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Surata's Questions

Surataparipṛcchāsūtra

Translated into Tibetan by
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འཕགས་པ་དེས་པས་ལྷུས་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa des pas zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra “Surata’s Questions”

Āryasurataparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 71
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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1 *Surata's Questions* follows Surata, a seemingly poor vagabond endowed with a wealth of ethical virtue. The juxtaposition of Surata's poverty with the abundance of his moral merits forms a central theme of the sūtra. After being tested by the god Śakra, Surata finds a precious gem that he decides to give to the poorest person in the city. The narrative's irony ensues when Surata decides that King Prasenajit should receive the gem, since his ethical depravity vitiates his material wealth. The shock of Surata's decision occasions a valuable lesson on true wealth lying in moral integrity, to which the Buddha himself attests upon his arrival midway through the sūtra. The sūtra concludes with King Prasenajit's recognition of the error of his ways and the Buddha's prophecy of Surata's coming awakening.

ac.

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

i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

Surata's Questions, the twenty-seventh sūtra in the *Heap of Jewels* section of the Kangyur, displays many of the common tropes of Mahāyāna literature, including the Buddha's unimaginably vast retinue, his performance of miracles, such as lights emanating from his body, and the conversion of a previously stubborn interlocutor. Also typical of Mahāyāna sūtras, the main protagonist is the eponymous figure of the sūtra, in lieu of the Buddha. *Surata's Questions* thus mainly focuses on the story of Surata in a narrative that can be conceptualized in six movements.

i.2

First, Surata, identified simply as a "poor city-dweller," is tested by the god Śakra in Śrāvastī, the city where the Buddha himself happens to be residing. With his divine eye, Śakra perceives Surata to be of impeccable moral character and so decides to determine the limits of his resolve. Śakra magically creates several scenarios to tempt Surata to succumb to a desire for power, wealth, and sexual gratification. But being inveterately moral and without desire, Surata resists each temptation, and responds to them in eloquent verses that highlight the dangers of succumbing to each of them. At this point, Śakra becomes deeply impressed with Surata.

i.3

In the second movement, Surata chances upon a precious gem. As a good bodhisattva, he resolves to give the jewel to the poorest person in the city of Śrāvastī, the capital of Kośala. Announcing this publicly, the townsfolk predictably make their case for why they are the poorest and therefore the most deserving of the gem. They are also predictably irritated when Surata declares he has decided to give the gem to the king of Kośala, the famed King Prasenajit. Having gained the crowd's attention through his audacity, Surata gives a soliloquy on how true wealth lies not in possessions, but in virtue. Surata therefore displays characteristic Mahāyāna skillful means, leveraging the townsfolk's infatuation with the gem to impart a moral lesson.

- i.4 With the crowd in tow, Surata delivers the gem to King Prasenajit. It is a backhanded gesture since Surata offers it with the explanation that the king is the poorest person in Śrāvastī. Insulted, the king asks Surata to explain how he could possibly be the poorest. Surata proceeds to describe how the king's political maneuverings and plundering have made him bereft of moral virtue. His possessions mean nothing without the merit of good deeds, for without this, one is karmically doomed to a miserable future. The king is both moved and angered by Surata's exposition, and so remains unconvinced, asking if there is anyone who can bear witness to Surata's testament. This ushers in the fourth movement of the story. Surata says that the Buddha will bear such witness. King Prasenajit therefore requests Surata to invite the Buddha, but Surata counters that there is no need, for, being omniscient, the Buddha will arrive simply through Surata's mental aspiration. The Buddha suddenly bursts forth from the ground, accompanied by a dizzying number of holy beings. The Buddha attests to Surata's summation of the king's wealth, and so Prasenajit is convinced. Surata suggests that the Buddha give a sermon, since it would be a shame for him to come without doing so. After delivering his sermon, the Buddha and his retinue continue their upward trajectory by flying into the sky.
- i.5 In the fifth movement, Surata delivers a sermon of his own, describing the various meanings of *retinue*. At the conclusion, the king again feels moved to contrition, offering bolts of cloth to the rag-clad Surata. When Surata rejects the offer, the king requests Surata to at least walk upon the cloth. This is a great show of respect because the feet are considered the most impure part of a person's body. Thus to request someone to touch an object with their feet suggests that even the lowest part of that person's body confers immense blessing. Surata then requests that the king give this cloth to the poor townsfolk, demonstrating that Surata did not trade their welfare solely to create an opportunity to teach the Dharma; in lieu of the gem, he was still able to offer them something of value in the end.
- i.6 The sixth and final movement of the story reads somewhat like an epilogue. Sometime later, King Prasenajit, his family, and his royal attendants accompany Surata to visit the Buddha. Śakra emanates a grand throne for the Buddha and his retinue with the requisite fanfare. Some of the other gods question why Surata, out of place in his ragged garments, is in attendance. Śakra's earlier respect for Surata resurfaces when he comes to Surata's defense by admonishing the other gods for their failure to realize how special Surata is. As Śakra foreshadows, the Buddha concludes the sūtra by predicting Surata's awakening, to the grand jubilation of all.

i.7 Surata is a common personal name in Buddhist literature, but no other text appears to mention a renunciate bodhisattva who might be identifiable as the Surata of this text. In contrast, the prominent role in this narrative of Prasenajit, king of Kośala, a well-known figure in Buddhist literature, is noteworthy. It is believed that Prasenajit was born in the same year as Siddhārtha, the future Buddha, and it is possible, given the close geographical and political ties between Kośala and the Śākya kingdom, that Prasenajit and the Śākya prince Siddhārtha moved in the same royal circles and knew each other from an early age. Prasenajit is generally depicted as a dedicated, lifelong patron of the Buddha with an exemplary degree of devotion to him. This devotion is clearly demonstrated in Prasenajit's most famous deed: his fashioning of a sandalwood image of Śākyamuni—perhaps the earliest record of any image of the Buddha—to soothe his longing and devotion when the Buddha was away from Śrāvastī. Prasenajit is also a frequent interlocuter in Buddhist sūtras, presenting the questions to Śākyamuni that elicit his sermons. For his role in Buddhist sūtras and his acts of patronage and devotion, Prasenajit is often held up as the model of Buddhist kingship.

i.8 This general depiction of Prasenajit in Buddhist literature makes his role in *Surata's Questions* a curious one. Here he is described as a rapacious and maniacal tyrant who steals the wealth of his people and inflicts needless suffering upon them. It is only through Surata's challenge and the Buddha's subsequent chastisement that Prasenajit realizes his faults as a king and awakens his devotion to the Buddha and his community. That this narrative stands somewhat at odds with Prasenajit's general status in Buddhist literature may simply demonstrate the malleability of common Buddhist narratives for the sake of expediency in articulating the ethical or doctrinal message of a given scriptural discourse. Possibly, too, in describing what seems to be his first meeting with the Buddha following the latter's awakening, the text could be read as indicating that Prasenajit's views on how best to wield royal power had, prior to that first encounter with Surata's challenge as a prelude, been fiercer and more autocratic than is suggested in other accounts of his subsequent doings.¹ If this is an account of Prasenajit's first meeting with the Buddha, however, it should be noted that it is a quite different one from the classic account related in the *Saṅghabhedavastu* (Toh 1 chapter 17),² in its standalone derivative the *Abhiniṣkramanasūtra* (Toh 301), and in the Pali *Dahara-sutta* (SN 3.1). This unique perspective on the figure of Prasenajit thus counts among the numerous ways *Surata's Questions* makes a significant contribution to our understanding of Buddhist literature.

i.9 In addition to the Tibetan translation found in various Kangyurs, three Chinese translations of the *Surataparipṛcchā* are presently available. Of the two earlier versions, the first, translated by Bai Yan in the mid-third century, is titled 佛說須賴經 (*Fo shuo xulai jing*, Taishō 328), and the second, translated by Zhi Shilun in 373 CE, has the title 須賴經 (*Xu lai jing*, Taishō 329). The attributions and dates of these two early translations, given here from the standard catalogs, remain disputed by scholars. A later version was translated in the sixth century by Bodhiruci under the title 善順菩薩會 (*Shanshun pusa hui*), which is one title (number 27) among the 49 texts included under Taishō 310, the Ratnakūṭa. The latter translation by Bodhiruci served as the basis for the English translation of the *Surataparipṛcchā* published by Garma C. C. Chang and his team in 1983. There are marked differences between Bodhiruci's translation and the Tibetan versions used in the translation of this sūtra that follows here, which are closer to the two earlier versions. These differences are reflected in Chang's English translation. The final, sixth movement is not found in the Chinese version, and the order of events varies. In the sequence from the Tibetan translation reported above, the narrative continues after the Buddha has given his sermon on the meanings of *retinue*; the Chinese version of the sūtra, however, concludes at this point. The contents of the Buddha's sermon in the fourth movement also vary widely between the two versions: in the Chinese, the Buddha discusses the thirty-two practices that good Mahāyāna adherents must follow, while in the Tibetan, the Buddha expounds six different sets of four, each tetrad communicating seemingly disconnected aspects of Buddhist practice. Other differences are minor but noteworthy: in the Tibetan version, for instance, Surata chances upon a precious gem, and in the Chinese, he finds a golden bell.

