

༄༅། །ཚཱ་ཤེན་རྣམ་པར་འབྱེད་པ།

**Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is
Meaningful**

Dharmārvhāvibhaṅga

འཕགས་པ་ཚོས་དང་དོན་རྣམ་པར་འབྱེད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa chos dang don rnam par 'byed pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful”

Āryadharmārvibhaṅganāmamahāyānasūtra

· Toh 247 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 66 (mdo sde, za), folios 42.b–46.a

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

· Jinamitra · Danaśīla · Yeshé Dé ·



Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

First published 2019

Current version v 1.0.17 (2023)

Generated by 84000 Reading Room v2.26.1

84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha is a global non-profit initiative to translate all the Buddha's words into modern languages, and to make them available to everyone.



This work is provided under the protection of a Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND (Attribution - Non-commercial - No-derivatives) 3.0 copyright. It may be copied or printed for fair use, but only with full attribution, and not for commercial advantage or personal compensation. For full details, see the Creative Commons license.

This print version was generated at 9.10pm on Thursday, 28th November 2024 from the online version of the text available on that date. If some time has elapsed since then, this version may have been superseded, as most of 84000's published translations undergo significant updates from time to time. For the latest online version, with bilingual display, interactive glossary entries and notes, and a variety of further download options, please see <https://84000.co/translation/toh247>.

co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- ti. Title
- im. Imprint
- co. Contents
- s. Summary
- ac. Acknowledgements
- i. Introduction
- tr. The Translation
 - 1. Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful
- c. Colophon
- n. Notes
- b. Bibliography
- g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

s.1 There are two main themes in *Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful*. One is in the narrative structure: The Buddha Śākyamuni tells how, countless eons ago, in a world called Flower Origin, a buddha named Arisen from Flowers gave instructions to a royal family, and prophesied the awakening of the prince Ratnākara. Arisen from Flowers, the Buddha Śākyamuni then relates, has since become the buddha Amitābha, and the prince Ratnākara the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The other theme is doctrinal, and lies in the content of the teaching given by Arisen from Flowers: it explains the four mistakes made by ordinary beings in the way they perceive the five aggregates, and how bodhisattvas teach them how to clear away these misconceptions, so that they may be free of the sufferings that result.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 Translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the guidance of Chökyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Anna Zilman and Timothy Hinkle. Andreas Doctor compared the translation with the Tibetan and edited the text.

The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful is a scripture that in the Degé Kangyur belongs to the General Sūtra section. The sūtra is set in Śrāvastī, in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, where the Buddha Śākyamuni is residing with a gathering of monks and bodhisattvas. In delivering his teaching, Śākyamuni describes an ancient world known as Flower Origin,¹ in which lived a buddha called Arisen from Flowers.² That world was governed by a king known as Attainment of Victory, under whose rule everyone practiced the Great Vehicle. Prompted by the prince Ratnākara, the royal family goes to meet Arisen from Flowers. That buddha then teaches the audience about the insubstantial and unsatisfactory nature of the aggregates, and describes beings' tendency to perceive the aggregates in a flawed manner: while the aggregates are actually impermanent, repulsive, unclean, and unreal, sentient beings conceive of them as lasting, beautiful, pure, and true. The Buddha Śākyamuni further explains how beings are themselves a product of their actions, and that the five aggregates (the components that together constitute a sentient being) are not purposely created by anyone.

i.2

The sūtra thus presents a version of the well-known "four errors" (*catvāro viparyāsāḥ*, *phyin ci log pa bzhi*), often described in Buddhist canonical literature as the main underpinnings of sentient beings' mistaken view of the world: erroneously perceiving (1) the impermanent to be permanent, (2) the painful to be pleasant, (3) the dirty to be clean, and (4) what has no self to have a self.³ The four errors are discussed extensively not only in the Abhidharma, but also in the *Catuhśataka* of Āryadeva (fl. third century), where each is treated in a separate chapter (chapters 6–9).⁴ The present sūtra invokes the four errors, but instead of presenting the illusion that the painful is pleasant, it speaks of the illusion that the repulsive (*mi sdug pa*) is beautiful (*sdug pa*). Aside from this minor twist, the context remains that of the usual four errors.

