

TRANSLATION OF THE SUTRA

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. PREFACE.

(1. *The Scene and Circumstances of the Sermon.*)

Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord dwelt at Rajagriha, on the Vulture Peak, together with a large gathering of monks, with 1,250 monks, all of them Arhats—their outflows dried up, undefiled, fully controlled, quite freed in their hearts, well freed and wise, thorough-breds, great Serpents, their work done, their task accomplished, their burden laid down, their own weal accomplished, with the fetters that bound them to becoming extinguished, their hearts well freed by right understanding, in perfect control of their whole minds—

with 500 nuns, laymen, and laywomen, all of them liberated in this present life—

and with hundreds of thousands of niyutas of kotis of Bodhisattvas—(1) all of whom had acquired the Dharaṇis; (2) dwellers in emptiness, their sphere in the signless, who had not fashioned any desire for the future; (3) who had acquired sameness and patience¹; (4) who had acquired the Dharaṇi of nonattachment; (5) who had imperishable superknowledges; (6) were of acceptable speech; (7) not tricksters; (8) not chatters, (9) with thoughts that had left behind all desire for reputation and gain, (10) disinterested demonstrators of the spiritual dharma; (11) ready to accept deep dharmas without reserve; (12) who had obtained the grounds of self-confidence; (13) had transcended Mara's deeds, (14) were free from obstacles caused by their (past) deeds; (15) and skilful in expounding the analysis of investigations into dharma; (16) who had formed their vows incalculable aeons ago; (17) who address others with smiling countenances; (18) without a frown on their faces; (19) skilful in songs, chants and benedictions; (20) with thoughts free from sluggishness;

¹So Nāgārjuna (pp. 325-7) seems to have understood this attribute. The Bodhisattva has won insight into two kinds of "sameness", i.e. he knows that all beings are the same, and that all dharmas are the same. He also possesses two kinds of "patience",—he is patient towards all beings, and he patiently accepts the Prajñāpāramita teaching about the true nature of all dharmas—The Tibetan seems, however, to interpret as "he acquires the patient acceptance of the sameness of all dharmas".

(21) with their flashes of ideas uninterrupted; (22) endowed with self-confidence when engaged in overpowering endless assemblies; (23) skilled in going forth during endless kotis of aeons; (24) resolutely intent on dharmas which they held to be like an illusion, a mirage, a reflection of the moon in water, a dream, an echo, an apparition, an image in the mirror, a magical creation; (P5) (25) skilful in understanding the destiny of beings, their subtle thoughts, their conduct and intentions;² (26) with unobstructed thoughts;³ (27) endowed with extreme patience; (28) skilful in teaching others how to penetrate to the true character of reality; (29) acquiring through their vows and their setting-out the endless harmonies of all the Buddha-fields; (30) always face to face with the concentrated recollection of the Buddhas of countless world systems; (31) skilful in soliciting⁴ innumerable Buddhas; (32) skilful in appeasing the various views, biases, prepossessions, and defilements; (33) and in producing a hundred thousand concentrations and in playing with them. They are the Bodhisattva Bhadrāpāla, the great being; the Bodhisattvas Ratnākara, Sārhavāha, Naradatta, Varuṇadatta, Śubhagupta, Indradatta, Uttaramati, Viśeshamati, Vardhamānamati, Amoghadarśin, Susamprasthita, Suvikrāntavikrāmin, Nityodyukta, Anikshiptadhura, Sūryagarbha, Anupamacintin, Avalokiteśvara, Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Mañjuśrī, Vajramati, Ratnamudrāhastā, Nityokshiptahastā and Maitreya the Bodhisattva, the great being, at the head of many hundred thousands of niyutas of kotis of Bodhisattvas.

(I) Thereupon the Lord, having himself arranged the Lion Seat, sat down with his legs crossed; holding his body erect, intent on fixing his mindfulness, he entered into the concentration—"King of Concentrations" by name—in which all concentrations are included, comprehended, and come to meet.

Thereupon the Lord, mindful and self-possessed, emerging from this concentration, (P6) surveyed with the Heavenly Eye the entire world system. His whole body became radiant. From the wheels with a thousand spokes (imprinted) on the soles of his feet issued 60 hundred thousand niyutas of kotis of rays, and so from his ten toes, and similarly from his ankles, legs, knees, thighs, hips and navel, from his two sides, and from the sign "Śrīvatsa"⁵ on his chest, a mark of the Superman. Similarly from his ten fingers, his two arms, his two shoulders, from his neck,

²So I understand after the Tibetan of *S*. But Nāgārjuna (pp. 389-90): "Knowing the course of the thought and conduct of beings, they are skilful in saving them through their subtle wisdom".

