

༄། །ཀུན་ཏུ་རྒྱ་བ་སེན་རིངས་ཀྱིས་ལྷུས་པ།

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**The Questions of Dīrghanakha the  
Wandering Mendicant**

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*Dīrghanakhaparivrājakaparipṛcchā*

ཀུན་ཏུ་རྒྱ་བ་སེན་རིངས་ཀྱིས་ལྷུས་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་མདོ།

*kun tu rgyu ba sen rings kyis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i mdo*

The Sūtra “The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant”

*Dīrghanakhaparivṛājakaparipṛcchānāmasūtra*

· Toh 342 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 74 (mdo sde, a), folios 298.b–300.a



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co.

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## SUMMARY

s.1 As the Buddha teaches the Dharma to the fourfold saṅgha on Vulture Peak Mountain, the brahmin and wandering mendicant Dīrghanakha approaches and questions the Buddha about his doctrine concerning the incontrovertible relationship between karma and its effects in the world. He then poses a series of ten questions regarding the karmic causes of certain attributes of the Buddha, from his vajra body to the raised uṣṇīṣa on his crown. The Buddha responds to each question with the cause for each attribute, roughly summing up the eight poṣadha vows and the ways he observed them in the past. Dīrghanakha drops his staff and bows to the Buddha, pledging to take refuge in the Three Jewels and maintain the eight poṣadha vows.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This sūtra was translated by the Kīrtimukha Translation Group. Celso Wilkinson, Laura Goetz, and L.S. Summer translated the text from the Tibetan and Sanskrit. William Giddings provided comparisons to the Chinese versions of the text.

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

i.

## INTRODUCTION

i.1

*The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant* takes place on Vulture Peak Mountain in Rājagṛha. As the Buddha teaches the Dharma to the fourfold saṅgha, the brahmin and wandering mendicant Dīrghanakha approaches and interrogates the Buddha, in somewhat irreverent tones, about his teaching that actions dependably produce particular effects in the world. He then poses a series of ten questions regarding the karmic causes of certain attributes of the Buddha. These questions refer to the Buddha's (1) vajra body, (2) long and webbed fingers, (3) complete faculties and fully developed body, (4) tongue that covers his face, (5) lion's gait, (6) forty even and white teeth, (7) fragrance of moral discipline, (8) thirty-two signs, (9) three seats, and (10) raised uṣṇīṣa on his crown. The Buddha responds to each question by identifying the cause for each attribute, roughly summing up the eight poṣadha vows and the ways he observed them in the past. He also mentions his previous offerings and devotion to the Three Jewels and to his parents, preceptors, scholars, gurus, and other worthy ones. At this point, Dīrghanakha drops his staff and bows to the Buddha, pledging three times to take refuge in the Three Jewels and to maintain continuously and correctly the eight poṣadha vows in the manner of the arhats.

i.2

The term *poṣadha* (Tib. *gso sbyong*) refers to the ceremony performed every full and new moon day by monastics, in which they confess any faults or transgressions and recite the prātimokṣa vows. Although lay people are restricted from going to these ceremonies, they traditionally adopt what are called "the eight poṣadha vows,"<sup>1</sup> which are observed by lay people on the same lunar day of the poṣadha ceremony or on other occasions, usually for a single day at a time. They are to refrain from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying or divisive speech, (5) intoxication, (6) eating at inappropriate times, (7) entertainment such as singing, dancing, seeing shows, and beautifying themselves with adornments or cosmetics, and (8) using a high bed. These amount to not only an expansion of the standard list



of five lay vows (which constitute the first five), but most of the ten vows of a novice monk or nun (with the seventh split in two as in this sūtra), which include the additional vow to not handle money. In a sense, the laity become monastics for a day, and the occasion is understood to be a period of abstinence that often involves fasting as a way to purify one's conduct, often in conjunction with the monastic community.

i.3 Etymologically, *poṣadha* has its roots in an older Sanskrit term, *upavasatha* (Pali: *uposatha*), which literally means “to dwell near.”<sup>2</sup> This can be traced back to Vedic India, where it was a day of rest and preparation preceding a ritual sacrifice.<sup>3</sup> Sylvain Lévi notes that while one would expect the Pali *uposatha* to be translated into classical Sanskrit as *upavasatha*, the Buddhists ended up with the translation *poṣadha*, having as it does less of a brahmanical resonance. It means to nourish (*poṣa*) and cleanse (*dha*), which the Tibetans repeated in their rendering as *gso sbyong*.<sup>4</sup> However, the older term *upavasatha* has not been entirely replaced by the term *poṣadha*; it is still used, usually with the alternate spelling *upavāsa* (Tib. *bsnyen gnas*, “abstinence”), in reference to the practice of abstinence with regard to the eight *poṣadha* vows or fasting, while only the term *poṣadha* is used as the name for the ceremony itself. Thus, at the end of the sūtra, *Ārghhanakha* vows to uphold the eight *poṣadha* vows in the context of the *upavāsa*, or abstinence. He does not merely vow to follow this for one day but pledges to make the special commitment of practicing them continuously for as long as he lives as “the instrument of my mind, and the accumulation of awakening.”

