

ཤེས་རབ་སྐྱེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight” (2)

Prajñāvardhanīnāmādhāraṇī

· Toh 1037 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waM), folios 185.b–186.a



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Summary

- s.1 The text presents a single dhāraṇī for the generation of insight, and correspondingly, the ability to memorize large quantities of text.

Acknowledgements

- ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.
- ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Paul G. Hackett produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Rory Lindsay edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

- i.1 This text presents a single dhāraṇī to enable the retention of what has been heard and generate insight (*prajñā*), with no additional explanation. Of the four types of dhāraṇīs described by the fourth-century scholar-yogi Asaṅga,¹ this text falls into the category of Dharma dhāraṇīs, which enable one to retain knowledge of Dharma teachings that have been heard.
- i.2 In this particular text, only one dhāraṇī is given. It is as follows:
- i.3 *hūṃ | picu picu | prajñāvardhani | jvala jvala | medhāvardhani | dhiri dhiri | buddhivardhani | svāhā |*
- i.4 This can be translated roughly as follows: “Hūṃ! Shimmer! Shimmer! Increase insight! Blaze! Blaze! Increase intelligence! Stabilize! Stabilize! Increase comprehension! May auspiciousness abound!”

- i.5 Like many dhāraṇīs, this one appears to have its roots in a larger tantra, and in this case is found in the following three tantras:²

The Tantra of Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa (Caṇḍmahroṣaṇatantra; khro bo chen po'i rgyud, Toh 431), 5.6;

The Tantra of Red Yamāri (Raktayamāritantra; gshin rje gshed dmar po'i rgyud, Toh 474), folio 193.a); and

The Tantra of Black Yamāri (Kṛṣṇayamārināmatantra; gshin rje gshed nag po zhes bya ba'i rgyud, Toh 467), 1.184.

- i.6 In the latter two of these, this dhāraṇī is also identified as a mantra of Sarasvatī, a goddess of the arts and, in particular, of eloquence. Indeed, at the very opening of his foundational treatise on eloquence, *The Mirror of Poetry (Kāvyādarśa)*, Daṇḍin invokes Sarasvatī herself, likewise requesting her inspiration:

- i.7 May the whitest of all swan maidens— You, O Sarasvatī, from the lotus grove of faces Of the Four-Faced One, come and revel For a time, in the lake of my mind.³

- i.8 So, too, one can easily imagine Sarasvatī being viewed as a benefactor of knowledge in general and, for similar purposes, being associated with knowledge enhancement. Indeed, in at least one commentary on Daṇḍin's verse, Sarasvatī is presented as the consort of Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva of wisdom.⁴

- i.9 This text is not known to be extant in Sanskrit, and, as with most *dhāraṇīs*, nothing is known about the context of its production, use, or popularity in ancient India. Given the extensive number of sūtras and secondary literary compositions within the Indian Buddhist sphere, one can easily imagine that a *dhāraṇī* enabling a person to memorize large quantities of text would have broad popular appeal. Whether or not attestations of success accompanied such texts, the promise of such results could easily account for the propagation of the text outside of the Indian subcontinent into Tibet, China, and surrounding regions.
- i.10 According to its colophon, the text was translated during the imperial era of Tibet, in ca. 750, by the Indian master Jñānagarba and the Tibetan translator Lü Wangpo. Consequently one expects, and indeed sees, a certain amount of irregular translation terms, particularly with regard to proper names, which had yet to be standardized at that time.⁵ In addition, the text is attributed to imperial era translators and yet does not appear in catalogs produced during that era, such as the *Denkarma*.⁶ Therefore, it is likely that this text was not subjected to the revision processes of the early ninth century, despite the colophon specifying that the preserved translation was revised by the Indian preceptor *Vidyākarasiṃha* and the editor *Bandé Devacandra*.
- i.11 Herrmann-Pfandt (2002) identified a text in the Chinese canon that was an equivalent of this text: Taishō 1372.⁷ This text, *The Sūtra of the Dhāraṇī for Increasing Insight* (增慧陀羅尼經), bears a sufficiently close resemblance to the Tibetan text presented here to allow for its attribution to a common source. The Chinese version of this text was produced close to two hundred years after its Tibetan translation, in the seventh month of the second year of Shun Hua (淳化) of the Northern Sung dynasty (北宋), the equivalent of 991 CE,⁸ by *Dānapāla* (施護), a.k.a. *Dānarakṣita*, who is said to have traveled to China from Udayana.⁹

