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## The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa

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*Agrapradīpadhāraṇī*

འཕགས་པ་རིག་སྒྲགས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ་སློན་མ་མཚོག་གི་གཟུངས།

*'phags pa rig sngags kyi rgyal po sgron ma mchog gi gzungs*

The Noble King of Spells, the Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa

*Āryāgrapradīpadhāraṇīvidyārāja*



Toh 858  
Degé Kangyur, vol. 100 (rgyud 'bum, e), folios 79.b–85.a

Translated by Julian Schott  
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Noble King of Spells, the Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* presents six distinct dhāraṇī formulas that can be used for protection from threatening forces and illness, to facilitate the path to awakening, and to bring the practitioner into harmony with other beings. As the Buddha Śākyamuni resides at Jeta Grove near the city of Śrāvastī, he is visited by two bodhisattvas sent as emissaries by the Buddha Agrapradīpa, who resides in a distant buddhfield named Infinite Flowers. These bodhisattvas present the first of the six dhāraṇīs as an offering to Śākyamuni from Agrapradīpa. Inspired by their example, additional dhāraṇīs are then presented: one each by Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, two by Śākyamuni himself, and a final formula recited by the Four Great Kings. After the presentation of each dhāraṇī, the Buddha tells Ānanda of the rarity of such dhāraṇīs and describes the benefits that accrue from their recitation.

ac.

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Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*The Noble King of Spells, the Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* is a text of the dhāraṇī genre that presents a series of six dhāraṇī formulas that can be recited to guard against disease, grant security from danger, and ensure harmony with beings. The narrative of the text begins in Jeta Grove near the city of Śrāvastī, where the Buddha Śākyamuni is teaching a gathering of monks, bodhisattvas, devas, and ordinary people. Two bodhisattvas—Amitābha and Great Light—arrive at that assembly and announce that they are emissaries of Agrapradīpa, the titular buddha who lives in the buddhafiield Infinite Flowers located many millions of buddhafiields away. After conveying Agrapradīpa’s greetings and well-wishes to Śākyamuni, the two bodhisattvas present Agrapradīpa’s main offering: a dhāraṇī that will protect and benefit all the people of Śākyamuni’s buddhafiield. When their recitation of the dhāraṇī is complete, the Buddha addresses Ānanda, exhorting him to remember, recite, and uphold the dhāraṇī. He then describes the rarity of receiving such a dhāraṇī and the benefits that will accrue from using it.

i.2

Five additional dhāraṇīs are recited in the text: one each by the bodhisattvas Maitreya and Mañjuśrī, both of whom are already present in the audience; two by Śākyamuni himself; and a final dhāraṇī recited in unison by the Four Great Kings—Kubera, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Virūpākṣa, and Virūḍhaka. These dhāraṇīs are presented the same way as before: first it is announced that a dhāraṇī will be recited for the health, happiness, and protection of all beings; next, the dhāraṇī is recited before the assembly; finally, the Buddha encourages Ānanda to uphold the dhāraṇī while explaining to him the rarity of the occasion and the benefits of reciting and transmitting the dhāraṇī. Also included in these descriptions are the number of past lives the reciter will be able to remember, the number of buddhas who have taught the dhāraṇī, and a statement about its secrecy.



i.3      Śākyamuni gives his most detailed account of the benefits of dhāraṇī recitation following the second of the dhāraṇīs that he himself recites. In this passage, the Buddha lists the types of supernatural beings who will no longer influence the reciter, the classes of animals that will not be a threat, the types of diseases the dhāraṇī will alleviate, and specific life-threatening circumstances it will protect against. The Buddha completes this description by declaring that it is not possible for anyone under the protection of these dhāraṇīs to be reborn among the gods, humans, asuras, or māras. The Buddha offers a similarly detailed description of the benefits of dhāraṇī recitation, this time in verse, following the presentation of the dhāraṇī by the Four Great Kings. In this passage the Buddha places more emphasis on spiritual benefits, noting that one who recites the dhāraṇī will be free of the obstacles created by Māra, purify billions of eons of karmic deeds, and amass an incredible amount of merit in an exceedingly short time. Following these verses, the text comes to a close as the entire assembly, including the bodhisattvas and Four Great Kings, rejoice and praise Śākyamuni's discourse.

