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## The Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality”

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*Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*

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*'phags pa rnam par mi rtog par 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i gzungs*

The Noble Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality”

*Āryāvikalpapraveśanāmadhāraṇī*



Toh 142  
Degé Kangyur, vol. 57 (mdo sde, pa), folios 1.a–6.b

Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

First published 2020  
Current version v 1.1.18 (2023)  
Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.19.5

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co.

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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Dhāraṇī "Entering into Nonconceptuality"* is a short Mahāyāna sūtra that came to be particularly influential in Yogācāra circles. The central theme of the sūtra is the attainment of the nonconceptual realm, reached through the practice of relinquishing all conceptual signs by not directing the mind toward them. The sūtra presents the progressive stages through which bodhisattvas can abandon increasingly subtle conceptual signs and eliminate the erroneous ideas that lead to the objectification of phenomena.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the supervision of Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. Ryan Damron prepared the translation and introduction. Miguel Sawaya compared the English translation with the Tibetan translation found in the Degé Kangyur and edited the text.

The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*The Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality”* is a short but influential Mahāyāna sūtra.<sup>1</sup> It is known not only by its most usual Sanskrit title *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (APD), but also by the alternative form *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*.

i.2

In common with a small number of other texts in the General Sūtra section of the Kangyur that are labeled “dhāraṇī” and do not include the word “sūtra” in their titles at all, the text is nevertheless presented in the style of a sūtra. It is not a dhāraṇī in the sense in which that term is applied to a large number of scriptures containing a specific mantra-like formula recited in order to bring about a desired result—and indeed contains no such formula at all—but is rather a sūtra *about* a dhāraṇī, the same term being used here in a somewhat different sense to refer to a spiritual quality or aspect of realization. The basic meaning of the Sanskrit *dhāraṇa* is to “hold,” “uphold,” or “maintain,” and by extension the term is frequently used in reference to memory and learning. In the context of the present text, *dhāraṇī* may either refer to the content held, the specific set of realizations regarding nonconceptuality of which it teaches, in a way parallel to that in which other texts refer to specific absorptions (*samādhi*) or gates (*mukha*); or it may identify it as a mnemonic support for the Buddha’s discourse on nonconceptuality, presenting his teaching in a manner that can be easily memorized and frequently recollected. Indeed, these nuances of the meaning of dhāraṇī overlap, and both are probably relevant. As the Buddha states at the beginning of the sūtra, a bodhisattva who keeps this teaching in mind (*dhāraṇan*) will make rapid progress on the path to buddhahood.

i.3

A popular sūtra in both India and Tibet, *The Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality”* was particularly influential in Yogācāra circles. From an early period it was closely associated with the Five Treatises of Maitreya and is now widely considered a source text for Maitreya’s *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*.<sup>2</sup> At least two major Indian commentaries were composed on it:



Kamalaśīla's (ca. 740–95) *Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇīṭīkā* (Toh 4000), and a similarly titled work, now lost, by Śākyamitra (ca. ninth century).<sup>3</sup> Renowned Yogācārinś such as Sthiramati (ca. 510–70) and Ratnākaraśānti (ca. eleventh century) cited the sūtra in their commentarial works, the latter quoting it in his treatises on both sūtric and tantric scriptures.

i.4 *The Dhāraṇī "Entering into Nonconceptuality"* proved equally influential in Tibet, particularly during the early spread of Buddhist teachings in the seventh through ninth centuries. It was in this period that it was first translated, by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla working with the great Tibetan editor-translator Kawa Peltsek<sup>4</sup> and became an important text in the debate over the primacy of gradual or sudden paths to awakening.<sup>5</sup> The text was claimed by proponents of both positions; Kamalaśīla, who strenuously supported the gradualist position, paraphrased it in his *Bhāvanākrama* series and composed a commentary on it, possibly while residing in Tibet and taking part in this debate.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, a text attributed to Vimalamitra, the *cig car 'jug pa rnam par mi rtog pa'i bsgom don*, cites the APD in support of the instantaneous position..

i.5 Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé (ninth century) similarly invoked the APD in his *Lamp for the Eye of Meditation (bsam gtan mig sgron)*, a text in which he summarized and hierarchically ranked the four primary Buddhist systems of his day. From lowest to highest, these comprise the gradual path promoted by Kamalaśīla, the instantaneous path famously championed by the Chinese Chan master Heshang Moheyan, the tantric system of Mahāyoga, and the teachings of the Great Perfection. Nubchen's analysis of these four paths hinges on their particular understanding of nonconceptuality, for which he cites numerous scriptural sources. In the context of these arguments he locates the APD as a source text for the gradualist position.<sup>7</sup>

i.6 In the later spread of Buddhist teachings in Tibet the APD continued to feature in Yogācāra-themed literature, especially in the commentarial traditions surrounding the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and the *Ratnagotravibhāga*.<sup>8</sup>

#### · Summary of the Text ·

i.7 The central theme of *The Dhāraṇī "Entering into Nonconceptuality"* is the practice of relinquishing all conceptual signs by not directing the mind toward them. The sūtra presents the progressive stages through which bodhisattvas can abandon increasingly subtle conceptual signs and eliminate the erroneous ideas that lead to the objectification of phenomena. This serves to undermine the conceptual reification of appearances and facilitate direct experience with the nonconceptual realm.

