

སྐྱོལ་མ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ཉི་ཤུ་ཅུ་གཅིག་གིས་བསྟོད་པ།

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**Praise to Tārā with Twenty-One Verses of  
Homage**

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*Namastāraikaviṃśatistotra*

སློལ་མ་ལ་ཕྱག་འཚལ་ཉི་ཤུ་རྩ་གཅིག་གིས་བསྟོན་པ་ཕན་ཡོན་དང་བཅས་པ།

*sgrol ma la phyag 'tshal nyi shu rtsa gcig gis bstod pa phan yon dang bcas pa*

Praise to Tārā with Twenty-One Verses of Homage and Their Benefits

*Namastāraikaviṃśatistotraguṇahitasahita*



Toh 438

Degé Kangyur, vol. 81 (rgyud, ca), folios 42.b–43.b.

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co.

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## SUMMARY

s.1

*Praise to Tārā with Twenty-One Verses of Homage* is a liturgy that consists of twenty-seven verses of praise and reverence dedicated to the deity Tārā. The first twenty-one verses are at once a series of homages to the twenty-one forms of Tārā and a poetic description of her physical features, postures, and qualities. The remaining six verses describe how and when the praise should be recited and the benefits of its recitation.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1

Translated by Lhasey Lotsawa Translations. The translation was produced by Stefan Mang and Peter Woods, and the introduction was written by Stefan Mang. Wiesiek Mical compared the translation with the available Sanskrit editions.

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

## INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1

For Tibetan Buddhists, the *Praise to Tārā with Twenty-One Verses of Homage* is undoubtedly the most popular prayer to the deity Tārā. It is recited on a daily basis by many monks, nuns, and lay practitioners alike. The first twenty-one verses praise Tārā by drawing upon the three epithets that also form the core of her root mantra—Tārā (Deliverer), Tuttārā (Savior), and Turā (Swift One).<sup>1</sup> In doing so, they invoke Tārā’s twenty-one forms that vary in aspect from peaceful to wrathful. These twenty-one verses both pay homage to Tārā and provide a poetic description of her physical features, postures, qualities, abilities, mantras, and hand gestures. The concluding six verses of the liturgy describe how and when the praise should be recited and the benefits of its recitation.

i.2

The praise has been preserved in the Kangyur in two forms. First, the praise was translated into Tibetan and preserved as an independent text in the Kangyur (Toh 438). It is this text that we present in English translation here. Second, it is also found in transliterated Sanskrit as part of the larger tantra *The Source of the Different Activities of Tārā* (Toh 726). In this tantra, the Buddha reveals the praise in the form of an incantation (*dhāraṇī*), a circumstance that prompted the Tibetan translators to transliterate the Sanskrit text of the praise rather than translate it into Tibetan. The relationship between these two versions in the Kangyur is not clear. The colophons to some Kangyur editions suggest that the Tibetan translation (Toh 438) was prepared based on the transliterated Sanskrit,<sup>2</sup> but this is disputed by the Tibetan commentator Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltzen (1147–1216), who mentions that the praise was transmitted from India and translated as an independent text.<sup>3</sup>

i.3

Regarding the Indian commentarial literature on the praise, there are seven related texts preserved in the Degé Tengyur. These comprise two sādhanas attributed to Nāgārjuna (Toh 1683–84) as well as two sādhanas (Toh 1685–86) and three commentaries attributed to Sūryagupta (Toh 1687–89).<sup>4</sup> Sūryagupta’s commentaries, rather than explaining the meaning of the words in the praise, focus on the iconography of each of Tārā’s twenty-one forms, describing her

color, seat, posture, number of faces and arms, implements, and hand gestures.<sup>5</sup> In Tibet, many scholars composed a variety of commentaries and sādhanas related to this praise.<sup>6</sup>

i.4 This translation has been prepared based on the Degé Kangyur with reference to the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur.<sup>7</sup> We also consulted the Sanskrit editions prepared by de Blonay (1895), Pandey (1984), Willson (1996), and Wayman (2002).<sup>8</sup> The interested reader may also wish to compare our translation to some of the other published translations of the praise in English.<sup>9</sup>



tr.

