

༄༅། །ཡི་དགས་ཁ་ནས་མེ་འབར་སྐྱབས་པའི་གཟུངས།

The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth

ཡི་དགས་ཁ་ནས་མེ་འབར་བ་ལ་སྐྱབས་མཛད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་གཟུངས།

yi dags kha nas me 'bar ba la skyabs mdzad pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs

The Dhāraṇī “Giving Refuge to the Preta Flaming Mouth”

· Toh 646 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 91 (rgyud, ba), folios 130.a–132.b



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under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* recounts the nocturnal encounter of the monk Nanda with a gruesome preta ("hungry ghost") who predicts his imminent death. After recounting his experience to the Buddha, he is taught a dhāraṇī and an associated food offering ritual to allay the sufferings of pretas and avert his prophesied fate.

ac.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

- i.1 *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* is one of two closely related texts found together in the Degé Kangyur¹ in which the Buddha teaches a dhāraṇī and associated food offering ritual to relieve pretas of their sufferings.² The other text is *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 647/1079). These texts have had a significant legacy for the ritual traditions of Buddhist Asia, serving as foundations for the traditions of giving compassionate food offerings to alleviate the suffering of spirits and ghosts. The present text is the longer of the two, corresponding (though not precisely matching) Amoghavajra's Chinese translation in the Chinese canon (Taishō 1313).
- i.2 As with most dhāraṇīs, little is known about the early Indic history of this text, and there does not appear to be an extant Sanskrit version. A Chinese translation by Amoghavajra (不空) was made between 757 and 770 CE³ (Taishō 1313), an English translation of which, along with an introduction, has been published by Charles Orzech.⁴
- i.3 A Dunhuang manuscript (IOL Tib J 349) of *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* is nearly identical in content to the version preserved in the various Tibetan Kangyurs and may reflect the source from which the canonical version was taken. Unfortunately, this manuscript is missing its final folio, which might have contained a colophon with translator attribution and other information. None of the canonical versions, either, have colophons that identify the translators.
- i.4 The closely related text, *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 647/ 1079) is listed in the Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) imperial catalog compiled in the early ninth century CE.⁵ In this somewhat shorter text, the protagonist of the story is Ānanda rather than Nanda,⁶ and there is no invocation of the four tathāgatas, but otherwise it presents a nearly identical narrative. The Chinese translation of this closely related text was produced by Śikṣānanda (實叉難陀) ca. 700 CE (Taishō 1314).

- i.5 Although neither text sheds any light on the possible Indian origins of the practice or any indication that they were derived from any other text in the canon, the two texts clearly present a variation on the same story and prescribed ritual, though using different language. Given the close resemblance between the Tibetan and Chinese versions (Toh 646 with Taishō 1313, and Toh 647 with Taishō 1314), it is possible that both Tibetan texts were translated from Chinese. Lye (2003) questions this, however, pointing to the fact that the preta who appears in Toh 647 is explicitly identified as female (*yi dags mo*) while no such gender identification is found in Taishō 1314.⁷
- i.6 The proper rendering of the Sanskrit name of this preta—given here as “Flaming Mouth” (*kha nas me 'bar ba*)⁸—remains unresolved. Although no Sanskrit title for the text is given in the Narthang, Yongle, or Degé recensions, Sanskrit titles provided in the Lithang, Kangxi, and Choné recensions render the name of the preta as “Mukhāgnijvāla.” These titles, however, appear to be reconstructions back-translated from the Tibetan. In the Chinese versions, the name of the preta is translated as Yankou (餓口 or 焰口, “Flaming Mouth”) in Taishō 1313, and as Mianran (面燃, “Burning Face”) in Taishō 1314, which it has been suggested could correspond to the putative Sanskrit *Jvālāmukha or *Ulkāmukha. It remains unclear whether in this text this is a proper name referring to the specific preta who appears in the narrative, or a more generic identifier for a class of pretas (“those with flames coming from their mouths”). Fire and flames are indeed a relatively common—but by no means constant—secondary feature of descriptions of pretas in the canonical literature,⁹ the primary features being hunger, thirst, and pain, suffered both because of terrible physical deformities and because of being deprived of all but the most minimal or disgusting means of sustenance. The Sanskrit Jvālāmukha and Tibetan *kha 'bar ma*, as well as being the name of various minor deities in a range of tantras, is more specifically in the *Guhyagarbhatantra* and other tantras of the Nyingma tradition the name of the *nirmāṇakāya* sage (Muni) who manifests in the realm of the pretas, one of six such Munis corresponding to the six realms and numbered among the one hundred peaceful and wrathful deities of the *maṇḍala*.¹⁰
- i.7 As shown by Lye (2003), the story recounted here has had a major legacy in Chinese Buddhism, since it is treated as the origin myth for the *Yuqie yankou* (瑜伽餓口) rite at the heart of the Ghost Festival celebrated annually in the seventh month of the Chinese calendar. In Tibetan Buddhism, its legacies are found in a variety of rites that involve making *torma* (Skt. *bali*, Tib. *gtor ma*)¹¹ offerings to the pretas, in which the *dhāraṇī* given in the *sūtra* is employed. Many such rites involve the invocation or visualization of

