

READING THE WORDS OF THE BUDDHA

~

***THE PROFOUND AND VAST
MAHAYANA SUTRAS***

For internal use only

*Exclusively for the use of the
Rime Shedra NYC Core Texts Program
A program of Shambhala Meditation Center of New York
First Edition*

Reading the Words of the Buddha

The Profundity and Vastness of the Mahayana Sutras

Tuesdays, 7-9:15 pm, from September 25th to December 11th
(Omitting November 20th)

I. 9/25: Introduction to the Profound and Vast Teachings of the Buddha

- A. Flawless Purity: A Dialogue with the Laywoman Gangottara, in *A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra*, Translated by BAUS, pp. 37-40
- B. The Teachings, from *The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems*, by Longchen Rabjam, Translated by Richard Barron, pp. 14-19
- C. The Religious Literature, in *Buddhist Civilization in Tibet*, by Tulku Thondrup, p. 51
- D. Three Phases of Revelation, from *Crystal Mirror VIII: Light of Liberation*, pp. 113-125
- E. Classification of Teachings, excerpt from Heian Buddhism, in *Foundation of Japanese Buddhism*, by D&A Matsunaga, pp. 152

II. 10/3: The Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita Sutra –Diamonds Are Never

- A. Outline of the Diamond Sutra, by Edward Conze
- B. The Diamond Sutra, from *The Diamond Sutra: Transforming the Way we Perceive the World*, Translated by Mu Soeng, pp. 141-155
- C. Chapter XXXI: Dharmodgata, *The Perfection of Wisdom in Eight Thousand Lines*, Translated by Conze, pp. 191-198

III. 10/9: Kashyapa Parivarta Sutra – The Interrogation by the Bodhisattva Kashyapa

- A. Excerpt from The Sutra of Assembled Treasures, in *A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra*, Translated by The Buddhist Association of the United States, pp. 395-411
- B. The Middle Path According to the Kasyapaparivarta-sutra, Leslie Kawamura, from *Wisdom, Compassion and the Search for Understanding*, Ed. Jonathan A. Silk, pp. 221-232

IV. 10/16: Lankavatara Sutra – The Buddha's Vacation in Sri Lanka

- A. *The Lankavatara Sutra: A Zen Text*, Translation and Commentary by Red Pine
 - 1. Chapter XXIII, p. 99
 - 2. Chapter LXIV-LXVIII, pp. 127-129
 - 3. Chapter LXV-LXVIII, pp. 181-193
 - 4. Chapter LXXVII-LXXIX, pp. 221-231
 - 5. Chapter LXXX-LXXXII, pp. 233-243
 - 6. Chapter LXXXVI-LXXXVII, pp. 253-255

V. 10/23: Saddharma Pundarika Sutra - The White Lotus of the True Dharma

- A. *The Lotus Sutra: A Contemporary Translation of a Buddhist Classic*, Translated by Gene Reeves:
 - 1. A Parable, pp. 103-118
 - 2. The Lifetime of the Tathagata, pp. 291-299
 - 3. Divine Powers of the Tathagata, pp. 344-349

VI. 10/30: Samdhinirmocana Sutra –The Buddha’s Hermeneutic Explained

- B. *The Wisdom of Buddha: The Samdhinirmocana Sutra*, Translated by John Powers
 - 1. Chapter Six: The Questions of Gunakara, pp. 79-91 (even pages only)
 - 2. Chapter Seven: The Questions of Paramarthasamudgata, pp. 93-145 (even pages only)

VII. 11/6: Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra – The Cosmic Humor of the Licchavi Vimalakirti

- A. Excerpt from *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* by Dudjom Rinpoche Translated by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein, page 454
- B. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, Translated by Robert A.F. Thurman:
 - 1. Introduction, pp. 1-9
 - 2. Chapter One: Purification of the Buddha Field, pp. 3-11
 - 3. Chapter Two: Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique, pp. 12-14
 - 4. Chapter Three: The Disciples' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti, pp.15-24
 - 5. Chapter Four: The Reluctance of the Bodhisattvas, pp. 25-31

VIII. 11/13: Vimalakirti Nirdeśa Sutra – Part Two

- A. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti*, Translated by Robert A.F. Thurman:
 - 1. Chapter Five: The Consolation of the Invalid, pp. 32-38
 - 2. Chapter Six: The Inconceivable Liberation, pp. 39-43
 - 3. Chapter Seven: The Goddess, pp. 44-51
 - 4. Chapter Nine: The Dharma-Door of Nonduality, pp. 52-56

IX. 11/27: Shrimāladevi Simhananda Sutra – The Dialogue with Queen Shrimāladevi

- C. Excerpt from The True Lion’s Roar of Queen Shrimālā, in *A Treasury of Mahayana Sutras: Selections from the Maharatnakuta Sutra*, Translated by The Buddhist Association of the United States, Ed. By Garma C.C. Chang, pp. 371-383
- D. The Concept of Tathagatagarbha in the Srimāladevi Sutra, by Diana Paul, in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 99, No. 2, , pp. 191-198

X. 12/4: Tathagatagarbha – The Matrix of the Enlightened Ones

- E. The Tathagatagarbha Sutra, Translated by William Grosnick, from *Buddhism in Practice*, Ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr., pp. 1-12
- F. *The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, Translated by Kosho Yamamoto,
 - 1. On the Adamantine Body, pp. 43-47
 - 2. On The Nature of the Tathagata, excerpt on pp. 101-103

XI. 12/11: Avatamsaka Sutra - The Aspiration of Bodhisatva Samantabhadra

- G. The Meditation of the Enlightening Being Universally Good, from *The Flower Ornament Scripture*, Translated by Thomas Cleary, pp. 176-181
- H. The Aspiration Prayer For The Excellent Conduct Of The Noble Ones, from *The Gate of Entry into the Limitless Activities of The Supreme Noble Ones: A Short Commentary on The Aspiration Prayer For The Excellent Conduct Of The Noble Ones By Lochan Dharmashri*, Translated by Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche and Gerry Wiener, pp. 1-9

A Treasury of
Mahāyāna Sūtras
Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra

大寶積經

Translated from the Chinese by
The Buddhist Association of the United States
Garma C. C. Chang, General Editor

The Pennsylvania State University Press
University Park and London

3 恆河上優婆夷會
Flawless Purity: A Dialogue with the
Laywoman Gaṅgottarā

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada, in the Jeta Grove near Śrāvastī. At that time, a laywoman named Gaṅgottarā came from her dwelling in Śrāvastī to see the Buddha. She prostrated herself with her head at the Buddha's feet, withdrew to one side, and sat down.

The World-Honored One asked Gaṅgottarā, "Where do you come from?"

The laywoman asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if someone were to ask a magically produced being where he came from, how should the question be answered?"

The World-Honored One told her, "A magically produced being neither comes nor goes, neither is born nor perishes; how can one speak of a place from which he comes?"

Then the laywoman asked, "Is it not true that all things are illusory, like magic?"

The Buddha said, "Yes, indeed. What you say is true."

Gaṅgottarā asked, "If all things are illusory, like magic, why did you ask me where I came from?"

The World-Honored One told her, "A magically produced being does not go to the miserable planes of existence, nor to heaven; nor does he attain nirvāṇa. Gaṅgottarā, is that also true of you?"

The laywoman replied, "As I see it, if my own body were different from a magically produced one, then I could speak of going to the good or miserable planes of existence, or of attaining nirvāṇa. I see no difference, though, between

Sūtra 31, Taishō 310 pp. 549–550; translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci.

my body and a magically produced one, so how can I speak of going to the good or miserable planes, or of attaining nirvāṇa?

"Furthermore, World-Honored One, nirvāṇa's very nature is such that it is not reborn in the good or miserable planes, nor does it experience parinirvāṇa. I perceive that the same is true of my own nature."

The Buddha asked, "Do you not seek the state of nirvāṇa?"

Gaṅgottarā asked in turn, "If this question were put to one who had never come into being, how should it be answered?"

The Buddha replied, "That which has never come into being is nirvāṇa itself."

Gaṅgottarā asked, "Are not all things identical with nirvāṇa?"

The Buddha replied, "So they are, so they are."

"World-Honored One, if all things are identical with nirvāṇa, why did you ask me, 'Do you not seek the state of nirvāṇa?'"

"Furthermore, World-Honored One, if a magically produced being asked another magically produced being, 'Do you not seek the state of nirvāṇa?' what would the answer be?"

The World-Honored One told her, "A magically produced being has no mental attachments [and thus seeks nothing]."

Gaṅgottarā inquired, "Does the Tathāgata's very question stem from some mental attachment?"

The World-Honored One told her, "I raised the question because there are in this assembly good men and good women who can be brought to maturity. I am free of mental attachments. Why? Because the Tathāgata knows that even the names of things are inapprehensible, let alone the things themselves or those who seek nirvāṇa."

Gaṅgottarā said, "If so, why all the accumulation of good roots for the attainment of enlightenment?"

[The Buddha replied.] "Neither Bodhisattvas nor their good roots can be apprehended, because in the Bodhisattvas' minds there is no discriminative thought as to whether they are accumulating good roots or not."

Gaṅgottarā asked, "What do you mean by 'no discriminative thought'?"

The World-Honored One answered, "The absence of discriminative thought cannot be understood or grasped by means of thinking. Why? Because in the state [of no discriminative thought], even the mind is inapprehensible, let alone the mental functions. This state, in which the mind is inapprehensible, is called inconceivable. It cannot be grasped or realized; it is neither pure nor impure. Why so? Because, as the Tathāgata always teaches, all things are as empty and unimpeded as space."

Gaṅgottarā inquired, "If all things are like empty space, why does the World-Honored One speak of form, feeling, conception, impulse, and consciousness; the [eighteen] elements; the [twelve] entrances; the twelve links of dependent origination; the defiled and the undefiled; the pure and the impure; saṃsāra and nirvāṇa?"

The Buddha told Gaṅgottarā, "When I speak of a 'self,' for example, although I express the concept by a word, actually the nature of a 'self' is inapprehensible. I speak of form, but in reality the nature of form is also inapprehensible, and so it is with the other [dharma], up to nirvāṇa. Just as we cannot find water in mirages, so we cannot find a nature in form, and so it is with the others, up to nirvāṇa."

"Gaṅgottarā, only a person who cultivates pure conduct in accordance with the Dharma, perceiving that nothing can be apprehended, deserves to be called a real cultivator of pure conduct. Since the arrogant say that they have apprehended something, they cannot be said to be firmly established in genuine pure conduct. Such arrogant people will be terrified and doubtful when they hear this profound Dharma. They will be unable to liberate themselves from birth, old age, sickness, death, worry, sorrow, suffering, and distress."

"Gaṅgottarā, after my parinirvāṇa, there will be some people able to spread this profound Dharma, which can stop the rounds of saṃsāra. However, some fools, because of their evil views, will hate those Dharma-masters, and will contrive to harm them. Such fools will fall to the hells for that."

Gaṅgottarā asked, "You speak of this profound Dharma which can stop the rounds of saṃsāra. What do you mean by 'stop the rounds of saṃsāra'?"

The World-Honored One replied, "To stop the rounds of saṃsāra is [to penetrate] reality, the realm of the inconceivable. Such a Dharma cannot be damaged or destroyed. Hence, it is called the Dharma that can stop the rounds of saṃsāra."

Then the World-Honored One smiled graciously and emitted from his forehead blue, yellow, red, white, and crystalline lights. The lights illuminated all the numerous lands, reaching as high as the Brahmā Heaven, then returned and entered the top of the Buddha's head.

Seeing this, the Venerable Ānanda thought to himself, "The Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Supremely Enlightened One, does not smile without a reason." He rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, and joined his palms toward the Buddha, inquiring, "Why did the Buddha smile?"

The Buddha replied, "I recall that, in the past, a thousand Tathāgatas also taught this Dharma here, and each of those assemblies was also led by a laywoman named Gaṅgottarā. After hearing this Dharma preached, the laywoman and all the assembly left the household life. [In time,] they entered the nirvāṇa without residue."²

Ānanda asked the Buddha, "What name should be given to this sūtra and how should we accept and uphold it?"

The Buddha said, "This sūtra is called 'Flawless Purity,' and you should accept and uphold it by that name."

During the preaching of this sūtra, seven hundred monks and four hundred nuns were liberated from defilements forever and their minds were set free.

At that time, the gods of the Realm of Desire magically produced various

kinds of wonderful celestial flowers and scattered them upon the Buddha, saying, "Rare indeed is this laywoman, who can converse fearlessly with the Tathāgata on equal terms. She must have served and made offerings to countless Buddhas, and planted good roots of every kind in their presence."

After the Buddha had finished speaking this sūtra, the laywoman Gaṅgotarā and all the gods, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and so forth were jubilant over the Buddha's teaching. They accepted it with faith, and began to follow it with veneration.

NOTES

1. The word 'nature' here is a translation of the Chinese character 相, which is more often rendered as 'sign', 'attribute', 'characteristic', 'appearance', 'form', etc. However, in certain sūtras, 相 is sometimes also used to mean 性, which is properly translated as 'nature'.
2. Whether the Gaṅgotarā referred to here is the same individual as the Gaṅgotarā present during the preaching of this sūtra is not clear from the text. Though she could be another person with the same name and similar karma, it is likely that she is the same person. The question may arise, "If Gaṅgotarā left the household life and entered nirvāṇa without residue long ago, how is it that she appears here as a lay questioner?"

According to the Hīnayāna doctrine, this question is almost impossible to answer, since that tradition asserts that if one enters nirvāṇa without residue, one never returns to the world. In Mahāyāna, however, the occasion of a Dharma preaching is looked upon as a drama which may be replayed again and again, and a person who has entered nirvāṇa may reappear in a body to benefit sentient beings.

The Mahāyāna description of nirvāṇa, called "non-abiding nirvāṇa," states that it is possible to achieve liberation and yet remain in the world for universal salvation. Such a person abides neither in saṃsāra nor in nirvāṇa. However, the nonabiding nirvāṇa of Mahāyāna is not contradictory to the Hīnayāna understanding of nirvāṇa. This is clearly demonstrated by the famous story of the "Buddha's silence" (see *Aggi-Vachagottasutta*, in I.B. Horner, trans., *The Middle Length Sayings* (London: Luzac & Co., 1957), vol.2, pp. 162-167) when he refused to answer the question whether after parinirvāṇa there exists a being which is conscious of that state. Thus, even according to the Buddha's teaching in the Pāli tradition, one cannot say nirvāṇa is annihilation, or that he who enters nirvāṇa will never return to the world. The Buddha gave neither an affirmative nor a negative answer to this problem. (G.C.)

4 善住意天子會

How to Kill with the Sword of Wisdom

I

Thus have I heard. Once the World-Honored One was dwelling on Mount Grdhrakūṭa near the city of Rājagṛha, accompanied by sixty-two thousand great monks, all of whom possessed great virtue and were endowed with miraculous powers. The monks were led by certain great Śrāvakas.

Also in the assembly were forty-two thousand Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, led by Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, Bodhisattva Lion Banner, Bodhisattva Maitreya, Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, Bodhisattva Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Bodhisattva King of Great Eloquence, . . . and others.

Also in the assembly at that time were sixty thousand devas, led by the Four Deva Kings; the deva kings of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three; and Brahmā, master of the Sāhā World. Present, too, were the devas Well-Abiding Mind, Virtue, and Great Ease, leaders of thirty thousand devas who had long been abiding in the Bodhisattva-path; twenty thousand asura kings; . . . and sixty thousand great dragon kings, . . . all of whom had also been abiding in the Bodhisattva Path. In addition, innumerable gods, dragons, yakṣas, . . . monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen joined the assembly.

When the World-Honored One, surrounded by the assembly of countless hundreds of thousands, was teaching the Dharma, Bodhisattva-Mahāsattva Mañjuśrī, in his dwelling place, had entered the Samādhi Devoid of Contention and Mind, remaining quiet and motionless. Then Mañjuśrī rose from the samādhi with a calm mind, and at once six quakes occurred in innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten directions.

The Precious Treasury of Philosophical Systems

*A Treatise Elucidating the Meaning of the
Entire Range of Spiritual Approaches*



Longchen Rabjam

Translated by Richard Barron
(Lama Chökyi Nyima)



PADMA PUBLISHING

2007

turning the wheel of dharma,
 and passing into nirvana: all those who demonstrate these
 deeds²⁵
 do so within the total range of impure realms
 for as long as there is conditioned existence.²⁶

II. THE TEACHINGS

After having thus awakened to buddhahood, the Buddha turned the wheel of dharma in the following ways.

A. The Hinayana Interpretation

According to the shravaka schools, the Buddha did not teach for a period of seven weeks after his enlightenment. Then, in response to supplications by Brahma and Indra, he journeyed to Varanasi, where he taught the four truths. His audience, made up of “the five noble ones” as well as eighty thousand gods, perceived the truth.²⁷ From that point until his eightieth year, the Buddha presented his teachings in three stages. These schools maintain that he taught in response to specific situations, giving a distinct teaching in each place according to the capacities of those to be guided. *The Scriptural Transmission of Vinaya* states:

On the banks of the Varata River, he gave to the nagas a great outpouring of teachings concerning the ten kinds of positive actions. . . . The descendants of Vasishtha, together with their five hundred attendants, simultaneously gained unclouded vision free of distortions through the teachings on unsurpassable enlightenment.²⁸

Regarding the Buddha’s passing into nirvana at the age of eighty, *The Great Treasury of Detailed Explanations* explains:

In each of the following locations, the Sage,
 the sublime person, spent one year:
 the sacred site where he turned the wheel of dharma,²⁹ Vaishali,
 Makkola, the abode of the gods,
 Shishumara, Kaushambhi,
 Atavaka, Chaityargira,
 the bamboo grove of Venuvana, Vairata,
 and the city of Kapilavastu. [9a]
 He spent two years at the sacred site of Blazing Cave,

four in the medicinal groves of Bhaishajyavana,
 and five in the city of Rajagriha.
 He spent six years practicing austerities,
 twenty-three in Shravasti,
 and twenty-nine at the palace.
 Thus, the Victorious One was eighty
 when he, the holy and sublime sage, passed into nirvana.³⁰

Some shravaka authors maintain that he prolonged his life for two months, as we read in *The Commentary on "The Hundred Thousand Stanzas"*:

Having vanquished Mara, the lord of death, he prolonged his life
 for two months.³¹

B. The Ordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the well-known interpretation of the ordinary Mahayana, in the excellent place of Varanasi, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue made up of the five noble ones and eighty thousand gods, teaching the excellent dharma—the first cycle of the Buddha's words, the various teachings pertaining to the four truths; this he did between the ages of thirty-six and forty-two. He began by teaching principally the training in discipline, what came to be known as the compilation of Vinaya. The ethical codes of Vinaya contain extensive overviews that classify actions according to their nature or their relation to formal precepts. The discourses of Vinaya concern the stages of meditative absorption and the celibate way of life undertaken in yogic practice. The further teachings of Vinaya give extensive, detailed explanations and analyses of these topics.

Then, at the excellent place of Vulture Peak, [9b] the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to several excellent retinues. Among the four relatively ordinary retinues were about five thousand arhats, including Shariputra and Maudgalyayana;³² about five hundred nuns, including Shakyamuni's stepmother, Prajapati; and groups of laypeople, including the householder Anathapindaka and the laywoman Sagama. As well, there were enormous numbers of gods, nagas, demigods, and gandharvas. The extraordinary retinue was made up of an enormous number of bodhisattvas—including Bhadrapala, Ratnasambhava, and Jaladatta—who had truly attained great levels of realization. On excellent occasions, he taught these reti-

nues the excellent dharma—the intermediate cycle of the Buddha’s words, the various teachings pertaining to the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent; this he did between the ages of forty-three and seventy-two. He taught principally the training in mind, what came to be known as the compilation of Sutra. The ethical codes of Sutra classify the precepts of the bodhisattva vow. The discourses of Sutra discuss meditative absorption in profound and extensive ways. The further teachings of Sutra analyze related topics—spiritual levels and paths, powers of recall, and meditative absorption—in great detail.

Then, in excellent places—not any one place—such as the human world and the abodes of gods and nagas, on excellent occasions, the excellent teacher Shakyamuni spoke to an excellent retinue of innumerable monks, nuns, gods, nagas, bodhisattvas, and others, [10a] teaching the excellent dharma—the final cycle of the Buddha’s words, the various teachings pertaining to definitive truth; this he did between the ages of seventy-three and eighty-two. He taught principally the training in sublime knowing, what came to be known as the compilation of Abhidharma. The ethical codes of Abhidharma have to do with taming the afflictive states in ways that are easy to implement and involve little hardship.³³ The discourses of Abhidharma discuss the vast range of techniques for engaging in the experience of suchness. The further teachings of Abhidharma analyze in great detail the mind-body aggregates, the fields of experience, the components of perception, the controlling factors, consciousness, and tathagatagarbha (the innately, totally pure “buddha nature”) and discuss related topics.³⁴ As the sutra *The Seven Hundred Stanzas* states:

The Sage taught the collections of the dharma thoroughly
to benefit beings.
In stages, at various places and times,
the Buddha imparted his teachings in melodious tones.

C. The Extraordinary Mahayana Interpretation

According to the extraordinary interpretation, in terms of the intelligence of those to be guided, for those whose karma allowed them to comprehend the teachings gradually, it seemed that the Buddha taught in three successive cycles. For those whose intelligence enabled them to comprehend everything all at once, he seemed to teach, in its entirety and on a

single occasion, everything that needed to be taught. According to the sutra *The Majestic Array of Qualities*:

Without saying anything at all, [10b]
 I manifest to beings in infinite and pervasive ways.³⁵
 When there are those who sincerely wish to comprehend in a
 gradual way,
 that is what occurs for all of them.
 For those who comprehend all at once,
 the varieties of spiritual teachings manifest in their entirety.
 Such is the great quality of enlightened speech—
 to fulfill beings' hopes just as they wish.

Some masters hold exclusively that the three cycles were taught all at once, while others maintain that they were taught in stages. Both points of view amount to nothing more than ignorance of the significance underlying the distinction between the ordinary and extraordinary interpretations, which is based on the acumen of individual beings.

Like a precious wish-fulfilling gem, then, the Teacher ensured benefit for beings exactly according to their interests. This benefit came about because, by his blessings, individual beings heard him, his speech marked by sixty melodious qualities, as if he were speaking in their respective languages. Nevertheless, these words and sounds actually had no autonomous existence. Their manifestation was similar to that of an echo and arose because of the coming together of three things: the interests of those to be guided, the Buddha's blessings, and the occasions on which these two factors coincided. *The Highest Continuum* explains:

The sound of an echo
 occurs within someone's consciousness;
 it is nonconceptual and unfabricated.
 Similarly, the enlightened speech of the Tathagata
 occurs within someone's consciousness,
 but it is not located externally or internally.³⁶

Referring to the same theme, *The Amassing of the Rare and Sublime* states:

O Shantimati, from the night that I awakened to manifestly perfect buddhahood to the night that I pass into nirvana, [111a] I will not have spoken even a single syllable of spiritual teachings.

Some ignorant people say that this means he did not teach in the ultimate sense, only in the relative sense. But they seem to be confused about what is actually so—that enlightened speech, which is beyond words and letters, seems to be expressed in words and letters that conform to the perceptions of beings.

Therefore, regarding these cycles of the Buddha's words, which manifested in the perceptions of those to be guided, let us put aside the question of whether he taught in a single or in numerous locations. When those to be guided differ in three ways—in terms of bias, character, and interest—what each of them hears the Tathagata speak will be a different teaching, and all of these teachings will occur simultaneously. In *The Majestic State of Meditative Absorption*, we read the following:

Benefactor of the world, a single instance of your enlightened speech
arises as sounds that accord with different interests.
Each one thinks, "This is what the Victorious One taught me."
That is why you smile.

Moreover, the sutra *Prophetic Enlightened Intent* states:

In a single instance of vajra speech—
nonconceptual, unchanging, and delightful—
there are many different interpretations
based on the mentalities of those to be guided.

Because it seemed to some that the Buddha spoke these three cycles of teachings in succession at different times, there exists such a classification. As *The Intermediate-Length "Mother"* indicates:

How marvelous that in the human world there occurred the second turning of the wheel of dharma!

According to *The Perfection of Sublime Knowing in Seven Hundred Stanzas*:

Restating his teaching three times, [11b] he turned the wheel of dharma in twelve ways.³⁷

There are also cases in which what the single Teacher spoke on a single occasion in a single place was perceived as different teachings by the individuals to be guided. The sutra *The Array of Treasure Urns* states:

On that occasion, some bodhisattvas heard a variety of teachings about supreme compassion, while others heard a variety of teachings about the characterization of phenomena as nonexistent.

As we find in *The Definitive Commentary on Enlightened Intent*:

. . . for while different teachings were spoken, they were not explained in separate places on separate occasions.

You may wonder, “Doesn’t the preceding citation disprove the claim that the Buddha ever spoke in stages?” However, the intended meaning of the foregoing passages is that a single theme of the teachings is subject to different analyses and that no other location or occasion is involved; but this does not imply that he did not speak on other topics in other places and at other times.

III. THE BUDDHA’S NIRVANA

Then, at age eighty-two, the Buddha saw that he could no longer ensure benefit by continuing to manifest physically, so it became his intention to demonstrate his passing into nirvana. The sutra *The Exalted Passing into Complete Nirvana* states:

At this time, when the life span is one hundred years,
it is only fitting that I pass into nirvana at eighty.
But for your sake, O brahmin,
I will endeavor to prolong my life for an additional two.³⁸

The ordinary scriptural sources state that he lived for eighty years, whereas the extraordinary sources state that he lived to be eighty-two.³⁹ [12a] Although different methods of calculation are involved, these sources are considered to be in fundamental agreement. An excellent explanation is given by the master Bhavadeva, who states that if one counts the actual years, there were eighty, whereas if one counts from the Buddha’s birth (disregarding the ten months he spent in the womb) and adds up the intercalary months, one arrives at a total of eighty-two. That is, by separately counting the intercalary month that was traditionally added every three years, at the end of eighty years one obtains a total of twenty-four months (or two years) extra, thus giving the total of eighty-two; there are also the two months by which the Buddha deliberately extended his life. Alternatively, there are twenty days that can be counted as the

I. THE RELIGIOUS LITERATURE

The religious literature can be classified in two ways:

(A) according to origin and (B) according to subject. According to origin, there is first of all (1) a large body of literature translated from Indian sources into Tibetan. Secondly, (2) there is the enormous volume of religious works written by Tibetan scholars. According to subject, the religious literature falls into four divisions: 1. Religion, 2. History and Biography, 3. Poetic Composition and Yogic Songs and 4. Art, Music and Dance.

A) Religious Literature — According to Origin

1. The Literature Translated from Tibetan Sources

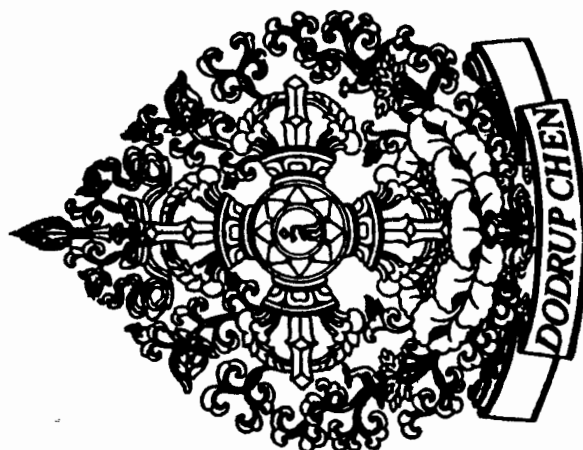
(a) The Kajur Collection — The Buddha's Teachings

The Kajur contains the scriptures of both Sutras and Tantras. Although many of the Sutras were translated in the period of the Later Spread of the Doctrine (bsTan-Pa Phyi-Dar), most of them were translated into Tibetan during the Earlier Spread of the Doctrine (bsTan-Pa sNga-Dar) and revised during the period of the Later Spread. Most of the tantras contained in the Kajur are New Tantras (gSang-sNgags gSar-Ma) but there are also a few scriptures of the Old Tantra in this collection. The New Tantras are those which were translated beginning with Lo-Ch'en Rin-Ch'en bZang-Po (958-1051). The Old Tantras are the tantric scriptures translated from the 7th century A.D. until the time of Acharya Smrtijnana at the beginning of the 11th century. Most of the Old Tantras are contained in the rNying-Ma rGyud-'Bum collection. The contents of the Kajur are as follows:

No.	Title of the Sub-Divisions	No. of	
		Vol. *	Treatises *
1.	rGyud (Tantra)	24	729
2.	Sher-Phyin (Prajnaparamita)	23	30
3.	dkon-brTsegs (Ratnakuta)	6	1
4.	Phal-Ch'en (Avatamsaka)	6	1
5.	mDo (Sutra)	32	269
6.	a'Dul-Ba (Vinaya)	13	16
		104	1046
7.	The Collection of rNying-Ma rGyud-a'Bum (Pracin-Tantras)	+	+
		33	375

* These figure based on Peking Edition.

+ These figures based on Delhi publication



BUDDHIST CIVILIZATION IN TIBET

By Tulku Thondup

through mindfulness, it manifests as sublime beauty accompanied by perfectly appropriate action free of harmful intent or results. In the *Bhikṣu-priyā-sūtra* (NE 302), the Buddha describes the nature and conduct of a true renunciate and the central importance of *śīla*:

“Those who seek virtue, who gain food by begging, who are dispassionate, who walk in the way, whose lives are correct, who have cast off passions: They who possess these qualities are *bhikṣus*.

“They who are merciful, who have cast far away gold and all the other ornaments of the world, are adorned with the most precious of ornaments. The best of raiments is not the garments of the world; the best of raiments is the saffron-colored robe, the garment of the doctrine. The best of unguents is not camphor and such like; the best of unguents is morality. The most beautiful color is not white, red, or the like; the most beautiful color is faith. It is not worldliness, but application, that is the best and swiftest conveyance. Contemplation and the practice of Dharma are the best foods and have a sweeter aroma than boiled rice. . . .

“*Śīla* (moral perfection) is the greatest happiness, the road to freedom, the field of perfection. *Śīla* is the foundation of enlightenment, the chief among all good things. Watch over *śīla* as your most precious possession, for life itself is at stake: Foolish are they who renounce it. All things that are born have but a limited existence, but this is not true of *śīla*. Therefore, *Upāli*, and all disciples here assembled, observe the *Vinaya* rules with the greatest care.”

Three Phases of Revelation

The Wheel of the Dharma subdues the demons and conquers false views; it transcends the realm of rebirth and enters the Buddha-realm. It is perfectly known by the venerable Arhats, understood by the Pratyekabuddhas, comprehended by the Bodhisattvas, praised by all the Buddhas, and indivisible from all the Tathāgatas.

—Voice of the Buddha

For the first seven years of his teaching, the Buddha taught the foundation of the Dharma, called the First Turning Teachings. Having perceived the causes of human suffering, the Buddha concentrated on teaching the implications of impermanence and the factors that create the potential for endless rounds of frustration. During this time the Buddha emphasized the path of the Arhats, the saints whose realization stops the production of karma and frees them from bondage to patterns that perpetuate suffering.

The basis for this path is the Vinaya, the "peaceful way" that calms body and mind and removes obstacles to realization. The Vinaya established a code of moral conduct and the physical and mental discipline necessary to gain understanding of the nature of existence. With few exceptions, the Vinaya teachings were given in the vihāras near Rājagṛha and Śrāvastī.

In addition to guiding the daily life of the Sangha, the Vinaya teachings point the way to "conquer the enemy," the tendencies of mind and habits of body that keep beings ensnared in Māra's net of illusion. On progressively deeper levels, the Vinaya encourages mindfulness of every thought, word, and action: Where did each arise, how does it evolve, and to where does it lead?

In supporting mindfulness, the Vinaya provides a firm foundation for meditation and realization of the central teachings conveyed in the First Turning Sūtras, including the marks of existence, the four truths, the connection between cause and effect, and the power of karma. The Sūtras inspire meditation, which develops clarity and concentration, essential for comprehending the Abhidharma, the more technical aspects of the Buddha's teachings. Study of the Abhidharma encourages a correct understanding of mind and mental events; with this knowledge it is possible to develop the concentration that completely dries up the passions and removes all taint of greed, hatred, and delusion.

Each type of teaching supports a specific training: Vinaya promotes śīla, or moral perfection; Sūtra promotes samādhi, or concentration; and the Abhidharma develops prajñā, or discriminating wisdom. These three trainings prepare one to "enter the stream" that leads to enlightenment and support progress at every stage of the path.

The path comprises thirty-seven elements, expressed in the Abhidharmakośa as bodhipāka, or wings of enlightenment: the four applications of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four foundations of miraculous power, the five

strengths, the five powers, the seven branches of enlightenment, and the eightfold path. Within the First Turning teachings, the wings of enlightenment apply to the bhikṣu, and within the Second and Third Turning teachings, they form the foundation of the Bodhisattva's practice. See pp. 118–19.

Teachings of the Second Turning

After seven years, the Buddha began a new phase of his teachings called the Second Turning, in which he revealed the more profound implications of the Dharma. The first of these teachings was given to the "four assemblies": the Arhats, including Śāriputra and Maudgalyāyana; five hundred nuns with the Buddha's stepmother Mahāprajāpatī at their head; and a great host of laymen and laywomen, including the merchant Anāthapiṇḍada and the lady Viśākḥā. The expanded, or great assembly included (in addition to the four assemblies) gatherings of gods, nāgas, and gandharvas, and multitudes of such highly accomplished Bodhisattvas as Bhadrakalpā, Ratnasambhava, and Jāladatta. The location for these teachings was Gṛdhrakūṭa, the Vulture Peak, a high rocky hill overlooking the countryside around Rājagṛha.

In this phase of his teaching the Buddha emphasized the importance of developing understanding of śūnyatā, the essential emptiness of all elements of existence. Now it was time for those who had generated confidence in the Dharma to penetrate to the realization of ultimate truth and fully understand what it means to live in a world of constant flux, where there is no solid ground, no resting place, no substantiality, and hence no limitation and no bar to perfect freedom. To the Arhats, the pure beings, the great saints, the Buddha presented an ideal of spiritual attainment grounded in supreme compassion: The path of the Bodhisattva, once considered only possible for a very few who would become Buddhas, was shown to be open to everyone willing to set aside all vestiges of self-interest and make efforts throughout time for the benefit of others.

The teachings of the Second Turning were given in their most fully developed form in the Sūtras on the Perfection of Wisdom. The most extensive of these profound Sūtras is the Śatasāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā-sūtra, the Teaching of Perfect Wisdom in 100,000 verses. This teaching finds expression in shorter forms as well, in the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras in versions of 25,000, 18,000, 10,000, and 8,000 lines. There is also a verse summary of the 8,000-line Prajñāpāramitā, known as the Ratnagūṇa-saṃcaya-gāthā (NE 13), which some Western scholars regard as a chapter of the 18,000-line teaching. The large Sūtras on Perfect Wisdom elaborate on how the thirty-seven wings of enlightenment speed the Bodhisattva along the path to realization. Following the path illuminated by Prajñāpāramitā, the Bodhisattva attains maturity and becomes capable of performing the Twelve Great Actions of the Bodhisattva.

Two of the Buddha's teachings on the Perfection of Wisdom, the Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra (NE 21), known as the Heart Sūtra, and the Vajracchedikā-prajñāpāramitā (NE 16), or Diamond Sūtra, are still memorized and recited daily by hundreds of thousands of Buddhist practitioners in order to evoke understanding of śūnyatā.

According to a number of accounts cited by Bu-ston, the Buddha taught the doctrine of śūnyatā for twelve, twenty-seven, thirty, or thirty-one years. Teachings belonging to this Second Turning of the Dharma Wheel include the basic texts that set forth the view and path of the Mahāyāna. They comprise the teachings that clarify the great vows of the Bodhisattva and the Sūtras that enumerate the stages, paths and samādhis to be understood and realized by the Bodhisattva.

The Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras, the Saddharmapundarīka (NE 113), the Śūraṅgamasamādhi (NE 132), the Lalitavistara (NE 95), and the Bhadrakalpika Sūtras all are generally considered Second Turning teachings. Many of these teachings remained concealed for centuries, awaiting the time when

the minds of human beings were prepared to appreciate the cosmic play of emptiness and form.

Teachings of the Third Turning

After fully expressing the profound doctrine of śūnyatā, the Buddha revealed the full breadth of the Dharma in a Third Turning of the wheel of the Dharma. In these teachings, given at indeterminate times in such places as Mt. Malaya, Mt. Meru, and Vaiśālī, the Buddha analyzed all aspects of existence in accord with the three natures: the imaginary (parikalpita, kun-btags), the dependent (paratantra, gzhan-dbang), and the absolute (pariniṣpanna, yongs-grub) and imparted the doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha, the Buddha nature inherent in all beings. According to the Vijñānavāda view cited by Bu-ston, the teachings of the Third Turning were given to remove tendencies toward eternalism and nihilism and to penetrate ultimate reality directly. In the Mādhyamika view also given by Bu-ston, the First and Third Turning teachings both express conventional truth and only the Second Turning teachings directly convey the ultimate meaning.

Among the teachings imparted during this period (Bu-ston cites various traditions that this period lasted seven, nine, ten, twelve, twenty-six, or twenty-seven years) are the Avataṃsaka (NE 44), Laṅkāvatāra (NE 107), and Ratnakūṭa (NE 45), as well as the ten Tathāgatagarbha Sūtras, including the Saṃdhinirmocana (NE 106). These teachings were given at various places, primarily to the host of great Bodhisattvas who required them for their complete maturation, with members of all four Sanghas—monks and nuns, laymen and laywomen—also in attendance.

An example of one such teaching is the Sūtra known as the Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā (Śrīmālādevī-simhanāda-sūtra, NE 92). Invited by the prayers of Śrīmālā (Queen of Ayodhyā and daughter of King Prasenajit and Queen Mallikā), the Buddha traveled to Ayodhyā, an ancient city

Thirty-Seven Wings of Enlightenment

Four Applications of Mindfulness

1. Mindfulness of body
2. Mindfulness of feelings
3. Mindfulness of mind
4. Mindfulness of all dharma (factors).

Refraining from forming discursive thoughts about the body, the Bodhisattva sets aside selfishness, envy, and sadness, and is clearly mindful and conscious of all that concerns the inner and outer body, feelings, thoughts, and all environmental factors. Mindfulness of the inner body includes awareness of exactly what the body is, what the whole body is doing, whether the breath is moving out or in, and the precise position of each part of the body. Mindfulness of the outer body arises through contemplation of the body bereft of life: Once breath leaves the body, what stages of decay does it pass through, and what is its inevitable end?

Four Right Efforts

Bodhisattvas who course in perfect wisdom arouse their will, make an effort, put forth vigor, focus their thoughts, and correctly exert themselves to accomplish the four right efforts, also known as the four great restraints:

1. Whatever non-virtuous actions do not yet exist, the Bodhisattva vigorously refrains from thoughts and actions that would bring them into being.
2. Whatever non-virtuous actions already exist, the Bodhisattva strives to give them up.
3. Whatever virtuous actions have not been generated, the Bodhisattva makes an effort to bring them into being.
4. Whatever virtuous actions have been generated, the Bodhisattva makes an effort to maintain, increase, stabilize, and perfect them.

Four Bases of Miraculous Power

1. One-pointed cultivation of will
2. One-pointed cultivation of mind
3. One-pointed cultivation of effort
4. One-pointed cultivation of analysis

Five Strengths

1. Strength of faith
2. Strength of effort
3. Strength of mindfulness
4. Strength of one-pointed contemplation
5. Strength of wisdom

Five Powers

1. Power of faith
2. Power of effort
3. Power of mindfulness
4. Power of one-pointed contemplation
5. Power of wisdom

Seven Branches of Enlightenment

1. Enlightened mindfulness
2. Enlightened investigation of truth
3. Enlightened effort
4. Enlightened joy
5. Enlightened flexibility
6. Enlightened one-pointed contemplation
7. Enlightened equanimity

Eightfold Path

1. Right view
2. Right conception
3. Right speech
4. Right conduct
5. Right livelihood
6. Right effort
7. Right mindfulness
8. Right meditative concentration

Derived from *The Large Sūtra on Perfect Wisdom*, pp. 153ff.

Twelve Great Actions of the Bodhisattvas

1. Bodhisattvas possess the quality of infinite resolve: as a result of having fulfilled the six perfections, whatever they resolve to do, they accomplish.
2. Through the analytical knowledge of languages, Bodhisattvas comprehend the speech of all beings.
3. Through the analytical knowledge of speech, Bodhisattvas are able to expound the Dharma effectively at all times.
4. Bodhisattvas are always born apparitionally.
5. Bodhisattvas are always reborn in good families.
6. Bodhisattvas are always reborn in noble or Brahmin families.
7. Bodhisattvas are reborn in that clan from which the former Bodhisattvas have come.
8. Bodhisattvas are endowed with a retinue of Bodhisattvas after they have established beings in enlightenment.
9. When born, Bodhisattvas irradiate all world systems with splendor and shake them all in six ways.
10. Bodhisattvas leave home together with hundreds of thousands of *niyutas* of *koṭis* of beings.
11. Bodhisattvas obtain the miraculous harmony of the Bodhi Tree: the roots of their Bodhi Trees are made of gold, the trunks of *Vaidurya* (lapis), the branches of all kinds of jewels, the leaves of all kinds of precious things, and the trees' fine fragrance and radiance illuminate infinite world systems.
12. A Bodhisattva's accomplishment of the fulfillment of all virtuous qualities is the perfect purity of his Buddhahood, through the maturity of the beings in it.

—*Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā-prajñāpāramitā*

west of Śrāvastī. There he received the Queen's homage, praised her meritorious actions in previous lifetimes, and predicted her attainment of Buddhahood. Then, in the presence of the Buddha, Queen Śrīmālā made ten vows of perfect conduct and three great vows expressing the Bodhisattva's commitment to the liberation of all beings. Inspired by the Blessed One, she taught the assembly of disciples and great Bodhisattvas concerning the power of comprehending the essence of the Mahāyāna. The Buddha affirmed her realization: "Just as Mount Sumeru soars above all other mountains, to hold to the true Dharma, casting aside body, life, and worldly wealth for the great teaching, is superior to any other sacrifice."

Both the Second and Third Turnings clarify the Bodhisattva nature and path. As described by the Buddha, Bodhisattvas operate from a more expansive view of *śīla*, *samādhi*, and *prajñā* (moral perfection, meditation, and wisdom) than the Arhat. Governed by the most altruistic compassion that has no place for self-centered views, Bodhisattvas set aside thought of a personal *nirvāṇa* and vow to work for the enlightenment of all beings. Aware of their close kinship with all life, Bodhisattvas willingly engage birth after birth for the purpose of benefiting others. "Without being asked, the Bodhisattva becomes a friend who teaches, comforts, and loves all living beings." (*Śrīmālādevī-simhanāda-sūtra*, NE 92)

Motivated by the sufferings of others and convinced of the possibility of enlightenment, Bodhisattvas generate the aspiration for Buddhahood and awaken *bodhicitta*, the mind focused on enlightenment. To develop *bodhicitta*, a Bodhisattva strives to understand the theoretical basis of *sūnyatā* and develop insight into its profound significance. The Bodhisattva takes up the sixfold practice of giving, morality, patience, vigor, concentration, and wisdom; in elevating these qualities "to perfection," carrying them far beyond ordinary virtues and attainments, Bodhisattvas simultaneously purify themselves of the most subtle obscurations and greatly extend their capacities to benefit others.

Practicing the perfections, the Bodhisattva develops complete understanding of śūnyatā, necessary to cut through dualistic modes of thought and remove all residues of ego-centric views. Only when this understanding, internalized and integrated, becomes the foundation of all thought and action can the Bodhisattva embody the six perfections and be of real assistance to others. Thus the Bodhisattva acts "without basing himself on anything," fully aware that ultimately, there are no beings to be benefited and no Bodhisattva to benefit them. The realization that neither object nor subject ultimately exists does not diminish the value of the action, which determines directionality, and ultimately the nature of change.

In the Daśabhūmika-sūtra (NE 44), the Buddha described the ten bhūmis, or stages, of the Bodhisattva path. Whereas the pāramitās are like the boat that carries the traveler to enlightenment, the ten stages provide a guide through unfamiliar regions. Each stage has an appropriate practice and realization and leads naturally to the next, culminating in the union of wisdom and skillful means that enables the Bodhisattva to dedicate lifetimes of service to all beings. In the Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra (NE 44), the Buddha expressed the Bodhisattva path in a poetical allegory of the pilgrimage of the youth Sudāna to a series of great Bodhisattvas, who each impart a teaching that deepens his understanding. The setting for the Gaṇḍavyūha-sūtra is Jeta's Grove, which the Buddha by his power transforms into a world without limit, filled with innumerable treasures.

Among the teachings of the Three Turnings, there is no concept of higher or lower: The Dharma is fully present in all of the Buddha's words. The Nyingma scholar Dudjom Rinpoche explains that each "Turning" can be viewed as emphasizing one of the three pitakas, or collections of teachings. For the Bodhisattva, the Vinaya, Sutra, and Abhidharma teachings of the First Turning emphasize the Vinayapitaka, the foundation for study and practice; the teachings of the Second Turning emphasize the Sūtrapitaka,

Sūtras Preserved in Other Realms

Sūtra	Realm
Mahāvayavadāna-bhūmi	deva-realms
Prajñāpāramitā	
1 billion verses	king of gandharvas
Prajñāpāramitā	
ten million verses	king of the devas
Prajñāpāramitā	
100,000 verses (complete)	nāga-realms

Bu-ston, II:170.

supporting the most profound development of samādhi; and the teachings of the Third Turning emphasize the Abhidharmapitaka, for they provide the most complete analysis of the meaning of the teachings.

Thus, through the Three Turnings, the Buddha planted the seeds of enlightenment in three different forms, so that all beings could obtain the maximum benefit of the teachings. All who heard the Buddha's teaching understood according to their abilities and achieved results in accord with their realization and efforts. All were free to draw from this great body of Dharma, and all who turned their thoughts to the Dharma were uplifted and benefited in some way.

Although in the last two thousand years a great portion of the Buddha's teachings have been lost, thousands of teachings are still being transmitted in an unbroken lineage from the time of the Buddha. The fabric of the Dharma woven by the enlightened Buddha Śākyamuni has endured through the centuries.

Lost Parts of the Buddhahadharma

Completely lost:		
Duhkha-skandha-sūtra	0	
Udayana-paripṛcchā	0	
Guru-sūtra	0	
Sūtra of Kāśyapa	0	
Sūtra of Ānanda	0	
Partially lost:		
Partially lost:	original	remaining
Ratnakūṭa	100,000 chapters	49
Mahāsamaya	100,000 chapters	60
Avatamsaka	100,000 chapters	40
Laṅkāvatāra	36,000 verses	3,600
Ghanavyūha	12,000 verses	1,300
Mahāmegha	100,000 verses	few chapters
Samādhirāja	?	15 divisions
Ekottarikāgama	1-100 topics?	1-10
Nirvāṇa	?	incomplete*
Smṛtyupasthāna	?	incomplete*
Śūraṅgama	10,000 verses	1 chapter*
Mahādhigama	incomplete*	
Candragarbha-paripṛcchā		incomplete*

*translation into Tibetan not finished; remainder lost

Many of the Second and Third Turning teachings were given in realms outside Jambudvīpa. Although humans and devas alike could not normally access realms on a higher plane than their own, it was possible to transcend these barriers through the perfection of profound samādhi. Thus teachings in these realms are associated with highly developed levels of consciousness.

At least two Sūtras were given in the Akaniṣṭha Heaven, the highest heaven in the Rūpadhātu, the realm of form: the Ghanavyūha (NE 110) and the Atyavajñāna (NE 122), a teaching on how to direct the mind at the time of death. The extensive Avatamsaka-sūtra, a teaching of the Third Turning, was given on Mt. Meru, the abode of the devas of the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven.

The Buddha also went to the palace of Sāgara, king of the nāgas, where he gave teachings for the benefit of these powerful beings. The bKa'-gyur preserves five such Sūtras: two Sāgaranāgarāja-paripṛcchā-sūtras (NE 154-155), teachings on the nature of existence and the four dharmas; the Anavataptanāgarāja-paripṛcchā (NE 156), a teaching in answer to Anavatapta's question on the means of obtaining Buddhahood, and two Mahāmegha-sūtras (NE 234, 235), prayers for obtaining rain. The great nāgas also protected certain of the teachings given in other locations, some of which, like portions of the Prajñāpāramitā, have since been brought to the human realm. Additional teachings remain under the nāga's protection.

"The Teaching is like a precious jewel.
Sublime and indestructible,
it shows the Path of Purity.
Contemplated with reverence by the hooded nāgas,
the Teaching is like the diamonds in the nāgas' diadems,
dispersing the darkness for those
who dwell in the depths of the earth."

—Śiṣyalekha (Candragomin)

Bu-ston, II: 169-170.

FOUNDATION
OF
JAPANESE BUDDHISM

VOL. I

THE ARISTOCRATIC AGE

BY

DAIGAN MATSUNAGA Ph.D.

ALICIA MATSUNAGA Ph.D.

BUDDHIST BOOKS INTERNATIONAL
LOS ANGELES - TOKYO

doctrine of the Five Periods and Eight Teachings, they recognized all Buddhist texts as holy scriptures.

4. Classification of Teachings

In the Mahāyāna tradition, Chih-I created a classification of the development of Buddhist teachings to designate the philosophical position of the Tendai sect. This classification was somewhat unique in that it divided the life and activities of the historical Buddha into five chronological periods and the teachings themselves into eight varieties:

Five Periods

- a) Time of the *Avataṃsaka*, immediately after the Enlightenment of the Buddha, when he taught the essence of his Enlightenment but was unable to be understood by his disciples. Comparable to the sun at dawn, whose rays touch only the highest mountain peaks.⁶
- b) Time of Deer Park, when he preached the *Nikāyas*. This was also known as the time of 'inducement' or 'attraction' since the purpose of the teachings was to prepare the disciples for Mahāyāna. The sun at a point that illuminates the lowest valleys and canyons.
- c) Time of the *Vaipulīya*, when the Hīnayānists were converted to Mahāyāna. Sutras such as the *Vimalakīrti nirdēśa* and *Lañkāvatāra* were preached. Comparable to the sun at 8 a.m., the time of the monk's meal.
- d) Time of *Prajñāpāramitā*, when the doctrine of *śūnyatā* was emphasized. Comparable to the sun at 10 a.m.
- e) Time of the *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka* and *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtras*. The *Lotus Sūtra* was considered to be the supreme doctrine taught by the Buddha uniting the temporary teaching of the three vehicles (Śrāvaka, Pratyeka Buddha and Bodhisattva) into one vehicle. The ultimate objective of these five periods was to lead the Śrāvakas to the perfect teachings of the *Lotus*. The *Nirvana sūtra* served as a resumé of the previous teachings and source of Enlightenment for those not included in the *Lotus*. Comparable to the sun at high noon, which illuminates the entire earth without distinction.

Eight Teachings

The first four doctrines are classified according to the method utilized in preaching (*kegishikiyō*):

- a) *Sudden Doctrine (ton)*. The direct and penetrating method used when the Buddha teaches what he has conceived without adaptation to the audience (*upāya*). This is equivalent to the Time of the *Avataṃsaka*.
- b) *Gradual Doctrine (zen)*. The Buddha uses various *upāya* to induce his hearers into deeper thought. Time of Deer Park, *Vaipulas* and *Prajñāpāramitā*.
- c) *Mystic Indeterminate Doctrine (himitsu)* Both mystical and indeterminate since the hearers are often concealed from each other by the Buddha's power and each believes he is being preached to alone. This method and the following are applicable to the first four periods, the Time of the Lotus transcends all four of these methods.
- d) *Indeterminate Doctrine (fujō)* Non-mystical, yet although the hearers are aware they are listening together, each understands differently.

The next four doctrines relate to the nature of the teachings (*kehō*).

- a) *Doctrine of the Three Pīṭakas (zōkyō)* or Hīnayāna scriptures and related works that set forth an inferior form of *śūnyatā*.
- b) *Doctrine Common to All (tsūgyō)*. Common to the three vehicles and also an elementary doctrine of Mahāyāna. The *Prajñāpāramitā sūtra* is most representative of this category.
- c) *Distinct Doctrine (bekkyō)*. Pure Mahāyāna and special to superior bodhisattvas. The bodhisattva views the three truths of Tendai (*kū*, *ke* and *chū*) separately or distinctly, progressing from Emptiness (*kū*) to the temporary (*ke*) and finally arriving at the Middle Way (*chū*). The *Avataṃsaka Sūtra* is most representative.
- d) *Round Doctrine (engyō)*, meaning the 'complete', 'perfect', 'all-penetrating', 'all-permeating' doctrine. The teaching of the principle that one dharma contains all the dharmas or 'the one is all and all is one.'

OUTLINE OF THE DIAMOND SUTRA

From Buddhist Wisdom Books
Containing The Diamond Sutra And The Heart Sutra
Translated and Explained by Edward Conze

I) Introduction

- A) The Convocation of the Assembly (1)
- B) Subhuti makes a request (2)

II) The Bodhisattva's Career

- A) The Vow of a Bodhisattva (3)
- B) The Practice of the Perfections (4)
- C) Buddhahood and the thirty-two Marks (5)
- D) Buddhahood and the Dharmabody
 - 1) The Dharmabody as the body of teachings (6)
 - 2) The Dharmabody as the result of Gnosis (7)
 - 3) The Dharmabody as the result of Merit (8)

III) The range of the spiritual life

- A) The four Great Saints (9)
- B) The Bodhisattva's thought of enlightenment (10a)
- C) The Bodhisattva and his Pure Land (10b)
- D) The Bodhisattva's final Nirvana (10c)
- E) The merit derived from Perfect Wisdom (11, 12)

IV) The first ending (13a)

V) Transcendentality

- A) The dialectical nature of reality (13a-d)
- B) The supreme excellence of this teaching (13e-14d)
- C) Selfless patience and perfect inner freedom (14e)
- D) The existence and non-existence of beings (14f)
- E) Truth and falsehood (14g)
- F) The merit acquired, its presuppositions and results (14h-16c)

VI) The Bodhisattvas

- A) The Bodhisattva's Vow (17a)
- B) His state of mind when he met Dipankara (17b)
- C) The Bodhisattva at the end of his career (17c-e)
- D) The Bodhisattva's attitude to his tasks (17f-h)

VII) The Buddhas

- A) The Buddha's Five Eyes (18a)
- B) The Buddha's super knowledge of others' thoughts (18b)
- C) The Buddha's Merit is no Merit (19)
- D) The Buddha's physical body (20)
- E) The Buddha's teaching (21)
- F) The Buddha's Dharma (22, 23)
- G) Once more about the Buddha's Merit (24)
- H) The Buddha as a saviour, and the nature of emancipation (25)
- I) The true nature of a Buddha (26)
- J) The effectiveness of meritorious deeds (27-29)

VIII) Advice to the imperfect

- A) The material world (30)
- B) Views and attitudes (31)
- C) The key to supreme knowledge (32a)

IX) The second conclusion (32b)

THE DIAMOND SUTRA

TRANSFORMING THE WAY
WE PERCEIVE THE WORLD

Mu Soeng



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON

Appendix

THE DIAMOND SUTRA

THUS HAVE I HEARD. At one time the Buddha was staying at Anathapindika's garden in Jeta Grove in the city of Shravasti. With him was a large gathering of 1,250 monks and bodhisattva-mahasattvas. Early in the morning, when the meal time came, the Buddha put on his robe and, holding his bowl, entered the great city of Shravasti where he begged for food. Having finished begging from door to door, he came back to his own seat in the garden and took his meal. When this was done, he put away his robe and bowl, washed his feet, spread his seat, and sat down, mindfully fixing his attention in front of him.

Then the Venerable Subhuti, who was among the assembly, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, set his right knee on the ground, and, respectfully folding his hands, addressed the Buddha thus: "It is wonderful, World-Honored One, that the Tathagata thinks so much of all the bodhisattvas and instructs them so well. World-Honored One, in the case of a son or daughter of a good family, who arouses the thought for the supreme awakening, how should they abide in it and how should they keep their thoughts under control?"

The Buddha replied, "Well said, indeed, O Subhuti! As you say, the Tathagata thinks very much of all the bodhisattvas and instructs them well. But now listen attentively and I will tell you how those who have set out on the bodhisattva path should abide in it, and how they should keep their thoughts under control."

"So be it, World-Honored One. I wish to listen to you."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All the bodhisattva-mahasattvas, who undertake the practice of meditation, should cherish one thought only: 'When I attain perfect wisdom, I will liberate all sentient beings in every realm of the universe, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, or miraculously born; those with form, those without form, those with perception, those without perception, and those with neither

perception nor non-perception. So long as any form of being is conceived, I must allow it to pass into the eternal peace of nirvana, into that realm of nirvana that leaves nothing behind, and to attain final awakening.'

"And yet although immeasurable, innumerable, and unlimited beings have been liberated, truly no being has been liberated. Why? Because no bodhisattva who is a true bodhisattva entertains such concepts as a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. Thus there are no sentient beings to be liberated and no self to attain perfect wisdom.

"Furthermore, Subhuti, in the practice of generosity a bodhisattva should be unsupported. He or she should practice generosity without regard to sight, sound, touch, flavor, smell, or any thought that arises in it. Subhuti, thus should a bodhisattva practice generosity without being supported by any notion of a sign. Why? When a bodhisattva practices generosity without being supported by any notion of a sign, his or her merit will be beyond conception. Subhuti, what do you think? Can you measure the space extending eastward?"

"No, World-Honored One, I cannot."

"Subhuti, can you measure the space extending toward the south, or west, or north, or above, or below?"

"No, World-Honored One, I cannot."

"Subhuti, so it is with the merit of a bodhisattva who practices generosity without cherishing any notion of a sign; it is beyond measure like space. Subhuti, a bodhisattva should persevere one-pointedly in this instruction.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is it possible to recognize the Tathagata by means of bodily marks?"

"No, World-Honored One. And why? When the Tathagata speaks of the bodily marks, he speaks of the no-possession of no marks."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "All that has a form is an illusory existence. When the illusory nature of form is perceived, the Tathagata is recognized."

Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, in times to come, will there be beings who, when they hear these teachings, have real faith and confidence in them?"

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, do not utter such words. Five hundred years after the passing of the Tathagata, there will be beings who, having practiced rules of morality and being thus possessed of merit, happen to hear of these statements and will understand their truth. Such beings, you should know, have planted their root of merit not only under one, two,

three, four, or five Buddhas, but under countless Buddhas. When such beings, upon hearing these statements, arouse even one moment of pure and clear confidence, the Tathagata will see them and recognize their immeasurable amount of merit. Why? Because all these beings are free from the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul; they are free from the idea of a dharma as well as a no-dharma. Why? Because if they cherish the idea of a dharma, they are still attached to a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. If they cherish the idea of a no-dharma, they are attached to a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. Therefore, do not cherish the idea of a dharma nor that of a no-dharma. For this reason, the Tathagata always preaches thus: 'O you bhikshus, know that my teaching is to be likened unto a raft. Even a dharma is cast aside, much more a no-dharma.'

"Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata attained the supreme awakening? Has he something he can preach?"

Subhuti said, "World-Honored One, as I understand the teaching of the Buddha, the Buddha has no doctrine to convey. The truth is ungraspable and inexpressible. It neither is nor is not. How is it so? Because all noble teachers are exalted by the unconditioned."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If a son or daughter of a good family should fill the three thousand chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures and give them all as a gift to the Tathagatas, would not the merit thus obtained be great?"

Subhuti said, "Very great, indeed, World-Honored One. Why? Because their merit is characterized with the quality of not being merit. Therefore, the Tathagata speaks of the merit as being great."

The Buddha: "If there is a person who, memorizing even four lines from this sutra, preaches it to others, his merit will be superior to the one just mentioned. Why? Because, Subhuti, all the Buddhas and their supreme awakening issue from this sutra. Subhuti, what is known as the teaching of the Buddha is not the teaching of the Buddha."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a sotrapanna think, 'I have obtained the fruit of sotrapatti'?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because while sotrapanna means 'entering the stream,' there is no entering here. A true sotrapanna is one who does not enter sound, odor, flavor, touch, or any thought that arises."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a sakridagamin think, 'I have obtained the fruit of a sakridagamin'?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because

while sakridagamin means 'going and coming for once,' one who understands that there is really no going-and-coming, he or she is a true sakridagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does an anagamin think, 'I have obtained the fruit of an anagamin'?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because while anagamin means 'not coming,' there is really no not-coming; therefore the one who realizes this is called an anagamin."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does an arhat think, 'I have obtained arhatship'?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because there is no dharma to be called arhat. If, World-Honored One, an arhat thinks, 'I have obtained arhatship,' this means that he has the idea of an ego-self, a person, a living being, or a soul."

"Although the Buddha has said that I am the foremost of those who have obtained arhatship, that I am the foremost of those arhats who are liberated from unwholesome desires, World-Honored One, I cherish no thought that I have attained arhatship. World-Honored One, [if I did] you would not have declared of me, 'Subhuti, who is the foremost of those who dwell in peaceful abiding, does not dwell anywhere; that is why he is called a "dweller in peace."'

The Buddha asked Subhuti, "What do you think? When the Tathagata practiced in ancient times under Dipankara Buddha, did he attain any Dharma?"

"No, World-Honored One, he did not attain any Dharma while practicing with the Dipankara Buddha."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does a bodhisattva create any harmonious buddha fields?"

"No, World-Honored One, he does not. Why? Because to create a harmonious buddha field is not to create a harmonious buddha field, and therefore it is known as creating a harmonious buddha field."

"So, Subhuti, all bodhisattvas should develop a pure, lucid mind that doesn't depend upon sight, sound, touch, flavor, smell, or any thought that arises in it. A bodhisattva should develop a mind that functions freely, without depending on anything whatsoever."

The Buddha continued, "Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to have a body as large as Mount Sumeru, would not this body be very large?"

Subhuti said, "Very large indeed, World-Honored One. Why? Because

the Buddha teaches that that which is no-body is known as a large body."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, would the number of grains of sand in all those rivers would be many?"

Subhuti said, "Very many, indeed, World-Honored One. Those Ganges Rivers would indeed be many, much more so the grains of sand in them."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were a good man or woman who filled the three thousand chiliocosms containing as many world systems as there are grains of sand in those Ganges Rivers with the seven precious treasures and then gave them all away out of generosity, would not this merit be very great?"

Subhuti said, "Very great, indeed, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said, "I declare to you, Subhuti, if a good man or woman were to accept, practice, and explain even four lines of this sutra to others, such merit would be far greater than the preceding one."

"Moreover, Subhuti, wherever this sutra or even four lines of it are preached, that place will be respected by all beings including devas, asuras, etc., as if it were the Buddha's own shrine or chairya. How much more [worthy of respect] the person who can memorize and recite this sutra [for the benefit of others]! Subhuti, you should know that such a person achieves the highest, foremost, and most wonderful blessing. Wherever this sutra is kept, the place is to be regarded as if the Buddha or a venerable disciple of his were present."

At that time Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what will this sutra be called? How should we keep its teachings in mind?"

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "This sutra will be called the *Vajracchedikā Prajnaparamita*, *The Diamond-Cutter Wisdom That Has Gone Beyond*, because it has the capacity to cut through illusions and afflictions and bring us to the shore of awakening, and by this title you will know it."

"And why? The reason is, Subhuti, that what the Tathagata has called the Prajnaparamita, the highest, transcendental wisdom, is not, in fact, the Prajnaparamita and therefore it is called Prajnaparamita."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any Dharma that the Tathagata has taught?"

"No, indeed, World-Honored One, there is none."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Are there many dust particles in the three thousand chiliocosms?"

"Yes, very many, indeed, World-Honored One."

"Subhuti, the Tathagata teaches that what are called dust particles are

not dust particles. That is why they are merely dust particles. And what the Tathagata calls chiliocosms are not chiliocosms. That is why they are merely chiliocosms.

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be recognized through the thirty-two marks [of a great man]?"

"No, World-Honored One, he cannot be recognized through the thirty-two marks. And why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what are called the thirty-two marks are really no-marks. Therefore they are called the thirty-two marks."

"Subhuti, suppose a man or a woman were to renounce all his or her belongings as many times as there are grains of sands in the river Ganges, the merit thus gained would not exceed that of one who, memorizing even one gatha of four lines of this sutra, preaches them to others."

Venerable Subhuti, listening to this discourse, through the shock of the Doctrine, had a deep understanding of the meaning of the sutra and was moved to tears. He said to the Buddha, "It is wonderful, indeed, World-Honored One, how well the Tathagata has taught this discourse on Dharma. Through it [a new level of] cognition has been produced in me. Never before have I heard such a discourse on Dharma. World-Honored One, if someone hears this sutra and has pure and clear confidence in it, that person will gain true perception. And what is called true perception is indeed no-perception. This is what the Tathagata teaches as true perception."

"World-Honored One, it is not difficult for me to have faith in, to understand, and to memorize this sutra, which I have just heard. But in the ages to come, in the next five hundred years, if there are beings who, listening to this sutra, are able to believe, understand, and memorize it, they will indeed be most wonderful beings. In them no perception of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul will take place. And why? Because that which is perception of self is no-perception. That which is perception of a being, a person, or a living soul is no-perception. And why? Because the Buddhas have left all perceptions behind."

The Buddha said to Subhuti, "It is just as you say. If there is a person who, listening to this sutra, is not frightened, alarmed, or disturbed, you should know him as a wonderful person. Why? Because what the Tathagata has taught as *paramaparamita*, the highest perfection, is not the highest perfection and is therefore called the highest perfection."

"Moreover, Subhuti, the teaching of the Tathagata on the perfection of patience is really no perfection and therefore it is the perfection of patience. Why? Subhuti, when, in ancient times, my body was cut to pieces by the

king of Kalinga, I did not have the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul. Why? When at that time my body was dismembered limb after limb, joint after joint, feelings of anger and ill will would have arisen in me had I had the idea of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul.

"With my superknowledge I recall that in my past five hundred lifetimes I have led the life of a sage devoted to patience and during those times I did not have the idea of an ego, a person, a being, or a soul."

"Therefore, Subhuti, a bodhisattva, detaching him- or herself from all ideas, should rouse the desire for utmost, supreme, and perfect awakening. He or she should produce thoughts that are unsupported by forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tangible objects, or mind objects, unsupported by Dharma, unsupported by no-Dharma, unsupported by everything. And why? Because all supports are no supports. This is the reason why the Buddha teaches that a bodhisattva should practice generosity without dwelling on form. Subhuti, the reason he practices generosity is to benefit all beings."

"The Tathagata teaches that all ideas are no-ideas and that all beings are no-beings. Subhuti, the Tathagata is one who speaks of things as they are, speaks what is true, and speaks in accordance with reality. He does not speak deceptively or to please people. Subhuti, in the Dharma attained by the Tathagata there is neither truth nor falsehood."

"Subhuti, if a bodhisattva should practice generosity while still depending on form, he or she is like someone walking in the dark. He or she will not see anything. But when a bodhisattva practices generosity without depending on form, he or she is like someone with good eyesight walking in the bright sunshine—he or she can see all shapes and colors."

"Subhuti, if in times to come the sons and daughters of good families memorize and recite this sutra, they will be seen and recognized by the Tathagata with his buddha knowledge, and they will all acquire immeasurable and infinite merit."

"Furthermore, Subhuti, if one should renounce in the morning all one's belongings as many times as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges, and if one should do likewise at noon and in the evening and continue thus for countless ages; and if someone else, on hearing this discourse on Dharma, were to accept it with a believing heart, the merit acquired by the latter would far exceed that of the former. How much more the merit of one who would copy, memorize, learn, recite, and expound it for others!"

"Subhuti, to sum up, immeasurable, innumerable, and incomprehensible is this discourse on Dharma. The Tathagata has taught it for the well-being of those who have set out in the best, in the most excellent vehicle."

Those who take up this discourse on Dharma, bear it in mind, recite, study, and expound it in detail for others will all be known to the Tathagata and recognized by him and acquire merit that is incomparable, measureless, and infinite. Such beings will share in the supreme awakening attained by the Tathagata. Why? Because, Subhuti, this course on the Dharma could not be understood by beings of inferior resolve, nor by those attached to the idea of a self; a person, a being, or a living soul. [Being so caught up], they are unable to hear, memorize, learn, recite, and expound this sutra.

"Moreover, Subhuti, the spot of earth where this sutra will be revealed, that spot of earth will be worthy of worship by the whole world with its gods, men, asuras, worthy of being saluted respectfully, worthy of being honored by circumambulation. That spot of earth will be like a shrine or temple.

"And yet Subhuti, there will be some sons and daughters of good families who will be despised for their memorizing and reciting of this sutra. This is due to their previous evil karma. The impure deeds that these beings have done in their former lives are liable to lead them into states of woe in this lifetime. But [if they are not averse to] being despised in the present life, whatever evil karma they produced in their previous lives will be destroyed, and they will be able to attain the awakening of a Buddha.

"Subhuti, with my superknowledge, I recall that in the past, even before I was with Dipankara Buddha, I made offerings, and had been attendant, to eighty-four thousand multi-million Buddhas. But the merit I gained from that service is not one hundredth nor even one hundredth million of the merit of someone who, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, memorizes, recites, and learns from this sutra and expound it to others. It bears neither number, nor fraction, nor enumeration, nor similarity, nor comparison, nor resemblance.

"Moreover, Subhuti, the merit acquired by good men and women who, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, memorize, recite, and learn this sutra will be so great that if I were to describe it in detail, some people would become suspicious and disbelieving, and their minds might become disoriented. Subhuti, you should know that the meaning of this sutra is beyond comprehension and discussion. Likewise, the fruit that results from receiving and practicing this sutra is beyond comprehension and discussion."

At that time, the Venerable Subhuti said to the Buddha, "World-Hon-

ored One, may I ask you again? If the sons and daughters of good family wish to arouse the thought of supreme enlightenment, how should they abide in it? How should they keep their thought under control?"

The Buddha replied, "Someone who has set out on the bodhisattva path should cherish one thought only: 'When I attain perfect wisdom, I will liberate all sentient beings in every realm of the universe, whether they be egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, miraculously born; those with form, those without form, those with perception, those without perception, and those with neither perception nor non-perception so long as any form of being is conceived, I must allow it to pass into the eternal peace of nirvana, into that realm of nirvana that leaves nothing behind, and to attain final awakening.'

"And yet, although immeasurable, innumerable, and unlimited beings have been liberated, truly no being has been liberated. Why, Subhuti? Because if a bodhisattva entertains such thoughts as a self, a person, a being, or a living soul, he is not a true bodhisattva.

"Subhuti, in fact, there is no independently existing object of mind called the supreme, perfect awakening. What do you think, Subhuti? In ancient times, when the Tathagata was living with Dipankara Buddha, did he attain anything called the supreme, perfect awakening?"

"No, World-Honored One. According to what I understand, there is no attainment of anything called the supreme, perfect awakening."

The Buddha said, "Right you are! It is for this reason that the Dipankara Buddha then predicted of me: 'You, young Brahmin, will be in a future time a Tathagata, an arhat, fully enlightened, by the name of Shakyamuni.' This prediction was made because there is, in fact, nothing that can be attained that is called the supreme, perfect awakening.

"Why is this? Because, Subhuti, 'Tathagata' is synonymous with true suchness (tathata) of all dharmas. And if someone were to say, 'The Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right, and perfect liberation,' he would be speaking falsely. Why? Because there is no Dharma by which the Tathagata has fully known the utmost, right, and perfect awakening. And the Dharma that the Tathagata has fully known and demonstrated is neither graspable nor elusive. Therefore the Tathagata teaches 'All dharmas are the Buddha's own and special Dharmas.' Why? All dharmas, Subhuti, have been taught by the Tathagata as no-dharmas. Therefore all dharmas are expediently called the Buddha's own and special Dharmas.

"Subhuti, a comparison can be made with the idea of a great human

body. What the Tathagata calls a great body is in fact a no-body. So it is, Subhuti, with the bodhisattvas. If a bodhisattva were to think, 'I will lead all beings to nirvana,' he or she should not be considered a bodhisattva. Why? Because there is no such thing as a 'bodhi being' (bodhi sattva). It is because of this that the Tathagata teaches that all dharmas are without the notion of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul.

"Subhuti, furthermore, if a bodhisattva were to say, 'I will create harmonious buddha fields,' he or she likewise should not be called a bodhi being. Why? The Tathagata has taught that the harmonious buddha fields are not in fact harmonious buddha fields. Such is merely a name. It is thus that he speaks of truly harmonious buddha fields.

"Subhuti, a bodhisattva who thoroughly understands the principle of no-self and no-dharma as the true self and the true Dharma [respectively] is to be considered an authentic bodhisattva.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the human eye?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the divine eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the gnostic eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the prajna eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Does the Tathagata possess the buddha eye?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he does."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Has the Tathagata taught about the grains of sand in the Ganges River?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, he has."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If there were as many Ganges Rivers as there are grains of sand in the Ganges River and if there were a buddha land for each one of those grains of sand, would those buddha lands be many?"

"Yes, World-Honored One, they would be many indeed."

"Subhuti, I declare to you that however many living beings there may be in all of these manifold buddha lands and though each one of them has numerous trends of thought, the Tathagata has known them all. How is it so? Because the Tathagata teaches that all trends of thought are actually not trends of thought, and that is why he calls them trends of thought. Why? Because the past mind cannot be gotten hold of, the future mind cannot be gotten hold of, and the present mind cannot be gotten hold of.

"What do you think, Subhuti? If a son or daughter of good family were

to fill the three thousand chiliocosms with the seven precious treasures and then give them as a gift to the Tathagatas, the arhats, the fully enlightened ones, would the merit of that act be great?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, it would be great indeed, O Lord."

The Buddha said, "So it is, Subhuti, so it is. But if, in reality, there were such a thing as a great heap of merit, the Tathagata would not have spoken of it as a great heap of merit. Such is merely a name. It is because it is without a foundation that the Tathagata has spoken of it as a great heap of merit."

"What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by means of his perfectly formed body?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, the Tathagata is not to be seen by means of his perfectly formed body. Why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what is called a perfectly formed body is not a perfectly formed body. Such is merely a name. Therefore it is called a perfectly formed body."

The Buddha asked further, "What do you think, Subhuti? Can the Tathagata be seen by means of his possession of bodily marks?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, the Tathagata cannot be by means of his possession of the bodily marks. Why? Because the Tathagata has taught that what are called the bodily marks are not in fact bodily marks. Such is merely a name. Therefore they are called the bodily marks."

The Buddha asked, "What do you think, Subhuti? Does the Tathagata think, 'by me has Dharma been taught'? Subhuti, whosoever says that the Tathagata thinks this way slanders the Tathagata; he would misrepresent me by seizing on what is not there. Why? The Tathagata has taught that in the teaching of the Dharma there is no Dharma that can be pointed to as Dharma. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called the teaching of Dharma."

Subhuti asked, "World-Honored One, will there be beings in the future, five hundred years from now, at the time of the collapse of the Dharma, who will truly believe these teachings?"

The Buddha said, "Subhuti, there are neither beings nor no-beings. Why? The Tathagata has taught that what are called beings are truly no beings. Such is merely a name. That is why the Tathagata has spoken of them as beings.

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is there any Dharma by [means of] which the Tathagata has understood perfect, unexcelled awakening?"

Subhuti said, "No, World-Honored One. As I understand it, there is

no Dharma by which the Tathagata has understood perfect, unexcelled awakening."

The Buddha said, "So it is, Subhuti, so it is. Not even the least trace of Dharma is to be found anywhere. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called the perfect, unexcelled awakening."

"Furthermore, Subhuti, the dharma called the anuttara samyak-sambodhi is at one with everything else. Nothing in it is at variance with anything else. That is why it is called the perfect, unexcelled awakening. It is self-identical through the absence of a self, a person, a being, or a living soul, and that is why it is fully known as the totality of all the wholesome dharmas. And yet, Subhuti, no dharmas have been taught by the Tathagata. Such is merely a name. Thus are they called 'wholesome dharmas.'"

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of a good family were to pile up the seven precious treasures in the three thousand chiliocosms and give them away as a gift, the merit resulting from such an act would be much less than that of someone who was to memorize but one stanza from this *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita* and teach it to others. The merit of the latter would indeed be so great that no comparison could be made."

"Subhuti, you must not think that the Tathagata entertains the notion 'I will bring all living beings to the shore of awakening.' Why? Because in reality there are no beings who can be liberated by the Tathagata. To entertain the notion that there are beings who can be liberated would be to partake in the idea of a self, a person, a being and a living soul. The Tathagata has taught that one must not seize upon these notions, and yet foolish common people have seized upon them. Subhuti, though the Tathagata uses the words 'foolish common people,' in reality there are no such people. Such is merely a name. That is why they are called foolish common people."

"Subhuti, what do you think? Is the Tathagata to be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said, "If, Subhuti, the Tathagata could be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks, then the *chakravartin* also would be a Tathagata. Therefore the Tathagata is not to be recognized by means of his possession of [bodily] marks."

Subhuti said, "As I understand the Tathagata's teaching, he is not to be recognized by means of his [bodily] marks."

Then the Buddha uttered the following stanzas:

Those who saw me through my form,
And those who heard me by my voice,
False endeavors they engaged in;
Me those people will not see.

A Buddha is to be seen [known] through the Dharma,
And his guidance manifests from Dharma bodies.
Yet the true nature of the Dharma cannot be understood,
And no one can be conscious of it as an object.

"Subhuti, you should not think that the Tathagata has attained the anuttara samyak-sambodhi by virtue of his possession of the thirty-two [bodily] marks. Why? Because the Tathagata could not have attained the anuttara samyak-sambodhi through possession of [bodily] marks [alone]."

"At the same time, Subhuti, no one should say that those who have set out on the path of the bodhisattva need to see all dharmas in terms of their annihilation. I declare to you, Subhuti, that those who set out in the bodhisattvayana do not entertain any notion of the annihilation of dharmas."

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family were to fill as many world systems as there are grains of sands in the Ganges River with the seven precious treasures and give them as a gift to the *Tathagatas*, arhats, fully enlightened ones, and if, on the other hand, a bodhisattva were to gain the insight that all dharmas are empty and have no self-nature or essence of their own, his or her merit would be immeasurably and incalculably [greater than that of the former]. Why is that? Because bodhisattvas are immune to any rewards of merit."

Subhuti asked, "What does it mean, World-Honored One, that the bodhisattvas are immune to rewards of merit?"

The Buddha said, "The bodhisattva whose merit is great does not get caught in the desire for or idea of merit. She or he understands that such is merely a name. It is for this reason that the bodhisattva is immune to the rewards of merit."

"Whosoever says that the Tathagata goes or comes, stands, sits or lies down does not understand the meaning of my teaching. Why? The Tathagata does not come from anywhere, nor does he depart to anywhere. Therefore he is called the Tathagata, the arhat, the fully enlightened one."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If a son or daughter of good family were to grind as many world systems as there are particles of dust in the three thousand chiliocosms as finely as they can be ground with incalculable

vigor, would that be an enormous collection of dust particles?"

Subhuti replied, "Yes, World-Honored One, it would indeed be an enormous collection. Why? If the dust particles had any real self-existence, the Tathagata would not have called them an enormous collection of dust particles. As I understand it, what the Tathagata calls a collection of dust particles is not in essence a collection of dust particles. Such is merely a name. It is for this reason that it is called a collection of dust particles. Moreover, what the Tathagata has taught as the system of three thousand chiliocosms is not in fact a system of chiliocosms. That is why they are called chiliocosms. To consider the chiliocosms as real would be a case of seizing on a material object that is nothing but an assembly of dust particles. That is why it is called seizing on an object."

The Buddha added, "What is called seizing upon a material object is a matter of linguistic convention without factual content. It is not a dharma or a no-dharma. And yet the foolish common people have seized upon it."

"Subhuti, what do you think? If someone were to say that the Tathagata has taught the view of self, person, being, or living soul, would that person have understood my meaning?"

Subhuti replied, "No, World-Honored One, such a person would not have understood the Tathagata. Why? What the Tathagata calls a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view are not in essence a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view. That is why they are called a self-view, a person-view, a being-view, or a living soul-view."

