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The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth

· Toh 1079 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs, wam), folios 240.b–242.b



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SUMMARY

- s.1 This short text narrates Ānanda's nocturnal encounter in the Banyan Grove in Kapilavastu with a gruesome female preta, or "hungry ghost," with a burning mouth. The ghost tells Ānanda that he will die imminently and be reborn in the realm of the pretas unless he satisfies innumerable pretas with offerings of food the following morning. Terrified, Ānanda goes quickly to the Buddha and asks for advice. The Buddha then teaches Ānanda a dhāraṇī and an associated food offering ritual that together will satisfy innumerable ghosts and will cause offerings to the Three Jewels to multiply. The Buddha then instructs Ānanda to memorize and widely propagate this practice.

ac.

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- ac.1 Translated by the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Translation Group: Krisztina Teleki in collaboration with Karma Dorje (Rabjampa), and assistance from Beáta Kakas (Sanskrit) and William Dewey (English). Edited and introduced by George FitzHerbert, and finalized 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.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* is one of two closely related texts found together in the Degé Kangyur¹ in which the Buddha teaches a dhāraṇī and associated food offering ritual to relieve pretas of their sufferings.² The other text is *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 646/1080). These texts have had a significant legacy for the ritual traditions of Buddhist Asia, serving as foundations for the traditions of giving compassionate food offerings to alleviate the suffering of spirits and ghosts. The present text is the shorter of the two, corresponding (though not precisely matching) Śikṣānanda's Chinese translation in the Chinese Buddhist canon (Taishō 1314).

i.2 The sūtra narrates Ānanda's³ nocturnal encounter with a gruesome female preta, or "hungry ghost," known by the epithet Flaming Mouth (Tib. *kha 'bar ma*),⁴ who threatens him with imminent death unless he satisfies innumerable pretas and brahmin ascetics with food offerings. Ānanda seeks the Buddha's advice, whereupon the Buddha gives him a dhāraṇī and brief instructions for how to use it to consecrate *bali* (Tib. *gtor ma*) offerings that will magically satisfy innumerable pretas, relieve them of their suffering, and cause them to be reborn as gods. The Buddha further states that the ritual will be of great benefit to whoever performs it and will prevent them from being bothered by nonhuman spirits and hostile forces. He instructs Ānanda to propagate the practice widely.

i.3 The Tibetan text has no colophon, so little is known for certainty about its translation history or possible Indian origins. However, it is listed in the Denkarma imperial catalog,⁵ indicating that the Tibetan translation was made no later than the early ninth century CE. A version of the parallel text (Toh 646/1080) also exists among the manuscripts discovered in the cave library at Dunhuang (IOL Tib J 349). No extant Sanskrit version of either text has been identified, and its Sanskrit title is unknown.

