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The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala

Puṇyabalāvadāna

Translated into Tibetan by
Jinamitra · Devacandra



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co.

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SUMMARY

s.1

In Śrāvastī, at Prince Jeta's Grove, several elder monks in the Buddha's assembly cannot agree on which human quality is most valuable and beneficial: beauty, diligence, artistry, or insight. They ask the Buddha, who replies that merit, which gives rise to all the qualities they have noted, is of most benefit to beings. To illustrate this point, he tells the story of a past life in which he was born as Puṇyabala, with four older brothers who were each named after their most prized quality: Rūpabala, Vīryavanta, Śīlpavanta, and Prajñāvanta. In an ensuing contest to determine which quality produces the best outcomes in real life, Puṇyabala wins, and through his merit is granted dominion over much of the world. The Buddha then goes on to tell the story of his even earlier lifetime as Dyūtajaya, during which he developed the intention to attain buddhahood through the accumulation of merit.

ac.

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i.

INTRODUCTION

i.1

The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala is written in one the most recognizable literary forms in Buddhism: the Buddha's past-life stories. These stories are usually morality tales, which highlight the positive benefits of certain actions and the detrimental results of others. This tale focuses on the benefits of accruing merit. Puṇyabala is a young prince whose store of merit is so great that he acquires untold riches and power.

i.2

Most past-life stories of the Buddha are found within two genres of Buddhist literature: *avadānas* and *jātakas*. The Sanskrit term *avadāna*, broadly meaning "narrative" or "tale," denotes a type of exemplary story that is common to most Indian religious traditions. In the Buddhist context, *avadāna* is traditionally specified as the tenth of a twelvefold categorization of Buddhist scripture (Skt. *pravacana*), classified according to content, thematic structure, and literary style. Although this class of works is as varied as it is voluminous, the stories typically illustrate the results of good and bad karma, indicating how past deeds have shaped present circumstances. In this vein, many *avadānas*, the present one included, set out to show how the exemplary lives of the Buddha, or more often of his followers, have resulted from their meritorious deeds in past lives. *Avadānas* may also, in certain cases, include prophecies (Skt. *vyākaraṇa*) of future spiritual attainments.

i.3

Avadānas recounting past deeds generally follow a three-part narrative structure: a story from the present life of the Buddha or another protagonist, a story of an exemplary past deed, and a connecting conclusion that shows how the past protagonist and his circle were prior incarnations of the present protagonist and his circle. In this regard, *avadānas* bear a close relationship to *jātakas* ("birth stories" of the Buddha), which some scholars have justifiably considered to be a subset of the *avadāna* genre. One notable difference, however, is that the protagonist of an *avadāna* is often not the Buddha himself, as it is in most *jātaka* stories, but one of his followers or

prospective followers.¹ Another difference is that avadānas typically concern realized beings' past *human* lives, not those as animals or nonhumans, as is the case in many jāṭaka tales. Finally, while jāṭaka stories had wide popular appeal, with plots, characters, and motifs drawn from pan-Indian folklore, the avadānas seem to have been originally intended primarily for monastics, as suggested by their frequent references to attendant monks, their moral tone, and their specific prescriptions for Buddhist practice that are interspersed throughout the narratives. Yet, in the course of their historical diffusion, these edifying tales of spiritual and moral achievement eventually gained wide popularity and came to inspire and educate Buddhist monastics and lay followers alike.

i.4 *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala* exemplifies many of the leitmotifs of the avadāna genre. The Buddha relates an inspirational story about the benefits of making merit, and uses illustrative narratives to show how this practice underpins all rival character traits, being the only one that leads directly to spiritual attainment. Although the narrative contains some elements that would be more typical of a jāṭaka, such as the giving away of body parts,² it is primarily dedicated to explaining and illustrating the primacy and far-reaching efficacy of merit-making in spiritual life and has fewer of the entertaining plot devices that enliven the jāṭaka versions of this story.

i.5 The central story and leading characters of *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala* are found in various permutations throughout the Buddhist past-lives literature. The bare outline of the tale of the five young men, their debate over what is “best in the world” (Skt. *loke anuttaraṃ* in the *Mahāvastu* version), and their journey to a foreign land in order to test their differing theories, is shared by at least three other Buddhist texts that are each much shorter in length than the *Puṇyabalāvadāna*. These texts are the *Puṇyavanta Jātaka*, which forms a chapter of the *Mahāvastu*;³ a Tocharian version of the *Puṇyavanta* story;⁴ and a metric version that is included in the *Bhadrakalpāvadāna*.⁵ Apart from their shared narrative outline, these texts are not only notably different in composition and content from one another, but also from the *Puṇyabalāvadāna*. While the dialog and ensuing adventures of the five young men are the focus of the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* and of the *Puṇyavanta Jātaka* in the *Mahāvastu*, the Tocharian version devotes more than three-quarters of its content to the stories and dialogs preceding the young men's journey, giving only seven and a half lines to their actual adventures.⁶

i.6 The characters also differ among these works. The protagonist in our avadāna, Puṇyabala, is named Puṇyavanta in the other works (or its equivalent *Puṇyavaṃ* in the Tocharian version) and likewise Rūpabala is Rūpavanta in the other works. Moreover, in the *Mahāvastu* version, the

young prince's companions are said to be ministers' sons (Skt. *amātyaputrā*) who are of the same age, whereas they are referred to as princes (Tib. *gzhon nu*, Skt. *kumāra*; Tocharian *māñcuṣke*) belonging to the same royal family in both the Tocharian tale and the *Puṇyabalāvadāna*. The concluding correspondences drawn between the past characters and their present incarnations are largely similar, except that Śilpavanta becomes one of the Buddha's ten leading disciples, Aniruddha (Pāli *Anuruddha*), in the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* and the Tocharian tale but becomes a lesser known disciple, Rāśtrapāla (Pāli *Raṭhapāla*), in the *Mahāvastu* tale.

i.7 An interesting narrative difference between these works is that the *Mahāvastu* version of the exploits of Rūpavanta, Prajñāvanta, and Puṇyavanta contains erotic intrigues or escapades that are absent in the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* and the Tocharian tale, though the latter does describe at some length a nocturnal liaison between a painter and a maiden, as an illustration of the perils of artistry offered by the wise Prajñāvanta. In general, the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* gives comparatively little consideration to the feats of the other princes, which are each summarized in only a line or two and devotes far more attention than the other works to explaining and illustrating the benefits of merit-making through the lens of Puṇyabala's life. In the *Mahāvastu* narrative, it is not through any meritorious deeds that Puṇyavanta earns the respect of King Brahmadata and his ministers, but rather by generally making an agreeable impression on them, and especially by not falling prey to the sexual advances of the love-smitten princess! It is for these rather passive successes that the king rewards Puṇyavanta with the princess's hand in marriage and makes him heir to the throne. In the *Puṇyabalāvadāna*, by contrast, it is only through a series of arduous merit-making tasks—including living in poverty, giving wealth to the poor, giving his limbs and blood to an amputee, and making the aspiration to gain spiritual awakening so that he can liberate all beings from saṃsāra—that Puṇyabala's efforts bear fruit. Even then, it is only upon gaining the final approval of the god Śakra, who appears in the guise of a brahmin to interrogate the young prince and ensure that his altruistic deeds have not been corrupted by any disinclination or vested interest, that Puṇyabala finally gains prosperity, kingship, and the assurance of future awakening to buddhahood.

i.8 Of the works considered, it is only the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* that treats the ideal of merit in systematic detail and argues for its alleged superiority over the other virtues. Significantly, the Tocharian tale devotes well over half its content to extolling insight, giving relatively short shrift to merit. The *Mahāvastu* story gives only cursory treatment to each of the five prized qualities and seems to be invested far more in plot developments than in

ethical and didactic considerations. Taken together, all these structural and thematic differences between the versions of this story reinforce our general impression that the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* was primarily intended as a morality tale for a Buddhist monastic audience. It is perhaps worth noting that there are several jātaḱa tales featuring a King Puṇyabala who is renowned for his generosity, but these otherwise bear little resemblance to the Puṇyavanta narrative.

- i.9 Let us now give a brief synopsis of *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala*. Our story begins with the Buddha delivering a teaching to his disciples in Prince Jeta’s Grove about the crucial importance of generosity, the accumulation of merit, and the maintenance of discipline. The Buddha’s teaching prompts his students to debate over which human quality should be considered the most valuable quality and therefore the most worthy aim in life. Venerable Nanda argues that good looks are most valuable to humans.⁷ Venerable Śroṇakoṭṭiṃṣa argues that it is diligence.⁸ Venerable Aniruddha argues that it is artistic skill, and venerable Śāriputra argues that it is insight. When they cannot resolve their disagreement, they ask the Buddha. The Buddha tells them that merit is the best human quality, as it underpins all the others. He then tells a story from one of his past lives to illustrate this claim.
- i.10 He recounts a previous life as King Puṇyabala, who was the fifth of five brothers. His four older brothers each exemplify, and indeed are named after, the human qualities they consider most worthy: Rūpabala, Vīryavanta, Śilpavanta, and Prajñāvanta. It becomes clear early on that it is Puṇyabala’s inborn quality of merit, especially generosity, that makes his birth the most valuable and auspicious of the five. Indeed, his presence in his mother’s womb already attracts the veneration of the gods and all the kingdom’s residents, including the king, and causes treasures to rain down from the sky.
- i.11 In the episodes of his coming of age, Prince Puṇyabala’s merit is described as closely related to his generosity; he is generous because of his merit, and his merit is, in turn, a result of his generosity. A key example of this is his compassionate act of granting food to hungry pretas who were hitherto unable to eat anything that was offered to them.
- i.12 Even such acts, however, do not convince his brothers of the preeminence of merit. As a result, he eventually devises a test to see which of their qualities is the most valuable quality for humans. He suggests that they travel to a foreign land where they are unknown and test out which quality proves most beneficial to themselves and others. The other brothers agree, and all five leave home to live incognito in a distant land. After they arrive, the other brothers soon find success by virtue of their respective qualities,

but they are not as successful as Puṇyabala. In fact, their varying degrees of success reflect an ascending hierarchy of the values they embody, with each being more beneficial and encompassing than the last.

i.13 Puṇyabala begins his life abroad by staying in a pauper's house. His host quickly becomes wealthy and respected, and so does Puṇyabala. Puṇyabala then encounters a man who had given unacceptable medical advice to a rival king and was punished by amputation of all his limbs. Puṇyabala offers him his own limbs, and he uses the power of words of truth to attach his severed limbs to their new recipient. Śakra is compelled by this act to make an appearance. He demands to know if Puṇyabala regrets the action, and Puṇyabala confirms his continuing diligence in generosity by pronouncing another truth statement—which restores his arms and legs. Śakra is impressed and states that Puṇyabala will soon attain awakening.

i.14 After these acts, Puṇyabala grows increasingly wealthy and becomes the king of a neighboring land. He is then given additional kingdoms, until eventually he comes to rule most of the world. His brothers and father seek him out and acknowledge his superiority. After his death, he is reborn in Heaven of Joy and eventually takes rebirth as the Buddha.

i.15 The narrative concludes, in standard avadāna fashion, with the Buddha revealing the true identities of the characters in the story. He relates that he was Puṇyabala, the parents in the story were none other than his current parents, and Puṇyabala's brothers were the four monks who argued over which human quality is the most valuable quality.

i.16 The Buddha continues with a further past-life story in which he had taken birth as a pauper named Dyūtajaya, who had gambled away all his money and become utterly destitute. On his way home, however, he encountered a previous buddha named Aparājita, to whom he confessed his errant ways; he aroused the mind of awakening and made an offering to Aparājita of five handfuls of cowrie shells and his upper garment. This was a paltry offering, but presumably all he could manage given his recent deprivation and, most importantly, it was made with pure intention. As a result of this pure deed, he went on to first become wealthy, then a king on earth, and eventually a king in heaven. Eventually, it was the catalyst for his rebirths as Puṇyabala and the Buddha. This final narrative serves to illustrate how any human being, even a wrongdoer, can attain the highest goals in life if he or she strives to benefit others with pure intention.

i.17 The colophon of the text states that it was translated from Sanskrit into Tibetan by the imperial-era translators Jinamitra, the Kashmiri scholar, and the Tibetan Devacandra (eighth to ninth centuries). Jinamitra was active in Tibet at the end of the eighth century or during the first decades of the ninth.⁹ The *Puṇyabalāvadāna*'s inclusion in the Denkarma Catalog shows that

it was translated prior to that catalog's compilation in 812. In this catalog, the text is grouped within the category of Hīnayāna sūtras (Tib. *theg pa chung ngu'i sde*).¹⁰ Indeed, its cast of characters includes only the Buddha Śākyamuni and his śrāvaka disciples (in their present and former lives), and none of the bodhisattvas who often appear in the Mahāyāna sūtras.

i.18 This text was also translated into Chinese by Dānapāla in 983, during the Northern Song Dynasty.¹¹ However, the text of the Chinese translation does not closely match the Tibetan version of the text, and only begins partway through the narrative. It therefore seems likely that the Chinese and Tibetan translations were based on different versions of the text (or perhaps the Chinese translation was based on an incomplete source text).¹² We have not consulted the Chinese translation in preparing this English translation of *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala*.

i.19 Kazuo Kano has noted that a Sanskrit version of the *Puṇyabalāvadāna* that once belonged to the Indian scholar Atiśa Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna is currently stored in the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Unfortunately, however, this text along with the many other Sanskrit and Tibetan texts in the Potala collection remain unavailable to scholars at this time.¹³

i.20 *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala* has not previously been translated into any Western language. In producing the present English translation, we based our work primarily on the Tibetan edition found in the Degé Kangyur, but consulted variant readings in the Comparative Edition (*dpe bsdur ma*) and the Stok Palace manuscript edition.