Avalokiteśvara, just as some of the related practices in Chinese tradition may incorporate the bodhisattva Guanyin.¹² The offering rite explicitly based on this text, including the evocation of the four tathāgatas, clearly had considerable popularity in Tibet since early times. In the thirteenth century, it is mentioned by Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251) as an example of a ritual inaccurately performed by Tibetans.¹³

· Contents of the Text ·

- i.8 Following a preamble that provides the context and impetus for the teaching, the core of the text is the proclamation of a mantra dhāraṇī and a description of its use. The mantra dhāraṇī here, unlike some cryptic mantras and dhāraṇīs in other texts, is in intelligible Sanskrit: “*nāmaḥ sarvatathāgatāvalokite oṃ sambhara sambhara hūṃ*” (“Homage to the One With the Gaze of All Tathāgatas!¹⁴ Oṃ bring them together, bring them! Hūṃ!”). Though the object of the imperative verb *sambhara* (“bring them together”) is not explicit, similar dhāraṇīs include “all pretas” (*sarvapretān*) in the formula, which can be assumed to be the case here as well.¹⁵ Thus this dhāraṇī is phrased as a call to the pretas to gather to partake of bali being offered to them.
- i.9 Accompanying the expression of this dhāraṇī is an invocation of four tathāgatas whose names appear to connote features of the enlightened state: Abundant Riches (*prabhūtaratna*; *rin chen mang*; 多寶), Perfect Form (*surūpa*; *gzugs dam pa*; 妙色身), Expansive Body (*vipulagātra*; *sku 'byam klas*; 廣博身), and Fearless (*abhayakara*; *'jigs pa dang bral ba*; 離怖畏).¹⁶ Only the first of these tathāgatas, Prabhūtaratna, is readily identifiable. This is the tathāgata who appears in the eleventh chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (*The White Lotus of the Good Dharma*; *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*; *dam pa'i chos pad ma dkar po* Toh 113). There, the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna arises before the assembly in his stūpa and commends the Buddha Śākyamuni on teaching the *Lotus Sūtra*, the means by which he had attained enlightenment eons earlier. Of possibly greater significance, however, the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna also appears in *The Sutra of Meditating on the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra* (佛說觀普賢菩薩行法經, Taishō 277), a text found in the Chinese canon—but without Tibetan parallel—that is considered the concluding part of *The Threefold Lotus Sūtra*.¹⁷ In that text, the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna is associated with purification practices to avoid rebirth in the lower realms, which is a theme similar to the focus of this text.
- i.10 Following the invocation of the four tathāgatas, several rituals for the mantra dhāraṇī's compassionate deployment in different situations are briefly described. The text concludes with an admonition to memorize and

teach the practice.

