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**The Sovereign Tantra “Praises to Śrīdevī  
Kālī”**

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*Śrīdevīkālīpraśamsārājantra*

*dpal lha mo nag mo'i bstod pa rgyal po'i rgyud*

· Toh 671 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud 'bum, ba), folios 202.b–209.b



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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Sovereign Tantra "Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī"* opens in the Pāruṣyaka grove on the summit of Mount Sumeru, where the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi has assembled with a large retinue of divine and demonic beings. Vajrapāṇi introduces the goddess Śrīdevī Kālī and implores the members of his retinue to make offerings to her and praise her. Twelve members of the assembly then praise Śrīdevī Kālī in turn, with each praise providing a fresh perspective on how the goddess's physical features and virtuous qualities reflect her status as a distinctively Buddhist deity.

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i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*The Sovereign Tantra “Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī” (Śrīdevīkālīpraśamsārājatantra)*<sup>1</sup> opens in the Pāruṣyaka grove on the summit of Mount Sumeru, where the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi has assembled with a large retinue of divine and demonic beings. Vajrapāṇi introduces the goddess Śrīdevī Kālī<sup>2</sup> and implores the members of his retinue to praise and make offerings to her, prompting twelve members of the retinue to praise the goddess in turn.

i.2

Each praise to the goddess provides a distinct perspective on how her physical features and virtuous qualities reflect her status as a distinctly Buddhist deity and protector of the Buddha Śākyamuni’s teachings. Śakra, the lord of the gods, begins by praising Śrīdevī Kālī in terms of the ten virtuous actions, noting how the goddess’s practice of the ten virtuous actions led her to abandon all forms of nonvirtuous action. The yakṣa king Vaiśravaṇa then praises Śrīdevī Kālī in terms of her progression on the fivefold path, indicating that she is understood in this tantra to be a highly advanced bodhisattva. We next hear from the kinnara king Druma, the gandharva king Pañcaśikha, the nāga king Nanda, and so forth, representing the various leaders of “eight classes of divine and demonic beings” in Vajrapāṇi’s retinue. Each figure’s praise of Kālī draws out numerous connections between the goddess’s various qualities and the Buddhist teachings on nonduality, the performance of ritual actions, ultimate truth, and the bodhisattva path, providing an entirely Buddhist interpretive framework for understanding and visualizing the goddess. At times, the beings praising Kālī explicitly acknowledge her association with other, non-Buddhist traditions, offering their explanations of why that is the case.

i.3

Among the numerous figures praising Mahākālī is Yama, the Lord of Death. His praise is noteworthy for the fact that it also appears, in a slightly modified standalone form, as *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease*,<sup>3</sup> a text found in both the Kangyur (Toh 1090) and the Tengyur (Toh 1777). Both versions are attributed to “the brahmin Vararuci,” who, here in *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī*,



speaks the praise immediately following the praise spoken by Yama. Thus it would appear that Toh 1090/1777 is an extract from *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī*, and the compilers of Toh 1090/1777 mistook the line introducing the praise of Vararuci in *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī* as an attribution of authorship for the preceding praise spoken by Yama. The fact that Toh 1090/1777 is attributed to the human Vararuci perhaps explains why the same text was also included in the Tengyur.

i.4 There is currently no known Sanskrit witness to this text, and the text does not include a translator's colophon. It also does not appear in either of the ninth-century royal Tibetan catalogs of translated works and is not found in the Chinese canon. All of these factors make it difficult to determine the provenance of the text, and it is perhaps partly for these reasons that Butön Rinchen Drup and others have called into question the authenticity of this work as an Indian text.<sup>4</sup>

i.5 This English translation is based on the version of *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī* in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Stok Palace Kangyur, Phukdrak Kangyur, and the Comparative Edition of the Degé Kangyur (*dpe bsdur ma*). The version of the text preserved in the Nyingma Gyübum also informed this translation.

## **The Sovereign Tantra “Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī”**

1.

## The Translation

[F.202.b]

1.1 Homage to glorious Vajrapāṇi, lord of vidyās and mantras.

Thus did I hear at one time. In the vast Pāruṣyaka grove on the summit of Mount Sumeru, the blessed and glorious great fierce one Vajrapāṇi—whose body blazes like the fire that consumes the world at the end of an eon, [F.203.a] who is victorious over the threefold world, and who burns with the fire of a thousand suns—sat surrounded by a retinue including Śakra and a horde of piśācas, rākṣasas, and mātrkās numbering in the billions. Seated on a lotus, glorious Vajrapāṇi proclaimed, “Eight classes of divine and demonic beings in my retinue, listen to me! There is a great regent in this desire realm known as the mother of the demon<sup>5</sup> and Yama’s sister. She upholds the teachings of all the buddhas, so you should make offerings to her and praise her. I give you my blessing!”

1.2 Śakra, the lord of the gods, rose from his seat in the assembly and spoke the following verses praising Śrīdevī Kālī in terms of the ten virtuous actions:

1.3 “Long ago, before the first eon, you trained your mind extensively in the ten virtuous actions.

Since then, though you have perfected the most exalted of paths,  
You benefit beings in the higher realms through ten virtuous actions—  
Homage and praise to you, Śrīdevī who converts outsiders.

1.4 “You gave up killing beings long ago,  
Attained a long life and wondrous form,  
And are free from karmic debt to others, the cause of harm.<sup>6</sup>  
Homage to you who has conquered the Lord of Death.

1.5 “Because you gave up taking what is not given,<sup>7</sup>

- The accumulation of merit has brought you abundant prosperity,  
And you discovered an undiminishing, stable wealth of treasure.  
Homage and praise to you who bears the treasure of generosity.
- 1.6 “You guard the teachings that warn against a lack of chastity,  
Have risen above the lowly city of the womb,  
And abandoned desire for existence long ago.  
Homage and praise to you, great female renunciant.
- 1.7 “As the result of abandoning the affliction of false words,  
You are a leader who tames the world with the accomplishment of speech,  
And have the nature of one who has attained pure, supreme speech.  
Homage and praise to you who speak the truth. [F.203.b]
- 1.8 “You abandoned the fault of divisive speech and have an undivided retinue.  
A disciplined retinue surrounds you  
And you tame gods and asuras with the truth.  
Homage to you who have gathered a pure retinue.
- 1.9 “Gifted with the virtue of abandoning meaningless speech,  
You gave up disruptions to undistracted, single-pointed samādhi.  
You protect the teachings with your meaningful speech.  
Homage and praise to you, tamer of childish beings.
- 1.10 “By virtue of abandoning pride and conceit, Goddess,  
In a melodious voice, you speak gentle, peaceful words,  
That are an antidote to abusive, harsh speech.  
Homage and praise to you, tamer of harsh speech.
- 1.11 “As a sign that you abandoned concepts of an apprehending subject  
And specifically abandoned covetousness in your own mind,  
The lion that symbolizes no-self adorns your ear.  
Homage and praise to you who have abandoned covetousness.
- 1.12 “You abandoned harmful intent toward apprehended objects  
And view external objects as nondual phenomena.  
Homage and praise to you whose snake earring  
Is a sign of having fully abandoned such harmful intent.
- 1.13 “You abandoned religious doctrines based on the wrong view  
And took a form aligned with the Buddha’s doctrine—  
One that embodies the pure view.  
Homage and praise to you who display the ultimate, free of conceptuality.
- 1.14 “There are two types of action in this world: pure and impure.

