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Victory of the Ultimate Dharma

Paramāρθadharmavijaya

འཕགས་པ་དོན་དམ་པའི་ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa don dam pa'i chos kyi rnam par rgyal ba zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

Āryaparamāṛthadharmavijayanāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 246

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co.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ti. Title

im. Imprint

co. Contents

s. Summary

ac. Acknowledgements

i. Introduction

tr. Victory of the Ultimate Dharma

1. The Translation

c. Colophon

n. Notes

b. Bibliography

· Primary Sources

· Secondary Sources

g. Glossary

s.

SUMMARY

- s.1 *Victory of the Ultimate Dharma* presents the Buddha's answers to questions posed by a non-Buddhist seer named Ulka concerning the origin of life, the end of the universe, and the nature of the soul. These questions are posed following a miraculous display by the Buddha, in which countless living beings are emitted from the Buddha in the form of rays of light. Although this miraculous display awes the bodhisattvas and gods who are present, Ulka is not swayed by these powers, arguing that non-Buddhist gods such as Nārāyaṇa and Maheśvara are also able to perform such feats. In answering his questions, the Buddha articulates core teachings of Buddhism such as impermanence, karma, and emptiness.

ac.

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INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 *Victory of the Ultimate Dharma*¹ begins as the Buddha enters a meditative concentration called *precious emission* and subsequently performs a range of spectacular miraculous displays. A bodhisattva called Victorious Heap is about to ask the bodhisattva Mañjughoṣa (Mañjuśrī) to explain the significance of these displays when he is unexpectedly interrupted by the non-Buddhist seer Ulka, who is unimpressed with the Buddha's display of miracles and decides to test his omniscience. Ulka therefore proceeds to ask a series of questions concerning the origin of life, the end of the universe, and the nature of the soul.

i.2 In answering these questions, the Buddha presents several core Buddhist doctrines. Without espousing a theory of its origin, he sets sentient life in the context of dependent arising. Concerning the end of the universe, he states that it will come because "everything is impermanent." As for the various realms of existence in saṃsāra, beings are born into them due to their karma. The soul, moreover, does not exist because it cannot be observed anywhere, and therefore sentient beings themselves do not truly exist. The text concludes with a scene in which Ulka—and all the other non-Buddhists in attendance—become the Buddha's followers. Finally, the Buddha prophesies that Ulka will become a buddha in the future named Vipāśyin, and he entrusts this discourse to Mañjuśrī.

i.3 An interesting feature of this sūtra is the presence of many non-Buddhist ascetics, who are described as naked, with matted hair, emaciated bellies, and so forth. Moreover, the central interlocutor of this sūtra is a non-Buddhist seer, Ulka, whose questions to the Buddha also seem to be founded in non-Buddhist cosmological views. It is therefore also fitting that the setting of this sūtra is Gayāśīrṣa Hill, a brahmanical holy site referred to in texts such as the *Brahmāṇḍapurāṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. For Buddhists, this hill is also a sacred site as the venue where the Buddha taught the Dharma after he had brought to the Buddhist path the three ascetic Kāśyapa brothers

and a thousand of their followers, likewise through a series of miracles. In this sūtra, however, the Buddha's miraculous display is not sufficient to assuage Ulka's doubts, and his questions to the Buddha serve as a launching point for the teaching of important Buddhist concepts.

i.4 Non-Buddhist ideas are clearly reflected in this sūtra. First of all, as part of the Buddha's miraculous displays, he emits lights that constitute countless living beings, including the higher castes of the kṣatriyas and brahmins. This is somewhat reminiscent of how the body of the Vedic god Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, is the source of human beings of different castes. Secondly, in a question reminiscent of Śiva's role as the destroyer of creation, Ulka asks the Buddha why the world will be destroyed by fire at the end of the eon, and in an ambiguous passage the Buddha answers that the buddhas do not needlessly "bring forth" the apocalyptic fire. Lastly, in the end the ascetic Ulka swears to pursue the Buddha's omniscience in a manner suited to an ascetic, promising to do so even if he has to abide in a pit, jump off a mountain, be tormented, be roasted by the sun, or fast for eons.

i.5 Ulka'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. Perhaps the best known story, found in several Pali works as well as in the Mahāsāṅghika, Sarvāstivāda, and Mūla-sarvāstivāda vinayas, is that of the skeptic Dīrghanakha (Pali: Dīghanakha), also known by his birth name Koṣṭhila or Kauṣṭhila and as Agnivaiśyāyana. In the Kangyur, his story is told in *The Chapter on Going Forth (Pravrajyāvastu)*, the first chapter of the *Vinayavastu* (Toh 1),² and in *The Questions of Dīrghanakha the Wandering Mendicant (Dīrghanakhaparivrajakaparipṛcchā, Toh 342)*.³ 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.⁴ 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.⁵ 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 seek to establish some sort of ultimate reality (in the vinaya version, although in the sūtra version 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.⁶ 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—although perhaps none could claim maturity comparable to Ulka’s sixty eon quest.

- i.6 There appears to be no surviving Sanskrit edition of this sūtra, but there are two translations of the text in the Chinese canon.⁷ In the Tibetan translation the colophon states that it was translated by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla together with the Tibetan editor-translator Yeshé Dé, all of whom flourished during the late eighth and early ninth century. This dating is confirmed by the text’s inclusion in the Denkarma catalog of Tibetan imperial translations, which is dated to 812 CE.⁸ For this English translation, we relied on the Degé, the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), and the Stok Palace versions of the Kangyur and occasionally consulted the Mongolian translation as well. As far as we can tell, this is the first translation or study of the sūtra in a Western language.

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

Victory of the Ultimate Dharma

1.

The Translation

[F.33.a]

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. Soon after fully awakening, the Bhagavān was staying at Gayāśīrṣa Hill with an assembly of devoted monks and nine hundred ninety million bodhisattvas. In the gathering were also two hundred eighty million gods and an assembly of eighty-six thousand monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen. Also in attendance were sixty thousand strongmen, one hundred twenty million naked ascetics, and five hundred great seers endowed with the five types of superknowledge, who had bodies made excellent⁹ through the five fires. Also in attendance were eighty-four thousand other seers who had pale limbs, who were emaciated, and whose skulls and bones were visible through their skin. Their stomachs shrunken,¹⁰ hair matted on their heads, and bodies hunched, they wore animal skins and tree bark and carried begging bowls in their hands.¹¹ Other seekers of liberation were also there.

1.3 In the midst of these seers, the Bhagavān was as radiant, clear, and brilliant as Mount Meru, the king of mountains, among dark mountains. Indeed, like the six-tusked king of elephants among sheep, like the sun or the moon next to fireflies, like a branch of coral tree flowers next to flowers of kāśa grass, and like the king of garuḍas surrounded by crows, the Bhagavān in the midst of these seers was twice as resplendent.

1.4 Then, the Bhagavān entered the meditative concentration called *precious emission* and performed inconceivable miracles. From both his right and left sides, he emitted rays of light. Then he emitted countless millions of tathāgatas, [F.33.b] in addition to countless millions of bodhisattvas and countless śākras, brahmās, and world guardians.