- i.4 This text was translated into Chinese by Śikṣānanda between 700 and 704 CE⁶ (*Foshuo jiu mianran egui tuoluoni shenzhou jing* 說救面燃餓鬼陀羅尼神咒經, Taishō 1314).⁷ Some decades later, between 757 and 770,⁸ a slightly longer version, corresponding to Toh 646, was translated into Chinese by Amoghavajra (Taishō 1313).⁹ Both Chinese texts have been translated into English by Lye (2003).¹⁰ The Chinese and Tibetan texts mirror each other in their respective length and content (Toh 647 with Taishō 1314, and Toh 646 with Taishō 1313), so it is possible that the Tibetan translations were made from the Chinese. However, in some significant details they diverge. For example, in the Tibetan of the present text (Toh 647) the main preta protagonist is explicitly female (Tib. *yi dags mo*), something that is not found in either Chinese text. This observation led Lye (2003) to tentatively conclude that the Tibetan versions were probably made directly from two variant iterations of the narration that circulated in Sanskrit. The two Tibetan texts, while clearly presenting the same narrative, differ in their wording.
- i.5 As shown by Lye (2003), the Chinese versions of these texts are foundational to the *Yuqie yankou* (瑜伽餓口) and *Shuilu* (水陸) ghost-feeding rites, as well as the annual Ghost Festival in Chinese Buddhism, which takes place in the seventh lunar month. Such rituals appear to have developed from the late Tang and early Song periods in China,¹¹ from whence they spread to Vietnam and also to Japan.¹²
- i.6 Fire and flames are a common—if secondary—feature of descriptions of pretas in the canonical literature both Chinese and Tibetan,¹³ and in some Tibetan sources, the preta known by the epithet “flaming mouth” is presented as a “queen of pretas” (Tib. *yi dwags kyi rgyal mo*), though she is not explicitly described as such in this text. The tormā (Tib. *gtor ma*, Skt. *bali*) offering ritual for the preta Flaming Mouth has a long history in Tibet. The *Blue Annals*, for example, mentions the eleventh–twelfth-century master Dzung Dharmabodhi requesting instruction on the “Great Torma Offering of Flaming Mouth.”¹⁴ The ritual is also mentioned in the writings of Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) in the thirteenth century, who identified it as a rite that was inaccurately performed in Tibet.¹⁵ In the eighteenth century the actual dhāraṇī was included in the compendium of dhāraṇī in four scripts (Tibetan, Manchurian, Chinese, and Mongolian) compiled under Chankya Rolpé Dorjé and the Qianlong emperor.¹⁶
- i.7 The epithet “flaming mouth” or “blazing mouth” (Tib. *kha 'bar ma*) for pitiful female ghosts, both as a name for an individual figure and a class of beings, features in a number of “averting death” (Tib. *'chi bslu*), repelling harm (*bzlog pa*), and “thread-cross” (*mdos*) rituals.¹⁷ For example, the figure White Flaming Mouth (*kha 'bar ma dkar mo*) is found in a number of such ritual

texts dating from the eighteenth century, though the relationship between this figure and the protagonist of the present canonical text remains to be explored.

- i.8 As a proper name, “Flaming Mouth,” *kha 'bar ma* in Tibetan, corresponding in at least some attested sources to the Sanskrit *Jvālāmukhī* (female) or *Jvālāmukha* (male), is also found in a range of tantras referring to various minor deities. Of more specific relevance, in the *Guhyagarbhatantra* and other tantras of the Nyingma tradition the masculine form is the name of the *nirmāṇakāya* sage (Muni) who manifests in the realm of the pretas, one of six such Munis corresponding to the six realms and numbered among the one hundred peaceful and wrathful deities of the maṇḍala.¹⁸
- i.9 The dhāraṇī and the associated rite of compassionate appeasement for worldly spirits described here, as well as a large number of liturgical arrangements incorporating the dhāraṇī formula are still widely used in the Tibetan and Mongolian¹⁹ cultural areas. Many such liturgies involve the invocation or visualization of Avalokiteśvara, just as some of the related practices in Chinese tradition may incorporate the bodhisattva Guanyin.²⁰
- i.10 The category of such practices in which the offering consists of water alone (Tib. *chu gtor*) may derive from the additional way of making offerings mentioned in the present text (see 1.11)—but not in the other version, Toh 646/ 1080, even though the latter, with its greater detail in other respects, may represent a later and more elaborated form.
- i.11 As far as we are aware, this is the first translation of the Tibetan text into any European language. An early French translation of the parallel text (Toh 646) was published by Léon Feer in 1883.²¹
- i.12 This translation was made from the Tibetan version in the Degé Kangyur, where the text is found twice in almost identical editions, once in the Tantra (*rgyud*) section and once in the Dhāraṇī (*gzungs*) section. The Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur editions were also consulted for variant readings.

The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth

1.

The Translation

[F.240.b]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

Once, the Blessed One was staying at Banyan Grove in Kapilavastu with a great congregation of monks, a great assembly of bodhisattvas, and a great assembly of other beings, teaching them the Dharma. In the meantime, Ānanda was in seclusion, meditating and realizing the Dharma through single-pointed contemplation.

1.2 During the last watch of the night, the female preta Flaming Mouth came before him and spoke, [F.241.a] “O Ānanda, you will die the day after tomorrow and be reborn in the realm of pretas.”

