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## The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”

*Tārāsvapratijñādhāraṇī*

འཕਾਗ'ਸ'ਗ'ਸ਼੍ਵਰ'ਵ'ਦ'ਦੰਸ਼ੀ'ਨ'ਵ'ਨਤਸ'ਵ'ਕ੍ਰੇਸ'ਵ'ਸਤੰ'ਸ਼ੁੰਨਸ'।

*'phags ma sgrrol ma rang gis dam bcas pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs*

The Noble Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”

*Āryatārāsvapratijñānāmadhāraṇī*



Toh 1002

Degé Kangyur vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waM), folios 160.a–160.b..

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co.

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## SUMMARY

s.1      *The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”* is a short *dhāraṇī* invoking the goddess Tārā.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated by Lhasey Lotsawa Translations and Publications under the guidance of Phakchok Rinpoche. The translation and introduction were produced by Stefan Mang and reviewed and edited by Ryan Conlon.

The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1 *The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”* is, as the title suggests, framed as a promise made by the goddess Tārā. Tārā, whose name can be translated as “Savior,”<sup>1</sup> is revered in diverse Buddhist communities as a deity who quickly responds to the needs of all in the face of worldly and spiritual dangers.

i.2 The worship of Tārā in India can be traced back to at least the sixth century, and since that time the goddess has gained increasingly important status in the Buddhist pantheon.<sup>2</sup> Tibetan histories recount that worship and practice of the deity Tārā was introduced to Tibet as early as the seventh century via a sandalwood statue brought by the Nepalese princess Bhṛkuṭī as dowry for her marriage to the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo.<sup>3</sup> While a few texts dedicated to Tārā were translated in the following centuries,<sup>4</sup> it is believed that the worship of Tārā did not take firm root in Tibet until the eleventh century, when it was actively promoted by Atīśa.<sup>5</sup>

i.3 *The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”* can be divided into two parts: the dhāraṇī and a statement of its benefits. The dhāraṇī itself was not translated into Tibetan but was instead preserved in transliterated Sanskrit. The Tibetan text lacks a colophon, so the Tibetan translators and editors of the dhāraṇī remain unidentified.

i.4 This work is cataloged in the Degé Kangyur<sup>6</sup> as part of a cycle of eight Kriyātantra (*bya rgyud*) texts (Toh 724–731) dedicated to the goddess Tārā. The dhāraṇī recorded here is also preserved in Butön Rinchen Drup’s (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364) *Dhāraṇī Collection* (*gzungs bsdus*) from his *Collected Works* (*gsung 'bum*),<sup>7</sup> and is found in a short Sanskrit ritual manual collected in the *Sādhanamālā* and preserved in Tibetan translation as *The Instructions on the Ritual of Blessed Āryatārā from the Essence of Amitābha Tantra* (*Amitābhagarbhatantre bhagavatyāryatārāyāḥ kalpoddeśāḥ*, Toh 3501).<sup>8</sup> The colophon to the Tibetan translation states that this dhāraṇī is an extract from *The Supreme Vajra Tantra* (*rdo rje mchog gi brgyud*), while the colophon to Toh

3501 and the Sanskrit witness in the *Sādhanamālā* state that it comes from the *Amitābhagarbhatantra*.<sup>9</sup> There are, however, no extant texts with either of these titles.

i.5 In attempting to establish the text of the dhāraṇī presented here, we have consulted the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) Kangyur and Butön's *Dhāraṇī Collection*. The texts preserved in the *Sādhanamālā* edition and in the Tengyur are generally similar to each other, but they differ in a few significant ways from the dhāraṇī found in the present text. Our own rendering, therefore, is based on the best available Kangyur readings but also includes conjectures informed by the *Sādhanamālā* text and related Sanskrit manuscripts. The English translation of the verses following the dhāraṇī are based on the Tibetan version in the Degé Kangyur collection, in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) Kangyur.

The Noble Dhāraṇī

## **Tārā's Own Promise**

1.

## The Translation

1.1 [F.160.a] Homage to Noble Tārā!

1.2 Tārā proclaimed *The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”*:

*tad yathā | om̄ tāre tārāyai hūṁ hūṁ hūṁ samayasthite bhara bhara sarvābharaṇa-vibhūṣite padme padme<sup>10</sup> mahāpadmāsanasthite hasa hasa trailokyavarade sarva-devadānavapūjite smarāhi bhagavati tāre smarāhi bhagavatas<sup>11</sup> tathāgatasya purataḥ samayaṇi dhara dhara mahāsattvāvalokite maṇikanakavicitrābharaṇe | om̄ vilocāya (insert name)<sup>12</sup> bhagavati<sup>13</sup> tāre hrīṁ hrīṁ hrīṁ phaṭ svāhā |<sup>14</sup>*

1.3 By merely recalling this dhāraṇī all dangers will be eliminated, all accomplishments will be attained, and all sentient beings will be brought under control. [F.160.b] On the eighth or fifteenth day of the moon, make vast offerings to Noble Tārā and then recite this dhāraṇī until you perceive Tārā directly. Whatever you desire will be given, and all boons will be granted. If this does not happen, it means that you had committed the five acts with immediate retribution. Indeed, immeasurable benefits will come.

1.4 This was extracted from *The Supreme Vajra Tantra*.

1.5 *This concludes the noble dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise.”*

n.