The Buddha said, "It is in this manner, Subhuti, that someone who has set out on the bodhisattva path should know all dharmas, see that all dharmas are like this, and should have confidence in the understanding of all dharmas without any conception of dharmas. Subhuti, what the Tathagata has called a conception of dharmas is not a conception of dharmas. Such is merely a name. That is why it is called a conception of dharmas."

"Again, Subhuti, if a son or daughter of good family were to pile up the seven precious treasures in all the three thousand chiliocosms and give them away as a gift to the Tathagatas, the arhats, and the fully enlightened ones, and, on the other hand, if someone were to take but one stanza from this *Vajracchedika Prajnaparamita* and bear it in mind, teach it, recite and study it, and illuminate it in full detail for others, his or her merit would be much more immeasurable and incalculable [than that of the former]. And in what spirit would he or she illuminate it for others? Without being caught up in the appearances of things in themselves but understanding the nature of things just as they are. Why? Because:

So you should view all of the fleeting worlds:

A star at dawn, a bubble in the stream;

A flash of lightning in a summer cloud;

A flickering lamp, a phantom, and a dream.

When the Buddha had finished [speaking], Venerable Subhuti, the monks and nuns, the pious lay men and women, the bodhisattvas, and the whole world with its gods, asuras, and *gandharvas* were filled with joy at the teaching, and, taking it to heart, they went their separate ways.

*THE PERFECTION OF WISDOM
IN EIGHT THOUSAND LINES
& ITS VERSE SUMMARY*

translated by **Edward Conze**

Four Seasons Foundation
Bolinās, California

Chapter XXXI

DHARMODGATA

1. THE COMING AND GOING OF THE TATHAGATAS

Dharmodgata: Tathagatas certainly do not come from anywhere, nor do they go anywhere. Because Suchness does not move, and the Tathagata is Suchness. Non-production does not come nor go, and the Tathagata is non-production. One cannot conceive of the coming or going of the reality-limit, and the Tathagata is the reality-limit. The same can be said of emptiness, of what exists in accordance with fact, of dispassion, of stopping, of the element of space. For the Tathagata is not outside these dharmas. The Suchness of these dharmas and the Suchness of all dharmas, and the Suchness of the Tathagata are simply this one single Suchness. There is no division within Suchness. Just simply one single is this Suchness, not two, nor three. Suchness has passed beyond counting, because it is not. A man, scorched by the heat of the summer, during the last month of summer [513], at noon might see a mirage floating along, and might run towards it, and think 'there I shall find some water, there I shall find something to drink.' What do you think, son of good family, has that water come from anywhere, or does that water go anywhere, to the Eastern great ocean, or the Southern, Northern or Western?

Sadaprarudita: No water exists in the mirage. How could its coming or going be conceived? That man again is foolish and stupid if, on seeing the mirage, he forms the idea of water where there is no water. Water in its own being certainly does not exist in that mirage.

Dharmodgata: Equally foolish are all those who adhere to the Tathagata through form and sound, and who in consequence imagine the coming or going of a Tathagata. For a Tathagata cannot be seen from his form-body. The Dharma-bodies are the Tathagatas and the real nature of dharmas does not come or go. There is no coming or going of the body of an elephant, horse, chariot or foot-soldier, which has been conjured up by a magician. Just so there is neither coming nor going of the Tathagatas. A sleeping man might in his dreams see one Tathagata, or two, or three, or up to one thousand, or still more [514]. On waking up he would, however, no longer see even one single Tathagata. What do you think, son of good family, have these Tathagatas come from anywhere, or gone to anywhere?

Sadaprarudita: One cannot conceive that in that dream any dharma at

all had the status of a full and perfect reality, for the dream was deceptive.

Dharmodgata: Just so the Tathagata has taught that all dharmas are like a dream. All those who do not wisely know all dharmas as they really are, i.e. as like a dream, as the Tathagata has pointed out, they adhere to the Tathagatas through their name-body and their form-body, and in consequence they imagine that the Tathagatas come and go. Those who in their ignorance of the true nature of dharmas imagine a coming or going of the Tathagatas, they are just foolish common people, at all times they belong to birth-and-death with its six places of rebirth, and they are far from the perfection of wisdom, far away from the dharmas of a Buddha. On the contrary, however, those who know as they really are all dharmas as like a dream, in agreement with the teaching of the Tathagata, they do not imagine the coming or going of any dharma, nor its production or stopping. They wisely know the Tathagata in his true nature, and they do not imagine a coming or going of the Tathagatas. And those who wisely know this true nature of a Tathagata, they course near to full enlightenment and they course in the perfection of wisdom. These disciples of the Lord do not consume their alms fruitlessly, [515] and they are worthy of the world's gifts. The gems which are in the great ocean do not come from any place in the East, or West, or in any other of the ten directions, but they owe their existence to the wholesome roots of beings. They are not produced without cause. And when, dependent on cause, condition and reason, these gems have been coproduced and stopped by conditions, they do not pass on to any place anywhere in the world in any of the ten directions. And nevertheless, when those conditions exist, the gems are augmented; when those conditions are absent, no augmentation takes place. Just so the perfect body of the Tathagatas has not come from any place anywhere in the ten directions, and it does not go to any place anywhere in the world with its ten directions. But the body of the Buddhas and Lords is not without cause. It has been brought to perfection by their conduct in the past, and it has been produced dependent on causes and conditions, coproduced by subsidiary conditions, produced as a result of karma done in the past. It is, however, not in any place anywhere in the world with its ten directions. But when those conditions exist, the accomplishment of the body takes place; when those conditions are absent, the accomplishment of the body becomes inconceivable. When the sound of a boogharp is being produced, it does not come from anywhere. When it is stopped, it does not go anywhere, nor does it pass on to anywhere. But it has been produced conditioned by the totality of its causes and conditions,—namely the boat-shaped hollow body of the harp, the parchment sounding board, the strings, the hollow arm of the boogharp, the bindings,

the plectrum, the person who plays it, and his exertions. [516] In that way this sound comes forth from the boogharp, dependent on causes, dependent on conditions. And yet that sound does not come forth from that hollow body of the harp, nor from the parchment sounding board, nor from the strings, nor from the hollow arm, nor from the bindings, nor from the plectrum, nor from the person who plays it, nor from his exertions. It is just the combination of all of them that makes the sound conceivable. And when it is stopped, the sound also does not go anywhere. Just so the perfect body of the Buddhas and Lords is dependent on causes, dependent on conditions, and it has been brought to perfection through exertions which have led to many wholesome roots. But the augmenting of the Buddha-body does not result from one single cause, nor from one single condition, nor from one single wholesome root. And it is also not without cause. It has been coproduced by a totality of many causes and conditions, but it does not come from anywhere. And when the totality of causes and conditions has ceased to be, then it does not go to anywhere. It is thus that you should view the coming and going of those Tathagatas, and that you should conform to the true nature of all dharmas. And it is just because you will wisely know that the Tathagatas, and also all dharmas, are neither produced nor stopped, that you shall become fixed on full enlightenment, and that you shall definitely course in the perfection of wisdom and in skill in means.

When this disquisition on the fact that the Tathagatas neither come nor go had been taught, the earth and the entire great trichiliocosm shook in six ways, it stirred, quaked, was agitated, resounded and rumbled. And all the realms of Mara were stirred up and discomfited. All the grasses, shrubs, herbs and trees in the great trichiliocosm bent in the direction of the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. [517] Flowers came up out of season. From high up in the air a great rain of flowers came down. And *Shakra*, Chief of Gods, and the *Four Great Kings* scattered and poured heavenly sandalwood powder and heavenly flowers over the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, and said: "Well spoken, son of good family. Through your might we have heard a sermon which has issued from ultimate reality, which is contrary to the whole world, and which gives no ground to any of those beings who are established in any of the views which involve the assumption of an individuality, or who have settled down in any of the views which assume the existence of something that is not."

Sadaprarudita then asked Dharmodgata: "What is the cause, what is the reason why this great earthquake is manifested in the world?"

Dharmodgata: In consequence of your asking for this disquisition on the not-coming and not-going of the Tathagatas, and through my exposi-

tion of it, eight thousand living beings have acquired the patient acceptance of *dharma*s which fail to be produced, eighty *niyutas* of living beings have raised their hearts to full enlightenment, and of sixty-four thousand living beings has the dispassionate, unstained *dharma*-eye been purified for the vision of *dharma*s.

2. SADAPRARUDITA'S SELF-SACRIFICE

The Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* then had a supreme, a most sublime feeling of zest and joy: "It is a gain to me, a very great gain that, by asking for the perfection of wisdom and for this disquisition, I have wrought the weal of so many beings. [518] That alone should bring me merit sufficient for the accomplishment of full enlightenment. Unquestionably I shall become a Tathagata." In his zest and joy he rose seven palm trees high into the air, and, standing at the height of seven palm trees, he reflected: "How can I, standing here in the air, do honour to the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata?" *Sakra*, Chief of Gods, saw him, read his thoughts, presented him with heavenly Mandarava flowers, and said to him: "Honour the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata with these heavenly flowers! For we feel that we should honour the man who helped you. Today your might has wrought the weal of many thousands of living beings. Rare are the beings who, like you, have the strength, for the sake of all beings through countless aeons to bear the great burden."

The Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* then took the Mandarava flowers from *Sakra*, Chief of Gods, and scattered them over the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. He presented the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata with his own body, and said to him: "I give you myself as a present, and I shall be your attendant and servant from today onwards." And with folded hands he stood before Dharmodgata. [519] The merchant's daughter and her five hundred maidens then said to the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita*: "We in our turn make a present of ourselves to you, son of good family. Through this wholesome root we also shall become recipients of just those *dharma*s, and together with you we shall again and again honour and revere the Buddhas and Lords, and the Bodhisattvas, and we shall remain near to you." *Sadaprarudita* replied: "If you, maidens, in imitation of my own earnest intention, give yourselves with earnest intentions to me, then I will accept you." The maidens replied: "We imitate you, and with earnest resolution we give ourselves as presents to you, to do with us as you will." Thereupon the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* presented the merchant's daughter and her five hundred maidens, embellished and adorned, together with their five hundred well-decorated carriages, to the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, and said:

“All these I present to you as attendants and servants, and also the carriages for your own use.” Sakra, Chief of Gods, applauded him and said: “Well done, son of good family! A Bodhisattva must renounce all his property. Through that thought of renunciation he soon wins full enlightenment, and the worship he pays thus to the preachers of dharma enables him to hear about the perfection of wisdom and skill in means. [520] Also in the past the Tathagatas, when they still were Bodhisattvas, have, by the fact that they renounced everything, procured a claim to full enlightenment; and they also have asked questions about perfect wisdom and about skill in means.” The Bodhisattva Dharmodgata accepted Sadaprarudita’s gift, so that his wholesome root might reach fulfilment. Immediately afterwards he returned it to Sadaprarudita. After that, the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata went into his house. The sun was about to set.

The Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* then thought to himself: “It would not indeed be seemly for me, who have come here out of love for dharma, to sit or to lie down. I will remain either standing or walking, until the time when the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata shall again come out of his house, in order to reveal dharma to us.”

The Bodhisattva Dharmodgata then remained for seven years immersed in one uninterrupted state of trance, and he dwelt in countless thousands of concentrations, peculiar to Bodhisattvas, issued from perfection of wisdom and skill in means. For seven years *Sadaprarudita* never adopted any other posture than the two just mentioned, and he did not fall into sloth and torpor. For seven years he never felt any preoccupation with sense desires, or with ill will, or with harming others, he never felt any eagerness for tastes, nor any self-satisfaction. But he thought: “When then will the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata emerge from his trance, [521] so that we may spread out a seat for him, whereon he may demonstrate dharma, and so that we may sprinkle well the place where he will reveal the perfection of wisdom and skill in means, anoint it well and bedeck it with manifold flowers?” And the merchant’s daughter with her five hundred maidens followed his example, passed their time in two postures only, and imitated all his works.

One day the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* heard a *heavenly voice* which said: “On the seventh day from today the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata will emerge from his trance, and he will then, seated in the center of the town, demonstrate dharma.” When *Sadaprarudita* heard the heavenly voice, he was contented, elated, joyous, overjoyed and jubilant. Together with the merchant’s daughter and her five hundred maidens he cleansed the ground, spread out the seat made of the seven precious things, took off his upper garment, and spread it on top of the seat. The maidens also took off their

upper garments, spread their five hundred upper garments on that seat, and thought: "Seated on that seat will the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata demonstrate dharma." [522] And they also were contented, elated, joyous, overjoyed and jubilant.

When the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita wanted to sprinkle the ground he could not find any water, though he searched all round. For Mara, the Evil One, had hidden all the water. And he did this so that Sadaprarudita, if he could not find any water, should become depressed and sad, or change his mind, with the result that his wholesome root would vanish, or the fervour of this worship be dimmed. The Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* then thought to himself: "Let me pierce my own body, and sprinkle the ground with my blood. The ground is full of rising dust, and I fear that some of it may fall on the body of the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata. What else can I do with this body which is of necessity doomed to break up? Better surely that this my body should be destroyed by such an action rather than by an ineffectual one. For the sake of sense pleasures, as a result of sense pleasures many thousands of frames of mine have again and again, while I wandered in birth-and-death, been broken up, but never in conditions as favourable as these, never for the sake of gaining the good law. If they must once more be broken up, let them in any case be broken up in a holy cause." He [523] then took a sharp sword, pierced his body on every side, and everywhere sprinkled that piece of ground with his own blood. The merchant's daughter with her five hundred maidens followed his example, and did as he did. But there was no alteration of thought in either the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita*, or in all those maidens, which would have given Mara, the Evil One, a chance of entering in order to obstruct their wholesome roots.

Sakra, chief of Gods, then thought to himself: "It is wonderful how much this Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* loves dharma, how firm is his sense of obligation, how great the armour he has put on, and how he disregards his body, his life, and his pleasures, and how resolutely he has set out with the goal of knowing full enlightenment, in his desire to 'set free all beings from the measureless sufferings of birth-and-death, after he has known full enlightenment.'" *Sakra* then changed by magic all that blood into heavenly sandalwood water. And all round that piece of ground, for one hundred leagues, an inconceivably sublime scent, the scent of that heavenly sandalwood water, filled the air. And *Sakra* said to *Sadaprarudita*: "Well done, son of good family! I applaud your inconceivable vigour, your supreme love and search for dharma. The Tathagatas in the past [524] also have procured the right to full enlightenment through this kind of earnest intention, vigour, and love for dharma."

The Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* then thought to himself: "I have spread out the seat for the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, and I have well swept and sprinkled this piece of ground. Now I must still get flowers with which to cover this piece of ground, and to scatter over the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata when he demonstrates dharma." *Sakra* then said to *Sadaprarudita*: "Accept these heavenly Mandarava flowers for that twofold purpose!" And he presented him with a thousand heavenly Khara measures of heavenly flowers. And the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* accepted those flowers, and used some of them to cover the piece of ground, and, later on, he strewed others over the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata.

3. DHARMODGATA'S DEMONSTRATION OF DHARMA

After the lapse of seven years the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata emerged from his trance, went up to the seat spread out for him, sat down on it, and, surrounded and attended by an assembly of many hundreds of thousands, he demonstrated dharma. The moment the Bodhisattva *Sadaprarudita* [525] saw the Bodhisattva Dharmodgata, he was filled with that kind of happiness which a monk feels when, with one-pointed attention, he has obtained the first trance. And this is the demonstration of the perfection of wisdom by the Bodhisattva *Dharmodgata*:

"The perfection of wisdom is self-identical, because all dharmas are the same. Perfect wisdom is isolated because all dharmas are isolated. Perfect wisdom is immobile because all dharmas are immobile. Perfect wisdom is devoid of mental acts because all dharmas are devoid of mental acts. Perfect wisdom is unbenumbed, because all dharmas are unbenumbed. Perfect wisdom has but one single taste because all dharmas have one and the same taste. Perfect wisdom is boundless because all dharmas are boundless. Perfect wisdom is non-production because all dharmas are non-production. Perfect wisdom is non-stopping because all dharmas are not stopped. As the firmament is boundless, so is perfect wisdom. As the ocean is boundless, so is perfect wisdom. As Meru shines in multicoloured brilliance, so does the perfection of wisdom. As the firmament is not fashioned, so is perfect wisdom not fashioned. Perfect wisdom is boundless, because form, and the other skandhas are boundless. Perfect wisdom is boundless because the element of earth, and the other elements, are boundless. Perfect wisdom is self-identical, because the adamant dharma is self-identical. Perfect wisdom is undifferentiated because all dharmas are undifferentiated. The non-apprehension of perfect wisdom follows from the non-apprehension of all dharmas. Perfect wisdom remains the same whatever it may surpass because all dharmas remain the same what-

ever they may surpass. [526] Perfect wisdom is powerless to act because all dharmas are powerless to act. Perfect wisdom is unthinkable because all dharmas are unthinkable."

Thereupon on that occasion there was born in the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita the king of concentrations called "the sameness of all dharmas," and, consequent on that, the concentrations called "isolation of all dharmas," "immobility of all dharmas," "absence of all mental acts in all dharmas," "lack of numbness in all dharmas," "the one taste of all dharmas," "the boundlessness of all dharmas," "the non-production of all dharmas," "the non-stopping of all dharmas," "boundless like the firmament," "boundless like the ocean," "brilliant and multicoloured like Meru," "not fashioned, like the firmament," "boundless like form, etc.," "boundless like the element of earth, etc.," "adamantine," "non-differentiatedness of all dharmas," "non-apprehension of all dharmas," "sameness of all dharmas whatever they may surpass," "all dharmas are powerless to act," "all dharmas are unthinkable." Beginning with these, the Bodhisattva Sadaprarudita acquired six million concentration doors.

A Treasury of
Mahāyāna Sūtras
Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra

大寶積經

Translated from the Chinese by
The Buddhist Association of the United States
Garma C. C. Chang, General Editor

The Pennsylvania State University Press
University Park and London

The Buddhist Association of the United States

Chief Translator: Fayen Koo
Translators: Shu-Lien Miao
Yang-chu Hsu
Yi-tze Liu
Kuang-mo Ho
Editors: V.S. Brown
Walter Hsieh
Janet Gyatso
T.C. Tsao

31. Here is an important statement indicating that within every human being there is Buddha-nature, which gives rise to religious aspiration, i.e., the quest for perfection and ultimate meaning in life. This Buddha-nature is called here the 'Tathāgata-embryo'.

32. Presumably Queen Śrīmālā's husband.

20 普明菩薩會

The Sūtra of Assembled Treasures

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa near Rājagṛha, accompanied by eight thousand great monks. Also in the assembly were sixteen thousand Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas from various Buddha-lands, all of whom had attained the stage of nonregression and were destined for supreme enlightenment in their next lives.

That day, the World-Honored One told Mahākāśyapa, "Four things cause a Bodhisattva's wisdom to decrease or be lost. What are the four?"

- (1) To disrespect the Dharma or Dharma-masters;
- (2) to withhold the profound Dharma he has acquired instead of disclosing it fully;
- (3) to hinder those who rejoice in the Dharma by giving them reasons to despair; and
- (4) to be arrogant and conceited, and to disdain others.¹

Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things cause a Bodhisattva to gain great wisdom. What are the four?

- (1) Always to respect the Dharma and revere Dharma-masters;
- (2) to preach widely whatever Dharma he has learned, with a pure mind not in pursuit of fame or profit;
- (3) to know that wisdom arises from much learning, and to pursue learning with such constant, urgent effort as if to save his head from fire; and
- (4) to recite the sūtras he has learned, and practice cheerfully as instructed, without becoming entangled in words.

Sūtra 43, Taishō 310, pp. 631–638; translated into Chinese by an anonymous translator.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things cause a Bodhisattva to lose his bodhicitta. What are the four?

- (1) To deceive his teacher and pay no respect to the sūtras he has been taught;
- (2) to cause unwarranted doubt or regret in others;
- (3) to revile and slander those who seek the Mahāyāna, thus defaming them far and wide; and
- (4) to be fawning and crooked in dealing with people.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things enable a Bodhisattva to retain his bodhicitta from one lifetime to another, so that it will always be naturally present in him until his attainment of Buddhahood. What are the four?

- (1) Not to lie even when his life is at stake, much less in jest;
- (2) always to deal with people sincerely and honestly, without flattery or crookedness;
- (3) to think of Bodhisattvas as World-Honored Ones, and to extol their names in all the four directions; and
- (4) not to enjoy the Hīnayāna doctrines, but [instead] to cause all who believe in the Dharma to pursue supreme bodhi.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things cause the wholesome practices cultivated by a Bodhisattva to stop increasing or to cease. What are the four?

- (1) To read, recite, and study the secular scriptures out of arrogance;
- (2) to approach a donor with a mind lusting for material gains;
- (3) to resent and slander other Bodhisattvas; and
- (4) to discredit and contradict sūtras which he has not heard before.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things cause the wholesome practices cultivated by a Bodhisattva to grow instead of ceasing. What are the four?

- (1) The Bodhisattva rejects heterodox doctrines and seeks the orthodox scriptures—such as those on the six pāramitās, which constitute the Bodhisattva's canon—and when doing so, casts away arrogance and remains humble toward all sentient beings.
- (2) He receives offerings in accordance with the Dharma, is content with what he obtains, does not earn a livelihood in improper ways, and abides in the four noble practices.
- (3) He does not expose others' wrongdoings, whether they are true or not, and does not look for people's shortcomings.
- (4) When he finds some [Buddhist] doctrines incomprehensible, he thinks, 'The Buddha-Dharma has infinite varieties, for it is preached according to the inclinations of sentient beings. It is known to the Buddha only, not to me. I should defer to the Buddha as the certifying authority and not harbor disobedience or opposition.'

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, a Bodhisattva must shun four wrong mentalities.² What are the four?

- (1) To harbor doubts about the Buddha-Dharma or to regret [having accepted it];
- (2) to be resentful and arrogant toward sentient beings;
- (3) to be jealous of others for their gains and good living; and
- (4) to [wish to] revile other Bodhisattvas and defame them far and wide.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four signs indicate a Bodhisattva's right mentality.³ What are the four?

- (1) The Bodhisattva does not hide his transgressions, but exposes them to others so that his mind is free from covers and bonds.
- (2) He never speaks false words even if he loses his own body, life, country, or kingdom.
- (3) When he encounters misfortunes, being scolded, beaten, slandered, bound, or otherwise injured, he blames himself only; resigning himself to karmic retribution, he does not hate others.⁴
- (4) He maintains his faith firmly; when he hears the Buddha-Dharma which is profound and difficult to believe, his pure mind can accept and uphold it entirely.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four signs indicate a Bodhisattva's corruption. What are the four?

- (1) After reading a scripture, a corrupted Bodhisattva indulges in play-words, instead of practicing in accordance with the Dharma.
- (2) He does not obey, respect, or gladden his masters.
- (3) He wastes devotees' offerings by accepting them even when he has broken his former vows.
- (4) He is contemptuous and disrespectful toward virtuous Bodhisattvas.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four signs indicate a Bodhisattva's willing compliance. What are the four?

- (1) The Bodhisattva faithfully accepts a sūtra the first time he hears it, and practices it as taught, relying on the doctrine rather than on the words.
- (2) He follows his master's instructions, knows his intention, and speaks with him openly; everything he does is in harmony with virtue and his master's intention.
- (3) He never regresses in discipline or dhyāna, and accepts offerings with a mind well subdued.
- (4) When he sees a virtuous Bodhisattva, he respects him, admires him, and emulates his virtuous deeds.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four mistakes that a Bodhisattva may make. What are the four?

- (1) To comply with an untrustworthy person;
- (2) to preach a profound doctrine to a sentient being who is incapable of accepting it;
- (3) to praise the Hīnayāna among those who rejoice in the Mahāyāna; and
- (4) to give only to virtuous precept-keepers, not to wicked people.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four right paths for a Bodhisattva. What are the four?

- (1) To treat all sentient beings impartially;
- (2) to teach all sentient beings impartially [on the basis of the] Buddha's wisdom;
- (3) to preach the Dharma to all sentient beings without discrimination; and
- (4) to cause all sentient beings to abide in right action equally.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four kinds of people who are not good friends or companions for a Bodhisattva. What are the four?

- (1) Śrāvakas, who desire only to benefit themselves;
- (2) Pratyekabuddhas, who enjoy having few things to attend to;
- (3) the worldly scholars, who study heterodox scriptures and indulge in flowery literature; and
- (4) associates who can only increase his worldly acquisitions, not his acquisition of the Dharma.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four kinds of people who are good friends and companions for a Bodhisattva. What are the four?

- (1) Those who call upon a Bodhisattva for help are his good friends, because they cause him to walk upon the Buddha's path.
- (2) Those who can expound the Dharma are his good friends, because they spread wisdom.
- (3) Those who can persuade others to renounce the household life are his good friends, because they can increase [others'] virtues.
- (4) All the Buddhas, the World-Honored Ones, are his good friends, because they cause all Buddha-Dharmas to grow and thrive.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four kinds of people who may appear to be Bodhisattvas but actually are not. What are the four?

- (1) Those who lust for material gains instead of seeking the Dharma;
- (2) those who wish to acquire fame instead of virtues;
- (3) those who seek their own happiness and do not show other sentient beings the path to the cessation of suffering; and
- (4) those who enjoy the company of many disciples and dislike detachment and seclusion.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, there are four kinds of true Bodhisattvas. What are the four?

- (1) Those who not only understand and believe in emptiness, but also believe in karmic retribution;⁵
- (2) those who know that all dharmas are devoid of self-entirety, but who still have great compassion for sentient beings;⁶
- (3) those who deeply cherish nirvāṇa, but continue to roam in saṃsāra; and
- (4) those who practice giving for the benefit of sentient beings, without seeking any reward.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, a Bodhisattva has four great treasures. What are the four?

- (1) Encountering Buddhas;
- (2) hearing the six pāramitās and the elucidation of their meaning;
- (3) regarding a Dharma-master with an unobstructed mind; and
- (4) being inclined to the unremitting practice of renunciation.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things enable a Bodhisattva to transcend devilish hindrances.⁷ What are the four?

- (1) Never to be apart from bodhicitta;
- (2) to harbor no ill feelings against sentient beings;
- (3) to be aware of every kind of knowledge and view; and
- (4) never to despise or belittle any sentient being.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things enable a Bodhisattva to accumulate good roots. What are the four?

- (1) To avoid a wrong mentality when in solitude;
- (2) to practice the four inducements among sentient beings without expecting any reward;
- (3) to pursue the Dharma vigorously, even at the cost of his life; and
- (4) to cultivate numerous good roots without satiety.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, a Bodhisattva has four adornments [causing] immeasurable blessings.⁸ What are the four?

- (1) To teach the Dharma with a pure mind;
- (2) to have great compassion for those who break the precepts;
- (3) to extol bodhicitta among sentient beings; and
- (4) to practice patience when insulted by the lowly and inferior.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, a [true] Bodhisattva is not a Bodhisattva in name only. One who can practice wholesome dharmas and has a mind of equality is called a Bodhisattva. Briefly speaking, one who accomplishes thirty-two things is called a Bodhisattva. What are the thirty-two?

- (1) To aspire to bring sentient beings peace and happiness;
- (2) to enable all sentient beings to abide in all-knowing wisdom;
- (3) not to resent others' wisdom;
- (4) to shatter one's own haughtiness and arrogance;
- (5) to take deep pleasure in the Buddha's path;
- (6) to love and respect all sentient beings sincerely;
- (7) to remain thoroughly kind to friends and foes alike up to one's attainment of nirvāṇa;
- (8) always to speak with a smile and be the first to offer greetings;
- (9) never to stop halfway through in performing a task;
- (10) to extend great compassion equally to all sentient beings;
- (11) to seek extensive learning untiringly and insatiably;
- (12) to look for one's own faults, but not to speak of others' shortcomings;
- (13) to be inspired by bodhicitta in every aspect of one's behavior;
- (14) to practice giving without expecting anything in return;⁹
- (15) to observe the discipline, but not for the purpose of a higher rebirth;
- (16) to practice patience with an unimpeded mind among sentient beings;
- (17) to strive with vigor to cultivate all good roots;
- (18) to practice meditation without aspiring to rebirth in the realm of formlessness;
- (19) to apply the wisdom of skillful means;
- (20) to practice the four inducements;
- (21) to be equally kind to both good and evil sentient beings;
- (22) to listen to the Dharma single-mindedly;
- (23) to remain detached in mind;
- (24) not to indulge in worldly affairs;
- (25) not to enjoy the Hīnayāna, but always to see great benefit in the Mahāyāna;
- (26) to avoid bad friends and associate with good ones;
- (27) to accomplish the four immeasurables and achieve total command of the five miraculous powers;
- (28) always to rely on the true wisdom;
- (29) not to forsake any sentient beings, whether their actions are right or wrong;
- (30) always to discourse with decisiveness;
- (31) to value the true Dharma; and
- (32) to dedicate all one's deeds to bodhi.

Kāśyapa, if a person fulfills these thirty-two things, he is called a Bodhisattva.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, the virtues of a Bodhisattva are innumerable and boundless; they can only be illustrated by parables and similes.

"Kāśyapa, just as the great earth, used by all sentient beings, does not

discriminate or seek rewards, so a Bodhisattva benefits all sentient beings from the time he engenders bodhicitta until the time he attains Buddhahood, but does not discriminate or seek rewards.

"Kāśyapa, just as the element water causes all kinds of grains, medicinal herbs, and trees to grow, so a Bodhisattva, because his mind is pure, extends his kindness and compassion to all sentient beings and causes all wholesome dharmas to grow.

"Kāśyapa, just as the element fire ripens all grains and fruits, so a Bodhisattva's wisdom ripens all wholesome dharmas.

"Kāśyapa, just as the element air causes the formation of all the worlds, so a Bodhisattva's ingenuity causes the formation of all the Buddha-Dharmas.

"Kāśyapa, just as the brilliance and size of a new moon increase from day to day, so all the wholesome dharmas in a Bodhisattva's pure mind grow from day to day.

"Kāśyapa, just as the light of the rising sun simultaneously illuminates all sentient beings, so a Bodhisattva's light of wisdom simultaneously illuminates all sentient beings.

"Kāśyapa, just as the lion, the king of beasts, is fearless wherever it goes, so a Bodhisattva, being flawless in keeping the precepts and endowed with true wisdom, is fearless wherever he dwells.

"Kāśyapa, just as a well-trained, huge elephant can perform great feats without tiring, so a Bodhisattva, due to his well-subdued mind, can yield great benefits to sentient beings without feeling weary at heart.

"Kāśyapa, just as the lotus grows in muddy water but is not soiled by the mud, so a Bodhisattva lives in the world, but is unsullied by worldly things.

"Kāśyapa, after a tree is felled, its stump will continue to grow as long as its root remains. In the same way, after a Bodhisattva has severed the knots of defilement, he still takes rebirth in the three realms by the power of his ingenuity, because he retains his intrinsic love [for sentient beings].

"Kāśyapa, just as the streams flowing from all directions assume a uniform taste when they join the ocean, so the numerous good roots accumulated in different ways by a Bodhisattva become uniform in taste¹⁰ when they are dedicated to the attainment of supreme enlightenment.

"Kāśyapa, just as Mount Sumeru, the king of mountains, is the dwelling-place of the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three and the Heaven of the Four Deva Kings, so the Bodhisattva's bodhicitta is the basis of all-knowing wisdom.

"Kāśyapa, just as the king of a large country can administer state affairs with the assistance of his ministers, so a Bodhisattva's wisdom can accomplish all the Buddha's undertakings with the power of ingenuity.

"Kāśyapa, just as a sunny sky without a speck of cloud is a sure sign that there will be no rain, so a Bodhisattva who has learned little will show no sign of a Dharma-rain.

"Kāśyapa, just as a dark, cloudy sky will inevitably produce rain to fulfill the needs of sentient beings, so a Bodhisattva produces a heavy Dharma-rain from the cloud of great compassion, for the benefit of sentient beings.¹¹

"Kāśyapa, just as the seven treasures appear wherever a universal monarch appears, so the thirty-seven ways to enlightenment appear in the world whenever a Bodhisattva appears.

"Kāśyapa, just as there is an infinite quantity of gold, silver, and precious gems wherever a wish-fulfilling pearl is found, so there are infinite numbers of Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas wherever a Bodhisattva appears.

"Kāśyapa, when the gods of the Heaven of the Thirty-Three enter the Garden of Equality, all the things they use are the same; similarly, a Bodhisattva, with his truly pure mind, teaches all sentient beings equally.

"Kāśyapa, just as poisons can be rendered harmless by charms and antidotes, so the poison of defilements is rendered harmless to a Bodhisattva by the power of his wisdom, and does not cause him to fall to the miserable planes of existence.

"Kāśyapa, just as the excrement and garbage discarded by the people living in big cities will yield benefits when placed in vineyards and sugarcane fields, so the residual defilements of a Bodhisattva will yield benefits because they are conducive to all-knowing wisdom.¹²

"Moreover, Kāśyapa, a Bodhisattva who wishes to learn this Sūtra of Assembled Treasures should constantly cultivate the right insight into all dharmas. What is the right insight? It is to think of all dharmas as they really are. The true, right insight means not to see a self, a personal identity, a sentient being, or a life. This is called the middle way,¹³ the true, right insight.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, true insight means to regard forms as neither permanent nor impermanent; to regard feelings, conceptions, impulses, and consciousness as neither permanent nor impermanent. This is called the middle way, the true, right insight.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, true insight means to regard the element earth as neither permanent nor impermanent, and to regard the elements water, fire, and air as neither permanent nor impermanent. This is called the middle way, the true, right insight.

"Why? Permanence is one extreme, impermanence is the other, and [the two-in-one of] permanence-impermanence is the middle, which is formless, shapeless, incognizable, and unknowable. [To realize] it is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"Ego is one extreme, egolessness is the other, and [the two-in-one of] ego-egolessness is the middle, which is formless, shapeless, incognizable, and unknowable. [To realize] it is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, [to regard] the mind as real is one extreme; [to regard] it as unreal is the other. [To realize] that there is no mind or mental function is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"The same is true of the dharmas which are wholesome and unwholesome,

mundane and supramundane, sinful and not sinful, afflictive and nonafflictive, conditioned and unconditioned, defiled and undefiled. That which is apart from the two extremes cannot be felt¹⁴ or expressed. [To realize] it is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, existence is one extreme, nonexistence is the other, and that which falls on neither extreme is formless, shapeless, incognizable, and unknowable. [To realize] it is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"Next, Kāśyapa, there is a doctrine I have expounded, namely, the twelve links of dependent origination: on ignorance depend actions; on actions depends consciousness; on consciousness depend name and form; on name and form depend the six senses; on the six senses depends contact; on contact depends feeling; on feeling depends craving; on craving depends grasping; on grasping depends becoming; on becoming depends birth; on birth depend old age, death, worry, sorrow, misery, and distress. These links of dependent origination are nothing but a great mass of suffering. If ignorance ceases, actions cease; if actions cease, consciousness ceases; if consciousness ceases, name and form cease; if name and form cease, the six senses cease; if the six senses cease, contact ceases; if contact ceases, feeling ceases; if feeling ceases, craving ceases; if craving ceases, grasping ceases; if grasping ceases, becoming ceases; if becoming ceases, birth ceases; if birth ceases, then old age, death, worry, sorrow, distress, and the whole mass of suffering altogether cease.

"[Concerning the twelve links of dependent origination,] ignorance, [or not knowing], and wisdom, [or knowing], are one and the same. To understand this is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas. In like manner, actions and nonactions, consciousness and the objects of consciousness, the perceptible and the imperceptible aspects of name and form, the six senses and the six miraculous powers, contact and objects of contact, feeling and its cessation, craving and its cessation, grasping and its cessation, becoming and its cessation, birth and its cessation, old age and death and their cessation—all these are one and the same. To understand this is called the middle way, the true insight into all dharmas.

"Next, Kāśyapa, to one who has the true insight, things are empty, not because one contemplates them as empty; they are empty by nature. Things are signless, not because one contemplates them as signless; they are signless in themselves. Things are unsought,¹⁵ not because one contemplates them as unsought; they are unsought in themselves. Things are devoid of origination, arising, entry, and self-nature; they are impossible to grasp, not because one contemplates them as such; they are so in themselves. This understanding is called the true insight.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, personal identity is empty, not because one thinks there is no personal identity; it is empty in itself. It was empty in the past; it will be empty in the future; and it is empty at present. Therefore, one should rely on emptiness, not on personal identity.

"However, if one thinks that he has realized emptiness and becomes attached

to emptiness, then he regresses in the pursuit of the Buddha-Dharma. Thus, Kāśyapa, it is better for one to take a view of the self as massive as Mount Sumeru than to take a view of emptiness and become arrogant. Why? Because all views can be eliminated by emptiness, but if one gives rise to the view of emptiness, there is no way to do away with it.¹⁶

"Kāśyapa, if a physician gives his patient some medicine to purge an illness, but the medicine stays in the body instead of being discharged, what do you think? Will the patient get better?"

"No, World-Honored One. The patient's illness will become worse if the medicine is not discharged."

"In like manner, Kāśyapa, all views can be eliminated by emptiness, but the view of emptiness cannot be eradicated."

"Suppose a person is afraid of empty space and wails in grief and pounds his chest, saying, 'I want to escape from empty space!' What do you think? Can one escape from empty space?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"Similarly, Kāśyapa, if a person is afraid of the doctrine of emptiness, I say he is crazy and has lost his mind. Why do I say so? Because he is always in emptiness, and yet is afraid of it."

"Just as a painter paints a picture of demons and then faints at the sight of his own creation, so ordinary people fabricate forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and textures, and then wander in saṃsāra afflicting themselves with all kinds of suffering without knowing it."

"Just as a magician produces an illusory being and then is devoured by it, so a monk who follows the path engenders the view that all dharmas are empty, still, and insubstantial; and then he, the viewer, is also voided [by this view].¹⁷

"Kāśyapa, just as fire produced by rubbing two pieces of wood together will burn up wood, so, Kāśyapa, the sacred wisdom born of true insight will burn up true insight."

"When a lamp is lit, the darkness completely vanishes. The darkness goes nowhere, just as it comes from nowhere—it does not go to or come from the east, the south, the west, the north, the four intermediate directions, the zenith, or the nadir. Furthermore, the lamplight does not think. 'I can dispel darkness,' though it is because of the light that the darkness vanished. Both light and darkness are empty, inert, and impossible to grasp. Similarly, Kāśyapa, once true wisdom arises, ignorance ends. Both wisdom and ignorance are empty, inert, and impossible to grasp."

"Kāśyapa, suppose a room has been totally dark for a thousand years and then a lamp is lit therein. Do you suppose the darkness will think to itself, 'I have lived here for a long time and do not want to go'?"

"No, World-Honored One. When the lamp is lit, the darkness will be powerless. Even if it should refuse to go, it would surely be dispelled."

"In the same way, Kāśyapa, with one true insight, all the defilements and

karmas accumulated through hundreds of thousands of millions of kalpas can be eradicated. The lamplight stands for the sacred wisdom; the darkness stands for the defilements and karmas.

"To illustrate, Kāśyapa, it is absolutely impossible for a seed to grow in midair. Likewise, it is impossible for a Bodhisattva to develop the Buddha-Dharma if he clings to his realization [of emptiness]. Kāśyapa, just as a seed sprouts when sown in a fertile field, so, Kāśyapa, the Buddha-Dharma grows when a Bodhisattva dwells among defilements and involves himself in worldly things."¹⁸

"Kāśyapa, just as a lotus flower cannot grow in high, dry land, so the Buddha-Dharma cannot grow in a Bodhisattva who stays in [the realm of] the unconditioned. Kāśyapa, just as a lotus flower grows in a low, wet, muddy land, so the Buddha-Dharma grows only when a Bodhisattva stays in the mire of saṃsāra among those in the group convinced by heterodox teachings."¹⁹

"Kāśyapa, the quantity of a Bodhisattva's conditioned good roots is like the quantity of cream sufficient to fill the four great oceans, while the quantity of a Śrāvaka's good roots is like a tiny droplet from that ocean suspended from a hundredth part of a hair."

"Kāśyapa, a Śrāvaka's conditioned wisdom is like the space inside a tiny mustard seed. Kāśyapa, a Bodhisattva's conditioned wisdom²⁰ is like the immeasurable, boundless space throughout the ten directions, and its power is infinite."

"Kāśyapa, suppose the wife of a kṣatriya ruler bears the child of a poor, lowly man. What do you think? Will the child be a prince?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"In the same way, Kāśyapa, although my Śrāvaka disciples [and the Bodhisattvas] both realize the Dharma-nature and are born of it, Śrāvakas are not called the true sons of the Tathāgata."

"Kāśyapa, if a kṣatriya ruler has a child with his maidservant of low caste, the child may be called a prince. Similarly, though a novice Bodhisattva is not fully equipped with merits or wisdom, wanders in saṃsāra, and can only benefit sentient beings within the limits of his [meager] power, he is still called a true son of the Tathāgata."

"Kāśyapa, if a universal monarch has a thousand sons, but not one of them bears the characteristics of a universal monarch, the monarch will not consider any of them as heir to the throne. Similarly, if a Tathāgata is surrounded by hundreds of thousands of millions of Śrāvakas, but no Bodhisattvas, he will not consider any of them as his true son."

"Kāśyapa, suppose the wife of a universal monarch is pregnant for seven days with a son who is already endowed with all the characteristics of a universal monarch. This son will be respected by gods more than other, grown sons [who lack those characteristics]. Why? Because this embryo prince will someday inherit the throne and perpetuate the lineage of the universal monarch. Similarly, Kāśyapa, though a novice Bodhisattva does not yet fully possess the qualities of a

Bodhisattva, he will, as in the case of the embryo prince, be more deeply honored by gods and spirits than great Arhats who have achieved the eightfold liberation. Why? Because such a Bodhisattva is heir to the supreme throne [of the Tathāgata] and will perpetuate the Buddha-lineage.

"Kāśyapa, just as one bead of lapis lazuli is worth more than ordinary crystal beads piled as high as Mount Sumeru, so a Bodhisattva, even when he first brings forth bodhicitta, surpasses all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas combined.

"Kāśyapa, when a prince is newly born, all the chieftains and ministers come to pay their respects to him. Similarly, when a Bodhisattva first brings forth bodhicitta, all gods and humans should pay homage to him.

"Kāśyapa, just as the herbs growing in the Himalayas belong to no one and will cure any person of his illness without discrimination, so the medicine of wisdom acquired by a Bodhisattva can deliver all sentient beings equally, without discrimination.

"Kāśyapa, just as people adore a new moon more than a full moon, so those who believe my words adore a Bodhisattva more than they adore a Tathāgata. Why? Because Tathāgatas are born of Bodhisattvas.²¹

"Kāśyapa, a fool may worship stars instead of the moon, but a wise man will never pay homage to Śrāvakas instead of Bodhisattvas.

"Kāśyapa, no matter how skillful a god or human may be in making artificial gems, he cannot turn an ordinary bead into a precious bead of lapis lazuli. Similarly, for all their accomplishments in discipline and meditation, those who seek Śrāvakahood can never sit at the bodhi-site to realize supreme bodhi.

"Kāśyapa, when a bead of lapis lazuli is formed, myriads of gems will appear with it. Similarly, when a Bodhisattva is taught and develops, he will yield myriads of Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas."

Then the World-Honored One told Mahākāśyapa further, "A Bodhisattva should always try to benefit sentient beings. He should correctly cultivate all meritorious deeds and good roots and dedicate them to all sentient beings equally. He should administer to sentient beings everywhere in the ten directions the medicines of wisdom he has acquired, and thus cure them thoroughly.

"What are the genuine medicines of wisdom?²² Contemplation on [bodily] impurities cures lust. Contemplation on kindness cures anger and hatred. Contemplation on dependent origination cures ignorance.²³

"Contemplation on the emptiness of phenomena cures all deluded views. Contemplation on signlessness cures memories, discriminations, and wandering thoughts. Contemplation on wishlessness cures the desire to escape from the three realms.

"Contemplation on the four right views cures the four wrong views; contemplation on the impermanence of all conditioned dharma cures the wrong view of regarding the impermanent as permanent; contemplation on the sufferings caused by conditioned dharma cures the wrong view of regarding suffering as pleasure; contemplation on the absence of self-entity in dharma cures the wrong view of

regarding that which has no self as having a self; and contemplation on the tranquility of nirvāṇa cures the wrong view of regarding the impure as pure.

"The four mindfulnesses²⁴ cure clinging to body, feelings, mind, and dharma. One who practices the Dharma and contemplates the body as it really is will not be trapped by the view of a real self. One who contemplates feelings as they really are will not be trapped by the view of a real self. One who contemplates the mind as it really is will not be trapped by the view of a real self. One who contemplates dharma as they really are will not be trapped by the view of a real self. These four mindfulnesses, therefore, cause one to abhor the body, feelings, mind, and all dharmas, and thereby open the door to nirvāṇa.

"By the four right efforts one can put an end to present unwholesome dharmas, prevent new unwholesome dharmas from arising, bring new wholesome dharmas into existence, and at the same time cultivate all virtues and good roots. . . . When such a Bodhisattva has acquired the medicine of wisdom, he will proceed in all the ten directions to cure sentient beings thoroughly [of their afflictions].

"What is a Bodhisattva's medicine of supramundane wisdom? It is to know that all dharmas arise from combinations of causes and conditions. It is to believe that all dharmas are devoid of self-entity, personal identity, being, or life; that there is no knower, seer, doer, or receiver.²⁵ It is to believe in and penetrate this truth [that] there is no 'I' or 'mine.'

"A Bodhisattva should not be afraid of or terrified by this Dharma of emptiness, in which nothing is apprehensible. He should further exert himself to probe the characteristics of the mind.

"A Bodhisattva probes the mind by thinking: 'What is the mind? Is it desire? Is it hatred? Is it ignorance? Does it belong to the past, the present, or the future? If it belongs to the past, the past is gone. If it belongs to the future, the future has not yet come. If it belongs to the present, the present never stands still. The mind is not inside or outside [the body], nor in between. It is formless, shapeless, incognizable, and unknowable; it relies on nothing and has no location. Such a mind was not, is not, and will not be seen by any of the Buddhas of the ten directions and the three phases of time. If it is not seen by any of the past, present, or future Buddhas, how can it exist? It is due to wrong thinking that the mind arises, and along with it all the different dharmas. The mind is illusory, but through thought, fantasy, and discrimination, it gives rise to all kinds of karmas and consequently causes one to receive various bodily forms [as karmic results].

"Furthermore, Mahākāśyapa, the mind is like the wind blowing, which no one can catch. It is like flowing water, continually arising and ceasing. It is like the flame of a lamp, caused by various factors. It is like lightning, for it perishes from moment to moment. It is like the air, for it is polluted by the dust of external objects. It is like a monkey, for it clings to the six desires one after another. It is like a painter, for it is able to create numerous karmic causes and conditions.

"The mind is not fixed, for it runs after various defilements. It is like a

mighty ruler, for all dharmas are governed by it. It acts alone, without companion, for two minds cannot exist simultaneously. It is a bitter enemy, for it causes all sufferings. It can ruin all good roots, just as a mad elephant may trample mud huts under its feet. It behaves like [a fish] swallowing a hook, considering suffering to be pleasure. It is like a dream, giving rise to the idea of an 'I' where there is no 'I'. It is like a fly, considering impurities to be pure.

"The mind is like a rogue, for it can torture one in every way. It is like a demon, always looking for opportunities to attack. It constantly swings between high and low, for it is spoiled by greed and anger. It is like a bandit, for it can rob one of all good roots. It lusts for forms, just as a moth plunges into fire. It yearns for sounds, just as a veteran soldier yearns to hear drumbeats signaling victory. It is always greedy for fragrances, just as a hog enjoys wallowing in filth. It always pursues flavors, just as a young girl indulges in delicacies. It always craves pleasant textures, just as a fly clings to oil.

"Thus, Kāśyapa, [a Bodhisattva] probes the characteristics of the mind but finds the mind to be inapprehensible. If it is inapprehensible, it has nothing to do with the past, present, or future. If it has nothing to do with the past, present, or future, it transcends the three phases of time. If it transcends the three phases of time, it is neither existent nor nonexistent. If it has no self-nature, it does not arise. If it does not arise, it does not cease. If it does not cease, it parts with nothing. If it parts with nothing, then it neither comes nor goes, and neither gains nor loses anything. If it neither comes nor goes, and neither gains nor loses anything, then it performs no actions. If it performs no actions, then it is unconditioned.

"Since it is unconditioned, it is the root from which all saints develop. In the unconditioned, there is no keeping or breaking of precepts. If there is no keeping or breaking of precepts, then there is no action or inaction. If there is no action or inaction, then there is no mind or mental function. If there is no mind or mental function, then there is no karma or karmic result. If there is no karma or karmic result, then there is no joy or suffering. What is free from joy and suffering is the holy nature; in it, there is no karma or creator of karma; no bodily karma, no verbal karma, and no mental karma; nor any such distinctions as high, middle, or low.

"The holy nature is equal throughout, for it is like empty space. It is beyond distinction, for all dharmas are of one taste. It is detachment, for it is detached from all phenomena of body and mind. It is apart from all dharmas, for it accords with nirvāṇa. It is purity, for it is free from all defilements. It has no 'I,' for it is devoid of the 'I' and 'mine.' It has no high or low, for it is born of equality.

"The holy nature is the real truth, for it is the ultimate truth. It never ends, for it ultimately does not come into being. It always abides, for all dharmas forever remain the same. It is bliss, for nirvāṇa is the highest [bliss]. It is pure, for it is apart from all phenomena. It has no 'I,' for the 'I' is inapprehensible. The holy nature is true purity, for it is ultimately pure from the beginning.

"Furthermore, Mahākāśyapa, all of you should contemplate inwardly. Do not let your minds gallop outside.

"Now, Mahākāśyapa, some monks in the future will behave like a dog chasing clods of earth. What does this mean? If a person throws clods of earth at a dog, the dog will chase the clods instead of the person. In the same way, Kāśyapa, a śramaṇa or brāhmin may fear the bondage of pleasant forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and textures, and live completely alone in a secluded place, far away from the bustling multitude; but, while his body is separated from the objects of the five sensuous desires, his mind has not renounced them. Such a person will at times think about pleasant forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and textures, and yearn to enjoy them instead of contemplating inwardly. He does not know how to detach himself from forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and textures. Because he does not know this, when he enters a city, town, or village and mingles with the crowd, he will still be attached to the pleasant forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and textures. Because he has observed the mundane rules of conduct in a secluded place, he can be reborn in heaven after death. However, he will then be bound again by the five sensuous pleasures in heaven; and when his life there ends, he will still be unable to escape falling to the four miserable planes of existence, namely, those of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, and asuras. Such a monk may be likened to a dog chasing clods of earth.²⁶

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, how can a monk not be like a dog chasing clods of earth? Suppose a monk does not return a scolding for a scolding, nor does he retaliate for beatings, injuries, hatred, or slander; instead, he only reflects inwardly, seeking to subdue his own mind, and thinks, 'Who is the scolder? Who is the scolded? Who is the beater, the injurer, the hater, or the slanderer?' Such a monk is not like a dog chasing clods of earth.

"Kāśyapa, just as a good horse trainer can immediately tame a rampageous, unruly horse, so one who practices the Dharma can instantly arrest his mind whenever it wanders, not allowing it to go astray.

"Kāśyapa, just as a throttling disease can cut short one's life immediately, so, Kāśyapa, among all views, the view of an 'I' can cut short the life of wisdom instantly.

"Just as a person seeks to release himself from whatever bonds restrict him, so, Kāśyapa, one should seek to release himself from whatever his mind is attached to.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, one who has left the household life may have two impurities of the mind. What are the two? First, to read heterodox scriptures, such as those of the materialists; second, to collect fine robes and bowls.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, one who has left the household life may suffer from two strong fetters. What are the two? First, the fetter of wrong views; second, the fetter of material gains.

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may meet two obstacles. What are the two? First, to be intimate with laypeople; second, to resent virtuous persons.

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may have two blemishes. What are the two? First, to tolerate defilements [in himself]; second, to be attached to donors.

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may be afflicted by two hailstorms that will ruin his good roots. What are the two? First, to rebel against and to corrupt the true Dharma; second, to accept offerings from devotees after having broken the precepts.

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may suffer from two abcesses. What are the two? First, to find fault with others; second, to hide his own faults.

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may be afflicted with two fevers. What are the two? First, to be defiled in mind while wearing a monastic robe; second, to accept offerings from virtuous people who keep the precepts, [while violating the precepts himself].

"Furthermore, one who has left the household life may suffer from two illnesses. What are the two? First, to be arrogant and refuse to be humble; second, to ruin others' aspirations for the Mahāyāna.

"Moreover, Mahākāśyapa, there are four kinds of śramaṇas. What are the four?

- (1) Śramaṇas in appearance and attire [only];
- (2) śramaṇas who are deceptively dignified in conduct;
- (3) śramaṇas who lust for fame; and
- (4) śramaṇas who really practice the Dharma.

"What is a śramaṇa in appearance and attire [only]? Suppose a śramaṇa is fully dressed in a monastic robe, has cleanly shaven hair and beard, and an alms-bowl in hand, yet he performs impure actions of body, speech, and mind. Instead of properly guarding himself from evil, he is miserly, jealous, idle, and lazy; he violates the precepts and engages in vile pursuits. Such a śramaṇa is one in appearance and attire [only].

"What is a śramaṇa who is deceptively dignified in conduct? Suppose a śramaṇa displays full dignity in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down. He is composed and serene; does not take delicacies; follows the four noble practices; avoids the bustling crowd, even a group of monks; and speaks softly. However, he does all this deceitfully, not for the sake of true purity. Or, he thinks there is something to be attained in emptiness, and is afraid of the doctrine of nonattainment, just as one is afraid of an abyss; he regards as enemies or bandits those monks who preach that all dharmas are ultimately empty. Such a śramaṇa is one who is deceptively dignified in conduct.

"What is a śramaṇa who lusts for fame? Suppose a śramaṇa observes the precepts only because he wants to be known and to achieve certain goals in his present life. He reads and recites the sūtras on his own because he wants people to know that he is learned; and he lives alone in a secluded spot because he wants

people to know that he is a recluse who has few desires, is content, and practices detachment. In short, he does everything for the sole purpose of fame, not out of renunciation, nor to achieve true tranquillity, nor to realize the truth, nor to attain the fruit of a śramaṇa or brāhmin, nor to achieve nirvāṇa. Such a śramaṇa is one who lusts for fame.

"Finally, Kāśyapa, what is a śramaṇa who really practices the Dharma? Suppose a śramaṇa does not even crave for physical existence, much less for material gains. When he hears that all dharmas are empty, signless, and unsought, he understands this doctrine thoroughly, conforms to it, and practices it as taught. He does not cultivate pure conduct in order to achieve nirvāṇa, much less to [be reborn in] the three realms. He does not cherish the idea of emptiness, or the idea that there is no 'I,' let alone the idea of an 'I,' a being, or a personal identity.

"He parts with reliance in seeking release from all defilements; seeing that all dharmas are originally undefiled and ultimately pure, he relies on himself instead of others. Realizing the true Dharma-body, he does not even see the Buddha, much less [his physical] form. Through realizing emptiness, he has become detached, and does not even perceive the Dharma; much less does he crave for the sounds and words [describing it]. Realizing the unconditioned, he does not even see the Saṅgha, much less the existence of a harmonious assembly. He does not eradicate anything or cultivate anything; he does not abide in saṃsāra or attach himself to nirvāṇa.²⁷ Knowing that all dharmas are from the beginning ultimately quiescent, he perceives no bondage and seeks no liberation. Such a śramaṇa is one who really practices the Dharma.

"Thus, Kāśyapa, you should imitate the śramaṇa who really practices the Dharma. Do not be ruined by names. Kāśyapa, suppose a poor, lowly man assumed the name of a rich, noble person. Do you think the name would fit him?"

"No, World-Honored One."

"In the same way, Kāśyapa, if one is called a śramaṇa or brāhmin but does not perform the real meritorious deeds of a śramaṇa or brāhmin, he will be ruined by the name.

"For example, a person swept away by a flood may die of thirst and fatigue. Similarly, Kāśyapa, if a śramaṇa reads many sūtras but cannot quench his thirst of desire, hatred, and ignorance, he will be swept away by the Dharma-flood, die of the thirst of defilements, and fall to the miserable planes of existence.

"For example, a physician who always carries a medicine pouch may be unable to cure his own illness. The same is true of a learned person afflicted with the illness of defilements; although he has much learning, he cannot benefit himself unless he puts an end to his defilements.

"A person who takes a king's expensive medicine may be unable to adjust himself to it and be hurt by it. The same is true of a learned person afflicted with the illness of defilements: although he has obtained the good medicine of the Dharma, he will hurt his own root of wisdom if he does not cultivate virtues.

"Kāśyapa, just as a wish-fulfilling pearl that has just fallen into filth cannot

be worn, so a learned person who covets material gains cannot benefit humans or gods.

"Just as a corpse may wear gold ornaments, so a learned monk who breaks the precepts may [improperly] wear monastic robes and accept offerings from people.

"If an elder's son trims his nails, bathes, rubs himself with red sandalwood incense, puts a garland around his neck, and wears new, white clothing, then his appearance befits his social status. Similarly, Kāśyapa, a learned monk who observes the precepts is worthy to wear a monastic robe and accept offerings from people.

"Next, Mahākāśyapa, there are four kinds of monks who break the precepts but appear to keep the precepts well. What are the four?

"Some monks observe the precepts completely. They are always afraid of committing any transgression, whether major or minor, and obey all the rules of discipline they have learned. They are pure in action, word, and thought, and adopt a pure, right means of livelihood. However, they uphold the doctrine which claims that there is a real 'self'.²⁸ These people constitute the first kind of monk who breaks the precepts but appears to keep the precepts well.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, some monks recite the code of discipline and practice its teachings. However, they continue to hold the view of a real body. They constitute the second kind of monk who breaks the precepts but appears to keep the precepts well.

"Furthermore, Kāśyapa, some monks observe the precepts completely. However, in practicing kindness they become attached to sentient beings, and when they hear that no dharma ever arises, they are terrified. They constitute the third kind of monk who breaks the precepts but seems to keep the precepts well.

"Finally, Kāśyapa, some monks practice all twelve austerities,²⁹ but see something attainable in doing so. They constitute the fourth kind of monk who breaks the precepts but seems to keep the precepts well.

"Next, Kāśyapa, one who observes the precepts well sees no 'I' or 'mine'; no doing or nondoing, no deed or doer, no action or inaction, no name or form, no signs or nonsigns, no cessation or continuation, no clinging or abandoning, nothing to grasp and nothing to give up, no sentient being and no term 'sentient being,' no mind and no term 'mind,' no world or nonworld, and no reliance or nonreliance. Such a person does not pride himself on keeping the precepts, nor does he look down upon the way others observe the precepts, nor does he think or discriminate about the precepts. He is called one who observes the discipline of all saints: he is free from defilements and bondage, not caught in the three realms, and beyond all doctrines of reliance."

Thereupon, to clarify this point, the World-Honored One spoke in verse:

"One who observes the precepts purely
Is free from any blemish;
He is free from everything.

In keeping the precepts,
He is not arrogant,
And relies upon nothing.
In keeping the precepts,
He is not deluded,
And is free from all bonds.

In keeping the precepts,
He is untainted,
And does nothing amiss.
In keeping the precepts,
His mind is pliant and gentle,
And he always dwells in ultimate quiescence.

Such a person is far apart
From all thoughts and discriminations;
He is liberated from every stirring
Of the mind.
This is the pure observance
Of the Buddha's precepts.

If one is not attached to his [present] life,
Nor craves for any [future] birth,
But performs only right actions,
And abides securely in the noble path—
He is one who purely, and in truth,
Observes the Buddha's precepts.

One who keeps the precepts
Is not defiled by the world,
Nor does he rely
On anything mundane.
Once he attains the light of wisdom,
All darkness vanishes and nothing remains;
Without a notion of self or others,
He knows and sees all phenomena.
He is one who purely, and in truth,
Observes the Buddha's precepts.

There is no this or other shore,
Nor anything in between.
Be not attached [to them], nor
To the absence of the three.
To be free from bondage, defilements, and deceit
Is called the true, pure observance
Of the Buddha's precepts.

If one is not attached to name or form
 And has no notion of 'I' or 'mine,'
 He is said to securely abide
 In the true, pure observance
 Of the precepts.

Although one may observe all precepts,
 His arrogance should not increase,
 Nor should he regard
 The discipline as supreme.
 He should transcend it,
 And seek the holy path.

To do this is a sign
 Of the true, pure observance
 Of the precepts.

Do not regard the discipline as supreme,
 Nor overvalue samādhi.
 If one can transcend both discipline and samādhi,
 But cultivate wisdom,
 He will realize emptiness, still and void,
 Which is the very nature shared
 By all saints and sages.

To do this is the true, pure
 Observance of the precepts,
 Extolled by all Buddhas.

Release the mind from the view of a self,
 Eliminate the 'I' and 'mine,'
 Believe in and understand
 The teaching of quiescence and emptiness,
 Which all Buddhas practice;
 He who so observes the holy discipline
 Is indeed peerless.

One depends on discipline to achieve samādhi,
 And on samādhi to cultivate insight.
 Relying on the insight thus cultivated,
 One achieves the pure wisdom:
 He who achieves the pure wisdom
 Is able to keep the pure precepts."

When this was spoken, five hundred monks became detached from all dharma and achieved mental liberation,³⁰ thirty-two thousand persons left mundane filth behind and attained the clear Dharma-eye.³¹ However, five hundred monks did

not understand or believe in the profound Dharma they had heard, and they rose from their seats and walked away.

Seeing this, Mahākāśyapa said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, these five hundred monks have all attained dhyāna; however, because they cannot understand or have faith in the profound Dharma, they have risen and gone away."

The Buddha said to Kāśyapa, "These monks all have arrogance; therefore, when they hear of the pure, flawless discipline, they cannot understand it or have faith in it. The meaning of the verses spoken by the Buddha is profound. Why? Because the enlightenment of Buddhas is profound. If a person has not planted good roots abundantly, or associates with evil friends, he will lack the power of faith and understanding, and it will be difficult for him to accept and believe in [this doctrine]."

"Furthermore, Mahākāśyapa, at the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, these five hundred monks were disciples of heterodox masters. Once they visited Kāśyapa Buddha in order to find fault with him; however, after they heard that Buddha expound the Dharma, they acquired a little faith and thought, 'This Buddha is unusual; how wonderfully he speaks!' Because of this virtuous thought, they were born in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three after death. When their lives ended there, they were born in this world, and here they renounced the household life for the Dharma.

"These monks are strongly attached to various views; therefore, they cannot believe in, conform to, or thoroughly understand the profound Dharma they hear expounded. Although they do not thoroughly understand the profound Dharma, they will obtain great benefit merely because they have heard it. They will not be reborn in the miserable planes of existence, but will realize nirvāṇa in this very life."

Then the Buddha told Subhūti, "Go bring those monks back."

Subhūti said, "World-Honored One, these people do not even believe the Buddha; much less will they believe Subhūti."

Thereupon the Buddha magically produced two monks to follow the five hundred monks. When the [real] monks saw the two magically produced ones, they asked them, "Where are you going?"

The magically produced monks answered, "We are going to some secluded spot to enjoy the practice of meditation. Why? Because we cannot understand or believe in what the Buddha said."

The other monks said, "Elders, we cannot understand or believe in what the Buddha said, either. We, too, are going to a secluded spot to practice meditation."

Then the magically produced monks said to the others, "We should give up arrogance, defiance, and contention, and try to understand and believe in what the Buddha taught. Why? Because to have no arrogance or contention is the law of śramaṇas. Nirvāṇa means cessation. What ceases? In the body, is there an 'I,' a personal identity, a doer, a receiver, or a life to cease?"

The other monks said, "In the body, there is no 'I,' no personal identity, no

doer, no receiver, and no life that ceases. It is the cessation of desire, hatred, and ignorance that is called nirvāṇa."

The magically produced monks asked, "Do the desire, hatred, and ignorance you mentioned have definite forms to be totally extinguished?"

The other monks answered, "Desire, hatred, and ignorance are neither inside nor outside the body, nor anywhere in between. When one does not stir his mind, they do not arise."³²

The magically produced monks said, "In that case, you should not stir your minds. If you do not stir your minds or make distinctions about dharma, then you will be neither defiled by nor detached from anything. To be neither defiled by nor detached from anything is called ultimate quiescence. Discipline does not come or go or perish; meditation, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and awareness derived from liberation³³ also do not come or go or perish. It is in light of this doctrine that we speak of nirvāṇa. This truth is empty [in itself], detached from all things, and cannot be grasped. You should abandon even the thought of nirvāṇa. Do not follow any thought³⁴ or nontought. Do not rid yourselves of a thought by another thought. Do not contemplate a thought by another thought. If you rid yourselves of a thought by using a thought, you are still bound by thought. You should not discriminate anything concerning the Dhyāna of Cessation of Feeling and Conception, because all dharma are beyond discrimination. If a monk eliminates all feelings and conception and attains this dhyāna, then he fulfills himself to the utmost."

When the magically produced monks had spoken thus, the five hundred [real] monks became detached from all dharma and liberated in mind. They returned to the Buddha, bowed with their heads at his feet, and stood to one side.

Subhūti asked the monks, "Where did you go and where do you come from?"

The monks said, "The Dharma expounded by the Buddha comes from nowhere and goes nowhere."

"Who is your teacher?"

"He who has never been born and will never die is our teacher."

"Where do you learn the Dharma?"

"We learn the Dharma in the place where the five aggregates, the twelve entrances, and the eighteen elements do not exist."

"Why do you learn the Dharma?"

"Not for the sake of bondage or for the sake of liberation."

"What doctrine do you practice?"

"We do not try to attain anything or to eliminate anything."

"Who subdued you?"

"We are subdued by [one whose] body has no definite nature and [whose] mind does not act."³⁵

"What action leads to the liberation of the mind?"

"Neither the eradication of ignorance nor the generation of wisdom."

"Whose disciples are you?"

"We are disciples of one who attains nothing and knows nothing."

"You have attained [the ultimate liberation]; when will you enter nirvāṇa?"

"When a person magically produced by the Tathāgata enters nirvāṇa, we will do so, too."³⁶

"Have you obtained benefit for yourselves?"

"Self-benefit is inapprehensible."

"Have you accomplished what you set out to do?"

"Deeds are inapprehensible."

"Have you cultivated pure conduct?"

"We cultivate nothing in the three realms, nor do we not cultivate anything; this is our pure conduct."

"Have you exhausted your defilements?"

"Ultimately, nothing can be exhausted."

"Have you vanquished the demons?"

"The demons of the aggregates are inapprehensible."

"Do you serve the Tathāgata?"

"Not with body or mind."

"Do you abide in the fields of blessings?"

"We do not abide in anything."

"Have you cut off circling in saṃsāra?"

"There is neither permanence nor severance."

"Do you conform to the Dharma?"

"We are liberated from every obstruction."³⁷

"What is your ultimate destination?"

"Wherever a person magically produced by the Tathāgata goes, we will go."

While Subhūti was questioning the monks, five hundred other monks became detached from all dharma and liberated in mind; thirty-two thousand people parted from mundane defilements and attained the clear Dharma-eye.

Then a Bodhisattva in the assembly named Universal Light asked the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if a Bodhisattva wishes to learn this Sūtra of Assembled Treasures, what should he abide in and how should he learn it?"

The Buddha answered, "A Bodhisattva learning this sūtra should know that what I have said has no definite nature, and he should not be attached to it or cling to it. If he follows this instruction in his practice, he will benefit greatly."

"Universal Light, suppose a person tries to cross the Ganges in a poorly built boat. With what vigor should he row the boat?"

Bodhisattva Universal Light replied, "World-Honored One, he should row it with great vigor. Why? Because it may collapse in midstream."

The Buddha said, "Universal Light, a Bodhisattva who wishes to cultivate the Buddha-Dharma should exert himself twice as hard. Why? Because the body is

impermanent and uncertain, a decaying form which cannot long remain and will eventually wear out and perish; it may disintegrate before one benefits from the Dharma.

"[A Bodhisattva should think,] 'I will learn to navigate the Dharma boat in this stream [of saṃsāra], so that I may ferry sentient beings across the four currents. I will ply this Dharma boat back and forth in saṃsāra to deliver sentient beings.'

"The Dharma boat which a Bodhisattva should use is made for the purpose of saving all sentient beings equally. Its strong, thick planks are the immeasurable merits resulting from the practice of pure discipline; its embellishments are the practice and the fruit of giving; its beams are the pure faith in the Buddha-path; its strong riggings are all kinds of virtues; its nails are patience, tenderness, and thoughtfulness. The raw wood is the various ways to enlightenment, cultivated with vigor, taken from the forest of the supreme, wonderful Dharma.

"Its builders are the infinite, inconceivable dhyanas and the tranquil, well-subdued mind resulting from one's meritorious deeds. Ever-enduring compassion and the four inducements are the means to attract immense numbers of sentient beings aboard to ferry them over the great distance. The power of wisdom guards the boat from robbers. Ingenuity of all kinds and the four immeasurables are its splendid adornments. The four right mindfulnesses form its golden bridge. The four right efforts and the four bases of miraculous powers are the swift winds [that propel the boat].

"The five roots are the able navigator who steers the boat away from the dangerous waters. The five powers are its strong buoyancy. The seven factors of enlightenment serve to discover and vanquish devilish pirates. By sailing [on the course of] the eightfold noble path, the boat will arrive at its destination on the other shore, away from the landings of heterodox teachings.

"Concentration serves as the helmsman, while insight brings the true benefit. The boat steers clear of [the reefs of] the two extremes and sails safely by the law of dependent generation. The follower of the vast Mahāyāna has inexhaustible eloquence, and his name spreads far and wide. Being able to deliver sentient beings in the ten directions, he proclaims, 'Come aboard this Dharma boat! It sails on a safe course to nirvāṇa. It ferries you from the shore of all wrong views, including that of a real self, to the shore of Buddhahood.'

"Thus, Universal Light, a Bodhisattva-Mahāsatva should learn everything about this Dharma boat. For hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of incalculable kalpas, he should use this Dharma boat to rescue those sentient beings who are drifting and drowning in the vast stream of saṃsāra."

The Buddha then said to Universal Light, "Moreover, there are other Dharma instructions that can cause a Bodhisattva to achieve Buddhahood quickly. They are:

Be sincere in every endeavor and cultivate an abundance of virtue.

Keep a pure, deeply [compassionate] mind and never cease to be vigorous.

Take delight in approaching enlightenment and cultivate all good roots. Always maintain right thought and enjoy wholesome dharmas.

Learn the Dharma insatiably in order to be filled with wisdom.

Shatter your conceit and arrogance in order to increase your knowledge.

Rid yourself of play-words in order to accomplish meritorious deeds.

Take pleasure in solitude in order to be detached in body and mind.

Stay away from noisy crowds in order to avoid wicked people.

Probe the depth of the Dharma in accordance with the ultimate truth.

Seek the wisdom that penetrates reality.

Seek the real truth to attain the indestructible Dharma.

Seek the doctrine of emptiness so that your practice may be right.

Seek detachment in order to attain ultimate quiescence.

In this way, Universal Light, a Bodhisattva may quickly achieve Buddhahood." When this sūtra had been spoken, Bodhisattva Universal Light, Mahākāśyapa, and all the gods, asuras, and humans were jubilant. With great veneration, they began to practice the sūtra as taught.

NOTES

1. After each series of four, the category is repeated (e.g., "These four cause a Bodhisattva's wisdom to decrease.") We have omitted this repetition for brevity.
2. Literally, "crooked minds."
3. Literally, "straight mind."
4. That is, he considers all adversity as retribution for his own negative karma committed in a previous life.
5. This is a recurring quandary for people who are interested in Buddhist doctrine: If there is no 'I', no 'mine', and all dharmas are utterly empty, how can the law of karma prevail? The answer is: it is precisely because everything is empty and there is no self or 'I', that everything *can* exist and the principle of karma *can* prevail. If things were truly existent, i.e., with a definite, enduring substance or entity, then no change or flow would be possible. Because nothing has a self-nature (*svabhāva*), everything is possible. The Buddhist way of thinking is unique in this aspect. To understand this point more clearly, the reader is referred to the Mādhyamika and Prajñāpāramitā literature, such as T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1955) ch. 1, 2, and 3; and Garma Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971) Part 2, sec. 1. (G.C.)
6. A similar quandary. If sentient beings, like all dharmas in the universe, are utterly empty and do not exist, on whom is compassion bestowed?

I think this problem is much more difficult to explain than that in note 5. I personally do not know any completely satisfactory answer, for it is not only an ontological problem,

but also an ethical one; hence, it involves a much broader spectrum of questions than the preceding one. The traditional Buddhist answers to this problem are as follows:

A. When a Bodhisattva sees the illusory sentient beings undergo the illusory sufferings caused by their illusory karma, he generates an illusory compassion toward the illusory sentient beings and delivers them from their delusions. The Bodhisattva is illusory and empty, for he has no concept of 'self'; the sentient beings and their sufferings are also illusory and empty because they have no self-entities; the compassion of the Bodhisattva and the sufferings of sentient beings are also illusory, because they are inapprehensible or unobtainable, like dreams or magic. Everything in samsāra is illusory (*māyā*), like magic. However, an illusory or magic-like Buddhist game—the Bodhisattva's compassion and his altruistic deeds—can still take place without there being attachment to man's innate view that self and beings are all real (*satkāyadṛṣṭi*).

B. On the mundane level, sentient beings and their sufferings, Bodhisattvas and their vows, etc., are all 'real' and do appear to exist, but on the transcendental level they are all empty or nonexistent. However, these two levels (the two truths system) are not separate realms or entities; they are actually one. There is a mutually penetrating and mutually identical all-merging totality, in which the arising of compassion and the emptiness of sentient beings are not contradictory but interdependent and mutually supplementary. The complete merging of the mundane and the transcendental is expressed here as the coexistence of the arising of the Bodhisattvas' compassion and the emptiness of sentient beings. Compassion and emptiness seem to be irreconcilable and contradictory by definition. However, this is only from the limited human viewpoint; in the great merging totality (圓融法界) the contradictions all become harmonious noncontradictions. As long as there is the appearance of a dichotomy of samsāra and nirvāṇa, these contradictions are unavoidable, because the *svabhāva* way of thinking preconditions men to think in this manner. In the totalistic way of thinking no such problem exists. See Chang, *The Buddhist Teaching of Totality*, Part 2, sec. 2.

7. The literal translation of *mo shih* (魔事) could be 'devilish matters'. Its meaning is very broad; it can include acts of demons affecting the Bodhisattva, as well as any devilish tendencies he may have himself.

8. Literally, "four immeasurable virtuous adornments" (四無量福德莊嚴).

9. This and the five following lines refer to the practice of the six *pāramitās*.

10. 一味 is translated here as 'uniform in taste'. 'Taste' here means 'nature'. 一味 has been translated by different scholars as 'one taste', 'one nature' or 'at-one-ment'.

11. These two similes taken together indicate the two main themes of the Mahāyāna: wisdom and compassion.

12. This perhaps is suggestive of the Tantric view that enlightenment can be found directly in defilements themselves, as when the Bodhisattva identifies his defilements with bodhi.

13. 'The middle way', as it is translated here, may also be interpreted as an adjective modifying 'insight', and meaning 'not favoring one extreme or another'. (Y. C. H.)

14. Although the Chinese text reads 受 ('felt'), I believe that this could be a mistranslation, and that it should be rendered as 'apprehended'. That which is apart from the two extremes cannot be apprehended or expressed, but it can be "felt" or "experienced" by enlightened beings. (G. C.)

15. 'Unsought' indicates that things cannot be wished for. Since 'wishless' and 'beyond wishing' are ambiguous terms—though corresponding to the third door to liberation called wishlessness—we use 'unsought'.

16. The tendency to cling to emptiness is very common, especially for advanced yogis. Many Zen koans bear witness to this fact. (G. C.)

17. Alternate translation: "Just as beings magically produced by a magician may destroy each other and finally all comes to nought, so dharmas contemplated by a monk who follows the path are empty, still, and insubstantial, and even his contemplation of them is also empty."

18. Literally, "he is apart from worldly things," but the Chinese word 離 ('apart from') does not fit the context. It may be a misprint for 離 ('become involved'). Shih Hu's translation, *Taishō* 352, p. 208, comes close to our interpretation here.

19. One of the three groups. See Numerical Glossary.

20. This and the preceding sentences all use the word 'conditioned' (有爲). It could be a corruption of the text; Shih Hu's translation has no modifying word 'conditioned', and it reads more smoothly and clearly. Of course, Shih Hu's text is obviously a different version, probably of a much later date. See *Taishō* 325, pp. 208–209. (G. C.)

21. A novice Bodhisattva, with all his immaturity and imperfections, strives for Buddhahood and practices the Bodhisattva's deeds. In his undertaking of the Bodhisattva's acts, he often appears more attractive and appealing to man, because he speaks our language, understands our problems, and shares our feelings. He is one of us. As in the parable of the new moon and the full moon, imperfection is sometimes more beautiful than perfection. (G. C.)

There may be a different interpretation. Those who believe the Buddha's words (as opposed to people in general) "adore a Bodhisattva more than they adore a Tathāgata" simply because they accept the Buddha's statement that "Tathāgatas are born of Bodhisattvas." To "adore a new moon more than a full moon" may be just a custom in India, marking the beginning of a bright future, and thus a handy illustration in this case; it may have nothing to do with beauty. (S. L. M.)

22. Or, "the Bodhisattva's ultimate medicines of wisdom."

23. In this way, the three poisons or defilements are counteracted.

24. This and the subsequent six paragraphs apply the thirty-seven ways to enlightenment.

25. All these eight terms are different names for the 'I', which non-Buddhists think of as that which knows and sees, performs actions, and receives karmic results.

26. This parable is not clear in the text, but we presume it means this: the person who throws the clods of earth at the dog represents the inner desires, while the clods he throws represent sensuous pleasures. The person is the root of the dog's problem; as long as the person is there, the clods of earth will keep coming. Therefore, to free itself from the attack, the dog should chase the person instead of the clods of earth. Similarly, a śramaṇa should conquer the desires within instead of trying to live in a secluded place devoid of sensuous pleasures in order to cure his defilements.

27. See Glossary, "nirvāṇa." This is the nonabiding nirvāṇa.

28. *Ātma-vāda*, Ch. 有我論. This is the doctrine which claims that 'self' (*ātman*), which also may be translated as 'soul' or 'substance', is real, permanent, eternal, unchanging, and irreducible.

29. The twelve are:

- 1) living in a secluded forest;
- 2) begging for food;

- 3) taking turns at begging for food;
- 4) eating only one meal a day;
- 5) eating only a small amount of food;
- 6) taking no food, and no drinks made with fruit or honey, after midday;
- 7) wearing garments of cast-off rags;
- 8) having only three garments;
- 9) dwelling among graves;
- 10) staying under a tree;
- 11) sitting on bare ground; and
- 12) never lying down.

30. To become detached from all dharmas and achieve mental liberation is tantamount to attaining Arhatship, the fourth and ultimate fruit of a Śrāvaka.

31. To leave mundane filth behind and attain the clear Dharma-eye is to achieve the fruit of a Stream-enterer, the first fruit of a Śrāvaka.

32. Literally, "When one does not remember and think, they do not arise."

33. Discipline, meditation, wisdom, liberation, and the knowledge and awareness derived from liberation are called 'the five factors and the Dharma-body'.

34. The Chinese word *hsiang* (想) is here rendered as 'thought', which is not an altogether satisfactory translation. Other renderings have difficulties, too, however. *Hsiang* seems to contain many meanings; here, in this context, it denotes thoughts, concepts, notions, ideas, etc., a broad range of mental activities.

35. Alternate translation: "We are subdued because we realize that the body has no definite nature and the mind does not act." (W.H.)

36. Shih Hu's translation reads:

"When will you enter nirvāṇa?"

