

Surangama Sutra

Zen Instructional Series

Surangama Sutra

Shakyamuni Buddha

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Surangama Sutra, Volume 1

Volume 1, Part One

Thus I have heard:

At one time the Buddha dwelt at the City of Shravasti in the sublime abode of the Jeta Grove with a gathering of great Bhikshus, twelve hundred fifty in all.

All were great Arhats without outflows, disciples of the Buddha who dwelt in and maintained the Dharma. They had fully transcended all existence, and were able to perfect the awesome deportment wherever they went.

They followed the Buddha in turning the wheel and were wonderfully worthy of the bequest. Stern and pure in the Vinaya, they were great exemplars in the three realms. Their numberless response-bodies took beings across and liberated them, extricating and rescuing those of the future so they could transcend the bonds of all mundane defilements.

The names of the leaders were: the Greatly Wise Shariputra, Maha Maudgalyayana, Mahakaustila, Purnamaitreyaniputra, Subhuti, Upanishad, and others.

Moreover, numberless Pratyekabuddhas who were beyond learning and those of initial resolve came to where the Buddha was. All the Bhikshus were there as well, having the Pravaraṇa at the close of the summer retreat.

And there were also Bodhisattvas from the ten directions, who desired counsel in order to resolve their doubts. All were respectful and obedient to the Awesome But Compassionate One as they prepared to seek the Secret Meaning.

Then the Tathāgata arranged his seat, sat quietly and peacefully, and for the sake of everyone in the assembly, proclaimed the profound and mysterious. At the banquet of Dharma, what the members of the pure assembly obtained was unprecedented.

The Immortal's kalavinka-sound pervaded the worlds of the ten directions and Bodhisattvas as many as the Gange's sands gathered at the Way-place with Manjushri as their leader.

On the day of mourning, King Prasenajit, for the sake of his father, the former king, arranged a vegetarian feast and invited the Buddha to the side rooms of the palace. He welcomed the Tathágata with a vast array of superb delicacies of unsurpassed, wonderful flavors and himself invited the Great Bodhisattvas, as well.

Elders and laypeople of the city were also prepared to provide meals for the Sangha at the same time, and they stood waiting for the Buddha to come and receive offerings.

The Buddha commanded Manjushri to assign the Bodhisattvas and Arhats to receive offerings from the various vegetarian hosts.

Only Ánanda, who had traveled far to accept a special invitation earlier, and had not yet returned, was late for the apportioning of the Sangha. No senior Bhikshu or Acharya was with him, and so he was returning alone on the road.

On that day Ánanda had received no offerings, and so at the appropriate time he took up his alms bowl and, as he traveled through the city, received alms in sequential order.

As he set out to receive alms from the first to the last donors, his vegetarian hosts, he thought not to question whether they were pure or impure; whether they were kshatriyas of honorable name or chandalas. While practicing equality and compassion he would not select merely the lowly but was determined to perfect all beings' limitless merit and virtue.

Ánanda was aware that the Tathágata, the World Honored One, had admonished Subhuti and Mahakashyapa for being Arhats whose minds were not fair and equal. He revered the Tathágata's instructions on impartiality for saving everyone from doubt and slander.

Having crossed the city moat; he walked slowly through the outer gates, his manner stern and proper as he strictly respected the rules for obtaining vegetarian food.

At that time, because Ánanda was receiving alms in sequential order, he passed by a house of prostitution and was waylaid by a powerful artifice. On the strength of Kapila's mantra, which came from the Brahma Heaven, the daughter of Matangi drew him onto an impure mat.

With her licentious body she caressed him until he was on the verge of destroying the precept–substance.

The Tathágata, knowing Ánanda was being taken advantage of by an impure artifice, finished the meal and immediately returned to the Sublime Abode. The king, great officials, elders, and laypeople followed along after the Buddha desiring to hear the essentials of the Dharma.

Then the World Honored One from his crown emitted hundreds of rays of jeweled light, which dispelled all fear. Within the light appeared a thousand–petal jeweled lotus, upon which was seated a transformation–body Buddha in full–lotus posture, proclaiming a spiritual mantra.

Shakyamuni Buddha commanded Manjushri to take the mantra and go provide protection, and, when the evil mantra was dispelled, to support Ánanda and Matangi's daughter and encourage them to return to where the Buddha was.

Surangama Sutra, Volume 1

Volume 1, Part Two

Ánanda saw the Buddha, bowed, and wept sorrowfully, regretting that from time without beginning he had been preoccupied with erudition and had not yet perfected his strength in the Way. He respectfully and repeatedly requested an explanation of the initial expedients of the wonderful shamatha, Samapatti, and Dhyana, by means of which the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions had realized Bodhi.

At that time Bodhisattvas as numerous as Ganges' sands, great Arhats, Pratyekabuddhas, and others from the ten directions, were also present. Pleased at the opportunity to listen, they withdrew quietly to their seats to receive the sagely instruction.

Then, in the midst of the great assembly, the World Honored One extended his golden arm, rubbed Ánanda's crown, and said to Ánanda and the great assembly, "There is a samádhi called the King of the Foremost Surangama at the Great Buddha's Crown Replete with the Myriad Practices; it is a path wonderfully adorned and the single door through which the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions gained transcendence. You should now listen attentively." Ánanda bowed down to receive the compassionate instruction humbly.

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "You and I are of the same family and share the affection of this natural relationship. At the time of your initial resolve, what were the outstanding characteristics which you saw in my Dharma that caused you to suddenly cast aside the deep kindness and love found in the world?" Ánanda said to the Buddha, "I saw the Thus Come One's thirty-two hallmarks, which were so supremely wonderful and incomparable that his entire body had a shimmering translucence just like that of crystal.

"I often thought that those hallmarks could not have been born of desire and love. Why? The vapors of desire are coarse and murky. From foul and putrid intercourse comes a turbid mixture of pus and blood, which cannot give off such a magnificent, pure, and brilliant

concentration of purple–golden light. And so I eagerly gazed upward, followed the Buddha, and let the hair fall from my head.”

The Buddha said, “Very good, Ánanda. You should know that from beginning less time all beings are continually born and continually die, simply because they do not know the everlasting true mind with its pure nature and bright substance. Instead they engage in false thinking. These thoughts are not true, and so they lead to further transmigration.

“Now you wish to investigate the unsurpassed Bodhi and actually discover your nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions escaped birth and death because their minds were straightforward. Since their minds and words were consistently that way, from the beginning, through the intermediate stages to the end, they were never in the least evasive.

“Ánanda, I now ask you: at the time of your initial resolve, which arose in response to Thus Come One’s thirty–two hallmarks, what was it that saw those characteristics and who delighted in them?”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, this is the way I experienced the delight: I used my mind and eyes. Because my eyes saw the Thus Come One’s outstanding hallmarks, my mind gave rise to delight. That is why I became resolved and wished to extricate myself from birth and death.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “It is as you say, that experience of delight actually occurs because of your mind and eyes. If you do not know where your mind and eyes are, you will not be able to conquer the wearisome mundane defilements.

“For example, when a country is invaded by thieves and the king sends out his troops to suppress and banish them, the troops must know where the thieves are.

“It is the fault of your mind and eyes that you undergo transmigration. I now ask you specifically about your mind and eyes: where are they now?”

Ánanda answered the Buddha, “World Honored One, All the ten kinds of beings in the world alike maintain that the mind–

consciousness dwells within the body; and as I regard the Thus Come One's eyes that resemble blue lotuses, they are on the Buddha's face.

"I now observe that these prominent organs, four kinds of defiling objects, are on my face, and my mind-consciousness actually is within my body."

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "You are now sitting in the Thus Come One's lecture hall. Where is the Jeta Grove that you are gazing at?"

"World Honored One, this great many-storied pure lecture hall is in the Garden of the Benefactor of the Solitary. At present the Jeta Grove is, in fact, outside the hall."

"Ánanda, as you are now in the hall, what do you see first?"

"World Honored One, here in the hall I first see the Thus Come One, next I see the great assembly, and from there, as I gaze outward, I see the grove and the garden."

"Ánanda, how are you able to see the grove and the garden?"

"World Honored One, since the doors and windows of this great lecture hall have been thrown open wide, I can be in the hall and see into the distance."

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "It is as you say. When one is in the lecture hall and the doors and windows are open wide, one can see far into the garden and the grove. Could someone in the hall not see the Thus Come One and yet see outside the hall?"

Ánanda answered: "World Honored One, to be in the hall and not see the Thus Come One, and yet see the grove and fountains is impossible."

"Ánanda, you are like that too.

"Your mind is capable of understanding everything thoroughly. Now if your present mind, which thoroughly understands everything, were in your body, then you should first be aware of what is inside your body. Could there be beings that first see the inside of their bodies before observing external phenomena?"

"Even if you cannot see your heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, still, you should be able to clearly perceive the growing of your nails

and hair, the twist of your sinews, and the throb of your pulse. Why don't you perceive these things?

If you cannot perceive your internal organs, how could you perceive what is external to you?

"Therefore you should know that declaring that the aware and knowing mind is inside the body is an impossible statement."

Ánanda bowed his head and said to the Buddha, "Upon hearing the Thus Come One proclaim this explanation of Dharma, such a Dharma—sound as the Thus Come One has proclaimed, I realize that my mind is actually outside my body.

"How is that possible? For example, a lamp lit in a room will certainly illumine the inside of the room first, and only then will its light stream through the doorway to reach the recesses of the hall. Beings' not being able to see within their bodies but only see outside them is analogous to having a lighted lamp placed outside the room, so that it cannot illumine the room.

"This principle is clear and beyond all doubt. It is identical with the Buddha's complete meaning, isn't it?"

The Buddha said to Ánanda, "All these Bhikshus, who just followed me to the city of Shravasti to go on sequential alms rounds to obtain balls of food, have returned to the Jeta Grove. I have already finished eating. Observing the Bhikshus, do you think that by one person eating everyone gets full?"

Ánanda answered, "No, World Honored One. Why? Although these Bhikshus are Arhats, their physical bodies and lives differ. How could one person's eating enable everyone to be full?"

The Buddha told Ánanda, "If your mind which is aware, knows, and sees were actually outside your body, your body and mind would be mutually exclusive and would have no relationship to one another. The body would be unaware of what the mind perceives, and the mind would not perceive the awareness within the body.

"Now as I show you my hand which is soft like tula—cotton, does your mind distinguish it when your eyes see it?"

Ánanda answered, "Yes, World Honored One."

The Buddha told Ánanda, “If the two have a common perception, how can the mind be outside the body?”

“Therefore you should know that declaring that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is outside the body is an impossible statement.”

Amanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said. Since I cannot see inside my body, my mind does not reside in the body. Since my body and mind have a common awareness, they are not separate and so my mind does not dwell outside my body. As I now consider the matter, I know exactly where my mind is.”

The Buddha said: “So, where is it now?”

Ánanda said, “Since the mind which knows and understands does not perceive what is inside but can see outside, upon reflection I believe it is concealed in the organ of vision.

“This is analogous to a person placing crystal lenses over his eyes; the lenses would cover his eyes but would not obstruct his vision. The organ of vision would thus be able to see, and discriminations could be made accordingly.

“And so my mind is aware and knows, understands, and is aware does not see within because it resides in the organ: it can gaze outside clearly, without obstruction for the same reason: it is concealed in the organ.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Assuming that it is concealed in the organ, as you assert in your analogy of the crystals, if a person were to cover his eyes with the crystals and looks at the mountains and rivers, would he see the crystals as well?”

“Yes, World Honored One, if that person were to cover his eyes with the crystals, he would in fact see the crystals.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “If your mind is analogous to the eyes covered with crystals, then when you see the mountains and rivers, why don’t you see your eyes?”

“If you could see your eyes, your eyes would be part of the external environment, but that is not the case. If you cannot see them,

why do you say that the aware and knowing mind is concealed in the organ of vision as eyes are covered by crystals?

“Therefore you should know that you state the impossible when you say that the mind which knows, understands, and is aware is concealed in the organ of vision in the way that the eyes are covered by crystals.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I now offer this reconsideration: viscera and bowels lie inside the bodies of living beings, while the apertures are outside. There is darkness within where the bowels are and light at the apertures.

“Now, as I face the Buddha and open my eyes, I see light: that is seeing outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness that is seeing within. How does that principle sound?”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “When you close your eyes and see darkness, does the darkness you experience lie before your eyes or not? If it did lie before your eyes, then the darkness would be in front of your eyes. How could that be said to be ‘within’?”

“If it were within, then when you were in a dark room without the light of sun, moon, or lamps, the darkness in the room would constitute your vital organs and viscera. If it were not before you, how could you see it?”

“If you assert that there is an inward seeing that is distinct from seeing outside, then when you close your eyes and see darkness, you would be seeing inside your body. Consequently, when you open your eyes and see light, why can’t you see your own face?”

“If you cannot see your face, then there can be no seeing within. If you could see your face, then your mind, which is aware and knows and your organ of vision as well would have to be suspended in space. How could they be inside?”

“If they were in space, then they would not be part of your body. Otherwise the Thus Come One who now sees your face should be part of your body as well.

“In that case, when your eyes perceived something, your body would remain unaware of it. If you press the point and insist that the body and eyes each have awareness, then you should have two

perceptions, and your one body should eventually become two Buddhas.

“Therefore you should know declaring that to see darkness is to see within is an impossible statement.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “I have often heard the Buddha instruct the four assemblies that since the mind arises, every kind of dharma arises and that since dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises.

“As I now consider it, the substance of that very consideration is truly the nature of my mind. Wherever it joins with things, the mind exists in response.

It does not exist in any of the three locations of inside, outside and in between.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Now you say that because dharmas arise, every kind of mind arises. Wherever it joins with things, the mind exists in response. But it has no substance; the mind cannot come together with anything. If, having no substance, it could yet come together with things, that would constitute a nineteenth realm brought about by a union with the seventh defiling object. But there is no such principle.

“If it had substance, when you pinch your body with your fingers, would your mind which perceives it come out from the inside, or in from the outside? If it came from the inside, then, once again, it should be able to see within your body. If it came from outside, it should see your face first.”

Ánanda said, “Seeing is done with the eyes; mental perception is not. To call mental perception seeing doesn’t make sense.”

The Buddha said, “Supposing the eyes did the seeing. That would be like being in a room where the doors could see! Also, when a person has died but his eyes are still intact, his eyes should see things. But how could one be dead if one can still see?

“Furthermore, Ánanda, if your aware and knowing mind in fact had substance, then would it be of a single substance or of many substances? Would its substance perceive the body in which it resides or would it not perceive it?

“Supposing it were of a single substance, then when you pinched one limb with your fingers, the four limbs would be aware if it. If they all were aware if it, the pinch could not be at any one place. If the pinch is located in one place, then the single substance you propose could not exist.

“Supposing it was composed of many substances: then you would be many people. Which of those substances would be you?

“Supposing it were composed of a pervasive substance: the case would be the same as before in the instance of pinching. But supposing it were not pervasive; then when you touched your head and touched your foot simultaneously, the foot would not perceive being touched if the head did. But that is not how you are.

“Therefore you should know that declaring that wherever it comes together with things, the mind exists in response is an impossible statement.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I also have heard the Buddha discuss reality with Manjushri and other disciples of the Dharma King. The World Honored One also said, ‘The mind is neither inside nor outside.’

“As I now consider it, it cannot be inside since it cannot see within, and it cannot be outside since in that case there would be no shared perception. Since it cannot see inside, it cannot be inside; and since the body and mind do have shared perception, it does not make sense to say it is outside. Therefore, since there is a shared perception and since there is no seeing within, it must be in the middle.”

The Buddha said, “You say it is in the middle. That middle must not be haphazard or without a fixed location. Where is this middle that you propose? Is it in an external place, or is it in the body?”

“If it were in the body, the surface of the body cannot be counted as being the middle. If it were in the middle of the body, that would be the same as being inside. If it were in an external place, would there be some evidence of it, or not? If there would not be any evidence of it, that amounts to it not existing at all. If there were some evidence of it, then it would have no fixed location.

“Why not? Suppose that middle were indicated by a marker. When seen from the east, it would be to the west, and when seen from the south, it would be to the north. Just as such a tangible marker would be unclear, so too the location of the mind would be chaotic.”

Ánanda said, “The middle I speak of is neither one of those. As the World Honored One has said, the eyes and forms are the conditions, which create the eye–consciousness. The eyes make discriminations; forms have no perception, but a consciousness is created between them: that is where my mind is.”

The Buddha said, “If your mind were between the eyes and their object, would such a mind’s substance combine with the two or not?”

“If it did combine with the two, then objects and the mind–substance would form a chaotic mixture. Since objects have no perception, while the substance has perception, the two would stand in opposition. Where could the middle be? If it did not combine with the two, it would then be neither the perceiver nor the perceived. Since it would lack both substance and nature, what would such a middle be like?”

“Therefore you should know that declaring the mind to be in the middle is an impossible statement.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, when I have seen the Buddha turn the Dharma Wheel in the past with Mahamaudgalyayana, Subhuti, Purna, and Shariputra, four of the great disciples, he often said that the nature of the mind which is aware, perceives, and makes discriminations is located neither within nor outside nor in the middle; it is not located anywhere at all. That very non–attachment to everything is what is called the mind. Therefore, is my non–attachment my mind?”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “You say that the mind with its aware nature that perceives and makes discriminations is not located anywhere at all. Everything existing in the world consists of space, the waters, and the land, the creatures that fly and walk, and all external objects. Would your non–attachment also exist?”

“If it did not exist, it would be the same as fur on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. Just what would that non-attachment be?”

“If non-attachment did exist, it couldn’t be described as a negation. The absence of attributes indicates negation. Anything not negated has attributes. Anything with attributes exists. How could that define non-attachment?”

“Therefore you should know that to declare that the aware, knowing mind is non-attachment to anything is an impossible statement.”

Then Ánanda rose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, uncovered his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, respectfully put his palms together, and said to the Buddha:

“I am the Thus Come One’s youngest cousin. I have received the Buddha’s compassionate regard and have left the home life, but I have been dependent on his affection, and as a consequence have pursued erudition and am not yet without outflows.

“I could not overcome the Kapila mantra. I was swayed by it and almost went under in that house of prostitution, all because I did not know how to reach of the realm of reality.

“I only hope that the World Honored One, out of great kindness and sympathy, will instruct us in the path of shamatha to guide the icchantikas and overthrow the mlecchas.”

After he had finished speaking, he placed his five limbs on the ground and then, along with the entire great assembly, stood in anticipation, waiting eagerly and respectfully to hear the instructions.

Then the World Honored One radiated from his face various kinds of light, lights as dazzlingly brilliant as hundreds of thousands of suns.

The Buddha realms quaked pervasively in six ways and thus lands as many as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions appeared simultaneously.

The Buddha’s awesome spirit caused all the realms to unite into a single one.

In these realms all the great Bodhisattvas, while remaining in their own countries, put their palms together, and listened.

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “From beginning less time onward, all living beings and in all kinds of upside down ways, have created seeds of karma which naturally run their course, like the aksha cluster.

“The reason that cultivators cannot accomplish unsurpassed Bodhi, but instead reach the level of Hearers or of those enlightened to conditions, or become accomplished in externalist ways as heaven-dwellers or as demon kings or as members of the demons’ retinues is that they do not know the two fundamental roots and so are mistaken and confused in their cultivation. They are like one who cooks sand in the hope of creating savory delicacies. They may do so for as many eons as there are motes of dust, but in the end they will not obtain what they want.

“What are the two? Ánanda, the first is the root of beginning less birth and death, which is the mind that seizes upon conditions and that you and all living beings now make use of, taking it to be your own nature.

“The second is the primal pure substance of beginning less Bodhi Nirvana. It is the primal bright essence of consciousness that can bring forth all conditions. Due to these conditions, you consider it to be lost.

“Having lost sight of that original brightness, although beings use it to the end of their days, they are unaware of it, and unintentionally enter the various destinies.

“Ánanda, now you wish to know about the path of shamatha with the hope of quitting birth and death. I will now question you further.”

Then the Thus Come One raised his golden-colored arm and bent his five webbed fingers as he asked Ánanda, “Do you see?”

Ánanda said, “I see.”

The Buddha said, “What do you see?”

Ánanda said, “I see the Thus Come One raise his arm and bend his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles my mind and my eyes.”

The Buddha said, “What do you see it with?”

Ánanda said, “The members of the great assembly and I each see it with our eyes.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “You have answered me by saying that the Thus Come One bends his fingers into a fist of light which dazzles your mind and eyes. Your eyes are able to see, but what is the mind that is dazzled by my fist?”

Ánanda said, “The Thus Come One is asking where the mind is located. Now that I use my mind to search for it thoroughly, I propose that precisely that which is able to investigate is my mind.”

The Buddha exclaimed, “Hey! Ánanda, that is not your mind.”

Startled, Ánanda leapt up from his seat, stood, put his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “If that is not my mind, what is it?”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “It is your perception of false appearances based on external objects which causes your true nature to be deluded and has caused you from beginningless time to your present life to take a thief for your son, to lose your eternal source, and to undergo transmigration.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, I am the Buddha’s favorite cousin. It is because my mind loved the Buddha that I was led to leave the home life. With my mind I not only makes offerings to the Thus Come One, but also, in passing through lands as many as the grains of sand in the Ganges River to serve all Buddhas and good, wise advisors, and in marshalling great courage to practice every difficult aspect of the Dharma, I always use my mind. Even if I were to slander the Dharma and eternally sever my good roots, it would also be because of this mind. If this is not my mind, then I have no mind, and I am the same as a clod of earth or a piece of wood, because nothing exists apart from this awareness and knowing.

“Why does the Thus Come One say this is not my mind? I am startled and frightened and not one member of the great assembly is without doubt. I only hope that the World Honored One will regard us with great compassion and instruct those who have not yet awakened.”

Then the World Honored One gave instruction to Ānanda and the great assembly, wishing to cause their minds to enter the state of patience with the non-existence of beings and dharmas.

From the lion's seat he rubbed Ānanda's crown and said to him, "The Thus Come One has often said that all dharmas that arise are only manifestations of the mind. All causes and effects, the worlds as many as fine motes of dust, take on substance because of the mind.

"Ānanda, if we regard all the things in the world, including blades of grass and strands of silk, examining them at their fundamental source, each is seen to have a nature, even empty space has a name and an appearance.

"And so how could the clear, wonderful, pure bright mind, the essence of all thought, itself be without substance?

"If you insist that the nature which is aware, observes and knows is the mind, then apart from all forms, smells, tastes, and tangibles—apart from the workings of all the defiling objects—that mind should have its own complete nature.

"And yet now, as you listen to my Dharma, it is because of sound that you are able to make distinctions.

"Even if you could put an end to all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and maintain an inner composure, the shadows of your discrimination of dharmas would remain.

"I do not insist that you grant that it is not the mind. But examine your mind in minute detail to see whether there is a discriminating nature apart from sense objects. That would truly be your mind.

"If the discriminating nature you discover has no substance apart from objects, then that would make it just a shadow of discriminations of mental objects.

"The objects are not eternal, and when they pass out of existence, such a mind would be like fur on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit. In that case your Dharma-body would come to an end along with it. Then who would be left to cultivate and attain patience with the non-existence of beings and dharmas?"

At that point Ānanda and everyone in the great assembly was speechless and at a total loss.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “There are cultivators in the world who, although they realize the nine successive stages of samadhi, do not achieve the extinction of outflows or become Arhats, all because they are attached to birth and death and false thinking and mistake these for what is truly real. That is why now, although you are highly erudite, you have not realized sage hood.”

When Ānanda heard that, he again wept sorrowfully, placed his five limbs on the ground, knelt on both knees, put his palms together and said to the Buddha. “Since I followed the Buddha and left home, I have relied on the Buddha’s awesome spirit. I have often thought, ‘There is no reason for me to toil at cultivation’ expecting that the Tathagata would bestow samadhi upon me. I never realized that he could not stand in for me in body or mind. Thus, I lost my original mind and although my body has left the home–life, my mind has not entered the Way. I am like the poor son who renounced his father and roamed around.

Therefore, today I realize that although I’m greatly learned, if I do not cultivate, it amounts to having not learned anything; just as someone who only speaks of food will never get full.”

“World Honored one, now we all are bound by two obstructions and as a consequence do not perceive the still, eternal nature of the mind. I only hope the Tathágata will empathize with us poor and destitute ones, disclose the wonderful bright mind, and open our Way–eyes.”

Then from the swastika “myriad” on his chest, the Thus Come One poured forth gem–like light. Radiant with hundreds of thousands of colors, this brilliant light simultaneously pervaded throughout the ten directions to Buddha–realms as many as fine motes of dust, anointing the crowns of every Tathágata in all these jeweled Buddha lands of the ten directions. Then it swept back to Ānanda and all the great assembly.

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “I will now erect the great Dharma banner for you, to cause all living beings in the ten directions

to obtain the wondrous subtle secret, the pure nature, the bright mind,
and to attain those pure eyes.

Surangama Sutra, Volume 2

Volume 2, Part One

“Ánanda, you have told me that you saw my fist of bright light. How did it take the form of a fist? How did the fist come to emit light? How was the fist made? By what means could you see it?”

Ánanda replied, “The body of the Buddha is born of purity and cleanness, and therefore, it assumes the color of Jambu river gold with deep red hues. Hence, it shone as brilliant and dazzling as a precious mountain. It was actually my eyes that saw the Buddha bend his five-wheeled fingers to form a fist which was shown to all of us.”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “Today the Thus Come One will tell you the truth: all those with wisdom are able to achieve enlightenment through the use of examples. “Ánanda, take, for example, my fist: If I didn’t have a hand, I couldn’t make a fist. If you didn’t have eyes, you couldn’t see. If you apply the example of my fist to the case of your eyes, is the principle the same?”

Ánanda said, “Yes, World Honored One. Since I can’t see without my eyes, if one applies the example of the Thus Come One’s fist to the case of my eyes, the principle is the same.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “You say it is the same, but that is not right.

“Why? If a person has no hand, his fist is gone forever. But one who is without eyes is not entirely devoid of sight. “Why not? Try consulting a blind man on a street: ‘What do you see?’ Any blind person will certainly answer, ‘Now I see only darkness in front of my eyes. Nothing else meets my gaze.’ “The meaning is apparent: If he sees dark in front of him, how could his sight be considered ‘lost’?”

Ánanda said, “The only thing blind people see in front of their eyes is darkness. How can that be called seeing?”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Is there any difference between the darkness seen by blind people, who do not have the use of their eyes, and the darkness seen by someone who has the use of his eyes when he is in a dark room?”

“Stated in that way, World Honored One, there is no difference between the two kinds of blackness, that seen by a person in a dark room and that seen by the blind.”

“Ánanda, if the person without the use of his eyes who sees only darkness were suddenly to regain his sight and see all kinds of forms, and you say it is his eyes which see, then when a person in a dark room who sees only darkness suddenly sees all kinds of forms because a lamp is lit, you should say it is the lamp which sees.

“If the lamp did the seeing, it would be endowed with sight. But then we would not call it a lamp anymore. Besides, if the lamp were to do the seeing, what would that have to do with you?

“Therefore you should know that while the lamp can reveal forms, the eyes, not the lamp, do the seeing. And while the eyes can reveal forms, the seeing–nature comes from the mind, not the eyes.”

Although Ánanda and everyone in the great assembly had heard what was said, their minds had not yet understood, and so they remained silent. Hoping to hear more of the gentle sounds of the Thus Come One’s teaching, They put their palms together, purified their minds, and stood waiting for the Thus Come One’s compassionate instruction.

Then the World Honored One extended his bright hand that is as soft as tula cotton, opened his five webbed fingers, and told Ánanda and the great assembly, “When I first accomplished the Way I went to the Deer Park, and for the sake of Ajnatakaundinya and all five of the Bhikshus, as well as for you of the four–fold assembly, I said, ‘It is because beings are impeded by transitory defilements and afflictions that they do not realize Bodhi or become Arhats.’ At that time, what caused you who have now realized the various fruitions of sage hood to become enlightened?”

Then Ajnatakaundinya arose and said to the Buddha, “Of the elders now present in the great assembly, only I received the name “Understanding” because I was enlightened to the meaning of transitory defilements and realized the fruition.

“World Honored One, the analogy can be made of a traveler who stops as a guest at a roadside inn, perhaps for the night or

perhaps for a meal. When he has finished lodging there or when the meal is finished, he packs his baggage and sets out again. He does not remain there at his leisure. The host himself, however, does not leave.

“Considering it this way, the one who does not remain is called the guest, and the one who does remain is called the host. The transitory guest, then, is the one who does not remain.

“Again, the analogy can be made to how when the sun rises resplendent on a clear morning, its golden rays stream into a house through a crack to reveal particles of dust in the air. The dust dances in the rays of light, but the empty space is unmoving.

“Considering it is that way, what is clear and still is called space, and what moves is called dust. The defiling dust, then, is that which moves.”

The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Then in the midst of the great assembly the Thus Come One bent his five webbed fingers. After bending them, he opened them again. After he opened them, he bent them again, and he asked Ānanda, “What do you see now?”

Ānanda said, “I see the Thus Come One’s hand opening and closing in the midst of the assembly, revealing his hundred-jeweled wheeled palms.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “You see my hand open and close in the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or is it your seeing that opens and closes?”

Ānanda said, “The World Honored One’s jeweled hand opened and closed in the assembly. I saw the Thus Come One’s hand itself open and close while my seeing–nature neither opened nor closed.”

The Buddha said, “What moved and what was still?”

Ānanda said, “The Buddha’s hand did not remain at rest. And since my seeing–nature is beyond even stillness, how could it not be at rest?”

The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Then from his wheeled palm the Thus Come One sent a gem-like ray of light flying to Ānanda’s right. Ānanda immediately turned his head and glanced to the right. The Buddha then sent another ray

of light to Ánanda's left. Ánanda again turned his head and glanced to the left. The Buddha said to Ánanda, "Why did your head move just now?"

Ánanda said, "I saw the Thus Come One emit a wonderful gem-like light which flashed by my left and right, and so I looked left and right. My head moved by itself."

"Ánanda, when you glanced at the Buddha's light and moved your head left and right, was it your head that moved or your seeing that moved?"

"World Honored One, my head moved of itself. Since my seeing-nature is beyond even cessation, how could it move?"

The Buddha said, "So it is."

Then the Thus Come One told everyone in the assembly, "Normally beings would say that the defiling dust moves and that the transitory guest does not remain.

"You have observed that it was Ánanda's head moved; yet his seeing did not move. You also have observed my hand open and close; yet you're seeing did not stretch or bend.

"Why do you continue to rely on your physical bodies which move and on the external environment which also moves? From the beginning to the end, this causes your every thought to be subject to production and extinction.

"You have lost your true nature and conduct yourselves in upside-down ways. Having lost your true nature and mind, you take objects to be yourself, and so you cling to revolving on the wheel of rebirth."

When Ánanda and the great assembly heard the Buddha's instructions, they became peaceful and composed both in body and mind. They recollected that since time without beginning, they had strayed from their fundamental true mind by mistakenly taking the shadows of the differentiations of conditioned defilements to be real. Now on this day as they awakened, they were each like a lost infant who suddenly finds its beloved mother. They put their palms together to make obeisance to the Buddha.

They wished to hear the Thus Come One enlighten them to the dual nature of body and mind, of what is false, of what is true, of what is empty and what is existent, and of what is subject to production and extinction and what transcends production and extinction.

Then King Prasenajit rose and said to the Buddha, “In the past, when I had not yet received the teachings of the Buddha, I met Katyayana and Vairatiputra, both of whom said that this body ends at death, and that this is Nirvana. Now, although I have met the Buddha, I still wonder about that. How can I go about realizing the mind at the level of no production and no extinction? Now all in this Great Assembly who still have outflows also wish to be instructed on this subject.”

The Buddha said to the great king, “Let’s talk about your body as it is right now. Now I ask you, will your physical body be like vajra, indestructible and living forever? Or will it change and go bad?”

“World Honored One, this body of mine will keep changing until it eventually perishes.”

The Buddha said, “Great king, you have not yet perished. How do you know you will perish?”

“World Honored One, although my impermanent, changing, and decaying body has not yet become extinct, I observe it now, as every passing thought fades away. Each new one fails to remain, but is gradually extinguished like fire turning wood to ashes. This ceaseless extinguishing convinces me that this body will eventually completely perish.”

The Buddha said, “So it is.”

“Great king, at your present age you are already old and declining. How does your appearance and complexion compare to when you were a youth?”

“World Honored One, in the past when I was young my skin was moist and shining. When I reached the prime of life, my blood and breath were full. But now in my declining years, as I race into old age, my form is withered and wizened and my spirit dull. My hair is white and my face is wrinkled and not much time remains for me.

How could one possibly compare me now with the way I was when in my prime?”

The Buddha said, “Great king, your appearance should not decline so suddenly.”

The king said, “World Honored One, the change has been a hidden transformation of which I honestly have not been aware. I have come to this gradually through the passing of winters and summers.

“How did it happen? In my twenties, I was still young, but my features had aged since the time I was ten. My thirties were a further decline from my twenties, and now at sixty-two I look back at my fifties as hale and hearty.

“World Honored One, I now contemplate these hidden transformations. Although the changes wrought by this process of dying are evident through the decades, I might consider them further in finer detail: these changes do not occur just in periods of twelve years; there are actually changes year by year. Not only are there annual changes, there are also monthly transformations. Nor does it stop at monthly transformations; there are also differences day by day. Examining them closely, I find that kshana by kshana, thought after thought, they never stop.”

“And so I know my body will keep changing until it has perished.”

The Buddha told the Great King, “By watching the ceaseless changes of these transformations, you awaken and know of your perishing, but do you also know that at the time of perishing there is something in your body which does not become extinct?”

King Prasenajit put his palms together and said to the Buddha, “I really do not know.”

The Buddha said, “I will now show you the nature which is neither produced and nor extinguished.

“Great King, how old were you when you saw the waters of the Ganges?” The King said, “When I was three years old my compassionate mother led me to visit the goddess Jiva. We passed a river, and at the time I knew it was the waters of the Ganges.”

The Buddha said, “Great King, you have said that when you were twenty you had deteriorated from when you were ten. Day by day, month-by-month, year by year until you reached sixty, in thought after thought there has been change. Yet when you saw the Ganges River at the age of three, how was it different from when you were thirteen?”

The King said, “It was no different from when I was three, and even now when I am sixty-two it is still no different.”

The Buddha said, “Now you are mournful that your hair is white and your face wrinkled. In the same way that your face is definitely more wrinkled than it was in your youth, has the seeing with which you look at the Ganges aged, so that it is old now but was young when you looked at the river as a child in the past?”

The King said, “No, World Honored One.”

The Buddha said, “Great King, your face is wrinkled, but the essential nature of your seeing will never wrinkle. What wrinkles is subject to change. What does not wrinkle does not change.

“What changes will perish, but what does not change is fundamentally free of production and extinction. How could it be subject to your birth and death? Furthermore, why bring up what Maskari Goshaliputra and the others say: that after the death of this body there is total annihilation?”

The king heard these words, believed them, and realized that when the life of this body is finished, there will be rebirth. He and the entire great assembly were greatly delighted at having obtained what they never had before.

Ánanda then arose from this seat, made obeisance to the Buddha, put his palms together, knelt on both knees, and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, if this seeing and hearing are indeed neither produced nor extinguished, why did the World Honored One refer to us people as having lost our true natures and as going about things in an upside-down way? I hope the World Honored One will give rise to great compassion and wash my dust and defilement away.”

Then the Thus Come One let his golden-colored arm fall so his webbed fingers pointed downward, and demonstrating this to Ánanda,

said, “You see the position of my hand: is it right–side–up or upside–down?” Ánanda said, “Being in the world take it to be upside–down. I myself do not know what is right–side–up and what is upside–down.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “If people of the world take this as upside–down, what do people of the world take to be right–side–up?”

Ánanda said, “They call it right–side–up when the Thus Come One raises his arm, with the fingers of his cotton–soft hand pointing up in the air.”

The Buddha then held up his hand and said: “And so for it to be upside–down would be for it to be just the opposite of this. Or at least that’s how people of the world would regard it.

“In the same way they will differentiate between your body and the Thus Come One’s pure Dharma body and will say that the Thus Come One’s body is one of right and universal knowledge, while your body is upside down.

“But examine your body and the Buddha’s closely for this upside–down ness: What exactly does the term ‘upside down’ refer to?”

Thereupon Ánanda and the entire great assembly were dazed and stared unblinking at the Buddha. They did not know in what way their bodies and minds were upside down.

The Buddha’s compassion arose as he empathized with Ánanda and all in the great assembly and he spoke to the great assembly in a voice that swept over them like the ocean–tide.

“All of you good people, I have often said that all conditions that bring about forms and the mind as well as dharmas pertaining to the mind and all the conditioned dharmas are manifestations of the mind only. Your bodies and your minds all appear within the wonder of the bright, true, essential, magnificent mind.

“Why do I say that you have lost track of what is fundamentally wonderful, the perfect, wonderful bright mind, and that in the midst of your gem–like bright and wonderful nature, you wallow in confusion while being right within enlightenment.

“Mental dimness turns into emptiness. This emptiness, in the dimness, unites with darkness to become form.

“Form mixes with false thinking and the thoughts take shape and become the body.

“As causal conditions come together, there are perpetual internal disturbances, which tend to gallop outside. Such inner turmoil is often mistaken for the nature of the mind.

“Once that is mistaken to be the mind, a further delusion determines that it is located in the physical body.

“You do not know that the physical body as well as the mountains, the rivers, empty space, and the great earth are all within the wonderful bright true mind.

Such a delusion is like ignoring hundreds of thousands of clear pure seas and taking notice of only a single bubble, seeing it as the entire ocean, as the whole expanse of the great and small seas.

“You people are doubly deluded among the deluded. Such delusion does not differ from that caused by my lowered hand. The Thus Come One says you are pathetic.”

Having received the Buddha’s compassionate rescue and profound instruction, Ānanda wept, folded his hands, and said to the Buddha, “I have heard these wonderful sounds of the Buddha and have awakened to the primal perfection of the wonderful bright mind as being the eternally dwelling mind–ground.

“But now in awakening to the Dharma–sounds that the Buddha is speaking, I know that I have been using my conditioned mind to regard and revere them. Having just become aware of that mind, I dare yet claim to recognize that fundamental mind–ground.

“I pray that the Buddha will be compassionate and with his perfect voice explain to us in order to pull our doubts out by the roots and enable us to return to the unsurpassed Way.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “You and others like you still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind, and so the Dharma becomes conditioned as well, and you do not obtain the Dharma–nature. This is similar to a person pointing his finger at the moon to show it to someone else. Guided by the finger, the other person should see the

moon. If he looks at the finger instead and mistakes it for the moon, he loses not only the moon but the finger also. Why, because he mistakes the pointing finger for the bright moon.

“Not only does he lose the finger, but he also fails to recognize light and darkness. Why? He mistakes the solid matter of the finger for the bright nature of the moon, and so he does not understand the two natures of light and darkness. The same is true of you.

“If you take what distinguishes the sound of my speaking Dharma to be your mind, then that mind itself, apart from the sound which is distinguished, should have a nature which makes distinctions. Take the example of the guest who lodged overnight at an inn; he stopped temporarily and then went on. He did not dwell there permanently, whereas the innkeeper did not go anywhere, since he was the host of the inn.

“The same applies here. If it were truly your mind, it would not go anywhere. And so why in the absence of sound does it have no discriminating nature of its own?

“This, then, applies not only to the distinguishing of sound, but in distinguishing my appearance, that mind has no distinction-making nature apart from the attributes of form.

“This is true even when the making of distinctions is totally absent; when there is no form and no emptiness, or in the obscurity which Goshali and others take to be the ‘profound truth’: that mind still does not have a distinction-making nature in the absence of casual conditions.

“How can we say that the nature of that mind of yours plays the part of host since everything perceived by it can be returned to something else?”

Ánanda said, “If every state of our mind can be returned to something else as its cause, then why does the wonderful bright original mind mentioned by the Buddha return nowhere? We only hope that the Buddha will empathize with us and explain this for us.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “As you now look at me, the essence of your seeing is fundamentally bright. Although that seeing is

not the wonderful essential brightness of the mind, it is like a second moon, rather than the moon's reflection.

“Listen attentively, for I am now going to explain to you the concept of not returning to anything.

“Ánanda, this great lecture hall is open to the east. When the sun rises in the sky, it is flooded with light. At midnight, during a new moon or when clouds or fog obscures the moon, it is dark. Looking out through open doors and windows your vision is unimpeded; facing walls or houses your vision is hindered. In such places where there are forms of distinctive features your vision is causally conditioned. In a dull void, you can see only emptiness. Your vision will be distorted when the objects of seeing are shrouded in dust and vapor; you will perceive clearly when the air is fresh.

“Ánanda, observe all these transitory characteristics as I now return each to its source. What are their sources? Ánanda, among these transitions, the light can be returned to the sun. Why? Without the sun there would be no light; therefore the cause of light belongs with the sun, and so it can be returned to the sun.

“Darkness can be returned to the new moon. Penetration can be returned to the doors and windows while obstruction can be returned to the walls and eaves. Conditions can be returned to distinctions. Emptiness can be returned to dull emptiness. Darkness and distortion can be returned to mist and haze. Bright purity can be returned to freshness, and nothing that exists in this world goes beyond these categories.”

“To which of the eight states of perception would the essence of your seeing be reducible? Why do I ask that? If it returned to brightness, you would not see darkness when there was no light. Although such states of perception as light, darkness, and the like differ from one another, your seeing remains unchanged.

“That which can be returned to other sources clearly is not you; if that which you cannot return to anything else is not you, then what is it?

“Therefore I know that your mind is fundamentally wonderful, bright, and pure. You yourself are confused and deluded. You abuse

what is fundamental, and end up undergoing the cycle of rebirth, bobbing up and down in the sea of birth and death. No wonder the Thus Come One says that you are the most pathetic of creatures.”

Ánanda said, “Although I recognize that the seeing–nature cannot be traced back to anything, but how can I come to know that it is my true nature?”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “Now I have a question for you. At this point you have not yet attained the purity of no outflows. Blessed by the Buddha’s spiritual strength, you are able to see into the first dhyana heavens without any obstruction, just as Aniruddha looks at Jambudvīpa with such clarity as he might at an amala fruit in the palm of his hand.

“Bodhisattvas can see hundreds of thousands of realms. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions see everything throughout pure lands as numerous as fine motes of dust. By contrast, ordinary beings’ sight does not extend beyond a fraction of an inch.

“Ánanda, as you and I now look at the palace where the four heavenly kings reside, and inspect all that moves in the water, on dry land, and in the air, some are dark and some are bright, varying in shape and appearance, and yet all of these are nothing but the dust before us, taking solid form only through our own distinction–making.

“Among them you should distinguish which is self and which is other. I ask you now to select from within your seeing which is the substance of the self and which is the appearance of things.

“Ánanda, if you take a good look at everything everywhere within the range of your vision extending from the palaces of the sun and moon to the seven gold mountain ranges, all that you see is phenomena of different features and degrees of light. At closer range you will gradually see clouds floating, birds flying, wind blowing, dust rising, trees, mountains, streams, grasses, seeds, people, and animals, all of which are phenomena, but none of which are you.

“Ánanda, all phenomena, near and far, have their own nature. Although each is distinctly different, they are seen with the same pure essence of seeing. Thus all the categories of phenomena have their

individual distinctions, but the seeing–nature has no differences. That essential wonderful brightness is most certainly your seeing–nature.

“If seeing were a phenomenon, then you should also be able to see my seeing.

“If we both looked at the same phenomenon, you would also be seeing my seeing. Then, when I’m not seeing, why can’t you see my not seeing?

“If you could see my not–seeing, it clearly would not be the phenomenon that I am not seeing. If you cannot not see my ‘not seeing’, then it is clearly not a phenomenon. How could it not be you?

Besides that, if you’re seeing of phenomena was like that then when you saw things, things should also see you. With substance and nature mixed together, you, I, and everyone in the world would no longer be distinguishable from each other.

“Ānanda, when you see, it is you who sees, not me. The seeing–nature pervades everywhere; whose is it if it is not yours?

