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The Questions of Ratnacandra

Ratnacandraparipṛcchā

འཕགས་པ་རིན་ཆེན་སྐྱབས་ལུས་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་ཐེག་པ་ཆེན་པོའི་མདོ།

'phags pa rin chen zla bas zhus pa zhes bya ba theg pa chen po'i mdo

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra “The Questions of Ratnacandra”

Āryaratnacandraparipṛcchānāmamahāyānasūtra



Toh 164
Degé Kangyur, vol. 59 (mdo sde, ba), folios 160.a–167.b.

Translated by Tenpa Tsering
under the patronage and supervision of 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha

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co.

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SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Questions of Ratnacandra* is a sūtra in which Ratnacandra, a prince from the country of Magadha, requests the Buddha Śākyamuni to reveal the names of the ten buddhas who dwell in the ten directions. Prince Ratnacandra has been told that hearing the names of these ten buddhas ensures that one will attain awakening at some point in the future. The Buddha confirms this and discloses their names, as well as details of their respective buddha realms, such as the names of these realms and their many unique qualities.

ac.

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ac.1 Translated by Tenpa Tsering, Khentrul Gyurme Dorjee, and Davis A. Baltz. The translation was edited by Ryan Damron and Andreas Doctor, who also wrote the introduction together.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Questions of Ratnacandra is a sūtra that takes place on Vulture Peak Mountain outside of the city of Rājagṛha, the capital of the ancient country of Magadha. There Ratnacandra, who is described as one of the sons of King Bimbisāra, the ruler of Magadha, requests the Buddha Śākyamuni to reveal the names of the ten buddhas who dwell in the ten directions. Ratnacandra has been told that hearing the names of these ten buddhas guarantees one's future awakening and so wishes to know them. The Buddha confirms the transformative power of these ten names, and during the course of the sūtra he discloses them and provides additional details of these buddhas, their respective realms, and their many unique qualities—including their cosmically long dispensations. Finally, the Buddha concludes the teaching by relating the events of a distant past that led to these ten buddhas conjointly attaining awakening.

i.2

The message of the sūtra—that one can ensure the future attainment of awakening by coming into contact with the names of celestial buddhas—is one shared by a number of Great Vehicle sūtras. Nakamura includes this sūtra among more than twenty sūtras in the Chinese canon that prescribe the practice of chanting the names of various buddhas.¹ The Tibetan canon likewise contains a significant number of such sūtras. However, since the organizing principles of the Degé Kangyur are not always thematic but often based on other criteria, such as titles, *The Questions of Ratnacandra* is grouped in the Degé Kangyur among the many sūtras named “The Questions of . . .” This sūtra is a prime example of the genre of Great Vehicle literature that places great emphasis on the transformative power of remembering, chanting, and venerating the names of the many buddhas who occupy other world systems concurrently with Buddha Śākyamuni's presence here in our realm.

i.3

No Sanskrit manuscript of this sūtra appears to be extant, but in addition to the Tibetan translation a single Chinese translation also exists (Taishō 437). This translation was produced by the Indian monk Dānapāla (fl. ca. 980 CE), a prolific translator credited with completing no less than one hundred individual translations. In spite of this relatively late date of translation into Chinese, Nakamura remarks that a certain “prototype” of *The Questions of Ratnacandra* is cited in the *Daśabhūmikavibhāṣā*, which is attributed to Nāgārjuna (ca. second–third century CE).² The attribution of this text to Nāgārjuna is itself a topic of debate, but the text was undoubtedly translated by Kumārajīva, who lived from 344–413 CE. This means that the so-called “prototype” of *The Questions of Ratnacandra* must have been in circulation in India prior to the middle of the fourth century CE.

i.4

The colophon of the Tibetan translation lists four figures involved in its production: the Indian preceptors Viśuddhasiṃha and Vidyākarasiṃha and the Tibetan translators Gewa Pal (*dge ba dpal*) and Devacandra (*de ba tsan dra*). Therefore, the Tibetan translation would have been completed during the early translation period. The ninth-century Denkarma (*ldan dkar ma*) catalog includes a text with a similar title, *The Questions of the Child Ratnacandra* (*khye’u rin chen zla bas zhus pa*),³ but this title may not refer to the text translated here. The Phukdrak (*phug brag*) Kangyur uniquely preserves texts with both titles, and while they are similar enough in content to suggest that they are closely related texts, *The Questions of the Child Ratnacandra* is substantially different. This sūtra shares the framing narrative and other structural features of *The Questions of Ratnacandra* but omits many of its specific descriptive elements, especially those concerning the Buddha’s entourage and the features of the individual buddha realms. There is also significant variation in the names of the buddha realms and their attending thus-gone ones, with most, but not all, being unique to each version.⁴ *The Questions of the Child Ratnacandra* found in the Phukdrak Kangyur also lacks the versified passage that closes *The Questions of Ratnacandra*. The text recorded in the Denkarma catalog as *The Questions of the Child Ratnacandra* is listed as a translation made by the same group of Indian preceptors and Tibetan translators as *The Questions of Ratnacandra*, suggesting it may in fact be the work translated here; however, the Phukdrak version lacks a translator’s colophon, making it impossible to determine any contextual relationship between the two translations. To confuse matters more, *The Questions of Ratnacandra* is preserved under the title *The Questions of the Child Ratnacandra* in extra-canonical dhāraṇī collections.⁵ In producing this English translation, we have based our work on the Degé xylograph while consulting the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*).

