

དུག་སེལ་ཅེས་བྱ་བའི་རིག་སྐབས།

# The Vidyā “Jāṅgulī”

*Jāṅgulīnāmavidyā*

འཕགས་པ་དུག་སེལ་ཅེས་བྱ་བའི་རིག་སྒྲགས།

'phags pa dug sel ces bya ba'i rig sngags

The Noble Vidyā “Jāṅgulī”

*Āryajāṅgulināmaṅvidyā*

· Toh 990 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waM), folios 143.b–144.b



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## Summary

- s.1 *The Vidyā “Jāṅgulī”* contains a *vidyā* or “spell” to neutralize poisons, especially from snakes, that was transmitted to the Buddha in a former lifetime by a goddess of that name.

## 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. Adam C. Krug produced the translation and wrote the introduction. John Canti edited the translation and the introduction, and Iby Caputo copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

## Introduction

- i.1 *The Vidyā “Jāṅgulī”* begins in Śrāvastī, where the Buddha Śākyamuni is staying with his monks. The Buddha begins by telling his monks about a *vidyā* goddess named Jāṅgulī, whom he encountered in a previous life when he was a *bodhisattva* living on the slopes of Mount Gandhamādana. The Buddha describes Jāṅgulī as a young girl adorned with snakes who beckoned to him and then gave him her *vidyā* for neutralizing poisons.
- i.2 Jāṅgulī is one of several goddesses related to snakebites and the neutralization of poisons that are shared by Buddhist and non-Buddhist traditions.<sup>1</sup> *The Vidyā “Jāṅgulī”* is placed in the Degé Kangyur among the Action (*kriyā*) tantras belonging to the “mothers” of the Tathāgata family (Toh 571), and has a duplicate in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Toh 990). A complete Sanskrit version of the text with the title *Āryajāṅgulīmahāvidyā* survives in Benoytosh Bhattacharyya’s edition of *A Garland of Sādhanas* (Skt. *Sāadhanamālā*).<sup>2</sup>

i.3 Unfortunately, the Tibetan translations do not include colophons that identify the translators of this text. The Denkarma<sup>3</sup> and Phangthangma<sup>4</sup> both list the title as *'phags pa dug sel gyi rig sngags (The Noble Vidyā 'Jāṅgulī')*, which indicates that a version of the text had been translated into Tibetan by the early ninth century. The text was translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra in 1246 CE.<sup>5</sup>

i.4 This translation was prepared using the Tibetan translations preserved in the Tantra (*rgyud 'bum*) and Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs 'dus*)<sup>6 7</sup> sections of the Degé Kangyur, in consultation with the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur and the Stok Palace Kangyur. These witnesses were read against the Sanskrit witness in Bhattacharyya's edition of *A Garland of Sādhana*s, which was extremely helpful in resolving some of the difficulties with the Tibetan translation.

## The Translation

1.

### The Noble Vidyā 'Jāṅgulī'

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was in Śrāvastī, in Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park.<sup>8</sup> The Blessed One addressed the monks, saying, "Long ago, monks, when I was a bodhisattva,

1.3 "I lived on Mount Gandhamādana, North of the Himalayas. On the slope of that king of mountains Was a young girl with a hundred virtuous features.<sup>9</sup>

1.4 "She wore a black antelope skin. Her girdle was adorned with snakes. Her crown and earrings were made Of venomous snakes that could poison with a glance.

1.5 "She ate poisonous flowers and Drank mālu vine juice. She called out to me, saying, 'You, boy! Come here and listen to me!

1.6 “I am the vidyā Jāṅgulī, Supreme neutralizer of poisons. My name will neutralize All poison, whatever it may be.