- i.11 *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* is found twice in the Degé Kangyur, once in the Tantra section (Toh 646) and once in the Dhāraṇī section (Toh 1080). This English translation was made from the recension found in the Tantra section, with reference to the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Dunhuang manuscript (IOL Tib J 349). The Sanskrit names of the tathāgathas were deciphered with reference to the Chinese version (Taishō 1313). A translation of this text into French was made by Léon Feer and published in 1883, which was consulted for comparison following initial translation into English.

The Dhāraṇī “Giving Refuge to the Preta Flaming Mouth”

1.

The Translation

[F.130.a]

- 1.1 At one time, the Bhagavān was teaching the Dharma to an entourage consisting of the monastic saṅgha and a limitless number of bodhisattvas at the monastic hermitage in Kapilavastu. At that time, the venerable Nanda remained at a distance, having been contemplating and memorizing the Dharma. That evening, in the later part of the night, a very frightening preta called Flaming Mouth, with a hideous appearance, frail, withered, with flames coming from its mouth, its throat as thin as a needle, with dishevelled hair, with long sharp fingernails and teeth, came before Nanda, and said to Nanda: “You! Seven days from now,¹⁸ your life will end, and you will be reborn in the realm of the pretas!”
- 1.2 Having heard what the preta had said, Nanda became very afraid, and responded to the preta, saying, “What can be done about being reborn in the realm of the pretas when my time here is finished, so that I might be liberated from this impending suffering?”
- 1.3 The preta replied to Nanda, “If tomorrow you make *bali* offerings to pretas as numerous as the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, and offer a Magadhan measure of food to each and every one of the many hundreds of thousands of brahmins and ṛṣis, and make offerings for my sake to the Three Jewels, then your life will be long, and I will be freed from the sufferings of the preta realm, and will be reborn as a god in the upper realms.”
- 1.4 To see that preta called Flaming Mouth, hideous, frail and withered, with flames coming from its mouth, its throat as thin as a needle, with disheveled hair, and long, sharp fingernails and teeth, and to hear such unpleasant and unwelcome words, was enough to send shivers through Nanda’s body, and in terror he then rose from where he had been sitting, and quickly went to where [F.130.b] the Bhagavān was.

- 1.5 Arriving in the presence of the Bhagavān, Nanda fell before him, touching the five points of his body to the ground. Then, after prostrating with his head to the feet of the Bhagavān, with his body trembling, he implored the Bhagavān, “I beseech you to grant me final relief from being tormented by this suffering!”
- 1.6 He continued, “I was off at a distance, having been contemplating the Dharma, when a preta called Flaming Mouth said to me, ‘You! Seven days from now, your life will end, and you will be reborn in the realm of the pretas!’ When I asked, ‘What can be done about this, so that I might be liberated from the sufferings of the preta realm?’ the preta said to me, ‘If you make bali offerings to pretas as numerous as the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, and offer the finest food to each and every one of the many hundreds of thousands of brahmins and ṛṣis and so on, then your life will be long.’ If I am to provide this, Bhagavān, how can I prepare so much food for so many pretas, brahmins, ṛṣis, and so forth?”
- 1.7 “Do not let this frighten you,” said the Bhagavān to Nanda. “I have a method by which you may prepare food and many balis for pretas as numerous as the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, and brahmins and ṛṣis and so forth. So do not let this upset you.”
- 1.8 Then the Bhagavān said to Nanda, “I have a mantra dhāraṇī called *the power of all-conquering rays of light by which all are brought under the influence of immeasurable radiance*.¹⁹ When anyone utters this dhāraṇī, there will be food and the finest bali for pretas as numerous as the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, and the many brahmins and ṛṣis and so forth, so that each and every one of those pretas and others will receive seven portions of food weighed according to Magadhan measures.
- 1.9 “Nanda, when I was a brahmin in a previous life, [F.131.a] I heard this dhāraṇī from the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara and the tathāgata called Vaśavartiguṇa, and by the power of that dhāraṇī, countless pretas and many ṛṣis were each given bali and food, and those that had been born in the realm of the pretas were liberated from their suffering and were reborn as gods in the upper realms.
- 1.10 “Nanda, remember this dhāraṇī! It will increase your merit and even your lifespan when you are reborn.”
- 1.11 The Bhagavān then uttered this mantra dhāraṇī to Nanda:
- 1.12 *nāmaḥ sarvatathāgatāvalokite om sambhara sambhara hūm*
- 1.13 The Bhagavān said to Nanda, “Any son of good family or daughter of good family who wishes to lengthen their life, or improve and increase their merit, or who wishes to quickly bring to completion the perfection of giving,