The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala

1.

The Translation

[F.1.b] [B1]

1.1 Homage to the Buddha.

1.2 Thus did I hear at one time. The Blessed One was staying in Śrāvastī at Prince Jeta’s Grove, Anāthapiṇḍada’s park. At that time, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, when certain foolish men possess three traits at odds with the sacred Dharma, they do not practice generosity, do not engage in merit, and do not maintain discipline after taking it on. What are these three traits? They are attachment, miserliness, and carelessness.

1.3 “Monks, because some foolish men possess these three traits at odds with the sacred Dharma, they do not practice generosity, do not engage in merit, and do not [F.2.a] maintain discipline after taking it on. As a result, when their bodies fail and they die, they will fall into lower realms and be reborn in the hell realms.

1.4 “Monks, those worthy people who have three qualities of the sacred Dharma practice generosity, engage in merit, and maintain discipline after taking it on. What are these three qualities? They are nonattachment, freedom from the stain of miserliness, and conscientiousness. Monks, those sublime beings who have these three qualities will practice generosity, engage in merit, and maintain discipline after taking it on. As a result, when their bodies fail and they die, they will meet happy destinies and take birth in the higher realms, among the gods.”

1.5 These words were proclaimed by the Blessed One. After the Well-Gone One had said these words, he, the Teacher, went on to say this:

1.6 “Due to miserliness and carelessness,
You do not practice generosity.
Therefore, with a mind that yearns for merit,
You should practice generosity.

- 1.7 “The fears of the miserly are such that
Due to their fears of hunger and thirst,
They do not give in this life.
Thus, these childish ones are tainted
By their fear-induced lack of generosity,
Both in this world and in the hereafter.
- 1.8 “But those who forsake miserliness
Will give when it is right to give.
So for them, death is not really death.
They are like well-provisioned travelers.
- 1.9 “Those who give what is hard to give up,
Making offerings, large or small,
Of what is very hard to relinquish,
Such people [F.2.b] are the purifiers of difficult karma.
Unworthy ones do not understand this.
Worthy ones do not do things that transgress the Dharma.
- 1.10 “So it is for the worthy and the unworthy,¹⁴
That when they have passed from this life,
The unworthy go to hell,
And the worthy go to heaven.
- 1.11 “There is no refuge from the ravages of old age.
As life shortens, the moment when your life force is taken draws closer.
It is reasonable for those who see this terror of death
To engage in acts¹⁵ that bring merit and happiness.¹⁶
- 1.12 “Making hundreds of thousands of offerings
Will not amount to a sixteenth fraction
Of the small acts of joyous giving performed
By those who relinquish women and live as a renunciant.
- 1.13 “How can it be that making vast and prodigious offerings
Does not necessarily qualify as the path of appropriate offering?
How can it be that making hundreds of thousands of offerings
Does not amount to a sixteenth fraction of a renunciant’s offering?
- 1.14 “It is so because here, in this life, some childish fools kill and shackle others,
Brutally ruining them, while donating their wealth to others.
Such generosity accompanied by tear-stained faces and punishment
Does not qualify as the path of appropriate offering.

- 1.15 “Even if such offerings are vast and prodigious,
They do not qualify as the path of appropriate generosity.
This is why even hundreds of thousands of offerings
Do not amount to even a sixteenth fraction of a renunciant’s offerings.
- 1.16 “Those who are not hypocritical
And who give away righteously acquired wealth
Let go of things that are hard to relinquish.
They will go to the gods’ realms because of their merit.”
- 1.17 After speaking thus, the Blessed One rose from his seat and proceeded toward a dense forest. He stayed in the dense forest for the day, sitting beneath a tree.
- 1.18 During that time, many monks gathered in the assembly hall and took their seats. The elders began to discuss the issue of the most valuable quality of human beings.¹⁷ Among those seated in the assembly were the Blessed One’s cousin, his aunt’s son, venerable Nanda, along with venerable Śroṇakoṭṭivimṣa, [F.3.a] venerable Aniruddha, and venerable Śāriputra.
- 1.19 At this point, venerable Nanda said, “Venerable ones, good looks are the most valuable quality of humans.”
- 1.20 Venerable Śroṇakoṭṭivimṣa said, “Venerable ones, diligence is the most valuable quality of humans.”
- 1.21 Venerable Aniruddha said, “Venerable ones, being skilled in arts and crafts¹⁸ is the most valuable quality of humans.”
- 1.22 And venerable Śāriputra said, “Venerable ones, insight is the most valuable quality of humans.”
- 1.23 They then said, “Venerable ones, since we have all understood things differently and cannot come to an agreement, we must go to the Blessed One and report our disagreement to him. We will accept whatever the Blessed One tells us.”
- 1.24 The venerable ones then praised the Blessed One:
- 1.25 “He is the great compassionate teacher.
He is omniscient and eliminates doubts.
He eradicates uncertainty,
Like the sun dispels darkness.
- 1.26 “He is the sole refuge for living beings,
Who are caught in the net of suffering
And are set on a wrong path.
He is like the best father of children.
- 1.27 “Therefore, we shall all ask him,

The lord of all qualities,
Who strives for the welfare of all sentient beings,
The Sage who eradicates doubt.

1.28 “The Victor will eradicate
The great knot of uncertainty.
Therefore, let us all go
And ask the Thus-Gone One.”

1.29 Having spoken thus, many of the monks made arrangements to go see the Blessed One. On this occasion that the Blessed One had settled in the dense forest to spend the day there, many monks of the saṅgha¹⁹ had meanwhile gathered and taken their seats in the assembly hall. At this time, he heard with his unhindered, superhuman, pure, divine ears what they had said. [F.3.b] He then rose from his meditative absorption and returned to the assembly hall. Once there, he took his seat on the mat that was set out for him in the center of the assembly. When he was seated, the Blessed One asked the monks, “Monks, you are all gathered and seated here in the assembly hall. What have you been discussing? What topic of discussion has presently brought you to gather and be seated here?”

1.30 They responded, “Honorable One, with many monks gathered in the assembly hall, the venerable ones have been discussing the issue of the most valuable quality of human beings. Venerable Nanda said, ‘Venerable ones, good looks are the most valuable quality of humans.’ Venerable Śroṇakoṭṭivimṣā said, ‘Venerable ones, diligence is the most valuable quality of humans.’ Venerable Aniruddha said, ‘Venerable ones, being skilled in arts and crafts is the most valuable quality of humans.’ And venerable Śāriputra said, ‘Venerable ones, insight alone is the most valuable quality of humans.’ Honorable One, this is how we deliberated about the matter. Since we venerable ones were all in disagreement, and each saw things differently, we decided to come before the Blessed One and ask about this very issue. We resolved to accept whatever advice the Blessed One gives us. Honorable One, this is what we, the many monks gathered and seated in the assembly hall, discussed. This is the topic of discussion that has brought us to assemble and take our seats here.”

1.31 Following their query, the Blessed One replied with the following verse:

1.32 “Good looks, skill in arts and crafts,
Diligence, insight, and all the other qualities that
Sentient beings possess have arisen from merit. [F.4.a]
Therefore, merit is most important.”

- 1.33 After uttering this, the Blessed One said to the monks, “Monks, those things you understood to be the most valuable qualities are only of limited duration; they are not the most valuable qualities for all beings and all occasions. Merit, however, is the most valuable quality for all living beings on all occasions. Monks, in truth, I have not observed a single thing that is a more valuable quality than merit. Monks, to explain why, I will tell you a story.”
- 1.34 “Once upon a time, a king named Bright Power ruled from his capital city. During his reign, the kingdom became more prosperous, expansive, and pleasant. It had good harvests, and it was filled with a large population of creatures and humans. The king’s wife was named Queen Vibhūṣitā. She had a lovely figure and was beautiful, most pleasing to the eye. Some time later, he frolicked and enjoyed himself with Queen Vibhūṣitā, and they made love. From this playing, pleasuring, and lovemaking, a son was born.
- 1.35 Their son also had a lovely figure. He was beautiful and pleasing to the eye. His complexion surpassed that of humans but did not quite equal that of the gods. At his birth, a celebratory ceremony was arranged, and on this occasion he was given the name Rūpabala. Later, three more sons were born. They were named Vīryavanta, Śilpavanta, and Prajñāvanta.
- 1.36 “After some time, Queen Vibhūṣitā again became pregnant with another son. On the day of this child’s conception, gold of various hues suddenly rained down around the palace. Furthermore, a large divine canopy decorated with various precious jewels appeared above the queen’s head. When King Bright Power saw these miraculous occurrences, he was amazed and asked the astrologers, ‘Ah! What is this unprecedented miracle?’ The astrologers replied, ‘Lord, [F.4.b] this son your queen has conceived is one who will be renowned for his great merit, which is the power of this being.’ When the king heard this, he was utterly astonished.
- 1.37 “Shortly thereafter, a wish arose in the queen’s mind, and she beseeched the king, ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I could be seated on a lion throne, with a white umbrella above me and a yak-tail fan with a jewel-encrusted handle?’ Thereupon, the king’s mind was filled with joy. He did just as she wished and ordered that the city be lavishly decorated. Thus, he ordered that everything be done just as she requested, and nothing remained unsatisfied of the wish that had arisen in her mind.
- 1.38 “Later, another wish arose in her mind, and she beseeched the king, ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I were seated on a pile of gold and silver and could then make offerings with my own hands, thus making merit and providing wealth to those who lack wealth?’ The king agreed to this. After the king did just as she had requested, nothing remained unsatisfied of the wish that had arisen in her mind.

- 1.39 “Later, another wish arose in her mind: ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I were to release all the prisoners?’ In order to fulfill the wish she had conceived, the king released all the prisoners, and nothing remained unsatisfied of the wish that had arisen in her mind.
- 1.40 “Later, yet another wish arose in her mind: ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I were to behold parks?’ At this, the king fulfilled her wish by letting her behold the beautiful parks, and nothing remained unsatisfied of the wish that had arisen in her mind.
- 1.41 “Later, still another wish arose in her mind. She beseeched the king, ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I were to speak words of truth before a crowd of people? And if, while seated on a divine lion throne because of the karmic ripening of the merit I possess, I could teach the Dharma to many people? And if, following my teaching, some miracles would occur and the gods would immediately make offerings to me?’ [F.5.a]
- 1.42 “The king then ordered that the queen’s chamber and the wider city be beautified. All the city’s many residents gathered, attired themselves in clean apparel, adorned themselves with ornaments, and held incense, garlands, and perfume in their hands. Goddess-like, Queen Vibhūṣitā entered the crowd, wearing an assortment of ornaments, surrounded by her female retinue, and captivating people’s eyes and hearts. Placing her mind in a state of love that encompassed all sentient beings, she gazed at the sky and spoke this verse, whose truth was a spiritual blessing:
- 1.43 “ ‘If the child residing inside me like a divine emanation
Is a superior one, a lord of humans, Puṇyabala,
Then by this truth may the gods
Quickly arrange my lion throne.’
- 1.44 “As soon as she uttered those words, the gods who displayed the power of merit instantaneously offered her a magical lion throne, and divine flowers began to rain down. When they saw this amazing magical display, which aroused joy in gods and humans, the crowds of people were astonished. ‘Ah! How powerful is this merit!’ they said in unison. ‘Even the gods who are worshiped in all worlds are summoned by the power of merit and must listen to the humans’ commands! How marvelous it is!’
- 1.45 “At this point, Queen Vibhūṣitā was overjoyed. She ascended the throne without hesitation and took her seat. As soon as the queen sat on the throne, the earth shook in six different ways, and the lion throne rose from the ground and ascended into the sky, reaching the height of seven humans. Next, a divine canopy decorated with various precious jewels appeared over the lion throne. Because the crowd of people saw the power of merit, their minds were delighted, and they liberally offered incense, garlands, and

perfume to the queen. They folded their hands out of respect, [F.5.b] sat in front of her and listened to her words with humbled minds. When King Bright Power likewise saw the astonishing power of merit, he was overjoyed, and together with his retinue, he sat down with folded hands. Then Queen Vibhūṣitā recited a verse that had never before been heard:

- 1.46 “ ‘If beings accumulate merit, they will be happy.
Therefore, people should perform meritorious deeds.
Moreover, they should perform them again and again.
They should aspire for this alone.’
- 1.47 “As soon as she uttered these verses, a voice came from the sky, ‘Very well said!’ The sound of divine music could be heard, and a great shower of highly ornate divine garments rained down. Upon hearing this verse, King Bright Power and the crowd of people were filled with joy. The gods present in the sky removed the robes and ornaments from their bodies without hesitation and draped them over Queen Vibhūṣitā and her lion throne. In unison they uttered the words, ‘Well said! Well said!’
- 1.48 “After the queen had slowly descended from the lion throne and was seated on the ground, the sounds of divine music faded, but the sounds of human music continued to resound. The king and the crowd of people jubilantly paid great honor to the queen and escorted her back to her chambers. Once the queen had gone inside, the lion throne disappeared. The crowd saw the efficacy of merit, and their minds were filled with pure joy. They said in unison, ‘Ah! This is the greatness of merit! Ah! This is the sweet fruit of merit!’
- 1.49 “Thereafter, nothing that the queen had wished for was left unfulfilled. Sometime later, after nine months had elapsed, Queen Vibhūṣitā gave birth to a son at daybreak. [F.6.a] The newborn had a beautiful appearance and was pleasing to the eye and lovely. At this time, the earth shook in six different ways, and from the sky a great shower of seven kinds of precious substances rained down on the queen’s chambers. Various sorts of garments rained down on everyone around the king’s palace. And everywhere in that kingdom, supreme, beautiful, divine flowers showered down. Flowering trees produced flowers, and fruiting trees produced fruit. Gentle rain showers fell everywhere. Fresh breezes wafted in from the four directions.
- 1.50 “The Four Great Kings spontaneously offered a bejeweled lion throne and a wish-fulfilling tree in the presence of the newborn child. Śakra, lord of the gods, held in his own hands fine fabrics, and he held an eight-spoked divine umbrella and a golden-handled yak-tail fan over the boy. Above him, the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three unfurled canopies of divine fabric.