- The ten impure, nonvirtuous actions lead to the lower realms.  
The pure, virtuous actions lead to higher birth.  
Because you first trained in the virtuous actions,
- 1.15 “You reside on progressively higher grounds.  
You teach the signs of the ten virtuous actions in this inferior realm,  
Adopting a malevolent guise to guide beings.  
Homage and praise to you who are worthy of praise.”
- 1.16 Next, the yakṣa king Vaiśravaṇa praised Śrīdevī Mahākālī according to the system of the fivefold path:
- 1.17 “After purifying the accumulations  
On the unique path traveled by the holy ones  
And gradually cultivating the antidote, wisdom that sees the ultimate,  
[F.204.a]  
Your supreme goal is to reach perfection.
- 1.18 “That is why, Goddess, such attributes,  
That you specifically possess,  
Show that you perfectly gathered the accumulations from the first  
And attained the samādhi related to the application from the first stage.<sup>8</sup>
- 1.19 “You saw the ultimate on the ground of Utter Joy  
As nonconceptual and unarisen.  
Then, with the unique qualities of a glorious bodhisattva,  
Relying on your own mind and the pure second ground,
- 1.20 “You likewise reached the end of the pure third ground.  
You further cultivated your mind on the fourth ground  
And perfected concentration on the fifth ground.  
You further purified your mind on the sixth ground
- 1.21 “And perfected method on the seventh ground.  
You further cultivated your mind on the eighth  
And, as Śrīdevī Kālī, made aspirations  
And attained the quality of power on the ninth.
- 1.22 “That power will propel you on to wisdom.  
After you perfected these grounds,  
You aspired to reach fruition on the ground of a buddha.  
You have a youthful form because you traversed the eighth ground
- 1.23 “And appear in a fierce form to tame beings.  
Homage and praise to you, tamer of wicked beings!

May I complete the path as quickly as you!”

- 1.24 Next, the horse-headed kinnara king Druma praised Śrīdevī Mahākālī in terms of nonduality:
- 1.25 “Śrīdevī, you are nondual;  
You are found within this ultimate, nonconceptual basic reality.  
You are true because the ultimate and relative are not two.  
You are profound because saṃsāra and nirvāṇa are not two.
- 1.26 “You are exalted because ordinary beings and buddhas are not two.  
I praise you because action and result are not two.  
You are the result because cause and effect are not two.
- 1.27 “You are the single state, the nonduality of subject and object,  
The ultimate space that subsumes conceptuality and its absence.<sup>9</sup>  
You are the great accumulation of nondual merit and wisdom.  
I praise you as the pure nonduality of the perceptible and the ultimate.  
[F.204.b]
- 1.28 “You are the single expression of the phenomena of self and other,  
The profound power of the nonduality of apprehended and apprehender,  
And the purified field, free from both higher and lower rebirth.  
I praise you as the single nondual nature of good and bad.
- 1.29 “You are supreme as unproduced, complete, spontaneously present  
nonduality,  
The mind itself in which mind and the aggregates are not separate,  
The state in which one attains the nonduality of practice and its goal.  
I praise you<sup>10</sup> as the supreme expression of the nonduality of self and other.
- 1.30 “You are bodhicitta, the nondual space of male and female,  
The nondual object of method and wisdom,  
And the peaceful state in which empty and not empty are inseparable.  
Homage and praise to you, effortlessly changeable and unchanging.
- 1.31 “You are the ineffable state, the nonduality of word and sound,  
The singular mode of the mind itself, inseparable from body and mind.  
Because you are the single object, the nonduality of effort and its goal,  
I praise you as the ultimate realm devoid of conceptuality.
- 1.32 “Since there is one system in which Buddhists and non-Buddhists are not  
two,  
You have realized that the phenomenal world<sup>11</sup> and wisdom are nondual.  
Since existence and liberation are one true reality,

- I praise and honor you as the nondual body of everything.
- 1.33 “You are the single state of nonduality in which internal and external do not exist,  
The pure peaceful mode of sentience and insentience,  
And are seen as singular, the nonduality of the apparent and unapparent.  
Homage and praise to you, the supreme nondual referent.
- 1.34 “All of this is the profound expression of the ultimate  
And is concerned with a referent free of conceptuality.  
All of this illuminates your mind, Goddess—  
Through this praise, may I also become like you.”
- 1.35 At that point, the gandharva king Pañcaśikha praised Śrīdevī in terms of her ritual activity:
- 1.36 “The mind itself is distinguished as the four ritual activities.  
They are nothing other than mind itself but are devoid of mind.  
Ultimately, the mind itself is free of conceptuality and lacks color and form.  
Conventionally, it is one’s own mind as mere illusion.
- 1.37 “Glorious pacifying goddess who is widely extolled,  
You pacify, are pacifying, and have a pacifying nature. [F.205.a]  
You are a queen surrounded by a peaceful retinue  
And have white physical marks that shine brightly.<sup>12</sup>
- 1.38 “Homage and praise to you, all-pacifying goddess.  
Please pacify my enemies and illnesses.
- 1.39 “Glorious enriching goddess who is widely extolled,  
You enrich, are enriching, and have an enriching nature.  
You are a queen surrounded by an enriching retinue  
And have golden physical marks that are intensely majestic.
- 1.40 “Homage and praise to you, all-enriching goddess.  
Please increase my merit and wisdom.
- 1.41 “Glorious enthralling goddess who is widely extolled,  
You enthrall, are enthralling, and have an enthralling nature.  
You are a queen surrounded by an enthralling retinue  
And have red physical marks that are intensely majestic.
- 1.42 “Homage and praise to you, all-enthralling goddess.  
Please bring my illnesses and enemies under your control.

- 1.43 “Glorious wrathful goddess who is widely extolled,  
You bring wrath, are wrathful, and have a wrathful nature.  
You are a queen surrounded by a wrathful retinue  
And have dark physical marks that are intensely majestic.
- 1.44 “Homage and praise to you, all-wrathful goddess.  
Please kill my illnesses and enemies with your wrath.
- 1.45 “Your true nature is not established in any way,  
But you can appear with any of these characteristics.<sup>13</sup>  
This is what allows the four ritual activities to benefit beings.  
May I spontaneously accomplish the nature of the four ritual activities  
And strive to benefit others just as you do.”
- 1.46 Next, the nāga king Nanda praised Śrīdevī Kālī in terms of her physical features:
- 1.47 “You are identical with the accomplishment of mantra-yoga.  
The colors and forms of your physical attributes  
Are insubstantial but, in order to tame beings,  
Are taught using these symbolic features:
- 1.48 “You ride a donkey because you tame the three realms  
And wear shackles to symbolize that you will not pass into nirvāṇa.  
You are draped with an elephant hide to show you spontaneously  
accomplish your own benefit  
And are wrapped with a pelt to show that you fulfill the benefit of others.
- 1.49 “A full moon illuminates your crown because you possess bodhicitta.  
[F.205.b]  
A sun adorns your stomach because you have realized insight.  
You hold a sword that cuts the stalk of the three poisons  
And a mongoose symbolizes your treasure of merit.
- 1.50 “Your disheveled, deep yellow locks indicate your perfection of enthralling  
and wrathful rites.  
You bare your sharp fangs, symbolizing the removal of afflictions.  
You click your palate because the blood of saṃsāra is on your tongue  
And you have a wide, angry glare because you harm hateful, wicked beings.
- 1.51 “Your eyes are bloodshot because you enthrall everything.  
You have a dark complexion to show your supreme, unwavering store of  
equanimity.<sup>14</sup>  
You wear charnel ground ornaments because you tame the māṭṛkās