- i.3 Once the Buddha Arisen from Flowers has taught the audience, the king, queen, prince, and the entire retinue all take ordination. The thus-gone one then prophesies Prince Ratnākara's awakening, revealing his future name, world, lifespan, and the nature of his teachings. Toward the end of the sūtra, the Buddha Śākyamuni reveals the current identity of the main characters of his narrative. Arisen from Flowers has now become the buddha Amitābha, and Ratnākara has become the bodhisattva known as Avalokiteśvara. In the remainder of the sūtra, Śākyamuni reveals that anyone who faithfully receives this Dharma teaching will be reborn in Sukhāvātī (the buddha realm of Amitābha) and that all women who touch or read this sūtra will be able to exchange their female bodies for male forms and never again take rebirth in a female body.⁵
- i.4 The title of the sūtra could be interpreted in a number of different ways, some of which would require translations other than the one we have chosen. *Chos* (*dharma*) could refer to qualities, factors, practices, states, phenomena, or the teachings, while *don* (*artha*), too, has a wide range of meanings including object, referent, goal, purpose, worth, use, meaning, and cause. We have inevitably had to narrow the possibilities down to produce a rendering in English.⁶
- i.5 There is no extant Sanskrit version of this scripture, and the sūtra does not appear to have been translated into Chinese. In producing this translation, we have based our work on the Degé xylograph Kangyur while consulting the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), as well as the Stok Palace manuscript Kangyur. The colophon of the sūtra states that it was translated by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla, as well as the prolific Tibetan translator Yeshé Dé. We can therefore date the Tibetan translation to the late eighth or early ninth century, and this is confirmed by the text's inclusion in the early ninth century Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) and Phangthangma (*'phang thang ma*) catalogues.⁷

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra
Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful

1.

The Translation

[F.42.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was staying in Śrāvastī, in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park. He was there together with a great saṅgha of monks, as well as a great saṅgha of bodhisattvas.

1.3 At that time, the Blessed One recounted the following to the bodhisattva great being [F.43.a] Delighted by Victory:

1.4 "Noble son, at a past time countless, limitless, immeasurably many eons ago, there was a world called Flower Origin. It was abundantly prosperous and happy, had good crops, and was delightful. It was filled with many people, and was as even as the palm of a hand. Noble son, in the world Flower Origin dwelled the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Arisen from Flowers. He still abides there, alive and well, teaching the Dharma to the fourfold assembly, as well as to gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, demigods, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and non-humans.

1.5 "Noble son, in the world Flower Origin lived the ruler Attainment of Victory. He was a universal emperor, who had as his dominion the entire trichiliocosm. Noble son, under the king's rule⁸ beings had found happiness and well-being, followed the path of the ten virtuous deeds, and were satisfied with their spouses. Everyone there had entered but a single vehicle: they had entered the Great Vehicle. They had entered the supreme vehicle. They had entered the main vehicle. They had entered the true vehicle. They had entered the foremost vehicle—the best, the finest, and the highest vehicle. The vehicle they had entered was higher than the highest: the unsurpassed vehicle. They had entered the unequalled vehicle. They had entered the matchless vehicle. They had entered the inconceivable vehicle.

- They had entered the unfathomable vehicle. [F.43.b] Noble son, under the rule of that king Attainment of Victory, vehicles other than the Great Vehicle were unheard of.
- 1.6 “Noble son, in his retinue of queens King Attainment of Victory had ninety-nine thousand wives, none of whom had entered any other vehicle. They all belonged solely to the Great Vehicle, longed for the Dharma day and night, and took delight in the Dharma. Noble son, that king’s primary wife Ratnaśrī, who was a beloved⁹ bodhisattva, followed the Buddha, the Dharma,¹⁰ and the Saṅgha. She belonged to the Great Vehicle, longed for the Dharma at all times, and found delight only in the joy of the Dharma.
- 1.7 “Noble son, once, while Ratnaśrī was seated upon a splendid lion throne, her son Ratnākara got down from her lap where he had been sitting in the cross-legged posture. He was adorned with divine ornaments, attired with divine fabrics, and his body was adorned with the excellent major and minor marks. As soon as he got down, the child asked his mother, ‘Mother, is the thus-gone Arisen from Flowers still alive?’
- 1.8 “The queen Ratnaśrī answered the young child:
- “ ‘My only son, the omniscient one,
The protector of the world,
The unsurpassed one who delights all—
He is alive in the world of gods and humans.’
- 1.9 “The prince Ratnākara then said to his parents, ‘Father and Mother, come here! We must go to the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Arisen from Flowers in order to behold him, to pay homage and make offerings, to serve him, and to receive Dharma teachings from him. If you wonder why we need to do so, Father and Mother, it is because the Thus-Gone One performs hardships in the world of gods and humans.
- 1.10 “ ‘He is a protector liberating those who have not been liberated.
He grants eyesight to the blind.
He is heroic and courageous with regard to the Dharma. [F.44.a]
He is as unwavering as a great mountain.’
- 1.11 “King Attainment of Victory and Queen Ratnaśrī then brought their son and the retinue of queens and servants and went before that blessed one. They circumambulated that blessed one seven times and offered him extremely valuable pearl necklaces, after which they all sat down among the assembly. Noble son, the prince then rose up into the sky to the height of seven palm trees by means of his miraculous ability, and showered upon the blessed Arisen from Flowers a rain of jewels, flowers, and incense. He then proclaimed to that blessed one:

