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# Vajira Sutta

## Sister Vajira

Translator's note: This discourse dramatizes a problem that often arises in meditation practice -- a speculative question arises that, if followed, pulls one out of concentration. Sister Vajira shows how to deal with the situation: recognize that the terms in which the question is expressed are just that -- terms -- and that whatever reality there is in the issue raised by the question can be reduced to phenomena observable in the immediate present. In ultimate terms, this comes down to the arising and passing away of stress, which should be observed and comprehended to the point where one can see through to that which neither arises nor passes away.

At Savatthi: Then, early in the morning, Vajira the nun put on her robes and, taking her bowl and outer robe, went into Savatthi for alms. When she had gone for alms in Savatthi and had returned from her alms round, after her meal she went to the Grove of the Blind to spend the day. Having gone deep into the Grove of the Blind, she sat down at the foot of a tree for the day's abiding.

Then Mara the Evil One, wanting to arouse fear, "horripilation," (sic) and terror in her, wanting to make her fall away from concentration, approached her and addressed her in verse:

"By whom was this living being created?  
Where is the living being's maker?  
Where has the living being originated?  
Where does the living being  
cease?"

Then the thought occurred to Vajira the nun: "Now who has recited this verse -- a human being or a non-human one?" Then it occurred to her: "This is Mara the Evil One, who has recited this verse wanting to arouse fear, "horripilation," and terror in me, wanting to make me fall away from concentration."

Then, having understood that "This is Mara the Evil One," she replied to him in verses:

"What? Do you assume a `living being,' Mara?  
Do you take a position?  
This is purely a pile of fabrications.  
Here no living being  
can be pinned down.

Just as when, with an assemblage of parts,  
there's the word,  
chariot,  
even so when aggregates are present,  
there's the convention of  
living being.

For only stress is what comes to be;  
stress, what remains and falls away.  
Nothing but stress comes to be.  
Nothing ceases but stress."

Then Mara the Evil One -- sad and dejected at realizing, "Vajira the nun knows me" -- vanished right there.

# Vajjiya Sutta

## About Vajjiya

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Campa, on the shore of Gaggara Lake. Then Vajjiya Mahita the householder left Campa in the middle of the day to see the Blessed One, but the thought then occurred to him, "Now is not the right time to see the Blessed One, for he is in seclusion. And it is not the right time to see the monks who develop the mind, for they are in seclusion. What if I were to visit the park of the wanderers of other persuasions?" Then he headed to the park of the wanderers of other persuasions were staying.

Now on that occasion the wanderers of other persuasions had come together in a gathering and were sitting, discussing many kinds of bestial topics, making a great noise & racket. They saw Vajjiya Mahita the householder coming from afar, and on seeing him, hushed one another: "Be quiet, good sirs. Don't make any noise. Here comes Vajjiya Mahita the householder, a disciple of the contemplative Gotama. He is one of those disciples of the contemplative Gotama, clad in white, who lives in Savatthi. These people are fond of quietude and speak in praise of quietude. Maybe, if he perceives our group as quiet, he will consider it worth his while to come our way." So the wanderers fell silent.

Then Vajjiya Mahita the householder went to where the wanderers of other persuasions were staying. On arrival he greeted them courteously. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, the wanderers said to him, "Is it true, householder, that the contemplative Gotama criticizes all asceticism, that he categorically denounces & disparages all ascetics who live the rough life?"

"No, venerable sirs, the Blessed One does not criticize all asceticism, nor does he categorically denounce or disparage all ascetics who live the rough life. The Blessed One criticizes what should be criticized, and praises what should be praised. Criticizing what should be criticized, praising what should be

praised, the Blessed One is one who speaks making distinctions, not one who speaks categorically on this matter."

When this was said, one of the wanderers said to Vajjiya Mahita the householder, "Now wait a minute, householder. This contemplative Gotama whom you praise is a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

"I tell you, venerable sirs, that the Blessed One righteously declares that 'This is skillful.' He declares that 'This is unskillful.' Declaring that 'This is skillful' and 'This is unskillful,' he is one who has declared [a teaching]. He is not a nihilist, one who doesn't declare anything."

When this was said, the wanderers fell silent, abashed, sitting with their shoulders drooping, their heads down, brooding, at a loss for words. Vajjiya Mahita the householder, perceiving that the wanderers were silent, abashed... at a loss for words, got up & went to the Blessed One. On arrival, having bowed down to the Blessed One, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he told the Blessed One the entirety of his conversation with the wanderers.

[The Blessed One said:] "Well done, householder. Well done. That is how you should periodically & righteously refute those foolish men. I don't say that all asceticism is to be pursued, nor do I say that all asceticism is not to be pursued. I don't say that all observances should be observed, nor do I say that all observances should not be observed. I don't say that all exertions are to be pursued, nor do I say that all exertions are not to be pursued. I don't say that all forfeiture should be forfeited, nor do I say that all forfeiture should not be forfeited. I don't say that all release is to be used for release, nor do I say that all release is not to be used for release.

"If, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is not to be pursued. But if, when an asceticism is pursued, unskillful qualities wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of asceticism is to be pursued.

"If, when an observance is observed, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of observance is not to be observed. But if, when an observance is observed, unskillful qualities wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of observance is to be observed.

"If, when an exertion is pursued... a forfeiture is forfeited...

"If, when a release is used for release, unskillful qualities grow and skillful qualities wane, then I tell you that that sort of release is not to be used for release. But if, when a release is used for release, unskillful qualities wane and skillful qualities grow, then I tell you that that sort of release is to be used for release."

When Vajjiya Mahita the householder had been instructed, urged, roused & encouraged by the Blessed One with a talk on Dhamma, he got up from his seat and, having bowed down to the Blessed One, left, keeping the Blessed One on his right side. Not long afterward, the Blessed One addressed the monks: "Monks, even a monk who has long penetrated the Dhamma in this Doctrine & Discipline would do well periodically & righteously to refute the wanderers of other persuasions in just the way Vajjiya Mahita the householder has done."

# The Vajrasamadhi Sutra

Introduction by Translator:

This translation into English from Chinese has been done, firstly, after consulting the excellent exposition on this sutra in Chinese by the late Venerable Shi Zhi Yu (from Taiwan) under the title: Jin-Gang-San-Mei-Jing-Yi-Bo-Ji (Notes on A Wave from Vajrasamadhi Sutra – ISBN 957-99267-5-1). Secondly, it is modeled after the format as well as adopted some of the vocabularies used in the original English translation forming part of a dissertation by Robert E. Buswell, Jr., Professor of East Asian Languages and Cultures at the University of California, Los Angeles, under the title: THE FORMATION OF CH'AN IDEOLOGY IN CHINA AND KOREA (ISBN 0-691-07336-8). All inadequacies and mistakes are entirely mine!

This sutra, although comparatively short, encompasses the essence of many, if not all the sutras, as clearly explained by the Buddha himself in the last chapter. It expounds the principle of DHARMAS, which means literally everything. For someone on the spiritual path, it gives a definitive view on what does not lead to enlightenment! Although this is a pre-eminent companion text for all followers of Ch'an (Zen), Dzogchen, Mahamudra, Taoism, and all non-dual spiritual paths, it can also act as a compass for all serious spiritual seekers.

As this sutra is full of gems, its reading should be done slowly with frequent reflections, if an uninitiated wants to reap maximum benefit out of it. It should be borne in mind that the wordings within small brackets ( ) represent alternative terms for the word or phrase immediately preceding it. On the other hand, wordings within large brackets [ ] are to help bring out the meanings more clearly, particularly in view of the fact that very often the same Chinese word can have more than one meaning.

Readers who are not familiar with the Buddha's spiritual attainments, may be flabbergasted by the enormous size of the audience mentioned in the first chapter which could put some fiction novels to shame. However, as one progresses, it should not be difficult to realize that the Buddha is a Master of Non-

duality. The taste of the pudding, however, is to put what is being expounded in this sutra through personal practice and experimentation.

May I thank those friends who helped me in one way or another in the completion of the translation, especially to Martin Ng with the proof-reading.

May all be blissful from moment-to-moment. K C Oon  
Chapter One

## Prologue

Thus have I heard. The Buddha was once in the great city of Rajagrha (King's House), on Mount Grdhrakuta (Vulture Peak), together with a great assembly of some ten thousand bhiksus (ordained monks), all of whom had attained the [full] arhat path. They included arhats Sariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Subuti, etc.

Also present were some two thousand bodhisattvas, mahasattvas (adepts on their way to full enlightenment). Their names were Liberation (Vimukti) Bodhisattva, Mind King (Cittaraja) Bodhisattva, Non-Abiding (Apratisthita) Bodhisattva, etc.

Furthermore, there were eighty thousand elders (grhapati). Their names were Elder Chastity (Brahmacarya), Elder Great Chastity (Mahabrahmacarya), Elder Luminary (Jyotiska), etc.

In addition, there were devas, dragons, yaksas (demons), gandharvas (demigod-musicians), asuras (titans), garudas (mystical birds), kinnaras (half horses/half men), mahoragas (great snakes), humans and non-humans – some six hundred million of them.

At that time the Lord was surrounded by the great assembly. He expounded a Mahayana sutra to them, entitled 'The Practice and Benediction of the Single-Taste, Definite, Signless, Beyond-Creation, Absolute Reality of Self-Enlightenment' (Vajrasamadhi Sutra). If one hears this sutra or retains only one four-line stanza of it, that person will be able to access the Buddha's wisdom [in future]. He will be able to liberate, with appropriate expedients,



sentient beings [who, in turn, can] become great spiritual mentors to all sentient beings.

After the Buddha expounded this sutra, he folded [his legs] into full-lotus pose and entered into diamond absorption (*vajrasamadhi*), with his body and mind motionless. At that time, a *bhikṣu* (ordained monk) in the assembly named Agada, rose from his seat [to pay respects to the Buddha]. He joined his palms together, with his right knee on the ground. Reiterating the essence [of the sutra expounded], he recited the stanza:

The Lord, the embodiment of compassion,  
With wisdom penetrating without obstruction,  
In order to ferry sentient beings across [to the other shore],

Has explained the essence of the One-Truth.  
All this was accomplished via the path of Single-Taste,  
Never by means of the Hinayana (incomplete realization).  
Where the taste of the essence has been spoken,  
It enabled all to abandon the unreal.  
Accessing the wisdom-base of all the buddhas,  
That Absolute Reality,  
The entire audience (now) knows how to transcend the world,  
With no one unable to attain liberation (ultimately).  
All the innumerable bodhisattvas,  
Know how to ferry all sentient beings across (to the other shore).  
For the assembly, they inquired extensively and profoundly,  
On the calm-void characteristics of all dharmas.  
They accessed the Absolute domain [of enlightenment].  
The Tathagata, through his wisdom and expedients,  
Speaks so that [all beings] will be able to access Reality,  
In accordance with the One-Vehicle,  
Without extraneous tastes.  
Like the soaking by a single rain,

Multitudes of plants grow verdantly.  
According to the differences in their natures,  
Being soaked by the Dharma of Single-Taste,  
Everyone is completely fulfilled.  
Just as being soaked by a single rain,  
All their bodhi-sprouts are matured.  
Accessing the Diamond-Taste [of the diamond samadhi],

They realized the absorption of the Reality of dharmas.  
They are determined to transcend doubts and regrets,  
Through the seal of the One-Dharma.

Chapter Two:

## The Signless Dharma

Arising from his samadhi, the Lord spoke thus, “The wisdom-base of all the buddhas accesses the nature and characteristics of all dharmas. From this definitive wisdom-base, the buddhas’ expedients and spiritual powers in benefiting sentient beings are all done without signs. The essence of the One-Enlightenment is difficult to understand and access. It is not understood or recognized by adherents of the two vehicles [of sravakas and pratyekabuddhas]. It is only known by the buddhas and bodhisattvas who explain the Single-Taste to sentient beings capable of transcendence.”

Then Vimukti (Liberation) Bodhisattva immediately rose from his seat, with his palms joined together and his right knee on the ground, addressed the Buddha, “Lord! After the Buddha’s [physical] demise, the right dharma will vanish from the world and the semblance dharma will linger on. During the dharma-ending age, sentient beings [tainted by] the five turbidities (such as calamities, wrong views, unending worries, shortened life-span etc., over infinite world-cycles) will perform all types of evil deeds and transmigrate amongst the three (form, formless and desire) realms of existence without respite. May the Buddha, out of his mercy and compassion, proclaim for the later generations, the Single-Taste Absolute Reality [Dharma], to enable all sentient beings to be liberated.”

The Buddha said, “Good man, you asked about what caused my appearance in the world to liberate sentient beings to let them attain the fruition [of enlightenment] that transcends the world. This great matter [of a buddha’s appearance in the world] is inconceivable, because it is performed out of great mercy [and] great compassion. If I do not respond [to your questions], I will fall into miserliness [for with-holding the Dharma I have awakened to]. You should listen attentively and carefully. I shall proclaim [the Dharma] for you.

“Good man, when liberating sentient beings, do not conceive whether it takes place or not; then it (such an act) is great indeed! Guide these sentient beings to abandon mind and ego, for both mind and ego are basically void [of independent existence]. If they realize the void of mind, the mind will not illusorily project anything. Free from all illusory projections, they will attain cessation [of birth-death cycles]. The mind that does not project anything derives from such non-projection.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha, “The nature of the mind of sentient beings is fundamentally void [of independent nature]. The essence of the mind is void of sense-objects (*rupa*) and related characteristics. How are we to cultivate and train so that we may realize the fundamentally void mind? May the Buddha proclaim this for us, out of his mercy and compassion.”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, fundamentally, the mind and its characteristics have no origin (non-substantial). [Therefore,] they fundamentally have no abode, [and the mind is] void and calm, projecting nothing. When the mind ceases to fabricate anything, it accesses void-calmness. At the base of the mind, where all is void and calm, one realizes the void of the mind. Good man! The signless mind is free from both mind [itself] and self (ego). It is the same with the characteristics of all dharmas (all phenomena and related principles).”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! For those sentient beings who conceive of a self (grasping of ego) or conceive of a mind (grasping of dharmas), what Dharma will awaken them and lead them to leave behind such shackles (bondage)?”

The Buddha replied, “Good man, when someone conceives of a self, he should be led to contemplate the twelve-fold inter-dependent origination (co-origination) [comprising: ignorance, volition, consciousness, body-mind formations, six sense-doors, contact, feeling/sensation, craving, clinging, becoming, birth and sickness/death]. The twelve-fold inter-dependent-origination derives from cause and effect. But both cause and effect are fabrications of the mind! Since (basically) the mind does not

exist, much less the body, [therefore] a person who conceives of a self, should be led to abandon the view that the self exists.

“[Similarly] a person who conceives of no-self should be led to abandon his view that the self does not exist. If a person conceives that the mind exists, he should be led to abandon [the view that] the nature [of the mind] is subject to creation. If a person conceives that the mind can be extinguished, he should be led to abandon [the view that] the nature [of the mind] is subject to extinction. Once all the views *about* the nature of the mind are extinguished, he immediately accesses Reality. Why? Because whatever that is basically unborn (not subject to the process of birth/creation) is beyond extinction [since everything arises and diminishes through co-origination]; and whatever that is extinct [being devoid of nature] is beyond creation. This is the same with all the dharmas.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! If a sentient being perceives that a dharma is subject to creation, what view should he be advised to abandon? What view should he be advised to abandon when he perceives that a dharma is subject to extinction?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, if a sentient being perceives that a dharma [being beyond creation/extinction] is subject to creation, let him abandon his view on the non-existence [of dharmas]. When he perceives a dharma is subject to extinction, let him abandon his view on the existence [of dharmas]. Once these views are extinguished, he realizes the absolute non-existence of all dharmas and he accesses the definite non-projection [of the mind].”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! If a sentient being abides by non-creation, would it mean [he had realized] the non-creation [of dharmas]?”

The Buddha replied, “By abiding in non-creation, he would actually be creating something. Why? Only when one does not abide by non-creation is it really non-creation. Bodhisattva, if one abides by non-creation, this is creating (activating) [the mind] to extinguish creation! When creation and extinction are both being extinguished, creation cannot take place and the mind will be

void and calm, without any abode. Only a truly non-abiding mind is non-creating.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “If the mind does not abide anywhere, is there need for learning and cultivation? Is there is still learning left to be completed or no more learning required?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, a non-creating mind has neither egress nor access. Its basic *tathagatagarbha* (the unmanifested ‘store’ of every thing) is calm and motionless [by nature]. It need neither further learning nor free from further learning. When there is neither learning nor non-learning is where no further learning is necessary. ‘Non-learning’ means no need for learning.” {Note: according to the texts, non-learning is only applicable to those who have awakened to a minimum of third-stage arhat, or seventh-*bumi* (ground/level) bodhisattva along the spiritual path.}

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “How is it that the nature of the *tathagatagarbha* is calm and motionless?”

The Buddha replied, “The characteristics of arising and demise of the *tathagatagarbha*’s functions and discretions are [in accordance with] its concealed principle [of void-calmness], enabling it not to manifest [itself]. This is how the nature of the *tathagatagarbha* is calm and motionless.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva inquired, “Why are the characteristics [of the *tathagatagarbha*’s] functions and discretions subject to arising and demise?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, the principle is free from either acceptance or rejection. If there is acceptance or rejection, all kinds of thoughts would be created. All conceptions and mentations are subject to arising and demise.

“Bodhisattva, contemplate the self-nature and characteristics [of the *tathagatagarbha*] and the principle will be perfected in and of itself. All the conceptions and mentations do not augment the principles of the path. They instead agitate [the mind,] so that one loses (forgets) the basic mind-king [of the One-Mind]. With

neither conception nor mentation, there will be no creation or extinction [of the mind]. The mind will not arise and be in Reality. All [eight] consciousnesses will be peaceful and calm. The currents [of desire, existence, and ignorance] will not arise. [One then] accesses the purity of the five dharmas [relating to the five aggregates of *form, feeling, perception, formation* and *consciousness*]. This is called the Mahayana.

“Bodhisattva, by accessing the purity (void nature) of the five dharmas [of the five aggregates], the mind is free from delusions. When delusions vanish, one immediately accesses the base of the tathagata’s self-enlightened, noble-wisdom. One who accesses this wisdom fully knows that everything is uncreated originally. Knowing that everything is uncreated originally, one is free from [all] illusory conceptions.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! One who is free from [illusory] conceptions should have nothing that need to be calmed or brought to an end.”

The Buddha responded, “Bodhisattva, delusions are originally uncreated. [Hence,] there are no delusions to be brought to an end. Knowing that the mind is actually non-mind (void in nature), there is no mind to be calmed. [Being] free from both differentiation and discrimination, the consciousness that [otherwise] projects sensory objects will cease to be active. With nothing to be calmed, this is non-calming. Yet it is also not non-calming. Why? Because [true] calming actually calms nothing.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! If calming is non-calming, then calming would be created [by the mind]. How can it be said to be uncreated?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, the moment when calming occurs it is being created, [but] after it has been done, no [further] calming is necessary. Do not linger in either non-calming or in non-abiding. How could it (calming) have been created?”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! What does a non-fabricating mind cling to or reject? Does it abide by any characteristics of dharmas?”

The Buddha replied, “The mind that fabricates nothing neither clings to nor rejects anything. It abides by non-mind and it abides by non-dharma.”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “How does one abide by non-mind and abide by non-dharma?”

The Buddha replied, “Abiding by non-mind means mind not creating anything. Abiding by non-dharma means mind not being aroused by any dharma.

“Good man, when the mind is not being aroused, or not conceiving anything, it will be independent of everything. Not lingering over all the formations (*samskara*) [of subject, or object relative to the body, speech and mind], the mind will be constantly void and calm, without any projections. It is like the empty space – motionless and non-abiding, non-arising and non-doing, free from either this or that. One [thus] attains the eye (essence) of the void of mind, and the body (nature) of the void of dharmas. Thus the five aggregates [of being] and the six sense-bases will be void and calm.

“Good man, he who cultivates the Dharma of voidness will be beyond the three realms (form, formlessness and desire) of existence and need not abide by the specifics of the *Vinaya* (renunciate’s precepts) [since all the precepts are embodied within this Dharma]. Being pure and free from thoughts, he neither grasps nor relinquishes anything. His nature is the same as that of diamond – not inferior to the *triratna* (the triple-gem comprising the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha). His mind, being void, is still, fully endowed with all the six *paramitas* (perfections).”

Vimukti Bodhisattva addressed the Buddha: “Lord! All the six paramitas have characteristics. Can dharmas having characteristics capable of transcending [sentient beings]?”

The Buddha replied, “Good man, the six *paramitas* I speak of are formless and beyond practice. Why? If a person forsakes desires, his mind will always be pure. Through his purity in speech and skilful means, he benefits himself and others. This is *danaparamita* [perfection of charity].

“With firm determination and constant non-abiding, his mind is pure, untainted. He does not cling to the three realms of existence. This is *silaparamita* [perfection of morality].

“Cultivating [the practices relating to the various aspects of] the void and extricating himself from all the knots (fetters), he is not attached to anything. He calms and silences the three karmic formations [relative to the body, speech and mind] and does not abide by either body or mind. This is *ksantiparamita* (perfection of patience).

“By leaving all sense-objects (forms), classifications and all ego-generating activities, he overcomes the views of both nonexistence and existence and delves deeply into the void of the aggregates (*skandhas*) [and their related ramifications – the six-roots (sense-doors), twelve entrances (the six sense-doors and their six objects), and eighteen sense realms (the six consciousness of the sense-doors added to the twelve entrances)]. This is *viryaparamita* (perfection of courage).

“Completely abandoning [attachment to] both the void and calmness, yet not lingering in any void, the mind is without abode, nor does it dwell in the great void itself. This is *dhyana-paramita* (perfection of meditation).

“Free of all projections [and being void in nature], the mind does not even cling to the void [itself]. In all activities, the mind is not aroused, nor does it look forward to any realization of calm-extinction (Nirvana). It neither egresses nor accesses. Its nature is in perpetual equanimity. The Reality of all dharmas has this Absolute nature. It does not rely on any of the *bhumis* (the normal ten stages of spiritual progression), nor abide by any wisdom. This is *prajnaparamita* (perfection of wisdom).

“Good man, all the six *paramitas* are endowed with Self-Benediction [leading to Self-Enlightenment). They access the Absolute therein and transcend the world. This is unobstructed liberation.”

“Good man, the characteristics of such Dharmas that accord liberation are all beyond signs and practices. They are also beyond both liberation and bondage. This is called liberation.



Why? Because the characteristics of liberation are beyond both sign and practice. It is motionless and beyond distraction. [It is] the calm and silent Nirvana, [yet] without clinging to any characteristics of Nirvana.”

After hearing these words, Vimukti Bodhisattva’s mind was greatly pleased as it never had before. Wishing to proclaim the essence and intent [of the Dharma expounded], he recited the stanza:

The Lord, replete with Full Awakening,  
Has expounded the Dharma for the assembly.  
It was explained from [the view of] the One-Vehicle,  
Not the pathways of the dualistic vehicles.  
The formless benevolence of the Single-Taste,  
Is like great space,  
Nothing it does not embrace or accept,  
According to the differences of individual nature.  
All attain the fundamental Self-Domain.  
Thus they abandon mind and self (ego),  
The One-Dharma (signless and non-practice) established.  
All [past] practices with identification and differentiation,  
Being rewarded by Self-Benediction [instead],  
With all dualistic views extirpated.  
The calm and silent Nirvana,  
All do not dwell or cling to it.  
Accessing the Absolute domain,  
With neither characteristics nor practices.  
Within the calm-extinct void mind-base,  
The calm-extinct mind is non-creating.  
Such [a mind], like the nature of diamond,  
is not inferior to the *triratna* (triple-gem).  
Endowed with all the six *paramitas*,  
Ferrying all sentient beings across.  
Transcending the three realms of existence,  
Not relying on the Hinayana (Nirvana for oneself).  
The Dharma seal of the Single-Taste,  
Is perfected by the One-Vehicle.

When the great assembly heard the exposition of the Doctrine, their minds were greatly pleased. They were able to abandon mind and self (ego). They accessed the signless void which is

broad and expansive, vacant and vast (without obstruction). All gained the Absolute Reality, cutting all fetters (mental afflictions) and eliminating all leakages (defilements).

## Chapter Three

### The Practice of Non-Creation

At that time Cittaraja (Mind King) Bodhisattva heard the Buddha's discourse of the Dharma that transcends the three realms of existence, which is inconceivable. Arising from his seat, he joined his palms together and asked in stanza:

The Doctrine the Tathagata has pronounced,  
Transcends the world without signs.  
It enables all sentient beings,  
To completely abandon the leakages (the three realms).  
Eradicating the knots and emptying both mind and self,  
Is this [the state of] non-creation?  
If nothing is being created,  
How can one attain the non-creation [of dharmas]?

Then the Buddha proclaimed to Cittaraja Bodhisattva, "Good man, the Dharma relating to the non-abidance and non-creation of dharmas is basically unborn [as all dharmas are essentially void of self-nature]. [Being void of nature,] all practices lead to nothing, not that there is a practice on non-creation. [Therefore] any attainment through abidance by non-creation is a deception."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, "Lord! Since attainment through abidance by non-creation is a deception, non-attainment and non-abidance should not be deceptions?"

The Buddha replied, "Not so. Why? In non-attainment and non-abidance exists attainment (mental activity). [Similarly,] in attainment and abidance there exists creation (arising of the mind). Both the creation through attainment and the creation of dharmas are [therefore] deceptions."

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, "Lord! What is a non-attaining and non-abiding mind which is beyond deception?"

The Buddha replied, “A mind which is free from both abidance and attainment, has neither form nor impermanence (existence-extinction). It is like [the nature of] fire, though latent in wood, cannot be found there; as its presence has no absolute location

(depending on other co-originating factors). [Therefore] all names and descriptions of everything [being void ultimately], are beyond grasping (should not be depended upon). They (names and descriptions) have been provisionally given to facilitate understanding [in communication]. [Similarly,] the mind and all its characteristics, being void ultimately, are beyond grasping – they have no abode. Know the mind to be thus and it will not fabricate anything.

“Good man, the nature and characteristics of the mind are like the example of the myrobalan (*amalaka*) fruit. They are not: self-generated, generated by an external agent, generated jointly with something else, or generated in the absence of a [co-originating] cause. Why? Because conditions appear and disappear alternately [according to co-origination]. When conditions arise [resulting in fruition through co-origination], it is not [considered] creation. When conditions subside [after fruition through co-origination], it is not [considered] extinction. Whether hidden or manifesting, [the nature and characteristics of the conditions] are without form. Their fundamental principle is the calm-void. There is nowhere they abide and no abode can be located. This is due to their Absolute nature.

“This Absolute nature is neither one nor different; neither transient nor permanent. It has neither access nor egress and it can neither be created nor destroyed. It abandons all the four perimeters (fullness, void, both-fullness-and-void, and neither-fullness-nor-void). [In this way] the path-ways of words and speech are being abandoned. The unborn nature of the mind is the same. How can it be said that something is being created or extinguished; or that there is abidance or non-abidance?

“If [a person] says that the mind is capable of attainment, abidance, or perception, that means he has not attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi* (complete, perfect enlightenment). [This] *prajna* (wisdom) is for those who are willing to abandon the ‘long night’ of the mind and its characteristics. Know that the

mind is thus and its characteristics are also thus. This is non-creation and non-practice.”

Cittaraja Bodhisattva noted, “Lord! If the mind is basically thus [in its natural state], nothing will be produced out of any practice. All practices, [therefore,] lead to nothing. [Accordingly,] when one practises, it [ultimately] produces nothing. This non-production does not need to be practised. This is the practice of non-creation.”

The Buddha asked, “Good man, you are employing [the practice of] non-creation [with the intention of] realizing the practice of non-creation.”

Cittaraja Bodhisattva replied, “Not so. Why? Thusness (suchness) is beyond mind and practice. Both the nature and characteristics [of the mind] are void and calm, there is no [self-identification with] seeing or hearing, gain or loss, word or speech, perception, images, acceptance or rejection. How can there be any clinging or realization? If one clings to this realization, it amounts to disputation and contention [within the mind]. Only in the absence of disputation or contention lies the practice of non-creation.

The Buddha said, “Have you attained *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*?”

Cittaraja Bodhisattva responded, “Lord! I am free from any attainment of *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*. Why is this? The nature of *bodhi* (awakening) has neither gain nor loss, enlightenment nor [ordinary] consciousness, for it is free from all characteristics of differentiation. Within this non-differentiation is the pure nature [of *bodhi*]. This nature is free from any extraneous admixture [such as the dualities of creation/extinction, subject/object]. It is free from words and speeches. It neither exists nor does not exist. It is neither aware nor unaware.

“This is also the same for all the dharmas (techniques) that can be practised. Why? Because all dharmas and practices have neither abidance nor abode. This is their Absolute nature.

Basically, they are free from any attainment or non-attainment. So how can one attain *anuttarasamyaksambodhi*?”

The Buddha replied, “So it is, so it is. As you have said, all the activities of the mind are without form and its body (nature of the mind) is calm and non-creating. It is the same with all consciousnesses. Why is this? Know that the eyes and sight are both void and calm [by nature]. [Eye] consciousness [itself] is also void and calm – free from any characteristic of movement or stillness. Internally it is free of the three feelings (pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral). [Thus,] the three feelings are calm and extinct. So are the hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, mental (sixth consciousness), discriminating (seventh consciousness), and *alaya* (eighth consciousness). All of them are also unborn. [Therefore,] the mind is calm and extinct and non-creating. [If one tries to] create a calm, extinct and non-creating mind, it would be a practice that creates something; not the practice of non-creation.

“Bodhisattva, [thus] internally are generated the three feelings, the three [karmic] formations [of body, speech and mind], and the three moral precepts [comprising firstly the *Vinaya* discipline of vowing to end all evils, secondly the vow to cultivate all good deeds and thirdly, the vow to liberate all sentient beings]. If these are already calm and extinct, the [otherwise] fabricating mind will not fabricate and the mind will always be calm and extinct, still with nothing [mental] to be done. One does not cherish the realization of any characteristic of calm-extinction; nor does one dwell in non-realization. In non-abidance everywhere, lies the non-formation of all defilements. Thus, the three feelings, the three formations, and the three moral precepts will not arise. All [these] will be calm and extinct, pure and non-abiding. One does not [need to] access *samadhi* (mental absorption) or persists in *dhyana* (static mind-directed meditation). This is non-creation and non-practice.”

Cittaraja Bodhisattva asked, “As *dhyana* can tame all agitations and stabilize all illusory distractions, why not *dhyana*?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, [ordinary] *dhyana* is [in fact]

motion (mental activity). Being neither distracted nor concentrated is the [true] non-creating *dhyana*. [Since] the nature of this *dhyana* is non-creating, [therefore] abandon any *dhyana* that fabricates sense-objects (*rupa*). The nature of [*non-creating*] *dhyana* is non-abiding. [Therefore, one should] abandon any sign of abidance in *dhyana*. If one knows that the [true] nature of *dhyana* is free from both distraction and calmness, one immediately accesses the [wisdom of] non-creation [of dharmas]. [This] wisdom of non-creation does not depend on abidance. [Consequently,] the mind will not be distracted. With this wisdom, this is how one attains the unborn (beyond birth-death cycles) *prajnaparamita*.”

Cittaraja Bodhisattva said, “Lord! The non-creating *prajna*, wherever it may be, is non-abiding. It is not apart from the mind and has no abode. There is no place where the mind abides. With non-abidance, the mind is non-creating. The mind is non-creating and non-abiding. The mind that so abides is in fact non-creating and non-abiding.

“Lord! [Your discourse on] the practice of non-abidance and non-creation of the mind is inconceivable. As it is inconceivable, it can [only] be spoken *about* but beyond speech (any description is not identical to the matter being described).”

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

Having heard the above, Cittaraja Bodhisattva, in praising its unprecedented qualities, recited the stanzas:

The Lord who is replete in immeasurable wisdom,  
Has extensively expounded the Dharma on non-creation.  
This has never been heard before.  
What has yet to be explained has been explained now.  
Like the *amritha* (pure sweet dew),  
That appears but once in a long while,  
[So is this Dharma] difficult to encounter and imagine.  
Rare too it is to hear it.  
It is the unsurpassed field of merit *par excellence*,  
The supremely efficacious, miraculous medicine.

In order to ferry sentient beings across,  
It has now been proclaimed.

Upon hearing these words, all in the assembly awakened to the non-arising [of dharmas] and the *prajna* (wisdom) on non-creation.

## Chapter Four

### The Benediction of Self-Enlightenment

At that time, Apratisthia (Non-Abiding) Bodhisattva heard the Buddha's discourse on single-taste Reality, which is inconceivable. From far-away land (most probably another world system) he had personally come near to the tathagata's seat with the sole intention of listening to the discourse on Noble-Truth. Accessing the pure domain [of the Absolute-void], his body and mind were motionless.

At that time, the Buddha addressed Apratisthia Bodhisattva: "Where have you come from? Where have you arrived now?"

Apratisthia Bodhisattva replied, "Lord! I come from where there is no origination, and have now arrived where there is [also] no origination."

The Buddha said, "You originally came from where there is no origination, and have now arrived where there is [also] no origination. You have attained the [Dharma of] Self-Benediction, which is inconceivable. You are a bodhisattva-mahasattva."

Immediately emitting a great light that pervaded the many thousands of world-systems, the Buddha recited the stanza:

Oh Great bodhisattva,  
Replete in wisdom,  
Constantly by means of Self-Benediction,  
To benefit sentient beings.  
In all four postures [walking, standing, sitting, lying],  
You constantly abide by Self-Benediction,  
Guiding all beings,  
Neither coming nor going (silently without signs).

Apratisthia Bodhisattva then addressed the Buddha: “Lord! Through what skilful means can one transform the defiled consciousness of sentient beings so that they can access the *amala* (ultimate-fruitful consciousness transformed from the eighth consciousness)?”

The Buddha replied, “All the buddhas, the tathagatas, constantly transform all the [defiled] consciousness of sentient beings by means of the One-Enlightenment so that they can access the *amala*. Why? As all sentient beings are endowed with Self-Enlightenment (primordially enlightened), the buddhas, constantly awaken all beings by guiding them to regain Self-Enlightenment. Once enlightened, all the defiled consciousnesses will be [realized to be] void, calm and non-arising. Why? [Because] the Absolute Self-Nature is motionless.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “As every one of the eight consciousnesses arises [through co-origination] vis-a-vis the sense-realms, how could they be motionless?”

The Buddha answered, “All the sense-realms are basically void [of independent existence]. [Similarly] all consciousnesses are basically void. Since the nature of the void is not affected by co-origination, how can they be *created* by co-origination?”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “If all the sense-realms are void, how can there be perception?”

The Buddha replied, “Perception is [ultimately] a delusion. Why? All the tens of thousands of manifestations are [ultimately] unborn and without form. Originally they are without names. They are all void and calm. The characteristics of all dharmas are the same. The bodies of all sentient beings are also the same. Since the bodies do not [ultimately] exist, how can perception exist!”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, “If all the sense-realms are void, all bodies are void, and all consciousnesses are void, then enlightenment must also be void.”



The Buddha replied, “The One-Enlightenment is beyond both destruction and decay since it is the Absolute. It is neither void nor non-void as it is free from being void or non-void.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, “It is the same for all the sense-realms. They are not characterized by being void or non-void.”

The Buddha agreed, “So it is. The nature of all the sense-realms is basically within the Absolute [void]. The base of the Absolute [void] has no abode.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, “Enlightenment is also the same: it is not located anywhere.”

The Buddha agreed, “So it is. As enlightenment has no abode, it is pure [and void]. Being pure, it is free from [any sign of] enlightenment. Sense-objectification has no abode, it is pure. Being pure, it (purity) is free from [any characteristic of] sense-object.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, “The mind and eye consciousness are also the same. This is inconceivable!”

The Buddha said, “Yes, the consciousness of the mind and eye consciousness are similarly inconceivable. Why? A sense-object (*rupa*) has no abode; it is pure without name. It does not intrude internally [into the sense-bases]. Eye consciousness has no abode; it is pure and non-seeing [without the sense of a self that sees]. It does not go towards the external [sense-objects]. The mind [too] has no abode. Its purity is without ceasing, without a birth-place. [Similarly as well as ultimately the other] consciousnesses have no abode. They are pure and motionless, not affected by conditions [of co-origination] or differentiations. The nature [of all dharmas] is void and calm. This nature is

[therefore] free from any sign of enlightenment. This is how enlightenment is being realized.

“Good man! When one awakens [to the wisdom] that there is ultimately no [attainment in] enlightenment, all the [eight] consciousnesses will access [enlightenment]. Why? At the stage of the diamond (a buddha’s Absolute) wisdom, the path (practice) leading to liberation is being dropped [as there is neither liberation nor bondage]. Having abandoned the path, one accesses the non-abiding stage [of unexcelled enlightenment] where there is neither egress nor access – the Absolute Domain where the mind has no abode. The base [of that state] is pure, like the transparent lapis lazuli [representing *dharmakaya*, attainment of the great, perfect mirror-like wisdom]. It is in perpetual equanimity, like the great earth [representing the attainment of liberation of the impartial wisdom]; enlightened, miraculous, contemplative wakefulness [representing the ultimate *prajna*], like the effulgence of the sun of wisdom; perfected through Self-enlightenment, like the great rain of Dharma. One who accesses this wisdom is accessing the buddhas’ domain of wisdom. For one who has accessed this domain of wisdom, none of the consciousnesses will arise.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, “The Tathagata has explained that the sacred power of the One-Enlightenment [where] the four wisdoms (mentioned in the last paragraph) [are perfected] are in fact the self-enlightened nature of all sentient beings. Why? Because these are fully replete within the bodies of all sentient beings basically.”

The Buddha agreed, “So it is. Why? All sentient beings are basically free from outflows with all wholesome Self-Benediction innate in them. Now they are being pricked by the thorns of desire, which they have yet to overcome.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “If sentient beings have yet to awaken to the Self- Enlightenment continues to [have the desire to] gather and accumulate [mundane things and experiences], how can they overcome that which is difficult to overcome?”

The Buddha replied, “Whether [sentient beings are within] a

group or an individual, when discriminations and taints occur, [or even] with consciousness abiding within a cave of emptiness (leading to a state of mental cessation), they can overcome that which is difficult to overcome and be liberated from the bonds of demonic forces. Get them to sit transcendently on the open ground (without abidance), where the consciousnesses and the aggregates can be transformed to [the Absolute] *parinirvana* [where all the aggregates dissolve].”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva remarked, “The mind that attains Nirvana is aloof without companionship, abiding perpetually in Nirvana. [Such a mind] must be liberated.”

The Buddha responded, “Abiding perpetually in Nirvana is the bondage of Nirvana. Why? Nirvana is the benediction of the Self-Enlightenment. This benediction is the primordial Nirvana. The enlightened aspects of Nirvana are in fact the aspects of Self-Enlightenment. [As these aspects are void in nature,] the nature of enlightenment is non-discriminatory and Nirvana is undifferentiated. [Accordingly,] enlightenment is basically unborn and Nirvana is [also] unborn. [Thus] enlightenment is basically free from extinction and Nirvana is free from extinction. Since the enlightened aspect of Nirvana is beyond differentiation, there is no attainment of Nirvana. Since Nirvana is beyond attainment, how can one abide in it?

“Good man, enlightened beings do not abide in Nirvana. Why? Enlightenment basically is unborn; it is detached from the defilements of sentient beings. Enlightenment is basically free from calmness. For one who is attached to Nirvana, his mind is agitated the moment he is detached from Nirvana. [On the other hand], the mind of one who abides by the ground of thusness (suchness), has no abidance. Free from both egress and access, it accesses the *amala*-consciousness.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “If the *amala*-consciousness has somewhere to be accessed, it ought to be something attainable, therefore, an *attained* Dharma?”

The Buddha replied, “No, it is not. Why? It is like the example of a deluded son with gold coins in his hands, not knowing that he has them. Roaming about the ten directions, he spent fifty years

in poverty, destitution, hardship and suffering. Though devoted to seeking out a living, he was unable to support himself adequately. [Finally,] when the father saw his son in such a state, he told him, “The gold coins you are carrying around, why not make use of them? [Then you can be] free to satisfy all the needs.” The son awakened and found the gold coins. His mind greatly joyous, he shouted that he found the gold coins. His father replied, “Deluded son! You need not be elated. The gold coins have always been yours, not something you have discovered. What is there to be happy about?”

“Good man, it is the same with the *amala*-consciousness. [Since] basically it has never left [you], it is not something to be acquired now. Being unaware of it in the past, it does not mean that it is not non-existent. Now that you have awakened to it, it is not that you have accessed it.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “Since the father knew that his son was deluded, why did he let [the son] spend fifty years roaming about the ten directions in poverty, destitution, hardship and suffering, before he told him about the gold coins he was carrying?”

The Buddha replied, “The [example of] passage of fifty years is but the movement of a single thought. Roaming about the ten directions is the fantasy of distant travel [exemplifying unending delusions blocking the return to Absolute Enlightenment].”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “What is ‘the movement of a single thought?’”

The Buddha replied, “Within the movement of a single thought, all the five aggregates arise. And all fifty evils [arising from the five aggregates as mentioned in the Shurangama Sutra] are contained within the five aggregates.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva asked, “Since the fantasy of distant travel and roaming about the ten directions is the arising of a single thought comprising all the fifty evils, how can sentient beings be guided not to give rise to a single thought [so that the evils do not arise]?”

The Buddha replied, “One should guide sentient beings to calm their mind by abiding in the diamond-base [of undistracted awareness], with no arising of thoughts. The mind being thus calmed will always be calm and at peace, without a single thought.”

Apratisthia Bodhisattva said, “It is inconceivable that in enlightenment thoughts do not arise, and one’s mind is calm and at peace. A calm and peaceful mind itself is the benediction of Self-Enlightenment. The benediction is motionless; it exists perpetually and is not without. It is beyond both existence and non-existence. There is nothing that it does not [have the capacity to] enlighten. It is ever aware without one having [to set up the mind] to be aware. Self-Benediction [itself] is Self-Enlightenment. One awakened to it is beyond defilement and is non-abiding. This is because the nature [of enlightenment] is the unchanging and immutable Absolute. It is inconceivable!”

The Buddha replied, “It is so.”

After hearing these words Apratisthia Bodhisattva attained what he never had before and recited the stanza:

The Lord is the Lord of Great Enlightenment.  
He explains the Dharma on non-creation of thoughts.  
A thought-free mind is non-creating.  
That mind is in perpetuity, never extinct.  
The Single-awakening of Self-Enlightenment,  
Guides all [beings] who are self-endowed.  
It is like [the example of] one who [recovered] gold coins,  
But what he recovered [being his own] was not a discovery.

After the assembly heard these words, all awakened to the Self-Benediction of the *prajnaparamita*.

Chapter Five:

Accessing Reality

Later the Tathagata stated: “All the bodhisattvas and the others [in the assembly] who have deeply accessed the Absolute will be

capable of liberating sentient beings. During the Dharma-degenerating age, they must disseminate the Absolute Dharma so that the listeners can reap the benefit of Self-Benediction, irrespective of whether the beings are sympathetic or unsympathetic [towards the Dharma]. The speech (teaching) should be done without abidance, be it through identification or differentiation (without bias). Such thusly speech guides all defiled consciousness [of sentient beings] so that it flows towards the sea of wisdom of the buddhas. This will prevent them from being swept away by the empty breeze [of ignorance], leading them towards the spiritual milk of the Single-Taste [instead].

“Whether in the mundane or supra-mundane world, abiding (by the Dharma) or non-abiding (against the Dharma), the egress and access of the five voids {please see the Buddha’s explanations given later} are done with neither clinging nor rejection. Why? [Because] the characteristics of all dharmas (phenomena) are devoid [of independent nature]. The nature [of all dharmas] neither exists nor does not exist, neither nonexistent nor extant. Being neither extant nor nonexistent [it is non-abiding], it has no absolute nature. They (dharmas) do not abide by existence or non-existence as they are beyond existence or nonexistence. The [buddhas’] wisdom that transcends both the sagely and the lay, though invisible, is beyond error.

Once the bodhisattvas and the others have awakened to this Benediction, they immediately attained to *bodhi* (awakening to enlightenment).”

At that time there was a bodhisattva in the assembly named Mahabala (Great Power). Arising from his seat, he came before the Buddha and addressed: “Lord! As the Buddha has said that the egress and access of the five voids are done with neither clinging nor rejection, how is it that there is no clinging or rejection with regard to the five voids?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, the five [ultimate] voids are: [firstly,] the three realms of existence are void; [secondly,] the shadows (the karmic effects) of the six realms of existence (hell, animals, hungry ghosts, humans, asuras, and gods) are void;

[thirdly,] the characteristics of all dharmas (everything)[being devoid of independent existence] are void; [fourthly,] sense-organ objects and related characteristics are void; [and lastly] the mind and related consciousnesses are void.

“Bodhisattva, as these voids are void [of nature], they are unable to linger in the void, for the void is without form. How can dharmas which are formless cling to or reject [anything]? Being free from clinging [and rejection] is identical to accessing the three voids.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “What are the three voids?”

The Buddha replied, “The three voids are: [First] the characteristics of the void are void [in nature]; [Second] the void of void is void; [Third] that which is void of void is also void. These voids [being equal] do not abide by the characteristics of the three voids. They are not devoid of Reality [of the Absolute]. [Being beyond] the pathways of words and speech they are inconceivable.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva said, “If they are not devoid of Reality, then they must have characteristics.”

The Buddha disagreed, “[Being the Absolute-void,] nonexistence does not abide in nonexistence; existence does not abide in existence. There is neither nonexistence nor existence. A nonexistent (non-abiding) dharma cannot linger in nonexistence. A nonexistent characteristic cannot have abidance in existence. The principle of non-abidance cannot be understood in terms of either existence or nonexistence.

“Bodhisattva, the principle which is beyond naming and characteristics is inconceivable. Why is this? The name of the nameless is not without existence; the principle beyond principle is not without principle (essence).”

Mahabala Bodhisattva said, “Such names and principles [of sameness, equality, and non-obstruction] are the characteristics of Reality-thusness. They are [also] the characteristics of thusness of the tathagatas. Thusness does not abide in thusness. Thusness has no characteristic of thusness, because

it is free from any characteristic. The characteristic of thusness is not different from that of the tathagatas'. The characteristics of the mind of sentient beings are the same as those of the tathagata's. Hence, the mind of sentient beings ought to be free of the sense-realms."

The Buddha said, "So it is. The mind of sentient beings is actually free of any sense-realms. Why? Because the mind is basically pure, and the principle [of the purity] unsullied. It is the soiling by the dusts (sensory objects) that culminates in the three realms of existence. [This is how] the mind that is involved with the three realms of existence is called 'the other realm'. Such realms are empty and delusive. They are the projections of the mind. When the mind is free from delusions, there will be no other realms."

Mahabala Bodhisattva reiterated, "If the mind is pure (non-creating), no sense-realms will arise. When the mind is pure, the three realms of existence therefore should not exist."

The Buddha responded, "So it is. Bodhisattva, if the mind does not project sense-realms, sense-realms will not arise in the mind. Why? All sense-objects are nothing but the mind that sees them. If the mind does not illusorily project them, there will be no [deceptive] visual-objects.

"Bodhisattva, if sentient beings [know that] sentient beings are [ultimately] non-existent internally (within their mind) and the three natures [of kindness, aggression and mental-blankness] are void and calm, there then will be no grasping of the self, or the grasping of others. Even the two accesses {please see the Buddha's explanation to follow} will not activate the mind. For one who has thus attained, there will be no three realms of existence."

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, "What is meant by: 'The two accesses will not activate the mind'? The mind is basically unborn; how can there be an access?"

The Buddha replied, "The two accesses are: one is called the



*access via principle* (understanding); the second one is called the *access via actualization* (realization).

“One who has accessed via the principle means one is convinced [through understanding and insight] that sentient beings are not different from enlightened (buddha) nature. This [nature] is neither one nor different. [But this nature] has been obscured and obstructed by foreign dusts (sense-objects). Without [the mind] either going or coming, one abides in contemplative awareness. One contemplates on the noble-truth that the buddha-nature is neither existent nor nonexistent; neither self nor others and it is not different in an ordinary person or a sage. One abides firmly without wavering in the state of the diamond base of the mind, calm, quiet, non-doing and free from differentiations. This is called *the access via principle*.

“The mind of one who has accessed via *actualization* has no bias or inclination; free from the shadows of the fluxes [of the sense-objects]. Wherever it may be, the mind is without any thought, seeking nothing. Not affected by the winds and noise [of ignorance], it is [motionless] like the great earth. Relinquishing as well as abandoning all [the otherwise] grasping of the mind and self-identification, he saves sentient beings. It (such a mind) is beyond creation, has no characteristics, and is free from both clinging and rejection.

“Bodhisattva, the mind has neither egress nor access. As the mind is free from either egress or access, it accesses without accessing anything, [for convenience sake] it has been referred to as ‘access’.

“Bodhisattva, the Dharma which thus accesses is not devoid of characteristics; and the Dharma itself is not void. That Dharma is [in fact] all-pervading. Why? The Dharmas (the Buddha’s definitive teachings) which are not non-existent are replete with merits. They are beyond [the creations of] the mind and its shadows. They are naturally pure (please see the Buddha’s explanation later).”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “How is it that the Dharma that is beyond [the creations of] the mind and its shadows is serene and pure?”

The Buddha explained, “The void, thusly Dharma, is not a dharma created by the consciousness of the mind. It is [also] not fabricated by the mind [itself]. This Dharma is not marked by any characteristics of the void, nor does it have any characteristics of corporeality (form). This Dharma does not belong to the mind. Therefore, it is not a dharma generated through co-origination.

“[However,] being not something [created] by the mind, yet [being the result of] non-doing, it is [therefore, also] not devoid of co-origination. It is neither a shadow nor a projection from any of the sense objects. It has neither independent nature nor any differences thereof. It has neither name, characteristics, nor definitions (differences). Why? Because the Absolute [Dharma] does not [even] have thusness.

“Those dharmas that are not in accord with thusness are not lacking in thusness. Those [dharmas] that have no existence do not lack thusness. It is not that they are lacking in thusness. Why? The Dharma with basic principle is beyond [any] principle or base. It is beyond all controversies and characteristics.

“Bodhisattva, the pure Dharma of thusness cannot be created through creation [as its essence is unborn]; nor can it be extinguished by extinction [as its essence, being void, is beyond extinction].”

Mahabala Bodhisattva exclaimed, “Inconceivable! The characteristics of the Dharma of thusness exist neither in combination (produced in association with other causes) nor independently [as they have no independent self-nature]. They are neither bridled (being neither form nor object) nor bound (by the senses) [since they are self-liberating]. [Being ultimately void as well as unborn,] they are neither assembled nor scattered. They are beyond creation and extinction. They are also free from any characteristics of arrival or departure from abidance. This is inconceivable!”

The Buddha said, “So it is. It is inconceivable! The inconceivable mind! The mind [of sentient beings] is also thus. Why? Thusness is not different from the mind. The mind is basically thus.

“The buddha-nature of all sentient beings [and that of the buddhas] is neither one nor different. The nature of all sentient beings is originally free from both creation and extinction. This nature of creation and extinction originally is the nature of Nirvana. The nature of the characteristics [of creation and extinction] are originally thus (void of independent existence), for thusness is motionless.

“The characteristics of all dharmas are not generated by co-origination. [Because] the nature of the characteristics of creation is thusness, but thusness is motionless. The characteristics of all the factors of co-origination are basically void and nonexistent. As all such factors are [ultimately] void, and co-origination itself is also void [of existence], there is no co-origination. All dharmas generated through co-origination are the illusory visions of the deluded mind. The appearance [of such visions] is basically uncreated, as the co-originating factors [supposedly responsible for their creation] are basically nonexistent. The mind and its thusness are like the principle of dharmas, being devoid of self-nature. It is like the [non-abiding] ‘King of Space’ which is without any abode. The mind of ordinary people misperceives and differentiates [everything].

“The characteristics of thusness are basically beyond existence and nonexistence. The characteristics of existence and nonexistence are perceptions by the mind and [its] consciousness.

“Bodhisattva, so it is with the nature of the mind. It is not devoid of self-nature, but its self-nature is [also] nonexistent. It is beyond existence and nonexistence.

“Bodhisattva, nonexistence is not without characteristics. They (the characteristics of both existence and nonexistence) are beyond speech and language. Why? The Dharma of the Absolute thusness is void, all-pervading and devoid of characteristics. It is not something that can be fathomed by [followers of the] dualistic vehicles.

“The realm of the [Absolute] void cannot be fathomed from within

[by the mind and related consciousness – being void in nature it is beyond grasp,] or from without [through the sense-realms]. Only masters of the six practices know them.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “What are the six practices? Please kindly explain.”

The Buddha replied, “First is the practice of the ten faiths. Second is the practice of the ten abidings. Third is the practice of the ten practices. Fourth is the practice of the ten transferences. Fifth is the practice of the ten *bhumis*. Sixth is the practice of equal enlightenment. Practitioners of these practices will then know [the realm of the void].”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “Since the Absolute Enlightenment of Reality has neither egress nor access, through which Dharma or [frame of] mind can one be in it?”

