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The Sūtra on the Ringing Staff

འཕགས་པ་འཁར་གསེལ་གྱི་མདོ།

'phags pa 'khar gsil gyi mdo

The Noble Sūtra on the Ringing Staff

· Toh 335 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), folios 271.a–274.a



Translated by the Sarasvatī Translation Team
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SUMMARY

- s.1 In this short sūtra, the Buddha first instructs the monks to carry the ringing staff and then provides a brief introduction to its significance. In response to Venerable Mahākāśyapa's queries, the Buddha gives a more detailed explanation of the attributes of the staff and the benefits that can be derived from holding it. In the course of his exposition, he also elucidates the rich symbolism of its parts, such as the four prongs and the twelve rings. Finally, the Buddha explains that while the ringing staff is carried by all buddhas of the past, present, and future, the number of prongs on the staff might vary.

ac.

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ac.1 The sūtra was translated by the Sarasvatī Translation Team, whose members thank Peter Skilling for having kindly provided several publications and his unpublished article related to the ringing staff. They acknowledge with love and gratitude the privilege of having had, as team editor, Steven Rhodes, who passed away in 2017. They are also grateful to Eleanor Brunnen who stepped in to help with the editing.

This translation has been completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 Buddhism is replete with symbolic objects, ranging from the well-known eight-spoked wheel representing the eightfold path of noble beings to esoteric maṇḍalas that represent entire pure universes. The subject matter of this sūtra is one such article known as “the ringing staff” (Skt. *khakkhara*,¹ Tib. *'khar gsil*, Ch. *xizhang*), which is one of the requisites of a fully ordained monastic.² Though textual sources report the existence of the renunciant’s staff in India prior to the time of the Buddha, the staff used by Buddhist monastics is unique. Buddhist texts associate the ringing staff and teachings on its symbolic significance with the Buddha himself. In South Asian Buddhism, Vinaya texts as well as pilgrims’ accounts furnish references to the ringing staff, and its representations can be found in visual art. In Central, East, and Southeast Asia as well as in Tibet, an even wider range of evidence attests to its presence in Buddhist cultures.³

i.2 When a monastic shakes the staff during alms rounds, the ringing sounds produced by its rings alert householders to the presence of a monastic collecting alms. Beyond its practical usage, the staff reminds a monastic of salient points that pertain to the spiritual path leading to awakening. In addition, the components, combined in intricate ways, are themselves laden with symbolic significance.

i.3 Underscoring its great importance as an emblem of Buddhist renunciation, Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna spoke the following lines in a teaching entitled “The Riches of the Noble Ones and the Khakkhara Staff,” which was delivered to the saṅgha at Nyethang Or, his retreat near Lhasa:

i.4 “Wherever this [staff] is upheld is a central region;
In the borderlands, none uphold it,
Nor is it the domain of householders.
Householders are [drowning] in suffering,
Whereas the upholders of [the staff] dwell in happiness.
So, depart from your home and uphold it.”⁴

- i.5 Vinaya texts preserve scattered accounts of traditions related to the ringing staff's origin, structure, material, and uses.⁵ Two sūtras in the General Sūtra section of the Kangyur are focused on the subject of the ringing staff. The first (Toh 335), which is translated in the following pages, is the longer of the two. It discusses the religious significance and symbolism of the ringing staff. *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* (Toh 336), on the other hand, presents a simple ritual for a monk to receive a ringing staff as well as an elaborate set of twenty-five rules stipulating how a ringing staff is to be properly used.
- i.6 A single text in the Taishō edition of the Chinese Tripiṭaka includes material found in both Toh 335 and Toh 336. The *De daoti cheng xizhang jing* (得道梯橙錫杖經, Taishō 785), the translation of which is dated to the Jin Dynasty (317–420 CE), contains a version of *The Sūtra on the Ringing Staff*, which enumerates two sets of twenty-five rules for how to use the staff.⁶ A short intervening section, which has no Tibetan parallel that we are aware of, provides further instructions on handling the staff. Writing in 1643 or 1644, the Chinese Buddhist monk Hongzan, following an earlier Chinese tradition, declared Taishō 785 to be an apocryphal text.⁷
- i.7 Regardless of whether the *De daoti cheng xizhang jing* was wholly or partially composed in China,⁸ there are several factors that support the case that *The Sūtra on the Ringing Staff* (Toh 335) is a Tibetan translation of the corresponding section within it. First of all, the Tibetan sūtra is close to the relevant section of the Chinese, with differences being found generally in specific short phrases. The Tibetan sūtra lacks the customary Sanskrit title, and most versions lack a translator's colophon.⁹ Moreover, the Dunhuang manuscript of *The Sūtra on the Ringing Staff* and *The Rite for the Protocols Associated with Carrying the Ringing Staff* contains a colophon that states that both the sūtra and the rite were translated from the Chinese by the well-known translator Chödrup.¹⁰
- i.8 On the other hand, the thirteenth century Tibetan scholar Chomden Rikpai Raltri (*bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri*, 1227–1305), lists this text and Toh 336, which he calls "the longer and shorter ringing staff sūtras" (*'khar sil gyi mdo che chung gnyis*) among twenty-one canonical texts translated from Khotanese.¹¹ This seems to contradict the evidence from the Dunhuang colophon, and may possibly be a reference to alternative translations that have not been preserved. Whatever the case, the general notion that these texts evolved in Khotan from earlier material brought from India, before being transmitted to both China and Tibet, seems by no means unlikely.
- i.9 The present translation is based on the Degé Kangyur, with reference to variants in other versions noted in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and to the Dunhuang manuscript, as well as a comparison with the relevant