should recite this dhāraṇī constantly in the morning, or even at all times. Then their life will not be cut short.

1.14 “Pour clean water into a clean vessel, then add a little bit of cooked grains, meal, or pastry, and so forth. Then place your right hand over the top of the vessel and, having sanctified it seven times with this dhāraṇī, you should invoke the names of the four tathāgatas as follows:

1.15 “Homage to the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna! By the blessings from invoking the name of the Tathāgata Prabhūtaratna, may all those pretas overcome the nonvirtuous karma of having been miserly in their numerous previous lives, and may their collection of merit be brought to completion!

1.16 “Homage to the Tathāgata Surūpa! [F.131.b] By the blessings from invoking the name of the Tathāgata Surūpa, may those many pretas overcome their hideous appearance and may they take on a marvelous form and attributes!

1.17 “Homage to the Tathāgata Vipulagātra!²⁰ By the blessings from invoking the name of the Tathāgata Vipulagātra, may the thirst of many pretas be dispelled and may they be satisfied. May they be led to places where offerings are being made, and may they be allowed to eat to their satisfaction!

1.18 “Homage to the Tathāgata Abhayakara! By the blessings from invoking the name of the Tathāgata Abhayakara, may all be free from all the fears of the many pretas, and may all the realms of the pretas be pacified!”

1.19 The Bhagavān told Nanda, “Sons of good family, and so on, after the blessing of having invoked the names of these four tathāgatas, should snap their fingers three times.²¹ Then, taking the bali vessel in their outstretched arms, they should pour it out on to clean ground. If one makes bali offering in this manner, each and every one of the pretas who arrive from the four directions, as numerous as the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, will receive seven portions weighed according to Magadhan measures. These pretas will be led to and allowed to eat as much food as they wish, and will leave the realms of the pretas behind, and be reborn as gods in the upper realms.

1.20 “Nanda, if any monks or nuns, or male or female lay devotees, when giving an offering to a preta, consistently sanctify the food by means of this dhāraṇī, they will bring immeasurable merit to completion. As that merit is indistinguishable from the merit of making offerings to a hundred thousand million billion buddhas, they will have long life, merit, and luster; be born with strength that will only increase; complete roots of virtue; no nonhuman²² yakṣas, rākṣasas, or horrible pretas will be able to endanger them or inflict harm on them; and they will have an immeasurable radiance [F.132.a] for others.

