

ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཡུམ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

# **The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of All Dharmas”**

*Sarvadharmamātr̥kānāmadhāraṇī*

འཇགས་མ་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ཀྱི་ཡུམ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

The Noble Dhāraṇī “The Mother of All Dharmas”

*Āryāsarvadharmamātrkānāmadhāraṇī*

· Toh 573 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 90 (rgyud 'bum, pha), folio 200.a



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## **Contents**

Summary

Acknowledgements

Introduction

The Translation

Notes

**Glossary**

**Bibliography**

## Summary

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of All Dharmas”* contains one healing dhāraṇī taught by the Buddha to Ānanda and a second dhāraṇī taught by the gods of the Śuddhavāsa realm.

## Acknowledgements

- ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.
- ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Adam C. Krug produced the translation and wrote the introduction. John Canti edited the translation and the introduction, and Iby Caputo copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

## Introduction

- i.1 *The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of All Dharmas”* is a brief teaching by the Buddha, with a standard introductory phrase setting the teaching in Śrāvastī. The text contains one dhāraṇī taught by the Buddha to Ānanda and a second dhāraṇī taught by the gods of the Śuddhavāsa realm. This brief text does not include any ritual instructions or description of the applications of these dhāraṇīs, and there is no description of the subject to whom, or which, the dhāraṇī refers. It is also not clear from the very brief narrative why the title refers to the dhāraṇī as “the mother of all dharmas.”

- i.2 *The Dhāraṇī “The Mother of All Dharmas”* does not include a translators’ colophon, but the text is included in the Denkarma<sup>1</sup> and Phangthangma<sup>2</sup> imperial inventories of Tibetan translations, which indicates that it must have been translated into Tibetan by the early ninth century CE. There is no extant Sanskrit witness for this text, and it does not appear to have been translated into Chinese.
- i.3 The text is classified in the Degé Kangyur among the Action (*kriyā*) tantras belonging to the “mothers” of the Tathāgata family (Toh 573), presumably because of its title, and is duplicated in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (Toh 996).<sup>3 4</sup>
- i.4 This English translation was prepared from the Tibetan translations in the Tantra (*rgyud ’bum*) and Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs ’dus*) sections of the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Tibetan witnesses in the Stok Palace Kangyur and the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur.

## The Translation

1.

### The Noble Dhāraṇī

### The Mother of All Dharmas

- 1.1 Homage to the buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- 1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Śrāvastī, and there addressed the venerable Ānanda, saying, “Ānanda, this mudrā dhāraṇī called *mother of all dharmas* has been taught by all the thus-gone ones to cure all illness. I will also teach it now and you should retain it.
- 1.3 *tadyathā | avarte avarte vivarte vivarte bhagam śuddhe prabhāsvare tāraṇe ukkhale mukkhale<sup>5</sup> sarvadharmāpāśi vatani svāhā*

1.4 The gods of the Śuddhavāsa realm then addressed the Blessed One, saying, “Blessed One, we will teach the essence mantra related to this dhāraṇī:

1.5 *tadyathā | acche anale elule eluphe mūrtānugate sarvadharmādhipataye prāpte  
jyotsnākara adhigatajñāne viśuddhepati svāhā*

1.6 After the Blessed One had spoken, the venerable Ānanda along with the entire assembly rejoiced and praised the words of the Blessed One.

1.7 This concludes *The Dhāraṇī* “*The Mother of All Dharmas.*”

## Notes

1. Denkarma, folio 303.b.
2. Phangthangma, p. 30.
3. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 996 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 996, n.3, for details.
4. [note 9c33505f...]
5. This transliteration follows the reading in the Toh 996 version, *uk+kha le/ muk+kha le*. The Toh 573 version reads *uk kha le/ mug kha le*; and the Stok Palace version reads *ug kha le/ mug kha le*.

## Glossary

### **dhāraṇī**

*gzungs*

གནུངས།

*dhāraṇī*

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.

### **mudrā**

*phyag rgya*

ཕྱག་རྒྱ།

*mudrā*

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.

**null**

*kun dga' bo*

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

*null*

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the Mahāvastu, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).

Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

**null**

*mnyan yod*

མཉམ་ཡོད།

*null*

During the life of the Buddha, Śrāvastī was the capital city of the powerful kingdom of Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, who became a follower and patron of the Buddha. It was also the hometown of Anāthapiṇḍada, the wealthy patron who first invited the Buddha there, and then offered him a park known as Jetavana, Prince Jeta's Grove, which became one of the first Buddhist monasteries. The Buddha is said to have spent about twenty-five rainy seasons with his disciples in Śrāvastī, thus it is named as the setting of numerous events and teachings. It is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

## Śuddhāvāsa

*gnas gtsang ma*

གནས་གཙང་མ།

*śuddhāvāsa*

The five Pure Abodes are the highest heavens of the Form Realm (rūpadhātu). They are called “pure abodes” because ordinary beings (pṛthagjana; so so’i skye bo) cannot be born there; only those who have achieved the fruit of a non-returner (anāgāmin; phyir mi ’ong) can be born there. A summary presentation of them is found in the third chapter of Vasubandhu's Abhidharmakośa, although they are repeatedly mentioned as a set in numerous sūtras, tantras, and vinaya texts.

The five Pure Abodes are the last five of the seventeen levels of the Form Realm. Specifically, they are the last five of the eight levels of the upper Form Realm—which corresponds to the fourth meditative concentration (dhyāna; bsam gtan)—all of which are described as “immovable” (akopya; mi g.yo ba) since they are never destroyed during the cycles of the destruction and reformation of a world system. In particular, the five are Abṛha (mi che ba), the inferior heaven; Atapa (mi gdung ba), the heaven of no torment; Sudṛśa (gya nom snang), the heaven of sublime appearances; Sudarśana (shin tu mthong), the heaven of the most beautiful to behold; and Akaniṣṭha (’og min), the highest heaven.

Yaśomitra explains their names, stating: (1) because those who abide there can only remain for a fixed amount of time, before they are plucked out ( $\sqrt{bṛh}$ , bṛṃhanti) of that heaven, or because it is not as extensive (abṛṃhita) as the others in the pure realms, that heaven is called the inferior heaven (abṛha; mi che ba); (2) since the afflictions can no longer torment ( $\sqrt{tap}$ , tapanti) those who reside there because of their having attained a particular samādhi, or because their state of mind is virtuous, they no longer torment ( $\sqrt{tap}$ , tāpayanti) others, this heaven, consequently, is called the heaven of no torment (atapa; mi gdung ba); (3) since those who reside there have exceptional (suṣṭhu) vision because what they see ( $\sqrt{dṛś}$ , darśana) is utterly pure, that heaven is called the heaven of sublime appearances (sudṛśa; gya nom snang); (4) because those who reside there are beautiful gods, that heaven is called the heaven of the most beautiful to behold (sudarśana; shin tu mthong); and (5) since it is not lower (na

kaniṣṭhā) than any other heaven because there is no other place superior to it, this heaven is called the highest heaven (akaniṣṭha; 'og min) since it is the uppermost.

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