

། །སྐྱོད་ལྟུང་གྱིས་འཚོ་བ།

The City Beggar Woman

Nagarāvalambikā

འཕགས་པ་གྲོང་ཁྱིམ་འཚོ་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa grong khyer gyis 'tsho ba zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The City Beggar Woman”

Āryanagarāvalambikānāmamahāyānasūtra

· Toh 205 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 62 (mdo sde, tsha), folios 92.a–93.b

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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1

This short Mahāyāna sūtra tells of a beggar woman from the city of Śrāvastī whose modest offering of a lamp at Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's park, is contrasted with the lavish offering of lamps being made at the same time by Prasenajit, who was the king of Kośala and a major benefactor of the Buddha Śākyamuni and his community. While King Prasenajit's extravagant donations fill a thousand large lamps with oil and burn so bright that a wide area around the monastery is illuminated, the beggar woman has only a tiny amount of oil with which to make her modest offering. As she lights the lamp, she does so with the sincere prayer that she too may one day achieve enlightenment and become a teacher of the Dharma, just like the Buddha. Her small lamp burns bright through the night and cannot be extinguished, no matter what Maudgalyāyana does as he tries to douse it. When the beggar woman returns the next day and sees her lamp still burning, she is filled with joy, whereupon the Buddha gives one of his magnificent smiles that lights up the cosmos. Asked by Ānanda to divulge the reason for his smile, the Buddha prophesies the almswoman's fortuitous future rebirths and her eventual awakening as a buddha. He then reprises the whole tale in a series of verses.

ac.

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ac.1 Translated and introduced by George FitzHerbert, in consultation with a draft translation by Khenpo Kalsang Gyaltzen and Chodrungrma Kunga Chodron of the Sakya Pandita Translation Group.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. David Fiordalis edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Celso Wilkinson was in charge of the digital publication process.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The City Beggar Woman is a short Mahāyāna sūtra that tells of a poor woman in Śrāvastī who lights an oil lamp in veneration of the Buddha Śākyamuni, makes a vow to become a buddha in the future, and then receives a prophecy of her future buddhahood from the Buddha. As Peter Skilling notes in the introduction to his translation of this sūtra, there are at least two other iterations of this story found elsewhere in the Tibetan Kangyur.¹ One is in *The Chapter on Medicines* in the *Vinayavastu* of the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya,² and the other is chapter 37 of *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*.³ The version in the Tibetan Vinaya also has a close parallel preserved in Sanskrit in the *Divyāvadāna*.⁴ Skilling also notes that the story was among those selected for illustration in Ming dynasty woodcuts of events from the Buddha's life and in other Chinese artworks.⁵

i.2

The different versions of the story all tell of a pauper woman who is “dependent on the city for her livelihood” (Skt. *nagarāvalambikā*).⁶ In all versions, this woman lights an oil lamp at Prince Jeta's Grove that cannot be extinguished due to her great determination of mind in vowing to become a buddha. While sharing this basic plot and some other narrative details, such as a disciple trying to douse the lamp with the edge of his robe, the different versions diverge in various ways. For instance, in the Vinaya and *Divyāvadāna* versions, it is Ānanda who tries to extinguish the lamp, while in this sūtra, and the version found in *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*, it is Maudgalyāyana.

i.3

The framing of the story is also diverse across the different iterations. While the Vinaya and *Divyāvadāna* versions present it as the last of several episodes in a series, in *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* it is followed by a past life story.⁷ The patterns of convergence and divergence between the different iterations, in these and other ways,⁸ are therefore somewhat complicated.

