms right in front of you as Tara.

Her kaya is the color of a snow mountain reflecting the sun.

She has one face and two hands and is smiling with joy.

Her eyes are long and slanted, her breasts voluptuous.

Her two legs are in the vajra posture.

Her locks of hair are the color of sapphire.

Her right hand, in the mudra of giving generosity, holds a white lotus.

This visualization in front is a little different. Although her mudra of giving generosity is the same as you, she also holds a white lotus in the same hand. When a deity holds a white lotus, it is always the thumb and the ring finger holding the stem and then the lotus blooms up from there. It is very delicate.

Her left holds a longevity vase with the mudra of equipoise in her lap.

Mudra of equipoise means meditation. Her left hand is down in her lap with the palm up, and in that cupped hand is a longevity vase. Longevity vases have a slightly different look than a general vase with a spout; they do not have a spout. I am sure you have seen them when the lamas come to give empowerment and so forth. The Tara in the space in front is holding the longevity vase with the left hand in the mudra of meditation of equipoise in her lap. She is:

Adorned as the perfect Sambhogakaya, she exudes a brilliant luster.

Above her crown rests Buddha Amitabha.

Her back is beautified by a full lunar disc.

She rests in an expanse of five-colored rainbow light.

That is how she appears outwardly. Inwardly:

Within her heart, inside a crystal crossed vajra, . . .

A crossed vajra made of crystal, horizontal of course, is in her heart.

. . . standing upon a moon disc,
is a rimmed eight-spoked wheel.

In the very center of that is a white syllable TAM surrounded by
the dharma wheel of mantric syllables.

It is the same mantra or same mantric syllables surrounding the TAM in her heart. In addition to that:

Her three places are marked by a moon, lotus, and sun,
upon which is a white OM, a red AH, and a blue HUNG.

There is a white OM on the moon in her crown, a red AH on the lotus in her throat, and a blue HUNG on the sun in her heart.

Light rays radiate from these syllables . . .

Light rays of red, white, and blue radiate from these syllables, OM AH HUNG, and also from the mantric syllables lined up in her heart. The light rays radiate:

. . . into the ten directional pure lands, inviting . . .

That means the four cardinal directions, the four intermediate directions above and below, totaling ten. The radiating light rays invite:

. . . all of the buddhas, rishis, vidyadharas,
and the assembly of the twenty-one Taras.

They dissolve into self and the visualization in front to bestow all of the empowerments.

This is the invocation of what is referred to as *the wisdom being*. One might think, “I thought I already was a wisdom being.” Well, in fact you are. So why are we doing this stage of the practice? Why is it necessary to invoke the wisdom beings? It is because we are still dwelling in duality and still believe that the wisdom blessing comes from outside of ourselves. Consequently, just to make sure that we know that they have come and have completely entered us and filled us with the blessings, we invoke their presence and there is no longer any distinction between their presence and the meditation.

Before the invocation of the wisdom being, there is just the meditation being that you have established with the visualization using your mind. So, here, there is the assumption that the meditator still feels that there needs to be the wisdom presence brought into that. The time will come in your practice that this stage is automatically accomplished at the moment that you

visualize, period. But until that time comes, we go through these stages to purify our ordinary habits.

As I mentioned, all dharma tools are methods that are really engaged on a relative plane in order to accomplish the absolute result, and they are temporary. This invocation of the wisdom blessing is very common to all sadhana practices. It is included because of the in-front visualization and the fact that Tara's three places are marked with the three sacred vajra syllables of enlightened body, speech, and mind, OM AH and HUNG. Light rays are radiating out from those syllables and invoking all of the enlightened beings. The liturgy mentions them here, all of the buddhas, sages, vidyadharas, and wisdom deities, including the entire pantheon of twenty-one Taras. All of their emanations start emerging from all directions in space and coming down like snowflakes in a blizzard, dissolving into what you have visualized, self and in front.

When we receive empowerments from masters, we are also required to perform this kind of visualization, the descent of the wisdom blessing, and it really is wisdom dissolving into wisdom. Thereafter, there is nonduality. There is just no doubt; it just is as it is.

Next is a whole new section of what you do once this stage has been accomplished, and then that brings us to the mantra recitation. We will have plenty of time later to finish the teaching on how to do this as a daily sadhana, and I will also review how you would do it if you were in retreat or if you want to do a tenth or twenty-fifth day tsok with Tara practice. Those options are there and we will go over it later. We will also have an opportunity to practice together so that we know how to chant, practice, and familiarize.

Now, the invocation of the wisdom deities begins with:

OM Within the unborn dharmadhatu,
from the Potala and Turquoise Leaf pure realms,

Here, the text mentions Potala pure realm, which is also one of the pure realms of Arya Tara. In fact, that is how the Potala in Lhasa got its name, since Tara is the patron saint of Tibet, hence the famous Potala palace. However, this is reference to the wisdom pure realm called Potala, which along with Turquoise Leaf, *yu lo kod*, are epithets for Tara's wisdom pure realms. From the wisdom pure realm:

. . . assembly of ten directional buddhas, vidyadharas, and siddhas,
longevity vidyadharas and immortal vidyadharas,
arise in the aspect of Arya Tara, the Noble Mother.

There are different kinds of vidyadharas, *rigdzin* in Tibetan. *Vidya* is the Sanskrit word for the well-known Tibetan term *rigpa*, which we know to be our wisdom buddha nature. Oftentimes,

it is translated as awareness, pristine awareness, or pristine mind. *Dhara* means to hold. So, *vidyadhara* means to hold awareness. How do you say *vidyadhara* in Spanish? What is *vidya*? What is Spanish for rigpa? Transcendental wisdom. In many ways, the English word *awareness* is also not that satisfactory, if you just say *awareness*. So, oftentimes we say *pristine awareness*. That is nice, *pristine consciousness*. That is Alan Wallace's translation. It is the same idea, pristine mind, pristine consciousness. It means *the original state of mind* and is a little closer than transcendental wisdom. Acharya Malcolm Smith, who is another important Great Perfection translator from Tibetan to English, uses *pristine consciousness* for rigpa, or *vidya* in Sanskrit.

On the subject of *vidyadhara*, we can just say *vidyadhara* in Sanskrit. It is reliable. Whatever the case, *vidyadharahood* is the accomplishment in Vajrayana. The four main categories of *vidyadharas* are the mature *vidyadhara*, immortal *vidyadhara*, mahamudra *vidyadhara*, and spontaneously present *vidyadhara*. Here, this practice is emphasizing the immortal *vidyadhara*, *tsewang rigdzin*, which means *power over life*. This stage is likened to those who become arya bodhisattvas. They rise out of the realm of samsara, meaning rebirth in and out of the six realms of existence is no longer out of your control. Now, you are an arya bodhisattva anywhere on the bhumis, the levels or grounds of bodhisattvahood. Anyone who is on a bodhisattva bhumi is an arya, which means *a noble one*. That means they are no longer in the round of samsara; however, it does not mean that they are fully enlightened as buddha. There is a lot of misunderstanding about that. Many times people think, "Oh arya bodhisattva is buddha." Buddha is other than that.

