གཟུངས་ཆེན་དོ།

The Great Dhāraṇī

Mahādhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་གཟུངས་ཆེན་པོ།

’phags pa gzungs chen po

The Noble “Great Dhāraṇī”

Āryamahādhāraṇī

· Toh 529 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 88 (rgyud ’bum, na), folios 73.b–75.b (in 1737 par phud printing), folios 90.b–92.b (in later printings)
For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar’s Edition

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

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Summary

s.1 This text, revealed to Ānanda at Śrāvastī, consists of a series of short spells followed by their application and benefits. The dhāraṇīs, whose powers are praised at length, are meant to protect from various dangers and illnesses, but they can also aid in attaining spiritual accomplishments, such as the recollection of past lives or not forsaking the resolve of awakening.

Acknowledgments

ac.1 This text was translated and introduced by the Buddhapīṭha Translation Group (Gergely Hidas and Péter-Dániel Szántó).

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. Rory Lindsay edited the translation and the introduction, and Laura Goetz copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

i.1 *The Great Dhāraṇī* is a short but seemingly important and popular text. It was revealed to Ānanda, who visited the Buddha after having finished his rainy season retreat in the city of Sāketaka, even without his asking for a teaching. The Blessed One narrates that he himself had heard the dhāraṇī he will now teach from former buddhas and praises its rarity and magnificent powers. The dhāraṇī proclaimed is in fact a series of dhāraṇīs, three or four depending on which version of the text we look at. The first three are incrementally more powerful, as their effects are to unveil more and more former births. Otherwise, their general role is to protect from untimely death, illness, inimical sorcery, and harm from supernatural beings. A sorry fate is predicted for those beings who might wish to resist their power.

i.2 A slightly shorter recension of the text is available in Sanskrit, in the hitherto oldest known *Collection of Dhāraṇīs*.[1] The chief difference when compared to the Tibetan translation is that this version does not reveal a fourth dhāraṇī, and the last three paragraphs before the closing sentence are transmitted in reverse order, whereas minor differences include shorter lists (of supernatural beings and so forth) and fluctuations in the text of the dhāraṇīs proper.

i.3 The Tibetan translation is recorded in the imperial catalogs,[2] and we could locate and use two small Dunhuang fragments.[3] According to the colophon, the translation was made by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Yeshé Dé (*ye shes sde*), who also modified the translation according to "the new language," that is to say the standard terms for translation as prescribed by the Imperial Council in the early ninth century. This text is included also in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section of the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that include such a separate section.

i.4 The Chinese translation (*Sheng da zong chi wang jing* 聖大總持王經, Taishō 1371)[4] dates from a later period, ca. 988 CE, and is the work of Dānapāla, who

worked under the egis of the Northern Song dynasty's famous Translation Bureau.[5] While the overall structure and content of the text are very similar to those of the versions seen in Sanskrit and Tibetan, there are some interesting and possibly significant divergences: most importantly, the dhāraṇīs revealed here are only two, and they are shorter and quite different.

i.5 This English translation was made principally on the basis of the Tibetan translations of the text found in the Tantra Collection (*rgyud 'bum*) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs 'dus*)[6] in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Stok Palace Kangyur. We also consulted the two fragments from Dunhuang and a Sanskrit manuscript (Cambridge University Library Add. 1680.8), improving the edition by Hidas (2021).

The Translation

1.

The Noble

Great Dhāraṇī

1.1 [7]Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One resided in the city of Śrāvastī, in the forest of Jeta, in the grove of Anāthapiṇḍada, together with a great monastic retinue of one thousand two hundred fifty monks.[8] At that time, the elder Ānanda spent the rainy season in Sāketaka,[9] and when the three months of the rainy season were over, he put on and donned monastic robes, held on to his monastic robes and alms bowl, and set out toward where the Blessed One was residing.[10] When he arrived, he bowed his head to the feet of the Blessed One and sat down on one side. Once the elder Ānanda had sat down on one side, the Blessed One said this to him:

1.3 "Ānanda! For the welfare, benefit, happiness, strength, and life force of all sentient beings, uphold these mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī. Take, receive, recite, master, and memorize them! Why? The mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī, Ānanda, are difficult to obtain, for it is difficult to obtain the appearance in the world of thus-gone, worthy, fully awakened, perfect buddhas; it is rare like the udumbara flower. Therefore, uphold, take, receive, recite, memorize, and master them!

