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The Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder

Śilākṣiptasūtra

འཕགས་པ་རྡོ་འཕངས་པའི་མདོ།

’phags pa rdo ’phangs pa’i mdo

The Noble Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder

Āryaśilākṣiptasūtra

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Summary

s.1 During the last day of his life, the Buddha is traveling in the land of the people known as the Mallas. The inhabitants of Kuśinagara eagerly prepare for his arrival, yet their efforts are thwarted by a huge boulder that blocks the main road into town. Despite being renowned for and proud of their great strength, the Mallas are unable to move the boulder by any means. When the Buddha arrives, he is able to easily toss the boulder into the air with a miraculous display and set it to the side of the road. He then delivers a lengthy discourse to the Mallas illustrating the strength of a buddha compared to that of other beings. He reveals that the only thing stronger than a buddha is impermanence, which will overtake him that very evening.

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Introduction

i.1 *The Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder* recounts the episode from the life of the Buddha Śākyamuni in which, on the day of his parinirvāṇa, he tosses a huge boulder from the middle of the road from Pāpā to Kuśinagara in the land of the Mallas. It recounts questions directed to him by the Mallas, the local people renowned for their physical strength, a detail that serves to exalt the Buddha when he easily surpasses them in a display of strength.

i.2 The narrative begins with the hubbub of activity that precedes his visit to Kuśinagara, during which time the locals endeavor to thoroughly clean Kuśinagara and adorn it with banners and other symbols of reverence. In their efforts, however, the Mallas encounter an insurmountable obstacle: a huge boulder sits in the middle of the road along which the Buddha will enter the town. The Mallas, confident in their physical prowess, decide to remove it as an act of devotion and with the thought of the praise that will come their way, but they are unable even to budge the boulder. They wrap strong ropes around the boulder, tie it to oxen and elephants, and even employ spells and potions, but the result is the same. After exhausting themselves with the futile task, they are physically spent and disheartened.

i.3 When the Buddha arrives on the scene, he asks the Mallas why they are sitting despondently next to the boulder. After they describe their efforts to move it, the Buddha effortlessly rocks the boulder back and forth with his big toe, lifts it with one hand, and places it in the palm of the other hand. He then, to the astonishment of those present, tosses it skyward out of sight, as far as the Brahmā world. The Buddha then pulverizes the rock into tiny fragments and reconstructs it in another location, off to the side of the road. He then delivers to the Mallas a lengthy discourse illustrating the strength of a buddha according to five types of strengths possessed by buddhas—the strength inherited from one's parents (i.e., physical strength), the strength of merit, the strength of wisdom, the strength of miraculous power, and the strength of meditation. Under

the teaching on the first type of strength, the Buddha lists a hierarchy of strong beings, beginning with the strength of an ordinary human and progressing through a list of strong animals such as elephants up to the god Nārāyaṇa, whose strength amounts to only a tiny fraction of the strength of a buddha.

i.4 The Buddha then goes on to describe other qualities of buddhas, their merit, magical abilities, and wisdom, according to a similar pattern of a hierarchy with a buddha at its apex, utterly surpassing all others. He reveals, however, that there is one strength that surpasses that of a buddha—impermanence—which will that very evening destroy even a body such as his when the time of his parinirvāṇa arrives. As he explains the vast results of generating roots of virtue toward a perfect buddha, the gods Brahmā and Śakra appear to give their farewells, emphasizing the rarity of having encountered a buddha in one's lifetime. After the beings in the assembly are brought to varying levels of realization, the Mallas, disheartened at the news of the Buddha's imminent passing, depart the scene.

i.5 This story of the Buddha tossing a boulder on the day of his parinirvāṇa is also recounted in several other sources. Much of the Tibetan *The Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder* corresponds very closely to the extant Sanskrit of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.[1] As Monika Zin observes, "It was aptly inserted into *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*; due to the fact that this moment of the biography was selected the demonstration of strength becomes much more expressive: The Buddha shows his all-exceeding strength even though he is in a very bad physical condition on the day of his death."[2] In the Vinaya, a similar story is recounted in *The Chapter on Medicines* (*Bhaiṣajyavastu*).[3] There is also a portion of the story preserved in Kṣemendra's *Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā* and several Chinese works.[4] The story is also depicted in reliefs from Gandhāra, where it is connected to the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. [5]

i.6 The Tibetan translation was made by the Tibetan translator Sangkyong (ninth century) and edited by the famed translator Paltsek (eighth–ninth century).[6]

The date of this translation to the late eighth or early ninth century is also confirmed by its inclusion in the Denkarma and Phangthangma imperial-period catalogs, where it is listed as a Hīnayāna (*theg chung*) work.[7]

i.7 Our translation was based on the Degé Kangyur edition in consultation with the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace Kangyur. We also consulted the Sanskrit of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to clarify some passages. Any divergences from the Degé witness are discussed in the notes to the translation.

The Translation

1.

The Noble Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder

1.1 Homage to the noble Youthful Mañjuśrī!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. While visiting the land of the Mallas, the Blessed One went to Pāpā and settled at the Jalūkā Grove in Pāpā.[8] He said to the venerable Ānanda, "Ānanda, let us go to Kuśinagara." Ānanda replied, "As you say, Reverend One," and heeded the Blessed One's instructions.

1.3 At that time there were approximately five hundred Mallas[9] in Kuśinagara, each with a retinue of one hundred Mallas. Having gathered in a certain meeting house,[10] they sat down and discussed among themselves: "Wise ones, after visiting the land of the Mallas, the Blessed One went to Pāpā and settled at the Jalūkā Grove in Pāpā. The Mallas of Pāpā venerated him with utmost reverence, honored him with the utmost worship, and served him with the utmost devotion. In return, the Blessed One benefited them with a supreme, sublime, and unsurpassed gift of the Dharma. The Blessed One is staying there now, but before long he is bound to travel to Kuśinagara, to our village lands, surrounded by the retinue of monks and followed by the saṅgha of monks. In that case, so that we can benefit through also venerating and honoring the Blessed One, we should sweep, sprinkle with water, and wipe clean all of Kuśinagara according to procedure. Then we should adorn it with every kind of ornament and decoration and with incense, garlands, flowers, perfume, and the sublime sound of music. We should erect parasols, victory banners, and pennants, and we should organize festivities. We should furthermore, according to procedure, sweep clear the road on which the Blessed One intends to travel. After that, it would be excellent if we were all to welcome him together."

1.4 Then they all gathered and rejoiced. Without disagreement and single-mindedly, they swept clean all of Kuśinagara according to procedure. After

they sprinkled it with water and wiped it clean, they adorned it with every kind of ornament and decoration and with incense, garlands, flowers, perfume, and the sublime sound of music. They erected parasols, victory banners, and pennants, and they also organized festivities. Furthermore, according to procedure, they swept clean the road along which the Blessed One would arrive.

1.5 At that time, between Kuśinagara and the Hiraṇyavatī River, a huge boulder lay out of place, right on the main road. It measured fifteen arm spans in height, and seven and a half arm spans in width. The people thought, "We should lift this huge boulder and set it to one side. In this way we will have swept clear the road and honored the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect Buddha. The news of our great virtue will spread far and wide, and others will applaud us with words and verses of praise. If we lift the huge boulder and relocate it elsewhere, people will say, 'Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so courageous! Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so brave, and they had powerful bodies and immense strength!' "

1.6 With such thoughts, they committed themselves to the task. They said to one another, "Wise ones, Mallas and young Mallas of Kuśinagara, listen here! We are endeavoring to clear[11] this road. Since this huge boulder is lying out of place, right on the main road, we should lift this huge boulder and set it to one side. In this way we will have cleared the road and honored the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect Buddha. The news of our great virtue will spread far and wide, and others will applaud us with words and verses of praise. If we lift this huge boulder and set it to one side, people will say, 'Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so courageous! Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so brave, and they had powerful bodies and immense strength!' Therefore, wise ones, let us all set out for the site of the huge boulder."

1.7 The Mallas of Kuśinagara agreed among themselves, saying, "Thus it is!" Each mounting their own fine vehicle and departing, they arrogantly thought, "We are the strongest people on this earth!" They were intoxicated by their pride in

their lineage, strength, physical appearance, and power. They laughed and chattered with loud and high-pitched voices. Rejoicing and filled with joy, bliss, and gladness, they set out from Kuśinagara with their immense wealth. Leading many hundreds of horses, camels, the finest of blue bulls, chief bulls, elephants, and rutting elephants, they went to the site of the huge boulder, where they tied the boulder several times with strong animal-hair rope. Some set up ladders and pulled it back and forth with rope made of muñja or balbaja grass, or with the kind of rope that is drawn by horses. Some wanted to extract it from its base with one hundred plowshares, and others wanted to cut it with axes. Some wanted to pulverize it by hitting it with vajra. Others pursed their lips and tried to move it with brute strength, and some wanted to use chief bulls and chief oxen to overturn it. Some wanted to use a herd of elephants to destroy it. Some wanted to destroy it with the power of medicine, and others wanted to make it disappear with the power of mantra. To that end, through such diligence, determination, and effort, they thought to lift it and set it to one side. Persevering with their bodies weary, fatigued, and stooped over, they were discouraged, and they were unable to cause that huge boulder to waver in the slightest, let alone to lift it up or throw it.

1.8 Then the Blessed One, surrounded by the retinue of monks and followed by the saṅgha of monks, proceeded to the site where that huge boulder lay. The Mallas of Kuśinagara saw the Blessed One coming from a very long distance, and on seeing him they were uplifted, becoming happy, delighted, and overjoyed. Giving rise to great devotion, they all welcomed the Blessed One. They bowed their heads at the Blessed One's feet, circumambulated him three times, and sat quietly to one side.

1.9 The Blessed One then asked the Mallas of Kuśinagara, who sat to one side, "Youths, did you undertake a great deal of effort, and did you labor?"

1.10 The Mallas of Kuśinagara replied to the Blessed One, "O Reverend One, we Mallas of Kuśinagara heard that after visiting the land of the Mallas, the Blessed

One went to Pāpā and settled[12] at the Jalūkā Grove in Pāpā. There the Mallas of Pāpā venerated you with utmost reverence, honored you with the utmost worship, and served you with the utmost devotion. In return, the Blessed One benefited them with a supreme, sublime, and unsurpassed gift of the Dharma.

1.11 "We heard that the Blessed One would now travel to Kuśinagara, to our village lands, surrounded by the retinue of monks and followed by the saṅgha of monks. Upon hearing this, we thought, 'In that case, so that we can be benefited through also venerating and honoring the Blessed One, we should sweep, sprinkle with water, and wipe clean all of Kuśinagara according to procedure. Then we should adorn it with every kind of ornament and decoration and with incense, garlands, flowers, perfume, and the sublime sound of music. We should erect parasols, victory banners, and pennants, and we should organize festivities. We should furthermore, according to procedure, sweep clear the road on which the Blessed One intends to travel. After that, it would be excellent if we were all to welcome him together.'

1.12 "Then we all gathered together and rejoiced. Without disagreement and single-mindedly, we swept clean all of Kuśinagara according to procedure. After we sprinkled it with water and wiped it clean, we adorned it with every kind of ornament and decoration and with incense, garlands, flowers, perfume, and the sublime sound of music. We erected parasols, victory banners, and pennants, and we also organized festivities.

1.13 "As we furthermore, according to procedure, swept clean the road on which the Blessed One would arrive, we came across a huge stone that was out of place, and we saw that it had come to rest on the main road. Then we thought, 'In that case, we will lift this huge boulder and relocate it elsewhere. In that way, not only will we have swept clear the road, but we will also have honored the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect Buddha. The news of our great virtue will spread far and wide, and others will applaud us with words and verses of praise. Of those who lift that huge boulder and toss it to one side, people will

say, “Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so courageous! Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so brave, and they had powerful bodies and immense strength!”

1.14 “The pledges we undertook were, ‘Wise ones, Mallas and young Mallas of Kuśinagara, listen here! We are endeavoring to clear this road. Since this huge boulder is lying out of place, right on the main road, we should lift this huge boulder and set it to one side. In this way, not only will we have swept clear the road, but we will also have honored the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect Buddha. The news of our[13] great virtue will spread far and wide, and others will applaud us with words and verses of praise. Of those who lift this huge boulder and toss it to one side, people will say, “Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so courageous! Ah! The Mallas of Kuśinagara were so brave, and they had powerful bodies and immense strength!” Therefore, wise ones, let us go right away to the site of this huge boulder.’

