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The Sūtra of Nanda's Going Forth

Nandapraṇirajyāsūtra



Toh 328
Degé Kangyur, vol. 72 (mdo sde, sa), folios 254.b–257.a.

Translated by the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Translation Group
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 In this sūtra, the Buddha Śākyamuni, accompanied by Ānanda, visits the house of Nanda during his stay in Banyan Grove near Kapilavastu. A discourse ensues in which the Buddha explains to Nanda the importance and benefits of going forth as a monk. Nanda expresses hesitation about going forth, so the Buddha explains by means of analogies how fortunate Nanda is to have obtained an auspicious human birth, to have met the Buddha, and to have the opportunity to become a monk. Nanda is deeply impressed by the Buddha's teaching and decides to renounce worldly life and go forth.

ac.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This sūtra was translated from the Tibetan, introduced, and edited by the Alexander Csoma de Kőrös Translation Group: the translators Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki in collaboration with Karma Dorje (Rabjampa), a native Tibetan speaker and Tibetan language expert. The Sanskrit consultant was Beáta Kakas.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha.

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

In this sūtra, the Buddha Śākyamuni, accompanied by Ānanda, visits the house of Nanda during his stay in Banyan Grove near Kapilavastu. The Buddha explains to Nanda the importance and benefits of going forth as a monk. Nanda expresses hesitation about going forth, so the Buddha uses two memorable analogies to explain to Nanda how fortunate he is to have obtained an auspicious human birth, to have met the Buddha, and to have the opportunity to become a monk. Nanda is deeply impressed by the Buddha's teaching and decides to renounce worldly life and go forth.

i.2

The setting of the teaching is Kapilavastu, the ancient city and capital of the Śākya state, where Siddhārtha Gautama lived until the age of twenty-nine before he renounced worldly life. Seven years after his awakening, he returned to Kapilavastu for the first time since his departure, upon his father's request. His cousins Ānanda and Devadatta, his half-brother Nanda, his barber Upāli, and even his son Rāhula joined the saṅgha in Kapilavastu, and the propagation of several rules of the Vinaya later took place in Banyan Grove.¹

i.3

Having specified the setting, the text follows a typical sūtra structure as the narrative unfolds, beginning with the Buddha visiting the home of his younger half-brother Nanda, accompanied by his disciple Ānanda. In the dialogue that ensues, the Buddha begins by asking Nanda why he does not go forth. Nanda replies with the request, "Blessed One, please explain what is meant by the words *going forth*." At this request, the Buddha proceeds to give a teaching, in verse, explaining the meaning of going forth and describing how fortunate Nanda is to have obtained an auspicious human birth, to have met the Buddha, and to have the opportunity to become a monk. The Buddha also mentions royal and lay devotees who decided to go forth. He then encourages Nanda to do the same.

- i.4 The Buddha begins by defining going forth (Skt. *pravrajyā*, Tib. *rab tu byung ba*), listing its advantages. The expression *to go forth* means to renounce the worldly life of a householder, or lay person, and become a monk or nun.² In the translated text several other variations of this expression appear, such as “abandon one’s land and go forth” (Tib. *sa bor nas rab tu byung*), “abandon one’s home and go forth” (Tib. *khyim rnam bor nas rab tu byung*), “go forth and renounce the world” (Tib. *rab tu byung bar nges par ’byung ba*), and “go forth from home into homelessness” (Tib. *khyim nas khyim med par rab tu byung*).
- i.5 After hearing about the manifold advantages of going forth, Nanda hesitates and says that he will remain a lay person, but he will make various offerings and donations to the Buddha and the saṅgha. The Buddha explains that no offering can remotely compare to the intention to go forth. The Buddha then uses two memorable analogies to illustrate how fortunate Nanda is to have obtained favorable circumstances and met the Buddha, and he again encourages him to go forth, comparing the rarity of meeting a buddha to the rarity of the *uḍumbara* flower.
- i.6 The two analogies that the Buddha gives to illustrate the difficulty of obtaining a human birth are the improbability of a blind turtle putting its head through a yoke tossed about on the waves of a vast ocean, and the improbability of a mustard seed passing through the eye of an upright-standing needle when a handful of seeds are tossed at it. Both analogies are widely known as illustrations of the rarity of obtaining a human birth. This sūtra seems to be the only mention in full in the Kangyur of the analogy of the blind turtle,³ and it is therefore presumably to this canonical source that Śāntideva refers in his *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.⁴ The Buddha adds that the “favorable conditions” of a rebirth in which there is the opportunity to go forth are even more fortunate. Thus, he persuades Nanda to make the most of this opportunity and become a monk. The sūtra concludes with Nanda going forth and, together with Ānanda, praising the speech of the Buddha.
- i.7 Nanda was to become an important monastic disciple of the Buddha, but several accounts of his early experience of going forth suggest that it was not an easy commitment for him to make. The Buddha (as Siddhārtha Gautama) and Nanda were the two sons of King Śuddhodana, but were half-brothers since the Buddha’s mother, Māyādevī, had died seven days after his birth. Nanda’s mother was the king’s second queen, Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī, the Buddha’s maternal aunt and the woman who raised him after his mother’s death. Of the Śākya kingdom’s nobility, Nanda and the Buddha’s son Rāhula in particular, as well as their cousins Ānanda and Devadatta, were thus important as potential royal successors, and one could imagine that all of them eventually choosing to follow the Buddha in renouncing such positions for the spiritual life was seen as consequential