- 1.12 “ ‘O Teacher, you have crossed
The great river of suffering,
And ferry beings across it.
I have come here to see you, Omniscient One.
- 1.13 “ ‘As the unsurpassed protector of the world,
There is no one who has ever matched you,
Or displayed such qualities as yours,
In the world of gods and humans.
- 1.14 “ ‘You establish in the Lesser Vehicle
Beings who have strayed onto negative paths,
Those who are under the sway of desire and anger,
And then you teach the Great Vehicle.
- 1.15 “ ‘You are skilled in means and courageous,
A master of great compassion.
The Dharma is meaningful and you are sated by the Dharma;
You set forth the Dharma and are a source of all qualities.
- 1.16 “ ‘Also, knowing phenomena to be unborn
And without substance,
You know their true nature.
That is how you perform hardships.’
- 1.17 “The young prince praised that blessed one in this manner, then
circumambulated him and sat before him.
- 1.18 “The Blessed One looked in all directions with his broad eyes, which
resembled the petals of a lotus flower. Knowing the minds and mental states
of the fourfold assembly, he said to King Attainment of Victory:
- 1.19 “ ‘Great King, although the five aggregates are insubstantial, childish
ordinary beings think of them as being substantial. [F.44.b] Great King, the
aggregates look awful; they smell terrible; they ooze pus and blood; they are
like wood, clods of dirt, or roads; and they are insubstantial, inert, and
interlinked with joy and sorrow. They are linked to each other by chains of
craving, are full of affliction, and are vile. Still, ordinary beings think that
such insubstantial things are substantial; they think that impermanent
things are permanent, repulsive things are beautiful, unclean things are
clean, and unreal things are real. Great King, the five aggregates are
“painted” by one’s own karma. As an analogy, O Great King, there is no
painter who paints the peacock’s five-colored tail, and neither is there any

paint involved. Rather, it is painted by the peacock's own karma. Great King, in the same way, childish ordinary beings arise from reciprocal conditions, painted by their own karma.'

1.20 "At this point the bodhisattva great being Invincible Lord¹¹ stood up among the assembly, circumambulated the Blessed One, draped his shawl over one shoulder, knelt down on his right knee, and bowed with joined palms.

1.21 "He said to the Blessed One, 'Blessed One, these aggregates do look awful and smell terrible; they ooze blood and pus; they are like wood, clods of dirt, walls, or roads; they are insubstantial and inert. Childish ordinary beings think that these things have substance, but these beings are like the mistaken, the blind, and the confused. They have fallen into bewilderment. They are completely enveloped in darkness, obscurity, and veils. They are lost in the dense thicket of all their wrong views. Blessed One, these four collections of the Dharma are all profound; they are like space. [F.45.a] Blessed One, will any beings ever come to understand correctly the statements that are spoken in discourses such as this?'

1.22 "The blessed Arisen from Flowers answered that bodhisattva great being, 'Noble son, whenever bodhisattva great beings manifest, it will be in order to purify beings. They teach them the Dharma in accordance with their inclinations. They cut through the cravings of those who are tormented by craving. They clear away the suffering of those tormented by pain. Knowing all phenomena to be insubstantial and knowing them to be like space, they direct sentient beings to the nature of phenomena. Bodhisattvas are then known as purifiers of beings.'

1.23 "When that blessed, thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Arisen from Flowers had delivered this teaching concerning sentient beings, King Attainment of Victory cut off his hair and beard. His son, as well as Queen Ratnaśrī and the retinue of queens and servants, likewise all cut off their hair and they all took ordination with the Blessed One.