## NOTES

n.1 Tārā’s name is a causative derivation from the root  $\sqrt{t\bar{r}}$  (“to cross”), meaning “to cause to cross,” i.e., “to rescue.”

n.2 In her PhD dissertation, Rachael Stevens (2010) provides a comprehensive introduction to the goddess Tārā via a literary review (pp. 11–21) and an exploration of the history of Tārā worship (pp. 20–45), the Tārā pantheon (pp. 46–56) and key Buddhist texts relating to Tārā (pp. 57–62).

n.3 Beyer 1978, pp. 5–6. We find this episode in Butön Rinchen Drup’s *History of Buddhism* (Obermiller 1932, vol. 2, p. 184) and dramatized in Sonam Gyaltzen’s *The Clear Mirror* (Sonam Gyaltzen 1996, pp. 124–27).

n.4 The Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) catalog of early translations, for example, lists only two works dedicated to Tārā that were translated during this time. Following Herrmann-Pfandt’s edition (2008), these are no. 439: ‘phags pa lha mo sgrol ma’i mtshan brgya rtsa brgyad pa (*Tāradevīnāmāṣṭaśataka*, Toh 728) and no. 454: ‘phags pa lha mo sgrol ma ’jigs pa thams cad las sgrol bar bstod pa (according to Herrmann-Pfandt, the identification of this title remains uncertain). One could further include no. 388: ‘phags pa spyan ras gzigs kyi yum (*Avalokiteśvara-mātādhāraṇī*, *The Dhāraṇī* “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara” (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh725.html>)), which, while it does not mention the goddess Tārā, was nevertheless included within the Degé Kangyur section of Tārā-related scriptures (Toh 724–731) as Toh 725.

n.5 Beyer 1978, pp. 5–13; Landesman 2008, p. 59; Stevens 2010, pp. 36–37.

n.6 This text, Toh 1002, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, waM*), are listed as being located in volume 101 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in

volume 102. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantrāṭikā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.

n.7 Butön Rinchen Drup, *gsung 'bum*, folio 218.b.6–7.

n.8 For the Sanskrit text, see *sādhana* no. 108 in Bhattacharyya 1925.

n.9 Bhattacharyya 1925, p. 221.

n.10 Here we follow the reading *padme padme* from the *Sādhanamālā* instead of the Tibetan *padmani padma*.

n.11 The text has been emended to the genitive form of the term *bhagavat* to align syntactically with the following term *tathāgatasya*. Though this form is not attested in the available Tibetan witnesses, it is the implied syntax of the Sanskrit compound *bhagavattathāgata*<sup>o</sup> attested in the *Sādhanamālā*.

n.12 As indicated by the inserted Tibetan term *che ge mo*, the reciter is instructed here to insert the name of the person to whom this *dhāraṇī* is directed.

n.13 We follow the reading of the *Sādhanamālā*, *bhagavati*, instead of the Degé reading *bhagavate*.

n.14 This can be tentatively translated as “*Om. Tārā! Hūṁ hūṁ hūṁ* to Tārā. She who is firm in her samaya! Bear it! Bear it! She who is adorned with all ornaments! Lotus! Lotus! She who sits on a great lotus seat! Laugh! Laugh! Granter of boons to the three worlds! She who is worshiped by devas and dānavas! Recollect! Tārā, Blessed Lady! Recollect! Uphold, uphold the samaya in front of the blessed Thus-Gone One! O great deity who surveys all beings everywhere! She who is ornamented with various jewels and gold! *Om! Tārā, Blessed Lady, look upon (insert name), Hrīṁ hrīṁ hrīṁ svāhā!*”

b.

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g.

## GLOSSARY

g.1 Atīśa

*a ti sha*

अतीश

*Atīśa*

The Indian master Atīśa Dīpañkaraśrījñāna (982–1054) is renowned in the history of Tibetan Buddhism for coming to Tibet and revitalizing Buddhism there during the early eleventh century.

g.2 Bhr̥kuṭī

*khro gnyer can*

छ्रुकुटी

*Bhr̥kuṭī*

According to Tibetan historical sources, the Nepalese princess who married the Tibetan king Songtsen Gampo. She is believed to have arrived in Tibet in either 632 or 634.

g.3 Dānava

*lha ma yin*

दानव

*dānava*

As a subclass of asuras, dānavas are a class of nonhuman beings antagonistic to the devas (gods) and a consistently disruptive force in Indic mythology.

g.4 Dhāraṇī

*gzungs*

धारणी

*dhāraṇī*

The term *dhāraṇī* has the sense of something that “holds” or “retains,” and as such can refer to the special capacity of practitioners to memorize and recall detailed teachings. It can also refer to a verbal expression of the teachings—an incantation, spell, or mnemonic formula that distills and “holds” essential points of

the Dharma and is used by practitioners to attain mundane and supramundane goals. The same term is also used to denote texts that contain such formulae.

g.5 Five acts with immediate retribution

*mtshams med pa lṅga*

ସହମାତ୍ରାଣ୍ୟାତ୍ମା

*pañcānantarya*

Acts for which one will be reborn in hell immediately after death, without any intervening stages; they are (1) killing one's master or father, (2) killing one's mother, (3) killing an arhat, (4) maliciously drawing blood from a buddha, and (5) causing a schism in the saṅgha.

g.6 Songtsen Gampo

*srong btsan sgam po*

ସ୍ରୋଙ୍ ବତ୍ସା ଶଙ୍ଗପୋ

—

617–650; a famous king from Tibet's Imperial Period.

g.7 Tārā

*sgrol ma*

ସ୍ଗ୍ରୋଲ୍ ମା

*Tārā*

A goddess whose name can be translated as "Savior." She is known for giving protection and is variously presented in Buddhist literature as a great bodhisattva or a fully awakened buddha.