

## How Tara Saved My Life Eight Times

Today I will share a few stories about myself. In general, my stories are not that important. However, this story is quite meaningful. We supplicate to the deity who has the three qualities of omniscience, love, and power. The deity is the samboghakaya, like a rainbow. You might think “If it’s like a rainbow, it’s nothing.” But this is not true, because they possess omniscience, love, and power. This is why I also trust in the deity, and because of my supplications to Tara, she has directly saved me from eight great predicaments. Each time when I found myself in a difficult situation, the deity protected me, so my trust 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.

First, 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 the sutra path, 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)

The first great predicament started in 1958. I joined the Chushi Gangdruk Tibetan Resistance Army that was 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. In general, under the Communist rule it wasn’t easy to establish such an organization. But Andruk Gompo Tashi quietly began collaborating with traders from all over Tibet, Kham and so on, to join forces. An idea was floated to offer the Dalai Lama a Golden Throne and to receive the Kalachakra initiation from him. Under the cover of offering a Golden Throne and holding a Kalachakra initiation, people gathered, resources were pooled, and the resistance army was formed. This is how the "Kham, Four Rivers, Six Ranges Tibetan Voluntary Resistance Army" (the “Chushi Gangdruk”) was born. At that time, all the people, high and low, rose up and joined them, in order to protect the precious teachings of the Buddha. As for myself, in the beginning I didn’t want to join them. 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, there really wasn’t any difference between surrendering to the Communist regime and joining the resistance forces. So I thought, “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 entered the war and fought for two years. The year of our defeat was 1960. The Dalai Lama had already reached India. The Chushi Gangdruk Army was destroyed and we became separated into isolated units. Our unit of the split-up army was at Gyalrak Penpa. We ended up escaping to a mountain that was surrounded by forest. On the peak of the mountain there was no vegetation at all. At first we were hiding in the forest, but then the Communist Army surrounded the mountain. As they slowly made their way up towards us, we escaped further and further up the mountain. One day, in October of 1960, we were forced to scatter further up the mountain. At night we fought our way up until we arrived at the middle part of the mountain. One of us

was a patron who belonged to a great merchant family in Kharak, Tibet. Actually, there had been two, but one of them had already been caught by the Chinese. The other patron, Norsang, escaped together with us. One night, when the Chinese army was already surrounding us, we had some tea and food together. So that night, Norsang came to me and said, "Tomorrow we will be captured, and many of us will die. There is no way out for us. Our entire life we have prayed to the perfect Guru Padmasambhava and his patron, the King Trisong Deutsen, for a long life that is free of illness. Today I have a different prayer. Today I pray to the holy gurus 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 in battle tomorrow." That is what he said to me that night. I told him, "May your prayers be fulfilled." The next morning at sunrise, we escaped further up the mountain and arrived at the barren peak. Most of the women on that mountain had already been killed. The women were armed with guns and bullets, and they were shooting while they were still wearing their heavy head adornments. The Chinese army came closer and closer, and very soon we were in an open battle. Everyone was fighting; some were even fighting with knives. From above, warplanes were dropping bombs, and on the ground bullets were flying as they came closer. We took out some bullets from our ammo pouches and abandoned the pouches. I had a blessing bundle from the previous Garchen Rinpoche that was very dear to me. I made prayers, hid it in a nearby cave, and put some cartridges around it. I consecrated it all with the blessing balm from the Gyanagma Prayer Wheel and abandoned it. Then we escaped on the mountain. Bullets were flying everywhere. With each step, a bullet would pass where I had just been. We had these Soviet rifles, type 50, I think. They were very powerful. Even if the bullet didn't hit you directly, the blast of air that came with the shot was so powerful that it almost felt like you had been hit. In any case, there was a rain of bullets, but I was able to escape from it. Many people could not escape. I escaped, and around 10 am, the path 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.

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The second time came after we had lost the battle. We stayed in the mountains for many days. The Chinese Army still surrounded us, searching for people. Some of us still had ammunition and guns. We stayed in caves and kept shooting guns towards the path where the army passed. America had given us a lot of ammunition, so we had many boxes of ammunition. Each box held fifty bullets, and we were each carrying two, so we each had a hundred bullets. We continued to shoot and fight; many fought to their death. They were shooting across at us from an opposite slope of the mountain. We stayed hiding in a thicket for a few days. There was no food. During daylight, they kept raiding the area, and had airplanes searching for people in the vast mountain ranges. During the day, we would cover our bodies with tall grass and just stay put. When I had to pee, I had to pee my pants. At night I would get up to search for water. All of this is in my life story. In the end, still in 1960, we had to surrender, and we were taken to Xining. They had told us that they would send us back home. We were singing popular folk songs, thinking that we were going home, but when we arrived, there was no home town; we were put in prison. Then I got very ill. So the next story is about how I was saved from the threat of illness. We were seven people in one prison cell. Everyone in that room was ill. A prominent comrade amongst us was the Prince

