

༄༅། །ཤེར་ཕྱིན་ལྷ་བའི་སྒྲིབ་པོ།

The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom

Candragarbhaprajñāpāramitā

འཕགས་པ་ལྷ་བའི་སྣང་པོ་ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་པ་རོལ་དུ་ཕྱིན་པ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa zla ba'i snying po shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom”

Āryacandragarbhaprajñāpāramitāmahāyānasūtra



Toh 27

Degé Kangyur, vol. 34 (shes rab sna tshog, ka), folios 176.b–177.b

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom* is a condensed prajñāpāramitā sūtra that takes the form of a dialogue between the Buddha and the bodhisattva Candragarbha. In response to Candragarbha's question about how bodhisattvas should train themselves in the perfection of wisdom, the Buddha declares that the perfection of wisdom lies in the understanding that all phenomena are devoid of entities, using the analogy of the moon to clarify the meaning of this declaration. Candragarbha then asks the Buddha how many kinds of perfection of wisdom exist for bodhisattvas. The Buddha answers by describing two types of perfection of wisdom, "contaminated" and "uncontaminated," and he elucidates the nature of the perfection of wisdom with reference to the ultimate nature of all phenomena. At the end of this discourse, the Buddha presents a mantra of the perfection of wisdom, followed by a summary verse.

ac.

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- ac.1 Translated by the Indo-Tibetan Studies Translation Group, Visva-Bharati, under the guidance of Ven. Geshe Dakpa Kalsang. The translation was produced by Prof. Sanjib Kumar Das, who also served as project manager and editor. Ritiman Das proofread the first English draft.
- ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom is a condensed prajñāpāramitā sūtra that takes the form of a dialogue between the Buddha and the bodhisattva Candragarbha. At the outset, Candragarbha asks the Buddha how bodhisattvas should train themselves in the perfection of wisdom. In response, the Buddha declares that the perfection of wisdom lies in the understanding that all phenomena are devoid of entities. The Buddha uses the analogy of the moon to clarify the meaning of this declaration. Candragarbha then asks the Buddha how many kinds of perfection of wisdom exist for bodhisattvas. The Buddha answers by describing two types of perfection of wisdom, “contaminated” and “uncontaminated.” Furthermore, he elucidates the nature of the perfection of wisdom with reference to the ultimate nature of all phenomena. At the end of this discourse, the Buddha presents a mantra of the perfection of wisdom, followed by a summary verse.

i.2

The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom is one of five short prajñāpāramitā sūtras that are each named for the bodhisattva who is the Buddha’s interlocutor. The bodhisattva for whom the present sūtra is named, Candragarbha, may be the bodhisattva Candragarbha listed as one of the bodhisattvas present in the assembly in *The Perfection of Wisdom in One Hundred Thousand Lines* (Toh 8), *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-Five Thousand Lines* (Toh 9),¹ and *The Perfection of Wisdom in Ten Thousand Lines* (Toh 11).² Although he does not feature as one of the Buddha’s interlocutors in those sūtras, the present sūtra might nevertheless be seen as a concise summary of them. It partly resembles another summary of the long prajñāpāramitā sūtras—*The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* (Toh 21).³ In both cases, the discourse summarizes the meaning of the perfection of wisdom in response to a question about how bodhisattvas should train in it.⁴ Both also culminate in the revelation of a “mantra of the perfection of wisdom” (Tib. *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa’i sngags*).⁵

The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom has no colophon, and it is not found in either of the Tibetan imperial catalogs. There is no surviving Sanskrit witness, and it does not appear that the sūtra was ever translated into Chinese. There also do not appear to be any references to or citations of the sūtra in the commentarial literature. Unfortunately, then, there is nothing that can be said about the sūtra's provenance or about its transmission and translation in Tibet. It was translated into English with the other condensed prajñāpāramitā sūtras by Edward Conze, who assumes that it dates from the "Tantric period," after 750 CE.⁶ A contemporary translation into Chinese was published by the Kumarajiva Project in 2020.⁷ The present translation is based on the version found in the Degé Kangyur, with reference to the variants recorded in the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) and to the version found in the Stok Palace Kangyur.

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra

The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom

1.

The Translation

[F.176.b]

1.1 Homage to all buddhas and bodhisattvas!

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing on Vulture Peak in Rājagṛha together with an immeasurable and incalculable saṅgha of monks and a great many bodhisattvas.