- And you brandish a khaṭvāṅga, symbolizing body, speech, and mind.
- 1.52 “You wear a garland of skulls because you have perfected the three bodies.  
You are adorned with a whirlwind to indicate your swift wrath.  
You stand within a blazing fire because you have burned up the afflictions  
And you lean against the pāriyātraka tree because you protect the desire  
realm.
- 1.53 “You are the impenetrable goddess of the fortress<sup>15</sup> because you tamed the  
asuras.  
You wear a tiger skin skirt to show your steadfast courage  
And the complete set of wrathful attire because you protect the teachings.
- 1.54 “Since the roar of no-self shows a mastery of pride,  
A lion adorns your right earring, symbolizing method.  
Since you have tempered the power of anger and tamed the great poison,  
A snake adorns your left earring, symbolizing insight.
- 1.55 “You ring a bell, symbolizing the impermanence of compounded  
phenomena.  
Because you stoke rage toward attachment, you drink waves of blood.<sup>16</sup>  
You wear tree bark as adornment because you guard your samaya  
And a peacock crown ornament since you govern the different ritual actions.
- 1.56 “Because you purified the collection of afflictive obscurations  
And your wisdom manifests as the body of vidyās,  
You stand firm in the northeast, the supreme natural abode.<sup>17</sup>  
You ride a donkey because you abide in the middle way<sup>18</sup>  
And you take the guise of a mother because you tame the wicked afflictions.  
Homage and praise to you, mother of ḍākinīs!”
- 1.57 Next, the kumbhāṅḍa king Nine-Headed Snake praised Śrīdevī<sup>19</sup> in terms of  
body, speech, and mind:
- 1.58 “Though bodhicitta is ultimately nondual,  
Her symbolic attributes are the three existences. [F.206.a]  
Her pure mind is the wrathful palace,  
Which emerges from the ocean of blood that surrounds it  
And is adorned with skeletons, skull garlands, and flayed skin.
- 1.59 “The wrathful queen is utterly terrifying in her dark body,  
Sending forth emanations of female beings with shaggy blue locks.
- 1.60 “Glorious Remaju<sup>20</sup> is her body emanation.  
She arises within a triangular, dark yellow expanse.

- She enhances good qualities, is yellow, and laughs at the sky.  
May she perfectly carry out all enriching rites!
- 1.61 “Glorious Remati is her speech emanation.  
She arises within a triangular, red expanse.  
She is the great red one, the great red Caṇḍālī.  
May she render all enthralling rites effective!
- “Samudrā is her emanation of body, speech, and mind.  
She destroys Rudra and subdues the army of māras.  
She liberates the six realms and is the mother of beings.  
Homage and praise to the goddess who spreads the teachings.  
Please bless my body, speech, and mind.”
- 1.62 Next, the asura king Vemacitra praised Śrīdevī in terms of the ultimate:
- 1.63 “You are the state of perfect quiescence, luminous and free of conceptuality.  
You are the true mother, the pure, supreme heart essence,  
And the essence of primordially nondual space.  
Glorious one, your nature is exceedingly clear.
- 1.64 “This essential nature is utterly pure and ineffable.  
Praises to it composed by the naïve fall short.  
Fools imagine you to be substantial  
And speak words of praise as if you have a physical form.
- 1.65 “But any praise based on words and letters,  
Directed to you, who is fixed upon the Victor’s truth,<sup>21</sup>  
Is never the true reality of liberation.  
When primordial nondual great bliss has not been realized,<sup>22</sup>  
Praise inspired by you will always fall short,<sup>23</sup>  
When it takes you to be a symbolic emanation of your aspirations.<sup>24</sup>
- 1.66 “A person who understands nonarising  
And can meditate on the essence of primordial nonduality  
Is someone who truly praises you. [F.206.b]
- 1.67 “Those who grasp at your form and color  
Might gaze upon you for countless eons  
And still not be able to see your form and color,  
While those who do not grasp at form will see.
- 1.68 “They will use all manner of sounds, words, and expressions,  
To call out to you for an eon, but you will not hear.  
However, you will hear the call of those yogins,

Who have abandoned such things.

1.69 “A fool who has accomplished your practice  
Through the virtues of body and speech will always forsake you,  
While one who worships you with a mind that rejects body and speech  
Will attain the treasure of accomplishment when they worship.

“You epitomize the qualities of the multitudes of victors<sup>25</sup>  
And commune<sup>26</sup> with the victors in the dharmadhātu.  
Because you display the nature of the profound middle way,  
You take on a non-Buddhist form to guide all beings  
In this exceedingly harsh Sahā world.

1.70 “Your body, imagined in this way,  
Has reached the state of being empty of the manifold obscurations.  
You, supreme emptiness and truly empty,  
Are praised by those who understand the empty and nondual.

1.71 “To praise you in this way counts as a form of praise,  
And though you are not an object of praise,  
I praise you like this to guide naive people.”

1.72 Next, the king of garuḍas Vajra Golden Eyes praised Śrīdevī:

1.73 “Śrīdevī, your import is difficult to fathom.  
Your skillful emanations move through the sky.  
I revere and praise you as an emanation of a bodhisattva,  
With melodies, numerous as grains of dust, from my three doors.

1.74 “Though you are untainted by the offerings I make,  
May objects pleasing to the senses fall from the sky like rain,  
Glorious One, so that the sublime accomplishment may be attained—  
And may these abundant offerings conquer the senses.

1.75 “Glorious One, you have dominion over good and evil.  
I regretfully confess before you  
All of my wicked bodily, verbal, and mental acts. [F.207.a]  
Out of compassion, please purify my obscurations.

1.76 “You are particularly exalted for the benefit you bring beings  
And the abundant prosperity benefits you bring yourself.  
I rejoice and offer harmonious joy free of envy,  
To the continuity of your being.

1.77 “Beautiful Kālī, whose supreme body has

- Such wonderful qualities, I implore you—  
 Use your terrifying power as the web of illusion  
 To benefit beings throughout the three times and ten directions.
- 1.78 “I request that your supreme body with its unique qualities  
 Remain without passing into nirvāṇa  
 As long as beings endure,  
 To tame wicked beings and protect the teachings.
- 1.79 “May the virtue from this homage, confession,  
 Rejoicing, encouragement, and requesting  
 Empty the lower realms—I dedicate it so that all  
 Will perfect the accumulations and reach great awakening.”
- 1.80 Next, the attendants of the sky god praised Śrīdevī:
- 1.81 “From a palace in the middle of a swirling expanse of nine dark winds,  
 At the center of a vast blaze like the fire at the end of an eon,  
 You emerge as the sole mother, sovereign goddess of the desire realm,  
 The mother of the demon, and Yama’s only sister.<sup>27</sup>
- 1.82 “You are Śrīdevī, the black Remati,  
 The black devourer with awesome fangs,  
 Dark black, naked, and with bloody locks.
- 1.83 “Your appearance with a black body  
 Symbolizes not being agitated by ultimate space.  
 The leftward curl of your hair  
 Symbolizes sending emanations into a mother’s womb.
- 1.84 “The locks on your head are braided as one,  
 Symbolizing that you combine recognition of the ultimate with action.  
 The sparks that fly from your locks  
 Symbolize sending mind emanations throughout the ten directions.
- 1.85 “The garland of fresh skulls tied around your head  
 Symbolizes your compassionate benefit to beings with your emanation body.  
 The pouncing lion on your right earring  
 Symbolizes your subjugation of all *menmos*. [F.207.b]
- 1.86 “The serpent with a flared hood on your left earring  
 Symbolizes purity within the expanse where anger is not abandoned.  
 The ringing golden bells on your earrings  
 Symbolize your worship and accomplishment of all the buddhas.