i.10 *Surata's Questions* is only mentioned by name in one work of the Tengyur, an anthology titled *Compendium of Sūtras on the Steps of Meditation* (*Bhāvanā-kramasūtrasamuccaya*, *bsgom pa'i rim pa mdo kun las btus pa*). The work cites two interesting parts of the sūtra, both of which are in verse. The first reads:

i.11 When the seeds are bitter,
They will bear bitter fruit.
When the seeds are sweet,
They will bear sweet fruit.

i.12 Applying this example,
A wise person understands
The bitterness of the ripening of sins
And the sweetness of the fruits of white deeds. [F.130.b]

i.13 This verse is given in the midst of several other citations describing the importance of keeping one’s ethics in order to escape the suffering of saṃsāra. The second selection is cited as an example of how to go to refuge to the Three Jewels—the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha:

i.14 You delight in eliminating desire, hatred, and delusion;
Your mind is peaceful and impartial, yet compassionate;
You speak truthfully and know the ultimate;
Thus, I pay homage to you, who liberates all three realms! [F.137.b]

i.15 The context of these passages becomes clear in the sūtra translated below. However, the decision to isolate these passages and place them in a mélange of other such passages from other sūtras suggests they may have been recognized as standalone aphorisms that were well-known in the compiler’s contemporary Buddhist community and worthy of record.

i.16 There is no surviving Sanskrit witness to *Surata’s Questions*. It was translated into Tibetan by a group of translators, including the famous translator Bandé Yeshé Dé, no later than the early ninth century CE. The text is recorded in both the Denkarma and the Phangthangma—both early catalogs of Tibetan translations. The translation below relies primarily on the Degé (*sde dge*) edition of the text, but other editions included in the Comparative Edition of the Kangyur (*bka’ ’gyur dpe bsdur ma*) as well as the Stok Palace (*stog pho brang*) edition of the Kangyur were consulted, particularly when the Degé seemed to contain errors or nonintuitive readings. Chang’s English translation of the Chinese version of this text—which, as described above, is markedly different from the Tibetan—was also consulted for comparison.

The Noble Mahāyāna Sūtra

Surata's Questions

1.

The Translation

[F.181.a]

1.1 Homage to all the buddhas and bodhisattvas!

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Bhagavān was dwelling in Śrāvastī, in Prince Jeta's Grove at Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, together with a great monastic assembly of one thousand two hundred and fifty monks and with thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas. He was venerated, revered, honored, and worshiped by the fourfold community, as well as by the king, ministers, townsfolk, and citizens.

1.3 At that time in Śrāvastī there lived a poor city-dweller named Surata. He had unshakable faith in the Buddha, unshakable faith in the Dharma, and unshakable faith in the Saṅgha. He held to the five basic precepts and adhered to the ten virtuous actions. Being kind, he was equanimous toward all sentient beings. Being compassionate, he was indefatigable. Being joyful, he reveled in and longed for the bliss of Dharma. Being impartial, he was unmoved by happiness or suffering. He was dedicated to the pursuit of unsurpassable, perfect awakening, and was perfected through previous practice. Through skillful means, he brought sentient beings to full maturity, despite being considered poor.

1.4 Śakra, lord of the gods, beheld the poor city-dweller Surata with his divine eye, whose clarity surpasses any human's. Śakra perceived that he had few desires, that he was content, that he had ethical discipline and was morally upright, that his mind was unperturbed, that he always wore a smile, that he did not judge others for their mistakes, [F.181.b] that he cared for the mental welfare of all sentient beings, that he was not covetous, that he acted mindfully, that he was content, easily fulfilled, and easily sated, that he had good intentions, that he was not deceitful, that he was not conceited, that he was eloquent, that he was respectful, that he continually observed the eight precepts, that he carried a bowl made of leaves in his hands, that he slept on

a grass mat, that he wore tattered garments, that he would not take things he chanced upon, that he would share his food no matter its quality, that he had regard for the Tathāgata at all times, that he wanted to hear the Dharma, that he was inspired by various parables, and that when sentient beings saw him, they were happy.

1.5 Seeing this, Śakra, lord of the gods, thought to himself, “Let me examine whether this poor city-dweller’s moral resolve is firm.” He then emanated a crowd of people who abused and rebuked the poor city-dweller Surata with offensive words. Surata patiently tolerated their threats, even as they brandished clumps of earth, sticks, and blades; he was neither irritated, nor gave rise to malicious thoughts.

1.6 Śakra, lord of the gods, then emanated another crowd in front of Surata. With kind words, they said to him, “We would like to help you. If you wish, we will exterminate all the enemies who threaten you.”

1.7 “Friends, don’t say such things!” replied Surata. “Even if those people were to cut my body into a hundred pieces, I still would not think badly of them. Friends, in the various worlds, there are two types of beings, the virtuous and the nonvirtuous. The virtuous ones have happy rebirths, and the nonvirtuous ones have miserable rebirths. Therefore, since I don’t even want to get angry with them, how could I harm them physically?”

1.8 Surata then spoke these verses:

1.9 “When the seeds are bitter,
They will bear bitter fruit. [F.182.a]
When the seeds are sweet,
They will bear sweet fruit.

1.10 “Applying this analogy,
A wise person understands
The bitterness of the ripening of sins
And the sweetness of the fruits of white deeds.³

1.11 “You should never commit the three kinds of sins
With your body, speech, or mind!
And when others commit them,
The wise should not rejoice!

1.12 “You should always perform the three white deeds
With your body, speech, and mind!
And when others perform virtues,
You should rejoice in them!”

- 1.13 Then, on another occasion, Śakra, lord of the gods, showed Surata a heap of jewels and gold and said, “Surata, use these to make donations and make merit! Get some clothes and jewelry! Why should you be poor and wretched?”
- 1.14 “Friends,”⁴ said Surata, “because I performed evil deeds in the past toward sentient beings with my body, speech, and mind, I am now considered poor. Therefore, I don’t want to take what is not given to me.”
- 1.15 “Surata, now is the time to be living happily!” Śakra insisted. “Why are you thinking of the world beyond?”
- 1.16 “Friend,” replied Surata, “living for the sake of this life is the way of childish beings. The wise live for the sake of their next life. Those who are possessed by desire, possessed by hatred, possessed by delusion, and possessed by lust take what is not given to them, whereas the wise are not covetous. Those who live for the sake of hoarding take what is not given to them, whereas the wise do not hoard. Those who hold concepts of ‘mine’ and who are possessive take what is not given to them, whereas the wise do not hold concepts of ‘mine’ and are not possessive. Those who focus on their bodies and vitality take what is not given to them, whereas the wise do not focus on their bodies and vitality. [F.182.b] Those who are not satisfied and not contented take what is not given to them, whereas the wise know satisfaction and contentment. Those who live impurely take what is not given to them, whereas the wise live purely. Those who do not have insight into karma take what is not given to them, whereas the wise have insight into karma. Those who live for the sake of harming others take what is not given to them, whereas the wise live for the sake of not harming others. Those who do not have loving attitudes take what is not given to them, whereas the wise have loving attitudes. Those whose minds are polluted by the four wrong views take what is not given to them, whereas the minds of the wise are not wrong. Moreover, may the poor heed these verses!
- 1.17 “The learned have explained
That those with tens of billions of treasures
But who refuse to give
Are poor in this world.
- 1.18 “The insightful have explained
That those without even porridge to eat
But who continue to give
Are wealthy in this world.
- 1.19 “Noble ones are without sin,
And thus are always beautiful.
Childish beings commit sins

And so are ugly, even adorned with ornaments.

1.20 “What the wise revile with ease
The childish praise instead.
The childish praise sin;
Sin is what the wise condemn.”

1.21 Then, on another occasion, Śakra, lord of the gods, emanated another person who brought a pile of gold to Surata and said, “Hey Surata, I’ve brought this gold for you. I’m in the midst of a dispute with someone and only you can act as my witness. You need to be my witness!”

1.22 Surata replied, “Give it up, my friend! Don’t say that! I don’t want to lie. My friend, lying would deceive not only myself and others, but the noble ones as well. Lying ruins one’s reputation. Lying makes one untrustworthy and unpleasant. [F.183.a] Lying makes one despicable. Lying torments one’s mind. My friend, lying gives one bad breath. Lying makes one’s body feeble. Lying makes one despised by the gods. My friend, lying steals away one’s roots of virtue. Lying dulls one’s memory. Lying blocks one’s path to fortunate rebirths. My friend, noble ones do not engage in lying.⁵ Lying makes one’s speech distasteful among truthful people. Lying is criticized by the wise. Lying is the root of all sins. Lying severs the fulfillment of one’s religious observances at the root. Lying is the root of all miserable rebirths.”

1.23 The poor city-dweller Surata then spoke these verses:

1.24 “From the mouths of liars
Emerges foul breath.
Lying eliminates all of one’s prior white deeds,
Akin to destroying a monastery.

1.25 “Deluded people dishearten themselves
As well as deities and noble beings.
A person who tells lies
Will always be suspect.

1.26 “Telling a lie
Is the root of all sins.
It severs the root of ascetic practices,
And is said to be the path to miserable rebirths.

1.27 “Even if you were to offer me gold
Enough to fill Jambudvīpa,
To protect the Dharma,
I would never tell a lie.”