“Why do you have doubts about your own true–nature and come to me seeking verification, thinking your nature is not true?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, given that this seeing–nature is certainly mine and no one else’s, when the Thus Come One and I regard the hall of the Four Heavenly Kings with its supreme abundance of jewels or stay at the palace of the sun and moon, this seeing completely pervades the lands of the Saha world. Upon returning to this sublime lecture hall, the seeing only observes the monastic grounds and once inside the pure central hall, it only sees the eaves and corridors.

“World Honored One that is how the seeing is. At first its substance pervaded everywhere throughout the one realm, but now in the midst of this room it fills one room only. Does the seeing shrink from great to small, or do the walls and eaves press in and cut it off?

Now I do not know where the meaning of this lies and hope the Buddha will extend his vast compassion and proclaim it for me thoroughly.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “All the aspects of everything in the world, such as big and small, inside and outside, amount to the dust before you. Do not say the seeing stretches and shrinks.

“Consider the example of a square container in which a square of emptiness is seen. I ask you further: is the square emptiness that is seen in the square container a fixed square shape, or is it not fixed as a square shape?

“If it is a fixed square shape, when it is switched to a round container the emptiness would not be round. If it is not a fixed shape, then when it is in the square container it should not be a square-shaped emptiness.

“You say you do not know where the meaning lies. The nature of the meaning being thus, how can you speak of its location?

Ānanda, if you wished there to be neither square ness nor roundness, you would only need to remove the container. The essential emptiness has no shape, and so do not say that you would also have to remove the shape from the emptiness.

“If, as you suggest, your seeing shrinks and becomes small when you enter a room, then when you look up at the sun shouldn’t your seeing be pulled out until it reaches the sun’s surface? If walls and eaves can press in and cut off your seeing, then why if you were to drill a small hole, wouldn’t there be evidence of the seeing reconnecting? And so that idea is not feasible.

“From beginning less time until now, all beings have mistaken themselves for phenomena and, having lost sight of their original mind, are influenced by phenomena, and end up having the scope of their observations defined by boundaries large and small.

“If you can influence phenomena, then you are the same as the Thus Come One.

“With body and mind perfect and bright, you are your own unmoving Way-place.

“The tip of a single fine hair can completely contain the lands of the ten directions.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, if this seeing-essence is indeed my wonderful nature, my wonderful nature

should no be right in front of me. The seeing being truly me, what, then, are my present body and mind? Yet it is my body and mind, which make distinctions, whereas the seeing does not make distinctions and does not discern my body.

“If it were really my mind which caused me to see now, then the seeing–nature would actually be me, and my body would not be me.

“How would that differ from the question the Thus Come One asked about phenomena being able to see me? I only hope the Buddha will extend his great compassion and explain for those who have not yet awakened.”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “What you have just now said—that the seeing is in front of you—is actually not the case.”

“If it were actually in front of you, it would be something you could actually see, and then the seeing–essence would have a location. There would have to be some evidence of it.

“Now as you sit in the Jeta Grove you look about everywhere at the grove, the pond, the halls, up at the sun and moon, and at the Ganges River before you. Now, before my Lion’s Seat, point out these various appearances: what is dark is the groves, what is bright is the sun, what is obstructing is the walls, what is clear is emptiness, and so on including even the grasses and trees, and the most minute objects. Their sizes vary, but since they all have appearances, all can be located.

“If you insist that you’re seeing is in front of you, then you should be able to point it out. What is the seeing? Ánanda, if emptiness were the seeing, then since it had already become your seeing, what would have become of emptiness? If phenomena were the seeing, since they had already become the seeing, what would have become of phenomena?

“You should be able to cut through and peel away the myriad appearances to the finest degree and thereby distinguish and bring forth the essential brightness and pure wonder of the source of seeing, pointing it out and showing it to me from among all these things, so that it is perfectly clear beyond any doubt.”

Ánanda said, “From where I am now in this many–storied lecture hall, reaching to the distant Ganges River and the sun and moon overhead, all that I might raise my hand to point to, all that I indulge my eyes in seeing, all are phenomena; they are not the seeing.

World Honored One, it is as the Buddha has said: not to mention someone like me, a Hearer of the first stage, who still has outflows, even Bodhisattvas cannot break open and reveal, among the myriad appearances which are before them, an essence of seeing which has a special nature of its own apart from all phenomena.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is.”

The Buddha further said to Ánanda, “It is as you have said. No seeing–essence that would have a nature of its own apart from all phenomena can be found. Therefore, all the phenomena you point to are phenomena, and none of them is the seeing.

“Now I will tell you something else: as you and the Thus Come One sit here in the Jeta Grove and look again at the groves and gardens, up to the sun and moon, and at all the various different appearances, having determined that the seeing–essence is not among anything you might point to. I now advise you to go ahead and discover what, among all these phenomena, is not your seeing.”

Ánanda said, “As I look all over this Jeta Grove, I do not know what in the midst of it is not my seeing.

“Why is that? If trees were not the seeing, why would I see trees? If trees were the seeing, then how could they also be trees? The same is true of everything up to and including emptiness: if emptiness were not the seeing, why would I see emptiness? If emptiness were the seeing, then how could it also be emptiness?

“As I consider it again and explore the subtlest aspects of the myriad appearances, none is not my seeing.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is.”

Then all in the great assembly who had not reached the stage beyond study were stunned upon hearing these words of the Buddha, and could not make heads or tails of it all. They were agitated and taken aback at the same time, having lost their bearings.

The Thus Come One, knowing they were anxious and upset, let empathy rise in his heart as he consoled Ánanda and everyone in the great assembly. “Good people, what the unsurpassed Dharma King says is true and real. He says it just as it is. He never deceives anyone; he never lies. He is not like Maskari Goshaliputra advocating his four kinds of non-dying, spouting deceptive and confusing theories. Consider this carefully and do not be embarrassed to ask about it.”

Then Dharma Prince Manjushri, feeling sorry for the fourfold assembly, rose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, placed his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, the great assembly has not awakened to the principle of the Thus Come One’s two-fold disclosure of the essence of seeing as being both form and emptiness and as being neither of them.

“World Honored One, if conditioned forms, emptiness, and other phenomena mentioned above were the seeing, there should be an indication of them; and if they were not the seeing, there should be nothing there to be seen. Now we do not know what is meant, and this is why we are alarmed and concerned.

Yet our good roots from former lives are not deficient. We only hope the Thus Come One will have the great compassion to reveal exactly what all the things are and what the seeing-essence is. Among all of those, what exists and what doesn’t?

The Buddha told Manjushri and the great assembly, “To the Thus Come Ones and the great Bodhisattvas of the ten directions, who dwell in this samadhi, seeing and the conditions of seeing, as well as thoughts regarding seeing, are like flowers in space—fundamentally non-existent.

“This seeing and its conditions are originally the wonderful pure bright substance of Bodhi. How could one inquire into its existence or non-existence?

Manjushri, I now ask you: Could there be another Manjushri besides you? Or would that Manjushri not be you?

“No, World Honored One: I would be the real Manjushri.

There couldn't be any other Manjushri. Why not? If there were another one, there would be two Manjushris. But as it is now, I could not be that non-existent Manjushri. Actually, neither of the two concepts 'existent' or 'non-existent' applies."

The Buddha said, "That is how the basic substance of wonderful Bodhi is in terms of emptiness and mundane objects.

They are basically misnomers for the wonderful brightness of unsurpassed Bodhi, the pure, perfect, true mind. Our misconception turns them into form and emptiness, as well as hearing and seeing.

"They are like the second moon: does that moon exist or not?

Manjushri, there is only one true moon. That leaves no room for questioning its existence or non-existence.

"Therefore, your current contemplating of the seeing and the mundane objects and the many observations that entails are all false thoughts. You cannot transcend existence and non-existence while caught up in them.

"Only the true essence, the wonderful enlightened bright nature is beyond pointing out or not pointing out."

Ánanda said to the Buddha, "World Honored One, it is truly as the Dharma King has said: the condition of enlightenment pervades the ten directions. It is clear and eternal its nature is neither produced nor extinguished. "How does it differ, then, from the Elder Brahmin Kapila's teaching of the mysterious truth or from the teaching of the ash-smearing ascetics or from the other externalist sects that say there is a true self which pervades the ten directions?

"Also, in the past, the World Honored One gave a lengthy lecture on this topic at Mount Lanka for the sake of Great Wisdom Bodhisattva and others: 'Those externalist sects always speak of spontaneity. I speak of causes and conditions which is an entirely different frame of reference.'

"Now as I contemplate original enlightenment in its natural state, as being neither produced nor extinguished, and as apart from all empty falseness and inversion, it seems to have nothing to do with your causes and conditions or the spontaneity advocated by others. Would you please enlighten us on this point so we can avoid joining

those of deviant views, thus enabling us to obtain the true mind, the bright nature of wonderful enlightenment?”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “Now I have instructed you with such expedients in order to tell you the truth, yet you do not awaken to it but mistake what I describe for spontaneity.

“Ānanda, If it definitely were spontaneous, you should be able to distinguish the substance of the spontaneity.

“Now you investigate the wonderful bright seeing. What is its spontaneous aspect? Is the bright light its spontaneous aspect? Is darkness its spontaneous aspect? Is emptiness its spontaneous aspect? Are solid objects its spontaneous aspect?

“Ānanda, if its spontaneous aspect consisted of light, you should not see darkness. Or, if its spontaneous aspect were emptiness, you should not see solid objects. Continuing in the same way, if its spontaneous aspect were all dark appearances, then, when confronted with light, the seeing–nature should be cut off and extinguished, so how could you see light?”

Ānanda said, “The nature of this wonderful seeing definitely does not seem to be spontaneous. And so I propose that it is produced from causes and conditions. But I am not totally clear about this. I now ask the Thus Come One whether this idea is consistent with the nature of causes and conditions.”

The Buddha said, “You say the nature of seeing is causes and conditions. I ask you about that: because you are now seeing, the seeing–nature manifests. Does this seeing exist because of light? Does it exist because of darkness? Does it exist because of emptiness? Does it exist because of solid objects?

“Ānanda, if light is the cause that brings about seeing, you should not see darkness. If darkness is the cause that brings about seeing, you should not see light. The same question applies to emptiness and solid objects.

“Moreover, Ānanda, does the seeing derive from the condition of there being light? Does the seeing derive from the condition of there being darkness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of

there being emptiness? Does the seeing derive from the condition of there being solid objects?

“Ánanda, if it existed because there is emptiness, you should not see solid objects. If it exists because of there are solid objects, you should not see emptiness: It would be the same with light or darkness as it would be with emptiness or solid objects.

“Thus you should know that the essential, enlightened wonderful brightness is due to neither causes nor conditions nor does it arise spontaneously.

“Nor is it the negation of spontaneity. It is neither a negation nor the denial of a negation.

“All dharmas are defined as being devoid of any attributes.

“Now in the midst of them, how can you use your mind to make distinctions that are based on clever debate and technical jargon? To do that is like grasping at empty space: you only end up tiring yourself out. How could empty space possibly yield to your grasp?”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “If the nature of the wonderful enlightenment has neither causes nor conditions then why does the World Honored One always tell the bhikshus that the nature of seeing derives from the four conditions of emptiness, brightness, the mind, and the eyes? What does that mean?”

The Buddha said, “Ánanda, what I have spoken about causes and conditions in the mundane sense does not describe the primary meaning. “

Ánanda, I ask you again: people in the world say, ‘I can see.’ What is that ‘seeing’? And what is ‘not seeing’?”

Ánanda said, “The light of the sun, the moon, and lamps is the cause that allows people in the world to see all kinds of appearances: that is called seeing. Without these three kinds of light, they would not be able to see.”

“Ánanda, if you say there is no seeing in the absence of light then you should not see darkness. If in fact you do see darkness, which is just lack of light, how can you say there is no seeing?”

“Ánanda, if, when it is dark, you call that ‘not seeing’ because you do not see light, then since it is now light and you do not see the

characteristic of darkness, that should also be called ‘not seeing.’ Thus, both aspects would be called ‘not seeing.’”

“Although these two aspects counteract each other, your seeing–nature does not lapse for an instant. Thus you should know that seeing continues in both cases. How, then, can you say there is no seeing?

“Therefore, *Ánanda*, you should know that when you see light, the seeing is not the light. When you see darkness, the seeing is not the darkness. When you see emptiness, the seeing is not the emptiness. When you see solid objects, the seeing is not the solid objects.

And by extension of these four facts, you should also know that when you see your seeing, the seeing is not that seeing . Since the former seeing is beyond the latter, the latter cannot reach it. Such being the case, how can you describe it as being due to causes and conditions or spontaneity or that it has something to do with mixing and uniting?

“You narrow–minded Hearers are so inferior and ignorant that you are unable to penetrate through to the purity of ultimate reality. Now I will continue to instruct you. Consider well what is said. Do not become weary or negligent on the wonderful road to Bodhi.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, we have still not understood what the Buddha, the World Honored One, has explained for me and for others like me about causes and conditions, spontaneity, the attributes of mixing and uniting, and the absence of mixing and uniting. And now to hear further that the seeing that can be seen is not the seeing adds yet another layer of confusion.

“Humbly, I hope that with your vast compassion you will bestow upon us the great wisdom–eye so as to show us the bright pure enlightened mind.” After saying this he wept, made obeisance, and waited to receive the sacred instruction.

Then the World Honored One, out of pity for *Ánanda* and the great assembly, began to explain extensively the wonderful path of cultivation for all samadhis of the Great Dharani.

And said to Ānanda, “Although you have a keen memory, it only benefits your extensive learning. But your mind has not yet understood the subtle secret contemplation and illumination of shamatha. Listen attentively now as I explain it for you in detail

“And cause all those of the future who have outflows to obtain the fruition of Bodhi.

“Ānanda, all living beings turn in the cycle of rebirth in this world because of two upside-down discriminating false views. Wherever these views arise, they cause one to revolve through the cycle in accord with their corresponding karma.

“What are the two views? The first consists of the false view based on living beings’ individual karma. The second consists of the false view based on living beings’ collective karma.

“What is meant by false views based on individual karma?

Ānanda, take for example someone who has cataracts on his eyes so that at night he alone sees around the lamp a circular reflection composed of layers of five colors.

“What do you think? Are the colors that compose the circle of light that appears around the lamp at night created by the lamp or are they created by the seeing?

“Ānanda, if the colors were created by the lamp, why is it that someone without the disease does not see the same thing, and only the one who is diseased sees the circular reflection? If the colors were created by the seeing,, then the seeing would have already become colored; what, then, should the circular reflection that the diseased person sees to be called?

“Moreover, Ānanda, if the circular reflection were a thing in itself, apart from the lamp, then it should be seen around the folding screen, the curtain, the table, and the mats. On the other hand, if it had nothing to do with the seeing, the eyes should not see it. So why does the man with cataracts see the circular reflections with his eyes?”

“Therefore, you should know that in fact the colors originate from the lamp, and the disease of the seeing brings about the reflection. Both the circular reflection and the faulty seeing are the result of the cataract. But that which sees the diseased film is not sick.

Thus you should not say that the cause is the lamp or the seeing or neither the lamp nor the seeing.

“Consider the example of which is neither substantial nor a reflection. This is because the double image of the moon is merely a result of applying pressure on the eyeball. Hence, a wise person would not try to argue that the second moon either has or doesn’t have a form, or that it is apart from the seeing or not apart from the seeing.

“The same is true in this case: the illusion is created by the diseased eyes. You cannot say it originates from the lamp or from the seeing: even less can it be said not to originate from the lamp or the seeing.

“What is meant by the false view of the collective karma?

Ánanda, in Jambudvīpa, besides the waters of the great seas, there is level land that forms some three thousand continents. “East and west, throughout the entire expanse of the great continent, there are twenty–three hundred large countries. In the other smaller continents in the seas there may be two or three hundred countries, or perhaps one or two, or perhaps thirty, forty, or fifty.

“Ánanda, suppose that among them there is one small continent where there are only two countries. The people of just one of the countries collectively experience evil conditions. On that small continent, all the people of that country see all kinds of inauspicious omens. “Perhaps they see two suns, perhaps they see two moons, perhaps they see the moon with circles of, or a dark haze, or girdle–ornaments around them (white vapor around it, or half around it); or comets with long rays, or comets with short rays, moving (or “flying”) stars, shooting stars, ‘ears’ on the sun or moon, (evil haze above the sun, or evil haze besides the sun), (morning) rainbows, secondary (evening) rainbows, and various other evil signs.

“Only the people in that country see them. The beings in the other country never do see or hear anything unusual.

“Ánanda, I will now summarize and compare these two cases for you, to make both of them clear.

“Ánanda let us examine the case of the being’s false view involving individual karma. He saw the appearance of a circular

reflection around the lamp. Although this appearance seemed to be real, in the end, what was seen came about because of the cataracts on his eyes.

“The cataracts are the result of the weariness of the seeing rather than the products of form. However, what perceives the cataracts is free from all defects. By the same token, you now use your eyes to look at the mountains, the rivers, the countries, and all the living beings: and they are all brought about by the disease of your seeing contracted since time without beginning.

“Seeing and the conditions of seeing seem to reveal what is before you. Originally our enlightenment is bright. The cataracts influence the seeing and its conditions, so that what is perceived by the seeing is affected by the cataracts. But no cataract affects the perception and the conditions of our fundamentally enlightened bright mind.

The perception that perceives the cataracts is a perception not affected by the cataracts. That is the true perception of seeing. Why name it other things like awareness, hearing, knowing, and seeing?

“Therefore, you now see me and yourself and the world and all the ten kinds of living beings because of a disease in the seeing. What perceives the disease is not diseased.

“The nature of true essential seeing has no disease. Therefore it is not called seeing.

“Ānanda let us compare the false views of those living beings’ collective karma with the false views of the individual karma of one person.

“The individual person with the diseased eyes can be likened to the people of that one country. He sees circular reflections, erroneously brought about by a disease of the seeing. The beings with a collective share see inauspicious things. In the midst of their karma of identical views arise pestilence and evils.

“Both are produced from a beginning less falsity of seeing. It is the same in the three thousand continents of Jambudvīpa, throughout the four great seas in the saha world and on through the ten directions. All countries that have outflows

and all living beings are the enlightened bright wonderful mind without outflows. Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are an illusory falseness brought about by the disease and its conditions. Mixing and uniting with that brings about a false birth; mixing and uniting with that creates a false death.

“If you can leave far behind all conditions which mix and unite as well as those which do not mix and unite, then you can also extinguish and cast out the causes of birth and death, and obtain perfect Bodhi, the nature of which is neither produced nor extinguished. That is the pure clear basic mind, the eternal fundamental enlightenment.

“Ánanda, although you have already realized that the wonderful bright fundamental enlightenment is not originated by conditions nor is it originated by spontaneity, you have not yet understood that the source of enlightenment does not originate from mixing and uniting or from a lack of mixing and uniting.

“Ánanda, now I will once again make use of the mundane objects before you to question you. You now hold that false thoughts mix and unite with the causes and conditions of everything in the world, and you wonder if the Bodhi mind one realizes might arise from mixing and uniting.

“To follow that line of thinking, right now, does the wonderful pure seeing–essence mix with light, does it mix with darkness, does it mix with penetration or does it mix with obstructions? If it mixed with light, then when you looked at light, when light appeared before you, at what point would it mix with your seeing? Given that seeing has certain attributes, what would the altered shape of such a mixture be?

“If that mixture were not the seeing, how could you see the light? If it were the seeing, how could the seeing see itself?

“If you insist that seeing is complete, what room would there be for it to mix with the light? And if light were complete in itself, it could not unite and mix with the seeing.

“If seeing were different from light, then, when mixed together, both its quality and the light would lose their identity. Since the mixture would result in the loss of the light and the quality of

seeing, the proposal that the seeing–essence mixes with light doesn't hold. The same principle applies to its mixing with darkness, with penetration, or with all kinds of solid objects.

“Moreover, Ānanda, as you are right now, once again, does the wonderful pure seeing–essence unite with light, does it unite with darkness, does it unite with penetration, or does it unite with solid objects?”

“If it united with light, then when darkness came and the attributes of light ceased to be, how could you see darkness since the seeing would not be united with darkness? If you could see darkness and yet at the same time there was no union with darkness, but rather a union with light, you should not be able to see light. Since you could not be seeing light, then why is it that when your seeing comes in contact with light, it recognizes light, not darkness?”

“The same would be true of its union with darkness, with penetration, or with any kind of solid object.”

“Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, as I consider it, the source of this wonderful enlightenment does not mix or unite with any conditioned mundane objects or with mental speculation. Is that the case?”

“The Buddha said, “Now you want to say that the enlightened nature neither mixes nor unites. So now I ask you further: as to this wonderful seeing–essence's neither mixing nor uniting, does it not mix with light? Does it not mix with darkness? Does it not mix with penetration? Does it not mix with solid objects?”

“If it does not mix with light, then there should be a boundary between seeing and light.

“Examine it closely: At what point is there light? At what point is there seeing? Where are the boundaries of the seeing and the light?”

“Ānanda, if there were no seeing within the boundaries of light, then there would be no contact between them, and clearly one would not know what the attributes of light were. Then how could its boundaries be defined?”

“As to its not mixing with darkness, with penetration, or with any kind of solid object, the principle would be the same.

“Moreover, as to the wonderful seeing essence’s neither mixing nor uniting, does it not unite with light? Does it not unite with darkness? Does it not unite with penetration? Does it not unite with solid objects?

“If it did not unite with light, then the seeing and the light would be at odds with each other by their nature, as are the ear and the light, which do not come in contact.

“Since the seeing would not know what the attributes of light were, how could it determine clearly whether there is union?”

“As to its not uniting with darkness, with penetration, or with any kind of solid object, the principle would be the same.”

Surangama Sutra, Volume 3

Volume 3, Part One

“Ánanda, you have not yet understood that all the defiling objects that appear, all the illusory, ephemeral phenomena, spring up in the very spot where they also come to an end. Their phenomena aspects are illusory and false, but their nature is in truth the bright substance of wonderful enlightenment.

“Thus it is throughout, up to the five skandhas and the six entrances, to the twelve places and the eighteen realms; the union and mixture of various causes and conditions account for their illusory and false existence, and the separation and dispersion of the causes and conditions result in their illusory and false extinction.

“Who would have thought that production and extinction, coming and going are fundamentally the eternal wonderful light of the Thus Come One, the unmoving, all-pervading perfection, the wonderful nature of True Suchness! If within the true and eternal nature one seeks coming and going, confusion and enlightenment, or birth and death, one will never find them.

“Ánanda, Why do I say that the five skandhas are basically the wonderful nature of true such-ness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

“Ánanda, suppose a person with clear vision were to gaze at clear bright space. His gaze would perceive only clear emptiness devoid of anything else.

“Then if that person for no particular reason fixed his gaze, the staring would cause fatigue. Thus in empty space he would see illusory flowers and other illusory and disordered unreal appearances.

“You should be aware that the form Skandha is like that.

“Ánanda, those illusory flowers did not originate from space nor did they come from the eyes.

“In fact, Ánanda, if they came from space, coming from there they should also return to and enter space. But if objects were to enter and leave it, space would not be empty. And if space was not empty, then there would be no room for it to contain the flowers that might

appear and disappear, just as Ānanda's body cannot contain another Ānanda.

“If the flowers came from the eyes, coming from them, they should also return to the eyes.

“If the image of flowers originated in the eyes, then they themselves should have vision. If they had vision, when they went out to space, they should be able to turn around and see the person's eyes. If they didn't have vision, then in going out, they would obscure space and in returning they would obscure the eyes.

“But when the person saw the flowers, his eyes should not have been obscured. But on the contrary, isn't it when we see clear space that our vision is said to be clear?

“From this you should understand that the form Skandha is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ānanda, suppose a person's hands and feet were relaxed and his entire body was in balance. He was unaware of his life-processes to the point that he experienced neither pain nor pleasure. Then for no particular reason that person might rub his hands together creating the illusory sensation of friction and smoothness, cold and warmth, and other sensations.

“You should be aware that the feeling Skandha is like that.

“Ānanda, that imaginary contact did not originate in the surrounding air nor did it originate in the palms.

“In fact, Ānanda, if it had come from the air, since the contact affected the palms, why didn't it affect the rest of the body? Nor should the air select what it comes in contact with.

“If the sensation came from the palms, there would be no need to rub the palms together to experience it.

“Besides, if it came from the palms, the palms would experience it when joined, but when they were not joined, the sense of contact should return into the palms. And in that case, the arms, wrists, bones, and marrow should also be aware of its course of entry.

“If you insist that the mind would be aware of is leaving and entering, then the contact would be a thing in itself that came and went

in the body. What need would there be to wait for the palms to be joined to experience it and identify it as contact?

“From this you should understand that the feeling Skandha is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a person’s mouth watered at the mention of sour plums, or the soles of his feet tingled when he thought about walking along a precipice.

“You should be aware that the thinking Skandha is like that.

“Ánanda, The mouth’s watering caused by the mention of plums does not originate from the plums, nor does it originate in the mouth.

“In fact, Ánanda, if the mouths’ watering came from the plums, the plums should speak for themselves, why wait for someone to mention them? If it came from the mouth, the mouth itself should hear, so what need would there be to wait for the ear’s perception? If the ear alone heard, then why doesn’t it produce the saliva?

“Thinking about walking along a precipice can be explained in the same way.

“From this you should understand that the thinking Skandha is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a swift rapids had waves that follow upon one another in orderly succession, the ones behind never overtaking the ones in front. “You should be aware that the activity Skandha is like that.

“Ánanda, that flowing does not arise because of emptiness, nor does it come into being because of water. It is not identical to the water and yet it is not separate from either the emptiness or the water.

“In fact, Ánanda, if the flow arose because of emptiness, then the inexhaustible emptiness throughout the ten directions would become an unending flow, and all the worlds would inevitably be drowned.

“If the swift rapids existed because of water, then they would have to differ from water, and the location and attributes of their

existence should be apparent. If the rapids were identical to water, then when the rapids disappeared and became still and clear, the water should also disappear.

“Suppose the rapids were separate from both the emptiness and the water. But there isn’t anything beyond emptiness, and without water there couldn’t be any flow.

“From this you should understand that the activity Skandha is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a man picked up a kalavinka pitcher, up its two holes, lifted up the pitcher filled with emptiness, and walking some thousand miles away, presented it to another country. You should be aware that the consciousness Skandha is like that.

“Ánanda, that emptiness did not originate in one place, nor did it go to another.

“In fact, Ánanda, if the emptiness were to come from one place, then, when the stored-up emptiness in the pitcher was carried elsewhere, there should be less emptiness in the place where the pitcher originally was.

“And if it were to enter the other region, when the holes were unplugged and the pitcher was turned over, one would see emptiness emerge.

“From this you should understand that the feeling Skandha is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Furthermore, Ánanda, why do I say that the six entrances are basically the wonderful nature of True Suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

“Ánanda, although the eyes’ staring causes fatigue, both the eye and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. The attributes of the fatigue come from the staring.

3p 16 “Because of the two false defiling attributes of light and dark, a sense of seeing is stimulated which in turn draws in those two defiling attributes. That is called the ability to see. Apart from these

two defiling attributes of light and dark, this seeing is ultimately without substance.

“In fact, *Ánanda*, you should know that seeing does not originate from light or dark, nor from the sense organ, nor from emptiness.

“Why not? If it originated from light, then it would be extinguished when there was darkness, and you would not see darkness. If it came from darkness, then it would be extinguished when there was light, and you would not see light.

“If the essence of seeing came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of light and dark, then in that case, basically no seeing could take place.

“If it came from emptiness, then looking ahead it would see the shapes of mundane phenomena; looking back, it should see the eye itself. Moreover, if emptiness itself did the seeing, what would that have to do with your eye?

“From this you should understand that the eye—entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“*Ánanda*, suppose a person suddenly stops up his ears with his fingers. Because the sense organ of hearing become fatigued, he hears a sound in his head. However, both the ear and its fatigue originate in *Bodhi*. The attribute of fatigue comes from the monotony.

“Because of the two false defiling attributes of motion and stillness, a sense of hearing is stimulated which in turn draws in those two defiling attributes. That is called the ability to hear. Apart from the two defiling attributes of motion and stillness, this hearing is ultimately without substance.

“In fact, *Ánanda*, you should know that hearing does not originate from motion and stillness; nor from the sense organ, nor from emptiness.

“Why not? If it came from stillness, it would be extinguished when there was motion, and you would not hear motion. If it came from motion, then it would be extinguished when there was stillness, and you would not be aware of the stillness.

“If the capacity to hear came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of motion and stillness, then in that case basically the hearing would not have a nature of its own.

“Suppose it came from emptiness, then emptiness would become hearing and would no longer be empty. Moreover, if emptiness itself did the hearing, what would that have to do with your ear?

“From this you should understand that the ear-entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a person inhaled deeply through his nose. After he inhaled for a long time he became fatigued, and then there is a sensation of coldness in the nose. Because of that sensation, distinctions of penetration and obstruction, of emptiness and actuality, and so forth, including all fragrant and stinking vapors are made. However, both the nose and its fatigue originate in Bodhi. The attribute of fatigue comes from overexertion.

“Because of the two false defiling attributes of penetration and obstruction, a sense of smelling is stimulated which in turn draws in those two defiling attributes. That is called the ability to smell. Apart from the two defiling attributes of penetration and obstruction, this smelling is ultimately without substance.

“You should know that smelling does not come from penetration and obstruction, nor from the sense organ, nor from emptiness.

“Why not? If it came from penetration, the smelling would be extinguished when there was obstruction, and then how could it experience obstruction? If it existed because of obstruction, then where there was penetration there would be no smelling; in that case, how would the awareness of fragrance, stench, and other such sensations come into being?

“If the mechanism of hearing came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of penetration and obstruction, then in that case basically smelling would not have a nature.

“If it came from emptiness then smelling itself should be able to turn around and smell your own nose. Moreover, if emptiness itself did the smelling, what would that have to do with your ability to smell?

“From this you should understand that the nose–entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a person licks his lips with his tongue. His excessive licking causes fatigue. If the person is sick, he will taste a bitter flavor; A person who is not sick will taste a subtle sweetness. Sweetness and bitterness demonstrate the tongue’s sense of taste. When the organ is inactive, a sense of tastelessness prevails. However, both the tongue and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. The attributes of fatigue come from prolonged licking.

“Because the two false defiling attributes of sweetness and bitterness and of tastelessness, a sense of hearing is stimulated which in turn draws in those two defiling attributes. That is called the ability to taste. Apart from the two defiling attributes of sweetness and bitterness and apart from tastelessness, the sense of taste is originally without substance.

“In fact, Ánanda, you should know that the perception of sweetness, bitterness, or tastelessness does not originate from sweetness or bitterness, nor from tastelessness, nor from the sense organ, nor from emptiness.

“Why not? If it came from sweetness or bitterness, it would cease to exist when tastelessness was experienced, so how could it recognize tastelessness? If it arose from tastelessness, it would vanish when the flavor of sweetness was tasted, so how could it perceive the two flavors of sweet and bitter?

“If it came from the tongue which is obviously devoid of sweetness, bitterness, and tastelessness, then in that case taste would not have a nature.

“If it came from emptiness, then the sense of taste should be experienced by emptiness instead of by the mouth. Moreover, if

emptiness itself did the tasting, what would that have to do with your tongue?

“From this you should understand that the tongue–entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a person were to touch his warm hand with his cold hand. If the cold were greater than the warmth, the warm hand would become cold; if the warm were greater than the cold, the cold hand would become warm. That sensation of warmth and cold is felt through the contact and separation of the two hands. Fatiguing contact results in the mingling of warmth and cold. However, both the body and the fatigue originate in Bodhi. The attribute of fatigue comes from protracted contact.

“Because of the two false defiling attributes of separation and union, a physical awareness is stimulated which in turn draws in those two defiling attributes. That is called the awareness of physical sensation. Apart from the two sets of defiling attributes of separation and union, and pleasure and pain, the awareness of sensation is originally without a substance.

“In fact, Ánanda, you should know that this sensation does not come from separation and union, nor does it exist because of pleasure and pain, nor does it arise from the sense organ, nor is it produced from emptiness.

“Why not? If it arose when there was union, it would disappear when there was separation, so how could it sense the separation? The two characteristics of pleasure and pain would be the same way.

“If it came from the sense organ, which is obviously devoid of the four characteristics of union, separation, pleasure, and pain, then in that case basically no awareness of physical sensation could take place.

“If it came from emptiness, then the awareness of sensations would be experienced by emptiness itself. What would that have to do with your body?

“From this you should understand that the body–entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, suppose a person becomes so fatigued that he goes to sleep. Having slept soundly, he awakens and tries to recollect what he experienced while asleep. He recalls some things and forgets others. Thus, his upside down ness goes through production, dwelling, change, and extinction, which are taken in and processed through the mind’s central system habitually, each following the next without ever being overtaken. That is called the ability to know. The mind and its fatigue are both Bodhi. The attributes of fatigue come from persistent thinking.

“The two defiling attributes of arising and ending stimulate a sense of knowing which in turn grasps these inner sense data, reversing the flow of seeing and hearing. The place beyond the reach of this flow is known as the faculty of intellect.

“Apart from the two sets of defiling attributes of waking and sleeping and of arising and ceasing, the faculty of intellect is originally without substance.

“In fact, Ánanda, you should know that the faculty of intellect does not come from waking, sleeping, arising or ceasing, nor from the mind organ, nor from emptiness.

“Why not? If it came from waking, it would disappear during sleep, so how could it experience sleep? If it came from arising, it would cease to exist at the time of ceasing, so how could it experience ceasing? If it came from ceasing it would disappear at the time of arising, so how could it experience arising?”

“If mental awareness came from the faculty of the intellect, it would be no more than the physical opening and closing caused by the waking and sleep states respectively. Apart from these two movements, the faculty of intellect would be as insubstantial as flowers in space, and in that case basically no cognition could exist.

“If mental awareness came from emptiness, then emptiness itself should become cognition. What would that have to do with the mind entrance.

“From this you should understand that the mind–entrance is empty and false. Fundamentally its nature cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

Moreover, Ānanda, why do I say that the twelve places are basically the wonderful nature of True Suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

“Ānanda, look again at the trees in the Jeta Grove and the river and pools.

“What do you think: do these things come into being because the forms arise and thus the eyes see them, or because the eyes produce the attributes of form?

“Ānanda, if the eyes were to produce the attributes of forms, then when the eyes looked at empty space, the forms should be obliterated. Once they were obliterated, everything that had manifested would disappear. Since the attributes of forms would then be absent, who would be able to recognize emptiness? The same principle applied to emptiness.

“If, moreover, forms arose and the eyes saw them, then seeing should perish upon looking at space, which has no form. Once seeing perished, everything would disappear and then who would be able to recognize either emptiness or form?

“From this you should understand that neither seeing, nor form, nor emptiness can be located, and thus the two places of form and seeing are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ānanda, listen again to the drum being beaten in the Jeta Garden when the food is ready. The assembly gathers as the bell is struck. The sounds of the bell and the drum follow one another in succession.

“What do you think: do these things come into existence because the sound arrives in the vicinity of the ear, or because the ear’s hearing extends to the source of the sound.

“Ānanda, once again, if the sound arrived in the vicinity of the ear, then that would be like when I go on alms rounds to the city of Shravasti, I am no longer in the Jeta Grove. And so, if the sound definitely arrived in the vicinity of Ānanda’s ear, then neither Maudgalyayana nor Kashyapa would hear it, much less the twelve

hundred and fifty Shramanas who, upon hearing the sound of the bell, come to the dining hall at the same time.

“Again, if the ear arrived in the vicinity of the sound, that would be like when I return to the Jeta Grove, I am no longer in the city of Shravasti. When you hear the sound of the drum, your hearing would already have gone to the place where the drum was being beaten. Thus, when the bell pealed, you could not hear that sound—even the less those of the elephants, horses, cattle, sheep, and all the other various sounds around you.

“However, without coming or going, there would be no hearing.

“From this you should understand that neither hearing nor sound can be located, and thus the two places of hearing and sound are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ánanda, you smell the chandana in this censer. When one particle of this incense is lit, it can be smelled simultaneously through forty miles around the city of Shravasti.

“What do you think? Is this fragrance produced from the chandana wood? Is it produced in your nose, or does it arise within emptiness?

“Ánanda, once again, if the fragrance were produced from your nose, what is said to be produced from the nose should come forth from the nose. Your nose is not chandana, so how can your nose have the fragrance of chandana? When you say you smell a fragrance, it should enter your nose. Smelling is not defined as the nose emitting fragrance.

“If it were produced from within emptiness, since the nature of emptiness is eternal and unchanging, the fragrance should be constantly present. Why should the presence of the fragrance be contingent on the burning of dry wood in the censer?

“If it were produced from the wood, since the nature of this incense is such that it gives off smoke when it is burned, then when the nose smelled it, the nose should be filled with smoke, which does not happen. The smoke rises into the air, and before it has reached the

distance, how can the fragrance already be smelled at a distance of more than ten miles?

“From this you should understand that neither the fragrance nor the nose’s smelling can be located, and thus the two places of smelling and fragrance are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ānanda, twice every day you take up your bowl along with the rest of the assembly, and among what you receive may be fine-tasting foods, such as curds, buttermilk, and clarified butter.

“What do you think? Are these flavors produced from emptiness, do they come forth from the tongue, or does the food produce them?

“Ānanda, once again, if the flavors came from your tongue, since you only have one tongue in your mouth, when that tongue had already tasted the flavor of curds, then it would not change if it encountered some dark rock candy.

“If it did not change then it could not be said to be aware of tastes. Yet if it did change, since the tongue is not made up of many substances, how could one tongue know so many tastes?

“If the tastes were produced from the food, since food does not have consciousness, how could it know tastes? Moreover, if the food itself were to recognize them that would be the same as someone else eating. Then what connection would that have with what is called your recognition of tastes?

“If the tastes were produced in emptiness, then when you eat emptiness, what flavor does it have? Suppose that emptiness had the flavor of salt. Then since your tongue was salty, your face should also be salty, and likewise everyone in the world would be like fish in the sea. Since you would be constantly influenced by salt, you would never know tastelessness. Yet, if you did not recognize tastelessness, you could not be aware of the saltiness, either. You would not know anything at all. How could that be called taste?

“From this you should understand that neither the flavors nor the tongue’s tasting can be located, and thus the two places of tasting

and flavors are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, early every morning you rub your head with your hand.

“What do you think? When the sensation of rubbing occurs, what does the touching? Does the head or the hand do the touching?

“If the ability to touch were in the hand, then the head should have no knowledge of it. How could we then say that the head was touched? If it were in the head, then the hand would be useless, and how could it be said to have touched?

“If each had the ability to touch, then you, Ánanda, should have two bodies.

“If between the head and the hand only one touch took place, then the hand and the head would be of one substance. If they were one substance, then no touch would be possible.

“If they were two substances, to which would the touch belong? The one that was capable of touch would not be the one that was touched. The one that was touched would not be the one that was capable of touch. Nor should it be that the touch came into being between you and emptiness.

“From this you should understand that neither the sensation of touch nor the body can be located, and thus the two places of body and touch are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda, your mind is always conditioned by the three qualities of good, bad, and indeterminate, which produce patterns of dharmas.

“Are these dharmas produced by the mind, or do they have a special place apart from the mind?

“Ánanda, if they were the mind, the dharmas would not be its defiling objects. Since they would not be conditions of the mind, how could you say that they had a location?

“If they were to have a special place apart from the mind, then would the dharmas themselves be able to know?

“If they had a sense of knowing, they would be called a mind.

Being something other than you and yet not defiling objects, they would be someone else's mind. Being the same as you, they would be your own mind. But, how could your mind exist apart from you?

“If they had no sense of knowing, and yet these defiling objects were not forms, sounds, smells, or tastes, neither cold nor warmth, nor emptiness. Where would they be located?

“They are not represented in form or emptiness, nor is it likely that they exist somewhere in the human realm beyond emptiness, for if they did, the mind could not be aware of them. From where, then, would they arise?

“From this you should understand that neither dharmas nor the mind can be located, and thus the two places of mind and dharmas are empty and false. Fundamentally their natures cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

Surangama Sutra, Volume 3

Volume 3, Part Two

“Moreover, Ānanda, why do I say that the eighteen realms are basically the wonderful nature of True Suchness, the Treasury of the Thus Come One?

“Ānanda, as you understand it, the eyes and forms create the conditions that produce the eye–consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the eyes, such that the eyes are its realm? Or is it produced because of forms, such that forms are its realm?

“Ānanda, if it were produced because of the eyes, then in the absence of emptiness and form it would not be able to make distinctions; and so, even if you had a consciousness, of what use would it be?

“Moreover, your seeing is neither green, yellow, red, nor white. There is virtually nothing in which it is represented. Therefore, from what would the realm be established?

“If it were produced because of form, then when no forms were present in emptiness, your consciousness would cease to be. Then, why is it that the consciousness recognizes emptiness?

“If a form changes, you are also conscious of the form’s changing appearance, but your eye–consciousness does not change. Where is the boundary established?

“If the eye–consciousness did change when form changed, then such a realm would have no attributes. If it did not change, it would be constant, and given that it was produced from form, it should have no conscious knowledge of where emptiness was.

“If they were combined, then there would be a crack in-between. If they were separate, then half of your eye–consciousness would possess awareness and half of it would lack awareness. With such chaotic and disordered substances and natures, how could they comprise a realm?

“From this you should understand that as to the eyes and form being the conditions that produce the realm of eye–consciousness,

none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the natures of the eyes, forms, and the form realm, these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ānanda, as you understand it, the ear and sound create the conditions that produce the ear-consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the ear such that the ear is its realm, or is it produced because of sound, such that sound is its realm?

“Ānanda, if it were produced because of the ear, then since motion and stillness would be lacking, the ear would not be aware of anything. Certainly in the absence of awareness, nothing could be known and so what would characterize the consciousness?

“You may hold that the ears hear, but without motion and stillness, hearing cannot occur. Besides, how could the combination of the ears, which are but physical forms, and external objects be called the realm of consciousness? Once again, then, how would the realm of ear-consciousness be established?

“If it were produced from sound, then the consciousness would exist because of sound, and would have no connection with hearing. Without hearing, the attributes of sound would have no location.

“If the ear-consciousness came from sound, given that sound exists because of hearing, then what you heard would be the ear-consciousness itself.

“If the ear-consciousness were not heard, then there would be no realm. If it were heard, then it would be the same as sound. If the consciousness were being heard, who would the perceiver and hearer of the consciousness be? If there were no perceiver, then in the end you would be like grass or wood.

“Nor should the sound and hearing mix together to form a realm in between. Lacking a realm in between them, how could those internal and external phenomena be delineated?

“From this you should understand that as to the ears and sounds being the conditions that produce the realm of ear-consciousness, none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the natures of the ears, sounds, and the realm of awareness of sounds,

these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ānanda, as you understand it, the nose and smells create the conditions that produce the nose–consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the nose such that the nose is its realm, or is it produced because of smells, such that smells are its realm?

“Ānanda, if it were produced because of the nose, then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose? Do you hold that it takes the form of two fleshy claws, or do you hold it is an inherent ability of the nature, which perceives smells as a result of motion?

“If you hold that the nose is fleshy claws, flesh is an integral part of your body and the body’s perception is touch. Then it should be called ‘body’ instead of ‘nose’ and its objects would be those of touch. Since it would not even be called a nose, how could a realm be established for it?

“If you hold that the act of smelling is perceived, then, in your opinion, what is the perceiver? Were the flesh the perceiver, basically what the flesh perceives is objects of touch, which have nothing to do with the nose.

“Were emptiness the perceiver, then emptiness would perceive by itself and the flesh would have no awareness. If that were the case, then empty space would be you, and since your body would be without perception, Ānanda would not exist.

“If the smells were the perceiver, perception itself would lie with the smells. What would that have to do with you?

“If you insist that smells of both fragrance and stench are produced from your nose, then these two wafting smells of fragrance and stench would not arise from the wood of airavana or Chandala. Given that the smells would not come from those two things, when you smelled your own nose, would it be fragrant or would it stink? What stinks does not give off fragrance; what is fragrant does not stink.