Some tossed precious gems, some tossed ornaments, some tossed garments, some tossed flowers, and some tossed powders. Some tossed perfumes, garlands, and ointments. Some played exquisite divine music.

1.51 “The god Viśvakarma, the architect of the gods, cleared the city of rocks, gravel, and pebbles, and strung up many cloth tassels. He also erected victory banners and flags, sprinkled sandalwood water, hung censers containing sweet-smelling incense, and scattered assorted flowers everywhere. When he had finished, the city was as attractive as the gods’ pleasure garden, called Park of Delights.

1.52 “A hundred of the finest elephants freely came from the dense jungles and arrayed themselves in formation. A hundred mares and their foals followed. All the crops ripened marvelously without any plowing or planting. [F.6.b] Below this lion throne and facing it were five treasuries filled to the brim with all kinds of jewels, which were never depleted no matter how many were taken from them. In that moment, even animals that are natural enemies²⁰ regarded each other with loving hearts.

1.53 “The boy had magical and extraordinary powers. Immediately after being born, he was instantly able to remember his past lives. Looking in the four directions, he recited a verse:

1.54 “ ‘If beings accumulate merit, they will be happy.
Therefore, humans should perform meritorious deeds.
Moreover, they should perform them again and again.
They should aspire for this alone.’

1.55 “Thereby, the mind of a magical and exceedingly powerful god who lived in the sky became overjoyed upon witnessing this exceptionally wondrous and delightful display of merit. To teach the greatness of this merit, at that time he uttered this verse:

1.56 “ ‘Look at this display of merit!
This merit has overwhelmed
Everyone, from the Four Great Kings
Up to the Lord of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.’

1.57 “After witnessing such splendor, the king, the queen’s retinue, the princes, ministers, courtiers, and other people in the area were wide-eyed with amazement. In this state of utter astonishment, they exclaimed, ‘Ah! The power of the boy’s merit! Ah! Even though he’s human, the boy’s merit is so renowned that he receives abundant wealth like that of gods! How wonderful!’

- 1.58 “The king, overjoyed and delighted, issued an order to his treasurers. Heeding his command, they amassed heaps of gold and silver in the king’s courtyard, and then gave gifts, thus accruing merit. Many poor people became rich, and a short time later, the king’s wealth increased even more. A big celebration was held to mark the prince’s birth [F.7.a] and give him a name. The king asked, ‘What should the prince’s name be?’ The ministers replied, ‘Lord, since this boy has enormous power of merit, and because at his birth he has accrued wealth like that of the gods, the prince’s name should be Puṇyabala.’ Thus, he was named Puṇyabala.
- 1.59 From then on, Prince Puṇyabala had eight nurses assigned to him: two women to hold him, two wet nurses, two women to bathe him, and two women to play with him. These eight women fed him milk, yogurt, butter, ghee, and cream, and they raised him with great care and affection. He blossomed like a lotus in a pond.
- 1.60 “When he grew older, he was instructed in letters and perfected his reading and writing. He perfected the five sets of royal skills. Furthermore, Prince Puṇyabala had great faith, and he was virtuous and goodhearted. He worked for the benefit of himself and others. He was compassionate and a great being, someone who sought the Dharma, loved all beings, longed to make offerings, loved to give, took great joy in generosity, and gave away everything. He gave prodigiously without attachment. He was committed to great generosity.
- 1.61 “He begrudged nothing—not even his own flesh—to ascetics, brahmins, the poor, the suffering, and the destitute. There was nothing he would not give away prodigiously. When beggars came to him for alms, he maintained a loving heart toward them. Looking at the sky, he would generate the intention, ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if whatever they desired—gold, silver, fabric, food, meals, drink, or bedding—were to come to me from the sky!’ [F.7.b] When he generated such an intention, whatever they desired would come forth, but none of them understood the reason. The beggars returned home with their desires thoroughly fulfilled by these goods. Because of the prince’s fame, he was extolled throughout Jambudvīpa, from all the netherworlds of the nāgas up to the celestial realms of Brahmā.
- 1.62 “After some time, Prince Puṇyabala set out on an excursion to the Pleasure Garden of Supreme Wealth, together with his four older brothers. On their way, they were encircled by many thousands of begging pretas with mouths²¹ like needles and stomachs like Mount Sumeru. They were like standing skeletons, their bodies ablaze, venerating him with hands together. No one other than Prince Puṇyabala could see the pretas. At this point, the pretas spoke to Prince Puṇyabala saying, ‘Oh Prince, you are well-known for your great merit. If you are indeed compassionate, please give to us who are

so hungry and thirsty for food and drink. Previously, we were overpowered by miserliness, and thus we have now been born in the preta realm. Because of this, in this realm not only have we not found any water for many hundreds of years, but we have also not seen any kind of food.'

1.63 "After they said this, Prince Puṇyabala's mind was greatly moved by compassion. In sorrow, he gazed at the sky and gave rise to the thought, 'Well now, wouldn't it be wonderful if I received divine food and drink!' Instantly, divine food and drink came from the sky. Prince Puṇyabala then gave the hungry and thirsty pretas the divine food and drink, in order to satisfy them. But for a while, due to the faults of their past karma, they were unable to see the food and drink. Thus they exclaimed, 'Oh Prince, you are renowned as a compassionate person, [F.8.a] so why have you not satisfied us?'

1.64 "The prince responded, 'I have provided you with abundant divine food and drink. What is wrong with this food and drink that you have not eaten or drunk it yet?'

1.65 "The pretas said to him, 'Oh Prince, we cannot see the divine food and drink because of the faults of our past karma.'

1.66 "Upset, Prince Puṇyabala then thought, 'Alas! This is due to the influence of miserliness.' His heart filled with love for the pretas, and he expressed an aspiration: 'If merit has power, may the power of that truth and the truth of these words allow these pretas to see this divine food and drink as it really is,²² and may they have the ability to consume it.'

1.67 "At the very moment the prince uttered these words, they no longer perceived things erroneously, and their mouths became normal. Thus, Prince Puṇyabala was exceedingly happy that he had been able to satiate the pretas with the divine food and drink. But as they received food and drink unlike any they had ever tasted, due to the power of their utterly unbearable hunger and thirst, the pretas consumed too much, and their stomachs burst. Nevertheless, because they died with minds full of appreciation for Prince Puṇyabala, they were born among the league of the gods of Heaven of Joy. Thereupon, they proclaimed, 'Prince Puṇyabala, because you caused us to manifest among the league of the gods of Heaven of Joy, let us rejoice! Now, relying only on you, we will become generous and create merit.' At this, Prince Puṇyabala felt overjoyed and said, 'How wonderful!' He then continued on his way to the pleasure garden.

1.68 "When he and the others²³ arrived at the pleasure garden, they began to confer²⁴ and try to gain certainty about the important subject of what is the most valuable quality of human beings. His brother the good-looking prince²⁵ said, 'What is the point of this question? Even [F.8.b] common people know that good looks are the most valuable quality of humans. Why?

When they see someone with good looks, even if they have never seen this person before, they are overjoyed—even those who were not joyful before. Even the sages of the past proclaimed that attaining good looks is fully half of what is to be attained. Moreover, just observe that when people see someone with good looks, they are gladdened by merely beholding this person. From their hearts, they treat this person with respect, just like the best people treat the supreme Dharma.’

1.69 “When the diligent one heard the words of the good-looking prince, he said, ‘But what are you going to do with these good looks? Diligence alone is the most valuable quality of humans. Why? If you have good looks but lack diligence, no desirable results will appear or be heard of, either at present or in future lives. So to say that good looks are the most valuable quality will only confuse childish, ordinary²⁶ beings. Diligence produces desirable results in this very life. Consider that such things as farmers’ crops, merchants’ wealth, servants’ sustenance, superior men’s understanding of scriptures, and meditators’ attainments of the fruits of meditation all appear in this life as the desirable fruits of diligence. Diligence also produces fruits in future lives: such things as the higher realms, vast resources, and the attainment of liberation also appear in future lives as the fruits of diligence. Moreover, diligence serves as the basis of all good qualities, and it overcomes harm. Nothing is harder to attain than diligence.’

1.70 “When the artistic one heard this, he laughed and said, [F.9.a] ‘My mind is unsettled by what you have said, even though you are right in many respects. Why is this? Because I have never seen anyone achieve any results through diligence without artistry. This is because I have observed that those with artistry achieve results. Therefore, artistry alone is the most valuable quality of humans. Moreover, even low-born artisans are certainly respected by kings, ministers, brahmins, and householders.

1.71 “ ‘Multiskilled artisans are
Greatly respected, even by gods and humans.
Even if their behavior is rough,
Artisans are still respected by gods and humans.’

1.72 “After Śilpavanta said this, the wise one gave a little chuckle and said, ‘Nothing is a more valuable quality for humans than insight—neither good looks, nor diligence, nor artistry is as useful. Why? Those with impaired insight may be handsome, but their attractiveness²⁷ is conditional. They may be diligent, but without insight they will not achieve their goals. And without insight, they cannot learn a craft.²⁸ Therefore, insight alone accomplishes all goals, and it is the most valuable quality of humans.

1.73 “ ‘Moreover, by way of insight one will acquire good looks and skills,

As well as diligence and wealth.

People will obtain excellence and great happiness.

Everything is obtained by way of insight.'

- 1.74 “After Prajñāvanta said this, Prince Puṇyabala smiled. When he spoke, it was as if the power of merit itself flowed from his mouth: ‘Without insight, all these things—good looks, artistry, and diligence—are not valuable qualities. But those who have accomplished them by way of insight receive their associated fruits and reap their benefits. This is plainly true. Yet you cannot acquire insight without merit; and therefore, merit alone is the most valuable quality of humans. Merit is the one fundamental source [F.9.b] of the goals of attractiveness, honorableness, delightfulness, pleasantness, and congeniality. I cannot even begin to describe the full extent of merit’s positive qualities, but to give you an inkling of them, let me at least explain a mere fraction of merit’s positive qualities. Listen!
- 1.75 “ ‘Those with merit obtain good looks.
Due to merit they have discipline.
Those with merit obtain good fortune.
And likewise they become prosperous.
- 1.76 “ ‘Those with merit obtain insight.
Due to merit, they master poetry.
Those with merit obtain dignity.
Those with merit obtain good births.
- 1.77 “ ‘Due to merit they are born into a high caste.
Due to merit they remember past lives.
Those with merit gain fame.
Those with merit will have good temperaments.
- 1.78 “ ‘Those with merit become generous.
Those with merit have unimpaired faculties.
Those with merit find happiness.
Those with merit are venerated by the wise.
- 1.79 “ ‘Those with merit obtain power.
Due to merit, they will meet worthy people.
Those with merit fulfill all their goals.
In this life, they will also be suitable recipients of offerings.
- 1.80 “ ‘Whether they make a living from farming or commerce,
If they work to attain the happiness they desire,
Even by working only a little, those with merit

- Will obtain vast wealth.
- 1.81 “ ‘Those who accrue merit
Easily attain everything through merit.
Clothing, food, drink, and jewels come from the sky,
Merely by wishing for them.
- 1.82 “ ‘Those with merit obtain lovely homes.
Those with merit get the best wives.
Great merit grants them wealth and crops.
All their wishes will be realized.
- 1.83 “ ‘When those with merit travel,
The ground will be free of logs and thorns.
In accordance with whatever merit they possess,
It may even be level and covered with fabric.
- 1.84 “ ‘They can heal the sick
By merely touching them.
Similarly, when touched by those with merit,
Food, drink, or both,
As well as clothing, jewels, [F.10.a] and crops,
Will never be depleted.
- 1.85 “ ‘Because of the greatness of their meritorious natures,
Gods, nāgas, asuras, yakṣas,
Pretas, mahoragas, and humans
Protect those with merit from poison and harm.
- 1.86 “ ‘Those with merit gain respect.
Through merit, they delight many people.
Those with merit become famous.
Those with merit receive good fortune.
The words of those with merit are authoritative.
- 1.87 “ ‘Those with merit become attractive.
Due to merit, they acquire the voice of Brahmā.
Merit will grant them a beautiful physique and complexion.
Those with merit will also have excellent speech.
- 1.88 “ ‘Being mindful and amiable, they will be leaders.
They will be learned in many topics.
They will have faithful retinues.
Those with merit will be free from sickness.

- 1.89 “ ‘And due to the ripening of their aspirations,
They will have gifts and glory.
Those with merit will receive kingdoms.
They will be unrivaled and nonviolent.
- 1.90 “ ‘Because of their merit, their wealth will not diminish.
Those with merit also acquire treasure.
Due to merit, they will become universal monarchs,
And the seven precious possessions of a monarch will appear before them.
- 1.91 “ ‘With radiance equal to the sun and moon
Moving across the sky,
The very moon will be gained by merit.
The very sun will be gained by merit.
- 1.92 “ ‘Brahmā himself will be attained by merit.
Śakra himself will be attained by merit.
Due to merit, people will become gods
Traveling in their celestial chariots.
- 1.93 “ ‘Similarly, they will become sons of gods
Or powerful asura kings.
Those with merit are freed from the lower realms.
Because of merit, they will go to the higher realms.
- 1.94 “ ‘Those with merit find
Exceedingly rare and exquisite flowers.
Those with merit acquire supernatural powers.
Merit illuminates the world.
- 1.95 “ ‘Due to merit, they become
Supreme among gods, asuras, and humans.’
- 1.96 “ ‘Thus spoke Prince Puṇyabala. But because of their biased perspectives, the others did not accept his words. So Puṇyabala spoke to them again: [F.10.b] ‘Hey! Come now! Let’s go to a faraway land, dressed in disguise. That way, we can learn which is the most valuable quality of humans: good looks, diligence, artistry, insight, or merit.’
- 1.97 “ ‘The other princes agreed to Puṇyabala’s proposal, exclaiming, ‘Let’s do it!’ Thus, without hesitating or even telling their father, they set out for a faraway kingdom in another land, and entered the realm of a different king, dressed in disguise.

