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Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva

Bodhisattvacaryānirdeśa

འཕགས་པ་བྱང་ཚུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད་པ་བསྟན་པ་ཤེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa bstan pa shes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva”

Āryabodhisattvacaryānirdeśanāmamahāyānasūtra

· Toh 184 ·

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SUMMARY

- s.1 This sūtra takes place in the city of Vaiśālī, where the Buddha Śākyamuni and his retinue of monks have gone to gather alms. When the Buddha enters Vaiśālī a number of miracles occur in the city, and these draw the attention of a three-year-old boy named Ratnadatta. As the child encounters the Buddha, a dialogue ensues with the monks Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra and the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, in which the boy delivers a teaching on the practice of bodhisattvas and a critique of those who fail to take up such practices.

ac.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva opens in a forest on the outskirts of the city of Vaiśālī, where the Buddha Śākyamuni has been living with a great assembly of worthy ones and bodhisattvas. One morning the Buddha and his assembly proceed to Vaiśālī to beg for alms, and as Śākyamuni crosses the threshold of the city a number of miracles take place. Suddenly blind people can see, deaf people can hear, and all beings in all realms of existence are filled with joy. A three-year-old boy named Ratnadatta witnesses these miracles and asks his mother how they have come to pass, and his mother responds with a set of verses that outline the precious qualities, inconceivable realization, and physical marks of the Buddha.

i.2

This piques the boy Ratnadatta's sense of devotion and adoration toward the Buddha, so he asks his mother to place him in the window so he might see the Thus-Gone One himself. As Śākyamuni and his assembly make their way to Ratnadatta's door, he devises a plan to make an offering to the Buddha. Ratnadatta holds his toy, a thousand-petal golden lotus, in his hand and throws himself out of the window. Using his miraculous power, the Buddha halts Ratnadatta in midair, and, hovering there, the child tosses his golden lotus as an offering. The Buddha then performs another miracle by transforming it into a jeweled lotus parasol as Ratnadatta recites a short set of verses explaining his offering.

i.3

This opening narrative sets the stage for a sequence of dialogues between the three-year-old Ratnadatta and the Buddha's close disciples Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra as well as the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī. Much in the same way that famous works such as the *Vimalakīrtinirdeśasūtra* and *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra* frame Mahāyāna doctrine within an inversion of traditional hierarchies of authority, *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva* places such esteemed elders as Maudgalyāyana and Śāriputra on the receiving end of a critique delivered by a three-year-old boy. This is a startling inversion and can be interpreted as a bodhisattva's critique of the path leading to the

attainment of a worthy one. Additionally, with its primary interlocutor being a small child, *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva* can be classified together with a number of other works in which a young boy (*dāraka*) or girl (*dārikā*) boldly challenges one or more of the elder disciples of the Buddha and defeats them in philosophical debate.¹

i.4 The dialogues that unfold between Ratnadatta, Maudgalyāyana, Śāriputra, Mañjuśrī, and the Buddha Śākyamuni proceed through a series of critiques of the *ābhidharmika* theory of phenomena and the assumption that any object of apprehending can be the foundation for the attainment of unsurpassed and perfect awakening. At the center of this critique is Ratnadatta’s assertion that the true practice of a bodhisattva rejects any religious view or practice that involves grasping founded upon the mental activity of apprehending (*dmigs pa, ālambana*). Those who continue to engage in such grasping, the child Ratnadatta tells us, are nothing but “childish beings.” Ratnadatta delivers a critique of Buddhists who reject the doctrine of emptiness, construct a distinction between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa by imputing entities and their cessation, and mischaracterize insight (*prajñā*) as a “seed.” Ratnadatta’s teaching then concludes with a final bit of advice to Mañjuśrī on how to teach beginner bodhisattvas. This final teaching constitutes a complete inversion of the foundational elements of the cultivation of virtue in traditional Buddhism.

i.5 *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva* appears to have been cited only once in the extant Indian commentarial literature, in the *Sūtrasamuccaya* attributed to Nāgārjuna.² It appears in both the Denkarma³ and Phangthangma⁴ royal Tibetan inventories of translated works, indicating that the first Tibetan translation of the text was completed by the early ninth century. The translators’ colophon to the text tells us it was translated by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra (ca. eighth century) and Prajñāvarman (ca. eighth century) along with the chief editor-translator Yeshé Dé (ca. eighth century) and others, which pushes the date of the Tibetan translation back to the late eighth century. The text was translated into Chinese twice; the first translation (T. 1583) was produced by the Kaśmīri monk Guṇavarman in 431 CE⁵ and the second (T. 488) was completed by Fa-hsien several centuries later in 989 ce.⁶

i.6 This translation was prepared based on the Tibetan translation in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur. The translators and editors also benefited from consulting Jens Braarvig’s, edition, study, and translation of this text.

**The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra
Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva**

1.

The Translation

[F.96.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling at the Kūṭāgāraśālā in the forest outside Vaiśālī [F.97.a] together with a great assembly of one thousand monks. All of them were worthy ones whose defilements were exhausted. They were without afflictions and in control. Their minds were perfectly free, and their insight was perfectly liberated. They were of noble birth. They were great elephants who had completed their objectives and done what must be done. They had laid down their burdens and fulfilled their aims. They had eliminated that which binds to existence. Their minds had been perfectly liberated by correct knowledge. They had obtained supreme perfection in mastering all mental states. Their behavior was peaceful, disciplined, free, and natural. The only exception was Venerable Ānanda, but the Blessed One had instructed him in the practice as well, and he had been prophesied to become a worthy one in this life.

1.3 Also present were one thousand bodhisattvas. All of them had attained the stage free from regression. All of them had obtained retention. All of them possessed the patience of equanimity. All of them had reached the stage where one practices exactly what has been proclaimed. They were wise, honest, and faithful. They were extremely confident and exceedingly graceful. They always smiled and never frowned angrily. They were steadfast and successful. They had realized the nature of phenomena and never tired of teaching the Dharma. They had encountered the wisdom of a buddha and were bringing it to full maturity. They possessed unerring patience regarding allusive speech. They had attained the stage of being unmistakable regarding all objects. They knew the right time, season, occasion, and moment. They were free from agitation and arrogance. Their behavior was natural and perfect. They were skilled in the meditative

absorption on emptiness. They had relinquished arising and disintegration. They possessed the meditative absorption on wishlessness. They had practiced bodhisattva conduct in cyclic existence for a long time. They possessed the meditative absorption on signlessness. They correctly understood the characteristics of all the content of mental constructs. [F.97.b] They were skilled in maturing beings. They were free from ideation. They were skilled in the presentation of the Hearer Vehicle. They engaged in properly distinguishing the teachings of the Dharma. They taught the Solitary Buddha Vehicle. They praised tranquility. They inspired beings to become bodhisattvas. They behaved appropriately, teaching the Dharma without hatred or animosity.

