

༄། །རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བའི་སྣོད་པོ།

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## The Essence of Dependent Arising

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*Pratītyasamutpādaḥṛdaya*

འཕགས་པ་རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བའི་སྣིང་པོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།

*'phags pa rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba'i snying po zhes bya ba*

The Noble “Essence of Dependent Arising”

*Āryapratītyasamutpādaḥṛdayanāma*

· Toh 521 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 88 (rgyud 'bum, na), folio 42.a (in *par phud* printings), folio 59.a (in later printings)



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s.

## SUMMARY

- s.1 This brief dhāraṇī text presents a translation and transliteration of the well-known Sanskrit *ye dharma* formula, the essence of the Buddha's teachings on dependent arising. The text also describes several benefits of reciting this dhāraṇī, including the purification of negative actions.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This publication was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

ac.2 The text was translated, edited, and introduced by the 84000 translation team. Bruno Galasek-Hul produced the translation and wrote the introduction. Ryan Damron edited the translation and the introduction, and Ven. Konchog Norbu copyedited the text. Sameer Dhingra was in charge of the digital publication process.

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

The short dhāraṇī *The Essence of Dependent Arising* presents a Tibetan translation and transliteration of the well-known *ye dharma* formula, which is considered the essence of the Buddha Śākyamuni's teachings on dependent arising. The dhāraṇī then concludes with a statement of the specific benefits that accrue from its recitation: the purification of all negative actions, the neutralization of adversity, and the multiplication of offerings. As the formula is considered to contain the very essence of the Buddha's teaching and to represent the Buddha himself, the text states that any object visualized while reciting the dhāraṇī will become either the body of the Buddha or a stūpa.

i.2

This verse on the essence of dependent arising is closely associated with the conversion of Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana to the Dharma. In the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivādins,<sup>1</sup> Upatiṣya, the ascetic who would later be known as Śāriputra, encounters the Buddha's disciple Aśvajit, who summarizes for him the essence of Buddha's teaching with the *ye dharma* verse. Upatiṣya gains deep insight into the Dharma through this formula, and subsequently shares it with his fellow ascetic Kaulita, who later became known as Maudgalyāyana. In the Pali canon, a version of this story of the transmission of the *ye dharma* formula is found in the *Mahāvagga* of the Khandhaka section of the Vinaya. Here again Śāriputra (Pali *Sāriputta*) and Maudgalyāyana (Pali *Moggallāna*) hear the verse from Aśvajit (Pali *Assaji*), who presents it as a summary of his understanding of the Buddha's teachings.<sup>2</sup> Yet another version of the story occurs in *The Ratnaketu Dhāraṇī* (Toh 138). In this text, the essence of the Buddha's teaching on dependent arising is verbalized in an alternative, extended version of the *ye dharma* formula.<sup>3</sup> In *The Sūtra on Dependent Arising* (*Pratītyasamutpādasūtra*, Toh 520), the verse was taught by the Buddha himself in Heaven of the Thirty-Three to an audience of gods, bodhisattvas, and śrāvakas, among whom was the great śrāvaka Aśvajit.

- i.3 The *ye dharma* formula has evolved to become a popular and widespread Buddhist dhāraṇī formula that is frequently used as an auspicious and benedictory refrain appended to the end of texts, inscribed on votive plaques and statues, and written down and deposited in caityas, stūpas, and other structures throughout the Buddhist world.<sup>4</sup>
- i.4 The topic of dependent arising is explained at length in sūtras such as *The Rice Seedling Sūtra* (*Śālistambhasūtra*, [Toh 210](#)) and *The Sūtra Teaching the Fundamental Exposition and Detailed Analysis of Dependent Arising* (*Pratītya-samutpādādivibhaṅganirdeśasūtra*, [Toh 211](#)), which detail the twelve links of dependent arising. Additional presentations of the *ye dharma* verse as a dhāraṇī formula can be found in works such as *The Sūtra on Dependent Arising* ([Toh 520](#)) and *The Dhāraṇī Containing the Rite of the Essence of Dependent Arising* ([Toh 519](#)).<sup>5</sup> These latter texts, and *The Essence of Dependent Arising* ([Toh 521](#)) translated here, are categorized as Action Tantras (*kriyātantra*, *bya rgyud*) in the Degé Kangyur, thus underscoring the development of this famous verse into an esoteric, spell-like formula that can bring material and spiritual benefits through its recitation.
- i.5 Two virtually identical versions of *The Essence of Dependent Arising* are found in the Degé Kangyur, one in the Tantra section (*rgyud sde*, [Toh 521](#)) and the other in the Dhāraṇī section (*gzungs 'dus*, [Toh 981](#)).<sup>6</sup> It is likewise included in both the Tantra and Compendium of Dhāraṇīs sections in the other Tshalpa Kangyurs that have a separate Dhāraṇī section, and is found in the Tantra section of Tshalpa Kangyurs that do not contain a Dhāraṇī section.<sup>7</sup> It is not included in any of the Thempangma Kangyurs. It thus appears this text may have been added to some Kangyurs specifically because it was included in the Compendium of Dhāraṇīs, which may have been compiled on the basis of an earlier collection or collections of dhāraṇīs and associated ritual texts.<sup>8</sup> Since both iterations of the text ([Toh 521](#) and [Toh 981](#)) lack a translator colophon, we have no information about who translated it and when. A Sanskrit source of *The Essence of Dependent Arising* does not seem to have survived, and it has no Chinese translation.
- i.6 English translations of *The Essence of Dependent Arising*, along with *The Sūtra on Dependent Arising* have been published in Peter Skilling's anthology *Questioning the Buddha*.<sup>9</sup> The English translation presented here is based on the two Degé witnesses ([Toh 521](#) and [Toh 981](#)) in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe sdur ma*) and the Narthang Kangyur.