The Noble Great Vehicle Sūtra
The Questions of Ratnacandra

1.

The Translation

[F.160.a]

1.1

Homage to the Omniscient One.

1.2

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was residing in Rājagṛha, on Vulture Peak Mountain, together with a large community of 7,200,000 monks, including Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana. There were also 90,000 bodhisattvas, including the bodhisattva great being Maitreya, the bodhisattva great being Mañjuśrī, the bodhisattva great being Akṣayamati, the bodhisattva great being Sāgaramati, the bodhisattva great being Anantamati, the bodhisattva great being Dṛḍhamati, the bodhisattva great being Dispeller of the Three Realms, the bodhisattva great being Ratnapāṇi, the bodhisattva great being Vaidyarāja, the bodhisattva great being Ratnākara, and the bodhisattva great being Joy and Sorrow. There were also many billions of gods, including the Four Great Kings; Śakra, king of the gods, along with his millions of divine attendants; and Brahmā, lord of the Enduring world, along with his millions of divine attendants from the Brahmā realm. There were also millions of nāgas, including the nāga king Sāgara, the nāga king Anavatapta, the nāga king Elapatra, and the nāga king Renowned. Along with them were millions of yakṣa generals, such as Āṭavaka, [F.160.b] Sucīromā, Oṣadhi, and Gardabhaka.

1.3

One morning the Blessed One put on his lower garments and monk's robes, took his alms bowl, and left for his alms round in Rājagṛha. At the same time Prince Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, left the city of Rājagṛha riding an elephant known as Eight-Trunked. It was adorned with seven kinds of precious materials and covered with golden latticework. Small bells were tied onto the elephant, which was further ornamented with tassels of golden brocade. As the prince emerged incense was burned, flower petals were scattered, and banners and flags were unfurled. After

riding through the city, which was decorated with parasols and fences, beautified with precious trees, and encircled by seven pavilions, he rode out of the capital displaying both royal wealth and power.

1.4 As Prince Ratnacandra was handing out alms to everyone present, he noticed the Blessed One walking in the distance. He was handsome and gracious, with peaceful faculties and mind. He had the most exquisite color. He was perfectly gentle and peaceful, the perfection of a gentle and peaceful being. He had a great presence and was restrained and calm. Like a lake, he was clear and pristine. Like a golden reliquary, his noble body was adorned with the thirty-two major marks and the eighty minor marks of a great being. Due to his supreme splendor, he was shining, bright, and resplendent.

1.5 Upon seeing the Blessed One, Ratnacandra was moved to faith. Filled with faith, he immediately alighted from the elephant and approached the Blessed One. Prostrating at the feet of the Blessed One, he circumambulated him three times and sat to one side with deference and respect. [F.161.a] Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, folded his palms together and bowed toward the Blessed One and spoke to him, “O Blessed One, it is said that a faithful noble son or daughter who has heard the names of the ten thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas who dwell in the ten directions will not fall back from the unsurpassed and perfect state of awakening. Blessed One, please speak of this. Thus-Gone One, please tell us about this.”

1.6 In response, the Blessed One said to Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, “Prince, well done! Well done indeed. Prince, you ask this in order to benefit many beings and bring them happiness. You do so out of love for the world and for the welfare of many beings, to benefit and bring happiness to gods and humans alike, and to assist the bodhisattvas of the present and the future. Prince, it is excellent you thought to ask the thus-gone, worthy, perfect Buddha about this point. Prince, your request is excellent, and it is virtuous that you were moved to articulate it. Therefore, Prince, listen carefully and keep this teaching in mind. Listen to me with one-pointed concentration and reflect on what I say as I explain this teaching to you.”

Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, replied to the Blessed One, “Excellent!” And he listened as the Blessed One had directed.

