

The dhāraṇī mentioned in the 46th Vow refers to “completely retaining Buddha's teachings.” Bodhisattvas who have heard Amitabha’s name can attain not only the Dharma of being free from birth, but also the dhāraṇī. There are four types of dhāraṇīs: Dharma-dhāraṇī, doctrine-dhāraṇī, mantra-dhāraṇī, and kṣānti-dhāraṇī. These four dhāraṇī can be instantly obtained by the bodhisattvas of other worlds due to the merit of “upon hearing Amitabha’s name.” Now let’s learn these four dharanis.

1. Dharma-Dhāraṇī

When listening to Buddha’s teaching, you listen with great focus, not being affected by external sounds. You let the teaching enter and imprint deeply into your heart, you hold it firmly without forgetting; this is Dharma-dhāraṇī. How do we obtain this Dharma-dhāraṇī? It hinges on 100% sincerity and respect.

Our Shifu, Master Chin Kung, had explicitly demonstrated this for us! The first day when he went to see Master Zhang Jia (*one of three teachers of Master Chin Kung) who, sitting in silence for half an hour after Shifu inquired on how to quickly resonate with Buddha’s realm, only taught Shifu two things: see through to the truth, and let go. Our Shifu used utmost sincerity to receive the teaching. Despite not fully understanding the words at that time, Shifu could hold it firmly without forgetting for his entire life. This is Dharma-dhāraṇī.

When using sincerity and respect, you will naturally focus and will not be distracted. The external sounds such as the sound of singing, you will not notice. Do you hear it? If you heard it, you have been distracted. Avalokitêśvara Bodhisattva teaches us, "Withdraw inward the root of your ears to heed self-nature, when self-nature is realized, you then attain the supreme bodhi "

First of all, withdraw inward your ears and congregated the root of your ears. Listen to Dharma instead of the external sound; this is cultivation. Cultivation is to practice your concentration and dhyana, because wisdom can only arise through dhyana.

The Story of Zheng Kangcheng Illustrates Genuine Sincerity and Respect

Even learning secular knowledge requires focus, a story in Chinese history has proven this to us. In the Han Dynasty, there was a renowned scholar, Ma Rong. Ma Rong had an extraordinary student, Zheng Kangcheng, who had higher achievement than that of Ma Rong. *The Analects* that we read nowadays was compiled by Zheng Kangcheng.

At that time, there were *Ancient Analects*, *Lu Analects*, and *Qi Analects*. Zheng Kangcheng also annotated thirteen Confucian Classics, such as *The Classic of Filial Piety*, *Three Rituals*, and *The Analects*. This was a great contribution to Chinese Confucianism.

Being indifferent to fame and wealth in his lifetime, Zheng Kangcheng never sought to enter the political system for power. The Emperor invited him to be an official, but he did not accept it due to the turmoil of the Eastern Han Dynasty at that time. In the past when there was no more Dao (*morality) throughout the country, a gentleman with noble character would live in seclusion instead of pursuing official greats. This is morally lofty! Not seeking fame and fortune enabled Zheng Kangcheng to focus on his intellectual pursuit and obtain high achievement.

At the time when Zheng Kangcheng was pursuing his studies, he attended Ma Rong's class. Ma Rong had a hobby of having some girls singing, dancing, and playing instruments behind a curtain while he was giving speeches. Among all the people who attended his class, only one student, Zheng Kangcheng, concentrated on the class for three years; his eyes never looked behind the curtain, his ears never listened to the singing.

Three years later, Ma Rong told everyone, "My intellectual knowledge has all been learned by Zheng Kangcheng." Why did Zheng Kangcheng have such an achievement? Extreme sincerity and respect allowed his mind to be very focused. Master Yin Guang said, "With 10% sincerity, you obtain 10% benefit; with 100% sincerity, you obtain 100% benefit." If you do not have a sincere heart but are flighty and impetuous with many wandering thoughts, you are wasting your time. You will not be able to gain anything at all.

So in "obtaining dhāraṇis," the first one we will obtain is Dharma-dhāraṇi. It's up to us whether we have a sincere and respectful heart to seek Dharma as well as whether we respect teachers and honor Dao. No matter how good or bad the teacher's virtues and knowledge are, as long as we respect and honor our teacher, we will gain something from our learning.

Despite being the teacher, Ma Rong's virtues and intellectual knowledge were actually not as good as that of his student Zheng Kangcheng. But he had some aspects worth learning, Zheng Kangcheng hence learned earnestly and also respected the teacher very much.

Why do we say that Ma Rong's virtues and intellectual knowledge were not good enough? Because he did not let go of his jealousy. Three years later, when Zheng Kangcheng graduated and prepared to leave, Ma Rong held a farewell party for him and encouraged Zheng Kangcheng to drink. Why did Ma Rong encourage him to drink? Because he had harbored a vicious scheme to kill Zheng Kangcheng. He knew that this student would be remarkable, and definitely surpass his achievements.

