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**The Basket Without Words, The Illuminator's
Matrix**

Anakṣarakaraṇḍakavairocanagarbha

འཕགས་པ་ཡི་གེ་མེད་པའི་བླ་མ་ཏོག་རྒྱམ་པར་སྤང་མཛད་གྱི་སྣང་པོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

*'phags pa yi ge med pa'i za ma tog rnam par snang mdzad kyi snying po zhes bya ba theg pa
chen po'i mdo*

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “The Basket Without Words, The Illuminator’s Matrix”

Āryānakṣarakaraṇḍakavairocanagarbhanāmamahāyānasūtra

· Toh 259 ·

Degé Kangyur vol. 66 (mde sde, za), folios 259.b–264.a

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Basket Without Words, The Illuminator's Matrix* unfolds in Rājagṛha on Vulture Peak, where the Buddha is dwelling with a great assembly. The bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin requests the Buddha to give a teaching on two words and asks him to explain one factor that bodhisattvas should abandon, one quality that encompasses all the foundations of the training when safeguarded by bodhisattvas, and one phenomenon to which thus-gone ones truly and perfectly awaken. The Buddha responds by listing the afflictions that bodhisattvas abandon. Next, he advises bodhisattvas not to do to others what they themselves do not desire. Then, he teaches that there is no phenomenon to which thus-gone ones truly and perfectly awaken, and that thus-gone ones comprehend that all phenomena are free from going and coming, causes and conditions, death and birth, acceptance and rejection, and decrease and increase. At the conclusion of the sūtra, members of the assembly promise to propagate this teaching, and the Buddha explains the benefits of doing so.

ac.

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ac.1 This translation was produced by Bhikṣuṇī Thubten Damcho and team. Geshema Tenzin Lhadrön kindly reviewed this translation. Bhikṣuṇī Dr. Heng Ching Shih pointed us to contemporary Chinese commentaries. We are also grateful to Bhikṣuṇī Thubten Chodron and the Sravasti Abbey community, Dr. William Magee, Dr. Paul Hackett, and Maitripa College for their support and advice regarding this translation.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

- i.1 *The Basket¹ without Words, The Illuminator's Matrix²* begins with a description of the marvelous qualities of a massive assembly of bodhisattvas that has gathered in Rājagṛha on Vulture Peak together with the Buddha and his monastics. There follows a list of the great bodhisattvas in attendance, some of whom are accompanied by retinues of bodhisattvas, gods, goddesses, and universal monarchs. Also present are arhats, nāgas, gandharvas, and garuḍas, as well as more bodhisattvas from world systems in the ten directions, each accompanied by a fourfold assembly.
- i.2 The main interlocutor of this discourse is the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin, who is praised by the Buddha in *The Questions of Brahmaviśeṣacintin (Brahmaviśeṣacintipariṣcchā, Toh 160)*³ as “foremost among the bodhisattvas skilled in asking questions correctly and thoroughly.” The bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin requests the Buddha to give a teaching on two words, and he asks the Buddha about one factor bodhisattvas abandon, one quality that encompasses all the foundations of the training when bodhisattvas safeguard it, and one phenomenon to which thus-gone ones truly and perfectly awaken.
- i.3 The Buddha responds to the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin's first question by listing eight afflictions that bodhisattvas should abandon: the three poisons of attachment, anger, and delusion; afflictions derived from ignorance such as grasping at a self, laziness, and lethargy and sleepiness; and two of the twelve links of dependent origination that cause suffering in cyclic existence, namely ignorance and craving.
- i.4 To the second question, the Buddha responds that one quality that encompasses all the foundations of the training when bodhisattvas safeguard it is to not do to others what they themselves do not desire. The Buddha illustrates this with the example of avoidance of the three

- nonvirtuous physical actions—killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct—and explains that those who seek full awakening seek the causes of their own and others' happiness and do not desire their own and others' suffering.
- i.5 The Buddha's response to the third question is a series of paradoxical statements. He begins by stating that there is no phenomenon to which thus-gone ones truly and perfectly awaken. Nonetheless, thus-gone ones comprehend that although all phenomena are unborn, karma is appropriated. All phenomena are without cessation, yet they depend on causes and conditions. All phenomena are free from the two extremes and are unarisen, yet there is arising that depends on causes and conditions.
- i.6 Just as bodhisattvas must train in methods—by abandoning afflictions and safeguarding ethical conduct—in conjunction with cultivating wisdom, here the Buddha points to the complementary nature of dependent arising and emptiness. He explains that bodhisattvas generate mundane and supramundane wisdom by comprehending the empty yet dependently arising nature of all phenomena. By examining the nature of that wisdom, they enter into the womb of the perfection of wisdom, which is called *the illuminator's matrix*.
- i.7 The Buddha concludes his explanation with the statement that thus-gone ones comprehend how all phenomena are free from going and coming, causes and conditions, death and birth, acceptance and rejection, and decrease and increase.
- i.8 Having heard the Buddha's discourse, a multitude of beings attain spiritual realization and higher rebirth. The Buddha exhorts his son, Venerable Rāhula, to retain this Dharma instruction, and a multitude of bodhisattvas promise to propagate it, while the Four Great Kings pledge to fulfill the wishes of beings who are vessels of this teaching. The Buddha concludes with a description of the great benefits that will accrue for those who hear and preserve this sūtra, which includes seeing at the time of death the Buddha Amitābha with his retinue and the Buddha with his retinue at Vulture Peak, attaining supernormal powers, and becoming fully awakened.
- i.9 This text is listed in both the Denkarma⁴ and Phangthangma⁵ catalogs, which indicates it was translated prior to the compilation of the Denkarma catalog ca. 812 CE. According to its colophon in the Degé Kangyur, the text was edited and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Munivarman and by the chief editor-translator Bandé Yeshé Dé. The colophon in the Stok Palace Kangyur does not include the names of the translators.
- i.10 Butön Rinchen Drup (*bu ston rin chen grub*, 1290–1364) cites the Buddha's response to the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin's second question in *Cluster of Scriptures*,⁶ his explanation of Haribhadra's *Commentary on Ornament for the*

Clear Realizations (Abhisamayālaṅkāraṅṛtti), in the section “Summarizing the Meaning of the Buddha’s Instructions through One Phenomenon.”⁷ The fifteenth-century Tibetan scholar Pekar Sangpo⁸ groups this text under “Sūtras Explaining the Mental States of Bodhisattvas”⁹ in his *Presentation of the Sūtras in the Kangyur*¹⁰ and asserts that this sūtra teaches the doctrine that the three provisional vehicles of the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva lead to the one final vehicle of buddhahood.¹¹

i.11 One folio of fragmented Sanskrit text from the end of the sūtra and corresponding to Degé folios 263.b.2 to 264.a.3, has been identified in the *Vajracchedikā* manuscript held at the British Library.¹² The manuscript, discovered by Sir Marc Aurel Stein in 1900 in present-day Xinjiang, China, is the oldest extant Sanskrit copy of the *Vajracchedikā* and is dated to the late fifth or early sixth century CE. Paul Harrison notes that the Tibetan translation of this section matches the Sanskrit fragments in general, whereas the Chinese translations differ in places. Aside from these fragments, there is no extant Sanskrit version of the present text.