from a temporal perspective. No such considerations are directly mentioned in any of the texts that relate Nanda's going forth,⁵ but in the present text they can perhaps be discerned in the explanations and comparisons the Buddha uses as he describes the benefits of going forth.

i.8 There is another well-known version of the story leading to Nanda's going forth that also illustrates the careful skillful means through which the Buddha introduced the idea to him.⁶ It relates that the Buddha, on the third day of his arrival at Kapilavastu, after taking part in a meal in Nanda's house, handed his bowl to Nanda and departed, thereby propagating the Dharma to his half-brother without words. However, Nanda, not understanding this, followed him to Banyan Grove to return the bowl. There, the Buddha asked Nanda if he would become a monk. Although Nanda had just married, he went forth.

i.9 Details of the difficulties Nanda subsequently experienced at the start of his life as a monk are related in several other canonical texts. They are found, for example, in a sutta in the Pali Canon entitled *The Nanda Sutta (Udāna 3.2)*⁷ as well as in *The Finer Points of the Monastic Discipline (Vinayaṣudrakavastu, Toh 6)*⁸ and *The Teaching to Nanda on Entry into the Womb (Nandaḡarbhāvākṛānti-nirdeśa, Toh 57)*.⁹ According to the version of the story found in the latter, although Nanda became a monk, he could not focus on the spiritual path because he missed his wife. Recognizing this, the Buddha took Nanda to the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (Skt. *Trāyastriṃśa*, Tib. *sum cu rtsa gsum*). On their way, Nanda saw a blind female monkey clinging to a tree. The Buddha asked him how the physical appearance of his wife compared to that of the monkey, to which Nanda replied that the physical appearance of the monkey could not compare in any way to the beauty of his wife. Finally, when they reached the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, Nanda saw beautiful celestial nymphs there. When the Buddha asked whether he considered his wife or the nymphs more beautiful, Nanda confessed that the physical appearance of his wife could not compare in any way to the beauty of the nymphs. The Buddha promised Nanda that he would meet the nymphs if he did not disrobe. Thereupon, Nanda endeavored with great intent, but nevertheless the monks scorned him for his attachment to sensual desire. Recognizing his attachment to sensual desire, the Buddha took Nanda to the hells, where Nanda saw for himself what awaited him after his sojourn in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three to sport with the nymphs. In the end, Nanda would recognize the true nature of desire and become an arhat.

i.10 The story of Nanda was so well-known that the early Indian poet Aśvaghoṣa wrote a poem about his conversion entitled *Handsome Nanda* (Skt. *Saundarananda*).¹⁰

