

How Tara Saved Me from Great Dangers

Narratives by H.E. Garchen Rinpoche

Om Ah Hung. Today some disciples would like to record a few stories about me. In general, my stories are not that interesting, though this one is quite meaningful, as it concerns the activity of the deity. We supplicate to the deity, who has the three qualities of omniscience, love, and power. The deity is the samboghakaya, which appears like a rainbow. You might think, “If it is like a rainbow, then it is nothing.” But this is not true, because the deity possesses omniscience, love, and power. This is also why I trust in the deity, and because of my supplications to Jetsun Tara, she has directly saved me from eight great predicaments. Each time I found myself in a difficult situation, the deity protected me, and my trust in her increased. This is why I tell everyone, “The deity is there. If you have faith and trust, the deity will be there, and your clear and trusting faith in the deity will increase.” This is why I am sharing my story.

I have not engaged in a lot of practice. I have not done much learning, contemplation, and meditation. When I was young I learned how to read and write, and I learned a bit about liturgies, rituals, and chanting. Aside from that, I have no learning. Nevertheless, ever since I was young, I have had faith in the deity and a strong belief in karma due to the teachings I received from my root gurus, such as Chime Dorje. Fully confident in karma, I understand that the deity is a natural manifestation of bodhicitta, and I have been protected by the deity in the face of eight great predicaments. Because my disciples would like to hear about this, I share my story.

(1) War (1958)

The first great predicament started in 1958. The Chushi Gangdruk Tibetan Voluntary Resistance Army had been set up to protect His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the religious and secular leader of Tibet. In that time of upheaval in Tibet, many people, lay and ordained, joined the army in order to protect the precious teachings of the Buddha. Of course, under the Communist rule such an organization was not allowed. But Andruk Gompo Tashi was quietly collaborating with traders from all over Tibet, Kham, and so on, to join forces.

At that time, in order to receive the Kalachakra initiation from the Dalai Lama, an idea was floated to offer him a Golden Throne. He accepted the request, so people began gathering together, and resources were pooled. The Golden Throne was built, and the remaining resources were used to set up the army under the guidance of Andruk Gompo Tashi. This is how the “Do Kham, Four Rivers, Six Ranges Tibetan Voluntary Resistance Army” (also known as the “Chushi Gangdruk”) was born. All the people, high and low, rose up at that time and joined the army. As for myself, in the beginning I didn’t want to join. The King of Nangchen didn’t allow any of the lamas or monks to abandon their monasteries, so we tried to persist in staying put.

However, as far as the difficulties that we knew were coming, there really wasn't any difference between surrendering to the Communist regime and joining the resistance forces. Therefore I joined and figured, "If they catch me, they catch me; if they kill me, they kill me." You can learn more about this in my life stories.

So I joined the Chushi Gangdruk and entered the war, and fought for two years. In 1960, the main part of the Chushi Gangdruk Army was destroyed, and we were separated into isolated units. By that time, the Dalai Lama had already reached India. Our unit was at Gyalrak Penpa, and we ended up escaping into a forest around a mountain. The peak of the mountain had no vegetation at all, just open grass fields. At first we hid in the forest, but soon the Communist Army had us surrounded. As they slowly made their way toward us, we could only escape by going further and further up the mountain toward the barren peak. Then one day we were forced to scatter far up the mountain, fighting our way up at night until we arrived mid-way to the top.

Originally there were two wealthy patrons from the Zarak family in our group—Zarak Dunchu and Zarak Norsang. Zarak Norsang had already been caught by the Chinese Communists, but Zarak Dunchu was still with us, hiding in the forest. One night after we'd had some tea and food together, Zarak Dunchu came to me.

"Tomorrow we will be captured, and many of us will die," he said. "There is no way out for us. For my entire life, the relations between my family and the families of Lama Gar and Lama Mingyur have been like the relationship between Guru Rinpoche and King Trisong Deutsen. I have always prayed to you for a long life free of illness, but today I have a different prayer. Today, I pray to you that tomorrow I will not fall alive into the hands of the Communists. Tomorrow, I wish to die in battle. If I die tomorrow in battle, it will be due to the grace of the Three Jewels. Should I not die, but instead fall into the hands of the Communists alive, then the Three Jewels will not have granted their protection to me. Thus, my prayer tonight is to die tomorrow in battle." That is what he said to me that night.