“If you could smell both the fragrance and the stench, then you, a single person, would have two noses, and I would now be addressing questions to two Ánandas. Which one would be you?”

“If you only have one nose, then fragrance and stench would not have two separate identities. Since stench would be fragrance and fragrance would be stench, thereby lacking two distinctive natures, what would make up the realm?”

“If the nose-consciousness were produced because of smells, it would exist because of smells. Just as the eyes can see but are unable to see themselves, so, too, if the nose-consciousness existed because of smells, it should not be aware of smells.

“If it had no awareness, it could not be a consciousness. If the consciousness were not aware of smells, then the realm could not be established from smells. If the consciousness was not aware of smells, then the realm could not be established due to smells.

“Since no realm of consciousness would exist between them, then how could any of the internal or external phenomena exist either? A nature of smelling like that would be ultimately empty and false.

“From this you should understand that as to the nose and smells being the conditions that produce the realm of nose-consciousness, none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the natures of the nose, smells and the realm of smelling, these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ánanda, as you understand it, the tongue and flavors create the conditions that produce the tongue-consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the tongue so that the tongue is its realm, or is it produced because of the flavors, so that the flavors are its realm?”

“Ánanda, if it were produced because of the tongue, then all the sugar cane, black plums, huang-lien, salt, xixing, ginger, and cassia in the world would be entirely without flavor. Also, when you tasted your own tongue, would it be sweet or bitter?”

“If your tongue’s natural flavor were bitter, then what would taste the tongue? Since the tongue cannot taste itself, who would have the sense of taste? If the natural flavor of the tongue was not

bitter, then it could not engender tastes. How, then, could a realm be established?

“If the tongue–consciousness were produced because of flavor, the consciousness itself would be a flavor. Then the case would be the same as with the tongue–organ being unable to taste itself. How could the consciousness know whether it had flavor or not?

“Moreover, the many flavors do not all come from one thing. Since flavors are produced from many things, the consciousness would have many substances.

“If the consciousness were a single substance and that substance was definitely produced from flavor, then when salt, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors were combined, their various differences would change into a single flavor and there would be no distinctions among them.

“If there were no distinctions, it could not be called consciousness. So, how could it further be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?

“Nor could empty space produce your conscious awareness.

“The tongue and flavors could not combine without each losing its basic nature. How, then, could a realm be produced?

“From this you should understand that as to the tongue and flavors being the conditions that produce the realm of tongue–consciousness, none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the natures of the tongue, flavors, and the realm of the tongue–consciousness, these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ānanda, as you understand it, the body and objects of touch create the conditions that produce the body–consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the body, such that the body is its realm, or is it produced because of objects of touch, such that objects of touch are its realm?

“Ānanda, if it were produced because of the body, the body alone cannot generate the awareness of contact or separation. What would the body be conscious of?

“If it were produced because of objects of touch, then your body should not be necessary. But who can perceive contact with something other than the body?”

“Ánanda, things do not perceive objects of touch; the body does.

“What the body knows is objects of touch, and what is aware of objects of touch is the body. Objects of touch are not the body, and the body is not objects of touch.

“The two entities of body and objects of touch basically have no location. If it were the body–consciousness that came in contact with the body, then it would be the body’s own substance and nature. If the body–consciousness were separate from the body, then it would be like empty space.

“Since the internal and external aspects can’t be established, how can something be set up between them? Since no such middle can be set up, the internal and external aspects are by nature empty. From what, then, would your consciousness be produced?”

“From this you should understand that as to the body and objects of touch being the conditions that produce the realm of body–consciousness, none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the body, objects of touch, and the realm of body–consciousness, these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Moreover, Ánanda, as you understand it, the mind and dharmas create the conditions that produce the mind–consciousness.

“Is this consciousness produced because of the mind, such that the mind is its realm, or is it produced because of dharmas, such that dharmas are its realm?”

“Ánanda, if it were produced because of the mind, in your mind there certainly must be thoughts that give expression to your mind. If there were no dharmas before you, the mind would not give rise to anything. Apart from conditions, it would have no shape; thus, of what use would the consciousness be?”

“Moreover, is your mind–consciousness the same as your mind–organ with its thought processes and discriminations, or is it

different? If it were the same as the mind, then it would be the mind, how could it be something produced from it? If it were different from the mind, it shouldn't have any consciousness.

If it didn't have any consciousness, how could it be produced from the mind? If it did have consciousness, how could the mind be conscious of itself? Since it is by nature neither the same nor different, how can a realm be established?

“If it were produced because of dharmas, none of the mundane dharmas exist apart from the five defiling objects. Consider the dharmas of form, of sound, of smell, of taste, and of touch: each has a clearly distinguishable appearance and is matched with one of the five organs. They are not what the mind takes in.

“If your consciousness were indeed produced through a reliance on dharmas, then take a look at them now: what does each and every dharma look like?

“Apart from the attributes of form and emptiness, motion and stillness, penetration and obstruction, unity and separation, and arising and ceasing there is nothing at all.

“When there is arising, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas arise. When there is ceasing, then form, emptiness, and all dharmas cease to be.

Since the objective causes do not exist, then what does the consciousness which those causes produce look like? If there is nothing discernible about the consciousness, how can a realm be established for it?

“From this you should understand that as to the mind and dharmas being the conditions that produce the realm of mind-consciousness, none of the three places exists. Fundamentally the mind, dharmas, and the realm of the mind-consciousness, these three, cannot be attributed to either causes and conditions or spontaneity.

“Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, in discussing the dharmas of mixing and uniting and of causes and conditions, the Thus Come One has often said that the transformations of all mundane phenomena can be discovered in the mixing and uniting of the four elements.

“Why does the Thus Come one now reject causes and conditions and spontaneity as well? I do not know what your meaning pertains to.

“Please be so compassionate as to instruct us beings in dharmas that adhere to the complete meaning of the Middle Way and are not philosophical speculations.

“At that time the World Honored One said to Ánanda, “You have already renounced the Small Vehicle dharmas of the Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions and have resolved to diligently seek unsurpassed Bodhi. Because of that, I will now explain the Complete Meaning of the Middle Way to you.

“Why do you still bind yourself up in mundane philosophical speculations and false thoughts about causes and conditions?

“Although you are very learned, you are like someone who can discuss medicines but cannot recognize a real medicine when it is placed before you. The Thus Come One says that you are truly pitiable.

“Listen attentively now as I explain this point in detail to enable you and those of the future who cultivate the Great Vehicle to penetrate to the ultimate reality.”

Ánanda was silent and awaited the Buddha’s sagely instruction.

“Ánanda, according to what you say, the mixing and uniting of the four elements can be discovered in the myriad transformations of all mundane phenomena.

“Ánanda, if the natures of those elements did not mix and unite, then they could not combine with other elements, just as empty space cannot combine with forms.

“If the natures of those elements do not mix and unite, they are themselves transformations in a never-ending process of bringing each other into being. The continuation of comings into being and ceasing to be, of births and deaths, of deaths and births is like the unbroken wheel of flame that appears when a torch is spun in a circle.

“Ánanda, the process is like water becoming ice and ice turning into water again.

“Consider the nature of earth: its coarsest aspect is the earth itself; its subtlest aspect is a mote of dust, which at its smallest would be a particle of dust bordering on emptiness.

“If one divided one of those particles of dust that is barely form to begin with into seven parts and then split one of those parts, emptiness itself would be arrived at.

“Ánanda, if a particle of dust bordering on emptiness can be divided to arrive at emptiness, it should be that emptiness can give rise to form.

“Just now you asked if mixing and uniting doesn’t bring about all mundane transformations.

“You should carefully consider how much emptiness mixes and unites with itself to arrive at a single particle of dust bordering upon emptiness. Such a particle could not be composed of other particles of dust bordering upon emptiness.

“Moreover, since particles of dust bordering upon emptiness can be reduced to emptiness, of how many particles of such form would emptiness be composed?

“When those particles of form mass together, a mass of form does not make emptiness; when emptiness is massed together, a mass of emptiness does not make form. Besides, although form can be divided, how can emptiness be massed together?

“You still have not realized that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the nature of form is true emptiness and the nature of emptiness is true form. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm. Beings’ minds absorb it according to their capacity to know.

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the nature of fire is devoid of identity, being dependent upon various causes and conditions for its existence. Consider a family in the city that has not yet eaten. When they wish to prepare food, they hold up a brass mirror to the sun, seeking fire.

“Ánanda, speaking of mixing and uniting, you and I and the twelve hundred and fifty Bhikshus unite to form a community. However, a careful analysis of the community reveals that every member composing it has his own body, family name, clan, and name. For instance, Shariputra is a Brahman, Uruvilva is of the Kasyapa clan, and you, Ánanda, come from the Gautama family.

“Ánanda, if fire existed because of mixing and uniting, then when your hand holds up the mirror to the sun to seek fire, does the fire come out of the mirror? Does it come out of the moxa tinder? Or does it come from the sun?

“Ánanda, if the fire came from the sun, then only would it burn the moxa tinder in your hand, but as it came across the groves of trees, it should burn them up as well.

“Suppose it came from the mirror, since it would come out to the mirror to ignite the moxa tinder, why doesn't the mirror melt? Yet, as your hand that holds the mirror feels no heat; how could the mirror melt?

“If the fire came from the moxa tinder, then why would fire be generated only when the bright mirror came into contact with the dazzling light?

“Furthermore, on closer examination, you will find that the mirror is held in your hands, the sun is high in the sky, and moxa is grown from the ground. So where does the fire come from?

“The sun and the mirror cannot mix and unite, since they are far apart. Nor can it be that the fire arises spontaneously without an origin.

“You still have not realized that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm. Beings' minds absorb it according to their capacity to know.

“Ánanda, you should know that fire can be generated anywhere where a mirror is held up to the sunlight. If mirrors were held up to the sunlight everywhere in the Dharma Realm, fire would be generated everywhere. Since fire can come forth throughout the whole world, can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people in the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the nature of water is mutable, its flowing and stopping are erratic. Kapila, Chakra, Padma, Hasta, and other great magicians of Shravasti often hold up instruments to the light of the full moon at midnight to extract from it the essence of water to mix with their drugs.

“Does the water come out of the crystal ball that is used, or does it exist naturally in space? Or does it come from the moon?

“Ánanda, if the water came from the distant moon, then, water should also flow from all the grasses and trees when the moonlight passes over them on its way to the crystal ball. If it did flow from them, why wait for it to condense on the surface of the crystal ball? Since it does not flow from the trees, then the water clearly cannot descend from the moon.

“If it came from the crystal ball, then it should flow from the crystal at all times. Why would one have to wait for midnight and the light of the full moon to receive it?

“If the water came from space, which is by nature boundless, it would flow everywhere until everything between heaven and earth was submerged. How, then, could there still be travel by water, land, and air?

“Furthermore, upon closer examination you will find that the moon moves through the sky, the crystal ball is held in the hand, and the pan for receiving the water is put there by someone. So where does the water that flows into the pan come from?

“The moon and the crystal ball cannot mix and unite, since they are far apart. Nor should the essence of water arise spontaneously without an origin.

“You still have not realized that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of water is true emptiness, and the nature of

emptiness is true water. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm. Beings' minds absorb it according to their capacity to know.

“A crystal ball can be held up at a certain place, and water will come forth. If crystal balls were held up throughout the Dharma Realm, then throughout the Dharma Realm water would come forth. Since water can come forth throughout the entire world, can there be any fixed place to which it is confined?”

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes., which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the nature of wind has no substance, and its patterns of movement and stillness are erratic. You always adjust your robe as you enter the great assembly. When the corner of your saṃghati robe brushes the person next to you, the air stirs against that person's face.

“Does that wind come from the corner of the Kashaya sash, does it arise from emptiness, or is it produced from the face of the person brushed by the air?”

“Ánanda, if that wind came from the corner of the Kashaya, then you would be clad in the wind, and your kashaya should fly off and leave your body. But my robe remains motionless and hangs straight down as I now speak Dharma in the midst of the assembly. Observing my robe closely, where is the wind in it? The wind could not be stored somewhere in the robe.

“If the wind arose from emptiness, why wouldn't there be a brushing motion even when your robe did not move? Since the nature of emptiness is constant, the nature of the wind should be too. And so when the wind stopped, emptiness should also cease to be. The lack of wind can be detected, but what would signify the disappearance of emptiness? If emptiness came and went, it wouldn't be emptiness. And since it is empty, how can it generate wind?”

“If the wind came from the face of the person it brushed, it would blow upon you, too. Then while you were setting your robe in order, how could it blow backwards upon other people?”

“Upon closer examination, you will find that the robe is set in order by yourself, the face blown by the wind belongs to the person by your side, and the emptiness is tranquil and not involved in movement. So where does the wind come from that blows in this place?”

“The wind and emptiness cannot mix and unite, since they are different from each other. Nor could the wind exist spontaneously without an origin.

“You still have not realized that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of wind is true emptiness and the nature of emptiness is true wind. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm. Beings’ minds absorb it according to their capacity to know.

“Ánanda, in the same way that you alone shift your robe slightly and the air is stirred, so, too, if a similar movement were made throughout the Dharma Realm, the air would stir everywhere. Since wind can arise throughout the world, how could there be any fixed place to which it is confined?”

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the nature of emptiness has no shape; it is only apparent because of form. For instance, Shravasti is far from the river, so when the Kshatriyas, Brahmans, Vaishyas, Shudras, Bharadvajas, Chandalas, and so forth build their homes there, they dig wells seeking water. As a square foot of earth is removed, a square foot of emptiness becomes evident. As ten square feet of earth are removed, ten feet of emptiness become evident. The depth of the emptiness corresponds to the amount of earth removed.

“Does that emptiness come out of the earth? Or does it exist because of the digging? Or does it arise by itself, without a cause?”

“Ánanda, if that emptiness arose by itself without any cause, why wasn't it evident even before the earth was dug? All that could be seen was the vast expanse of solid, impenetrable earth.

“If emptiness came about because of the removal of the earth, then, as the earth was removed, the entering of the emptiness should be visible. If no emptiness entered when the earth was first removed, then how could the emptiness come about because of the removal of the earth?

“If no removal or entering took place, then there would be no difference between the earth and emptiness. Not being different, they would be the same. In that case, wouldn't the emptiness be removed from the well along with the earth in the process of digging?

“If emptiness appeared because of the digging, then the digging would bring out emptiness instead of the earth. If emptiness did not emerge because of the digging, then the digging should only remove the earth. Why, then, do we see emptiness appear as the well is dug?

“Consider this even more carefully. Look into it deeply, and you will find that the digging comes from the person's hands engaged in that act, and the earth exists because of its removal from the ground. So what causes the emptiness to appear?

“The digging and the emptiness, one being substantial and the other insubstantial, are not compatible. They do not mix and unite. Nor could emptiness exist spontaneously without an origin.

“Although the nature of emptiness is completely pervasive and basically unmoving, you should know that emptiness, earth, water, fire, and wind are called the five elements. Their natures are true, perfectly fused, identical with the Treasury of the Thus Come one, and neither come into being nor cease to be.

“Ánanda, your mind is murky and confused, and you do not awaken to the fact that the source of the four elements is none other than the Treasury of the Thus Come One . Is the emptiness you see subject to removal or entering or is it not subject to removal or entering?

“You still do not realize that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of enlightenment is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness

is true enlightenment. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm.

“Beings’ minds absorb it according to their capacity to know.

“Ánanda, wherever there is an empty well, emptiness fills that well. The same is true of emptiness in the ten directions. Since emptiness fills the ten directions, how could there be any fixed place in which it was found?

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign their origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the seeing–awareness does not perceive by itself. It depends upon form and emptiness for its existence. You are now in the Jeta Grove where you see the brightness of the morning and the darkness of the evening. Deep in the night you see brightness when the moon arises and darkness are discerned by the seeing.

“Is the seeing identical in substance with brightness, darkness, or emptiness, or are they not of the same substance? Are they the same and yet different, or are they neither the same nor different?

“Ánanda, suppose seeing shared a single substance with brightness, darkness, or emptiness. Darkness and brightness cancel each other out. When it is dark, there is no light; when it is light, there is no darkness. If seeing were one with darkness, it would cease to exist in brightness; if it were one with brightness, it would cease to exist in darkness? Since it would cease to exist, how could it perceive both brightness and darkness? If brightness and darkness differ from each other and that seeing has neither existence nor ceasing to exist how can it be of the same substance with brightness and darkness?

“If the essence of seeing were not of one substance with brightness and darkness, and you were separate from light, darkness,

and emptiness, then what shape and appearance would the source of the seeing have?

“In the absence of darkness, brightness, and emptiness, the seeing would be the same as fur on a tortoise or horns on a hare. How could there be seeing without the presence of the three attributes of brightness, darkness, and emptiness?

“How could the seeing be one with darkness and brightness since they are opposites? Yet, how could it be different from these three attributes, since in their absence there would be no seeing?

“How could the seeing not be one with emptiness, since no boundary exists between them? But how could the seeing not differ from emptiness, since the seeing remains unchanged, regardless of whether it is perceiving brightness or darkness?

“Examine this in even greater detail, investigate it minutely, consider and contemplate it carefully. The light comes from the sun and darkness from the new moon; penetration belongs to emptiness, and solidity returns to the earth, so where does the essence of seeing arise from?

“Seeing has awareness while emptiness is inanimate: they do not mix and unite. Nor could the essence of seeing arise spontaneously without an origin.

“If the natures of seeing, hearing, and knowing are pervasive and unmoving, you should know that the stable, boundless emptiness, together with the unstable elements such as earth, water, fire, and wind, are together known as the six elements. Their natures are true, perfectly fused, identical with the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and fundamentally devoid of coming into being and ceasing to be.

“Ánanda, your nature is so submerged that you have not realized that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are basically the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Contemplate seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing to see whether they are subject to coming into being and ceasing to be; whether they are identical or different; whether they are not subject to coming into being and ceasing to be; and whether they are neither identical nor different.

“You still do not realize that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of seeing is enlightened brightness, the essence of enlightenment is bright seeing. That fundamental purity pervades the Dharma Realm.

“Beings’ minds absorb it according to their capacity to know. Just as the eyes capacity to see pervades the Dharma Realm, so, too, do the capacities to hear, smell, taste, make contact, and know. All those capacities are glorious, magnificent qualities. Since they pervade the Dharma Realm and fill all emptiness in the ten directions, how could they be found in any fixed location?

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“Ánanda, the nature of consciousness has no source, but is a false manifestation based on the six organs and their corresponding objects. Now, take a look at the entire sagely assembly gathered here. The observations made by your eyes are similar to reflections in a mirror, both being devoid of distinction making.

“However, your consciousness will systematically identify what is seen: that is Manjushri, that is Purna, there is Maudgalyayana, there is Subhuti, and that one is Shariputra.

“Does the consciousness, which is aware and knows comes from seeing, from forms, from emptiness, or does it arise suddenly without a cause?

“Ánanda, if your consciousness came from seeing, then in the absence of the four attributes of brightness, darkness, form, and emptiness, you would not be able to see. Since those attributes would not exist where would your consciousness come form?

“If your consciousness arose from form rather than form seeing, it would see neither brightness nor darkness. In the absence of brightness and darkness, it would not see form or emptiness, either.

Since those attributes would not exist, where would your consciousness come from?

“If it came from emptiness, it would be neither an appearance nor the seeing. Without seeing, it could not function, being unable to discern brightness, darkness, forms, or emptiness by itself. Without appearances there would be no external conditions, and thus no location where seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing could be established.

“Being located at neither of those two places, the consciousness would be empty, as if non-existent. If it did exist, it would not be a phenomenon. Even if you could exercise a consciousness, how would it discern anything.

“If it suddenly comes forth without a cause, why can’t you discern the moonlight within the sunlight?

Investigate this even more carefully, discriminate it in detail, and look into it. The seeing belongs to your eyes; the appearances are considered to be the environment, what has an appearance exists. What lacks appearances does not. What, then, are the conditions that cause the consciousness to come into being?

“The consciousness moves and the seeing is still; they do not mix and unite. Smelling, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the same way. Nor could the condition of consciousness exist spontaneously without an origin.

“If the consciousness pertaining to the mind did not come from anywhere, the same would be true of the natures of the seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, which are all complete and tranquil and do not come from anywhere. They together with emptiness, earth, water, fire, and wind are together called the seven elements. Their natures are true, perfectly fused, identical with the Treasury of the Thus Come One, and fundamentally devoid of coming into being and ceasing to be.

“Ánanda, your mind is coarse and shallow, and so you do not perceive that seeing, hearing, and the resulting awareness are Treasury of the Thus Come One. Contemplate these six locations of

consciousness to see whether they are identical or different; empty or existent; neither identical nor different; or neither empty nor existent.

“You still do not realize that in the Treasury of the Thus Come One the nature of consciousness is bright knowing; enlightened brightness is the true consciousness. Wonderful enlightenment is tranquil and pervades the Dharma Realm.

“It encompasses the emptiness of the ten directions and issues forth from it. How could it have a location?

“Whatever manifests does so in compliance with karma. Ignorant of that fact, people of the world are so deluded as to assign its origin to causes and conditions or to spontaneity. These mistakes, which arise from the discriminations and reasoning processes of the conscious mind, are nothing but the play of empty and meaningless words.

“At that time, Ānanda and the great assembly, filled with the subtle, wonderful instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One, experienced unhindered physical and mental peace. Everyone in the great assembly became aware of how his mind pervaded the ten directions, beholding emptiness in the ten directions as one might look at a leaf or other held in the palm of one’s hand.

“All mundane phenomena became the wonderfully bright primal mind of Bodhi.

“The essence of the mind became completely pervasive, containing the ten directions.

“Each person regarded his physical body as being like a particle of dust blown about in the emptiness of the ten directions; sometimes visible, sometimes not, or as being like a single bubble floating on the clear, vast sea, appearing from nowhere and disappearing into oblivion. Each person comprehended and knew personally the fundamental wonderful mind possessed by all as being eternal and never ceasing to be.

“They bowed to the Buddha and placed their palms together, having gone through this unprecedented experience. Then, before the Thus Come One, Ānanda spoke verses in praise of the Buddha.

“The wonderfully deep Dharani,

The unmoving Honored One,
The foremost Surangama King
Is seldom found in the world.

It dissolves away my inverted thoughts
Gathered through billions of eons,
So I needn't endure asamkhyeya eons
To obtain the Dharma body.

“I wish now to achieve the result
And become an honored king,
Who then returns to save beings
As many as Ganges' sands.

I offer this profound thought to all,
Whose numbers are like dust motes in Buddha lands.
To repay the kindness shown me by the Buddha.

“Humbly I ask the World Honored One to
Certify my vow to come back to the five turbid evil realms,
And as long as even one being has not yet become a Buddha.,
At death I will not enter Nirvana.

“Exalted Hero with awesome strength,
Great kindness and compassion,
Search out and dispel even the subtlest doubts.

“Causing me to quickly attain the supreme enlightenment,
And sit in Way-places in realms of the ten directions.
“Were even the nature of emptiness to entirely melt away,
This vajra mind will never waver.

Surangama Sutra, Volume 4

Volume 4, Part One

Then Purnamaitreyaniputra (Purna) arose from his seat in the midst of the great assembly, uncovered his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, put his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, “The most virtuous and awe–inspiring World Honored One has for the sake of beings expounded the primary truth of the Thus Come One with remarkable eloquence.

“The World Honored One often singles me out as the foremost among speakers of the Dharma. But now when I hear the Thus Come One’s wonderful, subtle expressions of the Dharma, I am like a deaf person who at a distance of more than a hundred paces tries to hear a mosquito, which in fact cannot be seen, let alone heard.

“Although the Buddha’s clear expressions have succeeded in dispelling our doubts, we still have not fathomed the ultimate meaning that could enable us to rise above all delusions. Those who are like Ánanda, although enlightened, have not yet ended their outflows of their habits.

“Those of us present in the assembly who have reached the stage of no outflows, despite having ended our outflows, still wonder about the Dharma spoken by the Thus Come One today.

“World Honored One, if all the mundane sense organs, sense objects, skandhas, places, and realms are the Treasury of the Thus Come One, why, in that fundamental purity, do the mountains, rivers, great earth and all other conditioned phenomena suddenly arise, cyclically change and flow, end, and then begin again?

“Moreover, the Thus Come One said that the basic natures of earth, water, fire, and wind are perfectly fused, pervade the Dharma Realm, and are tranquil and eternal.

“World Honored One, if the nature of earth is pervasive, how could it contain water? If the nature of water is pervasive, fire would not arise. Further, how do you explain that the natures of fire and water can each pervade empty space without displacing one another? World Honored One, the nature of earth is solid; the nature of

emptiness is vacuous. How can they both pervade the Dharma Realm? I don't know what this doctrine is aiming at.

"I only hope the Thus Come One will compassionately explain in order to clear the clouds of confusion that engulf all of us in this great assembly." After saying that, he made a full prostration and respectfully and expectantly awaited the Thus Come One's unsurpassed compassionate instruction.

The World Honored One then told Purna and all the Arhats in the assembly who had ended their outflows and had reached the level beyond study, "Today the Thus Come One will explain in depth the truest most supreme meaning. May those of you in the assembly who are Hearers or Arhats of a fixed nature who have not yet realized the two kinds of emptiness and all who are dedicated to the Superior Vehicle reach the tranquility of the One Vehicle, the true aranya, the proper place of cultivation. Listen attentively and I will explain it for you." Purna and the others listened quietly, respecting the Buddha's expression of Dharma.

The Buddha said, "Purna, you have asked why in fundamental purity the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise.

"Have you not often heard the Thus Come One expound upon the wonderful light of the enlightened nature and the bright wonder of fundamental enlightenment?"

Purna said, "Yes, World Honored One, I have often heard the Buddha expound upon that subject."

The Buddha said, "You speak of understanding enlightenment; does the nature understand and is that called enlightenment? Or does enlightenment initially lack understanding and so you speak of understanding enlightenment?"

Purna said, "If a lack of understanding is called enlightenment, then there would be no understanding at all."

The Buddha said, "If there were no understanding at all, then there could be no understanding of enlightenment. If understanding is added, then that is not enlightenment. If understanding is not added, then there's no understanding. But a lack of understanding or ignorance is not the lucid bright nature of enlightenment.

“The nature of enlightenment certainly includes understanding. It’s redundant to speak of understanding enlightenment.

“Enlightenment is not a kind of understanding. Understanding sets up an objective realm. Once that objective realm is set up, your false subjective state arises.

“Where there was neither sameness nor difference, suddenly difference appears. What differs from that difference becomes sameness. Once sameness and difference mutually arise, and due to them, what is neither the same nor different is created.

“This turmoil eventually brings about weariness. Prolonged weariness produces defilement. The combination of these in a murky turbidity creates afflictions with respect to wearisome defilements.

“The world comes about through this arising; the lack of any arising becomes emptiness. Emptiness is sameness; the world, difference. Those that have neither difference nor sameness become conditioned dharmas.

“The understanding added to enlightenment creates a light that stands in mutual opposition with the darkness of emptiness. As a result, wind wheels that support the world come into being.

“The tension between emptiness and that light creates movement. The false, persistent light congeals into a solidity that becomes metal. A lack of enlightenment nurtures that persistence and causes metal wheels to secure all lands.

“That tenacious unenlightened state creates metal, while the fluctuations of light cause the wind to rise. The friction between wind and metal creates fire, which is mutable in nature.

“Metal produces moisture, which causes flame to rise from the fire. Thus the wheel of water that encompasses all realms in the ten directions comes about.

“Fire rises and water falls, and the combination becomes tenacious. What is wet becomes the oceans and seas; what is dry becomes the continents and islands.

“Because of this, fire often rises up in the oceans, and on the continents the streams and rivers ever flow.

“When the power of water is less than that of fire, high mountains result. That is why mountain rocks give off sparks when struck, and become liquid when melted.

“When the power of earth is less than that of water, the outcome is grasses and trees. That is why the vegetation in groves and marshes turns to ashes when burned and oozes water when twisted.

“The interaction of that false dichotomy in turn creates these elements as seeds and from these causes and conditions comes the continuity of the world.

“Moreover, Purna, the false understanding is none other than the mistake of adding understanding to enlightenment.

“After the falseness of the objective realm is established, the subjective understanding cannot transcend it. Due to that, hearing does not go beyond sound, and seeing does not surpass form.

“Forms, smells, tastes, objects of touch and the others of the six falsenesses are realized. Because of them there is a division into seeing, sensation, hearing, and knowing.

“Similar karma binds beings together; union and separation bring about their transformations.

“The manifestation of light is caused by false view and ignorance. Competitive views generate hatred; compatible views create love. The flow of love becomes a seed; the potential fetus is taken in and conception occurs. When intercourse takes place, beings with similar karma are drawn in. From these causes and conditions, the kalaka, arbuda, and other fetal stages evolve.

“The womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born beings come about in response: the egg-born come from thought, the womb-born are due to emotion, the moisture-born arise from union, and transformations occur through separation.

“Emotion, thought, union, and separation go through further changes, and the maturation of such karma causes one to rise or sink. From such causes and conditions comes the continuity of beings.

“Purna, thought and love become bound together so that people love each other and cannot bear to be apart. As a result,

ceaseless successive births of parents, children, and grandchildren occur in this world. And the basis for all that is desire and greed.

“Greed and emotional love feed on one another until the greed becomes insatiable. The result of that in this world is the tendency of egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born beings to devour one another to the extent that their strength permits. The basis for all that is killing and greed.

“Suppose a person eats a sheep. The sheep dies and becomes a person; the person dies and becomes a sheep, the same applies in all rebirths among the ten categories. Through death after death and birth after birth, they eat each other. The evil karma one is born with continues to the bounds of the future. The basis for all that is stealing and greed.

“‘You owe me a life; I must repay my debt to you.’ Due to such causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in sustained cycle of birth and death.

“‘You love my mind; I adore your good looks.’ Due to such causes and conditions we pass through hundreds of thousands of eons in sustained mutual entanglement.

“Killing, stealing, and lust are the basic roots. From such causes and conditions comes the continuity of karma and retribution.

“Purna, these three kinds of upside-down continuity come from adding understanding to enlightenment. That lack of understanding generates an internal awareness which gives rise to external phenomena. Both are born of false views. From this falseness the mountains, the rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned phenomena unfold themselves in a succession that recurs in endless cycles.”

Purna said, “If this wonderful enlightenment, the wonderful awareness of fundamental enlightenment, which is neither greater than nor less than the mind of the Thus Come One, abruptly brings forth the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, and all conditioned phenomena, then now that the Thus Come One has attained the wonderful emptiness of clear enlightenment, will the mountains, the

rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned habitual outflows arise ever again?”

The Buddha said to Purna, “If a person living in a village were confused about directions, mistaking south for north, would that confusion be the result of confusion or of awareness?”

Purna said, “His confusion would be the result of neither. Why not? Confusion is fundamentally baseless, so how could anything arise because of it? And as awareness does not produce confusion, how could confusion arise out of it?”

The Buddha said, “If someone who knows the directions points them out to the confused person, then once the person who was confused becomes aware, do you suppose, Purna, that he could lose his sense of direction again in that village?”

“No, World Honored One.”

“Purna, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are the same way.

Confusion is groundless and ultimately empty in nature. In the past, there basically was no confusion. It merely seemed as if there were confusion and enlightenment. When the delusion about confusion and enlightenment is ended, enlightenment will not give rise to confusion.

“Consider the person who, because of cataracts, saw flowers in space. Once the cataracts were removed, the flowers in space disappeared. Were he to rush to the spot where the flowers disappeared and wait for them to reappear, would you consider that person to be stupid or wise?”

Purna said, “Originally there weren’t any flowers in space. It was through a seeing disability that they appeared and disappeared. To see the disappearance of the flowers in space is already a distortion. To wait for them to reappear is sheer madness. Why bother to determine further if such a person is stupid or wise?”

The Buddha said, “Since you explain it that way, why do you ask if the clear emptiness of wonderful enlightenment can once again give rise to the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth?”

“Consider a piece of ore containing gold and other metals mixed together. Once the pure gold is extracted it will never become ore again. Consider wood that has burnt to ashes; it will never become wood again.” The Bodhi and Nirvana of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, are the same way.

“Purna, you also asked whether the natures of water and fire would not destroy each other if the natures of earth, water, fire, and wind were all perfectly fused and pervaded the Dharma Realm, and whether space and the great earth would not be incompatible if both pervaded the Dharma Realm.

“Purna, consider space: its substance is not the various phenomena, yet that does not prevent all phenomena from being included within it.

“How do we know that? Purna, empty space is bright on a sunny day, and dark when the sky is cloudy. It moves when the wind rises, it is fresh when the sky clears. It is turbid and hazy when the weather is foul, it is obscure when a dust storm breaks out. It casts a bright reflection on a pool of clear water.

“Do you think these conditioned phenomena come into existence at different places? Are they created from these conditions themselves or is their origin in space. If they arise from these conditions, Purna, then on a sunny day, since the sun is bright, all worlds of the ten directions should take on the form of the sun. Then why, on a sunny day do we see the round sun in the sky? If space is bright, space itself should shine. Then why, when there is a covering of clouds and fog, is no light evident?

“You should know that the brightness is not the sun, nor space nor other than the space or the sun.

“The truly wonderful enlightened brightness is the same way. You recognize space, and space appears. Recognizing earth, water, fire, and wind, each will appear. If all are recognized, all will appear.

“How can they all appear? Purna, consider the sun’s reflection as it appears in a single body of water. Two people gaze at it, both at the same time. Then one person walks east and the other walks west. Each person, still looking at the water will see a sun go along with

him, one to the east, one to the west, while there seems to be no fixed direction for the movement of the sun's reflection.

“Don't belabor the question and ask, 'If there is one sun, how can it follow both people? Or if the sun is double, why does only one appear in the sky?' This is just revolving in falseness, because such things cannot be proven.

“Contemplate how phenomena are ultimately false and cannot be verified. They are like flowers conjured up in space that cannot bear fruit. Why, then, investigate how such phenomena appear and disappear?

“Contemplate how the nature is ultimately truth and is solely the wonderful enlightened brightness. That wonderful enlightened bright mind originally was neither water nor fire. Why, then, ask about incompatibility?

“Purna, you think that form and emptiness overcome and destroy one another in the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One appears to you as form and emptiness throughout the Dharma Realm.

“And so, within it the wind moves, emptiness is still, the sun is bright, and the clouds are dark. The reason for this lies in the delusion of beings who have turned their backs on enlightenment and joined with the defiling dust. Thus, the wearisome defilements come into being and mundane phenomena exist.

“Based on wonderful understanding that neither ceases to be nor comes into being, I unite with the Treasury of the Thus Come One. Thus the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the unique and wonderful enlightened brightness, which completely illumines the Dharma Realm.

“That is why, within it, the one is limitless; the limitless is one. In the small appears the great; in the great appears the small.

“Unmoving in the Bodhimanda, yet pervading the ten directions, my body contains the ten directions and endless emptiness. On the tip of a single hair appear the lands of the Jeweled Kings. Sitting in a mote of dust, I turn the great Dharma wheel, put an end to

defiling dust, and unite with enlightenment, so that true such-ness, the wonderful enlightened bright nature, comes into being.

“The Treasury of the Thus Come One is the fundamental, wonderful, perfect mind.

“It is not the mind, nor emptiness, nor earth, nor water, nor wind, nor fire; it is not the eyes, nor the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body, or the mind. It is not form, nor sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, or dharmas. It is not the realm of eye-consciousness, nor any other, up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness.

“It is not understanding, nor ignorance, nor the ending of understanding or ignorance, nor any other, up to and including old age and death and the ending of old age and death.

“It is not suffering, nor accumulation, nor extinction, nor the Way. It is neither knowing nor attaining.

“It is not Dana, nor Shila, nor Virya, nor Kshanti, nor Dhyana, nor Prajna, nor Paramita,

“nor any other: It is not the Tathágata, nor the Arhats, nor Samyak Sambodhi, nor Parinirvana, nor Eternity, nor Bliss, nor True Self, nor Purity.

“Therefore, it is neither mundane nor transcendental, since the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the wonder of the mind’s primal understanding.

“It is the mind; it is emptiness, it is earth; it is water; it is wind; it is fire; it is the eyes; it is the ears; the nose, the tongue, the body, and the mind. It is form; it is sounds; smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. It is the realm of eye-consciousness, and so forth, up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness. “It is understanding and ignorance and the ending of understanding and ignorance, and so forth up to and including old age and death and the ending of old age and death. It is suffering; it is accumulation; it is extinction; and it is the Way. It is knowing and attaining. It is Dana; it is Shila; it is Virya; it is Kshanti; it is Dhyana; it is Prajna; and it is Paramita, and so forth, up to and including the Tathágata, the Arhats, Samyak Sambodhi, Parinirvana, Eternity, Bliss, True Self, and Purity.

“It is both mundane and transcendental, since the Treasury of the Thus Come One is the wonderful understanding of the primal mind.

“It is apart from identity and negation. It is identity and negation.

“How can beings in the three realms of mundane existence and the Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions at the level of transcendental existence make suppositions about the unsurpassed Bodhi of the Thus Come One with the minds that they know of, or enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddha through the medium of worldly language?

“Consider lutes, flutes, and guitars. Although those can make wonderful sounds, but if there are no skilled fingers to play them, their music will never come forth.

“You and all beings are the same way. The precious, enlightened true mind is perfect in everyone. I apply pressure and the Ocean Impression emits light; you move your mind, and the wearisome defilements spring up.

“That happens all because you do not diligently seek the unsurpassed enlightened Way, but are fond of the lesser vehicle and are satisfied with little attainment.”

Purna said, “My mind and the Thus Come One’s true wonderful pure mind are no different in their perfect precious enlightenment and complete understanding. But I have long been plagued with beginning-less false thoughts and have long endured the cycle of rebirth. As of yet my attainment in the sagely vehicle is not ultimate. The World Honored One has completely ended all falseness and attained wonderful eternal truth.

“I venture to ask the Thus Come One why all beings exist in falseness and conceal their own wonderful understanding, so that they keep drowning in this deluge?”

The Buddha said to Purna, “Although you have cast off doubts, you still have not ended residual delusions. I will now question you about a mundane event.

“Did you hear about Yajnadatta from Shravasti who on impulse one morning held a mirror to his face and fell in love with the head in the mirror? He gazed at the eyes and eyebrows but got angry because he could not see his own face. He decided he must be a mountain or river sprite, lost control, and ran madly about. What do you think? Why did this person set out on a mad cause for no reason?”

Purna said, “That person was insane. There’s no other reason.”

The Buddha said, “What reason can you give for saying that the wonderful enlightened bright perfection, the fundamentally perfect bright wonder is false? If there is a reason, then how do you define false?”

“All of your own false thinking becomes in turn the cause for more. From confusion you accumulate confusion through eon after eon; although the Buddha is aware of it, he cannot counteract it.

“From such confused causes, the cause of confusion perpetuates itself. When one realizes that confusion has no cause, the falseness becomes baseless. Since it never arose, why would you hope for its end? One who obtains Bodhi is like a person who awakens to tell of the events in a dream; since his mind will remain awake and clear, why would he want to hold onto the things in a dream?”

“This is especially true for things that lack a cause and are basically non-existent, such as Yajnadatta’s situation that day in the city. Was there any reason why he became fearful for his head and went running about? If his madness had suddenly ceased, he still wouldn’t get his head back from someplace else outside; and so before his madness ceased, how could his head have been lost?”

“Purna, falseness is the same way. How can it exist?”

“You only need not follow discriminations about the three kinds of continuity of the world, beings, and karmic retributions. By cutting off those three conditions, the causes will not arise.

“Then the madness, like Yajnadatta’s, will cease by itself. Once it ceases, Bodhi appears. The supreme, pure, bright mind originally pervades the Dharma Realm. It is not something obtained

from anyone else. Why, then, toil at cultivation making yourself bone-tired trying to gain certification?

“Consider a person who has a wish fulfilling pearl sewn into his clothing but does not know it. Poverty-stricken and ragged, he roams around begging for food and always on the move. Although he is indeed destitute, the pearl is never lost.

“Suddenly a wise person points out the pearl: then all his wishes are fulfilled, he obtains great wealth, and he realizes that the pearl did not come from somewhere outside.”

Then from among the great assembly, Ánanda bowed at the Buddha’s feet, stood, and said to the Buddha, “The World Honored One has just explained about the karma of killing, stealing and lust: when the three conditions are cut off, the three causes do not arise. Then the madness, like Yajnadatta’s, will cease by itself, and once it ceases, Bodhi appears. It is not something obtained from anyone else. Those clearly are causes and conditions; why, then, does the Thus Come One abruptly reject causes and conditions?

“My enlightenments have come about through causes and conditions. World Honored One, that is not only true of those of us who are young in years, or who are Hearers still in the process of learning. Maha Maudgalyayana, Shariputra, and Subhuti, and others who followed the elder Brahmans, became enlightened and obtained no outflows upon hearing the Buddha expound upon causes and conditions.

“Now you say that Bodhi does not come from causes and conditions. That would make the spontaneity that Maskari Goshaliputra and others advocated in Rajagriha the primary meaning! I only hope that the Greatly Kind One will dispel my confusion.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Let us take the case of Yajnadatta in the city: if the causes and conditions of his madness cease, the nature that is not mad will spontaneously come forth. The entire principle of spontaneity and causes and conditions is nothing more than that.

“Ánanda, Yajnadatta’s head was naturally there; it was a natural part of him. There was never a time when it was not. Why,

then, did he suddenly fear that he had no head and start running about madly?

“If he naturally had a head and went mad due to causes and conditions, would it not be just as natural for him to lose his head due to causes and conditions?

“Basically his head was never lost. The madness and fear arose from falseness. There was never any change that took place. Why, then, belabor the point about causes and conditions?

“Had the madness been his natural state, the madness and fear would be fundamental. Before he went mad, then, where was his madness hidden?

“Had the madness not been his natural state, and his head in fact not lost, why did he run about in a state of madness?

“If you realize that you have a head and recognize the madness of your pursuit, then both spontaneity and causes and conditions become idle theories. That is why I say that once the three conditions cease to be, the Bodhi mind appears.

“The arising of the Bodhi mind and the ending of the mind subject to arising and ceasing itself imply arising and ceasing.

“The ending of both arising and ceasing is the effortless Way. If there is spontaneity then clearly the thought of spontaneity must arise and the mind subject to arising and ceasing end: but that is still a case of arising and ceasing.

“To call the lack of arising and ceasing spontaneity would be like saying that a combination of mundane phenomena that form a single substance are mixed and united in nature, and that everything not mixed and united is spontaneous in nature.

“Spontaneity is not natural, and mixing and uniting lack unifying qualities. Spontaneity and unity alike must be abandoned, and both their abandonment and their existence cease to be. Achieving that would be no idle theory.

“Bodhi and Nirvana are still so far away that you must undoubtedly pass through eons of bitterness and diligence before you cultivate them and are certified.

“You can memorize the twelve divisions of the Sutras spoken by the Buddhas of the ten directions and their pure, wonderful principles as many as the sands of the Ganges river, but that only aids your idle theorizing.

“Although you can discuss causes and conditions and spontaneity and understand them perfectly clearly, and people refer to you as the one foremost in learning, still, the eons upon eons you have spent saturating yourself with learning, did not help you avoid the trouble with Matangi’s daughter.

“Why did you have to wait for me to use the spiritual mantra of the Buddha’s Crown to put out the fire of lust in Matangi’s daughter’s heart, causing her to attain the position of an Anagamin and join a vigorous group in my Dharma assembly, drying up the river of emotional love in her and setting you free?

“Therefore, Ánanda, your ability to intellectually master the Thus Come One’s wonderful secret teachings for eons upon eons is not as good as a single day of non–outflow cultivation that is intent upon quitting the two worldly sufferings of love and hate. “In Matangi’s daughter, a former prostitute, emotional love and desire were dispelled by the spiritual power of the mantra. Now her Dharma name is Bhiksunis Nature.

“She and Rahula’s mother, Yashodhara, both became aware of their past causes and knew that for several eons they had endured the suffering of greed and emotional love. Due to their single–mindedness they became permeated with the cultivation of non–outflow goodness, they were both freed from their bonds and received predictions. Why, then, do you cheat yourself and still remain caught up in looking and listening?”