1.15 “We all agreed among ourselves, saying ‘Thus it is!’ and mounted our fine vehicles and departed, arrogantly thinking, ‘We are the strongest people on this earth!’ We were intoxicated by our pride in our lineage, strength, physical appearance, and power. We laughed and chattered with loud and high-pitched voices. Rejoicing and filled with joy, bliss, and gladness, we set out from Kuśinagara with our immense wealth. Leading many hundreds of horses, camels, the finest of blue bulls, chief bulls, elephants, and rutting elephants, we set out for the site of the huge boulder, where we tied the huge boulder every which way with strong animal-hair rope. Some set up ladders and pulled it back and forth with rope made of muñja or balbaja grass, or with the kind of rope that is drawn by horses. Some of us wanted to extract it from its base with one hundred plowshares, and others wanted to cut it with axes. Some wished to pulverize it by hitting it with vajra. Others pursed their lips and tried to move it with brute strength, and some of us wanted to use chief bulls and chief oxen to overturn it. Some wanted to use a herd of elephants to destroy it. Some of us wanted to destroy it with the power of medicine, and others wanted to make it

disappear with the power of their mantras. To that end, through such diligence, determination, and effort, we thought to lift it and set it to one side. Persevering with our bodies weary, fatigued, and stooped over, we were discouraged, and though we labored for twenty-nine days we were unable to cause that huge boulder to waver in the slightest, let alone to lift it up or throw it."

1.16 The Blessed One then asked, "Youths, do you wish the Tathāgata to lift that huge boulder and set it to one side?"

"Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Very much so, Sugata!"

1.17 The Blessed One draped his upper robe over one shoulder and approached the huge boulder. With the big toe of his right foot he rocked the huge boulder and extracted it completely from its base. With his left hand he then lifted it and placed it in the palm of his right hand. After contemplating for a moment, he tossed the boulder upward, as high as the Brahmā world, and it disappeared from sight. The sound of it frightened the Mallas.

1.18 "Vāsiṣṭhas, do not be afraid!" said the Blessed One. As soon as the boulder was tossed upward, it produced the sound, "All compounded phenomena are impermanent. All phenomena are devoid of a self. Nirvāṇa is peace," and then it returned again to rest on the Tathāgata's palm. With an exhalation of his breath, he reduced it to tiny particles. Having reduced it to dust, he caused a rain of dust to begin to fall as tiny particles in every direction.

1.19 The gathering of Mallas was deeply disturbed by the disappearance of the huge boulder. Since the Blessed One knew with his mind each of the thoughts of that gathering of Mallas, he understood their deep unease on account of the huge boulder's disappearance. So, subsequently, he gathered back all those minute particles of the stone into one—with nothing missing, in its entirety—thus creating an exact version of the huge boulder, which he then set in another place, out of the way. By that astounding, marvelous great display, the Blessed One brought inspiration to those five hundred Mallas. Rejoicing and filled with joy,

bliss, and gladness, they asked the Blessed One, “What is this, Blessed One? Is it the Tathāgata’s strength inherited from one’s parents, or is it the strength of miraculous power? Or is it the strength of meditation?”

1.20 The Blessed One replied, “Vāsiṣṭhas, the Tathāgata rocked the huge boulder with the big toe of his right foot and extracted it completely from its base. Taking it with his left hand, he placed it in the palm of his right hand. After contemplating for a moment, he tossed it upward, as high as the Brahmā world. This is the Tathāgata’s strength inherited from one’s parents.

1.21 “Vāsiṣṭhas, producing the sound of the huge boulder—“All compounded phenomena are impermanent; all phenomena are devoid of a self; nirvāṇa is peace”—was the Tathāgata’s strength of miraculous power.

1.22 “Vāsiṣṭhas, with the exhalation of his breath, the Tathāgata reduced that huge boulder to dust, and then he drew those tiny particles back into one—with nothing missing, in its entirety—and bound them together, thus making nothing but a similar huge boulder, which he then set in another place, out of the way. This was the Tathāgata’s strength of meditation.”

1.23 “Reverend One, what kinds of strength inherited from one’s parents do tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess?”

1.24 “Vāsiṣṭhas, do you wish to hear from the Tathāgata about the strength inherited from one’s parents of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

“Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Yes, very much so, Sugata!”

1.25 “In that case, Vāsiṣṭhas, listen closely and pay attention, and I will tell you.

1.26 [14]“Vāsiṣṭhas, the strength of ten humans equals that of one ordinary ox. The strength of ten ordinary oxen equals that of one blue bull. The strength of ten blue bulls equals that of one chief bull. The strength of ten chief bulls equals that of one yak. The strength of ten yaks equals that of one rhinoceros. The

strength of ten rhinoceroses equals that of one ordinary elephant. The strength of ten ordinary elephants equals that of one quiet elephant.[15] The strength of ten quiet elephants equals that of one loud elephant.[16] The strength of ten loud elephants equals that of a single-tusked elephant.[17] The strength of ten single-tusked elephants equals that of one blue mountain elephant, and the same applies to the yellow mountain, red mountain, white mountain, endowed-with-excellent-fragrance, endowed-with-soothing-fragrance, endowed-with-the-fragrance-of-blue-lotus, and endowed-with-the-fragrance-of-white-lotus elephants. The strength of ten endowed-with-the-fragrance-of-white-lotus elephants equals that of one red-lotus elephant. The strength of ten red-lotus elephants equals that of one great red-lotus elephant. The strength of ten great red-lotus elephants equals that of one snow-mountain elephant. The strength of ten snow-mountain elephants equals that of a strong rutting elephant. The strength of ten strong rutting elephants equals that of a half-champion.[18] The strength of two half-champions[19] equals that of one champion. The strength of ten champions equals that of a half–bold man. The strength of two half–bold men equals that of one bold man. The strength of ten bold men equals that of one wrestler. The strength of ten wrestlers equals that of one strong-armed man. The strength of ten strong-armed men equals that of one half Nārāyaṇa. The strength of two half Nārāyaṇas equals that of one Nārāyaṇa. The strength of three hundred twenty Nārāyaṇas equals the strength inherited from one's parents of a single tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddha.

1.27 "Why is that? Because the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas carry the strength of Nārāyaṇa in each of the vital points of their bodies. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas in the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.

1.28 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are endowed with such strength inherited from one’s parents. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas of the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.”

1.29 “Reverend Blessed One, now that we have heard about the strength inherited from one’s parents of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, Reverend One, what kind of strength of merit is possessed by the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

1.30 “Vāsiṣṭhas, do you wish to hear about the strength of merit of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

“Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Very much so, Sugata!”

1.31 “In that case, Vāsiṣṭhas, listen closely and pay attention, and I will tell you. Vāsiṣṭhas, the merit of the beings of Jambudvīpa, when compared to the merit of a universal monarch who rules a single continent, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.32 “Vāsiṣṭhas, the merit of the beings on two continents, when compared to the merit of a universal monarch who rules two continents, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.33 “Vāsiṣṭhas, the merit of the beings on three continents, when compared to the merit of a universal monarch who rules three continents, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.34 “Vāsiṣṭhas, the merit of beings on four continents, when compared to the merit of a universal monarch who rules four continents, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.35 “Vāsiṣṭhas, there are four types of universal monarchs: universal monarchs of one, two, three, or four continents. Among these, the wheel of a universal monarch of a single continent is made of iron and measures one krośa all around. The wheel of a universal monarch who rules two continents is made of copper and measures two krośas all around. The wheel of a universal monarch who rules three continents is made of silver and measures three krośas all around. The wheel of a universal monarch who rules four continents is made of gold—it is entirely, along with its one thousand spokes, its hub, and its rim, made of gold. It radiates a divine light and shines with light, and it measures four krośas all around.

1.36 “Vāsiṣṭhas, a trillion times the merit of a universal monarch of four continents, compared to the merit of the gods from the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.37 “A trillion times the merit of the gods from the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, compared to the merit of the Four Great Kings themselves, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.38 “A trillion times the merit of the Four Great Kings, compared to the merit of the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.39 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, compared to the merit of Śakra, the lord of the gods, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.40 “A trillion times the merit of Śakra, the lord of the gods, compared to the merit of the gods of Yāma, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.41 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Yāma, compared to the merit of the god Suyāma, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.42 “A trillion times the merit of the god Suyāma, compared to the merit of the gods of Tuṣita, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.43 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Tuṣita, compared to the merit of the god Santuṣita, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.44 “A trillion times the merit of the god Santuṣita, compared to the merit of the gods of Nirmāṇarati, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.45 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Nirmāṇarati, compared to the merit of the god Sunirmita, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it ap-

proach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.46 “A trillion times the merit of the god Sunirmita, compared to the merit of the gods of Paranirmitavaśavartin, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.47 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Paranirmitavaśavartin, compared to the merit of the god Vaśavartin, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.48 “A trillion times the merit of the god Vaśavartin, compared to the merit of the gods of Brahmakāyika, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.49 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Brahmakāyika, compared to the merit of Brahmā, the leader of the assembly, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.50 “Just as it is with those of Brahmakāyika, so it is with those of Brahmapurohita, Mahābrahmā, Parīttābha, Apramāṇābha, Ābhāsvara, Parīttaśubha, Apramāṇaśubha, Śubhakṛtsna, Anabhraka, Puṇyaprasava, Bṛhatphala, Avṛha, Atapa, Sudṛśa, Sudarśana, and Akaniṣṭha.

1.51 “A trillion times the merit of the gods of Akaniṣṭha, compared to the merit of one rhinoceros-like pratyekabuddha, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.52 “A trillion times the merit of a rhinoceros-like pratyekabuddha, compared to the merit of a single bodhisattva Maitreya, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.53 “A trillion times the merit of the bodhisattva Maitreya, compared to the merit of a single bodhisattva who has reached their final rebirth, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.54 “The merit of a bodhisattva who has reached their final rebirth multiplied by the number of grains of sand in the Ganges River, compared to the merit of a tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddha, does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison.

1.55 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are endowed with such strength of merit. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas in the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.”

1.56 “Reverend One, now that we have heard from the Tathāgata about the strength inherited from one’s parents of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, and since we have also heard about the strength of merit, Reverend One, what kind of strength of wisdom is possessed by the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

1.57 “Vāsiṣṭhas, do you wish to hear from the Tathāgata about the strength of wisdom of tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

“Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Very much so, Sugata!”

1.58 “In that case, Vāsiṣṭhas, listen closely and pay attention, and I will tell you. Vāsiṣṭhas, suppose there is a great ocean eighty thousand leagues deep and whose extent is immeasurable. It is completely filled with ink concentrate, and Sumeru, the king of mountains, rises up eighty thousand leagues out of the water. It is made of four precious gems and has four faces. The first face is made of gold, the second face is made of silver, the third face is made of beryl, and the fourth face is made of crystal. At the gold face appears the continent of Uttarakuru. At the silver face appears the continent of Pūrvavideha. At the beryl face appears the continent of Jambudvīpa. And at the crystal face appears the continent of Godānīya. Sumeru, the king of mountains, also descends eighty thousand leagues below the water. And suppose that what stands between [the water] and the golden ground became just so much birch-bark paper, and there are writers equal to the realm of beings on the four continents. Writing pens are as numerous as all the grass, sticks, branches, and pieces of wood to be found on the surface of the great earth.

1.59 “Vāsiṣṭhas, the concentrated ink equal to the great ocean, the birch-bark paper the size of Sumeru, the writers equal to the realm of beings on the four continents, and the writing pens as numerous as all the grass, sticks, branches, and pieces of wood on the surface of the great earth will be exhausted and used up very quickly, but I do not say that the wisdom of the monk Śāriputra will be exhausted. Vāsiṣṭhas, the monk Śāriputra is possessed of such strength of wisdom.

1.60 “It is like this, Vāsiṣṭhas: as far as the suns, the makers of light, travel and illuminate the directions, a thousand such worlds—with their thousand moons, thousand suns, thousand Sumeru, kings of mountains, thousand Pūrvavidehas, thousand Godānīyas, thousand Uttarakurus, thousand Jambudvīpas, and thousand gods of the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, thousand gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, of Yāma, of Tuṣita, of Nirmāṇarati, and of Paranirmitavaśavartin, and thousand Brahmā worlds—is called a ‘chiliocosm.’