"May your prayers be fulfilled," I told him.

The enemy closed in at sunrise. We retreated further up the mountain until we arrived at the barren peak. Most of the men with us had already been killed by then. The Chinese army moved closer and closer, and soon we were in open battle. The Communists had Soviet rifles, AK47's, which made a "Takka! Takka!" sound every time they fired. Everyone was fighting, including the women, who were armed with guns and ammunition and fought while still wearing their heavy head adornments set with large pieces of turquoise, coral, and amber. Some of the people were even fighting with knives. Warplanes dropped bombs on us from above, and on the ground bullets and cannon-fire were flying all around.

We had some horses and mules, and we decided to remove the saddles and release them. My saddle belonged to the previous Garchen Rinpoche, and since it was very precious, I made prayers and hid it in a nearby cave. I blessed the horses and mules with the blessing balm from the Gyanagma Prayer Wheel, and let them go.

As we moved across the mountain top, bullets were flying everywhere. With each step, bullets would pass by with strong force where I had just been. Even if the bullet didn't hit you, the blast of air that came with the shot was so powerful that it made you spin, and you felt like you had been hit. In any case, there was a rain of bullets, but I was somehow able to escape from it. Many people could not escape, but I did, moving along the top of the mountain until around ten in the morning, when the path I was on ended and I came to a cliff. I jumped down the cliff into the forest, where there was no army. And thus I was saved from the threat of weapons.

This was the first time Tara saved me, from the threat of weapons.

(2) Starvation (1960)

The second time I was saved by Tara came after we had lost the battle. We stayed in the mountains for many days after that, hiding out while the Chinese Army kept us surrounded, searching for any survivors. But America had given us guns and many boxes of ammunition, so we had lots of bullets—each box held fifty bullets, and we were each carrying two, so we each had a hundred bullets. We stayed in caves and kept shooting toward the path as their army passed, while they shot at us from the opposite slope of the mountain. So we continued to shoot and fight, many to their death.

There was no food. During daylight, we stayed hidden in a thicket as their soldiers raided the area. They had airplanes searching for people all through the mountain ranges, so all day we would lay down and cover our bodies with tall grass and just stay put wherever we were. When I had to pee, I had to pee in my pants. At night I would get up and search for water. In the end, though, they had us completely surrounded and we had to surrender, and we were taken to Xining. The most important parts of this are also in my life story.

As we were transported to Xining, to keep everyone calm they told us they were sending us back home. They even sang melodious propaganda songs for us: “We’re sending you back to your home towns...” But when we arrived, there was no home town—there was only a prison, and we were put inside. That was in 1960. It was there that I got very ill.

So the next story is about how I was saved from the threat of illness from starvation. Once inside the prison, there were seven of us in a single cell. Everyone in the room was ill. A prominent comrade amongst us was the Prince of Nangchen, Achen Trinley Kunkyab. The rest were also great lamas—there were many lamas in that prison. Most of the sick people didn't have enough food to eat. Actually, the sick people even had a bit more to eat than the rest... In 1960, the vast majority didn't have food, and were so hungry they would pick up excrement and eat it.

But this was not just in prison—the people outside were really dying of starvation. In fact, when new prisoners were brought in, they found that at least in prison you occasionally got something to eat. The people outside could scarcely find any crumbs at all. The new arrivals told us that, compared to outside, you got fed pretty well in prison.

But the seven of us sick prisoners really didn't have enough to eat. Though we were given the nominal "three meals a day," each meal was only a small piece of bread or a bun. We were always hungry, and just got sicker and sicker. I found that if I ate just a little bit, I would be so hungry that it would feel like my belly was on fire, and I would want to eat more. It got to the point where I thought that I wanted to die, and I refused to eat any more. I took a vow not to eat, and secretly started giving my share to the others, each in turn. In that way I was actually able to not think of food so much. Then after not eating for a week, I could no longer move my body.