i.4      As a text of the dhāraṇī genre, *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* features teachings by Śākyamuni and others on the use of dhāraṇī, formulas of syllables and words recited to accomplish mundane goals and to progress on the path to liberation. Derived from the Sanskrit root  $\sqrt{dhr}$ , which means to “hold” and “retain,” both in the sense of physically holding something and keeping something firmly in mind, as a verbal formula a dhāraṇī can be described as that which “holds” or encodes the teachings or blessings of the buddhas, and so it is extremely efficacious for those who memorize and recite it. Because dhāraṇīs are very often used to achieve the worldly goals of health, protection, and prosperity, they can be used and understood as “spells.” In this and similar texts, the term *dhāraṇī* is often used synonymously with the terms *mantra* (*sngags*), *vidyā* (*rig*), and *vidyāmantra* (*rig sngags*). This can be seen in the full title of the text, which identifies it as a *vidyārāja* (*rig sngags kyi rgyal po*), a “king of spells,”<sup>1</sup> and in the body of the text, where the verbal formulas are consistently referred to as *dhāraṇīmantrapāda*, translated here as “dhāraṇī-mantra formula.” Much like spells, the formulas in this text are intended to be recited aloud to produce their effects, but in other works a dhāraṇī can also be written down so that it can be worn or otherwise used as a physical protective talisman. While many dhāraṇīs convey clearly articulated meaning, they just as often consist entirely of words with no obvious semantic content. This is the case in *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*, where it is the alliterative force of the formulas, rather than their meaning, that conveys their power to heal and protect.

i.5        Though dhāraṇīs are used to bring about a wide range of effects from the mundane to the transcendent, it is often the mundane benefits of dhāraṇī recitation that are given priority. *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* is no different in this regard. Here, we are told that the dhāraṇīs can protect the reciter from a host of threatening forces, including bhūtas, nāgas, yakṣas, rākṣasas, vetālas, and similar supernatural beings, as well as from the danger posed by biting insects, snakes, spiders, and predatory animals. These dhāraṇīs will protect one from a wide range of infectious diseases and skin disorders and will even avert the effects of hostile magic. By reciting these dhāraṇīs one will remain safe wherever one is, be it at home, in a royal palace, out in the wilderness, or in situations where one’s life is threatened by fire and water. One can even escape criminal punishment through the use of these dhāraṇīs. Among the spiritual benefits of reciting the dhāraṇīs is the ability to remember multiple past lives, to mitigate the effects of eons of accumulated karma, and to amass in a short period of time the same merit bodhisattvas accumulate over millions of eons. Such is the power of a dhāraṇī as the distillation of the Dharma into short, potent, and broadly applicable formulas to heal, protect, and facilitate one’s progress to awakening.

i.6        A complete version of *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* is not presently available in Sanskrit, but several lines of the text are extant in a fragment of a paper manuscript written in the Brāhmī script that was recovered in Khotan. The fragment, which dates to roughly the eighth or ninth century, was unearthed by Aurel Stein at Khadalik, Khotan in 1906 and is presently held by the British Library.<sup>2</sup> *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* was translated into Chinese multiple times over a span of several centuries. The earliest translation is the *Chiju shenzhou jing* (Taishō 1351; 持句神呪經), which was translated by Zhi Qian and completed in the third century.<sup>3</sup> The *Tuoluonibo jing* (Taishō 1352; 陀隣尼鉢經) was translated by Zhu Tanwu lan, also known as Dharmarakṣa, who was active between 381 and 395. There are also two versions of Jñānagupta’s *Donfang zuisheng dengwang tuoluoni jing* (Taishō 1353 and 1354; 東方最勝燈王陀羅尼經) preserved in the Chinese canon.<sup>4</sup> Jñānagupta was a Gandharan monk who spent time in Khotan and prepared his translations during his residence at the Xingshan Temple in Chang’an between 592 and 594. A fourth translation, the *Sheng zuishang dengming rulai tuoluoni jing* (Taishō 1355; 聖最上燈明如來陀羅尼經) was completed centuries later by Dānapāla, who was active between 982 and 1017.<sup>5</sup> The range of dates of the Chinese translations, as well as the discovery of a Sanskrit fragment of the dhāraṇī in Khotan, demonstrate the enduring popularity and geographic diffusion of *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*.

i.7        Included in this wide geographic and temporal range is the Tibetan translation of *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*. The text lacks a translator's colophon, making it challenging to determine the precise date of its translation and to identify its translators. The text is recorded in both the Denkarma and Phangthangma imperial-period catalogs, indicating that it was translated no later than the Tibetan Empire's collapse in the mid-ninth century.<sup>6</sup> This would place its translation roughly approximate to the Khotanese fragment, and falling between the Chinese translations of Jñānagupta and Dānapāla. As is often the case with works of the dhāraṇī genre, *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* appears twice in the Kangyur, once in the Tantra section (Toh 528), and once in the Dhāraṇī section (Toh 858). There is practically no difference between these two versions, apart from minor orthographic variants.

i.8        The present translation was completed based on the Tibetan translation of *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* preserved in the Tantra and Dhāraṇī sections of the Degé Kangyur<sup>7</sup> as the representative of the Tshalpa (*tshal pa*) group of Kangyurs, and in consultation with the version in the Stok Palace Kangyur as representative of the Thempangma (*them spangs ma*) group. This translation also utilized the comparative apparatus of the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Degé Kangyur. The Tibetan translations are remarkably stable across versions, with no substantive variants to report. The six dhāraṇīs recorded in transliterated Sanskrit have been reported as they are written in the Degé version, with no attempt made to emend or standardize the Sanskrit reported therein.

