



Short Practice Instructions for the Tara Cards

Background and History

Green Tara, beloved female Buddha of Tibet, is thought to have appeared over many centuries in countless forms around the world. In December of 1996, I was initiated by my Tibetan teacher, Lodrö Tulku Rinpoche, into the practice of the Twenty-One Taras in the tradition according to Atisha. The initiation took place in Zollikon, Switzerland. Soon afterwards, Rinpoche translated the sadhanas of the Twenty-one Taras into English, and asked me to edit them and compile a practice book.

Several years later, with Rinpoche's blessings, I began teaching meditation groups in the United States using these practices. Beth Hardin, a member of one of these groups, suggested that we create a deck of Tara cards. She felt they would be a great practice tool! The idea gained traction after an inspiring visit with Claudia Webinger, a Tara Devotee from Germany. Claudia had begun her own process of creating cards for the 21 Taras based on the tradition of the Master Suryagupta. She shared her early designs at a gathering of Tara Sisters during her visit.

In 2004, Beth and I created our first set of black and white cards following the tradition of Atisha. Several years later, with the help of Claudia Rebola, Ph.D., we redesigned the cards into their current color form. The image on the cards is from an original painting by Giovanna Silvani-Weidman, which I commissioned many years ago, and blesses my living room every single day.

The text of these cards is drawn from several sources. The descriptions, praises, and mantras of the emanations of Tara come from the sadhanas themselves. The white band in the middle of the cards contains succinct teachings about what each Tara offers in a given moment. They represent a synthesis of Rinpoche's teachings during the initiation, along with my modern-day interpretations offered during our meditation group meetings. Beth had recorded my commentary over several years of practice sessions. We used her notes and our combined editing talents to create these concise statements.

Instructions for Short Practices Using the Cards

Set Your Intention

The first crucial step is to set your intention. In seeking Tara's council, ask that whatever positive potential or understanding arising from your practice be a benefit to you and to all beings. Ask that you might awaken fully in order to more skillfully contribute to the world. Hold in your awareness that you are not separate in any way from the vast interconnected

web of all being. Pray that all beings would come to know the great joy of this realization: none of us are separate; we are never alone.

Take Refuge

Say to yourself: “I take refuge in the enlightened consciousness embodied in Tara’s heart and in her whole being. I take refuge in the great wisdom teachings that have arisen through the ages, including these teachings related to Tara. I take refuge in the communities of practitioners to which I belong, to the holy lineages of teachers, and in my own open heart and inner wisdom.

Draw a Card and Meditate on its Meaning

If you have a question for Tara, bring that to mind. Or simply ask, “Which emanation of Tara do I need today?” After a brief pause, draw a card. Read the commentary in the white band, and see if the message resonates with you, or offers insight into the question you have for Tara.

Then, visualize Tara as she is described on the card you have drawn. See her seated on a lotus throne in front of you, slightly above your head. Repeat the praise that is printed on the card. Next, repeat the mantra at least 21 times, preferably 108 times. You may use the mantra on the card you have drawn, or simply recite the root mantra of Green Tara, *Om Tare Tuttare Ture Soha*. Do not worry about correct pronunciation! Just remember Tara and imagine she is delighted that you are calling on her! Finally, rest quietly in the vibrations of the mantra, sensing the energetic presence of Tara that arises in this space. Be open to possible insight, inspiration, comfort, or guidance.

Dedicate Your Practice

Allow your visualization of Tara to dissolve into light, and see her light dissolving into the universe and into your heart and entire body. Finally, close your practice with the dedication prayer.

May whatever positive potential that has been generated from this practice go towards my own healing and awakening and the healing and awakening of all beings everywhere, with no exceptions.

Allow yourself to feel the joy of having done your practice, both for yourself and for the limitless beings all around you.

If you want further explanations and instructions for longer practices, please refer to: *Tara: The Liberating Power of the Female Buddha*. (Rachael Wooten, Sounds True, 2020.)