

༄༅། །གསང་བ་རིང་བསྐྱེད་གྱི་གཟུངས།

The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics

Guhyadhātudhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་དེ་བཞིན་གཤམས་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་བྱིན་གྱིས་བརླབས་ཀྱི་སྣང་པོ་གསང་བ་རིང་བསྐལ་གྱི་ཟ་མ་ཉོག་
ཅེས་བྱ་བའི་གསུངས་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

*'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi byin gyis brlabs kyi snying po gsang ba ring
bsrel gyi za ma tog ces bya ba'i gzungs theg pa chen po'i mdo*

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra, the Dhāraṇī “The Receptacle of Secret Relics,
Quintessence of the Blessings of All the Thus-Gone Ones”

Āryasarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānaḥṛdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍanāmadhāraṇīmahāyānasūtra



Toh 883
Degé Kangyur vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folios 123.a–129.a

Translated by Dylan Esler
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 On his way to honor a brahmin's invitation for a midday meal, the Buddha comes across an old stūpa that resembles a rubbish heap. Subsequently, while in conversation with Vajrapāṇi, the Buddha reveals that the stūpa contains the doctrinal synopsis for a dhāraṇī that embodies the essence of the blessings of innumerable buddhas. He also explains that the stūpa is, in fact, made of precious materials and that its lowly appearance is merely due to the lack of beings' merit. The Buddha then extols the merit that results from copying, reading, and worshiping this scripture, and he enumerates the benefits that arise from placing it in stūpas and buddha images. When he pronounces the actual dhāraṇī, the derelict old stūpa is restored to its former glory.

ac.

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84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics, often referred to by its abbreviated Sanskrit title, *Guhyadhātudhāraṇī*, or sometimes also by its alternative title *Karaṇḍamudrā-dhāraṇī*, is a short sūtra that has played a fundamental role in ritual practice throughout the Buddhist world, particularly regarding the veneration of relics and of the stūpas that contain them.

i.2

In this sūtra, the Buddha, who is residing in Magadha, is invited for a midday meal by a brahmin named Stainless Glow. On the way to the brahmin's home, he comes across an old stūpa that resembles a rubbish heap. When approached by the Buddha, the stūpa emits rays of light, and a mysterious exclamation of praise resounds. After paying his respects to the stūpa, the Buddha weeps and then smiles, revealing an entire array of buddhas who likewise shed tears. When Vajrapāṇi rushes to the scene to inquire about the reasons behind the Buddha's weeping, the Buddha first explains that the stūpa contains a doctrinal synopsis that is the essence of the blessings of innumerable buddhas. Upon hearing this, many in the assembly attain various levels of realization. Prompted by Vajrapāṇi, the Buddha enumerates the benefits of copying, reading, and worshipping this scripture. He also points out that the derelict old stūpa is, in fact, made of precious substances, yet it appears as a heap of rubbish because of sentient beings' lack of merit. He warns of a future time when sentient beings' merit will be so depleted that the Three Jewels will no longer be present, and the only token of the Buddha's teaching to remain will be stūpas. This, he explains, is the reason he and the other buddhas are weeping. The Buddha then extols the merit involved in copying the text and placing it in stūpas and buddha statues, indicating that the areas where these stūpas and images are located will be free from illness and other calamities, and that the stūpas and images themselves will take on the properties of precious substances. When the Buddha proclaims the actual dhāraṇī, the assembled buddhas praise Śākyamuni for having brought forth a religious treasure in

the world. The sūtra concludes by proclaiming that wherever this dhāraṇī is taught, or whenever it is placed inside a stūpa, the blessings of all the buddhas will be present. Furthermore, as a consequence of the Buddha pronouncing the dhāraṇī, the derelict old stūpa is restored to its former glory.

i.3 This text belongs to the genre of dhāraṇī sūtras, which began to circulate around 500 CE.¹ A central preoccupation of these texts is the notion that a dhāraṇī encapsulates the blessings of all the buddhas, and that building a stūpa and placing within it the dhāraṇī being promoted is equal to the merit of erecting stūpas for all the buddhas.² Given the centrality of this theme, it may be helpful to briefly clarify the sense of the term *dhāraṇī*. The term is derived from the Sanskrit root √*dhṛ* and is connected to the word *dhāraṇa*, hence it is related to notions of retaining, holding, and memory.³ Part of a dhāraṇī's function is to aid in the memorization of the Buddhist teachings.⁴ Aside from this mnemonic function, these formulas also serve protective and soteriological purposes.⁵ Dhāraṇīs contribute to an expanded understanding of memory and mnemonics, where memory is not just about remembering a specific memorized formulation of the Buddhist teachings, but also about recalling the power and blessings encoded within the formula.⁶ The dhāraṇī can thus be seen as a code that operates on multiple cognitive and affective levels, its polysemic nature reflecting the interdependence of the teachings (and of reality itself) encrypted within its syllables.⁷

i.4 The genre of dhāraṇī sūtras may itself be seen as part of the emergent “cult of the book” in the Mahāyāna,⁸ which arose against the background⁹ of the historically older and dominant cult of relics and of their receptacles, the stūpas.¹⁰ Eventually, sūtras and dhāraṇīs came to be placed within the stūpas,¹¹ and the dhāraṇīs themselves came to be considered (at least in the Tibetan tradition) relics.¹² Just as a single bone relic is held to encapsulate the Buddha's essence, so a dhāraṇī is believed to contain within it the entirety of the Buddha's doctrine.¹³ And since the Buddha can be identified with the essence of his doctrine and with the realization of ultimate reality itself,¹⁴ when a dhāraṇī is placed within a stūpa or buddha image, it infuses the stūpa or image with the presence of the Buddha and his doctrine.¹⁵

i.5 The Sanskrit version of *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics* does not appear to be extant. Epigraphical and archaeological evidence, however, suggests that, like the other texts of its genre, this sūtra was widespread in India and throughout the Buddhist world, and that it exerted a strong influence on religious practice. The text of the dhāraṇī itself¹⁶—without the surrounding narrative of the sūtra—is found on a set of stone tablets from the ninth century recovered in Anuradhapura in Sri Lanka, indicating that the sūtra was well known on the island at the time. The tablets seem to have been part

of a stūpa located at the Abhayagiri Stūpa in Anuradhapura.¹⁷ Maritime trade routes played an important part in bringing the sūtra to East Asia.¹⁸ While *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics* was well known in China after the eighth century when Amoghavajra produced the first Chinese translation of the sūtra, it was not until the tenth and eleventh centuries that it began to be placed inside stūpas.¹⁹ Qian Chu (929–88 CE), the ruler of the prosperous coastal Wuyue state, promoted the distribution of the sūtra as a textual relic throughout his kingdom.²⁰ For example, along with the full narrative sūtra and a pictorial representation,²¹ the dhāraṇī was inserted in the hollow bricks of a stūpa in Hangzhou constructed during his reign,²² as well as in a stūpa from the same period in Zhejiang. Other sūtras of the same genre, such as the *Raśmivimalaviśuddhāprabhādhāraṇī* (Toh 510/982), were likewise inserted in stūpas in Korea and Japan.²³ Epigraphical evidence of this genre of texts has also been recovered in India itself, as witnessed by a stone inscription from Orissa and by terracotta tablets from Nālandā, both of which depict the *Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣa* (Toh 509/920),²⁴ a text that has also been found in Afghanistan²⁵ and Indonesia.²⁶ In the Tibetan tradition, *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics* is classified as belonging to a wider group of five dhāraṇīs—the five great dhāraṇīs (*gzungs chen sde lnga*)—that are frequently placed inside stūpas throughout the Buddhist world.²⁷ The other dhāraṇīs of this group are the *Uṣṇīṣavijayadhāraṇī* (Toh 594, Toh 595, Toh 596, Toh 597, Toh 598), the *Vimaloṣṇīṣadhāraṇī* (Toh 599/983), the above-mentioned *Bodhigarbhālaṅkāralakṣadhāraṇī* (Toh 509/920), and the *Pratītyasamutpādahṛdaya* (Toh 521/981).²⁸