i.12 There are four Chinese translations of this sūtra, the best known of which is *The Precious Casket without Words* translated by Bodhiruci between 508 and 535.¹³ The second translation with the same title made by Buddhaśānta (dates unknown) in 529 CE has been lost.¹⁴ Two other Chinese translations were made by Divākara (613–87 CE): *The Mahāyāna Sūtra “Universally Radiant Treasury Free from Words”* in 683 and *The Mahāyāna Sūtra “Brilliant Treasury That Illuminates All, The Dharma Gateway without Words”* between 676 and 688.¹⁵

i.13 These sources may shed light on an ambiguity concerning the “two words” Viśeṣacintin refers to in his initial request. It is not entirely clear in the Tibetan translation what these two words are. Bodhiruci’s translation and Divākara’s translation *The Mahāyāna Sūtra “Brilliant Treasury That Illuminates All, The Dharma Gateway without Words”* appear to handle this ambiguity by grouping the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin’s three questions into two. The contemporary Chinese commentary referenced above¹⁶ asserts that they refer to *rulai* (如來), the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit compound *tathāgata*, which can be parsed as “thus gone” (*tathā + gata*) or “thus come” (*tathā + āgata*). Read in this light, the Buddha’s reply to the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin seems to mirror a section in *The Ornament of the Light of Awareness That Enters the Domain of All Buddhas (Sarvabuddhaviśayāvātārañānālokālaṅkāra, Toh 100)*,¹⁷ in which the bodhisattva Mañjuśrī asks the Buddha to explain the meaning of two words, “non-arising” and “non-cessation.” The Buddha responds that these two words refer to the Tathāgata¹⁸ and provides a list of the causes of affliction and purification, which he explains are by nature empty and not perceived.¹⁹

- i.14 Divākara's other translation, *The Mahāyāna Sūtra "Universally Radiant Treasury Free from Words,"* continues to be taught and recited today in the Chinese Buddhist tradition. It is often accompanied by a preface of unknown authorship entitled "The Miraculous Results of Reciting and Upholding *The Mahāyāna Sūtra 'Universally Radiant Treasury Free from Words'* through the Ages,"²⁰ which relates stories of four historical figures from the Tang through Ming Dynasties who derived benefits from reciting this sūtra.
- i.15 *The Basket Without Words* was translated from Chinese into Japanese by Hokei Izumi and published in the *Kokuyaku Issaikyō (Japanese Translations of the Scriptures)* series. In 1986, Sakai Shinten published a comparative study of the three extant Chinese translations and a Japanese translation of the Tibetan. Sakai reads "the basket without words" (*anakṣarakaraṇḍaka*) as referring to the Sanskrit letter *a*, described in the Buddha's teaching to the bodhisattva Dṛḍhamati in *Upholding the Roots of Virtue (Kūśalamūlasaṃparigraha*, Toh 101)²¹ as "a point of explanation for designating the gate devoid of attributes" that all phenomena possess.²²
- i.16 This English translation was prepared based on the Tibetan translation in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur.

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra
The Basket Without Words, The Illuminator's Matrix

1.

The Translation

[F.259.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in Rājagṛha on Vulture Peak together with a great saṅgha of monastics.

1.2 There were also many hundred sextillions of bodhisattvas, all with extensive knowledge, skilled in means, lucid, free from laziness, and skilled in their command of words.²³ They comprehended what is correct and what is incorrect. They were completely liberated. Endowed with the bud of discipline and the branch of conscience, they were compassionate by nature and [F.260.a] affectionate toward sentient beings. They had attained many meditative concentrations, possessed the hand of insight, and showed great respect to their teachers.

1.3 They resembled the bodhisattva great being Ratnadvīpa.²⁴ They knew what was virtuous and nonvirtuous and comprehended deception. They comprehended both semantic elucidation and inexhaustible eloquence.²⁵ They had attained victory and they engendered comprehension in all sentient beings. They emerged from and relied upon²⁶ the limit of reality.²⁷ Extremely heroic, they had no abode.²⁸ They were certain about the nature of the highest teachings. Their thoughts distinctly focused on the lack of inherent existence, they were courageous with regard to the matrix.²⁹

1.4 They were beings who despised rebirth. They comprehended phenomena and knew their bases of characterization. They were guardians and protectors of realms. They were renowned. They were endowed with the conqueror's voice, endowed with the treasury of conquest, and endowed with the matrix without words. Absolutely awake and absorbed in the aggregate of knowledge, they delighted in their own actions and relied on

those who were like them.³⁰ They were good in every way, took delight in equality, and were completely pure. They had purified their own and others' continuums and attained victory.

1.5 Together there were the following: the bodhisattva great being Voice of Victory, the bodhisattva great being Dharma Speaker, the bodhisattva great being Conqueror's Abode, the bodhisattva great being Emanation of the Dharma, the bodhisattva great being Source of a Thousand Attributes,³¹ the bodhisattva great being Aspirations Amassed, the bodhisattva great being Viśeṣacintin, the bodhisattva great being Dharaṇīdhara, the bodhisattva great being Jagatīndhara,³² the bodhisattva great being [F.260.b] Melodious Song of the Earth, the bodhisattva great being Pratibhānasampad, the bodhisattva great being Supreme Accumulation, the bodhisattva great being Lotus Petal Eyes, the bodhisattva great being Lotus Face, and the bodhisattva great being Maṇicūḍa.

1.6 The bodhisattva great being Mañjuśrī was also there together with bodhisattva great beings beyond number, all of whom were youthful. The bodhisattva great being Maitreya³³ was also there together with bodhisattva great beings who were all regents, as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges. The bodhisattva great being Viśeṣacintin was there together with many Śakras. The bodhisattva great being Samantabhadra, the bodhisattva great being Ākāśagarbha, and the Four Great Kings were there together with a multitude of universal monarchs. The bodhisattva great being Mahāsthāmaprāpta and the bodhisattva great being Avalokiteśvara were there together with a multitude of Brahmās. The bodhisattva great being Amoghadarśin was there together with a retinue of a multitude of Vaiśravaṇas. The bodhisattva great being Nakṣatrarāja was there together with the other guardians of the world. The bodhisattva great being Destroyer of Doubt and the bodhisattva great being Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin were there together with many thus-gone ones bearing the appearance of bodhisattvas.³⁴ Śāradvatīputra, Maudgalyāyana, Mahākāśyapa, and so forth were there together with all the arhats.

1.7 The bodhisattva [F.261.a] great being Abundant Virtues and the bodhisattva great being Viśeṣacintin³⁵ were there together with a multitude of thousands of goddesses. The bodhisattva great being Bhaiṣajyarāja, the bodhisattva great being Arisen from Remedies, and all the Moons and Suns in as many world systems of the ten directions as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, proud of their own splendor, proceeded to where the Blessed One was. When seated in the Blessed One's presence, it was as if lumps of soot had been placed before gold from the Jambu River—those Moons and Suns were no longer beautiful, no longer blazed, no longer shone, no longer gleamed, and no longer illuminated in the Blessed One's presence.