The Buddha replied, “The Dharma of Reality has no boundary. A boundless (non-abiding) mind is [already] within Reality.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “The wisdom of this boundless mind has no limit. The boundless mind is one that has attained liberation. Liberated wisdom accesses Reality [directly]. In the case of ordinary, feeble-minded sentient beings, whose mind is subject to frequent panting (agitations), through which Dharma can they be led to control that [panting], and to steady their mind [in order] to access Reality?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva, one whose mind is panting is driven both internally [by the sense organs and the sense of self-hood (ego)] and externally [by sense-objects and the sense-realms]. [These defiled subjects and objects (*klesas*)] flow along with the impulses, until their drips (accumulations) become a sea [of defiled consciousnesses]. The winds [of ignorance] stir [the ‘sea’ of tendencies, creating] the waves [of the consciousnesses], thereby startling the great dragon [of ignorance]. As the mind is startled and alarmed, one pants frequently.

“Bodhisattva, urge all sentient beings to preserve the three and abide the one, [in order] to access the tathagata-dhyana. With undistracted absorption, their mind will be free of panting.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “What is ‘preserve the three and abide the one, [in order] to access the *tathagata-dhyana*’?”

The Buddha replied, “To ‘preserve the three’ means to preserve the three liberations; to ‘abide the one’ means to abide in the thusness of the mind, and to ‘access the *tathagata-dhyana*’ means [knowing] the principle and the practice of contemplation (natural thus-awareness). Accessing this base of the mind is accessing Reality.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “What are the three liberations? Through what Dharma may one access the samadhi of the [natural] thus-awareness?”

The Buddha replied, “The three liberations are: [firstly] the liberation of the void [that everything is ultimately void in nature, whereby one is free from entanglements of all dharmas]; [secondly] diamond liberation [that everything is ultimately formless, whereby one is free from all mental agitations]; [and thirdly] *prajna* liberation [that everything, being void in nature, is beyond grasping, whereby one awakens to the primordially pure and silent nature of the mind]. The mind of one who is in accord with the principle [of the void, formlessness, and purity] is in contemplation [of thus-awareness] (free of abiding and obstruction) with no affirmation or negation to be differentiated.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “How does one go about this preservation? How can one contemplate it?”

The Buddha answered, “Preservation is putting into operation where the mind and its objects are non-dual (undivided). Be it internally [via the sense organs], or externally [through the sense-objects and the sense-realms], with neither egress nor access, the mind remains non-dual. By not abiding by any thing, the mind is free from gain or loss. The mind, thus purified, freely accesses the one-and-many *bhumis* (levels of spiritual attainment). This is what is meant by ‘contemplation (thus-awareness)’.

“Bodhisattva, such a person does not dwell on any dualistic

characteristics. Although he does not leave home (going forth into homelessness) he does not abide by the home (no longer considers himself as part of the household). For this reason, he does not: wear the dharma-robles, observe all the *Pratimoksha* precepts [monk's disciplinary guide], or participate in the *posada* [half-monthly (lunar calendar) religious observance]. With a [taintless] mind in non-doing, without any egoistic thoughts, he attains the fruition of sage-hood. Without lingering over either of the two [dualistic] vehicles, he accesses the bodhisattva path. Subsequently he will perfect all the [ten] *bhumis* and attain the *bodhi* of the buddhas.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, “This is inconceivable! Although he has not gone forth into homelessness, this person is not unlike one who has. Why is this? He has accessed the domain of Nirvana, where he dons the robes of the tathagatas and sits on the *bodhi*-seat (*bodhimanda*). Such a person should be respected and offered *dana* (food and other essentials) even by sramanas (novice renunciates).”

The Buddha said, “So it is. Why? Accessing the domain of Nirvana, the mind [of this person] transcends the three realms of existence. Donning the robe of the tathagatas, he accesses the void realm of the dharmas. Seated on the *bodhi*-seat, he ascends to the *bhumi* of perfect enlightenment. The mind of such a person transcends the two types of selfhood (the selfhood of one's ego and that of dharmas). Why should the sramanas not respect and offer *dana* to him?”

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, “Followers of the two [dualistic] vehicles are unable to see such Single-*bhumi* [of buddhahood] or the sea of the [Absolute-] void.”

The Buddha responded, “So it is. Followers of the two [dualistic, lesser] vehicles are attached to samadhi (mental absorption), [in order] to gain the samadhi-body [through the trance of *cessation* (*nirodhasamapatti*), whereby they attain ‘neither perception nor non-perception’]. They are like alcoholics who are drunk and unable to sober up, as far as the Single-*bhumi* [of buddhahood] or the sea of [the Absolute] void is concerned. Continuing through countless tests, they are unable to attain enlightenment. Until the liquor has dissipated off, they finally wake up. They will

then be able to cultivate these practices, eventually attaining the body (realization) of buddhahood. When a person abandons the [status of] *icchantika* (a person blocked from attaining enlightenment), he will be able to access the six practices. Along the path of practice, his mind is purified [by devotion to contemplating thus-awareness] and he definitely knows [the path]. The power of his diamond-like wisdom renders him (not subject to spiritual retrogression). He ferries sentient beings across to liberation with boundless mercy and compassion.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva remarked, “Since such a person ought not maintain the codes of morality, he will not be respected [even] by the sramanas (novice mendicants).”

The Buddha replied, “The moral codes have been prescribed for those with unwholesome actions and pride, owing to the waves and swells (disturbance by the first seven consciousnesses) from the sea [of the mind]. [Being primordially pure and awakened to the void nature of dharmas] this person’s sea of the eighth consciousness of his mind-ground is settled (calm), its [consequential] flow into its ninth consciousness (the *amala* buddha-mind) is pure (silent). The winds [of the sense-realms] become inactive [unable to agitate such an awakened mind, thus] the waves and swells do not arise.

“The moral codes are void in nature; the custodians (followers) who hold fast to them are being deluded and confused. [On the other hand,] for a person (an adept) [who knows the true nature of the precepts], the seventh and sixth [consciousnesses] and all related factors of co-origination cease [to arise]. [Having awakened to as well accessed] the contemplative absorption, he is not away from the three [aspects of] buddha-hood (*dharmakaya*, *nirmanakaya* and *sambhogakaya*). Thus the *bodhi* [within] has sprouted. Within the three formless characteristics [of neither birth nor death, of neither Nirvana nor non-Nirvana, and neither formlessness nor non-formlessness], mysteriously his mind deeply penetrates [the Dharma of the One-mind]. He deeply reveres the *triratna*. As he is not without dignified demeanor and moral codes, all the sramanas do not fail to venerate him!

“Bodhisattva, a person who has thus awakened (enlightened) will not linger over any worldly dharmas, be they active [leading to rebirth in the (impermanent) desire-realm] or passive [leading to rebirth in the form and formless realms of much longer duration]. Instead, he accesses the three types of void [comprising the three liberations through the void, formlessness and vows] and extinguishes the mind that is involved in any way with the three realms of existence.”

Mahabala Bodhisattva asked, “The virtuous one upon attaining the full fruition of buddhahood with the [three] qualities of [1] (sambhogakaya) buddhahood with all meritorious qualities and merits; [2] (*dharmakaya*) buddhahood of the tathagatagarbha-buddha [the Self-Enlightenment innate in all sentient beings]; and [3] (*nirmanakaya*) buddhahood [of the physical buddha, engaging in actively liberating all beings]. He accesses the three aggregates of morality [comprising the abandoning of all evils, doing all good and liberating all sentient beings], but does not linger over their characteristics. He extinguishes all thoughts of the three realms of existence, but does not abide in the calm domain [of Nirvana]. Not forsaking all the sentient beings, he [forsakes the unsurpassed *bodhi* and] stays (physically) in the world (repeated birth-death cycles and related experiences like ordinary sentient beings). It is inconceivable!”

At that time, Sariputra rose from his seat, came forward, and recited these stanzas:

The Buddha, replete with the sea of *prajna*,

Without abiding in the city of Nirvana,

Is like the wonderful lotus,

That is not grown in the high plains.

All buddhas underwent countless tests,

Without forsaking any defilement.

Only after saving the world did they access [Nirvana],

Like the lotus rising from the mud.



The six practices,

The bodhisattvas cultivate.

So are the three liberations,

The true path to *bodhi*.

Whether I now abide [by Nirvana] or not,

It will be as the Buddha has said.

I will return repeatedly to this place whence I came,

And leave only after completing [the bodhisattva path].

Furthermore, I will urge all sentient beings,

To join me [in pursuing the same vow],

May those who came before, or will come in the future,

All be led to climb (realize) the awakening of Reality.

Then the Buddha proclaimed to Sariputra: “This is inconceivable! You will certainly accomplish the path of *bodhi* in future. Countless sentient beings will transcend the sea of birth and death.”

At that time, the [sub-] assembly [of Mahayanists] all awakened to *bodhi*, and the [sub-] assembly [of Hinayanists] accessed the sea of the five voids (possibly the inner void, the outer void, the void of both the inner and outer, the big void, and the void (emptiness) of void – mentioned in the Sastra on Emptiness by Nagarjuna).

## Chapter Six

### True Nature of the Void

Then Sariputra addressed the Buddha: “Lord! The cultivation of the bodhisattva path is free of both signs and characteristics. The three moral precepts (abandoning all evils, doing all good and liberating all sentient beings) are also beyond observance. How should we maintain and observe [the precepts] so that we

can transmit them to sentient beings? May the Buddha proclaim this for us, out of his mercy and compassion.”

The Buddha replied, “Good man! You listen with full attention. I will proclaim this for you.

“Good man, all wholesome and unwholesome dharmas are illusory projections of the mind. All the sense-realms are the discriminations and differentiations of mentation and speech. Fix (tether) them on one spot and all the co-originating factors will cease to exist. Why? Good man! The one [primordial Enlightenment] basically is beyond generation. Thus, the functioning of the three outflows [via the body, speech and mind] becomes inoperative. By abiding within the principle of thusness, the gates leading to the six roads (sense-organs) are shut and the four co-originating factors which are in accord with thusness become replete with the three moral precepts.”

Sariputra asked, “How do the four co-originating factors that accord with thusness become replete with the three moral precepts?”

The Buddha replied, “The four co-originating factors are: Firstly, the power of Nirvana in bringing about the cessation of these factors [that otherwise require the observance of the precepts] maintains both the discipline and the departments of the moral code. Secondly, the power of Self-Benediction generated from the pure bases [of the five roots (comprising faith, courage, thought, concentration and wisdom) and their five respective strengths], is the moral code that culminates in wholesome Dharmas. Thirdly, the power of the great compassion inherent within the Self-Wisdom is the moral code that incorporates the vow to save all sentient beings. Fourthly, the power of the penetrative wisdom of the One-Enlightenment is in accord with abidance in thusness [which embraces all the spiritual powers and wisdom through the working of co-origination]. These are the four co-originating factors.

“Good man, thus the power of the four great factors does not linger over the substance as well as the characteristics of its work, nor lacking in the scope or efficiency in its functioning (although absolutely quiet in its work, it impartially helps transcend all sentient beings). As it does not have any abode, it cannot be sought (being free of abiding, its six roots cease to attach to the six dusts).

“Good man, the One-Enlightenment of thusness completely embraces all the six practices. It is the buddhas’ sea of bodhi and wisdom.”

Sariputra remarked, “[The Lord said that] ‘The power [of the four great factors] does not linger over the substance as well as the characteristics of its work, nor lacking in the scope or efficiency in its functioning.’ This Dharma is on the True void – permanent, blissful, [with] selfhood, and pure. Transcending the two types of selfhood (the selfhood of the ego and dharmas), it is the great parinirvana. Such a mind has no bonds (non-abiding). It is a powerful contemplation (direct awareness of the mind by itself). All the thirty-seven requisites of enlightenment must be within this contemplation.”

The Buddha said, “Indeed it does. It is inclusive of the Thirty-Seven Requisites of Enlightenment. How? Because it includes the four applications of mindfulness, the four right effort, the four bases of spiritual power, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven factors of enlightenment and the noble eightfold path; or whatever name/title it is being called. Although they are many classifications (titles and names), they have but one essence [that they all lead to enlightenment]. They are neither one [although they are of the same transcendental essence], nor different [although they are under different names].

“Despite their manifold names, such names are merely names and letters. [As they are ultimately void in nature, therefore, beyond differentiation], the dharmas [relating to the respective names] are beyond grasp. A dharma that is beyond grasp has only a single essence and is free from [all] descriptions. The characteristic of being free from description is the nature of the Absolute void. The essence of that void nature is in accord with the Reality of thusness. The principle of thusness [therefore] embraces all dharmas.

“Good man, a person who abides by (accesses) this principle [of thusness] crosses (transcends) the sea of the three sufferings (pain, decay and unnecessary deviated practice).”

Sariputra asked, “All the myriads of dharmas are but [the expressions of] speeches and writings. Anything characterized through speech and writing has no essence. Essence that accords with Reality is beyond [the images conveyed via] language and disputation. How does the Tathagata now proclaim the Dharma?”

The Buddha replied, “I proclaim the Dharma for the sake of you sentient beings. I proclaim that which cannot be spoken about (beyond words). [As the Dharma, being void in nature, is beyond description,] this is why I expound [the Dharma for the sake of communication with sentient beings]. What I speak of is the language of [transcendental] essence, not merely words. [But] the speeches of sentient beings are mere words and languages, without [transcendental] essence. Non-[transcendental] essence and words must be understood to be all empty (devoid of essence) and delusory. Empty and delusory words convey nothing relating to the [transcendental] essence, and anything that does not convey this essence is false speech.

“Speech that is in accordance with essence is truly void and yet not void [for] the void is real and yet unreal. [Such speech] is beyond all dualistic characteristics and is also not centred between [characteristics]. The dharma that is not so centred is beyond the three characteristics [of creation, abidance, and related cessation]. It has no abode to be found.

“Speech [that is beyond the three characteristics] is made according to thusness. Thusness is nonexistent and yet not nonexistent. Thusness [being a non-abiding Dharma] is beyond both existence and nonexistence. [Being void of nature,] its existence cannot exist within existence. There is nowhere that thusness does not exist. As one should not be attached to [the mere wordings] of speech, one should not even abide by thusness. [As the Dharma of] thusness neither exists nor does not exist, it can only be thusly said.”

Sariputra said, “[As the spiritual path of] all sentient beings begin as icchantikas (persons blocked from enlightenment). In order to attain the [level of] the tathagatas’ and the tathagatas’ absolute characteristics [of anuttarasamyaksambodhi (complete, perfect enlightenment)] how should the mind of an icchantika abide,?”

The Buddha said, “From the mind of the icchantika upwards, until one reaches the tathagata’s and the absolute characteristics of the tathagata’s, one passes through five levels.

“First is the attainment of [the ten] faith[s]. [A follower who has no faith previously,] now has faith that within his body is a seed of the Absolute-Thusness, which is being obscured by delusions. By relinquishing and abandoning the deceptive thoughts, the [primordially endowed] mind will be pure and taintless and one

will know that all the sense-realms are only the discriminations of the mind and speech.

“Second is the attainment of contemplation [comprising the ten abidings, ten practices, and ten transferences,] where one is aware that all the sense-realms are nothing more than the mentation and verbalization [of the mind]. They manifest according to the mind’s discriminatory mentation and verbalization [tendencies]. The sense-realms perceived are not my (the tathagata’s) Absolute (base) consciousness. Understand that the Absolute (base) consciousness is not: a dharma, an essence, the sense-objects to which one clings, or the mind and the other sense-organs which cling.

“Third is the attainment of cultivation [from first to seventh bhumi]. Cultivation involves the constant generation [of bodhicitta, a mind set on awakening of the six paramitas] and training thereof. Both the generation and training are to be carried out at the same time. Initially [one should be guided by wisdom (preparatory view) to overcome all hindrances and difficulties. This is [how] one leaves and abandons all hindrances (sensual desire, hatred, sloth and torpor, restlessness and remorse, and doubt) and shackles (shamelessness, apathy, jealousy, miserliness, regret, sleepiness, excitement, lethargy, anger, and belligerence).

“Fourth is the attainment of practice. Practice means abandoning all practices. The mind is free from both acceptance and rejection, [manifesting] the extremely pure, fundamental benediction [of Self-Enlightenment]. The thusness of the mind is motionless, and one’s Absolute nature is being realized. This is the great parinirvana where [amongst the six elements (earth, water, fire, wind, void, and consciousness)] the void is the biggest (most powerful).

“Fifth is the attainment of detachment (perfect enlightenment – buddhahood). Without abiding by its void nature, wisdom proper flows freely. Great compassion is characterized by thusness but that characteristic does not linger in thusness. The samyaksambodhi being void in nature, is therefore, nothing to be realized. [Such a] mind has no boundary and without focus. This is how tathagata-hood is being arrived at.

“Good man, [all] the five attainments arise from the One-Enlightenment and are accessed through the Self-Benediction [of primordial enlightenment]. [When one] helps transform

sentient beings it must be from that Self-Base [of enlightenment].”

Sariputra asked, “How does one go about ‘from that Self-Base’?” The Buddha replied, “Basically there is no origin. The functioning of [thusness] is without base. This Absolute void is the base-Reality [responsible for the manifestation] of everything. By generating bodhicitta (leading to realization of void nature of the mind that culminates in all the merits therein) one completes the sagely path (journey). Why? Good man! Like a hand grabbing air, [enlightenment] is neither attainment, [as all dharmas are void of nature,] nor non-attainment [as all dharmas, being void of nature, arise out of co-origination].”

Sariputra remarked, “As the Lord has explained, at the beginning of one’s journey [of the five attainments], one should aim at the Self-Benediction of Self-[Enlightenment]. Such a [state of] mind is calm and non-fabricating, and that calm non-fabrication is thusly. [Thusness] holds all the merits [of full enlightenment] and embraces all the Dharmas. This is perfect, non-dual, fusion. It is inconceivable! We should know this Dharma is the mahaprajnaparamita (perfection of great wisdom). It is the great spiritual mantra, the mantra of great clarity, the unexcelled mantra, the unequalled mantra.”

The Buddha said, “So it is, so it is! This void-nature of the Dharma is thusly. As its nature is void, it is the fire of wisdom that incinerates all knots (defilements and sufferings). [Knowing all dharmas are void of nature] they are equal in every respect. The three [final] stages of complete enlightenment and the three bodies (dharmakaya, sambhogakaya, nirmanakaya) of sublime enlightenment shine brilliantly, without shadows, in the ninth consciousness.

“Good man, this Dharma is beyond cause or co-origination, since it is wisdom functioning of its own. It neither moves nor is it still, as its functioning is void in nature. Its essence neither exists nor does not exist, since the characteristic of the void is void [itself].

“Good man, when liberating sentient beings, one should guide them to access this essence [of the Absolute void] through contemplation. One who accesses this essence will meet the tathagatas [by virtue of the realization of the single dharma-body (dharmakaya) of all buddhas].”

Sariputra remarked, “The essence of the contemplation of the tathagata means not lingering in any [mind-prompted] currents. One should abandon the four [ordinary] dhyanas (mental absorptions generated through concentration) as well as their limiting tops (heavenly states of such absorptions).”

The Buddha said, “So it is. Why? Because all dharmas are [merely] names and classifications. The four [ordinary] dhyanas [being object-based concentrations] are the same. [On the other hand,] if one meets the tathagatas (the realization of the single-body, the dharmakaya of all buddhas) [one’s own] tathagata-mind [being the thusness, without coming or going] is [totally] liberated, eternally in a state of extinction, neither away from [that state] nor accessing it. [This is] because there is equality (no difference) inside or outside [the tathagata-mind].

“Good man, similarly, all [types of ordinary] dhyana contemplations are absorptions directed towards the cessation of perception. But thusness contemplation, is not the same as those [types of dhyana]. Why? One who contemplates thusness-upon-thusness has no perception (sign) that he is contemplating thusness. All the characteristics relating to thusness are already calm and extinct. Calm-extinction is the essence of thusness.

“The dhyana absorption [directed towards] the cessation of perception is, in fact, mental activity and is not [true] dhyana. Why? The nature of dhyana [proper] is detached from all [mental] activities. It neither taints nor is being tainted. It is neither a dharma nor its shadow. It is beyond all differentiations, since its essence is that of Self-Benediction. Good man! This contemplative absorption of thusness is to be called dhyana [proper].”

Sariputra asked, “It is inconceivable! The Tathagata constantly employs Reality which accords with the essence of thusness in liberating sentient beings. [Since] the essence has many meanings and is vast [in scope], only sentient beings with sharp faculties are able to cultivate it. Sentient beings of dull faculties will find it difficult to understand its meaning. Through what expedient means can those of dull faculties be led to access this Truth?”

The Buddha replied, “One should encourage those of dull faculties to receive and maintain one four-line stanza; [this will ultimately allow them] to access the truth of Reality. All Buddha-Dharmas can be condensed within a single four-line stanza.”

Sariputra asked, “What is the four-line stanza? I beg [the Lord] to proclaim it.”

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

The essence of everything created by causes and originations,  
Such essence [being void] is extinct, beyond creation.

Essence that extinguishes all that is subject to creation-  
extinction,

Such essence [being void] exists and not extinct (beyond co-  
origination).

When the great assembly heard the proclamation of this stanza,  
all were joyous. Everyone awakened to the state where  
creations (phenomenal illusions) cease to arise [through their  
understanding of extinction and creation]. All [now having their  
mind silenced] awakened to the wisdom-sea of prajna on the  
nature of the void [as it is within the silent void that the inherent  
Self-Wisdom manifests].

## Chapter Seven

The Tathagatagarbha (The Perpetual Store)

At that time, the Elder Brahmacharya (Chastity) rose from the  
Self-domain [of Reality, the enlightened state] and spoke to the  
Buddha, “Lord! The essence (nature of the void) that exists is  
beyond extinction [since it is beyond co-origination]. The  
essence which can cause extinction is unborn (the essence of  
extinction itself is beyond extinction). [Therefore,] the essence of  
thusness is the bodhi of the buddhas. The nature of bodhi is free  
from differentiation. The non-differentiating wisdom [being void in  
nature] can [thusly] fathom infinite differentiations. These  
unlimited characteristics [of wisdom] result in the cessation of [all]  
differentiations. Therefore, both the essence and characteristics  
[of the void] are inconceivable; and within its inconceivable  
essence, lies its non-differentiation.

“Lord! The number of dharmas is immeasurable and limitless,  
but the unlimited characteristics of dharmas have only one  
[common] essence of abidance by one (single) nature. How  
does this come about?”

The Buddha replied, “Elder! It is inconceivable! I proclaim all the  
Dharmas for the sake of those who are deluded. Hence, they  
(the Dharmas) are only expedient means. All the characteristics  
of dharmas possess [only] one essence of Reality. Why? They  
are like the example of the four gates that open upon a city. All  
four gates lead to the [same] city. Just as the populace [of that



city] may freely enter [through any gate], the same is with the various tastes of the myriad dharmas [leading ultimately to the same essence of Single-taste].”

The Elder Brahmacharya remarked, “If dharmas are like this, by abiding in the Single-Taste, I should be able to access all the tastes.”

The Buddha replied, “So it is, so it is! Why? The essence of the Single-Taste is like a big sea (an ocean). There is not a single one amongst all the streams that does not flow into it. Elder! The tastes of all the dharmas are just like all the streams. [Whilst] their names and classifications may differ, the water [from all the streams] is not different. From the perspective of the sea, its water embraces all [the water] from those streams. [In the same way,] if one abides by the Single-Taste, then all tastes are being accessed.”

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, “If all dharmas are of a single taste, how is it that there are paths of the three vehicles? Is the wisdom behind each different?”

The Buddha replied, “Elder! This is like the example relative to the stream, the river, the canal, and the sea. In view of the differences in their sizes and depths, they are named differently. When water is in the stream, it is called the stream water. When it is in the canal it is called the canal water. When it is in the river it is called the river water. But once [all the water] is in the sea, it is just called seawater. The dharmas [of the three vehicles] are also the same. [As] they are all within the Reality of thusness, they are all called the path to buddhahood.

“Elder! One who accesses the path to buddhahood accesses three practices.”

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, “What are the three practices?”

The Buddha replied, “First is the practice in accord with phenomena [knowing them to be void ultimately]. Second is the practice in accord with consciousness [knowing the characteristics of everything (all phenomena) to be the projections of the mind]. Third is the practice according to thusness [of the non-abiding mind that functions without obstruction under all circumstances].

“Elder! These three practices fully embrace all approaches. Of all the approaches to the Dharma, there is not one that does not access thereof. One who accesses these practices does not

generate any characteristics of the void. And one who so accesses (these practices) can be said to have accessed the tathagatagarbha. One who accesses the tathagatagarbha accesses that which is beyond access.”

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, “This is inconceivable! Upon accessing the tathagatagarbha is like a bud that matures into a fruit. It has no access point. Through the strength of the fundamental Self-Benediction, it (the Self-Benediction) accesses the Self- [Reality]. In attaining that Self-[Reality], how many types of wisdom would one have?”

The Buddha replied, “One’s wisdom would be inexhaustible. Briefly speaking, one would have four categories of wisdom. What are the four? First is the perpetual wisdom that accords with thusness [working without obstructions for sentient beings, according to co-origination]. Second is adaptive wisdom that expediently extirpates the sicknesses (defilements) [of sentient beings, according to co-origination]. Third is nirvanic wisdom [of Nirvana] that removes lightning (momentary) wisdom [of the cultivator]. Fourth is Absolute-Wisdom that accesses Reality perfectly, replete with the path to buddhahood.

“Elder, this is the working of these four great matters. The sayings of all the buddhas of the past act as big bridges and ships [to ferry sentient beings across]. [When you] liberate sentient beings, you should employ this wisdom.

“Elder, further, the operation of these great functions involves three important aspects. Firstly, there is the mutual non-infringement between the internal (for self-liberation) and the external (when liberating others) within the three samadhis {please see the Buddha’s explanation later}. Secondly, use discriminatory wisdom within the great matrix of subject [in ending all obscurations related to the four elements and the base consciousness]. Thirdly, the wisdom and non-distraction of thusness propelled by compassion, when liberating oneself and others. These three aspects will culminate in [the perfection of] bodhi. One who does not practise these, will be unable to flow into the sea of the four wisdoms and will be subject to the whims of all the great demons.

“Elder, until the attainment of buddhahood, you and the others in the assembly should constantly cultivate and practise, without any temporary respite.”

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, “What are the three samadhis?”  
The Buddha replied, “The three samadhis are the samadhi of the void, the samadhi without characteristics, and the samadhi of non-expectation. These are the samadhis.”

The Elder Brahmacharya asked, “What is the great matrix of subject?”

The Buddha replied, “‘Great’ means the four basic elements (earth, water, fire, and wind). ‘Subject’ means the [five] aggregates (skandha), and others [such as the sense-realms, and the twelve-fold co-origination]. ‘Matrix’ means the base (eighth) consciousness. This is called the great matrix of subject.”

The Elder Brahmacharya said, “It is inconceivable! Such wisdom [comprising the four wisdoms and the three related matters that bring about their perfection] benefits oneself and others. [It enables a cultivator to] transcend the three realms, [yet] without abiding by Nirvana, to access the bodhisattva path.

“Such characteristics [created through the functioning of differentiation in co-origination] belong to dharmas that are subject to creation-extinction, since they involve differentiation. If one were to abandon differentiation, then these dharmas would not be subject to extinction.”

In proclaiming the essence, the Tathagata then recited the stanza:

Dharmas created from differentiations (co-origination),  
Are duly extinguished by differentiations,  
Abandon all dharmas that are subject to differentiations,  
Then they will neither be created nor extinguished.

When the Elder Brahmacharya heard this stanza, his mind was jubilant and elated. Wishing to proclaim its essence, he recited the stanza:

All dharmas are originally calm and extinct.  
This calm-extinction is also unborn (beyond creation).  
All dharmas that are subject to creation-extinction,  
Such dharmas are not beyond creation.  
They are not the same [as those beyond creation-extinction],  
As each is subject to either permanence or impermanence.  
This [Dharma of the Buddha] leaves all dualities,  
But also does not linger in oneness.  
If dharmas are [illusorily] said to be one,

It would be like the [illusory] hair of fire-rings,  
 [Or] mistaking heat-waves (mirages) for water.  
 All [such perceptions] are false and deceptive.  
 [Also] if one perceives the nonexistence of dharmas,  
 [This perception creates] a dharma of nothingness.  
 Like a blind man who [ignorantly] believes otherwise,  
 Preaching a dharma like (nonexistent) hair of a tortoise.  
 I have now heard the Buddha's exposition [on],  
 The Dharma beyond dualistic views,  
 Also not relying on abidance between [such views].  
 Therefore it is beyond grasping or abiding.  
 The Dharmas spoken by the tathagatas,  
 Are completely from non-abidance.  
 I, from the place with non-abidance,  
 Pay respect to the tathagatas from here.  
 Respectfully saluting the characteristics of the tathagatas,  
 Their motionless wisdom equals to empty space.  
 Free from grasping and lingering,  
 I respectfully salute their non-abiding bodies.  
 Everywhere I,  
 Always see all the tathagatas.  
 I only wish all the tathagatas,  
 Will explain the perpetual Dharma to me.  
 Then the Tathagata stated: "All good men! You listen attentively  
 and I will explain for you the perpetual Dharma.  
 "Good man, the perpetual Dharma is not a perpetual dharma. It  
 is neither the spoken nor the written word. It is neither the noble  
 truth nor liberation. It is neither non-existence nor the sense-  
 realms (existence). It is beyond all deception (grasping) and  
 impermanence. This Dharma is also not impermanent. [For] it is  
 beyond all views of permanence and impermanence.  
 Permanence is revealed once [the impermanent deceptive]  
 consciousness [of the eighteen sense-realms,] is realized to be  
 void. The [eighth consciousness, as the base of the other seven]  
 consciousness is perpetually calm and extinct. This calm-  
 extinction [itself] is also calm and extinct.  
 "Good man, one who knows that dharmas are calm and extinct  
 need not calm his mind, nor extinguish it. His mind is always  
 calm and extinct. The mind of one who attains calm extinction  
 (through realization that mind and dharmas are void of nature) is  
 constantly aware that all mentation (nama) and sense-objects

(rupa) are nothing but the [creations of the] ignorant mind. The ignorant mind differentiates all the dharmas. [But all the dharmas] are nothing apart from mentation (nama) and sense-objects (rupa). [One who] knows the thusness of dharmas does not follow (being conceptualized by) written and spoken language. The mind will only be with the essence and will not differentiate self and others [thus transcending duality]. Knowing that the self is [only] a hypothetical name is the attainment of calm-extinction. If one attains calm-extinction, one attains anuttarasamyaksambodhi.”

After Elder Brahmacharya heard this exposition, he recited the stanza:

Mentation and forms, the phenomena [created by] differentiation,  
Together with dharmas – these are called the three [delusions].  
Absolute thusness and sublime wisdom (the two of Reality),  
[The above] altogether makes five.

I now know these dharmas,

Are latched by permanence and impermanence.

Accessing the path of creation and extinction,

Is impermanence not permanence.

The Dharma on the Void spoken by the Tathagata,

Is beyond impermanence and permanence.

Being without co-origination, [this Dharma] is unborn.

Since it is beyond creation, it has no extinction.

Grasping at existence [of co-origination],

Is like plucking a flower from the sky,

Or expecting a barren woman’s child –

The Absolute is beyond grasping.

Abandoning all clinging to co-originations,

One also does not linger on all that is subject to extinction,

Or on Self-essence (base consciousness) and the [four] great [elements].

By relying on thusness, therefore, one attains Reality.

Therefore the Dharma of Reality-thusness,

Is constantly free within thusness.

All the tens of thousands of dharmas,

Are not the fabrications of the consciousness of thusness.

As the Dharma once detached from the eight consciousnesses is void,

Hence it is explained from the perspective of the void.

By abandoning all dharmas subject to creation-extinction,  
One dwells in Nirvana.

Being overcome by the great compassion [within],  
[One] does not linger within the extinction of Nirvana.

Transmuting both object and subject of clinging,  
One accesses the tathagatagarbha.

When the great assembly heard this essence, all attained right  
vocation (spiritual mission) and accessed the beyond-coming-  
and-going (beyond creation-extinction) sea of the  
tathagatagarbha.

Chapter Eight

Concluding Summary

At that time, Ksitigarbha (Earth-Store) Bodhisattva, rising from  
amidst the assembly, came before the Buddha. Joining his  
palms together [to pay respect] with his right knee on the ground,  
he addressed the Buddha, “Lord! I observe that the assembly  
has [some] doubts that have yet to be resolved. As the  
Tathagata is now willing to remove the doubts [for us], I will now  
ask on behalf of this assembly on doubts that still remain. I beg  
that the Tathagata, out of mercy and compassion, to take pity on  
us and grant this request.”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva-mahasattva! The way you are  
saving and liberating sentient beings shows great compassion  
and empathy. It is inconceivable. You should ask extensively. I  
will speak for you.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “Why are all dharmas not  
created through co-originations?”

Proclaiming the essence, the Tathagata recited the stanza:

If dharmas are created by co-originations,  
No dharmas can exist when co-originations are absent.

Since dharmas are void of [independent] nature,  
How can co-originations create dharmas?

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “If dharmas are beyond  
creation, how can the Buddha expound a Dharma that dharmas  
are created by the mind?”

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas that are created by the mind,  
Such dharmas cling to subject and object.  
Like the sky-flowers in a drunkard’s eyes,  
Such dharmas are still not the otherwise (thusness).

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva then remarked, “If dharmas are like this, then they would be without parallels (be like thusness). Dharmas that have no parallels ought to be self-generated (without causes).”

Thereupon the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas are basically free from existence and nonexistence,  
So is the case for existence of self (ego) and others.

With neither beginning [of existence] nor end [of nonexistence],  
The success and failure [of everything] are non-abiding (void).

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said [quoting the Buddha], “The characteristics of all dharmas are the bases of Nirvana. Nirvana [itself] and the characteristics of the void are also the same.

From the perspective of thusness, all dharmas without [characteristics of] thusness ought to be the same.”

The Buddha agreed, “All dharmas without [characteristics of] thusness are the same [since they are mutually non-obstructing].”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, “This is inconceivable. The characteristics of thusness is neither one nor different [from one]. Any clinging [related to speech and mind] by the mind and action [by the body] are void and calm. The void and calm mind and its dharmas are beyond grasping. Thus, they (mind and dharmas) too ought to be calm and extinct.”

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:

All dharmas which are void and calm,  
Such dharmas are calm but not void,  
When the mind has not [awakened to the] void,  
This is a grasping mind that is not calm.

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, “This Dharma [of the One-mind] is not of the three truths. For [the three truths relating to] sense-objects, the void and mind are also nonexistent. Since these [three] Dharmas are basically non-existent, the Dharma [of the One-mind] should also be nonexistent.”

Thereupon the Lord recited the stanza:

Dharmas are basically without self-nature,  
They arise through co-originating factors.  
By not [abiding by] thusness,  
Is how they are in thusness.

Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “As all dharmas are beyond creation and extinction, how is it that they are not all one (identical)?”

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:  
An abode for dharmas does not exist,  
Their characteristics and classifications are void, hence,  
nonexistent.

These two, naming and speech, and all dharmas,  
Are the graspings by the subjects (sense-organs).  
Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva remarked, “The characteristics of  
all dharmas do not abide by the two shores [of subject or object].  
[Being non-abiding] they also do not linger mid-stream between  
them. Mind and consciousnesses are similarly [beyond creation-  
extinction]. How can all the sense-realms be created by  
consciousness? If consciousness is capable of creation, then  
consciousness [itself] must be created [by something else]. So  
how can consciousness be beyond creation? The subject that  
can create must have the object of its creation.”

Thereupon, the Lord recited the stanza:  
The object and subject of creation are two,  
These two are subject and object of co-origination.  
Since both are without independent nature,  
Clinging to their existence is an illusion, like a sky-flower.  
When consciousness has not arisen,  
Sense-realms also are not being created.  
When sense-realms have not been created,  
Consciousness is also being extinguished (non-arising).  
As these both are basically nonexistent.  
They both neither exist nor do not exist.

Consciousness that is not created is also nonexistent,  
How does sense-realms derive their own existence?”  
Then Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva remarked, “Similarly, the  
characteristics of dharmas are void [both] internally (within  
consciousnesses of sense-organs) and externally (in sense  
objects). These two groups: sense-objects and [sense-organs]  
consciousnesses, are basically calm and extinct. The  
Tathagata’s explanation relates to a dharma’s Absolute  
characteristic. A dharma that is absolutely void and thusly is  
beyond co-origination.”

The Buddha responded, “So it is. A dharma that accords with  
Reality is beyond sense-objectification and is non-abiding. It can  
neither be co-originated nor can it co-originate. It is neither the  
subject [of the aggregates and the sense-realms], nor the great



(elements). [It is] the Dharma of the one Self-Benediction (enlightenment). [Thus it is] the conglomeration of profound merits.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, “It is inconceivable! It is an inconceivable conglomeration [of merits]! The seventh [consciousness] and the five [consciousnesses of the five sense-organs] are beyond creation. The eighth and sixth [consciousnesses] are calm and extinct. The characteristics of the ninth [consciousness, being the Absolute-void] are [therefore,] void and nonexistent. [Hence, within the ninth consciousness, it being the Absolute-void,] the void is also void [of existence]. The non-void is [similarly] void and nonexistent. As the Lord has explained, dharmas and essence are all void [ultimately]. Accessing the void (gate to liberation), there are no practices [that need to be cultivated], yet one does not neglect any action [such as the six paramitas]. There is neither self nor object-of-self, neither subject nor object of the body or object of perception. All the internal and external knots (defilements) are calm and still. Therefore, vows are also being extinguished. This thusly contemplation is the true thusness in which wisdom and concentration [are perfectly balanced]. The Lord constantly explains that the Dharma on the void is an excellent medicine.”

The Buddha replied, “So it is. Why? Because the nature of the dharma (being nonexistent) is void. As this void-nature is beyond creation, the mind [that accesses the void] is perpetually non-creating. As this void-nature is beyond creation, the mind is perpetually beyond creation. As the void-nature is non-abiding, the mind is also non-abiding. As the void-nature is beyond any doing (beyond practice), the mind is also non-doing (beyond practice). The void, being free from both egress and access, is free of all gains and losses. The aggregates, sense-realms, etc., are also nonexistent. Therefore the mind is thusly and non-grasping! Bodhisattva, I have expounded the Dharma on the void in order to prick all [the graspings relating to] existence.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva said, “Lord! Knowing that existence is unreal, like heat-waves (mirages) that appear as water, and that Reality is not nonexistent, like the nature of fire [inherent in wood], is a person who so contemplates wise?”

The Buddha replied, “So it is. Why? This person is contemplating Reality. [He is] contemplating on the one [characteristic of non-characteristics, i.e.,] calm-extinction. All characteristics and

non-characteristics, being void [of nature], are being equally absorbed by the void, in the process where the void is being cultivated (understood/realized). [With a non-abiding mind where all characteristics arising during contemplation are being self-liberated, one accesses the dharmakaya and thus] does not fail to meet the buddhas. Since [when] one meets the buddhas, one does not follow the three currents (types) [of cultivators who are not able to awaken to buddhahood during their life-time].

“Within the Mahayana, the path of the three liberations [of the void, formlessness, and non-practice] has a single body (essence) which is void in nature. Since it is void in nature, it is [called] the void. Since it is void, it has no characteristics. As it has no characteristics, it is non-doing. As it is beyond practice, it seeks nothing. As it seeks nothing, it is free from expectation. As it is non-expecting, it is beyond vows. Since it is beyond vows, it understands all karmas [are the creations of the mind], and the need to purify (calm) the mind. As the mind is purified, one sees the buddhas. As one meets the buddhas, one then will be born in the Pure Land.

“Bodhisattva, this profound Dharma on the three liberations should be diligently cultivated. Wisdom and [right] concentration will then be perfected, leading to the transcendence of the three realms of existence.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “What the Tathagata has expounded on non-creation and non-extinction is the Dharma on impermanence [of dharmas]. Extinction arises by virtue of creation and extinction. But creation and extinction are self-extinguishing. [Once creation and extinction have been extinguished,] calm-extinction will be permanent. Once it is permanent, it cannot be broken. This is the perpetual Dharma which is beyond the three realms of existence. All the active (impermanent) dharmas [of the desire realm] and static (longer duration) dharmas [of the form and formless realms] that involve practices (doings), should be avoided like fire pits.

“Through what dharma may one rely upon as well as admonish oneself in order to access the one approach [to the perpetual Dharma]?”

The Buddha replied, “Bodhisattva! Admonish the mind on the three great matters, and access this practice via the three noble truths.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “How may one admonish one’s mind on the three matters? How may one access the one practice via the three noble truths?”

The Buddha replied, “As regards the three great matters: the first is called cause, the second is called effect, and the third is called consciousness. These three matters are void and nonexistent basically. They are neither the self [as they are void in nature] nor are they the True-Self (Buddha-nature). How do the taints of craving arise in them? Contemplate these three matters. They are being bound by the bonds of attachment, causing sentient beings to aimlessly drift in the sea of suffering. On these matters one should constantly admonish oneself.

“As for the three noble truths: the first is called the path of bodhi. This is the noble truth of equality [as bodhi-nature is inherent in all sentient beings]. It is not a truth about inequality. The second truth is called the noble truth of wisdom attained through great enlightenment. It is not deviated-truth [of other pathways]. The third truth is that noble truth accessed through the simultaneous cultivation of wisdom and concentration. This truth is not accessed by practising them lopsidedly. Anyone who cultivates these three truths along the path to buddhahood, will not fail to attain the great enlightenment. Accessing the wisdom of the great enlightenment, one exudes extremely great compassion, benefiting both one-self and others, and attains the bodhi of the buddhas.”

Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva asked, “Lord! Such a Dharma [on the void] would be free from causes and co-originations. If a dharma is not co-originated, there should be no causes that can be generated. So how can such a motionless dharma access the [path of the] tathagatas?”

Wishing to proclaim the meaning, the Tathagata recited the stanza:

The characteristics of all dharmas,  
Are void, nonexistent, and motionless by nature.  
These dharmas at a specific time,  
Are not arisen (not affected) through such time.  
[As] dharmas have no differences in time,  
They do not arise through differences in time.  
Dharmas are beyond motion and stillness.  
They are calm and extinct as their natures are void.

When their natures are void, calm, and extinct,  
 Then dharmas can appear [through co-origination].  
 When detached from all characteristics, they abide calmly.  
 As they abide calmly, they do not co-originate.  
 All co-originated dharmas,  
 Are co-originated, [but] not created.  
 As co-originating factors are not created or extinguished,  
 The nature of creation-extinction is hence void and calm.  
 The nature of co-origination gives rise to subject and object,  
 These co-originations arise from basic co-originating [nature].  
 Hence dharmas' arising is not [directly due to] co-origination.  
 This is also the case with the non-arising of co-origination.  
 All dharmas that arise through co-origination,  
 Such dharmas [being ultimately void] are purely co-originated.  
 The co-originating characteristics of creation and extinction,  
 Are themselves free from creation and extinction.  
 Those characteristics [being the Absolute] are thusly and real,  
 Basically neither manifest nor disappear.  
 All dharmas [being void of nature] at a specific time,  
 Co-originate manifestations and disappearances themselves.  
 Therefore the absolutely pure base,  
 Is not caused by other forces,  
 Precisely when this is subsequently attained,  
 One [re-]attains the Self-attainment (Self-Enlightenment).  
 When Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva heard what the Buddha said, his  
 mind-ground (deepest part of the mind) was blissful and free. All  
 in the assembly had no more doubts. Knowing their mind-state,  
 [Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva] recited the stanza:  
 I knew the doubts in all their mind,  
 And accordingly inquired sincerely and extensively,  
 [Through] the Tathagata's great compassion and kindness,  
 [He] has analyzed [the doubts] with none remaining.  
 Everyone in the two [sub-] assemblies,  
 Has clearly understood.  
 From the Absolute-Domain,  
 I [vow to] liberate all sentient beings.  
 Like the great compassion of the Buddha,  
 Not abandoning the great vow.  
 Hence at the only-child state (viewing everyone as one's child),  
 [The bodhisattva] abides amidst defilements [to liberate others].

Then the Tathagata addressed the assembly: “This bodhisattva is inconceivable! He constantly relieves sentient beings from their sufferings through his great compassion. If there are sentient beings who keep the Dharma of this sutra, or keep this bodhisattva’s name, they will not fall into the evil realms [of hell, hungry ghosts and animals], with all obstructions and difficulties completely eradicated. If there are sentient beings with no remaining stray thoughts, recite [or contemplate] exclusively on the Dharma of this sutra, cultivate and practise it, this bodhisattva will always manifest a transformation body to expound the Dharma to them. He will support them unceasingly, leading them to attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi quickly. “You bodhisattvas, when liberating sentient beings, you should lead all of them to cultivate and practise this Absolute-Essence of the Mahayana.”

### Epilogue

At that time, Ananda arose from his seat, came forward and addressed the Buddha: “What the Tathagata has spoken is the conglomeration of merits of the Mahayana. It will definitely eradicate the knots (fetters). The perpetual benediction of enlightenment is inconceivable! What should the title of the sutra of this Dharma be? How much merit will those who receive and keep such a sutra accrue? May the Buddha be merciful and compassionate to explain this for us.”

The Buddha replied, “Good man, the name of this sutra is inconceivable. It has been kept and maintained by all the buddhas of the past. It enabled them to access the tathagatas’ all-embracing sea of wisdom. If a sentient being keeps this sutra, he then need seek no more from other sutras. The Dharma of this sutra is inclusive of [the essence of] all other Dharmas. It embraces the essence of all sutras. It is the unifying tie of the Dharmas of all the sutras. As for the title of this sutra, it is named Mahayanasamgraha-sutra; (Compendium of Mahayana sutras). It is also called Vajrasamadhi. It can also be called the Source of Immeasurable Doctrine. If a person receives and keeps this scripture, the merits therein is like one who supports hundreds of thousands of buddhas. Such merits are comparable to the inconceivable limitless space. I now charge you with the dispensation of this sutra.”

Ananda asked, “What sort of mentality and what type of person can receive and keep this sutra?”

The Buddha replied, “Good man, the mind of the person who receives and keeps this sutra ought to be free from gains or losses and constantly cultivating the spiritual life. Even in non-essential discussions, his mind is always blissful and calm. In the midst of crowded environment, his mind is collected (undistracted). Even if he lives at home (householder’s life), he does not grasp at the three realms of existence.

“This person’s appearance in the world is endowed with five merits. First, he is respected by the masses. Second, he will not meet with accidental or untimely death. Third, he will expertly rebut perverse views. Fourth, he will gladly ferry sentient beings across [to the other shore]. Fifth, he will be able to access the sagely path. Such a person will receive and keep this sutra.”

Ananda asked, “Will a person who ferries sentient beings across [to the other shore] be worthy of receiving offerings, or not?”

The Buddha replied, “Such a person is able to become a great field of merits for sentient beings. He constantly exercises great wisdom [of the unexcelled bodhi] and displays both skilful means and wisdom. He is as worthy of receiving offerings as [any of] the four [levels of ascetic discipleship]. [Even if such a person dies] one may make offerings (pay respect) to his [partially cremated] head, eyes, marrow, and brain. So how could he not receive clothes and provisions? Good man, such a person is your mentor, your bridge. How could an ordinary person not pay respect to him?”

Ananda asked, “If, at that person’s residence, one receives and keeps this sutra and pays respect and makes offerings to that person, how much merit would one accrue?”

The Buddha answered, “Besides, if, a person donates a city-full of gold and silver to charity, it would not be comparable to the inconceivable [merits] of one who maintains a four-line stanza of this sutra. Paying respect and making offerings to that person [the merits accrued thereof] is inconceivable!

“Good man, a person who guides all sentient beings to hold this sutra, his mind will always be collected and he will never forsake his mind-base (buddha-nature). Should he forget his mind-base, he must immediately repent. This Dharma of repentance produces coolness [of the mind].”

Ananda asked, “If one repents, would past evil deeds not be receded?”

The Buddha replied, “So it is. Like a dark room, when a bright lamp is brought into it, its darkness is being extinguished instantly. Good man! Talking about repentance from [evil deeds]; all evil deeds committed can be said to have receded into the past.”

Ananda asked, “What is repentance (how repentance can be realized)?”

The Buddha replied, “By relying on the teachings of this sutra, one accesses the contemplation on Reality. Once contemplation has been accessed, all evil deeds will be completely extinguished. Leaving behind all evil realms, one will be born in the Pure Land, where one will quickly attain anuttarasamyaksambodhi.

When the Buddha completed expounding this sutra, Ananda, the bodhisattvas and the fourfold assembly [comprising the monks, nuns, lay male and lay female followers – alternatively it could mean the four groups in the assembly as mentioned in the first chapter] were all immensely elated. Their mind attained the certainty [of enlightenment]. They paid due respect to the Buddha by touching his feet with their foreheads. They gladly practised [the Buddha’s teachings] respectfully.

# Valahaka Sutta

## Thunderheads

"There are these four types of thunderheads. Which four? One that thunders but doesn't rain, one that rains but doesn't thunder, one that neither thunders nor rains, and one that both thunders and rains. These are the four types of thunderheads.

"In the same way, these four types of persons resembling thunderheads are to be found existing in the world. Which four? The one that thunders but doesn't rain, the one that rains but doesn't thunder, the one that neither thunders nor rains, and the one that both thunders and rains.

"And how is one the type of person who thunders but doesn't rain? There is the case where a person has mastered the Dhamma: dialogues, narratives of mixed prose and verse, explanations, verses, spontaneous exclamations, quotations, birth stories, amazing events, question and answer sessions [the earliest classifications of the Buddha's teachings]. Yet he doesn't discern, as it actually is present, that 'This is stress.' He doesn't discern, as it actually is present that 'This is the origination of stress.' He doesn't discern, as it actually is present that 'This is the cessation of stress.' He doesn't discern, as it actually is present that 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is the type of person who thunders but doesn't rain. This type of person, I tell you, is like the thunderhead that thunders but doesn't rain.

"And how is one the type of person who rains but doesn't thunder? There is the case where a person has not mastered the Dhamma: dialogues... question and answer sessions. Yet he does discern, as it actually is present, that 'This is stress.' He discerns, as it actually is present that 'This is the origination of stress.' He discerns, as it actually is present that 'This is the cessation of stress.' He discerns, as it actually is present that 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is the type of person who rains but doesn't thunder. This type of person, I tell you, is like the thunderhead that rains but doesn't thunder.



"And how is one the type of person who neither thunders nor rains? There is the case where a person has not mastered the Dhamma: dialogues... question and answer sessions. He doesn't discern, as it actually is present, that 'This is stress.'... 'This is the origination of stress.'... 'This is the cessation of stress.'... 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is the type of person who neither thunders nor rains. This type of person, I tell you, is like the thunderhead that neither thunders nor rains.

"And how is one the type of person who both thunders and rains? There is the case where a person has mastered the Dhamma: dialogues... question and answer sessions. He discerns, as it actually is present, that 'This is stress.'... 'This is the origination of stress.'... 'This is the cessation of stress.'... 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is the type of person who both thunders and rains. This type of person, I tell you, is like the thunderhead that both thunders and rains.

"There are these four types of people to be found existing in the world."

# Vammika Sutta

## The Simile of the Ant Hill

I heard thus:

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi.. At that time venerable Kumaarakassapa lived in the Dark forest. When the night was waning a certain deity illuminated the whole of the Dark forest and approached venerable Kumaarakassapa stood on a side, and said, Bhikkhu, this ant hill smokes in the night and blazes in the day. The Brahmin said

Wise one, take a tool and dig. When digging with the tool he saw an obstacle; Good one, an obstacle. The Brahmin said remove the obstacle wise one, and dig with the tool.. Digging with the tool he saw a swollen dead body. Good one a swollen dead body. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the swollen dead body and dig with the tool.. Digging with the tool he saw a forked path. Good one a forked path. The Brahmin said, remove the forked path and dig with the tool. Good one a casket. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the casket and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a tortoise. Good one, a tortoise. The Brahmin said remove the tortoise and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a slaughterhouse. Good one a slaughterhouse. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the slaughterhouse and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a tendon of flesh. Good one a tendon of flesh. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the tendon of flesh and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool, he saw a snake. Good one a snake. The Brahmin said, wise one, stop do not hurt the snake, worship the snake. Bhikkhu, approach the Blessed One and ask this question and as he explains it bear it in mind. In this world of gods and men, together with its Maras, Brahmas and the community of recluses and Brahmins I do not see anyone who could answer this question and convince the mind except the Thus Gone One, a disciple of the Thus Gone One or one who has heard it. Saying that the deity vanished from there.. .