- i.6 The Tibetan translation of *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics* was produced by the Indian scholar Vidyākaraprabha²⁹ and the translator Tsang Devendrarakṣita, who appear to have lived in the late eighth or early ninth century.³⁰ No Dunhuang version of the text seems to have surfaced so far.³¹ However, given its popularity throughout Buddhist Asia, this does not necessarily mean that no copies of the text circulated in that area. While the text is not mentioned in the Phangthangma catalog, it is listed in the Denkarma,³² confirming that by the early ninth century the text had been translated into Tibetan. Regarding the title of the text as recorded in the Tibetan versions, it might be remarked that the Sanskrit title in the Stok Palace Kangyur is slightly different from that found in the Degé Kangyur edition, since it adds the word *mudrā* after *karaṇḍa*, so that the title reads *Sarvatathāgatādhiṣṭhānahṛdayaguhyadhātukaraṇḍamudrānāmadhāraṇīsūtra*. This variant is also found in several of the other editions.³³ While this additional word is not found in the Tibetan title of the editions that have the variant in their Sanskrit title, it is reflected in discussions of the title found in the body of the sūtra itself.³⁴

- i.7 Two Chinese translations of the sūtra exist. The earlier of them, the *Yiqie rulai xin mimi quanshen sheli bao qie yin toluoni jing* (切如來心祕密全身舍利寶篋印陀羅尼經; Taishō 1022a) was made by Amoghavajra (705–74 CE), and the later, the *Yiqie rulai zhengfa mimi qie yin xin tuoluoni jing* (切如來正法祕密篋印心陀羅尼經; Taishō 1023), is by Dānapāla (d. 1017).³⁵ Dānapāla’s translation does not seem to have enjoyed the same level of popularity as Amoghavajra’s, which spread from China to Korea and Japan.³⁶ Interestingly, since the Chinese translations make use of the Chinese equivalent of the word *mudrā* (印) in their titles, this suggests that the Sanskrit text on which they are based probably included the word *mudrā* in the title, thus confirming the transcription thereof found in some of the Tibetan editions.
- i.8 A commentary on this dhāraṇī was written by Bodong Paṅchen Choklé Namgyal (1376–1451).³⁷ To this must be added the earlier yet more general commentary by Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltzen (1147–1216), which is among the earliest Tibetan expositions of the practice of inserting dhāraṇīs and relics inside stūpas.³⁸
- i.9 The translation of the sūtra presented here is based on the two versions recorded in the Degé Kangyur,³⁹ one from the Action Tantra section (Toh 507) and one from the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs section (Toh 883). These two versions correspond very closely. The Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) versions of both texts have also been consulted, as has the version from the Stok Palace Kangyur. As some of the personal and place names in the text do not seem to be otherwise attested, the choice was made to render them in English rather than attempt a Sanskrit reconstruction. The Sanskrit of the dhāraṇī has been transliterated according to the version found in the Action Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur, though in cases of major divergence from the version in the Compendium of Incantations section, the variant that seemed most viable was chosen, listing the differences in the notes. A tentative translation has also been proposed in the note following the transliterated Sanskrit of the dhāraṇī.

The Translation

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

**The Dhāraṇī “The Receptacle of Secret Relics,
Quintessence of the Blessings of All the Thus-Gone
Ones”**

1. The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics

[F.123.a]

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Magadha at a pool made of the seven precious materials in the Stainless Pleasure Grove, together with a great congregation of bodhisattvas, a great congregation of hearers, and several tens of millions of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans, and hundreds of thousands of local people, all of whom surrounded and esteemed him.

1.2 Among this retinue was a great brahmin who was like a great sal tree, who was skilled, astute, clear-minded, and handsome to behold, and who upheld the path of the ten virtuous deeds. He was called Stainless Glow. Endowed with the virtuous mindset of paying homage only to those who have faith in and respect for the Three Jewels, he examined things in detail and persevered for the sake of virtue and of all sentient beings. He had great wealth and expansive enjoyments, was affluent, and had many possessions and abundant provisions. [F.123.b]

1.3 The great brahmin Stainless Glow went to the Blessed One and circumambulated him seven times, worshiping him with flowers and incense. He presented him with a very costly robe and an expensive pearl necklace and prostrated at the Blessed One's feet. Sitting down before the Blessed One, he asked, "Would the Blessed One agree to be invited, along with your retinue of bodhisattva sons, to take your midday meal at my home?" The Blessed One considered this invitation by the great brahmin Stainless Glow and consented by remaining silent. The great brahmin Stainless Glow knew that by remaining silent the Blessed One had accepted his invitation, and so he promptly returned home. When the night had passed, he arranged many foods, provisions, and delicacies. Along with this

great array of foodstuffs, he carried an auspicious palanquin, a variety of large palanquins, flowers, and incense. With a large entourage, cymbals, and percussion instruments, he went to the Blessed One to inform him that the time had come.

1.4 The great brahmin Stainless Glow told the Blessed One, “O Blessed One, the time has come. Now that it is time, would the Blessed One agree to come with me?”

The Blessed One reassured the great brahmin Stainless Glow; looking at him and his entourage, he said, “Since all of you gathered here in this retinue will accomplish a great purpose today, [F.124.a] let us go!” The Blessed One then rose from his seat. As soon as he had risen, multicolored light rays manifested from his body. The brilliance of these rays of light illuminated all the buddha fields of the ten directions, exhorting all the thus-gone ones. Having beheld this, the great brahmin knew that the Blessed One was about to leave. The great brahmin Stainless Glow worshiped him with offerings and great honor and beautified the Blessed One’s route. The large entourage; the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas; and Śakra, Brahmā, the protectors of the world, Maheśvara, Nārāyaṇa, and the Four Great Kings also beautified his route.

1.5 Not far from the Blessed One’s path was a park called Pleasurable. In this park was a great old stūpa. Derelict, overgrown with brambles, and totally covered in grass, trees, and gravel, it resembled a heap of rubbish. When the Blessed One approached it, the old stūpa resembling a rubbish heap blazed forth, emitting blazing light rays of various colors. From the heap of rubbish and gravel the sound “Excellent!” came forth. “Excellent, excellent is the Thus-Gone One, the Sage of the Śākyas! It is a good omen that you have come here today. O great brahmin, it is excellent that you have invited the Thus-Gone One. Today you have accomplished a great purpose!”

1.6 The blessed Thus-Gone One then prostrated with the five points of his body in front of the old stūpa that resembled a rubbish heap and circumambulated it three times. [F.124.b] He took the robes from his own body and offered them to the old stūpa resembling a rubbish heap. The Blessed One wept profusely and then smiled. Because of his smile, all the thus-gone ones of the ten directions could be seen as if they were in the palm of one’s hand. The eyes of all the thus-gone ones, too, filled with tears.⁴⁰ All the thus-gone ones also emitted light rays, which entered the great heap that was the old stūpa. The many assemblies gathered there marveled and were infused with trust. The body of the great yakṣa commander, Vajrapāṇi, trembled, and his heart pounded. Grabbing his scepter, he swiftly went to the Blessed One. He prostrated at the Blessed One’s feet, and said to the Blessed One, “What, O Blessed One, is the

presage causing the Blessed One to weep? What is the presage causing the Blessed One's eyes to fill with tears? Would the Blessed One grant me an opportunity to ask, on behalf of those in this assembly, why this is the case?"