The doctor heard about me and ordered a high official to come talk to me, and I punched the official. They thought I had gone crazy, and they carried me away. They used ropes made of gunny sack and tied me to a stretcher used for carrying away corpses, and took me to a different building. Everyone thought I had lost my mind.

After they put me in the other building, the high official came to me again and said, "You are young. You probably have parents, even though they are not in China. You are young and you should eat food, study, and get medical treatment."

"It's not that I won't eat food," I replied. "It's that they don't give me any food to eat. Everyone is dying in the famine. It's not that we are refusing to eat; there's simply no food."

"You must eat what you're given," the official insisted.

"If you want me to eat," I said, "then you have to give me as much as I can eat. Otherwise, I won't eat anything at all."

At that point I was so weak they ended up feeding me through the nose. After I'd gotten a bit of strength back, the official that I had punched before came and asked me what I had to say.

"To begin with, I'm in prison because I have committed an offense," I told him. "Then, since I punched you, a high official, that increases my delinquency... So I think that after I'm fed and treated, you are going to kill me."

"No, I have no intention at all to kill you," he said. "You punched me because you are angry at the Communist regime, so from that perspective, I would have to punish you... But I really love you, so it doesn't matter that you punched me. In fact, if you eat the food you're given, I will give you whatever you want to eat."

“Well, if you give me whatever I want, I will eat.”

So they put me in a single cell, and did they feed me! Very sick people would get fed six times a day. If the sickness was not very bad, they would get fed four times a day. The rest would get the nominal three meals a day. But they gave me all of that: the six meals, plus the four meals, plus the token three meals. He really loved me. Within a month my body was stronger than before. This is how I was saved from the famine. But that was only me; many others died in the famine. So I was saved from the threat of weapons and the threat of famine. It was amazing that I didn't die. So many people had died, but not me. It was the blessings of Jetsun Tara. Why did only I receive so much food? Why did so many die in the famine? I thought it must be due to the karma of previous lives, and especially my trust in Tara. That was how I didn't die in the famine.

(3) Drowning (1963)

My body became very strong, and later I was given a job as a cook in the prison kitchen. I was doing very well with following the rules. The official told me, “You are very disciplined and you work hard. The only problem is that you are not loyal to the regime. But you do follow the rules very well.”

It was after they appointed me as a cook that I was saved from the threat of drowning. Near the cooking area, there was a large reservoir lake. There were about ten thousand Tibetan and Chinese prisoners doing forced labor in the prison factory, which was kept as a secret work camp. There were ten thousand prisoners and ten big kitchens. First team, second team...tenth team—there were a total of ten teams, ten kitchens. We were in the second team; we were the lama team, maybe it was the first team. Sometimes the weather got too cold and the water pipes to the kitchen would freeze, and no water would come out. Whenever that happened, we would have to go fetch water from the lake. We had to push carts with water tanks to get the water, which was about a kilometer walk. The lake was huge, and it would freeze during the winter. I heard that in summer some people had fallen into the lake and drowned.

The lake was so big, like an ocean, and in winter it was covered with ice. One day the water pipes froze, so I had to go fetch water for the lama team. Near the shore there was a hole in the ice where everyone took their water from, but that water was a bit cloudy, not very clean, and not very good. There was another hole to draw water from, but it was out in the center of the lake. Most people didn't dare go there, figuring it was probably very dangerous. But the water there was excellent—crystal clear.

There were carts set up around the shore to transport the water, and each cart was operated by two cooks. There were about twenty carts, so there were forty people working there. I would have to fetch the water in buckets and transfer it to the water tanks on the carts.

