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Verses for Prasenajit

Prasenajidgāthā

གསལ་རྒྱལ་གྱི་ཚིགས་སྲུ་བཅད་པ།

gsal rgyal gyi tshigs su bcad pa

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SUMMARY

- s.1 In *Verses for Prasenajit*, the Buddha proclaims the benefits of constructing, beautifying, maintaining, and worshiping the stūpas and images of awakened beings who have passed away.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This text was translated by Elizabeth Angowski, who also wrote the introduction and annotated the translation.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. David Fiordalis edited the introduction, translation, and annotations, and supplied additional information by consulting the Sanskrit manuscript held at the Cambridge University Library. Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Sameer Dhingra was in charge of the digital publication process.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *Verses for Prasenajit* is a text that belongs to the General Sūtra section of the Kangyur. Its title refers to King Prasenajit, who is said to have ruled over the country of Kośala during the time of the Buddha. At the outset of the text, King Prasenajit asks the Buddha Śākyamuni, in verse, how it is that people can secure happiness in future lifetimes by making offerings to awakened beings after they have passed away. The Buddha responds in verse on the benefits of constructing, beautifying, maintaining, and worshipping at the stūpas and images of such beings.¹ Near the end of the sūtra, the Buddha also devotes three stanzas to the benefits of donating to the saṅgha, noting that those who give bedding as well as fine food and drink to renunciants will one day enjoy such finery in kind.

i.2 *Verses for Prasenajit* primarily highlights the mundane rewards a person can expect to receive as a result of venerating the stūpas and images of awakened beings. Prominent examples include great physical beauty and strength, political power, esteem, and abundant resources, like elegant garments and ornate, comfortable homes. In fact, reading *Verses for Prasenajit*, one is struck by just how many of the benefits of stūpa and image worship relate to physical attractiveness and corporeal ease. Although several lines do speak to the attainment of virtue or liberation, most pertain to material gains.²

i.3 This is not to say that *Verses for Prasenajit* advocates a focus on securing beauty and comfort above all else, however. Rather, it seems to underscore the idea that stūpa and image worship can benefit everyone, regardless of an individual's current situation or ultimate goals. We see this idea conveyed especially in stanzas that treat the attainment of mundane rewards and progress along the spiritual path as outcomes of the same act of veneration. For example, if people put on a crown (or bind a turban) at a stūpa, they will obtain fortune *and* liberation. Similarly, someone who sweeps up around a stūpa can expect to become beautiful *and* free from the flaws of craving. In

short, deeds that result in auspicious rebirths might simultaneously lead one farther down the path to awakening. Or, as Vincent Tournier puts it, worldly boons can serve as “markers of one’s progress toward Awakening.”³

i.4 As its stanzas progress, *Verses for Prasenajit* casts a wide net over its imagined audience. Although the Buddha is ostensibly addressing Prasenajit, a king who might be inclined to sponsor the wholesale construction of a stūpa, his words conjure up a world in which many people, not just wealthy monarchs, interact with sacred sites and images. Certain people might not be able to fund a stūpa’s construction entirely, but perhaps they could support the construction of the spire, for example. Still others might not have the resources to offer things like bells and parasols, but they could help keep a stūpa and its grounds clean. At one point, the Buddha tells Prasenajit that those who offer “whatever special offerings they have and can afford...will attain unsurpassable awakening,” encapsulating the idea that stūpa veneration can be realized in many ways by people of various inclinations and means.

i.5 *Verses for Prasenajit* lacks a colophon, and thus the translator remains unknown. The inclusion of the text’s title in the Denkarma (*Idan dkar ma*)⁴ and Phangthangma (*’phang thang ma*) catalogs of Tibetan translations of the imperial era, however, suggests that it was translated sometime during the late eighth or early ninth century.

i.6 Thematically, *Verses for Prasenajit* is of a piece with sūtras like *The Avalokīṅ Sūtra* (Toh 195), *Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One* (Toh 320), *The Verses on Circumambulating Shrines* (Toh 321), and *The Sūtra on Commissioning Images to Be Made of the Tathāgata* (*Tathāgatabimbakārāpaṇa-sūtra*),⁵ a fragment of which is preserved among the Gilgit manuscripts.

i.7 In terms of historical significance, recent evidence suggests that a version of *Verses for Prasenajit* was a source for donative inscriptions at Ajaṅṭā, the complex of Buddhist vihāras and cave monuments constructed in central India from the second century BCE through to the sixth century CE. Echoed in Ajaṅṭā’s tenth and twenty-second caves is a stanza⁶ that appears seventh within the Tibetan *Verses for Prasenajit*, namely:

i.8 “Those who produce an image of the Victor here,
They will possess beauty, charm, and good qualities.
Their senses restrained, brilliant as the sun,
They will become beautiful for all the world to behold.”

