

# āṭānāṭīya sūtra

A rough translation of the Chinese version into English, by devout  
layperson Phoenix MacRae-Therien,  
questions and constructive feedback welcome on SuttaCentral  
(username BuddhaBuddy)

I am pleased to present a text never before translated into English. This was done for personal use as well as to share with others; therefore this should not be cited as a literary source, although sharing is highly encouraged. Thanks to cdpatt on SuttaCentral Discuss & Discover for going over the text and helping greatly with terminology and grammar fixes.

An older version is found in the pāli canon under the title ‘āṭānāṭīya sutta’, in the dīghanikāya (DN32). Interestingly, this text has no parallel version in the āgama category of the taishō tripiṭaka, which parallel the nikāyas. Instead, it is listed under a different name, in the esoteric category as 佛說毘沙門天王經 (taishō #1245). This is the version you are about to read. Sanskrit fragments have been shown to refer to it as the ‘āṭānāṭīya sūtra’, albeit with some different mantras. Yet another version can be found in the kangyur under the kriyāntara class due to its inclusion of mantra. Another version exists elsewhere in the kangyur, but without mantra. This version probably more closely resembles the pāli version. Further comparison would be of great interest, but unfortunately my knowledge of other languages is limited.

Both the pāli and Sanskrit provide protection from non-human beings, albeit in different literary style. A more extensive range of non-human beings are mentioned here. It is interesting to note that this is one of the only sūtras to encourage śrāvakas to use mantras, whereas most dhāraṇī sūtras put emphasis on the bodhisattvayana. This makes it highly likely to be a very early example of mantra usage.

I have chosen to be the most faithful possible to the Sanskrit terminology; therefore I have put important terms in brackets. For this reason, I have included a glossary at the bottom. This should also help readers to learn new terms. I have excluded the individual names of the troops of non-human beings as many are difficult to translate and would require a great knowledge of Sanskrit to verify. The Chinese version gives only transliterated versions, although a copy I came across on the web seems to have found the Sanskrit equivalents. I have provided these instead whenever possible, taken from the following link.

<http://silavisodhana.blogspot.com/2016/09/atanatiya-atanatika-mahasutra.html>

I hope this protection text will help to give piece of mind, strengthen your practice, and help to realize nirvāṇa!

# [buddhavacana] [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] [sūtra]

Translated from India by [tripiṭakācārya] dharmadeva, expert of  
transmitting the teachings, by royal order

Thus have I heard. On one occasion the [buddha] was dwelling at [śrāvastī], in [jeta]'s grove at [anāthapiṇḍada] park. At that time, [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja], along with hundreds of thousands of innumerable [yakṣa] companions, came together to where the [buddha] resided during the first watch of the night. He radiated a brilliant light that illuminated the entirety of [jeta]'s grove and proceeded to bow at the [bhagavān]'s feet. Standing at one side, he faced the [buddha] and praised him with a [gāthā].

I take refuge in the [mahāvīra],  
The [saṃbuddha] who is the honored biped,  
The [deva]s with their divine eyes,  
Are unable to see the meaning of his [dharma].

To the [buddha]s of the past, present, and future,  
The compassionate guide of all three ages,  
[saṃyaksambuddha]-  
-I now worship and go to for refuge.

Once [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] recited this [gāthā], he then spoke to the [buddha]. Indeed, [bhagavān], there are [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu]s, [bhikṣuṇī]s, [upāsaka]s, and [upāsikā]s who may walk, sit, or lie in the wilderness, in the forest, or under a tree. Among us [yakṣa] and non-human beings, there are some who believe in the [buddha]'s words and some who have little faith in them. There are countless evil [yakṣa]s that do not believe the word of the [buddha], disturb other beings, and prevent peace. It is wonderful, [bhagavān], that this [ātānāṭīya] [sūtra] is capable of bestowing knowledge and protection. Whenever there are [bhikṣu]s, [bhikṣuṇī]s, [upāsaka]s, and [upāsikā]s, or any [deva] or human at all who receives, holds, reads, recites, honors, supports, and teaches it widely to others, there will be protectors who make good fortune for them. At that time, a group of faithful [yakṣa]s that were in the middle of the congregation came forward and spoke. Please, [devarāja], speak this [sūtra]. We would be happy to hear it. Thereupon, [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] silently accepted their request. He approached the [buddha] and bowed at his feet. Receiving the [buddhānubhāva], he spoke to the [yakṣa]s. If anyone can distribute it, this [sūtra] will be able to get rid of all the [kleśa]s of living beings. Therefore, I bow and go to it for refuge.