- 1.28 Unable to get Surata to lie, the person emanated by Śakra went away.
Then Śakra, lord of the gods, said to the goddess Sunlight and the asura Śacī,
- 1.29 “You two go test whether this practitioner of religious observances and austerities indulges in sensual gratification or if he truly doesn’t strive for pleasure!”
- 1.30 At daybreak, the asura Śacī and the goddess Sunlight went to where Surata was staying and spoke to him sweetly, “Wake up, Surata! [F.183.b] We’re here to serve you. Surata, behold our perfect bodies! Behold the curves, luster, and shapeliness of our bodies. Behold our bodies, anointed with unguents and adorned with ornaments, garments, and accessories! Behold how we exude the bloom of youth! Surata, behold our well-formed, perfect bodies, the kind that will please you.”
- 1.31 Seeing them, Surata said, “You two serve those in hell, the realms of animals, and Yama’s realm, but not those in the god or human realms. I see your bodies as illusory and dream-like. I see your bodies as being like foam, bubbles, and mirages. I see your bodies, anointed with sandalwood ointment, as covered in soggy flesh. I see your ornaments and garments as illusions that deceive the eyes. I see your youthfulness as impermanent and subject to change. Since I see all that to be meritless, I feel no attraction to you. You two serve those whose minds are like monkeys and those whose minds are like women’s, but you can’t serve those whose minds are protected by mindfulness.
- 1.32 “Sisters, those who rely on desire are ugly. Those who rely on desire smell foul. Those who rely on desire are rotten. Those who rely on desire suffer greatly. Those who rely on desire are barred from all happiness. Those who rely on desire will frequent the hells, animal realms, and Yama’s realm. Those who rely on desire will remain in miserable rebirths. Those who rely on desire will resort to fighting, disputing, and quarreling. Those who rely on desire will have to live in disharmony and become trapped. Those who rely on desire develop misconceptions. [F.184.a] Those who rely on desire will maintain their propensities for continued existence.⁶ Those who rely on desire are very deluded, completely deluded, and thoroughly deluded. Those who rely on desire are fully oppressed, very oppressed, and extremely oppressed. Those who rely on desire are thoroughly tormented, very tormented, and entirely tormented. Those who rely on desire pursue nonvirtue and degrade their virtue. Those who rely on desire plant the roots of nonvirtue. Those who rely on desire are completely trapped in an impenetrable fog of nonvirtue. Those who rely on desire are intimate with rākṣasīs, with those who have ugly bodies, and with piśācīs. Those who rely on desire will have relations with cattle, donkeys, dogs, pigs, camels,

elephants, horses, sheep, and foxes. Those who rely on desire will rely on degenerate people. Those who rely on desire will rely on people who entirely forsake discipline, study, and acts of generosity. Those who rely on desire forsake religious observances and ascetic practices. Those who rely on desire are completely careless. Those who rely on desire greatly increase their mental afflictions. Those who rely on desire create many obstacles.”

1.33 The poor city-dweller Surata then spoke these verses:

1.34 “Desire tarnishes the impermanent as permanent;
Desire completely destroys happiness with suffering;
Desire makes miserable realms your home.
Those with deluded minds always rely on desire.

1.35 “Due to desire, the quarrelsome become unhappy and evil.
They are trapped in contentiousness and disharmony;
They are a fertile ground for misconceptions;
Their craving increases and happiness vanishes.

1.36 “Due to desire, they become very deluded, extremely deluded, and
thoroughly deluded;
They are constantly oppressed and experience harm;
They are thoroughly tormented, very tormented, and entirely tormented;
[F.184.b]
And they engage in evil and squander their virtue.

1.37 “Desire is the root of all nonvirtue.
Relying on desire is like an impenetrable fog;
Relying on desire, one will be intimate
With piśācīs, rākṣasīs, and ugly women.

1.38 “Due to desire, one even has relations
With cattle, donkeys, horses,
Pigs, dogs, foxes, camels, elephants, and sheep.
Thus, holy beings abandon desire.

1.39 “Desire ruins discipline, study, and acts of generosity
As well as ascetic practice and religious observance;
Due to desire, one is always careless, and faults increase.
Therefore, those who wish for liberation always reject women.

1.40 “Even if the world were filled
With radiant beauties like you,
Being stable in good qualities, my focused mind
Would never be swayed toward desire.”

- 1.41 The asura Śacī and the goddess Sunlight then went back to Śakra, lord of the gods, and spoke this verse:
- 1.42 “Surata perceives unfailingly
The true deficiencies of women.
The more he rejects sense objects,
The less he has any desire for them.”
- 1.43 Thereupon Śakra, lord of the gods, came to the poor city-dweller Surata and spoke this verse:
- 1.44 “O righteous Surata, what is it you desire?
Keeper of religious observances, tell me truthfully!
Do you want to become Sūrya, Candra, or Indra,
Or Brahmā, or a divine king?”
- 1.45 Surata responded:
- 1.46 “What wise person would want to become any of those mighty great beings,
Whether it is Sūrya, Candra, or even Śakra,
Brahmā, a divine king, or anyone else,
Seeing that their frolicking is impermanent and unstable?
- 1.47 “I am resolved, in thought and deed,
To obtain that which is birthless, ageless, deathless,
And beyond judgments of beauty and ugliness—
That is called ‘becoming a buddha who liberates beings.’ ”
- 1.48 Śakra said:
- 1.49 “I rejoice in your beneficent words; [F.185.a]
May you completely accomplish your wishes!
Having swiftly subjugated the entire horde of māras,
May you attain awakening like the conqueror Śakyasiṃha!”
- 1.50 On another occasion, the poor city-dweller Surata found a priceless and precious gem. He thought to himself, “Assuredly, I should give this precious gem, the finest in Jambudvīpa, to the poorest person in Śrāvastī.” He went to the city and announced, “I will give this gem to the poorest among you.”
- 1.51 A crowd of neglected poor people gathered there and called out, “We are poor, so give it to us!”
“You are not poor!” countered Surata. “But there is someone else in Śrāvastī who is exceedingly poor, so I will give it to that person.”
- 1.52 The crowd asked, “Who?”
“It is King Prasenajit,” replied Surata.

- 1.53 “Don’t say that!” the crowd retorted. “King Prasenajit is rich and wealthy with vast resources, whereas we are poor and neglected.”
- 1.54 Surata responded:
- 1.55 “What is the use of so much wealth?
Like nāgas unsatisfied with what’s in the ocean,⁷
Those for whom nothing is ever enough
Are unrestrained and thus truly poor.
- 1.56 “Those deluded ones,
Whose desires intensify
And whose minds are tormented,
Are poor in both this life and the next.”
- 1.57 Then the poor city-dweller Surata, carrying the precious gem and accompanied by the crowd, went to where King Prasenajit was administering his royal duties.
- 1.58 At that time, as a penalty for some minor infractions, King Prasenajit had seized the possessions of some five hundred eminent merchants and householders who were from good families.
- 1.59 The poor city-dweller Surata offered the king the precious gem and said, “Great king, I’ve found this priceless and precious gem whose worth matches that of all Jambudvīpa, [F.185.b] and I thought that I would give it to the poorest person in Śrāvastī. I think you are the poorest among everyone here. Therefore, O King, please accept it!”
- 1.60 Thereupon King Prasenajit became nervous and embarrassed, and he asked the poor city-dweller Surata, “Surata, how am I even poorer than you?”
Surata replied, “O Your Majesty, it is true. You are poorer than me.”
- 1.61 “In what way am I poor?” asked the king.
Surata then spoke these verses:
- 1.62 “When someone has increasingly intense desires, is not contented with his own possessions,
Disturbs the kingdom by causing harm, forsakes even himself,
Fails to protect the people in his kingdom, and holds in high esteem those of meager quality,
Then those intent on the Dharma will think him poor.
- 1.63 “When someone practices loving kindness, is not harsh to sentient beings,
Is always content with the bare necessities, has no desire,
Is constantly compassionate when he sees the destitute, and does not despise them,

- Then he is rich, wealthy, and immensely affluent, enjoys the treasures of faith, and so forth.
- 1.64 “Know that when someone possesses immense power over the people here, but does not protect the Dharma;
When he knows that lowly people are tormented by suffering, yet punishes them further;
When he delights in focusing on what’s in front of him with his mistresses, but has no regard for the world beyond,
Then he does not protect the Dharma—he is abjectly poor and the lowest of people!
- 1.65 “Those whose minds are stainless due to their faith, who remain unshakably ethical,
Who always know shame and propriety, who uphold learning and enjoy giving,
Who have perfected wisdom, are intelligent, and have concern for all beings
Never fall into poverty and are worthy of veneration by those intent upon the Dharma.
- 1.66 “Those [F.186.a] who are attached to wealth, enjoy pleasures, and are miserly,
Who take their own body and life to heart, but never bother with what is essential—
Those whose minds are crazed and frantic, like a rampaging elephant,
And who are unmindful—Your Majesty, all of them fall into poverty.
- 1.67 “Those who have great devotion to the stainless Three Jewels,
Who are always skillful at using what’s essential from their body, life, and wealth—
Those who are not covetous, malicious, foolish, or prideful,
And those who are adorned with the Dharma—Your Majesty, all of them are wealthy and holy beings.
- 1.68 “Your Majesty, a wildfire is never satisfied with just burning the dry bark in a forest.
Your Majesty, the ocean is never satisfied with just the water it receives from rivers.
Likewise, the sun and moon are never satisfied with their progressions in the sky.
Due to craving, a king is never content with his wealth, and so is brought to ruin.
- 1.69 “Once grass has been incinerated by fire, it will not burn again.

