

Tibetan Graduate Studies Seminar -
'The Dharmabhāṅaka's Body and the Ontologization of Authority' with Natalie Gummer

Transcript corrected by Heather Moody

00:00:15 Rob Mayer

So, welcome everyone to the third series of our Treasure seminar and the first to be held online.

00:00:21 Rob Mayer

And the treasure Seminar is an interdisciplinary forum on treasure discovery and scriptural revelation.

00:00:28 Rob Mayer

Focusing mainly but by no means exclusively on Asian cultures.

00:00:33 Rob Mayer

And this third series will consider the interrelated themes of scriptural revelation in South Asian Buddhism, Tibetan Buddhism, and the nondual Shaivism of Kashmir.

00:00:45 Rob Mayer

Previous meetings have all been held face to face at various locations in Oxford.

00:00:50 Rob Mayer

But the Zoom era now permits us to expand our reach, and I'm delighted to introduce our first ever online speaker, Professor Natalie Gummer, a leading scholar of Mahayana Buddhism. I'm sure.

00:01:01 Rob Mayer

Most of you have heard of.

00:01:03 Rob Mayer

Natalie Gummer received her PhD from Harvard University in Buddhist Studies in 2000 and is currently Professor of Religious Studies at Beloit College in southern Wisconsin.

00:01:14 Rob Mayer

The research examines ritual poetic paradigms for the performance of Mahāyāna Buddhist sūtras in ancient South Asia.

00:01:22 Rob Mayer

With a focus on the role of the body.

00:01:24 Rob Mayer

In textualized processes of transmission and transformation.

00:01:29 Rob Mayer

She is editor of the language of the secret essays in honour of Luis Gomez.

00:01:34 Rob Mayer

And the author of several articles on Buddhist ritual and literary culture.

00:01:39 Rob Mayer

She is currently completing a monograph entitled performing the Buddhist body Mahayana sutras as ritual speech acts.

00:01:46 Natalie Gummer

Thanks, I'm so honoured to be part of this seminar and very excited about what I might learn.

00:01:54 Natalie Gummer Learn

from it.

00:01:57 Natalie Gummer

So let me just say this presentation is based on a paper that's currently under review. Of course, I've had to kind of cut it quite a lot, but hopefully it'll still make sense to people.

00:02:08 Natalie Gummer

My goal today is to investigate some of the verbal rituals that invest the Dharmabhāṅaka with power in the hopes of shedding some light on possible connections.

00:02:17 Natalie Gummer

Between this performer of the Dharma, right, the Dharmabhāṅaka, and the Tertön. Of course, I must leave it to those of you with the expertise.

00:02:25 Natalie Gummer

To determine which aspects of any of the ritual and rhetorical frameworks I will explore today might have relevance to the Tertön. I'm really excited to learn more from all of you.

00:02:39 Natalie Gummer

I'm going to focus on a single chapter in the *Saddharmapuṅḍarīka*, but let me begin by distinguishing three kinds of Dharmabhāṅaka that appear in Mahayana sutras. At least you know that's what I've counted so far.

00:02:53 Natalie Gummer

One is the Dharmabhāṅaka as an individual character, right, sometimes introduced in Jataka style narrative like Dharmodgata and the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā* or *Ratnocaya* in the *Suvarṇaprabhāsa*.

00:03:09 Natalie Gummer

Another is the generic Dharmabhāṅaka, so this is the Dharmabhāṅaka's category, and he's the focus of what, at least at first glance, appears to be theoretical reflection by the Buddha or his interlocutors.

00:03:24 Natalie Gummer

And then always hovering behind these two kinds of Dharmabhāṅaka is a third. The Dharmabhāṅaka who is performing these narratives, right? About the character or performing the reflections about the category. And, to be clear, I mean this third Dharmabhāṅaka is no more a real world character.

00:03:45 Natalie Gummer

Then the other two. He, too, is produced by the Sutra of which he is the posited performer, right? An effect of the sutra's frequent reference to its own performance.

00:03:56 Natalie Gummer

So there's a fourth point, I guess, to write the actual performer, but about him we have no direct evidence, at least in the Indic context of which I'm aware.

00:04:06 Natalie Gummer

So, my focus today is on mainly on the intersection of the 2nd and the third of these Dharmabhāṅakas and what seems to me one of the most sustained reflections.

00:04:16 Natalie Gummer

On the Dharmabhāṅaka as category, indeed, as ontological category that we have available to us.

00:04:23 Natalie Gummer

But at the same time, it's because it's meant to be performed by a Dharmabhāṅaka and therein lies its ritual performative magic right? It makes him in to a Dharmabhāṅaka in a profoundly embodied sense. 00:04:41 Natalie Gummer So, uhm.

00:04:44 Natalie Gummer

My focus is the chapter on the benefits to the performer of the Dharma of the *Saddharmapuṅḍarīka* right, which offers a particularly vivid and complex example of the conceptions of ritual performance that inform at least some Mahayana sutras and their relationship to the embodiment of power. I hope this.

