

༄༅། །མདོ་ཆེན་སྐུ་མའི་བུ་བ།

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## The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”

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*Māyājālamahāsūtra*

མདོ་ཆེན་པོ་སྐུ་མའི་དྲ་བ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ།

*mdo chen po sgyu ma'i dra ba zhes bya ba*

*Māyājālanāmamahāsūtra*

· Toh 288 ·

Degé Kangyur, vol. 71 (mdo sde, sha), folios 230.a–244.a

TRANSLATED INTO TIBETAN BY

· Jinamitra · Prajñāvarman · Bandé Yeshé Dé ·



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## SUMMARY

- s.1 *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* is a discourse taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni to an assembly of monks in Śrāvastī. The Buddha starts by mentioning the three trainings, in discipline, contemplation, and wisdom, and emphasizes the paramount importance of the training in wisdom, which brings to perfection the other two trainings too. He goes on to describe how we should train in wisdom by examining the futility and folly of our emotional reactions to what we perceive. Discussing each of the five sense perceptions and mental perception in succession, the Buddha describes how ordinary sensory and mental perceptions are deluded, and how getting caught up in the bonds of that delusion traps us in pain and regret. His systematic descriptions of the different perceptions are supplemented by individual analogies, illustrating the “net of illusion” to which the title refers.

ac.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ac.1 This text was translated by the Dharmachakra Translation Committee under the guidance of Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche. The translation was produced by Oriane Lavolé, who also prepared the summary and the synopsis of the text in the introduction. The rest of the introduction, on the history of the text in India and its transmission to Tibet, was prepared by Adam Krug, who also compared the translation with the original Tibetan and edited the text.

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

## INTRODUCTION

i.

i.1 In *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* the Buddha opens his discourse by emphasizing that among the three trainings—in discipline, contemplation, and wisdom—the training in wisdom is of paramount importance.<sup>1</sup> Perfecting the training in wisdom, he tells his monks, brings the other two trainings to perfection too.

i.2 What needs to be done to train in wisdom is the topic of the rest of the sūtra. Essentially, it involves a continuing examination of the futility and folly of one’s emotional reactions to what one perceives, namely objects of the five senses and objects in the mind. The Buddha discusses successively these different kinds of perception. He describes how ordinary sensory and mental perceptions are deluded, and how getting caught up in them causes pain and regret. The passages on each of the six kinds of object comprise almost identical phrasing, using key terms such as the four psychophysical bonds that tie beings to cyclic existence, and the four misconceptions through which they misinterpret the real nature of their experience. Within each of these six similar passages, however, the Buddha adds two unique analogies, one illustrating the sobering shift of mindset from folly to wisdom, and the other depicting examples of perceptual illusion; the analogies are mostly not direct references to the sensory mode being discussed.

i.3 *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* belongs to a corpus of texts known as the Mahāsūtras or “Great Discourses,” extracted from the Āgamas of the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins. The Mahāsūtras’ long history has been traced in a magisterial study by Peter Skilling, who concludes that the Mahāsūtra collection, to which ten texts translated into Tibetan in the early ninth century by Jinamitra, Prajñāvarman, and Bandé Yeshé Dé belong, probably originated from a corpus of discourses important to the Kashmiri Mūlasarvāstivādin textual community. The Mahāsūtras, in addition to their practical function as a compact canon that represented the four Āgama collections in shortened form, were also employed as protective texts (*rakṣā*).<sup>2</sup>

Doctrinally, all the works in this corpus draw on an early and fundamental layer of the Buddhist canon, and set out some of the key, essential perspectives that characterize the Buddha's teaching.

i.4 The present sūtra is no exception in that regard, explaining as it does how what causes our suffering and keeps us circling in saṃsāra is our failure to perceive the world as it really is, and our tendency instead to fall prey to the perceptual distortions caused by assessing what our senses tell us in terms of our mistaken belief in a self. These distorted perceptions form the "illusion's net" to which the title refers, trapping sentient beings in its bonds. It is noteworthy that in the final summary with which the text concludes<sup>3</sup> it is the twelve analogies that are said to constitute the "illusion's net," although it is not clear whether the wording here refers to the whole text (i.e. as a title), or to the net itself. In either case, the summary suggests that the analogies were seen as particularly significant features of the work.<sup>4</sup>

i.5 More generally, the theme of a "net of illusion" (Skt. *māyājāla*, and here Tib. *sgyu ma'i dra ba*), figures widely in the Indian literature of many traditions, not just Buddhist. In the Buddhist canon, there is also a father tantra (*pha rgyud*) within the Unexcelled category with the Sanskrit title *Māyājāla-mahātantrarāja* (Tib. *rgyud kyi rgyal po sgyu 'phrul dra ba*, Toh 466) and an extensive cycle of Nyingma tantras of the Mahāyoga class known collectively as the *Māyājāla* (Tib. *sgyu 'phrul dra ba* or *drwa ba*) that includes the *Guhya garbha* tantras (*rgyud gsang ba'i snying po*, Toh 832–834). However, the content of these tantric works has little in common with that of the Mahāsūtra presented here.

i.6 *The Mahāsūtra "Illusion's Net"* is found in the General Sūtra section of the Degé Kangyur as the first of the group of seven Mahāsūtras that are classified as sūtras, placed immediately following the massive *Application of Mindfulness of the Sacred Dharma (Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna*, Toh 287),<sup>5</sup> which marks the beginning of the "Lesser Vehicle" subset of canonical sūtras, as categorized by successive scholars from the time of Chomden Rikpai Raltri (1227–1305) and Butön (1290–1364) onward.