When Ánanda and the great assembly heard the Buddha’s instruction, their doubts and delusions were dispelled. Their minds awakened to the ultimate reality, they experienced both physical and mental light ease, and unprecedented attainments.

Once again Ánanda wept, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, knelt, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha, “The Unsurpassed, Great, Compassionate, Pure, and Precious King has instructed me

well, so that, by means of these various causes and conditions, expedients and encouragements, all of us who were immersed in the sea of suffering have escaped it.

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Volume 4, Part Two

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“World Honored One, having heard that explanation of Dharma, I know that the Treasury of the Thus Come One, the wonderful, enlightened, bright mind, pervades the ten directions and contains the lands of Thus Come Ones throughout the ten directions, all the pure and elegantly adorned kshetras of Wonderful Enlightened Kings. The Thus Come One also admonished that erudition is of no merit and is not as good as cultivation.

“So now I am like a wanderer who suddenly encounters a divine king who bestows upon him an elegant house. Even though he has obtained a mansion, he has to enter through a door.

“I only hope the Thus Come One will not withhold his great compassion in instructing those of us in the assembly who are covered by darkness, so that we may renounce the Small Vehicle and attain at last the Thus Come One’s Nirvana without residue, the fundamental path of resolve. May he enable those who are still learning to know

how to subdue the age-old habit of seeking to manipulate conditions to one's advantage, to obtain Dharani, and to enter in to the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas." Having said this, he made a full prostration, and together with the members of the assembly, single-mindedly awaited the Buddha's compassionate instruction.

The World Honored One then sympathized with the Hearers and Those Enlightened to Conditions in the assembly, all those who were not yet at ease with the Bodhi mind. His sympathy also extended to helping beings in the future Dharma Ending Age after the Buddha's entry into tranquility to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi. He revealed the wonderful path of cultivation of the Unsurpassed Vehicle.

He proclaimed to Ānanda and to the great assembly, "You have decisively resolved to attain Bodhi and so you should not grow weary when it comes to the Wonderful Samādhi of the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones. You must first understand two absolutes regarding initial resolve for enlightenment. What are the two absolutes regarding initial resolve for enlightenment?"

"Ānanda, the first absolute is that if you wish to renounce the position of Hearer and cultivate the Bodhisattva Vehicle, and to enter the knowledge and vision of the Buddhas, you must carefully consider whether the resolve on the cause-ground and the enlightenment on the ground of fruition are the same or different.

"Ānanda, it is impossible while on the cause-ground to base one's cultivation on the mind that is subject to arising and ceasing when in quest of the Buddha Vehicle, which neither arises nor ceases to be.

"For this reason, you should realize that all composite dharmas belonging to the material world will decay and disappear. Ānanda, contemplate the world: what composite dharmas will not wear out?"

"But I have never heard of empty space wearing out. Has anyone every heard of the disintegration of the void? Why not? Empty space is not a composite and it can never wear out.

"While you are in your body, what is solid is of earth, what is moist is of water, what is warm is of fire, and what moves is of wind. Because of these four bonds, your tranquil and perfect, wonderfully

enlightened bright mind divides into seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition. From its beginning to its end you are immersed in the five layers of turbidity.

“What is meant by turbidity? Ānanda, pure water, for instance, is fundamentally clear and clean, whereas dust, dirt, ashes, silt, and the like, are basically solid substances. Such are the properties of the two; their natures are not compatible. Suppose someone takes some dirt and tosses it into pure water. The dirt loses its solidity and the water is deprived of its transparency. The resulting cloudiness is called turbidity. Your five layers of turbidity are similar to it.

“Ānanda, you see that space pervades the ten directions. There is no division between space and seeing. And yet space by itself cannot identify its own substance, and seeing alone has nothing to register awareness of. But the two become entangled in falseness. This is the first layer, called the turbidity of time.

“Your body appears in full, with the four elements composing its substance, and from this, seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition become firmly defined. Water, fire, wind, and earth fluctuate between sensation and cognition and become entangled in falseness. This is the second layer, called the turbidity of views.

“Further, the functions of memory, discrimination, and verbal comprehension in your mind bring into being knowledge and views. From out of them appear the six defiling objects. Apart from the defiling objects the consciousness would lack attributes. Apart from cognition the objects would have no nature. But they become entangled in a falseness. This is the third layer, called the turbidity of afflictions.

“And if day and night there is endless arising and ceasing as your knowledge and views continually wish to remain in the world, while your karmic patterns constantly move you to various places. This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fourth layer, called the turbidity of living beings.

“Originally, your seeing and hearing were not of different natures, but a multitude of defiling objects has divided them into crude differences. These natures have mutual awareness, but their functions

are in opposition. Sameness and difference arise and they lose their identity. This entanglement becomes a falseness, which is the fifth layer, called the turbidity of a life span.

“Ánanda, you now want to cause your seeing, hearing, sensation, and cognition to return to and tally with the eternity, bliss, true self, and purity of the Thus Come One.

“You should first decide what the basis of birth and death is by relying on the perfect, tranquil nature, which neither arises nor ceases.

“By means of this tranquility, influence the empty and false arising and ceasing so that it is subdued and returns to the source of enlightenment. The attainment of this source of bright enlightenment, which neither arises nor ceases, is the mind of the cause–ground.

“Then, you can completely realize cultivation of and certification to the ground of fruition. To do that much is like purifying muddy water by placing it in a quiet vessel which is kept completely still and unmoving. The sand and silt settle, and the pure water appears. That is called the initial subduing of transitory defiling afflictions.

“The complete removal of the mud from the water is called the eternal severance of fundamental ignorance.

“When clarity is pure to its very essence, then no matter what happens, there is no affliction. Everything is in accord with the pure and wonderful virtues of Nirvana.

“The second absolute is that if you definitely wish to bring forth the resolve for Bodhi and to be especially courageous and dedicated in your cultivation of the Bodhisattva Vehicle, you must decisively renounce all conditioned phenomena.

“You should carefully consider the origin of afflictions: who creates and who endures the beginning–less creation of karma and perpetual rebirth?

“Ánanda, if in your cultivation of Bodhi you do not carefully consider the origin of affliction, you cannot realize where the location of the upside–down ness of the empty and false sense organs and sense–objects is. If you don’t even know their location, how can you subdue them and reach the level of the Thus Come One?

“Ānanda, consider someone who wants to untie a knot. If he can't see where the knot is, how can he untie it?

“But I have never heard of anyone unbinding empty space. Why not? Because emptiness has no form of appearance; and so there are no knots to untie.

“But now your visible eyes, ears, nose, and tongue, as well as your body and mind are like six thieving matchmakers who plunder the jewels of your own household.

“And, thus, from beginning-less time, because beings and the temporal and spatial world, have been bound up together, beings are unable to transcend the material world.

“Ānanda, how do we define beings and the temporal and spatial world? ‘Temporal’ refers to change and flow; ‘spatial’ refers to location.

“You should know by now that north, east, south, west, northeast, northwest, southeast, southwest, above and below are space. Past, present, and future are periods of time. There are ten directions in space and three periods of time.

“All beings come into being because of false interaction. Their bodies go through changes and they are caught in the temporal and spatial combinations of this world.

“However, although there are ten directions in space, those known in the world as north, south, east, and west are the only ones that can be clearly fixed. Above and below have no position; the intermediates have no definite direction. Determined clearly to be four in number, they are then combined with the three periods of time. Three times four, or, alternately, four times three makes twelve.

“Increase this to the third place; from the tens through the hundreds to the thousands. The greatest possible efficacy of each of the six organs is one thousand two hundred.

“Ānanda, you can thereby establish their value. Consider how the eyes see darkness behind and light in front. The front is totally light; the back is totally dark. With your peripheral vision included, you can see two thirds around at most. Therefore, its capacity can be expressed as an efficacy, which is not complete. One third of its

efficacy is without virtue. Know, then, that the eyes have an efficacy of only eight hundred.

“Consider how the ears hear everywhere in the ten directions, without any loss. They hear movements, whether far or near, and stillness without bounds. Know, then, that the organ of hearing is complete with the efficacy of twelve hundred.

“Consider how the nose smells odors with each inhalation and exhalation of the breath. It is deficient at the point between the inhalation and exhalation. The organ of smell can be considered to be deficient by one third. Know, then, that the nose has an efficacy of only eight hundred.

“Consider how the tongue can proclaim the entirety of worldly and transcendental wisdom. Although language varies according to locality, the principles go beyond boundaries of any kind. Know, then, that the organ of the tongue is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.

“Consider how the body is aware of touch, registering it as pain or pleasure. When it makes contact, it is aware of the thing touched; when is isolation, it has no tactile knowledge of other things. Isolation has a single and contact has a dual aspect. The organ of the body can be considered as deficient by one third. Know, then, that the body has an efficacy of only eight hundred.

“Consider how the mind silently includes all worldly and transcendental dharmas of the ten directions and three periods of time. Regardless of whether it be sagely or ordinary, everything is included in its boundlessness. Know, then, that the organ of the mind is complete with an efficacy of twelve hundred.

“Ánanda, now you wish to oppose the flow of desire that leads to birth and death. You should turn back the flow of the organs to reach a state of neither arising nor ceasing.

“You should investigate all of the six functioning organs to see which are uniting, which are isolated, which are deep, which are shallow, which will penetrate perfectly, and which are not perfect.

“If you can realize which organ penetrates perfectly, you can thereupon reverse the flow of its beginning-less involvement in false

karma and follow that to perfect penetration. The difference between that and an organ which is not perfect is like the difference between a day and an eon.

“I have now revealed to you the fundamental efficacy of the tranquil perfect brightness of these six. This is what the numbers are. It is up to you to select which one to enter. I will explain more to aid your progress in that.

“The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, cultivating by means of one or another of the eighteen realms, attained perfect, unsurpassed Bodhi. For them, any of those eighteen were generally adequate.

“But you are at an inferior level and are not yet able to perfect comfortable wisdom among them. Therefore, I shall give you an explanation, so that you will be able to enter deeply into the door.

“Enter one without falseness, and the six sense organs will be simultaneously pure.

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, how do we oppose the flow, enter deeply into one door, and cause the six organs to simultaneously become pure?”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “You have already obtained the fruition of a Srota-āpanna. You have already put an end to the view-delusions that living beings in the three realms possess, but you do not yet know that your organs have accumulated habits that are without beginning. The severing of these habits must be done through cultivation. Including the numerous subtleties of their arising, dwelling, changing, and ceasing.

“You should now contemplate the six organs further: are they one or six? Ánanda, if you say they are one, why can’t the ears see? Why can’t the eyes hear? Why can’t the head walk? Why can’t the feet talk?

“If the six organs are definitely six, then as I now explain this subtle, wonderful Dharma-door for you in this assembly, which of your six organs is receiving it?” Ánanda said, “I hear it with my ears.”

The Buddha said, “Your ears hear by themselves? What, then, does that have to do with your body and mouth? And yet you ask

about the principles with your mouth, and your body displays veneration.

“Therefore, you should know that if they are not one, then they are six. And if they are not six, they must be one. But you can’t say that your organs are basically one and six.

“Ānanda, you should know that these organs are neither one nor six. It is from being upside–down and sinking into involvements throughout time without beginning that the theory of one and six has become established. As a Srota–apanna, you have dissolved the six, but you still have not done away with the one.

“That is like filling emptiness into differently shaped vessels and then saying that emptiness is whatever shape the vessel is. And then, upon getting rid of the vessels, looking at emptiness and saying it is all the same.

“How can emptiness become the same or different at your convenience? Even less can you call it ‘One’ or ‘not one.’ You should understand that the six receptive functioning organs are the same way.

“Seeing occurs because the two attributes of darkness and light and their like firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of seeing reflects form and combines with forms to become an organ. This organ, which was originally the four pure elements, is called an eye and is shaped like a grape. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs located in the head pursue, this one races out after form.

“Hearing occurs because the two reverberations of movement and stillness and their like firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of hearing reflects sound and resounds with it to become the organ of the ear. The primal composition of the ear–organ is the purely defined four elements. Those portions we call the ears are shaped like fresh–curled leaves. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs pursue, this one is loosed upon sound.

“Smelling occurs because the two appearances of penetration and obstruction and their like firmly adhere to tranquility in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of smelling reflects

the scents and takes in scents to become the organ of the nose. The primal composition of the nose–organ is the purely defined four elements. That portion we call the nose is shaped like a double hanging claw. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs pursue this one probes out after scents.

“Tasting occurs because the two blends of blandness and variety of flavor? And their like firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of tasting reflects flavors and becomes entwined with flavors to become the organ of the tongue. The primal composition of the tongue–organ is in the purely defined four elements. That portion we call the tongue is shaped like a crescent moon. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs pursue this one craves flavors.

“Sensation occurs because the two frictions of separation and union, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of sensation reflects contact and seizes upon contact to become the organ of the body. The primal composition of the body–organ is in the purely defined four elements. The portion we call the body is shaped like a table. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs pursue, this one is compelled by contact.

“Knowing occurs because the two continuities of production and extinction, and their like, firmly adhere to quietude in what originally was wonderful perfection. The essence of knowing reflects dharmas and grasps them to become the organ of the mind. The primal composition of the mind–organ is in the purely defined four elements. Of the four defiling objects that the sense organs pursue, this one chases after dharmas.

“Ánanda, because understanding is added to enlightenment, the six sense–organs lose their essence and adhere to falseness, confining their brilliance.

“Therefore, apart from darkness and light there is no substance to seeing for you now; apart from movement and stillness, there basically is no disposition of hearing; without penetration and obstruction, the nature of smelling does not arise; in the absence of variety and blandness, tasting does not occur; lacking separation and

union, the sensation of contact is fundamentally non-existent; without arising and ceasing, knowing is put to rest.

“You only need not follow the twelve conditioned attributes of movement and stillness, union and separation, blandness and variety, penetration and obstruction, production and extinction, and brightness and darkness.

“Accordingly, extract one organ, free it from adhesion, and subdue it at its inner core. Once subdued, it will return to primal truth and radiate its innate brilliance. When that brilliance shines forth, the remaining five adhesions will be freed to accomplish total liberation.

“Do not follow the knowing and seeing influenced by objects before you. True understanding does not follow from the sense organs. Yet lodged at the organs is the potential to discover mutual functioning of the six organs.

“Ánanda, don't you know that now in this assembly Aniruddha is blind and yet can see; the dragon UpÁnanda is deaf and yet can hear; the spirit of the Ganges River has no nose and yet smells fragrances; Gavampati has an unusual tongue and yet tastes flavor; and the spirit Sunyata has no body and yet is aware of contact? In the light of the Thus Come One, this spirit is illumined temporarily as an ethereal essence without substance. In the same way, Mahakashyapa, who is also in this assembly, dwells in the samádhi of extinction, having obtained the tranquility of a Hearer. He has long since put to rest the mind-organ, and yet he has a perfectly clear knowledge which is not due to the mental process of thinking.

“Ánanda, if you can completely extract all your organs, you will glow with an inner brilliance. Then the ephemeral defiling objects and all the changing phenomena of the material world will become like ice being melted by hot liquid. In response to your mind, the transformation will bring unsurpassed enlightenment.

“Ánanda, consider a person who has confined seeing to his eyes. If you suddenly have him close his eyes, he will see darkness before him. The six organs will be enveloped in total darkness. From head to toe he will experience that. If the person traces the shape of

external things with his hands, then even though he cannot see, he can recognize someone from head and toe. Enlightenment is also like that.

“If light were the condition requisite for seeing, then darkness would bring the absence of seeing. But to perceive without light would mean that no dark manifestation could obscure the seeing.

“Once the organs and objects suddenly melt away, how could the enlightened brightness that results be anything but perfect and wonderful?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, as the Buddha has said, ‘The resolve for enlightenment on the cause–ground which seeks the eternal must be in mutual accord with the ground of fruition.

“World Honored One, the ground of fruition is Bodhi; Nirvana: True Suchness; the Buddha Nature; the Amala–Consciousness; the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One; the great Perfect Mirror–Wisdom. But although it is called by these seven names, it is pure and perfect; its substance is enduring, like royal vajra, eternal and indestructible.

“If the seeing, hearing, and the rest are ultimately devoid of substance apart from light and darkness, movement and stillness, and penetration and obstruction and the rest then they would be like thoughts which, apart from immediate sense–objects, do not exist at all.

“How could an ultimate Annihilationism like that be a cause by which one cultivates in the hope of obtaining the Thus Come Ones’ seven–fold eternal fruition?

“World Honored One, if seeing is ultimately empty apart from light and darkness, just as thoughts cease of themselves in the absence of any immediate sense object.

“Then my comparisons become circular, and no matter how carefully I search, there seems to be no such thing as my mind or what pertains to it. Just what should be used to seek the Unsurpassed Enlightenment?

“The Thus Come One previously referred to a tranquil essence, perfect and eternal. His present contradiction defies belief and is resort

to idle theorizing. How can the Thus Come One's words be true and actual?

"I only hope the Buddha will let fall his great compassion and instruct us who do not understand and who are holding on tightly.

The Buddha told Ánanda, "You study and learn much, but you have not yet put an end to outflows. In your mind you know only the causes of being upside down. But when the true inversion manifests, you really cannot recognize it yet.

"Lest your sincerity and faith remain insufficient, I will try to make use of an ordinary event to dispel your doubts."

Then the Thus Come One instructed Rahula to strike the bell once, and he asked Ánanda, "Did you hear that?"

Ánanda and the members of the great assembly all said, "We heard it."

The bell ceased to sound, and the Buddha again asked, "Do you hear it now?"

Ánanda and the members of the great assembly all said, "We do not hear it."

Then Rahula struck the bell again. The Buddha again asked, "Do you hear it now?"

Ánanda and the great assembly again said, "We hear it."

Ánanda and the members of the great assembly all said to the Buddha, "When the bell is rung, we hear it. Once the sound of the bell ceases, so that even its echo fades away, we do not hear it."

The Thus Come One again instructed Rahula to strike the bell, and asked Ánanda, "Is there a sound now?"

Ánanda and the members of the great assembly all said, "There is a sound."

After a short time the sound ceased, and the Buddha again asked, "Is there a sound now?"

Ánanda and the great assembly answered, "There is no sound."

After a moment, Rahula again struck the bell, and the Buddha again asked, "Is there a sound now?" Ánanda and the great assembly said together, "There is a sound."

The Buddha asked Ánanda, ‘What is meant by ‘sound,’ and what is meant by ‘no sound?’’ Everyone in the great assembly including Ánanda told the Buddha, “When the bell is struck there is a sound. Once the sound ceases and even the echo fades away, there is said to be no sound.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda and the great assembly, “Why are you inconsistent in what you say?”

The great assembly and Ánanda then asked the Buddha, “In what way have we being inconsistent?”

The Buddha said, “When I asked if it was your hearing, you said it was your hearing. Then, when I asked you if it was sound, you said it was sound. I cannot ascertain from your answers if it is hearing or if it is sound. How can you not say that is inconsistent?”

“Ánanda, when the sound is gone without an echo, you say there is no hearing. If there were really no hearing, the hearing–nature would cease to be. It would be just like dead wood. If then the bell were sounded again, how would you know?”

“What you know to be there or not to be there is the defiling object of sound which seems to come into being and cease to be. But how could the hearing–nature be there or not be there? And if the hearing really were, as you contend, not there, who would know it was not there?”

“And so, Ánanda, the sounds that you hear are what rise and cease. Your hearing–nature does not come into being and cease to be based on the arising and ceasing of the sounds you hear.

“You are so upside–down that you mistake sound for hearing. No wonder you are so confused that you take what is eternal to be Annihilationism. Ultimately, you cannot say that there is no hearing–nature apart from movement and stillness, from obstruction and penetration and the rest.

“Consider a person who falls into a deep sleep while napping on his bed. While he is asleep, someone in his household starts beating clothes or pounding rice. In his dream, the person hears the sound of beating and pounding and takes it for something else, perhaps for the

striking of a drum or the ringing of a bell. In his dream he wonders why the bell sounds like stone or wood.

“Suddenly he awakens and immediately recognizes the sound of pounding. He tells the members of his household, “I was just having a dream in which I mistook the sound of pounding for the sound of a drum.”

“Ánanda, how can this person in the dream–state remember stillness and motion, penetrability and obstruction? Although he is physically asleep, his hearing–nature is not unclear.

“Even when your physical existence melts away and your life–force changes and dwindles, how could that nature melt away and be gone from you?

“But because beings, from time without beginning, have pursued forms and sounds and have followed their thoughts as they turn and flow, they still are not enlightened to the wonderful eternal pure nature.

“They do not accord with what is eternal, but chase after things that are subject to arising and ceasing. That is what causes them to be born again and again, flowing and turning in defilement.

“But if they reject arising and ceasing and uphold the eternal truth, an enduring light will appear, and with that, the sense–organs, defiling objects, and consciousnesses will disappear.

“Then you must maintain your distance from the defilements of the manifestations of thinking and the emotional states of consciousness. Then your Dharma–eye will accordingly become pure and bright. And, how can you fail to realize Unsurpassed Enlightenment?”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, although the Thus Come One has explained this second absolute, as I now regard someone who wants to untie a knot, if he cannot find its center, he will never get the knot undone.

“World Honored One, I and all other Hearers in the great assembly who are not beyond study are the same way. From time without beginning we have been accompanied in birth and death by ignorance. We have obtained these good roots of erudition and are

said to have left the home life, yet in fact we act like someone with recurrent malaria.

“I only hope, Greatly Compassionate One, that you will take pity on us who are sinking and drowning. What are the knots in our body and mind and how do we untie them? Your explanation will also enable future beings who are in suffering and difficulty to avoid the cycle of rebirth and keep them from falling into the three realms of existence.”

After saying that, he and everyone in the entire great assembly made full prostrations. He wept profusely, and with sincere anticipation awaited the unsurpassed instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One.

Then the World Honored One took pity on Ánanda and those in the assembly with something left to study, as well as on beings of the future who have the potential to transcend the world and to develop insight.

He rubbed the crown of Ánanda’s head with his hand that shone with Jambunada purple–golden light. Instantaneously all the Buddha lands of the ten directions quaked in six ways.

Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust, each dwelling in his respective world, emitted a precious light from the crowns of his head.

At one and the same time their light went from their own countries to the Jeta Grove and anointed the crown of the Thus Come One’s head. All in the assembly received unprecedented benefits.

Then Ánanda and everyone in the great assembly heard the Thus Come Ones as numerous as fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions speak to Ánanda with different mouths but with a single voice.

“Good indeed, Ánanda! You wish to recognize your innate ignorance that causes you to turn on the wheel. The origin of the knot of birth and death is simply your six sense organs and nothing else.

“You also want to understand unsurpassed Bodhi, so that you can quickly realize bliss, liberation, tranquility, and wonderful permanence. It, too, is your six sense organs and nothing else.”

Although Ānanda heard those sounds of Dharma, he did not yet understand them. Bowing his head, he said to the Buddha, “How can what causes me to revolve in the cycle of birth and death and what enables me to gain bliss and wonderful eternity be the six sense–organs in both cases and nothing else?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “The sense–organs and the objects are the same source. The bonds and their release are not different things. The nature of the consciousness is empty and false, like flowers in space.

“Ānanda, awareness arises because of defiling objects. Phenomena exist because of the sense organs. The phenomena and the perception are both devoid of their own natures. They support each other like intertwining reeds.

“Therefore, creating knowledge within enlightened perception is fundamental ignorance. To be devoid of perception within enlightened perception is the non–outflow true purity of Nirvana. Why try to put something else in these?”

Then the World Honored One, wishing to restate that meaning, spoke verses, saying:

“In the true nature, conditioned things are empty.
Conditions that arise are like illusions.
Things unconditioned neither arise nor cease.
Unreal they are, like flowers in space.

“To speak of the false is to reveal the true.
But both the false and the true are false themselves.
Since there is neither truth nor untruth,
How could there be perceiver and perceived?

“Between the two no real nature exists;
Thus they are likened to entwining reeds.
The knots and their release have a common cause.
The sages and ordinary people’s path are not two.

“Regard the nature of the intertwined:

They are neither empty nor existent.
Dark confusion is simply ignorance;
Bringing it to light is liberation.

“The knots must be untied successively,
When the six are released,
Even the one ceases to be.
Select an organ preferred for perfect penetration;
Enter the flow and realize proper enlightenment.

“Extremely subtle, the Adana consciousness,
Makes patterns of habit that flow on in torrents.
Fearing you will confuse the truth with what is not,
I rarely tell you of all this.

“With your own mind, you grasp at your own mind;
What is not illusory turns into illusion.
Do not grasp and nothing will not be illusion.
Since even non-illusion does not arise,
How can illusory dharmas be established?
This is called the Wonderful Lotus Flower,
The Regal Vajra Gem of Enlightenment.

“In this Samapatti that is likened to illusion,
Transcend to the level beyond learning.

“This Abhidharma, incomparable,
Is the single pathway through Nirvana’s gate,
Taken by Bhagavans in all the ten directions.”

When Ánanda and the great assembly heard the unsurpassed, compassionate instruction of the Buddha, the Thus Come One, this harmonious and brilliant Geya verse with its clear and penetrating wonderful principles, their hearts and eyes were opened, and they exclaimed that this Dharma was unprecedented.

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Ánanda put his palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, “Having heard the Buddha’s unrestrained, greatly kind, true and actual expression of Dharma that is pure in nature and wonderfully eternal, I still have not understood the sequence for releasing the knots so that when the six are untied, the one is gone also. I only hope you will be compassionate, and once again empathize with this assembly and those of the future, by offering us explanation of the Dharma to wash and rinse away our deep-rooted defilements.

Then, upon the lion’s throne, the Thus Come One straightened his Nirvana robes, arranged his samghati sash, took hold of the table inlaid with the seven gems, reached out onto the table and picked up an exquisitely beautiful cloth given him by a god from the Suyama Heaven.

Then, as the assembly watched, he tied it into a knot and showed it to Ánanda, asking, “What is this called?”

Ánanda and the great assembly answered together, “It is called a knot.”

Then the Thus Come One tied another knot in the beautiful cloth and asked Ánanda again, “What is this called?”

Ánanda and the great assembly once again answered together, “It, too, is called a knot.”

He continued in this pattern until he had tied six knots in the beautiful cloth. As he made each knot, he held it up to Ánanda and asked, “What is this called?”

And each time Ánanda and the great assembly answered the Buddha in the same way: “It is called a knot.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “When I first tied the cloth, you called it a knot. Since the beautiful cloth is basically a single strip how could you give the same answer for the second and third time?”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, this beautiful cloth is just one piece, but the way I understand it, when the Thus Come One makes one tie, it is called a knot. If he were to make

a hundred ties, they would be called a hundred knots. And so now that exactly six knots—not five or seven—have been tied in the cloth, why does the Thus Come One only allow me to speak of one knot and not of two or three?”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “You know that this precious cloth is basically one strip, but when I made six ties in it, you said it had six knots. Carefully consider the substance of the cloth: it remains unchanged except for the knots in it.

“What do you think? You identified the first knot I tied as number one. Now I am ready to tie the sixth knot. Will you also call it number one?”

“No, World Honored One. If there are six knots, the sixth knot can never be called the first one. Even if I exhausted all my intelligence and eloquence in life after life, I could reverse the sequence of these six knots.

The Buddha said, “So it is. The six knots are not identical. Consider their origin: they are created from the one cloth and were tied in a certain order. It would be impossible to scramble that sequence.

“Your six sense organs are also like that. From what was identical, decisive differences arise.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Assuming you did not want these six knots and would like there to be just one cloth, how could you achieve that end?”

Ánanda said, “As long as these knots remain, dispute about what they are and what they are not will arise. Their very existence will lead to such distinctions as this knot not being that knot and that knot not being this one. But if the Thus Come One were to untie them all right now, so that none remained, then there would be no ‘this’ or ‘that.’ There would not even be anything called ‘one,’ how much the less ‘six.’”

The Buddha said, “That is also what happens when the six sense organs are freed: even the one is gone.

“Because from beginning-less time your mind and nature have been insane and disturbed, you have created false knowledge and

views. As that falseness continues to arise without respite, perception becomes weary and defilements arise.

“Just like the whirling flowers that appeared when the eyes grew tired of staring, these too are disturbances that arise without a cause within the tranquil, essential brightness.

“Everything in the world—the mountains, the rivers, the earth itself, as well as birth, death, and Nirvana—is these flowers that appear because of our being turned upside-down by insanity and weariness.”

Ánanda said, “This weariness is the same as these knots. How do we untie them?”

The Thus Come One took hold of the knotted cloth, pulled on its left end, and asked Ánanda, “Is this the way to untie them?”

“No, World Honored One.”

Then the Buddha pulled on the right end and again asked Ánanda, “Is this the way to untie them?”

“No, World Honored One.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “Now I have pulled the cloth left and right and still have not been able to undo the knots. What method do you propose for untying them?”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, you must untie the knots from their center. Then they will come undone.”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “So it is, so it is. If you want to undo them, you have to untie them from the center.

“Ánanda, the Buddha Dharma I explain arises from causes and conditions. But that does not imply grasping at the mixing and uniting of coarse, worldly appearances. The Thus Come One understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas and knows their fundamental causes and what conditions bring them into being.

“This is so to the extent that I know how many drops of rain fall in as many worlds away from here as there are dust motes in the Ganges. The same is true of all the things you can see: Why the pine is straight, why the brambles are twisted, why the goose is white, why the crow is black—I understand all these reasons.

“Therefore, Ānanda, you can select whichever one of the six sense organs you wish. If the knots of the sense organs are removed, then the defiling phenomena disappear of themselves and all falseness ceases to be. If what remains is not the truth, then where do you expect to find the truth?”

“Ānanda, I now ask you, can the six knots beautiful cloth be untied simultaneously and released all at once?”

“No, World Honored One. As the knots were originally made in sequence, now they must be untied in sequence. The substance of the six knots is the same, but they were not made simultaneously, and so now when they are undone, how could they be untied simultaneously?”

The Buddha said, “Releasing the six sense–organs is the same way.

When the sense organ begins to be released, one realizes the emptiness of people first. When the nature of that emptiness is fully understood, then one is released from dharmas. Once one is freed from dharmas, neither kind of emptiness will arise.

“That is called the Patience with Non–Production that Bodhisattvas attain by means of samādhi.”

Upon receiving the Buddha’s instruction, Ānanda, and the great assembly gained wisdom and awareness that was perfectly penetrating and free of doubt and delusion.

All at the same time, they placed their palms together, and bowed at the Buddha’s feet. Ānanda then said to the Buddha, “Today our bodies and minds are illumined, and we are happily free from obstruction.

“We have understood the meaning of the ending of the six and the one. Still, we have not yet progressed to fundamental, perfect penetration.

“World Honored One, we who have drifted and floundered our way through eon after eon, homeless and alone, had no idea; we never imagined that we could meet the Buddha in such a close relationship. We are like lost infants who have suddenly found their compassionate mother.

If because of this encounter we realize the Way, [it will not have been in vain]. If we treat these secret instructions with our former mode of understanding, it will be the same as if we hadn't even heard them.

“We only wish the Greatly Compassionate One will bestow upon us the profound secret as the Thus Come One's final instruction.” After saying this Ánanda prostrated himself, withdrew, and silently anticipated the Buddha's hidden transmission.

Then the World Honored One told all those in the assembly who were great Bodhisattvas and great Arhats with their outflows extinguished, “All of you Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are born from within my Dharma and have attained the stage beyond study, I now ask you: When you first brought forth your resolve and became enlightened to the eighteen realms, which one of these brought perfect penetration? Through which expedient did you enter samádhi?”

“Kaundinya, with the others of the first five Bhikshus, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, “When I was in the Deer Park and the Pheasant Garden, I observed the Thus Come One immediately after his accomplishment of the Way. Upon hearing the Buddha's voice, I understood the Four Truths.

“The Buddha is questioning us Bhikshus. As I was the first to understand, the Thus Come One certified me and named me Ajnata. His wonderful sound was both secret and all pervasive. It was through sound that I became an Arhat.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, sound is the foremost means.”

Upanishad arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, “I also saw the Buddha when he first accomplished the Way. I learned to contemplate the attributes of impurity until I grew to loathe it and came to understand that the nature of all forms is unclean. Bare bones and fine dust all return to emptiness, and so both emptiness and forms are done away with. With this realization, I accomplished the path beyond study.

“The Thus Come One certified me and named me Upanishad. Objects of form came to an end, and wonderful form was both secret

and all pervasive. Thus, it was through the attributes of forms that I became an Arhat. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, forms are the foremost means.”

The pure youth, Exalted by Fragrance, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I heard the Thus Come One teach me to contemplate attentively all conditioned phenomena.

“I then left the Buddha and dwelt quietly in a pure abode. I observed that when the Bhikshus lit ‘sinking’ incense, its fragrant scent quietly entered my nostrils. I contemplated this fragrance: it did not come from the wood; it did not come from emptiness; it did not come from the smoke, and it did not come from the fire. There was no place it came from and no place it went to. Because of that, my discriminating mind was dispelled, and I attained the absence of outflows.

“The Thus Come One certified me and called me Exalted by Fragrance. Defiling scents suddenly vanished, and the wonderful fragrance was both secret and all pervasive. It was through the adornment of fragrance that I became an Arhat.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, being exalted by fragrances are the foremost means.”

The two Dharma-Princes, Medicine King and Superior Medicine, and five hundred Brahma gods in the assembly arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, From beginning-less eons until now, we have been good doctors for the world. Our mouths have tasted many herbs, wood, metals, and stones of the Saha world, a hundred and eight thousand flavors. We know in detail the bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, and the like, in all their combinations and inherent changes. We have a thorough knowledge of whether they are cooling or warming, poisonous or non-poisonous.

“While serving the Thus Come One we came to know that the nature of flavors is neither empty nor existent, nor of the body or of the mind, nor apart from body or the mind. We became enlightened by discriminating among flavors.

“The Thus Come One sealed and certified us brothers and named us Bodhisattvas Medicine King and Superior Medicine. Now in the assembly we are Dharma Princes who have ascended to the Bodhisattva level due to having become enlightened by means of flavors.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As we have been certified to it, the cause of flavors is the foremost means.”

Bhadrapala and sixteen awakened lords who were his companions, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

“We first heard the Dharma and left the home life under King of Awesome Sound Buddha. Once, when it was time for the Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse. Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body. And in that moment I became peaceful and attained the state of there being nothing at all.

“To this day, I have never forgotten that experience. Having left home with the Buddha, I have advanced beyond study. The Buddha named me Bhadrapala. Wonderful touch was revealed, and I reached the level of being a disciple of the Buddha.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch is the foremost means.”

Mahakashyapa, Bhikkhuní Purple–golden Light and others arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

“In a past eon in this region, I drew near to the Buddha named Sun, Moon, and Lamp, who was then in the world. I heard the Dharma from him and cultivated and studied with him. After that Buddha entered tranquility, I made offerings to his sharira and lit lamps to continue his light. Bhikkhuní Purple–Golden–Light gilded the Buddha’s image. From that time on, in life after life, my body has always been perfect and has shone with a purple–golden light. The Bhikkhuní Purple–Golden Light, and others make up my retinue, and we all brought forth the resolve for Bodhi at the same time.

“I contemplated that the world’s six sense–objects change and decay; they are but empty stillness. Based on this, I cultivated tranquility. Now my body and mind can pass through hundreds of thousands of eons as though they were a finger–snap.

“Based on the emptiness of dharmas, I accomplished Arhat–ship. The World Honored One says that I am foremost in dhuta ascetic practices.

Wonderful Dharma brought me awakening and understanding, and I put an end to all outflows. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, dharmas are the foremost means.”

Aniruddha arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “When I first left home, I was fond of sleeping all the time. The Thus Come One scolded me and said I was no better than an animal. When I heard the Buddha’s scolding, I wept and upbraided myself. For seven days I did not sleep, and I lost the sight in both my eyes.

“The World Honored One taught me the Vajra Samádhi of the Delightful Seeing, which Illumines and is Bright. Without using my eyes, I could contemplate the ten directions with true and penetrating clarity, just as if I were looking at a piece of fruit in the palm of my hand. The Thus Come One certified me as having attained Arhat–ship.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning the seeing back to its source is the foremost means.”

Kshudrapanthaka arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

“I am deficient in the ability to memorize and do not have much innate intelligence. When I first met the Buddha, I heard the Dharma and left the home life. But, when I tried to remember one line of a verse by the Thus Come One, I spent a hundred days remembering the first part and forgetting the last, or remembering the last and forgetting the first.

“The Buddha pitied my dullness and taught me to relax and to regulate my breath. I contemplated my breath thoroughly to the subtle

point in which arising, dwelling, decay, and ceasing happen in every moment.

“My mind suddenly attained vast non-obstruction, until my outflows were ended and I accomplished Arhat-ship. Beneath the Buddha’s seat I was sealed and certified as being beyond study.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, turning the breath back to emptiness is the foremost means.”

Gavampati arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I created an offense that resulted in mouth karma in a past eon. I slighted a Shramana, and in life after life I’ve had this cow-cud sickness.

“The Thus Come One taught me the mind-ground Dharma-door of the purity of a single flavor. My thoughts ended, I entered samádhi, and learned by contemplating flavors—how they have no substance and are not things. As a result my mind transcended all worldly outflows.

“Internally my body and mind were liberated and externally I abandoned the world. I left the three realms of existence far behind, just like a bird released from its cage. I separated from filth and wiped out defilements, and so my Dharma eye became pure, and I accomplished Arhat-ship. The Thus Come One personally certified me as having ascended to the stage beyond study.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning flavor and turning awareness around is the foremost means.”

Pilindavatsa arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

“When I first resolved to follow the Buddha and enter the Way, I often heard the Thus Come One explain how there is nothing in this world that brings happiness. Once, when I was on alms rounds in the city, I was reflecting on this Dharma-door and did not notice a poisonous thorn on the road until it had pricked my foot. My mind was aware of the strong physical pain, but although my awareness

experienced the pain, I was also aware that in my pure heart there was neither pain nor awareness of it.

“I also thought, ‘Is it possible for one body to have two awareness’s?’

Having reflected on this for a short while, my body and mind became suddenly empty. After twenty–one days, my outflows disappeared and I accomplished Arhat–ship. The Buddha personally certified me and confirmed that I had realized the level beyond study.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, purifying the awareness and forgetting the body is the foremost means.”

Subhuti arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “From distant eons until now, my mind has been unobstructed. I remember as many of my past lives as there are sand grains in the Ganges.

From the beginning, in my mother’s womb, I knew emptiness and tranquility, to the extent that the ten directions became empty and I caused beings to be certified to the nature of emptiness.

“Having received the Thus Come One’s revelation that the enlightened nature is true emptiness and that the nature of emptiness is perfect and bright, I attained Arhat–ship. I suddenly entered into the Thus Come One’s sea of magnificent, bright emptiness. My knowledge and views became identical with the Buddhas. I was certified as being beyond study. In the liberation of the nature of emptiness, I am unsurpassed.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, all phenomena enter into nothingness until nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear. Turning dharmas back to the void is the foremost means.”

Shariputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “From distant eons until the present, my mind and views have been pure. In this way I have undergone as many births as there are sand grains in the Ganges. At one glance I am able to understand all the various transformations and changes of both what is worldly and what is world transcending without any obstruction.

“Once I met the Kasyapa brothers on the road, and walked along with them. They spoke about causes and conditions, and I awakened to the boundlessness of my mind.

“I followed the Buddha and left the home life. My seeing–awareness became bright and perfect, I obtained great fearlessness and became an Arhat. As one of the Buddha’s elder disciples, I am born from the Buddha’s mouth, transformation ally born from the Dharma.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, for the mind and the seeing to emit light and for the light to radiate throughout both knowing and seeing is the foremost means.”

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I have been a Dharma Prince with as many Thus Come Ones as there are sand grains in the Ganges. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions tell their disciples who have the roots of a Bodhisattva to cultivate the Universal Worthy conduct, which is named after me.

“World Honored One, I use my mind to listen and distinguish the knowledge and views of beings.

In other regions as many realms away as there are sand grains in the Ganges, for each being who resolves to practice the conduct of Universal Worthy, I immediately mount my six–tusked elephant and create hundreds of thousands of reduplicated bodies which go to those places. Although their obstacles may be so heavy that they cannot see me, I secretly rub their crowns, protect and comfort them, and help them succeed.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The basic cause I speak of is listening with the mind, distinguishing at ease, and emitting light. This is the foremost means.”

SundarÁnanda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “When I first left home and followed the Buddha to enter the Way, I received the complete precepts, but my mind was always too scattered for samádhi, and I could not attain the state of having no outflows. The World Honored One taught

Kaushthila and me to contemplate the white spot at the tip of our noses.

“From the first, I contemplated intently. After three weeks, I saw that when I inhaled and exhaled, the breath in my nostrils looked like smoke. Internally my body and mind became bright, and externally I perfectly understood that the world was like crystal, empty and pure. The smoky appearance gradually disappeared, and the breath in my nostrils became white.

“My mind opened and my outflows were ended. Every inhalation and exhalation of breath was transformed into light, which illumined the ten directions, and I attained Arhat-ship. The World Honored One predicted that in the future I would obtain Bodhi.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I did it by means of the disappearance of the breath, until eventually the breath emitted light and the light completely extinguished my outflows. That is the foremost means.”

Purnamaitreyaniputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “For vast eons I have possessed unobstructed eloquence. When I discuss suffering and emptiness I penetrate deeply into ultimate reality. In the same way, I feel no fear as I give subtle, wonderful instruction to the assembly concerning the secret Dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sand grains in the Ganges.

“The World Honored One knew that I had great eloquence, and, using his sound to turn the Dharma wheel, taught me to propagate the Dharma. I joined the Buddha to help him turn the Dharma wheel. I accomplished Arhat-ship due to his lion’s roar. The World Honored One certified me as being foremost in speaking Dharma.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the sounds of Dharma to subdue demons and adversaries and to melt away my outflows. That is the foremost means.”

Upali arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home life. I observed the Thus Come One endure six years

of diligent asceticism. I watched the Thus Come One subdue all the demons, and adherents of external paths and become liberated from all outflows based on worldly desire and greed.

“I based myself on the Buddha’s teaching of precepts, encompassing the three thousand awesome deportments and the eighty thousand subtle aspects until both my karma of the nature and karma of restraint became pure. My body and mind became tranquil, and I accomplished Arhat-ship.

“In the Thus Come One’s assembly, I record the rules governing discipline. The Buddha himself certified my mind’s upholding of the precepts and my genuine cultivation of them. I am considered a leader of the assembly.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I disciplined the body until it attained ease and comfort. Then I disciplined the mind until it attained penetrating clarity. After that, both body and mind experienced keen and thorough absorption. That is the foremost means.”

Maha Maudgalyayana arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “Once when I was out on the road doing alms rounds, I met the three Kasyapa brothers—Uruvilva, Gaya, and Nadi—who proclaimed for me the Thus Come One’s profound principle of causes and conditions. I immediately brought forth the resolve and obtained a great understanding.

“The Thus Come One accepted me, I was spontaneously clad in the kashaya and my hair and beard fell out by themselves. I roamed the ten directions, having no impeding obstructions. My spiritual penetrations, which are esteemed as unsurpassed, and I accomplished Arhat-ship.

“Not only the World Honored One, but the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions praise my spiritual powers as being perfectly clear and pure, masterful, and fearless.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. By means of unrelenting attention to the profound, the light of my mind was revealed, just as water becomes clear when the mud settles. Eventually my mind became pure and lustrous. That is the foremost means.”

Ucchushma came before the Buddha, put his palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to him, "I can still remember how many eons ago I was filled with excessive greed and desire. The Buddha named King of Emptiness was in the world, and he said that people with too much lustful desire turn into a raging mass of fire. He taught me to contemplate the coolness and warmth found throughout my entire body.

"A spiritual light coalesced inside me and transformed my thoughts of excessive lust into the fire of wisdom. After that, all the Buddhas referred to me by the name Fire-Head.

"Due to the strength of this Fire-light Samádhi, I accomplished Arhat-ship. I made a great vow that when any Buddha accomplishes the Way, I will be a powerful knight and personally subdue the demons' enmity.