i.4 The story of *Ārghhanakha* (Pali: *Ārghhanakha*) is found throughout the Mahāyāna and Pali corpora. In some accounts he is also known in Sanskrit as *Koṣṭhila* (Long Torso), which is the birth name by which he was known before he left home to wander, and which he later readopts when he becomes a monk under the Buddha Śākyamuni. The variants *Kauṣṭhila*, *Mahākauṣṭhila*, and *Agnivaiśyāyana* (Pali: *Aggivessāna*) are also found. *Ārghhanakha* is also known as the uncle of Śāriputra, the famous early disciple of Śākyamuni.

i.5 The Pali Majjhima Nikāya contains a sutta called *Dīrghanakhasutta* in the *Paribbājakavagga* (The Division on Wanderers).<sup>5</sup> This sutta relates the story of how *Ārghhanakha* became a lay disciple of the Buddha, who addresses him here as *Aggivessāna*. After *Ārghhanakha* approaches the Buddha and proclaims that he believes in nothing,<sup>6</sup> there follows a conversation in which the Buddha teaches the reasons for abandoning wrong views and the method for attaining liberation by adopting the view of impermanence

rooted in the observation of physical sensation. In the *Mahāvastu* of the Mahāsaṅghika-Lokottaravāda school, a sūtra called *The Sūtra of the Wanderer Dīrghanakha* is mentioned as a text to be inserted, but is not included.<sup>7</sup>

i.6 In the *Pravrajyāvastu* (*The Chapter on Going Forth*), the first chapter of the *Vinayavastu* (Toh 1) in the Kangyur, we find a lengthy biography of Dīrghanakha interwoven with that of his nephew Śāriputra.<sup>8</sup> This narrative tells of Koṣṭhila (Dīrghanakha)'s upbringing as the son of the learned brahmin Māṭhara who, during the reign of King Bimbisāra, was awarded the entire village of Nālada by winning a debate. We see Koṣṭhila's privileged upbringing before he is vanquished in debate by his own sister Śārikā and driven to a life of wandering. Finding himself in another country, he becomes a student of the brahmin Tiṣya, a follower of the materialist Lokāyata philosophy that rejected rebirth and the afterlife.

i.7 After bragging about his hometown and the wisdom of its philosophers, he begins to journey back along with his teacher and his fellow young brahmins. On reaching Rājagṛha, Tiṣya battles Māṭhara in debate before King Bimbisāra and is victorious, thus winning the village of Nālada from Māṭhara. Tiṣya offers to share with Māṭhara, who in gratitude gives him Śārikā, who will later become the mother of Śāriputra, to marry. This upsets Koṣṭhila, who is outraged that the enemy who has robbed his family is now being invited into it. Thinking that the insult is the result of his lack of learning, he goes off again to study the Lokāyata philosophy, vowing not to cut his fingernails as long as he upholds it, thus becoming Dīrghanakha (Long Fingernails).

i.8 Later in the text, Dīrghanakha, still a wandering tīrthika, meets with the Buddha (whom he seems to have met before), and engages in a conversation remarkably similar to that of the Pali sutta. In it Dīrghanakha states that “no self endures [after death],” to which the Buddha replies by summarizing the various views of ascetics and brahmins as they relate to the endurance or nonendurance of a self. He again teaches the way of contemplating impermanence rooted in the observation of physical sensation. Dīrghanakha immediately grasps the Dharma and, unlike in the Pali sutta, takes ordination as a monk. Here his story concludes with these words of the Buddha: “Monks, among my monk disciples who have gained the knowledge of perfect discernment, the monk Koṣṭhila is supreme.”<sup>9</sup>

i.9 The story of Dīrghanakha's conversion is also told in the Sanskrit collection of Buddhist tales called the *Avadānaśataka*.<sup>10</sup> This account also deals with the transitory nature of sensation. Here Dīrghanakha returns to Rājagṛha on learning that Śāriputra has come of age and driven the non-Buddhists from the area after coming under the influence of the Buddha. Dīrghanakha's conversation with the Buddha, in which he is addressed as

Agnivaiśyāyana (Descendent of Agnivaiśya, the name of an old brahmanical family),<sup>11</sup> bears great resemblance to the exchange in the *Pravrajyāvastu* and the Pali sutta. As in the *Pravrajyāvastu*, the story ends in ordination.