1.7 The Blessed One said the following to Vajrapāṇi, the great yakṣa commander: "O Vajrapāṇi, this stūpa of the Thus-Gone One, a heap of relics, contains a doctrinal synopsis for the stūpa of the dhāraṇī seal that is the quintessence of all the thus-gone ones, who are as numerous as ten million times the number of sesame seeds in a pod. O Vajrapāṇi, wherever this doctrinal synopsis resides, there are thus-gone ones as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times the number of sesame seeds in a pod, and relics of the bodily remains of the thus-gone ones too numerous to mention. Eighty-four thousand compendiums of the doctrine reside there. [F.125.a] Likewise, the uṣṇīṣas and the crowns of the heads of ninety-nine times the number of thus-gone ones who are as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times the number of sesame seeds in a pod also reside there. O Vajrapāṇi, wherever this doctrinal synopsis resides is declared to be a stūpa of a thus-gone one. O Vajrapāṇi, these are the great beneficial qualities and the great power of this doctrinal synopsis. O Vajrapāṇi, the beneficial qualities of this doctrinal synopsis are immense. O Vajrapāṇi, this doctrinal synopsis consummates all auspiciousness."

1.8 When the many assemblies gathered there heard this doctrinal synopsis from the Blessed One, with regard to phenomena, they attained the dustless and stainless eye of the doctrine, and they were freed from the subsidiary afflictions. Some of them attained the fruition of a stream enterer. Some obtained the fruition of a worthy one, some the fruition of the enlightenment of a solitary buddha. Some attained the fruition of a non-returner. Some attained the fruition of a once-returner. Some came to abide on the bodhisattva stages. Some obtained a prophecy concerning their enlightenment. Some came to abide on the first bodhisattva stage. Some came to abide on the second stage, some on the third stage, some on the fourth, some on the fifth, some on the sixth, some on the seventh, some on the eighth, some on the ninth, and some on the tenth bodhisattva stage. Some of them completed the six perfections. The great brahmin, too, obtained the five supercognitions, was freed from stains, and was freed from avarice and jealousy.

1.9 The great yakṣa commander Vajrapāṇi, having beheld such a great miracle, was filled with wonder and amazement. He asked the Blessed One, "If one obtains, O Blessed One, such an ornament of beneficial qualities by hearing the name of this doctrinal synopsis, [F.125.b] what is there to say, O Blessed One, of extensively revering and honoring it? How might one, O Blessed One, view that aggregation of merit?"

1.10 The Blessed One responded, “Listen, Vajrapāṇi! If a son or daughter of good family, a monk or nun, or a layman or laywoman writes down⁴¹ this doctrinal synopsis, they will generate the roots of virtue and will possess an aggregation of merit equal to that of ninety-nine times the number of thus-gone ones who are as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times a hundred billion times the number of sesame seeds in a pod.⁴² They will be cared for by those thus-gone ones. Those who read it will come to grasp the sūtras spoken by all the thus-gone ones. Those who hold this doctrinal synopsis are held and watched over, on a single day, by ninety-nine times the number of the thus-gone ones of the ten directions who are as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times a hundred billion times the number of sesame seeds in a pod, and by the thus-gone, worthy, completely perfect buddhas of each direction. Any son or daughter of a good family, or any layman or laywoman who worships this doctrinal synopsis, who assimilates it and offers it flowers, incense, perfumes, flower garlands, ointments, robes, decorations, and ornaments, will be offering divine substances consisting of flowers, incense, perfumes, flower garlands, ointments, robes, decorations, and ornaments to ninety-nine times the number of thus-gone ones in each of the ten directions who are as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times a hundred billion times the number of sesame seeds in a pod. [F.126.a] Such clouds of a thus-gone one’s offerings presented before the thus-gone ones in each of the ten directions beget heaps of qualities, which in size are like a great Mount Meru made of the seven precious materials.”

1.11 The gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans, and all those in this great gathering of sentient beings, marveled and told one another, “This old stūpa, a heap of rubbish and gravel, has been blessed by the Thus-Gone One and thereby displayed such a great magical miracle. Great is its power!”

1.12 The great yakṣa commander, Vajrapāṇi, asked the Blessed One, “Who, O Blessed One, fashioned a precious stūpa from what had become a heap of rubbish?”

1.13 The Blessed One answered, “O Vajrapāṇi, this is not a heap of rubbish, but a great and precious stūpa made of the seven precious materials. Yet it vanished from sight, O Vajrapāṇi, to show the maturation of the results of sentient beings’ deeds. Stūpas containing the quintessence of the relics of the buddhas, the thus-gone ones, are never destroyed or dispersed. How could the Thus-Gone One’s adamantine quintessence body be dispersed? Yet when the maturation of the results of sentient beings’ deeds appeared, the stūpa vanished from sight.

- 1.14 “Furthermore, Vajrapāṇi, there will be a time in the future, exceedingly dire, when sentient beings will be engaged in evil, will be possessed of evil, and will descend to the hells. There will be neither Buddha nor Doctrine nor Community, and virtuous roots will not be generated. Due to these causes and conditions, the holy doctrine will vanish from sight. That is why, Vajrapāṇi, [F.126.b] my eyes filled with tears, and why all the thus-gone ones too were in tears. Expositions of the holy doctrine such as this will have vanished from sight; there will only remain stūpas of a thus-gone one that are blessed by all the thus-gone ones.”
- 1.15 The great yakṣa commander, Vajrapāṇi, then asked the Blessed One, “If, O Blessed One, someone writes down this doctrinal synopsis and places it inside a stūpa, what sort of virtuous roots will they produce?”
- 1.16 The Blessed One replied, “O Vajrapāṇi, if someone writes down this doctrinal synopsis and places it inside a stūpa, this will become a stūpa with relics that are the adamant quintessence of all the thus-gone ones. It will become a stūpa blessed by the secret quintessence of the dhāraṇī of all the thus-gone ones. It will become a stūpa of ninety-nine times the number of thus-gone ones who are as numerous as there are sesame seeds in a pod. It will be blessed as a stūpa of the uṣṇīṣa and the eyes of all the thus-gone ones. If someone places it within a buddha image or inside a stūpa, the image of the Thus-Gone One will be blessed with the nature of the seven precious materials. The stūpa’s circular rings, connected lattices of little bells, auspicious signs, rain gutters, and bells will be blessed with the nature of the seven precious materials. Such persons will be blessed by all the thus-gone ones and by the power, blessings, truth, and pledges of this doctrinal synopsis until they arrive at the seat of enlightenment.
- 1.17 “Those sentient beings who revere and honor the stūpa will certainly not regress and they will be awakened to unsurpassed, completely perfect enlightenment. [F.127.a] Those who prostrate to or circumambulate it once will be released from falling into the Avīci hell and they will no longer turn away from unsurpassed, completely perfect enlightenment. Areas where there are such stūpas or images will be blessed by all the thus-gone ones. Such areas will be unaffected by hostile nāgas, frost, and hail. These places will be unaffected by hostile or malevolent creatures and unaffected by predators. There will be no fear of birds of prey, or of parrots, mynah birds, rats, mongooses, biting insects, bees, ladybugs, worms, mosquitoes, or centipedes.⁴³ These areas will be unaffected by poisonous snakes, and there will be no epidemics, contagious diseases, or disturbances. There will be no fear of yakṣas, rākṣasas, bhūtas, pretas, piśācas, or apasmāras. These areas will be unaffected by any type of graha. They will be unaffected by fever. Their inhabitants will be unaffected by any illness—by boils, blisters, ulcers,

fistulas,⁴⁴ eczema, scabies, or leprosy—and by just seeing the stūpa, they will be cleansed of all these diseases. These areas will be unaffected by the diseases of cattle and herd animals, or by the many other kinds of illnesses that beset animals. They will never be affected by the diseases of men, women, boys, or girls. There will be no untimely death, and the people will never be affected by poison, weapons, [F.127.b] fire, or water.

1.18 “There will be no fear of external armies, and the people will never be affected by the fear of bad harvests. There will be no fear of the royal army, and the Four Great Kings will continuously guard and protect these areas. The twenty-eight yakṣa commanders, too, will continuously guard, protect, and defend these areas. The twenty-eight constellations, the moon, the sun, and the great comets will maintain harmony, day and night. All the nāga kings, moreover, will never steal vitality; they will only bring down a rainfall of excellence. Even the gods will come thrice a day from their thirty-two abodes⁴⁵ in order to prostrate to, honor, and worship the great stūpa. All the local deities will also come before those stūpas and images of the buddha thrice a day to praise and circumambulate them. Even the sovereign of the gods, Śakra, along with the goddesses and gods themselves, will always come thrice a day and night before the stūpas or buddha images, and will prostrate to and worship them.