What I am presenting is according to the Nyingmapa School within the specific context of Atiyoga's presentation. We should also understand the different schools' philosophies, and within those schools, the information about the categories of the cycles or classes will be presented slightly differently. The information presented here belongs to the quintessential Heart Essence cycle of the Nyingma School, which is Atiyoga's upadesha class. In Atiyoga, there are three classes: mind, expanse, and upadesha. This is the upadesha class, which means the class of pointing-out instructions. According to that category, we come to understand the meaning of our liturgies. Of course, in order to really understand the meaning of what we are doing, we have to study the tantras that belong to that system.

For example, the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, one of the root tantras for highest secret teaching particularly in the Nyingma School, discusses the *vidyadharas* in depth. There are two different traditions within the *Guhyagarbha* in terms of commentaries that are given by great masters on that root tantra. Those traditions are the Zurpa tradition and that of Omniscient Longchenpa and Rongzom Lotsawa. They have different ways of interpreting what the accomplishment of these four levels of *vidyadharahood* is exactly and when this occurs while on the path. This subject is very interesting and important for us to know, because this is what we are going to accomplish on our path; so we should be informed. Mainly, we are following the teachings of Longchenpa, so that is the Ronglong tradition. *Ronglong* means bringing together the first syllables of those

two master's names, or Ronglong, because they had the same mind and the same interpretation of the *Guhyagarbha*. Then, the lineage comes down to Mipham Rinpoche, then Khenpo Jigmed Phuntsok Rinpoche, and then our masters, all of them following closely to this way of understanding.

Any time you have an opportunity to study one of their writings, you know that you are studying according to the tradition that we are practicing in; so this is very good and very important. Also, Longchenpa always discusses these four states of vidyadharahood in his Great Perfection writings, not just in the *Guhyagarbha*. In his Dzogchen writings, particularly in the *Precious Treasury of the Genuine Meaning*, he discusses what these stages are.

Because it is pertinent to this practice, *tsewang rigdzin*, or immortal vidyadharahood, means mastery over life, which occurs when the practitioner passes from this life. However, they do not really die; they become an immortal. That happens when they pass from this life, and it is then that they rise out of samsara once and for all. They never return back into the six rounds, unless they are returning as a nirmanakaya to benefit beings, which is something different from returning as a sentient being. A sentient being has no control; but a nirmanakaya is intentionally returning to benefit others, so they do have control.

. . . longevity vidyadharas and immortal vidyadharas,
arise in the aspect of Arya Tara, the Noble Mother.

All of these highly realized beings, including fully enlightened buddhas countless in number, are being invoked to come and present themselves in the aspect of White Tara that you are visualizing. Of course, it is not the case whereby they exist somewhere in an ordinary corporeal body and come out from there to show themselves. All of this is just wisdom's magical manifestation, because all of the beings who have become fully enlightened on the path of practice are being invoked. Whoever they are, wherever they might be, now you imagine that they arise in the aspect of Noble White Tara, and you implore them:

Swiftly arrive here without delay by the power of your samaya commitment.

Because all of the great enlightened ones have always had the aspiration to bring all beings to the state of enlightenment, just like that, we have that aspiration. That is why whenever we practice anything, accumulate any virtue, we always seal it with the dedication of merit and the aspiration prayer, these two things, *ngowa* and *monlam*. *Ngowa* means dedication of merit, and *monlam* means aspiration prayer. We dedicate to the welfare of others, and the aspiration is the prayer that we may never give up until all beings are freed from the realms of samsara, that we commit ourselves to the samaya commitment. Through the power of those two, you ask the wisdom deities to remember and to swiftly arrive. And:

Once arriving here, through the power of your compassion,
by praying to you, O Goddess of Longevity,

please bestow the siddhis of long life upon this practitioner.

We say *O Goddess of Longevity* because all of them are arriving as White Tara.

OM ARYA TA RE BENZAR SA MA YA DZA DZA

This is the Sanskrit mantra for the invocation of the wisdom beings. You recite the mantra and imagine all of the aspects that were said in the liturgy just before it. The mantra is the synthesis of everything that the Tibetan words are saying, encapsulated into the power of mantric words. So OM, NOBLE TARA, VAJRA SAMAYA DZA DZA is the invocation: please come. That is the magnetizing way of bringing her forward. Then, recite:

PADMA KA MA LA YA STOM

Once you say this, then the wisdom being and your meditation or samaya being are inseparable. Now, you know that there is really no distinction between who you are as Arya Tara and the wisdom state of Arya Tara. You are fully consecrated as that state. In a way, it is like when statues are erected in Tibetan Buddhism. For instance, the White Tara above Ensenada is not empty inside. In other traditions, Chinese, Japanese, around the world, you will see statues in temples; most of the time they are hollow inside. However, in our tradition, all statues have been consecrated. They have the tree of life, or central energy channel, all the mantras, and different chakras, and have been fully consecrated according to the lineage rituals for doing this. That is the wisdom consecration is extremely important, because that is what secures the presence of the wisdom blessing. That is similar to what we are doing here. You know you are securing the presence of the wisdom blessing.

On the one hand, there will be someone with a very high view who can look at a statue, for example White Tara, and even if she has no consecration, they just believe the wisdom Tara is there. Ultimately, she is. But with the consecration in the statue, when you look at the Tara, you know for sure the wisdom being is present, because there has been a ceremony, blessing has taken place, and she is filled with hundreds and thousands of mantras and blessed with sacred substances. Then, you know for sure the wisdom Tara is there. This part of the practice is like that. It helps us to ensure stability. After that, recite:

ARYA TA RE NA MO PU RU SHA YA HO

You pay homage. You prostrate to this inseparable nature of who you are, the wisdom Noble Tara. If you wanted to, here you could do mudras. For example, when we usually repeat the refuge verses, bodhicitta verses, and seven-branch prayer, we visualize the objects of refuge in the space in front, and then we say DZA HUNG BAM HO TSOK ZHING NAM RANG LA TIM PEI GYUD CHIN GYI LAB PAR GYUR. With DZA HUNG BAM HO, the field of refuge in front dissolves into us and grants all the blessings, and we make the gathering vajra mudra, with right arm over left, crossed at our heart. You can also do that mudra here, or not. If

you want to be more formal sometimes, you can include the elaborations; or just say the verses, visualize, and continue on.

After the invocation of the wisdom being, we always have the verses of offering and praise, and that is what is coming next. Then mantra recitation follows that. The offering:

HUNG In the trichiliocosm world system of all directions,
the varieties of desirable offerings substances of the divine
are actually presented and mentally projected.