1.2 Then the bodhisattva great being Candragarbha, who was in the assembly, [F.177.a] got up from his seat and asked the Blessed One, “How, Blessed One, should bodhisattvas train in the perfection of wisdom?”

1.3 The Blessed One replied, “Candragarbha, that all phenomena are devoid of entities is the perfection of wisdom. As an analogy, although the disk of the moon is without conceptualization, it encircles the four continents and dispels darkness. Similarly, although bodhisattva great beings who practice the perfection of wisdom are without conceptualization, they encircle those with⁸ the four distorted views with compassion and naturally dispel defilements because of nonconceptualization.”

1.4 “Blessed One, how many perfections of wisdom of bodhisattvas are there?” asked Candragarbha.

“Son of a good family,” replied the Blessed One, “there are two types of the bodhisattvas’ perfections of wisdom—contaminated and uncontaminated.

1.5 “Son of a good family, *contaminated wisdom* refers to the conceptualization of grasped objects and grasping subjects in the context of the stage of devoted conduct—contaminated perfection of wisdom abandons that.⁹

1.6 “Son of a good family, *uncontaminated perfection of wisdom* refers to the nonconceptual gnosis of the path of seeing. That gnosis is nonconceptual because it is devoid of all conceptualization.

- 1.7 “Son of a good family, it is the perfection of wisdom because it does not abide in any extreme of near or far shore. As for wisdom, since everything¹⁰ from form up to all-aspect omniscience is without inherent existence, the perfection of wisdom should be known to be without inherent existence. Phenomena such as form and so on should be known to be unapprehended in the three times, neither bound nor freed.
- 1.8 “Son of a good family, since all phenomena are equal, the perfection of wisdom is equal. Since all phenomena [F.177.b] are without cessation, the perfection of wisdom is without cessation. Since all phenomena are without signs, the perfection of wisdom is without signs. Since all phenomena are without arising, the perfection of wisdom is without arising. Since all phenomena are without annihilation, the perfection of wisdom is without annihilation. Since all phenomena are without coming, the perfection of wisdom is without coming. Since all phenomena are without going, the perfection of wisdom is without going. Since all phenomena are without permanence, the perfection of wisdom is without permanence. Since all phenomena are without difference, the perfection of wisdom is without difference. Since all phenomena are one, the perfection of wisdom is one. Since all phenomena are the essential nature of nonentities, the perfection of wisdom is the essential nature of nonentities.
- 1.9 “In short, since it transcends a sign, existence, and nature, it is the perfection of wisdom. Therefore, there is the mantra of the perfection of wisdom:
- 1.10 *tadyathā oṃ prajñe prajñe mahāprajñe candraprajñe sarvaśāsakari svāhā*
- 1.11 “All phenomena arise from causes—
That is the conventional truth.
They are without an intrinsic nature and without thought construction—
That is the domain of ultimate truth.”
- 1.12 After the Blessed One had spoken, the bodhisattva Candragarbha, the entire assembly, and the world with its gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.
- 1.13 *This concludes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra, The Candragarbha Perfection of Wisdom.*

n.

NOTES

- n.1 Padmakara Translation Group (2023), trans., *The Perfection of Wisdom in Twenty-five Thousand Lines* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh9.html>), Toh 9 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha).
- n.2 Padmakara Translation Group (2018), trans., *The Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom in Ten Thousand Lines* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh11.html>), Toh 11 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha).
- n.3 Dharmachakra Translation Committee, trans., *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom, the Blessed Mother* (<http://read.84000.co/translation/toh21.html>), Toh 21 (84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2022).
- n.4 *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* 1.4.
- n.5 *The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom* 1.15.
- n.6 Conze (1973), p. iv.
- n.7 https://www.ymfz.org/library/kangyur_translated/toh0027/
(https://www.ymfz.org/library/kangyur_translated/toh0027/)
- n.8 Here “those with” has been added in English for the sake of clarity. The Tibetan translates as “the four distorted views” (Tib. *phyin ci log bzhi rnam*s).
- n.9 Alternatively, “causes that to be abandoned” (Tib. *de spong bar byed pa*).
- n.10 The Tibetan does not explicitly say “everything,” but this has been added in English for the sake of clarity.

b.

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Toh 9). 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha, 2023.

GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship 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 all-aspect omniscience

rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa nyid

རྣམ་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ་ཉིད།

sarvākārajñāna^{AD}

This key technical term in the Prajñāpāramitā literature refers to the omniscience of a buddha, and is not to be confused with the “knowledge of the path” of bodhisattvas, or with the “knowledge of all the dharmas” of śrāvakas.

g.2 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura^{AD}

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.3 blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān^{AD}

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 √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.4 bodhisattva

byang chub sems dpa'

བྱང་ལྷན་སེམས་དཔའ།

bodhisattva ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A being who is dedicated to the cultivation and fulfilment of the altruistic intention to attain perfect buddhahood, traversing the five bodhisattva paths and ten bodhisattva levels. Bodhisattvas purposely opt to remain within cyclic existence in order to liberate all sentient beings, instead of simply seeking personal freedom from suffering. In terms of the view, they realize the two aspects of selflessness, with respect to afflicted mental states and the nature of all phenomena.

g.5 Candragarbha

zla ba'i snying po

ལྷ་བའི་སྤྱིང་པོ།

candragarbha ^{AD}

The bodhisattva who is the Buddha's interlocutor in the present sūtra.

g.6 contaminated

zag pa dang bcas pa

ཟག་པ་དང་བཅས་པ།

sāsrava ^{AD}

Literally, "to flow" or "to ooze." Mental defilements or contaminations that "flow out" toward the objects of cyclic existence, binding us to them.

g.7 four continents

gling bzhi

གླིང་བཞི།

caturdvīpa ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

According to traditional Buddhist cosmology, our universe consists of a central mountain, known as Mount Meru or Sumeru, surrounded by four island continents (*dvīpa*), one in each of the four cardinal directions. The *Abhidharmakośa* explains that each of these island continents has a specific shape and is flanked by two smaller subcontinents of similar shape. To the south of Mount Meru is Jambudvīpa, corresponding either to the Indian subcontinent itself or to the known world. It is triangular in shape, and at its center is the place where the buddhas attain awakening. The humans who inhabit Jambudvīpa have a lifespan of one hundred years. To the east is Videha, a semicircular continent inhabited by humans who have a lifespan of two hundred fifty years and are twice as tall as the humans who inhabit

Jambudvīpa. To the north is Uttarakuru, a square continent whose inhabitants have a lifespan of a thousand years. To the west is Godānīya, circular in shape, where the lifespan is five hundred years.

g.8 four distorted views

phyin ci log bzhi

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་བཞི།

caturviparyāsa ^{AD}

Taking what is impermanent to be permanent, what is suffering to be happiness, what is unclean to be clean, and what is not self to be self.

g.9 gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva ^{AD}

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

g.10 gnosis

ye shes

ཡེ་ཤེས།

jñāna ^{AD}

g.11 perfection of wisdom

shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་ཕ་རོལ་ཏུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

prajñāpāramitā ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The sixth of the six perfections, it refers to the profound understanding of the emptiness of all phenomena, the realization of ultimate reality. It is often personified as a female deity, worshiped as the “Mother of All Buddhas”

(*sarvajinamātā*).

g.12 Rājagṛha

rgyal po'i khab

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

rājagṛha ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The ancient capital of Magadha prior to its relocation to Pāṭaliputra during the Mauryan dynasty, Rājagṛha is one of the most important locations in Buddhist history. The literature tells us that the Buddha and his saṅgha spent a considerable amount of time in residence in and around Rājagṛha enjoying the patronage of King Bimbisāra and then of his son King Ajātaśatru. Rājagṛha is also remembered as the location where the first Buddhist monastic council was held after the Buddha Śākyamuni passed into parinirvāṇa. Now known as Rajgir and located in the modern Indian state of Bihar.

g.13 stage of devoted conduct

mos pas spyod pa'i sa

མོས་པས་སྟོད་པའི་ས།

adhimukticaryābhūmi

The level of devoted conduct is said to comprise the first two of the five paths, those of accumulation and preparation, which lead up to the path of seeing. This level is also presented as the second of seven spiritual levels in the *Bodhisattvabhūmi*, which follows the initial level of the spiritual potential (*gotrabhūmi*).

g.14 uncontaminated

zag pa med pa

ཟག་པ་མེད་པ།

anāsrava ^{AD}

The absence of contaminants. See the entry for “contaminated.”

g.15 Vulture Peak

bya rgod kyi phung po

བྱ་རྫོང་གི་ཕུང་པོ།

gṛdhrakūṭa ^{AD}

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Gṛdhrakūṭa, 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.