A thousand lesser chiliocosms are called a ‘middling dichiliocosm.’ A thousand middling dichiliocosms are called a ‘great trichiliocosm.’

1.61 “Vāsiṣṭhas, a great trichiliocosm may be filled with those whose wisdom is like that of the monk Śāriputra, but compared to the wisdom of the Tathāgata, it does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison. Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are possessed of such strength of wisdom. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas of the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.”

1.62 “Reverend One, now that we have heard from the Tathāgata about the strength inherited from one’s parents of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, and since we have also heard about their strength of merit and their strength of wisdom, Reverend One, what kind of strength of miraculous power is possessed by the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

1.63 “Vāsiṣṭhas, do you wish to hear from the Tathāgata about the strength of miraculous power of tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?”

“Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Very much so, Sugata!”

1.64 “In that case, Vāsiṣṭhas, listen closely and pay attention, and I will tell you. On one occasion, Vāsiṣṭhas, I[20] was seated at the foot of the yakṣa Naḍera’s neem tree[21] at Vairaṇyā. At that time a famine had occurred in Vairaṇyā. It was a time of great hardship in which it became difficult for secluded mendicants to get alms. Owing to their poor diets, the monks were exhausted. The monk Maudgalyāyana approached me and said, ‘Reverend One, at present, since a famine has occurred in Vairaṇyā, it is difficult for secluded mendicants to get alms. Owing to their poor diets this rainy season, the monks are exhausted.

May I be heard and may I be considered directly before the Reverend Blessed One.[22] There is rich earth essence in this great earth. I know for myself that it lies just below, for I have engaged my precise gnosis-vision. There is rich earth essence in this great earth, and it lies just below. Therefore, Reverend One, I wish to turn over this great earth. I will extract the substance that lies below this great earth and move what is above below.'

1.65 "I asked in response, 'Maudgalyāyana, do you wish to turn over this great earth?'

" 'Yes, Reverend One,' he replied. 'I will stand upon the Cakravāḍa and Mahā-cakravāḍa mountains and turn it over.'

1.66 " 'Maudgalyāyana, if you wish to turn over the great earth, what will you do with those beings and creatures who depend on the earth?'

" 'Reverend One,' he replied, 'I wish to turn over the great earth; I will pick up all those beings and creatures who depend on the earth with my left hand and hold them; then I will turn over the great earth with my right hand.'

1.67 " 'Maudgalyāyana,' I asked, 'once you have turned over the great earth, what kind of perception will you have of it?'

" 'Reverend One, when I have turned over the great earth, I will maintain the perception of it being utterly light. It will be like this: when a powerful person has turned over a leaf of a plantain tree, they will maintain the perception of it being utterly light. Likewise, Reverend One, when I have turned over the great earth, I will maintain the perception of it being utterly light.'

1.68 "To this I responded, 'Excellent, excellent! Maudgalyāyana, you may have the ability to turn over the great earth with your miraculous power and by that method, but the Tathāgata will not allow you to. If you ask why, Maudgalyāyana, most beings have attachment with regard to the taste of food, and they are ignorant and deluded with regard to the taste of food. If you ask why, Maudgalyāyana, once it is above the great earth, that rich nutritional substance

extracted from the earth will not remain for long. Once it is above the great earth, before long it will completely disappear in every way. As a result, since beings, living things, and creatures all have desire with regard to the taste of food, and since they are ignorant and deluded with regard to the taste of food, they will go completely mad, or their life force will be severed and they will die. Maudgalyāyana, this is why the Tathāgata will not allow you to turn over the great earth.'

1.69 "Vāsiṣṭhas, the monk Maudgalyāyana is endowed with such strength of miraculous power. Vāsiṣṭhas, it is like this: as far as the suns, the makers of light, travel and illuminate the directions, a thousand such worlds—with their thousand moons, thousand suns, thousand Sumeru, king of mountains, thousand Pūrvavidehas, thousand Godānīyas, thousand Uttarakurus, thousand Jambudvīpas, thousand gods of the Heaven of the Four Great Kings, thousand gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three, of Yāma, of Tuṣita, of Nirmāṇarati, and of Paranirmitavaśavartin, and thousand Brahmā worlds—is called a 'chiliocosm.' A thousand lesser chiliocosms are called a 'middling dichiliocosm.' A thousand middling dichiliocosms are called a 'great trichiliocosm.'

1.70 "Vāsiṣṭhas, suppose that great trichiliocosm were further filled with those who possess miraculous powers like those of the monk Maudgalyāyana. Compared to the miraculous power of the Tathāgata, this does not approach even a hundredth of it, nor does it approach a thousandth, a hundred thousandth, or any number, fraction, enumeration, analogy, or comparison. If you ask why, the miraculous powers of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas operate through their bodies, but the miraculous powers of tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are as swift as the mind. Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are possessed of such strength of miraculous power. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas in the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit.

However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies."

1.71 "Reverend One, now that we have heard from the Tathāgata about the strength inherited from one's parents of the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, and since we have also heard about their strength of merit, their strength of wisdom, and their strength of miraculous power, Reverend One, may we ask what kind of strength of meditation is possessed by the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?"

1.72 "Vāsiṣṭhas, do you wish to hear from the Tathāgata about the strength of meditation of tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas?"

"Yes, very much so, Reverend Blessed One! Very much so, Sugata!"

1.73 "In that case, Vāsiṣṭhas, listen closely and pay attention, and I will tell you. Vāsiṣṭhas, Jambudvīpa is seven thousand leagues in length and breadth. Its northern part is broad, and its southern part is shaped like a chariot.[23] Vāsiṣṭhas, the continent of Pūrvavideha is eight thousand leagues in length and breadth and shaped like a half-moon. Vāsiṣṭhas, the continent of Godānīya is nine thousand leagues across and entirely round. Vāsiṣṭhas, the continent of Uttarakuru is ten thousand leagues in length and breadth and completely square. Vāsiṣṭhas, there is a time when unseasonal clouds appear over the four continents. During that time, great torrents of water and great masses of water flow from the four continents into the great ocean. The Tathāgata knows with precision each and every drop of water: 'This drop of water rains down from Jambudvīpa; it has rained down from such-and-such village and such-and-such town, country, province, tree, stem, branch, leaf, flower, fruit, grass, sticks, branches, and pieces of wood. This has rained down from Godānīya, this from Pūrvavideha, and this from Uttarakuru; it has rained down from such-and-such village and such-and-such town, country, province, tree, stem, branch, leaf, flower, fruit, grass, sticks, branches, and pieces of wood.' He also knows with precision the smallest minute particles in that drop of water.

1.74 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are possessed of such strength of meditation, and in this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas of the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.

1.75 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess another ten strengths. They assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly. In this respect all the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas in the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies.

1.76 “Vāsiṣṭhas, what ten strengths do they have? In this respect tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively what is possible as possible and what is impossible as impossible.

1.77 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this first strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.78 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively, in regard to past, future, and present activities and the undertaking of activities,[24] their place, their cause, their entity, and their ripening. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively, in regard to past, future, and present activities and the undertaking of activities, their place, their cause, their entity, and their ripening.

1.79 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this second strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.80 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively defilement, purification, abiding, and purity as they relate to[25] concentration, liberation, absorption, and equipoise. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively defilement, purification, abiding, and purity as they relate to concentration, liberation, absorption, and equipoise.

1.81 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this third strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.82 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the higher and lower capabilities of other beings and other persons. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the higher and lower capabilities of other beings and other persons.

1.83 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this fourth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.84 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the variety of inclinations of other beings and other persons. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the variety of inclinations of other beings and other persons.

1.85 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this fifth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.86 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the world with its varied and numerous constituents. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the world with its varied and numerous constituents.

1.87 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this sixth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.88 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the path to all destinations. Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas know definitively the path to all destinations.

1.89 “Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this seventh strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion’s roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.90 “Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas also recollect the many aspects of their past lives. In this way they recollect one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty lifetimes, a hundred lifetimes, a thousand lifetimes, a hundred thousand lifetimes, many hundreds of lifetimes, many thousands of lifetimes, many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, an eon of destruction, an eon of formation, an eon of both destruction and formation, many eons of destruction, many eons of formation, and many eons of both destruction and formation. And they recollect the many aspects of their previous lives, including their location and the conditions by which they occurred: ‘Those beings that emerged had such-and-such names; being them, we had such-and-such names; they had such-and-such family lineages; they were of such-and-such a clan; the food they ate was like this; they experienced happiness and suffering that was like this; their lifespans were just this long; they remained in that existence for just this duration; those lifetimes were allotted just this amount of time; when we died and

transmigrated from those places, we were reborn in such-and-such places, and then we again died and transmigrated and were reborn in such-and-such places, and then we once again died and transmigrated and were reborn here.'

1.91 "In this way, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas recollect the many aspects of their past lives. In this way they recollect one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten, twenty, thirty, forty, and fifty lifetimes, a hundred lifetimes, a thousand lifetimes, a hundred thousand lifetimes, many hundreds of lifetimes, many thousands of lifetimes, many hundreds of thousands of lifetimes, an eon of destruction, an eon of formation, an eon of both destruction and formation, many eons of destruction, many eons of formation, and many eons of both destruction and formation. And they recollect the many aspects of their previous lives, including their location and the conditions by which they occurred: 'Those beings that emerged had such-and-such names; being them, we had such-and-such names; they had such-and-such family lineages; they were of such-and-such a clan; the food they ate was like this; they experienced happiness and suffering that was like this; their lifespans were just this long; they remained in that existence for just this duration; those lifetimes were allotted just this amount of time; when we died and transmigrated from those places, we were reborn in such-and-such places, and then we again died and transmigrated and were reborn in such-and-such places, and then we once again died and transmigrated and were reborn here.'

1.92 "Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this eighth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion's roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.93 "Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, with their pure divine eye, which surpasses that of humans, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas see beings who die and transmigrate, those who are born, those with good appearance, those with bad appearance, those who are inferior, those who are excellent, those who go to pleasant states, and those who go to the lower realms. And they know just as it

is: ‘Beings who proceed in accord with their actions[26] and those beings who have emerged are those who engage in misconduct with their bodies, those who engage in misconduct with their speech and with their mind, those who disparage the noble ones, and those who hold wrong views; based on the actions that result from wrong views, the phenomena appropriated as a result, and those causes and conditions, they will be reborn, as soon as their bodies are destroyed and they pass away, among the hell beings in a bad state, in the lower realms, into downfall. On the other hand, these beings who have emerged are those who engage in good physical conduct and those who engage in good verbal and mental conduct, those who do not disparage the noble ones, and those who hold right views; based on the actions that result from right view, the phenomena appropriated as a result, and those causes and conditions, on the destruction of their bodies, they will be reborn among the gods in the higher realms, the blissful states.’

1.94 “Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way, with their pure divine eye, which surpasses that of humans, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas see beings who die and transmigrate, those who are born, those with good appearance, those with bad appearance, those who are inferior, those who are excellent, those who go to pleasant states, and those who go to the lower realms. And they know just as it is: ‘Beings who proceed in accord with their actions and those beings who have emerged are those who engage in misconduct with their bodies, those who engage in misconduct with their speech and with their mind, those who disparage the noble ones, and those who hold wrong views; based on the actions that result from wrong views, the phenomena appropriated as a result, and the causes and conditions of those, they will be reborn, as soon as their bodies are destroyed and they pass away, among the hell beings in a bad state, in the lower realms, into downfall. On the other hand, these beings who have emerged are those who engage in good physical conduct and those who engage in good verbal and mental conduct, those who do not disparage the noble ones, and those who hold right views; based on the actions that result from right view, the phenomena appropriated as a result, and the causes and conditions

of those, on the destruction of their bodies, they will be reborn among the gods in the higher realms, the blissful states.'

1.95 "Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this ninth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion's roar in the midst of the assembly.

1.96 "Moreover, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, through their own direct knowledge, have manifested in this very life the undefiled liberation of mind and liberation of wisdom, because their defilements have been exhausted; having perfected them, they know fully and proclaim, 'Our births have been exhausted. We have maintained pure conduct. We have done what is to be done. We will not know another existence beyond this one.'

