

ལྷོ་ལྷོ་མི་ཟད་བས་ལྷོ་བ།

# Akṣayamati's Questions

*Akṣayamatiparipṛcchā*

འཕགས་པ་གློ་གྲོས་མི་བད་པས་ལུས་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa blo gros mi zad pas zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “Akṣayamati’s Questions”

*Āryākṣayamatiparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra*

· Toh 89 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 44 (dkon brtsegs, cha), folios 175.b–182.b



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## Summary

s.1 The main theme of this short Mahāyāna sūtra is the correspondence between the ten pāramitās and the ten bodhisattva stages. The discourse begins when the bodhisattva Akṣayamati raises a query about the terms *bodhicitta* and *bodhisattva*. In response, the Buddha parses the terms and explains that although verbal designations such as *bodhi*, *citta*, and *sattva* are empty, *bodhicitta*—the mind of awakening—nevertheless does arise. He explains that it is generated in ten stages, corresponding to the ten bodhisattva stages, spurred by the practice of the ten pāramitās respectively. The pāramitās themselves are elaborated with a description of ten preliminary qualities that ensure the successful practice of each. The meaning of the term *pāramitā*, and the perfection of each in the realization of sameness, is then expounded, along with a description of the visionary premonitions which indicate the onset of each bodhisattva stage. It is then further explained that the ten developments of *bodhicitta* at the ten bodhisattva stages arise through ten *samādhis*, and that at each bodhisattva stage there also arises a particular *dhāraṇī*. This discourse with Akṣayamati is also found in slightly expanded but otherwise identical form as Chapter Six of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*.<sup>1</sup>

## Acknowledgements

ac.1 Translation by the Mañjuḥṣa Translation Project, Leipzig, under the supervision of Per Kjeld Sørensen and Lopon Tsöndrū. The sūtra was translated into English by Rolf Scheuermann and Stefan Schley with the aid of Lewis Doney. Special thanks to James Gentry for his comments and advice. At different stages of the translation process, the sūtra was read and discussed in two advanced Tibetan language courses at the Universities of Leipzig and Heidelberg. We want to express our gratitude to the students for their valuable suggestions.

ac.2 The translation was completed under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. George FitzHerbert edited the translation and the introduction, and Dawn Collins copyedited the text. Martina Cotter was in charge of the digital publication process.

## Introduction

i.1 The *Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “Akṣayamati’s Questions”* is included as the forty-fifth of the forty-nine texts in the Heap of Jewels collection<sup>2</sup> (Skt. *ratnakūṭa*, Tib. *dkon brtsegs*) of the Kangyur. The same discourse is also found, in a slightly more elaborated but otherwise identical form, as Chapter Six of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Suvarṇaprabhāsottamasūtra* Toh 556).<sup>3</sup> In both cases, the setting of the discourse is Vulture Peak Mountain near Rājagṛha, where the Buddha resides amidst a great gathering of bhikṣus and bodhisattvas. Among them is the bodhisattva Akṣayamati, who is described in *Akṣayamati’s Questions* as “surrounded and attended upon by six hundred million bodhisattvas.” This makes it clear that this is understood as the same bodhisattva Akṣayamati described in the influential *Teaching of Akṣayamati (Akṣayamatinirdeśa*, Toh 175) as arriving from a distant buddhafield with such an entourage.<sup>4</sup> Like the *Teaching of Akṣayamati*, the main topics covered in *Akṣayamati’s Questions* are bodhicitta and the practice of the ten pāramitās.

- i.2 The sūtra begins with Akṣayamati asking how the notion of *bodhicitta* is to be understood, and how it relates to the notion of a *bodhisattva*. The Buddha responds by first parsing these terms into their constituent elements, namely *bodhi* (“awakening”), *citta* (“mind”) and *sattva* (“being”), and confirms that in the ultimate view, none of these notions are to be dualistically apprehended as perceptual objects. Nevertheless, he says, despite the ultimate emptiness of such notions, *bodhicitta* does arise, and indeed it develops in ten stages. Each of these ten stages is spurred by the practice of the ten *pāramitās* respectively, which constitute the defining practices of the *bodhisattva* path. The section concludes with the statement that any individual who has generated any of these levels of *bodhicitta* may be called a *bodhisattva*.
- i.3 Ten preliminary qualities or prerequisites that are necessary for the successful practice of each of the ten *pāramitās* are then elaborated in turn. This is followed by an explanation of the meaning of *pāramitā*, and then by a description of each of the ten premonitions or omens that indicate the onset of each *bodhisattva* stage. Ten *samādhis* and ten *dhāraṇīs* associated with each of the ten *bodhisattva* stages are then enumerated. Finally, in response to a deva called *Unimpeded Radiance of the Lion Banner*, the Buddha briefly explains the various temporary and lasting benefits that result from listening to these teachings.

- i.4 In *Akṣayamati's Questions*, the ten samādhis and dhāraṇīs associated with each bodhisattva stage are simply listed by name, but related lists are known from other canonical sources and are also included in the *Mahāvvyutpatti*, the Sanskrit-Tibetan dictionary compiled in the early ninth century.<sup>5</sup> For example, both lists are found in closely related forms in *The Jewel Cloud* (*Ratnamegha-sūtra*, Toh 231), a sūtra which is likewise focused on the pāramitās and the bodhisattva stages.<sup>6</sup> Also, in the more elaborated version of *Akṣayamati's Questions* found as Chapter 6 (“Purification of the Bhūmis”) of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* (Toh 556), each of the ten dhāraṇīs is presented along with an explanation of its benefits.<sup>7</sup> In his research on these ten dhāraṇīs associated with the ten bodhisattva stages, Ulrich Pagel has also presented reconstructed Sanskrit names for each, and these have been added to the glossary.
- i.5 Aside from those sections in which it is more elaborate,<sup>8</sup> the version of the teaching found in *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* is all but verbatim with the Tibetan text of *Akṣayamati's Questions*, indicating that the two texts have been coordinated at some point. It seems probable that Surendrabodhi and Yeshé Dé's earlier translation of *Akṣayamati's Questions* as a standalone text was imported in full into *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*.<sup>9</sup>
- i.6 No Sanskrit version of *Akṣayamati's Questions* is extant and, unlike the *Teaching of Akṣayamati*, (Toh 175) with which it is sometimes confused, there are no Sanskrit citations of *Akṣayamati's Questions* in any extant Indic commentarial works.<sup>10</sup> A Chinese translation (*Wu chin hui p'u sa hui* 無盡慧菩薩會; Taishō 310–45) attributed to Bodhiruci was made in the early eighth century CE. An abridged English translation of this has been published by Garma C. Chang and team.<sup>11</sup>

- i.7 As with most of the sūtras in the Heap of Jewels collection<sup>12</sup> in the Tibetan canon, *Akṣayamati's Questions* is believed to have been translated into Tibetan from Sanskrit by the Tibetan translator Nanam Yeshé Dé and the Indian preceptor Surendrabodhi in the early ninth century during the early translation period. The colophons of the Stok Palace, Narthang and Yongle editions further suggest that Dharmatāśīla (who was also the translator of *The Teaching of Akṣayamati*) later revised their work. It is listed in both the Phangthangma and Denkarma imperial catalogs of translated texts.<sup>13</sup>
- i.8 This English translation is based primarily on the Tibetan Degé edition of the Kangyur, in consultation with the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace (*stog pho brang*) Kangyur version.