- 1.8 All the assemblies of gods such as Nārāyaṇa; all the kings of the nāgas such as Varuṇa, Takṣaka, and Anavatapta, together with their retinues; the lord of the gandharvas Sumanāpa together with many tens of millions of gandharvas; and the king of the garuḍas Great Stainless One together with seventy million garuḍas proceeded to the place where the Blessed One was. All the bodhisattvas dwelling in as many world systems of the ten directions as there are grains of sand in the Ganges obtained permission from their respective thus-gone ones and, together with their fourfold assemblies, proceeded there and made supramundane offerings to the Blessed One and to the bodhisattvas and then sat on their respective lotus seats.
- 1.9 Then the bodhisattva great being Viśeṣacintin said to the Blessed One, “If the Blessed One gives me permission, I would like to ask the Blessed One about two words.”³⁶
- 1.10 The Blessed One replied, “I give my permission. [F.261.b] Therefore, Viśeṣacintin, ask the Thus-Gone One whatever you have in mind. The Thus-Gone One did not appear here for the sake of just anyone's benefit, I appeared here for the sake of your benefit.”
- 1.11 Then the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, what is one factor that bodhisattvas abandon? Blessed One, what is one quality that, when safeguarded by bodhisattvas, encompasses all the foundations of the training? Blessed One, what is one phenomenon to which thus-gone ones have truly and perfectly awakened?”
- 1.12 Questioned in this way, the Blessed One gave his approval to the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin. “Brahmā,³⁷ the words you have spoken are excellent, excellent! Child of a good family, such eloquence arises through the Thus-Gone One's blessing. Child of a good family, if the Thus-Gone One did not bestow blessings, no one would ask the Thus-Gone One such questions. Viśeṣacintin, because of that, you should listen very carefully and keep this in mind. I will explain this to you.”
- 1.13 After the Blessed One said this, the bodhisattva Viśeṣacintin listened to the Blessed One accordingly.
- 1.14 The Blessed One said to him, “Child of a good family, someone may ask, ‘What is one factor that bodhisattvas should abandon?’ It is the quality of attachment. Child of a good family, this is one factor that should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned is the quality of anger. This is one factor that should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned is the quality of delusion. This is one factor that should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned [F.262.a] is grasping at a self. This is one factor that should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned is laziness. This is one factor that

should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned is lethargy and sleepiness. This is one factor that should be abandoned. Moreover, one factor that should be abandoned is craving.³⁸ This is one factor that should be abandoned. Child of a good family, moreover, one factor that bodhisattvas should abandon is ignorance. Child of a good family, this is one factor that bodhisattvas should abandon.³⁹

1.15 “Child of a good family, someone may ask, ‘What is one quality that bodhisattvas should constantly and continuously safeguard?’ Child of a good family, whatever bodhisattvas do not desire, they should not do to others. Child of a good family, those bodhisattvas who safeguard this one quality will thereby safeguard all the foundations of the thus-gone ones’ training. Why is this so? Child of a good family, whoever values their own life does not kill.⁴⁰ Whoever values their own wealth does not take what has not been given. Whoever values their wife does not approach another’s wife.⁴¹ Child of a good family, I have explained that those who think in these or similar ways and understand, ‘I should act in accordance with the Thus-Gone One’s teachings,’ should safeguard this one quality.

1.16 “Why is this so? Child of a good family, all those who seek unsurpassed, perfect, and complete awakening seek the causes⁴² of their own happiness. That means that no one desires their own suffering; beings desire happiness. I say, ‘Do not do to others what you do not desire.’ Child of a good family, this is one quality that bodhisattvas should constantly and continuously safeguard.

1.17 “Child of a good family, [F.262.b] someone may ask, ‘What is one phenomenon to which thus-gone ones have truly and perfectly awakened?’ Child of a good family, there is no one phenomenon to which thus-gone ones have truly and perfectly awakened. Child of a good family, without any phenomenon whatsoever to realize,⁴³ thus-gone ones have truly and perfectly awakened.

1.18 “Child of a good family, thus-gone ones also comprehend that all phenomena are unborn. Thus-gone ones comprehend that all phenomena are without cessation. Child of a good family, thus-gone ones also comprehend that all phenomena are free from the two extremes. Child of a good family, thus-gone ones comprehend that all phenomena are unarisen.⁴⁴ Child of a good family, thus-gone ones comprehend the appropriation of karma. Thus-gone ones comprehend that all phenomena depend on causes and conditions. Child of a good family, thus-gone ones comprehend that causes and conditions are like lightning. Thus-gone ones comprehend that there is no birth without causes and conditions.⁴⁵ In this way, thus-gone ones comprehend the true nature that is the illuminator’s matrix.

- 1.19 “Someone may ask, ‘Why are these realizations⁴⁶ called *the illuminator’s matrix*?’ Child of a good family, this is because they are the womb from which all mundane and supramundane wisdom and so forth arises. When one examines the nature of that wisdom, then one enters the womb of the perfection of wisdom. That is called *the illuminator’s matrix*.
- 1.20 “Child of a good family, thus-gone ones also comprehend that all phenomena are like a magician’s illusions and like mirages. Thus-gone ones comprehend their own true nature⁴⁷ that is naturally liberated. That which is liberated is the true nature of the illuminator’s matrix. [F.263.a]
- 1.21 “Child of a good family, thus-gone ones also comprehend the single gateway of the Dharma. Child of a good family, that which is without going, without coming, without causes, without conditions, without death and transmigration, without birth, without acceptance, without rejection,⁴⁸ without decrease, and without increase; and, child of a good family, what is naturally natureless, what cannot be indicated by analogy, what cannot be expressed by words or language—that single gateway of the Dharma is comprehended by the thus-gone ones.”
- 1.22 When the teaching of the king of arrays, this Dharma discourse on the basket without words, the illuminator’s matrix, was explained,⁴⁹ as many sentient beings as the minute particles that would appear to the eyes of a bodhisattva abiding on the tenth ground generated the mind of unsurpassed, perfect, and complete awakening. The same number attained arhatship. Moreover, an even greater number of sentient beings than that died and transmigrated from among the hell beings and were born as humans and gods. Many bodhisattvas attained the grounds.⁵⁰ Many bodhisattvas actualized hundreds of thousands of meditative concentrations. Many found that due to this discourse they did not lack anything they needed.
- 1.23 Then the Blessed One said to Venerable Rāhula, “Rāhula, you should remember this Dharma instruction of mine enthusiastically.”
- 1.24 Immediately after the Blessed One spoke, by the power of the Buddha, ninety million bodhisattvas from that retinue arose from their seats and said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, we will remember this Dharma instruction of the Thus-Gone One. At a later time, in the future, we will explain it well in the Sahā world to those who seek the Bodhisattva Collection.”⁵¹ [F.263.b]
- 1.25 The Four Great Kings said to the Blessed One, “Blessed One, we will fulfill all the wishes of those bodhisattvas who become vessels of teachings like this.”
- 1.26 Then the Blessed One looked upon the entire retinue and said, “Friends, those who hear this Dharma discourse on the basket without words, the illuminator’s matrix, which condenses the very extensive sūtras, will not be endowed with lesser roots of virtue. Why is this so?⁵² This is because all