1.4 Among them were the bodhisattva great being Maitreya, Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, Pratibhānakūṭa, Ratnapāṇi, Gandhaprabha, Anantaprabhāsamati, Apāyajaha, Siddhārthacintin, Guṇarājaprabhāsa, Sarvaśokāndhakārāpohamati, Sarvaviṣamadārśin, Tatsvabhāvāpratiṣṭhita, Anantamati, Vīrya, Vikramasaṃdarśakacintin, Ratnākara, Vyūharāja, Vikurvāṇarāja, Avyabhicāraprabhāva, Viśeṣamati, Samantaprāsādika, Anāvarenaḍarśin, Vikrīḍamāna, Suvarṇottamaprabhāśrī, Sarvadharmānityadarśanadhīmat, Āśugandhadānakusumita, Jyeṣṭhakūṭa, Aśokaśrī, Merudāra, Avalokiteśvara, Gandheśvararāja, Prāmodyarāja, Anantamatipratipatti, Sarvasaddharmāvismaraṇasthita,⁷ and the bodhisattva great being Siṃhanādābhinādin. Also dwelling with them were many thousands of other bodhisattvas.

1.5 One morning the Blessed One donned his lower and upper robes, took up his alms bowl, [F.98.a] and went to collect alms in the city of Vaiśālī accompanied and attended by two thousand monks. As soon as the Blessed One placed his foot at the threshold of the city gates, the following wondrous miracles occurred, miracles that occur whenever the blessed buddhas enter a city: blind people gained sight, deaf people gained hearing, and the insane regained their senses. A rain of divine flowers fell, a bright light shone, and the roads became free of filth. The enchanting musical instruments of the gods resounded even without being played. All beings, from the Hell of Uninterrupted Torment up to the Highest Heaven, became completely happy.

1.6 At that time in the city of Vaiśālī there was a boy named Ratnadatta who had been born as the son of a Licchavi man named Siṃha. The three-year-old was sitting on his mother's lap on the top floor of their house, and when he witnessed these miraculous signs, the boy Ratnadatta spoke the following verses to his mother:

1.7 "Mother, whose magical power
Has manifested these extraordinary miracles?"

- This light outshines the radiance
Of millions of suns. Whose is it?
- 1.8 “It pervades the ground of the three-thousand-fold world
And dries up the lower realms.
What is this magical light?
Quick, Mother, please tell me!
- 1.9 “A rain of unseasonable flowers
Continually beautifies this buddha realm,
And everywhere flocks of birds
Fill the air with song.
- 1.10 “The roads are covered with flowers,
The flower parasols unfurled,
And both sides are adorned
With happy men and women.
- 1.11 “Blind people have gained sight,
Deaf people can hear sounds,
Those who were ugly are now handsome,
Those of poor complexion now have perfect skin, [F.98.b]
- 1.12 “The bewildered have regained their senses,
The mute can speak clearly,
And beings who had no love in their hearts
Are now filled with love.
- 1.13 “Quick, Mother, tell me,
Who is this extraordinary being
Who moves throughout the worlds
With the power to perform such miracles?”
- 1.14 Ratnadatta’s mother answered him in the following verses:
- 1.15 “He is a pure being with supreme conduct,
A stainless victor without harmful intent
Who is beyond thought and utterly pure.
He is powerful, exalted in precious virtues.
- 1.16 “He is the world’s protector, refuge, and guide.
This is our kinsman, the Thus-Gone One,
A wise man come to beg alms
Who does not adhere to worldly duty.

- 1.17 “He does not entertain mundane thoughts
Such as pleasant or unpleasant.
The lord engages in conduct without being stained,
Like a lotus born from the water.
- 1.18 “This intelligent one eliminates doubt.
He benefits beings and is compassionate.
Now this leader has come here
To dispel the suffering of beings.
- 1.19 “Praise does not delight him,
And blame does not upset him.
He has abandoned anger and attachment
And moves freely, like the wind.
- 1.20 “He is a sublime dharma king
Who has mastered profound wisdom
And is learned in the ultimate meaning—
The teacher of beings has come.
- 1.21 “He teaches the middle way
That is free from grasping at existence or nonexistence.
He possesses the path of Dharma and is peaceful.
He has abandoned all types of dependence.
- 1.22 “The one for whom wisdom is the aggregates’ lack of self,
Who has gathered the accumulation of merit,
The well-gone one, the guide of the world
Whose form is boundless, has come today!
- 1.23 “His hair is coiled to the right
And is soft, shiny, and curly.
It is black, not matted,
And perfectly adorns his head.
- 1.24 “His uṣṇīṣa circles to the right,
Its hair is coiled, and it is perfectly placed.
It resembles the peak of Mount Meru—
So beautiful is its shape. [F.99.a]
- 1.25 “The middle of his brow is adorned with a curled hair
That is smooth and turns to the right.
Its radiance is far brighter than a lattice
Of pure crystal lunar rays.⁸

- 1.26 "His eyes are beautiful
Like blue lotus flowers.
He has perfect eyelashes like a cow.
He has a peaceful gaze without redness or agitation.
- 1.27 "He has a jaw like a glorious lion,
And he always has a smile on his face.
His lips are red like a bimba fruit,
His beautiful face attracts all embodied beings.
- 1.28 "He has an abundance of great power and strength,
The strength of hundreds of merits.
The rows of his teeth have a beautiful shine,
And they are even and perfectly spaced.
- 1.29 "His teeth are pure white.
His tongue is very long and thin,
And with it he can completely cover
The surface of his own face.
- 1.30 "The head of the glorious one is like a parasol.
Likewise, his nose is prominent,
His complexion is like refined gold,
And he has a beautiful forehead.
- 1.31 "His eyebrows are very pleasant
And the color of blue sapphire.
His peaceful eyes are beautiful
And extend toward his ears.
- 1.32 "His earlobes are long and dangling.
His face is more beautiful than an autumn moon
And resembles a perfectly pure lotus.
It is radiant, pure, and clear.
- 1.33 "His speech is steady and eloquent,
And his voice is kind, pleasing,
And soft; it satisfies beings
Like the call of a sparrow.
- 1.34 "The sound of a peacock,
A swan, a kinnara,
A parrot, a myna, and a cuckoo,
Of thunder, a crane,

- 1.35 "A pheasant, a flute, the beat
Of a clay drum; and anything else,
However pleasant, does not match a sixteenth
Of the voice of the Thus-Gone One.
- 1.36 "It is inspiring, yet soft.
It is sweet and gentle,
Endearing, pleasing, and clear.
It is flawless and fearless.
- 1.37 "Like a steady rain for the hopeful,
It satisfies and pacifies the mind.
It is uncorrupted, unmistaken, perfectly peaceful,
Pure, and also easy to comprehend. [F.99.b]
- 1.38 "It is auspicious, sweet,
Meaningful, and possesses all good qualities.
His poetic embellishments are perfect.
His speech inspires virtue.
- 1.39 "Beings with different inclinations
And different interpretations
Have faith in what he says
And become exceedingly happy.
- 1.40 "His voice reaches all beings who abide
In the world systems of the ten directions,
And the words of the protector
Are rendered meaningful to all those beings.
- 1.41 "That sage, supreme among beings,
Has a neck like a conch and rounded shoulders.
He is broad chested,
And the seven parts⁹ of his body are convex.
- 1.42 "His arms are very long,
His skin the color of gold.
He is as tall as the wish-fulfilling tree,
His girth like a banyan.
- 1.43 "His chest is adorned with the endless knot.
His lotus hands bear the imprints of a wheel.
They are soft to the touch like cotton or flower petals,
And their fingers are long.