Venerable Kumaarakassapa at the end of that night approached the Blessed One, worshipped and sat on a side. Sitting venerable Kumaarakassapa said thus to the Blessed One. Venerable sir, last night, a certain deity illuminated the whole of Dark the forest and approached me and stood on a side, and said, Bhikkhu, this ant hill smokes in the night and blazes in the day. The Brahmin said Wise one, take a tool and dig. When digging with the tool he saw an obstacle; Good one, an obstacle. The Brahmin said remove the obstacle wise one, and dig with the tool.. Digging with the tool he saw a swollen dead body. Good one a swollen dead body. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the swollen dead body and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a forked path. Good one a forked path. The Brahmin said, remove the forked path and dig with the tool. Good one a casket. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the casket and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a tortoise. Good one a tortoise. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the tortoise and dig with the tool Digging with the tool he saw a slaughterhouse. Good one a slaughterhouse. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the slaughterhouse and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool he saw a tendon of flesh. Good one a tendon of flesh. The Brahmin said, wise one remove the tendon of flesh and dig with the tool. Digging with the tool, he saw a snake. Good one a snake. The Brahmin said, wise one, stop do not hurt the snake, worship the snake. Bhikkhu, approach the Blessed One and ask this question and as he explains it bear it in mind. In this world of gods and men, together with its Maras, Brahmas and the community of recluses and Brahmins I do not see anyone who could answer this question and convince the mind except the Thus Gone One, a disciple of the Thus Gone One or one who has heard it. Saying that the deity vanished from there.

Venerable sir, what is an anthill, what is to smoke in the night. What is to blaze in the day. Who is the Brahmin and who is the wise one, what is the tool, what is to dig, what is an obstacle, what is a swollen dead body, what is the forked path, what is a casket, what is a tortoise, what is a slaughter house, what is a tendon of flesh, and who is the snake..

Bhikkhu, anthill is a synonym for this four elemental body brought forth by mother and father, supported on rice and bread and subject to impermanence, brushing, breaking and destruction. Whatever work done during the day, is thought and discursively thought in the night, this is to smoke during the night. What is thought and discursively thought during the night is put into action through body, words and mind during the day that is to blaze in the day Brahmin is a synonym for the Thus Gone One, worthy and rightfully enlightened. The wise one is a synonym for the trainer. The tool is a synonym for the noble one's wisdom.

Dig is a synonym for aroused effort. Obstacle is a synonym for ignorance. Remove the obstacle is dispel ignorance It's meaning is wise one take a tool and dig. Bhikkhu, a swollen dead body is a synonym for anger and restlessness. Take the tool dig and remove the swollen dead body is dispel anger and restlessness. A forked path is a synonym for doubts. Take the tool, dig and remove the forked path is its meaning. The casket is a synonym for the five hindrances; sensual interest, aversion, sloth and torpor, restlessness and worry, and doubts. Dispel the five hindrances is. Wise one take a tool dig and remove the casket is its meaning. Tortoise is a synonym for the five holding masses. Such as the holding mass of matter, the holding mass of feelings, the holding mass of perceptions, the holding mass of determinations, and the holding mass of consciousness. Remove the tortoise is give up the five holding masses. Wise one take a tool, dig and remove the tortoise is its meaning. Slaughter house is a synonym for the five strands of sensual pleasures. Such as pleasing agreeable forms arousing fondness cognizable by eye consciousness. Pleasing agreeable sounds arousing fondness cognizable by ear consciousness. Pleasing agreeable smells arousing fondness cognizable by nose consciousness. Pleasing agreeable tastes arousing fondness cognizable by tongue consciousness and pleasing agreeable touches arousing fondness cognizable by body consciousness. Remove the slaughterhouse is dispel the five strands of sensual desires. Wise one take the tool dig and remove the slaughter house is its meaning. A tendon of flesh is a synonym for interest and greed. Wise one take the tool and dig is its meaning. The

snake is a synonym for the Bhikkhu with desires destroyed. Wait!  
Do not hurt the snake, worship the snake, is its meaning.

The Blessed One said thus and venerable Kumaarakassapa  
delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

# Vanapattha Sutta

## The Ways of the Forest

I heard thus:

At one time the Blessed One lived in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi.

From there the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus, "Bhikkhus, I will teach the method of the forest, listen, and attend carefully, I will teach.

"Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides in a certain forest stretch. When abiding there, un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, not destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites [Medicine] when ill are collected with difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide in this forest stretch, to me abiding in this forest, un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not get concentrated, not destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty Bhikkhus, he should not abide in that stretch of forest, he should leave it by night or by day.

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides in a certain forest stretch. When abiding there, un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, not destroyed desires, do not get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide in this forest stretch, to me abiding in this forest, un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not get concentrated the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed, the not attained noble end of the

yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide in this stretch of forest, to me abiding in this forest un-established mindfulness does not get established un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed, the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. I did not go forth as a homeless for the sake of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill, yet to me living in this stretch of forest not established mindfulness does not get established, not concentrated mind does not concentrate, the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained. Bhikkhus, that Bhikkhu considering should leave that stretch of forest, should not abide there.

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides in a certain forest stretch, when abiding there, un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide in this forest stretch, to me abiding in this forest stretch un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty. I did not go forth as a homeless for the sake of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill, yet to me abiding in this stretch of forest un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. That Bhikkhu considering should not leave that stretch of forest, should abide there.

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides in a certain forest stretch, when abiding there, un-established mindfulness gets established,

the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide in this forest stretch, to me abiding in this forest stretch un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. That Bhikkhu considering should not leave that stretch of forest, should abide there, as long as life lasts. .

Here Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides supported on a certain village-abides supported on a certain hamlet.-abides supported on a certain town,-abides supported on a certain state- abides supported on a certain person, Bhikkhus, when abiding supported on a certain person un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, non-destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide supported on this person, to me abiding supported on this person un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not get concentrated, not destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained , as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty Bhikkhus, he should not abide supported on that person he should leave that person by night or by day without informing, so that he may not follow. .

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides supported by a person When abiding supported by a person un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, not destroyed desires, do not get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide supported



by this person, to me abiding thus un-established mindfulness does not get established, un-concentrated mind does not get concentrated the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed, the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide supported by this person to me abiding thus un-established mindfulness does not get established un-concentrated mind does not concentrate, the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed, the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained, as for the four requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. I did not go forth as a homeless for the sake of robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill, yet to me living supported by this person, not established mindfulness does not get established, not concentrated mind does not concentrate, the not destroyed desires do not get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is not attained. Bhikkhus, that Bhikkhu should leave that person without informing, so that he may not follow. . .

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides supported by a person when abiding thus, un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide supported by this person, to me abiding thus un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with difficulty. I did not go forth as a homeless for the sake of robes, for the sake of morsel food, for the sake of dwellings and for the sake of requisites when ill, yet to me abiding supported by this person, un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. That Bhikkhu considering should follow that person, should not leave him.

Here, Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu abides supported on a certain person, to him supported by that person, un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected with ease. That Bhikkhu should reflect, I abide supported by this person, to me abiding thus, un-established mindfulness gets established, the un-concentrated mind concentrates, the not destroyed desires get destroyed, and the not attained noble end of the yoke is attained. As for the requisites of life for the gone forth, as a homeless, robes, morsel food, dwellings and requisites when ill are collected without difficulty. That Bhikkhu should follow that person as long as he lives, even if chased should follow.

The Blessed One said thus and those Bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

# Vasala Sutta

## Discourse on Outcasts

Thus have I heard:

On one occasion the Blessed One was living near Savatthi at Jetavana at Anathapindika's monastery. Then in the forenoon the Blessed One having dressed himself, took bowl and (double) robe, and entered the city of Savatthi for alms. Now at that time a fire was burning, and an offering was being prepared in the house of the Brahman Aggikabharadvaja. Then the Blessed One, while on his alms round, came to the Brahman's residence. The Brahman seeing the Blessed One some way off said this: "Stay there, you shaveling, stay there you wretched monk, stay there you outcast." When he spoke thus the Blessed One said to the Brahman: "Do you know, Brahman, who an outcast is and what the conditions are that make an outcast?" "No, indeed, Venerable Gotama, I do not know who an outcast is or the conditions that make an outcast. It is good if Venerable Gotama were to explain the Dhamma to me so that I may know who an outcast is and what the conditions are that make an outcast."

"Listen then, Brahman, and pay attention, I will speak."

"Yes, Venerable Sir," replied the Brahman.

1. "Whosoever is angry, harbors hatred, and is reluctant to speak well of others (discredits the good of others), perverted in views, deceitful -- know him as an outcast.
2. "Whosoever in this world kills living beings, once born or twice born, in whom there is no sympathy for living beings -- know him as an outcast.
3. "Whosoever destroys and besieges villages and hamlets and becomes notorious as an oppressor -- know him as an outcast.
4. "Be it in the village, or in the forest, whosoever steals what belongs to others, what is not given to him -- know him as an outcast.

5. "Whosoever having actually incurred a debt runs away when he is pressed to pay, saying, 'I owe no debt to you' -- know him as an outcast.

6. "Whosoever coveting anything, kills a person going along the road, and grabs whatever that person has -- know him as an outcast.

7. "He who for his own sake or for the sake of others or for the sake of wealth, utters lies when questioned as a witness -- know him as an outcast.

8. "Whosoever by force or with consent associates with the wives of relatives or friends -- know him as an outcast.

9. "Whosoever being wealthy supports not his mother and father who have grown old -- know him as an outcast.

10. "Whosoever strikes and annoys by (harsh) speech, mother, father, brother, sister or mother-in-law or father-in-law -- know him as an outcast.

11. "Whosoever when questioned about what is good, says what is detrimental, and talks in an evasive manner- know him as an outcast.

12. "Whosoever having committed an evil deed, wishes that it may not be known to others, and commits evil in secret -- know him as an outcast.

13. "Whosoever having gone to another's house, and partaken of choice food, does not honor that host by offering food when he repays the visit -- know him as an outcast.

14. "Whosoever deceives by uttering lies, a Brahman or an ascetic, or any other mendicant -- know him as an outcast.

15. "Whosoever when a Brahman or ascetic appears during mealtime angers him by harsh speech, and does not offer him (any alms) -- know him as an outcast.

16. "Whosoever in this world, shrouded in ignorance, speaks harsh words (*asatam*) or falsehood expecting to gain something -- know him as an outcast.

17. "Whosoever debased by his pride, exalts himself and belittles others -- know him as an outcast.

18. "Whosoever is given to anger, is miserly, has base desires, and is selfish, deceitful, shameless and fearless (in doing evil) -- know him as an outcast.

19. "Whosoever reviles the Enlightened One (the Buddha), or a disciple of the Buddha, recluse or a householder -- know him as an outcast.

20. "Whosoever not being an Arahant, a Consummate One, pretends to be so, is a thief in the whole universe -- he is the lowest of outcasts.

21. "Not by birth is one an outcast; not by birth is one a Brahman. By deed one becomes an outcast, by deed one becomes a Brahman.

22. "Know ye by the example I now cite (the fact that by birth one is not an outcast). There was an outcast's son, Sopaka, who became known as Matanga.

23. "This Matanga attained the highest fame so difficult to gain. Many were the warriors (*kshatriyas*) and Brahmans who went to attend on him.

24. "Mounting the celestial chariot (the Noble Eightfold path, and driving) along the passion-free high road, (Sopaka, now a monk), reached the Brahma realm having given up sense desires.

25. "His (lowly) birth did not prevent him from being reborn in the Brahma realm. There are Brahmans born in the family of preceptors, kinsmen of (veda) hymns.

26. "They are often seen committing evil deeds. In this life itself they are despised, in the next they are born in an evil state of existence. High birth does not prevent them from falling into a woeful state, or from censure.

27. "Not by birth is one an outcast; not by birth is one a Brahman. By deed one becomes an outcast, by deed one becomes an Brahman."

When the Buddha had thus spoken, the Brahman Aggikabharadvaja said to the Blessed One: "Excellent, O Venerable Gotama, excellent! Just as, O Venerable Gotama, a man were to set upright what had been overturned, or were to reveal what had been hidden, or were to point the way to one who had gone astray, or were to hold an oil lamp in the dark so that those with eyes may see things, even so in many ways has the Venerable Gotama expounded the Dhamma, the doctrine. I take refuge in the Venerable Gotama, the Dhamma, and the Sangha, the Order. May the Venerable Gotama accept me as a lay follower who has taken refuge from this day onwards while life lasts."

# Vatthupama Sutta

## The Simile of the Cloth

1. Thus have I heard. Once the Blessed One was staying at Savatthi, in Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. There he addressed the monks thus: "Monks." -- "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this:

2. "Monks, suppose a cloth were stained and dirty, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink, it would take the dye badly and be impure in color. And why is that? Because the cloth was not clean. So too, monks, when the mind is defiled,[1] an unhappy destination [in a future existence] may be expected.

"Monks, suppose a cloth were clean and bright, and a dyer dipped it in some dye or other, whether blue or yellow or red or pink, it would take the dye well and be pure in color. And why is that? Because the cloth was clean. So too, monks, when the mind is undefiled, a happy destination [in a future existence] may be expected.

3. "And what, monks, are the defilements of the mind?[2] (1) Covetousness and unrighteous greed are a defilement of the mind; (2) ill will is a defilement of the mind; (3) anger is a defilement of the mind; (4) hostility...(5) denigration...(6) domineering...(7) envy...(8) jealousy...(9) hypocrisy...(10) fraud...(11) obstinacy...(12) presumption...(13) conceit...(14) arrogance...(15) vanity...(16) negligence is a defilement of the mind.[3]

4. "Knowing, monks, covetousness and unrighteous greed to be a defilement of the mind, the monk abandons them.[4] Knowing ill will to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing anger to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing hostility to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing denigration to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing domineering to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing envy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing jealousy to be a defilement of the mind, he

abandons it. Knowing hypocrisy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing fraud to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing obstinacy to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing presumption to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing conceit to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing arrogance to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing vanity to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it. Knowing negligence to be a defilement of the mind, he abandons it.

5. "When in the monk who thus knows that covetousness and unrighteous greed are a defilement of the mind, this covetousness and unrighteous greed have been abandoned; when in him who thus knows that ill will is a defilement of the mind, this ill will has been abandoned;...when in him who thus knows that negligence is a defilement of the mind, this negligence has been abandoned -- [5]

6. -- he thereupon gains unwavering confidence in the Buddha [6] thus: 'Thus indeed is the Blessed One: he is accomplished, fully enlightened, endowed with clear vision and virtuous conduct, sublime, knower of the worlds, the incomparable guide of men who are tractable, the teacher of gods and men, enlightened and blessed.'

7. -- he gains unwavering confidence in the Dhamma thus: 'Well proclaimed by the Blessed One is the Dhamma, realizable here and now, possessed of immediate result, bidding you come and see, accessible and knowable individually by the wise.'

8. -- he gains unwavering confidence in the Sangha thus: 'The Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples has entered on the good way, has entered on the straight way, has entered on the true way, has entered on the proper way; that is to say, the four pairs of men, the eight types of persons; this Sangha of the Blessed One's disciples is worthy of gifts, worthy of hospitality, worthy of offerings, worthy of reverential salutation, the incomparable field of merit for the world.'

9. "When he has given up, renounced, let go, abandoned and relinquished the defilements in part,[7] he knows: 'I am endowed with unwavering confidence in the Buddha...in the Dhamma...in



the Sangha; and he gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma,[8] gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy is born in him; being joyous in mind, his body becomes tranquil; his body being tranquil, he feels happiness; and the mind of him who is happy becomes concentrated.[9]

10. "He knows: 'I have given up, renounced, let go, abandoned and relinquished the defilements in part'; and he gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma, gains gladness connected with the Dhamma. When he is gladdened, joy is born in him; being joyous in mind, his body becomes tranquil; when his body is tranquil, he feels happiness; and the mind of him who is happy becomes concentrated.

11. "If, monks, a monk of such virtue, such concentration and such wisdom [10] eats alms-food consisting of choice hill-rice together with various sauces and curries, even that will be no obstacle for him. [11]

"Just as cloth that is stained and dirty becomes clean and bright with the help of pure water, or just as gold becomes clean and bright with the help of a furnace, so too, if a monk of such virtue, such concentration and such wisdom eats alms-food consisting of choice hill-rice together with various sauces and curries, even that will be no obstacle for him.

12. "He abides, having suffused with a mind of loving-kindness [12] one direction of the world, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides suffusing the entire universe with loving-kindness, with a mind grown great, lofty, boundless and free from enmity and ill will.

"He abides, having suffused with a mind of compassion...of sympathetic joy...of equanimity one direction of the world, likewise the second, likewise the third, likewise the fourth, and so above, below, around and everywhere, and to all as to himself; he abides suffusing the entire universe with equanimity, with a mind grown great, lofty, boundless and free from enmity and ill will.

13. "He understands what exists, what is low, what is excellent,[13] and what escape there is from this whole field of perception.[14]

14. "When he knows and sees [15] in this way, his mind becomes liberated from the canker of sensual desire, liberated from the canker of becoming, liberated from the canker of ignorance.[16] When liberated, there is knowledge: 'It is liberated'; and he knows: 'Birth is exhausted, the life of purity has been lived, the task is done, there is no more of this to come.' Such a monk is called 'one bathed with the inner bathing.'"[17]

15. Now at that time the Brahmin Sundarika Bharadvaja [18] was seated not far from the Blessed One, and he spoke to the Blessed One thus: "But does Master Gotama go to the Bahuka River to bathe?"

"What good, Brahmin, is the Bahuka River? What can the Bahuka River do?"

"Truly, Master Gotama, many people believe that the Bahuka River gives purification, many people believe that the Bahuka River gives merit. For in the Bahuka River many people wash away the evil deeds they have done."

16. Then the Blessed One addressed the Brahmin Sundarika Bharadvaja in these stanzas:[19]

Bahuka and Adhikakka,[20]  
Gaya and Sundarika,  
Payaga and Sarassati,  
And the stream Bahumati --  
A fool may there forever bathe, Yet will not purify his black  
deeds.

What can Sundarika bring to pass?  
What can the Payaga and the Bahuka?  
They cannot purify an evil-doer,  
A man performing brutal and cruel acts.

One pure in heart has evermore  
The Feast of Cleansing [21] and the Holy Day; [22]

One pure in heart who does good deeds  
Has his observances perfect for all times.

It is here, O Brahmin, that you should bathe [23]  
To make yourself a safe refuge for all beings.  
And if you speak no untruth,  
Nor work any harm for breathing things,

Nor take what is not offered,  
With faith and with no avarice,  
To Gaya gone, what would it do for you?  
Let any well your Gaya be!

17. When this was said, the Brahmin Sundarika Bharadvaja spoke thus:

"Magnificent, Master Gotama! Magnificent, Master Gotama! The Dhamma has been made clear in many ways by Master Gotama, as though he were righting the overthrown, revealing the hidden, showing the way to one who is lost, or holding up a lamp in the dark for those with eyesight to see forms.

18. "I go to Master Gotama for refuge, and to the Dhamma, and to the Sangha. May I receive the first ordination of going forth under Master Gotama, may I receive the full admission!

19. And the Brahmin Sundarika Bharadvaja received the first ordination of going forth under the Blessed One, and he received the full admission. And not long after his full admission, dwelling alone, secluded, diligent, ardent and resolute, the venerable Bharadvaja by his own realization understood and attained in this very life that supreme goal of the pure life, for which men of good family go forth from home life into homelessness. And he had direct knowledge thus: "Birth is exhausted, the pure life has been lived, the task is done, there is no more of this to come."

And the venerable Bharadvaja became one of the Arhats.

## Footnotes:

1. "So too, monks, if the mind is defiled..." Comy: "It may be asked why the Buddha had given this simile of the soiled cloth. He did so to show that effort brings great results. A cloth soiled by dirt that is adventitious (i.e., comes from outside; agantukehi malehi), if it is washed can again become clean because of the cloth's natural purity. But in the case of what is naturally black, as for instance (black) goat's fur, any effort (of washing it) will be in vain. Similarly, the mind too is soiled by adventitious defilements (agantukehi kilesehi). But originally, at the phases of rebirth(-consciousness) and the (sub-conscious) life-continuum, it is pure throughout (pakatiya pana sakale pi patisandhi-bhavanga-vare pandaram eva). As it was said (by the Enlightened One): 'This mind, monks, is luminous, but it becomes soiled by adventitious defilements'. But by cleansing it one can make it more luminous, and effort therein is not in vain."

2. "Defilements of the mind" (cittassa upakkilesa). Comy.: "When explaining the mental defilements, why did the Blessed One mention greed first? Because it arises first. For with all beings wherever they arise, up to the level of the (Brahma heaven of the) Pure Abodes, it is first greed that arises by way of lust for existence (bhava-nikanti). Then the other defilements will appear, being produced according to circumstances. The defilements of mind, however, are not limited to the sixteen mentioned in this discourse. But one should understand that, by indicating here the method, all defilements are included." Sub. Comy. mentions the following additional defilements: fear, cowardice, shamelessness and lack of scruples, insatiability, evil ambitions, etc.

3. The Sixteen Defilements of Mind:

1. abhijjha-visama-lobha, covetousness and unrighteous greed
2. byapada, ill will
3. kodha, anger
4. upanaha, hostility or malice
5. makkha, denigration or detraction; contempt
6. palasa, domineering or presumption
7. issa, envy
8. macchhariya, jealousy, or avarice; selfishness

9. maya, hypocrisy or deceit
10. satheyya, fraud
11. thambha, obstinacy, obduracy
12. sarambha, presumption or rivalry; impetuosity
13. mana, conceit
14. atimana, arrogance, haughtiness
15. mada, vanity or pride
16. pamada, negligence or heedlessness; in social behavior, this leads to lack of consideration.

The defilements (3) to (16) appear frequently as a group in the discourses, e.g., in Majjh. 3; while in Majjh. 8 (reproduced in this publication) No. 15 is omitted. A list of seventeen defilements appears regularly in each last discourse of Books 3 to 11 of the Anguttara Nikáya, which carry the title Ragapeyyala, the Repetitive Text on Greed (etc.). In these texts of the Anguttara Nikáya, the first two defilements in the above list are called greed (lobha) and hate (dosa), to which delusion (moha) is added; all the fourteen other defilements are identical with the above list.

4. "Knowing covetousness and unrighteous greed to be a defilement of the mind, the monk abandons them."

Knowing (viditva). Sub.Comy.: "Having known it either through the incipient wisdom (pubbabhaga-paññá of the worldling, i.e., before attaining to Stream-entry) or through the wisdom of the two lower paths (Stream-entry and Once-returning). He knows the defilements as to their nature, cause, cessation and means of effecting cessation." This application of the formula of the Four Noble Truths to the defilements deserves close attention.

Abandons them (pajahati). Comy.: "He abandons the respective defilement through (his attainment of) the noble path where there is 'abandoning by eradication' (samucchedappahana-vasena ariya-maggena)," which according to Sub.Comy. is the "final abandoning" (accantappahana). Before the attainment of the noble paths, all "abandoning" of defilements is of a temporary nature. See Nyanatiloka Thera, Buddhist Dictionary, s.v. pahana.

According to the Comy., the sixteen defilements are finally abandoned by the noble paths (or stages of sanctity) in the following order:

"By the path of Stream-entry (sotapatti-magga) are abandoned: (5) denigration, (6) domineering, (7) envy, (8) jealousy, (9) hypocrisy, (10) fraud.

"By the path of Non-returning (anagami-magga): (2) ill will, (3) anger, (4) malice, (16) negligence.

"By the path of Arhat-ship (arahatta-magga): (1) covetousness and unrighteous greed, (11) obstinacy, (12) presumption, (13) conceit, (14) arrogance, (15) vanity."

If, in the last group of terms, covetousness is taken in a restricted sense as referring only to the craving for the five sense objects, it is finally abandoned by the path of Non-returning; and this is according to Comy. the meaning intended here. All greed, however, including the hankering after fine material and immaterial existence, is eradicated only on the path of Arhat-ship; hence the classification under the latter in the list above.

Comy. repeatedly stresses that wherever in our text "abandoning" is mentioned, reference is to the Non-returner (anagami); for also in the case of defilements overcome on Stream-entry (see above), the states of mind which produce those defilements are eliminated only by the path of Non-returning.

5. Comy. emphasizes the connection of this paragraph with the following, saying that the statements on each of the sixteen defilements should be connected with the next' paragraphs, e.g., "when in him...ill will has been abandoned, he thereupon gains unwavering confidence..." Hence the grammatical construction of the original Pali passage -- though rather awkward in English - has been retained in this translation.

The disciple's direct experience of being freed of this or that defilement becomes for him a living test of his former still imperfectly proven trust in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha.

Now this trust has become a firm conviction, an unshakable confidence, based on experience.

6. "Unwavering confidence" (aveccappasada). Comy.: "unshakable and immutable trust." Confidence of that nature is not attained before Stream-entry because only at that stage is the fetter of skeptical doubt (vicikiccha-samyojana) finally eliminated. Unwavering confidence in the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha are three of four characteristic qualities of a Stream-winner (sotapañña angani); the fourth is unbroken morality, which may be taken to be implied in Sec. 9 of our discourse referring to the relinquishment of the defilements.

7. "When he has given up...(the defilements) in part" (yatodhi): that is, to the extent to which the respective defilements are eliminated by the paths of sanctitude. Odhi: limit, limitation. yatodhi = yato odhi; another reading: yathodhi = yatha-odhi.

Bhikkhu Ñanamoli translates this paragraph thus: "And whatever (from among those imperfections) has, according to the limitation (set by whichever of the first three paths he has attained), been given up, has been (forever) dropped, let go, abandoned, relinquished. "

In the Vibhanga of the Abhidhamma Pitaka, we read in the chapter Jhana-vibhanga: "He is a Bhikkhu because he has abandoned defilements limitedly; or because he has abandoned defilements without limitation" (odhiso kilesanam pahana Bhikkhu; anodhiso kilesanam pahana Bhikkhu).

8. "Gains enthusiasm for the goal, gains enthusiasm for the Dhamma" (labhati atthavedam labhati dhammavedam).

Comy.: "When reviewing (paccavekkhato)\* the abandonment of the defilements and his unwavering confidence, strong joy arises in the Non-returner in the thought: 'Such and such defilements are now abandoned by me.' It is like the joy of a king who learns that a rebellion in the frontier region has been quelled."

\*["Reviewing" (paccavekkhana) is a commentarial term, but is derived, apart from actual meditative experience, from close scrutiny of Sutta passages like our present one. "Reviewing"

may occur immediately after attainment of the jhanas or the paths and fruitions (e.g., the last sentence of Sec. 14), or as a reviewing of the defilements abandoned (as in Sec. 10) or those remaining. See *Visuddhimagga*, transl. by Ñānamoli, p. 789.]

Enthusiasm (*veda*). According to Comy., the word *veda* occurs in the Pali texts with three connotations: 1. (Vedic) scripture (*gantha*), 2. joy (*somanassa*), 3. knowledge (*ñāna*). "Here it signifies joy and the knowledge connected with that joy."

*Attha* (rendered here as "goal") and *Dhamma* are a frequently occurring pair of terms obviously intended to supplement each other. Often they mean letter (*Dhamma*) and spirit (or meaning: *attha*) of the doctrine; but this hardly fits here. These two terms occur also among the four kinds of analytic knowledge (*patisambhida-ñāna*; or knowledge of doctrinal discrimination). *Attha-patisambhida* is explained as the discriminative knowledge of "the result of a cause"; while *dhamma-patisambhida* is concerned with the cause or condition.

The Comy. applies now the same interpretation to our present textual passage, saying: "*Attha-veda* is the enthusiasm arisen in him who reviews his unwavering confidence; *dhamma-veda* is the enthusiasm arisen in him who reviews 'the abandonment of the defilement in part,' which is the cause of that unwavering confidence..." Hence the two terms refer to "the joy that has as its object the unwavering confidence in the Buddha, and so forth; and the joy inherent in the knowledge (of the abandonment; *somanassa-maya ñāna*)."

Our rendering of *attha* (Skt.:*artha*) b; "goal" is supported by Comy.: "The unwavering confidence is called *attha* because it has to be reached (*araniyato*), i.e., to be approached (*upagantabbato*)," in the sense of a limited goal, or resultant blessing.

Cf. Ang 5:10: *tasmim dhamme attha-patisamvedi ca hoti dhammapatisamvedi ca; tassa atthapatisamvedino dhammapatisamvedino pamojjaṃ jayati...* This text continues, as our present discourse does, with the arising of joy (or rapture; *piti*) from gladness (*pamojja*). *Attha* and *Dhamma* refer here to the meaning and text of the Buddha word.



9. The Pali equivalents for this series of terms\* are: 1. pamojja (gladness), 2. piti (joy or rapture), 3. passaddhi (tranquility), 4. sukha (happiness), 5. Samadhi (concentration). Nos. 2, 3, 5 are factors of enlightenment (bojjhanga). The function of tranquility is here the calming of any slight bodily and mental unrest resulting from rapturous joy, and so transforming the latter into serene happiness followed by meditative absorption. This frequently occurring passage illustrates the importance given in the Buddha's Teaching to happiness as a necessary condition for the attainment of concentration and of spiritual progress in general.

\* [Here the noun forms are given, while the original has, in some cases, the verbal forms.]

10. "Of such virtue, such concentration, such wisdom" (evam-silo evam-dhammo evam-pañño). Comy.: "This refers to the (three) parts (of the Noble Eightfold Path), namely, virtue, concentration and wisdom (sila-, samadhi-, pañña-kkhandha), associated (here) with the path of Non-returning." Comy. merely refers dhammo to the path-category of concentration (samadhi-kkhandha). Sub.Comy. quotes a parallel passage "evam-dhamma ti Bhagavanto ahesum," found in the Mahapadana Sutta (Digha 14), the Acchariya-abbhutadhamma Sutta (Majjh. 123), and the Nalanda Sutta of the Satipatthana Samyutta. The Digha Comy. explains samadhi-pakkha-dhamma as "mental states belonging to concentration."

11. "No obstacle," i.e., for the attainment of the path and fruition (of Arhat-ship), says Comy. For a Non-returner who has eliminated the fetter of sense-desire, there is no attachment to tasty food.

12. "With a mind of Loving-kindness" (metta-sahagatena cetasa). This, and the following, refer to the four Divine Abidings (brahma-vihara). On these see Wheel Nos. 6 and 7.

13. "He understands what exists, what is low, what is excellent" (so 'atthi idam atthi hinam atthi panitam...' pajanati).

Comy.: "Having shown the Non-returner's meditation on the Divine Abidings, the Blessed One now shows his practice of

insight (vipassana), aiming at Arhat-ship; and he indicates his attainment of it by the words: 'He understands what exists,' etc. This Non-returner, having arisen from the meditation on any of the four Divine Abidings, defines as 'mind' (nama) those very states of the Divine Abidings and the mental factors associated with them. He then defines as 'matter' (rupa) the heart base (hadaya-vatthu) being the physical support (of mind) and the four elements which, on their part, are the support of the heart base. In that way he defines as 'matter' the elements and corporeal phenomena derived from them (bhutupadayadhamma). When defining 'mind and matter' in this manner, 'he understands what exists' (atthi idan'ti; lit. 'There is this'). Hereby a definition of the truth of suffering has been given."

"Then, in comprehending the origin of that suffering, he understands 'what is low.' Thereby the truth of the origin of suffering has been defined. Further, by investigating the means of giving it up, he understands 'what is excellent. Hereby the truth of the path has been defined."

14. "...and what escape there is from this (whole) field of perception" (atthi uttari imassa saññaga-tassa nissaranam). Comy.: "He knows: 'There is Nibbana as an escape beyond that perception of the Divine Abidings attained by me.' Hereby the truth of cessation has been defined."

15. Comy.: "When, by insight-wisdom (vipassana), he thus knows the Four Noble Truths in these four ways (i.e., 'what exists,' etc.); and when he thus sees them by path-wisdom (magga-pañña).

16. Kamasava bhavasava avijjasava. The mention of liberation from the cankers (asava) indicates the monk's attainment of Arhat-ship, which is also called "exhaustion of the cankers" (asavakkhaya).

17. "Bathed with the inner bathing" (sinato antarena sinanena). According to the Comy., the Buddha used this phrase to rouse the attention of the brahmin Sundarika Bharadvaja, who was in the assembly and who believed in purification by ritual bathing. The Buddha foresaw that if he were to speak in praise of

"purification by bathing," the Brahmin would feel inspired to take ordination under him and finally attain to Arhat-ship.

18. Bharadvaja was the clan name of the Brahmin. Sundarika was the name of the river to which that Brahmin ascribed purifying power. See also the Sundarika-Bharadvaja Sutta in the Sutta Nipata.

19. Based on Bhikkhu Ñānamoli's version, with a few alterations.

20. Three are fords; the other four are rivers.

21. The text has Phaggu which is a day of brahminic purification in the month of Phagguna (February-March). Ñānamoli translates it as "Feast of Spring."

22. Uposatha.

23. "It is here, O Brahmin, that you should bathe." Comy.: i.e., in the Buddha's Dispensation, in the waters of the Noble Eightfold Path.

In the Psalms of the Sisters (Therīgāthā), the nun Punnika speaks to a Brahmin as follows:

Nay now, who, ignorant to the ignorant,  
Hath told thee this: that water-baptism  
From evil kamma can avail to free?  
Why then the fishes and the tortoises,  
The frogs, the water snake, the crocodiles  
And all that haunt the water straight to heaven  
Will go. Yea, all who evil kamma work --  
Butchers of sheep and swine, fishers, hunters of game,  
Thieves, murderers -- so they but splash themselves  
With water, are from evil kamma free!

-- Transl. by C. A. F. Rhys Davids, from *Early Buddhist Poetry*,  
ed. I. B. Horner Publ. by Ananda Semage, Colombo 11

# Vedana Sutta

## Feeling

At Savatthi. "Monks, feeling born of eye-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Feeling born of ear-contact... Feeling born of nose-contact... Feeling born of tongue-contact... Feeling born of body-contact... Feeling born of intellect-contact is inconstant, changeable, alterable.

"One who has conviction & belief that these phenomena are this way is called a faith-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry shades. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

"One who, after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way is called a Dhamma-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry shades. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

"One who knows and sees that these phenomena are this way is called a stream-enterer, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening."

# Vekhanassa Sutta

## Advice to the Wandering Ascetic Vekhanassa

I heard thus:

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. Then the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa approached the Blessed One, exchanged friendly greetings and stood on a side and uttered a solemn utterance. 'This is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, why do you say, this is the most excellent appearance? What is that most excellent appearance?'

'Good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, how is that appearance, which has no other appearance more noble and exalted than that.'

'Good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance.'

'Kaccayana, does it extend lengthwise?' 'Good Gotama, as there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is said to be the highest appearance, and it cannot be pointed out.'

'Kaccaayana, it is like this. There is a man who says, I desire and love the most beautiful woman in this state: Then he is asked Good man, the most beautiful woman you desire, is she of warrior clan, Brahmin clan, householder clan or from an out caste clan? When asked, he would say No. Then he is asked. Good man, the most beautiful woman you desire and love, do you know, of what clan she is. do you know whether she is tall, short or medium. Do you know whether she is dark, fair or brown? Do you know in which village, hamlet or town she lives? When asked he says, No. Then he is told, good man, do you desire and love someone whom you do not know and have not seen? Then he would say, yes. 'What do you think Kaccaayana. Doesn't this talk turn out to be stupid talk?'

‘Good Gotama, when that is so, that man’s talk turns out to be stupid talk.’

‘In the same manner Kaccaayana, you say, good Gotama, when there is no other appearance more noble and exalted than that, it is the most excellent appearance, and that appearance you do not point out.’

‘Good Gotama, it is like a lapis gem of good birth, with eight facets, well completed and when placed in the orange colored blanket, shines, emits heat and illuminates. The self would be of that appearance, healthy after death.’

‘Kaccayana, what do you think, of these two, the lapis gem of good birth, with eight facets, well completed and placed in the orange colored blanket, and the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night, which give the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances the more excellent appearance would be the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the worms and fire flies in the darkness of the night and a lighted oil lamp, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the lighted oil lamp.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the lighted oil lamp for the darkness of the night, and a large mass of fire, for the darkness of the night, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be a large mass of fire for the darkness.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, a large mass of fire for the darkness, and the morning star, in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the morning star in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear.’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the morning star in the last watch of the night, when the sky is clear, and the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent appearance would be the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds?’

‘Kaccayana, of these two, the full moon at mid night when the sky is clear without clouds and the sun in the sky at mid day in Summer, which gives the more excellent appearance in shining, emitting heat and illuminating?’

‘Good Gotama, of these two appearances, the more excellent would be the sun in the sky at mid day in Summer time.’

‘Kaccayana, the excellence of many of these gods surpasses the excellence of the moon and sun, I know them, yet I would not tell whose appearance is more noble and more excellent than the other’s appearance. Yet, you say, this appearance, which is inferior even to the appearance of the worms and fireflies, is the most noble and excellent appearance. That too you would not point out..’..

‘Kaccayana, five are the strands of sensual pleasures. What are the five? Pleasing agreeable forms cognizable by eye consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires. Pleasing agreeable sounds, --Pleasing agreeable smells, -Pleasing agreeable tastes, --- Pleasing agreeable touches cognizable by body consciousness arousing fondness and sensual desires. Kaccayana, these are the five strands of sensual pleasures on account of them arises pleasantness and pleasure. Thus from the senses is sensual pleasures, of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure is declared’. [1]

When this was said the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa said thus to the Blessed One-‘Indeed wonderful are the words of good

Gotama, from the senses is sense pleasures, of sensual pleasures the highest pleasure is told by me..’.

‘Kaccayana, you of another faith, another liking, another yoking, without knowing the training, would not know the senses, the sense pleasures, and of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure. Kaccayana, those perfected Bhikkhus, desires destroyed, lived the holy life, done what should be done, put down the weight, have attained the highest good, have destroyed the desires ‘to be’ and knowing rightly released, would know the senses, the sensual pleasures, and the highest sensual pleasure.’

When this was said the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa was angry and displeased and cursed and reviled the Blessed One. ‘It is the recluse Gotama who says evil words. In this manner certain recluses and Brahmins, not knowing the beginning and not seeing the end acknowledge birth is destroyed. The holy life is lived, what should be done is done; there is nothing more to wish. These their words are empty and foolish.’

‘There Kaccayana, those recluses and Brahmins who not knowing the beginning and not seeing the end, acknowledge birth is destroyed, the holy life is lived, what should be done is done, there is nothing more to wish. They should be rightfully blamed. Yet Kaccaayana, leave alone the beginning and the end. Let any wise man come, not crafty and fraudulent, is straightforward I will instruct him and advise him. If he follows the method as instructed, before long he himself will rightfully know. Thus he will be rightfully released from this bond of ignorance. Kaccayana, like a toddler who would have strings tied on his arms, legs and the neck and when he is grown up and his mental faculties are mature those bonds would be broken and he would know. I am free of those bonds. In the same manner let any wise man come, who is not crafty and fraudulent, is straightforward, I will instruct him and advise him, and if he follows the method as instructed, before long he himself will rightfully know. Thus he will be rightfully released from this bond of ignorance.’



When this was said, the wandering ascetic Vekhanassa said thus: 'Good Gotama, now I understand. It is as though something over turned is reinstalled. As something covered is made manifest. It is as though the path is shown to someone who has lost his way. As though an oil lamp is lighted for those who have sight to see forms in the darkness. In various ways, the Teaching is explained, by good Gotama.. Now I take refuge in good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of Bhikkhus. May I be remembered as a lay disciple who has taken refuge from today until I die..

### **Footnote:**

[1] Of sensual pleasures the highest sensual pleasure is declared. 'kaamasukhaa kaamagga sukha.m tattha aggam akkhaayatiti' This is explained in many a Sutta as the sensual pleasures enjoyed by a man seeing a young girl of warrior clan, Brahmin clan or householder clan, of about the age of fifteen or sixteen years. Seeing her, touching her etcetera.

# Veranjaka Sutta

## The Discourse to the Householders of Veranjaka

I heard thus:

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. At that time the Brahmin householders of Veranjaka were resident in Savatthi, having come to Savatthi on some purpose. They heard that the good recluse Gotama, the son of the Sakyas, who had gone forth from the clan of the Sakyas was abiding in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. Such fame had spread about him, the Blessed One is perfect, rightfully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, is well gone. He is knower of worlds, and is the incomparable tamer of those to be tamed. He is Teacher of gods and men, is enlightened and blessed. To this world of gods and men, together with its Maras, Brahmas, the community of recluses, Brahmins, gods and men, he declares a teaching by himself known and realized. It is good at the beginning, in the middle and at the end. It is full of meaning even in the letters and proclaims the pure and complete, holy life. It is good to see such noble ones. Then the Brahmin householders of Veranja approached the Blessed One. Some worshipped the Blessed One, some exchanged friendly greetings with the Blessed One, some clasped hands towards the Blessed One, some announced their clan and name, and some were silent. They all sat on a side. Then those Brahmin householders said thus to the Blessed One: Good Gotama, why do some beings go to loss, to hell after death and why do some others go to increase and be born in heaven, after death? O! Householders, owing to misbehaving and not living according to the Teaching some go to loss go to hell and others conducting themselves well and living according to the Teaching go to increase and are born in heaven, after death...We do not understand this short exposition of good Gotama. Good if this short exposition be explained to us. The Blessed One said, then householders listen and attend carefully I will explain.

O! Householders, threefold is wrong conduct by body, fourfold is wrong conduct by words, and threefold is wrong conduct by mind. Householders, what is the threefold bodily wrong conduct? Here, a certain one is cruel, destroys living things, is with bloody hands. Engaged in destroying living things without compassion. From village or forest takes others' possessions stealthily. Takes what is not given. Misbehaves in sexuality, misbehaving with those protected by father, mother, mother and father, by brother, sister, relations, with those with a husband, becoming liable to punishment, or even those garlanded and made to promise. Householders this is the threefold bodily wrong conduct. Householders, what is the fourfold verbal wrong conduct? Here, householders, a certain one tells lies, in an assembly, at a gathering, amidst relations, gone to the guild, or in the presence of the royal family. Called upon to stand witness and asked to tell what he knows, not knowing would say I know. Knowing would say I do not know. Not seeing would say I saw, seeing would say, I did not see. Thus for his benefit, for another's benefit, or for some small gain he would tell lies with awareness. Would slander, hearing here would tell it elsewhere to make a split here. Hearing elsewhere would tell it here to make a split there. Thus he disunites the united, fond of disuniting talks words to disunite. Would talk roughly, saying insolent words that are sharp and cursing. Words bordering on anger and not conducive to concentration. Would say frivolous, untimely, untruthful words, not in keeping with the Teaching and the discipline. Words that could not be treasured. Householders, this is the fourfold verbal wrong conduct. Householders, what is the threefold mental wrong conduct? Here, householders, one covets others' possessions, thinks may those things be mine. Is angry with a defiled mind, thinks may they come to destruction and not exist. Is with wrong, perverted view that there are no results for a gift and sacrifice. There are no results for pure and impure actions. There is no this world, no other world, no mother, father, no spontaneously arisen beings and no recluses and Brahmins who have come to the right path and by themselves realizing declare this world and the other world. Householders, this is the threefold mental wrong conduct O! householders, on account of this wrong conduct and not living in accordance with the Teaching, a certain one after death is born in loss and go to hell.

O! householders, right conduct by body is threefold, by words fourfold and by mind threefold. Householders, what is the threefold right bodily conduct? Here, a certain one abstains from destroying living things, throwing away stick and weapon ashamed abides compassionate to all living things In village or forest does not take what is not given, the possessions of others. Does not misbehave in sexuality, not misbehaving with those protected by father, mother, mother and father, brother, sister, relations, or with those with a husband, becoming liable to punishment, or even those garlanded and made to promise. Householders this is the threefold right conduct by body. Householders, what is the fourfold right conduct by words?. Here, householders, a certain one does not tell lies. In an assembly, a gathering, in the midst of relations, gone to the guild, or in the presence of the royal family, called upon to stand witness, when asked to tell what he knows, not knowing would say, I do not know. Knowing would say I know. Not seeing would say I did not see, and seeing would say, I saw. Thus for his own good or for another's or for some small gain he would not tell lies with awareness. Would not slander, hearing here would not tell it elsewhere to make a split here. Hearing elsewhere would not tell it here to make a split there. Thus does not disunite the united, fond of uniting would talk words to unite. Would not talk roughly, saying polite loving words going straight to the heart, words pleasing to the populace at large. Not talking frivolously, would talk words that are timely, truthful and in accordance with the Teaching and the discipline. Words that could be treasured. Householders, this is the fourfold right conduct in words. Householders, what is the threefold mental good conduct? Here, householders, one does not covet others' possessions, thinking may they be mine. Is not angry and not with a defiled mind, thinking may these beings be well and happy. Is with right view not perverted. There are results for a gift and sacrifice There are results for pure and impure actions. There is this world, and the other world There is mother, father, and spontaneously arisen beings. In this world there are recluses and Brahmins who have come to the right path and by themselves realizing declare this world and the other world. Householders, this is the threefold mental right conduct. On account of this right conduct and living according to the Teaching, a certain one after death is born in increase in heaven.

Householders, if someone living in right conduct, according to the Teaching, were to wish, may I be born with the warrior householders after death, there is a possibility that he will be born with the warrior householders, after death. What is the reason: It happens to him living in right conduct, according to the Teaching.. –may I be born with the Brahmin householders after death,--with the householder stock after death, There is a possibility, that he will be born with the householder stock after death. .Householders, if someone living in right conduct, according to the Teaching, were to wish, may I be born with the retinue of the protecting gods – with the retinue of the gods of the thirty three,--with the Yama gods,--with the gods of happiness, --with the gods attached to creating, -- with the gods attached to creating others, with gods holding Brahma bodies, -- with the gods of luster,--with gods of limited luster,--with gods of limitless luster,--with the radiant gods,-- with the gods of pleasantness,--with the gods of limited pleasantness,-- with the gods of limitless pleasantness,--with the gods full of happiness,-- with the gods wielding power in space,--with the gods of non-destruction, --with the dissatisfied gods,--with the gods with insight,--with the gods of the highest heaven,--with the retinue of gods, in the sphere of space, in the sphere of consciousness, in the sphere of neither -perception -nor -non -perception, after death, there is a possibility, that they will be born, with the retinue of the gods in the sphere of neither-perception-nor-non-perception. What is the reason? It happens to those living in right conduct, according to the Teaching. If someone living in right conduct according to the Teaching were to wish, may I destroying desires, the mind released and released through wisdom, here and now realize and abide, there is a possibility that he should, destroying desires, the mind released and released through wisdom, here and now will realize and abide. What is the reason: It happens to those living in right conduct

When this was said, the Brahmin householders of Sala said thus to the Blessed One. Now we understand venerable sir. It is as though good Gotama has reinstated something that was over turned. Made manifest something that was covered. As though the path was told to those who have lost their way. As though an oil lamp was lighted for those who have sight to see forms. Thus in many ways the Teaching is explained. Now we take refuge in

good Gotama, in the Teaching and the Community of Bhikkhus.  
We are disciples who have taken refuge in good Gotama, from  
today until life ends.

# Vijaya Sutta

## Victory

Whether walking, standing,  
sitting, or lying down,  
it flexes and stretches:  
this is the body's movement.  
Joined together with tendons and bones,  
plastered over with muscle and skin,  
hidden by complexion,  
the body isn't seen  
for what it is:  
filled with intestines, filled with stomach,  
with the lump of the liver,  
bladder, lungs, heart,  
kidneys, spleen,  
mucus, sweat, saliva, fat,  
blood, synovial fluid, bile, and oil.  
On top of that,  
in nine streams,  
filth is always flowing from it:  
from the eyes : eye secretions,  
from the ears : ear secretions,  
from the nose : mucus,  
from the mouth : now vomit,  
now phlegm,  
now bile.  
from the body : beads of sweat.  
And on top of that,  
its hollow head is filled with brains.

The fool, beset by ignorance,  
thinks it beautiful.  
but when it lies dead,  
swollen, livid,  
cast away in a charnel ground,  
even relatives don't care for it.  
Dogs feed on it,  
jackals, wolves, and worms.

Crows and vultures feed on it,  
along with any other animals there.

Having heard the Awakened One's words,  
the discerning monk  
comprehends, for he sees it  
for what it is:

"As this is, so is that.

As that, so this."

Within and without,  
he should let desire for the body  
fade away.

With desire and passion faded away,  
the discerning monk arrives here:  
at the deathless,  
the calm,  
the undying state  
of Unbinding.

This two-footed, filthy, evil-smelling,  
filled-with-various-carcasses,  
oozing-out-here-and-there body:  
Whoever would think,  
on the basis of a body like this,  
to exalt himself or disparage another:

What is that  
if not blindness?



# VIMALAKIRTI NIRDESA SUTRA

## 1. Purification of the Buddha-Field

Reverence to all Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, Aryasravakas, and Pratyekabuddhas, in the past, the present, and the future.

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Lord Buddha was in residence in the garden of Amrapali, in the city of Vaisali, attended by a great gathering. Of Bhikkhus there were eight thousand, all saints. They were free from impurities and afflictions, and all had attained self-mastery. Their minds were entirely liberated by perfect knowledge. They were calm and dignified, like royal elephants. They had accomplished their work, done what they had to do, cast off their burdens, attained their goals, and totally destroyed the bonds of existence. They all had attained the utmost perfection of every form of mind control.

Of bodhisattvas there were thirty-two thousand, great spiritual heroes who were universally acclaimed. They were dedicated through the penetrating activity of their great super-knowledge's and were sustained by the grace of the Buddha. Guardians of the city of Dharma, they upheld the true doctrine, and their great teachings resounded like the lion's roar throughout the ten directions.

Without having to be asked, they were the natural spiritual benefactors of all living beings. They maintained unbroken the succession of the Three Jewels, conquering devils and foes and overwhelming all critics.

Their mindfulness, intelligence, realization, meditation, incantation, and eloquence all were perfected. They had attained the intuitive tolerance of the ultimate incomprehensibility of all things. They turned the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. They were stamped with the insignia of sign-less-ness. They were expert in knowing the spiritual faculties of all living beings. They were brave with the confidence that overawes all assemblies. They had gathered the great stores of merit and of wisdom, and

their bodies, beautiful without ornaments, were adorned with all the auspicious signs and marks.

They were exalted in fame and glory, like the lofty summit of Mount Sumeru. Their high resolve as hard as diamond, unbreakable in their faith in Buddha, Dharma and Sangha, they showered forth the rain of ambrosia that is released by the light rays of the jewel of the Dharma, which shines everywhere.

Their voices were perfect in diction and resonance, and versatile in speaking all languages. They had penetrated the profound principle of relativity and had destroyed the persistence of the instinctual mental habits underlying all convictions concerning finitude and infinitude. They spoke fearlessly, like lions, sounding the thunder of the magnificent teaching. Unequaled, they surpassed all measure. They were the best captains for the voyage of discovery of the treasures of the Dharma, the stores of merit and wisdom. They were expert in the way of the Dharma, which is straight, peaceful, subtle, gentle, hard to see, and difficult to realize.

They were endowed with the wisdom that is able to understand the thoughts of living beings, as well as their comings and goings. They had been consecrated with the anointment of the peerless gnosis (intuitive knowledge) of the Buddha. With their high resolve, they approached the ten powers, the four fearlessnesses, and the eighteen special qualities of the Buddha.

They had crossed the terrifying abyss of the bad migrations, and yet they assumed reincarnation voluntarily in all migrations for the sake of disciplining living beings. Great Kings of medicine, understanding all the sicknesses of passions, they could apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately. They were inexhaustible mines of limitless virtues, and they glorified innumerable Buddha-fields with the splendor of these virtues. They conferred great benefit when seen, heard, or even approached. Were one to extol them for innumerable hundreds of thousands of myriads of aeons, one still could not exhaust their mighty flood of virtues.

These bodhisattvas were named: Samadarsana, Asamadarsana, Samadhivikurvitaraja, harmesvara, Dharmaketu, Prabhaketu,

Prabhavyuha, Ratnavyuha, Mahavyuha, Pratibhanakuta, Ratnakuta, Ratnapani, Ratnamudrahasta, Nityapralambahasta, Nityotksipthasta, Nityatapta, Nityamuditendriya, Pramodyaraja, Devaraja, Pranidhanapravesaprapta, Prasiddhapratisamvitprapta, Gaganaganja, Ratnolkaparigrhita, Ratnasura, Ratnapriya, Ratnasri, Indrajala, Jaliniprabha, Niralambanadhyana, Prajnakuta, Ratnadatta, Marapramardaka, Vidyuddeva, Vikurvanaraja, Kutanimittasamatikranta, Simhanadanadin, Giryagrapramardiraja, Gandhahastin, Gandhakunjaranaga, Nityodyukta, Aniksiptadhura, Pramati, Sujata, Padmasrigarbha, Padmavyuha, Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, Brahmajala, Ratnadandin, Marakarmavijeta, Ksetrasamalamkara, Maniratnacchattra, Suvarnacuda, Manicuda, Maitreya, Manjusrikumarabhuta, and so forth, with the remainder of the thirty-two thousand.

There were also gathered there ten thousand Brahmas, at their head Brahma Sikhin, who had come from the Ashoka universe with its four sectors to see, venerate, and serve the Buddha and to hear the Dharma from his own mouth. There were twelve thousand Sakras, from various four-sector universes. And there were other powerful gods: Brahmas, Sakras, Lokapalas, devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas. Finally, there was the fourfold community, consisting of Bhikkhus, Bhikkhunis, laymen, and laywomen.

The Lord Buddha, thus surrounded and venerated by these multitudes of many hundreds of thousands of living beings, sat upon a majestic lion-throne and began to teach the Dharma. Dominating all the multitudes, just as Sumeru, the king of mountains, looms high over the oceans, the Lord Buddha shone, radiated, and glittered as he sat upon his magnificent lion-throne.