Similarly, the wise are never content with their wisdom and so do not blaze
with afflictions.

Since, like a water drop, a kingdom is unstable and prone to destruction,
Who would seek out such a kingdom that is a wellspring of harm and
smothers virtue?"

1.70 King Prasenajit became agitated and demanded of the poor city-dweller
Surata, "Surata, who could attest, on your behalf, that I am poor and you are
rich?"

1.71 "Your Majesty," replied Surata, "haven't you heard that the thus-gone,
worthy, completely perfect Buddha is dwelling here in Śrāvastī?"

"I've heard this, but have yet to see him," said the king.

1.72 "Your Majesty, he has become the eye for all beings, including the gods!"
said Surata. "He has become the authority. He could attest on my behalf."

"Go invite the Tathāgata and I will hear what he has to say," said the king.

1.73 Surata replied:

1.74 "One need not send this humble servant,
Nor any other envoy for the Teacher, [F.186.b]
For when I think of him,
He will know and come hither.

1.75 "In this world and beyond,
There is nothing unknown to him.
Knowing my thoughts,
The Guide will come hither.

1.76 "Because of his compassion toward sentient beings,
He does not fall prey to conceit.
Because he is ever attentive to sentient beings,
He will come hither, even from afar.

1.77 "O great king, in your great kindness,
Please now do what I ask!
Please seek a statement of truth
From the Teacher who is coming here!

1.78 "Please prepare
Flowers, incense, flower garlands,
Victory banners, parasols, ointments, and cymbals—
The Guide is coming."

1.79 Surata, with hands joined together,
Uncovered one shoulder,

- Knelt down on the ground,
And said these words:
- 1.80 “If you are truly omniscient,
Then you should know what I am thinking.
Therefore, O Sage, please come before me
By the truth of my words!”
- 1.81 As soon as these words were spoken,
The earth shook violently.
The ground burst open,
And the Tathāgata emerged.
- 1.82 He was surrounded by five hundred śrāvakas,
Who possessed miraculous powers,
And was escorted
By twelve hundred bodhisattvas,
As well as protectors, gods, nāgas,
And the gods Śakra and Brahmā.
- 1.83 When they saw these miracles,
The people were astonished.
The king, together with his ministers and army,
Prostrated at the Teacher’s feet.
- 1.84 Then thousands of other living beings
Also made offerings to the Teacher.
Making offerings to the perfect Buddha,
They mentally prostrated as well, for the sake of awakening.
- 1.85 Thereupon the poor city-dweller Surata paid homage by touching his head
to the Bhagavān’s feet and circumambulated him seven times. Then he said,
“Bhagavān, while wandering about Śrāvastī, [F.187.a] I found a priceless,
precious gem. I decided to give it to the poorest person in Śrāvastī. I
determined that King Prasenajit is the poorest, because no matter how much
he plunders, he is never satisfied; he seeks riches again and again, yet it is
never enough. He is never satisfied with the possessions of others; he harms
those already suffering and quickly uproots the happiness of others. He
leads the poor to ruin and subjugates the wealthy. He has gone completely
mad! Having determined that he is completely bound by the wealth of his
kingdom and by his cravings, I offered him the gem but he didn’t accept it.
He asked, ‘Who could attest, on your behalf, that I am poor and you are

rich?' Therefore, O Bhagavān—who is impartial to all sentient beings, who never turns away from them, and who is without obstinacy, impurity, and enmity—Bhagavān, please tell us clearly if what I have said is true!"

1.86 The Bhagavān then said, "Great king, you think yourself rich based on the resources of your kingdom that you have acquired in this life, such as gold, jewels, pearls, lapis lazuli, conch shells, crystals, corals, gold powder, silver, horses, elephants, chariots, infantry, cavalry, storehouses, and treasuries. Great king, Surata thinks himself rich based on his generosity, discipline, self-restraint, forbearance, gentleness,⁸ ethical discipline, religious observances, ascetic practices, conscientiousness, virtuous practices, frugality, kindness, compassion, joy, equanimity, [F.187.b] devotion to the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, faith, ethical discipline, learning, acts of generosity, wisdom, sense of shame, modesty, stability, and vows. Great king, suppose that all the people under your authority became wealthy like you. Even added together, the mound of their collective merit could not match one hundredth the merit that Surata accumulates by walking seven steps with his discipline, learning, religious observance, ascetic practices, and conscientiousness alone. It is incomparable."

1.87 "Bhagavān," said Prasenajit, "finding people like him, with such vast qualities, living in our land is a great discovery!"

1.88 The Bhagavān replied, "Great king, there are many people with these vast qualities in your land."

1.89 King Prasenajit then spoke these verses to Surata:

1.90 "With your words, you have certainly eliminated my pride;
Therefore, Surata, you are my second teacher!
Let me give you my entire kingdom and my armies.
Make me your disciple and teach me!

1.91 "I have been deceived by my pride for a long time,
And have been surrounded and coddled by wicked companions.
Since I have heard this Dharma from you, Surata,
I will restrain myself and behave in accordance with the Dharma.

1.92 "For the sake of wealth I have punished
These five hundred householders.
From now on I will no longer do this;
Let me leave them alone and make them comfortable.

1.93 "Let these five hundred who are now free
Also develop deep respect for Surata.
May they never fatigue, and without distraction,
May they aspire for happiness and the state of omniscience!

- 1.94 “Surata, you spoke well when you said,
‘I am not poor. You are poor.’
Whoever now calls Surata ‘poor’ [F.188.a]
Breaks the king’s command.”
- 1.95 Surata, a child of the lineage, then made a request of the Bhagavān:
“Bhagavān, it is not enough for the great assembly of people gathered here
merely to see you. Therefore, Bhagavān, please offer them whatever
teachings will make their encounter with the Tathāgata meaningful!”
- 1.96 The Bhagavān replied, “Surata, if a child of the lineage possesses these
four dharmas, he or she will clearly see the Tathāgata. What are the four?
Conviction, faith, regret, and reverence are the four. Whoever possesses
these four will clearly see the Tathāgata.
- 1.97 “There is another set of four: generating the intention for unsurpassable,
perfect awakening while gazing at the form body of the Tathāgata and
wishing, ‘May I become like him’; generating the special and pure intention
because the Tathāgata is trustworthy;⁹ generating the intention to teach the
Dharma to all sentient beings until they are completely liberated; and
generating the intention to uphold the supreme Dharma so that the
continuity of the lineage of the Three Jewels is maintained. Whoever
possesses these four will clearly see the Tathāgata.
- 1.98 “There is still another set of four: seeing form as detached; seeing
sensations, perceptions, formations, and consciousnesses as detached;
seeing the four elements as space-like; and seeing the sense spheres to be
like empty cities. Whoever possesses these four will clearly see the
Tathāgata.
- 1.99 “There is still another set of four: the purity of the self because there is no
self; the purity of a sentient being because there is no sentient being; the
purity of a living being because there is no living being; and the purity of a
person because there is no person. Whoever possesses these four will clearly
see the Tathāgata. [F.188.b]
- 1.100 “There is still another set of four: the divine eye that is uncontrived,¹⁰ the
wisdom eye that is all-pervasive; the dharma eye that discriminates; and the
buddha eye that is fully aware.¹¹ Whoever possesses these four will clearly
see the Tathāgata.
- 1.101 “There is still another set of four: because all phenomena are not objective,
the component of ethics is pure; because all phenomena are equal, the
component of concentration is pure; because transcendent gnosis is
internalized, the component of wisdom is pure; because the liberation of that
gnosis is seen, the component of the gnosis seeing liberation is pure.¹²
Surata, child of the lineage, whoever possesses these four will clearly see the
Tathāgata.”

- 1.102 Then, having brought joy to that great assembly of people with this sermon, the Bhagavān flew into the sky like the king of geese, accompanied by his retinue.
- 1.103 King Prasenajit of Kośala said to the child of the lineage, Surata, “Surata, when you go to see the Tathāgata, please let me know! I will come with you to see the Tathāgata.”
- 1.104 “Great king, I will do so,” replied Surata. “I will take you and your retinue—your wives, heirs, ministers, and the rest—to see the Tathāgata.
- 1.105 “Great king, bodhisattvas do not act for their own benefit alone; instead, they are resplendent when surrounded by a grand retinue.”
- 1.106 “Surata, what is the retinue of a bodhisattva?” asked the king.
- 1.107 Surata replied, “All sentient beings are the retinue of a bodhisattva for the sake of training and maturing them. Great king, bodhicitta, which motivates others toward awakening so that they do not desire other vehicles, is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, [F.189.a] the special intention to discipline crooked beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, inexorable resoluteness is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.
- 1.108 “Great king, the generosity that matures miserly beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the ethical discipline that matures unethical beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the tolerance that matures beings with harmful intentions is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the diligence that matures lazy beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the concentration that matures distracted beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the wisdom that matures unwise beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.
- 1.109 “Great king, the kindness that is equanimous toward all sentient beings is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the compassion that does not wane with the vicissitudes of cyclic existence is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the joy that delights in and seeks the bliss of the Dharma is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the equanimity that is free of attachment and aversion is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.
- 1.110 “Great king, the four means of gathering disciples that bring all beings to maturity are also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, accumulating all the various roots of virtue that purify buddhafiels is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the emptiness, signlessness, and wishlessness that completely overcome all demonic machinations are also the retinue of a bodhisattva. [F.189.b]
- 1.111 “Great king, the truthfulness and gentleness that make one’s words respectable are the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the refusal to blame and disparage others that perfects one’s eloquence is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.