## THE TRANSLATION

# Praise to Tārā with Twenty-One Verses of Homage and Their Benefits

- 1.1 [F.42.b] Homage to the honored, noble lady Tārā!
- 1.2 Homage to Tārā, swift and gallant,  
Whose glance is instantaneous like lightning.  
You arose from the heart of the blossoming lotus  
That is the face of the lord of the three worlds.
- 1.3 Homage to you whose face resembles  
One hundred autumn full moons gathered;  
Your brilliant radiance blazes,<sup>10</sup>  
Like a thousand clusters of stars.
- 1.4 Homage to you, whose hand is graced  
By a golden-blue lotus flower.<sup>11</sup>  
You embody generosity, diligence, endurance,  
Serenity, patience, and concentration.
- 1.5 Homage to you, whose triumphs are endless,  
Jewel on the Tathāgata's crown.  
You are well attended to by the heirs of the victors,  
Who have mastered all the perfections.
- 1.6 Homage to Tuttārā,<sup>12</sup> who with *hūm*  
Fulfills all wishes to the bounds of space.<sup>13</sup>  
You trample the seven worlds underfoot,<sup>14</sup>

- And possess the strength to summon all.
- 1.7 Homage to you, praised by Śakra,  
Agni, Brahmā, maruts, and Śiva.  
The hosts<sup>15</sup> of bhūtas, vetālas, gandharvas,  
And yakṣas pay tribute to you.
- 1.8 Homage to you, who with *traṭ*<sup>16</sup> and *phaṭ* [F.43.a]  
Crush the magical devices of other traditions.  
With your right leg bent and your left leg extended,  
You shine amid flames blazing wildly.
- 1.9 Homage to Turā, the fearsome lady,  
Destroyer of the most powerful demons.<sup>17</sup>  
With your lotus face and stern frown,  
You are the slayer of each and every foe!
- 1.10 Homage to you, whose fingers grace your heart,  
Displaying the *mudrā* of the Three Jewels.  
Graced by wheels in all directions,  
Your natural radiance overwhelms all.<sup>18</sup>
- 1.11 Homage to you, supremely joyous,  
Your splendorous crown spreading garlands of light.  
Tuttārā, smiling and laughing,  
You bring demons and worlds within your control.<sup>19</sup>
- 1.12 Homage to you, who can summon  
The hosts of earthly guardians.  
Knitting your quivering brows, with the syllable *hūm*  
You deliver from every misfortune.
- 1.13 Homage to you, so brightly adorned,  
With a sliver of moon as your crown,<sup>20</sup>  
Your locks always graced by Amitābha,  
Whose bright light streams forever forth.
- 1.14 Homage to you, seated amid blazing flames  
That resemble the fire that ends an eon.  
Immersed in joy, your right leg extends, and the left is bent.  
Thus, you crush legions of foes.
- 1.15 Homage to you, who on the earth's surface  
Strike your palms and stamp your feet;  
The *hūm* that is formed by your frown