1.4 "Ānanda, whichever faithful son or daughter of good family upholds, takes, recites, memorizes, and masters the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī will not die an untimely death, be it by the sword, by poison, by fire, by water, or by royal punishment. Such a person will never be harmed by any god, asura, nāga, wind god, garuḍa, gandharva, kinnara, mahoraga, yakṣa, rākṣasa, preta, piśāca, kumbhāṇḍa, pūtana, kaṭapūtana, bhūta,[11] apasmāra, unmāda, ostāraka,

chāyā, witchcraft, magic, or sorcery. Such a person will never be harmed by any human or nonhuman being. Such a person will never be harmed by sorcery involving spells, deeds of speech, or deeds of mind. Such a person will never contract fever, whether of one day, two days, three days, or four days, whether constant, demonic, or sudden, or whether caused by wind, bile, phlegm, or a combination of these.

1.5 "Now, the mantra-words[12] of the Great Dhāraṇī are as follows:

1.6 *tadyathā jvale mahājvale jvalane mahājvalane tapane mahātapane jvalite ugge bugge saṃpade mahāsaṃpade cakre mahācakre, protect, protect me and all sentient beings from all dangers, all harms, all illnesses, svāhā.*

1.7 "These mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī, Ānanda, were spoken by seventy-seven crores of perfect buddhas, and now I, too, have spoken them and take delight in them. Ānanda, whichever son or daughter of good family takes, memorizes, recites, keeps in mind, and masters the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī shall remember up to seven former births and shall never forsake the resolve of awakening.

1.8 "Now, the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī are as follows:

1.9 *tadyathā aṇḍe maṇḍe kṣame kṣamame dhānase vadane adane hule mahāhule kare gambhīre duṣpuṣṭe, protect, protect me and all sentient beings from all dangers, all harms, all illnesses, svāhā.*

1.10 "These mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī, Ānanda, were spoken by eighty-eight crores of perfect buddhas, and now I, too, have spoken them and take delight in them. Ānanda, whichever son or daughter of good family takes, memorizes, recites, keeps in mind, and masters the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī shall remember up to fourteen former births and shall never forsake the resolve of awakening.

1.11 "Now, the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī are as follows:

1.12 *tadyathā aṭṭe vaṭṭe agge vagge ṭhakke ṭhakke dhakke dhāradhagake ṭakke ṭakke akosi sakosi mahākosi ili mili tili mili raurave mahāraurave bhūtaṃgame mahābhūtaṃgame bhūtaparāyaṇe timigise mahātimigise saṃbhāve mahāsaṃbhāve, protect, protect me and all sentient beings from all dangers, all harms, all illnesses, svāhā.*

1.13 "These mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī, Ānanda, were spoken by ninety-nine crores of perfect buddhas, and now I, too, have spoken them and take delight in them. Ānanda, whichever son or daughter of good family takes, memorizes, recites, keeps in mind, and masters the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī shall remember up to twenty-one former births and shall never forsake the resolve of awakening.

1.14 "If a son or daughter of good family, Ānanda, uses the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī to protect even a desiccated tree and safeguards it, shields it, and defends it, performs a pacifying rite, a benediction rite, a protection from weapons, a protection from poisons, and a healing of poisons, seals the boundaries, seals the sky, and seals the earth, and ties a protective cord on it, then the roots, branches, leaves, shoots, flowers, fruits of that tree will grow back. How much more so if one does this for a body endowed with consciousness! An exception, Ānanda, is if former deeds have already begun maturing.

1.15 "The sun and the moon, Ānanda, may eventually fall upon the earth, no matter how powerful they are, no matter how mighty they are, no matter how lofty they are. The king of mountains, Ānanda, may eventually shake in its place. The four oceans, Ānanda, may eventually dry out and disappear, no matter how deep they are, no matter how wide they are, no matter how powerful they are, no matter how mighty they are. This great earth, Ānanda, may eventually split into a thousand pieces, water may lose its moistness, fire may lose its heat, and wind may lose its coolness. However, the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī will never fail.

