

Usnisa Vijaya Dharani Sutra (Sutra on the Namgyalma Mantra)

(Translated version of Master Buddhapala during the Tang Dynasty)

Thus I have heard, at one time, the Bhagavan (World Honored One) was dwelling in the city of Shravasti at the Jeta Grove, in the Garden of the Benefactor of Orphans and the Solitary (Anathapindika), together with his regular disciples of twelve hundred and fifty great Bhikshus and twelve thousand Maha Bodhisattvas Sangha in all.

At that time the devas in Trayastrimsha Heaven were also having a gathering in the Good Dharma Hall. Among them was a devaputra by the name of Susthita who, together with the other great devaputras, was frolicking in the garden and courtyard, enjoying in the supremely wonderful bliss of heavenly life. Surrounded by devas they were extremely happy - singing, dancing and entertaining themselves.

Soon after nightfall, Devaputra Susthita suddenly heard a voice in space saying, "Devaputra Susthita, you have only seven days left to live. After death, you will be reborn in Jambudvipa (Earth) as an animal for seven successive lives. Then you will fall into the hells to undergo more sufferings. Only after fulfilling your karmic retribution will you be reborn in the human realm, but to a humble and destitute family, while in the mother's womb you will be without eyes and born blind."

On hearing this, Devaputra Susthita was so terrified that his hair stood on end. Tormented and distressed, he rushed over to the palace of Lord Sakra. Bursting into tears and not knowing what else to do, he prostrated himself at the feet of Lord Sakra, telling Lord Sakra of what had happened.

"As I was enjoying the frolic of dance and songs with the heavenly devas, I suddenly heard a voice in space telling me that I had only seven days left, and that I would fall into Jambudvipa after death, remaining there in the animal realm for seven successive lives. Following that, I would fall into the various hells to endure greater sufferings. Only after my karmic retribution had been fulfilled would I reborn as a human, and even then I would be born without eyes in a poor and disreputable family. Lord of Heaven, how can I escape from such sufferings?"

Lord Sakra immediately calmed his mind to enter Samádhi and made careful observations. Instantly, he saw that Susthita would undergo seven successive evil paths in the forms of a pig, dog, jackal, monkey, python, crow and vulture, all feeding on filth and putrescence.

Having seen the seven future rebirth forms of Devaputra Susthita, Lord Sakra was shattered and was filled with great sorrow, but could not think of any way to help Susthita. He felt that only the Tathágata, Arhate, Samyak-sambuddha could save Susthita from falling into the great sufferings of evil destinies.

Thus, soon after nightfall that very day, Lord Sakra prepared various types of flower wreaths, perfume and incense. Adorning himself with fine Deva garments and bearing these offerings, Lord Sakra made his way to the garden of Anathapindika, abode of the World Honored One. Upon arrival, Lord Sakra first prostrated himself at the Buddha's feet in reverence, then circumambulated the Buddha seven times clockwise in worship, before laying out his great Puja (offerings).

Kneeling in front of the Buddha, Lord Sakra described the future destiny of Devaputra Susthita who would soon fall into the evil paths with seven successive rebirths in the animal realm with details of his subsequent retribution.

Instantly, the usnisa (crown of the head) of the Tathágata radiated multiple rays of light, illuminating the world in all ten directions, the light then returned, circling the Buddha three times before entering His mouth. Then the Buddha smiled and said to Lord Sakra, "Lord of Heaven, there is a Dharani known as the 'Usnisa Vijaya Dharani'. It can purify all evil paths, completely eliminating all sufferings of birth and death. It can also liberate all miseries and sufferings of beings in the realms of hell, King Yama and animal, destroy all the hells, and transfer sentient beings onto the virtuous path."

"Lord of Heaven, if one hears this Usnisa Vijaya Dharani once, all the bad karma incurred from his previous lives that should cause him to fall into hells will be destroyed altogether. He will instead acquire a fine and pure body. Wherever he is reborn, he will clearly remember the Dharani - from one Buddhahood to another, from one heavenly realm to another heavenly realm. Indeed, throughout the Trayastrimsha Heaven, wherever he is reborn, he will not forget."

"Lord of Heaven, if someone at death's door recalls this divine Dharani, even for just a moment, his lifespan will be extended and he will acquire purification of body, speech and mind. Without suffering any physical pain and in accordance with his meritorious deeds, he will enjoy tranquility everywhere. Receiving blessings from all the Tathágatas, and constantly guarded by devas and protected by Bodhisattvas, he will be honored and respected by people, and all the evil hindrances will be eradicated."

