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The Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī

Uṣṇīṣavijayādhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་དན་འགྲོ་བམས་ཅད་ཡོངས་སུ་སྐྱོང་བ་གཙུག་ཏུ་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

*'phags pa ngan 'gro thams cad yongs su sbyong ba gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya
ba'i gzungs*

The Noble Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī That Purifies All Lower Rebirths

Āryasarvadurgatipariśodhaniuṣṇīṣavijayānāmadhāraṇī



Toh 984
Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs, waM), folios 120.a–124.b

Translated by Patrick Lambelet and Caley Smith
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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Noble Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī That Purifies All Lower Rebirths* opens with an account of the god Supraṭiṣṭhita, who seeks the god Śakra's advice after learning of his own impending death and rebirth in the lower realms. Realizing that the Tathāgata is the only true refuge from lower rebirth, Śakra goes to the Buddha, who explains to him the benefits of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī* and a number of rituals related to it that can liberate Supraṭiṣṭhita and all beings from rebirth in the lower realms.

ac.

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ac.1 The text was translated from Tibetan by Patrick Lambelet and from Sanskrit by Caley Smith. Thanks to Catherine Dalton for her helpful suggestions regarding further bibliographic sources.

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INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Noble Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī That Purifies All Lower Rebirths* opens in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, where the god Supraṭiṣṭhita's enjoyment of divine pleasures is interrupted by a voice warning him that he will die within a week, experience seven rebirths in Jambudvīpa, and then be born as a hell being. Supraṭiṣṭhita rushes in panic to Śakra, Lord of the Gods, seeking his help. Śakra, shocked by this news, sees that Supraṭiṣṭhita will be born in the lower realms as various types of animals for seven rebirths. Realizing that only the Buddha can offer refuge for beings facing such low rebirths, he seeks the Buddha's counsel.

i.2 When Śakra tells the Buddha of the god Supraṭiṣṭhita's impending death and rebirth, light rays emerge from the Buddha's uṣṇīṣa, illuminating all the worldly realms before returning to his mouth. The Buddha then explains the qualities of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī*, which include destroying the obscurations, purifying lower rebirths, attaining rebirth as a god, attaining a long life, and attaining rebirth in buddha fields, divine abodes, and the abodes of bodhisattvas. The Buddha bestows the *dhāraṇī* and again enumerates its benefits. He then requests Śakra to proclaim the *dhāraṇī* to Supraṭiṣṭhita so that Supraṭiṣṭhita will avoid unfortunate future rebirths and be born into the bodhisattva lineage. The Buddha adds that Supraṭiṣṭhita should contemplate, meditate upon, and recall the *dhāraṇī* in order to benefit beings in the god realms and all the beings in Jambudvīpa.

i.3 The Buddha then explains that the *dhāraṇī* should be written down and installed in a high place, such as the top of a flagpole or caitya, and that the beings who do this and all beings who see it displayed will be liberated from lower rebirths. He also notes that a person who makes offerings to or venerates the *dhāraṇī* is to be known as a great being and a child of the tathāgatas.

- i.4 Following this, Yama, the Lord of Death, goes to the Buddha, praises the benefits of the dhāraṇī, and vows to protect all beings. The Four Great Kings then ask the Buddha to explain the rite related to the dhāraṇī and the technique for performing it. The Buddha explains that beings who recite it will be liberated from the lower realms as well as from all forms of illness, eventually taking their last rebirth in Sukhāvātī.
- i.5 The Buddha explains a dhāraṇī rite for those who have died in which one should scatter sesame seeds incanted with the dhāraṇī over the bones of the deceased. This will liberate them from lower realms and lead to rebirth in the god realms. He also explains that daily recitation of the dhāraṇī will lead to rebirth in Sukhāvātī, liberation, and protection by the tathāgatas.
- i.6 Upon hearing these explanations from the Buddha, Śakra returns to Supraṭiṣṭhita and provides him with the dhāraṇī and the instructions he has received. After practicing it for a week, the dhāraṇī grants Supraṭiṣṭhita's every wish—he obtains freedom from lower rebirths, is established on the path to higher rebirth, and is set on the path to his own eventual awakening.
- i.7 This work is one among a group of texts found clustered together in the Kriyātantra section of the Tibetan Kangyurs that contain the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī and its related rituals. Unlike the other texts in this group, the title of the present work does not explicitly refer to the rituals connected with the dhāraṇī, though it does in fact include a few of the same ritual instructions found in the remaining four texts in the group.¹ The group of four more specifically ritual texts all share a similar narrative opening (*nidāna*) that differs from the introductory narrative in the present text. The dhāraṇī itself and several further passages, however, are shared between the present text and other works in this group. For example, after the supporting narrative for the Buddha's recitation of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī, the dhāraṇī itself and nearly all the material that follows it can be found in various sections of Toh 594.
- i.8 There are many Sanskrit witnesses of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī proper,² and the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī text translated here survives in at least one incomplete early Sanskrit manuscript.³ There is also at least one surviving Sanskrit *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī work that is closely related to the remaining four *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī texts described above in that it shares the same opening narrative and some of the ritual material with those texts.⁴
- i.9 Several ritual manuals for recitation of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī were translated into Chinese.⁵ The present work was significant in East Asia, and one scholar has even identified it as the most important esoteric Buddhist scripture translated into Chinese in the seventh century.⁶ Practices connected with the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī were important in China, in particular in conjunction with funerary rites, where the dhāraṇī was written

on pillars near tombs, especially from the mid-Tang to Ming dynasties (ca. 800–1600 CE).⁷ In addition to its ritual uses, in China this dhāraṇī receives mention in poems and tales of miracles and is analyzed in philosophical commentaries.⁸

i.10 The *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī also appears to have been popular in Dunhuang. A number of Tibetan manuscripts from Dunhuang include just the dhāraṇī on its own, both in Tibetan transliteration (dhāraṇīs, like mantras, are commonly left untranslated in Tibetan texts) *and* in Tibetan translation. The *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī text translated here also appears in several Dunhuang manuscripts.⁹ Interestingly, several drawings from Dunhuang show maṇḍala (altar) arrangements corresponding to *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī texts,¹⁰ and one in particular, which has labels written in Chinese, depicts a maṇḍala that is nearly identical to the one described in one of the rites in Toh 594, even though no known ritual manual surviving in Chinese describes such a maṇḍala.¹¹ The records of *uṣṇīṣavijayā*-related works at Dunhuang, then, suggest a close relationship between Tibetan- and Chinese-speaking Buddhist practitioners there.

i.11 In Nepal, *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī rituals continue to be performed as part of modern Newar Buddhist practice, where their practice is sometimes prescribed for Wednesdays in particular.¹² Practices connected to the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī likewise continue in modern Tibetan Buddhism. The so-called Tongchö (*stong mchod*)—the thousandfold offering practice of Uṣṇīṣavijayā—is currently performed in Tibetan monasteries, sometimes using a ritual manual composed by the nineteenth-century polymath Jamyang Khyentsé Wangpo. Other notable Tibetan works on the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī and its associated practices include commentaries by the great Sakya lama Butön (bu ston rin chen grub, 1290–1364) and the fourth Panchen Lama, Losang Chökyi Gyaltzen (blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan, 1570–1662).