- i.4 Here the story is presented as a standalone Mahāyāna sūtra in which (like the Vinaya and *Divyāvadāna* versions) the beggar woman's humble but sincere offering is contrasted with the extravagant and ostentatious offerings of King Prasenajit.
- i.5 The standalone sūtra does not appear to have been translated into Chinese, and no extant Sanskrit for it has been identified. It was translated into Tibetan during the height of the Tibetan imperial patronage of Buddhism (*snga dar*) in the late eighth or early ninth century and is listed in both the Denkarma and Phangthangma imperial catalogs.⁹ Its colophon states that it was translated by Jñānagarbha¹⁰ and Lui Wangpo, and edited by Vidyākarasiṃha and Devacandra, all of whom were active in Tibet in the early ninth century. It is one of four texts in the Kangyur credited to this particular translation and editorial team, the other three all being *dhāraṇī* texts (Toh 545/892, Toh 546/893, and Toh 718/1037).¹¹
- i.6 This English translation was made from the Tibetan as found in the Degé Kangyur, with reference to the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), and the Stok Palace Kangyur. Peter Skilling's English translation was also consulted.

**The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra
The City Beggar Woman**

1.

The Translation

[F.92.a]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. While staying in Śrāvastī, in Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's park, the Blessed One was served, honored, venerated, and revered [F.92.b] by gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas; by Śakra, Brahmā, and the world protectors; by kings and ministers; and by bodhisattvas, monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Yet he remained like a lotus unsullied by water.¹²

1.2 At that time, in order to venerate the Thus-Gone One, on the full moon day of the last month of autumn, King Prasenajit had a thousand large copper cauldrons filled with grain oil and set them out so that the entire area for four leagues around was illuminated by their flames.

1.3 At the same time, in the great city of Śrāvastī, there was a city beggar woman called Maker of Joy.¹³ She had bought a tiny amount of oil, as a result of which she had gone without food for four days and had grown weak.¹⁴ She took the oil to Prince Jeta's Grove and, using it to light a lamp at the edge of the courtyard, she made this wish:

1.4 "Blessed One, with this root of virtue, may I too become a teacher in the future. May I teach the Dharma and gather a community, just as the thus-gone, worthy, perfect, and complete Buddha does now. If I am to become a buddha in the future, may this oil lamp continue to burn until I return." Whereupon she lit the lamp, and returned to the city.

1.5 The light of that oil lamp illuminated all of Jambudvīpa and the following day the lamp was still burning. Then Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana tried to put it out with the edge of his robe, but he could not. Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana then tried to extinguish it with gales of wind, but still he could not put it out. Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana then went to the

Brahmā realms and caused sheets of rain the size of chariot axles¹⁵ to fall upon this whole trichiliocosm. However, even though he directed the deluge right over the lamp, still he could not douse it.

1.6 Then the Blessed One said, “Let it be, Maudgalyāyana! This lamp has been lit with a mind set on awakening, and a mind set on awakening cannot be overcome by a śrāvaka. [F.93.a] How so? Because no śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha can ever overcome a mind set on omniscience.”

1.7 A while later, as the sun was rising, the woman returned from the city. When she saw that the lamp was still burning brightly, she was filled with tremendous joy.

1.8 At that moment, the Blessed One smiled.¹⁶ It is the nature of things that whenever a blessed buddha smiles, rays of light of many colors—blue, yellow, red, white, crimson, and the colors of crystal and silver—stream forth from the blessed buddha’s mouth. These illuminate and pervade worlds without end, reaching as far as the Brahmā realms where they outshine even the sun and the moon. They then return once again, and, after circling the blessed one thrice, descend into the uṣṇīṣa at the crown of that blessed one’s head. So, indeed, did such rays of light, having circled the Blessed One thrice, disappear into the uṣṇīṣa of the Blessed One’s head.

1.9 Venerable Ānanda then spoke the following verse to the Blessed One:

1.10 “Excellent victor, guide, and best of men,
You do not smile without reason,
So please, with compassion, for the benefit of the world,
Tell us what gives you cause to smile.”

1.11 The Blessed One replied, “Ānanda, this city beggar woman will not fall into a lower rebirth for twenty-eight eons. She will experience only the abundance of the human and god realms, and then will become a thus-gone, worthy, perfect, and complete buddha called All-Illuminating.”