1.7 The Blessed One then said, “Prince, east of this buddha realm, past countless, inconceivably many, limitless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm [F.161.b] called Sorrowless. You may wonder how many boundless buddha realms one must pass through to reach that realm. Well, Prince, suppose the entire trichiliocosm was completely filled with sand, all the way to its summits. If a person were to remove the sand, grain by grain, and place one grain of sand in each buddha realm toward the east until every single grain of sand was placed in a buddha realm in that direction, one would still

not have reached the extent and limit of those buddha realms. The realm called Sorrowless lies farther away than such boundless and countless billions of buddha realms. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand, is beautifully decorated with seven kinds of precious substances, and has a ground made of gold. It is laid out in a checkered pattern and ornamented with precious trees. There are no hell beings, animals, hungry spirits, or asuras there, and it is free of grass, dried sticks, thorns, stones, pebbles, gravel, ravines, and precipices. Instead, the ground is covered in flower petals.

1.8 “There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Bhadraśrī resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He is learned and venerable, a blissful one, a knower of the world, a steersman who guides beings, an unexcelled one, a teacher of gods and humans, a blessed buddha. His body, which is adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great being, is like purified and refined gold adorned with precious ornaments. Sitting beautifully amidst the gathering, he teaches a Dharma that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. [F.162.a] He teaches as follows: ‘In this way the earth element will not become nonexistent, nor will the water element, the fire element, or the wind element. Likewise, Brahmā who is the lord of beings will not become nonexistent, and the same applies to form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness.’⁶ Prince, it has been six hundred million eons since the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Bhadraśrī fully awakened to unsurpassed and perfect buddhahood.

1.9 “Prince, in that buddha realm there are no words for *day* and *night*, and there is nothing analogous to that calculation of time used in our world. The entire buddha realm is permanently illuminated with the light of the thus-gone one. Moreover, Prince, every teaching given by the thus-gone one establishes countless billions of beings at the level of unborn phenomena. He establishes twice as many beings in each of the three types of acceptance. Furthermore, Prince, sentient beings who served past buddhas in other buddha realms and produced roots of virtue with them will attain acceptance that phenomena are unborn when touched by the light born from the power generated from the past aspirations of this thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha. Prince, any noble son or daughter who hears the name of the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Bhadraśrī will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening.

1.10 “Prince, south of here, past as many countless billions of buddha realms as mentioned before, there is a realm called Joy. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities previously described.⁷ [F.162.b] There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Candanaśrī resides and lives

surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them a Dharma that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. He also teaches the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until 'consciousness.' Prince, what do you think? Why is the thus-gone one called Candanaśrī? The entire buddha realm of the thus-gone one is filled with houses built of sandalwood. Therefore, the thus-gone one is called Candanaśrī.⁸ Any noble son or daughter who hears the name of that thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening.

1.11 "Prince, west of here, past as many countless billions of buddha realms as mentioned before, there is a realm called Excellence. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Amitābha resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them a Dharma that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. He also teaches the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until 'consciousness.' Prince, any noble son or daughter who hears the name of that thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and will experience that light. [F.163.a]

1.12 "Prince, north of here, past as many countless billions of buddha realms as mentioned before, there is a realm called Without Conflict. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Floral Splendor resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them a Dharma that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. He also teaches the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until 'consciousness.' Prince, any noble son or daughter who hears the name of that thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and will become like a victory banner for the world along with its gods.

1.13 "Prince, southeast of here, past countless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Moonlight. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. Prince, what do you think? Why is that world called Moonlight? It is because the rays of light from its thus-gone one illuminate that entire realm. That is why that world is called Moonlight. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Aśokaśrī resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until 'consciousness.' Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening. [F.163.b]

1.14

“Prince, southwest of here, past countless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Decorated with Banners. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Ratnayūpa resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until ‘consciousness.’ Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and will become as exalted as a jewel in the world.

1.15 “Prince, northwest of here, past countless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Resounding. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. Prince, what do you think? Why is that world called Resounding? It is because the realm is endowed with the sounds of ‘Buddha,’ ‘Dharma,’ and ‘Saṅgha,’ as well as ‘emptiness,’ ‘signlessness,’ and ‘wishlessness.’ Furthermore, it is endowed with the sounds of ‘generosity,’ ‘discipline,’ ‘patience,’ ‘diligence,’ ‘concentration,’ ‘insight,’ ‘liberation,’ and ‘vision of the wisdom of liberation.’ Prince, since that world is endowed with such sounds, it is called Resounding. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Kusumaśrī resides and lives [F.164.a] surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until ‘consciousness.’ Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and, like a flower, will be unstained by nonvirtuous phenomena.

1.16 “Prince, northeast of here, past countless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Happy. It is affluent, thriving, and happy. It has good harvests and is inhabited by many people. It is as flat as the palm of the hand and has all the other qualities described above. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Reveling in Lesser, Medium, and Higher Superknowledge resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He teaches them the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until ‘consciousness.’ Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening, will become skilled in all the actions and ways of bodhisattvas, and will uphold the knowledge of the perfections.

