IMPERATIVES IN THE BUDDHIST TANTRA MANTRAS[1]

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The Buddhist tantric works contain an enormous amount of mantras, recognized by being kept in transcription when those works were translated into Tibetan and Chinese. Bu-ston, editor of the Tibetan canon, collected a great many of these mantras in a large volume.[2] Also in the original Sanskrit works, mantras were recognizable by the context and their form. Here I shall not deal with the use of mantras in religious practice, or with the dispute over whether they do or do not have meaning in our usual sense of meaning. I am concerned with what is essentially a grammatical problem of the imperative forms; and this type of meaning must be admitted, otherwise how could they be labelled imperatives and their type of imperative discussed?

From time to time in my studies of the Buddhist Tantras I have noticed mantras in certain contexts which help to explain them. I shall restrict myself to these more enlightening contexts, rather than simply present a long list which could easily be done. Since the great majority of such imperatives are addressed to the deity in the singular number of the second person, these will be my examples, which in my observation regularly adopt the Parasmaipada option of the Present Tense. These forms are generally recognizable by doublets for emphasis, the form repeated, e.g. *hana hana*. We shall find that sometimes these mantras obey rules of Classical Sanskrit, and sometimes they must be construed as Middle Indic. The imperatives are classifiable in four types, 1. those for appeasing *(śāntika)*, 2. those for prosperity *(pauṣṭika)*, 3. those for controlling *(vaśīkara)*, and 4. those for destruction *(abhicāra)*. Besides, the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-tantra*, Chap. II, k. 180, in the Tibetan Kanjur, and its commentary by Buddhaguhya in the Tibetan Tanjur, distinguishes between imperative mantras directed to the minor deities called 'attendants' and those directed to the furious deities (Krodha). Mantras to be translated "Remember!", "Consume!", and "Conquer!" are directed to the attendants, a group that also incudes the 'messengers'; and those translated "Stab!", "Kill!", and "Tear to pieces!" are directed to the Krodha deities.[3]

The repetition of the root vowel in such forms as *kiri* is doubtless due to the injunction to repeat the mantra many times, since the repetition of the vowel apparently assists this multiplication of the mantra. Since the semantic value of *kiri* is not evidenced, this does suggest that the mantra was more intended to be repeated many times than to be understood. We shall observe that to be understood one must read this form as *kira*, the imperative. There are suggestions in this tantric literature that the 'meaning' *(artha)* is the 'goal' *(artha)* of the recitation.

1) The first example is from the mantra transcription in an Acala Tantra of the Tibetan canon:[4]

> vighnāṃ māraya māraya | duṣṭāṃ rakṣa rakṣa |
> satvāṃ kuru kuru | kiri kiri |

Here the first doublet of imperatives is in causative form, and I render the command "Kill the demons!" Next, there is, "Ward off the wicked!" Third, "Lead the strong!" (As for translating the imperative *kuru* by "Lead!" the Monier-Williams dictionary cites this meaning for the root *kṛ*- from Pāṇini i,4,77). Finally, this *kiri kiri* represents an imperative of *kir* 'to

scatter' (6th conjugation class in classical Sanskrit), so we
would expect _kira;_ but here there is repetition of the root vowel
-- a frequent feature of these mantra imperatives; and it means,
"Scatter (or disperse)!" namely, the evil forces.

2) From the _Trisamayarājasādhana,_ first work of the _Sādhana-
mālā._ This is the form in which it is edited:[5]

> arara asama sama samantatānanta dharma te khaṇa khaṇa mahā-
> vīrācale sama sama asahamahābale kaṇa kaṇa mahāvarāgrike
> haha haha vajravajrāhvaye dhara dhara Huṃ Huṃ maṇḍalaṃ sama-
> balāgravikrame kuru kuru turu turu sarvathā sarvaṃ hi jvala
> jvala agre agriṇi Huṃ Phaṭ Svāhā |.