1.12 Then the Blessed One spoke these verses:

1.13 “To venerate the holder of ten powers, Prasenajit lit a thousand fine lamps
[F.93.b]
In huge copper cauldrons, which illuminated everything for four leagues.
The city beggar woman lit a lamp with a tiny amount of oil
And, by the power of the mind set on awakening, it illuminated the whole
world.

1.14 “Maudgalyāyana wanted to extinguish the lamp with his vast magical
powers,
But even powerful gales could not extinguish it.

Sending down sheets of rain the size of chariot axles from the Brahmā
realms,

Still he could not douse that lamp, which shone like the sun.

1.15 “After four days with no food, she came to the delightful Jeta Grove
And, with joyful heart, paid respects with folded hands to the feet of the
Sugata.

The peerless one smiled, and Ānanda, thoroughly delighted, asked,
‘What kind of result does this smile foretell, infinitely radiant one?’

1.16 “In twenty-eight eons, this Maker of Joy will be a victor, a self-arisen one
Known as All-Illuminating, and she will illuminate four great chiliocosms.
In the future, she will make offerings to ten million sugatas;
She will become a universal monarch and venerate the victors.

1.17 “This exemplary tale about a future buddha will delight the faithful¹⁷
And the wise who hear it will also feel joy.
In this way, the qualities of innumerable victors with the ten powers are
inconceivable.
So the matchless result of rejoicing in them will also be inconceivable.”

1.18 Thus spoke the Blessed One, and Venerable Ānanda, the city beggar
woman, the bodhisattvas and monks, along with the gods, humans, asuras,
and gandharvas of the world, rejoiced and thoroughly praised what the
Blessed One had said.

1.19 *This concludes The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The City Beggar Woman.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated by the Indian preceptor Jñānagarbha and Lotsawa Bandé Lui Wangpo. Edited and finalized by the Indian preceptor Vidyākarasiṃha and senior editor Lotsawa Bandé Devacandra.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Skilling 2021, pp. 297–313.
- n.2 *The Chapter on Medicines*, 2021: 9.127–9.136.
- n.3 A history of the *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* is included in the sixth-century Chinese work by Sengyu (445–518 CE) known as *The Collected Records on the Making of the Tripitaka* (*Chu san zang ji ji*). This collection of stories was translated from Chinese into Tibetan during the height of the Tibetan imperial patronage of Buddhism (Tib. *snga dar*), and, much later, into Mongolian. See Skilling 2021, p. 301.
- n.4 For a translation of this Sanskrit version, see Rotman 2008, pp. 282–305.
- n.5 Skilling 2021, p. 301.
- n.6 See “city beggar woman.”
- n.7 In *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* it is appended with a tale of the past in which the Buddha explains that, in a former birth, he was a princess who made lamp offerings to a monk who later became the Buddha Dīpaṃkara.
- n.8 For example, in this sūtra the Buddha predicts that the pauper woman will become a buddha named All-Illuminating in the future, and in *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* the future buddha’s name is somewhat similar. However, in the Vinaya and *Divyāvadāna* versions, the Buddha says that the beggar woman will become a buddha named Śākyamuni in the future, possessing many of the same traits as the Buddha himself.
- n.9 Phangthangma, p. 16; Denkarma, F.299.b; Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p.109.
- n.10 On the question of whether the translator Jñānagarbha can be equated with the Madhyamaka philosopher of the same name, see Skilling 2021, pp. 298–

