

ཤེས་རབ་སྐྱེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight” (3)

Prajñāvardhanīnāmādhāraṇī

· Toh 1038 ·

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



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Summary

- s.1 The text presents a single dhāraṇī to enable the retention of what one hears.

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 one hears. Only one dhāraṇī is given in this text. Opening with and included entirely in Sanskrit is an homage to the Three Jewels and an invocation of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. Following this is the dhāraṇī *skhalate skhalate manite svāhā*, which can be translated as “Assist me! Assist me! May I understand! May auspiciousness abound!”¹

- i.2 Unlike some other dhāraṇīs, this one appears to have no root in a larger tantra, although a clue to its larger context may be discerned from the mantra itself. At first glance, this dhāraṇī appears to be an abbreviated version—albeit with a different mantra—of another text with an identical name deployed for a similar purpose: *The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight” (2) (Prajñāvardhanīnāmadhāraṇī*, Toh 718). In that text, the mantra given is explicitly associated—in the Yāmarī tantras—with Sarasvatī.² Here, there is reason to believe that this mantra as well can be associated with Sarasvatī given the salutation to Avalokiteśvara (in Sanskrit) and his connection to Sarasvatī. In *The Basket’s Display (Kāraṇḍavyūha, za ma tog bkod pa*, Toh 116), the foundational sūtra narrative of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara’s story, Avalokiteśvara is presented as the progenitor of the gods, with different gods coming from different parts of his body. One such god is Sarasvatī, who came from his fangs:
- i.3 Bodhisattva Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin asked the Bhagavat, “What were the qualities of Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Avalokiteśvara that you heard the tathāgata describe?”
- i.4 The Bhagavat said, “Āditya and Candra came from his eyes, Maheśvara came from his forehead, Brahmā came from his shoulders, Nārāyaṇa came from his heart, Devi Sarasvatī came from his canines, Vāyu came from his mouth, Dharaṇī came from his feet, and Varuṇa came from his stomach.”³
- i.5 This would seem to explain the invocation of Avalokiteśvara—the renowned bodhisattva of compassion—in a mantra associated with Sarasvatī for generating insight.

- i.6 This dhāraṇī and others appear to have enjoyed a certain degree of popularity—or at least valorization—in Tibet, as they reappear in subsequent text collections, such as the collected works (*gsungs 'bum*) of the Fourteenth Sakya Trichen, Sönam Gyaltzen (bsod nams rgyal mtshan, 1312–75) in one volume⁴ devoted entirely to dhāraṇīs. To what extent they were actually deployed, however, as part of the lived practice of Tibetans in their day-to-day lives is uncertain.
- i.7 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 numbers 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 (and its variations, see below) outside of the Indian subcontinent into Tibet, China, and surrounding regions, although no translations into Chinese or other Tibet-peripheral languages have been identified.
- i.8 According to its colophon, this text was translated during the imperial era of Tibet, in ca. 750, by the Indian master Jñānagarbha and the Tibetan translator Lü Wangpo, and subsequently revised by the Indian abbot Vidyākarasiṃha and Bandé Devacandra. In addition, given that the text is attributed to imperial era translators and yet does not appear in catalogs produced during that era, such as the *Denkarma*,⁵ it would seem to have been a minor work that escaped attention during the era of its production. As noted above, there is no known Chinese equivalent that would shed light on its context.

- i.9 In its Tibetan translation, this text is found in two different locations in many recensions of the Kangyur.⁶ One version (Toh 719) 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*).⁷ The second version of this text (Toh 1038) is found in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section. The versions of the text, including among the various recensions of the Kangyur, are nearly identical, with only minor differences in punctuation, Sanskrit transliteration, and obvious scribal errors.⁸
- i.10 There are two other texts in the Kangyur (Toh 650/1039 and Toh 718/1038) 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. Toh 718 embeds its dhāraṇī in a proper setting and introduction typical of sūtra works, along with a narrative of its origin. Toh 650, like the present work, lacks a narrative context, and its dhāraṇī takes the form of a different invocation of Avalokiteśvara. Adelheid Herrmann-Pfandt (2002) has discussed the relationship of these three texts across various recensions of the Kangyur.⁹
- i.11 This translation of the text into English was produced primarily based on the Degé^{10 11} recension while making reference to variant readings in other recensions as noted in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and validated in the source texts—notably the Narthang—as was necessary. No previous translation of this text into a language outside the Tibetan sphere of influence is known.

The Translation

1.

The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight”

1.1 *nāmo ratnatrayāya | nāma ārya avalokiteśvarāya bodhisattvāya mahāsat-
tvāya | tadyathā | skhalate skhalate manite svāhā |* ¹²

1.2 The ritual for this vidyā mantra is this. Recite this three times over water in the palm of your hand. When drunk, after seven days, you will be able to retain what is heard.

1.3 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. The words that comprise this mantra are ungrammatical and may reflect Prakṛt forms or simply be corrupt. Here we take *skhalate*, not as a conjugated form of the root $\sqrt{\text{skhal}}$ (1.P. *skhalati/skhalyate*; “to stumble”), but as a derivative form of the word *sakha* (“friend,” “companion”). Similarly, we take *manite* as a derivative form of the word *manita* (“know,” “understand”).
2. See the introduction to *The Dhāraṇī “Generating Insight” (2)*
3. *The Basket’s Display*, 1.22.
4. Sönam Gyaltzen (bsod nams rgyal mtshan). *gzungs ’bum las bya ba’i rgyud kyi skor dam tshig gsum bkod pa’i rtog pa’i rgyal po las byung ba’i sngags*. In *gsung ’bum: bsod nams rgyal mtshan* vol. 1 (ka), pp. 517–938. BDRC W00KG02390.
5. 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.
6. It is worth noting that this text is missing in the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) line of Kangyurs and is only found in the Tshalpa (*tshal pa*) line.
7. Herrmann-Pfandt (2002, pp. 125–31) has speculated on the significance of these subcategories, to which the interested reader is referred.
8. For example, the Lithang recension contains an obvious homophone error. It reads “when seen” (*mthong na*) instead of “when drunk” (*’thungs na*).
9. 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.
10. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1038 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1038, n.10, for details.
11. [note 861c916e...]
12. The basic meaning of the mantra is “Homage to the Three Jewels! Homage to the bodhisattva and mahāsattva, the ārya Avalokiteśvara! Assist me! Assist me! May I understand! May auspiciousness abound!”

Glossary

null

ban+de de ba tsan+d+ra

བནེ་དེ་བ་ཙ་ས།

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

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

རྩོ་ན་གཞ།

null

Name of an Indian preceptor (mkhan po) who lived in the mid-eighth century (ca. 700–70) and worked as a translator in Tibet. According to Hodge (2003, p. 24), he was the teacher of Śāntarakṣita (710–79). 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

rig sngags

རིག་སྒྲགས།

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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