In the east quarter of this world is the [gandharva] leader named [dhr̥tarāṣṭra]. Great in authority, his body emits light like a rising sun illuminating the whole world. The company of [gandharva]s that he

commands surround him and pay homage, dancing and singing, and he thereby receives great happiness. He has ninety-one sons, all of whom are named [śakra], powerful, courageous, and fierce. Seeing the [buddha], the [bhagavān], they take refuge, respect, honor, and esteem him. Overseeing all these non-human beings paying homage, that [dhṛtarāṣṭra] [devarāja] guards the eastern quarter. They practice the [buddha]'s practice, and so they protect the world. Now, let us bow and take refuge in the [saṃyaksambuddha], the one worthy in knowledge and conduct, and the unsurpassed [nirvāṇa].

In the southern quarter of this world is the [kumbhāṇḍa] leader named [virūdhaka]. Great in authority, his body emits light like the sun illuminating the whole world. It is incomprehensible to ordinary beings like the depth and width of the ocean. The company of [kumbhāṇḍa]s that he commands surround him and pay homage, dancing and singing, and he thereby receives great happiness. He has ninety-one sons, all of whom are named [śakra], powerful, courageous, and fierce. Seeing the [buddha], the [bhagavān], they take refuge, respect, honor, and esteem him. Overseeing all these non-human beings paying homage, that [virūdhaka] [devarāja] guards the southern quarter. They practice the [buddha]'s practice, and so they protect the world. Now, let us bow and take refuge in the [saṃyaksambuddha], the one worthy in knowledge and conduct, and the unsurpassed [nirvāṇa].

In the western quarter of this world is the [nāga] leader named [virūpākṣa]. Great in authority, his light shines far. The company of [nāga]s that he commands surround him and pay homage, dancing and singing, and he thereby receives great happiness. He has ninety-one sons, all of whom are named [śakra], powerful, courageous, and fierce. Seeing the [buddha], the [bhagavān], they take refuge, respect, honor, and esteem him. Overseeing all these non-human beings paying homage, that [virūpākṣa] [devarāja] guards the western quarter. They practice the [buddha]'s practice, and so they protect the world. Now, let us bow and take refuge in the [saṃyaksambuddha], the one worthy in knowledge and conduct, and the unsurpassed [nirvāṇa].

In the northern quarter of this world is the [yakṣa] leader named [kuvera]. Great in authority, his body emits light and burns like a great fire. The company of [yakṣa]s that he commands surround him and pay homage, dancing and singing, and he thereby receives great happiness. He has ninety-one sons, all of whom are named [śakra], powerful, courageous, and fierce. Seeing the [buddha], the [bhagavān], they take refuge, respect, honor, and esteem him. Overseeing all these non-human beings paying homage, that [kuvera] [devarāja] guards the northern quarter. They practice the [buddha]'s practice, and so they protect the world. Now, let us bow and take refuge in the [saṃyaksambuddha], the one worthy in knowledge and conduct, and the unsurpassed [nirvāṇa].

Furthermore, in the northern quarter of the world, people live for a thousand years, and no one dies prematurely. The land need not be plowed or cultivated, and people need not manage it. Food and drink appear naturally, perfect in shape and aroma, nourishing all the senses, and making the body lustrous. Everywhere there are fruit, flowers, trees, streams, springs, and ponds. People there entertain themselves however they wanted like they were experiencing heavenly happiness. It is the same for [dhṛtarāṣṭra] to the east, for [virūdhaka] to the south, for [virūpākṣa] to the west, and for [kuvera] to the north. They each have their respective authority, guarding over the four continents.

Furthermore, the [gandharva] leader possesses a [yakṣī] troupe. Some ride elephants, some ride horses, some ride camels, some ride water buffalo, some ride sheep, some ride snakes, some ride birds, some driven by a girl-drawn carriage, some driven by a boy-drawn carriage. Led by an elephant in the sky before them, they visit various places in secret, transforming themselves in various ways however they liked. They are also protectors that people can't see. If the [yakṣa]s are repulsive in appearance, they transform in various ways. They also fly like birds in the sky, roaming at will, secretly protecting people. They are named ātānāṭa, kunāṭa, parikusanāṭa, nāḍa, nāḍapurika, along with a group of [yakṣī]s. They live in the large city of [aḍakavatī] in the north. Also, this large city has a palace. On all four sides, it has ninety-nine ponds. The water is deep and wide, and its name is dharaṇī pond. It flows plentifully from its source and brings down rain. Furthermore, there are many types of flower and fruit trees. They go by names such as kaukumbhaka, kurara, and the flower called kama. The taste of the fruit is sweet and delicious, loved by all. [kalaviṅka], peacocks, and various kinds of birds always make sweet sounds there. There is a [devaputra] named sūra and his retinue who also live in the palace and guard the region. At that time, [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] obtained the [buddha]'s power of compassion and pronounced the following [mantra].

