

༄༅། །དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་གཟུགས་བརྒྱན་བཞག་པའི་མན་ཡོན་ཡང་དག་པར་
བརྗོད་པ།

Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One

Tathāgatapratibimbapratīṣṭhānuśamsasaṃvarṇana

འཕགས་པ་དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པའི་གཞུགས་བརྟན་བཞག་པའི་ཕན་ཡོན་ཡང་དག་པར་བརྗོད་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བའི་ཚོས་
ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

*'phags pa de bzhin gshegs pa'i gzugs brnyan bzhag pa'i phan yon yang dag par brjod pa
zhes bya ba'i chos kyi rnam grangs*

The Noble Dharma Discourse “Describing the Benefits of Producing
Representations of the Thus-Gone One”

Āryatathāgatapratibimbapratisthānuśaṃsasaṅvarṇananāmadharmaparyāya



Toh 320
Degé Kangyur, vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), folios 197.a–198.b.

Translated by the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Translation Group
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co.

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s.

SUMMARY

- s.1 In this sūtra, the Buddha Śākyamuni tells a group of monks how they should respond when asked about the karmic benefits accrued by patrons who create representations of the Buddha. He explains five kinds of benefits that such virtuous deeds bring.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1

This sūtra was translated from the Tibetan and introduced by the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Translation Group, which is comprised of Krisztina Teleki and Karma Dorje (Rabjampa). Beáta Kakas served as Sanskrit expert and William Dewey served as the English-language editor.

ac.2

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

In *Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One*,¹ the Buddha Śākyamuni is residing in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park in Śrāvastī when a large number of monks gather nearby and begin discussing how one should respond when asked about the karmic benefits accrued by creating representations of the Buddha. They approach the Buddha for guidance, and the Buddha explains the five kinds of benefits that such virtuous deeds bring. First, he elaborates on the excellent life circumstances such as happiness and fame that they will experience. Second, he details the characteristics of physical beauty that they will gain. Third, he lists the kinds of wealth they will accrue. Fourth, he states that the donor will become a universal emperor enjoying all the advantages of that position. Fifth, he explains that the donor will be reborn among the gods and enjoy all divine distinctions. The sūtra then concludes with the monks rejoicing and praising the Buddha.

i.2

This English translation is based on the Tibetan version in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) Kangyur. There is to our knowledge no extant Sanskrit version of this sūtra. The colophon to the Tibetan translation states that it was translated by the Indian preceptor Dharmākara, the translator Bandé Yeshé Nyingpo, and the chief editor Bandé Paltsek. As for the date of the Tibetan translation, the text's inclusion in the Denkarma² and Phangthangma³ imperial catalogs confirms its provenance in the late eighth or early ninth century.

i.3

A Chinese version of this text is also extant with the title *Zuofoxingxiang jing* 作佛形像.⁴ While its translator is unknown and its date is uncertain, it is mentioned in the *Dongjin lu* 東晉錄 (*Record of the Eastern Jin*, 317–420 CE). It is also referenced in the *Houhanshu* 後漢書 (*Book of the Later Han*), which is the

official dynastic history of the Later Han dynasty 後漢 (25–220 CE) written by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445). This indicates that the Chinese translation was completed sometime before the late fourth or early fifth century.

i.4 A Mongolian translation of the text is also available in different versions of the Mongolian Buddhist canon, which is based on the Tibetan.⁵

i.5 There is, to our knowledge, no previous English translation of the text to date, nor any translation into any other European language.

The Noble Dharma Discourse

**Describing the Benefits of Producing
Representations of the Thus-Gone One**

1.

The Translation

[F.197.a]

1.1 Homage to the Omniscient One.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing in the Jeta Grove in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park at Śrāvastī.