- Smashes the seven netherworlds to nothing but dust.
- 1.16 Homage to you, blissful, gracious, and tranquil,  
Whose domain is the peace of nirvāṇa.  
In perfect union with *svāhā* and *om*,  
You lay to waste every terrible evil.
- 1.17 Homage to you, who, immersed in rapture,  
Shatter the bodies of all foes.  
You shine with the knowledge-syllable *hūm*,  
As your mantra's ten syllables are set forth.<sup>21</sup>
- 1.18 Homage to Turā, your feet stomping,  
Formed from the seed of the syllable *hūm*.  
The mountains of Meru, Mandara, and Vindhya,<sup>22</sup>  
And all the three worlds—you cause them to quake.
- 1.19 Homage to you, who hold in your hand  
A deer-marked moon like a divine lake.  
With *tāra* uttered twice and then with *phaṭ*, [F.43.b]  
You eliminate all poisons.
- 1.20 Homage to you, sovereign of divine hosts,  
Served by gods and kiṃnaras.  
Your resplendence, an armor of joy,  
Pacifies strife and clears away nightmares.
- 1.21 Homage to you, whose two eyes shine brightly  
Like the sun and the moon when it's full.  
Tuttārā, with twice-uttered *hara*,  
You pacify the most intractable ills.
- 1.22 Homage to you, who have the power to pacify,<sup>23</sup>  
You display the three true natures.<sup>24</sup>  
Turā, supreme lady, you destroy  
The hordes of grahas, vetālas, and yakṣas.
- 1.23 This praise by means of the root mantra—  
The twenty-one verses of homage  
Should be recited in earnest by the wise,<sup>25</sup>  
Who are filled with devotion for the goddess.
- 1.24 Recalling it at dusk and also when rising at dawn  
Will grant them freedom from every fear.

- It will pacify all misdeeds,  
And destroy all evil destinies.
- 1.25     Soon they will receive empowerment  
From seven million conquerors.  
Beyond this, they shall attain greatness,  
And proceed to the ultimate state of buddhahood.
- 1.26     If they recall this praise all dreadful poisons,  
Whether natural or manufactured,  
Whether eaten or imbibed,  
Will be utterly neutralized.
- 1.27     This will dispel the heap of suffering  
Inflicted by grahas, infectious diseases, and poisons,  
Even in other beings.  
If chanted twice, thrice, or seven times,
- 1.28     Those who want children will come to have them,  
Those who seek wealth will come to have that,  
Each and every wish will be fulfilled,  
And obstacles, entirely vanquished, will be no more.
- 1.29     *This completes the praise to the Blessed Tārā as spoken by the completely perfect Buddha.*

## NOTES

n.

n.1 Tārā's root mantra is *om tāre tuttāre ture svāhā*. The part *tāre tuttāre ture* addresses the goddess in the vocative. The intended meaning could be that of the conjectured phrase *tāre uttāre ture*, with the middle word subsequently modified with the initial *t* for the sake of rhythm and alliteration, to have all three epithets begin with *t* and end with *e*. The first of the three epithets is the goddess's name, Tārā, which is a causative derivation from the root  $\sqrt{t\bar{r}}$ , "to cross." The second is the same prefixed by *ud*, which modifies the meaning from "one who helps to cross" (fem., *tārā*) the ocean of saṃsāra, to one who in addition "pulls up" (fem., *ut-tārā*) from that ocean. As the difference in meaning between these two is merely nominal, we chose to translate them here as "Deliverer" and "Savior" respectively. The third epithet (fem., *turā*), means "swift."

n.2 The Lhasa, Narthang, and Stok Palace editions indicate this in the colophons.

n.3 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen states that the praise was transmitted independently by a certain Nāgārjuna to the Tibetan translator Nyen Lotsawa Darma Drak (late eleventh century). On his identification of Darma Drak as the Tibetan translator of Toh 438, see Drakpa Gyaltsen 2007c, p. 646. The identity of the Nāgārjuna mentioned by Drakpa Gyaltsen remains unclear (see Mabbett 1998, pp. 332–46).

n.4 Willson raises some doubts regarding the authorship of the works attributed to Sūryagupta (Willson 1996, pp. 238–41). Noteworthy also is a short story about the origins of the works on Tārā attributed to Sūryagupta that is preserved in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949, pp. 1050–52).

n.5 For a short description of Sūryagupta's works, see Willson 1996, pp. 109–11.

n.6 For a list of such commentaries, see Beyer 1978, pp. 469–70, and Willson 1996, pp. 111–66.

n.7 We also considered the variant readings recorded in Drakpa Gyaltsen's commentary (2007c) and Willson's presentation of several Tibetan commentaries (1996, pp. 117–66).

