




INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE  
PRACTICE OF WHITE TARA

Dorlop Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche



# INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRATICE OF WHITE TARA

Oral Explanations on *A Chest of Amrita* from *The Treasury  
of Kagyu Mantras* by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye



DORLOP KYABJE TENGA RINPOCHE



DHARMAEBOOKS.ORG

# CONTENTS

FOREWORD	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
PRELIMINARY PRACTICES	3
Tara Preliminaries	4
Special Preliminaries	11
DEVELOPMENT PHASE ( <i>Kyerim</i> )	15
Contemplation of White Tara	24
Offerings and Praises	28
Visualization of the Appearance	28
The Repetitions	34
Long Life Practice	41
Purification of the Mistakes of the Practice	41
COMPLETION PHASE ( <i>Dzogrim</i> )	43
Completion Phase with Form	44
Completion Phase without Form	50
TORMA OFFERING	54
COMPLETION OF THE PRACTICE	61
Dedication of Merit	61
TRANSMISSION LINEAGE	62
IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA	64

## FOREWORD



The teachings presented in this publication were given in Tibetan by Kyabje Tenga Rinpoche in August of 1986 at the Kamalashila Institute in Germany. In a clear, accessible way, Rinpoche elucidated the instructions included in the commentary *A Chest of Amrita* by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.

I was fortunate to attend these teachings in person. Listening first in Tibetan, and then through English and German interpretation, I was able to take extensive and detailed notes.

Nearly twenty years later, a group of German practitioners affiliated with the Benchen Phuntsok Ling Centre in Allmuthen transcribed these teachings into German, preserving them for internal use within Rinpoche's students' circle. I wish to express my deep gratitude to them; without their efforts, the present English version would likely never have come into being.

While in a long retreat practising White Tara sadhana, Lama Martina prepared a working English translation from the German for her own personal use. I subsequently revised and refined this English text, drawing on my original notes as well as on numerous explanations

I received from Tenga Rinpoche over the years, both during public teachings and while translating Rinpoche's responses to private questions of students engaged in this yidam practice. For this reason, it would not be accurate to describe the present work simply as a translation of the German text, though it has certainly served as an important source of inspiration.

It is my sincere hope that this collective effort will prove beneficial to many practitioners. I have strived to present here as faithful a record of Tenga Rinpoche's teachings as possible. Any errors or shortcomings are entirely my own.

The drawings illustrating various elements of the visualisation were painted by Tenga Rinpoche himself, in white on blue card. They were often used by Rinpoche to explain this practice.

In addition, the *thanka* used on the book cover was painted by Rinpoche and it represents three main practices of the Tenga lineage. The First Tenga Rinpoche, Lama Samten, was devoted to Karma Pakshi, pictured above White Tara. The Second Tenga Rinpoche, Chogyal Tenzin Drupchok, as advised by his root guru Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye, was mainly practicing Six-Armed Mahakala (Tib. *Chadrukpa*). And White Tara was the main yidam of the Third Tenga Rinpoche, Tenzin Trinle.

The photographs of the three-dimensional palace (Tib. *lo lang* ལོ་ལང་པོ་ལང་པོ་) of the White Tara mandala were taken by myself in Pharping, Nepal, inside the stupa containing Tenga Rinpoche's relics. This palace was

constructed precisely according to Rinpoche's instructions. Some of its features differ from the style in which such mandalas are commonly created in many other monasteries.

The final editorial revision of the English text was carried out by Ani Tsekyi Buchanan from KTD Monastery. We are extremely grateful to her for all the help she provided.

*Lama Rinchen  
Benchen Karma Kamtsang Centre, Grabnik, Poland  
April 2026*

## INTRODUCTION



The following explanations refer to the White Tara practice commentary *A Chest of Amrita* from *The Treasury of Kagyu Mantras* by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye.<sup>1</sup>

The practices of Green and White Tara belong to the Anuttarayoga Tantra class. They are both embodiments of Prajnaparamita. The Anuttarayoga Tantra is divided into the father, mother and the non-dual tantra. The mother tantra again is divided into the following six tantra categories: Drölma Naljorma Tantra, Phakpa Mikyöpa, Dorje Nyima, Pema Gawang, Tai Gjalpo (Hayagriva) and Pal Heruka Tantra. The Tara teachings belong to Hayagriva, the fifth of these six tantras.

In Tibet several tradition lineages of the White Tara Practice developed. They all can be traced back to Buddha Shakyamuni. The four main traditions were passed on by the four translators Bari Lotsawa, Nyen Lotsawa, Pandita Nag Kyi Rinchen and Jowo Atisha.<sup>2</sup> I will base

---

1. English translation of this commentary is available for download on [dharmaebooks.org](http://dharmaebooks.org)

2. Tib.: *ba ri lo tsa' ba, g.nyan lo tsa' ba, pandi ta nags kyi rin chen, jo wo a ti sha*

my explanations on the tradition of Atisha. The text contains the special instructions that are passed on by the Kagyu lineage.

All yidam activities are identical in their essence. They provide protection from the temporary sufferings of cyclic existence and ultimately the yidam practice allows one to achieve Mahamudra, the stage of enlightenment, which in turn grants the ability to help other beings also reach this realization. The activity of White and Green Tara saves us from eight or sixteen other types of fear and ultimately makes the realization of life siddhi possible. For these reasons the Tara practice is of great importance for us. It grants us a long life, which then gives us the chance to practice the Dharma intensively for a long time in order to develop the Bodhisattva qualities gradually and to help others.

# PRELIMINARY PRACTICES



## GENERAL PRELIMINARIES

The text of the commentary begins with the Four General Preliminaries (Tib. *ngöndro*). We contemplate upon:

1. The value and preciousness of our human existence and the related opportunities and freedoms;
2. The impermanent nature of all things;
3. The law of causality of actions (cause and effect);
4. The sufferings of conditioned existence.

The purpose of these contemplations is to turn the mind towards the Dharma and to develop an attitude that corresponds to the Dharma. It is important to work with these contemplations and to internalize them. If we do not, there is the danger that our mind will wander from the Dharma. What does it matter if the mind is connected with the Dharma or not? We can examine our mind to determine the answer. Dharma gives us methods to relieve the suffering of our mind and disturbing emotions such as anger, desire, aversion, ignorance, pride, envy, etc. We should watch our mind. When we find that disturbing

emotions like anger, desire, etc. decrease after several years of Dharma practice, then we can conclude that our mind is connected with the Dharma. This is a sign that we have internalized the Dharma. But if we find that disturbing emotions like anger, etc. increase, then this is a sign that our mind is separated from the Dharma, and that we have not internalized the Dharma.

## TARA PRELIMINARIES

In order to pass on the complete text of Jamgön Lodrö Thaye, the following explanations also include the special Tara Preliminaries.<sup>3</sup>

The White Tara Preliminaries basically corresponds to the Mahamudra Preliminaries we know. Only the arrangement of the text is different. In the Tara Preliminaries we first practice Vajrasattva (Tib. *Dorje Sem-pa*), then taking refuge, next mandala offering and finally guru yoga.

## VAJRASATTVA

We sit in meditation posture. The back should be straight as we breathe out three times forcefully. With this triple exhalation everything negative from previous lives, all the obstacles that could affect our lives, are eliminated. Above our head on a many-petalled, white

---

3. If someone has already completed the Mahamudra Preliminaries (Ngöndro), there is no need to also practice the Tara Preliminaries. In such case, here we first recite the lineage prayer and then the rest of the sadhana.

lotus flower and white moon disc appears Vajrasattva in one instant. He is identical with our root guru.

The color of his body is white. He has one face and two arms, in his right hand he holds a dorje and in the left a bell. Dorje Sempa sits in the Vajra posture adorned with ornaments and jewels as we know him from thangkhas.

There is a white ཨྐ OM at his forehead, a red ཨཱ AH at his throat and a blue HUNG at the lower part of his heart. At the upper part of his heart is an eight-petalled, white lotus flower with a white moon disc and a white syllable ཨྐ HUNG on top of it. The syllables of the “hundred-syllable mantra” are standing around the HUNG.

In our heart is a lotus flower and moon disc, on which Noble White Tara appears. She is identical with our root guru. In her heart on a moon disc is the syllable ཨྐ TAM. We request that Vajrasattva purify our negativities and confusions. Vajrasattva dissolves into light and merges with the White Tara in our heart.

In the following mantra recitation we **join the mantra of Vajrasattva with the Tara mantra**: OM TARE TUTTARE TURE SOHA OM BENZA SATO SAMAYA MANU PALAYA ... We recite the syllables like this as a continuous mantra. At the same time we visualize that white nectar flows out of the TAM in Tara’s heart (in our heart) and fills her body. It continues to flow from her right hand, which she holds in the gesture of highest giving, fills the interior of our body and purifies our negativities. All negativities in the form of smoke

and ink and all diseases in the form of blood and pus are flushed out through our orifices and pores. After the purification process, our body is completely filled with nectar.

We can repeat this visualization as often as we like. At the end of the practice the White Tara in our heart dissolves into light and merges with our body. Then we appear as White Tara, the outer world as her pure land and all sound as the sound of her mantra. All thoughts that arise in the mind are the spontaneous expression of the wisdom of Tara, an expression of Dharmakaya. Finally we dedicate the merit for the benefit of all beings.

