

དབྱིག་དང་ལྡན་པ་ཤེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

# The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”

*Hiraṇyavatīdhāraṇī*

འཕགས་པ་དབྱིག་དང་ལྡན་པ་ཤེས་བྱ་བའི་གསུངས།

'phags pa dbyig dang ldan pa shes bya ba'i gzungs

The Noble Dhāraṇī 'Hiraṇyavatī'

*Āyahiraṇyavatīnāmadhāraṇī*

· Toh 991 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 101 (gzungs 'dus, waM), folios 144.b–146.b



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## Summary

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* is a short dhāraṇī taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni in the heavenly realm of Tuṣita to a gathering of bodhisattvas who are within a single lifetime of attaining awakening. The dhāraṇī is presented not only as a protection from harm, like many other vidyās, but also as an essential element of a bodhisattva’s progress to awakening.

## 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 setting for the Buddha Śākyamuni’s teaching of *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* is the heavenly realm of Tuṣita. The Buddha is surrounded by thousands of bodhisattvas who are all one lifetime away from attaining perfect awakening. Directing his instructions toward a bodhisattva great being named Well Established (Tib. *legs par gnas pa*), the Buddha explains that upholding *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* is critical to the attainment of a bodhisattva’s ultimate goal of seeing, hearing, and experiencing the buddhas of the three times.

- i.2 The Buddha then explains that bodhisattva great beings can only attain this dhāraṇī when they have come to abide in wisdom, which is equivalent to attaining nirvāṇa. This is the point at which bodhisattva great beings can be said to receive *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”*, which, in turn, allows them to attain mastery of all subjects and ensures that the discipline and qualities that they possess are certain, true, and pure. The Buddha states that the dhāraṇī is effectively equivalent to the vidyā mantras of all other buddhas, even if these have different names. He then pronounces the dhāraṇī and explains how it is “the mother of the blessed buddhas of the past, future, and present.”
- i.3 The description of the dhāraṇī in first part of this text is focused on the process of awakening. Here, *The Dhāraṇī Hiraṇyavatī* is presented as a component of the bodhisattva path that enables bodhisattvas to maintain pure discipline; to formulate the Dharma autonomously; to desire nothing, uphold nothing, and set nothing free; and to experience the thus-gone ones of the three times. In some passages, the text seems to be referring to the attainment of dhāraṇī in general sense, as one of the special abilities accomplished by bodhisattvas, as much as to this particular dhāraṇī.
- i.4 The later passages of the text focus more on *The Dhāraṇī of Hiraṇyavatī’s* specific protective qualities. The Buddha provides brief instructions on how one should perform the recitation ritual and notes that the power of this dhāraṇī can ensure that one will be served and protected from obstacles by all manner of human and nonhuman beings. It also has the power to ensure that the practitioner will always be surrounded and protected by all the bodhisattva great beings all the way up to Akaniṣṭha, the highest domain of the desire realm.

i.5

It is not clear from the text what the name *Hiraṇyavatī*, which means “possessing gold,” primarily designates. Elsewhere, *Hiraṇyavatī* appears as the name of a river near Kuśinagara on the banks of which the Buddha entered parinirvāṇa. The name is also found referring to a goddess of that river, and as a form of Tārā.<sup>1</sup> *Dhāraṇī* spells and mantras are often personified as goddesses, and this *dhāraṇī* is referred to as a *vidyā*, a term identified with female mantra beings. However, aside from his description of the *dhāraṇī* as the “mother of the buddhas,” the Buddha does not give any further explicit indication that *Hiraṇyavatī* is understood here as the name of a goddess. It is thus difficult to be sure from the text itself whether *Hiraṇyavatī* is the proper name of a goddess or some sort of metaphorical designation for the *dhāraṇī*’s qualities. The text’s classification in the Degé Kangyur among the Action (*kriyā*) tantras belonging to the “mothers” of the Tathāgata family confirms that in the Tibetan tradition this was certainly seen as a *dhāraṇī* and *vidyā* featuring a goddess.