sections of the Chinese in the Taishō edition of *De daoti cheng xizhang jing*. Only significant differences between the Chinese and the Tibetan versions of the sūtra have been noted.¹²

The Noble Sūtra
The Ringing Staff

1.

The Translation

[F.271.a]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Once, the Blessed One said to the monks, “You shall carry this ringing staff. Why? Because past buddhas have carried this ringing staff and future buddhas will carry this ringing staff. Present buddhas also carry this ringing staff; having now attained awakening, I carry the ringing staff. [F.271.b] In a similar manner, past, future, and present buddhas instruct the listeners, ‘You shall carry the ringing staff.’ So now, having attained awakening, I also teach you in accordance with the Dharma of the buddhas, and you too shall carry the ringing staff. Why?”

1.3 “The ringing staff is also called *the staff of gnosis*. It is also called *the staff of excellent qualities*. Because it signifies the gnosis of noble beings, it is called the staff of gnosis. Because it builds the foundation of excellent qualities, it is called the staff of excellent qualities.

1.4 “This ringing staff signifies that the holder is a sublime being belonging to the lineage of noble beings, it is an emblem that points to the Dharma of the path, and it is a practice that facilitates recollection. Therefore, you should carry it according to the Dharma.”

1.5 Then Venerable Mahākāśyapa rose from his seat, adjusted his robes, draped his upper robe over one shoulder, joined his palms, and knelt on the ground. He inquired of the Blessed One, “Blessed One, why is it called a ‘ringing staff’? How should it be carried? May the Blessed One explain. We will practice as instructed.”

The Blessed One said to Kāśyapa, “Listen well, keep it in mind, and I shall explain.

- 1.6 “The ringing staff brings relief. Those who rely upon this ringing staff will eliminate afflictions and emerge from the three realms. Therefore, it is said to bring relief.
- 1.7 “The ringing staff causes illumination. Those who hold the ringing staff will attain the illumination of wisdom. Therefore, it is said to cause illumination.
- 1.8 “The ringing staff brings about irreversibility. [F.272.a] Those who hold the ringing staff will emerge from the three realms of existence and also be unattached. Therefore, it is said to bring about irreversibility of spiritual progress.
- 1.9 “The ringing staff causes understanding. What does the ringing staff cause one to comprehend? One will understand suffering, emptiness, and the fetters that are afflictions of the three realms, and one will clearly realize the four truths and the twelve links of dependent origination. Therefore, it is said to cause understanding.
- 1.10 “The ringing staff eliminates pride. Those who hold the ringing staff will give up acting pridefully. Therefore, it is said to eliminate pride.
- 1.11 “The ringing staff keeps others at a distance. Those who hold this ringing staff will distance themselves from the five sensual objects. Therefore, they will give up the fetters of craving for sensual objects, discard the five aggregates, give up the five states of existence, approach nirvāṇa, and also expel conditioning karma far away. Therefore, it is said to keep others at a distance.
- 1.12 “The ringing staff adopts. By adopting the precious discipline, meditative stabilization, and wisdom of the buddhas, those who hold the ringing staff will attain freedom. Therefore, it is said to adopt.
- 1.13 “The ringing staff brings accomplishment. By becoming accomplished in the collections of the Buddha’s teachings and practicing them as taught,¹³ those who hold the ringing staff will not fall back but become excellent. Therefore, it is said that it brings accomplishment.”
- 1.14 “Kāśyapa,” the Blessed One concluded, “since the meanings of the term *ringing staff* are vast and multifarious, they cannot be described fully, but for the time being you should comprehend them in that way.” [F.272.b]
- 1.15 Kāśyapa then asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, if the meanings of the ringing staff are so, what are the reasons for this whole range of meanings, from ‘staff of gnosis’ to ‘it is a practice aimed at the application of recollection’?¹⁴ Could the Blessed One explain?”
- 1.16 The Blessed One replied, “The ringing staff causes the accomplishment of the practice of gnosis; causes the accomplishment of vast learning; engenders an unhindered understanding of worldly and transcendent