- i.12 In its Tibetan translation, this text is found in two different locations in many recensions of the Kangyur.¹⁰ One version (Toh 718) is found in the Action Tantra (*kriyātantra*; *bya ba'i rgyud*) section of the canon, specifically in the sectional classification offered by the Tibetan editors of the canon as associated with the “Lotus” tantric family (*pad+ma'i rigs*).¹¹ The second version of this text (Toh 1037) is found in the Compendium of *Dhāraṇīs* section. The versions of the text are nearly identical, with only minor differences between them and between the various recensions of the Kangyur.
- i.13 There are two other texts in the Kangyur (Toh 650/1039 and Toh 719/1038) with the same name and found in the same sections of the Degé Kangyur, though their content differs somewhat—while all three texts present a short *dhāraṇī* along with brief instructions for its use, all for the purpose of enhancing one’s ability to retain teachings, they differ in their *dhāraṇīs* and instructions, and the text presented here unique in embedding its *dhāraṇī* in a proper setting and introduction typical of sūtra works, along with a narrative of the origin. Toh 650 and Toh 719 contains no narrative context, their *dhāraṇīs* taking the form of an invocation of Avalokiteśvara, presented with a brief instruction on their use. All three texts pertain to the increase of one’s ability to retain texts and teachings. Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt (2002) has discussed the relationship of these three similarly named texts across various recensions of the Kangyur.¹²
- i.14 This translation of the text into English was produced primarily based on the Degé^{13 14} recension while making reference to the Stok Palace version and to the variants noted in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), which were validated in the source texts—notably the Narthang—as was necessary. With the exception of the synopsis of the text provided by Herrmann-Pfandt (2002), and a recent unpublished draft translation from the Chinese of this text made by Rolf Giebel (2024), there is no known previous translation of this text into a language outside the Tibetan sphere of influence.

The Translation

1.

The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight”

1.1 Homage to the Omniscient One.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The bodhisattva¹⁵ Sumati¹⁶ was dwelling on the slopes of Mount Sumeru. Having been surrounded by all the devaputras who reside on Mount Sumeru, when they had sat in front of him, the Bhagavan taught them the Dharma.

1.3 Then the bodhisattva mahāsattva Kumārabhūta¹⁷ made obeisance with folded hands and supplicated the bodhisattva Sumati, “O Bhagavan, for the sake of those sentient beings who are weak in insight, who are of little intelligence,¹⁸ and who lack mental acuity, I beseech you to explain the dhāraṇī called *generating insight*.”

1.4 He spoke:

1.5 *hūṃ | picu picu | prajñāvardhani | jvala jvala | medhāvardhani | dhiri dhiri | buddhivardhani | svāhā |*¹⁹

1.6 Whosoever memorizes²⁰ this dhāraṇī, reads it, writes it, has it written, actively studies it, or even hears just a single spoken syllable of it will, in this very life, become someone of great insight.

1.7 Whosoever, over the course of six months, each day over a palmful of rice water,²¹ recites this vidyā seven times—when this is drunk at sunrise—will be able to retain a thousand verses.²² If drunk once, they will be able to retain five hundred, and in even just a single day, their insight will increase. Similarly, by merely reciting it every day, it will give rise to mindfulness and mental acuity.

1.8 *This completes the dhāraṇī “Generating Insight.”*

Colophon

- c.1 This was translated by the Indian preceptor Jñānagarbha and the translator Bandé Lü Wangpo. It was then edited and finalized by the Indian preceptor Vidyākarasiṃha and the great editor-translator Bandé Devacandra.