Thereupon, the Licchavi bodhisattva Ratnakara, with five hundred Licchavi youths, each holding a precious parasol made of seven different kinds of jewels, came forth from the city of Vaisali and presented himself at the grove of Amrapali. Each approached the Buddha, bowed at his feet, circumambulated him clockwise seven times, laid down his precious parasol in offering, and withdrew to one side.

As soon as all these precious parasols had been laid down, suddenly, by the miraculous power of the Lord, they were transformed into a single precious canopy so great that it formed a covering for this entire billion-world galaxy. The surface of the entire billion-world galaxy was reflected in the interior of the great precious canopy, where the total content of this galaxy could be seen: limitless mansions of suns, moons, and stellar bodies; the realms of the devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas, as well as the realms of the four Maharajas; the king of mountains, Mound Sumeru; Mount Himadri, Mount Mucilinda, Mount Mahamucilinda, Mount Gandhamadana, Mount Ratnaparvata, Mount Kalaparvata, Mount Cakravada, Mount Mahacakravada; all the great oceans, rivers, bays, torrents, streams, brooks, and springs; finally, all the villages, suburbs, cities, capitals, provinces, and wildernesses. All this could be clearly seen by everyone. And the voices of all the Buddhas of the ten directions could be heard proclaiming their teachings of the Dharma in all the worlds, the sounds reverberating in the space beneath the great precious canopy.

At this vision of the magnificent miracle affected by the supernatural power of the Lord Buddha, the entire host was ecstatic, enraptured, astonished, delighted, satisfied, and filled with awe and pleasure. They all bowed down to the Tathágata, withdrew to one side with palms pressed together, and gazed upon him with fixed attention. The young Licchavi Ratnakara knelt with his right knee on the ground raised his hands; palms pressed together in salute of the Buddha, and praised him with the following hymn:

Pure are your eyes, broad and beautiful, like the petals of a blue lotus.

Pure is your thought, having discovered the supreme transcendence of all trances.

Immeasurable is the ocean of your virtues, the accumulation of your good deeds.

You affirm the path of peace.

Oh, Great Ascetic, obeisance to you!

Leader, bull of men, we behold the revelation of your miracle.

The superb and radiant fields of the Sugatas appear before us,

And your extensive spiritual teachings, that lead to immortality

Make themselves heard throughout the whole reach of space.

Dharma-King, you rule with the Dharma your supreme Dharma-kingdom,

And thereby bestow the treasures of the Dharma upon all living beings.

Expert in the deep analysis of things, you teach their ultimate meaning.

Sovereign Lord of Dharma, obeisance to you.

All these things arise dependently, from causes,

Yet they are neither existent nor nonexistent.

Therein is neither ego, nor experiencer, nor doer,

Yet no action, good or evil, loses its effects.

Such is your teaching.

O Shakyamuni, conquering the powerful host of Mara,

You found peace, immortality, and the happiness of that supreme enlightenment,

Which is not realized by any among the heterodox,  
Though they arrest their feeling, thought and mental processes.

O Wonderful King of Dharma,  
You turned the wheel of Dharma before men and gods,  
With its threefold revolution, its manifold aspects,  
Its purity of nature, and its extreme peace;  
And thereby the Three Jewels were revealed.

Those who are well disciplined by your precious Dharma  
Are free of vain imaginings and always deeply peaceful.  
Supreme doctor, you put an end to birth, decay, sickness, and  
death.

Immeasurable Ocean of virtue, obeisance to you!

Like Mount Sumeru, you are unmoved by honor or scorn.  
You love moral beings and immoral beings equally.  
Poised in equanimity, your mind is like the sky.  
Who would not honor such a precious jewel of a being?

Great Sage, in all these multitudes gathered here,  
Who look upon your countenance with hearts sincere in faith,  
Each being beholds the Victor, as if just before him.  
This is a special quality of the Buddha.

Although the Lord speaks with but one voice,  
Those present perceive that same voice differently,  
And each understands in his own language according to his own  
needs.

This is a special quality of the Buddha.

From the Leader's act of speaking in a single voice,  
Some merely develop an instinct for the teaching, some gain  
realization,  
Some find pacification of all their doubts.

This is a special quality of the Buddha.

Obeisance to you who command the force of leadership and the  
ten powers!

Obeisance to you who are dauntless, knowing no fear!

Obeisance to you, leader of all living beings,

Who fully manifests the special qualities!

Obeisance to you who have cut the bondage of all fetters!

Obeisance to you who, having gone beyond, stand on firm  
ground!

Obeisance to you who save the suffering beings!

Obeisance to you who do not remain in the migrations!

You associate with living beings by frequenting their migrations.  
Yet your mind is liberated from all migrations.  
Just as the lotus, born of mud, is not tainted thereby,  
So the lotus of the Buddha preserves the realization of void-ness.

You nullify all signs in all things everywhere.  
You are not subject to any wish for anything at all.  
The miraculous power of the Buddhas is inconceivable.  
I bow to you, who stand nowhere, like infinite space.

Then, the young Licchavi Ratnakara, having celebrated the Buddha with these verses, further addressed him:

"Lord, these five hundred young Licchavis are truly on their way to unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and they have asked what is the bodhisattvas' purification of the Buddha-field. Please, Lord, explain to them the bodhisattvas' purification of the Buddha-field!"

Upon this request, the Buddha gave his approval to the young Licchavi Ratnakara: "Good, good, young man!

Your question to the Tathágata about the purification of the Buddha-field is indeed good. Therefore, young man, listen well and remember! I will explain to you the purification of the Buddha-field of the bodhisattvas."

"Very good, Lord," replied Ratnakara and the five hundred young Licchavis, and they set themselves to listen.

The Buddha said, "Noble sons, a Buddha-field of bodhisattvas is a field of living beings. Why so? A bodhisattva embraces a Buddha-field to the same extent that he causes the development of living beings. He embraces a Buddha-field to the same extent



that living beings become disciplined. He embraces a Buddha-field to the same extent that, through entrance into a Buddha-field, living beings are introduced to the Buddha-gnosis. He embraces a Buddha-field to the same extent that, through entrance into that Buddha-field, living beings increase their holy spiritual faculties. Why so? Noble son, a Buddha-field of bodhisattvas springs from the aims of living beings.

"For example, Ratnakara, should one wish to build in empty space, one might go ahead in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn anything in empty space. In just the same way, should a bodhisattva, who knows full well that all things are like empty space, wish to build a Buddha-field in order to develop living beings, he might go ahead, in spite of the fact that it is not possible to build or to adorn a Buddha-field in empty space.

"Yet, Ratnakara, a bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of positive thought. When he attains enlightenment, living beings free of hypocrisy and deceit will be born in his Buddha-field.

"Noble son, a bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of high resolve. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that have harvested the two stores and have planted the roots of virtue will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of virtuous application. When he attains enlightenment living beings that live by all virtuous principles will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is the magnificence of the conception of the spirit of enlightenment. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that are actually participating in the Mahayana will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of generosity. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that give away all their possessions will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of tolerance. When he attains enlightenment, living beings with the transcendences of tolerance, discipline, and the superior trance - hence beautiful

with the thirty-two auspicious signs - will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of meditation. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that are evenly balanced through mindfulness and awareness will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is a field of wisdom. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that are destined for the ultimate will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field consists of the four immeasurables. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that live by love, compassion, joy, and impartiality will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field consists of the four means of unification. When he attains enlightenment, living beings that are held together by all the liberations will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is skill in liberative technique.

When he attains enlightenment, living beings skilled in all liberative techniques and activities will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field consists of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. Living beings who devote their efforts to the four foci of mindfulness, the four right efforts, the four bases of magical power, the five spiritual faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors of enlightenment, and the eight branches of the holy path will be born in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is his mind of total dedication. When he attains enlightenment, the ornaments of all virtues will appear in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is the doctrine that eradicates the eight adversities. When he attains enlightenment, the three bad migrations will cease, and there will be no such thing as the eight adversities in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field consists of his personal observance of the basic precepts and his restraint in blaming others for their transgressions. When he attains enlightenment, even the word 'crime' will never be mentioned in his Buddha-field.

"A bodhisattva's Buddha-field is the purity of the path of the ten virtues. When he attains enlightenment, living beings who are secure in long life, great in wealth, chaste in conduct, enhanced by true speech, soft-spoken, free of divisive intrigues and adroit in reconciling factions, enlightening in their conversations, free of envy, free of malice, and endowed with perfect views will be born in his Buddha-field.

"Thus, noble son, just as is the bodhisattva's production of the spirit of enlightenment, so is his positive thought. And just as is his positive thought, so is his virtuous application.

"His virtuous application is tantamount to his high resolve, his high resolve is tantamount to his determination, his determination is tantamount to his practice, and his practice is tantamount to his total dedication, his total dedication is tantamount to his liberative technique, his liberative technique is tantamount to his development of living beings, and his development of living beings is tantamount to the purity of his Buddha-field.

"The purity of his Buddha-field reflects the purity of living beings; the purity of the living beings reflects the purity of his gnosis; the purity of his gnosis reflects the purity of his doctrine; the purity of his doctrine reflects the purity of his transcendental practice; and the purity of his transcendental practice reflects the purity of his own mind."

Thereupon, magically influenced by the Buddha, the venerable Shariputra had this thought: "If the Buddha-field is pure only to the extent that the mind of the bodhisattva is pure, then, when Shakyamuni Buddha was engaged in the career of the bodhisattva, his mind must have been impure. Otherwise, how could this Buddha-field appear to be so impure?"

The Buddha, knowing telepathically the thought of venerable Shariputra, said to him, "What do you think, Shariputra? Is it

because the sun and moon are impure that those blind from birth do not see them?"

Shariputra replied, "No, Lord. It is not so. The fault lies with those blind from birth, and not with the sun and moon."

The Buddha declared, "In the same way, Shariputra, the fact that some living beings do not behold the splendid display of virtues of the Buddha-field of the Tathágata is due to their own ignorance. It is not the fault of the Tathágata. Shariputra, the Buddha-field of the Tathágata is pure, but you do not see it."

Then the Brahma Sikhin said to the venerable Shariputra, "Reverend Shariputra, do not say that the Buddha-field of the Tathágata is impure. Reverend Shariputra, the Buddha-field of the Tathágata is pure. I see the splendid expanse of the Buddha-field of the Lord Shakyamuni as equal to the splendor of, for example, the abodes of the highest deities."

Then the venerable Shariputra said to the Brahma Sikhin, "As for me, O Brahma, I see this great earth, with its highs and lows, its thorns, its precipices, its peaks, and its abysses, as if it were entirely filled with ordure."

Brahma Sikhin replied, "The fact that you see such a Buddha-field as this as if it were so impure, reverend Shariputra, is a sure sign that there are highs and lows in your mind and that your positive thought in regard to the Buddha-gnosis is not pure either. Reverend Shariputra, those whose minds are impartial toward all living beings and whose positive thoughts toward the Buddha-gnosis are pure see this Buddha-field as perfectly pure."

Thereupon the Lord touched the ground of this billion-world-galactic universe with his big toe, and suddenly it was transformed into a huge mass of precious jewels, a magnificent array of many hundreds of thousands of clusters of precious gems, until it resembled the universe of the Tathágata Ratnavyuha, called Anantagunaratnavyuha. Everyone in the entire assembly was filled with wonder, each perceiving himself seated on a throne of jeweled lotuses.

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Shariputra, "Shariputra, do you see this splendor of the virtues of the Buddha-field?"

Shariputra replied, "I see it, Lord! Here before me is a display of splendor such as I never before heard of or beheld!"

The Buddha said, "Shariputra, this Buddha-field is always thus pure, but the Tathágata makes it appear to be spoiled by many faults, in order to bring about the maturity of the inferior living beings. For example, Shariputra, the gods of the Trayastrimsa heaven all take their food from a single precious vessel, yet the nectar, which nourishes each one, differs according to the differences of the merits each has accumulated. Just so, Shariputra, living beings born in the same Buddha-field see the splendor of the virtues of the Buddha-fields of the Buddhas according to their own degrees of purity."

When this splendor of the beauty of the virtues of the Buddha-field shone forth, eighty-four thousand beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, and the five hundred Licchavi youths who had accompanied the young Licchavi Ratnakara all attained the conformative tolerance of ultimate birthlessness.

Then, the Lord withdrew his miraculous power and at once the Buddha-field was restored to its usual appearance. Then, both men and gods who subscribed to the disciple-vehicle thought, "Alas! All constructed things are impermanent."

Thereby, thirty-two thousand living beings purified their immaculate, undistorted Dharma-eye in regard to all things. The eight thousand Bhikkhus were liberated from their mental defilements, attaining the state of non-grasping. And the eighty-four thousand living beings that were devoted to the grandeur of the Buddha-field, having understood that all things are by nature but magical creations, all conceived in their own minds the spirit of unexcelled, totally perfect enlightenment.

## 2. Inconceivable Skill in Liberative Technique

At that time, there lived in the great city of Vaisali a certain Licchavi, Vimalakirti by name. Having served the ancient

Buddhas, he had generated the roots of virtue by honoring them and making offerings to them. He had attained tolerance as well as eloquence. He played with the great super-knowledge's. He had attained the power of incantations and the fearlessnesses. He had conquered all demons and opponents. He had penetrated the profound way of the Dharma. He was liberated through the transcendence of wisdom. Having integrated his realization with skill in liberative technique, he was expert in knowing the thoughts and actions of living beings. Knowing the strength or weakness of their faculties, and being gifted with unrivaled eloquence, he taught the Dharma appropriately to each. Having applied himself energetically to the Mahayana, he understood it and accomplished his tasks with great finesse. He lived with the department of a Buddha, and his superior intelligence was as wide as an ocean. He was praised, honored, and commended by all the Buddhas and was respected by Indra, Brahma, and all the Lokapalas. In order to develop living beings with his skill in liberative technique, he lived in the great city of Vaisali.

His wealth was inexhaustible for the purpose of sustaining the poor and the helpless. He observed a pure morality in order to protect the immoral. He maintained tolerance and self-control in order to reconcile beings who were angry, cruel, violent, and brutal. He blazed with energy in order to inspire people who were lazy. He maintained concentration, mindfulness, and meditation in order to sustain the mentally troubled. He attained decisive wisdom in order to sustain the foolish.

He wore the white clothes of the layman, yet lived impeccably like a religious devotee. He lived at home, but remained aloof from the realm of desire, the realm of pure matter, and the immaterial realm. He had a son, a wife, and female attendants, yet always maintained continence. He appeared to be surrounded by servants, yet lived in solitude. He appeared to be adorned with ornaments, yet always was endowed with the auspicious signs and marks. He seemed to eat and drink, yet always took nourishment from the taste of meditation. He made his appearance at the fields of sports and in the casinos, but his aim was always to mature those people who were attached to games and gambling. He visited the fashionable heterodox

teachers, yet always kept unswerving loyalty to the Buddha. He understood the mundane and transcendental sciences and esoteric practices, yet always took pleasure in the delights of the Dharma. He mixed in all crowds, yet was respected as foremost of all.

In order to be in harmony with people, he associated with elders, with those of middle age, and with the young, yet always spoke in harmony with the Dharma. He engaged in all sorts of businesses, yet had no interest in profit or possessions. To train living beings, he would appear at crossroads and on street corners, and to protect them he participated in government. To turn people away from the Hinayana and to engage them in the Mahayana, he appeared among listeners and teachers of the Dharma. To develop children, he visited all the schools. To demonstrate the evils of desire, he even entered the brothels. To establish drunkards in correct mindfulness, he entered all the cabarets.

He was honored as the businessman among businessmen because he demonstrated the priority of the Dharma. He was honored as the landlord among landlords because he renounced the aggressiveness of ownership. He was honored as the warrior among warriors because he cultivated endurance, determination, and fortitude. He was honored as the aristocrat among aristocrats because he suppressed pride, vanity, and arrogance. He was honored as the official among officials because he regulated the functions of government according to the Dharma. He was honored as the prince of princes because he reversed their attachment to royal pleasures and sovereign power. He was honored as a eunuch in the royal harem because he taught the young ladies according to the Dharma.

He was compatible with ordinary people because he appreciated the excellence of ordinary merits. He was honored as the Indra among Indra's because he showed them the temporality of their lordship. He was honored as the Brahma among Brahmas because he showed them the special excellence of gnosis. He was honored as the Lokapala among Lokapalas because he fostered the development of all living beings.

Thus lived the Licchavi Vimalakirti in the great city of Vaisali, endowed with an infinite knowledge of skill in liberative techniques.

At that time, out of this very skill in liberative technique, Vimalakirti manifested himself as if sick. To inquire after his health, the king, the officials, the lords, the youths, the aristocrats, the householders, the businessmen, the town-folk, the country-folk, and thousands of other living beings came forth from the great city of Vaisali and called on the invalid. When they arrived, Vimalakirti taught them the Dharma, beginning his discourse from the actuality of the four main elements:

"Friends, this body is so impermanent, fragile, unworthy of confidence, and feeble. It is so insubstantial, perishable, short-lived, painful, filled with diseases, and subject to changes. Thus, my friends, as this body is only a vessel of many sicknesses, wise men do not rely on it. This body is like a ball of foam, unable to bear any pressure. It is like a water bubble, not remaining very long. It is like a mirage, born from the appetites of the passions. It is like the trunk of the plantain tree, having no core. Alas! This body is like a machine, a nexus of bones and tendons. It is like a magical illusion, consisting of falsifications. It is like a dream, being an unreal vision. It is like a reflection, being the image of former actions. It is like an echo, being dependent on conditioning. It is like a cloud, being characterized by turbulence and dissolution. It is like a flash of lightning, being unstable, and decaying every moment. The body is ownerless, being the product of a variety of conditions.

"This body is inert, like the earth; selfless, like water; lifeless, like fire; impersonal, like the wind; and non-substantial, like space. This body is unreal, being a collocation of the four main elements. It is void, not existing as self or as self-possession. It is inanimate, being like grass, trees, walls, clods of earth, and hallucinations. It is insensate, being driven like a windmill. It is filthy, being an agglomeration of pus and excrement. It is false, being fated to be broken and destroyed, in spite of being anointed and massaged. It is afflicted by the four hundred and four diseases. It is like an ancient well, constantly overwhelmed by old age. Its duration is never certain - certain only is its end in death. This body is a combination of aggregates, elements, and



sense-media, which are comparable to murderers, poisonous snakes, and an empty town, respectively.

Therefore, such a body should repulse you. You should despair of it and should arouse your admiration for the body of the Tathágata.

"Friends, the body of a Tathágata is the body of Dharma, born of gnosis. The body of a Tathágata is born of the stores of merit and wisdom. It is born of morality, of meditation, of wisdom, of the liberations, and of the knowledge and vision of liberation. It is born of love, compassion, joy, and impartiality. It is born of charity, discipline, and self-control. It is born of the path of ten virtues. It is born of patience and gentleness. It is born of the roots of virtue planted by solid efforts. It is born of the concentrations, the liberations, the meditations, and the absorptions. It is born of learning, wisdom, and liberative technique. It is born of the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment. It is born of mental quiescence and transcendental analysis. It is born of the ten powers, the four fearless-nesses, and the eighteen special qualities. It is born of all the transcendences. It is born from sciences and super-knowledge's. It is born of the abandonment of all evil qualities, and of the collection of all good qualities. It is born of truth. It is born of reality. It is born of conscious awareness.

"Friends, the body of a Tathágata is born of innumerable good works. Toward such a body you should turn your aspirations, and, in order to eliminate the sicknesses of the passions of all living beings, you should conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment."

While the Licchavi Vimalakirti thus taught the Dharma to those who had come to inquire about his sickness, many hundreds of thousands of living beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

### 3. The Disciples' Reluctance to Visit Vimalakirti

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought to himself, "I am sick, lying on my bed in pain, yet the Tathágata, the saint, the perfectly

accomplished Buddha, does not consider or take pity upon me, and sends no one to inquire after my illness."

The Lord knew this thought in the mind of Vimalakirti and said to the venerable Shariputra, "Shariputra, go to inquire after the illness of the Licchavi Vimalakirti."

Thus having been addressed, the venerable Shariputra answered the Buddha, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to ask the Licchavi Vimalakirti about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was sitting at the foot of a tree in the forest, absorbed in contemplation, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came to the foot of that tree and said to me, 'Reverend Shariputra, this is not the way to absorb yourself in contemplation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that neither body nor mind appear anywhere in the triple world. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest all ordinary behavior without forsaking cessation. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you can manifest the nature of an ordinary person without abandoning your cultivated spiritual nature. You should absorb yourself in contemplation so that the mind neither settles within nor moves without toward external forms. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that the thirty-seven aids to enlightenment are manifest without deviation toward any convictions. You should absorb yourself in contemplation in such a way that you are released in liberation without abandoning the passions that are the province of the world.

"Reverend Shariputra, those who absorb themselves in contemplation in such a way are declared by the Lord to be truly absorbed in contemplation.'

"Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was unable to reply and remained silent. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to ask that good man about his sickness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Maha-Maudgalyayana, "Maudgalyayana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness." (Maha is a title that means "Great")

Maudgalyayana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day when I was teaching the Dharma to the householders in a square in the great city of Vaisali, and the Licchavi Vimalakirti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Maudgalyayana, that is not the way to teach the Dharma to the householders in their white clothes. The Dharma must be taught according to reality.

"Reverend Maudgalyayana, the Dharma is without living beings, because it is free of the dust of living beings.

It is selfless, because it is free of the dust of desire. It is lifeless, because it is free of birth and death. It is without personalities, because it dispenses with past origins and future destinies.

"The Dharma is peace and pacification, because it is free from desire. It does not become an object, because it is free of words and letters; it is inexpressible, and it transcends all movement of mind.

"The Dharma is omnipresent, because it is like infinite space. It is without color, mark, or shape, because it is free of all process. It is without the concept of "mine," because it is free of the habitual notion of possession. It is without ideation, because it is free of mind, thought, or consciousness. It is incomparable, because it has no antitheses. It is without presumption of conditionality, because it does not conform to causes.

"It permeates evenly all things, because all are included in the ultimate realm. It conforms to reality by means of the process of nonconformity. It abides at the reality-limit, for it is utterly without fluctuation. It is immovable, because it is independent of the six objects of sense. It is without coming and going, for it never stands still. It is comprised by voidness, is remarkable through sign-less-ness, and is free of presumption and repudiation, because of wish-less-ness. It is without establishment and rejection, without birth or destruction. It is without any fundamental consciousness, transcending the range of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and thought. It is without highness and lowness. It abides without movement or activity.

"Reverend Maha-Maudgalyayana, how could there be a teaching in regard to such a Dharma? Reverend Maha-Maudgalyayana, even the expression "to teach the Dharma" is presumptuous, and those who listen to it listen to presumption. Reverend Maudgalyayana, where there are no presumptuous words, there is no teacher of the Dharma, no one to listen, and no one to understand. It is as if an illusory person were to teach the Dharma to illusory people.

"Therefore, you should teach the Dharma by keeping your mind on this. You should be adept in regard to the spiritual faculties of living beings. By means of the correct vision of the wisdom-eye, manifesting the great compassion, acknowledging the benevolent activity of the Buddha, purifying your intentions, understanding the definitive expressions of the Dharma, you should teach the Dharma in order that the continuity of the Three Jewels may never be interrupted.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had discoursed thus, eight hundred householders in the crowd conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and I myself was speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Maha-Kasyapa, "Maha-Kasyapa, you go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

"Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember one day, when I was in the street of the poor begging for my food, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came along and said to me, 'Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, to avoid the houses of the wealthy, and to favor the houses of the poor - this is partiality in benevolence. Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, you should dwell on the fact of the equality of things, and you should seek alms with consideration for all living beings at all times. You should beg your food in awareness of the ultimate nonexistence of food. You should seek alms for the sake of eliminating the materialism of others.

When you enter a town, you should keep in mind its actual voidness, yet you should proceed through it in order to develop men

and women. You should enter homes as if entering the family of the Buddha. You should accept alms by not taking anything. You should see form like a man blind from birth, hear sounds as if they were echoes, smell scents as if they were winds, experience tastes without any discrimination, touch tangibles in awareness of the ultimate lack of contact in gnosis, and know things with the consciousness of an illusory creature. That which is without intrinsic substance and without imparted substance does not burn. And what does not burn will not be extinguished.

"Elder Maha-Kasyapa, if, equipoised (a state of equilibrium) in the eight liberations without transcending the eight perversions, you can enter the equanimity of reality by means of the equanimity of perversion, and if you can make a gift to all living beings and an offering to all the saints and Buddhas out of even a single measure of alms, then you yourself may eat. Thus, when you eat, after offering, you should be neither affected by passions nor free of passions, neither involved in concentration nor free from concentration, neither living in the world nor abiding in liberation.

Furthermore, those who give such alms, reverend, have neither great merit nor small merit, neither gain nor loss. They should follow the way of the Buddhas, not the way of the disciples. Only in this way, Elder Maha-Kasyapa, is the practice of eating by alms meaningful.'

"Lord, when I heard this teaching, I was astonished and thought: 'Reverence to all bodhisattvas! If a lay bodhisattva may be endowed with such eloquence, who is there who would not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? From that time forth, I no longer recommend the vehicles of the disciples and of the solitary sages but recommend the Mahayana. And thus, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Subhuti, "Subhuti, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Subhuti replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? My Lord,

I remember one day, when I went to beg my food at the house of the Licchavi Vimalakirti in the great city of Vaisali, he took my bowl and filled it with some excellent food and said to me, 'Reverend Subhuti, take this food if you understand the equality of all things, by means of the equality of material objects, and if you understand the equality of all the attributes of the Buddha, by means of the equality of all things. Take this food if, without abandoning desire, hatred, and folly, you can avoid association with them; if you can follow the path of the single way without ever disturbing the egoistic views; if you can produce the knowledge's and liberations without conquering ignorance and the craving for existence; if, by the equality of the five deadly sins, you reach the equality of liberation; if you are neither liberated nor bound; if you do not see the Four Holy Truths, yet are not the one who "has not seen the truth"; if you have not attained any fruit, yet are not the one who "has not attained"; if you are an ordinary person, yet have not the qualities of an ordinary person; if you are not holy, yet are not unholy; if you are responsible for all things, yet are free of any notion concerning anything.

"Take this food, reverend Subhuti, if, without seeing the Buddha, hearing the Dharma, or serving the Sangha, you undertake the religious life under the six heterodox masters; namely, Purana Kasyapa, Maskarin Gosaliputra, Samjayin Vairatiputra, Kakuda Katyayana, Ajita Kesakambala, and Nirgrantha Jnaniputra, and follow the ways they prescribe.

"Take this food, reverend Subhuti, if, entertaining all false views, you find neither extremes nor middle; if, bound up in the eight adversities, you do not obtain favorable conditions; if, assimilating the passions, you do not attain purification; if the dispassion of all living beings is your dispassion, reverend; if those who make offerings to you are not thereby purified; if those who offer you food, reverend, still fall into the three bad migrations; if you associate with all Mara's; if you entertain all passions; if the nature of passions is the nature of a reverend; if you have hostile feelings toward all living beings; if you despise all the Buddhas; if you criticize

all the teachings of the Buddha; if you do not rely on the Sangha; and finally, if you never enter ultimate liberation.'

"Lord, when I heard these words of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, I wondered what I should say and what I should do, but I was totally in the dark. Leaving the bowl, I was about to leave the house when the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to me, 'Reverend Subhuti, do not fear these words, and pick up your bowl. What do you think, reverend Subhuti?'

If it were an incarnation created by the Tathágata who spoke thus to you, would you be afraid?'

"I answered, 'No indeed, noble sir!' He then said, 'Reverend Subhuti, the nature of all things is like illusion, like a magical incarnation. So you should not fear them. Why? All words also have that nature, and thus the wise are not attached to words, nor do they fear them. Why? All language does not ultimately exist, except as liberation. The nature of all things is liberation.'

"When Vimalakirti had discoursed in this way, two hundred gods obtained the pure doctrinal vision in regard to all things, without obscurity or defilement, and five hundred gods obtained the conformatory tolerance. As for me, I was speechless and unable to respond to him. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness."

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Purna-maitrayaniputra, "Purna, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Purna replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to this good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was teaching the Dharma to some young monks in the great forest, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Purna, first concentrate yourself, regard the minds of these young Bhikkhus, and then teach them the Dharma! Do not put rotten food into a jeweled bowl! First understand the inclinations of these monks, and do not confuse priceless sapphires with glass beads!'

"Reverend Purna, without examining the spiritual faculties of living beings, do not presume upon the one-sidedness of their faculties; do not wound those who are without wounds; do not impose a narrow path upon those who aspire to a great path; do not try to pour the great ocean into the hoof-print of an ox; do not

try to put Mount Sumeru into a grain of mustard; do not confuse the brilliance of the sun with the light of a glowworm; and do not expose those who admire the roar of a lion to the howl of a jackal!

"Reverend Purna, all these monks were formerly engaged in the Mahayana but have forgotten the spirit of enlightenment. So do not instruct them in the disciple-vehicle. The disciple-vehicle is not ultimately valid, and you disciples are like men blind from birth, in regard to recognition of the degrees of the spiritual faculties of living beings.'

"At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakirti entered into such a concentration that those monks were caused to remember their various former existences, in which they had produced the roots of virtue by serving five hundred Buddhas for the sake of perfect enlightenment. As soon as their own spirits of enlightenment had become clear to them, they bowed at the feet of that good man and pressed their palms together in reverence. He taught them the Dharma, and they all attained the stage of irreversibility from the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. It occurred to me then, 'the disciples, who do not know the thoughts or the inclinations of others, are not able to teach the Dharma to anyone. Why? These disciples are not expert in discerning the superiority and inferiority of the spiritual faculties of living beings, and they are not always in a state of concentration like the Tathágata, the Saint, the perfectly accomplished Buddha.'

"Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his health."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Maha-Katyayana, "Katyayana, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Katyayana replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when, after the Lord had given some brief instruction to the monks, I was defining the expressions of that discourse by teaching the meaning of impermanence, suffering, selflessness, and peace; the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Maha-Katyayana, do not teach an ultimate reality



endowed with activity, production, and destruction! Reverend Maha-Katyayana, nothing was ever destroyed, is destroyed, or will ever be destroyed. Such is the meaning of "impermanence." The meaning of the realization of birthlessness, through the realization of the voidness of the five aggregates, is the meaning of "suffering." The fact of the non-duality of self and selflessness is the meaning of "selflessness." That which has no intrinsic substance and no other sort of substance does not burn, and what does not burn is not extinguished; such lack of extinction is the meaning of "peace."

"When he had discoursed thus, the minds of the monks were liberated from their defilements and entered a state of non-grasping.

Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Aniruddha, "Aniruddha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

"My Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? I remember, Lord, one day when I was taking a walk, the great Brahma named Subhavyuha and the ten thousand other Brahmas who accompanied him illuminated the place with their radiance and, having bowed their heads at my feet, withdrew to one side and asked me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, you have been proclaimed by the Buddha to be the foremost among those who possess the divine eye. To what distance does the divine vision of the venerable Aniruddha extend?'

I answered, 'Friends, I see the entire billion-world-galactic universe of the Lord Shakyamuni just as plainly as a man of ordinary vision sees a myrobalan nut on the palm of his hand.' When I had said these words, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and, having bowed his head at my feet, said to me, 'Reverend Aniruddha, is your divine eye compounded in nature? Or is it un-compounded in nature?'

If it is compounded in nature, it is the same as the super-knowledge's of the heterodox. If it is un-compounded in nature,

then it is not constructed and, as such, is incapable of seeing. Then, how do you see, O elder?'

"At these words, I became speechless, and Brahma also was amazed to hear this teaching from that good man.

Having bowed to him, he said, 'Who then, in the world, possesses the divine eye?'

"Vimalakirti answered, 'in the world, it is the Buddhas who have the divine eye. They see all the Buddha-fields without even leaving their state of concentration and without being affected by duality.'

"Having heard these words, the ten thousand Brahmas were inspired with high resolve and conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Having paid homage and respect both to me and to that good man, they disappeared. As for me, I remained speechless, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Upali, "Upali, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Upali replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day there were two monks who had committed some infraction and were too ashamed to appear before the Lord, so they came to me and said, 'Reverend Upali, we have both committed an infraction but are too ashamed to appear before the Buddha. Venerable Upali, kindly remove our anxieties by absolving us of these infractions.'

"Lord, while I was giving those two monks some religious discourse, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Reverend Upali, do not aggravate further the sins of these two monks. Without perplexing them, relieve their remorse. Reverend Upali, sin is not to be apprehended within, or without, or between the two. Why?'

The Buddha has said, "Living beings are afflicted by the passions of thought, and they are purified by the purification of thought."

"Reverend Upali, the mind is neither within nor without, nor is it to be apprehended between the two. Sin is just the same as the mind, and all things are just the same as sin. They do not escape this same reality.

"Reverend Upali, this nature of the mind, by virtue of which your mind, reverend, is liberated - does it ever become afflicted?"

"Never," I replied.

"Reverend Upali, the minds of all living beings have that very nature. Reverend Upali, passions consist of conceptualizations. The ultimate nonexistence of these conceptualizations and imaginary fabrications - that is the purity that is the intrinsic nature of the mind. Misapprehensions are passions. The ultimate absence of misapprehensions is the intrinsic nature of the mind. The presumption of self is passion. The absence of self is the intrinsic nature of the mind. Reverend Upali, all things are without production, destruction, and duration, like magical illusions, clouds, and lightning; all things are evanescent, not remaining even for an instant; all things are like dreams, hallucinations, and unreal visions; all things are like the reflection of the moon in water and like a mirror-image; they are born of mental construction. Those who know this are called the true upholders of the discipline, and those disciplined in that way are indeed well disciplined."

"Then the two monks said, 'this householder is extremely well endowed with wisdom. The reverend Upali, who was proclaimed by the Lord as the foremost of the upholders of the discipline, is not his equal.'

"I then said to the two monks, 'Do not entertain the notion that he is a mere householder! Why? With the exception of the Tathágata himself, there is no disciple or bodhisattva capable of competing with his eloquence or rivaling the brilliance of his wisdom.'

"Thereupon, the two monks, delivered from their anxieties and inspired with a high resolve, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Bowing down to that good man, they made the wish: 'May all living beings attain eloquence such as

this!' Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Rahula, "Rahula, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Rahula replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day many young Licchavi gentlemen came to the place where I was and said to me, 'Reverend Rahula, you are the son of the Lord, and, having renounced a kingdom of a universal monarch, you have left the world. What are the virtues and benefits you saw in leaving the world?'

"As I was teaching them properly the benefits and virtues of renouncing the world, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and, having greeted me, said, 'Reverend Rahula, you should not teach the benefits and virtues of renunciation in the way that you do. Why? Renunciation is itself the very absence of virtues and benefits.

Reverend Rahula, one may speak of benefits and virtues in regard to compounded things, but renunciation is uncompounded, and there can be no question of benefits and virtues in regard to the uncompounded. Reverend Rahula, renunciation is not material but is free of matter. It is free of the extreme views of beginning and end. It is the path of liberation. It is praised by the wise, embraced by the saints, and causes the defeat of all Mara's. It liberates from the five states of existence, purifies the five eyes, cultivates the five powers, and supports the five spiritual faculties. Renunciation is totally harmless to others and is not adulterated with evil things. It disciplines the heterodox, transcending all denominations. It is the bridge over the swamp of desire, without grasping, and free of the habits of "I" and "mine." It is without attachment and without disturbance, eliminating all commotion. It disciplines one's own mind and protects the minds of others. It favors mental quiescence and stimulates transcendental analysis. It is irreproachable in all respects and so is called renunciation. Those who leave the mundane in this way are called "truly renunciants." Young men, renounce the world in the light of this clear teaching! The appearance of the Buddha is extremely rare. Human life

endowed with leisure and opportunity is very hard to obtain. To be a human being is very precious.'

"The young men complained: 'But, householder, we have heard the Tathágata declare that one should not renounce the world without the permission of one's parents.'

"Vimalakirti answered: 'Young men, you should cultivate yourselves intensively to conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. That in itself will be your renunciation and high ordination!'

"Thereupon, thirty-two of the Licchavi youths conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the venerable Ánanda, "Ánanda, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Ánanda replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day when the body of the Lord manifested some indisposition and he required some milk; I took the bowl and went to the door of the mansion of a great Brahman family. The Licchavi Vimalakirti came there, and, having saluted me, said, 'Reverend Ánanda, what are you doing on the threshold of this house with your bowl in your hand so early in the morning?'

"I replied: 'the body of the Lord manifests some indisposition, and he needs some milk. Therefore, I have come to fetch some.'

"Vimalakirti then said to me, 'Reverend Ánanda, do not say such a thing! Reverend Ánanda, the body of the Tathágata is tough as a diamond, having eliminated all the instinctual traces of evil and being endowed with all goodness. How could disease or discomfort affect such a body?'

"Reverend Ánanda, go in silence, and do not belittle the Lord. Do not say such things to others. It would not be good for the powerful gods or for the bodhisattvas coming from the various Buddha-fields to hear such words.

"Reverend Ānanda, a universal monarch, who is endowed only with a small root of virtue, is free of diseases.

How then could the Lord, who has an infinite root of virtue, have any disease? It is impossible.

"Reverend Ānanda, do not bring shame upon us, but go in silence, lest the heterodox sectarians should hear your words. They would say, "For shame! The teacher of these people cannot even cure his own sicknesses. How then can he cure the sicknesses of others?" Reverend Ānanda, go then discreetly so that no one observes you.

"Reverend Ānanda, the Tathāgatas have the body of the Dharma - not a body that is sustained by material food.

The Tathāgatas have a transcendental body that has transcended all mundane qualities.

There is no injury to the body of a Tathāgata, as it is rid of all defilements. The body of a Tathāgata is uncompounded and free of all formative activity. Reverend Ānanda, to believe there can be illness in such a body is irrational and unseemly!

"When I had heard these words, I wondered if I had previously misheard and misunderstood the Buddha, and I was very much ashamed. Then I heard a voice from the sky: 'Ānanda! The householder speaks to you truly.

Nevertheless, since the Buddha has appeared during the time of the five corruptions, he disciplines living beings by acting lowly and humble. Therefore, Ānanda, do not be ashamed, and go and get the milk!

"Lord, such was my conversation with the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

In the same way, the rest of the five hundred disciples were reluctant to go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and each told the Buddha his own adventure, recounting all his conversations with the Licchavi Vimalakirti.

#### 4. The Reluctance of the Bodhisattvas

Then, the Buddha said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, "Maitreya, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Maitreya replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day I was engaged in a conversation with the gods of the Tushita heaven, the god Samtusita and his retinue, about the stage of non-regression of the great bodhisattvas. At that time, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and addressed me as follows:

"Maitreya, the Buddha has prophesied that only one more birth stands between you and unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. What kind of birth does this prophecy concern, Maitreya? Is it past? Is it future? Or is it present? If it is a past birth, it is already finished. If it is a future birth, it will never arrive. If it is a present birth, it does not abide. For the Buddha has declared, "Bhikkhus, in a single moment, you are born, you age, you die, you transmigrate, and you are reborn."

"Then might the prophecy concern birthlessness? But birthlessness applies to the stage of destiny for the ultimate, in which there is neither prophecy nor attainment of perfect enlightenment.

"Therefore, Maitreya, is your reality from birth? Or is it from cessation? Your reality as prophesied is not born and does not cease, nor will it be born nor will it cease. Furthermore, your reality is just the same as the reality of all living beings, the reality of all things, and the reality of all the holy ones. If your enlightenment can be prophesied in such a way, so can that of all living beings. Why, because reality does not consist of duality or of diversity. Maitreya, whenever you attain Buddhahood, which is the perfection of enlightenment, at the same time all living beings will also attain ultimate liberation. Why? The Tathágatas do not enter ultimate liberation until all living beings have entered ultimate liberation. For, since all living beings are utterly liberated, the Tathágatas see them as having the nature of ultimate liberation.

"Therefore, Maitreya, do not fool and delude these deities! No one abides in, or regresses from, enlightenment.

Maitreya, you should introduce these deities to the repudiation of all discriminative constructions concerning enlightenment.

"Enlightenment is perfectly realized neither by the body nor by the mind. Enlightenment is the eradication of all marks. Enlightenment is free of presumptions concerning all objects. Enlightenment is free of the functioning of all intentional thoughts. Enlightenment is the annihilation of all convictions. Enlightenment is free from all discriminative constructions. Enlightenment is free from all vacillation, mentation, and agitation.

Enlightenment is not involved in any commitments. Enlightenment is the arrival at detachment, through freedom from all habitual attitudes. The ground of enlightenment is the ultimate realm. Enlightenment is realization of reality. Enlightenment abides at the limit of reality.

Enlightenment is without duality, since therein are no minds and no things. Enlightenment is equality, since it is equal to infinite space.

"Enlightenment is un-constructed, because it is neither born nor destroyed, neither abides nor undergoes any transformation. Enlightenment is the complete knowledge of the thoughts, deeds, and inclinations of all living beings. Enlightenment is not a door for the six media of sense. Enlightenment is unadulterated, since it is free of the passions of the instinctually driven succession of lives. Enlightenment is neither somewhere nor nowhere, abiding in no location or dimension. Enlightenment, not being contained in anything, does not stand in reality. Enlightenment is merely a name and even that name is unmoving. Enlightenment, free of abstention and undertaking, is energy-less. There is no agitation in enlightenment, as it is utterly pure by nature. Enlightenment is radiance, pure in essence. Enlightenment is without subjectivity and completely without object. Enlightenment, which penetrates the equality of all things, is undifferentiated. Enlightenment, which is not shown by any example, is incomparable. Enlightenment is subtle, since it is extremely difficult to realize.



Enlightenment is all-pervasive, as it has the nature of infinite space.

Enlightenment cannot be realized, either physically or mentally. Why? The body is like grass, trees, walls, paths, and hallucinations. And the mind is immaterial, invisible, baseless, and unconscious.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had discoursed thus, two hundred of the deities in that assembly attained the tolerance of birthlessness. As for me, Lord, I was rendered speechless. Therefore, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the young Licchavi Prabhavyuha, "Prabhavyuha, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Prabhavyuha replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day, when I was going out of the great city of Vaisali, I met the Licchavi Vimalakirti coming in. He greeted me, and I then addressed him: 'Householder, where do you come from?' He replied, 'I come from the seat of enlightenment.' I then inquired, 'What is meant by "seat of enlightenment"?' He then spoke the following words to me, 'Noble son, the seat of enlightenment is the seat of positive thought because it is without artificiality. It is the seat of effort, because it releases energetic activities. It is the seat of high resolve, because its insight is superior. It is the seat of the great spirit of enlightenment, because it does not neglect anything.

"It is the seat of generosity, because it has no expectation of reward. It is the seat of morality, because it fulfills all commitments. It is the seat of tolerance, because it is free of anger toward any living being. It is the seat of effort, because it does not turn back. It is the seat of meditation, because it generates fitness of mind. It is the seat of wisdom, because it sees everything directly.

"It is the seat of love, because it is equal to all living beings. It is the seat of compassion, because it tolerates all injuries. It is the seat of joy, because it is joyfully devoted to the bliss of the

Dharma. It is the seat of equanimity, because it abandons affection and aversion.

"It is the seat of paranormal perception, because it has the six super-knowledge's. It is the seat of liberation, because it does not intellectualize. It is the seat of liberative technique, because it develops living beings. It is the seat of the means of unification, because it brings together living beings. It is the seat of learning, because it makes practice of the essence. It is the seat of decisiveness, because of its precise discrimination. It is the seat of the aids to enlightenment, because it eliminates the duality of the compounded and the un-compounded. It is the seat of truth, because it does not deceive anyone.

"It is the seat of interdependent origination, because it proceeds from the exhaustion of ignorance to the exhaustion of old age and death. It is the seat of eradication of all passions, because it is perfectly enlightened about the nature of reality. It is the seat of all living beings, because all living beings are without intrinsic identity. It is the seat of all things, because it is perfectly enlightened with regard to voidness.

"It is the seat of the conquest of all devils, because it never flinches. It is the seat of the triple world, because it is free of involvement. It is the seat of the heroism that sounds the lion's roar, because it is free of fear and trembling. It is the seat of the strengths, the fearlessnesses, and all the special qualities of the Buddha, because it is irreproachable in all respects. It is the seat of the three knowledges, because in it no passions remain. It is the seat of instantaneous, total understanding of all things, because it realizes fully the gnosis of omniscience.

"Noble son, when bodhisattvas are thus endowed with the transcendences, the roots of virtue, the ability to develop living beings, and the incorporation of the holy Dharma, whether they lift up their feet or put them down, they all come from the seat of enlightenment. They come from the qualities of the Buddha, and stand on the qualities of the Buddha.'

"Lord, when Vimalakirti had explained this teaching, five hundred gods and men conceived the spirit of enlightenment, and I

became speechless. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the bodhisattva Jagatimdhara, "Jagatimdhara, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Jagatimdhara replied, "My Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember that one day, when I was at home, the wicked Mara, disguised as Indra and surrounded with twelve thousand heavenly maidens, approached me with the sounds of music and singing. Having saluted me by touching my feet with his head, he withdrew with his retinue to one side. I then, thinking he was Sakra, the king of the gods, said to him, 'Welcome, O Kausika! You should remain consciously aware in the midst of the pleasures of desire. You should often think on impermanence and strive to utilize the essential in body, life, and wealth.'

"Mara then said to me, 'Good sir, accept from me these twelve thousand divine maidens and make them your servants.'

"I replied, 'O Kausika, do not offer me, who am religious and a son of the Sakya, things which are not appropriate. It is not proper for me to have these maidens.'

"No sooner had I said these words than the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said to me, 'Noble son, do not think that this is Indra! This is not Indra but the evil Mara, who has come to ridicule you.'

"Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to Mara, 'Evil Mara, since these heavenly maidens are not suitable for this religious devotee, a son of the Sakya, give them to me.'

"Then Mara was terrified and distressed, thinking that the Licchavi Vimalakirti had come to expose him. He tried to make himself invisible, but, try as he might with all his magical powers, he could not vanish from sight. Then a voice resounded in the sky, saying, 'Evil One, give these heavenly maidens to the good

man Vimalakirti, and only then will you be able to return to your own abode.'

"Then Mara was even more frightened and, much against his will, gave the heavenly maidens.

"The Licchavi Vimalakirti, having received the goddesses, said to them, 'Now that you have been given to me by Mara, you should all conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.'

"He then exhorted them with discourse suitable for their development toward enlightenment, and soon they conceived the spirit of enlightenment. He then said to them, 'You have just conceived the spirit of enlightenment.

From now on, you should devote yourselves to find joy in pleasures of the Dharma, and should take no pleasure in desires.'

"They then asked him, 'What is "joy in the pleasures of the Dharma"?'

"He declared, 'It is the joy of unbreakable faith in the Buddha, of wishing to hear the Dharma, of serving the Sangha and honoring the spiritual benefactors without pride. It is the joy of renunciation of the whole world, of not being fixed in objects, of considering the five aggregates to be like murderers, of considering the elements to be like venomous serpents, and of considering the sense-media to be like an empty town. It is the joy of always guarding the spirit of enlightenment, of helping living beings, of sharing through generosity, of not slackening in morality, of control and tolerance in patience, of thorough cultivation of virtue by effort, of total absorption in meditation, and of absence of passions in wisdom. It is the joy of extending enlightenment, of conquering the Mara's, of destroying the passions, and of purifying the Buddha-field. It is the joy of accumulating all virtues, in order to cultivate the auspicious marks and signs. It is the joy of the liberation of non-intimidation when hearing the profound teaching. It is the joy of exploration of the three doors of liberation, and of the realization of liberation. It is the joy of being an ornament of the seat of enlightenment, and

of not attaining liberation at the wrong time. It is the joy of serving those of equal fortune, of not hating or resenting those of superior fortune, of serving the spiritual benefactors, and of avoiding sinful friends. It is the joy of the superior gladness of faith and devotion to the Dharma. It is the joy of acquiring liberative techniques and of the conscious cultivation of the aids to enlightenment. Thus, the bodhisattva admires and finds joy in the delights of the Dharma.'

"Thereupon, Mara said to the goddesses, 'now come along and let us return home.'

"They said, 'you gave us to this householder. Now we should enjoy the delights of the Dharma and should no longer enjoy the pleasures of desires.'

"Then Mara said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, 'If it is so that the bodhisattva, the spiritual hero, has no mental attachment, and gives away all his possessions, then, householder, please give me these goddesses.'

"Vimalakirti replied, 'they are given, Mara. Go home with your retinue. May you fulfill the religious aspirations of all living beings!'

"Then the goddesses, saluting Vimalakirti, said to him, 'Householder, how should we live in the abode of the Mara's?'

"Vimalakirti replied, 'Sisters, there is a door of the Dharma called "The Inexhaustible Lamp." Practice it!

What is it? Sisters, a single lamp may light hundreds of thousands of lamps without itself being diminished.

Likewise, sisters, a single bodhisattva may establish many hundreds of thousands of living beings in enlightenment without his mindfulness being diminished. In fact, not only does it not diminish, it grows stronger. Likewise, the more you teach and demonstrate virtuous qualities to others, the more you grow with respect to these virtuous qualities. This is the door of the Dharma called "The Inexhaustible Lamp." When you are living in the realm of Mara, inspire innumerable gods and goddesses with the spirit of enlightenment. In such a way, you will repay the

kindness of the Tathágata, and you will become the benefactors of all living beings.'

"Then, those goddesses bowed at the feet of the Licchavi Vimalakirti and departed in the company of Mara.

Thus, Lord, I saw the supremacy of the magical power, wisdom, and eloquence of the Licchavi Vimalakirti, and therefore I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

The Buddha then said to the merchant's son, Sudatta, "Noble son, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Sudatta replied, "Lord, I am indeed reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness. Why? Lord, I remember one day in my father's house when, in order to celebrate a great sacrifice, I was bestowing gifts upon religious devotees, Brahmans, the poor, the wretched, the unfortunate, beggars, and all the needy. On the

seventh and final day of this great sacrifice, the Licchavi Vimalakirti came there and said, 'Merchant's son, you

should not celebrate a sacrifice in this way. You should celebrate a Dharma-sacrifice. What is the use of the sacrifice of material things?'

"I then asked him, 'How does one give a Dharma-sacrifice?'

"He replied, 'A Dharma-sacrifice is that which develops living beings without beginning or end, giving gifts to them all simultaneously. What is that? It consists of the great love which is consummated in enlightenment; of the great compassion which is consummated in the concentration of the holy Dharma on the liberation of all living beings; of the great joy which is consummated in the awareness of the supreme happiness of all living beings; and of the great equanimity which is consummated in concentration through knowledge.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the transcendence of generosity, which is consummated in peacefulness and self-discipline; of the transcendence of morality, which is consummated in the moral development of immoral beings; of

the transcendence of tolerance, consummated through the principle of selflessness; of the transcendence of effort, consummated in initiative toward enlightenment; of the transcendence of meditation, consummated in the solitude of body and mind; and of the transcendence of wisdom, consummated in the omniscient gnosis.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the meditation of voidness, consummated in effectiveness in the development of all living beings; of the meditation of sign-less-ness, consummated in the purification of all compounded things; and of the meditation of wish-less-ness, consummated in voluntarily assuming rebirths.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of heroic strength, consummated in the upholding of the holy Dharma; of the power of life, consummated in the means of unification; of the absence of pride, consummated in becoming the slave and the disciple of all living beings; of the gain of body, health, and wealth, consummated by the extraction of essence from the essenceless; of mindfulness, consummated by the six remembrances; of positive thought, consummated through the truly enjoyable Dharma; of purity of livelihood, consummated by correct spiritual practice; of the respect of saints, consummated by joyful and faithful service; of soberness of mind, consummated by absence of dislike for ordinary people; of high resolve, consummated by renunciation; of skill in erudition, consummated by religious practice; of retirement in solitary retreats, consummated by understanding things free of passions; of introspective meditation, consummated by attainment of the Buddha-gnosis; of the stage of the practice of yoga, consummated by the yoga of liberating all living beings from their passions.

"The Dharma-sacrifice consists of the store of merit which is consummated by the auspicious signs and marks, the ornaments of the Buddha-fields, and all other means of development of living beings; of the store of knowledge which is consummated in the ability to teach the Dharma according to the thoughts and actions of all living beings; of the store of wisdom, which is consummated in the uniform gnosis free of acceptance and rejection in regard to all things; of the store of all roots of virtue, consummated in the abandonment of all passions, obscurations, and un-virtuous things; and of the attainment of all

the aids to enlightenment, consummated in the realization of the gnosis of omniscience as well as in accomplishment of all virtue.

"That, noble son, is the Dharma-sacrifice. The bodhisattva who lives by this Dharma-sacrifice is the best of sacrifice's, and, through his extreme sacrifice, is himself worthy of offerings from all people, including the gods.'

"Lord, as soon as the householder had discoursed thus, two hundred Brahmans among the crowd of Brahmans present conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. And I, full of astonishment, having saluted this good man by touching his feet with my head, took from around my neck a necklace of pearls worth one hundred thousand pieces of gold and offered it to him. But he would not accept it. I then said to him, 'Please accept, good man, this necklace of pearls, out of compassion for me, and give it to whomsoever you wish.'

