

༄༅། །སྐྱུན་རས་གཟིགས་ཡུམ་གྱི་གནུངས།

**The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of
Avalokiteśvara”**

Avalokiteśvaramātādhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག་གི་ཡུམ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གསུངས།

'phags pa spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug gi yum zhes bya ba'i gzung

The Noble Dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara”

Āryāvalokiteśvaramātānāmadhāraṇī



Toh 725
Degé Kangyur, vol. 94 (rgyud, tsha), folios 200.b–202.a.

Translated by Samye Translations
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

First published 2021
Current version v 1.1.8 (2022)
Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.16.5

84000: *Translating the Words of the Buddha* is a global non-profit initiative to translate all the Buddha's words into modern languages, and to make them available to everyone.



This work is provided under the protection of a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution - Non-commercial - No-derivatives) 3.0 copyright. It may be copied or printed for fair use, but only with full attribution, and not for commercial advantage or personal compensation. For full details, see the Creative Commons license.

This print version was generated at 2.26pm on Friday, 4th November 2022 from the online version of the text available on that date. If some time has elapsed since then, this version may have been superseded, as most of 84000's published translations undergo significant updates from time to time. For the latest online version, with bilingual display, interactive glossary entries and notes, and a variety of further download options, please see <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh725.html>.

co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- im. Imprint
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
 - 1. The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara”
- c. Colophon
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
 - Primary Sources
 - Secondary Sources
- g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

- s.1 In this short sūtra, the bodhisattva Samantabhadra asks the Buddha to reveal *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*, a powerful dhāraṇī that helps practitioners progress on the path to awakening. The Buddha grants his request and relates how he had himself received the dhāraṇī. Samantabhadra then speaks the dhāraṇī, after which the Buddha states its benefits.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated by Samye Translations under the guidance of Phakchok Rinpoche. The translation and introduction were produced by Lowell Cook and Stefan Mang. The translation was checked against the Chinese by Dr. Jeffrey Kotyk.

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

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Noble Dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara”*¹ begins in the city of Vaiśālī, where the Buddha is residing amidst an assembly of monks and bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva Samantabhadra requests that he reveal the powerful *dhāraṇī* known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*, and the Buddha agrees. The Buddha first relates how he had himself received this *dhāraṇī* in a past life from the brahmin Prabheśvara, who benefited millions of beings by teaching it in Sukhāvātī, the pure land of the Buddha Amitābha. Following this account, Samantabhadra magically speaks the *dhāraṇī* to the assembly, after which the Buddha encourages the audience to recite it and praises its efficacy. Thus, the *dhāraṇī* can be divided into four sections: the request to teach the *dhāraṇī*, the *dhāraṇī*’s origin story, the *dhāraṇī* itself, and a praise of the *dhāraṇī*’s benefits.

i.2 As indicated by the text’s title, the *dhāraṇī* concerns a goddess named or bearing the title Avalokiteśvaramātā, “the mother of Avalokiteśvara.” In the Degé Kangyur,² the *dhāraṇī* belongs to a cycle of eight Kriyātantra (*bya rgyud*) texts (Toh 724–31) dedicated to the goddess Tārā. Based on this categorization, we may infer that the Tibetan scholars understood Avalokiteśvaramātā to be the goddess Tārā, but there is no further evidence to confirm this identification.

i.3 According to the Tibetan colophon, *The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara”* was originally translated by the monk and translator Yeshé Dé and the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla, who were regular collaborators in the late eighth- and early ninth-centuries. The *dhāraṇī* is accordingly found in the Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) and Phangthangma (*’phang thang ma*) catalogs of translations made during Tibet’s imperial period.³ The *dhāraṇī* was translated into Chinese by Fǎxián (法賢, 973-1001) under the title *Fo shuo guanzizai pusa mu tuoluoni jing* (观自在菩萨母陀罗尼经, Taishō 1117). There is to our knowledge no extant Sanskrit version of this work.

i.4 This English translation is based on the Tibetan version in the Degé Kangyur collection, in consultation with the Stok Palace and Phukdrak Kangyurs, as well as the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) Kangyur. The English translation was compared with the Chinese translation before being finalized.