00:05:04 Natalie Gummer

Investigation will clarify both what sort of performance the sutra envisions its Dharmabhāṅaka enacting, as well as the nature of the bodily transformations. The sutra promises to enact upon him in the course of his performance.

00:05:19 Natalie Gummer

A close reading of passages from this chapter reveals how the multi layered performance of the sutra which, I want to say, is a ritual and dramatic re-enactment, effects transformation of the bodies of both its performers and its auditors.

00:05:37 Natalie Gummer

As I've argued elsewhere, this bidirectional efficacy finds ample precedent in rituals for conferring, displaying, exercising, and perpetuating sovereign.

00:05:47 Natalie Gummer Power

and.

00:05:49 Natalie Gummer

And here I contend that the performance of the sutra enacts the interdependent rituals of abhiṣeka and darshan through verbal practises of impersonation, self-praise, and ontological transformation. 00:06:05 Natalie Gummer Okay, so.

00:06:08 Natalie Gummer

The practise of darshan probably best known from the act of taking darshan of material images of deities develops, as Marko Geslani recent work has shown, from much earlier rituals of sovereignty that rendered the sight of the King's newly consecrated body a source of auspiciousness.

00:06:27 Natalie Gummer

And blessing for his subjects.

00:06:30 Natalie Gummer

So, as Geslani argues, that the subsequent creation and consecration of material images for this purpose aims to redress the problem of the mortality and decrepitude of the king's fleshly body suspending the royal body at the height of auspiciousness in the ritual process.

00:06:49 Natalie Gummer

The moment when it has been bathed with the waters of appeasement and then presented, darshayet, to a viewing public, it preserves this state in petrified form, right? That's what the image does, yeah?

00:07:01 Natalie Gummer

Darshan is thus a visual encounter that emerges from a meticulous ritual performance. The royal body is made to be seen.

00:07:14 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, so enter the Buddha's quintessentially sovereign body, right?

00:07:19 Natalie Gummer

Like the Vedic king, the Mahayana Buddha attains his sovereign status through identification with the entire cosmos, achieved through repeated rituals of self-sacrifice.

00:07:34 Natalie Gummer

Uhm and confirmed or confirmed through verbal abhiṣeka, the latter consisting of his explicitly consecratory prediction to Buddhahood by previous Buddhas.

00:07:46 Natalie Gummer

And he displays his kingship in his body, ornamented with the marks of a great man, Mahāpurusa, and destined either for the universal territorial dominion of the Chakravartin or the cosmic rule, śāsana, of a Buddha over his own field.

00:08:04 Natalie Gummer

And, once he attains that body, people under his rule desire darshana of him because of the auspicious power that emanates from this perfected body.

00:08:16 Natalie Gummer

The advent of his parinirvāṇa occasions the generation of practises for ensuring that this royal power remains present and accessible, including the abhiṣeka and darshan of Buddha images and numerous other practises. The self-consecrating performance of the Dharmabhāṇaka among them.

00:08:36 Natalie Gummer

And as an aside, especially for Rob, because we've been talking a little bit about this on email, the association of the Buddha is substitutes with kingship, might also account in part for the.

00:08:47 Natalie Gummer Importance

of *yakṣa*.

00:08:49 Natalie Gummer

To the revelation and preservation of Mahayana sutras, to their protective function vis-à-vis the Dharmabhāṇaka.

00:08:56 Natalie Gummer

And perhaps also to the connexion some have noted of the Mahayana to the.

00:09:00 Natalie Gummer

Forest because I mean Geslani has pointed out that royal power depends on the King's ability to control the chaotic powers of the wilderness.

00:09:09 Natalie Gummer

So in one of the recurring motifs of this pattern, the forest shrine of a *yakṣa*, sometimes a simple seed or throne, forms the source of sovereignty. Controlling the shrine.

00:09:21 Natalie Gummer

And defeating the *yakṣa* guarantees the control and security of the Kingdom in some instances the throne in the wilderness actually serves as the site of a coronation ritual. That's all from Geslani.

00:09:35 Natalie Gummer

So the Dharmabhāṇaka body, then. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* draws explicitly and implicitly upon the ritual mechanisms of abhiṣeka and darshan in seeking to ameliorate the apparent bodily death in absence of the Buddha.

00:09:51 Natalie Gummer

Rather than consecrating material images, however, the sutra consecrates its performers and thereby its audiences. It reveals or reframes the Buddha's apparent parinirvāṇa as one of his efficacious strategies, upaya-kaushalya, his true body is the sutra itself.

00:10:10 Natalie Gummer

The performance of a Dharmabhāṇaka brings that body to life and makes it present and visible. The Dharmabhāṇaka is not yet a Buddha but, like a material, image acts as a vessel for his power and present, his verbal essence.

00:10:27 Natalie Gummer

As he performs the Buddha's litany of his sensory enhancements with his natural, *prākṛta*. body, he effects his own transformation and thus gives his audience as darshan of a body infused and transformed by the auspicious power of Buddha's speech.