- 1.87 “The wide-eyed glare of your bloodshot eyes  
Symbolizes that you observe the samayas of yogins in the three existences.  
The fierce open fire pit of your mouth  
Symbolizes the liberation of Rudra, destroyer of the teachings.
- 1.88 “Bearing your sharp and poisonous triangular fangs  
Symbolizes liberating the ten targets for liberation onto the bodhisattva  
levels.  
Dressing in human skin and an antelope hide  
Symbolizes that you possess the true Dharma and its meaning.
- 1.89 “Being wrapped in a fresh elephant hide  
Symbolizes that you possess the meaning of the supreme vehicle.  
That you wear black felt  
Symbolizes your majesty in this world.
- 1.90 “The sun shining from your navel  
Symbolizes drying the ocean of suffering to its depths.  
The moon shining from the crown of your head  
Symbolizes clearing away the three poisons’ dark ignorance.
- 1.91 “The restraining shackles clasping your feet  
Symbolize the unification of method and insight.  
That you wield a black sword in your right hand  
Symbolizes the eradication of suffering, birth, and death.
- 1.92 “That you drink human blood from a fresh skull in your left hand  
Symbolizes drinking the suffering of saṃsāra like blood.  
That you ride sideways on a white-faced donkey  
Symbolizes liberating beings who hold wrong views.
- 1.93 “The front of your saddle is made from a rākṣasa’s throat,  
Symbolizing the taming of Laṅkāpura in the realm of the rākṣasas.  
The upper and lower bridle, made of a large black snake,  
Symbolizes your anger that conquers the classes of obstructing beings.
- 1.94 “Swinging your riding crop<sup>28</sup> made out of black tortoiseshell  
Symbolizes binding the black nāgas and māras under oath.  
The cross of the māras on the right saddle strap  
Symbolizes pinning those who violate the samayas to a cross.
- 1.95 “The satchel of diseases that hangs on the rear saddle straps [F.208.a]  
Symbolizes averting misfortune and bringing disease down  
On those who would harm this teaching.

- 1.96 “You exude drops of fat that symbolize the nectar of the ultimate,  
Are ornamented with drops of blood symbolizing your fondness for  
compassion,  
And are imprinted with an ash mark symbolizing your activities to tame  
beings.
- 1.97 “The myriad mātṛkās bound to you in service  
Symbolize the activities you perform, which pervade the three realms.  
The fire blazing from your mouth, sole mother, dries up the oceans,  
And by raising your vajra you hurl the Sumeru mountain range.
- 1.98 I fervently praise you, Goddess!”
- 1.99 Next, Black Yama praised the great goddess in terms of her superior  
qualities:
- 1.100 “Goddess,<sup>29</sup> glorious black ḍākinī,<sup>30</sup> your single braid is perpetually  
saturated with sesame oil. You are poised seductively wearing lead earrings  
and you bear many ornaments. A single iron shackle beautifully adorns your  
feet as anklets. You are known as Kālī, the one who rides around at night on  
a donkey. Beautifully adorned with locks as you are, who can fathom the  
import of the great ocean of your behavior? When saṃsāra is destroyed,  
when smoke billows from the blood and fat dripping from human bones,  
then, Kālī, all beings will instantly fall into your mouth—into your  
unbearable fangs.
- 1.101 “Goddess, you hold a human skull in your hand, reveling in the charnel  
ground while immersed in the accomplishment of yoga. You and your  
attendants have no sorrow and ring your bells with no fear of death. You  
hold a garland of heads—the severed heads of heroes cut down by swords  
in battle—as you dance in a circle, arms extending and retracting mightily. A  
belt made of woven nāga lords is tied around your broad hips and you  
brandish a spear and standard in your hand. Your eyes are bloodshot from  
being intoxicated with the liquor of blood and you are watched by the host  
of bhūtas who wander cremation grounds at night. Your leggings are made  
from fresh hides<sup>31</sup> and you are wrapped in a felt shawl. Your moon-like face  
is graced with a hood of fresh human intestines and your forehead mark is  
made of a clump of blood and fat. [F208.b] You gnash noisily on bits of  
human flesh and wear a crown of human corpses on your head.
- 1.102 “Wrathful protector of mine, with human flesh in hand, the eyes of māras,  
rākṣasīs, and mātṛkās who see you now for the first time quiver and bulge as  
they bow to you. Beautiful Goddess, your body is black and you are so  
overwhelming even I, Yamarāja, praised by Śakra and the rest, always bow  
to you. Because you bring an end to all gods and beings,<sup>32</sup> an uruga with a  
thousand hooded heads adorns one of your ears from behind and an

- incomparable lion is fastened to the other ear. You are surrounded by an ocean, trample the earth, and the sun and moon that course over the earth rise from your navel. Goddess, you conquer the three existences.
- 1.103 You are the all-pacifying woman who is able to dry up all waters with the fire that blazes from the vast ocean. Black Durgā, whose form resembles that of Mahādeva,<sup>33</sup> you do not fear any human or animal disease.
- 1.104 “I respectfully offer homage and praise to you, sole mother.”
- 1.105 Next, the brahmin Vararuci praised Śrīdevī Kālī in terms of the relative truth:
- 1.106 “Homage and praise to you,  
Sole mother, goddess, Śrīdevī,  
Vajra goddess Kālī, great and powerful.  
May my reverent praise to you  
Bring supremely good fortune and desired riches.
- 1.107 “Your swift mind and great form are known far and wide,  
You are a renowned māṭṛkā, a world protector,  
A fierce warrior with great perseverance,  
Who is always victorious on the battlefield.  
Praise to you, Yama’s sister.
- 1.108 “You are dressed in blue silk,  
Wear adornments both beautiful and hideous,  
Have eyes that are hideous and enraged,<sup>34</sup>  
Are faithful, and gather people in the assembly. [F.209.a]
- 1.109 “Sometimes you dwell deep in the mountains,  
Sometimes you dwell in forests and trees,  
And sometimes you dwell in the middle of a charnel ground  
Where shrines of the goddess have been built.
- 1.110 “When, people continually praise you, Goddess,  
In those places, in remote mountains and forests,  
You are compelled to fulfill their intentions.  
When I continually praise you,  
Please fulfill my wishes as well.
- 1.111 “Your banner is made of peacock feathers.  
You protect those who continually serve you  
And cause livestock to flourish.
- 1.112 “You are constantly surrounded on all sides  
By lions, tigers, and wolves.

- You ring the great vajra bell  
And grant boons as the great bell rings.
- 1.113 “Sometimes you hold a trident in your hand.  
Sometimes you raise a sun and moon standard.
- 1.114 “If someone worships you during the waning moon  
On either the ninth or eleventh day,  
You, goddess whom none surpass,  
The tamer of m̄aras, teacher of asuras and r̄akṣasīs,  
Grant them victory over their enemies and in battle.
- 1.115 “You are supreme among women,  
Like the world-protecting Vāgīśvarī.<sup>35</sup>  
You are like a lotus in a king’s palace.  
Your beautiful face is like a full moon.  
You are like a ferry to cross water  
And like a beloved friend to the poor.
- 1.116 “When the gods and asuras battled,  
You made a fortress for the gods  
Within your own navel, Goddess.  
You brought victory to the pure army of the gods  
And defeated the asuras.  
You rattle the bloody spear you wield  
And your banner and standard blaze like fire.
- 1.117 “Praise to you who tames enemies and averts war!”
- 1.118 Next, the great ṛṣi Kauṇḍinya praised Śrīdevī in terms of her physical attributes:
- 1.119 “I offer constant, respectful homage to the sovereign leader of the world.
- 1.120 “You have always been supreme among mothers,  
The entire triple world praises you,  
And everyone longs to see your beautiful face.  
Your body is adorned with various wonderful features.
- 1.121 “Your eyes are broad like the petals of a blue lotus,  
You are adorned with the famous light of merit and wisdom, [F.209.b]  
And you are just like a priceless jewel.  
Because I have praised you now, Lotus lady,  
My mind’s every wish will be fulfilled.