The Translation

The Noble Dhāraṇī

The Mother of Avalokiteśvara

1. The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara”

[F.200.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. In the city of Vaiśālī, the Blessed One was surrounded and honored by a great assembly as he sat upon a seat arranged for him. He was surrounded and honored by five hundred fully ordained monks headed by the great śrāvaka Śāriputra, and many bodhisattva great beings headed by Maitreya. Present among this assembly was the bodhisattva great being known as Samantabhadra. Rising from his seat, Samantabhadra draped his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt on his right knee, bowed his head at the feet of the Blessed One, and said:

1.3 “Blessed One, the great dhāraṇī of the vidyāmantra, the mantra formula, known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*, has been taught and is being taught by the blessed buddhas of the past, present, and future. It had previously been taught when the Blessed One was a bodhisattva seeking awakening, and it was taught in order to benefit and care for all beings, up to and including the bodhisattvas. The dhāraṇī is a refuge for all beings who lack refuge, beings who have been the fathers and mothers of the noble sons and daughters who follow the bodhisattva vehicle. It is an ally to those without allies and a protector to those without protection. It brings all misdeeds to an end. All wishes are fulfilled as soon as this dhāraṇī is heard, [F.201.a] and through it all vidyāmantras are successful.”⁴

1.4 The Blessed One replied, “Bodhisattva great being, in the past when I was a bodhisattva seeking awakening, the Thus-Gone worthy, complete, and perfect Buddha Amitābha lived, prospered, and taught the Dharma in Sukhāvātī, a world system far beyond as many world systems as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges. He lives there even now. Among his retinue was a brahmin known as Prabheśvara who had attained the third bodhisattva level. It was he who proclaimed, expounded, and taught this

great queen of vidyāmantras, the dhāraṇī known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*, to many hundreds of thousands of brahmins and numerous billions of sentient beings. As soon as they heard this dhāraṇī, they were freed from all misdeeds and transgressions and remembered their rebirths. This I recall.

1.5 “Great bodhisattva, recite the dhāraṇī! At a later time, the numerous trillions of misdeeds of sentient beings, throughout defiled worlds, who have performed misdeeds and the actions with immediate retribution will be exhausted. They will be well and be happy. It will serve as a protector to those without protection. I also approve and rejoice.”

1.6 The bodhisattva great being Samantabhadra then spoke the great dhāraṇī of the vidyāmantra, the mantra formula, known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*.

1.7 “Homage to the Three Jewels. Homage to the Blessed, thus-gone Amitābha. Homage to the bodhisattva great being endowed with great compassion, Noble Avalokiteśvara. [F.201.b] Having paid homage to them, I shall recite the great vidyāmantra, the mantra formula, the noble dhāraṇī known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara*. May I accomplish this vidyā!

1.8 *tadyathā | ili mili | cili mili | kuntule kuntule kuntule | śire śiśire viśire | vīrāyai gauri gāndhāri drāmiṭe mātaṅgi pukkasi kaṣṭaya mām | caṇḍāli huttu mālini hūm | dhu dhu mālini | cile mile | gṛhṇa saumyadarśani | kuru candramukhi | laḡhumānayante āryadakṣiṇabhujē | sarvavidyānām prasādhane | sarvavidyānām īśvari svāhā | |*

1.9 The Blessed One then said,⁵ “This is the rite for this dhāraṇī that is mastered through recitation. As soon as it is heard, all karmic obscurations will be purified, and one will be protected from all fears. If one recites it during the three periods of the day, one will see the bodhisattva great being Samantabhadra within seven days. If one mentally recites it without thinking of anything else, the great vidyā herself, the mother of Noble Avalokiteśvara, will be revealed within one month, and noble Amitābha will also be seen. One’s progress to unsurpassed awakening will be irreversible. One will also remember one’s rebirths and retain whatever has been learned. No matter where one is born, one will not be separated from the sacred Dharma, and one will be affluent.”

1.10 After the Blessed One spoke these words, the entire assembly, including the bodhisattva great being Samantabhadra, the bodhisattvas, and the fully ordained monks, rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had taught.

1.11 *This completes the noble dhāraṇī “The Mother of Avalokiteśvara.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated and edited by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and [F.202.a] Dānaśīla and the translator-editor Bandé Yeshé Dé, revised according to the new lexicon, and finalized.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Following the general application of the honorific “noble” (Skt. *ārya*; Tib. *’phags pa*) in Buddhist literature, the term seems likely to apply to the text itself, not the deity. However, this honorific is so frequently prefixed to Avalokiteśvara’s name that many readers of the Tibetan text may naturally and optionally interpret it in that way instead.
- n.2 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 909 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 909 note 2 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh909.html#end-note-UT22084-094-002-56>) for details.
- n.3 Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 221–22. See also Denkarma, 302.b.6.
- n.4 The implication is that Buddhist dhāraṇīs such as this have the capacity to accomplish all other Buddhist and non-Buddhist spells, whatever their purpose.
- n.5 There is no indication at this point in the text that Samantabhadra has finished speaking and that the Buddha begins, but considering that the following quote concludes with the statement, “After the Blessed One spoke these words,” inserting this line for clarity seems warranted.