00:10:46 Natalie Gummer

And unlike an image, it is a body that can bestow *abhiṣeka* as well as darshan. The *Dharmabhāṅga* in turn infuses listeners with the vital sovereign essence of.

00:10:57 Natalie Gummer The

Buddha or the sutra.

00:10:59 Natalie Gummer

Same thing. Including the ubiquitous narrative speech acts that remake or reveal the past.

00:11:06 Natalie Gummer

In future of audience members, right? This is throughout the sutras. It does this like those that instruct a material image in the life story that it thereby embodies and makes present.

00:11:19 Natalie Gummer

The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* is a brilliant ritual technology for ensuring that encounters with the sovereign power and visible presence of the Buddha can continue in the absence of his fleshly body, re embodied in other bodies.

00:11:35 Natalie Gummer

So when he speaks, the *Dharmabhāṅga* impersonates the Buddha and transforms himself and his audiences thereby.

00:11:43 Natalie Gummer

I mean transformation by mimetic impersonation has a venerable pedigree in ancient South Asia, and here I'm drawing on the work of Caley Smith

00:11:51 Natalie Gummer Smith,

who writes.

00:11:52 Natalie Gummer

Of Vedic hymns of impersonation that they present themselves as re-enactments of primordial events in the present, and that this re-enactment is ontologically homologous.

00:12:03 Natalie Gummer

To the emulated original, that is, the texts do not present this change as merely a poetic device, but a real transformation of being.

00:12:13 Natalie Gummer

The significant subcategory of Mahayana sutras that focus on their own performance and performers share with the Vedic ritual corpus the idea of a textualized essence that is transmitted through hearing, memorising and re-performing text.

00:12:29 Natalie Gummer

Surely this ritual precedent informs the self-referential rhetoric of Mahayana sutras, which are so deeply concerned with preserving and transmitting the Buddha's verbal essence, and so deliberately keyed to the moment of visual and oral performative encounter.

00:12:46 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, nowhere are these self-referential strategies more potently, performative, than in the frequent appearances of the Dharmabhāṅaka as a central topic in the dramatic utterances that come forth from his own mouth at the moment of performance. And, to my knowledge, no reference to the Dharmabhāṅaka is more spectacularly and self-referentially.

00:13:06 Natalie Gummer

Embodied, than the list of benefits to the performer of the Dharma in which the enhanced sensory capacities of the performer qua performer form the substance of the entire chapter. 00:13:20 Natalie Gummer Okay.

00:13:23 Natalie Gummer

The chapter opens with a kind of prediction made by the Buddha for performers of the.

00:13:28 Natalie Gummer

Sutra they will gain 800 attributes of the eye 1200 of the ear, 800 of the nose, 1200 of the Tongue 800 of the body, and 1200 of the minds, and these attributes will make the six.

00:13:40 Natalie Gummer

Sense organs completely pure.

00:13:43 Natalie Gummer

These sensory enhancements constitute the focus of the subsequent sense specific sections.

00:13:50 Natalie Gummer In which the.

00:13:51 Natalie Gummer

Buddha introduces each sense in turn, first in prose and then in verse.

00:13:56 Natalie Gummer

These sections tell us that although the performer does not yet possess divine divya sense faculties, his performance of the sutra will cause his natural or ordinary, prākṛta, faculties to gain the special capacities associated with divine sense organs.

00:14:16 Natalie Gummer

That is, their sensory reach pervades the cosmos.

00:14:21 Natalie Gummer

So, what's going on here? Why does the Dharmabhāṅaka performance of the sutra produce sensory enhancements, especially divya sensory enhancement enhancements?

00:14:30 Natalie Gummer

In a prākṛta body? If we read the ensuing lists as though sutra were simply trumpeting the benefits received by the performers of the sutra.

00:14:40 Natalie Gummer

Then I think we missed the complexity of.

00:14:42 Natalie Gummer

The chapters normative vision of its own performance.

00:14:46 Natalie Gummer

Part of this complexity is historical. The Dharmabhāṅga performance stands in a robust lineage of practises of ontological transformation through what Stephanie Majcher has called, "The intentional and heavily ritualised introduction of revelation into one's person."

00:15:04 Natalie Gummer

So in the Rigveda 00:15:05

Natalie Gummer

Āraṇyaka which she investigates. The person is a permeable entity into which deified sense faculties enter and become established through ritual utterance.

00:15:17 Natalie Gummer

The ritual's realisation of this profound interpenetration of language and person is what Majcher calls "becoming saṃskṛta". And the senses both as divine entities and as bodily entry points are central to this process.

00:15:36 Natalie Gummer

Impersonation serves as precisely such a mode of introduction, a way of making a potent.

00:15:42 Natalie Gummer Past

Past speech act.

00:15:43 Natalie Gummer

Present and real, and in the process transforming the person who.

00:15:47 Natalie Gummer Utters

that speech.

00:15:49 Natalie Gummer

In this context, re-enactment is a performance that engenders a real ontological transformation.