- 1.5 He also emitted countless hundreds of thousands of arhats; countless hundreds of thousands of monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen; countless universal monarchs, universal monarchs who rule by force, feudal lords, and vidyādharas; countless Bharatas mountain dwellers, Drāviḍians, southerners, and forest dwellers. He also emitted kṣatriyas like great śāla trees, brahmins, and householders like great śāla trees; all the other varieties of human form in their different costumes, classes, and languages; and all the different types of gods. Thereupon, those in the great assembly looked at one another in bewilderment. The bodhisattvas, however, rejoiced, and all types of precious things, from jewels to ornaments, rained down.
- 1.6 Then, the Bhagavān arose from the meditative concentration of *precious emission* and, poised like a lion, surveyed the ten directions. As soon as the Bhagavān had gazed in the ten directions, all bhagavān buddhas in all the buddhafiels of the ten directions—which previously had appeared only in the Buddha’s purview—now appeared clearly to the Sahā world system as if placed in the palm of one’s hand. Then, all these tathāgatas also emitted miracles of magical emanation just as the Bhagavān Śākyamuni had done. All those emanations emitted by the tathāgatas then approached the Bhagavān and joined his assembly. Countless bodhisattvas, monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River, came [F.34.a] bearing great, unparalleled offerings for the Tathāgata. Also, having seen the Bhagavān’s miraculous emanations, multitudes of gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans approached the Bhagavān.
- 1.7 Those bodhisattvas who arrived from the ten directions then venerated the Bhagavān with unsurpassable offerings and sat on seats attained by way of the six perfections. All the beings present, from human to nonhuman, also sat on their appropriate seats. All those emanations emitted by the Bhagavān now went everywhere, from the lowest hell of Endless Torment up to the highest heaven, Below No Other, and returned once more. All the emanations emitted by the buddhas of the ten directions then dissolved into the hair follicles of the Bhagavān Śākyamuni. Similarly, all the emanations emitted by the Bhagavān dissolved into the bodies of all the buddhas of the ten directions.
- 1.8 Thereupon, a bodhisattva mahāsattva called Victorious Heap rose from his seat, placed his upper robe over one shoulder, knelt with his right knee on the ground, joined his palms and bowed toward the Bhagavān, and praised him with these verses:
- 1.9 “Ah, the guide of human beings
Has swiftly shown all beings here
A multitude of unprecedented deeds,

- Which has overshadowed the māras.
- 1.10 “This has made them remark to one another,
‘Alas, this is so wondrous;
Why have we come here?
Alas, we have been defeated. Defeated!’
- 1.11 “The ascetics have said, ‘We ascetics have become false ascetics,
Our weak bodies nothing but skin and bone. [F.34.b]
Decrepit and withered, we have lost our happiness
And not attained the power of magical emanation.’
- 1.12 “Not by words but by the three miracles¹²
Have the enemies of the teachings been overshadowed.
Today, you, the guide of the teachings,
Have created a great festival for the children of the buddhas.
- 1.13 “The entire assembly has resolved its doubts,
And, rejoicing, their minds have become very joyful.
We, the host of deities, who have come from our abodes,
Also pray, ‘May we become buddhas, the protectors of the world!’
- 1.14 “Mañjuḥṣa has venerated many buddhas.
I pray that Mañjuḥṣa, who sits in the midst of the assembly,
Surrounded by infinite children of the buddhas,
Will teach us and explain these miracles.
- 1.15 “Of what were these things a sign?
What Dharma was the sage intending to preach?
Since the entire assembly is crying forth,
Out of your compassion for sentient beings, please teach us!”
- 1.16 Then, from within that retinue and by the Buddha’s blessing, one of the great seers called Ulka said to the bodhisattva Victorious Heap, “Hey, young lord, keep quiet for a bit. I have a question to ask the Bhagavān. If he is able to decipher it, I will concede that he is worthy of the title *Omniscient One*. But given that Nārāyaṇa and Maheśvara have gotten magical birds¹³ to emanate various things, the amazing miracles that he has shown here are not that impressive. Even rogues and conjurers are able to perform that trick!”
- 1.17 Thereupon, the Bhagavān, his smiling countenance observing the assembly of seers, said to the great seer Ulka, “O venerable Great Seer, ask all of your questions, and I shall resolve them!”

- 1.18 Then, the great seer Ulka said to the Bhagavān, “O Gautama, what is the origin of sentient beings’ life? [F.35.a] Why will the world be consumed by apocalyptic fire at the end of the eon?¹⁴ At that time, in what realm will sentient beings gather? Within that realm, what is the size of the subtle soul that resides there? Is it a cubit? Is it a finger span? Is it the size of a forefinger, a thumb, a grain of barley, a grain of wheat, a black gram, a sesame seed, or a mustard seed? Please tell me how big this subtle soul within that realm is.”
- 1.19 The Bhagavān responded to the great seer Ulka, “Excellent, Great Seer. Excellent. These questions asked by this great seer—who is in fact sixty eons old—are felicitous.”
- 1.20 Now the assembly of great seers became amazed, thinking, “How did he know the great seer Ulka’s age without being told? Even we who have lived with him for a long time did not know it!”
- 1.21 The Bhagavān continued, “Great seers, listen to me carefully and pay attention, and I will explain. Great Seer, you asked me what is the origin of sentient beings’ life; about that, there is no verbal account. What we call a sentient being is one who is born from the condition of ignorance and who persists until old age and death. Great Seer, alternatively, one can say that a sentient being is born from causes and conditions, and those causes and conditions are the parents. Great Seer, the union of the parents is the cause. And whenever there is entry into the body of a woman caused by the karmic winds, themselves impelled by concepts, that is the condition.
- 1.22 Great Seer, the truths of the noble ones—suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path one travels to end suffering—are a sentient being. The five appropriated aggregates and the eighteen constituent elements are a sentient being. Great Seer, a sentient being is nothing other than karma, and karma is nothing other than a sentient being. Great Seer, a sentient being neither diminishes nor develops.”
- 1.23 The great seer asked, “O Gautama, if a sentient being neither diminishes nor develops, how could sentient beings become sovereign after transmigrating from a previous rebirth, such as that of a dog?” [F.35.b]
- 1.24 The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, it is not as you have said. If sovereign persons were truly sovereign, it would not make sense for them to be powerless against death. Great Seer, how could those people who are not even the master of their own body be sovereign? Great Seer, it would be like the case of a firefly thinking, ‘I shall illuminate Jambudvīpa myself.’ Could a firefly illuminate Jambudvīpa by virtue of that thought alone? Those who have not disciplined their mind are not genuine sovereigns.

- 1.25 “Also, Great Seer, if a sovereign person had fewer afflictions, then it follows that when that person was a dog, that person would have had many more afflictions. But since both a dog and a sovereign person possess both sovereignty and afflictions, sentient beings cannot be seen as either diminishing or developing.”
- 1.26 The great seer then asked, “Gautama, can afflictions be diminished?” The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, I have not overcome errors, nor have I diminished them.” The great seer retorted, “If that is true, then you too are not sovereign!”
- 1.27 The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, that is the case. Due to a lack of origination, I too am not sovereign.” The great seer then said, “Gautama, leave this topic aside for a moment. A child of Gautama said that sentient beings are born from the union of the parents. Well, if this is so, then why are the births of sentient beings fewer than the many instances of union?”
- 1.28 The Bhagavān said, “I shall demonstrate it to you with the following analogy. Great Seer, it is like the case of a tree that grows from a single seed, or the case of limitless fruits growing from a single fruit with many seeds. How is it that sometimes one seed grows whereas the other seeds do not?” [F.36.a]
- 1.29 The great seer replied, “O Gautama, fruits are ruined by the wind and the sun.” The Bhagavān said, “Great Seer, that is the case. The fruits of sentient beings are also ruined by karmic winds. Great Seer, some are eaten by worms when they are just in the womb, and some are turned to dust by karmic winds. Great Seer, the faults of a tree are few, but the faults of sentient beings are many. Great Seer, the constituent elements of sentient beings are impelled by conceptions. Great Seer, sentient beings are seen as existent insofar as their minds and mental factors are operating. Therefore, Great Seer, I assert that the constituent elements of sentient beings are impelled by conceptions.”
- 1.30 The great seer said, “O Gautama, that is the case. The response you have given is faultless. Next, please explain why the world will be consumed by apocalyptic fire at the end of the eon.”
- 1.31 The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, the world will be consumed by apocalyptic fire because the expanse of reality is unconditioned. Great Seer, if it were not consumed by apocalyptic fire, then the expanse of reality would be dual: some things would be impermanent and others permanent. If that were so, the Tathāgata would not be telling the truth. Great Seer, since everything is impermanent and unstable and offers no respite, the Tathāgata attains the title *Omniscient*.”
- 1.32 The great seer said to a young brahmin, “He’s worthy of the title *Omniscient*.”