1.24 "The Blessed One now spoke to the assembly: 'Noble children, look at the young prince. Noble children, this sublime being has produced roots of virtue in the company of ninety-nine trillion buddhas. On all of these occasions he has become a Dharma preacher. And this person here has always been the father of that sublime being. This sublime being has always ripened beings to unsurpassed and perfect awakening. Noble children, as soon as I pass into parinirvāṇa, the young prince Ratnākara will become a buddha. He will be seated in front of the tree of awakening, which will be bedecked with various precious stones. When he attains awakening, he will become a thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha. [F.45.b] He will be someone learned and virtuous, a well-gone one, a knower of the world, a charioteer

who guides beings, an unsurpassed being, a teacher of gods and humans, a blessed buddha known as Splendorous King of Shining Light. His world will be known as Painted with Many Jewels. He will have an immeasurable saṅgha of hearers. He will have a lifespan of ninety-six trillion eons. The appearance of his sacred Dharma will remain for seven million five hundred thousand years.'

1.25 "Noble son, at that time, when the prophecy concerning that bodhisattva great being was made, eighty-four thousand beings gained acceptance that phenomena are unborn. Noble son, should you wonder, question, or have doubts regarding the identity of the thus-gone one of that time, there is no need. Why so? Noble son, it is the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Amitābha who was known at that time as the thus-gone Arisen from Flowers and who taught the Dharma in that world. Noble son, should you wonder, question, or have doubts regarding the identity of the prince known as Ratnākara at that time, there is no need. Why so? Noble son, it is the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara who was at that time the son of King Attainment of Victory. That thus-gone one prophesied, 'He will gain awakening from me.' "

1.26 The bodhisattva great being Delighted by Victory, who was among the retinue, now joined his palms and asked the Blessed One, "Blessed One, will beings who have not produced roots of virtue ever even hear this Dharma teaching, [F.46.a] let alone commit it to writing, commission it to be written, retain it, recite it, or offer flowers, incense, and incense powder to it?"

1.27 The Blessed One replied to the bodhisattva great being Delighted by Victory, "Noble son, only those who have served as many buddhas as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River will come across this discourse. Noble son, those sentient beings who hear this Dharma teaching and do not doubt it will be reborn in the realm of Sukhāvātī after they die and pass from this world. Noble son, any place where this discourse is kept will become worthy of homage. Noble son, later, in the future, any woman who holds or reads aloud this Dharma teaching will exchange her female body and be reborn in the realm of Sukhāvātī. That will be her last birth as a female.¹² She will, moreover, behold the thus-gone Amitābha at the moment of death."

1.28 Once the Blessed One had spoken, the bodhisattva great being Delighted by Victory, the other bodhisattvas, the monks, and the rest of the assembly, along with the world with its gods, humans, demigods, and gandharvas, all rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

1.29 *This concludes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra "Distinguishing Phenomena and What Is Meaningful."*

c.

Colophon

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

n.

NOTES

- n.1 The Sanskrit name for this world is most likely *puṣpākara*. This is attested in Negi for *me tog gi 'byung gnas* and it is found in Edgerton (1998, p. 350) as the name of a buddha. We have not, however, found a world by this name, i.e., a *puṣpākara-loka*, and have therefore rendered this name in English translation.
- n.2 Although canonical sources list past buddhas known either as *puṣpa*, *puṣpita*, or *puṣpakṛta*, we have not found an attested Sanskrit for the Tibetan *me tog las byung ba*. We have therefore preferred to use the English translation of this name, rather than attempt a reconstruction, especially because clear lists and equivalents for such names of buddhas as these do not as yet seem to be available. For a discussion of the names of buddhas listed in the *Bhadra-kalpikasūtra*, see Skilling (2010) and, in particular, Skilling (2014).
- n.3 For a discussion of these four errors, see Lang (2003).
- n.4 See Lang (1986).
- n.5 This notion that women might be obliged to turn into or be reborn as men in order to awaken to buddhahood, somewhat jarring to modern sensibilities, is a common idea found throughout Mahāyāna literature. For more on this theme, see Nattier (2002). Statements of this kind are partially counterbalanced by passages in other sūtras in which the role of gender is downplayed or deconstructed.
- n.6 In translating *don* as “what is meaningful,” we have taken as one of the only available cues the single occurrence of the word in the text—in the third line of 1.15. Although the translation of this line renders *chos* as “the Dharma” rather than as “phenomena,” the play between the different meanings of this word in this and the following stanza in the source text, and the possible ambiguities that result, are probably intentional.