wisdom, virtue and nonvirtue, the conditioned and unconditioned, and the contaminated and uncontaminated; and it causes the accomplishment of wisdom. Therefore, it is called *the staff of gnosis*.

1.17 “Practicing the strict observance of discipline, patience, the cultivation of meditative concentration with a single-pointed mind devoid of distraction,¹⁵ and constant meritorious actions, as if their head or turban had caught fire, those who hold the ringing staff do not forsake these practices even for an instant. Therefore, it is called *the staff of excellent qualities*.

1.18 “Those who hold this ringing staff will become perfect in the sixteen kinds of practice: (1–4) the four truths of suffering, origin, cessation, and the path; (5–8) the four immeasurable states of love, compassion, joy, and equanimity; (9–12) the four meditative concentrations: the first meditative concentration, second meditative concentration, third meditative concentration, and fourth meditative concentration; and (13–16) the four formless states of meditative attainment: the sphere of infinite space, the sphere of infinite consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, and the sphere of neither perception nor absence of perception. [F.273.a] In addition, they will become perfect in the thirty-seven practices—namely, the thirty-seven aids to awakening—and they will discern these dharmas with clarity.¹⁶ Because they actualize them physically, they do not pursue words. They frolic in these dharmas and are free to enter the gateways to liberation of emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness at will and without difficulty.¹⁷ Such persons are called *noble beings*.

1.19 “Possessing such qualities internally, they hold the ringing staff externally. Because of this, it is beyond doubt that such persons are perfect in the excellent qualities of noble beings: discipline, patience, meditative concentration, wisdom, the threefold knowledge, the six types of supernatural knowledge, and the eight kinds of liberation. Because the ringing staff engenders respect by signifying that such persons are noble beings, it is called *the sign of a noble being*.

1.20 “As for the expression ‘that which signifies that the holder is a sublime being,’ because of possessing the nature of gnosis within, a person is said to be ‘sublime.’ The ringing staff engenders respect by signifying that the person is a noble being.¹⁸ It thereby shows that, because of possessing the nature of gnosis that is present within a noble being, the holder accomplishes the foundation of excellent qualities, strives for increasingly higher qualities, and accomplishes them well. Therefore, it is called *that which signifies that the holder is a sublime being*.

1.21 “It makes known that ‘this clear-minded person, having practiced by means of wisdom, will enter before long the path leading to a peaceful and secluded state beyond conditioning, namely the bliss of nirvāṇa, the ultimate

place.’ Therefore, the ringing staff is called *the emblem that points to the Dharma of the path*.

1.22 “As for the expression ‘it is a practice that facilitates recollection,’ this ringing staff has three levels. Just by seeing the structure of the three segments, having recollected the suffering of the three lower states of existence, [F.273.b] one will cultivate discipline, meditative stabilization, and wisdom; having recollected the three misfortunes—aging, sickness, and death—one will dispel the three poisons: attachment, hatred, and ignorance; and having recollected the three realms as impermanent, one will generate belief in and respect for the Three Jewels, eliminate the three realms of existence, discard the three contaminations,¹⁹ purify the three kinds of karma, wish to possess the threefold knowledge, enter the three liberations, obtain the three states of the six recollections,²⁰ and realize the three gnosés that take one far. Hence, it is presented in its structure of three segments.

1.23 “Furthermore, it is made with four prongs. For the purpose of severing the four types of birth, recollecting the four truths, cultivating the four immeasurable states, entering the four meditative concentrations, purifying the four states of meditative attainment, revealing the four applications of mindfulness, teaching the four kinds of exertion,²¹ and obtaining the four bases of supernatural power, it is made with four prongs.

1.24 “With the central wooden shaft included, it is shown to have five aspects. For the purpose of forsaking the five views,²² discarding the disturbances of the suffering of saṃsāra of the five states of existence, cultivating the five faculties, possessing the five powers, eliminating the five hindrances, dismantling the five aggregates, and attaining the Dharma body having five parts, it is shown to have five aspects.