"Then, Vimalakirti took the pearls and divided them into two halves. He gave one half of them to the lowliest poor of the city, who had been disdained by those present at the sacrifice. The other half he offered to the Tathágata Dusprasaha. And he performed a miracle such that all present beheld the universe called Marici and the Tathágata Dusprasaha. On the head of the Tathágata Dusprasaha, the pearl necklace took the form of a pavilion, decorated with strings of pearls, resting on four bases, with four columns, symmetrical, well constructed, and lovely to behold. Having shown such a miracle, Vimalakirti said, 'the giver who makes gifts to the lowliest poor of the city, considering them as worthy of offering as the Tathágata himself, the giver who gives without any discrimination, impartially, with no expectation of reward, and with great love - this giver, I say, totally fulfills the Dharma-sacrifice.'

"Then the poor of the city, having seen that miracle and having heard that teaching, conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. Therefore, Lord, I am reluctant to go to that good man to inquire about his illness."

In the same way, all the bodhisattvas, great spiritual heroes, told the stories of their conversations with Vimalakirti and declared their reluctance to go to him.



## 5. The Consolation of the Invalid

Then, the Buddha said to the crown prince, Manjusri, "Manjusri, go to the Licchavi Vimalakirti to inquire about his illness."

Manjusri replied, "Lord, it is difficult to attend upon the Licchavi Vimalakirti. He is gifted with marvelous eloquence concerning the law of the profound. He is extremely skilled in full expressions and in the reconciliation of dichotomies. His eloquence is inexorable, and no one can resist his imperturbable intellect. He accomplishes all the activities of the bodhisattvas. He penetrates all the secret mysteries of the bodhisattvas and the Buddhas. He is skilled in civilizing all the abodes of devils. He plays with the great super-knowledge's. He is consummate in wisdom and liberative technique. He has attained the supreme excellence of the indivisible, non-dual sphere of the ultimate realm. He is skilled in teaching the Dharma with its infinite modalities within the uniform ultimate. He is skilled in granting means of attainment in accordance with the spiritual faculties of all living beings. He has thoroughly integrated his realization with skill in liberative technique. He has attained decisiveness with regard to all questions. Thus, although he cannot be withstood by someone of my feeble defenses, still, sustained by the grace of the Buddha, I will go to him and will converse with him as well as I can."

Thereupon, in that assembly, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the Sakras, the Brahmas, the Lokapalas, and the gods and goddesses, all had this thought: "Surely the conversations of the young prince Manjusri and that good man will result in a profound teaching of the Dharma."

Thus, eight thousand bodhisattvas, five hundred disciples, a great number of Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and many hundreds of thousands of gods and goddesses, all followed the crown prince Manjusri to listen to the Dharma. And the crown prince Manjusri, surrounded and followed by these bodhisattvas, disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, gods, and goddesses, entered the great city of Vaisali.

Meanwhile, the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought to himself, "Manjusri, the crown prince, is coming here with numerous attendants. Now, may this house be transformed into emptiness!"

Then, magically his house became empty. Even the doorkeeper disappeared. And, except for the invalid's couch upon which Vimalakirti himself was lying, no bed or couch or seat could be seen anywhere.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti saw the crown prince Manjusri and addressed him thus: "Manjusri! Welcome, Manjusri! You are very welcome! There you are, without any coming. You appear, without any seeing. You are heard, without any hearing."

Manjusri declared, "Householder, it is as you say. Who comes, finally comes not. Who goes, finally goes not.

Why? Who comes is not known to come. Who goes is not known to go. Who appears is finally not to be seen.

"Good sir, is your condition tolerable? Is it livable? Are your physical elements not disturbed? Is your sickness diminishing? Is it not increasing? The Buddha asks about you - if you have slight trouble, slight discomfort, slight sickness, if your distress is light, if you are cared for, strong, at ease, without self-reproach, and if you are living in touch with the supreme happiness.

"Householder, whence came this sickness of yours? How long will it continue? How does it stand? How can it be alleviated?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, my sickness comes from ignorance and the thirst for existence and it will last as long as do the sicknesses of all living beings. Were all living beings to be free from sickness, I also would not be sick. Why? Manjusri, for the bodhisattva, the world consists only of living beings, and sickness is inherent in living in the world. Were all living beings free of sickness, the bodhisattva also would be free of sickness. For example, Manjusri, when the only son of a merchant is sick, both his parents become sick on account of the sickness of their son. And the parents will suffer as long as that only son does not recover from his sickness. Just so, Manjusri, the bodhisattva loves all living beings as if each were his only child. He becomes

sick when they are sick and is cured when they are cured. You ask me, Manjusri, whence comes my sickness; the sicknesses of the bodhisattvas arise from great compassion."

Manjusri: Householder, why is your house empty? Why have you no servants?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, all Buddha-fields are also empty.

Manjusri: What makes them empty?

Vimalakirti: They are empty because of emptiness.

Manjusri: What is "empty" about emptiness?

Vimalakirti: Constructions are empty, because of emptiness.

Manjusri: Can emptiness be conceptually constructed?

Vimalakirti: Even that concept is itself empty, and emptiness cannot construct emptiness.

Manjusri: Householder, where should emptiness be sought?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, emptiness should be sought among the sixty-two convictions.

Manjusri: Where should the sixty-two convictions be sought?

Vimalakirti: They should be sought in the liberation of the Tathágatas.

Manjusri: Where should the liberation of the Tathágatas be sought?

Vimalakirti: It should be sought in the prime mental activity of all living beings. Manjusri, you ask me why I am without servants, but all Mara's and opponents are my servants. Why? The Mara's advocate this life of birth and death and the bodhisattva does not avoid life. The heterodox opponents advocate convictions, and the bodhisattva is not troubled by convictions. Therefore, all Mara's and opponents are my servants.

Manjusri: Householder, of what sort is your sickness?

Vimalakirti: It is immaterial and invisible.

Manjusri: Is it physical or mental?

Vimalakirti: It is not physical, since the body is insubstantial in itself. It is not mental, since the nature of the mind is like illusion.

Manjusri: Householder, which of the four main elements is disturbed - earth, water, fire, or air?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, I am sick only because the elements of living beings are disturbed by sicknesses.

Manjusri: Householder, how should a bodhisattva console another bodhisattva who is sick?

Vimalakirti: He should tell him that the body is impermanent, but should not exhort him to renunciation or disgust. He should tell him that the body is miserable, but should not encourage him to find solace in liberation;

that the body is selfless, but that living beings should be developed; that the body is peaceful, but not to seek any ultimate calm. He should urge him to confess his evil deeds, but not for the sake of absolution. He should

encourage his empathy for all living beings on account of his own sickness, his remembrance of suffering experienced from beginning-less time, and his consciousness of working for the welfare of living beings. He should encourage him not to be distressed, but to manifest the roots of virtue, to maintain the primal purity and the lack of craving, and thus to always strive to become the king of healers, who can cure all sicknesses. Thus should a bodhisattva console a sick bodhisattva, in such a way as to make him happy.

Manjusri asked, "Noble sir, how should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, a sick bodhisattva should control his own mind with the following consideration: Sickness arises from total involvement in the process of misunderstanding from beginning-less time. It arises from the passions that result from

unreal mental constructions, and hence ultimately nothing is perceived which can be said to be sick. Why? The body is the issue of the four main elements, and in these elements there is no owner and no agent. There is no self in this body, and except for arbitrary insistence on self, ultimately no "I" which can be said to be sick can be apprehended. Therefore, thinking "I" should not adhere to any self, and "I" should rest in the knowledge of the root of illness,' he should abandon the conception of himself as a personality and produce the conception of himself as a thing, thinking, 'This body is an aggregate of many things; when it is born, only things are born; when it ceases, only things cease; these things have no awareness or feeling of each other; when they are born, they do not think, "I am born." When they cease, they do not think, "I cease."

"Furthermore, he should understand thoroughly the conception of himself as a thing by cultivating the following consideration: 'Just as in the case of the conception of "self," so the conception of "thing" is also a misunderstanding, and this misunderstanding is also a grave sickness; I should free myself from this sickness and should strive to abandon it.'

"What is the elimination of this sickness? It is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness. What is the elimination of egoism and possessiveness? It is the freedom from dualism. What is freedom from dualism? It is the absence of involvement with either the external or the internal. What is absence of involvement with either external or internal? It is non-deviation, non-fluctuation, and non-distraction from equanimity. What is equanimity? It is the equality of everything from self to liberation. Why because both self and liberation are void. How can both be void? As verbal designations, they both are void, and neither is established in reality. Therefore, one who sees such equality makes no difference between sickness and void ness; his sickness is itself void ness, and that sickness as void ness is itself void.

"The sick bodhisattva should recognize that sensation is ultimately non-sensation, but he should not realize the cessation of sensation. Although both pleasure and pain are abandoned when the Buddha-qualities are fully accomplished, there is then

no sacrifice of the great compassion for all living beings living in the bad migrations. Thus, recognizing in his own suffering the infinite sufferings of these living beings, the bodhisattva correctly contemplates these living beings and resolves to cure all sicknesses. As for these living beings, there is nothing to be applied, and there is nothing to be removed; one has only to teach them the Dharma for them to realize the basis from which sicknesses arise. What is this basis? It is object-perception.

Insofar as apparent objects are perceived, they are the basis of sickness. What things are perceived as objects?

The three realms of existence are perceived as objects. What is the thorough understanding of the basic, apparent object? It is its non-perception, as no objects exist ultimately. What is non-perception? The internal subject and the external object are not perceived dualistically. Therefore, it is called non-perception.

"Manjusri, thus should a sick bodhisattva control his own mind in order to overcome old age, sickness, death, and birth. Such, Manjusri, is the sickness of the bodhisattva. If he takes it otherwise, all his efforts will be in vain. For example, one is called 'hero' when one conquers the miseries of aging, sickness, and death.

"The sick bodhisattva should tell himself: 'Just as my sickness is unreal and nonexistent, so the sicknesses of all living beings are unreal and nonexistent.' Through such considerations, he arouses the great compassion toward all living beings without falling into any sentimental compassion. The great compassion that strives to eliminate the accidental passions does not conceive of any life in living beings. Why? Because great compassion that falls into sentimentally purposive views only exhausts the bodhisattva in his reincarnations. But the great compassion, which is free of involvement with sentimentally purposive views, does not exhaust the bodhisattva in all his reincarnations. He does not reincarnate through involvement with such views but reincarnates with his mind free of involvement. Hence, even his reincarnation is like liberation. Being reincarnated as if being liberated, he has the power and ability to teach the Dharma, which liberates living beings from their bondage. As the Lord declares: 'It is not possible for one

who is himself bound to deliver others from their bondage. But one who is himself liberated is able to liberate others from their bondage.' Therefore, the bodhisattva should participate in liberation and should not participate in bondage.

"What is bondage? And what is liberation? To indulge in liberation from the world without employing liberative technique is bondage for the bodhisattva. To engage in life in the world with full employment of liberative technique is liberation for the bodhisattva. To experience the taste of contemplation, meditation, and concentration without skill in liberative technique is bondage. To experience the taste of contemplation and meditation with skill in liberative technique is liberation. Wisdom not integrated with liberative technique is bondage, but wisdom integrated with liberative technique is liberation. Liberative technique not integrated with wisdom is bondage, but liberative technique integrated with wisdom is liberation.

"How is wisdom not integrated with liberative technique a bondage? Wisdom not integrated with liberative technique consists of concentration on voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness, and yet, being motivated by sentimental compassion, failure to concentrate on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the Buddha-field, and on the work of development of living beings it is bondage.

"How is wisdom integrated with liberative technique a liberation? Wisdom integrated with liberative technique consists of being motivated by the great compassion and thus of concentration on cultivation of the auspicious signs and marks, on the adornment of the Buddha-field, and on the work of development of living beings, all the while concentrating on deep investigation of voidness, signlessness, and wishlessness - and it is liberation.

"What is the bondage of liberative technique not integrated with wisdom? The bondage of liberative technique not integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva's planting of the roots of virtue without dedicating them for the sake of enlightenment, while living in the grip of dogmatic convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.

"What is the liberation of liberative technique integrated with wisdom? The liberation of liberative technique integrated with wisdom consists of the bodhisattva's dedication of his roots of virtue for the sake of enlightenment, without taking any pride therein, while forgoing all convictions, passions, attachments, resentments, and their subconscious instincts.

"Manjusri, thus should the sick bodhisattva consider things. His wisdom is the consideration of body, mind, and sickness as impermanent, miserable, empty, and selfless. His liberative technique consists of not exhausting himself by trying to avoid all physical sickness, and in applying himself to accomplish the benefit of living beings, without interrupting the cycle of reincarnations. Furthermore, his wisdom lies in understanding that the body, mind, and sickness are neither new nor old, both simultaneously and sequentially. And his liberative technique lies in not seeking cessation of body, mind, or sicknesses.

"That, Manjusri, is the way a sick bodhisattva should concentrate his mind; he should live neither in control of his mind, nor in indulgence of his mind. Why? To live by indulging the mind is proper for fools and to live in control of the mind is proper for the disciples. Therefore, the bodhisattva should live neither in control nor in indulgence of his mind. Not living in either of the two extremes is the domain of the bodhisattva.

"Not the domain of the ordinary individual and not the domain of the saint, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.

The domain of the world yet not the domain of the passions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one understands liberation, yet does not enter final and complete liberation, there is the domain of the bodhisattva.

Where the four Mara's manifest, yet where all the works of Mara's are transcended, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one seeks the gnosis of omniscience, yet does not attain this gnosis at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one knows the Four Holy Truths, yet does not realize those truths at the wrong time, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of introspective insight, wherein one does not arrest voluntary reincarnation in the world, such is the



domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes birthlessness, yet does not become destined for the ultimate, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one sees relativity without entertaining any convictions, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. Where one associates with all beings, yet keeps free of all afflictive instincts, there is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain of solitude with no place for the exhaustion of body and mind, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the triple world, yet indivisible from the ultimate realm, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of voidness, yet where one cultivates all types of virtues, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of signlessness, where one keeps in sight the deliverance of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of wishlessness, where one voluntarily manifests lives in the world, such is the domain of the bodhisattva.

"A domain essentially without undertaking, yet where all the roots of virtue are undertaken without interruption, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six transcendences, where one attains the transcendence of the thoughts and actions of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain

of the six super-knowledge's, wherein defilements are not exhausted, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living by the holy Dharma, without even perceiving any evil paths, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four immeasurables, where one does not accept rebirth in the heaven of Brahma, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the six remembrances, unaffected by any sort of defilement, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of contemplation, meditation, and concentration, where one does not reincarnate in the formless realms by force of these meditations and concentrations, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four right efforts, where the duality of good and evil is not apprehended, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the four bases of magical powers, where they are effortlessly mastered, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the five spiritual faculties, where one knows the degrees of the spiritual faculties

of living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of living with the five powers, where one delights in the ten powers of the Tathágata, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of perfection of the seven factors of enlightenment, where one is skilled in the knowledge of fine intellectual distinctions, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the holy eightfold path, where one delights in the unlimited path of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the cultivation of the aptitude for mental quiescence and transcendental analysis, where one does not fall into extreme quietism, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of the realization of the unborn nature of all things, yet of the perfection of the body, the auspicious signs and marks, and the ornaments of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of manifesting the attitudes of the disciples and the solitary sages without sacrificing the qualities of the Buddha, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain of conformity to all things utterly pure in nature while manifesting behavior that suits the inclinations of all living beings, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. A domain where one realizes that all the Buddha-fields are indestructible and un-creatable, having the nature of infinite space, yet where one manifests the establishment of the qualities of the Buddha-fields in all their variety and magnitude, such is the domain of the bodhisattva. The domain where one turns the wheel of the holy Dharma and manifests the magnificence of ultimate liberation, yet never forsakes the career of the bodhisattva, such is the domain of the bodhisattva!"

When Vimalakirti had spoken this discourse, eight thousand of the gods in the company of the crown prince Manjusri conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

## 6. The Inconceivable Liberation

Thereupon, the venerable Shariputra had this thought: "There is not even a single chair in this house. Where are these disciples and bodhisattvas going to sit?"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti read the thought of the venerable Shariputra and said, "Reverend Shariputra, did you come here

for the sake of the Dharma? Or did you come here for the sake of a chair?"

Shariputra replied, "I came for the sake of the Dharma, not for the sake of a chair."

Vimalakirti continued, "Reverend Shariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested even in his own body, much less in a chair. Reverend Shariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma has no interest in matter, sensation, intellect, motivation, or consciousness. He has no interest in these aggregates, or in the elements, or in the sense-media. Interested in the Dharma, he has no interest in the realm of desire, the realm of matter, or the immaterial realm. Interested in the Dharma, he is not interested in attachment to the Buddha, attachment to the Dharma, or attachment to the Sangha. Reverend Shariputra, he who is interested in the Dharma is not interested in recognizing suffering, abandoning its origination, realizing its cessation, or practicing the path. Why? The Dharma is ultimately without formulation and without verbalization. Who verbalizes: 'Suffering should be recognized, origination should be eliminated, cessation should be realized, the path should be practiced,' is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in verbalization.

"Reverend Shariputra, the Dharma is calm and peaceful. Those who are engaged in production and destruction are not interested in the Dharma, are not interested in solitude, but are interested in production and destruction.

"Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, the Dharma is without taint and free of defilement. He who is attached to anything, even to liberation, is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in the taint of desire. The Dharma is not an object. He who pursues objects is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in objects. The Dharma is without acceptance or rejection. He who holds on to things or lets go of things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in holding and letting go. The Dharma is not a secure refuge. He who enjoys a secure refuge is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in a secure refuge. The Dharma is without sign. He whose consciousness pursues signs is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in signs.

The Dharma is not a society. He who seeks to associate with the Dharma is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in association. The Dharma is not a sight, a sound, a category, or an idea. He who is involved in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in sights, sounds, categories, and ideas.

Reverend Shariputra, the Dharma is free of compounded things and uncompounded things. He who adheres to compounded things and uncompounded things is not interested in the Dharma but is interested in adhering to compounded things and uncompounded things.

"Thereupon, reverend Shariputra, if you are interested in the Dharma, you should take no interest in anything."

When Vimalakirti had spoken this discourse, five hundred gods obtained the purity of the Dharma-eye in viewing all things.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the crown prince, Manjusri, "Manjusri, you have already been in innumerable hundreds of thousands of Buddha-fields throughout the universes of the ten directions. In which Buddha-field did you see the best lion-thrones with the finest qualities?"

Manjusri replied, "Noble sir, if one crosses the Buddha-fields to the east, which are more numerous than all the grains of sand of thirty-two Ganges Rivers, one will discover a universe called Merudhvaja. There dwells a Tathágata called Merupradiparaja. His body measures eighty-four hundred thousand leagues in height, and the height of his throne is sixty-eight hundred thousand leagues. The bodhisattvas there are forty-two hundred thousand leagues tall and their own thrones are thirty-four hundred thousand leagues high. Noble sir, the finest and most superb thrones exist in that universe Merudhvaja, which is the Buddha-field of the Tathágata Merupradiparaja."

At that moment, the Licchavi Vimalakirti, having focused himself in concentration, performed a miraculous feat such that the Lord Tathágata Merupradiparaja, in the universe Merudhvaja, sent to this universe thirty-two hundred thousand thrones. These thrones were so tall, spacious, and beautiful that the

bodhisattvas, great disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and other gods had never before seen the like. The thrones descended from the sky and came to rest in the house of the Licchavi Vimalakirti. The thirty-two hundred thousand thrones arranged themselves without crowding and the house seemed to enlarge itself accordingly. The great city of Vaisali did not become obscured; neither did the land of Jambudvīpa, (or "land of the jambu trees," this is a land populated by people with very bad karma) nor the world of four continents.

Everything else appeared just as it was before.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the young prince Manjusri, "Manjusri, let the bodhisattvas be seated on these thrones, having transformed their bodies to a suitable size!"

Then, those bodhisattvas who had attained the super-knowledge's transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But the beginner bodhisattvas were not able to transform themselves to sit upon the thrones. Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti taught these beginner bodhisattvas a teaching that enabled them to attain the five super-knowledge's, and, having attained them, they transformed their bodies to a height of forty-two hundred thousand leagues and sat upon the thrones. But still the great disciples were not able to seat themselves upon the thrones.

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the venerable Shariputra, "Reverend Shariputra, take your seat upon a throne."

He replied, "Good sir, the thrones are too big and too high, and I cannot sit upon them."

Vimalakirti said, "Reverend Shariputra, bow down to the Tathāgata Merupradīparaja, and you will be able to take your seat."

Then, the great disciples bowed down to the Tathāgata Merupradīparaja and they were seated upon the thrones.

Then, the venerable Shariputra said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble sir, it is astonishing that these thousands of thrones, so big and so high, should fit into such a small house and that the

great city of Vaisali, the villages, cities, kingdoms, capitals of Jambudvipa, the other three continents, the abodes of the gods, the nagas, the yakshas, the gandharvas, the asuras, the garudas, the kimnaras, and the mahoragas - that all of these should appear without any obstacle, just as they were before!"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti replied, "Reverend Shariputra, for the Tathágotas and the bodhisattvas, there is a liberation called 'Inconceivable.' The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can put the king of mountains, Sumeru, which is so high, so great, so noble, and so vast, into a mustard seed. He can perform this feat without enlarging the mustard seed and without shrinking Mount Sumeru. And the deities of the assembly of the four Maharajas and of the Trayastrimsa heavens do not even know where they are.

Only those beings that are destined to be disciplined by miracles see and understand the putting of the king of mountains, Sumeru, into the mustard seed; that, reverend Shariputra is an entrance to the domain of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas.

"Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can pour into a single pore of his skin all the waters of the four great oceans, without injuring the water-animals such as fish, tortoises, crocodiles, frogs, and other creatures, and without the nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, and asuras even being aware of where they are. And the whole operation is visible without any injury or disturbance to any of those living beings.

"Such a bodhisattva can pick up with his right hand this billion-world-galactic universe as if it were a potter's wheel and, spinning it round, throw it beyond universes as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, without the living beings therein knowing their motion or its origin, and he can catch it and put it back in its place, without the living beings suspecting their coming and going; and yet the whole operation is visible.

"Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, there are beings who become disciplined after an immense period of evolution, and there are also those who are disciplined after a short period of

evolution. The bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation, for the sake of disciplining those living beings who are disciplined through immeasurable periods of evolution, can make the passing of a week seem like the passing of an aeon, and he can make the passing of an aeon seem like the passing of a week for those who are disciplined through a short period of evolution. The living beings that are disciplined through an immeasurable period of evolution actually perceive a week to be the passing of an aeon, and those disciplined by a short period of evolution actually perceive an aeon to be the passing of a week.

"Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can manifest all the splendors of the virtues of all the Buddha-fields within a single Buddha-field. Likewise, he can place all living beings in the palm of his right hand and can show them with the supernatural speed of thought all the Buddha-fields without ever leaving his own Buddha-field. He can display in a single pore all the offerings ever offered to all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and the orbs of all the suns, moons, and stars of the ten directions. He can inhale all the hurricanes of the cosmic wind-atmospheres of the ten directions into his mouth without harming his own body and without letting the forests and the grasses of the Buddha-fields be flattened. He can take all the masses of fire of all the supernovas that ultimately consume all the universes of all the Buddha-fields into his stomach without interfering with their functions. Having crossed Buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges downward, and having taken up a Buddha-field, he can rise up through Buddha-fields as numerous as the sands of the Ganges and place it on high, just as a strong man may pick up a jujube leaf on the point of a needle.

"Thus, a bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation can magically transform any kind of living being into a universal monarch, a Lokapala, a Sakra, a Brahma, a disciple, a solitary sage, a bodhisattva, and even into a Buddha. The bodhisattva can transform miraculously all the cries and noises, superior, mediocre, and inferior, of all living beings of the ten directions, into the voice of the Buddha, with the words of the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha, having them proclaim, 'Impermanent!

Miserable! Empty! Selfless!' And he can cause them to recite the words and sounds of all the teachings taught by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

"Reverend Shariputra, I have shown you only a small part of the entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation. Reverend Shariputra, to explain to you the teaching of the full entrance into the domain of the bodhisattva who lives in the inconceivable liberation would require more than an aeon, and even more than that."

Then, the patriarch Maha-Kasyapa, having heard this teaching of the inconceivable liberation of the bodhisattvas, was amazed, and he said to the venerable Shariputra, "Venerable Shariputra, if one were to show a variety of things to a person blind from birth, he would not be able to see a single thing. Likewise, venerable Shariputra, when this door of the inconceivable liberation is taught, all the disciples and solitary sages are sightless, like the man blind from birth, and cannot comprehend even a single cause of the inconceivable liberation. Who is there among the wise that, hearing about this inconceivable liberation, does not conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment? As for us, whose faculties are deteriorated, like a burned and rotten seed, what else can we do if we do not become receptive to this great vehicle? We, all the disciples and solitary sages, upon hearing this teaching of the Dharma, should utter a cry of regret that would shake this billion-world-galactic universe! And as for the bodhisattvas, when they hear of this inconceivable liberation they should be as joyful as a young crown prince when he takes the diadem and is anointed, and they should increase to the utmost their devotion to this inconceivable liberation. Indeed, what could the entire host of Mara's ever do to one who is devoted to this inconceivable liberation?"

When the patriarch Maha-Kasyapa had uttered this discourse, thirty-two thousand gods conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the patriarch Maha-Kasyapa, "Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, the Mara's who play the devil in the innumerable universes of the ten directions are all bodhisattvas dwelling in the inconceivable liberation, who are



playing the devil in order to develop living beings through their skill in liberative technique. Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, all the miserable beggars who come to the bodhisattvas of the innumerable universes of the ten directions to ask for a hand, a foot, an ear, a nose, some blood, muscles, bones, marrow, an eye, a torso, a head, a limb, a member, a throne, a kingdom, a country, a wife, a son, a daughter, a slave, a slave-girl, a horse, an elephant, a chariot, a cart, gold, silver, jewels, pearls, conches, crystal, coral, beryl, treasures, food, drink, elixirs, and clothes - these demanding beggars are usually bodhisattvas living in the inconceivable liberation who, through their skill in liberative technique, wish to test and thus demonstrate the firmness of the high resolve of the bodhisattvas. Why? Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, the bodhisattvas demonstrate that firmness by means of terrible austerities. Ordinary persons have no power to be thus demanding of bodhisattvas, unless they are granted the opportunity. They are not capable of killing and depriving in that manner without being freely given the chance.

"Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, just as a glowworm cannot eclipse the light of the sun, so reverend Maha-Kasyapa, it is not possible without special allowance that an ordinary person can thus attack and deprive a bodhisattva. Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, just as a donkey could not muster an attack on a wild elephant, even so, reverend Maha-Kasyapa, one who is not himself a bodhisattva cannot harass another bodhisattva, and only a bodhisattva can tolerate the harassment of another bodhisattva. Reverend Maha-Kasyapa, such is the introduction to the power of the knowledge of liberative technique of the bodhisattvas who live in the inconceivable liberation."

## 7. The Goddess

Thereupon, Manjusri, the crown prince, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "Good sir, how should a bodhisattva regard all living beings?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, a bodhisattva should regard all living beings as a wise man regards the reflection of the moon in water or as magicians regard men created by magic. He should regard them as being like a face in a mirror; like the water of a mirage; like the sound of an echo; like a mass of clouds in

the sky; like the previous moment of a ball of foam; like the appearance and disappearance of a bubble of water; like the core of a plantain tree; like a flash of lightning; like the fifth great element; like the seventh sense-medium; like the appearance of matter in an immaterial realm; like a sprout from a rotten seed; like a tortoise-hair coat; like the fun of games for one who wishes to die; like the egoistic views of a stream-winner; like a third rebirth of a once-returner; like the descent of a non-returner into a womb; like the existence of desire, hatred, and folly in a saint; like thoughts of avarice, immorality, wickedness, and hostility in a bodhisattva who has attained tolerance; like the instincts of passions in a Tathágata; like the perception of color in one blind from birth; like the inhalation and exhalation of an ascetic absorbed in the meditation of cessation; like the track of a bird in the sky; like the erection of a eunuch; like the pregnancy of a barren woman; like the un-produced passions of an emanated incarnation of the Tathágata; like dream-visions seen after waking; like the passions of one who is free of conceptualizations; like fire burning without fuel; like the reincarnation of one who has attained ultimate liberation.

"Precisely thus, Manjusri, does a bodhisattva who realizes the ultimate selflessness consider all beings."

Manjusri then asked further, "Noble sir, if a bodhisattva considers all living beings in such a way, how does he generate the great love toward them?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, when a bodhisattva considers all living beings in this way, he thinks: 'Just as I have realized the Dharma, so should I teach it to living beings.' Thereby, he generates the love that is truly a refuge for all living beings; the love that is peaceful because free of grasping; the love that is not feverish, because free of passions; the love that accords with reality because it is equanimous in all three times; the love that is without conflict because free of the violence of the passions; the love that is non-dual because it is involved neither with the external nor with the internal; the love that is imperturbable because totally ultimate.

"Thereby he generates the love that is firm, its high resolve unbreakable, like a diamond; the love that is pure, purified in its

intrinsic nature; the love that is even, its aspirations being equal; the saint's love that has eliminated its enemy; the bodhisattva's love that continuously develops living beings; The Tathágatas love that understands reality; the Buddha's love that causes living beings to awaken from their sleep; the love that is spontaneous because it is fully enlightened spontaneously; the love that is enlightenment because it is unity of experience; the love that has no presumption because it has eliminated attachment and aversion; the love that is great compassion because it infuses the Mahayana with radiance; the love that is never exhausted because it acknowledges voidness and selflessness; the love that is giving because it bestows the gift of Dharma free of the tight fist of a bad teacher; the love that is morality because it improves immoral living beings; the love that is tolerance because it protects both self and others; the love that is effort because it takes responsibility for all living beings; the love that is contemplation because it refrains from indulgence in tastes; the love that is wisdom because it causes attainment at the proper time; the love that is liberative technique because it shows the way everywhere; the love that is without formality because it is pure in motivation; the love that is without deviation because it acts from decisive motivation; the love that is high resolve because it is without passions; the love that is without deceit because it is not artificial; the love that is happiness because it introduces living beings to the happiness of the Buddha. Such, Manjusri, is the great love of a bodhisattva."

Manjusri: What is the great compassion of a bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is the giving of all accumulated roots of virtue to all living beings.

Manjusri: What is the great joy of the bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is to be joyful and without regret in giving.

Manjusri: What is the equanimity of the bodhisattva?

Vimalakirti: It is what benefits both self and others.

Manjusri: To what should one resort when terrified by fear of life?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, a bodhisattva who is terrified by fear of life should resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha.

Manjusri: Where should he who wishes to resort to the magnanimity of the Buddha take his stand?

Vimalakirti: He should stand in equanimity toward all living beings.

Manjusri: Where should he who wishes to stand in equanimity toward all living beings take his stand?

Vimalakirti: He should live for the liberation of all living beings.

Manjusri: What should he who wishes to liberate all living beings do?

Vimalakirti: He should liberate them from their passions.

Manjusri: How should he who wishes to eliminate passions apply himself?

Vimalakirti: He should apply himself appropriately.

Manjusri: How should he apply himself, to "apply himself appropriately"?

Vimalakirti: He should apply himself to production-less-ness and to destruction-less-ness.

Manjusri: What is not produced? And what is not destroyed?

Vimalakirti: Evil is not produced and good is not destroyed.

Manjusri: What is the root of good and evil?

Vimalakirti: Materiality is the root of good and evil.

Manjusri: What is the root of materiality?

Vimalakirti: Desire is the root of materiality.

Manjusri: What is the root of desire and attachment?

Vimalakirti: Unreal construction is the root of desire.

Manjusri: What is the root of unreal construction?

Vimalakirti: The false concept is its root.

Manjusri: What is the root of the false concept?

Vimalakirti: Base-less-ness.

Manjusri: What is the root of base-less-ness?

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, when something is baseless, how can it have any root? Therefore, all things stand on the root, which is baseless.

Thereupon, a certain goddess who lived in that house, having heard this teaching of the Dharma of the great heroic bodhisattvas, and being delighted, pleased, and overjoyed, manifested herself in a material body and showered the great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas, and the great disciples with heavenly flowers. When the flowers fell on the bodies of the bodhisattvas, they fell off on the floor, but when they fell on the bodies of the great disciples, they stuck to them and did not fall. The great disciples shook the flowers and even tried to use their magical powers, but still the flowers would not shake off. Then, the goddess said to the venerable Shariputra, "Reverend Shariputra, why do you shake these flowers?"

Shariputra replied, "Goddess, these flowers are not proper for religious persons and so we are trying to shake them off."

The goddess said, "Do not say that, reverend Shariputra. Why? These flowers are proper indeed! Why? Such flowers have neither constructual thought nor discrimination. But the elder Shariputra has both constructual thought and discrimination.

"Reverend Shariputra, impropriety for one who has renounced the world for the discipline of the rightly taught Dharma consists of constructual thought and discrimination, yet the elders are full of such thoughts. One who is without such thoughts is always proper.

"Reverend Shariputra, see how these flowers do not stick to the bodies of these great spiritual heroes, the bodhisattvas! This is

because they have eliminated constructual thoughts and discriminations.

"For example, evil spirits have power over fearful men but cannot disturb the fearless. Likewise, those intimidated by fear of the world are in the power of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and textures, which do not disturb those who are free from fear of the passions inherent in the constructive world. Thus, these flowers stick to the bodies of those who have not eliminated their instincts for the passions and do not stick to the bodies of those who have eliminated their instincts. Therefore, the flowers do not stick to the bodies of these bodhisattvas, who have abandoned all instincts."

Then the venerable Shariputra said to the goddess, "Goddess, how long have you been in this house?"

The goddess replied, "I have been here as long as the elder has been in liberation."

Shariputra said, "Then, have you been in this house for quite some time?"

The goddess said, "Has the elder been in liberation for quite some time?"

At that, the elder Shariputra fell silent.

The goddess continued, "Elder, you are 'foremost of the wise!' Why do you not speak? Now, when it is your turn, you do not answer the question."

Shariputra: Since liberation is inexpressible, goddess, I do not know what to say.

Goddess: All the syllables pronounced by the elder have the nature of liberation. Why? Liberation is neither internal nor external, nor can it be apprehended apart from them. Likewise, syllables are neither internal nor external, nor can they be apprehended anywhere else. Therefore, reverend Shariputra, do not point to liberation by abandoning speech! Why? The holy liberation is the equality of all things!

Shariputra: Goddess, is not liberation the freedom from desire, hatred, and folly?

Goddess: "Liberation is freedom from desire, hatred, and folly" that is the teaching of the excessively proud.

But those free of pride are taught that the very nature of desire, hatred, and folly is itself liberation.

Shariputra: Excellent! Excellent, goddess! Pray, what have you attained, what have you realized, that you have such eloquence?

Goddess: I have attained nothing, reverend Shariputra. I have no realization. Therefore I have such eloquence.

Whoever thinks, "I have attained! I have realized!" is overly proud in the discipline of the well-taught Dharma.

Shariputra: Goddess, do you belong to the disciple-vehicle, to the solitary-vehicle, or to the great vehicle?

Goddess: I belong to the disciple-vehicle when I teach it to those who need it. I belong to the solitary-vehicle when I teach the twelve links of dependent origination to those who need them. And, since I never abandon the great compassion, I belong to the great vehicle, as all need that teaching to attain ultimate liberation.

Nevertheless, reverend Shariputra, just as one cannot smell the castor plant in a magnolia wood, but only the magnolia flowers, so, reverend Shariputra, living in this house, which is redolent with the perfume of the virtues of the Buddha-qualities, one does not smell the perfume of the disciples and the solitary sages. Reverend Shariputra, the Sakras, the Brahmas, the Lokapalas, the devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas who live in this house hear the Dharma from the mouth of this holy man and, enticed by the perfume of the virtues of the Buddha-qualities, proceed to conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

Reverend Shariputra, I have been in this house for twelve years, and I have heard no discourses concerning the disciples and solitary sages but have heard only those concerning the great

love, the great compassion, and the inconceivable qualities of the Buddha.

Reverend Shariputra, eight strange and wonderful things manifest themselves constantly in this house. What are these eight?

A light of golden hue shines here constantly, so bright that it is hard to distinguish day and night; and neither the moon nor the sun shines here distinctly. That is the first wonder of this house.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, whoever enters this house is no longer troubled by his passions from the moment he is within. That is the second strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, this house is never forsaken by Sakra, Brahma, the Lokapalas, and the bodhisattvas from all the other Buddha-fields. That is the third strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, this house is never empty of the sounds of the Dharma, the discourse on the six transcendences, and the discourses of the irreversible wheel of the Dharma. That is the fourth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, in this house one always hears the rhythms, songs, and music of gods and men, and from this music constantly resounds the sound of the infinite Dharma of the Buddha. That is the fifth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, in this house there are always four inexhaustible treasures, replete with all kinds of jewels, which never decrease, although all the poor and wretched may partake to their satisfaction.

That is the sixth strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, at the wish of this good man, to this house come the innumerable Tathágatas of the ten directions, such as the Tathágatas Shakyamuni, Amitabha, Aksobhya, Ratnasri, Ratnarcis, Ratnacandra, Ratnavyuha, Dusprasaha, Sarvarthasiddha, Ratnabahula, Simhakirti, Simhasvara, and so forth; and when they come they teach the



door of Dharma called the "Secrets of the Tathágatas" and then depart. That is the seventh strange and wonderful thing.

Furthermore, reverend Shariputra, all the splendors of the abodes of the gods and all the splendors of the fields of the Buddhas shine forth in this house. That is the eighth strange and wonderful thing.

Reverend Shariputra, these eight strange and wonderful things are seen in this house. Who then, seeing such inconceivable things, would believe the teaching of the disciples?

Shariputra: Goddess, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?

Goddess: Although I have sought my "female state" for these twelve years, I have not yet found it. Reverend Shariputra, if a magician were to incarnate a woman by magic, would you ask her, "What prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

Shariputra: No! Such a woman would not really exist, so what would there be to transform?

Goddess: Just so, reverend Shariputra, all things do not really exist. Now, would you think, "What prevents one whose nature is that of a magical incarnation from transforming herself out of her female state?"

Thereupon, the goddess employed her magical power to cause the elder Shariputra to appear in her form and to cause herself to appear in his form. Then the goddess, transformed into Shariputra, said to Shariputra, transformed into a goddess, "Reverend Shariputra, what prevents you from transforming yourself out of your female state?"

And Shariputra, transformed into the goddess, replied, "I no longer appear in the form of a male! My body has changed into the body of a woman! I do not know what to transform!"

The goddess continued, "If the elder could again change out of the female state, then all women could also change out of their female states. All women appear in the form of women in just the same way as the elder appears in the form of a woman. While they are not women in reality, they appear in the form of women. With this in mind, the Buddha said, 'In all things, there is neither male nor female.'"

Then, the goddess released her magical power and each returned to his ordinary form. She then said to him,

"Reverend Shariputra, what have you done with your female form?"

Shariputra: I neither made it nor did I change it.

Goddess: Just so, all things are neither made nor changed, and that they are not made and not changed, that is the teaching of the Buddha.

Shariputra: Goddess, where will you be born when you transmigrate after death?

Goddess: I will be born where all the magical incarnations of the Tathágata are born.

Shariputra: But the emanated incarnations of the Tathágata do not transmigrate nor are they born.

Goddess: All things and living beings are just the same; they do not transmigrate nor are they born!

Shariputra: Goddess, how soon will you attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood?

Goddess: At such time as you, elder, become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual, then will I attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

Shariputra: Goddess, it is impossible that I should become endowed once more with the qualities of an ordinary individual.

Goddess: Just so, reverend Shariputra, it is impossible that I should attain the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood! Why,

because perfect enlightenment stands upon the impossible. Because it is impossible, no one attains the perfect enlightenment of Buddhahood.

Shariputra: But the Tathágata has declared: "The Tathágatas, who are as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, have attained perfect Buddhahood, are attaining perfect Buddhahood, and will go on attaining perfect Buddhahood."

Goddess: Reverend Shariputra, the expression, "the Buddhas of the past, present and future," is a conventional expression made up of a certain number of syllables. The Buddhas are neither past, nor present, nor future.

Their enlightenment transcends the three times! But tell me, elder, have you attained sainthood?

Shariputra: It is attained, because there is no attainment.

Goddess: Just so, there is perfect enlightenment because there is no attainment of perfect enlightenment.

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the venerable elder Shariputra, "Reverend Shariputra, this goddess has already served ninety-two million billion Buddhas. She plays with the super-knowledge's. She has truly succeeded in all her vows. She has gained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things. She has actually attained irreversibility. She can live wherever she wishes on the strength of her vow to develop living beings."

## 8. The Family of the Tathágatas

Then, the crown prince Manjusri said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble sir, how does the bodhisattva follow the way to attain the qualities of the Buddha?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Manjusri, when the bodhisattva follows the wrong way, he follows the way to attain the qualities of the Buddha."

Manjusri continued, "How does the bodhisattva follow the wrong way?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Even should he enact the five deadly sins, he feels no malice, violence, or hate. Even should he go into the hells, he remains free of all taint of passions. Even should he go into the states of the animals, he remains free of darkness and ignorance. When he goes into the states of the asuras, he remains free of pride, conceit, and arrogance. When he goes into the realm of the lord of death, he accumulates the stores of merit and wisdom. When he goes into the states of motionlessness and immateriality, he does not dissolve therein.

"He may follow the ways of desire, yet he stays free of attachment to the enjoyments of desire. He may follow the ways of hatred, yet he feels no anger to any living being. He may follow the ways of folly, yet he is ever conscious with the wisdom of firm understanding.

"He may follow the ways of avarice, yet he gives away all internal and external things without regard even for his own life. He may follow the ways of immorality, yet, seeing the horror of even the slightest transgressions, he lives by the ascetic practices and austerities. He may follow the ways of wickedness and anger, yet he remains utterly free of malice and lives by love. He may follow the ways of laziness, yet his efforts are uninterrupted as he strives in the cultivation of roots of virtue. He may follow the ways of sensuous distraction, yet; naturally concentrated his contemplation is not dissipated. He may follow the ways of false wisdom, yet, having reached the transcendence of wisdom, he is expert in all mundane and transcendental sciences.

"He may show the ways of sophistry and contention, yet he is always conscious of ultimate meanings and has perfected the use of liberative techniques. He may show the ways of pride, yet he serves as a bridge and a ladder for all people. He may show the ways of the passions, yet he is utterly dispassionate and naturally pure. He may follow the ways of the Mara's, yet he does not really accept their authority in regard to his knowledge of the qualities of the Buddha. He may follow the ways of the disciples, yet he lets living beings hear the teaching they have not heard before. He may follow the ways of the solitary sages, yet he is inspired with great compassion in order to develop all living beings.

"He may follow the ways of the poor, yet he holds in his hand a jewel of inexhaustible wealth. He may follow the ways of cripples, yet he is beautiful and well adorned with the auspicious signs and marks. He may follow the ways of those of lowly birth, yet, through his accumulation of the stores of merit and wisdom, he is born in the family of the Tathágatas. He may follow the ways of the weak, the ugly, and the wretched, yet he is beautiful to look upon, and his body is like that of Narayana.

"He may manifest to living beings the ways of the sick and the unhappy, yet he has entirely conquered and transcended the fear of death.

"He may follow the ways of the rich, yet he is without acquisitiveness and often reflects upon the notion of impermanence.

He may show himself engaged in dancing with harem girls, yet he cleaves to solitude, having crossed the swamp of desire.

"He follows the ways of the dumb and the incoherent, yet, having acquired the power of incantations, he is adorned with a varied eloquence.

"He follows the ways of the heterodox without ever becoming heterodox. He follows the ways of the entire world, yet he reverses all states of existence. He follows the way of liberation without ever abandoning the progress of the world.

"Manjusri, thus does the bodhisattva follow the wrong ways, thereby following the way to the qualities of the Buddha."

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the crown prince Manjusri, "Manjusri, what is the 'family of the Tathágatas'?"

Manjusri replied, "Noble sir, the family of the Tathágatas consists of all basic egoism; of ignorance and the thirst for existence; of lust, hate, and folly; of the four misapprehensions, of the five obscurations, of the six media of sense, of the seven abodes of consciousness, of the eight false paths, of the nine causes of irritation, of the paths of ten sins. Such is the family of the Tathágatas. In short, noble sir, the sixty-two kinds of convictions constitute the family of the Tathágatas!"

Vimalakirti: Manjusri, with what in mind do you say so?

Manjusri: Noble sir, one who stays in the fixed determination of the vision of the uncreated is not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment. However, one who lives among created things, in the mines of passions, without seeing any truth, is indeed capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment.

Noble sir, flowers like the blue lotus, the red lotus, the white lotus, the water lily, and the moon lily do not grow on the dry ground in the wilderness, but do grow in the swamps and mud banks. Just so, the Buddha-qualities do not grow in living beings certainly destined for the uncreated but do grow in those living beings who are like swamps and mud banks of passions. Likewise, as seeds do not grow in the sky but do grow in the earth, so the Buddha-qualities do not grow in those determined for the absolute but do grow in those who conceive the spirit of enlightenment, after having produced a Sumeru-like mountain of egoistic views.

Noble sir, through these considerations one can understand that all passions constitute the family of the Tathágotas. For example, noble sir, without going out into the great ocean, it is impossible to find precious, priceless pearls. Likewise, without going into the ocean of passions, it is impossible to obtain the mind of omniscience.

Then, the elder Maha-Kasyapa applauded the crown prince Manjusri: "Good! Good Manjusri! This is indeed well spoken! This is right! The passions do indeed constitute the family of the Tathágotas. How can such as we, the disciples, conceive the spirit of enlightenment, or become fully enlightened in regard to the qualities of the Buddha? Only those guilty of the five deadly sins can conceive the spirit of enlightenment and can attain Buddhahood, which is the full accomplishment of the qualities of the Buddha!

"Just as, for example, the five desire objects have no impression or effect on those bereft of faculties, even so all the qualities of the Buddha have no impression or effect on the disciples, who have abandoned all adherences.

Thus, the disciples can never appreciate those qualities.

"Therefore, Manjusri, the ordinary individual is grateful to the Tathágata, but the disciples are not grateful.

Why? The ordinary individuals, upon learning of the virtues of the Buddha, conceive the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment, in order to insure the uninterrupted continuity of the heritage of the Three Jewels; but the disciples, although they may hear of the qualities, powers, and fearlessnesses of the Buddha until the end of their days, are not capable of conceiving the spirit of unexcelled perfect enlightenment."

Thereupon, the bodhisattva Sarvarupasamdarsana, who was present in that assembly, addressed the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "Householder, where are your father and mother, your children, your wife, your servants, your maids, your laborers, and your attendants? Where are your friends, your relatives, and your kinsmen? Where are your servants, your horses, your elephants, your chariots, your bodyguards, and your bearers?"

Thus addressed, the Licchavi Vimalakirti spoke the following verses to the bodhisattva Sarvarupasamdarsana:

Of the true bodhisattvas,  
The mother is the transcendence of wisdom,  
The father is the skill in liberative technique;  
The Leaders are born of such parents.

Their wife is the joy in the Dharma,  
Love and compassion are their daughters,  
The Dharma and the truth are their sons;  
And their home is deep thought on the meaning of void ness.

All the passions are their disciples,  
Controlled at will.  
Their friends are the aids to enlightenment;  
Thereby they realize supreme enlightenment.

Their companions, ever with them,  
Are the six transcendences.  
Their consorts are the means of unification,

Their music is the teaching of the Dharma.

The incantations make their garden,  
Which blossoms with the flowers of the factors of enlightenment,  
With trees of the great wealth of the Dharma,  
And fruits of the gnosis of liberation.

Their pool consists of the eight liberations,  
Filled with the water of concentration,  
Covered with the lotuses of the seven impurities -  
Who bathes therein becomes immaculate.

Their bearers are the six super knowledge's,  
Their vehicle is the unexcelled Mahayana,  
Their driver is the spirit of enlightenment,  
And their path is the eightfold peace.

Their ornaments are the auspicious signs,  
And the eighty marks;  
Their garland is virtuous aspiration,  
And their clothing is good conscience and consideration.

Their wealth is the holy Dharma,  
And their business is it's teaching,  
Their great income is pure practice,  
And it is dedicated to the supreme enlightenment.

Their bed consists of the four contemplations,  
And its spread is the pure livelihood,  
And their awakening consists of gnosis,  
Which is constant learning and meditation.

Their food is the ambrosia of the teachings,  
And their drink is the juice of liberation.  
Their bath is pure aspiration,  
And morality their unguent and perfume.

Having conquered the enemy passions,  
They are invincible heroes.  
Having subdued the four Mara's,  
They raise their standard on the field of enlightenment.



They manifest birth voluntarily,  
Yet they are not born, nor do they originate.  
They shine in all the fields of the Buddhas,  
Just like the rising sun.

Though they worship Buddhas by the millions,  
With every conceivable offering,  
They never dwell upon the least difference  
Between the Buddhas and themselves.

They journey through all Buddha-fields  
In order to bring benefit to living beings,  
Yet they see those fields as just like empty space,  
Free of any conceptual notions of "living beings."

The fearless bodhisattvas can manifest,  
All in a single instant,  
The forms, sounds, and manners of behavior  
Of all living beings.

Although they recognize the deeds of Mara's,  
They can get along even with these Mara's  
For even such activities may be manifested  
By those perfected in liberative technique.

They play with illusory manifestations  
In order to develop living beings,  
Showing themselves to be old or sick,  
And even manifesting their own deaths.

They demonstrate the burning of the earth  
In the consuming flames of the world's end,  
In order to demonstrate impermanence  
To living beings with the notion of permanence.

Invited by hundreds of thousands of living beings,  
All in the same country,  
They partake of offerings at the homes of all,  
And dedicate all for the sake of enlightenment.

They excel in all esoteric sciences,  
And in the many different crafts,  
And they bring forth the happiness  
Of all living beings.

By devoting themselves as monks  
To all the strange sects of the world,  
They develop all those beings  
Who have attached themselves to dogmatic views.

They may become suns or moons,  
Indras, Brahmas, or lords of creatures,  
They may become fire or water  
Or earth or wind.

During the short aeons of maladies,  
They become the best holy medicine;  
They make beings well and happy,  
And bring about their liberation.

During the short aeons of famine,  
They become food and drink.  
Having first alleviated thirst and hunger,  
They teach the Dharma to living beings.

During the short aeons of swords,  
They meditate on love,  
Introducing to nonviolence  
Hundreds of millions of living beings.

In the middle of great battles  
They remain impartial to both sides;  
For bodhisattvas of great strength  
Delight in reconciliation of conflict.

In order to help the living beings,  
They voluntarily descend into  
The hells, which are attached  
To all the inconceivable Buddha-fields.

They manifest their lives

In all the species of the animal kingdom,  
Teaching the Dharma everywhere.  
Thus they are called "Leaders."

They display sensual enjoyment to the worldlings,  
And trances to the meditative.  
They completely conquer the Mara's,  
And allow them no chance to prevail.

Just as it can be shown that a lotus  
Cannot exist in the center of a fire,  
So they show the ultimate unreality  
Of both pleasures and trances.

They intentionally become courtesans  
In order to win men over,  
And, having caught them with the hook of desire,  
They establish them in the Buddha-gnosis.

In order to help living beings,  
They always become chieftains,  
Captains, priests, and ministers,  
Or even prime ministers.

For the sake of the poor,  
They become inexhaustible treasures,  
Causing those to whom they give their gifts  
To conceive the spirit of enlightenment.

They become invincible champions,  
For the sake of the proud and the vain,  
And, having conquered all their pride,  
They start them on the quest for enlightenment.

They always stand at the head  
Of those terrified with fright,  
And, having bestowed fearlessness upon them,  
They develop them toward enlightenment.

They become great holy men,  
With the super-knowledge's and pure continence,

And thus induce living beings to the morality  
Of tolerance, gentleness, and discipline.

Here in the world, they fearlessly behold  
Those who are masters to be served,  
And they become their servants or slaves,  
Or serve as their disciples.

Well trained in liberative technique,  
They demonstrate all activities,  
Whichever possibly may be a means  
To make beings delight in the Dharma.

Their practices are infinite;  
And their spheres of influence are infinite;  
Having perfected an infinite wisdom,  
They liberate an infinity of living beings.

Even for the Buddhas themselves,  
During a million aeons,  
Or even a hundred million aeons,  
It would be hard to express all their virtues.

Except for some inferior living beings,  
Without any intelligence at all,  
Is there anyone with any discernment  
Who, having heard this teaching,  
Would not wish for the supreme enlightenment?

### 9. The Dharma-Door of Non-duality

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti asked those bodhisattvas, "Good sirs, please explain how the bodhisattvas enter the Dharma-door of non-duality!"