- 1.112 “Great king, accumulating the tools necessary to preserve one’s learning is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, reverence for one’s masters and preceptors for the sake of learning is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the learning that allows one to fully grasp the supreme Dharma is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, a full grasp of the supreme Dharma that causes one to master the teachings of all tathāgatas is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.
- 1.113 “Great king, dwelling in a forest, which perfects all of one’s roots of virtue, is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, a pure livelihood that inspires the faithless to faith is also the retinue of a bodhisattva. Great king, the conscientiousness that causes one to achieve the factors conducive to awakening is also the retinue of a bodhisattva.”
- 1.114 King Prasenajit then rejoiced; he felt great joy. Filled with such boundless joy, he offered Surata one thousand pairs of finely woven upper and lower garments, worthy of a king, as religious robes.
- 1.115 “Great king,” said Surata, “you seek to venerate and make offerings to me! Although the king may want to give all that to me, I don’t want clothes that would make me hold conceptions of ‘mine’ or make me possessive. I already have rags sewn together from a hundred patches of tattered cotton. Great king, during the hot season, when I leave these rags hanging on a branch for one, two, ten, or a hundred days, no one steals them, [F.190.a] and no one becomes covetous. I just leave them there without worrying about them, and there they remain. Great king, I don’t want any clothes that would make me hold conceptions of ‘mine’ or make me possessive. Great king, bodhisattvas only possess those clothes for which they have no desire and which will not give rise to desire in others.”
- 1.116 The king replied, “Surata, if you won’t accept these pairs of finely woven upper and lower garments, please, out of sympathy for me, at least tread on them with your feet!”
- 1.117 Saying, “Your Majesty, I’ll do as you wish,” Surata trod on them with his feet and returned to the king.
- 1.118 “Surata, what should I do with these pairs of finely woven upper and lower garments that have been beneath your feet?”¹³ asked the king.
- 1.119 “Great king,” replied Surata, “give them away to the poor and naked.”
- 1.120 The king said, “Yes, I will do as you say,” and entrusted the matter to his attendants, who carried out his order.
- 1.121 Those poor people, who received and put on those pairs of finely woven upper and lower garments, were immediately moved to repay Surata’s kindness. Then, due to the blessing of the Buddha and the power of Surata’s aspiration, they heard these verses from the sky:
- 1.122 “Although you may want to offer

Flowers, incense, perfumes,
Food, drink, and jewelry as repayment,
These will not suffice, for Surata is delighted by bodhicitta.

- 1.123 “Surata has no desire for food and clothes,
Nor for personal gain, nor veneration, nor fame.
Surata desires the qualities that arise from bodhicitta;
It is bodhicitta that pleases Surata.”
- 1.124 Sometime later, Surata, a child of the lineage, and King Prasenajit with his retinue of queens, ministers, and entourage, as well as the men, women, boys, and girls of Śrāvastī and hundreds of other creatures, went to see the Bhagavān.
- 1.125 Between Śrāvastī and Prince Jeta’s Grove, Śakra, lord of the gods, emanated a large, well-decorated pavilion that was vast, towering, and beautiful to behold; it was a beautifully adorned palace that resembled Vaijayanta, his palace in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. [F.190.b] At the center of the palace he emanated a wish-fulfilling tree, in front of which he emanated a well-proportioned lion throne fit for the Bhagavān, one that was beautiful to behold and covered with hundreds of thousands of divine, finely woven cotton cloths. Finally, he emanated sixty thousand seats for bodhisattvas.
- 1.126 Twelve thousand goddesses, such as the asura Śacī, came bringing flowers, incense, perfumes, flower garlands, ointments, and divine sandalwood powders, while playing cymbals and drums. Since they were Surata’s attendants, they ornamented the Bhagavān’s lion throne. Knowing that this great assembly of people was coming, the Bhagavān emerged from the monastery and sat down on the prepared seat, surrounded by bodhisattvas and śrāvakas.
- 1.127 Then, the gandharva Pañcaśikha said to the goddess Sunlight, “Kind lady, come here! As an act of service to Surata, please worship the Tathāgata with string instruments and melodious songs!”
- 1.128 The goddess Sunlight together with some five hundred goddesses then sang these verses of praise accompanied by string instruments:
- 1.129 “For the past hundred eons, you have practiced asceticism;
You have delighted in the ways of gathering disciples, discipline, and generosity;
Your body, speech, and mind are completely pure—
Thus, I pay homage to you, the foremost in the three realms!
- 1.130 “You are without callousness, and delight in forbearance and kindness;
Your diligence is firm, and your powers perfected;

- You delight in the dawning of concentration, intelligence, and ethics—
Thus, I pay homage to you, who dispels the blemishes of the three stains!
- 1.131 “You delight in eliminating desire, hatred, and delusion;
Your mind is peaceful and impartial, yet compassionate;
You speak truthfully and know the ultimate—
Thus, I pay homage to you, who liberates all three realms! [F.191.a]
- 1.132 “You eliminate doubts in those who see you;
You eliminate all faults in those who see you;
You bring great delight to those who see you—
Thus, I go for refuge to you, the Conqueror, with all my heart!
- 1.133 “Even sublime goddesses who are extremely lustful,
Upon seeing you, delight in the Dharma.
Delighted, they will attain expansive mindfulness.
Delighted, they will be free from delighting in lust for beauty.
- 1.134 “You have the supreme, luminous qualities of being perfectly adorned
With the ornaments of the thirty-two supreme marks.
You are a holy man, whose speech is pure and supreme;
I pay homage to you, whose radiance is unparalleled!
- 1.135 “Your beautiful palms are like the gold of the noble Jambu River.
The Sage’s chest is like a lion’s, and your posture like an elephant’s.
Your eyebrows and nose are elegant; your teeth are even, beautiful, and
have no gaps—
I bow to you, the great Śākyamuni, who is like the śrīgarbha jewel!
- 1.136 “By the limitless capacities of the merit
Acquired from praising the delightful Sugata,
A conqueror replete with hundreds of good qualities,
May the whole world come to buddhahood together!”
- 1.137 Surata, a child of the lineage, then approached the Bhagavān along with the
great crowd of people. Surata bowed his head to the Bhagavān’s feet and sat
to one side. King Prasenajit said to Surata, a child of the lineage, “Please sit
here!” and personally offered him a well-prepared seat, which Surata
accepted. King Prasenajit and his retinue also bowed their heads to the
Bhagavān’s feet and took their seats.
- 1.138 Thereupon, some of the gods¹⁴ who were unfamiliar with Surata, a child of
the lineage, wondered to themselves, “Why has this shabbily dressed poor
man received such abundant honors?”

- 1.139 Śakra, lord of the gods, told those gods, [F.191.b] “Friends, don’t belittle him! I have seen for myself the great qualities possessed by this child of the lineage. Friends, just sit down for now! You will see the display of qualities this child of the lineage possesses.”
- 1.140 Realizing what those gods were thinking, Surata, a child of the lineage, made a request to the Bhagavān: “Bhagavān, please teach us the means that bodhisattvas display to bring sentient beings to maturity and the means they display to bring them to gnosis!”
- 1.141 The Bhagavān then emitted light rays from his body. When the light rays reached Surata, his body became over a hundred thousand times more beautiful than the perfect body of Śakra, the lord of the gods. Those gods were thunderstruck and rained flowers upon Surata.
- 1.142 Then the Bhagavān replied to Surata, a child of the lineage, “Surata, whenever bodhisattvas have adamant power, they feign to be lowly for the sake of bringing sentient beings to maturity. And even when they have little power, they feign to be supreme, also for the sake of bringing sentient beings to maturity. This is their display. Immersed in gnosis, they feign ignorance, and even when feigning ignorance, their knowledge is keen. This is their display. With their physical and moral conduct, they inspire faith in those without gnosis. Showing all types of conduct, they reveal miracles to those with gnosis. This is their display. By constantly mastering their minds, they are revered by Brahmā despite manifesting as poor and destitute, and when maintaining their supreme display, they are still revered by ordinary beings. This is their display. For the sake of attracting sentient beings, they teach the poor and destitute. For the sake of inspiring sentient beings to renounce the world, they appear as renunciants, despite possessing vast wealth. This is their display.”
- 1.143 Thereupon, venerable Ānanda asked the Bhagavān, [F.192.a] “Bhagavān, what good deeds has Surata, a child of the lineage, done for the sake of awakening?”
- 1.144 The Bhagavān answered, “Ānanda! Surata, a child of the lineage, has venerated millions of buddhas. He has been perfected through previous practice. He has attained the three forbearances. He has attained eloquence. He is artful with his extraordinary powers. He is skilled in bringing sentient beings to maturity. By being poor and destitute, he disciplines sentient beings.”
- 1.145 “Bhagavān,” asked Ānanda, “how many sentient beings has this poor and destitute man disciplined?”
- 1.146 The Bhagavān replied, “Ānanda, he has brought many hundreds of thousands of gods to the maturity of unsurpassable and perfect awakening. He has done the same for an equal number of human beings.”