- those excellent beings have served, venerated,⁵³ and honored me. Those children of a good family will carry my awakening on their shoulders. Their consummate eloquence will be unceasing. Their buddha realms will be thoroughly and completely pure.
- 1.27 “Also, at the time of death, they will see standing before them the Thus-Gone One Amitābha surrounded by a saṅgha of śrāvakas and attended by an assembly of bodhisattvas. They will also see me together with these very bodhisattvas abiding on Vulture Peak, the king of mountains. The treasury of the Dharma will never be exhausted for those children of a good family. They will remember their past lives. They will not be born in the lower realms.
- 1.28 “Child of a good family, I have spoken these words that contradict the whole world.⁵⁴ I have never seen children of a good family who commit the five actions with immediate retribution and then fasten this Dharma discourse to their bodies, write it out, recite it, or master it fall into the lower realms. Those bodhisattvas will be empowered by all the buddhas and attain the five eyes. They will not have inferior faculties. [F.264.a] They will be embraced by all buddhas. They will be embraced by all bodhisattvas. Their limitless actions will be purified. Child of a good family, I see that they will speak these words in the future and become truly and perfectly awakened.”
- 1.29 When the Blessed One had spoken these words, Viśeṣacintin and the other bodhisattvas, Śakra and the gods, the Four Great Kings, and the world with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.
- 1.30 *This concludes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra “The Basket Without Words, The Illuminator’s Matrix.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 It was edited and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra, Dānaśīla, and Munivarman, and the chief editor-translator Bandé Yeshé Dé.

ab.

ABBREVIATIONS

C Choné

D Degé

H Lhasa (Zhol)

J Lithang

K Kangxi (Peking late 17th c.)

N Narthang

S Stok Palace MS

Y Yongle

n.

NOTES

- n.1 See the introduction to Peter Alan Roberts and Yeshe Tulku, trans., *The Basket's Display* (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh116.html>) (*Kāraṇḍavyūha*, Toh 116, 2013), i.15 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh116.html#UT22084-051-004-17>)–i.17 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh116.html#UT22084-051-004-19>) for a helpful discussion of the translation of *karaṇḍa* as “basket.”
- n.2 The Tibetan that has been rendered “illuminator” is *rnam par snang mdzad*, which we have read as a noun rather than as an adjective, and which may refer either to the sun, figuratively, or to the Buddha Vairocana. Whether the intended sense here is the figurative evocation of the sun or a reference to Vairocana is not clear, but we have treated all instances in the text as the former and left the English uncapitalized. As for “matrix,” the intended sense here is that of a womb, one of the word’s meanings. In this regard, it may be worth noting that the English word “matrix” comes from the Latin for “mother” (*māter*).
- n.3 Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *The Questions of Brahmaviśeṣacintin* (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2021), 1.22 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh160.html#UT22084-059-003-48>).
- n.4 Denkarma, folio 299.b. See also Yoshimura 1950, p. 136; Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 109.
- n.5 Phangthangma 2003, p. 16.
- n.6 *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan ces bya ba'i 'grel pa'i rgya cher bshad pa lung gi snye ma.*
- n.7 *chos gcig gis don bsdu ba.* This section of Butön’s commentary also lists quotes from *The Lion’s Roar of Śrīmālādevī* (*Śrīmālādevīsīṃhanāda*, Toh 92), *The Sūtra of Sīṃha’s Questions* (*Sīṃhapariṣcchāsūtra*

(<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh81.html>), Toh 81), and *The Sūtra of Advice for the King* (*Rājādeśasūtra*, Toh 214, 215). *Cluster of Scriptures*, pp. 203-204.

- n.8 For the dates of this scholar, see van der Kuijp 2009, pp. 8–9.
- n.9 *byang chub sems dpa'i sems kyi gnas bshad pa'i mdo*. The other sūtras in this group, listed in the order in which they appear, are Toh 257–62, 264–86, 357, 32, 33, 138, and 36.
- n.10 *mdo sde spyi'i rnam bzhag*.
- n.11 *theg pa ni gnas skabs gsum dang mthar thug gcig go*. The doctrine of the one final vehicle of buddhahood asserts that the śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva vehicles are expedient means that lead all beings to attain buddhahood. In contrast, the doctrine of three final vehicles asserts that those who follow the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha paths become arhats and pratyekabuddhas, respectively, and do not go on to attain buddhahood. In a similar vein, a contemporary Chinese commentary reads “the illuminator’s matrix” (*vairocanaagarbha*) as referring to the ninth level of “immaculate consciousness” (*amalavijñāna*) posited in certain strands of the Yogācāra school in China, and it likewise classifies this sūtra as teaching the one final vehicle of buddhahood. See Shi, Miaohui. Also see Shi, Chengjing on this sūtra teaching the doctrine of the one final vehicle of buddhahood.
- n.12 See Harrison 2015, pp. 833, 851, 863–65.
- n.13 無字寶篋經 (*Wuzi baoqie jing*), Taishō 828. See Lancaster, “K213 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/cat-kor-can.html#k0213).”
- n.14 This sūtra is listed among Buddhaśānta’s translations in the 歷代三寶紀 (*Lidai sanbao ji*) [Record of the three jewels throughout successive dynasties], Taishō (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T2034_001) 2034, a private scriptural catalog of canonical texts compiled by Fei Changfang in 597 CE.
- n.15 大乘離文字普光明藏經 (*Dacheng liwenzi puguangmingzang jing*), Taishō (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T0829_001) 829, and 大乘遍照光藏無字法門經 (*Dacheng bianzhao guangzang wuzifamen jing*), Taishō (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T0830_001) 830. See Lancaster, “K214 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/cat-kor-can.html#k0214)” and “K215 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/cat-kor-can.html#k0215).”
- n.16 Shi, Miaohui.

- n.17 Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *The Ornament of the Light of Awareness That Enters the Domain of All Buddhas* (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2015), 1.14
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh100.html#UT22084-047-002-37>).
- n.18 Toh 100, 1.18 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh100.html#UT22084-047-002-41>).
- n.19 Toh 100, 1.71 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh100.html#UT22084-047-002-94>)–1.75 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh100.html#UT22084-047-002-98>).
- n.20 历代诵持《大乘离字普光明藏经》神奇感应 (“Lidai songchi *dacheng liwenzi puguangmingzang jing shenqi ganying*”).
- n.21 Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *Upholding the Roots of Virtue* (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2020), 13.63
(<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh101.html#UT22084-048-001-2284>).
- n.22 Reading *vairocanagarbha* as referring to the womb realm of the Buddha Mahāvairocana, Sakai posits that this sūtra is a summary of the meaning of the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, an early Buddhist tantra composed between the mid-sixth and seventh centuries, extant in Chinese as *The Enlightenment, Supernatural Transformations, and Empowerment of Mahāvairocana* (Śubhakarasiṃha and Yixing, trans., 大毘盧遮那成佛神變加持經 *Da biluzhena chengfo shenbian jiachi jing*, Taishō
(https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T0830_001) 848) and in Tibetan as *The Tantra of the Complete Awakening of Vairocana* (*rnam par snang mdzad mngon par rdzogs par byang chub pa'i rgyud*, Toh 494). However, this sūtra’s translation into Chinese by Bodhiruci in the early sixth century suggests that it predates the *Vairocanābhisaṃbodhi*, raising doubts about Sakai’s claim.
- n.23 *yi ge sgrub pa la mkhas pa*. The Chinese translations read that they were “accomplished in understanding the gateway/treasury of the Dharma without words.”
- n.24 All three Chinese translations lack the epithet “bodhisattva great being” and read Ratnadvīpa as a place name (寶洲, “Precious Continent”). S reads *rin po che'i snying* (“Precious Matrix”).
- n.25 This translation follows the reading in C, H, J, and N that omits *dang* after *zad mi shes pa: nges pa'i tshig dang spobs pa zad mi shes pa zung khong du chud par byed pa*. Taishō 828 and Taishō 830 read *zung* (“pair”) as “two kinds of emptiness” (二空). Taishō (https://cbetaonline.dila.edu.tw/en/T0830_001) 829 reads