- i.8 The sūtra begins in Rājagṛha, where the Buddha is residing together with an assembly of monks and bodhisattvas. From among the bodhisattvas, Avikalpaprabhāsa (Radiance of Nonconceptuality) approaches the Buddha and beseeches him to teach the dhāraṇī. The Buddha assents, and begins by explaining the progressively subtle sets of conceptual signs that need to be abandoned.
- i.9 The first set of conceptual signs to be abandoned consists of those that are most fundamental, which in the context of this sūtra refers to any defiled subjective or objective phenomena in general and to the five aggregates in particular. The method for abandoning such conceptual signs—the primary technique emphasized throughout the text—is to refrain from mentally engaging them and to recognize that they are mere appearances that do not correspond to real phenomena.
- i.10 This formula is repeated with the remaining three categories of conceptual signs. The second category of conceptual signs comprises those that arise in relation to the antidotes applied when striving to overcome the conceptual reification of the defiled entities listed in the previous category. These antidotes include the six perfections: generosity, discipline, patience, diligence, meditative concentration, and insight. This category also includes any conceptual signs that arise through an examination of the antidotes' intrinsic natures, qualities, and essences.
- i.11 The third category of conceptual signs comprises those that pertain to any true reality one believes to have been realized once the antidotes have been applied. This includes any conceptual mark that may arise in the context of examining traditional Buddhist designations for ultimate reality: emptiness, suchness, the limit of reality, ultimate truth, and so forth. This also includes any further marks that arise when one analyzes these designations in terms of their intrinsic natures, qualities, or essences.
- i.12 The fourth and final set of conceptual signs consists of those pertaining to the attainments that are believed to arise after true reality has been realized. These include those marks that arise when examining everything from the ten bodhisattva levels through to the attainment of omniscience. As in the case of the previous two sets of conceptual signs, this category also includes those marks that arise through an examination of this set in terms of intrinsic natures, qualities, and essences. And, as before, all of these conceptual signs are to be abandoned by not directing the mind toward them and thereby recognizing them as mere appearances.
- i.13 The Buddha next points out that the abandonment of these conceptual signs is not itself sufficient for attaining a direct experience of the nonconceptual realm. The abandonment of conceptual signs brings about a state of meditative absorption conducive to approaching the nonconceptual,

but it is only through the repeated application and perfection of this method that bodhisattvas are able to experience nonconceptuality. The Buddha explains that the nonconceptual realm transcends all imputations and is independent of all emotional and cognitive obscurations. It is immaterial, indemonstrable, and unmanifest. Bodhisattvas who become established in the nonconceptual realm will see that all phenomena are equivalent to space, that they are nothing more than illusions, mirages, dreams, and so forth. Stability in the nonconceptual realm grants a bodhisattva great power to perform all manner of awakened activity for the benefit of beings.

i.14 To illustrate the progressive process of meditation outlined in the sūtra, the Buddha provides an analogy. Just as a person who desires a wish-fulfilling jewel buried deep beneath the earth must forsake all other precious minerals unearthed as they dig deeper and deeper toward the wish-fulfilling jewel, so a bodhisattva who wishes to reach the nonconceptual realm must unrelentingly relinquish progressively subtler conceptual signs, not stopping until nonconceptuality is reached.

i.15 The Buddha next presents a sequence of reflections to be used to relinquish conceptual signs and thereby reach the nonconceptual realm. Whenever a conceptual mark arises, bodhisattvas should not entertain the idea that such a mark is their own or belongs to another; bodhisattvas should not regard that mark as actually representing a real phenomenon that arises or ceases, is pure or defiled, exists or does not exist, or has an intrinsic nature; they should not think of the phenomenon as being a cause, an effect, or any type of action; bodhisattvas should not apprehend any phenomena apart from the act of cognitive representation (Skt. *vijñapti*; Tib. *rnam par rig pa*), nor should they consider that which is distinct from cognition to be unreal; they should not think cognition itself to be either real or unreal; and finally, when they no longer engage with any of these concepts, they should even give up the idea “this is the nonconceptual.” Only when bodhisattvas become stable in this realization do they enter into the nonconceptual realm.

i.16 The Buddha ends his discourse by extolling the great merit that will accrue to anyone who trains in this teaching, or even writes it down or recites it aloud. After offering a summary verse to cap the sūtra, the Buddha finishes his teaching as the entire retinue, along with the complete host of worldly and celestial beings, rejoices.

#### · Recensions, Editions, and Translations ·

i.17 The present translation is based on the Sanskrit edition of the APD prepared by Kazunobu Matsuda, who relied on the two extant Sanskrit witnesses: a largely complete but slightly damaged manuscript currently held by the

Institute of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences of Russia in St. Petersburg, and a fragmented manuscript from Gilgit presently held in New Delhi, India.<sup>9</sup> The Tibetan translation, as preserved in the Degé Kangyur, has also been consulted for this translation. Significant variants between the Sanskrit text and Tibetan translations have been noted.