## TAKING REFUGE

In the vast expanse of space in front of us appears a large four-petalled lotus. In its center is a throne, which is supported by eight lions. On top of it is a lotus flower with a sun disc and a moon disc. On the moon disc is our root guru in the form of **Buddha Amitabha**, surrounded by all the lineage lamas.

On the front petal is White Tara, surrounded by all the yidams. On the petal to the right of Amitabha is **Buddha Shakyamuni**, surrounded by all the buddhas. On the rear petal is **Prajnaparamita** (Tib. *Yum Chenmo*); she embodies the dharma teaching. On the petal to the left of Amitabha is **Avalokiteshvara** (Tib. *Chenrezik*), surrounded by the whole sangha. Around the whole visualization and in all the spaces

in between, like masses of clouds, are all dakas, dakinis and dharma protectors.

We are surrounded by all beings of the six realms. Together we take refuge and recite the verses that we know from the Mahamudra Preliminaries (*From now on until we have attained enlightenment*, etc.). We may also recite the short form of refuge that we know from the Chenrezik practice (*I take refuge in the Buddha*, etc.). During the recitation we do prostrations.

Next comes the development of bodhicitta. We recite the same verses as in the Mahamudra Preliminaries, and the aspiration prayers to lead all beings to liberation are also the same. Finally all objects of refuge merge into Buddha Amitabha. He dissolves into light and merges with us. Because he is the union of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, we obtain their blessing through this dissolution. Then we dedicate the merit for the benefit of all beings.

## MANDALA OFFERING

Here we have the “drubpe-mandala”<sup>4</sup> and the “offering-mandala” like in the Mahamudra Preliminaries.

To set up the drubpe mandala, we put five heaps of rice on the mandala plate: one in the middle and one each in the four different directions. These heaps symbolize Mount Meru in the center and the

---

4. It serves as a support for our practice, and it should be placed on the shrine or any other place in front of us.

four continents in the four directions. A lotus flower and a moon disc appear above each heap. Then on top of each lotus flower, there appears a different seed syllable: above Mount Meru a white syllable །ྤ TAM, above the eastern continent a green syllable །ྤ TAM, above the southern continent a yellow syllable །ྤ MUM, above the western continent a yellow syllable །ྤ A and above the northern continent a white syllable །ྤ HRI.

In an instant we appear as White Tara, with a moon disc and a white syllable TAM in the heart. From this TAM, light radiates to all buddhas and bodhisattvas and invites them to appear in the space in front of us. In the middle in front of us is White Tara, in the eastern direction Green Tara, in the southern direction Buddha Shakyamuni, in the western direction Prajnaparamita and in the northern direction white Avalokiteshvara.

At the words PEMA KAMALYA SATOM the deities, that appeared in the space in front of us dissolve into their corresponding syllables: White Tara into the white TAM in the middle, Green Tara into the green TAM in the eastern direction, etc., whereby the syllables then transform into the respective deities.

They are in the space in front of us:

- In the middle (above Mount Meru) on a lotus and moon disc is **White Tara**;
- In front (above the eastern continent Lüpakpo) is **Green Tara**;

- To her right side (on the southern continent Dzambuling) is **Buddha Shakyamuni**;
- Behind (on the western continent Balangcho) is **Pranjaparamita**;
- To her left side (on the northern continent Draminyen) is **Avalokiteshvara**;

They are surrounded by all the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Above them are all the lamas, in the middle all the yidams and in the lower space all the protectors.

We pay homage to them and do prostrations. This is followed by praises and offerings. From our heart, offering goddesses with washing water, drinking water, etc. radiate. Then we recite the seven-branch prayer, confess our negative actions, etc. We put the mandala plate on the shrine, and in front of it the seven offering bowls.

This is followed by the offering-mandala. It is identical to the Mahamudra Preliminaries. First we offer the thirty-seven-point mandala with the verses “OM BENZA BHUMI AH HUNG ... etc.” The verses we recite and count during the repetition of the offerings differ from the Mahamudra Preliminaries, but they have the same meaning. After the end of the mandala offering the deities in the space in front of us dissolve into light and merge with us. We dedicate the merit for the benefit of all beings.

## GURU YOGA

In an instant we appear as White Tara. Above our head is a throne, supported by eight lions, with a lotus flower and sun, and moon discs. On top of these is our root guru in the form of **White Tara**.

The White Tara (above us) has a white syllable OM at the forehead, at the throat a red syllable AH, and at the lower part of the heart a blue syllable HUNG. Above the HUNG, in the middle of her heart, is a moon disc with an eight-spoked wheel. In the hub of the wheel is the white syllable TAM and around the TAM, on the spokes of the wheel, stand the syllables of the Tara Mantra.

From the mantra syllables light radiates to all buddhas and bodhisattvas and invites the lineage lamas. They appear and merge into the White Tara above us. Thus Tara becomes the embodiment of the entire refuge: the embodiment of all buddhas and bodhisattvas, all lamas, yidams and protectors. She is like a wish-fulfilling jewel.

Then follows the recitation of the lines: *Namo Aryataraye...* and then the verses: *Ma nam kha dang nyam pä sem chen tham che* etc. These four lines are also in the Mahamudra Preliminaries.

From the White Tara above us white light radiates from the white syllable OM at her forehead into our forehead. Thus we receive the blessing of her body. From the red syllable AH at her throat red light radiates into our throat, and we receive the blessing of her speech. From her heart blue light radiates into our heart, and we receive the

blessing of her mind. By the yellow light that radiates from her navel into our navel, we receive her highest siddhi, the realization of Mahamudra. Finally Tara dissolves into light and merges with us. We are inseparable from our lama, the Noble Tara.

## SPECIAL PRELIMINARIES

### RELATIVE BODHICITTA

For the development of relative bodhicitta, the accumulation of merit and compassion, we meditate on the four immeasurables:

1. **Immeasurable love:** may all beings be happy and have the cause of happiness.
2. **Immeasurable compassion:** may all beings be free from suffering and the cause of suffering.
3. **Immeasurable joy:** may all beings never be separated from true joy, which is without suffering.
4. **Immeasurable equanimity:** may all beings abide in great equanimity, free from attachment and aversion.

### ABSOLUTE BODHICITTA

The development of absolute bodhicitta serves the accumulation of wisdom (awareness).

For this, we recite the **mantra of emptiness**:

OM SHUNYATA JANA BENZA SOBHAWA ETMAKO HAM and meditate on the emptiness of all phenomena, the outer physical world, the elements, our body, the skandhas, etc. With the recitation of the mantra of emptiness starts the actual practice of White Tara. The mantra symbolizes emptiness. There are other texts that start with another mantra of emptiness such as: OM SOBAVA SHUDDA... They both have essentially the same meaning.

#### EXPLANATION OF THE EMPTINESS MANTRA

The first syllable **ॐ** OM symbolizes the essence of the five kayas or the five primordial wisdoms (Tib. *yeshe*) in ourselves.

The second word of the mantra, **शुन्यता** SHUNYATA, means emptiness and refers here to the nature of mind: the mind has no characteristics whatsoever, no form, is not round, square or triangular, etc. It has no color. We cannot say it is green, blue or yellow. There are no characteristic attributes with which we could describe the mind in this way. Therefore it is said that its essence is emptiness.

The next word **ज्ञान** JNANA means enlightened, supreme awareness. It refers here to the clarity aspect of the mind. When it is said that the nature of mind is emptiness, this does not mean that it is empty like the space or like the sky above the earth. It is not empty in the literal sense. The clarity aspect of the mind is the basis of the various phenomena that we experience, whether the mind is pure or impure. In

the impure state we go through the sufferings of the lower realms, e.g. the hell realms, or the suffering of old age, sickness and death in the human realm, or we experience the temporary comforts of the god realms. In the pure state, when the clear mind manifests, we are able to help others by performing different buddha activities. These activities arise from the clear aspect of the mind, which we equate with the highest awareness. That is why we speak of the emptiness and clarity of mind.

The word བཛྲ་ BENZA means vajra. The term *vajra* stands for seven different terms (unchangeable, indestructible, etc.). These refer to the fundamental nature of the mind, as it was explained above: to the nature of emptiness, which is always connected with the aspect of clarity. The ultimate nature of the mind is the inseparable unity of clarity and emptiness. This unity we call buddha nature. From the very beginning it is the true nature of the mind of all beings and it has always been, whatever experiences the beings might go through. For example, even if they are going through the experiences of torment in the hell realms, their buddha nature will not be harmed in any way. The fundamental nature of mind will not be affected. If someone attains enlightenment including all the realizations and levels of consciousness of a buddha, his or her buddha nature will not thereby get any bigger or stronger. The fundamental nature of mind is stable and unchanging. This inseparability of emptiness and clarity of the mind is associated with the vajra, because its nature is indestructible.

The next word མཐོག་གཙོ་ SOBHAWA means nature. The nature of mind is clear and inherently empty. The basic characteristics of the mind are and always remain the same and unchanging. That is why we speak of

the inseparability of the emptiness and clarity aspects of the mind. The world of phenomena that we perceive, the things that appear to us, come from the clarity of mind. Although the mind is empty, we experience different things, the phenomena of relative reality. Where do these phenomena come from? The mind has many different habitual tendencies. Due to these habitual tendencies, we perceive the various phenomena of our experience. Thus these experiences depend on the mind. They are projections of the mind. They are, concerning their nature, empty.

The mantra ends with the syllables ཨྩྭ་ཀཾ་ ATMAKA (pronounced EMAKO) ཧྷཾ་ HAM. These syllables mean that one should let one's mind rest in its own natural state, in accordance with the two aspects of emptiness and clarity.