1.17 “Prince, below here, past countless billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Vast Expanse. Prince, what do you think? Why is that world called Vast Expanse? It is because it is as flat as the palm of the hand and it has no mountains, surrounding mountains, or great surrounding mountains. Since even the word *mountain* [F.164.b] does not exist in that buddha realm, it is called Vast Expanse. There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Prabhāśrī resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who

venerate him. He teaches them the same Dharma mentioned previously, up until 'consciousness.' Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and will be graced with the exhaustion of all their perpetuating afflictions.

1.18 "Prince, above here, past innumerable, unfathomable, inconceivable, and immeasurable billions of buddha realms, there is a realm called Moonlit. How many unfathomable buddha realms must one pass through to reach Moonlit? Prince, it is like this. Suppose this trichiliocosm were completely filled with sand, all the way to its summits. If a person were to remove the sand, grain by grain, and place one grain of sand in each buddha realm above until every single grain of sand was placed in a buddha realm in that direction, one would still not have reached the extent and limit of those buddha realms. The realm Moonlit lies farther away than such unfathomable and innumerable billions of buddha realms. That realm is as flat as the palm of the hand, is beautifully decorated with seven kinds of precious substances, and has a ground made of gold. It is laid out in a checkered pattern and ornamented with precious trees. There are no hell beings, animals, hungry spirits, or asuras there, [F.165.a] and it is free of grass, dried sticks, thorns, stones, pebbles, gravel, ravines, and precipices. Instead, the ground is covered in flower petals.

1.19 "There the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Dhanaśrī resides and lives surrounded by a gathering of bodhisattvas who venerate him. He is learned and venerable, a blissful one, a knower of the world, a steersman who guides beings, an unexcelled one, a teacher of gods and humans, a blessed buddha. His body, which is adorned with the thirty-two marks of a great being, is like purified and refined gold adorned with precious ornaments. Sitting beautifully amidst the gathering, he teaches a Dharma that is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end. He teaches as follows: 'In this way the earth element will not become nonexistent, nor will the water element, the fire element, or the wind element. Likewise, Brahmā who is the lord of beings will not become nonexistent, and the same applies to form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness.'⁹ Any noble son or daughter who hears his name will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening and will receive the precious and unsurpassed Dharma.

1.20 "Prince, any noble son or daughter who hears the names of these thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas, who are endowed with perfect conduct, qualities, wisdom, discipline, absorption, insight, liberation, and the vision of the wisdom of liberation, will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening.

1.21

“Prince, long ago in the past, [F.165.b] eons beyond calculation and measure, there was an eon by the name of Ratnākara. In that eon appeared the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddha Sāgaraśrī. He was learned and venerable, a blissful one, a knower of the world, a steersman who guides beings, an unexcelled one, a teacher of gods and humans, a blessed buddha. At that time, these ten thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas came together to generate roots of virtue by making boundless and countless grand offerings of food and drink, flowers, incense, flower garlands, lotions, parasols, banners, and flags to that blessed one. Thereby all of them together generated the mind set upon unsurpassed and perfect awakening. Then, one day, at precisely the same moment, they all achieved acceptance that phenomena are unborn. Thereafter they gradually engaged in bodhisattva conduct and mastered the factors that are conducive for awakening. Then, at precisely the same moment, they all attained unsurpassed and perfect awakening in each of their respective buddha realms. At precisely the same moment, they all turned the wheel of Dharma. They even enjoyed the same lifespan. Prince, these thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas will also one day enter into complete nirvāṇa at precisely the same moment.”

1.22 Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, then said to the Blessed One, [F.166.a] “Blessed One, the lifespan of those thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas is amazing! Blessed One, out of compassion for sentient beings, those thus-gone ones intentionally live such long lives. Blessed One, how much merit will noble sons or daughters generate if they keep the lifespan of those thus-gone ones in mind and trust in it without disregarding it or ignoring it?”

1.23 The Buddha replied, “Prince, one could fill up this entire trichiliocosm, along with the buddha realms of these ten thus-gone ones and the other buddha realms in the ten directions, with the seven precious substances of the gods and make daily offerings of them to the thus-gone, worthy, perfect buddhas, continuing this daily offering for countless eons. On the other hand, a noble son or daughter who has heard about the names and lifespan of these buddhas may keep them faithfully in mind without disregarding or disrespecting them and instead trust and agree with them. For that person the heap of merit accrued is far greater than that gathered by the former person. The former does not gather even a hundredth or a thousandth of that. It is, in fact, beyond the scope of illustration.”