i.7 Fragments from *The Mahāsūtra "Illusion's Net"* have been identified among Sanskrit manuscript fragments belonging to the Sarvāstivādin school recovered from Central Asia.<sup>6</sup> The earliest of these fragments is in "Turkestan Gupta" script, allowing it to be tentatively dated to the fifth or sixth century CE.<sup>7</sup> More recently, a complete Sanskrit version of the text has been identified as part of an eighth-century manuscript of the *Dīrghāgama* produced in Gilgit, and preliminary studies suggest that it closely aligns with the Tibetan translation.<sup>8</sup> Peter Skilling notes that Asaṅga references or otherwise paraphrases *The Mahāsūtra "Illusion's Net"* nine times

in his *Yogācārabhūmi* and includes a brief passage from the text in his *Śrāvākabhūmi*, without naming its source. These references indicate that the version of the text Asaṅga used was close to the recension that was used for the Tibetan translation.<sup>9</sup> *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* is cited in the Tibetan translations of Vasubandhu’s *Vyākhyāyukti*<sup>10</sup> and Guṇamati’s *Vyākhyāyukti-ṭīkā*.<sup>11</sup> Despite the fact that the text itself was not translated into Chinese,<sup>12</sup> references to the text occur across a handful of Tibetan and Chinese translations.<sup>13</sup> Along with a number of other factors, these references to *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* suggest that the text was extant in some form no later than the third century CE; however, the text may have existed in a recension approximating its current form as early as the beginning of the Common Era. It appears, however, that with the contraction of Buddhism in India and Central Asia, *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* eventually fell into obscurity and the sole remaining witness to the text preserved in Tibetan was rarely studied in Tibet.<sup>14</sup>

i.8 This English translation is based on the Tibetan translation of *The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”* preserved in the Degé Kangyur in consultation with the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*), the Stok Palace Kangyur, and Peter Skilling’s comparative edition.

## **The Mahāsūtra “Illusion’s Net”**

1.

## The Translation

[F.230.a]

1.1 Homage to the Three Jewels.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was staying in Śrāvastī, in Prince Jeta's Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada's Park. He addressed the monks as follows:

1.3 "Monks, one may possess the training in superior discipline but lack superior contemplation and superior wisdom, and one may possess the training in superior discipline and superior contemplation but lack superior wisdom. However, when a noble hearer is established in the practice of striving for superior wisdom, the cultivation of superior discipline and superior contemplation will be perfected.<sup>15</sup> Thus, monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.

1.4 "Monks, how are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: 'Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant forms perceived by the eyes. I became and remained averse to unpleasant forms perceived by the eyes. I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral forms perceived by the eyes.<sup>16</sup> I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age and death. The past is gone, [F.230.b] so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding forms perceived by the eyes. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present forms I perceive with the eyes, such as the psychophysical

bonds<sup>17</sup> of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, “This is the truth,” and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.’<sup>18</sup>

1.5 “Moreover, monks, the very same forms perceived by the eyes may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.

1.6 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those forms that are perceived by the eyes as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant forms perceived by the eyes. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. [F.231.a] They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.7 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those forms that are perceived by the eyes as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant forms perceived by the eyes. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.8 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those forms that are perceived by the eyes as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent<sup>19</sup> to neutral forms perceived by the eyes. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.9 “Here is an analogy, monks. An insane person who is mentally disturbed may wander around naked, take great joy in doing so, and not see any fault in it. Then, when they come back to their senses, the fact that they had previously conducted themselves as an insane person, behaved like someone who is mentally disturbed, and wandered around naked brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.

- 1.10 “Monks, in the same way, for noble hearers who are learned and [F.231.b] have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, ‘Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.’<sup>20</sup>
- 1.11 “Here is an analogy, monks. A magician or a skilled magician’s apprentice sits at a major crossroads and creates the following four magical illusions: an elephant division, a cavalry division, a chariot division, and an infantry division. Once these are displayed, beings who have a childish, deluded, and confused disposition think, ‘There is an elephant division, a cavalry division, a chariot division, and an infantry division that are visible, real and present here.’
- 1.12 “Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, ‘There is no elephant division, cavalry division, chariot division, or infantry division that are visible, real and present here. That is only worked by magic, just an optical illusion.’
- 1.13 “Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, ‘All of the past, future, and present forms my eyes perceive [F.232.a] lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistakable true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra’s tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them,<sup>21</sup> or become and remain excessively attached to them. The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.’ That is how they conduct a thorough analysis.
- 1.14 “Having understood that, they correctly see all the forms perceived by their eyes in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, a scorpion’s sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.
- 1.15 “When they correctly see all the forms perceived by their eyes in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, as a splinter, as a scorpion’s sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present forms

perceived by the eyes that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, 'This is the truth,' and clinging to it as real. [F.232.b]

1.16 "By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.

1.17 "Monks, how else are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: 'Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant sounds perceived by the ears. I became and remained averse to unpleasant sounds perceived by the ears. I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral sounds perceived by the ears. I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age, sickness,<sup>22</sup> and death. The past is gone, so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding sounds perceived by the ears. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present sounds I perceive with the ears that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, "This is the truth," and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.' [F.233.a]

1.18 "Moreover, monks, the very same sounds perceived by the ears may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.

1.19 "Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those sounds that are perceived by the ears as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, 'This is true, and anything else is false,' and they conduct themselves accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant sounds perceived by the ears. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

- 1.20 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those sounds that are perceived by the ears as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant sounds perceived by the ears. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. [F.233.b] They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.
- 1.21 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those sounds that are perceived by the ears as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral sounds perceived by the ears. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.
- 1.22 “Here is an analogy, monks. A person who is insane or drunk might sleep with their mother, take great pleasure in doing so, and not see any fault in it. Yet, when they recover from their madness or drunkenness, the fact that they previously slept with their mother brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.
- 1.23 “Monks, in the same way, after noble hearers who are learned have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, ‘Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. [F.234.a] I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.’
- 1.24 “Here is an analogy, monks. When an echo resounds on the shores of a river or a large canal, beings who have a childish, deluded, and confused disposition think, ‘There is a sentient being that is the source of that sound, real and present there.’
- 1.25 “Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, ‘There is no sentient being that is the source of that sound, real and present there. That was only an echo, just an auditory delusion.’