The monks said, "When the Tathāgata enters nirvāṇa, we will then enter nirvāṇa." (Taishō 352, p. 215)

37. This can also be translated, "We are unimpededly liberated." (Y.T.L.)

21 無盡慧菩薩會

Dialogue With Bodhisattva Infinite Wisdom

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling near Rājagṛha on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa, together with an assembly of twelve hundred fifty monks. There were also ten thousand Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas present, among whom were Bodhisattva Wisdom Banner, Bodhisattva Dharma Banner, Bodhisattva Moon Banner, Bodhisattva Sun Banner, and Bodhisattva Boundless Banner; sixteen lay Bodhisattvas, with Bhadrāpāla foremost; sixty Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas of incomparable mind, with Mañjuśrī foremost; all the Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas of the Worthy Kalpa, with Bodhisattva Maitreya foremost; and sixty thousand other Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas, with Bodhisattva Infinite Wisdom foremost.

At that time, Bodhisattva Infinite Wisdom rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt upon his right knee, faced the Buddha with palms joined, and paid homage to him by bowing down with his head at the Buddha's feet. He then scattered precious flowers around the Buddha as an offering and said, "The World-Honored One speaks of bodhi-mind [*bodhicitta*]. By what principle do you speak of it? What are the ways in which a Bodhisattva achieves bodhi-mind? What is bodhi-mind? In bodhi, the mind is inapprehensible; in the mind, bodhi is also inapprehensible. Apart from bodhi, the mind is inapprehensible; apart from the mind, bodhi is also inapprehensible. Bodhi is formless, signless, and inexpressible; the mind is also formless, signless, and not demonstrable; thus, too, are sentient beings. None of the three is apprehensible. World-Honored One, since all dharmas are such, by what principle should we cultivate ourselves?"

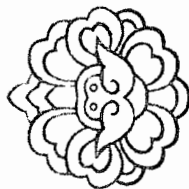
The Buddha said, "Good man, listen to me attentively. The bodhi I speak of has intrinsically no name or description. Why? Because in bodhi, name and description are inapprehensible. The same is true of the mind and sentient beings. Such an understanding is called bodhi-mind."

Sūtra 45, Taishō 310, pp. 648-650; translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci.

THE LANKAVATARA SUTRA

A ZEN TEXT

Translation and Commentary by Red Pine



COUNTERPOINT
Berkeley

Copyright 2012 Red Pine (Bill Porter)

All rights reserved under International and Pan-American
Copyright Conventions.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical articles and reviews.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available.

ISBN: 978-1-58243-791-0

COUNTERPOINT
1919 Fifth Street
Berkeley, CA 94710
www.counterpointpress.com

Distributed by Publishers Group West
Printed in the United States of America
Interior design by Domini Dragoone
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

249. Section XXIII. Resuming his review of the major teachings bodhisattvas were expected to understand, the Buddha introduces the three modes of reality, which he summarizes according to their relationships to the five dharms. They are, after all, two different ways of looking at the same thing, namely, the world we perceive and think of as real: one based on projection, the other based on correct knowledge.

250. The three modes of reality (*tri-sva-bhava*) include imagined reality, (*parikalpita*), dependent reality (*paratantra*), and perfected reality (*pariniṣpanna*). The three modes do not refer to separate realities. They simply represent the three ways we perceive what is real. In imagined reality, we mistakenly perceive things as separate from other things. In dependent reality, we correctly perceive things as dependent on other things, but we still perceive the world in terms of things which are themselves fictions. In perfected reality, we neither perceive nor do not perceive things, for things neither exist nor do not exist. In perfected reality, we dwell in the realm of the tathagata-garbha.

251. Gunabhadra puts this question in Mahamati's mouth, but it does better as a rhetorical question, which is how it appears in the translations of Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda and also in the Sanskrit.

252. Gunabhadra reverses the order and attribution of "name" and "appearance," apparently by mistake. I've gone along with Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit texts in placing "appearance" first, followed by "name."

253. The "ground" of dependent reality is the eighth, or repository, consciousness, which supplies the "names." The "objective support" includes the remaining seven forms of consciousness, including the five sensory-based forms of consciousness, which supply the "appearances." The Sanskrit for "ground" is *āśraya* and for "objective support" is *ālambana*.

254. The *tathagata-garbha*, or womb of buddhas, is the name applied to the repository consciousness when it is transformed.

255. Gunabhadra and Shikshananda render this verse with four-character lines, instead of the usual five-character lines.

256. The relationship between the five dharms and the three modes of reality, as described in the above verse and elsewhere in this sutra, connects name and appearance to imagined reality, projection to dependent reality, and true knowledge and suchness to perfected reality. For more on these, see Sections LXXXIII & LXXXIV.

257. The reference here is to perfected reality. It should be noted, however, that elsewhere (at the end of the third paragraph in the next section, for example) the

XXIII²⁴⁹

"Moreover, Mahamati, bodhisattvas should be well acquainted with the three modes of reality.²⁵⁰ And what are the three modes of reality? Imagined reality, dependent reality, and perfected reality.

"Mahamati, imagined reality arises from appearances. And how does imagined reality arise from appearances?²⁵¹ Mahamati, as the objects and forms of dependent reality appear, attachment results in two kinds of imagined reality. These are what the tathagatas, the arhats, the fully enlightened ones describe as 'attachment to appearance' and 'attachment to name.' Attachment to appearance involves attachment to external and internal entities, while attachment to name involves attachment to the individual and shared characteristics of these external and internal entities.²⁵² These are the two kinds of imagined reality. What serves as the ground and objective support²⁵³ from which they arise is dependent reality.

"And what is perfected reality? This is the mode that is free from name or appearance or from projection. It is attained by buddha knowledge and is the realm where the personal realization of buddha knowledge takes place. This is perfected reality and the heart of the tathagata-garbha."²⁵⁴

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Name and appearance and projection / these characterize two modes of reality / correct knowledge and suchness / these characterize the perfected mode."²⁵⁵

"Mahamati, this is what is known as the teaching of how to view what characterizes the five dharms and the modes of reality.²⁵⁶ This is the realm where the personal realization of buddha knowledge takes place and which you and other bodhisattvas should cultivate."²⁵⁷

XXIV²⁵⁸

"Furthermore, Mahamati, bodhisattvas should become adept at examining the two kinds of phenomena that have no self. And what are the two kinds of phenomena that have no self? Neither beings nor dharms have a self.

"And what does it mean that beings have no self? The assemblage of the skandhas, the dhatus, or the ayatanas arises from ignorance, karma, and desire and includes neither a self nor anything that belongs to a self.²⁵⁹ As the grasping and attachment of such senses as the eye to form give rise to consciousness,

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "The ways of attainment and instruction / are based on realization and teaching / those who see and distinguish these clearly / don't pursue speculation
2. Nonexistence as reality / this is what fools imagine / but why do they imagine / nonexistence as liberation
3. Contemplate conditioned things / the cycle of arising and cessation / the nourishing of dualities / mistaken views and ignorance
4. This one thing is true / freedom from blame is nirvana⁵³ / view projections of the world / as illusions, as dreams, as banana tree trunks

53. Gunabhadra has *vu-ts'ui*, meaning "blameless." Hence, his text must have involved the alliteration: *niravadya* (blamelessness/stainlessness) is nirvana. Apparently, the Sanskrit text changed. Bodhiruchi has "freedom from consciousness," Shikshananda has "freedom from will," and Suzuki has "nothing to do with intellection (*manas*)." If Gunabhadra is correct, the "blame" would refer to the subject of the previous verse.

54. In Shikshananda and the Sanskrit, this first line is: "There is no desire, anger, or delusion."

55. Section LXIV. If our projections are unreal, as noted in the final verses of the last section, where do they come from and why? And why is ultimate reality not likewise subject to projections?

56. The Sanskrit is *abhuta-parikalpita*, where *abhuta* means "what has no foundation in reality," and where *parikalpita* means "projection." Thus, this term is redundant, as projections are necessarily without foundation.

57. In his answer, the Buddha responds to Mahamati's three questions: how do such projections arise, in what do they consist, and where do they reside—the answer to the last being the repository consciousness, where the habit-energy of such projections collects.

58. This preamble to Mahamati's question that repeats what the Buddha has just stated is missing in Shikshananda.

59. Following the Sanskrit and the Chinese of Shikshananda, Suzuki adds several more lines to this paragraph. I've followed Gunabhadra.

5. Though desire, anger, and delusion exist⁵⁴ / there is no person present / the skandhas arise from thirst / their existence is a dream or illusion."

LXIV⁵⁵

Mahamati once again asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, please explain what characterizes false projections.⁵⁶ How do false projections arise? What constitutes a false projection? And where are false projections found?"

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Excellent! It is excellent that you are able to ask the Tathagata about this for the welfare of the many, for the happiness of the many, out of pity for all the gods and people in this world. Listen carefully and ponder this well, and I will tell you."

Mahamati replied, "Wonderful, Bhagavan. May we be so instructed."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Projections arise when there is attachment to the misperception of different objects. Mahamati, because people are unaware that their attachments to projections of what they grasp and of the one who grasps are nothing but perceptions of their own minds, they fall prey to views of existence and nonexistence in which they are abetted by the views of followers of other paths and the habit-energy of their projections. And as they become attached to different external objects, the mind, and what belongs to the mind give rise to the projection of a self and what belongs to a self."⁵⁷

Mahamati said, "Bhagavan, since projections arise when there is attachment to the misperception of different objects, and people are unaware that the projections of what they grasp and of the one who grasps are nothing but perceptions of their own minds, and they fall prey to views of existence and nonexistence in which they are abetted by the views of followers of other paths and the habit-energy of their projections, and as they become attached to various external objects, the mind, and what belongs to the mind give rise to the projection of a self and what belongs to a self,⁵⁸ since this is so, Bhagavan, when they fall prey to the existence or nonexistence of different external objects that neither exist nor do not exist and that transcend the characteristics of views, Bhagavan, this is also true of ultimate truth, which transcends the characteristics of measurement, sensation, inference, analogy, and causation. Why on the one hand, Bhagavan, does attachment to the discrimination of the existence of an unreal object give rise to projections and on the other hand attachment to ultimate truth not give rise to projections? Are you not teaching a false doctrine of causation, Bhagavan, when you say the one gives rise to them and the other does not?"⁵⁹

The Buddha said, "Mahamati, it is not true that one projection arises and the other does not. And why not? Because projections of existence or nonexistence do not arise. Projections do not arise when the external objects that appear as existing or not existing are seen to be nothing but perceptions of one's own mind."

"Mahamati, I tell foolish people that because the different projections of their minds appear before them as objects; they become attached to the existence of their projections. So how do they get free of views of attachment to a self or what belongs to a self and get free of the misconception of causation as cause and effect? By becoming aware that their projections are nothing but mind. Thus, do they

60. The four possibilities in this case refer to existence, nonexistence, both existence and nonexistence, and neither existence nor nonexistence. The meaning here is that since causes and conditions only exist as projections, it is projection from which the world actually arises.

61. Gunabhadra expands this verse into six lines. I've condensed it to the standard four-line format based on the translations of Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda.

62. Commentators describe this as a fruit producing a fruit, rather than a flower producing a fruit.

63. For this line, Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit have variations of "determine/see they are nothing but mind." But Gunabhadra's version is much more interesting.

64. These are different from the four uniformities listed in Section LX and include opposite pairs, not all of which are mentioned in the poem due to limitations of meter. The four, which only Gunabhadra seems aware of, include: characteristics and no characteristics, causes and results, self and no self, practice and practitioner.

65. This verse appears as this section's penultimate verse in the Sanskrit. The view that the world is a manifestation of the mind is not supported by this sutra. This and the verses that follow state the position upheld in the *Lankavatara*: that our mind is the world and the world is our mind. If the world were a manifestation of the mind, they would be different. But they are neither one nor different. Time for tea.

66. This verse appears as this section's final verse in the Sanskrit.

67. In the Sanskrit text, these last three verses appear between verse 9 and verse 10.

transform their body and mind and finally see clearly all the stages and realms of self-awareness of tathagatas and transcend views and projections regarding the five dharmas and modes of reality. This is why I say that projections arise from the attachment to things that are unreal and that once someone knows what is real they free themselves from the various projections of their own mind."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Who says the world arises / from causes and conditions / imagines the four possibilities⁶⁰ / but doesn't understand my teaching
2. It neither arises nor doesn't arise / nor both of these nor neither / so why do fools imagine / the world's causes and conditions⁶¹
3. Who sees the world like this / neither existing nor not existing / nor both of these nor neither / transforms their mind and finds no self
4. Whatever exists does not arise / because it arises from conditions / whatever results from conditions / is a result and not self-existent
5. Nor does a result produce a result / twin results are a fallacy⁶² / since twin results cannot occur / their existence cannot be found
6. Viewing conditioned things / without support and supporting nothing / as nothing but the no-mind mind⁶³ / thus I teach nothing but mind
7. Where only essential nature dwells / free from existence and conditions / where existence is finally purified / this I say is nothing but mind
8. The conventional self is a fabrication / containing nothing real / the skandhas, too, are fabrications / containing nothing real as well
9. Equalities are fourfold⁶⁴ / characteristics, causes, and results / no self is the third / practice and practitioner are the fourth
10. As the habit-energy of projections change / the mind gives rise to a myriad things / an objective realm appears outside / a world that is nothing but mind⁶⁵
11. What appears outside does not exist / all the things seen by the mind / your abode, body, and possessions / these I teach are nothing but mind⁶⁶
12. Transcending every view / free from conceiving and conception / where nothing arises and nothing is found / this I teach is nothing but mind⁶⁷

68. The Sanskrit must have changed. Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda read this line differently: "thus transcending the mind as well," while Suzuki renders the Sanskrit: "which is thus free from intellection."

69. These last four verses deal with the transformation of the five forms of sensory consciousness, the sixth, the seventh, and the eighth into the four kinds of knowledge. They also refer back to the four equalities: characteristics and no characteristics, cause and result, self and no self, practice and practitioner.

70. Section LXV. The inquiry into the misconceptions and projections of the mind continues with speech (*ruṣa*) and meaning (*artha*). The Buddha has previously told Mahamati to rely on meaning and not on words. But without relying on words, how are we to understand meaning? The Buddha's only concern is our differentiation of speech and meaning and our attachment to one or the other. Thus, he tells Mahamati they are neither different nor not different. If you want to see what is in a room, you need a lamp. But viewing the lamp as different from what is in the room is a mistake and only leads to the need for another lamp. Meaning isn't in the words, just as the room isn't in the lamp.

71. In sections XXXII and XXXIII, the Buddha explains how word projection fails to express ultimate truth. Here, the focus is similar but different.

72. This and the previous sentence are missing in Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit.

73. Instruction, reflection, and meditation comprise the three sources of wisdom.

74. Following this sentence there are several lines not present in Gunabhadra but present in the texts of Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit: "Mahamati, it is like someone who uses a lamp to examine his possessions and knows such and such a thing is like this and in such and such a place. Mahamati, bodhisattvas likewise rely on the lamp of speech to enter the realm of self-realization that is free from speech."

13. Neither existing nor not existing / free from existence and nonexistence / the liberation of this mind⁶⁸ / this I teach is nothing but mind

14. Emptiness, suchness and reality / nirvana and the Dharma Realm / the different projection bodies / these, too, I teach are nothing but mind.⁶⁹

LXV⁷⁰

Mahamati once again asked the Buddha, "The Bhagavan has said that bodhisattvas should become versed in speech and meaning."⁷¹ Bhagavan, how should bodhisattvas become versed in speech and meaning? What is speech? And what is meaning?"

The Buddha said, "Listen carefully, Mahamati, and ponder it well, and I will tell you."

Mahamati replied, "Wonderful, Bhagavan. May we be so instructed."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "What is speech? It is the combination of projections and of words that rely on the throat and larynx, the tongue and lips, the teeth and gums, and the sides of the mouth. And it arises due to attachment to the habit-energy of the discriminations of one's own and others' words. This is what is meant by speech.

"And what is meaning? It is what transcends all the characteristics of projections and the characteristics of speech. This is what is meant by meaning."⁷² It is thus in regard to meaning, Mahamati, that bodhisattvas dwell in solitude and proceed toward the city of nirvana as a result of their own understanding of wisdom from learning, reflection, and meditation."⁷³ And once they have transformed their habit-energy, they contemplate the distinctive characteristics of the meaning of the various stages leading to the realm of personal realization. This is what is meant by how bodhisattvas become versed in meaning.

"Moreover, Mahamati, bodhisattvas versed in speech and meaning regard speech as neither separate nor not separate from meaning, and they also regard meaning and speech in the same manner. If speech were separate from meaning, meaning would not be expressed by speech. But it is by means of speech that we understand meaning, just as a lamp illuminates forms."⁷⁴

"Moreover, Mahamati, if someone becomes attached to the meaning of such expressions as 'neither arising nor ceasing,' 'self-existence,' 'nirvana,' 'three paths,' 'one path,' 'mind,' or 'modes of reality,' they fall prey to views of assertion and denial—assertions of difference and projections of difference, whereby projections appear like so many illusions. As with illusions, fools imagine differences, not the wise."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Those who give rise to projections of speech / assert all kinds of things / because of their assertions / they spend their next life in hell
2. 'The self isn't in the skandhas' / 'the skandhas aren't the self' / such conceptions are mistaken / 'nor is there no self' as well⁷⁵
3. As for 'everything exists' / which is what fools imagine / if things were as they see them / they would see the truth
4. And as for 'nothing at all exists' / pure and impure both would vanish⁷⁶ / things are not as they are seen / nor are there no things."

75. See the passage quoted from the *Samyuktāgama* in the note to Section LXXV, in which the validity of these positions are all denied.

76. If nothing exists, then spiritual cultivation is meaningless.

77. Section LXVI. From speech and meaning, the Buddha proceeds to consciousness and knowledge, on which the foregoing pair is based. It is the trans-formation of consciousness that constitutes knowledge, but there is no knowledge outside consciousness.

78. The Buddha focuses on knowledge here. For more on consciousness, see Section IV in Chapter Two, where the Buddha outlines three kinds of consciousness: "Mahamati, we generally speak of eight forms of consciousness. But these can be summarized under three headings: true consciousness, perceiving consciousness, and object-projecting consciousness."

79. As elsewhere in this sutra, individual characteristics refer to what distinguish one entity from another, while shared characteristics include such aspects as emptiness and the absence of a self shared by more than one entity, if not all entities. Here, the characteristics that are wished for refer to the end of samsara and the attainment of nirvana.

80. The phrase "depends on personal attainment" is only present in Gunabhadra. The Sanskrit puts this paragraph after the next two.

81. Throughout the rest of this section "knowledge" refers to transcendent knowledge.

82. As in the previous paragraph, this refers to transcendent knowledge, not mundane or metaphysical knowledge.

LXVI⁷⁷

"Mahamati, I will now explain the characteristics of knowledge and consciousness. For by becoming adept at distinguishing the characteristics of knowledge and consciousness, you and the other bodhisattvas will be able to understand the characteristics of knowledge and consciousness and quickly realize unexcelled, complete enlightenment."⁷⁸

"Mahamati, there are three kinds of knowledge: mundane knowledge, metaphysical knowledge, and transcendent knowledge. What is mundane knowledge? This refers to that of all those ordinary people and followers of other paths who are attached to existence and nonexistence. And what is metaphysical knowledge? This refers to that of those shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas who fall prey to longing for and becoming attached to individual and shared characteristics.⁷⁹ And what is transcendent knowledge? This refers to that of buddhas and bodhisattvas who contemplate what is free from projections and see that it neither arises nor ceases, that it transcends categories of existence and nonexistence, and that the tathagata stage and the absence of a self among persons and things depend on the occurrence of personal attainment."⁸⁰

"Mahamati, what arises and ceases is consciousness. What neither arises nor ceases is knowledge.⁸¹ Furthermore, it is consciousness that falls prey to characteristics and the absence of characteristics and also falls prey to the causes of the different characteristics of existence and nonexistence, while it is knowledge that transcends the characteristics of existence and nonexistence. Furthermore, consciousness is characterized by increase, while knowledge is not characterized by increase. Also, there are three objects of knowledge: the knowledge of arising and cessation, the knowledge of individual and shared characteristics, and the knowledge of non-arising and non-cessation.

"Moreover, knowledge⁸² is also characterized by the absence of obstructions, while consciousness is characterized by the obstruction of countless external realms. Furthermore, consciousness is characterized by what arises from threefold combinations,⁸³ while knowledge is characterized by the absence of anything self-existent. Furthermore, consciousness is characterized by attainment, while knowledge is characterized by non-attainment, for the realm of buddha knowledge that one attains is neither present nor absent, like the moon in the water."

83. According to most commentators, the "threefold combination" refers to the powers and domains of sensation and the forms of consciousness that arise upon their conjunction. This term is also mentioned in sections LXVIII and LXXXII. In Section LXXIII, however, the Buddha says followers of other paths attribute awareness to the conjunction of self, sense organs, and sense objects, replacing consciousness with self.

84. This line also appears in the eighth verse of Section X.

85. Gunabhadra renders this verse in six lines. I've condensed it into the standard four-line format and relied on the translation of Shikshananda in doing so.

86. Freedom from projections (*nirabhāsa*) is a characteristic of the eighth stage of the bodhisattva path. Thus, the "higher stages" here refer to the ninth and tenth stages, where buddhahood occurs.

87. This refers to the forbearance of non-arising, which is also a characteristic of the eighth stage.

88. All three Chinese translations render this verse in six lines, as does the Sanskrit.

89. Section LXVII. In the previous section, the Buddha indicated that the culmination of knowledge consisted in an understanding that nothing arises and nothing ceases. But such an understanding is not possible if someone believes something changes. Hence, the Buddha considers this subject in order to lead his audience from consciousness (and projection) to knowledge (and non-projection).

90. Where I have "origin," Gunabhadra has *śūlā*, which is his usual translation for *vastu* or *dṛavya*, meaning "object," or *kriyā*, "action." Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda, however, have *śeng*, meaning "birth/rising," and the Sanskrit has *utpada*, meaning "rising/origin." In this case, I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit.

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Consciousness accumulates karma⁸⁴ / knowledge examines dharmas / wisdom penetrates projectionless realms / thereby attaining powers⁸⁵
2. Consciousness is tied to objects / knowledge sees how thoughts are born / from projectionless realms and higher stages⁸⁶ / this is where wisdom rises
3. Whose mind, will, and consciousness / get free of all projections / who grasp the teaching of non-projection / are bodhisattvas, not shravakas
4. Tranquil and supreme forbearance⁸⁷ / the pure knowledge of a buddha / these rise from the best of truths / which transcends every practice
5. I have three kinds of knowledge / whereby the wise reveal the truth / all concern projections / the things that people cling to
6. Unconcerned with lesser paths / such knowledge is free from objective realms / while from shravakas rises / attachment to self-existence / transcendent and nothing but mind / a buddha's knowledge is pure."⁸⁸

LXVII⁸⁹

"Furthermore, Mahamati, the views of change held by followers of other paths come from their nine doctrines about change. These include change of shape, change of characteristic, change of cause, change of connection, change of view, change of existence, change of perceptible condition, change of perceptible function, and change of origin.⁹⁰ Mahamati, these are their nine views of change. It is on the basis of these that followers of other paths produce their doctrines of change concerning existence and nonexistence.

"What is a change of shape? This refers to the view that there is a difference in shape. For example, when gold is turned into utensils or ornaments, it takes on the appearance of different shapes, although the nature of gold doesn't change. This is how anything that exists changes. And this is how followers of other paths imagine change, up to and including their projection of a change of origin. Something is not as it was. But neither is it different. This is the result of projection. This is how anything that exists changes.

"It is like the aging of milk and curds or of fruit and wine. Followers of other paths imagine change where there is no change. Something seems to be there and seems not to be there. But it is merely the perception of their own minds of an external entity that does not exist, which foolish people give rise to, Mahamati,

due to the habit-energy of their own projections. Mahamati, though something seems to arise and seems to cease, there is nothing there. It is like seeing an image appear in a magic trick or a dream."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "A shape that changes over time / four elements and five senses / slowly rising in the skandhas / a fantasy not knowledge
2. Sages regard what comes from causes / unlike others imagine / the world that comes from causes / is a city of gandharvas."⁹¹

91. As elsewhere, a city of gandharvas is made of clouds.

92. Section LXVIII. The reason people believe something changes is because of their attachment to the projection that something exists or does not exist. But because their underlying projections are flawed, because they don't realize they are nothing but the perceptions of their own mind, they struggle to get free in vain. The Buddha likens such people to silkworms wrapping themselves in cocoons of delusion.

93. The Sanskrit here is *sandhi*, meaning "connection" or "continuity."

94. Gunabhadra renders *vikalpa-buddhi* (projections-awareness) quite literally as *wang-biang chueh* (awareness of projections). Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda ignore *buddhi* and have simply *wang-biang* (projections). Suzuki puts *buddhi* (to be aware, to know) at the beginning of the next sentence, where it makes better sense. In this case, I've followed Suzuki.

95. These ten include vows to liberate beings regardless of the unlimited nature of beings, worlds, space, reality, nirvana, buddha realms, tathagata knowledge, conditions of the mind, realms entered by buddha knowledge, and the transformation of worlds, dharma, and knowledge.

96. The Sanskrit is our old friend *paravriti* (to overturn/transform).

97. Such attachments as these constitute the obstruction of knowledge and the cause of transformation death.

98. The Sanskrit adds "and of no-stages."

LXVIII⁹²

Mahamati once more asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, would you please explain the meaning of the continuity and non-continuity of things?"⁹³ For once I and the other bodhisattvas become adept at distinguishing the characteristics of the continuity and non-continuity of things, we will better understand how all continuities work and will not become attached to a continuity because of how its meaning is expressed in words. For once we are versed in the characteristics of the continuity and non-continuity of things, and we transcend the erroneous projections⁹⁴ of language, we will know how to travel to all buddhalands and to their countless assemblies, where our myriad transformations will be marked by spiritual powers, masteries, faculties, and spells and will shine like so many suns or moons or magic gems upon the four elements with the refulgent light of wisdom gained from the effortless exercise of the ten inexhaustible vows.⁹⁵ And wherever we dwell, we will look upon everything as an illusion or a dream and will avoid views characterized by the projection of a self. And upon reaching the stage of buddhas, in every realm where there are beings, we will teach whatever teaching they respond to and lead them to transform themselves⁹⁶ by accepting that everything is like a dream or illusion and by avoiding categories of existence and nonexistence and projections of arising and cessation or the teachings of other paths."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Well said, well said. Listen carefully and ponder it well, and I will tell you."

Mahamati replied, "May we be so instructed."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Attachments to continuities based on how their meaning is expressed in words are limitless."⁹⁷ There is attachment to the continuity of characteristics, attachment to the continuity of conditions, attachment to the continuity of existence and nonexistence, attachment to the continuity of the projection of arising and non-arising, attachment to the continuity of the projection of cessation and non-cessation, attachment to the continuity of the projection of a path and no path, attachment to the continuity of the projection of the created and the uncreated, attachment to the continuity of the projection of the individual characteristics of the stages,⁹⁸ attachment to the continuity of the projection of attainment and of projection itself, attachment to the continuity of the projection of categories of existence and nonexistence on which other paths depend, and attachment to the continuity of the projection of attainment of the three paths or the one path.

"Furthermore, Mahamati, foolish beings project continuities other than these. But it is because of their projection of such continuities that they are like silkworms making cocoons, using the thread of projection to envelop themselves and others in attachments to the characteristics of continuities of existence and nonexistence.

"Furthermore, Mahamati, for those who see that everything is still, there are no characteristics of continuity or non-continuity in any of this. But it is due to the non-arising of projections that bodhisattvas see that everything is still.

"Moreover, Mahamati, know that external entities do not exist, that their characteristics are perceptions of your own mind and free of projections. Accordingly, when you see that whatever exists or does not exist is simply a perception of your own mind and without form, continuities become still. Thus, there are no

99. The previous eleven continuities are those of shravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, and followers of other paths, while these three are common to non-practitioners. The three continuities (*tri-samiti*) are also referred to as the three poisons. In either case, these continuities constitute the obstruction of passion and are the cause of karmic death.

100. The five destinies include rebirth among gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, and the denizens of the various hells. Asuras (gods who make war on other gods) are sometimes added to these five, making six destinies.

101. As in Section LXVI, this refers to the powers and domains of sensation and the forms of consciousness that arise upon their conjunction.

102. The three liberations refer to the emptiness of the eighth form of consciousness, the formlessness of the sixth, and the intentionlessness of the seventh.

103. Gunabhadra renders this verse in six lines, which I have condensed into four following the translation of Shikshananda.

104. Section LXIX. Previously, the Buddha said things have no self-existence. But if nothing has self-existence, is this not the same as nihilism? At the same time, the Buddha's teaching of personal realization would seem to be advocating self-existence. Is this not a contradiction? Thus, Mahamati wonders if the Buddha's teaching does not involve attachment to views of existence and non-existence. The Buddha reminds him that all teachings are expedient means, nothing more, and points him back to personal realization. This section is also noteworthy for the great variation among texts, as Suzuki himself noted. As elsewhere, I've followed Gunabhadra.

characteristics of the continuity or non-continuity of anything. Moreover, Mahamati, although others, given to falsehood, think bondage and emancipation exist, there is nothing in any of this to be bound to or emancipated from. And why is this so? Because among what exists or does not exist, no beings can be found.

"Furthermore, Mahamati, the ignorant possess three continuities:⁹⁹ greed, anger, and delusion, together with the desire for happiness in a future existence. Because of such continuities, there is the continuity of existence, and among these continuities are links to the five destinies.¹⁰⁰ However, Mahamati, for those who put an end to continuities, there are no characteristics of continuity or non-continuity.

"Moreover, Mahamati, because of the active grasping of consciousness based on threefold combinations,¹⁰¹ continuities arise without interruption. It is because of such active grasping that continuities exist. Meanwhile, those who put an end to those forms of consciousness dependent on threefold combinations witness the threefold liberation¹⁰² and the non-arising of continuities."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Projections that are false / these characterize continuities / once you know what is real / continuity's net is cut
2. Fools don't understand / they look for meaning in words / like silkworms in cocoons / wrapped in their own imaginations."¹⁰³

LXIX¹⁰⁴

Mahamati once more asked the Buddha, "The Bhagavan has said it is due to projections that we imagine the existence of different things and it isn't they themselves that exist but only the projection of them that exists. Bhagavan, if it is only the projection of them that exists and their own corresponding existence does not exist, would not the affliction and purification of which the Bhagavan speaks also suffer from nonexistence, since the existence of whatever is imagined does not itself exist?"

The Buddha told Mahamati, "So it is. So it is. It is as you say, Mahamati. What is real is not what fools imagine as existing. What they imagine as existing lacks any characteristic of its own existence. However, Mahamati, according to bud-dha knowledge there is something that exists, something the existence of which is known by means of the noble insight and noble vision of the eye of noble wisdom."

what is truly so. What is truly so does not vary. What is truly so does not come or go. What puts an end to all fabrications, this is what is truly so. Mahamati, a noble son or daughter should not embrace or cling to anything that is said because what is real is beyond language.

"Mahamati, if one person¹⁷⁷ points to something with their finger, and a foolish person looks at their finger, they won't know what they really mean. In the same manner, foolish people become attached to the finger of words. And because they never look away from it, they are never able to discover the true meaning beyond the finger of words. Likewise, Mahamati, an infant should eat cooked rice, not uncooked rice. If someone feeds it uncooked rice, that person must either be mad or not know how to prepare rice.¹⁷⁸ Mahamati, the same is true of 'what

177. Gunabhadra has "foolish person," but in this case I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit.

178. Gunabhadra and Shikshananda have the infant going mad. Certainly feeding a child uncooked rice would not make it happy, but mad, as in crazy? I've turned to Bodhiruchi in this case.

179. Only Gunabhadra has this sentence.

180. Section LXXVII. Mahamati continues his inquiry and wonders if the Buddha's teaching of what neither arises nor ceases differs from that of other schools. The Buddha tells him that despite their usage of similar expressions, there is always something behind the words of other schools, while he uses this term because everything is illusory and neither arises nor ceases. What seems to arise or cease are nothing but the perceptions of one's own mind.

181. At the beginning of Chapter One and Chapter Two, Mahamati also rises by the Buddha's power to ask his questions. It's been awhile, but the sutra reminds us that it is really a dialogue engineered by the Buddha to question himself. Then, too, Mahamati asks questions he might not normally ask and represents the views of others who might have such doubts in the future.

182. The causes are listed at the end of the next paragraph.

183. The Sanskrit is *apratiskhye-nirodha*. This is one of the two types of cessation recognized by the Sarvastivadians and one of the six uncreated dharmas of the Yogacarins. This refers to the cessation of whatever gives rise to suffering not as the result of analysis and understanding, but simply as the result of fortuitous circumstances. Hence, it is temporary.

184. Not mentioned here are: time, direction, space and Brahma.

neither arises nor ceases.' Those who don't make an effort don't become skilled. Thus, you should focus your efforts on becoming skilled and not on words, as if you were looking at someone's fingertip.

"Thus, Mahamati, you should focus your efforts on the true meaning.¹⁷⁹ The true meaning is subtle and silent. It is the cause of nirvana. Words are linked to projections, and projections are tied to birth and death. Mahamati, the true meaning is learned from the learned. Mahamati, those who are learned esteem meaning and not words. Those who esteem meaning don't accept the scriptures and doctrines of other schools. They don't accept them for themselves, nor do they cause others to accept them. Thus they are called 'learned and virtuous.' Hence, those who seek meaning should approach those who are learned, those who esteem meaning. And they should distance themselves from those who do the opposite and who attach themselves to words."

LXXVII¹⁸⁰

Once again by means of the Buddha's spiritual power,¹⁸¹ Mahamati Bodhisattva asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, your proclamation of 'what neither arises nor ceases' is not unique. And why not? Because there are other schools whose causes¹⁸² neither arise nor cease. Also, the Bhagavan teaches that the realms of space, nonanalytic cessation¹⁸³ and nirvana neither arise nor cease.

"Bhagavan, other schools teach that every world arises from causes, while the Bhagavan teaches that every world arises from the conditions of ignorance, desire, karma, and projection. But the causes of the one and the conditions of the other are merely different words.

"The same is true for the causes and conditions of external objects, for which there is no difference between the explanations of the Bhagavan and those of other schools. Instead of their nine things¹⁸⁴ that neither arise nor cease, such as elementary particles, a first cause, a paramount power, or a creator, the Bhagavan also teaches that whatever exists neither arises nor ceases because its existence or nonexistence cannot be determined.

"Other schools also teach that the four elements are indestructible, that their essential nature neither arises nor ceases, that they are eternal, and that the four elements extend everywhere without losing their essential nature. What the Bhagavan teaches is also like this, which is why I said it was not unique. I hope the Bhagavan can explain how it differs, how it is unique, and how it excels that of other schools. But if there isn't any difference, then the teachers of other schools

must also be buddhas based on their teaching of 'what neither arises nor ceases.' The Bhagavan has said it is impossible for multiple buddhas to appear in the world at the same time. But according to the foregoing, if there isn't any difference, there would be multiple buddhas at the same time."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "My teaching of what neither arises nor ceases is not the same as the teaching of what neither arises nor ceases taught by members of other schools. And how so? According to these members of other schools, there is something that exists that has the characteristics of neither arising nor changing.¹⁸⁵ Mine does not fall prey to such categories as existence or nonexistence. Mahamati, mine transcends the categories of existence and nonexistence. It is not subject to arising or ceasing. Neither does it exist, nor does it not exist.

"It does not not exist because it appears just as an illusion or a dream does. But then how does it not exist? Because form lacks any perceptible characteristics of self-existence, it appears but does not appear. It is perceived but is not perceived. Therefore whatever exists neither exists nor does not exist. Once you realize it is

185. This probably refers to a creator god, such as Brahma, who does not arise or change. Or it could refer to death. All three Chinese translations have *bien* (changing) here, instead of the usual *miē* (ceasing).

186. That is, they seem not to be false.

187. The Sanskrit is *avivikta-darśana*, which is similar to *avivikta-dṛṣṭi*, both of which mean "to not see clearly/distinctly."

188. Section LXXVIII. This section denies doctrines of arising, establishes the truth of non-arising, and treats doctrines of other paths claiming non-arising and non-cessation as projections and as just more versions of arising. There is considerable variation among the translations for this section. As elsewhere, I've followed Gunabhadra, unless otherwise noted.

189. For this line, Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit have "I teach the truth of 'no cause' (*abeta-vada*)."

190. I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit for this line, which is not clear in Gunabhadra.

191. This verse is rendered in six lines by all versions.

nothing but the perception of your own mind, its projections do not arise, you dwell in peace and happiness, and worldly concerns cease.

"What ignorant and foolish people do is give rise to projections, but not the wise. Projections are not real, like cities of gandharvas or their conjured residents. Mahamati, foolish people imagine their conjured residents, such as merchants and shopkeepers, entering and leaving those gandharvan cities and that they really enter and leave, when, in fact, no one enters or leaves. It is merely due to their projections.

"Likewise, Mahamati, the confusion foolish people give rise to about what neither arises nor ceases is neither created nor not created. It is like the appearance of conjured beings. In truth, nothing arises or ceases. There is no existence or nonexistence. This is true of all things. They neither arise nor cease. Foolish people fall prey to falsehood and give rise to projections of arising and ceasing, but not the wise.

"What is false is not so, and it is no different with the projection of self-existence. Though projections seem to be different,¹⁸⁶ they are attachments to the self-existence of things due to not seeing clearly.¹⁸⁷ Those who do not see clearly never get free of projections.

"Therefore, Mahamati, seeing what has no form is better than not seeing what has form. Seeing what has form is the cause of rebirth. Hence, it isn't better. Mahamati, where there is no form, projections do not arise. What neither arises nor ceases is what I call nirvana. Mahamati, nirvana is to see the meaning of what is truly so and to get free from the net of thoughts of previous projections. To attain the personal realization of the noble knowledge of a tathagata, this is what I call nirvana."

LXXVIII¹⁸⁸

The Bhagavan then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "To refute the doctrine of arising / to establish the truth of non-arising / I explain this teaching¹⁸⁹ / fools can't understand
2. Although things don't arise / they don't exist as nothing¹⁹⁰ / as gandharvan cities, illusions, or dreams / they exist but without a cause
3. Why don't things arise or exist by themselves / why are they empty / because apart from combinations / nothing appears to wisdom / thus I teach what is empty / what doesn't arise and is not self-existent¹⁹¹

4. When this and that combine / something appears but doesn't exist / analysis finds no combination / despite what other schools claim
5. As dreams, illusions, or strands of hair / mirages or gandharvan cities / such are the things of the world / they appear but without a cause
6. To refute doctrines of causation / I proclaim the truth of non-arising / because I proclaim non-arising / the Dharma continues unbroken / but the radiance of no causation / frightens the followers of other paths."¹⁹²

Mahamati then asked in verse:

7. "How and caused by what / and why do things arise / and how do they come together / according to this doctrine of no causation?"

The Bhagavan then replied in verse:

8. "When created things are examined / as neither having nor not having a cause / the doctrine of arising and cessation / is undone by what one sees."

192. Another verse rendered by all versions in six lines. Only Gunabhadra has *chib-jan* (bright light).

193. Bodhiruchi omits most of this. Shikshananda has this verse in four lines. Gunabhadra renders it in six lines, which I've summarized in four.

194. Non-arising (the forbearance of non-arising) is associated with the eighth stage of the bodhisattva path. Hence, bodhisattvas of the first seven stages do not understand this teaching.

195. Gunabhadra omits the last line. I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit in including it.

196. Three of this verse's four lines and the first two lines of the next verse are missing in Gunabhadra. I've followed Shikshananda.

197. Imagined (*parikalpita*) and dependent (*paratantra*) reality.

198. The Sanskrit is *paraṁrtti-abhaya*, overturning the basis, transforming the foundation.

199. For the last two lines, Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit all have variations of "except when things combine / something is seen arising or ceasing."

Mahamati then asked in verse:

9. "Does non-arising mean nonexistence / or does it wait upon a cause / a name should not mean nothing / could you please explain?"¹⁹³

The Bhagavan then replied in verse:

10. "Non-arising isn't due to nonexistence / nor does it wait upon a cause / nor does a name mean something exists / nor does a name have no meaning
11. Beyond the reach of other paths / pratyeka-buddhas and shravakas / beyond the seven stages / this is the realm of non-arising"¹⁹⁴
12. Beyond causes and conditions / likewise beyond all actions / resting on nothing but mind / this I say is non-arising"¹⁹⁵
13. Things not arising from causes / neither existing nor not existing / beyond perceiver and perceived / this I say is non-arising"¹⁹⁶
14. The mind without an object / beyond the two modes of reality¹⁹⁷ / transforming one's very ground¹⁹⁸ / this I say is non-arising
15. No external existence or nonexistence / no grasping by the mind / putting an end to every view / this I say is non-arising
16. When something is thus distinguished / as empty and without self-existence / it isn't empty because it's empty / it's empty because it doesn't arise
17. When causes and conditions combine / something arises and something ceases / aside from causes and conditions / nothing else arises or ceases
18. Aside from causes and conditions / there isn't something else that exists / something the same or different / despite what other schools say
19. Existence or nonexistence doesn't arise / there is no existence or nonexistence / except when combinations change / neither of these apply¹⁹⁹
20. It is only according to convention / mutual dependence becomes a chain / apart from the chain of causation / arising has no meaning
21. Arising doesn't arise if it doesn't exist / the error of other paths is thus avoided / I only speak of a chain of causation / when fools can't understand
22. As for something else arising / apart from the chain of causation / this is the doctrine of no causation / which denies the meaning of the chain

200. The lamp, for example.

201. For the last line, Bodhiruchi has "which isn't known to fools," while Shikshananda and the Sanskrit have "which is what fools perceive."

202. The forbearance of the non-arising of all things is attained at the eighth stage of the bodhisattva path. The Sanskrit is *anupatitika-dharma-kṣaṇi*.

203. For the third line, Gunabhadra has "everything free from chains." But no other edition agrees.

204. From a bow drill comes fire, from clay comes a pot, from a wheel comes a cart, from seeds come plants.

205. For the last line, Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda have, "and thus negate the teaching."

206. These refer to the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind.

207. For this last line, Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit have: "the auspicious Eightfold Noble Path." The Buddha's meaning here is that while afflictions and understandings might differ, what appear as different teachings are not different teachings. If they were different, they would not be Mahayana teachings.

208. Section LXXIX. The recognition of impermanence underlies the Buddha's teaching. But the Buddha was not alone in such recognition. Other schools also taught impermanence. This section presents an admittedly convoluted review of their views and notes their inherent flaws and concludes with the Buddha's teaching. Some of the views criticized involve differences as to how the material world and the elements of which it is composed are understood, others differ as to whether impermanence is some kind of independent entity. All of these views, however, fail to realize that whatever they perceive is nothing but the mind. Permanence and impermanence are irrelevant.

209. Bodhiruchi says "eight kinds." Suzuki points out what he thinks must be Bodhiruchi's eighth kind, but I think it is simply an explanation, which is something Bodhiruchi frequently adds to his translation.

210. That is, things are abandoned by the causes that gave rise to them.

211. Buddhists differentiate shape (*samsthāna*) and form (*rūpa*). Shape is the external appearance of material form, while form is anything external, material or not, and includes sound, smell, taste, and touch.

23. Just as a lamp illuminates forms / perception of the chain does the same / thus apart from the chain / something else would exist²⁰⁰

24. What doesn't arise doesn't exist / its existence is like that of space / apart from the chain of causation / the wise find nothing to see²⁰¹

25. But there is something that doesn't arise / something attained by the wise / the arising of which doesn't arise / the forbearance of non-arising²⁰²

26. If in every world / whatever you see is a chain / everything as a chain / from this you will attain samadhi²⁰³

27. Ignorance, desire, and karma / these are the interior chain / a bow drill, a lump of clay, a wheel / and seeds make up the outside²⁰⁴

28. If something else existed / something arising from causes / this would negate the chain's meaning / and thus it wouldn't succeed²⁰⁵

29. If something arose that didn't exist / which link would be its cause / things give rise to each other / this is what causation means

30. Solidity, moisture, heat, and movement²⁰⁶ / these are the projections of fools / nothing else exists but their combinations / thus I teach no self-existence

31. Like doctors who treat diseases / don't have particular doctrines / because diseases differ / they prescribe different cures

32. For the sake of other beings / to rid them of afflictions / I gauge their level of understanding / before I decide what to teach

33. But different afflictions and understandings / don't mean different teachings / I only teach one path / the path of the Mahayana.²⁰⁷

LXXIX²⁰⁸

Mahamati Bodhisattva once more asked the Buddha, "Followers of other paths all give rise to projections of impermanence. The Bhagavan also teaches that all phenomena are impermanent, that they arise and they cease. What does this mean? Is this wrong? Or is this right? And how many kinds of impermanence are there?"

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Followers of other paths have seven kinds²⁰⁹ of impermanence, none of which are taught by me. And what are the seven? Some say impermanence is when something is created and then abandoned.²¹⁰ Some say impermanence is the destruction of shape. Some say impermanence is form.²¹¹

Some say impermanence is the process during which form changes and that because it involves an uninterrupted dissolution, like the transformation of milk to curds, the process of change is imperceptible but that impermanence destroys whatever is there. Some say impermanence is something that exists. Some say impermanence is something that exists and does not exist. And some say impermanence is something that does not arise but is inherent in all phenomena.²¹²

"Mahamati, according to impermanence as something that exists and does not exist, the individual characteristics of the four elements and what they comprise are destroyed, but the self-existence of the four elements is imperceptible and does not arise.

"According to impermanence as something that does not arise, neither the existence nor nonexistence of anything arises, and even the most careful analysis yields nothing, neither permanence nor impermanence. This is the meaning of what does not arise, not of what does arise. This is what characterizes impermanence as something that does not arise. Those who don't understand this fall prey to the view of followers of other paths that impermanence is something that arises.

"Mahamati, as for impermanence being something that exists, this is a projection of one's own mind and not of the existence of permanence or impermanence. What does this mean? It means that the existence of impermanence itself is not destroyed. Mahamati, the nonexistence of what exists is the result of impermanence. Except for impermanence, there is nothing that can cause what exists not to exist. It is like a club or a roof tile²¹³ or a rock. It breaks things.

212. In the paragraphs that follow, the Buddha explains these seven kinds of impermanence, but in an order different from his initial list: 6, 7, 5, 1, 2, 3, 4. Note that in his explanations of these seven, the Buddha presents them from the points of view of their adherents followed by comments of his own.

213. Roof tiles were sufficiently heavy to keep from being blown off.

"Clearly it is no different for anything else. For in terms of existence and impermanence, there is no difference between cause and effect. If this is impermanence, and this is the effect, and there is no difference between cause and effect, then everything that exists would be permanent, as nothing would exist as a cause. Mahamati, the nonexistence of what exists does have a cause, but not one fools are aware of. A cause does not produce an unrelated effect. If it did, anything that exists could be impermanence. And if the effect were unrelated, there would be no difference between cause and effect, even though they were clearly different.

"In the case of impermanence as something that exists, this would amount to the existence of an effect-producing cause. But if that were so, whatever exists would never end. If everything that exists amounted to an effect-producing cause, then impermanence itself would be impermanent. And because impermanence would be impermanent, everything that exists would not be impermanent but permanent.

"As for impermanence being inherent in whatever exists, this is contradicted by the three periods of time. Either it is destroyed along with past forms, or it does not arise in the future because such forms do not arise, or it is destroyed along with present forms. Forms are different combinations of the four elements, and the essential nature of the four elements and what they comprise is not subject to destruction, as it neither varies nor does it not vary. But while according to followers of other paths, the four elements are indestructible, it is common knowledge that the four elements and all the forms they comprise throughout the three realms arise and cease to exist. Where then do the followers of such paths conceive of impermanence as existing apart from the four elements and what they comprise if the four elements do not arise and their essential nature is not subject to destruction?

"As for impermanence existing apart from initial creation, there are no other four elements than the four elements because among the individual characteristics of their different characteristics, no differences can be found. Since they don't differ, they don't create something that does. This kind of impermanence, you should know, involves the non-arising of dualities.

"As for impermanence being the destruction of shape, this means that the four elements and what they comprise are not destroyed. They are never destroyed. Mahamati, if one analyzes objects into the finest particles, one observes their destruction, as the shapes of the four elements and what they comprise cannot

avoid appearing to differ in terms of their dimensions. But this is not true of the four elements. The four elements are not destroyed. It is the shapes that appear to be destroyed. This falls under the doctrine of the Samkhyas.²¹⁴

"As for impermanence consisting in form, this means form itself is impermanence. But what is impermanent are shapes, not the four elements. If the four elements were impermanent, this would deny worldly convention. The denial of worldly convention falls under the doctrines of the Lokayatas,²¹⁵ who view whatever exists as nothing but words and individual characteristics as not arising.

"As for impermanence consisting in change,²¹⁶ this means that the existence of form appears to differ, not the four elements. For example, when we use gold to make ornaments, its appearance changes, but the nature of gold is not destroyed. It is only the ornaments that are subject to destruction. Thus, changes in whatever else exists are also like this.

"Such are the various views of impermanence held by followers of other paths who imagine that when fire destroys the four elements,²¹⁷ their individual characteristics are not destroyed. If their individual characteristics were destroyed, the four elements and what they comprise would cease to exist.

214. Samkhyas believed that the world was a combination of matter and spirit, with the former being made of varying amounts of *gunas* (tendencies or qualities) of creation, stasis, and destruction that were permanent and indestructible.

215. This refers to materialists who held that the world (*loka*) alone exists, that it is made up of the four elements, and that only knowledge gained through the five senses is valid. Thus, worldly conventions are, as a rule, invalid.

216. This is the fourth kind of impermanence mentioned at the beginning of this section.

217. The world-destroying conflagration at the end of a series of kalpas.

218. In summarizing some of the kinds of impermanence mentioned in this verse, the Buddha sees such conceptions as irrelevant. Arguments about impermanence are themselves nothing but mind.

219. For this last verse, Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda have: "Everything including Brahma's heavens / I say are nothing but mind / apart from the mind / there is nothing to be found." Some sects held that Brahma alone was permanent but everything created by him was not. His heaven is located beyond the realm of desire at the base of the realm of form.

"Mahamati, my teaching is that what arises is neither permanent nor impermanent. And how so? Because external existence cannot be determined, I teach that the three realms are nothing but mind and do not teach the arising or ceasing of their different characteristics. As for the four elements coming together and differentiating, the four elements and what they comprise are projections of the duality of subject and object. By understanding that dualistic views are projections, one gets free from the dualistic views of external existence and nonexistence, and one sees them as nothing but perceptions of one's own mind.

"Projections arise when you think about doing something, not when you do nothing. Avoid projections of the existence or nonexistence of the mind. All mundane, metaphysical, and transcendent dharms are neither permanent nor impermanent. Those who fail to perceive them as merely perceptions of their own mind end up attached to erroneous, dualistic views. But because followers of other paths do not perceive them as their own projections, such fools have no means by which to know that all mundane, metaphysical, and transcendent dharms are the result of their own projection of words. This is not something fools are aware of."

The Bhagavan then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Something separate from what is created / differences of shape / impermanence of form or existence / these are what other schools see"²¹⁸
2. In the indestructibility of what exists / the persistence of the elements / other schools see impermanence / immersed in a myriad views
3. For all such schools as these / there is no arising or cessation / but if the elements last forever / what does impermanence mean?
4. Everything is nothing but mind / from this dualities flow / among the grasping and the grasped / there is no self or its possessions
5. From Brahma's heaven to the roots of trees / throughout their world-encircling branches / what I teach is this / it is all nothing but mind."²¹⁹

1. Chapter Four. Just a few final questions as Mahamati and the Buddha move on to the nature of buddhahood and the end of the bodhisattva path. I have combined Suzuki's chapters Four through Nine into this one chapter but have retained his section numbering.

2. Section LXXX. This section focuses on the differences between how bodhisattvas and followers of other paths handle samadhi and the bliss of samadhi during the final stages of the path. While followers of other paths see the cessation of sensation and perception as their final goal, bodhisattvas see it as just another illusion and continue in their practice of liberating all beings. Then, too, bodhisattvas see all stages as illusions.

3. The Sanskrit is *nirodha-samapatti*. This samadhi in which sensation and perception cease is characteristic of the sixth stage of the bodhisattva path. It is also part of the Hinayana path, whose practitioners interpret this as nirvana. However, Mahayana practitioners see it as transitional and neither allow themselves to be seduced by its bliss, nor do they forsake its bliss for the nothingness of nirvana, nor do they cease giving rise to thoughts. For them, thoughts are not thoughts.

4. Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit all have variations of "not fall prey to" or "not be confused by" the bliss of this samadhi. I've followed Gunabhadra. Based on what follows in this section, Gunabhadra's translation is clearly the correct interpretation here.

5. At this stage they eliminate all views of the three realms.

6. Formless meditations are practiced during the first five stages but only begin to exceed those based on form at the sixth stage. By the seventh stage all meditations are said to be formless.

7. What is good is nirvana or what leads to nirvana, what is bad is samsara or what leads to samsara.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINAL QUESTIONS¹



LXXX²

Mahamati Bodhisattva again asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, would you please explain for bodhisattvas, shravakas, and pratyeka-buddhas the sequence of stages involving the Samadhi of Cessation,³ so that once I and the other bodhisattvas better understand this sequence, we will not wrongly forsake⁴ the bliss of the Samadhi of Cessation or fall prey to the foolishness of shravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, or followers of other paths."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Listen carefully and ponder it well, and I will tell you."

Mahamati answered the Buddha, "Would the Bhagavan please instruct us."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "It is at the sixth stage that bodhisattvas, shravakas, and pratyeka-buddhas enter the Samadhi of Cessation.⁵ At the seventh stage, bodhisattvas think thoughts during this samadhi, but thoughts that are free from any characteristic of self-existence.⁶ This is not true of shravakas or pratyeka-buddhas. Shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas fall prey to their own accomplishments and are aware of a practitioner and a practice during this samadhi. Therefore, at the seventh stage they do not think thoughts. Instead of the undifferentiated nature of things, they still perceive their different characteristics during this samadhi, such as which are good or bad.⁷ Hence, at the seventh stage they are unable to think during this samadhi.

"Mahamati, from the first to the seventh stage,⁸ bodhisattvas see the three realms as nothing but mind, will, and conceptual consciousness and without a self or what belongs to a self. But for bodhisattvas, shravakas, and pratyeka-buddhas at the eighth stage, projections of mind, will, and conceptual consciousness cease. Meanwhile, those fools who cultivate their own projections remain trapped by the myriad characteristics of external entities and see things in terms of the dialectic of subject and object unaware that these are the result of habit-energy from the beginningless past.

"Mahamati, at the eighth stage, bodhisattvas, shravakas, and pratyeka-buddhas experience nirvana. But because bodhisattvas are supported by buddhas during samadhi,⁹ despite the bliss of samadhi, they do not enter nirvana. Without such support, they would not complete the tathagata stage and would give up all that they do for other beings and would sever their membership in the lineage of buddhas. Therefore, the buddhas tell them of the inconceivable and infinite virtues of a tathagata. Meanwhile, shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas are seduced by the bliss of samadhi and create the thought of nirvana.

"Mahamati, I have distinguished these seven stages that involve examining characteristics of the mind, the will, and conceptual consciousness, and that involve examining the self and what belongs to a self and the absence of a self among both

persons and things, and that involve examining the individual and shared characteristics of what arises and ceases, and that also involve mastery of the four unshared powers of argument and judgment,¹⁰ samadhi, the sequence of stages, and the elements of awareness in order to prevent bodhisattvas unaware of individual or shared characteristics and unfamiliar with the seven stages from falling prey to the mistaken doctrines of other paths. This is why I teach a sequence of stages.

"Mahamati, there is nothing that actually arises or ceases. The sequence of stages and all the phenomena in the three realms are nothing but perceptions of one's own mind. But fools are unaware of this. And because they are unaware, I and other buddhas talk about a sequence of stages and talk about the phenomena of the three realms.

"Moreover, Mahamati, shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas at the eighth bodhisattva stage become so intoxicated by the bliss of the Samadhi of Cessation, they fail to realize it is nothing but the perception of their own mind. Obstructed by the habit-energy of individual and shared characteristics, they fall prey to views of attachment to no self among persons and things and give rise to conceptions of nirvana, not to an understanding of detachment from dharmas.¹¹

"Mahamati, when bodhisattvas experience the bliss of the Samadhi of Cessation, because of their earlier vows of compassion to complete the ten inexhaustible deeds,¹² they do not give rise to conceptions of nirvana. And because conceptions of nirvana do not arise, they transcend projections of grasping and what is grasped and realize that these are nothing but perceptions of their own mind. And because they do not give rise to projections of any kind, they do not fall prey to projections of the mind, will, or conceptual consciousness or characteristics of external existence. They do not give rise to what is not conducive to the Dharma. And as their wisdom grows, they reach the tathagata stage of self-realization.

"It is like someone crossing a river in a dream who wakes up before they are across.¹³ Once they are awake, they wonder if it was real or not. But it was neither real nor not real. It was only because of the different habit-energy of the traces that remained from the sights, sounds, feelings, and thoughts from the beginningless past that different shapes appeared and disappeared in the dream that is the mind, the will, and conceptual consciousness.

"Mahamati, this is how bodhisattvas at the eighth stage view the arising of projections. As they progress from the first stage through the seventh stage, they see everything as an illusion. But once they transcend projections of subject and object, they undertake the work of the Dharma so that those who have not yet

8. Gunabhadra alone has "seventh," all other versions have "sixth." I have inverted the order of this sentence and the next.

9. Both here and in Section LXXXII, Gunabhadra has *chueb* (to be aware/to know), instead of *chueb-the* (aware ones; buddhas). Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit all have "aware ones/buddhas." Since elsewhere in the sutra, even Gunabhadra has the buddhas supporting bodhisattvas during samadhi, Gunabhadra's translation needs amending here.

10. The four *pratisamvid* include powers regarding teaching, meaning, expression, and eloquence.

11. The Sanskrit is *vivikta-dharma*. Suzuki reads this quite differently as "absolute solitude."

12. These ten vows, made at the beginning of the path, include speaking the Dharma in being realms without limit, world realms without limit, space realms without limit, dharma realms without limit, nirvana realms without limit, etc.

13. In this metaphor, this shore is samsara, the other shore is nirvana, and the river is that of the ever-flowing habit-energy that arises from projections.

14. Again, the Sanskrit is *vivikta-dharma*. Bodhiruchi adds a paragraph here in which Mahamati asks about the seeming contradiction of shravakas and pratyekas reaching the eighth stage but not yet possessing insights characteristic of the first stage, let alone the seventh. The Buddha tells him there are two kinds of such practitioners, the ordinary shravakas and those who have previously practiced the bodhisattva path but who have fallen back into the Hinayana path.

15. As the Buddha himself states in the next verse, these refer to the seventh and eighth stages, respectively.

16. The referent of "this abode" is the ninth stage. See also the next verse.

17. The "two stages" are the ninth and tenth stages, the tenth of which is "supreme." Thus, the conception of the bodhisattva path in the *Lanka* is one of ten stages, in which the tathagata stage is the tenth. There is no eleventh stage.

18. Buddhas experience enlightenment in the highest heaven in the realm of form.

19. The stage free from projections is the eighth stage. Then again, as the sequence of stages is itself a projection, no stage would be the only stage free from projections.

20. Section LXXXI. Previously in Section LXXIX, the Buddha dismissed the seven kinds of impermanence advanced by other paths and said the teaching of the tathagatas is neither permanent nor impermanent. Here, Mahamati wonders if this also applies to a tathagata's body—in or out of nirvana. The question concerns a buddha's dharma body, not a buddha's apparition or reward bodies. The Buddha reminds Mahamati that such assertions are inherently flawed, as they are based on a duality that is imaginary and that does not apply to tathagatas or to the knowledge of tathagatas.

21. If permanent, tathagatas would be equivalent to a creator (or first cause). If impermanent, then they would cease to exist when their bodies ceased to exist. Also, if they are not the creator but the created, they would be like anything else created, as would their knowledge and teaching. Finally, they would be like everything else, and everything else would be like them.

22. The Sanskrit is *karanam*.

understood understand. Mahamati, this is the nirvana of bodhisattvas. It does not involve annihilation. And because they transcend the mind, the will, and conceptual consciousness, they achieve the forbearance of non-arising. Mahamati, the ultimate truth includes no sequence of stages. The absence of all projections, this is what is meant by detachment from dharmas."¹⁴

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Nothing but mind and no projections¹⁵ / this abode and the buddha stage¹⁶ / these are what tathagatas teach / past, present, and those to come
2. Nothing but mind is the seventh stage / no projections is the eighth / of the two stages where I dwell¹⁷ / the buddha stage is supreme
3. Self-realization and purity / these make up my world / in the highest heaven of heavens¹⁸ / adorned with the purest forms
4. With the blazing fire of knowledge / filling all directions with light / with a radiance that doesn't blind / I appear throughout the three realms
5. I appear in the present world / I appear in worlds gone by / the paths I teach in each / all lead to the buddha stage
6. The tenth stage thus becomes the first / the first becomes the eighth / the ninth becomes the seventh / and the seventh becomes the eighth
7. The second becomes the third / the fourth becomes the fifth / the third becomes the sixth / but which is free from projections?"¹⁹

LXXXI²⁰

Mahamati again asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, are the tathagatas, the arhats, the fully enlightened ones permanent or impermanent?"

The Buddha told Mahamati, "The tathagatas, the arhats, the fully enlightened ones are neither permanent nor impermanent. Either assertion would be mistaken.²¹ If they were permanent, the problem would be that of a first cause²² because what is permanent, according to followers of other paths, is a first cause that is not itself caused. Hence, the permanence of tathagatas would not be permanent because the problem would be that of not possessing the permanence of a first cause. And if tathagatas were impermanent, the problem would be that of the impermanence of a first cause. Also, since the characteristics characterized by the

skandhas do not exist by themselves, when the skandhas disappear, the tathagatas should cease to exist. But they do not cease to exist.

"Mahamati, everything that is caused is impermanent, like a pot or a robe. But if everything suffered from impermanence, all knowledge, attainments, and skills would be meaningless because they would be caused. And everything caused would be a tathagata because its causal basis would be the same. Therefore, Mahamati, tathagatas are neither permanent nor impermanent.

"Moreover, Mahamati, tathagatas are not permanent like space.²³ If they were permanent like space, their attainment of the self-realization of buddha knowledge would be meaningless. Mahamati, if anything were like space, it would be neither permanent nor impermanent. It would transcend permanence and impermanence. Because of the problems of permanence and impermanence,

23. Followers of other paths also held that what was permanent or impermanent was caused or created. But if tathagatas were uncaused, would they not be the same as space, which was also held to be uncaused? Also, if the tathagatas were uncaused, they would not require a short, much less a long, course of practice to reach such attainment.

24. Previously, the Buddha said "non-arising is another name for the Tathagata." Followers of other paths held that what does not arise is permanent because by not arising it would not be subject to ceasing. But this would be equivalent to an imaginary fabrication.

25. This permanence is true permanence and not false permanence. The Dharma doesn't change whether it is realized or not, whether it is manifest or not, whether it is taught or not. What is realized is permanent, and what realizes is permanent.

26. This is the Sanskrit term for "wisdom." Its use in this sutra is rather rare, as the *Lankavatara* focuses on *jñāna*, or "knowledge." *Prajñā* literally means "before-knowledge."

27. I've followed Shikshananda for this verse, which Gunabhadra omits.

28. As when the seven kinds of impermanence are applied to nirvana.

it could not be said to be one or the other or both or neither. Therefore, tathagatas are not permanent.

"Again, Mahamati, if tathagatas possessed the permanence of what does not arise,²⁴ such as that of rabbit horns or horse horns, because of the permanence of what does not arise, their practice would be meaningless. Thus, because of the problems with a permanence that does not arise, tathagatas are not permanent.

"Moreover, Mahamati, there is another aspect in which we know tathagatas are permanent. And what aspect is that? The knowledge attained by realization is permanent. Therefore, tathagatas are permanent. Mahamati, whether tathagatas appear in the world or do not appear in the world, the Dharma is fixed and abiding.²⁵ Shravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, and tathagatas all dwell in realization, not in space. But this is not something fools would know.

"Mahamati, the knowledge attained by tathagatas is the result of *prajñā*²⁶ and not the result of the skandhas, dhatus, or ayatanas or the mind, the will, or conceptual consciousness. Mahamati, everything in the three realms arises from false projections. But tathagatas do not arise from false or empty projections.

"Mahamati, it is because of duality that there is permanence and impermanence, not because of non-duality. Non-duality means detachment, where nothing is characterized by the appearance of dualistic characteristics. Therefore, the tathagatas, the arhats, the fully enlightened ones are neither permanent nor impermanent. Mahamati, whenever distinctions of language occur, there are problems regarding permanence and impermanence. Only when distinctions cease are they transcended. But foolish people are not detached from views of permanence and impermanence. It is the wise who once and for all transcend permanence and impermanence and who are not affected by either."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Neither permanent nor impermanent / but perceived as permanent or impermanent / who sees the buddhas like this / doesn't give rise to mistaken views²⁷
2. The meaninglessness of accomplishments / results from permanence or impermanence / whose knowledge is free from distinctions / leaves permanence and impermanence forever
3. Once a position is established / a multitude of truths appear²⁸ / who sees nothing but mind / cannot be touched by words."

LXXXII²⁹

Mahamati once more asked the Buddha, "Bhagavan, would you please explain again the arising and cessation of the skandhas, dhatus, and ayatanas? If they contain no self, who arises, and who ceases? Foolish people rely on arising and cessation and fail to experience an end of suffering and fail to know nirvana."

The Buddha said, "Excellent. Listen carefully, and I will tell you."

Mahamati replied, "May we be so instructed."

29. Section LXXXII. The Buddha explains the relationship, if it can be called that, between the tathagata-garbha and the alaya-vijnana, whereby the former is the cause of the latter but whereby the latter is an illusion. Readers should also refer to the Buddha's earlier description of the tathagata-garbha as an intrinsically pure jewel wrapped in the rags of the skandhas and without a self (Section XXVIII).

30. This term refers to a sensory power, a sensory domain, and the form of sensory consciousness that arises when these two meet.

31. This refers to the fundamental condition of ignorance from which all forms of ignorance arise. The Sanskrit is *avidya-vasa-bhumi*.

32. The four dhyana (meditative) heavens are regions in the realm of form, where enlightenment occurs. The fourth dhyana heaven is where thought ceases.

33. This refers to the Four Noble Truths, the fourth of which is the Eightfold Path of Liberation.

34. They have seen through the self in persons but not the self in dharmas.

35. They cease to exist because they are products of the repository consciousness, which has been replaced by or transformed into the tathagata-garbha.

36. This name (*acala*: unshakeable) refers to the eighth stage of the bodhisattva path.

37. These are enumerated in the *Avatamsaka Sutra*, where they constitute the subject of Chapter 27 (of the forty-chapter version): universal light, subtle light, travel to all buddhalands, purification of the mind, knowledge of the past, light of wisdom, knowledge of adornments, differentiation of beings, the Dharma Realm, and unimpeded teaching.

The Buddha said, "The tathagata-garbha is the cause of whatever is good or bad and is responsible for every form of existence everywhere. It is like an actor who changes appearances in different settings but who lacks a self or what belongs to a self. Because this is not understood, followers of other paths unwittingly imagine an agent responsible for the effects that arise from the threefold combination."³⁰

"When it is impregnated by the habit-energy of beginningless fabrications, it is known as the repository consciousness and gives birth to fundamental ignorance" along with seven kinds of consciousness. It is like the ocean whose waves rise without cease. But it transcends the misconception of impermanence or the conceit of a self and is essentially pure and clear.

"The seven kinds of thoughts of the remaining forms of consciousness—the will, conceptual consciousness, and the others—rise and cease as the result of mistakenly projecting and grasping external appearances. Because people are attached to the names and appearances of all kinds of shapes, they are unaware that such forms and characteristics are the perceptions of their own minds and that bliss or suffering do not lead to liberation. As they become enveloped by names and appearances, their desires arise and create more desires, each becoming the cause or condition of the next. Only if their senses stopped functioning, and the remaining projections of their minds no longer arose, and they did not distinguish bliss or suffering, would they enter the Samadhi of Cessation of Sensation and Perception in the fourth dhyana heaven."³¹ However, in their cultivation of the truths of liberation,³² they give rise to the concept of liberation and fail to transcend or transform what is called the repository consciousness of the tathagata-garbha. And the seven kinds of consciousness never stop flowing. And how so? Because the different kinds of consciousness arise as a result of causes and conditions. This is not the understanding of shravaka or pratyeka-buddha practitioners, as they do not realize there is no self that arises from grasping the individual or shared characteristics of the skandhas, dhatus, or ayatanas."³⁴

For those who see the tathagata-garbha, the five dharmas, the modes of existence, and the two kinds of no-self cease to exist."³⁵ And once they progress through the sequence of stages and are not swayed by the views of other paths, they are said to dwell in the unshakeable stage³⁶ of bodhisattvas, where they enjoy the bliss of the ten samadhis.³⁷ Supported by the buddhas during such samadhis, they reflect on the inconceivable Dharma. But because of their vows, they do not grasp the bliss of samadhi or ultimate reality.³⁸ And by means of the personal realization of buddha knowledge, which is not among the practices of shravakas,

38. The Sanskrit term *bhūta-koti* means "limit/boundary of reality," and here all three Chinese translations render it *shib-*chi** (reality-boundary). Its range of reference is similar to that of "nirvana," but without the sense of annihilation. For more on this term, and its counterpart *purva-koti* (ultimate beginning), see Robert Sharf's *Coming to Terms with Chinese Buddhism*, pages 230–233.

39. This is a conception of spiritual lineages found in Prajnaparamita literature. It begins with the "dry-wisdom" stage and ends with the pratyeka-buddha, bodhisattva, and buddha stages.

40. When consciousness is transformed into knowledge, its name is no longer repository consciousness but womb of buddhas (*tathagata-garbha*).

41. If there were no repository consciousness, there would be no *tathagata-garbha* and, thus, no liberation or path leading to liberation.

42. The Indian gooseberry, or *Phyllanthus emblica*, the fruit of which is about one inch in diameter.

43. She was the daughter of King Prasenajit and Queen Mallika of Kosala. In a sutra named after her, she explains that the *tathagata-garbha* has two states: empty and not empty. This short text was translated by Gunabhadra in 436. (cf. Taisho Tripitaka, volume 12)

44. Bodhiruchi and Shikshananda add: "It is not for shravakas and the followers of other paths who are attached to words."

45. As for the two kinds of grasping, earlier in this section, the Buddha lists the grasping of individual and shared characteristics. However, near the end of the next section, he lists the grasping of the self and what belongs to the self, of subject and object.

pratyeka-buddhas, or followers of other paths, they complete the ten-stage path of the lineage of sages,³⁹ and they acquire bodies of knowledge and projection that transcend samadhi.

"Therefore, Mahamati, bodhisattvas who seek the highest goal should purify what are called the *tathagata-garbha* and the repository consciousness.⁴⁰ Mahamati, if there were nothing called the repository consciousness, the *tathagata-garbha* would neither arise nor cease.⁴¹ But sages and fools alike experience arising and cessation, Mahamati. Therefore, practitioners who cultivate the personal realization of buddha knowledge dwell in the bliss of whatever is present and do not abandon their practice.

"Mahamati, although this repository consciousness of the *tathagata-garbha* seen by the minds of shravakas and pratyeka-buddhas is essentially pure, because it is obscured by the dust of sensation, it appears impure—but not to *tathagatas*. To *tathagatas*, Mahamati, the realm that appears before them is like an amala⁴² fruit in the palm of their hand.

"Mahamati, I have used my spiritual power to support Queen Shrimala⁴³ and other bodhisattvas of deep wisdom to explain the meaning of what are called the repository consciousness and the *tathagata-garbha*, which appear together with the seven other kinds of consciousness, so that those shravakas still attached to them might see that persons and dharmas are without a self. Thus supported by the power of the Buddha, Queen Shrimala explained the realm of understanding of *tathagatas* and not the realm of understanding of shravakas, pratyeka-buddhas, or other paths. The repository consciousness of the *tathagata-garbha* is something only buddhas and those wisest of bodhisattvas who rely on meaning understand.⁴⁴ Therefore you and the other bodhisattvas should diligently reflect on the repository consciousness of the *tathagata-garbha*. Don't simply think hearing about this is enough."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Deep is the *tathagata-garbha* / with seven kinds of consciousness / the two kinds of grasping that arise⁴⁵ / are avoided by the wise
2. The mind is like a reflected image / the result of habit-energy without beginning / for those who see what is real / whatever is seen isn't seen
3. Like fools who see me point to the moon / look at my finger and not at the moon / those who cling to names / don't see this truth of mine

projection. Whether you look inside or outside, apart from projection, there are no other beings. Whether it is what knows or what is known, everything is still. As long as you don't recognize that your projections are perceptions of your own mind, projections arise. Once you do, they cease."

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

76. Gunabhadra expands this into six lines. I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit.

77. Gunabhadra has "this is a buddha's enlightenment" for the last line, which I've transposed to the first line. Otherwise, I've followed Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit for this verse. The Buddha is referring to the tathagata-garbha here, which is the *alaya-vijnana* transformed and thus "unpolluted." The Buddha has more to say about this relationship between the tathagata-garbha and the *alaya-vijnana* in the next section.

78. Section LXXXVI. Mahamati continues his inquiry into the nature of *buddhas*. If all *dharma*s are transient, would this not also include those *dharma*s upon which buddhahood is based? And if so, are *buddhas* themselves not also momentary? The Buddha's teaching in this and other Mahayana sutras is that *dharma*s are not momentary because they do not exist in the first place. But this is only understood by someone at the eighth stage of the *bodhisattva* path, someone who has attained the forbearance of non-arising.

79. The Sanskrit is *ksbana-bhanga* (momentary-breakable). Impermanence is among the earliest teachings of the Buddha.

80. The five *skandhas* (form, sensation, perception, memory, and consciousness) are sometimes called "grasping" because they represent the domains in which a self is established, or at least conjured.

81. Uncreated, or unconditioned, *dharma*s include space, cessation, and nirvana.

1. "Who views the tathagatas / like the sand of the Ganges / not destroyed or disappearing / they can see the buddhas"⁷⁶
2. What is a buddha's body like / like the sand of the Ganges / flowing unpolluted / flowing on forever."⁷⁷

• LXXXVI⁷⁸

Mahamati once more asked the Buddha, "Could the Bhagavan please explain how *dharma*s are momentary and subject to destruction?"⁷⁹ Why are they momentary?"

The Buddha told Mahamati, "Listen closely and think about what I tell you."

The Buddha told Mahamati, "All *dharma*s are either good, bad or neutral, created or uncreated, mundane or transcendent, karmic or non-karmic, defiled or undefiled, perceptible or imperceptible. Briefly, Mahamati, the five grasping *skandhas*⁸⁰ are based on the mind, the will, and conceptual consciousness along with their habit-energy. It is the mind, the will, and conceptual consciousness and their habit-energy that nourishes the differentiation of good and bad by fools. Mahamati, cultivating the bliss and absorption of *samadhi* and the bliss of whatever is present, this is what is called good and undefiled by the wise.

"Mahamati, what is good or bad refers to the eight forms of consciousness. And what are the eight? They include the tathagata-garbha—known as the repository consciousness—the will, conceptual consciousness, and the five forms of sensory consciousness. These are not taught by followers of other paths. Mahamati, the five forms of sensory consciousness together with the mind, the will, and the conceptual consciousness give rise to the development and destruction of good and bad characteristics and a body that continues without being destroyed. But while these arise and cease, people are unaware that they are perceptions of their own minds. And as one form of consciousness ceases, others arise, differentiate, and grasp shapes and forms. And as conceptual consciousness and the five forms of sensory consciousness arise in correspondence with one another, they last but a moment. Hence, they are called momentary.

"Mahamati, what is momentary is the repository consciousness of the tathagata-garbha. But while the habit-energy of consciousness that arises together with the will is momentary, its undefiled habit-energy is not momentary. This is not something of which foolish people are aware because they are attached to the doctrine of momentariness. Unaware that the momentariness of everything is not momentary, they apply their views of annihilation to the destruction of uncreated *dharma*s as well."⁸¹

82. Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit all have "five forms of sensory consciousness." Either version would be correct here, as it is only the eighth form of consciousness that "transmigrates," which it does in the form of fundamental ignorance.

83. These refer to the five states of affliction, four of which are lumped together here: views, attachments to desire, attachments to form, attachments to formlessness, and fundamental ignorance, which is separated from the rest here, as it is said to be responsible for "transmigration."

84. Section LXXXVII. This section does not so much explain the previous section as it does its last sentence. The deeper meaning of the Buddha's teaching of momentariness is no momentariness. The order of this and the next section was apparently confused at an early date, as Gunabhadra, Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit all have the next section before this one. However, such an arrangement is clearly mistaken, and I have reverted to what I assume was the original order. There are also quite a few lines in this section that are handled differently by Bodhiruchi, Shikshananda, and the Sanskrit. I have only indicated the more significant differences.

85. "Created things" refer to *samskṛta* dharmas, as opposed to the *asamskṛta* (uncreated) dharmas of space, cessation, and nirvana.

86. This verse, and also the last two lines of the previous verse, outline the view of "transmigration" as the rebirth of ignorance.

87. Characteristic of the third (*Abhaya*) heaven in the second meditation in the realm of form.

88. Referring to the view that affliction is enlightenment, samsara is nirvana.

89. For the last two lines, Bodhiruchi has: "the forms that are seen are devoid of the four elements / how can the four elements create them?" Shikshananda has: "the elements have no real existence / why say they can create them?" Suzuki translates the Sanskrit: "realities are characterized with unreality / how can they be causal agencies?"

"Mahamati, the seven forms of consciousness⁸² do not transmigrate. Nor do they experience pleasure or pain. Nor are they the cause of nirvana. Mahamati, it is the tathagata-garbha that experiences pleasure and pain and that arises and ceases in conjunction with causes. Intoxicated with the four states of affliction and that of fundamental ignorance,⁸³ foolish people remain unaware that their view of momentariness is the mind under the influence of differentiation.

"Moreover, Mahamati, just as gold and diamonds and the relics of buddhas possess a unique nature, which is indestructible, if realization were momentary, Mahamati, the wise would not be wise. But the wise are, indeed, wise. Even in the course of kalpas, the amount of gold or diamonds does not diminish. Why then do foolish people not understand the deeper meaning of my words and think that everything, whether internal or external, is momentary?"

LXXXVII⁸⁴

The Buddha then repeated the meaning of this in verse:

1. "Fools imagine created things⁸⁵ / as empty, impermanent, and momentary / momentariness they imagine / as a river, a lamp, or a seed
2. Afflictions end in a moment / they are still and uncreated / nothing arises at all / this is what momentary means
3. Things arising then ceasing / this isn't what I teach fools / an unbroken continuous existence / this is the result of distinctions
4. Ignorance is the cause / this is where thoughts begin / but before any forms appear / where are they in between⁸⁶
5. Cessation is unceasing / one thought follows another / before they focus on form / on what do they depend to arise
6. Because this arises from that / arising from what isn't real / how could something be momentary / if it was never complete
7. The samadhis of practitioners / the relics of buddhas and diamonds / celestial palaces of light and music⁸⁷ / the world cannot destroy
8. The abiding truths that are attained / the perfect knowledge of a tathagata / the equalities realized by a monk⁸⁸ / how can these be momentary
9. Illusions such as gandharvan cities / these too are not momentary / but regarding unreal forms / real is how they are seen."⁸⁹

The Lotus Sutra

A CONTEMPORARY TRANSLATION
OF A BUDDHIST CLASSIC



Translation and Introduction by

Gene Reeves



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS • BOSTON



3. A Parable

AT THAT TIME Shariputra, ecstatic with joy, stood up, put his palms together, reverently looked up at the face of the Honorable One and said to him: "Hearing this sound of the Dharma from the World-Honored One, I am filled with ecstasy, something I have never experienced before. Why? When we heard such a Dharma from the Buddha before, we saw that bodhisattvas were assured of becoming buddhas, but not that we ourselves were. And we were very distressed at never being able to have a tathagata's immeasurable insight.

