What the Preachers of the *Suvaṇṇaprabhāsa* Resolved in the *Kamalākara-parivarta*

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

The present author has proposed and verified the following hypothesis

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1) about the intentions of the compilers of the *Suvaṇṇaprabhāsa* (*Sūtra of Golden Light; Suv*)

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〈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 already expounded in other treatises, the compilers and the proponents of the *Suv* became more able to lead their daily religious lives in accordance with “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 the [Mahāyāna] Buddhist clergy to bring about “the independence of Mahāyāna from traditional Buddhism” and to survive in the Indian religious world by emphasizing its merit, value, usefulness, and completeness 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* lay in this attempt by collecting as many doctrines and rites as possible from the stage of the formation of the *Suv* to that of the *Suv* consistently, we can suppose that the intention of the compilers remained unchanged all through the stages of its formation. 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 [2012], which focuses on the *Deśanā-parivarta* (Chapter on Confession, Chapter 3 of the *Suv*), has provided the most recent study on this subject, and the following tentative conclusion has been reached:

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 and King Kanishka of the Kushan Empire. However during and after the Gupta period when the *Suv* was compiled, Buddhism had already lost its dominant position to Hinduism. Under such circumstances the compilers of the *Suv*, 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.

They enlarged the Suv at various times in order to emphasize its value and usefulness with their intention clearly expressed in the Deśanā-parivarta (before its enlargement, i.e., in Part 1 and Part 2) after which the Suv was titled and which has been regarded as the core chapter of the Suv.

In the enlargement of the Deśanā-parivarta (Part 3), their chief object was likely to form it more properly as sūtra literature for the sake of emphasizing the completeness of the Suv.

This paper continues to verify (the Hypothesis) by examining the Kamalākara-parivarta (Chapter (Called) “Abundance of Lotuses,” Chapter 4 of the Suv), which directly follows the Deśanā-parivarta, paying special attention to what the preachers of the Suv resolved in this Chapter 4.

2. A Survey of the Kamalākara-parivarta (Chapter 4)

The Kamalākara-parivarta is composed of the following four parts:

Part 1: The Lord tells a goddess Bodhisattvasamuccayā that a king called Suvarṇabhu-jendra formerly praised all the Tathāgatas with a praise called Kamalākara (Verses 1–21).

Part 2: The Lord tells the goddess that the king made resolve for the benefit of all the sentient beings (Verses 22–35).

Part 3: The Lord tells the Bodhisattva Ruciraketu the connection between the past and the present (Verses 36 and 37). This Part 3 is missing in the Suv3 and the Suv7, but had already existed in the Suvc1 which is the oldest version of the Suv ever known.

Part 4: The assemblies rejoiced and made up their mind to attain supreme enlightenment (Verse 38). This Part 4 exists only in the Suv7 and the Suvc3.

Now let us take a closer look at this Chapter 4.

Part 1: Suvc1 339a8–b27; Suv3 45.2–51.2; Suv7 35.3–38.16; Suvc2 378b7–c26; Suvc3 422b28–423a17.

The Opening: Then indeed the Lord spoke thus to a noble goddess Bodhisattvasamuccayā:

"Then indeed, noble goddess, at that time, at that moment, there was a king called Suvarṇabhujendra. With this praise of all the Tathāgatas (known as) Kamalākara he praises
the Lord Buddhas, past, future, and present." It is later in Part 3 revealed that the past
ing Suvarṇābhuṣendra is the present Bodhisattva Ruciraketu who is the chief character in
Chapter 3.  

Verses 1–15: The Buddhas of the past, the future, and the present with special marks
are worshipped and praised. These passages correspond to those of Verse 60–66 in Chap-
ter 3. Though Chapter 4 has more verses and more detailed description than Chapter 3 on
this subject, both chapters repeatedly emphasize that all the Buddhas are gold-colored,
shining with the color of gold. This draws our attention in relation to the title of this scrip-
ture (Śūtra of Golden Light). 

Verses 16–20: "The Buddhas’ virtues cannot be told in thousands of aeons. It is impos-
sible to tell the details of a single virtue of all the Buddhas. Even a single virtue of the
Buddhas cannot be measured." In this way the impossibility of telling Buddhas’ virtue is
emphasized. These passages correspond to those of Verses 67–69 in Chapter 3.

Verse 21: "All the Buddhas are praised and extolled by me with body, voice, and be-
lieving mind. By these excellent merits I accumulated, may all beings attain Buddhahood." 

