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**The Dhāraṇī to Uphold “The Noble Great
Amulet”**

'phags ma so sor 'brang ma chen mo gzung bar 'gyur ba'i gzungs

· Toh 588 ·

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



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SUMMARY

s.1 This text consists of a short dhāraṇī said to encompass a famous text for protection in the Kangyur, *The Great Amulet* (Toh 561), and the benefit 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.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

This text consists of a short dhāraṇī said to encompass a famous text for protection in the Kangyur, *The Great Amulet*,¹ and the benefit of its recitation. In fact, the dhāraṇī here is also revealed in the parent text, where it is called “the supremely secret essence mantra.”² This incantation does not seem to have been included among the four original mantras of the parent text. It is remarkable, however, that it is this additional fifth mantra that has become the most emblematic of *The Great Amulet* tradition, and it is found most commonly in various other Buddhist texts, and even in a late Hindu tantric anthology, the *Tantrasāra*, with variants in the *Mantramahodadhi* and the *Śrī-vidyārṇavatāntra*. Note also that this mantra is one of those recited during the *Gurumaṇḍala-pūjā* performed at the beginning of Vajrayāna rituals in Nepal.³

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*),⁴ 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,⁵ the *Ādikarmavidhi* by Tatakara Gupta,⁶ and the **Bodhipaddhati* by Abhayākar Gupta.⁷

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*)⁸ in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the various Sanskrit sources mentioned above.

The Dhāraṇī to Uphold “The Noble Great Amulet”

1.

The Translation

[F.204.b]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels!

1.2 *namaḥ samantabuddhānām apratihataśāsanānām oṃ maṇidhari vajriṇi
mahāpratisare⁹ hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ phaṭ svāhā!¹⁰*

1.3 By upholding this, one will have upheld *The Noble Queen of Incantations: The Great Amulet.*¹¹

1.4 *Here ends “The Dhāraṇī to Uphold ‘The Noble Great Amulet.’ ”*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 *Mahāpratisarā* (so sor 'brang ba chen mo, Toh 561). See *The Great Amulet* (<https://84000.co/translation/toh561.html>).
- n.2 *The Great Amulet*, 1.134 (<https://84000.co/translation/toh561#UT22084-090-005-223>).
- n.3 For further details and references, see Hidas 2010, especially note 72.
- n.4 Hidas 2021, p. 27, item 20(c) in Cambridge University Library Ms. Add. 1680.8.1. The dhāraṇī is also transmitted elsewhere; see pp. 150, 154, 232–33, and 235.
- n.5 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 *Dhīḥ: Journal of Rare Buddhist Texts Research Unit* 62 (2022): 89–150. The dhāraṇī is on p. 103.
- n.6 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 folios 33 recto–33 verso.

- n.7 *byang chub kyi gzhung lam* (Toh 3766). See folio 120.b for the dhāraṇī. This text heavily depends on Mañjukīrti.
- n.8 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 944 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 944, n.8 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh944.html#UT22084-090-032-85>), for details.
- n.9 This word is omitted in Mañjukīrti.
- n.10 A tentative translation is as follows: “Homage to all buddhas whose teaching is unopposed. *Om* O Amulet holder, O One with a Vajra, O Great Amulet *hūṃ hūṃ phaṭ phaṭ svāhā.*”
- n.11 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* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh576.html>),” Toh 576/932), is more explicit when he replaces the verb with *kaṅṭhasthīkṛ* (“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” (*punṇyaphala*) 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 puṇyasam̐bhārasādhanatvenāsam̐khyeyatathāgatair adhiṣṭhiteyaṃ dhāraṇī, 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*).

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 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།

triratna^{AS}

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.4 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.