- 1.44 “Each body hair is present, upright, thick, and soft.
His torso is broad and his navel is deep.
His belly is the shape of a bow, and his genitals are retracted in a sheath like
an elephant.
He has calves like an antelope and with a white hue like the inside of a reed.
- 1.45 “His ankle bones do not protrude, and his heels are well shaped.
The sage’s fingers are long and his nails are red.
The soles of the Well-Gone One’s feet are not arched,
And they are adorned with wheels, hooks, *svastikas*, and conches.
- 1.46 “The Lord’s feet are of equal proportion and steady.
They are soft and pleasing to the touch like cotton.
Their color is like a blooming red lotus,
And with them he traverses the worlds.
- 1.47 “The lion’s roar of the Thus-Gone One bestows happiness.
This chief among beings has now arrived here,
And when he comes, he teaches the Dharma of nonduality
And the lack of mental constructs with the fearless roar of a lion.”
- 1.48 Then the boy Ratnadatta said to his mother, [F.100.a] “Mother, put me in the
window so I can see the Thus-Gone One,” so his mother sat him in the
window. The Blessed One knew what Ratnadatta was thinking, so he
walked right down his street. When the boy saw the Blessed One walking he
thought, “Whoever sees the Thus-Gone One, who possesses all good
qualities, and does not generate the mind of awakening is indeed
unfortunate.” The Blessed One proceeded right up to Ratnadatta’s door and
the boy thought, “Since it is difficult to meet such an extraordinary being
even in a trillion eons, I should jump down from this house.”
- 1.49 With that thought, Ratnadatta placed his toy, a golden lotus with a
hundred thousand petals, in the palm of his hand and jumped off the house.
However, due to the Buddha’s power, he remained floating in midair.
Ratnadatta then offered the golden lotus with a hundred thousand petals to
the Blessed One. As soon as Ratnadatta let go of the lotus, the Blessed One
transformed it into a lotus parasol adorned with a net of jewels, and it
hovered in the sky directly above the Blessed One’s head. When that
happened, the boy Ratnadatta recited the following verses:
- 1.50 “I offer this lotus to the Buddha
Seeking nothing in return—
I seek supreme awakening
To eliminate all goals.

- 1.51 “Since in unborn awakening
There is nothing to gain or lose
And nothing to accept or reject,
I offer this flower.
- 1.52 “The conception of value
That childish beings construct is pointless. [F.100.b]
I make this offering to the supreme human being
So that I may eliminate all conceptual thought.
- 1.53 “I do not offer this flower
So that a result will ripen for me.
I offer this lotus blossom
To eliminate all existent things.
- 1.54 “In my buddha realm
One will follow only the vehicle of the supreme victor—
May even the names *hearer* or *solitary buddha*
Not arise there.”
- 1.55 Then, Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana recited the following verse to the boy
Ratnadatta:
- 1.56 “Although you make this offering
Out of faith in such a teacher,
Your understanding is mistaken.
How, then, will you become a buddha?”
- 1.57 Ratnadatta replied to Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana with the following
verses:
- 1.58 “All these entities are unborn.
Conditioned things are hollow and void.
How could such phenomena
Have any substance?
- 1.59 “You wear saffron monastic robes
And grasp at the state of a worthy one,
But aren’t consciousness and¹⁰ its domain
Simply empty?
- 1.60 “The millions of buddhas are not pleased
By having recourse to apprehending.
Those millions perceive only quiescence,
And there is not one of them who does not find joy in that.

- 1.61 “Maudgalyāyana, do you still
Engage in apprehending?
Can someone who thinks as you do
Even purify a gift?”¹¹
- 1.62 Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana replied to Ratnadatta, saying, “Child, tell me, has the Thus-Gone One not become a complete buddha who has manifested unsurpassed and perfect awakening? Furthermore, has he not taught the Dharma?”
- 1.63 “Maudgalyāyana,” Ratnadatta replied, “a wise person should not conceptualize awakening or formulate opinions about the Thus-Gone One. They should not impute concepts such as the thought that phenomena do not arise, the thought that all phenomena are conditioned, or the thought that all phenomena are unconditioned. They should not impute concepts such as ‘all phenomena arise, do not arise, [F.101.a] are existent, or are nonexistent,’ ‘grasping and letting go,’ ‘meeting and separating,’ ‘going, coming, remaining, transmigrating, phenomena associated with attachment, hatred, and delusion, and right and wrong.’¹² They should not impute the concept that ‘ignorance and the like¹³ up to and including the qualities of hearers, the qualities of solitary buddhas, the qualities of the buddhas, the factors of pollution, the factors of purification, the physical and nonphysical, perception and lack of perception, marks and lack of marks, pure conduct, sameness, difference, body, mind, and all correct and incorrect qualities arise.’ So you tell me, Maudgalyāyana—do you think the thus-gone ones are complete buddhas who manifest unsurpassed and perfect awakening?”
Maudgalyāyana replied, “That is not the case.”
- 1.64 The boy said, “Do you assert that the thus-gone ones are not included in suchness, that awakening is not included in suchness, or that ordinary beings are not included in suchness?”
Maudgalyāyana said, “That is not the case.”
- 1.65 “Maudgalyāyana,” the boy responded, “do you conceptualize the lack of conceptualization?”
“I teach by means of the conventions of the world,” Maudgalyāyana replied.
- 1.66 The boy continued, “Maudgalyāyana, the world is a fake, deceptive, and illusory appearance that tricks childish beings.”
- 1.67 “If the world is a fake and deceptive phenomenon,” said Maudgalyāyana, “then this teaching is also a fake and deceptive phenomenon. Why, then, do you teach it?”
“Maudgalyāyana,” answered the boy, “phenomena cannot be demonstrated. [F.101.b] They cannot be demonstrated, attained, actualized, abandoned, understood, or meditated upon.”

- 1.68 Maudgalyāyana replied, "If that is the case, what is the point of you making an offering to the Thus-Gone One?"
"Maudgalyāyana," the boy asked, "do you apprehend a Thus-Gone One, someone who gives a gift, or an act of giving?"
- 1.69 Venerable Maudgalyāyana remained silent, so the boy Ratnadatta continued, "Maudgalyāyana, with this in mind, I have given up becoming a thus-gone one and say those who form the resolve set on the vehicle of the hearers 'are indeed unfortunate.' "
- 1.70 Maudgalyāyana replied,
- 1.71 "You are very young,
Yet your insight is vast as the ocean.
How long have you been
Trained in these teachings?"
- 1.72 Ratnadatta replied with the following verses:
- 1.73 "All training perishes.
Training is not training.
The training of the wise ones
Consists in being one who lacks training.
- 1.74 "The question 'what is the point?' that you asked me
Is based upon the perceptions of beings,
And to this I say one does not find
Any phenomena arising anywhere.
- 1.75 "Childish beings conceptualize
Both awakening and cyclic existence.
So do you, Venerable One,
Still follow the way of childish beings?
- 1.76 "Since they understand
That all phenomena lack essence,
The wise do not generate
Concepts such as 'near' and 'far.'
- 1.77 "Intelligent ones do not differentiate
Between childish beings and their qualities,
Or the buddhas' qualities and the victors,
So you too should see these as merely empty.
- 1.78 "That the great sage attained awakening
Is an illogical imputation.