i.9 Together with Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā*, then, *Verses for Prasenajit* seems to be one of only two known works that serve as a source for the Ajaṅṭā inscriptions.⁷

i.10 Non-Tibetan sources for *Verses for Prasenajit* include two Sanskrit fragments from Gilgit and two complete Sanskrit manuscripts, one housed in the Potala and the other held at the Cambridge University Library. The Potala manuscript, which bears the title *Prasenajitparipṛcchāsūtra* (*The Sūtra of Prasenajit's Question*) rather than *Prasenajidgāthā* (*Verses for Prasenajit*), has been edited and collated with the Gilgit fragments by Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā (Vinita Tseng) within *A Unique Collection of Twenty Sūtras in a Sanskrit Manuscript from the Potala* (2010).⁸ Ven. Vinītā notes that the collection as a whole lacks a colophon, perhaps because only the first forty-four leaves are preserved, and she states that there is insufficient evidence to date it, save to say that because it quotes *The Sūtra on the Descent into Laṅkā* (*Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, Toh 107), the collection appears to be later than that text.⁹ However, Jonathan Silk, in a review of Ven. Vinītā's work, speculates that the manuscript could be from the thirteenth century.¹⁰

i.11 By comparison, the Cambridge manuscript has so far received less scholarly attention since the time of its acquisition.¹¹ Like the Potala manuscript, however, it is also a collection of texts of which two are complete in the extant fragment: this text, which bears the title *The Question of Prasenajit* (*Prasenajitparipṛcchā*), and also a complete version of *The Verses on Circumambulation* (*Pradaḥṣiṇāgāthā*). For a further discussion of the latter, see the translation of Toh 321. The Potala's Sanskrit manuscript version of the text includes thirty-three stanzas, whereas the Cambridge manuscript version has thirty-five. The latter includes all of those stanzas found in the former and has them in almost the same order, albeit with some variations of terminology and phrasing, plus two additional stanzas. One of these additional stanzas is also found in one of the Gilgit manuscripts, but neither of them seems to be in the Tibetan translation. The Tibetan version, by contrast, has a total of fifty-nine stanzas.¹² The Tibetan further differs from the Potala and Cambridge Sanskrit manuscripts in that it exhibits a greater variation in the sequencing of the stanzas it has in common with those manuscripts. Therefore, it seems likely that the basis for the Tibetan translation stemmed from a different version of the work.

i.12 Ven. Vinītā's *A Unique Collection* contains the first and only edition and English translation of a Sanskrit version of the text. In tandem with her edition and translation of the Potala manuscript, she includes a transcription and edition of the Gilgit fragments and of the Tibetan translation based on five witnesses, including the Degé, Gondhla, Peking, and Stok Palace versions. Ven. Gyalten Lekden published an online English translation of the Tibetan in 2019.¹³ Otherwise, no other complete translations of *Verses for Prasenajit* have been published in any European language.

i.13 This translation is based primarily on the Degé Kangyur, the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), and the Stok Palace Kangyur. Other Kangyurs were also consulted, as were Ven. Vinīta's Sanskrit and Tibetan editions as well as the Sanskrit manuscript held at the Cambridge University Library. The most significant findings from this comparative work are cited in the notes.

Verses for Prasenajit

1. The Translation

[F.201.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

After setting aside his parasol, crown,
Fly whisk, sword, and bejeweled shoes,
And joining his palms and bowing properly,
King Prasenajit asked the Protector of the World a question:

1.2 “How, O supreme mind,¹⁴ do people attain happiness in other lives,
By making offerings to the thus-gone ones,
Who, intent on helping and compassionate by nature,
Have entered nirvāṇa?”

1.3 Since the Blessed One, a lion among men, [F.201.b]
Has the eye of direct perception¹⁵ on all things, past and future,
He provided these answers to Prasenajit’s question,
In the presence of Ānandabhadra:

1.4 “How, by worshiping the victors,¹⁶
Do people, in other lives,
Obtain the various rewards¹⁷ they desire?
Listen, O King, to the answer to your question!

1.5 “However many particles make up stūpas and images of the Blessed One,
As numerous as those shall be the kingdoms assuredly attained,
In heaven and on earth,
By people who construct them.¹⁸

1.6 “Having experienced all the supreme levels of perfect
Meditative absorption of the form and formless realms,
Ultimately, they will obtain the state of buddhahood,

Which is free from the suffering of birth, old age, and so on.

- 1.7 “Those who produce an image of the Victor here,
They will possess beauty, charm, and good qualities.
Their senses restrained, brilliant as the sun,
They will become beautiful for all the world to behold.¹⁹
- 1.8 “Those who produce an image of the Sugata,
Their bodies will be unblemished,
Soft, and wide—like the calyx of a lotus—
Free from fear, disease, sorrow, and pain.²⁰
- 1.9 “Someone who produces an image of the Protector of the World
Will not be born a slave or a servant;
They will not become a beggar or an outcast,
And their sense faculties, moreover, will not be deficient.
- 1.10 “People who build a stūpa of the Lord of Sages
Will be utterly unafflicted, their entire body strong,
With superior resources and many jewel treasures.
They will also be able to defeat throngs of enemies.
- 1.11 “By offering the central pillar within a stūpa of the Victor,
They will accomplish the Dharma and what accords with it,²¹
And they will possess supreme morality, learning, and forbearance.
In every world, they will accomplish all their goals.
- 1.12 “By offering the tiered parasol spire,
They will be reborn among gods and humans,
And like Nārāyaṇa’s body, their entire body will be strong.
They will become someone with qualities that command respect.
- 1.13 “By coating a stūpa of the Lord of Sages with whitewash, [F.202.a]
They will have a long life in the worlds of gods and humans,
Their body and mind will be freed from disease and distress,²²
And they will be constantly happy and wealthy.
- 1.14 “After causing a stūpa of the Lord of Sages
To be covered with resplendent strips of gold and silver,²³
People in other, different existences
Will have bodies that are firm and luminous as well as radiant and beautiful.
- 1.15 “Whoever, with a faithful mind,
Offers a canopy to a stūpa or statue,
Will rule, entirely and unhindered, as the sole victor

Over the earth, boundless as the shores of the ocean.