i.12 The question of what, or *who*, exactly, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is is a complex one that cannot be clearly answered here. In short, like a number of uṣṇīṣa deities, she is sometimes identified as a protective deity, in this case a goddess, emanated from the Buddha's uṣṇīṣa. Indeed, Uṣṇīṣavijayā is clearly depicted as a goddess in a number of short sādhanas included in Indian anthologies such as the *Sādhnamāla*, compiled from the works of many authors probably during the period of the Pāla kings (eighth to twelfth century).¹³ Three closely similar sādhanas of a three-faced, eight armed form of the goddess are included in the Tengyur, one in each of the three related anthologies translated from the Indian collections into Tibetan in the eleventh to fourteenth centuries respectively.¹⁴ A variety of other forms are depicted or described in Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and Kashmiri sources.¹⁵

In the later Tibetan tradition Uṣṇīṣavijayā can even appear as one of a group of three long-life deities along with the Buddha Amitāyus and White Tārā. Here in the Kangyur, however, in all but one (Toh 598) of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* works in this section, while the dhāraṇī itself uses the feminine vocative form throughout, the name *uṣṇīṣavijayā* is not rendered in Tibetan in the feminine, and the word *uṣṇīṣavijayā* is not used to refer to anything apart from the name of the dhāraṇī—the dhāraṇī of *the crown victory*.

i.13 The range of possible answers to the question of what the name Uṣṇīṣavijayā refers to is enlarged even further by the existence of a group of related texts widely used in Southeast Asia, sharing the Pali title *Uṇhissa-vijaya-sutta* (or in some cases simply *Uṇhissa-vijaya*) but found in a number of different forms, some in Pali but others in Siamese, Lao, Yuon, and Khmer. Some refer at least briefly to the story of the god Supraṭiṣṭhita (Pali Supaṭiṣṭhita), but instead of the dhāraṇī of the Sanskrit and Tibetan texts they contain a set of verses (*gāthā*) to be recited whose content is unrelated to that of the Sanskrit dhāraṇī. The *gāthā* are also found alone in several ritual compilations. Even in the vernacular versions, the verses are written in Pali. In these texts, in their own opening lines, it seems to be the verses themselves that are referred to as the Uṇhissa-vijaya.¹⁶

i.14 The present text was translated into Tibetan by the Indian paṇḍitas Jinamitra and Surendrabodhi and the Tibetan translator Bandé Yeshé Dé, thus placing the translation sometime in the ninth century CE.

i.15 This translation was made principally on the basis of the Tibetan translations of the text found in the Tantra Collection (*rgyud 'bum*) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs 'dus*) sections in the Degé Kangyur¹⁷ in consultation with the Stok Palace Kangyur and the Comparative Edition of the Kangyur (*dpe bsdur ma*). We also consulted Toshiya Unebe's 2015 transliteration of the Sanskrit text, the Sanskrit from Schopen's transcription of the "Los Angeles Manuscript" of this text, and Hidas' edition and translation of the surviving Sanskrit *Uṣṇīṣavijayā-dhāraṇī* ritual for the passages that are parallel with the present text.

i.16 The dhāraṇī proper—as is not unusual in the canonical texts where multiple versions have survived—is not identical in every detail even across the five different versions in the Degé Kangyur (Toh 594–598), and the existence of further variations across different Kangyurs and versions in extra-canonical collections further complicates the picture. Reference to Hidas' edition of the Sanskrit yields useful orthographic confirmation but may be misleading as a model given that the ten different Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts on which it is based are of much later date than any of the present Tibetan witnesses. Here and in the other works in the group, we

have therefore chosen to transcribe the dhāraṇī as it appears in the Degé version of each text, making only minor choices of orthography and adding annotations to point out the most significant discrepancies.

i.17 While most differences are minor, one particular phrase in this version of the dhāraṇī appears displaced by comparison with the dhāraṇī in the other works.¹⁸ The apparent displacement is not seen in all Kangyurs but is nevertheless not unique to the Degé xylograph alone. Moreover, in the two supposedly duplicate versions of this text, Toh 597 and Toh 984 (in the Tantra and Dhāraṇī sections respectively), that same phrase is by no means identical.

i.18 One noticeable difference across both Tibetan and Sanskrit versions of the dhāraṇī is the presence or absence of the syllable *om* at the beginning of certain phrases. In the present work and Toh 594, 595, and 596 there are only three such *om* syllables, while in Toh 598 *om* appears no less than nine times, as it does in Hidas' edition from Sanskrit sources and in some of the extra-canonical liturgies. Toh 598 is a translation made at a significantly later date than the other works of the group, and may possibly signal a change in usage that is also reflected in the Nepalese Sanskrit texts of even later date. This is corroborated by the absence of extra *oms* in the Dunhuang manuscripts. The colophon of the equivalent of the present text in the Phukdrak (*phug brag*) Kangyur¹⁹ includes a note to the effect that the texts with only three *oms* are to be considered more correct; that although there may have been Sanskrit source texts with as many as nine, Sumpa Lotsāwa (twelfth century)²⁰ reported that all the Sanskrit texts he had seen contained only three; and that of the Sanskrit texts held at Sakya monastery none had more than that. Sumpa Lotsāwa's remark regarding this aspect of the Sanskrit manuscripts he had seen, presumably including those then available in Nepal, where he studied and lived, thus contrast with what we know of later manuscript traditions of the dhāraṇī in Nepal, in which the inclusion of nine *oms* seems to have been the norm.

i.19 Over the centuries, the textual transmission of the dhāraṇī has preserved the major portion of it with remarkable fidelity. Nevertheless, the few anomalies to be seen across all these closely related texts are a reminder that here, as with other dhāraṇī works, some variations over time and place are only to be expected.

The Translation

The Noble Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī That Purifies All Lower
Rebirths

1. The Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī

[F.120.a]

- 1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- 1.2 There was a god called Supraṭiṣṭhita, seated in the divine assembly hall, Sudharmā, among the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three; he lived in a great palace, where he was surrounded by the finest divine pleasures and a great harem of divine maidens playing and singing songs.
- 1.3 That night, after he had indulged in those divine pleasures, he heard a voice say, “God Supraṭiṣṭhita, your death will occur in one week. After you die, you will be born in Jambudvīpa, where you will undergo seven rebirths. After undergoing the seventh rebirth, you will be born as a hell being. When you are eventually born as a human, you will be poor and blind.”
- 1.4 When the god heard that voice, he became terrified and anguished, and his hairs stood on end. In great haste, he went to Śakra, Lord of the Gods, and prostrated at his feet. He wailed miserably, sobbed, and addressed Śakra, Lord of the Gods, saying, “Lord of the Gods, please listen. Today, Lord of the Gods, I was surrounded by my harem of divine maidens, and after we had enjoyed divine pleasures, played, and indulged in bliss, I heard a voice saying, ‘God Supraṭiṣṭhita, your death will occur in one week. After you die, you will be born in Jambudvīpa, where you will undergo seven rebirths. After undergoing the seventh rebirth, you will be born as a hell being. When you are eventually born as a human, you will be poor and blind.’ Lord of the Gods, what am I to do?”²¹
- 1.5 When he heard what the god Supraṭiṣṭhita said, Śakra, Lord of the Gods, [F.120.b] was astonished. He thought about the seven rebirths that this god was going to experience and sat there in silence. He saw those seven rebirths—birth as a pig, a dog, a fox, a monkey, a venomous snake, a vulture, and a crow—and saw the filthy things he would consume. When Śakra, Lord

of the Gods, saw those seven births, he thought, “Alas, if this god is going to experience this unbearable, great suffering, who but the thus-gone, worthy, perfectly awakened Buddha will be his refuge, support, and last resort?”