By offering this to the Noble Mother Tara and her assembly,
may all beings bring the two levels of merit to maturity.

OM AH HUNG TA RE DEWA DAKINI BENZAR ARGHAM PADYAM
PUSHPE DHUPE ALOKE GENDHE NEWIDYA SHABDA HUNG

The offering is very clear. Read the verses, and then mentally imagine outer, inner, and secret offerings to the best of your ability, presented to the Noble Mother Tara and her assembly.

[Lama Chonam demonstrates the offering mudras once again.]

Next is the praise:

OM Mother of all buddhas of the three times, . . .

She is called Mother of all buddhas of the three times because it is pointing to the birthplace of all buddhas. The mother is the place where you were born from, so all buddhas and all wisdom blessings were born from emptiness, the state of Prajnaparamita or *yum chenmo*, the Great Mother, the womb of emptiness.

Noble Tara, mother who grants liberation,
Wish-Fulfilling Chakra Mother of Longevity—
to you, the Wisdom Goddess, I always bow down.
Mother Tara who grants liberation from samsara,
Mother Tara who grants liberation from the eight states of fear,
Tara who liberates from all kinds of illness and disease—
to Mother Tara, I prostrate and render praise.

There are eight states of fear, sixteen, and on and on. In a way, knowing them according to the scriptures is important; but, also, this kind of information can change over time. Now, according to the phenomena of modern times, we have our special varieties or degrees of fear.

It might not be poisonous snakes and elephants anymore. There are no elephants walking down the road in Ensenada; but in ancient India, the wild elephants were rampant. Obviously, this kind of information can adjust to modern times. Otherwise, wisdom teachings, dharma, never needs to adjust to modern times. Modern times need to adjust to ancient wisdom teachings, which is quite the opposite to what many western Buddhists think these days.

The point is that whatever incites fear in you or whatever the present-day illnesses and incurable diseases are, that is what you bring to mind. You know, many of them from the time of the Buddha's life have already been cured. But now, we have new ones. According to Guru Rinpoche's prophecies, he predicted all of these incurable cancers, diseases, drug resistant illnesses that our modern-day antibiotics are incapable of touching, and viruses that go rampant. So, whatever illness, disease, or fear that comes to mind, pray to Mother Tara because she liberates us from all of it. Whatever name you call it, it boils down to being the same thing; it is just suffering, it is samsara.

Just like in all languages, human beings have different ways of saying things and using different sounds, but all human beings are the same. We all wish for happiness. No one wants to suffer. We all suffer because of the same problems. We all achieve happiness for the same reasons, and so on and so forth. Nothing really changes. But because Tara is liberated and has the commitment to be the hook of compassion for the ring of faith, she liberates disciples with faith and devotion through that connection for all of us, whoever we may be. To Mother Tara, I prostrate and render praise.

The white wheel emits white light rays,
the eight-spoked wheel appears
completely encircled by the eight syllables of the secret mantra—
to the possessor of the chakra, I prostrate and render praise.

This reference KHOR LO CHEN LA CHAG TSAL TOD, to the possessor of the chakra, I prostrate and render praise, looks like it is referring to the eight-spoked diamond wheel in her heart, which is in the center of the golden vajra where the syllables of the mantra are located. It might be better to say, “. . . to the one who possesses the chakra, I prostrate.” *Possessor of the chakra* makes it sound like she is holding, so it is a little bit misleading. It means *the one with the chakra*. It refers to the diamond wheel, which is the color of the moon, as it says earlier when it sets up the visualization for the mantra recitation.

Upon the white lotus and lunar disc,
you rest in the posture of the nature of evenness
fully adorned with all attributes of the Sambhogakāya—
to the one with the mudra of supreme generosity, I prostrate and render praise.

Sporting the brilliant white color of the autumn moon,
with a splendor stronger than one hundred thousand blazing suns, . . .

That means luminous.

. . . resting upon a full lunar disc,
fully bedecked with varieties of precious gems,
seated in an expanse of five-colored rainbow light—
to the holder of the longevity vase and the utpala flower, I bow down.
Loving Wisdom Goddess who swiftly bestows the power of the immortal life,
by accomplishing you with single-pointed fervent devotion,
may all sickness, demonic-force possession, obstructions, and misfortune
brought about by human and nonhuman spirits, conflicting conditions and
untimely harm,
all eighty types of obstacles that suddenly emerge to impair life, . . .

These are usually considered to be conceptual.

. . . be fully pacified by you, the Goddess of Immortality.

Please bestow the siddhi of deathlessness.

This means dharmakaya. Here, we know *sickness* as incurable disease, *demonic-force possession* means being attacked by external negativities based on spirits to whom you owe unpaid karmic debts, *obscurations* means the veils of ignorance that you yourself have accumulated within your own mind that actually affect your body and mind, and all aspects of misfortune that arise from that. These things are brought about through human contact, nonhuman spirits, conflicting contributing conditions in life, and untimely harm. All eighty types of obstacles are things that just come up suddenly to lead one astray.

We cannot delineate those now, but they include everything that would contribute to the decline of one's life expectancy that suddenly emerge to impair life, shorten life, or compromise the quality of our lives. It is one thing to live a long life, but we also have to have all of our wits about us. No one wants to have Alzheimer's disease, dementia, or other kinds of obscurations so that we cannot practice dharma at all. The whole point for a dharma practitioner is to be lucid, so this is also another good reason why we have to stay very healthy.

Health and long life go together. Just long life with no quality is not really what we are looking for, although it is good to at least recite mantra with faith and devotion like many elderly Tibetans and those who were raised in dharma. It is a beautiful thing to see how much

faith and devotion they have, even prostrating when they can barely walk, just slowly, slowly going down and coming back up, spinning the prayer wheels, using their mala and saying mantra, and getting ready to die, accepting. This is quite the opposite from the way a lot of the older people in our cultures approach their own immanent death.

This completes the kaya aspect of Tara, and the enlightened form of Tara is now fully established. Here, we begin the enlightened speech section, the mantra recitation, and begin with the visualization for that:

In your heart, the mantric syllables begin to swirl in a clockwise direction.

Light rays of the five colors are projected everywhere.

Invoking the Noble Tara in front of you, her mantric syllables begin to spin.

These light rays are projected everywhere; specifically, they are certainly projected into the in-front Tara. This incites the mantric syllables in her heart to begin to spin rapidly also in a clockwise direction. From that, light rays go out to fill all regions of space.

From them, light rays fill all regions of space.

They are invoking, once again.

From the buddhas, rishis, and vidyadharas of the ten directions,

including the bodhisattvas on the bhumis, and the world and its inhabitants, . . .

Here, the verses are specifically invoking:

. . . the essence of their longevity as nectar with full potential and power,

is gathered to appear as the three syllables AH, NRI, and TAM.