- 1.16 “By joyfully setting up
Many kinds of broad parasols at stūpas of the Sugata,
In worlds of gods and humans they will become like parasols,²⁴
Just like lords of gods and lords of humans.
- 1.17 “People who hang various beautiful banners
On reliquaries that have become pure sources of merit
Will come to possess power
And become objects of worship in the three realms.
- 1.18 “By putting a crown on a stūpa of the Sugata,²⁵
They will obtain the fortune of the lord of humans and the fortune of the lord
of gods;
And then, having experienced supreme bliss,
They will obtain the special crown of liberation.²⁶
- 1.19 “By offering bells to stūpas of the Victor,²⁷
They will have compelling speech²⁸ and great fame,
The pleasant, melodious voice of Brahmā, and recall of previous lives,
And they will obtain various adornments.²⁹
- 1.20 “Whichever wise person, with a faithful mind,
Hangs a garland at a stūpa of the Sugata,
That meritorious person will, over their head,
Wear many precious golden garlands.
- 1.21 “Those who drape ornaments on stūpas of the Teacher
Will go about the world adorned
With multistranded necklaces, collar necklaces,
Bracelets, and the finest armlets.³⁰
- 1.22 “Those who smear earth and cow dung³¹
On a stūpa of the Sugata
Will be happy and born among gods and humans,
With bodies that are beautiful, utterly pure, and flawless.
- 1.23 “By sweeping around a stūpa of the Lord of Sages, [F.202.b]
They will be very pleasant to see, beautiful to the eye,
With a fine countenance, lotus-hued,
And free from the flaws of craving.³²
- 1.24 “Whoever smears a stūpa of the Sugata
With oil mixed with the best fragrances

- Will be worshiped with incense,
And their body, anointed with sandalwood, will be like the rays of the sun.
- 1.25 “Whoever washes a stūpa of the Lord of Sages
With scented water, clean and clear,
Will have an unblemished body, free of pain,
With a soft complexion, free of sorrow.
- 1.26 “One who beautifies, with various paints,
The shrines at a stūpa of the Buddha³³
Will become enveloped in³⁴
All the various qualities of the Sugata.
- 1.27 “Those who, in the springtime,³⁵
settle all the dust around a stūpa with clean water,
For them, women will joyfully wave away dust
With golden-handled fans.
- 1.28 “Whoever, for the sake of the Three Jewels,
Creates a mandala that delights the noble ones
Will have hands and feet with webbed fingers and toes,
And every limb, too, will be flawless.
- 1.29 “Whoever offers flowers to the Three Jewels,
Along with freshly grown fruit,
Will, as they transmigrate among beings,
Obtain every supreme taste and possess indomitable might.³⁶
- 1.30 “Whoever venerates a statue of the Victor here
With vast garlands and cascades of flowers
Will, among the worlds of gods and humans,
Be well dressed in various, attractive garments.³⁷
- 1.31 “Those who offer fragrances at stūpas of the Buddha,
With infusions of many and various types of incense,
As well as agarwood incense,
Will have their entire body perfumed.
- 1.32 “Whoever joyfully donates yak-tail fans
To a stūpa of the Sugata,
That eminent one will also be fanned significantly
By the joyful mind, the yak-tail fan, that is the compassion of the victors.
- 1.33 “Whoever offers to the omniscient one a delightful mirror,
Totally stainless, like the full moon,

- Will, amid their series of rebirths,
Be suitable to gaze at by gods and men. [F.203.a]
- 1.34 “Those who offer to the stūpa of the Sugata
Whatever special offerings they have and can afford,
Accordingly will attain unsurpassable awakening,
Which is stainless and devoid of sorrow.
- 1.35 “Whoever pays homage to stūpas or statues of the Buddha,
Respectfully bowing their heads,
Will, among gods and humans,
Occupy a place of greater and greater esteem.
- 1.36 “Those who, with devotion, circumambulate
Stūpas or statues of the Sage
Will have their enemies bow to them in future lives
And they will become a fine vessel, full of virtues.
- 1.37 “Those who, with joyful devotion,
Perform physical activities
At stūpas and statues of the Unsurpassed One
Will have abundant riches in every lifetime.³⁸
- 1.38 “By offering musical sounds to a stūpa of the Victor,
They will have perfect eloquence, profound and coherent—
With charming words, complete with the five attributes,
The sound of their voices will fill the world.
- 1.39 “Whoever extols the reliquary of the Victor
Will hear the sounds of flutes and singing,
As well as pleasant, charming sounds,
And will obtain correct discernment.
- 1.40 “People who suitably³⁹ cover the head of the World’s Superior
With grass or bricks,
Or inspire others to do so—either way,
They will be like a refuge for all beings.
- 1.41 “People who construct a temple to the Victor
Will, as they transmigrate among beings,
Obtain a splendid home like the abode of the lord of gods
And happiness across all seasons of the year.
- 1.42 “In the higher realms, states that are the result of excellent karma,
Like Constant Happiness, where one is happy for an eon,