1.6 That evening at dusk, Śakra, Lord of the Gods, gathered various kinds of perfumes, flowers, incense, clothing, ornaments, and so forth, approached the Blessed One in the Jetavana monastery,²² prostrated at the Blessed One’s feet, circumambulated him seven times, performed a great offering, sat before the Blessed One, and told the Blessed One in detail about Supraṭiṣṭhita’s seven rebirths.

1.7 As soon as Śakra, Lord of the Gods, had told the Blessed One about those seven rebirths, brilliant rays of light emerged from the Blessed One’s uṣṇīṣa, illuminated every place throughout the ten directions where there was a world system, returned, and entered the Blessed One’s mouth.²³ Then the Blessed One smiled at Śakra, Lord of the Gods, and spoke these words:

1.8 “Lord of the Gods, *the crown victory dhāraṇī* that has been consecrated by the Tathāgata purifies all lower rebirths, destroys all births characterized by obscurations and suffering, thoroughly purifies the hell realms, [F.121.a] animal realms, and the Realm of the Lord of Death, and sets beings on the path to higher rebirth.

1.9 “Lord of the Gods, as soon as *the crown victory dhāraṇī* that purifies all lower rebirths is heard, it destroys the many different types of suffering related to the obscurations. One will obtain a stream of completely pure births, and in each of those lifetimes one will remember one’s previous lives. One will go from one buddha land to another and one god realm to another until one reaches the thirty-second god realm.²⁴

1.10 “Lord of the Gods, as soon as that *dhāraṇī* is uttered, any god whose lifespan has been exhausted will have their lifespan extended,²⁵ the perfectly pure bodily, verbal, and mental karma they have accumulated by maintaining contact with the higher realms²⁶ will allow them to remain, and the tathāgatas will watch over them and²⁷ constantly protect, guard, and preserve them. All the bodhisattvas will think about them as well.

1.11 “Just reciting it will lead all the hell realms, the animal realm, the Realm of the Lord of Death, and the preta realm to dry up, disintegrate, and be scattered, cleared, and emptied. The doors to all the buddha fields, god realms, and realms of the bodhisattvas will be opened for them, and they can enter whichever they wish.”

1.12 At that point Śakra, Lord of the Gods, addressed the Blessed One, saying, “Blessed One, please proclaim that *dhāraṇī* and explain its benefits for the life force of beings.” [F.121.b]

Then, the Blessed One understood what Śakra, Lord of the Gods, had requested and bestowed the following *dhāraṇīs*:²⁸

1.13 “²⁹ om namo bhagavate sarvatrailokyapratiṣiṣṭāya buddhāya te namaḥ | tadyathā | om bhrūṃ bhrūṃ bhrūṃ | śodhaya śodhaya | viśodhaya viśodhaya | asama-samantāvabhāsaspharaṇagatigagane svabhāvaviśuddhe |³⁰ abhiñcantu māṃ sarvatathāgatāḥ sugatavaravacanāmṛtābhīṣekair mahāmudrāmantrapadaḥ | āhara āhara mama³¹ āyusandhāraṇi śodhaya śodhaya | viśodhaya viśodhaya | gagana-svabhāvaviśuddhe | uṣṇīṣavijayāpariśuddhe | sahasraraśmisaṃcodite | sarvatathāgatāvalokini | ṣaṭpāramitāparipūraṇi | sarvatathāgatamāte³² daśabhūmi-pratiṣṭhite | sarvatathāgataḥṛdayādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite | mudre mudre mahāmudre | vajrakāyasamḥatanapariśuddhe | sarvakarmāvaraṇaviśuddhe | pratinivartaya mama āyurviśuddhe | sarvatathāgatasamayādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite | om muni muni mahāmuni | vimuni vimuni mahāvimuni | mati mati mahāmati mamati sumati | tathatābhūtakoṭipariśuddhe | viṣphuṭabuddhiśuddhe | he he | jaya jaya | vijaya vijaya | smara smara sphara sphara | sphāraya sphāraya | sarva-buddhādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite | śuddhe śuddhe | buddhe buddhe | vajre vajre mahāvajre suvajre³³ | vajragarbhe | jayagarbhe | vijayagarbhe | vajrajvālāgarbhe | vajrodbhave | vajrasamḥhave | vajre | vajriṇi | vajraṃ bhavatu mama śarīraṃ sarvasattvānāṇi ca kāyapariśuddhir bhavatu | sadā me³⁴ sarvagatipariśuddhiś ca | sarvatathāgatasamaya ādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite³⁵ | sarvatathāgatāś ca mām³⁶ | samāśvāsayantu | budhya budhya | sidhya sidhya | bodhaya bodhaya | [F.122.a] vibodhaya vibodhaya | mocaya mocaya | vimocaya vimocaya | śodhaya śodhaya | viśodhaya viśodhaya | samantān mocaya mocaya³⁷ samantaraśmipariśuddhe | sarvatathāgataḥṛdayādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite | mudre mudre mahāmudre mahāmudrā-mantrapade svāhā³⁸

1.14 “Lord of the Gods, the crown victory dhāraṇī that completely purifies all lower rebirths completely purifies all bad deeds, actions, and obscurations. It leads to the path of higher rebirth and utterly destroys all lower rebirths. As many buddhas as there are grains of sand in eighty-eight trillion Gaṅgā Rivers have taught, blessed, and rejoiced in this dhāraṇī, and it is sealed by the wisdom mudrā of all the tathāgatas. It was taught in order to place all beings on the path that leads to higher rebirths, to bring back those who have fallen into lower rebirths, and to liberate all those in painful and frightening existences: hell beings, those born into the animal realm, those in the Realm of the Lord of Death, and all others who have plunged into the ocean of suffering.

1.15 “Similarly, this dhāraṇī has been given to Jambudvīpa to benefit beings who have a short lifespan and little fortune, who are despised, and who have strayed from the path.

“Lord of the Gods, you should take this dhāraṇī and proclaim it to the god Supraṭiṣṭhita. After you proclaim it, you should urge him to chant it, recite it, contemplate it, meditate upon it, and recollect it, and to worship, uphold, and master it.

“Thus, for the benefit, assistance, and happiness of the gods residing in all the god realms [F.122.b] and the beings of Jambudvīpa, I entrust to you the mudrās and mantras related to this dhāraṇī. Lord of the Gods, you must keep it well!

1.16 “Lord of the Gods, as soon as this dhāraṇī is heard, the karmic obstructions one has amassed over one hundred thousand eons will be utterly purified.³⁹ Know that one will no longer take any of the various births in the hell realms, the animal realm, the Realm of the Lord of Death, the realm of the pretas, and the realm of the asuras. Likewise, one will not be born into the class of creatures such as yakṣas, rākṣasas, bhūtas, piśācas, pūtanas, kaṭapūtanas, apasmāras, dogs, tortoises, snakes, fierce wild animals, birds, bees, flies, reptiles, and ants.

1.17 “Instead, one will meet with the tathāgatas, be born into the family of the bodhisattvas, or be born into a prominent family such as a brahmin family that is like a great sāl tree, a kṣatriya family that is like a great sāl tree, a householder family that is like a great sāl tree, or a merchant family that is like a great sāl tree.

1.18 “Lord of the Gods, the power of this dhāraṇī will allow one to obtain great and completely pure rebirths until one finally reaches the seat of awakening.

“Lord of the Gods, this dhāraṇī is extremely powerful, beneficial, potent, virtuous, and auspicious.