1.3 Ānanda asked, “What reliable method is there to avoid this?”²²

1.4 The female preta replied, “Ānanda, if in the morning you offer food and drink in the amount of seven large Magadhan bushels to each and every preta as numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges, and satisfy one hundred thousand brahmin ascetics, and make an offering in my name to the Three Jewels, then your life will be extended, and I will transmigrate from the realm of the pretas and be reborn in the upper realms.”

1.5 Then Ānanda saw that female preta Flaming Mouth. She was wasted and ugly, with an emaciated body, tongues of flame coming from her mouth, and her belly and mouth shriveled up. Her hair was matted and in disarray, and she had long nails and body hair. Hearing her jarring and unpleasant words, he was so afraid that the hairs all over his body stood on end. He rose from his seat, and went hurriedly, very quickly, to where the Blessed One was.

1.6 On arriving, he prostrated to the Blessed One and, trembling, he begged, “Blessed One, please protect me! Well-Gone One, please protect me! I will be killed the day after tomorrow. Blessed One, I saw the female preta Flaming Mouth and she told me, ‘You will die the day after tomorrow.’ I asked her, ‘What method is there to avoid it?’ She replied, ‘If you satisfy pretas as

numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges, as well as one hundred thousand brahmin ascetics, then your life will be extended.' Blessed One, please tell me how I can do this."

1.7 Then [F.241.b] the Blessed One, the Thus-Gone One Śākyamuni, said to venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, do not be afraid! There is a method to satisfy the pretas and the brahmin ascetics. Ānanda, there is a dhāraṇī called *the great powerful light that illumines everything*.²³ Just making an offering with this will satisfy pretas as numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges, so that each and every preta and brahmin ascetic will be given seven Magadhan bushels of food and drink. Long ago, when I was a brahmin, I received this dhāraṇī from the bodhisattva mahāsattva Lokeśvara and the Thus-Gone One Lokeśvaraprabha.²⁴ With this dhāraṇī I satisfied numerous, countless pretas and brahmin ascetics with food and drink, and all of them transmigrated from the realm of the pretas and were reborn in the realm of the gods. Ānanda, remember and accept it:

1.8 *namaḥ sarvatathāgata avalokite oṃ sambhara sambhara hūṃ*²⁵

1.9 "Ānanda, recite this spell seven times over the bali for the preta. Then, extending your arm, offer it in front of the door, snap your fingers, and clap.²⁶ Immediately after you offer it in this way, all the pretas of the four directions, as numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges, will be satisfied, and each preta will be given seven Magadhan bushels. Merely by consuming it, they will transmigrate from the realm of the pretas and be reborn among the gods.

1.10 "Ānanda, you should constantly and incessantly relate this to the monks and nuns and the male and female lay devotees around you. For those who act in this way, [F.242.a] a heap of merit will be accrued and their life will be long. They will obtain the combined heaps of merit of a trillion thus-gone ones, and will become invisible to those spirits that wander incessantly in nonhuman forms—bhūtas, piśācas, kumbhāṇḍas,²⁷ and others; yakṣas, rākṣasas, grahas, and pretas. They will become strong and diligent. They will obtain beauty, charisma, and mindfulness.

1.11 "To satisfy brahmin ascetics, fill a container with the clean water to be offered, recite the dhāraṇī seven times, and make the offering at any place where water is swiftly flowing. When this is done accordingly, brahmin ascetics as numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges will be satisfied with divine food and drink. Those brahmin ascetics will be thoroughly sated, and they will cry, " Oṃ! May all be well!" In this way, the intentions of those beings will be completely purified, and they will have the

charisma of brahmins. They will always live the religious life, they will obtain the roots of virtue of thus-gone ones as numerous as the billions of grains of sand of the river Ganges, and all their enemies will always be destroyed.²⁸

1.12 “Recite the dhāraṇī twenty-one times over flowers, incense, perfume, or food and drink, and then offer them to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha. If that is done accordingly, noble sons and noble daughters, monks and nuns, and male and female lay devotees will revere, honor, and worship the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha [F.242.b] of the buddhafiels of all the thus-gone ones in the ten directions with divine offerings and the supreme offerings of the thus-gone ones. They will be in the intentions and prophecies of all the thus-gone ones, and will be protected by all the gods.