The editor has erroneously separated the words _asama_ and _sama;_
they should be compounded as a _tatpuruṣa;_ "the equal to what is
without equal". Now, I take the expression _arara_ and _asamasama,_
in the form of vocatives, to be in apposition to the term _dharma:_
"Oh, the _dharma_ universal without end -- the gate _(arara)_ and the
equal of what is without equal, of thee _(te),_" namely the deity
Trisamayarāja. And the genitive _te_ goes as well with the follo-
wing locative absolutes. First, "when (of thee) there is the
great unswerving heroism" KHAṆA KHAṆA, which has nothing to do
with digging. This is a Middle Indic imperative, and the retro-
flex _ṇ_ is due to a presumed retroflex sibilant of an equivalent
Sanskrit, namely _kṣaṇa,_ "Wound!" (i.e. the opponent). Next, "when
(of thee) there is the great strength which one cannot with-
stand," SAMA SAMA. Again, Middle Indic for Sanskrit _śama śama,_
"Be appeased!" (reminding of the fierce Vedic Rudra appeased with
the name Śiva). Next, "when (of thee) there is the chief of great
boons," KHAṆA KHAṆA. And as I learned from Helmer Smith, this
goes with Sanskrit _kvaṇ,_[6] thus KVAṆA KVAṆA, "Sound out!" (i.e.
make it known). Next, "when (of thee) the name of a diamond is
'diamond'," HAHA HAHA. This form HAHA is another example of the
repetition of root vowel, where in Middle Indic HAHI has the _-hi,_
generalized Parasmaipada addition for the second person impera-
tive, present tense; which is parallel with the imperative using
the present stem in the manner of the first conjugational class
of Classical Sanskrit. The meaning of the imperative HAHA HAHA
depends on the associated locative absolute phrase, containing
the _hve-_ root, suggesting that the equivalent Sanskrit to this,
HA- is HVA-, in the dictionary as _hve-;_ although admittedly my
reference works do not supply this Sanskrit equivalence to the
Middle Indic _ha-._ But the context does support this association
of _hve-_ root, whereby, "when the name of a diamond is 'diamond'",
the imperative is rendered, "Call it by name!" The passage conti-
nues: DHARA DHARA, "Be steadfast!" HUṂ HUṂ (untranslateable, but
signifying the fierce side of the deity; in Tibetan transcrip-
tion, always HŪṂ). Then, "when there is the best forward step of
strength equal to it," "Construct [make it work] the _maṇḍala!_"
Next, TURU TURU, for Sanskrit TURA, but, as previously, repeating
the vowel; and to be rendered, "Be quick!". Then, JVALA JVALA,
"Radiate!" -- everything in every way. Now correct the editor's
agriṇi to _agreṇi,_ vocative of _agreṇī,_ the masculine; thus, "O,
leader!" -- at the summit _(agre)._ Finally, HUṂ PHAṬ SVĀHĀ.

3) From the _Guhyasamājatantra,_ Chap. XIV, with the help
of commentary:[7]

> ru ru sphuru jvala tiṣṭha.
> ghuṭṭa ghuṭṭa ghuṭṭani.

The first imperative sequence has some features well worth
mentioning. There is no doubt of the repetition RU RU as edited,
and that the following terms are imperatives even though not re-

peated. According to the commentator Ratnākaraśānti, the impera-
tives are to be rendered, "Speak!" "Fill up!" "Radiate" and "Re-
main!".[8] The JVALA and TIṢṬHA are obvious. SPHURU exhibits the
repetition of root vowel as was shown with previous examples. As
to the expression RU RU, the meaning "Speak!" (i.e. asking the
silent to speak) appears to take *ru* as the present stem of the
verb *ru*- 'to cry out', etc. in the 2nd class of conjugation might
have as the equivalent imperative the form *ruhi;* and the present
tense example is *rauti* or *ravīti*). This example of RU as an impe-
rative is therefore a further evidence of Middle Indic imperative
forms in these mantras.

The next mantra, GHUṬṬA ... in this *Guhyasamājatantra,* Chap.
XIV, addressed, according to the commentary, to the goddess
Māmakī, contains another instructive example, signifying accor-
ding to Ratnākaraśānti, "Protect! O, protectress!".[9] This root
GHUṬṬ- is found neither in the Böhtlingk-Roth nor the Monier-
Williams Sanskrit dictionaries. Of the twelve Dhātupāṭha sources
in Palsule, *A Concordance of Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas,*[10] the root is
entered in only one, the *Kāśakṛtsna.* But the *Guhyasamājatantra*
supplies both an imperative and a vocative form. Notice also in
this example that there is no repetition of the root vowel, as in
some of the previous examples, and that here the imperative
agrees with Classical Sanskrit.