i.10 Lastly, Dīrghanakha's story is told in Nāgārjuna's *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*, a commentary, only found in the Chinese canon, on the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā* (*Perfection of Wisdom in Five Thousand Lines*, Toh 9). Here he is depicted as a fierce and proud scholar, prevailing everywhere in debate like "an enraged mighty elephant," until he encounters the Buddha while coming to meet with his newly ordained nephew Śāriputra. The exchange here resembles the accounts in other texts, but with the poignant addition of Dīrghanakha's inner thoughts as he grapples with the Buddha's interrogation before admitting defeat and becoming a monk.<sup>12</sup>

i.11 Dīrghanakha's transformative encounter with the Buddha in this text has echoes in several similar stories of dialogues involving other wandering ascetics of fiercely independent bent. One is the story, in the Kangyur, of the ṛṣi Ulka,<sup>13</sup> whose questions to the Buddha also seem to be founded in non-Buddhist cosmological views. Another is the story of Śreṇika Vatsagotra (Pali: Vacchagotta), mentioned in all the long Prajñāpāramitā sūtras as significant in passages discussing the Buddha's omniscience, which Śreṇika Vatsagotra is said to have accepted through conviction alone.<sup>14</sup> The Prajñāpāramitā sūtras themselves give little further detail, and Vatsagotra's questioning of the Buddha does not seem to appear in full in any canonical text in Tibetan translation; it is, however, related in a number of Pali texts and āgamas in Chinese.<sup>15</sup> In fact, the Buddha's omniscience—directly or indirectly—can be seen as the principal focus of the questions put by all these individuals. Dīrghanakha's questions in the vinaya account seek to establish some sort of ultimate reality (although in the sūtra version translated here his questions are limited to the past causes of some of the Buddha's unique physical marks). Śreṇika Vatsagotra's questions directly address what have come to be called the twelve or fourteen "unanswerable points" (*avyākṛtavastu*). Ulka begins with the "unanswerable" question of where sentient beings originated from in the first place. In each case, the ways in which the Buddha responds bring about not only a complete resetting of the parameters of the questions, but also a fundamental change in how the questioners perceive him.<sup>16</sup> The exchanges typify how the Buddha is said to have convinced even very mature seekers of the truth as to the authenticity of his teaching.

i.12 *The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant* is found in the General Sūtra section (*mdo sde*) of the Kangyur, and in Kangyurs of the Tshalpa line it is classified among predominantly narrative texts of the avadāna genre. No

information is given in the colophon or in the different Kangyur indexes as to the translator or editor of the Tibetan. Both the Denkarma and Phangthangma imperial catalogs list the title among their inventories of sūtras.<sup>17</sup> This indicates that it was translated into Tibetan in the early translation period at a date no later than that of the Denkarma, 812 CE.

i.13 There was no known Sanskrit witness of *The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant* available until recently, when a manuscript containing a collection of twenty sūtras was found in the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Bhikṣuṇī Vinītā published a critical edition and English translation of this collection in the series Sanskrit Texts from the Autonomous Region (2010). Unfortunately, due to the inaccessibility of the manuscript collection and because it is missing a final colophon, its origin and date are currently unknown.<sup>18</sup>

i.14 There is one translation of the sūtra found in the Chinese Tripiṭaka (Taishō 584) by Yijing (義淨, seventh–eighth century) with the title *The Sūtra of the Questions of the Brahmin Dīrghanakha* (*chang zhao fan zha qang wan jang 長爪梵志請問經*). There is also a complete extant Sogdian version of this sūtra, translated from the Chinese, called *The Sūtra Spoken by the Buddha at the Question of a Religious Man Dīrghanakha* (*pwty prβ'yrtk βrzn'x'n d'ynδ'ry wp'rs pwstk*). The first study and (French) translation of this text was published by Robert Gauthiot in 1912 and later extensively commented on by Friedrich Weller (1934) and revised by Émile Benveniste (1940).<sup>19</sup>

i.15 We have based our translation primarily on the Degé edition of the Tibetan Kangyur, but we consulted the Sanskrit, Chinese, and other Kangyur editions in the case of questionable terms or passages in order to establish the most plausible and accurate readings of the text. Any instance where we have diverged from the Degé has been noted, and any significant differences found in the various versions of the sūtra are recorded and explained in the notes. Citations in the notes of the Sanskrit are given using Vinītā's emendations of the handwritten manuscript.

**The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra  
The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering  
Mendicant**

1.

## The Translation

[F.298.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Rājagṛha on Vulture Peak Mountain<sup>20</sup> together with a great monastic saṅgha of 1,250 monks.<sup>21</sup>

1.3 Then the Blessed One taught the Dharma to the fourfold saṅgha. He taught the wholesome conduct that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end, and that is excellent in meaning, excellent in words, distinctive, perfect, completely pure, and completely refined.<sup>22</sup>

1.4 At that time Dīrghanakha the wandering mendicant journeyed to where the Blessed One was. Arriving in the presence of the Blessed One, he stood there resting on his staff, saying nothing at all. He then looked up and said to the Blessed One, “Hey, Gautama, you say that<sup>23</sup> beings of the world take possession of actions, enjoy the legacy of actions, and are bound by the fetters of actions, and you say that these actions are reliable.<sup>24</sup> If this is true, then (1) what previous actions has the renunciant Gautama performed and accumulated so that he has come to possess the vajra body?”