1.13 “Ānanda, go, and accept this! Teach it correctly, again and again, to all beings. Perform all the roots of virtue. Thus have I spoken.”

1.14 *This concludes “The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth.”*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 In the Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur, *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 646) comes first, followed by *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 647). However in the Dhāraṇī section, in which both texts are also found, the order is reversed, so that the (marginally shorter) *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 1079) comes first, followed by the *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* (1080).
- n.2 This text, Toh 1079, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, wam*), are listed as being located in volume 101 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 102. 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 *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantṛāṭikā* (*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.3 In the other text, Toh 646 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh646.html>)/1080 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1080.html>), the main protagonist is Nanda, the Buddha's half-brother, rather than Ānanda, his cousin and attendant.

- n.4 In the other text, Toh 646
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh646.html>)/1080
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1080.html>), the Tibetan rendering of the epithet is *kha nas me 'bar ba*, and the preta is not specifically identified as female. Nevertheless (and disregarding this gender difference), both versions have a very similar meaning, and given the presumed common source of the narrative and the likelihood that the same original Sanskrit (or possibly Chinese) epithet could easily have been translated into Tibetan in different ways, we have used “Flaming Mouth,” to render both.
- n.5 It is listed in the Denkarma catalog, under the name *'phags pa yi dags kha 'bar ma dbugs dbyung ba'i gtor ma'i cho ga*, as being 20 ślokas in length (Denkarma, folio 303.a; Herrmann-Pfandt, p. 234). It is not listed in the Phangthangma catalog, which is believed to have been compiled a few years later.
- n.6 Hun Yeow Lye (2003), p. 30.
- n.7 A manuscript of the Chinese text is held at the British Library under the title *Dharani Sutra for Saving the Burning-Mouth Hungry Ghosts* (BL Or.8210/S.4119).
- n.8 Hun Yeow Lye (2003), p. 30.
- n.9 *Foshuo jiuba yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 佛說救拔燄口餓鬼陀羅尼經, Taishō 1313.
- n.10 Lye (2003), pp. 417–25. An English translation of the longer of the two, the translation by Amoghavajra (Taishō 1313), was also published with an introduction by Orzech (1996).
- n.11 Hun Yeow Lye (2003), p. 225. Lye’s study explores the history and evolution of the ghost-feeding rites based on these foundational texts and their liturgical outgrowth into two additional texts included in the Chinese canon (Taishō 1315 and Taishō 1318) that do not appear to have direct Tibetan parallels. See also Rotman (2021), pp. 59–61, who provides and describes a Chinese Ming dynasty painting of Flaming Mouth.
- n.12 In the *Catalog of Received Items* (*Shōrai mokuroku* 請來目錄), completed in 806 CE, a text called *Sūtra on the Dhāraṇī for Bestowing (Food) on the Flaming-Mouth Hungry Ghost* (*Shi yankou egui tuoluoni jing* 施燄口餓鬼陀羅尼) is included among the texts that Kūkai (774–835) brought from China to Japan. This title also appears in the catalogs of several other Japanese monks who traveled to China in the medieval period in search of Buddhist traditions and texts. Lye (2003), p. 232.
- n.13 See Rotman (2021), p. 46.