1.19 “All the thus-gone ones will constantly consider and bless the stūpas. Whatever the stūpas and images are made of—whether of clay, stone, wood, silver, gold, or copper—as soon as this doctrinal synopsis has been written down and placed inside them, they will be blessed with the nature of the seven precious materials. All their moldings, steps, railings, circular rings, auspicious signs, parasols, dangling bells, pennants, and lattices of little bells [F.128.a] will likewise take on the nature of the seven precious materials. Everywhere in the four directions there will be images of the Thus-Gone One. There will be precious stūpas blessed by all the thus-gone ones, stūpas of the quintessence of their bodily remains, and places of worship. The images and stūpas will be protected by the gods of Akaniṣṭha, who will be committed to their worship.”

1.20 The great yakṣa commander, Vajrapāṇi, then asked the Blessed One, “How,⁴⁶ O Blessed One, did this doctrinal synopsis come to have such distinctive qualities?”

1.21 The Blessed One replied, “The quintessence of the blessings of all the thus-gone ones is this dhāraṇī that is the seal of the receptacle of secret relics. It is, therefore, O Vajrapāṇi, this power that instills it with blessings of such distinctive qualities.”

1.22 “Would the Blessed One please teach the doctrinal synopsis of the dhāraṇī that is the seal of the precious receptacle?” asked the vajra holder.

1.23 “Listen, Vajrapāṇi!” answered the Blessed One. “This is the doctrinal synopsis of the dhāraṇī that is the seal of the receptacle of relics, for the thus-gone ones of the past, present, and future, for all the blessed buddhas who have attained complete nirvāṇa and the three bodies of the thus-gone one—the body of reality, the body of enjoyment, and the body of emanation—throughout all three times:

1.24 *“namastraiyadhvikānāṃ⁴⁷ | sarvatathāgatānāṃ | om⁴⁸ bhū vibhavān vare vacaṭau⁴⁹ | culu culu | dhara dhara⁵⁰ | sarvatathāgatā | dhātudhare | padmagarbhe | jayavare | acale | smara tathāgata | dharmacakra | pravartana | vajrabodhimaṇḍa alaṃkāra | alaṃkṛte | sarvatathāgata | adhiṣṭhite | bodhaya bodhaya | bodhani [F.128.b] bodhani | budhya buddhya⁵¹ | sambodhani sambodhaya | cala cala | calantu sarva āvaraṇāni | sarvapāpāni vigate | huru huru | sarvaśoka vigate | sarvatathāgataḥḍaya | vajriṇi | sambhava sambhava | sarvatathāgataḥḍaye | dhāraṇimudre | buddhe | subuddhe⁵² | sarvatathāgata adhiṣṭhite | dhātugarbhe svāhā | samaya adhiṣṭhite svāhā | sarvatathāgataḥḍaya | dhātumudre svāhā | supraṭiṣṭhita stūpe tathāgata adhiṣṭhite | hūm hūm svāhā | om sarvatathāgata uṣṇīṣadhātumudrāṇi⁵³ sarvatathāgata dharmadhātu vibhūṣita adhiṣṭhite huru huru | hūm hūm svāhā”⁵⁴*

1.25 As soon as the Blessed One had uttered this dhāraṇī that is the seal of the receptacle of relics, from each of the ten directions came ninety-nine times the number of thus-gone ones who are as numerous as a hundred thousand times ten million times a hundred billion times the number of sesame seeds in a pod. They said to the Blessed One, the Sage of the Śākyas, “For the sake of sentient beings, the Sage of the Śākyas has placed this doctrinal synopsis, a treasure of the doctrine, in this world and has blessed this stūpa that is the quintessence of relics. This is excellent, excellent!” Thus was the pledge and blessing of all the thus-gone ones.

1.26 Wherever this dhāraṇī that is the seal of relics is taught, or wherever it is placed inside a stūpa or image, the thus-gone ones, all as one, will follow it continuously and remain there. It will always be infused with the blessings of the thus-gone ones. As soon as the dhāraṇī had been pronounced, the old stūpa that resembled a rubbish heap was restored as a stūpa having the nature of the seven precious materials, along with its moldings, symmetrical features, circular rings, and auspicious signs.

1.27 When the Blessed One had rejoiced and spoken thus, the great bodhisattva hero Vajrapāṇi, [F.129.a] along with the world of gods and humans—the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas—rejoiced in and praised the words of the Blessed One.

1.28 *This completes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra, "The Dhāraṇī 'The Receptacle of Secret Relics, Quintessence of the Blessings of All the Thus-Gone Ones.'"*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated, edited, and redacted by the scholar⁵⁵ Vidyākaraprabha and the translator⁵⁶ Tsang Devendrarakṣita.

NOTES

n.

n.1 Bentor 1995, p. 252.

n.2 Schopen 1982, pp. 105–6.

n.3 See Ryan Damron’s comments on the term in Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *The Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality,”* Toh 142 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2020), [i,2](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh142.html#UT22084-057-001-100) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh142.html#UT22084-057-001-100>).

n.4 Lamotte 1976, vol. 4, pp. 1863–64; Braarvig 1985, pp. 18–19, p. 24.

n.5 Kapstein 2003, p. 238.

n.6 Gyatso 1992, p. 176, p. 178, p. 186.

n.7 Davidson 2009, p. 120, p. 126.

n.8 According to Schopen (1982, p. 105), influential sūtras of this movement include the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* ([Toh 113](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html>)) and the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* (Toh 555, Toh 556, Toh 557). For a translation of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, see Peter Alan Roberts, trans., *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh113.html>), Toh 113 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2018). For the *Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra*, see the German translation of Taishō 665, the influential Chinese rendition prepared by Yijing (635–713), in Nobel 1958, vol. 1. For an English translation of the condensed Sanskrit version of the sūtra, see Emmerick 2001.

n.9 While the relationship between the “cult of the book” and the “cult of relics” has at times been portrayed in terms of competition (cf. Schopen 1975, pp. 168–70), it is perhaps more accurate to view the cult of stūpas and of relics as

forming the background against which the “cult of the book” emerged. See Drewes 2007, pp. 133–35.

- n.10 On the cult of stūpas, see Strong 2004.
- n.11 Harrison 1992, p. 76; Bendor 1995, pp. 251–52.
- n.12 Whereas in some strands of the Tibetan tradition, dhāraṇīs are considered relics of the body of reality (Skt. *dharmakāya*), in the Nyingma and Kagyu schools this position tends to be reserved for miniature stūpas and molded cones (*tsha tsha*). See Bendor 1995, p. 254, p. 258.
- n.13 Bendor 2003, p. 21.
- n.14 This is particularly the case with reference to the theory of the three bodies and the Buddha’s body of reality (Skt. *dharmakāya*). See Makransky 1998, pp. 33–34, p. 56.
- n.15 Bendor 2003, p. 24.
- n.16 See Chandra 1976, part 11, pp. 3410–11, and especially part 12, pp. 4117–22, for a multilingual transcription (in Manchurian, Chinese, Mongolian, and Tibetan) of the Sanskrit dhāraṇī, stemming from the Chinese imperial palace. On the role played by Tibetan and Mongolian monks as experts in Sanskrit at the Chinese imperial court during the Yuan (1279–1368), Ming (1368–1644), and Qing (1644–1912) dynasties, see Kapstein 2018, p. 473.
- n.17 See Schopen 1982, pp. 100–102, who refers to the transcription found in Mudiyanse 1967, pp. 99–105.
- n.18 See Baba 2017, pp. 124–26; Lee 2021, p. 7.
- n.19 Lee 2021, p. 9.
- n.20 Barrett 2001, p. 54; Baba 2017, pp. 130–32.
- n.21 Lee 2021, p. 12 (figures 4 and 5), p. 14.
- n.22 The stūpa was built in 975 CE and collapsed in 1924. See Edgren 1972. It has since been rebuilt.
- n.23 Schopen 1982, p. 106; Bendor 1995, pp. 255–56.
- n.24 Schopen 1982, pp. 106–7; Schopen 1985.
- n.25 See Strauch 2009.