- n.11 *Spoken by Mañjuśrī Himself* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh545.html>) (Toh 545/892), 2023; *Mañjuśrī's Sworn Oath* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh546.html>) (Toh 546/893), 2023; and *The Dhāraṇī for Developing Insight* (Toh 718/1037), forthcoming.
- n.12 Tib. *pad ma chus ma gos pa bzhin du bzhugs so*. That is to say, he remained unaffected by being served and venerated by his many devotees, like a lotus flower remains unblemished by the muddy water in which it grows.
- n.13 Tib. *dga' byed ma zhes bya ba*. Skilling suggests Nandikā as a possible equivalent for the name. The name *dga' byed ma* is also attested as a translation of Nandinī in *The Root Manual of the Rites of Mañjuśrī* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh543.html#UT22084-088-038-16696>) and *The Tantra of Siddhaikavīra* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh544.html#UT22084-089-001-279>). In the Tibetan translation of *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish*, her name is given as *bsnyen dga' mo*, a feminine form of a name for which the masculine is attested as “Upananda,” and in the Chinese version of that sūtra it is *nantuo 难陀*, which likewise suggests either “Nandinī” or “Nandikā.” In the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya* and *Divyāvadāna* versions of the story her name is not given.
- n.14 Tib. *des 'bru mar sran gre'u dang sbyar ba nyos nas zhag bzhi kha 'tshos te nyam chung bar gyur to*. Skilling notes that *sran gre'u* is similar to *sran khre'u*, which is attested in Negi's dictionary as a translation of *māṣaka* and can mean “a bean,” or “a very small amount.” Skilling also notes that *kha 'tshos* is attested as a translation of *anāhāratāṃ pratipannaḥ*, “she went without food.” This has been preferred over a possible reading of the Tibetan that she bought some “oil mixed with beans” (*'bru mar sran gre'u dang sbyar ba nyos nas*) and subsisting on that for four days became weak. In the *Vinaya* and the *Divyāvadāna*, she begs for a little oil. In *The Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* the narrative is a little more elaborate: she finds a coin and goes to an oil merchant who tells her that such a coin would only buy a useless amount of oil. However, when she tells him she plans to use the oil to make an offering to the Buddha, he is moved by pity and he gives her some more. She then goes directly to the monastery to light the lamp.
- n.15 Tib. *shing rta'i srog shing tsam gyi char* Lit. “rain the size of chariot axles,” is an expression found elsewhere in the Kangyur, for example in *The Questions of Sāgaramati* (Toh 152, [12.28](#)) and *The Questions of Ratnañālin* (Toh 163, [1.35](#)). Skilling translates it as “torrents of water as wide as chariot axles.”

- n.16 The description of many-colored lights emitting from buddhas' mouths when they smile and streaming upward (to the heavens) and downward (to the hells) before returning and being reabsorbed into various parts of the body (relating to what kind of prophecy is being made) is found with various degrees of elaboration in many Kangyur texts. For one such elaborate expression see *The Hundred Deeds (Karmaśataka, Toh 340)*, 2.58–2.66. For a shorter expression of this theme, similar to that found here, see *The Teaching by the Child Inconceivable Radianance (Acintyaprabhāsanirdeśa, Toh 103)*, 1.131.
- n.17 *sangs rgyas rtogs pa brjod pa yi ni dad rnams rab dga' byed*. In light of the Stok Palace version, which reads *sangs rgyas rtogs pa brjod pa'i ming ni dad rnams rab dga' byed*, "the name of [this] exemplary tale about a future buddha will delight the faithful," we have opted to read *yi* as *yis*, as Skilling does. Otherwise, an alternative translation could be "She will delight those who have faith in exemplary tales about future buddhas." This would preserve the subject of *byed* repeated from previous lines.

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 All-Illuminating

kun snang · kun du snang ba

ཀུན་སྒྲུབ་། ཀུན་དུ་སྒྲུབ་བ།

**samantāvabhāsa*^{RS} · **samantāloka*^{RS}

The name of Maker of Joy when she becomes fully awakened after twenty-eight eons.

g.2 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda ^{AD}

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.3 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A type of nonhuman being whose precise status is subject to different views, but is included as one of the six classes of beings in the sixfold classification of realms of rebirth. In the Buddhist context, asuras are powerful beings said to be dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility. They are also known in the pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic mythologies of India and Iran, and feature prominently in Vedic and post-Vedic Brahmanical mythology, as well as in the Buddhist tradition. In these traditions, asuras are often described as being engaged in interminable conflict with the devas (gods).

