

The Shurangama Sutra

The Shurangama Sutra

Volume Five

a simple explanation by the

Venerable Master Hsuan Hua

English translation by the
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The Shurangama Sutra - Volume Five

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Introduction

This is the fifth of eight volumes of the *Shurangama Sutra*, with commentaries from the Venerable Master [Hsuan Hua](#).

In the previous volume, the Buddha demonstrated that the source of ignorance lies with the six organs: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body and mind. In “The Six Knots”, the Buddha shows how these six ‘knots’ actually originate from the same source. The Buddha also shows that they must be untied in sequence, one after another.

In the “Twenty-five Means to Enlightenment”, the Buddha then enquires of those in the assembly which ‘knot’ allowed them entry to perfect penetration. There were twenty-five responses:

In “The Six Defiling Objects”, Ajnatakaundinya, Upanishad, Adorned Fragrance, Physician King, Bhadravala and Kashyapa speak of the objects of sound, form, smell, taste, touch and dharmas.

In the “Five Organs”, Aniruddha, Kshudrapanthaka, Gavampati, Pilindavatsa, and Born-into-Emptiness speak of the eye, nose, tongue, body and mind organs.

In “The Six Consciousnesses”, Shariputra, Universal Worthy, Sundarananda, Purnamaitreyaniputra, Upali and Mahamaudgalyayana speak of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind consciousnesses.

In “The Seven Elements”, Ucchushma, Maintaining-the-Ground Bodhisattva, Moonlight Bodhisattva, Vaidurya Bodhisattva, Treasury-of-Emptiness Bodhisattva, Maitreya Bodhisattva and Great-Strength Bodhisattva speak of the elements fire, earth, water, wind, emptiness, consciousness and perception.

In “The Ear Organ”, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva speaks of his entry into perfect penetration via the ear organ. He also speaks of how, via the thirty-two response bodies, the fourteen fearlessnesses and the four inconceivables, he has benefitted and will continue to benefit living beings of the past, present and the future.

In “Manjushri Selects the Organ of Entry”, the Buddha requests Manjushri to select the best organ of entry so that Ananda may quickly attain enlightenment, and so that living beings of the present and future may easily cultivate and enter the Bodhisattva vehicle, seeking the unsurpassed Way.

Manjushri then, for the sake of Ananda and living beings of the future, selects the most suitable of the twenty-five modes of entry and praises its efficaciousness.

User's Guide

to the Shurangama Sutra series

Because of the length of the *Shurangama Sutra*, and the need to provide aid to various readers, the Sutra has been compiled into a series of 9 books: the “Sutra Text and Suppliments”, and the remaining Volumes one to eight.

The “Sutra Text and Suppliments” contains:

1. the entire Sutra text, which is in excess of 2700 paragraphs;
2. the entire outline, which contains 1676 entries;
3. and a master index, which has index references for both the “Sutra Text and Suppliments” and the eight volumes.

Volumes one to eight contain:

1. the Sutra text, with commentaries;
2. the local outline entries;
3. and a local index.

Readers who wish to read or recite the Sutra in its entirety will find the “Sutra Text and Suppliments” very useful.

Those who wish to deeply study the Sutra with its commentaries will find volumes one to eight indispensable.

Exhortation to Protect and Propagate

by Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua

Within Buddhism, there are very many important sutras. However, the most important Sutra is the *Shurangama Sutra*. If there are places which have the *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Proper Dharma dwells in the world. If there is no *Shurangama Sutra*, then the Dharma Ending Age appears. Therefore, we Buddhist disciples, each and every one, must bring our strength, must bring our blood, and must bring our sweat to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*. In the *Sutra of the Ultimate Extinction of the Dharma*, it says very, very clearly that in the Dharma Ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* is the first to disappear, and the rest of the sutras disappear after it. If the *Shurangama Sutra* does not disappear, then the Proper Dharma Age is present. Because of that, we Buddhist disciples must use our lives to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, must use vows and resolution to protect the *Shurangama Sutra*, and cause the *Shurangama Sutra* to be known far and wide, reaching every nook and cranny, reaching into each and every dust-mote, reaching out to the exhaustion of empty space and of the Dharma Realm. If we can do that, then there will be a time of Proper Dharma radiating great light.

Why would the *Shurangama Sutra* be destroyed? It is because it is too true. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true body. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's sharira. The *Shurangama Sutra* is the Buddha's true and actual stupa and shrine. Therefore, because

the *Shurangama Sutra* is so true, all the demon kings use all kinds of methods to destroy the *Shurangama Sutra*. They begin by starting rumors, saying that the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony. Why do they say the *Shurangama Sutra* is phony? It is because the *Shurangama Sutra* speaks too truly, especially in the sections on The Four Decisive Deeds, the Twenty-five Sages Describing Perfect Penetration, and the States of the Fifty Skandha Demons. Those of off-center persuasions and externally-oriented ways, weird demons and strange freaks, are unable to stand it. Consequently there are a good many senseless people who claim that the *Shurangama Sutra* is a forgery.

Now, the principles set forth in the *Shurangama Sutra* are on the one hand proper, and on the other in accord with principle, and the weird demons and strange freaks, those in various cults and sects, all cannot hide away their forms. Most senseless people, in particular unwise scholars and garbage-collecting professors “Tread upon the holy writ.” With their extremely scant and partial understanding, they are confused and unclear, lacking real erudition and true and actual wisdom. That is why they falsely criticize. We who study the Buddhadharma should very deeply be aware of these circumstances. Therefore, wherever we go, we should bring up the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should propagate the *Shurangama Sutra*. Wherever we go, we should introduce the *Shurangama Sutra* to people. Why is that? It is because we wish to cause the Proper Dharma long to dwell in the world.

If the *Shurangama Sutra* is regarded as true, then there is no problem. To verify its truth, let me say that if the *Shurangama Sutra* were phony, then I would willingly fall into the hells forever through all eternity—for being unable to recognize the Buddhadharma—for mistaking the false for true. If the *Shurangama Sutra* is true, then life after life in every time I make the vow to propagate the Great Dharma of the Shurangama, that I shall in every time and every place propagate the true principles of the Shurangama.

Everyone should pay attention to the following point. How could the *Shurangama Sutra* not have been spoken by the Buddha? No one else could have spoken the *Shurangama Sutra*. And so I hope that all those people who make senseless accusations will wake up fast and stop creating the causes for suffering in the Hell of Pulling Out Tongues. No matter who the scholar is, no matter what country students of the Buddhadharma are from, all should quickly mend their ways, admit their mistakes, and manage to change. There is no greater good than that. I can then say that all who look at the *Shurangama Sutra*, all who listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*, and all who investigate the *Shurangama Sutra*, will very quickly accomplish Buddhahood.

Composed by Gold Mountain Shramana Tripitaka Master Hua

Translated by Bhikshuni Heng Hsien

Reviewed by Shramaneri Heng Wen

The Eight Guidelines

of the Buddhist Text Translation Society

1. A volunteer must free him/herself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. A volunteer must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. A volunteer must refrain from aggrandizing his/her work and denigrating that of others.
4. A volunteer must not establish him/herself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with his or her fault-finding.
5. A volunteer must take the Buddha-mind as his/her own mind.
6. A volunteer must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. A volunteer must request Virtuous Elders in the ten directions to certify his/her translations.
8. A volunteer must endeavour to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

Outline

of the Shurangama Sutra

The outline for the Shurangama Sutra was compiled by Dharma Master Yuan Ying, which categorizes the various parts of the Sutra text consisting of over 2,700 paragraphs to 1,676 entries.