i.6

The colophon to the Tibetan translation of *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* notes that it was translated by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra (ca. ninth century CE) and Dānaśīla (ca. ninth century CE) together with the great Tibetan translator Bandé Yeshé Dé (ca. eighth–ninth century CE). The colophon data are supported by the fact that the text is included in both the Denkarma and Phangtangma imperial Tibetan catalogs of translated works,<sup>2</sup> and it is thus relatively certain that some version of *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* had been translated into Tibetan by the early half of the ninth century. The text was translated into Chinese by Dānapāla in 1245.<sup>3</sup> There is no known Sanskrit witness for this text.

i.7

This English translation is based on the two Tibetan witnesses for *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavatī”* in the Degé Kangyur, one in the Tantra Collection (*rgyud ’bum*) and the other in the Compendium of *Dhāraṇīs* (*gzungs ’dus*),<sup>4,5</sup> in consultation with the Tibetan witnesses in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur and the Stok Palace Kangyur.

## The Translation

1.

### The Noble Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was in Tuṣita on the Pāṇḍukambala rock<sup>6</sup> with many thousands of bodhisattvas who had all been prophesied to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening and were within one rebirth of their goal.

1.3 The Blessed One addressed the bodhisattva great being Well Established, saying, “Well Established, bodhisattva great beings who do not wish to uphold *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”* do not see, hear, or experience the thus-gone ones of the past, future, and present, while those who do see, hear, or experience those thus-gone ones have attained this dhāraṇī.

1.4 “Why is that? Well Established, such bodhisattva great beings do not hold on to the thought, ‘I have performed a meritorious action,’ and they do not hold on to the thought, ‘I have performed an unmeritorious action,’ ‘...a virtuous action,’ or ‘...a nonvirtuous action.’

1.5 “Why is that? Because, Well Established, bodhisattva great beings do not think about or conceive of upholding a dhāraṇī. Bodhisattva great beings who have attained this dhāraṇī neither impute substantial existence or defining characteristics on past, future, and present phenomena, nor do they think about them as having conditions or not having conditions, being animate or not being animate, having death or rebirth, being empty or not being empty, having signs or not having signs, having aspirations or not having aspirations, or arising or ceasing.

- 1.6 “Well Established, bodhisattva great beings with this extent of engagement are said to abide in wisdom. When they abide in wisdom, they are said to have entered nirvāṇa. When they have entered nirvāṇa, they take up *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”* and gain complete mastery, and both meaning and verbal expression become inexhaustible for them. They have unquestionable discipline, true discipline, and pure discipline. They have unquestionable qualities, true qualities, and pure qualities. Needing no one else to follow, they follow their own Dharma. They have performed the highest duty for the buddhas, and they will engage in the rites of the vidyās.
- 1.7 “Well Established, such bodhisattva great beings desire nothing, uphold nothing, and set nothing free. Well Established, when bodhisattva great beings desire nothing, uphold nothing, and set nothing free, they attain *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”* through the mantra formulas of different vidyā names of the buddha lineage and of blessed buddhas of the past, future, and present.
- 1.8 *tadyathā kuti kuti kucala elā imirito kothāla ireri imiriṇi*
- 1.9 “Well Established, these are different names of vidyās of blessed buddhas of the past. They are different names of vidyās of blessed buddhas of the future and the present.
- 1.10 “Well Established, *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”* is the mother of the blessed buddhas of the past, future, and present. Why is that? Because it is not based on an aim in the past, and it is not based on an aim in the future or in the present. Well Established, bodhisattva great beings who uphold *The Dhāraṇī “Hiraṇyavati”* will have made offerings to and worshiped countless blessed buddhas. They will be known and recognized by countless blessed buddhas, and countless blessed buddhas will issue prophecies about them attaining unsurpassed, perfect awakening.