- 1.26 “Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, ‘All of the past, future, and present sounds my ears perceive lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistaken true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra’s tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them, or become and remain excessively attached to them. The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.’ That is how they conduct a thorough analysis. [F.234.b]
- 1.27 “Having understood that, they correctly see all the sounds perceived by their ears in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, a scorpion’s sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.
- 1.28 “When they correctly see all the sounds perceived by their ears in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, as a splinter, as a scorpion’s sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present sounds perceived by the ears that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real.
- 1.29 “By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.
- 1.30 “Monks, how else are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: ‘Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant smells perceived by the nose. I became and remained averse to unpleasant smells perceived by the nose. [F.235.a] I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral smells perceived by the nose. I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age and death. The past is gone, so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding smells perceived by the nose. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past,

future, and present smells I perceive with the nose that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, “This is the truth,” and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.’

1.31 “Moreover, monks, the very same smells perceived by the nose may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.

1.32 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those smells that are perceived by the nose as they truly and really are, and so [F.235.b] they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant smells perceived by the nose. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.33 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those smells that are perceived by the nose as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant smells perceived by the nose. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.34 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those smells that are perceived by the nose as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral smells perceived by the nose. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.35 “Here is an analogy, monks. An executioner, adversary, and enemy might develop a close relationship with a person, [F.236.a] and that person might take pleasure in it and not see any fault in it. However, once they examine

- them closely and realize, 'This person is my executioner, adversary, and enemy,' it brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.
- 1.36 "Monks, in the same way, after noble hearers who are learned have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, 'Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.'
- 1.37 "Here is an analogy, monks. When someone who can see holds up a round mirror that is extremely clear and closely examines their own facial features in it, beings who have a childish, deluded, and confused disposition think, 'There is a sentient being that appears in this way, real and present there.'
- 1.38 "Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, 'There is no sentient being that appears in this way, real and present there. This is only a reflection, just an optical illusion.'
- 1.39 "Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, [F.236.b] 'All of the past, future, and present smells my nose perceives lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistakable true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra's tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them, or become and remain excessively attached to them. The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.' That is how they conduct a thorough analysis.
- 1.40 "Having understood that, they correctly see all the smells perceived by their nose in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, a scorpion's sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.
- 1.41 "When they correctly see all the smells perceived by their nose in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, as a splinter, as a scorpion's sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present smells

perceived by the nose that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, [F.237.a] and thinking, 'This is the truth,' and clinging to it as real.

1.42 "By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.

1.43 "Monks, how else are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: 'Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant tastes perceived by the tongue. I became and remained averse to unpleasant tastes perceived by the tongue. I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral tastes perceived by the tongue. I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age and death. The past is gone, so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding tastes perceived by the tongue. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present tastes perceived by the tongue that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, [F.237.b] and thinking, "This is the truth," and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.'

1.44 "Moreover, monks, the very same tastes perceived by the tongue may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.

1.45 "Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those tastes that are perceived by the tongue as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, 'This is true, and anything else is false,' and they conduct themselves accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant tastes perceived by the tongue. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

- 1.46 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those tastes that are perceived by the tongue as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant tastes perceived by the tongue. [F.238.a] These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.
- 1.47 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those tastes that are perceived by the tongue as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real,<sup>23</sup> they think, ‘This is true, and anything else is meaningless,’<sup>24</sup> and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral tastes perceived by the tongue. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.
- 1.48 “Here is an analogy, monks. A student might say, ‘I will offer my teacher food,’ and give them cow dung to eat. They might say, ‘I will quench their thirst,’ and give them urine to drink. They might take great pleasure in doing so and not see any fault in it. Then, when they thoroughly examine their actions, they realize, ‘I said, “I will offer my teacher food,” and then I gave them cow dung to eat, and I said, “I will quench their thirst,” and then I gave them urine to drink,’ and it brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.
- 1.49 “Monks, in the same way, after noble hearers who are learned have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, ‘Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. [F.238.b] I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.’
- 1.50 “Here is an analogy, monks. When the sun is at its zenith in a cloudless sky in the last month of spring, undulating mirages may appear due to the heat, and beings who have a childish, deluded, and confused disposition might think, ‘There is water that appears in this way, real and present there.’

- 1.51 “Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, ‘There is no water that appears in this way, real and present there. It is only a mirage, just a visual illusion.’
- 1.52 “Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, ‘All of the past, future, and present tastes my tongue perceives lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistakable true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra’s tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them, or become and remain excessively attached to them. [F.239.a] The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.’ That is how they conduct a thorough analysis.
- 1.53 “Having understood that, they correctly see all of the tastes perceived by their tongue in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, a scorpion’s sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.
- 1.54 “When they correctly see all the tastes perceived by their tongue in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, as a splinter, as a scorpion’s sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present tastes perceived by the tongue that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real.
- 1.55 “By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.
- 1.56 “Monks, how else are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: [F.239.b] ‘Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant textures perceived by the body. I became and remained averse to unpleasant textures perceived by the body. I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral textures perceived by the body. I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age and death. The

past is gone, so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding textures perceived by the body. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present textures perceived by the body that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, “This is the truth,” and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.’

1.57 “Moreover, monks, the very same textures perceived by the body may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. [F.240.a] They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.