- “the gateway to the ultimate and conventional” (真俗門), implying the two truths.
- n.26 D: *brten pa*. S: *bstan pa* (“taught”).
- n.27 Here, Taishō 828 reads 善學諸諦通達實際 (“Skilled in learning all truths, they realized the limit of reality”). Taishō 829 reads 深明實際不住其中 (“Deeply understanding the limit of reality, they did not abide in it”).
- n.28 Tib. *gnas pa med pa*. Here Taishō 828 reads 無邊勇健無所執著 (“Limitless in power, there was nothing they were attached to”).
- n.29 Translation tentative. Where D reads *sems pa*, other Kangyur versions (C, J, K, Y, N, S) read *sems dpa’* (Skt. *sattva*), with S adding a *shad: rang bzhin med pa’i khyad par sems dpa’ / snying po la dpa’ ba* (“Preeminent heroes who lacked inherent existence, they were courageous about the matrix”). Here Taishō 828 reads 能善思惟實以不實二種法門 (“They were able to skillfully contemplate the real and unreal, the two types of Dharma doors”).
- n.30 The Chinese translations add here that these bodhisattvas were liberated from the three realms and able to rescue those in the three realms.
- n.31 *stong gi ’byung gnas*. This translation follows the Chinese translations that read “bodhisattva Thousand Attributes” (Taishō 828: 千相菩薩, Taishō 829: 千容相菩薩). Taishō 830 reads “bodhisattva Thousand Spokes” (千輻菩薩).
- n.32 Not listed in S.
- n.33 D: *byams pa*. Y: *spyān ras gzigs* (Avalokiteśvara). Taishō 829 and Taishō 830 similarly mention Avalokiteśvara here; they also do not include Mañjuśrī in the audience.
- n.34 Taishō 828 has the opposite formulation of the bodhisattvas Destroyer of Doubt and Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin manifesting the bodies of thus-gone ones. Taishō 829 is similar to the Tibetan, while Taishō 830 does not include this sentence.
- n.35 Taishō 828 also lists Viśeṣacintin a second time in the audience, accompanied by a retinue of goddesses. Taishō 829 and 830 name different bodhisattvas accompanied by goddesses.
- n.36 *yi ge gnyis shig*. Ch. 二字. It is not clear what this term refers to given that Viśeṣacintin asks the Buddha three questions. In Taishō 828, Viśeṣacintin asks only two questions here about what bodhisattvas abandon and what the thus-gone ones realize. He asks the third question about what

- bodhisattvas safeguard only after the Buddha's reply to his first question. Taishō 829 is similar to the Tibetan. Taishō 830 has Viśeṣacintin asking only two questions, combining what bodhisattvas abandon and safeguard into a single question. After posing the two questions, Viśeṣacintin adds, "Please explain these two meanings to us" (有何等法。菩薩摩訶薩應當除滅及以守護。復有何法。如來克證及以覺知。如是二字惟願為說。) .
- n.37 Short for Brahmaviśeṣacintin. Taishō 828 uses the same short form here ("Brahmā," 梵天) and spells out Brahmaviśeṣacintin (勝思惟梵天) in full once later in the sūtra.
- n.38 D: *sred pa*. S reads *srid pa* (Skt. *bhava*), "renewed existence" or "becoming," the tenth of the twelve links of dependent origination.
- n.39 Taishō 829 and Taishō 830 include "deluded doubt" (疑惑) in the list of phenomena to be abandoned. Taishō 829 also lists "arrogance" (憍慢) and leaves out "ignorance." Taishō 830 leaves out "lethargy."
- n.40 Y and K: *gzhan gyi srog mi gcod* ("does not take the lives of others").
- n.41 Taishō 830 further spells out avoidance of the other seven of the ten nonvirtuous actions: lying, divisive speech, idle talk, harsh speech, covetousness, malice, and wrong views.
- n.42 D: *rgyur*. Y and K: *rgyun* ("continuity").
- n.43 D: *rtogs pa*. Y and K: *rtog pa* ("conceive").
- n.44 Instead of "all phenomena are unarisen," the Chinese translations read "all phenomena are not real" (不實).
- n.45 Taishō 828 has a different formulation: "Yet what thus-gone ones realize is free from causes and free from conditions. Thus-gone ones' speech is without karmic results. They experience this upon attaining full awakening" (而如來所覺離因離緣。如來說言無有業報。既成正覺而受之也。). Taishō 829 and Taishō 830 are similar to the Tibetan.
- n.46 D: *yongs su rtog pa dag* ("conceptions"). This translation follows the reading in S: *yongs su rtogs pa dag*. Taishō 829 and Taishō 830 read "the nature of phenomena" (法性). An equivalent term does not appear in Taishō 828.
- n.47 Taishō 828 and Taishō 830 read "the nature and characteristics (性相) of phenomena." Taishō 829 reads "the true nature (實性) of all phenomena."
- n.48 Taishō 828 reads "without thought, no thought" (無思不思) instead of "without acceptance, without rejection." Taishō 829 and Taishō 830 are

similar to the Tibetan.

- n.49 Here Taishō 828 reads 說此廣嚴上王無字寶篋光嚴法門時 (“When this extensively adorned supreme king, the basket without words, the Dharma instruction adorned by light was spoken”); Taishō 829 reads 當佛說此莊嚴王離文字普光明藏法門之時 (“When the Buddha spoke this king of adornments, the Dharma instruction of the universally illuminating treasury free from words”).
- n.50 *sa thob par gyur*. Taishō 830 reads “countless bodhisattvas abided on the grounds” (無量諸菩薩等住於諸地). Taishō 829 reads “countless bodhisattvas attained entry onto the first ground” (無量菩薩得入初地). This sentence is not found in Taishō 828.
- n.51 Following the reading in S: *byang chub sems dpa'i sde snod* (Skt. *bodhisattvapīṭaka*). D: *byang chub sems dpa'i snod*.
- n.52 In Taishō 830, the Buddha begins his response by saying that he is giving this Dharma instruction for the first time since attaining buddhahood. While Taishō 828 and Taishō 829 are similar to the Tibetan here, in Taishō 828 the Buddha concludes his discourse with a similar pronouncement.
- n.53 S adds *ri mor bya* (“showed respect to”).
- n.54 See *The Questions of Brahmaviśeṣacintin* (Toh 160), 1.187 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh160.html#UT22084-059-003-258>)–1.188 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh160.html#UT22084-059-003-259>) for bodhisattva Brahmaviśeṣacintin’s explanation of why this Dharma contradicts the whole world.