- 1.11 “Well Established, know that bodhisattva great beings who uphold<sup>7</sup> this *Hiranyavatī Dhāraṇī* should think, ‘I have delighted in their awakened wisdom of countless blessed buddhas, worshiped them, and made offerings to them. I have generated immeasurable merit.’ For those who uphold *The Dhāraṇī “Hiranyavatī”* with this attitude, wisdom will be brought within reach for those who seek wisdom, *dhāraṇī* for those who seek *dhāraṇī*, gold for those who seek gold, and learning for those who seek learning.
- 1.12 “The ritual for this *dhāraṇī* is as follows: When the moon is waxing, one should prepare gruel made of rice and milk and eat it at sunrise. One should focus continuously on these *vidyās* of the buddha and on the different names of *vidyās* of blessed buddhas.
- 1.13 “Through the power of these mantra formulas, all human and nonhuman beings in as many world systems as there are grains of sand in the *Gaṅgā River*—such as *asuras*, *garuḍas*, *kinnaras*, *mahoragas*, *yakṣas*, *pretas*, *kumbhāṇḍas*, and *piśācas*—will please you. They will ensure that you encounter no obstacles and will always support you.
- 1.14 “The bodhisattva great beings *Joyous Virtue*, *Exceedingly Vast*, *Vajrapāṇi Utterly Content*, *Abiding in the Alpine Wilderness*, and *Abiding in the Snowy Mountains* will support you. All the bodhisattvas all the way up to *Akaniṣṭha*, too, through the power of *The Dhāraṇī “Hiranyavatī”*, will watch over you in perilous situations or in the wilderness, and will bring you freedom from danger.”
- 1.15 After the *Blessed One* had spoken these words in *Tuṣita* on the *Pāṇḍukambala rock*, the bodhisattva great being *Well Established* and the thousands of bodhisattvas accompanying him rejoiced and praised what the *Blessed One* had said.
- 1.16 This concludes *The Dhāraṇī “Hiranyavatī.”*

## Colophon

- c.1 Translated and edited by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla and the chief editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé. The text was then corrected and finalized in accordance with the new language reforms.

## Notes

1. See folios 258.a et seq. and 292.a et seq. in *The Chapter on Minor Matters of Monastic Discipline* (*Vinayakṣudrakavastu*, Toh 6), and folio 276.b in *The Sūtra of Throwing Stones* (*Śilākṣiptasūtra*, Toh 295). See also Malalasekera q.v. *Hiraññavatī*.
2. Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, 220-221, no. 386. See also Denkarma, 298.b.4.
3. Taishō 1404, 佛說如意寶總持王經 (*Foshuo ruyi baozong chiwang jing*).
4. [note 4c2335f0...]
5. Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 991 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 991, n.4, for details.
6. The Pāṇḍukambala rock is usually said to be situated in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*Trāyastriṃśā*) rather than in Tuṣita.
7. This translation follows the reading 'dzin pa'i byang chub sems dpa'... in the Degé Toh 991 version and the Lithang, Choné, Kanxi, and Yongle Kangyurs. The Degé 570 version, Stok Palace, and some other Kangyurs read 'dzin pa des byang chub sems dpa'....

## Glossary

### **Abiding in the Alpine Wilderness**

*ri dben pa la gnas pa*

The name of a bodhisattva.

### **Abiding in the Snowy Mountains**

*gangs ri la gnas pa*

The name of a bodhisattva.

### **Akaniṣṭha**

*'og min*

འོག་མིན།

*akaniṣṭhā*

The eighth and highest level of the Realm of Form (rūpadhātu), the last of the five pure abodes (śuddhāvāsa); it is only accessible as the result of specific states of dhyāna. According to some texts this is where non-returners (anāgāmin) dwell in their last lives. In other texts it is the realm of the enjoyment body (saṃbhogakāya) and is a buddhafield associated with the Buddha Vairocana; it is accessible only to bodhisattvas on the tenth level.