**The Noble  
Essence of Dependent Arising**

1.

## The Translation

[F.42.a] [F.59.a]<sup>10 11</sup>

1.1 Homage to the blessed Buddha!

“The Tathāgata explained the cause  
Of dharmas that arise from causes,  
And he taught their cessation.  
Thus the Great Śramaṇa has instructed.<sup>12</sup>

1.2 *ye dharmā hetuprabhavā hetuṃ teṣāṃ tathāgato hy avadat | teṣāṃ ca yo nirodha  
evaṃvādī mahāśramaṇaḥ | |*

1.3 By reciting this essence once, all negative actions will be purified and all adverse conditions will be pacified and averted. Any object that one envisions<sup>13</sup> while reciting it will become the body of the Buddha or a stūpa, and any offering one envisions while reciting it will be offered as if they fill an entire world realm.

1.4 *The Essence of Dependent Arising is complete.*

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 An elaborate version of the story is told in the *Pravrajyāvastu*, the first chapter of the *Vinayavastu* (Toh 1-1). For an English translation, see *The Chapter on Going Forth*, Toh 1-1, translated by Robert Miller and team (online publication, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2018), [1.277](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-543) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-543>). For a translation of the *ye dharma* formula itself as it appears there, see *The Chapter on Going Forth* (2018), [1.292](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-565) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-565>).
- n.2 The Pali version of the formula reads: *ye dhammā hetuppabhavā tesam hetuṃ tathāgato āha tesaṃ ca yo nirodho evaṃvādī mahāsamaṇo* (*Mahāvagga*, p. 40; Vin I 40, 28–29).
- n.3 See *The Ratnaketu Dhāraṇī* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh138.html>), Toh 138, translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee (2020), [1.6](https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-056-006.html#UT22084-056-006-38) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-056-006.html#UT22084-056-006-38>)–[1.7](https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-056-006.html#UT22084-056-006-40) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/UT22084-056-006.html#UT22084-056-006-40>). This long version of *ye dharma* formula seems only to occur in one additional canonical source, namely, as a *maṅgalam*-verse called “verse of the sage” (*gtsug lag gi tshigs su bcaḍ pa*) at the end of the *Amarakoṣaṭīkāmadhenunāma*.
- n.4 See Skilling 2003, pp. 273–74. For some examples of the extent of this practice in Buddhist Asia and further references, see *The Sūtra on Dependent Arising*, Toh 212, translated by the Buddhavacana Translation Group (online publication, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2016), [i.3](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh212.html#UT22084-062-012-5) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh212.html#UT22084-062-012-5>). For canonical sources in which the formula also occurs, see also *The Sūtra on Dependent Arising* (2016), [1.5](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh212.html#UT22084-062-012-12) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh212.html#UT22084-062-012-12>), and

an expanded Tibetan version in *The Ratnaketu Dhāraṇī* (2022), [1.7](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh138.html#UT22084-056-006-40) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh138.html#UT22084-056-006-40>). For an alternative translation of the Sanskrit, see *Distinctly Ascertaining the Meanings* (2021), [n.141](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh317.html#UT22084-072-017-209) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh317.html#UT22084-072-017-209>).