The bodhisattva Dharmavikurvana declared, "Noble sir, production and destruction are two, but what is not produced and does not occur cannot be destroyed. Thus the attainment of the tolerance of the birthlessness of things is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Srigandha declared, " 'I' and 'mine' are two. If there is no presumption of a self, there will be no possessiveness. Thus, the absence of presumption is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Srikuta declared, " 'Defilement' and 'purification' are two. When there is thorough knowledge of defilement, there will be no conceit about purification. The path leading to the complete conquest of all conceit is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Bhadrajyotis declared, " 'Distraction' and 'attention' are two. When there is no distraction, there will be no attention, no mentation, and no mental intensity. Thus, the absence of mental intensity is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Subahu declared, " 'Bodhisattva-spirit' and 'disciple-spirit' are two. When both are seen to resemble an illusory spirit, there is no bodhisattva-spirit, nor any disciple-spirit. Thus, the sameness of natures of spirits is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Animisa declared, " 'Grasping' and 'non-grasping' are two. What is not grasped is not perceived, and what is not perceived is neither presumed nor repudiated. Thus, the inaction and noninvolvement of all things is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Sunetra declared, " 'Uniqueness' and 'character-less-ness' are two. Not to presume or construct something is neither to establish its uniqueness nor to establish its character-less-ness. To penetrate the equality of these two is to enter non-duality."

The bodhisattva Tisya declared, " 'Good' and 'evil' are two. Seeking neither good nor evil, the understanding of the non-duality of the significant and the meaningless is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Simha declared, " 'Sinfulness' and 'sin-less-ness' are two. By means of the diamond-like wisdom that

pierces to the quick, not to be bound or liberated is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Simhamati declared, "To say, 'This is impure' and 'this is immaculate' makes for duality. One who, attaining equanimity, forms no conception of impurity or immaculateness, yet is not utterly without conception, has equanimity without any attainment of equanimity - he enters the absence of conceptual knots.

Thus, he enters into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Suddhadhimukti declared, "To say, 'This is happiness' and 'That is misery' is dualism. One who is free of all calculations, through the extreme purity of gnosis - his mind is aloof, like empty space; and thus he enters into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Narayana declared, "To say, 'This is mundane' and 'that is transcendental' is dualism. This world has the nature of voidness, so there is neither transcendence nor involvement, neither progress nor standstill. Thus, neither to transcend nor to be involved, neither to go nor to stop - this is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Dantamati declared, "'Life' and 'liberation' are dualistic. Having seen the nature of life, one neither belongs to it nor is one utterly liberated from it. Such understanding is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Pratyaksadarsana declared, "'Destructible' and 'indestructible' are dualistic. What is destroyed is ultimately destroyed. What is ultimately destroyed does not become destroyed; hence, it is called 'indestructible.' What is indestructible is instantaneous, and what is instantaneous is indestructible. The experience of such is called 'the entrance into the principle of non-duality.'"

The bodhisattva Parigudha declared, "'Self' and 'selflessness' are dualistic. Since the existence of self cannot be perceived, what is there to be made 'selfless'? Thus, the non-dualism of the vision of their nature is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Vidyuddeva declared, "'Knowledge' and 'ignorance' are dualistic. The natures of ignorance and knowledge are the same, for ignorance is undefined, incalculable, and beyond the sphere of thought. The realization of this is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Priyadarsana declared, "Matter itself is void. Voidness does not result from the destruction of matter, but the nature of matter is itself voidness. Therefore, to speak of voidness on the one hand, and of matter, or of sensation, or of intellect, or of motivation, or of consciousness on the other - is entirely dualistic."

Consciousness itself is voidness. Voidness does not result from the destruction of consciousness, but the nature of consciousness is itself voidness. Such understanding of the five compulsive aggregates and the knowledge of them as such by means of gnosis is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Prabhaketu declared, "To say that the four main elements are one thing and the etheric space-element another is dualistic. The four main elements are themselves the nature of space. The past itself is also the nature of space. The future itself is also the nature of space. Likewise, the present itself is also the nature of space. The gnosis that penetrates the elements in such a way is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Pramati declared, "'Eye' and 'form' are dualistic. To understand the eye correctly, and not to have attachment, aversion, or confusion with regard to form - that is called 'peace.' Similarly, 'ear' and 'sound,' 'nose' and 'smell,' 'tongue' and taste, 'body' and touch, and 'mind' and 'phenomena' - all are dualistic. But to know the mind, and to be neither attached, averse, nor confused with regard to phenomena - that is called 'peace.' To live in such peace is to enter into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Aksayamati declared, "The dedication of generosity for the sake of attaining omniscience is dualistic. The nature of generosity is itself omniscience, and the nature of omniscience itself is total dedication."

Likewise, it is dualistic to dedicate morality, tolerance, effort, meditation, and wisdom for the sake of omniscience. Omniscience is the nature of wisdom, and total dedication is the nature of omniscience. Thus, the entrance into this principle of uniqueness is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Gambhīramatī declared, "It is dualistic to say that void-ness is one thing, sign-less-ness another, and wish-less-ness still another. What is void has no sign. What has no sign has no wish. Where there is no wish there is no process of thought, mind, or consciousness. To see the doors of all liberations in the door of one liberation is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Santendriyā declared, "It is dualistic to say 'Buddha,' 'Dharma,' and 'Saṅgha.' The Dharma is itself the nature of the Buddha, the Saṅgha is itself the nature of the Dharma, and all of them are uncompounded. The uncompounded is infinite space, and the processes of all things are equivalent to infinite space. Adjustment to this is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Apratihatānetrā declared, "It is dualistic to refer to 'aggregates' and to the 'cessation of aggregates.' Aggregates themselves are cessation. Why? The egoistic views of aggregates, being un-produced themselves, do not exist ultimately. Hence such views do not really conceptualize 'These are aggregates' or 'These aggregates cease.' Ultimately, they have no such discriminative constructions and no such conceptualizations. Therefore, such views have themselves the nature of cessation. Nonoccurrence and non-destruction are the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Suvinitā declared, "Physical, verbal, and mental vows do not exist dualistically. Why? These things have the nature of inactivity. The nature of inactivity of the body is the same as the nature of inactivity of speech, whose nature of inactivity is the same as the nature of inactivity of the mind. It is necessary to know and to understand this fact of the ultimate inactivity of all things, for this knowledge is the entrance into non-duality."



The bodhisattva Punyaksetra declared, "It is dualistic to consider actions meritorious, sinful, or neutral. The non-undertaking of meritorious, sinful, and neutral actions is not dualistic. The intrinsic nature of all such actions is voidness, wherein ultimately there is neither merit, nor sin, nor neutrality, nor action itself. The non-accomplishment of such actions is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Padmavyuha declared, "Dualism is produced from obsession with self, but true understanding of self does not result in dualism. Who thus abides in non-duality is without ideation, and that absence of ideation is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Srigarbha declared, "Duality is constituted by perceptual manifestation. Non-duality is object-less-ness. Therefore, non-grasping and non-rejection is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Candrottara declared, "'Darkness' and 'light' are dualistic, but the absence of both darkness and light is non-duality. Why? At the time of absorption in cessation, there is neither darkness nor light, and likewise with the natures of all things. The entrance into this equanimity is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Ratnamudrahasta declared, "It is dualistic to detest the world and to rejoice in liberation, and neither detesting the world nor rejoicing in liberation is non-duality. Why? Liberation can be found where there is bondage, but where there is ultimately no bondage where is there need for liberation? The mendicant who is neither bound nor liberated does not experience any like or any dislike and thus he enters non-duality."

The bodhisattva Manikutaraja declared, "It is dualistic to speak of good paths and bad paths. One who is on the path is not concerned with good or bad paths. Living in such unconcern, he entertains no concepts of 'path' or 'non-path.' Understanding the nature of concepts, his mind does not engage in duality. Such is the entrance into non-duality."

The bodhisattva Satyarata declared, "It is dualistic to speak of 'true' and 'false.' When one sees truly, one does not ever see any truth, so how could one see falsehood? Why? One does not see with the physical eye, one sees with the eye of wisdom. And with the wisdom-eye one sees only insofar as there is neither sight nor non-sight.

There, where there is neither sight nor non-sight, is the entrance into non-duality."

When the bodhisattvas had given their explanations, they all addressed the crown prince Manjusri: "Manjusri, what is the bodhisattva's entrance into non-duality?"

Manjusri replied, "Good sirs, you have all spoken well. Nevertheless, all your explanations are themselves dualistic. To know no one teaching, to express nothing, to say nothing, to explain nothing, to announce nothing, to indicate nothing, and to designate nothing - that is the entrance into non-duality."

Then the crown prince Manjusri said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "We have all given our own teachings, noble sir. Now, may you elucidate the teaching of the entrance into the principle of non-duality!"

Thereupon, the Licchavi Vimalakirti kept his silence, saying nothing at all.

The crown prince Manjusri applauded the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "Excellent! Excellent, noble sir! This is indeed the entrance into the non-duality of the bodhisattvas. Here there is no use for syllables, sounds, and ideas."

When these teachings had been declared, five thousand bodhisattvas entered the door of the Dharma of non-duality and attained tolerance of the birthlessness of things.

## 10. The Feast Brought by the Emanated Incarnation

Thereupon, the venerable Shariputra thought to himself, "If these great bodhisattvas do not adjourn before noontime, when are they going to eat?"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti, knowing telepathically the thought of the venerable Shariputra, spoke to him:

"Reverend Shariputra, the Tathágata has taught the eight liberations. You should concentrate on those liberations, listening to the Dharma with a mind free of preoccupations with material things. Just wait a minute, reverend Shariputra, and you will eat such food as you have never before tasted."

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti set himself in such a concentration and performed such a miraculous feat that those bodhisattvas and those great disciples were enabled to see the universe called Sarvagandhasugandha, which is located in the direction of the zenith, beyond as many Buddha-fields as there are sands in forty-two Ganges rivers. There the Tathágata named Sugandhakuta resides, lives, and is manifest. In that universe, the trees emit a fragrance that far surpasses all the fragrances, human and divine, of all the Buddha-fields of the ten directions. In that universe, even the names "disciple" and "solitary sage" do not exist, and the Tathágata Sugandhakuta teaches the Dharma to a gathering of bodhisattvas only. In that universe, all the houses, the avenues, the parks, and the palaces are made of various perfumes, and the fragrance of the food eaten by those bodhisattvas pervades immeasurable universes.

At this time, the Tathágata Sugandhakuta sat down with his bodhisattvas to take his meal, and the deities called Gandhavyuhahara, who were all devoted to the Mahayana, served and attended upon the Buddha and his bodhisattvas. Everyone in the gathering at the house of Vimalakirti was able to see distinctly this universe wherein the Tathágata Sugandhakuta and his bodhisattvas were taking their meal.

The Licchavi Vimalakirti addressed the whole gathering of bodhisattvas: "Good sirs, is there any among you who would like to go to that Buddha-field to bring back some food?"

But, restrained by the supernatural power of Manjusri, none of them volunteered to go.

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said to crown prince Manjusri, "Manjusri, are you not ashamed of such a gathering?"

Manjusri replied, "Noble sir, did not the Tathágata declare, 'Those who are unlearned should not be despised'?"

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti, without rising from his couch, magically emanated an incarnation-bodhisattva, whose body was of golden color, adorned with the auspicious signs and marks, and of such an appearance that he outshone the whole assembly. The Licchavi Vimalakirti addressed that incarnated bodhisattva: "Noble son, go in the direction of the zenith and when you have crossed as many Buddha-fields as there are sands in forty-two Ganges rivers, you will reach a universe called Sarvagandhasugandha, where you will find the Tathágata Sugandhakuta taking his meal. Go to him and, having bowed down at his feet, make the following request of him:

"The Licchavi Vimalakirti bows down one hundred thousand times at your feet, O Lord, and asks after your health - if you have but little trouble, little discomfort, little unrest; if you are strong, well, without complaint, and living in touch with supreme happiness.'

"Having thus asked after his health, you should request of him 'Vimalakirti asks the Lord to give me the remains of your meal, with which he will accomplish the Buddha-work in the universe called "Saha." (Saha means 'endurance' and always refers to our present world system) Thus, those living beings with inferior aspirations will be inspired with lofty aspirations, and the good name of the Tathágata will be celebrated far and wide."

At that, the incarnated bodhisattva said, "Very good!" to the Licchavi Vimalakirti and obeyed his instructions.

In sight of all the bodhisattvas, he turned his face upward and was gone, and they saw him no more. When he reached the universe Sarvagandhasugandha, he bowed down at the feet of the Tathágata Sugandhakuta and said, "Lord, the bodhisattva Vimalakirti, bowing down at the feet of the Lord, greets the Lord, saying: 'do you have little trouble, little discomfort, and little unrest? Are you strong, well, without complaint, and living in touch with the supreme happiness?' He then requests, having bowed down one hundred thousand times at the feet of the Lord: 'May the Lord be gracious and give to me the remains of his

meal in order to accomplish the Buddha-work in the universe called Saha. Then, those living beings who aspire to inferior ways may gain the intelligence to aspire to the great Dharma of the Buddha, and the name of the Buddha will be celebrated far and wide."

At that the bodhisattvas of the Buddha-field of the Tathágata Sugandhakuta were astonished and asked the Tathágata Sugandhakuta, "Lord, where is there such a great being as this? Where is the universe Saha? What does he mean by 'those who aspire to inferior ways'?"

Having thus been questioned by those bodhisattvas, the Tathágata Sugandhakuta said, "Noble sons, the universe Saha exists beyond as many Buddha-fields in the direction of the nadir as there are sands in forty-two Ganges Rivers. There the Tathágata Shakyamuni teaches the Dharma to living beings that aspire to the inferior ways, in that Buddha-field tainted with five corruptions. There the bodhisattva Vimalakirti, who lives in the inconceivable liberation, teaches the Dharma to the bodhisattvas. He sends this incarnation-bodhisattva here in order to celebrate my name, in order to show the advantages of this universe, and in order to increase the roots of virtue of those bodhisattvas."

The bodhisattvas exclaimed, "How great must that bodhisattva be himself if his magical incarnation is thus endowed with supernatural power, strength, and fearlessness!"

The Tathágata said, "The greatness of that bodhisattva is such that he sends magical incarnations to all the Buddha-fields of the ten directions, and all these incarnations accomplish the Buddha-work for all the living beings in all those Buddha-fields."

Then, the Tathágata Sugandhakuta poured some of his food, impregnated with all perfumes, into a fragrant vessel and gave it to the incarnation-bodhisattva. And the ninety million bodhisattvas of that universe volunteered to go along with him: "Lord, we also would like to go to that universe Saha, to see, honor, and serve the Buddha Shakyamuni and to see Vimalakirti and those bodhisattvas."

The Tathágata declared, "Noble sons, go ahead if you think it is the right time. But, lest those living beings become mad and intoxicated, go without your perfumes. And, lest those living beings of the Saha world become jealous of you, change your bodies to hide your beauty. And do not conceive ideas of contempt and aversion for that universe. Why? Noble sons, a Buddha-field is a field of pure space, but the Lord Buddhas, in order to develop living beings, do not reveal all at once the pure realm of the Buddha."

Then the incarnation-bodhisattva took the food and departed with the ninety million bodhisattvas and by the power of the Buddha and the supernatural operation of Vimalakirti, disappeared from that universe Sarvagandhasugandha and stood again in the house of Vimalakirti in a fraction of a second. The Licchavi Vimalakirti created ninety million lion-thrones exactly like those already there, and the bodhisattvas were seated.

Then, the incarnation-bodhisattva gave the vessel full of food to Vimalakirti, and the fragrance of that food permeated the entire great city of Vaisali and its sweet perfume spread throughout one hundred universes.

Within the city of Vaisali, the Brahmans, householders, and even the Licchavi chieftain Candracchattra, having noticed this fragrance, were amazed and filled with wonder. They were so cleansed in body and mind that they came at once to the house of Vimalakirti, along with all eighty-four thousand of the Licchavis.

Seeing there the bodhisattvas seated on the high, wide, and beautiful lion-thrones, they were filled with admiration and great joy. They all bowed down to those great disciples and bodhisattvas and then sat down to one side. And the gods of the earth, the gods of the desire-world, and the gods of the material world, attracted by the perfume, also came to the house of Vimalakirti.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti spoke to the elder Shariputra and the great disciples: "Reverends, eat of the food of the Tathágata! It is ambrosia perfumed by the great compassion. But do not fix

your minds in narrow-minded attitudes, lest you be unable to receive its gift."

But some of the disciples had already had the thought: "How can such a huge multitude eat such a small amount of food?"

Then the incarnation-bodhisattva said to those disciples, "Do not compare, venerable ones, your own wisdom and merits with the wisdom and the merits of the Tathágata! Why? For example, the four great oceans might dry up, but this food would never be exhausted. If all living beings were to eat for an aeon an amount of this food equal to Mount Sumeru in size, it would not be depleted. Why? Issued from inexhaustible morality, concentration, and wisdom, the remains of the food of the Tathágata contained in this vessel cannot be exhausted."

Indeed, the entire gathering was satisfied by that food, and the food was not at all depleted. Having eaten that food, there arose in the bodies of those bodhisattvas, disciples, Sakras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and other living beings, bliss just like the bliss of the bodhisattvas of the universe Sarvasukhamandita. And from all the pores of their skin arose a perfume like that of the trees that grow in the universe Sarvagandhasugandha.

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti knowingly addressed those bodhisattvas who had come from the Buddha-field of the Lord Tathágata Sugandhakuta: "Noble sirs, how does the Tathágata Sugandhakuta teach his Dharma?"

They replied, "The Tathágata does not teach the Dharma by means of sound and language. He disciplines the bodhisattvas only by means of perfumes. At the foot of each perfume-tree sits a bodhisattva, and the trees emit perfumes like this one. From the moment they smell that perfume, the bodhisattvas attain the concentration called 'source of all bodhisattva-virtues.' From the moment they attain that concentration, all the bodhisattva-virtues are produced in them."

Those bodhisattvas then asked the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "How does the Buddha Shakyamuni teach the Dharma?"

Vimalakirti replied, "Good sirs, these living beings here are hard to discipline. Therefore, he teaches them with discourses appropriate for the disciplining of the wild and uncivilized. How does he discipline the wild and uncivilized? What discourses are appropriate? Here they are:

"This is hell. This is the animal world. This is the world of the lord of death. These are the adversities. These are the rebirths with crippled faculties. These are physical misdeeds, and these are the retributions for physical misdeeds. These are verbal misdeeds, and these are the retributions for verbal misdeeds. These are mental misdeeds, and these are the retributions for mental misdeeds. This is killing. This is stealing. This is sexual misconduct. This is lying. This is backbiting. This is harsh speech. This is frivolous speech. This is covetousness. This is malice. This is false view. These are their retributions. This is miserliness, and this is its effect. This is immorality. This is hatred. This is sloth. This is the fruit of sloth. This is false wisdom and this is the fruit of false wisdom. These are the transgressions of the precepts. This is the vow of personal liberation.

This should be done and that should not be done. This is proper and that should be abandoned. This is an obscuration and that is without obscuration. This is sin and that rises above sin. This is the path and that is the wrong path. This is virtue and that is evil. This is blameworthy and that is blameless. This is defiled and that is immaculate. This is mundane and that is transcendental. This is compounded and that is uncompounded. This is passion and that is purification. This is life and that is liberation.'

"Thus, by means of these varied explanations of the Dharma, the Buddha trains the minds of those living beings who are just like wild horses. Just as wild horses or wild elephants will not be tamed unless the goad pierces them to the marrow, so living beings who are wild and hard to civilize are disciplined only by means of discourses about all kinds of miseries."

The bodhisattvas said, "Thus is established the greatness of the Buddha Shakyamuni! It is marvelous how, concealing his miraculous power, he civilizes the wild living beings that are poor and inferior. And the bodhisattvas who settle in a Buddha-field of



such intense hardships must have inconceivably great compassion!"

The Licchavi Vimalakirti declared, "So be it, good sirs! It is as you say. The great compassion of the bodhisattvas who reincarnate here is extremely firm. In a single lifetime in this universe, they accomplish much benefit for living beings. So much benefit for living beings could not be accomplished in the universe Sarvagandhasugandha even in one hundred thousand aeons. Why? Good sirs, in this Saha universe, there are ten virtuous practices, which do not exist in any other Buddha-field. What are these ten? Here they are: to win the poor by generosity; to win the immoral by morality; to win the hateful by means of tolerance; to win the lazy by means of effort; to win the mentally troubled by means of concentration; to win the falsely wise by means of true wisdom; to show those suffering from the eight adversities how to rise above them; to teach the Mahayana to those of narrow-minded behavior; to win those who have not produced the roots of virtue by means of the roots of virtue; and to develop living beings without interruption through the four means of unification. Those who engage in these ten virtuous practices do not exist in any other Buddha-field."

Again the bodhisattvas asked, "How many qualities must a bodhisattva have, to go safe and sound to a pure Buddha-field after he transmigrates at death away from this Saha universe?"

Vimalakirti replied, "After he transmigrates at death away from this Saha universe, a bodhisattva must have eight qualities to reach a pure Buddha-field safe and sound. What are the eight? He must resolve to himself: 'I must benefit all living beings, without seeking even the slightest benefit for myself. I must bear all the miseries of all living beings and give all my accumulated roots of virtue to all living beings. I must have no resentment toward any living being. I must rejoice in all bodhisattvas as if they were the Teacher. I must not neglect any teachings, whether or not I have heard them before. I must control my mind, without coveting the gains of others, and without taking pride in gains of my own. I must examine my own faults and not blame others for their faults. I must take pleasure in being consciously aware and must truly undertake all virtues.'

"If a bodhisattva has these eight qualities, when he transmigrates at death away from the Saha universe, he will go safe and sound to a pure Buddha-field."

When the Licchavi Vimalakirti and the crown prince Manjusri had thus taught the Dharma to the multitude gathered there, one hundred thousand living beings conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and ten thousand bodhisattvas attained the tolerance of the birthlessness of things.

#### 11. Lesson of the Destructible and the Indestructible

Meanwhile, the area in which the Lord was teaching the Dharma in the garden of Amrapali expanded and grew larger, and the entire assembly appeared tinged with a golden hue. Thereupon, the venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha, "Lord, this expansion and enlargement of the garden of Amrapali and this golden hue of the assembly -what do these auspicious signs portend?"

The Buddha declared, "Ānanda, these auspicious signs portend that the Licchavi Vimalakirti and the crown prince Manjusri, attended by a great multitude, are coming into the presence of the Tathāgata."

At that moment the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the crown prince Manjusri, "Manjusri, let us take these many living beings into the presence of the Lord, so that they may see the Tathāgata and bow down to him!"

Manjusri replied, "Noble sir, send them if you feel the time is right!"

Thereupon the Licchavi Vimalakirti performed the miraculous feat of placing the entire assembly, replete with thrones, upon his right hand and then, having transported himself magically into the presence of the Buddha, placing it on the ground. He bowed down at the feet of the Buddha, circumambulated him to the right seven times with palms together, and withdrew to one side.

The bodhisattvas who had come from the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Sugandhakuta descended from their lion-thrones and, bowing down at the feet of the Buddha, placed their palms

together in reverence and withdrew to one side. And the other bodhisattvas, great spiritual heroes, and the great disciples descended from their thrones likewise and, having bowed at the feet of the Buddha, withdrew to one side. Likewise all those Indras, Brahmas, Lokapalas, and gods bowed at the feet of the Buddha, placed their palms together in reverence and withdrew to one side.

Then, the Buddha, having delighted those bodhisattvas with greetings, declared, "Noble sons, be seated upon your thrones!"

Thus commanded by the Buddha, they took their thrones.

The Buddha said to Shariputra, "Shariputra, did you see the miraculous performances of the bodhisattvas, those best of beings?"

"I have seen them, Lord."

"What concept did you produce toward them?"

"Lord, I produced the concept of inconceivability toward them. Their activities appeared inconceivable to me to the point that I was unable to think of them, to judge them, or even to imagine them."

Then the venerable Ānanda asked the Buddha, "Lord, what is this perfume, the likes of which I have never smelled before?"

The Buddha answered, "Ānanda, this perfume emanates from all the pores of all these bodhisattvas."

Shariputra added, "Venerable Ānanda, this same perfume emanates from all our pores as well!"

Ānanda: Where does the perfume come from?

Shariputra: The Licchavi Vimalakirti obtained some food from the universe called Sarvagandhasugandha, the Buddha-field of the Tathāgata Sugandhakuta, and this perfume emanates from the bodies of all those who partook of that food.

Then the venerable Ānanda addressed the Licchavi Vimalakirti: "How long will this perfume remain?"

Vimalakirti: Until is it digested.

Ánanda: When will it be digested?

Vimalakirti: It will be digested in forty-nine days, and its perfume will emanate for seven days more after that, but there will be no trouble of indigestion during that time. Furthermore, reverend Ánanda, if monks who have not entered ultimate determination eat this food, it will be digested when they enter that determination. When those who have entered ultimate determination eat this food, it will not be digested until their minds are totally liberated. If living beings that have not conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment eat this food, it will be digested when they conceive the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. If those who have conceived the spirit of perfect enlightenment eat this food, it will not be digested until they have attained tolerance. And if those who have attained tolerance eat this food, it will be digested when they have become bodhisattvas one lifetime away from Buddhahood. Reverend Ánanda, it is like the medicine called "delicious," which reaches the stomach but is not digested until all poisons have been eliminated only then is it digested. Thus, reverend Ánanda, this food is not digested until all the poisons of the passions have been eliminated only then is it digested.

Then, the venerable Ánanda said to the Buddha, "Lord, it is wonderful that this food accomplishes the work of the Buddha!"

"So it is, Ánanda! It is as you say, Ánanda! There are Buddha-fields that accomplish the Buddha-work by means of bodhisattvas; those that do so by means of lights; those that do so by means of the tree of enlightenment; those that do so by means of the physical beauty and the marks of the Tathágata; those that do so by means of religious robes; those that do so by means of good; those that do so by means of water; those that do so by means of gardens; those that do so by means of palaces; those that do so by means of mansions; those that do so by means of magical incarnations; those that do so by means of empty space; and those that do so by means of lights in the sky. Why is it so, Ánanda? Because by these various means, living beings become disciplined. Similarly, Ánanda, there are Buddha-fields that accomplish the Buddha-work by means of

teaching living beings words, definitions, and examples, such as 'dreams,' 'images,' 'the reflection of the moon in water,' 'echoes,' 'illusions,' and 'mirages'; and those that accomplish the Buddha-work by making words understandable. Also, Ānanda, there are utterly pure Buddha-fields that accomplish the Buddha-work for living beings without speech, by silence, inexpressibility, and unteach-ability. Ānanda, among all the activities, enjoyments, and practices of the Buddhas, there are none that do not accomplish the Buddha-work, because all discipline living beings. Finally, Ānanda, the Buddhas accomplish the Buddha-work by means of the four Mara's and all the eighty-four thousand types of passion that afflict living beings.

"Ānanda, this is a Dharma-door called 'Introduction to all the Buddha-qualities.' The bodhisattva who enters this Dharma-door experiences neither joy nor pride when confronted by a Buddha-field adorned with the splendor of all noble qualities, and experiences neither sadness nor aversion when confronted by a Buddha-field apparently without that splendor, but in all cases produces a profound reverence for all the Tathāgatas. Indeed, it is wonderful how all the Lord Buddhas, who understand the equality of all things, manifest all sorts of Buddha-fields in order to develop living beings!

"Ānanda, just as the Buddha-fields are diverse as to their specific qualities but have no difference as to the sky that covers them, so, Ānanda, the Tathāgatas are diverse as to their physical bodies but do not differ as to their unimpeded gnosis.

"Ānanda, all the Buddhas are the same as to the perfection of the Buddha-qualities, that is: their forms, their colors, their radiance, their bodies, their marks, their nobility, their morality, their concentration, their wisdom, their liberation, the gnosis and vision of liberation, their strengths, their fearlessnesses, their special Buddha-qualities, their great love, their great compassion, their helpful intentions, their attitudes, their practices, their paths, the lengths of their lives, their teachings of the Dharma, their development and liberation of living beings, and their purification of Buddha-fields. Therefore, they are all called 'Samyaksambuddhas,' 'Tathāgatas,' and 'Buddhas.'

"Ánanda, were your life to last an entire aeon, it would not be easy for you to understand thoroughly the extensive meaning and precise verbal significance of these three names. Also, Ánanda, if all the living beings of this billion-world galactic universe were like you the foremost of the learned and the foremost of those endowed with memory and incantations - and were they to devote an entire aeon, they would still be unable to understand completely the exact and extensive meaning of the three words 'Samyaksambuddha,' 'Tathágata,' and 'Buddha.'

Thus, Ánanda, the enlightenment of the Buddhas is immeasurable, and the wisdom and the eloquence of the Tathágatas are inconceivable."

Then, the venerable Ánanda addressed the Buddha: "Lord, from this day forth, I shall no longer declare myself to be the foremost of the learned."

The Buddha said, "Do not be discouraged, Ánanda! Why? I pronounced you, Ánanda, the foremost of the learned, with the disciples in mind, not considering the bodhisattvas. Look, Ánanda, look at the bodhisattvas.

They cannot be fathomed even by the wisest of men. Ánanda, one can fathom the depths of the ocean, but one cannot fathom the depths of the wisdom, gnosis, memory, incantations, or eloquence of the bodhisattvas. Ánanda, you should remain in equanimity with regard to the deeds of the bodhisattvas. Why? Ánanda, these marvels displayed in a single morning by the Licchavi Vimalakirti could not be performed by the disciples and solitary sages who have attained miraculous powers, were they to devote all their powers of incarnation and transformation during one hundred thousand millions of aeons."

Then, all those bodhisattvas from the Buddha-field of the Tathágata Sugandhakuta joined their palms in reverence and, saluting the Tathágata Shakyamuni, addressed him as follows: "Lord, when we first arrived in this Buddha-field, we conceived a negative idea, but we now abandon this wrong idea. Why? Lord, the realms of the Buddhas and their skill in liberative technique are inconceivable. In order to develop living beings, they manifest such and such a field to suit the desire of such and

such a living being. Lord, please give us a teaching by which we may remember you, when we have returned to Sarvagandhasugandha."

Thus having been requested, the Buddha declared, "Noble sons, there is a liberation of bodhisattvas called 'destructible and indestructible.' You must train yourselves in this liberation. What is it? 'Destructible' refers to compounded things. 'Indestructible' refers to the uncompounded. But the bodhisattva should neither destroy the compounded nor rest in the uncompounded.

"Not to destroy compounded things consists in not losing the great love; not giving up the great compassion; not forgetting the omniscient mind generated by high resolve; not tiring in the positive development of living beings; not abandoning the means of unification; giving up body and life in order to uphold the holy Dharma; never being satisfied with the roots of virtue already accumulated; taking pleasure in skillful dedication; having no laziness in seeking the Dharma; being without selfish reticence in teaching the Dharma; sparing no effort in seeing and worshipping the Tathágatas; being fearless in voluntary reincarnations; being neither proud in success nor bowed in failure; not despising the unlearned, and respecting the learned as if they were the Teacher himself; making reasonable those whose passions are excessive; taking pleasure in solitude, without being attached to it; not longing for one's own happiness but longing for the happiness of others; conceiving of trance, meditation, and equanimity as if they were the Avici hell; conceiving of the world as a garden of liberation; considering beggars to be spiritual teachers; considering the giving away of all possessions to be the means of realizing Buddhahood; considering immoral beings to be saviors; considering the transcendences to be parents; considering the aids to enlightenment to be servants; never ceasing accumulation of the roots of virtue; establishing the virtues of all Buddha-fields in one's own Buddha-field; offering limitless pure sacrifices to fulfill the auspicious marks and signs; adorning body, speech and mind by refraining from all sins; continuing in reincarnations during immeasurable aeons, while purifying body, speech, and mind; avoiding discouragement, through spiritual heroism, when learning of the immeasurable virtues of the Buddha; wielding the

sharp sword of wisdom to chastise the enemy passions; knowing well the aggregates, the elements, and the sense-media in order to bear the burdens of all living beings; blazing with energy to conquer the host of demons; seeking knowledge in order to avoid pride; being content with little desire in order to uphold the Dharma; not mixing with worldly things in order to delight all the people; being faultless in all activities in order to conform to all people; producing the super-knowledge's to actually accomplish all duties of benefit to living beings; acquiring incantations, memory, and knowledge in order to retain all learning; understanding the degrees of people's spiritual faculties to dispel the doubts of all living beings; displaying invincible miraculous feats to teach the Dharma; having irresistible speech by acquiring unimpeded eloquence; tasting human and divine success by purifying the path of ten virtues; establishing the path of the pure states of Brahma by cultivating the four immeasurables; inviting the Buddhas to teach the Dharma, rejoicing in them, and applauding them, thereby obtaining the melodious voice of a Buddha; disciplining body, speech, and mind, thus maintaining constant spiritual progress; being without attachment to anything and thus acquiring the behavior of a Buddha; gathering together the order of bodhisattvas to attract beings to the Mahayana; and being consciously aware at all times not to neglect any good quality. Noble sons, a bodhisattva who thus applies himself to the Dharma is a bodhisattva who does not destroy the compounded realm.

"What is not resting in the uncompounded? The bodhisattva practices voidness, but he does not realize voidness. He practices signlessness but does not realize signlessness. He practices wishlessness but does not realize wishlessness. He practices non-performance but does not realize non-performance. He knows impermanence but is not complacent about his roots of virtue. He considers misery, but he reincarnates voluntarily. He knows selflessness but does not waste himself. He considers peacefulness but does not seek extreme peace. He cherishes solitude but does not avoid mental and physical efforts. He considers placelessness but does not abandon the place of good actions. He considers occurrencelessness but undertakes to bear the burdens of all living beings. He considers immaculateness, yet he follows the process of the



world. He considers motionlessness, yet he moves in order to develop all living beings. He considers selflessness yet does not abandon the great compassion toward all living beings. He considers birthlessness, yet he does not fall into the ultimate determination of the disciples. He considers vanity, futility, insubstantiality, dependency, and place-less-ness, yet he establishes himself on merits that are not vain, on knowledge that is not futile, on reflections that are substantial, on the striving for the consecration of the independent gnosis, and on the Buddha-family in its definitive meaning.

"Thus, noble sons, a bodhisattva who aspires to such a Dharma neither rests in the uncompounded nor destroys the compounded.

"Furthermore, noble sons, in order to accomplish the store of merit, a bodhisattva does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to accomplish the store of wisdom, he does not destroy the compounded. In order to fulfill the great love, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to fulfill the great compassion, he does not destroy compounded things. In order to develop living beings, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and in order to aspire to the Buddha-qualities, he does not destroy compounded things. To perfect the marks of Buddhahood, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to perfect the gnosis of omniscience, he does not destroy compounded things. Out of skill in liberative technique, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, through thorough analysis with his wisdom; he does not destroy compounded things. To purify the Buddha-field, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, by the power of the grace of the Buddha, he does not destroy compounded things. Because he feels the needs of living beings, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to show truly the meaning of the Dharma, he does not destroy compounded things. Because of his store of roots of virtue, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and because of his instinctive enthusiasm for these roots of virtue, he does not destroy compounded things. To fulfill his prayers, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because he has no wishes, he does not destroy compounded things. Because his positive thought is pure, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because his high resolve is pure, he

does not destroy compounded things. In order to play with the five super-knowledge's, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because of the six super-knowledge's of the Buddha-gnosis, he does not destroy compounded things. To fulfill the six transcendences, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to fulfill the time, he does not destroy compounded things. To gather the treasures of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, because he does not like any narrow-minded teachings, he does not destroy compounded things. Because he gathers all the medicines of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately, he does not destroy compounded things. To confirm his commitments, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to mend any failure of these commitments, he does not destroy compounded things. To concoct all the elixirs of the Dharma, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, to give out the nectar of this subtle Dharma, he does not destroy compounded things. Because he knows thoroughly all the sicknesses due to passions, he does not rest in the uncompounded, and, in order to cure all sicknesses of all living beings, he does not destroy compounded things.

"Thus, noble sons, the bodhisattva does not destroy compounded things and does not rest in the uncompounded, and that is the liberation of bodhisattvas called 'destructible and indestructible.' Noble sirs, you should also strive in this."

Then, those bodhisattvas, having heard this teaching, were satisfied, delighted, and reverent. They were filled with rejoicing and happiness of mind. In order to worship the Buddha Shakyamuni and the bodhisattvas of the Saha universe, as well as this teaching, they covered the whole earth of this billion-world universe with fragrant powder, incense, perfumes, and flowers up to the height of the knees. Having thus regaled the whole retinue of the Tathágata, bowed their heads at the feet of the Buddha, and circumambulated him to the right three times, they sang a hymn of praise to him. They then disappeared from this universe and in a split second were back in the universe Sarvagandhasugandha.

## 12. Vision of the Universe Abhirati and the Tathágata Aksobhya

Thereupon, the Buddha said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble son, when you would see the Tathágata, how do you view him?"

Thus addressed, the Licchavi Vimalakirti said to the Buddha, "Lord, when I would see the Tathágata, I view him by not seeing any Tathágata. Why? I see him as not born from the past, not passing on to the future, and not abiding in the present time. Why? He is the essence, which is the reality of matter, but he is not matter. He is the essence, which is the reality of sensation, but he is not sensation. He is the essence, which is the reality of intellect, but he is not intellect. He is the essence, which is the reality of motivation, yet he is not motivation. He is the essence, which is the reality of consciousness, yet he is not consciousness. Like the element of space, he does not abide in any of the four elements. Transcending the scope of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, he is not produced in the six sense-media. He is not involved in the three worlds, is free of the three defilements, is associated with the triple liberation, is endowed with the three knowledge's, and has truly attained the unattainable.

"The Tathágata has reached the extreme of detachment in regard to all things, yet he is not a reality-limit. He abides in ultimate reality, yet there is no relationship between it and him. He is not produced from causes, nor does he depend on conditions. He is not without any characteristic, nor has he any characteristic. He has no single nature nor any diversity of natures. He is not a conception, not a mental construction, nor is he a non-conception. He is neither the other shore, nor this shore, nor that between. He is neither here, nor there, nor anywhere else. He is neither this nor that. He cannot be discovered by consciousness, nor is he inherent in consciousness. He is neither darkness nor light. He is neither name nor sign. He is neither weak nor strong.

He lives in no country or direction. He is neither good nor evil. He is neither compounded nor un-compounded.

He cannot be explained as having any meaning whatsoever.

"The Tathágata is neither generosity nor avarice, neither morality nor immorality, neither tolerance nor malice, neither

effort nor sloth, neither concentration nor distraction, neither wisdom nor foolishness. He is inexpressible. He is neither truth nor falsehood; neither escape from the world nor failure to escape from the world; neither cause of involvement in the world nor not a cause of involvement in the world; he is the cessation of all theory and all practice. He is neither a field of merit nor not a field of merit; he is neither worthy of offerings nor unworthy of offerings. He is not an object, and cannot be contacted. He is not a whole, nor a conglomeration. He surpasses all calculations. He is utterly unequalled, yet equal to the ultimate reality of things. He is matchless, especially in effort. He surpasses all measure. He does not go, does not stay, and does not pass beyond. He is neither seen, heard, distinguished, nor known. He is without any complexity, having attained the equanimity of omniscient gnosis. Equal toward all things, he does not discriminate between them. He is without reproach, without excess, without corruption, without conception, and without intellectualization. He is without activity, without birth, without occurrence, without origin, without production, and without non-production. He is without fear and without sub-consciousness; without sorrow, without joy, and without strain. No verbal teaching can express him.

"Such is the body of the Tathágata and thus should he be seen. Who sees thus, truly sees. Who sees otherwise, sees falsely."

The venerable Shariputra then asked the Buddha, "Lord, in which Buddha-field did the noble Vimalakirti die, before reincarnating in this Buddha-field?"

The Buddha said, "Shariputra, ask this good man directly where he died to reincarnate here."

Then the venerable Shariputra asked the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble sir, where did you die to reincarnate here?"

Vimalakirti declared, "Is there anything among the things that you see, elder, that dies or is reborn?"

Shariputra: There is nothing that dies or is reborn.

Vimalakirti: Likewise, reverend Shariputra, as all things neither die nor are reborn, why do you ask, "Where did you die to

reincarnate here?" Reverend Shariputra, if one were to ask a man or woman created by a magician where he or she had died to reincarnate there, what do you think he or she would answer?

Shariputra: Noble sir, a magical creation does not die, nor is it reborn.

Vimalakirti: Reverend Shariputra, did not the Tathágata declare that all things have the nature of a magical creation?

Shariputra: Yes, noble sir, that is indeed so.

Vimalakirti: Reverend Shariputra, "death" is an end of performance, and "rebirth" is the continuation of performance. But, although a bodhisattva dies, he does not put an end to the performance of the roots of virtue, and although he is reborn, he does not adhere to the continuation of sin.

Then, the Buddha said to the venerable Shariputra, "Shariputra, this holy person came here from the presence of the Tathágata Aksobhya in the universe Abhirati."

Shariputra: Lord, it is wonderful that this holy person, having left a Buddha-field as pure as Abhirati, should enjoy a Buddha-field as full of defects as this Saha universe!

The Licchavi Vimalakirti said, "Shariputra, what do you think? Does the light of the sun accompany the darkness?"

Shariputra: Certainly not, noble sir!

Vimalakirti: Then the two do not go together?

Shariputra: Noble sir, those two do not go together. As soon as the sun rises, all darkness is destroyed.

Vimalakirti: Then why does the sun rise over the world?

Shariputra: It rises to illuminate the world, and to eliminate the darkness.

Vimalakirti: Just in the same way, reverend Shariputra, the bodhisattva reincarnates voluntarily in the impure Buddha-fields in order to purify the living beings, in order to make the light of wisdom shine, and in order to clear away the darkness. Since they do not associate with the passions, they dispel the darkness of the passions of all living beings.

Thereupon, the entire multitude experienced the desire to behold the universe Abhirati, the Tathágata Aksobhya, his bodhisattvas, and his great disciples. The Buddha, knowing the thoughts of the entire multitude, said to the Licchavi Vimalakirti, "Noble son, this multitude wishes to behold the universe Abhirati and the Tathágata Aksobhya - show them!"

Then the Licchavi Vimalakirti thought, "Without rising from my couch, I shall pick up in my right hand the universe Abhirati and all it contains: its hundreds of thousands of bodhisattvas; its abodes of devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, and asuras, bounded by its Cakravada mountains; its rivers, lakes, fountains, streams, oceans, and other bodies of water; its Mount Sumeru and other hills and mountain ranges; its moon, its sun, and its stars; its devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, and asuras themselves; its Brahma and his retinues; its villages, cities, towns, provinces, kingdoms, men, women, and houses; its bodhisattvas; its disciples; the tree of enlightenment of the Tathágata Aksobhya; and the Tathágata Aksobhya himself, seated in the middle of an assembly vast as an ocean, teaching the Dharma. Also the lotuses that accomplish the Buddha-work among the living beings; the three jeweled ladders that rise from its earth to its Trayastrimsa heaven, on which ladders the gods of that heaven descend to the world to see, honor, and serve the Tathágata Aksobhya and to hear the Dharma, and on which the men of the earth climb to the Trayastrimsa heaven to visit those gods. Like a potter with his wheel, I will reduce that universe Abhirati, with its store of innumerable virtues, from its watery base up to its Akanistha heaven, to a minute size and, carrying it gently like a garland of flowers, will bring it to this Saha universe and will show it to the multitudes."

Then, the Licchavi Vimalakirti entered into a concentration, and performed a miraculous feat such that he reduced the universe

Abhirati to a minute size, and took it with his right hand, and brought it into this Saha universe.

In that universe Abhirati, the disciples, bodhisattvas, and those among gods and men who possessed the super-knowledge of the divine eye all cried out, "Lord, we are being carried away! Sugata, we are being carried off! Protect us, O Tathágata!"

But, to discipline them, the Tathágata Aksobhya said to them, "You are being carried off by the bodhisattva Vimalakirti. It is not my affair."

As for the other men and gods, they had no awareness at all that they were being carried anywhere.

Although the universe Abhirati had been brought into the universe Saha, the Saha universe was not increased or diminished; it was neither compressed nor obstructed. Nor was the universe Abhirati reduced internally, and both universes appeared to be the same as they had ever been.

Thereupon, the Buddha Shakyamuni asked all the multitudes, "Friends, behold the splendors of the universe Abhirati, the Tathágata Aksobhya, the array of his Buddha-field, and the splendors of these disciples and bodhisattvas!"

They replied, "We see them, Lord!"

The Buddha said, "Those bodhisattvas who wish to embrace such a Buddha-field should train themselves in all the bodhisattva-practices of the Tathágata Aksobhya."

While Vimalakirti, with his miraculous power, showed them thus the universe Abhirati and the Tathágatas Aksobhya, one hundred and forty thousand living beings among the men and gods of the Saha universe conceived the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, and all of them formed a prayer to be reborn in the universe Abhirati. And the Buddha prophesied that in the future all would be reborn in the universe Abhirati.

And the Licchavi Vimalakirti, having thus developed all the living beings that could thereby be developed, returned the universe Abhirati exactly to its former place.

The Lord then said to the venerable Shariputra, "Shariputra, did you see that universe Abhirati, and the Tathágata Aksobhya?"

Shariputra replied, "I saw it, Lord! May all living beings come to live in a Buddha-field as splendid as that! May all living beings come to have miraculous powers just like those of the noble Licchavi Vimalakirti!

"We have gained great benefit from having seen a holy man such as he. We have gained a great benefit from having heard such teaching of the Dharma, whether the Tathágata himself still actually exists or whether he has already attained ultimate liberation. Hence, there is no need to mention the great benefit for those who, having heard it, believe it, rely on it, embrace it, remember it, read it, and penetrate to its depth; and, having found faith in it, teach, recite, and show it to others and apply themselves to the yoga of meditation upon its teaching.

"Those living beings who understand correctly this teaching of the Dharma will obtain the treasury of the jewels of the Dharma.

"Those who study correctly this teaching of the Dharma will become the companions of the Tathágata. Those who honor and serve the adepts of this doctrine will be the true protectors of the Dharma. Those who write, teach, and worship this teaching of the Dharma will be visited by the Tathágata in their homes. Those who take pleasure in this teaching of the Dharma will embrace all merits. Those who teach it to others, whether it be no more than a single stanza of four lines, or a single summary phrase from this teaching of the Dharma, will be performing the great Dharma-sacrifice. And those who devote to this teaching of the Dharma their tolerance, their zeal, their intelligence, their discernment, their vision, and their aspirations, thereby become subject to the prophesy of future Buddhahood!"

## Epilogue

### Antecedents and Transmission of the Holy Dharma



Then Sakra, the prince of the gods, said to the Buddha, "Lord, formerly I have heard from the Tathágata and from Manjusri, the crown prince of wisdom, many hundreds of thousands of teachings of the Dharma, but I have never before heard a teaching of the Dharma as remarkable as this instruction in the entrance into the method of inconceivable transformations. Lord, those living beings who, having heard this teaching of the Dharma, accept it, remember it, read it, and understand it deeply will be, without a doubt, true vessels of the Dharma; there is no need to mention those who apply themselves to the yoga of meditation upon it. They will cut off all possibility of unhappy lives, will open their way to all fortunate lives, will always be looked after by all Buddhas, will always overcome all adversaries, and will always conquer all devils. They will practice the path of the bodhisattvas, will take their places upon the seat of Enlightenment, and will have truly entered the domain of the Tathágatas. Lord, the noble sons and daughters who will teach and practice this exposition of the Dharma will be honored and served by me and my followers. To the villages, towns, cities, states, kingdoms, and capitals wherein this teaching of the Dharma will be applied, taught, and demonstrated, I and my followers will come to hear the Dharma. I will inspire the unbelieving with faith, and I will guarantee my help and protection to those who believe and uphold the Dharma."

At these words, the Buddha said to Sakra, the prince of the gods, "Excellent! Excellent, prince of gods! The Tathágata rejoices in your good words. Prince of gods, the enlightenment of the Buddhas of the past, present, and future is expressed in this discourse of Dharma. Therefore, prince of gods, when noble sons and daughters accept it, repeat it, understand it deeply, write it completely, and, making it into a book, honor it, those sons and daughters thereby pay homage to the Buddhas of the past, present and future.

"Let us suppose, prince of gods, that this billion-world-galactic universe were as full of Tathágatas as it is covered with groves of sugarcane, with rosebushes, with bamboo thickets, with herbs, and with flowers, and that a noble son or daughter were to honor them, revere them, respect and adore them, offering them all sorts of comforts and offerings for an aeon or more than an aeon.

And let us suppose that, these Tathágotas having entered ultimate liberation, he or she honored each of them by enshrining their preserved bodies in a memorial stupa made of precious stones, each as large as a world with four great continents, rising as high as the world of Brahma, adorned with parasols, banners, standards, and lamps. And let us suppose finally that, having erected all these stupas for the Tathágotas, he or she were to devote an aeon or more to offering them flowers, perfumes, banners, and standards, while playing drums and music.

That being done, what do you think, prince of gods? Would that noble son or daughter receive much merit as a consequence of such activities?"

Sakra, the prince of gods, replied, "Many merits, Lord! Many merits, O Sugata! Were one to spend hundreds of thousands of millions of aeons, it would be impossible to measure the limit of the mass of merits that that noble son or daughter would thereby gather!"

The Buddha said, "Have faith, prince of gods, and understand this: Whoever accepts this exposition of the Dharma called 'Instruction in the Inconceivable Liberation,' recites it, and understands it deeply, he or she will gather merits even greater than those who perform the above acts. Why so? Because, prince of gods, the enlightenment of the Buddhas arises from the Dharma, and one honors them by the Dharma worship, and not by material worship. Thus it is taught, prince of gods, and thus you must understand it."

The Buddha then further said to Sakra, the prince of gods, "Once, prince of gods, long ago, long before aeons more numerous than the innumerable, immense, immeasurable, inconceivable, and even before then, the Tathágata called Bhaisajyaraja appeared in the world: a saint, perfectly and fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, a blissful one, knower of the world, incomparable knower of men who need to be civilized, teacher of gods and men, a Lord, a Buddha. He appeared in the aeon called Vicarana in the universe called Mahavyuha.

"The length of life of this Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja, perfectly and fully enlightened one, was twenty short aeons.

His retinue of disciples numbered thirty-six million billion, and his retinue of bodhisattvas numbered twelve million billion. In that same era, prince of gods, there was a universal monarch called King Ratnacchatra, who reigned over the four continents and possessed seven precious jewels. He had one thousand heroic sons, powerful, strong, and able to conquer enemy armies. This King Ratnacchatra honored the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja and his retinue with many excellent offerings during five short aeons. At the end of this time, the King Ratnacchatra said to his sons, 'Recognizing that during my reign I have worshiped the Tathágata, in your turn you also should worship him.'

"The thousand princes gave their consent, obeying their father the king, and all together, during another five short aeons, they honored the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja with all sorts of excellent offerings.

"Among them, there was a prince by the name of Candracchatra, who retired into solitude and thought to himself, 'Is there not another mode of worship, even better and more noble than this?'

"Then, by the supernatural power of the Buddha Bhaisajjaraja, the gods spoke to him from the heavens: 'Good man, the supreme worship is the Dharma-worship.'

"Candracchatra asked them, 'What is this "Dharma-worship"?'

"The gods replied, 'Good man, go to the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja, ask him about the "Dharma-worship," and he will explain it to you fully.'

"Then, the prince Candracchatra went to the Lord Bhaisajjaraja, the saint, the Tathágata, the insuperably, perfectly enlightened one, and having approached him, bowed down at his feet, circumambulated him to the right three times, and withdrew to one side. He then asked, 'Lord, I have heard of a "Dharma-worship," which surpasses all other worship. What is this "Dharma-worship"?'

"The Tathágata Bhaisajyaraja said, 'Noble son, the Dharma-worship is that worship rendered to the discourses taught by the Tathágata. These discourses are deep and profound in illumination. They do not conform to the mundane and are difficult to understand, difficult to see and difficult to realize. They are subtle, precise, and ultimately incomprehensible. As Scriptures, they are collected in the canon of the bodhisattvas, stamped with the insignia of the king of incantations and teachings. They reveal the irreversible wheel of Dharma, arising from the six transcendences, cleansed of any false notions. They are endowed with all the aids to enlightenment and embody the seven factors of enlightenment. They introduce living beings to the great compassion and teach them the great love. They eliminate all the convictions of the Mara's, and they manifest relativity.

"They contain the message of selflessness, living-being-lessness, lifelessness, person-less-ness, void ness, sign-less-ness, wish-less-ness, nonperformance, non-production, and nonoccurrence.

"They make possible the attainment of the seat of enlightenment and set in motion the wheel of the Dharma.

They are approved and praised by the chiefs of the gods, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kimnaras, and mahoragas. They preserve unbroken the heritage of the holy Dharma, contain the treasury of the Dharma, and represent the summit of the Dharma-worship. They are upheld by all holy beings and teach all the bodhisattva practices. They induce the unmistakable understanding of the Dharma in its ultimate sense. They certify that all things are impermanent, miserable, selfless, and peaceful, thus epitomizing the Dharma. They cause the abandonment of avarice, immorality, malice, laziness, forgetfulness, foolishness, and jealousy, as well as bad convictions, adherence to objects, and all opposition. They are praised by all the Buddhas. They are the medicines for the tendencies of mundane life, and they authentically manifest the great happiness of liberation.

To teach correctly, to uphold, to investigate, and to understand such Scriptures, thus incorporating into one's own life the holy Dharma - that is the "Dharma-worship."