- They will frolic, lack sorrow,
And finally obtain a state of peace.
- 1.43 “Whoever erects a main gate to the Sage—
A beautiful archway like the bend of a rainbow—
Will, in other lives, obtain mansions
With doors completely decorated.
- 1.44 “Whichever people who, out of devotion
And in order to protect the teacher’s reliquary,
Establish a moat and a gate, [F.203.b]
Their enemies in other lives will not be able to rend them from their glorious
qualities.
- 1.45 “Whoever mends cracks in old stūpas,
Not acting on another’s behalf
But of their own accord,
Will become adorned with a fine body and the best qualities.
- 1.46 “By clearing away wilted flowers from a stūpa of the Victor,
Without being impassioned by desire or becoming hostile in anger,
Without being deluded in ignorance or becoming engrossed in wrong
views,⁴⁰
People will become very joyful and happy.
- 1.47 “Whoever offers elephants bedecked with hanging bells⁴¹
And chariots harnessed to tamed horses
To the Teacher and the community of noble ones
Will obtain the unsurpassed Great Vehicle.
- 1.48 “Those beings who offer sparkling, choice gems
To the Protector of the World
Will obtain the seven precious jewels
And the precious, pure factors of awakening.
- 1.49 “By offering clothing to a stūpa of the Victor,
While wearing the clothes of modesty—by this meritorious act⁴²
They will be joyful, endowed with all virtues, unselfish,
As well as smooth skinned and golden hued.
- 1.50 “By offering a butter lamp at a stūpa of the Incomparable One,⁴³
They will have eyes like fully blossomed blue lotuses,
Clear, attractive, elongated, and beautiful,
And they will have the unblemished divine eye.

- 1.51 “Whoever offers rows⁴⁴ of butter lamps at a stūpa
Will have attractive eyes like fully developed lotus buds,⁴⁵
Elongated and sapphire hued,
Worthy of men’s and women’s admiration.
- 1.52 “At night, those who sit, palms joined, before the Great Sage
And offer wicks for butter lamps according to their means⁴⁶
Will gain rewards in other lives,
And obtain a body with the luster of a large gem.
- 1.53 “If, when butter lamps offered to the Victor die out,
Joyful minds become delighted at this
And revive the wicks,
They will also surely obtain fivefold vision.
- 1.54 “Some people, those with virtuous minds,
Rejoice in the deeds done by others at a stūpa of the Victor,
And even though such deeds are not done by them,
In essence it is as if they also perform those deeds. [F.204.a]
- 1.55 “Whoever joyfully gives bedding and seats
To those who come from morally disciplined communities,
Such a person, while cycling through the realms of existence,
Will obtain a lion’s throne⁴⁷ and the best of seats.
- 1.56 “Those who give to the saṅgha
Fine food fitting for a renunciant
Will, amid the wilderness of cyclic existence,
Obtain food rich in color, taste, and so on.
- 1.57 “Those who give to the saṅgha
Ample drink fitting for a renunciant
Will, amid the wilderness of cyclic existence,
Obtain drink rich in color, taste, and so on.
- 1.58 “Those who practice the excellent way of the holy Dharma,
Having heard it proclaimed by the World’s Teacher,
Will swiftly cross the ocean of existence
Amid the most frightening waves of afflictive emotions.
- 1.59 “O King, since all these virtuous deeds
Ripen into various worldly pleasures,
Then the fruit that is the sublime awakening of the buddhas
Will be just as easy to attain.”

1.60 Then, after the king, radiant with joy, circumambulated the sage and the saṅgha and bowed down his head at the feet of the Lord of Sages, he departed the Jeta Grove.

1.61 *“Verses for Prasenajit” is complete.*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 See the 84000 Knowledge Base article, “Stūpa (<https://read.84000.co/knowledgebase/EFT-KB-STUPA.html>).”
- n.2 We might compare this emphasis with other well-known sūtras that detail the rewards of stūpa and image worship. See, for example, *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (Toh 113), 2.105–2.123, where, at the end of each stanza on the topic, awakening is assured.
- n.3 See Tournier 2015, p. 180, as well as pp. 182, 192, and 197, on the coexistence of mundane benefits with the supreme goal in sūtras like *Verses for Prasenajit*.
- n.4 In this catalog, dated to ca. 812 CE, *Verses for Prasenajit* is included among the “Hīnayāna sūtras” (*theg pa chung ngu’i mdo*). See Denkarma, 301.a.2. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 159, no. 291. *Verses for Prasenajit* is preceded by *The Verses of Nāga King Druma* (*klu’i rgyal po rnga sgra’i tshigs su bcad pa*, Toh 325) and followed by *Verses on Circumambulating Reliquaries* (*mchod rten bskor ba’i tshigs bcad*, Toh 321).
- n.5 On this text in relationship to *Verses for Prasenajit*, see Tournier 2015, pp. 194–96.
- n.6 See Cohen 2006, p. 301 on Inscription 52 in Cave X and p. 331 on Inscription 90 in Cave XXII. For a translation of the Sanskrit, see Vinītā 2010, p. 217.
- n.7 On this point, see Tournier 2015, p. 192. An e-text version of this sūtra can be found at Tathāgatabimbakārāpaṇasūtra (http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/gretil/corpustei/transformations/html/sa_tathAgatabimbakArApaNasUtra.htm). GRETIL edition input by Klaus Wille, based on the edition by Adelheid Mette, “Zwei kleine Fragmente aus Gilgit: I. *Tathāgatabimbakārāpaṇasūtra* (Gilgit-Ms. No. 18); II. *Devatāsūtra* un *Alpadevatāsūtra*

(Gilgit-Ms. No. 13).” *Studien zur Indologie und Iranistik* 7 (1981), 133–51. Input July 31, 2020.