"World-Honored One, whenever I was alone under the trees in a mountain forest, whether sitting or walking, I was occupied with this thought: 'We have all equally entered Dharma-nature. Why does the Tathagata offer us salvation only by the Dharma of a small vehicle?' This is our own fault, not the fault of the World-Honored One. Why? Because had we waited to hear you teach how to attain supreme awakening, we would certainly have been saved by the Great Vehicle. But, not understanding your way of preaching by skillful means according to what is appropriate, when we first heard the Buddha-dharma we only passively believed and accepted it, pondered it, and were informed by it.

"World-Honored One, ever since then I have spent whole days and nights blaming myself. But now, hearing from the Buddha the unprecedented Dharma that I have never heard before, all my doubts and regrets are over. I am mentally and physically at ease, and happily at peace. Today, having received my share of Buddha-dharma, I realize that I really am a child of the Buddha, born from the Buddha's mouth and transformed by the Dharma."

At that time, wanting to say what he meant once again, Shariputra spoke in verse:

Hearing the voice of this Dharma,
I have something I never had before.
My heart is full of joy
And the whole net of doubt is gone.

Having received the Buddha's teaching from long ago,
I have never been denied the Great Vehicle.
The voice of the Buddha is only rarely heard,
But it can rid living beings of suffering.

Having already freed myself of fault,
Hearing this, I am also free from anxiety.
Whether in a mountain valley
Or under the trees in a forest,

Whether sitting or walking around,
I always thought about this matter
And blamed myself completely, thinking:
"Why have I cheated myself so?

"We too are children of the Buddha
And have entered the same flawless Dharma,
Yet in the future will not be able to
Preach the unexcelled way.

"We will never receive
The golden body with thirty-two characteristics,⁶
The ten powers, or various kinds of liberation,
Even though we are all alike in the one Dharma.

"We have completely missed
Such blessings as
The eighty different wonderful, attractive features
And the eighteen unique qualities."

When I was walking around alone
I saw the Buddha in the great assembly,
His fame reaching in all directions,
Everywhere bringing abundant benefits to living beings.

I thought I had been deprived of this benefit,
That I had been deceived.

All day and all night
I pondered over these things,
And wanted to ask the World-Honored One
Whether I had lost my opportunity or not.

I always saw the World-Honored One
Praising the bodhisattvas.
Therefore I thought about these things
Day and night.

Now I hear the voice of the Buddha teaching the Dharma,
The difficult to conceive and flawless Dharma,
In accord with what is appropriate,
Enabling the living to reach the place of the Way.

Once I was attached to non-Buddhist views,
And became a teacher of brahmins.
But the World-Honored One, understanding me,
Uprooted my wrong views and taught me nirvana.

Completely freed from these wrong views
And gaining proof of the emptiness of things,
I told myself that I had reached extinction.
Finally, I now realize that it was not real extinction.

If the time comes
When I become a buddha,
And possess all of
The thirty-two characteristics,

If I am revered by human and heavenly beings
And by satyrs, dragon-gods, and others,
Then will I be able to say,
"Finally I am completely extinct, with nothing remaining."

In the midst of the great assembly
The Buddha proclaimed that I will become a buddha.
Hearing such a voice of the Dharma,
All my doubts and regrets were completely removed.

When I first heard the Buddha preach this
I was frightened and perplexed,
Thinking it might be the devil pretending to be the Buddha,
Which distressed and confused me.

But when the Buddha spoke so eloquently
With various explanations and parables,
My heart was as peaceful as the sea.
Listening, my net of doubts was removed.

The Buddha teaches that in past ages
Innumerable, now extinct buddhas,
Dwelling at peace in skillful means,
Taught the Dharma.

Present and future buddhas,
Countless in number,
Also with skillful means,
Preach this same Dharma.

So too the present World-Honored One,
After his birth and departure from home,
After entering the Way and turning the Dharma wheel,
Has taught with skillful means.

The World-Honored One teaches the true way;
The Evil One has no such truth.

Thus I know for certain
This is not the devil pretending to be the Buddha.

Yet because I had fallen into a net of doubts,
I imagined it to be the doing of the devil.
But now, hearing the gentle, very fine, and wonderful
Voice of the Buddha fluently explaining the pure Dharma,

My heart is filled with joy,
My doubts and regrets
Are forever ended.
I am dwelling at peace in real wisdom.

I am confident of becoming a buddha,
Respected by human and heavenly beings,
Turning the unexcelled Dharma wheel,
Teaching and transforming many bodhisattvas.

Then the Buddha said to Shariputra: "Now in this great assembly of human and heavenly beings, mendicants, brahmins, and others, I say this: In the past, in the presence of two trillion buddhas, for the sake of the unexcelled way, I always taught and transformed you. And throughout long days and nights you have followed me and accepted my teaching. Since I used skillful means to guide you, you have been born into my Dharma.

"Shariputra, in the past I led you to aspire and vow to follow the Buddha way. But now you have entirely forgotten this, and therefore suppose that you have already attained extinction. Now, wanting you to recollect the way that you originally vowed to follow, for all the shravakas I teach this Great Vehicle sutra called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, by which bodhisattvas are taught and which buddhas watch over and keep in mind.

"Shariputra, in a future life, after innumerable, unlimited, and innumerable eons, when you have served some ten million billion buddhas, maintained the true Dharma, and perfected the way of bodhisattva practice, you will be able to become a buddha whose name will be Flower Light Tathagata, one worthy of offerings, truly awakened, fully

clear in conduct, well gone, understanding the world, unexcelled leader, trainer of men, teacher of heavenly beings and people, buddha, world-honored one.

"Your land will be called Free of Dirt. It will be level and smooth, pure and beautifully decorated, peaceful and prosperous. Both human and heavenly beings will flourish there. It will have lapis lazuli for its earth, with eight intersecting roads with golden cords marking their boundaries. Beside each road will be a row of trees of the seven precious materials, which will always be filled with flowers and fruit. Using the three vehicles, Flower Light Tathagata will teach and transform living beings.

"Shariputra, when that buddha appears, though it will not be in an evil age, because of his original vow he will teach the three-vehicle Dharma. His eon will be named Adorned with Great Treasures. Why will it be named this? Because in that land bodhisattvas will be considered great treasures. Those bodhisattvas will be countless, unlimited, inconceivable in number, beyond computation or comparison by parable or simile, such as none can comprehend who does not have a buddha's wisdom. Wherever these bodhisattvas walk, treasured flowers will receive their feet.

"These bodhisattvas will not have just begun to aspire to awakening, for all of them will have planted roots of virtue for a long time. Under innumerable hundreds of thousands of billions of buddhas they will have observed noble practices in purity, always being praised by buddhas. Constantly cultivating Buddha-wisdom, acquiring great divine faculties, knowing well the ways of all the teachings, they will be upright and genuine in character, and firm in will and thought. Such bodhisattvas as these will fill that land.

"Shariputra, the lifetime of Flower Light Buddha will be twelve small eons, not counting the time during which he is a prince who has not yet become a buddha. And the lifetime of the people of his land will be eight small eons. After the twelve small eons, Flower Light Tathagata will assure the Bodhisattva Full of Firmness of his future supreme awakening, and will say to all the monks: 'This Full of Firmness Bodhisattva will become the next buddha. A tathagata, arhat, full buddha, his name will be Flowery Feet Calmly Walking. His buddha-land will be like mine.'

"Shariputra, after the extinction of this Flower Light Buddha, the

true Dharma will last for thirty-two small eons and then the merely formal Dharma will also last for thirty-two small eons."

Then the World-Honored One, wanting to restate this teaching, spoke in verse:

Shariputra, in a future life
You will become a buddha
Honored for universal wisdom,
With the name Flower Light.

You will liberate innumerable living beings,
Make offerings to innumerable buddhas,
Master bodhisattva practice, the ten powers, and other virtues
And attain the unexcelled way.

After countless eons have passed
You will have an eon named Adorned with Great Treasures,
And your world, named Free of Dirt,
Will be pure and flawless.

It will have lapis lazuli for its ground,
Roads marked off by golden cords,
And trees of the seven precious materials
Always bearing flowers and fruit.

All the bodhisattvas of that land
Will always be firm in mind and will,
Having mastered
Divine faculties and transcendental practices.

Under innumerable buddhas
They will learn well the bodhisattva way.
Such great leaders as these
Will be transformed by Flower Light Buddha.

When that buddha is still a prince,
He will abandon his realm, give up worldly glory,

And in his final incarnation
Leave home and attain the Buddha way.

Flower Light Buddha will remain in the world
For a lifetime of twelve small eons,
And the many people of his land
Will remain for eight small eons.

After that buddha's extinction
The true Dharma will remain in the world
For thirty-two small eons,
Saving living beings everywhere.

When the true Dharma
Has passed,
The merely formal Dharma
Will last for thirty-two small eons.

The Buddha's remains
Will be widely dispersed,
With gods and people everywhere
Making offerings to them.

These kinds of things will be
The actions of Flower Light Buddha.

That most holy and honored of people,
Most excellent and incomparable,
Is really you yourself.
You should rejoice and be glad.

When all of the four groups, namely monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, and the gods, dragons, satyrs, centaurs, asuras, griffins, chimeras, pythons, and others—the entire great assembly—saw that Shariputra had received his assurance of supreme awakening from the Buddha, their hearts overflowed with joy and danced in ecstasy. Each took off the outer robes they were wearing and presented them as offerings to the

Buddha. Indra Devendra and Brahma, the king of heaven, as well as others, with countless children of heaven, also made offerings to the Buddha with their wonderful heavenly robes, mandarava and great mandarava flowers from heaven, and so on. The heavenly robes they had scattered remained in the sky, whirling around and around by themselves. With hundreds of billions of kinds of heavenly musical instruments, these heavenly beings made music together in the sky. And, raining down numerous flowers from heaven, they spoke these words: "In the past at Varanasi the Buddha first turned the Dharma wheel, and now he rolls the wheel again—the unexcelled, greatest Dharma wheel!"

Then all the children of heaven, to say what they meant once again, spoke in verse:

In the past,
At Varanasi,
You turned the Dharma wheel
Of the four truths.

Making distinctions,
You taught that all things,
Being made of the five constituent aggregates,
Arise and become extinct.

Now again you turn the most wonderful,
Unexcelled, great wheel of the Dharma,
The Dharma that is extremely profound
And that few are able to believe.

From a long time ago,
We have often heard the World-Honored One teach,
But never before have we heard such a profound,
Wonderful, and supreme Dharma.

Since the World-Honored One teaches this Dharma,
We all respond with joy.
Shariputra, the great sage,
Has now received the eminent assurance.

We also, in a similar way,
 Certainly will be able to become buddhas,
 In all the worlds
 Most honored and unsurpassed.

The Buddha way
 Is difficult to understand or discuss
 But is taught by skillful means,
 In accord with what is appropriate.

May all our meritorious deeds
 In this life or previous ones,
 And the blessings from seeing the Buddha,
 All be devoted to the Buddha way.

Then Shariputra said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, I now have no more doubts or regrets. I personally have received assurance of supreme awakening from the Buddha. But these twelve hundred who are mentally free, while they were at the learning stage in the past, were always taught by the Buddha, who said: 'My Dharma can free you from birth, old age, disease, and death and enable you finally to attain nirvana.' These people, some still in training and some no longer in training, being free from views of self and about 'existence' or 'nonexistence,' thought they had attained nirvana. But now, hearing something they have never heard before from the World-Honored One, they have fallen into doubt.

"Thus, World-Honored One, I beg you to give causal explanations to the four groups so that they may be free from doubt and regret."

Then the Buddha said to Shariputra: "Did I not tell you before that when the buddhas, the world-honored ones, by using causal explanations, parables, and other kinds of expression, teach the Dharma by skillful means, it is all for the purpose of supreme awakening? All these teachings are for the purpose of transforming people into bodhisattvas. But, Shariputra, let me once again make this meaning still more clear through a parable, for intelligent people can understand through parables.

"Shariputra, suppose in a village or city in a certain kingdom there was a great elder. He had many fields, houses, and servants. His house was

large and spacious but had only one gateway. Many people lived in the house, one hundred, two hundred, or even five hundred in all. Its halls and rooms were old and decaying, its walls crumbling, its pillars rotting at the base, its beams and rafters falling down and dangerous.

"All over the house, at the same moment, fire suddenly broke out, engulfing the house in flames. The children of the elder, say ten, twenty, or even thirty, were in this house. The elder, seeing this great fire spring up on every side, was very alarmed and thought: 'Though I can get out safely through the flaming gateway, my children are in the burning house enjoying themselves engrossed in play, without awareness, knowledge, alarm, or fear. Fire is closing in on them. Pain and suffering threaten, but they do not care or become frightened, and have no thought of trying to escape.'

"Shariputra, this elder said to himself: 'My body and arms are strong. I can wrap the children in some robes and put them on a palette or bench and carry them out of the house.' But then he thought again: 'This house has only one gateway, and it is narrow and small. My children are young. Knowing nothing as yet of the danger, they are absorbed in their play. Probably they will be burned up in the fire. I must tell them why I am alarmed, and warn them that the house is burning and that they must get out quickly or be burned up in the fire.' In accord with this line of thought, he called to his children: 'Get out quickly, all of you!'

"Although the father was sympathetic and tried to persuade them with kind words, the children, absorbed in their play, were unwilling to believe him and were neither alarmed nor frightened. They didn't even think about trying to escape. What's more, they did not understand what he meant by the fire, or the house, or losing their lives. They only kept running around playing, barely glancing at their father.

"Then the elder thought: 'This house is already going up in a great blaze. If my children and I do not get out at once, we will certainly be burned alive. Now I have to find some skillful means to get my children to escape from this disaster.'

"Knowing what his children always liked, and all the various rare and attractive playthings and curiosities that would please them, the father said to them: 'The things you like to play with are rare and hard to find. If you do not get them when you can, you will be sorry later. A variety of goat carriages, deer carriages, and ox carriages are now outside the gate

for you to play with. You must get out of this burning house quickly, and I will give you whatever ones you want.'

"When they heard about the rare and attractive playthings described by their father, which were just what they wanted, all of the children, eagerly pushing and racing with each other, came scrambling out of the burning house.

"Then the elder, seeing that his children had safely escaped and were all sitting in the open square and no longer in danger, was very relieved and ecstatic with joy. Then each of the children said to their father: 'Those playthings you promised us, the goat carriages, deer carriages, and ox carriages, please give them to us now!'

"Shariputra, then the elder gave each of his children equally a great carriage. They were tall and spacious, and decorated with many jewels. They had railings around them, with bells hanging on all four sides. Each was covered with a canopy, which was also splendidly decorated with various rare and precious jewels. Around each was a string of precious stones and garlands of flowers. Inside were beautiful mats and rose-colored pillows. Pulling each of them was a handsome, very powerful white ox with a pure hide, capable of walking with a smooth gait and fast as the speed of the wind. Each also had many servants and followers to guard and take care of them.⁷

"Why was this? Because this great elder's wealth was so inexhaustible, his many storehouses so full of treasures, he thought: 'There is no limit to my wealth. I should not give inferior carriages to my children. They are all my children and I cherish them equally. I have countless numbers of these large carriages with the seven precious materials. I should give one to each of the children without discrimination. I have so many large carriages I could give one to everyone in the land without running out. Surely I can give them to my own children.'

"Then the children rode on their great carriages, having received something they had never had before and never expected to have.

"Shariputra, what do you think about this? Is that elder, in giving equally the rare treasure of great carriages to his children, guilty of falsehood or not?"

Shariputra said: "No, World-Honored One. That elder only made it possible for his children to escape the disaster of the fire and preserve their lives. He committed no falsehood. Why do I say this? By saving

their lives he has already given them a kind of plaything. How much more so when by skillful means he saved them from that burning house. World-Honored One, even if that elder had not given them one of the smallest of carriages, he would not be guilty of falsehood. Why? Because the elder, from the beginning, had intended to use some skillful means to enable his children to escape. That is the reason why he is not guilty of falsehood. How much less so, when knowing his own immeasurable wealth and wanting to benefit his children abundantly, he gave them equally great carriages!"

The Buddha said to Shariputra: "Good, good. It is just as you say, Shariputra. The Tathagata is also like this, for he is a father to the whole world. He has long ago completely gotten rid of all fear, distress, anxiety, ignorance, and blindness; has attained immeasurable insight, powers, and freedom from fear; and has gained great spiritual power and wisdom. He has fully mastered skillful means and the practice of wisdom. His great mercy and compassion never stop. He always seeks the good, whatever will enrich all beings.

"He was born into this threefold world, an old decaying burning house, in order to save living beings from the fires of birth, old age, disease, death, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, agony, folly, blindness, and the three poisons, and to teach and transform them, enabling them to reach supreme awakening.

"He sees how living beings are scorched by the fires of birth, old age, disease and death, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, and agony. Moreover, because of the five desires and the desire for wealth, they undergo all kinds of suffering. Because of attachment to desire and striving, they endure much suffering in this life and later will suffer in a purgatory, or as animals or hungry spirits. Even if they are born in a heaven, or among people, they will experience many kinds of suffering, such as the suffering of poverty and hardship, the suffering of separation from what they cherish, or the suffering from encountering what they hate.

"Absorbed in these things, living beings rejoice and amuse themselves, without knowing or seeing or being alarmed or frightened. And never being dissatisfied, they never try to liberate themselves. In the burning house of this threefold world they run about here and there, and, though they encounter great suffering, they are not disturbed by it.

"Shariputra, having seen this, the Buddha thought: 'I am the father of all living beings and should rescue them from suffering and give them the joy of immeasurable, unlimited Buddha-wisdom, so that they can find enjoyment in it.'

"Shariputra, the Tathagata also thought: 'If I used only divine powers and wisdom, setting aside skillful means, and for the sake of living beings praised only the insight, powers, and courage of the Tathagata, living beings would not be saved. Why? As long as all these beings have not escaped birth, old age, disease, death, anxiety, sorrow, suffering, and agony, and are being consumed in the burning house of the threefold world, how can they understand the wisdom of the Buddha?'

"Shariputra, even though the elder had strength in his body and arms, he did not use it, but only through carefully worked-out skillful means saved his children from the danger of the burning house and then gave each of them great carriages with precious materials. So too the Tathagata, though he has power and is free from fear, does not use these, but only by wisdom and skillful means rescues and liberates living beings from the burning house of this threefold world, teaching the three vehicles to them, the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and buddha vehicles.

"He says to them: 'None of you should be happy dwelling in the burning house of the threefold world. Do not crave its crude forms, sounds, scents, tastes, and sensations. If you become attached to them and learn to cherish them, you will be burned up by them. You need to get out of this threefold world quickly so that you can have the three vehicles, the shravaka, pratyekabuddha, and the buddha vehicles. I now make this promise to you, and it will never turn out to be false. Just apply yourselves and make the effort!'

"The Tathagata uses this skillful means to bring people to act. And then he says to them: 'You should know that the teachings of these three vehicles are praised by sages. With them, you will be free from attachments and bondage, and will not need to rely on or seek anything else. Riding in these three vehicles you will gain flawless roots, powers, awareness, ways, meditations, liberation, concentration, and so forth. And then, enjoying yourselves, you will be able to delight in infinite peace and comfort.'

"Shariputra, if there are living beings who are wise by nature and who, following the Buddha, the World-Honored One, hear the Dharma,

receive it in faith, and make a great effort, wanting to escape quickly from the threefold world and seek their own nirvana, they will be called those who take the shravaka vehicle. They are like the children who came out of the burning house to get a goat carriage.

"If there are living beings who, following the Buddha, the World-Honored One, hear the Dharma and receive it in faith, and who, seeking natural intelligence and taking solitary delight in tranquility and goodness, make a great effort to deeply understand the causes and conditions of all things, they will be called those who take the pratyekabuddha vehicle. They are like the children who came out of the burning house to get a deer carriage.

"If there are living beings who, following the Buddha, the World-Honored One, hear the Dharma and receive it in faith, who apply themselves and make a great effort, seeking comprehensive wisdom, buddha wisdom, natural wisdom, the wisdom that needs no teacher, and seeking as well a tathagata's insight, powers, and freedom from fear, and who pity and comfort innumerable living beings, enrich human and heavenly beings, and save them all, they will be called those who take the Great Vehicle. Because bodhisattvas seek this vehicle, they are called great ones. They are like the children who came out of the burning house to get an ox carriage.

"Shariputra, the elder, seeing his children safely out of the burning house and no longer threatened, thought about his immeasurable wealth and gave each of his children a great carriage. The Tathagata does the same. He is the father of all living beings. He sees innumerable thousands of millions of beings escape from the suffering of the threefold world, from the fearful and perilous path, through the gateway of teachings of the Buddha, and thus gain the joys of nirvana. Then the Tathagata thinks: 'I have Dharma storehouses of buddhas, with immeasurable, unlimited wisdom, power, and freedom from fear. All these living beings are my children. I will give the Great Vehicle to them equally, so that no one will reach extinction individually, but all gain the same extinction as the Tathagata.'

"All the living beings who escape the threefold world are given the enjoyments of buddhas—meditation, liberation, and so forth. All are of one character and one type, praised by sages and capable of producing pure, wonderful, supreme happiness.

"Shariputra, the elder at first attracted his children with the three carriages and afterward gave them just one great carriage decorated with jewels, which was the safest and most comfortable carriage. Yet the man is not guilty of lying. The Tathagata does the same. There is no falsehood in teaching three vehicles first, to attract living beings, and afterward using just the Great Vehicle to save them. Why? Because the Tathagata has Dharma storehouses of immeasurable wisdom, power, and freedom from fear. He can give all living beings the Great Vehicle Dharma. But not all are able to receive it. For this reason, Shariputra, you should understand that the buddhas use the power of skillful means, thus making distinctions within the One Buddha—Vehicle and teaching the three."

The Buddha, wanting to restate this teaching, spoke in verse:

Suppose there was an elder
Who owned a large house,
And this house was very old,
Decaying and falling apart.

Its great rooms were in dangerous condition,
Its pillars broken and rotting at the base,
Its beams and rafters leaning and askew,
Its foundation and steps in a state of collapse.

The walls and partitions
Were cracked and broken,
Their plaster crumbling away.
The thatch was in disorder and falling off.

The ends of the eaves had slipped away,
The surrounding fences
Were crooked and falling down,
And piles of rubbish were all over the place.

Five hundred people
Were staying in that house,
With kites, owls, hawks, and eagles,
Crows, magpies, pigeons, doves,

Lizards, snakes, vipers, scorpions, centipedes and millipedes,
Newts and ground beetles, weasels, ferrets, rats, and mice.
All sorts of evil creatures
Scurried about everywhere.

There were places stinking with excrement,
Overflowing with filth,
Where dung beetles and worms
Came together.

Foxes, wolves, and jackals
Bit and trampled each other
To gnaw on carcasses,
Scattering the bones and flesh.

Because of this,
Packs of dogs,
Gaunt with hunger
And shrinking from fear,

Looking everywhere for food,
Came running to snatch and grab,
Fighting and scuffling,
Snarling and barking.

That house was frightening, extraordinary.
All over the place were goblins, ogres, and satyrs,
Evil spirits who devour human flesh,
And all sorts of poisonous insects.

Evil birds and beasts
Bore offspring,
Hatched and nursed them,
Each hiding and protecting its own.

Satyrs tried to outdo one another in seizing and eating them,
And when they had eaten their fill,

And the old man also said, "This is my father."
A young father with an old child —
The whole world would not believe it.
So is it with the World-Honored One.

You attained the Way only recently.
Yet all these bodhisattvas,
Strong willed, neither timid nor weak,
Have practiced the bodhisattva way for innumerable eons.

Skilled in answering difficult questions,
They know no fear,
Are patient and resolute,
Decent, virtuous, and dignified.

Praised by the buddhas in the ten directions,
They are able to explain clearly.
They don't like being with the crowd,
But always prefer to be in meditation.

In order to pursue the Buddha way
They have lived in the space below.
Hearing this from the Buddha,
We have no doubts in this matter.

But, so that it can be understood in the future,
We beg the Buddha to preach.
If any should have doubts about or fail to believe this sutra,
They will fall into evil ways.

Please explain it for them now:
How have these innumerable bodhisattvas
In such a short time
Been taught, transformed, and led to have aspiration,
And reached the stage of never backsliding?



16. The Lifetime of the Tathagata

AT THAT TIME the Buddha said to the bodhisattvas and to all the great assembly: "Have faith in and understand, all you good sons, the truthful words of the Tathagata." Again he said to the great assembly: "Have faith in and understand the truthful words of the Tathagata." And yet again he said to the great assembly: "Have faith in and understand the truthful words of the Tathagata."

Then the great multitude of bodhisattvas, Maitreya at their head, put their palms together and said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, we beg you to explain this matter. We will believe and accept the Buddha's words." They said this three times, repeating the words: "We beg you to explain this matter. We will believe and accept the Buddha's words."

Then the World-Honored One, knowing that the bodhisattvas' request, now repeated three times, would not be stopped, said to them: "You should all listen carefully to hear about the Tathagata's secret and divine powers. In all the worlds, the humans, heavenly beings, and asuras think that the present Shakyamuni Buddha left the palace of the Shakya clan, sat at the place of the Way not far from the city of Gaya, and attained supreme awakening. But, my good sons, in fact there have been innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of myriads of eons since I became a buddha.

"Suppose someone were to take five hundred thousand billions of myriads of countless three-thousand great thousandfold worlds and grind them into dust. Then, after going east through five hundred thousand billions of myriads of innumerable lands, one of those specks of dust was deposited. And suppose he continued eastward until he had

used up all those specks. What do you think, my good sons? Is it possible to imagine or calculate the number of all those worlds?"

Maitreya Bodhisattva and the others said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, those worlds are innumerable, unlimited, beyond the reach of calculation and beyond the reach of thought. Not even all the shravakas and prayekabuddhas, with their flawless wisdom, would be able to imagine or understand such numbers. And we too, though we are at the stage of non-regression, cannot comprehend these matters. World-Honored One, such worlds would be innumerable and unlimited."

Then the Buddha said to all those bodhisattva great ones: "Good sons, now I will speak to you clearly. Suppose you took all those worlds, where a speck of dust has been deposited and where none has been deposited, and reduced them to dust. Let one speck be equal to an eon. The time that has passed since I became a buddha exceeds these by hundreds of thousands of billions of myriads of countless eons. Since that time I have constantly been in this world—preaching, teaching, and transforming. And in other places, in hundreds of thousands of billions of myriads of countless other lands, I have led and enriched living beings.

"Good sons, during this time I have talked about the Buddha Burning Light and others, and have told of their entering nirvana. In all of this I used skillful means to analyze things.

"Good sons, whenever living beings come to me, I use my Buddha's eyes to observe whether the faculties of their faith and so on are keen or dull. Accordingly, I appear in various places under different names and speak of the length of time during which my teachings will be effective. Sometimes I tell them I will enter nirvana. In various skillful ways, I teach the profound and wonderful Dharma, leading the living to rejoice.

"Good sons, the Tathagata sees that among the living there are those who prefer lesser teachings, and are of little virtue and heavy with filth. For these people I teach about how as a young man I left home and attained supreme awakening. But in reality the time since I became a buddha is very long, as I have said. It is just that I use skillful means to teach and transform living beings, so that they may enter the way of the Buddha.

"Good sons, all the sutras preached by the Tathagata are for the purpose of saving all the living. Sometimes I speak of myself, sometimes of

others; sometimes I appear as myself, sometimes as someone else; sometimes I appear in my own actions, sometimes in the actions of others; but all that I say is true and not empty.

"Why is this? The Tathagata has insight into the character of the threefold world as it really is. For him there is no birth or death, neither retreat from nor emergence into the world. Nor is there any existing in the world and entering extinction following that. Nothing is simply real, nothing simply empty, nothing as it seems, nothing the opposite. The threefold world is not as we experience it. The Tathagata sees all such things clearly, without mistake. "Because living beings have different natures, different desires, different activities, and different assumptions and ways of analyzing things, and because I wanted to lead them to put down roots of goodness, I have used a variety of causal explanations, parables, and other kinds of expression to share various teachings. I have never for a moment neglected the Buddha's work.

"Thus, since I became Buddha a very long time has passed, a lifetime of innumerable countless eons of constantly living here and never entering extinction. Good sons, from the beginning I have practiced the bodhisattva way, and that life is not yet finished, but will be twice as long as what has already passed. Even now, though I will not actually enter extinction, I announce that I will adopt the way of extinction. By using such skillful means, the Tathagata teaches and transforms living beings.

"Why is this? If the Buddha lives for a long time in this world, people of little virtue will not plant roots of goodness, and those who are poor and of humble origins will become attached to the five desires and be caught in a net of assumptions and false views. If they see that the Tathagata is always alive and never extinct, they will become arrogant and selfish or discouraged and neglectful. Unable to realize how difficult it is to meet him, they will not have a respectful attitude toward him.

"Therefore the Tathagata teaches by using skillful means, saying: 'Monks, you should know that it is difficult to meet a buddha who has come into the world.' Why is this? In the course of countless hundreds of thousands of billions of eons, some people of little virtue may see a buddha while others may never see one. For this reason I say this: 'Monks, it is difficult to see a tathagata.' Living beings, hearing such words, surely will realize that it is difficult to meet a buddha. They will yearn for one. Then they will cultivate roots of goodness. This is why the

Tathagata announces his extinction even though he does not in reality become extinct.

"Good sons, the teachings of all the buddha-tathagatas are all like this. They are for the sake of liberating all the living. They are true and not empty.

"Suppose, for instance, there is a fine physician who is wise and clever and knows how to make medicines for curing all sorts of disease. He has many sons—say, ten, twenty, even a hundred. To take care of some business he goes off to a distant land. After he leaves, his children drink some poisonous drugs, which drives them into deliriums of agony and leaves them writhing on the ground.

"At this point their father comes back home to find the sons have drunk the poison. Some have lost their minds, others have not. Seeing their father in the distance, they are all very happy. Kneeling to greet him, they say: 'How good it is that you have returned safely! Foolishly we have taken some poison by mistake. Please heal us and give us back our lives.'

"The father sees his children in such suffering and agony and, following various formulas, looks for good medicinal herbs, perfect in color, fragrance, and flavor. Then he pounds, sifts, and mixes them and gives them to his children, telling them: 'This excellent medicine is perfect in color, fragrance, and flavor. Take it and you will quickly be rid of your suffering and agony, and be free from the illness.'

"Those children who have not lost their minds, seeing this excellent medicine of good color and fragrance, take it immediately and are completely cured of their illness. The others, who have lost their minds, are also happy to see their father return and ask him to heal their illness. Yet when the medicine is given to them, they refuse to take it. Why? Because the poison has penetrated deeply into them and they have lost their minds. Even though this medicine has good color and fragrance, they think it is no good.

"The father thinks to himself: 'These poor children. Because of the poison in them, their minds are completely unbalanced. Though they are glad to see me and ask to be healed, they refuse to take this good medicine. Now I have to use some skillful means to get them to take this medicine.' Then he says to them: 'You should know that I am now worn

out with old age, and the time for me to die has now arrived. I will leave this excellent medicine here. You should take it and not worry that it will not make you better.' After instructing them in this way, he leaves again for another land, from which he sends back a messenger to inform them: 'Your father is dead.'

"Now, when those children hear that their father has died and left them behind, they become very distressed and think to themselves: 'If our father were alive he would have been kind to us, and would have saved us. But now he has abandoned us and died in a distant land. We think of ourselves as orphans, with no one to rely on.'

"This continuous grief brings them to their senses. They recognize that the medicine is excellent in color, fragrance, and flavor, and they take it and are fully healed of the poison. The father, hearing that the children have all recovered, returns home immediately, so that they all see him again.

"Good sons, what do you think? Can anyone say that this fine physician is lying?"

"No, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said: "I too am like this. Since I became Buddha, innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of myriads of countless eons have passed. For the sake of living beings, I use the power of skillful means and say that I will take the way of extinction. Yet, taking the circumstances into account, no one can accuse me of being guilty of lying."

At that time the World-Honored One, wanting to restate what he meant, spoke in verse:

Since I became a buddha,
Innumerable hundreds of thousands
Of billions of countless
Numbers of eons have passed.

For countless eons I have taught the Dharma ceaselessly,
Teaching and transforming
Innumerable hundreds of millions of living beings,
Enabling them to enter the Buddha way.

In order to liberate the living,
 As a skillful means I appear to enter nirvana.
 Yet truly I am not extinct.
 I am always here teaching the Dharma.
 I am always here.
 But due to my divine powers
 Perverse living beings fail to see me
 Even though I am close.
 When the many see me as extinct
 They make offerings to my remains everywhere.
 All long for me,
 Adore and yearn for me.

And when the living have become faithful,
 Honest and upright and gentle,
 And wholeheartedly want to see the Buddha,
 Even at the cost of their own lives,
 Then, together with the assembly of monks
 I appear on Holy Eagle Peak.

Then I tell all the living
 That I am always here, not extinct.
 Yet by the power of skillful means
 I reveal both extinction and non-extinction.

If there are living beings in other lands
 Who are reverent and sincere in their faith,
 Then among them as well
 I will teach the unexcelled Dharma.

Not hearing about this,
 You think only that I am extinct.

When I look at living beings,
 I see them drowning in a sea of suffering.

So I do not show myself,
 Making them adore and yearn for me
 Until they are full of longing.
 Then I appear to teach the Dharma for them.

Such are my divine powers.
 Throughout countless eons,
 I have always lived on Holy Eagle Peak
 And in various other places.

When the living witness the end of an eon,
 When everything is consumed in a great fire,
 This land of mine remains safe and tranquil,
 Always filled with human and heavenly beings.

Its gardens and groves, halls and pavilions,
 Are adorned with all kinds of gems.
 Jeweled trees are full of flowers and fruit,
 And living beings freely enjoy themselves.

Gods beat on heavenly drums,
 Always making various kinds of music.
 Mandarava blossoms rain down
 And are scattered over the Buddha and the great assembly.

My Pure Land will never be destroyed,
 Yet the multitude see it as being consumed in fire,
 Everywhere filled with grief and fear
 And all kinds of suffering.

Sinful living beings,
 Because of the evil they have done in the past
 Throughout countless eons,
 Fail to hear the names of the three treasures.

But those who do good,
Who are gentle and honest,
Will all see me here
Teaching the Dharma.

At times for this multitude
I teach that the Buddha's life is immeasurable,
And to those who see the Buddha only after a long time
I teach that it is difficult to meet a buddha.

The power of my wisdom is such
That its light shines immeasurably,
I gained this life of countless eons
From long-cultivated practice.

You who are wise
Should have no doubt about this.
You should reject doubt forever,
For the Buddha's words are true, not false.

Like the physician who uses skillful means
To cure his deranged children,
Though actually alive, he announces his death,
Yet cannot be charged with lying.

I am the father of this world,
Healing all who suffer or are sick.
For the sake of ordinary, perverse people,
Though truly alive, I say I am extinct.

If people see me all the time,
They become arrogant and selfish,
Indulge in the five desires without restraint,
And fall into evil paths.

I always know which living beings
Practice the Way and which do not.

In accord with what they need to be saved,
I share various teachings for them.

I am always thinking:
"How can I lead all the living
To enter the unexcelled way
And quickly perfect their Buddha-bodies?"



21. Divine Powers of the Tathagata

AT THAT TIME all the bodhisattvas, the great ones, who had sprung up from the earth, equal in number to the specks of dust of a thousand worlds, put their palms together in complete attention before the Buddha, reverently looked up at his face, and said to him: "World-Honored One, after the extinction of the Buddha, in whatever lands the World-Honored One is embodied, wherever he has become extinct, we will reach this sutra everywhere. Why? Because we too want to gain this true and pure, great Dharma, to embrace, read and recite, explain, copy, and make offerings to it."

Then the World-Honored One revealed his great divine powers before Manjushri and the other innumerable hundreds of thousands of billions of bodhisattvas, the great ones, who had lived in this world for a long time, as well as monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen, gods, dragons, sarys, centaurs, asuras, griffins, chimeras, pythons, humans and nonhumans, and so on. Before all these beings, he extended his long and broad tongue until it reached up to the Brahma world, while light of immeasurable and innumerable colors radiated from every pore, illuminating everything everywhere throughout the worlds in all directions. Under all the jeweled trees, the buddhas, seated on lion seats, did the same thing, extending their long, broad tongues and radiating immeasurable light.

While Shakyamuni Buddha and all the other buddhas under the jeweled trees were displaying their divine powers, hundreds of thousands of years went by. After that they drew back their tongues, coughed

simultaneously, and snapped their fingers in unison. These two sounds went through all the buddha worlds in all directions, and all these lands trembled and shook in the six ways.

Thanks to the divine powers of the Buddha, all the living beings in these worlds, the gods, dragons, satyrs, centaurs, asuras, griffins, chimeras, pythons, humans and nonhumans, and others, saw in this world the innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of buddhas seated on the lion seats under all the jeweled trees, and they saw Shakyamuni Buddha together with Abundant Treasures Tathagata sitting on a lion seat in the treasure stupa. And they also saw the innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of bodhisattvas, the great ones, and the four groups reverently surrounding Shakyamuni Buddha. Having seen this, they were all filled with great joy, having obtained something they had never had before.

At the same time, heavenly beings in the sky sang with loud voices: "Beyond these innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of countless worlds, there is a land named Saha, and in it there is a buddha named Shakyamuni. For the sake of all bodhisattvas, the great ones, he now teaches the Great Vehicle sutra called the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Dharma, the Dharma by which bodhisattvas are taught and which buddhas watch over and keep in mind. You should rejoice from the depths of your hearts. Worship him and make offerings to Shakyamuni Buddha!"

All those living beings, having heard the voices in the sky, put their palms together facing this world and exclaimed: "Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha! Praise to Shakyamuni Buddha!"

Then they took various flowers, incense, garlands, banners, and canopies, as well as personal ornaments, gems, and other wonderful things, and together from afar scattered them in the direction of this world. The things scattered from every direction came like gathering clouds, which changed into a jeweled canopy covering the whole area above the buddhas. Then passage between all the worlds in all directions became unobstructed, uniting them as one buddha-land.

At that time the Buddha spoke to Superior Practice and the multitude of other bodhisattvas: "The divine powers of buddhas, as you have seen, are innumerable, unlimited, inconceivable. Even if for the sake of entrusting this sutra to others I were to use these divine powers to declare its

blessings for innumerable, unlimited hundreds of thousands of billions of countless eons, I would be unable to exhaust them. In brief, all the teachings of the Tathagata, all the unhindered, divine powers of the Tathagata, the hidden core of the whole storehouse of the Tathagata, and all the profound matters of the Tathagata are proclaimed, demonstrated, revealed, and preached in this sutra.

"Therefore, after the extinction of the Tathagata, you should all wholeheartedly embrace, read and recite, explain and copy, and practice it as you have been taught. In any land, wherever anyone accepts and embraces, reads and recites, explains and copies, and practices it as taught, or wherever a volume of the sutra is kept, whether in a garden, or in a woods, or under a tree, or in a monk's cell or a layman's house, or in a palace, or in a mountain valley or an open field, in all these places you should put up a stupa and make offerings. Why? You should understand that all such places are places of the Way. They are where the buddhas attain supreme awakening; they are where the buddhas turn the Dharma wheel; they are where the buddhas reach complete nirvana."

At that time the World-Honored One, wanting to proclaim this teaching once again, spoke in verse:

The buddhas, the saviors of the world,
Having great divine faculties,
Reveal their innumerable divine powers
In order to bring joy to living beings.

Their tongues reach to the Brahma heaven.
Their bodies emit countless rays of light.
For those who seek the Buddha way
They reveal such rare things.

The sounds of the buddhas coughing
And the snapping of their fingers
Are heard throughout the lands in all directions,
And those lands shake in six ways.

Because there will be some who embrace this sutra
After the Buddha's extinction,

The buddhas rejoice
And display innumerable divine powers.

Because the buddhas want to entrust this sutra,
Those who embrace it are praised.
Even if it is for innumerable eons,
Such praise cannot be exhausted.

The blessings received by such a person
Will be unlimited and without end,
Like the empty space in every direction,
For which no one can find a limit.

One who can embrace this sutra
Is one who has already seen me,
As well as Abundant Treasures Buddha
And all the buddhas embodying me.

Such a one also sees me today
Teaching and transforming bodhisattvas.

Anyone who can embrace this sutra
Will cause me and my embodiments,
And the already extinct Abundant Treasures Buddha,
All to rejoice.

The buddhas present in all directions,
And those of the past and the future,
Will also be seen, and be given offerings,
And led to rejoice by such a person.

Anyone who embraces this sutra
Before long will surely gain as well
The hidden core of the Dharma
Attained by the buddhas in their places of the Way.

One who embraces this sutra
Will delight in endlessly teaching
Meanings of what has been taught,
With their names and expressions,
Like a wind in the sky, which never meets obstacles.

After the extinction of the Tathagata,
Anyone who knows the sutras preached by the Buddha,
Their causes and conditions and proper order,
Will teach them truthfully in accord with their true meaning.

Just as the light of the sun and the moon
Can dispel darkness,
Such a person, working in the world,
Can dispel the gloom of living beings,

Leading innumerable bodhisattvas
Finally to dwell in the one vehicle.

Therefore, one who has wisdom,
Hearing of the blessings to be gained,
After my extinction
Should embrace this sutra.

Such a person will be determined to follow,
Without doubts, the Buddha way.

Wisdom of Buddha

The Saṃdhinirmocana Sūtra

Translated by
John Powers





ཡོན་ཏན་འབྱུང་གནས་ཀྱི་ལུ་སྟོན་ལཱ་པ།

The Questions of
Guṇākara

Chapter Six

Then Bodhisattva Guṇākara¹ questioned the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, when you say ‘Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena; Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena,’ Bhagavan, just how are Bodhisattvas wise with respect to the character of phenomena? For what reason does the Tathāgata designate a Bodhisattva as being wise with respect to the character of phenomena?”

The Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Guṇākara: “Guṇākara, you are involved in [asking] this in order to benefit many beings, to bring happiness to many beings, out of sympathy for the world, and for the sake of the welfare, benefit, and happiness of many beings, including gods and humans. Your intention in questioning the Tathāgata about this subject is good! It is good! Therefore, Guṇākara, listen well and I will describe for you how [Bodhisattvas] are wise with respect to the character of phenomena.

“Guṇākara, there are three characteristics of phenomena. What are these three? They are the imputational character, the other-dependent character, and the thoroughly established character.

“Guṇākara, what is the imputational character of phenomena?² It is that which is imputed as a name or symbol in terms of the own-being or attributes of phenomena in order to subsequently designate any convention whatsoever.

“Guṇākara, what is the other-dependent character of phenomena? It is simply the dependent origination of phenomena. It is like this: Because this exists, that arises; because this is produced, that is produced. It ranges from: ‘Due to the condition of ignorance, compositional factors [arise],’ up to: ‘In this way, the whole great assemblage of suffering arises.’³

“Guṇākara, what is the thoroughly established character of phenomena? It is the suchness of phenomena. Through diligence and through proper mental application, Bodhisattvas establish realization and cultivate realization of [the thoroughly established character]. Thus it is what establishes [all the stages] up to unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment.⁴

“Guṇākara, for example, the imputational character should be viewed as being like the defects of clouded vision⁵ in the eyes of a person with clouded vision. Guṇākara, for example, the other-dependent character should be viewed as being like the appearance of the manifestations of clouded vision in that very [person], manifestations which appear as a net of hairs, or as insects, or as sesame seeds; or as a blue manifestation, or a yellow manifestation, or a red manifestation, or a white manifestation.

“Guṇākara, for example, the thoroughly established character should be viewed as being like the unerring objective reference, the natural objective reference of the eyes when that person’s eyes have become pure and free from the defects of clouded vision.

“Guṇākara, for example, when a very clear crystal comes in contact with the color blue, it then appears as a precious gem, such as a sapphire or a mahānīla.⁶ Further, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as a sapphire or a mahānīla, sentient beings are deluded.

“When it comes in contact with the color red, it then appears as a precious gem such as a ruby and, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as a ruby, sentient beings are deluded. When it comes in contact with the color green, it then appears as a precious gem such as an emerald and, further, by mistaking it for a precious gem such as an emerald, sentient beings are deluded. When it comes in contact with the color gold, it then appears as gold and, further, by mistaking it for gold, sentient beings are deluded.

“Guṇākara, for example, you should see that in the same way as a very clear crystal comes in contact with a color, the other-dependent character comes in contact with the predispositions for conventional designations that are the imputational character. For example, in the same way as a very clear crystal is mistaken for a precious substance such as a sapphire, a mahānīla, a ruby, an emerald, or gold, see how the other-dependent character is apprehended as the imputational character.

“Guṇākara, for example, you should see that the other-dependent nature is like that of very clear crystal. For example, a clear crystal is not thoroughly established in permanent,

permanent time or in everlasting, everlasting time as having the character of a precious substance like a sapphire, a mahānīla, a ruby, an emerald, or gold, and is without the natures [of such things].

“In the same way, you should see that since the other-dependent character is not thoroughly established in permanent, permanent time, or in everlasting, everlasting time as being the imputational character, and is without its nature, it is the thoroughly established character.

“Guṇākara, in dependence upon names that are connected with signs, the imputational character is known. In dependence upon strongly adhering to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character, the other-dependent character is known. In dependence upon absence of strong adherence to the other-dependent character as being the imputational character, the thoroughly established character is known.⁷

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the imputational character as it really is with respect to the other-dependent character of phenomena, then they know characterless phenomena as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the other-dependent character as it really is, then they know the phenomena of afflicted character as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know the thoroughly established character as it really is, then they know the phenomena of purified character as they really are.

“Guṇākara, when Bodhisattvas know characterless phenomena as they really are with respect to the other-dependent character, then they completely abandon phenomena of afflicted character. When they have completely abandoned phenomena of afflicted character, they realize phenomena of purified character.

“Therefore, Guṇākara, Bodhisattvas know the imputational character of phenomena, the other-dependent character, and the thoroughly established character of phenomena as they really are. Once they know characterlessness, the thoroughly afflicted character, and the purified character as they really are, then they know characterless phenomena as they really are. They completely abandon the phenomena of afflicted character, and when they have completely abandoned phenomena of afflicted character, then they realize phenomena of purified character.

“This is how Bodhisattvas are wise with respect to the character of phenomena. When the Tathāgata designates Bodhisattvas as being wise with respect to the character of phenomena, he designates them as such for this very reason.”

Then the Bhagavan spoke these verses:

“When one knows characterless phenomena,
one abandons phenomena of afflicted character.
When one abandons phenomena of afflicted character,
one attains phenomena of pure character.

“Heedless beings, overcome by faults and lazy,
do not consider the faults of compounded phenomena.
Weak regarding stable and fluctuating phenomena,
they are objects of compassion.”

This completes the sixth chapter of Guṇākara.





།དོན་དམ་ཡང་དག་འཕགས་ཀྱི་ལུ་སྟོ་བདུན་པ།

The Questions of
Paramārthasamudgata

Chapter Seven

Then Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata¹ questioned the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, when I was in seclusion there arose this thought: ‘The Bhagavan has spoken in many ways of the own-character of the aggregates and further spoken of their character of production, their character of disintegration, and their abandonment and realization. Just as he has spoken of the aggregates, he has also spoken of the sense spheres, dependent origination, and the sustenances.

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the [own-] character of the [four] truths and further spoken of the realization [of suffering], abandonment [of the source of suffering], actualization [of the cessation of suffering], and meditative cultivation [of the path].

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the constituents and has further spoken of the various constituents, the manifold constituents, and of their abandonment and realization.

“The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the mindful establishments and further spoken of their discordances and antidotes, their meditative cultivation, the production of [the mindful establishments] that have not yet arisen, the abiding of those that have arisen, their non-forgetting, continued arising, increasing, and extending.

“Just as he spoke of the mindful establishments, he has also spoken of the correct abandonings, the bases of magical

abilities, the powers, the forces, and the branches of enlightenment. The Bhagavan has also spoken in many ways of the own-character of the eight branches of the path of the Āryas and further spoken of their discordances and antidotes, their meditative cultivation, the production of those that have not yet arisen, the abiding of those that have arisen, their non-forgetting, continued arising, increasing, and extending.

“The Bhagavan has also said that all phenomena lack own-being, that all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’

“Then I thought, ‘Of what was the Bhagavan thinking when he said, “All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?”’

“Why was the Bhagavan thinking, “All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?”’ I ask the Bhagavan the meaning of this.”²

The Bhagavan replied to Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata: “Paramārthasamudgata, your thought, virtuously arisen, is good! It is good! Paramārthasamudgata, you are involved [in asking] this in order to benefit many beings, to bring happiness to many beings, out of sympathy for the world, and for the sake of the welfare, benefit, and happiness of beings,

including gods and humans. Your intention in questioning the Tathāgata about this subject is good! Therefore, Paramārthasamudgata, listen well and I will explain to you what I was thinking when I said: 'All phenomena lack an own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of the three types of lack of own-being of phenomena—the lack of own-being in terms of character, the lack of own-being in terms of production, and an ultimate lack of own-being—I taught, 'All phenomena lack own-being.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena? It is the imputational character. Why is this? The [imputational character] is a character posited as names and symbols, but it does not subsist by way of its own character. Therefore, it is the 'lack of own-being in terms of character'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena? It is the other-dependent character of phenomena. Why is this? The [other-dependent character] arises through the force of other conditions and not by itself. Therefore, it is the 'lack of own-being in terms of production'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, what is an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena? Phenomena that are dependently

originated lack an own-being due to the lack of own-being in terms of production. They also lack own-being due to an ultimate lack of own-being. Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, I teach that whatever is an object of observation for purification of phenomena is the ultimate.³ Since the other-dependent character is not an object of observation for purification, it is an 'ultimate lack of own-being'.

"Moreover, Paramārthasamudgata, the thoroughly established character of phenomena is also 'an ultimate lack of own-being'. Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, that which is the 'selflessness of phenomena' of phenomena is known as their 'lack of own-being'. That is the ultimate. Since the ultimate is distinguished as the lack of own-being of all phenomena, it is an 'ultimate lack of own-being'.

"Paramārthasamudgata, for example, you should view lack of own-being in terms of character as being like a sky-flower.⁴ For example, Paramārthasamudgata, you should also view the lack of own-being in terms of production as being like a magical apparition.

"The ultimate lack of own-being should be viewed as being something other than those [first two characters]. For example, Paramārthasamudgata, just as [space] is distinguished by being just the lack of own-being of forms in space and as pervading everywhere, in the same way the ultimate lack of

own-being is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena and should be viewed as all-pervasive and unitary.

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of those three types of lack of own-being, I taught, ‘All phenomena lack own-being.’

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of lack of own-being in terms of character, I taught: ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’ Why is this?

“Paramārthasamudgata, that which does not exist by way of its own character is not produced. That which is not produced does not cease. That which is not produced and does not cease is quiescent from the start. That which is quiescent from the start is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. That which is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa does not have even the slightest remainder that could pass beyond sorrow. Therefore, thinking of lack of own-being in terms of character, I taught, ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’⁵

“Moreover, Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of an ultimate lack of own-being that is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, I taught: ‘All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’ Why is this?

“An ultimate lack of own-being, distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, abides solely in permanent,

permanent time and everlasting, everlasting time. That uncompounded reality of phenomena is free from all afflictions. That which is uncompounded, which abides in permanent, permanent time and everlasting, everlasting time due to being this very reality, is uncompounded. Therefore, it is unproduced and unceasing. Because it is free from all afflictions, it is quiescent from the start and is naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Therefore, thinking of an ultimate lack of own-being that is distinguished by being the selflessness of phenomena, I taught, 'All phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.'

"Paramārthasamudgata, I do not designate the three types of lack of own-being because sentient beings in the realms of sentient beings view the own-being of the imputational as distinct [from the other-dependent and the thoroughly established character] in terms of own-being; or because they view the other-dependent and the thoroughly established as distinct in terms of own-being. Superimposing the own-being of the imputational onto the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established, sentient beings subsequently attribute conventions of the character of the own-being of the imputational to the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established.

"To the extent that they subsequently attribute such conventions, their minds are infused with conventional designations. Thereafter, because of being bound to conventional

designations or due to predispositions toward conventional designations, they strongly adhere to the character of the own-being of the imputational as the own-being of the other-dependent and the thoroughly established.

“To the extent that they strongly adhere [to this], they strongly adhere to the own-being of the imputational as the own-being of the other-dependent. Due to these causes and conditions, in the future [this view of] the own-being of the other-dependent proliferates. Based on this, the afflictive afflictions give rise to further afflictions.

“The afflictions of actions and the afflictions of birth give rise to further afflictions. For a long time sentient beings will wander, transmigrating among hell beings, or animals, or hungry ghosts, or gods, or asuras, or humans. They will not pass beyond cyclic existence.

“Paramārthasamudgata, I initially teach doctrines starting with the lack of own-being in terms of production to those beings who have not generated roots of virtue, who have not purified obstructions, who have not ripened their continuums, who do not have much conviction, and who have not completed the accumulations of merit and wisdom. When they hear those doctrines, they understand dependently originated compounded phenomena as being impermanent. They know them to be phenomena that are unstable, unworthy of confidence, and changeable, whereupon they develop aversion and antipathy toward all compounded phenomena.

“Having developed aversion and antipathy, they turn away from wrong-doing. They do not commit any wrong-doing, and they adhere to virtue. Because of adhering to virtue, they generate roots of virtue that were not previously generated. They also purify obscurations that were not previously purified. They also ripen their continuums, which were not previously ripened. On that basis, they have great conviction, and they complete the accumulations of merit and wisdom.

“In that way they complete everything from the generation of roots of virtue up to the accumulation of merit and wisdom. However, because they do not understand, as they are, the two aspects pertaining to lack of own-being in terms of production—lack of own-being in terms of character and ultimate lack of own-being—they do not become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena. They do not become separated from attachment. They do not become fully liberated. They do not become fully liberated from the afflictive afflictions nor fully liberated from the afflictions of actions nor fully liberated from the afflictions of birth.

“The Tathāgatha further teaches them doctrines beginning with lack of own-being in terms of character and ultimate lack of own-being. Thus they become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena, separated from attachment, and liberated; they pass beyond the afflictive afflictions, pass beyond the afflictions of actions, and pass beyond the afflictions of birth.

“Hearing these doctrines, they do not strongly adhere to the own-being of the other-dependent as being of the character of the own-being of the imputational. Further, they become confident that the lack of own-being in terms of production does not exist as an ultimate own-being in the sense that it is just an absence of own-being in terms of character with respect to those [phenomena]. They fully distinguish this. They realize it as it is and, in this way, their understanding is not infused with conventional designations. Thereafter, because they are not bound to conventional designations and because their understanding is free from predispositions toward conventions, in this lifetime they produce the ability to understand the other-dependent character. In future lives they achieve cessation through cutting off the continuum.

“Based on this, they become wholly averse toward all compounded phenomena, free from attachment, and liberated. They become fully liberated from the afflictive afflictions, the afflictions of actions, and the afflictions of birth.

“Paramārthasamudgata, through just this path and through just this attainment, even sentient beings of the Śrāvaka lineage attain the establishment and abiding of unsurpassed nirvāṇa. Through just this path and through just this attainment, sentient beings of the Pratyekabuddha lineage and sentient beings of the Tathāgata lineage also attain the establishment and abiding of unsurpassed nirvāṇa. Thus, there is a

single path of purification for Śrāvakas, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas, and there is a single purification. There is no other. Thinking of that, therefore, I have taught that there is a single vehicle. Yet in the realms of sentient beings, there are various types of sentient beings, such as those who are naturally of weak faculties, or naturally of middling faculties, or naturally of sharp faculties.

“Paramārthasamudgata, even if all the Buddhas were to attempt to establish someone having the Śrāvaka lineage, who proceeds solely towards peacefulness, in the heart of enlightenment, that person would be unable to attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment.⁶ Why is this? Due to extremely limited compassion and great fear of suffering, that one is simply by nature of an inferior lineage. Just as his compassion is extremely limited, so he turns away from the welfare of sentient beings. Just as he is extremely afraid of suffering, so he turns away from all the activities of compounded phenomena.

“I do not describe those who turn away from the welfare of sentient beings and who turn away from all the activities of compounded existence as unsurpassably, perfectly enlightened. They are ‘those who seek peace for themselves alone’.

“[However] I teach that Śrāvakas who evolve with respect to enlightenment are a type of Bodhisattva.⁷ It is like this: Having become liberated from the afflictive obstructions, they

liberate their minds from the obstructions to omniscience when they are encouraged by the Tathāgatas. Thus, the Tathāgata designates those who initially work for their own benefit and are freed from the afflictive obstructions as being of the Śrāvaka lineage.⁸

“Paramārthasamudgata, it is like this: My disciplinary doctrine is explained well, is complete, and is taught with a very pure thought. With respect to this well-taught doctrine, degrees of conviction appear among sentient beings.⁹

“Paramārthasamudgata, thinking of just these three types of lack of own-being, through the teachings that are Sūtras of interpretable meaning, the Tathāgata taught such doctrines as: ‘All phenomena lack own-being; all phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.’

“When those sentient beings who have generated great roots of virtue, purified the obstructions, ripened their continuums, who have great conviction and have completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom¹⁰ hear those doctrines, they understand the teaching just as it is in accordance with my thought.¹¹ They further understand those doctrines to be doctrine. Through wisdom they also realize the meaning just as it is. Through cultivating realization of that [meaning], they rapidly attain the final state. Regarding [these doctrines],

they develop faith, [thinking], 'Ah! The Bhagavan is completely and perfectly enlightened. He is completely and perfectly enlightened with respect to all phenomena.'

"When sentient beings who have not generated great roots of virtue, have not purified the obstructions, have not ripened their continuums, do not have great conviction, and have not completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are honest and have an honest nature, who are unable to remove conceptuality, who are not fixated on holding their own view to be supreme, [when such beings] hear those doctrines, they do not understand the teaching just as it is in accordance with my thought.

"Still, [these beings] develop conviction and also attain faith in these doctrines. They are convinced that: 'These Sūtras taught by the Tathāgata are profound, brilliantly profound, are endowed with emptiness, are difficult to perceive, difficult to understand, unanalyzable, not subject to dispute, and are known by the wise capable of fine discernment and by the astute.'

"They think: 'We do not understand the meaning of those Sūtras or the meaning of those teachings.' They think: 'The enlightenment of the Buddha is profound. The reality of phenomena is also profound. The Tathāgata alone knows; we do not understand. The doctrinal teaching of Tathāgatas influences sentient beings according to their diverse beliefs. The Tathāgatas' wisdom and perception are infinite, whereas our

understanding and perception are like mere cowprints.' With reverence toward these Sūtras, they copy the letters. Having copied them, they also memorize them, read them, propagate them, venerate them, receive their oral transmission, recite them, and repeat them to others. However, because they do not understand these profound teachings in accordance with my thought, they are unable to apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. Based on that, they progress due to the accumulation of merit; they also progress due to the accumulation of wisdom. They also progressively ripen their continuums which were not previously ripened.

"When other sentient beings who have not completed [the stages of the path] up to the great accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are not honest and do not have an honest nature, who are able to remove conceptuality, but who are fixated on holding their own view to be supreme¹² hear these doctrines, they do not understand this profound explanation just as it is, in accordance with my thought.

"Although they believe in the doctrine, they strongly adhere just to the literal meaning of the doctrine, [thinking], 'All phenomena just lack own-being; all phenomena are just unproduced, just unceasing, just quiescent from the start, just naturally in a state of nirvāṇa.' Based on this, they adopt the view that all phenomena do not exist and that character does not exist.¹³ Having adopted the view of non-existence and the

view that character does not exist, they also deprecate everything through [deprecating] all characters. Because they deprecate the imputational character of phenomena, they also deprecate the other-dependent character of phenomena and the thoroughly established character.

“Why is this? Paramārthasamudgata, if the other-dependent and thoroughly established characters exist, then the imputational character is also understood.¹⁴ However, those who see the other-dependent character and the thoroughly established character as non-existent also deprecate the imputational character. Therefore, they also ‘deprecate all three types of character’. They perceive my doctrine to be doctrine, but they perceive what is not the meaning to be the meaning.

“Those who perceive my doctrine to be doctrine but perceive what is not the meaning to be the meaning also understand the doctrine to be doctrine. They also understand what is not the meaning to be the meaning. Due to belief in the doctrine, they progress by means of virtuous qualities. But, due to strongly adhering to what is not the meaning, they fall away from wisdom. When they fall away from wisdom, they also fall away from vast and immeasurable virtuous qualities.

“Others, having heard from them that the doctrine is the doctrine, but that what is not the meaning is the meaning, delight in that view. Because they conceive the doctrine to be doctrine and conceive what is not the meaning to be the

meaning, they strongly adhere to doctrine as being doctrine and to what is not the meaning as being the meaning. Know that based on this they also fall away from virtuous qualities.

“When people who do not delight in such views hear from others that phenomena lack an own-being and hear that phenomena are unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, they become fearful and develop misgivings, saying, ‘This is not the word of the Buddha. This is a statement from Māra!’ Thinking in this way they also deprecate these Sūtras. They reject them, condemn them, and speak badly of them.

“Based on this, they earn great misfortune, and they also meet with great karmic obstructions. Also based on this, since they cause many beings to meet with great obstructions, they deceive them. I state that those who view all characters as non-existent and who teach what is not the meaning to be the meaning possess great karmic obstructions.

“Paramārthasamudgata, when those sentient beings who have not produced roots of virtue, have not purified the obstructions, have not ripened their continuums, do not have great conviction, have not completed the accumulations of merit and wisdom, who are not honest and do not have an honest nature, and who are unable to remove conceptuality and who are fixated on holding their own view to be supreme hear these doctrines, they do not understand the teaching

just as it is in accordance with my thought. They also do not develop belief in this doctrine; they perceive the doctrine as non-doctrine and perceive the meaning to be what is not the meaning. Strongly adhering to the doctrine as non-doctrine and to the meaning as not being the meaning, they say: 'This is not the word of the Buddha. This is a statement from Māra!' Thinking in this way, they deprecate these Sūtras. They reject them, condemn them, speak badly of them, and also engage in interpolation. In many ways they are involved with these Sūtras in order to reject, undermine, and eradicate them. They also perceive people who believe in these [Sūtras] to be enemies. From the very beginning, they are obstructed by karmic obstructions. Based on that, they continue to be obstructed by similar karmic obstructions. It is easy to designate the beginning of these karmic obstructions; it is difficult to designate during how many hundred thousands of millions of epochs they will continue to arise.

"Paramārthasamudgata, in that way, degrees of conviction appear among sentient beings with respect to this well-taught doctrine, my disciplinary instruction which is explained well, is complete, and is taught with a very pure thought."

Then the Bhagavan spoke these verses:

"What sage would propound, without a thought behind it,
that dharmas lack own-being; dharmas are unproduced;
dharmas are unceasing; dharmas are quiescent from the start;
that all dharmas are naturally in a state of nirvāṇa?"

“I explain lack of own-being in terms of character,
in terms of production, and in terms of the ultimate.
Whatever sage understands the thought behind this
will not travel a path of degeneration.

“The path of purity is this alone;
there is one purity; there is no other.
Thus this one vehicle is designated,
although there are various types of beings.

“In the realms of beings, innumerable beings
seek nirvāṇa for themselves alone.
Those who, steadfast and compassionate,
attain nirvāṇa without abandoning beings are very rare.

“The uncontaminated realm of those who are liberated
is subtle, inconceivable, equal, and undifferentiated,
all-beneficial, free from suffering and affliction,
inexpressible in dualistic terms, blissful and stable.”

Then the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said to the
Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, since [your] teaching, having the thought
of the Buddhas and the Bhagavans, is subtle, is supremely
subtle, profound, supremely profound, difficult to realize,
supremely difficult to realize, it is amazing and wondrous.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of that which the
Bhagavan said in this way: The imputational character con-
sists of [first] those things that are posited in terms of names

and symbols—the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of the own-being or as the character of attributes of ‘the form aggregate’; and [second], those things that are posited in terms of names and symbols as the character of own-being or the character of attributes of ‘the production of a form aggregate’, or its ‘cessation’, or the ‘abandonment and realization of a form aggregate’. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things that are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, the signs of compounded phenomena, are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and, additionally, an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those very objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being that imputational character, and they lack own-being. Because of just that, the lack of own-being, selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Just as this is applied to the form aggregate, so it should also be applied to the remaining aggregates. Just as this is applied to the aggregates, so it should also be applied to each of the sense spheres that comprise the twelve sense spheres. The same is true for each of the limbs of existence that comprise the twelve limbs of existence. The same is true for each of the sustenances that comprise the four sustenances. The same is true for each of the constituents that comprise the six constituents and the eighteen constituents.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: The imputational character consists of those things posited in terms of names and symbols—which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of own-being and the character of attributes of the ‘truth of suffering and understanding the truth of suffering’. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan designated lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things that are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those things that are the objects of

conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being the imputational character. And because of just that own-being, the lack of own-being, the selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and the object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Just as this is applied to the noble truth of suffering, so it should be applied to the remaining truths. Just as this is applied to the truths, so it should be applied to the mindful establishments, the correct abandonings, the bases of magical abilities, the powers, the forces, the branches of enlightenment, and each of the branches of the path of the Āryas.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: The imputational character consists of those things posited in terms of names and symbols—which are objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena—as the character of own-being or the character of attributes of ‘pure samādhi’ or the ‘discordances and antidotes of samādhis’, or the ‘production of those which have not been produced’, or the ‘abiding of those which have been produced, and their non-forgetting, their further arising, and their increasing and extending’. In dependence upon that, the

Bhagavan designated the lack of own-being in terms of character of phenomena.

“Those things which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are the other-dependent character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated the lack of own-being in terms of production of phenomena and an ultimate lack of own-being.

“Bhagavan, I understand the meaning of the Bhagavan’s teaching in this way: Those things which are the objects of conceptual activity, the bases of the imputational character, and the signs of compounded phenomena are not established as being the imputational character. And because of just that own-being, the lack of own-being, the selflessness of phenomena, suchness, and the object of observation for purification are the thoroughly established character. In dependence upon that, the Bhagavan additionally designated an ultimate lack of own-being of phenomena.

“Bhagavan, for example, dried ginger is added to all medicinal powders and elixirs. Similarly, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with [the teachings that phenomena are] unproduced, unceasing, quiescent from the start, and naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, the Bhagavan

also placed teachings of definitive meaning in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning.¹⁵

“Bhagavan, for example, the background of a painting, whether it is blue, yellow, red, or white, is of one taste throughout the entire painted work and also highlights the details of the painting. Similarly, the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are all of one taste in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning and also highlight meanings that are interpretable.

“Bhagavan, for example, when one adds clarified butter to all types of dishes, for instance cooked grain or cooked meat, it is very satisfying. Similarly, when the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are added to all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, it is satisfying, supremely satisfying!

“Bhagavan, for example, space is all of one taste and yet does not obstruct any undertakings. Similarly, the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, ranging from the lack of own-being of phenomena to their being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, are also all of one taste in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, and yet do not obstruct any undertaking concerned with either the Śrāvaka vehicle, or the Pratyekabuddha vehicle, or the Great Vehicle.”¹⁶

“Excellent!” the Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata. “Paramārthasamudgata, that is good, good! Paramārthasamudgata, having the thought of the Tathāgata, you understand this explanation.

“Your good illustrations of the meaning, [analogies] such as dried ginger, the background of a painting, adding butter, and space, are accurate, Paramārthasamudgata. The [teaching] is not other than this. Therefore it should be apprehended in just this way.”

Then the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata said to the Bhagavan: “Initially, in the Vārāṇasī area, in the Deer Park called Sages’ Teaching, the Bhagavan taught the aspects of the four truths of the Āryas for those who were genuinely engaged in the [Śrāvaka] vehicle. The wheel of doctrine you turned at first is wondrous. Similar doctrines had not been promulgated before in the world by gods or humans. However, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned is surpassable, provides an opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute.¹⁷

“Then the Bhagavan turned a second wheel of doctrine which is more wondrous still for those who are genuinely engaged in the Great Vehicle, because of the aspect of teaching emptiness, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being

naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. However, this wheel of doctrine that the Bhagavan turned is surpassable, provides an opportunity [for refutation], is of interpretable meaning, and serves as a basis for dispute.

“Then the Bhagavan turned a third wheel of doctrine, possessing good differentiations, and exceedingly wondrous, for those genuinely engaged in all vehicles, beginning with the lack of own-being of phenomena, and beginning with their absence of production, absence of cessation, quiescence from the start, and being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa. Moreover, that wheel of doctrine turned by the Bhagavan is unsurpassable, does not provide an opportunity [for refutation], is of definitive meaning, and does not serve as a basis for dispute.

“Bhagavan, when sons or daughters of good lineage hear the Bhagavan’s teachings of definitive meaning, from [the teachings] of the lack of own-being of phenomena up to [the teachings] of [phenomena] being naturally in a state of nirvāṇa, they develop conviction in them and write them down. Having transcribed them, they also memorize them, read them, venerate them, propagate them, receive their oral transmission, recite them to others, and reflect and apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. How much merit will they generate?”

The Bhagavan replied to the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata: “Paramārthasamudgata, those sons or daughters

of good lineage will generate immeasurable, incalculable merit. It is not easy to give examples of that [merit], but I will explain it to you briefly.

“Paramārthasamudgata, for example, if one compares the particles of earth on the tip of a fingernail to all the particles of earth in the earth, they do not approach even a hundredth part. They do not approach even a thousandth part, [or] even a one-hundred-thousandth part. They do not approach any number, any part, any approximation, any comparison. If one compares the water in a cow’s hoofprint to the water of the four great oceans, it does not approach even a hundredth part. It does not approach any comparison.

“Paramārthasamudgata, similarly, I have described the merit [generated] by people who develop conviction in Sūtras of interpretable meaning up to those who apply themselves to the types of meditative cultivation. If one compares this merit to the merit [generated] by people who are established in teachings of definitive meaning through conviction up to those who are established [in them] through applying themselves to the types of meditative cultivation, that merit does not approach even a hundredth part. It does not approach any comparison.”

The Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata asked the Bhagavan: “Bhagavan, what is the name of this form of Dharma discourse that explains your thought? How should it be apprehended?”

The Bhagavan replied: “Paramārthasamudgata, this is the teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning. Apprehend it as ‘the teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning’.”

When this teaching of the ultimate, the definitive meaning, was explained, six hundred thousand beings generated the aspiration toward unsurpassed, complete, and perfect enlightenment. Three hundred Śrāvakas purified the Dharma eye that is free from dust and stainless with respect to the Dharma. One hundred and fifty thousand Śrāvakas liberated their minds from contamination, becoming free from attachment. Seventy-five thousand Bodhisattvas attained the forbearance of the doctrine of non-production.

This completes the seventh chapter of the Bodhisattva Paramārthasamudgata.



“If the basis-consciousness did not exist, appropriation of a body would be impossible; initial operation [of consciousness] would be impossible; clear operation [of consciousness] would be impossible; seeds would be impossible; karma would be impossible; bodily feelings would be impossible; meditative absorptions in which mind is absent would be impossible; and transmigration of consciousness would be impossible.” (B, vol. cho [205]:124.6)

8 This passage refers to the fanciful etymology of the Sanskrit word *citta* from the verbal root \sqrt{ci} , which means ‘to accumulate’. Thus, *citta* is what ‘accumulates’ the predispositions. The basis-consciousness has seeds within it that ripen into eye-consciousnesses. When these become activated, an eye-consciousness results. (KJ 4.12–6.9 and KY 5a, 11b. See also JBW 111–19, 138, 409–20)

9 In other words, this reason alone is not sufficient for Bodhisattvas to merit the designation: “wise with respect to the secrets of mind, thought, and consciousness.” They must also directly realize the ultimate in order to be worthy of this designation.

10 “It is deep because it is difficult for its depth to be fathomed by the intelligence even of the wise of the world. It is subtle because it is difficult to know even for Śrāvakas. Therefore, [Buddha] does not teach this [basis-]consciousness to Śrāvakas and the like, because they do not seek extremely subtle omniscience. With respect to [the phrase,] ‘all its seeds flowing like a river’: Because it continues from one moment to another, it flows without its continuum being cut off, like a river. With respect to [the phrase,] ‘I have not taught this to children’: It is not revealed to those having a view of self. This is because those who conceive of a self would apprehend [the appropriating consciousness] as being a unitary, unchanging ‘self’ that exists as long as cyclic existence lasts.” (W, vol. ti [118]:489.6, citing Asvabhāva’s commentary on MS)

Notes to Chapter Six

1 “With respect to [the name] Guṇākara (‘Source of Qualities’): Because [he] has accumulated the causes of [good] qualities for immeasurable eons, this is a case of a designation of a name from a causal point of view. Because [he] has accumulated both types of

bases of [good] qualities—the collections of merit and wisdom—he is [called] Guṇākara.” (W, vol. ti [118]:493.5)

This entire chapter is quoted by Asaṅga in VS (P 5539, vol. 'i [111]: 60a.2–62b.2). He states that the subject of this chapter is the character of phenomena (chos-rnams-kyi-mtshan-nyid, dharma-lakṣaṇa).

2 “Why is it called ‘imputational’ (kun-btags, parikalpita)? Because mental consciousness, having the aspects of immeasurable conceptions, just gives rise to error, [it is termed] ‘imputational’. Also because its own character does not truly exist, but is merely perceived conceptually, it is called ‘imputational’.” (W, vol. ti [118]:496.4, citing MS) “‘A character that gives rise to error’ means that it has a character of unreal, erroneous objects of observation. ‘Its own character does not truly exist’ [because] its nature does not truly exist.” (W citing Vasubandhu’s commentary, 496.7)

“The imputational character is a character that is posited in the manner of names and terminology, but is not posited through its own character. Since it is utterly non-existent in terms of both of the two truths, it lacks own-being due to lacking own-being in terms of character.” (B, vol. cho [205]:213.5)

3 “The ‘other-dependent (gzhan-dbang, paratantra) character’ is the own-being of internal and external phenomena that are dependently arisen through the power of other conditions. Because the own-being of things that are apprehended objects and apprehending subjects are produced due to the power of other causes and conditions, it is the ‘other-dependent character’.” (B, vol. cho [205]: 187.7) “The other-dependent character is produced by the power of other conditions but is not [produced] through its nature. Therefore—since it exists merely [like] a magician’s illusions in terms of conventional truths—it is a lack of own-being due to being a lack of own-being in terms of production. Since it does not have ultimate lack of own-being because it is not an object of observation for purification, it is not an ultimate lack of own-being because it is not an ultimate truth. Therefore, it is a lack of own-being, and the thoroughly established character is the ultimate, and the ultimate is distinguished by being the lack of own-being of all phenomena. Because [the thoroughly established character] is both the ultimate truth and a lack of own-being, it is a lack of own-being due to being the ultimate lack of own-being.” (B 213.6. See also pp. 99–105 of this Sūtra)

"Because this exists, that arises" indicates that [effects] arise from conditions unalterably. "Because this is produced, that is produced" indicates that objects are produced from conditions that are impermanent. This is because production of an effect from causes that do not give rise to any phenomenon is not established. The phrase, "due to the condition of ignorance, compositional factors [arise]," indicates that [effects] are produced from conditions that are potencies. Although phenomena are unfluctuating and impermanent, any effect does not arise from any condition. Why is this? Since there are different divisions of potencies of phenomena, it is said that "there are [the links of dependent origination] ranging from the arising of compositional factors due to the power of ignorance up to the arising of old age and death due to the power of birth." "The whole great assemblage of suffering" indicates that there is no beginning or end to the accumulation of suffering. (W, vol. ti [118]:504-5)

4 "Because [the thoroughly established character] does not change into something else, because it is an object of observation for purification, because it is supreme of all virtuous phenomena, it is called the 'thoroughly established character' in the sense of being supreme." (W quoting MS, vol. ti [118]:499.7) "'Because it does not change into something else' it is not a false phenomenon. It is like a minister who is free from falsity." (W quoting Vasubandhu, 500.1)

"The 'thoroughly established character' is correct knowledge and suchness that are distinguished by having been transformed and by being the suchness of phenomena." (B, vol. cho [205]:187.6)

5 "Clouded vision" (rab-rib, timira) indicates a wide range of visual defects, including occluded or hazy vision, seeing spots or lines in the visual field that may look like a net of hairs, insects, sesame seeds, etc., or perceiving colors incorrectly. (See W, vol. ti [118]:517.4, 518.5; *Viṃśatikā-kārikā-vṛtti* 161, verse 2 and commentary)

6 Mahānīla (mthon-ka-chen-po) is a blue-colored gem.

7 "In that way, through entering into [understanding of] the character of objects that appear in the manner of mental verbalizations, those Bodhisattvas enter into [understanding of] the imputational character. Through entering into [understanding of] cognition-only, they enter into [understanding of] the other-dependent character. How do they enter into [understanding of] the thoroughly established character? They enter after having reversed even concep-

tions of cognition-only.” (W, vol. ti [118]:538.1, citing MS) “At that time, since objects of observation and observers are equalized for those Bodhisattvas, the non-conceptual exalted wisdom of equality arises. Therefore, those Bodhisattvas have entered into [understanding of] the thoroughly established character.” (W 538.6)

Notes to Chapter Seven

1 Regarding the name of this Bodhisattva, Paramārthasamudgata (‘Exalted by the Ultimate’): “The ‘ultimate’ is the object to be attained, and it is the object of the supreme exalted wisdom. Therefore it is called ‘ultimate’. Because the exalted wisdom that is the means of attainment arises from observing the ultimate, he is ‘exalted’.” (W, vol. ti [118]:544.7) This chapter explains the meaning of the character of lack of own-being of phenomena. (VS, P 5539, vol. ‘i [111]:62b.2)

2 Paramārthasamudgata’s question implies that the two sets of teachings (the teachings concerning the aggregates and so forth taught in other Sūtras and the teachings concerning lack of own-being and so forth taught in this Sūtra) are mutually contradictory (phan-tshun-’gal-ba). (W, vol. ti [118]:552.4) Paramārthasamudgata is asking the Buddha to clarify the intentions behind his earlier teachings in light of the teachings being given in this text. According to G (74.6–75.13), Paramārthasamudgata is asking this question not for himself, but for the benefit of others who might have such questions.

3 “That suchness which is the object of the exalted wisdom purifying the two obstructions [i.e., the afflictive obstructions and the obstructions to omniscience] is the thoroughly established nature and is the object of observation for purification.” (DLG 48.1)

4 “Lack of own-being in the sense of lack of own-being in terms of character should be understood to be an utter non-existence in terms of both conventional and ultimate truths, like a sky-flower. . . . Like a magical apparition, lack of own-being in the sense of lack of own-being in terms of production and ultimate lack of own-being should be understood as existing only as a conventional truth.” (B, vol. cho [205]:187.6) “The similarity of imputational natures with a sky-flower is an example of their merely being imputed by thought and is not an example of their not occurring among objects of knowledge.” (EG 13.11)

5 Asaṅga states that when the Buddha said that all phenomena are unproduced and so forth, he was “thinking only of lack of own-being in terms of character.” (VS, P 5539, vol. ‘i [111]:18a.8)

6 “‘Peacefulness’ (zhi-ba, śānti) refers to liberation from the afflictive obstructions. ‘Proceeds’ (bgrod-pa, yāna) refers to the path and the fruit: the path of the Śrāvaka vehicle and the fruit of liberation. ‘Solely’ (gcig-pu, eka) refers to not attaining the lineage which achieves the conditions for complete transformation into [the state of] unsurpassable enlightenment at that time, and abiding in the partial liberation and nirvāṇa of the Śrāvaka.” (B, vol. cho [205]: 239.1. See also Bh 14.5)

“Since the causes of unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment are thoroughly ripening sentient beings and ripening the qualities of a Buddha for oneself, those who do not complete those two [activities] lack the causes of that [i.e., enlightenment] at that time. Moreover, this is merely a difference in practice; it does not come from the nature of the mind. Therefore, [Buddha’s] thought is that they are called ‘those who proceed solely towards peacefulness’ as long as they have not attained the lineage of transformation into unsurpassed enlightenment and do not exert themselves.” (B 240.3)

7 “Because Śrāvakas [who evolve with respect to enlightenment] immediately thereafter abide on the eighth Bodhisattva stage, Śrāvakas are also indicated as being among the enumeration of Bodhisattvas.” (B, vol. cho [205]:241.2) “When [Śrāvakas] become non-learners [when they reach the path of no more learning of the Śrāvaka vehicle], they turn away from the aspirations of Śrāvakas, and through the Tathāgatas’ encouragement they apply themselves to unsurpassed, complete, perfect enlightenment with a body that has a remainder of aggregates [impelled by former contaminated actions and afflictive emotions].” (B 241.3. See also WE 261)

8 “As long as [their enlightenment] is not transformed into unsurpassed enlightenment, they are designated as being of the Śrāvaka lineage.” (B, vol. cho [205]:241.4)

9 The “disciplinary doctrine” (chos’dul-ba, dharma-vinaya) is here understood as “the teaching of the Bhagavan, the Buddha, [which is] endowed with the eight branches of the path of Āryas. Correct views, realization, mindfulness, and samādhi are doctrine. Correct speech, aims of actions, and livelihood are discipline. Correct exertion is

omnipresent. It is 'well taught' since that disciplinary doctrine is explained exceptionally well. It is 'well taught' since it is virtuous in the beginning, virtuous in the middle, and virtuous in the end." (B, vol. cho [205]:242.1) "Because all three scriptural collections [of Vinaya, Sūtra, and Abhidharma] have the capacity to discipline ill deeds, [they are] 'disciplinary'." (W, vol. thi [119]:46.4. See also WE 29–34)

10 "“Having ripened their continuums’ [means that] although Bodhisattvas on the occasion of having gained the Bodhisattva lineage abide in the lineage and have thoroughly purified obstructions, due to four causes, they are unable to attain unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. Due to being free from those four causes indicated earlier, [these Bodhisattvas] have ‘thoroughly ripened continuums’. . . ‘Great conviction’ [refers to] conviction in the ability to attain the qualities of a Buddha . . . Thoroughly ripened wisdom [is that which] differentiates doctrines and apprehends the ultimate truth. This is indicated by ‘they have completed the great accumulations of merit and wisdom.’” (B, vol. cho [205]:244.2)

11 The Buddha’s thought differs from what the actual words of his teaching indicate to beings who do not understand this thought. This point is developed at length in EG, especially 3–29, and DLG, especially 8–36. See also JBW 294–97.