- 1.98 “When people saw the good-looking one, they gathered around him because he was so attractive, and he was able to live solely on the wealth they gave him. The diligent onesaw a strong, swift, and deep river that was terrifying even to look at,²⁹ and which had swept away a large sandalwood tree. Through the great power of his diligence, he was able to haul out that large sandalwood tree that others were not able to salvage, and he made a living selling it. He became wealthy from this endeavor. The artistic one made his living by creating crafts and became wealthy by this trade. The wise one skillfully negotiated a settlement of a longstanding rivalry between two merchants. This pleased the two businessmen so much that they paid him enough to live comfortably.
- 1.99 “In order to highlight the importance of merit-making, Prince Puṇyabala went to live in a pauper’s house. On his first day living in the house, the power of Prince Puṇyabala’s merit caused the household to amass vast riches: great wealth, crops, gold, and silver filled the house. The pauper was surprised and ecstatic. He wondered, ‘Where did all this new wealth come from?’ Then he thought again, ‘All this wealth [F.11.a] must have accumulated due to the influence of the newcomer in my house.’
- 1.100 “Prince Puṇyabala let the poor man use the wealth however he wished. At that time, the poor man became prosperous and his wealth increased greatly. The man pondered again and thought, ‘I was very poor and remained so. Now, whatever abundance and fortune I have is dependent on this youth. Why? On the day this youth came to my home, abundance also came to my home. This person must therefore be a paragon of great merit, and it would be appropriate to venerate him.’ Thereafter, he continually revered the prince with great admiration. The story of the young stranger in a certain pauper’s house spread far and wide. Everywhere it was proclaimed, ‘Due to the youth’s power, fortune has come to that house!’ When the populace heard this, they came to admire Prince Puṇyabala and exclaimed, ‘Ah! How great is the power of merit!’
- 1.101 “At that time, Puṇyabala’s power caused the flowers and fruit trees to bloom continuously. Periodically, the gods also sent down showers of timely rains, which provided for excellent crops. As a result, a great many people were delighted by the power of merit, and wishing to behold this spectacle, they set out to witness it for themselves. Prince Puṇyabala wanted to bring together the people who were approaching him. He gave rise to this aspiration: ‘Well now, wouldn’t it be wonderful if I had a house that was delightful to look at in all sorts of ways, replete with all kinds of jewels and various sorts of goods, and teeming with male and female staff and servants?’

- 1.102 “Monks,³⁰ as soon as those wishes arose, Prince Puṇyabala suddenly had a large house that was delightful to look at in every way, replete with all sorts of jewels, supplied with various types of goods, [F.11.b] and teeming with male and female staff and servants. When they saw this, many people were amazed and began to treasure merit. Thinking, ‘Ah! The fruits of merit are so sweet,’ they revered Prince Puṇyabala with great admiration. Knowing that many people’s minds were delighted, Prince Puṇyabala employed what was efficacious from among the four means of enticement: he attracted some through generosity; he attracted others through kind words; he attracted still others through engaging in beneficial conduct; and he attracted the rest through the consistency of his words and his deeds. Thus, his fame spread throughout the king’s realm.
- 1.103 “A while later, Prince Puṇyabala saw a man who had offered his medicinal expertise to a rival king, and as a consequence, executioners had amputated his limbs. A great deal of blood had drained from his body, and so his complexion had become gaunt. When Prince Puṇyabala appeared there, as soon as the man saw him, he wept loudly, crying out to him piteously, ‘Save me, young lord!’³¹ When Prince Puṇyabala saw this, compassion arose in his mind, and he wondered, ‘By what means might I save him?’ He gave rise to this thought: ‘Right here and now I should demonstrate to the world the power of merit!’
- 1.104 “Then Prince Puṇyabala noticed the man’s fever, and his mind was saturated with compassion. He drew blood from his own veins, and by transfusing it into the man, he completely healed his gaunt complexion.
- 1.105 “When Prince Puṇyabala saw that the man was in excruciating pain due to the amputation of his limbs, he wished to take on this suffering. He therefore cut off his own legs and arms in order to attach them to the man’s body in the appropriate places. Gazing at the sky, he cultivated an attitude of loving-kindness [F.12.a] that extended to all sentient beings and spoke words of truth: ‘It is true that I do not recall performing any nonvirtuous deeds whatsoever since this body of mine was born. Through these words of truth, may my arms and legs thus be attached to this man in the appropriate places. May his body be restored to its original state.’
- 1.106 “As soon as he said this, Prince Puṇyabala’s severed limbs were attached to the man’s body in the appropriate places. The man’s body was thereby restored to its original state, his wounds were all healed, and there were not even any visible scars. When Prince Puṇyabala observed that the man’s body had been restored to its original state, his mind filled with joy. He thought, ‘Now that my intention has been fulfilled, the pain I have undergone has yielded fruit. My wish has been fulfilled!’

- 1.107 “ ‘Moreover, after restoring him with my own blood and lengthening his limbs with my own limbs, by invoking truth, his body has become just as it was previously, and his precious life has been given back to him. In the same way, through these same virtuous roots, after I have attained unsurpassed and perfect awakening, may I satiate this man with the nectar of the supreme Buddhadharma. May I place him in the everlasting ultimate, the attainment and security³² of nirvāṇa.’
- 1.108 “At that moment, the earth shook in six different ways. The palaces of the great lords were thoroughly rocked by the tremors. This made Śakra, the lord of the gods, wonder, ‘Who is causing the earth to shake?’ He had witnessed Prince Puṇyabala’s performance of these extremely difficult tasks. Seeing this, he was astonished. He developed conviction, and thought, ‘I will find out why this great being performed these extremely difficult tasks.’ Thereupon, Śakra, lord of the gods, descended from his abode in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three and emanated himself as a brahmin. He approached Prince Puṇyabala and [F.12.b] asked, ‘Puṇyabala, why did you deprive yourself of your arms and legs?’
- 1.109 “Prince Puṇyabala did not recognize him. He answered this question at length: ‘Friend, I suffer when others suffer. I am overjoyed when others are happy. Therefore, when I saw this person distraught and in unbearable pain, I wished that his suffering would be experienced by me instead of him. Having given away my own arms and legs, inspired by truth, I restored this man’s body to its previous state.’ [B2]
- 1.110 “At this, Śakra, the lord of the gods, became utterly amazed. He caused his brahmin body to disappear and stood there in his true form. He said to Prince Puṇyabala, ‘O Prince, when you were deciding to give away your own arms and legs—and when you did give them away—did you consider changing your mind or have a moment of regret?’
- 1.111 “ ‘Kauśika,’ Prince Puṇyabala responded, ‘when I was deciding to give away my own arms and legs and when I did give them away, I did not consider changing my mind, nor did I have a moment of regret.’
- 1.112 “ ‘How can I verify this?’ asked Śakra.
 “Prince Puṇyabala replied, ‘In this case, Kauśika, I will demonstrate the words of truth, so listen!’ Prince Puṇyabala proceeded to apply the attitude of loving-kindness that extended to all sentient beings. Gazing in the four directions, he uttered this verse inspired by truth:
- 1.113 “ ‘If, when I severed my arms and legs today,
 I had no regrets,
 Then by my words of truth,
 May my body become just as it was before.’

- 1.114 “As soon as he uttered this verse, the great being’s body immediately reverted to its previous state. Divine flowers rained down [F.13.a] from the sky. The sounds of divine music resounded. A gentle, fresh breeze began to blow.
- 1.115 “Śakra, the lord of the gods, was astounded by this merit. It inspired faith in gods and humans. At that time, in amazement at having witnessed for himself the copious fruits of ripened merit, faith arose in his mindstream. He asked Prince Puṇyabala, ‘O Prince, what do you wish to accomplish through this effort?’
- 1.116 “Puṇyabala responded, ‘Kauśika, I wish that through this effort, after attaining unsurpassed and perfect awakening, I may extricate all sentient beings from the ocean of saṃsāra. I aspire to establish them in the everlasting ultimate, the attainment and security of nirvāṇa.’
- 1.117 “When Śakra, the lord of the gods, realized that Prince Puṇyabala’s intent to attain unsurpassed and perfect awakening was as immovable as Mount Sumeru, he was pleased and said, ‘Well done, well done, great being! Your aspiration is vast! Your perseverance cannot be shaken! Because of this perseverance, it will not be long before you awaken to perfect buddhahood—the unsurpassed and perfect awakening.’ After Śakra, the lord of the gods, praised Prince Puṇyabala, he disappeared. And having fulfilled his aspirations, Prince Puṇyabala returned home.
- 1.118 “Later, the king from that town passed away, but he left no son. So his retinue of queens, the grooms, the ministers, the people from the city, and the people from the countryside all gathered. They deliberated, ‘Alas! We must enthrone a king!’ At this point, one of them said, ‘Let us enthrone as king someone who is greatly renowned for merit.’ Then together they exclaimed, ‘Let it be so!’ They all agreed, and thus took up the search for a suitable person to be king, one greatly renowned for merit. [F.13.b] They dispatched scouts in all directions.
- 1.119 “Meanwhile, motivated by the previous virtuous roots that would enable him to become king at that time, Prince Puṇyabala, together with his close friends, had journeyed to a pleasure garden on the outskirts of the city. Upon their arrival, several auspicious omens appeared: A rain shower fell from the sky onto his head. Brightly colored birds circled clockwise. Young boys and girls proclaimed words of victory, standing there with high spirits and happy thoughts. The prince was so overjoyed that all the hairs on his body stood on end. The ground became free from any rocks, gravel, and pebbles. His body also became very light. He heard joyous and pleasing sounds.
- 1.120 “Prince Puṇyabala was an expert in prognostication, and he thought, ‘These omens that appear to me now indicate without doubt that I will be enthroned as a great king!’ Then he entered the groves at the perimeter of

the pleasure garden. Experiencing joy among the groves of the pleasure garden, he went to sleep under an aśoka tree that was heavy with blossoming flowers. His friends wandered around in the pleasure garden, utterly enthralled with its flowers and fruits. While they enjoyed the pleasure garden, the power of Prince Puṇyabala's merit inspired the nāgas to cause an incredibly magnificent, fragrant-smelling, beautifully colored, joy-giving, thousand-petaled, divine lotus to blossom from the ground. This great lotus gradually and slowly lifted Prince Puṇyabala as he lay there; but due to a magical blessing, he did not awake. After the time of the midday meal, the shadows of the other trees extended toward³³ the east and descended toward the east. But even as the other shadows descended toward the east, the shadow of the aśoka tree did not leave Prince Puṇyabala's body.

1.121 "All the flowers and fruit trees in the park [F.14.a] inclined toward the aśoka tree, and each of them bowed. Deer and birds delightful to behold³⁴ engaged in auspicious activities; after circumambulating him in a gentle manner, they came to rest. Meanwhile, in his sleep, Prince Puṇyabala was still deep in dreams. He dreamed that he was sitting atop a massive heap of filth. Then he dreamed that he was deep in the filth. He dreamed that he licked the sky. He dreamed that he sat atop a lotus. He dreamed that he ascended to the summit of a mountain. He dreamed that a large crowd of people prostrated before him.

1.122 "At about the same time, some of the people sent out to search for a king by the townsfolk, ministers, and people from the countryside arrived in that area, accompanied by various other people. When they witnessed Prince Puṇyabala's godlike wealth, they became amazed. They concluded, 'This being must be one who is greatly renowned for his merit.' They hastened directly to the townsfolk, ministers, and people from the countryside and described this in detail.

1.123 "At that moment, Prince Puṇyabala awoke. Because he was an expert in interpreting dreams, this thought entered his mind regarding the interpretation of those dreams: 'The dream in which I was sitting atop a massive heap of filth is an omen that I will be installed as the sovereign of a great kingdom. The dream in which I was deep in filth is an omen that I will sit upon a great lion throne. The dream in which I ascended to the summit of a mountain is an omen that I will rise above everyone. The dream in which a large crowd of people prostrated before me is an omen that large crowds of people will venerate me. Since I had such dreams and witnessed such omens, it is certain that I will become king this very day.' [F.14.b]

1.124 "When they heard the report from the search party, the townsfolk, ministers, and people from the countryside grew excited. All together they proceeded to the pleasure garden carrying the implements needed for a

royal coronation. A short time later, they too witnessed the prince's divine wealth, and were deeply astonished when they beheld it. When Prince Puṇyabala noticed them, he was sitting cross-legged on the divine giant lotus. Inspired by Prince Puṇyabala's merit, the Four Great Kings offered him a divine lion throne fit for a great being. Śakra, the lord of the gods, offered him a white umbrella and a yak-tail fan with a jeweled handle. The gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three spread out divine canopies decorated with various precious gems. The gods who live in the air and the sky rained down myriad divine flowers. The gods in the Four Great Kings' realm showered down precious gems, played divine music, and scattered garments.

1.125 "The royal palace precincts, the pleasure garden, and the forest were all beautified. Rocks, gravel, and pebbles were removed. Victory banners and pennants were hoisted. Tasseled flags were strung out everywhere. Censers of fragrant incense were hung. Various sorts of flowers were scattered. Everything was decked out like a divine realm. At Śakra's request, the god Viśvakarma emanated a divine multistoried mansion for Prince Puṇyabala's enjoyment in that pleasure garden. It was created from four kinds of precious substances and endowed with myriad features.