- 1.122 “Your wisdom is perfect and your good fortune abundant.  
You are perfectly pure like a lotus  
And all long to see your body’s beautiful hue.  
You are adorned with various marks and features.
- 1.123 “You are beautified by your stainless wisdom,  
Are supreme among all objects of recollection,  
And, like a lion, are supreme among predators.
- 1.124 “As a result of these verses of praise,  
May all that is desired be attained.”
- 1.125 Then, glorious Vajrapāṇi addressed the gathering: “Your praises to Śrīdevī  
are wonderful. I too will reflect on the meaning of these praises and  
constantly recite them mentally. To praise this goddess is to praise me and to  
praise all the buddhas. The goddess protects and defends such a person and  
grants whatever accomplishments they desire.”
- 1.126 When he finished speaking, the assembly was delighted and a great  
torrent of ornaments rained down on blessed Vajrapāṇi. They then returned  
to their respective abodes.
- 1.127 *This concludes “The Sovereign Tantra of Praises.”*

ab.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- C Choné (*co ne*)
- D Degé (*sde dge bka' 'gyur*)
- F Phukdrak (*phug brag*)
- H Lhasa (*lha sa / zhol*)
- J Lithang (*li thang*)
- K Kangxi (*kang shi*)
- N Narthang (*snar thang*)
- S Stok Palace (*stog pho 'brang*)
- Y Yongle (*g.yong lo*)

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 D, S: *shrI de bI kA li pra ma rA dza tan+tra kA li*; F: *ShrI de wa ka pra sraM ra ca tan tra ka li*. There is no known attestation of the Sanskrit title for this text. In the Tibetan transliteration of the Sanskrit title, we have tentatively emended *pra ma* to *praśamsā* to reflect a common Sanskrit correlate to the Tibetan term *bstod pa*. The Tibetan transliteration also includes the term *kA li (kāli)* at the end of the Sanskrit title, but as this appears to be an error it has been removed.
- n.2 For a presentation of Śrīdevī Kālī and the relationship between the texts in the Kangyur that focus on this protector, see the introduction in *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease* (*nad kyi bdag mo la bstod pa*, Toh 1090/1777).
- n.3 For another discussion of this textual relationship, see the introduction in *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease* (*nad kyi bdag mo la bstod pa*, Toh 1090/Toh 1777).
- n.4 Tarthang Tulku 1982, p. 273.
- n.5 Tib. *bdud kyi ma*. Elsewhere she is always named “the wife of the demon” (*bdud kyi yum*). For details see *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease*, i.3 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-101-146.html#UT22084-101-146-223>).
- n.6 D, S: *gzhan gyi lan chags gnod pa'i rkyen dang ldan*; F: *gzhan gyi lan chags gnod pa'i rkyen dang bral*. This translation is tentative and follows F, which is also supported by the reading in the Nyingma Gyübum.
- n.7 D: *ma byin len spangs tshul la*; F, H, N, S: *ma byin len pa'i tshul la*. This translation follows the reading in F, H, N, and S.
- n.8 D, S: *dang po'i sa las*; F: *dang po'i las la*. The English translation follows D and S. This line refers to the first stage of the path of accumulation, not the first

bodhisattva ground (*sa, bhūmi*), which is the result of completing the path of seeing (*mthong lam, darśanamārga*), not the basis for the path of accumulation.

- n.9 D, S: *spros dang spros med don dam dbyings kyis bsdus*; F: *spros dang spros med don dam gnyis kyis bsdus*. This translation, which follows D and S, is tentative.
- n.10 F, H, K, S: *bstod*; D: *bskyod*. This translation follows F, H, K, and S.
- n.11 Here we understand *dbyings* to be short for *chos kyī dbyings* and in this context to refer to the appearance of the various phenomena of conventional reality.
- n.12 D, S: *rtags kyī sku mdog dkar mo shin tu dngas*; F: *rtags kyī sku mdog dkar zhing rab tu dngas* This translation is tentative.
- n.13 D: *'di ltar 'dzin nyid cir yang snang ba ni*; F, H: *'di ltar mtshan nyid cir yang snang ba ni*; S: *ji ltar 'dzin nyid cir yang snang ba ni*. This translation follows F and H.
- n.14 This translation is tentative.
- n.15 D: *rdzon gi dka' zlog ma*. This epithet clearly evokes Kālī's appearance in the form of Durgā (*dka' zlog ma*), but it also appears to refer to the story mentioned below in this text where Kālī is said to have provided a fortress for the gods when the gods and asuras were at war.
- n.16 This translation is tentative.
- n.17 This translation is tentative.
- n.18 D: *dbu ma' i sa*. This translation is tentative.
- n.19 D: *dpal lha mo nag mo*; C, F, H, J, K, N, S, Y: *dpal lha mo*. This translation follows C, F, H, J, K, N, S, and Y in omitting *nag mo (kālī)*.
- n.20 D: *re ma dzu*; C, J: *re ma 'dzi*; F, H, K, Y: *re ma ti*; N: *re ma Ti*; S: *na ma ti*.
- n.21 D: *rgyal ba' i don yang thugs chud khyod nyid la*; C, J, K, Y: *rgyal ba' i don spangs thugs chud khyod nyid la*; F: *rgyal ba' i dgongs pa thugs chud khyod nyid la* N, S: *rgyal ba' i don yangs thugs chud khyod nyid la*. This translation follows D, but the wide variation across sources suggests that other interpretations may be viable.
- n.22 D, F: *gdod nas gnyis med bde chen ma rtogs par*; H, N, S: *gdod nas gnyis med bde chen ma gtogs par*. This translation follows D.
- n.23 D, F: *khyod la brten nas thams cad ltung bar 'gyur*; H, N, S: *khyod la brten nas thams cad ltung bar 'gyur*. This translation follows D.

- n.24 The translation of this passage is tentative.
- n.25 D: *rgyal po mang po*; C, F, H, J, N, K, S, Y: *rgyal ba mang po*. This translation follows C, F, H, J, N, K, S, and Y.
- n.26 D: *mjal*; H, K, N, Y, S: *mol*; F] *rol*. This translation follows D.
- n.27 For details on the meaning and origin of these three epithets of Kālī, see *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease*, i.3 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-101-146.html#UT22084-101-146-223>).
- n.28 This translation is tentative.
- n.29 This passage spoken by Yama makes up the entirety of *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-101-146.html>) (Toh 1090/1777). Though there is some variation between Toh 1090 and this text, likely due to separate histories of editorial revision, the content is largely the same. Whereas Toh 1090/1777 is presented in consistently metrical lines of verse, a metrical structure is only hinted at here in Toh 671. Therefore, in this English translation we have opted to render this passage in prose rather than alternate between verse and prose in the uneven manner suggested by the text.
- n.30 We have emended *khyod la ni* to *khyod nyid ni* as suggested by the version of the text preserved in the Nyingma Gyübum. This line is not reported in Toh 1090/1777.
- n.31 D: *rkang pa'i gos ni ko rlon mtshan pas drangs pas*. This translation is tentative.
- n.32 D: *lha rnamdang ni 'gro ba ma lus 'jug brtul bas na*; F: *lha rnamdang ni 'gro ba ma lus 'jug sdug bsngal gnas nas*; C, J, K, Y: *lha rnamdang ni 'gro ba ma lus mjug brtul bas*; H, N: *lha rnamdang ni 'gro ba ma lus pa rnamdang 'jug phyir rab rtul bas*; S: *lha rnamdang ni 'gro ba ma lus pa rnamdang 'jug phyir rab brtul bas*. This translation follows C, J, K, and Y.
- n.33 D: *lha chen sku dang 'tsham par bzhugs pa'i dka' zlog*. In *Praising the Lady Who Rules Disease*, 1.7 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-101-146.html#UT22084-101-146-206>), this line reads “You are present as half of Mahādeva’s body” (*lha chen sku yi phyed du bzhugs*).
- n.34 D, S: *spyān mig mthong na mi sdug kun du sdang*; F: *spyān mig 'thong na kun tu sngag*; Y: *spyān mig mi sdug kun du sdang / dad cing tshogs pa'i mi rnamdang sdud*. Because the reading in D and S is hypermetrical, this tentative translation follows the reading in Y.

n.35 D, S: *tshig dbang 'jig rten mgon po 'dra*. This translation is tentative.

