

༄༅། །བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས་ཀྱིས་འཇམ་དཔལ་རྣམ་པོ་ལ་བསྟོད་པ།

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**The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp  
Mañjuśrī**

བཅོམ་ལྡན་འདས་ཀྱིས་འཇམ་དཔལ་རྣོན་པོ་ལ་བསྟོད་པ།

*bcom ldan 'das kyis 'jam dpal rnon po la bstod pa*

The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp Mañjuśrī



Toh 551  
Degé Kangyur vol. 89 (rgyud 'bum, pa), folios 15.a–15.b

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co.

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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp Mañjuśrī* is a praise in twelve verses that describes in detail the physiognomy, ornamentation, vestments, and general splendor of Mañjuśrī's various manifestations as a bodhisattva and as a tathāgata.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- ac.1 Translated by David Mellins, Kaia Fischer, and Geshé Lobsang Dawa, with Phakyab Rinpoche (Geshé Ngawang Sungrab), under the auspices of the Tibetan Classics Translators Guild of New York. Introduction by David Mellins and Kaia Fischer. Special thanks to Paul Hackett for generously sharing his bibliographic expertise and resources, and to Artemus B. Engle for his assistance in deciphering the syntax of descriptive passages. This translation would not have been possible without the kind and dedicated tutelage of Gen Lozang Jampal, Executive Director, Tibetan Classics Translators Guild of New York.
- ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp Mañjuśrī* is the first of two short Mañjuśrī praise texts<sup>1</sup> in the Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur that immediately follow a group of six concise Mañjuśrī dhāraṇī scriptures. The text describes in detail the physiognomy, ornamentation, vestments, and general splendor of Mañjuśrī while skillfully maintaining a tension between two frames of reference: the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī of the sūtras and the tathāgata Mañjuśrī who appears in various manifestations in tantric literature. The verses also employ tropes that integrate features characteristic of the devotional and philosophical genres of Sanskrit literature, in a manner reminiscent of Buddhist *belle-lettres* such as Aśvaghoṣa's *Buddhacārīta* and Kṣemendra's *Avadānakalpalatā*.

i.2

A Sanskrit version of the text is to our knowledge no longer extant, and no record of its Sanskrit title has yet been identified. It also appears that the text was never translated into Chinese. The Tibetan translation lacks a colophon, so we have no information about the history of its transmission or the identity of its translators. The text's absence from the Denkarma and Phangthangma imperial catalogs suggests that it was translated into Tibetan later than the beginning of the ninth century<sup>2</sup> but before the flourishing of the scholar Butön Rinchen Drup (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364), who listed its title in his *History of Buddhism*.<sup>3</sup>

i.3

This English translation is based on the Degé Kangyur version (Toh 551) in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), with all major divergences recorded in the notes.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp Mañjuśrī**

1.

## The Translation

[F.15.b]

1.1 Homage to the Omniscient One!

1.2 The Blessed One praised sharp Mañjuśrī:

1.3 Your head shines gently with the beauty of midnight splendor.<sup>5</sup>  
Your braids sway like a boat amid azure ocean waves.  
At the noble crown of your head, the supreme mark, coiled to the right—  
An uṣṇīṣa lofty beyond the sight of ordinary beings.<sup>6</sup>

1.4 That all suffering of existence be overcome  
And your brilliant powers vanquish the enemy,  
The crown upon your head conceals a conqueror's excellence;<sup>7</sup>  
Your perfections of might and skill are those of a dharmarāja.

1.5 As in cat's-eye gems and water lilies, so in your eyes,  
White and black are distinguished with perfect clarity.  
Your elegant eyebrows glisten like crescent moons,  
And the sidelong glances of your smiling eyes signal your affection.

1.6 You are the foundation of countless Dharma gates to limitless liberation,  
In the sundry plethora of the victors' fields,  
Embellished by pure music, excellent qualities,<sup>8</sup> ample grain,  
And jewels of every type.