The Bhagavān said, “Great Seer, if the world were not consumed by apocalyptic fire, saying ‘This is a fortunate period’ versus ‘This is an unfortunate period’ would be a meaningless distinction. Also, Great Seer, if it were not consumed by apocalyptic fire, the karmic ripening of good and evil deeds would be indistinguishable. [F.36.b] Great Seer, moreover, the destruction of the world by apocalyptic fire is a skillful means of the tathāgatas. Great Seer, after learning about this destruction by apocalyptic fire, sentient beings gain faith and are attracted to the tathāgatas via their methods of gathering disciples.

1.33 “Great Seer, for example, a saliva-licking snake is able to inhale through its eyes, as well as through its ears, nose, and mouth. Great Seer, likewise, tathāgatas attract sentient beings through generosity, affectionate speech, beneficial actions, and consistency between their words and actions.

1.34 “Great Seer, for example, one does not place gold in fire in order to destroy it. Rather, one puts solid gold in the fire with the intention to produce gold dust. It is by exposing the gold to intense heat that it becomes more precious. That way, whatever it decorates becomes priceless. Great Seer, that is why gold is pounded and burnt. Great Seer, likewise, the bhagavān buddhas do not needlessly bring forth¹⁵ the apocalyptic fire, and no sentient being is harmed during the destruction.”

1.35 Thereupon, the great seer Ulka said to the Bhagavān, “O Bhagavān, it is wonderful that no sentient being is harmed even though the world is consumed by apocalyptic fire at the end of the eon.”

1.36 The Bhagavān said, “Great Seer, tathāgatas do not harm any sentient being. Great Seer, the tathāgatas and bodhisattvas of the ten stages, who hold sentient beings near and dear and lead them hand in hand to liberation, are more numerous than droplets of light mist falling throughout the ten directions. Great Seer, at that time, [F.37.a] sentient beings will even see the bodies and radiant luster of those tathāgatas and bodhisattvas who liberate them from the terrors of the apocalyptic fire at the end of the eon.

1.37 “They will become contented and very joyful. So, they will sing, ‘May we also become liberators like them. May our bodies also become beautiful like theirs. May our luster also become radiant like theirs.’ Rueful, some of their minds will be freed, and they will attain the level of a stream enterer as a result.

1.38 “Others will attain the level of a once-returner or the level of a non-returner. Still others will attain the level of an arhat, or the enlightenment of a solitary realizer, or the level of acceptance that phenomena are unborn, and some will reach the stage of nonregression. Some will be born as gods in the

realms of the Four Great Kings, or as gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, or of the Yāma Heaven, or of the Joyous Heaven, or of Delightful Emanations, or of Controlling Others' Emanations.

1.39 “Great Seer, according to this Dharma teaching, some will be born as gods in all the heavens up to the highest heaven, Below No Other. Likewise, others will become universal monarchs, or universal monarchs who rule by force, or feudal lords. Great Seer, some will be born as kṣatriyas, as brahmins, as householders, or anywhere in between.

1.40 “Great Seer, these types of beings will see the form bodies of the tathāgatas. Seeing themselves liberated from great fear, they will realize and remember the kindness of the tathāgatas. Learning about the true nature of dharmas from the tathāgatas, they will become vigilant in the forms of training. By this means, they will not be reborn in unfortunate rebirths.

1.41 “Great Seer, there are as many realms of sentient beings who possess the faults of craving for saṃsāra as there are particles of the earth element that appear to the eyes of bodhisattvas on the tenth stage. [F.37.b] Having realized this, sentient beings will frequently pass completely beyond sorrow into the sphere of liberation, beyond the sorrow of the psycho-physical aggregates. Great Seer, this is why the world will be consumed by apocalyptic fire.”

1.42 The great seer Ulka contemplated this and said eloquently, “Alas! How can I be called *Great Seer*? The magnificence of this son of the Śākya clan is extremely vast. I have tested him enough, for he is manifestly omniscient. I too will call him by his proper title!” Then the great seer Ulka said to the Bhagavān, “You have earned the title *Omniscient* because you have become the source of all good qualities, and your exalted knowledge is infinite. Please tell me in what realm sentient beings will congregate.”

1.43 The Bhagavān said, “Great Seer, sentient beings will congregate nowhere. They will congregate in the state of equality. Great Seer, sentient beings will congregate in the state produced by the one vehicle. Sentient beings will congregate in the essence of enlightenment. Great Seer, sentient beings will congregate in the sphere of liberation from the sorrow of the psycho-physical aggregates. Great Seer, for instance, various rivers, streams, and tributaries flow toward one vast ocean and thus become indistinguishable. Great Seer, likewise, all the realms of sentient beings will be expunged of impurities, and their inhabitants will thereby congregate in the state of liberation.

1.44 “Great Seer, I would say that since sentient beings have congregated in saṃsāra, they have yet to really congregate. Great Seer, for instance, butterflies from all over, buffeted by the wind, cluster around a puddle.¹⁶

- When there is no wind, they separate from one another. Like this, Great Seer, those sentient beings who are mutually connected through karma to go to hell will congregate there. [F.38.a]
- 1.45 “Great Seer, in the same manner, those beings who are mutually connected through karma to be reborn as hungry ghosts or as animals will congregate there. Great Seer, those beings who would be reborn as gods and humans will congregate there.”
- 1.46 The great seer said, “O Surpasser of All, Omniscient One! Please explain how those formerly born as humans will later become other types of beings, be they animals, hungry ghosts, or anywhere in between.”
- 1.47 The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, when sentient beings see other sentient beings with whom they will be born and congregate in hell, they become sad, they get angry, their heads pound, and they even defecate and urinate upon themselves. Great Seer, this is characteristic of how those who will be born in hell are embodied. Anyone in this situation will also come to understand, ‘Now this sentient being and I will abide together in hell.’ ”
- 1.48 The great seer then said, “O One Who Clarifies the Types of Beings, O Omniscient One, what are the features of those who will abide together in the animal realm?”
- 1.49 The Bhagavān replied, “Whenever sentient beings who have been born in the human realm see one another, they hold bonds of enmity. Then, they seek out the faults of others, thinking, ‘How can I find their faults?’ Great Seer, this is characteristic of how those who will be born in the animal realm are embodied. They will also come to understand, ‘Now this sentient being and I will abide together in the animal realm.’
- 1.50 “Great Seer, those who will be born as hungry ghosts desire foul smells and excessively crave food. Even if they want to give to others, [F.38.b] attachment arises. Those who will be born as hungry ghosts, having seen the wealth of another with whom they have congregated, become jealous and desirous of the possessions of others. This is characteristic of how those who will be born as hungry ghosts are embodied. They will also come to understand, ‘Now this sentient being and I will abide together in the hungry ghost realm.’
- 1.51 “Great Seer, those from other rebirths who become lustful when they see one another will congregate as humans. Great Seer, this is characteristic of how those who will be born as human beings congregate. They will also come to understand, ‘Now this sentient being and I will abide together as humans.’ ”
- 1.52 The great seer then said, “Bhagavān, what is the case for those beings who will be born in all those births between gods and humans?”