b.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

· Primary Sources ·

spyān ras gzigs yum gyi gzungs (Avalokiteśvaramātādhāraṇī). Toh 725, Degé Kangyur vol. 94 (rgyud, tsha), folios 200.b–202.a.

spyān ras gzigs yum gyi gzungs (Avalokiteśvaramātādhāraṇī). Toh 909, Degé Kangyur vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folios 240.a–241.b.

spyān ras gzigs yum gyi gzungs. bka' 'gyur (dpe bsdur ma) [Comparative Edition of the Kangyur], krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug ste gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang (The Tibetan Tripitaka Collation Bureau of the China Tibetology Research Center). 108 volumes. Beijing: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang (China Tibetology Publishing House), 2006–2009, vol. 94, pp. 511–16.

pho brang stod thang ldan dkar gyi chos kyi 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag [Denkarma]. Toh 4364, Degé Tengyur vol. 206 (sna tshogs, jo), folios 294.b–310.a.

· Secondary Sources ·

Herrmann-Pfandt, Adelheid. *Die lHan kar ma: ein früherer Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte*. Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008.

GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

Amitābha

The buddha residing in the western buddha realm Sukhāvātī.

g.2 Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

Avalokiteśvara

One of the eight main bodhisattvas, the heart sons of the Buddha.

g.3 Bandé Yeshé Dé

ban+de ye shes sde

བརྗེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

A prolific Tibetan translator active during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. He is credited with translating no fewer than 380 works.

g.4 Blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

An epithet of the buddhas.

g.5 Dānaśīla

dA na shI la

དྲན་ཤི་ལ།

Dānaśīla

An Indian preceptor from Kashmir who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth- and early ninth-centuries. He was a frequent collaborator of Yeshé Dé.

g.6 Dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

The term *dhāraṇī* has the sense of something that “holds” or “retains,” and as such can refer to the special capacity of practitioners to memorize and recall detailed teachings. It can also refer to a verbal expression of the teachings—an incantation, spell, or mnemonic formula that distills and “holds” essential points of the Dharma and is used by practitioners to attain mundane and supramundane goals. The same term is also used to denote texts that contain such formulae.

g.7 Dhāraṇī of the vidyāmantra

gzungs kyi rig sngags

གཟུངས་ཀྱི་རིག་སྒྲགས།

vidyāmantradhāraṇī

g.8 Ganges

gang gA

གང་ས།

Gaṅgā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The major river in North India and, according to Buddhist cosmology, one of the four sacred rivers that flow through the southernmost continent of Jambudvīpa. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.9 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇི་ན་མི་ཏ།

Jinamitra

An Indian preceptor from Kashmir who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. He was a frequent collaborator of Yeshé Dé.

g.10 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

Maitreya

One of the eight main bodhisattvas, the heart sons of the Buddha.

g.11 Mantra formula

gsang sngags kyi gzhi

གསང་སྒྲགས་ཀྱི་གཞི།

mantrapada

g.12 Mother

yum

ཡུམ།

mātā

g.13 Prabheśvara

dbang phyug 'od

དབང་ཕྱུག་འོད།

Prabheśvara

A brahmin who teaches the dhāraṇī known as *The Mother of Avalokiteśvara* in Sukhāvātī, the realm of the Buddha Amitābha.

g.14 Samantabhadra

kun tu bzang po

ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ།

Samantabhadra

One of the eight main bodhisattvas, the heart sons of the Buddha.

g.15 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤ་རི་བུ།

Śāriputra

One of the closest disciples of the Buddha, known for his wisdom and pure observance of discipline.

g.16 Śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

The word, based on the verb “to hear,” means “disciple” in general, and is more specifically applied to the followers of the non-Mahāyāna traditions of Buddhism.

g.17 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

Sukhāvātī

The pure realm of the Buddha Amitābha.

g.18 Tārā

sgrol ma

སྒྲོལ་མ།

Tārā

A goddess whose name can be translated as “Savior.” She is known for giving protection and is variously presented in Buddhist literature as a great bodhisattva or a fully awakened buddha.

g.19 Thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

An epithet of the buddhas.

g.20 Vaiśālī

yangs pa can

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

Vaiśālī

A major city during the Buddha's time, the capital of the Licchavi republic. It was an important location where a number of Buddhist sūtras are said to have been taught.

g.21 Vidyā

rig pa

འིག་པ།

vidyā

A term that at once refers to a type of spell or dhāraṇī and to the goddess it invokes, thereby reflecting their inseparability.

g.22 Vidyāmantra

rig sngags

འིག་སྒྲགས།

vidyāmantra

The formula associated with and identical to the goddess it invokes.