These entries are presented in the form of a tree-like structure, dividing the various parts of the Sutra text into groups, those groupings being sub-divided further and further, thus providing a detailed break-down of the entire text.

Though the outline is not a prerequisite to reading the Sutra text and the accompanying commentaries, it serves as a useful tool for students of the Way who wish to deeply study the Sutra. Without this outline, students may find it difficult to refer to specific parts of the text.

Because of the size of the outline (and the Sutra), only outline entries which pertain to the Sutra text contained within this book is included.

For the outline of the entire Sutra, please refer to the “Sutra Text and Supplements”, where the entire sutra text, outline, and index entries are all combined into one single volume.

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釋迦牟尼文佛



Namo Original Teacher Shakyamuni Buddha

An illustration of an open book with a decorative border. The text is centered on the pages.

Verse for Opening a Sutra

*The unsurpassed, profound, and wonderful Dharma,
Is difficult to encounter in hundreds of millions of eons,
I now see and hear it, receive and uphold it,
And I vow to fathom the Tathagata's true meaning.*

CHAPTER 1

The Six Knots

I3 The Buddha ties a strip of cloth to explain the principle.

J1 Ananda explains his question and asks for instruction.

Sutra:

Ananda put his palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, “Having heard the Buddha’s unbounded, greatly compassionate, pure, everlasting, true and actual expression of dharma, I still have not understood the sequence for releasing the knots such that when the six are untied, the one is gone also. I only hope you will be compassionate, and once again take pity on this assembly and on those of the future, by bestowing the sounds of Dharma on us and wash and rinse away our heavy defilements.”

Commentary:

Ananda put his palms together, bowed, and said to the Buddha, “having heard the Buddha’s unbounded, greatly compassionate, pure, everlasting, true and actual expression of dharma, I still have not understood the principle whereby when the six are untied, the one is gone also. I haven’t yet figured out the sequence for releasing the knots. I only hope you will be compassionate, and once again take pity on this assembly, all

the people gathered here, **and on those of the future** great assemblies of beings. Take pity by **bestowing the sounds of Dharma on us**. Make a gift to all living beings of the expression of the Buddhadharma, to **wash and rinse away our heavy defilements.**” Just as with vegetables: first you wash them, and then, fearing they might not be completely clean, you rinse them again. “Defilements” may be “heavy” or “serious” enough to cause us to fall into lower states of being. The defilements refer to our greed, hatred, and stupidity. Ananda seeks further clarification.

J2 The Thus Come One's clever explanation.

K1 He cleverly sets up an analogy.

L1 The original cloth is one strip.

Sutra:

Then, upon the lion's throne, the Thus Come One straightened his 'Nirvana robes,' arranged his samghati, took hold of the table made of the seven gems, reached out onto the table with his hand and picked up a flowered cloth given him by the Suyama God.

Commentary:

Then, upon the lion's throne, the Thus Come One – the Dharma seat that Shakyamuni Buddha was sitting on was called a “Lion's Throne.” It was so named to indicate that the Buddha's speaking of Dharma was like the roar of a lion; When the lion roars, all other beasts tremble. When the Buddha speaks Dharma, the heavenly demons and those outside the Way are frightened. **He straightened his 'Nirvana robes'** – “Nirvana robes” refers to the Buddha's inner clothing – and **arranged his samghati**. The “Samghati” is the outer sash, the “perfect robe” or “great robe.” He **took hold of the table made of the seven gems**. The table placed before the Buddha was made of gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearls, and carnelian. Lapis lazuli is sometimes described as “thick crystal.” Crystal may not seem so special in this day and age when glass is so prevalent, but in these early times, crystal was hard to come by, so it was considered a

precious gem. Mother-of-pearl sometimes has a pattern like cart-tracks in it. Carnelian is likened to “horse-brains” in its shape; it is red and white in color.

He then **reached out onto the table with his hand and picked up a flowered cloth given him by the Suyama God.** Suyama Heaven is the heaven of “well-divided time.” “Flowered cloth” refers to a long hand-towel made of layered flowers. In India, such towels were valued highly, and this one was especially so, since it was a gift to Shakyamuni Buddha from the Ruling God of the Suyama Heaven.

L2 He ties it in six knots.

Sutra:

Then, as the assembly watched, he tied it into a knot and showed it to Ananda, asking, “What is this called?”

Ananda and the great assembly answered together, “It’s called a knot.”

Then the Thus Come One tied another knot in the cloth of layered flowers and asked Ananda again, “What is this called?”

Ananda and the great assembly once again answered together, “It, too, is called a knot.”

He continued in this pattern until he had tied six knots in the cloth of layered flowers. As he made each knot, he held it up to Ananda and asked, “What is this called?”

And each time Ananda and the great assembly answered the Buddha in the same way: “It is called a knot.”

Commentary:

Then, as the assembly watched, he tied it into a knot. The Buddha, as if playing a game with children, took up the cloth of layered flowers and tied it in knots, while he was sitting there before the great assembly. He **showed it to Ananda, asking, “What is this called?”** He let Ananda see the knot and asked him what it was.

Ananda and the great assembly answered together, “It’s called a knot.

Then the Thus Come One tied another knot in the cloth of layered flowers and asked Ananda again, “What is this called?” He asked him the same thing over again.

Ananda and the great assembly once again answered together, “It, too, is called a knot.” They gave the same answer.

He continued in this pattern until he had tied six knots in the cloth of layered flowers. In all, he tied six knots in the towel. **As he made each knot, he held it up to Ananda and asked, “What is this called?”**

And each time Ananda and the great assembly answered the Buddha in the same way: “It is called a knot.” The cloth of layered flowers represents the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. The six knots tied in it represent the six sense organs.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “When I first tied the cloth, you called it a knot. Since the cloth of layered flowers is basically a single strip, how can you call the second and third ties knots as well?”

Commentary:

The cloth is just one piece, which you said was a knot, so how can you call the second and third ties in it knots as well? The Buddha deliberately quizzed Ananda in this way.

Sutra:

Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, this cloth of woven layered flowers is just one piece, but as I consider it, when the Thus Come One makes one tie, it is called a knot. If he were to make a hundred ties, they would be called a hundred knots, how much the more so with this cloth, which has exactly six knots, not seven or five. Why does the Thus

Come One allow me to call only the first tie a knot and not the second or third ties?”

Ananda said to the Buddha – Ananda replied to the Buddha’s quizzing. “World Honored One, this cloth of woven layered flowers is just one piece. The precious cloth of layered flowers is a single strip, but as I consider it, when the Thus Come One makes one tie, it is called a knot. If he were to make a hundred ties, they would be called a hundred knots. Every one of those hundred can be called a knot, how much the more so with this cloth, which has exactly six knots, not seven or five. You have only tied six knots in this strip of cloth. You didn’t go on to tie seven knots nor did you stop at five. Why does the Thus Come One allow me to call only the first tie a knot and not the second or third ties? Buddha, why do you only admit that the first tie is called a knot and don’t recognize the second and the third as knots? What’s the principle behind this?”

K2 He answers two questions.

L1 The answer that when the six are untied, the one is gone.

M1 By the analogy he shows that one starts with something that is the same and turns it into something different.

Sutra:

The Buddha told Ananda, “You know that this precious cloth of flowers is basically one strip, but when I made six ties in it, you said it had six knots. As you carefully consider this, you will see that the substance of the cloth is the same; it is the knots that make the difference.