1.24 Then, in order to venerate this teaching and the ten thus-gone ones, Śakra king of the gods, Brahmā lord of the Enduring world, the Four Great Kings, and the divine sons Īśvara, Maheśvara, Glorious Fortune, Tuṣita, and Santuṣita scattered divine flowers and sandalwood powder upon the Thus-Gone One. Then they spoke these words: “Blessed One, any noble son or daughter who retains, [F.166.b] carries, reads, and recites this teaching is

worthy of reverence. Blessed One, merely holding this teaching in their hand, they will never turn back from unsurpassed and perfect awakening. Blessed One, any noble son or daughter who hears this teaching will not fall under the sway of the evil Māra.”

1.25 At that point Prince Ratnacandra, son of King Bimbisāra, addressed the following verses to the Blessed One:

1.26 “Blessed One, you are beyond the aggregates!
Your eloquent teachings are beyond measure.
I and the entire world, along with its gods,
Rejoice in the teachings you have given.

1.27 “We take refuge in the world protectors
Who have passed, who are yet to come,
And in the buddhas who are present,
Residing in all directions.

1.28 “Of common purpose with all the buddhas,
The Dharma and Saṅgha are the utmost peace.
Their perfect qualities are inconceivable.
We take refuge in the Saṅgha too.

1.29 “The fearless bodhisattvas
Are stable in patience,
Grounded in recall,
And maintain incomparable emptiness.

1.30 “These bodhisattvas train well
In the sūtras of characteristics,
The scriptures that lead to awakening,
And the sūtras that conform to both.

1.31 “Sage, like them, we too wish to train
In the conduct of awakening.
You have taught about those naturally arisen ones,
The pure arrangement of their realms,

1.32 “And their practices, domains, and absorptions,
As well as their qualities
And the lifespan of these supreme sages.
Now I too will accomplish these qualities.”

1.33 Then the Blessed One commended the gods and Ratnacandra, and addressed them with the following verses:

- 1.34 “All who recall the names
Of these protectors of the world [F.167.a]
Will, in future times,
Become supreme among humans.
- 1.35 “They too will live
For inconceivably many millions of eons,
Like the lifespan of these supreme sages,
Which I have just described.
- 1.36 “Those who recall the names
Of these protectors
Will be unharmed by fire, bandits,
Poison, and weapons.
- 1.37 “Whoever recalls the names of these buddhas
Will never drown in rivers,
Will never be subject to royal punishment,
And will never forsake the Dharma.
- 1.38 “Recite these names at three times:
In the first watch of the night
And in the middle and last watches as well.
Wise ones who recite the names
- 1.39 “Of these supreme sages
In the morning, at noon,
And in the evening
Will have good dreams.
- 1.40 “Next, having recalled these names,
One must confess all the negative deeds
One has committed
Over the course of billions of eons.
- 1.41 “Any negative deed committed
By way of body, speech, and mind
After one has recalled these names
Must also be confessed.
- 1.42 “Touching one’s five points to the ground,
One should rejoice in the merit
Of all the wholesome deeds accumulated
By the victors prior to awakening.

- 1.43 “Having attained awakening,
The kinsmen of the world taught the Dharma,
And all beings made offerings
To the protectors of the world.
- 1.44 “The children of the victors should rejoice in them
Three times during the day and night.
In this way the perfections that benefit self and others
Shall be accomplished.”
- 1.45 When the Blessed One had spoken these words, the youth Ratnacandra, son
of King Bimbisāra, along with all the bodhisattvas, monks, gods, humans,
asuras, and gandharvas, rejoiced in the Buddha’s teaching and offered
praise. [F.167.b]

This completes the noble Great Vehicle sūtra “The Questions of Ratnacandra.”

c.

Colophon

c.1 The Indian preceptor Viśuddhasiṃha and the translator Bandé Gewa Pal translated this. Later, the Indian preceptor Vidyākarasiṃha and the editor-translator Bandé Devacandra edited and finalized it.

NOTES

n.

n.1 Nakamura 1980, pp. 177–182.

n.2 Nakamura 1980, p. 234

n.3 The Denkarma catalog is dated to ca. 812 CE. See Denkarma, f. 299.a.4. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, p. 99, no. 184.

n.4 In the Phukdrak version, the realms and their presiding buddhas are given as follows: to the east is the realm Sorrowless (*mya ngan med pa*) and the buddha Bhadraśrī (*dpal bzang po*); to the south is Peaceful (*zhi ba*) and buddha Ratnaprabhā (*rin chen 'od*); to the west is Heroic (*dpa' bo*) and the buddha Ānandaśrī (*dga' ba'i dpal*); to the north is the realm Without Conflict (*mi 'khrugs pa*) and the buddha Ketuśrī (*dpal gyi dpal*); to the southeast is Opulent (*spyod pa can*) and the buddha Aśokaśrī (*mya ngan med pa'i dpal*); to the southwest is the realm Shining Bright (*dpal gyi dpal*) and the buddha Ratnayaṣṭī (*rin chen srog shing*); to the northwest is Melodious (*dbyangs can*) and the buddha Kusumaśrī (*me tog dpal*); to the northeast is Happy (*bde ldan*) and the buddha Supernatural Power that Revels in the Shining Lotus (*pad mo 'tsher bas rnam par rol pa mngon par shes pa*); at the nadir is Vast Expanse (*yangs pa can*) and the buddha Brilliant Star (*skar ma dpal*); and at the zenith is the realm Moonlight (*zla ba snang ba*) and the buddha Dhanaśrī (*bnor dpal*).