- n.14 Tib. *kha' bar ma'i gtor chen*. Zhonnu Pel (1984), p. 223; Roerich (1949), p. 177.
- n.15 In his *sdom gsum rab dbye* (*Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*) Sakya Paṇḍita said he had witnessed practices in Tibet in which the names of the four tathāgatas were recited “in prologue to the Burning Mouth oblation,” which he said was not correct as “in the sūtra” the names of the four tathāgatas should be recited after the dhāraṇī. This is a clear reference to [n.13](#) in Toh 646. He also said that was incorrect to add food to water offerings, as this causes pretas great torment. It is interesting that the instruction to add food to water offerings is found only in Toh 646, and not in the ritual prescribed here in Toh 647. Here, the instruction is to make food offerings to pretas and water offerings to brahmarṣis. See Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltshe (2002), p. 124.
- n.16 Lokesh Chandra STP 10.3153, 13.4299.
- n.17 Sobisch (2019, p. 245) mentions, for example, a *mdos* ritual text in the Collected Works of Choné Drakpa Shedrup (1675–1748) called *kha' bar ma'i mdos chen ma mo'i gdon sogs gnod pa kun sel* (*Great Thread-Cross Rite of Jvālāmukhī, Which Removes the Malevolent Influence of the Mundane Mother Deities and All Other Negative Forces*).
- n.18 As, for example, in the *ting nge 'dzin mchog gi rgyud* ([rKTs-G149](#) (<http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=149&typ=3>), f. 163.a) and *chos nyid zhi ba'i rgyud* ([rKTs-G153](#) (<http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=153&typ=3>), f. 228.b); see also the translation of the *Guhyagarbhatantra* and commentary in Choying Tobden Dorje (2016), vol. 1, p. 198 *et passim*.
- n.19 A Mongolian translation of the Tibetan text is available in the Mongolian Kangyur in two identical versions in the Tantra section (Mong. *dandar*), entitled *Aman dayan ḡal badaraḡči em-e birid-i amuyulqui baling-un ḡang üile*. See Ligeti (1942), p. 180.
- n.20 The association with Avalokiteśvara-Guanyin may be relevant to the apparent reference to Avalokiteśvara in the dhāraṇī formula (see [n.25](#)). Rotman (2021), pp. 60–61, also alludes to the notion in some Chinese traditions that Flaming Mouth is a manifestation of Guanyin “who expediently assumed the form of Flaming Mouth and precipitated Ānanda’s crisis in order to facilitate the Buddha’s creation of the *Yuqie yankou* ritual.” The various figures named Jvālāmukha or Jvālāmukhī mentioned in the preceding paragraph ([i.8](#)) may possibly echo such notions.
- n.21 Feer (1883), pp. 447–50.

- n.22 The Tibetan reads simply “what reliable method is there?” (*brtan pa'i thabs ci yod*). The words “to avoid this” have been added for clarification.
- n.23 Tib. *thams cad du 'od dang ldan pa rgyal chen shugs ldan 'od ces bya ba*. In the closely related text (Toh 646/Toh 1080), the name of this dhāraṇī is given as *gzi brjid tshad med pa'i dbang du gyur pa'i 'od zer rnam par rgyal ba'i shugs zhes bya ba*.
- n.24 Tib. *'jig rten dbang phyug dang 'jig rten dbang phyug 'od*. According to the parallel Chinese text (Taishō 1314), the Buddha received this dhāraṇī from Guan shiyin pusa and Shijian zizai deli rulai (Hun 2003, p. 420). In Toh 646/1080 he receives the dhāraṇī from the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara (Tib. *spyān ras gzigs*) and the Thus-Gone One Vaśavartīguṇa (Tib. *de bzhin gshegs pa dbang sgyur yon tan*).
- n.25 The dhāraṇī itself could be translated as “Homage to the One With the Gaze of All Tathāgathas! *Oṃ* bring them together, bring them! *Hūṃ!*” Here Sarvatathāgatāvalokita is likely an epithet of Avalokiteśvara.
- n.26 Tib. *se gol yang brdab par bya'o*. Cf. Toh 646/Toh 1080, “snap your fingers three times.”
- n.27 Tib. *grul 'bum*. There is no reference to these ghouls in the iteration of the text found in the Dhāraṇī section (Toh 1079).
- n.28 See [i.10](#).

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 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the *Mahāvastu*, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).

Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

g.2 bali

gtor ma

གོར་མ།

bali

A food offering made to a deity or spirits; such an offering may be varied and elaborate, or may be simple uncooked food.

g.3 Banyan Grove

nya gro dha' i kun dga' ra ba

ཉ་གོ་རྒྱུ་དགའ་ར་བ།

nyagrodhārāma

A grove of banyan trees (Skt. *nyagrodha*) near Kapilavastu where the Buddha sometimes took residence. It was a gift to the Buddhist community by King Śuddhodana, the father of the Buddha.

g.4 bhūta

'byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta

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.5 billions

bye ba khrag khrig phrag 'bum

བྱི་བ་ཀླག་ཀླིག་ཕྱག་འབུམ།

koṭinīyutaśatasahasra

The number of grains of sand of the river Ganges is a favored analogy for immense numbers in the sūtras. Literally 10 million x 100 million x 100 thousand; i.e., 10¹⁹ or 10 quintillion.

g.6 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་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 √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.7 bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ལྡན་སེམས་དཔའ།

bodhisattva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfilment of the altruistic intention to attain perfect buddhahood, traversing the ten bodhisattva levels (*daśabhūmi*, *sa bcu*). Bodhisattvas purposely opt to remain within cyclic

existence in order to liberate all sentient beings, instead of simply seeking personal freedom from suffering. In terms of the view, they realize both the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena.

g.8 brahmarṣis

bram ze'i drang srong

བླམ་ཟེའི་དྲང་སྲོང་།

brahmarṣi

See brahmin ascetics.

g.9 brahmin

bram ze

བླམ་ཟེ།

brāhmaṇa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A member of the highest of the four castes in Indian society, which is closely associated with religious vocations.

g.10 brahmin ascetics

bram ze'i drang srong

བླམ་ཟེའི་དྲང་སྲོང་།

brahmarṣi

Indian ascetic, sage, or hermit belonging to brahmin priestly class.

g.11 buddhafiield

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།

buddhakṣetra

A pure realm manifested by a buddha in which beings may follow the path to awakening without fear of falling into lower realms.

g.12 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.13 female preta

yi dags mo

ཡི་དགས་མོ།

**pretikā*

The feminine form of preta.

g.14 Flaming Mouth

kha 'bar ma

ཁ་འབར་མ།

**jvālāmukhī*

The epithet of the female preta (or *pretikā*) who disturbs Ānanda, demanding to be fed. In Tibetan dictionaries, the female preta known as Flaming Mouth is sometimes described as “a queen of pretas” (*yi dwags kyi rgyal mo zhig*), though this status is not made explicit in this text. Sometimes rendered by scholars as *Jvālāmukhī*. Rendered in Chinese (Taishō 1314) as Mianran 面燃 “Burning Face.”

g.15 Ganges

gang gA'i klung

གང་གཱི་ཀླུང་།

gaṅgā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Gaṅgā, or Ganges in English, is considered to be the most sacred river of India, particularly within the Hindu tradition. It starts in the Himalayas, flows through the northern plains of India, bathing the holy city of Vārāṇasī, and meets the sea at the Bay of Bengal, in Bangladesh. In the sūtras, however, this river is mostly mentioned not for its sacredness but for its abundant sands—noticeable still today on its many sandy banks and at its delta—which serve as a common metaphor for infinitely large numbers.

According to Buddhist cosmology, as explained in the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is one of the four rivers that flow from Lake Anavatapta and cross the southern continent of Jambudvīpa—the known human world or more specifically the Indian subcontinent.

g.16 graha

gdon

གདོན།

graha

A type of spirit that can exert a harmful influence on the human body and mind. Grahas are closely associated with the planets and other astronomical bodies.

g.17 Kapilavastu

yul ser skya

ཡུལ་སེར་སྐྱ།

kapilavastu

The Śākya capital, where Siddhārtha Gautama was raised.

g.18 kumbhāṇḍa

grul bum

གུལ་བུམ།

kumbhāṇḍa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of dwarf beings subordinate to Virūḍhaka, one of the Four Great Kings, associated with the southern direction. The name uses a play on the word *aṇḍa*, which means “egg” but is also a euphemism for a testicle. Thus, they are often depicted as having testicles as big as pots (from *khumba*, or “pot”).