The water was for the lama team, so I wanted to fetch the clean water from out in the middle. It was early in the morning, around six a.m., and the weather was freezing cold. As I walked slowly to the center of the lake, the ice felt sturdy. I filled two buckets at the hole, brought the water back to the shore, and transferred it to the tank. Then I went a second time... I filled one bucket with water, then the other, and carefully placed the buckets on the ice. My feet were supported by larger blocks of ice around the hole, maybe the size of two fists. The ice blocks seemed strong enough, but then I got a little reckless: when I lifted the two full buckets at once, the ice blocks broke and I fell right into the water. One of the buckets and the wooden carrying pole landed on top of the ice, and the other bucket fell into the water with me. I was wearing a cotton top and pants, and the water went right up to my neck. From far away, I could see people crowding around the banks of the lake, screaming with raised hands: “Someone fell into the water!”

The water reached my mouth and I was sinking... but then suddenly I just floated up naturally. I immediately swung one leg up onto the ice next to the bucket and I put one arm on the ice. My clothes were soaking wet and froze immediately and stuck to the ice. I swung my other leg over onto the ice, and when I looked up, I saw the sky. All I was thinking of in that moment was Jetsun Tara. Everyone was shocked. I couldn’t stand up—my clothes were still stuck to the ice. People were crying. This is how my life was saved again, this time from the threat of water.

(4) Carbon Monoxide Poisoning (1973)

The fourth time Tara saved me was when, after having worked in prison for many years, I was moved to a somewhat “softer” prison camp. In that prison I was appointed as a security guard, and I was to have my own place in a small guardhouse. The official said, “You should guard the tools—the ones inside belonging to the workers. The people from outside come and steal the tools.” Even though the outer walls were high and surrounded by soldiers, the thieves were audacious enough to break into the prison and steal the tools. My job was to guard them from the thieves.

They built a nice little guardhouse, just for me. They even spread a coat of plaster on the walls of the house, which made it look very neat and clean. But the walls of the house were still wet when I moved in. Since there was a stove in the room, I decided to build a fire to dry the walls more quickly. I didn’t know that burning coal released poisonous gases.

So I filled the stove with large pieces of high-quality coal. I locked the front door, which I would only be unlocking again at eight a.m., when work began. Until then I would be alone. I lit a strong fire with the coal, closed the window, and went to sleep.

Normally, wherever I went, I would keep the blessing balm from the Gyanagma prayer wheel and some blessed purification water in my room. This time when I went to sleep, I suddenly felt very happy... but when I tried to move, I found that I couldn’t. I wondered what was happening, not knowing that it was from the toxic coal fumes. I tried again to move my body, but I couldn’t

get up, and I fell out of my bed onto the floor. I crawled on the floor and tried to grab hold of the blessing tincture, and when I seized it I quickly drank some, and poured some on my crown. Already I felt a bit clearer. Next to the stove there was a bucket filled with water, so I poured the water over the stove until it stopped smoking. But I still couldn't get up. There was nothing I could do but lay there until the morning.

Eventually I was able to lift myself back into my bed, but I still wasn't able to stand. I was extremely nauseous and I vomited. I lay there for a long time. At sunrise, the workers arrived and called out: "Open up!" A young man from Amdo called Konchok Tenzin, who liked me a lot, called to me, "Hey brother, are you dead?" He climbed over the outer wall around my house and knocked on my door and tried to enter, but my door was still locked. He pushed the window open and jumped in. I was still unable to move. He saw the stove filled with coal and said, "It's incredible that you didn't die!" Again I was saved, this time from the threat of poison, in the form of carbon monoxide.

(5) Food Poisoning (1979)

The fifth time I was saved wasn't long before my release, maybe a year. The supervising officials at the prison liked me very much. They gave me a letter in private telling me that my mother was still alive, and told me that I could go visit her. At that time, we were allowed to return to our home town for one month. My mother wasn't in my home town, though. She was in Pemakod. So instead of returning to my home town, I was to travel to the Lhasa area secretly, and then on to my mother's dwelling place in Pemakod. The public and the officials we would be dealing with wouldn't know that we were prison inmates. Only the prison officials would know the truth. The lead official liked me very much, and he gave me and my friend Chin Jyam documents showing that we were workers at the factory. That was in 1979. Pemakod is at the border between China and India, and it was very difficult to travel there.

