

༄༅། །ལྷ་མོ་ནམ་གྲུ་ལ་བསྟོད་པ།

In Praise of the Goddess Revatī

· Toh 1091 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waṃ), folios 255.b–256.a



Translated by Catherine Dalton
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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co.

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SUMMARY

s.

- s.1 *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* includes a short praise to the goddess Revatī along with a dhāraṇī extracted from *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge* (Toh 746). The praise itself is just a few lines long and addresses Revatī's characteristics—her body is said to be made of gems and precious substances—and her familial lineage.

ac.

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ac.1 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Catherine Dalton produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Andreas Doctor edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* includes a short praise to Revatī along with her dhāraṇī. The praise itself is just a few lines long and addresses Revatī's characteristics and her familial lineage. There is no narrative setting and the praise is preceded by two short introductory lines. It is immediately followed, with no introduction or framing, by Revatī's dhāraṇī, which closes the text.

i.2 It is worth noting that while this work has the title *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* in the incipit of all versions consulted, the explicit consistently gives an alternative title, *The Dhāraṇī of the Great Goddess Rematī*.¹ The names Revatī (*nam gru*) and Rematī (*re ma ti*), although sometimes conflated as they are in this text, in fact appear to refer to two distinct goddesses with separate characteristics and pedigrees.² The present text is a praise to Revatī, so both the title given in the explicit, as well as a line of homage at the beginning that also addresses Rematī rather than Revatī, are likely to have been added by later redactors who conflated the two names. In this translation we have nevertheless left the name Rematī in the homage and the explicit as they are found in the Tibetan text, even though it is clear that this text relates to Revatī.

i.3 There is no reference in the text of *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* to any source for the lines of praise it contains. However, these verses are also found in *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge (Vidyottamamahātantra, Toh 746)* where they feature as part of a larger narrative in which they are addressed directly to Revatī by Vajrapāṇi.³ In this section of *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, a group of gods and sages praise Vajrapāṇi and request from him a ritual for taming and pacification.⁴ Vajrapāṇi replies that he is pleased by their diligence in helping beings and by their entry into the king of maṇḍalas. At this point Revatī approaches but is unable to enter the maṇḍala herself. She nonetheless frightens the gods and the sages because she is powerful, diligent, and kills children. The gods and sages seek protection

from Vajrapāṇi, who becomes wrathful and proclaims that all the hateful beings in the world will be destroyed. The gods and sages are grateful for this protection and respond by requesting Vajrapāṇi to praise Revatī in order that she may now be able to enter the maṇḍala. Vajrapāṇi replies by expressing, directly to Revatī, the same lines praising her family line and her qualities as appear in the present work.

i.4 In that narrative of *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, Vajrapāṇi continues speaking with additional verses describing Revatī and the evils she inflicts, as well as methods that offer protection from those evils. He concludes with the dhāraṇī that is also found here.⁵ Upon hearing all this, Revatī cries out, enters the maṇḍala, and begs Vajrapāṇi for protection, which he grants. She requests instruction and he commands her to protect everyone who has seen the maṇḍala and who wears an amulet on which an account of her family history and characteristics are written. She promises to do so, adding that any child who wears such an amulet will be protected from *graha* spirits (*gdon*; Revatī herself is typically considered a *graha*). The words that are to be written on the amulet—the account of Revatī’s family history and her characteristics—are contained in the praise spoken earlier by Vajrapāṇi and are indeed precisely the contents of the present short work. *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* has the added benefit of including a dhāraṇī in addition to the praise. In this sense, then, we can consider *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* to be a kind of textual recipe needed to create a protective amulet for warding off harm caused by Revatī.

i.5 An abbreviated version of the very same narrative from *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, including the praise and dhāraṇī, makes up the contents of a short work from Dunhuang entitled *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* (*Iha mo nam gru ma’i gzungs*, IOL Tib J 442/2), which is, however, not included in any Kangyurs.⁶ *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* appears to have been extracted from *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, and presents the longer narrative summarized above verbatim, but in abridged form, with some passages omitted.

i.6 In short, *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī*, and *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* are closely related works that include the same content, but with varying amounts of detail. The most extensive version of the narrative, including the praise and dhāraṇī, is found as a section of *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*; an abbreviated version is found in *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* from Dunhuang; and the standalone praise and dhāraṇī,⁷ without any narrative context, is found in the present work, *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī*.⁸