- 1.53 The Bhagavān replied, “Great Seer, when those who will be born and congregate as gods see one another, they become enamored. Consequently, they perceive, ‘This sentient being and I will be born and congregate together as gods.’ Great Seer, sentient beings will congregate in this manner.”
- 1.54 Then the great seer Ulka became joyful and rejoiced. He said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, I would say that those sentient beings who do not perform prayers to you, Omniscient One, are deceived.”
- 1.55 Then the Bhagavān said to the great seer Ulka, “Great Seer, when you asked me about how subtle a so-called *sentient being* is, this demonstrated that you conceive the referent of a *sentient being* to be the subtle soul of a sentient being. Great Seer, consider, for instance, if someone were to ask a blind person, ‘What is the color white like?’ Since they cannot see, are they able to say what the color white is like?” [F.39.a]
- 1.56 The great seer asked, “How is this relevant?”
- The Bhagavān said, “Great Seer, similarly, I am like a blind person. Since I do not see it, I am not able to describe what is termed *the subtle soul of sentient beings*.
- 1.57 “Also, Great Seer, so-called *sentient beings* are not found in the eye, or the ear, or the nose, or the tongue, or the body, and so-called *sentient beings* are not found in the mind. Great Seer, so-called *sentient beings* are not found in the five appropriated aggregates. Great Seer, so-called *sentient beings* are found neither in the eighteen constituent elements, nor in the twelve links of dependent origination, nor in the emptiness of the internal, nor in the emptiness of the external, nor in the emptiness of both the internal and external.
- 1.58 “Great Seer, the eye is wretched and perishable, and it does not endure even for a moment. Likewise, the ear, the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind are wretched and perishable, and they do not endure even for a moment. Great Seer, the five appropriated aggregates are also wretched and perishable; they do not endure even for a moment. Great Seer, the thirty-six impure substances are also wretched and perishable, and they do not endure even for a moment.
- 1.59 “Neither so-called *sentient beings* nor their bodies exist. Great Seer, only a collection of substances is reckoned to be a so-called *sentient being*. Those who conceptualize discriminate substances, but they do not actually apprehend a life principle, growth, a being, a person, a human, or humankind. Great Seer, if sentient beings were always already existent, the Tathāgata would not come to teach the Dharma via the four truths of the

noble ones. Thus, Great Seer, since sentient beings do not exist, the state of a tathāgata can be attained. Therefore, however much one practices, to the same degree will one succeed.” [F.39.b]

1.60 Then the great seer Ulka said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, from today henceforth, I, the great seer Ulka, will aspire to omniscience. Bhagavān, even if in order to gain omniscience I have to abide for limitless eons in the pits that lead to the hell realms, or jump off of Mount Meru, whose peak is so tall that it reaches the highest heaven, Below No Other, or I have to be burned by the eon of five torments, or roast under the sun for eons, or experience the pain of fasting for thirty eons in a single month, O Bhagavān, I would endure and even hope for such hardships. For the sake of omniscience, I will not allow my effort to wane.”

1.61 Then all the great seers possessed of the five types of superknowledge who were assembled near the Bhagavān rose from their seats and said to the Bhagavān, “Bhagavān, we too, from today henceforth, will aspire for perfect, unsurpassable enlightenment. We shall strive to the best of our ability.”

1.62 Immediately after the great seers had spoken those words, the Bhagavān emitted rays of light called *tamers* from the spot between his eyebrows. All the buddhas of the ten directions also emitted rays of light called *tamers* from the spots between their eyebrows.

1.63 Due to the power of those rays of light, the great earth shook in six ways: it shook, it shook intensely, it quaked, it quaked intensely, it trembled, and it trembled intensely. As the east rose, the south fell. As the west fell, the north rose. As the east fell, the south rose. As the west rose, the north fell.

1.64 All the buddhas of the ten directions also brought down a rainfall of flowers atop the Tathāgata. Drums were beaten. Charming gandharva lords hailed the Bhagavān with the five types of instruments. [F.40.a] The aroma of sweet smelling, divine incense also filled and infused the air around the Tathāgata. The bodhisattvas rejoiced, and with supremely blissful minds they scattered necklets and necklaces and brought down a rainfall of precious substances atop the Tathāgata. They also made offerings with flowers, perfumes, incense, garlands, unguents, aromatic powders, garments, parasols, victory banners, and flags. The assemblies of gods also rejoiced and brought down a rainfall of coral tree and great coral tree blossoms. The entire retinue rejoiced and offered fitting garments to the body of the Tathāgata as well.

1.65 Then, the rays of light called *tamers* manifested everywhere, from the highest heaven, Below No Other, to the lowest hell of Endless Torment. They circled around all the buddhas of the ten directions. Returning, they disappeared into the crown of the Bhagavān’s head. Then, Venerable Subhūti said to the Bhagavān:

- 1.66 “Not without cause would the Śākya sage
Have emitted light rays in the ten directions,
But he did so because the entire retinue had doubts.
For this reason, the sage now foretells our future.
- 1.67 “Seeing the emanation of the guide of humanity,
Becoming happy, greatly rejoicing,
And making praises with great joy,
One proclaims, ‘The Bhagavān is excellent!’
- 1.68 “Śakras, brahmās, the world guardians,
And even spirits from the celestial abode make praises
And bring down a rainfall of divine flowers from the sky.
Even without being struck, the great drums sound forth.”
- 1.69 Thereupon, the Bhagavān asked Venerable Subhūti, “Do you see this great seer Ulka?” Subhūti replied, [F.40.b] “Yes, Bhagavān, I see him.” The Bhagavān said, “Subhūti, in the future, after the one thousand buddhas of this fortunate eon have passed, this great seer Ulka will become the thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly enlightened Buddha Vipāśyin in the world system Moonlit. Subhūti, the name alone of the Tathāgata Vipāśyin will fulfill the deeds of a pure wish-fulfilling jewel.
- 1.70 “Subhūti, eighty-four thousand great seers will subsequently achieve the stage of nonregression immediately upon hearing this Dharma teaching. Subhūti, through the sacred words of the Tathāgata Maitreya, they will attain the tenth stage. After three hundred eons, I, the thus-gone, worthy, fully and perfectly enlightened Buddha, will come into the world with the name Eloquent Speech. Subhūti, immediately upon hearing this Dharma teaching, immeasurable bodhisattvas will achieve the meditative concentration of *going as a hero*, and they will achieve the meditative concentrations called *knowing as spoken and unspoken, the empowerment of victory, illusion-like, differentiation of realms, the king of intelligence, the essence of the ocean, the level of pliability, the essence of the mind, and the clear light*.
- 1.71 “Subhūti, gods numbering ten million times the grains of sand in the Ganges River will achieve the level of acceptance that phenomena are unborn. Immeasurable thousands of monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen will actualize the state of an arhat. Subhūti, gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and nonhumans numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River will generate the wish for perfect, unsurpassable enlightenment. [F.41.a] O Subhūti, foreseeing the import of all this, the Tathāgata has emitted the lights called *tamers*.”