g.4 bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའ།

bodhisattva ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfilment of the altruistic intention to attain perfect buddhahood, traversing the ten bodhisattva levels (*daśabhūmi*, *sa bcu*). Bodhisattvas purposely opt to remain within cyclic existence in order to liberate all sentient beings, instead of simply seeking personal freedom from suffering. In terms of the view, they realize both the selflessness of persons and the selflessness of phenomena.

g.5 **Brahmā**

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

brahmā ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world; he is also considered to be the lord of the Sahā world (our universe). Though not considered a creator god in Buddhism, Brahmā occupies an important place as one of two gods (the other being Indra/Śakra) said to have first exhorted the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. The particular heavens found in the form realm over which Brahmā rules are often some of the most sought-after realms of higher rebirth in Buddhist literature. Since there are many universes or world systems, there are also multiple Brahmās presiding over them. His most frequent epithets are “Lord of the Sahā World” (*Sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*Mahābrahmā*).

g.6 **Brahmā realms**

tshangs pa'i 'jig rten

ཚངས་པའི་འཛིན་རྟེན།

brahmāloka ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A collective name for the first three heavens of the form realm, which correspond to the first concentration (*dhyāna*): Brahmakāyika, Brahmāpurohita, and Mahābrahmā (also called Brahmāpārṣadya). These are ruled over by the god Brahmā. According to some sources, it can also be a general reference to all the heavens in the form realm and formless realm. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.7 **chilocosm**

stong chen

སྤྲོད་ཆེན།

—

A great “thousandfold universe,” consisting of a thousand worlds each with its own own Mount Meru, four continents, sun, moon, and god realms.

g.8 city beggar woman

grong khyer gyis 'tsho ba

གྲོང་ཁྱེར་གྱིས་འཚོ་བ།

nagarāvalambikā ^{AD}

Lit. “one whose livelihood is from the city.” This is a Tibetan rendering of the Sanskrit *nagarāvalambikā*, referring to a person dependent on the city for alms, or a beggar.

(Skilling 2021, pp. 301–4, includes a detailed discussion of this Sanskrit term and notes that different Tibetan translations of it include the following: *grong khyer gyis 'tsho ba* (“one who is supported by the city,” which is the Tibetan translation found in this sūtra), *grong khyer rten pa* (“city dependent”), *grong khyer gyi sprang po* (“city beggar”), and *grong gi sprang po* (also “city beggar”).)

g.9 community

dge 'dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Though often specifically reserved for the monastic community, this term can be applied to any of the four Buddhist communities—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—as well as to identify the different groups of practitioners, like the community of bodhisattvas or the community of śrāvakas. It is also the third of the Three Jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community.

g.10 Devacandra

de ba tsan dra

དེ་བ་ཙན་དྲ།

devacandra ^{AD}

A Tibetan translator and senior editor (Tib. *zhu chen*) active in the early ninth century.

g.11 exemplary tale

rtogs pa brjod pa

རྟོགས་པ་བརྗོད་པ།

avadāna^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the twelve types of the Buddha’s teaching (*dvādaśāṅga*). In this sense, the Sanskrit word *avadāna* means “exceptional feat” or “magnificent deed,” but in the context of the twelve types of *buddhavacana* the term came to refer to the narrative accounts of such deeds.

g.12 gales of wind

rnam par 'thor ba'i rlung

རྣམ་པར་འཕྲོར་བའི་རླུང་།

vairambhavātā^{AD}

A kind of powerful, gusty wind (the Tibetan translation means “scattering wind” referred to in a wide range of Buddhist literature. The Pali forms are *veramba* or *verambha*. The term *Vairambha* is also found in Buddhist literature as the name of a city and as the name of a sea, famed for its powerful winds. For a detailed discussion, see Skilling 2021, pp. 304–8.

g.13 gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the skies, sometimes said to inhabit fantastic cities in the clouds, and more specifically to dwell on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, where they are ruled by the Great King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They are most renowned as celestial musicians who serve the gods. In the Abhidharma, the term is also used to refer to the mental body assumed by sentient beings during the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Gandharvas are said to live on fragrances (*gandha*) in the desire realm, hence the Tibetan translation *dri za*, meaning “scent eater.”

