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The Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni

འཕགས་པ་ཤུག་ཐུབ་པའི་སྙིང་པོའི་གཟུངས།

'phags pa shAkya thub pa'i snying po'i gzungs

The Noble Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni

· Toh 860 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folios 87.a



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co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- im. Imprint
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
 - 1. Essence Dhāraṇī of Śākyamuni
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
 - Tibetan Sources
 - Modern Sources
- g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

- s.1 This short dhāraṇī contains the essence mantra of Śākyamuni. After a formulaic homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni, his essence mantra is presented followed by a description of the benefits of its recitation.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Bruno Galasek-Hul produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Nathaniel Rich 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 *The Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni* is a very brief dhāraṇī contained in the Degé Kangyur in both the Tantra section and in the Dhāraṇī section. Within the Tantra section, it is classed as an Action tantra (*bya rgyud, kriyātantra*).

i.2 The dhāraṇī has no narrative frame or interlocutors and starts with a formulaic homage to the Buddha Śākyamuni. Immediately after that, the dhāraṇī mantra that invokes the Buddha is presented. The dhāraṇī concludes with the marvelous benefit that can be expected when one recites Śākyamuni's dhāraṇī mantra only once: all the negative actions that one has accrued during eighty million *kalpas* will be completely purified.

i.3 *The Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni* has no Sanskrit title, no translators' colophon, and we do not know who translated it or when. To our knowledge, no Sanskrit text of this dhāraṇī is extant and it does not appear to have been translated into Chinese. The catalogs of the early imperial translations, the Denkarma and the Phangthangma, do not list it. The short title is mentioned in the catalog of translated works in the Kangyur that is included in Butön's monumental fourteenth-century *History of Buddhism*.¹ Richard O. Meisezahl records an interesting variant of the dhāraṇī in a catalog of Tibetan manuscripts and prints kept in the Linden Museum in Stuttgart. Here, the dhāraṇī of Śākyamuni is clearly comprised of the homage (in transcribed Sanskrit) and the essence mantra, while in the Degé version of *The Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni*, the homage is translated into Tibetan and appears separate from the essence mantra. The version in the Linden Museum reads as follows: *na mah śākya mu na ye ta thā ga tā ya | arha te samyaksam buddhā ya | tadya thā | mu ni mu ni ma hā mu ni ye sbā hā*.²

i.4 The mantra of the Buddha Śākyamuni occurs in a few other places in the Kangyur, most notably in *The Perfection of Wisdom in a Few Syllables* (Toh 22) and in *The Perfection of Wisdom for Vajrapāṇi* (Toh 29), as well as several times in *A Portion of the Practice of the Sovereign Tantra Purifying Evil Destinies* (Toh 485).

This English translation was prepared based on the two versions in the Degé Kangyur (Toh 533³ and Toh 860⁴) in consultation with the variant readings of the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur and the version in the Stok Palace Kangyur (S 492). Śākyamuni's mantra was edited based on the Degé edition and an English translation is provided in a note.

**The Noble
Essence Dhāraṇī of Śākyamuni**

1.

The Translation

[F.87.a]

1.1 Homage to the thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Śākyamuni!

tadyathā | muni muni mahāmunaye⁵ svāhā⁶

1.2 When one has recited this once, whatever negative actions one has committed during eighty trillion⁷ kalpas, will all be purified.

1.3 *The Noble Dhāraṇī of the Essence of Śākyamuni is complete.*

NOTES

n.

- n.1 Butön Rinchen Drup, folio 174.a / 979: *shākya thub pa'i snying po*.
- n.2 Meisezahl 1957, p. 100. The Śākyamuni dhāraṇī is found in a small tightly rolled cylinder (inventory number 71 554) of five white, printed paper strips that was wrapped with colored thread and possibly used to put in an amulet or a statue. On the first leaf is written *bya rgyud kyi sde las* (“From the *Kriyā-tantrapīṭaka*”) and “the general heart mantra” (*spyi'i snying po*) of Śākyamuni. Leaf number two contains the *bcom ldan 'das śākya thub pa'i snying po* “the heart mantra of the Bhagavat Śākyamuni.” The remaining leaves bear two more dhāraṇīs associated with Śākyamuni and the dhāraṇīs of Amitābha, Akṣobhya, and Bhaiṣajyaguru.
- n.3 In the Toh 533 version of the text there is a slight discrepancy in the folio numbering between the 1737 *par phud* printings and the late (post *par phud*) printings of the Degé Kangyur. Although the discrepancy is irrelevant here, further details concerning this may be found in [n.3](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh533.html#UT22084-088-027-84) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh533.html#UT22084-088-027-84>) of the Toh 533 version of this text.
- n.4 This text, Toh 860, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, e*), are listed as being located in volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 101. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantraṭīkā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100,

although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.

n.5 S has *mu ni ye*.

n.6 “Like so: Sage, sage, [homage to the] great sage! *Svāhā!*” All consulted editions of the Kangyur read *muni*, which is the stem form of the Sanskrit noun *muni* (“sage”). However, the vocative singular *mune* would be the grammatically correct form.

n.7 Tib. *bye ba brgya phrag brgyad khri*.

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^{AD}

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 heart mantra

snying po

སློང་པོ།

hṛdaya ^{AD}

Literally “heart,” this term means the heart essence or essence of the deity and here refers to the deity’s mantra.

g.3 kalpa

bskal pa

བསྐྱལ་པ།

kalpa ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A cosmic period of time, sometimes equivalent to the time when a world system appears, exists, and disappears. According to the traditional Abhidharma understanding of cyclical time, a great eon (*mahākalpa*) is divided into eighty lesser eons. In the course of one great eon, the universe takes form and later disappears. During the first twenty of the lesser eons, the universe is in the process of creation and expansion; during the next twenty it remains; during the third twenty, it is in the process of destruction; and during the last quarter of the cycle, it remains in a state of empty stasis. A fortunate, or good, eon (*bhadrakalpa*) refers to any eon in which more than one buddha appears.

g.4 Śākyamuni

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀྱ་ཐུབ་པ།

śākyamuni ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An epithet for the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama: he was a *muni* (“sage”) from the Śākya clan. He is counted as the fourth of the first four buddhas of the present Good Eon, the other three being Krakucchanda,

Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa. He will be followed by Maitreya, the next buddha in this eon.