i.18 In addition to the canonical version of the Tibetan translation, two incomplete Tibetan manuscripts of the APD were discovered among the Dunhuang documents. One of the manuscripts (IOL Tib J 51) is a copy of the canonical translation prepared by Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Kawa Paltsek. The second (IOL Tib J 52) preserves a different translation, but it demonstrates only minor variants that are primarily due to the lexical preferences of the translator.<sup>10</sup> In both cases the colophons are missing, making it difficult to precisely determine the details of their composition. There are also two extant Chinese translations of the APD: a Dunhuang manuscript by an unknown translator with the title *Ru wu fenbie zongchi jing*, and an early eleventh-century translation by Dānapāla, the *Fo shuo ru wu fenbie famen jing* (Taishō 654).<sup>11</sup> The latter is a translation of an otherwise unknown recension of the Sanskrit text.

i.19 *The Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality”* has previously been translated into English twice. Raymond Robertson translated the text along with Kamalaśīla’s commentary in his 2006 multi-volume work on the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*. Karl Brunnhölzl includes a translation of it in an appendix to his 2012 study of the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* and its commentarial tradition.

The Noble Dhāraṇī

**Entering into Nonconceptuality**

1.

## The Translation

[F.1.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One, together with a great assembly of monks and bodhisattvas, was residing at Rājagṛha in the palace at the heart of the nonconceptual realm of phenomena, a place superior to everything within the three realms. Together with him were the bodhisattvas, the great beings, Avikalpa, Avikalpaprabhāsa, Avikalpacandra, Nirvikalpavīra, Nirvikalpadharmanirdeśakuśala, Nirvikalpasvabhāva, Nirvikalpamati, Nirvikalpanāda, Nirvikalpaspharaṇa, Nirvikalpasvara,<sup>12</sup> Maheśvara,<sup>13</sup> [F.2.a] Nirvikalpamahāmaitrīśvara, and the bodhisattva, the great being, Avalokiteśvara.

1.3 At that time, the Blessed One, surrounded and esteemed by an assembly of hundreds of thousands, taught the Dharma<sup>14</sup> concerning the nonconceptuality of phenomena.

1.4 The Blessed One surveyed the entire assembly of bodhisattvas and addressed them, “Noble sons, you should keep in mind *The Dhāraṇī ‘Entering into Nonconceptuality’*. Keeping it in mind, a bodhisattva, a great being, will swiftly perfect the qualities of a buddha and will make steady, excellent progress.”

1.5 The bodhisattva, the great being named Avikalpaprabhāsa, rose from his seat in the assembly, draped his upper robe over his shoulder, and knelt with his right knee on the ground. He bowed toward the Blessed One with hands folded and addressed the Blessed One, “Blessed One, please explain *The Dhāraṇī ‘Entering into Nonconceptuality’*. Once they have heard it, bodhisattvas, great beings, will keep it in mind, recite it, contemplate it properly, and teach it extensively to others.”

1.6 Thus addressed, the Blessed One said, “Then listen well, noble sons, and be attentive as I explain *The Dhāraṇī ‘Entering into Nonconceptuality’*.”

“That is excellent, Blessed One!” replied the bodhisattvas, the great beings. [F.2.b] They then listened to the Blessed One.

1.7 The Blessed One said to them, “Noble sons, those bodhisattvas, great beings, who hear teachings on the topic of nonconceptuality and then settle into nonconceptuality, will abandon all conceptual signs. First, bodhisattvas abandon the fundamental conceptual signs, those of either subject or object. In this regard, the fundamental conceptual signs are those signs relating to a defiled entity. ‘Defiled entity’ refers to the five aggregates as the bases for clinging: the aggregate of matter as a basis for clinging, the aggregate of sensation as a basis for clinging, the aggregate of perception as a basis for clinging, the aggregate of karmic dispositions as a basis for clinging, and the aggregate of consciousness as a basis for clinging. How do bodhisattvas abandon these fundamental conceptual signs? They abandon them by not directing their minds toward what is experientially evident.

1.8 “Once bodhisattvas have progressively abandoned those conceptual signs, another set of conceptual signs based on an examination of antidotes arises and becomes experientially evident. This includes the conceptual signs that arise through examining generosity, examining discipline, examining patience, examining diligence, examining meditative concentration, and the conceptual signs based on examining insight. Whether they are examined in terms of intrinsic natures, examined in terms of qualities, or examined in terms of essences, bodhisattvas also abandon conceptual signs based on examining antidotes by not directing their minds toward them.

1.9 “Once bodhisattvas have abandoned those signs, another set of conceptual signs based on the examination of true reality arises and becomes experientially evident. [F.3.a] This includes conceptual signs based on examining emptiness, examining suchness, examining the limit of reality, examining the absence of signs, examining ultimate truth, and those based on examining the field of phenomena. Whether they are examined in terms of particular features, examined in terms of qualities, or examined in terms of essences, bodhisattvas also abandon the conceptual signs based on examining true reality by not directing their minds toward them.

1.10 “Once bodhisattvas have abandoned those signs, another set of conceptual signs based on examining the attainments arises and becomes experientially evident. This includes the conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of the first through tenth bodhisattva levels, conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of the acceptance that phenomena do not arise, conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of prophecy, conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of the ability to purify buddhafiels, conceptual signs based on

examining the attainment of the ability to ripen beings, and conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of initiation up to conceptual signs based on examining the attainment of omniscience. Whether they are examined in terms of intrinsic natures, examined in terms of qualities, or examined in terms of essences, bodhisattvas also abandon the conceptual signs based on examining the attainments by not directing their minds toward them.