- If the phenomenon of awakening does not arise,
How can one attain nirvāṇa?
- 1.79 “An infinite number of teachings are proclaimed,
Yet there is no such thing as the liberation of beings.
Understand this: there is no distinction [F.102.a]
Between nirvāṇa and saṃsāra.
- 1.80 “Thus, in all cases,
There is never any increase or decrease.
The wise harbor no delusions
About the fact that phenomena are indistinct.
- 1.81 “Childish beings obtain and attain.
A childish being who attains nirvāṇa
Is thoroughly attached to saṃsāra.
Such conceited thinking is Māra’s trap.
- 1.82 “Someone who thinks ‘I have attained’
Has not attained anything at all.
They will proceed to their next birth
And start all over again in ignorance.
- 1.83 “Abiding at the seat of awakening,
There is nothing to see and nothing to abandon.
The awakening of all the buddhas
Is a conventional term but nothing in actuality.
- 1.84 “Awakening and nirvāṇa
Cannot be expressed by conventional terms.
Those who see correctly in that way
Fully understand the nature of reality.
- 1.85 Venerable Śāriputra then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, how long
has this boy Ratnadatta practiced this teaching?”
- 1.86 The Blessed One replied, “When the thus-gone one Dīpaṅkara gave his
prophecy that I would attain acceptance of the nonarising of phenomena, at
that point he was foremost among those bodhisattvas who abided in
emptiness according to Dīpaṅkara’s teachings. At the moment when I first
generated the mind set on unsurpassed and perfect awakening, three
hundred thousand eons had passed since he attained acceptance.”
- 1.87 “Blessed One,” asked Śāriputra, “what cause and what conditions are
responsible for the boy Ratnadatta not becoming a complete buddha who
has manifested unsurpassed and perfect awakening?”

- 1.88 “You should ask Ratnadatta himself this question. He will tell you,” the Blessed One responded.
- 1.89 So Venerable Śāriputra asked the boy Ratnadatta, “Why have you not become a complete buddha who has manifested unsurpassed and perfect awakening?” [F.102.b]
- 1.90 “The reason I do not become a complete manifest buddha,” Ratnadatta replied, “is that I do not apprehend unsurpassed and perfect awakening.”
- 1.91 “If that is so,” Śāriputra asked, “since this thus-gone one is a complete manifest buddha, do you apprehend him?”
- 1.92 Ratnadatta replied, “If someone grasps at the Thus-Gone One as a complete manifest buddha, and if he becomes the referent object of that grasping, then the Dharma he teaches will not cause that person to become a complete manifest buddha, and it will not even bring about renunciation.”
- 1.93 “Since you equate complete maturation with accomplishing the four factors,¹⁴ what is your acceptance based on?” Śāriputra asked.
- 1.94 The boy Ratnadatta replied, “I do not perceive even a single phenomenon that is truly established, much less four. What is there truly established in them? ‘Knowing the Dharma’ is apprehending. ‘Awakening’ is apprehending. ‘The Thus-Gone One’ is grasping. ‘Liberation’ is a mental construct.”
- 1.95 “Son of the lineage,” Śāriputra replied, “what a wonder that you experience things in this way and that you have attained such a miraculous birth whereby you were born in the presence of the buddhas and will always go forth!”
- 1.96 Ratnadatta then replied with the following verses:
- 1.97 “Born and not born are both mental constructs.
They are the level of conceptual imputation and the domain of Māra.
Desire realm beings such as the gods and asuras who grasp at
And harbor conceit about phenomena such as the body are destroyed in this
domain.
- 1.98 “Thinking, ‘The Victor attained the unconditioned, deathless state,’
Some set out with the same intention
And insult the buddhas.
Though they attain it, there is nothing in it that the guides attain.
- 1.99 “There are many people who,
Having gone forth for this, presume they have gone forth.
They are confused by mental apprehending
And they corrupt the teachings.
- 1.100 “Those who are proud of their attainment say,

'I have attained deathlessness.'

But the teaching of the protector, the lion of the Śākya clan,
Lacks mental constructs. [F.103.a]

- 1.101 "Among all mental content
One does not find the nature of mind.
Thus, the view taught by the guide
Has no inherent nature.
- 1.102 "In the view taught by the Victor with pure vision
There is no viewing.
That is why those who have insight
Do not grasp at the thought, 'I am free.'
- 1.103 "Those accustomed to apprehending marks
Apprehend a self and are deluded.
Such unwise people
Reject emptiness as incorrect.
- 1.104 "The unwise impute things
With their own minds,
Like a dream and an illusion.
Then, when things cease, they call it nirvāṇa.
- 1.105 "They take the body as a support
And do away with the notion of discipline.
They take mental apprehension as a support
And do away with the notion of meditative absorption.
- 1.106 "Likewise, they apprehend insight
And have a deluded notion of it as a seed.
The wise people of the world
Proclaim them thieves of the Dharma.
- 1.107 "The luminous expanse of phenomena,
Free of afflictions, is in all such phenomena.
So, will you please tell me
The point of going forth?
- 1.108 "All phenomena are indistinct.
They are like an echo.
The wise never conceptualize
The sphere of the noble ones.
- 1.109 "Their characteristic is suchness and nothing else.

They never transform into other things.
Since phenomena are unchanging,
What use is the concept of going forth?"

- 1.110 Then Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta asked Ratnadatta, "Child, what is 'awakening' a verbal designation for?"
"Mañjuśrī," Ratnadatta replied, "awakening is devoid of verbal designations."
- 1.111 "How do you consider and verbally express it?" Mañjuśrī asked.
Ratnadatta replied, "Mañjuśrī, since reality is inconceivable, I consider it as such and then express it."
- 1.112 Mañjuśrī asked, "How should beginner bodhisattvas be given instructions on this? How should they be taught about it?" [F.103.b]
- 1.113 Ratnadatta replied, "One should say the following: 'Do not abandon desire. Do not get rid of anger. Do not clear away delusion. Do not rise above the body. Practice nonvirtue. Do not vanquish views. Do not remove¹⁵ fetters. Grasp at the aggregates. Make the elements into a single mass. Engage the sense spheres. Do not go beyond the level of childish beings. Realize nonvirtue. Abandon virtue. Do not contemplate the Buddha. Do not think about the Dharma. Do not make offerings to the Saṅgha. Do not take up the trainings. Do not strive to pacify existence. Do not cross over the river.'
- 1.114 "It is with such instructions that one should instruct and teach beginner bodhisattvas. Why is that? Because only this state is the state of phenomena. Childish beings declare that phenomena arise and declare that phenomena cease. The realm of phenomena is discerned through nonconceptuality. If someone receives the instruction that understanding the nature of phenomena in this way is awakening, and if they are not afraid, scared, or frightened by it, then that person is a bodhisattva who will truly never regress. That bodhisattva who has reached the stage free from regression should be considered a fortunate one. Through these instructions, one should give rise to true joy again and again."
- 1.115 At that point, eight monks who maintained the view of apprehending refused to follow this Dharma teaching, rejected it, and left the assembly. They all vomited warm blood and died, and after they died they were reborn in the Great Wailing Hell. At that point Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta alerted the Blessed One saying, "Blessed One, see how those monks have suffered such great harm by listening to this Dharma teaching!" [F.104.a]
- 1.116 "Do not say such things, Mañjuśrī," the Blessed One replied. "If these monks had not heard this Dharma teaching, they would not have secured higher births for millions of eons, let alone meeting and serving any buddhas. Since they just listened to this Dharma teaching with doubt, they