These three syllables are common to all longevity practices, except for the seed syllable, which in this case is TAM, because that is specific to Tara. For example, if we are doing Chimed Sog Tig, the seed syllable will be HRI. If it is another practice, it could be HUNG; but here it is going to be TAM and includes AH and NRI. AH is the dharmakaya, NRI is the nirmanakaya because it is the syllable for taking rebirth as a human, and then TAM is the sambhogakaya. All essence of longevity ambrosia, which carries the full potential of all those beings including ordinary humans and other inhabitants who have longevity essence, is gathered into AH, NRI, and TAM; and the syllables now fill the entire universe.

The syllables completely fill the trichilocosm . . .

Trichiliochosm means all universes, all systems of existence, wherever they may be. Then, those syllables:

. . . and then dissolve into the Tara in front of you.

Then from her heart, nectar begins to pour out as five colors of light
that continuously dissolve into your heart.

All your illness, your demonic-force possession and obstacles are fully pacified.

Your life span, life essence, prosperity, abundance, fame, and magnificence all
increase.

Your body becomes a heap or radiant, dazzling light.

You achieve the state of an immortal vidyadhara.

Considering all of this, you recite the mantra with great enthusiasm.

OM TA RE TUTARE TU RE PUNYE PUTRING AHYU PUTRING KURU
YE SO HA

You recite as many times as you are going to recite for that session.

Thus reciting, be sure to abandon all faults and negativities. This is the principal mantra.

Faults and negativities refers to distraction, speaking, or just basically somehow sully the energy of mantra recitation. You are meant to be single-pointedly concentrated and not looking at other things or saying other sounds in between. Recite just only the mantra again and again, while visualizing. After you set up the stages and go through them, you are really focusing strongly on the nectar pouring from her heart into you, which removes all illness, negativity, and so on and increases all that is positive and necessary to sustain your life expectancy. Think of yourself as a mass of wisdom light, as an immortal vidyadhara. There is no notion of a corporeal body anymore. Resting in this state of pure awareness, pristine cognition, is very important.

You will recite the mantra however many times you can, according to the time you have set aside for your session. Then, you would shift to the second mantra:

OM ARYA TA RE TUTARE AHYU JNA NA SIDDHI PHA LA HUNG

Recite this mantra for a shorter period of time.

If you are going to conclude your session, there are two things you can do at this point. If you have done a shorter session, then you may just go ahead and conclude by continuing on with the liturgy. If you can take the time, you would do the vowels, consonants, the Vajrasattva mantra, and essential mantra of interdependent origination. Then, go back and repeat the verses of offering and the first four or eight lines of the verses of praise, not all of them.

If you are going to include the offering and praise, then you go back to where it says HUNG TONG SUM JIG TEN on page 19, recite the offering through OM AH HUNG TARE DEWA DAKINI BENZAR ARGHAM PADYAM PUSHPE DHUPE ALOKE GENDHE

NEWIDYA SHABDA HUNG with the mudras. Then, for the praise, you can do the next four or eight lines of the liturgy. Then, go back to where you left of on page 26.

Next, you are going to conclude, which is the actual completion section of the sadhana, which actually corresponds to the mind. We have practiced enlightened body, we have practiced enlightened speech, which is the mantra, and now we practice enlightened mind, which is the conclusion.

HUNG Although the dharmadhatu involves no abiding or departing,
may the mudras and mantras that are the manifestation of wisdom knowledge
and loving compassion
remain vividly stable.

May there be the good fortune of wish-fulfilling bliss and excellence,

And you say the mantra:

OM SUTRA TITRA BENZAR YE SO HA

Toss flowers and consider that stability occurs.

This section stabilizes the wisdom presence. It is called the stability of the wisdom being always remaining for auspiciousness. Now, you do not have to toss flowers; you can toss rice, or you do not toss anything. You just imagine. Actually, this practice does not need to be elaborate. In order to be inspired to do it and so it is not complicated for you, that is why I said you can just skip doing vowels, consonants, and essence mantra of interdependent origination and offering and praise, and just go ahead and conclude. That is fine for your daily practice if you only have a half hour, for example, to do this in the morning. If you have a longer time to practice, then you can add these things. If you are in retreat, you will have plenty of time and can add everything that is available here.

Then the stage of dissolution begins here with:

HUNG All phenomena are baseless from the root,
yet they possess the wisdom essence of empty awareness.
Although radiating and reabsorbing is nonconceptual,
to cleanse these imputations, everything dissolves into the dhatu.

Here, you dissolve the visualization as it says *into the dhatu*, which means the basic space of phenomena. The reference to *yet they possess the wisdom essence of empty awareness* can be considered in the following way: As I mentioned, according to this level of practice, emptiness is endowed with threefold wisdom presence: the essence, which is empty; the intrinsic nature, which is lucid and cognizant; and the quality, which is unobstructedly compassionate. So, all

phenomena, although baseless from the root, involve nothing. There is nothing to identify with. All phenomena possess these threefold wisdom aspects, although the radiating and the reabsorbing, this act of practicing Tara and receiving blessings, and so forth are all nonconceptual. In order to cleanse even the imputation or inference of there having been the process of radiating and reabsorbing, because that never really existed, we just engage that method to help us accumulate merit and purify obscurations. Now, we are no longer going to engage even in any of those positive methods of the practice; everything just dissolves into the basic space of phenomena, or the dharmadhatu.

Dharmadhatu means emptiness endowed with threefold wisdom presence. Here, you rest in the view; however, you have come to understand the view according to your master's instructions, and that is where you rest. It is important to give yourself time to rest. I think, oftentimes, we spend most of the time doing the generation of the practice and recitation of mantra, and we just barely touch upon resting in mind's nature. It is better to give more time to that, because it is actually the core of the practice. As soon as you feel yourself being distracted by karmic winds and ordinary mind too much, then you end it; but you rest as long as you can. Also, it is good if you can practice where you can gaze out into space, and your gaze is not obstructed by a lot of objects and other things that would further distract you. You are gazing out into space in a relaxed meditation posture and breathing very naturally and slowly. There is nothing else to do but just drop into your wisdom essence, your rigpa. You rest there, for example, at least five minutes at the end of a practice, if not longer.

Not only that, resting gives us the opportunity to become familiar with our wisdom essence. If we are not familiar with this, how are we going to actualize it at the time of our death? How are we going to know it in the bardo after death? If we are always using ordinary mind, even though doing dharma practice and it is positive, it is still using the mind. It is not wisdom essence. Wisdom essence is nonconceptual. That is why it says here, "Although radiating and reabsorbing is nonconceptual." That, too, has to dissolve in the end so that the actual Dzogchen practice involves nothing. You do not move, you do not speak, and you do not think. It is called *the motionless states of the three doors*. There are nine aspects to that, but basically that is it. There is really nothing to do.