1.7 *tadyathā om ilimitte tilimitte ilitilimitte dumve dumvāliye dusme dusmaliye tarke takaraṇe marme mare meraṇe kaśmīri kaśmīramugate aghe aghaṇe aghanaghaṇe ilī alīye akhā īe avyā ie śvete śataduṇḍe anurakte<sup>10</sup> svāhā*

1.8 “Monks, this Jāṅgulī vidyā that I possess is as effective as the sarvaśvetā herb.<sup>11</sup> Anyone who hears this vidyā once will not be bitten by a snake for seven years. Their body will be impervious to poison. If a snake takes hold of them, it will burst into seven pieces just like the flowers of a wild basil plant. The words of this mantra should not be recited in the presence of poisonous snakes, because the snakes will die.

1.9 *tadyathā, ilala cilalī cakravakko kauḍa koḍeḍi kuruta kuruḍati poḍāti purudā purudeti moḍeti nikuruḍe nikuruḍe nimamuruta nimamuruḍete purude phuttareha phutta phuttattaṇḍarahe nāgarāhe nagattadataṇḍarahe sarvarahe sarvatattadaraha acchi acchi puruḍata calaviṣe śrīte śrītā bandhale mātāle halehale halahala halale ilale kipacale milale taṇḍi taṇḍi taṭa taṭa spuṭa sphuṭa phaṭ phaṭ<sup>12</sup> haraviśva svāhā*

1.10 “Monks, these are the exact words of this vidyā just as Jāṅgulī pronounced them in the entire assembly of bhūtas. It is so and not otherwise. It is authentic, true, without error, and unfailing. May it render this poison no longer poisonous. May it return it to the one who dispensed it. May it return it to the biter.<sup>13</sup> May that one be drowned. May it be burned. May it be buried. May it turn into a pillar. May it turn into a wall. May it turn into space. May it turn into earth. May it be at peace. *Svāhā.*”

1.11 When the Blessed One had spoken these words the monks rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

1.12 This concludes *The Noble Vidyā “Jāṅgulī.”*

## Notes

1. For a thorough treatment of this topic, see Slouber 2017.
2. Bhattacharyya 1925, vol. 1, pp. 248–50.
3. Denkarma, folio 303.a.
4. Phangthangma, p. 28.
5. Taishō 1264, 觀自在菩薩化身囊裏哩曳童女銷伏毒害陀羅尼經 (*Guanzizai pusa huashenrang yuliyue tongnu xiaofu duhai tuoluoni jing*).
6. [note a1100a2f...]
7. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 990 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 990, n.6, for details.
8. This translation follows the Tibetan witnesses, which do not provide further details about the audience for this teaching. The Sanskrit witness in Bhattacharyya’s edition of *A Garland of Sādhanas*, however, mentions that the Buddha was “accompanied by a great saṅgha of 1,500 monks together with many bodhisattva great beings and numerous human and nonhuman beings such as devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas” (*mahatā bhikṣusaṅghena sārdham ardhatrāyodaśabhirbhikṣuśataiḥ sabahulaiśca bodhisattvairmahāsattvairanekaiśca devanāgayakṣa gandharvāsurasagaruḍakinnaramahoragamanuṣyāmanuṣyaiśca sārdham*).
9. The Tibetan renders this passage as four lines of verse, while the Sanskrit renders it in prose. The Sanskrit also makes clear that the Buddha is speaking of himself residing on Mount Gandhamādāna, and that the Tibetan *gzhon nu* should be understood as a translation of the feminine Sanskrit form *kumārī* (Tib. *gzhon nu ma*) referring to Jāṅgulī: *bhūtapūrvaṃ bhikṣavo bodhisattvabhūto viharāmi | himavantasyottarapārśve parvate gandhamādane [ ] yasya parvatarājasya prāgbhare kumārīśatapuṅyalakṣanā* (this reading amends the punctuation in the Sanskrit edition by moving the *daṇḍa* that follows the verb *viharāmi* to a position following the noun *gandhamādane*).
10. The transliteration of this term follows the reading in the Lhasa Kangyur.
11. The Tibetan reads *dge slong dag nga'i dug sel gyi rigs sngags 'di ni sbyin pa thams cad dkar po ste*, whereas the Sanskrit in Bhattacharyya’s edition of *A Garland of Sādhanas* reads *iyam asmākaṃ bhikṣavo vidyā sarvaśvetā sudakṣiṇā*. In *The Basket’s Display* (*Karaṇḍavyūhasūtra*, Toh 116) the Sanskrit term *sarvaśvetā* refers to a mythical medicinal herb (see 2.9, 2.11, 2.14), informing the tentative rendering here “as effective as the sarvaśvetā herb.” However, the term *sarvaśvetā* is also identified as a species of venomous insect in the classical Āyurvedic work *Suśrutasaṃhitā*. This suggests that an alternative translation of this line might be: “extremely effective against the venomous sarvaśvetā insect.”
12. This transliteration follows the reading in the Stok Palace Kangyur: *phaT phaT*. Both versions in the Degé Kangyur read *phaT Ta phaT Ta*; the Sanskrit simply reads *sphuṭatu*.