³Or, alternatively, "their thought is free from hostility". See also *Nag* 391-4.

⁴"Soliciting", or "invitation", *adhyeṣhaṇā*: This means that one asks the Buddhas (1) to preach the Dharma, (2) to postpone their entry into Nirvana, so that they may stay in the world and save beings. For the details see *Nag*. 415-422.

⁵i.e. the Svastika.

his forty teeth, his two nostrils, ears and eyes, from the hair-tuft in the middle between his eye-brows, and from the cowl on the top of his head. And through these rays this great trichiliocosm⁶ was illumined and lit up. And in the East world systems as numerous as the sands of the Ganges were, by this great illumination of rays, lit up and became illumined. So in the South, the West, the North, the North-East, the South-East, the South-West, the North-West, below and above. And the beings who were lit up and illumined by this great illumination of rays, they all became fixed on⁷ the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment. (P7)

(II) Thereupon all the Lord's hairpores became radiant, and from each single pore issued 60 hundred thousand of niyutas of kotis of rays through which this great trichiliocosm was illumined and lit up. And in the East world systems as numerous as the sands of the Ganges were, by this great illumination of rays, lit up and illumined. And so in the other nine directions. And the beings, who were lit up and illumined by this great illumination of rays, they all became fixed on the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

(III) Thereupon the Lord again, with the natural splendour of the Buddhas, the Lords, illumined the great trichiliocosm. And so on, *up to* : In all the ten directions, in each single direction, world systems as numerous as the sands of the Ganges were illumined by His splendour. And the beings who were touched by this splendour, they were all fixed on the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

(IV) Thereupon the Lord on that occasion put out his tongue. With it he covered the great trichiliocosm⁸ and many hundreds of thousands of niyutas of kotis of rays issued from it. From each one of these rays there arose lotuses, made of the finest precious stones, of golden colour, and with thousands of petals; and on those lotuses there were, seated and standing, Buddha-frames⁹ demonstrating dharma, i.e. this very demonstration of dharma associated with the six perfections. They went in all the ten directions to countless world systems in each direction (P 8), and demonstrated dharma to beings, i.e. this very demonstration of dharma associated with the six perfections. And the beings who heard this demonstration of dharma, they became fixed on the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

⁶See my *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 1958, p. 40.

⁷=definitely oriented towards. "Intent on", "focused on", "set on" might be more elegant renderings.

⁸The Buddha's tongue symbolizes his veracity, or the truth of what he says. In the Rig Veda already Agni's tongue, the priestly voice, "touches heaven". S. Thomas Aquinas has a similar idea when he says: "The tongue of an angel is called metaphorically the angel's power, whereby he manifests his mental concepts. Since the intellectual operations of an angel have no reference to here and now, in angelic speech distance is no impediment".

⁹A "Buddha-frame" is the figure of a Buddha, magically conjured up by the real Buddha.

(V) Thereupon the Lord, seated on that very Lion Seat, entered into the concentration called "The Lion's Play". With his supernatural power he shook this great trichiliocosm in six ways—it moved, moved back, trembled, trembled from one end to another, tossed, tossed along. At the sides it rose up, in the middle it sank down; in the middle it rose up, at the sides it sank down; it became soft and pliable, and all beings came to be at ease.

Thereupon, at that moment, minute and second, in this great trichiliocosm the hells, and the animal world, and the world of Yama,¹⁰ they all were abolished and became empty, and all the places of untoward rebirth disappeared. And the beings who had deceased in these destinies—i.e. the hells, the animal births, and the world of Yama—they all, through their very joy and rejoicing, were reborn among men, and also among the six kinds of gods (of the realm of sense desire). (P 9)

Thereupon these men and gods, through the very might of the Lord recalled their former lives. In their great joy and rejoicing they then approached the Lord, saluted his feet with their heads, raised their folded hands to the Lord and paid homage to him. And so in each one of the ten directions, in world systems countless as the sands of the Ganges, all the hells, animal births, and worlds of Yama were abolished and became empty, and all untoward moments¹¹ disappeared. And the beings who deceased in these three destinies, they all, through their very joy and rejoicing, were reborn among men, and also among the six kinds of gods (of the realm of sense desire). And those who were thus reborn among gods and men, through the might of the Lord, recalled their former lives. They then, in their great joy and rejoicing, went each to his own Buddha-field and approached the presence of the Buddha, the Lord who had arisen therein, saluted his feet, and they all raised their folded hands and paid homage to the Lord.