We are not going to be doing that all the time, because we do not know how to do that. We would be lost in ordinary mind, sitting there pretending. That is why we need to practice to accumulate merit and purify obscurations. However, we also need to establish the habit of knowing what rigpa is and becoming familiar with it. This is very important, especially for those who are older, because our time is limited. This is the key point of all of dharma. That is why we practice dharma; to know this essential, wisdom buddha nature. There is really no other reason for practicing dharma, because it is from that point, that we awaken as buddha.

You rest as long as you can, and then as it mentions in the small print, you take:

. . . the three yogas as the path of post-meditation.

Of course, first of all, before you get up from your session, you are going to dedicate the virtue and make aspiration prayers. However, *the three yogas as the path of post-meditation* means that when you get up from your meditation, which really is when you stop resting in rigpa and go back to ordinary mind, rather than just let your mind take over and carry you away with ordinary thoughts about past, present, and future, immediately, you see all form as the wisdom deity, you hear all sound as the mantra, and you recognize all thoughts and all concepts to be rigpa, pristine awareness, and at least remind yourself that all beings are Tara. Every word they are uttering, or the sound of a car honking, is the mantra of Tara. We are in Tara's pure realm. All beings' thoughts and minds are the threefold wisdom buddha nature. You appreciate that actual fundamental nature for what it is, and in that state, you dedicate the virtue

By this virtue, may I perfect the two accumulations . . .

Two accumulations means personal aim and the welfare of others.

. . . and swiftly achieve the state of Arya Tara.

May all beings purify their obscurations
and attain the state of immortal vidyadharahood.

You can repeat this three times, or one time. Next are the verses for auspiciousness:

By the self-occurring, immortal vajra body of Arya Tara,
the strength of unobstructed compassionate blessings,
and the ever-increasing, vajra life essence of the Victors of the three times,
may I, a fortunate disciple, perfect all of these aspirations.

Here, you can include with any other prayers for auspiciousness and aspiration prayers that you wish to include. Then, the sadhana is complete. That is the way to do this as a daily sadhana practice. So you see, it is quite simple and direct.

The rest of the liturgy that you have here is really for doing this practice in retreat. The first section is if you wish to offer tormas between sessions; and if you are going to offer tormas, you would do that at the point in the sadhana that is after the OM SUTRA TITRA BENZAR YE SO HA on page 27 and before you start the stages of dissolution.

The insert for offering the tormas begins RAM YAM KHAM OM AH HUNG on page 29, and you do this tormas offering. These verses are very clear and straightforward. This section includes offering the tormas and then verses of praise to Noble Mother Tara. It also includes the one hundred syllable mantra and confession of all negativity. When you have recited the one hundred syllable mantra however many times you are going to, then you go back to where you

left off in the sadhana, which is HUNG CHO NAM ZHI MED on page 27, and you just go through to the end exactly as I previously described, including resting in rigpa, dedicating the virtue and merit, and making aspiration prayers. Again, offering tormas is optional, and it is only if you are in retreat, or if you are not in retreat and have taken the day to practice Tara and are having several sessions a day and want to offer the tormas, that is also perfectly fine.

Next, the text gives us instructions at the end of the inserted liturgy for offering tormas, this long section of small print is included in the terma as well:

The extent of the approach section of practice for the Noble Mother is to practice either for one week, twenty-one days, one month, or however long is possible.

This is important because the tertön, basically Guru Rinpoche himself, is telling us that you can have signs of accomplishment, meaning that you have averted untimely death, by practicing this for as little as one week. That is really remarkable, and it is absolutely true. When the instructions say *the approach section*, it is referring to recitation of the root mantra, the main mantra of the deity. Usually, we have the three different stages of mantra recitation. Then, there is the accomplishment mantra, which includes an appendage, such as SIDDHI PALA HUNG, to accomplish siddhi. You do not do that siddhi mantra until you have accomplished the root mantra, because by doing the root mantra you are becoming the deity. That is the reason for spending all that time accumulating the root mantra while visualizing yourself as the deity. At a certain point, you become the deity. It becomes effortless. That is who you are. You dream you are the deity. When you wake up, you are the deity. When you go to bed, you are the deity. It just becomes your stream of awareness. So, we cannot underestimate the power of repeating mantras. We know the effects of repetitive things in our own ordinary lives. Well, in dharma, it is very much like that, of course. We have to create the habit of becoming familiar with what we are doing, and the more we do that, that is what we are going to become. Even by practicing for just a week, it is the power of Tara's blessings that we can totally reverse untimely death.

Now, the enumerations are discussed. Actually, when we decide to accomplish a deity in retreat, there are three choices as to how long the retreat will last. It will be according to timing, such as one week, twenty-one days, one month, or longer. Or it will be according to enumerations, such as:

. . . ten thousand, one hundred thousand, ten million recitations, and so forth,
which . . .

Or the length of one's retreat will be according to indications of success. So, those are your three choices. For the enumerations, Dudjom Rinpoche tells us that if you do that number of accumulations, it will:

. . . will eliminate any occurrence of untimely death, misfortune, or discord and protect and extend the duration of one's life span until finally the state of an immortal vidyadhara is realized.

It is said in the tantras:

If one practices without distraction and accumulates one hundred thousand recitations, the state of immortal vidyadharahood will occur.

So, that is the information for the length of retreat according to enumerations.

Now, in terms of indications of success, the text also states that in the best scenario, you will directly witness the deity, and you will receive prophecy from the deity. In the middling case, you will have a visionary experience; and in the least case, you will meet the deity in the dream state and receive teaching. You will see a mass of white light. You will dream that you are picking flowers, eating fruit, drinking nectar, watching the sunrise, greeting a lovely white-colored maiden, being given white-colored jewelry or malas, seeing stupas and tsa-tsas. All of these are the definitive signs of accomplishing longevity.

The *yig chung* on page 35 is also an insert for retreat, as it states:

In this way having performed the approach according to time, accumulation, or signs of accomplishment, then the time for the accomplishment phase will have arrived.

That means receiving the siddhis, or spiritual attainments. For instance, it is the last morning of your retreat; then you:

Clearly visualize the mandala in the space in front; and from the three places of the Noble Mother and all of the accomplishment substances visualized as Tara, . . .

This is reference to what is on your shrine, such as if you have a vase, if you have a statue of Tara, if you have the tormas, if you have the longevity pills, if you the longevity ambrosia. All of the accomplishment substances are visualized as Tara. From them and from the Noble Mother herself, light rays come from her crown as white light, from her throat as red light, and from her heart as blue light, dissolving into your crown, throat and heart. They will emerge and dissolve into your three places.

. . . consider that you receive the blessings of immortality and the wisdom siddhis upon that very cushion.