1.58 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those textures that are perceived by the body as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant textures perceived by the body. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.59 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those textures that are perceived by the body as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’<sup>25</sup> and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant textures perceived by the body. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.60 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those textures that are perceived by the body as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral textures perceived by the body. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas [F.240.b] are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

- 1.61 “Here is an analogy, monks. When a person is attacked by robbers, they might grab someone else’s child, thinking it is their own, and then leave town. At first, they rejoice and see no fault in this, but once they thoroughly examine it, they realize that the child is not their own but someone else’s, and it brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.
- 1.62 “Monks, in the same way, after noble hearers who are learned have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, ‘Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.’
- 1.63 “Here is an analogy, monks. A person who is asleep might revel in and enjoy objects desirable to the five senses in a dream, yet when they wake up afterward there is nothing there. At that point, beings with a childish, deluded, and confused disposition think, ‘There were those objects desirable to the five senses that we enjoyed in our dreams, real and present there.’  
[F.241.a]
- 1.64 “Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, ‘There were no objects desirable to the five senses that we enjoyed in our dreams, real and present there. That was only a dream, just a mental delusion.’
- 1.65 “Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, ‘All of the past, future, and present textures my body perceives lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistakable true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra’s tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them, or become and remain excessively attached to them. The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.’ That is how they conduct a thorough analysis.
- 1.66 “Having understood that, they correctly see all textures perceived by their body in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, a scorpion’s sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.

- 1.67 “When they correctly see all the textures perceived by their body in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, [F.241.b] as a splinter, as a scorpion’s sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present textures perceived by the body that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real.
- 1.68 “By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.
- 1.69 “Monks, how else are noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed? Monks, noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom consider the following to conduct a thorough analysis: ‘Formerly, I became and remained attached to pleasant phenomena perceived by the mind. I became and remained averse to unpleasant phenomena perceived by the mind. I became and remained thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral phenomena perceived by the mind. I have trained myself and behaved in this way for a long time, and so I have experienced old age [F.242.a] and death. The past is gone, so today I will no longer train myself as I did before regarding phenomena perceived by the mind. I must train myself to abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present phenomena perceived by the mind that are the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, “This is the truth,” and clinging to it as real—and then I must abandon them.’
- 1.70 “Moreover, monks, the very same phenomena perceived by the mind may be pleasant to some but unpleasant to others. Sometimes they will be pleasant to them, sometimes they will be unpleasant, and sometimes they will be neutral. Monks, beings have been obscured by their minds in this way for a long time, and since they have been deceived and duped by their minds, they do not recognize the error. They have no conception of renunciation, and evil Māra forces them to do whatever he desires.
- 1.71 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those phenomena that are perceived by the mind as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves

accordingly. They become and remain attached to pleasant phenomena perceived by the mind. [F.242.b] These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of covetousness. They are entangled in attachment, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.72 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those phenomena that are perceived by the mind as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain averse to unpleasant phenomena perceived by the mind. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of malice. They are entangled in aversion, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.73 “Monks, some śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas do not see those phenomena that are perceived by the mind as they truly and really are, so they stubbornly hold on to their own mistaken beliefs. They cling to them as real, thinking, ‘This is true, and anything else is false,’ and they conduct themselves accordingly. They remain thoughtlessly indifferent to neutral phenomena perceived by the mind. These śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas are completely corrupted by the psychophysical bond of thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real. They are entangled in pride, and so they too are forced to do whatever evil Māra desires.

1.74 “Here is an analogy, monks. A person who picks up a chest containing snakes as they flee from a fire in their village thinking that it is a chest of jewels might be delighted in doing so and not see any fault in it. But when they thoroughly examine it and realize it is not a chest of jewels but a chest containing snakes, [F.243.a] it brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust.

1.75 “Monks, in the same way, after noble hearers who are learned have obtained noble, supramundane wisdom, their previous childish, deluded, and confused behavior brings them distress, shame, remorse, and disgust. They think, ‘Formerly, I thought there was permanence where there is only impermanence. I thought there was happiness where there is only suffering. I thought there was purity where there is only impurity. I thought there was a self where there is only the absence of a self. In this way, formerly, I perceived impermanence as permanence. I perceived suffering as happiness. I perceived impurity as purity. I perceived the absence of a self as a self.’

1.76 “Here is an analogy, monks. A magician or a skilled magician’s apprentice sits at a major crossroads and creates the following magical illusions: jewels, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, hand ornaments, anklets, rings, and gold and silver garlands. Once these are displayed, beings who have a

- childish, deluded, and confused disposition think, ‘There are these jewels, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, hand ornaments, anklets, rings, and gold and silver garlands that are visible in this way, real and present there.’ [F.243.b]
- 1.77 “Beings whose disposition is insightful instead of childish or deluded think, ‘There are no jewels, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, armlets, hand ornaments, anklets, rings, and gold and silver garlands that are visible in this way, real and present there. They are only a magic trick, just a visual illusion.’
- 1.78 “Monks, in the same way, noble hearers who are learned think, ‘All of the past, future, and present phenomena perceived by my mind lack permanence, stability, unchangeability, a true nature, an unmistakable true nature, a unique true nature, genuine reality, truth, suchness, a way things really are, infallibility, and incontrovertibility. They are hollow. They are vain. They have no essence. They are false. They are deceptive phenomena. They are Māra. They are Māra’s tools. They are corpses. They are corpse-like forms. Therefore, it does not make sense to delight in them, speak highly of them, and become and remain excessively attached to them. The noble, supramundane wisdom taught by the Blessed One is true.’ That is how they conduct a thorough analysis.
- 1.79 “Having understood that, they correctly see all phenomena perceived by their mind in the past, future, and present as a sickness. They correctly see them as a cancer, a splinter, [F.244.a] a scorpion’s sting, impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self.
- 1.80 “When they correctly see all of the phenomena perceived by their mind in the past, future, and present as a sickness, and they correctly see them as a cancer, as a splinter, as a scorpion’s sting, as impermanent, suffering, empty, and lacking a self, they then abandon mistaken beliefs, wrong ideas, incorrect thoughts, and incorrect views regarding past, future, and present phenomena perceived by the mind, the psychophysical bonds of covetousness, malice, a sense of moral and ascetic supremacy, and thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real.
- 1.81 “By abandoning those bonds, they render Māra blind, depressed, and disoriented and stand their ground. Since evil Māra can no longer see them, they destroy Māra and his retinue and wage battle against his great army. They are victorious in battle, destroy the army, and stand their ground. This is how noble hearers who remain engaged in practicing superior wisdom are supported by wisdom, which among all supports is unsurpassed.”
- 1.82 After the Blessed One had spoken, the monks rejoiced and praised the words of the Blessed One.
- 1.83 An intervening summary:<sup>26</sup>

- 1.84     *The madman, the magical illusion,  
The drunk, the echo,  
The executioner, the mirror,  
The food offering, the mirage,  
Fleeing a robber's attack,  
Enjoyments in a dream, the chest,  
And the jewels and necklaces—  
Under these is illusion's net subsumed.*
- 1.85     *This concludes The Mahāsūtra "Illusion's Net."*

c.