The Translation

The Noble King of Spells

**The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa**

# 1. The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa

[F.79.b]<sup>8</sup>

## 1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing near Śrāvastī, in Jeta Grove at Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, along with a great congregation of 1,250 monks, many hundreds of thousands of gods and humans, and many hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas. Surrounded and venerated by them, he taught the Dharma.

## 1.2 In a buddhafiield one trillion buddhafiields away from this buddhafiield, [F.80.a] the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha Agrapradīpa was residing in the world system named Infinite Flowers. He passed his time there teaching the Dharma. He sent the two great bodhisattvas, Great Light and Amitābha, here to the Sahā world system.

## 1.3 The two bodhisattvas went to Jeta Grove at Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, where Śākyamuni, the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha was residing. They arrived, respectfully bowed their heads at the Blessed One's feet, circumambulated him three times, and sat to one side.

## 1.4 Those two bodhisattvas said to the Blessed One, "Blessed One, a trillion buddhafiields away is the world system named Infinite Flowers, where the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha Agrapradīpa resides. He passes his time there teaching the Dharma. The blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha Agrapradīpa sent us both here to this Sahā world system. The blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha Agrapradīpa asks about the Blessed One's health. Are his illnesses and ailments few? Is he fit, nourished, strong, happy, free of annoyances, and therefore comfortable?"

1.5 “He also asks if you are free from any and all of the harms in this world caused by humans, nonhumans, bhūtas, piśācas, yakṣas, rākṣasas, kumbhāṇḍas, the commander of the kumbhāṇḍa armies, [F.80.b] kings, high-ranking ministers, thieves, snakes, insects, spiders,<sup>9</sup> small biting insects,<sup>10</sup> and other afflictions.

1.6 “For the benefit, welfare, and happiness of all beings, to provide them with vitality, charisma, glory, good qualities, strength, and beauty, and to protect, guard, and preserve them, the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly awakened Buddha Agrapradīpa offers this dhāraṇī-mantra formula:

1.7 *joāle<sup>11</sup> joāle joāle gate hukku mukku sammate mahāsammate mahājoāle joāvala me sahe sahe mahājoāle ukke mukke sāme sammahe mahāsammate mahāsāme svāha.”<sup>12</sup>*

1.8 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, remember this mantra formula. Receive it, retain it, recite it, and master it. Teach it to others extensively. Ānanda, the appearance of a buddha is rare, and this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hard to find. Ānanda, one who upholds this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is also exceedingly hard to find. Ānanda, any son or daughter of noble family who remembers, receives, retains, recites, and masters this dhāraṇī-mantra formula and teaches it to others extensively will remember their last seven rebirths. In this life they will escape all harm apart from the results of their previous actions, [F.81.a] and they will be in harmony with all beings. Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula was taught by seventy-seven billion buddhas. This dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hidden from all those who would violate it.”

1.9 The bodhisattva mahāsattva Ajita then rose from his seat, adjusted his robe on his shoulder, and knelt down on his right knee.<sup>13</sup> Bowing to the Blessed One with joined palms, he spoke to the Blessed One: “O Blessed One, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of all beings, to provide them with vitality, charisma, glory, good qualities, strength, and beauty, and to protect, guard, and preserve them, I will speak another dhāraṇī-mantra formula:

1.10 *atte vatte natte kunatte pukase kupukkase kase anakase nāmakase anuta pranuta khaje mahākaje sadpappe taḍaphe tuḍaphe hili mili tile svāha.”*

1.11 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, remember this mantra formula. Receive it, retain it, recite it, and master it. Teach it to others extensively. Ānanda, the appearance of a buddha is rare, and this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hard to find. Ānanda, one who upholds this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is also exceedingly hard to find. [F.81.b] Ānanda, any son or daughter of noble family who remembers, receives, retains,

recites, and masters this dhāraṇī-mantra formula and teaches it to others extensively will remember their last twelve rebirths. In this life they will escape all harm apart from the results of their previous actions, and they will be in harmony with all beings. Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula was taught by eighty-two billion buddhas. This dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hidden from all those who would violate it.”