- i.11 Despite the multiplicity of accounts of Nanda's going forth, however, the Buddha's advice to him on the importance and benefits of doing so, as set out in the present short sūtra, does not seem to be included in any of the longer texts transmitted in the Mūlasarvāstivāda and Lokottaravāda vinaya traditions and its provenance remains unknown.
- i.12 There is to our knowledge no extant Sanskrit version of this sūtra. It seems to have been translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan no later than the early ninth century, as its title is recorded in the Denkarma¹¹ and Phangthangma¹² Tibetan imperial translation catalogs. Versions of the Tibetan translation are found in all the known Kangyurs. A Mongolian translation of the text is available in the Mongolian Kanjur,¹³ entitled *Nandi toyin boluṣan-u sudur* (*The Sūtra of Nandi's Ordination*).¹⁴ A Chinese translation of a similarly titled sūtra is available in the Taishō Canon (難提釋經 *Nandi shi jing*, Taishō 113), but it bears little resemblance to the Tibetan translation. The colophon names its translator as Fa Ju (Skt. Dharmalokā), who was active in Luoyang between 290 and 306 CE, toward the end of the Western Jin dynasty.¹⁵ There is to our knowledge no English translation of the text to date, nor any translation into another European language.
- i.13 As for the Tibetan versions of this text, those included in the Kangyurs of the Thempangma line, such as the Stok Palace Kangyur (Tib. *stog pho brang bka' 'gyur*), provide no information about who translated the text in their colophons, which say only that the text "is included in the first teachings of the Buddha" (Tib. *'di bka' dang por gtogs so*), that is, the teachings included in the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma. However, in the short colophon of the versions found in Kangyurs belonging to the Tshalpa line, such as Degé, Lithang, and Choné, as well as in independent or "mixed" Kangyurs such as Lhasa and Narthang, only the editor of the translation is named, Tsang Devendrarakṣita (Tib. *rtsangs de ben dra ra k+Shi ta*). This figure is named as the text's translator in Butön's *History of Buddhism* (Tib. *bu ston chos 'byung*).¹⁶ Furthermore, the colophon of the version found in the Gondhla collection states that the sūtra was edited and finalized by the Indian scholar Dharmākara (Tib. *dar ma ka ra ba*) together with the monk-translator Tsang Devendrarakṣita.¹⁷ Dharmākara is the only attested Sanskrit name of a scholar who worked on Tibetan translations during the imperial period that vaguely corresponds to the odd *dar ma ka ra ba*.¹⁸
- i.14 This English translation is based on the Tibetan version in the Degé Kangyur, in consultation with the Stok Palace Kangyur version, the variant readings recorded in the Comparative Edition (Tib. *dpe bsdur ma*) of the Kangyur, and the Phukdrak (Tib. *phug brag*) manuscript Kangyur.

The Translation

The Sūtra

Nanda's Going Forth

1. The Sūtra of Nanda's Going Forth

[F.254.b]

1.1 Homage to the Omniscient One.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was staying in Banyan Grove near Kapilavastu. One morning he put on his upper and lower robes, took his alms bowl, and went to Kapilavastu for alms, attended by the śramaṇa Venerable Ānanda. The Blessed One approached the house of the noble son, Nanda. Nanda saw from afar that the Blessed One was coming. Having seen this, he quickly arranged a seat for him and said, "Do come inside, Blessed One! Welcome, Blessed One! Please take a seat, Blessed One!"

1.3 The Blessed One took a seat. Then Nanda, the noble son, prostrated at the Blessed One's feet and sat down in front of him.

1.4 The Blessed One asked Nanda, the noble son, [F.255.a] "Nanda, why do you not go forth?"

Nanda responded, "Blessed One, please explain what is meant by the words *going forth*."

1.5 The Blessed One replied as follows:

1.6 "It is the complete avoidance of all sinful deeds.

It is the perfect elimination of desire, anger, and ignorance.

It is the cleansing of all defilements that gather in the darkness of fighting, battle, blaming, quarreling, disputation, deception, and dishonesty.

It is the basis of all virtues, just as fertile soil is the basis of all grains.

It is the source of all precious things.

It is the wish-fulfilling gem of all happiness.

It is the exalted abode of all virtues.

It is what gives relief to all sentient beings.

It is the confidence of all beings.

It is what grants fearlessness to all living creatures.

It is the excellent vase for all beings who are poor.
 It is the defense for those who are defenseless.
 It is the resting place for those exhausted by aimless longing and tormented
 by suffering.
 It is the distinctive feature of all buddhas.
 It is the object of worship of all sentient beings.
 It is what the wise ones praise.
 It is the path for those proceeding toward liberation.
 It is what pure sentient beings revere.
 It is what is adhered to by those sentient beings who are suitable vessels.¹⁹
 It is what closes the gate to rebirth in lower states of existence.
 It is what opens the gate to higher states of existence and liberation.
 It is what fills up the realm of divine beings.
 It is the dispeller of all sufferings.
 It is the liberator of those bound by the fetters of craving.
 Nanda, this is what we call *going forth*.