1.5 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning killing<sup>25</sup> in my previous succession of lives.”

1.6 (2) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he came to have fingers that are long and webbed?”

1.7 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning taking what is not given<sup>26</sup> in my previous succession of lives.”

1.8 (3) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform [F.299.a] and accumulate so that he came to have complete faculties and a fully developed body?”

- 1.9 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning desire and sexual misconduct in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.10 (4) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he came to have a tongue that covers the entire circle of his face?”<sup>27</sup>
- 1.11 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning false speech in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.12 (5) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he came to have the gait of a lion?”<sup>28</sup>
- 1.13 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning the state of heedlessness induced from being intoxicated with beer or other alcohol<sup>29</sup> in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.14 (6) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he came to possess forty even and white teeth?”<sup>30 31</sup>
- 1.15 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning eating food at inappropriate times in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.16 (7) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he manifested a body anointed with the fragrance of moral discipline?”<sup>32</sup>
- 1.17 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning the wearing of garlands, perfumes, ointments, and cosmetics in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.18 (8) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that his body came to be adorned with all of the signs?”<sup>33</sup>
- 1.19 The Blessed One [F.299.b] replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning song, dance, and jewelry<sup>34</sup> in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.20 (9) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he enjoys the three seats?”<sup>35</sup>
- 1.21 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the action of abandoning high thrones and large beds in my previous succession of lives.”
- 1.22 (10) “What previous actions did the renunciant Gautama perform and accumulate so that he came to have the raised uṣṇīṣa on his head?”
- 1.23 The Blessed One replied, “Great brahmin, this is the result of the actions of placing my limbs and head upon the earth,<sup>36</sup> prostrating, and making offerings to the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha, parents, preceptors, scholars,<sup>37</sup> gurus, and those worthy of offering in my previous succession of lives.”<sup>38</sup>

- 1.24 At this point, Dīrghanakha the wandering mendicant set his staff<sup>39</sup> on the ground and bowed his head to the feet of the Blessed One. Standing to the side of the Blessed One, he joined his palms together, bowed, and said,<sup>40</sup> “Blessed One, for as long as I live, I go for refuge in the Buddha. For as long as I live, I go for refuge in the Dharma. For as long as I live, I go for refuge in the Saṅgha. For as long as I live, I will undertake abstinence relating to the eight poṣadha vows.<sup>41</sup>
- 1.25 “From now on I will abandon (1) killing any living creatures, (2) stealing another’s wealth, (3) engaging in sex, (4) lying or using divisive speech, (5) becoming intoxicated, (6) eating food at the inappropriate time, (7) garlands, cosmetics, song, dance, and entertainment, and (8) high beds. I will maintain these eight good qualities [F.300.a] in the manner of the arhats.”
- 1.26 In the same way, he repeated this vow a second and third time and said, “I will correctly maintain the vows of the discipline of the poṣadha. This will be the ornament of my mind, the instrument of my mind, and the accumulation of awakening. May I remain in the omniscient wisdom of the ultimate truth and the unsurpassable bliss of nirvāṇa.”<sup>42</sup>
- The Blessed One said, “Great brahmin, you should do just that! Excellent! Excellent!”
- 1.27 When the Blessed One had thus spoken, those monks and the world with its gods, humans, demigods, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised the words of the Blessed One.
- 1.28 *This completes “The Sūtra of the Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant.” It is included among the teachings of the first turning.*<sup>43</sup>



ab.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- Chinese* Seventh–eighth-century Chinese translation (Taishō 584) by Yijing (義淨)
- D* Degé (*sde dge*) Kangyur
- H* Lhasa (*zhol*) Kangyur
- K* Peking (*pe cin*) Kangxi Kangyur
- N* Narthang (*snar thang*) Kangyur
- S* Stok Palace (*stog pho brang bris ma*) Kangyur
- Sanskrit* Sanskrit manuscript found in the Potala Palace (see [introduction](#))
- U* Urga (*ku re*) Kangyur
- Y* Peking Yongle (*g.yung lo*) Kangyur

n.