13. These phrases presumably refer to the poison being returned to the snake, just as the phrases that follow seem to be about what happens to the snake, but the translation is tentative. The Tibetan reads *sbyin par byed pa'i gan du song shig / 'dzin pa'i gan du song shig*; the Sanskrit reads *dātāraṃ gacchatu | daṣṭāraṃ gacchatu*. An alternative translation of the first phrase might read: “may it go to the donor.”

## Glossary

### **Anāthapiṇḍada's Park**

*mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba*

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

*anāthapiṇḍadārāma*

This was an important early site for the Buddha's growing community. Anāthapiṇḍada, a wealthy patron of the Buddha, purchased the park, located outside Śrāvastī, at great cost, purportedly covering the ground with gold, and donated it to the saṅgha. It was there that the Buddha spent several rainy seasons and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras. It was also the site for one of the first Buddhist monasteries. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

### **asura**

*lha min*

ལྷ་མིན།

*null*

A type of nonhuman being whose precise status is subject to different views, but is included as one of the six classes of beings in the sixfold classification of realms of rebirth. In the Buddhist context, asuras are powerful beings said to be dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility. They are also known in the pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic mythologies of India and Iran, and feature prominently in Vedic and post-Vedic Brahmanical mythology, as well as in the Buddhist tradition. In these traditions, asuras are often described as being engaged in interminable conflict with the devas (gods).

## **Blessed One**

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*

In Buddhist literature, this is an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (bhaga) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root  $\sqrt{\text{bhañj}}$  (“to break”).

## **bodhisattva**

*byang chub sems dpa'*

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔལ།

*bodhisattva*

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfillment 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.

**deva***lha*

ལྷ།

*null*

In the most general sense the devas—the term is cognate with the English *divine*—are a class of celestial beings who frequently appear in Buddhist texts, often at the head of the assemblies of nonhuman beings who attend and celebrate the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Buddhist cosmology the devas occupy the highest of the five or six “destinies” (gati) of saṃsāra among which beings take rebirth. The devas reside in the devalokas, “heavens” that traditionally number between twenty-six and twenty-eight and are divided between the desire realm (kāmadhātu), form realm (rūpadhātu), and formless realm (ārūpyadhātu). A being attains rebirth among the devas either through meritorious deeds (in the desire realm) or the attainment of subtle meditative states (in the form and formless realms). While rebirth among the devas is considered favorable, it is ultimately a transitory state from which beings will fall when the conditions that lead to rebirth there are exhausted. Thus, rebirth in the god realms is regarded as a diversion from the spiritual path.

**garuḍa***nam mka' lding*

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྷིང་།

*garuḍa*

In Indian mythology, the garuḍa is an eagle-like bird that is regarded as the king of all birds, normally depicted with a sharp, owl-like beak, often holding a snake, and with large and powerful wings. They are traditionally enemies of the nāgas. In the Vedas, they are said to have brought nectar from the heavens to earth. Garuḍa can also be used as a proper name for a king of such creatures.