Commentary:

The Buddha listened to Ananda’s answer with amusement. Of course, the six were all called knots. It’s not that the first is called a knot and the others are not. The Buddha asked him that question to tease him. And Ananda insisted that all six could be called knots. This was all for the sake of debate. It was a point of argument, a principle to discuss.

The Buddha told Ananda, “You know that this precious cloth of flowers is basically one strip. It’s a single piece. But when I made six ties in it, you said it had six knots. You then called it six knots. As you carefully consider this – look into this in minute detail, reflect upon it – you will see that the substance of the cloth is the same. It doesn’t have so many names. It is the knots that make the difference. As soon as I added a knot, it became different.

This demonstrates that the Nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One is basically one; the six sense organs are knots tied in it. But, although there are six knots, the original substance of the Treasury is still one. If you untie the six knots, not even one will remain.

Sutra:

“What do you think? The first knot I tied was called number one. Continuing until I come to the sixth knot, and as I now tie it, is it also number one?”

Commentary:

“What do you think? Ananda, what is your opinion? The first knot I tied was called number one. Continuing until I come to the sixth knot, and as I now tie it, is it also number one? Can the sixth one in turn be called number one?”

Sutra:

“No, World Honored One. If there are six knots, the sixth knot can never be called number one. In all my lives of learning, with all my understanding, how could I now confuse the names of six knots?”

Commentary:

Ananda said, “Absolutely not. You can’t switch them. Number one is number one. You can’t change number one so that it is called number six or change number six so that it is called number one. **No, World Honored One. If there are six knots, the sixth knot can never be called number one.** If there are six, the sixth is just

the sixth, and no matter what, it cannot turn into the first. **In all my lives of learning**, I, Ananda, the learned one, from limitless kalpas past down to the present, **with all my understanding** – what I have studied, what I have made my specialty, is to be well-read and good at debate. When I call upon all my accumulated learning and use all my skill in debate, **how could I now confuse the names of six knots?** How could I mix up the names? How could I fail to keep them in order?”

Sutra:

The Buddha said, “So it is. The six knots are not the same. Consider their origin. They are created from the one cloth. To confuse their order will not do.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, “So it is. What you say is right. You can’t change their names. You can’t call the sixth one the first. The first one cannot be changed and called the sixth. You are absolutely right. The reason they cannot be interchanged is because **the six knots are not the same. Consider their origin. They are created from the one cloth. To confuse their order will not do.** If you mix up the numerical order of the knots, it won’t work, you say. That’s right.

Sutra:

“Your six sense organs are also like this. In the midst or ultimate sameness, conclusive differences arise.”

Commentary:

Originally they are identical, but the eyes function as eyes, the ears function as ears, the nose functions as a nose, the tongue functions as a tongue, the body functions as a body, and the mind functions as the mind. Originally they were one and the same, but at this point they divide. Even then, it would be fine, if they worked together. They could all return their light and illumine within. The eyes could turn their light inward, the ears could listen within and hear the self-nature, the nose would not be turned by smells, the

tongue would not be turned by tastes, the body would not be turned by objects of touch, and the mind would not be influenced by dharmas. If they could all work together and return the light, they would still be one. But they can't work together. The eyes see forms, the nose smells fragrances and is turned by them, the tongue tastes flavors and is turned by them, the body enjoys objects of touch and is turned by them, and the mind is influenced by dharmas and is turned by them. What's important is to not follow after them, but ordinary people are unable to avoid following after them.

M2 By the analogy he shows that if one gets rid of what is different, one can return to what is the same.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “You certainly dislike these six knots and would like there to be just one cloth. But how can that be done?”

Ananda said, “As long as these knots remain, there will be grounds for argument about what is and what is not. Their very existence will lead to such distinctions as this knot not being that knot and that knot not being this one. But if on this day, the Thus Come One unties them all, so that no knots remain, then there will be no ‘this’ and no ‘that.’ There will not even be something called ‘one.’ How much the less can there be six?”

The Buddha said, “When the six are untied, the one is gone’ is the same meaning.

Commentary:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “You certainly dislike these six knots. It’s for sure you don’t like the six knots,” says Shakyamuni Buddha to his disciple, “You would like to untie the six knots so they cease to be, **and would like there to be just one cloth.** You want to make one out of them. **But how can that be done?** How can you get back to the one – to that basic substance?”

Ananda heard the Buddha’s question and said, “**As long as these knots remain, there will be grounds for argument about**

what is and what is not. Right?” Ananda admits, “I would like to get rid of the six knots and have only one thing remaining, because as long as the six are around, there will be disputes about them. The reason for contention is that there is distinction between this and that. **Their very existence will lead to such distinctions as this knot not being that knot and that knot not being this one.** In the midst of these various knots will arise arguments about what is right and what is wrong. ‘This knot,’ the first one, is not the sixth, and ‘that knot,’ the sixth one, is not the first. Distinctions arise regarding this and that.

But if on this day, the Thus Come One unties them all, so that no knots remain, then there will be no ‘this’ and no ‘that.’ There won’t be a first, second, third, fourth, fifth, or sixth knot. **There will not even be something called ‘one;’** if the six knots are destroyed there won’t even be one knot. **How much the less can there be six?**

The Buddha said, “When the six are untied, the one is gone’ is the same meaning.” “Not bad,” the Buddha told Ananda, “You spoke that principle correctly. If you understand that principle, you can understand ‘when the six are untied, the one is none; for that is the same meaning. Are you clear about it now?’”

L2 The answer that untying the knots is done in sequence.

M1 He explains the sequence of the knots.

N1 He accords with sequence in tying the knots.

Sutra:

“Because from beginningless time your mind and nature have been made wild and rebellious, you have produced false knowledge and views. This falseness continues to arise without respite, and the wearisomeness of these views brings about objective ‘dust.’

Commentary:

“Because from beginningless time your mind and nature have been made wild and rebellious:” From beginningless kalpas

on down to the present, your pure mind and your basic nature of True Suchness – your self-nature – have been made wild. “Wild” refers to your “appearance-of-production” ignorance, which is innate. From the “appearance-of-production” ignorance comes the discriminatory knowledge of dharmas which is also innate. “Wild” refers to ignorance.

“Rebellious” refers to the Three Subtle Appearances discussed before. They are:

1. The appearance of karma.
2. The appearance of turning.
3. The appearance of manifestation.

The appearance of karma brings about the appearance of turning, which leads to the appearance of manifestation. This is very subtle, however, not something which ordinary people can discern.

One unenlightened thought produces Three Subtle Appearances. With the existence of these three appearances, the first knot is tied. The point at which **“you have produced false knowledge and views”** is when,

*The experience of states becomes the condition
from which Six Coarse Appearances arise.*

These have already been discussed. They are:

1. The appearance of knowing. This knowing refers to worldly knowledge and skill in debate. It includes science, technology, and all kinds of professions. Because you have “produced false knowledge and views,” you give rise to the appearance of knowing. **“This falseness continues to arise without respite,”** and brings about the second of the six coarse appearances,

2. The appearance of continuity. It never stops. The appearance of knowing is the second knot, and the appearance of continuity is the third knot.

3. The appearance of grasping. You give rise to attachments.
4. The appearance of assigning names.
5. The appearance of the production of karma.
6. The appearance of karmic-bound suffering.

These four represent the last three knots.

N2 He uses an analogy to explain further.

