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The Quintessence of “The Stem Array”

Gaṇḍavyūhagarbha

འཕགས་པ་སྣང་པོ་བཀོད་པའི་སྟིང་པོ།

'phags pa sdong po bkod pa'i snying po

The Noble “Quintessence of ‘The Stem Array’ ”

Āryagaṇḍavyūhagarbha

· Toh 585 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 90 (rgyud, pha), folio 204.a



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SUMMARY

s.

s.1 This text consists of a short dhāraṇī said to encompass a famous sūtra in the Kangyur, *The Stem Array* (Toh 44–45), and the benefits of its recitation.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 The text was translated from Tibetan 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. Andreas Doctor edited the translation and the introduction, and Laura Goetz copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 This text consists of a short dhāraṇī said to encompass a famous sūtra in the Kangyur, *The Stem Array*,¹ also said to be the forty-fifth and final chapter of the Avataṃsaka collection (here translated as *A Multitude of Buddhas*),² and the benefits of its recitation. In other dhāraṇī texts, the reward typically includes some kind of karmic purification, but here “tantric” fruits are foreshadowed, namely becoming learned in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist esoteric systems.

i.2 Such short texts served a variety of purposes, the primary being that by reciting them one could acquire the positive karmic benefits of reciting an entire, sometimes extremely long, text. On a practical level, the recitation of these short texts also served as equivalent to the recitation of the parent text, should a prescribed ritual so require.

i.3 The text lacks both a Sanskrit title and a translator’s colophon. In South Asia, the text was transmitted within collections such as the *Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Dhāraṇīsaṃgraha)*,³ but it is also embedded into some ritual manuals such as the corpus of “rituals for beginners” (*ādikarmika, las dang po pa*) texts, in our case the *Ādikarmāvatāra* by Mañjukīrti,⁴ the *Ādikarmavidhi* by Tataragupta,⁵ and the **Bodhipaddhati* by Abhayākaragupta.⁶

i.4 This 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*)⁷ in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the various Sanskrit sources mentioned above, especially the text of Mañjukīrti, which is transmitted in a manuscript noted for its scribal precision.

**The Noble
Quintessence of “The Stem Array”**

1.

The Translation

[F.204.a]

1.1

Homage to the Three Jewels.

1.2

*namaḥ samantabuddhānām apratihataśāsanānām! oṃ kiṇi kiṇi⁸ tathāgatodbhava-
śānte⁹ varade uttamottamatathāgatodbhave¹⁰ hūṃ phaṭ svāhā!¹¹*

1.3

By upholding this, one will have read and recited the entire *Noble Stem Array Sūtra* in full.¹²

1.4

One will become knowledgeable in all maṇḍalas and vows, both worldly and transcendental.¹⁴ One will also know the hand gestures.

1.5

Here ends "The Quintessence of 'The Stem Array.' "

NOTES

n.

- n.1 *Gaṇḍavyūha* (*sdong pos brgyan pa*, Toh 44-45). See *The Stem Array* (<https://84000.co/translation/toh44-45.html>).
- n.2 See the 84000 Knowledge Base article, “[A Multitude of Buddhas](https://84000.co/kb-articles/ornaments-of-the-buddhas-kangyur-section-2) (<https://84000.co/kb-articles/ornaments-of-the-buddhas-kangyur-section-2>).”
- n.3 Hidas 2021, p. 27, item 20(a) in Cambridge University Library Ms. Add. 1680.8.1, and p. 77, item 9 in Cambridge University Library Ms. Add. 1326.
- n.4 The unique manuscript transmitting this text is currently being studied by Szántó for a forthcoming publication, *Buddhism for Beginners II: The Mañjukīrti Corpus*. The current location of the manuscript is not known with certainty. It was first seen and identified by Rāhula Sāṅkṛityāyana at Ngor Monastery; see Sāṅkṛityāyana 1935, p. 32. We are reading the text from the photographs kept at the Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Göttingen, shelf number Xc 14/50; for the catalog entry, see Bandurski 1994, pp. 86–87. Little is known of the author; the manuscript is undated but was most likely copied in Magadha during the twelfth century. The dhāraṇī can be found on folio 7 verso within the context of installing caityas. A somewhat carelessly produced edition of the text has now been published in *Dhīl: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Unit* 62 (2022): 89–150. The dhāraṇī is on p. 102.
- n.5 Unpublished, incomplete manuscript, currently at National Archives Kathmandu, showcase 3/7, read from the microfilm images of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, reel no. A 1165/7. Little is known of the author; the manuscript is undated but was probably copied in Bengal during the thirteenth century. No Tibetan translation is known. The dhāraṇī can be found on folio 33 recto.