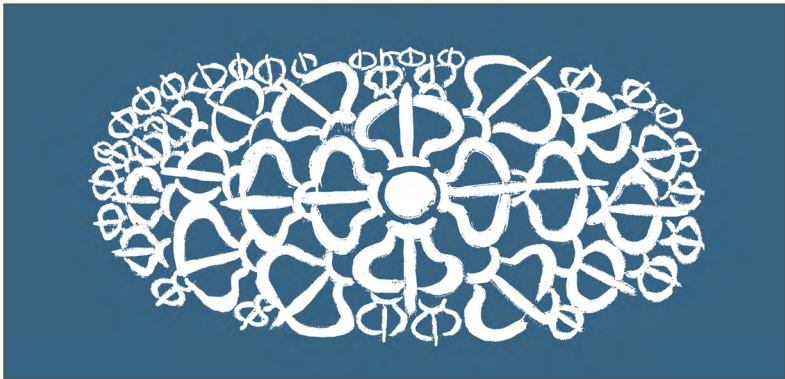
The world of phenomena, that we experience as human beings, dissolves into emptiness; this includes both the physical world with all its objects as well as all living beings, humans, animals and everything that lives and breathes, including ourselves. Then we let the mind rest in its natural state. Here one is not reflecting on the above-described explanation of the mantra.

## DEVELOPMENT PHASE (*Kyerim*)



### VAJRA PROTECTION CIRCLE AND PALACE

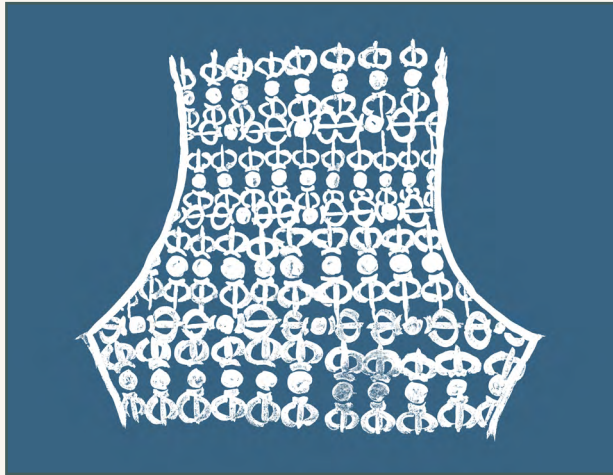
From emptiness the sound of the syllable HUNG spontaneously resounds, the essence of which is Dharmakaya.<sup>5</sup> This gives rise to the vajra base with a double vajra in the middle, from which many half vajras spread out in a circular pattern. They form a dense, scale-like **vajra ground**.<sup>6</sup> They look like white rock crystal. (picture 1)



Picture 1: Round vajra ground (Tib. *sa shi* སགཞི་)

5. The syllable is not visualized here; we imagine only the sound.
6. The vajras become smaller towards the edge.

The vajra ground is surrounded by a circular **vajra fence** (similar to a house wall) consisting of vertical and horizontal vajra rows.<sup>7</sup> The outer shape of the vajra fence looks like a bell. (picture 2)



Picture 2: Round vajra fence of vertical and horizontal vajra rows (Tib. *ra wa* རྗེ་ར་བ་)

Above the vajra fence is a **vajra tent**, which hangs down laterally. On the top of the tent is a double vajra, plus one tip of the double vajra pointing upwards vertically. Within the hub of the double vajra sits our root guru.

From the double vajra on the top of the tent, half vajras spread out in a circular pattern (similar to the vajra ground) and form the shape of a roof. Around the entire roof of the vajra tent, vajra garlands and vajra chains alternately hang down along the edge. (picture 3)

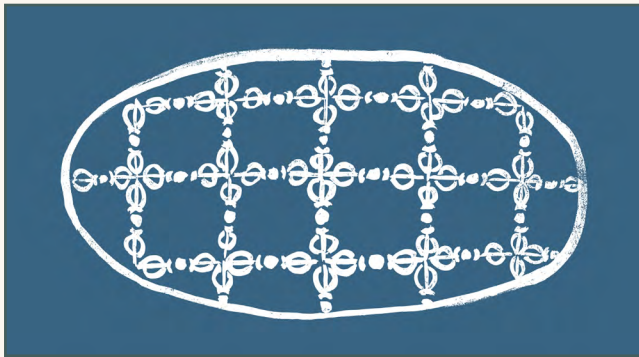
---

7. First vertical, then horizontal, then vertical again, etc.



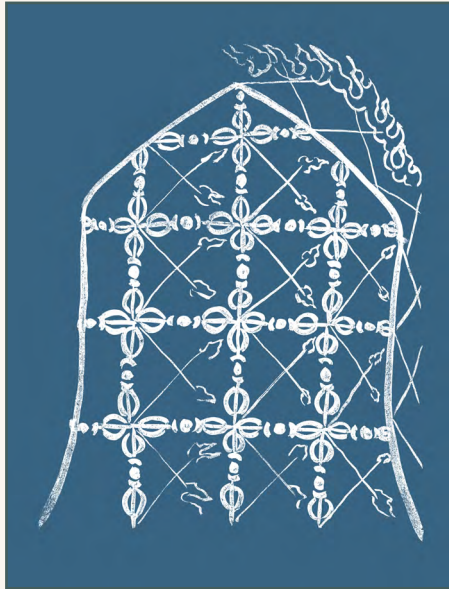
Picture 3: Round vajra tent with garlands and chains (Tib. *dorje gur* འོ་རྩེ་གུར་)

Inside the vajra tent, in the upper part, there is a vajra canopy hanging down. It consists of individual vajras, which joined together result in a square pattern. (picture 4)



Picture 4: Vajra canopy with a square pattern (Tib. *dorje ladre* འོ་རྩེ་ལ་དྲེ་)

The vajra ground, fence and tent are covered by a **vajra net**. Like the canopy, the net is formed from individual vajras, which together result in a square pattern. Each side of the square consists of one vajra. At the points where the vajras connect together, four vajras from the four directions meet. At each of these connection points, two arrows are attached. They are directed outwards, one diagonally downwards and one diagonally upwards, and they are so long that they cross with the arrows of the next connection point. At each arrowhead blazes a white fire and this covers the protection circle completely. Viewed from the outside, the structure looks like a huge, white, blazing fire wall. (picture 5)



Picture 5: Vajra net with burning arrowheads forms a fire wall (Tib. *dorje net* རྡོ་རྗེ་མེ་བོ་མེ་བོ་)

The size of the vajra protection circle we can visualize is arbitrary, either large or small according to our own wishes (e.g. small as a finger or as big as the world with infinite beings within the vajra protection circle).

#### THE SYMBOLISM OF THE VAJRA PROTECTION CIRCLE

Seven different qualities are associated with the vajra: Its nature is indestructible, unchangeable, etc. The vajra protection circle symbolizes the dharmadhatu wisdom of the buddhas. It is assigned to the empty aspect, while the other wisdoms (the mirror-like, the equalizing, the discriminating and the all-accomplishing wisdoms) emerge from the clarity aspect. (Emptiness itself is indestructible, because from the beginning it is primordial emptiness.)

In the center of the double vajra, in the middle of the vajra ground, is the white **syllable DRUM**. (picture 6)



Picture 6: White syllable DRUM

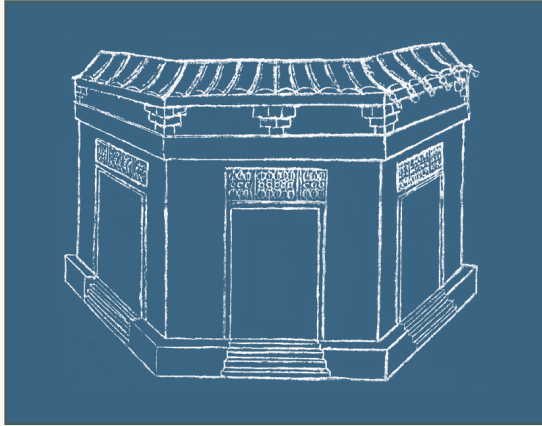
The syllable DRUM transforms into a **crystal palace**. The ground floor of the palace is square and rests on the double vajra of the vajra ground. On each side of the palace is a gateway with a portal and a canopy that is supported by four pillars. Below the gates the outermost tips of the double vajra can be seen. Above the ground floor is a large roof terrace, in the middle of which arises a small pagoda-like palace of light, with an octagonal, curved canopy roof and a *sertok* on top of it.<sup>8</sup> The palace is decorated with countless jewels, ornaments, offerings, offering goddesses and auspicious symbols. (pictures 7a, b, c)



Picture 7a: Crystal palace of White Tara

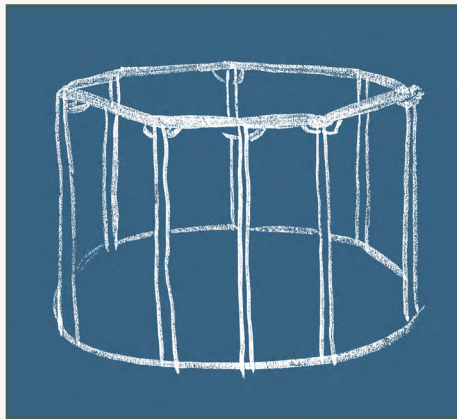
---

8. The *sertok* is an ornament that can be seen on most monasteries and stupas. It symbolizes a bell, lotus flower, vase and gem.