Thereupon in this great trichiliocosm the beings who were born blind saw forms with their eyes; the deaf heard sounds with their ears; the insane regained their mindfulness; those with distracted thoughts became one-pointed in their thoughts. The hungry were fed, the thirsty found their thirst stilled, the sick were healed and the cripples made whole. Those with unwholesome deeds of body, word and mind, and with unwholesome livelihood gave up their unwholesome habits. (P 10) All beings considered each other as one considers one's mother, father, brother, sister, friends, companions, kinsmen, and relations; and they tended the ten wholesome paths of action. Guarding their chastity,¹²

¹⁰Yama is the Judge of the Dead, and the king of the underworld.

¹¹Or: places of unpropitious rebirth. If a man is born at an "untoward moment", it is the concentration of the misfortunes which result from the bad deeds of his past.

¹²*brahmacaryā*.

pure, they lived in the odour of sanctity. And all beings, possessed of all happiness, acquired the ease which a monk feels when immersed in the third Trance.¹³ And at that very time they were endowed with such wisdom that the Buddhas and Lords in other Buddha-fields cried out : “Good is self-discipline! Good is quietude! Good is self-mastery! Good is it to have observed the practice of the religious life!¹² Good is the nonharming of living beings!”

(VI) Thereupon the Lord, seated on this very Lion Seat, overtowered this great trichiliocosm. There the Tathagata stood in all his glory, shone forth, gleamed and shed light, surpassing with his splendour, lustre, brilliancy, and beauty world systems as numerous as the sands of the Ganges in each of the ten directions. He did so in the same way in which Sumeru, king of mountains, overtowering all mountains, stands, shines forth, gleams, and sheds light, surpassing them with its splendour, lustre, brilliancy, and beauty.

(VII) Thereupon the Lord exhibited His own natural body in this great trichiliocosm. The gods of the world of sense desire and of the world of form, in this great trichiliocosm (P 11), saw that glorified body of the Tathagata. They took celestial flowers, incense, perfume, garlands, ointments, powders, robes, parasols, flags, banners, and streamers; they took celestial lotuses—blue lotuses, night lotuses, water lilies, white lotuses—they took Keśara flowers and Tamāla leaves; and they approached with them the glorified body of the Tathagata. Likewise the human beings in this great trichiliocosm took land and water flowers and approached the Tathagata’s glorified body. Both gods and men then strewed these flowers, etc., over the body of the Tathagata. By the sustaining power of the Buddha all these flowers, etc., formed high in the firmament one single pointed tower, which had the dimensions of the great trichiliocosm. And from this tower the celestial flowers and silken tassels hung down and were suspended, and they made this great trichiliocosm look very beautiful. And because the brightly shining golden colour of the Lord streamed forth in the ten directions, in each direction countless world systems were (P 12) lit up and illumined. In this great trichiliocosm, and in all the world systems, the same thought occurred to each one of these gods and men : “It is for me that the Tathagata, seated there, demonstrates Dharma”.

(VIII) Thereupon the Lord, seated on this very Lion Throne, smiled once again. Through the illumination from that smile this great trichiliocosm, and the innumerable world systems in the ten directions, were lit up. And all the beings in this great trichiliocosm saw the Buddhas, the Lords, and their assemblies of disciples in countless world systems in the East. And conversely, all the beings in countless world systems in the

¹³See my *Buddhist Meditation*, 1956, p. 117.

East saw this Sahā world system,¹⁴ and Śākyamuni, the Tathagata, together with his community of monks.

(IX) In the East, beyond countless world systems, at the very limit of these world systems, there is a world system called Ratnavatī.¹⁵ In it the Tathagata Ratnākara¹⁵ stands, holds and maintains himself.¹⁶ He demonstrates to the Bodhisattvas this very perfection of wisdom as the Dharma. Now, in that world system a Bodhisattva, a great being, called Samantaraśmi¹⁷ saw this great illumination, and this great shaking of the earth, and this glorified body of the Lord, and he approached the Lord Ratnākara, the Tathagata, saluted his feet with his head, and said to him: "What is the cause, O Lord, (P 13) what is the reason for this great illumination being manifested in the world, and for this great shaking of the earth, and for the exhibition of the glorified body of that Tathagata?"

The Tathagata Ratnākara replied: "There is, O son of good family, from here in the Western direction, beyond countless world systems, a world system called Sahā. There the Tathagata Śākyamuni stands, holds, and maintains himself. He reveals the perfection of wisdom to the Bodhisattvas, the great beings. This is his doing."