## Colophon

- c.1     This was translated, edited, and finalized by the Indian preceptors Jinamitra and Prajñavarman, along with the chief editor and translator Bandé Yeshe Dé, and so forth.

ab.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- C Choné (*co ne*)
- D Degé (*sde dge bka' 'gyur*)
- H Lhasa (*lha sa / zhol*)
- J Lithang (*li thang*)
- K Kanxi (*kang shi*)
- N Narthang (*snar thang*)
- S Stok Palace (*stog pho 'brang*)
- U Urga (*phyi sog khu re*)
- Y Yongle (*g.yung lo*)

## NOTES

n.

- n.1 For an exploration of how unusual it may be in a text from a fundamental layer of Buddhist literature to thus emphasize the training in wisdom, see Sharygin 2024.
- n.2 Skilling 2012, pp. 63–88. For more on the Mahāsūtras, see the 84000 Knowledge Base article [Mahāsūtras \(https://site.84000.co/kb-articles/mahasutras\)](https://site.84000.co/kb-articles/mahasutras).
- n.3 See [1.83–1.84](#). The term used in the Tibetan here is *bar sdom* (Skt. *antaroddāna*) or “intervening summary.” Such summaries are typically found in vinaya and abhidharma texts, as well as in the longer āgamas. Three other Mahāsūtras contain *antaroddāna* type summaries, attesting to these works’ close relationship with the Mūlasarvastivāda vinaya and āgama literature. See Skilling 2012, pp. 90–92 and 231.
- n.4 Skilling’s detailed study of various features of the text includes (Skilling 2012, pp. 242–245) an analysis of the analogies and their parallels elsewhere in the canonical literature.
- n.5 84000. [The Application of Mindfulness of the Sacred Dharma \(http://read.84000.co/translation/toh287.html\)](http://read.84000.co/translation/toh287.html), Toh 287 (2021).
- n.6 Skilling has provided a chart of these sources for quick reference. See Skilling 2012, p. 228.
- n.7 Skilling 2012, p. 233.
- n.8 The complete Sanskrit witness of the *Māyājālasūtra* mentioned here was not available at the time this English translation was published, and so was not consulted here. For more on this version, see Sharygin 2024 and Sharygin forthcoming.

- n.9 Skilling 2012, p. 234.
- n.10 Vasubandhu, *rnam par bshad pa'i rigs pa (Vyākhyāyukti)*, Toh 4061, Degé Tengyur vol. 238 (sems tsam, shi), folios 29.a–134.b. Skilling provides the folio number for this citation of Vasubandhu in the Qianlong Peking Tengyur as Q5562, vol. 113 (sems tsam, si), folios 126.b.1–126.b.2. See Skilling 2012, p. 228.
- n.11 Guṇamati, *rnam par bshad pa'i rigs pa'i bshad pa (Vyākhyāyuktīṭikā)*, Toh 4069, Degé Tengyur vol. 239 (sems tsam, si), folios 139.b–301.a. Skilling provides the folio numbers for this citation of Guṇamati in the Qianlong Peking Tengyur as Q5570, vol. 114 (sems tsam, i), folios 155.b–156.a.
- n.12 Skilling 2012, p. 106.
- n.13 Skilling 2012 pp. 228–29.
- n.14 Skilling 2012 p. 251.
- n.15 The Buddha is referring to the three trainings (Tib. *bslab pa gsum*, Skt. *trīṇi śikṣāṇī*). The list of three trainings that appears in the Mahāvīyutpatti matches the list as it appears in this text and across a broad range of Sanskrit and Pali Buddhist sources.
- n.16 Tib. *mig gis rnam par shes par bya ba'i gzugs btang snyoms kyi gnas lta bu dag la ni so sor brtags pa ma yin/ so sor rtags pa ma yin pa'i btang snyoms su gnas par 'gyur te*.
- n.17 Tib. *tshogs kyi mdud pa*. Skilling notes that this term translates the Sanskrit *kāyagrantha*, a technical term used for a set of four bonds that appears frequently throughout this text, but that unfortunately does not receive a thorough enough treatment in Sanskrit Buddhist literature to provide the proper context for its interpretation. Skilling defers to the following insightful comments from Nārada Mahā Thera on the presentation of the *kāyagranthas* in the Theravāda tradition: “*Ganthas* are those that bind mind with body or the present body with bodies of future existences. Here the term *kāya* is used in the sense of mass or body—both mental and physical.” See Skilling 2012, pp. 240–41. Nārada Mahā Thera’s interpretation of the term has been adopted here, and it appears to agree with the interpretation of a similar group of four in Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche’s *Gateway to Knowledge* (see Pema Kunsang 2000 and the next note).
- n.18 These correspond to the four “bonds that bind our bodies” (*lus kyis mdud pa*), according to Jamgön Mipham Rinpoche (see Pema Kunsang 2000, p. 130).
- n.19 “Thoughtlessly indifferent” renders the Tibetan *so sor brtags pa ma yin pa'i btang snyoms*.