1.12 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta then rose from his seat, adjusted his robe on his shoulder, and knelt down on his right knee.<sup>14</sup> Bowing to the Blessed One with joined palms, he spoke to the Blessed One: “O Blessed One, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of all beings, to provide them with vitality, charisma, glory, good qualities, strength, and beauty, and to protect, guard, and preserve them, I will speak another dhāraṇī-mantra formula:

1.13 *akkhe vakkhe naṅgāsare nahili jahile jahili vate caṇḍīla vate svāha.”*

1.14 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, remember this mantra formula. Receive it, retain it, recite it, and master it. Teach it to others extensively. [F.82.a] Ānanda, the appearance of a buddha is rare, and this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hard to find. Ānanda, one who upholds this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is also exceedingly hard to find. Ānanda, any son or daughter of noble family who remembers, receives, retains, recites, and masters this dhāraṇī-mantra formula and teaches it to others extensively will remember their last thirteen rebirths. In this life they will escape all harm apart from the results of their previous actions, and they will be in harmony with all beings. Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula was taught by eighty-two billion buddhas. This dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hidden from all those who would violate it.”

1.15 Then, the Bhagavān addressed the monks: “O monks, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of all beings, so that they may have vitality, charisma, glory, good qualities, strength, and beauty, and to protect, guard, and preserve them, I too will teach a dhāraṇī-mantra formula:

1.16 *aṭṭe vaṭṭe naṭṭe kunaṭṭe ṭake eḍake tatave tuḍave raṭake lole hule hili mile tile śīle śīla aḍḍhe vaḍḍhe naḍḍhe kunaḍḍhe aḍavati panavati kase kase kase phase phase phase mahāphase phase svāha.”*

1.17 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: [F.82.b] “Ānanda, remember this mantra formula. Receive it, retain it, recite it, and master it. Teach it to others extensively. Ānanda, the appearance of a buddha is rare, and this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hard to find. Ānanda, one who teaches this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is also exceedingly hard to find. Ānanda, any son or daughter of noble family who remembers, receives, retains, recites, and masters this dhāraṇī-mantra formula and teaches it to others extensively

will remember their last fourteen rebirths. In this life they will escape all harm apart from the results of their previous actions, and they will be in harmony with all beings. Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula was taught by eighty-four billion buddhas. This dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hidden from all those who would violate it.

1.18 “When any son or daughter of noble family uses this dhāraṇī-mantra formula as protection for a carelessly watered, withered tree, using it to guard, support, control, pacify, and help it grow well, that tree will again produce sprouts and leaves, and it will again bear flowers and fruit. What need is there to mention what will happen for a human?

1.19 *nāmaḥ sarvabuddhebhyaḥ siddhyantu dhāraṇīmantrapādāni svāha.*<sup>15</sup>

1.20 The Blessed One again addressed the monks: “O monks, for the benefit, welfare, and happiness of all beings, so that they may have vitality, [F.83.a] charisma, glory, good qualities, strength, and beauty, and to protect, guard and preserve them, I will teach another dhāraṇī-mantra formula. It is as follows:

1.21 *atte matte pake pāraḥ vekeḍā dramati taramati tuḍamati tuḍamati tuḍamati tuḍaṭure sure hile mule tile svāha.*”

1.22 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, remember this mantra formula. Receive it, retain it, recite it, and master it. Teach it to others extensively. Ānanda, the appearance of a buddha is rare, and this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hard to find. Ānanda, one who upholds this dhāraṇī-mantra formula is also exceedingly hard to find. Ānanda, any son or daughter of noble family who remembers, receives, retains, recites, and masters this dhāraṇī-mantra formula and teaches it to others extensively will remember their last twenty-one rebirths. In this life they will escape all harm apart from the results of their previous actions, and they will be in harmony with all beings.

1.23 “Anyone who is protected by it will not be affected by any kind of bhūta. They will not be harmed by devas, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, or any humans and nonhumans. They will not be harmed by snakes, insects, spiders, or small biting insects. [F.83.b] Fevers resulting from disorders of wind, bile, or phlegm, their combination,<sup>16</sup> or a change of seasons will not affect them. They will not be affected by illnesses lasting one, two, three, four, or seven days, half a month, a month, or a year, or illnesses that are chronic or sudden. Boils, lesions, eczema, blood boils, rashes, ringworm, chronic itching, scabies, all forms of leprosy, and any kind of pustule will not afflict them, and they will not be affected by kṛtya rites, or by kākhordas and vetālas.<sup>17</sup>