- i.7 As indicated in the summary above, the goddess Revatī who is praised in these three works is a powerful and frightening *graha* or goddess known to harm or kill children.⁹ This Revatī seems to be closely related to, or perhaps even identical with, the *bālagraha* (child-snatching spirit) Revatī who appears in the *Mahābhārata* and other non-Buddhist Indian works. This Revatī also harms children and her praise protects against such harm.¹⁰
- i.8 *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* is not extant in Sanskrit or in Chinese translation, nor is *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, from which *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* has been extracted. The Tibetan text does not include a Sanskrit title and there is also no translator's colophon at the end. The title does, however, appear in both the Phangthangma and the Denkarma imperial catalogs. This confirms the presence in Tibet during the early ninth century, if not of this very text, at least of one with an identical title.¹¹ Moreover, *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, from which the verses of praise and dhāraṇī were extracted, was translated by the Indian paṇḍita Vidyākaraprabha and the Tibetan translator Kawa Paltsek, who were both active during the ninth century.¹²
- i.9 The text is included in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section of the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that include a separate Dhāraṇī section.¹³ In Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that lack a section so named, the text is found in the Tantra section, but only in the equivalent but unnamed dhāraṇī collection comprising part of the Tantra section. It is not included in any Thempangma-lineage Kangyurs.¹⁴
- i.10 Notably, this is one of only twelve works in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section that are not duplicated in other sections of the Kangyur. It appears that these twelve texts found their way into the Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs specifically because of being part of the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs, which most likely was compiled based on earlier collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts.¹⁵ These collections, known in Sanskrit as *dhāraṇī-saṃgraha*, circulated throughout South Asia and Tibet—including at Dunhuang—as extracanonical dhāraṇī collections.¹⁶
- i.11 This English translation was made on the basis of the Degé Kangyur recension with reference to the *Comparative Edition (dpe bsdur ma)*. We also consulted the relevant parts of the Degé recension of *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge* and *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* from Dunhuang (IOL Tib J 442.2).

In Praise of the Goddess Revatī

1.

The Translation

[F.255.b]

1.1

Homage to the Three Jewels.

Homage to noble, glorious Vajrapāṇi.

Homage to the great goddess Rematī.¹⁷

1.2

The family and characteristics

Of Revatī¹⁸ should be explained:

1.3

Your body is made of precious substances—

Your back is Jambu River gold,

Your front is silver,

The surface of your belly is covered in vajra.

Your brothers are Treasure and Treasure Guardian,

Your mother is She Who Goes Everywhere,

Your father is called Vāyu.

Your bloodline is that of Bhagīratha; [F.256.a]

You are renowned in the heavens.

1.4

*namo vajrapāṇisya cili cili bhindi bhindi muñca muñca muñca havalakana svāhā |
vajrapāṇīr ajñāpayati svāhā | deva samājñāpayati svāhā | rīṣayaḥ samājñāpayati
svāhā |*¹⁹

namo ratna trayāya | tadyathā | ruru viṣiṣṭhava dhotsi svāhā | |

1.5

*This completes the dhāraṇī of the great goddess Rematī,²⁰ the Powerful Lady of the
Desire Realm, the Great Mother of Demons.²¹*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 *lha mo chen mo re ma ti'i gzungs.*
- n.2 See the introduction to *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease* (Toh 1090), [i.6–i.10](#), for more on disambiguating Revatī (*nam gru*) and Rematī (*re ma ti*).
- n.3 *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, folio 93.a.
- n.4 The following is a summary of *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, folios 91.b–94.a.
- n.5 In fact, only the first part of the vidyāmantra or dhāraṇī (these texts use both words to describe it) from *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī* is found in *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*. The second part is not found in the tantra. We have indicated the section that is unique to the present text in [n.19](#) to the translation.
- n.6 Dalton and van Schaik eds. 2006, in their catalog entry on *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* from Dunhuang, write that “LVP [= de la Vallée Poussin] notes that a text bearing a similar title (*Lha mo chen mo re ma ti'i gzungs*) does appear in Beckh 1914: 147, a catalogue of the Berlin manuscript edition of the *Bka' gyur*, which is an early (1680) version of the Peking edition. However, in the same position in the present-day Peking edition, we find another work (Q.712) with the title *Lha mo nam gru la bstod pa*, and a quick comparison shows that this is not the same as the present work, though the two are clearly related.” (Dalton and van Schaik eds. 2006, p. 188). Q 712 is precisely the present work, *In Praise of the Goddess Revatī*. As noted above, while the present text does, in all its Kangyur editions, bear this title in its incipit, the explicit of all recensions we have consulted bears instead the title noted by de la Vallée Poussin: *lha mo chen mo re ma ti'i gzungs*. Therefore, despite what Dalton and van Schaik have noted above regarding de la Vallée Poussin's observations, it appears likely that the present text is the Revatī praise and