From this Part 1 we can see that the compilers of the Suv advocate that all beings can at-
tain supreme enlightenment through the praise of the Buddhas performed by the king who
becomes the preacher of the Suv in future time. In the Suv the same kinds of account also
appear in the Sarvatathāgatastava-parivarta (Chapter 19 of the Suv) and in the Dābiān-
cāitiānūzāntānpin disānshi 大弁才天女讚歎品第三十. 

Part 2: Suvc1 339b27–340a3; Suv5 51.3–54.13; Suvf 38.17–40.21; Suvc3 378c26–379b2;
Suvc3 423a18–b16.

The passages of Part 2 correspond to those of Verses 33–55 and Verses 70–100 in Chap-
ter 3.

Verses 22 and 23: [The Lord continued to speak to the goddess.] "When the king had
thus praised the Buddhas, he made the following resolve: ‘Whenever birth may occur for
me in endless future aeons, may I see such a drum (idṛṣa bheri) in my dream, may I hear
such a confession (idṛṣa deśana), may I obtain there in every birth such a praise of the
Buddhas as the excellent Kamalākara.’" 

The king Suvarṇabhujendra stated in his vow "such a drum" and "such a confession,”
but there is no account on "such a drum" or "such a confession" in this Chapter 4. So we
can find no ground of his statement in this Chapter 4 itself. According to the previous studies such as Suzuki [2012], the account on “such a drum” and “such a confession” only appears in Chapter 3. Thus there seems no doubt that this Chapter 4 was compiled based on Chapter 3.  

Verse 24: “May I hear in my dream the endless, peerless Buddha-virtues, which are hard to obtain even in thousands of aeons, and may I expound them during the day.” These passages correspond to those of Verses 60–69 in Chapter 3.

Verse 25: “May I deliver beings from the ocean of woe, May I fulfill the Six Perfections (ṣaṭ-pāramitā). Afterwards may I obtain supreme enlightenment, May my land (kṣetra) be without a rival.” These passages correspond to those of Verses 73 and 55 in Chapter 3.

Verses 26 and 27: “By reason of the praise of all the Buddhas, may my two sons Kanakabhujendra and Kanakaprabha as well as I see the Lord Śākyamuni in future time, and may we there receive the prophecy to attain supreme enlightenment.” This account is related to the Dasadevaputrasahasrayākaraṇa-parivarta (Chapter 15 of the Sūv) in which their prophecy to attain supreme enlightenment is explained in detail.

Verse 28: “For those beings who are without rest, without protection, deprived of a refuge, and plunged in troubles, may I become in future time their protection, resort, and refuge.” These passages correspond to those of Verse 16 in Chapter 3.

Verses 29–35: “As one who causes the destruction of arising woes and one who has become a mine of every blessing, may I practice in future aeons for enlightenment as so many previous millions [of aeons] have passed. By this Confession named the Sūv may the ocean of evil be dried up for me; may the ocean of [evil] acts be destroyed for me; may the ocean of afflictions be destroyed for me; may the ocean of merit be filled for me; may the ocean of wisdom be purified for me. By the excellent splendor of flawless wisdom may I become the ocean of all virtues. Filled with jewel-like virtues, with the virtues of enlightenment, by the power of this Confession named the Sūv, may there be for me splendor of merits; may the splendor of enlightenment be pure for me. By the excellent splendor of flawless wisdom may there be splendor of body for me. By the shining of the splendor of my merit may I become distinguished in the whole triple world. Continually endowed with the power of merit, as a deliverer from the ocean of woe, and like a sea of all blessing, may I practice in future aeons for enlightenment. In future time as so many previous millions
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[of aeons] have passed, may my land be so distinguished by countless virtues as were the lands of all the Buddhas in the triple world distinguished by countless virtues.”20) These passages correspond to those of Verses 14 and 37–39 in Chapter 3, and those of Verses 3 and 4 in Chapter 1. It must be also noted here that the idea that “the Suv is Confession” is shown the same as in Chapter 1 and Chapter 3.

This Part 2 tells us that vows in Chapter 4 are only for supermundane merits such as attaining supreme enlightenment.

Part 3: Suv_{C1} 340a3–6; Suv_{S} —; Suv_{T1} —; Suv_{C2} 379b2–5; Suv_{T2} 40 n124.1–8; Suv_{C3} 423b17–20.

Verses 36 and 37: The Lord tells the Bodhisattva Ruciraketu that the king Suvarṇabhujendra at that time became the Bodhisattva Ruciraketu in this life, and that the king’s two sons also became the two sons of Ruciraketu in this life.

Part 4: Suv_{C1} —; Suv_{S} —; Suv_{T1} —; Suv_{C2} —; Suv_{T2} 40 n124.9–12; Suv_{C3} 423b21–22.