are right now dying and transmigrating from the Great Wailing Hell and being reborn among the gods in the Heaven of Joy. For sixty-eight eons, they will serve billions of thus-gone ones. In all these lives they will only take miraculous birth and become universal monarchs. In a later eon they will become thus-gone ones, worthy ones, perfect complete buddhas known as Vimalaprabhāsa.”

1.117 Then, having heard the prophecy¹⁶ with their divine hearing, those gods, together with eighty thousand gods, traveled to where the Blessed One was. When they arrived, they scattered divine flowers all over Vaiśālī. They rejoiced in this Dharma teaching, saying, “Blessed One, we rejoice! Please cause the system of the awakening of the thus-gone ones to flourish!” The moment that they rejoiced in this way, their progress toward unsurpassed and perfect awakening became irreversible. Eighty-four thousand beings of the great city of Vaiśālī also attained irreversible progress toward unsurpassed and perfect awakening. Twelve thousand beings removed the dust from the Dharma eye that sees all phenomena, rendering it stainless and pure.”

1.118 The Blessed One continued to address Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, saying, “Mañjuśrī, since someone who listens to this Dharma teaching with doubt generates far greater merit than a bodhisattva who practices the six perfections without skillful means for one hundred thousand eons [F.104.b], why mention someone who has no doubt when they hear it? And why mention those who write it down, explain it, hold it, and teach it extensively to others? Therefore, Mañjuśrī, those who want to attain the state of a worthy one should train in this teaching, those who want to attain the state of a solitary buddha should train in this teaching, and those who want to become a complete buddha who manifests unsurpassed and perfect awakening should train in this teaching.”

1.119 The boy Ratnadatta then said to his mother, “Mother, please give me some food, and I will offer it to the Blessed One.” Ratnadatta’s mother filled a metal bowl with delicious food and gave it to the child. Ratnadatta then addressed the Blessed One, saying, “Blessed One, since it is true that all phenomena are inexhaustible, may the food in this metal bowl not diminish until the entire saṅgha of monks has been satisfied.” Ratnadatta filled the Blessed One’s alms bowl first and then addressed the saṅgha of monks, saying, “Venerable Ones, may these alms be accepted out of compassion for me by someone who can ensure that I obtain a great result. May these alms be accepted by someone who does not purify the gift with the body, who does not purify it with the mind; someone who will not generate merit or ripen karma when it is offered to them; someone who has no physical, verbal, or mental karma; someone who abides neither in the conditioned nor

in the unconditioned; someone who is not stained by the qualities of ordinary beings; [F.105.a] someone who does not rely upon the teachings of the hearers; someone who is not skilled in the vehicle of the buddhas; and someone who has no wish to be skilled in it!”

1.120 No one in the saṅgha of monks took up the bowl, so the child Ratnadatta continued, “Venerable Ones, I wish to make a gift, and you also wish to eat. I do not expect anything in return from you venerable ones, so please eat! If it is true that my buddha realm will have a display of qualities that is a billion times greater than the display of qualities present in the buddha realms of billions of bodhisattvas who are of the same stature as Mañjuśrī, and if it is true that what I have spoken is the truth, then by these true statements may all your bowls be filled from this metal bowl, and may this bowl never be emptied!” All the alms bowls of the saṅgha of monks were then filled. The child Ratnadatta fed the entire population of Vaiśālī with delicious food, and even then the alms did not run out.

1.121 Then the Blessed One addressed the child Ratnadatta, saying, “Ratnadatta, these five are a bodhisattva’s purification of a gift: not apprehending a body, not apprehending a mind, having no attachment to the gift, not desiring any ripening, and no ripening for the recipients. Moreover, Ratnadatta, a bodhisattva should always manifest the following four things: the meditative concentration of emptiness, recollecting the Buddha, great compassion, and the ripening of one’s own karma.”

1.122 The Blessed One addressed [F.105.b] Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, saying, “Mañjuśrī, in thirty eons, this child Ratnadatta will become a complete buddha who has manifested unsurpassed and perfect awakening. He will appear in the world as a thus-gone one, a worthy one, a perfect buddha, learned and virtuous, a well-gone one, a knower of the world, an unsurpassed charioteer who tames beings, a teacher of gods and humans, a blessed buddha called Amoghabalakīrti.¹⁷ Those who gather in his retinue will be infinite in number, and all of them will be bodhisattvas who do not regress. They will be infinitely radiant and have immeasurable lifespans.”

1.123 Mañjuśrī then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what is the name of this Dharma teaching? How should it be remembered?”

1.124 The Blessed One replied, “You should remember it as *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva*, or you can also remember it as *A Being Born from Reality*.”

1.125 When the Blessed One and the saṅgha of monks had eaten their alms, they went on their way.

1.126 After the Blessed One had thus given these teachings, the bodhisattva Ratnadatta, the entire retinue, and the world with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

This concludes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra "Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva."

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Prajñāvarman and the chief editor-translator Bandé Yeshé Dé and others.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

· Abbreviations ·

Editions of the Tibetan Kangyur consulted through variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*):

C Choné

D Degé

H Lhasa

J Lithang

K Kangxi

L London

N Narthang

S Stok

T Tokyo

Y Yongle

n.

NOTES

- n.1 See Braarvig 1994 for a more detailed exploration of *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva* as a Mahāyāna critique, and its place among other texts that employ a young child as its main protagonist.
- n.2 Braarvig (1994), p. 125. The Tibetan translation of this title is *mdo kun las btus pa* (“Compendium of Sūtras”), Toh 3934, Degé Tengyur vol. 110 (dbu ma, ki), folios 148.b–215.a.
- n.3 The Denkarma inventory is dated to ca. 812 CE. In this inventory, *The Practice of a Bodhisattva* is included among the Miscellaneous Sūtras (*mdo sde sna tshogs*) less than one section (*bam po*) long. See Denkarma, f. 299.a.3. See also Herrmann-Pfandt (2008), p. 98, no. 181.
- n.4 *dkar chag 'phang thang ma*, p. 15.
- n.5 Lewis R. Lancaster, “K 532,” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed October 19, 2018, http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0532.html.
- n.6 Lewis R. Lancaster, “K 1227,” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, accessed October 19, 2018, http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k1227.html.
- n.7 The Sanskrit names of the bodhisattvas in this list are taken from Braarvig (1994), 126.
- n.8 The translation follows the reading *'od ni shel dag zla ba yi* found in Y, J, K, N, C, H, and S. D and T read *'od ni shel dang zla ba yi*.
- n.9 These are the tops of each hand, foot, and shoulder and the back of his neck.

