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The Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”

Tārāsvapratijñādhāraṇī

འཕགས་མ་སྐྱོལ་མ་རང་གིས་དམ་བཅས་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

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

The Noble Dhāraṇī “Tārā’s Own Promise”

Āryatārāsvapratijñānāmadhāraṇī



Toh 730
Degé Kangyur vol. 94 (rgyud, tsha), folios 222.a–222.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.

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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.

INTRODUCTION

i.

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,”¹ 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.² 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.³ While a few texts dedicated to Tārā were translated in the following centuries,⁴ 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.⁵

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 Kangyur⁶ as part of a cycle of eight Kriyāntara (*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*),⁷ and is found in a short Sanskrit ritual manual collected in the *Sādhnamālā* and preserved in Tibetan translation as *The Instructions on the Ritual of Blessed Āryatārā from the Essence of Amitābha Tantra* (*Amitābhagarbhatantra bhagavatyāryatārāyāḥ kalpoddeśaḥ*, Toh 3501).⁸ 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 *Sāadhanamālā* state that it comes from the *Amitābhaḡarbhataṅtra*.⁹ There are, however, no extant texts with either of these titles.

i.5 In attempting to establish the text of the dhāraṅī presented here, we have consulted the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) Kangyur and Butön's *Dhāraṅī Collection*. The texts preserved in the *Sāadhanamālā* edition and in the Tengyur are generally similar to each other, but they differ in a few significant ways from the dhāraṅī found in the present text. Our own rendering, therefore, is based on the best available Kangyur readings but also includes conjectures informed by the *Sāadhanamālā* text and related Sanskrit manuscripts. The English translation of the verses following the dhāraṅī 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.222.a] [F.222.b] Homage to Noble Tārā!

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

*tad yathā | om tāre tārāyai hūm hūm hūm samayasthite bhara bhara sarvābharaṇa-
vibhūṣite padme padme¹⁰ mahāpadmāsanasthite hasa hasa trailokyavarade sarva-
devadānavapūjite smarāhi bhagavati tāre smarāhi bhagavatas¹¹ tathāgatasya
purataḥ samayaṇ dhara dhara mahāsattvāvalokite maṇikanakavicitrābharaṇe | om
vilokāya (insert name)¹² bhagavati¹³ tāre hrīm hrīm hrīm phaṭ svāhā |¹⁴*

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. 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.”*

NOTES

n.

- 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* (*Tāradevīnāmāṣṭasāṭaka*, 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 spyān ras gzigs kyi yum* (*Avalokiteśvaramātādhāraṇī*, *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 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1002 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1002, [note 6 \(https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1002.html#end-note-UT22084-094-007-12\)](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1002.html#end-note-UT22084-094-007-12), for details.

- 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*^o 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! Hūm hūm hūm* 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), Hrīm hrīm hrīm svāhā!*”

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Atīśa

a ti sha

ཨ་ཏི་ཤ།

Atīśa

The Indian master Atīśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna (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 Bhṛkuṭī

khro gnyer can

ཐོ་གཉེར་ཅན།

Bhṛkuṭī

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

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

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

གཟུངས།

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 lnga

མཚམས་མེད་པ་ལྔ།

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

སྟོང་བཙན་སྐམ་པོ།

—

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

g.7 Tārā

sgrol ma

སྒྲོལ་མ།

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.