Verse 38: The assemblies rejoiced and made up their mind to attain supreme enlightenment.

3. An Examination of the Kamalākara-parivarta

As has been above mentioned, most of the accounts in this Chapter 4 also appear in other chapters of the Suv. Thus we may say that the originality of the account in Chapter 4 is considerably little. Then for what reason was Chapter 4 compiled?

What draws our attention most here is that religious merits expected in Chapter 4 are only supermundane ones, while the Suv almost throughout the text emphasizes obtaining mundane merits more than supermundane ones. This difference on the kind of merits between Chapter 4 and other chapters can be explained by the difference of the obtainers of the merits. In other chapters the obtainers of various kinds of merits include the hearers of the Suv, whereas the obtainer in Chapter 4 is the king Suvarṇabhujendra only, who is to become in future time the Bodhisattva Ruciraketu that preaches the Suv. Therefore we can say that the merits the king made resolve to obtain in Chapter 4 are those of the preachers of the Suv.

The previous studies listed in note 1 illustrate that the Suv was compiled, held, and
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preached by monks, that is, the clergy who belonged to Buddhist monasteries, besides the hearers of the Suv were expected to be lay people. In other chapters, both mundane and supermundane merits obtained by the hearers of the Suv are often referred to and the merits obtained only by the preachers of the Suv are not paid special attention. The largest characteristic of Chapter 4 lies in highlighting the fact that the preachers of the Suv essentially attempted to obtain supermundane merits. This fact elucidated in this study is entirely in accordance with the Hypothesis and the tentative conclusion that the Suv was compiled by the [Mahāyāna] Buddhist clergy who attempted to accomplish their duty to transmit Buddhism and to attain supreme enlightenment.

4. Conclusion

Under circumstances where Buddhism was declining, the compilers of the Suv, by gaining various kinds of aid from lay people, must have attempted to survive in the religious world for the sake of accomplishing the duties of the Buddhist clergy. They emphasized the merits of the Suv, especially mundane ones, in most of its chapters. In the Kamalākara-parivarta (Chapter 4), however, mundane merits are not referred to and only supermundane ones are enumerated and expected. This peculiarity of Chapter 4 can be explained in that the vows in Chapter 4 for obtaining merits are made by the preachers of the Suv, that is, not by lay people but by the clergy. From this point of view that "vows of the preachers of the Suv are only for obtaining supermundane merits," we can recognize the principle or the honor of the compilers of the Suv as the Buddhist clergy, no matter how often they emphasize mundane merits almost throughout the Suv. We can also confirm two points: First, the reason why the compilers of the Suv emphasized mundane merits is to attract lay people who have interest in obtaining mundane merits, and to gain financial aid from them. Second, the compilers of the Suv themselves did not abandon obtaining such supermundane merits as attaining supreme enlightenment. This confirmation serves to verify and strengthen the validity of the Hypothesis.

Viewing Indian Buddhism in the light of the Suv, we safely say that Indian Buddhism is in essence for the clergy, not for lay people.

Notes:
1) Suzuki, T. [2004] "Rites and Buddhism: A Perspective from the Sarasvatī-parivarta in the Su-

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2) 〈Texts and Abbreviations〉

*Suv* Suvannaprabhāsa or *Suvarṇa[-pra-]bhāsottamasūtrendraraṇāja.

*Suv*<sub>C1</sub> jinguāṃgīṃga shījuān 金光明經四卷, tr. Tânwû Chênn 暧無識. T. No. 663.


*Suv*<sub>T1</sub> ‘phags pa gSer ’od dam pa mdo sde ’i dbaṅ po ’i rgyal po žes bya ba theg pa chen po ’i mdo, ārya-Suvannaprabhāsottamasūtrendraraṇāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra, tr. unknown, P No. 176.

*Suv*<sub>C2</sub> Hēbūjīn.gzhūngīṃga bājuān 合部金光明經八卷, combined by Bào Quǐ 寶貴. T. No. 664.

*Suv*<sub>T2</sub> ‘phags pa gSer ’od dam pa mdo ’i rgyal po žes bya ba theg pa chen po ’i mdo, ārya-Suvannaprabhāsottamasūtrendraraṇāja-nāma-mahāyāna-sūtra, tr. Jinamitra, Śilendra bodhi and Ye šes sde, P No. 175.