dhāraṇī included in the Kangyurs, and that the Dunhuang work, *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī*, was never brought into the canonical collections.

- n.7 As mentioned in [n.5](#), the dhāraṇī in this shortest recension has been slightly augmented. We have indicated the section that is unique to the present text in [n.19](#) to the translation.
- n.8 It is included only in Kangyurs from the Tshalpa lineage.
- n.9 See *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge*, folio 32.b, in reference to Revatī harming children, and folio 92.a in reference to her killing children.
- n.10 See Srinivasan 2020.
- n.11 Denkarma, folio 304.a.4. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 265, no. 463.
- n.12 Toh 746 also appears in both the Phangthangma and Denkarma imperial catalogs. Denkarma, folio 301.a.7. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 172, no. 317.
- n.13 An explicitly named Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section is found in the Degé and Urga Kangyurs as well as in the peripheral Kangyurs of the Tshalpa lineage (Dodedrak, Phajoding, and Ragya). In contrast, the Berlin, Choné, Lithang, and Peking Qianlong Kangyurs include the same collection of dhāraṇīs but in a separate part of their Tantra sections, which has no distinct label. With or without the label, these collections of dhāraṇīs contain many duplicates of texts also found in the general sūtra or tantra sections. Therefore, in the latter group of Kangyurs, many dhāraṇī texts appear twice in different parts of the Tantra section.
- n.14 The Qianlong, Choné, and Lithang Kangyurs contain two recensions of this text, with identical titles, both included in the Tantra (*rgyud*) section of these Kangyurs. The two recensions in the Qianlong Kangyur (Q 268 and Q 684) are identical apart from two minor orthographic differences in the mantra. Presumably the same is the case with the recensions in the Choné and Lithang Kangyurs, but we have not verified this.
- n.15 The opening lines of the table of contents (*dkar chag*) of an independent dhāraṇī collection printed in Beijing in 1731, found in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest and transcribed by Orosz, identify the source of all such dhāraṇī collections as the extracanonical collection edited by Tāranātha (Orosz 2010, p. 67 and p. 100). This mention is also noted by Hidas 2021, p. 7, n. 56.

- n.16 See J. Dalton 2016 and J. Dalton and van Schaik eds. 2006 on the *dhāraṇī-saṃgraha* collections preserved at Dunhuang, which, like the canonical collection, contain praises and prayers as well as dhāraṇīs. See Hidas 2021 for the catalogs of eighteen *dhāraṇī-saṃgraha* collections surviving in Sanskrit.
- n.17 The goddess's name is here transliterated in Tibetan as Rematī (*re ma ti*), a name that occurs in several Tibetan canonical and noncanonical works. However, the only attested version of the present goddess's name in Sanskrit sources is Revatī. As discussed in the introduction to this translation, the goddess Rematī mentioned in a number of canonical and noncanonical Tibetan works appears to be distinct from the goddess or *graha* Revatī. Although we believe the use of the name Rematī here is in error and should be Revatī, we retained Rematī in the English translation to accurately reflect the Tibetan source text. For more information on Rematī, see the introduction to *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease* (Toh 1090 (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh1090.html>)).
- n.18 In Tibetan the name Revatī is followed by a plural particle (*dag*), which we have chosen not to translate. A similar passage in Toh 746 reads “Revatī, *your family...*” (*nam gru khyod kyi cho 'grang*) as Vajrapāṇi is addressing Revatī directly.
- n.19 The dhāraṇī or vidyāmantra up to this point is found in both *The Great Tantra of Supreme Knowledge* (Toh 746) and *The Dhāraṇī of the Goddess Revatī* (IOL Tib J 442/2). The remainder of the dhāraṇī is not found in either work.
- n.20 Here, as in the homage, the Tibetan text reads Rematī (*re ma ti*), though as reflected in the text's title, and explained in introduction, it should read Revatī.
- n.21 These same epithets are used to describe Rematī (not Revatī) in Toh 670 (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh670.html>), 671, 672, 840, 842, and Toh 1090/1777 (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh1090.html>). We presume that the redactors who conflated the names Revatī and Rematī here also included these epithets in the colophon.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source Unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