Sutra:

“It is just like strange flowers appearing when your eyes grow weary of staring. They arise at random without any cause within the tranquil, essential brightness.”

Commentary:

“It is just like strange flowers appearing when your eyes grow weary of staring.” This is like the passage earlier in the Sutra: “He stares into emptiness and after a long time gets weary.” When he gets weary, he sees strange flowers in emptiness. So, too, here: **They arise at random without any cause within the tranquil, essential brightness.** For no reason at all, they appear haphazardly in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N3 To oppose the sequence is connected with the analogy.

Sutra:

“Everything in the world – the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, as well as birth, death, and Nirvana – is all just a strange weariness: the upside-down appearance of flowers.”

Commentary:

“It is not only the Three Subtle and Six Coarse Appearances that arise because the eyes grow weary from long staring, so that they begin to see the appearance of flowers in emptiness. **Everything in the world** – the entire universe, that is, not just our world, but all worlds throughout empty space and the Dharmarealm – **the mountains, the rivers, and the great earth, as well as birth, death, and Nirvana – is all just a strange weariness.** They all

exist because the eyes, as it were, have stared for a long time and become weary. They all come about through the same kind of circumstances as the eyes' staring. They are **the upside-down appearance of flowers**. Originally there were no flowers in space. All these things are like the upside-down appearance of flowers." So the Buddha's principle here is: "Do you know where everything in the world came from? Everything arises from living beings' ignorance. That one unenlightened thought produces the Three Subtle Appearances. Experiencing states becomes the conditions from which Six Coarse Appearances arise."

M2 He shows that the untying is done in sequence.

N1 First he teaches him the technique of untying.

O1 Ananda seeks to untie the knot of weariness.

Sutra:

Ananda said, "This weariness is the same as the knots. How do we untie them?"

Commentary:

Having heard the Buddha's explanation, Ananda said, "**This weariness is the same as the knots**. This fatigue which comes from overexertion, is the same as the knots. **How do we untie them?** How do we get rid of them? How can we make them go away, so that we can return to our original face? How can we get back to our inherent nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One?"

O2 The Thus Come One uses a clever analogy to show them.

Sutra:

The Thus Come One took hold of the knotted cloth and pulled on its left end and asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?"

"No, World Honored One."

Then with his hand he pulled on the right end and again asked Ananda, "Is this the way to untie it?"

"No, World Honored One."

Commentary:

The Thus Come One uses an analogy to cause Ananda to understand for himself how to untie the knots, which are identical with the weariness that comes from overexertion.

The Thus Come One took hold of the knotted cloth and pulled on its left end. He took up the jeweled embroidered cloth which he had knotted and pulled its end to the left. At the same time he asked Ananda, **“Is this the way to untie it?”** Is this how you get it undone?”

Ananda answered, **“No, World Honored One.”**

Then with his hand he pulled on the right end and again asked Ananda, “Is this the way to untie it?” Can I get the knots undone this way? Have the knots loosened now?

“No, World Honored One, they haven’t come loose. If you just pull on them, they won’t come untied,” Ananda replied.

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “Now I have pulled it to the left and right with my hand and still have not been able to undo them. What method do you propose for untying them?”

Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, you must untie the knots from their center. Then they will come undone.”

Commentary:

Ananda is so intelligent: The Buddha couldn’t do it, but Ananda thought of a way. **The Buddha said to Ananda, “Now I have pulled it to the left and right with my hand and still have not been able to undo them.** I haven’t untied even one of the knots. I can’t do it. **What method do you propose for untying them?** You think of a way. Use some clever expedient. How can we get them undone? You’re very smart, Ananda. You will certainly come up with a method.”

Ananda said to the Buddha, “World Honored One, you must untie the knots from their center. Then they will come undone. If you just pull to the left or to the right, you can’t get them undone. What you have to do is work on the heart of the knot. Once you loosen that, the knot will come undone.”

Sutra:

The Buddha said to Ananda, “So it is, so it is, if you want to get them undone, you have to untie them from the center.

Commentary:

The Buddha’s reply is, “You are truly intelligent, Ananda. Aren’t you? **So it is, so it is.** That’s what you do. You figured it out. I couldn’t think of how to do it, and you came up with this wonderful method!” He expresses his approval. “Right, correct. Now I understand. **If you want to get them undone, you have to untie them from the center.** So, you aren’t just well-educated, you’re fundamentally intelligent.”

O3 He tells him that he should not erroneously accept or believe what was spoken.

Sutra:

“Ananda, the Buddhadharma I explain arises from causes and conditions. But that is not to grasp at the mixing and uniting of coarse appearances in the world. The Thus Come One understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas and knows their fundamental causes and what conditions bring them into being.

Commentary:

“Ananda, the Buddhadharma I explain arises from causes and conditions. But that is not to grasp at the mixing and uniting of coarse appearances in the world. It’s not that I’m referring to the coarse appearances that anyone can see. I, **the Thus Come One understands all worldly and world-transcending dharmas.**” “Worldly dharmas” refers to the defiled and defiling dharmas in the six common realms of rebirth. “World-transcending

dharmas” refers to the pure dharmas found in the four sagely Dharmarealms. I know **their fundamental causes and what conditions bring them into being**. I know the basic source of these dharmas and how they accord with conditions.

Sutra:

“This is so to the extent that I know how many drops of rain fall in as many worlds away from here as there are dust motes in the Ganges. The same is true for all the things you can see: why the pine is straight, why the brambles are twisted, why the goose is white, why the crow is black – I understand the reasons.

Commentary:

“This is so – I know what conditions bring things about – to the extent that I know how many drops of rain fall in as many worlds away from here as there are dust motes in the Ganges. I know what the conditions are in worlds infinitely far away and in all the worlds in between. There’s nothing in this world that I do not comprehend, and even in worlds vast distances beyond this world, I know exactly how much rain has fallen.” The *Vajra Sutra* says,

*The Thus Come One completely knows and sees
All the thoughts in the minds of all living beings.*

It doesn’t matter whether the beings are human or not; whatever thoughts go on in their minds are known to the Buddha. **“The same is true for all the things you can see.** You can’t see things in as many worlds away from here as there are sand grains in the Ganges, but as to the things that are right now before your very eyes – **Why the pine is straight, why the brambles are twisted, why the goose is white, why the crow is black – I understand the reasons.”**

O4 If he selects an organ and unties the knot, then he will certainly be certified.

Sutra:

“Therefore, Ananda, you can select whichever one of the six sense-organs you wish. If the knots of the sense-organs are

removed, then the defiling appearances disappear of themselves. All falseness ceases to be. If that is not the true, what do you expect in addition to it?

Commentary:

“**Therefore** – because of the Buddha’s total comprehension, as he has just explained – **Ananda, you can select whichever one of the six sense-organs you wish.** You yourself can choose whichever sense-organ you prefer. Do you remember how I explained the various merits of the sense-organs to you, how some have all twelve-hundred merits and some do not? Based on that, you can pick whichever one you want. Once you pick the organ, and **if the knots of the sense-organs are removed, then the defiling appearances disappear of themselves.** You apply the method to whichever organ you select in your cultivation, until the organ, the knots, and the defiling objects are all done away with. **All falseness ceases to be.** Then, all false thinking – thoughts based on production and extinction – all discriminations disappear.”