(T. Taishō Tripiṭaka; P Peking Kanjur)

3) 〈*Suv*<sub>C</sub> 336b10–339a6 (Chânhuǐpīn disān 慈悔品第三); *Suv*<sub>S</sub> 20.1–44.19 (Dešanā-parivarta); *Suv*<sub>T1</sub> 19.0–34.18 (rMi lam mthoṅ ba’i le’u, bšags pa’i le’u); *Suv*<sub>C2</sub> 365b19–368a14 (Suv*<sub>C1</sub>, Chânhuǐpīn disī); *Suv*<sub>T1</sub> 19.0–34.18, 215.2–18 (rMi lam na bšags pa’i le’u); *Suv*<sub>C3</sub> 411a17–413c5 (Mèngjǐānjīng-gùchánhuǐpīn disī 夢見金鼓嫉悔品第四).


4) 〈*Suv*<sub>C</sub> 339a7–340a6 (Zántänpin disī 讚歎品第四); *Suv*<sub>S</sub> 45.1–54.13 (Kamalākara-parivarta); *Suv*<sub>T1</sub>
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35.0–41.4 (Me tog pad ma'i 'byun gnas kyi le'u); *Suvc₂,* 378b3–379b5 (≈ *Suvc₁*, ZāntāṃPin diqī); *Suvc₁₂* (= *Suvc₁*), 40 n124; *Suvc₃,* 422b25–423b22 (Liānhuáyūzānpīn diqī 蓮華誦品第七).


6) Translations from the *Suvc₁* (either full or summarized) are mainly based on Emmerick [1996].

7) *Suvc₁,* 339a8–9; *Suvc₂,* 45.2–6; *Suvc₃,* 35.3–8; *Suvc₂,* 378b7–8; *Suvc₃,* 422b28–c4.

8) He, in Chapter 3, in the middle of his sleep saw a golden drum, made of gold, shining everywhere like the orb of the golden sun. And in all the directions he saw innumerable Buddhas. Then he saw a man beating that golden drum, from which there came forth 102 verses on confession, the praise of the Buddhas, the merits of hearing the *Suvc₁,* and vows. As soon as he awoke, he departed for the Lord. Having approached and worshipped the Lord, he uttered those verses he had heard in the middle of his sleep from the sound of the golden drum.

9) *Suvc₁,* 339a10–b13; *Suvc₂,* 45.7–49.16; *Suvc₃,* 35.9–37.20; *Suvc₂,* 378b9–c12; *Suvc₁,* 422c5–423a5.

10) *Suvc₁,* 339b13–24; *Suvc₂,* 49.17–50.14; *Suvc₃,* 37.21–38.12; *Suvc₂,* 378c12–23; *Suvc₁,* 423a6–15.

11) *Suvc₁,* 339b25–27; *Suvc₂,* 50.15–51.2; *Suvc₃,* 38.13–16; *Suvc₂,* 378c24–26; *Suvc₁,* 423a16–17.

12) *Suvc₁,* 357a22–24; *Suvc₂,* 51.11–14; *Suvc₃,* 38.25–39.2; *Suvc₂,* 400a23–26; *Suvc₃,* 454c23–24.

13) *Suvc₁,* 455c7–10.

14) *Suvc₁,* 339b27–c3; *Suvc₂,* 51.3–10; *Suvc₃,* 38.17–24; *Suvc₂,* 378c26–379a2; *Suvc₁,* 423a18–21.

15) This, at the same time, indicates the position and the role of this Chapter 4 in the *Suvc₁.*

16) *Suvc₁,* 339c4–6; *Suvc₂,* 51.11–14; *Suvc₃,* 38.25–39.2; *Suvc₂,* 379a3–5; *Suvc₁,* 423a22–23.

17) *Suvc₁,* 339c6–9; *Suvc₂,* 51.15–52.2; *Suvc₃,* 39.3–6; *Suvc₂,* 379a5–8; *Suvc₁,* 423a24–25.

18) *Suvc₁,* 339c9–12; *Suvc₂,* 52.3–10; *Suvc₃,* 39.7–14; *Suvc₂,* 379a8–11; *Suvc₁,* 423a26–29.

19) *Suvc₁,* 339c12–15; *Suvc₂,* 53.1–4; *Suvc₃,* 39.15–18; *Suvc₂,* 379a11–14; *Suvc₁,* 423b1–2.

20) *Suvc₁,* 339c15–340a3; *Suvc₂,* 53.5–54.13; *Suvc₃,* 39.19–40.21; *Suvc₂,* 379a14–b2; *Suvc₁,* 423b3–15.

(Key words) 金光明最勝王經・金光明經（*Suvarṇa*-pra-bhāṣottamaśāntendraraśa), 蓮華誦品 (Kamalākara-parivarta), the intention of the compilers of the *Suvarṇaprabhāśā*

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