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# Studies in Dhāraṇī Literature II: Pragmatics of Dhāraṇīs

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# Studies in *dhāraṇī* literature II: Pragmatics of *dhāraṇīs*<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

This article is one of a series that reassesses the *dhāraṇī* texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The article seeks to examine *dhāraṇī* texts by using the linguistic tools of pragmatics, especially historical pragmatics, to assist the understanding of their statements. Rather than the meaning of the term *dhāraṇī* as a subject term, the domain of truth-conditional semantics, this paper examines statements in texts labelled *dhāraṇī*. Pragmatics examines meaning in context, and the categories of speech acts developed by Searle has been especially helpful in mapping out differences within such texts and the formalization of statements across texts. The grammaticalization of specific speech elements, especially interjections, in the context of *mantra-dhāraṇīs* is also discussed.

**Keywords:** *Mantra*, *Dhāraṇī*, Historical pragmatics, Tantra, Buddhism, Speech acts

In a previous study of *dhāraṇī* literature, my primary concern was with the semantics of the term *dhāraṇī* (Davidson 2009). There I argued that the term had been somewhat misunderstood or presented in a one-sided manner. In the ensuing period, I have become satisfied that a rough approximation of the semantic contours of the term *dhāraṇī* are contained in that study.<sup>2</sup> Certainly, there is much more to be said with respect to the conventional semantics of *dhāraṇī*, and there is little doubt that refinements to my presentation will be necessary as new documents are explored. Among the many things missing in my cursory examination is an investigation of the other linguistic aspects of *dhāraṇī* use in India. One in particular begs to be addressed: the pragmatics of those expressions and textual sections belonging to the literary genre of *dhāraṇī* texts. While the previous study examined the semantic value of the term *dhāraṇī* as a subject term, the topic of this study will be statements found in *dhāraṇī* texts themselves.

To that end, this paper will present briefly the emerging discipline of historical pragmatics and its applicability to Indian Buddhist documents. It will outline

1 I thank George Thompson for glancing at the Vedic-related sections of the paper, a branch of Indology about which I have much uncertainty. I also thank Sean Gleason for suggestions on the pragmatics, especially grammaticalization. An anonymous reviewer also provided several useful suggestions. Needless to say, I remain responsible for all errors, great and small.

2 Independently, Copp (2008) arrived at similar conclusions, based on translations into Chinese.

a rough approximation of what may be said about the pragmatics of *dhāraṇī* statements found in the Mahāyānist scriptures containing *dhāraṇīs*, including texts from both early and later periods and admitting of data from other categories of spells (*mantra*, *hṛdaya*, *vidyā*). At the same time, some other linguistic phenomena will be brought into the discussion, especially questions of syntax, semantic change and grammaticalization, as these are entailed by pragmatics. In the process, the alternative voices of either grammatical or Mīmāṃsā pragmatic observations will be engaged on those few occasions where appropriate; one may indeed argue that analyses of pragmatics have been part of the discussion in Indian religion for quite some time. In our instance, however, their hermeneutics will be found to be not entirely appropriate in several respects. Only occasionally do we see that either grammatical, Mīmāṃsā or Smārta formulae provide guidance to the emerging Buddhist *dhāraṇī* literature.

Three inhibitions to the study of *dhāraṇī* pragmatics have occasionally been voiced. First is the idea that *dhāraṇī* literature encodes the personal inspiration of an individual, thus making the examination of implication and performance superfluous. According to this idea, the expression of the *dhāraṇī* is a consequence of individual inspiration apart from social or linguistic conventions. Second, there is the position that – as sacred phrases – *mantras* or *dhāraṇīs* cannot be considered with the same tools as other forms of language use.<sup>3</sup> In this model, because *mantras* are sacred, they are categorically different from other kinds of linguistic expression, so that our linguistic tools cannot be applied to them. Consequently, the pioneering studies of *mantra* by Gonda (1963) and Wayman (1975) – as well as more recent works by Padoux (1989), Patton (1995), and Wilke and Moebus – emphasized the ideology of *mantras*: the emic classifications, particular attributes, postulated values and sonic theology. This position appeared more compelling when scholars such as Staal emphasized the idea of the meaninglessness of *mantras* (*anarthaka*) because discussions in the *Nirukta* or *Jaiminimīmāṃsā-sūtra* seem to coincide with a

- 3 In their otherwise interesting and informative study, *Sound and Communication*, after broadly gesturing to pragmatic analysis, Wilke and Moebus (2011) maintain that: “However, speech act theory is insufficient to explain *mantras* fully, because they are regarded as effective of themselves. The *mantras* bring us to a radically participatory interpretation of language and to true language acts, i.e. to a use of language that can be categorized in speech act theory and yet at the same time goes beyond it. If, for example, the formula ‘for my life’ is spoken over the rice cooked on the daily sacrificial fire, this formula is effective of itself, owing to the sacrificial context. In the understanding of the Indian priest, *mantras* are therefore not a speech act at all in the strict sense. It is not the priest who performs something through language, i.e. brings about the blessing. The blessing is brought about by the formula itself” (p. 406). This is an example of the conflation of etic and emic perspectives, so that *mantras* cannot be assessed by modern linguistic tools. A very different tack is taken by Wheelock (1982), but with a similar result: rituals cannot be evaluated with standard categories but require their own – his “situating speech” category; this is because he categorizes language as necessarily communicating information. Suffice it to say that this “situating” category has not been accepted by others, even if many reference his paper. Wheelock’s is a relatively early attempt to wrestle with the specific parameters of ritual speech acts, but does not adequately take into account the position that Austin’s and Searle’s typologies, whatever their difficulties, were expressly developed to account for ritual(ized) speech.

semantic (truth-conditional) definition of meaning, so that *mantras* appeared outside of natural language.<sup>4</sup> Finally, there is the issue of the conservative reticence of those handling Indian Buddhist ritual documents either to encounter the Indian world at large or to employ new methods available for their use.<sup>5</sup>

In response, I would like to suggest that the data on formalized religious linguistic expressions support the position that Indian Buddhist ritual language is an irreducibly social phenomenon, and that to read these texts as individually expressed and personally sanctified phrases is to overlook the processes of their formation and employment.<sup>6</sup> It may be germane to point out that Biblical, Patristic and Classical studies are in advance of Indian Buddhist studies in this regard. Following in their philological footsteps, I will argue that it is imperative to take such formulaic expressions out of their “sacred” category and examine them as natural vocal events. Curiously, Vedic exegesis in part even supports this examination, arguing that both Vedic *mantras* and natural language operate with the same denotation.<sup>7</sup> To that end, the results of the last several decades of pragmatic investigation into language use will be invoked, not because this discipline is the final word on such phrases, but because it has not yet been adequately employed.<sup>8</sup>

## Semantics or historical pragmatics?

In this light, the difference between the semantic study of the materials and their pragmatic study might be clarified. It is common to trot out Morris’s now rather shopworn tripartite definition of semiotics as divided into semantics, pragmatics

- 4 Staal (2008): 142–5, 191–221; *Nirukta* 1.15 or *Jaiminimīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.2.1, 1.2.32–3. Truth-conditional definitions of meaning are behind Staal’s various discussions of meaning, whether the meaninglessness of ritual or of *mantras*, and represent a somewhat dated understanding of how meaning is understood in more current linguistic descriptions. Even then we could question the validity of the “meaningless” designation, since Staal discusses this with respect to Vedic *mantras*, which fall into the category of natural language (and therefore truth-conditional expressions), even if untrue. There would seem to be a problem in identifying both the intension and extension of the term *anartha* with the English term “meaningless”.
- 5 An example of this is Manné (1990), who formulates her own categories of scripture instead of tapping into the rich cross-cultural studies of scriptural analysis. In distinction, Grey (1994: 481–521) provides multiple references to well-established indices of folk-tale/folk literature. I thank Daniel Boucher for his generosity in providing a copy of Grey.
- 6 Mention must be made of McDermott’s (1975) “Towards a pragmatics of *mantra* recitation”, a very early study that attempted much in a very short address of so many issues. Unfortunately this study is dated in at least three ways: it came at a very early stage in the history of pragmatics when many of its concerns, including historical pragmatics, had not developed; it does not study the nature of *mantras* themselves but focuses on their recitation, thus putting the cart before the horse in my estimation; and it is insufficiently grounded in the Buddhist *mantra* archive to understand the conflicted goal orientations of *mantra* use. Nonetheless, it was a courageous first enterprise and acknowledged that quotidian speech acts and *mantra* recitation were at least subject to family resemblances (p. 283).
- 7 *Nirukta* 1.16; *Jaiminimīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.3.30; Taber 1989: 149–53.
- 8 It is fair to say that Staal seemed to realize that pragmatics represented a threat to his model of meaning; this may in part be the reason for the somewhat dismissive attitude to pragmatic analysis taken in his work; Staal 1989: 66–70; 2008: 205–07.

and syntax (McDermott 1975), but the field of linguistics has developed so significantly in the last half century that this division is no longer as applicable as it once was. One needs but a modest review of the literature to realize that pragmatic use influences syntactic, semantic and phonological developments over time. Recent work has highlighted both the difference between semantics *per se*, and the effervescence of the study of discourse *in situ* (pragmatics), while still acknowledging a mutual patterning. In Recanati's description:

The view I have just described is very widespread and deserves to be called the Standard Picture (SP). It enables the theorist to maintain the three assumptions listed at the beginning of this section. (*i.e.*) Semantics and pragmatics each has its own field of study. Semantics deals with literal meaning and truth conditions; pragmatics deals with speech acts and speaker's meaning. (Recanati 2004: 452)

Yet most scholars in the study of pragmatics today realize that these divisions are more heuristic than easily identifiable, and that language in general is resistant to typologies with hard boundaries.<sup>9</sup> Still, it is relatively clear that meaning may be inferred, implied or contextually determined in a manner that truth-conditional semantics has had difficulty delineating (Levinson 1983, Roberts 2004). So if one takes the sentence: "John can write his name well", by truth-conditional semantics this statement is true or false if John can write his name well. But if it is uttered in response to a question as to whether John is a good Sanskritist, it clearly implies that he is not, if the best that can be said is that he can write his name well. As Traugott and others have argued (Traugott and Dasher 2002, Blutner 2004), semantic change often follows on the heels of pragmatic use, so that the development of idioms, technical applications, slang and other semantic variations are often first defined in context, only later to enter the lexicon in a conventionalized form.

Over the last half century, forms of pragmatics have developed tools that will help shed light on some of the problems we must consider, and one of these, speech act theory, has been particularly fruitful. As is now very well known, Austin's typology of speech acts (Austin 1962: 151–64) has been employed, changed or modified by several scholars, but Searle's schematism appears to be the best known and most widely applied, even if it is still occasionally contested. Searle divided speech acts (*i.e.* illocutionary acts) into five types, emphasizing the verbal force associated with each (Searle 1969, 1979; Searle and Vanderveken 1985). In his typology, there are: (1) assertive statements, affirming or proposing a specific truth statement; (2) commissive statements, committing the person to a specific performance or act; (3) directive statements, attempting to command or otherwise to direct the listener to an action; (4) declarative statements, making declarations that alter the state of the social community; and (5) expressive statements, one person revealing to another a

9 Culpeper (2010: 78), in speaking of the realms of historical sociopragmatics, historical linguistics, pragma-historical linguistics, and other disciplines, affirms "It is important to stress that these areas of study are fuzzy-edged and often overlapping" (similarly Recanati 2004).

psychological attitude. As may be suspected, these are primarily determined by the verbal force, and Searle has articulated multiple instances of English versions of such statements. In some measure, these can be transposed into Indic structures. An example of (1) assertives might be any one of the many religious truth claims (*darśana*); of (2) commissives might be the vows or promises (*vrata, samaya*) found in Indian religious texts; of (3) directives would be sentences employing the imperative and optative verbs or their gerundive adjectival forms; of (4) declaratives would be the formal statements that open or close ceremonies or confer consecration, coronation or other ceremonial functions; and of (5) expressives would be the first person expressions of sincerity in confessions, praise, congratulations, condemnations and so forth.

This or related typologies have been employed by various Vedic scholars, notably Wheelock 1982, Patton 1995, Findly 1989, Thompson 1998, Ilieva (2003), Taber and, more recently, Dahl (2008). (We note that other scholars like Houben (2000) and Proferes (2003) have used the term pragmatics in a ritual-performative rather than a linguistic sense.) The contributions of these and other scholars mark quite an advance over previous work, for they have not only attempted to apply the observations of Austin, Searle and others to the problem of Vedic statements, but have articulated indigenous linguistic categories and noted areas where English-language based systems are a poor fit. However, in the application of speech act linguistics to the study of documents, there is a disturbing tendency either to misuse speech act theory or to provide an empty gesture to speech acts in particular, as Gorman has discussed in terms of literary criticism (Gorman 1999; also Gaskill 2008). Additionally, Searle's typology has not gone unchallenged, whether in light of ritual use or for ordinary language expressions (e.g. Wheelock 1982, Stiles 1981, Siebel 2003, Hughes 1984). Wheelock, for example, has argued that speech-act theory is primarily formulated to deal with vernacular social expressions, that is, sentences and situations that are modern and familiar. His analysis has not received wide acceptance for various reasons, but it does beg the question of the relationship of ritual repetition to other formalized expressions.

Even with such legitimate reservations in mind, it is appropriate to engage the questions about the pragmatic use of Indian texts, in this case Indian Buddhist texts, ever cognizant of limitations. Perhaps more important, pragmatics is concerned with the changes of fields of meaning that happen in conversational contexts, in which social interactions have presuppositions, understand the implicatures, sense the discontinuities between what is said and what is meant, to mention but a few of the topics associated with pragmatics analysis. In dealing with historical documents, many, if not most, of these factors are not clear or transparent. But such conceptual obscurity does not mean that the questions are unimportant, and indeed I would argue that the opacity of the discourse structures we deal with should invite us to seek out contextual understanding, even while acknowledging that it is fraught with uncertainties, some of which will remain contested or intractable over time.

In response to these and similar needs, linguists with a philological background began to apply pragmatic tools and procedures to historical texts, developing the discipline now known as "historical pragmatics". Andreas Jucker and

Elizabeth Traugott, in particular, started to employ such strategies to examine works, first in English and then expanded to other languages, yielding a growing series of studies and eventually the founding of the *Journal of Historical Pragmatics*. Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 6) describe the field in the following manner:

Historical pragmatics deals with changes in the linguistic structure resulting from altered communicative needs which are due to changes in the social structure, or, in other words, with changes in traditions of language use resulting from changes in the situational context, e.g. the institutionalisation or a medium of change. Hence the aims of a historically conceived pragmatics include (1) the description and the understanding of conventions of language use in communities that once existed and that are no longer accessible for direct observation, and (2) the description and the explanation of the development of speech conventions in the course of time. However, historical pragmatics can also be used as a philological tool to explain literary artefacts from the past.

This latter is true in the pursuit of “pragmaphilology”, (1) above, further defined by Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 11):

Pragmaphilology goes one step further and describes the contextual aspects of historical texts, including the addressers and addressees, their social and personal relationship, the physical and social setting of text production and text reception and the goal(s) of the text.

Pragmaphilology is understood to be a “macro approach”, emphasizing alterations in the sociocultural conditions wherein speech acts occur. In distinction, the other form (2) above, “diachronic pragmatics”, is identified as a “micro approach” (Traugott 2004: 538). Jacobs and Jucker (1995: 13) understand that:

diachronic pragmatics focuses on the linguistic inventory and its communicative use across different historical stages of the same language. Within the diachronic studies it is possible to distinguish two subtypes. Some studies may take a linguistic form (such as discourse markers, relative pronouns or lexical items) as a starting point in order to investigate the changing discourse meanings of the chosen element or elements, while the other subtype takes the speech functions (such as a specific speech act or politeness) as their starting point in order to investigate the changing realizations of this function across time.

The application of the discipline of historical pragmatics to the study of *dhāraṇīs* would seem at first blush to be immediately apparent, for investigations into all of these circumstances remain desiderata: the changing nature of Buddhist discourse, the macro social environment of India, the intermediate social environment of Buddhist monasteries and their support communities, the smaller environments of Mahayanist groups employing such phrases and placing them in their scriptures, to mention but the more urgent. This essay will be



one – certainly incomplete and probably faulty – attempt at applying the methods of historical pragmatics to a few of the many *dhāraṇī* texts in our archive.

### ***Dhāraṇī* pragmatic divisions**

*Dhāraṇī* literature is sufficiently complex to resist easy categorization, which is part of the reason it is simultaneously so interesting and so frustrating. However, in terms of its pragmatic contextualization, we can say that the presentation of *dhāraṇī* texts often divides into several relatively discrete types of statement. (a) First, we find precipitating assertives, whether articulating a problem condition or a miraculous event. (b) Second, we will consider the directive to speak or perform the *dhāraṇī*, with the verb in the imperative or rarely in the optative. (c) Third, we find commissive statements promising to communicate a *dhāraṇī*. (d) Fourth, we have assertives in the forms of precedent or predictive statements, extolling the use of this *dhāraṇī* or *vidyā* or *hṛdaya* by a/some/many previous Buddhas, and many include a predictive statement that it will be preached in the present or future as well. (e) Fifth, we find assertives as benefit statements, usually about the *dhāraṇī*'s power as a prophylactic against disease, poison, possession, or enemies, but also as an affirmation of health, welfare or even soteriological efficacy. (f) Sixth, we find assertive hybrid warning statements. (g) Seventh, there are the ubiquitous expressives: praise, homage, confession, condemnation, etc. (h) Eighth, we find perlocutionary expressives or assertives, about the joy and amazement of the audience who received this *dhāraṇī*, and occasionally other, sometimes less beneficial perlocutionary sentiments are indicated. (i) Ninth, we find the *mantra-dhāraṇī* itself, specifying the phrase to be recited. I simply employ the term *mantra-dhāraṇī* as a designation to differentiate it from the larger *dhāraṇī* text, and in recognition that it is a term employed in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (272.23–273.3), so as to avoid a neologism; the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* employs both the designations *mantra-dhāraṇī* (397.3) and *dhāraṇī-mantra* (396.3, 398.3, 399.9, 400.1, 401.1), which are equally clear. Other texts employ analogous designations.<sup>10</sup>

Readers of Buddhist scriptures will notice that many, perhaps most, of the items in the list (a)–(i) will have been employed in previous Buddhist texts as part of the overall textual strategy. Their presence in *dhāraṇī* texts serves to reinforce the authenticity and legitimacy of these works. As Austin pointed out, in terms of speech acts:

There must exist an accepted conventional procedure having a certain conventional effect, the procedure to include the uttering of certain words by certain persons in certain circumstances. (Austin 1962: 26; see also Sbisà 2009)

*Mutatis mutandis*, allowing for the changed circumstances of ritual works, the newer Mahāyāna *dhāraṇī* texts were expected to emulate well-established paradigms. That

10 *Mahāpratisarā* §36 *imāni dhāraṇīmantrapadāni bhāṣitāni*. Similar use, *Vasudhārādharmaṇī* pp. 143, 146.



does not mean they were necessarily successful in this process, and under section (d) we will discuss the problem of uptake and its success or failure.