1.97 "Vāsiṣṭhas, in this way, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas, through their own direct knowledge, have manifested in this very life the undefiled liberation of mind and the liberation of wisdom, because their defilements have been exhausted; having perfected them, they know fully and proclaim, 'Our births have been exhausted. We have maintained pure conduct. We have done what is to be done. We will not know another existence beyond this one.'

1.98 "Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas possess this tenth strength, and they assert the immense power of their supremacy, turn the wheel of Brahmā, and roar the true lion's roar in the midst of the assembly. In this respect all tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas in the past, future, and present are the same. They have the same characteristics, and they are equal in their qualities. They are equal in the ripened results of their merit. However, they vary in three ways: in their family lineage, their lifespan, and their physical bodies."

1.99 The Mallas of Kuśinagara then asked the Blessed One, “Reverend One, is there anything with strength greater than those strengths? Is there any other strength that outshines those strengths?”

1.100 “Vāsiṣṭhas, there is something with strength greater than those strengths, and there is another strength that can outshine those strengths. It is like this: During the middle watch of this very night, it is the strength of impermanence that will destroy even this very body adorned with the major marks and beautified by the minor marks and this life force that is a vessel for those strengths. Vāsiṣṭhas, this is what possesses strength greater than those strengths, and it is the other strength that outshines those strengths.”

1.101 Then the Blessed One spoke the following verses:

1.102 “Compared to physical strength and the strength of merit,
The strength of wisdom and the strength of miraculous power,
This very impermanence that destroys my splendor
Is said to possess the supreme strength.

1.103 “When a body such as this,
Which is like the peak of the golden lord of mountains,
Is destroyed by the splendor of impermanence,
The time for my demise has arrived.

1.104 “The wise must understand
The strength of impermanence to be the supreme strength.
They should attain the deathless state
Where impermanence cannot reach.”

1.105 Having heard this from the Blessed One, the Mallas of Kuśinagara were stunned. When they had somehow regained their senses, they rolled back and forth on the ground like logs. Some crossed their arms and wailed, while others sat still as their minds sank into deep sorrow. Others, recollecting the way

things are, thought, “The Blessed One taught us from the very beginning, ‘One will be separated from, bereft of, disconnected from, and dispossessed of everything that is desired, beautiful, beloved, and pleasing.’ ”

1.106 The Mallas of Kuśinagara, with a lovely sound like the cooing of pigeons, exhaled gently and at length and then shed tears. They bowed their heads at the Blessed One’s feet and sat to one side.

1.107 Then the Blessed One, together with the saṅgha of monks, sat to one side of the huge boulder, and the Mallas of Kuśinagara also sat to one side of the huge boulder. The Blessed One appeased the Mallas of Kuśinagara in this way: “Vāsiṣṭhas, this huge boulder was used as a weightlifting stone[27] by the humans of the first eon, and so even today we see their fingerprints on it. Just so, Vāsiṣṭhas, all compounded phenomena are impermanent, transient, unreliable, and subject to change. This is reason enough to be done with all compounded phenomena, enough to be disenchanted with them, enough to be free of desire for them, enough to be liberated from them.

1.108 [28]“Vāsiṣṭhas, the great ocean cannot dry out for four reasons. Due to what four reasons? It is secured below by a golden wheel, it is secured on the sides by the Cakravāḍa Mountains, great nāgas rain down streams of water as wide as chariot axles from above, and all the great rivers with their many thousands of tributaries are channeled into the great ocean. Just so, this great ocean of the Buddha’s teaching does not decline for four reasons. Due to what four reasons? It is secured below by the golden wheel of Vinaya, it is secured on the sides by the Cakravāḍa Mountains of Sūtra, it has been filled up by the rain of the great nāgas of Abhidharma, and it has been flooded by the tributaries of the roots of virtue arisen from meditation.

1.109 “Vāsiṣṭhas, nevertheless, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Likewise, the roots of virtue you have generated toward the Dharma and the roots of virtue you have generated toward the Saṅgha will not

be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.110 “Vāsiṣṭhas, Jambudvīpa is seven thousand leagues in length and breadth. Its northern part is broad, and its southern part is shaped like a chariot. If you ask how many steps that is, you can count and measure one hundred steps, one thousand steps, or one hundred thousand steps, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.111 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about Jambudvīpa. Vāsiṣṭhas, that which is known as the continent of Pūrvavideha is eight thousand leagues in length and breadth and shaped like a half-moon. If you ask how many steps that is, you can count and measure one hundred steps, one thousand steps, or one hundred thousand steps, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.112 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about Jambudvīpa. Forget about Pūrvavideha. Vāsiṣṭhas, that which is known as the continent of Godānīya is nine thousand leagues across and entirely round. If you ask how many steps that is, you can count and measure one hundred steps, one thousand steps, or one hundred thousand steps, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be ex-

hausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.113 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about Jambudvīpa. Forget about Godānīya in the west, and forget about Pūrvavideha. Vāsiṣṭhas, that which is known as the continent of Uttarakuru is ten thousand leagues in length and breadth and completely square. If you ask how many steps that is, you can count and measure one hundred steps, one thousand steps, or one hundred thousand steps, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.114 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about the world system of four continents. Vāsiṣṭhas, there are the Cakravāḍa and Mahācakravāḍa kings of mountains. If you ask how many palas are contained in those two, you can count and measure a hundred palas, a thousand palas, or a hundred thousand palas, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.115 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about the world system of four continents. Forget about the Cakravāḍa and Mahācakravāḍa kings of mountains. Vāsiṣṭhas, the great ocean is eighty thousand leagues deep, and its width is unfathomable. If you ask how many kumbhas it contains, you can count and measure a hundred kumbhas, a thousand kumbhas, or a hundred thousand kumbhas, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha

cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.116 “Vāsiṣṭhas, forget about the world system of four continents. Forget about the Cakravāḍa and Mahācakravāḍa kings of mountains, and forget about the great ocean. Vāsiṣṭhas, the king of mountains Sumeru descends eighty thousand leagues below the water, and it rises up eighty thousand leagues out of the water. If you ask how many palas it consists of, you can count and measure a hundred palas, a thousand palas, or a hundred thousand palas, but, Vāsiṣṭhas, roots of virtue generated toward the Buddha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa. Roots of virtue generated toward the Dharma and Saṅgha cannot be counted or measured. They will not be exhausted in saṃsāra, nor will they cease to exist. They will lead to inexhaustible nirvāṇa.

1.117 “Why is that, Vāsiṣṭhas? Because tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are immeasurable in terms of their generosity, immeasurable in terms of their discipline, immeasurable in terms of their patience, immeasurable in terms of their diligence, immeasurable in terms of their meditative concentration, immeasurable in terms of their wisdom, immeasurable in terms of their miraculous power, immeasurable in terms of their magical display of miraculous power, immeasurable in terms of their reading the minds of others, immeasurable in terms of their magical display of reading the minds of others, immeasurable in terms of their teaching, immeasurable in terms of their magical display of teaching, and immeasurable in terms of their ten strengths, four fearlessnesses, three unshared applications of mindfulness, and great compassion. It is because, Vāsiṣṭhas, tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect buddhas are possessed of such immeasurable qualities.”

1.118 When this Dharma discourse endowed with the great lion’s roar was delivered, this trichiliocosm quaked three times: it quaked, quaked strongly, and quaked violently. It shook, shook strongly, and shook violently. It rocked, rocked

strongly, and rocked violently. It trembled, trembled strongly, and trembled violently. Dwelling in their own abodes, Brahmā, the leader of the assembly, and Śakra, the lord of the gods, both thought, “This Blessed Buddha, residing near Kuśinagara, has inspired the Mallas of Kuśinagara through his magical display of miraculous power. Soon he will pass into parinirvāṇa, into the sphere of nirvāṇa, free from any aggregates’ remainder. Since that is the case, we should now go and visit the tathāgata, arhat, complete and perfect Buddha one last time.”

1.119 Then Brahmā, the leader of the assembly, and Śakra, the lord of the gods, disappeared from their abodes, and along with the gods of the desire realm and the gods of the form realm they reappeared before the Blessed One. Sitting to one side, Brahmā, the leader of the assembly, spoke the following verses:

1.120 “Just as an uḍumbara flower
Is rarely encountered in ten million eons,
Rarely does one encounter
Those renowned as perfect buddhas.

1.121 “It is likewise rare to encounter you—
The teacher, the lion of the Śākyas, the best of men.
Accompanied by the gods of the form realm,
I join my palms and bow to you!”

1.122 Then Śakra, the lord of the gods, sitting to one side, spoke the following verses:

1.123 “I have the stainless Dharma eye.
I have lit the Dharma lamp in my heart.
I have closed the doors to lower rebirths.
Hence, I do not fear the lower realms.

1.124 “Amazing! Compassionate teacher,
You love and wish to help all.

Accompanied by the gods of the desire realm,
I join my palms and bow to you!

1.125 “Soon you will pass into parinirvāṇa.
This is the last time we will see you!”

1.126 Having said this, Brahmā, the leader of the assembly, and Śakra, the lord of the gods, bowed their heads at the Blessed One’s feet and then circumambulated the Blessed One three times. They left facing the Blessed One directly and looking upon him, and after bowing their heads they disappeared then and there.

1.127 Then, knowing just as they were the thoughts, subtle propensities, dispositions, and natures of those in the audience, the Blessed One gave them a Dharma discourse that enabled them to understand correctly the four noble truths. Through merely hearing this discourse, some of the Mallas of Kuśinagara generated the roots of virtue that lead to the stage of meditative warmth. Others generated those that lead to the stage of peak. Yet others generated those that lead to lesser and middling acceptance. Still others generated the highest dharmas that are in accord with the truth.[29] Some realized the fruit of a stream enterer. Some realized the fruit of a once-returner. Some realized the fruit of a non-returner. Some went forth, abandoned all afflictions, and attained the state of an arhat. Some gave rise to the thought aimed at a śrāvaka awakening. Some gave rise to the thought aimed at a pratyekabuddha’s awakening. And some gave rise to the thought aimed at unsurpassed, complete and perfect awakening.

1.128 Blessed buddhas teach the unfailing doctrine;[30] most of those in that assembly were drawn to the Buddha, inclined toward the Dharma, and favored the Saṅgha. This was the final occurrence of the great assembly of those to be trained by the Blessed One. The Mallas of Kuśinagara were utterly disenchanted. They bowed their heads at the feet of the Blessed One, circumambu-

lated the Blessed One three times, and departed from the presence of the Blessed One.

1.129 *This concludes the noble "Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder."*

Colophon

c.1 It was translated by the translator Sangkyong and edited by Paltsek.

Abbreviations

DPPN Malalasekera 1938.

MPS *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (GRETIL input of the Sanskrit edition based on Waldschmidt 1938).

Notes

1. Waldschmidt 1948; the so-called “Sanskrit Sondertext.” On this manuscript see also Zin 2006, p. 340. This episode in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* is only present in its Sanskrit version, not in its Tibetan translation (Zin 2006, p. 347).

2. Zin 2006, p. 345.

3. *The Chapter on Medicines* (Toh 1-6), 4.92– 4.111.

4. Zin 2006, p. 342.

5. Zin 2006, pp. 343–47.

6. The Lhasa Kangyur gives the editor as Patshap, a family name that could refer to more than one figure. This could plausibly refer to the Tibetan translator Patshap Nyima Drak or Patshap Tsultrim Gyaltsen, both of whom translated a number of canonical works and lived in the eleventh–twelfth century, in which case the Lhasa Kangyur would represent a later edition.

7. Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 153 (no. 279).

8. “The land of the Mallas” (*gyad rnams kyi ljongs*) refers to *Mallārāṣṭra* (Pali *Mallaraṭṭha*), which is described in *The Numerical Discourses* (*Aṅguttaranikāya*) as one of the sixteen regions of the Middle Country (*Majjhima-desa*), the area in which the Buddha lived and taught. Kuśinagara (Pali: *Kusinārā*), where the discourse of this sūtra takes place, was one of the two capital cities (the other being *Pāvā*/*Pāpā*) of the Malla, a clan that lived in that region. The *Saṅgītisutta* (the thirty-third sutta of the *Dīghanikāya*; D.iii.207ff.) reports that near the end of his life the Buddha, accompanied by five hundred followers, traveled to Pāpā and then subsequently to Kuśinagara. While in the Pali *Saṅgītisutta* it is reported that the Buddha stayed in the mango grove of the blacksmith Cunda (*cundassa kammāraputtassa ambavane*), the Sanskrit version gives this location as Jalūkāvanaṣaṇḍa (Forest of Leeches) (Waldschmidt 1955, p. 302); the latter accords with the Tibetan translation of *The Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder* as found in the Degé recension, which reads *srin bu pad pa’i nags khrod*. The name is also recorded in this episode in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (31.15). In the *Saṅgītisutta*, Ānanda, after the Buddha announces his imminent entry into parinirvāṇa, is upset that the Buddha’s life would end in such a small and insignificant town, but the Buddha informs him that Kuśinagara was once the capital of a mighty kingdom and thus a fitting place for such a momentous event.