g.14 garuḍa

nam mkha' lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྗིང་།

garuḍa^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Indian mythology, the *garuḍa* is an eagle-like bird that is regarded as the king of all birds, normally depicted with a sharp, owl-like beak, often holding a snake, and with large and powerful wings. They are traditionally enemies of the *nāgas*. In the Vedas, they are said to have brought nectar from the heavens to earth. *Garuḍa* can also be used as a proper name for a king of such creatures.

g.15 god

lha

ལྷ།

deva^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Cognate with the English term *divine*, the *devas* are most generally a class of celestial beings who frequently appear in Buddhist texts, often at the head of the assemblies of nonhuman beings who attend and celebrate the teachings of Śākyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Buddhist cosmology the *devas* occupy the highest of the five or six “destinies” (*gati*) of *saṃsāra* among which beings take rebirth. The *devas* reside in the *devalokas*, “heavens” that traditionally number between twenty-six and twenty-eight and are divided between the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*), and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*). A being attains rebirth among the *devas* either through meritorious deeds (in the desire realm) or the attainment of subtle meditative states (in the form and formless realms). While rebirth among the *devas* is considered favorable, it is ultimately a transitory state from which beings will fall when the conditions that lead to rebirth there are exhausted. Thus, rebirth in the god realms is regarded as a diversion from the spiritual path.

g.16 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu'i gling

འཛམ་བུ་ནི་གླིང་།

jambudvīpa^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The name of the southern continent in Buddhist cosmology, which can signify either the known human world, or more specifically the Indian subcontinent, literally “the *jambu* island/continent.” *Jambu* is the name used for a range of plum-like fruits from trees belonging to the genus *Szygium*, particularly *Szygium jambos* and *Szygium cumini*, and it has commonly been rendered “rose apple,” although “black plum” may be a less misleading

term. Among various explanations given for the continent being so named, one (in the *Abhidharmakośa*) is that a jambu tree grows in its northern mountains beside Lake Anavatapta, mythically considered the source of the four great rivers of India, and that the continent is therefore named from the tree or the fruit. Jambudvīpa has the Vajrāsana at its center and is the only continent upon which buddhas attain awakening.

g.17 Jñānagarbha

dz+nyA na gar+b+ha

ཇཱ་ན་ག་བླ།

jñānagarbha ^{AD}

The Indian translator of this text. A preceptor (Tib. *mkhan po*) active in Tibet in the early ninth century.

g.18 kinnara

mi'am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name—which means “is that human?”—suggests some confusion as to their divine status. Kinnaras are mythological beings found in both Buddhist and Brahmanical literature, where they are portrayed as creatures half human, half animal. They are often depicted as highly skilled celestial musicians.

g.19 layman

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྟེན།

upāsaka ^{AD}

A male Buddhist practitioner who observes the five vows: not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.20 laywoman

dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྟེན་མ།

upāsikā ^{AD}

A female Buddhist practitioner who observes the five vows: not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.21 league

dpag tshad

དཔག་ཚད།

yojana^{AD}

A standard measure of distance used in ancient India. The Sanskrit literally means “yoking” or “joining.” It is the distance a yoked ox can travel in a day or before needing to be unyoked. Sources calculate the exact distance variably, somewhere between four and ten miles.

g.22 Lui Wangpo

klu'i dbang po

ལྷུ་འི་དབང་པོ།

—

The Tibetan translator of this text, active during the late eight and early ninth centuries. Lui Wangpo was one of the first seven Tibetans to take monastic ordination at the founding of Samyé monastery. He was a member of the Khön family that would later achieve preeminence in Tibet as the leading family of the Sakya school.

g.23 mahoraga

lto 'phye chen po

ལྷོ་འཕྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally “great serpents,” mahoragas are supernatural beings depicted as large, subterranean beings with human torsos and heads and the lower bodies of serpents. Their movements are said to cause earthquakes, and they make up a class of subterranean geomantic spirits whose movement through the seasons and months of the year is deemed significant for construction projects.