One caveat should be expressed, precipitated by the discussion of ritual order articulated by the late Frits Staal. As is well known, Staal argued that ritual order is meaningless, by which I understand him to have meant that ritual units can be rearranged syntactically without affecting their semantic value (Staal 1986a, 1986b, 2008). His model is grounded in the linguistic background of transformational grammar, which in its more extreme forms argues that syntactic units may be rearranged without a substantial change in semantic value. Here, pragmatics certainly has something to say, as contextual use and statement order are important. Consequently, the above list should not be taken as somehow indicative of either the respective place or the precise importance of such items in a specific *dhāraṇī* text. As the analysis unfolds, it will be clear that these items are sometimes shifted about. Their relocation, however, carries with it a degree of pragmatic significance, and I would argue that – just as in relocating specific items to the beginning of an English sentence may indicate emphasis – the pragmatic force is somewhat different for such items depending on their respective locations. Ideally, each text should be considered independently as an assemblage of pragmatic signifiers.

Nonetheless, we may also note that the position-related differences in pragmatic force are moderated to some degree because of the process of formalization. In addition to the attributes of formalism – redundancy and parallelism – already identified by others, Irvine listed four further qualities of formality that appear cross-culturally valid: increased code structuring; code consistency; the invocation of positional identities; and the emergence of a central situational focus (Irvine 1979: 774–9; Howell 1986). These are apparent in the codification of language, the consistency (intertextuality) of expression, the recognition of hierarchical relationships accompanied by attendant politeness concerns, and the transmission of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* itself as the central focus. Tambiah (1979) saw many of these same formalization functions in the anthropology of the rituals he examined, providing a modern, vernacular model to the textual Sanskrit with which we are concerned. Consequently, in light of the issues of formalization, we would best consider the items (a) to (i) across texts, for the formalization of language yields a pragmatic force that has echoes in other texts with which the hearer/reader would have been familiar.

In selecting items for examination, it would be well to foreground two basic concerns. First, the fundamental, important scriptural statements should be given preference over less central, peripheral statements. That is, those scriptures with the greatest overall resonance in the Indian Buddhist tradition should be the initial field of investigation. This would ideally be determined by a system of weighting based on reference, commentary, translation and actual ritual use in the period in question, to mention but the more obvious parameters. Unfortunately, in the absence of any rigorous quantification of such variables, this weighting must remain an idealized aspiration rather than an easily realized placement system. Yet it is reasonably easy to identify the most important of the Mahāyāna scriptures that employ *dhāraṇīs* or similar phrases (*hrdaya*, *vidyā* often re-branded as *dhāraṇīs*) for these are the ones for which there is generally – albeit not always – some surviving Sanskrit version. And that gives rise to the

second concern. The analysis would best avoid translated texts (Chinese, Tibetan, etc.) at this time for its primary data, although these may be employed to assist the resolution of some questions of earlier recension, semantic value, pragmatic use, and so on. Nonetheless, having some surviving Sanskrit text is better than no Sanskrit text in this instance – particularly if there is a translation to validate early use – as so much of the pragmatic force of the statements is encoded in the nuance of the Sanskrit vocabulary, as I hope will be clear in the ensuing discussion. These two concerns, however, do lessen the textual field considerably. Moreover, explicitly *dhāraṇī* literature frequently employs phrases and ritual statements also found in other spell genres (*mantra*, *vidyā*, *hr̥daya*) that are not always termed *dhāraṇī*, but that nonetheless share commonalities with the literature so designated. This other spell literature will consequently be exploited in the discussion.

Finally, experienced readers of *dhāraṇī* works will note one or more textual features missing in the (a)–(i) list given above. In response, I would beg the reader's indulgence; the items (a)–(i) are *not* exhaustive and represent the standard phrases I find most commonly expressed in *dhāraṇī* literature overall. This essay is simply a preliminary attempt at mapping them linguistically. As the *dhāraṇī* texts become longer – as the sixth- to eighth-century texts translated into Chinese and Tibetan attest – they become more complex and the kinds of statements have greater variation. One particular lapse in my agenda is constituted by the *vidhi*, *vidhāna*, *kalpa* or *sādhana* ritual materials, even though they are sometimes found side-by-side with the above sections. Such *vidhi* materials form the ritual instructions for the construction of an altar (*sthaṇḍila*, *maṇḍala*), offering materials to one or another figure, and over time come to include *homa*, *bali* and other offerings. The primary reasons for this neglect are threefold: first, it appears that the earliest of the *dhāraṇī* works and chapters in texts do not include such ritual specificity, which is itself a problem in understanding how these *dhāraṇī* materials were to be employed at their earliest phases. Second, it is increasingly clear to me that such rituals are grounded either in the *gr̥hya* literature of the Smārta Vedic traditions or in the popular forms of *yakṣa*, *nāga* or other local spirit cults and must be resolved in relation to those sources as much as can be. Establishing this relationship is such a complicated task that it should be reserved for another occasion. Third, the structures of *vidhi* rituals are such that they do not materially contribute to the discussions of pragmatics as more commonly encountered in the *dhāraṇī* texts. Consequently, as interesting as such *vidhi* literature is, it must be reluctantly set aside. Indeed, I envision the process of *dhāraṇī* pragmatic taxonomy as a prelude to the examination of these more complex rituals.

### A. Precipitating assertives

In the imagined narrative at the beginning of *dhāraṇī* texts, there is sometimes an event said to precipitate the expression of the *dhāraṇī*. If such a narrative is present, the nature of the event is sometimes a problem condition, either personal or social. In the former instance, we find the assertion that monks encounter afflictions having either supernormal or natural causes that exceed the Saṃgha's ability to control. So Svāti in both the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* and the *Mahāmāyūrī* goes wandering into the religious life and becomes snake-bitten,

a common enough circumstance and emblematic of a larger sphere of afflictions regularly encountered in South Asia, whether from insects, snakes, disease, fever or from some affliction not falling into the canon of modern medicine.

*sa kāṣṭhaṃ pāṭayitum ārabdho yāvad anyatamasmāt pūtidārusuṣirān  
niṣkramyāśīviṣeṇa dakṣiṇe pādāṅguṣṭhe dr̥ṣṭaḥ | sa viṣeṇa saṃmūrchito  
bhūmau patito lālā vāhayati mukhaṃ ca vibhaṇḍayati akṣiṇī ca saṃpari-  
vartayati |*

*Bhaiṣajyavastu* 285.14–17<sup>11</sup>

He [Svāti] began to break off some wood, and just then from another putrid piece of hollow wood a poisonous snake emerged and bit him in the big toe of his right foot. He passed out from the venom, fell to the ground, spit up saliva, his face distorted, and his eyes rolling back in his head.

A less salubrious approach is taken in the case of Surasundarī, the wife of the *cakravartin* Utpalavaktra, in innumerable *kalpas* in the past, as found in the *Ratnaketuparivarta*. The karmic tale (*pūrvayoga*) is related by Śākyamuni in order to remove doubt about the relationship between *karma* and consequences (p. 33.2: *karmapratyaya eṣa draṣṭavyaḥ*). With her thousand ladies-in-waiting, she comes to offer to Jyotiḥsomyagandhābhāṣāśrī Tathāgata, and they ask him to explain the deathless path to beneficial states devoid of obscurity (p. 37.7: *vada vitimira-sugatipatham amṛtam*). In reply Jyotiḥsomyagandhābhāṣāśrī offers them the *ratnaketudhāraṇī* which will transform them from the female to the male state, implying that the author believed the feminine condition to be the emblem of their karmic defilements (*karmāvaraṇa*), existing as their problem condition.<sup>12</sup>

Assertives of supernormal causes, as understood by modern standards, would include the case of Ānanda's falling under the control of a witch in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*.<sup>13</sup> The categories of natural and supernormal, however, are modern, and they sometimes seem to be represented with similar statements in *dhāraṇī* documents, as in the case of Rāhula's affliction in the *Mahāśītavati-dhāraṇī*:

*śītavane mahāśmaśāne iṅghikāyatanapratyuddeṣe tatrāyusmān rāhulo  
'tīva viheṭhyate | devagrahair nāgragrahair yakṣagrahai rākṣagrahair*

11 *Bhaiṣajyavastu* p. 285.14–17; To. 1, vol. ga, fol. 48b6–7; I have been unable to locate the Svāti story in T.1448 translated by Yijing.

12 As the editor notes, the verses given in Kurumiya pp. 36–7 are corrupt, and I suspect that they may have been initially composed in Prakrit and then roughly rendered into Sanskrit. The Tibetan follows the received text to some degree (fol. 201b4–7) but Dharmakṣema's translation articulates the *timira* problem (normally understood as an ocular disease) differently: 云何令我離女身, "tell me how I can get rid of the female body?"

13 *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* pp. 1–7; this episode has been attached to the beginning of the *avadāna* but was a self-contained narrative called the *Mataṅgī-sūtra*, for which there are four translations into Chinese: T. 551, 552, 1300, 1301. It is interesting that the trope of women (here Māra's daughters) trying to use spells to capture four Arhats (Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Maitrāyaṇīputra and Subhūti) is explored in the *Ratnaketuparivarta*, pp. 62–71. Unlike the hapless Ānanda, none of the Arhats are so captivated.

*marutagrahair asuragrahair kinnaragrahair garuḍagrahair gandharva-  
grahair mahoragrahair manuṣyagrahair amanuṣyagrahair pretagra-  
hair bhūtagrahair piśācagrahair kumbhāṇḍagrahair dvīpibhiḥ kākair  
ulūkaiḥ kīṭaiḥ sarīsrpair anyaiś ca manuṣyāmanuṣyaiḥ satvaiḥ |*

*Mahāśītavatī* 1.4–10<sup>14</sup>

Rāhula was living in the Śītavana cemetery in the Inghikāyatana region and was tormented by possessive spirits among the gods, among the *nāgas*, among the *yakṣas*, among the *rākṣasas*, among the *maruts*, among the *asuras*, among the *kinnaras*, among the *garuḍas*, among the *gandharvas*, among the *mahoragas*, among the humans and non-humans, among the *pretas*, among the *bhūtas*, among the *piśācas*, among the *kumbhāṇḍas*, and also tormented by leopards, crows, owls, insects, serpents, and by other beings, human and non-human.

Identifiably supernormal events include the appearance of catastrophic portents at the beginning of the *Mahāsāhasraparmardanī*:

*tena khalu punaḥ samayena vaiśālyāṃ mahānagaryāṃ mahān bhūmicālo  
'bhūd abhṛakūṭaṃ ca prādurbhūtaṃ | mahatī cākālavātāsanir  
mahāmeghaś ca samutthito devo garjati guḍaguḍāyati vidyutaś ca  
niścāranti | daśadiśaś cākulībhūtās tamo 'ndhakāraṃ ca prādurbhūtaṃ  
| nakṣatrāṇi ca na bhāṣante | candrasūryau na prabhavato na tapato na  
virocato na ca prabhāsvarau bhavataḥ || Mahāsāhasraparmardanī  
1.20–25<sup>15</sup>*

Then, you should realize that at that time, in the great city of Vaiśālī there was a great earthquake, and a tower of cloud appeared. And a massive inauspicious wind and lightning occurred, with a great cloud the rain god stood up roaring, as if with rumbling in his belly, and thunderbolts scattered everywhere. In all the ten directions, everyone became perplexed, and a darkness akin to night appeared. But there were no constellations visible. Nor did the sun or moon shine, or provide heat, or illuminate or reveal their brilliance.<sup>16</sup>

Some of the more significant statements about similar portents have to do with fending off the work of Māra, and one episode turns the narrative around. At one time, towards the end of the *Ratnaketuparivarta*, Māra and all his minions appear before

14 *Mahāśītavatī*, p. 1.4–10; apparently there is an alternative title to the work, reflected in the Tibetan translation, *Mahādaṇḍa-dhāraṇī*, To. 606, fol. 37a3–6; T. 1392.21.908b13–16; *Mahāśītavanavidyārājñīsūtraśatasahasraṭīkā*, To. 2693, fols. 285b6–290b3. Note that this is not the same text as the *Mahāśītavana-sūtra*, To. 562.

15 *Mahāsāhasraparmardanī*, p. 1.20–25; read *bhāṣante* for *bhāṣante*; To. 558, fol. 63a6–b1 and we note that the translators read *mahāmeghaś ca devo garjati* as indicating rain: *sprin chen po las char pa chen po yang 'bab par gyur*; T. 999.19.578b21–25; *Mahāsāhasraparmardanīsūtraśatasahasraṭīkā* T. 2690, fols. 8b7–9b1.

16 The author has employed crisis language found elsewhere, as in the *Mahāvadāna* (p. 52) / *Mahāpadāna* (p. 12) at the descent of Vipāśyin into his mother's womb; for the relationship of the seven Buddhas to *dhāraṇīs*, see Davidson forthcoming.

the Buddha and pay homage.<sup>17</sup> The Bodhisattva Kautūhalika asks if Māra has had a change of heart, but the Buddha replies in the negative. Just then, an entity called Agastī-māra comes before the Buddha, prays that if any of Māra's minions should appear, may that agent of distress have no power. Agastī-māra then utters a *dhāraṇī*, which yields those results, based on the power of his previous aspiration.

This episode builds on a wider theme throughout the spell scriptures: while there are spirits, *yakṣas*, *nāgas*, *kumbhāṇḍas*, and so on, who have decided to protect the Dharma, there are many, many more demons, spirits and such like, who are not so beneficent, and this sets up the need for the expression of *mantras* to be used as apotropaic aids in warding off the less benign elements of the preternatural mob. So one of the oldest of the Buddhist apotropaic scriptures, the *Ātānāṭika-sūtra*, provides various *mantras* to ward off the effects of the several demons, with the problem of their potential trouble as the specific motivation.<sup>18</sup> Likewise, the *Ratnakūṭapariṣat* picks up the same theme to provide the motivation for the expression of the *vajrakhavasari*, a *mantra-dhāraṇī* that is both the essence of all demons and equally capable of overcoming a daunting list of denizens of the spirit world.<sup>19</sup> Other kinds of assertive narratives certainly occur, some miraculous. A number of *dhāraṇī* texts indeed specify no difficulty that the *dhāraṇī* is to solve, but instead begin with a supernatural occurrence (*prātihārya*) that suddenly appears, either through the action of Śākyamuni or from some other source. So the *Sarvajñatāṭkāra-dhāraṇī* begins by the Bodhisattva Ratnavairocana noting the sudden appearance of beams of light and asking its source (p. 7: *paramāścaryābhūt tatprāpto 'haṃ bhagavan kuta ime raśmaya āgatāḥ | kasyaiṣa viśaya prabhāva | ko 'tra hetupratyayo bhaviṣyati |*).

The precipitating assertives function as specific kinds of graphic linguistic acts in the text, acts that prompt individuals to take further action, especially the Buddha but also specific Bodhisattvas, the four Great Kings (*catur mahārāja*), and various other entities, as we will see. The supposition is that the various Buddhist entities will respond to such difficulties, amazing circumstances, or almost anything incomprehensible or out of the ordinary. To be sure, not all of the *dhāraṇī* texts provide such narratives – they simply relate the *mantra-dhāraṇī* and are done with the matter – but many of the *dhāraṇī* texts take great pains to establish a complex social world in which the expectation is that the Buddha, as one of great compassion (*mahākāruṇika*), will be certain that his followers are equipped with the tools necessary to provide for their needs.

In this regard, the assertives establish the need for *mantra-dhāraṇīs* within the context of an extremely conservative institution; Buddhists have voiced the assumption that innovations are acceptable to the degree that they are responses to difficulties or circumstances bereft of other forms of control. This idea goes back to the earliest level of the tradition, and the Buddha is said to have affirmed that he did not initiate a new rule without there being a cause.

17 *Ratnakūṭapariṣat* chapter XI, pp. 158–64; To. 138 fols. 265b2–271a7; T. 397 (9).13.150b27151c25.

18 *Ātānāṭikasūtra*, pp. 32–67 (original pagination), after which the *mantras* are expressed; see the discussion of this scripture in Skilling 1994–97, vol. 2, pp. 553–79.

19 *Ratnakūṭapariṣat* chapter XII, pp. 165–71; this chapter transparently references the earlier sūtra by featuring Āṭavaka Mahāyākṣasenāpati as the interlocutor.

*na tāva sārīputta satthā sāvakanāṃ sikkhāpadaṃ paññāpeti uddisati pātimokkhaṃ yāva na idh' ekacce āsavaṭṭhāniyā dhammā saṃghe pātubhavati.*

(*Vinaya Texts* III.9.28–30)<sup>20</sup>

It is not the case, Śāriputra, that the Teacher establishes one of the [Vinaya] rules of instruction or teach the *Prātimokṣa* to the disciples without some events appearing in the Saṃgha that operate as the basis for defilement.

Thus, like the Vinaya rules, the *dhāraṇīs* were therapeutic responses to new aggravated conditions; they appeared to fit well with the mythology of cosmic decline and the imminent loss of the Saddharma. The disjuncture, clear from historical perspective but perhaps not so evident at the time, was that most of the situations reported in *dhāraṇī* precipitating assertives have had a long narrative history in the Saṃgha without the necessity for the inauguration of new apotropaic procedures. Thus, the intrusion of *vidyās*, *mantras* and other kinds of spells into the Buddhist canon must have had some measure of social and historical impetus behind whatever mythological motive has been furnished by the statements of their inauguration.

## B. *Dhāraṇī* directives

Based on such precipitating assertives, we find most *dhāraṇī* or *mantra* texts providing directives to others either to speak or “take up” this spell, whether for the benefit of selected members or for the entire community. Three of the *dhāraṇī* sections – (b) the directive statement, (f) the warning assertive hybrids, and (i) the actual *mantra-dhāraṇī* – will have a high degree of variation, but most of them employ direct or indirect illocutionary directive speech acts and construct what Mauri and Sansò call “directive strategies”.

By *directive strategies* we mean constructions and markers that encode positive directive speech acts, i.e. situations in which the speaker orders someone to do something ... As directive speech acts are complex situations involving different components such as, e.g., the speaker’s wish, the appeal to the addressee, and the expectation of an imminent actualization of the order, the diachronic sources of directive markers include different strategies originally attested in indirect speech acts and primarily devoted, among other things, to the expression of futurity/imminence (e.g., future constructions), or to the expression of the speaker’s wish (e.g., optative constructions). (Mauri and Sansò 2011: 3489–90)

Accordingly, while it is clear that the optative and imperative verb forms seen in this *dhāraṇī* section implicate such directive strategies, other forms of pragmatic force may also be uncovered around the Buddha’s command. Moreover, since we are dealing with Indian speech acts, a cautious approach would require recognition that there are statements describing pragmatics in some sense within Indian writing overall

20 From the *Suttavibhaṅga*, *Vinaya Texts* III. 9. 28–30; similarly *Bhaddālisutta*, *Majjhimanikāya* I. 445. 6–8; T. 26. 1. 748a12–24; with a similar purport *Mūlasarvāstivādinayavibhaṅga*, vol. ca, fol. 28b4–7.