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 Abundant Virtues

dge mang

དགེ་མང།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.2 Ākāśagarbha
nam mkha'i snying po
ནམ་མཁའི་སྣོད་པོ།
ākāśagarbha

One of the eight great bodhisattvas, his name means “Essence of Space.”

g.3 Amitābha
'od dpag med
འོད་དཔག་མེད།
amitābha

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

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

g.4 Amoghadarśin
mthong ba don yod
མཐོང་བ་དོན་ཡོད།
amoghadarśin

Literally “Unfailing Vision.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.5 Anavatapta
ma dros pa
མ་དྲོས་པ།

anavatapta

The nāga king who is said to dwell in Lake Manasarovar near Kailash.

g.6 anger

zhe sdang

ཞེ་སྣང་།

dveṣa

One of the six root afflictions (Skt. *mūlakleśa*), often listed as one of the three poisons (Skt. *triviṣa*) along with attachment (Skt. *rāga*) and delusion (Skt. *moha*).

g.7 Arisen from Remedies

sman yang dag byung

སྐྱོན་ཡང་དག་བྱུང་།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.8 Aspirations Amassed

smon lam brtsegs

སྐྱོན་ལམ་བརྩེགས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.9 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.10 attachment

'dod chags

འདོད་ཚགས།

rāga

One of the six root afflictions (Skt. *mūlakleśa*), often listed as one of the three poisons (Skt. *triviṣa*) along with anger (Skt. *dveṣa*) and delusion (Skt. *moha*).

g.11 Avalokiteśvara

spyang ras gzigs dbang phyug

སྤྱན་རས་གཟིགས་དབང་ཕྱུག

avalokiteśvara

First appeared as a bodhisattva beside Amitābha in *The Display of the Pure Land of Sukhāvātī* (*Sukhāvātīvyūha*, Toh 115). The name has been variously interpreted. In its meaning as “The Lord of Avalokita,” *avalokita* has been interpreted as “seeing,” although, as a past passive participle, it is literally “what has been seen.” One of the principal sūtras in the Mahāsāṅghika tradition was the *Avalokita Sūtra*, which has not been translated into Tibetan, in which the word is a synonym for enlightenment, as it is “that which has been seen” by the buddhas. In the early tantras, he was one of the lords of the three families, as the embodiment of the compassion of the buddhas. The Potalaka Mountain in South India became important in Southern Indian Buddhism as his residence in this world, but Potalaka does not feature in *The Basket's Display* (*Kāraṇḍavyūha*, Toh 116), which is the most important sūtra dedicated to Avalokiteśvara.

g.12 Bhaiṣajyarāja

sman gyi rgyal po

སྤྱན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

bhaiṣajyarāja

Literally “King of Medicine.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.13 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

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.14 Bodhisattva Collection

byang chub sems dpa'i snod

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔའི་སྣོད།

bodhisattvapitaka

The collection of the Mahāyāna teachings.

g.15 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

brahmā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

In this text:

Also used in this text as a shorthand for Brahmaviśeṣacintin, the main interlocutor in this discourse.

g.16 Conqueror’s Abode

rgyal ba'i gnas

རྒྱལ་བའི་གནས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.17 conscience

ngo tsha shes pa

རོ་ཚ་ཤེས་པ།

hrī

One of the eleven virtuous mental factors (Tib. *sems byung dge ba*; Skt. *kuśalacaitta*), a subgroup of the mental states or factors associated with the mind (Skt. *caitasika, caitta*), according to the Abhidharma. According to Vasubandhu (in his *Pañcaskandhaka*), *ngo tsha* (“scruples,” “conscience”) is different from *khrel* (“embarrassment”) in that it is independent from others’ judgment of one’s behavior and solely internal in that it comprises one’s internalized values and one’s inner moral compass or sense of integrity.

g.18 craving

sred pa

སྲེད་པ།

tṛṣṇā

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.19 Dānaśīla

dA na shI la

དུན་ཤེས་ལ།

dānaśīla

An Indian paṇḍita resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries. He was a frequent collaborator of Yeshé Dé.

g.20 delusion

gti mug

གཏི་མུག

moha

One of the three poisons (Skt. *triviṣa*) along with attachment (Skt. *nāga*) and anger (Skt. *dveṣa*).

g.21 Destroyer of Doubt

yid gnyis 'joms

ཡིད་གཉིས་འཇོམས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.22 Dharaṇīdhara

sa 'dzin

ས་འཛིན།

dharaṇīdhara

Literally “Holder of the Earth.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.23 Dharma Speaker

chos sgrogs

ཚོས་སློབ་གསུངས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.24 Emanation of the Dharma

chos sprul pa

ཚོས་སྤུལ་པ།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.25 equality

mnyam pa nyid

མཉམ་པ་ཉིད།

samatā

The equality of all phenomena in their nature of emptiness.

g.26 five actions with immediate retribution

mtshams med pa lnga

མཚམས་མེད་པ་ལྔ།

pañcānantarya

Literally “without an interval,” meaning that the result of these actions is rebirth in hell at the very instant of death. The five are killing one’s mother, killing one’s father, killing an arhat, causing a schism in the saṅgha, or maliciously drawing blood from a buddha.

g.27 five eyes

mig lnga

མིག་ལྔ།

pañcacakṣus

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

g.28 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

བྱུང་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Four gods who live on the lower slopes (fourth level) of Mount Meru in the eponymous Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Cāturmahārājika*, *rgyal chen bzhi'i ris*) and guard the four cardinal directions. Each is the leader of a nonhuman class of beings living in his realm. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra, ruling the gandharvas in the east; Virūḍhaka, ruling over the kumbhāṇḍas in the south; Virūpākṣa, ruling the nāgas in the west; and Vaiśravaṇa (also known as Kubera) ruling the yakṣas in the north. Also referred to as Guardians of the World or World-Protectors (*lokapāla*, *'jig rten skyong ba*).

g.29 fourfold assemblies

'khor bzhi

འཁོར་བཞི།

catuḥpariṣad

The assemblies of monks (Skt. *bhikṣu*) and nuns (Skt. *bhikṣuṇī*), along with laymen (Skt. *upāsaka*) and laywomen (Skt. *upāsikā*).

g.30 gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the skies, sometimes said to inhabit fantastic cities in the clouds, and more specifically to dwell on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, where they are under the jurisdiction of the Great King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They are most renowned as celestial musicians who serve the gods. In the Abhidharma, the term is also used to refer to the mental body assumed by sentient beings during the

intermediate state between death and rebirth. Gandharvas are said to live on fragrances (*gandha*) in the desire realm, hence the Tibetan translation *dri za*, meaning “scent eater.”

g.31 Ganges

gang gA

གང་གླ།

gaṅgā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Gaṅgā, or Ganges in English, is considered to be the most sacred river of India, particularly within the Hindu tradition. It starts in the Himalayas, flows through the northern plains of India, bathing the holy city of Vārāṇasī, and meets the sea at the Bay of Bengal, in Bangladesh. In the sūtras, however, this river is mostly mentioned not for its sacredness but for its abundant sands—noticeable still today on its many sandy banks and at its delta—which serve as a common metaphor for infinitely large numbers.

