

༄༅། །གསེར་གྱི་མདོ།

The Gold Sūtra

Suvarṇasūtra

འཕགས་པ་གསེར་གྱི་མདོ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa gser gyi mdo zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Gold Sūtra”

Āryasuvarṇasūtranāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 125
Degé Kangyur, vol. 54 (mdo sde, tha), folio 239.a.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 In this very brief sūtra, Venerable Ānanda asks the Buddha about the nature of the mind of awakening, the aspiration to attain the awakening of a buddha for the benefit of all beings. The Buddha explains that the mind of awakening is like gold because it is pure. He also teaches the analogy that just as a smith shapes gold into various forms, yet the nature of the gold itself does not change, so too the mind of awakening manifests in various unique ways, yet the nature of the mind of awakening itself does not change.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This sūtra was translated from Tibetan into English by Khenpo Kalsang Gyaltzen and Chodrungma Kunga Chodron. It was then edited and introduced by the 84000 editorial team.

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Gold Sūtra presents a very brief but meaningful teaching on the mind of awakening, the aspiration to attain the unsurpassed and perfect awakening of a buddha for the benefit of all beings. It consists of the Buddha's answer to a single question posed by Venerable Ānanda about how the mind of awakening should be viewed. The Buddha declares that the mind of awakening is like gold because it is pure, and he gives the analogy that just as a smith may shape gold into various forms, yet the nature of the gold itself does not change, so too the mind of awakening appears with various unique attributes, yet the nature of the mind of awakening itself does not change. The Buddha then proclaims a single four-line verse that succinctly articulates the nature of the mind of awakening and the way to practice it.

i.2

As far as we can tell, no Sanskrit or Chinese version of *The Gold Sūtra* exists. As there is no colophon at the end of the sūtra, we have no information on when or by whom it was translated into Tibetan. The sūtra is not listed in either of the two inventories of translations completed during the early, imperial period, and it appears to be found only in Kangyurs of the Tshalpa line of transmission. This translation into English is based on the version in the Degé (*sde dge*) Kangyur, with reference to the Comparative Edition (*dpe sdur ma*).

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra

The Gold Sūtra

1.

The Translation

[F.293.a]

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling in the Jetavana, in the Park of Anāthapiṇḍada. At that time the venerable Ānanda asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, how should the mind of awakening be viewed?”

1.3 The Blessed One replied, “Venerable Ānanda, the mind of awakening should be viewed as being in nature like gold. Just as gold is pure by nature, so the mind of awakening is pure by nature. Just as a smith shapes gold into a multiplicity of forms, yet the nature of the gold does not change, although the mind of awakening may appear to have a variety of unique attributes, ultimately these never waver from the mind of awakening. Therefore, its nature does not change.”

1.4 Then the Blessed One proclaimed the following verse:

“The mind of awakening is pure.
Strive for the benefit of self and other.
Meditate on the insubstantial essence.
Be intent on what causes the birth of wisdom.”

1.5 The Blessed One spoke thus, and Venerable Ānanda, the entire retinue, and the world together with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

1.6 *This completes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra “The Gold Sūtra.”*

b.

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GLOSSARY

g.

g.1

Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

Ānanda

The Buddha's cousin and principal attendant, who is said to have memorized the sūtras.

g.2

Anāthapiṇḍada

mgon med zas sbyin

མགོན་མེད་བཟ་སྦྱིན།

Anāthapiṇḍada

A wealthy layman and famous benefactor of the Buddha who purchased the Jetavana and donated it to the Buddhist community.

g.3

Asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

One of the six classes of sentient beings. The asuras are dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility and are incessantly embroiled in disputes with the gods. They are frequently portrayed in brahmanical and Buddhist mythology as having a disruptive effect on cosmological and social harmony.

g.4

Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

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.5 Gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

A class of generally benevolent semidivine beings who inhabit the sky and are most renowned as celestial musicians.

g.6 Jetavana

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

Jetavana

“Prince Jeta’s Grove,” a grove near Śrāvastī that was given to the Buddha by the householder Anāthapiṇḍada. The Buddha is said to have spent most rainy seasons there, and it is therefore the setting for many discourses.

g.7 Mind of awakening

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ལྡན་ཀྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

The intent at heart of the Great Vehicle, namely to obtain buddhahood in order to liberate all beings from suffering. In its relative aspect, it is both this aspiration and the practices towards buddhahood. In its absolute aspect, it is the realization of emptiness or the awakened mind itself.