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used attentive contemplation of the effects of heat in my body and mind until it became unobstructed and penetrating and all my outflows were consumed. I produced a blazing brilliance and ascended to enlightenment. That is the foremost means."

The Bodhisattva Maintaining the Earth arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember when Universal Light Thus Come One appeared in the world in the past. I was a Bhikshu who continually worked on making level the major roads, ferry-landings, and the dangerous spots in the ground, where the disrepair might hinder or harm horse carriages. I did everything from building bridges to hauling sand.

"Throughout the appearance of limitless Buddhas in the world I was diligent in this hard labor. If there were people waiting by the walls and gates of the cities who needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them all the way to their destination, set the things down, and leave without taking any recompense.

"When the Buddha Vipashyin appeared in the world, there was widespread famine. I would carry people on my back, and no matter how far the distance, I would accept only one small coin. If there was

an ox–cart stuck in the mud, I would use my spiritual strength to push the wheels out and resolve the hardship.

“Once a king asked the Buddha to attend a vegetarian feast. At that time, I served the Buddha by leveling the road for him as he went. Vipashyin Thus Come One rubbed my crown and said, ‘You should level your mind–ground, then everything else in the world would be level.’

“Immediately my mind opened up and I saw how the particles of earth composing my own body were no different from all the particles of earth that made up the world. These particles of dust do not conflict with our nature, to the point that not even the blade of a sword could harm it.

“Within the Dharma–nature I awakened to the patience with the non–production of dharmas and accomplished Arhat–ship. My mind has returned and I have now entered the ranks of the Bodhisattvas. Hearing that Thus Come One proclaim the Wonderful Lotus Flower, the level of the Buddha’s knowledge and vision, I have already been certified as having understood and am a leader in the assembly.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Upon attentive contemplation of the body and the environment, I saw that these two defiling dusts are exactly the same. Fundamentally everything is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but then falseness arises and creates the defiling dust. When the defiling dust is eliminated, wisdom is perfected, and one accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. That is the foremost means.”

The Pure Youth Moonlight arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember that long ago, beyond eons as many as there are sand grains in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Water–God, who taught all the Bodhisattvas to cultivate the contemplation of water and enter samádhi.

“I reflected upon how throughout the body the essence of water is not in discord. I started with mucus, phlegm, saliva, marrow, and blood, and went through to urine and excrement. As it circulated

through my body, the nature of water remained the same. I saw that the water in my body was not at all different from that in the world outside, even that in royal lands of floating banners with all their seas of fragrant waters.

“At that time, when I first succeeded in the contemplation of water, I could see only water. I still had not gotten beyond my physical body.

“I was a Bhikshu then, and once when I was in Dhyana repose in my room, a disciple of mine peeked in the window and saw only clear water filling the entire room. He saw nothing else.

“The lad was young, and not knowing any better, he picked up a tile and tossed it into the water. It hit the water with a ‘plunk.’ He gazed around and then left. When I came out of concentration, I was suddenly aware of a pain in my heart, and I felt like Shariputra must have felt when he met that cruel ghost.

“I thought, ‘I am already an Arhat and have long since abandoned conditions that bring on illness. Why do I suddenly have this pain in my heart? Am I about to lose the position of non-retreat?’

“Just then, the young lad came promptly to me and related what had happened. I quickly said to him, ‘When you see the water again, open the door, wade into the water, and remove the tile.’ The boy was obedient, so when I re-entered samādhi, he again saw the water and the tile as well, opened the door, and took it out. When I came out of concentration, my body was as it had been before.

“I encountered limitless Buddhas and cultivated in that way until the coming of the Thus Come One, King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas. Then I finally had no body. My nature and the seas of fragrant waters throughout the ten directions were identical with True Emptiness, without any duality or difference. Now I am with the Thus Come One and am known as a Pure Youth, and I have joined the assembly of Bodhisattvas.

I penetrated through to the flow of a single flavor, obtained patience with the non-production of dharmas, and reached the perfection of Bodhi. That is the foremost means.”

The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember back through eons as many as sand grains in the Ganges to the time of a Buddha named Limitless Sound, who instructed the Bodhisattvas that fundamental enlightenment is wonderful and bright. He taught them to contemplate this world and all the beings' physical bodies as being false conditions propelled by the power of wind.

"At that time, I contemplated the position of the world, and I regarded the passage of time in the world. I reflected on the motion and stillness of my body. I considered the arising of thoughts in my mind. There was no difference among all these kinds of motion; they were all the same.

"I then understood that the nature of movement does not come from anywhere, nor does it go anywhere. Every single material particle throughout the ten directions and every deluded being is of the same empty falseness.

"Eventually the beings in each of the worlds of the three-thousand-great-thousand world system were like so many mosquitoes confined in a vessel, droning monotonously. Caught in those few square inches, their hum built to a maddening crescendo. Not long after I encountered the Buddha, I attained patience with non-existence of beings and dharmas.

"My mind then opened, and I could see the country of the Buddha Unmoving in the east. I became a Dharma Prince and served the Buddhas of the ten directions. My body and mind emit a light that makes them completely clear and translucent.

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I contemplated the power of wind as lacking anything to rely on, awakened to the Bodhi-mind and entered samádhi, meshing with the single, wonderful mind transmitted by all the Buddhas of the ten directions. That is the foremost means."

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "The Thus Come One and I attained boundless bodies when with the Buddha Samádhi-Light.

“At that time I held in my hands four huge precious pearls, which shone on Buddha lands as many as the motes of dust in the ten directions, transforming them into emptiness.

“In my mind there appeared a great, perfect mirror and from it issued forth ten kinds of subtle, wonderful precious light that poured out into the ten directions to the farthest bounds of emptiness.

“All the royal lands adorned with banners were reflected in this mirror and passed through my body. This interaction was totally unhindered, because my body was like emptiness.

“Because my mind had become completely compliant, I could enter with ease as many countries as there are fine motes of dust and could do the Buddha’s work on a wide scale.

“I achieved this great spiritual power from contemplating in detail how the four elements lack any reliance; how the arising and ceasing of false thoughts is no different from emptiness; how all the Buddha lands are basically the same. Once I realized this identity, I obtained patience with the non-existence of beings and dharmas.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the contemplation of the boundlessness of emptiness to enter samádhi and attain wonderful power and perfect clarity. That is the foremost means.”

Maitreya Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember when, as many eons ago as there are fine motes of dust, a Buddha named Light of Sun, Moon and Lamp appeared in the world. Under that Buddha I left the home life; yet I was deeply committed to worldly fame and liked to associate with people of good families.

“Then the World Honored One taught me to cultivate Consciousness-only Concentration, and I entered that samádhi. For many eons I have made use of that samádhi as I served as many Buddhas as there are sand grains in the Ganges. My seeking for worldly name and fame ceased completely and never recurred.

“When Burning Lamp Buddha appeared in the world, I finally accomplished the unsurpassed, wonderfully perfect Samádhi of Consciousness.

“I went on until, to the ends of empty space, all the lands of the Thus Come One, whether pure or defiled, existent or non-existent, were transformations appearing from my own mind.

“World Honored One, because I understand Consciousness Only, limitless Thus Come Ones flow forth from this nature of consciousness.

Now I have received the prediction that I will be the next to take the Buddha’s place.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I intensely contemplated the ten directions as originating only from consciousness. When the consciousness is perfect and bright, one perfects wisdom that perceives ultimate reality. One leaves behind reliance on others and attachment to incessant calculating and attains the patience with the non-existence of beings and dharmas. That is the foremost means.”

The Dharma Prince Great Strength, together with fifty-two fellow-Bodhisattvas, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

“I remember when, as many eons ago as there are sand grains in the Ganges River, a Buddha called Limitless Light appeared in the world. During that same eon, there were twelve successive Thus Come Ones, the last of whom was called Light Surpassing the Sun and the Moon Buddha. Those Buddhas taught me the Buddha-recitation Samádhi:

“Suppose there are two people, one of whom always remembers the other, while the other has entirely forgotten about the first one. Even if these two people were to meet or see each other, it would be the same as not meeting or seeing each other.

“On the other hand, if two people develop intense memories for one another, then in life after life, they will be together like an object and its shadow, and they will never be separated. “The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are tenderly mindful of living beings just like a mother remembering her son. But if the son runs away, of what use is the mother’s concern? However, if the son remembers his

mother in the same way that the mother remembers her son, then in life after life mother and son will never be far apart.

“If living beings remember the Buddha and are mindful of the Buddha, they will certainly see the Buddha now and in the future.

“Being close to the Buddha, even without the aid of expedients, they will awaken by themselves.

“That is like a person who, once perfumed by incense, carries the fragrance on his body. That is called the adornment of fragrance and light.

“On the causal ground, I used mindfulness of the Buddha to be patient with the non-arising of both beings and dharmas. Now in this world I gather in all those who are mindful of the Buddha, and I bring them back to the Pure Land.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I would select none other than gathering in the six sense faculties through continuous pure mindfulness of the Buddha to obtain samádhi. That is the foremost means.”

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When Contemplator of the World’s Sounds Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

World Honored One, I remember when, as many eons ago as there are sand grains in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Contemplator of the World’s Sounds. I brought forth the Bodhi-resolve while with that Buddha, who taught me to enter samādhi through a process of hearing and reflecting.

“Initially, I entered into the flow of hearing and forgot the place of entry. Since both that place and the entry were quiet, the two attributes of motion and stillness cancelled each other out and did not arise. After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared.

Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on, and both awareness and its objects became empty. When the emptiness of awareness was ultimately perfected, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be. With arising and ceasing gone, tranquility was revealed.

“Suddenly I transcended the worldly and transcendental, and a perfect brightness prevailed throughout the ten directions. I obtained two supreme states.

First, I united above with the fundamental wonderfully enlightened mind of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and gained a strength of compassion equal to that of all Buddhas, Thus Come Ones.

“Second, I united below with all beings in the six paths, and gained a kind regard for all living beings.

“World Honored One, because I served and made offerings to the Thus Come One Contemplator of Sounds, I received from that Thus Come One a transmission of the Vajra Samádhi of All Being like an Illusion as One becomes Permeated with Hearing and Cultivates Hearing. Because I gained a strength of compassion equal to that of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, I attained thirty-two response-bodies and entered all lands.

“World Honored One, if Bodhisattvas enter samádhi and progress in their cultivation until they end outflows and display the perfection of superior understanding, I will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

If those who are studying are tranquil and have wonderful clarity and display the perfection of superior magnificence, I will appear before them in the body of a Solitarily Enlightened One and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

“If those who are studying have severed the twelve causal conditions, and, having severed those conditions, reveal a supreme nature, and display the perfection of magnificence, I will appear before them in the body of One Enlightened to Conditions and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

“If those who are studying have attained the emptiness of the Four Truths, and, through cultivation of the Way, can enter tranquility and display the perfection of the magnificent nature, I will appear before them in the body of a Hearer and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

“If beings wish to have clear and awakened minds and so do not indulge mundane desires, wishing to purify their bodies, I will

appear before them in the body of a Brahma King and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

“If beings wish to be the heavenly rulers and lead heavenly beings, I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If beings wish to attain physical self-mastery and to roam throughout the ten directions, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the Heaven of Self-mastery and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If beings wish to attain physical self-mastery and fly through space, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the Heaven of Great Self-mastery and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If beings are fond of ruling over ghosts and spirits in order to rescue and protect their nations, I will appear before them in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If beings like to govern the world in order to protect beings, I will appear before them in the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If beings enjoy being born in the heavenly palaces and commanding ghosts and spirits, I will appear before them in the body of a prince from the kingdoms of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If beings would like to be kings of people, I will appear before them in the body of a human king and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If beings enjoy being heads of clans whom those of the world respect and yield to, I will appear before them in the body of an elder and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If beings delight in discussing the classics and keeping themselves lofty and pure, I will appear before them in the body of an Upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If beings enjoy governing the country and handling matters of state, I will appear before them in the body of an official and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If beings like divination and incantations and wish to guard and protect themselves, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If men who are fond of study and want to leave the home life and uphold the precepts and rules, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshu and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If women who are fond of study and would like to leave the home life and hold the pure precepts, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhiksuni and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If men delight in upholding the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an Upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. If women wish to hold the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an Upasika and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If women want to govern internal affairs of household or country, I will appear before them in the body of a queen, noblewoman, or a tutor of court ladies and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If young men wish to remain pure, I will appear before them in the body of a virgin youth and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If maidens want to remain virgins and do not wish to marry, I will appear before them in the body of a virgin maiden and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If heavenly beings wish to escape their heavenly destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a god and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If dragons want to quit their lot of being dragons, I will appear before them in the body of a dragon and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If yakshas want to get out of their present fate, I will appear before them in the body of a yaksha and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If gandharvas wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a gandharva and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If asuras wish to be liberated from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of an asura and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If kimnaras wish to transcend their fate, I will appear before them in the body of a kimnara and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

If mahoragas wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a mahoraga and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If human beings like being people and cultivating, I will appear before them in a human body and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“If non–humans, whether with form or without form, whether with thought or without thought, long to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body like theirs and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

“These are called the wonderfully pure thirty–two response–bodies that enter into all lands. They come into being through the effortless wonderful strength and self–mastery of the Samádhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing.

“World Honored One, also due to the effortless wonderful strength of this Vajra Samádhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing, I have a kind empathy for all beings in the six paths throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time. Based on my physical and mental accomplishments, I can cause beings

who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtues of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.

First: because I do not contemplate sounds themselves, but rather the contemplator, I can enable beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds of reciting my name.

Second: since I am able to turn my knowledge and views inward, I can keep beings who are caught in a raging fire from being burned.

Third: since I am able to turn my contemplation and listening inward, I can keep beings who are floundering in deep water from being drowned.

Fourth, since my false thinking is cut off and my mind is without thoughts of killing or harming, I can keep beings who enter the territory of ghosts from being harmed.

Fifth: since I am permeated with hearing and have realized what hearing is, so that the six sense organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing, I can keep beings from being wounded, by causing the knives to break into pieces. I can cause swords to have no more effect than if they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light.

“Sixth: since my hearing has become permeating and my essential energy bright, light pervades the Dharma Realm so that absolutely no darkness remains. Then I can keep beings safe from yakshas, rakshasas, kumbhandas, pishachas, and putanas by causing the ghosts to be unable to see them even if they come close to them.

Seventh: since the nature of sound has completely melted away and through contemplation my hearing has returned to itself, leaving involvement with false and defiling sense-objects, I can free beings from the locks of cangues and fetters.

Eighth: when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises, and I keep beings who are traveling a dangerous road from being robbed by robbers.

Ninth: when hearing permeates, a separation from defiling objects occurs so that forms no longer act as thieves. Then I can enable with lust to leave greed and desire far behind.

Tenth: when sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense–organ and the external state are perfectly fused, and nothing is matched to anything else. Then I can enable beings who are full of rage and hate to stop being hateful.

“Eleventh: when the defiling objects have gone, a light spirals, and the Dharma Realm and the body and mind are like crystal, transparent and unobstructed. Then I can enable all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed—all atyantikas—to forever be free from stupidity and darkness.

“Twelfth: when form dissipates and returns to the hearing, then unmoving within the unmoving Bodhimanda I can travel among beings without disturbing anything in their worlds. I can go through the ten directions making offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust. Beside each Buddha I become a Dharma Prince, and I can enable childless beings throughout the Dharma Realm who wish to have sons to be blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons.

Thirteenth: with perfect penetration of the six sense organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. I inherit the secret Dharma–doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions, receiving them without loss. I can enable childless beings throughout the Dharma Realm who seek daughters to be blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects.

Fourteenth: In this three–thousand–great–thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many Dharma princes as there are grains of sands in sixty–two Ganges Rivers appear in the world, cultivate the Dharma, and act as models in order to teach and transform beings. They comply with beings by means of expedients and wisdom, in different ways for each.

However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense–organ and have discovered the wonder of the ear–entrance, after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the Dharma Realm, I can enable beings who uphold my name to obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma princes as many as the grains of sand in sixty–two Ganges Rivers.

World Honored One, the merit of my one name is the same as those many other names, because from my cultivation I have obtained true and perfect penetration.

These are called the fourteen powers of bestowing fearlessness; with them I bless living beings.

Moreover, World Honored One, because I obtained perfect penetration and cultivated the unsurpassed path to certification, I also became endowed with four inconceivable and effortless wonderful virtues.

“First: due to my attaining the miraculous wonder of hearing the mind, the essence of mind was liberated from the organ and states of hearing. Therefore, there was no distinction among seeing, hearing, sensation, knowing, and so forth. The enlightenment became a single, perfect fusion, pure and precious enlightenment. For that reason, I am able to manifest many wonderful appearances and can proclaim boundless secret spiritual mantras.

Among those, I may appear with one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, and so forth, including a hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, or eighty–four thousand vajra heads;

two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen arms, or twenty arms, twenty–four arms, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms, or eighty–four thousand Mudra arms;

two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes, and so forth including a hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, or eighty–four thousand pure and precious eyes, sometimes

compassionate, sometimes awesome, sometimes in samádhi, sometimes displaying wisdom to rescue and protect living beings so that they may attain great self-mastery.

Second: Due to my hearing and consideration having escaped the six defiling objects, just as a sound passes over a wall, they could no longer be hindered. For that reason I have the wonderful ability to manifest shape after shape and to recite mantra upon mantra. These shapes and these mantras dispel the fears of living beings. Therefore, throughout the ten directions, in as many lands as there are fine motes of dust, I am known as one who bestows fearlessness.

“Third: due to my cultivation of fundamental, wonderful, perfect penetration and purification of the sense organ, anywhere I go in any world I can inspire beings to offer up their lives and valuables to seek my sympathy.

Fourth: Due to my obtaining the Buddhas’ mind and being certified as having attained the ultimate end, I can make offerings of rare treasures to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions and to beings in the six paths throughout the Dharma Realm.

If beings seek a spouse, they can obtain a spouse. If they seek children, they can have children. Seeking samádhi, they obtain samádhi; seeking long life, they obtain long life, and so forth to the extent that if they seek the great Nirvana, they obtain great Nirvana.”

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. From the gateway of the ear, I obtained a perfect and illumining samádhi that allowed me to respond at ease to beings’ minds. By entering the flow back to the nature and obtaining samádhi, I accomplished Bodhi. That is the foremost means.

World Honored One, that Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the Dharma-door of perfect penetration. In the great assembly he bestowed a prediction upon me and the name Contemplator of the World’s Sounds.

“Due to my contemplation and listening being perfectly clear throughout the ten directions, the name Contemplator of the World’s Sounds pervades all the realms of the ten directions.”

Then the World Honored One upon his Lion's Throne emitted simultaneously from his five extremities a radiant light which shone far throughout the ten directions to anoint the crowns of as many Thus Come Ones and Dharma Prince Bodhisattvas as there are motes of dust.

All those Thus Come Ones also emitted from their five extremities radiant lights which were as numerous as motes of dust and which came from the various directions to anoint the crown of the Buddha as well as the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas and Arhats in the assembly.

Groves, trees, pools, and ponds all proclaimed the sound of Dharma. The lights blended and criss-crossed like a jeweled silken net. Everyone in the great assembly experienced this unprecedented event and attained the Vajra Samádhi.

Then the heavens rained down hundreds of precious lotus flowers of variegated combinations of blue, yellow, red, and white. All the space in the ten directions turned the colors of the seven gems.

This Saha world, the great earth itself along with the mountains and rivers disappeared totally, and all that could be seen were lands as numerous as motes of dust coming together as one realm. Pure praises in song and chant were spontaneously heard everywhere in celebration.

Then the Thus Come One said to Dharma Prince Manjushri, "You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond study.

"Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect penetration.

Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later.

I now wish to cause Ánanda to become enlightened, and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties, and which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way."

Dharma Prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instructions, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.

The sea of enlightenment in its nature is perfect and clear.
Complete, distinct Bodhi is its miraculous source.
But when basic brightness shone so that objects appeared,
With objects' existence, the nature's brilliance faded.

“Confusion about falseness brings about emptiness.
Relying on emptiness, worlds coming into being.
Thoughts settle, forming countries.
Consciousness becomes beings.
The emptiness created within great enlightenment,
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.
Beings subject to outflows and lands like fine dust motes,
All emerge out of empty space.
Just as the bubble bursts, so too, space never existed.
How much the less the three states of being!

“Returning to the source, the nature is not two.
Many are the entrances through expedients;
The sagely nature permeates them all.
Whether compliant or adverse, all situations are expedient.
Those who initially resolve to enter samádhi,
Progress slow or fast according to the method selected.

“Forms are defiled objects created from thought.
They cannot be discerned by the essence of mind.
How can something not clearly discernible
Be used to gain perfect penetration?

“In sounds, language is intermingled.
But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase,

In such that no single one can included them all.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Awareness of smells comes through contact with them.
Apart from them, one does not know that they exist.
Since sensation of them is not constant,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Flavors are not to us fundamental by nature.
They only exist when there is something to taste.
Since this sensation is not perpetual,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Touch becomes clear only when something is touched.
Without an object there can be no contact.
Since contact and separation fluctuate,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Dharmas are know as internal defiling dust.
Reckoned as defiling dust, they are certainly sense objects.
Involvement of subject and object cannot be pervasive;
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

Although seeing itself is lucid and penetrating,
Clearly discerning in front, it cannot discern behind.
Ever reaching only half the four directions,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“The nose’s breath penetrates in and out.
But in the rests between there is no air.
These interruptions render it inconsistent.
How can that be used perfect penetration?

“The tongue is not an organ without a function;
Flavors form the source of its sensation.

When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“It is the same for the body as for objects of touch.
Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness.
With defined and limited invisible divisions,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Mental knowledge is a mass of deliberating.
What it perceives is never profound insight.
Unable to get beyond reflection and thought,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

The seeing–consciousness combines three aspects.
Probe its origin: it has no appearance.
Since its very substance is variable,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“The essence of hearing penetrates the ten directions,
For those who have already developed great causes,
Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method.
It only serves to gather in and settle the mind.
Once settled, the mind is simply still.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

Those of former accomplishment enlightened by
Speaking Dharma through the medium of language,
But since words and phrases are not free of outflows,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Refraining from transgressions only controls the body.
For one lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.

Since its source is not all-pervasive,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.
What connection have they with distinguishing dharmas?
Conditioned thought is not apart from things.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“One may contemplate the nature of earth,
But it is firm and solid, not penetrable.
Whatever is conditioned is not the sagely nature.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“One may contemplate the nature of water,
But such mental reflection is not the true and real.
This state of such-ness is not an enlightened view.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“One may contemplate the nature of fire,
But admitting dislike is not true renunciation.
This expedient cannot be one for beginners.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“One may contemplate the nature of wind,
But movement and stillness are not non-dual.
Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“One may contemplate the nature of emptiness.
But its aspect is murky and dull, lacking awareness.
Whatever is unaware is different from Bodhi.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

One may contemplate the nature of consciousness;
Yet one is regarding a consciousness that is not eternal.

Even the thought of it is empty and false.
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

All activities are impermanent;
So, too, mindfulness has its origin in arising and ceasing.
Since at any given time the factors
propelling cause and effect differ,
How can that be used to reach perfect penetration?

“I now inform the World Honored One,
The Buddha appearing in the Saha world:
In this land the true substance of teaching
Resides in hearing the sounds purely.
If one wants to attain samádhis,
Hearing is the best way to enter.

“Apart from suffering, liberation is found.
How excellent is he who contemplates the world’s sounds!

Throughout eons as numerous as Ganges’ sands.
He enters Buddha lands as many as fine dust motes.
Obtaining great power of self–mastery,
He bestows fearlessness on living beings.

“Wonderful is the sound of Contemplator of the World’s
Sounds,

A pure sound, like the ocean’s roar.
He saves the world and brings peace to all within it.
He has transcended the world, and his attainment is eternal.

I now evaluate, Thus Come One,
What the Contemplator of Sounds has just explained:
Consider someone in a quiet place, who,
When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions,
Can hear at once the sounds from all ten locations.

That is actual true perfection.

“The eyes cannot see through solid forms.
The mouth and the nose are much the same.
The body registers awareness only through contact.
The mind, tangled in thoughts, lacks clear connections.

Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.
The ears can listen to things both near and far.
None of the other five organs can match this.
It, then, is penetrating true and real.

“The nature of sounds is based in motion and stillness.
One hears according to whether there is sound.
With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.
But this does not mean that the hearing–nature is gone.
“In the absence of sound, the nature is not ended;
Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.
Entirely beyond arising and ceasing.
It is, then, truly eternal.
Ever–present, even in dream–thinking,
It does not disappear when conditions and thought are gone.
Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition,
Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.

Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds
Has been proclaimed and understood.
Yet beings are confused about the source of hearing.
They follow sounds and so turn and flow.
Ánanda’s power to remember was exceptional;
Yet he fell prey to a deviant plot.
Was it not from heeding sounds that he was nearly lost?
By turning back the flow, one will be above falseness.

“Ánanda, listen attentively:

I rely upon the Buddha's awesome power,
In describing to you the Vajra King,
A samādhi inconceivable that is like an illusion.
It is the true mother of all Buddhas.

You may hear the secret Dharma-doors
Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust,
But without first renouncing desire and outflows,
You may amass learning, and still make mistakes.

“You exploit learning to uphold
the Buddhahood of the Buddhas.
Why don't you try to hear your own hearing?

Hearing does not arise spontaneously;
It gets its name due to sounds.
But when hearing returns and is free of sound,
What does one call that which is set free?

As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source,
All the six are liberated.

“Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.
The triple realm, a vision of flowers in space.
When hearing reverts,
the covering of the sense-organs is gone.
The defiling dust gives way to pure and perfect insight.

“With ultimate purity, the light is penetrating.
A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness .
Looking at the world from this point of view,
Everything that happens is just like a dream.
Matangi's daughter, too, is part of the dream.
Who was able, then, to physically detain you?

“Consider a shadow puppeteer at work,
Making the dolls seem as real as people.
Although one sees them move about freely,
They are really governed by a set of strings.
Cease operating the controls and they become still.
The entire illusion was never really there.

“The six sense–organs are also thus.
At first there was one essential brightness.
Which split into a six–fold combination.
If but one part ceases and returns,
All six functions will stop as well.
Responding to a thought, defiling objects vanish,
Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness .

“If there is residual defilement, one must still study.
When the brightness is ultimate,
one becomes a Thus Come One.

Ánanda, and everyone in the great assembly,
Turn around your mechanism for hearing.
Return the hearing to hear your own nature
The nature will become the supreme Way.
That is what perfect penetration really means.

“That is the gateway entered by Buddhas
as many as dust motes.
That is the one path leading to Nirvana.
Thus Come Ones of the past perfected this method.
Bodhisattvas now merge with this total brightness.
People of the future who study and practice
Will also rely on this Dharma.
Through this method I, too, have been certified.
Contemplator of the World’s Sounds
Bodhisattva was not the only one.

“The Buddha, the World Honored One,
Inquired of me which expedient,
Would save those in the final eon
Who seek to escape the mundane world,
And perfect the mind of Nirvana:
The best way is to contemplate the sounds of the world.

All the other kinds of expedients
Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha.
In some cases they bring immediate transcendence,
But they are not the customary means of practice,
Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.

I bow to the Thus Come Ones and the Tripitaka
And to those inconceivable Ones with no outflows,
Trusting they will aid those in the future,
So that no one will doubt this method.
It is an expedient easy to master;
an appropriate teaching for Ánanda
And for those floundering in the final age.
They should use the ear organ to cultivate
A perfect penetration surpassing all others
That is the way to the true mind.”

Thereupon, Ánanda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind upon receiving such profound instruction. They contemplated the Buddha’s Bodhi and Parinirvana like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home, although he has not yet returned completely.

Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division, those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond study, as well as all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, found their fundamental mind and, far

removed from dust and defilement, attained the purity of the Dharma eye.

The Bhikkhuní Nature attained Arhat-ship after hearing this verse, and limitless beings brought forth a matchless, unequaled resolve for anuttara-samyak-sambodhi.

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Ánanda straightened his robes and then, in the midst of the assembly, placed his palms together and bowed. His mind was perfectly clear, and he felt a mixture of joy and sorrow. His intent was to benefit beings of the future as he made obeisance and said to the Buddha, “Greatly Compassionate World Honored One. I have already awakened and attained this Dharma–door for becoming a Buddha, and I can cultivate it without the slightest doubt. I have often heard the Thus Come One say, ‘Save others first; then save yourself. That is the aspiration of a Bodhisattva. Once your own enlightenment is perfected, then you can enlighten others. That is the way the Thus Come Ones respond to the world.’ Although I am not yet saved, I vow to save all beings of the Dharma–ending Age.

“World Honored One, those beings are from the Buddha’s time, and there will be as many deviant teachers propounding their teachings, as there are sand grains in the Ganges. I want to enable those beings to collect their thoughts and enter samádhi. How can I cause them to reside peacefully in a Way–place, far away from exploits of demons, and be irreversible in their resolve for Bodhi?”

At that time, the World Honored One praised Ánanda in front of the whole assembly, saying, “Good indeed! How good it is that you have asked how to establish a Way–place and to rescue and protect beings who are sunk in the morass of the final age. Listen well, now, and I will tell you.”

Ánanda and the great assembly agreed to uphold the teaching.

The Buddha told Ánanda, “You constantly hear me explain in the Vinaya that there are three decisive aspects to cultivation. That is, collecting one’s thoughts constitutes the precepts; from the precepts comes samádhi; and out of samádhi arises wisdom. These are called the Three Non–Outflow Studies.

“Ánanda, why do I call collecting one’s thoughts the precepts? If beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thought of lust,

they would not have to undergo a continual succession of births and deaths.

“Your basic purpose in cultivating samádhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce lustful thoughts, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

“Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of chan samádhi, if they do not cut off lust, they are certain to enter demonic paths. At best, they will become demon kings; on the average, they will become members of the retinue of demons; at the lowest level, they will become female demons.

“These demons all have their groups of disciples. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

“After my tranquility, in the Dharma–ending Age, these hordes of demons will abound, spreading like wildfire as they openly practice greed and lust, while claiming to be Good Knowing Advisors. They will cause beings to fall into the pit of love and views and lose the way to Bodhi.

“When you teach people of the world to cultivate samádhi, they must first of all sever the mind of lust. This is the first clear and decisive instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones, the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

“Therefore, Ánanda, if cultivators of chan samádhi do not cut off lust, they are like someone who cooks sand hoping to get rice. After hundreds of thousands of eons, it will still just be hot sand. Why? It wasn’t rice to begin with; it was only sand.

“If you seek the Buddha’s wonderful fruition and still have physical lust, then even if you attain a wonderful awakening, it will be based on lust. With lust at the source, you will revolve in the three paths and not be able to get out. Which road will you take to cultivate and be certified to the Thus Come One’s Nirvana?

“You must cut off the lust which is intrinsic to both body and mind. Then get rid of even the aspect of cutting it off. At that point you have some hope of attaining the Buddha’s Bodhi.

“What I have said here is the Buddhas’ teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

“Further, Ānanda, if beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of killing, they would not have to undergo a continual succession of births and deaths.

“Your basic purpose in cultivating samādhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of killing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

“Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of chan samādhi, they are certain to enter the path of spirits if they do not cease killing. At best, they will become ghosts of great strength; on the average, they will become flying yakshas, ghost leaders, or the like; at the lowest level, they will become earth-bound rakshasas.

“These ghosts and spirits all have their followers. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

“After my tranquility, in the Dharma-ending Age, these hordes of ghosts and spirits will abound, spreading like wildfire as they argue that eating meat will bring one to the Bodhi Way.

“Ānanda, I permit the Bhikshus to eat five kinds of pure meat. This meat is actually a transformation brought into being by my spiritual powers. It basically has no life force. You Brahmans live in a climate so hot and humid, and on such sandy and rocky land, that vegetables will not grow; therefore, I have had to assist you with spiritual powers and compassion. Because of this magnanimous kindness and compassion, this so-called meat suits your taste. After my extinction, how can those who eat the flesh of beings be called the disciples of Shakya?

“You should know that these people who eat meat may gain some awareness and may seem to be in samādhi, but they are all great rakshasas. When their retribution ends, they are bound to sink into the bitter sea of birth and death. They are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people as these kill and eat one another in a never-ending cycle. How can such people transcend the Triple Realm?

“When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, they must also cut off killing. This is the second clear and decisive

instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones, the Buddhas of the Past, World Honored Ones.

“Therefore, Ánanda, if cultivators of chan samádhi do not cut off killing, they are like one who stops up his ears and calls out in a loud voice, thinking that no one hears him.. He tries to cover up the sound, but only makes it greater.

“Pure Bhikshus and Bodhisattvas who practice purity will not even step on grass in the pathway; even less would they pull it up with their hands. How could anyone with great compassion consume the flesh and blood of beings?

“Bhikshus who do not wear silk, leather boots, furs, or down, whether imported or found locally, and who do not consume milk, cream, or butter, can truly transcend this world. When they have paid back their past debts, they will not have to re-enter the Triple Realm.

“Why not? When someone wears anything taken from a living creature, he creates conditions with the creature, just as when people ate the hundred grains, their feet could not leave the earth. Both physically and mentally one must avoid the bodies and the by-products of beings, by neither wearing them nor eating them. I say that such people have true liberation.

“What I have said here is the Buddhas’ teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

“Further, Ánanda, if beings in the six paths of any mundane world had no thoughts of stealing, they would not have to undergo a continuous succession of births and deaths.

“Your basic purpose in cultivating samádhi is to transcend the wearisome defilements. But if you do not renounce your thoughts of stealing, you will not be able to get out of the dust.

“Even though people may have some wisdom and the manifestation of chan samádhi, they are certain to enter a deviant path if they do not cease stealing. At best, they will become clever apparitions; on the average, they will become vampire ghosts; at the lowest level, they will become deviant people who are possessed by river sprites.

“These deviant hordes all have their followers. Each claims that he has accomplished the Unsurpassed Way.

“After my tranquility, in the Dharma-ending Age, these vampires and deviant entities will abound, spreading like wildfire as they surreptitiously cheat others. Calling themselves good knowing advisors, they will each claim that they have attained the Unsurpassed Dharma. Enticing and deceiving the ignorant, or frightening them out of their wits, they disrupt and lay waste to households wherever they go.

“I teach the Bhikshus to beg for their food according to where they are, in order to help them renounce greed and accomplish the Bodhi Way. The Bhikshus do not prepare their own food, so that, at the end of this life of transitory existence in the Triple Realm, they can show themselves to be Once-Returners who go and do not return.

“How could thieves put on my robes and sell the Thus Come One, saying that all manner of karma one creates is just the Buddha dharma? They slander Bhikshus who have left the home life and taken the complete precepts, saying that they belong to the path of the Small Vehicle. In this way, they confuse limitless beings, causing them to go astray, until they fall into the Un-intermittent Hell.

“After my tranquility, I affirm that Bhikshus who have a decisive resolve to cultivate samādhi, and who before the images of Thus Come Ones can light an oil lamp in their bodies or burn off a finger, or burn even one incense stick on their bodies, will, in that moment repay their debts from beginning-less time past. They can depart from the world and be forever free of outflows. Though they may not have instantly understood the Unsurpassed Enlightenment, they will already have firmly set their minds on the Dharma.

“If one does not practice any of these token renunciations of the body on the causal level, then even if one realizes the unconditioned, one will still have to come back as a person to repay one’s past debts, exactly as I had to undergo the retribution of having to eat the grain meant for horses.

“When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, they must also cease stealing. This is the third clear and decisive

instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones, the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

“Therefore, Ánanda, if cultivators of chan samádhi do not cease stealing, they are like someone who pours water into a leaking cup hoping to fill it. He may continue for as many eons as there are fine motes of dust, but, in the end, the cup still will not be full.

“If Bhikshus do not store away anything else than their robes and bowls; if they give what is left over from their food–offerings to hungry beings; if they put their palms together and make obeisance to the entire great assembly; if when people scold them they can treat it as praise; if they can sacrifice their very bodies and minds, giving their flesh, bones, and blood to living creatures; and if they do not repeat the non–ultimate teachings of the Thus Come One as though they were their own explanations, misleading those who have just begun to study; then the Buddha gives them his seal as having attained true samádhi.

“What I have said here is the Buddhas’ teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

“Ánanda, although beings in the six paths of any mundane world may not kill, steal, or lust either physically or mentally, these three aspects of their conduct thus being perfect, if they tell various major lies, then the samádhi they attain will not be pure. They will become demons of love and views and will lose the seed of the Thus Come One.

“They claim that they have attained what they have not attained, and that they have been certified when they have not been certified. Perhaps they seek to be foremost in the world, most venerated and superior people. They announce to their audiences that they have attained the fruition of a Srota–apanna, of a Sakrdagamin, of an Anagamin, of Arhat–ship, of the Pratyekabuddha Vehicle, or the various levels of Bodhisattva hood up to and including the Ten Grounds, in order to cause others to revere and repent in front of them and because they are greedy for offerings.

“These icchantikas destroy the seeds of Buddhahood just as surely as a tala tree is destroyed if it is chopped down. The Buddha

predicts that such people sever their good roots forever and lose their knowledge and vision. Immersed in the sea of the Three Sufferings, they cannot attain samádhi.

“I command that after my tranquility, Bodhisattvas and Arhats appear in response–bodies in the Dharma–ending Age, and take various forms in order to rescue those in the cycle of rebirth.

“They should either become Shramanas, white–robed laypeople, kings, ministers or officials, virgin youths or maidens, and so forth, even prostitutes, widows, profligates, thieves, butchers, or dealers in contraband, doing the same things as these kinds of people while they praise the Buddha Vehicle and cause them to enter samádhi in body and mind.

“But they should never say of themselves, ‘I am truly a Bodhisattva’; or ‘I am truly an Arhat,’ or let the Buddhas’ secret cause leak out by speaking casually to those who have not yet studied,

“other than at the end of their lives and then only to those who inherit the teaching. Otherwise, aren’t such people deluding and confusing beings and indulging in gross false claims?

“When you teach people in the world to cultivate samádhi, they must also cease all lying. This is the fourth clear and decisive instruction on purity given by the Thus Come Ones and the Buddhas of the past, World Honored Ones.

“Therefore, Ánanda, one who does not cut off lying is like a person who carves a piece of human excrement to look like chandana, hoping to make it fragrant. He is attempting the impossible.

“I teach the Bhikshus that the straight mind is the Way–place and that in all aspects of their practice of the Four Awesome Departments they should avoid falseness. How could they claim to have themselves attained the Dharmas of a superior person?

“That would be like a poor person falsely calling himself an emperor and thereby bringing about his own execution. Much less should one attempt to usurp the title of the Dharma King. When the cause–ground is not true, the effects will be distorted. One who seeks the Buddha’s Bodhi in that way is like a person who tries to bite his own navel. Who could possibly succeed in that?

“If the Bhikshus’ minds are as straight as bowstrings, and they are true and real in everything they do, then they can enter samádhi and never be involved in the deeds of demons. I certify that such people will accomplish the Bodhisattvas’ Unsurpassed Knowledge and Enlightenment.

“What I have said here is the Buddhas’ teaching. Any explanation counter to it is the teaching of Papiyan.

“Ánanda, you asked about collecting one’s thoughts; I have now begun to explain the wonderful method of cultivation for entrance into samádhi in order to seek the Bodhisattva Way. First one must be as pure as glistening frost in keeping these four rules of deportment. One must refrain from all superfluous behavior and then the three evils of the mind and the four of the mouth will have no cause to come forth.

“Ánanda, if one does not neglect these four matters, and, further, does not pursue forms, fragrances, tastes, objects of touch, and the like, then how can any demonic deeds arise?

“If people cannot put an end to their habits from the past, you should teach them to single-mindedly recite my Light Atop the Buddha’s Crown Unsurpassed Spiritual Mantra Mwo He Sa Dan Dwo Bwo Da La.

“It is the invisible appearance atop the crown of the Thus Come Ones’ heads. It is the mantra-heart proclaimed by the Buddhas of the Unconditioned Mind who come forth from the crowns in a blaze of light and sit upon jeweled lotus flowers.

“What is more, your past lives with Matangi’s daughter have created accumulated eons of causes and conditions. Your habits of fondness and emotional love go back not just one life, nor even just one eon. Yet, as soon as I proclaimed it, she was freed forever from the love in her heart and accomplished Arhat-ship.

“Even that prostitute, who had no intention of cultivating, was imperceptibly aided by that spiritual power and was swiftly certified to the position beyond study; then what about you Hearers in the assembly, who seek the most supreme Vehicle and are resolved to

realize Buddhahood? For you it should be as easy as tossing dust into a favorable wind. What, then, is the problem?

“Those in the final age who wish to sit in a Way–place must first hold the pure precepts of a Bhikshu. To do so, they must find as their teacher a foremost Shramana who is pure in the precepts. If they do not encounter a member of the Sangha who is truly pure, then it is absolutely certain that their deportment in precepts and rules cannot be accomplished.

“Having kept the precepts well, they should put on fresh, clean clothes, light incense in a place where they are alone, and recite the spiritual mantra spoken by the Buddhas of the Mind one hundred and eight times. After that, they should secure the boundaries and establish the Way–place.

“Then they should beseech the unsurpassed Thus Come Ones abiding in their lands throughout the ten directions to emit a light of great compassion that anoints the crowns of the cultivators’ heads.

“Ánanda, when any such pure Bhikshus, Bhiksunis, or white–robed donors in the Dharma–ending Age who can get rid of greed and lust even at the mental level, hold the Buddhas’ pure precepts, and in a Way–place make the vows of a Bodhisattva and can bathe upon entering and exiting each time, continuing that practice of the Way day and night for three weeks without sleep, I will appear before these people in a physical form and rub the crowns of their heads to comfort them and enable them to become enlightened.”

Ánanda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, enveloped in the Thus Come One’s unsurpassed, compassionate instruction, my mind has already gained an awakening, and I know how to cultivate and be certified to the Way beyond study. But how do those who cultivate in the final age and want to establish a Way–place, secure the boundaries in accord with the rules of purity of the Buddhas, World Honored Ones?”

The Buddha said to Ánanda, “If there are people in the Dharma–ending age who wish to establish a Way–place, they should first find a powerful white cow in the snowy mountains, one which eats the lush and fertile sweet–smelling grasses of the mountains. Since

such a cow also drinks only the pure water of the snowy mountains, its dung will be very fine. They can take that cow dung, mix it with chandana, and plaster the ground with it.

“If not from the snowy mountains, the cow dung will smell bad and cannot be used to smear on the ground. In that case, select a level place, dig down five feet or so, and use that yellow earth.

“Mix it with chandana incense, ‘sinking-in-water’ incense, jasmine incense, continuously permeating incense, tulip incense, white paste incense, green wood incense, fragrant mound incense, sweet pine incense, and ‘chicken-tongue’ incense. Grind these ten ingredients to a fine powder, make a paste, and smear it on the ground of the platform.

The area should be sixteen feet wide and octagonal in shape.

“In the center of the platform, place a lotus flower made of gold, silver, copper, or wood. In the middle of the flower set a bowl filled with dew collected in the eighth lunar month. Float an abundance of flower petals on the water. Arrange eight circular mirrors at measured intervals around the flower and the bowl. Outside the mirrors place sixteen lotus flowers and sixteen censers, so that the incense-burners are adorned and arranged between the flowers. Burn only sinking-in-water incense, lighting it with an ember, not an open flame.

“Place the milk of a white cow in sixteen vessels, along with cakes made with the same kind of milk, granulated sugar, oil cakes, milk porridge, turushka, honeyed ginger, clarified butter, and filtered honey. These sixteen are set around the outside of the sixteen flowers as an offering to the Buddhas and great Bodhisattvas.

“At every mealtime and at midnight, prepare a half-pint of honey and three tenths of a pint of clarified butter. Set up a small incense burner in front of the platform. Decoct the fragrant liquid from the turushka incense and use it to cleanse the coals. Light them so that blaze bursts forth, and toss the clarified butter and honey into the flaming censer. Let it burn until the smoke disappears, and present it to the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

“Drape flags and flower garlands on the four outer walls, and within the room where the platform is located, arrange images of the Thus Come Ones and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions on the four walls.