(Taber 1989, Patton 1995, Thompson 1998). For example, as Taber and Patton have shown, there is a similarity between the typologies of *mantra* statements found in both Smārta and Mīmāṃsā literature on the one hand and the categories described in pragmatics analysis on the other, even if they cannot be directly equated.

As is well known from a study of both Smārta and Mīmāṃsā literature, the primary verbal vehicle for orthodox Sanskrit directives is the optative form (*liñ*), which has the emic illocutionary force of the injunction (*codanā*). The seminal *Jaiminimīmāṃsā-sūtra* recognizes this force in its various applications of *codanā* and the commentators affirm that *codanā* identifies such optative verbs as “let him sacrifice” (*yajeta*). (*Jaiminimīmāṃsā-sūtra* 1.1.2, 2.1.5, 2.1.32 etc., reading with Śabara). Curiously, however, most Buddhist *dhāraṇī* directives and *mantra-dhāraṇīs* or *vidyās*, appear to prefer the imperative (*lot*) forms rather than the better recognized optative (*liñ*) of the Smārta and Mīmāṃsā authorities. In distinction to the Smārta third person indeterminate “one” or “anyone” (*yaḥ* or *yaḥ kaścit*), this directive is usually invoked with second person direct address (*tvam* or *yūyam*), whether expressed or implied.

*udgrhṇa tvam ānanda imāṃ śaḍakṣarīvidyāṃ dhāraya vācaya  
paryavāpnuhi*

*Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* 4.16–17

Take up this six-syllable *vidyā*, Ānanda, hold it, speak it, master it!

As in this directive, a result of Ānanda’s having been captured by a witch’s spell, it would appear that the specific directive form is in some measure dependent on the narrative associated with the text, and whether there is a precipitating event in which a single person is the principal in the narrative. If there is no narrative of a precipitating assertive (as in A. above), but the text simply begins by indicating the existence of a *mantra-dhāraṇī*, then we sometimes see the Buddha ordering a figure to speak the spell.

*atha [khalu bhagavān āryāvalo]kiteśvaraṃ bodhisattvaṃ mahāsatvam  
etad avocat || bhāṣa tvam śuddhasatva | yasyedanīm kālam manyase ||  
anumoditaṃ tathāgatena paścimena kāle paścime samaye  
bodhisatvayānikānāṃ pitṛkāryaṃ kariṣyati ||*

*Amoghapāśahrdaya-dhāraṇī* 319.

Then you should know that the Lord said this to the Bodhisattva Mahāsattva Ārya-Avalokiteśvara, “Speak, O pure being, if you think now the proper time for this! It is approved by the Tathāgata and [the *dhāraṇī*] will act as an ancestor for those mounted on the Bodhisattva vehicle in the later days, in the subsequent days of the Dharma.

If there is a precipitating assertive of a problem or miraculous condition, then the individual so afflicted may be directed to take up the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, as Rāhula is so directed when he is afflicted by all the demons:

*udgrhṇa tvam rāhula imāṃ mahāśītavātī nāma dhāraṇīm vidyāṃ |*

*Mahāśītavātī-dhāraṇī* 2.8

Take up, Rāhula, this spell of the *Mahāśītavātī-dhāraṇī*!



Sometimes the person so directed is not the principal, but instead a senior or representative person in the Saṃgha who may provide assistance to the individual afflicted. So the direct address in the *Mahāmāyūrī* is Ānanda, who is able to employ the spell to cure Svāti, who has become incapacitated.

*evam ukte bhagavān āyusmantam ānandam etad avocet | gaccha tvam ānanda tathāgatasya vacanenānaya mahāmāyūrī vidyārājñā svāter bhikṣo rakṣaṃ kuru | guptiṃ paritrāṇaṃ parigrahaṃ paripālanaṃ śāntiṃ svastyayanaṃ daṇḍaparihāraṃ śāstraparihāraṃ viśadūṣaṇaṃ viśanāśanaṃ sīmābandhaṃ dharaṇībandhaṃ ca kuru|*

*Mahāmāyūrī* 3.11–14

This said, the Lord replied thus to Ānanda. “Go, Ānanda, and protect Svāti the monk with this Great Peacock Spell, the Queen of Spells, [expressed] by the Tathāgata’s voice! [With it], perform [his] cover, guarding, assistance, shield, pacification, health, warding off punishment, warding off weapons, removing poison, destroying poison, securing a sacred perimeter, and securing the site!”

We also find this conversational imperative use retained in the later *dhāraṇīs*, such as the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī*.

*gacchānanda vaiśālīṃ gatvā indrakīle pādaṃ sthāpayitvā imāni mahāmantrānusāriṇī mantrapadāni bhāṣasva | imāś ca gāthāḥ |*

*Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* C.1.3

Go, Ānanda, and having reached Vaiśālī, place your foot on the threshold and recite these *mantra* words of the *Mahāmantrānusāriṇī* and these verses, too.

Likewise the *Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī*:

*udgrhṇīdhvaṃ yūyam kulaputrā imāṃ ṣaṇmukhī-nāma-dhāraṇīm sarvajagaddhitārtham |*

*Ṣaṇmukhī-dhāraṇī* 9.

You must take up, O sons of good family, this *Six-door Dhāraṇī* for the sake of the welfare of the entire world.

The imperative use is so widely distributed that it appears to be employed by the disciples to request that the Buddha teach in the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, (p. 94[3]: *ni[rvikalpapraveśaṃ dhāraṇīm deśatu bhagavan|]*) although this form is reconstructed by Matsuda from the Tibetan and must be treated with caution. Nonetheless, that usage is found elsewhere, as when the four Mahārājas revealed *mantras* in the *Mahāsāhasrapramardaṇī*. There, each of them employs the second-person imperative to direct the Buddha to listen to their *mantra* words (pp. 4–6: *tatra mantrapadāny asti lokanātha śṛṇohi me ||*). But the result is that they become frightened when the Buddha trumps their *mantras*, and so the blunt imperative appears to set the stage for the Buddha’s unfavourable reception. Elsewhere in the same text, *yakṣas* cry out to the Buddha for protection using the third-person imperative (p. 29.7: *trāyatu naḥ śramaṇo gautama*), yielding a strong appeal, slightly blunted

by the more polite third-person form. Thus, the imperative would seem to be generally associated with a direct address and a pragmatic force indicating the presumption of either hierarchical rank or an increased strength of appeal.

In other areas, we find a distinctive optative use with a third-person indefinite rather than a second-person definite subject, but this is a commonplace about benefits in Mahāyāna scriptures. This use is assertive in form but pragmatically is part of an implicit directive strategy, an extended application acknowledged by Searle (1979: 28–9). The form is generally found in sections describing how, whatever son or daughter of good family were to learn, speak, internalize, broadcast, write or have written even a verse of a scripture, he/she would soon reach final awakening.<sup>21</sup> In many instances, these verbs are all expressed with optatives, but other verb and participial forms are sometimes present as well. That optative use occasionally finds expression associated with *mantras* or *vidyās*, as in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna*,

*yaḥ kaścīd ānanda śaḍakṣaryā vidyayā paritrāṇaṃ svastyayanaṃ kuryāt  
sa yadi vadhārho bhavet danḍena mucyate* | *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* 5.5–7  
(To. fol. 234a5)

Whoever, Ānanda, would secure his protection or health with this six-syllable *vidyā*, if he is worthy of death, he will be released with a judgment.

However, in none of these instances have I located the optative as an explicit directive in the manner of the imperative so commonly used.

Interestingly, Pāṇini does not strongly differentiate between the optative and imperative, and in more than one *sūtra* he explicitly identifies their conventional semantics (*Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.3.161–2: *vidhinimantraṇāmantraṇādhīṣṭasampraśnārthaneṣu liṅ | loṭ ca* |; *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.3.173: *āśīṣi liṅloṭau* |). Jayāditya's examples of both *liṅ* and *loṭ* uses in the *Kāśikāvṛtti* commentary on these *sūtras* are virtually identical, further blurring the distinction. Nonetheless, as van de Walle has pointed out, the optative is more closely associated with polite discourse, while the imperative is employed in slightly more blunt and forceful directives. Between these two stand the gerundive which, Pāṇini indicates, overlaps the optative and imperative meanings, even if with a passive sense (*kr̥tya*: e.g., *Aṣṭādhyāyī* 3.3.163, 169–72). Van de Walle's (1993: 104–10) examination of the use of these modal forms affirms that, in Classical Sanskrit, they are somewhat more nuanced and context-specific than in the grammarians' discussion, for the latter are frequently based on Pāṇini.

The politeness value of the optative is recognized in a modal question posed by the crowd in the *Mahāśāhasrapramardanī* to the Buddha when faced with the sudden appearance of a massive cloud and deep darkness, flecked with

21 E.g., *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* pp. 226.3–7. *yaḥ khalv asmād dharmaparyāyād antaśa ekagāthām apī dhārayet kaḥ punarvādo ya imāṃ dharmaparyāyaṃ sakalasamāptam udgrhṇīyād dhārayed vā vācayed vā paryavāpnuyād vā prakāśayed vā likhed vā likhāpayed vā likhitvā cānusmaret | tatra ca pustake satkāraṃ kuryāt gurukāraṃ kuryāt mānanāṃ pūjanāṃ arcanāṃ apacāyanāṃ puṣpadhūpagandhamālyavilepanacūṛṇacivaracchatradhvajapatākāvādyāñjalīnamaskāraṃ prāṇamāḥ | pariniṣpannaḥ sa bhaiṣajyarāja kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā 'nuttarāyāṃ samyak-sambodhau veditavyaḥ |*

lightning, “Given that this is the case, how might we be liberated thus from this fear-inducing calamitous form?” (p. 2.14–15: *katham nāmaitat syād vāyam evaṃ rūpād upadravato bhayasthānāt parimucyema*). Here and elsewhere, the employment of the optative appears to follow the Smārta use that directly ties optional goals (*kāmyakarma*) with specific practices. However, it sometimes blends into the Buddhist use of the imperative, which implies an urgent directive of the moment, in a determinate time and space.

### C. *Dhāraṇī* commissives

The directive statements are sometimes buttressed with related or supportive affirmations that various mythic entities will confer these *dhāraṇīs* on the individuals identified in the various narratives, or they may support possessors of such *dhāraṇīs* with protection and defence, or practise the *dhāraṇīs* themselves.<sup>22</sup> Often, the figures protected are *dharmabhāṇakas*, Mahāyānist preachers who are doubtless the most important of the *dhāraṇī* patrons and users to be identified in the scriptures. In this aspect of the frame narrative, the *dharmabhāṇaka* or other Mahāyāna supporter will receive instruction in this or that *mantra-dhāraṇī* from one or another figure under certain conditions. In the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, for example, the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja vows to offer his *dhāraṇī* of protection to any person invested in that text.

*dāsyāmo vāyam bhagavaṃs teṣāṃ kulaputrāṇāṃ kuladuhitṛiṇāṃ vā  
yeṣāṃ ayaṃ saddharmapuṇḍarīko dharmaparyāyaḥ kāyagato vā syāt,  
pustakagato vā, rakṣāvarenaḡguptaye dhāraṇīmantrapadāni |*

*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* 396.2–3

We will confer, O Lord, the words of the following *dhāraṇī*-*mantra* – for the purpose of protection, shelter and security – and on any son or daughter of good family who may have taken this *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, this teaching of Dharma, and learned by heart or retained as a book.

A variant on this commissive is found in the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna* (§§36–7), where Vajrapāṇi informs the Buddha of his commitment on behalf of *dharmabhāṇakas* in the past and requests (a polite directive; see Archer 2010) that he be allowed to proclaim his *mantra-dhāraṇī* in the present, thereby juxtaposing commissives and directives.

Beyond the specifically Buddhist figures, the various worldly divinities are shown to pronounce commissives in support of those following the Mahāyāna:

*aham api bhadanta bhagavan sarasvatī mahādevī tasya dharmabhāṇakasya  
bhikṣor vākyavibhūṣanārthāya pratibhāṇaṃ upasaṃhariṣyāmi | dhāraṇīm  
cānupradāsyāmi | suniruktavacanabhāvaṃ saṃbhāvayiṣyāmi | mahāntaṃ  
ca dharmabhāṇakasya bhikṣor jñānāvabhāsaṃ kariṣyāmi | yāni kānicit  
padavyaṇjanāni itaḡ suvarṇabhāsottamāt sūtrendrarājāt paribhraṣṭāni bha-  
viṣyanti vismaritāni ca | tāny ahaṃ sarvāṇi tasya dhamabhāṇakasya bhikṣoḡ*

22 The vow to practise the *dhāraṇī* is found in *Mahāpratisarā* §30 (Hidas p. 226).

*suniruktapadavyaṅjanāny upasaṃhariṣyāmi | dhāraṇīm cānupradāsyāmi  
smṛtyasaṃpramoṣaṅgāya |*

*Suvarṇabhāsottamasūtra* 102.16–103.6

I too, noble Lord, the Great Goddess Sarasvatī will nurture inspiration, for the purpose of ornamenting the vocal presentation of the preaching monk, and confer on him the *dhāraṇī*. I will bring about his state of vocal facility in analysis. I will fashion in that preaching monk a great light of knowledge. And whatever words or letters will have been lost or forgotten from this Lord King of Sūtras, this *Suvarṇabhāsottama*, I will refresh all of those well-etymologized words and letters for that preaching monk, and I will confer on him the *dhāraṇī* for the sake of retention of his recollection.

As in the case of the Bodhisattvas in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, there is a very similar statement in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* (pp. 112.8–113.13) from Śrī Mahādevī that echoes many of the commissive vows taken by Sarasvatī. Such vows also appear intermittently in other scriptures, some of which, like the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna*, express them through the agency of several worldly divinities (§§ 69, 79, 85–6, etc.).

A distinctive position is occupied by the four Mahārājas in *dhāraṇī* literature, an extension of their much earlier function as protectors of the Buddhist dispensation. As they live in the four directions surrounding Mt. Sumeru, they would appear to be a Buddhist iteration of the larger Indian fixation on the gods of the directions (Wessels-Mevissen 2001). In this instance, the different Mahārājas may take the vow to confer a *dhāraṇī* of protection on the *dharmabhāṇaka* or other supporter in the future. As Virūḍhaka affirms:

*aham api bhagavan dhāraṇīpadāni bhāṣiṣye bahujanahitāya teṣāṃ ca  
tathārūpāṇāṃ dharmabhāṇakānāṃ evaṃrūpāṇāṃ sūtrāntadhāraṇakāṇāṃ  
rakṣāvaraṇaguptaye dhāraṇīmantrapadāni |*

*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* 399.7–9

I also, O Lord, will speak these *dhāraṇī* words, for the welfare of the many, the *dhāraṇī*-mantra words for the protection, shelter and security of the Dharma preachers as have been described, and for the bearers of the *sūtras* as have been mentioned.

These statements by kings of demons – as the four Mahārājas are – are immediately followed by a group commissive by eleven *rākṣasī* demonesses, from Lambā to Hārītī, who reveal their (? collective) *mantra* so that the *dharmabhāṇakas* will be protected from a lengthy menu of demons and nasty spirits, who apparently live to harass preachers (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* pp. 400–02). Nor is this the only place where the four Mahārājas commit to the protection of those invested in *dhāraṇī* scriptures, for we see much more lengthy statements in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama* and the *Mahāsāhasraparmardanī*, both of which feature the four great protector kings.

In pragmatic terms, the explication (explicit message) in almost all such commissives is not simply that the figures involved will broadly support anyone reciting the *dhāraṇī* scriptures, but that they each come equipped with their own powerful spells which they reveal in the course of the commissive statement. These *mantras* they promise to reveal or to employ again at a later

time, usually if the conditions of their support are fulfilled by the *dharmabhāṇakas* maintaining the *dhāraṇī* scripture. The implicature (implied message) of many such texts is that the great Bodhisattvas, the worldly gods and the local spirits are all conspirators in the spread of the Buddhist message.<sup>23</sup> Their explicit commitment comes with the implicit understanding that the preachers are more generally favoured in the hierarchy of Indian religious agents. Because they are the specific cause for the spread and maintenance of the Mahāyānist *dhāraṇī* tradition, the *dharmabhāṇakas* also spread the material and intellectual goods that *dhāraṇīs* confer, detailed extensively throughout the literature. The support of these men by the worldly gods is thus implicitly circular: because the *dharmabhāṇakas* spread the means for the further production of health and wealth, the gods, spirits and others may all be granted greater offerings by *dharmabhāṇaka* followers, further motivating their support.

#### D. *Dhāraṇī* precedent and predictive assertives

The previous assertives, directives and commissives have as their purpose the legitimization of the use of *mantra-dhāraṇīs*, with minimal and maximal implied goals, both of which extend from the directive statements. The minimal perlocutionary (affective reception) goal was that the current formulator/user of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* would be understood as acting in a legitimate manner within the Buddhist world and not acting in an illegitimate manner. In my previous study (Davidson 2009: 115–16) I cited a section in *Māhīśāsaka-vinaya* in which monks reciting “*Namo bhagavan!*” doubted whether this was legitimate. Thus the minimal implication is authority of expression and reassurance in which the directive statement (“take up, Ānanda”) could be relocated – as sometimes observed in the use of religious texts – out of context and understood to apply to readers or to listeners in real time, who would be expected to replace Ānanda or whomever as the object of the direct address with their imagined selves projected into the narrative. In distinction, the maximal perlocutionary goal would be persuasive: to increase that use and application of *mantra-dhāraṇīs* by spreading the message to new populations and across Indian language systems.

Notwithstanding these goals, there were clear inhibitions to this process. One is the problem of felicity conditions. Austin (1962: 26–47) indicated that speech acts misfire in the face of faulty felicity conditions. Most of the felicity conditions have to do with the speaker (in our case the author) and the participants: A. There must be a procedure and the speaker must be authorized, B. the participants must perform the act correctly and completely, and Γ. the participants are sincere in the performance and conduct themselves appropriately afterwards. Austin was not entirely clear on the difference between this latter felicity condition and the kinds of perlocutionary goals that would extend from a successful performance (Levinson 1983: 236–46), but for our purposes one of the constituents of sincerity would be that somehow the *mantra-dhāraṇīs* be designated the word of the/a Buddha.

23 On implicature, see Carston 2004, Horn 2004, Levinson 1983.

To this end, *dhāraṇī* or Mahāyāna *hṛdaya* framing statements may contain an assertion of the previous pronouncement or use of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* by Buddhas or Bodhisattvas in the past. This material may be placed in the introductory section associated with the directive illocutionary force, or alternatively it may be located in a concluding statement following the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, or be absent altogether. When present, the specification of the previous pronouncement of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* by one or more Buddhas in the past reiterates an important trope in Buddhist literature, similar in many regards to Indian literature in general. Because the overall trope is entirely mythological, it has occasionally been set aside in the past by scholars seeking “historical” substance. But whether it comes before or after the actual pronouncement of the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, the trope establishes not history but precedent, an important attribute in a society gravely concerned with legal technicalities.