"Furthermore, noble son, the Dharma-worship consists of determining the Dharma according to the Dharma; applying the Dharma according to the Dharma; being in harmony with relativity; being free of extremist convictions; attaining the tolerance of ultimate birthlessness and nonoccurrence of all things; realizing selflessness and living-being-less-ness; refraining from struggle about causes and conditions, without quarreling, or disputing; not being possessive; being free of egoism; relying on the meaning and not on the literal expression; relying on gnosis and not on consciousness; relying on the ultimate teachings definitive in meaning and not insisting on the superficial teachings interpretable in meaning; relying on reality and not insisting on opinions derived from personal authorities; realizing correctly the reality of the Buddha; realizing the ultimate absence of any fundamental consciousness; and overcoming the habit of clinging to an ultimate ground. Finally, attaining peace by stopping everything from ignorance to old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, anxiety, and trouble, and realizing that living beings know no end to their views concerning these twelve links of dependent origination; then, noble son, when you do not hold to any view at all, it is called the unexcelled Dharma-worship.'

"Prince of gods, when the prince Candracchattra had heard this definition of Dharma-worship from the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja, he attained the conformative tolerance of ultimate birthlessness; and, taking his robes and ornaments, he offered them to the Buddha Bhaisajjaraja, saying, 'When the Tathágata will be in ultimate liberation, I wish to defend his holy Dharma, to protect it, and to worship it. May the Tathágata grant me his supernatural blessing, that I may be able to conquer Mara and all adversaries and to incorporate in all my lives the holy Dharma of the Buddha!'

"The Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja, knowing the high resolve of Candracchattra, prophesied to him that he would be, at a later time, in the future, the protector, guardian, and defender of the city of the holy Dharma. Then, prince of gods, the prince

Candracchattra, out of his great faith in the Tathágata, left the household life in order to enter the homeless life of a monk and having done so, lived making great efforts toward the attainment of virtue.

Having made great effort and being well established in virtue, he soon produced the five super-knowledge's, understood the incantations, and obtained the invincible eloquence. When the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja attained ultimate liberation, Candracchattra, on the strength of his super-knowledge's and by the power of his incantations, made the wheel of the Dharma turn just as the Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja had done and continued to do so for ten short aeons.

"Prince of gods, while the monk Candracchattra was exerting himself thus to protect the holy Dharma, thousands of millions of living beings reached the stage of irreversibility on the path to unexcelled, perfect enlightenment, fourteen billion living beings were disciplined in the vehicles of the disciples and solitary sages, and innumerable living beings took rebirth in the human and heavenly realms.

"Perhaps, prince of gods, you are wondering or experiencing some doubt about whether or not, at that former time, the King Ratnacchattra was not some other than the actual Tathágata Ratnarcis. You must not imagine that, for the present Tathágata Ratnarcis was at that time, in that epoch, the universal monarch Ratnacchattra.

As for the thousand sons of the King Ratnacchattra, they are now the thousand bodhisattvas of the present blessed aeon, during the course of which one thousand Buddhas will appear in the world. Among them, Krakucchanda and others are already born, and those remaining will still be born, from Kakutsunda up to the Tathágata Roca, who will be the last to be born.

"Perhaps, prince of gods, you are asking yourself if, in that life, in that time, the Prince Candracchattra who upheld the Holy Dharma of Lord Tathágata Bhaisajjaraja was not someone other than myself. But you must not imagine that, for I was, in that life, in that time, the Prince Candracchattra. Thus it is necessary to know, prince of gods, that among all the worships rendered to

the Tathágata, the Dharma-worship is the very best. Yes, it is good, eminent, excellent, perfect, supreme, and unexcelled. And therefore, prince of gods, do not worship me with material objects but worship me with the Dharma-worship! Do not honor me with material objects but honor me by honor to the Dharma!"

Then the Lord Shakyamuni said to the bodhisattva Maitreya, the great spiritual hero, "I transmit to you, Maitreya, this unexcelled, perfect enlightenment which I attained only after innumerable millions of billions of aeons, in order that, at a later time, during a later life, a similar teaching of the Dharma, protected by your supernatural power, will spread in the world and will not disappear. Why? Maitreya, in the future there will be noble sons and daughters, devas, nagas, yakshas, gandharvas, and asuras, who, having planted the roots of virtue, will produce the spirit of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment. If they do not hear this teaching of the Dharma, they will certainly lose boundless advantages and even perish. But if they hear such a teaching, they will rejoice, will believe, and will accept it upon the crowns of their heads. Hence, in order to protect those future noble sons and daughters, you must spread a teaching such as this!

"Maitreya, there are two gestures of the bodhisattvas. What are they? The first gesture is to believe in all sorts of phrases and words, and the second gesture is to penetrate exactly the profound principle of the Dharma without being afraid. Such are the two gestures of the bodhisattvas. Maitreya, it must be known that the bodhisattvas who believe in all sorts of words and phrases, and apply themselves accordingly, are beginners and not experienced in religious practice. But the bodhisattvas, who read, hear, believe, and teach this profound teaching with its impeccable expressions reconciling dichotomies and its analyses of stages of development these are veterans in the religious practice.

"Maitreya, there are two reasons the beginner bodhisattvas hurt themselves and do not concentrate on the profound Dharma. What are they? Hearing this profound teaching never before heard, they are terrified and doubtful, do not rejoice, and reject it, thinking, and 'whence comes this teaching never before heard?' They then behold other noble sons accepting, becoming vessels for, and teaching this profound teaching, and they do not attend

upon them, do not befriend them, do not respect them, and do not honor them, and eventually they go so far as to criticize them. These are the two reasons the beginner bodhisattvas hurt themselves and do not penetrate the profound Dharma.

"There are two reasons the bodhisattvas who do aspire to the profound Dharma hurt themselves and do not attain the tolerance of the ultimate birthlessness of things. What are these two? These bodhisattvas despise and reproach the beginner bodhisattvas, who have not been practicing for a long time, and they do not initiate them or instruct them in the profound teaching. Having no great respect for this profound teaching, they are not careful about its rules. They help living beings by means of material gifts and do not help them by means of the gift of the Dharma. Such, Maitreya, are the two reasons the bodhisattvas who aspire to the profound Dharma hurt themselves and will not quickly attain the tolerance of the ultimate birthlessness of all things."

Thus having been taught, the bodhisattva Maitreya said to the Buddha, "Lord, the beautiful teachings of the Tathágata are wonderful and truly excellent. Lord, from this time forth, I will avoid all such errors and will defend and uphold this attainment of unexcelled, perfect enlightenment by the Tathágata during innumerable hundreds of thousands of millions of billions of aeons! In the future, I will place in the hands of noble sons and noble daughters who are worthy vessels of the holy Dharma this profound teaching. I will instill in them the power of memory with which they may, having believed in this teaching, retain it, recite it, penetrate its depths, teach it, propagate it, write it down, and proclaim it extensively to others.

"Thus I will instruct them, Lord, and thus it may be known that in that future time those who believe in this teaching and who enter deeply into it will be sustained by the supernatural blessing of the bodhisattva Maitreya."

Thereupon the Buddha gave his approval to the bodhisattva Maitreya: "Excellent! Excellent! Your word is well given! The Tathágata rejoices and commends your good promise."



Then all the bodhisattvas said together in one voice, "Lord, we also, after the ultimate liberation of the Tathágata, will come from our various Buddha-fields to spread far and wide this enlightenment of the perfect Buddha, the Tathágata. May all noble sons and daughters believe in that!"

Then the four Maharajas, the great kings of the quarters, said to the Buddha, "Lord, in all the towns, villages, cities, kingdoms, and palaces, wherever this discourse of the Dharma will be practiced, upheld, and correctly taught, we, the four great kings, will go there with our armies, our young warriors, and our retinues, to hear the Dharma. And we will protect the teachers of this Dharma for a radius of one league so that no one who plots injury or disruption against these teachers will have any opportunity to do them harm."

Then the Buddha said to the venerable Ánanda, "Receive then, Ánanda, this expression of the teaching of the Dharma. Remember it, and teach it widely and correctly to others!"

Ánanda replied, "I have memorized, Lord, this expression of the teaching of the Dharma. But what is the name of this teaching, and how should I remember it?"

The Buddha said, "Ánanda, this exposition of the Dharma is called 'The Teaching of Vimalakirti,' or 'The Reconciliation of Dichotomies,' or even 'Section of the Inconceivable Liberation.' Remember it thus!"

Thus spoke the Buddha. And the Licchavi Vimalakirti, the crown prince Manjusri, the venerable Ánanda, the bodhisattvas, the great disciples, the entire multitude, and the whole universe with its gods, men, asuras and gandharvas, rejoiced exceedingly. All heartily praised these declarations by the Lord.

END

# Vimamsaka Sutta

## The Examination

I heard thus:

At one time the Blessed One was living in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. Then the Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus from there.

"Bhikkhus, by a Bhikkhu who could read the thought processes of another, an examination of the Thus Gone One should be done. Is he rightfully enlightened or not or only conscious of it?"

"Venerable sir, the Blessed One is the origin of the Teaching, the leader and the refuge of the Teaching. Good that the meaning of these words occur to the Blessed One. Hearing it from the Blessed One, the Bhikkhus will bear it in mind."

"Then Bhikkhus, listen, I will teach. "

"Bhikkhus, by the Bhikkhu who could examine the thought processes of another the Thus Gone One should be examined on two things. On things cognizable by eye consciousness and ear consciousness. Are defiled things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. These defiled things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness [1] are not evident in the Thus Gone One. Then he should make a further examination: Are mixed things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. These mixed things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness [2] are not evident in the Thus Gone One. Then he should make a further examination: Are pure things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? When examining he knows. The pure things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness [3] are evident in the Thus Gone One.

"Then he should make a further examination. Has the venerable one attained to these things of merit since long or are they attained to recently? When examining he knows these things of

merit were attained since long, and not recently. Then he should make a further examination. Is the venerable one internally convinced of this attainment? Is there a possible danger evident? He should make a thorough examination to know whether there is some danger evident. When examining he knows the venerable one is internally convinced of the attainment and there is no danger evident.

Then he should further examine. Does the venerable one not indulge in sensuality, through destruction of greed or through fear? When examining he knows. The venerable one does not indulge in sensuality through destruction of greed, and not through fear.

Then the others should question that Bhikkhu. On what grounds did the venerable one say, that the venerable one did not indulge in sensuality because greed is destroyed and not through fear? If that Bhikkhu should reply rightly, he should say: Whether the venerable one is in the midst of the community, or living alone. Living there well or miserably, if when advising a crowd, he sees someone fallen for materiality, or someone not soiled by materiality, the venerable one does not look down on him: This I heard in the presence of the Blessed One, and he acknowledged it 'I do not indulge in sensuality because my greed is destroyed, not out of fear.'

Then further it may, even be questioned from the Thus Gone One himself: Are defiled things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One or are they not? Then I would declare. 'Defiled things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness are not evident in the Thus Gone One'. Asked: Are mixed things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One, or are they not? I would declare. 'Mixed things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness are not evident in the Thus Gone One'. Asked: Are pure things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness evident in the Thus Gone One, or are they not? I would declare. 'Pure things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness are evident in the Thus Gone One. That is my path and pasture, but I do not make them mine'. Bhikkhus, a Teacher who says thus, is suitable to be approached to hear the Teaching. He teaches leading one to more and more exalted states, showing the dark and white

counterparts'. When teaching leading to more and more exalted states, at a certain point he reaches the summit [4] and establishes faith in the Teacher: The Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed, the Community of Bhikkhus have gone well.

Then the others should question that Bhikkhu. On what grounds did the venerable one say, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed and the Community of Bhikkhus have gone well? That Bhikkhu replying rightly should say, I approached the Blessed One to listen to the Teaching. The Blessed One taught me leading to more and more exalted states, showing the dark and white counterparts. When teaching, leading me to more and more exalted states, at a certain point I reached the summit, and then I established faith in the Teacher and came to the conclusion, the Blessed One is rightfully enlightened, the Teaching is well proclaimed, and the Community of Bhikkhus has gone dwell.

Bhikkhus, in whomever faith is established in the Thus Gone One in this manner with these phrases and words, it becomes well established, thoroughly rooted faith and insight. It cannot be changed by a recluse, Brahmin, god, Mara Brahma or by anyone in the world.

Bhikkhus, that is the search in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One, and is the propriety of reaching the summit [5] in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One..

The Blessed One said thus and those Bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.

### Footnotes

1. Defiled things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness' *ye sankili.t.thaa cakkusota vi~n~naaneyyaa dhammaa'* These are defiled perceptions born of eye and ear consciousness. Those are thoughts with greed, hate and delusion

2. Mixed things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness. '*ye vitimissaa cakkhusota vi~n~naaneyyaa dhammaa'* This is a

mixed up perception, when not sure whether it is seen or heard. They are thoughts with a mixture of greed, hate and delusion.

3. Pure things cognizable by eye and ear consciousness '*ye vodaataa cakkhusota vi~n~naaneyyaa dhammaa*' These are pure perceptions and thoughts born of eye and ear consciousness, free of greed, hate and delusion. .

4. At a certain point reaches the summit. '*idha ekacca.m dhamma.m ni.t.tha.m aagama.m*' Here, it is realising the Teaching of the Blessed One, and it is equivalent to attaining one or the other of the eight attainments of the Noble disciple. These attainments have to go in due order and the first of them is the entry into the stream of the Teaching. There is no progress without it.

5. The search in the Teaching of the Thus Gone One and the propriety of reaching the summit. '*eva.m kho bhikkhave tathaagate dhammasamannesanaa hoti. Eva.m ca pana tathaagato dhammataasusamanni.t.tho honti*' It means that the understanding of the Teaching should come from within, and it becomes the fitness to see through.

# Vina Sutta

## The Lute

"Monks, in whatever monk or nun there arises desire, passion, aversion, delusion, or mental resistance with regard to forms cognizable via the eye, he/she should hold the mind in check. [Thinking,] 'It's dangerous and dubious, that path, thorny and overgrown, a miserable path, a devious path, impenetrable. It's a path followed by people of no integrity, not a path followed by people of integrity. It's not worthy of you,' he/she should hold the mind in check with regard to forms cognizable via the eye.

"In whatever monk or nun there arises desire, passion, aversion, delusion, or mental resistance with regard to sounds cognizable via the ear... aromas cognizable via the nose... flavors cognizable via the tongue... tactile sensations cognizable via the body... ideas cognizable via the intellect, he/she should hold the mind in check. [Thinking,] 'It's dangerous and dubious, that path, thorny and overgrown, a miserable path, a devious path, impenetrable. It's a path followed by people of no integrity, not a path followed by people of integrity. It's not worthy of you,' he/she should hold the mind in check with regard to ideas cognizable via the intellect.

"Suppose that corn had ripened and the watchman was heedless. A corn-eating ox, invading the corn to eat it, would intoxicate itself as much as it liked. In the same way, an uninstructed run-of-the-mill person, not exercising restraint with regard to the six media of sensual contact, intoxicates himself with the five strings of sensuality as much as he likes.

"Now suppose that corn had ripened and the watchman was heedful. The corn-eating ox would invade the corn to eat it, but then the watchman would grab it firmly by the muzzle. Having grabbed it firmly by the muzzle, he would pin it down by the forehead. Having pinned it down by the forehead, he would give it a sound thrashing with a stick. Having given it a sound thrashing with a stick, he would let it go.

"A second time... A third time, the corn-eating ox would invade the corn to eat it, but then the watchman would grab it firmly by the muzzle. Having grabbed it firmly by the muzzle, he would pin it down by the forehead. Having pinned it down by the forehead, he would give it a sound thrashing with a stick. Having given it a sound thrashing with a stick, he would let it go.

"As a result, the corn-eating ox -- regardless of whether it went to the village or to the wilds, was standing still or lying down -- wouldn't invade the corn again, because it would recall the earlier taste it got of the stick.

"In the same way, when a monk's mind is held back, thoroughly held back, from the six media of sensory contact, his mind settles inwardly, grows steady, unified, and concentrated.

"Suppose there were a king or king's minister who had never heard the sound of a lute before. He might hear the sound of a lute and say, 'What, my good men, is that sound -- so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling?' They would say, 'that, sire, is called a lute, whose sound is so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling.' Then he would say, 'Go and fetch me that lute.' They would fetch the lute and say, 'Here, sire, is the lute whose sound is so delightful, so tantalizing, so intoxicating, so ravishing, so enthralling.' He would say, 'enough of your lute. Fetch me just the sound.' Then they would say, 'this lute, sire, is made of numerous components, a great many components. It's through the activity of numerous components that it sounds: that is, in dependence on the body, the skin, the neck, the frame, the strings, the bridge, and the appropriate human effort. Thus it is that this lute -- made of numerous components, a great many components -- sounds through the activity of numerous components.'

"Then the king would split the lute into ten pieces, a hundred pieces. Having split the lute into ten pieces, a hundred pieces, he would shave it to splinters. Having shaved it to splinters, he would burn it in a fire. Having burned it in a fire, he would reduce it to ashes. Having reduced it to ashes, he would winnow it before a high wind or let it be washed away by a swift-flowing stream. He would then say, 'A sorry thing, this lute -- whatever a

lute may be -- by which people have been so thoroughly tricked and deceived.'

"In the same way, a monk investigates form, however far form may go. He investigates feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go. As he is investigating form... feeling... perception... fabrications... consciousness, however far consciousness may go, any thoughts of 'me' or 'mine' or 'I am' do not occur to him."



# Viññana Sutta

## Consciousness

At Savatthi. "Monks, eye-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, alterable. Ear-consciousness... Nose-consciousness... Tongue-consciousness... Body-consciousness... Intellect-consciousness is inconstant, changeable, alterable.

"One who has conviction & belief that these phenomena are this way is called a faith-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry shades. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

"One who, after pondering with a modicum of discernment, has accepted that these phenomena are this way is called a Dhamma-follower: one who has entered the orderliness of rightness, entered the plane of people of integrity, transcended the plane of the run-of-the-mill. He is incapable of doing any deed by which he might be reborn in hell, in the animal womb, or in the realm of hungry shades. He is incapable of passing away until he has realized the fruit of stream-entry.

"One who knows and sees that these phenomena are this way is called a stream-enterer, steadfast, never again destined for states of woe, headed for self-awakening."

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# Vipaka Sutta

## Results

"Monks, the taking of life -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from the taking of life is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to a short life span.

"Stealing -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from stealing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the loss of one's wealth.

"Illicit sexual behavior -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from illicit sexual behavior is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to rivalry and revenge.

"Telling falsehoods -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from telling falsehoods is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to being falsely accused.

"Divisive tale-bearing -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from divisive tale bearing is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to the breaking of one's friendships.

"Harsh speech -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from harsh speech is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to unappealing sounds.

"Frivolous chattering -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from frivolous chattering is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to words that aren't worth taking to heart.

"The drinking of fermented and distilled liquors -- when indulged in, developed, and pursued -- is something that leads to hell, leads to rebirth as a common animal, leads to the realm of the hungry shades. The slightest of all the results coming from drinking fermented and distilled liquors is that, when one becomes a human being, it leads to mental derangement."

# Vipallasa Sutta

## Perversions

"Monks, there are these four perversions of perception, perversions of mind, perversions of view. Which four? 'Constant' with regard to the inconstant is a perversion of perception, a perversion of mind, a perversion of view. 'Pleasant' with regard to the stressful... 'Self' with regard to not-self... 'Attractive' with regard to the unattractive is a perversion of perception, a perversion of mind, a perversion of view. These are the four perversions of perception, perversions of mind, perversions of view.

"There are these four non-perversions of perception, non-perversions of mind, non-perversions of view. Which four? 'Inconstant' with regard to the inconstant is a non-perversion of perception, a non-perversion of mind, a non-perversion of view. 'Stressful' with regard to the stressful... 'Not-self' with regard to not-self... 'Unattractive' with regard to the unattractive is a non-perversion of perception, a non-perversion of mind, a non-perversion of view. These are the four non-perversions of perception, non-perversions of mind, non-perversions of view."

Perceiving constancy in the inconstant,  
pleasure in the stressful,  
self in what's not-self,  
attractiveness in the unattractive,  
beings, destroyed by wrong-view,  
go mad, out of their minds.  
Bound to Mara's yoke,  
from the yoke they find no rest.  
Beings go on to the wandering-on,  
leading to birth and death.

But when Awakened Ones  
arise in the world,  
bringing light to the world,  
they proclaim the Dhamma  
leading to the stilling of stress.  
When those with discernment listen,

they regain their senses,  
seeing the inconstant as inconstant,  
the stressful as stressful,  
what's not-self as not-self,  
the unattractive as unattractive.  
Undertaking right view,  
they transcend all stress and suffering.

# Virecana Sutta

## (Tikicchaka Sutta)

### A Purgative

"Monks, doctors give a purgative for warding off diseases caused by bile, diseases caused by phlegm, diseases caused by the internal wind property. There is a purging there; I don't say that there's not, but it sometimes succeeds and sometimes fails. So I will teach you the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair. Listen and pay close attention. I will speak."

"As you say, lord," the monks responded.

The Blessed One said: "Now, what is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair?"

"In one who has right view, wrong view is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on wrong view are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right view go to the culmination of their development.

"In one who has right resolve, wrong resolve is purged away..."

"In one who has right speech, wrong speech is purged away..."

"In one who has right action, wrong action is purged away..."

"In one who has right livelihood, wrong livelihood is purged away..."

"In one who has right effort, wrong effort is purged away...

"In one who has right mindfulness, wrong mindfulness is purged away...

"In one who has right concentration, wrong concentration is purged away...

"In one who has right knowledge, wrong knowledge is purged away...

"In one who has right release, wrong release is purged away, and the many evil, unskillful mental qualities that come into play in dependence on wrong release are purged away as well, while the many skillful mental qualities that depend on right release go to the culmination of their development.

"This, monks, is the noble purgative that always succeeds and never fails, a purgative whereby beings subject to birth are freed from birth; beings subject to aging are freed from aging; beings subject to death are freed from death; beings subject to sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair are freed from sorrow, lamentation, pain, distress and despair."

# Visakhuposatha Sutta

## The Discourse to Visakha on the Uposatha with the Eight Practices

Thus have I heard:

At one time the Exalted One was staying near Savatthi at the Eastern monastery in the mansion given by Migara's mother. Then Visakha, [1] Migara's mother, approached the Exalted One; having approached and bowed down she sat down in a suitable place. When she was seated the Exalted One spoke thus to Visakha, Migara's Mother:

"Visakha, when the Uposatha undertaken with its eight component practices, [2] is entered on, it is of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range. And how, Visakha, is the Uposatha undertaken with its eight component practices, entered on, is of great fruit, great advantage, great splendor and great range?

"Here, [3] Visakha, a noble disciple considers thus:

"For all their lives the Arahants dwell having abandoned killing living beings, refrain from killing living beings, they have laid down their staffs, laid down their weapons, they are conscientious, [4] sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned killing living beings, refraining from killing living beings, I am one who has laid down my staff, laid down my weapon, I am conscientious, sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this first practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants dwell having abandoned taking what is not given, refrain from taking what is not given, they are takers of what is given, those who expect only what is given, themselves become clean without thieving; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned taking



what is not given, refraining from taking what is not given. I am a taker of what is given, one who expects only what is given, by myself become clean without thieving. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this second practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants dwell having abandoned unchaste conduct, they are of chaste conduct, living aloof, refrain from sex which is the way of common society; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned unchaste conduct, I am of chaste conduct, living aloof, refraining from sex which is the common way of society. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this third practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants dwell having abandoned false speech, refrain from false speech, they are speakers of truth, joiners of truth, [5] firm-in-truth, [6] grounded-on-truth, [7] not speakers of lies to the world; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned false speech, refraining from false speech, a speaker of truth, a joiner of truth, firm-in-truth, grounded-on-truth, not a speaker of lies to the world. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this fourth practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants dwell having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness and refrain from them; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness, refraining from them. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this fifth practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants are one-mealers, refrain from eating outside the time, desisting at night, [8] so today I am a one-mealer, refraining from eating outside the time,

desisting at night. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this sixth practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics; so today I refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing ornaments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics. By this practice, following after the Arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this seventh practice.

"He considers: 'For all their lives the Arahants having abandoned high beds [9] and large beds, [10] refraining from high beds and large beds, they make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass; so today I have abandoned high beds and large beds, refraining from high beds and large beds, I make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass. By this practice, following after the Arahants the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this eighth practice.

"Thus indeed, Visakha is the Uposatha entered on and undertaken with its eight component practices, of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range. "How great a fruit? How great an advantage? How great a splendor? How great a range?

"Just as though, Visakha, one might have power, dominion and kingship [11] over sixteen great countries abounding in the seven treasures [12] -- that is to say, Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vansa, Kure, Pancala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja, yet it is not worth a sixteenth part of the Uposatha undertaken with its eight practices. For what reason? Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.

"That which among men is fifty years, Visakha, is one night and day of the devas of the Four Great Kings, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the devas of the Four Great Kings is five hundred of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Four Great Kings -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"That which among men is a hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the devas of the Thirty-three, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the devas of the Thirty-three is one thousand of those heavenly years. [13] Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Thirty-three -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"That which among men is two hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Yama devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Yama devas is two thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break-up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Yama devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"That which among men is four hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Tushita devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Tushita devas is four thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Tushita devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with

this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"That which among men is eight hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Nimmanarati devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Nimmanarati devas is eight thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death may arise to fellowship with the Nimmanarati devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"That which among men is sixteen hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas is sixteen thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Paranimmitavasavatti devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

"Kill no life, nor take what is not given, speak no lie, nor be an alcoholic, refrain from sex and unchaste conduct, at night do not eat out-of-time food, neither bear garlands nor indulge with perfume, and make your bed a mat upon the ground: this indeed is called the eight-part uposatha taught by the Buddha gone to dukkha's end. The radiance of the sun and moon, both beautiful to see, follow on from each other, dispelling the darkness as they go through the heavens, illumining the sky and brightening the quarters and the treasure found between them: pearls and crystals and auspicious turquoises, gold nuggets and the gold called "ore," monetary gold with gold dust carried down -- compared with the eight-part uposatha, though they are enjoyed, are not a sixteenth part -- as the shining of the moon in all the groups of stars. Hence indeed the woman and the man who are virtuous enter on uposatha having eight parts and having made

merits [14] bringing forth happiness blameless they obtain heavenly abodes."

The Upasaka Vasettha, when he heard this discourse, after the Buddha had finished speaking the above verses, exclaimed:

"Lord, if my dear kin and relatives were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. Lord, if all the warrior-nobles, Brahmans, merchants and laborers were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day."

"So it is, Vasettha. If all the warrior-nobles, Brahmans, merchants and laborers were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. If this world with its devas, Maras and brahmas, this generation with its Samanas and Brahmans, together with its rulers and mankind were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. Vasettha, if these great sala trees were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day, that is, if they were conscious, what to speak of mankind."

## Footnotes

1. Visakha: a very generous woman lay-disciple who, by listening frequently to Dhamma, became a Stream-winner and who was, perhaps, already a noble disciple (*ariya*) when this discourse was spoken.

2. *anga*: lit. part, component, practice; here meaning practices composing the Uposatha.

3. "Here": meaning "in the Buddhasasana," the Buddha's instructions or religion.

4. *lajji*: one who has shame (*hiri*) of doing evil, and fear of doing evil (*ottappa*), the two qualities which are called "the world guardians."

5. *saccasandha*: "they join the truth" (Comm.).

6. *theta*: lit. "firm, established," that is, in the experience of ultimate truth.

7. *paccayika*: truth that has been seen by perceiving its conditional arising.

8. Bhikkhus do not eat after midday until the following dawn.

9. High beds means luxurious beds which are soft and well-sprung.

10. Large beds means those in which two people can sleep.

11. *rajjam*: lit., "kingship," but meaning generally great authority.

12. The seven treasures: gold, silver, pearls, crystal, turquoise, diamond, coral.

13. If calculated in human years, the devas of the Four Great Kings live 9,000,000 years; of the Thirty-three 36,000,000 years; of the Yama 144,000,000 years; of the Tushita 576,000,000 years; of the Nimmanarati 2,304,000,000 years; of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas the life is 9,216,000,000 years. Man can live at most one day in the life of the Thirty-three. It is worth reading the story in the Dhammapada Commentary (trans. "Buddhist Legends," Harvard Oriental Series Vol. 29, reissued by the Pali Text Society, London, 1969), called *Husband-honorer*, which brings to life this comparative time scale.

14. merit (*puñña*): good kamma which purifies and cleanses the mind of the doer, such as the practice of the three ways of merit-making: giving, moral conduct (or precepts), and meditation.

# The Visualization Sutra

## I. PROLOGUE

Thus have I heard: at one time, Shakyamuni Buddha was staying on Vulture Peak near Rajagrha with a great assembly of 1,250 *bhiksus* and 32,000 *bodhisattvas*, led by the Dharma-Prince Manjushri.

At that time, in the great city of Rajagrha, there was a prince named Ajatasatru. Following the counsel of Devadatta, an evil friend, he arrested his father, King Bimbisara, and confined him in a cell surrounded by walls seven layers deep, forbidding any officials or ministers from going there. The queen, whose name was Vaidehi, remained loyal to the king. Purifying herself by bathing, she anointed her body with an ointment of cream and honey mixed with wheat flour, and filled her ornaments with grape juice. She then offered them to the king in secret.

At that time, the king ate the flour-paste and drank the grape juice, then asked for some water. Having rinsed his mouth completely, he respectfully placed his palms together and, facing Vulture Peak, bowed to the World-Honored One. He said, "Great Maudgalyayana is my friend and compatriot; I beg you to have the compassion to come and initiate me in the Eight Precepts."

Thereupon, Maudgalyayana flew to the king like a swooping bird of prey. Day after day, he came like this to initiate the king in the Eight Precepts. The World-Honored One also sent the Venerable Purnamaitrayaniputra, who delivered Dharma discourses and Sutras to the king. Three weeks passed in this fashion. Because the king was able to eat the flour-paste and honey and to hear the Dharma teachings, his countenance became peaceful and calm.

At that time, Ajatasatru questioned the guard at the entrance: "Is my father, the king, still alive?" The guard replied, "Your Majesty, the queen daily anoints her body with flour-paste and fills her ornaments with grape juice. And the monks Maudgalyayana and Purnamaitrayaniputra swoop down from the sky and deliver Dharma discourses to the king. It is impossible to stop them."

Hearing this, Ajatasatru became enraged with his mother and said, "My own mother is a criminal and with criminals does she associate! Those evil monks, with their tricks, illusions and magical incantations, have caused this evil king to have escaped death for many days." With this, he seized a sharp sword intending to kill his mother.

At that time, there was a wise and intelligent minister whose name was Moonlight. Along with the physician Jivaka, he bowed to the king and said, "Your Majesty, we have heard it said in the Vedic discourses that from the beginning of this aeon to the present there have been some 18,000 evil kings who have killed their own fathers because they desired the throne; yet never have we heard of anyone who committed the outrageous crime of killing his mother. Your majesty, if you commit such a vicious murder, you will bring disgrace upon the Noble Caste. As your ministers, we cannot even bear to hear of it, for this indeed is the act of an outcaste. We cannot stay here any longer." Having spoken these words, the two ministers began to withdraw, each with his hand grasping on his sword.

Ajatasatru, astounded and fearful, called out to Jivaka and said, "Are you going to desert me?" Jivaka replied, "Great King, please restrain yourself; do not harm your mother." Hearing this, the king repented and begged their forgiveness. Thereupon he immediately put away his sword and gave up all thought of killing his mother. Instead he ordered that she be detained in her quarters and kept in the palace so that she could not leave again.

Having thus been detained, Vaidehi was stricken with sorrow and grief. Facing faraway Vulture Peak, she prostrated herself towards the Buddha and said, "O Tathagata, World-Honored One, in former times you never failed to send Ananda to come and comfort me. Now I am greatly distressed and have no way to look upon World-Honored One's majesty. I pray, send the Venerable Maudgalyayana and the Venerable Ananda to come and meet with me." Having said this, she wept sorrowful tears that fell like rain as she bowed to the Buddha.

But even before she raised her head, the World-Honored one, who was then staying on Vulture Peak and knew the thoughts in Vaidehi's mind, ordered Great Maudgalyayana and Ananda to



go to her through the sky. The Buddha also disappeared from Vulture Peak and reappeared in the inner chamber of the royal palace.

When Vaidehi finished her prayer and raised her head, she saw the World-Honored One, the Buddha Shakyamuni. His body was the color of purple-gold and he was seated on a hundred-jeweled lotus flower, attended by Maudgalyayana on his left side and Ananda on his right. Indra and Brahma, along with the other heavenly beings guarding the world, hovered in the sky about him; scattering heavenly blossoms like rain, they paid homage to the Buddha.

When Vaidehi saw the Buddha, the World-Honored One, she tore off her ornaments, rose and prostrated herself on the ground. Weeping bitterly, she faced the Buddha and said, "O World-Honored One, what evil *karma* did I commit in a previous life that should cause the birth of such an evil son? World-Honored One, what were the causes and conditions of his association with Devadatta and his kind? My only wish is for the World-Honored One to reveal to me a place where I might be reborn that is without distress, for unhappy is this impure world in this evil *kasaya* era. This defiled and evil place is full of hell-beings, hungry spirits and beasts, and there is an accumulation of much evil. I pray that in the future I may hear no evil worlds and may see no evil beings. Now, World-Honored One, prostrating before you, I ask for your compassion. My only wish is for you to teach me to visualize a place where one can be born by performing pure and undefiled acts."

At that time, the World-Honored One emitted a golden light from between his eyebrows. It illuminated all the countless worlds of the Ten Directions, and upon returning rested atop the Buddha's head, forming a golden tower resembling Mount Sumeru. Upon the tower were revealed the pure and wondrous worlds of all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Some of these lands were made of the seven kinds of jewels, others consisted entirely of lotus flowers; some resembled the heavenly palace of Isvara, and others were like crystal mirrors in which all the lands of the Ten Directions were reflected. These countless lands of the Buddhas could be seen by Vaidehi in all their majesty.

Then Vaidehi said to the Buddha, "O World-Honored One, all these Buddha Lands are pure, free of defilement and brilliant, but I would prefer to be born in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss where the Buddha Amitayus resides. My only wish is that you instruct me in how to concentrate my thoughts and attain samadhi."

At that time, the World-Honored One gently smiled, and from the Buddha's mouth emerged five-colored rays of light, each ray illuminating the top of King Bimbisara's head. Although the great king was in his cell and despite the obstacle of distance, his mind's eye remained unhindered, and he saw the World-Honored One. Touching his forehead to the ground in homage, he spontaneously advanced to the Stage of a Non-Returner.

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Vaidehi, "Do you not know now that the Buddha Amitayus is not far from here? You should concentrate your thoughts upon and visualize that Buddha-land which is the result of pure actions. I shall now give you detailed instructions so that you and future generations who desire to practice the pure actions may attain birth in the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss."

"Those who desire to be born in that land must perform the three meritorious acts: first, they should attend dutifully to their parents, honor the work of teachers and elders, with a compassionate mind refrain from killing, and cultivate the ten virtuous acts; second, they should receive and uphold the Three Refuges, keep the various precepts, and refrain from breaking the rules of conduct; third, they should awaken the mind that aspires for Enlightenment, believe deeply in the principle of cause and effect, read and recite the Mahayana teachings, and encourage those who practice the way. These three acts are called the undefiled acts."

The Buddha further said to Vaidehi: "You should know that these three kinds of virtuous deeds are none other than the true cause for the Enlightenment of all the Buddhas of the past, present and future."

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Listen closely and think well upon this! I, the Tathagata, will now expound the pure

and undefiled acts for the benefit of the future generations of all sentient beings who are affected by the enemy – blind passions. Excellent is this Vaidehi, who has done well to ask about this! Ananda, you should receive and keep the Buddha's words and proclaim them widely for the benefit of the multitudes of beings.

"I, the Tathagata, will now instruct you, Vaidehi and all the sentient beings of future generations in the visualization of the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss. By the power of the Buddha, they will see that Pure Land as though seeing their own images in a bright mirror. When they see that land of ultimate and wondrous joy, they will rejoice and immediately acquire the insight into the non-origination of all existence."

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "You are but an ordinary person whose mental capacities are weak and feeble. As you have yet to attain the divine eye, you are unable to see very far. But the Buddhas, the Tathagatas, have special means to allow you to see that far."

Then Vaidehi said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, because of the Buddha's transcendent power, I may be able to see that land. But how will sentient beings who come after the Buddha's death be able to see Buddha Amitayus' Realm of Ultimate Bliss when they are constrained by defilements, unwholesomeness and the five afflictions?"

## II. FIRST VISUALIZATION: THE SETTING SUN

The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "You and all sentient beings should single-mindedly concentrate your thoughts with one-pointed attention, on the Western Quarter. How is this to be done? All the multitudes of sentient beings who are not born blind and have the sense of sight have seen the setting sun. Focusing your attention and sitting in the proper posture, you should face the west. Contemplatively examine the sun, with your mind firmly fixed upon it. Firmly concentrate upon the setting sun and do not let your sight wander from it. It should appear like a (red) drum suspended above the horizon. Once the sun is visualized in this way, then whether the eyes are shut or open, it can be clearly

seen. This is the image of the sun and is called the First Visualization."

### III. SECOND VISUALIZATION: WATER

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the First Visualization has been completed, next form the perception of water. Envision the Western Quarter as being completely filled with water, and picture the water as clean and pure. Seeing water that is clear leads to clear sight and then there is no scattering of the mind. Once this water has been visualized, envision it as turning into ice. Having visualized the ice as brilliant and transparent to its depth, see it as turning into lapis lazuli.

"When this vision is completed, next imagine that this ground of lapis lazuli shines brilliantly, both inside and out, and that the lapis lazuli ground is supported from below by majestic golden-bannered pillars made of adamant and the seven precious jewels. Each golden-bannered pillar has eight corners and eight sides, each side is made of a hundred jewels, each jewel shines with a thousand rays of light, and each ray of light has eighty-four thousand colors. As they are reflected on the lapis lazuli ground, they look like thousands of millions of suns, so dazzling that it is impossible to see them all in detail.

"On the surface of this lapis lazuli ground, golden paths intricately mesh and crisscross like a net of cords, and the seven kinds of precious jewels form borders that demarcate the intersected parts of the ground. Each jewel emits a flood of light in five hundred colors. The light appears in the shape of a flower, or a star or the moon; suspended in the sky, these rays form a tower of light on which there are ten million pavilions made of a hundred jewels. Both sides of the tower are adorned with a billion flower-banners and countless musical instruments. Pure breezes of the eight pleasing qualities are produced by these rays of light, causing the musical instruments to play in voices which proclaim the truths of 'suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self.' This is the visualization of water and is called the Second Visualization. To do this visualization is

called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

#### IV. THIRD VISUALIZATION: THE GROUND

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the water has been achieved, each image should be clearly seen whether the eyes are shut or open, and should be constantly kept in your mind except when sleeping.

Accordingly, these images are called the general perception of the ground of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. If you succeed in realizing the state of *samadhi*, seeing the ground of that land so clearly and distinctly that it cannot be adequately described, then it is the perception of the ground which is called the Third Visualization."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You are the keeper of the Buddha's discourses for future generations and for the benefit of the multitudes of beings who wish to be liberated from suffering. For them I proclaim the Dharma of visualizing the ground. If they can visualize the ground, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for eight hundred million aeons is eliminated, and when they take leave of this life, they will assuredly be born into the Pure Land with a heart that is free of doubt. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called a wrong visualization."

#### V. FOURTH VISUALIZATION: THE JEWELED TREES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the ground has been completed, the next visualization is of the jeweled trees. In visualizing the jeweled trees, one should see them one by one and form an image of seven pathways that are lined with these trees. Each tree is eight thousand *yojanas* high, and is adorned with blossoms and leaves made of the seven kinds of jewels. Each blossom and leaf is the color of a different jewel. From the lapis lazuli-colored blossoms is emitted a golden light; from the rock crystal-colored

is emitted a crimson light; from the emerald-colored is emitted a sapphire light; and from the sapphire-colored is emitted a pearl-green ray of light. In addition, coral, amber and all the other myriad jewels serve as dazzling ornaments.

"Exquisite nets of pearls completely cover the trees, and each tree is veiled by seven layers of nets. Between each of the nets there are five billion exquisite flower palaces that resemble the palace of Lord Brahma, and within each of them reside celestial children. Each of these children wears ornaments made of five billion noble wish-fulfilling jewels. The light from these *mani* jewels shines brightly for a radius of a hundred *yojanas* in all directions, not unlike a constellation of a billion suns and moons, but no words can fully describe the brilliance of this light. The intermingling of the light from these various jewels produces a color unexcelled among all colors.

"The rows of these jeweled-tree paths are evenly arranged, and their foliage is equally spaced. From among the leaves appear exquisite blossoms, and upon these flowers, fruits made of the seven kinds of jewels spontaneously appear. Each blossom is twenty-five *yojanas* in diameter, and their petals shine with a thousand colors and have a hundred different patterns so that altogether, the leaves are like heavenly ornaments. This array of exquisite blossoms is the color of the golden sands of the Jambu River and resembles revolving wheels of fire gently turning among the leaves; and from these flowers, fruits well up as if from Sakra's vase.

"These fruits issue forth great floods of light that form banners, flags and countless canopies adorned with jewels. Within these jeweled canopies, all the deeds of the Buddhas of the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds are illuminated, and the Buddha-Lands of the Ten Directions also appear within.

"When you have seen the trees in this way, visualize each detail in order: perceive the trunks, the branches, the leaves, the blossoms and the fruits, and let your vision of all of them be clear and distinct. This is the visualization of the trees and is called the Fourth Visualization. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

## VI. FIFTH VISUALIZATION: THE BODIES OF WATER

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When the visualization of the trees has been completed, next perceive the bodies of water. The Land of Utmost Bliss has eight bodies of water; the waters of each one of these lakes are made of the seven treasures and are begotten from a wish-fulfilling pearl. The water of each lake flows into fourteen streams, each of which is made of the seven treasures and is wondrous in color. The banks of each channel are golden in color, and the bed is strewn with the sand of variegated diamonds.

"In the midst of each lake there are six hundred million seven-treasured lotus flowers. Each lotus flower is perfectly round and is twelve *yojanas* in diameter. The pearly water flows among the flowers and courses back and forth amidst the trees. The delicate and exquisite sounds of the flowing waters proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence, non-self and the *Paramitas*. They also praise the physical characteristics and marks of the Buddhas.

"From the wish-fulfilling pearl, delicate and exquisite golden rays of light issue forth and become singing birds as colorful as a hundred jewels; and their harmonious and sweet songs continually praise the mindfulness of the Buddha, the mindfulness of the Dharma and the mindfulness of the Sangha. This is the visualization of the eight lakes of excellent qualities and it is called the Fifth Visualization. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

## VII. SIXTH VISUALIZATION: THE TREES, GROUND AND LAKES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "In every region of that land of myriad treasures there are five billion treasure palaces adorned with jewels, and in those palaces there are countless heavenly beings playing heavenly music. Like heavenly jeweled

banners, musical instruments are suspended in the sky, producing myriad sounds that proclaim the mindfulness of the Buddha, the mindfulness of the Dharma and the mindfulness of the Sangha.

"When this visualization has been completed, it is called the general perception of the jeweled trees, the jeweled ground and the jeweled lakes in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. This is the unified visualization of these images which is called the Sixth Visualization. For those who see this, the heavy and evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for measureless tens of millions of aeons is eliminated, and when they take leave of this life, they will assuredly be born in that land. To do this visualization is called the right visualization; to do another is called an incorrect visualization."

## VIII. THE LOTUS SEAT

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "Listen closely! Listen closely! Consider my words carefully. I shall now analyze and expound for you the Dharma by which you may free yourselves from sufferings and afflictions; keep it in your minds, and explain it widely for the benefits of the multitudes of beings."

After Shakyamuni Buddha had spoken these words, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span appeared in the sky with the two great beings, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta standing in attendance to the left and right. They shone with such a radiant and brilliant light that it was impossible to see them in detail. The golden hue of the sands of a hundred thousand Jambu rivers could not compare to it.

Once Vaidehi saw the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, she fell to her knees at the feet of Shakyamuni Buddha saying, "O World-Honored One, it is by your transcendental power that I am now able to see the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas; but how can sentient beings in the future visualize the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas?"



The Buddha said to Vaidehi, "Those who wish to visualize that Buddha should concentrate their thoughts and form the visualization of a lotus flower on the seven-jeweled ground; each petal of that lotus flower has the color of hundreds of jewels and eighty-four thousand veins that are like heavenly patterns; each vein has eighty-four thousand rays of light so clear and distinct that one can see all of them. Even the smallest petals are two hundred and fifty *yojanas* in diameter. Each lotus flower has eighty-four thousand such petals, and between each petal are a billion *mani*-pearls, the king of jewels, serving as dazzling ornaments. Each of these *mani*-pearls sends forth a thousand rays of light which, like canopies made of the seven kinds of jewels, cover the entire land.

"There is a pedestal made of *sakrabhilagna-mani* jewels, and this lotus flower pedestal is studded and adorned with eighty thousand diamonds, rubies and wondrous nets made of *brahma mani*-pearls. Four columns with jeweled banners spontaneously arise from this pedestal, each jeweled banner as large as a hundred trillion Mount Sumerus.

"Atop these bannered columns is a jeweled canopy like that of the palace of the Yama Heaven, and this canopy shines with five billion rare and exquisite jewels that serve as dazzling ornaments. Each of these precious jewels emits eighty-four thousand rays of light, and each ray of light creates eighty-four thousand different shades of gold. Each golden ray of light illuminates the entire jeweled ground and transforms itself everywhere into various forms: some become diamond pedestals, some form nets of pearls, and others create clouds of various kinds of flowers. In all the Ten Directions, they transform themselves according to one's wishes, performing the works of the Buddhas. This is the visualization of the lotus seat and is called the Seventh Visualization."

The Buddha further said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "These exquisite flowers were originally created by the power of the Bodhisattva Dharmakara's vows. Those who wish to be mindful of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life should first visualize the image of the Lotus Seat. When visualizing this image they should not stray into other visualizations, but should perceive each detail one by one. Each petal, each jewel, each ray of light,

each pedestal and each bannered column should be as clear and distinct as when seeing the reflection of one's own face in a mirror. For those who have completed this visualization, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for fifty thousand aeons is eliminated, and they assuredly will be born in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization; if one performs another visualization, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## IX. EIGHTH VISUALIZATION: THE THREE SAGES

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When you have seen these things, next you should visualize the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span. And why is that? Because each *Buddha-Tathagata*, as the body of the *Dharmadhatu*, pervades the mind of all sentient beings. This is why when your mind perceives the Buddha, it is your mind that possesses the thirty-two prominent features and the eighty secondary attributes. This mind that creates the Buddha is the mind that is the Buddha, and the wisdom of the Buddhas – true, universal and ocean-like – arises from this mind. This is why you should single-mindedly fix your thoughts and contemplatively examine that Buddha, that Tathagata, that Arhat, that Supremely Awakened One.

"To perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life, you must first imagine Amitayus' form, and whether your eyes are open or closed, you should see this precious form – the color of the golden sands of the Jambu river – seated upon that flower-throne. Once that Buddha's figure is seen sitting there, your mind's eye will be opened, and you will clearly see the Land of Ultimate Bliss adorned with the seven kinds of jewels; you will see the jeweled ground, the jeweled lakes and the paths lined with jeweled trees; you will see the heavenly jeweled canopies completely covering the trees and the jeweled nets completely filling the sky; you will see these things as clearly and distinctly as you might see the palm of your hand.

"Once this has been seen, you should again from the visualization of a large lotus flower and place it on the Buddha's left. This lotus flower should be exactly like the one described

before. Then form the visualization of another large lotus flower and place it on the Buddha's right. Next visualize an image of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara seated on the left flower throne, sending forth golden rays of light exactly as described before. Then visualize an image of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta seated on the right flower throne.

"When this visualization has been completed, the figures of the Buddha and the two Bodhisattvas all send forth exquisite rays of light, and these golden rays illuminate the jeweled trees. At the foot of each of the trees there are also three lotus flowers, and atop these lotus flowers sit the figures of the Buddha and the two Bodhisattvas so that the land is completely filled with such images.

"When this visualization has been completed, you, the practitioner, will hear the flowing waters, the rays of light, the jeweled trees, the ducks, geese and so forth which proclaim the exquisite Dharma teachings; and whether you are in meditation or not, you will always hear these exquisite teachings. Even after you rise from meditation, keep in mind and do not forget what you have heard, then confirm it with the Sutras. If it does not agree with the Sutras, it is called an illusory perception, but if it does accord, it is called the attainment of the general perception of the Land of Ultimate Bliss. This is the perception of the Three Sages which is called the Eighth Visualization. Those who perform this visualization eliminate the evil karma of an immeasurable number of aeons of births and deaths, and in this very life attain the Buddha-Remembrance Samadhi. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization; if one performs another visualization, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## X. NINTH VISUALIZATION:

### THE BODY OF THE BUDDHA OF IMMEASURABLE LIFE SPAN

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When this visualization has been completed, next one should further visualize the physical features and the light of the Buddha of

Immeasurable Life Span. Ananda, it should be known that the Body of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span is as bright as the sands of a trillion Jambu rivers in the Yama Heavens. That Buddha's body is as tall as the number of yojanas equaling that of the sands of six sextillions of Ganges Rivers.

"Between that Buddha's eyebrows there is a tuft of white hair that curls gently to the right and is the size of five Mount Sumerus. The Buddha's eyes are pure like the waters of the four great oceans; the blue irises and the whites are clear and distinct; the pores of the Buddha's body emit rays of light that are the size of Mount Sumeru.

"The circle of light around that Buddha's head illuminates an area as large as a billion three-thousand-great-thousand worlds. Within that all-encompassing light there are miraculously created Buddhas whose number is as countless as the sands of ten sextillions of Ganges Rivers. Each of these miraculously created Buddhas is attended by a great assembly of countless miraculously created Bodhisattvas.

"The Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span has eighty-four thousand physical characteristics; and in each of those features there are eighty-four thousand secondary marks of excellence. Each of those marks sends forth eighty-four thousand rays of light; each ray of light shines universally upon the worlds of the Ten Directions; and those sentient beings who are mindful of the Buddha are embraced by that light, never to be abandoned.

"No words can adequately describe the lights, the physical characteristics, the secondary marks and the miraculously created Buddhas. But by concentrating your thoughts on these things, you can see them with your mind's eye. To see these things is to see all the Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Because you see these Buddhas, it is called the Buddha-Remembrance Samadhi.

"To perform this visualization is to visualize the body of all the Buddhas. Because you perceive the bodies of the Buddhas, you also realize the mind of the Buddhas. The mind of the Buddhas is the mind of Great Compassion, and with this unconditioned compassion, all sentient beings are embraced. One who

performs this visualization, upon taking leave of this life, will be born in the presence of the Buddhas and will acquire the insight into the non-origination of all existence. For this reason, those who realize the effectiveness of forming this perception should concentrate their thoughts and clearly perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span.

"In order to perceive the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, begin with one of the physical features. Visualize only the tuft of white hair between the eyebrows until it becomes very clear and distinct. Once you have visualized it, the eighty-four thousand physical characteristics and marks will appear of their own accord. Once you have seen the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, you see at once the infinite Buddhas of the Ten Directions. Because you are able to see the countless Buddhas, you will receive from each the prediction of your future Buddhahood. This is the comprehensive perception of all the physical features of the Buddha, and is called the Ninth Visualization. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## XI. TENTH VISUALIZATION: BODHISATTVA AVALOKITESVARA

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When you have clearly and distinctly seen the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, next visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara. This Bodhisattva's body is eighty sextillions of *yojanas* tall and is purple-gold in color. On the top of the head is a mound of flesh surrounded by a halo of light which shines from behind the neck. Both the halo and the Bodhisattva's face are one hundred thousand *yojanas* in diameter.

"Within this halo of light there are five hundred miraculously created Buddhas that resemble Shakyamuni Buddha, and each miraculously created Buddha is attended by five hundred miraculously created Bodhisattvas and countless numbers of heavenly beings. Within the light emanating from this Bodhisattva's body, sentient beings of the five realms of birth-and-death appear in all their various forms. Atop the

Bodhisattva's head is a heavenly crown made of *sakrabhilanga-mani* pearls, and within this heavenly crown stands a miraculously created Buddha Amitayus, twenty-five *yojanas* high.

"The face of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara is the golden color of the sands of the Jambu river. A tuft of hair between the eyebrows possesses all the colors of the seven kinds of jewels, and streaming from it are eighty-four thousand different rays of light. Within each of those rays of light there are immeasurable and countless hundreds of thousands of miraculously created Buddhas, each attended by countless miraculously created Bodhisattvas. These Buddhas and Bodhisattvas miraculously appear everywhere, completely filling the worlds of the Ten Quarters.

"This Bodhisattva's arms, the color of a red lotus flower, are adorned with ornaments made of eight hundred million exquisite rays of light. Within these ornaments, the majestic works of the Buddha are reflected in their entirety. The palms of the hands are the color of five billion lotus flowers of various colors, and the tip of each of the ten fingers shows eighty-four thousand patterns like those on an engraved seal. Each pattern has eighty-four thousand colors, each color emits eighty-four thousand rays of light, and each soft, delicate ray of light illuminates all beings. With these jewel-like hands, this Bodhisattva embraces and guides sentient beings.