Notes

1. Asaṅga. *byang chub sems dpa'i sa (Bodhisattvabhūmi)*. A discussion of various classifications of dhāraṇīs is given in Pagel 2007.
2. The historical connection between this dhāraṇī and any of these tantras remains unclear.
3. *caturmukhamukhāmbhoja vanahaṃsavadhūr mama | mānase ramatām dīrghaṃ sarvasuklā sarasvatī* || (vs. I.1). Daṇḍin. *snyan ngag me long (Kāvyaḍarśa)*. Toh 4301, Degé Tengyur vol. 198 (sgra mdo, se).
4. Cf. Paṇchen Jamyang Khache, 474.
5. The locus classicus of Sanskrit–Tibetan translation terms, *The Great Treatise on Understanding Etymologies (Mahāvvyutpatti; bye brag tu rtogs par byed pa)* and *The Glossary in Two Sections (Nighaṇṭu; sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa)*, was not compiled and ratified until the time of Tridé Songtsen (*khri lde srong btsan*, a.k.a. *sad na legs*, ca. 814 CE), whereas this text appears to have been translated slightly before that time.
6. Denkarma (*pho brang stod thang ldan dkar gyi chos kyi 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag*). Toh 4364, Degé Tengyur vol. 206 (sna tshogs, jo), folios 294.b–310.a.
7. Lewis R. Lancaster's catalog (see note 13) does not identify this text with a Tibetan equivalent.
8. Lewis R. Lancaster, K 1198, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed September 23, 2024.
9. Lokesh Chandra 1998.
10. It is worth noting that this text is missing in the Thempangma line of Kangyurs, with the exception of the Stok Palace (stog pho brang, ca. 1729) recension, which includes one version of it: *shes rab skyed pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs (Prajñāvardhanīnāmadhāraṇī)*. Stok Palace Kangyur vol. 105 (rgyud, pha), folios 94.b–95.a.
11. Herrmann-Pfandt (2002, pp. 125–31) has speculated on the significance of these subcategories, to which the interested reader is referred.
12. We can also consider these three texts as parts of a broader group of closely related works in the Degé Kangyur comprising short rituals to enhance one's ability to retain texts and teachings. Toh 711–716 and Toh 792 (= Toh 1034, 1042–1047) make for a set of brief ritual texts with largely the same structure and all aimed at memorizing large numbers of verses (from one hundred to three thousand) in a short amount of time. All these works bear some relation to the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Toh 650–651 and Toh 717–720 (= Toh 1037–1041, 1048) make for another similar group of ritual works for retaining what has been learned or memorized.
13. [note f9ebeeef...]
14. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1037 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1037, n.13, for details.

15. The Tibetan has the unusual term “bhagavan bodhisattva” (*bcom ldan ’das byang chub sems dpa’*), while the Chinese has only “bodhisattva” (菩薩). Given the incommensurate nature of these two terms, we have amended the reading based on the Chinese.
16. Tib. *blo ldan*. Chn. 大慧 (*dà huì*). The Chinese implies *Mahāmati, while the Tibetan would imply reading this literally as *Dhimat but more likely, in light of the Chinese, as *Sumati. Another possibility is that this is a translation of *Subuddhi, being a corruption of *Subhūti, who was a key interlocutor in the Perfection of Wisdom sūtras.
17. Tib. *gzhon nu’i gzugs can*. Chn. 童子相 (*tong zi xiang*). The Tibetan would imply reading this literally as *Kumārārūpin (“having the body/form of youth”), while the Chinese implies *Kumāralakṣaṇa (“having the signs of youth”). Based on the this, Herrmann-Pfandt (2002, p. 120) hypothesizes that this must be an epithet of Mañjuśrī. This speculation would seem to be reinforced by the fact that two earliest mentions of a text by this title occur in handlists produced in the twelfth and thirteen centuries by the Sakya scholars Drakpa Gyaltsen (grags pa rgyal mtshan, 1147–1216) and Chögyal Phakpa (chos rgyal ’phags pa, 1235–80) in which they are classified under the tantric systems associated with Mañjuśrī, presumably in reference to taking him as the interlocutor (cf. Herrmann-Pfandt 2002, p. 125). Hence, the standardized form, Kumārabhūta, is given here.
18. Tib. *blo dang mi ldan pa*; [alt.] *blo zhan pa*. Chn. 童子相 (*tong zi xiang*).
19. The basic meaning of the mantra is “Hūṃ! Shimmer! Shimmer! Increase insight! Blaze! Blaze! Increase intelligence! Stabilize! Stabilize! Increase comprehension! May auspiciousness abound!” On the occurrences of this mantra is three tantras, see the introduction, i.4. The meaning of the exhortations provided here are as given in Devakulamahāmati’s *A Commentary on the Difficult Points of the King of Tantras, the Vajra Net of Dākīṇis, Called ‘Expanding Suchness’* (*Dākinīvajrajālapañjaratantrarājasyapañjikātattvapauṣṭikanāma*; *rgyud kyi rgyal po mkha’ ’gro ma rdo rje dra ba’i dka’ ’grel de kho na nyid rgyas pa zhes bya ba*), folio 88.a.
20. The word “memorizes” (*’dzin pa*) is omitted in all other recensions (Narthang, Stok Palace, and others), and in those recensions the exhortation begins with “reads” (*klog pa*).
21. Tib. *zhing(?) rtsab[s]*. It is conjectured that this is a translation of *kāñjika following Das (1902): *rtsab mo*. The Chinese reads simply “water” (水).
22. Tib. *tshigs su bcad pa stong*. Toh 1037 reads “a thousand verses each [day]” (*tshigs su bcad pa stong stong*). A similar sentiment is expressed in the Chinese translation: 日記千頌 (“memorize a thousand verses daily”).

