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# Introduction

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## The Setting

### 1.1

The sūtra is set at first on the banks of the Nairañjanā River, where the Buddha is dwelling together with a retinue of bodhisattvas including Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Maitreya, and Mañjuśrī, as well as great hearers like Subhūti, Śāripūtra, and Maudgalyayāna. After Śakra and Brahmā pay their respects, the Tathāgata magically transports himself together with his entire assembly to a grove in Vārāṇasī, where he manifests his supernatural powers.

## The Story

### 1.2

The Buddha, upon entering into the state of state of concentration known as *thegarlands of the buddhas*, asks Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi to summon miraculously all degenerate beings of the Sahā world system who must be led to awakening. Entering into the same state of concentration, Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi manifest light rays and inspirational verses to invite those beings to the mango grove. Once they arrive, the Tathāgata displays his supernatural powers by exerting his sovereign power over the whole world, turning it into a place similar to the pure realm of Sukhāvātī. With Mañjuśrī's help, he teaches on how the tathāgatas manifest to beings in a series of dialogues with other protagonists. He explains that a tathāgata is like a doctor who knows the various diseases of beings and the methods to cure them. The Buddha finally displays his supernatural powers a third time by making many other buddhas appear all around him. The sūtra ends with a condensed summary of Buddhadharma.

## The Main Points of the Subject Matter

### 1.3

From a doctrinal perspective, the sūtra explores several important Mahāyāna topics in relation with the notion of miracles (*prātihārya, cho 'phrul*), supernatural powers (*ṛddhi, rdzu 'phrul*), and extraordinary transformation (*vikurvaṇa, rnam par 'phrul*):

### 1.4

*The necessity for miracles.* At the beginning of the text, it is stated that sentient beings who could fall into negative forms of existence should be converted to the path in order to lead them to unsurpassable awakening. This can only occur,

though, through the display of miracles.

### 1.5

*The description of miracles.* In this sūtra, the miracles of the Buddha are presented in three different ways: as magical transformations, as the ability to know another's mind, and as the capacity to destroy defilements by expounding the Dharma. First the Buddha performs supernatural actions that transform the immediate physical surroundings. Then he explains that beings should be helped according to their dispositions, inclinations, and capacities. Since the Tathāgata is able to know beings' minds through his supernatural powers, he is able to assist them through various skillful means (*upāya*, *thabs*) corresponding to their circumstances. Vasubandhu explains this sequence in great detail in the *Abhidharmakośa*: the Buddha first ravishes the minds of beings he wishes to set on the path through the display of his extraordinary powers. Knowing their dispositions, inclinations, and capacities, he then imparts methods that will ultimately lead them to the unsurpassable, truly perfect awakening. The use of such miracles by the Buddha as skillful means is a recurring theme of Mahāyāna sūtras, as can be seen, for example, in the *Śūraṅgamasamādhisūtra* (Lamotte 2003: 233) where there is a passage that mirrors the storyline of the present sūtra.

### 1.6

*The “magical show” as an analogy for the nature of reality.*

The *Buddhabalādhānaprātihāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa* makes the important point that conditioned phenomena are like a “show” or an illusion, as clearly explained by Mañjuśrī to the gods. Just like a reflection in a mirror, the Tathāgata neither comes nor goes. Things neither arise nor cease. Yet the Tathāgata appears in the world for the sake of beings. For him, however, there is no birth, no old age, and no death. The sūtra explains that since all conditioned phenomena are like illusions, the extraordinary activities of a tathāgata, such as teaching and leading beings to awakening, are not limited by time and space. His teaching remains even if he manifested the extinction of suffering eons ago. As an object of veneration, he is a means to reach awakening by accumulating merit. His purpose and meaning are not constrained by notions of his being present or absent. The same idea occurs in a sūtra found in the *Ratnakūṭa*, *The Prophecy for the Magician Bhadra* (Toh. 65), in which the Tathāgata displays similar miracles (Chang 1983: 4–13) and in which it is stated that the Buddha can perform magic because he knows that all phenomena are illusory. Action (*karma*) is explained as being the great conjurer that magically creates beings and material objects. Thus, the basis of the Tathāgata's supernatural powers is considered to be his realization that all phenomena are like magic and illusions.

## 1.7

*The nature of the cycle of rebirths (saṃsāra) and karma.* In the *Buddhabalādhānaprātihāryavikurvāṇanirdeśa*, the Buddha explains that there is no birth, old age, and death. However, one's state of life is dependent on the perception conditioned by the body, since beings are fixated on the physical basis of their existence. These perceptions trigger actions. On the basis of these actions, beings will experience suffering again and again throughout all their future rebirths. This endless cycle of arisings and cessations is what is called *saṃsāra*. The scales of a balance are used as a metaphor in the text to illustrate this process, and it is worth noting that this simile is also found in the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* in the same context (Rahula 2001: 94).

## 1.8

*Skillful means and practices.* The sūtra puts forward various methods for venerating the tathāgatas—making offerings, chanting their names, supporting the Dharma, propagating the teachings, and making the Dharma available in any possible way. Of all these methods, those concerning the protection of the Dharma are deemed supreme.

## Source Text and Various Versions

## 1.9

The source text is extant in Tibetan, Chinese, and (partially) Sanskrit. The Tibetan text is found in the various editions of the Kangyur with no major variations. A glimpse of what might have been the source text for the Tibetan translation of the sūtra is afforded by some Sanskrit fragments in the collection of Gilgit manuscripts. The Gilgit manuscripts are among the oldest manuscripts in the world, dating back to the 5th and 6th centuries A.D., and include famous works from the Buddhist canon such as the *Lotus Sūtra*. The language of these manuscripts is a form of Sanskrit with Prakrit vocabulary and inflections. The Gilgit fragments of this sūtra, although far from representing the whole text, show no major variations from their Tibetan counterparts. It is, however, not possible at this stage to establish whether this specific Sanskrit version of the text was the basis for the Tibetan translations.

There is unfortunately no colophon to this sūtra, and therefore no direct mention by name of the Indian and Tibetan translators. We were unable to find any reference to this sūtra elsewhere in the Tibetan canon.

## 1.10

Regarding the relationship between this sūtra and others, it is worth noting that the text belongs to a corpus of sūtras containing passages in which [miracles](#) play a significant role: one Vinaya text, the *Vinayakṣudrakavastu* (Toh 6); two