- 1.24 “Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula was taught by ninety-nine billion buddhas. This dhāraṇī-mantra formula is hidden from all those who would violate it.
- 1.25 “Ānanda, this dhāraṇī-mantra formula should be kept in mind when residing in a palace, as well as when staying among thieves, rākṣasas, and fierce predatory animals. It should be kept in mind when staying in the wilderness, when at a river or other place that is difficult to traverse, or when dealing with fire and water. A person who keeps it in mind will not experience fear of such things. It can even make poisonous food edible. Ānanda, whoever upholds this dhāraṇī-mantra formula will not be harmed by any kind of bhūta, preta, pūtana, kṛtya rite, [F.84.a] kākhorda, or human or nonhuman. In brief, Ānanda, no harm will come to them from outside forces.
- 1.26 “A person deserving of execution, Ānanda, will be freed after being struck with a rod. A person deserving of being struck with a rod will be released after a beating. A person deserving of a beating will be released after a scolding.<sup>18</sup> A person deserving of a scolding will be released with a warning. A person deserving of a warning will be released with a stern look.<sup>19</sup>
- 1.27 “Ānanda, a person who is controlled, calmed, and made to prosper through the protection, security, and support of these dhāraṇī-mantra formulas will never be otherwise. It is impossible. I have not seen that happen in the world of devas, māras, or Brahmā. I have not seen that among beings who are mendicants and brahmins, or among devas, humans, or asuras. Why? This dhāraṇī-mantra formula grants blessings that bring escape from all harm, infectious diseases, and disturbances.”
- 1.28 Following this Dharma discourse, the Four Great Kings addressed the Blessed One: “Blessed One, if we also offer a dhāraṇī-mantra formula so that this Dharma discourse will spread widely, so that those who proclaim it are supported, so that the sublime Dharma will, by all means, last a long time, and so that all māras are defeated, will the Blessed One please consent to this by saying ‘Excellent?’”<sup>20</sup>
- 1.29 Out of affection for the Four Great Kings, the Blessed One then consented with his total silence. The Four Great Kings understood that the Blessed One was consenting with his total silence [F.84.b] and made their solemn statement:
- 1.30 *“danadḍe denadḍe mahānadḍe jambhane stambhane ṭaṭe ṭaṭane mahāṭaṭane kuṭṭe kuṭṭane mahākuṭṭane dharmale carmale svāha.*
- 1.31 “Blessed One, this formula is like the words found in this cycle of dhāraṇīs.<sup>21</sup> Any son or daughter of noble family who receives this dhāraṇī-mantra formula, recites it, and upholds it will escape all harm apart from the results

of their previous actions, and they will be in harmony with all beings. They will fully comprehend the entire sublime Dharma and never face any obstacles.”

1.32 The Blessed One then offered these words: “Friends, what you have done is most excellent because it will enable the teachings to remain for a long time.”

1.33 The Blessed One then addressed the venerable Ānanda: “Ānanda, because these dhāraṇīs have great miraculous power, are of great benefit, and have great blessings, remember this Dharma discourse on the dhāraṇīs. I ask that you receive it, retain it, recite it, master it, and teach it to others extensively.”

“Blessed One,” replied Ānanda, “I will uphold it so that it may spread widely.”

1.34 The Blessed One then spoke in verse to elaborate on the meaning:

1.35 “This discourse on dhāraṇī-mantra  
Was taught by all buddhas.  
I have also now explained it  
For the benefit of all beings.

1.36 “Whoever remembers or recites  
This discourse on dhāraṇī-mantra  
Will be able to remember  
Their twenty-one previous lives. [F.85.a]

1.37 “A person who recites this dhāraṇī-mantra  
Will never be obstructed  
By nonhumans of any kind,  
Including yakṣas, kumbhāṇḍas, and rākṣasas.

1.38 “A person who recites this dhāraṇī-mantra  
Will never face obstacles  
Made by the wicked Māra,  
Who rules over the desire realm.

1.39 “The parents, brothers, and sisters,  
As well as the friends and relatives  
Of one who remembers this dhāraṇī-mantra  
Will not meet with ruin.

1.40 “Therefore, one who fearlessly hears<sup>22</sup>  
This discourse on dhāraṇī-mantra  
And then recites these dhāraṇī-mantras  
Will never be frightened again.