The teacher was jealous of his student and had hired a killer to ambush him on his way home. Ma Rong intended to get Zheng Kangcheng drunk before leaving, so that a vicious blow could be struck. However, Zheng Kangcheng had not only a very pure mind to foresee the teacher's scheme but also great capacity both in heart and stomach; he did not have any problem after drinking.

Each classmate gave him a toast, say 100 classmates, each toasted him with three cups. He drank them all and did not miss even the smallest etiquette after drinking 300 cups.

Confucianism emphasizes etiquette, he amazingly did not lack any etiquette after 300 cups. Li Bai, one of the most famous poets in Chinese history, wrote a poem called *Bring in the Wine*. One of its sentences goes, "We must be able to drink three hundred cups all at once!" The story came from here.

After Zheng Kangcheng bid farewell to the teacher, he knew that the teacher would ambush him. He took a detour instead of the main road and ran off safely. Afterwards, he lived in seclusion throughout his life. He did writing and teaching to pass down the Confucian philosophy.

Frankly speaking, Ma Rong did not have real virtues and was not a genuine scholar. A real scholar must be selfless, compassionate, and with great inclusiveness, he will definitely not be jealous. Even though his teacher was not remarkable, Zheng Kangcheng did not see the teacher's shortcomings and faults; he simply learned conscientiously from his teacher and finally accomplished his learning.

So, whether the teacher is good or not is not the main problem. How much you can learn is up to your sincerity and reverence. We must pay attention to this! As long as we are listening to the sutras and Dharma with sincerity and respect, you will have much to gain from learning. You will obtain Dharma-benefit, attaining Dharma-dhāraṇī. Even if the speaker is Venerable Ding Hong, not very good, you can absolutely exceed him if you learn earnestly.

It is true. Let's take a look at the example of the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism, Master Hui Neng. He was just a woodchopper, but his heart was very pure. He passed a family's house while selling his wood and heard someone in the house reading *The Diamond Sutra*. When he heard this phrase, "With a non-dwelling mind, your true heart will then arise," he came to an instant enlightenment. Despite not being an ultimate enlightenment, it was a great enlightenment and his wisdom was revealed right away.

The person reading the sutra did not understand its meaning, yet the person who was listening understood it all. Why? The heart of the person who was reading was not pure enough, but the heart of the person who was listening was pure and sincere. The key relies on each individual. This is the Dharma-dhāraṇī, which allows us to uphold all Bhagavan's teachings without forgetting them.

2. Doctrine-Dhāraṇī

You can not only forever retain the words of Buddha's teaching without forgetting them but also grasp and retain its meaning; you can master the doctrine of the scriptures and will not forget; this is doctrine-dhāraṇī (*Skt. artha-dhāraṇī).

How do you not forget Buddha's teaching? You must implement it in your daily life—in interacting with people, matters, and objects. You must practice it genuinely! Implementing is practicing genuinely. If you do not practice genuinely, you will not truly understand its doctrines.

The beginning of *The Analects* states, "To practice what you have learned constantly, isn't it joyful?" After learning, you must practice. What is practice? It is exercise. You exercise by implementing it, you can then deeply comprehend the doctrines of sage teachings and uphold it without forgetting. That's why you can be joyful, full of Dharma-joy!

3. Mantra-Dhāraṇī

Mantra is also called the true-word. There is a True Word School in Japan. The True Word School belongs to the Esoteric Sect, which emphasizes upholding mantras. When you hear these mantras, you will not forget, this is mantra-dhāraṇī.

Mantras were mostly spoken for ghosts and deities by the Buddha. Ghosts and deities understand, humans do not understand. But if you have a sincere and pure heart, you can also understand upon hearing it.

We have seen some fellow practitioners who had never heard of the Great Compassion Mantra in their life, but they can memorize and recite it all after reading it just once. What is this? Mantra-dhāraṇī. It is because they had this kind of good root in their past lives. They also have a focused mind due to having a pure heart in this life, so they have a strong memory. Memorizing mantras is not easy! Memorizing the Great Compassion Mantra after reading it just one time, how many people can do that? This requires focus.

4. Kṣānti-Dhāraṇī

When you can peacefully dwell in the thusness of all dharmas, which refers to the truth of life and the universe, you will then not be deluded and will not forget Buddhas' teachings. You keep your mind awakened in every thought; this is kṣānti-dhāraṇī.

These four dharanis are extremely magnificent. When you listen to Dharma, you can remember and understand them all. When listening to mantras, you can recite them after listening only once. You can peacefully dwell in the thusness, stay awakened, and not be deluded; these are all due to Amitabha's blessings.

Thanks everyone for learning with us. Namo Amitabha!