“Lord of the Gods, this dhāraṇī called *the crown victory of the tathāgatas*, which completely purifies all lower rebirths, has been set forth for the benefit of beings.

1.19 “Lord of the Gods, consider the utterly stainless precious jewel that is the heart of the sun, completely pure like space, luminous, and blazing with light. [F.123.a] This dhāraṇī will render beings devoid of stains just like that jewel. Consider also the perfectly stainless gold from the Jambu River that is pure, perfectly resplendent,⁴⁰ and utterly lovely. Lord of the Gods, great beings such as those are as utterly and completely pure as that gold, and they will continue to be reborn like that from one lifetime to the next.

1.20 “Lord of the Gods, wherever this dhāraṇī is taught—and particularly wherever it is written down,⁴¹ read aloud, recited, chanted, worshiped, studied, listened to, and upheld—all rebirths will be thoroughly purified, and all rebirths in the hell realms will cease.

- 1.21 “Lord of the Gods, this dhāraṇī should be written down and hung from the top of a flagstaff. It should be placed on a high mountain, on top of a tall building, or on top of the life pillar of a caitya.⁴² Śakra, should any monk or nun, layman or laywoman, or any other son or daughter of noble family see it, live near it, pass under its shadow, or be touched by a breeze carrying a particle of dust from this dhāraṇī when it is hung from the top of a flagstaff, all of that being’s evil deeds will be purified,⁴³ Śakra, and they will no longer have any fear of going to the lower realms. They will not be born as a hell being, they will not be born in the animal realm, they will not be born in the Realm of the Lord of Death, they will not be born as a preta, and they will not be born among the asuras. Lord of the Gods, know that such a being has been prophesied by all the tathāgatas and will never turn back from unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening.
- 1.22 “Lord of the Gods, a being who worships and honors it, [F.123.b] who adorns it with flowers, incense, perfumes, flower garlands, scented salves, parasols, banners, pendants, and ornaments—not to mention builds a caitya at a crossroads, places this dhāraṇī there, and joins their palms together or prostrates or circumambulates it—you should know, Śakra, that this being is indeed a great being! Know them to be a child of the tathāgatas. Know them to be an abode of the Dharma. Know them to be a caitya of the tathāgatas.”
- 1.23 Then, as that evening passed and dawn began to break, Dharmarāja Yama arose, went before the Blessed One, worshiped the Blessed One with divine flowers, cloth, ornaments, and other things, and respectfully circumambulated the Blessed One seven times. Then he touched the Blessed One’s feet and said, “Blessed One, this dhāraṇī is very powerful. It is very beneficial. Blessed One, I will also continually pursue the benefit of those beings, and I will always remain here to protect and defend them.⁴⁴ I will turn those beings away from all hell realms. Blessed One, I will do what I know is right, and I will not do what I know is not right.”
- 1.24 Then the Four Great Kings circumambulated the Blessed One three times and said to him, “Blessed One, please give an extensive explanation of the detailed rite for this dhāraṇī and the way to perform the rite.”
- 1.25 The Blessed One then addressed the Four Great Kings, “Listen, and I will explain the way to perform the rite of this dhāraṇī.
- “To help a being with a short lifespan, a son or daughter of noble family [F.124.a] should bathe on the full moon day and recite the dhāraṇī 1,008 times. The depleted lifespan of that being will be restored. They will become free from illness, all their obscurations will be purified, and they will be completely freed from all lower rebirths, such as that of a hell being.

“One can even recite this dhāraṇī in the ear of any bird or living being that has taken an animal birth and know that this will be their very last lower rebirth.

1.26 “If one does the same thing for someone who is extremely ill, even when the doctors have determined that things have taken a turn for the worse, they will be completely freed from their illness and be cut off from all lower rebirths. When they die, they will be born in the realm of Sukhāvātī. Know that this very life is their last birth from a womb. From one lifetime to the next, they will only take miraculous birth from the center of a lotus, and they will always remember the succession of their past lives.

1.27 “For any being who has committed negative deeds and has died, recite the dhāraṇī over white mustard seeds twenty-one times and scatter these over their bones. Even if they have been born as a hell being, in the animal realm, in the Realm of the Lord of Death, as a preta, or in some other lower rebirth, the power of this dhāraṇī will free them from those lower rebirths, and they will be reborn as a god.

1.28 “Whoever recites this dhāraṇī completely twenty-one times each day will become worthy to receive offerings from great worldly beings. Their lifespan will increase, they will be free from illness, they will be happy, they will always be joyful, and they will attain the great nirvāṇa. [F.124.b] From there they will travel to many different buddha fields and meet the tathāgatas in each one. Those tathāgatas will reassure them and issue prophecies of their awakening. In each of those buddha fields, they will illuminate the entire world.⁴⁵

1.29 “Lord of the Gods,⁴⁶ this method will liberate all beings from all rebirths as hell beings and so forth. It will completely purify their lower rebirths, and they will have long lives.

“Lord of the Gods, go teach and proclaim this dhāraṇī to the god Supraṭiṣṭhita,⁴⁷ and in seven days, Lord of the Gods, all the god Supraṭiṣṭhita’s rebirths will be purified, he will have a long life, and he will become extremely powerful.”

1.30 Śakra, Lord of the Gods, took this teaching from the Tathāgata, went to Supraṭiṣṭhita’s abode, and gave this dhāraṇī to the god Supraṭiṣṭhita. That god diligently practiced this dhāraṇī for six days and six nights, and on the seventh day all his wishes were fulfilled. He was liberated from the lower realms, he was established on the path to the higher realms, and he obtained a long life. Then he proclaimed the following meaningful statement: “How wonderful is the Buddha! How wonderful is the Dharma! How wonderful is it that a dhāraṇī such as this exists in the world! I have been liberated from the great fear!”

1.31 *This concludes “The Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī That Purifies All Lower Rebirths.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Surendrabodhi and the chief editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 The four texts are [Toh 594 \(https://read.84000.co/translation/toh594.html\)](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh594.html), [595 \(https://read.84000.co/translation/toh595.html\)](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh595.html), [596 \(https://read.84000.co/translation/toh596.html\)](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh596.html), and [598 \(https://read.84000.co/translation/toh598.html\)](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh598.html). The first three share the same title: *Crown Victory of the Tathāgatas: The Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī with Its Ritual Manual (de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba'i gzungs rtog pa dang bcas pa)*. The fourth has an ever-so-slightly different title: *Crown Victory of the Tathāgatas: A Ritual Manual for the Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī (de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ma'i gzungs zhe bya ba'i rtog pa)*.
- n.2 Hidas 2020, p. 141. See also Hidas 2021, which catalogs a number of Indic *dhāraṇīsamgraha* collections, many of which include the *uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī*.
- n.3 The Sanskrit of this work is preserved in what Gregory Schopen calls the “Los Angeles Manuscript,” though it appears to be held currently in Japan. This is an early manuscript from Bamiyan-Gilgit that Schopen transcribed and translated into English in an unpublished work, which we are grateful to Jacob Dalton for sharing. In addition to being incomplete, probably due to the loss of a folio, the manuscript lacks several passages that are found in the Tibetan translation of Toh 597 and contains a few passages that are absent in that translation, including two passages that are found in Toh 594. Nonetheless, the Sanskrit manuscript is by and large the same work that is translated into Tibetan as Toh 597. More recently, the Sanskrit of the very same manuscript was studied by Gudrun Meltzer in a 2007 “limited distribution report” (Silk 2021, p. 108), to which we have not had access, as well as by Unebe Toshiya, who published the Sanskrit along with a Japanese translation in a 2015 article.