Prajñāpāramitāsūtras, the *Prajñāpāramitā in 25,000 lines* (Toh 9) and *Prajñāpāramitā in 10,000 lines* (Toh 11); the *Buddhāvataṃsaka* (Toh 44); six sūtras from the *Ratnakūṭa*, the *Tathāgatācintyaḡuhyānirdeśa* (Toh 47), *Bodhisattvapiṭaka* (Toh 56), *Bhadramāyākāravvyākaraṇa* (Toh 65), *Mahāpratihāryānirdeśa* (Toh 66), *Maitreyamahāsimhanāda* (Toh 67), and *Acintyabuddhaviśayānirdeśa* (Toh 79); and twenty-eight sūtras from the *mdo sde*, the *Bhadra-kalpika* (Toh 94), *Samghāṭisūtradharmaparyāya* (Toh 102), *Karuṇā-puṇḍarīka* (Toh 112), *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* (Toh 113), *Sarvadharmaguṇavyūharāja* (Toh 114), *Ratnakaraṇḍa* (Toh 117), *Samādhirāja* (Toh 127), *Praśāntaviniścayaprātihāryasamādhi* (Toh 129), *Śūraṃgamasamādhi* (Toh 132), *Catur-dārakasamādhi* (Toh 136), *Mahāsannipātaratnaketudhāraṇī* (Toh 138), *Tathāgatamahākāruṇānirdeśa* (Toh 147), *Sāgaramatipariṭṛchā* (Toh 152), *Anavataptanāgarājapariṭṛchā* (Toh 156), *Drumakiṃnaranarāja-pariṭṛchā* (Toh 157), *Vikurvāṇarājapariṭṛchā* (Toh 167), *Mahāyānopadeśa* (Toh 169), *Ākṣayamatīnirdeśa* (Toh 175), *Vimalakīrtīnirdeśa* (Toh 176), *Buddhabalādhānaprātihāryavikurvāṇānirdeśa* (this text, Toh 186), *Mahābherīhārakapariṭṛchā* (Toh 222), *Trāyastriṃśatparivarta* (Toh 223), *Buddhasaṅgīti* (Toh 228), *Mahāmegha* (Toh 232), *Paramārthadharmavijaya* (Toh 246), *Saddharmasmṛtyupasthāna* (Toh 287), *mdzangs blun* (Toh 341), and *Sumāgadhāvādāna* (Toh 346).

In addition, the pure realm of [Sukhāvati](#) is mentioned in the text, as are some names of tathāgatas and of a specific samādhi also found in the *Buddhāvataṃsaka*.

## Translation Issues and Academic Research

### I.11

To the best of our knowledge, no complete English translation of this sūtra was available prior to the one published here. Schopen, however, edited some Sanskrit fragments of the sūtra, compared them to the Tibetan text, and provided an English translation on the basis of the Sanskrit and Tibetan versions.

The many compounds found in the text remain, unsurprisingly, one of the main issues for translators. Some Tibetan expressions in which terms appear in a different order are apparently used for the same Sanskrit compound, for instance, *bsod nams las skyes pa'i dge ba'i rtsa ba* (145b.2) instead of *dge ba'i rtsa ba las skyes pa'i bsod nams* (150b.7).

### I.12

Another good illustration of the difficulty of translating compounds is the title of the sūtra itself, *Buddhabalādhānaprātihāryavikurvāṇa*, which Schopen does not translate in his study of the Sanskrit text. Although the Sanskrit term *balādhāna* is translated in the Mahāvvyutpatti as *stobs skyed pa*, different transliterations are found in the various Kangyur editions. For example, the Degé Kangyur

reads *balavadhana*, the Stok Palace reads *balādhana*, the Narthang reads *baladhana*, and so forth. The Pedurma (*dpe sdur ma*, comparative edition, see bibliography) settles for *balavardhana*. In the present case, we chose to follow Schopen, who opts for *balādhāna* (1978: 319). Edgerton, in his *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, offers a detailed explanation of this term, which he understands as “the attainment of (usually some particular) power,” such as the powers of a tathāgata (1953: 398a). As for the rest of the compound, we have translated *prātihārya* as “miracle” and *vikurvāṇa* as “extraordinary transformation.” In the *Śūraṃgamasamādhisūtra* (Lamotte 2003: 233), *prātihāryabala* and *vikurvāṇabala* are often used as synonyms. Lamotte reads them as *karmadhāraya* compounds (in the way of adjective+noun) respectively meaning “wondrous powers” and “prodigious powers.” Burnouf, on his part, understands *ṛddhiprātihārya* as “supernatural transformation” (2010: 189). La Vallée Poussin translates *prātihārya* as “magical powers” in v. VII.47–48 of the *Abhidharmakośa* (and *bhāṣya*).<sup>1</sup> In this context, *prātihārya* is used by a buddha to convert beings through the manifestation of miraculous powers, the ability to know others’ minds, and the capacity to teach, all of which correspond very much to the subject matter of our sūtra. In this context, the third *prātihārya* is deemed to be superior since it cannot be attained by means of magic formulae (La Vallée Poussin 1988–90: 1166–68 and 1209–1210). For these reasons, we have not read *prātihāryavikurvāṇa* as a *dvandva* in this context, as we were originally tempted to do. It is probably a *karmadhāraya* (noun+noun) and possibly a *tatpuruṣa*. In the Tibetan *cho ’phrul rnam par ’phrul pa*, the two terms stand in apposition, indicating rather a *karmadhāraya*. The complete title of the sūtra can therefore be translated as “The Teaching on the extraordinary transformation that is the miracle of Attaining the Buddha’s Powers,” and indeed the message of the sūtra is that the ultimate miracle is to attain the state of buddhahood. supernatural powers are only a means to lead beings to awakening.

### I.13

Another translation issue concerns the mention in the sūtra of a grove (*shing a mra srung ba’i tshal / a mra srung ba mo’i tshal*) located in Vāraṇasī. Although there is no extant Sanskrit fragment for this passage, Schopen translated the phrase *a mra srung ba mo’i tshal* from the Tibetan as “the grove of Āmrapālī” (see Schopen 1978: 323 fragment [1288]), taking it as a reference to the grove offered to the Buddha by the courtesan Āmrapālī in which several events and teachings recorded in the canonical texts took place. This translation is problematic here, however, because Āmrapālī’s grove was located in Vaiśālī and not Vāraṇasī. There are several reasons for thinking that these phrases do not refer to Āmrapālī’s grove. In the narratives of the *Vinaya* texts—the only instances in the Kangyur in which Āmrapālī is a protagonist in her own right as opposed to mentions of her grove—her name is rendered in Tibetan as *a mra skyong ma*, while the phrase *a mra srung ba*, which is often taken as an alternative rendering, is in fact only used in the sūtra section of



the Kangyur, and only within the phrase *a mra srung ba'i tshal*, i.e. referring to a grove. There are, it is true, several sūtras explicitly located in Vaiśālī in which *a mra srung ba'i tshal* can be reasonably taken as referring to Āmrapālī's grove. In this text, however, we are faced not only with the anomalous location, but also with the variant phrases *shing a mra srung ba'i tshal* and *a mra srung ba mo'i tshal*, both of which occur only here and nowhere else in the entire Kangyur. A literal translation of the syntactic construction in this text, *shing a mra srung ba'i tshal* (F.143.b) would be “grove of the caretaker of mango trees,” and our understanding is that the term *a mra srung ba* (*āmrapāla* / *āmrapālī*) is simply a generic name with this meaning, not a proper noun. In a word, the translation of *a mra srung ba'i tshal* as “Āmrapālī's grove” is technically wrong, although it is semantically correct when the grove is located in Vaiśālī. Other possible hypotheses to explain the anomaly would be that at some point in the transmission of the text a geographical or nominal inaccuracy has been introduced; or else that the translocation of Āmrapālī's grove to Vāraṇasī is intended to be understood as part of the Buddha's miraculous display.