- 1.72 Then, the Bhagavān covered his face with his tongue. From his tongue came light rays of many different colors, such as blue, yellow, red, white, violet, crystal, and silver. Going out toward endless and limitless world-systems, they came back and, circling the Bhagavān three times, disappeared into his two feet.
- 1.73 Thereupon, the bodhisattva mahāsattva Akṣayamati rose from his seat. Having placed his upper robe over one shoulder, he knelt on his right knee. He joined his palms in devotion and bowed before the Bhagavān. He then asked the Bhagavān, “If the bhagavān buddhas do not stick out their tongues causelessly, then what are the causes and what are the conditions under which you have just stuck out your tongue?”
- 1.74 The Bhagavān replied to the bodhisattva Akṣayamati, “O noble son, for the sake of those with no faith, I extended my tongue so that they would think, ‘A tongue like that could not tell a lie.’ ”
- 1.75 Then, the bodhisattva Akṣayamati asked the Bhagavān, “O Bhagavān, if anyone transmits at least one verse from this Dharma teaching, how much merit does that son or daughter of a noble family generate?”
- 1.76 The Bhagavān replied, “O noble son, suppose someone were to honor as many bhagavān buddhas as there are in the ten directions—as many as appear to the Buddha’s eye—with everything that pleases them, doing so until they had passed into final nirvāṇa. And suppose that even after those buddhas had passed into final nirvāṇa [F.41.b] that person were to make stūpas of the seven types of precious substances. Compared to that person, if someone were to transmit even a single verse of this Dharma teaching, that would generate far more merit.
- 1.77 “Noble son, when those with faith praise someone who teaches this Dharma teaching by saying ‘Excellent!’ they themselves will be lauded by all the buddhas. Whoever pays homage to one who teaches this Dharma teaching thereby pays homage to me.”
- 1.78 Then, looking at the entire retinue, the Bhagavān said these words: “O noble ones, I shall speak the truth. Wherever this Dharma teaching is taught, all the buddhas will esteem that place. Noble ones, this Dharma teaching will become the medicine of all sentient beings in Jambudvīpa. When one speaks this Dharma teaching three times or impels someone else to speak it, that person requests the Teacher to turn the wheel of Dharma. O Subhūti, whoever writes this Dharma teaching or impels someone else to write it will become enlightened—attaining perfectly complete enlightenment, endowed with bodily and mental bliss. Thereby, that person will possess the treasury of all buddhas.

- 1.79 “O noble ones, this Dharma teaching is not heard by the ears of those going to hell. This Dharma teaching is heard by the ears of those who, having been born human, will be born in the field of perfectly pure buddhas after they pass on. Subhūti, this Dharma teaching is heard by the ears of those who have generated the roots of virtue connected to a thousand buddhas. Subhūti, enlightenment is said to be held in the palm of the hand of a noble son or daughter [F.42.a] who—having heard this Dharma teaching—has faith in it, memorizes it, reads it aloud, fully understands it, or also correctly teaches it to others. Thereby, that person achieves the five eyes. That person’s sense faculties will not become impaired.
- 1.80 “That person will be mindful and will not lose memory at the time of death. That person will obtain the meditative concentration of *accomplishing all buddhas*. That person will obtain the meditative concentrations of *emanations of Vairocana, the essence of magical formulas, the great seal of the crown jewel, the empowerment, and Avalokiteśvara’s great seal*.
- 1.81 “That person will obtain the magical formula of *the letterless basket of scripture*. That person will gain the magical formulas of *obtaining victory over all dharmas, purifying all doubts, and ascertaining ultimate reality*. That person will gain access to limitless hundreds of thousands of magical formulas and meditative concentrations, including these. That person becomes endowed with the five types of superknowledge. That person can intentionally control birth and death.”
- 1.82 Then, the Bhagavān said this to Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta: “O Mañjuśrī, who has paid homage to many buddhas, I will entrust you with this Dharma teaching. Give a correct explanation of it over and over again! Mañjuśrī, think about all the tathāgatas to whom you may show reverence, pay respects, worship, and make offerings. Mañjuśrī, is there a limit or end to the roots of virtue gained by those offerings? Can you fathom those roots of virtue?” Mañjuśrī replied, “O Bhagavān, indeed not. O Sugata, indeed not.”
- 1.83 The Bhagavān said, “O Mañjuśrī, the roots of virtue of those who disseminate this Dharma teaching in this realm of suffering during the time of the five degenerations will become even greater than this. [F.42.b] Mañjuśrī, even if you were to show reverence to all the tathāgatas by offering garments, foods, bedding, medicine that cures diseases, and goods, but were not to teach this Dharma teaching, your efforts toward the tathāgatas would still be deficient. Mañjuśrī, even if you do not prostrate to a single tathāgata but disseminate this Dharma teaching, you will have done the equivalent of making all those offerings to all the tathāgatas.”
- 1.84 The Bhagavān having spoken thus, Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta, the great seer Ulka, and those monks, gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas of the world were joyous. All praised what the Bhagavān had said.

1.85 *This concludes the noble Mahāyāna sūtra “Victory of the Ultimate Dharma.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 The Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Dānaśīla and the chief editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé translated and edited it and, having rendered it into the new lexicon, finalized it.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 We have translated the title following Narthang and Stok (and all other *them spangs ma* witnesses, which read *kyi*. The Degé and all other *tshal pa* witnesses—except the Lhasa (zhol)—read *kyis* in the opening title, but in the colophon, the Degé also reads *kyi*.
- n.2 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>) and 1.281–1.312 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-633>).
- n.3 See Kirtimukha Translation Group (forthcoming).
- n.4 In chapter 1 of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* (Toh 12); chapter 11 of the *Daśasāhasrikā* (Toh 11, see Padmakara Translation Group 2018, 11.31–11.33 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh11.html#UT22084-031-002-1153>)); chapter 8 of the *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* (Toh 10, see Sparham forthcoming); chapter 5 of the *Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā* (Toh 9, see Padmakara Translation Group forthcoming); and in chapter 5 of the *Śatasāhasrikā* (Toh 8).
- n.5 See particularly Majjhimanikāya 71–73, Saṃyuktāgama SA 962–964 and SA2 196–198.
- n.6 The first chapter of Nāgārjuna’s *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra* mentions that among the Buddha’s reasons for teaching the Prajñāpāramitā was to bring Dīrghanakha, Śreṇika Vatsagotra, and another interlocutor, Satyaka Nirgranthīputra, to have faith in the Dharma. See Lamotte, vol.1, pp. 58–61.
- n.7 The earliest translation with the title *Di yi yi fa sheng jing* 第一義法勝經 (Taishō 833) is by Gautama Prajñārucci (542 CE). For more information on this version of the sūtra, see Lewis R. Lancaster, “K 202 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0202.html),” *The*

Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue. The other, almost contemporary, translation is titled *Da wei dengguang xianren wen yi jing* 大威燈光仙人問疑經 (Taishō 834) and is by Jñānagupta (586 CE). For more information on this version of the sūtra, see Lewis R. Lancaster, “K 203 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0203.html),” *The Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*.

- n.8 Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 95.
- n.9 Following Stok Palace (*yan lag mchog pa*) instead of the Degé (*yan lag chog pa*).
- n.10 Tibetan: *lto zhar*.
- n.11 This most likely refers to a group of ascetics who perform intense austerities and whiten their limbs with funeral-pyre ashes. This may be a reference to Śaivite ascetics who are known for such cremation ground practices. Other related features include dreadlocked hair and the donning of animal skins.
- n.12 This could also be rendered “by the three inexpressible miracles” or “by the three miracles that involved no words.” The rendering used here seems to capture the essence of the sūtra, since not by words but by the display of miracles does the Buddha win over his audience.
- n.13 According to J. S. Negi’s *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*, the Tibetan term *’gro lding ba* is the translation of the Sanskrit word *dramiḍa* or *drāviḍa*. It was translated earlier as “Drāviḍians” in this text. However, in this particular context, it seems most appropriate to translate it as “magical birds,” according to the Tibetan meaning of *’gro lding*. Alternatively, according to the meaning of *drāviḍa*, it could also be translated as “cardamom seeds.” In the Mongolian translation, the translators preserved the Sanskrit word *dramiḍa*; it seems that they also shared our hesitation!
- n.14 We have read *bskal pas sreg pa* as *bskal pa’i mes sreg pa*.
- n.15 The Tibetan word *’byin pa* is multivalent, but it seems to suggest that the tathāgatas are actually causing the apocalyptic fire. J. S. Negi’s *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary* has several pertinent renderings of *’byin pa*. For example, *nīscar* and *pramuñc* both carry the connotation of bringing something forth or about through an emittance. *Uddharaṇa* and its associated verb *uddhṛ* refer to a brand used to transfer fire from one sacrificial fire to another. The related *’byin pa po* renders as *sraṣṭṛ*, the creator of the universe. These connotations may create a more theistic image of the Tathāgata that is not generally accepted in Tibetan Mahāyāna Buddhism. However, there are several reasons internal to the text that suggest this reading: (1) Ulka’s original