g.1 bālagraha

byis pa rnam kyī gdon

བྱིས་པ་རྣམས་ཀྱི་གདོན།

bālagraha

Literally “child snatchers,” the *bālagrahaḥ* are an important class of demonic being in both Āyurvedic literature and across both popular and institutional religious communities in South Asia and the broader South Asian cultural world.

g.2 **Bhagīratha**

skal ldan shing rta

སྐལ་ལྷན་ཤིང་རྟ།

bhagīratha

The king of the “solar race,” from Puranic narratives, who is said to have brought down the river Gaṅgā from the heavens. He is identified in Buddhist texts as an ancestor of the buddha Śākyamuni; also, the name of a previous buddha.

g.3 **dhāraṇī**

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *dhāraṇī* has the sense of something that “holds” or “retains,” and so it can refer to the special capacity of practitioners to memorize and recall detailed teachings. It can also refer to a verbal expression of the teachings—an incantation, spell, or mnemonic formula that distills and “holds” essential points of the Dharma and is used by practitioners to attain mundane and supramundane goals. The same term is also used to denote texts that contain such formulas.

g.4 **graha**

gdon

གདོན།

graha

A type of evil spirit known to exert a harmful influence on the human body and mind. Grahas are closely associated with the planets and other astronomical bodies.

g.5 **Jambu river gold**

'dzam bu chu bo'i gser

འཛམ་བུ་ཚུ་བོའི་གསེར།

jāmbunadasuvarṇa

The remains of the golden fruit fallen from the legendary jambu tree and carried away by this divine river. It is considered to be a particularly fine type of gold.

g.6 Rematī

re ma ti

རེམ་ཏི།

—

A wrathful Dharma protector who is often portrayed together with her mistress Śrīdevī Mahākālī. At times she is conflated with Śrīdevī Mahākālī, so that the two appear to be identical. She is most often portrayed riding on a donkey and adorned with various wrathful ornaments and hand implements. Rematī is also known for her ability to inflict disease on others and retract it at will. In Kangyur literature Rematī is at times linked to the Indian goddess Revatī and also to the rākṣasī demoness Revatī. This link appears to have been made by the editors of the Kangyur.

g.7 Revatī

nam gru

ནམ་གུ།

revatī

A *graha* or goddess who harms children.

g.8 She Who Goes Everywhere

kun 'gro ma

ཀུན་འགོ་མ།

—

Revatī's mother, according to this text.

g.9 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དཀོན་མཚོན་གསུམ།

triratna

The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—the three objects of Buddhist refuge. In the Tibetan rendering, “the three rare and supreme ones.”

g.10 Treasure

mdzod

མཛོད།

—

Revatī's brother, according to this text.

g.11 Treasure Guardian

mdzod bdag

མཛོད་བདག་

—

Revatī's brother, according to this text.

g.12 vajra

rdo rje

རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This term generally indicates indestructibility and stability. In the sūtras, *vajra* most often refers to the hardest possible physical substance, said to have divine origins. In some scriptures, it is also the name of the all-powerful weapon of Indra, which in turn is crafted from vajra material. In the tantras, the vajra is sometimes a scepter-like ritual implement, but the term can also take on other esoteric meanings.

g.13 Vajrapāṇi

phyag na rdo rje

ཕྱག་ན་རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajrapāṇi

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Vajrapāṇi means “Wielder of the Vajra.” In the Pali canon, he appears as a yakṣa guardian in the retinue of the Buddha. In the Mahāyāna scriptures he is a bodhisattva and one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha.” In the tantras, he is also regarded as an important Buddhist deity and instrumental in the transmission of tantric scriptures.

g.14 Vāyu

rlung

རྩུང་།

vāyu

The Vedic god of wind, he presides over the southeastern direction.