4) From the *Vajra-vidāraṇa-nāma-dhāraṇī,* its long mantra.
In the course of my investigations, long ago, of the Tanjur
commentaries, I found one that explained the mantra, but only
by bringing in magical rites and specifying which parts go with
the chief deity (Vajrapāṇi) and which go with its four inner
retinue deities, Vajrakīla, etc., and with the ten directional
deities.[11] Here I shall treat the part specified for Vajrapāṇi's
magical acts *(karma)* of appeasing *(śāntika),* etc.[12]

> he phullu luni ru phullu | gṛhṇa kullu | mili cullu kuru
> kullu | vajravijayāya svāhā | kīlikīlāya svāhā | kaṭa kaṭa |
> maṭa maṭa | raṭa raṭa | moṭana-pramoṭanāya svāhā | cara
> nicara | hara hara | sara sara | māraya vajravidāraṇāya
> svāhā | chinda chinda | bhinda bhinda | mahākīlikīlāya svāhā |
> bandha bandha | krodhavajrakīlikīlāya svāhā |.

Some of the imperatives are single, and some doublets. I have
had to edit the apparently Middle-Indic selection, especially for
word isolation; and in the first stretch one must read *lūni* (the
long *ū*). It starts He ("O!"), Phullu ("Expand!"), Ru ("Express!")
the sheaf *(lūni),* Phullu ("Expand it!"). This appears to repre-
sent the deity's appeasing magic *(śāntika).* Then Gṛhṇa ("Take
prisoner!") and Kullu ("Make small!", Skt. *kṣull),* apparently
controlling magic *(vaśīkara).* Then, Mili ("Encounter!"), Cullu
("Exhibit an expression of joy!"), Kuru (take it as though Skt.
kṣuru, "Make furrows!"), and Kullu (again "Make small!"), which
is prosperity magic *(pauṣṭika).* Then, for these three kinds of
magic, Vajra-vijayāya ("With the victorious thunderbolt"), Svāhā;
and Kīlikīlāya ("With a loud noise"), Svāhā. Now, for the de-
structive magic, beginning Kaṭa Kaṭa (here, among the many pos-
sible meanings, take the 'rain' option, by authority of Ratnākara-
śānti's commentary on *Guhyasamāja-tantra,* Chap. XIV);[13] in the
drastic or destructive sense "Drop the deluge!"; Maṭa Maṭa ("Send
a hail storm!"); Raṭa Raṭa ("Roar!"); and Motaṇa-pramotaṇāya
("With the destructive Pramotaṇa"), Svāhā; where Pramotaṇa
appears to be an epithet of Vajrapāṇi's Vajra in its destructive
feature. Then Cara Nicara ("Hunt!") and Hara Hara ("Seize!");
Sara Sara ("Pursue!") and Māraya ("Kill!"), namely, "With the
Vajravidāraṇa", Svāhā. Here, Vajravidāraṇa, occuring as it does

in the title the work, indicates the prevalent character of the
Vajra, i.e. its cleaving ability. Then Chinda Chinda ("Cut
through!") and Bhinda Bhinda ("Rend asunder!"); Mahākīlikīlāya
("With the intense loud noise"), Svāhā. Finally, Bandha Bandha
("Tie up!"), with the loud noise of the fierce thunderbolt
(krodha-vajra), Svāhā. The term Svāhā here, does not, as is
frequently explained in the Buddhist Tantras, go with a female-
type mantra called vidyā, because the main deities here, Vajra-
pāṇi and entourage, are all male. Hence, Svāhā as found in the
foregoing must simply be the one employed in Vedic rituals, where
it signifies the benediction "Hail!". And here the term vajra
does mean "thunderbolt" rather than the "diamond" sense it
usually has in later Buddhist Tantras. The Mantra distinction of
four magical rites is somewhat clarified near the end of the long
mantra by way of four mantras which the commentary associates
with the four inner-retinue deities that surround Vajrapāṇi.

hulu hulu, tiṣṭha tiṣṭha vajra, bandha bandha, hana hana.