1.25 “It is taught that there are twelve rings so that one will recall the twelve links of dependent origination and will do so without being impeded, one will cultivate the meditative concentrations of the twelve doors, and one will recollect with a flawless mind. [F.274.a]

1.26 “It is taught to have seven parts—the combination of the three levels and the four prongs—so that one will recollect the Dharma of the seven branches of the awakening of the Tathāgata and accomplish the seven treasures of noble beings.

1.27 “With the lower tip included, it is shown to have eight parts. It is for the purpose of teaching the eight branches of the path, attaining the eight kinds of liberation, and dispelling the eight inopportune states that the eight parts are shown.

1.28 “That is the brief meaning of the ringing staff. Therefore, you should retain it well.”

Kāśyapa promised the Blessed One, “Blessed One, it shall be done just as it has been taught in the noble statements.”

1.29 Mahākāśyapa then inquired again of the Blessed One, “Blessed One, are all the teachings of the tathāgatas of the three times the same?”

1.30 The Blessed One replied, “For some, the staff is the same but the usage is different. On account of that, during the time of some, it is made with four prongs, and during the time of others, it is made with two prongs. The number of rings does not vary. As for me, I have taught that it should be made with four prongs and twelve rings.

1.31 “The two-prong design was established by the Tathāgata Kāśyapa. This meaning was established for the sake of sentient beings recollecting the two truths: conventional truth and ultimate truth.”

1.32 At that time, after the Blessed One had spoken these words, Venerable Mahākāśyapa, the entourage of 1,200 followers, and the large congregation were delighted and gave praise respectfully.

1.33 *This concludes The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra on the Ringing Staff.*

NOTES

n.

- n.1 Franklin Edgerton provides the alternative spellings of *khakhara*, *khakharaka*, *khañkhara*, and *khañkharaka*. See his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 2: 201–2.
- n.2 Most references to the ringing staff tend to associate the staff with a monk. However, the *bhikṣuṇī* section of the Mūlasarvāstivāda *Vinayavibhaṅga* contains passages that refer to circumstances where fully ordained Buddhist nuns carry the ringing staff. See three passages in Chinese translation in Taishō XXIII 1443 933b16–17, 975b7–10, and 981b6. A relevant passage in the corresponding Tibetan translation, *dge slong ma'i 'dul ba rnam par 'byed pa* (Toh 5), is found in Degé Kangyur ('dul ba, ta), 215.a. On this Vinaya source, see Prebish (1994), pp. 96–97. There are also contemporary reports that receiving a ringing staff occurs during the bodhisattva vow ceremony that serves as a component of monastic ordination ceremonies, including those of fully ordained nuns, in China and Taiwan.
- n.3 See Revire (2015), pp. 172–217, for a recent historical and geographical survey with bibliographical references.
- n.4 Atiśa, 'Brom-ston, and Jinpa (2008), p. 143.
- n.5 For an account based on the Vinaya texts found in Chinese translation, see Gao (1993), pp. 9–23.
- n.6 The material that corresponds to Toh 335 ends at Taishō 785 XVII 725a14.
- n.7 Gao (1993), pp. 16–17, n. 19.
- n.8 The section of the *De daoti cheng xizhang jing* (Taishō 785) that lists twenty-five rules for how to properly use the ringing staff, the part which corresponds with Toh 336, is said to be “translated based on the Indian

Tripitaka to make the future reader aware of its origin” (Taishō 785 XVII 725c6).