Then, you recite this liturgy, which is basically the reiteration of the verses of praise, with the appendage, where it says:

Confer empowerment for the ten glorious powers, the four activities, and the eight accomplishments.

Accomplishing unobstructed power at this very moment without exception,
and by liberating all beings from the ocean of existence,
bestow the siddhi of the dharmakaya rainbow body in this life!

Then, you will recite

OM TARE TUTARE TURE PUNYE PUTRING AHYU PUTRING MA MA
KAYA WAKA TSITTA SAMAYA AH DHISHTRA NA AHBESHAYA AH
AH

You can continue to recite this mantra as you take each one of the substances from your shrine and place it on your crown, your throat, and your heart, symbolically. To receive the siddhis, you will eat the longevity pill and will drink the longevity nectar. You can sip the nectar from the vase, touching the torii and the statue to your crown, throat, and heart, reciting the mantra, *KAYA* is enlightened form. *WAKA* is enlightened speech. *TSITTA* is enlightened mind. You are receiving all of the empowerments and the samaya for Tara's enlightened body, speech, and mind.

This would be on the final day of your retreat where you would receive the spiritual attainments. Otherwise, it is not necessary to include this at all. This is after you accomplish Tara in any of those three ways; then you would include this. So, it is actually very, very simple and straightforward. It might seem a little overwhelming right now, but once you do the practice and become a little more familiar with it, you will understand it is really not so complicated.

Finally, after that, the whole visualization dissolves into yourself, and you rest in innate essence of deathlessness. Then, you would go ahead and conclude, back to the sadhana at the stages of conclusion on page 27.

That is the best I can do for trying to help you to learn how to do this profound and beautiful practice. If there are any questions, I am happy to help you; but more importantly, we can practice. We will do the practice slowly and nicely, and we will also include the verses for the ganachakra offering, *YING KYI BENDHAR*, Dudjom Rinpoche's terma tsok offering verses. We will keep it simple. We will also do some Vajrasattva mantra, and then share the tsok. Maybe, if there is time, we can walk up and circumambulate the White Tara statue three times. At five o'clock, Lama Chonam is going to give refuge to a few people, and we will conclude. So, we a better give the translator a rest now.

Practice Notes:

Let me mention that there is no specific tune that we know of that goes with this, so for myself I do this every day and I just do straight chanting. Of course, you are welcome to do that, too, when you are on your own. For example, you go to the very beginning, you may start with the

seven-line prayer to Guru Rinpoche three times, which we did already, and then you start the lineage supplication prayer. You would just do straight chanting. Also, it is important to know what you are saying, so please read the Spanish. If you are in a pinch for time and you had to choose between Tibetan or Spanish, I would choose Tibetan, until you know what you are doing, except for the mantras, which are always kept in the original Sanskrit.

Questions and Answers

January 17, 2020

LC: You can ask questions. It is really good. That is the way it happens in all Buddhist teachings. The disciples asked questions, then Buddha answered, and then that became the eighty-four thousand categories of teachings. Things are clarified. If you want, you can ask any question.

Q: What is the difference between Green Tara and White Tara?

A: All manifestations of Tara are all called Tara or Drolma in Tibetan, but White Tara is the longevity deity to extend one's life. Green Tara removes obstacles, but also increases prosperity. If you pray only to White Tara and to accomplish the others too, they manifest for that reason. Therefore, the more emphasis, the more swift the blessings; that is why there are different images, different manifestations. We say twenty-one Taras. That is just limited in the number, but the manifestations of Tara are inconceivable. There is no number.

Q: So White Tara has to do with longevity, but it also has to do with healing, healing our own body or heart?

A: Yes. Anything. *Healing* means also part of extending one's life. When we are sick, become sick and then are dying, it is because of the four elements being unbalanced. Healing from Tara restores balance in those elements. That really kind of extends one's longevity. So, yes, you can call it *healing*, physically healing, mentally healing, both. That is the way we restore our life and longevity.

Q: Can you mention the four elements?

A: The four elements are earth, water, fire, and wind. I think every medical system will say that our body is made from those elements. When we get sick physically, mentally, also unhappy, there is something unbalanced. That is why we get sick. That is why we die. But by praying, through receiving blessings, healing from those blessings, sometimes taking medicine, we can heal. All of this is really part of the practice and part of the blessings of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. The elements become balanced, then there is a healthy body, there is a happy mind.

Q: What is the proper way to make a connection with Tara? What is the proper way to establish connection with Tara?

A: Tara is the wisdom mother. When you directly see White Tara, for example, you make a connection. You just pray according to the liturgy. If you can, the whole liturgy is a mantra. Even if you cannot do the entire mantra, there is one syllable you can do, OM. OM is the beginning of the twenty-one Taras. OM is really the enlightened body, speech, and the mind of Tara. Acknowledge enlightened body, speech, and mind and pay homage to enlightened body, speech, and mind. You just take in the Tara image, praying for whatever wishes you are really hoping for, to remove obstacles, or to accomplish something. There are many ways to pray, but that is the easiest way.

Even the stories mentioned in this commentary, some of them never pray to Tara, but when they really need help, then there is no choice but just trust completely. They have heard only stories of Tara, how she liberates from difficulties, and that's the only information they know, so they say, "I have no other choice. There is the deity Tara who has power. Maybe I will pray to her. I have only that choice, that option, left." They had that kind of attitude, and then Tara manifested as different images, or different elements, like fire. For example, suddenly clouds come, rains start, and kill a fire, and those many different magical manifestations. It is just a connection. How much you really make a connection depends on your faith, your openness.

Q: Could you speak about the benefits of circumambulating the statue?

A: Circumambulation of any sublime object, like sacred statues and sacred dharma books, is excellent. Circumambulating according to Buddhism means at least three circumambulations. When the right side of the shoulder is placed toward the object of devotion, it shows respect. Showing respect is not benefiting Tara directly, but your mind completely accepts the faith and devotion; when you circumambulate this way, then you are making an offering to Tara. In a similar way, if you see a beautiful flower, just one flower, just take and then offer it. Just your body, speech, and mind can also be offered, or just a mental offering.

There are two types of offerings. There are material things, substance offerings; whatever you think is beautiful, you offer. Then, there are mental offerings, whatever you imagine, beautiful things, without holding back anything, without involving any attachment. When you are doing that, you are simultaneously accumulating merit, accumulating virtue, and purifying negative karma. The most important is your belief. Circumambulate at the same time with mindfulness. Whatever it is that you are wishing for, hold that in your mind to benefit others and to remove obstacles in your life.

Q: Is there some method to transform ordinary working or service into spiritual practice?