- n.7 In the Denkarma catalogue, which is usually thought to date to c. 812 CE, the sūtra is included (F.299.b.3) among the “Miscellaneous Sūtras” (*mdo sde sna tshogs*) less than one hundred śloka in length, but the order of the words in the title is inverted to *don dang chos rnam par 'byed pa* (“Distinguishing What is Meaningful and Phenomena”). See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 111, no. 208. In the Phangthangma catalogue, the title is the same as in all Kangyurs.
- n.8 Tibetan: *tshig rab*.
- n.9 Translated based on the Stok Palace Kangyur: *sdug pa*. The Degé Kangyur reads: *sdud pa*.
- n.10 Translated based on the Yongle, Lithang, Kangxi, Narthang, Choné, Lhasa, and Stok Palace Kangyurs: *sangs rgyas dang chos*. The Degé Kangyur reads: *sangs rgyas pa'i chos*.
- n.11 The Tibetan for this bodhisattva’s name is *mi pham dbang phyug*. *mi pham* translates the Sanskrit *ajita*, which is an epithet typically associated with Maitreya. It is therefore possible that the bodhisattva mentioned here could be the well-known Maitreya.
- n.12 See [n.5](#).

b.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- '*phags pa chos dang don rnam par 'byed pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo* (*Āryadharmārthavibhāganāmamahāyānasūtra*). Toh 247, Degé Kangyur vol. 66 (mdo sde, za), folios 42.b–46.a.
- '*phags pa chos dang don rnam par 'byed pa ces bya ba thegs pa chen po'i mdo*. Stok no. 116, *stog pho brang bris ma*, vol. 64 (mdo sde, pa), folios 349.a–354.b.
- '*phags pa chos dang don rnam par 'byed pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo*. bka' 'gyur (dpe bsdur ma) [Comparative Edition of the Kangyur], krung go'i bod rig pa zhib 'jug ste gnas kyi bka' bstan dpe sdur khang (The Tibetan Tripitaka Collation Bureau of the China Tibetology Research Center). 108 volumes. Beijing: krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang (China Tibetology Publishing House), 2006–2009, vol. 66, pp. 117–27.
- Denkarma (*pho brang stod thang ldan dkar gyi chos kyi 'gyur ro cog gi dkar chag*), Toh. 4364. Degé Tengyur, vol. 206 (sna tshogs, jo), folios 294.b–310.a.
- Edgerton, Franklin. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary 2: Dictionary*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1998.
- Herrmann-Pfandt, Adelheid. *Die lHan kar ma: ein früherer Katalog der ins Tibetische übersetzten buddhistischen Texte*. Wien: Verlag der österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2008.
- Lang, Karen C. (1986). *Āryadeva's Catuṣṣataka: On the Bodhisattva's Cultivation of Merit and Knowledge*. Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1986.
- (2003). *Four Illusions: Candrakīrti's Advice to Travelers on the Bodhisattva Path*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Nattier, Jan. "Gender and Enlightenment: Sexual Transformation in Mahāyāna Sūtras." Unpublished manuscript, University of Indiana, 2002.
- Negi, J. S. *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*. 16 vols. Sarnath, Varanasi: Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, 1993–2005.

Skilling, Peter. "Notes on the Bhadrakalpika-sūtra." *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University XIII* (2010), pp. 195–229.

Skilling, Peter, and Saerji. "How the Buddhas of the Fortunate Aeon First Aspired to Awakening: The pūrva-praṇidhānas of Buddhas 1–250." *Annual Report of the International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology at Soka University XVII* (2014), pp. 245–91.

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 that phenomena are unborn

mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣānti

The realization that all phenomena are beyond birth.

g.2 Amitābha

'od dpag med

འོད་དཔག་མེད།

amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The buddha of the western buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī, where fortunate beings are reborn to make further progress toward spiritual maturity. Amitābha made his great vows to create such a realm when he was a bodhisattva called Dharmākara. In the Pure Land Buddhist tradition, popular in East Asia, aspiring to be reborn in his buddha realm is the main emphasis; in other Mahāyāna traditions, too, it is a widespread practice. For a detailed description of the realm, see *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī*, Toh 115. In some tantras that make reference to the five families he is the tathāgata associated with the lotus family.