- n.20 These are the “four misconceptions” (Skt. *caturviparyāsa*; Tib. *phyin ci log pa bzhi*): mistaking impermanence for permanence, mistaking suffering for happiness, mistaking impurity for purity, and mistaking the absence of a self for a self.
- n.21 “Speak highly of them” renders the Tibetan *mngon par brjod par bya ba*.
- n.22 D, U, S *na ba dang*; Y, K, J, N, C, H omit. This translation follows the reading in the Degé, Stok Palace, and Urga Kangyurs.
- n.23 D *mngon par shes par byas nas*; Y, K, S *mngon par zhen par byas nas*. This translation follows the reading in the Yongle, Peking, and Stok Palace Kangyurs.
- n.24 D, S *gzhan ni don med pa’o zhes*. This variant is found in all of the Tibetan witnesses consulted for this translation.
- n.25 D *gzhan ni don med pa’o zhes*; S *gzhan ni brdzun pa’o zhes*. This translation follows the reading in the Stok Palace Kangyur.
- n.26 See [i.4](#) and [n.3](#).

b.

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## GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for names and terms of the corresponding ·  
source language

AS	<i>Attested in source text</i> This term is attested in a manuscript used as a source for this translation.
AO	<i>Attested in other text</i> This term is attested in other manuscripts with a parallel or similar context.
AD	<i>Attested in dictionary</i> This term is attested in dictionaries matching Tibetan to the corresponding language.
AA	<i>Approximate attestation</i> The attestation of this name is approximate. It is based on other names where the relationship between the Tibetan and source language 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.

## g.1 attachment

*rjes su chags*

རྗེས་སུ་ཚགས།

*anurāga*<sup>AD</sup>

## g.2 aversion

*khong khro ba*

ཁོང་ཁྲོ་བ།

*pratigha*<sup>AS</sup>

g.3 Bandé Yeshé Dé

*ye shes sde*

ཡེ་ཤེས་སྡེ།

—

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Yeshé Dé (late eighth to early ninth century) was the most prolific translator of sūtras into Tibetan. Altogether he is credited with the translation of more than one hundred sixty sūtra translations and more than one hundred additional translations, mostly on tantric topics. In spite of Yeshé Dé's great importance for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet during the imperial era, only a few biographical details about this figure are known. Later sources describe him as a student of the Indian teacher Padmasambhava, and he is also credited with teaching both sūtra and tantra widely to students of his own. He was also known as Nanam Yeshé Dé, from the Nanam (*sna nam*) clan.

g.4 Blessed One

*bcom ldan 'das*

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

*bhagavat*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

In Buddhist literature, this is 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.5 covetousness

*brnab sems*

བརྒྱལ་སེམས།

*abhidhyā*<sup>AD</sup>

The desire for things that arises from experiencing sense objects as pleasant. First of the four bonds that bind the psychophysical body to cyclic existence. Also one of the ten nonvirtues.

g.6 empty

*stong pa*

སྟོང་པ།

*śūnya*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Emptiness denotes the ultimate nature of reality, the total absence of inherent existence and self-identity with respect to all phenomena.

According to this view, all things and events are devoid of any independent, intrinsic reality that constitutes their essence. Nothing can be said to exist independent of the complex network of factors that gives rise to its origination, nor are phenomena independent of the cognitive processes and mental constructs that make up the conventional framework within which their identity and existence are posited. When all levels of conceptualization dissolve and when all forms of dichotomizing tendencies are quelled through deliberate meditative deconstruction of conceptual elaborations, the ultimate nature of reality will finally become manifest. It is the first of the three gateways to liberation.

g.7 four misconceptions

*phyin ci log bzhi*

ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་བཞི།

*caturviparyāya*

These are mistaking impermanence for permanence, mistaking suffering for happiness, mistaking impurity for purity, and mistaking the absence of a self for a self.

g.8 hearer

*nyan thos*

ཉན་ཐོས།

*śrāvaka*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.9 impermanence

*mi rtag pa*

མི་རྟག་པ།

*anitya*<sup>AD</sup>

g.10 incorrect thought

*sems phyin ci log pa*

སེམས་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག་པ།

*cittaviparyāsa*<sup>AD</sup>

g.11 incorrect view

*log par lta ba*

ལོག་པར་ལྟ་བ།

—

One of the ten nonvirtuous actions.

g.12 intervening summary

*bar sdom*

བར་སྡོམ།

*antaroddāna*<sup>AD</sup>

A summary or synopsis in verse form comprising a list of topics or keywords. One of several types of summary (*uddāna*) characteristic of the vinaya and abhidharma literature and also found in longer sūtras of the Dīrghāgama

and (less often) Madhyamāgama. An intervening summary, found less often than the other types, typically summarizes the subject matter of a topical subsection of which it may also mark the end. See also [n.3](#).

g.13 Jinamitra

*dzi na mi tra*

ཇོན་མི་ཏྲ།

*jinamitra*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Jinamitra was invited to Tibet during the reign of King Tri Songdetsen (*khri srong lde btsan*, r. 742–98 CE) and was involved with the translation of nearly two hundred texts, continuing into the reign of King Ralpachen (*ral pa can*, r. 815–38 CE). He was one of the small group of paṇḍitas responsible for the *Mahāvīyūtpatti* Sanskrit–Tibetan dictionary.

g.14 lacking a self

*bdag med pa*

བདག་མེད་པ།

*anātman* <sup>AD</sup>

The view that there is no inherently existent self, whether dependent on or independent of the five aggregates.

g.15 Mahāsūtra

*mdo chen po*

མངོ་ཆེན་པོ།

*mahāsūtra* <sup>AD</sup>

The corpus of texts known as the Mahāsūtras or “Great Discourses” comprises (at least in the Kangyur) ten works originally extracted from the Āgamas of the Sarvāstivādins and the Mūlasarvāstivādins with applications mentioned in the vinaya literature. See [i.3](#) and the 84000 Knowledge Base article [Mahāsūtras](#).