- n.8 When the Sanskrit editions further clarified the Tibetan, we incorporated that into our translation. Whenever the Sanskrit presented a significantly different reading, we have recorded it in the footnotes. It is difficult, however, to account for all the variants created by the extant Sanskrit editions, the various Tibetan witnesses, and the Tibetan commentaries. Hence, the reader may encounter inconsistencies and other kinds of dissonance when referring to these various sources.
- n.9 E.g., Beyer 1978; Willson 1986; Tāranātha 1995; Lopez 1997; Wayman 2002; Khenchen Palden Sherab 2004; and Adeu Rinpoche et al. 2015.
- n.10 Following the Sanskrit (*prahasatkiraṇojjvale*) this line could also be read as “Smiling and blazing with brilliant light.”
- n.11 The Sanskrit *pāṇīpadma* metaphorically describes Tārā’s hands as resembling lotus flowers. The Tibetan rendering *padmas phyag* is understood to refer to the lotus that Tārā holds in her hand (Drakpa Gyaltsen 2007c, p. 638).
- n.12 Wayman (2002, p. 444) and Drakpa Gyaltsen (2007c, p. 639) read *tuttāre*. Following the Sanskrit, *Tuttāre* in the vocative could also be understood as an epithet of Tārā, that is, Tuttārā. Drakpa Gyaltsen (2007c, p. 639) explains *tuttāre* as a mantra syllable.
- n.13 “Fulfills all wishes” has been translated based on the Sanskrit *pūritāśā*. Drakpa Gyaltsen (2007c, p. 639) reads the Tibetan ‘*dod* (“desire”), which translates the Sanskrit *āśā* (“wish”), as a reference to the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*, ‘*dod khams*). See also Willson 1996, p. 131.
- n.14 According to various *purāṇas* and the *Atharvaveda*, our world system is divided into fourteen worlds: the seven (higher) worlds (*saptaloka* or *saptavyāhṛti*) consist of the earth and the heavenly realms above, and the seven netherworlds (*saptapātāla*) are subterranean paradises. Here, in verse 1.6, Tārā is praised as ruling the seven higher worlds, while in verse 1.15 she is praised as ruling the seven netherworlds.
- n.15 The Sanskrit term *gaṇa* (*tshogs*) can either express the plurality of the aforementioned spirits, or it can refer to a class of spirits, the *gaṇas*, who are the attendants of Śiva. The Tibetan suggests the former. Given the position that the word *gaṇa* takes in the Sanskrit it appears the Sanskrit suggests the latter. We have here translated according to the Tibetan.
- n.16 The syllable *traṭ* differs (*traḍ*, *trad*, *trat*, and *traṭ*) in the Sanskrit and Tibetan manuscripts and editions. Here our translation uses *traṭ* as suggested also by Wayman (2002, p. 447) and Willson (1996, p. 134).
- n.17 “The most powerful demons” is a translation of *māraoīra* (*bdud kyi dpa’ bo*). Drakpa Gyaltsen (2007c, p. 64) explains the term to refer to the “demon of