**TADYATHĀ: ILI MILI ILI KIṆṬAMULE HILI KIṆṬIMULE HADAME HUDURDUME  
GAURI GANDHĀRI GODOHINI OKE HOKE SVĀHĀ**

After [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] had pronounced the [mantra], he spoke to the [buddha]. [bhagavān], there are large companies of [gandharva]s with me who are my brethren. They are known as kāmamada, ratimada, gītamada, mālāmada, madhumada, puṣpamada, sadāmada, śrīmada, dhanamada, nandika, utpala, puṇḍarīka, candra, paṇila, kokilasāra, tumburu, pañcaśikha, suvarṇa, kanaka-māṇavi, śukra, bṛhaspati, rāja, yāvati-jagatogati. These companies of [gandharva]s mislead and disturb all living beings. If any of them disturb a living creature and won't desist, their heads will break into seven parts like an [arjaka] tree branch when they hear this [mantra]. The [mantra] is as follows.

**TADYATHĀ: KUNTULE KUNTULA EHI SADĀMANTIKE SADĀBHANḌITIKE TIṢṬHA  
DUṢṬA BHATOSI SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [gandharva]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [gandharva] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven parts like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī].

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [piśāca]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [piśāca] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī]. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: HUME HUME HUMILĀVATIYE SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], there is also a company of [kumbhāṇḍa]s. They are known as dānta, upadānta, ṛkīśa, mahāpārśva, mahodara, daśahasta, bhūmicara, vāmakṛṣṇa, lohita, abhravarṇa, vimāla, dīrghakarṇa, garjana, jaṭila, daśadānī, arjuna, kāmākāmaka, elagaṇḍa, kriyāgupta, trayaḥ-kāmbalabhadrikāḥ, sarvaraṅga, citrākṣa, and so on. These companies of [kumbhāṇḍa]s mislead and disturb all living beings. If they disturb them, and they hear this [mantra], then their heads will break into seven parts like an [arjaka] tree branch. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: SIRE VISIRE SIRE VISIRE KRṢṆACHAGALE KARADE PIṄGALE SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then the [kumbhāṇḍa] retinues will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [kumbhāṇḍa] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī].

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then the [preta] retinues will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [preta] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī]. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: YUMI YUMILE YUMILĀVATIYE SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], there is also a company of [nāga]s. They are known as nandopanandau, nandyeva, vāsukirbhadrajambukaḥ, piṅgala, dadhikarṇa, indrabāhu, svastika, aśoka, vītaśoka, vipramukta, jayaṃpatī, pṛthutala, citratala, pṛthujman, citra-prahadbhuj, mahāphaṇeṣu-jyotīrasaḥ, mahākṛṣṇa, bhujāṅgama, ajapāla, takṣaka, vāmakṛṣṇa, śyāmasūkla. These companies of [nāga]s mislead and disturb living beings. If any of them disturb a living creature, and they hear this [mantra], their heads will break into seven parts like an [arjaka] tree branch. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: CILE VICILE CILE VICILE GAURI GANDHĀRI MĀTAṄGI CAṆḌĀLI SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [nāga]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [nāga] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī].

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [kaṭapūtana]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [kaṭapūtana] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī]. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: APIVAHANYAVATIYE SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], there is also a company of [yakṣa]s. They are known as indra, soma, varuṇa, prajāpati, bharadvāja, īśanaścandanah, kāmaśreṣṭha, kunikaṇṭha, nikuṇṭha, maṇirmaṇirmaṇicarah, praṇāda, upapañcaka, sātāgiri, haimavata, pūrṇa, khadiraka, viṭa, gopāla-yakṣa, ātavaka, nara-rāja, janaṣabha, citrasena, gandharva, dīrghaśakti, mātali, pañcālaganḍa, sumana, dīrgha-yakṣa with his retinue, triphalī and trikaṇṭhaḥ and so on. These companies of [yakṣa]s mislead and disturb living beings. If any of them disturb a living creature, and they hear this [mantra], their heads will break into seven parts like an [arjaka] tree branch. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: HILE MILE HIMILE KĪRTĪMŪLE HILE KĪRTIMŪLE. OM TUMBHE TUMBHE OTUMBHA OTUMBHE OGHE MIGHE GODOHI BHRŅGARE ṚṢISANTANE SVĀHĀ**

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [yakṣa]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [yakṣa] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī].

[bhagavān], if there is a [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu], [bhikṣuṇī], [upāsaka], or [upāsikā] who receives, holds, reads, recites, respects, supports, and widely explains the contents of this [sūtra] to others, then [rākṣasa]s will do no harm to those such as mother, father, brother, sister, son, or daughter. They will always come to befriend, serve, and protect them. If there's a harmful being, it will lose its power, will not be able to get the [rākṣasa] [samādhi], and its head will break into seven sections like an [arjaka] tree branch, and they will not be able to go to the capital city of [aḍakavatī]. The [mantra] is as follows.