At that time a large number of monks had gathered in the assembly hall and started the following conversation: "Faithful brahmins or householders who remember what they are taught and have become increasingly learned may ask you how to practice virtue. There may also be some who delight in producing representations of the Thus-Gone One, who will come before us and inquire, 'Respected ones, may we know how much benefit there is for donors when they produce a representation of the Thus-Gone One?' How can we then respond to them in accordance with the Dharma when we do not know how much benefit results from producing a representation of the Thus-Gone One? We should ask the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, perfect Buddha—the omniscient, all-seeing teacher who eliminates all doubts—about this point. Once the Blessed One teaches us, we will comprehend it and can then explain it at length and respond to those faithful brahmins and householders."

1.3 Then that large number of monks went to the place where the Blessed One was staying, prostrated themselves at the Blessed One's feet, sat to one side, [F.197.b] and asked the Buddha the following: "Respected One, a large number of us monks just had the following conversation when we gathered in the assembly hall: 'Faithful brahmins or householders who remember what they are taught and have become increasingly learned may ask us how to practice virtue. There may also be some who delight in producing representations of the Thus-Gone One, who will come before us and inquire, "Respected ones, may we know how much benefit there is for donors when they commission a representation of the Thus-Gone One?" How can we

then respond to them in accordance with the Dharma when we do not know how much benefit results from producing a representation of the Thus-Gone One? We should ask the blessed, thus-gone, worthy, perfect Buddha—the omniscient, all-seeing teacher who eliminates all doubts—about this point. Once the Blessed One teaches us, we will comprehend it and can then explain it at length and respond to those faithful brahmins and householders.’ Respected Blessed One, since we have come to you asking about these matters, may we know how much benefit there is for donors when they produce a representation of the Thus-Gone One?”

1.4 The Blessed One replied, “Monks, you have asked this to bring benefit to many beings, to bring happiness to many beings and out of compassion for them, and to bring benefit and happiness to gods and humans. You have thought to ask for clarification from the thus-gone, worthy, perfect Buddha. Excellent! Excellent! For that reason, monks, listen to me very carefully, pay attention, [F.198.a] and I will teach you.

1.5 “Monks, a donor who produces a representation of the Thus-Gone One will enjoy the following five benefits:

“One will live in a great palace, be regarded as fortunate, be free of poverty,⁶ and have great joy, longevity, fame, and happiness. Monks, this is the first benefit for a donor who produces representations of the Thus-Gone One.

1.6 “One will also have riches, abundant wealth, prosperity, property, and many belongings. One will be self-sufficient and have many cherished possessions such as a great number of livestock, grain, jewels, gold, treasuries, and storerooms; many horses, elephants, oxen, sheep, male and female servants, employees, and laborers; and many ministers, friends, relatives, and kin. Monks, this is the second benefit for a donor who produces representations of the Thus-Gone One.

1.7 “Monks, one will also have a beautiful body, a pleasant appearance, elegance, a golden complexion,⁷ a head that is round like a parasol, long arms, a broad forehead, unbroken eyebrows, a perfect set of limbs and extremities, and be adorned with all sorts of ornaments. Monks, this is the third benefit for a donor who produces representations of the Thus-Gone One.

1.8 “Monks, one will also become a universal emperor who has a fine retinue, the seven royal treasures, and is surrounded by one thousand sons. All of one’s sons, wives, servants, and caretakers will listen respectfully and follow one’s commands. Monks, this is the fourth benefit for a donor [F.198.b] who produces representations of the Thus-Gone One.