The prison head told us that if the office in Lhasa gave us difficulties about going to Pemakod, we should send a telegram to the factory. While the inside of the factory was actually a prison, the outside of the building had a sign bearing the name of a large factory. It was, of course, a Chinese deception. Outside, the facility wore the impressive name of "The Second Hydroelectric Equipment Factory of Qinghai." Inside, it was nothing but a prison. For a month's labor, prisoners were only paid 1.5 RMB, plus food and clothing, so it was a real labor camp. The reason it was kept secret was because labor camps where people have to work hard for no pay were probably illegal. So the prison head gave us the letter with the factory name of "The Hydroelectric Equipment Factory of Qinghai" printed on the outside, and the letter inside stated that we were workers there.

We travelled and arrived in Lhasa, where I had to meet with officials for permission to travel further to secretly meet my mother. The officials in charge of the border said, "If both of you are going to Pemakod, that's at the border, so you must have another permit..." Chin Jyam was

proficient in Mandarin, so he could read the newspaper, and he knew what was going on in China. He also looked very impressive—well-fed and wearing fancy clothes, like a high official. So he pretended to be the boss, and I pretended to be his servant, since I didn't know Chinese very well. The other Chinese officials were all very impressed by him, and believed that he was indeed a high-ranking official. The officials said, "Please bring your work ID's here tomorrow for the proper visas."

We told them that we had been afraid of losing our ID's, so we left them back at the factory. The officials said, "Oh! You should carry your work ID's with you wherever you go. Would you send a telegram back to your factory to verify your ID's?"

"Sure!" we said. We sent the telegram, but were told we would have to wait a week to get our answer. But since we were "workers," they prepared a very nice place for us to stay for the week in Lhasa, with nice lodging and good food.

After a week, they received the factory's reply. The official read it and told us: "You are very good people! You should travel together with the army that is headed there. You can put all your baggage on the army horses." So the army helped us with everything. We stayed and ate together with them, and we also didn't have to pay much for our room. They treated us the same as their own soldiers, and escorted us to my mother unknowingly, as the Chinese had actually been keeping an eye out for her for many years.

The people in Pemakod were from my home town. They were our benefactors. Everyone knew my mother, but for twenty years no one said who she was, because if that came out, she would have immediately been arrested and put into prison by the Chinese. After my mother left our home town, many officials also came to the Pemakod area looking for her, but some of our relatives amongst them were officials as well. They helped keep it a secret, and the Chinese never found out.

After investigating my mother, the Chinese officials initially categorized her as "nameless." After a couple years, they confirmed that she had no name, that no one was responsible for her, and that she had no wealth. She became the "wealth-less mother." When we arrived in Pemakod, everyone said, "Two workers arrived today at the wealth-less mother's home."

In Pemakod everyone greeted us, everyone liked us very much. The officials of Metog County even sold us things that couldn't be bought by regular citizens: flour, tsampa, rice, and oil, at a discounted rate. We could buy whatever we wanted, and they helped us in every way. However, the people also told us that there was a tradition in Pemakod of killing people by mixing poison with their food. Many people had been killed that way. There were even stories of women trying to poison their husbands, and if he survived, the wife would just continue to live with him—very strange. They would give poison to anyone they wanted to kill.

Chin Jyam told me to be careful about being poisoned, but my mother said, “Don’t worry, no one will poison you.” She had no concerns whatsoever. It’s mentioned in my life story that in our home town in Tibet, people never saw my mother angry. She was famous for that. She was like a bodhisattva. In Pemakod everyone—the children, the officials—would call her Mother Dega. People would go to her house to eat and she would give them whatever she had.

One day during our stay, someone offered some food to me. After I ate it I suddenly got sick with a fever, and had diarrhea with blood in it. I got very sick. I only had permission for one month there, so I had already to return to prison very soon after our arrival. On my way back, I was able to obtain very precious medicine in Lhasa. After taking various medicines, I was saved from the threat of food mixed with poison. That was the first time I got food poisoning.