n.5 See, for example, the *mdo sngags gsung rab rgya mtsho'i snying po mtshan gzungs mang bsdus*, vol. 2 (waM pa), folios 91.b–103.a.

n.6 *'di ltar sa'i khams ni med par mi 'gyur ro . . .* etc. These statements about the elements, Brahmā, and the aggregates are somewhat surprising and difficult to interpret with certainty. While they might possibly be accounted for by the notion that the elements and aggregates are already non-existent, and therefore do not need to become so, it seems more likely that this is a

reference to their continuity in terms of their true nature. That Brahmā is included remains unusual.

n.7 This and the subsequent statements that reference previously mentioned material represent intentional scribal elisions (*peyāla*) of repetitive passages, and likely originate in the Sanskrit manuscript on which the Tibetan translation is based. The reader is meant to revisit the first passage for the elided material. The complete passage will typically be restated in the final section, which in the context of this text is the passage describing the tenth buddha realm. Such scribal elisions are a common feature in Pali and Sanskrit texts with lengthy passages of repetitive material.

n.8 Candanaśrī means “Sandalwood Splendor”.

n.9 See n.6.

b.

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g.

GLOSSARY

g.1 Acceptance that phenomena are unborn

mi skye ba'i chos la bzod pa

མི་སྐྱེ་བའི་ཚོས་ལ་བཟོད་པ།

anutpattikadharmakṣānti

An attainment characteristic of the effortless and spontaneous wakefulness of the eighth ground of the bodhisattvas.

g.2 Akṣayamati

blo gros mi zad pa

བློ་གྲོས་མི་བཟོད་པ།

Akṣayamati

A bodhisattva.

g.3 Amitābha

snang ba mtha' yas

སྣང་བ་མཐའ་ཡས།

Amitābha

A buddha who lives in a western buddha realm called Excellence.

g.4 Anantamati

mtha' yas blo gros

མཐའ་ཡས་བློ་གྲོས།

Anantamati

A bodhisattva.

g.5 Anavatapta

ma dros pa

མ་རྫོག་པ།

Anavatapta

A nāga king.

g.6 Aśokaśrī

mya ngan med pa'i dpal

ལྷ་ངན་མེད་པའི་དཔལ།

Aśokaśrī

A buddha who lives in a southeastern buddha realm called Moonlight.

g.7 Āṭavaka

'brog gnas

འཕྲོག་གནས།

Āṭavaka

A yakṣa general.

g.8 Bhadraśrī

dpal bzang po

དཔལ་བཟང་པོ།

Bhadraśrī

A buddha who lives in an eastern buddha realm called Sorrowless.

g.9 Bimbisāra

gzugs can snying po

གཟུགས་ཅན་སྡིང་པོ།

Bimbisāra

The king of the country of Magadha.

g.10 Blessed one

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān · bhagavat

An epithet of a buddha, used in this text to refer to the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.11 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚངས་པ།

Brahmā

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 Enduring (Sahā) world” (our universe).

g.12 Buddha realm

sangs rgyas kyi zhing

སངས་རྒྱས་ཀྱི་ཞིང་།

buddhakṣetra

The realm influenced by the activity of a specific buddha.

g.13 Candanaśrī

tsan dan dpal

ཚན་དན་དཔལ།

Candanaśrī

A buddha who lives in a southern buddha realm called Joy. His name means “Sandalwood Splendor.”

g.14 Decorated with Banners

tog dang ldan pa

ཏོག་དང་ལྷན་པ།

—

A southwestern buddha realm.

g.15 Devacandra

de ba tsan dra

དེ་བ་ཚན་དྲ།

Devacandra

A Tibetan translator active in the early ninth century.

g.16 Dhanaśrī

nor dpal

ནོར་དཔལ།

Dhanaśrī

A buddha who lives in a buddha realm above called Moonlit.

g.17 Dispeller of the Three Realms

khams gsum rnam par gnon pa

ལམས་གསུམ་རྣམ་པར་གཞོན་པ།

—

A bodhisattva.

g.18 Dṛḍhamati

blo gros brtan pa

སྒོ་བྲོས་བརྟན་པ།

Dṛḍhamati

A bodhisattva.