- 1.41 “A person who remembers this dhāraṇī-mantra  
Will purify in seven days  
All the obscuring karma  
Amassed over a billion eons.
- 1.42 “All the merit of a bodhisattva  
Achieved over ten million eons  
Will be surpassed in seven days  
By one who remembers this dhāraṇī-mantra.
- 1.43 “The world guardians of the four directions,  
The Four Great Kings—  
Kubera, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,  
Virūpākṣa, and Virūḍhaka—
- 1.44 “All of great appearance and renown,  
Will, along with their retinue and ministers,  
Recite this dhāraṇī-mantra  
And keep it always safe.”
- 1.45 After the Blessed One spoke these lines, the venerable Ānanda, the great śrāvakas, the noble bodhisattva mahāsattvas Maitreya, Mañjuśrī, and the rest, the Four Great Kings, and the world full of devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised the Blessed One’s teaching.
- 1.46 *“The Noble King of Spells, the Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa” is now complete.*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 As the term *vidyā* is feminine, one would expect the title to read *vidyārajñī* (*rig ma'i rgyal mo*), “queen of vidyās,” and indeed some versions of the Tibetan translation do read *rig ma'i rgyal mo* even if the Sanskrit title given is typically the masculine *vidyārāja*.
- n.2 The fragment is cataloged as IOL Khot 25/4 and is part of the British Library’s Stein Collection. It can be viewed at the [International Dunhuang Project website \(http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo\\_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Khot%2025/4;img=1\)](http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Khot%2025/4;img=1). The fragment was published in Skjærvø 2002 and identified as *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* in Chen 2012. The passage of the translation containing the lines preserved in the Khotanese fragment has been noted below.
- n.3 Shinohara (2014, p. 88) calls this date and attribution into question.
- n.4 Chen (2012, pp. 268–69) speculates that Taishō 1353 may have been wrongly attributed to Jñānagupta.
- n.5 Chen 2012, pp. 269–70; Shinohara 2014, pp. 88–89.
- n.6 *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa* is cataloged as no. 345 in the Denkarma and no. 326 in the Phangthangma. See Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 193–4, and Kawagoe 2005, p. 29, respectively. See also Denkarma F.302.a.
- n.7 This text, Toh 858, and all those contained in this same volume (*rgyud 'bum, na*), are listed as being located in volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur by the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (BDRC). However, several other Kangyur databases—including the eKangyur that supplies the digital input version displayed by the 84000 Reading Room—list this work as being located in volume 101. This discrepancy is partly due to the fact that the two volumes of the *gzungs 'dus* section are an added supplement not mentioned in the

original catalog, and also hinges on the fact that the compilers of the Tōhoku catalog placed another text—which forms a whole, very large volume—the *Vimalaprabhānāmakālacakratantṛāṭikā* (*dus 'khor 'grel bshad dri med 'od*, Toh 845), before the volume 100 of the Degé Kangyur, numbering it as vol. 100, although it is almost certainly intended to come right at the end of the Degé Kangyur texts as volume 102; indeed its final fifth chapter is often carried over and wrapped in the same volume as the Kangyur *dkar chags* (catalog). Please note this discrepancy when using the eKangyur viewer in this translation.

- n.8 In the Toh 528 version of the text there is a slight discrepancy in the folio numbering between the 1737 *par phud* printings and the late (post *par phud*) printings of the Degé Kangyur. Although the discrepancy is irrelevant here, further details concerning this may be found in [note 8](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh528.html#end-note-UT22084-088-022-118) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh528.html#end-note-UT22084-088-022-118>) of the Toh 528 version of this text.
- n.9 Tib. *lu ta*; Skt. *lūtā*. In addition to spiders, this term can be used for other kinds of insects.
- n.10 Tib. *sbrang bu lcags phye*, which could be more literally interpreted as “biting insects [that are like] iron filings.”
- n.11 In the version preserved as Toh 858 all instances of *jva* use the short vowel, rather than *jvā* as found in Toh 528.
- n.12 Because most of the words in this dhāraṇī-mantra and those that follow are given for their alliterative significance and do not convey a clear meaning, a translation has not been attempted.
- n.13 Lines from the passage beginning here are preserved in the Khotanese manuscript IOL Khot 25/4 ([http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo\\_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Khot%2025/4;img=1](http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Khot%2025/4;img=1)) held in the British Library. See Skjærvø 2002 and Chen 2012.
- n.14 The lines preserved in the Khotanese fragments end here. See Skjærvø 2002 and Chen 2012.
- n.15 This line can be translated as follows: “Homage to all buddhas, may the dhāraṇī-mantra formula succeed. *Svāhā!*” Even though this line is rendered in transliterated Sanskrit in the Tibetan text, it is clear from the context that this is not a dhāraṇī formula but rather a benediction for the success of the dhāraṇī formula previously given.