**Jāṅgulī***dug sel*

དུག་སེལ།

*Jāṅgulī*

The name of a vidyā goddess encountered by the Buddha Śākyamuni in a former life.

**kinnara***mi 'am ci*

མི་འམ་ཅི།

*kiṃnara*

A class of nonhuman beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name—which means “is that human?”—suggests some confusion as to their divine status. Kinnaras are mythological beings found in both Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, where they are portrayed as creatures half human, half animal. They are often depicted as highly skilled celestial musicians.

**kumārī***gzhon nu ma**kumārī***mahoraga***lto 'phye chen po*

ལྷོ་འབྲེ་ཆེན་པོ།

*mahoraga*

Literally “great serpents,” mahoragas are supernatural beings depicted as large, subterranean beings with human torsos and heads and the lower bodies of serpents. Their movements are said to cause earthquakes, and they make up a class of subterranean geomantic spirits whose movement through the seasons and months of the year is deemed significant for construction projects.

## **Mount Gandhamādana**

*spos ngad ldan pa'i ri bo*

*gandhamādanaparvata*

A legendary mountain north of the Himalayas, with Lake Anavatapta, the source of the world's great rivers, at its base.

## **null**

*'byung po*

འབྲུང་པོ།

*null*

This term in its broadest sense can refer to any being, whether human, animal, or nonhuman. However, it is often used to refer to a specific class of nonhuman beings, especially when bhūtas are mentioned alongside rākṣasas, piśācas, or pretas. In common with these other kinds of nonhumans, bhūtas are usually depicted with unattractive and misshapen bodies. Like several other classes of nonhuman beings, bhūtas take spontaneous birth. As their leader is traditionally regarded to be Rudra-Śiva (also known by the name Bhūta), with whom they haunt dangerous and wild places, bhūtas are especially prominent in Śaivism, where large sections of certain tantras concentrate on them.

## **null**

*dri za*

དྲི་ཟ།

*null*

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the skies, sometimes said to inhabit fantastic cities in the clouds, and more specifically to dwell on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, where they are ruled by the Great King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They are most renowned as celestial musicians who serve the gods. In the Abhidharma, the term is also used to refer to the mental body assumed by sentient beings during the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Gandharvas are said to live on fragrances (gandha) in the desire realm, hence the Tibetan translation dri za, meaning “scent eater.”

**null**

*gnod sbyin*

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

*null*

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the rule of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.

**null**

*rgyal bu rgya byed kyi tshal*

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

*null*

A park in Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India. It was owned by Prince Jeta, and the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, wishing to offer it to the Buddha, bought it from him by covering the entire property with gold coins. It was to become the place where the monks could be housed during the monsoon season, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery. It is therefore the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses.

**null***mnyan yod*

མཉན་ཡོད།

*null*

During the life of the Buddha, Śrāvastī was the capital city of the powerful kingdom of Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, who became a follower and patron of the Buddha. It was also the hometown of Anāthapiṇḍada, the wealthy patron who first invited the Buddha there, and then offered him a park known as Jetavana, Prince Jeta's Grove, which became one of the first Buddhist monasteries. The Buddha is said to have spent about twenty-five rainy seasons with his disciples in Śrāvastī, thus it is named as the setting of numerous events and teachings. It is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

**nāga***klu*

ལུ།

*nāga*

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form. Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

**saṅgha***dge 'dun*

དགེ་འདུན།

*saṃgha*

Though often specifically reserved for the monastic community, this term can be applied to any of the four Buddhist communities—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—as well as to identify the different groups of practitioners, like the community of bodhisattvas or the community of śrāvakas. It is also the third of the Three Jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community.

**vidyā***rig sngags*

རིག་སྒྲགས།

*vidyā*

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