Picture 7b: Walls of the palace

Inside the palace stand **eight pillars**; the cornerstones of the upper, octagonal palace, which support the roof structure, rest on these pillars. Even if it is said the palace is made from crystal, we should not imagine it solid, but made of light. (picture 8)



Picture 8: Eight pillars that carry the canopy roof

In the center of the palace arises a white eight-petalled lotus flower from the white syllable རྩ PAM. (picture 9)



Picture 9: White eight-petalled lotus flower with the syllable PAM

On the eight-petalled lotus flower arises the syllable ཨ A. It transforms into a flat, white full moon disc. (picture 10)



Picture 10: White moon disc with the syllable AH

On this disc appears a white ॐ TAM, which transforms into a white utpala flower, marked by a TAM. The white TAM on the white utpala flower symbolizes the true nature of our own consciousness. (picture 11)



Picture 11: White utpala flower marked by TAM with the white syllable TAM

From the TAM radiates five-colored predominantly white light that offers the buddhas and bodhisattvas a variety of offerings on the tips of the light rays. The light then radiates back with the blessing of the buddhas and bodhisattvas and gathers within the TAM and the utpala flower. From there it radiates again, this time to the six realms, where it accomplishes the benefit of all beings, eliminates negativities and obstacles, prevents premature death and plants the seeds for the realization of Tara. The light then returns and gathers in the syllable TAM and the utpala flower; we ourselves are then transformed into Arya Tara, the Noble Liberator.

## CONTEMPLATION OF WHITE TARA

### I. APPROACH (Tib. *nyenpa*): VISUALIZATION OF THE MANIFESTATION OF TARA

Her body is white like crystal, radiates five-colored light and is full of grace and beauty. Her face radiates great peace and she smiles. She has seven wisdom eyes, three on her face and one each on the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet. One part of her black hair is tied up and the rest falls over her shoulders and neck. She holds her right hand in the gesture of supreme generosity. In her left hand, at the level of her heart, between her thumb and ring finger, she holds the stem of a white, wide-open, hundred-petalled utpala flower, which unfolds next to her ear. She is adorned with celestial flowers and ornaments made of white pearls and set with different gemstones: a diadem, earrings, a short, medium and long necklace (around the neck, to the heart and to the navel), bracelets and anklets and a belt with bells. Her upper garment is made of finest white and around her legs she wears a long rainbow-colored silk skirt and on top a short red silk skirt. She sits in the vajra posture and the disc of the full moon supports her back.

## 2. CLOSE APPROACH (Tib. *nyewar nyenpa*): CONTEMPLATION OF THE SYLLABLES

In our forehead there is a white OM, in her throat a red AH and in the lower part of her heart a blue HUNG. In her heart center, on a white eight-petalled lotus flower and a moon disc, stands a white TAM.<sup>9</sup>

## 3. ACCOMPLISHMENT (Tib. *drubpa*): VISUALIZATION OF THE WISDOM ASPECT (Tib. *yeshepa*)

From the TAM radiates five-colored light to the buddha realms which invites the wisdom aspect (*yeshepa*) to appear in the form of White Tara in the space in front of us. The recitation BENZA SAMADZA etc. and the related mudra serve to summon the wisdom aspect. From the TAM in our heart, different colored offering goddesses radiate and offer the eight different vajra-offerings to Tara in front of us.

1. ARGAM White offering goddesses bring water to clean her mouth.
2. PADYAM Red offering goddesses bring water to bathe her feet.
3. PUPE White offering goddesses bring flowers to adorn her head.

---

9. The syllables OM AH HUNG are located a little bit before the point where the central channel would run, approximately in the middle between the forehead and the central channel. The lotus flower and the TAM are located directly at the point where the central channel would run.

4. DUPE Dark blue offering goddesses bring incense for her to smell.
5. ALOKE Pink offering goddesses bring lights for her to see.
6. GENDHE Green offering goddesses bring scented water for her body.
7. NEWIDYE Red offering goddesses bring food for her to taste.
8. SHABDA Green offering goddesses bring music for her to hear.

After the offering, the offering goddesses return back into our hearts. We request that Tara grants us her blessing. During the mantra recitation DZA HUNG BAM HO and the related mudra, the wisdom aspect of Tara merges with us. With the following syllables NYI SU ME PAR THIM we become inseparable from her (no longer different). This third part refers to the aspect of the realization, the inseparability with Tara. We have come closer to the realization of Tara.

#### THE MEANING OF THE • DZA HUNG BAM HO • MANTRA

There are several explanations. The most common is DZA is the iron hook wearer, HUNG is the lasso wearer, BAM is the iron chain wearer and HO is the bells wearer. This explanation refers to the wrathful yidam aspects, e.g. Mahakala, Dorje Phagmo.

For the peaceful yidam aspects like White Tara, etc., the meaning is as follows: DZA is the invitation of the wisdom aspect (*yeshepa*) of Tara, HUNG is our request to her to truly take a seat in the space before us,

BAM is the merging of the wisdom aspect with ourselves (*damtsigpa*) and HO is the work full of compassion for the benefit of all beings.

#### 4. GREAT ACCOMPLISHMENT (Tib. *drubpa chenpo*): CONTEMPLATION OF THE EMPOWERMENT

Again from the TAM in our heart light radiates to the buddha realms and invites the empowerment deities of the five families with their consorts to appear in the space in front of us. The deities carry auspicious flowers and their consorts carry vessels with nectar. In the center is the white Buddha **Vairocana**, in the east the blue Buddha **Akshobya**, in the south the yellow Buddha **Ratnasambhava**, in the west the red Buddha **Amitabha** and in the north the green Buddha **Amogasiddhi**. Again from the TAM in our heart, offering goddesses radiate and offer the various offerings just like before. Then the offering goddesses return and dissolve into our heart.

Next is the recitation of the mantra SARVA TATHAGATA etc. Here, we request the Tathagatas (the five buddhas with their consorts) to give us the blessing of initiation. They grant the transmission. The five male buddhas scatter wonderful flowers on us and recite auspicious words while their consorts perform the “vase empowerment” by pouring nectar from their blessing vases over us. This nectar enters through our crown, fills our body, and eliminates our conceptual and emotional negativities as well as the tendency for both. Some of the nectar overflows at the crown and transforms there into Buddha

Amitabha, who now crowns our head. The five buddhas and their consorts merge into Buddha Amitabha.

This aspect of the practice is the fourth part and is termed as great realization and means that the inspiration of Tara has become very strong.

## OFFERINGS AND PRAISES

Here multicolored goddesses radiate again from the TAM in our heart and offer the eight different offerings (water, flowers, etc.) to ourselves as Tara. Then the offering goddesses sing praises for us and return into our heart.

## VISUALIZATION OF THE APPEARANCE

### CLEAR VISUALIZATION OF WHITE TARA

(Tib.: *ku sal tab*)

To get the image of all details of Tara's appearance as clear as possible, we gradually focus upon the different details. We start from the inside and go slowly to the outside and then back again in the opposite direction.

First we focus our attention on the TAM inside our body, the moon disc, etc., then on the different parts of the body, the face, the jewel

crown, the lotus flower wreath, the long, narrow eyes (eyes like the buddhas), the body, its white color, the jewelry on her ears, neck, hips, etc., on the garments, the white silk scarf, the silk blouse, the posture, the moon disc and the lotus. It follows the crystal palace, the square ground plan, the gates, the vajra fence, the tent, the canopy, the net and the covering fire.

Then we focus our attention in the opposite direction, first on the fire wall, vajra net, tent, etc., up to the syllable TAM in our heart. Or we start from the top with Buddha Amitabha above our head, then down to the face, body, position of the legs, moon disc up to the lotus and then up again.

When focusing on individual details we initially neglect the overall visualization. If we succeed in having a clear vision of one detail (e.g. of the face, of her upper body or the palace, etc.), then we try to focus our concentration on this detail for a longer time to develop stability in meditation in this way.

Then in turn we try to visualize the general appearance. The vision of Tara should become familiar to us like our own house (by looking at it from the outside we already know what it looks like inside).

For a beginner it is hard to immediately be able to visualize or *see* the form of Tara clearly. The attempt would lead to considerable tension. Therefore we should practice step by step, getting to know the individual sections of the development phase slowly, allowing our abilities to mature. Then we will be gradually able to imagine the entire visual-

ization clearly, precisely and with stability. This visualization method is a kind of shamatha (Tib. *shinay*) meditation within the Vajrayana tradition.

## IDENTIFICATION: DEVELOPMENT OF THE YIDAM PRIDE (Tib. *nga gyal tenpa*)

No matter how clear or unclear our visualization of Tara is, we imagine to be Tara herself, to possess her qualities and to have overcome our difficulties and problems. We are Tara, identical with her, and we let our mind rest relaxed and uncontrived knowing we are truly Tara. By identifying with Tara and her qualities, we receive the blessings of her body, her speech and her mind and we gradually develop her realization. The identification with the yidam is a method to achieve buddhahood. It is applied in the various yidam practices.

## CONTEMPLATING PURITY (Tib. *dag dren gompa*)

Tara appears in **female** form. This symbolizes that she is the mother of all the buddhas and the embodiment of Prajnaparamita, the perfected wisdom of all the buddhas.