- n.16 Wind (*vāta*), bile (*pitta*), and phlegm (*śleṣman*) are, according to Āyurveda, the three primary constituents (*doṣa*) that affect physical and mental health. Disease results from their imbalance or improper interactions.
- n.17 This translation understands the Tibetan text to be a translation of the stock Sanskrit phrase *kṛtyākarmaṇākākhordavetāla*, in which the term *karmaṇa* refers to violent rites that employ *kṛtyas* as harmful magical agents. The Tib. term *sgyur ba'i las* would more literally mean “the karma/activities of transformation.”
- n.18 Reading *brgyad pa* as *brgyad bkaḡ* following the Skt. *ākrośa*.
- n.19 This passage, which concerns the use of magical means to avoid criminal punishments according to codes of law, has a close parallel in *The Great Peahen, Queen of Dhāraṇīs* (Toh 559: *Mahāmāyūrīvidyārajñī; rigs sngags kyi rgyal mo rma bya chen mo*). Cf. Takubo ed., p. 10: *vadhyārho'py ānanda daṇḍena mucyate daṇḍārhaḥ prahāreṇa, prahārṇha ākrośena, ākrośārhaḥ paribhāśena, paribhāśārho romaharṣaṇena, romaharṣaṇārha evam eva mucyate*.
- n.20 The statement “Excellent!” (*sādhu; legs so*) is frequently spoken by the Buddha as a way to give his approval of or consent to a statement made by an interlocutor. Often this assent is used to permit an interlocutor to give a teaching, make a doctrinal statement, or in this case speak a *dhāraṇī*, thereby sanctioning it or otherwise indicating it to be authoritative.
- n.21 “Cycle” is understood to refer to the set of *dhāraṇī*-mantras previously taught in this text.
- n.22 The phrase *'jigs med gang gis thos gyur nas* has been interpreted as *gang gis 'jigs med par thos gyur nas*, thus reading *'jigs med* adverbially as “fearlessly.” It would also be plausible to interpret this phrase to say “the fearless one who hears.”

b.

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## GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Agrapradīpa

*sgron ma mchog*

སྒྲོན་མ་མཚོག

*Agrapradīpa*

“Supreme Lamp,” a buddha from the buddhafiield Infinite Flowers. He is the titular figure in *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*.

*Links to further resources:*

[1 related glossary entry](#)

g.2 Ajita

*ma pham pa*

མ་ཕམ་པ།

*Ajita*

Another name of Maitreya, the bodhisattva who became Śākyamuni’s regent and is prophesied to be the next buddha, the fifth buddha in the fortunate eon.

*Links to further resources:*

[8 related glossary entries](#)

g.3 Amitābha

*’od dpag med*

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

*Amitābha*

“Infinite Light,” the name of one of the bodhisattvas present in Śrāvastī to proclaim and receive *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*.

g.4 Ānanda

*kun dga' bo*

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

*Ānanda*

The Buddha Śākyamuni's cousin, who was his attendant for the last twenty years of his life. He was the subject of criticism and opposition from the monastic community after the Buddha's passing, but he is also regarded as one of the primary compilers of the sūtras and was renowned for his ability to recite them from memory.

*Links to further resources:*

[78 related glossary entries](#)

g.5 Anāthapiṇḍada's Park

*mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba*

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

*anāthapiṇḍadārāma*

An important early Buddhist site located outside Śrāvastī. Anāthapiṇḍada, a wealthy patron of the Buddha, purchased the park at great cost, purportedly covering the ground with gold, and donated it to the saṅgha. The Buddha spent a number of rainy seasons there and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras. It was also the site of Jeta Grove, one of the earliest Buddhist monasteries.

*Links to further resources:*

[14 related glossary entries](#)

g.6 Brahmā

*tshangs pa*

ཚེངས་པ།

*Brahman*

One of the primary deities of the Brahmanical pantheon in which he is considered a creator god. Brahmā occupies an important place in Buddhism as one of two deities (the other being Śakra) who are said to have first exhorted Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. He is also considered to be the “Lord of the Sahā World” (our universe).

*Links to further resources:*

[122 related glossary entries](#)

g.7 Dhṛtarāṣṭra

*yul 'khor srung*

ཡུལ་འཁོར་སྤྱང།

*Dhṛtarāṣṭra*

One of the Four Great Kings, he is the guardian of the eastern direction and the lord of gandharvas.

*Links to further resources:*

[26 related glossary entries](#)

g.8 **Four Great Kings**

*rgyal po chen po bzhi*

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི།

*Cāturmahārāja*

The four divine kings who preside over the lowest of the god realms, on the slopes of Mount Meru: Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the east, Virūḍhaka in the south, Virūpākṣa in the west, and Kubera/Vaiśravaṇa in the north.

*Links to further resources:*

[42 related glossary entries](#)

g.9 **Great Light**

*'od chen po*

འོད་ཚེན་པོ།

—

The name of one of the bodhisattvas present in Śrāvastī to proclaim and receive *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*.

*Links to further resources:*

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.10 **Infinite Flowers**

*me tog mtha' yas*

མེ་ཏོག་མགའ་ཡས།

—

The world system of the Buddha Agrapradīpa in *The Dhāraṇī of Agrapradīpa*.

g.11 **Jeta Grove**

*rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal*

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

*Jetavana*

A grove in Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India, that was either part of or coextensive with Anāthapiṇḍada's Park. The grove was owned by Prince Jeta and was purchased by the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada as an offering to the Buddha. The site was the residence of the saṅgha during the monsoon season and eventually became the first Buddhist monastery. It is the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses.

*Links to further resources:*

[51 related glossary entries](#)

g.12 Kākhorda

*byad*

ཅཀ།

*kākhorda*

A class of spirit beings typically associated with violent sorcery rites.