In this process, the inauguration of a new behaviour is caught in the horns of more than one dilemma. The first is that new behaviours, even if grudgingly admitted as necessary, are understood to be disruptive. Again and again, the social fabric of Buddhist India is depicted as potentially fragile, easily torn and difficult to repair. While this is in part a legacy of caste, with its strategy of dividing society as a vehicle of social control, it is equally a consequence of the quickness with which Indians resort to accusations of flaws – real or imagined – in their co-religionists, and the minuteness of the inspection of potential infractions. Illustrations of this principle are strewn throughout the various *prātimokṣa* rules of the Vinaya traditions, both in its prohibitions against false accusation (e.g. *saṃghāvaśeṣadharmas* 8–10) and in the various discussions about whether an accusation under any of the rules is correct or not.

The second dilemma is equally compelling: the need for new rituals in accord with the changing religious horizon of India even while actual Indian historical record keeping is relatively meagre. Were Indians to rely on an archive of factual precedents maintained in other legal or ritual writing (Greek, Roman, Chinese), they might have selected analogies based on prior judgements to argue the validity of new(er) ritual systems, or at least tied their mythological statements to a hagiographical presentation of a historical person. To be sure, they did this in selected instances, as in the case of Nāgārjuna and the retrieval of the *Prajñāpāramitā* scriptures or the case of Aśaṅga and the retrieval of the *Yogācārabhūmi*. But human hagiographies became strongly de-emphasized in the Mahāyāna discourse during the first several centuries CE for reasons still obscure. Caught between the horns of the two dilemmas (lack of precedent and ritual need), mythology – being the default mode of much of Indian civilization – was placed in service to expound the utility of, and precedent for, a rite newly brought into the Buddhist fold.

As an example of the form, we find the *Karuṇāpūṇḍarīka* introducing its primary *dhāraṇī* in the following manner:

*udgrhṇa tvaṃ kulaputremam sarvajñātākāradhāraṇīmukhapraveśam  
sarvāṭṭais tathāgatair arhadbhīḥ samyaksaṃbuddhair yauvarājyābhiṣiktānām  
bodhisattvānām deśitam | ye caitarhi dāśasu dikṣu sarvalokadhātuṣu buddhā  
bhagavantas tiṣṭhanti dhriyante yāpayanti te 'pi buddho bhagavanto  
yauvarājyābhiṣiktānām bodhisattvānām deśayanti, ye 'pi te bhaviṣyanti*

*anāgate 'dhvani buddhā bhagavantas te 'pi yauvarāṇyābhiṣiktānām  
bodhisattvānām imāṃ sarvajñatākāradhāraṇīmukhapraveśaṃ deśayisyanti |*

*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka 21.5–16<sup>24</sup>*

You should, O son of good family, take up this entrance into the means of the *dhāraṇī* of omniscience, which was preached by all the Arhats, the Tathāgatas of the past to Bodhisattvas consecrated as princes [i.e. tenth *bhūmi* Bodhisattvas]. And [it] is nourished and upheld by those lord Buddhas residing at present in all the world systems in the ten directions; the lord Buddhas preach it to the Bodhisattvas consecrated as princes. And the lord Buddhas who will reside in the future, will preach to the Bodhisattvas consecrated as princes this means of the *dhāraṇī* of omniscience.

Here the precedent statement is part of the noun phrase following the directive, with its imperative verb. The nature of the *dhāraṇī* entrance is qualified by the lengthy assertive statement of its continually being part of the preaching of the Buddhas of the past, present and future. Elsewhere, we find phrases like “these *dhāraṇī* words, O Lord, have been pronounced and approved by the Tathāgatas, the Arhats, the Samyaksambuddhas, as many as are equal to the grains of sand in the river Ganges” (*imāṃ bhagavan dhāraṇīpadāni gaṅgānadīvālikāsamaṃs tathāgatair arhadbhiḥ samyaksambuddhair bhāṣitāni, anumoditāni ca*) come after the *mantra-dhāraṇī*s in the three instances in which it is invoked in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra* (pp. 397.2–3, 398.5–6, 400.1–2). Yet many of the lengthy *dhāraṇī* texts surviving, as well as their translations into Chinese or Tibetan, include such affirmations in an introductory section, prior to the *mantra-dhāraṇī* pronouncement.

In this, they continue an older form, that unites some of the tangents of the *Jātakas*, the *Avadānas*, or other spell literature (*hr̥daya*, *vidyā*), which employ many of the same precedent forms. As the early *Mataṅgī-sūtra* section of the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* affirms:

*iyam ānanda ṣaḍakṣarī vidyā ṣaḍbhiḥ samyaksambuddhair bhāṣitā  
caturbhiḥ ca mahārājaiḥ śakreṇa devānām indreṇa brahmaṇā ca  
sahāpatinā | mayā caitarhi śākyamuninā samyaksambuddhena bhāṣitā |*

*Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna 4.19–21*

This six-syllable spell was preached by six Samyaksambuddhas, and by the four Great Kings, and to the gods by Śakra-Indra and by Brahma-Sahāpati. And here it is being pronounced by me, Śākyamuni Samyaksambuddha.

Consequently, the affirmation that it has been preached by six previous Buddhas aligns the mythology of the spell with the cult of the seven Buddhas, which is evinced in archaeological sites and was a fertile ground for the production of

24 Yamada's printed text p. 21.8 has *sarvātītānāgataiḥ*, but this violates the sense and contrast between *deśitam* and *deśayisyanti*, and is not supported in the various translations: T.157.3.169b28–9: 過去諸多陀阿伽度阿羅呵三藐三佛陀, T.158.3.3.235c28: 一切過去如來應供正遍知; To. 112, mdo-sde cha, fol. 136a6–7: 'di ni 'das pa'i de bzhin gshes pa dgra bcom pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas thams cad kyis ....



*mantra-dhāraṇīs*.<sup>25</sup> The *Mataṅgī-sūtra* provides an early affirmation of the alliance of these figures and spell literature, but later each of the Buddhas (Vipaśyin, etc.) will be provided independent *mantra-dhāraṇīs*, both in collected texts and in autonomous works (Davidson forthcoming).

Some of these mythological frames provide their *mantra-dhāraṇīs* with an extensive pedigree, as in the case of the sixth-century *Ekādaśamukha*, in which Avalokiteśvara describes his previous practice (*pūrvayoga*) as the king of sorcerers who were great ṛṣis (*maharṣividyādharaṛāja*) at the time of the Buddha Śatapadmanayana-cūḍāpratihata-saṃgavelāma-raśmirāja, from whom he received this teaching, which has fourteen benefits.<sup>26</sup> At another time he was king of the *ṛṣividyādhara*s devoted to the Buddha Mandāravagandha-tathāgata, from whom Avalokiteśvara also received this teaching. That story is dwarfed by the later *Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī* narrative, which is extraordinarily lengthy and baroque, and occupies much of the text.

Pragmatically, there are two directions indicated by such affirmations: first they facilitate an accommodation to the common ground for presuppositions about the nature of the *mantra-dhāraṇīs*; and second, they place the *mantra-dhāraṇī* in an imagined narrative that allows the reciter to participate in the word of the Buddha (Roberts 2004: 199). By the first of these, I mean that the text asserts the validity of a specific *mantra-dhāraṇī*, but this presupposes that *mantra-dhāraṇīs* in general have been and may be understood to constitute the pronouncement of a/the/many/all Buddhas in the past. Thus, the particular element (*mantra-dhāraṇī*, *vidyā*, *hr̥daya*) will take its place among other *dhāraṇīs* that are understood to be categories of known revelations. Many problems attend this assumption, however, because none of these elements have an assured position in the architecture of the word of the Buddha.

As is well known, the categories of approved revelation include the various elements in the *Tripitaka*, generally understood as being classified into the twelve branches (*dvādaśāṅga*) of the literature that informs Mahāyāna scriptural discussions: discourses (*sūtra*), chanted elements (*geya*), prophecies (*vyākaraṇa*), verses (*gāthā*), ebullient expressions (*udāna*), responses (*nidāna*), exemplary narratives (*avadāna*), disciples' narratives (*itivr̥ttaka*), previous birth stories (*jātaka*), extensive scriptures (*vaipulya*), miraculous teachings (*adbhutadharma*) and incontrovertible exegesis (*upadeśa*).<sup>27</sup> However, neither *mantra-dhāraṇīs* nor other kinds of mantric expressions (*vidyā*, *mantra*, *hr̥daya*) find a convenient place in any of the categories, even those – as in the twelve-branch system's "extensive scripture" (*vaipulya*) – that are sometimes employed to justify the composition and inclusion of the Mahāyāna scriptures

25 E.g., found in Ajanta, Burgess 1881, painted inscription nos. 17, 30; Cohen (2006) inscriptions 58, 70, 90 and 91. Found in Barhut, Lüders 1963, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17. Found in Sāñchī, Marshall and Foucher 1940, vol. 1 no. 834. I have reviewed this material in detail in Davidson forthcoming.

26 Dutt incorrectly rendered this name; cf. *Gilgit Buddhist Manuscripts* vol. 2, fol. 2422.4. This name also appears in the Shatial inscriptions; von Hinüber 1989, nos. 91a, 91d; Fussman and König 1997, nos. 5:8, 170:5; I thank the anonymous reviewer for directing my attention to the correct name.

27 *Abhidharmasamuccaya* p. 78; *Abhidharmasamuccayabhāṣya* pp. 95–6. Lamotte (1958: 143–91) discusses the traditional scriptural assignments; also Davidson forthcoming.

overall. Moreover, the standards of scriptural authenticity that have been used since the time of the old *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* to admit new scriptures – they descend through the *sūtras*, are reflected in the vinaya and should not contradict reality (*sūtre* 'vataranti vinaye saṃdrśyante dharmatāñ ca na vilomayanti) – appear to exclude the admission of such forms of spells as an independent category.<sup>28</sup> These categories of scriptural classification and validation are our best understanding of the shared assumptions that would constitute the pragmatic common ground.

When an assertion, however, violates the common-ground suppositions, it will either require a minor adjustment (accommodation) in the presupposition (van Fintel 2008) or be rejected with a failure of perlocutionary effect. Given the controversial nature of *dhāraṇīs* at an early stage, it is probable that some in the community reacted with the “Hey wait a minute!” response, which Shanon and van Fintel indicate is a marker of the violation of suppositions that cannot be smoothly accommodated.<sup>29</sup> Verification of spells’ challenge to received understanding is visible in two aspects of the scriptures.<sup>30</sup> First, in scriptures that introduce spells, there is often – as in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* citation above – a specific identification that the *mantra-dhāraṇī* or *vidyā* was pronounced by some/a/the Buddha. This is pleonastic given that the entire scripture was to be so understood as *buddhavaṇṇa*, but most often *only* the spell elements are so specially marked in the text. Second, we find that the narrative of precedent is occasionally, as in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, given a secondary section to address doubt in the minds of the monks. This is an effective trope employed more broadly within that Vinaya to reinforce lessons of karma, generally in the case of extraordinary events that may be explained by past actions; but here it has been turned to the pronouncement of the *mantra* in order to aid its uptake.

*bhikṣavaḥ saṃśaya-jātāḥ sarvasaṃśayacchettārāṃ buddhaṃ bhagavantaṃ papracchuḥ | āścaryaṃ bhagavan yāvac ca bhagavatā mahāmāyūrī vidyā upakārā bahukārā ca | na bhikṣava etarhi yathā mamātīte 'py adhvaṇy akṣaṇapratipannasya vinipatitaśārīrasyāpi mahāmāyūrī vidyārājā upakārā bahukārā ca | tac chrūyatām |*

*Bhaiṣajyavastu* 287.11–15<sup>31</sup>

28 *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* §24. On these issues, see Lamotte 1949, Davidson 1990.

29 This kind of response is discussed in Shanon 1976 and van Fintel 2004; however, this is itself not uncontroversial and Atlas (2004) articulates a very different theoretical structure, based on neo-Gricean mechanisms of inference. Theoretical modelling aside, for our purposes the response to assertions contradicting assumptions would be expected to be similar.

30 In the *śāstras*, we also find objections to *mantra-dhāraṇīs* and their differing refutations; see *Tarkajvālā*, Eckel, pp. 179–82, 359–62; and Eltschinger 2008 for Dharmakīrti.

31 The Tibetan is a bit peculiar (To. 1, 'dul-ba, vol. ga, fol. 49b3): dge slong mams the tshom skyas nas the tshom thams cad gcod pa sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la zhus pa| bcom ldan 'das ji tsam du bcom ldan 'das kyis rma bya chen mo'i rigs sngags sman pa dang| gces spras bgyid pa ngo mtshar che lags so| dge slong dag da ltar 'ba' zhig tu ma yin te| ji ltar 'das pa'i dus na yang nga log par ltung ba'i lus mi khom par gyur pa na rig sngags kyi rgyal mo rma bya chen mos phan pa dang gces spras byas pa de nyon cig | The sDe-dge at least has sman-pa for the first instance of upakara and phan-pa for the second.

Then (after hearing the *vidyā* and its benefits and being directed to its recitation) all the monks became doubtful. In order to relieve themselves of doubt, they asked the Lord Buddha, “Magnificent, Lord, that the Great Peacock Spell should be beneficial and esteemed even by the Lord!” “O monks, not just here in this life, but also in a past existence was this Great Peacock Spell beneficial and esteemed, when I had fallen into an untimely existence, my body under threat. So listen to this narrative”.

If the affirmation of *mantra-dhāraṇī*s as *buddhavadāna* is found preceding the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, then it most often works in conjunction with the directive strategies to provide pragmatic force to them that they would not otherwise receive. If the affirmation comes after the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, then it tends to work with statements of the supernatural benefits of the *mantra-dhāraṇī*. Most interestingly, there are many instances in which this is not explicit, and we may presume the spells were communicated in less contentious environments.

### E. Benefit assertives

There are too many benefit statements to begin to do justice to the wealth of hyperbolic claims made by the *dhāraṇī* authors for their spells and the rituals surrounding them. The vast majority relate to relieving an individual from fear, anxiety, and the spectrum of vagaries of life in South Asia: lack of food, water, capricious political figures, disease, animals, insects and noxious spirits. Perhaps because of the predisposition of Mahāyāna scriptures to grandiosity, the benefit claims for spells far exceeded the problem that precipitated the pronouncement of the *dhāraṇī* or *vidyā* in the first place.

In the *Mahāmāyūrī*, for example (as also in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* material presented in section A above), the precipitating narrative was the imminent death, by snakebite, of the hapless monk Svāti. Once the Buddha pronounces the Great Peacock Spell, however, he goes on to articulate a broad swath of potential benefits that are not limited to medical emergencies.

*na cāśya rājabhayaṃ bhaviṣyati | na caurabhayaṃ bhaviṣyati |  
nāgnibhayaṃ bhaviṣyati | nodakena kālaṃ kariṣyati | na cāśya kāye viṣaṃ  
kramiṣyati | na śāstraṃ kramiṣyati | sukhaṃ ciraṃ jīviṣyati | sthāpayitvā  
ānanda pauraṇāṃ [karmavipākam] svapnāṃ sukhaṃ ca pratibudhiṣyati |  
svastho nirupadravo niruttrāso nihatapratyardhiko nihatapratyardhimitro  
nirupahataḥ sarvaviṣabhayavinirmuktaḥ sukhaṃ ciraṃ jīviṣyati |  
sthāpayitvā ānanda pauraṇāṃ karmavipākam|*

*Mahāmāyūrī* 58.20–59.6

[For one reciting this Great Peacock Spell], there will be no fear of kings’ [capricious punishment], no fear of thieves or of fire, or of death by drowning. Nor will poison afflict his body, nor weapons, and he will live long and prosper, only excepting the results of prior karma. And he will awake happy from dreams. He will be content, not experience catastrophe, lead a life lacking terror, his enemies destroyed, his opponents ruined, himself untouched, freed from fear of any poison, living long and prosperously, only excepting the results of prior karma.

Similarly the “six-syllable” spell given in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* was articulated in response to Ānanda’s being controlled by an outcast witch, although Ānanda was freed from the witch’s spell by a different *mantra*. No matter – the benefits of the second spell apparently far exceed those of the one the Buddha is depicted as actually employing.

*yaḥ kaścid ānanda śaḍakṣaryā vidyayā paritrāṇaṃ svastyayanam kuryāt  
sa yadi vadhārho bhavet daṇḍena mucyate | daṇḍārhaḥ prahāreṇa  
prahārārhaḥ paribhāṣaṇyā paribhāṣaṇārho romaharṣeṇa  
romaharṣaṇārhaḥ punar eva mucyate |*

*Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* 5.5–7

Whoever, O Ānanda, would create protection and prosperity [himself] with this six-syllable spell, even if he were to be worthy of death, he would be released with [merely] a [prison] sentence; one worthy of a sentence would get a beating; one worthy of a beating would get a scolding; one worthy of a scolding would be released with his hair happily horripilating; and one worthy of happy horripilation would actually be liberated.

In most such instances, we find an extensive discussion of all possible advantages. Even more astonishing, by the medieval period every sort of moral degradation that Buddhists had specified as utterly irredeemable and normally resulting in immediate retribution could now be eliminated from the individual by merely reciting the appropriate *mantra-dhāraṇī*, truly a sea-change in Buddhist ritual response.<sup>32</sup> Consequently, the *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* could affirm:

*bhāvayamānaś ca bodhisattvo mahāsattva imaṃ  
sarvajñatākāradhāraṇīmukhapraveśaṃ | yadi tasya bodhisattvasya  
pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇi kṛtāni syur upacitāni tāny apy asya parikṣayaṃ  
gacchanti |*

*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* 29–7

And for a bodhisattva mahāsattva cultivating this entrance in the means of the *dhāraṇī* of omniscience, even if that bodhisattva may have performed and accumulated the five sins of immediate retribution, for him even those are destroyed.

This did not sit well with some authors, to be sure, and the *Ratnaketuparivarta* reserves these five from the action of such remarkable practices,

*sthāpyānantaryakāriṇaṃ saddharmapratikṣepakaṃ vā āryāpavādakaṃ  
vā | yad anyat kāyavānmanahphalavipākadauṣṭhulyaṃ tat sarvaṃ pari-  
kṣayaṃ yāsyati |*

*Ratnaketuparivarta* p. 151.2–4

Setting aside only the sins of immediate retribution, the rejection of the true Dharma, or disparagement of the saints, any *other* defilements maturing from results of body speech and mind, are all destroyed.

32 On the five sins (*ānantaryakarma*), with their attendant problems of definition, application and ideology, see the good survey in Silk 2007.