- 1.7 “It is the house of those with right view.
 It is the true commitment to liberation.
 It is what leads to nirvāṇa.
 It is the complete termination of the continuum. [F.255.b]
 It is what burns away the afflictions.
 It is what uproots the latent propensities.
 It is what destroys the web of perverted views.
 It is what topples the victory banner of Māra.
 It is what raises the victory banner of the teacher of forbearance.
 It is what reverses the wheel of saṃsāra.
 It is what turns the wheel of Dharma.
 It is what dries up the ocean of milk.
 It is what destroys the mountain of bones.
 It is the end of birth, aging, illness, and death.
 It is what unloads the burden of aggregates.
 It is what extricates those mired in the swamp of afflictions.
 It is what liberates those in the cage of the household.
 It is what dispels harmful feelings.
 It is what destroys doubts and the entrenched defilements of the afflictions.
 It is what gives relief from the fears of aging and death.
 It is what terminates suffering due to separation from what we love.
 It is the riverbank of happiness and fearlessness for those tormented by the
 suffering of saṃsāra.
 It is what helps us transcend the desire realm.
 It is what helps us completely transcend the form realm.

It is what helps us entirely transcend the formless realm.
Ultimately, it makes us attain²⁰ the supreme nirvāṇa.
Nanda, this is what we call *going forth*.

1.8

“It is like the eye of all worlds.
It is the lamp in the darkness of ignorance.
It is the purifier of the mental continuum.
It is the pacifier of all the diseases linked to the afflictions.
It is what reveals the path to those who have lost their way.
It is what shows the essential nature of all phenomena.
It is what liberates us from all bonds.
It is what dispels all the darkness of ignorance.
It is what dissolves the obscuring darkness of the visual defects of
unknowing.
It is what encourages the lazy to make efforts.
It is what disenchants those who violate ethical behavior. [F.256.a]
It is what delights those with perfect ethical behavior.
It is what supremely delights the diligent.
It is what delights those who take pleasure in seclusion.
It is what deeply satisfies meditators.
It is the weapon for those engaged in subduing the enemy, the afflictions.
It is what grants victory to non-returners.
It is the abode for the homeless.
It is the protector for those without protection.
It is what grants fearlessness to those gripped by fear.
It is the refuge for those without refuge.
It is the means of attaining happiness for suffering ones.
It is what liberates those bound by the fetters of saṃsāra.
Nanda, this is what we call *going forth*.

1.9

“It is honored by gods and humans.
It is worshiped by kings.
It is what is intended by all buddhas.
It is the complete renunciation of one’s dwelling place.
It is the guide on the path to nirvāṇa.
It is the shaving of the burden of hair.
It is the saffron robe, the sign of being free from desires.
It is the field of appropriate endeavor.
It is the victory banner of the sages.
It is what vanquishes the arrogance²¹ of evildoing demons.
It is what fully delights gods and humans.
Therefore, Nanda, if going forth is like this, why would you not go forth?

- 1.10 “Nanda, the happiness of going forth is far superior even to the happiness of the dominion of a universal monarch. What’s more, Nanda, favorable circumstances are exceedingly difficult to find, even in one billion eons,²² yet for a buddha to have come is far more difficult to find than even that. Nanda, royal sages wishing for liberation, as well as universal monarchs endowed with the seven royal treasures, [F.256.b] together with their retinues of queens, have abandoned their lands²³ and gone forth. Similarly, householders and congregations of brahmins have also abandoned their homes and gone forth.”
- 1.11 Thereupon the noble son Nanda replied to the Blessed One, “O Honorable One! I will remain a householder and give donations, make merit, and venerate the Blessed One and the community of śrāvakas. I will also supply them with monastic robes, alms, bedding, medicine for healing illnesses, and other necessities, too.”
- 1.12 The Blessed One replied as follows: “If for one hundred years faithful noble sons and noble daughters were to make offerings of monastic robes, alms, cushions, medicine for healing illnesses, and other necessities to as many thus-gone, worthy, complete, and perfect buddhas as would fill the whole universe and its three realms, Nanda, it would not compare to as much as a sixteenth fraction of the intention to go forth and renounce the world.
- 1.13 “Nanda, it is very difficult for you to find
Such favorable conditions for going forth.
Nanda, the teacher has appeared before you;
So, do not disappoint me!
- 1.14 “Suppose, Nanda, that this whole wide world comprised the waters of one great ocean in which there dwelled a single, blind turtle, and that there was also a single yoke with a hole, tossing about. Considering this,²⁴ that blind turtle entertains the thought that it must put its neck through the hole of this yoke, but the yoke with its hole is buffeted by the wind and tossed about in all directions. In that case, Nanda, what are the chances that the blind turtle’s neck would ever accidentally enter the hole of that yoke, even in a hundred years?²⁵ In the same way, Nanda, this human birth may not be found, nor the excellence of a favorable circumstance.
- 1.15 “Nanda, it is very difficult for you to find this human birth; and thus, if you have found perfect favorable conditions, [F.257.a]
- 1.16 “Nanda, you have found the very difficult to find
Favorable conditions for going forth.
Nanda, the teacher has appeared before you;
So, do not disappoint me!

