The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*

**Suzuki Takayasu**

1. The Aim of This Paper: A Continuous Verification of the Hypothesis

As shown in the previous studies, the present author has proposed and verified the following hypothesis on the intentions of the compilers of the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa* (Sūtra of Golden Light, *Suv*)

(*The Hypothesis*) Owing to the account of the *Suv* which has, through the several stages of its formation, collected and demonstrated the various kinds of doctrines and rites of both mundane and supermundane levels expounded previously in the treatises either of Mahāyāna, of non-Mahāyāna, or of non-Buddhism (i.e., of Hinduism), the compilers and the proponents of the *Suv* became more able to lead their daily religious lives, including their practice of various rites and their attainment of various religious merits, in accordance with “the teaching of the *Suv,*** that is, “the teaching of Mahāyāna] Buddhism.” We can therefore interpret the features appearing in the *Suv* not as a token of “the assimilation of Buddhism into Hinduism” or “the depravity of Buddhism,” but as an attempt of Buddhists to survive in the Indian religious world by emphasizing the value, the usefulness, and the completeness of Mahāyāna] Buddhism under the circumstances where Hinduism had become more and more dominant over Buddhism (during and after the Gupta period). Moreover, if one of the intentions of the compilers of the *Suv* lies in this attempt by collecting as many doctrines and rites as possible, either of mundane or supermundane levels, or of Buddhism or non-Buddhism, from the stage of the formation of the *Suv* to that of the *Suv*, consistently, we can suppose that the intention of the compilers has remained unchanged all through the stages of the formation of the *Suv*. Furthermore, it may turn out that the *Suv* is not “a mere miscellaneous medley of doctrines and rites,” but a collection of them which is intrinsic to the value of the *Suv*.

Suzuki [2008] has provided the most recent study on this subject, and the following tentative conclusion has been reached:

“The Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” begins with the *Caturmahārāja-parivarta* which emphasizes the superiority of Buddhism over Hinduism and attempts to convert the people of the class of kings to Buddhism. After the successive attempts in the following three chapters to attract the people of the various classes who are ruled by the kings, “the Five Chapters”
The Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies

The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the Suvarṇaprabhāṣa (T. Suzuki) (79)

concludes with the Samyāyapa-parivarta in which a Yakṣa general who is the head of the chief retinues of Caturmahārājas and knows all things whether of mundane or supermundane levels, and whether of Buddhism or non-Buddhism, plays an important role to reinforce the discourse of the Caturmahārāja-parivarta.

From the examination of "the Five Chapters" we can recognize the deep consideration of the compilers of the Sūv toward the members of royal families. From this consideration they have successively compiled the Devendrasamaya-parivarta (Chapter on Instruction Concerning Divine Kings; Chapter 20 of the Sūv), which instructs a king on how to rule various people and exercise his kingship in order to realize the welfare of the people.

Buddhism had once stood foremost in the religious world of India under the patronage of the great kings such as King Aśoka of the Maurya Empire or King Kanishka of the Kushan Empire. However during and after the Gupta period when the Sūv was compiled, Buddhism has been already lost its dominant position to Hinduism. Under such circumstances the compilers of the Sūv, by obtaining various kinds of aid of the kings as well as of their people, must have attempted to survive in the religious world for the sake of accomplishing the duties of the Buddhist clergy.

This paper continues to verify (the Hypothesis) and the tentative conclusion by examining the Susambhava-parivarta (Chapter on Cakravartin-king Called Susambhava; Chapter 21 of the Sūv), which directly follows the Devendrasamaya-parivarta.

2. An Examination of the Susambhava-parivarta (Chapter on Cakravartin-king Called Susambhava; Chapter 21)

The Susambhava-parivarta consists of 32 verses in which the Lord Śākyamuni tells the story of his former lives. We will begin by examining the story with translations, and notes put in bold brackets.