- n.9 Only the Phukdrak Kangyur contains a colophon, which says that the text was translated from Chinese by the famous translator Chödrup. This colophon seems to be a direct copy of the Dunhuang manuscript (see below).
- n.10 This manuscript, IOL Tib J 205, is recorded in La Vallée Poussin (1962), p. 74. Online images of the manuscript are available through The International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online ([IOL Tib J 205](http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL%20Tib%20J%20205) (http://idp.bl.uk/database/oo_loader.a4d?pm=IOL Tib J 205;img=1)). The colophon in question reads: *khar sil gyi mdo dang/ cho ga 'di zhu chen gyi lo tsa pa ban de chos grub kyis rgya'i dpe las bsgyur cing zhus te/ gtan la phab pa//*. See also Silk (2019), p. 235. Gao also regards Toh 335 and 336 as Tibetan translations from Taishō 785. See his “Pini zhong de ‘xizhang,’ ” p. 16, n. 19.
- n.11 Chomden Rikpai Raltri (1) F.26.b, (2) F.28.a; see also Schaeffer and van der Kuip 2009, p. 161.
- n.12 On the Dunhuang manuscript of Taishō 785, see *A Concordance to the Taishō Canon and Dunhuang Buddhist Manuscripts: Third (Provisional) Edition* (Tokyo: International College for Postgraduate Buddhist Studies Library, 2015), p. 176.
- n.13 Reading *bstan* for *bsten*, which is corroborated by the Chinese.
- n.14 The Degé and Comparative Edition read here (272.b.2): *dran pa nye bar gzhang pa'i don gyi spyod pa*. This sentence introduces a variation (second occurrence) on a general phrase that appeared earlier (271.b.3, first occurrence) and appears again later (273.a.7, third occurrence): *rjes su dran pa'i rnam par gzhang pa'i don gyi spyod pa*. The general phrase is attested in the Dunhuang manuscript once (third occurrence); in the Stok Palace edition it appears twice (first and third occurrences). The change that appears here in the Degé (second occurrence) is apparently meant to bring the relevant part of the phrase in line with the well-known Buddhist term *dran pa nye bar bzhag pa* (Sanskrit: *smṛtyupasthāna*). At this point (second occurrence), the Stok Palace edition reads *dran par gzhang pa'i don gyi spyod pa*, which differs from both the general phrase and the Degé. In the Taishō edition, the same Chinese phrase appears in all three places: *jian nian yi zhi zhi* 建念義之志. It may be rendered as: “It is an emblem signifying the meaning of the establishment of recollection.” The Tibetan translator has rendered *nian* and *jian* separately as *rjes su dran pa* and *rnam par gzhang pa*, recognizing that it is different from the standard Chinese term *nianzhu* 念住 used to translate *smṛtyupasthāna*.

- n.15 The Dunhuang manuscript of the sūtra starts from here.
- n.16 Reading *rnam par 'byed pa* for *rnam par byed pa*, which is corroborated by the Chinese.
- n.17 The Degé reads *dga' ba med pa*, “they are without joy” (or, at best, “they are not elated”). Here we follow the text of the Dunhuang manuscript: *dka' ba med pa*. This agrees with the Chinese reading *wunan* 無難 (Taishō 785, XVII 724c6): it is executed “without difficulty.” Note the similarity in orthography between *dga' ba* and *dka' ba*.
- n.18 This sentence is not represented in the Chinese.
- n.19 The Degé reads *dag pa gtsang ba dang*, “pure and clean.” This curious expression, lacking any mention of a threefold attribute, does not appear in the Chinese. The reading of the Dunhuang manuscript is adopted here: *zag pa gsum spong ba dang*. It agrees with the Chinese text: *duan sanlou* 斷三漏 (Taishō 785 XVII 724c17–18), “discard the three contaminations.”
- n.20 Neither the Chinese nor the Dunhuang manuscript mentions “six.”
- n.21 The Chinese reads *jian si zhengqin* 堅四正勤 (Taishō 785 XVII 724c21), “making the four kinds of exertion firm.” This suggests reading *brtan par* in lieu of *bstan par*.
- n.22 This specific fivefold feature is not represented in the Chinese.

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 afflictions

nyon mongs pa

ཉོན་མོངས་པ།

kleśa

Afflictive emotions or mental factors such as the three poisons that disturb the mind, bind one to cyclic existence, and obstruct liberation.

g.2 aggregates

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

The five aggregates, the bases upon which the mistaken idea of a self is projected, are those of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.

g.3 aids to awakening

byang chub kyi phyogs

བྱང་ཆུབ་ཀྱི་ཕྱོགས།

bodhipakṣa

Thirty-seven practices or qualities whose cultivation leads to awakening.

g.4 applications of mindfulness

dran pa nye bar gzhag pa

དྲན་པ་ཉེ་བར་གཞག་པ།

smṛtyupasthāna

Belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, these are four contemplations on (1) the body, (2) feelings, (3) mind, and (4) phenomena.

g.5 Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna

dpal mar me mdzad

དཔལ་མར་མེ་མཛད།

atiśa dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna

The Bengali Buddhist reformer who visited Tibet in the middle of the eleventh century and whose disciples established the Kadampa (*bka' gdams pa*) tradition.

g.6 bases of supernatural power

rdzu 'phrul gyi rkang pa

རྩུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་རྒྱ་ཁང་པ།

ṛddhipāda

Four qualities belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, these are concentration based on (1) intention, (2) diligence, (3) attention, and (4) analysis.