1.7 The beautiful form of your nose is noblest of all—  
Highly ridged, with corners slight, and elegant of shape,  
Finely channeled like a slender stream. [F.15.b]  
One will not tire of gazing upon its virtues even in a hundred eons.

1.8 Your lips, the red of a mañjiṣṭhā flower,<sup>9</sup>

- Your exquisite body, perfectly formed, quelling deluded thought,<sup>10</sup>  
Your lovely complexion, radiant as a lotus, clear as a lake,<sup>11</sup>  
And the lucidity of your mind—all give reason to smile.
- 1.9 Your moon-like countenance is golden and effulgent,  
A maṇḍala of light resplendent with golden garlands,  
An orb of pure light to outshine a hundred suns,  
Emitting many colors like a mass of clouds.
- 1.10 O Gentle Voice, the dharmadhātu you proclaim—  
Alluring as the song of the kalaviṅka bird.  
Your voice, perfect, pristine, and melodious,  
Roars like a lion and chimes like a golden bell.
- 1.11 The body that you cultivate<sup>12</sup>—a body cloaked in noble splendor<sup>13</sup>—  
Performs the deeds of the most excellent of beings.  
It is youthful in appearance and youthful in bearing,  
A youthful form that trains the ready.
- 1.12 You wear a crown replete with many jewels;  
Pearls are embedded in your golden necklace.  
Layered garments, a divine lotus, envelop you.<sup>14</sup>
- 1.13 In your right you brandish the finest weapon, which tames through skillful  
means—  
It is insight itself, incomparably keen,  
Perfectly expressing the dharmadhātu principle,  
Incisive in manner, unbreakable as vajra.
- 1.14 In your left is the *Perfection of Wisdom*,  
The inconceivable sphere where nothing is cultivated nor cast aside—  
Such is the fathomless dharmatā,  
The truth you embrace in your heart.
- 1.15 *This concludes "The Blessed One's Praise of Sharp Mañjuśrī."*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 The second is Tibetan Classics Translators Guild of New York, trans. *The Eight Maidens' Praise of Mañjuśrī* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh552.html>), Toh 552 (2023).
- n.2 The Denkarma catalog is usually dated to ca. 812 CE.
- n.3 Butön listed the Tibetan title of this text together with those of other Mañjuśrī-associated dhāraṇī scriptures and *The Eight Maidens' Praise of Mañjuśrī* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh552.html>). Butön Rinchen Drup, *chos 'byung*, folio 172.a/p. 975.
- n.4 The text is not included in the Kangyur collections of the Thempangma line.
- n.5 The use of the third person as a polite form of second-person address is common in Sanskrit literature. Since such usage is comparatively rare in contemporary English, we have chosen to translate the scripture's third-person praises in the second person to emphasize their directness and devotional context.
- n.6 Tib. *dge ba'i spyi gtsug mtshan mchog g.yas su 'khyil/ gtsug tor 'phags pas skye bos bltar mi mthong*. Translation tentative.
- n.7 "A conqueror's excellence" is presumably a reference to the uṣṇīṣa.
- n.8 Tib. *mtshan rab*.
- n.9 Also known as red lotus or Indian madder.
- n.10 "Quelling deluded thought" for *yid gzhungs [sic] sel ba*, which we have elected to read as *yid gzhung sel ba* (giving precedence to the verb). The Comparative Edition records the variant *yid gzhungs 'phel* ("increasing intelligence/perspicacity") in a number of other Kangyurs. Alternatively, a

Tibetan reader has suggested that perhaps the text should read *yid zhum sel ba* (“dispelling timidity”).

- n.11 Tib. *mtsho lo bzhin*. Translation tentative. The Comparative Edition notes no variants. One wonders whether this might be an extremely rarely seen two-syllable version of the common *mtsho*, similar to *'khor lo*, *'phang lo*, *tshe lo*, and *cho lo*. To our knowledge *mtsho lo* does not appear elsewhere in the Kangyur.
- n.12 The Degé Kangyur version here reads *rgam par* [sic]. We have translated the variant reading found in the Lhasa Kangyur version: *sgom par*.
- n.13 Tib. *cha lugs bzhin 'chang gzi brjid 'phags pa'i sku*. Translation tentative.
- n.14 Tib. *pad ma lha yi na bza' sil ma bsnams*. Translation tentative.