## **asura**

*lha ma yin*

*lha min*

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

ལྷ་མིན།

*null*

A type of nonhuman being whose precise status is subject to different views, but is included as one of the six classes of beings in the sixfold classification of realms of rebirth. In the Buddhist context, asuras are powerful beings said to be dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility. They are also known in the pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic mythologies of India and Iran, and feature prominently in Vedic and post-Vedic Brahmanical mythology, as well as in the Buddhist tradition. In these traditions, asuras are often described as being engaged in interminable conflict with the devas (gods).

## **Blessed One**

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*

In Buddhist literature, this is an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it 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 *√bhañj* (“to break”).

**buddha lineage***sangs rgyas kyi rigs*

སངས་རྒྱལ་གྱི་རིགས།

*buddhagotra***dhāraṇī***gzungs*

གཟུངས།

*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.

**Exceedingly Vast***yangs pa chen po*

The name of a bodhisattva.

**garuḍa***nam mkha' lding*

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྗིང་།

*garuḍa*

In Indian mythology, the garuḍa is an eagle-like bird that is regarded as the king of all birds, normally depicted with a sharp, owl-like beak, often holding a snake, and with large and powerful wings. They are traditionally enemies of the nāgas. In the Vedas, they are said to have brought nectar from the heavens to earth. Garuḍa can also be used as a proper name for a king of such creatures.

## **Gaṅgā River**

*gang gA*

གང་གླ།

*gaṅgā*

The Gaṅgā, or Ganges in English, is considered to be the most sacred river of India, particularly within the Hindu tradition. It starts in the Himalayas, flows through the northern plains of India, bathing the holy city of Vārāṇasī, and meets the sea at the Bay of Bengal, in Bangladesh. In the sūtras, however, this river is mostly mentioned not for its sacredness but for its abundant sands—noticeable still today on its many sandy banks and at its delta—which serve as a common metaphor for infinitely large numbers.

According to Buddhist cosmology, as explained in the Abhidharmakośa, it is one of the four rivers that flow from Lake Anavatapta and cross the southern continent of Jambudvīpa—the known human world or more specifically the Indian subcontinent.

## **Hiraṇyavati**

*dbyig dang ldan pa*

*hiraṇyavati*

The name of a dhāraṇī that may or may not also be identified as a goddess.

## **Joyous Virtue**

*dga' bzang*

The name of a bodhisattva.

**kinnara***mi 'am ci*

མི་འམ་ཅི།

*kiṃnara*

A class of nonhuman beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name—which means “is that human?”—suggests some confusion as to their divine status. Kinnaras are mythological beings found in both Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, where they are portrayed as creatures half human, half animal. They are often depicted as highly skilled celestial musicians.

**kumbhāṇḍa***grul bum*

གུལ་བུམ།

*kumbhāṇḍa*

A class of dwarf beings subordinate to Virūḍhaka, one of the Four Great Kings, associated with the southern direction. The name uses a play on the word *aṇḍa*, which means “egg” but is also a euphemism for a testicle. Thus, they are often depicted as having testicles as big as pots (from *kumbha*, or “pot”).

**mahoraga***lto 'phye chen po*

ལྷོ་འབྲེ་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, and they make up a class of subterranean geomantic spirits whose movement through the seasons and months of the year is deemed significant for construction projects.

**null**

*ban+de ye shes sde*

བཟླ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than one hundred sixty sūtra translations and more than one hundred additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with teaching both sūtra and tantra widely to students of his own. He was also known as Nanam Yeshé Dé, from the Nanam (*sna nam*) clan.