00:15:58 Natalie Gummer

The notion of a composite self, Smith writes, is how the oral tradition theorises the ontology of the individual as an entity who embodies texts and transmits text to new bodies.

00:16:15 Natalie Gummer

In the chapter on the benefits to the performer of the Dharma, the Dharmabhāṇaka is similarly, we might say becoming saṃskṛta as his sense faculties transformed through his embodiment and utterance of the sutra from prākṛta to divya.

00:16:29 Natalie Gummer

Yeah, no, the sutra does not use the term.

00:16:32 Natalie Gummer Term

Saṃskṛta.

00:16:33 Natalie Gummer

But it does use Sanskrit, right? Of a sort, and maybe the sonic power of the language to perfect, divinize, and immortalise the person offer some fresh explanations as to why. Maybe. In any case, the transformative process.

00:16:50 Natalie Gummer

And product of becoming Sanskritized buddhavacana bears a striking resemblance to that enacted in the Āraṇyakas.

00:16:59 Natalie Gummer

The Dharmabhāṇaka bodily senses gained cosmic scope through his consecratory purification, this being one of the central connotations of.

00:17:07 Natalie Gummer Some

saṃskṛta.

00:17:08 Natalie Gummer

Right? And one of the central ritual functions of Sanskrit.

00:17:13 Natalie Gummer

Which he attains through re-enacting the verbal performance of the Buddha and thus infusing himself with the Buddha's sonorous speech.

00:17:22 Natalie Gummer

In the terms of the South Asian rituals of sovereignty, he becomes the whole right. His senses perceive, his speech attracts, and his body encompasses the entire cosmos, like Sanskrit, as theorised in the Āraṇyakas. Yet as Sanskritized buddhavacana introduces qualities through language.

00:17:42 Natalie Gummer

That effect changes within the person, transmitting and perpetuating a male lineage in the process.

00:17:51 Natalie Gummer

But to fully appreciate the complexity of this performance, we need to imagine the chapter as enacted by a Dharmabhāṇaka.

00:17:58 Natalie Gummer

This chapter about the Dharmabhāṇaka's body is a script awaiting embodied performance by a Dharmabhāṇaka the words of the Buddha that the Dharmabhāṇaka utters direct attention to his own body.

00:18:11 Natalie Gummer

Receptive audiences would sense and perceive themselves to be sensed by the divine powers behind the Dharmabhāṇaka's natural sense faculties.

00:18:21 Natalie Gummer

Thus, while the sutra assumes and asserts that the body of the performer who stands before the audience is natural, *prākṛta*, in origin and substance, it also invests that body by virtue of its verbal performance with a host of supernatural qualities, right? Indeed, the explicit assertion that the Dharmabhāṇaka.

00:18:41 Natalie Gummer

Sense organs are natural, that they will not appear different from those of ordinary people, enables audiences to see the sensory powers as they see and hear the Dharmabhāṇaka performing his own bodily gifts by giving voice and body to the Buddha's sonorous speech thereon.

00:19:03 Natalie Gummer

Those proclamations may be read as a commentary on the nature of performance as well in acting the part of the Buddha, the Dharmabhāṇaka takes on the Buddha's own sensory gifts and makes them manifest to an audience. The part he plays inhabits his body and enables audiences.

00:19:21 Natalie Gummer To

see and be seen by.

00:19:23 Natalie Gummer

To have darshan of the buddhavaṇa infused body of a Buddha surrogate.

00:19:29 Natalie Gummer

And if his performance succeeds, if the audience sees his body as invested with Buddha-like powers, then, on some level he becomes more Buddha-like, confounding, a clear distinction between the performative and the ontological.

Natalie Gummer

00:19:43

Yet he remains a performer with sense faculties that appear *prākṛta* despite the manifestation of their divine scope in and through the performance.

00:19:53 Natalie Gummer

These performative effects are dramatically and distinctively embodied in the Buddha's and the Dharmabhāṇaka's utterance regarding each of the senses, and I'll turn there now.

00:20:06 Natalie Gummer

The sense-by-sense catalogue begins with a prose proclamation of the qualities of.

00:20:10 Natalie Gummer The

Dharmabhāṇaka's eye.

00:20:13 Natalie Gummer

With his purified eye, he will see the whole cosmos inside and out. Everything from the Hells below to the furthest reaches of the world above, and he will see all the beings who dwell there and know the.

00:20:24 Natalie Gummer

Karmic results of their actions.

00:20:27 Natalie Gummer

Now, silent readers might be struck by the penetrating and all-encompassing vision of his eye, right? But imagine a Dharmabhāṇaka standing before an audience uttering these words, and their effect is altered and magnified as audiences look at him in the fleshly eye, they see him seeing the entire cosmos.

00:20:47 Natalie Gummer

From top to bottom, and as he utters the words of the Buddha about the Dharmabhāṇaka.

00:20:53 Natalie Gummer That he will see.

00:20:54 Natalie Gummer

All the beings who exist there and will know.

00:20:56 Natalie Gummer The

fruits of their actions.