“In the most prominent place, display images of Vairocana Buddha, Shakyamuni Buddha, Maitreya Bodhisattva, Akshobhya Buddha, Amitabha Buddha, and all the magnificent transformations of Guanyin (Contemplator of the World’s Sounds) Bodhisattva. To the left and right, place the Vajra–Treasury Bodhisattvas. Beside them display the Lords Shakra and Brahma, Ucchushma, and the Blue Dirgha, as well as Kundalin and Bhrukuti and all four Heavenly Kings, with Vinayaka to the left and right of the door.

“Then suspend eight mirrors in the space around the platform so that they are exactly opposite the mirrors on the platform. This will allow the reflections in them to interpenetrate infinitely.

“During the first seven days, bow sincerely to the names of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions, the great Bodhisattvas, and the names of the Arhats. Throughout the six periods of the day and night, continually recite the mantra while circumambulating the platform. Practice the Way with a sincere mind, reciting the mantra one hundred and eight times in each session.

“During the second week, make the vows of a Bodhisattva with unwavering ceaseless intent. In my Vinaya, I have already taught about vows.

“During the third week, hold the Buddha’s mantra, Bwo Da La, for twelve hours at a time with a single intent; and on the seventh day, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will appear simultaneously. Their light will inter–reflect in the mirrors, illumining the entire area; and they will rub the crowns of the practitioners’ heads.

“Cultivating samádhi like this in a Way–place, even in the Dharma–ending age one can study and practice until one’s body and mind are as pure and clear as Vaidurya.

“Ánanda, if any one of the Bhikshus precept–transmitting masters or any one of ten Bhikshus in the same assembly is not pure, the Way–place as described will not be successful.

“After three weeks, sit upright and still for a hundred days. Those with sharp roots will not arise from their seats and will become Srota–apannas. Although their bodies and minds have not yet attained the ultimate fruition of sage hood, they know for certain, beyond question, that they will eventually realize Buddhahood.

“You have asked how the Way–place is established. That is the way it is done.”

Ánanda bowed at the Buddha’s feet and said, “After I left the home life, I relied on the Buddha’s affectionate regard. Because I sought erudition, I still have not been certified to the unconditioned.

“When I encountered that Brahma Heaven Mantra, I was captured by the deviant spell; though my mind was aware, I had no strength to free myself. I had to rely on Manjushri Bodhisattva to liberate me. Although I was blessed by the Thus Come One’s spiritual mantra of the Buddha’s crown and imperceptibly received its strength, I still have not heard it myself.

“I only hope that the Greatly Compassionate One will proclaim it again to kindly rescue all the cultivators in this assembly and those of the future in the paths of rebirth, so that they may become liberated in body and mind by relying on the Buddha’s secret sounds.”

At that moment, everyone in the great assembly bowed as one and stood waiting to hear the Thus Come One’s secret compilation of phrases.

At that time, hundreds of brilliant rays of light welled forth from the flesh mound at the crown of the World Honored One’s head. A thousand–pedaled precious lotus then welled forth from amidst those rays. Upon the precious flowers sat a transformation Thus Come One.

From the crown of his head ten beams of light radiated forth, each composed of hundreds of rays of subtle light. Every one of those glowing rays shone on lands as many as the sand grains of Ten Ganges

Rivers, while throughout empty space Vajra Secret–Trace Spirits appeared each holding aloft a mountain and wielding a pestle.

The great assembly, gazing upward, felt fearful admiration and sought the Buddha’s kind protection. Single–mindedly they listened as the Thus Come One in the light at the Hallmark of the Invisible Crown proclaimed this spiritual mantra:

“Ánanda, it is from this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha’s head, the secret chant, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, with its subtle, wonderful compilation of phrases, that all the Buddhas of the ten directions come forth. Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions use this mantra–heart, they realize Unsurpassed, Proper, and All–pervading Knowledge and Enlightenment

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions take up this mantra–heart, they subdue all demons and control all adherents of externalist ways.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions avail themselves of this mantra–heart, they sit upon jeweled lotus–flowers and respond throughout countries as numerous as motes of dust.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions embody this mantra–heart, they turn the great Dharma wheel in lands as numerous as fine motes of dust.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions hold this mantra–heart, they are able to go throughout the ten directions to rub the crowns of beings’ heads and bestow predictions upon them. Anyone in the ten directions, who has not yet realized the levels of sagely fruition, can receive predictions from these Buddhas.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are based in this mantra–heart, they can go throughout the ten directions to rescue beings from sufferings experienced in the hells, as hungry ghosts, as animals, or by being blind, deaf, or mute, as well as from the suffering of being together with those one hates, the suffering of being apart from those one loves, the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks, and the suffering of the raging blaze of the five skandhas. They can simultaneously liberate beings from both major and minor

accidents. In response to their recitation, dangers involving bandits, armies, the law, or imprisonment; dangers involving wind, fire, and water; and dangers of starvation, thirst, or impoverishment are all eradicated.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are in accord with this mantra–heart, they can serve good and wise advisors throughout the ten directions. Abiding in the four aspects of awesome deportment, they make absolutely appropriate offerings. In the assemblies of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sand grains in the Ganges, they are considered to be great Dharma Princes.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions practice this mantra–heart, they can gather in and teach their relatives in the ten directions and keep those of the Small Vehicle from being frightened when they hear this secret treasury.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions recite this mantra–heart, they realize Unsurpassed Enlightenment while sitting beneath the Bodhi trees, and enter Parinirvana.

“Because the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions transmit this mantra–heart, after their Nirvana, those to whom they have bequeathed the Buddha dharma can dwell in and support it to an ultimate degree. Being strict and pure in the precepts and rules, they can attain total purity.

“If I were to explain this cluster of light atop the crown of the Buddha’s head Bwo Da La Mantra from morning till night unceasingly, without ever repeating any syllable or phrase, I could go on for as many eons as there are sand grains in the Ganges and still never finish.

“I also will tell you that this mantra is called The Crown of the Thus Come One.

“Unless you hold this mantra, all of you with something left to study who have not yet put an end to the cycle of rebirth and yet have brought forth sincere resolve to become Arhats, will find it impossible to sit in a Way–place and be far removed in body and mind from all demonic deeds.

“Ánanda, let any being of any country in any world copy out this mantra in writing on materials native to his region, such as birch bark, pattra, plain paper, or white cotton cloth, and store it in a pouch containing incense. If that person wears the pouch on his body, or if he keeps a copy of the mantra in his home, then you should know that even if he understands so little that he cannot recite the mantra from memory, he will not be harmed by any poison during his entire life.

“Ánanda, I will now tell you more about how this mantra can rescue and protect the world, help people obtain great fearlessness, and bring to accomplishment living beings’ transcendental wisdom.

“You should know that, after my extinction, if there are beings in the Dharma-ending Age who can recite the mantra themselves or teach others to recite it, such people who recite and uphold it will not be burned by fire, will not be drowned by water, and will not be harmed by mild or potent poisons.

“Other such things will not happen to them either, including not being possessed by any dragon, gods, ghost, spirits, weird entities, demonic ghosts, or evil mantras. These people’s minds will attain proper reception, so that any spell; any paralyzing sorcery; any poison made of herbs, gold, silver; any plant, tree, insect, or snake; and any of the myriad kinds of poisonous vapors will turn into sweet dew when encountered or ingested.

“No evil stars, nor any ghost or spirit that harbors malice in its heart and poisons others can work its evil on these people. Vinayaka as well as all the evil ghost kings and their retinues will be led by deep kindness to always guard and protect them.

“Ánanda, you should know that eighty-four thousand nayutas of Ganges’ sands of kotis of Vajra-Treasury King Bodhisattvas and their descendants, each with Vajra multitudes in their retinues, are ever in attendance, day and night, upon this mantra.

“If beings whose minds are scattered and who have no samádhi remember and recite the mantra, the Vajra Kings will always surround such good people. That is even more true for those who are decisively resolved upon Bodhi. All the Vajra Treasury-King

Bodhisattvas will regard them attentively and secretly hasten the opening of their spiritual awareness.

“When that response occurs, those people will be able to remember the events of as many eons as there are sand grains in eighty–four thousand Ganges Rivers, knowing them all beyond any doubt or delusion.

“From that eon onward, through every life until the time they take last body, they will not be born where there are yakshas, rakshasas, putanas, kataputanas, kumbhandas, pishachas and so forth; where there is any kinds of hungry ghost, or any being possessing or lacking form, possessing or lacking thought, or in any other such evil place.

“If these good men read, recite, copy, or write out the mantra, if they carry it or treasure it, or if they make offerings to it, then through eon after eon they will not be poor or lowly, nor will they be born in unpleasant places.

“If these beings have never done any deeds that generate blessings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions will bestow their own merit and virtue upon these people.

“Because of that, throughout Asamkhyeyas of ineffable, unspeakable numbers of eons, as many as sand grains in the Ganges, they will always be born in places where there are Buddhas. Their limitless merit and virtue will be three–fold, like the amala fruit–cluster, for they stay in the same place, become permeated with cultivation, and never part from the Buddhas.

“Therefore, The mantra can enable those who have broken the precepts to regain the purity of the precept source. It can enable those who have not received the precepts to receive them. It can cause those who are not vigorous to become vigorous. This mantra can enable those who lack wisdom to gain wisdom. It can cause those who are not pure to quickly become pure. It can cause those who are not vegetarians to become vegetarians naturally.

“Ánanda, if good men who uphold this mantra violate the pure precepts before having received them, their multitude of offenses

incurred by such violations, whether major or minor, can simultaneously be eradicated after they uphold the mantra.

“Even if they drank intoxicants or ate the five kinds of pungent plants and various other impure things in the past, the Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Vajra spirits, gods, immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not hold it against them.

“If they are unclean and wear tattered, old clothes to carry out the practice alone in a place by themselves, they can be equally pure. Even if they do not set up a platform, do not enter a Way-place, and do not practice the Way, but recite and uphold this mantra, their merit and virtue can still be identical with that derived from entering the platform and practicing the Way.

“If they have committed the five rebellious acts, grave offenses warranting un-intermittent retribution, or if they are Bhikshus or Bhiksunis who have violated the four parajikas or the eight parajikas, after they recite this mantra, even such heavy karma can dispense after they recite this mantra, like a sand dune that is scattered in a gale, so that not a particle of it remains.

“Ánanda, if beings who have never repented and reformed any of the obstructive offenses, either heavy or light, that they have committed throughout infinite countless eons past, up to and including those of this very life, can nevertheless read, recite, copy, or write out this mantra or wear it on their bodies or place it in their homes or in their garden houses, then all that accumulated karma will melt away like snow in hot water. Before long they will obtain awakening to Patience with the Non-existence of Both Beings and Dharmas.

“Moreover, Ánanda, if women who do not have children and want to conceive can sincerely memorize and recite this mantra or carry the mantra Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La on their bodies, they can give birth to sons or daughters endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom.

“Those who seek long life will obtain long life. Those who seek to quickly perfect their reward will quickly be able to do so. The same is true for those who seek something regarding their bodies, lives, appearance, or strength.

“At the end of their lives, they will gain the rebirth they hope for in whichever of the lands of the ten directions they wish. They certainly will not be born in poorly endowed places, or as inferior people; even less will they be reborn in some odd form.

“Ánanda, if there is famine or plague in a country, province, or village, or if perhaps there are armies, brigands, invasions, war, or any other kind of local threat of danger, then by writing out this spiritual mantra and placing it on the four city gates, or on a chaitya or on a dhvaja, by instructing all the people of the country to venerate the mantra, make obeisance to it, revere it, and single-mindedly make offerings to it; by instructing all the citizens to wear it on their bodies or to place it in their homes, and then all such disasters and calamities will completely disappear.

“Ánanda, in each and every country where the people accord with this mantra, the heavenly dragons are delighted, the winds and rains are seasonal, the five kinds of crops are abundant, and the people are peaceful and happy.

“It can also suppress all evil stars which may appear in any of the directions and transform themselves in uncanny ways. Calamities and obstructions will not arise. People will not die accidentally or unexpectedly, nor will they be bound by fetters, canyons, or locks. Day and night they will be at peace, and no evil dreams will disturb their sleep.

“Ánanda, this Saha world has eighty-four thousand changeable and potentially devastating evil stars. Twenty-eight great evil stars are the leader, and another eight great evil stars are the rulers. They take various shape, and when they appear in the world they bring disaster and unexpected calamities down upon beings.

“But wherever this the mantra is kept they will all be eradicated. A boundary will be secured for twelve yojanas around, and not evil calamity or misfortune will ever encroach upon it.

“Therefore, the Thus Come One proclaims this mantra to be one which will protect all cultivators of the future who have just begun to study, so that they can enter samádhi, be peaceful in body and mind, and attain great tranquility.

“Even less will any demon, ghost, or spirit, or any enemy, calamity, or misfortune due from former lives that reach back to beginning-less time, or any old karma or past debts come to vex and harm them.

“As to you and everyone in the assembly who is still studying, and as to cultivators of the future who rely on my platform and hold the precepts in accord with the Dharma; who received the precepts from pure members of the Sangha; and who hold this mantra-heart without giving rise to doubts: should such good men as these not comprehend their minds in that very body, then the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions have lied!”

When he finished this explanation, measureless hundreds of thousands of Vajra Power-Knights in the assembly came before the Buddha, placed their palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, “With sincere minds we will protect those who cultivate Bodhi in this way, according to what the Buddha has said.”

Then the Brahma King, the God Shakra, and the four great heavenly kings all came before the Buddha, made obeisance together, and said to the Buddha, “If indeed there are good men who cultivate and study in this way, we will do all we can to earnestly protect them and cause everything to be as they would wish throughout their entire lives.”

Moreover measureless great yaksha generals, rakshasa kings, putana kings, kumbhanda kings, pishacha kings, Vinayaka, the great ghost kings, and all the ghost commanders came before the Buddha, put their palms together, and made obeisance. “We also have vowed to protect these people and cause their resolve for Bodhi to be quickly perfected.”

Further, measureless numbers of gods of the sun and moon, lords of the rain, lords of the clouds, lords of the thunder, lords of lightning who patrol throughout the year, and all the retinues of stars which were also in the assembly bowed at the Buddha’s feet and said to the Buddha, “We also protect all cultivators, so that their Way-places are peaceful and they can attain fearlessness.”

Moreover, measureless numbers of mountain spirits, sea spirits, and all those of the earth—the myriad creatures and entities of water, land, and the air—as well as the king of wind—spirits and the gods of the Formless Heavens, came before the Thus Come One, bowed their heads, and said to the Buddha, “We also will protect these cultivators until they attain Bodhi and will never let any demons have their way with them.”

Then Vajra Treasury King Bodhisattvas in the great assembly, numbering as many as eighty-four thousand nayutas of kotis’ worth of sand grains in the Ganges, arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, the nature of our deeds in cultivation is such that, although we have long since accomplished Bodhi, we do not grasp at nirvana, but always accompany those who hold this mantra, rescuing and protecting those in the final age who cultivate samádhi properly.

“World Honored One, such people as this, who cultivate their minds and seek proper concentration, whether in the Way—place or walking about, and even such people who with scattered minds roam and amuse themselves in the villages, will be accomplished and protected by us and our retinue of followers.

“Although the demon kings and the gods of great comfort will seek to get at them, they will never be able to do so. The smaller ghosts will have to stay ten yojanas’ distance from these good people, except for those beings who have decided they want to cultivate Dhyana.”

“World Honored One, if such evil demons or their retinues want to harm or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to smithereens with our Vajra—pestles. We will always help these people to accomplish what they want.”

Then Ánanda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “Now that we who are dull and slow, who are fond of erudition but have not sought to stop the outflows of our minds, have received the Buddha’s compassionate instructions and have attained the proper means to become infused with cultivation, we experience joy in body and mind and obtain tremendous benefit.

“World Honored One, for one who cultivates in this way and is certified as having attained the Buddha’s samádhi, but who has not yet reached nirvana, what is meant by the Level of Dry Wisdom? What are the Forty–four Minds? What is the sequence in which one cultivates to reach one’s goal? What place must one reach to be said to have entered the grounds? And what is meant by a Bodhisattva of Equal Enlightenment?”

Having said this, he made a full prostration, and then the great assembly single–mindedly awaited the sound of the Buddha’s compassionate voice as they gazed up unblinkingly with respectful admiration.

At that time the World Honored One praised Ánanda, saying, “Good indeed, good indeed, that for the sake of the entire great assembly and those beings in the final age who cultivate samádhi and seek the Great Vehicle, you ask to have the unsurpassed proper path of cultivation that takes one from the level of an ordinary person to final parinirvana explained and revealed. Listen attentively, and I will speak about it for you.” Ánanda and everyone in the assembly placed their palms together, cleansed their minds, and silently waited to receive the teaching.

The Buddha said, “Ánanda, you should know that the wonderful nature is perfect and bright, apart from all names and attributes. Basically there is no world, nor are there any beings.

“Because of falseness, phenomena come into being. Because phenomena come into being, they also cease to be. Even the terms ‘coming into being’ and ‘ceasing to be’ are false.

“When the false ceases to be, that is known as truth. This is called the Thus Come One’s Unsurpassed Bodhi and Great Nirvana: These names refer to two kinds of turning around.

“Ánanda, you now wish to cultivate true samádhi and arrive directly at the Thus Come One’s Parinirvana. First, you should recognize the two upside–down causes of living beings and the world. The non–arising of upside–down ness is the Thus Come One’s true samádhi.

“Ánanda, what is meant by the upside–down ness of beings? Ánanda, our nature endows the mind with understanding because the nature itself is the perfection of understanding. By adding understanding, another nature comes into being, and from that false nature, views arise. From absolute nothingness comes ultimate existence.

“All that exists comes about in that way. The cause is not an actual cause. Subjective reliance on objective appearances is basically groundless. Thus, the very basis for the existence of the world and beings is fundamentally unreliable

“Confusion about one’s basic, perfect understanding results in the arising of falseness. Falseness itself is devoid of substance; it is not something which can be relied upon.

“One may wish to return to the truth, but that wish for the truth is already a falseness. The real nature of True Suchness is not a truth that one can seek to return to. By doing so one misses the mark.

“What basically does not arise, what basically does not dwell, what basically is not the mind, and what basically are not dharmas come into being in turn. As they arise more and more strongly, they form the propensity to create karma. Similar karma sets up a mutual stimulus. Because of the karma thus generated, there is mutual production and mutual extinction. That is the reason for the upside–down ness of beings.

“Ánanda, what is the upside–down ness of the world? All that exists and pertains to existence falsely arises in sections and shares. The world is based on that, but this cause is not an actual cause. Everything that is dependent has nothing on which it is dependent, and so it shifts and slides ceaselessly. Because of this, the world of the three periods of time and four directions come into being. Their union and interaction bring about changes which result in the twelve categories of beings.

“That is why, in this world, movement brings about sounds, sounds bring about forms, forms bring about smells, smells bring about contact, contact brings about tastes, and tastes brings about awareness of dharmas.

The random false thinking resulting from those six creates karma, and this continuous revolving becomes the cause of twelve different categories.

“And so, in the world, sounds, smells, tastes, contact, and the like, are each transformed throughout the twelve categories to make one complete cycle.

“Based on that continuously revolving process involving upside–down phenomena, those born from eggs, those born from wombs, those born from moisture, and those born by transformation; beings with form, those without form, those with thought, and those without thought; beings not totally endowed with form, those not totally lacking form, those not totally endowed with thought, and those not totally lacking thought come into being in this world.

“Ánanda, through a continuous process of falseness, the upside–down state of movement occurs in this world. It unites with energy to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts that either fly up or dive down. From that eggs come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as fish, birds, amphibians, and reptiles, so that their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of defilement, the upside–down state of desire occurs in this world. It unites with stimulation to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are either erect or horizontal. From that embryos in wombs come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as human beings, animals, dragons, and immortals until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of attachment, the upside–down state of inclination occurs in this world. It unites with warmth to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are vacillating and inverted. From that organisms in moisture come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as insects and crawling invertebrates, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of change, the upside–down state of borrowing occurs in this world. Based on upside–down ness, it unites with contact to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of new and old. From that, organisms that undergo

transformations come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as forms of metamorphic flying and crawling creatures, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of restraint, the upside–down state of obstruction occurs in this world. It unites with attachment to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of refinement and brilliance. From that animate entities that possess form come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as auspicious and inauspicious creatures, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of annihilation and dispersion, the upside–down state of delusion occurs in this world. It unites with darkness to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of obscurity and hiding. From that, animate entities that are formless come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as empty, dispersed, annihilated, and submerged beings until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of illusory imaginings, the upside–down state of shadows occurs in this world. It unites with memory to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are hidden and bound up. From that, animate entities endowed with thought, come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as spirits, ghosts, and devious beings, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of dullness and slowness, the upside–down state of stupidity occurs in this world. It unites with obstinacy to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts that are dry and attenuated. From that, animate entities lacking thought, come into being and transmigrate throughout the lands as their vitality and spirit change into earth, wood, metal, or stone, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of parasitic interaction, the upside–down state of simulation occurs in this world. It unites with defilement to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of according and relying. From that, animate entities not actually endowed with form, take on embryonic forms and transmigrate throughout the lands until their kinds abound, as jellyfish that use shrimp for eyes and the like.

“Through a continuous process of mutual enticement, an upside–down state of the nature occurs in this world. It unites with mantras to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of reckoning and summoning. From that animate entities not actually lacking form become formless beings and transmigrate throughout the lands as the hidden beings of mantras and incantations, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of false unity, the upside–down state of transgression occurs in this world. It unites with unlike formations to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of reciprocal interchange. From that animate entities not actually endowed with thought, become beings endowed with thought and transmigrate throughout the lands in such forms as a wasp that turns a different creature into its own species and the like, until their kinds abound.

“Through a continuous process of enmity and harm the upside–down state of killing occurs in this world. It unites with monstrosities to become eighty–four thousand kinds of random thoughts of devouring one’s father and mother. From that, animate entities not actually lacking thought become beings that lack thought and transmigrate throughout the lands, until their kinds abound in such forms as the owl which hatches its young from clods of dirt, and the pou jing bird, which incubates a poisonous fruit to create its young whereupon the young of each eat the parents and the like, until their kinds abound.

“These are the twelve categories of beings.”

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“Ánanda, each of these categories of beings is replete with all twelve kinds of upside–down states, just as pressing on one’s eye produces a variety of flower–like images.

“With the inversion of wonderful perfection, pure understanding of the true mind becomes glutted with false and random thoughts.

“Now, as you cultivate towards certification to the samádhi of Buddha, you will go through three gradual stages in order to get rid of the basic cause of these random thoughts.

“They work in just the way that hot water mixed with the ashes of incense cleanse a vessel that has held poisonous honey. Afterwards, such a vessel can be used to store sweet dew.

“What are the three gradual stages? The first is to correct one’s habits by getting rid of the aiding causes; the second is to truly cultivate to cut out the very essence of karmic offenses; the third is to increase one’s vigor to prevent the manifestation of karma.

“What are aiding causes? Ánanda, the twelve categories of beings in this world are not in complete in themselves, but depend on four kinds of eating; that is, eating by portions, eating by contact, eating by thought, and eating by consciousness. Therefore, the Buddha said that all beings must eat to live.

“Ánanda, all beings can live if they eat what is fresh, and they will die if they take poison. Beings who seek samádhi should refrain from eating five pungent plants of this world.

“If these five are eaten cooked, they increase one’s sexual desire; if they are eaten raw, they increase one’s anger.

“Therefore, even if people in this world who eat pungent plants can expound the twelve divisions of the Sutra canon, the gods and immortals of the ten directions will stay far away from them because they smell so bad. However, after they eat these things the hungry ghosts will hover around and kiss their lips. Being always in the

presence of ghosts, their blessings and virtue will dissolve as the days go by, and they will experience no lasting benefit.

“People who eat pungent plants and also cultivate samádhi will not be protected by the Bodhisattvas, gods, immortals, or good spirits of the ten directions; therefore, the tremendously powerful demon kings, able to do as they please, will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak Dharma for them, denouncing the precepts and praising lust, rage, and delusion.

“When their lives end, these people will join the retinue of demon kings. When they use up their blessings as demons, they will fall into the un-intermittent hell.

“Ánanda, those who cultivate for Bodhi should never eat the five pungent plants. This is the first of the gradual stages of cultivation.

“What is the essence of karmic offenses? Ánanda, beings who want to enter samádhi must first firmly uphold the pure precepts.

“They must sever thoughts of lust, not partake of wine or meat, and eat cooked rather than raw foods. Ánanda, if cultivators do not sever lust and killing, it will be impossible for them to transcend the Triple Realm.

“You should look upon lustful desire as upon a poisonous snake or a resentful bandit. First hold to the Hearers’ Four or Eight Parajikas in order to control your physical activity; then cultivate the Bodhisattva’s pure regulations in order to control your mental activity.

“When the precepts are successfully upheld, one will not create karma that leads to mutual rebirth and mutual killing in this world. If one does not steal, one will not be indebted, and one will not have to pay back past debts in this world.

“If people who are pure in this way cultivate samádhi, they will naturally be able to contemplate the extent of the worlds of the ten directions with the physical body given them by their parents; without need of the Heavenly Eye, they will perceive the Buddhas speaking Dharma and receive in person the sagely instruction. Obtaining great spiritual penetrations, they will roam through the ten directions, gain

clarity regarding past lives, and will not encounter difficulties and dangers.

“This is the second of the gradual stages of cultivation.

“What is the manifestation of karma? Ānanda, such people as these, who are pure and who uphold the precepts, do not have thoughts of greed and lust, and so they do not become dissipated in the pursuit of the six external defiling sense-objects.

“Because they do not pursue them, they turn around to their own source. Without the conditions of the defiling objects, there is nothing for the sense-organs to match themselves with, and so they reverse their flow, become one unit, and are no longer confined to six individual functions.

“All the lands of the ten directions then become as brilliantly clear and pure as a moon suspended in crystal.

“Their bodies and minds are blissful as they experience the equality of wonderful perfection, and they attain great peace.

“The secret perfection and pure wonder of all the Thus Come Ones appear before them.

“These people then obtain Patience with the Non-existence of Beings and Dharmas. They thereupon gradually cultivate according to their practices, until they reside securely in the sagely positions.

“This is the third of the gradual stages of cultivation.

“Ānanda, these good people’s emotional love and desire are withered and dry, the sense-organs and sense objects no longer mesh, and so the residual habits do not continue to arise.

“Recognizing that the attachments of the mind are false, they use only wisdom. That wisdom shines throughout the ten directions, and this initial wisdom is called the Stage of Dry Wisdom.

“Although the habits of desire are initially dried up, they still have not merged with Dharma-water that flows from the Thus Come Ones.

“Then, with this mind centered on the middle, they enter the flow where wonderful perfection reveals itself. From the truth of that wonderful perfection there repeatedly arise wonders of truth. They always dwell in the wonder of faith, until all false thinking is

completely eliminated and the Middle Way is totally true. This is called the Mind that Resides in Faith.

“When true faith is clearly understood, then perfect penetration is total, and the three aspects of skandhas, places, and realms are no longer obstructions. Then all their habits throughout innumerable eons of past and future, during which they abandon bodies and receive bodies, appear to them now in the present moment. These good people can remember everything and forget nothing. This is called the Mind that Resides in Mindfulness.

“When the wonderful perfection is completely true, that essential true brings about a transformation. They go beyond the beginning-less habits to reach the one essential brightness. Relying solely on this essential brightness, they progress toward true purity. This is called the Mind of Vigor.

“The essence of the mind reveals itself as total wisdom; this is called the Mind that Resides in Wisdom.

“As the wisdom and brightness are held steadfast, a profound stillness pervades everywhere. The stage at which the majesty of this stillness becomes constant and solid is called the Mind that Resides in Samádhi.

“The light of samádhi emits brightness. When the essence of the brightness enters deeply within, they only advance and never retreat. This is called the Mind that is Irreversible.

“When the progress of their minds is secure, and they hold their minds and protect them without loss, they connect with the life-breath of the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions. This is called the Mind that Protects the Dharma.

“Protecting their light of enlightenment, they can use this wonderful force to return to the Buddha’s light of compassion and to come back to stand firm with the Buddha. It is like two mirrors that are set facing one another, so that between them the exquisite images inter-reflect and enter into one another layer upon layer. This is called the Mind that Makes Transferences.

“With this secret interplay of light, they obtain the Buddha’s eternal solidity and unsurpassed wonderful purity. Dwelling in the

unconditioned, they know no loss or dissipation. This is called the Mind that Resides in Precepts.

“Abiding in the precepts with self-mastery, they can roam throughout the ten directions, going anywhere they wish. This is called the Mind that Resides in Vows.

“Ānanda, these good people use proper expedients to bring forth those ten minds. The essence of these minds becomes dazzling, and their ten functions interconnect to a point of single-mindedness. That is called the Dwelling of Bringing Forth the Resolve.

“The discoveries made by that mind are like pure crystal within which can be seen pure gold. Based on those previous wonderful minds, they step up to this level called the Dwelling of the Ground of Regulation.

“When the mind on that ground connects with wisdom, both become bright and comprehensive. Traversing the ten directions then without obstruction is called the Dwelling of Cultivation.

“When their conduct is the same as the Buddhas’ and they connect with the Buddha’s spirit, then, like the body-between-skandhas searching for a father and mother, they penetrate the darkness with a hidden communication and enter the lineage of the Thus Come One. That is called the Dwelling of Noble Birth.

“Since they ride in the womb of the Way, they are heirs to enlightenment just as a mature fetus has developed all human features. That

is called the Dwelling that is Endowed with Skill-in-Means.

“Their physical appearances become those of Buddhas and their minds the same as well. That is called Dwelling in the Proper Mind.

“United in body and mind, they grow and mature day by day. That is called Dwelling in Irreversibility.

“With the efficacious appearance of ten bodies, which are simultaneously perfected, they are Dwelling as a Pure Youth.

“Completely developed, they leave the womb and become sons of the Buddha. That is Dwelling as a Dharma Prince.

“Reaching the fullness of adulthood, they are like a chosen prince to whom a mighty king turns over the affairs of state. Eventually that eldest son of the kshatriya king will be ceremoniously anointed on the crown of the head. That is called Dwelling in Anointing the Crown of the Head.

“Ānanda, after these good men have become sons of the Buddha, they are replete with the limitlessly many wonderful virtues of the Thus Come Ones, and they comply and accord with beings throughout the ten directions. That is called the Conduct of Happiness.

“Being well able to accommodate all beings is called the Conduct of Benefiting.

“Enlightening themselves and enlightening others without putting forth any resistance is called the Conduct Free of Anger.

“Then they undergo birth in various forms continuously to the bounds of the future. Practicing that equally throughout the three periods of time and pervading the ten directions is called the Conduct Continued Endlessly.

“When everything is equally in accord, one never makes mistakes among the various Dharma doors. That is called the Conduct of Freedom from Deluded Confusion.

“Then within what is identical, myriad differences appear. Yet within the different appearances, an identity can be perceived. That is called the Conduct of Wholesome Manifestation.

“That continues until it includes all particles of dust that fill up empty space throughout the ten directions. In each and every mote of dust there appear the worlds of the ten directions. And yet the appearance of dust motes and the appearance of worlds do not interfere with one another. That is called the Conduct of Non-Attachment.

“Everything that appears before one becomes a foremost paramita. That is called the Conduct of Veneration.

“With such perfect fusion, one can model oneself after all the Buddhas of the ten directions. That is called the Conduct Based on Wholesome Dharmas.

“As each and every one of those becomes pure and without outflows, they merge into a singular truth, unconditioned, that is the essence of the nature. That is called the Conduct of Reality.

“Ánanda, when these good men replete with spiritual penetrations have done the Buddha’s work and are totally pure and absolutely true, they can remain distant from obstacles and calamities. Then they take beings across without being attached to the idea of taking them across. They direct the unconditioned mind toward the path of Nirvana. That is called the Transference of Saving and Protecting Living Beings, while apart from the Appearance of Living Beings.

“Destroying what should be destroyed and remaining far removed from what should be left behind is called the Transference of Indestructibility.

“Fundamental Enlightenment is profound indeed, an enlightenment on a level with the Buddhas’ enlightenment. That is called the Transference of Sameness with All Buddhas.

“When absolute truth is discovered, their level is like the level of Buddhas. That is called the Transference of Reaching all Places.

“Worlds and Thus Come Ones include one another without any obstruction. That is called the Transference of a Treasury of Inexhaustible Merit and Virtue.

“Since their level is like the Buddhas’, each and every cause they create at that level is pure. Based on the dispersing of such causes, they go straight down the path to Nirvana. That is called the Transference of the Good Roots of following what is Basically Identical.

“When true roots are set down, then all beings in the ten directions are my own nature. Not a single being is lost, as this nature is successfully perfected. That is called the Transference of Following the Impartial Contemplation of all Beings.

“Being identical with all dharmas yet apart from all phenomena, they are not attached to either the identity or the separation. That is called the Transference of the Appearance of True Suchness.

“That which is thus is truly obtained, and there is no obstruction throughout the ten directions. That is called the Transference of Unfettered Liberation.

“When the virtue of the nature is perfectly realized, the boundaries of the Dharma Realm are destroyed. That is called the Transference of the Limitlessness of the Dharma Realm.

“Ánanda, when these good men have completely purified these forty-one minds, they further accomplish Four Kinds of Wonderfully Perfect Aiding Practices.

“The enlightenment of a Buddha is just about to become a function of their own minds. It is on the verge of emerging but has not yet emerged, and so it can be compared to the point just before wood ignites when it is drilled to produce fire. That is called the Level of Heat.

“They continue on with their own minds to tread where the Buddhas tread, as if relying and yet not. It is as if they were climbing a lofty mountain, to the point where their bodies are in space but there remains a slight obstruction beneath them. That is called the Level of the Summit.

“When the mind and the Buddha are two and yet the same, they have well obtained the Middle Way. They are like someone who endures something when it seems impossible to either hold it in or let it go. That is called the Level of Patience.

“When numbers and limits are gone, no such designations as the Middle Way or as confusion and enlightenment are made. That is called the Level of Being First in the World.

“Ánanda, these good men have successfully penetrated through to Great Bodhi. Their enlightenment reaches through to the Thus Come Ones’. They have fathomed the state of Buddhahood. That is called the Ground of Happiness.

“The differences enter into identity; even the notion of identity is gone. That is called the Ground of Leaving Filth.

“At the point of ultimate purity, brightness comes forth. That is called the Ground of Emitting Light.

“When the brightness becomes ultimate, enlightenment is full. That is called the Ground of Blazing Wisdom.

“No identity or difference can be attained. That is called the Ground of Invincibility.’

“With unconditioned True Suchness, the nature is spotless, and brightness is revealed. That is called the Ground of Manifestation.

“Coming to the farthest limits of True Suchness is called the Ground of Traveling Far.

“The single mind of True Suchness is called the Ground of Immovability.

“Bringing forth the function of True Suchness is called the Ground of Good Wisdom.

“Ánanda, all Bodhisattvas beyond this point have completed their cultivation and have perfected their merit and virtue, and so this Ground is called the Level of Cultivation.

“Then a wonderful cloud of compassion hovers over the Sea of Nirvana. That is called ‘the Ground of the Dharma Cloud.

“The Thus Come Ones counter the flow as the Bodhisattvas thus reach this point through compliance with practice. Their enlightenment is about to meet that of the Buddhas; it is therefore called Equal Enlightenment.

“Ánanda, the enlightenment which encompasses the Mind of Dry Wisdom through to the culmination of Equal Enlightenment is awakening within the Varja Mind. That constitutes the Level of Initial Dry Wisdom.

“Thus there are totals of twelve single and grouped levels. At last they reach Wonderful Enlightenment and accomplish the Unsurpassed Way.

“At all these levels they use vajra contemplation of Ten Profound Analogies for the ways in which things are like an illusion. In Shamatha they use the Thus Come Ones’ Vipashyana to cultivate them purely, to be certified to them, and to gradually enter them more and more deeply.

“Ánanda, because they put to use the three means of advancement throughout all of them, they are well able to accomplish the fifty–five stages of the True Bodhi Path.

“This manner of contemplation is called proper contemplation. Contemplation other than this is called deviant contemplation.”

Then Dharma Prince Manjushri arose from his seat, and in the midst of the assembly he bowed at the Buddha’s feet and said to the Buddha, “What is the name of this Sutra and how should we and all beings uphold it?”

The Buddha told Manjushri, “This Sutra is called Great Buddha at the Crown, Syi Dan Dwo Bwo Da La, the Unsurpassed Precious Seal and Pure, Clear, Ocean–like Eye of the Thus Come Ones of the Ten Directions.

“It is also called The Cause for Saving a Relative, the Rescue of Ánanda and the Bhiksunis Nature, and the Attaining of the Bodhi Mind and Entry into the Sea of Pervasive Knowledge.

“It is also called The Thus Come Ones’ Secret Cause of Cultivation that Brings Certification to the Complete Meaning.

“It is also called The Great Expansive Means, the Wonderful Lotus Flower King, the Dharani Mantra which is the Mother of all Buddhas of the Ten Directions.

“It is also called The Foremost Surangama, Sections and Phrases for Anointing the Crown of the Head, and All Bodhisattvas’ Myriad Practices.

“Thus should you respectfully uphold it.”

After that was said, Ánanda and all in the great assembly immediately received the Thus Come One’s instruction in the secret seal, the meaning of Bwo Da La, and heard these names for the complete meaning of this Sutra.

They were suddenly enlightened to Dhyana, advanced in their cultivation to the sagely position, and increased their understanding of the wonderful principle. Their minds were focused and serene.

Ánanda cut off and cast aside six sections of subtle afflictions in his cultivation of the mind in the Triple Realm.

He arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, places his palms together respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "The Great, Awesome and Virtuous World Honored One, whose compassionate sound knows no limit, has well instructed beings as to their extremely subtle submersion in delusion and has caused me on this day to become blissful in body and mind and to obtain enormous benefit.

"World Honored One, if the wonderful brightness of this truly pure and wonderful mind is basically all-pervading, then everything on the great earth, including the grasses and trees, the wriggling worms and tiny forms of life are originally True Suchness and are themselves the Thus Come One— true embodiments of Buddhahood.

"Since the Buddhas' embodiments are true and real, how can there also be hells, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, gods, and other paths of rebirth? World Honored One, do these paths exist naturally of themselves, or are they created by beings' falseness and habits?

"World Honored One, the Bhikkhuni Precious Lotus Fragrance, for example, received the Bodhisattva Precepts and then indulged in lustful desire, recklessly saying that sexual acts did not involve killing or stealing and they carried no karmic retribution. But after saying that, her female organs caught fire, and then the raging blaze spread throughout all her joints as she fell into the Un-intermittent Hell alive.

"And there were the Mighty King Crystal and the Bhikshu Good Stars. Crystal exterminated the Gautama clan and Good Stars recklessly said that all dharmas are empty. They both sank into the Un-intermittent Hell alive.

"Are these hells fixed places, or do they arise spontaneously? Is it that each individual undergoes whatever kind of karma he or she creates? I only hope the Buddha will be compassionate and instruct those of us who do not understand this. May he cause all beings who uphold the precepts to receive this definitive instruction with joyful respect upon hearing it and be careful not to transgress it."

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “What a good question! You want to keep all living beings from adopting deviant views. You should listen attentively now and I will explain this matter for you.

“Actually, Ānanda, all beings are fundamentally true and pure, but because of their false views they give rise to the falseness of habits, which are divided into an internal aspect and an external aspect.

“Ānanda, the internal aspect refers to what occurs inside living beings. Because of love and defilement, they produce the falseness of emotions. When these emotions accumulate without cease, they can create the fluids of love.

“That is why living beings’ mouths water when they think about delicious food. When they think about a deceased person, either with fondness or with anger, tears will flow from their eyes. When they are greedy for wealth, a current of lust will course through their hearts and their skin will become lustrous. When their minds dwell on lustful conduct, spontaneous secretions will come from the male or female organ.

“Ānanda, although the kinds of love differ, their flow and formation is the same. With this moisture, one cannot ascend, but will naturally fall. This is called the Internal Aspect.

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“Ánanda, the External Aspect refers to what happens outside living beings. Because of longing and yearning, they give rise to fantasies. When these fantasies persist without cease, they can create an uplifting energy.

“That is why when living beings uphold the precepts in their minds, their bodies will be buoyant and feel light and clear. When they uphold mantra seals in their minds, they will command a heroic and resolute perspective. When they have the desire in their minds to be born in the heavens, in their dreams they will have thoughts of flying and ascending. When they cherish the Buddha lands in their minds, then the sagely realms will appear in a shimmering vision, and they will serve the good and wise advisors with little thought for their own lives.

“Ánanda, although the thought varies, the lightness and uplifting is the same. With flight and ascension, one will not sink, but will naturally become transcendent. This is called the External Aspect.

“Ánanda, all beings in the world are caught up in the continuity of birth and death. Birth happens because of their habitual tendencies; death results inflow and change. When they are on the verge of dying, but when the final warmth has not left their bodies, all the good and evil they have done in that life suddenly and simultaneously manifest. They experience the intermingling of two habits: an abhorrence of death and an attraction to life.

“Endowed solely with thought, they will fly and can certainly be reborn in the heavens. If in their minds they have blessings and wisdom, as well as pure vows, then their hearts will spontaneously open and they will see the Buddhas of the ten directions and all their pure lands and they will be reborn in whichever one they wish.

“When they have more thought than emotion, they are not quite as ethereal and so they become flying immortals, great mighty ghost kings, space traveling–yakshas, or earth–traveling rakshasas who roam the Heaven of the Four Kings, going where they please without obstruction.

“Among them may be some with good vows and good hearts who will protect and uphold my dharma. Perhaps they protect the pure precepts by following and supporting those who hold precepts. Perhaps they protect spiritual mantras by following and supporting those who hold mantras. Perhaps they protect those who practice Chan Samádhi so they can cultivate patience with dharmas. These beings will be close to the Thus Come One beneath his seat.

“When their thought and emotion are of equal proportions, they neither fly nor fall, but are born in the human realm, where the brightness of thought leads to intelligence and the darkness of emotion leads to dullness.

“When they have more emotion than thought, they enter the animal realm. With heavier emotion, they become fur–bearing beasts; with lighter emotion, they become winged creatures.

“When they have seventy percent emotion and thirty percent thought, they fall beneath the wheel of water and are bordering on the wheel of fire, where they experience the full force of the raging blaze. In the bodies of hungry ghosts, they are constantly burned to a crisp. Even water harms them, and they have nothing to eat or drink for hundreds of thousands of eons.

“When they have ninety percent emotion and ten percent thought, they fall through the wheel of fire until their bodies enter a region where wind and fire interact. With lighter emotion they are born in the intermittent hell; with heavier emotion they are born in the un–intermittent hell.

“When they are possessed entirely of emotion, they sink into the Avici Hell. If in their minds they slander the Great Vehicle, defame the Buddha’s pure precepts, irrationally speak dharma, are greedy for offerings from the faithful, recklessly accept the respect of others,

commit the five rebellious acts and the ten major offenses, then they are further reborn in Avichi Hell throughout the ten directions.

“Although one receives one’s due according to the evil karma one has created, a group can undergo an identical lot, and there are definite places where it occurs.

“Ánanda, it all comes from the karmic responses which living beings themselves invoke. They create ten habitual causes and undergo six interacting retributions.

“What are the ten causes? Ánanda, the first consists the habit of lustful intercourse which gives rise to mutual rubbing. When this rubbing continues without cease, it activates a tremendous raging fire, just as warmth arises between a person’s hands when he rubs them together.

“Because these two habits set each other ablaze, there come into being the Iron Bed, the Copper Pillar, and other such experiences.

“Therefore the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon the act of lust and name it the “fire of desire.” Bodhisattvas avoid desire as they would a fiery pit.

“The second consists of the habit of greedy scheming, which gives rise to a suction. When this suction continues without cease, it produces intense cold and solid ice where freezing occurs, just as a sensation of cold is experienced when a person draws in a blast of wind through his mouth.

“Because these two habits clash together, there come into being Cold Hells such as chattering, whimpering and shuddering; blue, red, and white lotuses; and other such experiences.

Therefore the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon excessive seeking and name it “the water of greed”. Bodhisattvas avoid greed as they would a sea of pestilence.