“What happens then?” you wonder. “What do we do when all our false thoughts are gone?” “**If that is not the true, what do you expect in addition to it?** If you’re not true then, what will you have left? All that’s left is the true. When the false is gone, the true is total. Get rid of your mind that seizes on conditions, and the nature of wonderful True Suchness appears, the pure and fundamental mind, the original face of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.”

At this point in the sutra, you should be particularly attentive. You should develop your skill by working on one of the six sense-organs. Which one? Any one will do: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, or mind – you can apply your skill to any one of them. The entrance to any of the six sense-organs is the Way. All are a part of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. All you have to do is take one in hand and put your mind to it in your cultivation, and you can return to the basic substance of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

N2 Then he shows that the untying is done in sequence.

O1 He first questions him to lead him to awakening.

Sutra:

“Ananda, I now ask you, can the six knots in the cloth of layered flowers be untied simultaneously and released all at once?”

“No, World Honored One. The knots were originally made one at a time, now they must be untied one at a time. The substance of the six knots is the same, but they were not made simultaneously, and so now when it is time to release them, how can they be untied simultaneously?”

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha says, **“Ananda, I now ask you, can the six knots in the cloth of layered flowers be untied simultaneously and released all at once?** This cloth from the Heaven of Well-Divided Time has six knots in it, as everyone can see. Can these knots be untied all at the same time?”

“No, World Honored One,” Ananda replied. **“Why not? The knots were originally made one at a time** They were tied in sequence. **Now they must be untied one at a time.** They have to be untied in sequence. **The substance of the six knots is the same, but they were not made simultaneously.** Although the six knots are all tied in the same cloth, they were not tied all at the same time, **and so now when it is time to release them, how can they be untied simultaneously?** They have to be released one at a time.

O2 He uses that awakening to further unite with understanding.

Sutra:

The Buddha said, “Releasing the six sense-organs is the same way. When the sense-organ begins to be released, one realizes the emptiness of people first. When the nature of that emptiness is fully understood, then one is released from

dharmas. Once one is freed from dharmas, neither kind of emptiness will arise.

Commentary:

The Buddha said, “Releasing the six sense-organs is the same way. The principle is the same as the principle for untying the six knots. You release the sense-organs one by one; you can’t work on them all at once. **When the sense-organ begins to be released** – that is, the organ you have chosen to cultivate to perfect penetration – **one realizes the emptiness of people first.”** With the emptiness of people, there is no attachment to self. There are two kinds of attachment to self:

- 1) Innate attachment to self.
- 2) Differentiated attachment to self.

At this point, both these attachments are finished.

When the nature of that emptiness is fully understood – when the emptiness of people is fully perfected – **then one is released from dharmas.** Then dharmas are also empty. One is liberated from the two kinds of attachments to dharmas:

- 1) Innate attachment to dharmas.
- 2) Differentiated attachment to dharmas.

“Once one is freed from dharmas, neither kind of emptiness will arise.” Once you attain liberation from dharmas, there is no longer any emptiness of people or emptiness of dharmas. Neither of these kinds of emptiness arises.

Sutra:

“This is called the Patience with Non-Production attained by the Bodhisattvas by means of samadhi.”

Commentary:

“This is called the Patience with Non-Production attained by the Bodhisattvas by means of samadhi.” The Bodhisattvas attain the power of concentration, and thus can awaken to patience

with the non-production of dharmas, which is the state of a Bodhisattva.

CHAPTER 2

Twenty-five Means to Enlightenment

I4 The profound transmission of selecting the organ.

J1 Ananda traces his enlightenment and makes grateful obeisance.

Sutra:

Upon receiving the Buddha’s instruction, Ananda and the great assembly gained wisdom and awareness that was perfectly penetrating and free of doubt and delusion.

Commentary:

Upon receiving the Buddha’s instruction, Ananda and the great assembly gained wisdom and awareness that was perfectly penetrating. At that time their wisdom was complete and bright and their enlightenment reached perfect penetration. And they were **free of doubt and delusion.**

Sutra:

All at the same time, they placed their palms together, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and he said to the Buddha, “Today our bodies and minds are illumined, and we are happily free from obstruction.

Commentary:

All at the same time, they placed their palms together, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and he said to the Buddha – they made a full prostration at his feet and Ananda said, “Today our bodies and minds are illumined.” They clearly understood. **“And we are happily free from obstruction.** We have attained a blissful state free of hindrance, doubt, and obstacles.”

J2 He asks for instruction in the perfect penetration of the organ.

K1 He has not yet penetrated the organ.

Sutra:

“We have understood the meaning of the ending of the six and the one. Still, we have not yet gone through to fundamental, perfect penetration.

Commentary:

“We have understood the meaning of the ending of the six and the one. and the one. We see clearly the principle that when the six are free, the one also is gone. **Still, we have not yet gone through to fundamental, perfect penetration.** What is the source of perfect penetration? We still don’t know.”

K2 He is fortunate to meet the Thus Come One.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, we who have floated and floundered our way through aeon after aeon, homeless and orphaned, had no idea, we never imagined that we could meet with the Buddha in such a close relationship. We are like lost infants who have suddenly found their compassionate mother.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, we Sound-Hearers with something left to study, who have floated and floundered our way, bobbing and sinking in the bitter sea of birth and death, and failing to get out of the wheel of rebirth, **through aeon after aeon, homeless and orphaned** – without parents to take care of them, orphans often

have no roof over their heads and must sleep out in the open at night. **“We had no idea, we never imagined that we could meet with the Buddha in such a close relationship.** It never occurred to us that we could encounter the Buddha, who is like a compassionate mother to us. **We are like lost infants who have suddenly found their compassionate mother.”** The child that was lost now finds its mother and will have milk to drink.

Sutra:

“Because of this, we accomplished the way in this assembly. Yet, the secret words which we received are the same as our basic enlightenment, and so it is the same as if we hadn’t even heard them.

Commentary:

“Because of this, opportunity which we have had, because of the Dharma the Buddha spoke, **we accomplished the way in this assembly. Yet, the secret words which we received are the same as our basic enlightenment.** The secret Dharmas which the Buddha taught us were such that each of us were enlightened to different things, and yet the enlightenment is our own, **and so it is the same as if we hadn’t even heard them.”** Ananda says, “The Dharma the Buddha speaks causes us to become enlightened. The Dharma was what the Buddha spoke, but the enlightenment is our own.

*We understand our basic nature,
We see our basic mind.*

It is not something that is obtained from outside. That’s why it’s no different than if we hadn’t heard at all.”

K3 He hopes the Buddha will make the profound transmission.

Sutra:

“We only wish the greatly compassionate one will bestow upon us the profound secret as the Thus Come One’s final instruction.” After saying this he prostrated himself, withdrew,

and held himself ready for the secret opportunity as he awaited the Buddha's hidden transmission.

Commentary:

Ananda continued to beseech the Buddha. **“We only wish the greatly compassionate one will bestow upon us the profound secret as the Thus Come One's final instruction.”** He asks the Buddha to again give rise to great compassion and bestow on him the profound secret Dharma – the Great Shurangama Samadhi. He wants the water of samadhi. **“As the Thus Come One's final instruction. Let this be the ultimate instruction the Buddha gives us.”** Once he had made this request, **he prostrated himself, withdrew, and held himself ready for the secret opportunity.** He returned to his seat and waited for Shakyamuni Buddha to transmit the wonderful Dharma to him secretly. **“Secret”** means that although everyone is present, the Buddha transmits a Dharma-door to Ananda without the others realizing it. So the text says, **“as he awaited the Buddha's hidden transmission.”**

J3 The Buddha instructs all the sages to speak.