00:20:57 Natalie Gummer

Those in the audience see him seeing them, right? His eyes see what they cannot know about themselves.

00:21:07 Natalie Gummer

The Dharmabhāṇaka performance of the Buddha's proclamation about his own.

Natalie Gummer

00:21:12

Eyes thus sets.

00:21:13 Natalie Gummer

Up a kind of darshan-esque encounter right in which audiences see and are seen by a figure endowed with special powers, especially since what they now know about his eyes.

00:21:25 Natalie Gummer

Despite their fleshly-ness makes him more Buddha-like.

00:21:30 Natalie Gummer

The performance of the sutra is certainly a kind of re-enactment or impersonation, but with a significant twist. The figure presented as the original performer, the Buddha, takes as his topic the future impersonator who thus finds himself in the ambiguous position of playing both Dharmabhāṇaka and.

00:21:50 Natalie Gummer

Buddha, no wonder his eyes are both prākṛta and divya. This double vision makes the Buddha's verbal power present again through his surrogate, the Dharmabhāṇaka, while also making the Dharmabhāṇaka more Buddha-like.

00:22:07 Natalie Gummer

And as I pointed out before, and this is something that Paul's written about recently, too, with great eloquence, when a performance self-referentially invokes the performance situation, including auditors as well as performers, it creates a presencing effect. What had happened is happening and is happening to you.

00:22:27

Right?

00:22:29 Natalie Gummer

The dramatic force of self-referentiality thus makes the present performance a recapitulation.

00:22:37 Natalie Gummer Of

a past performance.

00:22:39 Natalie Gummer

While simultaneously making the past performance into an originary moment.

00:22:46 Natalie Gummer

Similarly, it makes the present performance the genesis of a future attainment while simultaneously making the future attainment, and here I'm talking about the performers predicted Buddhahood, right, present in this case in the very body and senses.

00:23:01 Natalie Gummer

Natalie Gummer
Of the performer.

00:23:03

The performance of the sutra makes it possible for an audience to take darshan of a Buddha via his stand-in the Dharmabhāṇaka who makes the power of a past Buddha present and accessible in his own body and speech, imbuing audiences with the auspicious power of that encounter.

00:23:21 Natalie Gummer

And the consecratory narratives of the distant past and future that Buddha and Dharmabhāṇaka reveal about their auditors are potent elements in this ritual strategy.

00:23:32 Natalie Gummer

Elements that enhance the real illusion of not only seeing but also being seen by the Buddha. You could call this.

00:23:41 Natalie Gummer

Oral/aural darshan.

00:23:48

OK.

00:23:52 Natalie Gummer

As of the other sense faculties, the Dharmabhāṇaka's ordinary ear is infused with extraordinary sensory capacity via his performance of the Buddha's speech and body through which the Buddha and his limitless oral awareness ambiguously appear.

00:24:08 Natalie Gummer

It also facilitates the experience of a Buddhist cosmic soundscape.

00:24:14 Natalie Gummer

The litany of the Dharmabhāṇaka ear benefits builds a cosmic chorus, voice by listed voice, in the prose that opens the section the Buddha and the Dharmabhāṇaka enumerate all the different sounds that resound in the ear of the performer, and thus of the audience, right this list.

00:24:34 Natalie Gummer

Itself makes for a powerful auditory experience. 52 sounds all ending in śabda vā.

00:24:41 Natalie Gummer

Write offer of gradually intensifying rhythmic tour of the oral cosmos in all its horror and beauty, and he.

00:24:49 Natalie Gummer He

hears the.

00:24:50 Natalie Gummer

Natalie Gummer
Voices of his human auditors along the way, right?

00:24:52 Natalie Gummer

Because the full range of human voices from virtuous to vicious presents itself to his ears in this passage.

00:25:00 Natalie Gummer

Out of the tumult of sound emerges, in the verses that follow, the ordered and harmonious utterance of the Dharma, which the Dharmabhāṅaka hears constantly, or so he says, when he enacts the Buddha's speech about his own ears.

00:25:15 Natalie Gummer

And his are not mere descriptive claims. His utterance acts on several levels simultaneously, by reenacting the Buddhist announcement that the Dharmabhāṅaka.

00:25:26 Natalie Gummer

Hears all these other performers of the Dharma. He makes his voice reverberate with the authority of the Buddha, whose words he speaks and hears, and his auditors.

00:25:35 Natalie Gummer

Surely hear an echo as well as other voices, like that of the Dharmabhāṅaka before them, join him in communal recitation of the Dharma.

00:25:45 Natalie Gummer

Internalising the sutra through memorization ritual, ritually purified the Dharmabhāṅaka's ear, just as the chapter promised at the outset, ensuring that he will hear the Buddhist performance of the Dharma. And as is the case with so many of the transformations simultaneously described and enacted in this chapter.

00:26:05 Natalie Gummer

This claim has a kind of tongue.

00:26:07 Natalie Gummer In

cheek quality.