According to Buddhist cosmology, as explained in the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is one of the four rivers that flow from Lake Anavatapta and cross the southern continent of Jambudvīpa—the known human world or more specifically the Indian subcontinent.

g.32 garuḍa

nam mkha' lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྗིང་།

garuḍa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.33 god

lha

ལྷ།

deva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.34 grasping at a self

bdag tu 'dzin pa

བདག་ཏུ་འཛིན་པ།

ātmagraha

The fundamental form of ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*) that is the root cause of suffering in cyclic existence.

g.35 Great Stainless One

dri ma med pa chen po

དྷི་མ་མེད་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

—

The king of the garuḍas present at this discourse.

g.36 ground

sa

ས།

bhūmi

The path of a bodhisattva is divided into ten stages of spiritual attainment called *grounds*. The eleventh ground corresponds to complete awakening.

g.37 hand of insight

shes rab kyi lag pa

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ལག་པ།

—

One of the four hands of bodhisattvas, the other three being the hands of faith, discipline, and learning. See *The Fourfold Accomplishment (Catuṣkanirhāra*, Toh 252), 1.34.

g.38 hell beings

sems can dmyal ba

སེམས་ཅན་དབྱེལ་བ།

naraka

One of the six classes of sentient beings engendered by anger and powerful negative actions. They are dominated by great suffering and said to dwell in different hells with specific characteristics.

g.39 hundred sextillion

bye ba khrag khrig brgya stong

བྱེ་བ་ལྷག་ལྷིག་བརྟུ་སྟོང་།

koṭīniyutaśatasahasra

A number calculated by multiplying a *koṭi* (*bye ba*), or ten million, by a *niyuta* (*khrag khrig*), or a hundred billion according to the Abhidharma system (although it is only one million in Classical Sanskrit), and by a *śatasahasra* (*brgya stong*), or one hundred thousand, all of which together equals ten to the twenty-third power or a hundred sextillion. This term is often used to express a number so large as to be inconceivable.

g.40 ignorance

ma rig pa

མ་རིག་པ།

avidyā

First of the twelve links of dependent origination and one of the six root afflictions (Skt. *mūlakleśa*).

g.41 Jagatīndhara

'gro ba 'dzin

འགྲོ་བ་འཛིན།

jagatīndhara

Literally “Bearer of the World.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.42 Jambu River

'dzam bu'i chu bo

འཛམ་བུ་འི་ཅུ་བོ།

jambūnādī

A mythical river (flowing out of Lake Anavatapta at the enter of Jambudvīpa) whose gold is believed to be especially fine.

g.43 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇི་ན་མི་ཏྲ།

jinamitra

Jinamitra was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Trisong Detsen (*khri srong lde btsan*, r. 742–98 CE) and was involved with the translation of nearly two hundred texts, continuing into the reign of King Ralpachen (*ral pa can*, r. 815–38 CE). He was one of the small group of paṇḍitas responsible for the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary. He is also the author of the *Nyāyabinduṣūtrārtha* (Toh 4233), which is contained in the Tengyur (*bstan 'gyur*).

g.44 laziness

le lo

ལེ་ལོ།

kausīdya

One of the twenty auxiliary afflictions (Skt. *upakleśa*) derived from ignorance.

g.45 lethargy and sleepiness

rmugs pa dang gnyid

རླུགས་པ་དང་གཉིད།

styānamiddha

One of the five hindrances to cultivating concentration (Skt. *samādhi*).

g.46 limit of reality

yang dag pa'i mtha'

ཡང་དག་པའི་མཐའ།

bhūtakoṭi

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

This term has three meanings: (1) the ultimate nature, (2) the experience of the ultimate nature, and (3) the quiescent state of a worthy one (*arhat*) to be avoided by bodhisattvas.

g.47 Lotus Face

pad ma'i gdong

པད་མའི་གདོང་།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.48 Lotus Petal Eyes

pad ma'i 'dab ma'i mig

པད་མའི་འདབ་མའི་མིག་།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.49 Mahākāśyapa

'od srung chen po

འོད་སྤྱང་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākāśyapa

A senior bhikṣu student of the Buddha Śākyamuni, famous for his austere lifestyle.

g.50 Mahāsthāmaprāpta

mthu chen thob

མཐུ་ཆེན་ཐོབ།

mahāsthāmaprāpta

One of the eight great bodhisattvas who serves alongside Avalokiteśvara as Amitābha's attendant in the buddhafiield of Sukhāvātī. As his name suggests, he is renowned for possessing (Skt. *prāpta*; Tib. *thob pa*) great strength and power (Skt. *mahāsthāma*; Tib. *mthu chen*). In Tibetan Buddhism, he is identified with Vajrapāṇi, though they are separate bodhisattvas in the sūtras.

g.51 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitreya

In Sanskrit “The Benevolent One”; the name of the bodhisattva who became Śākyamuni’s regent and is prophesied to be the next buddha, the fifth buddha in the fortunate eon. In early Buddhism he appears as the human disciple Maitreya Tiṣya, sent to pay his respects by his teacher. The Buddha gives him the gift of a robe and prophesies he will be the next buddha, while his companion Ajita will be the next universal monarch. As one of the eight great bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna, he has both these names. He is said to currently reside in the Tuṣita heaven awaiting the proper time to take his final rebirth.

g.52 Maṇicūḍa

gtsug na nor bu

གཙུག་ནོར་བུ།

maṇicūḍa

Literally “Crown Jewel.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.53 Mañjuśrī

'jam pa'i dbyangs

འཇམ་པའི་དབྱངས།

mañjuśrī

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Mañjuśrī is one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha” and a bodhisattva who embodies wisdom. He is a major figure in the Mahāyāna sūtras, appearing often as an interlocutor of the Buddha. In his most well-known iconographic form, he is portrayed bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left. In addition to the epithet Kumārabhūta, which means “having a youthful form,” Mañjuśrī is also called Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, and Pañcaśikha.

g.54 matrix

snying po

སྟིང་པོ།

garbha

g.55 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

Along with Śāradvatīputra, one of the Buddha Śākyamuni's two main bhikṣu disciples, renowned as foremost in miraculous powers and endeavor. His family clan was descended from Mudgala, hence his name Maudgalyāyana (The Son of Mudgala's Descendants).

g.56 meditative concentration

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.57 Melodious Song of the Earth

sa'i sgra dbyangs

སའི་སྒྲ་དབྱངས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.58 Moon

zla ba

ཟླ་བ།

candra

The god of the moon; the moon personified.

g.59 Munivarman

mu ni barma

མུ་ནི་བསྐ།

munivarman

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

g.60 nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.61 Nakṣatrarāja

skar ma'i rgyal po

སྐར་མའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

nakṣatrarāja

Literally “King of Lunar Mansions.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.62 Nārāyaṇa

sred med kyi bu

སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།

nārāyaṇa

Another name for the Brahmanical god Viṣṇu.

g.63 Pratibhānasampad

spobs pa phun sum tshogs pa

སྤོབས་པ་ཕུན་སུམ་ཚོགས་པ།

pratibhānasampad

Literally “Consummate Eloquence.” A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.64 Rāhula

sgra gcan

སྲ་གཙམ།

rāhula

The Buddha Śākyamuni's son, he became the first novice monk and a prominent member of his monastic saṅgha.

g.65 Rājagṛha

rgyal po'i khab

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

rājagṛha

Now known as Rajgir and located in the modern Indian state of Bihar, Rājagṛha, literally “Royal City,” was the capital of the kingdom of Magadha during the Buddha's lifetime. Nearby is Vulture Peak Mountain (Gṛdhrakūṭaparvata), where the Buddha is said to have taught the *Prajñāpāramitā* and other teachings.