- 1.147 “Bhagavān,” asked Ānanda, “how will he become an unsurpassable, perfect, and completely awakened buddha? How will his buddhafield be arrayed? What will his name be?”
- 1.148 The Bhagavān replied to venerable Ānanda with these verses:
- 1.149 “Listen, Ānanda, and I will explain to you
The nature of his efforts to benefit beings, his consistency in religious observances,
How his great renown is held in the hearts of many,
And the way his conduct is steadfast in the qualities of awakening.
- 1.150 “Whatever good deeds Surata has done,
Whether it is his veneration of the conquerors through supreme offerings,
Or striving to protect the holy Dharma,
They are too numerous to be listed now.
- 1.151 “He is well trained in all the perfections;
He has been artful with his extraordinary powers in past lives;
He has perfected the divine states of mind;
He is well trained in skillful activity.
- 1.152 “Now, he sees well the faults of composite phenomena;
Even the complete awakening of the buddhas is evident to him.
He is well trained in those skills
That bring all sorts of different beings to liberation. [F.192.b]
- 1.153 “He is fearless and endowed with intelligence, realization, and mindfulness,
As well as eloquence and dhāraṇīs.
He has escaped Māra’s hook and the mire of mental afflictions,
And he is firmly set in the purview of the buddhas, the ultimate goal.
- 1.154 “He is not tainted by worldly affairs;
Like a stone, he is unmoved by lust and the like.
He neither gets close to nor distant from anyone;
Just like space, he is free of both bondage and liberation.
- 1.155 “He is steadfastly compassionate and indefatigable;
He is self-restrained and kind to those who are bewildered.
Considering all sentient beings as dear as himself,
He does not perceive others’ faults and thus is never quarrelsome.
- 1.156 “He steadfastly practices exactly as he was taught;
He conducts himself exactly in accord with the teachings.
By following the Dharma, he is well trained in the essence of dharmas.

- He yearns for emptiness and is free of dualism.
- 1.157 “He has attained the three forbearances and transcends the purview of
ordinary beings;
He is steadfast in the way and pure qualities of the buddhas.
In whatever world he roams,
He liberates numerous beings.
- 1.158 “Wherever this child of the buddhas resides,
There is never an absence of tathāgatas.
Thus, the entire world, including the gods,
Pays respect to him in the manner of a buddha.
- 1.159 “After I pass into nirvāṇa during the age of degeneration,
Surata will perform a buddha’s deeds.
Then, he will return to Abhirati, Akṣobhya’s realm,
Where he previously resided.
- 1.160 “Imperturbable,¹⁵ he will benefit living creatures,
And seek out the treasures of that buddhafiield.
For the sake of bringing sentient beings to the maturity of awakening,
He will perform good deeds for three countless eons.
- 1.161 “After that, he will become a guardian, a conqueror,
Whose name will be Lord King of the World.
His world will be equal to
The buddhafiield of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya.
- 1.162 “That world will be called Elegantly Emanated, [F.193.a]
And will be endowed with all good qualities.
His lifespan will be ten thousand years,
And his saṅgha members beyond reckoning.
- 1.163 “He will have few saṅgha members within the Śrāvaka Vehicle,
While most will strive for awakening.
All will possess the power of gnosis and miraculous powers,
And they will be endowed with the liberations and be fearless.
- 1.164 “That world will resound with the continual reverberation
Of nothing but their eloquent elucidations of the Dharma.
There will be no māras, nor attachment to saṃsāra;
They will all be knowledgeable and completely pure.
- 1.165 “After that sugata passes into complete nirvāṇa,
His sublime Dharma will be practiced

For eighty-four years,¹⁶

During which time his Dharma tradition will have no disharmony.

- 1.166 “Those who are brought to maturity by Surata
Will pursue unsurpassable awakening.
The sentient beings who are born in that buddhafiield
Will become free from all faults.”
- 1.167 As soon as the Bhagavān had made this prophecy about Surata, a child of the lineage, the trichiliocosm shook in six ways as divine flowers, powders, garments, and ornaments rained down. The entire retinue offered their garments to Surata, a child of the lineage. Many hundreds of merchants, householders, and brahmins were went forth as renunciants.
- 1.168 Thereupon Surata said to the Bhagavān, “Please permit me to go forth in the tradition of the Dharma and Vinaya that you have taught so well.”
- 1.169 The Bhagavān then raised his hand and blessed Surata, a child of the lineage, upon his head. The moment the Bhagavān touched his head, Surata, a child of the lineage, transformed into a monk wearing saffron robes.
- 1.170 Then the Bhagavān said to venerable Ānanda, “Ānanda, there are five degenerations: the degeneration of time, the degeneration of sentient beings, the degeneration of place, the degeneration of lifespan, and the degeneration of mental afflictions. [F.193.b] In the time of these degenerations, and following my perfect awakening, no one should be disciplined in ways other than how Surata has been disciplined.
- 1.171 “Ānanda, I don’t tame sentient beings of the Sahā world system with the Vinaya of the buddhas. Ānanda, I tame sentient beings with fears and warnings of becoming poor and destitute, or of taking lower rebirths. Ānanda, if in this world system I taught and gave instructions about the Dharma from a Buddha’s point of view, not one sentient being would be tamed and no Dharma would be realized. Therefore Ānanda, just as Surata and I tame sentient beings, so should you. Ānanda, there will be many sentient beings who will gain faith and realization; by hearing this Dharma discourse they will find faith and practice accordingly.”
- 1.172 When the Bhagavān finished speaking, venerable Ānanda, the bodhisattva Surata, the other bodhisattvas, the monks, Śakra, lord of the gods, King Prasenajit, and the gods, humans, asuras, and gandharvas of the world rejoiced and praised what the Bhagavān had said.
- 1.173 *This concludes Surata’s Questions, the twenty-seventh of the one hundred thousand sections of of the Dharma discourse known as The Noble Great Heap of Jewels.*

c.

Colophon

c.1 Translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Surendrabodhi, the Tibetan chief-editor and translator Bandé Yeshé Dé, and others.

n.

NOTES

- n.1 A further hint that leaves room for such speculation is the traditional narrative according to which the Buddha was not invited to Śrāvastī either by King Prasenajit or by any other member of the ruling family, but instead by the wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, who then had to pay Prasenajit's son Prince Jeta a huge sum of money for land on which to build a vihāra to accommodate the Buddha and his followers. This was in stark contrast to the insistent invitations, welcome, patronage, and provision of resources extended to the Buddha by Bimbisara, king of Magadha.
- n.2 Degé Kangyur vol. 4 ('dul ba, nga) F.89.b et seq. See Miller et al., *The Chapter on Schisms in the Saṅgha*, 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha (forthcoming).
- n.3 That is, virtuous deeds.
- n.4 "Friends" (*grogs po dag*) is clearly in the plural in the Tibetan, but it is unclear whom Surata is addressing.
- n.5 This translation follows the reading *brtson par mi bya ba* attested in the Yongle, Kangxi, Narthang, and Lhasa versions of the text. The Degé reads *btson par mi bya ba*.
- n.6 The Stok Palace version has *sred pa* here, which could be read as "attachment" or "craving." The Degé reads *srid pa*.
- n.7 The ocean is said to be the source of precious jewels. So even though the nāgas who live there have extensive access to riches, they still are not satisfied.
- n.8 Though this is describing a quality of Surata, "gentleness" (*des pa*) here happens to be the same word for his name.

- n.9 The phrase here, *lhag pa'i bsam pa yongs su dag pa*, seems to suggest *lhag bsam rnam dag*, a technical term describing a stage preceding the development of full bodhicitta where one takes on the personal responsibility to eliminate the suffering of all sentient beings.
- n.10 Here we follow the Kangxi, Narthang, Lhasa, Stok Palace, and Yongle versions in reading *mngon par byed pa med pa* (Skt. *anabhisamkāra*), where the Degé reads *mngon par byed pa* (Skt. *abhisamkāra*).
- n.11 These are four of the “five eyes” (Tib. *spyang lnga*; Skt. *pañcacakṣuḥ*) or five types of extraordinary vision possessed by a buddha. The five are the flesh eye, divine eye, wisdom eye, dharma eye, and buddha eye. The flesh eye is omitted in this list.
- n.12 These are the “five uncontaminated components” (Tib. *zag med phung po lnga*, Skt. *pañcānāsravaskandha*): the component of ethics, the component of concentration, the component of wisdom, the component of liberation, and the component of gnosis seeing liberation.
- n.13 The *dman ma* in the phrase here, *rkang pa'i dman mar gyur pa*, can denote “old” or “left over.” In colloquial English, we might call the cloth “used clothing.”
- n.14 The Stok Palace, Lhasa, Kangxi, Narthang, and Yongle Kangyurs omit “gods” and instead have “children of the lineage” (*rigs kyi bu gang bdag gis*).
- n.15 “Imperturbable” (*brtan po*) here may be a play on the meaning of Akṣobhya’s name, which is “immovable.”
- n.16 This seems a paltry number of years for Surata’s future Dharma teachings to persist. However, this is the literal number suggested by the Tibetan, “*lo ni brgyad cu dag las bzhi lhag*.” It may be a shorthand of 84,000, which is a significant number in Buddhist texts.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in the Sanskrit manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other Sanskrit manuscripts of the Kangyur or Tengyur.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionaries.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where Tibetan-Sanskrit relationship is attested in dictionaries or other manuscripts.
RP	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan phonetic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the Tibetan phonetic rendering of the term.
RS	<i>Reconstruction from Tibetan semantic rendering</i> This term is a reconstruction based on the semantics of the Tibetan translation.
SU	<i>Source Unspecified</i> This term has been supplied from an unspecified source, which most often is a widely trusted dictionary.