But this difference of opinion was set forth in all kinds of places, including in the rendering of the above idea – stated several times throughout the *Ratnaketuparivata* – in its Chinese translations. Dharmakṣema’s earlier translation (414–426 CE) specifically maintained that these five sins are able to be destroyed (T.397(9).13.150b4: 即能令滅除五逆罪), whereas the same statement in Prabhāmitra’s later (627–30 CE) translation is in accord with the Gilgit text (T.402.13.575c6: 唯置作五逆者誹謗正法者謗無賢聖者) and the Tibetan: the sins of immediate retribution cannot be so remediated (To.138, fol. 262a5–6: *mtshams med pa byed pa dang | dam pa’i chos spong ba dang | ’phags pa la skur pa ’debs pa ma togs par gang gzhan lus dan ngag dang | yid kyi ’bras bu rnam par smin pa’i gnas ngan len de thams cad yongs su byang bar ’gyur ro |*)

Nonetheless, eventually the whole range of *mantra-dhāraṇī* benefits appears to have been accepted. As the list of potential transgressions became longer with increased ritualization in India – and the potential for ritual violations – so did the release from those sins that could be afforded by the maintenance, recitation and transmission of the *mantra-dhāraṇī*s, even with a single recitation.

*evaṃ mahardhiko ’yaṃ mama bhagavan [hr̥dayam] ekavelāṃ prakāśitvā catvāro mūlāpattayaḥ kṣa[yaṃ] gacchanti pañcānantaryāṇi karmāṇi nir-avayavaṃ tanvīkariṣyanti |*

*Ekādaśamukhahr̥daya-dhāraṇī* 38.5–7<sup>33</sup>

Thus having recited just once this my miraculous “essential” spell, all of the four fundamental transgressions are reduced to nothing, and even the five sins of immediate retribution are indivisibly diminished.

The *Ekādaśamukhahr̥daya-dhāraṇī* continues, by identifying a cornucopia of benefits, with virtually no item omitted from the list, but even earlier a specifically soteriological statement highlights the manner in which benefits became extended:

*yaḥ kaścit kulaputro vā kuladuhitā vā imāṃ ṣaṇmukhī-nāma-dhāraṇīm triṣṭvā rātres triṣṭvā divasya cānuvar(t)ayaṣyati sa sarva-karmāṇi kṣepayitvā kṣipram anuttarāṃ samyak-sambodhim abhisambhotsyate ||*

*Ṣaṇmukhīdhāraṇī* 10.

Whatever son or daughter of good family should thrice perform this *Ṣaṇmukhīdhāraṇī* at night, and during the day, and follow its instruction, having destroyed all the hindrance of karma, he will quickly awaken to highest supreme awakening.

Eventually, this cascade of potential benefits to reciting a *mantra-dhāraṇī*, with its uneasy relationship between worldly and religious priorities, will become codified in finite lists, such as the twenty rewards (*vimśatir anuśaṃsāḥ*) and

33 *Ekādaśamukhahr̥daya-dhāraṇī* p. 38.5–7; To. 694, fol. 140a7: bcom ldan ’das bdag gi rig sngags ’di’i gzi byin chen po’i mthu dang ldan pas | gang la la gzhi gis lan cig tsaṃ bzlas brjod bgyis pa na yang rtsa ba’i ltung ba bzhi dang | mtshams ma mchis pa lnga ma lus par yongs su ’byang bar ’gyur na |; T.1070.20.149c5–7.

the eight other elements obtained (*aparāṇ aṣṭau dharmmāṇ pratilapsyante*), found in the *Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya* (*Amoghapāśahṛdaya-dhāraṇī* 317–18).

## F. Warning assertive hybrids

Throughout the text of the *dhāraṇīs* we find various assertive warnings to those not compliant with the injunctions of the *dhāraṇī*, be they various demons or persons unimpressed by the *dhāraṇī*'s revelation. It would appear that, initially, the statements predicted that dire consequence would be automatic, as in the case of the *gāthā* at the conclusion of the *dhāraṇī* chapter in the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*:

*saptadhāsyā sphuṭeṇ mūrdhā arjakasyeva mañjarī |*  
*ya imaṁ mantra śrutvā vai atikramed dharmabhāṇakam || XXI.1||*  
*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* 402.4–5.

Whoever, having listened to this *mantra*, should still transgress against the *dharmabhāṇaka*, may his head split into seven parts, like the blossom cluster of the *arjaka*.

This is a relatively old trope in Indian literature, that an opponent in a contest of speech or transgressor against a religious system will be cursed with an exploding cranium, often because that person is incapable of answering a question. Its early phraseology (*mūrdhā te vipariṣyati*) goes back at least as far as the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (14.6.7, 14.6.8) and the older Upaniṣads (e.g. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* 3.7.1, 3.9.26; *Chāndogya* 1.8.6, 1.8.8), and the relationship between those and the specifically Buddhist form indicates that it was widely understood to be the potential consequence of an oral contest, eventually taken into the literary vocabulary at an early period (Witzel 1987: 408–9). *Dhāraṇī* texts generally asserted the consequence of transgression to be the head bursting into seven parts, like the pod or blossom of the *arjaka* (a species of basil, perhaps *ocimum grassimum* or *ocimum album* closely related to the *tulasi* and well known in medical literature). The plant sends out a cluster of pods at each joint that is quite dramatic and apparently served as the basis for the metaphor.

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* articulates the older form of the trope – as seen in much late Vedic and early Buddhist literature – that the consequences will be automatic without personal or divine intervention; thus the sentence is a modal assertive articulating a potential, for it does not personally invoke the action, if the Buddha or other figure had issued a specific threat. A stronger modal warning, seen in other *dhāraṇī* literature, makes the future head-splitting the result of the intervention of the full panoply of Buddhist spirits and protective beings, whose threat and weapons are invoked as warnings to those who consider such transgressions. This form echoes earlier warning narratives found in the *Dīghanikāya* and the *brāhmaṇas*, wherein a god or supernatural being (Soma, Indra, Vajrapāṇi, etc.) exercises judgemental functions in the case of criminal behaviour or ritual violation (Insler 1989–90).

The *Mahāmāyūrī*'s statement is a standard example of the type, not the shortest but by no means the longest expression. After a rather lengthy identification of all the beings and elements who should not transgress against the power of the *vidyā*, the text issues the appropriate warning:

*yaś cemām ānanda mahāmāyūrīvidyārājñīm atikramet tasya vajrapāṇiḥ  
saptadhā mūrdhānam arjakasyeva mañjarīm sphoṭayiṣyati | sarvabuddha-  
bodhisatva-pratyekabuddhaśrāvakānām tejasā naṣṭa āloko naṣṭas  
cetasah | āryapudgalās tena viśaṃvādītā bhavyeṣuḥ | catvāraś cainam  
mahārājānaḥ kṣuraparyantaiḥ śastrair mahāntam vyasanam āpādayeṣuḥ |  
śakraś cāsya devānām indras tridaśagaṇaparivṛto vajreṇa mūrdhānam  
abhibhindyāt | brahmatejasā cāsya vibhūtir bhasmam gacchet |*

*Mahāmāyūrī* 58.12–17<sup>34</sup>

And whoever, O Ānanda, might transgress against the Great Peacock Spell, the Queen of Spells, Vajrapāṇi will break his head into seven parts, like the blossom cluster of an *arjaka*. And with the majesty of all the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Pratyekabuddhas and Śrāvakas, his light and mind will be destroyed. That is what would be the case for one who has deceived the noble beings. And the four Great Kings would visit enormous calamity on him with their weapons, edges sharp as razors. And Śakra, the Indra of the gods, surrounded by his retinue of [gods of the] thirty[-three], would split his head with his vajra, and by the majesty of Brahma, his wealth will be turned into ashes.

Similar statements are found elsewhere, as in the *Mahāśītāvatī-dhāraṇī*, but it seems entirely directed to spirits possessing the individual:

*yo graho na muñcet saptadhāsyā sphuṭen mūrdhā arjakasyeva mañjarī |  
vajrapāṇiś cāsya mahāyakṣasenāpatir vajreṇādīptena prajvālitenā eka-  
jvālībhūtena tāvad vyāyached yāvan mūrdhānam sphoṭayet | catvāraś  
ca mahārājāno 'yomayena cakreṇa mūrdhānam sphoṭayeṣuḥ |  
kṣuradhārāprahāreṇa vināśyeyus tasmāc ca yakṣalokā(c) cyavanam bha-  
veyeṣuḥ | aḍakavatyām rājadhānyām na labhate vāsam |*

*Mahāśītāvatī-dhāraṇī* 5.8–15<sup>35</sup>

Which ever seizer would not release [the person], his head would split in seven like the blossom cluster of an *arjaka*. And Vajrapāṇi the Great General of Yakṣas will take his flaming, glowing vajra, and in a single flaming mass, would fight that possessing spirit, until his head exploded. And the four Great Kings would split his head with their iron cakras, so that they would destroy him as if with the stroke of a razor's edge, causing him to die and leave the realm of the *yakṣas*. Then he would never obtain residence in the capital city, Aḍakavatī.

Here the commentary ascribed to Karmavajra clarifies that Vaiśravaṇa gathers together in his residence of Aḍakavatī all the protective spirits – the thirty-two Mahābalas, the twenty-eight Senāpatīs, etc. – and that the spirits who had

34 *Mahāmāyūrī* p. 58.12–17; To. 559, fol. 115b2–4; see also p. 12.15–17, 14.10–11, 57.8–58.11. Here, we may note that the sDe-dge is corrupted beyond hope, and the sTog Palace ms. is much the more correct, no. 518, vol. 103, fol. 513b2–5; instead of the Sanskrit “tridaśa”, the translation reads trayastriṃśa – the heaven of the thirty-three, supported by the Tibetan sum bcu rtsa gsum pa'i tshogs kyis bskor.

35 *Mahāśītāvatī-dhāraṇī* To. 606, rgyud ba, fol. 38b5–7; gnod sbyin gyi 'jig rten de nas shi 'phos nas.



transgressed the *Mahāśītavati-dhāraṇī* would be barred from obtaining that heavenly position.<sup>36</sup>

While it is uncertain whether any of these threats are associated with the modern parasomnia medical condition of exploding head syndrome, it is clear that the admonition would have been taken seriously, since the head was considered the residence of semen in Indian medical physiology. Consequently, the threat was as much a spectre of emasculation as of death.<sup>37</sup> The introduction of the agency of the Buddhist personages, as well as the activity of the guardian spirits, meant that, from the Gupta period onwards, Buddhist literature was being influenced by a tide of increasingly important theism. In this more pronounced theistic world, the threat of divinely ordained retribution served the purpose of authenticating the proclamation of the *dhāraṇī* as the speech of the Buddha, not to be contested (or else).

Pragmatically, these statements are all assertive in form, but serve a directive function with declarative dimensions as well; consequently they are assertive hybrids acting as indirect directives and declaratives (Archer 2010). As modal warnings or veiled threats, they direct the listener/reader to understand that those in defiance of the pronouncement will receive their just desserts. Their declarative overtones extend from the employment of threats in dedications from the time of the “schism edict” of Aśoka (Tieken 2000). Threat statements became a commonplace in both sacred and secular uses, especially notable in dedicatory inscriptions where the threats of the incursion of sin – equal to the five great sins – are found in such places as Kuḍā cave (Burgess 1881: 11) and Sāñchī (Marshall and Foucher 1940 I: 341–2, nos. 396, 404), to mention but a few such locales. These have some declarative force because they are exercised at the completion of a specific building programme or property dedication and rely on the institutional position of the pronouncer to be effective, but are indirect in their pragmatic force (Clapp 2009). Nonetheless, they are still formally assertives, and Searle had recognized that hybrid assertives would of necessity be a special case to be considered (Searle 1979: 20, 30–57; Searle and Vanderveken 1985: 180–82). Even then, the liminal nature of threats in speech act theory continues to be a topic of discussion, as do the closely related forms of promises (Salgueiro 2010).

### G. Expressives in praise of the Buddha or Bodhisattvas

Calling attention to the ubiquitous expressives of praise, confession, amazement, fear and so on in the *dhāraṇī* texts might seem a bit pleonastic, but nonetheless they are a type of statement that occurs in virtually every one (see Appendix A). Such expressives are most often encountered in one or more of three places: in the initial homage (e.g. *namo buddhāya*), in the dialogue within the body of the text, often after the revelation of a *mantra-dhāraṇī*, and within the specific *mantra* statements of the *mantra-dhāraṇīs*. The former are sometimes questionable as to whether they were the consequence of later scribes or manuscript owners, but the second, the dialogical praises, are embedded in the *dhāraṇī* narrative exposition and appear less contrived. So, after the revelation of a *dhāraṇī* by another agent,

36 *Mahāśītanavidyārājñīsūtraśatasahasraṭīkā* fol. 331a4–6.

37 In modern stories of Rajasthan, the loss of the hero’s head does not deter his performance in battle until he completes his heroic task; see Harlan 2003.

frequently the Buddha approves with formalized expressions, “Well done, O Bhaiṣajyarāja, that you have, for the benefit of beings, expressed the words of this *dhāraṇī*, performed their safety and protection, based on compassion for beings”. (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* p. 397: *sādhū sādhū bhaiṣajyarāja sattvānāṃ arthaḥ kṛto dhāraṇīpadāni bhāṣitāni sattvānāṃ anukampām upādāya rakṣāvaraṇaguptiḥ kṛtā*).

These expressives often blend with E, the assertives of benefits, and occasionally C, commissive statements, so we find Brahmā’s expression that:

*subhāṣitā iyaṃ vidyā mahāsāhasraparmardanī |*  
*vidyām ahaṃ pravakṣāmi dāraṇānāṃ hitaṃkarī |*  
*buddhavīraṃ namasyāmi dharmarājaṃ śubhākaraṃ||*  
*yena prathamato vidyā jaṃbudvīpe prakāṣitā |*

*Mahāsāhasraparmardanī* 35.3–6

This is well-expressed, this *Mahāsāhasraparmardanī*. I will proclaim this spell, which benefits boys. Homage to the Buddha-Hero, the King of Dharma, the source of benefit, by whom this spell was proclaimed to this Jaṃbudvīpa

The weaving of all these together should not surprise us, and Searle has indicated that various speech act environments may employ ritual statements in multiple ways (Searle 1979: 28–9). Here the statement also echoes the old expressive that, whatever the Buddha says, it is well-spoken (*subhāṣita*). Expressives of homage are also frequently encoded into *mantras*, as will be shown below (I.i).

## H. Narrative perlocutionary expressive or assertive statements

Even with evidence that *dhāraṇīs*’ status was not assured at the outset, some texts emulate the larger Buddhist scriptural strategy of articulating a narrative perlocutionary expressive – a first-person expression of the psychological or behavioural reception of the speech act. In this, the reader is not involved, but rather the narrative receiver, sometimes a person or group who was not initially favourable to the use of *dhāraṇīs* or spells but was later won over to the new pronouncement. Such figures act as paradigms for the reader or hearer to understand how to behave in light of the text’s message. This had also been a very old trope in Buddhist texts. Often in the Pali tradition, and at least once in the Āgamas, we find a revelation moment articulated, as in the case of the Aggīka Bhāradvāja in the *Vasalasutta* section of the *Suttanipāta*.

*abhikkantaṃ bho gotama abhikkantaṃ bho gotama seyyathāpi bho gotama*  
*nikkujjitaṃ vā ukkujjeyya paṭicchannaṃ vā vivareyya mūlhasa vā maggaṃ*  
*ācikkheyya andhakāre vā telapajjotaṃ dhāreyya cakkhumanto rūpāni*  
*dakkhīntīti evaṃ evaṃ bhotā gotamena anekapariyāyena dhammo pakāṣito* <sup>38</sup>  
 Hey, Gotama – excellent! Yeh, Gotama – excellent! I mean, Gotama, it’s like  
 something that’s inverted has been rectified, or something hidden has been  
 revealed. Or it’s like you’ve shown the road to someone lost, or brought an  
 oil lamp into a dark place, and those with vision can now see things that

38 *Suttanipāta*, vol. 1, p. 25.18–23; see also *Samyuktāgama* T. 99.2.77a20–29.

were there all along. Just like that, by you Gotama, sir, in many ways you illuminate Dhamma!

Such perlocutionary narrative expressives tend to be the stock in trade of missionary religions, and the Buddhists employed them to affirm the value of the message and to lead the reader into a receptive state of mind. Mahāyāna *sūtras*, engaging a somewhat different vocabulary from that found in the Pali texts, were nonetheless intent on much the same goal; it is specifically the Mahāyāna version that most *dhāraṇīs* employed. Here the statement is that of a third-person assertive rather than a first-person expressive.

*idam avocad bhagavān | āttamanā āyusmān ānanda āyusmāṃś ca svātīr bhikṣur ye ca tasyāṃ parśadi sannipatitāḥ sanniṣaṇṇāḥ devanāgayakṣagandharvāsuraḡarudakinnara-mahoraga-yakṣārākṣasamanuṣyāmanuṣyās te ca sarve bhagavato bhāṣitam abhyanandann iti |*  
*Mahāmāyūrī* 61.1–4

Thus the Lord explained. Then they were delighted, the Venerable Ānanda, and the Venerable monk Svāti, and all those collected and seated in that assembly – those gods, *nāgas*, *yakṣas*, *gandharvas*, *asuras*, *garuḡas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, *yakṣās* [*sic*], *rākṣasas*, human and non-human – all of them were pleased to hear the Lord’s statement.

Similar reports of delight and enjoyment are found in formulaic perlocutionary sentences in *dhāraṇī* literature, and they are simply replicating the overall structure and vocabulary of their Mahāyāna background.<sup>39</sup>

Conversely, for those not given to immediate expressions of joy with the pronouncement of the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, the *dhāraṇī* scriptures sometimes describe threatening or terrifying moments in the audience. As depicted in the *Mekhalā-dhāraṇī*:

*ye kecī pāpakarmāṇaḡ oḡāhāra | prthivyā prativasaṃti | sa[rve te] mekhalā vidyāṃ śrutvā saṃtrastā diśividiśi vrajaṃti | Mekhalā-dhāraṇī* 156–7<sup>40</sup>

39 *Mahāśītavatī-dhāraṇī* p. 6.7–9: *idam avocat bhagavān āttamanā āyusmān rāhulaḡ sā ca sarvāvātī parśat sadevamānuṣāsuraḡandharvaś ca loko bhagavataḡ samyaksaṃbuddhabhāṣitam abhyanandann |* *Ṣaṇmukhīdhāraṇī* p. 10: *idam avocad bhagavān āttamanās te ca bodhisa[t]tvā mahāsa[t]tvā bhagavato bhāṣitam abhyanandanann iti ||*. Similar statements appear obligatory at the conclusion of Mahāyāna *sūtras*; *Suvarṇabhāṣottamasūtra* pp. 250–51; *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* p. 260.5–7; *Karuṇāpuṇḡarika-sūtra* p. 420.4–6; *Saddharmapuṇḡarika* 487.1–5, etc.