g.16 malice

*gnod sems*

གནོད་སེམས།

*vyāpāda* <sup>AD</sup>

The hostility that arises from experiencing sense objects as unpleasant. The second of the four bonds that bind the psychophysical body to cyclic existence. Also one of the ten nonvirtues.

g.17 Māra

*bdud*

མ་རྩ་

*māra*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

*Māra*, literally “death” or “maker of death,” is the name of the deva who tried to prevent the Buddha from achieving awakening, the name given to the class of beings he leads, and also an impersonal term for the destructive forces that keep beings imprisoned in saṃsāra:

(1) As a deva, Māra is said to be the principal deity in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (*paranirmitavaśavartin*), the highest paradise in the desire realm. He famously attempted to prevent the Buddha’s awakening under the Bodhi tree—see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.1—and later sought many times to thwart the Buddha’s activity. In the sūtras, he often also creates obstacles to the progress of śrāvakas and bodhisattvas. (2) The devas ruled over by Māra are collectively called *mārakāyika* or *mārakāyikadevatā*, the “deities of Māra’s family or class.” In general, these māras too do not wish any being to escape from saṃsāra, but can also change their ways and even end up developing faith in the Buddha, as exemplified by Sārthavāha; see *The Play in Full* (Toh 95), 21.14 and 21.43. (3) The term māra can also be understood as personifying four defects that prevent awakening, called (i) the divine māra (*devaputramāra*), which is the distraction of pleasures; (ii) the māra of Death (*mṛtyumāra*), which is having one’s life interrupted; (iii) the māra of the aggregates (*skandhamāra*), which is identifying with the five aggregates; and (iv) the māra of the afflictions (*kleśamāra*), which is being under the sway of the negative emotions of desire, hatred, and ignorance.

g.18 mistaken beliefs

*log par mos pa*

ལོག་པར་མཐོས་པ།

*viparitādhimokṣa*<sup>AD</sup>

g.19 monk

*dge slong*

དགེ་སྐོར།

*bhikṣu*

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term *bhikṣu*, often translated as “monk,” refers to the highest among the eight types of prātimokṣa vows that make one part of the Buddhist assembly. The Sanskrit term literally means “beggar” or “mendicant,” referring to the fact that Buddhist monks and nuns—like other ascetics of the time—subsisted on alms (*bhikṣā*) begged from the laity.

In the Tibetan tradition, which follows the Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya, a monk follows 253 rules as part of his moral discipline. A nun (*bhikṣuṇī*; *dge slong ma*) follows 364 rules. A novice monk (*śrāmaṇera*; *dge tshul*) or nun (*śrāmaṇerikā*; *dge tshul ma*) follows thirty-six rules of moral discipline (although in other vinaya traditions novices typically follow only ten).

g.20 Prajñāvarman

*pra dza+nyA bar ma*

པ་རྗེ་བར་མ།

*prajñāvarma*

Indian scholar and translator of the sūtra. He lived during the eighth century and came to Tibet on the invitation of King Trisong Detsen. He contributed to the translation of 77 Buddhist works from Sanskrit into Tibetan during his stay in Tibet.

g.21 pride

*nga rgyal*

ང་རྒྱལ།

*māna*<sup>AD</sup>

g.22 Prince Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada’s Park

*rgyal bu rgyal byed kyī tshal mgon med zas sbyin gyi kun dga’ ra ba*

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ་མགོན་མེད་ཟས་སྦྱིན་གྱི་ཀུན་དགའ་རབ།

*jetavanam anāthapiṇḍadasyārāmaḥ*<sup>AO</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

One of the first Buddhist monasteries, located in a park outside Śrāvastī, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Kośala in northern India. This park was originally owned by Prince Jeta, hence the name Jetavana, meaning Jeta’s grove. The wealthy merchant Anāthapiṇḍada, wishing to offer it to the Buddha, sought to buy it from him, but the prince, not wishing to sell, said he would only do so if Anāthapiṇḍada covered the entire property with gold coins. Anāthapiṇḍada agreed, and managed to cover all of the park except

the entrance, hence the name Anāthapiṇḍadasyārāmaḥ, meaning Anāthapiṇḍada's park. The place is usually referred to in the sūtras as "Jetavana, Anāthapiṇḍada's park," and according to the *Samghabhedavastu* the Buddha used Prince Jeta's name in first place because that was Prince Jeta's own unspoken wish while Anāthapiṇḍada was offering the park. Inspired by the occasion and the Buddha's use of his name, Prince Jeta then offered the rest of the property and had an entrance gate built. The Buddha specifically instructed those who recite the sūtras to use Prince Jeta's name in first place to commemorate the mutual effort of both benefactors.

Anāthapiṇḍada built residences for the monks, to house them during the monsoon season, thus creating the first Buddhist monastery. It was one of the Buddha's main residences, where he spent around nineteen rainy season retreats, and it was therefore the setting for many of the Buddha's discourses and events. According to the travel accounts of Chinese monks, it was still in use as a Buddhist monastery in the early fifth century CE, but by the sixth century it had been reduced to ruins.

g.23 psychophysical bond

*tshogs kyi mdud pa*

ཚོགས་ཀྱི་མདུད་པ།

*kāyagrantha*

A set of four bonds that bind the psychophysical body (Skt. *kāya*, Tib. *tshogs*) to cyclic existence. See also [n.17](#)

g.24 renunciation

*nges par 'byung ba*

ངེས་པར་འབྱུང་བ།

*niḥsaraṇa*<sup>AD</sup> · *niryāṇa*<sup>AD</sup> · *niryāta*<sup>AD</sup>

g.25 sense of moral and ascetic supremacy

*tshul khrims dang brtul zhugs mchog tu 'dzin pa*

ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས་དང་བརྟུལ་ལུགས་མཚོག་ཏུ་འཛིན་པ།

*śīlavrataparāmarśa*

Considering discipline and the observance of vows as supreme is the third of the four bonds that bind the psychophysical body to cyclic existence.