- n.4 This text has been edited on the basis of ten Nepalese Sanskrit manuscripts and translated into English in Hidas 2020. From among the works belonging to this group that are preserved in the Tibetan canon, the Sanskrit text is most closely parallel, though not identical, with Toh 595.
- n.5 According to Chou, the ritual manuals surviving in Chinese are Taishō 972–973 (Chou 1945, p. 322). Hidas 2020 notes that the full set of Uṣṇīṣavijayā-related texts found in the Taishō canon includes Taishō 968–974, 978, and 979.
- n.6 Sørensen 2011a, p. 165.
- n.7 Sørensen 2011b, p. 386.
- n.8 Copp 2005, p. 4. For further details see Copp 2005, which addresses the topic of dhāraṇīs in medieval China using the *uṣṇīṣavijayā* dhāraṇī as a case study.
- n.9 See IOL Tib J 307 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20307;img=1)/PT 54 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=Pelliot%20tibétain%2054;img=1), PT 6 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=Pelliot%20tibétain%206;img=1), and PT 368 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=Pelliot%20tibétain%20368;img=1) for Tibetan translations of this text, IOL TIB J 322 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20322;img=1) and IOL Tib J 349/3 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20349;img=3) for a Tibetan translation of the dhāraṇī alone (not the whole text), and IOL Tib J 466/2 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20466;img=2), IOL Tib J 547 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20547;img=1), IOL Tib J 1134 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%201134;img=1), IOL Tib J 1498 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%201498;img=1), PT72 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=Pelliot%20tibétain%2072;img=1), and PT73 (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=Pelliot%20tibétain%2073;img=1) for Tibetan transliterations of the Sanskrit dhāraṇī alone (J. Dalton and van Schaik 2006; accessed through *The*

International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online). The translations of the *uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī* text translated here that appear at Dunhuang include at least one passage parallel with rites described in the *kalpas* (Toh 594, 595, 596, and 598) but missing from this *dhāraṇī* text in its Tibetan canonical translation, though present in the surviving Sanskrit manuscript corresponding to it (see J. Dalton forthcoming).

- n.10 Schmid 2011, pp. 372–73.
- n.11 J. Dalton 2016 and forthcoming.
- n.12 Bühnemann 2014; Rospatt 2015, p. 821.
- n.13 See Bhattacharyya 1928, vol. 2.
- n.14 The three are Toh 3377, 3248, and 3580, translated respectively by Khampa Lotsāwa Bari Chödrak (*kham pa lo tsA ba ba ri chos grags*, eleventh century), Patshap Lotsāwa Tsültrim Gyaltzen (*pa tshab lo tsA ba tshul khrims rgyal mtshan*, twelfth century), and Yarlung Lotsāwa Trakpa Gyaltzen (*yar klungs lo tsA ba grags pa rgyal mtshan*, late thirteenth or early fourteenth century).
- n.15 See Chandra 1980.
- n.16 These Southeast Asian texts are not included in the official Pali Canon of the Theravāda tradition and are unknown in Sri Lanka. In mainland Southeast Asia, however, they are popular in rituals for extending life and in funeral rites. Whether they reflect the diffusion of texts and practices directly from India prior to the relatively recent evolution of Theravāda orthodoxy, or were transmitted via Chinese along with Chinese migrations and cultural influence in the region, remains an open question. For a detailed study of these texts and their possible origins, see Cicuzza (ed.) 2018.
- n.17 This text, Toh 984, and all those contained in this same volume (*gzungs, waM*), are listed as being located in volume 101 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 102. 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.18 See [n.35](#).
- n.19 The text is F 631, Phukdrak Kangyur, vol. 117 (rgyud, dza), F.224.a–231.a. It should be noted, however, that the version of the dhāraṇī preserved in F 631 differs from the dhāraṇī in the present text much more substantially than any of the versions in the mainstream Kangyurs.
- n.20 Probably Sumpa Lotsāwa Dharma Yontan (*sum pa lo tsA ba dhar ma yon tan*), a translator and teacher of Sakya Jetsun Drakpa Gyaltsen, but possibly his uncle, also called Sumpa Lotsāwa, Palchok Dangpö Dorje (*dpal mchog dang po'i rdor rje*). Both studied in Nepal. See [Treasury of Lives](https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Sumpa-Lotsawa-Darma-Yonten/1726) (<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Sumpa-Lotsawa-Darma-Yonten/1726>).
- n.21 Sanskrit *'haṃ katham parimucyeyam*, “How might I be released from these things?”
- n.22 The Tibetan does not mention Jetavana, but the Sanskrit has *yena jetavane vihāre*.
- n.23 The Sanskrit witness consulted for this translation preserves the alternate reading *punar evāgatya bhagavantaṃ triḥ pradakṣiṇīkṛtya bhaga vataḥ mukhadvāraṃ praviṣṭā* (“three rays returned [and] circumambulated the Blessed One”).
- n.24 It is not entirely clear what this refers to. According to the *Abhidharmakośa*, there are six levels of gods in the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), seventeen in the form realm (*rūpadhātu*), and four in the formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu* / *ārūpadhātu*), totaling twenty-seven. It may refer to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, but the Tibetan versions, as well as the Sanskrit, all say “the thirty-second.”
- n.25 This translation follows the Sanskrit witness, which reads *devendra bhāṣitamātrāyāṃ gatāyusaś ca devaputraḥ punar api dīrghāyuni pratilabhate*. The Tibetan witnesses do not include the term *devaputraḥ* and indicate that the dhāraṇī can perform this function for anyone who recites it.
- n.26 The English term “realms” has been added to the translation for the sake of clarity and assumes that the term *bde ba* in the Tibetan witnesses refers to the

“higher realms” (*bde 'gro*). It is possible, however, to interpret this phrase to mean simply maintaining contact with “pleasant things.”

- n.27 The Sanskrit witness reads *sarvadevatā cāsyā rakṣāvaraṇaguptim kurvanti*, which indicates that the nominative agent of this phrase is all the tutelary deities and not the tathāgatas.
- n.28 Of the collection of *uṣṇīṣavijayā dhāraṇī* texts in the Kangyurs, only this text preserves the reading *gzungs 'di dag*, which notes that the long dhāraṇī that follows is in fact a collection of several separate dhāraṇīs.
- n.29 An opening homage to the Three Jewels, *namo ratna trayāya*, is added here in Toh 597, the version of the text in the Action Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur, but is not present here in Toh 984 in the Dhāraṇī section despite this version supposedly being a duplicate reiteration of Toh 597. Moreover, it is only in the Degé Kangyur that the dhāraṇī in the Action Tantra version includes that phrase of homage; it does not appear in the Action Tantra recensions in the Yongle, Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace Kangyurs.
- n.30 The phrase *uṣṇīṣavijāyāparisuddhe* follows here in the Yongle and Kanxi Kangyur versions of this text, in Hidas' Sanskrit edition, and in Toh 595, 596, and 598.
- n.31 *mama* is not present in Hidas' edition of the Sanskrit manuscripts.
- n.32 Hidas' edition reads *sarvatathāgatamātre*, a plausible variant unattested in Tibetan sources.
- n.33 *suvaṅgre* is not present in Hidas' edition of the Sanskrit manuscripts.
- n.34 Yongle and Kanxi here read *sadame*, while Hidas' edition of the Sanskrit manuscripts has *mama sadā*. In Toh 595 and 598 the phrase reads *kāyapariśuddhir bhavatu | me sadā sarvagatipariśuddhiś ca*.
- n.35 This is the anomalous phrase mentioned in the introduction at [i.17](#). In place of the reading *sarvatathāgatasamaya ādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite* here in Toh 984 in the Dhāraṇī section of the Degé, the Toh 597 version of the text in the Action Tantra section instead reads *samantān mocaya mocaya | ādhiṣṭhāna*, as do the equivalent texts in the Lithang and Cone Kangyurs. The Sanskrit manuscripts as edited by Hidas read *sarvatathāgatahṛdayādhiṣṭhānādhiṣṭhite*. However, in other Kangyurs, including the Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace, the phrase is omitted altogether. See also [n.37](#).
- n.36 *māṃ* is absent in Hidas' Sanskrit edition.

