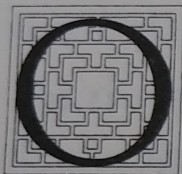


## Tara's Vow

TIBET, POSSIBLY SIXTEENTH CENTURY .....



ONCE, LONG AGO, the woman who would become the goddess Tara was a princess whose name was Moon of Wisdom. She was wise, compassionate, and devoted to the Dharma. A monk approached her and said, "Because of your virtuous actions, you have been born in a human body, but unfortunately it is a female body. If you want to attain complete awakening, pray that you will be reborn in a male body."

She replied, "In this life there is no such distinction between 'male' and 'female,' and therefore any attachment to ideas of 'male' and 'female' is a delusion. It is foolish to be caught by such a notion."

Then she made the vow that would carry her through to awakening:

There are many who wish to gain enlightenment in a man's form, and there are but few who wish to work for the welfare of living beings in a female form. Therefore may I, in a female body, work for the welfare of beings right until samsara has been emptied.

THE MONK STOOD BESIDE A WHEELBARROW

The monk stood beside a wheelbarrow, weeping.

God or Buddha nowhere to be seen—  
these tears were fully human,  
bitter, broken,  
falling onto the wheelbarrow's rusty side.

They gathered at its bottom,  
where the metal drank them in to make more rust.

You cannot know what you do in this life, what you have done.

The monk stood weeping.  
I knew I also had a place on this hard earth.