1.16 “Any being, Ānanda, be they a god, a nāga, an asura, a garuḍa, a kinnara, a mahoraga, a yakṣa, a rākṣasa, a preta, a piśāca, a kumbhāṇḍa, a pūtana, a kaṭapūtana, a bhūta, a brāhmaṇa,[13] a rākṣasa,[14] or a chāyā, human or nonhuman, who should transgress the mantra-words of the Great Dhāraṇī, to wit—

1.17 *tadyathā aggile caggile valle malle ohāni mohāni jambhani stambhani,*
protect, protect me and all sentient beings, svāhā—

1.18 their heads will be split into seven pieces by the great king Dhṛtarāṣṭra with a discus made of blazing, ferociously radiant, intensely gleaming iron, its fierceness focused into one point. Their heads will be split into seven pieces by the great kings Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa, and Vaiśravaṇa, too, with discuses made of blazing, ferociously radiant, intensely gleaming iron, their fierceness focused into one point. The lord of the gods, Indra, too, will strike them with his thunderbolt. Their heads will be split into seven pieces by the lord of the guhyakas, Vajrapāṇi, too, with his blazing, ferociously radiant, intensely gleaming thunderbolt, its fierceness focused into one point. They shall not gain residence in his royal palace in Aḍakavatī;[15] their heads will split into seven pieces like a cluster of clove basil.”[16]

1.19 Thus spoke the Blessed One, and the elder Ānanda and all the gods, humans, asuras, garuḍas, and gandharvas were delighted, and they praised the speech of the Blessed One.

1.20 *“The Great Dhāraṇī” is complete.*

Colophon

c.1 Translated and edited by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla, as well as the great editor-translator Bandé Yeshé Dé. It has also been updated to the new language and thus redacted.

Notes

1. Hidas 2021, pp. 44–46.

2. No. 363 in the *lhan kar ma* (see Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 208); no. 351 in the *'phang thang ma* (see Kawagoe 2005, p. 20).

3. Pelliot tibétain 52.4 and 81.1. Accessed through the Bibliothèque nationale de France. These are already listed in Herrmann-Pfandt 2008.

4. CBETA; SAT.

5. On the life and career of this Kashmiri scholar, see Orzech 2011, pp. 449–50.

6. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 888 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 888, n.6, for details.

7. The folio references of the Degé Kangyur appearing in the Tibetan source and compare view of this publication (or which are shown inline in the PDF and ePub versions) refer to the post *par phud* printing of the Degé. Note that, as described in the bibliographical reference on the title page, there is a 17-page discrepancy in volume 88 (*rgyud 'bum*, *na*) of the Degé Kangyur between the 1737 *par phud* printings and the late (post *par phud*) printings. This is due to an extra work, *Bodhimaṇḍasyālaṃkāra lakṣadhāraṇī* (Toh 508, *byang chub snying po'i rgyan 'bum gyi gzungs*), being added as the second text in the volume.

8. Both Dunhuang fragments add one thousand bodhisattvas to the retinue; this is not mirrored in the Sanskrit text.

9. The Dunhuang version reads *nges ldan* instead of *gnas bcas* for Sāketaka, which appears in the Sanskrit edition.

10. This sentence is much shorter in the Sanskrit: "After the elder Ānanda finished the rainy season retreat in Sāketaka, he took his alms bowl and monastic robe…."

11. The Sanskrit reading is *lūta*, but this is likely a scribal error.

12. When constructing the dhāraṇīs, in all cases we followed the Degé version, unless the Sanskrit manuscript provided "better" readings, inasmuch as this is possible in the case of nonreferential words.

13. The presence of brāhmaṇas in this list is very unusual.

14. Note that *rākṣasa* occurs twice in this list.

15. The Tibetan rendering of this idiom (*gnas su mi dbang*) seems to mirror a reading **na labhate vāsam*; see Hidas 2017, p. 474. However, in the Sanskrit manuscript we read *na cāsya…pātrodakaṃ prapatet* ("and for him no bowl of water will fall"). We are not familiar with this expression and could not find any parallels.

16. On this motif, see Hidas 2017, pp. 480–81.

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Glossary

Aḍakavatī

lcang lo can

ལྕང་ལོ་ཅན།

aḍakavatī

The world of yakṣas located on Mount Sumeru, ruled over by Vaiśravaṇa (Kubera).

Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

apasmāra

brjed byed

བརྗེད་བྱེད།

apasmāra

asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

benediction rite

bde legs su 'gyur ba

བདེ་ལེགས་སུ་འགྱུར་བ།

svastyayana

A kind of protective ritual.

bhūta

’byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta

bile

mkhris pa

མཁྲིས་པ།

pitta

One of the three humors (*doṣa*) in the Āyurveda medical tradition.

brāhmaṇa

bram ze

བྲམ་ཟེ།

brāhmaṇa

chāyā

grib gnon

གྲིབ་གནོན།

chāyā

“Shadow,” a class of malevolent supernatural beings considered a source of disease and misfortune.

city of Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉན་ཡོད།

śrāvastī

clove basil

ardza ka

ཨརྫ་ཀ།

arjaka

Ocimum gratissimum.

