སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག་གི་གཟུངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།

The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara

Āvalokiteśvaranāmadhāraṇī

འཕགས་པ་སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག་གི་གཟུངས་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།

’phags pa spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug gi gzungs zhes bya ba

The Noble Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara

Āryāvalokiteśvaranāmadhāraṇī

· Toh 696 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 93 (rgyud ’bum, tsa), folios 147.b–148.a
For referencing Tibetan sources, please see our Scholar’s Edition

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Contents

s.	**Summary**	**6**
ac.	**Acknowledgments**	**6**
i.	**Introduction**	**7**
tr.	**The Translation**	**9**
n.	**Notes**	**10**
b.	**Bibliography**	**11**
g.	**Glossary**	**12**

Summary

s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara* is a short text that describes the visualization of Avalokiteśvara in his four-armed, white form seated on a lotus throne. It enumerates the benefits of reciting his mantra *oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ* and promises that reciting the mantra will purify negative karma, prevent lower rebirths, protect from dangers, cure illnesses, reveal Avalokiteśvara's face, and ensure rebirth in Sukhāvatī after death.

Acknowledgments

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. Catherine Dalton produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Nathaniel Rich edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

Introduction

i.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara* is a short text that first describes the visualization of a four-armed Avalokiteśvara. It begins in the style of a sādhana, a ritual liturgy in which a practitioner generates the form of a deity by means of meditative concentration. Avalokiteśvara then speaks to the practitioner, describing the benefits of reciting his mantra—freedom from the consequences of evil deeds, from rebirth in the lower realms, and from harm by malicious spirits. He utters his mantra and explains that reciting it will cause a practitioner to see Avalokiteśvara directly and to take rebirth in Sukhāvatī.

i.2 Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva who embodies compassion, appears in this work in his common four-armed form. However, this work is different from many texts categorized as dhāraṇīs in that the text begins with a structure more akin to a sādhana. However, in this text, once the deity has been generated, unlike in sādhana, Avalokiteśvara immediately begins to speak and to describe the benefits of reciting his mantra, which he then proclaims. This latter part of the text is written in a style more typical of a dhāraṇī text.

i.3 A Sanskrit witness of *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara* does not appear to be extant, nor does it appear to have been translated into Chinese. The text does not appear in the imperial catalogs or at Dunhuang, and it lacks a translator's colophon. In the absence of such a colophon, and the absence of the text's title in any of the imperial catalogs or at Dunhuang, we are unable to date the text or its Tibetan translation.

i.4 Like many dhāraṇī texts, *The Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara* is found in the Tantra section of both the Tshalpa and Thempangma lineage Kangyurs, listed as a kriyā tantra. In the Degé Kangyur and other Tshalpa lineage Kangyurs that have a Dhāraṇī section, it is additionally found there. The text as found in the Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur (Toh 696) and the one found in the Dhāraṇī

(Toh 910)[1] section are identical except for occasional variances in their punctuation.

i.5 This English translation was made based on the two recensions of the text found in the Degé Kangyur, with reference also to the Stok Palace Kangyur and the notes from the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur. The mantra is rendered exactly as it appears in the Degé Kangyur recension from the Tantra section (Toh 696).

The Translation

1.

The Noble Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara

1.1 Homage to the great compassionate noble Avalokiteśvara.

1.2 Generate the mind of awakening with the strength of compassion from within the state of noble Avalokiteśvara's love. Then, upon a lotus, sun, and moon seat, the syllable *hṛīḥ* emanates light and gathers it back. Thereby, the syllable transforms into Avalokiteśvara, who has one face and four arms. His first two arms have the palms joined. His lower right hand holds a white pearl rosary. His lower left hand holds a white lotus. His body is white in color, and his legs are fully crossed. He is adorned by various jeweled ornaments and beautified by a jeweled crown. He is flanked by the mother Ṣaḍakṣarī as well as the father Maṇibhadra, and he is surrounded by many male and female bodhisattvas.

1.3 He says, "If a son or daughter of noble family recites this mantra just once, brings it to mind, keeps it in mind, writes it down and wears it on their body, or treats it with devotion and respect, it will completely purify the five actions of immediate consequence, or any of the evil deeds connected with them, and they will not take rebirth in the three lower realms, in the eight unfree states, or in any such painful birth. They will be completely freed from all dangers from humans, non-humans, or wild animals. They will be freed from all illnesses and malicious spirits.

1.4 "Anyone who says *oṁ maṇi padme hūṁ* will see the face of noble Avalokiteśvara. After death they will be reborn in Sukhāvatī. Have no doubt, uncertainty, or hesitation about this."

1.5 *This completes The Noble Dhāraṇī of Avalokiteśvara.*

Notes

1. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 911 version of this text within vol. 100 or 101 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 910, n.1, for details.

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Glossary

Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

eight unfree states

mi khom pa brgyad

མི་ཁོམ་པ་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭākṣaṇa

five actions of immediate consequence

mtshams med pa lnga

མཚམས་མེད་པ་ལྔ།

pañcānantarya

kriyā tantra

bya rgyud

བྱ་རྒྱུད།

kriyātantra

A class of tantric scripture that generally features elaborate rites directed toward both mundane goals—such as health, prosperity, and protection—and to the ultimate goal of liberation. In this class of tantra, the practitioners do not

identify themselves with the deity as in other classes of tantra, but rather seek their power, assistance, and intervention in pursuit of their goals. The *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa* and *Amoghapāśakalparāja* exemplify this class of tantra.

Maṇibhadra

nor bu rin po che

ནོར་བུ་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

maṇibhadra

A god connected with Avalokiteśvara who appears as his companion.

mantra

sngags

སྔགས།

mantra

mind of awakening

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

Ṣaḍakṣarī

lha mo drug ma

ལྷ་མོ་དྲུག་མ།

ṣaḍakṣarī

A goddess connected with Avalokiteśvara who appears as his companion.

Sukhāvatī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

sukhāvatī

three lower realms

ngan song gsum

ངན་སོང་གསུམ།

durgatitraya, tridurgati