- afflictions” (*kleśamāra*, *nyon mongs kyi bdud*) of the four demons (*caturmāra*, *bdud bzhi*), which, when destroyed, makes the other three demons crumble.
- n.18 The last two lines of this verse could be understood as (1) Tārā graces all points and bearings of the compass, and (2) Tārā bears the marks of thousand-spoked wheels on her hands and feet. See also Willson’s discussion of this point (1996, pp. 139–40).
- n.19 The Sanskrit compound *māraloka* (*’dud dang ’jig rten*) could be read as “the realm of demons” instead of “the world and demons.” De Blonay (1895) reads *bhayaṃkari* (*’jigs pa mdzad ma*) instead of *vaśaṃkari* (*dbang du mdzad ma*). Accordingly, the line could also be read as “you strike fear in the world and demons” or “realm of demons.”
- n.20 The Sanskrit editions read *khaṇḍendu* (*zla ba’i dum bu*), a sliver of moon. The Comparative Edition notes that the Degé, Lithang, and Choné editions read *zla ba’i rtse mo*, lit. “lunar peak” (p. 140 and p. 143).
- n.21 According to Drakpa Gyaltzen (2007c, p. 643) this refers to Tārā’s root mantra *oṃ tā-re tu-ttā-re tu-re svā-hā*.
- n.22 The Sanskrit editions vary and read either *meru-mandara* (Willson 1996, p. 153; Wayman 2002, p. 444) or *meru-maṇḍala* (de Blonay 1895, Pandey 1994). The Tibetan editions agree with the former, according to which the first two mountains in question are Mount Meru and Mandara. Regarding the third mountain, the Sanskrit editions read Kailāsa, which refers to Mount Kailash. However, the Tibetan editions seem to disagree and read *’bigs byed*, which suggests that the mountain in question is Vindhya (see also Willson 1996, p. 153). Here we are following the Tibetan editions. Interestingly, Drakpa Gyaltzen (2007c, p. 643) reads *’bigs byed* as the verb “to pierce.” According to Drakpa Gyaltzen’s explanation, it is the light radiating from Tārā’s seed syllable *hūṃ* that pierces Meru and Mandara.
- n.23 According to Drakpa Gyaltzen’s (2007c, p. 644) explanation, Tārā has the power to pacify (*zhi ba*) the afflictions. The Sanskrit editions employ the Śaiva term *śivaśakti* (“Śiva’s power”), which is rendered into Tibetan as *zhi ba’i mthus* (“the power to pacify”).
- n.24 Tibetan commentators understand “the three true natures” (*tritattvā*, *de nyid gsum*) to be these: the awakened body, speech, and mind; deity, mantra, and *samādhi*; and the syllables *oṃ*, *āḥ*, and *hūṃ* (Drakpa Gyaltzen 2007c, p. 644; Khenchen Palden Sherab 2004, p. 161).
- n.25 We have translated *rab tu brjod pas* (*paṭhet prayata*) as “recited in earnest.” The Comparative Edition notes that the Yongle and Lhasa versions read *rab dad brjod pa*, the Kangxi version reads *rab dung brjod pas*, and the Narthang reads *rab*

*pa tu rjod* (Comparative Edition, p. 143). Like the Yongle and Lhasa versions, the Stok Palace reads *rab dad brjod pa* (fol. 436.b.2).



b.

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## GLOSSARY

g.

g.1

Agni

*me lha*

མེ་ལྷ།

*agni*

The Vedic deity of fire. The name can also mean fire, particularly the sacrificial fire.

g.2

Amitābha

*'od dpag med*

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

*amitābha*

The buddha of the western realm of Sukhāvātī.

g.3

Bhūta

*'byung po*

འབྱུང་པོ།

*bhūta*

A general term for spirit, ghost, or demon (either positive or negative).

g.4

Brahmā

*tsangs pa*

ཙངས་པ།

*brahmā*

A high ranking deity, presiding over a divine world where other beings consider him the creator; he is also considered to be the Lord of the Sahā-world (our universe).

g.5

Gandharva

*dri za*

དྷི་ཟ།

*gandharva*

A class of semidivine beings sometimes referred to as heavenly musicians.