00:26:08 Natalie Gummer

Um, for the memorised syllables of the sutra do indeed enable him to hear the Buddha speech while uttering that speech offers the audience darshan of his super normal hearing capacity.

00:26:23 Natalie Gummer

At least at first glance, the nose seems less relevant to the Dharmabhāṅaka oratorical impersonation than the other senses, yet smell receives the most extended treatment of all the sensors. They're 30 versus that endow him with some strikingly specific sniffing skills. The Dharmabhāṅaka.

00:26:44 Natalie Gummer

Nose smells things hidden to the other senses, right? Such as the location of women and their ornaments or animal's dens, right?

00:26:52 Natalie Gummer

Whether a child in the womb is male or female, the schemes and hypocrisies of men and where treasure, nidhāna, is buried.

00:27:03 Natalie Gummer

The ability to distinguish and follow so impressive a variety of scents not only testifies to the cosmic range of the nose, but also advertises the Dharmabhāṇaka special talents of discovery, especially when they come from his own mouth.

00:27:20 Natalie Gummer

In this respect, they exemplify a feature of the entire chapter and one that it again invites juxtaposition with Vedic hymns of impersonation.

00:27:29 Natalie Gummer

The curious way in which the Dharmabhāṇaka, by reenacting the Buddha's words about his senses, his own senses, glorifies and realises his own unseen powers of perception, without himself making any direct claims. 00:27:43 Natalie Gummer About those powers.

00:27:47 Natalie Gummer

The verses on the nose benefits bring these aspects of praise and self-assertion to the fore, in part because the Buddhist pronouncements about the Dharmabhāṇaka's ability to discover things by scent often hang on the performers ability to smell the invisible conditions, intentions, or actions of others in his contemporary communities.

00:28:07 Natalie Gummer

For instance, the Buddha says of the Dharmabhāṇaka that he knows by scent which of

00:28:12 Natalie Gummer The

the other Dharma.

00:28:12 Natalie Gummer

Bhāṇaka's possessed strong memories, are absorbed in meditation, and delight in explication and recitation.

00:28:21 Natalie Gummer

This verse makes the Dharmabhāṇaka both knower and known, right? Endowing him with a gift for smelling out the gifts and defects.

00:28:29 Natalie Gummer Of

his peers.

00:28:31 Natalie Gummer

And while he speaks this brilliantly irrefutable assertion with his own mouth, the words and their authority derive from the Buddha.

00:28:43 Natalie Gummer

So uhm, Vedic impersonation often involves performance of the genre of ātmastuti.

00:28:50 Natalie Gummer

Hymn of self-Praise, right? Which is generally marked by the use of first-person pronouns so the deity proclaims his or her own accomplishments and the body and identity of the impersonator is ontologically transformed by his re-enactment of the deity self-praise.

00:29:09 Natalie Gummer

The, aham ,the I, is simultaneously human speaker and deity who become conflated in the moment of speaking right. His performance makes.

00:29:19 Natalie Gummer

It true, right?

00:29:21 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, he says "I" and he.

00:29:23 Natalie Gummer

Makes it true.

00:29:25 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, so the transformation of the Dharmabhāṅaka.

00:29:31 Natalie Gummer

Through his impersonation of the Buddha takes similarly ontological form, yet in this most self-referential of chapters on the performer, the Buddha refers to himself not at all, and consistently refers to the Dharmabhāṅaka in.

00:29:46 Natalie Gummer The

third person, right?

00:29:48 Natalie Gummer

But imagine in the performer's mouth the use of the third.

00:29:51 Natalie Gummer

Person, perhaps unexpectedly, adds an extra layer of self-reference to the performance of the sutra.

00:29:57 Natalie Gummer

He is both recipient and ritual specialist of the authoritative speech of good does speak with the power to make real the transformations it announces as the Dharmabhāṅaka utters the Buddha's words about himself, he makes present in his own body the essence and sovereign authority of Buddhahood.

00:30:17 Natalie Gummer

In the manner of an abhiṣeka the essence of Buddhas infuses the Dharmabhāṅaka via the speech from his own mouth and those transformations make him a Buddha to be, antecedent to the full attainment of Buddhahood, and yet in acting and revealing the power and presence.

00:30:35 Natalie Gummer Of

Of Buddhas.

00:30:39 Natalie Gummer

So the chapter makes this process quite explicit.

00:30:43 Natalie Gummer

In the section on the benefits redounding to the tongue.

00:30:46 Natalie Gummer

The Dharmabhāṅaka's enhanced tongue both tastes divine flavours and produces them when he utters the Dharma, but his sweet sounds and their effects upon beings constitute the central focus of the section.

00:31:00 Natalie Gummer

Beings will be blissful and enchanted when they hear the honeyed Madura tones of his tongue which link him not only with the Buddha himself but also with honey tongued.

00:31:10 Natalie Gummer

Agni of the Rigveda and in its golden colour, liquidity and concentrated richness, honey is the very essence of fiery sovereign potency.

00:31:20 Natalie Gummer

Analogous to semen and Soma and an ingredient in the unction fluid used in the.

