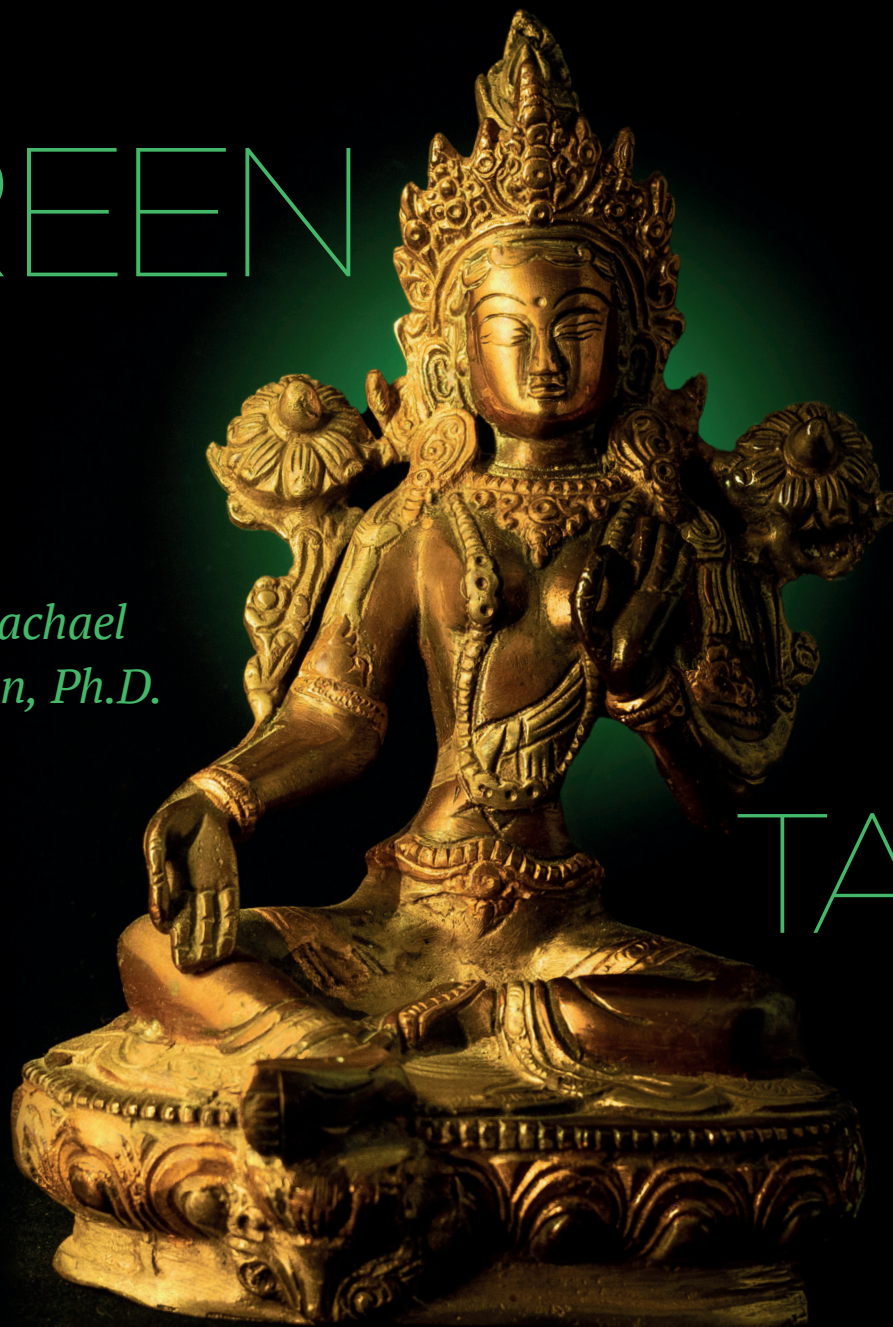


GREEN

by Rachael
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TARA,

the Liberating Goddess who Accompanies Us in All Realms

All of the images, stories, and practices related to Green Tara embody the central teaching of the Buddhist dharma: the interdependence of all phenomena. Living beings of all sorts, across all earthly landscapes and other realms of consciousness, are vividly and inextricably connected to one another. Through the tantric wisdom teachings and practices surrounding Tara, we're invited to experience the ways in which

our everyday lives in the world of form are influenced and potentially nourished by the unseen realms, both subtle and formless. Interdependence is happening on the horizontal and vertical axes simultaneously. *Everything* is connected.