- n.8 For further details on the state of this manuscript, see Vinītā 2010, pp. xv–xvii.
- n.9 Vinītā 2012, p. xvii.
- n.10 Silk 2013, p. 63, n. 3.
- n.11 The existence of this manuscript only came to our attention at the editorial phase of this project. Therefore, we had insufficient time to integrate its evidence fully into our translation and notes. However, we have made a preliminary investigation of its readings and noted some of them in the annotations to the translation. We acknowledge Péter-Dániel Szántó, whose remarks on another text led us to become aware of the existence of this additional manuscript.
- n.12 See Vinītā 2010, p. 258, Appendix II, for tables comparing the verses as they appear in the Potala manuscript, one of the Gilgit manuscripts, and the Tibetan, respectively. Her study does not take into account the Cambridge manuscript.
- n.13 The translation can be accessed [here](https://publishing.simplebuddhistmonk.net/index.php/downloads/translations/kangyur-sutra/verses-of-prasenajit/) (<https://publishing.simplebuddhistmonk.net/index.php/downloads/translations/kangyur-sutra/verses-of-prasenajit/>) (last accessed June 2024).
- n.14 Unlike in the Tibetan, which separates the terms *blo mchog* and *bde ba*, their Sanskrit equivalents, *agrabuddhe* and *sukha*, are adjacent in the Sanskrit manuscripts from the Potala and Cambridge. Vinītā (2010, p. 212, nn. 2–3) emends both terms in the Potala MS such that *agrabuddhe* becomes *agrabuddheḥ*, the genitive (or ablative) singular form of *agrabuddhi* (feminine), and *sukha* becomes *sukhaṃ*, the accusative form one finds in the Gilgit and Cambridge manuscripts that preserves the verse. In the Gilgit manuscript (1581, 5–6) cited in Vinītā 2010 (p. 212, n. 2), she renders a genitive relationship between the terms, i.e., “the bliss of the ultimate understanding.” Ven. Gyalten Lekden (2019), in his translation, takes the terms to be related by a conjunction, i.e., “supreme awareness and bliss.” However, Silk (2013, p. 71), in examining Ven. Vinītā’s translation of this stanza, suggests that the line should read, “How do mortal beings obtain bliss in other [future] existences through making offerings to the supreme sagacious one...” This reading reflects what would be a locative sense of *agrabuddha* (m.) rather than a genitive of *agrabuddhi* (f.). Still, we have a further option, namely *agrabuddhe* as the vocative of *agrabuddhi* (f.). Tournier (2015, p. 191, n.

- 40) favors this reading, translating *agrabuddhe* as “supremely sagacious one” and citing the Gilgit manuscript that preserves this verse where it shows *agryabuddhe* as further support for doing so. The Cambridge MS also reads *agrabuddhe*, supporting both Silk and Tournier’s interpretations without emendation. It seems likely that the Tibetan translator(s) understood *agrabuddhe* as a vocative.
- n.15 Preferring the variant in the Stok Palace Kangyur: *mngon sum spyan*. The Degé and the Pedurma (sans notes) show *mngon sum spyad* for *aparokṣacakṣuḥ*.
- n.16 While the Degé and Stok have *rgyal ba dag* and *rgyal ba rnam*s respectively, several other Kangyurs have *mchod rten dag*. See, for example, the Choné, Lhasa, Lithang, Narthang, and Yongle. Translating *mchod rten* instead of *rgyal ba*, the line would read, “How, by making offerings to stūpas, do people obtain the various rewards they desire in other lives?”
- n.17 The Degé reads *rnma smin 'dod pa sna tshogs ci thob pa* while the Stok reads *rnma smin 'dod pa rgya chen sna tshogs 'thob*. Observing the *ci* in the Degé, the line has been translated as a question above, i.e., “How, by worshiping the victors, do people, in other lives, obtain the various rewards they desire? Listen, O King, to the answer to your question!” However, the Stok (as well as the Phukdrak and Gondhla) reflect the Sanskrit more closely with the inclusion of *rgya chen* for *vipulaṃ*, and they do not include *ci*. A translation that would reflect those versions would be, “By worshiping the victors accordingly, people, in other lives, obtain the abundant, various rewards they desire. Listen, O King, to the information you requested!”
- n.18 This stanza, the fifth in the Tibetan, is the first that is not in the Sanskrit manuscripts.
- n.19 Cohen (2006) provides a translation of the lines that echo this verse at Ajaṅṭā. See p. 301 on Inscription 52 in Cave X and p. 331 on Inscription 90 in Cave XXII. On the Ajaṅṭā inscriptions as they relate to verses of *Verses for Prasenajit*, see also Tournier 2015, pp. 184–85.
- n.20 For this line, the Tibetan translation reflects the reading that is preserved in the Cambridge MS, *rogaśokabhayaaduḥkhavimuktaṃ*, over the one found in the Potala MS, which has *sarvarogabhayaśokavimuktaṃ* (“free of all disease, fear, and sorrow”). The Gilgit MS does not contain this verse.
- n.21 *chos dang rjes 'thun* [preferring the Narthang var. *mthun*] *chos la sgrub pa* could be rendered as “one conforms with the Dharma and accomplishes the Dharma.” However, the line reflects the Sanskrit *dharmānudharma*, and on this

compound, Edgerton (p. 27) points us to the Pali Text Society's Pali English Dictionary (p. 36), which states that *dhammānudhamma* is "to be judged as a redupl. cpd. [reduplicative compound] after the manner of cpds.

