

༄༅། །སྒྲུབ་གཏོང་བའི་ཚེ་སྒྲུབ་ལ་སྒྲུབ་སྐྱོ་གདམ་པ།

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## **A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them**



Toh 505a  
Degé Kangyur, vol. 87 (rgyud, da), folio 286.a

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

First published 2023  
Current version v 1.0.7 (2023)  
Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.19.5

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co.

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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* is a short work that pays homage to the Three Jewels and the Medicine Buddha, and provides a mantra to be used for incanting medicines.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This text was translated and introduced by Catherine Dalton and edited by members of the 84000 editorial team.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

The generous sponsorship of May, George, Likai, and Lillian Gu, which helped make the work on this translation possible, is most gratefully acknowledged.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* is a short work that pays homage to the Three Jewels and the Medicine Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru-vaiḍūryaprabharāja, and provides a mantra to be used for incanting medicines. The text itself does not mention the original source of the mantra, but it may have been extracted from *The Dhāraṇī of Vaiḍūryaprabha* (Toh 505), where it appears as the final part of the longer dhāraṇī taught there. The short mantra presented in *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* was later incorporated into the *Aṣṭāṅgahṛdayasaṃhitā* and *Aṣṭāṅgasaṅgraha*, two important works of the Indian Āyurvedic medical tradition that are believed to have been composed by Vāgbhaṭa (ca. 600 CE).<sup>1</sup> In both works the mantra is used in an emetic procedure (*vamanavidhi*) to incant a medicinal beverage immediately before it is administered to the patient.<sup>2</sup> The mantra incorporated into Vāgbhaṭa's texts includes both the mantra formula itself and the initial homage to Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabharāja.

i.2

*A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* is included in both the Tantra section (Toh 505a) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Toh 1059a) in the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that include a Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section.<sup>3</sup> In the Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs that do not include a separate dhāraṇī section, as well as in the Thempangma-lineage Kangyurs, it is included in the Tantra section. There are no significant variations between the recensions in terms of their textual content.<sup>4</sup>

i.3

The present work lacks a Sanskrit title at the beginning and a translator's colophon at the end. It is possible that like *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines, Extracted From "Destroyer of the Great Trichiliocosm"* (Toh 1059),<sup>5</sup> the short work that immediately precedes it in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section, it may have been extracted from its source text and given its present form in Tibet, rather than in India. It is perhaps not surprising then that *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* does not appear to be extant as

an independent work in Sanskrit or in Chinese translation. A work with this title is not found in the Denkarma or Phangtangma imperial catalogs of Tibetan translations, but the Denkarma catalog does include one prayer to Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabha and the Phangtangma lists two,<sup>6</sup> thus indicating that Medicine Buddha practices were being translated into Tibetan in the eighth and ninth centuries.

i.4 Additionally, *The Dhāraṇī of Vaiḍūryaprabha*, from which the mantra found in this text may have been extracted, was translated by the imperial-period translator Yeshé Dé, working with the Indian paṇḍitas Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Śīlendrabodhi, and was later revised by Atiśa and Tsültrim Gyalwa. However, although its colophon suggests it was translated during the imperial period, a text with that title does not appear in either of the imperial catalogs.

i.5 The present English translation of *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* was made on the basis of the two Degé Kangyur recensions of this work (Toh 505a and Toh 1059a), with additional reference to the notes from the Comparative Edition (*dpe sdur ma*), and the single recension of the work found in the Stok Palace Kangyur. We also compared the mantra against its occurrence in the Degé recension of *The Dhāraṇī of Vaiḍūryaprabha* (Toh 505) and found it to be nearly identical with that presented in this work.<sup>7</sup>

**A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When  
Administering Them**

1.

## The Translation

[F.286.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels!

Homage to the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, completely perfect Buddha  
Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabharāja!

1.2 *tadyathā om bhaiṣajye bhaiṣajye mahābhaiṣajye bhaiṣajye samudgate soāhā<sup>8</sup>*

1.3 *This completes "A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them."*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 It has been argued, tentatively, that Vāgbhaṭa was a Buddhist. For more on Vāgbhaṭa and his works, see Meulenbeld 1999, pp. 597–656 and Wujastyk 1998, pp. 236–39.
- n.2 See the *Aṣṭāṅga Hṛdaya of Vāgbhaṭa*, pp. 188–89, and the *Aṣṭāṅga Samgraha of Vāgbhaṭa*, pp. 466–69.
- n.3 An explicitly named Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section is found in the Degé and Urga Kangyurs, as well as in the peripheral Kangyurs of the Tshalpa lineage (Dodedrak, Phajoding, and Ragya). In contrast, the Berlin, Choné, Lithang, and Peking Qianlong Kangyurs include the same collection of dhāraṇīs in a separate part of their Tantra sections, which has no distinct label. With or without the label, these collections of dhāraṇīs contain many duplicates of texts also found in the General Sūtra or Tantra sections, and in the latter group of Kangyurs many dhāraṇī texts therefore appear twice in different parts of the Tantra section.
- n.4 It is nonetheless notable that the recension in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section preserves the older orthography for the concluding particle *rdzogs sho* at the end of the work, whereas the recension in the Tantra section of the canon, in all but one (the Narthang) of the recensions we consulted in both the Tshalpa and Tempangma Kangyur lineages, has been updated to the more common—and later—orthography, *rdzogs so*. The two recensions also have one minor spelling difference that is consistent across recensions (*smān gyi lha* in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section recension and *smān gyi bla* in the Tantra section recension), suggesting that the two recensions were transmitted separately. This may indicate that the recension adopted into the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section was incorporated into the canon due to its being part of an earlier collection or collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts that were brought together to constitute the canonical