- 1.9 “Moreover, monks, after passing away, one will take a favorable rebirth among the gods in the heavenly realms. After being born there, one will become an excellent king of the gods who will be venerated by the gods and goddesses. One will enjoy ten states: divine lifespan, divine complexion, divine power, divine happiness, divine lordship, and divine form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Monks, this is the fifth benefit for a donor who produces representations of the Thus-Gone One.”
- 1.10 When the Blessed One had said this, the monks rejoiced in the Blessed One’s words and praised him.
- 1.11 *Thus concludes The Noble Dharma Discourse “Teaching⁸ the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One.”*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This work was translated by the Indian preceptor Dharmākara and the translator Bandé Yeshé Nyingpo. It was then revised and finalized by Bandé Paltsek.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 The Sanskrit title in the Degé Kangyur reads *saṃvadanti* for the Tibetan *yang dag par brjod pa*, which is grammatically incorrect. We have instead followed the title as it appears in the Stok Palace Kangyur, which reads *saṃvarṇa*, although here emending it to *saṃvarṇana*.
- n.2 Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 163–64.
- n.3 *Dkar chag 'phang thang ma* 2003, p. 22.
- n.4 *Zuofoxingxiang jing* 作佛形像經 (Taishō no. 692). For more information on this text, see the *Korean Buddhist Canon: A Descriptive Catalogue*, K 281 (http://www.acmuller.net/descriptive_catalogue/files/k0281.html#note-k0281-1).
- n.5 This appears in the Mongolian printed Kanjur in the section Various Sūtras (Mong. *eldeb*, Tib. *mdo sna tshogs*). Its Mongolian title here is *Qutuγ-tu tegünčilen iregsed-ün köriig bey-e-yi bayiγuluγsan-u sayin tusa-yi ünen-iyer ögüleküi neretü nom-un jüil* (Noble Religious Practice “Clarification of the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One”). Mongolian Kanjur, vol. 88, Eldeb, no. 1080, folios 264.a–266.b. Cf. Ligeti 1942, pp. 291–92. It is likewise included in the Mongolian handwritten Kanjur with the title *Qutuγ-tu tegünčilen iregsed-ün köriig bey-e-yi ayulqui ači tusa-yi üneker ögüleküi nom-un jüil* (Noble Religious Practice “Clarifying the Benefits of Keeping Representations of the Thus-Gone One”) vol. 96, Eldeb, folios 42.b–43.a. Mng2.794.
- n.6 Tib. *bong sted*. Following the Chinese *bu zai pin qiong* 不在貧窮, we here translate this obscure Tibetan term as “free of poverty.”
- n.7 Tib. *mdog gser ltar bzang ba*, lit. “fine as though golden in color.”

n.8

The title given in the colophon differs from that given at the beginning. The initial title reads *yang dag par brjod pa* (“describing”), while the colophon has *yang dag par bstan pa* (“teaching”).

b.

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GLOSSARY

g.

g.1

All-seeing

thams cad gzig pa

ཐམས་ཅད་ག་ཟློག་པ།

sarvadarśin

Omniscient one who sees and knows everything. Epithet of a buddha.

g.2

Anāthapiṇḍada's Park

mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱོན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

Anāthapiṇḍadārāma

An important early site for the Buddha's growing community.

Anāthapiṇḍada, a wealthy patron of the Buddha, purchased the park, located outside Śrāvastī, at great cost, purportedly covering the ground with gold, and donated it to the saṅgha. It was there that the Buddha spent several rainy seasons and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras.

g.3

Assembly hall

rim gro'i gnas

རིམ་གྲོའི་གནས།

upasthānaśālā

A large hall in the traditional Buddhist vihāra used for monastic assemblies.

g.4

Bandé Paltsek

ban de dpal brtsegs

བན་དེ་དཔལ་བརྟེན།

—

Chief editor who finalized the Tibetan translation of *The Noble Dharma Discourse Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One*, among other works.

g.5 Bandé Yeshé Nyingpo

ban de ye shes snying po

བན་དེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡིང་པོ།

—

Translator who produced the Tibetan translation of *The Noble Dharma Discourse Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One*, among other works.

g.6 Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

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

bram ze

བྲམ་ཟེ།

brāhmaṇa

A member of the highest of the four traditional castes in Hinduism, the priestly caste.

g.8 Dharma discourse

chos kyi rnam grangs

ཚོས་གྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

g.9 Dharmākara

d+ha rmA ka ra

ཐཱ་མ་ཀ་ར་

Dharmākara

Indian scholar (Skt. *upādhyāya*) who assisted the Tibetan translation of *The Noble Dharma Discourse Describing the Benefits of Producing Representations of the Thus-Gone One*, among other works.