- n.10 This translation follows the variant *'di dang* reported in Y, J, K, N, H, and S. D reads *'di dag*.
- n.11 The meaning of this verse is a bit obscure, but it is likely a reference to the role that maintaining the *pratimokṣa* vows of a fully ordained monastic plays in the purification of gifts that are offered to the saṅgha and the resulting merit that accrues to the donor. Here Ratnadatta is challenging Maudgalyāyana's ability to perform one of the primary soteriological functions that the monastic saṅgha can perform for the lay donors who are their support by suggesting that Maudgalyāyana is unable to purify the gifts given in support of the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha because his understanding of the process of making offerings is tainted by apprehending / referentiality.
- n.12 *chos dang / chos ma yin pa*; Skt.: *dharmādharmā*. This phrase is translated here according to its more generalized connotations of what is right (*dharma*) and what is wrong (*adharmā*), but might also be taken in a more exclusively Buddhist context to signify what is and is not accepted as "Dharma," or the "fundamental truth" that the Buddha taught.
- n.13 Here Ratnadatta likely refers to the known set of twelve links of causality that begin with ignorance.
- n.14 Five other Mahāyāna sūtras (Toh 248 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh248.html>); Toh 249 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh249.html>); Toh 250 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh250.html>); Toh 251 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh251.html>); and Toh 252 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh252.html>)) discuss "Accomplishing the four factors" (*chos bzhi sgrub pa* or *bzhi pa sgrub pa*) but the presentation here is not consistent across these texts, nor are any of them consistent with the four factors presented here.
- n.15 The translation follows the reading *bton* from the L, T, and S. D reads *ston*.
- n.16 D and S insert *bdag cag* here (i.e., "my prophecy"), which Braarvig's edition does not do. C and N do not insert *bdag cag*. We have followed C, N, and Braarvig's edition here. See Braarvig (1994), p. 154.
- n.17 Sanskrit reconstruction of this name from Braarvig (1994), p. 138.

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 acceptance of the nonarising of phenomena

mi skyes ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེས་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣānti

The stage of acceptance that is associated with the realization of an eighth bhūmi bodhisattva.

g.2 afflictions

nyon mongs

ཉོན་མོངས།

kleśa

The harmful and mistaken mental states to which beings become accustomed and that (along with karma) bind beings to rebirth in cyclic existence.

g.3 Amoghabalakīrti

stobs dang grags pa don yod pa

སྟོབས་དང་གྲགས་པ་དོན་ཡོད་པ།

**amoghabalakīrti* ^{RS}

The name that the Buddha Śākyamuni gives in his prophecy of the boy Ratnadatta's attainment of Buddhahood.

g.4 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha (according to the *Mahāvastu*, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).

Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

g.5 Anantamati

blo mtha' yas

ལྷོ་མཐའ་ཡས།

anantamati

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.6 Anantamatipratipatti

blo mtha' yas sgrub pa

ལྷོ་མཐའ་ཡས་སྐྱབ་པ།

**anantamatipratipatti^{RS}*

The name of a bodhisattva. “Accomplished Limitless Intellect.”

g.7 Anantaprabhāsamati

mtha' yas snang ba'i blo gros

མཐའ་ཡས་སྐྱབ་བའི་ལྷོ་གྲོས།

**anantaprabhāsamati^{RS}*

The name of a bodhisattva. “Infinite Radiant Intellect.”

g.8 Anāvaraṇadarśin

sgrib med ston

སྐྱིབ་མེད་སྟོན།

anāvaraṇadarśin

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.9 Apāyajaha

ngan song spong

ངན་སོང་སྟོང།

apāyajaha

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.10 apprehending

dmigs pa

དམིགས་པ།

ālambana · upalabdhi

A term for the apprehending of a subject, an object, and the relationships that exist between subjects and objects. The term might also be translated as “referentiality,” meaning a system based on the existence of referent objects, referent subjects, and the referential relationships that exist between them.

As part of their doctrine of “threefold non-apprehending / non-referentiality” (*khor gsum mi dmigs pa*), Mahāyāna Buddhists famously assert that all three categories of apprehending lack substantiality.

g.11 Aśokaśrī

mya ngan med pa'i dpal

མྱ་ངན་མེད་པའི་དཔལ།

aśokaśrī

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.12 Āśugandhadānakusumita

spos dri myur sbyin me tog kun tu rgyas

སྣོས་འི་མུར་སྤྱིན་མེ་ཏོག་ཀུན་ཏུ་རྒྱས།

**āśugandhadānakusumita^{RS}*

The name of a bodhisattva. “Instantly Fragrant Blooming Flower.”

g.13 Avalokiteśvara

spyang ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག།

avalokiteśvara

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.14 Avyabhicāraprabhāva

khrul pa med pa'i mthu rtsal

ལྷལ་པ་མེད་པའི་མཐུ་རྩལ།

**avyabhicāraprabhāva^{RS}*

The name of a bodhisattva. “Unerring Power.”

g.15 bimba

bim pa

བིམ་པ།

bimba

Momordica monodelpha, which has a bright red fruit.

g.16 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat · bhagavān

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.17 content

rnam pa

རྣམ་པ།

ākāra

An epistemological term that signifies the mental content that results from sensory contact, which is often understood as a kind of “image” that presents itself before the mind.

g.18 curled hair

mdzod spu

མཛོད་སྤུ།

ūrṇā

A single curled hair or tuft of hair located between the eyebrows of a buddha.

g.19 Dīpaṃkara

mar me mdzad

མར་མེ་མཛོད།

dīpaṃkara

A thus-gone one of a previous eon who is famous for having issued the prophecy of Śākyamuni’s awakening as a Buddha.

g.20 elements

khams

ཁམས།

dhātu

One way of describing experience and the world in terms of eighteen elements (eye, form, and eye consciousness; ear, sound, and ear consciousness; nose, odor, and nose consciousness; tongue, taste, and tongue consciousness; body, touch, and body consciousness; mind, mental objects, and mind consciousness). It can also refer to the six elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, and consciousness.

g.21 endless knot

dpal gyi be'u

དཔལ་གྱི་བེའུ།

śrīvatsa

An auspicious sign found on the chest of the Buddha. In non-Buddhist traditions it is also found on the chest of certain deities, such as Viṣṇu.

g.22 four factors

chos bzhi

ཚོས་བཞི།

caturdharma

Teaching the Practice of the Bodhisattva lists these four as 1) knowing the Dharma; 2) awakening; 3) the Thus-Gone One; and 4) liberation.

g.23 Gandhaprabha

spos 'od

སྤོས་འོད།

gandhaprabha

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.24 Gandheśvararāja

spos kyi dbang phyug rgyal po

སྤོས་གྱི་དབང་ཕྱུག་རྒྱལ་པོ།

**gandheśvararāja* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Fragrant Sovereign King.”

g.25 Great Wailing Hell

dmyal ba chen po ngu 'bod

དམྱལ་བ་ཚེན་པོ་ངུ་འབོད།

mahāraurava

The name of a hell realm. One of the eight hot hells.