(6) Food Poisoning (1988)

The second time I was saved from food poisoning was in 1988. That time Bu Nima and I had gone to Pemakod together. I fell ill again, similar to the previous food poisoning. The residues from that poisoning, along with my current fever, caused me to fall ill. I was saved both times I got poisoning in Pemakod. At that time I held a position in the government. I didn’t have any political authority, but I was a government official with a salary. There are such strange positions in China’s bureaucracy. I had a little more freedom that time in Pemakod than before, and the county assisted me. They sent a car to drive me there. That was when my previous illness recurred and I suffered a little. That was the sixth time. Both, the fifth and sixth times, happened in Pemakod.

(7) Car Accident (2006)

The seventh time happened after I had arrived in the West. I had a Chinese passport, so I could go back to Tibet without a visa. I went to Tibet and stayed there for six months in 2006. When I was in Xining, I couldn’t go back to America yet. The people from Gar Monastery were begging us to stay, so out of love I could not leave them. We were already holding the Yamantaka drubchen in Arizona, and the drubchen was to be held at the same time at Gar Monastery. But when it was nearing time to get started, the monks suggested holding the drubchen in Xining instead of at the monastery. It was the Tibetan 12th month, the middle of winter, and travel to there would be all but impossible on the winter roads.

I refused, and insisted on traveling to the monastery for the drubchen. No one could stop me. Even the officials said, “Don’t go. You have breathing difficulties here even in summer. You won’t be able to stay long.” The monks all asked me to let them do the drubchen at the monastery, while I would meditate at the same time in Xining. I thought, “We are about to start Yamantaka in America, and I can’t do it. Now that I’m already here, there is no way I’m going to skip Yamantaka. I’d rather die.” I insisted on going even at the cost of my life.

I had a relative who was the governor of Haibei. His name was Sonam Lhagyal. He had a strong car, worth 320,000 RMB. He also had two drivers, and I asked them to take me to Gar Monastery in the 12th month. It had recently snowed, so the road to the monastery was frozen. We had to drive for a full day and night, using both drivers. Before we reached Drubgyu Monastery, I don't remember the name of that place... Trala and Damda, near Drubgyu Monastery, our car hit a large hole and flipped forward, tumbling end over end and landing on the roof. I was sitting in the front. There were five of us in the car. Everyone was screaming, "Gar Rinpoche!"

But Gar Rinpoche was still there. I didn't think about anything else but Tara as the car flipped and I held my hands around my prayer wheel. I was worried that my prayer wheel would break. I didn't worry about anything but my prayer wheel.

The car was totaled. I couldn't get out; the car door was stuck. The glass windows were shattered. My jacket was very thick, but the glass had cut through all my sleeves and slashed open a vein. There was a lot of blood, but I didn't want anyone to see it, so I quickly held my cuff tight and hid my hand behind my back, and didn't say a word. I couldn't get out of the car, so I used my cane to break a hole in the window.

We got out of the car, and although it was completely totaled, nothing at all had happened to any of the five passengers. Then I realized what had happened... This was the worst car accident I've had in my entire life. How could it be that all five of us were unharmed? It was really due to Tara's blessings. I used to have a friend named Chime Palden who was a driver. His car flipped sideways. Both he and the Nangchen village chief died on the spot. Actually, nothing much happened to their car. But our car flipped forward in a worse accident, and nothing at all happened to us, even though our car was totaled. We had to get it towed back to Xining. There was no way to drive that car.

The technician on the scene told us that if any other car were to crash the way ours did, there was no way anyone would survive. But nothing happened to the five of us. The car was towed away, and we stood there in the cold weather. I was holding my cuff tightly, but I was still bleeding a lot. The cuff came loose, and the blood oozed out.

Right away a car came down the road in our direction. We didn't actually know anyone in that area, but the person in the passing car was a monk from Drubgyu Monastery. He stopped right away—everyone from Drubgyu Monastery knows me. He asked me what happened, and I said that we totaled our car in an accident. I asked him what he was doing out there, and he said he had just felt like going for a drive for no special reason. He put us in his car and took us to Drubgyu Monastery.