These mantras are called upahṛdaya, meaning the next to shor-
test ones. First, Hulu Hulu appears to mean: "Shout with joy!"
identified as the prosperity upahṛdaya of Vajrakīla. Then Tiṣṭha
Tiṣṭha Vajra ("Stand up, O Vajra!"), the appeasing upahṛdaya of
Vajracaṇḍa. Then Bandha Bandha ("Tie up!"), the controlling
upahṛdaya of Vajramudgara. Finally, Hana Hana ("Injure!"), the
drastic upahṛdaya of Vajradaṇḍa. The mantra Tiṣṭha Tiṣṭha Vajra
therefore goes with the previous illustration of appeasing magic
by the mantra translated "Express and expand the sheaf (lūni),"
suggesting that the sheaf or bundle of grain stalks held by the
goddess (and preserved in the figure of the Virgạ́ sign) serves to
appease inimical forces.

5) More from the Trisamayarājasādhana: The passage sometimes
referred to as the '100 syllables'[14] contains some imperative
forms worth mentioning, i.e. Hara Hara ("Grasp!"); Smara Smaraṇa
("Remember!"); Sara Sara ("Flow on!"); Hasa Hasa ("Laugh!");
Traya Traya ("Rescue!"); Jvala Jvalana ("Burn!"). These commands
appear to agree with my introduction category from the Vairocanā-
bhisaṃbodhi-tantra as the kind directed to the minor deities
called 'attendants', rather than to the Krodhas.

6) From a commentary on the Buddhist dhāraṇī of Vimaloṣṇīṣa:
In a published article[15] I pointed out that this commentary cited
these 'charms' (vidyā), namely, kṣaṇa kṣaṇa | kṣiṇi kṣiṇi | kṣuṇu
kṣuṇu |, transcribed into Tibetan and the commentarial explana-
tions were translated into Tibetan, as I rendered respectively,
"Guard!", "Rescue!" and "Nourish!". Now, from my previous obser-
vations, in order to look up the Sanskrit as root one should
disregard the vowel repetitions; and so the roots should be:
kṣaṇ-, kṣiṇ-, and kṣun-. However, as Sanskritists know, if the
finals of these roots were the dental n, they would have to
appear in this retroflex n anyway, due to the preceding retroflex
s. Palsule, A Concordance of Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas, mentions, p.
26, that "some authorities regard ṇ in kṣaṇ, kṣiṇ etc. as origi-
nal, others it as a cerebralisation of a dental n." Kale, A
Higher Sanskrit Grammar, in his chapter Dhātukosha,[16] puts both
kṣaṇ and kṣiṇ in the 8th verb class, each defined as hiṃsāyāṃ,
i.e. to hurt, to kill; and does not recognize a verb root kṣuṇ.
Palsule recognizes two roots kṣaṇ, and two roots kṣiṇ and kṣin;
and likewise has no entry for kṣuṇ or kṣun. Hence, the imperative
kṣuṇu kṣuṇu should be referred to the verb kṣud, which Kale puts
in the 7th verb class, with meaning saṃpeṣaṇe, to strike against.
Clearly, all three root definitions in present lexicons and
dictionaries when in imperative form in these Tantras are direc-
ted to the Krodha deities for fierce action against demons,
whether internal or external. And all three of them are in dis-

agreement with the explanations I found and translated from the Tibetan, namely, imperatives directed to the deity attendants to help out sentient beings. The discrepancy can only be resolved if one allows in each case two verb roots. By the suggestion of Palsule's compendium, the two in the first instance are *kṣaṇ,* two such roots; in the second instance are *kṣiṇ* (the retroflex *ṇ)* and *kṣin* (the dental *n);* and in the third instance *kṣud* and either a second root *kṣud* or a theoretical root *kṣuṇ* which is presently not recognized in the lexicons. In support of this contention, notice in the *Monier-Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary,* under *kṣuṇṇa* such meanings as "shattered" but also "exercised" (in body) and "multiplied". These latter meanings are rather consistent with the imperative I rendered from the Tibetan, "Nourish!". And notice this dictionary's entry *kṣuda,* with the meaning from a lexicon 'flour, meal'. While flour is the result of pulverization (in magic, the drastic type) it is in a state appropriate for nourishing (in magic, the prosperity type).

7) From the text *Balimālikā:*[17] An unusual entry in the Tibetan Tanjur is this text *Balimālikā* which is completely transcribed into Tibetan script from which the original Sanskrit could be readily restored, and accompanied by interlinear Tibetan partially translating it. I originally consulted it in the Derge edition. Here I noticed the mantra Hana Hana (as above "Injure!"), but the Tibetan rendition *snun snun* ("Prick!" or "Stab!") seems to preserve a Vedic meaning of *han-* "to hurl a dart upon". Therefore, Hana Hana in this case should be counted as Middle Indic, which is recognized to preserve some Vedic words or meanings rare or lost in Classical Sanskrit.