[Verse 1] [The Lord spoke,] "When I became Cakravartin-king then I gave up the earth with its oceans, I presented the four continents full of jewels to the former Buddhas." [The Lord said that he had made offerings to the Buddhas when he was born a king. However it turns out later that this Chapter 21 proclaims that the actual objects to which offerings should be made are the Buddha's teachings and the Buddhist monks, not the Buddhas.]

[Verse 2] "For the sake of my research for a body composed of the Law (dharmakāya), there is no loved, pleasing object which I did not formerly give up. I gave up [even] my dear life during numerous aeons." [In this Chapter 21 offerings of riches and life are considered the chief means to attain dharmakāya (i.e. supreme enlightenment), though this chap-
(80) The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the \textit{Suvānaprabhāśa} (T. Suzuki)

ter has no actual description about giving up life. We see from Verse 30 and 31 that offer-
ings of life are experienced during other former lives.]

\textbf{Verse 3} "[I did those offerings] as [I made] to the teaching of the [former] Buddha Ratnaśīkin in the inconceivable aeons past. [So I am going to tell you the story.] When that Buddha had entered into his perfect peacefulness (parinirvāṇa), there arose a king called Susamabhava,\textsuperscript{8} [This chapter takes up the offering a king called Susamabhava made to the teaching left behind by the Buddha, as a typical example of the offerings for the sake of the attainment of supreme enlightenment. It must be noted here that the offering made by Susamabhava was practiced after the Buddha had entered into his perfect peacefulness, and that his offering was not made to the Buddha, that is, not to the stūpa of the Buddha.]

\textbf{Verse 4–6} In his dream King Susamabhava saw Ratnoccaya, a preacher of the Law (dharmaṁbhāṇaka), expounding the \textit{Suv}. Waking up from his sleep, the king approached joyfully the assembly of the disciples (śrāvakasamgha) to see the preacher.\textsuperscript{9} [The preacher of the \textit{Suv}, which is one of the Mahāyāna sūtras, is a member of a traditional monastery.]

\textbf{Verse 7} Having paid homage (pūjā) to the monks, the king asked after the monk (bhikṣu) Ratnoccaya, the preacher of the \textit{Suv}.\textsuperscript{10} [(1) In this monastery Ratnoccaya seems to be the only preacher of the \textit{Suv}; This can indicate that the \textit{Suv} is held by one special monk in a monastery. (2) Even though the other monks are not preachers of the \textit{Suv}, they are also expected to be paid homage by kings or the rich because a preacher of the \textit{Suv} belongs to their monastery.\textsuperscript{11} (3) Ratnoccaya is a monk as well as a preacher of the \textit{Suv}.]

\textbf{Verse 8} "Then Ratnoccaya was elsewhere, sitting in a solitary place, reflecting on this king of sūtras, reciting it, seated calmly."\textsuperscript{12} [A preacher of the \textit{Suv}, separate from the other monks and seated solely and calmly in a solitary place, practices through reflecting on and reciting the \textit{Suv}.]

\textbf{Verse 9–20} The monks showed the king the monk Ratnoccaya, the preacher of the \textit{Suv}. Worshipping Ratnoccaya, the king entreated him to expound the \textit{Suv}. Ratnoccaya accepted the request of the king, and all the gods also rejoiced. King Susamabhava purified an area by placing shower of jewels, perfumes, and flowers, and placed a seat for the monk. Then the king adorned that seat variously, elaborately, and excellently. A lot of divine beings came because they were desirous of the \textit{Suv}, and honored Ratnoccaya and the seat strewn with divine flowers. Having purified himself with water and put on pure clothing, Ratnoccaya approached that seat and did homage to it. He ascended the seat and sat down,
The Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies

mindful of the inconceivable number of the Buddhas. Producing compassion and a merci-
ful mind for all beings, he then expounded the Suv to the king. 13) [If carried out literally
enormous riches would be needed for the hearing of the Suv; It is possible that these kinds
of accounts may reflect the wish of the compilers of the Suv that they should obtain offer-
ings of riches for the sake of accomplishing their transmission of the Law and religious
practice.]