g.26 Guṇarājaprabhāsa

yon tan rgyal po snang

ཡོན་ཏན་རྒྱལ་པོ་སྣང།

guṇarājaprabhāsa

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.27 hearer

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

A term for someone who follows the Vehicle of the Hearers or those who “hear” the teachings from a Buddha.

g.28 Heaven of Joy

dga' ldan

དགའ་ལྡན།

tuṣita

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Tuṣita (or sometimes Saṃtuṣita), literally “Joyous” or “Contented,” is one of the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). In standard classifications, such as the one in the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is ranked as the fourth of the six counting from below. This god realm is where all future buddhas are said to dwell before taking on their final rebirth prior to awakening. There, the Buddha Śākyamuni lived his preceding life as the bodhisattva Śvetaketu. When departing to take birth in this world, he appointed the bodhisattva Maitreya, who will be the next buddha of this eon, as his Dharma regent in Tuṣita. For an account of the Buddha’s previous life in Tuṣita, see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 2.12, and for an account of Maitreya’s birth in Tuṣita and a description of this realm, see *The Sūtra on Maitreya’s Birth in the Heaven of Joy*, (Toh 199).

g.29 Hell of Uninterrupted Torment

mnar med

མནལ་མེད།

avīci

The lowest hell; the eighth of the eight hot hells.

g.30 Highest Heaven

'og min

འོག་མིན།

akanisṭha

The highest heaven of the form realm.

g.31 insight

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

The mental factor responsible for ascertaining the specific qualities of a given object, such as its specific qualities or whether or not it should be taken up or rejected.

g.32 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇི་ན་མི་ཏྲ།

jinamitra

An Indian paṇḍita resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.33 Jyeṣṭhakūṭa

gtso bo brtsegs

གཙོ་བོ་བརྩེགས།

**jyeṣṭhakūṭa* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Highest Summit.”

g.34 Kūṭāgāraśālā

khang pa brtsegs pa

ཁང་པ་བརྩེགས་པ།

kūṭāgāraśālā

An important early monastery outside of Vaiśālī. The name Kūṭāgāraśālā means “hall with an upper chamber.” It refers to a temple with one ground-floor room and at least one additional upper room within the structure.

g.35 Licchavi

li tsa byi · li ts+tsha bI

ལི་ཅ་བྱི། ་ ལི་ཚུ་བློ།

licchavi

The name of a people that inhabited the Licchavi republican state located in present-day north India.

g.36 Mahāmaudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu chen po

མོ་དགལ་གྱི་སུ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahāmaudgalyāyana

See “Maudgalyāyana.”

g.37 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitreya

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The bodhisattva Maitreya is an important figure in many Buddhist traditions, where he is unanimously regarded as the buddha of the future era. He is said to currently reside in the heaven of Tuṣita, as Śākyamuni’s regent, where he awaits the proper time to take his final rebirth and become the fifth buddha in the Fortunate Eon, reestablishing the Dharma in this world after the teachings of the current buddha have disappeared. Within the Mahāyāna sūtras, Maitreya is elevated to the same status as other central bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, and his name appears frequently in sūtras, either as the Buddha’s interlocutor or as a teacher of the Dharma. *Maitreya* literally means “Loving One.” He is also known as Ajita, meaning “Invincible.”

For more information on Maitreya, see, for example, the introduction to *Maitreya’s Setting Out* (Toh 198).

g.38 Mañjuśrī

’jam dpal

འཇམ་དཔལ།

mañjuśrī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Mañjuśrī is one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha” and a bodhisattva who embodies wisdom. He is a major figure in the Mahāyāna sūtras, appearing often as an interlocutor of the Buddha. In his most well-known

iconographic form, he is portrayed bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left. To his name, Mañjuśrī, meaning “Gentle and Glorious One,” is often added the epithet Kumārabhūta, “having a youthful form.” He is also called Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, and Pañcaśikha.

In this text:

Also called here Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, literally “Youthful Mañjuśrī.”

g.39 Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།

mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

See “Mañjuśrī.”

g.40 Māra

bdud

བདུད།

māra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Māra, literally “death” or “maker of death,” is the name of the deva who tried to prevent the Buddha from achieving awakening, the name given to the class of beings he leads, and also an impersonal term for the destructive forces that keep beings imprisoned in saṃsāra:

(1) As a deva, Māra is said to be the principal deity in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (*paranirmitavaśavartin*), the highest paradise in the desire realm. He famously attempted to prevent the Buddha’s awakening under the Bodhi tree—see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), [21.1](#)—and later sought many times to thwart the Buddha’s activity. In the sūtras, he often also creates obstacles to the progress of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. (2) The devas ruled over by Māra are collectively called *mārakāyika* or *mārakāyikadevatā*, the “deities of Māra’s family or class.” In general, these māras too do not wish any being to escape from saṃsāra, but can also change their ways and even end up developing faith in the Buddha, as exemplified by Sārthavāha; see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), [21.14](#) and [21.43](#). (3) The term māra can also be understood as personifying four defects that prevent awakening, called (i) the divine māra (*devaputramāra*), which is the distraction of pleasures; (ii) the māra of Death (*mṛtyumāra*), which is having one’s life interrupted; (iii) the

māra of the aggregates (*skandhamāra*), which is identifying with the five aggregates; and (iv) the māra of the afflictions (*kleśamāra*), which is being under the sway of the negative emotions of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

g.41 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, paired with Śāriputra. He was renowned for his miraculous powers. His family clan was descended from Mudgala, hence his name Maudgalyāyana, “the son of Mudgala’s descendants.” Respectfully referred to as Mahāmaudgalyāyana, “Great Maudgalyāyana.”

g.42 Meru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

meru

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

g.43 Merudāra

lhun po’i lto

ལུན་པོ་འི་ལྷོ།

**merudāra*^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Meru’s Inner Chamber.”

g.44 poetic embellishment

gsung gi rgyan

གསུང་གི་རྒྱན།

—

This is an honorific term describing the Buddha Śākyamuni's speech that invokes the use of *sgra rgyan* (*śabdālarīkāra*), a term that signifies the use of various aspects of poetic speech.

g.45 Prajñāvarman

pradz+nyA warma

པརྒྱལ་འཕམ་པ།

prajñāvarman

An Indian Bengali paṇḍita resident in Tibet during the late eighth/early ninth centuries. Arriving in Tibet on an invitation from the Tibetan king, he assisted in the translation of numerous canonical scriptures. He is also the author of a few philosophical commentaries contained in the Tibetan Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*) collection.

g.46 Prāmodyarāja

mchog tu dga' ba'i rgyal po

མཚོག་ཏུ་དགའ་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

prāmodyarāja

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.47 Pratibhānakūṭa

spobs pa brtsegs pa

སྤོབས་པ་བརྟེན་པ།

pratibhānakūṭa

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.48 Ratnadatta

rin chen byin

རིན་ཆེན་བྱིན།

ratnadatta

A three-year-old boy who plays the role of interlocutor in *Teaching the Practice of a Bodhisattva*.