- n.26 See Griffiths 2014.
- n.27 For a similar (though not quite identical) grouping, cf. Lee 2021, p. 8.
- n.28 Bentor 1995, p. 254, p. 256; Bentor 2003, p. 32; Phuntsok Tashi 1998, pp. 24–27.
- n.29 On Vidyākaraprabha, see Alexander Gardner, “[Vidyākaraprabha](https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Vidyakaraprabha/10911) (<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Vidyakaraprabha/10911>),” *Treasury of Lives*, November 2019.
- n.30 Schopen 1982, p. 102.
- n.31 *Resources for Kanjur & Tanjur Studies*, Universität Wien, accessed November 26, 2021. See also Dalton and van Schaik 2006, and *The International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online*, accessed December 2, 2021.
- n.32 Denkarma, folio 302.b.3; Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 215–16 (no. 377).
- n.33 The Comparative Edition reports that the variant reading of the Sanskrit title is also followed by the Narthang, Yongle, Lithang, Kangxi, and Choné editions, with the last four sharing the minor variant *mun dra*.
- n.34 Degé, [F.128.a.3](#); [F.128.b.3](#). The former passage is also mentioned by Schopen 1982, p. 104.
- n.35 Lewis R. Lancaster, *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue* (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/indexes/index-taisho.html) (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).
- n.36 Lee 2021, p. 10.
- n.37 Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal, pp. 1969–81.
- n.38 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen, pp. 1992–93. For a translation of an important passage from Drakpa Gyaltsen’s treatise, see Bentor 1995, pp. 256–57.
- n.39 This text, Toh 883, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, e*), 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 *Vimalaprabhānāmākālacakratantṛāṭikā* (*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.40 This phrase is omitted in the Tantra section of the Degé edition, presumably through eyeskip. It is found, however, in the Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition, in the Stok Palace MS, vol. 102 (rgyud, da), folio 4.a.7, as well as in the Narthang and Lhasa editions, as reported in the Comparative Edition.
- n.41 Here we follow the variant reading *'bri* found in the Yongle and Kangxi versions. Most versions read *'dri*, as witnessed, for instance, in both the Tantra section and the Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition, as well as in the Stok Palace MS. While this majority reading at first sight suggests a translation along the lines of “inquires” rather than “writes down,” the word *'dri* is attested as an archaic variant of *'bri* (Namgyal Tsering 2001, p. 268; see also Chökyi Drakpa 1995, p. 440). Moreover, contextually speaking, the sense of *writing down* or *copying* fits well with what we know about the way Mahāyāna sūtras tended to self-referentially advocate their own reproduction. See McMahan 2002, p. 90.
- n.42 In his summary of the sūtra, Schopen proposes the simpler rendition “equal to that of ninety-nine hundreds of millions of *Tathāgatas*.” Cf. Schopen 1982, pp. 103–4.
- n.43 The identification of several of the animals mentioned in this sentence has posed some difficulty. The word “ladybug” translates *bye ba*, which itself would seem to be a rendering of the Sanskrit *koṭika*. “Worm” translates *sbrang ma mchu gsum*, which seems to be an alternative for *mchu sbrang*, itself a rendering of the Sanskrit *kīṭa* (Negi 1993–2005, vol. 3, p. 1305). “Mosquito” translates *mchu rings*, an abbreviation of *sbrang bu mchu rings*, which renders the Sanskrit *maśaka* (Negi 1993–2005, vol. 9, p. 4154). Finally, “centipede” translates *rta bla*, following the definition given by Chökyi Drakpa 1995, p. 343: “an insect with many legs” (*rkang pa mang ba'i 'bu zhig*); a similar definition is found in Tudeng Nima 1998, p. 1060.
- n.44 For *mtshan bar rdol ba* (Drungtso and Drungtso 2005, p. 378), corresponding to the Sanskrit term *bhagandara* (Negi 1993–2005, vol. 11, p. 4960).

- n.45 It is not clear which thirty-two abodes are being referred to. In any case, unless we assume a transmissional error, this does not seem to refer to the Trāyastriṃśa heaven.
- n.46 Here the reading of the Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition has been followed, which has *ji lta bur*; this reading is also confirmed by the Stok Palace MS, vol. 102 (rgyud, da), folio 8.b.7. The Tantra section of the Degé edition, on the other hand, reads *'di lta bur*, although an interrogative sense is called for by the context.
- n.47 Reading *traiyadhvikānām*, as in the Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition. The version in the Tantra section is somewhat illegible here, so although it seems to read *dhī*, it may be that *dhvi* was intended.
- n.48 Unlike the Tantra section of the Degé edition, which gives an *anusvāra* for *om*, the Compendium of Incantations section gives an *anunāsika* for *om* instead; this also applies to the occurrence of the syllable below. The difference is minor in any case.
- n.49 Read *vacate*. The Yongle (both vols. rgyud, na and rgyud, 'a), Lithang (J 801), Kangxi (both vols. rgyud, na and rgyud, 'a), and Choné (C 513) editions, as reported in the Comparative Edition, have *vacate*, whereas the Narthang edition and the Stok Palace MS, vol. 102 (rgyud, da), folio 9.a.5 read *vacare*.
- n.50 The Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition reads *dhare dhare*. The Stok Palace MS has *dhara dhare*.
- n.51 This should probably be understood as *buddhāya*. The Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition reads *buddhaya buddhaya*. The version transcribed from the ninth-century Sri Lankan stone tablets (see Schopen 1982, p. 101), on the other hand, has *budhya budhya*.
- n.52 This reading follows the version in the Tantra section of the Degé edition. The version in the Compendium of Incantations reads *subuddha*.
- n.53 This reading is ungrammatical, since *mudrā* is feminine in gender, but the declension given is that of a vocative, plural, neuter *a*-stem. The reading *mudre* (as given in Schopen 1982, p. 101) seems called for; in that case, we have a straightforward vocative, singular, feminine.
- n.54 The translation presented here is merely tentative, as both the spellings and the grammar are quite ambiguous. For the *a*-stems (e.g., *vara*, *garbha*), the recurrent ending in *e* has been taken to refer not to a locative, singular, masculine/neuter, but to a vocative, singular, feminine, which accords with

the vocative, singular, feminine *i*-stems (e.g., *buddhi*). The impression is thus that the deity being invoked is a feminine personification of the dhāraṇī in question. In translating this dhāraṇī, it was beneficial to reflect on Arlo Griffiths' transliteration and translation of the *Bodhigarbhālāṅkāralakṣadhāraṇī* as preserved on an Indonesian inscription (Griffiths 2014, pp. 161–63).