### **TADYATHĀ: HILI HILI HULU HULU YUME YUMILĀVATIYE SVĀHĀ**

After [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] proclaimed the [āṭānāṭīya] [sūtra], he bowed at the [bhagavān]'s feet and stood at one side. At that moment, in the middle of the night, [śākyamuni] [buddha] spoke to the [bhikṣu]s. It is so. This [sūtra] has great power and is capable of wise protection. [vaiśravaṇa] [devarāja] and the hundreds of thousands of innumerable [yakṣa]s radiated a brilliant light that illuminated the entire [jeta] forest, and he uttered the following [gāthā].

I take refuge in the [mahāvīra],

The [sambuddha] who is the honored biped,  
The [deva]s with their divine eyes  
Are unable to see the meaning of his [dharma].

To the [buddha]s of the past, present, and future,  
The compassionate guide of all three ages,  
[saṃyaksambuddha]-  
-I now worship and go to for refuge.

After the recitation of this [gāthā], he then spoke to the [buddha]. There are [śrāvaka] [bhikṣu]s, [bhikṣuṇī]s, [upāsaka]s, and [upāsikā]s who may walk, sit, or lie in the wilderness, in the forest, or under a tree. Among us non-human beings, some believe the [buddha]'s words, others are of little faith, and some are completely evil disbelievers. They disturb other beings and prevent peace. Reciting this [sūtra] will be of beneficial joy to living beings. All you [bhikṣu]s, listen carefully, Listen carefully. This [sūtra] truly possesses great power and is capable of protecting them. Even a [deva] or human will always be secretly protected. You should accept, hold, and distribute it widely. After he had spoken these words, the [deva-nāga]s, [yakṣa]s, humans, non-humans, and so on felt great joy, believed, accepted, and carried it out.

[buddhavacana] [vaiśravaṇa]  
[devarāja] [sūtra]

# GLOSSARY

[aḍakavatī] the capital city of the yakṣas

[anāthapiṇḍada] a park at which the bhagavān often resides and teaches

[arjaka] probably ocimum basilicum

[āṭānāṭīya] the name of the protection given in this sūtra

[bhagavān] a high honorific for a teacher or deva

[bhikṣu] ‘monk’

[bhikṣuṇī] ‘nun’

[buddha] ‘awakened one’

[buddhānubhāva] the direct perception or cognition power of an awakened one

[buddhavacana] awakened-one-speech

[deva] a celestial being

[deva-nāga] when compounded, this usually implies eight classes of non-human beings

[devaputra] ‘deva-son’

[devarāja] ‘deva-king’

[dharma] variously translated as truth, teaching, phenomena, religion, righteousness

[dhṛtarāṣṭra] the eastern celestial king

[gandharva] a non-human being, talented musicians

[gāthā] a poetic verse

[jeta] the name a grove where the bhagavān often resides and teaches

[kalaviṅka] a non-human being, with beautiful bird-like features

[kaṭapūtana] a non-human being, said to be like rotting corpses

[kleśa] ‘affliction’

[kumbhāṇḍa] a non-human being, resembling a goblin in some ways

[kuvera] an alternate title for celestial king vaiśravaṇa

[mahāvīra] ‘great victor’, a title also used for the leader of the nirgranthas

[mantra] an incantation which can have various effects

[nāga] a non-human being, with serpent-like features

[nirvāṇa] ‘blown-out’

[piśāca] a non-human being, said to eat flesh

[preta] a non-human being, being miserable hungry ghosts, one of the six classes of birth

[rākṣasa] a non-human being, said to eat humans

[śakra] ruler of the trāyastriṃśa heaven

[śākyamuni] a popular title for the most recent buddha, also known as gautama

[samādhi] ‘concentration’, a meditative state

[saṃbuddha] ‘all-awakened-one’

[saṃyaksambuddha] ‘completely-all-awakened-one’

[śrāvaka] ‘disciple’

[śrāvastī] one of the six largest cities in ancient India

[sūtra] ‘woven’, a teaching put down to writing

[tripiṭakācārya] a formal title composed of both ‘tripiṭaka’, the three baskets of the scriptural writings, and ācārya, a title for a religious leader

[upāsaka] ‘layman’

[upāsikā] ‘laywoman’

[vaiśravaṇa] the northern celestial king

[virūḍhaka] the southern celestial king

[virūpākṣa] the western celestial king

[yakṣa] a non-human being, a type of spirit

[yakṣī] a female yakṣa