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 asura

*lha ma yin*

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

*asura*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:



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).

g.2 basic reality

*chos nyid*

ཚོས་ཉིད།

*dharmatā*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The real nature, true quality, or condition of things. Throughout Buddhist discourse this term is used in two distinct ways. In one, it designates the relative nature that is either the essential characteristic of a specific phenomenon, such as the heat of fire and the moisture of water, or the defining feature of a specific term or category. The other very important and widespread way it is used is to designate the ultimate nature of all phenomena, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms and is often synonymous with emptiness or the absence of intrinsic existence.

g.3 bhūta

*'byung po*

འབྱུང་པོ།

*bhūta*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.4 Butön Rinchen Drup

*bu ston rin chen grub*

བུ་སྟོན་རིན་ཆེན་གྲུབ།

—

Butön Rinchen Drup (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364), a great scholar at the monastery of Zhalu (*zha lu*) whose compiling of lists of translated works contributed to the emergence of the Kangyur and Tengyur collections.

g.5 Caṇḍālī

*gtum ma*

གཏུམ་མ།

*caṇḍālī*<sup>AD</sup>

The name of a goddess who is equated with Remati, the speech emanation of Mahākālī in *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī*.

g.6 conceptuality

*spros pa*

སྟོས་པ།

*prapañca*<sup>AD</sup>

This term denotes the presence of discursive or conceptual thought processes. Their absence or deconstruction is characteristic of the realization of emptiness or ultimate reality.

g.7 cross of the māras

*bdud kyi khram bam*

བདུད་ཀྱི་ཁྲམ་བམ།

—

In *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī* (Toh 671), this appears to be a pattern on the strap of Mahākālī's saddle that represents punishing beings who violate their vows (*samayas*).

g.8 dharmadhātu

*chos kyi dbyings*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།

*dharmadhātu*<sup>AD</sup>

Interpreted variously—given the many connotations of both *dharma* and *dhātu*—as the realm, element, or nature of phenomena, reality, or truth. Generally taken to denote the entirety of

phenomena and particularly their nature as a synonym of other terms designating the ultimate. In Tibetan, instances of the Sanskrit *dharmadhātu* with this range of meanings (rendered *chos kyi dbyings*) are distinguished from instances of the same Sanskrit term with its rather different meaning related to mental perception in the context of the twelve sense sources and eighteen elements (rendered *chos kyi khams*).

g.9 Druma

*ljon pa*

ལྷོན་པ།

*druma*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The kinnara king Druma is a well-known figure in canonical Buddhist literature, where he frequently appears, mostly in minor roles. For example, King Druma appears in *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (Toh 113), where he is one of the four kinnara kings attending the Buddha's teaching. He is also included in *The King of Samādhis Sūtra* (Toh 127), where he arrives with his queens to make an offering of his music to the Buddha. He is also a bodhisattva who teaches and displays a profound understanding of the doctrine of emptiness in *The Questions of the Kinnara King Druma* (Toh 157), where his future awakening is also prophesied by the Buddha.

(His name has been translated into Tibetan both as “*sdong po*” and “*ljon pa*.”)

g.10 Durgā

*rdzong gi dka' zlog ma · dka' zlog ma*

རྫོང་གི་དཀར་ལྷོག་མ། · དཀར་ལྷོག་མ།

—

A form of Mahākālī in *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī*. She is also a popular goddess within the Brahmanical and Hindu traditions, where she is identified as Pārvatī, the wife of Śiva.

g.11 eight classes of divine and demonic beings

*lha ma srin sde brgyad*

ལྷ་མ་སྲིན་སྡེ་བརྒྱད།

—

The eight classes of divine and demonic beings can vary across sources. It would appear that this set of eight beings is a Tibetan convention as there is no known Sanskrit equivalent for the term for this set as a whole, or an established Indic taxonomy based on eight types of such beings.

g.12 enriching rite

*phrin las rgyas pa · rgyas pa*

ཐིན་ལས་རྒྱས་པ། · རྒྱས་པ།

*pauṣṭika*<sup>AD</sup>

g.13 enthralling rite

*dbang gi phrin las · dbang*

དབང་གི་ཐིན་ལས། · དབང།

*vaśīkaraṇa*<sup>AD</sup>

One of the four primary categories of ritual activities. It involves summoning and controlling a desired target.

g.14 fire that blazes from the vast ocean

*rgya mtsho klong nas me 'bar*

རྒྱ་མཚོ་གློང་ནས་མེ་འབར།

—

“Vast ocean” translates the Tibetan *rgya mtsho'i klong*, which in turn is attested as a translation of the Sanskrit *vaḍabāmukha*, “the mare’s mouth.” In Indic mythology, this is the name for an underwater cavity at the bottom of the sea that contains a fire known as *vaḍabāgni* (“the mare’s fire”). At some point, this fire will erupt and consume the entire world.

g.15 fivefold path

*lam rnam pa lnga*

ལས་རྣམ་པ་ལྔ།

*pañcamārga*

A Buddhist framework for the path to awakening. It consists of (1) the path of accumulation (*sambhāramārga*; *tshogs lam*), (2) the path of preparation (*prayogamārga*; *sbyor lam*), (3) the path of seeing (*darśanamārga*; *mthong lam*), (4) the path of cultivation (*bhāvanāmārga*; *sgom lam*), and (5) the path of no further learning (*aśaikṣamārga*; *mi slob lam*).

g.16 god

*lha*

ལྷ།

*deva*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.17 ground

*sa*

ས།

*bhūmi* <sup>AD</sup>

Literally the “grounds” in which qualities grow, and also meaning “levels.” Here it refers specifically to levels of enlightenment, especially the ten levels of the enlightened bodhisattvas.

g.18 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

*sum cu rtsa gsum*

སུམ་རུ་ཚ་གསུམ།

*trāyastriṃśa* <sup>AD</sup>

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology. Counted among the six heavens of the desire realm, it is traditionally located atop Mount Meru, just above the terrace of the abodes of the Four Great Kings. It is reigned over by Śakra and thirty-two other gods.

g.19 insight

*shes rab*

ཤེས་རབ།

*prajñā* <sup>AD</sup>

In general, this is the mental factor of discerning the specific qualities of a given object and whether it should be accepted or rejected. As the sixth of the six perfections, it refers to the profound understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena—the realization of ultimate reality.

g.20 Kālī

*nag mo*

ནག་མོ།

*kālī*<sup>AD</sup>

A fearsome, wrathful goddess venerated in both non-Buddhist and Buddhist traditions. Here an epithet for Śrīdevī Mahākālī.

g.21 Kaunḍinya

*ko'u di n+ya*

ཀོ་བུ་དི་ན།

*\*kaunḍinya*<sup>RP</sup>

A great ṛṣi.

g.22 khaṭvāṅga

*kha T+wA~M*

ཁ་ལྷོ།

*\*khaṭvāṅga*<sup>RP</sup>

A staff with a single tip or one with three points and a freshly decapitated head, a rotting head, and a skull skewered on its shaft.