“Homage to the thus-gone ones of the three times. *Om*, O you who are best in splendor, O you who have been uttered, *culu culu!* Hold firm, hold firm! O holder of the relics of all the thus-gone ones, O lotus matrix, best among victories, unmoving one! Remember! O thus-gone one, setting in motion the wheel of the doctrine! O you who adorn with ornaments the adamantine seat of enlightenment! O you who are blessed by all the thus-gone ones! Arouse, arouse toward enlightenment, enlightenment! Thoroughly arouse, arouse toward the buddha, the buddha! Shake, shake! All obscurations must shake! O you in whom all evil has disappeared, *huru huru!* O you in whom all grief has disappeared! O quintessence of all the thus-gone ones, O wielder of the adamantine thunderbolt, engender, engender, O secret of all the thus-gone ones, O seal of the dhāraṇī, O knowing one, O well-knowing one, O you who are blessed by all the thus-gone ones, O matrix of relics, *svāhā!* O you who are blessed by the pledge, *svāhā!* O quintessence of all the thus-gone ones, O seal of relics, *svāhā!* O well-constructed stūpa blessed by the thus-gone one, *hūm hūm svāhā!* *Om*, O seal of the relics of all the thus-gone ones' uṣṇīṣas, O you who are blessed by the ornament of the dimension of reality of all the thus-gone ones, *huru huru, hūm hūm svāhā!*”

- n.55 The Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition replaces “scholar” (*paṇḍita*) with “Indian preceptor” (*rgya gar gyi mkhan po*). This variant is also found in the Stok Palace MS, vol. 102 (*rgyud, da*), folio 10.a.4, as well as in the Narthang and Lhasa editions, as reported in the Comparative Edition.
- n.56 The Compendium of Incantations section of the Degé edition adds several titles: “the chief editor and translator, the Venerable” (*zhu chen gyi lo ts+tsha ba bandhe*). Again, these additional titles are also found in the Stok Palace MS, as well as in the Narthang and Lhasa editions.

b.

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Toh 507, Degé Kangyur vol. 88 (rgyud, na), folios 1.b–7.b/Toh 883, Degé Kangyur vol. 100 (gzungs, e), folios 123.a–129.a.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Akaniṣṭha

'og min

འོག་མིན།

Akaniṣṭha

The highest of the seventeen levels of the form realm (*rūpadhātu*). Within the form realm it is the highest of the eight pure abodes (*śuddhāvāsika*) of the fourth concentration (*dhyāna*).

Links to further resources:

[40 related glossary entries](#)

g.2 Apasmāra

brjed byed

བརྗེད་བྱེད།

apasmāra

A class of nonhuman beings believed to be responsible for a number of illnesses and disorders, specifically epilepsy.

Links to further resources:

[11 related glossary entries](#)

g.3 Asura

lha ma yin · lha min

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན། · ལྷ་མིན།

asura

One of the six classes of sentient beings. The asuras are engendered and dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility and are metaphorically described as being incessantly embroiled in disputes with the gods (*deva*). They are

frequently portrayed in brahmanical mythology as having a disruptive effect on cosmological and social harmony.

Links to further resources:

[104 related glossary entries](#)

g.4 Auspicious sign

bkra shis

བཀྲ་ཤེས།

maṅgala

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.5 Avīci

mnar med

མནའ་མེད།

Avīci

The lowest hell; the eighth and most severe of the eight hot hells.

Links to further resources:

[36 related glossary entries](#)

g.6 Bhūta

'byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta

A specific class of nonhuman supernatural beings, or a term for spirits in general. They can be malevolent or benevolent.

Links to further resources:

[37 related glossary entries](#)

g.7 Biting insect

sha sbrang

ཤ་སྒྲ་།

daṁśa

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.8 Blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generically means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts this term implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root $\sqrt{bhañj}$, “to break.”

Links to further resources:

[115 related glossary entries](#)

g.9 Blessing

byin gyis brlabs · byin brlabs

བྱིན་གྱིས་བརྒྱབས། · བྱིན་བརྒྱབས།

adhiṣṭhāna

Links to further resources:

[11 related glossary entries](#)

g.10 Blister

phol mig

ཕོལ་མིག

pitaka · gaṇḍa

g.11 Bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ལྔུབ་སེམས་དཔའ།

bodhisattva

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfilment of the altruistic intention to attain perfect buddhahood according to the Mahāyāna tradition. Instead of simply seeking personal freedom from suffering, bodhisattvas purposely opt to remain within cyclic existence in order to liberate all sentient beings.

Links to further resources:

[33 related glossary entries](#)

g.12 Bodong Paṅchen Choklé Namgyal

bo dong paN chen phyogs las rnam rgyal

བོ་དོང་པཎ་ཆེན་ཕྱོགས་ལས་རྣམ་རྒྱལ།

—

1376–1451. Prolific scholar and abbot of the Bodong E monastery.

g.13 Body of emanation

sprul pa'i sku · sprul sku

སྤྱུལ་པའི་སྐུ། · སྤྱུལ་སྐུ།

nirmāṇakāya

The visible and usually physical manifestation of fully enlightened beings which arises spontaneously from the expanse of the body of reality, whenever appropriate, in accordance with the diverse dispositions of sentient beings.

Links to further resources:

[10 related glossary entries](#)

g.14 Body of enjoyment

longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku · longs sku

ལོངས་སྤྱོད་རྫོགས་པའི་སྐུ། · ལོངས་སྐུ།

sambhogakāya

The luminous manifestation of the buddhas' enlightened communication, perceptible to advanced bodhisattvas.

Links to further resources:

[7 related glossary entries](#)

g.15 Body of reality

chos kyi sku · chos sku

ཚོས་ཀྱི་སྐུ། · ཚོས་སྐུ།

dharmakāya

The ultimate nature or essence of the enlightened mind of the buddhas. It is said to be non-arising, free from the limits of conceptual elaboration, empty of inherent existence, naturally radiant, beyond duality, and spacious.

Links to further resources:

31 related glossary entries

g.16 Boil

'bras

འབྲས།

visphoṭa

g.17 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

Brahmā

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).

g.18 Centipede

rta bla

རྩ་བ།

—

g.19 Circular ring

'khor lo'i phreng ba

འཁོར་ལོའི་ཕྲེང་བ།

cakrāvalī

g.20 Complete nirvāṇa

yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa

ཡོངས་སུ་སྐྱ་རྒྱ་རྒྱ་ལས་འདས་པ།

parinirvāṇa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The final or complete nirvāṇa, which occurs when an arhat or a buddha passes away. It implies the non-residual nirvāṇa where the aggregates have also been consumed within emptiness. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

Links to further resources:

25 related glossary entries

g.21 Congregation

dge 'dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha

The community of followers of the Buddha; the third of the triad, the “Three Jewels,” in which Buddhists take refuge. In a narrower sense, it can refer to a congregation of monastics or of advanced bodhisattvas. Also translated here as “community.”

Links to further resources:

[32 related glossary entries](#)

g.22 Dangling bell

dril bu 'phyang ba

དྲིལ་བུ་འཕྱང་བ།

—

g.23 Decoration

lhab lhub

ལྷབ་ལྷབ།

vibhūṣaṇa

g.24 Dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

Literally, “retention,” or “that which retains, contains, or encapsulates,” the term dhāraṇī refers to mnemonic formulas, or codes possessed by advanced bodhisattvas that contain a quintessence of their attainments, as well as the Dharma teachings that express them and guide beings toward their realization. They are therefore often described in terms of “gateways” for entering the Dharma and training in its realization, or “seals” that contain condensations of truths and their expression. The term can also refer to a statement, or incantation, meant to protect or bring about a particular result.

Links to further resources:

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

g.25 Doctrinal synopsis

chos kyi rnam grangs

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

dharmaparyāya

Here referring to the dhāraṇī enshrined in a stūpa, the term is understood to refer to a condensed digest of the Buddha's doctrine.

Links to further resources:

[16 related glossary entries](#)

g.26 Eczema

rkang shu

རྐང་ཤུ།

vicarcikā

Links to further resources:

[1 related glossary entry](#)

g.27 Eye of the doctrine

chos kyi mig

ཚོས་ཀྱི་མིག།

dharmacakṣus

One of the five eyes: (1) the eye of flesh, (2) the eye of clairvoyance, (3) the eye of discernment, (4) the eye of the doctrine, and (5) the eye of the buddhas.

Links to further resources:

[8 related glossary entries](#)

g.28 Fistula

mtshan bar rdol ba

མཚན་བར་རྡོལ་བ།

bhagandara

g.29 Five points of the body

yan lag lnga

ཡན་ལག་ལྔ།

pañcāṅga

The two arms, two legs, and the head.