Abhirati

mngon par dga' ba

མངོན་པར་དགའ་བ།

abhirati

Lit. "Intense Delight." The universe, or buddhafiield, of the Tathāgata Akṣobhya.

g.2 Akṣobhya

mi 'khrugs

མི་འཁྲུགས།

akṣobhya

In Sanskrit, “Immovable,” the name of a tathāgata. In Surata’s next life, he returns to Abhirati, the realm of Akṣobhya.

g.3 Ānanda

kun dga' bo

ཀུན་དགའ་བོ།

ānanda

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.4 Anāthapiṇḍada

mgon med zas sbyin

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན།

anāthapiṇḍada

Anāthapiṇḍada was a wealthy merchant in the town of Śrāvastī, who became a patron of the Buddha Śākyamuni. He bought the land from Prince Jeta to serve as the Buddha’s first monastery.

g.5 Anāthapiṇḍada’s Park

mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga' ra ba

མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་ར་བ།

anāthapiṇḍadasya ārāmaḥ

This was an important early site for the Buddha’s growing community. Anāthapiṇḍada, a wealthy patron of the Buddha, purchased the park, located outside Śrāvastī, at great cost, purportedly covering the ground with gold, and donated it to the saṅgha. It was there that the Buddha spent several rainy seasons and gave discourses that were later recorded as sūtras. It was also the site for one of the first Buddhist monasteries.

g.6 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A type of nonhuman being whose precise status is subject to different views, but is included as one of the six classes of beings in the sixfold classification of realms of rebirth. In the Buddhist context, asuras are powerful beings said to be dominated by envy, ambition, and hostility. They are also known in the pre-Buddhist and pre-Vedic mythologies of India and Iran, and feature prominently in Vedic and post-Vedic Brahmanical mythology, as well as in the Buddhist tradition. In these traditions, asuras are often described as being engaged in interminable conflict with the devas (gods).

g.7 bhagavān

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān · bhagavat

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, an epithet applied to buddhas, most often to Śākyamuni. The Sanskrit term generally means “possessing fortune,” but in specifically Buddhist contexts it implies that a buddha is in possession of six auspicious qualities (*bhaga*) associated with complete awakening. The Tibetan term—where *bcom* is said to refer to “subduing” the four māras, *ldan* to “possessing” the great qualities of buddhahood, and *'das* to “going beyond” saṃsāra and nirvāṇa—possibly reflects the commentarial tradition where the Sanskrit *bhagavat* is interpreted, in addition, as “one who destroys the four māras.” This is achieved either by reading *bhagavat* as *bhagnavat* (“one who broke”), or by tracing the word *bhaga* to the root √*bhañj* (“to break”).

g.8 bodhicitta

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ལྡན་གྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

Literally “the mind of awakening,” but more technically, one’s particular aspiration to become fully awakened for the specific purpose of liberating all sentient beings. This is the necessary and sufficient condition to be a bodhisattva.

g.9 **Brahmā**

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

brahmā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world where other beings consider him the creator; 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 Sahā World” (*Sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*Mahābrahmā*).

g.10 **Candra**

zla ba

ཟླ་བ།

candra

The god of the moon; the moon personified.

g.11 **detachment**

dben pa

དབེན་པ།

viveka

Detachment is traditionally categorized as being of three types: (1) detachment or seclusion of the body (*kāyaviveka*), which refers to remaining in solitude free from desirous or disturbing objects; (2) detachment or seclusion of the mind (*cittaviveka*), which is mental detachment from desirous

or disturbing objects; and, (3) detachment or seclusion from the “substrate” (*upadhiviveka*), which indicates detachment from all things that perpetuate rebirth, including the five aggregates, the *kleśas*, karma, etc. This last category is what is being referenced here.

g.12 dhāraṇī

gzungs

གཟུངས།

dhāraṇī

As incantations or spells, dhāraṇīs are mnemonic formulas possessed by advanced bodhisattvas that contain a quintessence of their attainments. The same term in Sanskrit and Tibetan also refers to a highly developed power present in bodhisattvas that is a process of memory and recall of detailed teachings. This is best translated “retention” in certain contexts.

g.13 divine states of mind

tshangs pa'i gnas

ཚངས་པའི་གནས།

brahmavihāra

The four qualities that are said to result in rebirth in the paradise of Brahmā: limitless love, compassion, rejoicing, and equanimity.

g.14 eight precepts

gso sbyong gi yan lag brgyad

གསེས་སྦྱང་གི་ཡན་ལག་བརྒྱད།

aṣṭāṅgaṣoṣadha

These are the eight *upavasatha* vows, similar to the commitments of a monk, but maintained only for one day. On such days one pledges: (1) not to kill, (2) not to steal, (3) not to engage in sexual intercourse, (4) not to lie, (5) not to partake of any intoxicants, (6) not to sing or dance, (7) not to eat after noon, and (8) not to use high seats or luxurious beds.

g.15 Elegantly Emanated

legs par sprul pa

ལེགས་པར་སྦྱུལ་པ།

—

The name of Surata’s buddhafiield after he becomes awakened.

g.16 five basic precepts

bslab pa'i gzhi lnga

བསྐྱབ་པའི་གཞི་ལྷན།

pañcaśikṣāpada

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Refers to the five fundamental precepts of abstaining from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and consuming intoxicants.

g.17 five degenerations

snyigs ma lnga

སྒྲིགས་མ་ལྷན།

pañcakaṣāya

In this text, the five degenerations are: (1) the degeneration of time, (2) the degeneration of sentient beings, (3) the degeneration of place, (4) the degeneration of lifespan, and (5) the degeneration of mental afflictions. This differs from other presentations of this list in which the degeneration of views replaces the degeneration of place.

g.18 four dharmas

chos bzhi

ཚོས་བཞི།

—

In this sūtra, these are taught as conviction, faith, regret, and reverence— whoever possesses these four will clearly see the Tathāgata.

g.19 four means of gathering disciples

bsdu ba'i dngos po bzhi

བསྐྱབ་པའི་དངོས་པོ་བཞི།

catuḥsaṅgrahavastu

Generosity, kind talk, meaningful actions, and practicing what one preaches.

g.20 four wrong views

phyin ci log bzhi

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་བཞི།

caturviparyāsa

Viewing what is impermanent to be permanent, viewing what brings suffering to be pleasurable, viewing what is tainted to be pure, and viewing what is non-self to be self.

g.21 fourfold community

'khor bzhi

འཁོར་བཞི།

catuḥpariṣad

Monks, nuns, and male and female lay practitioners.

g.22 gandharva

dri za

དྲི་ཟ།

gandharva

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of generally benevolent nonhuman beings who inhabit the skies, sometimes said to inhabit fantastic cities in the clouds, and more specifically to dwell on the eastern slopes of Mount Meru, where they are under the jurisdiction of the Great King Dhṛtarāṣṭra. They are most renowned as celestial musicians who serve the gods. In the Abhidharma, the term is also used to refer to the mental body assumed by any sentient being in the realm of desire (*kāmadhātu*) during the intermediate state between death and rebirth. Gandharvas are said to live on fragrances in the desire realm, hence the Tibetan translation *dri za*, meaning “scent eater.”

g.23 Heap of Jewels

dkon mchog brtsegs pa

དཀོན་མཚོག་བརྟེན་པ།

ratnakūṭa

A collection of texts comprising a section of the Kangyur as well as of the Chinese Buddhist canon.

g.24 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་རྩུ་གསུམ།

trāyastriṃśa

The paradise of Indra on the summit of Sumeru where there are thirty-three leading deities, hence the name “Heaven of the Thirty-Three.” The second (counting from the lowest) of the six paradises in the desire realm.

g.25 Indra

dbang po

དབང་པོ།

indra

A Vedic god who eventually emerged as one of the most important in the Vedic pantheon. Indra retains his role as the “Lord of the Gods” in Buddhist literature, where he is often referred to by the name Śakra.

g.26 Jambu River

'dzam bu chu bo

འཛམ་བུ་ཚུ་བོ།

jambunadī

A divine river whose gold is believed to be especially fine.

g.27 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu gling · 'dzam gling

འཛམ་བུ་གླིང་། · འཛམ་གླིང་།

jambudvīpa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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 *Syzygium*, particularly *Syzygium jambos* and *Syzygium 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.

g.28 Jeta

rgyal byed

རྒྱལ་བྱེད།

jeta

Prince who sold a piece of land in Śrāvastī to the householder Anāthapiṇḍada, who built a monastery there and offered it to the Buddha.

g.29 Kośala

ko sa la

ཀོ་ས་ལ།

kośala

An ancient kingdom, northwest of Magadha, abutting Kāśi, whose capital was Śrāvastī. During the Buddha's time it was ruled by Prasenajit. It presently corresponds to an area within Uttar Pradesh.