Verse 21 "[Hearing the Suv,) the king, having stood with his hands in the gesture of
reverence, uttered one voice of joy. His eyes shed tears at the force of the Good Law (sadjharm).
His body became full of satisfaction."14) [We should notice here that the joy pro-
duced by hearing the Suv is mentioned.]

Verse 22-24 "For the sake of worshipping this sutra (imasya sutrasya pujaartham),
King Susambhava then took hold of the Cintamani, king of jewels, and made a resolution
(pramidhi) on account of the welfare of beings (sattvahrthahetoh): "May there now rain down
here in Jambudvipa ornaments made of the seven jewels and may the beings here in Jam-
budvipa be blessed with great riches." Then there rained down on the four continents the
seven jewels, bracelets, necklaces, and excellent earrings, likewise food, drinks, and cloth-
ing."15) [The compilers of the Suv maintain that worship of the Suv can be practiced
through offerings of riches.]

Verse 25 "And when King Susambhava saw this rain of jewels in Jambudvipa, he pre-
sented the four continents filled with jewels to the teaching of [the former Buddha] Rat-
naśākin (catvāri dvipāni saratapūrṇā niryātāyi ratnaśīkhisya sāsane)."16) [For the sake of wor-
shipping the Suv, the king who was desirous of attaining supreme enlightenment, filled
first the continents with jewels. And then he presented all of them to the teaching left be-
hind by the Buddha who had already entered into his perfect peacefulness, that is, to the
Suv taught by the past Buddha and to the preachers who hold the Suv. Turning our eyes to
the period of the actual compilation of the Suv, needless to say, it was after the Buddha Śākyamuni had entered into his perfect peacefulness, Therefore if lay people (they can be
kings or the rich) who wish to worship the Suv following the account of this chapter for the
sake of obtaining religious merits, they may be expected to make offerings not to the stū-
pas of the Buddha Śākyamuni but to the Suv and to their preachers.]

Verse 26, 27 The Lord Śākyamuni announces that he was at that time King Susam-
bhava, and the Buddha Aksobhya was the monk Ratanoccaya, the preacher of the Suv. 18)

— 1223 —
(82) The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the Suvannaprabhāsa (T. Suzuki)

Verse 28, 29 “Because I heard this sûtra then [in the former life when I was King Susambhava] and uttered one voice of joy, I obtained a body that has the color of gold (suvarnavarnam . . . labhayi kāyam), that has the marks of a hundred merits (satapunyaalakṣanam), always of pleasing appearance (priyadarśanam sadā), delightful to the eyes (nayanābhirāmam), beautiful for people to behold (janakāntadarśanam), causing pleasure to thousands of millions of gods (ratimkaram devasahasrakoṭinām).”¹⁹ [Though the attainment of a body composed of the Law (dharmakāya) is thought to be the final purpose in this chapter, we may say that the finally obtained body described here is almost as beautiful as “the material body (rūpakāya)” of the Buddha which is full of visual virtues. This equalization of dharmakāya and rūpakāya in visual virtues can be explained by one of the intentions of the compilers of the Suv to shift the central focus of Buddhism from stūpa worship to dharma evaluation. See, in particular, Suzuki [2003].]