9. *gyad* (Sanskrit *malla*) can refer to the people in the area of Pāpā and Kuśinagara, but also to a strong man or “wrestler.” Monika Zin (2006, p. 345) writes that the meaning of “wrestler” for *malla* was “probably adapted from a tribal name of that martial clan.” While it is unclear whether *malla*/*gyad* here refers to one or the other, we assume it refers to the people in general. Zin writes also about this tension when it comes to the depictions of this story in Gandharan reliefs, where the Mallas are depicted as wrestlers, although this may have been only the interpretation of the artists—the texts, as here, depicting them as being from a “noble lineage” (ibid., p. 347).

10. We read *'dun sa cig shos su 'dus te* as referring to a "meeting house" (the Tibetan simply reads "meeting place") according to the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* (31.2): *anyatarasmiṃ saṃsthāgāre sanniṣaṇṇāni*.

11. Reading Stok *bsal bar* ("to clear"); Degé and other witnesses read *btsal bar* ("to search/seek").

12. Reading Stok, Yongle, Kangxi, Narthang, and Lhasa *bzhugs*, which also agrees with the opening passage of the sūtra and with the MPS (31.15) *viharati*. Degé reads *zhugs* ("enter").

13. Reading Urga and Lhasa *gi*, which agrees with the same phrase in earlier passages in the Degé. Here the Degé reads *gis*.

14. Compare with a similar passage in *The Chapter on Medicines* (Toh 1-6), 4.102 and with a similar passage in *The Absorption That Encapsulates All Merit* (Toh 134), 1.16–1.26.

15. The Tibetan reads *sgra gsal bar mi byed pa'i glang po che*; the corresponding passage in the MPS (31.21) refers to a *vāmānuka* elephant (*hastin*), perhaps meaning a short or dwarfish one (*vāmana* being an epithet of Viṣṇu).

16. The Tibetan reads *sgra chen por byed pa'i glang po che*; the corresponding passage in the MPS (31.21) refers to a *kaṇeruka* elephant (*hastin*), perhaps meaning a female one (*kareṇu*).

17. The Tibetan reads *mche ba gcig pa'i glang po che*; the corresponding passage in the MPS (31.21) refers to a *karāḍa* (= *karāla*?) elephant (*hastin*).

18. The remainder of the terms in this list and in the MPS (31.21), starting from *tshan po che dang ldan pa* (*mahānagna*) correspond to a set of seven powers (*bala*) listed in the *Abhidharmakośa* (3.24). In explaining the strength of a buddha, it describes the strength of Nārāyaṇa in ascending order according to the "seven strengths of an elephant and so forth" (*hastyādisaptakabalam*). Here the powers also increase by factors of ten. The seven are *hastin*, *gandha-hastin*, *mahānagna*, *praskandin*, *varāṅga*, *cāṇūra*, and *nārāyaṇa*, the last five of which correspond to the list here and in the MPS, except that this list, following the MPS, includes some half (*ardha*) levels. Like Nārāyaṇa, other terms in this list correspond to storied strong figures, for example Cāṇūra, the famed wrestler slain by Kṛṣṇa.

19. Degé's reading of *rab gnod phyed po* is likely a scribal error for *rab gnon phyed po*, which is found in all other witnesses consulted and in the three other cases of *rab gnon* in proximity.

20. The use of first person here is based on the Sanskrit *viharāmi* of the MPS (31.56); in the Tibetan it is not clear who is sitting or dwelling (*bzhugs*).

21. See DPPN, s.v. "Naḷerupucimanda." MPS (31.56) reads *naḍerapicumanda*. Degé reads *gnod sbyin 'dam bu dang 'dra bar rtsub pa'i dong ka'i shing* (a rough-faced-tree, like the yakṣa *'dam bu*?). Yongle and Kangxi give the yakṣa's name as *'ang bu*.

22. The translation of this sentence is based on the MPS (31.58) *saṃmukhaṃ me bhadanta bhagavanto 'ntikāc chrutaṃ saṃmukham udgṛhītaṃ*, which seems to be a highly formalized request directed at the Buddha that is difficult to translate ("may it be heard closely and taken in for me directly in the presence of the Reverend Blessed One"). The Tibetan differs in giving the first person ergative *bdag gis*, which seems to make Maudgalyāyana the hearer, where the Sanskrit reads *me* ("for me").

23. This is a wedge shape, a chariot being narrow in the front and wide in the back.

24. While Tibetan reads *chos yang dag par len pa* (**dharmasamādāna*, "religious vows"), lists of the ten strengths usually read *las yang dag par len pa* (*karmasamādana*). See, for example, *The Transcendent Perfection of Wisdom in Ten Thousand Lines* (Toh 11), 2.1 and 29.18.

25. The Tibetan reads *gis* here; usually this modular passage occurs, just as in the formulation that follows in the Degé, with a genitive (*gi*), thus we read it according to the latter.

26. Degé reads *sems can la ji lta ba bzhin du nye bar dong ba dag*; here we read *las* instead of *la* in accord with the repetition of this passage that follows, with Stok, and with the parallel passage in *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eighteen Thousand Lines* (Toh 10), 3.131. This phrase makes a little more sense there as it is included in the prior sentence, showing that those beings die, transmigrate, and so forth in accord with their actions (*…ngan 'gro dang/ las ci lta ba bzhin du 'gro ba dag rab tu shes so//*).

27. Here we follow the understanding of Zin (2006, p. 342) for the Sanskrit (MPS 31.74) *vyāyāmaśilā* (Tibetan *rtsol ba'i rdo*).

28. The rest of the sūtra from this point is not present in the MPS, even where the extant Sanskrit is without lacuna.

29. These four levels correspond to the stages of penetrative insight (*nirvedhabhāgīya*) on the path of application (*prayogamārga*); while this list is not completely uniform among Buddhist works, it usually consists of heat (*uṣmagata*), peak (*mūrdha*), acceptance (*kṣānti*), and highest worldly dharmas (*laukikāgradharma*). In the corresponding passage in the MPS (31.80–81) they are listed as *uṣmagata*, *kṣānti*, *mūrdha*, and *satyānulomikā-laukika-agradharma*—as in the Tibetan, the fourth stage is "in accord with the truth."

30. We read the Tibetan *'bras bu yod pa'i chos kyi 'bras bu ston pa* without the second *'bras bu*, according to the common stock phrase. The MPS (31.81), where the syntax is a bit different, reads *avandhyadharmadeśanāṃ* (literally "those who teach the Dharma that is not without result").

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Glossary

Ābhāsvara

’od gsal

འོད་གསལ།

ābhāsvara

Sixth heaven of the form realm, meaning “Luminosity.”

Abhidharma

chos mngon pa

ཆོས་མངོན་པ།

abhidharma

One of the three baskets (piṭakas) of the Buddhist canon, it explains the nature, origin, and interaction of all psychological and material phenomena.

absorption

ting nge ’dzin

ཏིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

samādhi

In a general sense, *samādhi* can describe a number of different meditative states. In the Mahāyāna literature, in particular in the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras, we find extensive lists of different samādhis, numbering over one hundred. In a more restricted sense, and when understood as a mental state, *samādhi* is defined as the one-pointedness of the mind (*cittaikāgratā*), the ability to remain on the same object over long periods of time. The *Drajor Bamponyipa* (*sgra sbyor bam po gnyis pa*) commentary on the *Mahāvyutpatti* explains the term *samādhi* as referring to the instrument through which mind and mental states “get collected,” i.e., it is by the force of samādhi that the continuum of mind and mental states becomes collected on a single point of reference without getting distracted.

aggregate

phung po

ཕུང་པོ།

skandha

Five “collections” that encompass all apparent physical and mental phenomena: form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness.

Akaniṣṭha

’og min

འོག་མིན།

akaniṣṭha

The eighth and highest level of the Realm of Form (*rūpadhātu*), the last of the five pure abodes (*śuddhāvāsa*); it is only accessible as the result of specific states of *dhyāna*. According to some texts this is where non-returners (*anāgāmin*) dwell in their last lives. In other texts it is the realm of the enjoyment body (*saṃbhogakāya*) and is a buddhafield associated with the Buddha Vairocana; it is accessible only to bodhisattvas on the tenth level.

Anabhraka

sprin med

སྤྲིན་མེད།

anabhraka

Tenth heaven of the form realm, meaning “Cloudless.”

Ānanda

kun dga’ bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

A major śrāvaka disciple and personal attendant of the Buddha Śākyamuni during the last twenty-five years of his life. He was a cousin of the Buddha

(according to the *Mahāvastu*, he was a son of Śuklodana, one of the brothers of King Śuddhodana, which means he was a brother of Devadatta; other sources say he was a son of Amṛtodana, another brother of King Śuddhodana, which means he would have been a brother of Aniruddha).
Ānanda, having always been in the Buddha's presence, is said to have memorized all the teachings he heard and is celebrated for having recited all the Buddha's teachings by memory at the first council of the Buddhist saṅgha, thus preserving the teachings after the Buddha's parinirvāṇa. The phrase "Thus did I hear at one time," found at the beginning of the sūtras, usually stands for his recitation of the teachings. He became a patriarch after the passing of Mahākāśyapa.

Apramāṇābha

tshad med 'od

ཚད་མེད་འོད།

apramāṇābha

Fifth heaven of the form realm, meaning "Immeasurable Radiance."

Apramāṇaśubha

tshad med dge

ཚད་མེད་དགེ

apramāṇaśubha

Eighth heaven of the form realm, meaning "Immeasurable Virtue."

arhat

dgra bcom pa

དགྲ་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 (*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.

Atapa

mi gdung

མི་གདུང་།

atapa

Second of the pure abodes, meaning “Without Hardship.”

Avṛha

mi che

མི་ཆེ།

avṛha

Lowest of the pure abodes, meaning “Not Great” or “Lesser.”

blue bull

ba lang sngon po’i gtso bo

བ་ལང་སྔོན་པོའི་གཙོ་བོ།

nīlagavāmpati

bold man

rab gnon

རབ་གནོན།

praskandin

A type of supernaturally strong person.

boulder

rdo chen po

རྡོ་ཆེན་པོ།

pṛthvīśilā

Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

brahman, brahmā

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world; he is also considered to be the lord of the Sahā world (our universe). Though not considered a creator god in Buddhism, Brahmā occupies an important place as one of two gods (the other being Indra/Śakra) said to have first exhorted the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. The particular heavens found in the form realm over which Brahmā rules are often some of the most sought-after realms of higher rebirth in Buddhist literature. Since there are many universes or world systems, there are also multiple Brahmās presiding over them. His most frequent epithets are "Lord of the Sahā World" (*sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*mahābrahman*).

Brahmā world

tshangs pa'i 'jig rten

ཚངས་པའི་འཇིག་རྟེན།

brahmaloka

A collective name for the first three heavens of the form realm, which correspond to the first concentration (*dhyāna*): Brahmakāyika, Brahmapurohita, and Mahābrahmā (also called Brahmapārṣadya). These are ruled over by the god Brahmā. According to some sources, it can also be a general reference to all the heavens in the form realm and formless realm. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

Brahmā, the leader of the assembly

'khor gyi bdag po tshangs pa

འཁོར་གྱི་བདག་པོ་ཚངས་པ།

sabhāpatibrahmā

The Sanskrit sabhāpati, as found in the MPS may be the same epithet for the god Brahmā as sahāpati, sahāṃpati, and so forth, meaning "Lord of the Sahā

World,” or the world we currently inhabit. The Tibetan ’khor gyi bdag po translates sabhāpati, “the Lord/Leader of the Assembly.”