K1 The Buddha asks all the sages.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One told all those in the assembly who were great Bodhisattvas and great Arhats, their outflows extinguished – “All of you Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are born from within my dharma and have attained the stage beyond study, I now ask you: When you first brought forth your resolve and became enlightened to the eighteen realms, which one of these brought perfect penetration? Through which expedient did you enter samadhi?”

Commentary:

The Buddha knew that Ananda had withdrawn and readied himself for the secret opportunity to receive the Buddha's silent transmission. The Buddha knew what was on Ananda's mind, but for the time being he did not respond to Ananda's request. First he

questioned the twenty-five sages. He asked who had obtained perfect penetration and where they had obtained it from. He asked them which sense-organ they used to become enlightened. **Then the World Honored One told all those in the assembly who were great Bodhisattvas and great Arhats, their outflows extinguished** – this sentence was added as narrative when the Sutra was compiled. What follows is the Buddha’s words. **“All of you Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are born from within my dharma and have attained the stage beyond study – you were**

*Born from the Buddha’s mouth,
Transformationally born from the Dharma.*

You have reached the fourth fruition of Arhatship, the level beyond study, or you are great Bodhisattvas. **I now ask you: When you first brought forth your resolve and became enlightened to the eighteen realms, which one of these brought perfect penetration?** In the end, which sense-organ, which realm, was perfectly penetrating? **Through which expedient did you enter samadhi?** Through which Dharma-door did you attain samadhi?”

The Six Defiling Objects

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- K2 The assembly tells their former cases.
 L1 The sages speak in general.
 M1 Perfect penetration through the six defiling objects.
 N1 Ajnatakaundinya: the object of sound.

Sutra:

Kaundinya, with the others of the five Bhikshus, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I was in the Deer Park and the Pheasant Garden, I observed the Thus Come One immediately after his accomplishment of the Way. Upon hearing the Buddha's voice, I understood the Four Truths.

Commentary:

Kaundinya, also known as Ajnatakaundinya, was one of the Buddha's disciples. His name means "Understanding the Original Limit" (解本際); "The Very First to Understand" (最初解). He was the first of the Buddha's disciples to become enlightened. He was a Dharma-Nature Elder, because his enlightenment came early and he was quite old by this time. **With the others of the five Bhikshus, he arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I was in the Deer Park and the Pheasant Garden, I observed the Thus Come One immediately after his accomplishment of the Way."** It's said that the Pheasant Garden was a grove of trees where a lot of pheasants lived. The

grove once caught fire, and the pheasants wetted down their wings with water and beat out the fire. So it's said that this spot was a very efficacious one. There was an unusually magical atmosphere about the place. The geomantic properties were excellent. People who cultivate the Way should find places to abide that are endowed with such an efficacious atmosphere, because it's said of such places:

*When people draw near,
It's magical for them.*

In other words, it's easier to get enlightened there.

“At that time,” Kaundinya continued, “We observed the Thus Come One right after he had been certified to the Way. At first,

*He sat beneath the Bodhi Tree,
Saw one night a brilliant star,
And awakened to the Way.*

Then he came to the Deer Park to meet us five bhikshus. **Upon hearing the Buddha's voice** – the sound of the Dharma he spoke – we awakened to the Way. **I understood the Four Truths.**” The Buddha turned the Dharma Wheel of the Four Truths three times. He said, “This is suffering; its nature is oppressive. This is origination; its nature is seductive,” The origination of afflictions is seductive. “This is extinction; its nature is that it can be certified to. This is the Way; its nature is that it can be cultivated.”

Next he said, “This is suffering; you should know it. This is origination; you should cut it off. This is extinction; you should certify to it. This is the Way; you should cultivate it.”

On the third turning he said, “This is suffering; I already know it. This is origination; I have already severed it. This is extinction; I have already certified to it. This is the Way; I have already cultivated it.”

After the Buddha finished these turnings, Kaundinya became enlightened. Earlier in the *Shurangama Sutra*, Kaundinya has

explained that he awakened because of the two words, “guest dust.” He understood that the guest was not the host. The host does not go, while the guest does.

He heard the Buddha’s voice and awakened to the Way. People’s voices are a very important part of them. Your voice should be resonant. If your voice is full and carries well, people will enjoy listening when you speak dharma. If your voice is unclear and you hesitate and stammer when you speak, then people will not like listening to you. The Buddha’s voice was crystal clear like a lion’s roar. No matter how many people were assembled, they could all hear him, and they all understood his meaning. Nor was it only people who understood; all the animals also understood the dharma the Buddha spoke. So it is said,

*With a single sound he spoke the Dharma.
All beings understood, each according to their kind.*

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks us Bhikshus to speak. I was the first to understand, and the Thus Come One certified me and named me Ajnata. His wonderful sound was both secret and all-pervasive. It was through sound that I became an Arhat.

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks us Bhikshus to speak. Buddha, you have now asked all the bhikshus how they attained perfect penetration. **I was the first to understand, and the Thus Come One certified me and named me Ajnata.** I was the first to become enlightened and obtain liberation. **His wonderful sound was both secret and all-pervasive.** I heard the Buddha’s subtle, wonderful sound, and it tallied with my self-nature. It was both intimate and perfectly pervading. It fused perfectly with my self-nature. **It was through sound that I became an Arhat.** I cultivated through sound and became enlightened.”

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva cultivated the perfect penetration of the ear-organ. After the twenty-five sages each discuss their perfect

penetration, Manjushri Bodhisattva selects the ear as the best sense-organ for Ananda to use to obtain perfect penetration. He says cultivation of the ear-organ is the most appropriate dharma.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, sound is the superior means.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The Buddha asks which of the Eighteen Realms was the one through which I obtained perfect penetration. **As I have been certified to it, sound is the superior means.** My enlightenment came through sound. It was in that way that I obtained the fruition of Arhatship. So I think sound is the most important. It is the best method to use for cultivation.”

N2 Upanishad: the object of form.

Sutra:

Upanishad arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I also saw the Buddha when he first accomplished the way. I learned to contemplate the appearance of impurity until I grew to loathe it and came to understand that the nature of all form is unclean. Bare bones and subtle dust all return to emptiness, and so both emptiness and form are done away with. With this realization, I accomplished the Path Beyond Study.

Commentary:

Upanishad’s name means “the emptiness of the nature of form” (色性空). He’d always been plagued with strong sexual desire. Because of it, the Buddha taught him to cultivate the Contemplation of Impurity. This means that he observed how his own physical body, as well as everyone else’s, was unclean. The specific practice is called Contemplating the Nine Aspects of Impurity.

1. Contemplate swelling. After death, the body starts to swell up.
2. Contemplate the green mottled flesh. After the ‘swelling, the body breaks out in green areas like big bruises.
3. Contemplate flesh broken open. After it turns green, it pops open.
4. Contemplate blood and filth. When it breaks open, the blood and other things flow out.
5. Contemplate pus and rot. The pus begins to ooze out of the body as it starts to rot.
6. Contemplate it being eaten by worms. Out of the pus and rot emerge worms which feast on the flesh.
7. Contemplate it scattering. The flesh begins to fall off.
8. Contemplate the bare bones. Once the flesh is gone, there are just the bones underneath.
9. Contemplate it being burned. It is burned by the fire and turns into ashes. The ashes drift into emptiness and turn into dust, until at last there’s nothing left.