**null**

*dA na shI la*

དྲ་ན་ཤི་ལ།

*null*

**null**

*dzi na mi tra*

ཇི་ན་མི་བྲ།

*null*

Jinamitra was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Tri Songdetsen (khri srong lde btsan, r. 742–98 CE) and was involved with the translation of nearly two hundred texts, continuing into the reign of King Ralpachen (ral pa can, r. 815–38 CE). He was one of the small group of paṇḍitas responsible for the Mahāvvyutpatti Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary.

**null**

*gnod sbyin*

གནོད་སྐྱེན།

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the rule of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.

**null**

*phyag na rdo rje*

ཕྱག་ན་རྫོ་རྗེ།

*null*

The name of a bodhisattva.

**piśāca**

*sha za*

ཤ་ཟ།

*piśāca*

A class of nonhuman beings that, like several other classes of nonhuman beings, take spontaneous birth. Ranking below rākṣasas, they are less powerful and more akin to pretas. They are said to dwell in impure and perilous places, where they feed on impure things, including flesh. This could account for the name piśāca, which possibly derives from √piś, to carve or chop meat, as reflected also in the Tibetan sha za, “meat eater.” They are often described as having an unpleasant appearance, and at times they appear with animal bodies. Some possess the ability to enter the dead bodies of humans, thereby becoming so-called vetāla, to touch whom is fatal.

## **preta**

*yi dags*

ཡི་དགས།

*preta*

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 *pitrs*, 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*. They are sometimes said to reside in the realm of Yama, but are also frequently described as roaming charnel grounds and other inhospitable or frightening places along with *piśācas* and other such beings. They are particularly known to suffer from great hunger and thirst and the inability to acquire sustenance. Detailed descriptions of their realm and experience, including a list of the thirty-six classes of *pretas*, can be found in *The Application of Mindfulness of the Sacred Dharma*, Toh 287, 2.1281– 2.1482.

## **Pāṇḍukambala rock**

*la ba dkar po lta bu'i rdo leb*

ལ་བ་དཀར་པོ་ལྷ་སུའི་རྫོ་ལེབ།

*pāṇḍukambalaśilā*

Indra’s colossal throne underneath the *Pāriyātraka* tree in Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*Trāyastriṃśa*), which is made of a whitish stone and therefore resembles a “whitish woolen blanket” (*pāṇḍukambala*).

### **thus-gone one**

*de bzhin gshegs pa*

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

*tathāgata*

A frequently used synonym for *buddha*. According to different explanations, it can be read as *tathā-gata*, literally meaning “one who has thus gone,” or as *tathā-āgata*, “one who has thus come.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha*(*tā*), often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness,” is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms. Therefore, this epithet is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has departed in the wake of the buddhas of the past, or one who has manifested the supreme awakening dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence. It is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

### **Tuṣita**

*dga' ldan*

དགའ་ལྷན།

*tuṣita*

Tuṣita (or sometimes Saṃtuṣita), literally “Joyous” or “Contented,” is one of the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). In standard classifications, such as the one in the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is ranked as the fourth of the six counting from below. This god realm is where all future buddhas are said to dwell before taking on their final rebirth prior to awakening. There, the Buddha Śākyamuni lived his preceding life as the bodhisattva Śvetaketu. When departing to take birth in this world, he appointed the bodhisattva Maitreya, who will be the next buddha of this eon, as his Dharma regent in Tuṣita. For an account of the Buddha’s previous life in Tuṣita, see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 2.12, and for an account of Maitreya’s birth in Tuṣita and a description of this realm, see *The Sūtra on Maitreya’s Birth in the Heaven of Joy*, (Toh 199).

**Utterly Content**

*yongs su dga' ldan*

The name of a bodhisattva.

**vidyā**

*rig sngags*

རིག་སྒྲགས།

*vidyā*

While sometimes used synonymously with mantra, vidyā also denotes a particular type of magical spell that, in the course of time, came to be identified with deities. As vidyā is a feminine word, it is associated with goddesses, whereas mantra is more often associated with male deities.

**Well Established**

*legs par gnas pa*

The name of a bodhisattva.

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