12 This is because they do not seek the definitive meaning and the Mahāyāna but adhere to the literal meaning, thus misunderstanding the teachings. (W, vol. thi [119]:61.7) Because they do not seek scriptures of definitive meaning, but grasp at scriptures of interpretable meaning, they hold their own views to be supreme. (W 62.1)

13 The dGe-lugs-pa tradition, beginning with Tsong-kha-pa, interprets this passage to mean that these beings, whom they identify as Prāsaṅgika-Mādhyamikas, think that no object exists by way of its own-character. Thus they fall into the extreme of nihilism. (See EG 13–14) W states that this passage indicates the faults of exaggerated adherence to literal meanings. (W, vol. thi [119]:62)

14 "“They [adopt] the view that all phenomena do not exist’ [because] they view the phenomena that lack character, the phenomena of thoroughly afflicted character, and the phenomena of purified character as being equally non-existent. ‘They [adopt] the view that character does not exist’: They view all imputational char-

acters, other-dependent characters, and thoroughly established characters as equally non-existent. With respect to [the phrase,] ‘If other-dependent and thoroughly established characters exist, then the imputational character is also understood’: This is because imputation of names and terminology in the manner of own-being and attributes is itself the imputational character. [The phrase,] ‘Therefore, they also deprecate all three types of characters’ indicates [that they hold] a specific type of belief that arises from little wisdom.” (B, vol. cho [205]:252.4)

15 “When dried ginger is put in medicinal powders, they become potent. When one puts these words of lack of own-being and so forth in all Sūtras of interpretable meaning, then one will understand the thoughts [behind] those Sūtras.” (W, vol. thi [119]:107.5)

16 Through these examples, Paramārthasamudgata offers four ways of looking at the relation between what the Buddha said in his interpretable teachings and the definitive teachings that state his actual thought. In the first example, the definitive teaching is compared to an ingredient in a medicinal preparation essential to its efficacy. In the second example, the definitive teaching is compared to the background of a painting, which may remain unnoticed, but which provides the basis for the placement of lines and color. In the third example, the definitive teaching is compared to an ingredient in cooking that enhances flavor. In the final example, the definitive teaching is compared to space. Space is all-pervasive, subtle, imperceptible, and generally not noticed, but makes possible the manifestation of physical objects. In the same way, the definitive teaching is said to be subtle, difficult to perceive, and so forth, but is the essence of the explanations given by Buddha in the first two wheels, even when this was not noticed by his audience. (See W, vol. thi [119]:109.2; B, vol. cho [205]:262; and Bh 14–15)

17 “‘Surpassable’ indicates that there are other Sūtras of definitive meaning that are higher. [They] ‘provide an opportunity’ [for refutation because they] provide an opportunity for other disputants to find fault with respect to the literal reading of the explicit teaching. . . . [The first wheel] serves as a basis for controversy in that there is a basis for dispute because the Teacher did not differentiate individually in terms of the three characters whether they do or do not exist by way of their own character.” (DLG, 29.4)

From mouth to mouth, and from ear to ear,
To those who were endowed with good fortune.

The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism Its Fundamentals and History

Section One: The Translations

Dudjom Rinpoche, Jikdrel Yeshe Dorje

Translated and edited by
Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein

The Origination of the Symbolic Lineage among Human and Non-Human Awareness-holders

[72.4-77.3] In the *Sūtra of the Declaration of Enlightened Intention* (*San-dhivjākaraṇatantra*, T 444) the Teacher is asked:

O Transcendent Lord! you have indeed taught
The three guiding vehicles.⁴⁶⁵
Why, then, do you not teach the definitive vehicle,
In which the spontaneous presence
Of the cause and the fruit is enjoyed,
And which cannot be requested from other buddhas?

To this he replied:

Having turned the wheel of the doctrine of causes
For those who are intent upon cause,
The short path of the vehicle of indestructible reality
Will make its appearance
In an age that has not yet come.

In accordance with this prophecy, twenty-eight years after the supreme emanational body of the Teacher in this world [Śākyamuni] had passed into nirvāṇa, five noble ones of the genuine enlightened family – namely, the god Yaśasvī Varapāla, the nāga king Takṣaka, the yakṣa Ūlkāmukha, the ogre Maṇyaupāyika and the human awareness-holder Vimalakīrti the Licchavi⁴⁶⁶ – each learnt by supernormal cognitive powers that, in this world, the Lord had passed into nirvāṇa. They then aroused themselves from their inner meditative absorptions and miraculously assembled on the peak of Malayagiri in Lankā. There, they cried out in twenty-three verses of lamentation beginning:

Alas! when the light from the Teacher's lamp
Is gone from the whole universe,
Who will dispel the world's darkness?

So they wept to the point of exhaustion.

The Transcendent Lord had predicted that the secret mantra would become renowned throughout the world at some future time and, as that time had arrived, Vajrapāṇi, the Lord of Secrets, appeared there in person; for he had been empowered by the Buddha to teach the secret mantra. He instructed the five noble ones, as well as most of the community of awareness-holders, repeating the teachings of the secret mantra vehicle which the Teacher had previously conferred in the Akaniṣṭha realm, and elsewhere. The ogre Maṇyaupāyika inscribed



WISDOM PUBLICATIONS Boston

The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti

A Mahāyāna Scripture

Translated by
Robert A. F. Thurman

Introduction

The Message of Vimalakīrti

"Matter is not void because of voidness; voidness is not elsewhere from matter. Matter itself is voidness. Voidness itself is matter."¹ This statement, common in Mahāyāna Scriptures, expresses the quintessence of the Middle Way (*madhyamapratipat*). It is also fundamental to the message of Vimalakīrti. It is utterly profound, yet so simple it is all too easy to overlook its astounding implications. "Matter" represents the familiar world, the world of relativity, whereas "voidness" represents the goal of spiritual longing, the ultimate, the transcendental, the infinite and eternal. If the two are just the same, what is the purpose of religion? Of philosophy? Of the austerity of spiritual practice? Of this statement or any statement or teaching? Is this not the most blatant form of nihilism?

Indeed, a great many scholars, ancient as well as modern, have mistaken the Middle Way taught by Vimalakīrti, Nāgārjuna, and the Mahāyāna Buddha as leading to the annihilation of all values, mundane and spiritual, and the main purpose of this introduction is to avert this disastrous mistake. The key lies in the concept of "voidness." The word is carefully chosen, and does not mean "nothingness." Thus, the equation of "matter" with "voidness" tells us something about the condition of matter, not that matter does not exist at all. And the equation of "voidness" with "matter" emphasizes the fact that this teaching is, far from being nihilistic, the very cure for nihilism.

Nāgārjuna expounds the same theme in his *Vigrahavyāvartanī*: "I salute the incomparable, perfect Buddha, who made the declaration of the equivalence in meaning of voidness, relativity, and the Middle Way."² Here we find, instead of "matter," the term "relativity" (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which is another key term of the Middle Way philosophy. It means that all finite things are interdependent, relative, and mutually conditioned, and implies that there is no possibility of any independent, self-sufficient, permanent thing or entity. An entity exists only in relation to other entities. It must be composed of parts, which came together when it was produced and which separate at the time of its dissolution. All things that can be observed, imagined, or conceived by our finite minds are relative insofar as they are limited at least by having a point of contact, hence a relationship,

cal precision of Hsüan Tsang, or the elegance of Lamotte may have clarified the Tibetan, provided an alternative, or given me another reference point from which to find a middle way. Any significant departures from the basic Tibetan have been duly noted.

My main goal in this translation is to present the authentic *teaching* of Vimalakīrti, and so my main focus is philosophical rather than philological. Thus, I have taken great pains with the language of the translation, providing the reader with three glossaries, the first for Sanskrit terms and proper names, the second for the numerical categories that abound in Mahāyāna Scriptures, and the third for English Buddhist technical terms that correspond to important Sanskrit concepts, proper understanding of which is crucial for undistorted appreciation of the teaching. Sanskrit terms are given in root form except when they occur in plural or in grammatical combination.

The ultimate inexpressibility of everything is never more keenly felt than when it comes time to express one's gratitude to one's teachers and benefactors for their irrepayable kindness in enabling one to come to the point of serving in such a capacity as this. Nevertheless, silence on this occasion would be like Śāriputra's silence (Chap. 7), not like Vimalakīrti's lion's roar (Chap. 9). First, I must salute the long line of scholars and translators, some mentioned above, from Mañjuśrī to 卐Lamotte, who preserved this teaching over the millennia and made it available to me; I hope this work will contribute to the unending tradition. Second, I avow my heartfelt gratitude to my personal teachers, whom I list in temporal order of my contact with them: Rev. Geshe Wangyal, H. H. the Dalai Lama, Dr. M. Nagatomi, Dr. D. H. H. Ingalls, Dr. V. V. Gokhale, and Lama Anagarika Govinda; I can only hope that this work might please them. Third, I sincerely thank my friend and benefactor, Dr. C. T. Shen, both for his sponsorship of the work and for his most helpful collaboration in the work of comparing the Tibetan and Chinese versions. We were sometimes joined in our round-table discussions by Drs. C. S. George, Tao-Tien Yi, F. S. K. Koo, and T. C. Tsao, whose helpful suggestions I gratefully acknowledge. My thanks also go to Ms. Yeshe Tsono and Ms. Leah Zahler for their invaluable editorial assistance, and to Ms. Carole Schwager and the staff of The Pennsylvania State University Press. Finally, my very special thanks to Nena, who actually made it all possible, and to Ganden, Uma, and Dechen, who make it all necessary.

If, in spite of all this excellent help, any errors remain undetected, I take full responsibility for them.

Gandendechenay
Shady, New York
August 1975

Robert A. F. Thurman

Introduction

The Message of Vimalakīrti

"Matter is not void because of voidness; voidness is not elsewhere from matter. Matter itself is voidness. Voidness itself is matter."¹ This statement, common in Mahāyāna Scriptures, expresses the quintessence of the Middle Way (*madhyamapratipat*). It is also fundamental to the message of Vimalakīrti. It is utterly profound, yet so simple it is all too easy to overlook its astounding implications. "Matter" represents the familiar world, the world of relativity, whereas "voidness" represents the goal of spiritual longing, the ultimate, the transcendental, the infinite and eternal. If the two are just the same, what is the purpose of religion? Of philosophy? Of the austerity of spiritual practice? Of this statement or any statement or teaching? Is this not the most blatant form of nihilism?

Indeed, a great many scholars, ancient as well as modern, have mistaken the Middle Way taught by Vimalakīrti, Nāgārjuna, and the Mahāyāna Buddha as leading to the annihilation of all values, mundane and spiritual, and the main purpose of this introduction is to avert this disastrous mistake. The key lies in the concept of "voidness." The word is carefully chosen, and does not mean "nothingness." Thus, the equation of "matter" with "voidness" tells us something about the condition of matter, not that matter does not exist at all. And the equation of "voidness" with "matter" emphasizes the fact that this teaching is, far from being nihilistic, the very cure for nihilism.

Nāgārjuna expounds the same theme in his *Vigrahavāyavartanī*: "I salute the incomparable, perfect Buddha, who made the declaration of the equivalence in meaning of voidness, relativity, and the Middle Way."² Here we find, instead of "matter," the term "relativity" (*pratītyasamutpāda*), which is another key term of the Middle Way philosophy. It means that all finite things are interdependent, relative, and mutually conditioned, and implies that there is no possibility of any independent, self-sufficient, permanent thing or entity. An entity exists only in relation to other entities. It must be composed of parts, which came together when it was produced and which separate at the time of its dissolution. All things that can be observed, imagined, or conceived by our finite minds are relative insofar as they are limited at least by having a point of contact, hence a relationship,

with our perceptions or imaginations. However, as we make our way through the relative world, our minds are accustomed to constructing pairs of opposites such as "long and short" or "light and dark." Thus we hypothesize an opposite to every finite, dependent, temporal, relative entity we can know or imagine, and we call it infinity, independence, eternity, absolute—that is, usually some etymologically negative term (in-finite = not finite, etc.). This is quite harmless and useful, until we begin to make the unconscious assumption that since most names seem to refer to entities, these must also, and we begin to think of "an independent being" and similar concepts. If we then attach these false notions of ultimate being to whatever we are disposed to value, we fall short of full awareness of thoroughgoing relativity.

So the teachers of the Middle Way use "voidness" to remind us that all such false notions are delusive; that is, they use it to free us from our own conceptualizations. Hence "matter is voidness" does not negate matter as a relative phenomenon; it negates any false notion of matter as an ultimate thing, as having any independent, substantial being, as having any *ultimately* true status. Matter in itself does not need to be felt to have some sort of ultimate, independent substance, to stand in its diverse configurations and undergo its various relative transformations. In fact, were matter to have any sort of independent, ultimate status (such as the true being we tend to attribute to all things because of our habit of confusing name with reality), it would become obstructed in its functional roles of interdependency since, by definition, an independent "thing" cannot be dependent. Therefore, all negative statements in the teachings of the Middle Way, from the Scriptures to the systematic treatises of the Mādhyamika by the great masters such as Nāgārjuna and his successors, do not negate relative things per se but only their ultimate existence, which is initially attributed to them by habitual, delusive, mental constructions.

Most people are so accustomed to such notions that the world might seem impossible if there were no enduring substance in things. In his major work, "Wisdom" (*Prajñā nāma mūlāmādhīyamakārikā*),³ Nāgārjuna quotes a famous objector: "If all this were void, then there would be no creation and no destruction. . . ." And Nāgārjuna's answer comes as a shock at first: "If all this were *not* void, then there would be no creation and no destruction. . . ."⁴ Thus voidness, far from annihilating everything, is the *necessary condition* for all relative existence. In other words, voidness here is not "the void" we imagine in microspace or macrospace, a dark nothingness in which galaxies or atoms are contained; nor is it a substratum. It is infinity, which is only a term for the ultimate ineffability of the relative reality to which we can see no ending or beginning.

The difficulty of correct understanding of this principle may lie in its very

simplicity. When minds are conditioned to discover truth in subtle complexities, it may become emotionally repugnant to accept a principle so simple that it seems to make intellect obsolete. This principle therefore will not lead to resolution in one's deeper being, unless analytic intellect has succeeded in throwing out every possible alternative. Hence it is as delusive to grasp the principle as a solution in itself as it is delusive to reject it out of hand.

The principle is that the fact that matter is voidness is absolutely affirmative of matter, not negative of matter. Indeed, of all theories it is the *only one* that is thus affirmative.

How is this so?

There are basically two kinds of theory about ultimate reality: nihilism and "absolutism." Of course, intellectual history abounds in theories vastly different in detail, but all share one or the other of these basic postulates about reality. They either deny it altogether or they posit some sort of ultimate entity, substratum, or superstratum that serves as foundation, essence, container, or whatever, of the immediate reality. And this absolutism, while appearing to affirm something ultimately, actually negates the immediate reality in favor of the hypostatized ultimate reality. For if "God," "Brahman," the "universe," "the void," "nirvāṇa," "pure mind," "the Tao," "pure being," and so forth, make an ultimate reality beyond the imperfection of our world, the spiritual man must naturally strive to escape this imperfection to reach his ultimate and eternal well-being. However widely the absolutes posited may differ, they all impel us in practice to negate our immediate reality.

Now we may better appreciate the first implication of the statement that the immediate, relative reality is the ultimate, perfect reality: that matter is voidness. If it is so, our immediate reality is ultimate, cannot be escaped or negated, and must be accepted as it is—at least to start with, before we try to do something about it in a relative way—with no false hope of ever making it ultimate, since it already is so. We are left with the seemingly contradictory tasks of becoming conscious of its ultimacy on the one hand and, on the other hand, of devoting our energies to the improvement of the unavoidable relative situation as best we can. For the successful accomplishment of this dual task we need, respectively, wisdom (*prajñā*) and great compassion (*mahākaruṇā*), and these two functions are the essence of the Great Vehicle (*Mahāyāna*), and of the Middle Way.

Wisdom does not allow us to settle for our habitual involvement with sensory objects (as just being "given" "out there"), and causes us to learn and practice probing beneath the surface of apparent "reality" to gain direct awareness of the ultimate reality of all things. At the same time, great compassion does not allow us to set up any hypostatized "ultimate reality," immerse ourselves in any

sort of quietistic trance, or accept any sort of illogical escapism from relativity, but imperatively compels us to act selflessly, as if already enlightened, even when we do not yet feel enlightened. Thus, the correct intellectual understanding of the voidness of matter (*rūpaśūnyatā*), the voidness of consciousness (*viññānaśūnyatā*), or even the voidness of voidness (*śūnyatāśūnyatā*) is the indispensable first step in the long meditational cultivation of our tolerance of incomprehensibility (*anupalabhidharmakṣānti*), as well as the supreme cure for self-defeating selfishness in daily action. And thus the way is difficult, not because of any complexity, but because we cannot grasp matter, we cannot grasp mind, we cannot even grasp any doctrine of the “ungraspability of matter and mind.” And still, matter, mind, and ultimate voidness remain before us in ineluctable relativity, like the reflection of the moon in water. It is clear that this subtle, profound, yet simple teaching can be inaccessible or even frightening to those either intellectually or emotionally unprepared, while the gem-like being properly prepared need only hear it, and all mental blocks are instantly shattered.⁵

Thus, this teaching of the Middle Way is not for everyone. And hence the Buddha and the great masters who inherited his teachings devised other teachings intended to develop those who might be overwhelmed by introduction through this teaching, to develop them to a point where they would be ready to confront the “royal reason” equating voidness with relativity. There is the Hinayāna teaching, which teaches a liberation (*nirvāṇa*) that appears to be a release from the relative world short of perfect enlightenment. There is the “mind-only” teaching (*viññānavāda*), which teaches the reality of pure mind, beyond all miserable phenomena. Nevertheless, in all cases, these teachings serve in the development of an individual only up to a point: the point where he might meet with a Vimalakīrti, who would bring home to him the ultimate message of the Middle Way.

In the words of Nāgārjuna, from the *Ratnāvalī*: “Just as the grammarians make one read the grammar, the Buddha teaches the Dharma according to the tolerance of the disciples. He teaches the Dharma to some people to refrain from sins, to some to accomplish virtue, to some to depend on dualism, and to some to be independent from dualism; finally, to some, he teaches the profound, awe-inspiring practice of enlightenment, whose essence is compassion and voidness.”⁶

In keeping with an alternative title of the Scripture (“Inconceivable Liberation”),⁷ Vimalakīrti lays great emphasis on the theme of inconceivability, that is, the ultimate incomprehensibility of all things, relative or absolute. He thus spells out the furthest implication of the application of voidness: that the finite, ego-centered mind cannot even conceive of the ultimate nature of things and, hence, as far as such minds are concerned, their ultimate reality is itself inconceivability.

This accords with the degree of attainment of the bodhisattva, so frequently reached by Vimalakīrti’s audiences, called “the tolerance of the ultimate birthlessness of all things” (*anulpatika-dharmakṣānti*). It is extremely significant that the term “tolerance” (*kṣānti*) is used here, rather than “conviction,” “understanding,” or “realization”; it emphasizes the fact that where the ultimate is concerned, the mind is unable to grasp anything in the pattern of dualistic knowledge, for there is no finite object in this case and only relative objects can be grasped with relative certainty in the mundane sense. Yet that is not to say that the student’s task is to simply put a label of “inconceivability” on all things and rest complacent with a sense of having reached a high state. Indeed, there are three stages of this tolerance: the verbal (*ghoṣānuṣṭhā*), conforming (*anulomikī*), and true tolerance of birthlessness. This indicates the difficulty of attainment of true tolerance, which occurs only at the eighth stage of bodhisattvahood.⁸ Inconceivability as a verbal concept is only a principle to be applied to the mind, just like the verbal concept of voidness, or even of infinity.

When we reflect intensively on any of these concepts, our minds open gradually in an ever widening sphere whose limits proceed from preconceived limitation to preconceived limitation. We discover to our surprise that there is always something further, and we logically discard the possibility of any limit being ultimate because any limit serves as the near boundary of the next larger space or dimension or time. If we adhere rigorously to this process, we soon find ourselves lost in the stars, as it were, with less and less security about ever having started from anywhere. It takes time for such a process to permeate one’s whole being, for this can be a shattering experience to one whose conditioned notions are firmly ingrained and not previously brought into the light of analytic examination. The great master Aśiśa once likened the process to a mound of butter melting in a broth, or to an iron pressing smooth the wrinkles in a piece of cotton cloth.

The Buddha gave this type of deepest teaching only to disciples able to deal with it. Nāgārjuna himself rarely spelled it out explicitly, restricting himself to providing the means whereby the disciplined intellect can strip away its own conceptualizations and habitual notions. But Vimalakīrti felt that such a message should be available to a much larger circle of people, for he expressed himself definitively on all occasions, as recorded in this Scripture. Thus I have ventured to follow his example by spelling out the essence of his message in order to insure that his speech would not be utilized falsely as a justification for nihilism or sophistry. Of course it need not be repeated that no formula, no phoneme, and no spelling out can do more than point the way to an understanding beyond words, which, however, includes words as relative things from another point

of view. In fact, the very existence of this introduction betrays my inadequacy to live up to Vimalakīrti himself, with his famous silence on the subject of non-duality when questioned by Mañjuśrī.

The Method of Vimalakīrti

The second chapter, "Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique," introduces Vimalakīrti as a person who represents the consummate embodiment of skill in liberative technique.⁹ This makes even more plain the implication of the Scripture that he is an incarnation (*nirmāṇa*), like Śākyamuni Buddha himself, and, as such, indistinguishable from the Buddha in the ability to do the right thing for each particular person. His eloquence is supreme, his behavior is exemplary, and his miraculous feats are in no way inferior to those of the Buddha himself. Although he is respectful to the Buddha and usually polite with everyone, even the disciples, he is in no way intimidated in the august presence of the Tathāgata, as he proceeds to tell him to his face that he does not really exist.¹⁰

The main technique Vimalakīrti uses that is of interest here—dichotomy—is found in his discourse, which relates to another alternative title of the Scripture, "Reconciliation of Dichotomies" (*yamakav'yātyastāhāra*).¹¹ This is in keeping with the traditional method of the Middle Way masters, who had great skill in pitting polar opposites against each other to eliminate the fixedness of each and to free the mind of the student who applies himself to the polarities to open into a middle ground of reality beyond concepts. The "Great Sorcerers" (*mahāsiddhas*) of first-millennium India refined this technique to a consummate degree in their songs and extraordinary deeds, and the Great Ch'an and Zen Masters wielded the same "double-edged sword" in their earthshaking statements and their illuminating activities. The singular quality of such teachers' use of dichotomies lies in the fact that they relate them to the actual practice of the hearers, forcing them to integrate them in their minds and actions. Thus, they expect them to be liberated inconceivably, while being totally engaged in the work of helping other living beings.¹² They recommend their full cultivation of great love and great compassion while maintaining total awareness of the total absence of any such thing as a living being, a suffering being, a being in bondage. In short, they show the way to the full nonduality of wisdom and great compassion, the latter being expressed as skill in liberative technique—the integrated approach acknowledged by all the masters as the essence of the Mahāyāna.¹³

This brings out Vimalakīrti's main bone of contention with the disciples, such as Śāriputra, whom he finds to be too complacent in their sense of liberation

and superiority of wisdom. It also further emphasizes the positive aspect of the Middle Way in general, which has all too often been overlooked by its Western critics, who have mistaken it for nihilism at worst or at best for a sophistic, dry intellectualism. Vimalakīrti makes it clear that the sole function of wisdom, gnosis, or any state of liberation is its function as a necessary complement to the indispensable great compassion that has no object (*anupalambha*) and is not a sentimentally conceived emotion (*anānāyadṛṣṭimāhākaruṇā*). Wisdom as a solitary possession, not integrated with liberative technique, is plainly declared to be bondage;¹⁴ even meditation, trance, concentration, and so on, are declared to be vain unless they aid in reconciliation of the basic dichotomy of world versus liberation, *saṃsāra* versus *nirvāṇa*. That some modern scholars could think that this fundamental point of Vimalakīrti's message, this fundamental procedural basis of the entire Mahāyāna, might have been overlooked or neglected by such masters as Nāgārjuna or Candrakīrti is indeed surprising.

Vimalakīrti's reconciliation of dichotomies is so thoroughgoing that he shocks the disciples by his advocacy of the most horrible things as being part of the bodhisattva's path. The bodhisattva may commit the five deadly sins,¹⁵ may follow the false heterodox teachings, may entertain the sixty-two false views, may consort with all the passions, and so on. Even the Māras, or devils, that plague the various universes are said to be bodhisattvas dwelling in inconceivable liberation¹⁶—playing the devil, as it were, in order to develop living beings.

This leads to an extraordinary fact that cannot be omitted, as startling as it may be to some because of their historical convictions about the origins of various Buddhist teachings. Vimalakīrti's method in integrating the intellectual and behavioral dichotomies is one of many blatant hints of Tantric ideas in the background of his teaching method. Further research is needed to determine whether these connections prove the existence of Tantrism at a time earlier than modern scholars generally believe or whether later Tantrics found Vimalakīrti's teachings a source of inspiration. However, in a discussion of Vimalakīrti's method, it must be noted that in the foregoing instances of reconciliation of extreme dichotomies Vimalakīrti is actually teaching pure Tantric doctrine, as can be found in such works as the *Gṛhyasamājatantra*.¹⁷ The concept of the adept using paths generally considered evil for the attainment of enlightenment and the buddha-qualities is basic in Tantric doctrine and practice. Śākyamuni's revelation of the Saha world as a jeweled buddha-field accords with Tantric method. That method starts from the premise of Buddhahood, in a sense, as the devotee cultivates his perception of himself as a Buddha, of all living beings as Buddhas and deities, of the world as a pure realm of Tathāgatas, of his own residence as a crystal sky-palace, and so forth.¹⁸ Vimalakīrti's discussion of how a

bodhisattva in inconceivable liberation can transfer Mount Sumeru, or an entire universe, into a mustard seed is reminiscent of the yogic practices for transmuting dimensions of time and space found in the *Guhyaśamāja*.¹⁹ The description of Vimalakīrti as versed in “esoteric practices”;²⁰ the description of the “Family of the Tathāgatas”;²¹ Vimalakīrti’s verse identifying wisdom as the mother and liberative technique as the father, exactly corresponding with the central Tantric symbolism of male and female as vajra and bell, and the like;²² the yogic powers ascribed to the bodhisattva in inconceivable liberation, such as the ability to take fire in his stomach;²³ the mention of the appearance of many Tathāgatas—including Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Ratnavyūha, Sarvārthasiddha, and others—in the house of Vimalakīrti, teaching the esotericisms of the Tathāgatas (*tathāgata-guhya*);²⁴ and the culmination of the sūtra in the vision of the Buddha Akṣobhya;²⁵ All these lend the sūtra a certain aura of Tantra.²⁶ Whatever the “historical” relationship may be, it is safe to say that Vimalakīrti’s method of the reconciliation of dichotomies, as based on the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattva, forms a Tantra in its own right, that is, a rapid, effective method of simultaneously developing wisdom and great compassion to a high degree. Certainly, there is no doubt that the “Great Sorcerers” (*mahāsiddhas*) of later times would have felt at home in the house of Vimalakīrti.

The Miracles of Vimalakīrti

Vimalakīrti claims inclusion among the “Great Sorcerers” most of all, perhaps, for his generous use of miraculous feats in the course of teaching his fellow men and women. In view of the spirit of modern times, miracles merit some introduction in order to clear the air of prejudice so they may serve their proper function. Actually, modern scholars and the traditional scholars of Tibet, China, and Japan agree, albeit unwittingly, on a fundamental point: Modern scholars do not normally believe in “supernatural” miracles, but neither do they believe the events in the life of Vimalakīrti to be historical. They see the Scripture as a literary creation by an imaginative artist of the Mahāyāna tradition: an allegorical presentation of certain basic philosophical and religious teachings, set in the ancient and hallowed times of the Buddha Śākyamuni and using fictitious Tathāgatas and bodhisattvas to dramatize the doctrines. Traditional scholars do believe in the historicity of Vimalakīrti, the other bodhisattvas, and the Buddha in his Mahāyāna manifestations, as well as in the “science-fictional” world view of interrelated universes or buddha-fields. Nevertheless, because of their technical evaluation of the compassionate motives and miraculous

powers of these Buddhas and bodhisattvas, they agree about the allegorical nature of the Scripture. That is, they believe Vimalakīrti to be an emanated incarnation (*nirmāṇakāya*) of the Buddha, a *living allegory*, and a vehicle of the highest teaching; they believe that everything he does and says is solely for the purpose of developing and liberating living beings. Therefore, there is general agreement on the point that the events in the Scripture are allegorical, and we shall leave aside the question of whether they are *living* or *literary* allegory.

This attitude should be maintained to reap the full benefit of the miracles portrayed in the Scripture. Modern and traditional scholars agree that the miracles are not simply displays of magical prowess, either clamoring for belief or challenging disbelief, but rather are intended to stretch the imagination, whether by Vimalakīrti himself, as an artist of life-forms, in their magical accomplishment or by the master literary artist in their creation; they are intended to shake the student’s ingrained preconceptions of possibility and impossibility and make him receptive to the message of inconceivability. Certainly the Hwa Yen masters would agree, pointing out the cosmic vision in the jeweled parasol (p. 12), the thrones imported from the universe Merudhvaja (p. 51), the inexhaustible food (p. 81), the miniaturization and display of the universe Abhirati (p. 94), etc., as perfect illustrations of the principle of mutual nonobstruction of phenomena (*shih shih wu ai*; 事事無碍). Thus Vimalakīrti clearly demonstrates the effective complementarity of the supposed “positive approach” of the *Avatamsaka* and the “negative approach” of the *Prajñāpāramita*, showing the ultimate miracle to be the utter equivalence of voidness and the dazzling relativity of interpenetrating universes.

As we hear Vimalakīrti’s exhortation to strive for tolerance of inconceivability and the inconceivable liberation and as our rigid boundaries for exclusion of possibilities soften and give way before ever expanding frames of reference, our contemplation of the message of Vimalakīrti through opening our mental horizons on the ever widening scope of infinitude will enhance our enjoyment and appreciation of the beauty and splendor of the miraculous displays effected by the Buddha and by Vimalakīrti. Similarly, our imaginative visualization of the mental pictures created by the descriptions of the buddha-fields and by the distortions of dimensions, distances, times, and spaces will contribute to our sensitivity to the profound and subtle implications of Vimalakīrti’s eloquent teaching, that we may be so fortunate to come to hear the great lion’s roar of his profound silence.

The Holy Teaching of Vimalakirti

A Mahayana Scripture

Robert A. F. Thurman, ed. and trans.

Copyright (c) 1976 by The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Reproduced by permission of the publisher.

Chapters:

1. Purification of the Buddha-Field 3
2. Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique 13
3. The Disciples' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti 15
4. The Reluctance of the Bodhisattvas 30
5. The Consolation of the Invalid 39
6. The Inconceivable Liberation 48
7. The Goddess 54
8. The Family of the Tathagatas 63
9. The Dharma-Door of Nonduality 72
10. The Feast Brought by the Emanated Incarnation 77
11. Lesson of the Destructible and the Indestructible 84
12. Vision of the Universe Abhirati and the Tathagata Aksobhya 91
- Epilogue - Antecedents and Transmission of the Holy Dharma 96

Chapter One

Purification of the Buddha-Field

Reverence to all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Aryasravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas, in the past, the present, and the future.

Thus have I heard at one time. The Lord Buddha was in residence in the garden of Amrapali, in the city of Vaisali, attended by a great gathering. Of bhikshus there were eight thousand, all saints. They were free from impurities and afflictions, and all had attained self-mastery. Their minds were entirely liberated by perfect knowledge. They were calm and dignified, like royal elephants. They had accomplished their work, done what they had to do, cast off their burdens, attained their goals, and totally destroyed the bonds of existence. They all had attained the utmost perfection of every form of mind control.

Of bodhisattvas there were thirty-two thousand, great spiritual heroes who were universally acclaimed. They were dedicated through the penetrating activity of their great superknowledges and were sustained by the grace of the Buddha. Guardians of the city of Dharma, they upheld the true doctrine, and their great teachings resounded like the lion's roar throughout the ten directions.

Without having to be asked, they were the natural spiritual benefactors of all living beings. They maintained unbroken the succession of the Three Jewels, conquering devils and foes and overwhelming all critics.

Their mindfulness, intelligence, realization, meditation, incantation, and eloquence all were perfected. They had attained the intuitive tolerance of the ultimate incomprehensibility of all things. They turned the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. They were stamped with the insignia of signlessness. They were expert in knowing the spiritual faculties of all living beings. They were brave with the confidence that overawes all assemblies. They had gathered the great stores of merit and of wisdom, and their bodies, beautiful without ornaments, were adorned with all the auspicious signs and marks.

They were exalted in fame and glory, like the lofty summit of Mount Sumeru. Their high resolve as hard as diamond, unbreakable in their faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, they showered forth the rain of ambrosia that is released by the light rays of the jewel of the Dharma, which shines everywhere.

Their voices were perfect in diction and resonance, and versatile in speaking all languages. They had penetrated the profound principle of relativity and had destroyed the persistence of the instinctual mental habits underlying all convictions concerning finitude and infinitude. They spoke fearlessly, like lions, sounding the thunder of the magnificent teaching. Unequaled, they surpassed all measure. They were the best captains for the voyage of discovery of the treasures of the Dharma, the stores of merit and wisdom. They were expert in the way of the Dharma,

which is straight, peaceful, subtle, gentle, hard to see, and difficult to realize.

They were endowed with the wisdom that is able to understand the thoughts of living beings, as well as their comings and goings. They had been consecrated with the anointment of the peerless gnosis of the Buddha. With their high resolve, they approached the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen special qualities of the Buddha.

They had crossed the terrifying abyss of the bad migrations, and yet they assumed reincarnation voluntarily in all migrations for the sake of disciplining living beings. Great Kings of medicine, understanding all the sicknesses of passions, they could apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately. They were inexhaustible mines of limitless virtues, and they glorified innumerable buddha-fields with the splendor of these virtues. They conferred great benefit when seen, heard, or even approached. Were one to extol them for innumerable hundreds of thousands of myriads of aeons, one still could not exhaust their mighty flood of virtues.

These bodhisattvas were named: Samadarsana, Asamadarsana, Samadhivikurvitaraja, Dharmesvara, Dharmaketu, Prabhaketu, Prabhavyuha, Ratnavyuha, Mahavyuha, Pratibhanakuta, Ratnakuta, Ratnapani, Ratnamudrahasta, Nityapralambahasta, Nityotksipthasta, Nityatapta, Nityamuditendriya, Pramodyaraja, Devaraja, Pranidhanapravesaprapta, Prasiddhapratisamvitprapta, Gaganaganja, Ratnolkaparigrhita, Ratnasura, Ratnapriya, Ratnasri, Indrajala, Jaliniprabha, Niralambanadhyana, Prajnakuta, Ratnadatta, Marapramardaka, Vidyuddeva, Vikurvanaraja, Kutanimittasamatikranta, Simhanadanadin, Giryagrapramardiraja, Gandhahastin, Gandhakunjaranaga, Nityodyukta, Aniksiptadhura, Pramati, Sujata, Padmasrigarbha, Padmavyuha, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, Brahmajala, Ratnadandin, Marakarmavijeta, Ksetrasamalamkara, Maniratnacchattra, Suvarnacuda, Manicuda, Maitreya, Manjusrikumarabhuta, and so forth, with the remainder of the thirty-two thousand.

There were also gathered there ten thousand Brahmas, at their head Brahma Sikkhin, who had come from the Asoka universe with its four sectors to see, venerate, and serve the Buddha and to hear the Dharma from his own mouth. There were twelve thousand Sakras, from various four-sector universes. And there were other powerful gods: Brahmas, Sakras, Lokapalas, devas, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas. Finally, there was the fourfold community, consisting of bhikshus, bhikshunis, laymen, and laywomen. The Lord Buddha, thus surrounded and venerated by these multitudes of many hundreds of thousands of living beings, sat upon a majestic lion-throne and began to teach the Dharma. Dominating all the multitudes, just as Sumeru, the king of mountains, looms high over the oceans, the Lord Buddha shone, radiated, and glittered as he sat upon his magnificent lion-throne.

Thereupon, the Licchavi bodhisattva Ratnakara, with five hundred Licchavi youths, each holding a precious parasol made of seven different kinds of jewels, came forth from the city of Vaisali and presented himself at the grove of Amrapali. Each approached the Buddha, bowed at his feet, circumambulated him clockwise seven times, laid down his precious parasol in offering,

and withdrew to one side.

As soon as all these precious parasols had been laid down, suddenly, by the miraculous power of the Lord, they were transformed into a single precious canopy so great that it formed a covering for this entire billion-world galaxy. The surface of the entire billion-world galaxy was reflected in the interior of the great precious canopy, where the total content of this galaxy could be seen: limitless mansions of suns, moons, and stellar bodies; the realms of the devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas, as well as the realms of the four Maharajas; the king of mountains, Mount Sumeru; Mount Himadri, Mount Mucilinda, Mount Mahamucilinda, Mount Gandhamadana, Mount Ratnaparvata, Mount Kalaparvata, Mount Cakravada, Mount Mahacakravada; all the great oceans, rivers, bays, torrents, streams, brooks, and springs; finally, all the villages, suburbs, cities, capitals, provinces, and wildernesses. All this could be clearly seen by everyone. And the voices of all the Buddhas of the ten directions could be heard proclaiming their teachings of the Dharma in all the worlds, the sounds reverberating in the space beneath the great precious canopy.

At this vision of the magnificent miracle effected by the supernatural power of the Lord Buddha, the entire host was ecstatic, enraptured, astonished, delighted, satisfied, and filled with awe and pleasure. They all bowed down to the Tathagata, withdrew to one side with palms pressed together, and gazed upon him with fixed attention. The young Licchavi Ratnakara knelt with his right knee on the ground, raised his hands, palms pressed together in salute of the Buddha, and praised him with the following hymn.

Pure are your eyes, broad and beautiful, like the petals of a blue lotus.
Pure is your thought, having discovered the supreme transcendence of all trances.
Immeasurable is the ocean of your virtues, the accumulation of your good deeds.
You affirm the path of peace.

Oh, Great Ascetic, obeisance to you!
Leader, bull of men, we behold the revelation of your miracle.
The superb and radiant fields of the Sugatas appear before us,
And your extensive spiritual teachings, that lead to immortality
Make themselves heard throughout the whole reach of space.

Dharma-King, you rule with the Dharma your supreme Dharma-kingdom,
And thereby bestow the treasures of the Dharma upon all living beings.
Expert in the deep analysis of things, you teach their ultimate meaning.
Sovereign Lord of Dharma, obeisance to you.

All these things arise dependently, from causes,
Yet they are neither existent nor nonexistent.
Therein is neither ego, nor experiencer, nor doer,
Yet no action, good or evil, loses its effects.
Such is your teaching.

O Sakyamuni, conquering the powerful host of Mara,
You found peace, immortality, and the happiness of that supreme enlightenment,
Which is not realized by any among the heterodox,
Though they arrest their feeling, thought and mental processes.

O Wonderful King of Dharma,
You turned the wheel of Dharma before men and gods,
With its threefold revolution, its manifold aspects,
Its purity of nature, and its extreme peace;
And thereby the Three Jewels were revealed.

Those who are well disciplined by your precious Dharma
Are free of vain imaginings and always deeply peaceful.

Supreme doctor, you put an end to birth, decay, sickness, and death.
Immeasurable ocean of virtue, obeisance to you!
Like Mount Sumeru, you are unmoved by honor or scorn.
You love moral beings and immoral beings equally.
Poised in equanimity, your mind is like the sky.
Who would not honor such a precious jewel of a being?

Great Sage, in all these multitudes gathered here,
Who look upon your countenance with hearts sincere in faith,
Each being beholds the Victor, as if just before him.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.

Although the Lord speaks with but one voice,
Those present perceive that same voice differently,
And each understands in his own language according to his own needs.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.

From the Leader's act of speaking in a single voice,
Some merely develop an instinct for the teaching, some gain realization,
Some find pacification of all their doubts.
This is a special quality of the Buddha.

Obeisance to you who command the force of leadership and the ten powers!
Obeisance to you who are dauntless, knowing no fear!
Obeisance to you, leader of all living beings,
Who fully manifests the special qualities!

Obeisance to you who have cut the bondage of all fetters!
Obeisance to you who, having gone beyond, stand on firm ground!

Obeisance to you who save the suffering beings!
Obeisance to you who do not remain in the migrations!

You associate with living beings by frequenting their migrations.
Yet your mind is liberated from all migrations.
Just as the lotus, born of mud, is not tainted thereby,
So the lotus of the Buddha preserves the realization of voidness.

You nullify all signs in all things everywhere.
You are not subject to any wish for anything at all.
The miraculous power of the Buddhas is inconceivable.
I bow to you, who stand nowhere, like infinite space.

Then, the young Licchavi Ratnakara, having celebrated the Buddha with these verses, further addressed him:

"Lord, these five hundred young Licchavis are truly on their way to unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and they have asked what is the bodhisattvas' purification of the buddha-field. Please, Lord, explain to them the bodhisattvas' purification of the buddha-field!"
Upon this request, the Buddha gave his approval to the young Licchavi Ratnakara: "Good, good, young man!

Your question to the Tathagata about the purification of the buddha-field is indeed good. Therefore, young man, listen well and remember! I will explain to you the purification of the buddha-field of the bodhisattvas."

"Very good, Lord," replied Ratnakara and the five hundred young Licchavis, and they set themselves to listen.

The Buddha said, "Noble sons, a buddha-field of bodhisattvas is a field of living beings. Why so? A bodhisattva embraces a buddha-field to the same extent that he causes the development of living beings. He embraces a buddha-field to the same extent that living beings become disciplined. He embraces a buddha-field to the same extent that, through entrance into a buddha-field, living beings are introduced to the buddha-gnosis. He embraces a buddha-field to the same extent that, through entrance into that buddha-field, living beings increase their holy spiritual faculties. Why so? Noble son, a buddha-field of bodhisattvas springs from the aims of living beings.

"For example, Ratnakara, should one wish to build in empty space, one might go ahead in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn anything in empty space. In just the same way, should a bodhisattva, who knows full well that all things are like empty space, wish to build a buddha-field in order to develop living beings, he might go ahead, in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn a buddha-field in empty space.

"Yet, Ratnakara, a bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of positive thought. When he attains enlightenment, living beings free of hypocrisy and deceit will be born in his buddha-field.

"Noble son, a bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of high resolve. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who have harvested the two stores and have planted the roots of virtue will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of virtuous application. When he attains enlightenment living beings who live by all virtuous principles will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is the magnificence of the conception of the spirit of enlightenment. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are actually participating in the Mahayana will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of generosity. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who give away all their possessions will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of tolerance. When he attains enlightenment, living beings with the transcendences of tolerance, discipline, and the superior trance - hence beautiful with the thirty-two auspicious signs - will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of meditation. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are evenly balanced through mindfulness and awareness will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is a field of wisdom. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are destined for the ultimate will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field consists of the four immeasurables. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who live by love, compassion, joy, and impartiality will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field consists of the four means of unification. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are held together by all the liberations will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is skill in liberative technique. When he attains enlightenment, living beings skilled in all liberative techniques and activities will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field consists of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. Living beings who devote their efforts to the four foci of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of magical power, the five spiritual faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eight branches of the holy path will be born in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is his mind of total dedication. When he attains enlightenment, the ornaments of all virtues will appear in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is the doctrine that eradicates the eight adversities. When he attains enlightenment, the three bad migrations will cease, and there will be no such thing as the eight adversities in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field consists of his personal observance of the basic precepts and his restraint in blaming others for their transgressions. When he attains enlightenment, even the word 'crime' will never be mentioned in his buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's buddha-field is the purity of the path of the ten virtues. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are secure in long life, great in wealth, chaste in conduct, enhanced by true speech, soft-spoken, free of divisive intrigues and adroit in reconciling factions, enlightening in their conversations, free of envy, free of malice, and endowed with perfect views will be born in his buddha-field.

"Thus, noble son, just as is the bodhisattva's production of the spirit of enlightenment, so is his positive thought. And just as is his positive thought, so is his virtuous application.

"His virtuous application is tantamount to his high resolve, his high resolve is tantamount to his determination, his determination is tantamount to his practice, his practice is tantamount to his total dedication, his total dedication is tantamount to his liberative technique, his liberative technique is tantamount to his development of living beings, and his development of living beings is tantamount to the purity of his buddha-field.

"The purity of his buddha-field reflects the purity of living beings; the purity of the living beings reflects the purity of his gnosis; the purity of his gnosis reflects the purity of his doctrine; the purity of his doctrine reflects the purity of his transcendental practice; and the purity of his transcendental practice reflects the purity of his own mind."

Thereupon, magically influenced by the Buddha, the venerable Sariputra had this thought: "If the buddha-field is pure only to the extent that the mind of the bodhisattva is pure, then, when Sakyamuni Buddha was engaged in the career of the bodhisattva, his mind must have been impure. Otherwise, how could this buddha-field appear to be so impure?"

The Buddha, knowing telepathically the thought of venerable Sariputra, said to him, "What do you think, Sariputra? Is it because the sun and moon are impure that those blind from birth do not see them?"

Sariputra replied, "No, Lord. It is not so. The fault lies with those blind from birth, and not with the sun and moon."

The Buddha declared, "In the same way, Sariputra, the fact that some living beings do not behold the splendid display of virtues of the buddha-field of the Tathagata is due to their own ignorance. It is not the fault of the Tathagata. Sariputra, the buddha-field of the Tathagata is

pure, but you do not see it."

Then the Brahma Sikkhī said to the venerable Sāriputra, "Reverend Sāriputra, do not say that the buddha-field of the Tathagata is impure. Reverend Sāriputra, the buddha-field of the Tathagata is pure. I see the splendid expanse of the buddha-field of the Lord Sakyamuni as equal to the splendor of, for example, the abodes of the highest deities."

Then the venerable Sāriputra said to the Brahma Sikkhī, "As for me, O Brahma, I see this great earth, with its highs and lows, its thorns, its precipices, its peaks, and its abysses, as if it were entirely filled with ordure."

Brahma Sikkhī replied, "The fact that you see such a buddha-field as this as if it were so impure, reverend Sāriputra, is a sure sign that there are highs and lows in your mind and that your positive thought in regard to the buddha-gnosis is not pure either. Reverend Sāriputra, those whose minds are impartial toward all living beings and whose positive thoughts toward the buddha-gnosis are pure see this buddha-field as perfectly pure."

Thereupon the Lord touched the ground of this billion-world-galactic universe with his big toe, and suddenly it was transformed into a huge mass of precious jewels, a magnificent array of many hundreds of thousands of clusters of precious gems, until it resembled the universe of the Tathagata Ratnavyūha, called Anantagunaratnavyūha. Everyone in the entire assembly was filled with wonder, each perceiving himself seated on a throne of jeweled lotuses.

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Sāriputra, "Sāriputra, do you see this splendor of the virtues of the buddha-field?"

Sāriputra replied, "I see it, Lord! Here before me is a display of splendor such as I never before heard of or beheld!"

The Buddha said, "Sāriputra, this buddha-field is always thus pure, but the Tathagata makes it appear to be spoiled by many faults, in order to bring about the maturity of the inferior living beings. For example, Sāriputra, the gods of the Trayastrimsa heaven all take their food from a single precious vessel, yet the nectar which nourishes each one differs according to the differences of the merits each has accumulated. Just so, Sāriputra, living beings born in the same buddha-field see the splendor of the virtues of the buddha-fields of the Buddhas according to their own degrees of purity."

When this splendor of the beauty of the virtues of the buddha-field shone forth, eighty-four thousand beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, and the five hundred Licchavi youths who had accompanied the young Licchavi Ratnakara all attained the conformational tolerance of ultimate birthlessness.

Then, the Lord withdrew his miraculous power and at once the buddha-field was restored to its usual appearance. Then, both men and gods who subscribed to the disciple-vehicle thought,

"Alas! All constructed things are impermanent."

Thereby, thirty-two thousand living beings purified their immaculate, undistorted Dharma-eye in regard to all things. The eight thousand bhikshus were liberated from their mental defilements, attaining the state of nongrasping. And the eighty-four thousand living beings who were devoted to the grandeur of the buddha-field, having understood that all things are by nature but magical creations, all conceived in their own minds the spirit of unexcelled, totally perfect enlightenment. ^\

Chapter Two

Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique

At that time, there lived in the great city of Vaisali a certain Licchavi, Vimalakirti by name. Having served the ancient Buddhas, he had generated the roots of virtue by honoring them and making offerings to them. He had attained tolerance as well as eloquence. He played with the great superknowledges. He had attained the power of incantations and the fearlessnesses. He had conquered all demons and opponents. He had penetrated the profound way of the Dharma. He was liberated through the transcendence of wisdom. Having integrated his realization with skill in liberative technique, he was expert in knowing the thoughts and actions of living beings. Knowing the strength or weakness of their faculties, and being gifted with unrivaled eloquence, he taught the Dharma appropriately to each. Having applied himself energetically to the Mahayana, he understood it and accomplished his tasks with great finesse. He lived with the deportment of a Buddha, and his superior intelligence was as wide as an ocean. He was praised, honored, and commended by all the Buddhas and was respected by Indra, Brahma, and all the Lokapalas. In order to develop living beings with his skill in liberative technique, he lived in the great city of Vaisali.

His wealth was inexhaustible for the purpose of sustaining the poor and the helpless. He observed a pure morality in order to protect the immoral. He maintained tolerance and self-control in order to reconcile beings who were angry, cruel, violent, and brutal. He blazed with energy in order to inspire people who were lazy. He maintained concentration, mindfulness, and meditation in order to sustain the mentally troubled. He attained decisive wisdom in order to sustain the foolish.

He wore the white clothes of the layman, yet lived impeccably like a religious devotee. He lived at home, but remained aloof from the realm of desire, the realm of pure matter, and the immaterial realm. He had a son, a wife, and female attendants, yet always maintained continence. He appeared to be surrounded by servants, yet lived in solitude. He appeared to be adorned with ornaments, yet always was endowed with the auspicious signs and marks. He seemed to eat and drink, yet always took nourishment from the taste of meditation. He made his appearance at the fields of sports and in the casinos, but his aim was always to mature those people who were attached to games and gambling. He visited the fashionable heterodox teachers, yet always kept unswerving loyalty to the Buddha. He understood the mundane and transcendental sciences and esoteric practices, yet always took pleasure in the delights of the Dharma. He mixed in all crowds, yet was respected as foremost of all.

In order to be in harmony with people, he associated with elders, with those of middle age, and with the young, yet always spoke in harmony with the Dharma. He engaged in all sorts of businesses, yet had no interest in profit or possessions. To train living beings, he would appear at crossroads and on street corners, and to protect them he participated in government. To turn people away from the Hinayana and to engage them in the Mahayana, he appeared among listeners and teachers of the Dharma. To develop children, he visited all the schools. To

demonstrate the evils of desire, he even entered the brothels. To establish drunkards in correct mindfulness, he entered all the cabarets.

He was honored as the businessman among businessmen because he demonstrated the priority of the Dharma. He was honored as the landlord among landlords because he renounced the aggressiveness of ownership. He was honored as the warrior among warriors because he cultivated endurance, determination, and fortitude. He was honored as the aristocrat among aristocrats because he suppressed pride, vanity, and arrogance. He was honored as the official among officials because he regulated the functions of government according to the Dharma. He was honored as the prince of princes because he reversed their attachment to royal pleasures and sovereign power. He was honored as a eunuch in the royal harem because he taught the young ladies according to the Dharma.

He was compatible with ordinary people because he appreciated the excellence of ordinary merits. He was honored as the Indra among Indras because he showed them the temporality of their lordship. He was honored as the Brahma among Brahmas because he showed them the special excellence of gnosis. He was honored as the Lokapala among Lokapalas because he fostered the development of all living beings.

Thus lived the Licchavi Vimalakirti in the great city of Vaisali, endowed with an infinite knowledge of skill in liberative techniques.

At that time, out of this very skill in liberative technique, Vimalakirti manifested himself as if sick. To inquire after his health, the king, the officials, the lords, the youths, the aristocrats, the householders, the businessmen, the townfolk, the countryfolk, and thousands of other living beings came forth from the great city of Vaisali and called on the invalid. When they arrived, Vimalakirti taught them the Dharma, beginning his discourse from the actuality of the four main elements:

"Friends, this body is so impermanent, fragile, unworthy of confidence, and feeble. It is so insubstantial, perishable, short-lived, painful, filled with diseases, and subject to changes. Thus, my friends, as this body is only a vessel of many sicknesses, wise men do not rely on it. This body is like a ball of foam, unable to bear any pressure. It is like a water bubble, not remaining very long. It is like a mirage, born from the appetites of the passions. It is like the trunk of the plantain tree, having no core. Alas! This body is like a machine, a nexus of bones and tendons. It is like a magical illusion, consisting of falsifications. It is like a dream, being an unreal vision. It is like a reflection, being the image of former actions. It is like an echo, being dependent on conditioning. It is like a cloud, being characterized by turbulence and dissolution. It is like a flash of lightning, being unstable, and decaying every moment. The body is ownerless, being the product of a variety of conditions.

"This body is inert, like the earth; selfless, like water; lifeless, like fire; impersonal, like the wind; and nonsubstantial, like space. This body is unreal, being a collocation of the four main elements. It is void, not existing as self or as self-posessed. It is inanimate, being like grass,

trees, walls, clods of earth, and hallucinations. It is insensate, being driven like a windmill. It is filthy, being an agglomeration of pus and excrement. It is false, being fated to be broken and destroyed, in spite of being anointed and massaged. It is afflicted by the four hundred and four diseases. It is like an ancient well, constantly overwhelmed by old age. Its duration is never certain - certain only is its end in death. This body is a combination of aggregates, elements, and sense-media, which are comparable to murderers, poisonous snakes, and an empty town, respectively.

Therefore, you should be revulsed by such a body. You should despair of it and should arouse your admiration for the body of the Tathagata.

"Friends, the body of a Tathagata is the body of Dharma, born of gnosis. The body of a Tathagata is born of the stores of merit and wisdom. It is born of morality, of meditation, of wisdom, of the liberations, and of the knowledge and vision of liberation. It is born of love, compassion, joy, and impartiality. It is born of charity, discipline, and self-control. It is born of the path of ten virtues. It is born of patience and gentleness. It is born of the roots of virtue planted by solid efforts. It is born of the concentrations, the liberations, the meditations, and the absorptions. It is born of learning, wisdom, and liberative technique. It is born of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. It is born of mental quiescence and transcendental analysis. It is born of the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen special qualities. It is born of all the transcendences. It is born from sciences and superknowledges. It is born of the abandonment of all evil qualities, and of the collection of all good qualities. It is born of truth. It is born of reality. It is born of conscious awareness.

"Friends, the body of a Tathagata is born of innumerable good works. Toward such a body you should turn your aspirations, and, in order to eliminate the sicknesses of the passions of all living beings, you should conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment."

While the Licchavi Vimalakirti thus taught the Dharma to those who had come to inquire about his sickness, many hundreds of thousands of living beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. ^

Chapter Three

The Disciples' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought to himself, "I am sick, lying on my bed in pain, yet the Tathagata, the saint, the perfectly accomplished Buddha, does not consider or take pity upon me, and sends no one to inquire after my illness."

The Lord knew this thought in the mind of Vimalakirti and said to the venerable Sariputra, "Sariputra, go to inquire after the illness of the Licchavi Vimalakirti."

Thus having been addressed, the venerable Sariputra answered the Buddha, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to ask the Licchavi Vimalakirti about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was sitting at the foot of a tree in the forest, absorbed in contemplation, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came to the foot of that tree and said to me, 'Reverend Sariputra, this is not the way to absorb yourself in contemplation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that neither body nor mind appear anywhere in the triple world. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest all ordinary behavior without forsaking cessation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest the nature of an ordinary person without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that the mind neither settles within nor moves without toward external forms. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are manifest without deviation toward any convictions. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you are released in liberation without abandoning the passions that are the province of the world.

"'Reverend Sariputra, those who absorb themselves in contemplation in such a way are declared by the Lord to be truly absorbed in contemplation.'

"Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was unable to reply and remained silent. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to ask that good man about his sickness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Mahamaudgalyayana, "Maudgalyayana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Maudgalyayana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day when I was teaching the Dharma to the householders in a square in the great city of Vaisali, and the Licchavi Vimalakirti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Maudgalyayana, that is not the way to teach the Dharma to the householders in their white clothes. The Dharma must be taught according to reality.

"'Reverend Maudgalyayana, the Dharma is without living beings, because it is free of the dust of living beings. It is selfless, because it is free of the dust of desire. It is lifeless, because it is free of birth and death. It is without personalities, because it dispenses with past origins and future

destinies.

"The Dharma is peace and pacification, because it is free from desire. It does not become an object, because it is free of words and letters; it is inexpressible, and it transcends all movement of mind.

"The Dharma is omnipresent, because it is like infinite space. It is without color, mark, or shape, because it is free of all process. It is without the concept of "mine," because it is free of the habitual notion of possession. It is without ideation, because it is free of mind, thought, or consciousness. It is incomparable, because it has no antitheses. It is without presumption of conditionality, because it does not conform to causes.

"It permeates evenly all things, because all are included in the ultimate realm. It conforms to reality by means of the process of nonconformity. It abides at the reality-limit, for it is utterly without fluctuation. It is immovable, because it is independent of the six objects of sense. It is without coming and going, for it never stands still. It is comprised by voidness, is remarkable through signlessness, and is free of presumption and repudiation, because of wishlessness. It is without establishment and rejection, without birth or destruction. It is without any fundamental consciousness, transcending the range of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought. It is without highness and lowness. It abides without movement or activity.

"Reverend Mahamaudgalyayana, how could there be a teaching in regard to such a Dharma? Reverend Mahamaudgalyayana, even the expression "to teach the Dharma" is presumptuous, and those who listen to it listen to presumption. Reverend Maudgalyayana, where there are no presumptuous words, there is no teacher of the Dharma, no one to listen, and no one to understand. It is as if an illusory person were to teach the Dharma to illusory people.

"Therefore, you should teach the Dharma by keeping your mind on this. You should be adept in regard to the spiritual faculties of living beings. By means of the correct vision of the wisdom-eye, manifesting the great compassion, acknowledging the benevolent activity of the Buddha, purifying your intentions, understanding the definitive expressions of the Dharma, you should teach the Dharma in order that the continuity of the Three Jewels may never be interrupted.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had discoursed thus, eight hundred householders in the crowd conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and I myself was speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness." Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Mahakasyapa, "Mahakasyapa, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

"Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was in the street of the poor begging for my food, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Mahakasyapa, to avoid the houses of the wealthy, and to favor the houses of the poor - this is partiality in benevolence. Reverend Mahakasyapa, you should dwell on the fact of the equality of things, and you should seek alms

with consideration for all living beings at all times. You should beg your food in awareness of the ultimate nonexistence of food. You should seek alms for the sake of eliminating the materialism of others.

When you enter a town, you should keep in mind its actual voidness, yet you should proceed through it in order to develop men and women. You should enter homes as if entering the family of the Buddha. You should accept alms by not taking anything. You should see form like a man blind from birth, hear sounds as if they were echoes, smell scents as if they were winds, experience tastes without any discrimination, touch tangibles in awareness of the ultimate lack of contact in gnosis, and know things with the consciousness of an illusory creature. That which is without intrinsic substance and without imparted substance does not burn. And what does not burn will not be extinguished.

"Elder Mahakasyapa, if, equipoised in the eight liberations without transcending the eight perversions, you can enter the equanimity of reality by means of the equanimity of perversion, and if you can make a gift to all living beings and an offering to all the saints and Buddhas out of even a single measure of alms, then you yourself may eat. Thus, when you eat, after offering, you should be neither affected by passions nor free of passions, neither involved in concentration nor free from concentration, neither living in the world nor abiding in liberation. Furthermore, those who give such alms, reverend, have neither great merit nor small merit, neither gain nor loss. They should follow the way of the Buddhas, not the way of the disciples. Only in this way, Elder Mahakasyapa, is the practice of eating by alms meaningful."

"Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was astonished and thought: 'Reverence to all bodhisattvas! If a lay bodhisattva may be endowed with such eloquence, who is there who would not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? From that time forth, I no longer recommend the vehicles of the disciples and of the solitary sages but recommend the Mahayana. And thus, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Subhuti, "Subhuti, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Subhuti replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? My Lord,

I remember one day, when I went to beg my food at the house of the Licchavi Vimalakirti in the great city of Vaisali, he took my bowl and filled it with some excellent food and said to me, 'Reverend Subhuti, take this food if you understand the equality of all things, by means of the equality of material objects, and if you understand the equality of all the attributes of the Buddha, by means of the equality of all things. Take this food if, without abandoning desire, hatred, and folly, you can avoid association with them; if you can follow the path of the single way without ever disturbing the egoistic views; if you can produce the knowledges and liberations without conquering ignorance and the craving for existence; if, by the equality of the five deadly sins, you reach the equality of liberation; if you are neither liberated nor bound; if

you do not see the Four Holy Truths, yet are not the one who "has not seen the truth"; if you have not attained any fruit, yet are not the one who "has not attained"; if you are an ordinary person, yet have not the qualities of an ordinary person; if you are not holy, yet are not unholy; if you are responsible for all things, yet are free of any notion concerning anything.

"Take this food, reverend Subhuti, if, without seeing the Buddha, hearing the Dharma, or serving the Sangha, you undertake the religious life under the six heterodox masters; namely, Purana Kasyapa, Maskarin Goshiputra, Samjayin Vairatiputra, Kakuda Katyayana, Ajita Kesakambala, and Nirgrantha Jnaniputra, and follow the ways they prescribe.

"Take this food, reverend Subhuti, if, entertaining all false views, you find neither extremes nor middle; if, bound up in the eight adversities, you do not obtain favorable conditions; if, assimilating the passions, you do not attain purification; if the dispassion of all living beings is your dispassion, reverend; if those who make offerings to you are not thereby purified; if those who offer you food, reverend, still fall into the three bad migrations; if you associate with all Maras; if you entertain all passions; if the nature of passions is the nature of a reverend; if you have hostile feelings toward all living beings; if you despise all the Buddhas; if you criticize all the teachings of the Buddha; if you do not rely on the Sangha; and finally, if you never enter ultimate liberation.'

"Lord, when I heard these words of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, I wondered what I should say and what I should do, but I was totally in the dark. Leaving the bowl, I was about to leave the house when the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to me, 'Reverend Subhuti, do not fear these words, and pick up your bowl. What do you think, reverend Subhuti? If it were an incarnation created by the Tathagata who spoke thus to you, would you be afraid?'

"I answered, 'No indeed, noble sir!' He then said, 'Reverend Subhuti, the nature of all things is like illusion, like a magical incarnation. So you should not fear them. Why? All words also have that nature, and thus the wise are not attached to words, nor do they fear them. Why? All language does not ultimately exist, except as liberation. The nature of all things is liberation.'

"When Vimalakirti had discoursed in this way, two hundred gods obtained the pure doctrinal vision in regard to all things, without obscurity or defilement, and five hundred gods obtained the conformatory tolerance. As for me, I was speechless and unable to respond to him. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Purnamaitrayaniputra, "Purna, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Purna replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was teaching the Dharma to some young monks in the great forest, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Purna, first concentrate yourself, regard the minds of these young bhikshus, and then teach them the Dharma! Do not put rotten food into a jeweled bowl! First understand the inclinations of these

monks, and do not confuse priceless sapphires with glass beads!

"Reverend Purna, without examining the spiritual faculties of living beings, do not presume upon the one-sidedness of their faculties; do not wound those who are without wounds; do not impose a narrow path upon those who aspire to a great path; do not try to pour the great ocean into the hoof-print of an ox; do not try to put Mount Sumeru into a grain of mustard; do not confuse the brilliance of the sun with the light of a glowworm; and do not expose those who admire the roar of a lion to the howl of a jackal!

"Reverend Purna, all these monks were formerly engaged in the Mahayana but have forgotten the spirit of enlightenment. So do not instruct them in the disciple-vehicle. The disciple-vehicle is not ultimately valid, and you disciples are like men blind from birth, in regard to recognition of the degrees of the spiritual faculties of living beings.'

"At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakirti entered into such a concentration that those monks were caused to remember their various former existences, in which they had produced the roots of virtue by serving five hundred Buddhas for the sake of perfect enlightenment. As soon as their own spirits of enlightenment had become clear to them, they bowed at the feet of that good man and pressed their palms together in reverence. He taught them the Dharma, and they all attained the stage of irreversibility from the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. It occurred to me then, 'The disciples, who do not know the thoughts or the inclinations of others, are not able to teach the Dharma to anyone. Why? These disciples are not expert in discerning the superiority and inferiority of the spiritual faculties of living beings, and they are not always in a state of concentration like the Tathagata, the Saint, the perfectly accomplished Buddha.'

"Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his health."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Mahakatyayana, "Katyayana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Katyayana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when, after the Lord had given some brief instruction to the monks, I was defining the expressions of that discourse by teaching the meaning of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and peace; the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Mahakatyayana, do not teach an ultimate reality endowed with activity, production, and destruction! Reverend Mahakatyayana, nothing was ever destroyed, is destroyed, or will ever be destroyed. Such is the meaning of "impermanence." The meaning of the realization of birthlessness, through the realization of the voidness of the five aggregates, is the meaning of "suffering." The fact of the nonduality of self and selflessness is the meaning of "selflessness." That which has no intrinsic substance and no other sort of substance does not burn, and what does not burn is not extinguished; such lack of extinction is the meaning of "peace.'"

"When he had discoursed thus, the minds of the monks were liberated from their defilements and entered a state of nongrasping.

Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Aniruddha, "Aniruddha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

"My Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember, Lord, one day when I was taking a walk, the great Brahma named Subhavyuha and the ten thousand other Brahmas who accompanied him illuminated the place with their radiance and, having bowed their heads at my feet, withdrew to one side and asked me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, you have been proclaimed by the Buddha to be the foremost among those who possess the divine eye. To what distance does the divine vision of the venerable Aniruddha extend?'

I answered, 'Friends, I see the entire billion-world-galactic universe of the Lord Sakyamuni just as plainly as a man of ordinary vision sees a myrobalan nut on the palm of his hand.' When I had said these words, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and, having bowed his head at my feet, said to me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, is your divine eye compounded in nature? Or is it uncompounded in nature?'

If it is compounded in nature, it is the same as the superknowledges of the heterodox. If it is uncompounded in nature, then it is not constructed and, as such, is incapable of seeing. Then, how do you see, O elder?'

"At these words, I became speechless, and Brahma also was amazed to hear this teaching from that good man.

Having bowed to him, he said, 'Who then, in the world, possesses the divine eye?'

"Vimalakirti answered, 'In the world, it is the Buddhas who have the divine eye. They see all the buddha-fields without even leaving their state of concentration and without being affected by duality.'

"Having heard these words, the ten thousand Brahmas were inspired with high resolve and conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Having paid homage and respect both to me and to that good man, they disappeared. As for me, I remained speechless, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Upali, "Upali, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Upali replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness.

Why? Lord, I remember that one day there were two monks who had committed some infraction and were too ashamed to appear before the Lord, so they came to me and said, 'Reverend Upali, we have both committed an infraction but are too ashamed to appear before the Buddha. Venerable Upali, kindly remove our anxieties by absolving us of these infractions.'

"Lord, while I was giving those two monks some religious discourse, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Upali, do not aggravate further the sins of these two monks. Without perplexing them, relieve their remorse. Reverend Upali, sin is not to be apprehended within, or without, or between the two. Why?

The Buddha has said, "Living beings are afflicted by the passions of thought, and they are purified by the purification of thought."

"Reverend Upali, the mind is neither within nor without, nor is it to be apprehended between the two. Sin is just the same as the mind, and all things are just the same as sin. They do not escape this same reality.

"Reverend Upali, this nature of the mind, by virtue of which your mind, reverend, is liberated - does it ever become afflicted?'

"Never,' I replied.

"Reverend Upali, the minds of all living beings have that very nature. Reverend Upali, passions consist of conceptualizations. The ultimate nonexistence of these conceptualizations and imaginary fabrications - that is the purity that is the intrinsic nature of the mind. Misapprehensions are passions. The ultimate absence of misapprehensions is the intrinsic nature of the mind. The presumption of self is passion. The absence of self is the intrinsic nature of the mind. Reverend Upali, all things are without production, destruction, and duration, like magical illusions, clouds, and lightning; all things are evanescent, not remaining even for an instant; all things are like dreams, hallucinations, and unreal visions; all things are like the reflection of the moon in water and like a mirror-image; they are born of mental construction. Those who know this are called the true upholders of the discipline, and those disciplined in that way are indeed well disciplined."

"Then the two monks said, 'This householder is extremely well endowed with wisdom. The reverend Upali, who was proclaimed by the Lord as the foremost of the upholders of the discipline, is not his equal.'

"I then said to the two monks, 'Do not entertain the notion that he is a mere householder! Why? With the exception of the Tathagata himself, there is no disciple or bodhisattva capable of competing with his eloquence or rivaling the brilliance of his wisdom.'

"Thereupon, the two monks, delivered from their anxieties and inspired with a high resolve, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Bowing down to that good man, they

made the wish: 'May all living beings attain eloquence such as this!' Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Rahula, "Rahula, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Rahula replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day many young Licchavi gentlemen came to the place where I was and said to me, 'Reverend Rahula, you are the son of the Lord, and, having renounced a kingdom of a universal monarch, you have left the world. What are the virtues and benefits you saw in leaving the world?'

"As I was teaching them properly the benefits and virtues of renouncing the world, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and, having greeted me, said, 'Reverend Rahula, you should not teach the benefits and virtues of renunciation in the way that you do. Why? Renunciation is itself the very absence of virtues and benefits. Reverend Rahula, one may speak of benefits and virtues in regard to compounded things, but renunciation is uncompounded, and there can be no question of benefits and virtues in regard to the uncompounded. Reverend Rahula, renunciation is not material but is free of matter. It is free of the extreme views of beginning and end. It is the path of liberation. It is praised by the wise, embraced by the saints, and causes the defeat of all Maras. It liberates from the five states of existence, purifies the five eyes, cultivates the five powers, and supports the five spiritual faculties. Renunciation is totally harmless to others and is not adulterated with evil things. It disciplines the heterodox, transcending all denominations. It is the bridge over the swamp of desire, without grasping, and free of the habits of "I" and "mine." It is without attachment and without disturbance, eliminating all commotion. It disciplines one's own mind and protects the minds of others. It favors mental quiescence and stimulates transcendental analysis. It is irreproachable in all respects and so is called renunciation. Those who leave the mundane in this way are called "truly renunciants." Young men, renounce the world in the light of this clear teaching! The appearance of the Buddha is extremely rare. Human life endowed with leisure and opportunity is very hard to obtain. To be a human being is very precious.'

"The young men complained: 'But, householder, we have heard the Tathagata declare that one should not renounce the world without the permission of one's parents.'

"Vimalakirti answered: 'Young men, you should cultivate yourselves intensively to conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. That in itself will be your renunciation and high ordination!'

"Thereupon, thirty-two of the Licchavi youths conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."
The Buddha then said to the venerable Ananda, "Ananda, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to

inquire about his illness."

Ananda replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when the body of the Lord manifested some indisposition and he required some milk; I took the bowl and went to the door of the mansion of a great Brahman family. The Licchavi Vimalakirti came there, and, having saluted me, said, 'Reverend Ananda, what are you doing on the threshold of this house with your bowl in your hand so early in the morning?'

"I replied: 'The body of the Lord manifests some indisposition, and he needs some milk. Therefore, I have come to fetch some.'

"Vimalakirti then said to me, 'Reverend Ananda, do not say such a thing! Reverend Ananda, the body of the Tathagata is tough as a diamond, having eliminated all the instinctual traces of evil and being endowed with all goodness. How could disease or discomfort affect such a body?

"Reverend Ananda, go in silence, and do not belittle the Lord. Do not say such things to others. It would not be good for the powerful gods or for the bodhisattvas coming from the various buddha-fields to hear such words.

"Reverend Ananda, a universal monarch, who is endowed only with a small root of virtue, is free of diseases. How then could the Lord, who has an infinite root of virtue, have any disease? It is impossible.

"Reverend Ananda, do not bring shame upon us, but go in silence, lest the heterodox sectarians should hear your words. They would say, 'For shame! The teacher of these people cannot even cure his own sicknesses. How then can he cure the sicknesses of others?' Reverend Ananda, go then discreetly so that no one observes you.

"Reverend Ananda, the Tathagatas have the body of the Dharma - not a body that is sustained by material food. The Tathagatas have a transcendental body that has transcended all mundane qualities. There is no injury to the body of a Tathagata, as it is rid of all defilements. The body of a Tathagata is uncompounded and free of all formative activity. Reverend Ananda, to believe there can be illness in such a body is irrational and unseemly!

"When I had heard these words, I wondered if I had previously misheard and misunderstood the Buddha, and I was very much ashamed. Then I heard a voice from the sky: 'Ananda! The householder speaks to you truly. Nevertheless, since the Buddha has appeared during the time of the five corruptions, he disciplines living beings by acting lowly and humble. Therefore, Ananda, do not be ashamed, and go and get the milk!'

"Lord, such was my conversation with the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

In the same way, the rest of the five hundred disciples were reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and each told the Buddha his own adventure, recounting all his conversations with the Licchavi Vimalakirti. ^

Chapter Four

The Reluctance of the Bodhisattvas

Then, the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, "Maitreya, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Maitreya replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day I was engaged in a conversation with the gods of the Tusita heaven, the god Samtusita and his retinue, about the stage of nonregression of the great bodhisattvas. At that time, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and addressed me as follows:

"Maitreya, the Buddha has prophesied that only one more birth stands between you and unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. What kind of birth does this prophecy concern, Maitreya? Is it past? Is it future? Or is it present? If it is a past birth, it is already finished. If it is a future birth, it will never arrive. If it is a present birth, it does not abide. For the Buddha has declared, "Bhikshus, in a single moment, you are born, you age, you die, you transmigrate, and you are reborn."

"Then might the prophecy concern birthlessness? But birthlessness applies to the stage of destiny for the ultimate, in which there is neither prophecy nor attainment of perfect enlightenment.

"Therefore, Maitreya, is your reality from birth? Or is it from cessation? Your reality as prophesied is not born and does not cease, nor will it be born nor will it cease. Furthermore, your reality is just the same as the reality of all living beings, the reality of all things, and the reality of all the holy ones. If your enlightenment can be prophesied in such a way, so can that of all living beings. Why? Because reality does not consist of duality or of diversity. Maitreya, whenever you attain Buddhahood, which is the perfection of enlightenment, at the same time all living beings will also attain ultimate liberation. Why? The Tathagatas do not enter ultimate liberation until all living beings have entered ultimate liberation. For, since all living beings are utterly liberated, the Tathagatas see them as having the nature of ultimate liberation.

"Therefore, Maitreya, do not fool and delude these deities! No one abides in, or regresses from, enlightenment.

Maitreya, you should introduce these deities to the repudiation of all discriminative constructions concerning enlightenment.

"Enlightenment is perfectly realized neither by the body nor by the mind. Enlightenment is the eradication of all marks. Enlightenment is free of presumptions concerning all objects. Enlightenment is free of the functioning of all intentional thoughts. Enlightenment is the annihilation of all convictions. Enlightenment is free from all discriminative constructions.

Enlightenment is free from all vacillation, mentation, and agitation.

Enlightenment is not involved in any commitments. Enlightenment is the arrival at detachment, through freedom from all habitual attitudes. The ground of enlightenment is the ultimate realm. Enlightenment is realization of reality. Enlightenment abides at the limit of reality. Enlightenment is without duality, since therein are no minds and no things. Enlightenment is equality, since it is equal to infinite space.

"Enlightenment is unconstructed, because it is neither born nor destroyed, neither abides nor undergoes any transformation. Enlightenment is the complete knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and inclinations of all living beings. Enlightenment is not a door for the six media of sense. Enlightenment is unadulterated, since it is free of the passions of the instinctually driven succession of lives. Enlightenment is neither somewhere nor nowhere, abiding in no location or dimension. Enlightenment, not being contained in anything, does not stand in reality.

Enlightenment is merely a name and even that name is unmoving. Enlightenment, free of abstention and undertaking, is energyless. There is no agitation in enlightenment, as it is utterly pure by nature. Enlightenment is radiance, pure in essence. Enlightenment is without subjectivity and completely without object. Enlightenment, which penetrates the equality of all things, is undifferentiated. Enlightenment, which is not shown by any example, is incomparable. Enlightenment is subtle, since it is extremely difficult to realize. Enlightenment is all-pervasive, as it has the nature of infinite space.

Enlightenment cannot be realized, either physically or mentally. Why? The body is like grass, trees, walls, paths, and hallucinations. And the mind is immaterial, invisible, baseless, and unconscious.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had discoursed thus, two hundred of the deities in that assembly attained the tolerance of birthlessness. As for me, Lord, I was rendered speechless. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the young Licchavi Prabhavyuha, "Prabhavyuha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Prabhavyuha replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was going out of the great city of Vaisali, I met the Licchavi Vimalakirti coming in. He greeted me, and I then addressed him: 'Householder, where do you come from?' He replied, 'I come from the seat of enlightenment.' I then inquired, 'What is meant by "seat of enlightenment"?' He then spoke the following words to me, 'Noble son, the seat of enlightenment is the seat of positive thought because it is without artificiality. It is the seat of effort, because it releases energetic activities. It is the seat of high resolve, because its insight is superior. It is the seat of the great spirit of enlightenment, because it does not neglect anything.

"It is the seat of generosity, because it has no expectation of reward. It is the seat of morality, because it fulfills all commitments. It is the seat of tolerance, because it is free of anger toward any living being. It is the seat of effort, because it does not turn back. It is the seat of meditation, because it generates fitness of mind. It is the seat of wisdom, because it sees everything directly.

"It is the seat of love, because it is equal to all living beings. It is the seat of compassion, because it tolerates all injuries. It is the seat of joy, because it is joyfully devoted to the bliss of the Dharma. It is the seat of equanimity, because it abandons affection and aversion.