"When this Bodhisattva raises a foot, the thousand-spoked wheel that marks the sole of that foot changes of its own accord into a pedestal which emits five billion rays of light. When the foot is lowered, flowers made of diamonds and *mani* jewels are strewn about everywhere, filling and covering everything. All other physical characteristics and marks are exactly like those of the Buddha. The mound of flesh upon the head and the invisibility of the uppermost part of this mound, however, are inferior to those of the World-Honored One. This is the visualization of Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara's true physical features and is called the Tenth Visualization."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "Those who wish to visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara must do so with this method of visualization. Those who perform this visualization will not

encounter any misfortune; their karmic obstructions will be purified, and the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for countless aeons is eliminated. Even to hear the name of this Bodhisattva is to gain immeasurable merits; how much more so if this Bodhisattva is clearly visualized?

"Those who wish to visualize Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara should first visualize the mound of flesh on the head; next visualize the heavenly crown; then visualize the remaining physical characteristics in order. All of them should be seen as clearly and distinctly as you might see the palm of your hand. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## XII. ELEVENTH VISUALIZATION:

### BODHISATTVA MAHASTHAMAPRAPTA

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The next visualization is that of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta, whose body is the same size as that of Avalokitesvara. The halo of light and this Bodhisattva's face are each two hundred and twenty-five *yojanas* in diameter and illuminates an area of two hundred and fifty *yojanas*. The light which emanates from the body illuminates the lands of the Ten Directions, making them shine like purple-gold, and this light can be seen by all sentient beings who have a close karmic relationship with this Bodhisattva.

"Even if one sees only a single ray of light emanating from only one of the pores of this Bodhisattva, one can see at once the countless Buddhas of the Ten Directions and their pure and wondrous light. This is why this Bodhisattva is called 'Boundless Light.' And with this light of wisdom all beings are illuminated, enabling them to be freed from the Three Evil Paths and to attain unsurpassed powers. This is why this Bodhisattva is called Mahasthamaprapta, 'The One Who Has Attained Great Power.'

"This Bodhisattva's heavenly crown is adorned with five hundred jeweled lotus flowers, and each one of the jeweled flowers has

five hundred jeweled pedestals. Within each pedestal, the boundless and glorious features of the pure and exquisite lands of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions are reflected in their entirety. The mound of flesh on this Bodhisattva's head is like the *padma* [red lotus] flower, and in front of this mound of flesh is a jeweled vase filled with rays of light which reflect all the works of the Buddha. The remaining bodily characteristics are exactly like those of Avalokitesvara.

"When this Bodhisattva walks, the worlds of the Ten Directions all tremble and quake, and on this moving ground appear five billion jeweled flowers, each as splendid and brilliant as those in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. When this Bodhisattva sits down, the seven-jeweled lands, from the Buddha-realm of Golden Light Buddha in the lower quarter to the Land of the Light King Buddha in the upper quarter, all tremble at once.

"From between those quarters, the manifested bodies of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life together with those of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, as countless as particles of dust, all assemble like clouds in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, filling the entire sky. Sitting on lotus flower thrones, they proclaim the exquisite Dharma that liberates sentient beings from suffering.

"This visualization is the visualization of Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta; it is also known as the visualization of the physical features of Mahasthamaprapta, which is called the Eleventh Visualization. For those who visualize this Bodhisattva, the evil karma binding them to infinite aeons of birth-and-death is eliminated, and those who perform this visualization will no longer be subject to birth from the womb, but will roam freely throughout the pure and exquisite lands of the Buddhas. When this visualization has been completed, it is called the complete visualization of Mahasthamaprapta. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

### XIII. TWELFTH VISUALIZATION:



## THE BUDDHA OF INFINITE LIFE SPAN'S WORLD OF SUKHAVATI

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "When these visualizations are completed, they are called the complete perfection of the visualization of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. When you have seen these things, visualize yourself as being born in the Western Realm of Ultimate Bliss, sitting cross-legged inside a lotus flower. Visualize the lotus flower as being closed. When the lotus flower opens, rays of five hundred colors shine down and illuminate your body.

"Then your eyes are open and you see the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas filling the skies and hear the sounds of waters and trees, the notes of birds, and the voices of the Buddhas all proclaiming the exquisite Dharma in accordance with the twelve divisions of the Sutras. Even after you rise from meditation, keep in mind and do not forget all that you have seen and heard.

"Seeing these things is called the vision of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life and the Realm of Ultimate Bliss. This is the comprehensive visualization of its imagery and is called the Twelfth Visualization. The countless miraculously created bodies of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life together with those of Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta will always appear before those who contemplate thus. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

### XIV. THE THREE SAGES OF THE REALM OF ULTIMATE BLISS

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "If you wish with a sincere mind to be born in the Western Quarter, you should first visualize a sixteen-foot image of the Buddha standing on the surface of a lake. As I previously explained, the physical measurements of the Buddha of Immeasurable Life are boundless and are beyond the grasp of ordinary minds. But because of the power of that Tathagata's vows fulfilled in a previous life, those who keep the Buddha in mind will, without

fail, be able to perceive this body. Simply visualizing the Buddha's image brings one immeasurable merits; how much more so if one visualizes all the perfect physical characteristics of that Buddha?

"This Buddha Amitayus, able to utilize transcendent spiritual powers at any time, can freely manifest various forms throughout the lands of the Ten Directions, here appearing as a great body that fills the sky, there appearing as a small body only sixteen or eighteen feet tall. The color of these manifested figures is that of pure gold, and the miraculously created Buddhas and the jeweled lotus flowers in the surrounding circle of light are the same as I described before.

"The physical features of the Bodhisattvas Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta are the same in all respects, and sentient beings who simply visualize the features on their heads can distinguish between Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. These two Bodhisattvas assist Buddha Amitayus in the work of universal liberation. This is the composite visualization which is called the Thirteenth Visualization. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## XV. FOURTEENTH VISUALIZATION:

### THE SUPERIOR GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "In all, there are nine levels of sentient beings who are reborn in the Western Quarter. The sentient beings in the highest level of the highest grade of rebirth are those who vow to be reborn there. By awakening the three kinds of mind they are reborn there. What are the three? The first is the most sincere mind, the second is the mind of deep faith, and the third is the mind which aspires for rebirth by transferring merit. Those who possess those three minds will be reborn in that land without fail.

"There are three other kinds of beings who will be reborn there. What are the three? First are the compassionate ones who

refrain from killing and observe the precepts; second are those who read and recite the Mahayana Vaipulya Sutras; and third are those who cultivate the six kinds of mindfulness. Transferring the merit for rebirth, they vow to be reborn in that land. By accomplishing these virtuous acts for a period of from one to seven days, they immediately attain rebirth.

"When an aspirant is about to be reborn in that land, a result of unconquerable resolve, the Tathagata Amitayus appears along with Avalokitesvara, Mahasthamaprapta, countless transformation Buddhas, a great assembly of a hundred thousand *bhiksus* and *sravakas*, and countless heavenly beings in their seven-jeweled palaces.

"Holding a diamond pedestal, Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara approaches the aspirant along with Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta. The Buddha Amitayus sends forth a great light that illuminates the aspirant's body, and along with the Bodhisattvas, offers welcoming hands. Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, along with countless other Bodhisattvas, then encourage the aspirant's mind by offering praise. Upon seeing this the aspirant dances with joy, is self-seen seated atop the diamond pedestal, and, following after the Buddha, is reborn into that land as quickly as the snap of a finger.

"Once reborn in that land, the aspirants see the Buddha's body and the perfection of the Buddha's myriad characteristics. The perfection of the Bodhisattvas' physical characteristics is also seen. The light of the jeweled forests widely proclaim the wondrous Dharma, and having heard it, the aspirants will instantly awaken the insight into the non-origination of all existence.

"Then, in an instant, the aspirants will visit and venerate all the Buddhas of the Ten Quarters, and in the presence of each Buddha receive a prediction of their future Buddhahood. Upon returning to the land from whence they came, they attain countless hundreds of thousands of Dharma-gates of *dharanis*. These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the highest grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the middle level of the highest grade of rebirth do not necessarily uphold and recite the Vaipulya Sutras, but fully understand their meaning. Upon hearing the highest truth, their minds are not perplexed or shaken, and deeply believing in the principle of cause and effect, they do not slander the Mahayana. Transferring the merit of their virtuous acts, they vow to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"Those who perform these practices will, when their life is about to end, be met by Buddha Amitayus together with Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta; surrounded by a measureless, great host of attendant-followers, they hold a pedestal of purple-gold. The Buddha praises each aspirant, saying, 'Dharma disciple, you have practiced the Mahayana and have realized the highest truth. For this reason we have now come to welcome you.' With this, Buddha Amitayus and the thousands of miraculously created Buddhas offer their hands all at once.

"The practitioners see themselves seated on a pedestal of purple-gold, and with palms pressed together, praise the Buddhas. In the space of a single thought, they are reborn in that land in a seven-treasure lake. The pedestal of purple-gold is like a great jeweled flower, and after one night passes, the flower opens. Each practitioner's body becomes the color of purple-gold, and under their feet there are lotus flowers made of the seven treasures. The Buddha and the Bodhisattvas all send forth rays of light to illuminate each practitioner's body, causing their eyes to open, clear and wide. Because of the store of merit from their previous lives, they hear a variety of voices exclusively proclaiming the most profound, supreme truth. Descending from the golden pedestal, and with palms pressed together, they bow to and praise the Buddha, the World-Honored One.

"After seven days pass, each aspirant attains the Stage of Non-Retrogression on the path toward the Highest Perfect Enlightenment. Each aspirant acquires the ability to fly off at will to revere the Buddhas of the Ten Directions and to cultivate various *samadhis* from them. After one small aeon passes, each aspirant attains the insight into the non-origination of all existence, and in the presence of each Buddha, receive a

prediction of their future attainment. These are called the sentient beings in the middle level of the highest grade of rebirth.

"Those sentient beings reborn in the lowest level of the highest grade of rebirth also believe in the principle of cause and effect, do not slander the Mahayana, and awaken the mind which aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment. Transferring the merit of their virtuous acts, they vow to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"When the lives of such aspirants are about to end, these beings are met by Buddha Amitayus together with Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta and their great host of attendant-followers carrying golden lotus flowers which manifest five hundred transformed Buddhas to welcome them. These five hundred transformed Buddhas extend their hands to each person, saying, 'Dharma disciple, your mind is pure and you have awakened the mind which aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment, and so we have come to welcome you.'

"Having seen these things, each aspirant is self-seen seated on a golden lotus flower which then closes, and, following the World-Honored One, each aspirant is immediately reborn on a seven-jeweled lake.

"After one day and one night, the lotus flower opens, then within seven days, the aspirant beholds the Buddha. Although the body of the Buddha is seen, not all the physical characteristics and marks are clear in the aspirant's mind. But after three weeks, they are seen clearly and distinctly, and a variety of voices all widely proclaiming the wondrous Dharma are heard. The aspirant then travels to each of the Ten Quarters to make offerings to all the Buddhas, and to hear their most profound Dharma teachings.

"After three small aeons pass, the aspirant attains the hundred wisdom gates of the Dharma and abides in the Stage of Joy. These are called the sentient beings in the lowest level of the highest grade of rebirth. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## XVI. FIFTEENTH VISUALIZATION: THE MIDDLE GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings reborn in the highest level of the middle grade of rebirth are those who have upheld the five precepts, observed the eight abstinences, have cultivated the practice of the precepts, have not committed the five grave offenses and are free from various other faults. Transferring the merits of these roots of virtue for rebirth, they aspire to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss in the Western Quarter.

"When their lives are about to end, these beings will be met by Buddha Amitayus, who, surrounded by a host of *bhiksus* and attendant-followers, sends forth golden rays of light. Coming to each person, they proclaim the teachings of suffering, emptiness, impermanence and non-self, praising the renunciation of the world which enables one to be freed from suffering. After seeing this, each aspirant's heart is filled with great joy, and each is then self-seen sitting on a lotus flower pedestal. Dropping to their knees, the aspirants press their palms together, bowing to the Buddha in homage; and even before their heads are raised, rebirth in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss is attained.

"Immediately, the lotus flower opens, and when the flower unfolds, each aspirant hears a variety of sounds and voices praising the Four Truths. Instantly the aspirant attains the stage of an *Arhat*, acquires the three kinds of transcendent knowledge and the six supernatural powers, and realizes the eight *samadhis* of liberation. These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the middle grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the middle level of the middle grade of rebirth are those who, for at least one day and one night observe the eight abstinences; or for one day and one night observe the *shramanera* [novice] precepts; or for one day and one night observe the complete set of precepts for monks, their majestic deportment lacking nothing. Transferring the merit of these virtuous acts for rebirth, they aspire to be reborn in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"Permeated with the fragrance of these precepts, such an aspirant, when life is about to end, sees the Buddha Amitayus and the host of attendant-followers approaching. Sending forth golden rays of light, the Buddha comes before this practitioner carrying a seven-jeweled lotus flower. The aspirant then hears a voice from the sky saying, 'Child of a good family, as you are a virtuous person who has followed the teachings of the Buddhas of past, present and future, I have come to welcome you.' The aspirant is then self-seen sitting on a lotus flower which then closes, and rebirth in a jeweled lake of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss of the Western Quarter ensues.

"After seven days pass, the lotus flower unfolds. When the flower is fully open, the aspirant, whose eyes are now opened, places palms together and praises the World-Honored One. Hearing the Dharma, the aspirant is filled with joy and attains the stage of a Stream-Winner; then, after half an aeon, the stage of *Arhat* is attained. These are called the sentient beings of the middle level of the middle grade of rebirth.

"The sentient beings reborn in the lowest level of the middle grade of rebirth are those good sons or good daughters who attend dutifully to their parents and do benevolent deeds for others.

"When the lives of these people are about to end, they encounter a virtuous and learned teacher who fully explains the bliss of the land of the Buddha Amitayus and also expounds the Forty-eight Great Vows of the Bhiksu Dharmakara. Having heard these things, they soon come to the end of their lives, and in the time it takes for a vigorous person to bend and extend an arm, the aspirants are reborn into the Realm of Ultimate Bliss of the Western Quarter.

"Seven days after that rebirth, the practitioners meet Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta. Hearing the Dharma, they are filled with joy and attain the stage of Stream-Winner; then, after one small aeon passes, they attain the stage of *Arhat*. These are called the sentient beings of the lowest level of the middle grade of rebirth. Performing this visualization is called the right visualization. If one performs other visualizations, that is called an incorrect visualization."

## XVII. SIXTEENTH VISUALIZATION: THE LOWEST GRADE OF REBIRTH

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the highest level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who have committed myriad evil acts. Although they do not slander the *Vaipulya* sutras, these deluded beings repeatedly perform evil deeds, yet feel no remorse.

"When their lives are about to end, they meet a virtuous and learned teacher who praises for them the names and titles of the Mahayana sutras of the twelve divisions. By hearing the names of these sutras, the heavy and evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for a thousand aeons is eliminated. This learned teacher also teaches them to press their palms together and recite 'Namo Buddha Amitayus.' Because they recite the Buddha's name, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for a hundred million aeons is eliminated.

"At that time, the Buddha sends a miraculously created Buddha, a miraculously created Avalokitesvara and a miraculously created Mahasthamaprapta, who appear before the aspirants and praise each of them, saying, 'Well done, child of a good family! Because you have recited the Buddha's name, your evil karma has been eliminated. We have come to welcome you.' After these words have been spoken, each aspirant immediately sees the miraculously created Buddha, whose rays of light completely fill the room. Having seen this, the aspirants are filled with joy and their lives come to an end. Riding atop a jeweled lotus flower, each practitioner follows behind the miraculously created Buddha and is reborn in a jeweled lake.

"After seven weeks, the lotus flower opens. When this flower unfolds, the greatly compassionate Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta send forth great rays of light and, standing before the aspirant, expound the profound sutras of the twelve divisions. Upon hearing this, the aspirant accepts it in faith and awakens the mind that aspires for the Highest Perfect Enlightenment. After ten small aeons pass, the



aspirant attains the hundred wisdom gates of the Dharma and enter the first stage of a Bodhisattva.

"These are called the sentient beings in the highest level of the lowest grade of rebirth; and being able to hear the name of the Buddha, the name of the Dharma and the name of the Sangha – that is, the Three Treasures – these sentient beings immediately attain rebirth.

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the middle level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who violate the five precepts, the eight abstinences, and the complete set of precepts for monks. Such deluded people steal the property of the Sangha, take the personal belongings of the monks, preach the Dharma with impure intent, and feel no remorse. These deluded people defile themselves with these evil deeds, and because of this will fall into hell.

"When the lives of such people about to end, and the fires of hell simultaneously close upon them, they meet a virtuous and learned teacher who, with great compassion, praises and explains the majestic virtue and ten powers of the Buddha Amitayus, praises fully the transcendental powers of that Buddha's light, and further praises the virtues of that Buddha who accomplished the precepts, the meditation, the wisdom, the liberation and the awareness of that liberation. When these people have heard these things, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for eight hundred million aeons is eliminated. Hell's fierce flames are then transformed into pure, cool breezes that gently blow upon heavenly flowers. On top of each flower is a miraculously created Buddha and miraculously created Bodhisattvas who come to welcome these people. And in a single moment of thought, they are each reborn inside a lotus flower in a seven-jeweled lake.

"After six aeons pass, the lotus flowers unfold. When the flowers open, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta reassure them using the Brahma voice and expound the profound Mahayana Sutras. Upon hearing this Dharma, each person at once awakens the mind that aspires for the highest enlightenment. These are called the sentient beings of the middle level of the lowest grade of rebirth.

The Buddha said to Ananda and Vaidehi, "The sentient beings in the lowest level of the lowest grade of rebirth are those who commit such evil acts as the five grave offenses and the ten transgressions, and are burdened with various kinds of evil. These foolish beings, because of their evil karma, shall fall into the evil realms of existence, and experience endless suffering for many aeons .

"When the life of such a foolish person is about to end, this person meets a virtuous and learned teacher who provides various kinds of comfort, expounds the exquisite Dharma, and urges mindfulness of the Buddha. If that person is too tormented by pain to be mindful of the Buddha, the virtuous friend says, 'If you are unable to be mindful of the Buddha, you should recite the name of and take refuge in the Buddha of Immeasurable Life.' And so, with a sincere mind and an uninterrupted voice, this person says, 'Namo Buddha Amitayus' even as few as ten times, and because this person says the Buddhas name, with every repetition, the evil karma binding this person to birth-and-death for eight million aeons is eliminated.

"When the lives of such people come to an end, a sun-like golden lotus flower appears in front of them. And in the interval of a single thought-moment, each person will immediately attain rebirth inside a lotus flower in the Realm of Ultimate Bliss.

"After twelve great aeons the lotus flower opens. When the flower unfolds, Avalokitesvara and Mahasthamaprapta, using the Brahma voice, proclaim for each person the way to eliminate evil karma through the realization of the true nature of all existence. Upon hearing this, each person is filled with joy and, at that moment, awakens the mind that aspires for enlightenment. These are called the sentient beings of the lowest level of the lowest grade of rebirth. This perception of the sentient beings in the lowest grade of rebirth is called the sixteenth visualization."

## XVIII. EPILOGUE

When the World-Honored One had spoken these words, Vaidehi and her five hundred female attendants, having heard the Buddha's discourse, saw at once the breadth and extent of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss; and being able to see the body of the

Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and the two Bodhisattvas, joy welled up in their hearts. Marveling at this unprecedented occurrence, Vaidehi, her clouds of doubt now cleared, attained the great enlightenment and acquired the insight into the non-origination of all existence. Her five hundred female attendants, having awakened the mind that aspires to the highest perfect enlightenment, vowed to be reborn into that land. The World-Honored One assured all of them that they would be reborn there, and that after rebirth they would acquire the Samadhi of Being in the Presence of All the Buddhas Countless heavenly beings also awakened the mind that aspires for the Highest Perfect Enlightenment.

At that time, Ananda rose from his seat, stepped forward, and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, what shall this Sutra be called? And how should the essence of this Dharma be received and kept?"

The Buddha said to Ananda, "The name of this Sutra is the 'Visualization of the Realm of Ultimate Bliss, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span, the Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and the Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta.' It is also called, 'Removal of Karmic Hindrances for Attaining Rebirth in the Presence of All the Buddhas.' You should receive this Sutra and never forget it.

Those who practice this samadhi will be able to see, during their lifetime, the Buddha of Immeasurable Life Span and these two Bodhisattvas. If good sons and good daughters merely hear the name of this Buddha and these two Bodhisattvas, the evil karma binding them to birth-and-death for immeasurable aeons is eliminated. How much more so if these people are mindful of the Buddha? Know that whoever is mindful of the Buddha is a lotus flower among humans, has Bodhisattva Avalokitesvara and Bodhisattva Mahasthamaprapta as excellent friends, will be seated in the place of enlightenment and will be born into the family of the Buddhas."

The Buddha said to Ananda, "You should carefully hold these words in mind. To hold these words in mind is to hold in mind the name of the Buddha of Immeasurable life Span."

When the Buddha had spoken these words, the Venerable Maudgalyayana and the Venerable Ananda, as well as Vaidehi and the others, heard the Buddha's discourse and were all filled with great joy.

At that time, the World-Honored One walked through the open sky and returned to Vulture Peak. There, Ananda fully explained the above events for the benefit of the great assembly. The countless human beings, heavenly beings, naga deities, *yaksas* and all other beings who heard the Buddha's discourse were all filled with great joy, paid homage to the World-Honored Ones, and departed.

# Vitakkasanthaana Sutta

## The Discursively Thinking Mind

I heard thus.

At one time the Blessed One lived in the monastery offered by Anathapindika in Jeta's grove in Savatthi. The Blessed One addressed the Bhikkhus from there." Bhikkhus, by the Bhikkhu developing the mind five things should be attended to from time to time. What five: The Bhikkhu attending to a certain sign if evil Demeritorious thoughts arise conducive to interest, anger and delusion, he should change that sign and attend to some other sign conducive to merit, then those signs conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade, and the mind settles and comes to a single point. Like a clever carpenter or his apprentice would get rid of a coarse peg with the help of a fine peg. In the same manner the Bhikkhu attending to a certain sign, if evil Demeritorious thoughts arise conducive to interest, anger and delusion, he should change that sign and attend to some other sign conducive to merit, then those signs conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade, the mind settles and comes to a single point.

Even when the Bhikkhu has changed the sign and attended some other sign, if evil de-meritorious thoughts arise conducive to interest, anger and delusion, the Bhikkhu should examine the dangers of those thoughts. These thoughts of mine are evil, faulty and bring unpleasant results. When the dangers of those thoughts are examined those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point. Like a woman, a man, a child or youth fond of adornment would loathe and would be disgusted when the carcass of a snake, dog or a human corpse was wrapped round the neck. In the same manner when the Bhikkhu has changed the sign and attended some other sign, if evil de-meritorious thoughts arise conducive to interest, anger and delusion, the Bhikkhu should examine the dangers of those thoughts. These thoughts of mine are evil, loathsome, faulty and bring unpleasant results. When the dangers of those thoughts

are examined, those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point.

Even when the Bhikkhu has examined the dangers of those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion, if those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion arise, he should not attend to them. When those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion are not attended, they fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point. Like a man who would not like to see forms, that come to the purview would either close his eyes or look away. In the same manner when the Bhikkhu has examined the dangers of those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion, if evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion arise, he should not attend to them. When those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion are not attended, they fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point.

Even when the Bhikkhu did not attend to those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion, if these evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion arise, he should attend to appeasing the whole intentional thought process. When attending to appeasing the whole intentional thought process, those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point. Like it would occur to a man walking fast: why should I walk fast, what if I stand. Then he would stand. Standing it would occur to him: Why should I stand, what if I sit. Then he would sit. Sitting it would occur to him: Why should I sit, what if I lie. Thus abandoning the more coarse posture, would maintain the finer posture. In the same manner when attending to appeasing the whole intentional thought process, those evil de-meritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point. .

Even when attending to appeasing the whole intentional thought process, those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest,

anger and delusion arise, the Bhikkhu should press the upper jaw on the lower jaw and pushing the tongue on the palate should subdue and burn out those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion. Then those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to a single point. Like a strong man taking a weaker one by the head or body would press him and trouble him. In the same manner the Bhikkhu should press the upper jaw on the lower jaw and pushing the tongue on the palate should subdue and burn out those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion. Then those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point.

Bhikkhus, the Bhikkhu attending to a certain sign, if evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion arise, he attends to another sign conducive to merit, those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point .

When attending to the danger of those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion, those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point. When not attending to those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion, those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point: When attending to appeasing the whole intentional thought process, these evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point, The Bhikkhu pressing the lower jaw with the upper jaw and pushing the tongue on the palate would subdue and burn out those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion. Then those evil Demeritorious thoughts conducive to interest, anger and delusion fade. With their fading the mind settles and comes to one point. Bhikkhus, this is called the Bhikkhu is master over thought processes. Whatever thought he wants to think, that he

thinks, whatever thought he does not want to think, that he does not think He puts an end to craving , dispels the bonds and rightfully overcoming measuring makes an end of unpleasantness. .

The Blessed One said thus, and those Bhikkhus delighted in the words of the Blessed One.



# Vitthara Sutta

## Strengths in Detail

"Monks, there are these five strengths for one in training. Which five? Strength of conviction, strength of conscience, strength of concern, strength of persistence, and strength of discernment.

"And what is strength of conviction? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, has conviction, is convinced of the Tathágata's Awakening: 'Indeed, the Blessed One is worthy and rightly self-awakened, consummate in knowledge and conduct, well-gone, an expert with regard to the world, unexcelled as a trainer for those people fit to be tamed, the Teacher of divine and human beings, awakened, blessed.' This, monks, is called the strength of conviction.

"And what is the strength of conscience? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels shame at the thought of engaging in bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. This is called the strength of conscience.

"And what is the strength of concern? There is the case where a disciple of the noble ones feels concern for the suffering that results from bodily misconduct, verbal misconduct, mental misconduct. This is called the strength of concern.

"And what is the strength of persistence? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, keeps his persistence aroused for abandoning unskillful mental qualities and taking on skillful mental qualities. He is steadfast, solid in his effort, not shirking his duties with regard to skillful mental qualities. This is called the strength of persistence.

"And what is the strength of discernment? There is the case where a monk, a disciple of the noble ones, is discerning, endowed with discernment of arising and passing away -- noble, penetrating, leading to the right ending of stress. This is called the strength of discernment.

"These, monks, are the five strengths of one in training. Thus you should train yourselves, 'We will be endowed with the strength of conviction that is the strength of one in training; with the strength of conscience... the strength of concern... the strength of persistence... the strength of discernment that is the strength of one in training.' That's how you should train yourselves."

# Vyagghapajja Sutta

## Conditions of Welfare

Translator's note: In this Sutta, the Buddha instructs rich householders how to preserve and increase their prosperity and how to avoid loss of wealth. Wealth alone, however, does not make a complete man nor a harmonious society. Possession of wealth all too often multiplies man's desires, and he is ever in the pursuit of amassing more wealth and power. This unrestrained craving, however, leaves him dissatisfied and stifles his inner growth. It creates conflict and disharmony in society through the resentment of the underprivileged who feel themselves exploited by the effects of unrestrained craving.

Therefore the Buddha follows up on his advice on material welfare with four essential conditions for spiritual welfare: confidence (in the Master's enlightenment), virtue, liberality, and wisdom. These four will instill in man a sense of higher values. He will then not only pursue his own material concern, but also be aware of his duty towards society. To mention only one of the implications: a wisely and generously employed liberality will reduce tensions and conflicts in society. Thus the observing of these conditions of material and spiritual welfare will make for an ideal citizen in an ideal society.

Thus have I heard:

Once the Exalted One was dwelling amongst the Koliyans,[1] in their market town named Kakkarapatta. Then Dighajanu,[2] a Koliyan, approached the Exalted One, respectfully saluted Him and sat on one side. Thus seated, he addressed the Exalted One as follows:

"We, Lord, are laymen who enjoy worldly pleasure. We lead a life encumbered by wife and children. We use sandalwood of Kasi. We deck ourselves with garlands, perfume, and unguents. We use gold and silver. To those like us, O Lord, let the Exalted One preach the Dhamma, teach those things that lead to weal and happiness in this life and to weal and happiness in future life."

## Conditions of Worldly Progress

"Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, [3] conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in this very life. Which four?

"The accomplishment of persistent effort (*utthana-sampada*), the accomplishment of watchfulness (*arakkha-sampada*), good friendship (*kalyanamittata*) and balanced livelihood (*sama-jvivikata*).

"What is the accomplishment of persistent effort?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, by whatsoever activity a householder earns his living, whether by farming, by trading, by rearing cattle, by archery, by service under the king, or by any other kind of craft -- at that he becomes skillful and is not lazy. He is endowed with the power of discernment as to the proper ways and means; he is able to carry out and allocate (duties). This is called the accomplishment of persistent effort.

"What is the accomplishment of watchfulness?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, whatsoever wealth a householder is in possession of, obtained by dint of effort, collected by strength of arm, by the sweat of his brow, justly acquired by right means -- such he husbands well by guarding and watching so that kings would not seize it, thieves would not steal it, fire would not burn it, water would not carry it away, nor ill-disposed heirs remove it. This is the accomplishment of watchfulness.

"What is good friendship?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, in whatsoever village or market town a householder dwells, he associates, converses, engages in discussions with householders or householders' sons, whether young and highly cultured or old and highly cultured, full of faith (*saddha*),[4] full of virtue (*síla*), full of charity (*caga*), full of wisdom (*paññá*). He acts in accordance with the faith of the faithful, with the virtue of the virtuous, with the charity of the charitable, with the wisdom of the wise. This is called good friendship.

"What is balanced livelihood?

"Herein, Vyagghapajja, a householder knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

"Just as the goldsmith,[5] or an apprentice of his, knows, on holding up a balance, that by so much it has dipped down, by so much it has tilted up; even so a householder, knowing his income and expenses leads a balanced life, neither extravagant nor miserly, knowing that thus his income will stand in excess of his expenses, but not his expenses in excess of his income.

"If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with little income were to lead an extravagant life, there would be those who say -- 'This person enjoys his property like one who eats wood-apple.'[6] If, Vyagghapajja, a householder with a large income were to lead a wretched life, there would be those who say -- 'This person will die like a starveling.'

"The wealth thus amassed, Vyagghapajja, has four sources of destruction:

"(i) Debauchery, (ii) drunkenness, (iii) gambling, (iv) friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

"Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and outlets, if a man should close the inlets and open the outlets and there should be no adequate rainfall, decrease of water is to be expected in that tank, and not an increase; even so there are four sources for the destruction of amassed wealth -- debauchery, drunkenness, gambling, and friendship, companionship and intimacy with evil-doers.

"There are four sources for the increase of amassed wealth: (i) abstinence from debauchery, (ii) abstinence from drunkenness, (iii) non-indulgence in gambling, (iv) friendship, companionship and intimacy with the good.

"Just as in the case of a great tank with four inlets and four outlets, if a person were to open the inlets and close the outlets, and there should also be adequate rainfall, an increase in water

is certainly to be expected in that tank and not a decrease, even so these four conditions are the sources of increase of amassed wealth.

"These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, are conducive to a householder's weal and happiness in this very life.

## **Conditions of Spiritual Progress**

"Four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in his future life. Which four?

"The accomplishment of faith (*saddha-sampada*), the accomplishment of virtue (*sila-sampada*), the accomplishment of charity (*caga-sampada*) and the accomplishment of wisdom (*pañña-sampada*).

"What is the accomplishment of faith?

"Herein a householder is possessed of faith, he believes in the Enlightenment of the Perfect One (*Tathágata*): Thus, indeed, is that Blessed One: he is the pure one, fully enlightened, endowed with knowledge and conduct, well-gone, the knower of worlds, the incomparable leader of men to be tamed, the teacher of gods and men, all-knowing and blessed. This is called the accomplishment of faith.

"What is the accomplishment of virtue?

"Herein a householder abstains from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and from intoxicants that cause infatuation and heedlessness. This is called the accomplishment of virtue.

"What is the accomplishment of charity?

"Herein a householder dwells at home with heart free from the stain of avarice, devoted to charity, open-handed, delighting in generosity, attending to the needy, delighting in the distribution of alms. This is called the accomplishment of charity.

"What is the accomplishment of wisdom?

"Herein a householder is wise: he is endowed with wisdom that understands the arising and cessation of the five aggregates of

existence; he is possessed of the noble penetrating insight that leads to the destruction of suffering. This is called the accomplishment of wisdom.

"These four conditions, Vyagghapajja, conduce to a householder's weal and happiness in his future life."

Energetic and heedful in his tasks,  
Wisely administering his wealth,  
He lives a balanced life,  
Protecting what he has amassed.

Endowed with faith and virtue too,  
Generous he is and free from avarice;  
He ever works to clear the path  
That leads to weal in future life.

Thus to the layman full of faith,  
By him, so truly named 'Enlightened,'  
These eight conditions have been told  
Which now and after lead to bliss.

### **Footnotes:**

1. The Koliyans were the rivals of the Sakyans. Queen Maha Maya belonged to the Koliyan clan and King Suddhodana to the Sakyan clan.
2. Literally, 'long-kneed'
3. 'Tiger's Path'; he was so called because his ancestors were born on a forest path infested with tigers. Vyagghapajja was Dighajanu's family name
4. *Saddha* is not blind faith. It is confidence based on knowledge.
5. *Tuladharo*, lit., 'carrier of the scales.'
6. *Udambarakhadaka*. The Commentary explains that one who wishes to eat wood-apple shakes the tree, with the result that many fruits fall but only a few are eaten, while a large number are wasted.

# Yamaka Sutta

## To Yamaka

I have heard that on one occasion Ven. Shariputra was staying near Savatthi at Jeta's Grove, Anathapindika's monastery. Now, at that time this evil supposition had arisen to Ven. Yamaka: "As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more (mental) effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death." A large number of monks heard, "They say that this evil supposition has arisen to Ven. Yamaka: 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'" So they went to Ven. Yamaka and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, they sat to one side. As they were sitting there, they said to Ven. Yamaka, "Is it true, friend Yamaka, that this evil supposition has arisen to you: 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'"

"Yes, friends. As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death."

"Don't say that, friend Yamaka. Don't misrepresent the Blessed One. It's not good to misrepresent the Blessed One, for the Blessed One would not say, 'A monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'"

But even though Ven. Yamaka was thus rebuked by those monks, he -- from stubbornness and attachment -- maintained his adherence to that evil supposition: 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'



When those monks could not pry Ven. Yamaka loose from his evil supposition, they got up from their seats and went to Ven. Shariputra. On arrival they said to him: "Friend Shariputra, this evil supposition has arisen to Ven. Yamaka: 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.' It would be good if you would go to Ven. Yamaka out of sympathy for his sake."

Ven. Shariputra consented by remaining silent.

Then in the evening Ven. Shariputra left his seclusion, went to Ven. Yamaka, and on arrival exchanged courteous greetings. After an exchange of friendly greetings and courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Yamaka, "Is it true, my friend Yamaka, that this evil supposition has arisen to you: 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death.'"

"Yes, my friend Shariputra. As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death."

"How do you construe this, my friend Yamaka: Is form constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, my friend."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, my friend."

"And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, my friend."

"Is feeling constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, my friend."...

"Is perception constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, my friend." ...

"Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, my friend." ...

"Is consciousness constant or inconstant?"

"Inconstant, my friend."

"And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?"

"Stressful, my friend."

"And is it proper to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, my friend."

"How do you construe this: Do you regard form as the Tathágata?"

"No, my friend."

"Do you regard feeling as the Tathágata?"

"No, my friend."

"Do you regard perception as the Tathágata?"

"No, my friend."

"Do you regard fabrications as the Tathágata?"

"No, my friend."

"Do you regard consciousness as the Tathágata?"

"No, my friend."

"How do you construe this: Do you regard the Tathágata as being in form... Elsewhere than form... In feeling... Elsewhere than feeling... In perception... Elsewhere than perception... In fabrications... Elsewhere than fabrications... In consciousness... Elsewhere than consciousness?"

"No, my friend."

"How do you construe this: Do you regard the Tathágata as form-feeling-perception-fabrications-consciousness?"

"No, my friend."

"Do you regard the Tathágata as that which is without form, without feeling, without perception, without fabrications, without consciousness?"

"No, my friend."

"And so, my friend Yamaka -- when you can't pin down the Tathágata as a truth or reality even in the present life -- is it proper for you to declare, 'As I understand the Teaching explained by the Blessed One, a monk with no more effluents, on the break-up of the body, is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death'?"

"Previously, my friend Shariputra, I did foolishly hold that evil supposition. But now, having heard your explanation of the Dhamma, I have abandoned that evil supposition, and have broken through to the Dhamma.

"Then, friend Yamaka, how would you answer if you are thus asked: A monk, a worthy one, with no more mental effluents: what is he on the break-up of the body, after death?"

"Thus asked, I would answer, 'Form is inconstant... Feeling... Perception... Fabrications... Consciousness is inconstant. That which is inconstant is stressful. That which is stressful has ceased and gone to its end.'"

"Very good, my friend Yamaka. Very good. In that case I will give you an analogy for the sake of taking your understanding of this point even further. Suppose there were a householder or householder's son -- rich, wealthy, with many possessions -- who was thoroughly well guarded. Then suppose there came along a certain man, desiring what was not his benefit, desiring what was not his welfare, desiring his loss of security, desiring to kill him. The thought would occur to this man: 'It would not be

easy to kill this person by force. What if I were to sneak in and then kill him?'

"So he would go to the householder or householder's son and say, 'May you take me on as a servant, lord.' With that, the householder or householder's son would take the man on as a servant.

"Having been taken on as a servant, the man would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him. Then the householder or householder's son would come to regard him as a friend and companion, and would fall into his trust. When the man realizes, 'This householder or householder's son trusts me,' then encountering him in a solitary place, he would kill him with a sharp knife.

"Now what do you think, my friend Yamaka? When that man went to the householder or householder's son and said, 'May you take me on as a servant, lord': wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when, taken on as a servant, he would rise in the morning before his master, go to bed in the evening only after his master, doing whatever his master ordered, always acting to please him, speaking politely to him: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.' And when he encountered him in a solitary place and killed him with a sharp knife: wasn't he even then a murderer? And yet although he was a murderer, the householder or householder's son did not know him as 'my murderer.'"

"Yes, my friend."

"In the same way, an uninstructed, run-of-the-mill person -- who has no regard for noble ones, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma; who has no regard for men of integrity, is not well-versed or disciplined in their Dhamma -- assumes form (the body) to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He assumes feeling to be the self...

"He assumes perception to be the self...

"He assumes (mental) fabrications to be the self...

"He assumes consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

"He does not discern inconstant form, as it actually is present, as 'inconstant form.' He does not discern inconstant feeling, as it actually is present, as 'inconstant feeling.' He does not discern inconstant perception... He does not discern inconstant fabrications... He does not discern inconstant consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'inconstant consciousness.'

"He does not discern stressful form, as it actually is present, as 'stressful form.' He does not discern stressful feeling... He does not discern stressful perception... He does not discern stressful fabrications... He does not discern stressful consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'stressful consciousness.'

"He does not discern not-self form, as it actually is present, as 'not-self form.' He does not discern not-self feeling... He does not discern not-self perception... He does not discern not-self fabrications... He does not discern not-self consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'not-self consciousness.'

"He does not discern fabricated form, as it actually is present, as 'fabricated form.' He does not discern fabricated feeling... He does not discern fabricated perception... He does not discern fabricated fabrications... He does not discern fabricated consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'fabricated consciousness.'

"He does not discern murderous form, as it actually is present, as 'murderous form.' He does not discern murderous feeling... He does not discern murderous perception... He does not discern murderous fabrications... He does not discern murderous consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'murderous consciousness.'

"He gets attached to form, clings to form, and determines it to be 'my self.' He gets attached to feeling... He gets attached to perception... He gets attached to fabrications... He gets attached to consciousness, clings to consciousness, and determines it to be 'my self.' These five clinging-aggregates -- attached to, clung to -- lead to his long-term loss and suffering.

"Now, the well-instructed, disciple of the noble ones -- who has regard for noble ones, is well-versed and disciplined in their Dhamma; who has regard for men of integrity, is well-versed and disciplined in their Dhamma -- does not assume form to be the self, or the self as possessing form, or form as in the self, or the self as in form.

"He does not assume feeling to be the self...

"He does not assume perception to be the self...

"He does not assume fabrications to be the self...

"He does not assume consciousness to be the self, or the self as possessing consciousness, or consciousness as in the self, or the self as in consciousness.

"He discerns inconstant form, as it actually is present, as 'inconstant form.' He discerns inconstant feeling... He discerns inconstant perception... He discerns inconstant fabrications... He discerns inconstant consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'inconstant consciousness.'

"He discerns stressful form, as it actually is present, as 'stressful form.' He discerns stressful feeling... He discerns stressful perception... He discerns stressful fabrications... He discerns stressful consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'stressful consciousness.'

"He discerns not-self form, as it actually is present, as 'not-self form.' He discerns not-self feeling... He discerns not-self perception... He discerns not-self fabrications... He discerns not-self consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'not-self consciousness.'

"He discerns fabricated form, as it actually is present, as 'fabricated form.' He discerns fabricated feeling... He discerns fabricated perception... He discerns fabricated fabrications... He discerns fabricated consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'fabricated consciousness.'

"He discerns murderous form, as it actually is present, as 'murderous form.' He discerns murderous feeling... He discerns murderous perception... He discerns murderous fabrications... He discerns murderous consciousness, as it actually is present, as 'murderous consciousness.'

"He does not get attached to form, does not cling to form, does not determine it to be 'my self.' He does not get attached to feeling... He does not get attached to perception... He does not get attached to fabrications... He does not get attached to consciousness, does not cling to consciousness, does not determine it to be 'my self.' These five clinging-aggregates -- not attached to, not clung to -- lead to his long-term happiness and well-being."

"Even so, my friend Shariputra, are those who have people like you as their fellows in the holy life, teaching them, admonishing them out of sympathy, desiring their welfare. For now that I have heard this explanation of the Dhamma from you, my mind -- through lack of clinging/sustenance -- has been released from the effluents."

# Yavakalapi Sutta

## The Sheaf of Barley

"Suppose, monks, that a sheaf of barley were thrown down at a large four-way intersection, and six men were to come along with flails in their hands. They would thrash the sheaf of barley with their six flails. Thus the sheaf of barley would be thoroughly thrashed with the six flails. Then a seventh man would come along with a flail in his hand. He would thrash the sheaf of barley with a seventh flail. Thus the sheaf of barley would be even more thoroughly thrashed with the seventh flail.

"In the same way, the uninstructed run-of-the-mill person is thrashed in the eye by charming and pleasurable forms... thrashed in the ear by charming and pleasurable sounds... thrashed in the nose by charming and pleasurable aromas... thrashed in the tongue by charming and pleasurable flavors... thrashed in the body by charming and pleasurable tactile sensations... thrashed in the intellect by charming and pleasurable ideas. And if that uninstructed run-of-the-mill person forms intentions for the sake of further becoming in the future, then he -- that foolish person -- is even more thoroughly thrashed, just like the sheaf of barley thrashed with the seventh flail.

"Once, monks, the devas and asuras were arrayed for battle. Then Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, addressed the asuras: 'If, dear sirs, in the battle of the devas arrayed against the asuras, the asuras win and the devas are defeated, bind Sakka, the lord of the devas, neck, hand, and foot and bring him before me in the city of the asuras.'

"As for Sakka, lord of the devas, he addressed the devas of the Thirty-three: 'If dear sirs, in the battle of the devas arrayed against the asuras, the devas win and the asuras are defeated, bind Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, neck, hand, and foot and bring him before me in the righteous assembly of the devas.'

"Now, in that battle the devas won. So the devas of the Thirty-three bound Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, neck, hand, and



foot and brought him before Sakka in the righteous assembly of the devas.

"So there was Vepacitti, the lord of the asuras, bound neck, hand, and foot. When the thought occurred to him, 'the devas are in the right and the asuras are in the wrong. I'm now going over to the city of the devas,' then he viewed himself as freed from that fivefold bond. He was fully provided with the fivefold strings of heavenly sensuality. But when the thought occurred to him, 'The asuras are in the right and the devas are in the wrong. I will go over to the city of the asuras,' then he viewed himself as bound with that fivefold bond, deprived of the fivefold strings of heavenly sensuality. That's how subtle the bonds of Vepacitti were. But the bonds of Mara are even more subtle. Anyone who construes is bound by Mara. Anyone who doesn't construe is freed from the Evil One.

"'I am' is a construing. 'I am this' is a construing. 'I shall be' is a construing. 'I shall not be'... 'I shall be possessed of form'... 'I shall not be possessed of form'... 'I shall be percipient'... 'I shall not be percipient'... 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is a construing. Construing is a disease, construing is a cancer, construing is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell with an awareness free of construing.'

"'I am' is a perturbation. 'I am this' is a perturbation. 'I shall be' is a perturbation. 'I shall not be'... 'I shall be possessed of form'... 'I shall not be possessed of form'... 'I shall be percipient'... 'I shall not be percipient'... 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is a perturbation. Perturbation is a disease, perturbation is a cancer, perturbation is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell with an awareness free of perturbations.'

"'I am' is a wavering. 'I am this' is a wavering. 'I shall be' is a wavering. 'I shall not be'... 'I shall be possessed of form'... 'I shall not be possessed of form'... 'I shall be percipient'... 'I shall not be percipient'... 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is a wavering. Wavering is a disease, wavering is a cancer, wavering is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell with an awareness free of wavering.'

"'I am' is a complication. 'I am this' is a complication. 'I shall be' is a complication. 'I shall not be'... 'I shall be possessed of form'... 'I shall not be possessed of form'... 'I shall be percipient'... 'I shall not be percipient'... 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is a complication. Complication is a disease, complication is a cancer, complication is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell with an awareness free of complications.'

"'I am' is an act of conceit. 'I am this' is an act of conceit. 'I shall be' is an act of conceit. 'I shall not be'... 'I shall be possessed of form'... 'I shall not be possessed of form'... 'I shall be percipient'... 'I shall not be percipient'... 'I shall be neither percipient nor non-percipient' is an act of conceit. An act of conceit is a disease, an act of conceit is a cancer, and an act of conceit is an arrow. Therefore, monks, you should train yourselves: 'We will dwell with an awareness free of acts of conceit.'"

# Yodhajiva Sutta

## The Warrior

"Endowed with four qualities, monks, a warrior is worthy of a king, an asset to a king, and counts as a very limb of his king. Which four?"

"There is the case where a warrior is skilled in his stance, able to shoot far, able to fire shots in rapid succession, and able to pierce great objects. A warrior endowed with these four qualities is worthy of a king, an asset to a king, and counts as a very limb of his king.

"In the same way a monk endowed with four qualities is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world. Which four?"

"There is the case where a monk is skilled in his stance, able to shoot far, able to fire shots in rapid succession, and able to pierce great objects. A monk endowed with these four qualities is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world.

"And how is a monk skilled in his stance? There is the case where a monk is virtuous. He dwells restrained in accordance with the Patimokkha, consummate in his behavior and sphere of activity. He trains himself, having undertaken the training rules, seeing danger in the slightest faults. This is how a monk is skilled in his stance.

"And how is a monk one who is able to shoot far? There is the case where a monk sees any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near -- every form -- as it actually is with right discernment as: 'this is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"He sees any feeling whatsoever..."

"He sees any perception whatsoever...

"He sees any fabrications whatsoever...

"He sees any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near -- every consciousness -- as it actually is with right discernment as: 'this is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.'

"This is how a monk is one who is able to shoot far.

"And how is a monk one who is able to fire shots in rapid succession? There is the case where a monk discerns, as it actually is present, that 'This is stress.'... 'This is the origination of stress.'... 'This is the cessation of stress.'... 'This is the path of practice leading to the cessation of stress.' This is how a monk is one who is able to fire shots in rapid succession.

"And how is a monk one who is able to pierce great objects? There is the case where a monk pierces right through the great mass of ignorance. This is how a monk is one who is able to pierce great objects right through.

"Endowed with these four qualities, a monk is deserving of gifts, deserving of hospitality, deserving of offerings, deserving of respect, an unexcelled field of merit for the world."

# Yoga Sutta

## Yokes

"Monks, there are these four yokes. Which four? The yoke of sensuality, the yoke of becoming, the yoke of views, and the yoke of ignorance.

"And what is the yoke of sensuality? There is the case where a certain person does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from sensuality. When he does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from sensuality, then -- with regard to sensual objects -- he is obsessed with sensual passion, sensual delight, sensual attraction, sensual infatuation, sensual thirst, sensual fever, sensual fascination, sensual craving. This is the yoke of sensuality.

"And how is there the yoke of becoming? There is the case where a certain person does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from becoming. When he does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from becoming, then -- with regard to states of becoming -- he is obsessed with becoming-passion, becoming-delight, becoming-attraction, becoming-infatuation, becoming-thirst, becoming-fever, becoming-fascination, becoming-craving. This is the yoke of sensuality and the yoke of becoming.

"And how is there the yoke of views? There is the case where a certain person does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from views. When he does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from views, then -- with regard to views -- he is obsessed with view-passion, view-delight, view-attraction, view-infatuation, view-thirst, view-fever, view-fascination, view-craving. This is the yoke of sensuality, the yoke of becoming, and the yoke of views.

"And how is there the yoke of ignorance? There is the case where a certain person does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from the six sense media. When he does not discern, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from the six sense media, then -- with regard to ignorance concerning the six sense media -- he is obsessed with not-knowing. This is the yoke of sensuality, the yoke of becoming, the yoke of views, and the yoke of ignorance.

"Conjoined with evil, unskillful mental qualities -- defiling, leading to further becoming, unhappy, resulting in suffering and stress, and in future birth, aging, and death -- one is said not to be at rest from the yoke.

"These are the four yokes.

"Now, there are these four un-yokings. Which four? Unyoking from sensuality, unyoking from becoming, unyoking from views, and unyoking from ignorance.

"And what is unyoking from sensuality? There is the case where a certain person discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from sensuality. When he discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from sensuality, then -- with regard to sensual objects -- he is not obsessed with sensual passion, sensual delight, sensual attraction, sensual infatuation, sensual thirst, sensual fever, sensual fascination, sensual craving. This is unyoking from sensuality.

"And how is there unyoking from becoming? There is the case where a certain person discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from becoming. When he discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from becoming, then -- with regard to states of becoming -- he is not obsessed with becoming-passion, becoming-delight, becoming-attraction, becoming-infatuation, becoming-thirst, becoming-fever, becoming-

fascination, becoming-craving. This is unyoking from sensuality and unyoking from becoming.

"And how is there unyoking from views? There is the case where a certain person discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from views. When he discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from views, then -- with regard to views -- he is not obsessed with view-passion, view-delight, view-attraction, view-infatuation, view-thirst, view-fever, view-fascination, view-craving. This is unyoking from sensuality, unyoking from becoming, and unyoking from views.

"And how is there unyoking from ignorance? There is the case where a certain person discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from the six sense media. When he discerns, as it actually is present, the origination, the passing away, the allure, the drawbacks, and the escape from the six sense media, then -- with regard to ignorance concerning the six sense media -- he is not obsessed with not-knowing. This is unyoking from sensuality, unyoking from becoming, unyoking from views, and unyoking from ignorance.

"Disjoined from evil, unskillful mental qualities -- defiling, leading to further becoming, unhappy, resulting in suffering and stress, and in future birth, aging, and death -- one is said to be at rest from the yoke.

"These are the four un-yokings."

Joined with the yoke of sensuality  
and the yoke of becoming,  
joined with the yoke of views,  
surrounded by ignorance,  
beings go to the wandering-on,  
heading to birth  
and death.

But those who comprehend sensuality  
and the yoke of becoming -- entirely --  
who have thrown off the yoke of views

and are dispassionate  
toward ignorance,  
disjoined from all yokes:  
they -- their yokes overcome --  
are sages  
indeed.



# Yuganaddha Sutta

## In Tandem

On one occasion Ven. Ānanda was staying in Kosambi, at Ghosita's monastery. There he addressed the monks, "Friends!"

"Yes, friend," the monks responded.

Ven. Ānanda said: "Friends, whoever -- monk or nun -- declares the attainment of arahant-ship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of four paths. Which four?"

"There is the case where a monk has developed insight preceded by tranquility. As he develops insight preceded by tranquility, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it and pursuing it -- his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility preceded by insight. As he develops tranquility preceded by insight, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it and pursuing it -- his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk has developed tranquility in tandem with insight. As he develops tranquility in tandem with insight, the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it and pursuing it -- his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Then there is the case where a monk's mind has its restlessness concerning the Dhamma [the corruptions of insight] well under control. There comes a time when his mind grows steady inwardly, settles down, and becomes unified and concentrated. In him the path is born. He follows that path, develops it, pursues it. As he follows the path, developing it and pursuing it -- his fetters are abandoned, his obsessions destroyed.

"Whoever -- monk or nun -- declares the attainment of arahantship in my presence, they all do it by means of one or another of these four paths."