Dānapāla

dānapāla

施護

Name of a famous (possibly Kashmiri) translator of the Song period, active before 1018 ce. One hundred eleven translations are attributed to him.

dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

Dhṛtarāṣṭra

yul ’khor srung

ཡུལ་འཁོར་སྲུང་།

dhṛtarāṣṭra

One of the Four Great Kings, he presides over the eastern quarter and rules over the gandharvas.

forest of Jeta

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

jetavana

fully awakened, perfect buddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས།

samyaksaṃbuddha

gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

garuḍa

nam mkha’ lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྡིང་།

garuḍa

god

lha

ལྷ།

deva

grove of Anāthapiṇḍada

mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga’ ra ba

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

anāthapiṇḍadārāma

guhyaka

gsang ba pa

གསང་བ་པ།

guhyaka

A class of nonhuman beings, similar to yakṣas and perhaps synonymous with them in some contexts. They are closely associated with Kubera or Vaiśravaṇa, the lokapāla and god of wealth who is one of the Four Great Kings, but they also have a strong association with Vajrapāṇi.

Indra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

indra

kaṭapūtana

lus srul po

ལུས་སྲུལ་པོ།

kaṭapūtana

kinnara

mi ’am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara

kumbhāṇḍa

grul bum

གྲུལ་བུམ།

kumbhāṇḍa

mahoraga

lto ’phye chen po

ལྟོ་འཕྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga

mantra-word

gsang sngags kyi gzhi

གསང་སྔགས་ཀྱི་གཞི།

mantrapada

nāga

klu

ཀླུ།

nāga

ostāraka

gnon po

གནོན་པོ།

ostāraka

A class of supernatural beings believed to possess humans and cause physical and mental illness.

pacifying rite

zhi ba

ཞི་བ།

śānti

A kind of protective ritual.

phlegm

bad kan

བད་ཀན།

kapha

One of the three humors (*doṣa*) in the Āyurveda medical tradition.

piśāca

sha za

ཤ་ཟ།

piśāca

preta

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

protective cord

srad bu

སྲད་བུ།

pratisarā

An amulet-like string, red or white, used in a variety of ways, sometimes tied on the arm, wrist, or neck.

pūtana

srul po

སྲུལ་པོ།

pūtana

rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

resolve of awakening

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

Sāketaka

gnas bcas

གནས་བཅས།

sāketaka

A famous city in Kosala, Northern India.

sealing the boundaries

mtshams bcad pa

མཚམས་བཅད་པ།

sīmābandha

A kind of protective ritual.

sealing the earth

sa bcing ba

ས་བཅིང་བ།

dharaṇībandha

A kind of protective ritual.

sealing the sky

nam mkha’ bcing ba

ནམ་མཁའ་བཅིང་བ།

ākāśabandha

A kind of protective ritual.

thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

udumbara

u dum ba ra

ཨུ་དུམ་བ་ར།

udumbara

The udumbara flower is a symbol for extremely rare occurrences, since it is said to bloom once every three thousand years.

unmāda

smyo byed

སྨྱོ་བྱེད།

unmāda

A class of nonhuman beings associated with intoxication and madness.

Vaiśravaṇa

rnam thos kyi bu

རྣམ་ཐོས་ཀྱི་བུ།

vaiśravaṇa

One of the Four Great Kings, he presides over the northern quarter and rules over the yakṣas. He is also known as Kubera.

Vajrapāṇi

lag na rdo rje

ལག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajrapāṇi

Virūḍhaka

'phags skyes po

འཕགས་སྐྱེས་པོ།

virūḍhaka

One of the Four Great Kings, he presides over the southern quarter and rules over the kumbhāṇḍas.

Virūpākṣa

mig mi bzang

མིག་མི་བཟང་།

virūpākṣa

One of the Four Great Kings, he presides over the western quarter and rules over the nāgas.

wind

rlung

རླུང་།

vāta

One of the three humors (*doṣa*) in the Āyurveda medical tradition.

wind god

rlung lha

རླུང་ལྷ།

vāyu

worthy

dgra bcom pa

དགྲ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa