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The Sūtra of Mahāśrī

Mahāśrīsūtra

འཕགས་པ་དཔལ་ཚེན་མོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa dpal chen mo'i mdo

The Noble “Sūtra of Mahāśrī”

Āryamahāśrīsūtra

· Toh 740 ·

Degé Kangyur vol. 94 (rgyud 'bum, tsha), folios 234.b–235.a



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co.

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SUMMARY

s.

- s.1 *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* is a short sūtra revealed to Avalokiteśvara in the pure land of Sukhāvātī. In essence, it is a dhāraṇī centered on twelve epithets of the goddess of wealth and a short ritual instruction concerning its recitation. The spell is said to provide protection, wealth, and good social standing.

ac.

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ac.1 The text was translated from Tibetan by the Buddhapīṭha Translation Group (Gergely Hidas and Péter-Dániel Szántó).

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. Andreas Doctor edited the translation and the introduction, and Laura Goetz copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* is a short sūtra revealed to Avalokiteśvara in the pure land of Sukhāvātī. In essence, it is a dhāraṇī centered on twelve epithets of the goddess of wealth and a short ritual instruction concerning its recitation. Lists of the epithets of a deity are a common type of dhāraṇī, and such texts can sometimes be very long (for example, *Reciting the Names of Mañjuśrī*).¹ This text can be said to be an alternative version of *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī*,² from which it differs in only minor details. One significant difference, however, is that in that text the ritual instruction is not provided.

i.2 Mahāśrī, or simply Śrī, or commonly Lakṣmī, is a goddess who is perhaps more prevalent in the brahmanical tradition, where she is said to be the great god Viṣṇu's consort. She is associated with well-being and prosperity. Here her names constitute the inner core of the dhāraṇī, which is then accompanied by a short ritual instruction about how to recite it. The spell is promised to provide protection, wealth, and good social standing.

i.3 The text is not present under this title in the imperial-period catalogs, but its sibling text is. The colophon of the Tibetan translation of this text attributes it to the famous translator-duo Jinamitra and Yeshé Dé, dating it to sometime in the early ninth century. While the two texts are nearly identical, we may observe that name-epithets in particular were translated somewhat differently.

i.4 This translation was made principally on the basis of the Tibetan translations of the text found in the Tantra Collection (*rgyud 'bum*) and the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs (*gzungs 'dus*)³ in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Stok Palace Kangyur and the various witnesses of the sibling text, *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī*.

**The Noble
Sūtra of Mahāśrī**

1.

The Translation

[F.234.b]

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.⁴

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing in Sukhāvātī. Then the bodhisattva mahāsattva, the noble Avalokiteśvara, set out to where the Blessed One was residing. Having arrived, he bowed his head to the feet of the Blessed One, circumambulated the Blessed One thrice, and sat down on one side.

1.3 Then the Blessed One looked at Mahāśrī and said this to the noble Avalokiteśvara: “Whosoever, including monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen, gets to know, upholds, recites, writes down, or commissions to have written down these twelve names of Mahāśrī will escape destitution and become wealthy.”

1.4 Then the entire host of spirits⁵ said, “May it be so!”

1.5 Then the Blessed One spoke the twelve names of Mahāśrī: “It is thus— Splendor, Welfare, She Who Is Wearing a Garland of Lotuses, Mistress of Wealth, White One, She of Great Fame, Lotus-Eyed One, She of Great Radiance, She Who Accomplishes, Bestower of Nourishment, She of Jewel-Like Gleam,⁶ Great Splendor.

*syād yathedam—jini ghrīṇī⁷ sarvārthasādhani śāśini | alakṣmīṃ me nāśaya |
sīdhiantu me mantrapadāḥ svāhā | om bhṛkuṭi paramasubhage svāhā |⁸*

1.6 “One should recite this three times. Whosoever recites it at the three junctures of the day will have all their adversities destroyed and will become fortunate and of inexhaustible wealth. [F.235.a] If one recites this before going out to meet other people, those people will think of one as their son, they will be pleased, and they will do whatever one instructs. If one recites

continuously, Brahmā and brahmins may perform aggressive rituals, but one will not be harmed; rather, it will be as if one had performed service to many buddhas.”⁹

1.7 Thus spoke the Blessed One, and the bodhisattva, the noble Avalokiteśvara, was gladdened and praised the speech of the Blessed One.

1.8 *Here ends the noble “Sūtra of Mahāśrī.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This was translated, checked, and redacted by the Indian preceptor Jinamitra and the great editor-translator Bandé Yeshé Dé.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* ('jam dpal mtshan brjod, Toh 360).
- n.2 *dpal gyi lha mo chen mo'i mtshan bcu gnyis pa*, Toh 741/1006. See *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh741.html>).
- n.3 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 1005 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 1005, n.3 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1005.html#UT22084-094-017-112>), for details.
- n.4 This obeisance formula is not part of the main text, but the so-called translators' obeisance ('gyur phyag).
- n.5 It is not at all clear where these spirits came from, and it is still less clear why they are in Sukhāvātī.
- n.6 Here we have translated according to the Sanskrit (Hidas 2021, p. 33, item no. 3; and p. 52, item no. 40) and the Tibetan of the sibling text, *The Twelve Names*. The Tibetan here, *rin po che rab tu sbyin ma*, suggests an underlying reading of *Ratnapradā.
- n.7 This is the reading of Stok Palace and the Sanskrit of the sibling text. Both Degé versions transmit *ghrini*.
- n.8 The names or epithets translated into Tibetan are (1) Śrī, (2) Lakṣmī, (3) Padmamālinī, (4) Dhanādhipati, (5) Gaurī, (6) Mahāyaśāḥ, (7) Padmanetrī, (8) Mahādyuti, (9) Kartṛī, (10) Annadāyinī, (11) Ratnaprabhā (n.6), and (12) Mahāśrī. The rest of the spell may be translated as follows: "May it be so! *jini ghrinī*, O Accomplisher of All Goals, O Hare-Marked One (an epithet of the moon)! Destroy my destitution! May these mantra-words be accomplished for me! *Om* One Furling Her Eyebrows, O Supremely Fortunate One *soāhā*."

Note that “One Furling Her Eyebrows” is also the name of a goddess, Bhṛkuṭī, sometimes appearing as an ectype of Tārā.

- n.9 We observe the following differences in the Sanskrit version of the sibling text: (a) recitation at the three junctures of the day is not mentioned; (b) inexhaustible wealth is not among the promises; (c) it is not other people who are being met with but the king; (d) Brahmā and brahmins do not perform harmful rituals, but the god Great Brahmā (Mahābrahmā) appears and bestows a desired boon.

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.

g.1 Avalokiteśvara

spyan ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara^{AO}

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.2 Bandé Yeshé Dé

ban+de ye shes sde

བན་པེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.3 Bestower of Nourishment

zas sbyin ma

ཟས་སྤྱིན་མ།

annadāyini^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* ([Toh 741/1006](#)).

g.4 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཙེན་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat^{AO}

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 *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 $\sqrt{bhañj}$ (“to break”).

g.5 bodhisattva mahāsattva

byang chub sems dpa' sems dpa' chen po

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔལ་སེམས་དཔལ་ཚེན་པོ།

bodhisattvamahāsattva^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term can be understood to mean “great courageous one” or “great hero,” or (from the Sanskrit) simply “great being,” and is almost always found as an epithet of “bodhisattva.” The qualification “great” in this term, according to the majority of canonical definitions, focuses on the generic greatness common to all bodhisattvas, i.e., the greatness implicit in the bodhisattva vow itself in terms of outlook, aspiration, number of beings to be benefited, potential or eventual accomplishments, and so forth. In this sense the *mahā-* is closer in its connotations to the *mahā-* in “Mahāyāna” than to the *mahā-* in “mahāsiddha.” While individual bodhisattvas described as *mahāsattva* may in many cases also be “great” in terms of their level of realization, this is largely coincidental, and in the canonical texts the epithet is not restricted to bodhisattvas at any particular point in their career. Indeed, in a few cases even bodhisattvas whose path has taken a wrong direction are still described as *bodhisattva mahāsattva*.

Later commentarial writings do nevertheless define the term—variably—in terms of bodhisattvas having attained a particular level (*bhūmi*) or realization. The most common qualifying criteria mentioned are attaining the path of seeing, attaining irreversibility (according to its various definitions), or attaining the seventh *bhūmi*.

g.6 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚེངས་པ།

brahman^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world; he is also considered to be the lord of the Sahā world (our universe). Though not considered a creator god in Buddhism, Brahmā occupies an important place as one of two gods (the other being Indra/Śakra) said to have first exhorted the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. The particular heavens found in the form realm over which Brahmā rules are often some of the most sought-after realms of higher rebirth in Buddhist literature. Since there are many universes or world systems, there are also multiple Brahmās presiding over them. His most frequent epithets are “Lord of the Sahā World” (*sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*mahābrahman*).