"It is the seat of paranormal perception, because it has the six superknowledges. It is the seat of liberation, because it does not intellectualize. It is the seat of liberative technique, because it develops living beings. It is the seat of the means of unification, because it brings together living beings. It is the seat of learning, because it makes practice of the essence. It is the seat of decisiveness, because of its precise discrimination. It is the seat of the aids to enlightenment, because it eliminates the duality of the compounded and the uncompounded. It is the seat of truth, because it does not deceive anyone.

"It is the seat of interdependent origination, because it proceeds from the exhaustion of ignorance to the exhaustion of old age and death. It is the seat of eradication of all passions, because it is perfectly enlightened about the nature of reality. It is the seat of all living beings, because all living beings are without intrinsic identity. It is the seat of all things, because it is perfectly enlightened with regard to voidness.

"It is the seat of the conquest of all devils, because it never flinches. It is the seat of the triple world, because it is free of involvement. It is the seat of the heroism that sounds the lion's roar, because it is free of fear and trembling. It is the seat of the strengths, the fearlessnesses, and all the special qualities of the Buddha, because it is irreproachable in all respects. It is the seat of the three knowledges, because in it no passions remain. It is the seat of instantaneous, total understanding of all things, because it realizes fully the gnosis of omniscience.

"Noble son, when bodhisattvas are thus endowed with the transcendences, the roots of virtue, the ability to develop living beings, and the incorporation of the holy Dharma, whether they lift up their feet or put them down, they all come from the seat of enlightenment. They come from the qualities of the Buddha, and stand on the qualities of the Buddha.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had explained this teaching, five hundred gods and men conceived the spirit of enlightenment, and I became speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the bodhisattva Jagatimdhara, "Jagatimdhara, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Jagatimdhara replied, "My Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day, when I was at home, the wicked Mara, disguised as Indra and surrounded with twelve thousand heavenly maidens, approached me with the sounds of music and singing. Having saluted me by touching my feet with his head, he withdrew with his retinue to one side. I then, thinking he was Sakra, the king of the gods, said to him, 'Welcome, O Kausika! You should remain consciously aware in the midst of the pleasures of desire. You should often think on impermanence and strive to utilize the essential in body, life, and wealth.'

"Mara then said to me, 'Good sir, accept from me these twelve thousand divine maidens and make them your servants.'

"I replied, 'O Kausika, do not offer me, who am religious and a son of the Sakya, things which are not appropriate. It is not proper for me to have these maidens.'

"No sooner had I said these words than the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Noble son, do not think that this is Indra! This is not Indra but the evil Mara, who has come to ridicule you.'

"Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Mara, 'Evil Mara, since these heavenly maidens are not suitable for this religious devotee, a son of the Sakya, give them to me.'

"Then Mara was terrified and distressed, thinking that the Licchavi Vimalakirti had come to expose him. He tried to make himself invisible, but, try as he might with all his magical powers, he could not vanish from sight. Then a voice resounded in the sky, saying, 'Evil One, give these heavenly maidens to the good man Vimalakirti, and only then will you be able to return to your own abode.'

"Then Mara was even more frightened and, much against his will, gave the heavenly maidens. The Licchavi Vimalakirti, having received the goddesses, said to them, 'Now that you have been given to me by Mara, you should all conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.'

"He then exhorted them with discourse suitable for their development toward enlightenment, and soon they conceived the spirit of enlightenment. He then said to them, 'You have just conceived the spirit of enlightenment.'

From now on, you should devote yourselves to find joy in pleasures of the Dharma, and should take no pleasure in desires.'

"They then asked him, 'What is "joy in the pleasures of the Dharma"?''

"He declared, 'It is the joy of unbreakable faith in the Buddha, of wishing to hear the Dharma, of serving the Sangha and honoring the spiritual benefactors without pride. It is the joy of

renunciation of the whole world, of not being fixed in objects, of considering the five aggregates to be like murderers, of considering the elements to be like venomous serpents, and of considering the sense-media to be like an empty town. It is the joy of always guarding the spirit of enlightenment, of helping living beings, of sharing through generosity, of not slackening in morality, of control and tolerance in patience, of thorough cultivation of virtue by effort, of total absorption in meditation, and of absence of passions in wisdom. It is the joy of extending enlightenment, of conquering the Maras, of destroying the passions, and of purifying the buddha-field. It is the joy of accumulating all virtues, in order to cultivate the auspicious marks and signs. It is the joy of the liberation of nonintimidation when hearing the profound teaching. It is the joy of exploration of the three doors of liberation, and of the realization of liberation. It is the joy of being an ornament of the seat of enlightenment, and of not attaining liberation at the wrong time. It is the joy of serving those of equal fortune, of not hating or resenting those of superior fortune, of serving the spiritual benefactors, and of avoiding sinful friends. It is the joy of the superior gladness of faith and devotion to the Dharma. It is the joy of acquiring liberative techniques and of the conscious cultivation of the aids to enlightenment. Thus, the bodhisattva admires and finds joy in the delights of the Dharma.'

"Thereupon, Mara said to the goddesses, 'Now come along and let us return home.'

"They said, 'You gave us to this householder. Now we should enjoy the delights of the Dharma and should no longer enjoy the pleasures of desires.'

"Then Mara said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, 'If it is so that the bodhisattva, the spiritual hero, has no mental attachment, and gives away all his possessions, then, householder, please give me these goddesses.'

"Vimalakirti replied, 'They are given, Mara. Go home with your retinue. May you fulfill the religious aspirations of all living beings!'

"Then the goddesses, saluting Vimalakirti, said to him, 'Householder, how should we live in the abode of the Maras?'

"Vimalakirti replied, 'Sisters, there is a door of the Dharma called "The Inexhaustible Lamp." Practice it! What is it? Sisters, a single lamp may light hundreds of thousands of lamps without itself being diminished.

Likewise, sisters, a single bodhisattva may establish many hundreds of thousands of living beings in enlightenment without his mindfulness being diminished. In fact, not only does it not diminish, it grows stronger. Likewise, the more you teach and demonstrate virtuous qualities to others, the more you grow with respect to these virtuous qualities. This is the door of the Dharma called "The Inexhaustible Lamp." When you are living in the realm of Mara, inspire innumerable gods and goddesses with the spirit of enlightenment. In such a way, you will repay the kindness of the Tathagata, and you will become the benefactors of all living beings.'

"Then, those goddesses bowed at the feet of the Licchavi Vimalakirti and departed in the company of Mara. Thus, Lord, I saw the supremacy of the magical power, wisdom, and eloquence of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the merchant's son, Sudatta, "Noble son, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Sudatta replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day in my father's house when, in order to celebrate a great sacrifice, I was bestowing gifts upon religious devotees, Brahmans, the poor, the wretched, the unfortunate, beggars, and all the needy. On the seventh and final day of this great sacrifice, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said, 'Merchant's son, you should not celebrate a sacrifice in this way. You should celebrate a Dharma-sacrifice. What is the use of the sacrifice of material things?'

"I then asked him, 'How does one give a Dharma-sacrifice?'

"He replied, 'A Dharma-sacrifice is that which develops living beings without beginning or end, giving gifts to them all simultaneously. What is that? It consists of the great love which is consummated in enlightenment; of the great compassion which is consummated in the concentration of the holy Dharma on the liberation of all living beings; of the great joy which is consummated in the awareness of the supreme happiness of all living beings; and of the great equanimity which is consummated in concentration through knowledge.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the transcendence of generosity, which is consummated in peacefulness and self-discipline; of the transcendence of morality, which is consummated in the moral development of immoral beings; of the transcendence of tolerance, consummated through the principle of selflessness; of the transcendence of effort, consummated in initiative toward enlightenment; of the transcendence of meditation, consummated in the solitude of body and mind; and of the transcendence of wisdom, consummated in the omniscient gnosis.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the meditation of voidness, consummated in effectiveness in the development of all living beings; of the meditation of signlessness, consummated in the purification of all compounded things; and of the meditation of wishlessness, consummated in voluntarily assuming rebirths.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of heroic strength, consummated in the upholding of the holy Dharma; of the power of life, consummated in the means of unification; of the absence of pride, consummated in becoming the slave and the disciple of all living beings; of the gain of body, health, and wealth, consummated by the extraction of essence from the essenceless; of mindfulness, consummated by the six remembrances; of positive thought, consummated through the truly enjoyable Dharma; of purity of livelihood, consummated by correct spiritual practice; of the respect of saints, consummated by joyful and faithful service; of soberness of

mind, consummated by absence of dislike for ordinary people; of high resolve, consummated by renunciation; of skill in erudition, consummated by religious practice; of retirement in solitary retreats, consummated by understanding things free of passions; of introspective meditation, consummated by attainment of the Buddha-gnosis; of the stage of the practice of yoga, consummated by the yoga of liberating all living beings from their passions.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the store of merit which is consummated by the auspicious signs and marks, the ornaments of the buddha-fields, and all other means of development of living beings; of the store of knowledge which is consummated in the ability to teach the Dharma according to the thoughts and actions of all living beings; of the store of wisdom, which is consummated in the uniform gnosis free of acceptance and rejection in regard to all things; of the store of all roots of virtue, consummated in the abandonment of all passions, obscurations, and unvirtuous things; and of the attainment of all the aids to enlightenment, consummated in the realization of the gnosis of omniscience as well as in accomplishment of all virtue.

"That, noble son, is the Dharma-sacrifice. The bodhisattva who lives by this Dharma-sacrifice is the best of sacrificers, and, through his extreme sacrifice, is himself worthy of offerings from all people, including the gods.'

"Lord, as soon as the householder had discoursed thus, two hundred Brahmans among the crowd of Brahmans present conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. And I, full of astonishment, having saluted this good man by touching his feet with my head, took from around my neck a necklace of pearls worth one hundred thousand pieces of gold and offered it to him. But he would not accept it. I then said to him, 'Please accept, good man, this necklace of pearls, out of compassion for me, and give it to whomsoever you wish.'

"Then, Vimalakirti took the pearls and divided them into two halves. He gave one half of them to the lowliest poor of the city, who had been disdained by those present at the sacrifice. The other half he offered to the Tathagata Dusprasaha. And he performed a miracle such that all present beheld the universe called Marici and the Tathagata Dusprasaha. On the head of the Tathagata Dusprasaha, the pearl necklace took the form of a pavilion, decorated with strings of pearls, resting on four bases, with four columns, symmetrical, well constructed, and lovely to behold. Having shown such a miracle, Vimalakirti said, 'The giver who makes gifts to the lowliest poor of the city, considering them as worthy of offering as the Tathagata himself, the giver who gives without any discrimination, impartially, with no expectation of reward, and with great love - this giver, I say, totally fulfills the Dharma-sacrifice.'

"Then the poor of the city, having seen that miracle and having heard that teaching, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

In the same way, all the bodhisattvas, great spiritual heroes, told the stories of their conversations with Vimalakirti and declared their reluctance to go to him. ^

Chapter Five

The Consolation of the Invalid

Then, the Buddha said to the crown prince, Manjusri, "Manjusri, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Manjusri replied, "Lord, it is difficult to attend upon the Licchavi Vimalakirti. He is gifted with marvelous eloquence concerning the law of the profound. He is extremely skilled in full expressions and in the reconciliation of dichotomies. His eloquence is inexorable, and no one can resist his imperturbable intellect. He accomplishes all the activities of the bodhisattvas. He penetrates all the secret mysteries of the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas. He is skilled in civilizing all the abodes of devils. He plays with the great superknowledges. He is consummate in wisdom and liberative technique. He has attained the supreme excellence of the indivisible, nondual sphere of the ultimate realm. He is skilled in teaching the Dharma with its infinite modalities within the uniform ultimate. He is skilled in granting means of attainment in accordance with the spiritual faculties of all living beings. He has thoroughly integrated his realization with skill in liberative technique. He has attained decisiveness with regard to all questions. Thus, although he cannot be withstood by someone of my feeble defenses, still, sustained by the grace of the Buddha, I will go to him and will converse with him as well as I can."

Thereupon, in that assembly, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the Sakras, the Brahmas, the Lokapalas, and the gods and goddesses, all had this thought: "Surely the conversations of the young prince Manjusri and that good man will result in a profound teaching of the Dharma." Thus, eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred disciples, a great number of Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and many hundreds of thousands of gods and goddesses, all followed the crown prince Manjusri to listen to the Dharma. And the crown prince Manjusri, surrounded and followed by these bodhisattvas, disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, gods, and goddesses, entered the great city of Vaisali.

Meanwhile, the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought to himself, "Manjusri, the crown prince, is coming here with numerous attendants. Now, may this house be transformed into emptiness!" Then, magically his house became empty. Even the doorkeeper disappeared. And, except for the invalid's couch upon which Vimalakirti himself was lying, no bed or couch or seat could be seen anywhere.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti saw the crown prince Manjusri and addressed him thus: "Manjusri! Welcome, Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are, without any coming. You appear, without any seeing. You are heard, without any hearing."

Manjusri declared, "Householder, it is as you say. Who comes, finally comes not. Who goes, finally goes not.

"Why? Who comes is not known to come. Who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen.

"Good sir, is your condition tolerable? Is it livable? Are your physical elements not disturbed? Is your sickness diminishing? Is it not increasing? The Buddha asks about you - if you have slight trouble, slight discomfort, slight sickness, if your distress is light, if you are cared for, strong, at ease, without self-reproach, and if you are living in touch with the supreme happiness.

"Householder, whence came this sickness of yours? How long will it continue? How does it stand? How can it be alleviated?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and the thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would not be sick. Why? Manjusri, for the bodhisattva, the world consists only of living beings, and sickness is inherent in living in the world. Were all living beings free of sickness, the bodhisattva also would be free of sickness. For example, Manjusri, when the only son of a merchant is sick, both his parents become sick on account of the sickness of their son. And the parents will suffer as long as that only son does not recover from his sickness. Just so, Manjusri, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if each were his only child. He becomes sick when they are sick and is cured when they are cured. You ask me, Manjusri, whence comes my sickness; the sicknesses of the bodhisattvas arise from great compassion."

Manjusri: Householder, why is your house empty? Why have you no servants?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, all buddha-fields are also empty.

Manjusri: What makes them empty?

Vimalakirti: They are empty because of emptiness.

Manjusri: What is "empty" about emptiness?

Vimalakirti: Constructions are empty, because of emptiness.

Manjusri: Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?

Vimalakirti: Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness.

Manjusri: Householder, where should emptiness be sought?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.

Manjusri: Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?

Vimalakirti: They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathagatas.

Manjusri: Where should the liberation of the Tathagatas be sought?

Vimalakirti: It should be sought in the prime mental activity of all living beings. Manjusri, you ask me why I am without servants, but all Maras and opponents are my servants. Why? The Maras advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The heterodox opponents advocate convictions, and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all Maras and opponents are my servants.

Manjusri: Householder, of what sort is your sickness?

Vimalakirti: It is immaterial and invisible.

Manjusri: Is it physical or mental?

Vimalakirti: It is not physical, since the body is insubstantial in itself. It is not mental, since the nature of the mind is like illusion.

Manjusri: Householder, which of the four main elements is disturbed - earth, water, fire, or air?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, I am sick only because the elements of living beings are disturbed by sicknesses.

Manjusri: Householder, how should a bodhisattva console another bodhisattva who is sick?

Vimalakirti: He should tell him that the body is impermanent, but should not exhort him to renunciation or disgust. He should tell him that the body is miserable, but should not encourage him to find solace in liberation; that the body is selfless, but that living beings should be developed; that the body is peaceful, but not to seek any ultimate calm. He should urge him to confess his evil deeds, but not for the sake of absolution. He should encourage his empathy for all living beings on account of his own sickness, his remembrance of suffering experienced from beginningless time, and his consciousness of working for the welfare of living beings. He should encourage him not to be distressed, but to manifest the roots of virtue, to maintain the primal purity and the lack of craving, and thus to always strive to become the king of healers, who can cure all sicknesses. Thus should a bodhisattva console a sick bodhisattva, in such a way as to make him happy.

Manjusri asked, "Noble sir, how should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, a sick bodhisattva should control his own mind with the following consideration: Sickness arises from total involvement in the process of misunderstanding from beginningless time. It arises from the passions that result from unreal mental constructions, and hence ultimately nothing is perceived which can be said to be sick. Why? The body is the issue of the four main elements, and in these elements there is no owner

and no agent. There is no self in this body, and except for arbitrary insistence on self, ultimately no "I" which can be said to be sick can be apprehended. Therefore, thinking "I" should not adhere to any self, and "I" should rest in the knowledge of the root of illness,' he should abandon the conception of himself as a personality and produce the conception of himself as a thing, thinking, 'This body is an aggregate of many things; when it is born, only things are born; when it ceases, only things cease; these things have no awareness or feeling of each other; when they are born, they do not think, "I am born." When they cease, they do not think, "I cease."' "

"Furthermore, he should understand thoroughly the conception of himself as a thing by cultivating the following consideration: 'Just as in the case of the conception of "self," so the conception of "thing" is also a misunderstanding, and this misunderstanding is also a grave sickness; I should free myself from this sickness and should strive to abandon it.'

"What is the elimination of this sickness? It is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness. What is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness? It is the freedom from dualism. What is freedom from dualism? It is the absence of involvement with either the external or the internal. What is absence of involvement with either external or internal? It is nondeviation, nonfluctuation, and nondistractedness from equanimity. What is equanimity? It is the equality of everything from self to liberation. Why? Because both self and liberation are void. How can both be void? As verbal designations, they both are void, and neither is established in reality. Therefore, one who sees such equality makes no difference between sickness and voidness; his sickness is itself voidness, and that sickness as voidness is itself void.

"The sick bodhisattva should recognize that sensation is ultimately nonsensation, but he should not realize the cessation of sensation. Although both pleasure and pain are abandoned when the buddha-qualities are fully accomplished, there is then no sacrifice of the great compassion for all living beings living in the bad migrations. Thus, recognizing in his own suffering the infinite sufferings of these living beings, the bodhisattva correctly contemplates these living beings and resolves to cure all sicknesses. As for these living beings, there is nothing to be applied, and there is nothing to be removed; one has only to teach them the Dharma for them to realize the basis from which sicknesses arise. What is this basis? It is object-perception. Insofar as apparent objects are perceived, they are the basis of sickness. What things are perceived as objects?

The three realms of existence are perceived as objects. What is the thorough understanding of the basic, apparent object? It is its nonperception, as no objects exist ultimately. What is nonperception? The internal subject and the external object are not perceived dualistically. Therefore, it is called nonperception.

"Manjusri, thus should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind in order to overcome old age, sickness, death, and birth. Such, Manjusri, is the sickness of the bodhisattva. If he takes it otherwise, all his efforts will be in vain. For example, one is called 'hero' when one conquers the miseries of aging, sickness, and death.

"The sick bodhisattva should tell himself: 'Just as my sickness is unreal and nonexistent, so the sicknesses of all living beings are unreal and nonexistent.' Through such considerations, he arouses the great compassion toward all living beings without falling into any sentimental compassion. The great compassion that strives to eliminate the accidental passions does not conceive of any life in living beings. Why? Because great compassion that falls into sentimentally purposive views only exhausts the bodhisattva in his reincarnations. But the great compassion which is free of involvement with sentimentally purposive views does not exhaust the bodhisattva in all his reincarnations. He does not reincarnate through involvement with such views but reincarnates with his mind free of involvement. Hence, even his reincarnation is like a liberation. Being reincarnated as if being liberated, he has the power and ability to teach the Dharma which liberates living beings from their bondage. As the Lord declares: 'It is not possible for one who is himself bound to deliver others from their bondage. But one who is himself liberated is able to liberate others from their bondage.' Therefore, the bodhisattva should participate in liberation and should not participate in bondage.

"What is bondage? And what is liberation? To indulge in liberation from the world without employing liberative technique is bondage for the bodhisattva. To engage in life in the world with full employment of liberative technique is liberation for the bodhisattva. To experience the taste of contemplation, meditation, and concentration without skill in liberative technique is bondage. To experience the taste of contemplation and meditation with skill in liberative technique is liberation. Wisdom not integrated with liberative technique is bondage, but wisdom integrated with liberative technique is liberation. Liberative technique not integrated with wisdom is bondage, but liberative technique integrated with wisdom is liberation.

"How is wisdom not integrated with liberative technique a bondage? Wisdom not integrated with liberative technique consists of concentration on voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness, and yet, being motivated by sentimental compassion, failure to concentrate on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the buddha-field, and on the work of development of living beings it is bondage.

"How is wisdom integrated with liberative technique a liberation? Wisdom integrated with liberative technique consists of being motivated by the great compassion and thus of concentration on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the buddha-field, and on the work of development of living beings, all the while concentrating on deep investigation of voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness - and it is liberation.

"What is the bondage of liberative technique not integrated with wisdom? The bondage of liberative technique not integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva's planting of the roots of virtue without dedicating them for the sake of enlightenment, while living in the grip of dogmatic convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.

"What is the liberation of liberative technique integrated with wisdom? The liberation of liberative technique integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva's dedication of his roots of virtue for the sake of enlightenment, without taking any pride therein, while forgoing

all convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.

"Manjusri, thus should the sick bodhisattva consider things. His wisdom is the consideration of body, mind, and sickness as impermanent, miserable, empty, and selfless. His liberative technique consists of not exhausting himself by trying to avoid all physical sickness, and in applying himself to accomplish the benefit of living beings, without interrupting the cycle of reincarnations. Furthermore, his wisdom lies in understanding that the body, mind, and sickness are neither new nor old, both simultaneously and sequentially. And his liberative technique lies in not seeking cessation of body, mind, or sicknesses.

"That, Manjusri, is the way a sick bodhisattva should concentrate his mind; he should live neither in control of his mind, nor in indulgence of his mind. Why? To live by indulging the mind is proper for fools and to live in control of the mind is proper for the disciples. Therefore, the bodhisattva should live neither in control nor in indulgence of his mind. Not living in either of the two extremes is the domain of the bodhisattva.

"Not the domain of the ordinary individual and not the domain of the saint, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the world yet not the domain of the passions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one understands liberation, yet does not enter final and complete liberation, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where the four Maras manifest, yet where all the works of Maras are transcended, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one seeks the gnosis of omniscience, yet does not attain this gnosis at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one knows the Four Holy Truths, yet does not realize those truths at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of introspective insight, wherein one does not arrest voluntary reincarnation in the world, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes birthlessness, yet does not become destined for the ultimate, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one sees relativity without entertaining any convictions, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one associates with all beings, yet keeps free of all afflictive instincts, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of solitude with no place for the exhaustion of body and mind, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the triple world, yet indivisible from the ultimate realm, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of voidness, yet where one cultivates all types of virtues, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of signlessness, where one keeps in sight the deliverance of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of wishlessness, where one voluntarily manifests lives in the world, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.

"A domain essentially without undertaking, yet where all the roots of virtue are undertaken without interruption, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six transcendences, where one attains the transcendence of the thoughts and actions of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six superknowledges, wherein defilements are not exhausted, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living by the holy Dharma, without even perceiving any evil paths, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four immeasurables, where one does not accept rebirth in the heaven of

Brahma, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six remembrances, unaffected by any sort of defilement, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of contemplation, meditation, and concentration, where one does not reincarnate in the formless realms by force of these meditations and concentrations, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.

The domain of the four right efforts, where the duality of good and evil is not apprehended, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four bases of magical powers, where they are effortlessly mastered, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the five spiritual faculties, where one knows the degrees of the spiritual faculties of living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living with the five powers, where one delights in the ten powers of the Tathagata, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of perfection of the seven factors of enlightenment, where one is skilled in the knowledge of fine intellectual distinctions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the holy eightfold path, where one delights in the unlimited path of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the cultivation of the aptitude for mental quiescence and transcendental analysis, where one does not fall into extreme quietism, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the realization of the unborn nature of all things, yet of the perfection of the body, the auspicious signs and marks, and the ornaments of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of manifesting the attitudes of the disciples and the solitary sages without sacrificing the qualities of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of conformity to all things utterly pure in nature while manifesting behavior that suits the inclinations of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes that all the buddha-fields are indestructible and uncreatable, having the nature of infinite space, yet where one manifests the establishment of the qualities of the buddha-fields in all their variety and magnitude, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain where one turns the wheel of the holy Dharma and manifests the magnificence of ultimate liberation, yet never forsakes the career of the bodhisattva, such is the domain of the bodhisattva!"

When Vimalakirti had spoken this discourse, eight thousand of the gods in the company of the crown prince Manjusri conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. ^

Chapter Six

The Inconceivable Liberation

Thereupon, the venerable Sariputra had this thought: "There is not even a single chair in this house. Where are these disciples and bodhisattvas going to sit?"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti read the thought of the venerable Sariputra and said, "Reverend Sariputra, did you come here for the sake of the Dharma? Or did you come here for the sake of a chair?"

Sariputra replied, "I came for the sake of the Dharma, not for the sake of a chair."

Vimalakirti continued, "Reverend Sariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested even in his own body, much less in a chair. Reverend Sariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma has no interest in matter, sensation, intellect, motivation, or consciousness. He has no interest in these aggregates, or in the elements, or in the sense-media. Interested in the Dharma, he has no interest in the realm of desire, the realm of matter, or the immaterial realm. Interested in the Dharma, he is not interested in attachment to the Buddha, attachment to the Dharma, or attachment to the Sangha. Reverend Sariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested in recognizing suffering, abandoning its origination, realizing its cessation, or practicing the path. Why? The Dharma is ultimately without formulation and without verbalization. Who verbalizes: 'Suffering should be recognized, origination should be eliminated, cessation should be realized, the path should be practiced,' is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in verbalization.

"Reverend Sariputra, the Dharma is calm and peaceful. Those who are engaged in production and destruction are not interested in the Dharma, are not interested in solitude, but are interested in production and destruction.

"Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, the Dharma is without taint and free of defilement. He who is attached to anything, even to liberation, is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in the taint of desire. The Dharma is not an object. He who pursues objects is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in objects. The Dharma is without acceptance or rejection. He who holds on to things or lets go of things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in holding and letting go. The Dharma is not a secure refuge. He who enjoys a secure refuge is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in a secure refuge. The Dharma is without sign. He whose consciousness pursues signs is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in signs. The Dharma is not a society. He who seeks to associate with the Dharma is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in association. The Dharma is not a sight, a sound, a category, or an idea. He who is involved in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas.

Reverend Sariputra, the Dharma is free of compounded things and un compounded things. He

who adheres to compounded things and uncompounded things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in adhering to compounded things and uncompounded things.

"Thereupon, reverend Sariputra, if you are interested in the Dharma, you should take no interest in anything."

When Vimalakirti had spoken this discourse, five hundred gods obtained the purity of the Dharma-eye in viewing all things.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the crown prince, Manjusri, "Manjusri, you have already been in innumerable hundreds of thousands of buddha-fields throughout the universes of the ten directions. In which buddha-field did you see the best lion-thrones with the finest qualities?"

Manjusri replied, "Noble sir, if one crosses the buddha-fields to the east, which are more numerous than all the grains of sand of thirty-two Ganges rivers, one will discover a universe called Merudhvaja. There dwells a Tathagata called Merupradiparaja. His body measures eighty-four hundred thousand leagues in height, and the height of his throne is sixty-eight hundred thousand leagues. The bodhisattvas there are forty-two hundred thousand leagues tall and their own thrones are thirty-four hundred thousand leagues high. Noble sir, the finest and most superb thrones exist in that universe Merudhvaja, which is the buddha-field of the Tathagata Merupradiparaja."

At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakirti, having focused himself in concentration, performed a miraculous feat such that the Lord Tathagata Merupradiparaja, in the universe Merudhvaja, sent to this universe thirty-two hundred thousand thrones. These thrones were so tall, spacious, and beautiful that the bodhisattvas, great disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and other gods had never before seen the like. The thrones descended from the sky and came to rest in the house of the Licchavi Vimalakirti. The thirty-two hundred thousand thrones arranged themselves without crowding and the house seemed to enlarge itself accordingly. The great city of Vaisali did not become obscured; neither did the land of Jambudvipa, nor the world of four continents.

Everything else appeared just as it was before.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the young prince Manjusri, "Manjusri, let the bodhisattvas be seated on these thrones, having transformed their bodies to a suitable size!"

Then, those bodhisattvas who had attained the superknowledges transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But the beginner bodhisattvas were not able to transform themselves to sit upon the thrones. Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti taught these beginner bodhisattvas a teaching that enabled them to attain the five superknowledges, and, having attained them, they transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But still the great disciples were

not able to seat themselves upon the thrones.

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the venerable Sariputra, "Reverend Sariputra, take your seat upon a throne."

He replied, "Good sir, the thrones are too big and too high, and I cannot sit upon them."

Vimalakirti said, "Reverend Sariputra, bow down to the Tathagata Merupradiparaja, and you will be able to take your seat."

Then, the great disciples bowed down to the Tathagata Merupradiparaja and they were seated upon the thrones.

Then, the venerable Sariputra said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble sir, it is astonishing that these thousands of thrones, so big and so high, should fit into such a small house and that the great city of Vaisali, the villages, cities, kingdoms, capitals of Jambudvipa, the other three continents, the abodes of the gods, the nagas, the yaksas, the gandharvas, the asuras, the garudas, the kimnaras, and the mahoragas - that all of these should appear without any obstacle, just as they were before!"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti replied, "Reverend Sariputra, for the Tathagatas and the bodhisattvas, there is a liberation called 'Inconceivable.' The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can put the king of mountains, Sumeru, which is so high, so great, so noble, and so vast, into a mustard seed. He can perform this feat without enlarging the mustard seed and without shrinking Mount Sumeru. And the deities of the assembly of the four Maharajas and of the Trayastrimsa heavens do not even know where they are.

Only those beings who are destined to be disciplined by miracles see and understand the putting of the king of mountains, Sumeru, into the mustard seed. That, reverend Sariputra, is an entrance to the domain of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas.

"Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can pour into a single pore of his skin all the waters of the four great oceans, without injuring the water-animals such as fish, tortoises, crocodiles, frogs, and other creatures, and without the nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, and asuras even being aware of where they are. And the whole operation is visible without any injury or disturbance to any of those living beings.

"Such a bodhisattva can pick up with his right hand this billion-world-galactic universe as if it were a potter's wheel and, spinning it round, throw it beyond universes as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, without the living beings therein knowing their motion or its origin, and he can catch it and put it back in its place, without the living beings suspecting their coming and going; and yet the whole operation is visible.

"Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, there are beings who become disciplined after an immense

period of evolution, and there are also those who are disciplined after a short period of evolution. The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation, for the sake of disciplining those living beings who are disciplined through immeasurable periods of evolution, can make the passing of a week seem like the passing of an aeon, and he can make the passing of an aeon seem like the passing of a week for those who are disciplined through a short period of evolution. The living beings who are disciplined through an immeasurable period of evolution actually perceive a week to be the passing of an aeon, and those disciplined by a short period of evolution actually perceive an aeon to be the passing of a week.

"Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can manifest all the splendors of the virtues of all the buddha-fields within a single buddha-field. Likewise, he can place all living beings in the palm of his right hand and can show them with the supernatural speed of thought all the buddha-fields without ever leaving his own buddha-field. He can display in a single pore all the offerings ever offered to all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and the orbs of all the suns, moons, and stars of the ten directions. He can inhale all the hurricanes of the cosmic wind-atmospheres of the ten directions into his mouth without harming his own body and without letting the forests and the grasses of the buddha-fields be flattened. He can take all the masses of fire of all the supernovas that ultimately consume all the universes of all the buddha-fields into his stomach without interfering with their functions. Having crossed buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges downward, and having taken up a buddha-field, he can rise up through buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and place it on high, just as a strong man may pick up a jujube leaf on the point of a needle.

"Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can magically transform any kind of living being into a universal monarch, a Lokapala, a Sakra, a Brahma, a disciple, a solitary sage, a bodhisattva, and even into a Buddha. The bodhisattva can transform miraculously all the cries and noises, superior, mediocre, and inferior, of all living beings of the ten directions, into the voice of the Buddha, with the words of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, having them proclaim, 'Impermanent! Miserable! Empty! Selfless!' And he can cause them to recite the words and sounds of all the teachings taught by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

"Reverend Sariputra, I have shown you only a small part of the entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation. Reverend Sariputra, to explain to you the teaching of the full entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation would require more than an aeon, and even more than that."

Then, the patriarch Mahakasyapa, having heard this teaching of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas, was amazed, and he said to the venerable Sariputra, "Venerable Sariputra, if one were to show a variety of things to a person blind from birth, he would not be able to see a single thing. Likewise, venerable Sariputra, when this door of the inconceivable liberation is taught, all the disciples and solitary sages are sightless, like the man blind from birth, and cannot comprehend even a single cause of the inconceivable liberation. Who is there among the wise who, hearing about this inconceivable liberation, does not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? As for us, whose faculties are deteriorated, like a burned

and rotten seed, what else can we do if we do not become receptive to this great vehicle? We, all the disciples and solitary sages, upon hearing this teaching of the Dharma, should utter a cry of regret that would shake this billion-world-galactic universe! And as for the bodhisattvas, when they hear of this inconceivable liberation they should be as joyful as a young crown prince when he takes the diadem and is anointed, and they should increase to the utmost their devotion to this inconceivable liberation. Indeed, what could the entire host of Maras ever do to one who is devoted to this inconceivable liberation?"

When the patriarch Mahakasyapa had uttered this discourse, thirty-two thousand gods conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the patriarch Mahakasyapa, "Reverend Mahakasyapa, the Maras who play the devil in the innumerable universes of the ten directions are all bodhisattvas dwelling in the inconceivable liberation, who are playing the devil in order to develop living beings through their skill in liberative technique. Reverend Mahakasyapa, all the miserable beggars who come to the bodhisattvas of the innumerable universes of the ten directions to ask for a hand, a foot, an ear, a nose, some blood, muscles, bones, marrow, an eye, a torso, a head, a limb, a member, a throne, a kingdom, a country, a wife, a son, a daughter, a slave, a slave-girl, a horse, an elephant, a chariot, a cart, gold, silver, jewels, pearls, conches, crystal, coral, beryl, treasures, food, drink, elixirs, and clothes - these demanding beggars are usually bodhisattvas living in the inconceivable liberation who, through their skill in liberative technique, wish to test and thus demonstrate the firmness of the high resolve of the bodhisattvas. Why? Reverend Mahakasyapa, the bodhisattvas demonstrate that firmness by means of terrible austerities. Ordinary persons have no power to be thus demanding of bodhisattvas, unless they are granted the opportunity. They are not capable of killing and depriving in that manner without being freely given the chance.

"Reverend Mahakasyapa, just as a glowworm cannot eclipse the light of the sun, so reverend Mahakasyapa, it is not possible without special allowance that an ordinary person can thus attack and deprive a bodhisattva. Reverend Mahakasyapa, just as a donkey could not muster an attack on a wild elephant, even so, reverend Mahakasyapa, one who is not himself a bodhisattva cannot harass another bodhisattva, and only a bodhisattva can tolerate the harassment of another bodhisattva. Reverend Mahakasyapa, such is the introduction to the power of the knowledge of liberative technique of the bodhisattvas who live in the inconceivable liberation." ^

Chapter Seven

The Goddess

Thereupon, Manjusri, the crown prince, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "Good sir, how should a bodhisattva regard all living beings?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, a bodhisattva should regard all living beings as a wise man regards the reflection of the moon in water or as magicians regard men created by magic. He should regard them as being like a face in a mirror; like the water of a mirage; like the sound of an echo; like a mass of clouds in the sky; like the previous moment of a ball of foam; like the appearance and disappearance of a bubble of water; like the core of a plantain tree; like a flash of lightning; like the fifth great element; like the seventh sense-medium; like the appearance of matter in an immaterial realm; like a sprout from a rotten seed; like a tortoise-hair coat; like the fun of games for one who wishes to die; like the egoistic views of a stream-winner; like a third rebirth of a once-returner; like the descent of a nonreturner into a womb; like the existence of desire, hatred, and folly in a saint; like thoughts of avarice, immorality, wickedness, and hostility in a bodhisattva who has attained tolerance; like the instincts of passions in a Tathagata; like the perception of color in one blind from birth; like the inhalation and exhalation of an ascetic absorbed in the meditation of cessation; like the track of a bird in the sky; like the erection of a eunuch; like the pregnancy of a barren woman; like the unproduced passions of an emanated incarnation of the Tathagata; like dream-visions seen after waking; like the passions of one who is free of conceptualizations; like fire burning without fuel; like the reincarnation of one who has attained ultimate liberation.

"Precisely thus, Manjusri, does a bodhisattva who realizes the ultimate selflessness consider all beings."

Manjusri then asked further, "Noble sir, if a bodhisattva considers all living beings in such a way, how does he generate the great love toward them?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, when a bodhisattva considers all living beings in this way, he thinks: 'Just as I have realized the Dharma, so should I teach it to living beings.' Thereby, he generates the love that is truly a refuge for all living beings; the love that is peaceful because free of grasping; the love that is not feverish, because free of passions; the love that accords with reality because it is equanimous in all three times; the love that is without conflict because free of the violence of the passions; the love that is nondual because it is involved neither with the external nor with the internal; the love that is imperturbable because totally ultimate.

"Thereby he generates the love that is firm, its high resolve unbreakable, like a diamond; the love that is pure, purified in its intrinsic nature; the love that is even, its aspirations being equal; the saint's love that has eliminated its enemy; the bodhisattva's love that continuously develops living beings; The Tathagata's love that understands reality; the Buddha's love that causes living beings to awaken from their sleep; the love that is spontaneous because it is fully

enlightened spontaneously; the love that is enlightenment because it is unity of experience; the love that has no presumption because it has eliminated attachment and aversion; the love that is great compassion because it infuses the Mahayana with radiance; the love that is never exhausted because it acknowledges voidness and selflessness; the love that is giving because it bestows the gift of Dharma free of the tight fist of a bad teacher; the love that is morality because it improves immoral living beings; the love that is tolerance because it protects both self and others; the love that is effort because it takes responsibility for all living beings; the love that is contemplation because it refrains from indulgence in tastes; the love that is wisdom because it causes attainment at the proper time; the love that is liberative technique because it shows the way everywhere; the love that is without formality because it is pure in motivation; the love that is without deviation because it acts from decisive motivation; the love that is high resolve because it is without passions; the love that is without deceit because it is not artificial; the love that is happiness because it introduces living beings to the happiness of the Buddha.

Such, Manjusri, is the great love of a bodhisattva."

Manjusri: What is the great compassion of a bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is the giving of all accumulated roots of virtue to all living beings.

Manjusri: What is the great joy of the bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is to be joyful and without regret in giving.

Manjusri: What is the equanimity of the bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is what benefits both self and others.

Manjusri: To what should one resort when terrified by fear of life?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, a bodhisattva who is terrified by fear of life should resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha.

Manjusri: Where should he who wishes to resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha take his stand?

Vimalakirti: He should stand in equanimity toward all living beings.

Manjusri: Where should he who wishes to stand in equanimity toward all living beings take his stand?

Vimalakirti: He should live for the liberation of all living beings.

Manjusri: What should he who wishes to liberate all living beings do?

Vimalakirti: He should liberate them from their passions.

Manjusri: How should he who wishes to eliminate passions apply himself?

Vimalakirti: He should apply himself appropriately.

Manjusri: How should he apply himself, to "apply himself appropriately"?

Vimalakirti: He should apply himself to productionlessness and to destructionlessness.

Manjusri: What is not produced? And what is not destroyed?

Vimalakirti: Evil is not produced and good is not destroyed.

Manjusri: What is the root of good and evil?

Vimalakirti: Materiality is the root of good and evil.

Manjusri: What is the root of materiality?

Vimalakirti: Desire is the root of materiality.

Manjusri: What is the root of desire and attachment?

Vimalakirti: Unreal construction is the root of desire.

Manjusri: What is the root of unreal construction?

Vimalakirti: The false concept is its root.

Manjusri: What is the root of the false concept?

Vimalakirti: Baselessness.

Manjusri: What is the root of baselessness?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, when something is baseless, how can it have any root? Therefore, all things stand on the root which is baseless.

Thereupon, a certain goddess who lived in that house, having heard this teaching of the Dharma of the great heroic bodhisattvas, and being delighted, pleased, and overjoyed, manifested herself in a material body and showered the great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas, and the great disciples with heavenly flowers. When the flowers fell on the bodies

of the bodhisattvas, they fell off on the floor, but when they fell on the bodies of the great disciples, they stuck to them and did not fall. The great disciples shook the flowers and even tried to use their magical powers, but still the flowers would not shake off. Then, the goddess said to the venerable Sariputra, "Reverend Sariputra, why do you shake these flowers?"

Sariputra replied, "Goddess, these flowers are not proper for religious persons and so we are trying to shake them off."

The goddess said, "Do not say that, reverend Sariputra. Why? These flowers are proper indeed! Why? Such flowers have neither constructual thought nor discrimination. But the elder Sariputra has both constructual thought and discrimination.

"Reverend Sariputra, impropriety for one who has renounced the world for the discipline of the rightly taught Dharma consists of constructual thought and discrimination, yet the elders are full of such thoughts. One who is without such thoughts is always proper.

"Reverend Sariputra, see how these flowers do not stick to the bodies of these great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas! This is because they have eliminated constructual thoughts and discriminations.

"For example, evil spirits have power over fearful men but cannot disturb the fearless. Likewise, those intimidated by fear of the world are in the power of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures, which do not disturb those who are free from fear of the passions inherent in the constructive world. Thus, these flowers stick to the bodies of those who have not eliminated their instincts for the passions and do not stick to the bodies of those who have eliminated their instincts. Therefore, the flowers do not stick to the bodies of these bodhisattvas, who have abandoned all instincts."

Then the venerable Sariputra said to the goddess, "Goddess, how long have you been in this house?"

The goddess replied, "I have been here as long as the elder has been in liberation."
Sariputra said, "Then, have you been in this house for quite some time?"

The goddess said, "Has the elder been in liberation for quite some time?"

At that, the elder Sariputra fell silent.

The goddess continued, "Elder, you are 'foremost of the wise!' Why do you not speak? Now, when it is your turn, you do not answer the question."

Sariputra: Since liberation is inexpressible, goddess, I do not know what to say.

Goddess: All the syllables pronounced by the elder have the nature of liberation. Why? Liberation is neither internal nor external, nor can it be apprehended apart from them.

Likewise, syllables are neither internal nor external, nor can they be apprehended anywhere else. Therefore, reverend Sariputra, do not point to liberation by abandoning speech! Why? The holy liberation is the equality of all things!

Sariputra: Goddess, is not liberation the freedom from desire, hatred, and folly?

Goddess: "Liberation is freedom from desire, hatred, and folly" that is the teaching of the excessively proud. But those free of pride are taught that the very nature of desire, hatred, and folly is itself liberation.

Sariputra: Excellent! Excellent, goddess! Pray, what have you attained, what have you realized, that you have such eloquence?

Goddess: I have attained nothing, reverend Sariputra. I have no realization. Therefore I have such eloquence. Whoever thinks, "I have attained! I have realized!" is overly proud in the discipline of the well-taught Dharma.

Sariputra: Goddess, do you belong to the disciple-vehicle, to the solitary-vehicle, or to the great vehicle?

Goddess: I belong to the disciple-vehicle when I teach it to those who need it. I belong to the solitary-vehicle when I teach the twelve links of dependent origination to those who need them. And, since I never abandon the great compassion, I belong to the great vehicle, as all need that teaching to attain ultimate liberation.

Nevertheless, reverend Sariputra, just as one cannot smell the castor plant in a magnolia wood, but only the magnolia flowers, so, reverend Sariputra, living in this house, which is redolent with the perfume of the virtues of the Buddha-qualities, one does not smell the perfume of the disciples and the solitary sages. Reverend Sariputra, the Sakras, the Brahmas, the Lokapalas, the devas, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas who live in this house hear the Dharma from the mouth of this holy man and, enticed by the perfume of the virtues of the Buddha-qualities, proceed to conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

Reverend Sariputra, I have been in this house for twelve years, and I have heard no discourses concerning the disciples and solitary sages but have heard only those concerning the great love, the great compassion, and the inconceivable qualities of the Buddha.

Reverend Sariputra, eight strange and wonderful things manifest themselves constantly in this house. What are these eight?

A light of golden hue shines here constantly, so bright that it is hard to distinguish day and night; and neither the moon nor the sun shines here distinctly. That is the first wonder of this house.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, whoever enters this house is no longer troubled by his

passions from the moment he is within. That is the second strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, this house is never forsaken by Sakra, Brahma, the Lokapalas, and the bodhisattvas from all the other buddha-fields. That is the third strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, this house is never empty of the sounds of the Dharma, the discourse on the six transcendences, and the discourses of the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. That is the fourth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, in this house one always hears the rhythms, songs, and music of gods and men, and from this music constantly resounds the sound of the infinite Dharma of the Buddha. That is the fifth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, in this house there are always four inexhaustible treasures, replete with all kinds of jewels, which never decrease, although all the poor and wretched may partake to their satisfaction. That is the sixth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, at the wish of this good man, to this house come the innumerable Tathagatas of the ten directions, such as the Tathagatas Sakyamuni, Amitabha, Aksobhya, Ratnasri, Ratnarcis, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyuha, Dusprasaha, Sarvarthasiddha, Ratnabahula, Simhakirti, Simhasvara, and so forth; and when they come they teach the door of Dharma called the "Secrets of the Tathagatas" and then depart. That is the seventh strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Sariputra, all the splendors of the abodes of the gods and all the splendors of the fields of the Buddhas shine forth in this house. That is the eighth strange and wonderful thing.

Reverend Sariputra, these eight strange and wonderful things are seen in this house. Who then, seeing such inconceivable things, would believe the teaching of the disciples?

Sariputra: Goddess, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?

Goddess: Although I have sought my "female state" for these twelve years, I have not yet found it. Reverend Sariputra, if a magician were to incarnate a woman by magic, would you ask her, "What prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

Sariputra: No! Such a woman would not really exist, so what would there be to transform?

Goddess: Just so, reverend Sariputra, all things do not really exist. Now, would you think, "What prevents one whose nature is that of a magical incarnation from transforming herself out of her female state?"

Thereupon, the goddess employed her magical power to cause the elder Sariputra to appear in her form and to cause herself to appear in his form. Then the goddess, transformed into Sariputra, said to Sariputra, transformed into a goddess, "Reverend Sariputra, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

And Sariputra, transformed into the goddess, replied, "I no longer appear in the form of a male! My body has changed into the body of a woman! I do not know what to transform!"

The goddess continued, "If the elder could again change out of the female state, then all women could also change out of their female states. All women appear in the form of women in just the same way as the elder appears in the form of a woman. While they are not women in reality, they appear in the form of women. With this in mind, the Buddha said, 'In all things, there is neither male nor female.'"

Then, the goddess released her magical power and each returned to his ordinary form. She then said to him,

"Reverend Sariputra, what have you done with your female form?"

Sariputra: I neither made it nor did I change it.

Goddess: Just so, all things are neither made nor changed, and that they are not made and not changed, that is the teaching of the Buddha.

Sariputra: Goddess, where will you be born when you transmigrate after death?

Goddess: I will be born where all the magical incarnations of the Tathagata are born.

Sariputra: But the emanated incarnations of the Tathagata do not transmigrate nor are they born.

Goddess: All things and living beings are just the same; they do not transmigrate nor are they born!

Sariputra: Goddess, how soon will you attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood?

Goddess: At such time as you, elder, become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual, then will I attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

Sariputra: Goddess, it is impossible that I should become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual.

Goddess: Just so, reverend Sariputra, it is impossible that I should attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood! Why? Because perfect enlightenment stands upon the

impossible. Because it is impossible, no one attains the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

Sariputra: But the Tathagata has declared: "The Tathagatas, who are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, have attained perfect Buddhahood, are attaining perfect Buddhahood, and will go on attaining perfect Buddhahood."

Goddess: Reverend Sariputra, the expression, "the Buddhas of the past, present and future," is a conventional expression made up of a certain number of syllables. The Buddhas are neither past, nor present, nor future. Their enlightenment transcends the three times! But tell me, elder, have you attained sainthood?

Sariputra: It is attained, because there is no attainment.

Goddess: Just so, there is perfect enlightenment because there is no attainment of perfect enlightenment.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the venerable elder Sariputra, "Reverend Sariputra, this goddess has already served ninety-two million billion Buddhas. She plays with the superknowledges. She has truly succeeded in all her vows. She has gained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things. She has actually attained irreversibility. She can live wherever she wishes on the strength of her vow to develop living beings." ^

Chapter Nine

The Dharma-Door of Nonduality

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti asked those bodhisattvas, "Good sirs, please explain how the bodhisattvas enter the Dharma-door of nonduality!"

The bodhisattva Dharmavikurvana declared, "Noble sir, production and destruction are two, but what is not produced and does not occur cannot be destroyed. Thus the attainment of the tolerance of the birthlessness of things is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Srigandha declared, " 'I' and 'mine' are two. If there is no presumption of a self, there will be no possessiveness. Thus, the absence of presumption is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Srikuta declared, " 'Defilement' and 'purification' are two. When there is thorough knowledge of defilement, there will be no conceit about purification. The path leading to the complete conquest of all conceit is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Bhadrajyotis declared, " 'Distraction' and 'attention' are two. When there is no distraction, there will be no attention, no mentation, and no mental intensity. Thus, the absence of mental intensity is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Subahu declared, " 'Bodhisattva-spirit' and 'disciple-spirit' are two. When both are seen to resemble an illusory spirit, there is no bodhisattva-spirit, nor any disciple-spirit. Thus, the sameness of natures of spirits is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Animisa declared, " 'Grasping' and 'nongrasping' are two. What is not grasped is not perceived, and what is not perceived is neither presumed nor repudiated. Thus, the inaction and noninvolvement of all things is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Sunetra declared, " 'Uniqueness' and 'characterlessness' are two. Not to presume or construct something is neither to establish its uniqueness nor to establish its characterlessness. To penetrate the equality of these two is to enter nonduality."

The bodhisattva Tisya declared, " 'Good' and 'evil' are two. Seeking neither good nor evil, the understanding of the nonduality of the significant and the meaningless is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Simha declared, " 'Sinfulness' and 'sinlessness' are two. By means of the diamond-like wisdom that pierces to the quick, not to be bound or liberated is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Simhamati declared, "To say, 'This is impure' and 'This is immaculate' makes

for duality. One who, attaining equanimity, forms no conception of impurity or immaculateness, yet is not utterly without conception, has equanimity without any attainment of equanimity - he enters the absence of conceptual knots. Thus, he enters into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Suddhadhimukti declared, "To say, 'This is happiness' and 'That is misery' is dualism. One who is free of all calculations, through the extreme purity of gnosis - his mind is aloof, like empty space; and thus he enters into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Narayana declared, "To say, 'This is mundane' and 'That is transcendental' is dualism. This world has the nature of voidness, so there is neither transcendence nor involvement, neither progress nor standstill. Thus, neither to transcend nor to be involved, neither to go nor to stop - this is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Dantamati declared, "'Life' and 'liberation' are dualistic. Having seen the nature of life, one neither belongs to it nor is one utterly liberated from it. Such understanding is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Pratyaksadarsana declared, "'Destructible' and 'indestructible' are dualistic. What is destroyed is ultimately destroyed. What is ultimately destroyed does not become destroyed; hence, it is called 'indestructible.' What is indestructible is instantaneous, and what is instantaneous is indestructible. The experience of such is called 'the entrance into the principle of nonduality.'"

The bodhisattva Parigudha declared, "'Self' and 'selflessness' are dualistic. Since the existence of self cannot be perceived, what is there to be made 'selfless'? Thus, the nondualism of the vision of their nature is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Vidyudeva declared, "'Knowledge' and 'ignorance' are dualistic. The natures of ignorance and knowledge are the same, for ignorance is undefined, incalculable, and beyond the sphere of thought. The realization of this is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Priyadarsana declared, "Matter itself is void. Voidness does not result from the destruction of matter, but the nature of matter is itself voidness. Therefore, to speak of voidness on the one hand, and of matter, or of sensation, or of intellect, or of motivation, or of consciousness on the other - is entirely dualistic."

Consciousness itself is voidness. Voidness does not result from the destruction of consciousness, but the nature of consciousness is itself voidness. Such understanding of the five compulsive aggregates and the knowledge of them as such by means of gnosis is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Prabhaketu declared, "To say that the four main elements are one thing and the etheric space-element another is dualistic. The four main elements are themselves the nature of space. The past itself is also the nature of space. The future itself is also the nature of

space. Likewise, the present itself is also the nature of space. The gnosis that penetrates the elements in such a way is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Pramati declared, "'Eye' and 'form' are dualistic. To understand the eye correctly, and not to have attachment, aversion, or confusion with regard to form - that is called 'peace.' Similarly, 'ear' and 'sound,' 'nose' and 'smell,' 'tongue' and taste, 'body' and touch, 'and 'mind' and 'phenomena' - all are dualistic. But to know the mind, and to be neither attached, averse, nor confused with regard to phenomena - that is called 'peace.' To live in such peace is to enter into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Aksayamati declared, "The dedication of generosity for the sake of attaining omniscience is dualistic. The nature of generosity is itself omniscience, and the nature of omniscience itself is total dedication.

Likewise, it is dualistic to dedicate morality, tolerance, effort, meditation, and wisdom for the sake of omniscience. Omniscience is the nature of wisdom, and total dedication is the nature of omniscience. Thus, the entrance into this principle of uniqueness is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Gambhiramati declared, "It is dualistic to say that voidness is one thing, signlessness another, and wishlessness still another. What is void has no sign. What has no sign has no wish. Where there is no wish there is no process of thought, mind, or consciousness. To see the doors of all liberations in the door of one liberation is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Santendriya declared, "It is dualistic to say 'Buddha,' 'Dharma,' and 'Sangha.' The Dharma is itself the nature of the Buddha, the Sangha is itself the nature of the Dharma, and all of them are un compounded. The un compounded is infinite space, and the processes of all things are equivalent to infinite space. Adjustment to this is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Apratihatanetra declared, "It is dualistic to refer to 'aggregates' and to the 'cessation of aggregates.' Aggregates themselves are cessation. Why? The egoistic views of aggregates, being unproduced themselves, do not exist ultimately. Hence such views do not really conceptualize 'These are aggregates' or 'These aggregates cease.' Ultimately, they have no such discriminative constructions and no such conceptualizations. Therefore, such views have themselves the nature of cessation. Nonoccurrence and nondestruction are the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Suvinita declared, "Physical, verbal, and mental vows do not exist dualistically. Why? These things have the nature of inactivity. The nature of inactivity of the body is the same as the nature of inactivity of speech, whose nature of inactivity is the same as the nature of inactivity of the mind. It is necessary to know and to understand this fact of the ultimate inactivity of all things, for this knowledge is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Punyaksetra declared, "It is dualistic to consider actions meritorious, sinful, or

neutral. The non-undertaking of meritorious, sinful, and neutral actions is not dualistic. The intrinsic nature of all such actions is voidness, wherein ultimately there is neither merit, nor sin, nor neutrality, nor action itself. The nonaccomplishment of such actions is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Padmavyuha declared, "Dualism is produced from obsession with self, but true understanding of self does not result in dualism. Who thus abides in nonduality is without ideation, and that absence of ideation is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Srigarbha declared, "Duality is constituted by perceptual manifestation. Nonduality is objectlessness. Therefore, nongrasping and nonrejection is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Candrottara declared, "'Darkness' and 'light' are dualistic, but the absence of both darkness and light is nonduality. Why? At the time of absorption in cessation, there is neither darkness nor light, and likewise with the natures of all things. The entrance into this equanimity is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Ratnamudrahasta declared, "It is dualistic to detest the world and to rejoice in liberation, and neither detesting the world nor rejoicing in liberation is nonduality. Why? Liberation can be found where there is bondage, but where there is ultimately no bondage where is there need for liberation? The mendicant who is neither bound nor liberated does not experience any like or any dislike and thus he enters nonduality."

The bodhisattva Manikutaraja declared, "It is dualistic to speak of good paths and bad paths. One who is on the path is not concerned with good or bad paths. Living in such unconcern, he entertains no concepts of 'path' or 'nonpath.' Understanding the nature of concepts, his mind does not engage in duality. Such is the entrance into nonduality."

The bodhisattva Satyarata declared, "It is dualistic to speak of 'true' and 'false.' When one sees truly, one does not ever see any truth, so how could one see falsehood? Why? One does not see with the physical eye, one sees with the eye of wisdom. And with the wisdom-eye one sees only insofar as there is neither sight nor nonsight. There, where there is neither sight nor nonsight, is the entrance into nonduality."

When the bodhisattvas had given their explanations, they all addressed the crown prince Manjusri: "Manjusri, what is the bodhisattva's entrance into nonduality?"

Manjusri replied, "Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing - that is the entrance into nonduality."

Then the crown prince Manjusri said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "We have all given our own

teachings, noble sir. Now, may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of nonduality!"

Thereupon, the Licchavi Vimalakirti kept his silence, saying nothing at all.

The crown prince Manjusri applauded the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "Excellent! Excellent, noble sir! This is indeed the entrance into the nonduality of the bodhisattvas. Here there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas."

When these teachings had been declared, five thousand bodhisattvas entered the door of the Dharma of nonduality and attained tolerance of the birthlessness of things. Λ

A Treasury of
Mahāyāna Sūtras
Selections from the Mahāratnakūṭa Sūtra

大寶積經

*Translated from the Chinese by
The Buddhist Association of the United States*

Garma C. C. Chang, General Editor

19 勝鬘夫人會
The True Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling in the garden of Anāthapiṇḍada, in the Jeta Grove, near Śrāvastī. At that time, King Prasenajit and Queen Mallikā of Kosala had just had an initial realization of the Dharma. They said to each other, "Our daughter, Śrīmālā, is kind, intelligent, learned, and wise. If she could see the Tathāgata, she would be quick to understand the profound Dharma and would have no doubt about it whatsoever. We should now send an eloquent messenger to her to arouse her sincere faith."¹

Immediately upon this decision, the king and queen wrote Queen Śrīmālā a letter extolling the true merits of the Tathāgata, and sent a messenger, Chandra, to deliver it to her at Ayodhyā. Queen Śrīmālā received the letter with reverence and joy. After she opened and read it, she felt how unusual its message was and spoke to the messenger in verse:

"It is said that the Tathāgata's voice
Is difficult to encounter in this world.
If this saying is true,²
I shall reward you with apparel.
If the Buddha, the World-Honored One,
Has manifested himself to benefit this world,
His compassion will certainly extend to me,
That I may see his true appearance."

As soon as she had so spoken, the Buddha appeared in the air in an inconceivable form, emitting a brilliant light. Queen Śrīmālā and her retinue gathered

The Pennsylvania State University Press
University Park and London

Sūtra 48, Taishō 310, pp. 672-678; translated into Chinese by Bodhiruci.

together. With palms joined, they bowed respectfully to him, and the queen, looking up in adoration, praised the great teacher:

"The wondrous form of the Tathāgata
Is unequalled in this world;
It is incomparable and inconceivable;
Therefore I pay homage to him.
The form of the Tathāgata knows no bounds,
And boundless, too, is his wisdom.
All aspects [of his nature] abide eternally;³
Therefore I take refuge in him.
He has skillfully subdued all mental faults,
As well as the four vices of the body;⁴
He has reached the inconceivable stage;
Therefore I pay homage to him.
He knows everything that can be known,
For his wisdom-body meets no obstacles;
He forgets nothing;
Therefore I pay homage to him.
I bow down to the One who is infinite;
I bow down to the One who is peerless;
I bow down to the One
Who has free command of all dharmas;
I bow down to the One
Who is beyond thought.
May his compassion shelter me
And cause the seeds of the Dharma
To grow [within me].
So that I may always be with the Tathāgata
Until my last existence [in saṃsāra].
I have practiced all meritorious deeds
In this life and in all other lives.
May the Buddha always take me,
With all my roots of virtue,
Into his following."

When Queen Śrīmālā had spoken these verses, she and her entire retinue prostrated themselves at the Buddha's feet. Then the World-Honored One spoke to Śrīmālā in verse:

"In your former lives I taught you
And revealed to you the path of enlightenment.
Now once again you meet me here;
We shall also meet in future lives."

After speaking this verse, the Buddha prophesied to the assembly that Queen Śrīmālā would attain supreme enlightenment, saying, "You now praise the superb merits of the Tathāgata. Because of this good root, you will be a sovereign among gods and humans for incalculable kalpas. All your needs will be fulfilled. Wherever you are born, you will be able to meet me and praise me face to face, just as you do now. You will also make offerings to innumerable, countless other Buddhas, World-Honored Ones. After twenty thousand incalculable kalpas, you, too, will become a Buddha, named Universal Light Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One.

"In your Buddha-land, there will be no miserable planes of existence, no suffering of aging or sickness, and no evil deeds, not even their names. The sentient beings there will appear in magnificent forms, and will solely experience the five exquisite [sensuous] pleasures, enjoying them even more than do the gods in the Parānirmita-Vaśavartin Heaven and other heavens. All these sentient beings will follow the Mahāyāna teachings. Others who have correctly learned the Mahāyāna [elsewhere] may be born in that land."

After Queen Śrīmālā had received the prophecy, innumerable gods and humans were jubilant, and they all wished to be born in that Buddha-land. The World-Honored One then prophesied that they would all be born in that land.

After having heard the Buddha's prophecy, Queen Śrīmālā stood before the Tathāgata with her palms joined, and made ten great vows, saying:

- (1) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will never think of breaking the precepts I have received.
- (2) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will never be arrogant toward teachers or my superiors.
- (3) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will never feel ill will toward any sentient being.
- (4) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will never be jealous of my superiors or those whose possessions are superior to mine.
- (5) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will never be reluctant to give, even if I have only a little food.
- (6) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment,
I will not accept money or accumulate property for my own sake, but only for the sake of relieving the poverty and sufferings of sentient beings.

- (7) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment, I will practice the four inducements without expecting rewards. I will embrace sentient beings with a mind that never covets profit, is never weary, and is free of hindrances.
- (8) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment, if I see any sentient being bereft of parents or children, imprisoned, sick, distressed, or suffering from any kind of danger or misfortune, I will not forsake him. Instead, I will give him peace and security, help him properly, and relieve him of all sufferings.
- (9) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment, if I see anyone pursuing evil ways or violating the pure precepts of the Tathāgata, [I will not forsake him]. In the cities, towns, and villages under my influence, I will subdue whoever should be subdued and embrace whoever should be embraced. Why? Only by subduing and embracing [sentient beings] will the true Dharma⁵ endure. When the true Dharma endures, gods and humans will thrive, the miserable planes of existence will diminish, and the Tathāgata's Dharma-wheel will turn perpetually.
- (10) "World-Honored One, from now until my attainment of enlightenment, I will never forget the true Dharma I have embraced. Why? To forget the true Dharma is to forget the Mahāyāna; to forget the Mahāyāna is to forget the pāramitās; to forget the pāramitās is to abandon the Mahāyāna. If a Bodhisattva wavers in regard to the Mahāyāna, then he will not be firm in embracing the true Dharma, and consequently will not be able to transcend the state of an ordinary person, causing a great loss. World-Honored One, the Bodhisattvas who embrace the true Dharma now or in the future will receive unlimited, great benefits.

"World-Honored One, Noble Master, although you have witnessed the pronouncement of these great vows, sentient beings with meager roots of virtue may very well doubt the ten great vows, for they are most difficult to accomplish. These sentient beings may habitually perform unwholesome actions in the long night and be afflicted by all kinds of suffering. It is to benefit these sentient beings that I now make this sincere declaration before the Buddha: World-Honored One, if the ten great vows are true and not false, may celestial flowers rain down over this assembly and may a celestial voice be heard."

As soon as Queen Śrīmālā had said this to the Buddha, the sky began to rain down celestial flowers, and a celestial voice exclaimed, "Excellent, Queen Śrīmālā! What you have said is true indeed."

After the assembly saw the auspice, they were freed from every doubt and were overjoyed. They proclaimed in unison their desire to be born wherever Queen Śrīmālā would be born, to make the same vows she had made, and to

perform the same deeds she would perform. Thereupon, the Buddha, the World-Honored One, prophesied that all their wishes would be fulfilled.

Then Queen Śrīmālā made three more great vows before the Buddha, saying, "I will benefit an infinite number of sentient beings through the power of these vows: first, I will, by my good roots, attain the wisdom of the true Dharma in all my lifetimes; second, after I have attained the true wisdom, wherever I may be born I will explain it untiringly to all sentient beings; third, in whatever form I may be born, I will not spare life or limb in embracing, protecting, and upholding the true Dharma."

When the World-Honored One heard these vows, he told Śrīmālā, "Just as all forms are contained in the realm of space, so all the Bodhisattva's vows, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, are contained in these vows. These three vows are truly vast."

Then Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, through the eloquence vested in me by the Buddha's miraculous power, I would like to explain the great vow. Please grant me permission to speak."

The Buddha said, "Śrīmālā, speak as you wish."

Śrīmālā said, "The Bodhisattva's vows, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, are all contained in one great vow. This one great vow is called the embracing of the Tathāgata's True Dharma. This embracing of the true Dharma is truly great and vast."

The Buddha said, "Well said, Śrīmālā! You have practiced the Dharma for a long time; your wisdom and ingenuity are subtle and profound. Anyone who can understand your words must have planted many good roots in the long night. You speak of the embracing of the true Dharma; it is the teaching of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future. Now that I have attained supreme enlightenment, I, too, often teach the embracing of the true Dharma in various ways. The merits derived from praising the embracing of the true Dharma are limitless, just as the wisdom of the Tathāgata is limitless. Why? Because it is most meritorious and beneficial to embrace the true Dharma."

Queen Śrīmālā then said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, by the Buddha's divine power, I wish to explain the broad meaning of the embracing of the true Dharma."

The Buddha said, "Speak as you wish."

Śrīmālā said, "To embrace the true Dharma, broadly speaking, means to attain all the infinite Buddha-Dharmas, including the eighty thousand practices.

"Just as the multicolored clouds at the beginning of a kalpa rain down myriad gems, so the cloud of the good root of embracing the true Dharma rains down immeasurable blessings.

"World-Honored One, to illustrate further, the great flood at the beginning of a kalpa contains the cause of the billion-world universe, including the forty billion different continents.⁶ In the same way, the embracing of the true Dharma

contains the cause of the immeasurable realm of the Mahāyāna, and also the miraculous powers of the Bodhisattvas, the various Dharma-doors, and the perfection of the mundane and supramundane joy never before experienced by any god or human.

"To illustrate further, the great earth bears four burdens. What are the four? The oceans, the mountain ranges, the grasses and trees, and the sentient beings. The good men and women who embrace the true Dharma can bear four burdens heavier than those borne by the earth. What are the four?

- (1) To teach [cultivation of] the good roots of gods and humans to the sentient beings who are apart from virtuous friends, lack learning, and are sinful, thus bringing those beings to maturity;
- (2) to teach the Śrāvaka-vehicle to those who seek to be Śrāvakas;
- (3) to teach the Pratyekabuddha-vehicle to those who seek to be Pratyekabuddhas; and
- (4) to teach the Mahāyāna to those who seek the Mahāyāna.

These are the four burdens, heavier than those borne by the earth, borne by the good men and women who embrace the true Dharma.

"World-Honored One, the good men and women who embrace the true Dharma are able to establish [themselves like] the great earth to bear these four heavy burdens. They become the friends of all sentient beings universally, without need of an invitation. They are the Dharma-mothers of the world, who benefit sentient beings out of pity and great compassion.

"To illustrate further, the great earth is the source of the four categories of gems. What are the four? The invaluable gems, those of high value, those of medium value, and those of low value. Similarly, the good men and women who embrace the true Dharma and establish [themselves like] the great earth can cause the sentient beings who meet them to obtain the four great treasures, which are the best of all precious things. What are the four? When sentient beings meet such virtuous friends, they will obtain the good roots leading to birth as humans or gods, to Śrāvaka-hood, to Pratyekabuddha-hood, or to realization of the Unexcelled Vehicle. Sentient beings will obtain these four great treasures after meeting the good men and women who embrace the true Dharma and establish [themselves like] the great earth.

"World-Honored One, that which yields the [four] great treasures is the real embracing of the true Dharma.

"World-Honored One, regarding the embracing of the true Dharma, I do not mean that the true Dharma and the embracing of the true Dharma are different. The true Dharma is to embrace the true Dharma.

"World-Honored One, the embracing of the true Dharma is no other than the pāramitās, and the pāramitās are no other than the embracing of the true Dharma. Why?

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured through giving, the good men and women who embrace the true Dharma practice charity, giving even their own lives and limbs. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of giving.

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured by discipline, [those who embrace the true Dharma] guard their own six senses; purify their own verbal, bodily, and mental actions; and conduct themselves with dignity. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of discipline.

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured by patience, [those who embrace the true Dharma] are free of ill will; intend only to benefit; and bear rebukes, scoldings, insults, outrage, slander, libel, annoyance, and harassment with the utmost patience, even without their faces changing color in the slightest. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of patience.

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured by vigor, [those who embrace the true Dharma] do not have an indolent or negative mentality, but show great aspiration and supreme vigor, whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of vigor.

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured by meditation, [those who embrace the true Dharma] are not distracted, and achieve right mindfulness and remembrance. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of meditation.

"For those sentient beings who can best be matured by wisdom and who ask questions about the Dharma in order to benefit from it, [those who embrace the true Dharma] untiringly explain all doctrines, all sciences, and all techniques, until those sentient beings fully comprehend what is ultimate. In this way, they bring those sentient beings to maturity in accordance with their inclinations, to establish them firmly in the true Dharma. This is called the pāramitā of wisdom.

"Therefore, World-Honored One, the embracing of the true Dharma is not different from the pāramitās; the embracing of the true Dharma is the pāramitās."

The Queen Śrīmālā continued, "World-Honored One, through the eloquence vested in me by the Buddha's divine power, I wish to elaborate on the great meaning [of the embracing of the true Dharma]."

The Buddha said, "What is the great meaning?"

"World-Honored One, in referring to those who embrace the true Dharma,

I do not mean that they constitute an entity that differs from the embracing of the true Dharma.⁷ The good men and women who embrace the true Dharma are the embracing of the true Dharma. Why?

"The good men and women who embrace the true Dharma give their bodies, lives, and possessions for the sake of the true Dharma. By giving their bodies, these people will realize that which transcends the limits of *samsāra*, will be free from old age and sickness, and will attain the Tathāgata's Dharma-body, which is indestructible, eternal, changeless, ultimately tranquil, and inconceivable. By giving their lives, they will realize that which transcends the limits of *samsāra*, will be forever released from death, will attain eternity, will acquire the inconceivable merits, and will securely abide in all the Buddha-Dharmas and miraculous powers. By giving their possessions, they will realize that which transcends the limits of *samsāra*, and will go far beyond the realm of sentient beings. They will attain inexhaustible, undiminishing, perfect accomplishments; will acquire inconceivable merits and magnificent attributes; and will be honored and served by other sentient beings.⁸

"World-Honored one, the good men and women who give their bodies, lives, and possessions in order to embrace the true Dharma will receive the Tathāgata's prophecy [of their attainment of Buddhahood].

"World-Honored One, when the true Dharma is on the verge of extinction, the monks, nuns, laymen, and laywomen will gather in groups, form factions, and dispute with one another. At that time, the good men and women who, without crookedness or deceit, cherish and embrace the true Dharma will associate with the good faction;⁹ those who associate with the good faction will definitely receive the Buddha's prophecy [of their attainment of enlightenment].

"World-Honored One, I see that to embrace the true Dharma has this tremendous power. The Tathāgata regards this [doctrine] as the eye [of the Dharma], the basis of the Dharma, the guide of the Dharma, and the understanding of the Dharma."

Then the World-Honored One, having heard Queen Śrīmālā explain the great power of embracing the true Dharma, exclaimed, "So it is, so it is! Excellent, Śrīmālā! Just as you say, to embrace the true Dharma has tremendous, awesome power. A person will feel great pain or even become severely ill when one of his vulnerable spots¹⁰ is touched even slightly by a strong man. In the same way, Śrīmālā, the demon Pāpiyān feels excruciating pain, worry, and distress, and howls and moans with woe when someone embraces even a small portion of the true Dharma. Śrīmālā, I have never seen any way to cause that demon worry and distress as effective as embracing the true Dharma, even a small portion of it.

"Śrīmālā, just as the king of cattle is more beautiful in form and color and larger in size than other cattle, so, Śrīmālā, one who practices the Mahāyāna, even if he embraces only a small portion of the true Dharma, is superior to the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas with all their wholesome dharmas.

"Śrīmālā, Mount Sumeru, the king of mountains, surpasses all other moun-

tains in height, breadth, and beauty. In the same way, Śrīmālā, a novice in the Mahāyāna who, in order to benefit others, embraces the true Dharma without regard for his life or limb is superior to a person who has long been abiding in the Mahāyāna, but who is always concerned with his body and life, in spite of all his good roots.

"Therefore, Śrīmālā, you should reveal, demonstrate, and teach the embracing of the true Dharma to all sentient beings.

"Thus, Śrīmālā, to embrace the true Dharma yields great blessings, benefits, and karmic fruits. Śrīmālā, although for innumerable, incalculable kalpas I have praised the merits of embracing the true Dharma, I have not exhausted them. Therefore, to embrace the true Dharma brings about infinite merits."

The Buddha told Śrīmālā, "You should now explain further the embracing of the true Dharma, which I have taught, and which is cherished by all Buddhas alike."

Śrīmālā said, "Very well, World-Honored One. The embracing of the true Dharma is called the Mahāyāna. Why? Because the Mahāyāna gives birth to all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and all mundane and supramundane wholesome dharmas. Just as Lake Anavatapta is the source of the eight rivers,¹¹ so the Mahāyāna produces all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and all mundane and supramundane wholesome dharmas.

"World-Honored One, just as all seeds, grasses, trees, and forests depend upon the great earth in order to grow, so all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and all mundane and supramundane wholesome dharmas, depend upon the Mahāyāna in order to grow. Therefore, World-Honored One, to abide in and embrace the Mahāyāna is to abide in and embrace [the vehicles of] the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas, and all mundane and supramundane wholesome dharmas.

"The Buddha, the World-Honored One, has discoursed on six subjects, namely, the abiding of the true Dharma, the extinction of the true Dharma, the Prātimokṣa, the Vinaya, true renunciation of the household life, and full monastic ordination. It is for the sake of the Mahāyāna that these six subjects are taught. Why? The abiding of the true Dharma is taught for the sake of the Mahāyāna because the abiding of the Mahāyāna is the abiding of the true Dharma. The extinction of the true Dharma is taught for the sake of the Mahāyāna because the extinction of the Mahāyāna is the extinction of the true Dharma. As for the Prātimokṣa and the Vinaya, these two Dharmas differ in name, but mean the same. Vinaya is instruction for the Mahāyāna. Why? It is for the sake of Buddhahood, [which is the aim of the Mahāyāna,] that one leaves the household life and receives full monastic ordination. Therefore, the Vinaya, true renunciation of the household life, and full monastic ordination are all Mahāyāna disciplines.

"World-Honored One, the Arhats do not [truly] leave the household life or receive full monastic ordination. Why? Because it is not for the sake of Tathāgatahood that they leave the household life or receive full monastic ordination.

"The Arhats take refuge in the Tathāgata out of fear. Why? The Arhats are

constantly afraid of all phenomena, as if someone sought to harm them with a sword in hand. Therefore, they do not actually accomplish the deeds of renunciation, nor do they attain the ultimate bliss. World-Honored One, [he who does not need] a refuge does not seek a refuge. Just as sentient beings without refuge are afraid of this and that and seek refuge for the sake of security and peace, so, World-Honored One, the Arhats take refuge in the Tathāgata out of fear.

"Thus, the Arhats and the Pratyekabuddhas have not ended their rebirths, have not sufficiently cultivated pure conduct, have not accomplished what should be accomplished, and have not completely eradicated what should be eradicated; they are still far from nirvāṇa. Why? Only the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Perfectly Enlightened One, has attained nirvāṇa; has achieved all the infinite, inconceivable merits; has eradicated all that should be eradicated; is ultimately pure; is adored by all sentient beings; and has transcended the states of the two vehicles and of the Bodhisattvas. The Arhats and so forth have not done so. It is only as skillful means that the Buddha speaks of them as having attained nirvāṇa. Therefore, they are still far from nirvāṇa.

"World-Honored One, when the Tathāgata says that the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas have an insight into liberation, thoroughly possess the four knowledges,¹² and have attained ultimate relief and rest, he is speaking of the expedient truth in order to accommodate others' inclinations. Why? There are two kinds of [birth and] death. What are the two? They are the recurring [birth and] death and the transformational [birth and] death. The recurring [birth and] death are the [birth and death of] sentient beings who continue [to exist in saṃsāra]. The transformational [birth and] death are [the birth and death of] the mind-created bodies¹³ of Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and liberated Bodhisattvas,¹⁴ which they retain until they attain bodhi. Now, of the two kinds of [birth and] death, it is with regard to the recurring [birth and] death that the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas are said to know they have exhausted their rebirths. Because they have realized the incomplete fruit, they are said to know they have fully cultivated pure conduct. Because they have thoroughly eradicated the continuous defilements¹⁵—which cannot be accomplished by any ordinary people or by the seven grades of learners¹⁶—they are said to know they have accomplished what should be accomplished.

"World-Honored One, to say that the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas know they are no more subject to future existence does not mean that they have eradicated all defilements or that they know all their rebirths. Why? The Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas still have some residual defilements not yet eradicated; therefore, they cannot know all their rebirths.

"There are two kinds of defilements: underlying defilements and active defilements.¹⁷ The underlying defilements are four in number. What are they? Attachment to a particular viewpoint, attachment to desire, attachment to form, and craving for existence. World-Honored One, these four underlying defilements can produce all active defilements. The active defilements arise from moment to moment in concomitance with the mind. World-Honored One, the underlying de-

filement of ignorance never arises in concomitance with the mind from beginning-less time.¹⁸

"World-Honored One, the four underlying defilements are powerful; they can breed all the active defilements. Yet, in comparison with them, the underlying defilement of ignorance is so much more powerful that the difference is inexpressible either by figures or analogies. Thus, World-Honored One, the underlying defilement of ignorance is more powerful than the craving for existence. Just as the form, power, authority, and retinue of the demon king overshadow those of the gods of the Parinirmita-Vaśavartin Heaven, so the underlying defilement of ignorance overshadows the other four underlying defilements. All other defilements, which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, depend on the underlying defilement of ignorance. It also causes the other four underlying defilements to endure. It can be eradicated only by the wisdom of the Tathāgata, not by the wisdom of the Śrāvakas or the Pratyekabuddhas. This being the case, World-Honored One, the underlying defilement of ignorance is the most powerful of all.

"World-Honored One, with grasping as the condition and defiled karmas as the cause, the three realms are produced. Likewise, with the underlying defilement of ignorance as the condition and undefiled karmas as the cause, the mind-created bodies of Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and powerful Bodhisattvas are produced. These three kinds of mind-created bodies and the undefiled karmas all depend on the underlying defilement of ignorance, being conditioned as well as conditioning. Therefore, World-Honored One, the three kinds of mind-created bodies and undefiled karmas all have the underlying defilement of ignorance as their condition, just as the craving for existence [also depends on the underlying defilement of ignorance as its condition].

"World-Honored One, the underlying craving for existence functions differently from the underlying defilement of ignorance. The underlying defilement of ignorance is different from the other four underlying defilements, and for this reason it can be eradicated only by the Buddha. Why? Because, though the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas have eradicated the four underlying defilements, they have not fully mastered the power of utter exhaustion of defilements. They have not realized that state. Why? World-Honored One, to say that their defilements have been exhausted is an exaggeration. Being clouded by the underlying defilement of ignorance, the Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and Bodhisattvas in their last [saṃsāric] existences do not know and perceive all dharmas. Because they do not know and perceive all dharmas, they have left uneradicated what should be eradicated, and left unfinished what should be finished. Because they have not eradicated and finished all that should be eradicated and finished, they have attained incomplete liberation, not complete liberation; incomplete purity, not complete purity; incomplete merits, not complete merits. World-Honored One, because they have only attained incomplete liberation, not thorough liberation, and only incomplete merits, not all merits, their knowledge of suffering is incomplete, their eradication of

the cause of suffering is incomplete, their realization of the cessation of suffering is incomplete, and their following of the path is incomplete."

Queen Śrīmālā continued, "World-Honored One, if one knows suffering only in part, eradicates the cause of suffering only in part, realizes the cessation of suffering only in part, and follows the path only in part, he is said to have realized partial nirvāṇa. One who has realized partial nirvāṇa is only advancing toward the realm of nirvāṇa.

"However, if one knows suffering completely, eradicates all causes of suffering completely, realizes the complete cessation of all suffering, and follows the path in its entirety, then he will realize the permanent, quiet, cool nirvāṇa within an impermanent, decaying, corrupt world. World-Honored One, such a person can be a protector and refuge in a world where there is no protector or refuge. Why? One who sees high and low in things cannot realize nirvāṇa. Only one who perceives equality in wisdom, equality in liberation, and equality in purity can realize nirvāṇa; therefore, nirvāṇa is called the uniform, one taste. What is the one taste? It is the taste of liberation.

"World-Honored One, one cannot attain nirvāṇa, the one taste, the uniform taste, if he does not completely eradicate and exhaust the underlying defilement of ignorance. Why? Because if he does not do so, he cannot completely wipe out all the faults that should be wiped out, which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. If he does not wipe out all faults, which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, he cannot realize all merits, which are equally numerous.

"This being the case, the underlying defilement of ignorance is the breeding ground of all defilements that should be eradicated. From it arise all the defilements causing hindrances to the mind: hindrances to tranquillity, contemplation, meditation, samāpatti, intensive effort, wisdom, fruition, realization, power, and fearlessness. [From it arise] all the defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, that can be eradicated only by the Tathāgata's enlightenment and the Buddha's diamondlike wisdom. All active defilements depend on the underlying defilement of ignorance, for ignorance is their cause and condition.

"World-Honored One, these active defilements arise from moment to moment in concomitance with the mind. However, World-Honored One, the underlying defilement of ignorance never arises in concomitance with the mind from beginningless time.

"World-Honored One, all the defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges,¹⁹ which should be eradicated by the Tathāgata's enlightenment and the Buddha's diamondlike wisdom, depend on and are established by the underlying defilement of ignorance. As an illustration, consider seeds, plants, and forests, all of which germinate and grow from the great earth. If the earth were destroyed, they would also be destroyed. Similarly, all the defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, which should be eradicated by the Tathāgata's enlightenment and the Buddha's diamondlike wisdom, depend on the underlying defilement

of ignorance for their existence and growth. Once the underlying defilement of ignorance is cut off, all these defilements²⁰ will simultaneously be cut off.

"When all things—the [underlying] defilements and active defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges—which should be cut off have been cut off, one will be able to realize the inconceivable Buddha-Dharmas, which are [also] more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. He will penetrate all dharmas without obstruction,²¹ become all-knowing and all-seeing, be free from all faults, achieve all merits, and become a great Dharma king who has gained mastery of all dharmas and who has realized the state of free command of all dharmas. He will be able to make the true lion's roar: 'I have ended my rebirths; I have fully cultivated pure conduct; I have done what should be done; and I am no more subject to [saṃsāric] existence.' This is why the World-Honored One constantly makes his firm proclamation in a lion's roar based on the ultimate truth.

"World-Honored One, the knowledge of being no more subject to [saṃsāric] existence is of two kinds. What are the two? The first [knowledge] belongs to the Tathāgatas. The Tathāgatas have vanquished, with their harnessing and subduing power, the four demons; have transcended all worlds and are esteemed by all sentient beings; have realized the inconceivable, pure Dharma-body; have attained mastery in all fields of knowledge; are unexcelled and supremely magnificent; have nothing more to do and see no further stage to realize; are endowed with the ten powers; have ascended to the supreme stage of fearlessness; and observe all dharmas without hindrance. Therefore, they can make the true lion's roar, proclaiming that they are no more subject to [saṃsāric] existence.

"The second [knowledge of being no more subject to saṃsāric existence] belongs to the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas. They have been released from the fear of countless births and deaths and are enjoying the bliss of liberation; therefore, they think, 'I have left the frightful saṃsāra behind and will suffer no more pain.'

"World-Honored One, by making this observation, the Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas also claim that they are no more subject to [saṃsāric] existence. However, they have not realized the highest state of relief and rest—nirvāṇa. On the other hand, if they are not deluded by the Dharma they have realized, they will be able to understand [that there are] states they have not realized, [saying to themselves:] 'Now I have only realized an incomplete state'; and they will definitely attain supreme enlightenment. Why? Because [the vehicles of] the Śrāvakas and the Pratyekabuddhas are both included in the Mahāyāna, and the Mahāyāna is the Buddha-vehicle. This being the case, the three vehicles are the One Vehicle.

"One who realizes the One Vehicle attains supreme enlightenment. Supreme enlightenment is nirvāṇa. Nirvāṇa is the pure Dharma-body of the Tathāgata. To realize the Dharma-body is the One Vehicle. The Tathāgata is not different from the Dharma-body; the Tathāgata is the Dharma-body. The realization of the ultimate Dharma-body is the ultimate One Vehicle.

"The ultimate One Vehicle is that which is apart from [ordinary] continuity.

Why? World-Honored One, if one says that the abiding time of the Tathāgata is immeasurable, equal to the boundless future, and that the Tathāgata can benefit the world with limitless compassion and limitless vows, he is said to speak well. If one says that the Tathāgata is permanent, is an unending Dharma, and is the ultimate refuge of all sentient beings, he is also said to speak well. Therefore, the Tathāgata, the Worthy One, the Supremely Enlightened One, is an inexhaustible refuge, an ever-abiding refuge, and an ultimate refuge, for an infinite length of time stretching into the future, in a world without [any other] protection or refuge.

"The Dharma is the path of the One Vehicle. The Saṅgha is the assembly of the three vehicles. However, the Dharma and the Saṅgha are partial refuges, not ultimate refuges. Why? Although the path of the One Vehicle is taught, it is no longer mentioned after one has attained the ultimate Dharma-body. Because they have fear, those in the assembly of the three vehicles take refuge in the Tathāgata and learn and practice the Dharma; they are still in the active process of working toward supreme enlightenment themselves. Therefore, the two refuges are only limited refuges, not ultimate ones.

"When sentient beings are subdued by the Tathāgata and take refuge in the Tathāgata, their thirst is relieved by the nectar of Dharma, and they generate faith and joy; [consequently] they take refuge also in the Dharma and the Saṅgha. These two refuges are [conceived as] refuges because of sentient beings' faith generated through the quenching of their thirst by the nectar of Dharma. The Tathāgata is not such a refuge; the Tathāgata is a true refuge. Nevertheless, in terms of the ultimate truth, to take refuge in the Dharma and the Saṅgha is to take ultimate refuge in the Tathāgata. Why? The Tathāgata is not different from these two refuges; the Tathāgata is the three refuges.

"Why is the path of the One Vehicle taught? The Tathāgata, the Supreme One, is endowed with the four fearlessnesses and is able to make the true lion's roar. If the Tathāgatas, in accordance with sentient beings' needs, teach the two vehicles as skillful means, [then the two vehicles they teach] are no other than the Great Vehicle, because in the highest truth there are no two vehicles. The two vehicles both merge into the One Vehicle, and the One Vehicle is the vehicle of supreme truth.

"World-Honored One, when Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas reach the initial realization of the four noble truths, it is not with the one [supreme] knowledge that they eradicate the underlying defilements, realize the merits of complete knowledge of the four noble truths, or understand the essence of the four truths. World-Honored One, they lack the supramundane knowledge, so the four knowledges [of the four truths] come to them gradually, each conditioning the next. World-Honored One, the supramundane knowledge, like a diamond [which cuts things at one stroke], is not gradual in nature.

"World-Honored One, the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas eradicate the underlying defilements by knowing the noble truths in many ways, but they do not possess the supreme, supramundane knowledge. Only the Tathāgata, the Worthy

One, the All-Knowing One, can break up the shells of all defilements by his inconceivable knowledge of emptiness; it is beyond the domain of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas.

"World-Honored One, the ultimate knowledge which shatters the shells of defilements is called the supreme, supramundane knowledge. The initial knowledge of the noble truths is not the ultimate knowledge; it is knowledge only leading to supreme enlightenment.

"World-Honored One, the true meaning of the word 'noble' does not apply to [those who follow] the two vehicles. Why? The Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas are said to be noble merely because they can attain a small part of the merits [of a Tathāgata]. World-Honored One, the [real] noble truths are not truths belonging to Śrāvakas or Pratyekabuddhas, and are not merits belonging to them. The [real] noble truths are realized only by a Tathāgata, a Worthy One, a Perfectly Enlightened One, and afterwards revealed, demonstrated, and explained to sentient beings in the world who are confined in shells of ignorance. Hence the name 'noble truths.'

"World-Honored One, the [real] noble truths are very profound, subtle, difficult to perceive, hard to understand, and not to be discriminated; they are beyond the realm of thought and speculation, and they transcend the credence of all the world. They are known only to Tathāgatas, Worthy Ones, Perfectly Enlightened Ones. Why? These truths explain the very profound Tathāgata-embryo. The Tathāgata-embryo belongs in the realm of the Buddha and is beyond the domain of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. Since the noble truths are explained on the basis of the Tathāgata-embryo, and since the Tathāgata-embryo is profound and subtle, the noble truths are also profound and subtle, difficult to perceive, hard to understand, and not to be discriminated; they are beyond the realm of thought and speculation, and transcend the credence of all the world. They can be known only by a Tathāgata, a Worthy One, a Perfectly Enlightened One.

"If one has no doubt about the Tathāgata-embryo, which [in ordinary beings] is wrapped in an incalculable number of defilements, he will also have no doubt about the Dharma-body of the Tathāgata, which is beyond all defilement.

"World-Honored One, if one can have true faith in the Tathāgata-embryo and the Buddha's Dharma-body—the inconceivable, esoteric realm of the Buddha—he will then be able to believe in and understand well the two meanings of the noble truths.

"What are the two meanings of the noble truths? They are the active and the nonactive. The active noble truths are the four noble truths in an incomplete sense. Why? When one has to rely on others for protection, he cannot completely know suffering, eradicate all causes of suffering, realize the complete cessation of suffering, or follow in its entirety the path leading to the cessation of suffering. Therefore, he cannot know conditioned things, unconditioned things, or nirvāṇa.

"World-Honored One, the nonactive noble truths refer to the four noble truths in the complete sense. Why? Because, when one can rely on himself for

protection, he can completely know suffering, eradicate all causes of suffering, realize the complete cessation of suffering, and follow in its entirety the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

"Thus, there are in all eight noble truths mentioned; however, the Buddha teaches them only [in terms of] four noble truths. The meaning of the nonactive four noble truths is perfectly realized only by Tathāgatas, Worthy Ones, Perfectly Enlightened Ones, and is beyond the capacity of Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas. Why? Because nirvāṇa is not to be realized by any dharma, whether superior or inferior, whether low, middle, or high.

"What does it mean that the Tathāgatas perfectly realize the nonactive truths? The Tathāgatas, the Worthy Ones, the Supremely Enlightened Ones, completely know suffering; have eradicated all causes of suffering, which are the defilements; have realized the complete cessation of all suffering, [even that] derived from the aggregates of a mind-created body; and have followed in its entirety the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

"World-Honored One, the term 'cessation of suffering' does not imply the destruction of anything. Why? Because the cessation of suffering has no beginning, no action, no origination, and no end; it is ever-abiding, immovable, intrinsically pure, and free from the shell of defilements.²³

"World-Honored One, the Tathāgata has achieved inconceivable Dharmas more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, Dharmas which embody the wisdom of liberation and which are referred to as the Dharma-body. World-Honored One, when this Dharma-body is not apart from defilements, it is called the Tathāgata-embryo.²⁴

"World-Honored One, the Tathāgata-embryo is the Tathāgata's knowledge²⁵ of emptiness. The Tathāgata-embryo has never been seen or realized by any Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha. It is perceived and witnessed only by the Buddhas.

"World-Honored One, the knowledge of emptiness of the Tathāgata-embryo is of two kinds. What are the two? The first is the knowledge that *the Tathāgata-embryo is empty*: that it is apart from all defilements and apart from knowledge which does not lead to liberation. The second is the knowledge that *the Tathāgata-embryo is not empty*: that it contains inconceivable Dharmas more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, which embody the Buddhas' wisdom of liberation.

"World-Honored One, the advanced Śrāvakas can, through faith, gain access to these two knowledges of emptiness. World-Honored One, the knowledge of emptiness possessed by the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas is connected with and revolves around the four wrong views. Therefore, no Śrāvaka or Pratyekabuddha has ever perceived or realized the complete cessation of suffering. Only the Buddha has realized it directly; he has eradicated all defilements and followed in its entirety the path leading to the cessation of suffering.

"World-Honored One, of the four noble truths, three truths are impermanent, and one truth is permanent. Why? The three noble truths [of suffering, the cause of suffering, and the path leading to the cessation of suffering] belong to

the realm of conditioned dharmas. What is conditioned is impermanent, and what is impermanent is destructible. What is destructible is not true, not permanent, and not a refuge. Therefore, in the ultimate sense, the three noble truths are not true, not permanent, and not a refuge.

"World-Honored One, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering is beyond the realm of conditioned dharmas. What is beyond the realm of conditioned dharmas is ever-abiding by nature. What is ever-abiding by nature is indestructible. What is indestructible is true, permanent, and a refuge. For this reason, World-Honored One, the noble truth of the cessation of suffering is in the ultimate sense true, permanent, and a refuge.

"World-Honored One, this noble truth of the cessation of suffering is inconceivable. It is beyond the realm of all sentient beings' mind and consciousness; it is also beyond the domain of all Arhats' and Pratyekabuddhas' knowledge. Just as the myriad colors cannot be seen by a man born blind, or as the sun cannot be seen by a seven-day-old infant, so the noble truth of the cessation of suffering cannot be an object of ordinary people's mind and consciousness, nor is it in the domain of any Śrāvakas' or Pratyekabuddhas' knowledge.

"The consciousness of ordinary people refers to the two extreme views. The knowledge of Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas means their *pure* knowledge.

"Extreme views mean [the views which arise when] one clings to the five aggregates as the self and makes various discriminations. There are two extreme views. What are the two? The eternalistic view and the nihilistic view.

"World-Honored One, if one sees saṃsāra as impermanent and nirvāṇa as permanent, his view is neither nihilistic nor eternalistic, but is the right view.²⁶ Why? When deluded people see that bodies, sense-organs, and that which thinks and feels all perish in this life, but do not understand the continuation of existence, then, being blind and without the eye of wisdom, they conceive a nihilistic view. When they see the continuity of the mind but fail to see the aspect of its momentary perishing, then being ignorant of the [true] state of consciousness, they conceive an eternalistic view.²⁷

"World-Honored One, the before-mentioned truth is beyond all discrimination and beyond inferior understanding. Because fools have delusive thoughts and cling to misconceived ideas, they believe either nihilism or eternalism.

"World-Honored One, concerning the five aggregates, deluded sentient beings consider the impermanent to be permanent, suffering to be joy, nonself to be self, and the impure to be pure. The Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, with all their pure wisdom, never glimpse the Buddha's Dharma-body or the state of the Tathāgata.

"If a sentient being, out of faith in the Tathāgata, regards the Tathāgata as permanent, joyous, pure, and possessing a self, he does not see [the Tathāgata] wrongly; he sees him correctly. Why? Because the Dharma-body of the Tathāgata is the perfection²⁸ of permanence, the perfection of joy, the perfection of self, and the perfection of purity. Those sentient beings who assume such a view are said to

have the right view. Those who assume the right view are called the true sons of the Buddha, born from the Buddha's mouth, born from the true Dharma, born from the Dharma miraculously,²⁹ and heirs to the Buddha-Dharma.

"World-Honored One, the so-called pure knowledge is the perfection of knowledge of all Arhats and Pratyekabuddhas. Even this pure knowledge, pure as it is said to be, cannot embrace the realm of the noble truth of the cessation of suffering, let alone the knowledge of [those who practice] the four reliances. Why, then, does the World-Honored One teach the four reliances? In order that the novices of the three vehicles may not be ignorant of the Dharma and may eventually realize its meaning.

"World-Honored One, these four reliances are mundane dharma. World-Honored One, there is one reliance which is the highest of all reliances, which is the supramundane, supreme, and ultimate reliance—namely, [nirvāṇa,] the noble truth of the cessation of suffering.³⁰

"World-Honored One, the cycle of birth and death [saṃsāra] is based on the Tathāgata-embryo. Because of the Tathāgata-embryo, the beginning [of saṃsāra] cannot be known. World-Honored One, if one says that because there is the Tathāgata-embryo there is saṃsāra, he speaks well.

"World-Honored One, the cycle of birth and death means the cessation of the sense faculties and the immediate arising of new sense faculties. World-Honored One, the two dharmas, birth and death, are the Tathāgata-embryo itself; they are called birth and death from the conventional viewpoint. World-Honored One, death means the cessation of sense faculties, and birth means the arising of sense faculties. The Tathāgata-embryo, however, neither arises nor ceases to be, neither emerges nor vanishes; it is beyond the realm of conditioned [dharmas].

"World-Honored One, the Tathāgata-embryo is permanent and indestructible. Therefore, World-Honored One, the Tathāgata-embryo is the base, the support, and the foundation of the wisdom of liberation. It is also the base, the support, and the foundation of all conditioned dharmas.

"World-Honored One, if there were no Tathāgata-embryo, there would be no abhorrence of suffering and no longing for nirvāṇa.³¹ Why? The seven dharmas—the six consciousnesses and their objects—are momentary and nonabiding, and therefore cannot retain the experience of suffering. Hence, they are unable to abhor suffering or aspire to nirvāṇa. The Tathāgata-embryo has no beginning, neither arises nor ceases, and can retain the experience of suffering. It is the cause of [sentient beings'] renunciation of suffering and aspiration for nirvāṇa.

"World-Honored One, the Tathāgata-embryo is not a self, a personal identity, a being, or a life. The Tathāgata-embryo is not in the domain of sentient beings who believe in a real self, whose thinking is confused, or who cling to the view of emptiness.

"World-Honored One, the Tathāgata-embryo is the store of the dharma-dhātu, the store of the Dharma-body, the store of the supramundane, and the store of intrinsic purity.

"This intrinsically pure Tathāgata-embryo, as I understand it, is always the

inconceivable state of the Tathāgata even if contaminated by defilements, the adventitious dust. Why? World-Honored One, the mind, whether virtuous or non-virtuous, changes from moment to moment, and it cannot be contaminated by defilements, the adventitious dust. Why? Defilements are not in contact with the mind; the mind is not in contact with defilements. How can anything that is not in contact with the mind contaminate the mind? Yet, World-Honored One, because there are defilements there is a defiled mind. It is extremely difficult to know and understand contamination by defilements. Only the Buddha, the World-Honored One, who is the eye, the wisdom, the root of the Dharma, the guide, and the foundation of the true Dharma, can know and see it as it is."

Then the Buddha praised Queen Śrīmālā, saying, "Splendid, splendid! Just as you say, it is difficult to know and understand how the intrinsically pure mind can be contaminated by defilements.

"Śrīmālā, there are two things difficult to understand. What are the two? First, the intrinsically pure mind; second, the contamination of this mind by defilements. Only you and those Bodhisattvas who have already accomplished the great Dharma can accept these two things upon hearing of them. The Śrāvakas can understand them only through faith.

"Śrīmālā, if my disciples strengthen their faith and comply with the Dharma-wisdom, then they will reach the utmost [understanding] of this Dharma. Compliance with the Dharma-wisdom means: contemplation of the sense-organs, the consciousnesses, and their objects; contemplation of karmas and their results; contemplation of the dormant defilements of the Arhats; contemplation of the joy of a liberated mind and the bliss of meditation; and contemplation of the noble, miraculous powers of the Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas. By accomplishing these five skillful contemplations, my present and future Śrāvaka followers will, because of their strengthened faith and their compliance with the Dharma-wisdom, be able to understand the intrinsically pure mind and how it becomes contaminated by defilements. They will reach the utmost [understanding] of this Dharma]. Śrīmālā, the utmost [understanding] is the cause of the Mahāyāna.

"Now you should know that he who has faith in the Tathāgata does not slander the profound Dharma."

Then Queen Śrīmālā said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, there are still other doctrines that will be of great benefit. By the awesome, divine power of the Buddha I will explain them."

The Buddha said, "Excellent! Now speak all you wish."

Queen Śrīmālā said, "There are three kinds of good men and women who can, with regard to the profound Dharma, avoid harming themselves, generate numerous merits, and enter the path of the Mahāyāna. What are the three? They are: the good men and women who have by themselves attained the wisdom of the profound Dharma; those who succeed in complying with the Dharma-wisdom; and those who cannot understand the profound Dharma but fully rely on the Tathāgata, saying, 'This is only known to the Buddha; it is not in my domain.'

"Aside from these three kinds of good men and women, other sentient

beings may take from the profound Dharma only what they like, cling to mistaken interpretations, defy the true Dharma, or learn heterodox doctrines. Wherever these rotten seeds [i.e., wrong beliefs,] are, we should go there and eliminate them. All gods and humans should combine their efforts to destroy these rotten seeds."

After Queen Śrīmālā had thus spoken, she and her retinue bowed down at the feet of the Buddha.

The Buddha then praised Queen Śrīmālā, saying, "It is wonderful, Śrīmālā, that you can skillfully protect the profound Dharma and properly vanquish its enemies. Because you have already associated intimately with hundreds of thousands of millions of Buddhas, Tathāgatas, you are able to explain this doctrine."

Then the World-Honored One emanated a magnificent light illuminating the entire assembly, and elevated himself into midair to the height of seven palm trees. Using his miraculous powers, he walked in the air and returned to the city of Śrāvastī. Meanwhile, without taking their eyes off the World-Honored One for an instant, Queen Śrīmālā and her retinue gazed at him with adoration until he passed out of sight. Then they all danced with joy and exchanged praises of the virtues of the Tathāgata. Recollecting the Buddha single-mindedly, they returned to Ayodhyā.

[When she had returned to the city, Śrīmālā] persuaded King Mitrakīrti³² to establish the Mahāyāna [as the state religion]. She taught the Mahāyāna to all females of the city over seven years of age, and King Mitrakīrti taught the Mahāyāna to males over seven; as a result, all the citizens of the country, without exception, learned the Mahāyāna.

When the World-Honored One entered the Jeta Grove, he called the Venerable Ānanda. He also summoned the king of devas by thinking about him. In response to the Buddha's summoning thought, Śakra, the king of devas, and his retinue instantly appeared before the Buddha.

Then the World-Honored One told Śakra the deva king, "Kauśika, you should accept and uphold this sūtra, explain it, and reveal it for the sake of the peace and happiness of those who dwell in the Heaven of the Thirty-Three."

He then told Ānanda, "You, too, should accept and uphold this sūtra and explain it in detail to the four kinds of devotees."

Śakra, king of devas, said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what should we call this sūtra? How should we uphold it?"

The Buddha told the king of devas, "This sūtra has limitless merits. It is beyond the power of all Śrāvakas and Pratyekabuddhas, let alone other sentient beings. Kauśika, you should understand that this sūtra is very profound and subtle and is a great amassment of merits. I shall now tell you briefly its names. Listen carefully! Listen carefully and think well about it."

Thereupon, Śakra, king of devas, and the Venerable Ānanda said to the Buddha, "Yes, World-Honored One. We shall accept your teaching."

The Buddha said, "This sūtra is called 'Acclamation of the Tathāgata's True Virtues,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Ten Inconceivable Vows,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the One Great Vow That Comprises All Vows,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Inconceivable Embracing of the True Dharma,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Entry into the One Vehicle,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Boundless Truth,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Tathāgata-embryo,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Buddha's Dharma-body,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Hidden Reality in the Doctrine of Emptiness,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the One Truth,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the One, Ever-abiding, Immovable, and Quiet Refuge,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on Inversion and Reality,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the Intrinsically Pure Mind Wrapped in Defilements,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the True Sons of the Tathāgata,' and should be upheld accordingly."

"It is also called 'A Discourse on the True Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā,' and should be upheld accordingly."

Moreover, Kauśika, this sūtra's teaching resolves all doubts; it is the definitive, ultimate teaching, the way to the One Vehicle. Kauśika, I now entrust you with this 'Sūtra of the Lion's Roar of Queen Śrīmālā.' Reveal and explain it to the beings in the ten directions as long as the Dharma endures."

Śakra, the king of devas, said, "Yes, World-Honored One. We will follow your instructions."

Then, hearing what the Buddha had said, Śakra, the king of devas, the Venerable Ānanda, and all the gods, humans, asuras, gandharvas, and others in the assembly were jubilant. They accepted the sūtra with faith and began to practice it with veneration.

NOTES

1. The other extant Chinese version of this sūtra, translated from the Sanskrit by Guṇabhadra (Taishō 353, p. 217), reads: "We should promptly send her a letter to arouse her thought of bodhi." Since it is the letter which is eloquent, not the messenger, this reading may be preferable.
2. This line can also be translated as: "If what is said [in the letter] is true."
3. Literally, "All dharmas eternally abide." According to *The Record of a Discourse on the Śrīmālā Sūtra* (勝鬘夫人經講記), by Ven. Yin Shun (Taipei, 1970), p. 36, this refers to all the physical and mental attributes of the Tathāgata, which are an accumulation of merits.
4. Killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. Here the vices of the body are interpreted in a broad sense, and include the vice of speech, i.e. lying. In a more detailed classification, the vice of speech is separated from the vices of the body and expanded into four items: lying, slander, harsh speech, and frivolous chatter. These four, combined with the unwholesome actions of mind and body, form the ten evil deeds. See Numerical Glossary.
5. See Glossary, "true Dharma."
6. Ancient Buddhist cosmology holds that in a billion-world universe there are ten billion Mount Sumerus, each surrounded by four continents. Hence "the forty billion continents."
7. Here the text is obscure. This is a free, extremely interpretive translation.
8. An alternative translation based on Guṇabhadra's version (Taishō 353, p. 219), reads: By [continually] giving their bodies until the end of saṃsāra, these people will be free from old age and sickness, and will attain the Tathāgata's Dharma-body, which is indestructible, permanent, changeless, ultimately tranquil, and inconceivable. By [continually] giving their lives until the end of saṃsāra, they will be forever released from death; will attain infinite, eternal, inconceivable merits; and will securely abide in all the Buddha-Dharmas and miraculous powers. By [continually] giving their possessions until the end of saṃsāra, they will attain endless, undiminishing, perfect karmic results; will acquire inconceivable merits and splendors surpassing those of others; and will be honored and served by other sentient beings.
9. Guṇabhadra's version reads "the faction of the Dharma," instead of "the good faction."
10. Skt. *marman*. A marman is a spot on the body, a slight touch on which may cause great pain or result in death. According to different sources, there are either 64 or 120 such spots; M. Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, (Oxford, 1899) p. 791, gives their number as 107.
11. Lake Anavatapta is a lake in Buddhist and Hindu cosmology, north of the Snow Mountain and south of the Fragrant Mountain. The eight rivers are: Ganges, Indus, Oxus, Śitā, Jumna, Saravastī(?) or Ajiravati, and Mahī(?). Sometimes only the first four are mentioned.
12. I.e., knowledge of the four noble truths.
13. The mind-created body refers to those who have been released from ordinary birth and death, and can appear in any form at will without being subject to the limitations of time and space.

14. Bodhisattvas of the seventh or eighth stage, who have attained the Realization of the Nonarising of Dharmas. There are other interpretations. See Ven. Yin Shun, *op. cit.*, pp. 152-3.
15. The four underlying defilements mentioned below.
16. The seven grades of learners are: those who are approaching the fruit of a stream-enterer, and those who have obtained it; those who are approaching the fruit of a once-returner, and those who have obtained it; those who are approaching the fruit of a non-returner, and those who have obtained it; and those who are approaching the fruit of one beyond learning, i.e., an Arhat.
17. The active defilements are the unwholesome mental functions such as lust, anger, etc., which arise when the mind stirs.
18. We are conscious of the active defilements arising from moment to moment, whereas underlying ignorance, which serves as a "store" or basis for other defilements, is very subtle and deeply inherent, so the ordinary mind is not aware of its existence. This is presumably the meaning here. The text reads "the underlying defilement of ignorance never arises in concomitance with the mind from beginningless time." This implies that since beginningless time, when the mind arises, ignorance is latent, not active; therefore, a sentient being is not conscious of it.
19. In the text, "more numerous than the sands of the Ganges" seems to modify 'enlightenment', not 'defilements'.
20. The text reads in full: "all the defilements, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges, which should be cut off by the Tathāgata's enlightenment and the Buddha's diamondlike wisdom. . . ."
21. Literally, "He will realize the unobstructed miraculous powers with regard to all dharmas."
22. See Glossary, "Tathāgata-embryo."
23. Alternative translation: "Because the cessation of suffering means the emergence of the pure original nature from the shell of defilements. This nature has no beginning, no action, no origination, no end, and is ever-abiding and immovable."
24. Tathāgata-embryo is sometimes translated as the 'womb of the Tathāgata', or 'treasure of the Tathāgata'; that is to say, there is a complete, perfect Buddha-nature within every sentient being. It cannot manifest itself due to the covering of defilements. When one attains supreme enlightenment, the Tathāgata-embryo is no more. It manifests in full Tathāgatahood.
25. 'Knowledge', here, and in other passages, can also be rendered 'wisdom'. In many cases, 'wisdom' is a better translation. However, in order to make the translation uniform, we use 'knowledge' here.
26. Guṇabhadra's version (Taishō 353, p. 222) seems to be better and deeper. It reads: "If one sees all phenomena as impermanent, his is a nihilistic view, not the right view. If one sees nirvāṇa as permanent, his is an eternalistic view, not the right view."
27. This sentence is a free translation; the text is obscure.
28. 'Perfection' here translates pāramitā.
29. We usually translate 化生 as 'ethereally born' when it refers to an actual birth in a heaven, a Pure Land, etc. However, here it is used allegorically, so we use 'born miraculously'.
30. For these two paragraphs we follow entirely the reading of Guṇabhadra's version (Taishō 353, p. 222); the original text is extremely obscure.

31. Here is an important statement indicating that within every human being there is Buddha-nature, which gives rise to religious aspiration, i.e., the quest for perfection and ultimate meaning in life. This Buddha-nature is called here the 'Tathāgata-embryo'.
32. Presumably Queen Śrīmālā's husband.

20 普明菩薩會

The Sūtra of Assembled Treasures

Thus have I heard. Once the Buddha was dwelling on Mount Gṛdhrakūṭa near Rājagṛha, accompanied by eight thousand great monks. Also in the assembly were sixteen thousand Bodhisattva-Mahāsattvas from various Buddha-lands, all of whom had attained the stage of nonregression and were destined for supreme enlightenment in their next lives.

That day, the World-Honored One told Mahākāśyapa, "Four things cause a Bodhisattva's wisdom to decrease or be lost. What are the four?"

- (1) To disrespect the Dharma or Dharma-masters;
- (2) to withhold the profound Dharma he has acquired instead of disclosing it fully;
- (3) to hinder those who rejoice in the Dharma by giving them reasons to despair; and
- (4) to be arrogant and conceited, and to disdain others.¹

Furthermore, Kāśyapa, four things cause a Bodhisattva to gain great wisdom. What are the four?

- (1) Always to respect the Dharma and revere Dharma-masters;
- (2) to preach widely whatever Dharma he has learned, with a pure mind not in pursuit of fame or profit;
- (3) to know that wisdom arises from much learning, and to pursue learning with such constant, urgent effort as if to save his head from fire; and
- (4) to recite the sūtras he has learned, and practice cheerfully as instructed, without becoming entangled in words.

Sūtra 43, Taishō 310, pp. 631–638; translated into Chinese by an anonymous translator.

THE CONCEPT OF TATHĀGATAGARBHA IN THE ŚRĪMĀLĀDEVĪ SŪTRA (SHENG-MAN CHING)*

DIANA PAUL

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

"*Tathāgatagarbha*" refers to a theory in Mahāyāna Buddhism which interprets the nature of the mind as intrinsically pure (unconditioned) yet defiled (conditioned). The objective of this theory is to link living beings with the Buddha, encouraging them to attain enlightenment. In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, a major scriptural authority on *Tathāgatagarbha*, a correlation between the nature of Emptiness and the nature of mind is explicated. The development of ideas first presented in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* greatly influenced the evolution of the notion of *ālayavijñāna*, the key concept in the second major Mahāyāna school known as *Vijñānavāda*. It will be demonstrated that *Tathāgatagarbha* accounts for the possibility of change from a defiled to an enlightened state due to the two dimensions of the inherently pure nature of mind as "embryo" and "womb."

THE *ŚRĪMĀLĀDEVĪ-SŪTRA* IS a scriptural authority on the theory of *Tathāgatagarbha*. In this text there are two principal definitions of *Tathāgatagarbha*: 1) the basis or support for all phenomena, both conditioned and unconditioned, symbolically represented as the "womb"; 2) the causal element for the gradual maturation of the Buddha-nature, symbolically represented as the "embryo."

In the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* the concept of *Tathāgatagarbha*, with reference to the first definition, is expanded to include the notion of the storehouse-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*) which receives sensory input (*bīja*). With reference to the second definition, the *Laṅkāvatāra* introduces the transformation of this basic consciousness (*āśraya-parāvṛtti* or *āśraya-parivṛtti*) towards enlightenment as an account for the nature of mind. The prototype for this storehouse-consciousness may be found, in part, in the metaphors of the "jewel-storehouse" and the "storehouse of merit" found in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*. The dominant characteristics of *Tathāgatagarbha*, however, according to the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, are in terms of the two definitions mentioned above, without reference to a storehouse-consciousness but rather to an originally pure state of mind (*cittam prabhāsvaram* or *prakṛtipariśuddha-garbha*).

The theory of *Tathāgatagarbha*, as developed in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, results in an interpretation of mind as intrinsically pure (unconditioned) yet defiled (conditioned), which reflects all phenomena as their basis and foundation, redefining emptiness as the negation of the defiled (*kleśa*) and the

affirmation of the intrinsically pure (*Buddha-dharma*). This interpretation of mind as the undifferentiated Dharma-realm (*Dharma-dhātu*), consisting of the absolutely pure dharmas, accounts for the universal enlightenment of all beings and for the possibility of change from a defiled state to an enlightened state. Since the *Tathāgatagarbha* participates in both the causal plane (original state of mind) and the resultant plane (the Dharma-Body, the enlightened state of mind), it is the basis for both the conditioned and unconditioned levels of existence vis-à-vis its Dharma-nature (*tathatā*).

The compound *tathāgata-garbha* (*ju-lai-tsang*)^a has two constituents, *tathāgata* signifying "thus come" or "thus gone," designating a Buddha, and *garbha* signifying "womb, inside, middle, interior of anything . . . a foetus or embryo, child, brood."¹ *Tathāgatagarbha* would then signify the womb or the embryo of the *Tathāgata*. The container in which the *Tathāgata* resides is implied in the "womb" dimension of *garbha*. The potentiality of becoming a *Tathāgata* is represented by the foetus or "embryo" nature of *garbha*.

From the two definitions of *garbha*, a passive and an active interpretation can be derived. *Garbha* as *Tathāgata-in-utero* refers to a receptacle which possesses or receives the *Tathāgata*. *Garbha* as *Tathāgata-in-embryo* refers to the process of growth and birth which culminates in the *Tathāgata*. The *Tathāgatagarbha*, therefore, has a dual function: 1) as the receptacle of the Buddha-nature; 2) as a cause for the gradual development and maturation of the *Tathāgata*.

The Chinese term for *garbha* which is *tsang*,^b denoting "storehouse," "container," or hidden place (often used to translate the Sanskrit *kośa*), indicates the first function of Tathāgatagarbha. No reference is made to embryo, essence, or womb.² The interpretation of Tathāgatagarbha as a storehouse is explicitly demonstrated when Tathāgatagarbha is assimilated to the concept of the "storehouse-consciousness" (*ālaya-vijñāna*) in the *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*,³ employing the same word, *tsang*, for both Tathāgatagarbha and *ālaya-vijñāna* (*shih-tsang*).^d

In identifying Tathāgatagarbha with the *ālaya-vijñāna*, the *Laṅkāvatāra* cites the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*⁴ (*Sheng-man ching*)^e and interprets Tathāgatagarbha as the receiver of input (*bīja*) which directs the consciousness towards transformation into the Buddha-nature,⁵ an adaptation of both definitions mentioned above. However, the identity of Tathāgatagarbha with the *ālaya-vijñāna* is a late development, immediately prefiguring Vijñānavāda.⁶ The *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* remains silent with regard to a storehouse-consciousness.⁷

Although there are no instances of a storehouse-consciousness in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* there is the metaphor of a jewel-storehouse which describes the merits and virtues of the Tathāgatagarbha, viz. the Acceptance of the true Dharma (*saddharma-parigraha*):⁸

Again the Great Earth has four kinds of jewel-storehouses (*pao-tsang*). What are the four? 1) the priceless 2) the supremely valuable 3) the moderately valuable 4) the slightly valuable. These are the Great Earth's four kinds of jewel-storehouses.

Similarly, the good sons and daughters who accept the true Dharma and build the great earth, obtain the four kinds of most precious jewels, viz., living beings. Who are the four? 1) Those who have not heard [the Dharma] or are without the Dharma are presented with the merits and virtuous deeds of men and the gods by the good sons and daughters who have accepted the true Dharma; 2) Those who seek Śrāvakahood are presented with the Śrāvaka vehicle; 3) Those who seek Pratyeka-buddhahood are presented with the Pratyeka vehicle; 4) Those who seek Mahāyāna are presented with Mahāyāna.

Thus, all the good sons and daughters who obtain the great jewels, viz., living beings, realize extraordinarily rare merits because of the Acceptance of the true Dharma. Lord, the great jewel-storehouse is the Acceptance of the true Dharma.⁹

The extension of the Acceptance of the true Dharma includes all the Buddha-dharmas.¹⁰ Stated otherwise, the Acceptance of the true Dharma contains the Buddha-nature, or is a receptacle of the Buddha-nature.

In terms of the Tathāgatagarbha itself, four storehouses or "wombs" are ascribed to it: "O Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is the Womb of the Dharma-realm (*fa-chieh tsang*ⁱ), the Womb of the Dharma-Body (*fa-shen tsang*^j), the transcendental Womb (*ch'u shih-chien shang-shang tsang*^k), and the inherently pure Womb (*tsu-hsing ch'ing-ching tsang*^l)" (p. 222b, col. 21-22).¹¹ The first two Wombs refer to the constituents of the Tathāgatagarbha, the latter two to the nature of the Tathāgatagarbha itself. An allusion is being made here to the basis for the unconditioned (Dharma-realm), the enlightened state of mind (Dharma-Body), and to the original state of mind as transcendental and inherently pure.

The Tathāgatagarbha as the causal element for the gradual development and maturation of the Tathāgata as the Dharma-Body (Nirvāṇa) accounts for the possibility of change from a defiled to an enlightened state. In acknowledging an originally pure state of mind in all living beings, i.e., universal enlightenment, the cause of the immanent enlightened state is attributed to the Tathāgatagarbha. Consequently, as a soteriological device, Tathāgatagarbha inspires encouragement and hope in all living beings. This soteriological dimension is accompanied by an epistemological account for the change from defiled, but originally pure, state of mind (Tathāgatagarbha) to an actualized, enlightened pure state of mind (Dharma-Body):

O Lord, if there were no Tathāgatagarbha, there would be no revulsion towards suffering, nor the aspiration to seek Nirvāṇa. Why? Because the seven [mental] phenomena—the six consciousnesses and the knowledge of [accompanying] mental phenomena—do not continue even momentarily and do not accept the impressions of suffering, there cannot be revulsion for suffering nor the aspiration to seek Nirvāṇa (p. 222b, col. 13-16).

Because there is the causal element (Tathāgatagarbha) for the enlightened state of mind (Dharma-Body), there is enlightenment:

"The Highest, Complete Enlightenment (*anuttarā samyaksambodhi*) is a name for the Nirvāṇa realm (*nirvāṇa-dhātu*). The 'Nirvāṇa realm', Lord, is a

name for the Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata” (p. 220c, col. 22-23).¹² Consequently, the cause for the Dharma-Body, viz, the Highest, Complete Enlightenment, is the Tathāgatagarbha.

The nature of the embryo or potentiality of the Dharma-Body in the expression Tathāgatagarbha is more explicitly illustrated in the *Ta-fang-teng ju-lai-tsang ching*ⁿ (*Mahāvaiṣṭya-Tathāgatagarbha sūtra*),¹³ regarded as the initial text of the Tathāgatagarbha transmission,¹⁴ and cited in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (p. 60, verse 97) as the eighth of the nine metaphors for the Tathāgatagarbha, viz. “the Tathāgatagarbha is like the foetus of an outcaste woman, impregnated by a king, who will live to be a future king.” (*jaghanyanārījathare nrpatvam*)¹⁵ (*Taiṣṭhō* v. 16, n. 666, p. 459a, col. 7-9, 16-17). The essentially pure nature of the Tathāgatagarbha, the unconditioned, is represented by the embryo concomitant with the extraneously defiled nature of the mother’s womb, the conditioned:

Therefore, O Lord, the life-death cycle (*samsāra*) is both conditioned and unconditioned. Nirvāṇa is likewise [both conditioned and unconditioned], being [Nirvāṇa] with remainder [i.e., conditioned] and [Nirvāṇa] without remainder [i.e., unconditioned] (p. 221b, cols. 24-25).¹⁶

The relationship between the Tathāgatagarbha and the life-death cycle is described in the following manner:

O Lord, the life-death cycle is based upon the Tathāgatagarbha. Because there is the Tathāgatagarbha, one refers to the [life-death cycle’s] original limit, which is unknowable. O Lord, because there is the Tathāgatagarbha, one refers to the life-death cycle as a proper designation [for the Tathāgatagarbha].¹⁷ (p. 222b 4-6) . . . O Lord, these two phenomena—life and death—are the Tathāgatagarbha. It is worldly convention to say ‘there is life’ and ‘there is death’. ‘Death’ is the extinction of one’s senses. ‘Life’ is the arising of new senses. The Tathāgatagarbha is neither life nor death. The Tathāgatagarbha is separate from the conditioned. The Tathāgatagarbha is eternal and unchanging. Therefore, the Tathāgatagarbha is the basis, support, and foundation. (p. 222b 7-11)¹⁸

Consequently, the Tathāgatagarbha as the life-death cycle is both conditioned and unconditioned and as the Dharma-Body is both conditioned and

unconditioned. The relationship between Tathāgatagarbha as the causal element and Dharma-Body as the result resembles the maturation from embryo to completely matured Buddha-nature as illustrated in the eighth of the nine metaphors in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* cited above. The distinction between the causal plane (Tathāgatagarbha) and the resultant plane (Dharma-Body) is defilement (*kleśa*):¹⁹

In explaining Tathāgatagarbha one explains the Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata, the inconceivable Buddha realms, and skillful means (p. 221b 17-18) . . . The extinction of suffering signifies the Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata which is from beginningless time, uncreated, non-arising, free from destruction, eternal, inherently pure, and separate from all the stores of defilement. O Lord, the Dharma-Body is not separate from, free from, or different from the inconceivable Buddha-dharmas, which are more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. O Lord, the Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata is called the Tathāgatagarbha when it is inseparable from the stores of defilement. (p. 221c 7-11)²⁰

The sentient consciousness’ process of spiritual maturation is referred to as the Tathāgatagarbha when in embryonic form, i.e., as contained within a defiled nature, represented by the eighth metaphor. The result of this maturation is the Dharma-Body, the enlightened state of consciousness which is both conditioned and unconditioned. The originally pure state of mind, as the seed or cause for the gradual development and maturation of the Tathāgata, viz., the Tathāgatagarbha, must be differentiated from the enlightened, actualized pure state of mind, viz., the Dharma-Body. While the unconditioned, originally pure state of mind is the cause for all phenomena, both conditioned and unconditioned, the potentially enlightened state (Tathāgatagarbha) and the enlightened state (Dharma-Body) are not identical vis-à-vis defilements (*kleśa*).

In the *Mahāyāna-abhidharma-sūtra* which is quoted in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* (p. 72, lines 13-14), the latter citing the *Śrīmālādevī sūtra* as a gloss, a crucial interpolation of *garbha* is introduced:

*Anādikāliko dhātuḥ sarvadharmasamāśrayaḥ/
Tasmin sati gatiḥ sarvā nirvāṇādhigamo 'pi ca.//*
The causal element which continues from beginningless time is the basis for all phenomena. Because of its existence, there are all levels of existence as well as the attainment of Nirvāṇa.

In this passage not only is the cause for the levels of existence and the attainment of Nirvāṇa attributed to the causal element but the basis of all phenomena are dependent upon this element. In the Vijñānavādin framework the causal element, the basis for all phenomena, is equated with the *ālayavijñāna* by Sthiramati.²¹ The *Ratnagotravibhāga* (pp. 72-73, lines 15-16, 1-3) attributes this basis to the Tathāgatagarbha:

sarvadharmāśraya iti/ yad āha/ tasmād bhagavaṃs tathāgatagarbho nīśraya ādhāraḥ pratiṣṭhā sambad-dhānām avinirbhāgānām amuktajñānānām asaṃ-skṛtānām dharmānām/ asambaddhānām api bhagavan vinirbhāga-dharmānām muktajñānānām saṃ-skṛtānām dharmānām nīśraya ādhāraḥ pratiṣṭhā tathāgatagarbha iti/ (RGV p. 73, lines 1-5)

... "The basis for all phenomena"—It is said: "Therefore, O Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is the basis, support, and foundation for all the interconnected phenomena which are unconditioned, being the knowledge inseparable and indivisible [from the Buddha-dharmas]. The Tathāgatagarbha is also the basis, support, and foundation for all the non-interconnected phenomena which are conditioned, being the knowledge separable and divisible [from the Buddha dharmas]."²²

In this citation we see the convergence of the meaning of cause or "embryo" with basis (*āśrayaḥ*), foundation, and support which is reiterated in the *Śrīmālādevī sūtra*.

The Buddha-dharmas are the unconditioned constituents of the Tathāgatagarbha. The constituents which are not Buddha-dharmas, viz., defilements, are also associated with the Tathāgatagarbha.

The Tathāgatagarbha as a causal element which gradually develops and matures is fused with the concept of a basis upon which all phenomena depend. The identity between the cause for Buddha-nature on the one hand and the basis or foundation for all phenomena on the other is due to the true nature or essence of all phenomena, viz., Suchness. This fusion of embryo or cause with both foundation and essence is again demonstrated in the following passage of the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*:²³

sarveṣāṃ aviśiṣṭāpi tathatā śuddhim āgatā/ tathāgatavaṃ tasmāc ca tadgarbhāḥ sarvadehinah//
"Suchness, which is characteristic of all things, is purity

And has the nature of the Tathāgata; therefore, that essence belongs to all beings."

According to this verse, there is no differentiation between living beings and the Tathāgata from the aspect of Suchness. However, from the standpoint of those who have reached the enlightened state and those who have not, there is a distinction between living beings and the Tathāgata.

The Tibetan translation of *garbha* (in the compound Tathāgatagarbha), *śñiṃ po*, most adequately connotes the full range of meanings as seed or cause, essence or heart,²⁴ which are not connotations derived from *tsang*.^b However, the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, in the passages cited above, attempts, for the first time within the evolution of Tathāgatagarbha literature, to delineate a definitive exposition on the Tathāgatagarbha as the cause for the maturation of the Buddha-nature concomitant with a description as the essence of the mind and the basis for all phenomena. Therefore, two dimensions of Tathāgatagarbha are specified: 1) the active process in which the sentient consciousness realizes spiritual maturation, implied in the "embryo" dimension and 2) the underlying nature or foundation which is the basis and essence of all phenomena, metaphorically represented as a storehouse or Womb for the merits of the Tathāgata upon which all existence depends, serving as a prototype for a storehouse-consciousness.

From the above citations we have seen that the living being has within his consciousness the cause which enables him to attain enlightenment. While living beings have this seed of enlightenment, they nonetheless remain in a defiled state and must nurture and mature this embryonic seed or causal element concomitant with the extirpation of defilement. Defilement is the falsely discriminating nature of mind, covering over the original pure state. Defilement exists conditionally but is extrinsic (*āgantuka*) or not truly the nature of mind. This total condition of the sentient consciousness is ascribed to the Tathāgatagarbha as the inherently pure mind residing in a defiled state.

This Tathāgatagarbha which is inherently pure is the inconceivable realm of the Tathāgata which has been contaminated by extrinsic defilements and other virulent defilements. Why? The good mind is momentary and not contaminated by defilements. The evil mind is also momentary but is not contaminated by defilements either. Defilements do not affect the mind. Then, how does the mind, which is unaffected by nature, become defiled? O Lord, there are defilements and there are defiled minds. The fact that there is defilement in the mind which is

inherently pure is difficult to comprehend. Only the Buddhas, the Lords, who have the eye of truth and the wisdom of truth, who are the sources of the Dharma and penetrate the Dharma, and who are the refuge of the true Dharma, can comprehend this truth." (p. 222b 22-222c 1)²⁵

A strict identity between the sentient consciousness and the Tathāgatarbha is not intended. Rather, the Tathāgatarbha refers to the essential nature of mind which is intrinsically pure but obfuscated by defiled living beings who do not comprehend the true nature of their own minds. There is the identity between living beings and the Tathāgatarbha from the perspective of the enlightened state wherein one understands the dharma-nature as Emptiness, the non-differentiation between the pure and the impure. From the perspective of the embryonic state of becoming enlightened, the defilement which has not been understood as Empty, is still differentiated from the pure, enlightened state which understands Emptiness, i.e. the identity between original enlightenment (Tathāgatarbha) and actual enlightenment (Dharma-Body) is not maintained when there is false discrimination instead of wisdom (*prajñā*).

The author of the *Śrīmāladevī-sūtra* introduces the latent stage of ignorance (*avidyāvāsa-bhūmi*)²⁶ (*wu-ming chu-ti*)¹ as the subtle, subconscious propensity which conditions every active state of defiled consciousness and obscures the true state which is the intrinsically pure mind. Only the Buddha can eliminate this most subtle and fundamental character of sentient consciousness:

O Lord, such is the power of the latent stage of ignorance! The power of the latent stage of ignorance is much greater than the other latent stages represented by the fourth stage of desire for existence (p. 220a 9) . . . The power of the latent stage of ignorance is far superior to that of the other latent stages of defilement represented by the fourth stage of desire for existence, and is the basis for the active defilements more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. It [the latent stage of ignorance] also causes (*ling*)^u the four [other] kinds of [latent] defilements to continue for a long time. The Arhats and Pratyekas' wisdom cannot eliminate it. Only the Tathāgata's enlightenment wisdom²⁷ can eliminate it. Yes, the stage of ignorance is extremely powerful! (p. 220a 12-15)

The active defiled state of consciousness is extirpated only by the Tathāgata. Consequently, the absolutely pure state of mind is realized only by the Tathāgata (Dharma-Body). The last remnant of impurity which distinguishes the sentient mind (*sattvacitta*) from the enlightenment wisdom (*bodhi*) of the Tathāgata is the latent stage of ignorance. In order to understand phenomenal existence which is activated by the propensity of the beginningless²⁸ ignorance, one must realize the intrinsically pure state of mind, i.e., the knowledge of the Tathāgatarbha:

O Lord, the Arhats, Pratyeka-buddhas and the Bodhisattvas in their very last body do not know and do not awaken to the various phenomena which are obscured²⁹ by the stage of ignorance. Because they are not aware (of these phenomena) they cannot absolutely eliminate what should be eliminated. (p. 220a 25-29)

The tenacity of beginningless ignorance prevents the comprehension of the true nature of all things (*dharmatā*). Stated otherwise, beginningless ignorance impedes the Tathāgatarbha, i.e., the maturation of the Buddha-nature.

If there were no Tathāgatarbha upon which all phenomena, conditioned and unconditioned, are based, there would be no possibility for change, i.e., no transformation from a defiled state to an intrinsically pure state of mind since the Tathāgatarbha is the cause for both all levels of existence and Nirvāṇa.

The Tathāgatarbha accounts for the possibility of change and for the activity of all phenomena. In terms of consciousness Tathāgatarbha is the foundation for changing (*pravṛtti*) from the sentient defiled consciousness to an intrinsically pure state of consciousness (*nivṛtti*).³⁰ In terms of the activity of all phenomena, the Tathāgatarbha is the basis for both the conditioned and unconditioned but whether the status of all phenomena are mental as in Vijñānavāda remains unexplained.

The nature of the Tathāgatarbha as the basis for all phenomena is equated with Emptiness for the first time in the *Śrīmāladevī-sūtra*.³¹ Analyzed in two dimensions, the nature of the Tathāgatarbha is both the negation (*śūnya*) of the defiled active state of mind (*samsāra*) and the affirmation (*aśūnya*) of the intrinsically pure mind (*nirvāṇa*):

O Lord, the wisdom of Tathāgatagarbha (*ju-lai tsang chih*)² is the Tathāgata's wisdom of Emptiness (*ju-lai k'ung chih*)^{3a} (p. 221c 12) . . . Lord, there are two kinds of wisdom of Emptiness with reference to the Tathāgatagarbha (*ju-lai tsang k'ung chih*).^{3b}

1) The Tathāgatagarbha which is Empty is separate from, free from, and different from the stores of all defilements.

2) The Tathāgatagarbha which is not Empty is not separate from, not free from, and not different from the inconceivable Buddha-dharmas, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges. (p. 221c 15-17).

From the level of the Tathāgata's wisdom, the two states of consciousness, defiled and inherently pure, are identical in nature, all phenomena being of one and the same nature as Emptiness:

There is the attainment of Nirvāṇa because there are no [differentiations between] inferior and superior phenomena. There is the attainment of Nirvāṇa because of the equality of knowledge. There is the attainment of Nirvāṇa because of the equality of liberation. There is the attainment of Nirvāṇa because of the equality of purity. Therefore, Nirvāṇa has one and the same quality which is that of liberation. (p. 220b 8-11)³²

The oneness of all phenomena, i.e., nondiscriminative wisdom, is identical with the intrinsically pure, luminous mind, viz., Tathāgatagarbha, an identification prefigured in the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā*³³ in terms of no-mindedness (*acittatā*) rather than Tathāgatagarbha. The wisdom of the intrinsically pure, luminous mind (the enlightened state) is identical with the wisdom of Emptiness. What impedes the wisdom of the intrinsically pure, luminous mind, i.e., the wisdom of the Tathāgatagarbha, is the latent stage of beginningless ignorance, the most formidable obstacle (*jñeyāvaraṇa*) to attaining liberation, causing the mind to differentiate phenomena as inferior and superior:

Lord, if the stage of ignorance is not ultimately eliminated, then one does not attain the one and the same quality of knowledge and liberation. (p. 220b 11-12)

When beginningless ignorance is eliminated, the culmination of the path, i.e., the maturation of Buddha-nature is attained. The Buddha-nature is expressed negatively in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* by the

One Noble Truth, viz., the extinction of suffering. What remains after this extinction is the wisdom of the intrinsically pure mind, the wisdom of Emptiness.³⁴

Defilement is negated or Empty due to its lack of any real existence, being extrinsic to reality.³⁵ Consequently, the defiled, conditioned mind is really non-existent while the Buddha-nature, the unconditioned, inherently pure mind is truly existent, i.e., "not Empty."

The affirmation of Emptiness in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* is the attribution of positive qualities (Buddha dharmas) to the Tathāgatagarbha as the Tathāgata's wisdom of Emptiness. The nature of Tathāgatagarbha is Emptiness; the knowledge of Tathāgatagarbha is the knowledge of Emptiness.

It is only possible to affirm Emptiness after the negation of the Empty, i.e., defilement, since the defiled consciousness impedes the correct understanding of Emptiness. After one understands that the defiled, sentient consciousness is dependent upon the intrinsically pure consciousness, phenomena may be affirmed as Emptiness and defilement negated as extrinsic, unreal, or "Empty."³⁶

In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* the true Dharma is Tathāgatagarbha, manifested both in the conditioned and unconditioned levels of existence in much the same way as Emptiness is manifested both in *samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*.³⁷ With the elimination of the beginningless ignorance, the apprehension of the oneness of all phenomena and the basis for all phenomena, viz., the wisdom of the Tathāgatagarbha, is realized. Only then is the identity between the pure and the defiled comprehended.

The emphasis in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* is on the state of the sentient consciousness, both in its defiled state and its mature, inherently pure state, tending towards the theory of consciousness-only (*Vijñānavāda*),³⁸ but avoiding any analysis of phenomena as either material or mental.

The abstruse and profound nature of the meaning of Emptiness as both affirmation and negation were a re-interpretation of Emptiness in order to avoid the accusation of either the four contrary views³⁹ (*viparyāsa*) (*tien-tao*)⁴⁰ or the two limited views⁴⁰ (*dr̥ṣṭi*) (*pien chien*).^{4d}

Since the time of early Buddhism, the four contrary views of permanence (*nitya*), happiness (*sukha*), substantial self (*ātman*) and purity (*śubha*), had been impediments to Arhatship. In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* the definition of the contrary views is retained with regard to conditioned existence but re-interpreted in terms of Emptiness. The two vehicles

have the four contrary views when they attempt to understand the affirmation of the Tathāgatagarbha as not Empty.⁴¹ Because of the difficulty in understanding Emptiness, the Arhats and Pratyeka-buddhas cannot understand the affirmation of the truly existent Tathāgatagarbha but understand only its negative aspect as Empty. Consequently, they see Emptiness where there is Non-Emptiness and become attached to the former:

The impermanent is considered the permanent, suffering is considered happiness, the non-substantiality of the self is considered a substantial self, the impure is considered pure . . . If there are living beings who believe in the Buddha's words, they will have thoughts of permanence, happiness, self, and purity. These are not contrary views but are correct views.⁴² (p. 222a18-19, 20-21)

The Tathāgatagarbha, as the nature of the Buddha who has attained Supreme Enlightenment, is unconditioned, being identical with all of the Buddha's qualities of wisdom. It is not the realm of living beings who are confused by Emptiness described in its positive aspect in terms of the categories "permanent," "happy," "substantial self," and "purity."

Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is not a substantial self nor a living being nor "fate" nor a person. The Tathāgatagarbha is not a realm for living beings who have degenerated into the belief of a substantially existent body or for those who have contrary views, or have minds bewildered by Emptiness. (p. 222b 18-20)⁴³

The permanent results from the wisdom of the equality of all dharmas, i.e., the identity of *samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*, Tathāgatagarbha and Dharma-Body. The pure cannot be found in a conditioned, defiled world but in the world of the Tathāgata, i.e., the intrinsically pure nature of mind, which is devoid of the latent stages of defilement (*vāśabhūmi*) and is the peace resulting from the absence of philosophizing (*prapañca*) of ego and non-ego. Happiness results from the cessation of (discriminative) mental activity (*manomayaskandha*) and its cause. The eternal is the penetration into the equality of *samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*.⁴⁴

The defiled mind which is tied to the phenomenal, conditioned level of existence is unable to bridge the gap between the absolute and the phenomenal

whereas the Tathāgatagarbha is able to co-exist as both the phenomenal, sentient consciousness and the absolute, intrinsically pure mind vis-à-vis Emptiness.

The objective of the theory of Tathāgatagarbha is to link living beings with the Buddha, encouraging them to attain enlightenment. The link between living beings who have the Tathāgatagarbha as the cause for their enlightenment and the mature, enlightened state (*bodhi*) or Dharma-Body is the nature of the Dharma (*Dharmatā* or *Dharmadhātu*) itself which is identical in both. The undifferentiated Dharma-dhātu is the ground for the identity between living beings and the Buddha, Tathāgatagarbha and Dharma-Body. On the conditioned level, however, the differentiation between living beings and the Buddha is maintained. The foundation or base for enlightenment is the Tathāgatagarbha as the defiled state (*samālā tathatā*) of the Dharma-nature or Suchness. The resultant state of enlightenment (*bodhi* = Dharma-Body) is the absolutely pure, unconditioned state (*nirmalā tathatā*) of the Dharma-nature, which consists of all the pure Buddha dharmas inseparable from the Dharma-realm.⁴⁵

In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* the two dimensions of being, the Empty and the Non-Empty, are ascribed to the non-real and real respectively. What is Empty is what is devoid of reality, viz., what is conditioned by defilements. What is not Empty are the pure qualities of the Buddha-nature, the truly existent, unconditioned reality.

The defiled sentient consciousness which is ultimately unreal is emphasized in discussing the Tathāgatagarbha from the conditioned, phenomenal level of existence. The "matured mind," i.e., the inherently pure enlightened mind of Dharma-Body, is not the focus of the text. Consequently, the wisdom of Emptiness which is impeded for living beings by beginningless ignorance remains an unknown in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra*, identified with the abstract Dharma-Body. Only the defiled, "Empty" dimension of Tathāgatagarbha is discussed, the embryonic stage of the sentient consciousness. The essence of the Tathāgata, which is the basis for all phenomena, is identified with the Tathāgatagarbha as the comprehension of Emptiness and Emptiness itself remains unanalyzed due to the text's ambiguity with regard to the status of phenomena as either material or mental.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* the Tathāgatagarbha had two dimensions. It functioned as a cause for the

gradual development of spiritual awareness in the sentient consciousness, similar to the gestation and maturation from embryo to adult. In addition to this active process of spiritual growth, the concept of Tathāgatagarbha was linked with the underlying nature or basis for all phenomena, identified with the nature or essence of the Tathāgata. Tathāgatagarbha was not, as yet, a storehouse-consciousness although it was described as both a storehouse or merit vis-à-vis the Acceptance of the true Dharma and as possessing four jewel-storehouses. The fusion between the storehouse-consciousness and the Tathāgatagarbha did not occur until the *Laṅkāvatāra*, as evidenced by the glosses in the *Ratnagotrā* and *Triṃśika*. Consequently, the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* served as a prototype for a consciousness which would function both as a receiver of input directed towards spiritual transformation and the cause for that spiritual development.

As the first text to identify Tathāgatagarbha with the wisdom of Emptiness, re-interpreting Emptiness as both affirmative (the quiescent Buddha dharmas) and negative (the elimination of defilement), the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* suggested that the defiled state of consciousness was ultimately unreal ("Empty"). In order to explain the defiled state, this text introduced the notion of beginningless ignorance to which the sentient consciousness tenaciously adhered, discriminating and losing sight of the ultimately real ("not Empty") Buddha-nature.

The potentiality to realize the Buddha-nature, the knowledge of the true nature of all phenomena, was illustrated in terms of the embryo of the Buddha, the process undertaken by the active sentient consciousness to eliminate ignorance and refine one's comprehension of Emptiness. While the active, spiritual maturation of the Buddha-nature within the sentient consciousness concomitant with the underlying basis for all phenomena were attributed to the Tathāgatagarbha, the relationship between the intrinsically pure mind and the phenomena which are apprehended as having the nature of Emptiness remained external to the sūtra's analysis.

In contrast to the Vijñānavāda interpretation of the structure of mind in which the *ālayavijñāna* as the cause for conditioned phenomena (*saṃskṛtadharma*), i.e., the unreal (*niḥsvabhāva* or *śūnya*) is subsequently transformed (*āśrayaparāvṛtti*), the Tathāgatagarbha is the basis for both the conditioned and unconditioned and is not negated, or rather transformed, since the defiled, conditioned phenomena as adventitious and unreal are denied any association

with the intrinsically pure mind. The forerunner of the triple structure of being (*trisvabhāva*) in the Vijñānavāda tradition, however, is illustrated in the *Śrīmālādevī-sūtra* by the link (*tathatā*, *Dharma-dhātu*) between Tathāgatagarbha (*samālā tathatā*) and the Dharma-Body (*nirmalā tathatā*), but the embryonic state (Tathāgatagarbha) and the resultant state (Dharma-Body) remain the central focus rather than that of the Dharma-realm or Suchness.⁴⁶

* I am indebted to Prof. Geshe Sopha, University of Wisconsin, for criticism and suggestions on a draft of this paper, though of course the final version is not to be taken as representing any but the author's views. Research was supported by the Fulbright-Hays Commission while studying at Kyoto University during the academic year 1973-74.

¹ Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), p. 349b-c.

² The Chinese terms (*t'ai-erh*, *hsing*, and *t'ai*) respectively do not occur in any translations of the compound Tathāgatagarbha.

³ *Taishō* v. 16, n. 670, p. 510c 4-9. Cf. *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra*, ed. by Bunyiu Nanjio, 2nd. ed. (Kyoto: Otani University Press, 1956), p. 222-223, lines 1-10.

⁴ *Laṅkāvatāra*, op. cit., p. 221, lines 12-13.

⁵ Richard H. Robinson, *The Buddhist Religion: A Historical Introduction* (Belmont, Calif.: Dickenson Publishing Company, Inc., 1970), p. 71.

⁶ *Ratnagotravibhāga-mahāyānottaratantra-śāstra*, ed. by E. H. Johnston (Patna: Bihar Society, 1950), p. xiii.

⁷ Chi-tsang, in his commentary on the *Śrīmālādevī sūtra* (*Sheng-man ching pao-k'uo*),¹ gives one example of the fusion of *ālayavijñāna* with Tathāgatagarbha which had developed by his generation: "Just as the *Laṅkāvatāra* states: 'The sixth and seventh [consciousness] do not receive [the impressions of] suffering nor are they the cause of Nirvāṇa. The storehouse-consciousness receives [the impressions of] suffering and is the cause for Nirvāṇa.'" (*Taishō* v. 27, n. 1744, p. 83c 18-19). The parallel passage in the *Śrīmālādevī sūtra*, with no mention of a storehouse-consciousness, is discussed below.

⁸ The reciprocity between the terms Tathāgatagarbha and *saddharma-parigraha* is not within the scope of the present article.

⁹ *Sheng-man shih-tzu-hou i-ch'eng ta-fang-pien fang-kuang ching*,^h tr. by Guṇabhadra (394-468), *Taishō* v. 12, n. 353, p. 218b 18-28. This Chinese recension has been selected instead of the recension by Bodhiruci of T'ang (*Taishō* v. 11, n. 310) primarily because the former is the older and more popular of the two recensions as well as

being the recension upon which all the Chinese commentaries are based. All of the following excerpts have been translated by the author and are cited in the text by page, section, and column number only.

¹⁰ *Taishō* v. 12, n. 353, p. 218a 28-29.

¹¹ Cf. *Ratnagotravibhāga*, pp. 72-73, lines 16 and 1 in which only two “wombs” are listed, the transcendental Womb (*lokottaragarbha*) and the inherently pure Womb (*prakṛtipariśuddhagarbha*): *yo 'yaṃ bhagavaṃs tathāgatagarbho lokottaragarbhaḥ prakṛtipariśuddhagarbha iti*—“O Lord, the Tathāgatagarbha is the transcendental Womb, the Womb which is inherently pure.” Bodhiruci’s translation of the *Śrīmālādevī* also glosses (*tsu*-) *hsing ch’ing ching* as *pen-hsing ching*^m, “originally pure” (*Taishō* v. 11, n. 310, p. 677c 23-24). Both Takasaki and the Waymans interpolate *lokottaragarbha* and *prakṛtipariśuddhagarbha* as *lokottaradharma* and *prakṛtipariśuddhadharma*. Cf. Takasaki Jikido, *A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra): Being a Treatise on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory of Mahāyāna Buddhism* (Rome: Serie Orientale Roma, v. XXXIII, 1966), p. 291 and Alex and Hideko Wayman, *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), p. 106. However, the Sanskrit fragment in the *Ratnagotravibhāga* gives no such gloss immediately following this passage. Moreover, as Bodhiruci’s translation indicates by the interpolation “originally pure,” the emphasis in these two Wombs is upon the nature and intrinsic qualities of the Tathāgatagarbha itself, as contrasted to the prior two Wombs which describe the Buddha-dharmas. The interpretation of this passage given in this article agrees with Étienne Lamotte, *L’Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1962), p. 55, in which there is no interpolation in accordance with either Takasaki or the Waymans. *Prakṛtipariśuddhagarbha* is extrapolated to *Prakṛtiprabhāsvaragarbha*, the original state of the mind, i.e., Tathāgatagarbha, to correspond with *prabhāsvaram citta*, the *pen-hsing ching* gloss used by Bodhiruci.

¹² Cf. *Ratnagotravibhāga* (RGV), p. 3 lines 1-2: *anuttarā samyaksambodhir iti bhagavan nirvāṇadhātor etad adhivacanam/ nirvāṇadhātur iti bhagavan tathāgatadharmakāyasyaitad adhivacanam*.

¹³ There are two recensions of the *Tathāgatagarbha sūtra* now extant in Chinese, the *Ta-fang-teng ju-lai-tsang ching*ⁿ (*Taishō* v. 16, n. 666) translated by Buddhahadra (358-429) of Eastern Tsin and the *Ta-fang-kuang ju-lai-tsang ching*^o (*Taishō* v. 16, n. 667) by Amogha (or Amoghavajra) (705-774) of T’ang. There is also one Tibetan recension in the *bKa’ gyur*.

¹⁴ Takasaki Jikido, “Nyoraizō shisō ni okeru Shōmangyō no chii,” *Shōmangyō gisho ronshū, Nihon bukkyō genryū*

kenkyū kiyō, II (1965), 187.

¹⁵ Also see *Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 65, verse 122.

¹⁶ Cf. RGV p. 50, lines 10-11: *tasmād bhagavann asti saṃskṛto 'py asaṃskṛto 'pi saṃsārah/ asti saṃskṛtam apy asaṃskṛtam api nirvāṇam iti*—“Therefore, O Lord, the life-death cycle is both conditioned and unconditioned. Nirvāṇa is both conditioned and unconditioned.”

¹⁷ Cf. RGV, p. 73, line 6: *Sati bhagavaṃs tathāgatagarbhe saṃsāra iti parikalpam asya vacanāyeti*—“When there is the Tathāgatagarbha, O Lord, it is discriminated as ‘life-death cycle’ for its name.”

¹⁸ Cf. RGV, pp. 45-46, lines 20 and 1-5: *lokavyavahāra eṣa bhagavan mṛta iti vā jāta iti vā/ mṛta iti bhagavann indriyoparodha eṣa/ jāta iti bhagavan navānām indriyāṇaṃ prādurbhāva eṣa/ na punar bhagavaṃs tathāgatagarbho jāyate vā jīryati vā mriyate vā cyavate vā/ tat kasmād hetoḥ/ saṃskṛtalakṣaṇaviśayavyativṛtto bhagavaṃs tathāgatagarbho nityo dhruvaḥ śivaḥ śāsvata iti*—“O Lord, ‘what is dead’ or ‘what is living’ are worldly conventions. ‘What is dead’ is the obstruction of the senses. ‘What is living’ is the appearance of new sense organs, O Lord. However, the Tathāgatagarbha is never born, nor does it age, nor dies, nor passes away, nor arises. What is the reason? The Tathāgatagarbha transcends the realm of the conditioned and is eternal, permanent, quiescent, and constant.”

¹⁹ The analysis of defilements (*kleśa*) in the *Śrīmālādevī sūtra* is somewhat different from that of the Sarvāstivāda because in the *Śrīmālādevī* (SDS) fundamental defilement (*anuśaya*) are considered mind-disassociated (*cittavi-prayuktasamskāradharma*) and the seed for active defilements (*pariyavasthāna*) which are mind-associated (*cittasamprayuktasamskāradharma*). Cf. Kagawa Takao, “Shōmangyō ni okeru bonnōsetsu no seiritsu” in Professor Etani’s commemorative volume of *Jōdokyō no shisō to bunka*, p. 1059.

²⁰ Almost the entire citation is retained in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 12, lines 10-14: *Duḥkhanirodhanāmnā bhagavann anādikāliko 'krto 'jato 'nutpanno 'kṣayaḥ kṣayāpagataḥ nityo dhruvaḥ śivaḥ śāsvataḥ prakṛtipariśuddhaḥ sarvakleśakośa vinirmukto gaṅgāvalikāvyativṛttair avinirbhāgair acintyair buddhadharmaiḥ samanvāgatas tathāgatadharmakāyo deśitaḥ/ ayam eva ca bhagavaṃs tathāgatadharmakāyo 'vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgatagarbhaḥ sūcyate/* For Guṇabhadra’s recension, see gloss p of the Chinese glossary to this article.

²¹ *Vijñaptimātrāsiddhi*, ed. by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (Paris, 1928), I, pp. 169-172, Sthiramati’s commentary on verse 17 of the *Triṃśika*.

²² Both the Tibetan translation of the SDS by Jinamitra and Surendrabodhi and Bodhiruci’s translation, circa eighth century, are identical in interpretation but differ from the

RGV and Guṇabhadra's translation. For further discussion concerning the discrepancies in these recensions, see "Shōmangyō no Tibetto kūshisō" by Uryūzu Ryūshin, in *Shōmangyō gisho ronshū*, op. cit., pp. 200-215.

²³ Sylvain Lévi, ed., *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, (Paris: 1907), p. 40.

²⁴ David Seyfort Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha et du Gotra: Études sur la Sotériologie et la Gnoséologie du Bouddhisme* (Paris: École Française D'Extrême-Orient, 1969), pp. 501-502.

²⁵ Cf. RGV, p. 15, lines 3-7: *Kṣaṇikam bhagavan kuśalam cittam/ na kleśaiḥ saṃkliṣyate/ kṣaṇikam akuśalam cittam/ na saṃkliṣṭam eva tac cittam kleśaiḥ/ na bhagavan kleśas tac cittam sprṣanti katham atra bhagavann asparśanadharmi cittam tamaḥakliṣṭam bhavati/ asti ca bhagavann upakleśaḥ/ asty upakliṣṭam cittam/ atha ca punar bhagavan prakṛtipariśuddhasya cittasyopakleśārtho duṣpravedhyah/* "O Lord, the good mind is momentary. It is not defiled by defilements. The evil mind is also momentary, and even that mind is not defiled by defilements. O Lord, defilements do not affect ('touch') the mind. How then, does the mind, having an unaffected character, become defiled by mental darkness? O Lord, there is defilement and there is defiled mind. Moreover, the meaning of an inherently pure mind's defilements is difficult to comprehend." Both *kleśa* and *upakleśa* are translated by Guṇabhadra as *fan-nao*.⁹

²⁶ *Avidyāvāsabhūmi* is translated by Guṇabhadra as "dwelling place" (*chu-ti*) of ignorance in the ŚDS in accordance with the Sanskrit *vas*, "to dwell, live, stop" (Monier-Williams, op.cit., p. 932b: 947c). The RGV glosses *vāsabhūmi* as *vāsanā* in verse 130 (p. 67, lines 4-5; line 11) in accordance with the Sanskrit *vas*, "to perfume" (Monier-Williams, op.cit., p. 947b), interchanging the meanings of *vāsabhūmi* and *vāsanā*, denoting the foundation or dormant power behind the other stages of defilement (*shang fan-nao*¹ or *ch'i fan-nao*²). Cf. SDS, p. 220a 11-13. (See gloss u of the Chinese glossary for this passage.) The *Laṅkāvatāra-sūtra* (LA) also cites *avidyāvāsabhūmi* (p. 220, lines 14-15) which is also translated by Guṇabhadra as *wu-ming chu-ti*¹ (T.v.16, n. 670, p. 510b 8), making no distinction in translation between the *avidyāvāsabhūmi* of the ŚDS and the *avidyāvāsanābhūmi* of the LA. Kagawa (op.cit., pp. 1057-1059) identifies the *vāsa(na)bhūmi* with the *anuśaya* as contrasted to the *shang fan-nao* or *ch'i fan-nao*, which correspond to the *paryavasthāna*. The analysis of the *anuśaya* (*vāsabhūmi*) in the ŚDS is somewhat different from that of the *Abhidharmakośa*, listing five instead of six *anuśaya* which are the subtle states of defilement and not the *āsravas* or "outflows," but rather suggesting the underlying propensity for these outflows. Cf. *L'Abhidharmakośa de Vasubandhu*, tr. by Louis de la

Vallée Poussin (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1925), IV, chapter V, pp. 2-9, 80-84). The ŚDS's analysis of *avidyāvāsa(na)bhūmi* as mind-disassociated (p. 220a 6), in contradistinction to the *Abhidharmakośa*, may illustrate Mahā-sāṅghikan influence (Cf. *Abhidharmakośa*, op.cit., p. 4n).

²⁷ *P'ū-t'i chih*³ is the wisdom of the Tathāgata which eliminates *avidyāvāsabhūmi*. There is no occurrence of *p'ū-t'i chih* in Guṇabhadra's translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra* which would yield a Sanskrit equivalent. *Sarvabuddhajñāna* (LA p. 180, line 17) is translated by Guṇabhadra as *i-ch'ieh chu-fo chih-hui*⁴ (T.v.16, n. 670, p. 504b 8-9). *Sarvajñānanta* (LA p. 193, line 5) is translated as *i-ch'ieh chih*⁵ (T.v.16, n. 670, p. 506b 7-8). Therefore, it is unlikely that *p'ū-t'i chih* refers to omniscience but rather to *bodhi* which is usually transliterated *p'ū-t'i*. (Cf. Suzuki Daitetsu, *An Index to the Laṅkāvatāra sūtra* (Kyoto: Sanskrit Buddhist Texts Publishing Society, 1934), p. 369a. *Jñāna* is usually translated *chih*. Consequently, *p'ū-t'i chih* most probably is both the transliteration (*p'ū-t'i*) and translation (*chih*) of the term *bodhi*, signifying the enlightenment of the Tathāgata in contradistinction to that of the three vehicles. Takasaki Jikido (*A Study on the Ratnagotravibhāga*, op.cit., p. 215n) refers to this wisdom of the Tathāgata which extirpates *avidyāvāsabhūmi* as *bodhijñāna* but gives no philological evidence for his Sanskrit reconstruction. Also see Takasaki Jikido, "Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu, Dharmakāya and Buddhadhātu," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū*, XIV, 2, March 1966, p. 910.

²⁸ The latent stage of ignorance is beginningless and mind-disassociated in the ŚDS (p. 220a 6).

²⁹ Guṇabhadra, in his translation of the *Laṅkāvatāra*, translates *avṛta* as *fu-chang*⁶ and *āvaraṇa* as *chang* (Suzuki, op.cit., p. 43a). No Sanskrit fragment corresponding to this passage in ŚDS is extant. Since the *avidyāvāsabhūmi* refers to the obscuration impeding attainment of the Tathāgata's *bodhi*, the *jñeyāvaraṇa* which have not yet been eliminated appear to be implied. Cf. Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*, op.cit., p. 182, 194 for the association of *avidyāvāsabhūmi* with *akliṣṭajñāna* and *jñeyāvaraṇa*.

³⁰ LA p. 222, lines 9-12.

³¹ The identification of Emptiness with the Tathāgatagarbha is retained in the *Laṅkāvatāra*, p. 78, lines 6-11.

³² Cf. RGV, p. 59, lines 5-8: *na hi bhagavan hīnapraṇṭ-tadharmāṇāṃ nirvāṇādhigamah/ samadharmāṇāṃ bhagavan nirvāṇādhigamah/ samajñānāṇāṃ samavimuktīnāṃ samavimuktijñānadarsānāṃ bhagavan nirvāṇādhigamah/ tasmād bhagavan nirvāṇadhātur ekarasaḥ samarasa ity ucyate yad uta vidyāvimuktiraseneti/*—"O Lord, there is no attainment of Nirvāṇa for those who have [the discrimination of] inferior and superior phenomena. O Lord, there is the attainment of Nirvāṇa for those who have

the equality of all phenomena. O Lord, there is the attainment of Nirvāṇa because their knowledge and liberation are the same, their liberation is the same, and their knowledge is the same. Therefore, O Lord, it is said: 'The realm of Nirvāṇa has one and the same quality', viz., the quality of liberation and knowledge."

³³ *avikāraṃśman śāriputrāvikalpācittatā—Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā with Haribhadra's Commentary Called Aloka*, ed. by P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts No. 4 (Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960), p. 3. The critical difference between *acitta* and Tathāgatagarbha is that the latter is a basis for all phenomena whereas the former denies any such basis.

³⁴ The forerunner for the equation of the One Noble Truth, the Extinction of Suffering, and Emptiness is found in the *Mūlamadhyamaka-karikā* by Nāgārjuna, ed. by Louis de la Vallée Poussin (St. Petersburg, 1903), p. 516.