Links to further resources:

4 related glossary entries

g.30 Five supercognitions

mngon par shes pa lnga · *mngon shes lnga*

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ་ལྷན། · མངོན་ཤེས་ལྷན།

pañcābhijñā

These are (1) clairvoyance (*divyacakṣurabhijñā*, *lha'i mig gi mngon par shes pa*), (2) clairaudience (*divyaśrotrābhijñā*, *lha'i rna ba'i mngon par shes pa*), (3) knowledge of others' minds (*paracittajñāna*, *pha rol gyi sems shes pa'i mngon par shes pa*), (4) retrocognition (*pūrvanivāsānusr̥tijñāna*, *sngon gyi gnas rjes su dran pa'i mngon par shes pa*), and (5) knowledge of magical feats (*ṛddhividhijñāna*, *rdzu 'phrul gyi bya ba shes pa'i mngon par shes pa*).

Links to further resources:

29 related glossary entries

g.31 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

ལྷུ་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

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 Vaiśravaṇa in the north.

Links to further resources:

42 related glossary entries

g.32 Gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the sky and are most renowned as celestial musicians.

Links to further resources:

113 related glossary entries

g.33 Garuḍa

nam mkha' lding · *mkha' lding*

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྗིང་། · མཁའ་ལྗིང་།

garuḍa

A class of nonhuman beings described as eagle-type birds with a gigantic wingspan. They were traditionally enemies of the nāgas.

Links to further resources:

[78 related glossary entries](#)

g.34 Graha

gdon

གདོན།

graha

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

Links to further resources:

[12 related glossary entries](#)

g.35 Great śāla tree

shing sA la chen po

ཤིང་སུ་ལ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāśāla

An adjectival phrase typically linked to a brahmin, kṣatriya, or other upper-caste family, it denotes that the person in question has a large and prosperous household, family, or clan.

Links to further resources:

[5 related glossary entries](#)

g.36 Hearer

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

The word, based on the verb “to hear,” originally referred to the immediate disciples of the Buddha who heard the teachings directly from him. The term is also applied in Mahāyāna sources to followers of non-Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions.

Links to further resources:

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

g.37 Jetsün Drakpa Gyaltsen

rje btsun grags pa rgyal mtshan

རྗེ་བརྩུན་གྲགས་པ་རྒྱལ་མཚན།

—

1147–1216. Fifth throne-holder of Sakya monastery.

Links to further resources:

[3 related glossary entries](#)

g.38 Kinnara

mi 'am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara

A class of nonhuman beings that are half-human, half-animal, typically with animal heads atop human bodies. The term literally means “Is that human?”

They are renowned for having musical voices.

Links to further resources:

[78 related glossary entries](#)

g.39 Ladybug

bye ba

བྱི་བ།

koṭika

g.40 Lattice of little bells

dril bu g.yer ka'i dra ba

དྲིལ་བུ་གཡེར་ཀའི་དྲ་བ།

kinkijāla

g.41 Leprosy

mdzes

མཛེས།

kuṣṭha

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.42 Magadha

ma ga d+hA

མ་ག་རྒྱ།

Magadha

A large and important kingdom during the time of the Buddha Śākyamuni, ruled by Bimbisāra and later his son Ajātaśatru from the capital Rājagṛha.

Links to further resources:

[30 related glossary entries](#)

g.43 **Maheśvara**

dbang phyug chen po

དབང་ཕྱུག་ཆེན་པོ།

Maheśvara

An epithet of the Brahmanical god Śiva.

Links to further resources:

[47 related glossary entries](#)

g.44 **Mahoraga**

lto 'phye chen po

ལྷོ་འཕྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga

Literally “great serpents,” mahoragas are supernatural beings depicted as large, subterranean beings with human torsos and heads and the lower bodies of serpents. Their movements are said to cause earthquakes.

Links to further resources:

[69 related glossary entries](#)

g.45 **Molding**

'phang · 'phang ba

འཕང་། · འཕང་བ།

kṣepaṇa

g.46 **Mongoose**

sre mo · sre mong

སྲེ་མོ། · སྲེ་མོང་།

nakula

g.47 Mosquito
mchu rings · sbrang bu mchu rings · sbrang bu mchu ring
མཚུངས། · སྐྱང་བུ་མཚུངས། · སྐྱང་བུ་མཚུངས།
maśaka

g.48 Mynah bird
ri skegs
རི་སྐྱེགས།
śārikā
Links to further resources:
[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.49 Nāga
klu
ལྷ།
nāga
A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments and who are known to hoard wealth and esoteric teachings. Nāgas are associated with snakes and serpents and often assume a snakelike appearance.
Links to further resources:
[89 related glossary entries](#)

g.50 Nārāyaṇa
sred med kyi bu
སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།
Nārāyaṇa
Another name of the Brahmanical god Viṣṇu.
Links to further resources:
[30 related glossary entries](#)

g.51 Nirvāṇa
mya ngan las 'das pa
ལྷ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།
—

The Sanskrit term signifies the extinction of the causes of suffering, whereas the Tibetan term emphasizes the fact that suffering has been transcended.

Three types of nirvāṇa are identified: (1) the residual nirvāṇa where the person is still dependent on conditioned psycho-physical aggregates, (2) the non-residual nirvāṇa where the aggregates have also been consumed within emptiness, and (3) the non-abiding nirvāṇa transcending the extremes of phenomenal existence and quiescence.

Links to further resources:

[31 related glossary entries](#)

g.52 Non-returner

phyir mi 'ong ba

ཕྱིར་མི་འོང་བ།

anāgāmin

The third of four levels of noble ones attainable on the path of the hearers. Beings on this level will no longer be reborn in the desire realm but rather in the pure abodes (*śuddhāvāsika*), where they will attain liberation.

Links to further resources:

[30 related glossary entries](#)

g.53 Once-returner

lan cig phyir 'ong ba

ལན་ཅིག་ཕྱིར་འོང་བ།

sakṛdāgāmin

The second of four levels of noble ones attainable on the path of the hearers. Beings on this level will be reborn no more than once.

Links to further resources:

[27 related glossary entries](#)

g.54 Parasol

gdugs

གདུག་ལ།

chattra

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.55 Path of the ten virtuous deeds

dge ba bcu'i las kyi lam

དགེ་བ་བརྒྱའི་ལས་ཀྱི་ལམ།

daśakuśalakarmapatha

A collective term for the ten virtues, i.e., refraining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct (with the body); lying, slander, harsh words, gossip (with speech); covetousness, malice, and wrong views (with the mind).

Links to further resources:

[6 related glossary entries](#)

g.56 Pennant

ba dan

བ་དན།

patākā

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.57 Piśāca

'dre

འདྲེ།

piśāca

A class of nonhuman beings traditionally associated with the wild, remote places of the earth. They are known to devour flesh, thus, the term was also translated into Tibetan as “flesh eater” (*sha za*).

Links to further resources:

[30 related glossary entries](#)

g.58 Pleasurable

bde byed

བདེ་བྱེད།

—

The park in which the old stūpa is located in *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics*.

g.59 Preta

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

A type of spirit known for being tormented by unceasing hunger and thirst. The Sanskrit term generally refers to the spirits of the dead, but in Buddhism specifically it refers to a class of sentient beings belonging to the lower states of rebirth.

Links to further resources:

[49 related glossary entries](#)

g.60 Quintessence

snying po

སྟིང་པོ།

hrdaya

Links to further resources:

[6 related glossary entries](#)

g.61 Railing

kha ran

ཁ་རྟ།

vedikā

g.62 Rain gutter

char kab · char khab · char gab

ཆར་ཀམ། · ཆར་ཁབ། · ཆར་གབ།

varṣasthālaka

g.63 Rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition.

Links to further resources:

[47 related glossary entries](#)

g.64 Receptacle

za ma tog

ཟ་མ་ཏོག།

karaṇḍa

A basket, box, or other kind of receptacle with a lid.

g.65 Relic

ring bsrel

རིང་བསྐྱེལ།

dhātu · śarīra

The physical remains or personal objects of a previous tathāgata, arhat, or other realized person that are venerated for their perpetual spiritual potency. They are often enshrined in stūpas and other public monuments so that the Buddhist community at large can benefit from their blessings and power.