A: In Tibet, we have beautiful statues and temples and also stupas, and those who have time and energy are looking for the opportunity to accumulate merit, to purify negative karma, and other reasons. That is not the only way. You can also study and meditate, or do something like

go to caves and meditate. But to accumulate merit, to purify negative karma, to volunteer with respect, to go and take care of the statue or stupa with the purest intention to remove one's obstacles, but also to benefit others is the best way. It is really not involved with a lot of work, money, or a lot of power. It is only pure offering through your body, speech, and mind.

Recite mantra when you are doing gardening, cleaning, or whatever. At the same time you circumambulate, you are literally meditating. You are accumulating merit. You are reciting mantra. Everything comes together because you are focused on that image and pure intention. Your mind is not distracted. Your mind is also generating bodhicitta. Your intention is accumulating merit, purifying negative karma, benefiting others. That is a virtuous mind. If you can, this is the best way. That is your opportunity.

January 18, 2020

Q: You mentioned three stages of visualization. The first one was uniting the meditation being with the samadhi being, and the last one was the wisdom being; but there is another one in the middle. In this part of the *sādhana*, the TUG KAR MEN SHEL LE DRUB PAI [page 16] is the last part. So, which is the middle one?

SK: Generally, there, it is called the three stages. When you visualize self-nature as the deity, that is called *the damtsig sempa*, or samaya being. Today, I called it *meditation being* because it is easier to understand in that context. If you say *samaya being*, people say, "What?" What that means is that it is your meditation that you are committed to do as a practitioner. The notion is that once you have had empowerment, then you are going to practice. So, it is the meditation being. Then, when you visualize and invoke the wisdom presence, that is the wisdom being. Also, in the heart, there is *the samadhi being*, which is the *ting nge dzin sempa*, or single-pointed absorption. That means TAM, the seed syllable; that's the samadhi being. When you are doing mantra recitation, from time to time, you just put your mind only on TAM. However, because TAM is the source of Tara, no matter what, and Tara emerges from TAM, then that is also samadhi, the notion of single-pointedly focusing on that syllable as the seed or the source. It is not really that it is in between, or *the middle one*. It is just like that. The wisdom being has TAM, the samadhi being, and the meditation being. You also have the samadhi being. It just means the seed syllable.

Q: If there is a samaya being and in front, is one the *jnanasattva* being?

A: Yes.

Q: In her heart, both are the samadhi being?

A: Yes. Perfect.

Q: When you say twenty-five substances within the *bum chu*, do you refer to rakta?

A: I do not think rakta goes in there. Rakta has its own substances. This would be the *men*, or medicine. You know how you have the two, medicine and rakta? These twenty-five substances could qualify as ambrosia or medicine. But rakta is different. And there is a difference between those substances according to the different yogic systems, kriya, upa, yoga, and so forth.

Q: For the samaya being, the mudra for holding the flower is different from the wisdom being. You mentioned that the wisdom being has the ring finger and thumb. In the samaya being, which fingers are used?

A: It is the same. It is just a different hand. For the meditation being, yourself as samaya being, it is the mudra of generosity with your right hand, and your left hand is holding the stem of the flower with the ring finger and the thumb. The flower is blooming up just by the ear. The Tara in front is also holding the flower, but with her right hand down and in the left hand is the longevity vase.

Q: I was wondering about the wish-fulfilling chakra? I think that is what it is called; I am not sure as this is in Spanish. So is that a chakra that belongs to our body? Or is there a place; where is this chakra?

A: No, it is just her name. That term *khoro* can also mean “mandala.” It means a *vortex*, a *center*, that she is the power source. It does not refer to a chakra network of channels in your body, no. From her, because of this name *yid zhin* or wish-fulfilling, she will grant whatever is wished. She fulfills any wish. Also, the image of the wheel or the mandala, the chakra, means that from this energy source, anything and everything is possible. So, *chakra* is really a reference to her, the subject, Tara; that is her name.

Q: When you refer to the dynamic strength of emptiness, is that referred to as the part of the Prajnaparamita Sūtra, where it states, “Emptiness is form?” Is it related to that? Because I understand the other parts of Prajnaparamita, but the emptiness is form part... I am just asking if it is related.

A: In the Prajnaparamita, where it says, “Emptiness is form, form is emptiness,” this is according to Sutra’s way of explaining. Of course, it is hard to understand, but it means that the nature of form is empty, just simply put. Also, the nature of emptiness is form, which is what I think you are asking, this notion of the unceasing power. It is a little different because this terminology, that *tsal*, is a specific Great Perfection term, which is referring to this unobstructed compassion that is the wisdom aspect of emptiness. As I mentioned, Sutra does not identify wisdom in emptiness, so the Prajnaparamita teachings on form being emptiness is not really discussing or thinking about this wisdom energy. It is just that form, by nature, is compounded, which means that it can be dissected into nothingness; so its nature is empty. But the term *unobstructed power* means the energy of wisdom that is present in emptiness is actually manifesting and is capable of being present and available. It is present and available in everything, and it is being called compassion. That is a very good question.

Q: When you mentioned about this energy that is available, this kind of compassion and the essence and the compassion right there ready to respond, how is it ready to respond? If it is responding, there is already a duality responding to a subject and an object. So, is it just there?

A: I usually say *readiness*. It is a *readiness* because as it abides in the ground of emptiness. There is really nothing, yet the presence of lucidity and this possibility for manifestation is ready. It is ready but has not manifested yet. Because of this, according to the Great Perfection approach, that rupakaya becomes available, meaning sambhogakaya and nirmanakaya. Sutra explains rupakaya differently. These are very important points to really come to know in terms of the view.

Basically, it is these three wisdoms of the ground, which is the nature or essence being empty, the intrinsic nature being lucid or we also use terms, such as clarity or cognizance, and the quality being unobstructedly compassionate. That is the all-pervasiveness of it, that there is nowhere that it does not reach, like the rays of the sun. Oftentimes, the sun is used as a metaphor. There is the orb of the sun and then there are the rays, but they cannot be separated. In the orb, you cannot say that the rays are there, but the possibility for the rays are there in the orb; and then the rays are there outside of the orb, just naturally. So, it is like that.

Q: Can you clarify *tsewang rigdzin* and *tse yi rigdzin* [page 18]?

A: In that line, TSE WANG RID DZIN is reference to the immortal vidyādhara and is the accomplishment, and the TSE YI RIG DZIN is the one who is accomplishing that. So that is the practitioner. They are not really two different things. It is just reference to the accomplishment by the person who is accomplishing.

Q: The next question is about the eight states of fear and the sixteen states of fear.

A: And when the next terdon comes along, it will be thirty-two. It is just adding that. They are just two different groups. Eight and sixteen, just increasing. More elaboration.

Q: Sangye mentioned life essence, life force, and life expectancy. What are the Tibetan words for those? Can you define them a little bit more?

A: LC: Sangye is asking me to say something about those three. Those three, we say *la tse sog* [*bla tshe rsog*] This is kind of an ancient belief of Tibetans, not necessarily only in Buddhists; but Buddhist rituals bring in those ancient beliefs, and then the essence of that ancient belief becomes Buddhist wisdom teachings. There are a lot of things like that.