#### THE TRANSLATION

#### The Noble Sūtra of the Great Vehicle

## The Teaching on the Extraordinary Transformation that is the Miracle of Attaining the Buddha's Powers

### 1.1

[F.143.b] Homage to the Omniscient One One!

### 1.2

Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was dwelling on the banks of the great Nairāñjanā River, together with seven thousand bodhisattvas. Among them were the Noble Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, Maitreya, and Mañjuśrī, and all the great śrāvakas like Subhūti, Śāripūtra, and Maudgalyayāna. He was circumambulated by Śakra, Brahmā, and all the protectors of the world, as well as all the kings, ministers, brahmins, and householders, and was [F.144.a] placed in front of the assembly. After being presented with offerings of almsfood, he pleased his surrounding retinue with a teaching on Dharma, and encouraged, uplifted, and complimented them. By means of his great supernatural power, the Tathāgata and his surrounding retinue were then transported to the city of Vārāṇasī, where they stayed in the grove of the caretaker of mango trees.<sup>2</sup>

### 1.3

At that time the earth trembled greatly, and a vast lion throne made from the seven

kinds of precious substances appeared. Covering about ten miles in height and five miles in breadth, it was well adorned,<sup>3</sup> delightful, and pleasing to the mind. It was tied with hanging silk tassels, clothed with thousands of divine garments, covered with myriad garlands of divine flowers, endowed with a divine fragrance, and colorful. The lion throne had arisen from the Tathāgata’s previously developed roots of virtue. As soon as they saw it, all beings would immediately reach the stage of accepting that phenomena are not produced.

1.4

Then, the Blessed One sat down on this lion throne, settled into the state of concentration known as *the garlands of the buddhas*, and addressed the bodhisattvas Noble Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi as follows.

1.5

“Avalokiteśvara, go forth. Together with Vajrapāṇi, use your great supernatural powers and state of concentration to assemble around me the beings of this Sahā world system and of the other world systems of the ten directions whom you should tame and who are degenerate, have no faith, practice negative deeds, are obscured because of various types of affliction, have no consideration for their mothers or fathers, do not respect ascetics or brahmins for what they are, and have no faith in the Three Jewels.”

1.6

“Avalokiteśvara, go forth. Together with Vajrapāṇi, use your great supernatural powers and state of concentration to assemble around me the beings of this Sahā world system and of the other world systems of the ten directions whom you should tame and who are degenerate, have no faith, practice negative deeds, are obscured because of various types of affliction, have no consideration for their mothers or fathers, do not respect ascetics or brahmins for what they are, and have no faith in the Three Jewels.” [F.144.b]

1.7

On hearing these words from the Tathāgata, the bodhisattvas Noble Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi settled into the state of concentration known as *watching over and exhorting all beings*. Through the power of their state of concentration, this great earth was tremendously shaken in six ways.<sup>4</sup> Thousands of light rays shone forth from the bodies of Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi, and as they shone they completely illuminated the world systems of the great trichiliocosm. They illuminated everything from the world of Brahmā on down—that is, the worlds endowed with form and pervaded by form. From these light rays also came these verses of exhortation:

1.8

“Be attentive and without afflictions.  
Do not fall under the power of distraction!  
While everywhere is the suffering of birth, old age, and death,  
Rare is the appearance of the teaching of the Sugata.

1.9

“Those of unwholesome livelihood have no fear,  
Even though they are bound to circle  
In saṃsāra’s ocean for countless eons,  
Always ensnared by afflictions.

1.10

“Gain, desires, and women are impermanent.  
They always possess the nature of an illusory song and dance.  
Even if one experiences eons of bliss,  
One will eventually undergo suffering.

1.11

“Behold how tricky things are!  
One’s mother in this life may be one’s wife in another,  
And in yet another life fools may eat her flesh,  
And in their ignorance enjoy it.

1.12

“No doubt, human beings take birth in the ocean of saṃsāra’s suffering,  
Yet they are not afraid.  
You who desire to honor the Sugata for having explained the noble Dharma to  
human beings,  
Go forth!

1.13

“Once you have understood the one who can guide the untamed,  
You will attain the state of concentration, the cultivation of Peace.  
Thus, all you human beings in the ocean of saṃsāra,  
Be afraid and long for liberation! [F.145.a]

1.14

“All you humans, honor this noble one! 5  
Do not take the lives of others,  
And likewise do not take others’ possessions that have not been offered.  
Do not violate other people’s wives.

1.15



“Always pay homage to the Buddhadharma!  
Give up pride, arrogance, and harsh speech,  
And then set out for the grove of the caretaker of mango trees  
In the city called Vārāṇasī!

1.16

“Upon arriving, behold the supreme person.  
Vast and pleasing is his array:  
The saṅgha of monks who always have supernatural powers,  
And the bodhisattvas who possess even greater ones.

1.17

“He is named Avalokiteśvara  
Who continuously sends forth light rays  
So that the ignorant know  
And the myriad beings are liberated.

1.18

“Those who are proud, arrogant, and haughty  
And those who do not venerate the Buddhadharma,  
The protector, the supreme Vajrapāṇi, never ceases to illuminate them  
And leads them to understanding.

1.19

“Their bodies are vast with great supernatural powers.  
eons and eons would not suffice to describe them.

1.20

“There, in the grove of the caretaker of mango trees,  
Bring perfume, garlands, fine clothes, and ornaments to honor the Sugata.  
Venerate this guide of humankind,  
For rare is a buddha.

1.21

“Beings have suffered for myriads of eons  
And will forever do so due to desire.  
May the wise always long for liberation  
And venerate the supreme person, the Buddha!

1.22

“Sons, daughters, relatives,  
Parents, wives, friends—  
All are illusory and pointless;

They will always be reborn in different ways.

1.23

“So, too, gold and silver are like flashes of lightning.  
None show any essence.  
To reach the state of awakening,  
Venerate the guide of humankind.”

1.24

As these inspirational verses arose one after another from the light rays, [F.145.b] they filled the world systems of the great trichiliocosm with sound, inspiring all beings. Those who formerly had wrong views were converted to right views. Those who were afflicted with pride, vanity, arrogance, and pretense were freed from pride, vanity, and arrogance. Those who indulged in lust without restraint were freed from lust. All those who engaged in killing, stealing, sexual misconduct on account of desire, or the eight unwholesome factors were set on the noble eightfold path in all their actions, words, and thoughts. Each and every one of them completely abandoned excitement, joking, pleasure, amusement, desire, anger, envy, and attachment. They felt determined to contemplate, follow, and serve the Tathāgata. They all wished to hear the Dharma. All the gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, non-humans, kings of the nāgas, royal lords of the citadels, vassals, universal monarchs, monks, nuns, male lay vow holders, and female lay vow holders carried divine flowers, garlands, salves, aromatic powders, garments, umbrellas, royal banners, cymbals, and bundles of silk scarves in order to venerate the Tathāgata. Once they reached the place where he resided, the grove of the caretaker of mango trees in the great city of Vārāṇasī, they worshipped him and his surrounding retinue with the roots of virtue that arose from their own merit. A rain of flowers, a great fragrant rain, fell.