We stopped at a restaurant at Damda on the way to cover my wound and eat. Then we went straight to Drubgyu Monastery, and then Konchok Palsang and others from Gar Monastery came

to pick us up in one of our cars. On our way back we stopped in Yushu at the county hospital to get a proper bandage for my wound. When we got to the hospital, there was no one there; everyone was home sleeping. Eventually we got in touch with someone. A few people came, but they didn't have proper medical supplies, so they stuffed cotton into my wound and covered it casually like that. Then I started to feel pain all over my arm.

We left and headed toward Tsele Monastery, where I wanted to visit. They all love me there a lot. Well, I was supposed to visit Tsele Monastery, but now, due to the accident, Konchok Palsang and the rest said, "If you go to Tsele Monastery, we will lie down on the road to block your way from Yushu." But I insisted on turning east to Tsele Monastery. To get there we had to go two hours out of our way, and then later two hours back, a four hour total. We had to go from Yushu towards Drubchu... But I insisted on going to Tsele Monastery, and once I said so, no one could stop me.

We couldn't make it all the way to Tsele Monastery due to the icy roads, but we stopped at the Tsele Nunnery. There were around two hundred nuns waiting for me along the street, all the way up to Longbada, and I greeted each one by touching my crown to theirs. In the meantime, my arm was hurting more and more. But I held out and didn't say a word. Then we left for Gar Monastery, for the Yamantaka drubchen. When we got there, I still didn't say a word about my arm, and finished preparing for the drubchen. I thought that it would be fine if I died in the drubchen.

The companion of a Canadian disciple, Amber, is a doctor. At that time they were in Xining, on their way back to America. They heard about my car accident and injury, and got very worried. Immediately they bought bandages and all sorts of medical supplies, changed their plans, and came to Gar Monastery. When they reached Shonda they couldn't get a car, and they couldn't get up to the monastery. So she sold her high-quality boots and used the money to rent a motorbike, and in this way they managed to come up to Gar Monastery. The poor thing! Then they both joined the Yamantaka drubchen. The doctor looked at my arm and cleaned out all the blood and pus that had collected over many days. Then he changed the bandage twice daily.

If they hadn't come, I would certainly have died from the infection. So a doctor couple from America came to help me, and this was also Tara's blessing. This is how I was saved from the threat of a car accident.

(8) Food Poisoning (2013)

The eighth time happened after I had already come to the West. We were having a big puja at one location. I won't mention the name of the place. I took a seat on the throne for the tea offering, and morning tea was served. I drank the tea. After I had the tea, my stomach started to rumble. Right away I got dizzy and had to vomit. Normally, I would have been able to endure... But this time, I couldn't take it any longer, and I thought that I couldn't just vomit in the

assembly. So I excused myself and tried to get off the throne quickly. But I couldn't hold it in any longer, and I vomited into my bowl. I had to leave, and I got very sick.

After a few days I was a little bit better. Later, in America, I saw a doctor. He said this was a new and very bad sickness, not like the one I had before. I had to take medicine for many months in America. I had a medical exam where I had to blow into a device, and this is how the sickness was detected. I must have ingested extremely contaminated food that was really bad for my stomach. But once again, I didn't die. That was the last time. So Tara has saved my life about eight times.

Conclusion

Briefly, what is the purpose of sharing this? I have special a devotion for Tara, though all deities are the same in essence. I always hold on to my prayer wheel tightly, and I pray to Tara. I also tell others to pray to Tara. This is why I have a lot of faith in Tara.

At one center I visited in America, they hung up a Tara thangka for me. Actually, wherever I go, people hang up Tara thangkas for me. But they hung up a Tara thangka above my head where I slept. Early one morning I was still asleep, but my sleep was very light. I felt a hand stroking my head. I knew it was a dream because I was thinking, "I don't want to wake up from this dream." She caressed me as a mother does a child.

After that I really wanted to have that thangka. I told them that I would pay any price for it. Since it was a brand new thangka, they said, "This thangka is new, it is not very valuable." So they just gave it to me, and I hung it up in Arizona. Even though the thangka was brand new, because I really trust the deity, she actually touched me. Now we have this Tara image in the rainbow sphere, and I have made hundreds of thousands of them to give to everyone. I was requested to compose a supplication, so I wrote a prayer. The Tara in the picture that I always give to people is the one that touched me.