## NOTES

- n.1 *Aṣṭāṅgikaṣoḍha, yan lag brgyad pa'i gso sbyong*. This is the usual Tibetan translation. In the text translated here it is *yan lag brgyad pa'i bsnyen gnas*.
- n.2 *Posadha* comes from the Prākṛit form *posadha* of the Pali *uposatha*. Dutt (1962), p. 73.
- n.3 Dutt (1962), p. 73. Buswell and Lopez (2014), s.v. “*upoṣadha*.”
- n.4 Lévi (1912), p. 501.
- n.5 This sutta is listed in the Pali Tipitaka as MN 74. See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (1995), pp. 603–6.
- n.6 *Sabbari me na khamati*. See Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (1995), p. 1276, fn. 731, for more on Dīrghanakha’s view.
- n.7 *Dīrghanakhasya parivṛājakasya sūtram kartavyam, Mahāvastu 3.67* (at the end of the chapter on Śāriputra and Mahāmaudgalyāyana’s going forth).
- n.8 See Miller (2018), *The Chapter on Going Forth* (Toh 1-1) [1.67–1.102](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-247) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-247>) and [1.281–1.312](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-633) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-633>).
- n.9 Miller (2018), *The Chapter on Going Forth* (Toh 1-1), [1.312](https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-690) (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-690>).
- n.10 See Burnouf (2010), pp. 426–31.
- n.11 Burnouf (2010), p. 427, fn. 43.
- n.12 Lamotte (2001), pp. 58–61. See p. 59, fn. 1, for more details on the accounts of Dīrghanakha.

- n.13 See UCSB Translation Group, trans., *Victory of the Ultimate Dharma* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh246.html>) (*Paramārthadharmavijaya*, Toh 246), 2021.
- n.14 In chapter 1 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Toh 12); chapter 11 of the *Daśasāhasrikā* (Toh 11, Padmakara Translation Group 2018, [11.31–11.33](#)); chapter 8 of the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* (Toh 10, Sparham 2022, [8.35–8.38](#)); chapter 5 of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (Toh 9, Padmakara Translation Group 2023, [5.52–5.54](#)); and chapter 5 of the *Śatasāhasrikā* (Toh 8, Sparham 2024, [5.423](#) ff.).
- n.15 See particularly Majjhimanikāya 71–73, Saṃyuktāgama SA 962–964 and SA2 196–198.
- n.16 The first chapter of Nāgārjuna’s *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* mentions that among the Buddha’s reasons for teaching the Prajñāpāramitā was to bring Āṅgīra, Śreṇika Vatsagotra, and another interlocutor, Satyaka Nirgranthīputra, to have faith in the Dharma. See Lamotte, vol. 1, pp. 58–61.
- n.17 Denkarma, folio 299.b; Phangthangma (2003), p. 22.
- n.18 Currently the manuscript is kept in the Potala. Vinītā’s critical edition is based on a copy of the manuscript that is kept in the China Tibetology Research Center. For further details on the state of this manuscript, see Vinītā (2010), pp. xv–xvii.
- n.19 See Yoshida (2011) for more details about this text.
- n.20 The Sanskrit has the Veṅuvana Kalandakanivāsa as the setting rather than Vulture Peak Mountain. Both are in Rājagṛha.
- n.21 The Sanskrit omits the audience. The Chinese adds people of various occupations to the list.
- n.22 This description of the teaching is omitted in the Sanskrit.
- n.23 Although the Tibetan *de skad smas pa* does not make it clear whether Āṅgīra is attributing the following statement to the Buddha or not, the Sanskrit *vasadi* supports the second person subject “you.” It is evident from the fact that Āṅgīra does not bow, and addresses the Buddha as “Gautama,” that he is not being respectful and so would not be using an honorific register.
- n.24 That is to say that actions reliably cause results. In the Sanskrit this description is slightly different: “Hey Gautama, is it true you say that this world takes actions as its self, is the heir of actions, originates from actions, is

bound by actions, and has actions as a refuge?" (*satyaṃ bho gautamaivaṃ karmasvako lokaḥ karmadāyādaḥ karmayoniḥ karmabandhuḥ karmaṇisaraṇa iti*). The Buddha then replies to Dīrghanakha's initial question by affirming that he does propose this statement, before the first question (regarding the vajra body) is asked. In the Chinese, the Buddha likewise affirms Dīrghanakha by repeating the statement.

- n.25 The Sanskrit has "abandoning killing and ceasing killing" (*prāṇātipātāṃ prahāya prāṇātipātāt prativirataḥ*). Similarly, in the Buddha's other replies to Dīrghanakha's questions, with the exception of questions (5) and (7), he uses the two verbs *prahāya* and *prativirata*, while the Tibetan uses just the single verb "abandon" (*spong*).
- n.26 Translated from Sanskrit, H, Y, K, N, S, and U, which add "what is not given" (Skt. *adāna*, Tib. *ma byin par*). D just has "abandoning taking" (*len par spangs pa*).
- n.27 In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's fifth question.
- n.28 In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's sixth question.
- n.29 D: *'bru'i chang* (beer made from grain) or *sbyar ba'i chang* (beer or wine made with combined ingredients).
- n.30 Instead of "even teeth" (Tib. *so mnyam*), the Sanskrit has "very beautiful and very bright teeth" (*śūśobhanadantaḥ sudīptadantaḥ*).
- n.31 In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's ninth question.
- n.32 In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's eighth question.
- n.33 The Sanskrit specifies these as the thirty-two signs of a great being (*dvā-triṃśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*). In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's seventh question.
- n.34 The Sanskrit has "playing" (*lalita*) instead of "jewelry" (Tib. *rgyan*).
- n.35 The Sanskrit adds a description of these three seats: "the perfect seat, the eminent seat, and the highest seat" (*aśeṣāsanāni pravaraśanāni uttamāsanāni*). The Chinese reads "the vajra seat and the eminent seat" (*jin gang sheng miao zhi zuo* 金剛勝妙之座, Skt. *vajrāsana pravaraśana*). In the Sanskrit this is Dīrghanakha's fourth question.
- n.36 D: *yan lag lnga sa la gtugs*, literally "placing the five limbs on the earth." The "five limbs" here are the two arms, two legs, and head.