Conclusion

The foregoing examples could be multiplied without end by the abundance of mantras in the Buddhist Tantra texts. Still, the examples already presented enable me to make some conclusions. Notice that in a citation from the *Trisamayarājasādhana,* I took KHAṆA as a Middle Indic imperative with equivalent Sanskrit of *kṣaṇa.* Later I cited the mantra *kṣaṇa kṣaṇa* from a commentary on the Vimaloṣṇīṣa *dhāraṇī.* But the verb root *kṣaṇ* in the 8th class of verbs should have in Classical Sanskrit the form *kṣaṇu* for the second person single imperative, parasmaipada. The form *kṣaṇa* is the generalized imperative using the present stem like the first conjugational class. But *kṣaṇa* is not Middle Indic as was the form KHAṆA. Thus, these texts can present three kinds of verb forms. The text, when not giving a mantra, may be written in reasonably good Sanskrit, obeying the grammatical rules. Then in the case of a mantra, the imperatives may be Sanskrit in appearance, but not respecting the differentiated endings for the imperatives according to the ten classes of verbs. Or again, the imperative might be Middle Indic in form. The verb roots found in the Buddhist mantras also have the noteworthy feature of frequently being rare, perhaps the kind of root which modern Sanskrit dictionaries list only as lexical.

Editorial note: The editors deeply regret the following corrections: Page 38, line 1 "in the title the work" to "in the title of the work", and line 51 "others it" to "others regard it".

NOTES

1. Delivered at the Sixth World Sanskrit Conference, University of Pennsylvania, October 19, 1984, afternoon.

2. This is volume MA, or Tome 16, in the collected works of Bu-ston; cf. *A Catalogue of the Tohoku University Collection of Tibetan Works on Buddhism* (The Seminary of Indology, Tohoku University, 1953), where the contents of vol. MA are individually listed, pp. 31–65.

3. This information is from A. Wayman, MS. *Study of the Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi-tantra.*

4. From the Derge Kanjur, Rgyud 'bum, Vol. Thu, f. 291a-3, ff. This Acala Tantra of the Cāryatantra class has been edited in the Tibetan version by Jisshu Oshika, *Acta Indologica*, IV, Na ritasan Shinshoji, 1976/9, pp. 181-340, and the mantra I have cited is on p. 261.27-28.

5. Benoytosh Bhattacharya, ed., *Sādhanamālā*, Vol. I, (Baroda, 1968), text, p. 2.

6. Helmer Smith, *Saddanīti* (Lund, 1954), p. 1300.

7. Benoytosh Bhattacharya, ed., *Guhyasamāja Tantra* (Baroda, 1967), p. 78.4 and.14.

8. Cf. Alex Wayman, "The Sarvarahasyatantra," *Studies of Mysticism in Honor of the 1150th Anniversary of Kobo Daishi's Nirvāṇam, Acta Indologica*, VI, 1984, pp. 561-2.

9. A. Wayman (n. 8, above), also pp. 561-2.

10. Gajanan Balkrishna Palsule, *A Concordance of Sanskrit Dhātupāṭhas* (Poona, 1955).

11. For the theory of these respective parts of the mantra, cf. F.D. Lessing and A. Wayman, *Mkhas grub rje's Fundamentals of the Buddhist Tantras* (The Hague, 1968), pp. 116-118.

12. Transcription of part of the mantra within the *Vajra-vidāraṇa-nāma-dhāraṇī* (basic Vajrapāṇi Tantra of the Kriyātantra) from the Derge Kanjur edition.

13. A. Wayman (n. 8, above), also pp. 561-2.

14. B. Bhattacharya, ed. (n. 5, above), also p. 2.

15. Cf. A. Wayman, "The Significance of Mantras, from the Veda Down to Buddhist Tantric Practice", reprinted in *Buddhist Insight; Essays by Alex Wayman*, ed. by George R. Elder (Delhi, 1984), p. 429.

16. Moreshwar Ramchandra Kale, *A Higher Sanskrit Grammar* (Delhi, reprint of 1977), Dhātukosha, pp. 24-5.

17. A. Wayman (n. 15, above), p. 429.

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