## The Translation

### The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

#### Akṣayamati's Questions

1. [B.1] Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas.
- 1.1 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling at Vulture Peak Mountain near Rājagṛha together with a great saṅgha of one thousand two hundred and fifty bhikṣus as well as one thousand bodhisattvas. Among them were bodhisattva mahāsattvas such as Bodhisattva Wisdom Banner, Bodhisattva Dharma Banner, Bodhisattva Moon Banner, Bodhisattva Sun Banner, Bodhisattva Boundless Banner, and sixteen wise men, such as Bhadrāpāla, sixty<sup>14</sup> incomparable bodhisattva mahāsattvas, such as Mañjuśrī, and all the bodhisattva mahāsattvas of the Fortunate Eon, such as Maitreya.
- 1.2 The bodhisattva mahāsattva Akṣayamati, surrounded and escorted by six hundred million bodhisattvas, had also gathered at that very assembly and was seated there.

1.3 Then,<sup>15</sup> the bodhisattva mahāsattva Akṣayamati rose from his seat, draped his upper robe over one shoulder, and placing his right knee on the ground, bowed with his palms joined in the direction of the Blessed One. He then offered the Blessed One a flower-parasol made of various precious substances and flower sheaths, accompanied by the following request:

1.4 “Blessed One, one speaks of *bodhicitta*, ‘the mind of awakening.’ However, Blessed One, in what sense does a ‘bodhisattva’ have ‘bodhicitta’? Blessed One, what is *bodhicitta*? Blessed One, in awakening, neither the mind nor the being<sup>16</sup> has been apprehended, is apprehended, or will be apprehended. The mind of awakening cannot be apprehended apart from awakening. Awakening is inexpressible, mind (*citta*) is without form, indemonstrable, and unobstructed, and even the being is not clearly cognized. So how, Blessed One, is one to understand the meaning of these phenomena?”

1.5 The Blessed One replied: “Indeed, noble son, in this regard, being a sign, designation, or conventional term, ‘awakening’ is not to be apprehended, and the mind of awakening cannot be apprehended apart from awakening. Indeed, awakening is inexpressible, the mind is without form,<sup>17</sup> indemonstrable, unobstructed, and even the being, not being clearly cognized, is not apprehended. How so? Awakening cannot be expressed. As awakening is, so too is mind; as mind is, so too is awakening; as awakening and mind are, so too are beings; and as beings are, so too are all phenomena that arise in the past, present, and future.

1.6 “Noble son, it is in this way that bodhisattva mahāsattvas acquire the appellation *bodhisattva*. The mind in conformity with all phenomena is called *bodhicitta*, the ‘mind of awakening.’ Awakening does not arise in the past, nor in the future, nor in the present. The same is true for mind. The same is true for beings.

- 1.7 “Since no phenomena are to be apprehended, there is nothing to be discovered. There is neither awakening nor any designation as awakening. There is neither sentient being nor any designation as sentient being. There is neither śrāvaka nor any designation as śrāvaka. There is neither pratyekabuddha nor any designation as pratyekabuddha. There is neither bodhisattva nor any designation as bodhisattva. There is neither buddha nor any designation as buddha. There are neither conditioned phenomena nor any designation as conditioned phenomena. There are neither unconditioned phenomena nor any designation as unconditioned phenomena.
- 1.8 “Even though it has not been apprehended, is not apprehended, and will not be apprehended, nevertheless, noble son, when bodhicitta is first aroused it is perfectly exalted, like the analogy of Mount Meru, complete with all roots of virtue. Its cause is the pāramitā of generosity.
- 1.9 “The second arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as earth-like, in that it supports what is to be done regarding all phenomena. Its cause is the pāramitā of ethics.
- 1.10 “The third arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as being like the prowess of a maned lion, king of wild animals, in that it is fearless and lacks any kind of anxiety or trepidation. Its cause is the pāramitā of patience.
- 1.11 “The fourth arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as being like the power, strength, energy, diligence, and exertion of Nārāyaṇa, in that it is irreversible. Its cause is the pāramitā of diligence.
- 1.12 “The fifth arousing of bodhicitta, being insatiable for merit, is regarded as like being perfect exalted in various virtues.<sup>18</sup> Its cause is the pāramitā of concentration.
- 1.13 “The sixth arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as being like the bright light of the sun’s orb, in that it dispels the dense darkness. Its cause is the pāramitā of insight.

- 1.14 “The seventh arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as excellently adorned by the fulfillment of all intentions, in that it brings liberation from the wilderness of cyclic existence, like a caravan leader rich with enormous treasures. Its cause is the pāramitā of skillful means.
- 1.15 “The eighth arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as purifying all obscurations, as in the analogy of the halo of a pure full moon. Its cause is the pāramitā of aspiration.
- 1.16 “The ninth arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as the fulfilment of intentions, in that there is the full array of qualities of a pure buddhafield. Its cause is the pāramitā of strength.
- 1.17 “The tenth arousing of bodhicitta is regarded as space-like, as in the analogy of the marks of an anointed universal monarch with good qualities, wisdom, and mastery over all phenomena. Its cause is the pāramitā of wisdom.
- 1.18 “Noble son, these are the ten stages of bodhicitta for bodhisattvas. Those who have them are to be known as bodhisattvas. Though in the ultimate view, for them, there is neither *bodhi*, nor *bodhisattva*, nor *bodhicitta*.
- 2.1 “Noble son, in this regard, there are ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of generosity for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of the power of faith, (2) the preliminary of intention, (3) the preliminary of higher intention, (4) the preliminary of the pāramitās, (5) the preliminary of great loving kindness, (6) the preliminary of great compassion, (7) the preliminary of support for sentient beings, (8) the preliminary of means of attraction, (9) the preliminary of longing for the teachings of the Buddha, and (10) the preliminary of longing for omniscient wisdom. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of generosity for bodhisattvas.

2.2 “Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities that precede the pāramitā of ethics for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of purity in physical action, (2) the preliminary of purity in verbal action, (3) the preliminary of purity in mental action, (4) the preliminary of nonviolence, (5) the preliminary of renouncing all lower realms, (6) the preliminary of renouncing the eight unfree states, (7) the preliminary of passing over the stages of a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha, (8) the preliminary of establishing the qualities of buddhahood, (9) the preliminary of fulfilling intentions, and (10) the preliminary of fulfilling aspirations. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of ethics for bodhisattvas.