- n.37 The Sanskrit omits “scholars.”
- n.38 The Chinese adds the following section: “Whereupon the brahmin saw that the Buddha’s explanation of causes and their results was not deceptive and said, ‘Gautama, explain how these merits that you have described are obtained.’ The Buddha said, ‘These are said to be the eight poṣadha vows. If one is able through the course of one day and one night, or perhaps even longer over extended periods of time, to obtain mastery over keeping these, then such results are obtained.’ Whereupon the brahmin Dīrghanakha, with regard to all that the Buddha had said about the eight poṣadha vows and keeping them for a day and a night, with the result that the arising of previous far-distant low and wicked actions is turned away from, immediately obtained the subtle adornment of deep confidence and uplifting joy” (Taishō 584, b28–c5).
- n.39 The Sanskrit says he sets down his “staff and water pot” (*daṇḍakamaṇḍalu*). Some dictionaries describe this conjunct term as a water pot with a handle. However, it is clear from the mention of this at the beginning of the sūtra that he does carry a staff (*daṇḍa*). See [1.4](#).
- n.40 The Sanskrit only has Dīrghanakha setting down his staff and omits the rest of these actions before the following speech.
- n.41 Sanskrit: *āryāṣṭāṅgikapoṣadham upavasāmi*.
- n.42 This section, from “In the same way, he repeated this vow a second and third time” up to this point, is omitted in the Sanskrit.
- n.43 D, H, N, S, and U: *bka’ dang por gtogs so*; Y and K omit.

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 abstinence

*bsnyen gnas*

བསྐྱེད་གནས།

*upavāsa*

As expressed in the Sanskrit and translated literally into Tibetan, the term means “to dwell near.” The term comes from the older Vedic traditions in which during full moon and new moon sacrifices, householders would practice abstinence in various forms such as fasting and refraining from sexual activity. These holy days were called *upavasatha* days because it was said that the gods that were the recipients of these sacrifices would “dwell” (*√vas*) “near” (*upa*) the practitioners of these sacrifices. While sacrificial practices were discarded by Buddhists, the framework of practicing fortnightly abstinence evolved into the *poṣadha* observance, and in fact the term *poṣadha* is etymologically related to the term *upavasatha*. See Dutt (1962), p. 73.

g.2 blessed one

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, this is an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four *māras*, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four *māras*.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root *√bhañj* (“to break”).

In this text:

In this *sūtra* it is notable that *Dirghanakha* does not initially show respect to the Buddha and refers to him using a more neutral register, “renunciant Gautama,” until his conversion at the end of the *sūtra* (1.24), when he then uses the epithet “Blessed One.”

g.3 body anointed with the fragrance of moral discipline

*tshul khrims kyis spos kyis lus byugs pa*

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་ཀྱི་སྲོལ་ཀྱིས་ལུས་བྱུགས་པ།

*śīlagandhānuliptaḡātra*

There are many references in the sūtras to a pleasant fragrance that is the result of moral discipline. Although it is not stated in these exact words, this description echoes some of the eighty excellent signs (*asītyānuvyañjana*), a subset of the 112 physical characteristics of both buddhas and cakravartins. For example, the list found in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Ten Thousand Lines* (Toh 11, 2.33) describes these signs: “(34) Their body is immaculate and without unpleasant odors”; and (later down the list) “(40) The pores of their body all emit a pleasant odor.”

g.4 complete faculties and a fully developed body

*dbang po yongs su tshang zhing lus rab tu rgyas pa*

དབང་པོ་ཡོངས་སུ་རྩེད་ཞིང་ལུས་རབ་དུ་རྒྱས་པ།

*pūrṇendriyaḥ paripūrṇagātraḥ*

Although not stated in precisely the same words, this description echoes some of the eighty excellent signs (*asītyānuvyañjana*), a subset of the 112 physical characteristics of both buddhas and cakravartins. For example, the list found in the *Perfection of Wisdom in Ten Thousand Lines* (Toh 11, 2.33) describes these signs: “(15) Their body is well proportioned. (16) Their senses are completely purified. (17) Their understanding is perfectly pure.” And further down the list it reads “(36) Their [sense faculties]—the ‘gates to the sense fields’—are excellent.”

g.5 Dīrghanakha

*sen rings*

སེན་རིངས།

*dīrghanakha*

A brahmin disciple of the Buddha. Also known as Koṣṭhila, Kauṣṭhila, Mahākauṣṭhila, and Agnivaiśyāyana. See introduction, i.4.