- g.6 Graha  
*gdon*  
 གདོན།  
*graha*  
 An evil spirit that causes seizures and insanity.
- g.7 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltzen  
*rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan*  
 རྗེ་བརྩུན་གྲགས་པ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།  
 —  
 One of the five Sakya patriarchs. He was the son of Sachen Kunga Nyingpo (*sa chen kun dga' snying po*, 1092–1158) and the younger brother of Sönam Tsemo (*bsod nams rtse mo*, 1142–82).
- g.8 Kinnara  
*mi'am ci*  
 མི་འམ་ཅི།  
*kinṇara*  
 A class of semidivine beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name—which means “Is that a human?”—suggests some confusion as to their divine status.
- g.9 Magical device  
*khrol 'khor*  
 ལྷལ་འཁོར།  
*yantra*  
 A sacred diagram that is drawn or constructed for ritual use. The Sanskrit word is derived from the Sanskrit root *√yam*, “to control.”
- g.10 Mandara  
*mada ra*  
 མད་ར།  
*mandara*  
 Mandara is a mountain that appears in various *purāṇas* describing the origin of *amṛta*, the drink of immortality. In these, Mount Mandara is used by the gods as a churning rod to churn the ocean of milk, whereby *amṛta* is produced.
- g.11 Marut  
*rlung lha*  
 ལྷུང་ལྷ།  
*marut*  
 The Vedic gods of wind.
- g.12 Meru  
*lhun po*  
 ལྷུན་པོ།

*meru*

According to the ancient Indian cosmological system, Mount Meru is a mountain which forms the center of the universe.

g.13 Nāgārjuna

*klu sgrub*

ལྷ་སྐྱུབ།

*nāgārjuna*

A Indian author who presumably lived in the ninth century or later. He composed two practices of Tārā preserved in the Degé Tengyur.

g.14 Nyen Lotsawa Darma Drak

*gnyan lo tsā ba dar ma grags*

གཉན་ལོ་ཙྗེ་བ་དར་མ་གྲགས།

—

The translator of Nyen, Darma Drak. He accompanied Ra Lotsawa (*rwa lo tsā ba*, 1016–1128?) to India where he stayed twelve years. Darma Drak is credited with translating Prajñākaramati's commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, as well as texts on Kālacakra and Tārā, and other works.

g.15 Śakra

*brgya byin*

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

*śakra*

One of the principal gods. He rules over the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

g.16 Seven netherworlds

*rim pa bdun po*

ཇིམ་པ་བདུན་པོ།

*saptapātāla*

The seven netherworlds are the seven subterranean realms inhabited by nāgas and asuras.

g.17 Seven worlds

*'jig rten bdun po*

འཇིག་རྟེན་བདུན་པོ།

*saptaloka · saptavyāhṛti*

According to various *purāṇas* and the *Atharvaveda*, our world system is divided into fourteen worlds: the seven (higher) worlds consist of the earth and the heavenly realms above, and the seven netherworlds are subterranean realms.

g.18 Śiva

*dbang phyug*

དབང་ཕྱུག།

*śiva*

Major deity in the pantheon of the classical Indian religious traditions. He is sometimes portrayed as one part of the divine triad, which also includes Brahmā and Viṣṇu.

g.19 Sūryagupta

*nyi ma sbas pa*

ཉིམ་སྐམ་པ།

*sūryagupta*

A Kashmiri scholar (paṇḍita) who is well known for his commentaries on Tārā.

g.20 Tārā

*sgrol ma*

སྐྱོལ་མ།

*tārā*

A deity (lit. “Deliverer”) known for giving protection. She is variously presented in Buddhist literature as a great bodhisattva or a fully awakened buddha.

g.21 Turā

*tu ra*

ཏུ་ར།

*turā*

An epithet (lit. “Swift One”) of the deity Tārā.

g.22 Tuttārā

*tut+tA ra*

ཏུ་ཏུ་ར།

*tuttārā*

An epithet (lit. “Savior”) of the deity Tārā.

g.23 Vetāla

*ro langs*

རོ་ལངས།

*vetāla*

A harmful spirit that haunts charnel grounds and can take possession of corpses and reanimate them.

g.24 Vindhya

*'bigs byed*

འབིགས་བྱེད།

*vindhya*

The Vindhya Mountains are a complex, broken chain of mountain ridges, hill ranges, highlands, and plateau escarpments in west-central India.

g.25 Yakṣa

*gnod sbyin*

གནོད་སྐྱིལ།

*yakṣa*

A class of spirits.