- 1.21 “Someone who wishes to make offerings to brahmins and ṛṣis should fill a single vessel with the purest food, recite this dhāraṇī mantra seven times, and scatter the food in a clean river. That will cause it to become the most supreme foodstuffs of the gods. The brahmins and ṛṣis, as they receive the food infused with mantra, will delight in each and every previous individual offering that has been offered with mantra, and will ripen²³ the merit of those roots of virtue that have been cultivated, each of them in accord with the others, will all at the same time make the prayer, ‘May this person have long life, vitality, and power, and may they be comfortable and happy!’
- 1.22 “Moreover, that person, in terms of seeing and hearing in accordance with these intentions, will be completely pure, have unmistakable knowledge, and living the superior life of a brahmacārya will achieve complete perfection. Furthermore, as the merit would be like that of making offerings to buddha bhagavāns equal in number to the hundred thousand million billion grains of sand of the river Ganges, all the proponents of false teachings will be unable to do them harm.
- 1.23 “Any monk or nun, or male or female lay devotee, who wishes to make offerings to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha should recite this mantra dhāraṇī twenty-one times over incense, flowers, and the best of food, and then offer them to the Three Jewels. The food offered by a son of good family or a daughter of good family, having become the foodstuffs of the gods, will become offerings to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Saṅgha in all the worldly realms of the ten directions. Those who make such offerings will be endowed with the merit of praising, praying, and rejoicing, and will be constantly praised and watched over by the buddha bhagavāns. They will be constantly guarded and protected by many gods, and the perfection of giving [F.132.b] will be brought to completion.
- 1.24 “Nanda, commit this to memory in accordance with the Dharma. In order that all sentient beings may see and hear it, you should teach it extensively, and you will obtain immeasurable merit.”
- 1.25 *This completes the Dhāraṇī “Giving Refuge to the Preta Flaming Mouth.”*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 In the Tantra section of the Degé Kangyur, *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 646) comes first, followed by *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 647). However in the Dhāraṇī section, in which both texts are also found, the order is reversed, so that the (marginally shorter) *The Bali Ritual to Relieve the Female Preta Flaming Mouth* (Toh 1079) comes first, followed by the *The Dhāraṇī of Refuge for the Preta Flaming Mouth* (1080).
- n.2 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1080 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1080, note 2 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1080.html#end-note-UT22084-091-043-129>), for details.
- n.3 On the dating of Amoghavajra's Chinese translation see Lye (2003), p. 30.
- n.4 Orzech (1996).
- n.5 Denkarma, folio 303.a; Herrmann-Pfandt, p. 234; Lalou 1953, p. 328.
- n.6 In both Chinese versions, the interlocutor is Ānanda (阿難). Since Ānanda was the attendant to the Buddha, it is unusual to find him described as being away from the Buddha in the middle of the night, as found in the narrative here. Many narratives about pretas have Maudgalyāyana as chief protagonist; this is the case for the first five of the ten stories about pretas in the *Avadānaśataka*. None of the ten much resemble the present story, and none feature either Nanda or Ānanda, although in one Nandaka is the intermediary. See Rotman (2021), pp. 73–131.
- n.7 Lye (2003), p. 227. For further discussion of the Chinese and Tibetan translations, see Lye (2003), pp. 226–31.

- n.8 In the other text, Toh 647
<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh646.html>)/1079
<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1080.html>), the Tibetan rendering of the epithet is *kha 'bar ma*, and the preta is specifically identified as female. Nevertheless (and disregarding this gender difference), both versions have a very similar meaning, and given the presumed common source of the narrative and the likelihood that the same original Sanskrit (or possibly Chinese) epithet could easily have been translated into Tibetan in different ways, we have used “Flaming Mouth,” to render both.
- n.9 See Rotman (2021), p. 46.
- n.10 As, for example, in the *ting nge 'dzin mchog gi rgyud* (rKTs-G149 <http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=149&typ=3>) f. 163.a) and *chos nyid zhi ba'i rgyud* (rKTs-G153 <http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=153&typ=3>) f. 228.b); see also the translation of the *Guhyagarbhatantra* and commentary in Choying Tobden Dorje (2016), vol. 1, p. 198 *et passim*.
- n.11 As well as rituals in which the offerings consist of food, the genre includes rituals in which the offering is of water alone (Tib. *chu gtor*). These may derive from the other version of the text, in which this additional way of making offerings is mentioned (see 1.11 in Toh 647).
- n.12 Rotman (2021), pp. 60–61. The association with Avalokiteśvara (or Guanyin) may be relevant to the apparent reference to Avalokiteśvara in the dhāraṇī formula (see n.14).
- n.13 Sakya Paṇḍita writes in his *sdom gsum rab dbye* (*Clear Differentiation of the Three Codes*, in the translation of Jared Rhoton): “Furthermore, there are numerous mistaken practices here in the midst of the snowy mountains of Tibet. I have witnessed practices in which the names of the four Tathāgatas were recited in prologue to the ‘Burning mouth’ oblation. This, too, does not agree with the sūtras. In the sūtra the recitation of the four names follows the recitation of the mantra.” He also cautions that when making food offerings to pretas, the food should not be placed in water (despite the apparent instruction contained in this text), because this causes them great torment. When making food offerings to pretas, he says, the food should be offered in balls of hand-squeezed dough. See Sakya Pandita Kunga Gyaltsen (2002), p. 140.
- n.14 Here Sarvatathāgatāvalokita is likely an epithet of Avalokiteśvara.
- n.15 See, for example, the Balimālika (Toh 3771: *gtor ma'i phreng ba*): *om suru suru prasuru prasuru tara tara bhara sambhara sambhara santarpaya santarpaya sarvapretānī* [sic] *svāhā* | |