"Lord of Heaven, if anyone can sincerely read or recite this Dharani even for a short period of time, all his karmic retribution which would lead him to suffer in the hells, the animal realm, the realm of King Yama and the hungry ghost realm, will be completely destroyed and eradicated without leaving any trace. He will be free to go to any of the Buddhas' Pure lands and heavenly palace; all gateways

leading to the Bodhisattvas' abode are open to him unobstructed."

After hearing the above discourse, Lord Sakra immediately appealed to the Buddha, "For the sake of all sentient beings, may the World Honored One kindly give a discourse on how one's lifespan can be lengthened."

The Buddha was aware of Lord Sakra's intention and his eagerness to hear His discourse on this Dharani and so immediately proclaimed the Mantra thus:

"NAMO BHAGAVATE TRAILOKYA PRATIVISISTAYA BUDDHAYA BHAGAVATE.
TADYATHA, OM, VISUDDHAYA-VISUDDHAYA, ASAMA-SAMA SAMANTAVABHASA-
SPHARANA GATI GAHANA SVABHAVA VISUDDHE, ABHINSINCATU MAM. SUGATA
VARA VACANA AMRTA ABHISEKAI MAHA MANTRA-PADAI. AHARA-AHARA AYUH
SAM-DHARANI. SODHAYA-SODHAYA, GAGANA VISUDDHE. USNISA VIJAYA
VISUDDHE. SAHASRA-RASMI, SAMCODITE, SARVA TATHAGATA AVALOKANI,
SAT-PARAMITA, PARIPURANI, SARVA TATHAGATA MATI DASA-BHUMI,
PRATI-STHITE, SARVA TATHAGATA HRDAYA ADHISTHANADHISTHITA MAHA-MUDRE.
VAJRA KAYA, SAM-HATANA VISUDDHE. SARVAVARANA APAYA DURGATI,
PARI-VISUDDHE, PRATI-NIVARTAYA AYUH SUDDHE. SAMAYA ADHISTHITE.
MANI-MANI MAHA MANI. TATHATA BHUTAKOTI PARISUDDHE. VISPHUTA BUDDHI
SUDDHE. JAYA-JAYA, VIJAYA-VIJAYA, SMARA-SMARA. SARVA BUDDHA ADHISTHITA
SUDDHE. VAJRI VAJRAGARBHE, VAJRAM BHAVATU MAMA SARIRAM. SARVA
SATTVANAM CA KAYA PARI VISUDDHE. SARVA GATI PARISUDDHE. SARVA
TATHAGATA SINCA ME SAMASVASAYANTU. SARVA TATHAGATA SAMASVASA
ADHISTHITE, BUDDHYA-BUDDHYA, VIBUDDHYA-VIBUDDHYA, BODHAYA-BODHAYA,
VIBODHAYA-VIBODHAYA. SAMANTA PARISUDDHE. SARVA TATHAGATA HRDAYA
ADHISTHANADHISTHITA MAHA-MUDRE SVAHA."

(This Usnisa Vijaya Dharani is the improved version with some additions to the original Sanskrit transliteration)

Then the Buddha told Lord Sakra, "The above Mantra is known as the 'Purifying All Evil Paths' Usnisa Vijaya Dharani'. It can eliminate all evil karmic hindrances and eradicate the suffering of all evil paths."

"Lord of Heaven, this great Dharani is proclaimed together by Buddhas as numerous as eighty-eight kotis (hundred million) of the grains of sand of the Ganges River. All Buddhas rejoice and uphold this Dharani that is verified by the wisdom seal of the Maha Vairocana Tathagata. This is because in the evil paths, to liberate them from painful retribution in hell, animal and King Yama's realms; to deliver beings facing immediate danger of falling into the sea of birth and death (samsāra); to assist helpless beings with short life spans and poor fortune and to deliver beings who like to commit all kinds of evil deeds. Moreover, because of its dwelling and being upheld in the Jambudvīpa world, the power manifested by this Dharani would cause all beings in hells and other evil realms; those with poor fortune and revolving in the cycles of birth and death; those not believing in the existence of good and evil deeds and are deviated from the proper path, to attain deliverance."

Again Buddha reminded Lord Sakra, "I now entrust this divine Dharani to you. you should in turn transmit it to Devaputra Susthita. In addition, you yourself should receive and uphold it, recite, contemplate and treasure it, memories and revere it. This Dharani Mudra should be widely proclaimed to all beings in the Jambu-dvīpa world. I also entrust this to you, for the benefit of all heavenly beings, that this Dharani Mudra should be proclaimed.