00:31:26 Natalie Gummer Consecration

of the king.

00:31:28 Natalie Gummer

But the Dharmabhāṅaka's golden voice makes him the auspicious focus of visual as well as auditory encounters. Rhythmic parallel clauses enumerate the wish of the different kinds of beings who populate the cosmos to behold and venerate to have darshana of the Dharmabhāṅaka, they become present to the.

00:31:48 Natalie Gummer

Imagination and gather around him as you speak.

00:31:52 Natalie Gummer

The passage culminates by proclaiming the desire for darshan, darshana kāma, of the darshan of the Dharmabhāṅaka experienced by śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas and indeed Buddhas themselves. Buddhas themselves, desired darshan of the Dharmabhāṅaka what more conclusive.

00:32:12 Natalie Gummer

Evidence of his status as a freshly consecrated Buddha standing could there be, right? Unless we missed the point, however, the passage itself concludes by making the presence of the Buddha at the performance of the Dharmabhāṅaka explicit.

00:32:26 Natalie Gummer

When this passage is performed by the Dharmabhāṇaka, the Buddha appears both before him and through him right. He is the Buddha and the

00:32:35 Natalie Gummer

Dharmabhāṇaka proclaim a fitting receptacle or substitute, bhājana, right for the teachings or qualities of the.

00:32:42 Natalie Gummer

Buddha.

00:32:44 Natalie Gummer

The sound of the Dharma, śabda.

00:32:46 Natalie Gummer

That he produces, renders an encounter Darshana with the vital and visible presence of the Buddha accessible to audiences.

00:32:56 Natalie Gummer

No longer is the death and disappearance of the Buddha at the time of his ostensible parinirvāṇa, real like images, Dharmabhāṇaka, are consecrated with the potent sovereign essence of Buddhas through the recitation of the Dharma, like consecrated images, consecrated Dharmabhāṇakas make the absent Buddha present and enable.

00:33:16 Natalie Gummer

Audiences to see him right, but unlike images, Dharmabhāṇakas themselves utter the words that literally make them into receptacles or substitutes for the Buddha.

00:33:27 Natalie Gummer

They are both means and end of the ritual of consecratory recitation. That is the raison d'être of the sutra, right?

00:33:36 Natalie Gummer

The true body of the Buddha that is eternally present and eternally visible, because all its speakers are freshly consecrated through their own performances.

00:33:49 Natalie Gummer

The section on the benefits to the Dharmabhāṇaka's body affects a similar transformation through somewhat different means. The prose section offers a pithy encapsulation and enactment of this transformation.

00:34:03 Natalie Gummer

The faculty of touch, usually associated with the body and accounts of the senses, is here superseded by a vision of the body as encompassing the cosmos and all those that inhabit it.

00:34:14 Natalie Gummer

The body of the Dharmabhāṇaka makes all those bodies visible, and just as his tongue produced in others. The desire to see him so does.

00:34:22 Natalie Gummer

His body it's a cherished sight. Priya dharshana.

00:34:25 Natalie Gummer

It seems almost to act as a kind of screen on which other bodies of other beings are made manifest, or perhaps better, we could think about the notion of the performers body incorporating the bodies and acts of others right, which reveals a conception of what it means to impersonate right.

00:34:45 Natalie Gummer

To take in and send out the vital essence of others and thereby to make them part of oneself. Participating in a ritual poetic lineage of reproduction through verbal consecration and internalisation.

00:34:59 Natalie Gummer

The note the modern notion of the.

00:35:01 Natalie Gummer

Individual is like really not very. 00:35:03

Natalie Gummer

Useful here, I don't think, yeah.

00:35:09 Natalie Gummer

So, reprising the theme of cosmic awareness, the relatively brief section on the mental gifts of the Dharmabhāṇaka that closes the chapter draws a causal connexion between engagement with the sutra and pervasive knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and stirrings of all beings.

00:35:27 Natalie Gummer

Yet most of the benefits self referentially redound to the Dharmabhāṇaka's ability to remember, comprehend, expand upon, and perform the Dharma.

00:35:36 Natalie Gummer

Unlike the other senses, aside from the tongue that is, the mind is not visible to audiences. It's enhancement of the Dharma.

00:35:45 Natalie Gummer

Bhānika's performance, however, is conspicuous and profound when he hears even one verse he will understand it's many meanings I'm quoting from the sutra here, and thus.

00:35:56 Natalie Gummer

Filled with comprehension, he will teach a discourse on that theme for a whole month, even for four months, even for a year.

00:36:03 Natalie Gummer

And despite the astonishing duration of this performance, his memory of the discourse that he utters will not suffer loss.

00:36:13 Natalie Gummer

And while he does not yet have the knowledge of a Buddha, whatever he teaches about the Dharma is true. It's all been said before my previous Buddhas.

00:36:24 Natalie Gummer

As with the verses about the Dharmabhāṅaka sense of smell, the Dharmabhāṅaka here articulates a kind of indirect third person self-praise when he speaks.