2.3 “Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities that precede the pāramitā of patience for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of abandoning desire, (2) the preliminary of abandoning anger, (3) the preliminary of not having regard for one’s body, (4) the preliminary of not being concerned for one’s life, (5) the preliminary of being devoted, (6) the preliminary of bringing sentient beings to maturation, (7) the preliminary of the power of loving kindness, (8) the preliminary of acceptance of the profound Dharma, (9) the preliminary of dedication to the vast, and (10) the preliminary of dispelling ignorance. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of patience for bodhisattvas.

2.4 “Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities that precede the pāramitā of diligence for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of considering whatever can be done for all sentient beings, (2) the preliminary of rejoicing in the virtuous achievements of body, speech, and mind, (3) the preliminary of never being discouraged, (4) the preliminary of doing what needs to be done for the attainment of irreversibility, (5) the preliminary of right exertion, (6) the preliminary of the applications of mindfulness, (7) the preliminary of subduing the enemy, which is the afflictions, (8) the preliminary of being detached from all phenomena, (9) the preliminary of bringing sentient beings to maturation, and (10) the preliminary of perfectly accomplishing omniscient wisdom. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of diligence for bodhisattvas.

2.5 “Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities for the pāramitā of concentration for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of maintaining virtuous qualities, (2) the preliminary of samādhi, (3) the preliminary of meditative attainment, (4) the preliminary of being set on perfectly complete awakening, (5) the preliminary of concentration and liberation, (6) the preliminary of the power of samādhi, (7) the preliminary of the strength of samādhi, (8) the preliminary of abandoning the afflictions of all sentient beings, (9) the preliminary of bringing the aggregate of samādhi to perfection, and (10) the preliminary of fully preserving the authentic Dharma. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of concentration for bodhisattvas.

2.6 Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities that precede the pāramitā of insight for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of expertise in the aggregates, (2) the preliminary of expertise in the elements, (3) the preliminary of expertise in the sense sources, (4) the preliminary of expertise in dependent origination, (5) the preliminary of expertise in the truths, (6) the preliminary of expertise in dispelling false views, (7) the preliminary of the power of insight, (8) the preliminary of acceptance that phenomena are unborn, (9) the preliminary of perfecting all buddha qualities, and (10) the preliminary of perceiving wisdom free from obscurations. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of insight for bodhisattvas.

2.7 Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of skillful means for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of engaging with the intentions and the conduct of sentient beings, (2) the preliminary of supporting sentient beings, (3) the preliminary of loving kindness and compassion, (4) the preliminary of not becoming weary of bringing sentient beings to maturity, (5) the preliminary of engaging in all of the qualities of buddhahood, (6) the preliminary of comprehending<sup>19</sup> the vision of superior wisdom, (7) the preliminary of purifying and ripening the pāramitās, (8) the preliminary of fully comprehending all things the way they are, (9) the preliminary of attaining mental strengths, and (10) the preliminary of reaching the stage of irreversibility. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of skillful means for bodhisattvas.

2.8 Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of aspiration for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable mental processes of all sentient beings, (2) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable afflictions of all sentient beings, (3) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable faculties of all sentient beings, (4) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable intentions and inclinations of all sentient beings, (5) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable thoughts, higher intentions, and devotions of all sentient beings, (6) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable of different world systems with their three realms, (7) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable intentions and latent propensities of all sentient beings, (8) the preliminary of knowing the most impenetrable deaths and births of all sentient beings, (9) the preliminary of knowing the impenetrable classification of sentient beings in three categories, and (10) the preliminary of knowing what needs to be done in order to bring sentient beings who have untiring capabilities to maturity. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of aspiration for bodhisattvas.

2.9 Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of strength for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of understanding all phenomena being primordially non-arising, (2) the preliminary of all phenomena being primordially free from characteristics, (3) the preliminary of all phenomena being primordially unborn, (4) the preliminary of all phenomena being primordially non-existent, (5) the preliminary of all phenomena being primordially without attachment, (6) the preliminary of all phenomena being without engagement, (7) the preliminary of all phenomena being unstoppable, (8) the preliminary of all phenomena having the nature of non-entities, (9) the preliminary of all phenomena being sameness in the beginning, middle, and end, and (10) the preliminary of engaging with all phenomena as suchness without concepts or discursive thought. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of strength for bodhisattvas.

2.10 Noble son, there are ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of wisdom for bodhisattvas. What are the ten? They are (1) the preliminary of clear analysis that distinguishes every phenomenon, (2) the preliminary of perfecting wholesome dharmas, (3) the preliminary of accumulating the immeasurable requisites for awakening, (4) the preliminary of acquiring the great requisites of merit and wisdom, (5) the preliminary of internalizing the vastness of great compassion, (6) the preliminary of knowing the distinct ordering in world realms, (7) the preliminary of engaging with the realms of beings and with their afflicted conduct, (8) the preliminary of applying the mind to knowing how to enter and emulate the Tathāgata's sphere of experience, (9) the preliminary of focusing on and thoroughly understanding the ten strengths, the types of fearlessness, and the unique qualities of a buddha, and (10) the preliminary of attaining the stage of empowerment in<sup>20</sup> omniscient wisdom, which possesses the most excellent of all aspects. Noble son, these are the ten preliminary qualities of the pāramitā of wisdom for bodhisattvas.

2.11 In this regard, what is the meaning of pāramitā? The meaning of pāramitā (pāramitā) is bringing one's particular conduct to perfection. The meaning of pāramitā is bringing wisdom, vast and profound, to perfection. The meaning of pāramitā is being without attachment to the conditioned and the unconditioned. The meaning of pāramitā is discerning the shortcomings of saṃsāra just as they are. The meaning of pāramitā is bringing understanding to the uneducated. The meaning of pāramitā is accurately teaching the inexhaustible treasury of Dharma. The meaning of pāramitā is bringing unobscured liberation to perfection. The meaning of pāramitā is knowing the realms of sentient beings.

- 2.12 The meaning of pāramitā is realizing sameness in generosity. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting sameness in ethics. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting sameness in patience. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting sameness in diligence. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting sameness in concentration. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting learned certainty in the pāramitā of insight. The meaning of pāramitā is thoroughly knowing all dharmas. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting the acceptance that phenomena are unborn. The meaning of pāramitā is reaching the stage of irreversibility. The meaning of pāramitā is purifying the buddhafield. The meaning of pāramitā is ripening sentient beings. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting the wisdom of buddhahood at the seat of awakening. The meaning of pāramitā is taming all māras. The meaning of pāramitā is liberation through teaching the indivisibility of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. The meaning of pāramitā is going beyond all virtuous qualities.<sup>21</sup> The meaning of pāramitā is defeating all opponents who hold wrong views. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting the ten strengths, the types of fearlessness, and the eighteen unique qualities of a buddha. The meaning of pāramitā is perfecting all the qualities of buddhahood. The meaning of pāramitā is completely awakening to unsurpassed and perfect buddhahood. The meaning of pāramitā is turning the wheel of Dharma with the twelve aspects.
- 3.1 Noble son, the premonition of the first bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing the world systems of the great trichilocosm filled with hundreds of thousands of billions of treasures.
- 3.2 Noble son, the premonition of the second bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing the world systems of the great trichilocosm smooth and even like the palm of a hand, well-adorned with myriad hundreds of thousands of billions of jewels.