1.126 "When the townsfolk, ministers, city dwellers, and people from the countryside beheld all this divine opulence, they were astounded. With great respect and with no hesitation, they entreated Prince Puṇyabala to be seated on the divine lion throne. With utmost veneration, he was then crowned as their sovereign.

1.127 "Monks, immediately after the coronation, [F.15.a] light rays that outshone even the sun's corona radiated from Prince Puṇyabala's body. These divine rays pervaded space for a league directly around him. From then on, he was no longer called Prince Puṇyabala; his name was changed to King Avabhāsakara.³⁵ Since then, he has been known to some as King Puṇyabala, while others know him as King Avabhāsakara.

1.128 "After this, King Puṇyabala took his wealth, the wealth of gods and humans, and proceeded to the royal palace, where he was properly attended by Śakra and the other gods. From then on, King Puṇyabala reigned in the royal palace. The kingdom now possessed riches, a vast territory, happiness, good harvests, and a sizable population. Arguments and disputes were settled. Fighting, infighting, thieves, diseases, and hunger all disappeared. The kingdom was replete with wild rice, sugarcane, cattle, and buffaloes. He treated everyone like his own son and governed the kingdom in accordance with the Dharma. Flower and fruit trees were always abundant. The gods sent down showers of timely rains, and this produced excellent crops.

- 1.129 “Soon thereafter, his brothers heard the story of the coronation. Upon hearing it, they were amazed and said to each other, ‘So Puṇyabala has defeated us both in his pledge, as well as in power and wealth. Why? Because through his merit, he has become the great sovereign master of a kingdom. Come, before he makes inquiries after us; let us all go and gratify King Puṇyabala!’
- 1.130 “They set out for King Puṇyabala’s residence. Upon arriving they said, ‘May King Puṇyabala reign! May he have a long life!’ Then they sat down together. [F.15.b] While sitting together, they said to King Puṇyabala, ‘Well done, O Lord! Well done! You have been steadfast in your pledge. You have defeated us both in your pledge, as well as in power. Why? Because due to your merit, you have accomplished your objectives. You have become the sovereign master of a great kingdom.’
- 1.131 “Humbly, King Puṇyabala rose promptly from his lion throne and showed his brothers respect by seating them on seats fit for nobles. The brothers returned his respects, and then he sat back on the lion throne. From his throne, he delighted them by telling stories about their past, thus putting them at ease. After honoring them with great respect, he gave them all a considerable share of his wealth.
- 1.132 “Later, wishing to establish his brothers and the populace in merit-making, he addressed a large gathering:
- 1.133 “ ‘Lack of merit causes unbearable suffering to multiply,
And one is reborn in hell.
Those without merit will go
To the unbearable and forsaken animal destinies.
- 1.134 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will be reborn
As pretas who are tormented by hunger and thirst.
Due to lack of merit, they will become
Slaves who suffer deeply and endlessly.
- 1.135 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will become mute.
Due to lack of merit, they will become deaf.
Due to lack of merit, they will become dull,
Intellectually unstable, and mentally unsound.
- 1.136 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will have wrong understanding.
They will also become ugly.
Lack of merit causes beings to be born in the lowest castes,
Among those who are despised by the entire world.
- 1.137 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will become deluded

- And hated by the world.
Due to lack of merit, they will become insane.
Due to lack of merit, enemies will appear.
- 1.138 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, despite striving for all their goals, [F.16.a]
Their efforts will be wasted.
Likewise, due to lack of merit,
Their bodies will become rough and cracked.
- 1.139 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will always
Lack splendor and radiance.
Due to lack of merit, even insentient things
Will become their enemies.
- 1.140 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will be killed swiftly
By pretas, mahoragas, or demons.
Due to lack of merit, beneficial medicine
Will cause them tremendous harm.
- 1.141 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will become poor.
Due to lack of merit, they will be despised.
Due to lack of merit,
People will disparage them viciously.
- 1.142 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will always
Be separated from their group.
Due to lack of merit, they will lose their eyes.
Due to lack of merit, they will be habituated to suffering.
- 1.143 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will incur many illnesses,
And lack of merit makes it difficult to recover.
Due to lack of merit, they will have unsightly bodies.
Due to lack of merit, they will have unpleasant voices.
- 1.144 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will have missing fingers,
Crippled³⁶ legs, and ineffective words.
Due to lack of merit,
Kings, thieves, and fires will destroy their wealth.
- 1.145 “ ‘Due to lack of merit, they will hear unpleasant things.
Due to lack of merit, they will always be fearful.
Due to lack of merit, when they travel
The ground will be covered in stumps and thorns.
- 1.146 “ ‘If they are people who desire wealth,

- Whether as workers or merchants,
Due to lack of merit, they will always squander their time,
And will never become wealthy.
- 1.147 “ ‘Anything and everything in the world
That is unhappy, unpleasant, and unbeneficial,
And likewise all their downfalls—
All these things are due to lack of merit.
- 1.148 “ ‘Merit, on the other hand, will protect you.
Merit will make you diligent.
Merit wards off heat and cold.
Merit prevents untimely rains.
- 1.149 “ ‘Merit is like a wish-fulfilling cow.
Merit yields wish-fulfilling jewels.
Merit yields wish-fulfilling trees,
Whose fruits all ripen as you wish. [F.16.b]
- 1.150 “ ‘Through merit you will receive praise.³⁷
Merit makes you stunningly attractive.
Merit makes you trustworthy.
Those who have merit are born in high castes.
- 1.151 “ ‘Through merit you will become famous.
Through merit you will become learned.
Merit bestows extensive delights.
Through merit you will retain what you learn.
- 1.152 “ ‘Because one dies without illness due to merit,
Merit defeats the Lord of Death.
Those who may greatly fear the Lord of Death
Should have no fear because of their merit.
- 1.153 “ ‘The gods who live in celestial mansions
Also live in divine joy because of merit.
Because of merit, you can become a god in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three.
Similarly, because of merit you can become a god in the Heaven Free from
Strife.
- 1.154 “ ‘Because of merit, you become a supreme god in the Heaven of Joy.
The same is true for the Heaven of Delighting in Emanations.
Because of merit, you will become a Lord of the Desire Realm.

Similarly, you become a god in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’
Emanations.

- 1.155 “ ‘Merit can also make you a great Brahmā,
Who is respected by ten million gods.
You could wield sovereign power
Over Brahmā’s thousand worlds.
- 1.156 “ ‘Because of merit, you will get whatever you wish,
Always secure in good fortune.
Merit even enables you
To control insentient objects.’
- 1.157 “When King Puṇyabala declared these delightful words that are the
appropriate teaching for this and future lives, the crowd entrusted
themselves to merit. Then, so that even more in the crowd might cherish
merit to a greater degree, King Puṇyabala gazed at the sky, and having
given rise to the aspiration to inspire more people, said, ‘Well now, wouldn’t
it be wonderful if a shower of various precious divine jewels and garments
were to rain down on my inner and outer courts!’
- 1.158 Monks, as soon as King Puṇyabala voiced this aspiration, a stream of
various types of divine garments fit for nobles rained down from the sky.
After that, a stream of beautiful divine [F.17.a] flowers rained down. After
that, a stream of divine jewels rained down, resounding loudly, and the
entire royal palace and its environs were covered with various precious
jewels. When the whole crowd witnessed this wondrous display of merit,
which made gods and humans rejoice, they were amazed. They all came to
cherish merit. Overjoyed, they exclaimed, ‘Ah! Lord Puṇyabala’s merit is
indeed great!’
- 1.159 “Soon thereafter, during a conversation, the kings of the Western
Continent heard of this, and they were very impressed. Saying, ‘This great
being is very famous because of his merit; he must be worthy of veneration,’
they all assembled. After mustering four divisions of troops—an elephant
division, a cavalry division, a chariot division, and an infantry division—they
all went to pay their respects to King Puṇyabala.
- 1.160 “They descended from their mounts, touched King Puṇyabala’s feet,
pressed their hands together, and said, ‘Lord, you are very famous for the
power of your merit. We beseech you to be our king, and we beg to become
your servants.’ Then, having thoroughly satisfied them by giving them
precious jewels suitable for great beings, King Puṇyabala set them and their
retinues on the path of the ten virtues. He then dispatched them to their
respective lands.

- 1.161 “Eventually his father, King Bright Power, heard of these events. As soon as he heard of them, he promptly sent messengers, and very soon thereafter he himself set off with a vast contingent. When he arrived in the vicinity to pay his respects to King Puṇyabala, he swooned with longing for his cherished son. His eyes welled up, he was choked with tears, and he wept profusely. Dismounting from his elephant with tears in his eyes, [F.17.b] he embraced King Puṇyabala around the neck without hesitation. Holding his head, he examined him for a long time and then said, ‘Young son, please understand what I say to you now. I have grown old and decrepit. Because I am no longer able to bear the burden of ruling the kingdom, you must shoulder the burden of sovereignty.’ As he said this, King Bright Power offered the crown, diadem, and tiara from his own head.
- 1.162 “In this way, by degrees, King Puṇyabala came to have dominion over the sovereigns of all the kingdoms of Jambudvīpa. After satisfying all the many beings who resided in Jambudvīpa with whatever they desired of gold and silver, he set them on the path of the ten virtues. During this time, no one in Jambudvīpa was poor or sick. All the people of Jambudvīpa were happy. They were free from diseases and endowed with strength. They had prodigious faculties. They were wealthy and had vast resources. They came to acquire great stores of wealth, many possessions, multitudes of riches, grains, gold, silver, storehouses, and treasuries. All Jambudvīpa possessed riches, prosperity, happiness, and good harvests, and was filled with many animals and people. Quarrels and fights were quelled, and there was freedom from fighting, infighting, thievery, disease, and famine. Wild rice, sugarcane, cattle, and buffaloes were all plentiful. There were no thorns, rocks, gravel, or pebbles. Flowering and fruiting trees were continuously in bloom. The gods sent down showers of timely rains, and the fields yielded excellent crops.
- 1.163 “At this time, the entire populace was delighted and entrusted themselves to merit. They continuously performed acts of charity and merit. They maintained one-day precepts and maintained discipline after taking it on. During this time, those who passed on from being humans in Jambudvīpa—everyone separated from their bodies—were [F.18.a] born among the gods. Most of them were born among the gods of the Heaven of the Four Great Kings. After enabling countless beings to achieve their objectives in this life and the next, when King Puṇyabala and many thousands of others in his retinue died, they were born in the Heaven of Joy.
- 1.164 “Monks, do not think that King Puṇyabala at that time was anyone other than me. I am the one who became a bodhisattva at that time. King Puṇyabala’s father, King Bright Power, is now none other than King Śuddhodana; King Śuddhodana was King Bright Power at that time. Queen

Vibhūṣitā is now none other than Queen Mahāmāyādevī.³⁸ The good-looking prince is now none other than my aunt's son, the monk Nanda. The diligent one is now none other than the monk Śroṇakoṭṭivimṣa. The artistic one is now none other than the monk Aniruddha. The wise one is now none other than the monk Śāriputra. Śakra, the lord of the gods, is now none other than the monk Maudgalyāyana. The king who died before Puṇyabala succeeded him is now none other than the evil one, Māra. The poor man in whose house Puṇyabala stayed is now none other than the monk Rāhula. The man whose limbs were amputated by a king—who was restored by Prince Puṇyabala's own blood, whose limbs were lengthened by his own limbs, and whose body was restored to its previous state by his words of inspiration by words of truth—is now none other than the monk Kauṇḍinya. He was the man who at that time offered his medical expertise to a king.

1.165 “Therefore, monks, you should understand that merit, called by that very name, is the most valuable quality of all sentient beings for all times and in all respects. [F.18.b] Monks, this is why I have declared, ‘I have never observed anything that is a more valuable quality of sentient beings than merit.’ ”

1.166 After he had spoken, some monks had doubts. They asked the Blessed One, the Buddha, the one who dispels doubts, “Honorable One, through the ripening of what sort of karma did King Puṇyabala come to be renowned as a great and powerful king? And why did the gods and humans bestow kingship on him? Why did everything he thought of and wished for drop from the sky when he merely wished it? Why did the earth shake as this occurred? And why did it rain knee-high divine jewels? Why was he placed on a divine lion throne? Why did Śakra, the lord of the gods, hold in his own hands fine fabrics and a divine umbrella for him? Why did inexhaustible treasures appear?”

1.167 “Monks,” the Blessed One replied, “it was because King Puṇyabala had gathered the provisions and had set up the conditions. He had performed and accumulated these karmic deeds that bring inevitable results³⁹ that come about like waves. Therefore, monks, do you think that anyone other than Puṇyabala—who himself had performed and accumulated such deeds—would experience them?”

1.168 “Monks, actions that are performed and accumulated do not ripen upon the external earth element, or the water element, or the fire element, or the wind element. The virtuous and nonvirtuous actions that are performed and accumulated will only ripen upon the appropriated aggregates, constituents, and sense bases.

1.169 “The karmic deeds of embodied beings
Are never wasted, not even in a hundred eons.

When they are accumulated and the time arrives,
Their fruits will ripen automatically.

1.170 “Monks, once upon a time the blessed Buddha Aparājita was born in the world. He was a teacher, a thus-gone one, a worthy one, a perfect buddha, someone endowed with perfect knowledge and conduct, [F.19.a] a well-gone one, a knower of the world, an unsurpassed guide and tamer of beings, a teacher of gods and humans. Sometime later, after performing all his buddha activities, this perfect Buddha Aparājita attained complete nirvāṇa. This was the nirvāṇa without remaining aggregates, which is just like a fire at a king’s palace that has burned out and been extinguished. After the king constructed a stūpa for his relics, periodic celebrations were held. Later, when a celebration was held for the stūpa, a log drum was beaten, kettledrums were beaten, and a conch shell was blown. Later, in the afternoon light, a monk sat in the middle of the crowd and taught the Dharma to hundreds of thousands of living beings.