g.24 Maker of Joy

dga' byed ma · dga' byed

དགའ་བྱེད་མ། · དགའ་བྱེད།

**nandinī*^{RS} · **nandikā*^{RS}

The name of the beggar woman who receives a prediction of future awakening from the Buddha in *The City Beggar Woman*.

g.25 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu · maud gal gyi bu chen po

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ། མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ་ཚེན་པོ།

maudgalyāyana^{AD} · *mahāmaudgalyāyana*^{AD}

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.26 mind set on awakening

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ལྷན་གྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In the general Mahāyāna teachings the mind of awakening (bodhicitta) is the intention to attain the complete awakening of a perfect buddha for the sake of all beings. On the level of absolute truth, the mind of awakening is the realization of the awakened state itself.

g.27 mind set on omniscience

thams cad mkhyen pa nyid kyi sems

ཐམས་ཅད་མཚུན་པ་ཉིད་གྱི་སེམས།

—

A term closely related to and often used as a synonym for bodhicitta. See “mind set on awakening.”

g.28 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣu*, often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of *prātimokṣa* vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.

In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

g.29 nāga

klu

ལྷ

nāga^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form. Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

g.30 nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སློང་མ།

bhikṣuṇī^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣuṇī*, often translated as “nun,” refers to the highest among the eight types of *prātimokṣa* vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term *bhikṣu* (to which the female grammatical ending *nī* is added) literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist nuns and monks—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity. In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the *Mūlasarvāstivāda* Vinaya, a *bhikṣuṇī* follows 364 rules and a *bhikṣu* follows 253 rules as part of their moral discipline.

For the first few years of the Buddha's teachings in India, there was no ordination for women. It started at the persistent request and display of determination of Mahāprajāpatī, the Buddha's stepmother and aunt, together with five hundred former wives of men of Kapilavastu, who had themselves become monks. Mahāprajāpatī is thus considered to be the founder of the nun's order.

In this text:

See also "monk."

g.31 Prasenajit

gsal rgyal

གསལ་རྒྱལ།

prasenajit ^{AD}

King of Kośala, whose capital city was Śrāvastī, during the time of the Buddha.

g.32 pratyekabuddha

rang sangs rgyas

རང་སངས་རྒྱལ།

pratyekabuddha ^{AD}

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.33 Prince Jeta's Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

jetavana ^{AD}

See "Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's park."

g.34 Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's park

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyī tshal mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ་མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

jetavanam anāthapiṇḍadasyārāmaḥ ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the first Buddhist monasteries, located in a park outside Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India. This park was originally owned by Prince Jeta, hence the name Jetavana, meaning Jeta's grove. The wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, wishing to offer it to the Buddha, sought to buy it from him, but the prince, not wishing to sell, said he would only do so if Anāthapiṇḍada covered the entire property with gold coins. Anāthapiṇḍada agreed, and managed to cover all of the park except the entrance, hence the name Anāthapiṇḍadasyārāma, meaning Anāthapiṇḍada's park. The place is usually referred to in the sūtras as "Jetavana, Anāthapiṇḍada's park," and according to the *Saṅghabhedavastu* the Buddha used Prince Jeta's name in first place because that was Prince Jeta's own unspoken wish while Anāthapiṇḍada was offering the park. Inspired by the occasion and the Buddha's use of his name, Prince Jeta then offered the rest of the property and had an entrance gate built. The Buddha specifically instructed those who recite the sūtras to use Prince Jeta's name in first place to commemorate the mutual effort of both benefactors.