g.30 liberations

rnam par thar pa rnam

རྣམ་པར་ཐར་པ་རྣམས།

vimokṣa

Though not explicit in this text, this may be a reference to eight stages to liberation (*aṣṭāvimokṣa*; *rnam par thar pa brgyad*), a series of increasingly subtle states of meditative realization or attainment. There are several presentations of these found in the canonical literature. One of the most common is as follows: (1) One observes form while the mind dwells at the level of the form realm. (2) One observes forms externally while discerning formlessness internally. (3) One dwells in the direct experience of the body's pleasant aspect. (4) One dwells in the realization of the sphere of infinite space by transcending all conceptions of matter, resistance, and diversity. (5) Transcending the sphere of infinite space, one dwells in the realization of the sphere of infinite consciousness. (6) Transcending the sphere of infinite consciousness, one dwells in the realization of the sphere of nothingness. (7) Transcending the sphere of nothingness, one dwells in the realization of the sphere of neither perception nor nonperception. (8) Transcending the sphere of neither perception and nonperception, one dwells in the realization of the cessation of conception and feeling.

g.31 Lord King of the World

'jig rten rgyal po dbang phyug

འཇིག་རྟེན་རྒྱལ་པོ་དབང་ཕྱུག

—

The name Surata is known by after he becomes enlightened.

g.32 māra

bdud

བདུད།

māra

A class of beings related to the demon Māra or a term for the demon Māra himself. Māra and the māras are portrayed as the primary adversaries and tempters of people who vow to take up the religious life, and māras can be understood as a class of demonic beings responsible for perpetuating the illusion that keeps beings bound to the world and worldly attachments and the mental states those beings elicit.

g.33 Māra

bdud

མ་རྩ་

māra

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

(1) The demon who assailed Śākyamuni prior to his awakening. (2) The deities ruled over by Māra who do not wish any beings to escape from saṃsāra. (3) Any demonic force, the personification of conceptual and emotional obstacles. They are also symbolic of the defects within a person that prevent awakening. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.34 nāga

klu

ལྷ་

nāga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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.

g.35 Pañcaśikha

gtsug phud lnga pa

ཀུན་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་ལྷ་

pañcaśikha

A certain young gandharva allied with the god Śakra.

g.36 perfected through previous practice

sngon gyi tshul phun sum tshogs pa

སྔོན་གྱི་ཚུལ་ལྷན་སྲུང་ཚོགས་པ།

pūrvayogasampanna

g.37 piśācī

sha za ma

ཤ་ཟ་མ།

piśācī

A female member of a class of nonhuman beings traditionally associated with the wild, remote places of the earth. They are considered particularly violent and are known to devour flesh.

g.38 Prasenajit

gsal rgyal

གསལ་རྒྱལ།

prasenajit

King of the country of Kośala, he reigned in the city of Śrāvastī. In this sūtra, Surata humbles him and then becomes one of his teachers. See also [i.7](#).

g.39 Prince Jeta's Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚོལ།

jetavana

A grove owned by Prince Jeta in Śrāvastī, the capital of the kingdom of Kośala. It was bought by Anāthapiṇḍada and became the monastery that the Buddha spent most rainy seasons in and is therefore the setting for many sūtras.

g.40 propensities for continued existence

srid pa'i bag la nyal ba

སྲིད་པའི་བག་ལ་ཉལ་བ།

—

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

g.41 rākṣasī

srin mo

རྲིན་མོ།

rākṣasī

A female member of a class of Indic spirit deities generally considered malevolent and demonic.

g.42 Śacī

bde sog

བདེ་སོགས།

śacī

A goddess typically understood to be the wife of Indra/Śakra. In this text, it refers to a female asura who attempts to seduce Surata and later becomes one of his attendants.

g.43 Sahā world system

'jig rten gyi khams mi mjed

འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་ཁམས་མི་མཛེད།

sahālokadhātu

This universe of ours, or the trichiliocosm (but sometimes referring to just this world system of four continents), presided over by Brahmā. The term is variously interpreted as meaning the world of suffering, of endurance, of fearlessness, or of concomitance (of karmic cause and effect).

g.44 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

śakra

Another name for Indra, a Vedic god who eventually emerged as one of the most important in the Vedic pantheon. Indra retains his role as the “Lord of the Gods” in Buddhist literature, where he is often referred to by the name Śakra.

g.45 Śākyamuni

shAkya thub

ཤཱཀ་ལུ་བུ།

śākyamuni

The name of the historical Buddha, Siddhartha Gautama. He was a *muni* (“sage”) from the Śākya clan.

g.46 Śākyasiṃha

shAkya seng ge

ལྷན་སེང་གེ།

śākyasiṃha

In Sanskrit, “Lion of the Śākyas,” an epithet for the Buddha.

g.47 sense sphere

skye mched

སྐྱེ་མཆེད།

āyatana

The sense spheres are a collective list of the six sense objects (forms, sounds, odors, tastes, textures, mental phenomena) with their respective senses (eye, ear, nose, tongue, tactile sense, and mind) totaling twelve and indicating their interdependence. In this sūtra, they are equated to an “empty city.” This most likely denotes the fact that there is no self independent of the interaction of these or perceiver independent of the process of perception.

g.48 śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

A “listener” or direct disciple of the Buddha. Often used to denote the non-Mahāyāna monastic community.

g.49 Śrāvaka Vehicle

nyan thos theg pa

ཉན་ཐོས་ཐེག་པ།

śrāvakayāna

The vehicle comprising the teaching of the śrāvakas, the disciples or “Hearers” who heard the teachings from the Buddha. According to Mahāyāna sources, this is one of the two constitutents (along with the Pratyekabuddhayāna) of the so-called “Lesser Vehicle” (Hīnayāna).

g.50 Śrāvastī

mnyan yod

མཉན་ཡོད།

śrāvastī

Capital city of the kingdom of Kośala, ruled by one of the Buddha's royal patrons, King Prasenajit, where the Buddha often dwelt in the Jetavana grove, the site of many Mahāyāna sūtras.

g.51 śrīgarbha jewel

dpal gyi snying po

དཔལ་གྱི་སྡིང་པོ།

śrīgarbha

A kind of gem, reddish in color.

g.52 Sunlight

nyi 'od

ཉི་འོད།

—

A goddess who attempts to seduce Surata and later becomes one of his attendants.

g.53 Surata

des pa

དེས་པ།

surata

A poor city-dweller in Śrāvastī and protagonist of the text. Poor in resources, he is endowed with the proverbial wealth of virtue. See also [i.7](#).

g.54 Sūrya

nyi ma

ཉི་མ།

sūrya

The god of the sun; the sun personified.

g.55 tathāgata

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.56 ten virtuous actions

dge ba bcu'i las kyi lam

དགེ་བ་བརྒྱའི་ལས་ཀྱི་ལམ།

daśakuśalakarmapatha

These are the opposite of the ten sins, i.e., refraining from engaging in activities related to the ten sins and doing the opposite. There are three physical virtues: saving lives, giving, and sexual propriety. There are four verbal virtues: truthfulness, reconciling discussions, gentle speech, and religious speech. There are three mental virtues: loving attitude, generous attitude, and right views. The whole doctrine is collectively called the “tenfold path of good action” (*daśakuśalakarmapatha*).

g.57 thirty-two supreme marks

mtshan mchog sum cu rtsa gnyis

མཚན་མཚོག་སུམ་རུ་རྩ་གཉིས།

dvātriṅśanmahāpuruṣalakṣaṇa

These are thirty-two physical characteristics of a “great person.”

g.58 three forbearances

bzod pa gsum

བཟོད་པ་གསུམ།

trikṣānti

The three types of forbearance needed on the spiritual path: (1) forbearance with regard to harms, (2) forbearance with regard to undertaking hardships, and (3) forbearance with regard to having confidence in the Dharma.

g.59 three realms

kham s gsum pa

ཁམས་གསུམ་པ།

tridhātu

(1) The desire realm (*kāmadhātu*, 'dod khams), (2) the form realm (*rūpadhātu*, *gzugs khams*), and (3) the formless realm (*arūpyadhātu*, *gzugs med khams*).

g.60 three stains

dri ma gsum

དྲི་མ་གསུམ།

trimala

The same as the three poisons: desire, hatred, and delusion.

g.61 Vaijayanta

rnam par rgyal ba

རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བ།

vaijayanta

The palace of Śakra in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.

g.62 virtuous practices

sbyangs pa'i yon tan

སྤྱངས་པའི་ཡོན་ཏན།

dhūtaguṇa

An optional set of thirteen practices that monastics can adopt in order to cultivate greater detachment. They consist of (1) wearing patched robes made from discarded cloth rather than from cloth donated by laypeople; (2) wearing only three robes; (3) going for alms; (4) not omitting any house while on the alms round, rather than begging only at those houses known to provide good food; (5) eating only what can be eaten in one sitting; (6) eating only food received in the alms bowl, rather than more elaborate meals presented to the Saṅgha; (7) refusing more food after indicating one has eaten enough; (8) dwelling in the forest; (9) dwelling at the root of a tree; (10) dwelling in the open air, using only a tent made from one's robes as shelter; (11) dwelling in a charnel ground; (12) being satisfied with whatever dwelling one has; and (13) sleeping in a sitting position without ever lying down.

g.63 Yama

gshin rje

གཤིན་རྗེ།

yama

The lord of death in Indian mythology who judges the dead and rules over the hells and the realm of the hungry ghosts.