1.11 “Once bodhisattvas, great beings, have thus abandoned every type of conceptual sign by not directing their minds toward them, they are well oriented to the nonconceptual but have yet to experience the nonconceptual realm. They do, however, possess the well-grounded meditative absorption conducive to experiencing the nonconceptual realm. [F.3.b] As a consequence of cultivating this genuine method, training in it repeatedly, and correctly orienting their minds, bodhisattvas will experience the nonconceptual realm without volition or effort, and gradually purify their experience.

1.12 “For what reason, noble sons,<sup>15</sup> is the nonconceptual realm called ‘nonconceptual’? It completely transcends all conceptual analysis, completely transcends all imputations of instruction and illustration, completely transcends all conceptual signs,<sup>16</sup> completely transcends all imputation via the sense faculties, completely transcends imputation as sense objects, completely transcends imputation as cognitive representations, and is not based in the cognitive obscurations or in the obscurations of the afflictive and secondary afflictive emotions.<sup>17</sup> For this reason the nonconceptual realm is called ‘nonconceptual.’

1.13 “What, then, is the nonconceptual? The nonconceptual is immaterial, indemonstrable, unsupported, unmanifest, imperceptible, and without location. Those bodhisattvas, great beings who are established in the nonconceptual realm see, with their nonconceptual knowing wisdom that is indistinguishable from what is known, that all phenomena are like the expanse of space. Through the ensuing mode of knowing they see all phenomena as illusions, mirages, dreams, hallucinations, echoes, reflections, the image of the moon in water, and as magical creations.<sup>18</sup> They then attain the full expression of the power of sustaining great bliss.<sup>19</sup> They attain the full expression of the mind’s vast capacity. They attain the full expression of great insight and wisdom. They attain the full expression of the power of maintaining the great teaching.<sup>20</sup> In all circumstances they are able to bring every type of benefit to all beings, never ceasing in their effortless performance of awakened activity. [F.4.a]

1.14 “Noble sons, consider this analogy: Beneath a solid, hard sheet of rock there is a great trove of precious minerals, a variety of great wish-fulfilling jewels that shimmer with light, including precious silver, precious gold, and



precious emerald. Along comes a man seeking great treasure. Another man who is able to perceive the great treasure says to him, 'Excuse me sir, beneath this solid, hard sheet of rock there is a great precious treasure filled with glimmering precious minerals. But beneath that there is a great<sup>21</sup> precious treasure, a wish-fulfilling jewel. First you must remove the bedrock. Once that is removed, you will discover rocks that appear to be silver, but you should not consider this the great treasure. Recognizing this, continue digging. As you dig, you will discover rocks that appear to be gold, but again you should not consider this the great treasure. Recognizing this once again, dig. As you dig, you will discover rocks that appear to be various minerals, but again you should not consider this to be the great treasure. Recognizing this once again, dig. Sir, once you have toiled in unearthing these minerals, you will effortlessly and without any further exertion discover a great precious treasure, the wish-fulfilling jewel. Once you have found that great precious treasure, the wish-fulfilling jewel, you will become rich, affluent, prosperous, and fully able to benefit yourself and others.'

1.15 "Noble sons, this analogy is meant to provide some understanding of our topic. The solid, hard sheet of rock represents the various karmic dispositions that reinforce duality and the afflictive emotions. The great treasure that lies beneath that rock, the precious wish-fulfilling jewel, represents the nonconceptual realm. The person who seeks the great treasure, the precious wish-fulfilling jewel, represents the bodhisattva, the great being. [F.4.b] The person with knowledge of the great treasure is the Thus-Gone One, the Worthy One, the Perfect Buddha. The bedrock represents the fundamental conceptual signs. The command to dig represents not directing the mind toward them. The rock resembling silver represents the conceptual signs related to the examination of antidotes.<sup>22</sup> The rock resembling gold represents the conceptual signs related to emptiness and so on. The rock resembling various gemstones represents the conceptual signs related to the attainments. Finding the great treasure, the wish-fulfilling jewel, represents experiencing the nonconceptual realm. Noble sons, through this analogy, you should understand entering into nonconceptuality.<sup>23</sup>

1.16 "How then, noble sons, do bodhisattvas, great beings, reflect on the conceptual signs as they have been taught here and enter the nonconceptual realm? Noble sons, when a fundamental conceptual sign related to the aggregate of matter<sup>24</sup> manifests, bodhisattvas, great beings who are established in the nonconceptual realm, should reflect in this way: 'To think "this is my material form" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "this material form belongs to others" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "this is matter" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "matter

arises," "it ceases," "it is polluted," or "it is purified" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "there is no matter" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "matter does not exist intrinsically," "it does not exist causally," "it does not exist as a result," "it does not exist through action," "it does not exist in relation to anything," [F.5.a] or "it is not a mode of being" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "matter is mere cognitive representation" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "just as matter does not exist, so cognitive representation appearing as matter does not exist" is to entertain a conceptual thought.'