1.25

Then, [F.146.a] at that moment, the Blessed One exerted his sovereign power on Jambudvīpa and the grove of the caretaker of mango trees so that it extended over several trillions of yojanas. The ground became as smooth as the palm of a hand, divinely pleasing to the mind, colorful, and fragrant. It was ornamented with heavenly flower trees, fruit trees, fragrant trees, jewel trees, wish-fulfilling trees, and trees bearing garments. It supported heavenly lion thrones with hanging garlands of jewels, cloth, and flowers, and was suffused with the sound of divine bells. Thus, just like the world system known as Sukhāvātī, it was ravishing, fulfilling, pleasing, and delightful. It was blessed, being filled by everyone, from bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, kinnaras, and mahoragas, to monks, nuns, male and female lay vow holders, kings, ministers, brahmins, and kings, ministers, brahmins, and

householders.

1.26

Then, the bodhisattvas Noble Avalokiteśvara and Vajrapāṇi emerged from their state of concentration and went to where the Blessed One was staying. They approached, circumambulated him three times, and said to him, “Blessed One, the Tathāgata’s skillful means and methods that bring beings to spiritual maturity are many. Sugata, they are many indeed. Blessed One, the bodhisattva mahāsattvas, the great śrāvakas, gods, nāgas, yakṣas, gandharvas, asuras, garuḍas, [F.146.b] kinnaras, mahoragas, kings, ministers, brahmins, householders, monks, nuns, and male and female lay vow holders have gathered here in great numbers through the strength of the Tathāgata’s majesty and supernatural powers.”

1.27

The Blessed One replied, “Sons of a good family, this is excellent, most excellent. Sons of the Victorious One, it is indeed so. Many are the Tathāgata’s skillful means and methods that bring beings to spiritual maturity. He teaches the Dharma knowing their intentions, the way to convert them, and their roots of virtue, as well as their behavior according to their various dispositions. Some beings are to be converted by bodhisattvas. Some are to be converted by śrāvakas. Some are to be converted by pratyekabuddhas. Some are to be converted by gods. Some are to be converted by Śakra. Some are to be converted by Brahmā. Some are to be converted by nāgas. Some are to be converted by great supernatural powers. Some are to be converted by kings. Some are to be converted by states of concentration. Some are to be converted by listening to the Dharma. Some are to be converted by miracles. Some are to be converted by the Tathāgata’s complete nirvāṇa. Some are to be converted by relics. Some to be converted strive for the roots of virtue that arise from commissioning stūpas, monasteries, promenades, and groves. Some to be converted strive for the roots of virtue that arise from commissioning statues, images, and representations of gold, silver, and brass. Some to be converted strive<sup>7</sup> for the roots of virtue that arise from worshipping and venerating the saṅgha of monks. Some to be converted strive for the roots of virtue that arise from copying sūtras,<sup>8</sup> having sūtras copied, or reciting sūtras. Some to be converted strive for the roots of virtue that arise from offering lamps, incense, flowers, perfume, garlands, salves, jewel necklaces, and so forth. [F.147.a] They do not partake of a Dharma versed in the ultimate nor of a Dharma concerned with nirvāṇa.

1.28

“Sons of the Victorious One, there is indeed nothing whatsoever that the tathāgatas do not know, see, hear, or fully comprehend. They know what has happened. They know the future. They know the past. They know the present. They know the activities of all beings. They know their conduct. They know their dispositions. They

know their birth. They know their existence.

1.29

“Sons of the Victorious One, it is as follows. Consider the analogy of a well-trained doctor who is very skilled in the the eight branches of Āyurveda and expert in all conditions, having extensively studied the use of medicinal substances and instruments, knows the condition of the sick beings whose bodies are tormented by various ailments. He knows the phases and the degrees. He knows the cure. He knows the diseases related to the airs, bile, phlegm, or a combination of the three, those related to blood, indigestion, tumors, edema, heart disease, leprosy, skin eruption, abscesses, and boils, as well as poisoning, inflammation, and so on. Possessing knowledge of all these things, he cures the diseases of all beings and liberates them from the fear of diverse ailments through various medicinal substances, vomitives, purgatives, powders, sternutatory treatments, bleeding, ghee, boiled oil, and tonics.<sup>9</sup>

1.30

“In the same way, noble sons of the Victorious One, the Tathāgata possesses eight branches of Āyurveda: the various states of concentration, the bases of supernatural powers, the powers, the assurances, and divine sight and hearing.<sup>10</sup>[F.147.b] He is well versed in the various conditions of beings, their intentions, and their conduct. Thus he seeks to free from taking rebirth in hell or as animals, hungry ghosts, or in the world of Yama all those beings who are tormented by the diseases of desire, hatred, and bewilderment and by the sicknesses of the fundamental and secondary defilements, as well as those obscured by pride, vanity, and arrogance or by attachment, suffering, fear, and anger. To this end, by using various skillful means, various practices, various states of concentration, and supernatural powers, he brings beings to all stages of liberation up to and including their unsurpassable, perfect awakening, and thus leads them to the extinction of their suffering in the sphere of remainderless *parinirvāṇa*.

1.31

“He liberates them from the eight unwholesome factors and sets each of them on the eightfold noble path. Sons of a noble family, it is like this. Consider the analogy of the Moon which, for the sake of beings to be converted, manifests skillfully to them according to the roots of virtue that constitute their dispositions. It makes itself invisible, or shows itself as a half-moon, or waning, or waxing, or as a full moon. It dispels all obscurity and darkness, and refreshes all the grass, forests, medicinal herbs, and crops. Likewise, sons of the Victorious One, the Tathāgata understands beings who are obscured by various kinds of suffering, as well as the conduct of beings who are to be converted in keeping with their various dispositions. He manifests as being in the state of *parinirvāṇa*, as being born, as a universal monarch, and also as someone joyful who is entertained by amusements

and pleasures such as women’s laughter, play, perfume, and garlands. [F.148.a] He also manifests as someone who renounces the household life, goes forth to live as a renunciant, and practices asceticism, and eventually as someone who, having tamed Māra and turned the wheel of Dharma, pleases beings by bringing down the rain of the great cloud of Dharma. The tathāgatas have attained parinirvāṇa. Yet they liberate all beings through various practices such as zealously venerating relics, having stūpas, monasteries, and images constructed, giving up the household life for the sake of going forth as a renunciant, and venerating the saṅgha of monks, as well as copying, reading, and reciting the noble Dharma. They also liberate beings through skillful means such as maintaining the training, the way of life, the monastic vows, fasting,<sup>11</sup> and the lay pledges. They liberate these beings from rebirths as hell beings, animals, and beings born in Yama’s world, and from existences deprived of the eight freedoms, as well as from negative rebirths and negative forms of existence, and so forth, including comforting these beings by having them listen to the Dharma and bringing them to unsurpassable, truly perfect awakening.”

### 1.32

At that point, some dim-witted gods thought, “The tathāgatas of earlier times, who were arhats and fully awakened buddhas, accomplished the deeds of a tathāgata. That is to say, after extending their own lifespan through their blessings, they liberated all beings from birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, suffering, unhappiness, and trouble. Likewise, this tathāgata, although he has not yet accomplished all the deeds of a tathāgata, is also extolling and teaching nirvāṇa. And he is displaying [F.148.b] supernatural powers and miracles of extraordinary transformations after having assembled a great retinue. So does this tathāgata also seek parinirvāṇa right away?” With this thought, they were depressed and fell silent.