g.23 Laṅkapura

*lang ka pu ra*

ལང་ཀ་ཕུ་ར།

*\*laṅkapura*<sup>RP</sup>

The name of a city and its surrounding territory. Traditionally identified as the land of the rākṣasas (*srin yul*).

g.24 Lord of Death

*'chi bdag*

འཇི་བདག།

—

An epithet of Yama.

g.25 Mahādeva

*lha chen*

ལྷ་ཚེན།

*mahādeva*

An epithet for the deity Śiva.

g.26 mantra

*gsang sngags*

གསང་སྒྲགས།

*mantra* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A formula of words or syllables that are recited aloud or mentally in order to bring about a magical or soteriological effect or result. The term has been interpretively etymologized to mean “that which protects (*trā*) the mind (*man*)”.

g.27 mātṛkā

*ma mo*

མ་མོ།

*mātṛkā* <sup>AD</sup>

A class of potentially demonic spirit being.

g.28 menmo

*sman mo*

སྐྱེན་མོ།

—

A Tibetan class of female nonhuman beings that are perhaps related to medicine (*sman*) and medical rites. There are numerous subcategories and specific groupings of menmo in Tibetan literature.

g.29 mongoose

*ne’u le*

ནེ་ལུ་ལེ།

—

One of Mahākālī’s hand implements, said to symbolize her treasure of merit. Symbolically, mongooses are associated with wealth, are often described as spitting jewels, and are depicted with a jewel in their mouth.

g.30 Nanda

*dga' bo*

དགའ་བོ།

*nanda*<sup>AD</sup>

The name of a nāga king.

g.31 Nine-Headed Snake

*sbrul mgo dgu pa*

སྐྱུལ་མགོ་དགུ་པ།

—

The name of a king of the kumbhāṇḍas.

g.32 non-Buddhist

*mu stegs pa*

མུ་སྟེགས་པ།

*tīrthika*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Those of other religious or philosophical orders, contemporary with the early Buddhist order, including Jains, Jaṭilas, Ājīvikas, and Cārvākas. Tīrthika (“ford”) literally translates as “one belonging to or associated with (possessive suffix *-ika*) stairs for landing or for descent into a river,” or “a bathing place,” or “a place of pilgrimage on the banks of sacred streams” (Monier-Williams). The term may have originally referred to temple priests at river crossings or fords where travelers propitiated a deity before crossing. The Sanskrit term seems to have undergone metonymic transfer in referring to those able to ford the turbulent river of saṃsāra (as in the Jain tīrthaṅkaras, “ford makers”), and it came to be used in Buddhist sources to refer to teachers of rival religious traditions. The Sanskrit term is closely rendered by the Tibetan *mu stegs pa*: “those on the steps (*stegs pa*) at the edge (*mu*).”

g.33 Pañcaśikha

*zur phud lnga pa*

ཟུར་ཕུད་ལྷ་པ།

*pañcaśikha*<sup>AD</sup>

The name of a gandharva king.

g.34 pāriyātraka tree



*yongs 'du'i shing*

ཡོངས་འདུའི་ཤིང་།

*pāriyātraka* <sup>AD</sup>

The immense wish-fulfilling tree that stands in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

g.35 Pāruṣyaka

*rtsub 'gyur*

རུབ་འགུར།

*pāruṣyaka* <sup>AD</sup>

The name of one of the groves of the deities of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. In *Praises to Śrīdevī Kālī*, Pāruṣyaka is identified as a vast grove (*tshal chen po*) on the summit of Mount Sumeru.

g.36 piśāca

*sha za*

ཤ་ཟ།

*piśāca* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings that, like several other classes of nonhuman beings, take spontaneous birth. Ranking below *rākṣasas*, they are less powerful and more akin to pretas. They are said to dwell in impure and perilous places, where they feed on impure things, including flesh. This could account for the name *piśāca*, which possibly derives from √*piś*, to carve or chop meat, as reflected also in the Tibetan *sha za*, “meat eater.” They are often described as having an unpleasant appearance, and at times they appear with animal bodies. Some possess the ability to enter the dead bodies of humans, thereby becoming so-called *vetāla*, to touch whom is fatal.

g.37 rākṣasa

*srin po*

སྲིན་པོ།

*rākṣasa* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition. They are often depicted as flesh-eating monsters who haunt frightening places and are ugly and evil-natured with a yearning for human flesh, and who additionally have miraculous powers, such as being able to change their appearance.

g.38 Remaju

*re ma dzu*

རེམ་ཇུ།

\*remaju <sup>RP</sup>

The name of a goddess who is said to be Mahākālī's body emanation.

g.39 Remati

*re ma ti*

རེམ་ཏི།

—

The name of a goddess who accompanies Mahākālī. At times, the two goddesses appear to be conflated into one, but at other times they are clearly two distinct goddesses. In this text Remati is also said to be Mahākālī's speech emanation.

g.40 ritual activity

*phrin las*

ཕྱིན་ལས།

—

A term that denotes a range of ritual activities that fall under the four broad categories of pacification (*śānti*; *zhi ba*), enriching (*pauṣṭika*; *rgyas pa*), enthralling (*vaśya*; *dbang byed*), and assault (*abhicāra*; *mngon spyod*).

g.41 ṛṣi

*drang srong*

བླ་མ་ལྷོང་།

ṛṣi <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ancient Indian spiritual title, often translated as “sage” or “seer.” The title is particularly used for divinely inspired individuals credited with creating the foundations of Indian culture. The term is also applied to Śākyamuni and other realized Buddhist figures.

g.42 Rudra

*ru dra · drag po*

རུ་བླ་པོ།

rudra <sup>AD</sup>

A wrathful form of Śiva.

g.43 Sahā world

*mi mjed 'jig rten*

མི་མཇེད་འཇིག་རྟེན།

*sahāloka*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The name for our particular world system, the universe of a thousand million worlds, or trichiliocosm, in which our four-continent world is located.

Although it is sometimes said that it can refer only to our own four-continent world around Mount Meru, the sūtras largely seem to equate it with this trichiliocosm, and this is confirmed by scholars like Jamgön Kongtrul (see *The Treasury of Knowledge, Book One*). Each trichiliocosm is ruled by a god Brahmā; thus, in this context, he bears the title of Sahāṃpati, Lord of Sahā. Our world system of Sahā, or Sahālokadhātu, is also described as being the buddhafiield of the Buddha Śākyamuni. He teaches the Dharma here to beings who adhere to inferior ways and perceive this universe as an impure buddhafiield contaminated with the five degenerations (*pañcakaṣāya*, *snyigs ma lnga*): the degeneration of time, sentient beings, place, lifespan, and mental afflictions (see *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti*, Toh 176). It is also mentioned as the field of activity of all the thousand buddhas of this Fortunate Eon (see *The White Lotus of Compassion*, Toh 112).

The name Sahā possibly derives from the Sanskrit *√sah*, “to bear, endure, or withstand.” It is often interpreted as alluding to the inhabitants of this world having to endure suffering. The Tibetan translation, *mi mjed*, follows along the same lines. It literally means “not unbearable,” in the sense that beings here are able to bear the suffering they experience.

g.44 Śakra

*brgya byin*

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

*śakra*<sup>AS</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśā*).

Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based

on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

g.45 samādhi

*ting nge 'dzin · ting 'dzin*

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན། · ཉིང་འཛིན།

*samādhi* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In a general sense, *samādhi* can describe a number of different meditative states. In the Mahāyāna literature, in particular in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, we find extensive lists of different samādhis, numbering over one hundred.