question asks why the world will be destroyed by fire, not why the tathāgatas *teach* about the destruction. The object of *'byin pa* in the Tibetan is always the destruction proper, with no mention of its teaching. (2) The subsequent passages, via the gold analogy, describe the destruction of the world itself as beneficial, not the teaching as beneficial, and that the tathāgatas are the agents of this benefit. (3) The destruction of the world by a deity is central to brahmanical cosmology, elements of which the Buddha seems to incorporate in answering Ulka's questions. (4) The reassurance that no being is harmed by the fire suggests that the Tathāgata would be responsible if some being were harmed, also suggesting the Tathāgata is the agent of the fire. However, one of the translation equivalents of *'byin pa* is *udbhid*, which can mean "to mention," so the theistic interpretation is not definitive. Keeping in mind the Mahāyāna notion of skillful means, the language here may be intentionally ambiguous to suit the metaphysical suppositions of a brahmanical audience. Thus, the equally ambiguous "bring forth" seems the most felicitous here.

n.16 The emendation here is *zha*, meaning moisture or a puddle, for *zhwa*, a hat, which makes little sense in context. Butterflies are known to "mud-puddle" or collect around pools or puddles. The image here works on two levels: just as butterflies blown in the wind needing to land somewhere gather around puddles, so too are sentient beings blown by karmic winds forced to take rebirth, gathering in specific realms of saṃsāra.

b.

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GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Acceptance that phenomena are unborn

mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣāntilābha

g.2 Akṣayamati

blo gros mi zad pa

བློ་གྲོས་མི་བཟད་པ།

Akṣayamati

A bodhisattva.

g.3 Arhat

dgra bcom pa

དགའ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

One who has achieved the fourth and final level of attainment on the śrāvaka path, and who has attained liberation with the cessation of all mental afflictions. It is also used as an epithet of the Buddha. The Skt. means literally “worthy one.” The Tibetan interpretation explains the Middle Indic form *arahat* as *ari-hata*, “someone who has killed his foes (i.e., mental afflictions).” Also translated here as “worthy.”

g.4 Asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

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

g.5 Below No Other

'og min

འོག་མིན།

Akaniṣṭha

The highest of the seventeen heavens in the form realm, the highest of the five Śuddhāvāsa heavens.

g.6 Bhagavān

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavat

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generically means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts 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.7 Bharatas

rgya

རྩ།

Bharata

The Bharatas of southern Punjab were one of the prominent peoples mentioned in the *R̥gveda*. Here, we believe the term Bharatas denotes the Aryan people, in contrast to the Drāviḍians who are mentioned below.

g.8 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་བཀ

brahmā

Divinity in the intermediate realm within the first concentration (*dhyāna*). The deity in the form realm who was during the Buddha's time considered the supreme deity and creator of the universe. In the cosmogony of many universes, each with a thousand million worlds, there are many brahmās.

g.9 Brahmin

bram ze

བླ་མ་ཟླེ།

brāhmaṇa

A person belonging to the priestly caste of Indian society.

g.10 Child of Gautama

gau ta ma'i sras

གོ་ཏ་མའི་སྲས།

"Gautama" refers to Siddhārtha Gautama, the name of the historical Buddha.

"A child of Gautama" denotes one of his followers.

g.11 Controlling Others' Emanations

gzhan 'phrul dbang byed

གཞན་འཕྲུལ་དབང་བྱེད།

Paranirmitavaśavartina

The highest of the six heavens of the desire realm, its inhabitants enjoy objects created by others.

g.12 Coral tree

man dA ra ba

མན་རྒྱ་བ།

mandāra

Erythrina indica or *Erythrina variegata*. Also known as mandarava, flame tree, and tiger's claw. In the summer it is covered in large crimson flowers, which are believed to also grow in Indra's paradise. The coral tree is the most widespread species of *Erythrina* or *māndāra*, taller than the others, and all are collectively known as coral trees.

g.13 Cubit

khru

ཁྲུ།

hasta

A measure of length from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger.

g.14 Dānaśīla

dA na shI la

དྲན་ཤི་ལ།

Dānaśīla

An Indian preceptor and translator who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.15 Delightful Emanations

'phrul dga'

འཕྲུལ་དགའ།

Nirmāṇarataya

The fifth of the six heavens of the desire realm. Its inhabitants magically create the objects of their own enjoyment.

g.16 Dīrganakha

sen rings

སེན་རིངས།

Dīrganakha

A wandering ascetic whose dialogue with the Buddha is mentioned in many canonical texts. His name means “Long-Nailed.” Also known as Koṣṭhila, Kauṣṭhila, Mahākauṣṭhila, and Agnivaiśyāyana.

g.17 Drāviḍians

'gro lding ba

འགྲོ་ལྡིང་བ།

dramiḍa · ddrāviḍa

One of the prominent peoples of the Indian Subcontinent who were already present there prior to the arrival of the Aryans in around 1500 CE.

g.18 Eighteen constituent elements

khamś bcwa brgyad

ཁམས་བརྒྱ་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭadaśadhātu

The eighteen elements through which sensory experience is produced: the six sense bases, or sense organs; the six corresponding sense objects; and the six sensory consciousnesses.

g.19 Eloquent Speech

bka' blo bde ba

བཀའ་བློ་བདེ་བ།

Name that the Buddha will bear when he appears again in this world after three hundred eons.

g.20 Endless Torment

mnar med pa

མནལ་མེད་པ།

Avīci

The lowest hell, the eighth of the eight hot hells.

g.21 Enlightenment of a solitary realizer

rang byang chub

རང་བྱུང་རྒྱུ་བ།

pratyekabuddha

Someone who has attained liberation entirely through their own contemplation as a result of progress in previous lives but, unlike a buddha, does not have the accumulated merit and motivation to teach others.

g.22 Expanse of reality

chos kyi dbyings

ཚོས་ཀྱི་དབྱིངས།

dharmadhātu

g.23 Five appropriated aggregates

nye bar len pa'i phung po lnga

ཉེ་བར་ལེན་པའི་ཕུང་པོ་ལྔ།

pañcopādānaskandha

The five aggregates (*skandha*) of form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness. On the individual level the five aggregates refer to the basis upon which the mistaken idea of a self is projected. They are referred to as

the “bases for appropriation” (*upādāna*) insofar as all conceptual grasping arises on the basis of these aggregates.

g.24 Five degenerations

snyigs ma lnga

སྒྲིགས་མ་ལྷུ།

pañcakaṣāya

The five degenerations are those of the lifespan, of views, of afflictions, of sentient beings, and of the age.

g.25 Five eyes

mig lnga

མིག་ལྷུ།

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.26 Five fires

gdung ba lnga

གདུང་བ་ལྷུ།

pañcatapas

Literally meaning “five heats” or “fivefold ascetic practice,” within Brahmanical sources this term refers to the ascetic practice of sitting at the center of four fires during the hot season in India, with the sun above equaling five.

g.27 Five types of instruments

yan lag lnga pa'i sil snyan

ཡན་ལག་ལྷུ་པའི་སིལ་སྒྲིག་།

—

A standard grouping of five classical instruments into non-membranous percussion, membranous percussion, windblown, plucked string, and bowed string.