- 1.17 “Suppose, Nanda, someone tosses some white mustard seeds at the eye of an upright-standing needle. In that case, Nanda, what are the chances that any single white mustard seed would pass through the eye, even in a hundred years?²⁶ In the same way, Nanda, this human birth may not be found, nor the excellence of a favorable circumstance.
- 1.18 “Nanda, it is very difficult to find this human birth; and thus, if you have found perfect favorable conditions,
- 1.19 “Nanda, you have found the very difficult to find
Favorable conditions for going forth.
Nanda, the teacher has appeared before you;
So, do not disappoint me!
- 1.20 “Why is that so?
- 1.21 “If the word *buddha* was not heard
Even in ten billion eons,
And even in ten trillion eons,
How would it be possible to see a buddha?
- 1.22 “As the uḍumbara flower
Is extremely rare to find among trees,
A buddha is similarly difficult to find.
Yet, now you have found me!
- 1.23 “Nanda, it is very difficult for you to find
Such favorable conditions for going forth.
Nanda, the teacher has appeared before you;
So, do not disappoint me!”
- 1.24 Thereupon, Nanda, the noble son, shaved off his hair and beard, donned saffron robes, and, with deep faith in the teachings of the Victorious One, went forth from home into homelessness.
- 1.25 After the Blessed One had thus spoken, Venerable Ānanda and Nanda, the noble son, praised the speech of the Blessed One.

Thus concludes “The Sūtra of Nanda’s Going Forth.”

c.

Colophon

c.1 This text was edited by Tsang Devendrarakṣita.²⁷

NOTES

n.

- n.1 The story of the Buddha's return to Kapilavastu is the principal theme of *The Meeting of Father and Son* (*Pitāputrasamāgama*, Toh 60); it is also related in *The Chapter on a Schism in the Saṅgha* (chapter 17 of the Vinayavastu, Toh 1), Degé Kangyur, vol. 4, F.91.b et seq.; see Miller (forthcoming). See also Buswell 2014, p. 598.
- n.2 For more on this term, see the introduction to *The Chapter on Going Forth*, Toh 1-1, i.37 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh1-1.html#UT22084-001-001-80>).
- n.3 The analogy is also mentioned in brief in *The Application of Mindfulness of the Sacred Dharma* (*Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna*, Toh 287); see Dharmachakra Translation Committee 2021, 2.1478 (<https://read.84000.co/translation/toh287.html#UT22084-068-021-1898>).
- n.4 The mention comes in verse 20 of the fourth chapter (on carefulness) of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* (Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*), Toh 3871. Of the many English translations, see for example Wallace and Wallace 1997, p. 40.
- n.5 In the case of Rāhula's going forth, Śuddhodana's initial distress at the loss of a royal heir is made clear in the *Mahāvastu* (vol. III, ch. 23).
- n.6 The story is found in several canonical texts including, in the Kangyur, in *The Finer Points of the Monastic Discipline* (*Vinayaṣudrakavastu*, Toh 6), vol. 10 ('dul ba, tha) F.119.b–F.120.a, and in *The Teaching to Nanda on Entry into the Womb* (*Nandaḡarbhāvakrāntinirdeśa*, Toh 57), Degé Kangyur, vol. 41 (dkon brtsegs, ga), F.206.a–F.206.b (see Kritzer, forthcoming); and in Pali, the *Dhammapada Aṭṭakathā* (for an English translation, see Burlingame 1996, pp. 169–72).
- n.7 See Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