Upanishad was very attached to forms. He would take special notice of every woman he saw to remark on how beautiful this one was, how exquisite that one was, and how attractive another was. He put all his efforts into this kind of thing.

After he met the Buddha, the Buddha taught him to cultivate the Contemplation of Nine Aspects of Impurity.

Upanishad **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I also saw the Buddha when he first accomplished the way. I learned to contemplate the appearance of impurity until I grew to loathe it.** I, too, was with the Buddha just after he accomplished the Way, and the Buddha taught me to cultivate the Contemplation of Nine Aspects of Impurity. From this I realized that no matter how beautiful a person may be while alive, no matter how attractive or how exquisite she is, so that the more you think about her the more enticing she becomes, nevertheless,

once she dies, she will swell up just as grotesquely as anyone else. She'll get just as green and mottled, and her flesh will break open. Could you love her then? Then the blood and filth oozes out, and the corpse starts to stink. Dogs like it at this stage, but people stay far away from it. Then the pus and rot forms. Just thinking about it makes you want to vomit! It would be impossible to kiss her by this time. Then the worms grow: big ones and little ones. The flies and blueflies come in swarms. They draw near to her and at that point you wouldn't even get jealous. The flesh scatters and the bare bones are all that remain. Then it's burned and the entire thing disappears. Tell me, where has that beautiful person gone? Through this contemplation he grew to loathe forms, **“and came to understand that the nature of all form is unclean.”** He realized that no matter how beautiful the form was, its source was impure. The father's semen and the mother's blood is an unclean origin. **“Bare bones and subtle dust all return to emptiness, and so both emptiness and form are done away with. With this realization, I accomplished the Path Beyond Study,”** that is, the fourth fruition of Arhatship.

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One certified me and named me Upanishad. The object of form came to an end, and wonderful form was both secret and all-pervasive. Thus, it was through the appearance of form that I became an Arhat. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, form is the superior means.”

Commentary:

“The Thus Come One certified me and named me Upanishad. The Buddha sealed and certified me and named me ‘The emptiness of the nature of form.’ I saw through form; it was empty in its nature and just disappeared, and so I got rid of my attachment. **The object of form came to an end.** Since my unclean form no longer existed, **wonderful form was both secret and all-pervasive.** In True Emptiness it turned into Subtle Wonderful

Form. **It was through the appearance of form that I became an Arhat**, that I awakened to the Way. I was one who used to be fond of sex, but I got beyond it; I transcended it. **The Buddha asks about perfect penetration.** The Buddha wants to know which of the Eighteen Realms is perfectly penetrating. **As I have been certified to it, form is the superior means.** I awakened to the Way through the object of form. I saw through the object of form and was certified to the fruition.”

N3 Adorned Fragrance: the object of smells.

Sutra:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I heard the Thus Come One teach me to contemplate attentively all conditioned appearances.

Commentary:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, was adorned with a fragrant light. “Pure Youth” does not mean that he was a child – a person so young he didn’t understand anything at all. “Pure Youth” means he entered the Way as a virgin youth. He was a virgin when he left home. He never married. After Upanishad finished explaining his causes and conditions, the Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I heard the Thus Come One teach me to contemplate attentively all conditioned appearances.** The Buddha told me to look into all conditioned dharmas in minute detail.

Sutra:

“After I heard the Buddha’s instruction, I sat in repose in the quiet of a pure dwelling. When I saw the bhikshus light sinking incense, the fragrant scent quietly entered my nostrils. I contemplated this fragrance: it did not come from the wood; it did not come from emptiness; it did not come from the smoke, and it did not come from the fire. There was no place it came

from and no place it went to. Because of this, my discriminating mind was dispelled, and I attained the absence of outflows.

Commentary:

“After I heard the Buddha’s instruction, I sat in repose in the quiet of a pure dwelling. The Buddha told me to look into conditioned appearances, and I went off to cultivate and develop my skill.” A “pure dwelling” refers to a place where people are vegetarian and the environment is tranquil. He uses this expression to praise the Buddha. **“When I was in my pure dwelling cultivating, I saw the bhikshus light sinking incense.”** “Sinking incense” is called agaru in Sanskrit. This fragrant wood sinks when placed in water, and from this it takes its name.

“The fragrant scent quietly entered my nostrils. I contemplated this fragrance: it did not come from the wood; it did not come from emptiness. I contemplated the source of the fragrances: it was not the wood. If it came from the wood alone, there would be no need to burn it in order for it to emit fragrance. If it came from emptiness, it should be ever-present. But it must be lit for the fragrance to rise; before it is lit, there is no pervasive fragrance. The fragrance also does **not come from the smoke.** Nor does it **come from the fire.** **There was no place it came from and no place it went to. Because of this, my discriminating mind was dispelled, and I attained the absence of outflows.** Because I contemplated in this way, my mind subject to production and extinction disappeared. I was certified to the fruition of no-outflows.

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One certified me and called me ‘Adorned with Fragrance.’ Defiling scent suddenly vanished, and wonderful fragrance was both secret and all pervasive. It was through the adornment of fragrance that I became an Arhat.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, the adornment of fragrance is the superior means.”

The Thus Come One certified me and called me ‘Adorned with Fragrance.’ Defiling scent suddenly vanished, and wonderful fragrance was both secret and all pervasive. It was through the adornment of fragrance that I became an Arhat.

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. He wants to know which sense-organ is perfectly penetrating. As I have been certified to it – reckoning it from my point of view – the adornment of fragrance is the superior means.”

N4 Physician King: the object of taste.

Sutra:

The two Dharma-Princes, Physician King and Superior Physician, and five hundred Brahma gods in the assembly arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “From beginningless kalpas until now, we have been good doctors for the world. In our mouths we have tasted many herbs, wood, metals, and stones of the Saha world, a hundred and eight thousand flavors. We know in detail the bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, and the like, in all their combinations and inherent changes. We have a thorough knowledge of whether they be cooling or warming, poisonous or non-poisonous.

Commentary:

The Pure Youth, Adorned with Fragrance, awakened to the Way through the sense-object of fragrance. Upanishad awakened to the Way through the sense-object of form. Kaundinya awakened to the Way through the sense-object of sound. These two Bodhisattvas, Physician King and Superior Physician, awakened to the Way through the sense-object of flavor.

Physician King and Superior Physician Bodhisattva were brothers. In the past, Physician King Bodhisattva made a vow to be a good doctor for the world, so that all who came to see him would be cured of their illness, no matter what the sickness was. He made this vow at the time of the Buddha called Vaidurya Light, before the

Bhikshu Sun Treasury, in whose Dharma Assembly was an elder named Constellation Light. His brother made a similar vow at the same time. Similarly, in China, there was Emperor [Shen Neng](#) who tasted the hundred herbs and developed the science of herbal medicine. His stomach was like glass, and he could see whether what he had eaten was poisonous or not. Unfortunately, people in modern China totally fail to comprehend such historical events as this. They say such things are merely legends – superstitions. Actually, this is a commonplace occurrence, documented in Chinese medicinal texts. But modern Chinese students don't read the classics, and so they don't understand such things. Having read these texts myself, I am convinced that Emperor [Shen Neng](#) was a reincarnation of Physician King Bodhisattva, who came to China to help found the study of medicine there.

The two Dharma-Princes, Physician King and Superior Physician, and five hundred Brahma gods in the assembly arose from their seats. The Buddha is the Dharma King, so another name for Bodhisattva is Dharma Prince.