[compounds] mentioned under *anu* iv. & meaning 'the Law in all its parts, the dhamma and what belongs to it, the Law in its fullness.' " The Gondhla manuscript (284.b.6), where we find eleven syllables instead of nine, captures this sense more fully: *chos dang rjes su mthun ba'i chos la sgrub pa dang*.

- n.22 This line varies across versions, particularly in terms of the seventh syllable. E.g., the Degé reads *lus sems nad dang mya ngan byed spangs te*; the Stok has *lus sems nad dang mya ngan rgud spangs te*; the Phukdrak MS reads *lus sems nad dang mya ngan rab spangs*; and the Gondhla has *lus sems nad myed mya ngan myed spangs te*. For comparison, the Potala MS has *śokāgni-rogojjhitasarvadehā* ("the whole body freed from the fire of anguish and disease"), whereas the Cambridge MS has *rāgāgniśokājjhitacittadehā* ("the body and mind free from sorrow and the fire of passion"). The Gilgit MS appears to split the difference with *śokāgni-rogojjhitacittadehāḥ* ("the body and mind free from disease and the fire of sorrow").
- n.23 *gser dngul spa ba'i glegs mos g.yogs pa yi*. The Potala MS reads *suvarṇarūpyojjvala paṭṭabaddhaṃ*, while the Cambridge MS has *paṭṭabandhaṃ*. It may be that the term *spa ba* in this line is doing double duty as a way to evoke the sense of both *ujjvala* ("blazing up," "luminous") and *baddhaṃ* or *bandhaṃ* ("bound") in *paṭṭabaddhaṃ* or *bandhaṃ*. The terms *paṭṭabaddha* and *paṭṭabandha* refer to a binding or crowning of the head with a turban, an Indian symbol of royalty. The line could be meant to suggest that sheets or strips of gold and silver come together to cover the stūpa in a turban-like fashion.
- n.24 The parasol (Skt. *chattra*, Tib. *gdugs*) symbolizes protection and secular wealth or royalty. On this point, see Beer (1999), pp. 176–80 and *The Transformation of Karma* (Toh 339), section 1.71.
- n.25 Skt. *vibaddhapattāṃ sugatasya caitye* ("a turban tied on a stūpa of the Sugata").
- n.26 Tournier (2015, pp. 192–93) discusses the idea of a crown or turban of liberation.
- n.27 Cf. *The Transformation of Karma* (Toh 339), section 1.72, on the significance of offering bells.
- n.28 The Degé reads *tshig btsan* while the Phukdrak MS reads *phyug btsun*. Vinītā (2010: p. 225, n. 1) emends *tshig btsan* to *tshig btsun*, which makes sense for the Skt. *ādeyavākyaḥ* ("speech that is agreeable"). Above, we attempt a middling

position between “agreeable” or “noble” (*btsun*) speech and “forceful” or “authoritative” (*btsan*) speech with the use of “compelling.”

- n.29 *rgyan rnams sna tshogs 'thob*. While the Tibetan here does not specify that people will obtain bodily adornments, the Sanskrit includes °*āṅgāḥ*, i.e., “limbs” adorned with various ornaments.
- n.30 *de dag do shal rgyan phreng nor bu dang / gdu bu dag dang dpung rgyan mchog rnams kyis*. Skt. MS *hārārdhahāraiḥ kaṭakaiḥ saharṣaiḥ keyūravaryaiś ca vibhūṣitāṅgāḥ*. See Vinītā (2010, p. 224, n. f) for a comparison to KaṭhA (p. 33, 30.12) where we find *hārārdhahāraiḥ kaṭakair anekaiḥ keyūrataḍaṅkavidhair upetāḥ*. It is unclear exactly how many types of ornamentation are being understood in the Tibetan. Vinītā (2010, p. 227), following the Potala manuscript, translates four, i.e., necklaces of various strings (*hārārdhahāra*), bracelets (*kaṭaka*), necklaces (*saharṣa*), and excellent armlets (*keyūravarya*). In the Tibetan, it seems to be a question of how *do shal*, *rgyan phreng*, and *nor bu* function together. We take *do shal rgyan phreng* to translate *hārārdhahāra* and *nor bu* for *saharṣa*. As Vinītā (2010, p. 227, n. a) notes, we do not find *saharṣa* but rather *harṣa* for “necklace” in Edgerton, and in that definition, which includes the Tibetan *mgul gdub*, we see a citation of the series “harṣa-kaṭaka-keyūra- (etc.) [LV] 295.4.” The precise distinction between the types of necklaces is unclear, but it could be that *do shal rgyan phreng* refers to multiple, longer strands of pearls (or the like), which are clasped together at each collarbone, while *nor bu* could refer to shorter pieces like chokers or collar-style necklaces.
- n.31 Cow dung is considered sacred in Indian culture and is thought to possess many beneficial qualities. It is used as a base covering for interior floors in village buildings and as a covering for walls and, in this case, a sacred object such as a stūpa.
- n.32 Taking the variant *sred pa* for Degé *srid pa*. The Degé has *srid pa' i skyon rnams*, i.e., “the flaws of existence.” However, *sred pa* occurs widely over *srid pa*. See, for example, the Phukdrak, Gondhla, and Stok Palace manuscripts. Therefore, based on the prevalence of *sred pa*, it seems likely that the Tibetan translators understood this phrase in the sense of *tṛṣṇārajasā vimuktā*, i.e., “free from the flaws of craving,” which occurs in both the Cambridge and Gilgit manuscripts, rather than *kṛṣṇārajasā vimuktā*, which, based on the Potala Sanskrit manuscript, Vinītā translates as “free from the black impurity.” See Vinītā 2010, pp. 240, n. 4, and 241, n. b.
- n.33 Tentative translation of *mchod rten sku gzugs khang*. The term *mchod rten sku gzugs* might be from *caityabimba*, i.e., the dome of the stūpa, or from

stūpabimba, which Monier-Williams defines as *maṇḍala*. In context, however, it seems likely to refer to shrines or the walls within them.