The **white color** of her body symbolizes that she is completely free of the two types of obscurations as well as any predisposition to them:

- Free from obscurations, which are caused by feelings (e.g. free from attachment to an ego or eternal self);

- Free from conceptual obscurations (e.g. free from attachment to a fundamental existence of external objects or entities)
- Free from the tendency to these two obscurations (free from the repeated emergence of these two obscurations).

She has **one face**: This symbolizes that from the point of view of absolute reality all phenomena are of the same taste.<sup>10</sup>

The **three eyes** of her face symbolize that she has recognized the nature of reality through the three gates of liberation:

- That the essence of all tangible phenomena is emptiness;
- That the emptiness itself is free from characteristics such as shape, color, etc.;
- That the emptiness is the nature of one's own mind from the very beginning.

Her **hair is tied up** as a symbol that all conceptual extremes from the point of view of the Dharmakaya are experienced as equivalent.

She wears a **jewel crown**. This symbolizes the five buddha families.

She has **two arms**. These mean that the two truths, the relative and absolute truth, are not separated from each other or contradictory but they simultaneous.<sup>11</sup>

---

10. This refers to the essential emptiness of phenomena.

11. All tangible phenomena are summarized under the term *relative truth*, and the *absolute truth* means that all appearing phenomena are empty in their essence.

Her right hand rests in the **gesture of supreme generosity**. This symbolizes that she enables all beings to have the ordinary and highest realizations (*siddhis*). On the relative level she fulfills all wishes; on the absolute level she leads to buddhahood.

In her left hand, she holds her **thumb and ring finger together**. This symbolizes the inseparable union of wisdom and skillful means. The **three outstretched fingers** symbolize the Three Jewels: Buddha, Dharma, Sangha.

Between her ring finger and the thumb of her left hand she holds the stalk of a **white utpala flower**. This symbolizes that she has abandoned everything that has to be abandoned (negativity and confusion), and that she has realized everything that has to be realized (all qualities of enlightenment).

She has **two legs**. These symbolize that she is free from the two extremes of samsara and nirvana. Because she has actualized the realization of the Dharmakaya, she does not dwell in the extreme of samsara. Yet because she has realized non-conceptual compassion, she does not dwell in the extreme of passive nirvana either.

The further **four eyes** in the palms of her hands and the soles of her feet symbolize the four immeasurable virtues. With immeasurable love, compassion, joy and equanimity she acts for the benefit of all beings.

She wears **many jewels**. These symbolize that she has developed the highest qualities and acts for the benefit of all beings.

Her back is supported by a **white moon disc**. This symbolizes that she is free from all conditional joys and disturbing emotions and abides in the happiness of samadhi.

She sits fully upright in the **vajra posture**. This symbolizes that she abides in the so-called vajra-like (undistracted, one-pointed) samadhi.

She sits on a **white moon disc**. This symbolizes the absolute enlightened mind.

The **lotus flower** below her symbolizes the relative enlightened mind. She acts unceasingly for the benefit of all beings without being afflicted by their faults.

Her body radiates **five-colored light**. This symbolizes the five wisdoms.

1. The dharmadhatu wisdom: the wisdom of emptiness, which is the basis of everything.
2. The mirror-like wisdom: all phenomena are perceived simultaneously without attachment like in a mirror that reflects all phenomena simultaneously.
3. The equalizing wisdom: all judgmental concepts are completely purified and eliminated.
4. The discriminating wisdom: this relates to buddha activity. Buddhas perceive the entire personality of a being.<sup>12</sup>

---

12. They recognize cosmic correlations, e.g. of past, present, and future.

5. The all-accomplishing wisdom: this again refers to buddha activity, and specifically to the spontaneous recognition.<sup>13</sup>

**Amitabha** above her head symbolizes that he is the head of her family and her teacher.

To counteract any emerging attachments to the visualized form of Tara, we bring to mind the symbolic meaning.

## THE REPETITIONS

### VISUALIZATION OF THE WHEEL

The visualization of the eight-spoked wheel has already been described. The blue syllable HUNG is in the lower part of our heart, in the upper part of the heart is the eight-petalled white lotus and on top of that is the flat, white moon disc. On the moon disc lies a white, eight-spoked wheel with an inner and outer rim.

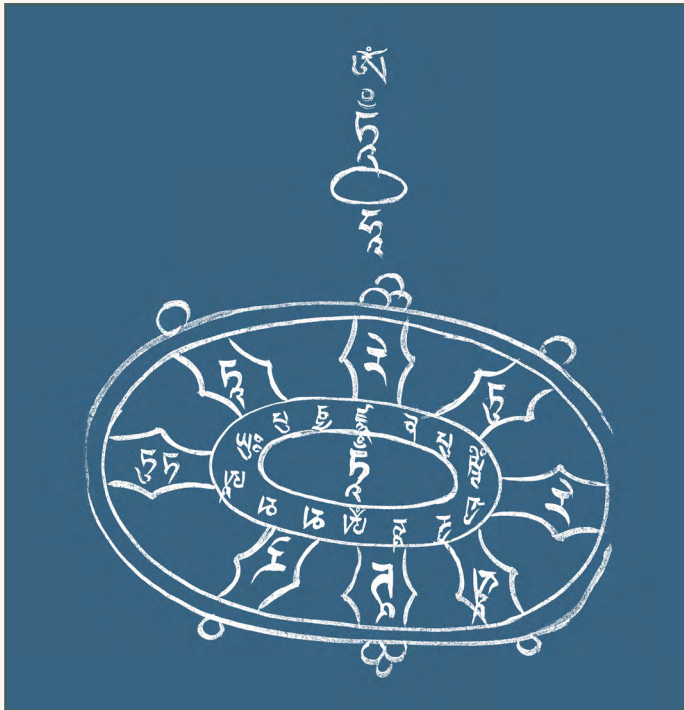
Above the cavity of the wheel hub the white syllable TAM hovers vertically. Above the syllable TAM, the white syllable OM hovers like a flying bird in the sky. Below the syllable TAM, half within the wheel hub, the white syllable HA hovers (it just barely does not touch the moon disc). On the eight spokes of the wheel stand the syllables of the mantra TA RE TU TA RE TU RE SO. On the inner rim stand the

---

13. For example, what is beneficial for individuals.

syllables of the long-life mantra OM MA MA A YU PU NYE JNA NA PUK TING KU RU HA.

The syllables on the rim of the hub and the spokes are arranged clockwise, to be read from the inside and starting from the front. All syllables shine like white pearls of light and do not move. The syllables in the wheel hub are aligned in two directions: OM forward, TAM to the right, HA forward. (picture 12)



Picture 12: Eight-spoked wheel with mantra syllables

## PRACTICE OF REPETITIONS

### Cessation Repetition

(Tib. *gogpā depa*)

During this “repetition” we let the breath flow naturally in and out without affecting it. We focus our attention on each syllable of the mantra. We use the mantra syllables as a support for the shinay meditation. Our concentration focuses gradually on the individual syllables. First on the TAM, which hovers over the wheel hub in the heart of White Tara. Then we focus on the other mantra syllables, which stand on the wheel hub: MA MA AYU PU NYE JNA NA PUK TING KU RU HA. Next we focus on the OM, which hovers above the TAM. Then we focus on the syllables on the wheel spokes, first on the syllable TA in front or in the east of the wheel. Then we focus on the syllables RE TUT TA RE TU RE SO. And finally we focus on the syllable HA, which hovers half within the wheel hub.

We try to focus our attention as long as possible on each syllable, ignoring other thoughts. If we have little time, we use the TAM as the object of shinay, as well as the OM; we do not use the individual syllables on the spokes, but then we do use the HA again. We do not visualize the syllables on the wheel hub in this case, but we only imagine that the mantra is there. The term “cessation repetition” means that when applying this practice, all thoughts cease, which is similar to shinay meditation.

## Vajra Repetition

(Tib.: *dorje depa*)

### 1. The Threefold Cleansing of the Breath

The posture should be straight. The hands are closed in fists, with the thumbs at the base of the ring fingers and enclosed by the fingers. Both fists rest on their respective knees. We breathe out through our nose slowly but forcefully three times. We slowly expel all air from our lungs and simultaneously spread our fingers outwards. With the first exhalation we expel all obstacles and negativities etc. from previous lives, with the second exhalation we expel all obstacles and negativities etc. from this life and with the third exhalation we expel all tendencies that could bring obstacles and negativities etc. in future lives.

### 2. Holding the breath

The practice of vajra repetition is connected with breathing techniques. One concentrates one's attention on the breath; the breath is used as the object of shinay. The word "vajra" refers here to the wisdom winds or the wisdom breath. In the breath there are wisdom and karmic winds, of which the karmic winds usually carry the most weight. By applying the vajra repetition the wisdom breath is strengthened. Basically, there are three different breathing techniques: Bum Chen ("Large Vase"), Bar Lung ("Medium Breath") and Jam Lung ("Gentle Breath"). Here during the vajra repetition the Bar Lung or the Jam Lung is used.

### 3. Bar Lung

During the Bar Lung method, we breathe in through the nostrils and press the breath from above slightly downwards, into the abdominal cavity, so that the lower abdomen is slightly curved outwards. Holding the air in the lower part, we continue to breathe into the upper part of the abdomen. During the Jam Lung, the soft form of breathing technique, the air is not pressed from the top down, but we only simply push the lower abdomen slightly outwards and breathe without forcing the breath.