n.37 The phrase here *samantān mocaya mocaya* is absent at this point in the Degé text of Toh 597 in the Action Tantra section, despite this version, Toh 984, being its supposedly duplicate reiteration. The same phrase is also present in the Stok Palace Kangyur, and in the Sanskrit manuscripts according to Hidas' edition; in the Narthang and Lhasa Kangyurs it reads *samantā mocaya mocaya*. In one or other of these two spellings it is also present in all other canonical versions of the dhāraṇī in this group of texts—with the exception of the heavily abridged version in the Phukdrak Kangyur (see [n.19](#)). See also [n.35](#); one could speculate that this phrase might possibly have been displaced at some point by a scribal error.

n.38 Hidas has translated the dhāraṇī based on his edition, and rather than retranslate it, we give his translation here. Substantive variants between the Sanskrit basis for his translation and the Degé have been noted above. “Om veneration to the glorious Buddha distinguished in all the Three Worlds. Namely, om bhrūṃ bhrūṃ bhrūṃ, purge, purge, purify, purify, O Unequaled Enveloping Splendor Sparkle Destiny Sky, O the One of Purified Nature, O the One Purified by the Topknot Victory, let all Tathāgatas consecrate me with consecrations of the nectar of the excellent Sugata's words along with great seals and mantrapadas, om bring, bring, O the One who Nourishes Life, purge, purge, purify, purify, O the One Purified by Sky Nature, O the One Purified by the Topknot Victory, O the One Impelled by Thousand Rays, O the One Beholding all Tathāgatas, O the One Fulfilling the Six Perfections, O Mother of all Tathāgatas, O the One Established in the Ten Stages, O the One Empowered by the Empowerment of the Heart of all Tathāgatas, om O Seal, O Seal, O Great Seal, O the One Purified by the Firmness of the Vajra Body, O the One Purged of all Obscurations Resulting from Actions, turn back for me O Life-purged One, O the One Empowered by the Empowerment of the Vow of all Tathāgatas, om muni muni, mahāmuni, vimuni vimuni, mahāvimuni, mati mati, mahāmati, mamati, sumati, O the One Purified by Truth and the True Goal, O the One Purged by a Burst Open Mind, om he he, triumph triumph, succeed succeed, recollect recollect, manifest manifest, expand expand, O the One Empowered by the Empowerment of all Buddhas, om O Pure One, O Pure One, O Awakened One, O Awakened One, O Vajra, O Vajra, O Great Vajra, O Vajra-essence, O Victory-essence, O Triumph-essence, O Vajra-flame-essence, O Vajra-born, O Vajra-produced, O Vajra, O the One with a Vajra, let my body become a vajra and that of all beings, let there be body-purification for me and purification of all destinies, O the One Empowered by the Empowerment of the Heart of all Tathāgatas, let all Tathāgatas provide encouragement, om awake awake, succeed succeed, awaken awaken, wake up, wake up, liberate liberate, release release, purge purge, purify purify, liberate completely, O the One

Purified by an Enveloping Ray, O the One Empowered by the Empowerment of the Heart of all Tathāgatas, om̐ O Seal O Seal, O Great Seal, O Great Seal and Mantrapada svāhā” (Hidas 2020, p. 154).

- n.39 Note that from this point until where it is indicated below, in Unebe’s transcription there does not appear to be any corresponding Sanskrit text.
- n.40 Reading *mnyen pa* as **snigdha*.
- n.41 Degé here adds *'dzin pa* (“upheld”), but this term is repeated later in the list, so we follow the Lithang and Choné Kangyurs, which omit the first instance.
- n.42 *mchod rten gyi srog shing gi steng du*. This reading differs in Toh 594, where we find the alternate reading *mchod rten gyi nang du* (“inside a caitya”). Either reading would be appropriate.
- n.43 Technically the final verb *mi 'byung* (“will not come about”) applies both to the evil deeds of the beings and their fears of lower rebirths, so this line could be translated as “all the evil deeds of that being will not come about,” i.e., they will stop performing evil deeds. However, given the context of the wider passage, we find it more likely that the passage means that their evil deeds will be purified, and so we have translated it accordingly.
- n.44 The implication here is of course that Yama, the Lord of the Realm of the Dead, will defend and protect those beings who are connected with this dhāraṇī and will not send them to lower rebirths.
- n.45 The parallels between this text and Toh 594 end here.
- n.46 The Phukdrak (*phug brag*) Kangyur manuscript contains a significant variant at this point beginning with the phrase *phyag rgya bcings pa ni* on folio 6.b.3. This line corresponds to the instructions for forming the mudrā for this dhāraṇī that appear in Toh 594 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh594.html#UT22084-090-038-84>), which do not appear in any of the other versions of Toh 597.
- n.47 This translation follows the reading *lha'i bu shin tu brtan pa* in the Stok Palace Kangyur. The Degé reads *lha'i bu blo gros shin tu brtan pa*.

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Apasmāra

brjed byed

བརྗེད་བྱེད།

apasmāra

This is the name for epilepsy, but it also refers to the demon that causes epilepsy and loss of consciousness. The Tibetan specifically means “causing forgetting.”

Links to further resources:

[11 related glossary entries](#)

g.2 Asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

A class of beings, accounts of which can be traced back to the Vedas. They are often considered inferior, even demonic, deities. In Buddhist contexts, they are generally depicted as being in constant conflict with the gods due to their intense jealousy. They are often considered one of the six realms of rebirth in saṃsāra, although they are sometimes classified together with the gods.

Links to further resources:

[104 related glossary entries](#)

g.3 Bhūta

'byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta

A generic term for a spirit or ghost. They can be malevolent or benevolent.

Links to further resources:

[37 related glossary entries](#)

g.4 Birth from a womb

mngal gyi gnas

མངལ་གྱི་གནས།

—

Existence in which one is born from a womb. This is one of four types of birth listed in treatises such as the *Abhidharmakośa*: (1) birth from a womb (mammals, human beings), (2) from an egg (birds, reptiles, fish, etc.), (3) from heat and moisture (maggots, etc.), (4) and spontaneous or miraculous birth (gods, pretas, hell beings, intermediate state beings, etc.).

g.5 Blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

Normally used as an epithet for a buddha. While the Sanskrit term simply means “fortunate,” “illustrious,” or “revered,” Tibetan hermeneutics defines the term as denoting a teacher or buddha who subdues (*bcom*) the four demonic forces, possesses (*ldan*) the six attributes of greatness (*che ba'i yon tan drug*, namely lordship, noble form, glory, fame, wisdom, and perseverance), and transcends (*'das*) all sorrow, without abiding in the extremes of existence and quiescence.