g.7 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī^{AO}

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.8 Great Splendor

dpal chen mo

དཔལ་ཆེན་མོ།

mahāśrī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* ([Toh 741/1006](#)). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *dpal chen mo ma*.

g.9 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇི་ན་མི་ཏྲ།

jinamitra^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Jinamitra was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (*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.

g.10 layman

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྟེན།

upāsaka^{AO}

An unordained male practitioner who observes the five precepts not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.11 laywoman

dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྟེན་མ།

upāsikā^{AO}

An unordained female practitioner who observes the five precepts not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.12 Lotus-Eyed One

pad+ma'i spyan

པདྨ་འཇིགས་ལྷན།

padmanetrī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *padma spyan mnga' ma*.

g.13 Mahāśrī

dpal chen mo

དཔལ་ཆེན་མོ།

mahāśrī^{AO}

Name of a goddess more prevalent in the brahmanical tradition, where she is a consort of Viṣṇu. She is the subject of *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006), where twelve of her epithets are listed.

g.14 Mistress of Wealth

nor gyi bdag mo

ནོར་གྱི་བདག་མོ།

dhanādhipati ^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *nor bdag ma*.

g.15 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu ^{AO}

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.16 nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སློང་མ།

bhikṣuṇī ^{AO}

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.17 preceptor

mkhan po

མཁན་པོ།

upādhyāya^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A person's particular preceptor within the monastic tradition. They must have at least ten years of standing in the saṅgha, and their role is to confer ordination, to tend to the student, and to provide all the necessary requisites, therefore guiding that person for the taking of full vows and the maintenance of conduct and practice. This office was decreed by the Buddha so that aspirants would not have to receive ordination from the Buddha in person, and the Buddha identified two types: those who grant entry into the renunciate order and those who grant full ordination. The Tibetan translation *mkhan po* has also come to mean "a learned scholar," the equivalent of a *paṇḍita*, but that is not the intended meaning in Indic Buddhist literature.

g.18 She of Great Fame

grags pa chen mo

གྲགས་པ་ཆེན་མོ།

mahāyaśas^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *grags chen ma*.

g.19 She of Great Radiance

'od chen mo

འོད་ཆེན་མོ།

mahādyuti^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *'od chen ma*.

g.20 She of Jewel-Like Gleam

rin po che rab tu sbyin ma

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་རབ་ཏུ་སྒྱིན་མ།

ratnaprabhā^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *rin chen 'od ldan ma* (**ratnapradā*).

g.21 She Who Accomplishes

byed pa mo

བྱེད་པ་མོ།

kartrī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006).

g.22 She Who Is Wearing a Garland of Lotuses

pad+ma'i phreng ba can

པདྨ་འི་ཕྲེང་བ་ཅན།

padmamālinī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* (Toh 741/1006). The *Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *padma'i phreng thogs ma*.

g.23 spirit

'byung po

འབྱུང་པོ།

bhūta^{AO}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This term in its broadest sense can refer to any being, whether human, animal, or nonhuman. However, it is often used to refer to a specific class of nonhuman beings, especially when bhūtas are mentioned alongside rākṣasas, piśācas, or pretas. In common with these other kinds of nonhumans, bhūtas are usually depicted with unattractive and misshapen bodies. Like several other classes of nonhuman beings, bhūtas take spontaneous birth. As their leader is traditionally regarded to be Rudra-Śiva (also known by the name Bhūta), with whom they haunt dangerous and wild places, bhūtas are especially prominent in Śaivism, where large sections of certain tantras concentrate on them.

g.24 Splendor

dpal ldan ma

དཔལ་ལྷན་མ།

śrī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* ([Toh 741/1006](#)).

g.25 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

sukhāvātī^{AO}

Sukhāvātī (Blissful) is the buddhfield to the west inhabited by the buddha Amitābha, who is also known as Amitāyus. It is classically described in *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* (*Sukhāvātīvyūha*).

g.26 Welfare

bkra shis ma

བཀྲ་ཤིས་མ།

lakṣmī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* ([Toh 741/1006](#)).

g.27 White One

dkar mo

དཀར་མོ།

gaurī^{AO}

One of the twelve names or epithets of Mahāśrī in *The Sūtra of Mahāśrī* and *The Twelve Names of the Goddess Śrī* ([Toh 741/1006](#)). *The Twelve Names* gives the Tibetan variant *dkar sham ma*.