g.66 Ratnadvīpa

rin po che'i gling

རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་གླིང།

ratnadvīpa

The name of a mythical island or group of islands full of jewels, to which residents of Jambudvīpa attempted voyages to find their fortunes.

g.67 Sahā world

'jig rten gyi khams mi mjed

འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས་མི་མཛེད།

sahālokadhātu

This universe of ours, or the trichiliocosm (but sometimes referring to just this world system of four continents), presided over by Brahmā. The term is variously interpreted as meaning the world of suffering, of endurance, of fearlessness, or of concomitance (of karmic cause and effect).

g.68 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

More commonly known as Indra, the deity who is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of

śata-kratu (“one who has performed a hundred sacrifices”): he is said to have become the lord of the gods through performing the horse sacrifice, which was the highest Vedic sacrifice. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra, so this sūtra mentions them in the plural.

g.69 Samantabhadra

kun tu bzang po

ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ།

samantabhadra

One of the eight great bodhisattvas, he figures strongly in *The Stem Array* (Toh 44-45; *Gaṇḍavyūha*, the final chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*) and in *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Toh 113). Not to be confused with the primordial buddha in the Nyingma tradition.

g.70 Śāradvatīputra

sha ra dwa ti'i bu

ཤ་ར་དྲཱི་བུ།

śāradvatīputra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, he was renowned for his discipline and for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise (often paired with Maudgalyāyana, who was praised as foremost in the capacity for miraculous powers). His father, Tiṣya, to honor Śāriputra's mother, Śārikā, named him Śāradvatīputra, or, in its contracted form, Śāriputra, meaning “Śārikā's Son.”

g.71 Sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin

sgrib pa thams cad rnam par sel ba

སློབ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་རྣམ་པར་སེལ་བ།

sarvanīvaraṇaviṣkambhin

One of the eight great bodhisattvas, his name literally means “Remover of Hindrances.” He plays an important role in *The White Lotus of the Good Dharma* (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, Toh 113), in which the Buddha Śākyamuni sends him to Vārāṇasī to see Avalokiteśvara. This is paralleled in *The Basket's Display* (*Kāraṇḍavyūha*, Toh 116), in which he is sent to Vārāṇasī to obtain Avalokiteśvara's *mantra*.

g.72 Source of a Thousand Attributes

stong gi 'byung gnas

སྤོང་གི་འབྲུང་གནས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.73 śrāvaka

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.74 Sumanāpa

shin tu yid du 'ong ba

ཤིན་ཏུ་ཡིད་དུ་འོང་བ།

sumanāpa

Literally “Extremely Attractive.” The lord of the gandharvas present at this discourse.

g.75 Sun

nyi ma

ཉིམ།

sūrya

The god of the sun; the sun personified.

g.76 Supreme Accumulation

shin tu brtsegs

འཇིག་རྟེན་བརྩེགས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.77 Takṣaka

'jog po

འཇོག་པོ།

takṣaka

A nāga king who is well known from his role in the Indian *Mahābhārata* epic. He dwells in the northwestern city of Taxila (Takṣaśilā) in present-day Pakistan.

g.78 true nature

chos nyid

ཚོས་ཉིད།

dharmatā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The real nature, true quality, or condition of things. Throughout Buddhist discourse this term is used in two distinct ways. In one, it designates the relative nature that is either the essential characteristic of a specific phenomenon, such as the heat of fire and the moisture of water, or the defining feature of a specific term or category. The other very important and widespread way it is used is to designate the ultimate nature of all phenomena, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms and is often synonymous with emptiness or the absence of intrinsic existence.

g.79 two extremes

mtha' gnyis

མཐའ་གཉིས།

antadvaya

The two views of (1) eternalism (*nityānta*), the belief in a permanent, causeless creator and/or the belief in an independent, permanent, singular self; and (2) nihilism (*ucchedānta*), the belief that things ultimately do not exist and/or the denial of the law of cause and effect or of past and future lives.

g.80 universal monarch

'khor los sgyur ba

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བ།

cakravartin

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

An ideal monarch or emperor who, as the result of the merit accumulated in previous lifetimes, rules over a vast realm in accordance with the Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he bears a wheel (*cakra*) that rolls (*vantana*) across the earth, bringing all lands and kingdoms under his power. The *cakravartin* conquers his territory without causing harm, and his activity causes beings to enter the path of wholesome actions. According to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, just as with the buddhas, only one *cakravartin* appears in a world system at any given time. They are likewise endowed with the thirty-two major marks of a great being (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), but a *cakravartin*'s marks are outshined by those of a buddha. They possess seven precious objects: the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the wish-fulfilling gem, the queen, the general, and the minister. An illustrative passage about the *cakravartin* and his possessions can be found in *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 3.3–3.13.

Vasubandhu lists four types of *cakravartins*: (1) the *cakravartin* with a golden wheel (*suvarṇacakravartin*) rules over four continents and is invited by lesser kings to be their ruler; (2) the *cakravartin* with a silver wheel (*rūpyacakravartin*) rules over three continents and his opponents submit to him as he approaches; (3) the *cakravartin* with a copper wheel (*tāmracakravartin*) rules over two continents and his opponents submit themselves after preparing for battle; and (4) the *cakravartin* with an iron wheel (*ayaścakravartin*) rules over one continent and his opponents submit themselves after brandishing weapons.

g.81 Vaiśravaṇa

nam thos kyi bu

ལྷ་ཐོས་ཀྱི་བུ།

vaiśravaṇa

One of the Four Great Kings, he presides over the northern quarter and rules over the yakṣas. He is also known as Kubera, and is regarded as a wealth deity.

g.82 Varuṇa

chu lha

ལྷ་ལྷ།

varuṇa

A nāga king. Varuṇa is also the name of one of the oldest of the Vedic gods and associated with the water and the ocean.

g.83 Viśeṣacintin

khyad par sems · tshangs pa khyad par sems · tshangs pa chen po khyad par sems

ལྷན་པར་སེམས། · ཚངས་པ་ལྷན་པར་སེམས། · ཚངས་པ་ཆེན་པོ་ལྷན་པར་སེམས།

viśeṣacintin

Literally “Distinctive Thinker.” A great bodhisattva who is the main interlocutor in this discourse. Also referred to as Brahmaviśeṣacintin and Mahābrahmaviśeṣacintin in *The Questions of Brahmaviśeṣacintin* (*Brahmaviśeṣacintipariṣcchā*, Toh 160).

g.84 Voice of Victory

rnam par rgyal ba'i dbyangs

རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བའི་དབྱངས།

—

A great bodhisattva present at this discourse.

g.85 Vulture Peak

bya rgod kyi phung po'i ri

བྱ་རྗོད་གྱི་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

grḍhrakūṭaparvata

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Grḍhrakūṭa, 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.86 world system

'jig rten gyi khams

འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

lokadhātu

Refers to any world or group of worlds illumined by one sun and moon, with its own Mount Meru, continents, desire, form, and formless realms, etc.

g.87 Yeshé Dé

ye shes de

ཡེ་ཤེས་དེ།

—

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than 160 sūtra translations and more than 100 additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with widely teaching both sūtra and tantra to students of his own.