of Nangchen, Achen Trinley Künkyab. 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 had a bit more to eat than the rest. In 1960, the vast majority didn't have food; they would pick up excrement and eat it. But not just in prison, the people outside were dying in a famine. In fact, when new prisoners were brought in, they found that in prison you got something to eat at least occasionally. The people outside could scarcely find crumbs to eat. They said that in prison you get fed well. We thought that we didn't have enough to eat in prison, but apparently it was worse outside, where people were dying of starvation. So, we seven sick prisoners didn't really have enough food to eat. We were always hungry, and we got sicker. I thought that I wanted to die. Although there was not enough food, it was just nominally "three meals a day," I secretly started to give my share to the others, each in turn. I wanted to die and refused to eat. That way I was actually not thinking of food so much. If I ate just a little bit, I would be so hungry, it felt like my belly was on fire. Then I would want to eat more. So I took a vow not to eat anymore. After not eating for one week, I could no longer move my body. One day the doctor heard about me. He ordered a high official to come talk to me, and I punched him. They thought I had gone crazy and they carried me away. They rolled my body up in a sheet like a corpse and took me to a different building. Everyone thought I had lost my mind. After they put me in a different building, some high official said to me, "You are young. You probably have parents, but they are not in China. You are young; eat food, study, and get medical treatment." I replied, "It's not that I won't eat food. They don't give me any food. Everyone is dying in the famine. It's not that we aren't eating; there is no food." They said, "Eat food," and I said, "If you want me to eat, then you have to give me as much as I can eat. Otherwise, I will not eat anything at all." Then they force-fed me through the nose. That same official that I had punched before came and asked me what I had to say. I said, "To begin with, I'm in prison because I have committed an offense. Then, since I punched you, a high official, that increases my delinquency. I think that after I'm fed and treated, you are going to kill me." And he said, "No, I have no intention at all to kill you. 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, it doesn't matter that you punched me. Eat food, I will give you whatever you want to eat." I said, "Fine, if you give me whatever I want, I will eat." Then they put me into 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 mere 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 kept his promise. Within one month my body was stronger than before. This is how I was saved from the famine. That was only me; many others died in the famine. So I was saved from the threat of weapons and the threat of famine. I thought that it was the blessings of Tara that I didn't die in the midst of so much death. 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. Thus, my trust in Tara increased even more. That was how I didn't die in the famine. My body became very strong, and I was given a job in the kitchen as a cook. I was doing very well with following the rules. They 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."

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The third time was after they had appointed me as a cook; I was saved from the threat of drowning. Near the cooking area, there was a large water reservoir underground. There were about 10,000 Tibetan and

Chinese prisoners doing forced labor around it, working secretly. This water reservoir with 10,000 people working on it, served ten big kitchens. I was there in the first or second generation. Sometimes, when the weather was cold, the pipes leading the water to the kitchen froze, and no water would come. When that happened, we had to go fetch water, walking on pathways of wooden planks that were about a kilometer long over the water. The reservoir was huge, and I had to creep over it on those planks. I heard that even in summer, some people fell into the tank and died. The reservoir was so big, like an ocean. In the winter it was covered over, and once I had to go fetch water. There was another lama with me in the kitchen. He said to me, "There is one hole to fetch water at the edge of the tank; everyone takes the water from there. But that water is a bit cloudy; it is not very clean, not very good. There is another hole to fetch water, but it's right at the center of the lake, and most people don't dare go there; it's probably very dangerous. But the water there is excellent, crystal clear." The reservoir was underground, everything else was above it. The carts to transport the water were all set up on top. Each cart was operated by two people. There were about twenty carts, so there were forty people. I had to fetch the water in a bucket and transfer it into these carts. The first time I went slowly over the planks with two buckets in my hands. It felt safe, sturdy, and I brought back the first load of water safely. Because that lama had told me about the clean water, I wanted to fetch clean water. So I fetched it once, brought it back, and transferred it. Then I went a second time. First I filled one bucket with water, then I filled the other one. I carefully placed the buckets on the planks. My feet were supported inside a small hole the size of two fists, inside the fabric that covered the lake. Actually, the fabric was quite thick. But then I was a little reckless, so after I had placed the two full buckets next to me, I jumped up to get back out, but the hole ripped and I fell into the water. One bucket stayed on top, the other one fell in together with me. The bucket that fell with me had a rope attached to it. I could barely keep my head above water; my whole body was submerged in freezing cold water. It was early morning, around 6 a.m.; I could see people crowding around the banks of the reservoir, far away. I saw them screaming, with raised hands, "Someone fell into the water!" Then I was lifted up naturally...I swung one leg up, with my clothes soaking wet, and laid it on the bucket. When I touched my leg with my hand, it got stuck on the wet clothes instantly. It was so cold, that my hand froze onto my pants. So I didn't drown, but I was floating on the bucket. All I was thinking of in that moment was Tara. Everyone was shocked and crying when they saw me floating there with my hand frozen to my leg. This is how my life was saved again, this time from the threat of water. That was when I was in prison, probably in 1963.