Verse 30, 31 “For nine hundred ninety billion aeons I was [any number of times] born Cakravartin-king. For numerous hundreds of thousands of aeons I experienced lesser kingship. For inconceivable aeons I was Śakra, [the Lord of the gods,] likewise King Brahma whose mind is tranquil. Immeasurable are the Buddhas I have [met, served, and] pleased, whose measure can never be found.”²⁰ [ (1) See the note on Verse 2. (2) We can understand from here encouragement by the compilers of the Suv that such offerings to the Suv as illustrated in this chapter can be made even by those who are not Cakravartin-kings; in other words, even by “kings or the rich like you.” (3) The worship of the Buddhas seems to be emphasized here at first glance. Following the discourse of this chapter, however, one who wishes to worship the Buddhas has to worship the Suv if the Buddhas had already entered into their perfect peacefulness; to put it more concretely “one has to worship the Suv at present because the Buddha Śākyamuni has already entered into his perfect peacefulness.” By reason of this the worship of the Suv are to be emphasized all the more.]

Verse 32 “So immeasurable is the mass of my great merits since I heard this sûtra and rejoiced in it, as according to my desire I have obtained enlightenment (bodhi) and have attained the body composed of the Good Law (saddharmakāya).”²¹

This chapter represents that the Lord Śākyamuni has, as we have seen, obtained his enlightenment and attained dharmakāya full of visual virtues through the offerings originated in the hearing of the Suv.
The Japanese Association of Indian and Buddhist Studies

3. The Path to the Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment Represented in the Susaṅbhava-parivarta

We will now consider the path to the attainment of supreme enlightenment represented in this chapter. The path can be explained by the following five items (①〜⑤):

① To become desirous of obtaining supreme enlightenment and attaining dharmakāya.
② To see the preacher of the Sūv, and to become willing to worship the Sūv after having heard and rejoiced in the Sūv.
③ To make offerings of riches as much as possible to the Sūv [and to the preachers of the Sūv, likewise to the assemblies of the Buddhist monks to which the preachers of the Sūv belong] since at present the Buddha who had taught the Sūv already entered into his perfect peacefulness.
④ To please the immeasurable Buddhas, in case one can meet them in future lives, through the offerings not only of riches but also of life. To do as shown in ③ in case one cannot meet the Buddhas in future lives.
⑤ By the mass of those religious merits accumulated through ③ and ④ which are originated in the hearing of the Sūv, supreme enlightenment can be obtained and dharmakāya can be attained which is equal in visual virtues to rūpakāya, that is, to the stūpa equated with the living Buddha after the Buddha’s entering into his perfect peacefulness.

The following four points draw our attention: First, the religious merit aimed at in this chapter is the attainment of supreme enlightenment (①⑤), that is, supermundane merit. This first point strongly contrasts with the characteristics of “the Five Chapters” and the Devendrasamaya-parivarta, since the religious merits aimed at mainly in these successive six chapters are the mundane ones. Second, what this chapter takes up as a typical example of the offerings for the sake of attaining supreme enlightenment is the offering a king made to the teaching left behind by the former Buddha (②), not the direct offering to the stūpa which has long been equated with the living Buddha in the history of Buddhism. Third, no difference can be found between the merits accumulated through the offerings to the Sūv and those through the offerings to the Buddhas (③④). These second and third points can be associated with one of the intentions of the Mahāyāna movement to shift the central focus of Buddhism from stūpa worship to dharma evaluation.22) Fourth, since the Sūv was
compiled after the Buddha Śākyamuni had entered into his perfect peacefulness, those "receivers" to whom lay people following the discourse of this chapter make their offerings of riches become inevitably the *Suv* and the preachers of the *Suv*, likewise the assemblies of the Buddhist monks to which the preachers of the *Suv* belong. Those offerings of riches can be made use of for the sake of the prevalence and the transmission of the *Suv* or the maintenance of the monasteries because they are not the offerings to the Buddhas.

All these factors discussed in this paper and the results obtained by the previous studies taken into consideration, we have come to the present conclusion given below.