40 *Mekhalā-dhāraṇī* pp. 156 (last line)–7; the section in [brackets] is reconstructed from the Tibetan, 106b7–107a1: *gang su dag sdig pa’i las dang ldan pa gzi byin ‘phrog pas la gnas pa de dag thams cad me kha la’i rig sngags thos nas shin tu skrag ste phyogs dang phyogs mtshams su ‘gro’i |*; similarly T.1377.21.899b9–11: 大地所有大惡難調攝人威光者極惡業者。若方若隅乃至一切處。聞是寶帶大明時皆大驚怖。We note that the rendering of *oḡāhāra* is explained in both instances as stealing beings’ glory, taking *ojas* as something like brilliance rather than vitality. We have a similar statement in *Ratnaketuḡparivarta* p. 171.12–14: *samanantarabhāṣitā cātavakena mahāyākṣasenāpatinā imāni mantrapadāny aṡa tāvad eva sarve devanāgayakṣakaṡapūtanāḡ kṣubdhās trastā iḡa sakale buddhakṣetre kṣitigaganasthāḡ pracakampire |*.

And all those sinful beings feasting on [beings'] vitality and living in the ground, if they hear this *Mekhalā-vidyā*, then they become terrified and flee in all the various directions.

The theme of terror of the pronouncement occurs elsewhere, sometimes with a twist. In the *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*, for example, the four kings express their *mantras* with great hubris. In reply, the Buddha utters his own *mantra* that terrifies the guardians of the directions, who all bow towards him (*buddhasya vacanam śrutvā lokapālāś caturdiśam | uttrastā bhītasamvighnā asthāsuḥ prāñjalīkṛtāḥ || Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*, p. 6.29–30).

However, Buddhist scriptures have been sensitive to portray their audience reception as overwhelmingly positive. The *mantra-dhāraṇī* brings joy and happiness to their lives, as it provides so many benefits, and the successful healing, or demon quelling or positive conclusion to whatever event precipitated the pronouncement of the *dhāraṇī* in the first place is treated as entirely benign. Yet those receiving the *dhāraṇī* pronouncement with a negative attitude – as many must have done – are cast in a similarly negative light: they may be powerful but ultimately it is their fear of the power of the Buddha or anxiety at the loss of control that is driving their urge to escape from the radius of the *dhāraṇī*'s pronunciation.

All told, we might acknowledge that *dhāraṇī* perlocutionary expressives and assertives are deceptively sophisticated. They operate as a narrative of closure to the teaching of the spell, so that it will be understood as not threatening to those who will listen. Indian Buddhist audiences within such narratives are led from consternation and confusion to affirmation of their understanding of the Buddha (now shifted somewhat) and joy in his compassion. The scriptural statements represent two possible understandings of the text – positive and negative – and in doing so they control the message of its possible reception. Indian audiences outside of the text, hearing a *dhāraṇī* narrative for the first time, will be instructed by example to follow the correct reception of the spell, for that is the pattern already established by the principal characters inscribed in the narrative. The textual authors adroitly mimic prior Buddhist perlocutionary formulae, which becomes every bit as important as the opening phrase, “Thus have I heard”, by its simple ubiquity.

### **I. *Mantra-dhāraṇīs* as directives with complex coding**

The *mantras* that almost invariably constituted the heart of the *dhāraṇī* texts are so complex and so promiscuously produced with such variation in length and components that it is difficult to envision a sufficient or all-encompassing catalogue of traits. A beginning might be attempted, however, and in my estimation there are four fundamental parts to many of the *mantra-dhāraṇīs*: i) natural language sentences, or phrases, including both noun and verb phrases; ii) discourse markers representing the grammaticalization of various previous Indic language parts of speech; iii) the non-referential and non-lexical vocal elements that operate both as echoes of other parts of speech (especially imperative verbal endings) and as speech elements that appear designed to interrupt linguistic construction; and iv) assertives of *mantras* as statements of truth.

### I.i. Mantra-Dhāraṇīs as natural language

Part of the reason for the relatively quick dismissal of the assessment that *mantras* are categorically meaningless (based on a truth-conditional model) is that some *mantras* or *vidyās*, particularly the early ones, are entirely natural language expressions, but this is not very well recognized. An example from the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* may be offered. This is the *vidyā* the Buddha is depicted as reciting to counteract the spell of the witch capturing Ānanda:

*sthitir acyutiḥ sunītiḥ | svasti sarvaprāṇibhyaḥ |  
saraḥ prasannaṃ nirdoṣaṃ praśāntaṃ sarvato 'bhayaṃ |  
ītaḥ yatra śāmyanti bhayāni calitāni ca |  
tad vai devā namasyanti sarvasiddhāś ca yoginaḥ |  
etena satyavākyaena svasty ānandāya bhikṣave ||*

Stability, deathlessness, good conduct, benefit for all beings –  
Water clear, faultless, peaceful and entirely fearless –  
Where plagues, fears and mental disturbances are pacified –  
[To] that indeed, all gods, *siddhas* and *yogins* pay homage.  
With this statement of truth, [let there be] benefit to Ānanda, the monk.  
*Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* 3.17–4.4

Despite the irregular grammar, the meaning is clear and in keeping with the early Buddhist idea that *nirvāṇa* may be an object of appeal. And we are told that Ānanda was immediately released from the witch's spell and returned to his own monastery without a problem.

When *mantras* are not entirely composed of natural language expressions, then they still may have a component, whether a noun or verb phrase. In Buddhist *mantras*, the noun phrase is sometimes one of homage to one or more Buddhas. This form is not initially as well attested as other *mantra* forms, but given that we see a similar homage used as a *mantra* in the early-fifth-century translation of the *Māhīśāsakavinaya*, as noted before, it is clear that such forms were found as early as the fourth century. Certainly we see in the *Mahāmāyūrī* such lines as “Rain, O god, in all the ten directions! Homage to the Buddhas! Svāhā (*Mahāmāyūrī* 7.19, 8.12: *varṣatu devaḥ samantena daśasu diśāsu | namo budhānāṃ svāhā* |). Such homages to a/the Buddha(s) begin almost every *dhāraṇī* in the collections of Buddhas' names in the c. fifth-century Central Asian manuscripts edited by Hoernle and von Hinüber, giving the name of one or another of the Buddhas found in various lists: *namo akṣobhyā[ya] tathāgatāya*, *namo amitābhāya tathāgatāya*, etc.<sup>41</sup> By the sixth century it is common to find such statements as the *Megha-sūtra*'s “homage to all Buddhas: bring to accomplishment the *mantra*'s words, Svāhā!” (*Megha-sūtra*, p. 302: *namaḥ sarvabuddhebhyaḥ sidhyantu mantrapadāni svāhā*) as definitely part of a *dhāraṇī*. As we see the movement into full tantric

41 Hoernle 1897: 231–2; Von Hinüber 1987/88: 233; 1991: 166–70. Von Hinüber (1987/88: 231–2) has identified one of the texts as the *Buddhanāmasahasrapaṇcaśatacatutripaṇcaśūtra*, To. 262; T.443.

literature these noun phrases, most often at the beginning of the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, became increasingly important.

Other than noun phrases, the use of individual nouns or declined adjectives is distributed throughout *dhāraṇī* literature. One needs only to examine words like *jvāle mahājvāle* or *agaṇe gaṇe gauri gandhāri caṇḍāli* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* p. 398.4, 399.9) to understand that at least some of these are feminine singular in the vocative case, and doubtless reflect the direct address to a goddess or other feminine spirit at the village or popular level, taken into Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇīs*. Other forms may include specific Buddhist terms, not integrated into a sentence and sometimes appearing as if on a list that may have non-Buddhist nouns as well: *dāntabhūmiḥ damathabhūmiḥ smṛtibhūmiḥ prajñābhūmir vaiśāradyaabhūmiḥ pratisaṃvidbhūmi anutkṣepabhūmiḥ* (*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* 43.13–5).

The verb phrases are evinced frequently, early and late. As Wayman (1985) noted in the case of the tantras, such verbs are often second-person imperatives and are sometimes repeated. Initially, the roots  $\sqrt{bhū}$ ,  $\sqrt{sat}$ , and  $\sqrt{sidh}$  are seen with some frequency: *bhavatu*, *astu*, *sidhyantu*. These are often connected with nouns, but not always. We find such sensible statements as: “May there be benefit for four-footed animals!” (*Mahāmāyūrī* p. 39.2: *svasti bhavatu catuspadānām*), but then forms like *cekaratke akṣayam astu* (May it be indestructible!) *ninile mamale* appear with the verb between non-lexical vocalizations (*Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* p. 24.7–8). Much of the sixth–seventh-century *Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā dhāraṇī* is entirely comprehensible as a natural language expression, containing, as it does, such statements as “Asperse me, All you Tathāgatas, with the consecrations of the nectar of speech of the Best of Sugatas, with *mantra* words of the Great Seal!” (*Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā dhāraṇī*, Yuyama, p. 171; Müller and Nanjio, p. 35: *abhiṣiṅcantu mām sarvatathāgatāḥ sugatavaravacanāmṛtābhiṣekair mahāmudrāmantrapadaiḥ*). Other vocalizations may be intended to represent second-person imperative verbs, but it is not quite clear, as in the use of *hara hara*, *dhara dhara*, *bhara bhara* (e.g. *Mahāmāyūrī* pp. 37, 46; *Ratnaketu-parivarta* p. 134; *Mahāpratisarā* pp. 115–21).

### *I.ii. Mantra-dhāraṇī discourse markers*

One of the more interesting phenomena evident in *mantra-dhāraṇīs* is the development of discourse markers as significant elements – *om*, *tadyathā*, and *svāhā* being the most important in *dhāraṇī* use, sometimes accompanied by a lesser and often later employment of *hūm* and *phaṭ*. I propose to examine the first two of these in detail because of their prominence, since one of them (*tadyathā*) is found in so many *mantra-dhāraṇīs*, and they will help establish some of the regular patterns of use in the case of syllables with reduced or absent semantic value.

The *mantras* found embedded in *dhāraṇī* texts reiterate and replicate many of the functions that previously unfolded in words found in the earlier *mantras* in the Brāhmaṇas, the Upaniṣads, and generally the Smārta tradition overall, especially as it was worked out in the *Śrautasūtras*, the *Gr̥hyasūtras* and related texts. The syllable *om* in particular exhibits many of the pragmatic principles that we see employed later in Buddhist *dhāraṇī* texts, going from a natural-language expression to discourse marker through a series of transformations. However, as in the case of *mantras* generally, the analysis of this has been inhibited by

theological considerations. Overwhelmingly, Indological discussions have privileged *om* as a noun, and its division into *a-u-m* in *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 5.32–4 and elsewhere (*Jaiminīya-upaniṣad-brāhmaṇa* 1.1.5; *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* II.76; Wilke and Moebus 2011: 435–8). This theological articulation of the word as a subject or predicate term in a sentence has occluded its natural language origin, and indeed it is difficult to find *om* in a sentence as a natural lexeme where the wealth of theological values attributed it can be understood as operative in any cogent sense. It can function either as the subject or predicate of a theological proposition under such circumstances, but cannot still be employed in this environment as an interjection, rejoinder, a discourse marker or any of the other natural language functions it has exhibited.

Earlier scholars have offered several analyses of the syllable, with the primary semantic assessments being either an affirmative interjection (e.g. Weber 1853: 187–8; Keith 1908–26: 490) or a conjunction equivalent to *atha*, “then” (Bloomfield 1890). Parpola (1981) reviewed the evidence and argued correctly that it was equivalent to an interjection of affirmation, closely related to the affirmative interjection *ām*. He argued that *ām/om* derived from a Dravidian interjection of assent, *ām*, which is said to be itself a modification of *ākum*. Furthermore, Parpola has argued that the particle *ām* experienced a nasalized vowel, yielding *ōm*, which eventually produced *om*. According to this etymology, we recover *ākum* > *ām* > *om* > *om*. The driving mechanism for this language change is not treated by Parpola, who does not address the question by employing linguistic tools developed to understand language or phonetic change in general. In part this was because of the conservative nature of Indology and in part because linguistics had yet to gain an appreciation of interjections, which remain relatively neglected particles whether in English or any other language (Ameka 1992a).

Whatever its etymology may prove to be, *om* certainly has a conventionalized semantic field of affirmation or assent, and its early uses are consistently glossed in that manner, even if they occur in formalized ritual expressives in the *Yajur-veda* (*Vājasaneyi-saṃhitā* 2.13: *om pratiṣṭha* “yes, advance!”; *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* 4.1.11: *om śrāvaya* “yes, announce!”; 4.9.2: *om indra-vantaḥ pracarata*, “yes, you with Indra, advance!”; 4.9.21: *om vā om vā om vā e ai svarṇajyotiḥ*, “yes, indeed! yes, indeed! yes, indeed! e, ai, yes golden light”). However, two environments remain unexplored: the variation of employment of *om* in dialogical examples with the implicatures of meaning that are not quite so conventionalized, and the historical process of change that the syllable has undergone. In going from its early position as an interjection, *om* has gone through gradient grammaticalization and has become a pragmatic marker, indicating specific kinds of ritual speech acts.<sup>42</sup> These are relatively regular linguistic developments.

42 Sean Gleason reminds me that “grammaticalization” is not uncontested as a theoretical construct about the convergence of language change processes, and the strong claims about its status have been challenged; important contributions include Janda (2001), Joseph (2001) and Newmeyer (2001), published in an issue of *Language Sciences* dedicated to the problem. I thank Sean Gleason for drawing my attention to these contributions and providing me with the articles.



In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* 3.9.1 there is a conversation recorded that reveals the pragmatics of *om* in the particular. This well-known section is theologically important for its discussions of the number of divinities. But here, *om* is not part of the theology; rather it is part of the exchange between Vidagdha Śākalya and Yājñavalkya, the latter having proposed that he was the most learned of brahmans at a gathering hosted by King Janaka of Videha.

*atha hainam vidagdhaḥ śākalyaḥ prapraccha kati devā yājñavalkyeti sa haitayaiva nividā pratipede yāvanto vaiśvadevasya nividya ucyante trayaś ca trī ca śatā trayaś ca trī ca sahasrety om iti hovāca kaṭy eva devā yājñavalkyeti*

Now Vidagdha Śākalya expressed this question,

“Yājñavalkya, how many gods are there?”

Yājñavalkya replied through specifying the invocation,

“As many as are expressed in the invocation to the All Gods: ‘Three and three hundred, three and three thousand!’”

[Dissatisfied, Vidagdha Śākalya] continued,

“Yes, no doubt, [*om iti hovāca*] but exactly how many gods are there, Yājñavalkya?”

Vidagdha continues interrogating Yājñavalkya on the number of gods, forcing Yājñavalkya into different replies, “thirty-three” then “six”, then “three”, then “two”, until finally Yājñavalkya comes down to the conclusion that there is only one god. In each of his many ripostes, Vidagdha has said “yes, no doubt (*om*)” in a similar manner, but remains unsatisfied and pursues his questioning:

“Yes, no doubt, but then exactly which are these ‘Three and three hundred, three and three thousand’ [mentioned in the Vaiśvadeva invocation]?”

*om iti hovāca katame te trayaś ca trī ca śatā trayaś ca trī ca sahasreti* (BAU 3.9.1 also related in *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* 14.6.9.1–2)

Here the particle *om* is very far from the theological properties found specified elsewhere, where it is *akṣara* “indestructible” or *praṇava* “the vibrator” (van Buitenen 1959). Instead, this is a natural language exchange, immediately recognizable. Vidagdha is one of those scholars who will insistently ask questions, and Yājñavalkya is a paṇḍita who believes himself to have all the answers. As is usual in these circumstances, the question-answer form invokes issues of politeness and “face” (Nevala 2010), but here Vidagdha is unrelenting in his pursuit and is playing the role of the argumentative Indian: every answer Yājñavalkya gives is riposted with a “yes but” response, for Vidagdha wishes to claim the prize of most learned for himself.

*Om* in this linguistic environment appears to be a developed “primary interjection” in the typology of White and others (White 1963; Ameka 1992a; Gehweiler 2010). Ameka defines them as “little words or non-words which in terms of their distribution can constitute an utterance by themselves and do not normally enter into construction with other word classes, for example, *Ouch*, *Wow*, *Gee*, *Oho*, *Oops*, etc. They could be used as co-utterances with other units ... In this usage, they are related to connectors which always

occur with another utterance – hence their discourse marking functions” (Ameka 1992a: 105, also Ameka 1992b; White 1963: 356; Wilkins 1992). Primary interjections are certainly well known in Sanskrit: *ām̐*, *dhik*, *aho*, *ahā*, *hā*, etc. Moreover, such expressions may be developed to carry other kinds of pragmatic force, and it appears that *om̐* here is operating as a specific kind of primary interjection, a phatic interjection. “Phatic interjections are used in the establishment and maintenance of communication contact” (Ameka 1992a: 114) and are therefore different from other interjections (e.g. expressive, cognitive, conative, etc.). In this regard, phatic interjections may serve as continuity markers, allowing agreement by way of continuing the conversation. Such interjections are very common, and *om̐* here operates in a manner roughly similar to how the modern Hindi interjections of *hāñ*, *ji*, *ṭik* and the well-known Indian head-wave gesture all function to show concert with the speaker, even if substantial agreement is not really indicated. And in the above conversation, complete agreement is certainly not implied. The implicature (non-conventional pragmatic meaning) of *om̐* in this conversation is something of the order of, “I understand what is being said, and I can see what that means, but I still am not completely satisfied and do not accept your statements at face value”.<sup>43</sup> That is also a reason to revisit Bloomfield’s (1890) argument, that *om̐* could be glossed by another primary phatic interjection, *atha* “and now”, since the two share certain conversational continuing functions.

Consequently, the phatic interjection in this application has a politeness component, one that allows Vidagdha to pursue the questioning without either reprimand or dismissal, until finally he goes beyond the established limits and Vidagdha’s head explodes, a fate assigned transgressors, as we have already seen. In challenging Yājñavalkya’s knowledge, Vidagdha Śākalya is placing himself in the subordinate position to Yājñavalkya. But Vidagdha is obsessed with both Yājñavalkya’s presumption to superiority and the cognitive dissonance inherent in the various descriptions of the gods; and here the well-attested Indian desire for a complete determination of the entire category of *deva* collides with the ever-shifting descriptions and identities of the deities. So, Vidagdha’s responses to each of Yājñavalkya’s statements embody a positive affirmation, *om̐*, which the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* vii.18 assigns a status marking. After noting that the Adhvaryu responds to the *ṛc* verses with an *om̐* but to the *gāthā* verses with a *tathā*, the text affirms that *om̐* is divine whereas *tathā* is human. Here Sāyana comments that *om̐*, employed with the *chandorūpa* meter, is the manner in which one signals agreement to gods; conversely, one signals agreement with men when employing *tathā* (*om ity etac chandorūpaṃ daivam devair aṅgikārāthe prayujyate | tat tathety antaṃ mānuṣyaṃ manuṣyā aṅgikāre tatheti śabdaṃ prayuñjate* | Sāyana, *Aitareya-brahmaṇa* cy, p. 859). This has been taken to identify theological value – and it is certainly implied – but the actual use we see is sociolinguistic: one employs *om̐* to superiors and *tathā* to equals or inferiors.