“The third consists of habits of arrogance and resulting friction which give rise to mutual intimidation. When it accelerates without cease, it produces torrents and rapids, which create restless waves of water, just as water is produced when a person continuously works his tongue in an effort to taste flavors.

“Because these two habits incite one another, there come into being the river of blood, the river of ashes, the burning sand, the poisonous sea, the molten copper which is forced down one’s throat, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon self-satisfaction and name it ‘drinking the water of stupidity.’ Bodhisattvas avoid arrogance as they would a huge deluge.

“The fourth consists of habits of hatred which give rise to mutual defiance. When this defiance binds one without cease, one’s heart becomes so hot that it catches fire, and the molten vapors turn into metal.

“From it is produced the mountain of knives, the iron cudgel, the tree of swords, the wheels of swords, axes and halberds, and spears and saws. It is like when a person harbors a grudge and the urge to kill surges forth.

“Because these two habits clash with one another, there come into being castration and hacking, beheading and mutilation, filing and sticking, flogging and beating, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon hatred and name it ‘sharp knives and swords.’ Bodhisattvas avoid hatred as they would a massacre.

“The fifth consists of habits of deception and misleading involvements which give rise to mutual guile. When such maneuvering continues without cease, it produces ropes for strangling and wood for imprisoning. It is like how grass and trees grow in an irrigated field.

“Because the two habits perpetuate one another, there come into being handcuffs and fetters, cangues and locks, whips and clubs, sticks and cudgels, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon deception and name it a ‘treacherous crook.’ Bodhisattvas fear deception as they would a savage wolf.

“The sixth consists of the habit of lying combined with continual fraudulence which give rise to mutual cheating. When false accusations continue without cease, one becomes adept at corruption.

“From this there come into being such filthy impurities as dirt, excrement and urine. It is like the obscuring of one’s vision when the dust is stirred up by the wind.

“Because these two habits augment one another, there come into being sinking and drowning, tossing and pitching, flying and falling, floating and submerging, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon lying and name it ‘robbery and murder.’ Bodhisattvas regard lying as they would treading on a venomous snake.

“The seventh consists of the habits of enmity and mutual suspicion, which give rise to grievances. From this there come into being the experiences of being pelted by flying rocks or gravel, being imprisoned in a box, car, or urn; and being bagged and struck. It is like a treacherous person who harbors evil in his mind.

“Because these two habits swallow one another up, there come into being tossing, pitching, seizing, striking, and banging, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon animosity and name it a ‘perverse and harmful ghost.’ Bodhisattvas regard animosity as they would drinking poisonous wine.

“The eighth consists of the habit of expressing (wrong) views, such as those of satkayadrishti, prohibitions, grasping, and other deviant insights and the karma involved in these, which result from contradiction and opposition. From these there come into being court officials and deputies holding documents, whom one meets as if they were people coming and going on the road.

“Because these two habits influence one another, there come into being official inquiries, baited questions, examinations, interrogations, public investigations, exposure, the youths who record good and evil, carrying the record books of the offenders’ arguments and rationalizations, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon evil views and name them the ‘pit of views.’ Bodhisattvas regard having false and one-sided views as they would standing on the edge of a steep ravine full of poison.

“The ninth consists of the habit of injustice that comes from instigating false charges and libeling. From them are produced crushing between mountains, crushing between rocks, stonerollers, stone grinders, plowing, and grinding. It is like a slanderous villain who engages in persecuting good people unjustly.

“Because these two habits join ranks, there come into being pressing and pushing, bludgeons and compulsion, squeezing and straining, weighing and measuring, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon harmful accusations and name them ‘a treacherous tiger.’ Bodhisattvas regard injustice as they would a bolt of lightning.

“The tenth consists of the habits of litigation and the mutual disputations which give rise to covering. From them are produced the mirror that reflects and the lamp that shines, exposing one just as if one were in direct sunlight and had no way to hide one’s shadow.

“Because these two habits bicker back and forth, there come into being evil companions, the mirror of karma, the fiery pearl, exposure of past karma, inquests, and other such experiences.

“Therefore, all the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions look upon covering and name it a ‘hidden villain.’ Bodhisattvas regard covering as they would having to carry a mountain atop their heads while walking upon the sea.

“What are the six retributions? Ánanda, all living beings create karma with their six consciousnesses. The evil retributions they call down upon themselves come from the six sense organs.

“What are the evil retributions that arise from the six sense organs? The first is the retribution of seeing, which brings an evil result. The karma of seeing intermingles, so that at the time of death one first sees a raging conflagration, which fills the ten directions. The deceased one’s spiritual consciousness takes flight, but then falls. Riding on a wisp of smoke, it enters the un–intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. The first is clear perception, in which one sees all sorts of evil things. This causes one to experience boundless fear. The second is obscure perception, which

is a stillness devoid of seeing. This causes one to experience boundless terror.

“When the fire that comes from seeing burns the sense of hearing, it becomes cauldrons of boiling water and molten copper. When it burns the breath, it becomes black smoke and purple fumes. When it burns the sense of taste, it becomes scorching hot pellets and molten iron gruel. When it burns the sense of touch, it become white-hot embers and glowing coals. When it burns the mind, it becomes sparks of fire that shower everywhere and whip up and inflame the entire realm of space.

“The second is the retribution of hearing, which brings an evil result. The karma of hearing intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees gigantic waves that drown the whole world. The deceased one’s spiritual consciousness falls into the water and rides the current into the un-intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. One is open hearing, in which it hears all sorts of noise and its essential spirit becomes confused. The other is closed hearing, in which there is a stillness devoid of hearing, and its soul sinks into oblivion. When the waves from hearing flow into the hearing, they become scolding and interrogation. When they flow into the seeing, they become thunder and roaring and evil poisonous vapors. When they flow into the breath, they become rain and fog permeated with poisonous organisms that entirely fill up the body. When they flow into the sense of taste, they become pus and blood and every kind of filth. When they flow into the sense of touch, they become animals and ghosts, and excrement and urine. When they flow into the mind, they become lightning and hail, which ravage the heart and soul.

“The third is the retribution of smelling, which brings an evil result. The karma of smelling intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a poisonous vapor that permeates the atmosphere near and far. The deceased one’s spiritual consciousness wells up out of the earth and enters the un-intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. One is penetrating smelling, in which one is thoroughly infused with the evil

vapors and one's mind becomes distressed. The other is blocked smelling, in which one's breath is cut off and there is no passage, and one lies stifled and suffocating on the ground.

“When the vapor of smelling invades the breath, it becomes cross-examination and torture. When it invades the seeing, it becomes fire and torches. When it invades the hearing, it becomes sinking and drowning, molten metal and boiling liquids. When it invades the sense of taste, it becomes putrid or rancid foods. When it invades the sense of touch, it becomes the actions of ripping apart and beating to a pulp. It also becomes a huge mountain of flesh which has hundreds and thousands of eyes and which is sucked and fed upon by numberless worms. When it invades the mind, it becomes ashes, pestilent air, and flying sand and gravel, which cut the body to ribbons.

“The fourth is the retribution of tasting, which brings an evil result. This karma of tasting intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees an iron net ablaze with a raging fire that covers over the entire world. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness passes down through this hanging net, and suspended upside down it enters the un-intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. One is a sucking air, which congeals into ice so that it freezes the flesh of his body until it bursts open. The other is a spitting blast of air, which spews out a raging fire that roasts his bones and marrow to a crisp.

“When the tasting of flavors passes through the sense of taste, it becomes what must be acknowledged and what must be endured. When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning metal and stones. When it passes through the hearing, it becomes sharp weapons and knives. When it passes through the sense of smell, it becomes a vast iron cage that encloses the entire land. When it passes through the sense of touch, it becomes bows and arrows, crossbows, and darts. When it passes through the mind, it becomes flying pieces of molten iron that rain down from out of space.

“The fifth is the retribution of touching, which brings an evil result. The karma of touching intermingles, and thus at the time of

death one first sees huge mountains closing in on one from four sides, leaving no path of escape. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness then sees a vast iron city. Fiery snakes and fiery dogs, wolves, lions, ox-headed jail keepers, and horse-headed rakshasas brandishing spears and lances drive it into the iron city toward the un-intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. One is touch that involves coming together, in which mountains come together to squeeze its body until its flesh, bones, and blood are totally dispersed. The other is touch that involves separation, in which knives and swords attack the body, ripping the heart and liver to shreds.

“When this touching passes through the sensation of touch, it becomes colliding, striking, stabbing, and piercing. When it passes through the seeing, it becomes burning and scorching. When it passes through the hearing, one hears the sounds on the path to the hells, at the gate to the hells, and in the courts of trial. . When it passes through the sense of smell, it becomes enclosures, bags, interrogation, and binding up. When it passes through the sense of taste, it become plowing, pinching, chopping, and severing. When it passes through the mind, it becomes falling, flying, frying, and broiling.

“The sixth is the retribution of thinking, which brings an evil result. The karma of thinking intermingles, and thus at the time of death one first sees a foul wind which devastates the land. The deceased one's spiritual consciousness is blown up into space, and then, spiraling downward, it rides that wind straight into the un-intermittent hell.

“There, two kinds of phenomena may occur. One is extreme confusion, which causes it to be frantic and to race about ceaselessly. The other is not confusion, but rather an acute awareness, which causes it to suffer from endless roasting and burning, the extreme pain of which is difficult to bear.

“When this deviant thought combines with thinking, it becomes locations and places. When it combines with seeing, it becomes inspection and testimonies. When it combines with hearing, it becomes huge crushing rocks, ice and frost, dirt and fog. When it

combines with smelling, it becomes a great fiery car, a fiery boat, and a fiery jail. When it combines with tasting, it becomes loud calling, wailing, and regretful weeping. When it combines with touch, it becomes sensations of large and small, where ten thousand births and ten thousands deaths are endured every day, and of lying with one's face to the ground.

“Ánanda, these are called the ten causes and six retributions of the hells, which are all created by the confusion and falseness of living beings.

“If living beings create this evil karma simultaneously, they enter the Avici Hell and endure limitless suffering, passing through limitless kalpas.

“If each of the six sense organs creates them and if what is done includes each state and each sense organ, then the person will enter the Eight Un–intermittent Hells.

“If the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind commit acts of killing, stealing, and lust, the person will enter the Eighteen Hells.

“If the three karmas are not all involved, and there is perhaps just one act of killing and one of stealing, then the person must enter the Thirty–six Hells.

“If the sense organ of sight alone commits just one karmic offense, then the person must enter the one hundred and eight hells.

“Because of this, living beings who do certain things create certain karma, and so in the world they enter collective hells, which arise from false thinking and which originally are not there at all.

“And then, Ánanda, after the living beings who have slandered and broken the precepts, violated the Bodhisattva precepts, slandered the Buddha's Nirvana, and created various other kinds of karma, pass through many kalpas of being burned in the inferno, they finally finish paying for their offenses and are reborn as ghosts.

“If greed for material objects was the original cause that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters material objects and will become a strange ghost.

“If it was indulgence in lust that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters the wind and will become a drought ghost.

“If it was indulgence in lying that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters animals and will become a mei ghost.

“If it was hatred that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters worms and insects, and will become a gu poison ghost.

“If it was the harboring of grudges that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters degeneration and will become a pestilence ghost.

“If it was arrogance that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters gases and will become a hungry ghost.

“If it was injustice to others that made the person commit offenses, then after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters darkness and will become a paralysis ghost.

It was attachment to wrong views that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters essential energy and will become a wang liang ghost.

“If it was deception that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters brightness and will become a servant ghost.

“If it was the practice of forming factions that made the person commit offenses, then, after he has finished paying for his crimes, he will take shape when he encounters people and will become a messenger ghost.

“Ánanda, such a person’s fall is due to his totally emotional level of functioning. When his karmic fire has burned out, he will rise up to be reborn as a ghost. This is occasioned by his own karma of false thinking. If he awakens to Bodhi, then in the wonderful perfect brightness there isn’t anything at all.

“Moreover, Ānanda, when his karma as a ghost is ended and the consequences of his emotion and thought are over, he comes into the world to meet his creditors and settle his accounts with them. He is born as an animal to repay his debts from past lives.

“The retribution of the strange ghost of material objects is finished when the object is destroyed and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of owl.

“The retribution of the drought ghost of the wind is finished when the wind subsides, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of uncanny creature which gives inauspicious prognostications.

“The retribution of the mei ghost of an animal is finished when the animal dies, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of fox.

“The retribution of the gu ghost in the form of worms and insects is finished when the gu is exhausted, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of venomous creature.

“The retribution of a pestilence ghost found in degeneration is finished when the degeneration is complete, and it is reborn in the world, usually as a species of tapeworm.

“The retribution of the ghost which takes shape in gases is finished when the gases are gone, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of animal used for food.

“The retribution of the ghost of darkness is finished when the darkness ends, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of animal used for clothing or service.

“The retribution of the ghost which unites with energy is finished when the union dissolves, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of migratory creature.

“The retribution of the ghost of brightness and intellect is finished when the brightness disappears, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of efficacious creature.

“The retribution of the ghost that relies on a person is finished when the person dies, and it is then reborn in the world, usually as a species of domestic animal.

“Ánanda, all this is due to the burning out of his karmic fire in payment for his debts from past lives. The rebirth as an animal is also occasioned by his own false and empty karma. If he awakens to Bodhi, then fundamentally none of these false conditions will exist at all.

“You mentioned Precious Lotus Fragrance, King Crystal, and Bhikshu Good Stars. Evil karma such as theirs was created by them alone. It did not fall down out of the heavens or well up from the earth, nor was it imposed upon them by some person. Their own falseness brought it into being, and so they themselves have to undergo it. In the Bodhi mind, it is empty and false—a cohesion of false thoughts.

“Moreover, Ánanda, if while repaying his past debts by undergoing rebirth as an animal, such a living being pays back more than he owed, he will then be reborn as a human to rectify the excess.

“If the creditor is a person with strength, blessings, and virtue, then he can pay what he collected in excess without having to lose his human form. But if he lacks blessings, then he will be reborn as an animal to pay the outstanding balance.

“Ánanda, if the debt involves money, material goods, or manual labor, then once it is paid, the debt is resolved.

“But if in the process of repayment the lives of other beings were taken or their flesh eaten, then it will start a cycle of mutual devouring and slaughtering that will send the debtors and creditors up and down endlessly for as many eons as there are motes of dust.

“There is no way to put a stop to it, except through Shamatha or through a Buddha’s coming to the world.

“You should know that when owls and their kind have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as obstinate people.

“When creatures that are inauspicious have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as abnormal people.

“When foxes have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as people who are simpletons.

“When creatures of the venomous category have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as malicious people.

“When tapeworms and their like have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are born as lowly people.

“When the edible types of creatures have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as weak people.

“When creatures that are used for clothing or service have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as people who do hard labor.

“When creatures that migrate have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as literary people.

“When efficacious creatures have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as intelligent people.

“When domestic animals have paid back their debts, they regain their original form and are reborn as sophisticated people.

“Ánanda, these are all beings that have finished paying back former debts and are born again in the human realm. They are involved in a beginning-less scheme of karma and delusion and spend their lives killing and being killed by one another. They do not get to meet the Thus Come One or hear the Proper Dharma. They just abide in the wearisome dust, passing through a repetitive cycle. Such people can truly be called pitiful.

“Furthermore, Ánanda, there are people who do not rely on Proper Enlightenment to cultivate Samádhi, but cultivate in some special way that is based on their false thinking. Holding to the idea of perpetuating their physical bodies, they roam in the mountains and forests in places people do not go and become Ten Kinds of Immortals.

“Ánanda, some living beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with specially prepared foods. When they have perfected this method of dieting, they are known as earth-traveling immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of grasses and herbs. When they have perfected this method of taking herbs, they are known as flying immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of metal and stone. When they have perfected this method of transformation, they are known as roaming immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through movement and stillness. When they have perfected their energy and essence, they are known as space-traveling immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong by using the flow of saliva. When they have perfected the virtues of this moisture, they are known as heaven-traveling immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong with the essence of sun and moon. When they have perfected the inhalation of this essence, they are known as all-penetrating immortals.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through mantras and precepts. When they have perfected these skills, they are known as immortals of the Way.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through the use of thought processes. When they have perfected thought and memory, they are known as illuminating immortals

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through internal union. When they have perfected the response, they are known as immortals of essence.

“Some of these beings with unflagging resolution make themselves strong through transformations. When they have perfected their awakening, they are known as immortals of the ultimate level.

“Ánanda, these are all people who smelt their minds but do not cultivate Proper Enlightenment. They obtain some special principle of life and can live for thousands or tens of thousands of years. They retire deep into the mountains or onto islands in the sea and cut themselves off from the human realm. However, they are still part of the turning wheel, because they flow and turn according to their false thinking and do not cultivate samádhi. When their reward is finished, they must still return and enter the various destinies.

“Ánanda, there are many people in the world who do not seek what is eternal and who cannot yet renounce the love that exists between themselves and their wives.

“But they have no interest in sexual misconduct and so their purity develops and their light is revealed. When their life ends, they are born in the Heaven of the Four Kings next to the sun and moon.

“Those whose sexual love for their wives is slight, but who have not yet obtained complete purity when dwelling in solitude,, transcend the light of sun and moon at the end of their lives, and reside at the summit of the human realm. Such people are born in the Trayastrimsha Heaven.

“Those who become temporarily involved when they meet with desire but who do not dwell upon it when it is finished, and who, while in the human realm, are active less and quiet more, abide at the end of their lives in light and emptiness where the illumination of sun and moon does not reach. These beings have their own light, and they are born in the Suyama Heaven.

“Those who are quiet all the time, but who are not yet able to resist when stimulated by contact, ascend at the end of their lives to a subtle and ethereal place; they will not be drawn into the lower realms. The destruction of the realms of humans and gods and the three disasters at the end of a kalpa will not reach them, for they are born in the Tushita Heaven.

“Those who are devoid of desire, but who will engage in it for the sake of their partner, even though to them the experience is as flavorless as chewing wax, are born at the end of their lives in a

transcendental place of transformations. They are born in the Heaven of Bliss by Transformation.

“Those who have no worldly thoughts while doing what worldly people do, who are lucid and beyond such activity while involved in it, are capable at the end of their lives of entirely transcending states where transformations may be present or absent. They are born in the Heaven of the Comfort from Others’ Transformations.

“Ánanda, although the beings in these six heavens have physically transcended desire physically, traces of it still remain in their minds. The levels of existence so far discussed are known as the Realm of Desire.

“Ánanda, all those in the world who cultivate their minds but do not avail themselves of Dhyana and so have no wisdom, can only control their bodies so as to not engage in sexual desire. Whether walking or sitting, or in their thoughts, they are totally devoid of it. Since they do not give rise to defiling love, they do not remain in the realm of desire. These people, in response to their thought, take on the bodies of Brahma beings. Such beings are in the Heaven of the Multitudes of Brahma.

“In those whose hearts of desire have already been cast aside, the mind apart from desire manifests. They delight in following the precepts. Practicing Brahma virtue at all times, such beings are in the Heaven of the Ministers of Brahma.

“Those whose bodies and minds are wonderfully perfect, and whose awesome deportment is not in the least deficient, are pure in the precepts and have a thorough understanding of them as well. Governing the Brahma multitudes as Great Brahma Lords, such beings are in the Great Brahma Heaven.

“Ánanda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by any affliction. Although they have not developed proper samádhi, their minds are pure to the point that all outflows are stilled. This is called the First Dhyana.

“Ánanda, those beyond the Brahma Heavens govern the Brahma beings, for their Brahma conduct is perfected. With their

minds tranquil and unmoving, they emit light in profound stillness. Such beings are in the Heaven of Lesser Light.

“Those whose lights illumine each other in an endless dazzling blaze shine throughout the realms of the ten directions so that everything becomes like crystal. Such beings are in the Heaven of Limitless Light.

“Those who sustain the light to perfection accomplish the substance of the teaching. Creating and transforming the purity into endless responses and functions, such beings are in the Light–Sound Heaven.

“Ánanda, those who flow to these three superior levels will not be oppressed by worries or vexations. Although they have not developed proper Samádhi, their minds are pure to the point that they have subdued their coarser outflows. This is called the Second Dhyana.

“Ánanda, heavenly beings for whom the perfection of light has become sound and who further open out the sound to disclose its wonder arrive at a more vigorous level of practice. Arriving at the bliss of still extinction, such beings are in the Heaven of Lesser Purity.

“Those in whom the state of purity is emptied experience the boundlessness of light ease in their bodies and minds, and they accomplish the bliss of still extinction. Such beings are in the Heaven of Limitless Purity.

“Those for whom the world, the body, and the mind are all perfectly pure have accomplished the virtue of purity, and they consider this to be a superior abode in which they can return to the bliss of still extinction.

Such beings are in the Heaven of Pervasive Purity.

“Ánanda, those who flow to these three superior levels will be replete with great compliance. Their bodies and minds are at peace, and they obtain limitless bliss. Although they have not obtained genuine Samádhi, the joy within the tranquility of their minds is total. This is called the Third Dhyana.

“Moreover, Ánanda, heavenly beings whose bodies and minds are not oppressed put an end to the cause of suffering and realize that

bliss is not permanent—that sooner or later it will come to an end. They resolutely renounce both thoughts of suffering and thoughts of bliss. Their coarse afflictions vanish, and pure blessings arise. Such beings are in the Heaven of the Birth of Blessings.

“Those whose renunciation of these thoughts is perfected gain a purity of superior understanding. Within these unimpeded blessings they obtain a wonderful compliance that extends to the bounds of the future. Such beings are in the Blessed Love Heaven.

“Ánanda, from that heaven there are two ways to go. Those who extend the previous thought into limitless pure light, and who perfect their blessings and virtue, cultivate and are certified to one of these dwellings. Such beings are in the Vast Fruit Heaven.

“Those who extend the previous thought into a dislike of both suffering and bliss unceasingly intensify their renunciation until they perfect the path of renunciation. Their bodies and minds will become extinct; their thoughts will become like dead ashes. For five hundred eons these beings will perpetuate the cause for production and extinction, being unable to uncover the nature, which is neither produced nor extinguished. During the first half of these eons they will undergo extinction; during the second half they will experience production. Such beings are in the Heaven of No Thought.

“Ánanda, those who flow to these four superior levels will not be affected by any suffering or bliss in any world. Although this is not the unconditioned of the True Ground of Non–Moving, because they still have the thought of obtaining something, their functioning is nonetheless quite advanced. This is called the Fourth Dhyana.

“Beyond these, Ánanda, are the Five Heavens of No Return. For those who have completely cut off the nine categories of habits in the lower realms, neither suffering nor bliss exist, and there is no regression to the lower levels. All whose minds have achieved this renunciation dwell in these heavens together.

“Ánanda, those who have put an end to suffering and bliss and who do not get involved in the contention between such thoughts are in the Heaven of No Affliction.

“When the mind and states are disengaged, even the thought of investigating that involvement is gone. Such beings are in the Heaven of No Heat.

“Those whose vision is wonderfully perfect and clear, view the realms of the ten directions as free of defiling appearances and devoid of all dirt and filth. Such beings are in the Heaven of Good View.

“Those whose essence of seeing has manifested are able to transform at will without obstruction. Such beings are in the Heaven of Good Manifestation.

“Those who exhaustively fathom the ultimate principle and the nature of form reach the border of emptiness. Such beings are in the Highest Heaven of the Form Realm.

“Ánanda, those in the Four Dhyanas, and even the rulers of the gods at those four levels, can only pay their respects through having heard of the beings in the Heavens of No Return; they cannot know them or see them, just as ordinary people of the world cannot see the places where the Arhats abide in holy Way–places deep in the wilderness and the mountains.

“Ánanda, in these eighteen heavens are those who remain solitary and uninvolved but who have not yet gotten rid of their form. These heavens are called the Form Realm.

“Furthermore, Ánanda, from this summit of the form realm there are also two roads. Those who are intent upon renunciation bring forth wisdom. The light of their wisdom becomes perfect and penetrating, so that they can transcend the defiling realms, accomplish Arhat–ship, and enter the Bodhisattva Vehicle. They are called Great Arhats who have turned their minds around.

“Those who dwell in the thought of renunciation and who succeed in renunciation and rejection, realize that their bodies are an obstacle. If they thereupon obliterate the obstacle and enter into emptiness, they are at the Station of Emptiness.

“For those who have eradicated all obstacles, there is neither obstruction nor extinction. Then there remains only the alaya consciousness and half of the subtle functions of the manas. These beings are at the Station of Boundless Consciousness.

“Those who have already done away with emptiness and form eradicate the conscious mind as well. In the extensive tranquility of the ten directions there is nowhere at all to go. These beings are at the Station of Nothing Whatsoever.

“The nature of consciousness is unmoving, yet within extinction they exhaustively investigate it, attempting to put an end to what is endless. Thus it is as if it existed and yet did not exist, as if it were ended and yet not ended. Such beings are at the station of Neither Thought nor Non–Thought.

“These beings who cultivate the path of sage hood from the heavens of no return by delving exhaustively into emptiness without fathoming the principle of emptiness are known as dull Arhats who do not turn their minds around. Just like those in the Heaven of Non–Thought and other externalist heavens who exhaustively investigate emptiness without knowing to turn around, these beings are ignorant and lost in (the heavens with) outflows. They will accordingly enter the cycle of rebirth again.

“Ánanda, the beings in all these heavens are ordinary beings receiving the fruits of their karmic rewards. Once their rewards are exhausted, they must once again enter rebirth. The lords of these heavens, however, are all Bodhisattvas who roam in Samádhi. They gradually progress in their practice and make transference to the way cultivated by all sages.

“Ánanda, these are the Four Heavens of Emptiness, where the bodies and minds of the inhabitants are extinguished. Concentration emerges, and they are free of the karmic retribution of form. This final group is called the Formless Realm.

“The beings in all of them have not understood the wonderfully enlightened bright mind. Their accumulation of falseness brings into being false existence in the Triple Realm. Within this they falsely follow along and become submerged in the seven destinies. As pudgalas, they gather together with their own kind.

“Furthermore, Ánanda, there are four categories of asuras in the Triple Realm.

“Those in the path of ghosts who, by means of their strength of protecting the Dharma, can ride their spiritual penetrations to enter into emptiness are asuras born from eggs; they belong to the destiny of ghosts.

“Those who have fallen in virtue and have been dismissed from the heavens dwell in places near the sun and moon. They are asuras born from wombs and belong to the destiny of humans.

“There are asura kings who uphold the world with a penetrating power and fearlessness. They are able to contend with the Brahma Lord, the God Shakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. These asuras come into being by transformation and belong to the destiny of gods.

“Ánanda, there is another, baser category of asuras. They are born in the center of the great seas and live in underwater caves. During the day they roam in emptiness; at night they return to their watery realm. These asuras come into being because of moisture and belong to the destiny of animals.

“Ánanda, so it is that when the seven destinies of hell-dwellers, hungry ghosts, animals, people, spiritual immortals, gods, and asuras are investigated in detail, they are all found to be murky and embroiled in conditioned existence. Their births come from false thoughts. Their subsequent karma comes from false thoughts. Within the wonderful perfection of the fundamental mind that is without any doing, they are like strange flowers in space, for there is basically nothing to be attached to; they are entirely vain and false, and they have no source or beginning.

“Ánanda, these living beings, who do not recognize the fundamental mind, all undergo rebirth for limitless kalpas. They do not attain true purity, because they keep getting involved in killing, stealing, and lust, or because they counter them and are born according to their not killing, not stealing, and lack of lust. If these three karmas are present in them, they are born among the troops of ghosts. If they are free of these three karmas, they are born in the destiny of gods. The incessant fluctuation between the presence and absence of these karmas gives rise to the cycle of rebirth.

“For those who are able bring forth samádhi, neither the presence nor the absence of these karmas exists in that eternal stillness; even their non-existence is done away with. Since the lack of killing, stealing, and lust is non-existent, how could there be actual involvement in deeds of killing, stealing and lust?

“Ánanda, those who do not cut off the three karmas each have their own private share. Because each has a private share, private shares come to be accumulated, making collective portions. They are not without a fixed source, for they arise from falseness. Since they arise from falseness, they are basically without a cause, and thus they cannot be traced precisely.

“You should warn cultivators that they must get rid of these three delusions if they want to cultivate Bodhi. If they do not put an end to these three delusions, then even the spiritual penetrations they may attain are merely a worldly, conditioned function. If they do not extinguish these habits, they will fall into the path of demons.

“Although they wish to cast out the false, they become doubly deceptive instead. The Thus Come One says that such beings are pitiful. You have created this falseness yourself; it is not the fault of Bodhi.

“An explanation such as this is proper speech. Any other explanation is the speech of demon kings.”

Surangama Sutra, Volume 8

Volume 8, Part One

At that time, the Thus Come One was preparing to leave the Dharma-seat. From the lion throne, he extended his hand out and placed it on a small table wrought of the seven precious things. But then, he turned his body, which was the color of purple-golden mountains, and leaned back, saying to everyone in the assembly and to Ánanda, “Those of you with More to Learn, those Enlightened by Conditions, and those who are Hearers have now turned your minds to pursue the attainment of supreme Bodhi; the unsurpassed, wonderful enlightenment. I have already taught you the true method of cultivation.

You are still not aware of the subtle demonic events that can occur when you cultivate Shamatha-Vipashyana. If you cannot recognize a demonic state when it appears, it is because the cleansing of your mind has not been proper. You will then be engulfed by deviant views.

You may be troubled by a demon from your own skandhas or a demon from the heavens. Or you may be possessed by a ghost or spirit, or you may encounter a mountain sprite (li mei). If your mind is not clear, you will mistake a thief for your own son.

It is also possible to feel satisfied after a small accomplishment, like the Unlearned Bhikshu who reached the Fourth Dhyana and claimed that he had realized sage hood. When his celestial reward ended and the signs of decay appeared, he slandered Arhat-ship as being subject to birth and death, and thus he fell into the Avichi Hell.

You should pay attention. I will now explain this for you in detail.

Ánanda stood up and, with the others in the assembly who had More to Learn, bowed joyfully. They quieted themselves in order to listen to the compassionate instructions.

The Buddha told Ánanda and the whole assembly: You should know that the twelve classes of living beings in this world of outflows are endowed with a wonderfully bright, fundamental enlightenment—

the enlightened, perfect substance of the mind which is not different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions.

Due to the fault of false thinking and confusion about the truth, infatuation arises and makes your confusion all pervasive. Consequently, an emptiness arises. Worlds come into being as that confusion is ceaselessly transformed. Therefore, the lands that are not without outflows, as numerous as motes of dust throughout the ten directions, are all created as a result of confusion, dullness, and false thinking.

You should know that the space created in your mind is like a wisp of cloud that dots the vast sky. How much smaller must all the worlds within that space be!

If even one person among you finds the truth and returns to the source, then all the space in the ten directions is obliterated. How could the worlds within that space fail to be destroyed as well?

When you cultivate Dhyana and attain samádhi, your mind tallies with the minds of the Bodhisattvas and the great Arhats of the ten directions who are free of outflows, and you abide in a state of profound purity.

All the kings of demons, the ghosts and spirits, and the ordinary gods see their palaces collapse for no apparent reason. The earthquakes, and all the creatures in the water, on the land, and in the air, without exception, are frightened. Yet ordinary people who are sunk in dim confusion remain unaware of these changes.

All these beings have five kinds of spiritual powers; they still lack the elimination of outflows because they are still attached to worldly passions. How could they allow you to destroy their palaces? That is why the ghosts, spirits, celestial demons, sprites, and goblins come to disturb you when you are in samádhi.

Although these demons possess tremendous enmity, they are in the grip of their worldly passions, while you are within wonderful enlightenment. They cannot affect you any more than a blowing wind can affect light or a knife can cut through water. You are like boiling water, while the demons are like solid ice, which, in the presence of

heat, soon melts away. Since they rely exclusively on spiritual powers, they are like mere guests.

They can succeed in their destructiveness through your mind, which is the host of the five skandhas. If the host becomes confused, the guests will be able to do as they please.

When you are in Dhyana, awakened, aware, and free of delusion, their demonic deeds can do nothing to you. As the skandhas dissolve, you enter the light. All those deviant hordes depend upon dark energy. Since light can destroy darkness, they would be destroyed if they drew near you. How could they dare linger and try to disrupt your Dhyana–samádhi?

If you were not clear and aware, but were confused by the skandhas, then you, *Ánanda*, would surely become one of the demons. You would turn into a demonic being.

Your encounter with Matangi's daughter was a minor incident. She cast a spell on you to make you break the Buddha's moral precepts. Still, among the eighty thousand modes of conduct, you violated only one precept. Because your mind was pure, all was not lost.

That would be an attempt to completely destroy your precious enlightenment. Had it succeeded, you would have become like the family of a senior government official who is suddenly exiled; his family wanders, bereft and alone, with no one to pity or rescue them.

Ánanda, you should know that as a cultivator sits in the Bodhimanda, he is doing away with all thoughts. When his thoughts come to an end, there will be nothing on his mind. This state of pure clarity will stay the same whether in movement or stillness, in remembrance or forgetfulness.

When he dwells in this place and enters samádhi, he is like a person with clear vision who finds himself in total darkness. Although his nature is wonderfully pure, his mind is not yet illuminated. This is the region of the form Skandha.

If his eyes become clear, he will then experience the ten directions as an open expanse, and the darkness will be gone. This is the end of the form Skandha. He will then be able to transcend the

turbidity of time. Contemplating the cause of the form Skandha, one sees that false thoughts of solidity are its source.

(1) *Ánanda*, at this point, as the person intently investigates that wondrous brightness, the four elements will no longer function together, and soon the body will be able to transcend obstructions. This state is called “the pure brightness merging into the environment.” It is a temporary state in the course of cultivation and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(2) Further, *Ánanda*, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous light, the light will pervade his body. Suddenly he will be able extract intestinal worms from his own body, yet his body will remain intact and unharmed. This state is called “the pure light surging through one’s physical body.” It is a temporary state in the course of intense practice, and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(3) Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate inside and outside, his physical and spiritual souls, intellect, will, essence, and spirit will be able to interact with one another without affecting his body. They will take turns as host and guests. Then he may suddenly hear the sounds of Dharma being spoken in space, or perhaps he will hear esoteric truths being pronounced simultaneously throughout the ten directions. This state is called “the essence and souls alternately separating and uniting, and the planting of good seeds.” It is a temporary state and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(4) Further, when the person’s mind becomes clear, unveiled, bright, and penetrating, an internal light will shine forth and turn everything in the ten directions into the color of Jambunada gold. All

the various species of beings will be transformed into Thus Come Ones. Suddenly he will see Vairocana Buddha seated upon a platform of celestial light, surrounded by a thousand Buddhas who simultaneously appear upon lotus blossoms in a hundred million lands. This state is called “the mind and soul being instilled with spiritual awareness.” When he has investigated to the point of clarity, the light of his mind will shine upon all worlds. This is a temporary state and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(5) Further, as the person uses his mind to intently investigate that wondrous light, he will contemplate without pause, restraining and subduing his mind so that it does not go to extremes. Suddenly the space in the ten directions may take on the colors of the seven precious things or the colors of a hundred precious things, which simultaneously pervade everywhere without hindering one another. The blues, yellows, reds, and whites will each be clearly apparent. This state is called “trying too hard to subdue the mind.” It is a temporary state and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(6) Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate with clear discernment until the pure light no longer scatters, he will suddenly be able to see various objects in a dark room at night, just as if it were daytime. Yet the things, which were already in the dark room, do not disappear. This state is called “refining the mind and purifying the vision until one is able to see in the dark.” It is a temporary state and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(7) Further, when his mind completely merges with emptiness, his four limbs will suddenly become like grass or wood, devoid of sensation even when burned by fire or cut with a knife. The burning of

fire will not make his limbs hot, and even when his flesh is cut, it will be like wood being whittled. This state is called “the merging of external states and the blending of the four elements into a uniform substance.” It is a temporary state and does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(8) Further, when his mind accomplishes such purity that his skill in purifying the mind has reached its ultimate, he will suddenly see the earth, the mountains, and the rivers in the ten directions turn into Buddha lands replete with the seven precious things, their light shining everywhere. He will also see Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as many as the sands of the Ganges, filling all of space. He will also see pavilions and palaces that are resplendent and beautiful. He will see the hells below and the celestial palaces above, all without obstruction. This state is called “the gradual transformation of concentrated thoughts of like and dislike.” It does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(9) Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate what is profound and far away, he will suddenly be able to see distant places in the middle of the night. He will see city markets and community wells, streets and alleys, and relatives and friends, and he may hear their conversations. This state is called “having been suppressed to the utmost, the mind flies out and sees much that had been blocked from view.” It does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then this will be a good state. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

(10) Further, as the person uses his mind to investigate to the utmost point, he may see a Good and Wise Advisor whose body undergoes changes. Within a brief interval, various transformations will occur which cannot be explained. This state is called “having an improper mind which is possessed by a mountain sprite or a celestial demon, and without reason speaking Dharma that fathoms wondrous

truths.” It does not indicate sage hood. If he does not think he has become a sage, then the demonic activities will subside. But if he considers himself a sage, then he will be vulnerable to the demons’ influence.

Ánanda, all ten of those states may occur in Dhyana as one’s mental effort interacts with the form Skandha.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become Sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

In the Dharma Ending Age, after the Thus Come One’s Nirvana, all of you should rely on and proclaim this teaching. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

(End of Form Skandha)

Surangama Sutra, Volume 8

Volume 8, Part Two

In the Dharma Ending Age, after the Thus Come One's Nirvana, all of you should rely on and proclaim this teaching. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so all can realize the unsurpassed Way.”

Ánanda, when the good person who is cultivating samádhi and Shamatha has put an end to the form Skandha, he can see the mind of all Buddhas as if seeing an image reflected in a bright mirror.

He seems to have obtained something, but he cannot use it. In this he resembles a paralyzed person. His hands and feet are intact, his seeing and hearing are not distorted, and yet his mind has come under a deviant influence, so that he is unable to move. This is the region of the feeling Skandha.

Once the problem of paralysis subsides, his mind can then leave his body and look back upon his face. It can go or stay as it pleases without further hindrance. This is the end of the feeling Skandha. This person can then transcend the turbidity of views. Contemplating the cause of the feeling Skandha, one sees that false thoughts of illusory clarity are its source.

(11) Ánanda, in this situation the good person experiences a brilliant light. A feeling arises in his mind as a result of excessive internal pressure. At this point, he suddenly feels such boundless sadness that he looks upon even mosquitoes and gadflies as newborn children. He is overwhelmed with pity and bursts into tears without knowing it.

This is called “trying too hard to suppress the mind in the course of cultivation.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood. If he realizes that and remains unconfused, then after a time it will disappear.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of sadness will enter his mind. Then, as soon as he sees someone, he will feel sad and cry uncontrollably. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(12) Further, Ānanda, in this state of samādhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. At that time he has a sublime vision and is overwhelmed with gratitude. In this situation, he suddenly evinces tremendous courage. His mind is bold and keen. He resolves to equal all Buddhas and says he can transcend three Asamkhyeyas of eons in a single thought.

This is called “being too anxious to excel in cultivation.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood. If he realizes that and remains unconfused, then after a time it will disappear.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of insanity will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will boast about himself. He will become extraordinarily haughty, to the point that he recognizes no Buddha above him and no people below him. Lacking proper samādhi, he will certainly fall.

(13) Further, in this state of samādhi the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. With no new realization immediately ahead of him, and having lost his former status as well, his power of wisdom weakens, and he enters an impasse in which he sees nothing to anticipate. Suddenly a feeling of tremendous monotony and thirst arises in his mind. At all times he is fixated in memories that do not disperse. He mistakes this for a sign of diligence and vigor.

This is called “cultivating the mind, but losing oneself due to a lack of wisdom.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of memory will enter his mind. Day and night it will hold his mind suspended in one place. Lacking proper samādhi, he will certainly fall.

(14) Further, in this state of samādhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. His wisdom becomes stronger than his samādhi, and he mistakenly becomes impetuous. Cherishing the supremacy of his

nature, he imagines that he is a Nishyanda (Buddha) and rests content with his minor achievement.

This is called “applying the mind, but straying from constant examination and becoming preoccupied with ideas and opinions.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a lowly demon that is easily satisfied will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will announce, “I have realized the unsurpassed absolute truth.” Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(15) Further, in this state of samádhi the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. He has not yet obtained any results, and his prior state of mind has already disappeared. Surveying the two extremes, he feels that he is in great danger. Suddenly he becomes greatly distraught, as if he were seated on the Iron Bed, or as if he has taken poison. He has no wish to go on living, and he is always asking people to take his life so he can be released sooner.

This is called, “cultivating, but losing expedients.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of chronic depression will enter his mind. He may take up knives and swords and cut his own flesh, happily giving up his life. Or else, driven by constant anxiety, he may flee into the wilderness and be unwilling to see people. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(16) Further, in this state of samádhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. As he dwells in this purity, his mind is tranquil and at ease. Suddenly a feeling of boundless joy wells up in him. There is such bliss in his mind that he cannot contain it.

This is called, “experiencing lightness and ease, but lacking the wisdom to control it.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon that likes happiness will enter his mind. As soon as he sees someone, he will laugh. He will sing and dance in the streets. He will say that he has already attained unobstructed liberation. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(17) Further, in this state of samádhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. He says he is already satisfied. Suddenly, a feeling of unreasonable, intense self-satisfaction may arise in him. It may include pride, outrageous pride, haughty pride, overweening pride, and pride based on inferiority, all of which occur at once. In his mind, he even looks down on the Tathágatas of the ten directions, how much the more so on the lesser positions of Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions.

This is called “viewing oneself as supreme, but lacking the wisdom to save oneself.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of intense arrogance will enter his mind. He will not bow to stupas or in temples. He will destroy Sutras and images. He will say to the Danapatis, “These are gold, bronze, clay, or wood. The Sutras are just leaves or cloth. The flesh body is what is real and eternal, but you don’t revere it; instead you venerate clay and wood. That is truly absurd.” Those who have deep faith in him will follow him to destroy and bury the images in the ground. He will mislead living beings so that they fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(18) Further, in this state of samádhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. In his refined understanding, he awakens completely to subtle principles. Everything is in accord with his wishes. He may suddenly experience limitless lightness and ease in his mind. He may say that he has become a sage and attained great self-mastery.

This is called “attaining lightness and clarity due to wisdom.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon that likes lightness and clarity will enter his mind. Claiming that he is already satisfied, he will not strive to make further progress. For the most part, such cultivators will become like the Unlearned Bhikshu. He will mislead living beings so that they will fall into the Avichi Hell. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

Further in this state of samádhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. In that clear awakening, he experiences a false clarity. Within that, suddenly he may veer towards the view of eternal extinction, deny cause and effect, and take everything as empty. The thought of emptiness so predominates that he comes to believe that there is eternal extinction after death.

This is called “the mental state of samádhi dissolving so that one loses sight of what is right.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of emptiness will enter his mind. He will slander the holding of precepts, calling it a “Small Vehicle Dharma.” He will say, “Since Bodhisattvas have awakened to emptiness, what is there to hold or violate?” This person, in the presence of his faithful Danapatis, will often drink wine, eat meat, and engage in wanton lust. The power of the demon will keep his followers from doubting or denouncing him. After the ghost has possessed him for a long time, he may consume excrement and urine, or meat and wine, claiming that all such things are empty. He will break the Buddha’s moral precepts and mislead people into committing offenses. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

(20) Further, in this state of samádhi, the good person sees the disintegration of the form Skandha and understands the feeling Skandha. He savors the state of false clarity, and it deeply enters his mind and bones. Boundless love may suddenly well forth from his

mind. When that love becomes extreme, he goes insane with greed and lust.

This is called “when an agreeable state of samádhi enters one’s mind, lacking the wisdom to control oneself and mistakenly engaging in lustful behavior.” If he understands, then there is no error. This experience does not indicate sage hood.