- 3.3 Noble son, the premonition of the third bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing oneself as a hero, clothed in strong armor and wielding weapons, defeating all opponents who hold wrong views.
- 3.4 Noble son, the premonition of the fourth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing flowers of various kinds being scattered over the great earth spheres by the four spheres of wind from the four directions.
- 3.5 Noble son, the premonition of the fifth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing a woman adorned with all kinds of ornaments placing a garland of magnolia flowers on one's head.
- 3.6 Noble son, the premonition of the sixth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing a pool with four flights of steps, strewn with golden sand, filled with water with the eight qualities, pure and unsullied, and adorned with blue, red, and white lotus flowers, and seeing oneself enjoying oneself in it.
- 3.7 Noble son, the premonition of the seventh bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing chasms of the hell realms yawning to both the left and the right, and seeing oneself turning away from them uninjured and unharmed.
- 3.8 Noble son, the premonition of the eighth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing oneself carrying on two shoulders the king of wild animals, a lion crowned with a mane, and frightening all weaker carnivorous animals.
- 3.9 Noble son, the premonition of the ninth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing oneself as a universal monarch surrounded and attended by myriad hundreds of thousands of billions of beings, with a white parasol adorned with various precious substances held aloft over one's head.

- 3.10 Noble son, the premonition of the tenth bodhisattva stage for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is seeing oneself with the body of a tathāgata, enshrouded in a golden aura a full arm span wide, surrounded and attended to by myriad hundreds of thousands of billions of brahmā deities to whom the Dharma is being taught.
- 3.11 Noble son, these ten are the premonitions that indicate the onset of the ten bodhisattva stages for bodhisattva mahāsattvas.<sup>22</sup>
- 3.12 Noble son, bodhisattvas at the first bodhisattva stage have mastered the pāramitā of generosity. Those at the second bodhisattva stage have mastered the pāramitā of ethics. Those at the third stage have mastered the pāramitā of patience. Those at the fourth stage have mastered the pāramitā of diligence. Those at the fifth stage have mastered the pāramitā of concentration. Those at the sixth stage have mastered the pāramitā of insight. Those at the seventh stage have mastered the pāramitā of skillful means. Those at the eighth stage have mastered the pāramitā of aspiration. Those at the ninth stage have mastered the pāramitā of strength. Those at the tenth stage have mastered the pāramitā of wisdom.
- 4.1 Noble son, the first arousal of bodhicitta for bodhisattva mahāsattvas is attained and arises through the samādhi *perfectly exalted jewel*.
- 4.2 The second arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *nonabiding*.
- 4.3 The third arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *utterly immovable*.
- 4.4 The fourth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *irreversible\**.

- 4.5 The fifth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *precious flower*.
- 4.6 The sixth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *brilliance of sunlight*.
- 4.7 The seventh arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *accomplishing all purposes*.
- 4.8 The eighth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *abiding in the presence of the buddhas of the present*.
- 4.9 The ninth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *lamp of wisdom*.
- 4.10 The tenth arousal of bodhicitta is attained and arises through the samādhi *heroic march*.
- 4.11 Noble son, these are the ten development stages of bodhicitta for bodhisattva mahāsattvas.
- 4.12 Noble son, for bodhisattva mahāsattvas at the first bodhisattva stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *special blessing*.
- 4.13 At the second stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *unassailable by others*.
- 4.14 At the third stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *firm presence*.
- 4.15 At the fourth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *hard to defeat*.
- 4.16 At the fifth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *various qualities*.
- 4.17 At the sixth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *lamp of the wisdom maṇḍala*.
- 4.18 At the seventh stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *particularly exalted*.

- 4.19 At the eighth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *unsullied thought*.
- 4.20 At the ninth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *adorned with infinite gateways*.
- 4.21 At the tenth stage there arises the dhāraṇī called *inexhaustible basket*.<sup>23</sup>
- 5.1 Then, at that time, the deva<sup>24</sup> *Unimpeded Radiance of the Lion Banner* addressed the Blessed One: “Blessed One, how wonderful! In this Dharma discourse everything is complete. All the qualities and virtues of buddhahood are covered.”<sup>25</sup>
- 5.2 The Blessed One replied: “Indeed, O deva, it is exactly as you have said. Deva, as soon as they hear this Dharma discourse, bodhisattvas will be irreversible from unsurpassed and perfect buddhahood. Why? Because hearing this Dharma discourse is the seal which ripens the roots of virtue for reaching irreversibility, for this Dharma discourse will not be heard by those who have not already produced such roots of virtue.

- 5.3 “Noble son, by merely hearing this Dharma discourse, noble sons and noble daughters will purify higher intention and will never be apart from seeing the Buddha. They will never be apart from hearing the authentic Dharma. They will never be apart from venerating the Saṅgha. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that fully accomplishes the inexhaustible ocean seal. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that penetrates the intentions, conduct, and sounds of sentient beings. They will never be without the dhāraṇī of the radiant sun banner. They will never be without the dhāraṇī of the radiant moon banner. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that achieves the subjugation of all obsessions. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that crushes mountains as solid and firm as a vajra. They will never be without the dhāraṇī for applying oneself to teaching the inexpressible meaning. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that penetrates all words, conduct, and sounds. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that applies the seal to the accomplishment of the stainless maṇḍala of space. They will never be without the dhāraṇī that accomplishes the perfect infinite body of a buddha.
- 5.4 “O deva, by obtaining<sup>26</sup> these dhāraṇīs, bodhisattvas will emanate buddha bodies through the buddhafi elds of the ten directions who will teach the Dharma while not wavering from the nature of reality, with neither coming nor going. Though they bring sentient beings to maturity, they do so without apprehending them as beings. Though they teach the Dharma, they do not waver from the sameness of words. Though they teach about death, transference and rebirth, there is no transference or rebirth. Being without discursive thought concerning all phenomena, formations neither come from anywhere nor go anywhere.”
- 5.5 When this Dharma discourse was given, three thousand bodhisattvas reached acceptance that phenomena are unborn, and countless sentient beings generated the mind set on unsurpassed and perfect buddhahood.

5.6 When the Blessed One had spoken these words,<sup>27</sup> the bodhisattva mahāsattva Akṣayamati, all the bodhisattvas, all the bhikṣus, the deva Unimpeded Radiance of the Lion Banner, and the entire world of devas, humans, asuras, and gandharvas rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.