g.6 eight poṣadha vows

*yan lag brgyad pa'i gso sbyong · yan lag brgyad pa'i bsnyen gnas*

ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པའི་གསོ་སྦྱང་། · ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད་པའི་བསྟེན་གནས།

*aṣṭāṅgikapoṣadha*

To refrain from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) sexual misconduct, (4) lying or divisive speech, (5) intoxication, (6) eating at inappropriate times, (7) entertainment such as singing, dancing, seeing shows, and beautifying oneself with adornments or cosmetics, and (8) using a high bed. See introduction (i.2).

g.7 fingers that are long and webbed

*sor mo ring zhing sor mo'i bar dra bas 'bral par*

སོར་མོ་རིང་ཞིང་སོར་མོ་འི་བར་དྲ་བས་འབྲལ་བར།

*dīrghāṅgulijālāvanaddha*

The Buddha is said to have long and webbed fingers and toes. This is one of the signs included in the thirty-two signs of a great being; sometimes “long” and “webbed” are listed as two separate signs.

g.8 forty even and white teeth

*so bzhi bcu dang ldan zhing so mnyam la so dkar ba*

སོ་བཞི་བཅུ་དང་ལྷན་ཞིང་སོ་མཉམ་ལ་སོ་དཀར་བ།

*catvāriṃśaddantaḥ śukladantaḥ \*samadantaḥ*

Having “forty even and white teeth” is included in the thirty-two signs of a great being. Depending on the list, this sign is often divided into two separate signs of having “forty teeth” and having “white teeth.” In the Sanskrit parallel of *The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant*, this quality is described as having “very beautiful and very bright teeth” (*suśobhanadantaḥ sudīptadantaḥ*).

g.9 fourfold saṅgha

*'khor bzhi po*

འཁོར་བཞི་པོ།

*catuḥparṣad*

The fourfold saṅgha comprises monks, nuns, and female and male lay practitioners.

g.10 gait of a lion

*seng ge'i stabs su 'gro ba*

སེང་གེ་འི་སྟབས་སུ་འགྲོ་བ།

*siṃhavikrāntagāmin*

Having the “gait of a lion” is included in the list of the eighty excellent signs (*asītyānuvyañjana*), a subset of the 112 physical characteristics of both buddhas and cakravartins.

g.11 Gautama

*go'u ta ma*

གོ་ཁུ་ཏ་མ།

*gautama*

The family name of the historical Buddha. Gautama means “descendant of Gotama,” while his clan name, Gotama, means “Excellent Cow.” When the Buddha is addressed as Gautama in the sūtras, it typically implies that the speaker does not share the respect of his disciples, who would rather refer to him as the “Blessed One” or another such epithet.

g.12 Lokāyata

*'jig rten rgyang phan pa*

འཇིག་རྟེན་རྒྱང་ཕན་པ།

*lokāyata*

The materialist or “worldly” school, one of the many schools of the Indian *śramaṇa* movement around at the time of the Buddha. Today most of their literature and discourse has been lost, but their view can be compiled through secondary historical literature and the voices of their critics. According to this, they are claimed to have asserted a rigid materialist philosophy in which everything in the universe is composed of only four elements (earth, water, heat, and air). They rejected the moral causality associated with karma, and they rejected transmigration or rebirth. For more on the Lokāyata philosophy, see Chattopadhaya (1992), pp. 22–75.

g.13 poṣadha

*gso sbyong*

གསོ་སྤྱོད།

*poṣadha · upoṣadha*

The ceremony performed every new and full moon day by monastics, in which they confess any faults or transgressions and recite the prātimokṣa. It also refers to the one-day practice adopted by lay people in which they practice restraint according to the eight poṣadha vows and which may also include fasting. See introduction ([i.2](#)).

g.14 raised uṣṇīṣa

*gtsug tor 'phags pa*

གཙུག་ཏོར་འཕགས་པ།

*uṣṇīṣonnata*

The uṣṇīṣa, described in this text as “raised” (Skt. *unnata*) is one of the most prominent of the thirty-two signs of a great being and is often placed first or last in the list. In its simplest form it is an elevated shape of the head, like a turban (the Sanskrit term *uṣṇīṣa* in fact means “turban”), or more elaborately

a dome-shaped extension. The extension is described as having various magical attributes such as emitting and absorbing rays of light or reaching such an immense height that the gods are incapable of flying over it.

g.15 Rājagrha

*rgyal po'i khab*

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

*rājagrha*

Literally “King’s House,” this was the capital city of Magadha ruled by King Bimbisāra. It is currently the modern-day city of Rajgir in Bihar, North India.

g.16 renunciant

*dge sbyong*

དགེ་སྤྱོད།

*śramaṇa*

The Sanskrit term literally means “one who toils,” i.e., an ascetic, and the term is applied to spiritual renunciants or monks, whether Buddhist or otherwise. The Tibetan translation of this term is *dge sbyong*, meaning “one who trains in virtue.”