43 Conversational implicatures are explored in Carston 2004.

This status marking appears important with the grammaticalization of *om* when it becomes employed as a discourse marker at the beginning of *mantras*.<sup>44</sup> As already mentioned, the *Yajurveda* illustrates a ritualized use of *om*, but there the interjection is also used as a polite softening of the imperative. The *Vājasaneyi* directive *om pratiṣṭha* “Yes, advance!” is said to the sacrificer by the Brahman, to indicate that he has been accepted by Savitr, who urges that he should give his fire stick.<sup>45</sup> Parpola (1981: 200) points out that *om* introduces the imperative in the sense of *prasava*, “assent or permission”. It also has the pragmatic value of turning an imperative into a polite request.<sup>46</sup> As we have seen, bare imperatives (*lot*) are the most direct of directives, and the prefix *om* here renders it less forceful even if just as authoritative. Consequently, *om* facilitates the retention of face and softens the illocutionary force, a mark of politeness.

Because it became placed at the beginning of imperatives as a pragmatic status marker, when later *mantras* began to be articulated, *om* was apparently carried through. At that moment, it no longer functioned as an affirmative phatic interjection, but was grammaticalized into a discourse marker. Grammaticalization is a process whereby a word becomes part of a grammatical code, and undergoes change as a result. As Hopper and Traugott (2003: xv) express it: “we now define grammaticalization as the change whereby lexical items and constructions come in certain linguistic contexts to serve grammatical functions and, once grammaticalized, continue to develop new grammatical functions”. In the case of *om*, it becomes a marker of sanctity at the advent of the recitation of a text or phrase, and in the process *om* exhibits a classic mark of grammaticalization: a shift of value from semantic to pragmatic.<sup>47</sup>

Thus, grammaticalization is sometimes understood to entail a “bleaching” of semantic value (Roberts 2010). In this instance, the previous conventionalized semantic force of *om* that allows it to operate as an affirmative phatic interjection is lessened and endowed with grammatical reference that in some measure lessens its lexical value. Such a model of semantic bleaching would seem to resonate with the alteration in the function and placement of *om*, pointing to

44 Janda (2001: 304–15) has argued that grammaticalization discussions often ignore the sociolinguistic attributes, which can often better explain language change, and certainly here status and politeness are important variables.

45 The duties of the Brahman priest to give such directions are noted by Parpola 1981: 200. Mahīdhara’s *cy* to *Vājasaneyī-saṃhitā Mādhyandīnya Śuklayajurveda* 2.13: *om ity aṅgikārthaḥ | tathāstu | pratiṣṭha prayāṇam kuru | samidādhānakāle yajamānasyābhipretam prayāṇam avagamyā savitā devo ’ṅgikṛtya prayāṇe prerayatīty arthaḥ |*.

46 Politeness in classical Sanskrit literature sometimes implicates the use of interjections; see van der Walle 1993, esp. pp. 126–7.

47 *Āpastambhīya-dharmasūtra* I.4.13.6; *Mānava-dharmaśāstra* II.70–4; *Gautama-dharmasūtra* I.49–58; *Viṣṇusmṛti* 55.15; *Śāṅkhāyanagṛhyasūtra* 4.8, etc. The transition from *om* to *om* may also be a function of another change observed in grammaticalization: phonetic erosion (coalescence), wherein there is the loss of some phonetic value; see Lehmann 2002: 132. But this is a bit dubious in this instance, and I would be hesitant to make the argument. Generally, phonetic erosion occurs during the transition from independent syllables to bound forms, as in the modern pronunciation of “going to” to “gonna”.

what comes after instead of replying to what has come before. In signalling the sanctity of the following text, *om* becomes a discourse marker, described by Brinton (2010: 285–6) as having the following attributes:

They are phonologically “short” items that preferentially occur in sentence-initial position ... Semantically, discourse markers are seen as having little or no semantic content: they are non-referential/non-propositional in meaning (although historically they typically derive from lexemes with full semantic content, and may retain traces of the original proposition meaning of these lexemes). Some discourse markers, but not all, express procedural (inferential) rather conceptual meaning ... Finally, it has been observed that discourse markers, because of their lack of semantic content, pose difficulties for translation.

But Hopper and Traugott (2003: 94–8) have argued that grammaticalization actually marks a shift of meaning instead, so that, in the case of *om*, the new function as a discourse marker replaces the semantic value of a lexical item with the function value of a grammatical particle. There is much to be said for that, given that *om* assumes two mutually exclusive properties; not only does it become a discourse marker for the advent of a *mantra*, but conversely becomes equipped with an entire theology when treated as a noun. That is, in the overwhelming number of instances of the use of *om*, it is simply a place holder that marks the beginning of the sacred phrase, yet there is little semantic value in its position. This is, in part, a function of its routinization as well: “Signal simplification typically results from the routinization (idiomatization) of expressions” (Hopper and Traugott 2003: 72). Certainly, given the ubiquity that *om* assumes in the early medieval period, there can be little doubt that it becomes de-semanticized in some measure. While grammaticalization has been proposed as an irreversible process, so that the original word can no longer operate with its original syntactic function or semantic value, this model is contested (e.g. Janda 2001: 291–303), and in our instance it does not seem to be entirely the case. *Om* was not immediately eclipsed in ordinary language situations, for outside of the religious sphere, *om* continued to be employed as a phatic interjection at least into the early medieval period.<sup>48</sup> Even in the modern period, the relatively common North Indian Vaiṣṇava expression “*Hari om!*” appears to retain semantic echoes of the earlier phatic interjection.

The above extended investigation of *om* was engaged to signal some of the many pragmatic attributes of the *mantra-dhāraṇīs* overall, but similar functions are notable in two words that have been consistently employed in Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇīs*: *tadyathā* and *svāhā*. It is a curious fact that most of the early Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇīs* do not seem to employ the syllable *om*. Neither the received texts of the early Mahāyāna *sūtras*, nor the early translations into Chinese seem definitively to use the syllable. Part of the problem in determining this is the normative use of 唵 (*ān*) to represent *om*, although

48 *Bṛhatkathāślokaśaṃgrha* 5.218: *gr̥hyatām iti tenokte | viśvilenoktam om iti* ||5.218||; *gaṇikāmātur ādeśam | om iti pratyapūjayam* ||18.116||; *Mālatīmādhava* prose after 6.7 *bhavatv om ity ucyatām amātyah* – although most editions read *evam* for *om* here.

it is sometimes transcribed by phonetically related characters (e.g. 菴). Both of these, however, are also used to identify other sounds, especially in *mantras*, so while we have *mantras* with the syllable *ān* 庵 from the *Drumakinnararāja-paripṛcchā* (T. 624.15.367a2) translation attributed to Lokakṣema, they apparently have other values, given their rendering in other Chinese and Tibetan translations.<sup>49</sup> Other early translations are equally conflicted, such as the two *Mahāmāyūrī* anonymous translations of 350–431 CE. In each of these, the character 菴 is found once (T. 986.19.477c22, T. 987.19.480a5) but this appears to signal a syllable like *am* or some similar pronunciation. Arguably, the earliest version of the *Mahāmāyūrī mantra* is found in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu* of the *Mūlasarvāstivāda-vinaya*, and there is no use of *om* reflected there.<sup>50</sup> Even in the extensive received Sanskrit text, *om* is found in but three places, and none of them appear to be reflected in the earliest versions.<sup>51</sup> I have not been able to find a secure use of *om* in any Buddhist context prior to the anonymous translations into Chinese thought to date from the early sixth century. In works like the *Saptabuddhaka*, however – triangulating between the Liang translation (502–557 CE), the 587 CE translation attributed to Jñānagupta and the Tibetan canonical translation – the *om* in the healing *mantra om hulu hulu* is certain; other *mantras* also include *om* in that scripture.<sup>52</sup> Similar evidence is available from the *\*Mūlyamantra* (anon. 502–557 CE) for which we also have Gilgit fragments, a 706 CE translation by Bodhiruci II and a Tibetan canonical version.<sup>53</sup> The apparent conclusion is that *om* per se is not firmly attested in the first centuries of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* texts.

Instead, the discourse marker function is often held by *tadyathā* and *svāhā*, and of the two, the former is the more distinctive. *Tadyathā* also went through a process of grammaticalization, and its path is more in keeping with the development of discourse forms, since it was never laden with the theology found in *om*. *Tadyathā* is apparently not a word found in the Vedic *saṃhitās*, for it is neither listed in Franceschini's 2005 enlargement of Bloomfield's *Vedic Concordance* nor is it found in Whitney's (1881) "Index verborum". However, it does occur in a few of the Brāhmaṇas, and the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* is particularly helpful in illuminating the development of the term.

*Tadyathā* begins without being a strictly bound term, and simply indicates the anaphoric deictic "that" (*tat*) in proximity to the relative cataphoric deictic of

49 *Druma-kinnara-rāja-paripṛcchā-sūtra* pp. 295–7. See Harrison and Coblin 2012.

50 *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, *Gilgit Manuscripts* III/2 pp. 287–8.

51 *Mahāmāyūrī* pp. 4–5, 37.21, 61.18.

52 *Saptabuddhaka*, T. 1333.21.561c11–14, 562a4–8, 562b1–5, 563a7–12, 563b17–24, 563c27–564a2; these roughly correspond to Bodhiruci's T.1334.21.565a29–b3, 565b19–22, 565c13–16, 566a21–26, 566b22–28, 566c24–28; and to To. 270, mdo-sde ya, fols. 14a3, 14b1, 14b7–15a1, 15b4–5, 16a6–b1, 16b7–17a1, and 17a6–7; we note that the Tibetan has more *mantras* than either Chinese translation. Wayman (1985: 38) interprets *hulu hulu* as an imperative of "to shout with joy", but this appears hermeneutic rather than linguistic.

53 There are many instances in the *\*Mūlyamantra*, e.g., T. 1007.19.659b02; T. 1006.19.636b19; To. 506, rgyud-'bum vol. da, fol. 286b7. For the Gilgit fragments of this and related texts, see Matsumura 1983. This text will be the subject of a future study.

manner, “in the manner that” (*yathā*). In *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 2.37 the unbound, envelope form (*tad āhur yathā*) occurs three times. This paragraph begins by indicating a relationship between the recitation of two kinds of verse: *stotra* and *śāstra*, the former sung whereas the latter is chanted. Each has two varieties, and the text tries to unravel a trope employed in Vedic literature that the sacrifice is the gods’ chariot, with the *stotra* as the outer reins of the two horses and the *śāstra* verses as the inner reins. In the same manner that the pairs of outer and inner reins are separated into right and left so as not to confuse the horses, the *stotra* and *śāstra* chants are separated by application, *pavamāna* and *ājya* in the former case, *prāṭiga* and *ājya* in the latter.<sup>54</sup> The simile intrudes on the instructions, which are that “with respect to that [metaphor] they said, ‘indeed, according to the *stotra*, so too the *śāstra*’” (*tad āhur yathā vāva stotram evaṃ śāstram*). The text struggles to harmonize the simile (which should indicate that *stotra* and *śāstra* simultaneously co-operate, as the right inner rein and the left outer rein are worked in union) with the instruction (*śāstra* following after *stotra*) and the problem of manner (*yathā*), since the *stotra* is sung and the *śāstra* is chanted.

For our purposes, though, the words *tad* and *yathā* operate in different directions and for different purposes in the initial two phrases – they have yet to become lexicalized into a single, bound form, nor have they been grammaticalized into a specific place position (reduced syntagmatic variability).<sup>55</sup> *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 2.37 continues by applying the simile to the relationship of *śāstra* verses and those of the *yājya* offering: “They said, ‘indeed, according to the *śāstra* so too the *yājya* to Agni; the Hotṛ lauds with the *ājya* verse’”. (*tad āhur yathā vāva śāstram evaṃ yājyāgneyaṃ hotājyaṃ śaṁsati*). After discussing this relation, however, in the final statement, the “they said” is elided and the two words are joined, “That [the *śāstra* is intoned silently by the Hotṛ] means as the *śāstra* so the *yājya* consecration verse (*tadyathaiva śāstram evaṃ yājyā*)”.<sup>56</sup>

Here there is only a hint at the grammaticalization that will occur, since the phrase is a contraction of the previous one (*tad āhur yathā vāva śāstram evaṃ yājyā*), but *tadyathā* begins to be employed as a discourse marker of enumeration

54 *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, Aufrecht, p. 55: *devaratho vā eṣa yad yajñas tasyaitāv antarau raśmī yad ājyapraūge | tad yad ājyena pavamānam anuṣaṁsati praūgeṇājyaṃ devarathasyaiva tad antarau raśmī viharaty alobhāya tām anukṛtīm manuṣyarathasyaivāntarau raśmī viharaty alobhāya nāsya devaratho lubhyati na manuṣyaratho ya evaṃ veda tad āhur yathā vāva stotram evaṃ śāstram |* See also Śaḍguruśiṣya pp. 382–9.

55 On lexicalization, see Brinton 2005, note p. 62: “Lexicalization is often discussed in isolation from grammaticalization, especially in studies of word formation. However, it has increasingly been the case that it has entered into grammaticalization studies. One area in which the linking of lexicalization and grammaticalization is especially apparent is in work on fusion, including what has been called freezing, univerbation, or bonding, depending on the type of item that undergoes boundary loss”.

56 This use is similar to that encountered elsewhere in the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*, e.g. 1.11, 1.15, 3.5, 3.18, 3.22, 3.31, 5.9, 5.15–6, 5.22, 5.32–3, 6.17, 6.21, 6.23. Similar forms are found throughout the *Satapathabrāhmaṇa*, e.g., 1.1.4.7, 1.3.3.17, 1.4.4.15, etc.; see also *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa* 2.7.18.4 (vol. 2, p. 466); *Pañcaviṃśabrāhmaṇa* 16.10.6. This is mimicked in the much later *Gopatha-brāhmaṇa* 2.5.10 as well.



by the end of the *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*. In places like *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 7.1, we find an intermediate point closer to the eventual use.<sup>57</sup> There directions on the dismemberment of the sacrificial animal (*paśor vibhakti*) are given along with the distribution of the parts. Those who do otherwise, then let it be that they rend animals like thieves or sinners (*atha ye 'to 'nyathā tadyathā selagā vā pāpakṛto vā paśuṃ vimathnūraṃs tādrk tat*). Here *tadyathā* begins to assume the position of a discourse marker that identifies members of a class, which is the reason that the author appeared compelled to add “like that” (*tādrk tat*) at the end, which would be redundant were *tadyathā* to have retained its earlier semantic value.<sup>58</sup> A somewhat similar situation is observable in *Mahābhāṣya* 1.4.21[1], discussing two examples of potential confusion of reference when the dual for eyes and feet is not employed; the two examples are made to follow *tadyathā*: *tadyathā akṣīṇi me darśanīyāni | pādā me sukumārā iti*.<sup>59</sup> By this time, similar bound discourse marker forms appear in Pali (*seyyathā*) and in Ardhamāgadhī (*sejahā, tamjahā*) as well, suggesting either a linguistic diffusion or that the discourse markers may have an earlier, unattested common source.<sup>60</sup>

*Tadyathā* is not entirely subsumed into a grammatical position quite yet, but by the time it shows up in classical inscriptions, it has achieved the state recognizable in normative Buddhist Sanskrit use. In the inscriptions of the Vākāṭakas, for example, *tadyathā* introduces a list of the exemptions allowed brāhmaṇas to whom land is donated, as in the case of the Jāmb Plates of Pravarasena II.<sup>61</sup>

*yathāsyopacitā[m] pūrvvarājānumatāñ cāturvaidyagrāmamaryyādā[m]  
vitarāmas tadyathā akaradāyī abhaṭacchatraprāveśya[h] apārampara-  
gobalavardda[h] apuṣpakṣīrasandoha[h] acārāsanacarmmāṅgāra[h]  
alavaṇakliṇvakreṇikhanakaḥ sarvvaviṣṭisaparihāraparihṛtaḥ sanidhiḥ  
sopanidhi[h] saklṛptopākṛpta[h] ācandrādityakālīyaḥ putrapautrānu  
[gā]mikaḥ bhuñjato*

Mirashi translates this:

And We grant the following exemptions which are incidental to a village bestowed on a Brāhmaṇa proficient in the four Vedas and are appropriate, as approved by former kings: – It is not to pay taxes; it is not to be entered by soldiers and policemen; it does not entitle (the State) to customary cows

57 *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 4.27, 8.20 also exhibit partial lists.

58 *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa* 4.4 also employs *tādrk tat* following the comparison.

59 In distinction, in *Mahābhāṣya* 2.3.3 *tadyathā* introduces individual examples, which are then explained.

60 Pischel 1981 § 423; *taṃjahā* is very common in the Jaināgamas; *Āyāraṃgasutta* 1.2, 1.4, etc.; *Aupapātikasūtra* §§ 5, 28, 30, etc.; while the *Milindapañha* often employs *seyyathā*, the prose begins with *taṃyathā* ‘*nusūyate*, possibly the intrusion of a later form; *Milindapañha* 1.13.

61 Mirashi (1963, CII V, p. 13 lines 24–9; trans. p. 14). This paragraph is common in the Vākāṭaka inscriptions; see the Belor Plates of Pravarsena, p. 20, lines 19–22; the Chammak Plates of Pravarasena II, p. 24, lines 25–30; the Indore Plates of Pravarasena II, pp. 40–41, lines 19–24; the Paṭṭan Plates of Pravarasena II, pp. 60–61, lines 29–34, etc.



and bulls; it does not (also) entitle it to (royalties on) flowers and milking; it is exempt from (the obligation to provide) grass, hides as seats and charcoal (to touring royal officers); it is exempt from (royalties on) the purchase of fermenting liquors and digging of salt; it is free from all kinds of forced labour; it is donated together with (the right to) hidden treasures and deposits (and) together with major and minor taxes; it is to be enjoyed as long as the sun and the moon (will endure) and it is to follow the succession of sons and son's sons.

Thus *tadyathā* becomes grammaticalized from a non-bound anaphoric deictic (*tat* that) added to a cataphoric deictic of manner (*yathā* just as) into a bound form with a distinctive function: “to whitt”, “that is to say”, “*id est* (i.e.)”, and any number of related forms. In the specifically Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇī* use, it has a more identifiable function – it is a marker that often introduces the beginning of all or a distinctive part of the *mantra*, much as *svāhā* signals the completion of the section. Accordingly, it acts very much in the manner of *oṃ* elsewhere, and may even be matched with it, as in the late *Sarvathathāgatādhiṣṭhāna* (§37: *namaḥ sarvabuddhānāṃ sarvabodhisattvārhanātānāṃ tadyathā oṃ vajradhara vajradhara*, etc.). However, in the early Buddhist *mantras*, *tadyathā* and *svāhā* are the preferred inaugurating and completing signs. In the Central Asian *dhāraṇīs* edited by von Hinüber, they become formulaic.