Links to further resources:

[115 related glossary entries](#)

g.6 Buddha field

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།

buddhakṣetra

A pure realm manifested by a buddha or advanced bodhisattva through the power of their great merit and aspirations. Examples include Sukhāvātī (the domain of the Buddha Amitābha) and Abhirati (the domain of the Buddha Akṣobhya).

Links to further resources:

[25 related glossary entries](#)

g.7 Caitya

mchod rten

མཚོད་རྟེན།

caitya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Tibetan translates both *stūpa* and *caitya* with the same word, *mchod rten*, meaning “basis” or “recipient” of “offerings” or “veneration.” Pali: *cetiya*.

A caitya, although often synonymous with *stūpa*, can also refer to any site, sanctuary or shrine that is made for veneration, and may or may not contain relics.

A *stūpa*, literally “heap” or “mound,” is a mounded or circular structure usually containing relics of the Buddha or the masters of the past. It is considered to be a sacred object representing the awakened mind of a buddha, but the symbolism of the *stūpa* is complex, and its design varies throughout the Buddhist world. *Stūpas* continue to be erected today as objects of veneration and merit making.

Links to further resources:

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

g.8 Crown victory

gtsug tor rnam par rgyal ba

གཙུག་ཏོར་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བ།

uṣṇīṣavijayā

The shorter name for the dhāraṇī after which this text is named.

g.9 Daughter of noble family

rigs kyi bu mo

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ་མོ།

kuladuhitṛ

Indian term of address used toward a female student of the bodhisattva path.

See “son of noble family.”

Links to further resources:

[3 related glossary entries](#)

g.10 Dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

Links to further resources:

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

g.11 Dharmarāja

chos kyi rgyal po

ཚས་ཀྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

Dharmarāja

Literally “Dharma King” In this text the term is used as an epithet for Yama, the Lord of Death, who judges the dead and rules over the hells.

g.12 Divine maiden

lha'i bu mo

ལྷ་འི་བུ་མོ།

apsarā

Female divine being. The Sanskrit literally means “going in the waters or between the waters of the clouds.”

g.13 Eon

bskal pa

བསྐལ་པ།

kalpa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A cosmic period of time, sometimes equivalent to the time when a world system appears, exists, and disappears. According to the traditional Abhidharma understanding of cyclical time, a great eon (*mahākalpa*) is divided into eighty lesser eons. In the course of one great eon, the universe takes form and later disappears. During the first twenty of the lesser eons, the universe is in the process of creation and expansion; during the next twenty it remains; during the third twenty, it is in the process of destruction;

and during the last quarter of the cycle, it remains in a state of empty stasis. A fortunate, or good, eon (*bhadrakalpa*) refers to any eon in which more than one buddha appears.

Links to further resources:

[17 related glossary entries](#)

g.14 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི།

Caturmahārāja

The Four Great Kings, or *mahārājas*, also known as the “Protectors of the World” (*’jig rten skyong ba; lokapāla*), are the protectors of the four directions: (1) Dhṛtarāṣṭra (*yul ’khor srung*) in the east, (2) Virūḍhaka (*’phags skyes po*) in the south, (3) Virūpākṣa (*spyan mi bzang*) in the west, and (4) Vaiśravaṇa (*rnam thos smas*) in the north.

Links to further resources:

[42 related glossary entries](#)

g.15 Gaṅgā River

gang gA'i klung

གང་གཱའི་ཀླུང་།

Gaṅgā

The Ganges River in India.

Links to further resources:

[41 related glossary entries](#)

g.16 Great being

sems dpa' chen po

སེམས་དཔའ་ཚེན་པོ།

mahāsattva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An epithet of advanced bodhisattvas. The term can be understood to mean “great courageous one” or “great hero,” or (from the Sanskrit) simply “great being,” and is almost always found as an epithet of “bodhisattva.” The qualification “great” in this term, according to the majority of canonical definitions, focuses on the generic greatness common to all bodhisattvas, i.e. the greatness implicit in the bodhisattva vow itself in terms of outlook, aspiration, number of beings to be benefited, potential or eventual

accomplishments, and so forth. In this sense the *mahā-* (“great”) is close in its connotations to the *mahā-* in “Mahāyāna.” While individual bodhisattvas described as *mahāsattva* may in many cases also be “great” in terms of their level of realization, this is largely coincidental, and in the canonical texts the epithet is not restricted to bodhisattvas at any particular point in their career. Indeed, in a few cases even bodhisattvas whose path has taken a wrong direction are still described as *bodhisattva mahāsattva*.

Later commentarial writings do nevertheless define the term—variably—in terms of bodhisattvas having attained a particular level (*bhūmi*) or realization. The most common qualifying criteria mentioned are attaining the path of seeing, attaining irreversibility (according to its various definitions), or attaining the seventh bhūmi.

Links to further resources:

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

g.17 Great nirvāṇa

mya ngan las 'das pa chen po

མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahānirvāṇa

The full awakening of a buddha. A synonym of *parinirvāṇa*

Links to further resources:

[2 related glossary entries](#)

g.18 Great sāl tree

shing sA la chen po

ཤིང་སུ་ལ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāsāla · *mahāsāla*

This can refer either to the sal (or sala) tree (*Shorea robusta*) or to a great (*mahā*) household (*śāla*). The Buddha was said to have been born and died beneath a sāl tree.

Links to further resources:

[5 related glossary entries](#)

g.19 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་རུ་རྩ་གསུམ།

Trayastrīṅśa

According to Buddhist cosmology, the Heaven of the Thirty-Three is the second lowest of the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), just above the Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Caturmahārājakāyika*) and below the Yāma Heaven. It is situated on the flat summit of Mount Sumeru and inhabited by thirty-three divinities, presided over by Śakra.

Links to further resources:

[69 related glossary entries](#)

g.20 Hell being

sems can dmyal ba

སེམས་ཅན་དམྱལ་བ།

naraka

One of the five or six classes of beings, engendered by anger and powerful negative actions. They are dominated by great suffering and said to dwell in different hells with specific characteristics.

Links to further resources:

[13 related glossary entries](#)

g.21 Jambu

'dzam bu

འཛམ་བུ།

Jambu

Legendary river carrying the golden fruit fallen from the legendary jambu (“rose apple”) tree. This term is used as an adjective for the gold found in rivers.

Links to further resources:

[32 related glossary entries](#)

g.22 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu'i gling

འཛམ་བུ་རྒྱུད།

Jambudvīpa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The name of the southern continent in Buddhist cosmology, which can signify either the known human world, or more specifically the Indian subcontinent, literally “the *jambu* island/continent.” Jambu is the name used for a range of plum-like fruits from trees belonging to the genus *Szygium*, particularly *Szygium jambos* and *Szygium cumini*, and it has commonly been

rendered “rose apple,” although “black plum” may be a less misleading term. Among various explanations given for the continent being so named, one (in the *Abhidharmakośa*) is that a jambu tree grows in its northern mountains beside Lake Anavatapta, mythically considered the source of the four great rivers of India, and that the continent is therefore named from the tree or the fruit. Jambudvīpa has the vajrāsana at its center and is the only continent upon which buddhas attain awakening.

Links to further resources:

[75 related glossary entries](#)

g.23 Jetavana

rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

Jetavana

One of the first Buddhist monasteries, it is located outside of Śrāvastī and is also known as Anāthapiṇḍada’s Park. Anāthapiṇḍada, a merchant and benefactor of the Buddha, bought the land from Prince Jeta and donated it to the saṅgha. It is said that both names are mentioned to acknowledge their mutual efforts in building the monastery. It was there that the Buddha spent several rainy seasons and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras.