- n.6 *byang chub kyi gzhung lam* (Toh 3766). See folio 120.b for the dhāraṇī. This text heavily depends on Mañjukīrti.
- n.7 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 941 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 941, n.7 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh941.html#UT22084-090-029-91>), for details.
- n.8 Tataragupta's manuscript transmits *kile kile*.
- n.9 The versions edited in Hidas have either *tathāgatodbhave śānte* or just *tathāgatodbhave*. We prefer the readings of the Tibetan versions, Mañjukīrti, Tataragupta, and Abhayākaragupta.
- n.10 The versions edited in Hidas have *uttamottame tathāgatodbhave*. We prefer the readings of the Tibetan versions, Mañjukīrti, Tataragupta, and Abhayākaragupta, except for retaining the feminine vocative ending.
- n.11 A tentative translation is as follows: "Homage to all buddhas whose teaching is unopposed. *Om kiṇi kiṇi*, O One whose Tranquility Is Born of the Thus-gone Ones, O One Who Grants Boons. O One Springing from Successive Thus-gone Ones, *hūṃ phaṭ svāhā*."
- n.12 Our Sanskrit witnesses stop here. Instead of what we translate here as "to uphold" to capture the ambiguity of the original, Tataragupta, when discussing a similar dhāraṇī said to encapsulate *The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (see *The Dhāraṇī of "The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines,"* Toh 576/932),¹³ is more explicit when he replaces the verb with *kaṇṭhasthīkr* ("to place it in one's throat"), which is the Sanskrit idiom for "to learn by heart." He also spells out the benefit as the "meritorious karmic fruit" (*puṇyaphala*) of memorizing the parent text. This sentence is then followed by a fascinating short discussion, which merits to be quoted in full: "Surely, this is an exaggeration! No, one should not say this. For countless thus-gone ones have empowered this dhāraṇī to serve as a method for gaining the equipment of merit for women, immature people, and simpletons, as well as for learned people whose minds are confused, just like the pole of a snake charmer[, which is preprepared by the expert snake charmer to be effective even when he is no longer present,] for removing poison; however, it is not a method for gaining the knowledge conveyed by *The [Perfection of Wisdom in] One Hundred Thousand Lines*. This should be understood to apply in other cases [i.e., where the text is abbreviated into a dhāraṇī] as well" (*nanv atyuktir eveti. na caitad vaktavyam. yataḥ strībālamūrkhān paryākulitamātīn paṇḍitān praty api puṇyasaṃbhārasādhanatvenāsaṃkhyeya-*

tathāgatair adhiṣṭhiteyaṃ dhāriṇī, yathā viśaharatvena gāruḍikaṃ stambhaḥ; na tu lakṣāpratipāditajñānasādhanatvena. evam anyatrāpi boddhavyaḥ). In his note to this dhāraṇī, he reiterates the point about “to uphold” meaning “to memorize” and promises as the reward the fruit of reciting the text (*pāṭhaphala*).

n.13 *Śatasāhasrikāprajñāpāramitādharmaṇī* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh576.html>) (Toh 576/932).

n.14 That is to say, both non-Buddhist (Śaiva, etc.) and Buddhist.

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 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī^{AS}

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.2 equipment of merit

bsod nams kyi tshogs

བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱི་ཚོགས།

punyaśaṃbhāra^{AO}

The progressive increase of virtuous karma. One of the two factors that come together in creating momentum toward a practitioner’s spiritual awakening, the other being the accumulation or equipment of wisdom.

g.3 hand gesture

phyag rgya

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

mudrā^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A seal, in both the literal and metaphoric sense. *Mudrā* is also the name given to an array of symbolic hand gestures, which range from the gesture of touching the earth displayed by the Buddha upon attaining awakening to the numerous gestures used in tantric rituals to symbolize offerings, consecrations, etc. Iconographically, *mudrās* are used as a way of communicating an action performed by the deity or a specific aspect a deity or buddha is displaying, in which case the same figure can be depicted using different hand gestures to signify that they are either meditating, teaching, granting freedom from fear, etc. In Tantric texts, the term is also used to designate the female spiritual consort in her various aspects.

g.4 maṇḍala

dkyil 'khor

དཀྱིལ་འཁོར།

maṇḍala^{AO}

Literally a “disk” or “circle,” in the ritual context *maṇḍala* is a sacred space on the ground or a raised platform, arranged according to a pattern that varies from rite to rite.

g.5 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།

triratna ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.6 thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A frequently used synonym for *buddha*. According to different explanations, it can be read as *tathā-gata*, literally meaning “one who has thus gone,” or as *tathā-āgata*, “one who has thus come.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha(tā)*, often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness,” is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms. Therefore, this epithet is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has departed in the wake of the buddhas of the past, or one who has manifested the supreme awakening dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence. It is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.7 VOW

dam tshig

དམ་ཚིག་

samaya ^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally, in Sanskrit, “coming together.” *Samaya* refers to precepts given by the teacher, the corresponding commitment by the pupil, and the bond that results, which can also be the bond between the practitioner and the deity or a spirit. It can also mean a special juncture or circumstance, or an ordinary time or season.