- n.5 On more instances of the verse, see Dietz and Eimer, 2019.
- n.6 Note that there is a discrepancy among various databases for cataloging the Toh 981 version of this text within vol. 101 or 102 of the Degé Kangyur. See Toh 981, [n.6](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh981.html#UT22084-088-015-100) ([toh981.html#UT22084-088-015-100](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh981.html#UT22084-088-015-100)), for details.
- n.7 See Resources for Kanjur & Tenjur Studies: <http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=520&typ=1> (<http://www.rkts.org/cat.php?id=520&typ=1>). Among Kangyurs of the Tshalpa line, this text is not found in the Lithang Kangyur.
- n.8 The opening lines of the table of contents (*dkar chag*) of an independent dhāraṇī collection printed in Beijing in 1731, found in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Budapest, identify the source of all such dhāraṇī collections as an extracanonical collection edited by Tāranātha (Orosz 2010, pp. 67 and 100). This mention is also noted by Hidas 2021, p. 7, n. 56.
- n.9 See Skilling 2021, pp. 247, and 273.
- n.10 Two sets of folio references have been included in this translation due to a discrepancy in volume 88 (*rgyud 'bum, na*) of the Degé Kangyur between the 1737 *par phud* printings and the late (post *par phud*) printings. In the latter case, an extra work, *Bodhimaṇḍasyālaṅkāralakṣadhāraṇī* (Toh 508, *byang chub snying po'i rgyan 'bum gyi gzungs*), was added as the second text in the volume, thereby displacing the pagination of all the following texts in the same volume by 17 folios. Since the eKangyur follows the later printing, both references have been provided, with the highlighted one linking to the eKangyur viewer.
- n.11 Toh 981 does not give the title of this dhāraṇī in Tibetan and Sanskrit, as is common at the beginning of texts in the Kangyur.
- n.12 The Nartang Kangyur reads: *de skad gsungs pa dge sbyong che*.
- n.13 Tib. *dnegos po gang la dmigs te*. The verb *dmigs* means to take something as an object of thought or perception, so this could be a physical object or an imagined one.

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 blessed

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*<sup>AD</sup>

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.2 dependent arising

*rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ།

*pratītyasamutpāda*<sup>AD</sup>

The central Buddhist doctrine that teaches how things are empty of self-nature and thus lack independent existence, yet exist provisionally insofar as they are created through the interaction of various causal factors.

g.3 Great Śramaṇa

*dge sbyong chen po*

དགེ་སྦྱང་ཆེན་པོ།

\**mahāśramaṇa*<sup>RP</sup>

An epithet of the Buddha. See also definition for “śramaṇa.”

g.4 negative action

*sdiḡ pa*

སྲིག་པ།

*pāpa*<sup>AD</sup>

Karmically relevant negative actions of body, speech, and mind. Also often translated as “sin,” “transgression,” “wrongdoing,” “misdeed,” etc., all indicating the moral overtones of this kind of action.

g.5 śramaṇa

*dge sbyong*

དགེ་སྦྱང་།

\**śramaṇa*<sup>RP</sup>



*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

A general term applied to spiritual practitioners who live as ascetic mendicants. In Buddhist texts, the term usually refers to Buddhist monastics, but it can also designate a practitioner from other ascetic/monastic spiritual traditions. In this context *śramaṇa* is often contrasted with the term *brāhmaṇa* (*bram ze*), which refers broadly to followers of the Vedic tradition. Any renunciate, not just a Buddhist, could be referred to as a *śramaṇa* if they were not within the Vedic fold. The epithet Great Śramaṇa is often applied to the Buddha.

g.6 stūpa

*mchod rten*

མཚོད་རྟེན།

*stūpa*<sup>AD</sup> · *caitya*<sup>AD</sup>

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

The Tibetan translates both *stūpa* and *caitya* with the same word, *mchod rten*, meaning “basis” or “recipient” of “offerings” or “veneration.” Pali: *cetiya*.

A *caitya*, although often synonymous with *stūpa*, can also refer to any site, sanctuary or shrine that is made for veneration, and may or may not contain relics.

A *stūpa*, literally “heap” or “mound,” is a mounded or circular structure usually containing relics of the Buddha or the masters of the past. It is considered to be a sacred object representing the awakened mind of a buddha, but the symbolism of the *stūpa* is complex, and its design varies throughout the Buddhist world. *Stūpas* continue to be erected today as objects of veneration and merit making.

g.7 tathāgata

*de bzhin gshegs pa*

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

\**tathāgata*<sup>RP</sup>

*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.8 world realm

*'jig rten gyi khams*

འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

*lokadhātu* <sup>AD</sup>

*Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:*

The term *lokadhātu* refers to a single four continent world-system illumined by a sun and moon, with a Mount Meru at its center and an encircling ring of mountains at its periphery, and with the various god realms above, thus including the desire, form, and formless realms.

The term can also refer to groups of such world-systems in multiples of thousands. A universe of one thousand such world-systems is called a chiliocosm (*sāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gi 'jig rten gyi khams*); one thousand such chiliocosms is called a dichiliocosm (*ḍviśāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gnyis kyi 'jig rten gyi khams*); and one thousand such dichiliocosms is called a trichiliocosm (*trisāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gsum gyi 'jig rten gyi khams*). A trichiliocosm is the largest universe described in Buddhist cosmology.