g.7 birth

skye ba

སྐྱེ་བ།

jāti

The four types of birth are birth from a womb, birth from an egg, birth from warmth and moisture, and miraculous birth.

g.8 branches of awakening

byang chub kyi yan lag

བྱང་ཚུབ་ཀྱི་ཡན་ལག

bodhyaṅga

The seven branches of awakening, belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, are mindfulness, investigation, energy, joy, meditative stabilization, equanimity, and pliancy.

g.9 Chomden Rikpai Raltri

bcom ldan rigs pa'i ral gri

བཅོམ་ལྷན་རིགས་པའི་རལ་གྲི།

—

A great scholar of Narthang monastery in central Tibet. He lived from 1227 to 1305 and was one of the first compilers of the the Kangyur.

g.10 collections

sde snod

སྡེ་སྡོད།

pitaka

Literally, the “baskets,” or collections containing the Buddha’s teachings.

g.11 compassion

snying rje

སྤྱིང་རྗེ།

karuṇā

g.12 conditioned

'*dus byas*

འདུས་བྱས།

saṃskṛta

g.13 contaminated

zag pa dang bcas pa

ཟག་པ་དང་བཅས་པ།

sāsrava

Susceptible to the contaminations (*āsrava*; *zag pa*), literally “outflows” or mental defilements that “flow out” toward the objects of cyclic existence. One classification enumerates three contaminations related to desire, existence, and ignorance.

g.14 conventional truth

kun rdzob kyi bden pa

ཀུན་རྫོབ་ཀྱི་བདེན་པ།

saṃvṛtisatya

g.15 craving

sred pa

སྲེད་པ།

tṛṣṇā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Eighth of the twelve links of dependent origination. Craving is often listed as threefold: craving for the desirable, craving for existence, and craving for nonexistence.

g.16 dependent origination

rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བ།

pratītyasamutpāda

The twelve links of dependent origination describe the process of being bound in cyclic existence, and, when reversed, the process of liberation. The twelve links are ignorance, formation, consciousness, name and form, the six sense bases, contact, feeling, craving, appropriation, becoming, birth, and old age and death.

g.17 discipline

tshul khrims

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

śīla

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Morally virtuous or disciplined conduct and the abandonment of morally undisciplined conduct of body, speech, and mind. In a general sense, moral discipline is the cause for rebirth in higher, more favorable states, but it is also foundational to Buddhist practice as one of the three trainings (*triśikṣā*) and one of the six perfections of a bodhisattva. Often rendered as “ethics,” “discipline,” and “morality.”

g.18 distraction

g.yeng ba

གཡེང་བ།

vikṣepa

g.19 eight branches of the path

lam yan lag brgyad

ལམ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭāṅgamārga

The eight branches of the path, belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, are right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right meditative stabilization.

g.20 emerge

nges par 'byung ba

ངེས་པར་འགྱུང་བ།

niryāṇa · nirsaraṇa

Deliverance from cyclic existence.

g.21 emptiness

stong pa nyid

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

śūnyatā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Emptiness denotes the ultimate nature of reality, the total absence of inherent existence and self-identity with respect to all phenomena.

According to this view, all things and events are devoid of any independent,

intrinsic reality that constitutes their essence. Nothing can be said to exist independent of the complex network of factors that gives rise to its origination, nor are phenomena independent of the cognitive processes and mental constructs that make up the conventional framework within which their identity and existence are posited. When all levels of conceptualization dissolve and when all forms of dichotomizing tendencies are quelled through deliberate meditative deconstruction of conceptual elaborations, the ultimate nature of reality will finally become manifest. It is the first of the three gateways to liberation.

g.22 equanimity

btang snyoms

བྟངས་སྣོད་མཁུ་

upeksā

g.23 exertion

yang dag pa'i spong ba

ཡང་དག་པའི་སྣོད་བཞུག་

samyakprahāṇa

The four kinds of exertion, belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, are the efforts to prevent the occurrence of unskillful states, to abandon unskillful states already arisen, to develop skillful states, and to sustain and increase skillful states already arisen.

g.24 existence

srid pa

སྲིད་པ།

bhava

Refers to cyclic existence in this sūtra.

g.25 faculties

dbang po

དབང་པོ།

indriya

The five faculties, belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, are faith, perseverance, mindfulness, meditative concentration, and wisdom.