g.17 seer

*drang srong*

དྲང་སྲོང།

*rṣi*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ancient Indian spiritual title, often translated as “sage” or “seer.” The title is particularly used for divinely inspired individuals credited with creating the foundations of Indian culture. The term is also applied to Śākyamuni and other realized Buddhist figures.

g.18 sexual misconduct

*'dod pa log par g.yem pa*

འདོད་པ་ལོག་པར་གཡེམ་པ།

*kāmamithyācāra*

For laity this would ostensibly constitute any sexual misconduct such as adultery, molestation, or any conduct seen as perverse or improper (*mithyā*). Refraining from sexual misconduct is the third of the eight poṣadha vows.

However, laity practicing the one-day poṣadha additionally practice celibacy, just as monastics do.

g.19 Śreṇika Vatsagotra

*bzo sbyangs · phreng ba can*

བོ་སྤྱངས། · རྩེང་བ་ཅན།

*śreṇika vatsagotra*

A wandering ascetic, uncle of Śāriputra, whose dialogue with the Buddha is mentioned in the long Prajñāpāramitāsūtras.

g.20 taking what is not given

*ma byin par len pa*

མ་བྱིན་པར་ལེན་པ།

*adattādāna*

Essentially meaning to steal. Refraining from stealing or taking what is not given is the second of the eight poṣadha vows.

g.21 thirty-two signs of a great being

*skyes bu chen po'i mtshan sum cu rtsa gnyis*

སྐྱེས་བུ་ཚེན་པོའི་མཚན་སུམ་རྩ་གཉིས།

*dvātriṅśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*

Thirty-two of the 112 identifying physical characteristics of both buddhas and cakravartins, in addition to the “eighty excellent signs.” There are significant variations found in this list depending on the source.

g.22 three seats

*stan gsum*

སྐྱེན་གསུམ།

*trīṅy āsanāni*

It is not clear precisely what the three seats are. See [n.35](#).

g.23 tīrthika

*mu stegs pa*

མུ་སྐྱེག་པ།

*tīrthika*

An ascetic or mendicant follower of a non-Buddhist religious system or philosophy.

g.24 tongue that covers the entire circle of his face

*lces gdong gi dkyil 'khor thams cad khebs*

ལྷུས་གདོང་གི་དཀྱིལ་འཁོར་ཐམས་ཅད་ལེབས།

*jihvayā sarvāmukhamaṇḍalam ācchādyati*

This description is in reference to one of the thirty-two signs of a great being. In some lists of the signs, this one is simply described as having a long and slender tongue, but in others it is explained that the tongue is capable of reaching anywhere on the face up to the hairline.

g.25 Ulka

*me sgron*

མེ་སྒྲོན།

*ulkā*

A non-Buddhist seer, the main interlocutor in *The Victory of the Ultimate Dharma* (Toh 246).

g.26 vajra body

*rdo rje'i lus*

རྡོ་རྗེ་ལུས།

*vajrakāyaśarīra*

The body of the Buddha is like an indestructible vajra. While the term *vajrakāya* has specialized meaning in a tantric context, it is unlikely that such meaning is applicable here. In the Chinese, the term is translated as a “vajra-like, indestructible solid body” (*jin gang bu huai jian gu zhi shen* 金剛不壞堅固之身).

g.27 Veṇuvana Kalandakanivāsa

*'od ma'i tshal bya ka lan da ka gnas pa*

འོད་མའི་ཚལ་བྱ་ཀ་ལན་ད་ཀ་གནས་པ།

*veṇuvana kalandakanivāsa*

The famous bamboo grove near Rājagṛha where the Buddha regularly stayed and gave teachings. It was situated on land donated by King Śreṇya Bimbisāra of Magadha and, as such, was the first of several landholdings donated to the Buddhist community during the time of the Buddha.

Kalandakanivāpa means “feeding place of the *kalandakas*,” where *kalandaka* could refer to a flying squirrel or bird, as explained by differing sources.

g.28 Vulture Peak Mountain



*bya rgyod kyi phung po'i ri*

བྱ་རྒྱུད་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

*grḍhrakūtaparvata*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Ḡḍhrakūṭa, literally Vulture Peak, was a hill located in the kingdom of Magadha, in the vicinity of the ancient city of Rājagṛha (modern-day Rajgir, in the state of Bihar, India), where the Buddha bestowed many sūtras, especially the Great Vehicle teachings, such as the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras. It continues to be a sacred pilgrimage site for Buddhists to this day.

g.29 wandering mendicant

*kun tu rgyu ba*

ཀུན་ཏུ་རྒྱུ་བ།

*parivrājaka*

Literally, “one who wanders around.” An umbrella term for the class of wandering religious ascetics of diverse religious persuasions who were common at the time of the Buddha.