Anāthapiṇḍada built residences for the monks, to house them during the monsoon season, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery. It was one of the Buddha's main residences, where he spent around nineteen rainy season retreats, and it was therefore the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses and events. According to the travel accounts of Chinese monks, it was still in use as a Buddhist monastery in the early fifth century CE, but by the sixth century it had been reduced to ruins.

g.35 root of virtue

dge ba'i rtsa ba

དགེ་བའི་རྩ་བ།

kuśalamūla ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to most lists (specifically those of the Pāli and some Abhidharma traditions), the (three) roots of virtue or the roots of the good or wholesome states (of mind) are what makes a mental state good or bad; they are identified as the opposites of the three mental "poisons" of greed, hatred, and delusion. Actions based on the roots of virtue will eventually lead to

future happiness. The *Dharmasaṃgraha*, however, lists the three roots of virtue as (1) the mind of enlightenment, (2) purity of thought, and (3) freedom from egotism (Skt. *trīṇi kuśalamūlāni | bodhicittotpādaḥ, āśayaviśuddhiḥ, ahaṅkāramamakāraparityāgaśceti |*).

g.36 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśā*). Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

g.37 śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Sanskrit term *śrāvaka*, and the Tibetan *nyan thos*, both derived from the verb “to hear,” are usually defined as “those who *hear* the teaching from the Buddha and *make it heard* to others.” Primarily this refers to those disciples of the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat seeking their own liberation and nirvāṇa. They are the practitioners of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realize the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focus on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), they liberate themselves, attaining first the stage of stream enterers at the path of seeing, followed by the stage of once-returners who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returners who will no longer be reborn into the desire realm. The final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the “four results of spiritual practice.”

g.38 Śrāvastī

mnyan du yod pa · mnyan yod

མཉན་དུ་ཡོད་པ། . མཉན་ཡོད།

śrāvastī^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

During the life of the Buddha, Śrāvastī was the capital city of the powerful kingdom of Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, who became a follower and patron of the Buddha. It was also the hometown of Anāthapiṇḍada, the wealthy patron who first invited the Buddha there, and then offered him a park known as Jetavana, Prince Jeta's Grove, which became one of the first Buddhist monasteries. The Buddha is said to have spent about twenty-five rainy seasons with his disciples in Śrāvastī, thus it is named as the setting of numerous events and teachings. It is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

g.39 Sugata

bde gshogs

བདེག་ཤེགས།

sugata^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the standard epithets of the buddhas. A recurrent explanation offers three different meanings for *su-* that are meant to show the special qualities of “accomplishment of one’s own purpose” (*svārthasampad*) for a complete buddha. Thus, the Sugata is “well” gone, as in the expression *su-rūpa* (“having a good form”); he is gone “in a way that he shall not come back,” as in the expression *su-naṣṭa-jvara* (“a fever that has utterly gone”); and he has gone “without any remainder” as in the expression *su-pūrṇa-ghaṭa* (“a pot that is completely full”). According to Buddhaghōṣa, the term means that the way the Buddha went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*) and where he went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*).

g.40 Thus-Gone One

de bzhin gshogs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata^{AD}

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.41 trichiliocosm

stong gsum · stong gsum gyi 'jig rten gyi khams

སྟོང་གསུམ། · སྟོང་གསུམ་གྱི་འཛིན་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

trisāhasralokadhātu ^{AD}

The universe of a thousand to the power of three, or one billion, world systems.

g.42 uṣṇīṣa

dbu'i gtsug tor

དབུ་འཛིན་གཙུག་རྟེན།

uṣṇīṣa ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the thirty-two signs, or major marks, of a great being. In its simplest form it is a pointed shape of the head like a turban (the Sanskrit term, *uṣṇīṣa*, in fact means “turban”), or more elaborately a dome-shaped extension. The extension is described as having various extraordinary attributes such as emitting and absorbing rays of light or reaching an immense height.

g.43 Vidyākarasiṃha

bid+yA ka ra sing ha

བིདྲ་ཀ་ར་སིང་ཧ།

vidyākarasiṃha ^{AD}

An Indian preceptor (Tib. *mkhan po*) active in Tibet in the early ninth century.

g.44 world protector

'jig rten skyong ba

འཛིན་རྟེན་སྐྱོང་བ།

lokapāla ^{AD}

A collective term for deities committed to protecting Buddhism. Often, but not always, refers to the Four Guardian Kings of the four directions.

g.45 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the jurisdiction of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.