g.26 śramaṇas and brāhmaṇas

*dge sbyong ngam bram ze* · *dge sbyong dang bram ze*

དགེ་སྦྱོང་དང་བླ་མ་ཟེ། · དགེ་སྦྱོང་དང་བླ་མ་ཟེ།

*śramaṇabrāhmaṇa* <sup>AD</sup>

A common two-member compound (*dvandva*) found as a stock phrase in Buddhist literature to refer broadly to two distinct systems of spiritual orientation and practice in early India. The term “śramaṇa” (Tib. *dge sbyong*) refers to those who took vows in non-brahmanical spiritual systems that focused on asceticism, renunciation, and monasticism. The term “brāhmaṇa” (Tib. *bram ze*) refers in this context not so much to brahmins in terms of caste identity alone but rather to those who actively participated in the Vedic tradition of learning and the ritual worship of brahmanical deities, mostly within the context of a householder lifestyle.

g.27 Śrāvastī

*mnyan yod*

མཉམ་ཡོད།

*śrāvastī* <sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

During the life of the Buddha, Śrāvastī was the capital city of the powerful kingdom of Kośala, ruled by King Prasenajit, who became a follower and patron of the Buddha. It was also the hometown of Anāthapiṇḍada, the wealthy patron who first invited the Buddha there, and then offered him a park known as Jetavana, Prince Jeta’s Grove, which became one of the first Buddhist monasteries. The Buddha is said to have spent about twenty-five rainy seasons with his disciples in Śrāvastī, thus it is named as the setting of numerous events and teachings. It is located in present-day Uttar Pradesh in northern India.

g.28 suchness

*de kho na nyid*

དེ་མོ་ནི་ཉིད།

—

The quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms.

g.29 suffering

*sdug bsngal ba*

སྤུག་བསྐྱེད་བ།

*duḥkha* <sup>AD</sup>

The first of the four truths of the noble ones. The term “suffering” includes all essentially unsatisfactory experiences of life in cyclic existence, whether physical or mental. These comprise (1) the suffering of suffering, i.e., the physical sensations and mental experiences that are self-evident as suffering and toward which spontaneous feelings of aversion arise; (2) the suffering of change, i.e., all experiences that are normally recognized as pleasant and desirable, but which are nonetheless suffering in that persistent indulgence in these always results in changing attitudes of dissatisfaction and boredom; and (3) the suffering of the pervasive conditioning underlying the round of birth, aging, and death.

g.30 superior contemplation

*lhag pa'i sems*

ལྷག་པའི་སེམས།

*adhicitta*<sup>AD</sup>

One of the three higher trainings, namely the trainings in superior discipline, superior contemplation (lit. “superior mind”), and superior wisdom.

g.31 superior discipline

*lhag pa'i tshul khrims*

ལྷག་པའི་ཚུལ་ཁྲིམས།

*adhiśīla*<sup>AD</sup>

One of the three higher trainings, namely the trainings in superior discipline, superior contemplation (lit. “superior mind”), and superior wisdom.

g.32 superior wisdom

*lhag pa'i shes rab*

ལྷག་པའི་ཤེས་རབ།

*adhiprajñā*<sup>AD</sup>

One of the three higher trainings, namely the trainings in superior discipline, superior contemplation (lit. “superior mind”), and superior wisdom.

g.33 thinking there is a self where there is only the absence of a self

*bdag med pa kho na la ni bdag tu bsams*

བདག་མེད་པ་ཁོ་ལ་ནི་བདག་ཏུ་བསམས།

—

One of the “four misconceptions” (Skt. *caturviparyāya*; Tib. *phyin ci log bzhi*).

g.34 thinking there is happiness where there is only suffering

*sdug bsngal ba kho na la ni bde bar bsams*

སྤྱག་བསྐྱེལ་བ་ལོ་ན་ལ་ནི་བདེ་བར་བསམ་མཁས།

—

One of the “four misconceptions” (Skt. *caturviparyāya*; Tib. *phyin ci log bzhi*).

g.35 thinking there is permanence when there is only impermanence

*mi rtag pa kho na la rtag par bsams*

མི་རྟག་པ་ལོ་ན་ལ་རྟག་པར་བསམ་མཁས།

—

One of the “four misconceptions” (Skt. *caturviparyāya*; Tib. *phyin ci log bzhi*).

g.36 thinking there is purity where there is only impurity

*mi gtsang ba kho na la ni gtsang bar bsams*

མི་གཙང་བ་ལོ་ན་ལ་ནི་གཙང་བར་བསམ་མཁས།

—

One of the “four misconceptions” (Skt. *caturviparyāya*; Tib. *phyin ci log bzhi*).

g.37 thinking, ‘This is the truth,’ and clinging to it as real

*di bden no snyam du mngon par zhen cing mchog tu ’dzin pa*

དི་བདེན་ནོ་སྣང་དུ་མངོན་པར་ཞེན་ཅིང་མཚོག་ཏུ་འཛིན་པ།

—

Fourth of the four bonds that bind the psychophysical body to cyclic existence.

g.38 Three Jewels

*dkon mchog gsum*

དགོན་མཚོག་གསུམ།

*triratna*<sup>AD</sup>

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha—the three objects of Buddhist refuge. In the Tibetan rendering, “the three rare and supreme ones.”

g.39 true nature

*de bzhin nyid*

དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད།

—

The quality or condition of things as they really are, which cannot be conveyed in conceptual, dualistic terms.

g.40 unmistaken true nature

*ma nor ba de bzhin nyid*

མ་ནོར་བ་དེ་བཞིན་ཉིད།

*avitathatā*<sup>AD</sup> . *avitathātā*<sup>AD</sup>

g.41 wrong ideas

*'du shes phyin ci log*

འདུ་ཤེས་ཕྱིན་ཅི་ལོག

*saṃjñāviparyāsa*<sup>AD</sup>