### 4. The Practice of Vajra Repetition

First, we hold the above-described Bar Lung. From the white syllable TAM in the heart flows white light with the breath through both nostrils outwards and merges with the space in front of us. After exhaling we abide in emptiness. When breathing in, white light flows along with the breath through the nostrils back into the syllable TAM in the heart. At this stage we hold our breath for a moment and focus one-pointedly on the syllable TAM. Then we breathe out again: the white light flows again with the breath outwards, merges with the space in front of us and we rest for a short time in emptiness. We repeat this method several times (3x or 21x or in retreat one mala length).

### Radiation and Absorption (Tib.: *tro dü depa*)

Then we come to the repetition of the mantra combined with the visualization of the radiation and absorption of light. From the syllable

TAM and the syllables of the wheel in the heart radiates white light. The light can be either five-colored light — as it is explained in a commentary by Chagme Rinpoche — or only white light, as explained here (in a commentary by Jamgon Kongtrul Lodro Thaye). Both are correct.

### 1. The First Radiating

The rays of white light fill the interior of our body and purify all negative karmic tendencies. The light pervades all areas of this world and of the universe, and it transforms them into the pure land of Tara and transforms all beings into White Taras. It gathers the essence of the elements of water, fire, earth and wind. With the healing and strengthening force, it radiates back in a nectar-like substance of white light and merges into our body and with the syllable TAM. This grants us the ability of a stable consciousness, a vajra-like, lasting health and protection from the dangers of the four elements.

### 2. The Second Radiating

Again light radiates from the TAM and the syllables in the heart, pervades the universe and reaches the Yogis, Indra, Brahma, Vishnu and the Vidjadharas, who have realized the siddhis of long life. The radiant light both increases their qualities and also gathers their abilities in the form of light, then radiating back as a nectar-like substance, merging into our body and into the syllable TAM. It grants us the same abilities that have already been described in the first radiating.

### 3. The Third Radiating

Again light radiates to the pure realms of the buddhas and bodhisattvas, makes countless offerings to their bodies, speech and minds with our request to act for the benefit of all beings. The light radiates back with Tara's inspiration, her compassionate understanding, wisdom, ability, activity and especially the endowment for the realization of long life. It therefore grants us her excellent qualities and siddhis. This wonderful inspiration inflames the mantra syllables in our heart. (They shine in white light).

We visualize the radiation and absorption of light during the subsequent mantra recitation. All beings appear as Tara and recite the mantra simultaneously and seemingly with one voice.

THE MEANING OF THE TARA MANTRA
OM: Five kinds of wisdoms (or the five kayas)
TARE: Tara
TUT TARE: Come quickly and with strength for the benefit of all beings. Remove all sufferings and fears and protect us.
TURE SOHA: The blessing stays constantly with us and does not leave us.

## LONG LIFE PRACTICE

Above our head sits Amitabha, the Buddha of Infinite Light. We request from him the siddhi of long life. From his heart radiates five-colored light to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, which then radiates back with the realization of long life in the form of nectar-like light. It fills the begging bowl in his hands, overflows and fills our body completely through the crown. At the same time we recite the mantra: OM TA RE TUT TA RE TU RE MA MA AYU PUNYE JNANA PUKTING KU RU SO HA.

## PURIFICATION OF THE MISTAKES OF THE PRACTICE

Here various mantras are recited to purify the mistakes that have arisen during the meditation of Tara. The 14 vowels and 32 consonants of the Sanskrit alphabet, the 100-syllable mantra of Dorje Sempa and the Ye-Dharma mantra. We recite all mantras one after another as if they were one long mantra.

The recitation of the vowels purifies the imperfections of speech, any mistakes during the mantra recitation, unclear pronunciation, etc.

The recitation of the consonants purifies the imperfections in the visualization of Tara.

The 100-syllable mantra of Dorje Sempa purifies the imperfections of mental concentration during the meditative absorption.

The Ye-Dharma mantra serves to stabilize the meditation results, so that realization and inspiration stay with us. The visualization reinforces the identification with Tara, the mantra recitation strengthens her speech and the meditation strengthens the inspiration of Tara's body, speech and mind.

## COMPLETION PHASE (*Dzogrim*)



After the mantra recitation follows the dissolution phase of the visualization.

The entire world and all beings, who had become the mandala of Arya Tara, dissolve into light and merge with the vajra protection circle. This then dissolves into the palace, which in turn dissolves into ourselves as Tara. We then dissolve into light, step by step from top and from the bottom simultaneously towards the middle and merge with the seed syllable TAM in the heart.

The TAM dissolves from the bottom to the top, first the A-chung (the hook below) into the TA, the TA into the crescent moon above, this into the *tigle* (drop or seed) and the *tigle* then merges into a *nada*.<sup>14</sup> This finally dissolves into emptiness.

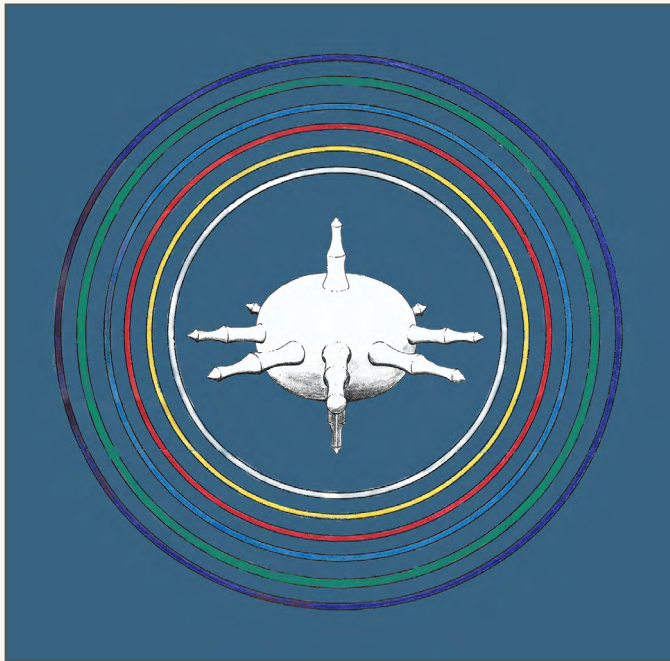
---

14. Sanskrit *nada* literally means "sparkling, flashing, flaring or flickering" of light)

## COMPLETION PHASE WITH FORM

### MEDITATION OF THE PROTECTIVE SPHERE

From emptiness a **sphere of white light with ten (outer) hollow spokes** of light appears in an instant. These spokes of light include eight horizontal and two vertical (one vertically upwards and one downwards). The sphere turns clockwise so fast that contours cannot be seen. (picture 13)



Picture 13: The protection sphere with spheres of light in 6 colors

At the center of this hollow, wide extensive sphere appears a many-petalled, **white lotus flower**, on top of which is a **moon disc**, and on which we ourselves appear as **Noble White Tara** with all her ornaments and attributes.

Above our head sits **Buddha Amitabha**. In our heart is a white lotus flower with a moon disc and the white, eight-spoked wheel with the syllables on it. At the inner edge of the sphere of light, in front of each opening of the hollow spokes, floating freely in space, the individual mantra syllables are arranged. Above us is the syllable OM, then in the middle, horizontal part, beginning at the front spoke and arranged clockwise, the syllables TA RE TUT TA RE TU RE SO appear and below us is the syllable HA. The syllables are to be read from the inside; they are white and stand still inside the sphere, which turns very fast.

In the protection sphere are the beings to whom we want to grant protection. They appear in the form of White Tara: our spiritual friends, the teachers above us, male friends to the right, female friends to the left and animals below. All beings within the protective sphere are identical with the White Tara and in their hearts is also the white wheel and the syllable TAM.

From the TAM in our heart and from the TAM of all Taras in the protection circle, light radiates in different colors and forms further spheres of light around the protective sphere:

**White, crystal-colored light** radiates for the benefit of beings. It pervades the world systems and its inhabitants and transforms them into

pure lands and into emanations of White Tara, respectively. The light radiates to the buddha realms and makes offerings to the buddhas and bodhisattvas. It radiates back with the essence of their blessing and their realization, and especially with the siddhi of pacifying activity. One part of the light merges with the syllable TAM in our heart and the hearts of the Taras within the protective sphere. Thus, to us and all we want to protect, the ability of pacifying activity is granted (elimination of diseases, neuroses, fears, etc.) The excess light forms a white, protective sphere of light around the protection sphere to a distance of approximately span of outstretched arm.. This process is repeated with successively radiating lights.

**Yellow, golden-colored light** radiates from the syllables at our hearts to the buddha realms, makes offerings and radiates back with the ability of the increasing activity (the first five Paramitas and the siddhi of long life). The excess part of the light forms a yellow sphere of light around the white light sphere to a distance of one span. The distances between the individual light spheres are filled with dark blue utpala blossoms.

**Red, ruby-colored light** radiates from the seed syllables at our hearts to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, makes offerings, and radiates back into the seed syllables with the ability of the controlling and wish-fulfilling activity. The excess light forms a red light sphere.

**Steel blue light** like the morning sky radiates from the seed syllables to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, makes offerings and radiates back into our hearts with the ability of the wrathful and destroying activity

(e.g. elimination of negativities). The excess light forms a blue light sphere.

**Green, emerald-colored light** radiates from the seed syllables to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, makes offerings and radiates back into our hearts with the achievement of all activities. Here all activities, the pacifying, the increasing, the controlling and the destroying are interconnected. The excess light forms a green protective sphere around the other spheres.