- [n.8](#) *'dul ba phran tshogs kyi gzhi*, Degé Kangyur, vol. 10 (*'dul ba, tha*), F.119 et seq.
- [n.9](#) *dga' bo la mngal na gnas pa bstan pa*, Degé Kangyur, vol. 41 (dkon brtsegs, ga), F.207.b et seq.; see Kritzer (forthcoming).
- [n.10](#) Covill 2007.
- [n.11](#) *Denkarma*, folio 301.a. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, pp. 160–61, no. 294.
- [n.12](#) *Phangthangma* 2003, p. 22.
- [n.13](#) Tome 88, Eldeb 29, No. 1088 (27), f. 338.a–341.b.
- [n.14](#) Mongolian Kanjur, vol. 88. f. 338.a–341.b, cf. also Ligeti 1942, p. 293.
- [n.15](#) The Chinese translation of the sūtra was identified by James Gentry, who also compared it with the Tibetan text.
- [n.16](#) Butön 1988, p. 214.
- [n.17](#) Tauscher 2008, p. 70. *rgya gar gi mkhan po dar ma ka ra ba dang | lo tsa ba ban dhe rtsangs te ben dras zhus te | gtan la phab pa | |*.
- [n.18](#) Cf. *Chibetto Daizōkyō Tanjūru Kandō Mokuroku* 1930–32, Skorupski 1985, although these other colophons do not record that Dharmākara worked with Devendrarakṣita. Cf.
<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verif2.php?id=328>
(<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verif2.php?id=328>).
- [n.19](#) Tib. *snod* (Skt. *bhājana*), which has the following meanings: “pot, vessel, container, receptacle, recipient.” Here the term is used metaphorically to refer to the recipients of the Buddha’s teachings.
- [n.20](#) Tib. *thob par byed pa*. The Stok Palace Kangyur reads *thog par byed pa*.
- [n.21](#) This translation follows the reading in Phukdrak, Tib. *dregs pa 'joms pa*. Degé, the Comparative Edition, and Stok Palace have *grags pa 'joms pa*.
- [n.22](#) Cf. the reading in the Stok Palace Kangyur version, *bskal pa brgyar*, “one hundred eons.”
- [n.23](#) Tib. *sa bor*. The Stok Palace Kangyur version has *bor*.
- [n.24](#) Tib. *'di skad du*. The Stok Palace Kangyur has *'di snyam du*.
- [n.25](#) Tib. *brgya la rkyen zhig gis*. Translation tentative.

n.26 Tib. *brgya la rkyen zhig gis*. Translation tentative.

n.27 Cf. <https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verif2.php?id=328>
(<https://www.istb.univie.ac.at/kanjur/rktsneu/verif/verif2.php?id=328>).

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GLOSSARY

g.

g.1 Afflictions

nyon mongs pa

ཉོན་མོངས་པ།

kleśa

A type of mental imperfection or disturbing emotion that binds one to saṃsāra.

g.2 Aggregates

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

The five aggregates 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” (Skt. *upādāna*) insofar as all conceptual grasping arises on the basis of these aggregates.

g.3 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

Ānanda

Ānanda, the cousin of Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha Śākyamuni). The Buddha’s personal attendant, one of his closest disciples, and also the person who, according to tradition, preserved the oral transmission of the sūtras.

g.4 Arhat
dgra bcom pa
དགའ་བཙེམ་པ།
arhat
“Worthy one” or “someone who has killed their foes” (i.e., mental afflictions).
A Buddhist saint who has obtained liberation from saṃsāra. Also used as an
epithet for buddhas.

g.5 Banyan Grove
n+ya gro dha'i kun dga'i ra ba
ཉུ་གློ་རླུ་ལྷན་དགའི་ར་བ།
Nyagrodhārāma
A grove of banyan trees (Skt. *nyagrodha*, Tib. *nya gro dha*) near Kapilavastu,
where the Buddha resided during his first visit to the city after his
awakening. It was donated to the monastic community by King
Śuddhodana, the father of the Buddha. It is said that several rules of the
Vinaya were promulgated there.

g.6 Blessed One
bcom ldan 'das
བཙེམ་ལྷན་འདས།
bhagavat
In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to
Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in
specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six
auspicious qualities (Skt. *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 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.7 Community
dge 'dun
དགའ་འདུན།
saṅgha