1.17 "Therefore, noble sons, the bodhisattvas, great beings, do not apprehend matter, nor do they apprehend cognitive representations appearing as matter. In no way do they bring cognitive representation to an end, nor do they apprehend any phenomenon as being distinct from cognitive representation. They do not consider that cognitive representation to be nonexistent, nor do they consider nonexistence to be something distinct from cognitive representation. They do not consider the nonexistence of a cognitive representation appearing as matter to be the same as that cognitive representation, nor do they consider it to be different. They do not consider a nonexistent cognitive representation to be existent, nor do they consider it to be nonexistent. Noble sons, those who do not conceptualize through any of these conceptual modes do not think, 'this is the nonconceptual realm.'

1.18 "Noble sons, this is the way of entering the nonconceptual realm. In this way, bodhisattvas, great beings, become established in the nonconceptual realm. The same should be applied to sensation, perception, karmic dispositions, and consciousness. The same should be applied to the perfection of generosity, the perfection of discipline, the perfection of patience, the perfection of diligence, the perfection of meditative concentration, and the perfection of insight. And the same should be applied to emptiness and so on, up to omniscience. [F.5.b]

1.19 "Noble sons, when conceptual signs<sup>25</sup> related to an examination<sup>26</sup> of omniscience manifest, bodhisattvas, great beings, should reflect as follows: 'To think "this is my omniscience" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "this is the omniscience of others" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "this is omniscience" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "omniscience is attained" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "omniscience is meant to destroy all cognitive obscurations and the obscurations of the afflictive emotions" is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "once purified, the three worlds are nothing other than omniscience"<sup>27</sup> is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think "omniscience arises," "it ceases," "it is polluted," or "it is purified" is to entertain a conceptual thought;<sup>28</sup> to think "omniscience does not exist" is to entertain a

conceptual thought; to think “omniscience does not exist intrinsically,” “it does not exist causally,” “it does not exist as a result,” “it does not exist through action,” “it does not exist in relation to anything,” and “it is not a mode of being” is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think “omniscience is mere cognitive representation” is to entertain a conceptual thought; to think “just as omniscience does not exist, so cognitive representation appearing as omniscience does not exist” is to entertain a conceptual thought.’

1.20 “Therefore, noble sons,<sup>29</sup> just as bodhisattvas, great beings, do not apprehend omniscience, they likewise do not apprehend cognitive representations appearing as omniscience. In no way do they bring cognitive representation to an end, nor do they apprehend any phenomenon as being distinct from cognitive representations. They do not consider that cognitive representation to be nonexistent, nor do they consider nonexistence to be something distinct from cognitive representation. They do not consider the nonexistence of that cognitive representation to be identical to that cognitive representation, [F.6.a] nor do they consider it to be different. They do not consider the nonexistence of that cognitive representation to be existent, nor do they consider it to be nonexistent. Noble sons, those who do not conceptualize through any of these conceptual modes<sup>30</sup> do not think, ‘this is the nonconceptual field of phenomena.’

1.21 “This is the way of entering the nonconceptual realm. Noble sons, this is how bodhisattvas, great beings, become established in the nonconceptual realm.

“Noble sons, the merit from taking up this discourse on the Dharma, writing it down,<sup>31</sup> and reciting it is much greater than giving away one’s body as many times as there are grains of sand in the river Ganga, much greater than offering jewel-filled world systems as numerous as grains of sand in the river Ganga, and much greater than the heap of merit created by commissioning images of the thus-gone ones to fill world systems as numerous as grains of sand in the river Ganga.”

1.22 Then, on that occasion, the Blessed One spoke these verses:

“With this true doctrine the Victor’s heir, intent upon the nonconceptual,  
Transcends the quagmire of concepts and gradually reaches the end of  
thought.

A bodhisattva thereby attains a nonconceptual bliss that is peaceful and  
unwavering,

Supreme, under their control, and both equaled and unequaled.”<sup>32</sup>

1.23 When the Blessed One finished his discourse, the bodhisattva, the great being Avikalpaprabhāsa and the entire retinue together with the world of gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced as they praised the

teachings of the Blessed One.

1.24 *This completes The Noble Dhāraṇī “Entering into Nonconceptuality.”*

c.

## Colophon

c.1 This was translated and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and [F.6.b] Dānaśīla, together with the chief editor and translator Kawa Peltsek.

ab.

## ABBREVIATIONS

*APD Avikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 Though not explicitly identified as a Mahāyāna sūtra, the APD states that it was taught to a gathering of bodhisattvas, with the bodhisattva Avikalpa-prabhāsa serving as the primary interlocutor.
- n.2 On the relationship between the APD and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga*, see Brunnhölzl 2012, pp. 49–52; Mathes 2005, pp. 12–13; Meinert 2003, p. 180; Robertson 2006, p. 91.
- n.3 This is the *rnam par mi rtog pa la 'jug pa'i gzung gyi 'grel pa*, listed in the Denkarma catalog on F.306.a.6; see also Lalou (1953), no. 552, p. 332.
- n.4 See Denkarma, F.199.a.7; see also Lalou (1953), no. 197, p. 324.
- n.5 For more on the debate between proponents of the gradual and spontaneous paths to awakening, see Meinert 2003, pp. 179–80, particularly footnote 13; Robertson 2006, pp. 36–87.
- n.6 See Robertson 2006, pp. 87–91.
- n.7 For a detailed discussion of the relationship between the APD and the *Lamp for the Eye of Meditation*, see Meinert 2003.
- n.8 See Brunnhölzl 2012, pp. 150–51; Mathes 2005, *passim*.
- n.9 See Matsuda, 1996.
- n.10 The extant folia of IOL Tib J 52 correspond to folios 2.b.7–4.b.2 and 5.b.3–6.a.3 of the Degé Kangyur recension. It should be noted that the digitized images of the scans are disordered and one folio is reversed. The Arabic numerals on the right side of the folios do not represent the correct order. There also appears to be one folio missing in the sequence. Only variants that suggest differences between Sanskrit recensions have been noted.