Lord of Heaven, you should diligently uphold and protect it, never letting it to be forgotten or lost."

"Lord of Heaven, if someone hears this Dharani even for just a moment, he will not undergo karmic retribution from the evil karma and severe hindrances accumulated from thousands of kalpas ago, that would otherwise cause him to revolve in the cycles of birth and death - in all kinds of life forms in the evil paths - hell, hungry ghost, animal, realm of King Yama, Asuras, Yaksa, Raksasa, ghosts and spirits, Putana, Kataputana, Apasmara, mosquitoes, gnats, tortoises, dogs, pythons, birds, ferocious animals, crawling creatures and even ants and other life forms. Owing to the merits accrued from hearing for a moment this Dharani, once this very life is over, he will be reborn in the Buddha lands, together with all the Buddhas and Ekajati-pratibaddha Bodhisattvas, or in a distinguished Brahmin or Ksatriya family, or in some other wealthy and reputable family. Lord of Heaven, this man can be reborn in one of the above-mentioned prosperous and reputable families simply because he has heard this Dharani, and hence be reborn in a pure place."

"Lord of Heaven, even acquiring the most victorious Bodhimanda is a result of praising the meritorious virtues of this Dharani. Hence, this Dharani is also known as the Auspicious Dharani, which can purify all evil paths. This Usnisa Vijaya Dharani is like a Treasury of Sun Mani Pearl - pure and flawless, clear as space, its brilliance illuminating and all-pervading. If any beings uphold this Dharani, likewise will they be bright and pure. This Dharani is similar to the Jambunada gold - bright, pure, and soft, can not be tainted by filth and well-liked by all who see it. Lord of Heaven, beings who uphold this Dharani are just as pure. By virtue of this pure practice, they will be reborn in the good paths."

"Lord of Heaven, where this Dharani dwells, if it is written for distribution, propagated, received and upheld, read and recited, heard and revered, this will cause all evil paths to be purified; miseries and sufferings in all hells will be completely eradicated."

Buddha again told Lord Sakra cautiously, "If someone could write this Dharani and place it on the top of a tall banner, high mountain or in a tall building or even keep it in a stupa; Lord of Heaven! If there are Bhikshus or Bhiksunis, Upasakas or Upasikas, laymen or laywomen who have seen this Dharani atop the above structures; or if the shadows of these structures should fall on beings who come near to the structures, or particles of dust from the written Dharani are blown onto their bodies;

Lord of Heaven: Should the accumulated evil karma of these beings cause them to fall into the evil paths such as realms of hell, animal, King Yama, hungry ghost, Asura and other, they will all be spared from the evil paths, and they will not be tainted with filth and defilement. Lord of Heaven!

Instead, all Buddhas will bestow predictions (Vyakarana) onto these beings who will never regress from the path to Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi (complete enlightenment)."

"Lord of Heaven, let alone if one makes various offerings of flower wreaths, perfumes, incense, banners and flags, canopies decorated with gems, clothing, necklaces of precious stones, etc, to adorn and honor this Dharani; and at major routes, if one builds special stupas to house this Dharani, then most respectfully with palms together circumambulates the pagoda, bowing and taking refuge, Lord of Heaven, those who make such offerings are called the great Mahasattvas, Buddha's true disciples, and the pillars of Dharma. Such stupas will be regarded as the Tathágata's complete body sharira-stupa."

At that time, in the early part of the night, the ruler of the Hell Realm - King Yama. came to the abode of the Buddha. First, using various Deva garments, beautiful flowers, perfumes and other adornments, he made offerings to the Buddha, then circumambulated the Buddha seven times before prostrating himself at the feet of the Buddha in reverence, saying, "I heard that the Tathágata was giving a discourse in praise of upholding the powerful Dharani; I have come with the intention to learn and cultivate it. I shall constantly guard and protect those who uphold, read and recite this powerful Dharani, not allowing them to fall into hell because they have followed the teachings of the Tathágata."

At this time, the four Guardians of the world - the Caturmaharajas (Four Heavenly Kings) circumambulated the Buddha three times, and most respectfully said, "World Honored One, may the Tathágata kindly explain in detail the way to uphold this Dharani."

The Buddha then told the Four Heavenly Kings, "Please listen attentively, for your benefit as well as for the benefit of all beings with short life spans, I will now explain the method to uphold this Dharani.

On a full-moon day - the 15th day of the lunar month, one should first bathe oneself and put on new clothes, uphold the profound precepts and recite this Dharani a 1000 times. This will cause one to lengthen one's lifespan, and be permanently free from the sufferings of illness; all one's karmic hindrances will be completely eradicated. One will also be liberated from suffering in hell. If birds, animals and other sentient beings hear this Dharani once, they will never again be reborn in these impure and gross body forms once their lives have ended."