The community of noble ones, or those who have realized the nature of reality; in a more conventional sense, the community of monks and nuns.

g.8 Continuum

rgyun

རྒྱུ།

saṃtati

In the present text this refers to the mental continuum.

g.9 Demon

bdud

བདུད།

Māra

See “māra.”

g.10 Desire realm

*'dod pa'i kham*s

འདོད་པའི་ཁམས།

kāmadhātu

One of the three spheres of existence, it comprises the traditional six realms of saṃsāra up to and including the desire realm gods—including the human realm. Rebirth in this realm is characterized by intense cravings via the five senses and their objects.

g.11 Eons

bskal pa

བསྐལ་པ།

kalpa

An aeon or cosmic period of time.

g.12 Excellent vase

bum pa bzang po

བུམ་པ་བཟང་པོ།

bhadraghaṭa

This likely refers to the vase of inexhaustible treasures known from Indian mythology, which provides beings with copious wealth and sustenance.

g.13 Form realm

*gzugs kyi kham*s

གཟུགས་ཀྱི་ཁམས།

rūpadhātu

In Buddhist cosmology, the sphere of existence one level more subtle than our own (the desire realm), where beings, though subtly embodied, are not driven primarily by the urge for sense gratification.

g.14 Formless realm

*gzugs med pa'i kham*s

གཟུགས་མེད་པའི་ཁམས།

arūpadhātu

In Buddhist cosmology, the sphere of existence two levels more subtle than our own (the desire realm), where beings are no longer physically embodied, and thus not subject to the sufferings that physical embodiment brings.

g.15 Going forth

rab tu byung ba

རབ་དུ་བྱུང་བ།

pravrajita · pravrajyā

To go forth from the home into homelessness, or to renounce the worldly life of a lay person, in order to become a monk or nun.

g.16 Higher states of existence

mtho ris

མཐོ་རིས།

svarga

The realms of the gods.

g.17 Honorable One

btsun pa

བཙུན་པ།

bhadanta

An epithet for a monastic.

g.18 Kapilavastu

ser skya'i gnas

སེར་སྐྱའི་གནས།

Kapilavastu

An ancient city, capital of the Śākya state, where Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha Śākyamuni) lived until the age of twenty-nine when he renounced worldly life. Later, some years after his awakening, the Buddha returned to Kapilavastu, where his cousins Ānanda and Devadatta, his half-brother Nanda, his barber Upāli, and his son Rāhula joined the monastic community.

g.19 Latent propensities

phra rgyas

ཕ་རྒྱས།

anuśaya

Various unwholesome mental states that lead to continued suffering and existence.

g.20 Liberation

thar pa

ཐར་པ།

mokṣa

Release or deliverance from saṃsāra.

g.21 Lower states of existence

ngan song

ངན་སྲིད།

durgati

The lower realms of hell beings, hungry ghosts (pretas), and animals.

g.22 Māra

bdud

བདུད།

Māra

The demon who assailed the Buddha Śākyamuni prior to his awakening; the personification of cognitive and emotional obstacles.

g.23 Meditator

rnal 'byor spyod pa

རྣལ་འབྱོར་སྦྱོང་བ།

yogācāra

Literally, a “practitioner of yoga,” meaning one dedicated to meditation practice. It can be synonymous with yogin. This is not a reference to the Yogācāra school of thought that developed within the Mahāyāna.

g.24 Mountain of bones

rus pa'i ri

རུས་པའི་རི།

—

This is a reference to saṃsāra, which is called a “mountain of bones” since the skeletons of the beings born therein would, if accumulated over countless rebirths, be enough to form a mountain.

g.25 Nanda

dga' bo

དགའ་བོ།

Nanda

Prince Nanda was the younger half-brother of Siddhārtha Gautama (the Buddha Śākyamuni); his mother was Mahāprajāpatī Gotamī, Siddhārtha Gautama’s maternal aunt. Nanda was an important monastic disciple of the Buddha.

g.26 Nirvāṇa

mya ngan las 'das pa

མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

nirvāṇa · nirvṛti

The “extinguishing” of suffering; the state of freedom from the suffering of saṃsāra.

g.27 Non-returner

phyir mi 'ong ba

ཕྱིར་མི་འོང་བ།

anāgāmin

One who will not have to be born again in the desire realm but will instead become an arhat.