³⁵ *Sheng-man ching pao-k'ū*, *Taishō* v. 37, n. 1744, p. 73c 2-4. See gloss ae of the Chinese glossary for this passage.

³⁶ See Gadjin M. Nagao, "What Remains in Śūnyatā: A Yogācārin Interpretation of Emptiness" (soon to be published in Richard Robinson's commemorative volume) for an analysis of the positive meaning of Emptiness in the Yogācārin treatises.

³⁷ Ruegg, *La Théorie du Tathāgatagarbha*, p. 359.

³⁸ Étienne Lamotte, *L'Enseignement de Vimalakīrti* (Louvain: Institut Orientaliste, 1962), p. 40.

³⁹ Cf. RGV p. 30, lines 19-20: *viparyastā bhagavan sattvā upātteṣu pañcasūtpādānaskandheṣu/ te bhavanti anitye nityasaṃjñīnaḥ/ dukkhe sukhasaṃjñīnaḥ/ anātmany ātmasaṃjñīnaḥ/ aśubhe śubhasaṃjñīnaḥ*—"O Lord, living beings are perverted when they have acquired the five constituents of the individual. When there is the impermanent, it is known as permanent. When there is suffering, it is known as bliss. When there is non-self, it is known as self. When there is the impure, it is known as pure."

⁴⁰ Cf. RGV pp. 34-35, lines 20, 1-2: *anityāḥ saṃskāra iti ced bhagavan paśyeta sāsya syād ucchedadr̥ṣṭiḥ/ sāsya*

syān na samyagdr̥ṣṭiḥ/ nityaṃ nirvāṇam iti ced bhagavan paśyeta sāsya syād chāśvatadr̥ṣṭiḥ/ sāsya syān na samyagdr̥ṣṭiḥ—"If someone considers 'The conditioned states are impermanent', this is nihilism, O Lord. This is not the correct view. If someone considers 'Nirvāṇa is eternal', this is eternalism, O Lord. This is not the correct view."

⁴¹ *Sheng-man ching pao-k'ū*, *Taishō* v. 37, n. 1744 p. 74c 10-12. See gloss af of the Chinese glossary for this passage. Cf. RGV p. 30, line 31, p. 31, line 1: *sarvaśrāvaka-pratyekabuddhā api bhagavan śūnyatājñānenadr̥ṣṭāpūrve sarvajñānānaviṣaye tathāgatadharmakāye viparyastāḥ*—"Even all the Śrāvakas and the Pratyeka-buddhas are perverted by their knowledge of Emptiness with reference to the Dharma-Body of the Tathāgata, the realm of the knowledge of all knowledges, which has not been previously seen." *Śūnyatājñānena* has been translated as the "knowledge of Emptiness" (*śūnyatā* + *jñānena*) rather than the "lack of knowledge of Emptiness" (*śūnyatā* + *ajñānena*) based upon the Chinese translation of Guṇabhadra (*k'ung chih*)⁴² (p. 221c 19).

⁴² See footnote 39 for the Sanskrit fragment of this passage cited in RGV.

⁴³ See footnote 41 for the citation in the RGV which is similar in meaning.

⁴⁴ The *Śrīmālādevī sūtra* does not explicitly define the four positive attributes of the Tathāgatagarbha. The interpretation of these attributes are based upon the *Ratnagotravibhāga*, p. 34, verses 37-38:

sa hi prakṛtiśuddhatvād vāsanāpagamāc chuciḥ/ paramātmātmanairaitmyaprapañcakṣayaśāntitāḥ/ 37 sukhō manomayaskandhataddhetuvinivṛttitāḥ/ nityaḥ samsāranirvāṇasamatāprativēdhataḥ/ 38

⁴⁵ For further discussion, see Takasaki Jikido, "Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu," op.cit., pp. 910-911, for the identification of *bodhi(jñāna)* with *taṭpr̥ṣṭalabdha(jñāna)* and Dharmakāya.

⁴⁶ For the correlation between the *trivabhāva* theory in Asaṅga's *Mahāyānasamgraha* and the implicit triple structure of the Tathāgatagarbha in the RGV, see Takasaki, "Dharmatā, Dharmadhātu," op.cit., pp. 903-905.

The Tathagatagarbha Sutra
Translated by William H. Grosnick

<http://www.webspawner.com/users/bodhisattva/index.html>

*From "Buddhism in Practice," edited by Donald S. Lopez,
Princeton University Press 1995.*

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying on the Vulture Peak near Rajagrha in the lecture hall of a many-tiered pavilion built of fragrant sandalwood. He had attained buddhahood ten years previously and was accompanied by an assembly of hundreds and thousands of great monks and a throng of bodhisattvas and great beings sixty times the number of sands in the Ganges River. All had perfected their zeal and had formerly made offerings to hundreds of thousands of myriad legions of buddhas. All could turn the irreversible wheel of the dharma. If a being were to hear their names, he would become irreversible in the highest path.

Their names were Bodhisattva Dharma-Wisdom, Bodhisattva Lion-Wisdom, Bodhisattva Adamantine Wisdom (Vajra-mati), Bodhisattva Harmonious Wisdom, bodhisattva Wonderful Wisdom, Bodhisattva Moonlight, Bodhisattva Jeweled Moon, Bodhisattva Full Moon, Bodhisattva Courageous, Bodhisattva Measureless Courage, Bodhisattva Transcending the Triple World, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara, Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, Bodhisattva Fragrant Elephant, Bodhisattva Fine Fragrance, Bodhisattva Finest Fragrance, Bodhisattva Main Treasury, Bodhisattva Sun Treasury, Bodhisattva Display of the Standard, Bodhisattva Display of the Great Standard, Bodhisattva Stainless Standard, Bodhisattva Boundless Light, Bodhisattva Bestower of Light, Bodhisattva Stainless Light, Bodhisattva King of Joy, Bodhisattva Eternal Joy, Bodhisattva Jeweled Hand, Bodhisattva Treasury of Space, Bodhisattva King of Light and Virtue, Bodhisattva Self-Abiding King of Dharanis, Bodhisattva Dharani, Bodhisattva Destroying All Ills, Bodhisattva Relieving All the Ills of Sentient Beings, Bodhisattva Joyous Thoughts, Bodhisattva Satisfied Will, Bodhisattva Eternally Satisfied, Bodhisattva Shining on All, Bodhisattva Moon Brightness, Bodhisattva Jewel Wisdom, Bodhisattva Transforming into a Woman's Body, Bodhisattva Great Thunderclap, Bodhisattva Spiritual Guide, Bodhisattva Not Groundless Views, Bodhisattva Freedom in All Dharmas, Bodhisattva Maitreya, and Bodhisattva Manjusri. There were also present bodhisattvas and great beings just like them from countless Buddha lands, whose number equalled sixty times the number of sands in the Ganges River. Together with an uncountable number of gods, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, and mahoragas [all divine and quasi-divine beings], they all gathered to pay their respects and make offerings.

At that time, the Buddha sat up straight in meditation in the sandalwood pavilion and, with his supernatural powers, put on a miraculous display. There appeared in the sky a countless number of thousand-petaled lotus flowers as large as chariot wheels, filled with colors and fragrances that one could not begin to enumerate. In the center of each flower was a conjured image of a Buddha. The flowers rose and covered the heavens like a jewelled banner, each flower giving forth countless rays of light. The petals all simultaneously unfolded their splendor and then, through the Buddha's miraculous powers, all withered in an instant. Within the flowers all the Buddha images sat cross-legged in the lotus position, and each issued forth countless hundreds of thousands of rays of light. The adornment of the spot at

the time was so extraordinary that the whole assembly rejoiced and danced ecstatically. In fact, it was so very strange and extraordinary that all began to wonder why all the countless wonderful flowers should suddenly be destroyed. As they withered and darkened, the smell they gave off was foul and loathsome.

But at that point the World-honored One realized why the bodhisattvas were perplexed, so he addressed Vajramati ("Adamantine Wisdom"), saying, "O good son. If there is anything in the Buddha's teaching that perplexes you, feel free to ask about it." Bodhisattva Vajramati knew that everyone in the whole assembly was perplexed, and so addressed the Buddha, saying, "O World-honored One, why are there conjured Buddha images in all of the innumerable flowers? And for what reason did they ascend into the heavens and cover the world? And why did the Buddha images each issue forth countless hundreds of thousands of rays of light?" Everyone in the assembly looked on and then joined his hands together in respect. At that point, Bodhisattva Vajramati spoke in verses, saying:

"Never ever have I witnessed
A miraculous display like today's.
To see hundreds of thousands and millions of buddhas
Seated in the calyxes of lotus flowers,
Each emitting countless streams of light,
Filling all the fields,
Scattering the dirt of false teachers,
Adorning all the worlds!
The lotuses suddenly wilted;
There was not one which was not disgusting.
Now tell us,
Why did you display this conjured vision?
We see buddhas more numerous than
The sands of the Ganges,

At that time the World-honored One spoke to Vajramati and the other bodhisattvas, saying, "Good sons, there is a great vaipulya-sutra called the 'Tathagatagarbha'. It was because I wanted to expound it to you that I showed you these signs. You should all listen attentively and ponder it well." All said, "Excellent. We very much wish to hear it."

The Buddha said, "Good sons, there is a comparison that can be drawn between the countless flowers conjured up by the Buddha that suddenly withered and the innumerable conjured buddha images with their many adornments, seated in the lotus position within the flowers, who cast forth light so exceedingly rare that there was no one in the assembly who did not show reverence. In a similar fashion, good sons, when I regard all beings with my buddha eye, I see that hidden within the klesas [negative mental traits] of greed, desire, anger, and stupidity there is seated augustly and unmovingly the tathagata's wisdom, the tathagata's vision, and the tathagata's body. Good sons, all beings, though they find themselves with all sorts of klesas, have a tathagatagarbha that is eternally unsullied, and that is replete with virtues no different from my own.

Moreover, good sons, it is just like a person with supernatural vision who can see the bodies of tathagatas seated in the lotus position inside the flowers, even though the petals are not yet unfurled; whereas after the wilted petals have been removed, those tathagatas are manifested for all to see. In similar fashion, the Buddha can really see the tathagatagarbhas of sentient beings. And because he wants to disclose the tathagatagarbha to them, he expounds the sutras and the Dharma, in order to destroy klesas and reveal the buddha nature. Good sons, such is the Dharma of all the buddhas. Whether or not buddhas appear in the world, the tathagatagarbhas of all beings are eternal and unchanging. It is just that they are covered by sentient beings' klesas. When the Tathagata appears in the world, he expounds the Dharma far and wide to remove their ignorance and tribulation and to purify their universal wisdom. Good sons, if there is a bodhisattva who has faith in this teaching and who practices it single-mindedly, he will attain liberation and true, universal enlightenment, and for the sake of the world he will perform buddha deeds far and wide."

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

"It is like the wilted flowers;
Before their petals have opened,
One with supernatural vision can see
The unstained body of the Tathagata.
After the wilted flowers are removed,
One sees, without obstacle, the Teacher,
Who, in order to sever klesas,
Triumphantly appears in the world.
The Buddha sees that all kinds of beings
Universally possess the tathagatagarbha.
It is covered by countless klesas,
Just like a tangle of smelly, wilted petals.
So I, on behalf of all beings,
Everywhere expound the true Dharma,
In order to help them remove their klesas
And quickly reach the Buddha way.
I see with my Buddha eye
That in the bodies of all beings
There lies concealed the buddhagarbha,
So I expound the Dharma in order to reveal it.

"Or good sons, it is like pure honey in a cave or a tree, surrounded and protected by a countless swarm of bees. It may happen that a person comes along who knows some clever techniques. He first gets rid of the bees and takes the honey, and then does as he will with it, eating it or giving it away far and wide. Similarly, good sons, all sentient beings have the tathagatagarbha. It is like pure honey in a cave or tree, but it is covered by klesas, which, like a swarm of bees, keep one from getting to it. With my Buddha eye I see it clearly, and with appropriate skilful techniques I expound the Dharma, in order to destroy klesas and reveal the Buddha vision. And everywhere I perform Buddha deeds for the benefit of the world." Thereupon the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is just like what happens when the honey in a cave or tree,
Though surrounded by countless bees,
Is taken by someone who knows a clever technique
To first get rid of the swarm.
The tathagatagarbha of sentient beings
Is like the honey in a cave or tree.
The entanglement of ignorance and tribulation
Is like the swarm of bees
That keep one from getting to it.
For the sake of all beings,
I expound the true Dharma with skilful means,
Removing the bees of klesas,
Revealing the tathagatagarbha.
Endowed with eloquence that knows no obstacle,
I preach the Dharma of sweet dew,
Compassionately relieving sentient beings,
Everywhere helping them to true enlightenment.

“Or, good sons, it is like a kernel of wheat that has not yet had its husk removed. Someone who is impoverished might foolishly disdain it, and consider it to be something that should be discarded. But when it is cleaned, the kernel can always be used. In like fashion, good sons, when I observe sentient beings with my Buddha eye, I see that the husk of klesas covers their limitless Tathagata vision. So with appropriate skilful means I expound the Dharma, to enable them to remove those klesas, purify their universal wisdom, and to attain in all worlds the highest true enlightenment.” Thereupon, the World-honored One expressed this in verses, saying:

“It is just like what happens when all the kernels,
The husks of which have not yet been washed away,
Are disdained by someone who is impoverished,
And said to be something to be discarded.
But although the outside seems like something useless,
The inside is genuine and not to be destroyed.
After the husks are removed,
It becomes food fit for a king.
I see that all kinds of beings
Have a buddhagarbha hidden by klesas.
I preach the removal of those things
To enable them to attain universal wisdom.
Just as I have a Tathagata nature,
So do all beings.
When they develop it and purify it,
They quickly attain the highest path.

“Or, good sons, it is like the genuine gold that has fallen into a pit of waste and been submerged and not seen for years. The pure gold does not decay, yet no one knows that it is there. But suppose there came along someone with supernatural vision, who told people,

‘Within the impure waste there is a genuine gold trinket. You should get it out and do with it as you please.’ Similarly, good sons, the impure waste is your innumerable klesas. The genuine gold trinket is your tathagatagarbha. For this reason, the Tathagata widely expounds the Dharma to enable all beings to destroy their klesas, attain true enlightenment, and perform Buddha deeds.”

At that time the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is just like what happens when gold is submerged
In impure waste, where no one can see it.
But someone with supernatural vision sees it
And tells people about it, saying
‘If you get it out and wash it clean,
You may do with it as you will,’
Which causes their relatives and family all to rejoice.
The Well-departed One’s vision is like this.
He sees that for all kinds of beings,
The Tathagata nature is not destroyed,
Though it is submerged in the muddy silt of klesas.
So he appropriately expounds the Dharma
And enables them to manage all things,
So that the klesas covering the Buddha nature
Are quickly removed and beings are purified.”

"Or, good sons, it is like a store of treasure hidden beneath an impoverished household. The treasure cannot speak and say that it is there, since it isn't conscious of itself and doesn't have a voice. So no one can discover this treasure store. It is just the same with sentient beings. But there is nothing that the power of the Tathagata's vision is afraid of. The treasure store of the great Dharma is within sentient beings' bodies. It does not hear and it is not aware of the addictions and delusions of the five desires. The wheel of samsara turns and beings are subjected to countless sufferings. Therefore buddhas appear in the world and reveal to them the Dharma store of the tathagata in their bodies. And they believe in it and accept it and purify their universal wisdom. Everywhere on behalf of beings he reveals the tathagatagarbha. He employs an eloquence which knows no obstacle on behalf of the Buddhist faithful. In this way, good sons, with my buddha eye I see that all beings possess the tathagatagarbha. And so on behalf of bodhisattvas I expound this Dharma." At that point, the Tathagata expressed himself in verses, saying:

"It is like a store of treasure
Inside the house of an impoverished man.
The owner is not aware of it,
Nor can the treasure speak.
For a very long time it is buried in darkness,
As there is no one who can tell of its presence.
When you have treasure but do not know of it,
This causes poverty and suffering.
When the buddha eye observes sentient beings,

It sees that, although they transmigrate
Through the five realms of reincarnation,
There is a great treasure in their bodies
That is eternal and unchanging.
When he sees this, the Buddha
Teaches on behalf of all beings,
Enabling them to attain the treasure-store of wisdom,
And the great wealth of widely caring for one another.
If you believe what I have taught you
About all having a treasure store,
And practice it faithfully and ardently,
Employing skillful means,
You will quickly attain the highest path.

“Or, good sons, it is like the pit inside a mango [“amra”] fruit which does not decay. When you plant it in the ground, it grows into the largest and most regal of trees. In the same manner, good sons, when I look at sentient beings with my Buddha vision, I see that the tathagatagarbha is surrounded by a husk of ignorance, just as the seeds of a fruit are only found at its core. Good sons, that tathagatagarbha is cold and unripe. It is the profound quiescence of nirvana that is brought about by great wisdom. It is called the truly enlightened one, the Tathagata, the arhat, and so on. Good sons, after the Tathagata has observed sentient beings, he reveals this message in order to purify the wisdom of bodhisattvas and great beings.”

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is just like the pit of a mango fruit
Which does not decay.
Plant it in the earth
And inevitably a great tree grows.
The Tathagata’s faultless vision
Sees that the tathagatagarbha
Within the bodies of sentient beings
Is just like the seed within a flower or fruit.
Though ignorance covers the buddhagarbha,
You ought to have faith and realize
That you are possessed of samadhi wisdom,
None of which can be destroyed.
For this reason I expound the Dharma
And reveal the tathagatagarbha,
That you may quickly attain the highest path,
Just as a fruit grows into the most regal of trees.

“Or, good sons, it is like a man with a statue of pure gold, who was to travel through the narrow roads of another country and feared that he might be victimized and robbed. So he wrapped the statue in worn-out rags so that no one would know that he had it. On the way the man suddenly died, and the golden statue was discarded in an open field. Travelers trampled

it and it became totally filthy. But a person with supernatural vision saw that within the worn-out rags there was a pure gold statue, so he unwrapped it and all paid homage to it. Similarly, good sons, I see the different sentient beings with their many klesas, transmigrating through the long night of endless samsara, and I perceive that within their bodies is the wondrous garbha of the Tathagata. They are august and pure and no different from myself. For this reason the Buddha expounds the Dharma for sentient beings, that they might sever those klesas and purify their Tathagata wisdom. I turn the wheel of the Dharma again and again in order to convert all worlds.”

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is like a traveller to another country
Carrying a golden statue,
Who wraps it in dirty, worn-out rags
And discards it in an unused field.
One with supernatural vision sees it
And tells other people about it.
They remove the dirty rags and reveal the statue
And all rejoice greatly.
My supernatural vision is like this.
I see that beings of all sorts
Are entangled in klesas and evil actions
And are plagued with all the sufferings of samsara.
Yet I also see that within
The dust of ignorance of all beings,
The Tathagata nature sits motionless,
Great and indestructible.
After I have seen this,
I explain to bodhisattvas that
Klesas and evil actions
Cover the most victorious body.
You should endeavor to sever them,
And manifest the Tathagata wisdom.
It is the refuge of all –
Gods, men, nagas, and spirits.

“Or, good sons, it is like a woman who is impoverished, vile, ugly, and hated by others, who bears a noble son in her womb. He will become a sage king, a ruler of all the four directions. But she does not know his future history, and constantly thinks of him as a base-born, impoverished child. In like fashion, good sons, the Tathagata sees that all sentient beings are carried around by the wheel of samsara, receiving suffering and poison, but their bodies possess the tathagata’s treasure store. Just like that woman, they do not realize this. This is why the Tathagata everywhere expounds the Dharma, saying, ‘Good sons, do not consider yourselves inferior or base. You all personally possess the Buddha nature.’ If you exert yourselves and destroy your past evils, then you will receive the title of bodhisattvas or world-honored ones, and convert and save countless sentient beings.

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is like an impoverished woman
Whose appearance is common and vile,
But who bears a son of noble degree
Who will become a universal monarch.
Replete with seven treasures and all virtues,
He will possess as king the four quarters of the earth.
But she is incapable of knowing this
And conceives only thoughts of inferiority.
I see that all beings
Are like infants in distress.
Within their bodies is the tathagatagarbha,
But they do not realize it.
So I tell bodhisattvas,
‘Be careful not to consider yourselves inferior.
Your bodies are tathagatagarbhas;
They always contain
The light of the world’s salvation.’
If you exert yourselves
And do not spend a lot of time
Sitting in the meditation hall,
You will attain the path of very highest realization
And save limitless beings.”

"Or, good sons, it is like a master foundryman casting a statue of pure gold. After casting is complete, it is inverted and placed on the ground. Although the outside is scorched and blackened, the inside is unchanged. When it is opened and the statue taken out, the golden color is radiant and dazzling. Similarly, good sons, when the Tathagata observes all sentient beings, he sees that the buddhagarbha is inside their bodies replete with all its many virtues. After seeing this, he reveals far and wide that all beings will obtain relief. He removes klesas with his adamant wisdom, and reveals the Buddha body like a person uncovering a golden statue.”

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“It is like a great foundry
With countless golden statues.
Foolish people look at the outside
And see only the darkened earthen molds.
The master foundryman estimates that they have cooled,
And opens them to extract their contents.
All impurity is removed
And the features clearly revealed.
With my Buddha vision
I see that all sentient beings are like this.
Within the mud shell of passions,

All have the Tathagata-nature.
By means of adamantine wisdom,
We break the mold of the klesas
And reveal the tathagatagarbha,
Like pure, shining gold.
Just as I have seen this
And so instructed all the bodhisattvas,
So should you accept it,
And convert in turn all other beings.”

At that point, the World-honored One spoke to Vajramati and the other bodhisattvas and great beings, saying, “Whether you are monks or laypersons, good sons and daughters, you should accept, recite, copy, revere, and widely expound this “Tathagatagarbha Sutra” for the benefit of others. The virtues that you will derive from it are inestimable. Vajramati, if there were a bodhisattva who, for the sake of the Buddha path, worked diligently and assiduously, or who cultivated spiritual powers, or who entered all of the samadhis, or who desired to plant the roots of virtue, or who worshiped the Buddhas of the present, more numerous than the sands of the Ganges River, or who erected more seven-jeweled stupas than there are sands in the Ganges River, of a height of ten yojanas [one yojana equals about nine miles] and a depth and breadth of one yojana, or who set up in those stupas seven-jeweled couches covered with divine paintings, or who daily erected for each Buddha more seven-jeweled stupas than there are sands in the Ganges River, and who presented them to each Tathagata and bodhisattva and sravaka in the assembly, or who did this sort of thing everywhere for all the present-day Buddhas, whose number is greater than the sands of the Ganges River, or who erected fifty times more jewelled stupas than there are sands in the Ganges River and who presented them to each Tathagata and bodhisattva and sravaka in the assembly, or who did this sort of thing everywhere for all the present-day Buddhas, whose number is greater than the sands of the Ganges River, or who erected fifty times more jewelled stupas than there are sands in the Ganges River and who presented them as an offering to fifty times more Buddhas and bodhisattvas and sravakas in the assembly than there are sands in the Ganges River, and who did this for countless hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands of eons, O Vajramati, that bodhisattva would still not be the equal of the person who finds joy and enlightenment in the ‘Tathagatagarbha Sutra’, who accepts it, recites it, copies it, or even reveres but a single one of its metaphors. O Vajramati, even though the number of good roots and virtues planted by those good sons on behalf of the Buddhas is incalculable, it does not come to a hundredth or a thousandth or any possible calculable fraction of the number of virtues attained by the good sons and daughters who revere the ‘Tathagatagarbha Sutra’.”

At that point, the World-honored One expressed himself in verses, saying:

“If there is a person seeking enlightenment
Who listens to and accepts this sutra,
And who copies and reveres
Even a single verse,
The subtle and profound garbha of the Tathagata
Will instantly come forth, accompanied with joy.
If you give yourself to this true teaching

Your virtues will be incalculable.
 If there is a person seeking enlightenment
 Who has attained great spiritual powers,
 And who desires to make an offering
 To the Buddhas of the ten directions
 And to the bodhisattvas and sravakas of the assembly,
 The number of which is greater
 Than the sands of the Ganges,
 A hundred million times incalculable;
 If for each of the Buddhas
 He constructed a marvellous jewelled stupa
 Ten yojanas in height
 And a breadth of forty li [one li equals about one-third of a mile],
 Within which he would bestow a seven-jeweled seat,
 With all the marvels
 Appropriate for the august Teacher,
 Covered with divine pictures and cushions,
 Each one with its own unique designs;
 If he offered to the Buddhas and the Sangha
 An incalculable number of these,
 More than the sands of the Ganges River,
 And if he offered them
 Without ceasing day or night
 For hundreds and thousands
 And tens of thousands of eons,
 The virtues he would obtain in this manner
 Could not be compared with
 The far greater virtues of
 The wise person who listens to this sutra,
 Who accepts even a single metaphor from it
 And who explains it for the benefit of others.
 Beings who take refuge in it
 Will quickly attain the highest path.
 Bodhisattvas who devote their thought
 To the profound tathagatagarbha,
 Know that all beings possess it
 And quickly attain the highest path.”

At that time the World-honored One again addressed Bodhisattva Vajramati, saying, "An incalculable time far back in the distant past, longer ago than many inconceivable countless eons, there was a buddha who was called the Eternally Light-Bestowing King, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Truly Enlightened One, the One Possessed of Shining Actions, the One Who has Well Transcended the World, the Master Who Has Grasped the Highest, the Hero of Harmony, the Teacher of Men and Gods, the Buddha, the World-honored One. O Vajramati, why was he called the Eternally Light-Bestowing King? When that Buddha was originally practicing the bodhisattva path and descended as a spirit into his mother's womb, he always gave off light which penetrated and illuminated in an instant even the tiniest atoms of all the

thousands of Buddha worlds in the ten directions. Any being who saw this light was filled with joy. His klesas were destroyed; he became endowed with the power of form; his wisdom was perfected; and he attained an eloquence which knew no obstacle. If a denizen of hell, a hungry ghost, an animal, King Yama, Lord of the Dead, or an asura saw this light, all of his rebirths in evil realms were cut off and he was born as a god. If any god saw this light, he attained irreversibility in the highest path and was endowed with the five supernatural powers. If anyone who had attained irreversibility saw this light, he attained unborn dharma-patience and the fifty dharanis [incantations] of virtue. Vajramati, all the lands illuminated by that light became stately and pure, like translucent porcelain, with golden cords marking out the eightfold path, luxuriant with the fragrance of various kinds of jewelled trees, flowers, and fruits. Light breezes blew gently through them, producing soft, subtle sounds that expounded freely and unrestrainedly the three jewels, the bodhisattva virtues, the power of good roots, the study of the path, meditation, and liberation. Beings who heard it all attained joy in the Dharma. Their faith was made firm and they were forever freed from the realms of evil rebirth. Vajramati, because all the beings of the ten directions were instantly enveloped in light, at six o'clock every morning and evening they joined their palms together and offered worship. Vajramati, until the time he attained buddhahood and nirvana without a remainder, the place where that bodhisattva issued forth from the womb always shone with light. And after his final nirvana the stupa in which his ashes were kept also gleamed with light.

Consequently, the inhabitants of the heavenly realms called him the Eternally Light-bestowing King. Vajramati, when the Eternally Light-bestowing King, the Tathagata, the Arhat, the Universally Enlightened One, first attained buddhahood, among his Dharma-disciples there was a bodhisattva named Boundless Light, as well as a group of two billion other bodhisattvas. The great being Bodhisattva Boundless Light turned toward the spot where the Buddha was and asked about the 'Tathagatagarbha Sutra', and the Buddha expounded it. He was in his seat for fifty long eons. And because he protected the thoughts of all the bodhisattvas, his voice reached everywhere in the ten Buddha worlds, even down to the smallest atoms, and it spread to hundreds of thousands of Buddha lands. Because of the numberless different backgrounds of the bodhisattvas, he presented hundreds of thousands of metaphors. He called it the 'Mahayana Tathagatagarbha Sutra'. All the bodhisattvas who heard him preach this sutra accepted it, recited it, and practiced it just as it had been explained. All but four of the bodhisattvas attained buddhahood. Vajramati, you must not regard them as exceptional. How could Bodhisattva Boundless Light be different from you? You are identical with him. The four bodhisattvas who had not yet attained buddhahood were Manjusri, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, and you, Vajramati. Vajramati, the 'Tathagatagarbha Sutra' has an abundant capacity. Anyone who hears it can attain the Buddha path."

Then the Buddha again expressed himself in verse, saying:

"Countless eons ago
A Buddha named King of Light
Always shone forth great light
And illumined innumerable lands everywhere.
Bodhisattva Boundless Light

First attained the way under that Buddha,
 And requested this sutra.
 The Buddha accordingly preached it.
 All those who encountered it were victorious,
 And all those who heard it
 Attained buddhahood,
 Except for four bodhisattvas.
 Manjusri, Avalokitesvara,
 Mahasthamaprapta, and Vajramati –
 These four bodhisattvas
 All formerly heard this Dharma.
 Of them, Vajramati
 Was the most gifted disciple.
 At the time he was called Boundless Light
 And had already heard this sutra.
 When I originally sought the way
 At the lion standard marking the Buddha place,
 I too once received this sutra
 And practiced it as I had heard it.
 Because of these good roots,
 I quickly attained the Buddha path.
 Therefore all bodhisattvas
 Ought to uphold and preach this sutra.
 After you have heard it
 And practiced just as it has been explained,
 You will become Buddhas just like I am now.
 If a person upholds this sutra,
 He will comport himself like the World-honored One.
 If a person obtains this sutra,
 He will be called ‘Lord of the Buddhadharma’,
 And then, on behalf of the world, he will protect
 What all the Buddhas proclaim.
 If anyone upholds this sutra,
 He will be called ‘The Dharma King’,
 And in the eyes of the world
 He will deserve to be praised
 Like the World-honored One.”

Then, when the World-honored One had finished expounding this sutra, Vajramati, together
 with the four groups of bodhisattvas, the gods, the gandharvas, the asuras, and the rest,
 rejoiced at what they had heard the Buddha explain, and they practiced it as they had been
 told.

The End of the "Tathagatagarbha Sutra"

The Mahayana Mahaparinirvana Sutra

Translated into English by Kosho Yamamoto, 1973
from Dharmakshema's Chinese version.
(Taisho Tripitaka Vol. 12, No. 374)

Edited, revised and copyright by Dr. Tony Page, 2007.

Chapter Five: On the Adamantine Body

Then the World-Honoured One said to Kasyapa: "O good man! The body of the Tathagata is one that is eternal, one that is indestructible, and one that is adamantine, one that is not sustained by various kinds of food. It is the Dharma-Body." Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! We do not see such a body as you speak of. What we see is one which is non-eternal, destructible, of dust, one sustained by various kinds of food. How? In that you, the Tathagata, are now about to enter Nirvana." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "Do not say that the body of the Tathagata is not strong, can easily be broken, and is the same as that of common mortals. O good man! Know that the body of the Tathagata is as indestructible as that which stands for countless billions of kalpas. It is neither the body of man or heaven, not one that fears, not one sustained by various kinds of food. The body of the Tathagata is one that is not a body and yet is a body. It is one not born and one that does not die. It is one that does not learn or practise. It is one innumerable and boundless and one that does not leave any tracks behind. It knows not and has no form to represent it. It is one ultimately pure. It does not shake. It does not receive, nor does it do [act]. It does not abide, does not make. It is tasteless and unmixed. It is an "is" and yet is not something created. It is neither action nor fruition [i.e. it is beyond Karma]. It is not one made, not one that dies. It is no mind; it is one not countable [whose dimensions can be reckoned]; It is the All-Wonderful, the one Eternal, and the one not presumable. It is not consciousness and is apart from mind. And yet it does not depart from mind. It is a mind that is all-equal. It is not an "is"; yet it is what is "is". There is no going and no coming [with it]; and yet it goes and comes. It does not break up. It is one indestructible. It does not snap and does not cease. It does not come out, nor does it die out. It is no master and yet a master. It is not one that exists; nor does it not exist. It awakes not, nor does it see. It is no letter, and is not no letter. It is no dhyana [meditation] and is not no dhyana. It cannot be seen and can be well seen. It is no place and yet is a place. It is no abode and yet is an abode. It is not dark and not bright. There is no quietness and yet there is quietness [in it]. It is non-possession, non-receiving, and non-giving. It is pure and untainted. It is no quarrelling and is never fighting. It is what is living and is not what is living. It is no taking and no falling. It is no thing and is not no thing. It is no field of weal and is not no field of weal. It is non-ending and does not end. It is separating and is a total ending. It is Void and is apart from Void. Though not eternal, it is not the case that it dies out moment after moment. There is no defilement and muddling [contamination]. There is no letter and it is apart from letters. It is no voice and no talking. It is no practising and learning. It is no praising and no weighing. It is not one and is not different. It has no form or characteristics. All is grand adornment. It is not brave and is not afraid. It is no quietness and is not quiet. It is heatless and is not hot. It cannot be seen; there is no form to represent it. The Tathagata succours all beings. While not emancipating, he yet indeed emancipates beings. There being no emancipation, there is the awakening of beings. There being no enlightening, he truly delivers sermons. There being not two, he is immeasurable and is incomparably equal. Being as flat as space, there is no form to represent [him]. Being equal to the nature of beings, he is not the "not-is", nor is he the "is". He always practises the One Vehicle. He sees the three of beings and does not retrogress, does not change, and cuts off all the roots of illusion. He does not fight or touch. He is non-nature and yet abides in nature. He does not merge and does not disperse. He is not long and not short. He is not round and not square. He is no skandha, sphere or realm, and yet he is the skandha, sphere, and realm. He is non-increasing and is not a lessening. He is no victor, and yet is one not vanquished. The body of the Tathagata is perfect in such innumerable virtues. There is none that he knows, none not known. There is none that is seen and none that is not seen. It is not that there is any creating and not that there is no creating. It is non-world and is not non-world. He does not do and is not non-doing. He is none to depend upon and is not none to depend upon. He is not the four great elements, nor is he not the four great elements. He is no cause and is not no cause. He is no being and is not no being. He is

no sramana, no Brahmin. He is the Lion, the Great Lion. He is nobody and not nobody. We cannot express. Other than the oneness of Dharma, no counting is possible. At the time of the Parinirvana, he does not enter parinirvana. The Dharma-Body of the Tathagata is perfect in all such innumerable, wonderful virtues. O Kasyapa! Only the Tathagata knows all such phases [aspects, modalities] of existence. All [this] is beyond what sravakas and pratyekabuddhas can know. O Kasyapa! The body of the Tathagata is composed of all such virtues. It is not a body maintained or nourished by various foodstuffs. O Kasyapa! The virtue of the true body of the Tathagata is such. How could it suffer from illnesses, the pain of illness, and insecurity? How could it be as brittle as an unfired piece of earthenware? O Kasyapa! The reason why the Tathagata manifests illness and pain all comes from his desire to subdue beings. O good man! Know now that the Tathagata's body is one that is adamantine. From now on, think exclusively of this signification. Never think of a body sustained by food. Also, tell all beings that the body of the Tathagata is the Dharma-Body."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! The Tathagata is perfect in all such virtues. How could it be that such a body could suffer from illness and pain, impermanence, and destruction? Henceforth I shall regard the Tathagata's body as of the eternal Dharma-Body and the body of peace. Also, I shall speak of it to all others as such. Yes, indeed, the Tathagata's Dharma-Body is adamantine and indestructible. And yet, I do not know how it could come to be thus." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "By correctly upholding Wonderful Dharma, one obtains this adamantine body. O Kasyapa! As I have in the past well guarded Dharma, I am now blessed with perfecting this adamantine body, which is eternal and indestructible. O good man! One who upholds Wonderful Dharma does not receive the five precepts and practise deportment, but protects with the sword, bow, arrow, and halberd those bhiksus who uphold the precepts and who are pure." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! If a bhiksu is unprotected, living alone in the open, in a graveyard, or under a tree, I say that such a one is a true bhiksu. Any bhiksu whose eyes turn to protection is, we may know, a bogus priest." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "Do not say 'bogus'. There may be a bhiksu who goes where he will, satisfies his personal needs, recites sutras, sits, and meditates. Should anyone come and ask about the Way, he will bestow sermons. He will speak about giving, observing the precepts, virtuous acts, and say that one should desire little and be satisfied. But he is not able to raise the lion's roar of the doctrine, is not surrounded by lions, and is not able to subdue those who do evil. Such a bhiksu cannot realise his own profit, nor is he able to assist others. Know that this person is indolent and lazy. Though he may well uphold the precepts and stick to pure actions, such a person, you should know, can do nothing. Or there may be a bhiksu whose utensils may be full. And he upholds the prohibitive precepts, and always utters the lion's roar, and delivers wonderful sermons on such as the sutras, geya, vyakarana, gatha, udana, itivrttaka, jatakas, vaipulya, and adbutadharma. He thus expounds these nine types of Buddhist sutras. He bestows benefit and peace upon others. Thus he says: 'Prohibitions are given in the Nirvana Sutra to bhiksus which say that they should not keep menials, cows, sheep, or anything contrary to the prohibitions. Should bhiksus keep such defiled things, they must be taught not to. The Tathagata has stated in the sutras of various schools that any bhiksu who keeps such things must be corrected, just as kings correct bad acts, and must be driven back into secular life.' When a bhiksu raises such a lion's roar, anyone who breaks the precepts, on hearing this, will get all angry and harm this priest. If this person dies as a result of this, he is to be called one who upholds the precepts and who benefits both his own self and others. For this reason, kings, ministers, prime ministers and upasakas protect those who deliver sermons. Any person who protects Wonderful Dharma should learn things thus. O Kasyapa! Any person who thus breaks the precepts and who does not protect Wonderful Dharma is to be called a bogus priest. One who is strict in observance of the rules does not gain such a name. O good man! In the past - innumerable, boundless, asamkhyas of kalpas past - there appeared in this town of Kusinagara a Buddha who was the Alms-deserving, the All-

Enlightened One, the All-accomplished One, the Well-gone, the All-knower, the Unsurpassed One, the Best Trainer, the Teacher of Heaven and Earth, the Buddha-World-Honoured One, and whose name was "Tathagata of Joy-and-Benefit-Augmentation." At that time, the world was wide and gloriously pure, rich and peaceful. The people were at the height of prosperity and no hunger was felt. He [They] looked like the Bodhisattvas of the Land of Peace and Happiness. That Buddha-World-Honoured One stayed in the world for an innumerable length of time. Having taught the people, he entered Parinirvana between the twin sal trees. The Buddha having entered Nirvana, the teaching remained in the world for countless billions of years and in the last part of the remaining 40 years the Buddhist teaching had still not died. At that time, there was a bhikṣu called "Enlightened-Virtuous", who upheld the precepts well and was surrounded by many of his relatives. He raised the lion's roar and preached all the nine types of sutras. He taught, saying: "Do not keep menials, men or women, cows, sheep or whatever might go against the precepts." At that time there were many bhikṣus who were acting contrary to the precepts. On hearing this, they entertained ill-will and came upon this bhikṣu, brandishing swords and staffs. At that time, there was a king called "Virtuous". He heard of this. To protect Dharma, he came to where the bhikṣu was delivering his sermons and fought against the evil doers so that the bhikṣu did not suffer. The king, however, received wounds all over his body. Then the bhikṣu, Enlightened-Virtuous, praised the king, saying: "Well done, well done, O King! You are a person who protects Wonderful Dharma. In days to come, you will become the unsurpassed utensil of Dharma." The king listened to his sermon and rejoiced. Then he died and was born in the land of Buddha Akshobhya and became his foremost disciple. The subjects of this king, his relatives and soldiers were all glad and did not retrogress in their Bodhichitta [resolve to gain Enlightenment]. When the day came to depart the world, they were born in the land of Buddha Akshobhya. At the time when Wonderful Dharma is about to die out, one should act and protect Dharma like this. O Kasyapa! The king at that time was I; the bhikṣu who delivered the sermon was Buddha Kasyapa. O Kasyapa! One who guards Wonderful Dharma is recompensed with such incalculable fruition. That is why I today adorn my body in various ways and have perfectly achieved the indestructible Dharma-Body."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa further said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! The eternal body of the Tathagata is one carved in stone, as it were." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "O good man! For that reason, bhikṣus, bhikṣunis, upasakas, upasikas should all the more make effort and protect Wonderful Dharma. The reward for protecting Wonderful Dharma is extremely great and innumerable. O good man! Because of this, those upasakas who protect Dharma should take the sword and staff and protect such a bhikṣu who guards Dharma. Even though a person upholds the precepts, we cannot call that person one who upholds Mahayana. Even though a person has not received [in formal ceremony] the five precepts, if he protects Wonderful Dharma, such a one can well be called one of Mahayana. A person who upholds the Wonderful Dharma should take the sword and staff and guard bhikṣus." Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! If all bhikṣus are to be accompanied by such upasakas with the sword and staff, can we say that they are worthy of the name, or are they unworthy of such? Or is this upholding the precepts or not?" The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "Do not say that such persons are those who transgress the precepts. O good man! After I have entered Nirvana, the world will be evil-ridden and the land devastated, each pillaging the other, and the people will be driven by hunger. At such a time, because of hunger, men may make up their minds, abandon home and enter the Sangha. Such persons are bogus priests. Such, on seeing those persons who are strict in their observance of the precepts, right in their deportment, and pure in their deeds, upholding Wonderful Dharma, will drive such away or kill them or cause harm to them." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said again to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! How can all such persons upholding the precepts and guarding Wonderful Dharma get into villages and castle towns and teach?" "O good man! That is why I allow those who uphold the precepts to be accompanied by the white-clad people [lay people, non-monks] with the sword and staff. Although all kings, ministers, rich lay men

[grhapati] and upasakas may possess the sword and staff for protecting Dharma, I call this upholding the precepts. You may possess the sword and staff, "but do not take life". If things are thus, we call this first-hand upholding of the precepts." Kasyapa said: "Anyone who protects Dharma abides in right view and widely expounds the Mahayana sutras. He does not carry the bejewelled parasols of royal persons, oil pots, unpolished rice, or fruit and seeds. He does not approach a king, minister, or the rich for profit. He does not flatter the danapatis [alms-givers] and is perfect in deportment, and crushes down those who transgress against the precepts and who do evil. Such a person is called a teacher who upholds and protects Dharma. He is a true, good teacher of the Way [kalyana-mitra - a good friend]. His mind is as expansive as the sea." "O Kasyapa! Should there be a bhiksu who speaks about Dharma for profit, the people and his relatives will also follow his example and greedily seek profit. This person thus spoils [does harm to] people. O Kasyapa! Of priests there are three kinds: 1) the precept-breaking, mixed-up priest, 2) the ignorant priest, 3) the pure priest. The precept-breaking mixed-up priest can easily be broken [spiritually injured], whereas the precept-observing priest cannot be broken just by profit.

"How is one a precept-breaking mixed-up priest? A bhiksu may be upholding the precepts, but for profit he sits, stands up, goes and comes with precept-breaking people and is on friendly terms with them and does things together with them. This is precept-breaking, hence, "mixed-up".

"Why do we call a priest ignorant? A bhiksu may be living in a quiet place, but all his sense-organs are not proper [controlled], his mind is dark and slow at working. He desires little and begs alms. On the day of admonition and freedom [pravarana], he does not teach pure confession to all the people; seeing many people breaking the precepts, he does not teach them pure confession. Yet he sits with others, talks about the precepts and seeks to be free. Such a one is an ignorant priest.

"Who is the pure priest? There is a bhiksu, a priest whom 100 thousand-billion Maras cannot break. Now, this Bodhisattva is pure in his nature and can train the two types of priest referred to above and make them live among those who are pure. He is the unsurpassed great teacher, who protects Dharma well, who well upholds the precepts. He knows well what is light or grave in the keeping of the precepts and adjusts and benefits people. He does not know anything that is not [characterised by] upholding the precepts; what he knows is what concerns the precepts.

"What does he do to adjust beings? For example, in order to adjust people, the Bodhisattva always enters a village any time and visits the places where widows and prostitutes live. He lives there for many years. This is what sravakas cannot do. This is what is called adjusting and benefiting beings.

"How does he know what is grave? Now, if one sees that the Tathagata admonishes and prohibits something, one should not do it thereafter. Things such as the four grave offences [killing, stealing, committing sexual misconduct, telling lies] are what the priest must not do. If, contrary to this, he purposely does [such things], this indicates that such a person is no longer a bhiksu, no son of the Shakya [Buddha]. This is what is "grave".

"What is "light"? A person commits light ill deeds and is thrice admonished. Then, he stops doing such again. This is "light". We say "non-vinaya which is not proved". A person praises and says that one may receive and take impure things, and says that one accords with the word, and one does not stop doing [this].

"We say "right vinaya which is rightly responded [observed]." This is correctly learning the vinaya [rules of monastic discipline], not drawing near to what is contrary to the vinaya, and spiritually sharing pleasure. Thus one ensures that the vinaya is observed. Thus one well understands what one ought to do as a Buddhist and one expounds it well. This is what the vinaya refers to as well understanding the one letter [i.e. the Chinese written character for

vinaya]. The same applies to upholding the sutras. O good man! The Buddha-Dharma is incalculable and hard to fathom. The same is also the case with the Tathagata. He is beyond knowing." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! It is so, it is so. It is as you, the Holy One, say. Unbounded and incomprehensible is Buddha-Dharma. Thus, too, is the Tathagata. All stands beyond comprehension; so too the Tathagata. Thus, I know now that the Tathagata is eternal and indestructible and that there is no change with him. I shall now study well and expound it widely to people."

Then the Buddha praised Bodhisattva Kasyapa and said: "Well said, well said! The body of the Tathagata is adamantine and indestructible. You, Bodhisattva, now have the right view and right understanding. If you see clearly thus, you will see the adamantine and indestructible body of the Tathagata just as you see things reflected in a mirror."

Chapter Twelve: On the Nature of the Tathagata

Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! Is there Self in the 25 existences or not?" The Buddha said: "O good man! "Self" means "Tathagatagarbha" [Buddha-Womb, Buddha-Embryo, Buddha-Nature]. Every being has Buddha-Nature. This is the Self. Such Self has, from the very beginning, been under cover of innumerable defilements. That is why man cannot see it. O good man! [Imagine that] there is a poor woman here. She has true gold concealed in her house. But none of the people of her house, whether big or small, know of it. But there is a stranger, who, through expediency, says to the poor woman: "I shall employ you. You must now go and weed the land!" The woman answers: "I cannot do this now. If you let my son see where the gold is hidden, I will soon work for you." The man says: "I know the way. I shall point it out to your son." The woman further says: "Nobody of my house, whether big or small, knows [of this]. How can you?" The man says: "I shall now make it clear." The woman says further: "I desire to see. Pray let me." The man digs out the gold that had lain hidden. The woman sees it, is gladdened, and begins to respect that person. O good man! The case is the same with the Buddha-Nature which man has. Nobody can see it. This is analogous to the gold which the poor woman possessed and yet could not see. O good man! I now let persons see the Buddha-Nature that they possess, which is overspread by defilements. This is analogous to the poor woman who cannot see the gold, even though she possesses it. The Tathagata now reveals to all beings the storehouse of Enlightenment, which is the Buddha-Nature, as it is called. If all beings see this, they are gladdened and will take refuge in the Tathagata. The good expedient is the Tathagata, and the poor woman is all the innumerable beings, and the cask of true gold is the Buddha-Nature.

"Also, next, O good man! As an example: a woman has a child who, while yet very young, is seized by illness. Worried by this, the woman seeks out a good doctor. The good doctor comes and compounds three medicines, which are butter, milk, and rock candy. This he gives her, to have it taken by the child. Then he says to the woman: "When the child has taken the medicine, do not give any milk to the child for some time. When the medicine has worked its way out, you may then give milk." Then the woman applies a bitter substance to her nipple and says to the child: "Do not touch it [i.e. her nipple]. My nipple is poisonous." The child is dying for the milk and wants to have it. [But] on hearing of the poison, it runs away. After the medicine has done its work, the mother washes her nipple, calls in her child and gives it [her nipple]. Although hungry, the child, having heard about the poison, will not come to it. The mother then says: "I only put poison on my nipple so as to give you the medicine. As you have already taken the medicine, I have washed the poison off. Come! Take my nipple. It is not bitter any more." On hearing this, the child slowly comes back and takes it. O good man! The case is the same with the Tathagata. In order to save beings, he gives them the teaching of non-Self. Having practised the Way thus, beings do away with the [cast of] mind that clings to self and gain Nirvana. All of this is to do away with people's wrong concepts, to show them the Way and cause them to stand above, to show them that they adhere to self, that what obtains in the world is all false and not true, and to make them practise non-Self and purify themselves. This is similar to the woman's applying a bitter substance to her nipple out of love for her child. It is the same with the Tathagata. For practising the Void, I say that all do not have the Self. This is like the woman's cleaning her nipple and calling for her child to partake of her milk. The case is the same with me, too: I speak of the Tathagatagarbha. For this reason, the bhiksus do not entertain fear. It is analogous to the child who hears its mother, slowly comes back and takes the milk. The situation is the same with the bhiksus. They should know well that the Tathagata hides nothing."

Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "O World-Honoured One! Really, there cannot be any case in which there is Self. Why not? When a child is born, it knows nothing. If there is a Self, the child would have to have knowledge when it is born into the world. Hence we can know

that there is no Self. If a Self definitely existed, there could not be any loss of knowing. If it were true that all beings eternally possessed Buddha-Nature, there could be no breaking away. If there is no destruction, how can there be the differences of Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya, Sudra, candala, and animals? Now, the effects of karma are various, and differences exist in life. If there definitely is a Self, there cannot be any victory or defeat with beings. From this, we can definitely know that the Buddha-Nature is eternal Dharma. If the Buddha-Nature is definitely eternal, why do we say speak of such things as killing, stealing, lust, forked tongue, ill-speaking, lying, flattering, greed, hatred, and wrong views? If there really is eternally the nature of Self, why is it that a person becomes intoxicated or mad? If the nature of Self is eternal, the blind should be able to see, the deaf hear, the dumb talk, and the lame walk. If the Self is eternal, fire, great floods of water, poison, swords, evil persons and animals cannot [need not] be avoided. If the Self is eternal, what has basically changed cannot be forgotten or lost. If forgotten, how can a person say: "I have seen this person somewhere [before]"? If the Self is eternal, there cannot be old age or youth, no ups or downs, no remembering of what has passed away. If the Self is eternal, where does it abide or live? Is it the case that tears, spittle, blue, yellow, red, and white are to remain in all things? If the Self is eternal, it will fill the body as in the case of sesame seed, in which there is no space left in between. When the body is cut up into small pieces, the Self, too, would have to be cut up"

The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "O good man! As an analogy: there is in the household of a king a great wrestler. He has an adamant bead on his brow. This man wrestles with other wrestlers. When [once] the head of another person touches his brow, the bead goes into the wrestler's flesh, and there is no knowing where it is. A boil comes up there. A good doctor is called in to cure it. At that time, there is a good doctor with a bright mind. He knows well how to diagnose and prescribe medicine. Now, he sees that this boil has appeared due to the bead's having got into the wrestler's body. He realises that this bead has entered the flesh and remains there. Then, the good doctor asks the wrestler: "Where is that bead that was on your brow?" The wrestler is surprised and answers: "O great teacher and doctor! Has not the bead on my brow got lost? Where could the bead be now? Is this not a miracle [that you know about it]?" He is worried and weeps. Then, the doctor pacifies the wrestler: "Do not be over-concerned. When you fought, the gem entered your body. It is now under your skin and can be seen, looming up. As you fought, the poison of anger so burned that the gem got into your body and you did not feel it." But the wrestler does not believe the doctor's words. "If it is under my skin, how is it that it does not come out because of the impure pus and blood? If it is in my sinews, we cannot possibly see it. Why do you mean to cheat me?" Then, the doctor takes up a mirror and holds it in front of the wrestler's face. The gem appears clearly in the mirror. The wrestler sees it, is surprised and is all wonder. It is like that. O good man! The case is the same with all beings. They do not come near to a good teacher of the Way. So, they cannot see the Buddha-Nature which is within, even though they possess it. And they are reigned over by greed, lust, anger, and ignorance. So they fall into the realms of hell, animals, hungry ghosts, asuras, candalas, and get born in such various houses as Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya and Sudra. The karma generated by the mind leads a person, though born a human, into such lives as a cripple, lame, deaf, blind or dumb person, and to the 25 existences, where such as greed, lust, anger and ignorance reign over the mind, and the person is unable to know of the presence of the Buddha-Nature. The wrestler says that the gem has gone away, even though it is [actually] in his body. The same with beings, too. Not having come into contact with a good teacher of the Way, they do not know the Tathagata's hidden treasure and do not study selflessness. For example, even when a person is told of the unholy self, he cannot know the true quality of the Self. The same is true of my disciples. As they do not befriend a good teacher of the Way, they practise non-Self and do not know where it [Self] is. They do not know the true nature of selflessness. How, then, could they know the true nature of the Self itself? Thus, O good man, the Tathagata says that all beings possess the Buddha-Nature. This

is like the good doctor's making the wrestler see where the adamantine jewel rests. All these beings are reigned over by innumerable defilements and thus do not know the whereabouts of the Buddha-Nature. When illusion is dispelled, there arises knowledge and brightness. This is like the wrestler's seeing the gem in the mirror. O good man! It is thus the case that what rests undisclosed [latent] in the Tathagata is innumerable and is difficult for beings to think about.

"Also, O good man! As an example, there is a medicine in the Himalayas called "pleasing taste". It tastes very sweet. It grows hidden under a deep growth of plants, and we cannot easily see it. But from its scent, one can come to know the whereabouts of this medicine. In days gone by, there was a chakravartin who, placing wooden tubes here and there in the Himalayas, collected this medicine. When it had ripened, it flowed out and entered the tubes. It tasted truly right. When the king died, this medicine became sour, salty, sweet, bitter, or hot, or light. Thus, what is one, tastes differently according to the different places. The true taste of the medicine remains in the mountains; it is like the full moon. Any common mortal, sterile in virtue, may work hard, dig, and try, but cannot get it. Only a chakravartin, high in virtue, appearing in the world can arrive at the true value of this medicine because of happy circumstantial concatenations. The same is the case [here]. O good man! The taste of the hidden store of the Tathagata is also like this. Overspread by all the growths of defilement, the beings clad in ignorance cannot hope to see it. We speak of the "one taste". This applies, for instance, to the Buddha-Nature. On account of the presence of defilement, several tastes appear, such as the realms of hell, animals, hungry pretas, devas, human beings, men, women, non-men, non-women, Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya and Sudra.

"The Buddha-Nature is strong and vigorous. It is hard to destroy. Therefore, there is nothing that can kill it. If there were something that could indeed kill it, Buddha-Nature would die. [But] nothing can ever destroy such Buddha-Nature. Nothing of this nature can ever be cut. "The nature of Self is nothing other than the hidden storehouse of the Tathagata". Such a storehouse can never be smashed, set on fire, or done away with. Although it is not possible to destroy or see it, one can know of it when one attains unsurpassed Enlightenment. Hence, there is indeed nothing that can kill it." Bodhisattva Kasyapa said to the Buddha: "If nothing can kill it, no karmic consequences would ensue from evil actions." The Buddha said to Kasyapa: "There truly is [such a thing as] killing. How? O good man! "The Buddha-Nature of beings rests within the five skandhas." If the five skandhas are destroyed, this is killing [of those skandhas]. If one harms a living thing, one gains the unfortunate realms. Through the working of karma, one transmigrates through such realms as Kshatriya, Brahmin, Vaishya, Sudra, candala, or man, woman, non-man, non-woman, and the 25 variegated existences. A person who has not reached the holy stage of a sage is waywardly bound up by attachment to self. All such phases [modes] of existence, whether big or small, are like barnyard grass, like rice or a bean, or like the thumb. Thus do they [i.e. ignorant beings] loosely imagine things. There can be no true shape in wild fancies. The shape of Self that seeks to flee from the world is Buddha-Nature. This is the best way of conceiving of the Self.

"And next, O good man! As an analogy: there is a man here who knows well what is hidden [under the ground]. He takes a sharp hoe, digs into the ground and hits upon such things as stones and gravel. All goes through and nothing hinders [i.e. the hoe digs through everything, without being obstructed]. Only when the diamond comes in its way, can the hoe not dig through. Now, no sword or hatchet can destroy a diamond. O good man! The Buddha-Nature of beings is like this. It is something that all those people who discuss things, Marapapiyas, all men and devas cannot destroy. What characterises the five skandhas is [the phenomenon of] what occurs and what is done. Whatever occurs and is done can certainly be destroyed, like stones and sand. "The True Self of the Buddha-Nature is like the diamond, which cannot be crushed". Hence, we call the destroying of the five skandhas the killing of life. O good man! Know well most definitely that the Buddhist teaching is not within the boundaries of conceiving.

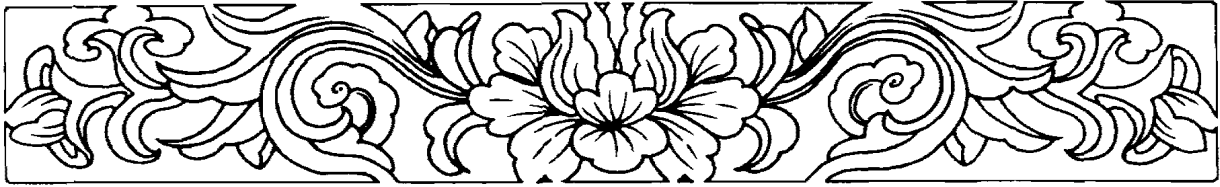


The Flower Ornament Scripture

Thomas Cleary



SHAMBHALA • BOSTON & LONDON • 1993



BOOK THREE

The Meditation of the Enlightening Being Universally Good

THE ENLIGHTENING BEING Universally Good, the great being, sat on a lion throne made of a bank of lotus flowers, and, imbued with the psychic power of the Enlightened One, entered into concentration. This concentration is called the immanent body of the illuminator of thusness, which is in all enlightened ones. It enters everywhere into the equal essence of all enlightened ones, and is capable of manifesting myriad images in the cosmos, vastly and immensely, without obstruction, equal to space. All the whirling oceans of universes flow along into it; it produces all states of concentration, and can contain all worlds in all directions. The oceans of lights of knowledge of all the enlightened ones come from here; it can reveal all the oceans of all conditions everywhere. It contains within it all the powers and liberations of the enlightened ones and the knowledge of the enlightening beings. It can cause the particles of all lands to be universally able to contain boundless universes. It develops the ocean of virtuous qualities of all Buddhas, and reveals the ocean of great vows of these enlightened ones. All the cycles of teaching of the Buddhas flow through it and are guarded and maintained by it, and kept without interruption or end.

As in this world the enlightening being Universally Good entered this concentration in the presence of the World Honored One, thus in the same way throughout the realm of space of the cosmos, in all directions and all times, in a subtle, unhindered, vastly expansive light, in all lands visible to the Buddha's eye, within reach of the Buddha's power, manifested by the Buddha's body, and in each atom of all those lands, there were Buddhas as numerous as atoms in an ocean of worlds, and in front of each Buddha were Universally Good enlightening beings numerous as atoms in an ocean of worlds, each also entering into this concentration in the immanent body of the illuminator of thusness in enlightened ones.

At that time each of the Universally Good ones saw the Buddhas of the ten directions appearing before them; those Buddhas praised Universally Good in the same voice: "Good! You are able to enter this enlightening beings' concentration in the immanent body of the illuminator of thusness in all Buddhas; this is fostered in you by all the Buddhas everywhere together, by means of the power of the original vow of the illuminating realized one Vairocana Buddha, and it is also because you cultivate the power of the practices and vows of all Buddhas: that is to say, because you can activate all the cycles of the enlightening teaching, revealing the ocean of knowledge and wisdom of all enlightened ones, universally illumine all the oceans of distinctions everywhere, without exception, cause sentient beings to clear away confusion and affliction and attain purity, universally accept all lands without attachment, deeply enter the sphere of all enlightened ones without impediment, and universally expound the virtues and qualities of all enlightened ones; because you are able to enter into the true character of all things and develop knowledge and wisdom, analyze all the media of the teachings, comprehend the faculties of all living beings, and because you are able to hold the ocean of written teachings of all the Buddhas."

At that time all the Buddhas of the ten directions then bestowed on the great enlightening being Universally Good the knowledge that enters into the power inherent in omniscience, the knowledge that enters into the infinity of the cosmos, the knowledge that perfects the realization of the sphere of all enlightened ones, the knowledge of the becoming and decay of all oceans of worlds, the knowledge of the full extent of the worlds of all sentient beings, the knowledge that abides in the extremely profound liberation of all enlightened ones and the nondiscriminating knowledge of all meditation states, the knowledge that enters into the ocean of all faculties of enlightening beings, the knowledge of elocution to turn the wheel of the teaching in the ocean of languages of all sentient beings, the knowledge that enters in all ways into the bodies of all oceans of worlds in the cosmos, and the knowledge that comprehends the voices of all Buddhas.

As in this world in the presence of the Buddha the enlightening being Universally Good experienced the Buddhas bestowing such knowledge, so in all oceans of worlds, as well as in each atom of all those worlds, so did all the enlightening beings Universally Good there experience this. Why? Because they had realized that state of mental focus in this way.

Then the Buddhas of the ten directions each extended his right hand and patted Universally Good on the head. Their hands were each adorned with the marks of greatness, being finely webbed, emanating light, fragrance, and flames. They also produced the various wondrous tones of all Buddhas. And within it were manifested the phenomena of mystical powers, the ocean of vows of universal goodness of all enlightening beings of past, present, and future, the cycles of pure teachings of

all enlightened ones, as well as the images of the Buddhas of past, present, and future.

As in this world Universally Good was patted on the head by all the Buddhas of the ten directions, so in all the oceans of worlds, and in each atom of those worlds, the enlightening beings Universally Good there were patted on the head by the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Then the enlightening being Universally Good arose from this concentration; when he did so, he rose from media of oceans of concentrations numerous as atoms in all oceans of worlds. For example, he rose from the medium of concentration of skillful knowledge realizing that the worlds of past, present, and future have no distinction in the succession of instants; he rose from the medium of concentration of knowledge of all the subtlest and most minute constituents of all universes in all times; he rose from the medium of concentration on the manifestation of all buddha-fields of past, present, and future; he rose from the medium of concentration revealing the dwelling places of all living beings; he rose from the medium of concentration of knowledge of various differences in locations of the universes of the ten directions; he rose from the medium of concentration of knowledge of boundlessly vast clouds of buddha-bodies existing in every atom; he rose from the medium of concentration of explanations of the ocean of inner principles in all things.

When the enlightening being Universally Good rose from such media of concentration, all the enlightening beings each found oceanic clouds of concentrations, numerous as atoms in an ocean of worlds, found oceanic clouds of spells, oceanic clouds of techniques to teach everything, oceanic clouds of ways of felicitous expression, oceanic clouds of practices, oceanic clouds of lights from the knowledge of the treasury of virtues of all who realize thusness, oceanic clouds of nondiscriminating techniques of the powers, knowledges, and wisdom of all enlightened ones, oceanic clouds of Buddhas each manifesting myriad lands in each and every pore, oceanic clouds of enlightening beings one by one manifesting descent from the palace of the Tushita heaven to be born on earth and become an enlightened Buddha, turn the wheel of the teaching, and enter into ultimate extinction, all as numerous as atoms in an ocean of worlds.

As when in this world the enlightening being Universally Good rose from concentration all the hosts of enlightening beings received such blessings, so in all the oceans of worlds, as well as in each atom of each world, the same thing occurred.

At that time, by the spiritual power of all the Buddhas and the power of Universally Good's concentration, all oceans of worlds in the ten directions trembled. Each world was arrayed with precious elements and gave forth wondrous sound, explaining all things. And on each Buddha, in the ocean of sites of enlightenment where the masses gathered, everywhere there rained ten kinds of clouds of regal jewels:

clouds of beautiful gold star jewels, jewels like precious discs descending, shining light jewels, jewels of the treasury manifesting the images of enlightening beings, jewels extolling the names of Buddhas, jewels of brilliant light illuminating the sites of enlightenment in buddha-fields everywhere, jewels whose light reflects the various miracles everywhere, jewels praising the virtues of all enlightening beings, jewels with a light that shines like the sun, jewels whose delightful music is heard everywhere.

After the universal rain of these ten kinds of clouds of jewels, all the Buddhas emitted lights from their pores, and in the light rays spoke verses:

Universally Good is present in all lands
Sitting on a jeweled lotus throne, beheld by all;
He manifests all psychic powers
And is able to enter infinite meditations.

The Universally Good always fill the universe
With various bodies flowing everywhere,
With concentration, psychic power, skill and strength,
In a universal voice teaching extensively without hindrance.

In every land, in the presence of all the Buddhas,
Various states of concentration revealing psychic powers,
Each psychic power pervades everywhere
In all lands of the ten directions.

As with the Buddhas of all lands,
So it is in all the atoms of the lands as well;
The phenomena of concentration and mystic powers
Are the will power of the illuminator.

Universally Good physically is like space,
Abiding by reality, not a land,
According to the heart's desires of all beings
Manifesting all kinds of embodiments, equal to all.

Universally Good, abiding at peace in great determination,
Thus attained these infinite spiritual powers,
In any lands of all buddha bodies
Manifesting his form going there.

All the myriad oceans are boundless:
He reproduces his body infinitely and dwells there;
All lands of his manifestation are purified,
And in an instant are seen many eons.

Universally Good lives peacefully in all lands:
 The spiritual powers he displays are incomparable;
 The trembling extending everywhere
 Causes those who look to be able to see.

The knowledge, virtue, and powers of all Buddhas,
 Their various great qualities, he has all fulfilled;
 By the medium of techniques of all meditations
 He shows his past enlightening acts.

Such independence, inconceivable,
 Is manifest in the lands of the ten directions
 To reveal the universal entrance of all meditations;
 In the clouds of buddha light his praises are sung.

Then all the hosts of enlightening beings turned to Universally Good,
 joined their palms and gazed respectfully at Universally Good; imbued
 with the psychic power of the Enlightened, they sang in praise with the
 same voice,

Born from the teachings of the Enlightened,
 Also originating from the will power of the Buddha,
 The womb of space, the equality of real thusness:
 You have purified this body of reality.

In the congregations of all buddha-fields
 Universally Good is omnipresent there;
 The light of the oceans of universal virtue and wisdom
 Equally illumine everywhere, so all are visible.

The immensely vast oceans of virtues of Universally Good
 Goes everywhere to approach the enlightened;
 To the lands within all atoms
 He can travel and clearly appear there.

O Child of Buddha, we always see you
 Associating with all the enlightened ones,
 Abiding in the real state of concentration
 For eons numerous as atoms in all lands.

The child of Buddha, with an all-pervading body,
 Can go to the lands in all directions,
 Liberating all the oceans of living beings,
 Entering into all the parts of the cosmos.

Entering into all particles of the cosmos,
The body is endless and undifferentiated;
Omnipresent as space,
It expounds the great teaching of the realization of thusness.

The light of all virtue,
Immense like clouds, power surpassing,
Traveling to all oceans of living beings
Expounding the incomparable way practiced by all Buddhas.

Cultivating and learning the supreme practice of universal goodness
In order to liberate sentient beings for oceans of eons,
Expounding all truths, like a great cloud,
The voice is tremendous, none do not hear.

How can the land be established?
How do the Buddhas appear?
And how about beings?
Please explain truthfully the truth as it is.

**THE GATE OF ENTRY INTO
THE LIMITLESS ACTIVITIES OF THE SUPREME NOBLE ONES**

**A SHORT COMMENTARY ON
THE ASPIRATION PRAYER FOR
THE EXCELLENT CONDUCT OF THE NOBLE ONES**

BY LOCHEN DHARMASHRI
Translated by Khenpo Gawang Rinpoche and Gerry Wiener

SUMMARY OUTLINE

I) The preliminary seven branch prayer that purifies one's being

- A) Prostration
- B) Offering
- C) Confession
- D) Rejoicing
- E) Requesting to teach the dharma
- F) Asking to remain
- G) Dedication

II) The main practice

- A) Aspiration by means of pure intention
- B) Not forgetting bodhichitta
- C) Commitments
- D) Activities
- E) Achievements
- F) Consolidating the aspirations

III) The conclusion that teaches the benefits

- A) The explanation of the benefits of aspiration
- B) Dedicating the aspirations that possess benefit

THE GATE OF ENTRY INTO THE
LIMITLESS ACTIVITIES OF THE
SUPREME NOBLE ONES

A SHORT COMMENTARY ON THE
ASPIRATION PRAYER FOR THE
EXCELLENT CONDUCT OF THE
NOBLE ONES

LOCHEN DHARMASHRI

TRANSLATED BY

KHENPO GAWANG RINPOCHE AND GERRY WIENER

1 ROOT VERSES

I pay homage to noble Manjushri Kumara.

To all the Tathagatas without exception,
Those lions of men and women of the three times
Who abide in the countless worlds of the ten directions,
I prostrate inspired by faith with body, speech and mind.

Through the power of this aspiration prayer for excellent conduct,
I manifest in mind all the victorious ones.
Bowing down with bodies as countless as atoms in all the realms,
I fully prostrate to all the victorious ones.

I imagine on a single atom, Buddhas as countless as atoms in
the universe,
Each residing with his son and daughter bodhisattvas.
In this way all the realms of the dharmadhatu
Are filled with victorious ones.

With oceans of inexhaustible exaltation
Consisting of all the sounds of oceans of various types of melodies,
I fully express the qualities of all the victorious ones
And praise all the sugatas.

With the finest flowers, the finest garlands,
Music, perfumes, supreme parasols,
Supreme lamps and the finest incense,
I make offering to all the victorious ones.

With the finest clothing, supreme scents,
Heaps of aromatic powders equal in size to Mount Meru and so on,
All displayed in the most sublime of arrangements,
I make offering to the victorious ones.

Supreme victory banners and supreme pennants,
All of these again I offer to the victorious ones.

Through the power of respectful faith in all the victorious ones,
And through the power of trusting faith in excellent conduct,
I prostrate and make offerings unsurpassable and vast
To all the victorious ones.

Through the power of passion, aggression and ignorance,
I have performed harmful actions
With body, speech and likewise mind.
All these actions I confess, each and every one.

I rejoice in all merits,
Those of the victorious ones and their descendant bodhisattvas of the
ten directions,
Those of the Pratyekabuddhas, the Shravakas requiring practice, the
arhants who no longer need practice,
And those of all beings.

I request all the protectors,
Those beacons of the worlds of the ten directions,
Who have traveled the stages of the path of bodhi and have reached
enlightenment free from obscuration,
To turn the wheel of the unsurpassable dharma.

With palms joined, I supplicate
All the Tathagatas who are planning to pass into nirvana,
To remain for as many kalpas as there are atoms in the Buddha realms,
In order to provide benefit and happiness to all sentient beings.

Whatever small virtue I have accumulated,
Through prostration, offering and confession,
Rejoicing, requesting to teach, and supplicating to remain,
I dedicate entirely for the sake of enlightenment.

I make offering to the Buddhas of the past
And to those who reside in the worlds of the ten directions.

May those who have not yet appeared as Buddhas,
Quickly complete their intentions.
May they progress through the stages of enlightenment
And attain buddhahood.

May the countless realms of the ten directions
Be completely transformed into vast and completely pure realms.
May these pure realms be completely filled with Buddhas together with
their son and daughter bodhisattvas,
And may each Buddha reside sitting under the greatest of all trees,
the tree of bodhi.

May the countless sentient beings of the ten directions
Be free from illness and enjoy happiness at all times.
May all beings who are acting in accord with the goals of the dharma
Be in harmony and may their aspirations be accomplished.

May I perform enlightened activities
And may I recall all my previous lives.
In all of my lives, from birth to death,
May I always be a renunciate.

Training by following the examples of all the victorious ones,
May I completely perfect excellent conduct.
May my activities and discipline be without stain and be completely pure.
May my conduct at all times be free of faults and impairments.

May I teach the dharma
In the language of the gods, in the language of the nagas, in the language
of the yakshas,
In the language of the kumbhandas, in the different languages
of humans,
And in all the many languages spoken by sentient beings.

With a mind of peace, may I fully exert myself in the paramitas.
May I never forget bodhichitta.
May I completely purify without exception,
All harmful actions and their ensuing obscurations to liberation.

May I be liberated from nonvirtuous actions, kleshas and Mara's
activities that obstruct accomplishment,
And may I act for all the beings of this world,

Just like the lotus unstained by mud
 And just like the beneficial sun and moon unhindered by space.

May I completely pacify the suffering of the beings of the lower realms
 Who in extent would fill all the directions of the Buddha fields.
 May I establish all beings in happiness
 And bring benefit to all.

May I completely perfect the activities of enlightenment
 And engage in harmonious activities in order to ripen sentient beings.
 May I fully teach excellent conduct
 And perform the sum of the above activities throughout
 all future kalpas.

May I always accompany
 Those whose good actions are similar to mine.
 May our activities and aspirations of body, speech and mind
 Be one and the same.

May I always meet those spiritual friends
 Who wish to benefit me
 And fully teach me excellent conduct.
 May I never displease them.

At all times may I see in person the victorious ones,
 Those lords who are encircled by their bodhisattvas.
 Throughout all future kalpas,
 May I tirelessly make a vast variety of offerings to them.

May I retain the authentic dharma of the victorious ones
 And thus be able to shed light on all enlightened conduct.
 Thoroughly training in excellent conduct,
 May I practice it at all times in all future kalpas.

In all my rebirths in samsara,
 May I obtain inexhaustible merit and wisdom.
 In this way may I become an inexhaustible treasury
 Of the qualities of upaya, prajna, samadhi and liberation.

Within a single atom, may I see all the countless Buddha realms.
 Within each of these realms may I see the incomprehensible Buddhas
 Residing with their son and daughter bodhisattvas.
 As they perform enlightened activities may I do so along with them.

Then, in each of the realms in all directions, may space even the size
 of a tip of a hair
 Be filled with realms the size of oceans containing oceans of Buddhas of
 the three times.
 May I fully engage in enlightened conduct together with the Buddhas
 throughout oceans of kalpas.

Every single teaching of the Buddha appears in languages having
 oceans of qualities.
 It has the qualities of the pure melodic speech of all the victorious ones
 And harmoniously satisfies the different wishes of all sentient beings.
 May I always listen to the speech of the Buddhas.

All the victorious Tathagatas of the three times
 Have fully turned the wheel of the dharma.
 May I, through the power of mind, fully enter into
 The inexhaustible melodious speech of all the victorious ones.

Just as the Buddhas enter into wisdom in all future kalpas
 May I too enter into such wisdom in this very instant.
 Combining the entire extent of all the kalpas of the three times
 Into a fraction of a single instant, may I perform enlightened conduct
 wherever I may be.

In this very instant may I see
 All the lions of men and women, the Tathagatas of the three times.
 May I at all times realize the liberation of the Tathagatas that sees
 All objects of experience as illusion.

May I make the Buddha realms of the three times
 Manifest within a single atom.
 May I then make each atom in all directions without exception
 Manifest all the pure realms of the victorious ones.

May I go into the presence of all the present and future lords,
 Those beacons who illuminate the world,
 Who demonstrate stage by stage the attainment of enlightenment,
 Who turn the wheel of the dharma,
 And who attain the ultimate complete peace of nirvana.

By way of the power of altogether swift miracles,
 The power of the vehicle that traverses the path of complete benefit,

The power of conduct having all excellent qualities,
The power of all pervasive loving kindness,
The power of all virtuous merit,
The power of wisdom that is free from attachment,
And the powers of prajna, upaya and samadhi,
May I perfectly accomplish the power of enlightenment.

May I completely purify the power of karma,
May I fully subjugate the power of the kleshas,
May I render the power of the Maras powerless,
And may I perfect the power of excellent conduct.

May I completely purify oceans of realms,
Completely liberate oceans of sentient beings,
Fully see oceans of dharmas,
Fully realize oceans of wisdom,
Perform oceans of excellent activities completely purifying all faults,
Fully complete oceans of aspirations,
And fully offer to oceans of Buddhas.
May I perform all of these activities without weariness throughout oceans of kalpas.

All the victorious ones of the three times
Have made multitudes of enlightened aspirations.
May I become an enlightened Buddha through performing excellent conduct
Thereby completing all of their aspirations without exception.

The principal son of all the victorious ones
Is the individual named Samantabhadra.
In order to act in the same manner as this master,
I fully dedicate all my virtuous activity.
I also make dedication for pure body, speech and mind,
For pure conduct, and for the complete purification of the realms.
May I be just like the master
In making this excellent dedication.

In order to practice the excellent conduct of the all virtuous dharmas,
May my aspirations be the same as those of Manjushri.
In all future kalpas, may I be without weariness in completing
All the activities of Manjushri.

May my paramita activities be immeasurable.
May my excellent qualities be immeasurable.
Having performed immeasurable activities,
May I attain all the manifestations of the Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Just as space is without limit
So too are all sentient beings.
Just as their karma and kleshas are without limit,
So, too, may my aspirations be without limit.

Individuals could offer limitless realms of the ten directions
Ornamented with precious jewels to the victorious ones.
They could also offer substances of gods and humans producing
supreme delight.

They could make these offerings in numbers as countless as atoms in all
the realms over many kalpas.

However, if they were to listen to this king of dedication prayers,
Be motivated to supreme enlightenment,
And then give rise to faith even a single time,
The merit gained would be even more sublime.

If I make this aspiration prayer for excellent conduct,
I will abandon all rebirths in the lower realms.
I will be free from associating with inappropriate friends
And will quickly see the Buddha Amitabha.
I will completely obtain the supreme attainments,
I will be happy in this life,
And in this present life everything will go well.
In aspiring to be like Samantabhadra,
I will be just like him in a short period of time.
If I perform the five inexpressible sins out of ignorance,
When I recite this Prayer for Excellent Conduct,
I will quickly and completely purify them.
I will attain wisdom, have a beautiful body, possess the major
and minor marks,

Be born into an excellent family and be radiant in appearance.
The Maras and tirthikas will not be able to harm me,
And all beings of the three worlds will make offerings to me.
I will quickly go before the Bodhi tree,
And abiding there I will be able to benefit sentient beings.
Having subdued the Maras and their troops,
I will attain enlightenment and fully turn the wheel of the dharma.

If I keep this aspiration prayer for excellent conduct with me
Chant or read it,
I will gain the complete fruition only known by the Buddhas,
The attainment of supreme enlightenment – of this there is no doubt!

Just as Manjushri has supreme knowledge,
So too, has Samantabhadra.
In order to follow in the footsteps of these supreme bodhisattvas,
I fully dedicate all the virtue arising from making this aspiration.

With dedications that are praised as supreme
By all the victorious ones of the three times,
I fully dedicate all of my roots of virtues
In order that all beings attain the conduct of Samantabhadra.

At the time of my death,
May all my obscurations be dispelled.
Having seen Buddha Amitabha in person,
May I instantly go to the pure realm of Sukhavati.

Having gone there, may all the fruitions
Of making this Aspiration Prayer fully manifest.
May all of my wishes and those of others be completely fulfilled,
And may I benefit sentient beings as long as worlds exist.

In that joyous realm having the excellent qualities of the mandala
of victorious Amitabha,
May I take birth on a beautiful lotus.
May victorious Amitabha appear to me in person,
And may I receive a prophecy from him.

Having fully received this prophecy in Sukhavati,
May I emanate many billions of emanations,
And through my intent, may a multitude of benefits
Be performed for sentient beings in the ten directions.

Through whatever small virtue I have accumulated
By reciting this aspiration prayer for excellent conduct,
May all the positive wishes of sentient beings
And all positive results be accomplished instantly.

The merit obtained through the dedication of this aspiration prayer
for excellent conduct
Is limitless and authentic.
By whatever merit I have so obtained,
May all sentient beings drowning in the river of suffering
Gain complete rebirth in the realm of Sukhavati.

Through this king of aspiration prayers
May all sentient beings receive benefit and attain the greatest
of all attainments.

By accomplishing this aspiration prayer taught by Samantabhadra and
ornamented with Buddha activity,
May the lower realms be completely emptied of beings.

The Aspiration Prayer for the Excellent Conduct of the Noble Ones
is complete.

The Indian scholars Jinamitra, Surendrabodhi, the translator Bande Yeshe De
and others translated this text from Sanskrit into Tibetan and the great
translator, Vairocana, served as the chief editor.