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 Aśvaghoṣa

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*aśvaghōṣa*

Sanskrit poet and author of the *Saundarananda* and *Buddhacarita*, considered the earliest extant example of *mahākāvya*, classical Sanskrit works of great literary quality. He is traditionally said to have been a brahmin, who, after converting to Buddhism, became a great champion of the religion through his poems.

g.2 blessed one

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཙོམ་ལྡན་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  $\sqrt{bhañj}$  (“to break”).

g.3 cat's-eye gem

*rin chen spug*

རིན་ཆེན་སྤྱུག

*musāragalva*

g.4 dhāraṇī

*gzungs*

གཟུངས།

*dhāraṇī*

*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.5 dharmadhātu

*chos kyi dbyings*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།

*dharmadhātu*

A synonym for emptiness or the ultimate nature of reality (*dharmatā*). This term is interpreted variously—given the many connotations of *dharmā/chos*—as the sphere, element, or nature of phenomena, reality, or truth

g.6 dharmarāja

*chos kyi rgyal po*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

*dharmarāja*

g.7 dharmatā

*chos nyid*

ཚོས་ཉིད།

*dharmatā*

Literally the “nature of phenomena” or “phenomena themselves.” The quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms. Akin to other terms such as thatness (*tattva, de kho na nyid*), true reality (*bhūtatā, yang dag pa nyid*), and suchness (*tathatā, de bzhin nyid*).

g.8 eon

*bskal pa*

བསྐལ་པ།

*kalpa*

*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.9 Gentle Voice

*'jam dbyangs*

འཇམ་དབྱངས།

*mañjughoṣa*

An epithet of Mañjuśrī.

g.10 kalaviṅka bird

*ka la ping ka*

ཀ་ལ་ཕིང་ཀ།

*kalaviṅka*

In Buddhist literature refers to a mythical bird with the head of a human and the body of a bird. The kalaviṅka's call is said to be far more beautiful than that of all other birds and so compelling that it could be heard even before the bird has hatched. The call of the kalaviṅka is also used as an analogy to describe the voice of the Buddha.

g.11 Kṣemendra

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—

*kṣemendra*

Sanskrit poet, held to be the author of the *Avadānakalpalatā*.

g.12 Mañjuśrī

*'jam dpal*

འཇམ་དབྱེད།

*mañjuśrī*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

Mañjuśrī is one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha” and a bodhisattva who embodies wisdom. He is a major figure in the Mahāyāna sūtras, appearing often as an interlocutor of the Buddha. In his most well-known iconographic form, he is portrayed bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left. In addition to the epithet Kumārabhūta, which means “having a youthful form,” Mañjuśrī is also called Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, and Pañcaśikha.

g.13 omniscient one  
*thams cad mkhyen pa*  
ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ།

—

An epithet of the Buddha.

g.14 tathāgata  
*de bzhin gshegs pa*  
དེ་སྟོན་གཤེགས་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.15 uṣṇīṣa  
*gtsug tor*  
གཙུག་ཏོར།  
*uṣṇīṣa*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

One of the thirty-two signs, or major marks, of a great being. In its simplest form it is a pointed shape of the head like a turban (the Sanskrit term, *uṣṇīṣa*, in fact means “turban”), or more elaborately a dome-shaped extension. The extension is described as having various extraordinary attributes such as emitting and absorbing rays of light or reaching an immense height.

g.16 vajra  
*rdo rje*  
རྡོ་རྗེ།

*vajra*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

This term generally indicates indestructibility and stability. In the sūtras, *vajra* most often refers to the hardest possible physical substance, said to have divine origins. In some scriptures, it is also the name of the all-powerful weapon of Indra, which in turn is crafted from vajra material. In the tantras, the vajra is sometimes a scepter-like ritual implement, but the term can also take on other esoteric meanings.