g.28 Obscuration

sgrib pa

སྒྲིབ་པ།

āvaraṇa

Usually a reference to five hindrances: longing for sense pleasures (Skt. *kāmacchanda*), malice (Skt. *vyāpāda*), sloth and torpor (Skt. *styānamiddha*), excitement and remorse (Skt. *auddhatyakaukr̥tya*), and doubt (Skt. *vicikitsā*).

g.29 Ocean of milk

nu zho'i rgya mtsho

ལུ་ཞོ་འི་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

—

This is a reference to saṃsāra, which is called an “ocean of milk” since the beings therein are sustained by their mother’s milk which, if accumulated over countless rebirths, would be enough to fill an ocean.

g.30 Omniscient One

thams cad mkhyen pa

ཐམས་ཅད་མཁྱེན་པ།

sarvajña

An epithet of a buddha.

g.31 Renounce the world

nges par 'byung ba

ངེས་པར་འབྱུང་བ།

niḥsaraṇa · niryāṇa

Definite emergence or release from saṃsāra; also a term for renunciation.

g.32 Śākyamuni

shAkya thub pa

ཤཱཀ་ལུ་ཐུབ་པ།

Śākyamuni

An epithet for the historical Buddha, Siddhārtha Gautama: he was a muni (“sage”) from the Śākya clan. In this text and elsewhere, he is counted as the fourth of the first four buddhas of the present Good Eon, the other three being Krakucchanda, Kanakamuni, and Kāśyapa. He will be followed by Maitreya, the next buddha in this eon.

- g.33 **Saṃsāra**
 'khor ba
 འཇོང་བ།
 saṃsāra
 The cycle of birth and death driven by mental afflictions and karmic actions.
- g.34 **Seven royal treasures**
 rin po che sna bdun
 ཇིན་པོ་ཆེ་སྣ་བདུན།
 saptaratna
 The seven precious royal treasures of a universal monarch: wheel, jewel, queen, minister/officer, elephant, excellent horse, and army officer.
- g.35 **Siddhārtha Gautama**
 don grub gau ta ma
 དོན་གྲུབ་གོ་ཏམ།
 Siddhārtha Gautama
 Siddhārtha was the Buddha Śākyamuni’s personal name, while Gautama (“descendants of Gotama”) was his family name.
- g.36 **Śramaṇa**
 dge sbyong
 དགེ་སྦྱང།
 śramaṇa
 The Sanskrit term literally means “one who toils,” i.e., an ascetic, and the term is applied to spiritual renunciants or monks, whether Buddhist or otherwise.
- g.37 **Śrāvaka**
 nyan thos
 ཉན་ཐོས།
 śrāvaka
 A follower of those teachings of the Buddha that focus on the monastic lifestyle and liberating oneself from suffering, in contrast to followers of the Bodhisattva Vehicle who seek awakening for the sake of all beings.

g.38 Three realms

khams gsum pa

ཁམས་གསུམ་པ།

traidhātuka

The desire realm, form realm, and formless realm.

g.39 Thus-gone

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

“Thus-Gone One,” an epithet of a buddha. A buddha is one who has “gone” to thusness, suchness, or nirvāṇa.

g.40 Tsang Devendrarakṣita

rtsangs de ben dra ra k+Shi ta

རུངས་དེ་བེན་ར་རྒྱ་ཏ།

Devendrarakṣita

Editor of the Tibetan translation of *The Sūtra of Nanda’s Going Forth*.

g.41 Uḍumbara

u dum ba ra

ལུ་དུམ་བ་ར།

udumbara · uḍumbara

The mythological flower of the fig tree said to appear on rare occasions, such as the birth of a buddha. The actual fig tree flower is contained within the fruit. The flower also came to be portrayed as a kind of lotus.

g.42 Universal monarch

’khor los sgyur ba’i rgyal po

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བའི་རྒྱལ་པོ།

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.43 Venerable

tshe dang ldan pa

ཚོ་དང་ལྷན་པ།

āyusmat

A respectful form of address between monks, and also between lay companions of equal standing. It literally means “one who has a [long] life.”

g.44 Wish-fulfilling gem

yid bzhin gyi nor bu

ཡིད་བཞིན་གྱི་ནོར་བུ།

cintāmaṇi

A gem or jewel that grants the fulfillment of all one could desire.