- n.16 In the Chinese of Taishō 1313 (trans. Orzech 1996), the four tathāgathas are each introduced with a line of transcribed Sanskrit: “*namo bhagavata prabhūtaratnāya tathāgatāya...namo bhagavata surūpāya tathāgatāya...namo bhagavata vipulagātrāya tathāgatāya...namo bhagavata abhayaṃkarāya tathāgatāya.*” Aside from Prabhūtaratna, it is only from this source that the Sanskrit names of the other three tathāgatas is attested, and their identity and significance remains unclear. Muller’s *Digital Dictionary of Buddhism* suggests they might be homologized with more well-known buddhas associated with the four cardinal directions. For example, that the tathāgata Surūpa/Surūpakāya (妙色身如來) might be another name for the buddha Akṣobhya, that Vipulagātra/Vipulakāya (廣博身如來) might be another name for the tathāgata Mahāvairocana, and citing Nakamura, that Abhayakara/Abhayaṃkara (離怖畏如來) might be another name for the buddha Śākyamuni; however, in the last case such an identity would not make sense in this context.
- n.17 See Dharmamitra (2013).
- n.18 In Toh 647, “the day after tomorrow” (*gnangs*). In the Chinese (Taishō 1313, Taishō 1314), “in three days.” Orzech (1996), p. 281; Lye (2003), p. 418.
- n.19 *gzi brjid tshad med pa’i dbang du gyur pa’i ’od zer rnam par rgyal ba’i shugs zhes bya ba*. Cf. the name of the same dhāraṇī in Toh 647 is given as *thams cad du ’od dang ldan pa rgyal chen shugs ldan ’od ces bya ba* (the great powerful light that illumines everything).
- n.20 There is a certain amount of variation of the spelling of this name in different recensions of the text. The Dunhuang manuscript and the Degé, Peking, and Choné recensions of the Kangyur read *sku ’byam klas*, while the Stok Palace recension provides the homophonous reading *sku ’jam klas*, and the Narthang and Phukdrak recensions read *sku ’dzam klas*.
- n.21 In the Chinese version (Taishō 1313), “seven times.” Orzech (1996), p. 282; Lye (2003), p. 422.
- n.22 *mi ma yin pa* (Skt. **amanuṣya*), following the reading in the Narthang and Urga recensions. Other recensions, including the Degé, read “humans and nonhumans” (*mi dang mi ma yin pa*). However, protections from humans typically require different methods. The Narthang reading also agrees with the Chinese version (Taishō 1313), in which no humans are mentioned. The term *amanuṣya* is often seen as a modifier in such lists of nonhuman beings.
- n.23 *yongs su ’gyur ba*; **pariṇata*.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

Abhayakara

'jigs pa dang bral ba

འཇིགས་པ་དང་བྲལ་བ།

**abhayakara*

離怖畏

Name of a tathāgata; lit. “without fear.”