But if he considers himself a sage, then a demon of desire will enter his mind. He will become an outspoken advocate of lust, calling it the Way to Bodhi. He will teach his lay followers to indiscriminately engage in acts of lust, calling those who commit acts of lust his Dharma heirs. The power of spirits and ghosts in the Ending Age will enable him to attract a following of ordinary, naive people numbering one hundred, two hundred, five or six hundred, or as many as one thousand or ten thousand. When the demon becomes bored, it will leave the person’s body. Once the person’s charisma is gone, he will run afoul of the law. He will mislead living beings, so that they fall into the Relentless Hells. Lacking proper samádhi, he will certainly fall.

Ánanda, ten of these states may occur in Dhyana as one’s mental effort interacts with the feeling Skandha.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become Sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

In the Dharma–ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathágata’s teachings, so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so that all can realize the unsurpassed Way.”

Surangama Sutra, Volume 8

Volume 8, Part Three

Ánanda, when the good person who is cultivating samádhi has put an end to the feeling Skandha, although he has not achieved the elimination of outflows, his mind can leave his body the way a bird escapes from a cage. From within his ordinary body, he already has the potential for ascending through the Bodhisattvas' sixty levels of Sage hood. He attains the "body produced by intent" and can roam freely without obstruction.

Suppose, for instance, someone is talking in his sleep. Although he does not know he is doing it, his words are clear, and his voice and inflection are all in order, so those who are awake can understand what he is saying. This is the region of the thinking Skandha.

If he puts an end to his stirring thoughts and rids himself of superfluous thinking, it is as if he has purged defilement from the enlightened, understanding mind. Then one is perfectly clear about the births and deaths of all categories of beings from beginning to end. This is the end of the thinking Skandha. One can then transcend the turbidity of afflictions. Contemplating the cause of the thinking Skandha, one sees that interconnected false thoughts are its source.

(21) Ánanda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone,* this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves its perfect brightness, so he sharpens his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for cleverness and skill.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks cleverness and skill, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. In an instant, he may appear to be a Bhikshu, enabling

that person to see him as such, or he may appear as Shakra, as a woman, or as a Bhikkhuní; or his body may emit light as he sleeps in a dark room.

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking that the other is a Bodhisattva. He believes the other's teachings and his mind is swayed. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

The other person is fond of speaking about calamities, auspicious events, and unusual changes. He may say that a Tathágata has appeared in the world at a certain place. He may speak of catastrophic fires or wars, thus frightening people into squandering their family wealth without reason.

This is a strange ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(22) Further, Ánanda, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves to roam about, so he lets his subtle thoughts fly out as he greedily seeks for adventure.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to roam, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His own body does not change its appearance, but those listening to the Dharma suddenly see themselves sitting on jeweled lotuses and their entire bodies transformed into clusters of purple-golden light. Each person in the audience experiences that state and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. Lust and laxity corrupt his mind. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

The other person is fond of saying that Buddhas are appearing in the world. He claims that in a certain place a certain person is actually a transformation body of a certain Buddha. Or he says that a certain person is such-and-such a Bodhisattva who has come to teach humankind. People who witness this are filled with admiration. Their deviant views multiply, and their Wisdom of Modes is destroyed.

This is a drought ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(23) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves spiritual oneness, so he clarifies his concentrated thought as he greedily seeks for union.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is actually possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks union, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. Neither his own body nor the bodies of those listening to the Dharma go through any external transformations. But he makes the minds of the listeners become 'enlightened' before they listen to the Dharma, so they experience changes in every thought. They may have the knowledge of past lives, or the knowledge of others' thoughts. They may see the hells or know all the good and evil events in the human realm. They may speak verses or spontaneously recite Sutras.

Each person is elated and feels he has obtained something unprecedented.

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. His thoughts become entangled in love. He breaks the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

He is fond of saying that there are greater Buddhas and lesser Buddhas, earlier Buddhas and later Buddhas; that among them are true Buddhas and false Buddhas, male Buddhas and female Buddhas; and that the same is true of Bodhisattvas. When people witness this, their initial resolve is washed away, and they easily get carried away with their wrong understanding.

This is a mei-ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

Instructions to be aware and not become confused.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(24) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samādhi, his mind craves to know the origins of things, so he exhaustively investigates the nature of physical things and their changes from beginning to end. He intensifies the keenness of his thoughts as he greedily seeks to analyze things.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks to know the source of things, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. His body has an awesome spiritual quality, which subdues the seeker. He makes the minds of those gathered beside his

seat spontaneously compliant, even before they have heard the Dharma. He says to all those people that the Buddha's Nirvana, Bodhi, and Dharma-body are there before them in the form of his own physical body. He says, "The successive begetting of fathers and sons from generation to generation is itself the Dharma-body, which is permanent and never-ending. What you see right now are those very Buddha lands. There are no other pure dwellings or golden features."

Those people believe and accept his words, forgetting their initial resolve. They offer up their lives, feeling they have obtained something unprecedented. They are all beguiled and confused into thinking he is a Bodhisattva. As they pursue his ideas, they break the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulge their greedy desires.

He is fond of saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are the Pure Land, and that the male and female organs are the true place of Bodhi and Nirvana. Ignorant people believe these filthy words.

This is a poisonous ghost or an evil nightmare ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(25) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves revelations from afar, so he pours all his energy into this intense investigation as he greedily seeks for imperceptible spiritual responses.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, completely unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks revelations, he arranges a seat and

speaks the Dharma. He briefly appears to his listeners in a body that looks a hundred or a thousand years old. They experience a defiling love for him and cannot bear to part with him. They personally act as his servants, tirelessly making the Four Kinds of Offerings to him. Each member of the assembly believes that this person is his former teacher, his original Good and Wise Advisor. They give rise to love for his Dharma and stick to him as if glued, feeling they have obtained something unprecedented.

The good person is beguiled and fooled into thinking the other is a Bodhisattva. Attracted to the other's thinking, he destroys the Buddha's moral precepts and covertly indulges his greedy desires.

He is fond of saying, "In a past life, in a certain incarnation, I rescued a certain person who was then my wife (or my mistress, or my brother). Now I have come to rescue you again. We will stay together and go to another world to make offerings to a certain Buddha." Or he may say, "There is a Heaven of Great Brilliance where a Buddha now dwells. It is the resting place of all Tathágatas." Ignorant people believe his ravings and lose their original resolve.

This is a pestilence ghost that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(26) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves deep absorption, so he restrains himself with energetic diligence and likes to dwell in secluded places as he greedily seeks for peace and quite.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks knowledge, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. He causes all of his listeners to think they know their karma from the past. Or he may say to someone there, “You haven’t died yet, but you have already become an animal.” Then he instructs another person to step on the first person’s ‘tail’, and suddenly the first person cannot stand up. At that point, all in the assembly pour out their hearts in respect and admiration for him. If someone has a thought, the demon detects it immediately. He establishes intense ascetic practices that exceed the Buddha’s moral precepts. He slanders Bhikshus, scolds his assembly of disciples, and exposes people’s affairs without fear of ridicule or rejection. He is fond of foretelling calamities and auspicious events, and when they come to pass he is not wrong in the slightest.

This is a ghost with great powers that in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person’s body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law. You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(27) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves more knowledge and understanding, so he diligently toils at examining and probing as he greedily seeks to know past lives.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma. This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks seclusion, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma.

There in the Dharma Assembly, inexplicably, that person may obtain an enormous precious pearl. The demon may sometimes change into an animal that holds the pearl in its mouth, or other jewels, bamboo tablets, tallies, talismans, letters and other unusual things. The demon first gives them to the person, and afterwards possesses him. Or he may fool his audience by burying the valuables underground and then saying that a “moonlight pearl” is illuminating the place. Thereupon the audience feels they have obtained something unique. He may eat only medicinal herbs and not partake of prepared food. Or he may eat only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat a day and still look robust. That is because he is sustained by the power of the demon. He slanders Bhikshus and scolds his assembly of disciples without fear of ridicule or rejection.

He is fond of talking about treasure troves in other locations, or of remote and hidden places where Sages and Worthies of the ten directions dwell. Those who follow him often see strange and unusual people.

This is a ghost or spirit of the mountain forests, earth, cities, rivers, and mountains that in its old age has become a demon. The person it possesses may advocate promiscuity and violate the Buddha’s precepts. He may covertly indulge in the five desires with his followers. Or he may appear to be vigorous, eating only wild plants. His behavior is erratic, and he disturbs and confuses the good person. But when the demon tires, it will leave the other person’s body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(28) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samādhi, his mind craves spiritual powers and all manner of transformations, so he investigates the source of transformations as he greedily seeks for spiritual powers.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, truly unaware that he is possessed by a demon, also claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks spiritual powers, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. The possessed person may hold fire in his hands and, grasping a portion of it, put a flame on the head of each listener in the Fourfold Assembly. The flames on top of their heads are several feet high, yet they are not hot and no one is burned. Or he may walk on water as if on dry land. Or he may sit motionless in the air. Or he may enter into a bottle or stay in a bag. Or he may pass through windowpanes and walls without obstruction. Only when attacked by weapons does he feel ill at ease. He declares himself to be a Buddha, and wearing the clothing of a layperson, he receives bows from Bhikshus. He slanders Dhyana meditation and the moral regulations. He scolds his disciples and exposes people's affairs without fear of ridicule or rejection.

He often talks about spiritual powers and self-mastery, and he may cause people to see visions of Buddha lands but they are unreal and arise merely from the ghost's power to delude people. He praises the indulgence of lust and does not condemn lewd conduct. He uses indecent means to transmit his Dharma.

This is a powerful nature spirit: a mountain sprite, a sea sprite, a wind sprite, a river sprite, an earth sprite, or a grass-and-tree sprite that has evolved over long ages. It may be a dragon-goblin; or a rishi who has been reborn as a goblin; or again a rishi who, having reached the end of his appointed time should have died, but whose body does not decay and is possessed by another goblin. In its old age it has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(29) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samádhi, his mind craves to enter cessation, so he investigates the nature of transformations as he greedily seeks for profound emptiness.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks emptiness, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. In the midst of the great assembly, his physical form suddenly disappears, and no one in the assembly can see him. Then out of nowhere, he abruptly reappears. He can appear and disappear at will, or he can make his body transparent like crystal. From his hands and feet he releases the fragrance of sandalwood, or his excrement and urine may be sweet as thick rock candy. He slanders the precepts and is contemptuous of those who have left the home-life.

He often says that there is no cause and no effect, that once we die, we are gone forever, that there is no afterlife, and that there are no ordinary people and no Sages. Although he has obtained a state of empty stillness, he covertly indulges his greedy desires. Those who give in to his lust also adopt his views of emptiness and deny cause and effect.

This is an essence that was created during an eclipse of the sun or moon. Having fallen on gold, jade, a rare fungus, a unicorn, a phoenix, a tortoise, or a crane, the essence endowed it with life, so that it did not die for thousands or tens of thousands of years and eventually became a spirit. It was then born into this land and in its old age has become a demon. It disturbs and confuses the good person. But when it tires of doing so, it will leave the other person's body. Then both the disciples and the teacher will get in trouble with the law.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

(30) Further, in the unhindered clarity and wonder that ensues after the feeling Skandha is gone, this good person is untroubled by any deviant mental state and experiences perfect, bright concentration. Within samādhi, his mind craves long life, so he toils at investigating its subtleties as he greedily seeks for immortality. He wishes to cast aside the birth and death of the body, and suddenly he hopes to end the birth and death of thoughts as well, so that he can abide forever in a subtle form.

At that time a demon from the heavens seizes the opportunity it has been waiting for. Its spirit possesses another person and uses him as a mouthpiece to expound the Sutras and the Dharma.

This person, unaware that he is possessed by a demon, claims he has reached unsurpassed Nirvana. When he comes to see that good person who seeks long life, he arranges a seat and speaks the Dharma. He is fond of saying that he can go places and come back without hindrance, perhaps traveling ten thousand miles and returning in the twinkling of an eye. He can also bring things back from wherever he goes. Or he may tell someone to walk from one end of the room to the other, a distance of just a few paces. Then even if the person walked fast for years, he could not reach the wall. Therefore people believe in the possessed person and mistake him for a Buddha.

He often says, “All the living beings in the ten directions are my children. I gave birth to all Buddhas. I created the world. I am the original Buddha. I created this world naturally, not due to cultivation.

This may be a Chamunda sent from the retinue of the demon in the Heaven of Sovereignty, or a youthful Pishacha from the Heaven of the Four Kings that has not yet brought forth the resolve. It takes advantage of the person’s luminous clarity and devours his essence and energy. Or perhaps without having to rely on a teacher, the cultivator personally sees a being that tells him, “I am a Vajra Spirit who has come to give you long life.” Or the being transforms itself into a beautiful woman and engages him in frenzied lust, so that within

a year his vitality is exhausted. He talks to himself; and to anyone listening he sounds like a goblin. The people around him do not realize what is happening. In most cases such a person will get in trouble with the law. But before he is punished, he will die from depletion. The demon disturbs and confuses the person to the point of death.

You should be aware of this in advance and not get caught up in the cycle of transmigration. If you are confused and do not understand, you will fall into the Relentless Hells.

Ánanda, you should know that in the Dharma–ending Age, these ten kinds of demons may leave the home–life to cultivate the Way within my Dharma. They may possess other people, or they may manifest themselves in various forms. All of them will claim that they have already accomplished Proper and Pervasive Knowledge and Awareness.

They praise lust and break the Buddha’s moral precepts. The evil demonic teachers and their demonic disciples that I just discussed transmit their teaching through licentious activity. Such deviant spirits take over cultivators’ minds, and after as few as nine lives or as many as a hundred generations; they turn true practitioners entirely into followers of demons.

When their lives are over, they are bound to end up as one of the demonic hordes. They will lose their proper and pervasive knowledge and fall into the Relentless Hells.

You need not enter Nirvana yet. Although you are completing your attainment to the level beyond study, hold nonetheless to your vows to enter the Dharma–ending Age. Bring forth great compassion to rescue and take across living beings who have proper minds and deep faith. Do not let them become possessed by demons. Help them instead to attain proper knowledge and views. I have already rescued you from birth and death. By venerating the Buddha’s words, you will be repaying the Buddha’s kindness, compassion and save living beings whose minds are proper in the Dharma–ending Age.

Ánanda, all ten of these states may occur in Dhyana as one’s mental effort interacts with the thinking Skandha.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become Sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

In the Dharma–ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathágata’s teachings, so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way! Offer protection so that all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

(End of thinking Skandha)

Surangama Sutra, Volume 8

Volume 8, Part Four

You need not enter Nirvana yet. Although you are completing your attainment to the level beyond study, hold nonetheless to your vows to enter the Dharma-ending Age. Bring forth great compassion to rescue and take across living beings who have proper minds and deep faith. Do not let them become possessed by demons. Help them instead to attain proper knowledge and views. I have already rescued you from birth and death. By venerating the Buddha's words, you will be repaying the Buddha's kindness.

Compassion and save living beings whose minds are proper in the Dharma-ending Age.

Ánanda, all ten of these states may occur in Dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the thinking Skandha.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, in their confusion they fail to recognize them and say that they have become Sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

In the Dharma-ending Age, after my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathágata's teachings, so that all living beings can awaken to their meaning. Do not let the demons of the heavens have their way. Offer protection so that all can realize the unsurpassed Way.

Ánanda, when the good person who is cultivating samádhi has put an end to the thinking Skandha, he is ordinarily free of dreaming and idle thinking, so he stays the same whether in wakefulness or in sleep. His mind is aware, clear, empty and still, like a cloudless sky, devoid of any coarse sense-impressions. He contemplates everything in the world—all the mountains, the rivers, and the vast land—as reflections in a bright mirror, appearing without attachment and vanishing without any trace; they are simply received and reflected. He does away with all his old habits, and only the essential truth remains.

From this point on, as the origin of production and destruction is exposed, he will completely see all the twelve categories of living beings in the ten directions. Although he has not fathomed the source

of their individual lives, he will see that they share a common basis of life, which appears as a mirage—shimmering and fluctuating—and is the ultimate, pivotal point of the illusory sense faculties and sense objects. This is the region of the formations Skandha.

Once the basic nature of this shimmering fluctuation returns to its original clarity, his habits will cease, like waves subsiding to become clear, calm water. This is the end of the formations Skandha. This person will then be able to transcend the turbidity of living beings. Contemplating the cause of the formations Skandha, one sees that subtle and hidden false thoughts are its source.

(31) Ānanda, you should know that when such a good person has obtained proper knowledge in his practice of Shamatha, his mind is unmoving, clear, and proper, and it cannot be disturbed by the ten kinds of demons from the heavens. He is now able to intently and thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings. As the origin of each category becomes apparent, he can contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and pervasive fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on that pervasive source, he could fall into error with two theories postulating the absence of cause.

First, perhaps this person sees no cause for the origin of life. Why? Since he has completely destroyed the mechanism of production, he can, by means of the eight hundred merits of the eye organ, see all living beings in the swirling flow of karma during eighty thousand eons, dying in one place and being reborn in another as they undergo transmigration. But he cannot see beyond eighty thousand eons.

Therefore, he concludes that for the last eighty thousand eons living beings in the ten directions of this and other worlds have come into being without any cause.

Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

Second, perhaps this person sees no cause for the end of life. And why? Since he perceives the origin of life, he believes that people are always born as people and birds are always born as birds; that

crows have always been black and swans have always been white; that humans and gods have always stood upright and animals have always walked on four legs; that whiteness does not come from being washed and blackness does not come from being dyed; and that there have never been nor will there be any changes for eighty thousand eons.

He says: “As I now examine to the end of this life, I find the same holds true. In fact, I have never seen Bodhi, so how can there be such a thing as the attainment of Bodhi? You should now realize that there is no cause for the existence of any phenomena.”

Because of this speculation, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

This is the first externalist teaching, in which one postulates the absence of cause.

(32) Ānanda, in his practice of samādhi, such a good person’s mind is unmoving, clear, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on its pervasive constancy, he could fall into error with four theories of pervasive permanence.

First, as this person thoroughly investigates the mind and its states, he may conclude that both are causeless. Through his cultivation, he knows that in twenty thousand eons, as living beings in the ten directions undergo endless rounds of production and destruction, they are never annihilated. Therefore, he speculates that the mind and its states are permanent.

Second, as this person thoroughly investigates the source of the four elements, he may conclude that they are permanent in nature. Through his cultivation, he knows that in forty thousand eons, as living beings in the ten directions undergo production and destruction, their substances exist permanently and are never annihilated. Therefore, he speculates that this situation is permanent.

Third, as this person thoroughly investigates the sixth sense faculty, the manas, and the consciousness that grasps and receives, he concludes that the origin of mind, intellect, and consciousness is

permanent. Through his cultivation, he knows that in eighty thousand eons, as all living beings in the ten directions revolve in transmigration, this origin is never destroyed and exists permanently. Investigating this undestroyed origin, he speculates that it is permanent.

Fourth, since this person has ended the source of thoughts, there is no more reason for them to arise. In the state of flowing, halting, and turning, the thinking mind—which was the cause of production and destruction—has now ceased forever, and so he naturally thinks that this is a state of non-production and non-destruction. As a result of such reasoning, he speculates that this state is permanent.

Because of these speculations of permanence, he will lose proper and pervasive knowledge, fall into externalism, and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the second externalist teaching, in which one postulates the pervasiveness of permanence.

(33) Further, in his practice of samādhi, such a good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate about self and others, he could fall into error with theories of partial impermanence and partial permanence based on four distorted views.

First, as this person contemplates the wonderfully bright mind pervading the ten directions, he concludes that this state of profound stillness is the ultimate spiritual self. Then he speculates, "My spiritual self, who is settled, bright, and unmoving, pervades the ten directions. All living beings are within my mind, and there they are born and die by themselves. Therefore, my mind is permanent, while those who undergo birth and death there are truly impermanent."

Second, instead of contemplating his own mind, this person contemplates in the ten directions worlds as many as the Ganges' sands. He regards as ultimately impermanent those worlds that are in eons of decay, and as ultimately permanent those that are not in eons of decay.

Third, this person closely examines his own mind and finds it to be subtle and mysterious, like fine motes of dust swirling in the ten directions, unchanging in nature. And yet it can cause his body to be produced and then to be destroyed. He regards that indestructible nature as his permanent intrinsic nature, and that which undergoes birth and death and flows forth from him as impermanent.

Fourth, knowing that the Skandha of thinking has ended and seeing the flowing of the Skandha of formations, this person speculates that the continuous flow of the Skandha of formations is permanent, and that the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking which have already ended are impermanent.

Because of these speculations of impermanence and permanence, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the third externalist teaching, in which one postulates partial permanence.

(34) Further, in his practice of samādhi, such a good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate about the making of certain distinctions, he could fall into error with four theories of finiteness.

First, this person speculates that the origin of life flows and functions ceaselessly. He judges that the past and the future are finite and that the continuity of the mind is infinite.

Second, as this person contemplates an interval of eighty thousand eons, he can see living beings; but earlier than eighty thousand eons is a time of stillness in which he cannot hear or see anything. He regards as infinite that time in which nothing is heard or seen, and as finite that interval in which living beings are seen to exist.

Third, this person speculates that his own pervasive knowledge is infinite and that all other people appear within his awareness. And yet, since he himself has never perceived the nature of their awareness, he says they have not obtained an infinite mind, but have only a finite one.

Fourth, this person thoroughly investigates the formations Skandha to the point that it becomes empty. Based on what he sees, in his mind he speculates that each and every living being, in its given body, is half living and half dead. From this he concludes that everything in the world is half finite and half infinite.

Because of these speculations about the finite and the infinite, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the fourth externalist teaching, in which one postulates finiteness.

(35) Further, in his practice of samádhi, such a good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on what he knows and sees, he could fall into error with four distorted, false theories, which are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality.

First, this person contemplates the source of transformations. Seeing the movement and flow, he says there is change. Seeing the continuity, he says there is constancy. Where he can perceive something, he says there is production. Where he cannot perceive anything, he says there is destruction. He says that the unbroken continuity of causes is increasing and that the pauses within the continuity are decreasing. He says that the arising of all things is existence and that the perishing of all things is non-existence. The light of reason shows that his application of mind has led to inconsistent views. If someone comes to seek the Dharma, asking about its meaning, he replies, "I am both alive and dead, both existent and non-existent, both increasing and decreasing." He always speaks in a confusing way, causing that person to forget what he was going to say.

Second, this person attentively contemplates his mind and finds that everything is non-existent. He has a realization based on non-existence. When anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word. He only says "no." Aside from saying "no," he does not speak.

Third, this person attentively contemplates his mind and finds that everything is existent. He has a realization based on existence. When anyone comes to ask him questions, he replies with only one word. He only says “yes.” Aside from saying “yes,” he does not speak.

Fourth, this person perceives both existence and non-existence. Experiencing this branching, his mind becomes confused. When anyone comes to ask questions, he tells them, “Existence is also non-existence. But within non-existence there is no existence.” It is all sophistry and does not stand up under scrutiny.

Because of these speculations, which are empty sophistries, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the fifth externalist teaching, in which one postulates four distorted, false theories that are total speculation based on the sophistry of immortality.

(36) Further, in his practice of samādhi, the good person’s mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on the endless flow, he could fall into error with the confused idea that forms exist after death.

He may strongly identify with his body and say that form is himself; or he may see himself as perfectly encompassing all worlds and say that he contains form; or he may perceive all external conditions as contingent upon himself and say that form belongs to him; or he may decide that he relies on the continuity of the formations Skandha and say that he is within form.

In all of these speculations, he says that form exists after death. Considering back and forth in this way, he comes up with sixteen cases of the existence of forms.

Then he may speculate that afflictions are always afflictions, and Bodhi is always Bodhi, and the two exist side by side without contradicting each other.

Because of these speculations about what exists after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature.

This is the sixth externalist teaching, which postulates confused theories of the existence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

(37) Further, in his practice of samádhi, such a good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper, and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on the skandhas of form, feeling, and thinking, which have already ended, he could fall into error with the confused idea that form do not exist after death.

Seeing that his form is gone, his physical shape seems to lack a cause. As he contemplates the absence of thought, there is nothing to which his mind can become attached. Knowing that his feelings are gone, he has no further involvements. Those skandhas have vanished. Although there is still some coming into being, there is no feeling or thought, and he concludes that he is like grass or wood.

Since those qualities do not exist at present, how can there be any existence of forms after death? Because of his examinations and comparisons, he decides that after death there is no existence. Expanding the idea, he comes up with eight cases of the non-existence of forms.

From that, he may speculate that Nirvana and cause and effect are all empty, that they are mere names, which ultimately do not exist.

Because of those speculations that forms does not exist after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the seventh externalist teaching, which postulates confused theories of the nonexistence of forms after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

(38) Further, in his practice of samádhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. In this state where the Skandha of formations remains, but the skandhas of feeling and thinking are gone, if he begins to speculate that there is both existence and non-existence, thus contradicting

himself, he could fall into error with confused theories that deny both existence and non–existence after death.

Regarding form, feeling, and thinking, he sees that existence is not really existence. Within the flow of the formations Skandha, he sees that non–existence is not really non–existence.

Considering back and forth in this way, he thoroughly investigates the realms of these skandhas and derives an eightfold negation of form. No matter which Skandha is mentioned, he says that after death, it neither exists nor does not exist.

Further, because he speculates that all formations are changing in nature, an “insight” flashes through his mind, leading him to derive a negation of both existence and non–existence. He cannot determine what is unreal and what is real.

Because of these speculations that deny both existence and non–existence after death, the future is murky to him and he cannot say anything about it. Therefore, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the eighth externalist teaching, which postulates confused theories that deny both existence and non–existence after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

(39) Further, in his practice of samádhi, the good person’s mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate that there is no existence after death, he could fall into error with seven theories of the cessation of existence.

He may speculate that the body will cease to exist; or that when desire has ended, there is cessation of existence; or that after suffering has ended, there is cessation of existence; or that when bliss reaches an ultimate point, there is cessation of existence; or that when renunciation reaches an ultimate point, there is cessation of existence.

Considering back and forth in this way, he exhaustively investigates the limits of the seven places and sees that they have already ceased to be and will not exist again.

Because of these speculations that existence ceases after death, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the ninth externalist teaching, which postulates confused theories of the cessation of existence after death in the realm of the five skandhas.

(40) Further, in his practice of samádhi, the good person's mind is firm, unmoving, and proper and can no longer be disturbed by demons. He can thoroughly investigate the origin of all categories of beings and contemplate the source of the subtle, fleeting, and constant fluctuation. But if he begins to speculate on existence after death, he could fall into error with five theories of Nirvana.

He may consider the heavens of the Desire Realm a true refuge, because he contemplates their extensive brightness and longs for it; or he may take refuge in the First Dhyana, because there his nature is free from worry; or he may take refuge in the Second Dhyana, because there his mind is free from suffering; or he may take refuge in the Third Dhyana, because he delights in its extreme joy; or he may take refuge in the Fourth Dhyana, reasoning that suffering and bliss are both ended there and that he will no longer undergo transmigration.

These heavens are subject to outflows, but in his confusion he thinks that they are unconditioned; and he takes these five states of tranquility to be refuges of supreme purity. Considering back and forth in this way, he decides that these five states are ultimate.

Because of these speculations about five kinds of immediate Nirvana, he will fall into externalism and become confused about the Bodhi nature. This is the tenth externalist teaching, which postulates confused theories of five kinds of immediate Nirvana in the realm of the five skandhas.

Ánanda, all ten of these crazy explanations may occur in Dhyana as one's mental effort interacts with the formations Skandha. That is why these "insights" appear.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, they mistake their confusion for

understanding and say that they have become Sages, thereby uttering a great lie. They will fall into the Relentless Hells.

After my Nirvana, all of you should pass on the Tathágata's teachings, transmitting and revealing them to those in the Dharma-ending Age, so that living beings everywhere can awaken to these truths. Do not let demons arise in their minds and cause them to commit grave offenses. Offer protection so that deviant views will be eradicated.

Teach them to awaken to true principles in body and mind, so that they do not stray off the Unsurpassed Path. Do not let them aspire to and be content with small attainments. You should become kings of great enlightenment and serve as guides of purity.

End of the Formations Skandha

Surangama Sutra, Volume 8

Volume 8, Part Five

Ánanda, when that good person, in cultivating samádhi, has put an end to the formations Skandha, the subtle, fleeting fluctuations—the deep, imperceptible, pivotal source and the common foundation from which all life in the world springs—are suddenly obliterated. In the submerged network of retributive karma of the Pudgala, the karmic resonance's are interrupted.

There is about to be a great illumination in the sky of Nirvana. It is like gazing east at the cock's last crow to see the bright glow of dawn already appearing. The six sense faculties are empty and still; there is no further racing about. Inside and outside there is a profound brightness. He enters without entering. Fathoming the original life—source of the twelve categories of beings throughout the ten directions, he can contemplate that source without being drawn into any of the categories. He has already become identical with the realms of the ten directions. The bright glow does not fade, and what was obscure and hidden is revealed. This is the region of the consciousness Skandha.

If he has already become identical with the beckoning masses, he may obliterate the individuality of the six gates and succeed in uniting and opening them. Seeing and hearing become linked so that they function interchangeably and purely. The worlds of the ten directions and his own body and mind are as bright and transparent as vaidurya. This is the end of the consciousness Skandha. This person can then transcend the turbidity of life spans. Contemplating the cause of the consciousness Skandha, one sees that the negation of existence and the negation of non—existence are both unreal, and that upside—down false thoughts are its source.

(41) Ánanda, you should know that the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty, and he must return consciousness to the source. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

He can cause the individual sense faculties of his body to unite and open. He also has a pervasive awareness of all the categories of beings in the ten directions. Since his awareness is pervasive, he can enter the perfect source. But if he regards what he is returning to as the cause of true permanence and interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of holding to that cause. Kapila the Sankhyan, with his theory of returning to the Truth of the Un-manifest, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the first state, in which he creates a place to which to return, based on the idea that there is something to attain. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of externalism.

(42) Further, Ānanda, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

He may regard that to which he is returning as his own body and see all living beings in the twelve categories throughout space as flowing forth from his body. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of maintaining that he has an ability, which he does not really have. Maheshvara, who manifests his boundless body, will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the second state, in which he creates a specific ability based on the idea that he has such an ability. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being born in the Heaven of Great Pride where the self is considered all pervading and perfect.

(43) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

If he regards what he is returning to as a refuge, he will suspect that his body and mind come forth from there, and that all things in the

ten directions of space arise from there as well. He will explain that that place from which all things issue forth is the truly permanent body, which is not subject to production and destruction. While still within production and destruction, he prematurely reckons that he abides in permanence. Since he is deluded about non-production, he is also confused about production and destruction. He is sunk in confusion. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not permanent to be permanent. He will speculate that the God of Sovereignty (Ishvaradeva) is his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the third state, in which he makes a false speculation based on the idea that there is a refuge. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of perfection.

(44) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

Based on his idea that there is universal awareness, he formulates a theory that all the plants and trees in the ten directions are sentient, not different from human beings. He claims that plants and trees can become people, and that when people die they again become plants and trees in the ten directions. If he considers this idea of unrestricted, universal awareness to be supreme, he will fall into the error of maintaining that what is not aware has awareness. Vasishtha and Sainika, who maintained the idea of comprehensive awareness, will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the fourth state, in which he creates an erroneous interpretation based on the idea that there is a universal awareness. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of awareness.

(45) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

If he has attained versatility in the perfect fusion and interchangeable functioning of the sense faculties, he may speculate that all things arise from these perfect transformations. He then seeks the light of fire, delights in the purity of water, loves the wind's circuitous flow, and contemplates the accomplishments of the earth. He reveres and serves them all. He takes these mundane elements to be a fundamental cause and considers them to be everlasting. He will then fall into the error of taking what is not production to be production. Kasyapa and the Brahmans who seek to transcend birth and death by diligently serving fire and worshipping water will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the fifth state, in which he confusedly pursues the elements, creating a false cause that leads to false aspirations based on speculations about his attachment to worship. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of a distorted view of transformation.

(46) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

He may speculate that there is emptiness within the perfect brightness, and based on that he denies the myriad transformations, taking their eternal cessation as his refuge. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not a refuge to be a refuge. Those abiding in Sunyata in the Heaven of [Neither Thought nor] Non-Thought will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the sixth state, in which he realizes a state of voidness based on the idea of emptiness within the perfect brightness. He strays

far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds of annihilation.

(47) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

In the state of perfect permanence, he may bolster his body, hoping to live for a long time in that subtle and perfect condition without dying. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of being greedy for something unattainable. Asita and those who seek long life will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the seventh state, in which he creates the false cause of bolstering and aspires to permanent worldly existence, based on his attachment to the life-source. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for false thoughts of lengthening life.

(48) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

As he contemplates the interconnection of all lives, he wants to hang on to worldly enjoyments and is afraid they will come to an end. Caught up in this thought, he will, by the power of transformation, seat himself in a lotus flower palace, conjure up an abundance of the seven precious things, increase his retinue of beautiful women, and indulge his mind. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall into the error of taking what is not the truth to be the truth. Vignakara will become his companion. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the eighth state, in which he sets up the result of indulging in worldly enjoyments, based on the cause of his deviant thinking. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming a demon of the heavens.

(49) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

In his understanding of life, he distinguishes the subtle and the coarse and determines the true and the false. But he only seeks a response in the mutual repayment of cause and effect, and he turns his back on the Way of Purity. In the practice of seeing suffering, eliminating accumulation, realizing cessation, and cultivating the Way, he dwells in cessation and stops there, making no further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature Hearer. Unlearned Sanghas and those of overweening pride will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the ninth state, in which he aspires toward the fruition of cessation, based on perfecting the mind that seeks responses. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for becoming enmeshed in emptiness.

(50) Further, the good person has thoroughly seen the formations Skandha as empty. He has already ended production and destruction, but he has not yet perfected the subtle wonder of ultimate serenity.

In that perfectly fused, pure, bright enlightenment, as he investigates the profound wonder, he may take it to be Nirvana and fail to make further progress. If he interprets this as a supreme state, he will fall and become a fixed-nature Pratyeka. Those Enlightened by Conditions and Solitarily Enlightened Ones who do not turn their minds to the Great Vehicle will become his companions. Confused about the Bodhi of the Buddhas, he will lose his knowledge and understanding.

This is the tenth state, in which he realizes the fruition of profound brightness based on fusing the mind with perfect enlightenment. He strays far from perfect penetration and turns his back on the City of Nirvana, thus sowing the seeds for being unable to surpass his attachment to the brightness of perfect enlightenment.

Ánanda, these ten states of Dhyana are due to crazy explanations along the way. Relying on them, the cultivator becomes confused and claims to have attained complete realization before actually having done so. All these states are the result of interactions between the consciousness Skandha and his mental efforts.

Dull and confused living beings do not evaluate themselves. Encountering such situations, their minds are confused by their individual likings and past habits, so they stop to rest in what they take to be the ultimate refuge. They claim to have fully realized unsurpassed Bodhi, thus uttering a great lie. After their karmic retribution as externalists and deviant demons comes to an end, they will fall into the Relentless Hells. The Hearers and Those Enlightened by Conditions cannot make further progress.

All of you should cherish the resolve to sustain the Way of the Tathágata. After my Nirvana, transmit this Dharma–door to those in the Dharma–ending Age, universally causing living beings to awaken to its meaning. Do not let the demons of views cause them to create their own grave offenses and fall! Protect, comfort, and compassionately rescue them and dispel evil conditions. Enable them to enter the Buddhas’ knowledge and understanding with body and mind so that from the beginning to the final accomplishment they never go astray.

It is by relying on this Dharma–door that the Tathágatas of the past, as many as fine motes of dust in eons as many as the Ganges’ sands, have enlightened their minds and attained the Unsurpassed Way.

When the consciousness Skandha ends, your present sense faculties will function interchangeably. Within that interchangeable functioning, you will be able to enter the Bodhisattvas’ Vajra Dry Wisdom. In your perfect, bright, pure mind, there will be a transformation.

It will be like pure vaidurya that contains a precious moon, and in that way you will transcend the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, the Four Additional Practices,

the Vajra-like Ten Grounds of a Bodhisattva's practice, and the perfect brightness of Equal Enlightenment.

You will enter the Tathágata's sea of wondrous adornments, perfect the cultivation of Bodhi, and return to the state of non-attainment.

These are subtle demonic states that all Buddhas, World Honored Ones, of the past, discerned with their enlightened clarity while in the state of Shamatha-Vipashyana.

Orders him to recognize the demonic states, and to protect and uphold the samádhi.

If you can recognize a demonic state when it appears and wash away the filth in your mind, you will not fall into error with deviant views.

The demons of the skandhas will melt away, and the demons of the heavens will be obliterated. The mighty ghosts and spirits will lose their wits and flee. And the li, mei, and wang liang will not dare to show themselves again.

You will directly arrive at Bodhi without the slightest weariness, progressing from lower positions to Great Nirvana without becoming confused or discouraged.

If there are living beings in the Dharma-ending Age who delight in cultivating samádhi, but who are stupid and dull, who fail to recognize the importance of Dhyana, or who have not heard the Dharma spoken, you should be concerned lest they get caught up in deviant ways. You should single-mindedly exhort them to uphold the Dharani Mantra of the Buddha's Summit. If they cannot recite it from memory, they should have it written out and placed it in the Dhyana Meditation Hall or wear on their person. Then none of the demons will be able to disturb them.

You should revere this final paradigm of the ultimate cultivation and progress by the Tathágatas of the ten directions.

Ánanda then arose from his seat. Having heard the Buddha's instruction, he bowed and respectfully upheld it, remembering every word and forgetting none. Then once more in the great assembly he spoke to the Buddha, "The Buddha has told us that in the

manifestation of the five skandhas, there are five kinds of falseness that come from our own thinking minds. We have never before been blessed with such subtle and wonderful instructions as the Tathágata has now given.”

“Further, are these five skandhas obliterated all at the same time, or are they extinguished in sequence? What are the boundaries of these five layers?”

“We only hope the Tathágata, out of great compassion, will explain this in order to purify the eyes and illuminate the minds of those in the great assembly, and in order to serve as eyes for living beings of the future.”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “The essential, true, wonderful brightness and perfect purity of basic enlightenment does not admit birth and death, nor any mundane defilements, nor even empty space itself. All these are brought forth because of false thinking.

The source of basic enlightenment, which is wonderfully bright, true, and pure, falsely gives rise to the material world, just as Yajnadatta became confused about his head when he saw his own reflection.

The falseness basically has no cause, but in your false thinking, you set up causes and conditions. But those who are confused about the principle of causes and conditions call it spontaneity. Even empty space is an illusory creation. How much the more so are causes and conditions and spontaneity, which are mere speculations, made by the false minds of living beings.

Ánanda, if you perceive the arising of falseness, you can speak of the causes and conditions of that falseness. But if the falseness has no source, you will have to say that the causes and conditions of that falseness basically have no source. How much the more is this the case for those who fail to understand this and advocate spontaneity.

Therefore, the Tathágata has explained to you that the fundamental cause of all five skandhas is false thinking.

Your body’s initial cause was a thought on the part of your parents. But if you had not entertained any thought in your own mind,

you would not have been born. It is by means of thought that life is perpetuated.

As I have said before, when you call to mind the taste of vinegar, your mouth waters. When you think of walking along a precipice, the soles of your feet tingle. Since the precipice doesn't exist and there isn't any vinegar, how could your mouth be watering at the mere mention of vinegar, if it were not the case that your body came from falseness?

Therefore, you should know that your present physical body is brought about by the first kind of false thinking, which is characterized by solidity.

As described earlier, merely thinking about a high place can actually cause your body to tingle and ache.

Due to that cause, feelings arise and affect your physical body, so that at present you pursue favorable feelings and are repelled by adverse feelings. These two kinds of feelings that compel you are brought about by the second kind of false thinking, which is characterized by illusory clarity.

Once your thoughts arise, they can control your body. Since your body is not the same as your thoughts, and yet, why is it that your body follows your thoughts and engage in every sort of grasping at objects? A thought arises and the body grasps in response to the thought.

When you are awake, your mind thinks. When you are asleep, you dream. Thus your thinking is stirred to perceive false situations. This is the third kind of false thinking, which is characterized by interconnectedness.

The metabolic processes never stop; they progress through subtle changes: your nails become long, your hair grows, your energy wanes, and your skin becomes wrinkled. By day and by night the processes continue, and yet you never wake up to them.

If these things aren't part of you, *Ánanda*, then why does your body keep changing? And if they are really part of you, then why aren't you aware of them?

Your formations Skandha continues in thought after thought without cease. It is the fourth kind of false thinking, which is characterized as subtle and hidden.

Finally, if your pure, bright, clear, and unmoving state is permanent, then there should be no seeing, hearing, awareness or knowing in your body. If it is genuinely pure and true, it should not contain habits and falseness.

How does it happen, then, that having seen some unusual thing in the past, you eventually forget it over time, until neither memory nor forgetfulness of it remain; but then later, upon suddenly seeing that unusual thing again, you remember it clearly from before without one detail omitted? How can you reckon the permeation, which goes on in thought after thought in this pure, clear, and unmoving consciousness?

Ánanda, you should know that this state of clarity is not real. It is like rapidly flowing water that appears to be still on the surface. Because of its rapid speed, you cannot perceive the flow, but that does not mean it is not flowing. If this were not the source of thinking, then how could one be subject to false habits?

If you do not open and unite your six sense faculties so that they function interchangeably, this false thinking will never cease.

That's why your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are presently strung together by subtle habits, such that within the profound clarity, existence and non-existence are both illusory. This is the fifth kind of upside-down, minutely subtle thinking.

Ánanda, these five skandhas of reception develop with five kinds of false thinking.

You also wanted to know the depth and scope of each realm. Form and emptiness are the boundaries of form. Contact and separation are the boundaries of feeling. Remembering and forgetting are the boundaries of thinking. Destruction and production are the boundaries of formations. Deep purity entering to unite with deep purity belongs to the boundaries of consciousness.

At their source, these five skandhas arise in layers. Their arising is due to consciousness. Their cessation begins with the elimination of form.

You may have a sudden awakening to the principle, at which point they all simultaneously vanish. But in terms of the specifics, they are eliminated not all at once, but in sequence.

I have already shown you the knots tied in the Karpasa cloth. What is it that you do not understand, that causes you to ask about it again?

You should gain a thorough understanding of the origin of this false thinking and then transmit your understanding to cultivators in the future Dharma-ending Age. Let them recognize this falseness and naturally give rise to deep disdain for it. Let them know of Nirvana so that they will not linger in the Triple Realm.

Ánanda, suppose someone were to present a quantity of the seven precious things that filled the space in the ten directions to as many Buddhas as there are motes of dust, attentively serving and making offerings to them without letting a moment go by in vain. Do you think this person would reap many blessings from making such an offering to the Buddhas?

Ánanda answered, “Since space is limitless, the precious things would be boundless. In the past, someone gave the Buddha seven coins and consequently was reborn as a Wheel-turning King in his next life. As to this person who now fills up all of space and all the Buddha lands with an offering of precious things that could not be reckoned through endless eons, how could there be a limit to his blessings?”

The Buddha told Ánanda, “All Buddhas, Tathágatas, speak words which are not false. There might be another person who had personally committed the Four Major Offenses and the Ten Parajikas so that, in an instant, he would have to pass through the Avichi Hells in this world and other worlds, until he had passed through all the Relentless Hells in the ten directions without exception.”

And yet, if he could explain this Dharma-door for even just the space of a thought to those in the Dharma-ending Age who have not yet studied it, his obstacles from offenses would be eradicated in response to that thought, and all the hells where he was to undergo suffering would become lands of peace and bliss.

The blessings he would obtain would surpass those of the person previously mentioned by hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of times, indeed by so many times that no calculations or analogies could express it.

Ánanda, if living beings are able to recite this Sutra and uphold this mantra, I could not describe in endless kalpas how great the advantages will be. Rely on the teaching I have spoken. Cultivate in accord with it, and you will directly realize Bodhi without encountering demonic karma.

When the Buddha finished speaking this Sutra, the Bhikshus, Bhiksunis, Upasakas, Upasikas, and all the gods, humans, and asuras in this world, as well as all the Bodhisattvas, those of the Two Vehicles, Sages, immortals, and pure youths in other directions, and the mighty ghosts and spirits of initial resolve all felt elated, made obeisance, and withdrew.

End Text