The Buddha continued, "If someone from a serious disease hears this Dharani, he will be free from the disease. All other illnesses will also be eradicated, so too will the evil karma that will cause him to fall into the evil paths. He will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss after the end of his life. From then onwards he will no longer be born from the womb. Instead, wherever he is reborn, he will be born transformed from the lotus flower and would always remember and uphold this Dharani and gain knowledge of his past lives."

The Buddha added, "If someone has committed all the severe evil deeds before his death, according to his sinful deeds, he ought to fall into one of these realms of hell, animals, King Yama or hungry ghosts, or even into the big Avichi Hells, or be reborn as an aquatic creature, or in one of the many forms of birds and animals. If someone could obtain part of the skeleton of the deceased, and holding a fistful of soil, chant this Dharani 21 times before scattering the soil over the bones, then the deceased will be reborn in heaven."

The Buddha further added, "If one can chant this Dharani 21 times daily, one is worthy of accepting all the immense worldly offerings and will be reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss after one's death. If one chants this Dharani constantly, one will attain Maha Parinirvana and be able to lengthen one's lifespan besides enjoying the most extraordinary bliss. After one's life is over, one will reborn in any of the wonderful Buddha lands, in constant company of the Buddhas. All Tathágotas will always give discourses on the profound and wonderful truth of Dharma and all World

Honored Ones will bestow predictions of enlightenment upon one. The light illuminating from one's body will pervade all Buddha lands."

The Buddha further explained, "To recite this Dharani, one should first, in front of the Buddha's image, use some clean soil to construct a square Mandala, the size according to one's wish. On top of the Mandala one should spread different kinds of grass, flowers and burn different kinds of quality incense. Then kneeling down with the right knee on the floor, mindfully reciting the Buddha's name and with the hands in the Mudrani symbol, (i.e. each hand bending the forefinger before and pressing it down with the thumb and placing both palms together before the chest) in reverence, one should recite this Dharani 108 times. The showers of flowers would rain down from the clouds and would thus be universally

made as offerings to Buddhas as numerous as the grains of sand of eighty-eight million Ganges Rivers. These Buddhas will simultaneously praise,

"Excellent! Rare indeed! A Buddha's true disciple! " One will instantly attain Unobstructed Wisdom Samádhi and the Great Bodhi Mind Adorned Samádhi. Thus is the way to uphold this Dharani."

The Buddha again exhorted Lord Sakra, saying, "Lord of Heaven, the Tathágata uses this expedient means to deliver beings who would otherwise have fallen into hells; to purify all evil paths and to lengthen the life-spans of those who uphold this Dharani. Lord of Heaven, please go back and transmit this Dharani to Devaputra Susthita. After seven days, come to see me with Devaputra Susthita."

Thus, at the abode of the World Honored One, the Lord of Heaven respectfully received this Dharani practice and returned to his heavenly palace to convey it to Devaputra Susthita."

Having received this Dharani, Devaputra Susthita kept to the practice as instructed for six days and six nights, after which all his wishes were completely fulfilled. The karma which should have led him to suffer in all the evil paths were all eradicated. He would remain on the Bodhi Path and increase his lifespan for an immeasurable period of time.

Thus, he was extremely delighted, exclaiming aloud in praise, "Extraordinary Tathágata! What a rare and wonderful Dharma! Its efficacy explicitly verified! Rare indeed! Truly I have thus obtained deliverance!"

When the seven days were over, Lord Sakra brought Devaputra Susthita, together with other heavenly beings, respectfully bearing excellent and wonderful adornment of flower-wreaths, perfumes, incense, jeweled banners, canopies decorated with gemstones, Deva-garments and garlands of precious stones, approached Buddha's abode and presented their grand offerings. Using heavenly garments and various garlands of precious stones to make offerings to the World Honored One, they then respectfully circumambulated the Buddha a hundred thousand times, paid homage to the Buddha, then happily took their seats and listened to the Buddha preach the Dharma.

The World Honored One then extended his golden arm and touched the crown of Devaputra Susthita, to whom He not only preached the Dharma but bestowed a prediction of Devaputra Susthita's attainment to Bodhi.

Finally, the Buddha said, "This Sutra shall be known as the 'Purifying All Evil Paths' Usnisa Vijaya Dharani'. You should diligently uphold it." On hearing this Dharma, the entire assembly was extremely happy. They faithfully accepted and respectfully practiced it.