g.2 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.3 Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

avalokiteśvara

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the “eight close sons of the Buddha,” he is also known as the bodhisattva who embodies compassion. In certain tantras, he is also the lord of the three families, where he embodies the compassion of the buddhas. In Tibet, he attained great significance as a special protector of Tibet, and in China, in female form, as Guanyin, the most important bodhisattva in all of East Asia.

g.4 bali

gtor ma

གཏོར་མ།

bali

A food offering made to a deity or spirits; such an offering may be varied and elaborate, or may be simple uncooked food.

g.5 Bhagavān

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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 mārās, *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 mārās.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.6 brahmacārya

tshangs pa lha'i spyod pa

ཚངས་པ་ལྷའི་སྟོད་པ།

brahmacārya

The expression *brahmacārya* (*tshangs pa lha'i spyod pa*) refers to the conduct of a student in training and encompasses a wide range of activities including moral restraint in general (including celibacy, refraining from killing and harming beings, etc.), devotion to academic studies and religious practices, as well as the simplification of one’s lifestyle in regard to food, lodging, and so forth.

g.7 brahmin

bram ze

བླ་མ་ཟེ།

brāhmaṇa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A member of the highest of the four castes in Indian society, which is closely associated with religious vocations.

g.8 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཏུངས།

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.

g.9 Flaming Mouth

kha nas me 'bar ba

ཁ་ནས་མེ་འབར་བ།

**ulkā mukha · *jvālāmukha*

Yankou (焰口 or 焰口)(Taishō 1313)

Name of the preta who accosts Nanda in this narrative.

g.10 god

lha

ལྷ།

deva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In the most general sense the devas—the term is cognate with the English *divine*—are a class of celestial beings who frequently appear in Buddhist texts, often at the head of the assemblies of nonhuman beings who attend and celebrate the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Buddhist cosmology the devas occupy the highest of the five or six “destinies” (*gati*) of saṃsāra among which beings take rebirth. The devas reside in the *devalokas*, “heavens” that traditionally number between twenty-six and twenty-eight and are divided between the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*), and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*). A being attains rebirth among the devas either through meritorious deeds (in the desire realm) or the attainment of subtle meditative states (in the form and formless realms). While rebirth among the devas is considered favorable, it is ultimately a transitory state from which beings will fall when the conditions that lead to rebirth there are exhausted. Thus, rebirth in the god realms is regarded as a diversion from the spiritual path.

g.11 Kapilavastu

yul ser skya

ཡུལ་སེར་སྐྱུ།

kapilavastu

The Śākya capital, where Siddhārtha Gautama was raised.

g.12 lay devotee

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྟེན།

upāsaka

A male (*upāsaka*) or female (*upāsikā*) practitioner who has taken vows to uphold the five precepts.

g.13 Magadhan measure

yul dbus 'gyur tshal gyi bre tshad ma

ཡུལ་དབུས་འགྱུར་ཚལ་གྱི་བྲེ་ཚད་མ།

—

A quantity of food measured using a basket or container (Tib. *bre*) of a specific size, as designated by custom in the kingdom of Magadha.

g.14 mantra dhāraṇī

gzungs sngags

གཟུངས་སྒྲགས།

—

A type of dhāraṇī.

g.15 Maudgalyāyana

mo'u 'gal gyi bu

མོ་འུ་ཀལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

One of the two chief śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha. He was “foremost in supernormal powers” and had frequent encounters with pretas.

g.16 merit

bsod nams

བསོད་ནམས།

punya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhism more generally, merit refers to the wholesome karmic potential accumulated by someone as a result of positive and altruistic thoughts, words, and actions, which will ripen in the current or future lifetimes as the experience of happiness and well-being. According to the Mahāyāna, it is important to dedicate the merit of one's wholesome actions to the awakening of oneself and to the ultimate and temporary benefit of all sentient beings. Doing so ensures that others also experience the results of the positive actions generated and that the merit is not wasted by ripening in temporary happiness for oneself alone.

g.17 **method**

thabs

ཐབས།

upāya

fangbian

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The concept of skillful or expedient means is central to the understanding of the Buddha's enlightened deeds and the many scriptures that are revealed contingent on the needs, interests, and mental dispositions of specific types of individuals. It is, therefore, equated with compassion and the form body of the buddhas, the rūpakāya.