Compendium of Dhāraṇīs collection. Indeed, apart from the canonical dhāraṇī collection appearing in several of the Tshalpa-lineage Kangyurs, these popular dhāraṇī collections, known in Sanskrit as *dhāraṇīsaṅgraha*, appear in South Asia as well as in Tibet—including at Dunhuang, and as extracanonical Tibetan dhāraṇī collections—and it appears that the canonical dhāraṇī collection may have been created on the basis of an earlier such collection or collections (see Hidas 2021, p. 7, n. 56; see also Dalton 2016 and Dalton and van Schaik 2006 on the *dhāraṇīsaṅgraha* collections preserved at Dunhuang; see Hidas 2021 for the catalogs of eighteen Sanskrit *dhāraṇīsaṅgraha* collections). It therefore seems likely that one recension of *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines When Administering Them* entered the canon via its inclusion in a *dhāraṇīsaṅgraha* collection that was brought into the canonical Compendium of Dhāraṇīs, while the very same text, in a different recension that had been updated to a more modern orthography, was then adopted into the Tantra section of a wider range of Kangyurs in a fitting place—immediately following the work from which its mantra was extracted.

- n.5 Dalton, Catherine. trans., *A Mantra for Incanting Medicines, Extracted from “Destroyer of the Great Trichiliocosm”* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh1059.html>), Toh 1059 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2023).
- n.6 The Denkarma includes the *'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa sman gyi bla bai DU rya 'od kyi sngon gyi smon lam gyi khyad par rgyas pa* (no. 148; Hermann-Pfandt 2008, p. 81) and the Phangthangma lists *de bzhin gshegs pa sman gyi bla be dur rya'i sngon gyi smon lam chen po* (no. 117) and the *de bzhin gshegs pa sman gyi bla be dur rya'i 'od kyi smon lam chen po chung ngu* (no. 179; Kawagoe 2005, pp. 11 and 13).
- n.7 The mantra in the present work includes an additional repetition of the word *bhaiṣajye*, which is not found in the dhāraṇī in Toh 505. The mantra in the present work reads *tadyathā om bhaiṣajye bhaiṣajye mahābhaiṣajye bhaiṣajye samudgate svāhā*. The final line of dhāraṇī in Toh 505 reads *tadyathā om bhaṣajya bhaiṣajya mahābhaiṣajya samudgate svāhā*.
- n.8 The final line of the dhāraṇī that appears in Toh 505 reads *tadyathā om bhaṣajya bhaiṣajya mahābhaiṣajya samudgate svāhā*.

b.

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## GLOSSARY

## · Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship 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 Atiśa

*a ti sha*

ཨ་ཏི་ཤ།

*atiśa*

Atiśa Dīpaṅkaraśrījñāna (982–1054 CE), often referred to in Tibetan as jo bo, “(The) Lord,” was a renowned figure in the history of Tibetan Buddhism famous for coming to Tibet and revitalizing Buddhism there during the early eleventh-century.

g.2 Bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabharāja

*sman gyi bla bai DUr+ya 'od kyi rgyal po*

སྐྱེན་གྱི་བླ་བེ་དྲུབ་འོད་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

*bhaiṣajyaguruvaiḍūryaprabharāja*

A name for the Medicine Buddha.

g.3 blessed

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root *√bhañj* (“to break”).

g.4 Dānaśīla

—  
—

*dānaśīla*

An Indian paṇḍita who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.5 Jinamitra

—  
—

*jinamitra*

An Indian paṇḍita who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.6 Śīlendrabodhi

—  
—

*śīlendrabodhi*

An Indian paṇḍita who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.7 Three Jewels

*dkon mchog gsum*

དཀོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།

*triratna*

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

g.8 thus-gone

*de bzhin gshegs pa*

དེ་བཞིན་གསེགས་པ།

*tathāgata*

*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 also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.9 Tsültrim Gyalwa

*tshul khrims rgyal ba*

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་རྒྱལ་བ།

—

Prolific eleventh-century Tibetan translator also known as Naktso Lotsawa (*nag tsho lo tsā ba*). He was sent to India by Lhalama Yeshé Ö (*lha bla ma ye shes 'od*), the king of Western Tibet, and his grand-nephew Jangchup Ö (*byang chub 'od*) to invite Atiśa to Tibet.

g.10 Yeshé Dé

*ye shes sde*

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than one hundred sixty sūtra translations and more than one hundred additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with teaching both sūtra and tantra widely to students of his own. He was also known as Nanam Yeshé Dé, from the Nanam (*sna nam*) clan.