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The fourth time 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 to be a security guard, watching over the compound. At that time, I was by myself in a small guardhouse, and I had to protect all the tools kept outside the buildings from thieving outsiders. Actually, the outer walls were surrounded by soldiers, so only the toughest of thieves could really get in. They built a nice, little house, only for me. They even spread a coat of plaster over the outside walls. They made it look very neat and clean. The walls of the house were still wet and there was a stove in the room. I filled the stove with large pieces of high-quality coal. The main door was locked, it only had to be opened at 8 a.m. when work began. Until then, I was by myself. In order to dry the room, I filled the entire stove with coal, I made a strong fire, closed the window, and went to sleep. Normally, wherever I went, I would always have with me a tincture of water mixed with the

blessing balm from the Gyanagma prayer wheel and some blessed purification water, to consecrate that place. That one time, when I was sleeping, I suddenly felt very happy, but I couldn't move. I wondered what was happening. I didn't know that burning coal [in a sealed room] is toxic. I quickly tried to move my body, but I couldn't get up and I fell out of my bed to the ground. I crawled on the floor and tried to grab hold of the blessing tincture. I seized it, quickly drank some of it, and poured some on my crown, and already felt a bit more clear. On the other side of the room was a bucket filled with water. I poured the water over the stove and it stopped smoking. But I still couldn't get up. There was nothing I could do but wait for the door to be unlocked in the morning. I was able to lift myself back into my bed but I still wasn't able to stand up. I was extremely nauseous and I vomited. I stayed there for a long time, until sunrise and the workers arrived. I was screaming, asking them to open the door. A young man from Amdo called Konchok Tenzin who liked me a lot called to me, "Hey brother, you didn't die, did you? What's going on?" He climbed over the outer fence and knocked on my door, but my door was locked. He desperately tried to get into my room through the window, and eventually he kicked in the door. I was unable to move. When he saw the stove filled with coal he said, "It's incredible that you didn't die." Again I was saved, this time from the threat of poison, of toxic coal.

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The fifth time wasn't very long before my release, perhaps just about one more year. The supervising officials liked me very much. They secretly passed a letter to me to inform me of the whereabouts of my mother, and that I could go to meet her. In general, we were given a short leave to visit home. They granted me leave for a visit home, but secretly let me go towards Lhasa, saying that my mother might be in that area. So I went to meet my mother in Pemakod. That was in 1979. I left for Lhasa, undercover with official papers stating that I belonged to that prison. The head of the prison really liked me, and he issued me and one companion, a high-ranking inmate, a document to take with us, confirming that we were actually spies. Pemakod lies towards Lhasa, at the border between China and India. It was very difficult to travel there. The prison head told us that if we ran into difficulties with those documents, we should contact the main office of the "factory". Actually, inside, it was a prison; but outside, anyone could see was the name of a large factory. It was, of course, a Chinese deception. Outside, the facility had the impressive name of "the Second Hydroelectric Equipment Factory", but inside, it was nothing but a prison. In one month prisoners were only paid 1.5 RMB, in addition to food and clothing. It was an actual labor camp inside. The reason it was kept secret was because labor camps where people have to work hard for no pay were probably illegal. So he sent us with this letter stating that we were spies and part of the Second Hydroelectric Equipment Factory. By identifying ourselves as members of the factory, we would avoid trouble. We arrived in Lhasa, but of course I had to travel further to meet my mother. The officials told us that Pemakod is at the border, and if we wanted to go there we would need a separate permit. My supervisor-inmate companion's Chinese was very good, he could read the newspaper. He also looked very impressive, like a high official. Since he was able to follow the news, he knew what was going on in China. He pretended to be the boss and I pretended to be his servant, because I didn't know Chinese very well. The other Chinese officials were all fooled and really believed that he must be a high-ranking official. He was also well-fed, and we were both wearing fancy clothes. The next day the officials asked us for other identification papers, and we told them that we had left them back at the factory. They told us that we were required to take them wherever we go. Then they asked us if we could call the