In a more restricted sense, and when understood as a mental state, *samādhi* is defined as the one-pointedness of the mind (*cittaikāgratā*), the ability to remain on the same object over long periods of time. The *Draḥor Bamponyipa* (*sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*) commentary on the *Mahāvīyutpatti* explains the term *samādhi* as referring to the instrument through which mind and mental states “get collected,” i.e., it is by the force of samādhi that the continuum of mind and mental states becomes collected on a single point of reference without getting distracted.

g.46 samaya

*dam tshig*

དམ་ཚིག།

*samaya* <sup>AD</sup>

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.

g.47 Samudrā

*rgya mtsho ma*

རྒྱ་མཚོ་མ།

*samudrā* <sup>AO</sup>

The name of a goddess who is said to be an emanation of Mahākālī’s body, speech, and mind.

g.48 satchel of diseases

*nad kyi rkyal pa*

ནད་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པ།

—

A handbag that holds the seeds of various diseases carried by nonhuman beings associated with causing disease.

g.49 Sovereign Goddess of the Desire Realm

*'dod pa'i kham s kyi dbang phyug ma*

འདོད་པའི་ཁམས་ཀྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག་མ།

—

An epithet for Śrīdevī Mahākālī. According to *The Tantra of the Flaming Ḍākinī* (Toh 842), Śrīdevī Mahākālī prays that in her next life she may meet the Buddha and become the sovereign goddess of the desire realm. When this becomes reality, she becomes known as “Sovereign Goddess of the Desire Realm.”

g.50 Śrīdevī Kālī

*dpal ldan lha mo nag mo*

དཔལ་ལྷན་ལྷ་མོ་ནག་མོ།

*śrīdevī kālī* <sup>AD</sup>

A fearsome, wrathful goddess who in the Buddhist tradition is a protector of the teachings. In Tibet, she is widely propitiated and takes on many forms, many of which are known through the Tibetan name Palden Lhamo (*dpal ldan lha mo*), which translates the Sanskrit *śrīdevī*. She is most often portrayed riding on a donkey and adorned with various wrathful ornaments and hand implements.

g.51 Sumeru

*ri rab*

རི་རབ།

*sumeru* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great

ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

g.52 ten targets for liberation

*bsgral ba'i zhing bcu*

བསྐྱལ་བའི་ཞིང་བརྒྱ།

—

A term for ten types of wicked beings (*sdig spyod bcu*) or adversaries (*dgra bo*) suitable to be killed.

g.53 ten virtuous actions

*dge bcu'i las*

དགེ་བརྒྱུད་ལས།

*daśakuśala*<sup>AD</sup>

Abstaining from killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, lying, uttering divisive talk, speaking harsh words, gossiping, covetousness, ill will, and wrong views.

g.54 three bodies

*sku gsum*

སྐྱུ་གསུམ།

*trikāya*<sup>AD</sup>

The manifestation body (*sprul sku, nirmāṇakāya*), the enjoyment body (*longs spyod sku, sambhogakāya*), and the truth body (*chos sku, dharmakāya*).

g.55 three existences

*srid gsum*

སྲིད་གསུམ།

*tribhava*<sup>AD</sup>

Usually synonymous with the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness. Sometimes it means the realm of devas above, humans on the ground, and nāgas below ground.

g.56 three realms

*khams gsum*

ཁམས་གསུམ།

*traidhātu* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The three realms that contain all the various kinds of existence in *samsāra*: the desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm.

g.57 triple world

*'jig rten gsum po*

འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་པོ།

*triloka* <sup>AD</sup> · *trailokya* <sup>AD</sup>

The desire realm, form realm, and formless realm. Also referred to as the “three realms” (*kham*s *gsum*).

g.58 true reality

*yang dag don*

ཡང་དག་དོན།

*bhūtārtha* <sup>AD</sup>

g.59 ultimate realm

*don dam dbyings*

དོན་དམ་དབྱིངས།

—

A synonym for the phenomenal realm (*dharmadhātu*; *chos dbyings*).

g.60 uraga

*brang gis 'gro ba*

བྲང་གིས་འགོ་བ།

*uraga* <sup>AD</sup>

A class of serpent-like beings.

g.61 Utter Joy

*rab tu dga'*

རབ་ཏུ་དགའ།

*pramuditā* <sup>AD</sup>

The name of the first ground (*sa, bhūmi*) that one attains after completing the path of accumulation (*tshogs lam, sambhāramārga*) and the path of application (*sbyor lam, prayogamārga*), and that one enters through path of seeing (*mthong lam, darśanamārga*) the ultimate.

- g.62 Vāgīśvarī  
*tshig dbang*  
 ཚིག་དབང་།  
*vāgīśvarī*<sup>AD</sup>  
 “Goddess of Speech”; the name of a goddess in both Buddhist and non-Buddhist sources.
- g.63 Vaiśravaṇa  
*rnam thos sras*  
 རྣམ་ཐོས་སྲས།  
*vaiśravaṇa*<sup>AD</sup>  
 The name of a yakṣa king who is typically included among the Four Great Kings of the four cardinal directions.
- g.64 Vajra Golden Eyes  
*rdo rje gser mig can*  
 རོ་རྗེ་གསེར་མིག་ཅན།  
 —  
 The name of a king of the garuḍas.
- g.65 Vajrapāṇi  
*phyag na rdo rje*  
 ཕྱག་ན་རོ་རྗེ།  
*vajrapāṇi*<sup>AD</sup>  
 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.66 Vararuci  
*mchog sred*  
 མཚོག་སྲེད།  
*vararuci*<sup>AD</sup>  
 A brahmin who praises Mahākālī.
- g.67 Vemacitra



*thags zangs ris*

ཐགས་ཟངས་རིས།

*vemacitra* <sup>AD</sup>

The name of an asura king.

g.68 vidyā

*rig sngags*

རིག་སྒྲགས།

*vidyā* <sup>AD</sup>

A term that at once refers to a type of mantra or dhāraṇī and to the deity it invokes, thereby reflecting their inseparability. A vidyā is typically applied to female deities, and is often, but not exclusively, used for worldly goals in esoteric ritual.

g.69 wife of the demon

*bdud kyi yum*

བདུད་ཀྱི་ཡུམ།

—

An epithet for Śrīdevī Mahākālī. According to *The Tantra of the Flaming Dākinī* (Toh 842), Śrīdevī Mahākālī was at one point tricked into marriage with the rākṣasa king Daśagrīva and so becomes known as “Wife of the Demon.”

g.70 wrath

*drag*

དྲག

—

A general term for the features and behaviors that invoke fear and danger. The term is also used in this text to refer to the body of rites otherwise known as *abhicāra* (*mngon spyod*), which include rites for aggressively overcoming adversarial influences, both human and nonhuman.

g.71 Yama

*gshin rje*

གཤིན་རྗེ།

*yama* <sup>AD</sup>

The lord of death.

g.72 Yamarāja

*gshin rje'i rgyal po*

གཤིན་རྗེ་རྒྱལ་པོ།

*yamarāja*<sup>AD</sup>

Another name for Yama, the lord of death.

g.73 Yama's Sister

*gshin rje'i lcam · shin rje'i sring mo · gshin rje'i lcam gcig ma*

གཤིན་རྗེ་ལྷ་མ་། · ཤིན་རྗེ་སྤྲིང་མོ། · གཤིན་རྗེ་ལྷ་མ་གཅིག་མ།

—

An epithet for Śrīdevī Mahākālī. According to *The Tantra of the Flaming Dākinī* (Toh 842), Śrīdevī Mahākālī was originally born as a divine girl called Red Cāmuṅḍī. Her father was Mahādeva, her mother was Umadevī, and her brother at that time was called Yama Mahākāla. Hence, she is “Yama's Sister.”