**Dark blue, sapphire-colored light** radiates to the buddhas and bodhisattvas, makes offerings and radiates back into our hearts with the ability of the body, speech and mind of the buddhas, and especially the ability to consolidate our existing qualities so that they do not diminish anymore. The excess light forms a dark blue protection sphere around the other spheres.

During the following mantra recitation, we focus on the protection sphere and its colors. The protection sphere is completely stable and impenetrable.

We look at the entire visualization, the protection sphere and the light spheres, etc., simultaneously. We recognize that the entire structure has no real substance, but is only an illusion, such as a reflection in the mirror or the reflection of the moon in water, or like a mirage in the desert, so that we do not cling to any element as real during the visualization. The visualization is very clear, and yet at the same time in its essence empty (without self-nature). We let the mind relax and

rest in the essence of “supreme wisdom”. We should stay as long as possible in this state without being dull or becoming attached. If we become disturbed during the meditation, such as by sounds we hear outside and within ourselves, like the sound of people talking or of our own breath, we should recognize these sounds as the true nature, the natural sound of the mantra of Tara, as the unity of sound and emptiness. We imagine that these sounds are like an echo. They are audible, but at the same time without any real essence or reality. We should let the completely relaxed mind rest in this awareness, while we continue to recite the mantra, very quietly, by moving the tongue only just a little.

When we have reached the end of the mantra recitation, we dissolve the visualization in one instant and abide relaxed in the meditation of emptiness. We practice the meditation of the protection sphere to protect other beings and ourselves from all kinds of dangers and obstacles.

## LIFE NAIL

(Tib. *tse pur dabpa*)

In one instant we appear as White Tara. We are sitting on a white lotus flower and a moon disc. The interior of our body is completely empty and hollow. Here we do not imagine the syllables in the heart, the lotus and the moon disc, but instead our body is in straight upright posture. Inside our body is the central channel; it is clear and transparent like a white crystal tube and is approximately the diam-

eter of a thumb. It extends from just below the crown of the head to just above the secret place. There is one thigle (Skr. *bindu*) at each end of the central channel. At the upper opening is a white seed (*thigle*), whose essence is happiness or great joy. At the lower end is a red seed, whose essence is warmth and heat. The thigles are the size of the central channel, so that they fit exactly into the openings. In the middle of the central channel, at the level of our heart, is the white syllable TAM. We visualize ourselves in this form as Tara and try to stabilize this mental image. Then we begin the practice of the so-called vase-breathing.

### Vase-Breathing

In order to perform the vase-breathing correctly, we should practice the meditation of the development phase of yidam practice for a long time. It would not be good to perform a practice like this right at the beginning, because difficulties with the inner winds may arise. First we have to develop the ability to deal with the winds, and only then are we able to practice with the thigles in the channels.<sup>15</sup> One way to perform this practice now would be by the use of the gentle breath.

### The Gentle Breath

The body posture should be straight with the hands on the knees, closed into a fist, with the back of the hand upwards. We breathe out through the nose slowly and forcefully and simultaneously spread the

---

15. Please ask your lama about those methods.

fingers outwards. We breathe in and hold the breath gently in order to push the belly outwards. We do not manipulate the breath in a strong way, but only push the belly slightly outwards, without pressing the air downwards. While we are breathing in, holding the breath and exhaling again, we focus on the white seed syllable TAM at the level of our heart. We imagine that blue and red lights radiate from the TAM and fill the central channel.<sup>16</sup> This we perform three times, followed by "HA shaking". At the end we dissolve the visualization into emptiness, and rest there for a moment.

## COMPLETION PHASE WITHOUT FORM

The second part of the completion phase is without form or characteristics. It is the meditation on the basic nature of the mind. We thereby take up the Mahamudra path, the so-called four yogas:

### ONE-POINTEDNESS

This means that the mind rests in itself. It is the concentration on a peaceful state of mind, therefore shamata (Tib. *shinay*) meditation. The four yogas are each divided into three levels, and each level must be completed: the lower or lesser, the middle and the higher or greater level. If we practice *shinay* or shamata meditation here in the right

---

16. The blue and red lights do not mix but rather appear like a mixture of red and blue wool fibers.

way, we also develop devotion for the lama. Through the blessing of the lama, through devotion, through effort and through the meditation of the development phase, etc., you pass the stages of the first yoga and come to a point of view that is called vipassana (Tib. *lhagthong*). Thus one has reached the first level of the second yoga.

## FREE OF CHARACTERISTICS

Buddha describes the meaning of this yoga when he says: the nature of mind is neither existent nor non-existent. It has no characteristics whatsoever. The basic nature of mind has no color, shape, etc. It does not have such characteristics. Nor is it “non-existent”, because the nature of the mind is the basis of the experience of samsara and nirvana. So the nature of mind is free of extremes or theories such as existence or non-existence. In the state of *lhagthong* meditation we perceive the true nature of mind directly, as it is, without imaginations and extremes. When we have gone through the three levels of the second yoga, we reach the first stage of the third yoga.

## ONE TASTE

At that time we realize that everything we experience as “outside”, the phenomena of the physical, outer world (our entire environment), is only a projection of our own mind. The habitual tendencies of our mind create the phenomena that we experience. As long as we have not recognized the nature of mind as being free of any extreme modes

of existence, we cling to external things as truly existent. However, if we understand the nature of mind, then we recognize that external things are not truly existent, but appear only from the mind itself, while their essence is emptiness. If we realize the understanding that everything is only a projection of the mind and depends on the habitual tendencies of the mind, then we experience that the mind merges with the phenomena which we perceive. We no longer distinguish the outer, relative world from our own mind: both are mixed into one, and thus become one “taste”. Then follows the fourth yoga.

### BEYOND MEDITATION

Here there is no longer any difference between the formal meditation session and the phase outside the meditation. In previous phases of the yogas, there is the distinction between the formal practice and the conduct of the so-called daily life. Here at this stage all our experiences are perceived as manifestations of the dharmakaya. We do not meditate anymore and there is also no more meditation practice applied. This state of “beyond meditation” that is described as the fourth yoga, we call buddha state or enlightenment. Here we spontaneously have the ability to act for the benefit of others. However, this state is not identical with the particular state of a buddha like Buddha Shakyamuni. There are twelve very special qualities of such a buddha, such as the turning of the dharma wheel, etc. Although we also speak of buddhahood or enlightenment at the above-described fourth stage, this is not the stage of a perfect buddha; there are differences.

There might be people who think that they have reached the state of a buddha or great mahasiddha. Such views and ideas are projections of the mind. If someone expresses that he is a buddha or mahasiddha, then we should ask him for evidence.<sup>17</sup> People who express themselves in this way, without having the corresponding qualities, are creating confusion. However, when we are sure that someone has actually attained buddhahood, then this is our own very personal idea.

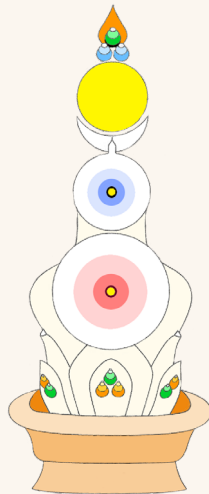
---

17. Through demonstration of a miracle and the power of his realization.

## TORMA OFFERING



At the torma offering we first put up a white *chog dum* torma. The lower part of the torma symbolizes an open, white lotus flower, the upper part a closed one. The torma is round and ornamented with flowers. This description comes from the First Karmapa Dūsum Khyenpa. If we do not have a *chog dum* torma (picture 15), we can replace it with cakes, fruits or the like.



Picture 13: *Chok dum* torma of White Tara

We appear in the form of White Tara, with the syllables OM at the forehead, AH at the throat and HUNG in the heart.

We recite the mantra of Amrita Kundali: OM BENZA AMRITA KUNDALI HANA HANA HUNG PHE. Amrita Kundali is a wrathful deity. He is green, holds a club with a double dorje in his right hand and a bell in his left. The blessing of his mantra eliminates our emotional defilements and our concepts regarding the torma, e.g. of it being particularly beautiful or expensive. Our mental concepts such as miserliness, reputation and recognition, etc., are dissolved.

During the recitation of the emptiness mantra OM SOBHAVA SHUDDHA SARVA DHARMA SOBHAVA SHUDDHO HAM, we imagine that the essence of all phenomena is emptiness, the torma and the offerings dissolve into emptiness and then we ourselves rest in emptiness.

THE MEANING OF THE EMPTINESS MANTRA
OM: five kayas and five kinds of wisdom;
SOBHAVA: the essence;
SARVA: everything;
DHARMA: phenomena;

## COMPLETION PHASE

SOBHAVA: purity;
SHUDDHO: in essence;
HAM: is.

The first “being in essence” refers to the original purity of all beings, their pure nature. The second “being in essence” refers to the purification of temporary obscurations. Although all beings are pure in their nature, temporary obscurations appear and they need to be purified.

From emptiness arises a spacious, large torma vessel made of precious gemstones, on a silver or golden plate. Above this are the syllables OM AH HUNG.

From the three syllables light radiates in three colors to all buddhas and bodhisattvas; it pervades the buddha spheres and radiates back into the three syllables with the blessing of the buddhas.

The syllables then merge into light and transform into an ocean of nectar. The white syllable OM becomes an **ocean of white nectar**. The red syllable AH becomes light, merging with the white nectar and giving it a **reddish shine**. The blue syllable HUNG becomes light and encircles the reddish nectar with a **blue wreath of light**.