### 1.33

The youthful Mañjuśrī then clairvoyantly understood what those gods were thinking and said to them, “Gods, do not think like that, do not say such things. Do not be depressed. Many are the skillful means of the tathāgatas. They teach the Dharma to beings of diverse inclinations by means of their sovereign power, the power of their roots of virtue, which consists of various methods, insights, and states of concentration. Gods, since I have seen the supernatural powers and miracles of extraordinary transformations that are the skillful means of the tathāgatas of the past, I know. So surely the Tathāgata will indeed wish to expound and spread the king of sūtras of the great vehicle called *The Teaching on the Extraordinary Transformation that is the Miracle of Attaining the Buddha’s Powers*. Moreover, gods, the tathāgatas do not enter parinirvāṇa—because there is no parinirvāṇa of the tathāgatas, nor are their lives ever exhausted. The tathāgatas

remain for immeasurable millions of eons, for utterly inexpressible eons. But through their skillful means they display their parinirvāṇa to beings, as well as the disappearance of the noble Dharma. Just as the Tathāgata sees the various beings of an impure nature who are to be converted by means of parinirvāṇa or by relics, who have no faith in the Tathāgata, and who are irreverent toward the master, so in each such case the Tathāgata displays his parinirvāṇa. But in fact, the Tathāgata neither comes nor goes. When the roots of virtue of beings have fully matured, [F.149.a] and they long to look upon the Tathāgata, are worthy of veneration, long to listen to the Dharma, and their longing is like the full Moon, at that time, the Tathāgata appears in the world for the benefit and happiness of many beings such as gods and humans, and for the sake of manifesting and propagating the Three Jewels to them.<sup>12</sup> But in fact, the Tathāgata is not born, nor does he age or die.

#### 1.34

“Sons of a noble family, it is as follows. As an analogy, although many forms might appear and disappear in a well-polished mirror, one never sees the reflected image actually entering the mirror or leaving it.<sup>13</sup> Gods, you should also look upon the body of the Tathāgata in this way.

“Sons of a noble family, it is as follows. As an analogy, a well-trained conjurer displays various cities, archways, parks, vehicles, physical forms of a universal monarch, amusements, and entertainments. Even if he makes these illusions cease, they do not move anywhere, nor do they come or go. You should regard the appearance of the tathāgatas and their parinirvāṇa in the same way.

#### 1.35

“Moreover, gods, the tathāgatas—because of their former vows, although a thousand years, an eon, or ten million eons may have elapsed since their parinirvāṇa, and on account of the fact that sentient beings worship them, venerate them, construct relic stūpas, create images, recite their names, and preserve and venerate the holy Dharma—liberate beings from all the hells, animal births, the world of Yama, downfalls into inopportune existences, unfortunate destinies, bad rebirths, and all suffering, even though these tathāgatas might belong to different world systems, [F.149.b] until beings gradually attain the unsurpassable, truly perfect enlightenment.<sup>14</sup> Thus, what need is there to mention those who worship the tathāgatas in person by offering them flowers, incense, perfume, garlands, salves, clothes, and aromatic powders? Gods, even though one thousand years, an eon, or even ten million eons may have elapsed since the Bhagavān Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, if some beings throw a flower in the sky, after calling the Tathāgata by his name seven times and saying ‘Homage to the Buddha,’ they will all bring an end to their suffering. But, let alone throwing a flower in the sky, if someone, whoever they might be, faithfully emulating the Tathāgata, strives to maintain even a single precept in order to honor the Tathāgata, or strives to focus



on worshipping the Tathāgata even for a single day, or a single night, or a single moment, this person will put an end to suffering and gradually, fully, and completely awaken to unsurpassable, truly perfect enlightenment. If even those who, in order to honor the Tathāgata, laugh, have fun, joke like fools, play games, or make a stūpa from sand, will all put an end to suffering and fully and completely awaken to unsurpassable, truly perfect enlightenment, what need is there to mention those who have built relic stūpas or relic images and, understanding that compassion toward all beings is the most important thing, think ‘I shall liberate all beings from suffering’? And what need is there to mention those who, having produced the thought directed toward unsurpassable, truly perfect awakening, [F.150.a] make offerings of divine flowers and incense, garlands, salves, aromatic powders, cymbals, umbrellas, and royal banners? Those who have thus made offerings to all the tathāgatas will be free from birth, old age, sickness, and death, as well as from misery, lamentation, suffering, unhappiness, and afflictions. And as long as they have not completely and fully awakened to unsurpassable, truly perfect awakening, they will be reborn in pleasant forms of existence. Gods, thus can one discern the aspiration of the tathāgatas of the past and is in perfect agreement with it.”

1.36

Then, those gods thought, “Oh, this youthful Mañjuśrī is endowed with great insight. If the tathāgatas possess supreme skillful means, what does it mean when Mañjuśrī says that the tathāgatas remain in the world systems and bring beings to spiritual maturity through various skillful means, even though ten billion eons have passed many times over since the tathāgatas attained nirvāṇa?”

1.37

The youthful Mañjuśrī, having clairvoyantly understood what those gods were thinking, said, “Gods, excellent! Excellent! Just wait a moment. These thoughts arising in your mind, as well as your earlier question, are also the sovereign power of the Tathāgata.”

1.38

At this, the Blessed One displayed his supernatural powers and the tathāgatas Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakumūni, Vipāśyin, Akṣobhya, and Amitābha appeared in his surrounding retinue, sitting on lion thrones surrounded by the saṅgha of śrāvakas and [F.150.b] bodhisattvas, and taught the Dharma to an ocean-like retinue. They too displayed those same types of supernatural powers by manifesting many tathāgatas sitting on their lion thrones, expounding the Dharma throughout the world systems of the east, south, west, and north.

1.39

The retinue of all those gathered and the gods rejoiced, jubilated, and were pleased. Having themselves increased the power of the roots of virtue arising from their merit, they worshipped the tathāgatas with flowers, incense, perfume, garlands, salves, garments, and ornaments, and circumambulated them three times, proclaiming the following verses:

1.40

“How wonderful is this gnosis!  
For this, one should practice the state of concentration and insight!  
Just like lights illuminating the world,  
This great Hero will remain

1.41

“For the benefit of beings  
For many eons after his nirvāṇa.  
Surrounded by bodhisattvas,  
He is seated on a lion throne.

1.42

“Seeing the Buddha is excellent.  
Listening to the Dharma is excellent.  
Likewise, observing a spiritual friend  
And listening to him is also excellent.

1.43

“All the precepts of the body  
That preserve the training are excellent.  
Those who have diligently perfected them  
Will all achieve awakening.

1.44

“Those who are skillful in means and insight  
Will liberate beings in this world.  
Like the orb of the Moon,  
Like a conjurer,

1.45

“The Tathāgata shows himself  
To come and go.  
Because they have stūpas,  
Drawings, and images made

1.46

“And they honor and worship him,  
Those who remember his name  
And live for the sake of awakening  
Will all attain liberation.

1.47

“Since they pay homage to the Tathāgata, [F.151.a]  
Listen to the noble Dharma,  
And worship and retain it accordingly,  
They will be free from all suffering.”