### Colophon

c.1 This concludes the chapter called *Akṣayamati's Questions*, the forty-fifth section of the *Great Heap of Jewels* with a hundred thousand chapters. Translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptor Surendrabodhi and the principal editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé.<sup>28</sup>

## Notes

1. *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, Toh 556.
2. See Heap of Jewels.
3. *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, Toh 556.
4. See *The Teaching of Akṣayamati*, 1.10.
5. This has been the subject of research by Ulrich Pagel (Pagel 2007).
6. In *The Jewel Cloud*, the list of ten samādhis are found in very similar form (Toh 175, 1.240), but with the eighth and ninth samādhis presented in reverse order. See Pagel 2007, p. 159, Table 2. The dhāraṇīs presented in *The Jewel Cloud* do not match exactly the dhāraṇīs listed in *Akṣayamati's Questions*, but there is considerable overlap.
7. *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, 6.89.
8. In addition to giving each dhāraṇī in Sanskrit and explaining their benefits, the version in *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* also explains the names of ten bodhisattva stages, and the main obscurations faced at each stage. These sections are absent from *Akṣayamati's Questions*.
9. This is suggested in the Introduction to *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* by Peter Alan Roberts (Toh 556, i.30).
10. On the significance of *The Teaching of Akṣayamati* for the Madhyamaka and Yogācāra philosophical traditions, see Jens Braavig's Introduction to *The Teaching of Akṣayamati* (Toh 175, i.3).
11. Translated as “Dialogue with Bodhisattva Infinite Wisdom” in Chang, G (ed.) 1983, pp. 415-24.
12. See Heap of Jewels.
13. Phangthangma, p.15/7, Denkarma, folio 296.b.4. Hermann-Pfandt 2008, p. 39.
14. Tib. *drug bcu*, following the Degé and Lithang editions. Yongle, Kangxi, Narthang and Lhasa read *bcu drug* “sixteen.” The reading “sixty” is supported by the Chinese. Chang 1996, p. 415.
15. From here, the text of *Akṣayamati's Questions* is also found, with only minor orthographic variations, as Chapter 6 of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* (Toh 556, 6.2).
16. The Tibetan rendering of *sattva* (“being”) varies across iterations and editions of this text. The Kangxi, Lhasa, Narthang and Yongle editions of this sūtra, as well as the iteration of this discourse found as Chapter 6 of Toh 556, give *sems dpa'*. The Degé edition of this sūtra reads *sems pa*.
17. Yongle offers the variant reading *gzung du med* (“ungrasped”).
18. In the Chinese, the blossoming of virtues is likened to “flowering pārijāta and kovidāra trees.” Chang (ed.) 1996, p. 416.
19. Following the Degé Kangyur *khong du chud pa*. The Yongle Kangyur reads *btsal ba'i* (“granting”).

20. Following the Degé and other Kangyurs of the Tshalpa line: *dbang bskur ba'i sa*. The Stok Palace edition reads *dbang sgyur ba'i sa* (“stage of mastery”).
21. The Chinese is more specific here, with “to transcend all the virtues of Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas” (Chang 1996, p. 421).
22. Here, the iteration of the teaching found as Chapter 6 of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, (Toh 556) is more elaborate and continues with a section on the names of the ten respective bodhisattva stages (namely Perfect Joy, Stainless, Shining, Blazing, Hard to Master, Manifested, Gone Far, Unwavering, Perfect Understanding, and Cloud of Dharma) and the obscurations that are encountered at each. See *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, 6.48–6.68.
23. On the dhāraṇīs, the iteration of this teaching found as Chapter 6 of *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, (Toh 556) is more elaborate. It gives each dhāraṇī in Sanskrit and elaborates on the benefits that reciting each of them will bestow. See *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, 6.90–6.128. The names of the dhāraṇīs in Tibetan closely correspond in the two texts. For more on these dhāraṇīs, see Pagel 2007.
24. Tib. *lha'i bu*. In *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* he is identified as a bodhisattva mahāsattva.
25. Here, the iteration of the teaching in *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* is more elaborate, with this figure offering ten verses of praise. These are then followed by a short eulogy by Maheśvara. See *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)*, 6.130–6.140.
26. Following the Degé Kangyur, *thob*. The Narthang reads *thos* (“hearing”).
27. Here, the iteration of the teaching in *The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2)* diverges in its concluding section.
28. The colophon of Narthang is slightly longer and adds the information: *sho lo ka gnyis brgya/ zhu chen gyi lo ts+tsha ba dhar+ma tA shI las skad gsar bcad kyis kyang zhus te gtan la phab ba/*. Yongle goes along with Narthang here but omits *sholo ka gnyis brgya/*. The addition of the Narthang edition can be translated as “[It is comprised of] two-hundred stanzas. The translator-editor Dharmatāśīla edited and finalized it according to the new lexical register.”

## Glossary

### **abiding in the presence of the buddhas of the present**

*da ltar gyi sangs rgyas mngon sum du bzhugs pa*

ད་ལྟར་གྱི་སངས་རྒྱས་མངོན་སུམ་དུ་བཞུགས་པ།

*pratyutpannabuddhasaṃmukhāvasthita*

The eighth of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the eighth bodhisattva stage. The samādhi is listed in the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) and in the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 744).

### **acceptance that phenomena are unborn**

*mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa*

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

*anutpattikadharmakṣānti*

Once a bodhisattva is able to accept that all phenomena are unborn and inherently empty of a true nature, they are able to effortlessly endure any type of hardship. This attainment is said to occur either on the first or the eighth bodhisattva stage.

### **accomplishing all purposes**

*don thams cad grub pa*

དོན་ཐམས་ཅད་གྲུབ་པ།

*sarvārthasiddha*

The seventh of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the seventh bodhisattva stage. The samādhi is listed in the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) and in the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 743).

### **adorned with infinite gateways**

*sgo mtha' yas pa'i rgyan*

སྒོ་མཐའ་ཡས་པའི་རྒྱན།

*anantamukhālaṃkāra*

A dhāraṇī associated with the ninth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.122).

### **aggregate of samādhi**

*ting nge 'dzin gyi phung po*

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན་གྱི་སྤང་པོ།

*samādhiskandha*

The second of the five uncontaminated aggregates.

### **aggregates**

*phung po*

སྤང་པོ།

*skandha*

The five psycho-physical constituents that together make up an individual, namely form, feelings, perceptions, formations, and consciousness.

### **Akṣayamati**

*blo gros mi zad pa*

བློ་གྲོས་མི་ཟད་པ།

*akṣayamati*

Name of a bodhisattva who features as an important figure in several Mahāyāna sūtras.