g.28 Five types of superknowledge

mngon par shes pa lnga

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ་ལྷུ།

pañcābhijñā

The five types of superknowledge are psychic powers, clairvoyance, clairaudience, knowledge of others' minds, and knowledge of past lives.

g.29 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཚེན་པོ་བཞི།

Cāturmahārāja

The powerful nonhuman guardian kings of the four quarters—Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Vaiśravaṇa—who rule, respectively, over kumbhāṇḍas in the south, nāgas in the west, gandharvas in the east, and yakṣas in the north.

g.30 Four truths of the noble ones

phags pa'i bden pa bzhi

ཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

caturāryasatya

The four truths that the Buddha realized and transmitted in his first teaching: suffering, the origin of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path one travels to end suffering.

g.31 Gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva

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

g.32 Ganges River

gang gA

གང་གླ།

Gaṅgā

The most important holy river of India.

g.33 Garuḍa

nam mkha' lding

ནམ་མཁའ་ལྷིང་།

garuḍa

A class of divine beings described as eagle-type birds with gigantic wingspans. They are traditionally enemies of the nāgas. In the Vedas, they are said to have brought nectar from the heavens to earth.

g.34 Gautama

gau ta ma

གོ་ཏ་མ།

Gautama

Refers to Siddhārtha Gautama, the name of the historical Buddha.

g.35 Gayāśīrṣa Hill

ga yA'i ri

ག་ཡཱི་རི།

A sacred hill immediately to the south of the city of Gayā. Its name means “Gayā Head,” and may derive from pre-Buddhist legends of a buried, reclining giant—in one version, a demon king called Gayāsura who was immobilized by Viṣṇu, and in another a saintly prince called Gaya; this hill marks the position of his head, with other features of the landscape in the region associated with other parts of his body.

g.36 God

lha

ལྷ།

deva

g.37 Great seer

drang srong chen po

དང་སྲོང་ཆེན་པོ།

maharṣi

Indian sage, often a wandering ascetic or hermit. This term is sometimes used as an epithet of the Buddha.

g.38 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་བུ་རྩ་གསུམ།

Trāyastriṃśa

The second heaven of the desire realm, it is found at the top of Mount Meru and is the abode of Śakra and the thirty-three gods.

g.39 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu'i gling

འཛམ་བུ་རི་གླིང་།

Jambudvīpa

The name of the southern continent in Buddhist cosmology, which can signify either the known human world, or more specifically the Indian subcontinent, literally “the *jambu* island/continent.” Jambu is the name used for a range of plum-like fruits from trees belonging to the genus *Szygium*, particularly *Szygium jambos* and *Szygium cumini*, and has commonly been rendered “rose apple” although “black plum” may be a less misleading term. Among various explanations given for the continent being so named, one (in the *Abhidharmakośa*) is that a jambu tree grows in its northern mountains beside Lake Anavatapta, mythically considered the source of the four great rivers of India, and that the continent is therefore named from the tree or the fruit. Jambudvīpa has the vajrāsana at its center and is the only continent upon which buddhas attain awakening.

g.40 Jinamitra

dzi na mi tra

ཇོ་ན་མི་ཏྲ།

Jinamitra

An Indian preceptor and translator who was resident in Tibet during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

g.41 Joyous Heaven

dga' ldan

དགའ་ལྗོངས།

Tuṣitā

The fourth of the six heavens of the desire realm. In Buddhist thought it is where all future buddhas dwell prior to their awakening.

g.42 Karmic winds

las kyi rlung

ལས་ཀྱི་རླུང་།

karmavāyu

g.43 Kāśa grass

ka shi

ཀ་ཤི།

kāśa

Saccharum spontaneum. A species of tall grass, native to the Indian subcontinent, topped by beautiful long feather-like white panicles. It is used in religious ceremonies, Ayurvedic medicine, and also for making mats, roofs, and so on.

g.44 Kinnara

mi 'am ci

མི་འམ་ཅི།

kinnara

A class of nonhuman beings that resemble humans to the degree that their very name means “Is that a human?” Kinnaras are mythological beings found throughout Indic literature, and are portrayed as creatures that are half human, half animal, typically with animal heads atop human bodies. They are also regarded to be highly skilled celestial musicians.

g.45 Kṣatriya

rgyal rigs

རྒྱལ་རིགས།

kṣatriya

The ruling caste in the traditional four-caste hierarchy of India, it is associated with warriors, the aristocracy, and kings.

g.46 Laymen

dge bsnyen

དགེ་བསྟེན།

upāsaka

Unordained practitioners who observe the five vows: not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.47 Laywomen

dge bsnyen ma

དགེ་བསྟེན་མ།

upāsikā

Unordained female practitioners who observe the five vows: not to kill, lie, steal, be intoxicated, or commit sexual misconduct.

g.48 Level of a non-returner

phyir mi 'ong ba'i 'bras bu

ཕྱིར་མི་འོང་བའི་འབྲས་བུ།

anāgāmiṃphala

One who has achieved the third of the four levels of attainment on the śrāvaka path, and who will not be reborn in saṃsāra any longer.

g.49 Level of a once-returner

lan cig phyir 'ong ba'i 'bras bu

ལན་ཅིག་ཕྱིར་འོང་བའི་འབྲས་བུ།

sakṛdāgāmiṃphala

One who has achieved the second of the four levels of attainment on the śrāvaka path, and who will only be reborn in saṃsāra once more.

g.50 Level of a stream enterer

rgyun du zhugs pa'i 'bras bu

རྒྱུན་དུ་ལྷུགས་པའི་འབྲས་བུ།

srotāpattiphala

One who has achieved the first of the four levels of attainment on the śrāvaka path, and who is from then onwards continuously approaching nirvāṇa.

g.51 Magical formula

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

An incantation, spell, or mnemonic formula that distills essential points of the Dharma. It is used by practitioners as an aid to memorize and recall detailed teachings, and to attain mundane and supramundane goals.

g.52 Maheśvara

dbang phyug chen po

དབང་ཕྱུག་ཆེན་པོ།

Maheśvara

An epithet of the god Śiva.

- g.53 **Mahoraga**
lto 'phye chen po
ལྷོ་འཕྱི་ཚེན་པོ།
mahoraga
Literally “large serpent.” A subterranean semidivine being that takes the form of a large serpent, sometimes with a human torso and head.
- g.54 **Maitreya**
byams pa
བྱམས་པ།
Maitreya
The bodhisattva of loving kindness, destined to be the next buddha, following Śākyamuni.
- g.55 **Mañjughoṣa**
'jam pa'i dbyangs · 'jam dbyangs
འཇམ་པའི་དབྱངས། · འཇམ་དབྱངས།
Mañjughoṣa
An alternative name for Mañjuśrī, meaning, “gentle or beautiful voice.”
- g.56 **Mañjuśrī**
'jam dpal
འཇམ་དཔལ།
Mañjuśrī
Bodhisattva of wisdom. Also called Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta and Mañjughoṣa in this sūtra.
- g.57 **Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta**
'jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa
འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།
Mañjuśrīkumārabhūta
An alternative name for Mañjuśrī, meaning, "youthful Mañjuśrī."
- g.58 **Māra**
bdud
བདུད།
māra

The deities ruled over by Māra, they are also symbolic of the defects within a person that prevent awakening. These four personifications are (1) *devaputramāra* (*lha'i bu'i bdud*), the divine māra, which is the distraction of pleasures, (2) *mṛtyumāra* (*'chi bdag gi bdud*), the māra of the Lord of Death, (3) *skandhamāra* (*phung po'i bdud*), the māra of the aggregates, i.e., the body, and (4) *kleśamāra* (*nyon mongs pa'i bdud*), the māra of the afflictive emotions.