From the ocean of this nectar light, the ends of the rays of light radiate and make wonderful **offerings** in perfect colors, tastes, smells and sounds.

We recite the syllables OM AH HUNG three or seven times. With this the torma is blessed. We ourselves are Tara. From the forehead, throat and heart, white, red and blue light radiates respectively and merges with the torma. Above the HUNG in our heart there is a white lotus blossom with a moon disc, and on top of it the white TAM. From the syllable TAM radiates five-colored light, which invites from Tara's pure buddha realm and Tara's mountain Potala the Noble Tara with all buddhas, bodhisattvas and their retinues, who come simultaneously with our recitation of the syllables OM BENZA SAMADZA. With PEMA KAMALAYA SATOM we request them to take a seat. They appear in the space in front of us: the buddhas and bodhisattvas above Tara, the yidams around, and the protectors below.

While offering the guests the torma, we recite the offering mantra OM TARE TU TARE TURE IDAM BALINGTA KA KA KAHI KAHI three times. The Noble Tara drinks the torma with a vajra straw.<sup>18</sup>

THE MEANING OF THE OFFERING MANTRAS
The mantra OM AH HUNG symbolizes the essence of body, speech and mind;
PHE: all dualistic concepts are removed through this;

---

18. From her mouth radiates light, it forms a tube of light, and from this she sucks in the nectar of the torma.

## COMPLETION PHASE

SOHA: grant your blessing;
IDAM: this;
BALINGTA: torma;
KA KA KAHI KAHI: accept it.

We recite the second offering mantra three times: OM AKARO MUKAM SARVA DHARMA NAM ADE NÜPENA TOTA OM AH HUNG PHE SOHA. The retinue of Tara then also drinks the torma as described above.

The meaning of this mantra is identical with the emptiness mantra (OM SOBHAVA SHUDDHA...) that was just explained. All phenomena are empty, without being attached to duality, without a grasping, without a grasper, without beginning or end. That is how it is.

Offering goddesses of different colors radiate from our heart and offer Tara and her retinue the eight offerings..

This is followed by the various **praises** to the Noble Tara. They are sung by the offering goddesses:

You are the mother who with TĀRE liberates from samsara;  
With TUTTĀRÉ you give freedom from the eight fears;  
With ture you protect from all illness.  
I praise and prostrate to you, the Noble Liberator.

With the white light of your compassion,  
you benefit every living being.  
To those without a protector, you give protection and refuge.  
I bow to the Victorious Ones and their heirs.<sup>19</sup>

At the end the offering goddesses then dissolve into light and merge with our heart.

We ask Tara to accept this torma offering: Let us and all who are connected with us experience health, a long life, strength, glory, reputation, good conditions and a wealth of possessions and joys. Grant the spiritual siddhis of the four activities: pacifying, increasing, etc. Protect us, support us and help us. Save us from premature death, diseases, demonic forces and obstacles. Free us from bad dreams, bad omens, evil influences and machinations. Let peace and joy prevail in the world, let the harvests be good and profitable without famine and let the dharma flourish and grow so that all beings attain more patience, generosity and the deepening of their meditation. Let everything that contributes to the benefit of beings find completion. Let all wishes come true! Noble Tara, please grant all ordinary and extraordinary spiritual siddhis. Protect us especially from present and future fears and give us the most excellent gift: a long life in accordance with the dharma.

---

19. Excerpt from *The Daily Practice of White Tara* translated by Michele Martin (dharmaebooks.org)

We recite the 100-syllable mantra and confess our mistakes: all omissions and imperfections that have arisen during the practice (i.e. during the visualization of the development phase, during the mantra recitation or while abiding in emptiness). We request Tara to stay with us and to dwell in the representation objects such as thangkhas, statues, etc. as long as samsara exists. We request Tara to grant us a long life, health, strength and everything excellent and good, especially the realization of Mahamudra.

With the mantra OM SUTRA TIKTA BENZAYE SOHA at the end of torma practice, Tara which was in front of us and her retinue dissolves into light and merges with an image of her (e.g. a statue, photo or thangka).

## COMPLETION OF THE PRACTICE



After abiding in the clear light we appear again in the form of Noble Tara with the syllables OM AH HUNG at the three places. As we return to our everyday activities, the outer world and our environment appear to us like a magical illusion, as the completely pure land of Tara, with all sounds as the echo of her mantra and all thoughts and images as the spontaneous expression of the dharma-kaya of Noble Tara.

## DEDICATION OF MERIT

May all beings be purified of all negativities by the merit of my practice. May their lives be prolonged, their merit and wisdom increase and may all beings realize the state of Noble Tara. Consort of the highest Buddha Amitabha and the Buddha Amitayus, mother of all Buddhas, you who grants immortality, holder of the supreme wisdom, wish-fulfilling Tara, may all this be realized.

## TRANSMISSION LINEAGE



The lineage for the instruction, the empowerment and the transmission of this practice of White Tara goes back to Atisha. Atisha gave the teachings to Dromtönpa, who passed them on to his student Geshe Drepa; who in turn gave them to Gampopa. From Gampopa the teachings went to the First Karmapa Düsüm Khyenpa, and then from one lineage holder to another up to Situ Tenpé Nyinjé.<sup>20</sup> All these teachers had visions of White Tara.

From Situ Tenpé Nyinjé the teachings were passed to Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. He gave the teachings and empowerments to the Fifteenth Karmapa Khakyab Dorje. He in turn gave them to the Eleventh Situ Pema Wangchuk. Then the Sixteenth Gyalwang Karmapa Rangjung Rigpe Dorje, received the empowerments. From him I received the empowerments at Rumtek monastery.

The teachings were also transferred to the last Sangye Nyenpa, the Ninth Sangye Nyenpa, by Situ Pema Wangchuk. He taught them to Khenpo Zöpa Tharchin, who was my teacher at Benchen monastery in Tibet. So I received the teachings from Khenpo Zöpa Tharchin, who

---

20. The eight Tai Situpa, Situ Panchen.

received them from the Ninth Sangye Nyenpa. But I also received the same initiations from Sangye Nyenpa at Benchen monastery.

The special commentary that I used here was written by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye and everyone who practices White Tara within the Kagyu tradition uses this text.

## IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA

The below images feature the silver Tara Mandala placed inside Tenga Rinpoche's relicts stupa. After the Third Tenga Rinpoche's passing into parinirvana the stupa was built in Parping near Benchen three-year retreat center.



IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA

---

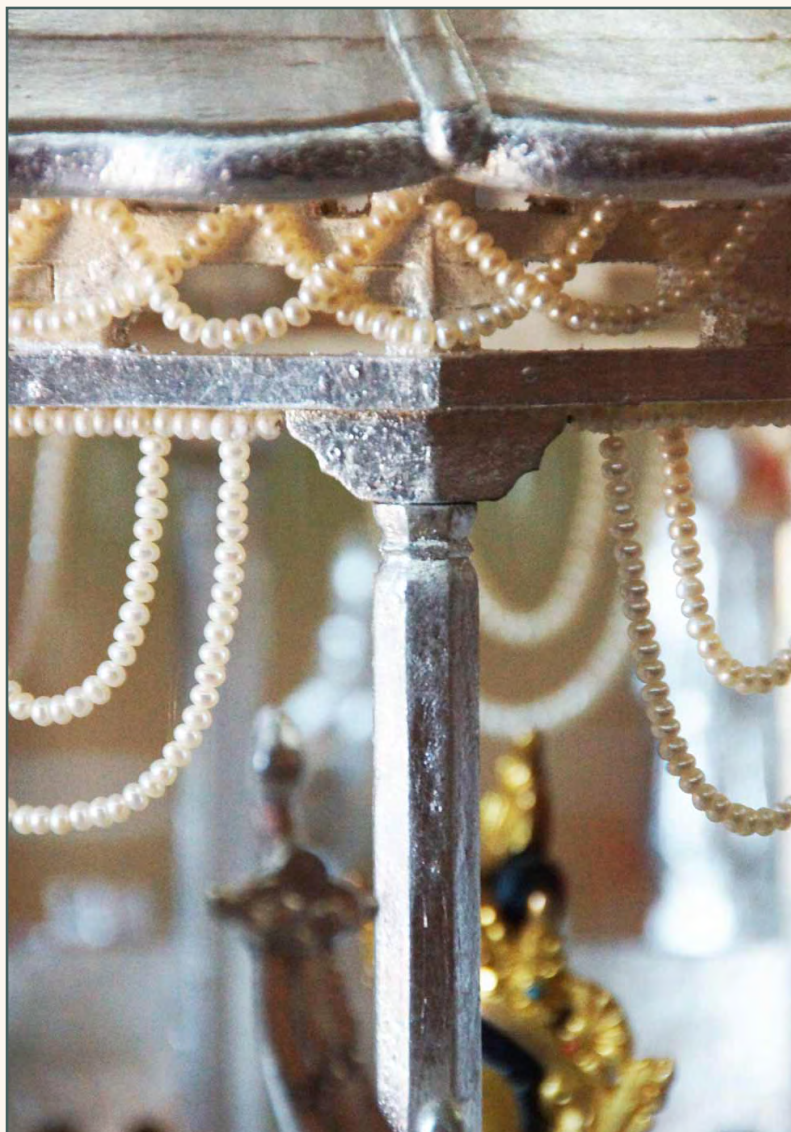




IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA

---







IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA

---



IMAGES OF THE TARA MANDALA

---