I have encountered Tara many times in similar ways. One winter, when I was still living at Gar Monastery, I had to do puja day and night throughout the three winter months. I never had time to sleep, 24 hours a day. Most people knew about this. During the day I would do the regular puja activities at the monastery, while at night I would visit the people who invited me to their homes.

There is one commitment I have: no matter what, I will not go anywhere uninvited, not even to ask for alms. But if someone asks me to come, I will go there, even in the middle of the night. If only one person wants to receive the Refuge Vows, I will give them to him or her, even in the middle of the night. This is my heart commitment.

So one time I'd gotten very sick. At that time I was doing a White Tara retreat at the Upper Gar Monastery. I thought, "Now I am probably going to die." I was in Yeshe Tsogyal's practice cave.

It was very clean. I thought dying in her cave would be a good way to go. When I stayed at the monastery, I wouldn't normally spend a lot of time in my room—at night, I would always go out fearlessly, like a wild animal. I trained myself to not need a bed or blankets. I formed a habit of being able to do without any bedding. So at that time I was staying in Yeshe Tsogyal's cave, and I had already completed the Tara mantra accumulations. After completion, I did a fire puja in the cave. I thought that if I had to die, it would be good to die in Yeshe Tsogyal's cave.

But word had spread about my illness, and Drupa Lodro heard about it. He was in Nepal. He called and told me through Bu Nima that Gyalpo Rinpoche and others were requesting me to go to the West. I told them that didn't want to go to the West.

But Drupa Lodro insisted and said, "If you won't come out for treatment and go to the West, even though I'm old, I will get a car and come get you." This is probably in my life stories, so there is no need to explain it in depth. I am bringing it up here because at that time, while I was doing the Tara fire pujas, I had all kinds of dreams. I told Drupa Lodro about it, and he informed His Holiness Chetsang Rinpoche. This is also in my life stories.

So I was having many dreams of Tara. I was still undecided whether or not I should go to the West. I had a passport. I told Bu Nima to apply for passports. If he got them, it would be a sign that we should go, and if he didn't, it would be a sign that we shouldn't go, so then I wouldn't go. But if we didn't try, Drupa Lodro wouldn't be at peace.

We got the passports. At that time I had a dream that foretold the name of my destination, Arizona: "A... A... A..." appeared in my dream. Tara showed me the letter "A." Later, it turned out that the place where we started the center was called Arizona. Then I understood what those dreams must have indicated.

When I first went to the West, I had many dreams of Tara. There were all kinds of objects connected with Tara, like images, statues, and writings about dreams I had, which are now with His Holiness Chetsang Rinpoche.

Pray to Tara

These are the stories of how Tara has protected me from eight major threats. Besides that, she has saved me many times from minor threats. Whenever I encounter difficulties, Tara always resolves them all. Whenever I encounter difficulties in whatever I do, Tara takes care of them. I have nothing else to rely on. No matter what happens, I don't think about anything, I only pray to Tara. I never think, "I should do this or that." When I was very young, at the age of seven, I entered the monastery. Then I stayed in prison for twenty years. When I was released from prison, I had already lost my parents, but I still had relatives at home. My relatives were not too bad off, so I stayed with them at first, because I couldn't go to Gar Monastery. But I said that I would go back to the monastery, even at the cost of my life. There was no place to stay at the monastery, except only one small house that had not been demolished. I stayed there because I

wanted to serve the Buddhadharma, and that is what I have been doing ever since. I have encountered various difficulties, some bigger and some smaller, while engaging in these activities. Whenever I encounter any difficulty, I just pray to Tara and think only, “If it works out, it works out, and if not, then not.” I pray to Tara single-pointedly. Many things have been accomplished, and there are only a few left to be done. Now I’m completely purified, ready to die. Later, when I die, I will put myself into the hands of Tara; I have committed a lot of misdeeds. In any case, whether I still live or die, I pray to Tara, and I tell all my friends, “Pray to the deity.”

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May it be of benefit!