Links to further resources:

[4 related glossary entries](#)

g.66 Sage of the Śākyas

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀ་ལྷུབ་པ།

Śākyamuni

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

Links to further resources:

[50 related glossary entries](#)

g.67 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་ཕྱིན།

Śakra

An alternative name for Indra, lord of the gods, who, according to Buddhist cosmology, resides in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

Links to further resources:

[105 related glossary entries](#)

g.68 Scabies

g.yan pa

གཡན་པ།

pāman

g.69 Seal

phyag rgya

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

mudrā

A polysemous term that indicates a “seal” in both the literal and metaphoric sense. It can refer to an emblem or symbol, a ritual hand gesture, or a consort in sexual practices. When paired with the term *dhāraṇī* it conveys the idea that a *dhāraṇī* *seals* or *stamps* the nature that it embodies upon the reciter or the targeted phenomenon.

Links to further resources:

[14 related glossary entries](#)

g.70 Seven precious materials

rin po che sna bdun

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣ་བདུན།

saptaratna

The list of seven precious materials varies. They can be gold, silver, turquoise, coral, pearl, emerald, and sapphire; or they may be ruby, sapphire, beryl, emerald, diamond, pearls, and coral.

Links to further resources:

[41 related glossary entries](#)

g.71 Six perfections

pha rol tu phyin pa drug

ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་དུག་

ṣaṭpāramitā

The six perfections are generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, concentration, and discernment.

Links to further resources:

[28 related glossary entries](#)

g.72 Solitary buddha

rang sangs rgyas

རང་སངས་རྒྱས།

pratyekabuddha

An individual who has attained realization by understanding the nature of dependent origination without relying on a teacher. They have neither the required merit nor the motivation to teach others.

Links to further resources:

77 related glossary entries

g.73 Son or daughter of good family

rigs kyi bu'am rigs kyi bu mo

རིགས་ཀྱི་བྱམས་རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ་མོ།

kulaputro vā kuladuhitā

While this is usually a term pertaining to the brahmin, kṣatriya, or other “upper castes,” the Buddha redefined noble birth as determined by an individual’s ethical conduct and integrity. Thus, someone who enters the Buddha’s Saṅgha is called a “son or daughter of noble family.”

g.74 Stainless Glow

dri med legs snang

དྲི་མེད་ལེགས་སྒྲང།

—

A brahmin layman who is the main interlocutor in *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics*.

g.75 Stainless Pleasure Grove

dri ma med pa'i kun dga' ra ba

དྲི་མ་མེད་པའི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

—

The location of the Buddha’s discourse in *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics*.

g.76 Step

them skas

ཐེམ་སྐྱས།

sopāna

g.77 Stream enterer

rgyun du zhugs pa

རྒྱུན་དུ་བྱུགས་པ།

srotaāpanna · śrotaāpanna

The first of four levels of noble ones attainable on the path of the hearers. Beings on this level have entered the “stream” of practice that will inexorably lead to nirvāṇa.

Links to further resources:

33 related glossary entries

g.78 Stūpa

mchod rten

མཚན་རྟེན།

stūpa · caitya

A sacred object representative of the mind of a buddha and the body of reality (*dharmakāya*), originally constructed to hold the mortal remains of Śākyamuni Buddha. The symbolism of the stūpa is complex, and its design varies considerably throughout the Buddhist world.

Links to further resources:

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

g.79 Subsidiary affliction

nye ba'i nyon mongs

ཉེབའི་ཉོན་མོངས།

upakleśa

The secondary afflictive emotions that arise in dependence upon the six root afflictions (attachment, hatred, pride, ignorance, doubt, and wrong view); they are (1) anger (*krodha*, *khro ba*), (2) resentment (*upanāha*, *'khon 'dzin*), (3) concealment [of faults] (*mrakṣa*, *'chab pa*), (4) irritation (*pradāśa*, *'tshig pa*), (5) jealousy (*īrśyā*, *phrag dog*), (6) avarice (*matsara*, *ser sna*), (7) craftiness (*māyā*, *sgyu*), (8) fickleness (*śāṭhya*, *g.yo*), (9) pompousness (*mada*, *rgyags pa*), (10) harmfulness (*vihimśā*, *rnam par 'tshé ba*), (11) shamelessness (*āhrīkya*, *ngo tsha med pa*), (12) non-embarrassment (*anapatrāpya*, *khrel med pa*), (13) lack of faith (*aśraddhya*, *ma dad pa*), (14) laziness (*kausīdya*, *le lo*), (15) carelessness (*pramāda*, *bag med pa*), (16) forgetfulness (*muṣitasmr̥titā*, *brjed ngas*), (17) inattentiveness (*asaṃprajanya*, *shes bzhin ma yin pa*), (18) dullness (*nimagna*, *bying ba*), (19) agitation (*auddhatya*, *rgod pa*), and (20) distraction (*vikṣepa*, *rnam g.yeng*).

Links to further resources:

[10 related glossary entries](#)

g.80 Symmetrical feature

legs par rnam par 'byes pa

ལེགས་པར་རྣམ་པར་འབྲེས་པ།

suvibhakta

g.81 Three bodies

sku gsum

སྐྱ་གསུམ།

trikāya

The three bodies or dimensions of a buddha's enlightenment.

Links to further resources:

[1 related glossary entry](#)

g.82 Thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

A frequently used synonym for buddha. The expression is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has arrived at, or gone to, the ultimate state.

Links to further resources:

[100 related glossary entries](#)

g.83 Tsang Devendrarakṣita

gtsang de wen+d+ra rak+Shita

གཙང་དེ་ཕྱེར་རྒྱ་རྒྱུ་ཏེ།

Devendrarakṣita

A Tibetan translator active in the early ninth century who translated *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics*.

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.84 Ulcer

lhog pa

ལྷོག་པ།

—

Links to further resources:

[1 related glossary entry](#)

g.85 Uṣṇīṣa

gtsug tor

གཙུག་ཏོར།

uṣṇīṣa

One of the thirty-two signs of a great being. In its simplest form, it is a pointed shape on the head (like a turban). More elaborately, a dome-shaped protuberance, or even an invisible protuberance of infinite height.

Links to further resources:

[25 related glossary entries](#)

g.86 Vajra holder

rdo rje 'dzin

དོར་རྟེན་འཛིན།

vajradhara

Here used as an epithet of Vajrapāṇi.

Links to further resources:

[10 related glossary entries](#)

g.87 Vajrapāṇi

lag na rdo rje · phyag na rdo rje

ལག་ན་རོ་རྟེན། · ཕྱག་ན་རོ་རྟེན།

Vajrapāṇi

A figure who takes on numerous personas in Buddhist literature, including as a yakṣa bodyguard of Śākyamuni, a bodhisattva, and an esoteric Buddhist deity involved in the transmission of tantric scripture.

Links to further resources:

[37 related glossary entries](#)

g.88 Vidyākaraṇa

bid+yA ka ra pra b+ha

བིདྱ་ཀ་ར་པ་མ།

Vidyākaraṇa

Indian paṇḍita active in the early ninth century who translated *The Dhāraṇī for Secret Relics*.

Links to further resources:

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

g.89 Worm

sbrang ma mchu gsum · mchu sbrang

སྤང་མ་མཚུགསུམ། · མཚུགསྤང་།

kīṭa

g.90 Worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དག་བཙུག་པ།

arhat

The fourth of four levels of noble ones attainable on the path of the hearers. Beings on this level have eliminated all the afflictions and personally ended rebirth in cyclic existence.

Links to further resources:

[94 related glossary entries](#)

g.91 Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of nonhuman beings who haunt or protect natural places and cities. They can be malevolent or benevolent, and are known for bestowing wealth and worldly boons, as well as for causing harm, illness, and obstacles.

Links to further resources:

[96 related glossary entries](#)