1.171 “During this period, among the king’s court was a man named Dyūtajaya, who was deeply addicted to gambling. His wife was named Vijayā, and his son was named Vijaya. One day Dyūtajaya lost all his possessions—everything inside and outside his house—to a wager. All that was left were the clothes he wore, an umbrella, his sandals, and five paṇa of cowrie shells. After everything he owned had been lost, he was tormented by unbearable worry and stress.

1.172 “He said, ‘Alas! It is terribly unfortunate that I have not created merit and am now utterly destitute!’ Exhaling a long, deep, strong breath, he put on his two sandals. With his five paṇa and his umbrella, he left the gambling den. Eventually, he arrived at a place where people were listening to the Dharma. When he saw so many people listening to the Dharma with folded hands, he was very pleased. He thought, ‘Just for a while, let me see what kind of Dharma instruction this is.’ To listen to the Dharma, he put his umbrella to one side and sat down. Removing his sandals, he listened with folded hands. [F.19.b] After a while, the Dharma preacher uttered the following verse:

1.173 “ ‘If beings accumulate merit, they will be happy.
Therefore, humans should perform meritorious deeds.
Moreover, they should perform them again and again.
They should aspire for this alone.’

1.174 “Upon hearing this verse, he thought, ‘It is indeed true that the accumulation of merit leads to happiness! Why? It is only my past actions that have led to my present unbearable suffering. Certainly, this is because I did not gather merit in the past. I must perform a few meritorious deeds!’

1.175 “Having considered things in this way, he thought of his remaining possessions. He saw that nothing remained aside from the clothing he was wearing, the umbrella, the pair of sandals, and the five paṇa of cowrie shells, and that he had lost everything else gambling. He then thought, ‘If I offer my five paṇa of cowrie shells and my upper garment, I may die of hunger. But if I do not offer them, I will certainly enter the next life without merit, and there I will again experience the suffering of poverty. If only there were some way to neither starve to death nor exhaust my merit!’ He thought further, ‘But I would rather die of hunger than enter the next world without merit. Therefore, I must offer my five paṇa of cowrie shells and my upper garment.’

1.176 “While he was thinking this, the Dharma preacher uttered another verse:

1.177 “ ‘If you engage in merit only slowly,
You will actually be delighting in wrongdoing.
So you should be virtuous quickly,
To turn your mind away from wrongdoing.’

1.178 “When he heard this verse, Dyūtajaya thought, ‘He said, “Perform merit quickly!” I should make an offering immediately!’ Thus it happened that this gambler, wretched due to poverty but with strong devotion, approached the Dharma preacher’s lion throne and held his umbrella over his head. [F.20.a] Then he left his sandals near the Dharma preacher’s feet, scattered his five paṇa of cowrie shells before the Dharma preacher’s feet, removed the upper garment from his body, and used it to cover the Dharma preacher’s feet. All his bodily hair stood on end, and he developed faith. Touching the teacher’s feet, he established a powerful aspiration of faith: ‘Due to these virtuous roots, the mind of awakening, and this offering for the sake of the Dharma, from this time onward may I never be poor. May I be greatly renowned for my merit in all my lives. May gods and humans make me king. May all the things I wish for be provided from the sky. May many miracles and wonders appear when I am reborn. May inexhaustible treasuries with many precious jewels and various precious gems appear wherever I am.’

1.179 “As he made these aspirations, the Dharma preacher made dedications for him in his prayers, and the entire assembly departed. Reflecting on the offering he had made for the Dharma, Dyūtajaya returned home wearing one piece of cloth. Seeing him, his wife and son thought, ‘He must have lost even⁴⁰ his upper garment while gambling somewhere.’ They were infuriated and said, ‘The only things you have left to lose are the two of us. You now intend to wager us! Go away!’

1.180 “Feeling ashamed, he thought, ‘It is due to the fault of poverty that I am humiliated in this way.’ He then uttered the following verse:

- 1.181 “ ‘Such suffering is the suffering of poverty!
How acute a suffering it is to be poor!
Being poor is the same as dying.
I would rather die than be poor.’
- 1.182 “After saying this, he exhaled a long, deep, strong breath and sat silently.
“In the courtyard of their house, there was a well. His wife tried to draw water from it with a pot and a rope. [F.20.b] But even after trying for a while, she could not pull up the water. After a while, still unable to raise it, she said to Dyūtajaya, ‘Master,⁴¹ I am unable to pull up this pot. Please come and have a look.’
- 1.183 “Dyūtajaya also tried to pull it up. After he proved unable to pull it up, the two of them called their son. Then the three of them together—with a great effort that tore their skin and flesh—were suddenly successful. After some time they noticed that in the bottom of the pot, weighing it down, were five pairs of copper vessels filled with gold and silver. At the moment when Dyūtajaya witnessed the wondrous fruits of giving that had ripened in that very life, his eyes widened with astonishment. With a joyous heart, he sang the following verse:
- 1.184 “ ‘Ah! On the faultless field,
Naturally replete with good qualities,
I sowed seeds moments ago;
And already the fruits have ripened!’
- 1.185 “At this, his wife’s eyes also grew wide with astonishment. She said, ‘Master, what were you thinking when you said that?’ He replied by relating what had happened in detail. After witnessing the wondrous ripening of the supremely pleasing fruits of meritorious actions in the present life, she too was amazed.
- 1.186 “The news was passed on from one person to another until it reached the king’s palace. When the populace heard, people were astonished; and in astonishment they said,⁴² ‘Ah! How wondrous! Ah! Such is the greatness of merit!’
- 1.187 “At this point, having directly witnessed the fruits of merit, upon suddenly becoming rich and acquiring great wealth due to fervent faith in the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, he ardently venerated them. Every day he made vast offerings to the Buddha’s stūpas, listened to the Dharma, and, with excellent food, satisfied the monks who had been appointed by the Saṅgha. Using his wealth, he also fulfilled the wishes of ascetics, brahmins, the poor, the sick, and beggars from elsewhere. [F.21.a] He made an offering

of a grand temple replete with all facilities. After presenting it to the monks of the Saṅgha of the four directions, his fame spread to all the members of the royal court.

1.188 “Sometime later, the king passed away, and the royal court had no heir to the throne. The townsfolk and ministers were aware that Dyūtajaya was renowned for his great merit and made him their king. Since then, people started calling him King Jaya⁴³ (“Winner”) instead of his old name, Dyūtajaya. Having witnessed the supremely pleasing fruits of ripened merit in his very lifetime, King Jaya developed conviction, and he entrusted himself mainly to merit. He continually made offerings and engaged in meritorious acts. He took up discipline and maintained it. He also urged the queen’s court, the ministers, the townsfolk, people from the countryside, and other groups to perform meritorious deeds.

1.189 “Later still, after King Jaya inevitably died, he was reborn alongside the gods of the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations. He was reborn as the son of its king, Vaśavartin. When he was born, a rain of great divine jewels and a rain of resplendent fabric descended from the sky. Light from his body illuminated all Vaśavartin’s palaces. This radiance was so bright that it outshone the radiance of the other gods in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations. Having witnessed the wondrous ripening of the fruits of merit for themselves, the other gods of the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations were utterly amazed.

1.190 “Monks, do not think that the gambler who became a king at that place and time was someone else. Dyūtajaya, that very same person, later became King Puṇyabala. [F.21.b] After hearing the Dharma, because his mind developed faith, this person offered the Dharma preacher his umbrella, sandals, upper garment, and five paṇa of cowrie shells. The results of these karmic deeds were that five lots of treasure appeared, and he was crowned as a king with dominion over his realm in that very lifetime. The ripening of that karma also led him to become the king of Tuṣita thirty-six times, king of the Heaven Free from Strife thirty-six times, king of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three thirty-six times, and king of the Heaven of the Four Great Kings thirty-six times. Many hundreds of times he was a universal monarch, victorious in the four directions, a Dharma king who lived by the Dharma and possessed a universal monarch’s seven precious possessions. The seven possessions are the precious wheel, the precious elephant, the precious horse, the precious jewel, the precious woman, the precious householder, and the precious minister as the seventh. He had one thousand sons, and they were all brave, courageous, handsome, and able to subdue the armies of others. Consequently, he extended his rule⁴⁴ over this great world to the shores of the ocean, without causing any harm, without violence, without

any interruptions, without coercion, and without recourse to warfare, in accordance with the Dharma. Due to his fairness, he was able to remain at ease.”

- 1.191 Then the Blessed One uttered these verses:
- 1.192 “This is the cause by which one becomes
A ruler of great beings.
The buddhas, who wish to help
Those in the world, speak in this way. [F.22.a]
- 1.193 “Upon hearing of these vast miracles
And wonders,
Who would not become devout,
Whether they were born into a family of sages or miscreants?
- 1.194 “Therefore, those who want the best for themselves, and
Who wish to become great beings in this life,
Should be mindful of the Buddha’s teachings
And regard the supreme Dharma as preeminent.
- 1.195 “Therefore, monks, you should venerate the supreme Dharma. Take it to be preeminent. Honor it. Worship it. You must train in this way. Yes,⁴⁵ monks, you should venerate the supreme Dharma. Take it to be preeminent. Honor it. Worship it. You must train upon it in this way.”
- 1.196 When the Blessed One spoke these words, the monks rejoiced and praised his words effusively.
- 1.197 *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala is complete.*

c.

Colophon

c.1 This work was translated and finalized by the Indian preceptor Jinamitra and the great editor and translator, Bandé Devacandra.

NOTES

n.

- n.1 Jātakas typically relate stories from the Buddha's past lives, in which the Buddha is either the protagonist of the story or a witness to other events. See Appleton 2010, pp. 3–6; and Rothenberg 1990, 4–5.
- n.2 See Ohnuma 2007, p. 42.
- n.3 For an English translation, see Jones 1956, vol. 3, pp. 31–39. For an edited Sanskrit version, see Marciniak 2019, vol. 3, pp. 42–48
- n.4 See Sieg and Siegling 1921 and Lane 1947.
- n.5 We were unable to consult any original version of this text or its Russian translation in Oldenburg 1894, but Sieg and Siegling 1921 (p. 2, n. 1) note that the version they consulted contains only a versified version of the *Mahāvastu* story.
- n.6 See Lane 1947, p. 33.
- n.7 The figure of Nanda in this text alludes to the Buddha's cousin Nanda, or Sundarananda ("Handsome Nanda"), who is famed for his good looks in Buddhist literature, a notable example being *Good-Looking Nanda* (*Saundarananda*) by the philosopher-poet Aśvaghoṣa (c. 80–150 CE).
- n.8 This may allude to an eponymous avadāna in which the monk Śroṇakoṭṭivimṣā (Pāli: *Soṇa Koṭṭivisa*) perseveres in pursuing his goals despite numerous obstacles.
- n.9 Germano 2000, p. 251.
- n.10 Denkarma, 300.b.7. See also Herrmann-Pfandt 2008, 155–56, no. 283.
- n.11 福力太子因緣經 *Fuli taizi yinyuan jing*, Taishō 173.

- n.12 We are grateful to Laurence Zhou for making a brief comparison of the content of the Tibetan and Chinese texts.
- n.13 Kano 2015, p. 99.
- n.14 The Stok Palace, Narthang, and Lhasa editions read *min* (“un-”), while the Degé edition reads *byin* (“give”). Our translation follows the former reading.
- n.15 The Degé edition reads *bdag* (“self”), in contrast to Narthang and Lhasa, which read *dag* (the plural marker). This translation follows the latter, which appears more in line with the context.
- n.16 The Peking, Yongle, Lithang, and Peking Kangxi editions read *bde* (“happiness”) while the Degé reads *der* (“there”). This translation follows the former.
- n.17 There is a spelling discrepancy between the Degé edition and the other versions. In contrast to Degé’s *dpen pa* (“vital,” “useful,” “necessary,” “essential”), the other editions have *dben pa* (“devoid of”). This translation follows the former. Tib. *dpen pa* is an old term, which, in this context, means the same as its synonyms *mkho ba*, *yid du ’ong ba*, and *phang*. In its numerous occurrences in this text, the term occurs in the unusual compound *nyams su dpen pa* (not found elsewhere in the Kangyur or Tengyur), which seems to refer to things one wishes or values as important.
- n.18 The Peking, Kangxi, and Choné editions read *bzod pa* (“patience”); this translation, however, follows the Degé edition and Stok Palace editions, reading *bzo*.
- n.19 Apart from the Degé edition, which reads *dge* (“virtue”), all the other editions consulted read *dag* (the plural marker). We have followed the latter reading, which accords with the reading in a parallel phrase earlier in the Degé edition itself.
- n.20 Tib. *sems can phan tshun khong ba rnams*, literally, “animals who [usually] hold mutual animosity.”
- n.21 Tib. *mchu*, literally “lips.”
- n.22 This part of the aspiration is crucial, because the negative karma of pretas colors their perceptions and causes them to see water as pus and blood, and food as a disgusting substance like vomit.
- n.23 The Degé edition reads *de nas* (“and then”), but we have instead translated following the Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions which read *de dag*

("they").