g.26 fetters

kun nas dkris pa

ཀུན་ནས་དགྲིས་པ།

paryavasthāna

g.27 four truths

bden pa bzhi

བདེན་པ་བཞི།

catuḥsatya

The four truths of nobles ones are the truths of suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Another classification of the truths referred to in the sūtra is that of the two truths, conventional and ultimate.

g.28 gateways to liberation

rnam par thar pa'i sgo

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པའི་སློ།

vimokṣamukha

Three qualities related to ultimate reality: emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness. In this sūtra, also referred to as the three liberations.

g.29 gnosis

ye shes

ཡེ་ཤེས།

jñāna

g.30 hindrance

sgrib pa

སློབ་པ།

nīvaraṇa

The five hindrances are sensual desire, ill will, sloth and torpor, excitement and remorse, and doubt.

g.31 immeasurable states

tshad med pa

ཚད་མེད་པ།

apramāṇa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The four meditations on love (*maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), joy (*muditā*), and equanimity (*upekṣā*), as well as the states of mind and qualities of being that result from their cultivation. They are also called the four abodes of Brahmā (*caturbrahmavihāra*).

In the *Abhidharmakośa*, Vasubandhu explains that they are called *apramāṇa*—meaning “infinite” or “limitless”—because they take limitless sentient beings as their object, and they generate limitless merit and results. Love is described as the wish that beings be happy, and it acts as an antidote to malice (*vyāpāda*). Compassion is described as the wish for beings to be free of suffering, and acts as an antidote to harmfulness (*vihimsā*). Joy refers to rejoicing in the happiness beings already have, and it acts as an antidote to dislike or aversion (*arati*) toward others’ success. Equanimity is considering all beings impartially, without distinctions, and it is the antidote to attachment to both pleasure and malice (*kāmarāgavyāpāda*).

g.32 inopportune states

mi khom pa

མི་ཁོམ་པ།

akṣaṇa

The eight conditions unfavorable for the practice of the Buddhist path: birth (1) in the hells, (2) among the pretas, (3) as an animal, (4) among the long-lived gods, and in the human realm (5) among barbarians, (6) among extremists, (7) in places where a buddha has not appeared or the Buddhist teachings do not exist, and (8) without adequate faculties to understand the teachings.

g.33 irreversibility of spiritual progress

phyir mi ldog pa

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྷོག་པ།

avaivartika

g.34 joy

dga' ba

དགའ་བ།

prīti · muditā

g.35 Kāśyapa

'od srung

འོད་སྲུང་།

kāśyapa

“Kāśyapa” occurs in this sūtra as the name of the disciple of the Buddha, Venerable Mahākāśyapa, and also of the past buddha, Tathāgata Kāśyapa.

g.36 knowledge

rig pa

རིག་པ།

vidyā

The three types of knowledge are the knowledge of previous lives, the knowledge of divine sight or of the deaths and rebirths of beings, and the knowledge of the exhaustion of contamination (*āsrava; zag pa*).

g.37 liberation

rnam par thar pa

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ།

vimokṣa

The eight kinds of liberation refer to eight meditative states: (1) the perception of material form by one who has form; (2) the perception of material form by one without form; (3) the beautiful; (4) infinite space; (5) infinite consciousness; (6) nothingness; (7) neither perception nor absence of perception; and (8) the cessation of perception and feeling.

g.38 lineage

rigs

རིགས།

gotra

Generally a reference to a person’s spiritual disposition.

g.39 listener

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

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.40 love

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitrī

g.41 lower states of existence

ngan song

ངན་སོང་།

durgati

The realms of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings.

g.42 Mahākāśyapa

'od srung chen po

འོད་སྤྱང་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākāśyapa

Mahākāśyapa was one of the principal disciples of the Buddha.

g.43 meditative concentration

bsam gtan

བསམ་གཏན།

dhyāna

One of several common terms that are used to describe meditative states. The four meditative concentrations are the four concentrations of the form realm.

g.44 meditative stabilization

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 *Mahāvīyūtpatti* 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.45 monk

dge slong

དགེ་སྐྱོད།

bhikṣu

A fully ordained Buddhist monk.

g.46 noble being

'phags pa

འཕགས་པ།

ārya

A person who has directly realized the noble truths.

g.47 noble statements

gsung rab

གསུང་རབ།

pravacana

Refers to the discourses of the Buddha.