1.48

As the Tathāgata imparted this instruction on the sovereign power and the miracle of the extraordinary transformation of a tathāgata, sixty-four thousand beings reached the stage where they accepted that phenomena are not produced.<sup>15</sup> Twenty thousand beings completely purified the eye of Dharma that sees all phenomena. Five thousand gods remained without grasping, their minds freed from defilements. They were led to the stage of a non-returner. Seven hundred monks, nuns, and male and female lay vow holders attained various states of concentration.

1.49

King Prasenajit said to the youthful Mañjuśrī, “Son of the Victorious One, in your answers to the questions that were asked for the benefit of all beings, what you said was excellent, it was excellent indeed. Yet I still have a few doubts. Therefore, please expound upon and answer my questions, which are about beings applying their minds to what they have heard and thus becoming free from the suffering of saṃsāra, passing into fortunate forms of existence, and never falling back from the unsurpassable, truly perfect awakening.”

1.50

Mañjuśrī replied, “Great king, it is excellent that you have developed your previous roots of merit and that your confidence has increased through the sovereign power of the Tathāgata. Whatever you wish to know, ask and I shall explain it to you.”

1.51

The king said, “Son of the Victorious One, just by hearing the names of the tathāgatas and honoring and serving them, beings who perform negative actions will be liberated from rebirths as denizens of the hells and animals, as well as from Yama’s world, and will pass into pleasant forms of existence. Who are those beings? In which world system do they abide? How should we honor them?”

## 1.52

Mañjuśrī [F.151.b] replied, “Son of a noble family, listen. I shall elucidate the reason why these beings will not pass into negative forms of existence. I shall state the names of the **Blessed Ones**, the tathāgatas, who will liberate them from rebirths in negative forms of existence, from rebirths as denizens of the hells and animals, and from Yama’s world, and I shall state how they are to be worshipped and venerated in their respective world systems.

## 1.53

“In the world system called **Vaiḍūrya Light** abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Bhaiṣajyaguru Vaidūryaprabharāja**,<sup>16</sup> who watches over beings as well as teaches the Dharma. In the world system called Śikhin abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Śikhin**. In the world system called **Vimalā** abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Stainless Arising**. In the world system called **Peace** abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Established in Peace**. In the world system called **Sukhāvati** abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Amitābha**. In the world system called **Lotus Excellence** abides the Tathāgata, the Arhat, the truly perfect Buddha called **Lotus Born**. In the world system called Vajra abides the Tathāgata called Indestructible Vajra. In the world system called **Aśoka** abides the Tathāgata called **Vigataśoka**. In the world system called **Fearless** abides the Tathāgata called **Pacifier of All Fears**. In the world system called **Endowed with Realization and Intelligence** abides the Tathāgata called **Purifier of All Rebirths**. In the world system called **Free from Negative Forms of Existence** abides the Tathāgata called [F.152.a] **Pacifier of All Negative Forms of Existence**. In the world system called Vimalā abides the Tathāgata called **He Whose Intelligence Has Been Completely Purified**. In the world system called **Possessed of Power** abides the Tathāgata called **Powerful Intelligence**. By calling them by their names, one will become the lord of the gods.

## 1.54

“In the world system called **Moon** abides the Tathāgata called **Stainless Full Moon**. By calling him by his name and worshipping him, one will be completely liberated from all defilements. In the world system called **Excellent Attainment** abides the Tathāgata called **Pacifier of All Negative Forms of Existence**. By calling him by his name and worshipping him, one will be liberated from negative forms of existence. In the world system called **Perfect Light** abides the Tathāgata called **He Who Looks at All Beings with Love**. By calling him by his name and worshipping him, all worldly beings will be completely delighted.

## 1.55

“Son of a noble family, in a word, even if a **sextillion** years or a hundred **eons** have

passed since the tathāgatas Ānandaśrī, Candanaśrī, Hero, Subjugator of All Demon Forces, Śikhin, Viśvabhū, Krakucchanda, Kanakumūni, and Kāśyapa have manifested nirvāṇa, great king, all beings will be liberated from negative rebirths and negative forms of existence by calling the names of these buddhas; by having relic stūpas, drawings, and representations made; by worshipping and honoring them with lamps, incense, flowers, and perfume; and by maintaining the training, way of life, austerities, discipline, [F.152.b] and fasting.

“Karmic obscurations that remain for eons, such as those stemming from the five actions with immediate results, will be purified. One will pass to pleasant forms of existence and not to negative ones, and one will gradually, fully, and completely awaken to the unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening.

1.56

“Suppose that sons or daughters of noble family with a feeble recollection of faith and bodhicitta commissions drawings or clay statues of those tathāgatas. Suppose they do so to liberate friends and relatives, and for the sake of beings who engage in negative actions, abandon the noble Dharma, denigrate the noble ones, commit the five actions with immediate results, take a life, steal the wealth of the Three Jewels, go to the Avīci hell, or take birth in the three negative forms of existence. And suppose that once they have commissioned the drawings or statues, they focus principally on generating compassion toward all these beings and adopt the noble eightfold path. And then suppose they worship the tathāgatas three times in the night and three times in the day with flowers, incense, perfume, garlands, salves, lamps, cymbals, royal banners, and flags, from the eighth day of the waxing Moon until the fifteenth.

1.57

“Now, in order to liberate beings, the buddhas, the Blessed Ones, know with their tathāgatas’ gnosis, hear with their divine ear, and see with their divine eye; so when sons or daughters of noble family dedicate their merit so that such beings will pass to pleasant forms of existence and accomplish wholesome deeds instead of negative ones, [F.153.a] in order to liberate the beings born in negative forms of existence, they should supplicate the tathāgatas. They should dedicate their merit in this way: ‘May negative actions be attenuated through confessing and acknowledging faults! May the names of the tathāgatas be heard! May beings be liberated from all negative forms of existence! Until they fully and perfectly awaken to the unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening, may their conduct be in accordance with that of Mañjuśrī himself!’

1.58

“Moreover, if one copies the different teachings of the Dharma or commissions this activity, keeps them in mind, recites them, and worships them, then due to

the power of the aspiration of the past tathāgatas, the names of the buddhas will reach the ears of beings born in Avīci hell and in the three negative forms of existence.

#### 1.59

“In addition, through the power of these different methods of the Dharma, all negative actions will be attenuated. Through the power of the tathāgatas’ majesty and their various Dharma discourses, one will be aware of wholesome and unwholesome actions. Thus one will subsequently not commit negative actions. One will then be liberated from the various kinds of suffering and pass to pleasant rebirths. Until one reaches unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening, the state of truly perfect awakening, one’s actions will be conducive to it.

“Thus, these Dharma discourses are endowed with many positive properties. They are like the great maṇi jewel. Just like the great maṇi jewel, the wish-fulfilling jewel, they accomplish all wishes. All negative actions are subjugated. All gates to the negative forms of existence are closed. All gates to the pleasant forms of existence and the buddhas’ realms are opened.