- n.24 The Degé edition reads *glod* ("release"), and the Narthang, Peking Yongle, and Peking Kangxi editions read *blod* ("chew"!)). We have instead followed the reading from the Stok Palace edition which reads *blon* ("counsel," "advise") and understand it to refer to discussion.
- n.25 The text here (and hereafter) refers to this prince as *gzugs dang ldan pa* (Skt. *Rūpavan*) rather than his proper name *gzugs stobs* (Skt. *Rūpabala*). We have taken this as a descriptor rather than a proper name and translated the references to the brothers accordingly.
- n.26 The Degé edition reads *byis pa skye bo* ("childish beings"), but we have followed the reading from the Stok Palace edition, which reads *byis pa so so'i skye bo* ("childish ordinary beings").
- n.27 The Degé edition here reads *'dzem pa* ("to avoid"), whereas the Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions read *mdzes pa* ("beauty," "beautiful"). In the translation we have followed the latter.
- n.28 The grammar in this paragraph up to this point is unclear and the translation is therefore tentative.
- n.29 The Degé edition reads *mthong nas 'jigs pas*, but we have followed the Stok Palace reading of *mthong na 'jigs pa*, which allows us to read this phrase ("terrifying even to look at") as a modifier for the river. Both the Narthang and Lhasa editions also agree with the Stok Palace in reading *'jigs pa* instead of *'jigs pas*.
- n.30 The Degé reads *dge slong de dag* ("those monks") but this translation follows the Narthang, Lhasa, Urga, and Stok Palace editions which read *dge slong dag* ("Monks...").
- n.31 The Degé edition reads *jo co* (sic!); we have followed the Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions which read *jo bo* ("lord").
- n.32 The Tibetan term *grub pa dang bde ba* (abbrev. *grub bde*) translates the Sanskrit *yogaḥṣema*, which signifies the secure possession of what has been acquired. It is generally explained as a coordinative (Skt. *dvandva*) compound denoting the "acquisition (Skt. *yoga*) and preservation (Skt. *ḥṣema*) of property."
- n.33 The Degé edition reads *gzhol* ("remained"), but we have followed the reading in the Narthang, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions, which read *yol* ("passed").

- n.34 The Degé reads *mthong na yid du 'ong zhing* (“delightful to behold, and”), but this translation follows the Yongle, Lithang, Kangxi, and Choné editions, which read *mthong na yid du 'ong ba* (“delightful to behold”), giving a more grammatical reading.
- n.35 The Degé edition obviously made a typo here by repeating the epithet *rgyal po snang byed* twice. In this translation, we have followed the Narthang and Lhasa editions, which only give the name a single time.
- n.36 Apart from the Degé edition, which reads *thang po*, all the other versions read *theng po* or *'theng po*, both of which mean crippled leg(s). Considering its present context, this translation follows the majority.
- n.37 In contrast to the Degé edition, which reads *bsod pa* (“taking delight”), the Peking Kangxi edition reads *bstod pa* (“praise”). As the latter makes the most sense grammatically, we have followed it.
- n.38 “Queen” is added here for the sake of clarification.
- n.39 The term “results” is added for context to clarify the intended meaning of the adjective *gdon mi za bar* (Skt. *avaśyam*, “inevitable”) with respect to karma.
- n.40 The Degé edition reads *dang* here, but we have followed the Peking Yongle, Lithang, Peking Kangxi, Narthang, Choné, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions, which read *kyang*.
- n.41 The Tibetan term *jo bo* is usually translated as “master” or “lord.” Here it is probably a translation of the Sanskrit term *svāmin*, which means “lord,” “master,” and “husband.” Her addressing him in this way (even after he squandered all the family’s possessions while gambling) reflects the sort of deference expected of an Indian wife toward her husband, in literature at least.
- n.42 The Degé edition has *'dzin* (“considered”), but according to the Lithang, Choné, Lhasa, and Stok Palace editions, it is *'dzer*, which is an old way of writing *zer* (“said”). This translation follows the latter.
- n.43 The Degé edition duplicates this name. We have followed the Narthang and Stok Palace editions, which only give the name once.
- n.44 Literally “touched”; this probably refers to the tradition of a “tour of conquest” (Skt. *dig-vijaya*), in which a great king would establish dominion over surrounding areas by traveling to the four quarters. Wherever he was able to roam unimpededly became his domain. Ideally, this should be done

through the power of his righteousness; other kings submitted to him and became his vassals in recognition of his superior moral standing.

n.45 This is repeated twice in the text. "Yes" is added to emphasize this repetition.

b.

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GLOSSARY

· Types of attestation for Sanskrit names and terms ·

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

g.1 aggregates

phung po

ཐུང་པོ།

skandha

The five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formation, and consciousness. On the individual level, the five aggregates refer to the basis upon which the mistaken idea of a self is projected. They are referred to as the “bases for appropriation” (Skt. *upādāna*), insofar as all conceptual grasping arises on the basis of these aggregates.

g.2 Aniruddha

ma 'gags pa

མ་འགགས་པ།

aniruddha

A disciple of the Buddha.

g.3 Aparājita

gzhan gyis mi thub pa

གཞན་གྱིས་མི་སྲུབ་པ།

aparājita

“Not Able to Be Harmed by Others”; a previous buddha.

g.4 artistry

bzo

བཟོ།

śilpa

It refers to arts and crafts generally; in the context of this sūtra, it is also used to describe skill in arts and crafts, and has been also been rendered as such.

g.5 aśoka tree

shing mya ngan tshang

ཤིང་མུ་རན་ཚོང་།

aśoka

A showy tree (*Saraca indica*) of the family Leguminosae of tropical Asia that is cultivated for its orange scarlet flowers and is used to decorate temples.

g.6 asura

lha ma yin

ལྷ་མ་ཡིན།

asura

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.7 attachment

chags pa

ཚགས་པ།

rāga

In this text, attachment is one of the three factors at odds with the true Dharma because it impedes generosity and thus destroys merit.

g.8 Blessed One

bcom ldan 'das

བཅོམ་ལྷན་འདས།

bhagavān

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

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

g.9 Brahmā

tshangs pa

ཚེངས་པ།

brahmā

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A high-ranking deity presiding over a divine world where other beings consider him the creator; he is also considered to be the lord of the Sahā world (our universe). Though not considered a creator god in Buddhism, Brahmā occupies an important place as one of two gods (the other being Indra/Śakra) said to have first exhorted the Buddha Śākyamuni to teach the Dharma. The particular heavens found in the form realm over which Brahmā rules are often some of the most sought-after realms of higher rebirth in Buddhist literature. Since there are many universes or world systems, there are also multiple Brahmās presiding over them. His most frequent epithets are “Lord of Sahā World” (*Sahāṃpati*) and Great Brahmā (*Mahābrahmā*).

g.10 Bright Power

gsal stobs

གསལ་སྒྲོབས།

—

“Power of Splendor,” Puṇyabala’s father.

g.11 carelessness

bag med pa

བག་མེད་པ།

pramāda

Not being conscientious. In this text, carelessness is one of the three factors at odds with the true Dharma because it impedes generosity and thus destroys merit.

g.12 constituents

khams

ཁམས།

dhātu

Often translated “element,” commonly in the context of the eighteen elements of sensory experience (the six sense faculties, their six respective objects, and the six sensory consciousnesses), although the term has a wide range of other meanings. Along with the aggregates (Skt. *skandha*) and the sense bases (Skt. *āyatana*), one of the three major categories in the taxonomy of phenomena in the sūtra literature.

g.13 diligence

brtson 'grus

བརྩོན་འགྲུས།

vīrya

Enthusiasm for virtue. One of the six perfections, the seven limbs of awakening, the five abilities, the four bases of magical power, and the five powers.

g.14 Dyūtajaya

rgyan po pa rgyal ba po

རྒྱལ་པོ་པ་རྒྱལ་བ་པོ།

dyūtajaya

“Winner at Dice,” a previous life of Prince Puṇyabala and the Buddha himself. Also called King Jaya.

g.15 everlasting

g.yung drung

གཡུང་རྩུང་།

svastika · sanātana

In this text, it is a description of the ultimate and quasi-synonymous with nirvāṇa.

g.16 Four Great Kings

rgyal po chen po bzhi

རྒྱལ་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་བཞི།

caturmahārāja

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Four gods who live on the lower slopes (fourth level) of Mount Meru in the eponymous Heaven of the Four Great Kings (*Cāturmahārājika*, *rgyal chen bzhi'i ris*) and guard the four cardinal directions. Each is the leader of a nonhuman class of beings living in his realm. They are Dhṛtarāṣṭra, ruling over the kumbhāṇḍas in the south; Virūḍhaka, ruling the nāgas in the west; Virūpākṣa, ruling the gandharvas in the east; and Vaiśravaṇa (also known as Kubera) ruling the yakṣas in the north. Also referred to as Guardians of the World or World-Protectors (*lokapāla*, 'jig rten skyong ba).

g.17 four means of enticement

bsdu ba'i dngos po bzhi

བསྐྱུ་བའི་དངོས་པོ་བཞི།

catvāri saṃgraha-vastūni

The four means of enticement are (1) generosity, (2) kind words, (3) consistency between words and deeds, and (4) helpful actions.

g.18 fruit

'bras bu

འབྲས་བུ།

phala

Effect, result, fruit.

g.19 generosity

sbyin pa

སྤྱིན་པ།

dāna

The first of the six or ten perfections, often explained as the essential starting point and training for the practice of the others. In this text, it exemplifies merit, the most prized quality of human beings.

g.20 Heaven Free from Strife

'thab bral

འཐབ་བྲལ།

yāma

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology included among the six heavens of the desire realm. It is characterized by freedom from difficulty.

g.21 Heaven of Delighting in Emanations

'phrul dga'

འཕྲུལ་དགའ།

nirmāṇarati

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, counted among the six heavens of the desire realm. Its inhabitants magically create the objects of their own enjoyment, and also dispose of them themselves.

g.22 Heaven of Joy

dga' ldan

དགའ་ལྷན།

tuṣita

The fourth level of the heavens of the realm of desire, and the last stopping place of a buddha before his descent and reincarnation on earth. According to Buddhist cosmology, it is presently the abode of the future Buddha Maitreya.

g.23 Heaven of Making Use of Others' Emanations

gzhan 'phrul dbang byed pa

གཞན་འཕྲུལ་དབང་བྱེད་པ།

paranirmitavaśavartin

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, highest of the six heavens of the desire realm. The inhabitants enjoy objects created by others, then dispose of them themselves.

g.24 Heaven of the Four Great Kings

rgyal bo bzhi'i lha yul · rgyal chen bzhi'i ris

རྒྱལ་བོ་བཞིའི་ལྷ་ཡུལ། · རྒྱལ་ཆེན་བཞིའི་རིས།

caturmahārājika

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, lowest of the six heavens of the desire realm. It is located on the slopes of Mount Meru and ruled by the Four Great Kings.

g.25 Heaven of the Thirty-Three

sum cu rtsa gsum

སུམ་རུ་རྩ་གསུམ།

trāyastriṃśa

One of the heavens of Buddhist cosmology, the second heaven of the desire realm. It is located above Mount Meru and reigned over by Indra, otherwise known as Śakra, and thirty-two other gods.

g.26 Honorable One

btsun pa

བཙུན་པ།

bhadanta

One of the standard epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.27 insight

shes rab

ཤེས་རབ།

prajñā

This term here refers to the knowledge or wisdom gained through study, contemplation, and meditation.

g.28 Jambudvīpa

'dzam bu'i gling

འཛམ་བུ་རི་གླིང་།

jambudvīpa

According to Buddhist cosmology, the central one of the seven continents surrounding Mount Sumeru.

g.29 karma

las

ལས།

karman

Generally meaning “work,” “action,” or “duty,” karma is an important concept in Indian religious thought that refers to the universal law by which a being’s good or bad deeds determine the future modes of their existence.

g.30 Kauṇḍinya

kau Di n+ya

ཀོ་དི་ལྷ།

kauṇḍinya

The court priest in the Buddha’s father’s kingdom, who predicted the Buddha’s awakening. He became one of the Buddha’s five companions in asceticism. They renounced him when he abandoned asceticism but after his awakening they became his pupils. Kauṇḍinya was the first to convert to being his pupil and was the first of his pupils to become an arhat. Also called “Kauṇḍinyagotra” and “Ājñātakauṇḍinya.”

g.31 Kauśika

kau shi ka

ཀོ་ཤི་ཀ།

kauśika

An epithet of Śakra.

g.32 King Avabhāsakara

rgyal po snang byed

གྱུལ་པོ་སྣང་བྱིད།

avabhāsakararāja

“Illuminating,” the name Prince Puṇyabala receives when he is coronated as a king.

g.33 King Śuddhodana

rgyal po zas gtsang ma

གྱུལ་པོ་ཟས་གཙང་མ།

śuddhodana

The father of the Buddha.

g.34 Lord of Death

'chi bdag

འཆི་བདག།

mṛtyu

Another name for King Yama (Skt. *yamarāja*; Tib. *gshin rje rgyal po*), the deity who judges the dead and rules over the hell realms of the underworld.

g.35 Lord of the Desire Realm

'dod pa'i dbang phyug

འདོད་པའི་དབང་ཕྱུག།

kāmeśvara

Literally “Lord of Desire.” Name of Kubera/Vaiśravaṇa, who presides over the Desire Realm.

g.36 Mahāmāyādevī

lha mo sgyu 'phrul chen mo

ལྷ་མོ་སྐུ་འཕྱུལ་ཆེན་མོ།

mahāmāyādevī

The mother of the Buddha.

g.37 Mahāvastu

—

—

mahāvastu

The *Mahāvastu* or “Great Chapter” is a lengthy work of the Lokottaravāda (Proponents of the Supramundane) subsect of the Mahāsāṃghika (Great Saṅgha) tradition, which some scholars have regarded as a precursor of Mahāyāna Buddhism. It is written in mixed Sanskrit, Pāli, and Prakrit and is regarded as the earliest Sanskrit biography of the Buddha. The work belongs to the Vinayapiṭaka and in fact describes itself as a historical preface to the Buddhist monastic codes (Skt. *vinaya*). In this regard, it does correspond loosely to the Mahāvagga section of the Khandhaka in the Pāli Vinayapiṭaka. Over half the text comprises *avadānas* and *jatakas* (some having no Pāli antecedent), which tell of past lives of the Buddha when he was a bodhisattva on the path to awakening.