g.48 patience

bzod pa

བཞོན་པ།

kṣānti

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A term meaning acceptance, forbearance, or patience. As the third of the six perfections, patience is classified into three kinds: the capacity to tolerate abuse from sentient beings, to tolerate the hardships of the path to

buddhahood, and to tolerate the profound nature of reality. As a term referring to a bodhisattva's realization, *dharmakṣānti* (*chos la bzod pa*) can refer to the ways one becomes "receptive" to the nature of Dharma, and it can be an abbreviation of *anutpattikadharmakṣānti*, "forbearance to the unborn nature, or nonproduction, of dharmas."

g.49 powers

stobs

སྟོབས།

bala

The five powers, belonging to the thirty-seven aids to awakening, are the power of faith, the power of perseverance, the power of mindfulness, the power of meditative concentration, and the power of wisdom.

g.50 pride

nga rgyal

ངར་རྒྱལ།

māna

g.51 recollection

rjes su dran pa

རྗེས་སུ་བྲན་པ།

anusmṛti

The act of bringing something to mind or being mindful of something.

g.52 ringing staff

'khar gsil

འཁར་གསེལ།

khakkhara

g.53 secluded

dben pa

དབེན་པ།

vivikta

g.54 seven treasures of noble beings

'phags pa'i nor bdun

འཕགས་པའི་རོར་བདུན།

saptāryāṇi dhanāni

Faith, discipline, learning, generosity, a sense of shame, fear of blame, and wisdom.

g.55 signlessness

mtshan ma med pa

མཚན་མ་མེད་པ།

animitta

One of the three terms associated with the nature of reality in the context of the three gateways to liberation.

g.56 single-pointed mind

sems rtse gcig

སེམས་རྩེ་གཅིག

cittaikāgratā

A state in which the mind is focused on a single object.

g.57 sphere of infinite consciousness

rnam shes mtha' yas skye mched

རྣམ་ཤེས་མཐའ་ཡས་སྐྱེ་མཚེད།

vijñānānantyāyatana

The second meditative state pertaining to the formless realm.

g.58 sphere of infinite space

nam mkha' mtha' yas skye mched

ནམ་མཐའ་མཐའ་ཡས་སྐྱེ་མཚེད།

ākāśānantyāyatana

The first meditative state pertaining to the formless realm.

g.59 sphere of neither perception nor absence of perception

'du shes med 'du shes med min gyi skye mched

འདུ་ཤེས་མེད་འདུ་ཤེས་མེད་མིན་གྱི་སྐྱེ་མཚེད།

naiṣaṃjñānāsamjñāyatana

The fourth meditative state pertaining to the formless realm.

g.60 sphere of nothingness

ci yang med pa'i skye mched

ཅི་ཡང་མེད་པའི་སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

ākṛiṃcanyāyatana

The third meditative state pertaining to the formless realm.

g.61 staff

'khar ba

འཇར་བ།

daṅḍa

g.62 states of existence

srid pa · 'gro ba

སྲིད་པ། · འགོ་བ།

—

The five states of existence refer to the five destinies of birth as a god, as a human, as an animal, as a preta (or “hungry ghost”), and in the hells.

g.63 states of meditative attainment

snyoms par 'jug pa

སྟོ་མས་པར་འཇུག་པ།

samāpatti

One of several common terms that are used to describe meditative states. The four states of meditative attainment refer here to the states of infinite space, infinite consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor absence of perception.

g.64 supernatural knowledge

mngon par shes pa

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ།

abhijñāna

Six kinds of supernatural awareness resulting from meditative concentration.

g.65 Three realms

khams gsum · srid pa gsum

ཁམས་གསུམ། · སྲིད་པ་གསུམ།

tridhātu

The three realms are the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*; *'dod khams*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*; *gzugs khams*), and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*; *gzugs med khams*).

g.66 transcendent
'jig rten las 'das pa
འཇིག་རྟེན་ལས་འདས་པ།
lokottara

g.67 ultimate truth
don dam pa'i bden pa
དོན་དམ་པའི་བདེན་པ།
paramārthasatya

g.68 unconditioned
'dus ma byas
འདུས་མ་བྱས།
asamskṛta

Refers to phenomena that are not produced by causes and conditions.

g.69 uncontaminated
zag pa med pa
ཟག་པ་མེད་པ།
anāsrava

Free from the contaminations; see “contaminated.”

g.70 venerable
tshe dang ldan pa
ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ།
āyusmat

Literally “long-lived,” a term (often honorific) used to address a Buddhist monk.

g.71 wisdom
shes rab
ཤེས་རབ།
prajñā

The mental factor that discerns phenomena.

g.72 wishlessness
smon pa med pa

སྣོན་པ་མེད་པ།

apraṇihita

One of the three terms associated with the nature of reality in the context of the three gateways to liberation.