#### 1.60

“So, son of a noble family, owing to the Tathāgatas’ various skillful means, aspirations, extraordinary transformations, sovereign power, and states of concentration, [F.153.b] one will pass to pleasant forms of existence and be liberated from all negative ones by continuously listening to and worshipping those who have remained in the various world systems, even if a hundred eons have passed since the tathāgatas’ nirvāṇa. Therefore, what need is there to mention the importance of keeping in mind the Dharma, reading it, copying it or commissioning this action, or accurately teaching it in a detailed way to others? Suppose a son or daughter of a noble family comes to possess this excellent quality. Except for the tathāgatas, no one could easily express the excellent quality of that being’s accumulation of merit and of their roots of virtue.

#### 1.61

“Great king, you should thus rely on this excellent quality and keep in mind the various Dharma discourses. You should read them. You should explain them. You should worship them. You should make your faith in the Three Jewels integral to you. You should always worship and venerate the tathāgatas and correctly grasp their teachings. Being repulsed by saṃsāra, you should be vigilant and focus your thoughts on its momentariness. Moreover, great king, the pursuit of their desires keeps beings in a state of suffering for sextillions of eons. That is, they will experience the suffering of arising and cessation, the suffering of being in the womb, the suffering of rebirth as a hell being or an animal, or the suffering of the world of Yama, the suffering of poverty, and the suffering of being cut, bruised,



beaten, struck, and burnt. Therefore, you should proceed to abandon all conditioned phenomena. Great king, you should give priority to compassion and long for the Dharma and liberation.”

1.62

King **Prasenajit**, together with his entire retinue, said to **Mañjuśrī**, “Mañjuśrī, this is excellent, most excellent! By bringing down the rain of the Dharma, [F.154.a] you have made us content and happy. As we have set out upon the state of awakening, you have made us vigilant.”

1.63

An eager bodhisattva then asked the **Blessed One**, “Blessed One, suppose someone adopts the various teachings of the Dharma, reads them, teaches them in detail to others, copies them or commissions their copying, and honors those who copy, adopt, and recite the teachings with flowers, incense, perfume, garlands, salves, garments, and ornaments. How much would the merit of this person increase, Blessed One?”

1.64

The Blessed One replied, “If sons or daughters of a noble family, kings, ministers, **monks**, **nuns**, **male lay vow holders**, or **female lay vow holders** keep in mind the various teachings of the Dharma with faith in the Tathāgata, worship them, copy them or commission their copying, and teach them correctly, they will attain the eight great qualities. What are those eight great qualities? None of the diseases or harm in the world will affect them at all. All yakṣas, bhūtas, and piśācas who rob people of their radiance will abide in loving-kindness. No harmful influences from **kr̥tyās**, **kākhordas**, spell-casters, or **vetālas** will injure their body. Having pleased all the kings, ministers, brahmins, householders, monks, nuns, and male and female lay vow holders, they will accomplish all aims. All the gods will congregate before them. They will pass to pleasant forms of existence. They will be accepted by **Vajrapāṇi**. They will be born wherever they might wish and will remember the succession of their former lives. In this way those sons or daughters of noble family, and the others, will [F.154.b] attain the eight great qualities. Thus, for one hundred thousand years, they will venerate these tathāgatas with the divine and manifest offerings meant for a tathāgata.

1.65

“Suppose someone were to fill Jambudvīpa with tathāgatas’ relic stūpas made of the seven precious substances, and then venerate, revere, and worship them for one hundred thousand years with divine garlands, salves, flowers, lamps, precious umbrellas, cymbals, royal banners, and flags; compared to such a person, someone who keeps in mind the various teachings of the Dharma with faith in the Tathāgata

and who reads them, worships them, copies them or commissions their copying, and teaches them correctly to others will have a vastly greater increase in merit. Son of a noble family, suppose someone were to set the beings of Jambudvīpa on the noble eightfold path and, after having done so, venerated and worshipped the Tathāgata for a hundred thousand divine years with all the necessities of life there might be; compared to such a person, someone who listens to just one four-line stanza drawn from the various teachings of the Dharma, keeps it in mind, copies it or commissions it to be copied, and promulgates it to others will have a vastly greater increase in merit.”

1.66

When the **Blessed One** had explained in detail the significance of the various teachings of the Dharma, he then spoke the following verses:

1.67

“Abiding in one trillion other fields,  
Ten million skillful buddhas  
Care for beings  
And liberate them from negative forms of existence.

1.68

“After you have performed actions of generosity  
By engaging in ceaseless activity,  
You should worship the tathāgatas by longing for the Dharma  
In order to liberate those who have gone to negative forms of existence.

1.69

“Produce drawings, stūpas, and various representations,  
Have statues made,  
Some of gold or silver, some of metal or clay,  
And worship them with various offerings. [F.155.a]

1.70

“Worship the tathāgatas with flowers, garlands, salves,  
Lamps, cymbals, perfume, and incense.  
With superior **insight**, dedicate merit as well.  
Explain the teachings of the sūtras, and abide by them.

1.71

“The majesty of the Tathāgata and of the collection of sūtras  
Will liberate beings from negative actions.  
They will take rebirth in pure abodes

Until they reach the unsurpassable awakening.

1.72

“They will remember their former actions, and having done so,  
Those who understand will not commit negative actions again.  
By expounding the bodhisattvas’ collection of sūtras for the sake of humans,<sup>17</sup>  
They will obtain great merit.

1.73

“They will be protected by the gods.  
In their bodies no disease will occur.  
Nowhere in their kingdoms will there be strife,  
And in their homes, villages, and cities there will be Peace.

1.74

“Whoever holds at all times this collection of sutrās  
Holds at all times the treasury of the buddhas.  
Whoever worships and venerates it, has it copied, and makes it heard,  
He, without doing anything else,  
Will perfectly worship the Buddha,  
And will quickly attain supreme awakening.”

1.75

The eager bodhisattva mahāsattva asked the Blessed One, “Blessed One, I have some qualms about this. Having come into possession of a kingdom with this body, will one again experience suffering? Or will there not be any sorrow when one circles in saṃsāra? Or alternatively, as one will experience again birth, old age, sickness, death, misery, despair, lamentation, suffering, and unhappiness, how will one be born, die, live, and gain happiness? How will one experience suffering?”

1.76

The Blessed One answered the eager bodhisattva mahāsattva, “You who are eager, you should consider that these experiences are conditioned by karma. Now, son of a noble family, [F.155.b] there is no birth, no death, no life in this world. Son of a noble family, although there is no old age and death here, one’s state of life is always dependent on the body consciousness.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, when one transmigrates to various births due to karmic conditions and karmic circumstances, one will experience happiness and suffering. One has the notion of happiness as happiness and suffering as suffering. One gives rise to the notion that non-happiness is not happiness and that non-suffering is not suffering. Nonetheless, until one possesses the qualities of nirvāṇa in the realm of nirvāṇa without a remainder, one will still be subject to sorrow.