g.59 Meditative concentration

ting nge 'dzin

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

A general term for states of deep concentration. One of the synonyms for meditation, referring in particular to a state of complete concentration or focus.

g.60 Monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu

This term refers specifically to a monk who has received full ordination, the highest level of ordination available in the Buddhist tradition, observing 253 Vinaya vows.

g.61 Moonlit

zla ba can

ཟླ་བ་ཅན།

—

The world system where the great seer Ulka will become enlightened as the Buddha Vipaśyin.

g.62 Mount Meru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

Sumeru

In Buddhist cosmology, the mountain at the center of a world system surrounded by the four continents.

g.63 Nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

A class of semidivine beings who live in aquatic environments and who are known to hoard wealth. They are associated with snakes and serpents.

g.64 Naked ascetic

gcer bu pa

གཅེར་བུ་པ།

nirgrantha

The Tibetan means “naked one,” and the Sanskrit “without possessions” or “without ties.” In Buddhist usage, a non-Buddhist religious mendicant who eschews clothing and possessions, often referring to Jains.

g.65 Nārāyaṇa

sred med kyi bu

སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།

Nārāyaṇa

An alternate name of the Brahmanical deity Viṣṇu.

g.66 Nun

dge slong ma

དགེ་སློང་མ།

bhikṣuṇī

This term refers specifically to a nun who has received full ordination, the highest level of ordination available in the Buddhist tradition, observing 364 Vinaya vows.

g.67 Omniscient One

thams cad mkhyen pa

ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ།

sarvajña

An epithet of the Buddha.

g.68 Psycho-physical aggregates

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

Also known as the “five appropriated aggregates.”

g.69 Realms of the Four Great Kings

rgyal chen bzhi'i ris

རྒྱལ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་རིས།

Cāurmahārājakāyika

The four respective realms of the Four Great Kings—Virūḍhaka, Virūpākṣa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Vaiśravaṇa. They are the lowest of the god realms and found on the slopes of Mount Meru, one in each of the four directions.

g.70 Sahā world system

mi mjed kyi 'jig rten gyi khams

མི་མཇེད་ཀྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

sahālokadhātu

This present world-system or trichiliocosm. The term is variously interpreted as meaning the world of suffering, of endurance, of fearlessness (because the beings who inhabit it do not fear the three poisons), or of concomitance (of karmic cause and effect).

g.71 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

The lord of the gods, also known as Indra, he dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śata-kratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a śakra.

g.72 Śākya

shAkya

ཤཱཀ།

Śākya

The family name of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.73 Śāla tree

shing sA la

ཤིང་སྤུ་ལ།

śāla

Usually identified as *Shorea robusta*, this is known as the kind of tree under which the Buddha was born and passed away.

g.74 Seer

drang srong

དང་སྲོང།

rṣi

See “great seer.”

g.75 Seven types of precious substances

rin po che sna bdun

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣ་བདུན།

saptaratna

The seven precious substances in this context are the seven precious metals and stones: gold, silver, turquoise, coral, pearl, emerald, and sapphire. More generally, they may also be the symbols of royal dominion: the wheel, gem, queen, minister, elephant, general, and horse.

g.76 Six perfections

pha rol tu phyin pa drug

ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ་དུག།

ṣaṭpāramitā

The trainings of the bodhisattva path: generosity (*dāna*, *byin pa*), discipline (*śīla*, *tshul khrims*), patience or acceptance (*kṣānti*, *bzod pa*), diligence or effort (*vīrya*, *brtson 'grus*), meditation (*dhyāna*, *bsam gtan*), and insight (*prajñā*, *shes rab*).

g.77 Śreṇika Vatsagotra

bzo sbyangs · phreng ba can

བཟོ་སྤྱངས། · ཕྲེང་བ་ཅན།

Śreṇika Vatsagotra

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

g.78 Stage of nonregression

phyir mi ldog pa'i sa

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྷོག་པའི་ས།

avaiṅvarīkabhūmi

A term used to describe a stage on the path at which further progress is assured, with no further possibility of retrogressing to a previous stage.

g.79 Subhūti

rab 'byor

རབ་འབྱོར།

Subhūti

One of the closest disciples of the Buddha, known for his profound understanding of emptiness.

g.80 Subtle soul

sems can phra ba

སེམས་ཅན་ཐུབ།

g.81 Tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

A frequently used synonym for buddhas, literally meaning “One Who Has Thus Gone.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha*(*tā*) is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms, often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness.” Therefore, this epithet is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies “one who has departed in the wake of the buddhas of the past,” or “one who has manifested the supreme enlightenment dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence.” Here also used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.82 Teacher

ston pa

སློབ་པ།

śāstr

An epithet for the Buddha.

g.83 Ten stages

sa bcu

ས་བཟུ།

daśabhūmi

According to the general Mahāyāna, the bodhisattva's development into a fully enlightened buddha is divided into ten stages.

g.84 Thirty-six impure substances

mi gtsang ba'i rdzas sum cu rtsa drug

མི་གཙང་བའི་རྩམ་སྲུམ་བྱུ་རྩ་དྲུག།

Various parts and secretions of the body.

g.85 True nature of dharmas

chos nyid

ཚོས་ཉིད།

dharmatā

The nature of phenomena, in terms of their specialized relative characteristics, such as the heat of fire, the moisture of water, etc.; and in terms of their common ultimate quality, emptiness, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms.

g.86 Truths of the noble ones

phags pa'i bden pa

ཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ།

āryasatya

See “four truths of the noble ones.”

g.87 Twelve links of dependent origination

rten cing 'brel par 'byung ba yan lag bcu gnyis pa

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་པར་འབྱུང་བ་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱུག་ཉིས་པ།

The twelve causal links that perpetuate life in saṃsāra, starting with ignorance and ending with death.

g.88 Ulka

me sgron

མེ་སློན།

Ulkā

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

g.89 Universal monarch

'khor los sgyur ba

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བ།

cakravartin

The term “universal monarch” denotes a just and pious king who rules over vast areas of the universe according to the laws of Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he wields a disc (*cakra*) that rolls (*vartana*) over continents, worlds, and world systems, bringing them under his power.

g.90 Victorious Heap

rgyal ba'i phung po

རྒྱལ་བའི་ཕུང་པོ།

A bodhisattva. The Tibetan rendering could be derived from Jayaskandha, Jinaskandha, or Jinarāsi.

g.91 Vidyādhara

rig sngags 'chang

རིག་སྐྱག་མ་ཚང་།

vidyādhara

A race of superhuman beings with magical powers who lived high in mountains, such as the Malaya range of southwest India. The term is also used for humans who have gained powers through their mantras and aptitude for spells.

In this text, it is unclear to which it refers.

g.92 Vipāśyin

nam par gzig

ལྷ་པར་གཟིགས།

Vipāśyin

The Buddha that Ulka will become in the future.

g.93 World guardian

'jig rten skyong ba

འཇིག་རྟེན་སྐྱོང་བ།

lokapāla

See “Four Great Kings.”

g.94 Worthy

dgra bcom pa

དགའ་བཙུགས་པ།

arhat

See “arhat.”

g.95 Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of semidivine beings said to dwell in the north, under the jurisdiction of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa. They are said to haunt or protect natural places and cities, can be malevolent or benevolent, and are known for bestowing wealth and other boons.

g.96 Yāma Heaven

mtshe ma

མཚོ་མ།

Yāma

The third of the six heavens of the desire realm. Also known as the Heaven Free from Strife (Tib. *'thab bral*).

g.97 Yeshé Dé

ye shes sde

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

A prolific Tibetan translator active during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