Amitābha, “Infinite Light,” is also known in many Indian Buddhist works as Amitāyus, “Infinite Life.” In both East Asian and Tibetan Buddhist traditions he is often conflated with another buddha named “Infinite Life,” Aparimitāyus, or “Infinite Life and Wisdom,” Aparimitāyurjñāna, the shorter version of whose name has also been back-translated from Tibetan into Sanskrit as Amitāyus but who presides over a realm in the zenith. For details on the relation between these buddhas and their names, see *The Aparimitāyurjñāna Sūtra (1)* Toh 674, i.9.

g.3 Arisen from Flowers

me tog las byung ba

མེ་ཏོག་ལས་བྱུང་བ།

—

A former buddha who is presently the Buddha Amitābha.

g.4 Attainment of Victory

rgyal ba thob pa

རྒྱལ་བ་ཐོབ་པ།

—

The ruler of the world Flower Origin.

g.5 Avalokiteśvara

spyang ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the “eight close sons of the Buddha,” he is also known as the bodhisattva who embodies compassion. In certain tantras, he is also the lord of the three families, where he embodies the compassion of the buddhas. In Tibet, he attained great significance as a special protector of Tibet, and in China, in female form, as Guanyin, the most important bodhisattva in all of East Asia.

g.6 Dānaśīla

dA na shI la

དྲན་ཤི་ལ།

dānaśīla

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

g.7 Delighted by Victory

rgyal bas dga'

རྒྱལ་བའ་དགའ།

—

The bodhisattva to whom this sūtra is spoken.

g.8 demigod

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

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.9 five aggregates

phung po lnga

ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ།

pañcaskandha

The constituents of a human being: form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness.

g.10 Flower Origin

me tog gi 'byung gnas

མེ་ཏོག་གི་འབྱུང་གནས།

—

The buddha realm of the Buddha Arisen from Flowers.

g.11 four errors

phyin ci log bzhi

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་བཞི།

caturo viparyāsā

Taking what is impermanent to be permanent, what is painful to be delightful, what is unclean to be clean, and what is no self to be a self.

g.12 gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva

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.13 garuḍa

nam mkha' lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྗེ་དུ།

garuḍa

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.14 Invincible Lord

mi pham dbang phyug

མི་ཕམ་དབང་ཕུག

—

A bodhisattva in the assembly of the buddha Arisen from Flowers.

g.15 Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park

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

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

jetavanam anāthapiṇḍadasyārāmaḥ^{AO}

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 Anāthapiṇḍadasyārāmaḥ, meaning Anāthapiṇḍada's park. The place is usually referred to in the sūtras as "Jetavana, Anāthapiṇḍada's park," and according to the *Samghabhedavastu* 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.16 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇོན་མི་ཏྲ།

jinamitra

An Indian Kashmiri paṇḍita who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. He worked with several Tibetan translators on the translation of a number of sūtras.

g.17 kinnara

mi'am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara

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.18 mahoraga

lto 'phye chen po

ལྷོ་འཕྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga

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.19 nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

A semidivine class of beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments and who are known to hoard wealth and esoteric teachings. They are associated with snakes and serpents.

g.20 Painted with Many Jewels

kun nas rin po ches yang dag par bris pa

ཀུན་ནས་རིན་པོ་ཆེས་ཡང་དག་པར་བྲིས་པ།

—

The buddha realm in which Prince Ratnākara will attain awakening.

g.21 parinirvāṇa

yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa

ཡོངས་སུ་སྐྱུ་རྒྱ་ལས་འདས་པ།

parinirvāṇa

The final stage of passing into nirvāṇa, which occurs when a worthy one or a buddha passes away.

g.22 Ratnākara

rin chen 'byung gnas

རིན་ཆེན་འབྱུང་གནས།

ratnākara

The son of King Attainment of Victory, who will become the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara.

g.23 Ratnaśrī

rin chen dpal

རིན་ཆེན་དཔལ།

ratnaśrī

The queen of King Attainment of Victory.

g.24 Śākyamuni

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀུ་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.25 Splendorous King of Shining Light

'od zer kun nas mngon 'phags dpal brtsegs rgyal po

འོད་ཟེར་གུན་ནས་མངོན་འཕགས་དཔལ་བརྟེན་གས་རྒྱལ་པོ།

—

The name of Prince Ratnākara once he attains awakening.

g.26 Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉན་ཡོད།

śrāvastī

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.27 Sukhāvātī

bde ba can

བདེ་བ་ཅན།

sukhāvātī

The buddha realm, located in the western direction, in which Buddha Amitābha resides.

g.28 trichiliocosm

stong gsum

སྟོང་གསུམ།

trisāhasralokadhātu

A universe containing one billion worlds.

g.29 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

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 rule 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.

g.30 Yeshé Dé

ye shes sde

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

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.