g.10 Donor

sbyin pa po

སྤྱིན་པ་པོ།

dātr

A person who gives alms, an offerer of a gift, or a donor. In the context of the text it is the person who orders an artist to produce the Tathāgata's image and offers it to the monastic community.

g.11 God

lha

ལྷ།

deva

Gods, demigods, and human beings compose the three fortunate realms of higher rebirth. Gods enjoy comfort and peace, but rarely attain enlightenment. The three realms of gods include the desire realm, form realm, and formless realm.

g.12 Jeta Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

Jetavana

The grove of Prince Jeta in Śrāvastī. The Buddha taught many of his discourses there, especially during the rainy season retreat.

g.13 Monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu

A fully ordained Buddhist monk observing 253 precepts.

g.14 Omniscient One

thams cad mkhyen pa

ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ།

sarvajña

An epithet of the Buddha and a title for high lamas in the Tibetan tradition.

g.15 Perfect buddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས།

samyaksambuddha

g.16 Representation

gzugs brnyan

གཟུགས་བརྟན།

pratibimba

A visual representation fashioned in the likeness of someone.

g.17 Respected one

btsun pa

བཙུན་པ།

bhadanta

g.18 Seven royal treasures

rin po che sna bdun

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣ་བདུན།

saptaratna

The seven royal substances or treasures of a universal emperor: precious wheel (*'khor lo rin po che*), precious jewel (*nor bu rin po che*), precious queen (*btsun mo rin po che*), precious minister (*blon po rin po che*), precious elephant (*glang po rin po che*), precious excellent horse (*rta mchog rin po che*), and precious army officer (*dmag dpon rin po che*).

g.19 Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

སམྱའཕྱོང་ཡོད།

Śrāvastī

The capital of the ancient Indian kingdom of Kośala during the sixth–fifth centuries BCE, which was ruled by one of the Buddha’s royal patrons, King Prasenajit. It was the setting for many sūtras, as the Buddha spent many rains retreats outside the city in the Jeta Grove. It has been identified with present-day Sahet Mahet in Uttar Pradesh on the banks of the river Rapti.

g.20 Teacher

ston pa

སྟོན་པ།

śāstr

An epithet of the Buddha.

g.21 Ten states

gnas bcu po

གནས་བརྒྱའོ།

—

This term refers here to the ten divine qualities listed in the text: (1) divine lifespan, (2) divine complexion, (3) divine power, (4) divine happiness, (5) divine lordship, (6) divine form, (7) divine sound, (8) divine smell, (9) divine taste, and (10) divine touch. They can be divided into two groups of five, the latter five being the pleasures of the five senses (*‘dod yon lnga*).

g.22 Thus-Gone One

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

A frequently used synonym for *buddha*. According to different explanations, it can be read as *tathā-gata*, literally meaning “one who has thus gone,” or as *tathā-āgata*, “one who has thus come.” *Gata*, though literally meaning “gone,” is a past passive participle used to describe a state or condition of existence. *Tatha(tā)*, often rendered as “suchness” or “thusness,” is the quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms. 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 awakening dependent on the reality that does not abide in the two extremes of existence and quiescence.

g.23 Universal emperor

'khor los sgyur ba'i rgyal po

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

cakravartin

A cakravartin is a king who rules over at least one continent and gains his territory by the rolling of his magic wheel over the land. Therefore, he is called a king with the revolving wheel. This is as the result of the merit he has accumulated in previous lifetimes.

g.24 Virtue

dge ba

དགེ་བ།

kuśala

g.25 Worthy

dgra bcom pa

དགའ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

According to Buddhist tradition, one who is worthy of worship (*pūjām arhati*), or one who has conquered the enemies, the mental afflictions or emotions (*kleśa-ari-hata-vat*), and reached liberation from the cycle of rebirth and suffering. It is the fourth and highest of the four fruits attainable by śrāvakas. Also used as an epithet of the Buddha.