1.77

“Son of a noble family, it is as follows. As an analogy, consider someone who puts on new clothes. Having put them on, this person performs all sorts of actions and experiences happiness and suffering. Later, at another time, this person is finally told that these clothes, being old and moth-eaten, are dirty, upon which he realizes that they should be thrown away, and thus he gets rid of them. Once he is rid of them, he again looks for brand new clothes to wear. When he has put them on, he performs various actions and experiences happiness and suffering. Until this person has put on genuine clothes that are durable and everlasting, indestructible and unbreakable, then though many eons pass, one after another, he will either have to wear such temporary clothes or throw them away. He does not think about this nor reflect upon it; he is under the influence of the body. Likewise, son of a noble family, at a certain time, due to one’s state of life, one’s body perishes and is seen to be on the point of collapse. At that time, one discards this body and looks for another that is new and young. Taking it on and performing actions with it, one will experience happiness and suffering. Just as clothes arisen from one’s own merit are soft, hard, or rough, so too one adopts the body that one takes on according to one’s state of life. Just as one is born according to one’s roots of virtue, namely, one’s karmic conditions, one will be born as a god, a king, [F.156.a] a hell being, an animal, or a being from the world of Yama. Although this body is also influenced by one’s state of life and is given up according to one’s state of life, one does not think about this, nor reflect upon it. Son of a noble family, you should look upon the body just as you look upon these clothes.

#### 1.78

“Son of a noble family, it is like a snake that, when the time has come on account of karmic conditions, sheds its skin, and then comes and goes in keeping with its physical shape. Although the snake will experience happiness and suffering, it does not think about its skin nor reflect upon it. You should look upon your state of life just as you look upon this snake.

“Son of a noble family, it is like a tree that, after it has developed its leaves and foliage, will then, with time, evolve so that finally they wither and fall. And then yet later again, with time, it will grow buds, branches, foliage, flowers, and fruit. Son of a noble family, it is in this way that you should look upon arising and cessation due to karmic conditions.

#### 1.79

“Now, son of a noble family, some time in the future beings will experience more greed, attachment, anger, envy, and pride. As they cause the scales and weights of karma to move,<sup>19</sup> their behavior will follow upon pleasure and attachment, so that they will commit more negative actions based upon or caused by their attachment. Committing more negative actions, they will experience suffering. They who construe impermanent things as permanent and the impure as pure will not venerate the Buddha, the Dharma, and the saṅgha. These infantile people will not

seek out a spiritual friend. Instead, they will mock and ridicule those who teach them the Dharma, rather than having faith or trust in them. Such beings will perform negative actions. They will adopt the body that they take on and which they will experience in keeping with karmic conditions and according to their particular state of life. [F.156.b] They will then give rise to notions of suffering and pleasure.

1.80

“Son of a noble family, this is the answer of the Tathāgata. This body should be regarded as karmically conditioned. For this body also there is no death, there is no life; happiness and suffering will not be experienced but they will arise and cease according to karmic causes and conditions. The tathāgatas have undergone sextillions of hardships for the sake of beings. Having completely given up all their possessions, they become perfectly awakened within unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening, and establish all beings, too, in great nirvāṇa.”

1.81

At that point, the Tathāgata’s sovereign power caused the whole earth to tremble. The assembled retinue said to the Tathāgata, “Excellent!” King Prasenajit and the others, by means of many, great, more and more powerful supernatural powers, made an offering to the Tathāgata of five hundred divine garments. Trembling, they circumambulated the Tathāgata three times. In the presence of all the tathāgatas, each of them confessed that the faults consisting of all their negative actions had indeed been committed, and they promised to adopt the training.

1.82

At the same time, the assembled retinue exclaimed, “Tathāgata, we pay homage to those who have turned away from all births, freed all beings from suffering, and attained liberation. Homage to them! Blessed One, in the future, we will not take any delight in the experiences of suffering in saṃsāra. Blessed One, we pray that you liberate us from birth, old age, disease, death, misery, despair, lamentation, suffering, unhappiness, and distress.”

1.83

The Blessed One replied, “Sons of a noble family, with roots of virtue that focus upon diligent application, may you acquire the superior intention directed at the Three Jewels. Know all conditioned phenomena to be impermanent and like illusions. [F.157.a] Be filled with joy at upholding the holy Dharma. May you worship, revere, and venerate it more and more. Know it as supreme compassion for all beings. Consider the one who expounds the Dharma as a tathāgata. Consider virtuous friends as gurus. Keep in mind, cultivate, and spread the various Dharma discourses. Sons of a noble family, you will be liberated from all sufferings, all births, old age, disease, death, misery, unhappiness, and great distress. You will be

liberated from the noose of saṃsāra. Practice the roots of virtue, that is, the noble eightfold path. May you turn away from the state of not being vigilant.

1.84

“Sons of noble family, once beings adopt even a single training of the Tathāgata for only a short while, they will be liberated from all suffering, experience pleasant rebirths, and will not experience negative forms of existence. That being so, what need is there to mention those who, after abandoning jokes, amusement, pleasure, and games, through their sublime devotion to the Tathāgata perform rituals to him, live with superior intentions, and practice the restoration and purification of their vows with the eight-branched fasting ritual? What need is there to mention that all those who practice these sorts of conduct will not be born in the three negative forms of existence, but will pass to pleasant ones, and that, having experienced the happiness of gods and humans, their suffering will come to an end so that gradually they will fully and completely awaken to unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening?”

1.85

“Whoever has the body of a woman tainted by the fundamental and secondary defilements, if they genuinely take refuge in the Three Jewels and adopt the training, whether for one day, half a day, or just a moment, [F.157.b] they will all dispel that condition of being a woman, suffering, unhappiness, and afflictions. Having put an end to suffering, they will go to pleasant forms of existence until they become fully and perfectly awakened buddhas within unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening. Sons of a noble family, the infantile do not recognize that one who genuinely takes up the pledges and the training commitments of body, speech, and mind is endowed with many qualities and great roots of virtue.”

1.86

At that moment, a great noise resounded in the sky. All the retinue marveled, upon which a great rain of flowers and perfume fell. One hundred thousand beings were all liberated from suffering and established in unsurpassable, complete, and perfect awakening—the spiritual level from which there can be no relapse. Moreover, ten million beings focused upon taking refuge in the Buddha, Dharma, and saṅgha, and generated bodhicitta for the first time.

1.87

The tathāgatas, too, all disappeared. Then, Vajrapāṇi and the others, all the vajra holders, Śakra, Brahmā, the protectors of the world, and the four kings spoke these words to the Blessed One:

“Thanks to the Tathāgata, we have respite. We have heard the Dharma discourses and the names of the tathāgatas. To the Blessed One, we have dedicated our countries, cities, and temples as well as our bodies and lives so that the Dharma will



be taught, copied, recited, worshipped, and proclaimed. We will preserve it. We will protect it. We will accomplish all its purposes. We will ensure that wealth and grains are well provided. We will ensure that the Blessed One will be venerated everywhere. We will ensure that people are free from all diseases. We will ensure that we give mindfulness, power, and inspiration.”

1.88

The Blessed One [F.158.a] declared, “Excellent. This is excellent!” And he told them, “At all costs, make sure in this way that these teachings of the Dharma, which are the pledge of the Tathāgata, will not quickly disappear.”

1.89

When the Blessed One had spoken in this way, all the bodhisattva mahāsattvas, such as Noble Avalokiteśvara, Vajrapāṇi, and others, as well as the great śrāvakas and the entire retinue, as well as the world of the gods, human beings, asuras, and gandharvas, rejoiced and praised what the Blessed One had said.