Samantaraśmi replied: "I will go to that Sahā world system, to see, salute, and honour that Tathagata Śākyamuni, and those Bodhisattvas, great beings, for the most part candidates to Buddhahood, who have acquired the Dharanis, are skilful in the consummation of the concentrations, and have reached the highest control over all the concentrations."

Ratnākara said: "Go then, you son of good family, for the right time has come."

Thereupon the Tathagata Ratnākara gave to the Bodhisattva Samantaraśmi lotuses made of manifold jewels, shining like gold, each with thousands of petals. "These lotuses, O son of good family, scatter over the Tathagata Śākyamuni! And say to him: 'The Lord Ratnākara hopes that the Lord Śākyamuni is well and free from sickness, alert and buoyant, strong, happy and comfortable. And these lotuses have been sent to the Lord by this Lord Ratnākara, the Tathagata! Act with full self-possession in that Buddha-field! For the Bodhisattvas who are reborn in that Sahā world system are difficult to deal with.'" (P 14)

Thereupon the Bodhisattva Samantaraśmi took from the Tathagata Ratnākara those lotuses made of manifold jewels, shining like gold, each with a thousand petals. He was surrounded and accompanied by

¹⁴This is the name of the world in which we live.

¹⁵"Thick with Jewels", "Jewel mine".

¹⁶This is a cryptic phrase for describing a Buddha's presence in this, or any other, world system.

¹⁷"Rays-all-round".

many hundreds of thousands of niyutas of kotis of Bodhisattvas, both householders and recluses, and by young men and women. And before they left they honoured, worshipped, and revered the Buddhas and Lords in the world-systems of the East.

(X) With the flowers, etc., he reached the Sahā world system, approached the Tathagata Śākyamuni, saluted the Lord's feet with his head, and stood on one side. The Bodhisattva Samantaraśmi then said to the Lord Śākyamuni: "The Lord Ratnākara hopes that the Lord Śākyamuni is well and free from sickness, alert and buoyant, strong, happy and comfortable. It is the Tathagata Ratnākara who has despatched to the Lord these lotuses made of manifold jewels, shining like gold, with thousands of petals."

Thereupon the Lord Śākyamuni, the Tathagata took up these lotuses, and threw them in the Eastern direction into countless world systems, which were lit up by these lotuses. Buddha-frames were seated on those lotuses. In those Buddha-fields they demonstrated dharma, i.e. this very demonstration of dharma associated with the perfection of wisdom. And the beings who heard that dharma became fixed on the utmost, right and perfect enlightenment.

Thereupon those Bodhisattvas, both the householders and recluses, and the young men and women who had come from that world system Ratnāvati with Samantaraśmi, the Bodhisattva, the great being, each one by virtue of his own wholesome roots¹⁸ revered, respected, honoured and worshipped the Lord Śākyamuni, and sat down on one side.

So far about the East (P 15). From all the ten directions Bodhisattvas came to the Lord Śākyamuni. The same scene took place, but the names of the world system, the Tathagata, and the Bodhisattva differ in each case. They are: for the South Sarvaśokāpagato, Aśokaśrī, and Vigatāśoko respectively; for the West Upaśānta, Ratnārcis, Cāritramati; for the North Jayā, Jayendra, Jayadatta; (P 16) for the North-East Samādhyalānkritā, Samādhihastyuttaraśrī, Vijayavikrāmin; for the South-East Bodhimaṇḍalākārasurucirā, Padmottaraśrī, Padmahasta; for the South-West Vigatarajaḥsancayā, Sūryamaṇḍalaprabhāsottamaśrī, Sūryaprabhāsa; for the North-West Vaśībhūtā, Ekacchattra, Ratnottama; (P 17) for the region below Padmā, Padmaśrī, Padmottara; and for the region above Nandā, Nandaśrī, Nandadatta.

Thereupon at that moment, minute and second, this great trichilocosm became composed of¹⁹ the seven precious substances,²⁰ and was over-

¹⁸I.e. the merits they had acquired in the past enabled them to perform this act of reverence. Without them they would neither have seen the Buddha, nor felt the urge to worship Him.

¹⁹ = was changed into.

²⁰See my *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 1958, p. 40.

strewn with flowers. Bundles of silken tassels were affixed to it, and it was adorned with Kalpa trees²¹—manifoldly ornamented with branches bending down with fruits—with trees with flowers and fruits, with perfumes and garlands. Just like the world system Padmāvati, the Buddha-field of the Tathagata Samantakusuma, where Mañjuśrī the Crown Prince resides, and the Bodhisattva Susthitamati, and other very powerful Bodhisattvas.

²¹This seems to refer to the fabulous trees of Indra's paradise, which are said to grant all wishes.