## **applications of mindfulness**

*dran pa nye bar gzhag pa*

བློ་པ་ཉེ་བར་གཞག་པ།

Typically, the applications of mindfulness are four: (1) mindfulness with regard to the body, (2) mindfulness with regard to feelings, (3) mindfulness with regard to the mind, and (4) mindfulness with regard to phenomena.

## **aspiration**

*smon lam*

སློབ་ལམ།

*praṇidhāna*

Eighth of the ten pāramitās.

## **awakening**

*byang chub*

བྱང་ལྷན།

*bodhi*

The state of awakening from the sleep of ignorance, which characterizes the realization of a Buddha.

## **being**

*sems pa*

སེམས་པ།

*sattva*

The second part of the term bodhisattva, denoting a “being,” also with a connotation in Sanskrit of “goodness.” The Tibetan indicates ‘one with sentience.’ In the other almost verbatim iteration of this teaching (Toh 556), *sattva* is rendered in Tibetan as *sems dpa’* (literally “mind hero”) as it is found in the Tibetan for *bodhisattva* (Tib. *byang chub sems dpa’*), while in this sūtra it is rendered as *sems pa*, which in other contexts is more often the translation of the Sanskrit *cetanā*, “attention.”

### **Bhadrapāla**

*bzang skyong*

བཟང་སྐྱོང་།

*bhadrapāla*

Name of the first of the sixteen wise men, a group of lay bodhisattvas that features in many sūtras.

### **Bhante Yeshé Dé**

*ban de ye shes sde*

བན་དེ་ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

The monk (Bhante) Nanam Yeshé Dé (sna nam ye shes sde) was a prolific Tibetan translator and editor of Buddhist sūtras who lived during the late eighth and early ninth centuries.

### **bhikṣu**

*dge slong*

དགེ་སྐོང་།

*bhikṣu*

### **Blessed One**

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavan*

Epithet for the Buddha.

### **blue lotus**

*ud pa la*

ལུད་པ་ལ།

*utpala*

Nymphaea nouchali. A water lily of blue color commonly known as blue lotus.

### **bodhicitta**

*byang chub kyi sems*

བྱང་ཆུབ་གྱི་སེམས།

*bodhicitta*

### **bodhisattva**

*byang chub sems dpa'*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ།

*bodhisattva*

Literally “awakening being.” Any practitioner of the Great Vehicle (Mahāyāna) who has generated the mind set on complete awakening for the sake of all sentient beings (bodhicitta). The main practices of a bodhisattva are the six or ten perfections (pāramitā). By perfecting these, they progress through the ten bodhisattva stages to complete awakening.

### **bodhisattva stage**

*byang chub sems dpa'i sa*

བྱང་ཆུབ་སེམས་དཔལ་འཛི་ས།

*bodhisattvabhūmi*

In this text, the ten bodhisattva stages on the path to awakening each correspond to the perfection of the respective ten pāramitās.

### **Boundless Banner**

*mtha' yas tog*

མཐའ་ཡས་ཉོག།

*anantaketu*

A bodhisattva.

**brilliance of sunlight**

*nyi ma'i 'od kyi gzi brjid*

ཉི་མའི་འོད་ཀྱི་གཟི་བརྗིད།

*sūryaprabhateja*

The sixth of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the sixth bodhisattva stage. The samadhi is listed in the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) and in the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 742).

**buddhafield**

*sangs rgyas kyi zhing*

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།

*buddhakṣetra*

A world system under the influence of a particular buddha.

**caravan leader**

*ded dpon*

དེད་དཔོན།

*sārthavāha*

A leader of a merchant caravan; sometimes used as an epithet for the Buddha in his capacity as a guide and protector.

**concentration**

*bsam gtan*

བསམ་བཀྲའ།

*dhyāna*

Fifth of the six or ten pāramitās, also often translated as “concentration” or “meditative stability.” The ability to maintain attention without distraction for long periods.

### **conditioned phenomena**

*'dus byas*

འདུས་བྱས།

*saṃskṛta*

Phenomena that are composite; produced by causes and conditions.

### **dependent origination**

*rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba*

རྟེན་ཅིང་འབྲེལ་བར་འབྱུང་བ།

*pratītyasamutpāda*

The fundamental Buddhist principle that asserts that phenomena do not exist independently from other phenomena.

### **Dharma Banner**

*chos kyi tog*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྟོག་

*dharmaketu*

A bodhisattva.

### **Dharma discourse**

*chos kyi rnam grangs*

ཚོས་ཀྱི་རྣམ་གྲངས།

*dharmaparyāya*

An explication of the Dharma.

### **dhāraṇī**

*gzungs*

གཟུངས།

*dhāraṇī*

**diligence**

*brtson 'grus*

བརྩོན་འགྲུས།

*vīrya*

Fourth of the six or ten pāramitās, also often translated as “diligence” or “perseverance.”

**elements**

*khams*

ཁམས།

*dhātu*

The constituents of phenomena. Here likely refers to the eighteen elements (eye, form, and eye consciousness; ear, sound, and ear consciousness; nose, smell, and nose consciousness; tongue, taste, and tongue consciousness; body, touch, and body consciousness; and mind, mental phenomena, and mind consciousness).

**ethics**

*tshul khrims*

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

*śīla*

Second of the six or ten pāramitās.

**false views**

*lta bar gyur pa*

ལྟ་བར་གྱུར་པ།

*dṛṣṭigata*

*dṛṣṭikṛta*

A view that is not in accord with the Buddhist teachings, i.e., a view that fosters the continuation of cyclic existence.

**fearlessness**

*mi 'jigs pa*

མི་འདྲིགས་པ།

*abhaya*

*vaiśāradya*

The four types of fearlessness of an awakened being are the fearlessness to declare that one has (1) awakened, (2) ceased all illusions, (3) taught the obstacles to awakening, and (4) shown the way to liberation.

**firm presence**

*rab tu gnas pa*

རབ་ཏུ་གནས་པ།

*pratiṣṭha*

A dhāraṇī associated with the third bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.98.)

**flower sheath**

*me tog gi phur ma*

མེ་ཏོག་གི་ཕུར་མ།

*puṣpapuṭa*

A type of flower-worship. According to Edgerton's Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary (vol. 2, p. 349), flower sheaths are “thrown upon a Buddha, or up in the air where they remain magically fixed and form umbrellas.”

**Fortunate Eon**

*bskal pa bzang po*

བསྐྱལ་བ་བཟང་པོ།

*bhadrakalpa*

The name of the current eon according to Buddhist cosmology. It is said that one thousand buddhas will appear during this period.

**generosity**

*sbyin pa*

སྤྱིན་པ།

*dāna*

First of the six or ten pāramitās.

**Great Heap of Jewels**

*dkon mchog brtsegs pa chen po*

དཀོན་མཆོག་བརྩེགས་པ་ཆེན་པོ།

*Mahāratnakūṭa*

One of the major sūtra collections contained within the Kangyur.