g.49 Ratnākara

rin chen 'byung gnas

རིན་ཆེན་འབྱུང་གནས།

ratnākara

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.50 Ratnapāṇi

lag na rin chen dang ldan

ལག་ན་རིན་ཆེན་དང་ལྡན།

ratnapāṇi

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.51 reality

chos nyid

ཚོས་ཉིད།

dharmatā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The real nature, true quality, or condition of things. Throughout Buddhist discourse this term is used in two distinct ways. In one, it designates the relative nature that is either the essential characteristic of a specific phenomenon, such as the heat of fire and the moisture of water, or the defining feature of a specific term or category. The other very important and widespread way it is used is to designate the ultimate nature of all phenomena, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms and is often synonymous with emptiness or the absence of intrinsic existence.

g.52 retention

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

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.53 Śākyamuni

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀྱ་སྐུབ་པ།

śākyamuni

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An epithet for the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama: he was a *muni* (“sage”) from the Śākya clan. He is counted as the fourth of the first four buddhas of the present Good Eon, the other three being Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa. He will be followed by Maitreya, the next buddha in this eon.

g.54 Samantaprāsādika

kun nas mdzas

ཀུན་ནས་མངོས།

samantaprāsādika

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.55 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རི་བུ།

śāriputra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, he was renowned for his discipline and for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise (often paired with Maudgalyāyana, who was praised as foremost in the capacity for miraculous powers). His father, Tiṣya, to honor Śāriputra’s mother, Śārikā, named him Śāradvatīputra, or, in its contracted form, Śāriputra, meaning “Śārikā’s Son.”

g.56 Sarvadharmānityadarśanadhīmat

chos thams cad la rtag tu lta ba'i blo ldan

ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་རྟག་ཏུ་ལྟ་བའི་སྡོ་ལྷན།

**sarvadharmānityadarśanadhīmat* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Intelligence That Always Sees All Phenomena.”

g.57 Sarvasaddharmāvismaraṇasthita

dam pa'i chos thams cad mi brjed par gnas pa

དམ་པའི་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་མི་བརྟེན་པར་གནས་པ།

**sarvasaddharmāvismaraṇasthita* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Not-Forgetting All the Sacred Teachings”

g.58 Sarvaśokāndhakārāpohamati

mya ngan gyi mun pa thams cad sel ba'i blo gros

མུ་ངན་གྱི་སྤྲུལ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སེལ་བའི་སྒྲོ་གྲོས།

**sarvaśokāndhakārāpohamati* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Intelligence Dispelling All Darkness of Sorrow.”

g.59 Sarvaviṣamadarśin

mi mnyam pa thams cad ston pa

མི་མཉམ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་སྟོན་པ།

**sarvaviṣamadarśin* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Unequaled Teacher of All.”

g.60 seat of awakening

byang chub snying po

བྱང་ལྡན་སྤྱིང་པོ།

bodhimāṇḍa

A name for the platform beneath the Bodhi tree, where the Buddha Śākyamuni attained awakening.

g.61 Siddhārthacintin

don grub sems pa

དོན་གྲུབ་སེམས་པ།

**siddhārthacintin* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Intending to Accomplish the Goal.”

g.62 signlessness

mtshan ma med pa

མཚན་མ་མེད་པ།

animitta

One of the three gateways to liberation; the ultimate absence of marks and signs in perceived objects.

g.63 Siṃha

seng ge

སེང་གེ།

siṃha

A Licchavi inhabitant of Vaiśālī and the father of Ratnadatta.

g.64 Siṃhanādābhinādin

seng ge ltar sgra mngon par sgrogs pa

སང་གེ་ལྷ་ར་སྒྲ་མངོན་པར་སྒྲོགས་པ།

simhanādābhinādin

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.65 solitary buddha

rang sangs rgyas

རང་སངས་རྒྱལ།

pratyekabuddha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally, “buddha for oneself” or “solitary realizer.” Someone who, in his or her last life, attains awakening entirely through their own contemplation, without relying on a teacher. Unlike the awakening of a fully realized buddha (*samyaksambuddha*), the accomplishment of a pratyekabuddha is not regarded as final or ultimate. They attain realization of the nature of dependent origination, the selflessness of the person, and a partial realization of the selflessness of phenomena, by observing the suchness of all that arises through interdependence. This is the result of progress in previous lives but, unlike a buddha, they do not have the necessary merit, compassion or motivation to teach others. They are named as “rhinoceros-like” (*khadḡaviṣāṇakalpa*) for their preference for staying in solitude or as “congregators” (*vargacārin*) when their preference is to stay among peers.

g.66 suchness

de bzhin nyid

དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད།

tathatā

The ultimate nature of things beyond all concepts.

g.67 Suvarṇottamaprabhāsrī

gser mchog 'od dpal

གསེར་མཚོ་གཤོང་དཔལ།

**suvarṇottamaprabhāsrī*^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Glorious Golden Light.”

g.68 svastika

bkra shis ldan

བརྟ་ཤིས་ལྷན།

svastika

An ancient Indian symbol of auspiciousness and eternity.

g.69 Tatsvabhāvāpratiṣṭhita

de'i rang bzhin du mi gnas pa

དེའི་རང་བཞིན་དུ་མི་གནས་པ།

**tatsvabhāvāpratiṣṭhita*^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Naturally Nonabiding.”

g.70 thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

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.71 Vaiśālī

yangs pa can

ཡངས་པ་ཅན།

vaiśālī

The ancient capital of the Licchavi republican state, the Buddha visited this city several times during his lifetime. It is perhaps most famous as the location where, on different occasions, Buddha cured a plague, admitted the first nuns into the Buddhist order, was offered a bowl of honey by monkeys, and announced his parinirvāṇa three months prior to his departure.

g.72 Vikramasaṃdarśakacintin

rtsal brtan por sems pa

ཕུལ་བརྟན་པོར་སེམས་པ།

**vikramasaṃdarśakacintin* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Capable Steadfast Intention.”

g.73 Vikrīdamāna

rnam par rtse

རྣམ་པར་རྩེ།

**vikrīdamāna* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Playful One.”

g.74 Vikurvāṇarāja

rnam par 'phrul pa'i rgyal po

རྣམ་པར་འཕྲུལ་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

vikurvāṇarāja

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.75 Vimalaprabhāsa

dri med pa'i 'od

དྲི་མེད་པའི་འོད།

vimalaprabhāsa

The name of a certain number of thus-gone ones.

g.76 Vīrya

brtson 'grus

བརྟོན་འགྲུས།

**vīrya* ^{RS}

The name of a bodhisattva. “Effort.”

g.77 Viśeṣamati

khyad par blo gros

ཁྱད་པར་བློ་གྲོས།

viśeṣamati

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.78 Vyūharāja

bkod pa'i rgyal po

བཀོད་པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

vyūharāja

The name of a bodhisattva.

g.79 wishlessness

smon pa med pa

སློན་པ་མེད་པ།

apraṇihita

One of the three gateways to liberation; the absence of conceptual modes of mind.

g.80 worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དགའ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

A person who has accomplished the final fruition of the path of the hearers and is liberated from saṃsāra.

g.81 Yeshé Dé

ye shes sde

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

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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.