Links to further resources:

[51 related glossary entries](#)

g.24 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇོ་ན་མི་ཏྲ།

Jinamitra

Co-translator and editor of the Tibetan text of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī*. His name means “Spiritual Guide (*mitra*) of the Conquerors (*jina*).”

Links to further resources:

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

g.25 Kaṭapūtana

lus srul po

ལུས་སྤྱུལ་པོ།

kaṭapūtana

A class of malevolent nonhuman beings, similar to pretas, who are often identified as the source of illness.

Links to further resources:

[13 related glossary entries](#)

g.26 Layman

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྐྱེན།

upāsaka

Links to further resources:

[19 related glossary entries](#)

g.27 Laywoman

dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྐྱེན་མ།

upāsikā

Links to further resources:

[14 related glossary entries](#)

g.28 Life pillar

srog shing

སྲོག་ཤིང་།

yaṣṭi

The Sanskrit *yaṣṭi* may refer to a flagpole, especially one said to have adorned the capital cities of five former buddha, but more specifically, it refers to the “life pillar” in the center of a statue or stūpa

Links to further resources:

[4 related glossary entries](#)

g.29 Lord of the Gods

lha'i dbang po

ལྷ་འི་དབང་པོ།

Devendra

An epithet for the god Indra, or Śakra.

Links to further resources:

[8 related glossary entries](#)

g.30 Meaningful statement

ched du brjod pa

ཆེད་དུ་བརྗོད་པ།

udāna

A formal mode of expression on a religious topic, often referring to one of the twelve divisions of the Buddhist scriptures.

Links to further resources:

[10 related glossary entries](#)

g.31 Mudrā

phyag rgya

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

mudrā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A seal, in both the literal and metaphoric sense. *Mudrā* is also the name given to an array of symbolic hand gestures, which range from the gesture of touching the earth displayed by the Buddha upon attaining awakening to the numerous gestures used in tantric rituals to symbolize offerings, consecrations, etc. Iconographically, mudrās are used as a way of communicating an action performed by the deity or a specific aspect a deity or buddha is displaying, in which case the same figure can be depicted using different hand gestures to signify that they are either meditating, teaching, granting freedom from fear, etc. In Tantric texts, the term is also used to designate the female spiritual consort in her various aspects.

Links to further resources:

[14 related glossary entries](#)

g.32 Palace

gzhal yas khang

གཞལ་ཡས་ཁང་།

vimāna

Here refers to a palace of the gods (*devavimāna*). Alternatively, it can refer to a chariot or self-moving aerial car.

Links to further resources:

[4 related glossary entries](#)

g.33 Piśāca

sha za

ཤ་ཟ།

piśāca

A class of semidivine beings traditionally associated with wild, remote places of the earth. They are considered particularly violent and known to devour flesh.

Links to further resources:

[30 related glossary entries](#)

g.34 Preta

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the five or six classes of sentient beings, into which beings are born as the karmic fruition of past miserliness. As the term in Sanskrit means “the departed,” they are analogous to the ancestral spirits of Vedic tradition, the *pitṛs*, who starve without the offerings of descendants. It is also commonly translated as “hungry ghost” or “starving spirit,” as in the Chinese 餓鬼 *e gui*.

The pretas live in the realm of Yama, the Lord of Death, where they are particularly known to suffer from great hunger and thirst and the inability to acquire sustenance.

Links to further resources:

[49 related glossary entries](#)

g.35 Pūtana

srul po

སྤུལ་པོ།

pūtana

Ugly and foul-smelling spirits, they can be good or cause harm to humans and animals.

Links to further resources:

[11 related glossary entries](#)

g.36 Rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition, sometimes depicted as flesh-eating demons who haunt frightening places.

Links to further resources:

[47 related glossary entries](#)

g.37 Realm of the Lord of Death

gshin rje'i 'jig rten

གཤིན་རྗེའི་འཇིག་རྟེན།

Yamaloka

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The land of the dead ruled over by the Lord of Death. In Buddhism it refers to the *preta* realm, where beings generally suffer from hunger and thirst, which in traditional Brahmanism is the fate of those departed without descendants to make ancestral offerings.

Links to further resources:

[26 related glossary entries](#)

g.38 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

Śakra

Common epithet of the god Indra, in Sanskrit meaning “Mighty One,” and in Tibetan “Hundred Gifts.” The Tibetan translation is based on an alternate etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, “one who has performed a hundred sacrifices.” This epithet often appears together with the title *Devendra* (“Lord of Gods”). He is ruler of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

Links to further resources:

[105 related glossary entries](#)

g.39 Son of noble family

rigs kyi bu

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ།

kulaputra

Indian term of address used toward a male student of the bodhisattva path. While this is usually a characteristic pertaining to brahmins (i.e., born in the brahmin caste to seven-generation brahmin parents), 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” and is in this sense “good” or “noble” and considered born again (*dvija*, or “twice born”).

Links to further resources:

[3 related glossary entries](#)

g.40 Sudharmā

chos bzang

ཚོས་བཟང་།

Sudharmā

The name of the assembly hall of the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, located on the southwest side of Mount Meru, where Śakra teaches the Dharma.

Links to further resources:

[13 related glossary entries](#)

g.41 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

Sukhāvātī

The blissful pure land of the Buddha Amitābha. A practitioner can take rebirth there through a combination of pure faith, sufficient merit, and one-pointed determination.

Links to further resources:

[42 related glossary entries](#)

g.42 Supraṭiṣṭhita

shin tu brtan pa

ཤིན་ཏུ་བརྟན་པ།

Supraṭiṣṭhita

A god living in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, whose name means “Very Stable.” He is one of the primary characters in this text, where he is told that he has only a week to live before he will be born into the lower realms.

Links to further resources:

[1 related glossary entry](#)

g.43 Surendrabodhi

su ren+d+ra bo d+hi

སུ་རེ་རྒྱ་བོ་རྗེ།

Surendrabodhi

Co-translator and editor of the Tibetan text of the *Uṣṇīṣavijayā Dhāraṇī*. His name means “Awakening Lord of the Gods.”

Links to further resources:

[25 related glossary entries](#)

g.44 Tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

A frequently used epithet for Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas, literally meaning one who has “arrived at” (*āgata*), or “gone to” (*gata*), the ultimate state, or “thusness” (*tathatā*).

Links to further resources:

[100 related glossary entries](#)

g.45 Unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening

bla na med pa yang dag par rdzogs pa'i byang chub

བླ་ན་མེད་པ་ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་བྱང་ལུག།

anuttarasamyakṣambodhi

The fully awakened state of a buddha.

Links to further resources:

[10 related glossary entries](#)

g.46 Uṣṇīṣa

gtsug tor

གཙུག་ཏོར།

uṣṇīṣa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the thirty-two signs of a great being. In its simplest form it is a pointed shape of the head like a turban (the Sanskrit term, *uṣṇīṣa*, in fact means “turban”), or more elaborately a dome-shaped extension. The extension is described as having various extraordinary attributes such as emitting and absorbing rays of light or reaching an immense height.

Links to further resources:

25 related glossary entries

g.47 Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of semidivine beings that haunt or protect natural places and cities. They can be malevolent or benevolent and are known for bestowing wealth and worldly boons. They are associated with Kubera, the god of wealth, who is often counted as their king.

Links to further resources:

96 related glossary entries

g.48 Yama

gshin rje

གཤིན་རྗེ།

Yama

The Lord of Death, he judges the dead and rules over the hells.

Links to further resources:

50 related glossary entries