00:36:33 Natalie Gummer

The Buddha's words about his own mind, right? But that self-praise affects an ontological change as it fills his *prākṛta* mind with the knowledge.

00:36:44 Natalie Gummer

And authority of Buddha, in a kind of verbal *abhiṣeka*.

00:36:48 Natalie Gummer

The mind embodied language of the sutra, the sound potency and seemingly infinite meaning that unfolds from its recitation, and contemplation is both cause and result, both means and end of these transformations.

00:37:05 Natalie Gummer

We might say, following David Schulman, that "Being and knowing are somehow equivalent in this context, as in so many areas of Indian thought epistemology, shades off into ontology and vice versa. To know the truth is to become that truth in a transformative and experiential manner."

00:37:25 Natalie Gummer

In the very moment of performance, the Dharmabhāṅaka body, his mind being one of the senses. Of course, right is in the process of becoming truth right in the process of incorporating and expressing the essence of would do at once verbal and substantial epistemological and ontological.

00:37:46 Natalie Gummer

And the audience bears witness to these invisible but not imperceptible transformations.

00:37:53 Natalie Gummer

The final verses of the section on the mind and of the chapter summarise the practise concisely, the practises of memorising and reciting the sutra produce a mind that produces *buddhavacana* antecedent to and yet not in conflict with the unobstructed knowledge of a Buddha.

00:38:13 Natalie Gummer

The Dharmabhāṅaka standing on the ground or stage of an exalted teacher, *ācārya bhūmi*. produces a mind capable not only of producing true *buddhavacana*, but also of comprehending its meaning.

00:38:28 Natalie Gummer

And when he utters these verses spoken by the Buddha about the Dharmabhāṅaka mind, he performs the process of impersonation.

00:38:38 Natalie Gummer

Ontologically transform transforming his body, mind, senses, into the textualized essence of Buddhahood through the incorporation of that same speech or knowledge.

00:38:54 Natalie Gummer

So just to wrap up here, the chapter on the benefits to the performer of the Dharma sheds light on the self referentiality of Mahayana buddhavacana as a normative mode of performed and performative utterance that aims to transform both speakers and listeners. The performance.

00:39:12 Natalie Gummer

Of the Dharmabhāṅaka makes present and potent the essence and agency of the Buddha.

00:39:17 Natalie Gummer

Brought to life as his speech occupies the living body of his impersonator.

00:39:24 Natalie Gummer

But the Dharmabhāṅaka also makes the Buddha's performance present as past, right, as original, and as future since he will be brought to life whenever the sutra is performed.

00:39:38 Natalie Gummer

And just as the Buddha's presence is manifested in the very moment of performance that marks.

00:39:43 Natalie Gummer His speech as.

00:39:43 Natalie Gummer

Past and offers him an eternal future, right?

00:39:47 Natalie Gummer

So, the Dharmabhāṅaka present manifestation of Buddha essence in his prākṛta body, consecrates himself as a future would done in part by re-enacting, the Buddhist glorification.

00:39:57 Natalie Gummer

Of who the Dharmabhāṅaka is and will become.

00:40:04 Natalie Gummer

As audience members are given darshan of a Buddha through the Dharmabhāṅaka's re-enactment, they not only see but are seen by him bathed in the auspicious sovereign power that radiates from his continually self-consecrated body. They both witness and undergo the potent present.

00:40:22 Natalie Gummer

Enactment of lineage transmission.

00:40:25 Natalie Gummer

As a receptacle or substitute, bhājana, for the Buddha, the Dharmabhāṇaka makes the Buddha's speech about the past, present and future of both performers and audience members act in the moment of performance.

00:40:39 Natalie Gummer

If darshan encompasses both perceiving and being perceived by the auspicious receptacle of sovereign power, this presencing effect is a form of oral or aural darshan right? The Dharmabhāṇaka not only makes the Buddha visible through his own performative ontological transformations.

00:40:59 Natalie Gummer

But also enables the Buddha to see and speak anew to every audience and through every speaker teaching others, after all, is a crucial part of what makes the Buddha a Buddha, right?

00:41:12 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, in the endlessly transmissible and repeatable abhiṣeka that is the performance of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, which aims to infuse everyone with its essence of sovereign Buddhahood and thus to extend its own reign and lineages eternally and throughout the cosmos. The Dharmabhāṇaka fulfils the role of both virtuoso.

00:41:33 Natalie Gummer

Ritual specialist and potent embodiment.

00:41:36 Natalie Gummer

Prokrita, yet imbued with Buddhavacana.

00:41:40 Natalie Gummer

Uhm, so I guess the question is in what ways, if at all, these ritual strategies inform the performance of the tertön. 00:41:52 Natalie Gummer

Thank you very much.

00:41:55 Rob Mayer

Thank you, Natalie, for that really fascinating talk.

00:41:58 Rob Mayer

I really have got a lot to learn.

00:42:01 Rob Mayer

About Dharmabhāṇakas.

00:42:02 Rob Mayer

It's a very interesting topic.