4. Conclusion

By the discourse of the *Susambhava-parivarta*, the compilers of the *Suv* attempts to encourage lay people, especially kings or the rich, who are desirous of attaining supermundane merits to make offerings of riches not to the stūpas of the Buddha Śākyamuni, but to the preachers of the *Suv* and the assemblies to which the preachers of the *Suv* belong. We can fairly suppose at least two backgrounds to this attempt: one is the intention of the Mahāyāna movement to shift the central focus of Buddhism from stūpa to dharmā, and the other is, as has been discussed in the previous studies, the wish of the compilers of the *Suv* to survive in the religious world for the sake of accomplishing the duties of the Buddhist clergy by obtaining financial aid from lay people, Whereas the religious merits aimed at in "the Five Chapters" and the *Devendrasamaya-parivarta*, which are the successive six chapters and located just before this *Susambhava-parivarta*, are mainly the mundane ones, those aimed at in this chapter are supermundane ones. Therefore by teaching those discourses of these successive seven chapters ("the Five Chapters," the *Devendrasamaya-parivarta*, and the *Susambhava-parivarta*), the compilers of the *Suv* become able to expect the offerings not only from the people who want to attain mundane merits, but also from those who want supermundane merits. Since those offerings are not "the offerings to the Buddha," the Buddhist monks can utilize them for the sake of accomplishing their transmission of the Law and religious practice for supreme enlightenment.

We can thus say that the purpose of this short paper was achieved in that the validity of *(the Hypothesis)* has been even more strengthened.
The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the Suvaṇṇaprabhāsā (T. Suzuki) (85)


2) (Texts and Abbreviations)

Suvaṇṇaprabhāsā or Suvarṇa[-pra-]bhās otamastasūtreṇātā.


(T. Taishō Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)

3) The present author calls the set of the five successive chapters consisting of the Caturmahāra- ja-parivarta (see Suzuki [2005]), the Sarasvatī-parivarta (see Suzuki [2004]), the Śri-parivarta (see Suzuki [2006]), the Dr̥gā- parivarta (see Suzuki [2007]), and the Saṃjiñāya-parivarta, “the Five Chapters on the Various Gods and Goddesses” or for short “the Five Chapters,” which tells of the various merits granted to the proponents of the Suvaṇṇaprabhāsā by the various gods and goddesses.


(T. Taishō Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)
(86) The Attainment of Supreme Enlightenment through the Offerings Represented in the *Suvāṃpūrṇaḥpālaśa (T. Suzuki)

5) These translations (either full or summarized) are mainly based on Emmerick [1996] (*The Sūtra of Golden Light: Being a Translation of the Suvāṃpūrṇaḥpālaśa, PTS*).


7) *Suvs* 146.3-146.6, *Suvψ* 115.5-8, *SuvcC* 348b3-6, *SuvcC* 391b14-17, *SuvcC* 444a21-22.


11) On the connection between the paying homage to (or worshipping) the Buddhist monks and the making offerings to them, see Sasaki [1999: 153-176], Schopen [2000: 210-225], Suzuki [2006: 49] and [2007: 69-70].


15) *Suvs* 151.18-152.6, *Suvψ* 118.5-16, *SuvcC* 349a1-9, *SuvcC* 392a12-20, *SuvcC* 444c3-8.


17) We can estimate the compilation to have taken place during and after the Gupta period (from the fourth to the sixth century). See the previous studies listed in n. 1.


22) There is room for further investigation whether this intention was influenced by the situation in which the Mahāyāna Buddhists were placed. See Schopen [2000].

23) See the note on Verse 7 and n. 11.

24) The *Yakṣārāya-parivartaka* (Chapter 22) which directly follows these seven chapters attempts to connect supermundane merits with mundane ones, and seems to serve as "a coordinator" among the successive eight chapters. The discourse of this chapter is expected to be examined in coming studies.

(This research was supported in part by Japan Society for the Promotion of Science, Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (C), 19520053, 2008.)

〈Key words〉 金光明最勝王経善生王品, 金光明経善集品, 金光明経の制作意図, 仏塔信仰と経典崇拝, インド [大乗] 仏教の実像理解

(Professor, Yamaguchi Prefectural University, D.Litt.)

— 1228 —