Glossary

null

ban+de de ba tsan+d+ra

བནེ་དེ་བ་ཙ་ན།

An Indian “mahāpaṇḍita” (mkhas pa chen po) who worked on translations in Tibet during the imperial era (ca. 800).

null

ban+de klu'i dbang po

བནེ་ལྷུ་འི་དབང་པོ།

Name of an imperial-era translator in the eighth century ce, who was a minister of king Tri Songdetsen (khri srong lde'u btsan, ca. 742–796). He is also listed as one of the “seven tested men” (sad mi mi bdun), the first group of Tibetan men who were ordained under the Indian paṇḍita Śāntarakṣita.

null

bid+yA ka ra sing ha

བིདྲ་ཀ་ར་སིང་ཧ།

null

An Indian abbot (mkhan po) who worked on translations in Tibet during the imperial era (ca. 800).

null

blo ldan

བློ་ལྷན།

null

Name of a bodhisattva.

null

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ།

null

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfilment of the altruistic intention to attain perfect buddhahood, traversing the ten bodhisattva levels (daśabhūmi, sa bcu). Bodhisattvas purposely opt to remain within cyclic existence in order to liberate all sentient beings, instead of simply seeking personal freedom from suffering. In terms of the view, they realize both the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena.

null

lha'i bu

ལྷའི་བུ།

null

Lit. “son of a god.” A class of beings in the higher planes of existence in the desire realm, as well as in the form and formless realm.

null

gzungs

གཟུངས།

null

From the Sanskrit verb *dhṛ* (“to hold”), the term refers to the ability to hold or retain the Buddha’s teachings in the memory. It also denotes the specific mnemonic formulas or aids to doing so, which distill the teachings into shorter utterances. From there, the term also carries a strong sense that such formulas or devices, when spoken or rehearsed in the mind, have extraordinary power to effect change in the world and in oneself.

null

dz+nyA na gar+b+ha

ལྷོ་ན་གཞི།

null

Name of an Indian preceptor (mkhan po) who lived in the mid-eighth century (ca. 700-770) and worked as a translator in Tibet. According to Hodge (2003, p. 24), he was the teacher of Śāntarakṣita (710–779). He is a different person from the Jñānagarbha who lived in the tenth century and was the teacher of Smṛtijñānakīrti (950–1025), and who was known to adhere to Yogācāra-Madhyamaka philosophical positions.

null

gzhon nu gzugs can

གཞོན་ལུ་གཟུགས་ཅན།

null

Name of a bodhisattva. Possibly an epithet of Mañjuśrī.

null

sems dpa' chen po

མེས་སྐུ་འཇུག་པོ།

null

The term can be understood to mean “great courageous one” or “great hero,” or (from the Sanskrit) simply “great being,” and is almost always found as an epithet of “bodhisattva.” The qualification “great” in this term, according to the majority of canonical definitions, focuses on the generic greatness common to all bodhisattvas, i.e., the greatness implicit in the bodhisattva vow itself in terms of outlook, aspiration, number of beings to be benefited, potential or eventual accomplishments, and so forth. In this sense the mahā- (“great”) is close in its connotations to the mahā- in “Mahāyāna.” While individual bodhisattvas described as *mahāsattva* may in many cases also be “great” in terms of their level of realization, this is largely coincidental, and in the canonical texts the epithet is not restricted to bodhisattvas at any particular point in their career. Indeed, in a few cases even bodhisattvas whose path has taken a wrong direction are still described as *bodhisattva mahāsattva*. Later commentarial writings do nevertheless define the term—variably—in terms of bodhisattvas having attained a particular level (bhūmi) or realization. The most common qualifying criteria mentioned are attaining the path of seeing, attaining irreversibility (according to its various definitions), or attaining the seventh bhūmi.

null

ri rab

རི་རབ།

null

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the desire realm gods (asuras). The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

null

rig pa

རིག་པ།

null

A type of incantation or spell used to accomplish a ritual goal. This can be associated with either ordinary attainments or those whose goal is awakening.

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