g.19 Eight-Trunked

lag brgyad pa

ལག་བརྒྱད་པ།

—

A royal elephant belonging to the stables of King Bimbisāra.

g.20 Elapatra

e la'i 'dab

ཨ་ལའི་འདབ།

Elapatra

A nāga king

g.21 Emptiness

stong pa nyid

སྟོང་པ་ཉིད།

śūnyatā

The absence of independent, singular, and permanent existence; one of the three gateways to liberation.

g.22 Enduring

mi mjed

མི་མཛེད།

Sahā

The world in which we live.

g.23 Excellence

bzang po

—

བཟང་པོ།

—

A western buddha realm.

g.24 Five points (of the body)

yan lag lnga

ཡན་ལག་ལྔ།

—

Literally, “the five limbs,” i.e., the head, arms, and legs.

g.25 Floral Splendor

me tog gi dpal

མེ་ཏོག་གི་དཔལ།

—

A buddha who lives in a northern buddha realm called Without Conflict.

g.26 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

The powerful nonhuman guardian kings of the four quarters of this universe—Virūdhaka, Virūpākṣa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and Vaiśravaṇa—who rule, respectively, over kumbhāṇḍas in the south, nāgas in the west, gandharvas in the east, and yakṣas in the north.

g.27 Gandharva

dri za

དྷི་ཟ།

gandharva

A semidivine class of beings that are generally identified as ethereal celestial musicians.

g.28 Gardabhaka

bong bu

བོང་བུ།

Gardabhaka

A yakṣa general.

g.29 Gewa Pal

dge ba dpal

དགེ་བ་དཔལ།

—

A Tibetan translator active in Tibet in the late eighth to early ninth century.

g.30 Glorious Fortune

dpal ldan legs

དཔལ་ལྷན་ལེགས།

—

A deity.

g.31 Happy

bde ldan

བདེ་ལྷན།

—

A northeastern buddha realm.

g.32 Īśvara

dbang phyug

དབང་ཕྱུག།

—

A deity from the Brahmanical pantheon.

g.33 Joy

dga' ba

དགའ་བ།

—

A southern buddha realm.

g.34 Joy and Sorrow

dga' sdug

དགའ་སྡུག།

—

A bodhisattva.

g.35 Kusumaśrī

me tog dpal

མེ་ཏོག་དཔལ།

Kusumaśrī

A buddha who lives in a northwestern buddha realm called Resounding.

g.36 Maheśvara

dbang phyug chen po

དབང་ཕྱག་ཚེན་པོ།

Maheśvara

A deity from the Hindu pantheon most often identified as Śiva.

g.37 Maitreya

byams pa

བྱམས་པ།

Maitreya

Bodhisattva of loving kindness; the next buddha to follow Śākyamuni.

g.38 Mañjuśrī

'jam dpal

འཇམ་དཔལ།

Mañjuśrī

One of the eight “close sons” of the Buddha; the embodiment of wisdom.

g.39 Māra

bdud

བདུད།

Māra

The demon who assailed Śākyamuni prior to his awakening; any demonic force; the personification of conceptual and emotional obstacles.

g.40 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོ་དགལ་གྱི་བུ།

Maudgalyāyana

One of the main disciples (*śrāvaka*) of the Buddha.

g.41 Moonlight

zla ba snang ba

ལྷོ་བ་སྣང་བ།

—

A southeastern buddha realm.

g.42 Moonlit

zla ba can

ལྷོ་བ་ཅན།

—

A buddha realm above.

g.43 Nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

A semidivine class of beings who live in aquatic environments and who are known to hoard wealth. They are associated with snakes and serpents.

g.44 Oṣadhi

rtsi sman

རྩི་སྐྱེན།

Oṣadhi

A yakṣa general.

g.45 Prabhāśrī

snang ba'i dpal

སྣང་བའི་དཔལ།

Prabhāśrī

A buddha who lives in a buddha realm below called Vast Expanse.

g.46 Rājagrha

rgyal po'i khab

རྒྱལ་པོའི་ཁབ།

Rājagrha

The capital of the ancient kingdom of Magadha.

g.47 Ratnacandra

rin chen zla ba

རིན་ཆེན་ལྷ་བ།

Ratnacandra

One of the sons of King Bimbisāra.

g.48 Ratnākara

rin chen 'byung gnas

རིན་ཆེན་འབྲུང་གནས།

Ratnākara

A bodhisattva.

g.49 Ratnākara

rin chen 'byung gnas

རིན་ཆེན་འབྲུང་གནས།

Ratnākara

An eon.

g.50 Ratnapāṇi

lag na rin po che

ལག་ན་རིན་པོ་ཆེ།

Ratnapāṇi

A bodhisattva.