- n.11 See Meinert 2003, pp. 178–79; Ueyama 1983, pp. 34–35. Ueyama presents an edition of the *Ru wu fenbie zongchi jing* in the same publication, pp. 38–40.
- n.12 Instead of Nirvikalpasvara, the Degé translation reads Nirvikalpeśvara (*rnam par med dbang phyug*).
- n.13 The Degé translation adds Nirvikalpa- to the name of Maheśvara (*rnam par rtog med dbang phyug chen po*).
- n.14 The Degé translation includes the statement “according to the Mahāyāna” (*theg pa chen po la*).
- n.15 The Degé translation lacks “noble sons,” but the phrase appears in the Dunhuang version.
- n.16 The Degé translation and Dunhuang version lack “completely transcends all conceptual signs.”
- n.17 The Degé translation lacks “secondary afflictive emotions,” but the phrase does appear in the Dunhuang version.
- n.18 These lines are cited by Ratnākaraśānti in his *Sarvarahasyanibandha*, a commentary on the *Sarvarahasya Tantra* (Toh 2623; see Isaacson, forthcoming, p. 16), and in his *Sāratamā* (or *Sārottamā*, Toh 3803), a commentary on the *Perfection of Wisdom in 8000 Lines* (Jaini 1979, p. 82). It is also cited by Sthiramati in his *Triṃśikāvijñaptibhāṣya* (Toh 4064; see Buescher 2002, p. 45, lines 16–18).
- n.19 The Tibetan translations lack an equivalent for *vibhutva*, “power.”
- n.20 The Degé translation and the Dunhuang version lack an equivalent for *vihāra*, “maintaining.”
- n.21 The Degé translation omits “great” here, which is attested in the Sanskrit.
- n.22 The Tibetan *gnyen po la rnam par mi rtog pa'i mtshan ma* here lacks an equivalent for the Sanskrit °*nirūpaṇa* in the compound *pratipakṣanirūpaṇavikalpanimitta*.
- n.23 The Degé translation reads *rnam par mi rtog pa'i dbyings*, “the nonconceptual realm.”
- n.24 The Degé translation should be emended from *gzungs* to *gzugs* following the Sanskrit and the variant attested in the Kangxi and Lhasa Kangyurs.
- n.25 The Degé translation omits “sign.”



- n.26 The Degé reading *spyod pa* should be emended here to *dpyod pa* in accordance with the Sanskrit °*nirūpaṇa*.
- n.27 The Tibetan translation reads, “omniscience is purification,” thus omitting “the three worlds.”
- n.28 The Degé translation omits the clause beginning with “to think, ‘omniscience arises.’” The Dunhuang version reads, “is difficult” (*rab tu dka’ ba*) instead of “is purified.”
- n.29 We have followed the Degé translation in including “noble sons” here.
- n.30 The Degé translation reads, “through any concepts of omniscience” (*rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa’i rnam par rtog pa thams cad kyis*). The repetition of *rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa*, “omniscience,” in the Tibetan passage suggests the possibility that *mkhyen pa* was added here by scribal error.
- n.31 The Degé translation includes “memorizing it” (*chang ba*).
- n.32 These verses are cited in the *Guṇavatīṭīkā* (Toh 1623), Ratnākaraśānti’s commentary on the *Mahāmāyā Tantra* (Damron 2014, p. 90). Regarding the phrase “equaled and unequaled” (*samāsama*), Ratnākaraśānti comments: “[Nonconceptual bliss] is ‘equaled’ because it is equivalent with general classes of bliss that are other than it. It is ‘unequaled’ because is distinct through those [previously mentioned] four distinctions.”

b.

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## GLOSSARY

## · Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship 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.

g.1 acceptance that phenomena do not arise

*mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa*

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*

Bodhisattvas' realization that all phenomena are unproduced and empty. It sustains them on the difficult path of benefitting all beings so that they do not succumb to the goal of personal liberation. Different sources link this realization to the first or eighth bodhisattva level (*bhūmi*).

g.2 aggregates as the bases for clinging

*nye bar len pa'i phung po*

ཉེབར་ལེན་པའི་ཕུང་པོ།

*upādānaskandha*

The five aggregates (*skandha*) of matter (*rūpa*), sensation (*vedanā*), perception (*saṃjñā*), karmic dispositions (*saṃskāra*), and consciousness (*vijñāna*). They are referred to as the “bases for clinging” (*upādāna*) insofar as all conceptual grasping arises on the basis of these aggregates.

g.3 Avalokiteśvara

*spyan ras gzigs*

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས།

*avalokiteśvara*

The bodhisattva who is the epitome of compassion.

