

མི་བརྗེད་པའི་གཟུངས།

The Dhāraṇī of Non-Forgetfulness

· Toh 717 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 93 (rgyud 'bum, tsa), folio 179.b



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Summary

- s.1 The text presents a single dhāraṇī to enable the retention of whatever has been heard.

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 *The Dhāraṇī of Non-Forgetfulness* presents a single dhāraṇī to enable the retention of what has been heard, 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. Following an homage to the Three Jewels and an invocation of the bodhisattva mahāsattva ārya Avalokiteśvara—all in Tibetan translation—the dhāraṇī itself is given in Sanskrit as follows:
- i.3 *smṛti mati mati | tejovidyā huru me hara² huru kṛtsna³ huru me svāhā |*

- i.4 This can be roughly translated as “Remember, O mind, O mind! O splendid vidyā! Prepare me! Do it! Prepare entirely! Prepare me! May auspiciousness abound!”⁴ Unlike some other dhāraṇīs, this one appears to have no grounding in a larger tantra.
- i.5 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 nature of Buddhist teachings, one can easily imagine that a dhāraṇī enabling a person to not forget extensive teachings received 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 others of a similar nature—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.6 There is no colophon to this text to indicate when or by whom the translation was made, nor are there any linguistic indicators to its era of production, or any listing for the text in the imperial era catalog, the *Denkarma*,⁵ so its provenance must remain undetermined.
- i.7 In its Tibetan translation, this text is found in two different locations in many recensions of the Kangyur. One version (Toh 717) is found in the Action Tantra (*kriyātantra*; *bya ba'i rgyud*) section of the canon, while the second version (Toh 1048) 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, such variations being confined to spelling variations in rendering the Sanskrit dhāraṇī.
- i.8 Another text in the Kangyur, bearing the title *The Dhāraṇī for Retaining Learning (1)* (*thos pa 'dzin pa'i gzungs*),⁶ is nearly identical in content to the text presented here.⁷ Unfortunately, that text likewise lacks a colophon.

- i.9 This translation of the text into English was produced based on the Degé^{8 9} 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 as was necessary. The dhāraṇī itself was edited to reflect normative Sanskrit spellings. No Sanskrit title is provided for this text, so its English title is given on the basis of the Tibetan alone. No previous translation of this text into a language outside the Tibetan sphere of influence is known.

The Translation

1.

The Dhāraṇī of Non-Forgetfulness

1.1

Homage to the Three Jewels.

1.2

I pay homage to the bodhisattva, the mahāsattva, the ārya, Avalokiteśvara.

1.3

tadyathā | smṛti mati mati tejovidyā huru me hara¹⁰ huru kṛtsna¹¹ huru me svāhā | |¹²

1.4

If you recite this mantra over white vacā grass¹³ and then eat it, there is no doubt you will be able to retain what has been heard.

1.5

This completes “The Dhāraṇī of Non-Forgetfulness.”

Notes

1. Asaṅga. *byang chub sems dpa'i sa* (*Bodhisattvabhūmi*). A discussion of various classifications of dhāraṇīs is given in Pagel 2007.
2. The parallel of this text (Toh 651) reads *huru* (“Prepare!”).
3. Narthang and Lhasa read *kṛṇḍa*. Degé and Choné read *kṛṣṇa*, neither of which is contextually meaningful.
4. The words that comprise this mantra are not entirely grammatical but are often found in other mantras, whose commentaries have explanations of them. For example, in Candrakīrti’s *Brightening Lamp* commentary on the *Secret Assembly Tantra*, *huru huru* is explained as meaning “make ready for the objective!” (*bya ba la ’bad par mdzod cig pa*).
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. *thos pa ’dzin pa’i gzungs*. Toh 651, Degé Kangyur vol. 91 (rgyud ’bum, ba), folios 136.b–137.a. *thos pa ’dzin pa’i gzungs*. Toh 1040, Degé Kangyur vol. 102 (gzungs ’dus, waM), folios 186.b–187.a.
7. In this parallel text, the color of the vacā grass is stated to be black, and the specific mantra recitation count of one hundred and eight is specified. This text (Toh 651) is different from another text of the same title in the Kangyur (Toh 720). We can consider these three texts as part 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.
8. [note 7f515088...]
9. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1048 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1048, n.8, for details.
10. The parallel of this text (Toh 651) reads *huru* (“Prepare!”).
11. Narthang and Lhasa read *kṛṇḍa*, and Degé and Choné read *kṛṣṇa*, neither of which is contextually meaningful.
12. “It is thus—Remember, O mind, O mind! O splendid vidyā! Prepare me! Bring it! Prepare entirely! Prepare me! May all be auspicious!”
13. The parallel of this text (Toh 651) reads “recite this mantra over black vacā grass one hundred and eight times” (*shu dag nag po la sngags ’di lan brgya rtsa brgyad bzlas brjod byas*).

Glossary

null

spyān ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

null

An ārya, bodhisattva, and mahāsattva who is one of the most popular bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna Buddhist pantheon and one of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha—renowned as the bodhisattva embodying compassion.

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

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

sems dpa’ chen po

སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་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*.

ārya

'phags pa

འཕགས་པ།

ārya

Someone who has entered the “path of seeing,” i.e., someone who has attained the first ground (bhūmi) of a bodhisattva, śrāvaka, or pratyekabuddha, constituted by the direct realization of the emptiness of their respective object of negation, and who then ceases to be an “ordinary person” (pṛthagjana; so so'i skyes bu) and becomes an ārya (commonly translated as “noble one”).

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