factory, and we said yes. However, we had to wait for an entire week in order to make a phone call. Since we were “spies” they prepared a very nice place for us to stay for that week. They treated us very well, and we ate together with their soldiers. After making the phone call a week later, they said, “You are very good people, you should travel together with the army. You can put all your baggage on the army horses.” The army helped us with everything; they gave us a place to stay, we ate together with them, and we also didn’t have to pay a lot for our room. They treated us the same as their own soldiers, and escorted us to my mother. The Chinese had actually been keeping an eye on my mother for many years. Everyone in Pemakod had links to our home region, as that town was its benefactor. Everyone knew my mother, but for twenty years no one said that she was my mother, because if that came out, she would have immediately been arrested and put into prison by the Chinese. Many officials actually searched for my mother, but some of our relatives were amongst them, and they confirmed that my mother could not be found. So the officials there didn’t know either; she remained there incognito. After investigating my mother, they categorized her as “nameless.” After one or two years, they confirmed that she had no name, no one responsible for her, and they called her “the bondless mother.” Everyone said, “Today two spies arrived at the bondless mother’s home.” The officials of Metog County welcomed us very warmly with the best things that couldn’t be bought: bread, tsampa, grains, butter, and apparel. We could buy whatever we wanted, and they helped us in every way. However, people said that there was a tradition in Pemakod of killing people by mixing poison with their food; many people were killed that way. There are even stories of women trying to poison their husbands, and if he survived it, his wife would just continue to live with him—very strange. They would give poison to anyone. Everyone told me to be careful about the poison but my mother said, “Don’t worry, no one will poison you.” She had no concerns whatsoever. In the past, in our home town in Tibet, I 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 come in, have food, offer all kinds of food, and have a good time. One day, someone offered some food to me. I didn’t know about it, but after I ate it, I suddenly got a fever and diarrhea with blood in it; I got very sick. I only had permission for one month there, so I had to return very soon. On my way back, I was able to obtain good medicine. After taking various medicines, I was saved from the threat of food mixed with poison.

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The sixth time was later, in 1988. I fell ill again for similar reasons. I had a fever because I had eaten some food mixed with poison, and again I was saved from the threat of eating food mixed with poison. At that time, Bunima was with me, and 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. At that time, Tibetans had a little more freedom than before. So, once when I was traveling in a car that had been arranged by the County, that illness from poisoning got worse again.

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The seventh time was after I had arrived in the West. I obtained a visa-permit in Malaysia to travel to China. I went to Tibet and stayed there for one year. In the summer we were holding pujas at the monastery, and while I was staying at the monastery, I couldn’t breathe anymore. I couldn’t stay there without an oxygen bottle. In the sixth and seventh Tibetan months I had to travel around; this you can

also find in my life stories. I gave empowerments and teachings on the Eight Classes of Heruka and performed different pujas all over. In the eighth and ninth months, I couldn't stay at that altitude anymore and I had to move to Xining. I couldn't go back to America yet, and at that time we had already started to hold the Yamantaka drubchens there. The drubchen was held at the same time at Gar Monastery, and when it was time to get started, the monks suggested holding the drubchen in Xining instead of the monastery since I couldn't travel there. I refused and insisted on traveling to the monastery for the drubchen. No one could stop me. Even the officials begged me not to go, and said that I could go to the monastery in the summer. They were worried that I wouldn't be able to breathe. At that time it was the Tibetan twelfth month. 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 here. I'd rather die. I insisted on going even at the cost of my life. One of my relatives, Sonam Lhagyal, also a government official, had a strong car, worth 320,000 RMB. He also had two drivers. I asked them to take me to Gar Monastery in the twelfth month. It had snowed, so the road to the monastery was frozen. We had to drive day and night, and we had two drivers. When we reached Traladam, in the area of Drubgyu Monastery, we had an accident. Our car hit a pothole and then flipped over. I was sitting in the front, right where we hit the pothole. I was in front and there were people in the back; we were five people. Everyone was screaming, "Gar Rinpoche!" Gar Rinpoche was still there. I didn't think about anything else but Tara as I put 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; the windows broke, and the broken glass cut my arm through my jacket, which was actually very thick. The glass cut through all my layers of clothes and slashed my skin open. There was a lot of blood, but I didn't want anyone to see it, so I quickly covered my sleeve, 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 the window. We left the car, and although the car had been completely totaled, nothing at all had happened to us five passengers. Then I realized what had happened; this was the worst car accident I have 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 who was a driver in Nangchen County, and who died in a car accident when he hit a pothole. Actually, nothing much happened to the car, but he died on the spot. His name was Chime Palgye. But when we hit the pothole, 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 manufacturers of our car said that if the car were to crash the way ours did, there was no way someone would survive it. But nothing happened to the five of us. The car was towed, and the weather was very cold. My arm was like a block of ice, but I was bleeding a lot. The covering on my arm came loose, and I lost a lot of blood. Right away a car passed us. 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 had happened, and I said that we had lost our car. 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 Domda on the way to fix my bandage and eat. Then we went straight to Drubgyu Monastery, and Konchok Palsang from Gar Monastery came to pick us up in one of our cars. On our way back we stopped in Yushu at the hospital to get a proper bandage for my wound. When we got to the hospital, there was no one there; everyone was sleeping. Finally we called someone, and a few people came, but they didn't have a bandage for my wound, so they fixed a provisional bandage. Then I started to feel pain all over my arm. A lot of dirt had gotten into my