g.4 Avikalpa

*rnam par mi rtog pa*

རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་པ།

*avikalpa*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Nonconceptual.”

g.5 Avikalpacandra

*rnam par mi rtog zla ba*

རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་ཟླ་བ།

*avikalpacandra*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Moon of Nonconceptuality.”

g.6 Avikalpaprabhāsa

*rnam par mi rtog snang ba*

རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་སྣང་བ།

*avikalpaprabhāsa*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Light of Nonconceptuality.”

g.7 bodhisattva level

*sa*

ས།

*bhūmi*

The stages a bodhisattva must traverse before reaching perfect buddhahood; traditionally ten in number, though some systems present more.

g.8 cognitive representation

*rnam par rig pa*

རྣམ་པར་རིག་པ།

*vijñapti*

g.9 conceptual

*rnam par rtog pa*

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པ།

*vikalpa*

g.10 conceptual sign

*rnam par rtog pa'i mtshan ma*

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་པའི་མཚན་མ།

*vikalpanimitta*

A “conceptual sign” should here be understood to refer to those signs that arise through conceptual engagement with the phenomenon under examination or discussion. See also “sign.”

g.11 essence

*snying po*

སྤྱིང་པོ།

*garbha*

g.12 field of phenomena

*chos dbyings*

ཚོས་དབྱིངས།

*dharmadhātu*

The nonconceptual, boundless field (*dhātu*) in which all phenomena (*dharma*) appear. A term for ultimate reality.

g.13 fundamental

*rang bzhin*

རང་བཞིན།

*prakṛti*

g.14 Great Perfection

*rdzogs pa chen po*

རྫོགས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*mahāsandhi*

g.15 Heshang Moheyan

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—

Ca. eighth century. A Chinese master of the Chan tradition who tradition holds lost a debate with Kamalaśīla regarding sudden versus gradual paths to awakening. He upheld the view of the sudden path.

g.16 imputation

*rnam par brtag pa*

རྣམ་པར་བརྟག་པ།

*vikalpa*

g.17 insight

*shes rab*

ཤེས་རབ།

*prajñā*

The sixth of the six perfections.

g.18 intrinsic nature

*ngo bo nyid*

ངོ་བོ་ཉིད།

*svabhāva*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

This term denotes the ontological status of phenomena, according to which they are said to possess existence in their own right—inherently, in and of themselves, objectively, and independent of any other phenomena such as our conception and labelling. The absence of such an ontological reality is defined as the true nature of reality, emptiness.



- g.19 Kamalaśīla  
*pad ma'i ngang tshul*  
 བད་མའི་ངང་རྒྱལ།  
*kamalaśīla*  
 Ca. late eighth century. An Indian monastic scholar important in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet.
- g.20 karmic dispositions  
*'du byed*  
 འདུ་བྱེད།  
*saṃskāra*  
 One of the five aggregates; the very subtle karmic tendencies that give shape to an individual's saṃsāric experience. In Abhidharma literature there are typically fifty-one saṃskāras.
- g.21 knowing  
*ye shes*  
 ཡེ་ཤེས།  
*jñāna*  
 Also rendered here as “wisdom.”
- g.22 limit of reality  
*yang dag pa'i mtha'*  
 ཡང་དག་པའི་མཐའ།  
*bhūtakoti*  
 This term has three meanings: (1) the ultimate nature, (2) the experience of the ultimate nature, and (3) the quiescent state of a worthy one to be avoided by bodhisattvas.
- g.23 Maheśvara  
*rnam par rtog med dbang phyug chen po*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་དབང་ཕྱུག་ཆེན་པོ།  
*nirvikalpamaheśvara*  
 “Great Lord”; the name of a bodhisattva in the *Avikalpraveśdhāraṇī*. This is more commonly used as an epithet of Śiva.
- g.24 mark

*mtshan ma*

མཚན་མ།

*nimitta*

See “sign.”

g.25 Material form

*gzugs*

གཟུགས།

*rūpa*

See “matter.”

g.26 matter

*gzugs*

གཟུགས།

*rūpa*

The first of the five aggregates, defined in Abhidharma literature as anything comprised of the four major elements (earth, air, fire, and water), either alone or in combination. Also rendered here as “material form.”

g.27 Nirvikalpadharmanirdeśakuśala

*rnam par rtog med chos ston mkhas pa*

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་ཚེས་སྟོན་མཁས་པ།

*nirvikalpadharmanirdeśakuśala*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Skilled in Teaching the Dharma of Nonconceptuality.”

g.28 Nirvikalpamahāmaitrīśvara

*rnam par rtog med byams pa chen po dbang phyug*

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་བྱམས་པ་ཆེན་པོ་དབང་ཕྱུག

*nirvikalpamahāmaitrīśvara*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Lord of Nonconceptual Great Love.”

g.29 Nirvikalpamati

*rnam par rtog med blo gros*

རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་བློ་གྲོས།

*nirvikalpamati*

Name of a bodhisattva; “Wise in Nonconceptuality.”