**hard to defeat**

*gdul dka' ba*

གདུལ་དཀའ་བ།

*durdānta*

A dhāraṇī associated with the fourth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.102).

**heroic march**

*dpa' bar 'gro ba*

དཔའ་བར་འགྲོ་བ།

*śūraṃgama*

The samādhi is the subject of its own dedicated sūtra, The Samādhi of Valiant Progress (Toh 132). It is mentioned in numerous sūtras, including The Jewel Cloud (Toh 231), and is listed in the Mahāvvyutpatti (no. 746).

**inexhaustible basket**

*zad mi shes pa'i za ma tog*

ཟད་མི་ཤེས་པའི་བཟ་མ་རྟོག

*akṣayakaraṇḍa*

A dhāraṇī associated with the tenth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.126).

**insight**

*shes rab*

ཤེས་རབ།

*prajñā*

Sixth of the six or ten pāramitās, also often translated as “the perfection of wisdom.” Understanding emptiness as the true nature of all phenomena.

**irreversible**

*phyir mi ldog pa*

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྡོག་པ།

*avinivartanīya*

The fourth of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the fourth bodhisattva stage. The samadhi is listed in the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) and in the Mahāvvyutpatti (no. 740).

**lamp of the wisdom maṇḍala**

*ye shes kyi dkyil 'khor gyi sgron ma*

ཡེ་ཤེས་ཀྱི་དྲིལ་འཁོར་གྱི་སྒྲོན་མ།

*jñānamaṇḍalapradīpa*

A dhāraṇī associated with the sixth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.110).

**lamp of wisdom**

*ye shes sgron ma*

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྒྲོན་མ།

*jñānolka*

The ninth of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the ninth bodhisattva stage. The samādhi is listed in the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) and in the Mahāvvyutpatti (no. 745).

**magnolia**

*me tog tsam pa ka*

*tsam pa ka*

མེ་ཏོག་ཅམ་པ་ཀ།

ཅམ་པ་ཀ།

*campaka*

*campaka*

A large tree of the magnolia family known for its fragrant flowers.

**mahāsattva**

*sems dpa' chen po*

སེམས་དཔའ་ཆེན་པོ།

*mahāsattva*

Literally “great being.” An epithet for accomplished bodhisattvas.

**Maitreya**

*byams pa*

བྱམས་པ།

*maitreya*

The bodhisattva who became Buddha Śākyamuni’s regent and is prophesied to become the fifth buddha of the Fortunate Eon.

## **Mañjuśrī**

*'jam dpal*

འཇམ་དབལ་ལ།

*mañjuśrī*

A famous bodhisattva said to embody wisdom. One of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha.

## **means of attraction**

*bsdu ba'i dngos po*

བསྐྱུ་བའི་དངོས་པོ།

*saṃgrahavastu*

The means of attracting disciples. The list of means of attraction is usually comprised of generosity, kind talk, meaningful actions and practicing as one preaches.

## **meditative attainment**

*snyoms par 'jug pa*

སྟོན་ས་བར་འཇུག་པ།

*samāpatti*

A technical term referring to a state of meditative equipoise attained through concentration.

## **Moon Banner**

*zla ba'i tog*

ཟླ་བའི་རྟོག་

*śaśiketu*

A bodhisattva.

**Mount Meru***ri rab*

རི་རབ།

*sumeru***māra***bdud*

བདུད།

*māra*

A personification of the four defects that prevent one from attaining liberation: (1) divine māra or being distracted by sense pleasures, (2) māra of death that interrupts one's life, (3) māra of the aggregates or self-identification with the five aggregates, and (4) māra in the form of the afflictions. In other contexts, the term is used to describe a heavenly beings opposed to the Buddhist doctrine.

**nature of reality***chos nyid*

ཚོས་ཉིད།

*dharmatā*

The way things really are.

**noble son***rigs kyi bu*

རིགས་ཀྱི་བུ།

*kulaputra*

Respectful term of address for a student on the bodhisattva path.

**nonabiding***gnas pa med pa*

གནས་པ་མེད་པ།

The second of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the second bodhisattva stage. In the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) this samādhi is found as Tib. shin tu gnas pa, which is listed in the Mahāvīyutpatti (no. 738) as translating Skt. supraṭiṣṭhita.

**Nārāyaṇa***sred med kyi bu*

སྲེད་མེད་ཀྱི་བུ།

*nārāyaṇa*

Major deity in the pantheon of the classical Indian religious traditions, he is famous for his strength.

**opponents who hold wrong views***phas kyi rgol ba*

ཕས་ཀྱི་རྫོལ་བ།

*parapravādī**paravāda*

An individual who maintains and/or teaches wrong views that oppose the Buddhist doctrine.

**particularly exalted***khyad par du 'phags pa*

ཁྱད་པར་དུ་འཕགས་པ།

*viśiṣṭha*

A dhāraṇī associated with the seventh bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.114).

**patience***bzod pa*

བཟོན་པ།

*kṣānti*

Third of the six or ten pāramitās, also often translated as “forbearance” or “acceptance.”

**perfectly exalted jewel***rin po che yang dag par 'phags pa*

རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཡང་དག་པར་འཕགས་པ།

The first of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the first bodhisattva stage. In the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) this samādhi is found as Tib. rin chen kun tu 'phags, which is listed in the Mahāvvyutpatti (no. 737) as translating Skt. ratnasamudgata.

**pratyekabuddha***rang sangs rgyas*

རང་སངས་རྒྱས།

*pratyekabuddha***precious flower***rin po che'i me tog*

རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་མེ་ཏྲག།

The fifth of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the fifth bodhisattva stage. In the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) this samādhi is found as Tib. rin chen 'byung gnas “jewel mine.” In the Mahāvvyutpatti (no. 741) dkon mchog 'byung gnas is listed as translating Skt. ratnākara.

### **preliminary**

*sngon du 'gro ba*

སློན་དུ་འགྲོ་བ།

*pūrvaka*

Individual traits or cultivations that are fundamental for and must precede a bodhisattva's training in any given pāramitā. In other contexts, the term is translated as “preliminary practice.”

### **premonition**

*snga ltas*

སླ་ལྷས།

*pūrvanimitta*

A premonition, omen or portent that precedes and indicates a new or future circumstance.

### **pāramitā**

*pha rol tu phyin pa*

ཕ་རོལ་དུ་ཕྱིན་པ།

Literally, “gone to the far shore.” Often translated as “perfections,” these are the main practices of the bodhisattva path or the Mahāyāna. Perfecting these practices leads to the far shore of saṃsāra, beyond the river of suffering in cyclic existence. In this sūtra, practicing each pāramitā leads to a further developmental stage of generating bodhicitta, and perfecting each pāramitā corresponds to reaching each of the ten stages of the bodhisattva path, culminating in awakening. The ten pāramitā are: generosity, ethics, patience, diligence, concentration, insight, skillful means, aspiration, strength, and wisdom.