g.51 Ratnayūpa

rin po che'i mchod sdong

རིན་པོ་ཆེའི་མཚོད་སྡོང་།

Ratnayūpa

A buddha who lives in a southwestern buddha realm called Decorated with Banners.

g.52 Renowned

kun du grags pa

ཀུན་དུ་གྲགས་པ།

—

A nāga king.

g.53 Resounding

sgra ldan

སྒྲ་ལྷན།

—

A northwestern buddha realm.

g.54 Reveling in Lesser, Medium, and Higher Superknowledge

mngon par shes pa chung ngu dang 'bring dang chen pos rnam par rol pa

མངོན་པར་ཤེས་པ་རྒྱུད་སྤུང་འབྲིང་དང་ཆེན་པོས་རྣམ་པར་རོལ་པ།

—

A buddha who lives in a northeastern buddha realm called Happy.

g.55 Sāgara

rgya mtsho

རྒྱ་མཚོ།

Sāgara

A nāga king.

g.56 Sāgaramati

blo gros rgya mtsho

བློ་གྲོས་རྒྱ་མཚོ།

Sāgaramati

A bodhisattva.

g.57 Sāgaraśrī

rgya mtsho'i dpal

རྒྱ་མཚོའི་དཔལ།

Sāgaraśrī

A buddha who lived in the distant past.

g.58 Śakra

brgya byin

བརྒྱ་བྱིན།

Śakra

A divine being who rules the Heaven of the Thirty-Three. Also known as Indra.

g.59 Santuṣita

yongs su dga' ldan

ཡོངས་སུ་དགའ་ལྷན།

Santuṣita

A god who rules the Heaven of Joy.

g.60 Śāriputra

shA ri'i bu

ཤཱ་རི་བྱ།

Śāriputra

One of the main disciples (*śrāvaka*) of the Buddha.

g.61 Signlessness

mtshan ma med pa

མཚན་མ་མེད་པ།

animitta

One of the three gateways to liberation; the ultimate absence of marks and signs in perceived objects.

g.62 Sorrowless

mya ngan med pa

མྱ་ངན་མེད་པ།

Aśoka

An eastern buddha realm.

g.63 Sucīromā

khab spu can

ཁབ་སྤུ་ཅན།

Sucīromā

A yakṣa general.

g.64 Thus-gone one

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

A frequently used synonym for a buddha. The expression is interpreted in different ways, but in general it implies one who has arrived at the realization of the ultimate state.

Here used as a specific epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

- g.65 Trichiliocosm
stong gsum
 ལྷོང་གསུམ།
trisāhasralokadhātu
 A universe containing one billion worlds.
- g.66 Tuṣita
dga' ldan
 དགའ་ལྷན།
Tuṣita
 A deity; also the name of the fourth level of the heavens in the desire realm.
- g.67 Vaidyarāja
sman gyi rgyal po
 ལྷན་གྱི་རྒྱལ་པོ།
Vaidyarāja
 A bodhisattva.
- g.68 Vast Expanse
yangs pa dang ldan pa
 ཡངས་པ་དང་ལྷན་པ།
 —
 A buddha realm below.
- g.69 Vidyākarasiṃha
bi dyA ka ra sing ha
 བི་དྷ་ཀ་ར་སིང་ཉ།
Vidyākarasiṃha
 An Indian paṇḍita active in Tibet in the early ninth century.
- g.70 Viśuddhasiṃha
bi shu dha sing ha
 བི་ཤུ་རྩ་སིང་ཉ།
Viśuddhasiṃha
 An Indian paṇḍita active in Tibet in the late eighth to early ninth century.
- g.71 Vulture Peak Mountain

bya rgod phung po'i ri

བྱ་རྗོད་ཕུང་པོའི་རི།

Gṛdhrakūṭa Parvata

The mountain where many Great Vehicle teachings were delivered by Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.72 Watch

thun tshod

ཐུན་ཚོད།

prahara

A unit of time equal to three hours, thus comprising one eighth of the day.

g.73 Wheel of Dharma

chos kyi 'khor lo

ཚོས་ཀྱི་འཁོར་ལོ།

dharmacakra

When a Buddha gives his first teaching he “sets in motion the Wheel of Dharma,” just as a monarch with exceptional merit sets in motion a magical wheel that easily subdues all his enemies.

g.74 Wishlessness

smon pa med pa

སྐྱོན་པ་མེད་པ།

apranihita

One of the three gateways to liberation; the absence of conceptual modes of mind.

g.75 Without Conflict

'khrug med

འཁྲུག་མེད།

—

A northern buddha realm.

g.76 Worthy one

dgra bcom pa

དགུ་བཅོམ་པ།

arhat

A person who has been liberated from saṃsāra. Also used to refer specifically to a person who has accomplished the final fruition of the path of the hearers.

g.77

Yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

A class of semidivine beings that typically haunt forests and other natural places.