- g.30 Nirvikalpanāda  
*rnam par rtog med nga ro*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་ངའོ།  
*nirvikalpanāda*  
 Name of a bodhisattva; “Roar of Nonconceptuality.”
- g.31 Nirvikalpaspharaṇa  
*rnam par rtog med khyab byed*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་ཁྱམ་བྱེད།  
*nirvikalpaspharaṇa*  
 Name of a bodhisattva; “Pervading Nonconceptuality.”
- g.32 Nirvikalpasvabhāva  
*rnam par rtog med ngo bo nyid*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་ངོ་བོ་ཉིད།  
*nirvikalpasvabhāva*  
 Name of a bodhisattva; “Having the Nature of Nonconceptuality.”
- g.33 Nirvikalpasvara  
*rnam par rtog med dbang phyug*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་དབང་ཕྱུག།  
*nirvikalpasvara*  
 Name of a bodhisattva; “Lord of Nonconceptuality.”
- g.34 Nirvikalpavīra  
*rnam par rtog med dpa' bo*  
 རྣམ་པར་རྟོག་མེད་དཔའ་བོ།  
*nirvikalpavīra*  
 Name of a bodhisattva; “Hero of Nonconceptuality.”
- g.35 nonconceptual  
*rnam par mi rtog pa*  
 རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་པ།  
*avikalpa*
- g.36 nonconceptual realm  
*rnam par mi rtog pa'i dbyings*

རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་པའི་དབྱིངས།

*avikalpadhātu*

The state of nonconceptuality.

g.37 nonconceptuality

*rnam par mi rtog pa nyid*

རྣམ་པར་མི་རྟོག་པ་ཉིད།

*avikalpa*

g.38 not direct the mind

*yid la mi byed pa*

ཡིད་ལ་མི་བྱེད་པ།

*amanasikāra*

To not conceptually engage or even direct the mind toward an object of perception.

g.39 Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé

*gnub chen sangs rgyas ye shes*

གཏུབ་ཆེན་སངས་རྒྱས་ཡེ་ཤེས།

—

Ca. eleventh century. An early Tibetan master of the Nyingma tradition.

g.40 omniscience

*rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid*

རྣམ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ་ཉིད།

*sarvākārajñatā*

A description of the mode of omniscience in which all possible phenomena as well as their ultimate nature are known.

g.41 quality

*yon tan*

ཡོན་ཏན།

*guṇa*

g.42 Rājagrha

*rgyal po'i khab*

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

*rājagṛha*

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

The ancient capital of Magadha prior to its relocation to Pāṭaliputra during the Mauryan dynasty, Rājagṛha is one of the most important locations in Buddhist history. The literature tells us that the Buddha and his saṅgha spent a considerable amount of time in residence in and around Rājagṛha—in nearby places, such as the Vulture Peak Mountain (Gṛdhrakūṭaparvata), a major site of the Mahāyāna sūtras, and the Bamboo Grove (Veṇuvana)—enjoying the patronage of King Bimbisāra and then of his son King Ajātaśatru. Rājagṛha is also remembered as the location where the first Buddhist monastic council was held after the Buddha Śākyamuni passed into parinirvāṇa. Now known as Rajgir and located in the modern Indian state of Bihar.

g.43 Ratnākaraśānti

*rin chen 'byung gnas zhi ba*

རིན་ཆེན་འབྲུང་གནས་ཞི་བ།

*ratnākaraśānti*

Ca. late tenth–early eleventh century. An important Indian monastic scholar who commented on both Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna texts.

g.44 secondary afflictive emotions

*nye ba'i nyon mongs*

ཉེ་བའི་ཉོན་མོངས།

*upakleśa*

A subsidiary set of afflictive emotions that differ in number depending on the system of Abhidharma that presents them.

g.45 sign

*mtshan ma*

མཚན་མ།

*nimitta*

Any imagined mark or feature of an object, the misperception of which serves as the basis of perception and the arising of coarse conceptuality. Also translated here as “mark.”

g.46 six perfections

*pha rol tu phyin pa drug*

ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་དུག

*ṣaṭpāramitā*

Generosity (Skt. *dāna*; Tib. *byin pa*), discipline (Skt. *śīla*; Tib. *tshul khrims*), patience (Skt. *kṣānti*; Tib. *bzod pa*), diligence (Skt. *vīrya*; Tib. *brtson 'grus*), meditative concentration (Skt. *dhyāna*; Tib. *bsam gtan*), and insight (Skt. *prajñā*; Tib. *shes rab*).

g.47 Sthiramati

*blo gros brtan pa*

ལྷོ་གྲོས་བརྟན་པ།

*sthiramati*

Ca. sixth century. An important Indian commentator on the Yogācāra system.

g.48 suchness

*de bzhin nyid*

དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད།

*tathatā*

A common term describing ultimate reality.

g.49 true reality

*de kho na*

དེ་ལོ་ན།

*tattva*

g.50 Vimalamitra

*dri med bshes gnyen*

དྷི་མེད་བཤེས་གཉེན།

*vimalamitra*

Ca. eighth century. An Indian master important in the transmission of Buddhism to Tibet.

g.51 wisdom

*ye shes*

ཡེ་ཤེས།

*jñāna*

Also rendered here as “knowing.”

g.52 worthy one

*dgra bcom pa*

དག་བཅོམ་པ།

*arhat*

According to Buddhist tradition, one who has conquered the enemy of the afflictions (*kleśa-ari-hata*) and reached the supreme purity. The term can refer to buddhas as well as to those who have reached realization of the disciple vehicle.