- n.34 *brtsegs par 'gyur* (“to become layered” with something). Above, the sense is that just as one would paint a stūpa with coats of paint, the person who does so will become coated (or laminated) with the Sugata’s qualities; more simply, one will come to possess them.
- n.35 The Tibetan here is *dpyid ka'i dus*, i.e. “springtime,” while the Sanskrit is *grīṣmakāla*, i.e., “summertime,” or more specifically the hot, dry season during which a windy day can blow the dust everywhere. *Grīṣma* typically occurs in the months of April and May according to the Gregorian calendar.
- n.36 The Degé and Phukdrak MS read *ro mchog kun thob mi rdzi stobs dang ldan*; the Stok has *mi rje'i stobs*; and the Gondhla reads *myi'i stobs*. It is unclear how the elements of this line relate to one another. It could be that one will experience all supreme tastes *and* they will have a level of strength that cannot be dominated. On the other hand, perhaps it is that one will have an indomitable might as a result of which one obtains all supreme tastes.
- n.37 *cha byad yid 'ong sna tshogs legs par brgyan*. While the Potala manuscript has *svalaṃkṛtās citramanojñaghoṣāḥ* for this line, the Gilgit Buddhist Manuscript 1 reads *svalaṃkṛtās citramanojñaveṣāḥ*, which more closely aligns with the use of *cha byad* (Skt. *veṣa*), i.e. “garments,” in the Tibetan. The Cambridge MS appears to read *varṇṇāḥ* (“coverings”).
- n.38 The Degé reads *shin tu rgyas*; however, there is an interesting variation in the Phukdrak MS, which reads *sangs rgyas 'gyur*, i.e., “they will become a buddha.” See Tournier 2015, pp. 193–94, on how, at some point in its history, *Verses for Prasenajit* might have been “updated” to align with the bodhisattva ideal.
- n.39 Reading *rigs pas* with Peking, whereas Degé and Stok have *rig pas* (“with intelligence”).
- n.40 *'dod chags chags med zhe sdang sdang* (Phukdrak: *skye*) *mi* (Stok: *med*) *'gyur / gti mug rmongs med lta ngan chags mi 'gyur*. Skt. *na rāgaraktā na ca doṣaduṣṭā / na mohamūḍhā na kudṛṣṭisaktāḥ*. Vinītā (2010, p. 239) translates the Sanskrit as follows: “Not impassioned by desire, nor defiled by hatred, nor bewildered by ignorance, nor engaged in wrong doctrines.” In this stanza, the Tibetan *chags* serves as a translation for the terms *rakta* and *sakta*, both of which convey a sense of becoming excited by and/or engaged in something.
- n.41 Taking the Lhasa variant *dril dpyangs* for the Degé *dril spyangs*.

- n.42 Taking the Choné and Narthang variants *byas* over *byams* in the Degé and the Stok, which aligns with the Sanskrit *punyakṛtā*.
- n.43 Understanding *dpe med mchod rten* as “a stūpa of the Incomparable One,” rather than “an incomparable stūpa,” based on the Potala and Gilgit MSS, which read *nivedyānupamasya caitye*. The Cambridge MS reads here *sugatasya caitye* (“a stūpa of the Sugata”).
- n.44 In the Degé (203.b.5) block print, it looks like it could read either *mar me dngar ba 'bul* or *mar me dang rab 'bul*. The Pedurma (581) shows *mar me dang rab 'bul* but the Stok Palace manuscript has *mar me dngar ba 'bul*. Vinītā emends what she takes to be *dang rab* in the Degé to *dra ba* (Skt. *jāla*). Considering how many variants reflect the Old Tibetan term *dngar ba*, it seems more likely, however, that the text should read *mar me dngar ba 'bul*, i.e., an offering of butter lamps that are “arranged” or “made into rows” (*dngar ba*).
- n.45 *mdzod rab rgyas*. The Potala has *susamṛddhakoṣā*; the Gilgit has *susamṛddhakoṣo*; the Cambridge has *susamṛddhakoṣā*. Vinītā (2010, p. 238, n. 4) emends *koṣā* to *koṣā* and translates the phrase as “perfect flower-buds” (p. 239). Rather than understand *koṣa* (or *koṣa*) in the sense of “treasury” or “storehouse,” common English translations for the Tibetan *mdzod*, one should understand it in this context to refer to “the sheath or integument of a plant,” which is here the bud of the blue lotus. On this definition, see Monier-Williams, p. 314.
- n.46 Taking the Stok variant *'tsham par* for the Degé *mtshan ma*.
- n.47 Taking the Phukdrak, Gondhla, and Stok variants *seng ge'i* over the Degé *gser gyi*, which is in line with the Skt. *siṃhāsanāni*.