According to the Great Vehicle, training in skillful means collectively denotes the first five of the six perfections when integrated with wisdom, the sixth perfection. It is therefore paired with wisdom (*prajñā*), forming the two indispensable aspects of the path. It is also the seventh of the ten perfections. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.18 **monastic hermitage**

dge 'dun gyi gnas

དགེ་འདུན་གྱི་གནས།

maṭha

This term can refer to the hut of an ascetic, or a cloister/college for monastics.

g.19 **monk**

dge slong

དགེ་སྦྱོང་།

bhikṣu

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣu*, often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.

In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

g.20 Nanda

dga' bo

དགའ་བོ།

nanda

The main protagonist in this text. Nanda was the younger half-brother of Prince Siddhārtha (the Buddha Śākyamuni); his mother was Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī, Siddhārtha Gautama’s maternal aunt. He became an important śrāvaka disciple of the Buddha.

g.21 Nandaka

dga' byed

དགའ་བྱེད།

nandaka

Nephew of the lay patron Anāthapiṇḍada of Śrāvastī. Nandaka became an important śrāvaka disciple of the Buddha, “foremost in teaching.”

g.22 nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སློང་མ།

bhikṣuṇī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣuṇī*, often translated as “nun,” refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term *bhikṣu* (to which the female grammatical ending *ṇī* is added) literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist nuns and monks—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on

alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity. In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a *bhikṣuṇī* follows 364 rules and a *bhikṣu* follows 253 rules as part of their moral discipline.

For the first few years of the Buddha's teachings in India, there was no ordination for women. It started at the persistent request and display of determination of Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's stepmother and aunt, together with five hundred former wives of men of Kapilavastu, who had themselves become monks. Mahāprajāpatī is thus considered to be the founder of the nun's order.

g.23 perfection of giving

sbyin pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa

སྤྱིན་པའི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

dānapāramitā

First of the six perfections, sometimes translated as “generosity.”

g.24 Prabhūtaratna

rin chen mang

རིན་ཆེན་མང།

**prabhūtaratna*

多寶

Name of a tathāgata; lit. “abundant riches.”

g.25 preta

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

egui

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 *egui*.

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.

g.26 rākṣasa

srin po

སྲིན་པོ།

rākṣasa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings that are often, but certainly not always, considered demonic in the Buddhist tradition. They are often depicted as flesh-eating monsters who haunt frightening places and are ugly and evil-natured with a yearning for human flesh, and who additionally have miraculous powers, such as being able to change their appearance.

g.27 river Ganges

gang gA'i klung

གང་གཱཾ་ཀླུང་།

gaṅgā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.28 ṛṣi

drang srong

རྩེ་སྲོང་།

ṛṣi

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ancient Indian spiritual title, often translated as “sage” or “seer.” The title is particularly used for divinely inspired individuals credited with creating the foundations of Indian culture. The term is also applied to

Śākyamuni and other realized Buddhist figures.

g.29 Surūpa

gzugs dam pa

གཟུགས་དམ་པ།

**surūpa*

妙色身

Name of a tathāgata; lit. “perfect form.”

g.30 tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.31 Three Jewels

dkon mchog gsum

དོན་མཆོག་གསུམ།

triratna

The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—the three objects of Buddhist refuge. In the Tibetan rendering, “the three rare and supreme ones.”

g.32 Vaśavartigūṇa

dbang sgyur yon tan

དབང་སྐུ་ཡོན་ཏན།

**vaśavartigūṇa*

Name of a tathāgata.

g.33 Vipulagātra

sku 'byam klas

སྐྱུ་འབྱམ་ཀླས།

**vipulagātra*

廣博身

Name of a tathāgata; lit. “vast body.”

g.34 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.