g.19 lay devotee

dge bsnyen · dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྐྱེན། · དགེ་བསྐྱེན་མ།

upāsaka · upāsikā

A male (*upāsaka*) or female (*upāsikā*) practitioner who has taken vows to uphold the five precepts.

g.20 Lokeśvara

'jig rten dbang phyug

འཇིག་རྟེན་དབང་ཕྱུག

lokeśvara

“Lord of the World,” protector of the world. Here an epithet of bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

g.21 Lokeśvaraprabha

'jig rten dbang phyug 'od

འཇིག་རྟེན་དབང་ཕྱུག་འོད།

lokeśvaraprabha

Name of the tathāgata who gave the dhāraṇī to the Buddha during a previous life as a brahmin.

g.22 Magadhan bushel

ma ga dha'i bre bo

མ་ག་རྒྱའི་བྲེ་བོ།

—

A unit of measurement for food and drink in the kingdom of Magadha, made using a container or bushel (Tib. *bre bo*) of a specific size.

g.23 method

thabs

ཐབས།

upāya

Method or skillful means. In the context of this text, a method for quelling the suffering of pretas.

g.24 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣu*, often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.

In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

g.25 Nanda

dga' bo

དགའ་བོ།

nanda

The Buddha's younger half-brother; his mother was Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, the Buddha's maternal aunt. He became an important śrāvaka disciple.

g.26 nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སློང་མ།

bhikṣuṇī

A fully ordained female practitioner observing 364 Vinaya vows.

g.27 offering ritual

gtor ma'i cho ga

གཏོར་མའི་ཚོགས།

balividhi

Food offering or oblation ritual.

g.28 offering water

mchod yon

མཚན་ཡོན།

argha

Drinking water, offering water, offering, gift. Also remuneration to a priest for performing a religious service.

g.29 piśāca

sha za

ཤ་ཟ།

piśāca

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 $\sqrt{piś}$, 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.30 *preta*

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

One of the five or six classes of sentient beings, into which beings are born as the karmic fruition of past miserliness. As the term in Sanskrit means “the departed,” they are analogous to the ancestral spirits of Vedic tradition, the *pitṛs*, who starve without the offerings of descendants. It is also commonly translated as “hungry ghost” or “starving spirit,” as in the Chinese 餓鬼 *e gui*.

They are sometimes said to reside in the realm of Yama, but are also frequently described as roaming charnel grounds and other inhospitable or frightening places along with *piśācas* and other such beings. They are particularly known to suffer from great hunger and thirst and the inability to acquire sustenance.

g.31 *rākṣasa*

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

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.32 *religious life*

tshangs pa lha'i spyod pa

ཚངས་པ་ལྷའི་སྤྱོད་པ།

brahmacārya

The expression *brahmacārya* (*tshangs pa lha'i spyod pa*) encompasses a wide range of activities including moral restraint in general (including celibacy, refraining from killing and harming beings, etc.), devotion to studies and religious practices, as well as the simplification of one's lifestyle in regard to food, lodging, and so forth.

g.33 root of virtue

dge ba'i rtsa ba

དགེ་བའི་རྩ་བ།

kuśalamūla

Fundamental positive qualities, good and virtuous deeds committed in the present or in former lives that bring good karma.

g.34 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.35 thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་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 is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.36 well-gone one

bde bar gshegs pa

བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པ།

sugata

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the standard epithets of the buddhas. A recurrent explanation offers three different meanings for *su-* that are meant to show the special qualities of “accomplishment of one’s own purpose” (*svārthasampad*) for a complete buddha. Thus, the Sugata is “well” gone, as in the expression *su-rūpa* (“having a good form”); he is gone “in a way that he shall not come back,” as in the expression *su-naṣṭa-jvara* (“a fever that has utterly gone”); and he has gone “without any remainder” as in the expression *su-pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (“a pot that is completely full”). According to Buddhaghōṣa, the term means that the way the Buddha went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*) and where he went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*).

g.37 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the jurisdiction of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.