Brahmakāyika

tshangs ris

ཚངས་རིས།

brahmakāyika

“Assembly of Brahmā.” The lowest heaven of the form realm.

Brahmapurohita

tshangs pa’i mdun na ’don

ཚངས་པའི་མདུན་ན་འདོན།

brahmapurohita

Second heaven of the form realm, meaning “Priests of Brahmā.” Also called “Brahmapariṣadya.”

Bṛhatphala

’bras bu che

འབྲས་བུ་ཆེ།

bṛhatphala

Twelfth heaven of the form realm, meaning “Great Fruition.”

Cakravāḍa

khor yug

ཁོར་ཡུག

cakravāḍa

Commonly refers to a mountain or ring of mountains that surrounds a world-system in Buddhist cosmology.

champion

tshan po che dang ldan pa

ཚན་ཉོ་ཆེ་དང་ལྡན་པ།

mahānagna

chief bull

khyu mchog

ཁྱུ་མཆོག

ṛṣabha

complete and perfect buddha

yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas

ཡང་དག་པར་རྫོགས་པའི་སངས་རྒྱས།

samyaksaṃbuddha

concentration

bsam gtan

བསམ་གཏན།

dhyāna

Dhyāna is defined as one-pointed abiding in an undistracted state of mind, free from afflicted mental states. Four states of *dhyāna* are identified as being conducive to birth within the form realm. In the context of the Mahāyāna, it is the fifth of the six perfections. It is commonly translated as "concentration," "meditative concentration," and so on.

defilement

kun nas nyon mongs pa

ཀུན་ནས་ཉོན་མོངས་པ།

saṃkleśa

A term meaning defilement, impurity, and pollution, broadly referring to cognitive and emotional factors that disturb and obscure the mind. As the self-perpetuating process of affliction in the minds of beings, it is a synonym for

saṃsāra. It is often paired with its opposite, *vyavadāna*, meaning "purification."

divine eye

lha'i spyan

ལྷའི་སྤྱན།

divyacakṣus

Clairvoyance, i.e., the supernormal ability to see to an unlimited distance, observe events in other worlds, see through mountains, and so forth. This is the first of the six (or sometimes five) superknowledges (ṣaḍabhijñā) and the second of the five eyes (pañcacakṣus). The five eyes are five superior levels of vision experienced by realized beings, the other four being the physical eye (māṃsacakṣus), the wisdom eye (prajñācakṣus), the Dharma eye (dharmacakṣus), and the buddha eye (buddhacakṣus).

equipoise

snyoms par 'jug pa

སྙོམས་པར་འཇུག་པ།

samāpatti

The Sanskrit literally means "attainment," and is used to refer specifically to meditative attainment and to particular meditative states. The Tibetan translators interpreted it as *sama-āpatti*, which suggests the idea of "equal" or "level"; however, they also parsed it as *sam-āpatti*, in which case it would have the sense of "concentration" or "absorption," much like *samādhi*, but with the added sense of "attainment."

four fearlessnesses

mi 'jigs pa bzhi

མི་འཇིགས་པ་བཞི།

caturvaiśāradya

Fearlessness in declaring that one has (1) awakened, (2) ceased all illusions, (3) taught the obstacles to awakening, and (4) shown the way to liberation. Four of the eighteen unshared buddha qualities.

Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

Four gods who live on the lower slopes (fourth level) of Mount Meru in the eponymous Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Cāturmahārājika*, *rgyal chen bzhi'i ris*) and guard the four cardinal directions. Each is the leader of a nonhuman class of beings living in his realm. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra, ruling the gandharvas in the east; Virūḍhaka, ruling over the kumbhāṇḍas in the south; Virūpākṣa, ruling the nāgas in the west; and Vaiśravaṇa (also known as Kubera) ruling the yakṣas in the north. Also referred to as Guardians of the World or World Protectors (*lokapāla, 'jig rten skyong ba*).

four noble truths

'phags pa'i bden pa bzhi

འཕགས་པའི་བདེན་པ་བཞི།

caturāryasatya

The four truths that the Buddha transmitted in his first teaching: (1) suffering, (2) the origin of suffering, (3) the cessation of suffering, and (4) the path to the cessation of suffering.

Ganges River

gang gA'i klung

གང་གཱའི་ཀླུང་།

gaṅgā

The sacred river of India.

god

lha, lha'i bu

ལྷ། ལྷའི་བུ།

deva, devaputra

In the most general sense the devas—the term is cognate with the English *divine*—are a class of celestial beings who frequently appear in Buddhist texts, often at the head of the assemblies of nonhuman beings who attend and celebrate the teachings of the Buddha Śākyamuni and other buddhas and bodhisattvas. In Buddhist cosmology the devas occupy the highest of the five or six "destinies" (*gati*) of saṃsāra among which beings take rebirth. The devas reside in the *devalokas*, "heavens" that traditionally number between twenty-six and twenty-eight and are divided between the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), form realm (*rūpadhātu*), and formless realm (*ārūpyadhātu*). A being attains rebirth among the devas either through meritorious deeds (in the desire realm) or the attainment of subtle meditative states (in the form and formless realms). While rebirth among the devas is considered favorable, it is ultimately a transitory state from which beings will fall when the conditions that lead to rebirth there are exhausted. Thus, rebirth in the god realms is regarded as a diversion from the spiritual path.

Godānīya

ba lang spyod

བ་ལང་སྤྱོད།

godānīya

One of the four main continents that surround Sumeru, the central mountain in classical Buddhist cosmology. It is the western continent, characterized as "rich in the resources of cattle," thus its Tibetan name "using cattle." It is circular in shape, measuring about 7,500 yojanas in circumference, and is flanked by two subsidiary continents. Humans who live there are very tall, about 24 feet (7.3 meters) on average, and live for 500 years. It is known by the names Godānīya, Aparāntaka, Aparagodānīya, or Aparagoyāna.

great compassion

thugs rje chen po

ཐུགས་རྗེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahākaruṇā

One of the eighteen unshared buddha qualities.

great trichiliocosm

stong gsum gyi stong chen po'i 'jig rten gyi khams

སྟོང་གསུམ་གྱི་སྟོང་ཆེན་པོའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu

The largest universe described in Buddhist cosmology. This term, in Abhidharma cosmology, refers to 1,000^3 world systems, i.e., 1,000 "dichiliocosms" or "two thousand great thousand world realms" (*dvisāhasra-mahāsāhasralokadhātu*), which are in turn made up of 1,000 first-order world systems, each with its own Mount Sumeru, continents, sun and moon, etc.

Heaven of the Four Great Kings

rgyal chen bzhi'i ris

རྒྱལ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་རིས།

caturmahārājika

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, lowest among the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*, *'dod khams*). Dwelling place of the Four Great Kings (*caturmahārāja*, *rgyal chen bzhi*), traditionally located on a terrace of Sumeru, just below the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Each cardinal direction is ruled by one of the Four Great Kings and inhabited by a different class of nonhuman beings as their subjects: in the east, Dhṛtarāṣṭra rules the gandharvas; in the south, Virūḍhaka rules the kumbhāṇḍas; in the west, Virūpākṣa rules the nāgas; and in the north, Vaiśravaṇa rules the yakṣas.

Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་ཅུ་རྩ་གསུམ།

trayastriṃśa

In Buddhist cosmology, the Heaven of the Thirty-Three is the second lowest of the six heavens in the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). Situated on the flat summit of Mount Sumeru, it lies above the Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Caturmahārājakāyika*) and below the Yāma Heaven. It consists of thirty-three regions, each presided by one of thirty-three chief gods, and the overall ruler is Śakra. The presiding gods are divided into four groups named in the *Abhidharmakośaṭīkā* (Toh 4092): the eight gods of wealth, two Aśvin youths, eleven fierce ones, and twelve suns. The thirty-three regions themselves are enumerated and described in *The Application of Mindfulness of the Sacred Dharma,* Toh 287, 4.B.2 et seq.).

Hiraṇyavatī River

chu klung dbyig ldan

ཆུ་ཀླུང་དབྱིག་ལྡན།

hiraṇyavatīnadī

A river near Kuśinagara, where the Buddha Śākyamuni passed away. Pali Hiraññavatī.

Jalūkā Grove

srin bu pad pa'i nags khrod

སྲིན་བུ་པད་པའི་ནགས་ཁྲོད།

jalūkāvanaṣaṇḍa

A grove in Pāpā, a city of the Mallas, which was visited by the Buddha on his final journey, just prior to his parinirvāṇa. The term jalūkā (Tib. srin bu pad pa) refers to a leech.

Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu gling

འཛམ་བུ་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 it 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.

krośa

rgyang grags

རྒྱང་གྲགས།

krośa

An Indian measure of distance, equal to approximately 2.25 miles or a quarter of a league. The Sanskrit literally means “a shout,” the Tibetan “an earshot.”

kumbha

bum pa

བུམ་པ།

kumbha

A measure of grain equal to twenty droṇas.

Kuśinagara

ku sha’i grong khyer

ཀུ་ཤའི་གྲོང་ཁྱེར།

kuśinagara, kuśinagarī

The capital of the Malla kingdom in India, and the town in the vicinity of which the Buddha passed into parinirvāṇa.

land of the Mallas

gyad rnams kyi ljongs

གྱད་རྣམས་ཀྱི་ལྗོངས།

mallajanapada

One of the sixteen great countries (mahājanapada) of Northern India during the Buddha's lifetime, with Kuśinagara as its capital. See also "Malla."

league

dpag tshad

དཔག་ཚད།

yojana

A measure of distance sometimes translated as "league," but with varying definitions. The Sanskrit term denotes the distance yoked oxen can travel in a day or before needing to be unyoked. From different canonical sources the distance represented varies between four and ten miles.

lesser chiliocosm

stong chung ngu'i 'jig rten gyi khams, stong spyi phud kyi 'jig rten gyi khams

སྟོང་ཆུང་དྲུའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།, སྟོང་སྤྱི་བུད་ཀྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

sāhasracūḍikalokadhātu

liberation

rnam par thar pa

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ།

vimokṣa

In its most general sense, this term refers to the state of freedom from suffering and cyclic existence, or saṃsāra, that is the goal of the Buddhist path. More specifically, the term may refer to a category of advanced meditative attainment such as those of the "eight liberations."

magical display

cho 'phrul

ཆོ་འཕྲུལ།

pratihārya

A miraculous or wondrous power attributed to buddhas or other spiritually advanced beings. Generally these are miraculous displays for the purpose of benefiting beings or impressing them in such a way as to inspire faith and devotion.

magical display of miraculous power

rdzu ’phrul gyi cho ’phrul

རྫུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་ཆོ་འཕྲུལ།

ṛddhiprātihārya

The first of three types of magical display, a buddha exhibits miraculous powers in order to inspire, convert, and train beings.

magical display of reading the minds of others

kun brjod pa’i cho ’phrul

ཀུན་བརྗོད་པའི་ཆོ་འཕྲུལ།

ādeśanāprātihārya

The second of three types of magical display. Since a buddha knows the minds of all beings, he knows just what to say in order to teach them. The Sanskrit ādeśanā means to “point out” or “foretell,” which he does through knowing the minds of beings, while the corresponding Tibetan term kun brjod pa (“elocution”) highlights the miraculous quality of a buddha’s speech in that he can teach the Dharma in any language.

magical display of teaching

rjes su bstan pa’i cho ’phrul

རྗེས་སུ་བསྟན་པའི་ཆོ་འཕྲུལ།

anuśāsanīprātihārya

The third of three types of magical display. A buddha knows his disciples’ afflictions and so is able to instruct them appropriately.

Mahābrahmā

tshangs pa chen po

ཚངས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahā brahmāṇa, mahābrahmā

Third heaven of the form realm, meaning “Great Brahmā.”

Mahācakravāḍa

khor yug chen po

ཁོར་ཡུག་ཆེན་པོ།

mahācakravāḍa

Commonly refers to a mountain or ring of mountains that surrounds a world-system in Buddhist cosmology.

Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

maitreya

The bodhisattva Maitreya is an important figure in many Buddhist traditions, where he is unanimously regarded as the buddha of the future era. He is said to currently reside in the heaven of Tuṣita, as Śākyamuni’s regent, where he awaits the proper time to take his final rebirth and become the fifth buddha in the Fortunate Eon, reestablishing the Dharma in this world after the teachings of the current buddha have disappeared. Within the Mahāyāna sūtras, Maitreya is elevated to the same status as other central bodhisattvas such as Mañjuśrī and Avalokiteśvara, and his name appears frequently in sūtras, either as the Buddha’s interlocutor or as a teacher of the Dharma. *Maitreya* literally means “Loving One.” He is also known as Ajita, meaning “Invincible.”
For more information on Maitreya, see, for example, the introduction to *Maitreya’s Setting Out* (Toh 198).

major marks

mtshan

མཚན།

lakṣaṇa

The thirty-two identifying physical characteristics of both buddhas and universal monarchs, in addition to the eighty “minor marks.”

Malla

gyad

གྱད།

malla

Name of a people or clan in Northern India during the Buddha’s lifetime. The literal meaning of the term is “athlete,” “strong man,” or “champion.”

Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, paired with Śāriputra. He was renowned for his miraculous powers. His family clan was descended from Mudgala, hence his name Maudgalyāyana, “the son of Mudgala’s descendants.” Respectfully referred to as Mahāmaudgalyāyana, “Great Maudgalyāyana.”

meditative warmth

dro ba

དྲོ་བ།

uṣmagata

The first of the “four aspects of ascertainment” (nirvedhabhāgīya) on the path of joining (prayogamārga).

middling dichiliocosm

stong gnyis pa bar ma’i ’jig rten gyi khams

སྟོང་གཉིས་ལ་བར་མའི་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

dvisāhasralokadhātu, dvisāhasramadhyamalokadhātu

minor marks

dpe byad bzang po

དཔེ་བྱད་བཟང་པོ།

anuvyañjana

The eighty secondary physical characteristics of a buddha and of other great beings (*mahāpuruṣa*), which include such details as the redness of the fingernails and the blackness of the hair. They are considered “minor” in terms of being secondary to the thirty-two major marks or signs of a great being.

miraculous power

rdzu ’phrul

རྫུ་འཕྲུལ།

ṛddhi

The supernatural powers of a śrāvaka correspond to the first *abhijñā*: “Being one he becomes many, being many he becomes one; he becomes visible, invisible; goes through walls, ramparts and mountains without being impeded, just as through air; he immerses himself in the earth and emerges from it as if in water; he goes on water without breaking through it, as if on [solid] earth; he travels through the air crosslegged like a winged bird; he takes in his hands and touches the moon and the sun, those two wonderful, mighty beings, and with his body he extends his power as far as the Brahma world” (*Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra*, trans. Lamotte 2003).
The great supernatural powers (*maharddhi*) of bodhisattvas are “causing trembling, blazing, illuminating, rendering invisible, transforming, coming and going across obstacles, reducing or enlarging worlds, inserting any matter into one’s own body, assuming the aspects of those one frequents, appearing and disappearing, submitting everyone to one’s will, dominating the supernormal power of others, giving intellectual clarity to those who lack it, giving

mindfulness, bestowing happiness, and finally, emitting beneficial rays" (*Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra,* trans. Lamotte 2003).

monk

dge slong

དགེ་སློང་།

bhikṣu

The term *bhikṣu,* often translated as "monk," refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means "beggar" or "mendicant," referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.
In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

Naḍera

'dam bu

འདམ་བུ།

naḍera

A yakṣa to whom a shrine at Vairaṇyā (Pali Verañjā) is dedicated. Pali Naḷeru. See DPPN s.v. "Naḷerupucimanda."

nāga

klu

ཀླུ།

nāga

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written

accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form. Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

Nārāyaṇa

sred med kyi bu

སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།

nārāyaṇa

An epithet of Viṣṇu, or a type of supernaturally powerful human.

Nirmāṇarati

'phrul dga'

འཕྲུལ་དགའ།

nirmāṇarati

The penultimate heaven in the desire realm meaning "Delighting in Emanations."

nirvāṇa

mya ngan las 'das pa

མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

nirvāṇa

In Sanskrit, the term *nirvāṇa* literally means "extinguishment" and the Tibetan *mya ngan las 'das pa* literally means "gone beyond sorrow." As a general term, it refers to the cessation of all suffering, afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), and causal processes (*karman*) that lead to rebirth and suffering in cyclic existence, as well as to the state in which all such rebirth and suffering has permanently ceased.

More specifically, three main types of nirvāṇa are identified. (1) The first type of nirvāṇa, called nirvāṇa with remainder (*sopadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*), is the state in which arhats or buddhas have attained awakening but are still dependent on

the conditioned aggregates until their lifespan is exhausted. (2) At the end of life, given that there are no more causes for rebirth, these aggregates cease and no new aggregates arise. What occurs then is called nirvāṇa without remainder (*anupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa*), which refers to the unconditioned element (*dhātu*) of nirvāṇa in which there is no remainder of the aggregates. (3) The Mahāyāna teachings distinguish the final nirvāṇa of buddhas from that of arhats, the nirvāṇa of arhats not being considered ultimate. The buddhas attain what is called nonabiding nirvāṇa (*apratiṣṭhitanirvāṇa*), which transcends the extremes of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, i.e., existence and peace. This is the nirvāṇa that is the goal of the Mahāyāna path.

non-returner

phyir mi 'ong ba

ཕྱིར་མི་འོང་བ།

anāgāmin

The third of the four attainments of śrāvakas, this term refers to a person who will no longer take rebirth in the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*), but either be reborn in the Pure Abodes (*śuddhāvāsa*) or reach the state of an arhat in their current lifetime. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

once-returner

lan cig phyir 'ong ba

ལན་ཅིག་ཕྱིར་འོང་བ།

sakṛdāgāmin

One who has achieved the second of the four levels of attainment on the śrāvaka path and who will attain liberation after only one more birth. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

pala

srang

སྲང་།

pala

As a unit of weight, it is equal to four karṣas, ranging from 30 to 75 grams. As a measure of capacity, it is equal to approximately seven cubic inches, though this varies depending on the source.

Paltsek

dpal brtsegs

དཔལ་བརྩེགས།

Paltsek (eighth to early ninth century), from the village of Kawa north of Lhasa, was one of Tibet's preeminent translators. He was one of the first seven Tibetans to be ordained by Śāntarakṣita and is counted as one of Guru Rinpoché's twenty-five close disciples. In a famous verse by Ngok Lotsawa Loden Sherab, Kawa Paltsek is named along with Chokro Lui Gyaltsen and Zhang (or Nanam) Yeshé Dé as part of a group of translators whose skills were surpassed only by Vairotsana.
He translated works from a wide variety of genres, including sūtra, śāstra, vinaya, and tantra, and was an author himself. Paltsek was also one of the most important editors of the early period, one of nine translators installed by Tri Songdetsen (r. 755–797/800) to supervise the translation of the Tripiṭaka and help catalog translated works for the first two of three imperial catalogs, the Denkarma (*ldan kar ma*) and the Samyé Chimpuma (*bsam yas mchims phu ma*). In the colophons of his works, he is often known as Paltsek Rakṣita (*rak+Shi ta*).

Pāpā

sdig pa

སྡིག་པ།

pāpā

One of the capital cities of the Mallas. Also called Pāvā. The Tibetan translates according to the meaning of pāpā as sdig pa, or "sin" / "evil deed."

Paranirmitavaśavartin

gzhan 'phrul dbang byed

གཞན་འཕྲུལ་དབང་བྱེད།

paranirmitavaśavartin

The sixth heaven of the desire realm; its name means “Mastery Over Others’ Emanations.”

Parīttābha

’od chung

འོད་ཆུང་།

parīttābha

The fourth heaven of the form realm, meaning “Limited Light.”

Parīttaśubha

dge chung

དགེ་ཆུང་།

parīttaśubha

Seventh heaven of the form realm, meaning “Little Virtue.”

peak

rtse mo

རྩེ་མོ།

mūrdha

The second of the “four aspects of ascertainment” (nirvedhabhāgīya) on the path of joining (prayogamārga).

pratyekabuddha

rang sangs rgyas

རང་སངས་རྒྱས།

pratyekabuddha

Literally, “buddha for oneself” or “solitary realizer.” Someone who, in his or her last life, attains awakening entirely through their own contemplation,

without relying on a teacher. Unlike the awakening of a fully realized buddha (*samyaksambuddha*), the accomplishment of a pratyekabuddha is not regarded as final or ultimate. They attain realization of the nature of dependent origination, the selflessness of the person, and a partial realization of the selflessness of phenomena, by observing the suchness of all that arises through interdependence. This is the result of progress in previous lives but, unlike a buddha, they do not have the necessary merit, compassion or motivation to teach others. They are named as "rhinoceros-like" (*khaḍgaviṣāṇakalpa*) for their preference for staying in solitude or as "congregators" (*vargacārin*) when their preference is to stay among peers.

Puṇyaprasava

bsod nams skyes

བསོད་ནམས་སྐྱེས།

puṇyaprasava

Eleventh heaven of the form realm, meaning "Increasing Merit."

pure conduct

tshangs spyod

ཚངས་སྤྱོད།

brahmacarya

Brahman is a Sanskrit term referring to what is highest (*parama*) and most important (*pradhāna*); the *Nibandhana* commentary explains *brahman* as meaning here *nirvāṇa,* and thus the brahman conduct is the "conduct toward brahman," the conduct that leads to the highest liberation, i.e., nirvāṇa. This is explained as "the path without outflows," which is the "truth of the path" among the four truths of the noble ones. Other explanations (found in the Pāli tradition) take "brahman conduct" to mean the "best conduct," and also the "conduct of the best," i.e., the buddhas. In some contexts, "brahman conduct" refers more specifically to celibacy, but the specific referents of this expression are many.

purification

rnam par byang ba

རྣམ་པར་བྱང་བ།

vyavadāna

Pūrvavideha

shar gyi lus ’phags

ཤར་གྱི་ལུས་འཕགས།

pūrvavideha

One of the four main continents that surround Sumeru, the central mountain in classical Buddhist cosmology. It is the eastern continent, characterized as “sublime in physique,” and it is semicircular in shape. The humans who live there are twice as tall as those from our southern continent, and live for 250 years. It is known as Videha and Pūrvavideha.

rutting elephant

spos kyi glang po che

སྤོས་ཀྱི་གླང་པོ་ཆེ།

gandhahastin

Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

The lord of the gods in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three (*trāyastriṃśa*). Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” 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. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.

saṃsāra

’khor ba

འཁོར་བ།

saṃsāra

A state of involuntary existence conditioned by afflicted mental states and the imprint of past actions, characterized by suffering in a cycle of life, death, and rebirth. On its reversal, the contrasting state of nirvāṇa is attained, free from suffering and the processes of rebirth.

saṅgha

dge ’dun

དགེ་འདུན།

saṅgha

Though often specifically reserved for the monastic community, this term can be applied to any of the four Buddhist communities—monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen—as well as to identify the different groups of practitioners, like the community of bodhisattvas or the community of śrāvakas. It is also the third of the Three Jewels (*triratna*) of Buddhism: the Buddha, the Teaching, and the Community.

Sangkyong

bzang skyong

བཟང་སྐྱོང་།

Tibetan translator of the ninth century.

Santuṣita

yongs su dga’ ldan

ཡོངས་སུ་དགའ་ལྡན།

santuṣita

The principal deity in the paradise of Tuṣita.

Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རིའི་བུ།

śāriputra

One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, he was renowned for his discipline and for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise (often paired with Maudgalyāyana, who was praised as foremost in the capacity for miraculous powers). His father, Tiṣya, to honor Śāriputra's mother, Śārikā, named him Śāradvatīputra, or, in its contracted form, Śāriputra, meaning "Śārikā's Son."

śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

The Sanskrit term *śrāvaka*, and the Tibetan *nyan thos*, both derived from the verb "to hear," are usually defined as "those who *hear* the teaching from the Buddha and *make it heard* to others." Primarily this refers to those disciples of the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat seeking their own liberation and nirvāṇa. They are the practitioners of the first turning of the wheel of the Dharma on the four noble truths, who realize the suffering inherent in saṃsāra and focus on understanding that there is no independent self. By conquering afflicted mental states (*kleśa*), they liberate themselves, attaining first the stage of stream enterers at the path of seeing, followed by the stage of once-returners who will be reborn only one more time, and then the stage of non-returners who will no longer be reborn into the desire realm. The final goal is to become an arhat. These four stages are also known as the "four results of spiritual practice."

stream enterer

rgyun du zhugs pa

རྒྱུན་དུ་ཞུགས་པ།

srotaāpanna

One who has achieved the first level of attainment on the path of the śrāvakas, and who has entered the “stream” of practice that leads to nirvāṇa. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming*.)

strength inherited from one’s parents

yab yum dag las byung ba’i stobs, yab yum las byung ba’i stobs

ཡབ་ཡུམ་དག་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་སྟོབས།, ཡབ་ཡུམ་ལས་བྱུང་བའི་སྟོབས།

mātāpaitṛkabala

A type of strength possessed by a tathāgata, it refers to physical strength.

strength of meditation

sgom pa’i stobs

སྒོམ་པའི་སྟོབས།

bhāvanābala

A type of strength possessed by tathāgatas.

strength of merit

bsod nams kyi stobs

བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱི་སྟོབས།

puṇyabala

A type of strength possessed by a tathāgata.

strength of miraculous power

rdzu ’phrul gyi stobs, rdzu ’phrul stobs

རྫུ་འཕྲུལ་གྱི་སྟོབས།, རྫུ་འཕྲུལ་སྟོབས།

ṛddhibala

A type of strength possessed by tathāgatas. See “miraculous power.”

strength of wisdom

shes rab kyi stobs

ཤེས་རབ་ཀྱི་སྟོབས།

prajñābala

One of the types of strengths possessed by tathāgatas.

strong-armed man

yan lag mchog

ཡན་ལག་མཆོག

varāṅga

Referring to a type of person with superhuman strength, Varāṅga is also an epithet of Viṣṇu.

Śubhakṛtsna

dge rgyas

དགེ་རྒྱས།

śubhakṛtsna

Ninth heaven of the form realm, meaning “Most Extensive Virtue.”

Sudarśana

shin tu mthong

ཤིན་ཏུ་མཐོང་།

sudarśana

Fourth of the pure abodes, meaning “Having a Beautiful Appearance.”

Sudṛśa

gya nom snang

རྒྱ་ནོམ་སྣང་།

sudṛśa

Third of the pure abodes, meaning “Sublime Appearance.”

sugata

bde bar gshegs pa

བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པ།

sugata

One of the standard epithets of the buddhas. A recurrent explanation offers three different meanings for *su-* that are meant to show the special qualities of "accomplishment of one's own purpose" (*svārthasampad*) for a complete buddha. Thus, the Sugata is "well" gone, as in the expression *su-rūpa* ("having a good form"); he is gone "in a way that he shall not come back," as in the expression *su-naṣṭa-jvara* ("a fever that has utterly gone"); and he has gone "without any remainder" as in the expression *su-pūrṇa-ghaṭa* ("a pot that is completely full"). According to Buddhaghoṣa, the term means that the way the Buddha went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*) and where he went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*).

Sumeru

ri rab

རི་རབ།

meru, sumeru

According to ancient Buddhist cosmology, this is the great mountain forming the axis of the universe. At its summit is Sudarśana, home of Śakra and his thirty-two gods, and on its flanks live the asuras. The mount has four sides facing the cardinal directions, each of which is made of a different precious stone. Surrounding it are several mountain ranges and the great ocean where the four principal island continents lie: in the south, Jambudvīpa (our world); in the west, Godānīya; in the north, Uttarakuru; and in the east, Pūrvavideha. Above it are the abodes of the desire realm gods. It is variously referred to as Meru, Mount Meru, Sumeru, and Mount Sumeru.

Sunirmita

rab 'phrul dga'

རབ་འཕྲུལ་དགའ།

sunirmita

The chief god in the heavenly realm of Nirmāṇarati.

Suyāma

rab ’thab bral

རབ་འཕབ་བྲལ།

suyāma

The chief god of the Yāma heaven.

tathāgata

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. It is also often used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

ten strengths

stobs bcu

སྟོབས་བཅུ།

daśabala

Ten things that a buddha knows. In *The Sūtra on the Throwing of the Boulder*, these are listed as knowing (1) what is possible and what is impossible, (2)

karmic cause and result, (3) the pure and afflicted sides of concentration, meditative states, and absorptions, (4) the various capacities of beings, (5) the various inclinations of beings, (6) the variety of elements or constituents of the world, (7) every path of travel, (8) memory of former lives, (9) death and rebirth, and (10) that the defilements have been eliminated. Ten of the eighteen unshared buddha qualities.

the way things are

chos nyid

ཆོས་ཉིད།

dharmatā

The real nature, true quality, or condition of things. Throughout Buddhist discourse this term is used in two distinct ways. In one, it designates the relative nature that is either the essential characteristic of a specific phenomenon, such as the heat of fire and the moisture of water, or the defining feature of a specific term or category. The other very important and widespread way it is used is to designate the ultimate nature of all phenomena, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms and is often synonymous with emptiness or the absence of intrinsic existence.

three unshared applications of mindfulness

ma ’dres pa’i dran pa nye bar gzhag pa gsum

མ་འདྲེས་པའི་དྲན་པ་ཉེ་བར་གཞག་པ་གསུམ།

tryāveṇikasmṛtyupasthāna

Mental attitudes peculiar to a buddha, which are being neither pleased nor displeased whether an audience is responsive, unresponsive, or a mixture of both. Three of the eighteen unshared buddha qualities.

trillion

bye ba phrag ’bum

བྱེ་བ་ཕྲག་འབུམ།

koṭiśatasahasra

Ten million (Skt. koṭi, Tib. bye ba) times a hundred thousand (Skt. śatasahasra, Tib. ’bum), according to the Abhidharma system.

Tuṣita

dga’ ldan

དགའ་ལྡན།

tuṣita

Tuṣita (or sometimes Saṃtuṣita), literally “Joyous” or “Contented,” is one of the six heavens of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*). In standard classifications, such as the one in the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is ranked as the fourth of the six counting from below. This god realm is where all future buddhas are said to dwell before taking on their final rebirth prior to awakening. There, the Buddha Śākyamuni lived his preceding life as the bodhisattva Śvetaketu. When departing to take birth in this world, he appointed the bodhisattva Maitreya, who will be the next buddha of this eon, as his Dharma regent in Tuṣita. For an account of the Buddha’s previous life in Tuṣita, see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 2.12, and for an account of Maitreya’s birth in Tuṣita and a description of this realm, see *The Sūtra on Maitreya’s Birth in the Heaven of Joy*, (Toh 199).

uḍumbara

u dum bA ra

ཨུ་དུམ་བཱ་ར།

uḍumbara

In Buddhist literature, the flower of the uḍumbara (Ficus racemosa or Ficus glomerata) symbolizes something hidden or obscured and rarely encountered. The flower being enclosed within the fruit produced by the tree, seeing an external flower is an exceedingly rare event.

universal monarch

’khor los sgyur ba

འཁོར་ལོས་སྒྱུར་བ།

cakravartin

An ideal monarch or emperor who, as the result of the merit accumulated in previous lifetimes, rules over a vast realm in accordance with the Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he bears a wheel (*cakra*) that rolls (*vartate*) across the earth, bringing all lands and kingdoms under his power. The cakravartin conquers his territory without causing harm, and his activity causes beings to enter the path of wholesome actions. According to Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*, just as with the buddhas, only one cakravartin appears in a world system at any given time. They are likewise endowed with the thirty-two major marks of a great being (*mahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa*), but a cakravartin's marks are outshined by those of a buddha. They possess seven precious objects: the wheel, the elephant, the horse, the wish-fulfilling gem, the queen, the general, and the minister. An illustrative passage about the cakravartin and his possessions can be found in *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 3.3–3.13.

Vasubandhu lists four types of cakravartins: (1) the cakravartin with a golden wheel (*suvarṇacakravartin*) rules over four continents and is invited by lesser kings to be their ruler; (2) the cakravartin with a silver wheel (*rūpyacakravartin*) rules over three continents and his opponents submit to him as he approaches; (3) the cakravartin with a copper wheel (*tāmracakravartin*) rules over two continents and his opponents submit themselves after preparing for battle; and (4) the cakravartin with an iron wheel (*ayaścakravartin*) rules over one continent and his opponents submit themselves after brandishing weapons.

Uttarakuru

byang gi sgra mi snyan

བྱང་གི་སྒྲ་མི་སྙན།

uttarakuru

The continent to the north of Sumeru according to Buddhist cosmology. In the *Abhidharmakośa*, it is described as square in shape. Its human inhabitants enjoy a fixed lifespan of a thousand years and do not hold personal property or marry.

Vairaṇyā

rtswa bi ra na dang ldan pa

རྩྭ་བི་ར་ན་དང་ལྡན་པ།

vairaṇyā

The name of a city where the Buddha spent a rainy-season retreat. The Sanskrit and Tibetan literally mean “Endowed with Vīraṇa Grass.” Pali Verañjā.

vajra

rdo rje

རྡོ་རྗེ།

vajra

This term generally indicates indestructibility and stability. In the sūtras, *vajra* most often refers to the hardest possible physical substance, said to have divine origins. In some scriptures, it is also the name of the all-powerful weapon of Indra, which in turn is crafted from vajra material. In the tantras, the vajra is sometimes a scepter-like ritual implement, but the term can also take on other esoteric meanings.

Vaśavartin

dbang sgyur

དབང་སྒྱུར།

vaśavartin

The chief god in the Paranirmitavaśavartin heaven.

Vāsiṣṭha

gnas ’jog gi rgyud

གནས་འཇོག་གི་རྒྱུད།

vāsiṣṭha

The term vāsiṣṭha, literally “descendant of Vasiṣṭha,” a famous ṛṣi of the Vedas. According to Edgerton (s.v. “vāsiṣṭha”), the term is used “in polite address to anyone without regard to ancestry.”

village land

grong gi zhing

གྲོང་གི་ཞིང་།

grāmakṣetra

Vinaya

’dul ba

འདུལ་བ།

vinaya

One of the three baskets (piṭakas) of the Buddhist canon, it explains the rules and procedures that govern the Buddhist monastic community.

went forth

rab tu byung

རབ་ཏུ་བྱུང་།

pra√vraj

The Sanskrit *pravrajyā* literally means “going forth,” with the sense of leaving the life of a householder and embracing the life of a renunciant. When the term is applied more technically, it refers to the act of becoming a male novice (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or female novice (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*), this being a first stage leading to full ordination.

wisdom

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

world system

’jig rten gyi khams

འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས།

lokadhātu

The term *lokadhātu* refers to a single four continent world-system illumined by a sun and moon, with a Mount Meru at its center and an encircling ring of mountains at its periphery, and with the various god realms above, thus including the desire, form, and formless realms.
The term can also refer to groups of such world-systems in multiples of thousands. A universe of one thousand such world-systems is called a chiliocosm (*sāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gi 'jig rten gyi khams*); one thousand such chiliocosms is called a dichiliocosm (*dvisāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gnyis kyi 'jig rten gyi khams*); and one thousand such dichiliocosms is called a trichiliocosm (*trisāhasralokadhātu*, *stong gsum gyi 'jig rten gyi khams*). A trichiliocosm is the largest universe described in Buddhist cosmology.

wrestler

stobs mchog

སྟོབས་མཆོག

cāṇūra

A type of supernaturally strong person, or it refers to the storied wrestler who was killed by Kṛṣṇa.

yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the rule of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.
Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just-mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.

Yāma

’thab bral

འཐབ་བྲལ།

yāma

The third of the six heavens of the desire realm in Buddhist cosmology. It is located between the Heaven of the Thirty-Three and Tuṣita. Its Tibetan translation means “Free from Strife.”

Youthful Mañjuśrī

’jam dpal gzhon nur gyur pa

འཇམ་དཔལ་གཞོན་ནུར་གྱུར་པ།

mañjuśrīkumārabhūta

Mañjuśrī is one of the “eight close sons of the Buddha” and a bodhisattva who embodies wisdom. He is a major figure in the Mahāyāna sūtras, appearing often as an interlocutor of the Buddha. In his most well-known iconographic form, he is portrayed bearing the sword of wisdom in his right hand and a volume of the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* in his left. To his name, Mañjuśrī, meaning “Gentle and Glorious One,” is often added the epithet Kumārabhūta, “having a youthful form.” He is also called Mañjughoṣa, Mañjusvara, and Pañcaśikha.