*namo akṣobhyā[ya] tathāgatāya tadyathā [male] male jyoti svāhā ||*  
*namo amitābhāya tathāgatāya tadyathā amṛ[te am]ṛtobhate amṛtasamb-*  
*have amitagaganakīrtakare svāhā ||*

Von Hinüber 1987/88: 233

Other *dhāraṇīs* are a little more complex, but most often they follow in this same pattern: “Homage [*Buddha/Bodhisattva name here*, dative case] *tadyathā* [various *mantra* syllables] *svāhā*.” This is not always observed, and there are *mantra-dhāraṇīs* that place the/a homage immediately before the *svāhā*, but they tend to be the exception. Occasionally, *tadyathā* is replaced by another marker, as in the case of the *Mahāsāhasrapardanī*'s and *Suvarṇabhāsottama*'s employment of *syād yathedam* instead.<sup>62</sup> Even then, if the precise discourse marker has been replaced, the discourse marker pragmatic function and position remain intact.

In most Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇīs*, *svāhā* is the discourse closure marker, although other markers, including *hūṃ* and *phaṭ*, have alternatively been employed. The etymology of *svāhā* is most often identified as “well said” (*su* + *āha*), also a bound form, but it is further recognized that *svāhā* is closely related to *svadhā*. Smārta texts generally affirm that *svāhā* is to be used in offerings to the gods whereas *svadhā* is employed for the ancestors (*Baudhāyana-dharmasūtra* 2.6.11.2–3, *Āpastambīya-dharmasūtra* 1.13.1; but see *Brhaddevatā* 8.111–12). Be that as it may, the function of *svāhā* in Buddhist contexts is also a discourse marker, this time indicating closure.

62 *Mahāsāhasrapramardanī*, pp. 4.23, 5.8, 5.24, 6.11, 6.23, 18.13, 19.2, 19.21, etc., *Suvarṇabhāsottama* 106.8, 108.11, 117.6–7.

Unfortunately, there is little in the way of evidence for the actual formation of *svāhā*, since both *svāhā* and *svadhā* arrive in *Rgveda* X.14.3 in their current form, but it is possible that both derive from an older Indic ritual vocalization, phonetically differentiated from each other as their functions became differentiated. And in fact, none of the other *mantra-dhāraṇī* discourse markers can be as well mapped as *om* and *tadyathā*.

The Buddhists, certainly, employed *svāhā* as it was already formulaic, and they most likely obtained their impetus from rules of *mantra* formation found in the *Gr̥hyasūtras*. So the *Khādiragr̥hyasūtra* indicates that *homas* are offered with *svāhā* at the end of their *mantras* (*Khādiragr̥hyasūtra* 1.1.19: *svāhāntā mantrā homeṣa*). Similarly, the *Hiraṇyakeśig̥rhya-sūtra* declares that *mantras* are always to have *svāhā* at their conclusion (*Hiraṇyakeśig̥rhya-sūtra* 1.3.2: *mantrānte nityaḥ svāhākāraḥ*) and goes on to add that new *mantras* may be manufactured for deities for which there is no *mantra*, simply by adding *svāhā* (1.3.3: *amantrāsu amuṣmai svāhā | iti yathādevatam*). These kinds of *mantra* rules (*mantraparibhāṣā*) provided the guidance necessary for Buddhists to formulate their new *mantra-dhāraṇīs* as they began to develop a deeper involvement with such phrases.

### I.iii. Mantra-dhāraṇī non-referential or non-lexical phonemes

Even accounting for observable sentences, stray nouns and verbs, interjections, exclamations and discourse markers, we are left with the fact that a great number of the syllables do not represent any words with known semantic values or identifiable markers with pragmatic force. Some may be drawn from Dravidian languages, as Bernhard (1967) argued, but he was not correct in assessing them as mnemonic devices – they only become *mantra-dhāraṇīs* when no longer recognizable. Indeed, the entire discussion of *mantra-dhāraṇīs* in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* relies on the idea that such phrases are not referential (*anartha*), in the argument I presented previously (Davidson 2009). There, apparently Dravidian-based words – *iti miṭi kiṭi* – are articulated as part of the example, and the *Mahāmāyūrī* in three places recognizes that it employs similar Dravidian words (*Mahāmāyūrī*: *ili misti kili misti ili kili misti ili me sidhyantu drāmiḍā mantrapadāḥ*, pp. 9.18, 14.7, 44.18; see also *Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka* 39.1–3: *Sarvajñatākāra-dhāraṇī* 16.1, 19.8). We also have traces of Prakritic words in the recognizable nouns (e.g. *istrī* for *strī*, *śiri* for *śrī*), so we may assume that some of the syllables are drawn from that source as well.<sup>63</sup>

It would be disingenuous not to acknowledge that *mantra-dhāraṇī* “words” are predominantly *not* natural language events. That leaves the possibility – to be explored in detail elsewhere – that these non-natural language syllables are graphic representations of a vocalization that has both similarities and dissimilarities to glossolalia or to other recorded forms of non-language vocalization. It is difficult to frame otherwise the kind of repetitive non-linguistic expressions we find in so many *mantra-dhāraṇīs*: *veduri veduri vedurī maṭṭite maṭṭite koṭi koṭi vidyumatī hu hu hu hu hu hu hu hu cu cu cu cu cu cu cu ru ru ru ru ru ru ru*

63 *Ratnaketuparivarta* p. 42.1 *istrībhāva*; Von Hinüber 1987/88: 236: *namo śrīpradīpāya | tadyathā śiri śiri pradīpaśiri svāhā ||*

*ru ca ca ca ca ca ca ca sa svāhā* (*Mahāmāyūrī* p. 17). While such phrases were justified in doctrinal or theological terms, they cannot be assigned value as either lexemes or operators in sentences.

#### *I.iv. Mantra-dhāraṇīs as acts of truth*

Skilling (1992: 144–6) noted that Buddhist spell literature includes references to *mantras* or *dhāraṇīs* as statements or professions of truth (*satyavacana*, *satyavākya*, *satyādhiṣṭhāna*), a Sanskrit Buddhist use that is closely related to cognate expressions in Pali (*saccakiriyā*) and Vedic (*satyakriyā*). As a trope for the affirmation of virtue or supernormal ability, professions of truth are scattered throughout Buddhist literature, and have been studied in significant detail (e.g. Wakahara 2002). When a person makes a profession of truth, it commonly entails the manipulation of reality: the extinguishing of a fire, bringing of rain, removal of poison or the reversing of the course of the River Ganges, to name but a few. As in the case of our directives (A. above), they most often make use of the imperative, and have been typified in the *Milindapañha* in that way:

*ye keci siddhā saccam anugāyanti | viṣaṃ halāhalaṃ agadaṃ bhavatū'ti |*  
*tesaṃ saha saccam-anugūtena viṣaṃ halāhalaṃ khaṇena agadaṃ bhavati |*  
*Milindapañha 120.32–121.3*

Those siddhas who chant a truth, “May the *halāhala* poison become medicine!” for them the *halāhala* poison becomes instantly transformed into medicine with their chanting of that truth.

Apparently, because of the manner in which phrases mutated into spells, the power of truth became identified with *mantras* or *vidyās* as statements of truth. For our purposes, the clearest application is when a *mantra* or *dhāraṇī* references itself as a profession of truth. The *Sambuddhamantra* in the *Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna* (4.4) concludes with such an affirmation:

*etena satyavākyaena svasty ānandāya bhikṣave |*  
 By this act of truth, let health return to Ānanda!

Similarly, the longish *mantra* in the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna* (§56), contains within itself a phrase:

*ya tvayā pūrve satyādhiṣṭhānaṃ kṛtam tena satyena sarvāśāṃ me paripūraya |*  
 And that profession of truth that you performed previously, by that truth may all my desire be fulfilled!

Stronger still is the *mantra* statement addressed to Sarasvatī in the *Suvarṇabhāsottama*:

*āvāhayāmi mahādevīm buddhasatyena dharmasatyena saṃghasatyena*  
*indrasatyena varuṇasatyena ye loke satyavādināḥ santi teṣaṃ*  
*satyavādināṃ satyavacanena āvāhayāmi mahādevīm |*  
*Suvarṇabhāsottama p. 109.7–10*

I invoke the Great Goddess [Sarasvatī] by the truth of the Buddha, of the Dharma, of the Saṃgha, of Indra, and of Varuṇa! All those who are speakers of truth in the world, by the expressions of truth of these speakers of truth, I invoke the Great Goddess!

Thompson's perceptive analysis of the Indic usage indicates that it is a performative utterance that affirms the authority of the principle in the statement.<sup>64</sup>

What seems to be fundamental, in all contexts [both Vedic and non-Vedic], is that the *satyakriyā*, is an assertion of personal authority, an assertion that rests on the power of the performer to accomplish sometimes very remarkable things – as we will see – by the mere utterance of certain words, and in a recognizably regular and formal way.

Thompson 1998: 125–6

This is certainly true in the broader picture of the event, and observable in the case of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* and *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā* texts, which makes an expression of truth a touchstone of whether a Bodhisattva is irreversible or not. If the Bodhisattva is, then he is capable of extinguishing a fire by the mere expression of speech. However, if the fire jumps around, going from building to building and not really being extinguished, then he is not irreversible and must continue to cultivate the path (*Aṣṭasāhasrikā* 189–91; *Aṣṭādaśasāhasrikā* 5–7). Both scriptures even leverage this trope by warning the Bodhisattva against hubris: Māra might come along and, while the Bodhisattva performs an exorcism expecting this expression of truth to validate his spiritual standing, Māra could expel the wayward spirit, leaving the Bodhisattva to become proud and self-important. Operating on the same principles (but in reverse), Hara has examined literary devices wherein acts of truth operate as validation of the person when wrongfully accused, so that gods or elements of reality are called on to vindicate the character's innocence (Hara 2009).

The evaluation of Buddhist *mantra-dhāraṇīs* as statements of truth is complicated by the non-linguistic sounds included in these phrases, as mentioned before (I.iii). Even then, it is apparent that Buddhists may employ them as directives, since there is most frequently an imperative that commands or implores some figure, explicit or not, to perform the function encoded in the *mantra-dhāraṇī*, as we saw in the case of Sarasvatī. Other examples are legion, but this one might be cited from the *Mahāmegha-sūtra*:

*namo bhagavate mama svasti bhavatu sarvasattvānām maitrī bhavatu |  
sarvabhūteṣv abhayaṃ bhavatu | sarvatiryaggatānām śāmyantu  
sarvadurgatayaḥ | namaḥ sarvanivāraṇaviskambhīṇe | sidhyatv ayaṃ  
sarvatathāgatavidhiḥ | sarvabuddhāvalokitavidhiḥ | tadyathā | sphāṭa  
[x7] svāhā |*

*Mahāmegha* 310.5–8

64 It is appropriate to point out that Searle (1989: 536) has protested this assignment of the term “performative” to all speech acts, and he reserves it for ritualized sentences that are predominantly declaratives.

Homage to the Lord! May he be beneficial for me! May he be loving to all beings! May there be fearlessness among all spirits! May the difficult destinies be pacified for all those born among animals! Homage to Sarvanivāraṇaviṣkambhin [*sic*]! May this ritual of all the Tathāgatas be accomplished, and the ritual of the Vision of all Buddhas! That is to say, “*Sphaṭa* [x7] *svāhā*!”

We even find the rather bizarre expressive and directive to nasty brahmins in the *Mahāmāyūrī*,

*ye brāhmaṇā vāhitapāpadharmāḥ teśāṃ namas | te mama sarvasatvānāṃ  
ca rakṣāṃ kurvantu*

*Mahāmāyūrī* 42.20–21

All those brahmins invested in sinful duties, homage to them! Let them protect me and all sentient beings.

Thus, the idea of a *mantra-dhāraṇī* as an act of truth expresses several somewhat problematic questions. First, it is evident that many of them cannot be truth in the sense of truth-conditional semantics, for at least some do not exclusively express statements comprehensible in natural language. Second, their presumption of efficacy appears dependent on the narrative of initial expression, and the needs of the individual in the subject case of that narrative. In this instance, as Thompson has pointed out, the direction of fit is to refashion the world into a vessel that is in accord with the intention and desire of the speaker, who speaks the words of the Buddha through his own mouth. In Searle’s terms (Searle 1979: 3–20; Searle and Vanderveken 1985: 92–8) that implicates, as in the case of all directives, a world to the word fit, so that the words of the *mantra-dhāraṇī* operate to express the intention of the Buddha and alter the nature of reality. We must surmise that, in the cases where the explicit “truthfulness” of the utterance is outside of linguistic parameters, it was understood to be a coded expression that contained extra-linguistic meaning. This must have been true, whether it meant the compression of significance from the compendium of the scriptures overall (as seen in some texts; Davidson 2009) or from the specific intention of the Buddha(s) to effect discrete changes in the structure of reality on behalf of the believers, as seen in the use of most *mantra-dhāraṇīs*.

Little wonder that the “statement of truth” language is expressed in but a minority of such texts, and that, at a later day, we see that Ānanda is told in the *Vasudhārādharmaṇī* that it was Sucandra’s great faith that caused the effects witnessed (*Vasudhārādharmaṇī* p. 146: *śrāddhānanda sucandro nāma gr̥hapatiḥ paramaśrāddhah*). On a different trajectory, in several *mantras* the *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna* replaces *satyādhiṣṭhānena* with *tathāgatādhiṣṭhānena* or *buddhādhiṣṭhānena* (§§ 31, 38, 70); twice it even places the two forms side-by-side (§§ 56, 87). These late texts suggest that the authors wished to argue that it is by the authority or truth of the Buddha that transformations to the nature of reality are effected. Thus, we see the older *satyakriyā* discourse fading to the point that it is intermittently supplanted by the new theistic devotionism, the leitmotif of India from the Gupta period forward.

## Conclusion: Encoded suppositions and expectations

The purpose of this study was to bring to bear some of the tools of historical pragmatics, so that the formalized statements in Buddhist *dhāraṇī* literature could be evaluated. The macro results are found below in Appendix A, which examines how the forms A–I discussed in the essay are employed in the individual texts, indicating the overall Buddhist use of pragmatics in *dhāraṇī* literature. However, this table should be used with caution, for some of the instances of the individual statements could easily be contested or otherwise interpreted, and the sample is equally quite limited, representing but a small fraction of the corpus of *dhāraṇī* texts or chapters. In keeping with this cautionary admonition, the limited goal of this application was simply a better understanding of the dynamics and structure of these texts, so that their development and evolution might be better mapped out. The other goal was to determine if nomothetic linguistic tools can be effectively brought to bear on the evaluation of *dhāraṇī* texts, rather than inventing, on the spot, a typology of dubious validity, neither really emic nor etic, or invoking emic typologies exclusively. In this instance, the applicability of pragmatics analysis to Buddhist *dhāraṇī* textual statements affirms their place within the parameters of normative language and vocalization use, rather than standing outside of it.

Just as important, we may conclude from the exercise yielding Appendix A that the *dhāraṇī* genre is highly formalized and, to a degree, formulaic. Whatever their initial impetus, *dhāraṇīs* became a commonly affirmed genre of texts by means of establishing a formal horizon of expectations by which the genre would be known. Their explicit goals were protection of individuals and communities, healing from disease and catastrophe, the mitigation of prior karma and the liberation of the person from soteriological bondage. Their implicit goals were the further integration of Buddhist practices into the evolving cosmos of Indian ritual, both Brahmanical and folk ritual, which had developed a dynamic relationship to *mantras*, however these were understood. Their method was to establish a series of phrases that were considered to encode truth, whatever that may have meant, but the encoding was framed in a formal presentation that may be explored by pragmatic analysis. In this regard, we may conclude that Buddhist *dhāraṇī* texts work in pragmatic patterns recognizable cross-culturally, even if they have distinctive attributes and values that extend from their specific origins.

## Appendix A: Provisional pragmatic grid – Sanskrit *dhāraṇī* texts

<i>Dhāraṇī</i> text	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I.i	I.ii	I.iii	I.iv
<i>Amoghapāśa-hṛdaya</i>		S	W	S	M		M	S	M	M	M	
<i>Ātānāṭika-sūtra</i>	M	S				M	M	S		M	M	
<i>Bhaiṣajyavastu</i>	S	M		S	S				M	M	M	
<i>Buddhanāmasahasrapañcaśataturtri- pañcadaśa-sūtra</i> (Hinüber <i>Dhāraṇīs</i> )							M		M	M	M	
<i>Ekādaśamukha-hṛdaya</i>		M	M	M	M		M		M	M	M	
<i>Gaṇapatihṛdaya</i>					M		M		M	M	M	
<i>Hayagrīvavidyā</i>				S		S		S	S	M		
<i>Karuṇāpuṇḍarīka</i>		M		M	M		M	M	M	M	M	
<i>Mahāmāyūrī</i>	S	M		M	M	M	M	S	M	M	M	S
<i>Mahāmantrānusārīṇī</i>		M				M		S	M		M	W
<i>Mahāmegha-sūtra</i>	S	M		M		W	M		M	M	M	M
<i>Mahāpratisarā-dhāraṇī</i>		M	S	M	M		M	M	M	M	M	
<i>Mahāsāhasrapramardanī</i>	S	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
<i>Mahāśūlavatī-dhāraṇī</i>	S	S		S	M	M	M	S	M	M	M	
<i>Mekhalādhāraṇī</i>	S	S	S	W	M			M	M	M	M	
<i>Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī</i>		S			W							S
<i>Ratnaketuparivarta</i>	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	
<i>Saddharmapuṇḍarīka</i>			M	M	M	M	M		M	M	M	
<i>Śaṇmukhadhāraṇī</i>		S			M			S	M	M	M	
<i>Śārdūlakarṇāvadāna</i>	S	S		M	M		S		M	M	M	S
<i>Sarvajñatākāra-dhāraṇī</i>	S	M		M	M		M	M	M	M	M	
<i>Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhāna-satvāvalokana- buddhakṣetrasandarśana-vyūha</i>	W	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M	M
<i>Suvarṇabhāsottama</i>		M	M		M		M	M	M	M	M	M
<i>Uṣṇīṣa-vijayā dhāraṇī</i>		S							M	M	M	
<i>Vajravīdāraṇī dhāraṇī</i>					M		M		M	M	M	
<i>Vasudhārā-dhāraṇī</i>	S	M	S	S	M		M	M	M	M	M	

Key: M = multiple; S = strong presence; W = weak presence; blank cell = no clear presence

In the cases of the lengthy sūtras, the table reflects only statements made in the *dhāraṇī* sections, unless there are *dhāraṇīs* scattered throughout the text, as in the *Ratnaketuparivarta*.



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### Abbreviations

T. = Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō. Takakusu Junjirō and Watanabe Kaikyoku (eds). 1924–35. Tokyo.

To. = Ui, Hakuju et al. (eds). 1934. A Complete Catalogue of the Tibetan Buddhist Canons (BKaḥ-ḥgyur and Bstan-ḥgyur). Sendai.

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