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 Ānandabhadra

kun dga' bzang po

ཀུན་དགའ་བཟང་པོ།

ānandabhadra

—

A monk mentioned as being present at the dialogue.

g.2 beggar

dbul bo

དབུས་བོ།

daridra

—

Poor, needy, deprived of, or a beggar.

g.3 Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

—

—

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 $\sqrt{bhañj}$ (“to break”).

g.4 central pillar

srog shing

སྟོག་ཤིང།

yaṣṭi

—

The central pillar is an essential element of the domed stūpa with a significant ritual importance.

g.5 Constant Happiness

rtag tu dga'

རྟག་ཏུ་དགའ།

—

—

In this text, a realm where one is happy for an eon.

g.6 correct discernment

so so yang dag rig pa

སོ་སོ་ཡང་དག་རིག་པ།

pratisaṃvid

—

This refers to the four forms of discernment or special knowledge that pertain to meaning, phenomena, definitions, and eloquence.

g.7 crown

cod pan

ཙོད་པན།

uṣṇīṣa · paṭṭa

—

A crown or turban that dons the head of the king and symbolizes royalty.

g.8 five attributes

yan lag lnga

ཡན་ལག་ལྔ།

pañcāṅga

—

The five aspects of the clarity of melodious speech are as follows: it is intelligible and brings full comprehension, is worthy to listen to and without unpleasant intonations, has depth and resonance, is generous and pleasant to hear, and is unruffled.

g.9 fivefold vision

spyan lnga

སྤྱན་ལྔ།

pañcacakṣuḥ

—

These comprise (1) the eye of flesh, (2) the eye of divine clairvoyance, (3) the eye of wisdom, (4) the eye of Dharma, and (5) the eye of the buddhas.

g.10 fly whisk

mga yab

ཇ་ཡབ།

vālavyajana

—

A chowrie, a fly whisk, or a yak-tail fan.

g.11 have entered nirvāṇa

mya ngan 'das pa

མྱ་ངན་འདས་པ།

parinirvṛta

—

Literally “those who have been fully extinguished.” In Sanskrit, the term *nirvāṇa* literally means “extinguishment” and the Tibetan *mya ngan las 'das pa* literally means “gone beyond sorrow.” As a general term, it refers to the cessation of all suffering, afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), and causal processes (*karma*) that lead to rebirth and suffering in cyclic existence, as well as to the state in which all such rebirth and suffering has permanently ceased.

g.12 Jeta Grove

rgyal byed tshal

རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཚལ།

jetavana

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A park in Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India. It was owned by Prince Jeta, and the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, wishing to offer it to the Buddha, bought it from him by covering the entire property with gold coins. It was to become the place where the monks could be housed during the monsoon season, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery. It is therefore the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses.

g.13 Kośala

ko sha la

ཀོ་ཤ་ལ།

kośala^{AD}

An ancient kingdom, northwest of Magadha, abutting Kāśī, whose capital was Śrāvastī. During the Buddha's time it was ruled by Prasenajit. It presently corresponds to an area within Uttar Pradesh.

g.14 lord of the gods

lha dbang

ལྷ་དབང།

—

—

Usually an epithet for Indra or Śakra, the chief of the gods who dwells in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

g.15 meditative absorption

ting nge 'dzin

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In a general sense, *samādhi* can describe a number of different meditative states. In the Mahāyāna literature, in particular in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, we find extensive lists of different samādhis, numbering over one hundred.

In a more restricted sense, and when understood as a mental state, *samādhi* is defined as the one-pointedness of the mind (*cittaikāgratā*), the ability to remain on the same object over long periods of time. The *Draḥor Bamponyipa* (*sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*) commentary on the *Mahāvīyutpatti* explains the term *samādhi* as referring to the instrument through which mind and mental states “get collected,” i.e., it is by the force of samādhi that the continuum of mind and mental states becomes collected on a single point of reference without getting distracted.

g.16 Nārāyaṇa

sred med bu

སྲེད་མེད་བུ།

nārāyaṇa

—

A name commonly associated with the Hindu god Viṣṇu and often used in Buddhist texts as an example of someone with superhuman strength.

g.17 necklaces

do shal

དོགས།

hāra

—

A garland of pearls or necklaces (according to some, made of 108 or 64 strings).

g.18 outcast

rigs dman

རིགས་དམན།

hīnajanman

—

An outcast or someone born into a low caste.

g.19 Prasenajit

gsal rgyal

གསལ་རྒྱལ།

prasenajit

—

A king of Kośala and disciple-patron of the Buddha.

g.20 Protector of the World

'jig rten mgon po

འཇིག་རྟེན་མགོན་པོ།

lokanātha · lokeśvara

—

A common epithet of the Buddha.

g.21 reliquary

gdung ldan

གདུང་ལྗན།

dhātudhara

—

A container of relics, such as a stūpa.

g.22 supreme mind

blo mchog

སྒོ་མཚོག

agrabuddhi

—

Used in this text as an epithet of the Buddha, seemingly. It means one who possesses supreme intelligence.

g.23 tiered parasol spire

gdugs brtsegs

གདུགས་བརྟེགས།

chattrāvalī

—

The tiered parasol, spire, or shaft atop a stūpa.

g.24 webbed fingers and toes

sor mo dra bar 'brel ba

སོར་མོ་བྲ་བར་འབྲེལ་བ།

—

—

One of the thirty-two marks of a great person (*mahāpuruṣa*)

g.25 whitewash

rdo thal

རྫོ་གཡ།

sudhā

—

Whitewash or lime plaster.

g.26 World's Superior

'jig rten bla ma

འཇིག་རྟེན་སྐྱ་མ།

—

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An epithet for the Buddha.