Contemplating this truth reminds me that every encounter with Tara, in my own practice or leading a group practice, requires a fresh approach. Every moment is new, full of its own rich complexities and challenges. I live in a much different

context from 30 years ago when I first encountered her. I ask myself: "Who am I in this moment? What is it about Tara that still captures my heart and imagination? How do these stories and practices help me stay open-hearted during this extremely difficult time on our planet? How does Tara practice help me and others in our practice communities skillfully navigate the seen and unseen realms?"

Inevitably, when I do this inquiry,

I remember my first encounter with Tara, which occurred in the fall of 1990 during a phone call with my new friend Allie. She and I had met a few months earlier in Northern Ontario during a ten day wilderness experience, which was centered around Lakota teachings and ceremonies.

Allie called to tell me a dream that had shaken her deeply. A male teacher had closed his classroom door, making it impossible for his elementary school-aged children to escape his intended sexual advances. A strong Black woman appeared in their midst, her body firmly planted between him and the children. Her presence created an impassable boundary. Just behind her, a green woman hovered in a subtle and ephemeral body. She offered a different but equally powerful protective barrier, clearly backing up the Black woman.

Allie woke up, disturbed by the man's intentions towards the children and in awe of the full-bodied power of the Black woman and the equally powerful energetic presence of the green woman. As Allie recounted the dream, my mind went immediately to the Black Madonna. Allie went in a different direction. "Have you ever heard of Tara?" she asked. I had not.

Prior to our conversation, Allie had related the dream to another friend, whose first thought had been of Green Tara. She suggested that Allie read China Galland's newly published book, *Longing for Darkness, Tara and the Black*



Madonna, in which Galland recounts her ten year journey, crisscrossing the globe following the trails of these archetypal embodiments of the Divine Feminine. Everywhere she went looking for the Black Madonna, she would encounter Tara. Likewise, when searching for Tara, she would stumble on another story or image of the Black Madonna.

Reading Galland's book, along with other fortuitous events, inspired me to trace the historical roots of both these figures. The path wound its way through several cultures back to ancient Sumeria and Egypt. Tara's connections with the Sumerian goddess, Inanna, as well as the Hindu Goddesses Durga and Kali of India were clear. Toward the end of this years-long exploration, I had a vivid dream of my own. I'm speaking in an animated tone to someone in the dream: "Sure these figures are all connected. How could they not be? But *what difference does it make?*"

After this dream, I realized that the interrelationships among these goddess figures were far more than an intellectual exercise for me. I reviewed my path to Tara. How had I landed on her doorstep, or more to the point, how did she, as many Buddhist texts say, "seize me with the iron hook of her great compassion?"

Before I encountered Tara, I had spent years studying the wisdom teachings of Jesus found in the accepted canonical

texts as well as the noncanonical gospels. During that same period, I studied with a number of indigenous teachers, primarily Lakota and Cherokee, hearing oral teachings and participating in traditional ceremonies.

When I began my studies to become a Jungian analyst in 1991, I encountered the descent narrative of the great Sumerian goddess Inanna. The translations of the poetry and mythology surrounding Inanna were easily accessible to a lay scholar such as myself.

In 1993, because of a series of powerful dreams, I decided to complete my Jungian studies in Switzerland. During the stressful moving process, I had several uncanny experiences related to Tara, for which I had no rational explanation. Once settled in Switzerland, I decided to mention the experiences to Andreas Schweizer, my supervising analyst in Zurich, who then introduced me to his good friend, Martin Kalf, a teacher and scholar of Tibetan Buddhism. Martin's first response to my stories about Tara was, "You need to meet the Lama." I did indeed "meet the Lama," Lodrö Rinpoche, and thus began my conscious journey with Tara in this lifetime.

During that time, I concentrated on my Jungian studies alongside intensive study and meditation practice of Tara and her 21 emanations. I made frequent visits to the shrine of the Black Madonna

of Einseideln, a 45 minute train ride from my apartment. I took note of the many lines of texts reminiscent of Inanna's poetry. Likewise, I recognized the lyrical similarities in the Sumerian texts and Biblical texts, especially the Song of Songs. Symbols such as the crescent moon and stars associated with Inanna are associated with Tara and the Madonna. Beautiful names, such as The Morning Star, and the Evening Star are common to all three of them.

In addition, I discovered familiar shamanic terms in the visualizations, mantras, praises and practice elements in the Tara sadhanas, including frequent references to her travels among and between the three realms of consciousness. Thus, many years of practice and study with indigenous teachers, as well as with teachers and scholars in Vajrayana Buddhism, Judaism, and Jesus' teachings, had illuminated the relationships among the spiritual traditions that had nourished me over decades.