La is really life force. Life force is always with the individual wherever they go, wherever they live, and whatever happens; it is always inseparable until they die. For example, sometimes people are scared or suddenly shocked, then they will lose that life force, or be separated from it temporarily. There is a ceremony called *la gug* [*bla 'gugs*], invoking the life force, and then kind of like “restoration.” That is *la*. It brings energy to that person when they live, when they speak, when they do anything. It is like the essence of that human being.

For example, for someone going to prison or jail that stays there for a few months or a few years, when they are free, when the individual is leaving at the gate, they look back and call, “Let’s go, now we are free; I am going home.” Then, the *la* also continues to follow the person back to wherever he lives.

Q: When you talk about the person and when they call their names, does their energy stay, before the name was said, in the prison?

A: For example, if someone is in prison, you cannot go home. When they say you can go home, that person called to himself, for example, calling to himself, “Let’s go, go home.”

SK: They are calling to their life force, so it will not stay back. But then later, with the cremation, when a person dies, their life force dies with them, is that the idea?

LC: Wherever their cremation happened, then it dissolves in that place. Then slowly, slowly, after nine years, the *la* will permanently dissolve into there. It is not consciousness.

Q: It dwells there?

A: Yes, permanently, as part of the earth.

LC: People also wear *la*, like a piece of turquoise as a support for the *la*, or holds the *la*, turquoise for the life force. Kings, queens, and important people also have lakes, *la tso*, or *la ri*, mountains, dedicated for their life forces. But individuals always wear a piece of turquoise, so that there is a dwelling place for the *la*. Also, for *la tse sog*, we use the example of a butter lamp. The vessel is the life essence support, the ghee or butter is the life force, or *la*, and the wick and fire are the life expectancy. Those almost cannot even exist separately, or are difficult to experience separately. They depend on each other.

The Epic of Gesar explains this very clearly, in many different ways. When they do smoke offerings in the ancient way and then they invoke those spirits, they uplift the individual’s life force, life essence. Before someone is going to fight, they prepare physically, mentally, spiritually; they then bring up those names and special features of the life force, life essence, and life expectancy.

Q: There have been a couple of questions from several people about the mantras because you mentioned the root mantra, the accomplishment, and the siddhi mantra. Several have asked about taking siddhi. What is the exact mantra, or what are the three mantra?

A: Here, there is mainly just the root mantra. That is what we focus on. Let’s turn to page 26, so you can see it. The root mantra is:

OM TARE TUTARE TURE PUNYE PUTRING AHYU PUTRING KURU YE
SOHA.

That is what one is mainly accomplishing in order to become Arya Tara herself. Then, there is this second mantra:

OM ARYA TARE TUTARE AHYU JNANA SIDDHI PHA LA HUNG

That is the accomplishment mantra, and it does not mention here about accumulating that. You would just do as Kyabje Rinpoche mentions, “Occasionally recite for a short while.” Oftentimes, it is one half the amount of the root mantra accumulations. Let’s say, if you are doing one hundred and eight, one mala, of the root mantra, then you would do fifty of the accomplishment mantra, but you could get away with twenty-five.

Then, the siddhi mantra is at the very end on page 36, which you would only say if you have done retreat and now you are concluding your retreat and are receiving the spiritual attainments. In the middle of the page, the *yig chung* says:

Recite the root mantra with the appendage: . . .

OM TARE TUTARE TURE PUNYE PUTRING AHYU PUTRING MA MA
KAYA WAKA TSITTA SAMAYA AH DHISHTRA NA AHBESHAYA AH
AH

That mantra is not being accumulated. You can recite that while you are receiving the blessing from the substances. It is being used for receiving the spiritual attainment.

Q: In regards to the term *lhamo*, in the text sometimes it says Goddess Tara, when the Tibetan word is *lhamo*, so I would like to ask if it is proper or synonymous to what it is referring to?

A: LC: I think *lhamo* is a “god” literally translated, but also “wisdom goddess,” and that means “wisdom dakini,” same thing. *Dakini*, *lhamo*, *goddess* are different names for the same thing.

SK: They are epithets really. In one way, maybe saying *goddess* is not so good because it can be misleading.

Q: In Mexico, it is very difficult for Mexican people, the idea of a goddess, because of the Catholic or Christian culture. There couldn’t be a female goddess or a female, so powerful a woman.

SK: Because that is too high you mean? Too other worldly? When we said *goddess*, how did you translate that?

Student: Yes. Diosa.

SK: Well, that is good to know. In that case, the translators should know that, and then they choose the right word. As a translator, that is what I do. I do not like to use a lot of Christian-based terms. One thing that really bothers me is this term “his holiness.” That term should be reserved for the Pope or the Dalai Lama and not prescribed to other high masters. The Tibetan

word is *kyabje*, lord of refuge. Well, that does not translate as “his holiness.” But like *lhamo*, *lha* is deity. So, we could have easily said “female deity,” but we said “goddess.”

LC: In Tibetan, you, when you hear *lhamo*, it does not mean an ordinary female; it is beyond an ordinary individual, it is a goddess.

SK: You could say “divine female?”

LC: Divine female deity, yeah.

SK: Because it is above an ordinary female. I mean, of course, Tara is.

LC: But also in the history of Tara, it said her name is *drolma*, she who liberates, liberator. We are not going to change generations, eons; the Buddha gave her permanent name, “You will be called Tara, *drolma*.” *Drolma* means one who liberates whoever is stuck, whoever needs help. “You did that for so many, many eons, and so now this is your permanent name. They will call you permanently Tara, liberator.” *Drolma* is Tibetan, and Tara in Sanskrit.

SK: Those are the kinds of things you have to keep in mind when you are translating into Spanish.

Student: Well, in general, when we practitioners are reading, we understand, okay it is Tara, so we can relate. It would be nice to find the proper word.

LC: And another thing also, in Tibetan, also Tara is not always called Tara/Drolma. She is called *phagmo*, which means heroine, and *nyurma* [*myur ma*], swift one. So, there are many different names, and it depends on different enlightened activities.

Q: Most of us here in Ensenada have received the praise of the twenty-one Taras. If we wanted to recite that, where or in what part of the practice would it go?

A: After you do the mantra recitation, then you do offering, and then it would be at the praise. You could put it there, or you could put it in the praise that comes before, on page 20. Where the liturgy says OM DU SUM GYALWA KUN GYI YUM, right after the offerings are presented. You have invoked the wisdom presence and you are making offerings and rendering praise. You can do it there. Or you can do the verses of praise in this text, which are actually quite long, and then you include the twenty-one Tara praise after page 23. Or after you do the mantra, again you recite four or eight lines of praise, you can include it there.