*Links to further resources:*

[9 related glossary entries](#)

g.13 Kṛtya

*gshed byed*

གཤེད་བྱེད།

*kṛtya*

A class of evil spirits.

*Links to further resources:*

[6 related glossary entries](#)

g.14 Kubera

*lus ngan*

ལུས་ངག།

*Kubera*

Another name for Vaiśravaṇa, one of the Four Great Kings. He is the guardian of the north and lord of the yakṣas and is traditionally regarded as a yakṣa himself.

*Links to further resources:*

[21 related glossary entries](#)

g.15 Maitreya

byams pa

མཛོད་ལྷན་ཁག་

Maitreya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The bodhisattva Maitreya is an important figure in many Buddhist traditions, where he is unanimously regarded as the buddha of the future era. He is said to currently reside in Tuṣita heaven, as Śākyamuni’s regent, where he awaits the proper time to take his final rebirth and become the fifth buddha in the Fortunate Eon, reestablishing the Dharma in this world after the teachings of the current buddha have disappeared. He is the only bodhisattva widely accepted outside the Mahāyāna traditions, though his role there is much less central than in the Mahāyāna schools of India, China, Tibet, Japan, Vietnam, and Korea. His future coming as a buddha is predicted in the Pali Canon, where he is mentioned in the *Cakkavattisihanādasutta* of the Dīgha Nikāya, and in the Mahāvastu, a canonical text of the Lokottaravāda school of the Mahāsaṅghikas. The prophecy of the future awakening of Maitreya is told in the *Mūla-sarvāstivādinaya*, in the *Bhaiṣajyavastu*, the sixth chapter of the *Vinayavastu* (*The Chapter on Medicines, Bhaiṣajyavastu*, Toh 1, ch. 6). Within the Mahāyāna sūtras, Maitreya is elevated to the same status as other central bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, and his name appears frequently in sūtras, either as the Buddha’s interlocutor or as a teacher of the Dharma. His name literally means “Loving One.” He is also known as Ajita.

In the Kangyur, we find a few short sūtras, such as *Maitreya’s Rebirth in the Heaven of Joy* (Toh 199), describing the circumstances leading to his awakening, his future appearance in the world, and the methods to apply if one wishes to be reborn close to him at that time. On his bodhisattva career and the circumstances for his initial arousing of the mind set on awakening, see *Maitreya’s Setting Out* (Toh 198). Other sūtras in which previous lives of the bodhisattva Maitreya are recounted include *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (Toh 113), *The Sublime Golden Light* (Toh 555–57), and *The Question of Maitreya* (Toh 85). Maitreya also occupies a central role in some of the most famous Mahāyāna sūtras, such as *The Teaching of Vimalakīrti* (Toh 176), *The Rice Seedling* (Toh 210), *The Stem Array* (Toh 44–45), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines* (Toh 12), and *The King of Samādhis* (Toh 127).

Links to further resources:

[81 related glossary entries](#) · [View the 84000 Knowledge Base article](#)

g.16 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དབལ་གཞོན་ནུ་རྒྱུ་པ།

—

A common term of address for the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, one of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha regarded as the embodiment of wisdom.

*Links to further resources:*

[106 related glossary entries](#)

g.17 Sahā world system

*'jig rten gyi khams mi mjed*

འཛིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས་མི་མཛེད།

*Sahāloka dhātu*

The world system presided over by the Buddha Śākyamuni.

*Links to further resources:*

[55 related glossary entries](#)

g.18 Śākyamuni

*shAkya thub pa*

ལྷན་ཐུབ་པ།

*Śākyamuni*

The name of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama; he was a sage (*muni*) from the Śākya clan.

*Links to further resources:*

[50 related glossary entries](#)

g.19 Śrāvastī

*mnyan yod*

མཉམ་ཡོད།

*Śrāvastī*

The capital of the ancient Indian kingdom of Kośala, and the setting for many sūtras, as the Buddha spent most rainy seasons in Jeta Grove, which was located nearby. It has been identified with the present-day Sāhet Māhet in Uttar Pradesh on the banks of the river Rapti.

*Links to further resources:*

[55 related glossary entries](#)

g.20 Virūḍhaka

*'phags skyes po*

འཕགས་སྐྱེས་པོ།

*Virūḍhaka*

One of the Four Great Kings, he is the guardian of the southern direction and the lord of the kumbhāṇḍas.

*Links to further resources:*

[22 related glossary entries](#)

g.21 Virūpākṣa

*mig mi bzang*

མིག་མི་བཟང་།

*Virūpākṣa*

One of the Four Great Kings, he is the guardian of the western direction and the lord of the nāgas.

*Links to further resources:*

[21 related glossary entries](#)