### **qualities of buddhahood**

*sangs rgyas kyi chos*

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཚོས།

*buddhadharma*

While the same term can also refer to the “doctrine of the Buddha,” it refers here to the different qualities of a buddha, such as the ten strengths, the four types of fearlessness, and the eighteen unique qualities.

### **red lotus**

*ku mu da*

ཀུ་མུ་ད།

*kumuda*

*Nymphaea pulescens*. A water lily of red, pink or white color. It is also known as night lotus.

### **roots of virtue**

*dge ba'i rtsa ba*

དགེ་བའི་རྩ་བ།

*kuśalamūla*

Similar to merit, roots of virtue are generated upon interaction with an awakened being or by undertaking wholesome actions of body, speech, and mind. They ripen into attainments on the path and eventually in full awakening.

### **Rājagrha**

*rgyal po'i khab*

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

*rājagrha*

**samādhi**

*ting nge 'dzin*

ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན།

*samādhi*

**seat of awakening**

*byang chub kyi snying po*

བྱང་ལྷན་གྱི་སྙིང་པོ།

*bodhimaṇḍa*

The location under the bodhi tree in Bodhgaya, where Buddha Śākyamuni sat in meditation and obtained awakening

**sense sources**

*skye mched*

སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

*āyatana*

**skillful means**

*thabs mkhas pa*

ཐབས་མཁས་པ།

*upāya*

Seventh of the ten pāramitās.

**special blessing**

*khyad par gyi byin gyi rlabs*

ཁྱད་པར་གྱི་བྱིན་གྱི་རྣམས།

*viśeṣādhiṣṭhita*

A dhāraṇī associated with the first bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.90).

**stage of irreversibility**

*phyir mi ldog pa'i sa*

ཕྱིར་མི་ལྷོག་པའི་ས།

*avaivartikabhūmi*

A stage on the bodhisattva path on which the practitioner will never turn back, or be turned back, from progress toward the full awakening of a buddha.

**strength**

*stobs*

སྟོབས།

*bala*

Ninth of the ten pāramitās.

**Sun Banner**

*nyi ma'i tog*

ཉི་མའི་རྟོག

*sūryaketu*

A bodhisattva.

**Surendrabodhi**

*su ren dra bo dhi*

སུ་རེན་བོ་བློ།

*surendrabodhi*

An Indian scholar who came to Tibet during the reign of King Ralpachen (early ninth century). He was involved in the formation of the Mahāvyutpatti Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary and worked together with Tibetan translators at the translation of Buddhist texts.

### **tathāgata**

*de bzhin gshegs pa*

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

*tathāgata*

Thus-gone one. Epithet for a buddha, implying that a buddha has transcended worldly existence.

### **ten strengths**

*stobs bcu*

མཚན་བཅུ།

*daśa balāni*

*daśabala*

A list of ten distinctive strengths of a Buddha. Typically listed as: (1) knowing what is possible and what is impossible; (2) knowing the results of actions or the ripening of karma; (3) knowing the various inclinations of sentient beings; (4) knowing the various elements; (5) knowing the supreme and lesser faculties of sentient beings; (6) knowing the paths that lead to all destinations of rebirth; (7) knowing the concentrations, liberations, absorptions, equilibriums, afflictions, purifications, and abidings; (8) knowing previous lives; (9) knowing the death and rebirth of sentient beings; and (10) knowing the cessation of the defilements.

### **three categories**

*phung po gsum*

ཕུང་པོ་གསུམ།

*trirāśi*

This refers to the capacity of a buddha to ascertain to which of the following categories for receiving Buddhist teachings a being belongs: (1) those whose receptivity is certain, (2) those whose nonreceptivity is certain, and (3) those whose receptivity is undetermined. According to this sūtra, the capacity is already developed by bodhisattvas at the higher stages.

**unassailable by others**

*gzhan gyis mi thub pa*

གཞན་གྱིས་མི་སུབ་པ།

*aparājita*

A dhāraṇī associated with the second bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.94).

**unconditioned phenomena**

*'dus ma byas*

འདུས་མ་བྱས།

*asaṃskṛta*

Phenomena that are not composite; not produced by causes and conditions.

**Unimpeded Radiance of the Lion Banner**

*seng ge'i tog gi 'od zer snang ba thogs pa med pa*

སང་གེའི་ཏོག་གི་འོད་ཟེར་སྒྲོང་བ་ཐོགས་པ་མེད་པ།

A deva who occurs as a disciple of the buddha in this sūtra.

**unique qualities of a buddha**

*sangs rgyas kyi chos ma 'dres pa*

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཚོས་མ་འདྲེས་པ།

*āveṇikabuddhadharma*

Eighteen features of a buddha’s realization, activity, and wisdom that are not shared by other beings. They consist of the ten strengths, the four types of fearlessness, three recollections, and great compassion.

**universal monarch**

*'khor los sgyur ba*

འཕོང་ཕོས་སྐྱུར་བ།

*cakravartin*

**unsullied thought**

*rnyog pa med pa'i rtog pa*

རྫོག་པ་མེད་པའི་རྟོག་པ།

*anāvilakalpana*

A dhāraṇī associated with the eighth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, 6.118).

**utterly immovable**

*rab tu mi g.yo ba*

རབ་ཏུ་མི་གཡོ་བ།

The third of a set of ten samādhis listed in this sūtra. This samādhi is associated with the third bodhisattva stage. In the Jewel Cloud (Toh 231) this samādhi is found as Tib. mi bsgul ba, which is listed in the Mahāvyutpatti (no. 739) as translating Skt. ākampya.

**various qualities**

*yon tan sna tshogs*

ཡོན་ཏན་སྣ་ཚོགས།

*nānāguṇa*

A dhāraṇī associated with the fifth bodhisattva stage. The Sanskrit dhāraṇī is found in Chapter 6 of The Sūtra of the Sublime Golden Light (2) (Toh 556, ).

**Vulture Peak Mountain**

*bya rgod kyi phung po'i ri*

བྱ་རྗོད་ཀྱི་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

*gr̥dhrakūtaparvata*

**white lotus**

*pad ma dkar po*

པད་མ་དཀར་པོ།

*puṇḍarīka*

Nelumbo nucifera. The sacred or Indian lotus. Its color ranges from white to red and it can also be bicolored.

**wholesome dharmas**

*dkar po'i chos*

དཀར་པོའི་ཚོས།

*śukladharma*

Wholesome activities; a synonym for virtuous activities.

**wisdom**

*ye shes*

*ye shes tog*

ཡེ་ཤེས།

ཡེ་ཤེས་ཉོག།

*jñāna*

*jñānaketu*

Tenth of the ten pāramitās.

**world systems of the great trichiliocosm**

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

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

*trisāhasramahāsāhasralokadhātu*

Use Standard

**śrāvaka**

*nyan thos*

ཉན་ཐོས།

*śrāvaka*

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