g.38 mahoraga

lto 'phye chen po

ལྷ་འཕྱེ་ཆེན་པོ།

mahoraga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

Literally “great serpents,” mahoragas are supernatural beings depicted as large, subterranean beings with human torsos and heads and the lower bodies of serpents. Their movements are said to cause earthquakes, and they make up a class of subterranean geomantic spirits whose movement through the seasons and months of the year is deemed significant for construction projects.

g.39 Māra

bdud

བདུད།

māra

In Sanskrit and Pāli, lit. “Maker of Death”; a demon in Buddhism who is the personification of evil and spiritual death. He notoriously assailed the future Buddha as he sat beneath the Bodhi tree and similarly impedes the spiritual progress of Buddhist practitioners in general.

g.40 Maudgalyāyana

maud gal gyi bu

མོད་གལ་གྱི་བུ།

maudgalyāyana

One of the Buddha’s two principal monastic disciples.

g.41 merit

bsod nams

བསོད་ནམས།

punya

In this text, merit is established as the most prized possession of human beings, more than good looks, diligence, artistry, and insight. In Buddhism more generally, merit refers to the wholesome tendencies imprinted in the mind as a result of positive and skillful thoughts, words, and actions that ripen in the experience of happiness and well-being. According to the Mahāyāna, it is important to dedicate the merit of one's wholesome actions to the benefit of all sentient beings, ensuring that others also experience the results of the positive actions generated.

g.42 mind of awakening

byang chub kyi sems

བྱང་ལྔའ་གྱི་སེམས།

bodhicitta

In Mahāyāna doctrine, bodhicitta refers to the resolve to attain awakening for the benefit of all beings and can also refer to the awakened mind itself.

g.43 miserliness

ser sna

སེར་སྒྲ།

mātsarya

In this text, miserliness is one of the three factors at odds with the true Dharma because it impedes generosity and thus destroys merit.

g.44 Mount Sumeru

ri rgyal po ri rab

རི་རྒྱལ་པོ་རི་རབ།

sumeru

The great mountain at the center of the universe, according to ancient Indian cosmology. At its summit lies Sudarśana city, home of Śakra (Indra) and his thirty-two gods.

g.45 nāga

klu

ལྷ།

nāga

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who live in subterranean aquatic environments, where they guard wealth and sometimes also teachings. Nāgas are associated with serpents and have a snakelike appearance. In Buddhist art and in written accounts, they are regularly portrayed as half human and half snake, and they are also said to have the ability to change into human form. Some nāgas are Dharma protectors, but they can also bring retribution if they are disturbed. They may likewise fight one another, wage war, and destroy the lands of others by causing lightning, hail, and flooding.

g.46 Nanda

dga' bo

དགའ་བོ།

nanda

The Buddha's cousin; see also [n.7](#).

g.47 nirvāṇa without remaining aggregates

phung po'i lhag ma med pa'i mya ngan las 'das pa

ཕུང་པོའི་ལྷག་མ་མེད་པའི་མྱ་ངན་ལས་འདས་པ།

nirupadhiśeṣanirvāṇa

The attainment of nirvāṇa without any remainder of the physical and mental aggregates.

g.48 paṇa

pa Na

པ་ཤ།

paṇa

According to Alexander Cunningham, one paṇa “was a handful of cowrie shells, usually reckoned as 80.” (See Cunningham 1996, p. 1.)

g.49 Park of Delights

dga' ba'i tshal

དགའ་བའི་ཚལ།

nandanavana

One of the four divine pleasure gardens.

g.50 Pleasure Garden of Supreme Wealth

byor ba mchog gi skyed mos tshal

ཕྱོད་བ་མཚོག་གི་སྐྱེད་མོས་ཚལ།

—

Puṇyabala's garden.

g.51 Prajñāvanta

shes rab ldan

ཤེས་རབ་ལྡན།

prajñāvān

“Wise,” the wise one; Prince Puṇyabala's brother who exemplifies insight.

g.52 preta

yi dags

ཡི་དགས།

preta

One of the five or six classes of sentient beings, considered to be the karmic fruition of past miserliness. In Sanskrit, literally “the departed”; they are analogous to the ancestral spirits of Vedic tradition, the *pitṛs*, who starve without the offerings of descendants. They live in the realm of Yama, the Lord of Death. They are particularly known to suffer from great hunger and thirst and the inability to acquire sustenance.

g.53 Prince Jeta's Grove

rgyal bu rgyal byed kyi tshal

རྒྱལ་བུ་རྒྱལ་བྱེད་ཀྱི་ཚལ།

jetavana

A grove that was given to the Buddha. Prince Jeta sold the so-called garden of Prince Jeta in Śrāvastī to the householder Anāthapiṇḍika, who built a monastery there and offered it to the Buddha.

g.54 Puṇyabala

bsod nams kyi stobs

བསོད་ནམས་ཀྱི་སྟོབས།

punjabala

The name means “Power of Merit”; he is a leading character in a number of the Buddha's past life stories. In *The Account of the Noble Deeds of Puṇyabala*, the Buddha tells of his past life as Prince Puṇyabala, whose compassionate acts of generosity demonstrated that merit is the most prized possession of human beings.

- g.55 Rāhula
sgra can 'dzin
 སྐ་ཅན་འཛིན།
rāhula
 The Buddha's son.
- g.56 Rūpabala
gzugs stobs
 གཟུགས་སྟོབས།
rūpabala
 “Power of Beauty,” the good looking one; Prince Puṇyabala's oldest brother, who exemplifies beauty.
- g.57 Śakra
brgya byin
 བརྒྱ་བྱིན།
śakra
Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:
 The lord of the gods. Alternatively known as Indra, the deity that is called “lord of the gods” dwells on the summit of Mount Sumeru and wields the thunderbolt. The Tibetan translation *brgya byin* (meaning “one hundred sacrifices”) is based on an etymology that *śakra* is an abbreviation of *śatakratu*, one who has performed a hundred sacrifices. Each world with a central Sumeru has a Śakra. Also known by other names such as Kauśika, Devendra, and Śacipati.
- g.58 Śāriputra
shA ri'i bu
 སྐ་རི་བུ།
śāriputra
Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:
 One of the principal śrāvaka disciples of the Buddha, he was renowned for his discipline and for having been praised by the Buddha as foremost of the wise (often paired with Maudgalyāyana, who was praised as foremost in the capacity for miraculous powers). His father, Tiṣya, to honor Śāriputra's mother, Śārikā, named him Śāradvatīputra, or, in its contracted form, Śāriputra, meaning “Śārikā's Son.”

g.59 sense base

skye mched

སྐྱེ་མཚེད།

āyatana

Sometimes translated “sense field” or “base of cognition,” the term usually refers to the six sense faculties and their corresponding objects, i.e. the first twelve of the eighteen constituents (Skt. *dhātus*). Along with the aggregates (Skt. *skandhas*) and the constituents, one of the three major categories in the taxonomy of phenomena in the sūtra literature.

g.60 seven precious possessions

rin chen bdun · rin po che sna bdun

རིན་ཚེན་བདུན། · རིན་པོ་ཚེ་སྣ་བདུན།

saptoparatna

The usual list is: (1) the precious golden wheel (Skt. *cakraratna*; Tib. *'khor lo rin po che*); (2) the precious jewel (Skt. *maṇiratna*; Tib. *nor bu rin po che*); (3) the precious queen (Skt. *strīratna*; Tib. *btsun mo rin po che*); (4) the precious minister (Skt. *puruṣaratna* or *pariṇāyakarātna*; Tib. *blon po rin po che*); (5) the precious elephant (Skt. *hastiratna*; Tib. *glang po rin po che*); (6) the precious horse (Skt. *aśvarātna*; Tib. *rta mchog rin po che*); and (7) the precious general (Skt. *khaḍgarātna* or *senāpatiratna*; Tib. *dmag dpon rin po che*). Here the precious queen is substituted by a precious woman (Tib. *bud med rin po che*) and the precious general is substituted by a precious householder (Tib. *khyim bdag rin po che*). However, in this text they appear listed slightly differently (see [1.-190](#)). Here the precious queen is substituted by a precious woman (Tib. *bud med rin po che*), and the precious general is substituted by a precious householder (Tib. *khyim bdag rin po che*).

g.61 Śilpavanta

bzo ldan

བཟོ་ལྷན།

śilpavān

“Artistic,” the artistic one; Prince Puṇyabala’s brother who exemplifies craftsmanship.

g.62 śrāvaka

nyan thos

ཉན་ཐོས།

śrāvaka

It is usually defined as “those who hear the teaching from the Buddha and make it heard to others.” Primarily it refers to those disciples of the Buddha who aspire to attain the state of an arhat by seeking self liberation and nirvāṇa.

g.63 Śrāvastī

mnyan du yod pa

མཉན་དུ་ཡོད་པ།

śrāvastī

The capital of Kośala, a kingdom in ancient India where the Buddha lived.

g.64 Śroṇakoṭīviṃśa

gro zhin skyes bye ba nyi shu pa

གོ་ཞིན་སྐྱེས་བྱེ་བ་ཉི་ཤུ་པ།

śroṇakoṭīviṃśa

A disciple of the Buddha, known in Pāli as Soṇa Koḷivisa.

g.65 Teacher

ston pa

སྟོན་པ།

śāstr

One of the standard epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni.

g.66 ten virtues

dge ba bcu

དགེ་བ་བརྒྱ།

daśakuśala

Abstaining from killing, taking what is not given, sexual misconduct, lying, uttering divisive talk, speaking harsh words, gossiping, covetousness, ill will, and wrong views.

g.67 Thus-Gone One

de bzhin gshegs pa

དེ་བཞིན་གཤེགས་པ།

tathāgata

One of the standard epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni. The expression is interpreted in different ways, but in general it means one who has thus gone (Skt. *tathā + gata*) or one who has thus come (Skt. *tathā + āgata*). The etymology of this term remains unclear and has, over the centuries, been variously interpreted as one who understands (*gata*) the way things are (*tathā*), one who has come (*gata*) into the world like other buddhas of the past, or one who (*gata*) has gone to nirvāṇa like other buddhas of the past.

g.68 universal monarch

'khor los sgyur ba

འཁོར་ལོས་སྐུར་བ།

cakravartin

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

The term “universal monarch” denotes a just and pious king who rules over the universe according to the laws of Dharma. Such a monarch is called a *cakravartin* because he wields a disk (*cakra*) that rolls (*vartana*) over continents, worlds, and world systems, bringing them under his power. A universal monarch is often considered the worldly, political correlate of a buddha. (*Provisional 84000 definition. New definition forthcoming.*)

g.69 Vaśavartin

dbang byed

དབང་བྱེད།

vaśavartin

The king of gods in the Heaven of Making Use of Others’ Emanations (Skt. *Paranirmitavaśavartin*).

g.70 venerable

tshe dang ldan pa

ཚེ་དང་ལྷན་པ།

āyusmat

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A respectful form of address between monks, and also between lay companions of equal standing. It literally means “one who has a [long] life.”

g.71 Vibhūṣitā

rnam par spa ba

རྣམ་པར་སྤྲོ་བ།

vibhūṣitā

“Well-adorned,” Puṇyabala’s mother.

g.72 Vijayā

rnam par rgyal ma

རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་མ།

vijayā

“Triumphant,” Dyūtajaya’s wife.

g.73 Vijaya

rnam par rgyal ba

རྣམ་པར་རྒྱལ་བ།

vijaya

“Triumphant,” Dyūtajaya’s son.

g.74 virtuous roots

dge ba'i rtsa ba

དགེ་བའི་རྩ་བ།

kuśala-mūla

Wholesome actions that benefit others.

g.75 Vīryavanta

brtson 'grus ldan

བརྩོན་འགྲུས་ལྡན།

vīryavān

“Diligent,” the diligent one; Prince Puṇyabala’s brother who exemplifies diligence.

g.76 Viśvakarma

las sna tshogs can · las sna tshogs pa

ལས་སྣ་ཚོགས་ཅན། · ལས་སྣ་ཚོགས་པ།

viśvakarman

Literally “maker of sundry things,” Viśvakarma is the architect of the gods. He was an important deity in early Hinduism. In the *R̥g Veda*, he is regarded as the personification of ultimate reality, the abstract creative power inherent in deities and in living and nonliving beings in this universe.

g.77 Well-Gone One

bde bar gshegs pa

བདེ་བར་གཤེགས་པ།

sugata

One of the standard epithets of the Buddha Śākyamuni. According to Buddhaghosa, the term means that the way the Buddha went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*) and where he went (Skt. *gata*) is good (Skt. *su*).

g.78 Western Continent

ba lang spyod

བ་ལང་སྟོད།

aparāntaka · aparagodānīya · aparagoyāna

The western continent of the human world according to traditional Indian cosmology, characterized as “rich in the resources of cattle.” It is named Aparāntaka (or sometimes Aparagodānīya or Aparagoyāna). It has a circular shape and is about 7,500 *yojanas* in circumference. Humans who live there are very tall, about 7.3 meters on average, and live for 500 years.

g.79 yak-tail fan

mga yab

རྩ་ཡབ།

cāmara

The bushy tail of the yak used as a whisk for repelling flying insects. It is one of the insignia of royalty.

g.80 yakṣa

gnod sbyin

གནོད་སྦྱིན།

yakṣa

Definition from the 84000 Glossary of Terms:

A class of nonhuman beings who inhabit forests, mountainous areas, and other natural spaces, or serve as guardians of villages and towns, and may be propitiated for health, wealth, protection, and other boons, or controlled through magic. According to tradition, their homeland is in the north, where they live under the jurisdiction of the Great King Vaiśravaṇa.

Several members of this class have been deified as gods of wealth (these include the just mentioned Vaiśravaṇa) or as bodhisattva generals of yakṣa armies, and have entered the Buddhist pantheon in a variety of forms, including, in tantric Buddhism, those of wrathful deities.