wound, and they just covered it up. We left and stopped at Tsele Monastery; they all love me there a lot. There were around 200 people waiting for me along the street, all the way up to Daragar. If we hadn't had the accident, I was supposed to visit Tsele Monastery. Konchok Palsang and the rest said, "How can you go to Tsele Monastery now? Everyone is blocking the road all the way from Yushu. People are lying in the street to keep you from going. 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; in total, we still had ten hours to drive. From Yushu we had to go in the opposite direction from Drubgyu Monastery. 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, but we stopped at the Tsele Nunnery. There are a lot of nuns there, around 200. I greeted each one by touching my crown to hers. 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. I still didn't say a word, and did the drubchen. I thought that it would be fine if I died in the drubchen. The husband of an American disciple, Amber—she is now in Nepal—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 about it. 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, so they couldn't get up to the monastery. She sold some of her clothing and some nice shoes, 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. He changed the bandage twice every night. If they hadn't come, I would certainly have died. 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.

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The eighth time was after I had already come to the West. We were having a big retreat at one place. I took a seat on the throne for the tea offering and morning tea was served. I drank the tea. After I had that tea, my stomach started to rumble. Right away I got dizzy and had to vomit. I still tried to be patient and persevere. Then 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. Then I left, and I was very sick. After a few days I was a little bit better. Then a doctor came to see me, because this was a new and very bad sickness, not one I had had before. I had to take medicine for many months. Back 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.

It's quite a long story, but briefly, what is the purpose of sharing this? I believe in Tara, but all deities are the same. 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. So they hung up a Tara thangka above my head where I slept. One day, early in the morning, I was still sleeping, 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. Then I really wanted to have that thangka.

I said that I would pay any price for it. 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]; 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. When I was still living at Gar Monastery, before I went to the West, I was sick one time. This story might not be in my life stories. I was very sick and I had to do puja 24/7 throughout the three winter months. 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, even in the middle of the night. This is my heart commitment. Therefore, throughout the three winter months, 24/7, I would go. I never had time to sleep, 24 hours a day. Most people knew about this. So one time I was 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. 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, that one 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. Then word spread about my illness, and Drupa Lodro heard about it. He told me that Gyalpo Rinpoche and others were requesting me to come to the West. I told them that I didn’t want to go to the West. But Drupa Lodro insisted and said, “If you won’t come, 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 during that time, I had many dreams of Tara. At that time I was undecided whether or not I should go to the West. I didn’t have a passport. I told Bunima that if we got passports, it would be a sign that we should go; but if we didn’t get passports, 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. Then I got a passport. 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. There were all kinds of signs that were recorded, and the records are now with His Holiness, Chetsang Rinpoche.

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 lost my parents, but I still had relatives at home. My relatives were not too bad off, so I stayed with them first, because I couldn’t go to Gar Monastery. But I said that I would go to the monastery, even at the cost of my life. There was no place to stay at the

monastery; there was no house. There was only one small house left that had not been demolished, and 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 with single-pointed mind. Sometimes things do go wrong, but a lot also gets accomplished. 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.” This concludes my stories of Tara.

*Translated by Ina Trinley Wangmo and edited by Kay Candler in 2018.*