I now have a few answers to the question my dream posed years ago about

the religious authorities in an entrenched patriarchal culture that she will only become enlightened in a woman's body. Her courage continuously inspires me. We still suffer daily from the effects of patriarchy and authoritarianism, which deny the value of women and the earth, commodifying and depleting her rich and varied life forms.

In addition, the lineage of teachers and practitioners who have kept the practices alive for over 1400 years, generates tremendous gratitude and a deep sense of belonging to a living ancestral current of the Great Mother. Tara practitioners around the globe now tend this current for the generations to come.

Finally, taking refuge in Tara—in the teachings, teachers, and sanghas—supports our efforts to wake up to our intricate connection to all beings, in order to be of benefit to ourselves and all beings, human and others. Praying the Four Immeasurables, wishing that everyone could wake up in this way, relieves me of the burden of attachment to people I hold close and aversion for others I dislike. This softens unconscious

the form of inner wisdom and insight. At other times we experience Tara's presence through outer events and synchronicities. What seems ultimately trustworthy to me is this: With steady practice, giving voice to our deepest longings, and through the power of our love, intentions, and compassion, what we need to know will be discovered. Our inner world will become infinitely richer, more stable, and reliable.

Stability and inner inspiration assist us in bringing Tara's light, the light of awakened consciousness in female form, into the world at this crucial moment. Honoring the teachings from other traditions that have been meaningful to us in the past strengthens and enriches our practice and work. We are able to act with full personal integrity for the benefit of ourselves and all others, with no exceptions! 🌿

“Green Tara appears in our visualizations with her right foot forward because she leaps instantly to our assistance when we call on her for help.”

these connections, "What difference does it make?" I also understand the central role of Tara teachings and practice in discovering those answers.

Personally, the lore of Tara and the practices associated with her create the inner container for these precious teachings to live together in my psyche, illuminating one another, and offering refuge when my own struggles and those of the world around me became overwhelming.

On a collective level, the truth of interdependence, including the interdependence of spiritual traditions, is the foundation for all things Tara. The imperative of our time, for the planet, and our future existence depends on our fully realizing that everything is connected. We must act decisively on this realization.

Tara provides an essential feminine container for me, for other women, and for men as well. In the traditional story of Wisdom Moon, who became the Buddha Tara, she emphatically vows to

prejudices and deepens the felt sense of being connected to everyone.

The Refuge Prayers and the Four Immeasurables, which precede any other practice related to Tara, are more than rote recitations. They create the possibility for the meaning of the words to arise energetically and somatically as lived experience. Countless sadhana practices based on Tara's infinite manifestations take us even deeper. There's something for everyone.

Green Tara appears in our visualizations with her right foot forward because she leaps instantly to our assistance when we call on her for help. She is famous in the world of Vajrayana meditation deities for providing protection from inner fears and outer dangers. Asking for help from Tara and from all wise and compassionate sources in the seen and unseen worlds is critical at this point in our evolution and continuation of life on earth.

Many times Tara's help arises in

MEET THE AUTHOR



RACHAEL WOOTEN, PhD, is a Zürich-trained Jungian analyst and psychologist who has been in private practice as a therapist for more than forty years. Her interests in human consciousness led her to the field of psychology. After practicing as a psychologist for over a decade, she began Jungian studies and a deeper dive into spiritual practices for her own healing, that of her clients, and members of her community. She also studied with and participated in healing ceremonies with indigenous teachers from the Lakota, Cherokee, and Huichol traditions. Rachael has taught Tara practice under the authorization of Lodrö Rinpoche for more than 20 years. A link to online practice opportunities can be found on her website.

On the web
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“Everywhere she went looking for the Black Madonna, she would encounter Tara. Likewise, when searching for Tara, she would stumble on another story or image of the Black Madonna.”

Bookshelf

TARA: THE LIBERATING POWER OF THE FEMALE BUDDHA BY RACHAEL WOOTEN, PHD,

published by Sounds True, Paperback (278 pages).

A practical guide for invoking the power and blessings of Tara, the beloved female Buddhist deity of Tibet. Known as "the female Buddha" in Tibet and India, Tara connects us to the archetypal Divine Feminine—an energetic force that exists within us and all around us, and has been available to all humans since our earliest origin.

The Tara Cards (sold separately) are a set of 22 cards that are a helpful companion to the book. The cards are double sided, with Green Tara on one side and one of her twenty-one emanations on the other. There is also a separate card for Green Tara. Each one has a description of the particular emanation of Tara, her mantra, her praise, and a brief statement about the action of that Tara.