These two Bodhisattvas and their retinue of five hundred gods arose from their seats, **bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From beginningless kalpas until now, we have been good doctors for the world. In our mouths we have tasted many herbs, wood, metals, and stones of the Saha world, a hundred and eight thousand flavors."** At that time in India, the nature of medicines was composed of these four elements – herbs, wood, metals, and stones. **We know in detail the bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, and the like, in all their combinations and inherent changes.** We know which medicines are compatible and which ones are not. Those which are compatible can cure illnesses when mixed in appropriate combinations. Those which are not compatible, but are in opposition to one another, can kill people if taken in combination. So it says in the [Yan Hsing Fu](#) ("Treatise on the Nature of Medicines"), "Of the basic herbs, there are eighteen that act in opposition and nineteen flavors. [Fan lo](#), [bei lyan](#), and [gung wu](#)." That refers to [fan hsia](#), [kua lo](#), [bei lyan](#), and

wu tou, which are in opposition to one another. “Licorice roots do not combine with *k’ai tsao*, *ba chi*, *gan tsui*, or *lyan hua*.” Licorice root is described as a predominately compatible herb in the *Treatise on the Nature of Medicines*. It can act as a base for many combinations. But it is not compatible with *k’ai tsao*, *ba chi*, *gan tsui*, or *lyan hua*. If someone takes it in combination with these, he might die. *Li lu* and *hsi hsing* together will also kill if taken together. *Hsi hsin* taken by itself cures headaches. **We have a thorough knowledge** of how these herbs are compatible or incompatible and which ones have changes inherent in them which will occur if they are used in combination with the wrong herbs, as well as **”whether they be cooling or warming, poisonous or non-poisonous.”** They can be cold, hot, neutral, or warm. Some people whose natures are cool to begin with can’t take cooling medicines, and people with warm natures are unable to stand a warming medicine. The two Bodhisattvas also knew how much poison was contained in any given herb.

Sutra:

“While serving the Thus Come One we came to know that the nature of flavors is not empty and is not existent, nor is it the body or mind, nor is it apart from body and mind. We became enlightened by discriminating among flavors.

Commentary:

“While serving the Thus Come One, we reverently paid homage and made offerings to the Buddha. **We came to know that the nature of flavors is not empty and is not existent.** Flavors don’t come from emptiness, nor do they come from existence. **Nor is it the body or mind, nor is it apart from body and mind.** The nature of flavor does not arise from the tongue’s tasting flavors; nor do flavors exist apart from the tongue’s tasting them. **We became enlightened by discriminating among flavors.** We contemplated in minute detail the source of flavors and from this became enlightened. When we had made discriminations to the ultimate point – to the point where there could be no further discrimination

– we became enlightened. We became aware that originally flavor is flavorless!

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One sealed and certified us brothers and named us as Bodhisattvas Physician King and Superior Physician. Now in the assembly we are Dharma Princes who have ascended to the Bodhisattva level because we became enlightened by means of flavors.

Commentary:

“The Thus Come One sealed and certified us brothers and named us as Bodhisattvas Physician King and Superior Physician. The Buddha gave us Bodhisattvas these two names. Now in the assembly we are Dharma Princes who have ascended to the Bodhisattva level because we became enlightened by means of flavors. We tasted flavors until we became enlightened and reached the level of a Bodhisattva.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As we have been certified to it, the cause of flavors is the superior means.”

Commentary:

Flavors are the best for eating. They are the most flavorful and also the least flavorful. The least flavorful is the most supreme, wonderful flavor. But you’ll have to taste it for yourself to find out whether or not it is flavorful.

N5 Bhadrápala: the object of touch.

Sutra:

Bhadrápala and sixteen awakened lords who were his companions, arose from their seats and bowed at the Buddha’s feet. He said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

The name **Bhadrapala** is Sanskrit and means “worthy guard” (*xian shou* 賢守) and also “worthy protector” (*xian de* 賢德). When Bhadrapala first began to practice the Way, he was very arrogant. There was once a Bodhisattva named “Never Slighting” who concentrated on the practice of being respectful to people. He bowed to whomever he met, and then said, “I don’t want to slight you, because in the future you will all become Buddhas.” When he did this to the arrogant Bhadrapala, Bhadrapala scolded him: “You low-down idiot,” he said, “how can you be so cheap? You’re worthless.” And after that encounter, he even urged people to go beat up Never Slighting Bodhisattva. When Never Slighting would bow to these people, they would kick him while he was prostrate. Sometimes they gave him nosebleeds, sometimes they knocked his teeth out. From this display of arrogance, Bhadrapala fell into the hells. He remained there for a very long time before he again became a person. **Bhadrapala and sixteen awakened lords who were his companions** – “Awakened Lords” refers to Bodhisattvas – **arose from their seats and bowed at the Buddha’s feet. He said to the Buddha:**

Sutra:

“We first heard the dharma and left the home-life under King of Awesome Sound Buddha. Once, when it was time for the Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse. Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body. At that point, between the two, I became peaceful, and I attained the state of there being nothing at all.

Commentary:

“We first heard the dharma and left the home-life under King of Awesome Sound Buddha.” King of Awesome Sound Buddha was the first of all the Buddhas. If anyone asks you who the first Buddha was, you now know what to tell them. Bhadrapala left the home life under that Buddha. **Once, when it was time for the**

Sangha to bathe, I followed the custom and entered the bathhouse.” Left-home people bathed every fortnight. That was the rule at the time. **“Suddenly I awakened to the fact that water does not wash away the dust, nor does it cleanse the body.”** It was because of water that he became enlightened. He was awakened through the object of touch. **“At that point, between the two, I became peaceful.”** How is it water doesn’t wash the dust? How does it not wash the body? That’s the wonderful point. If you don’t understand, investigate **Ch’an**. Look into this and you, too, can awaken through the object of touch. Between water not being able to wash the dust and not being able to cleanse the body, he experienced tranquility. He **“attained the state of there being nothing at all.”** That means there was no object of touch.

Sutra:

“To this day, I have never forgotten that past experience. Having left home with the Buddha, I have gone beyond study. That Buddha named me Bhadrupala. Wonderful touch was revealed, and I accomplished the position of the Buddha’s disciple.

Commentary:

“To this day, I have never forgotten that past experience.” I’ve never forgotten how I was aware of the water when I entered the bathhouse that time.” Although Bhadrupala went through the hells after that, he still never forgot his awakening. From the time of the Buddha King of Awesome Sound, to the time when Bhadrupala spoke these words in Shakyamuni Buddha’s assembly is a period beyond reckoning. Never Slighting Bodhisattva was just Shakyamuni Buddha in a former life. And Bhadrupala, now in Shakyamuni Buddha’s assembly, was the person who in a previous incarnation slandered and had others beat and oppress Never Slighting Bodhisattva. He was that bhikshu who was so arrogant and full of self-pride that he fell into the hells. **“Having left home with the Buddha, I have gone beyond study. That Buddha named me Bhadrupala.”** He says, “Now I have left the home life

and gone beyond study. That Buddha who enabled me to go beyond study named me Bhadrapala. **Wonderful touch was revealed, and I accomplished the position of the Buddha's disciple.** The object of touch disappeared, but a wonderful object of touch was revealed." When he says he's a "disciple of the Buddha," he means he has been certified to the position of Bodhisattva.

Sutra:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch is the superior means."

Commentary:

"The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, touch, the object of touch, is the superior means."

N6 Kashyapa: the object of dharmas.

Sutra:

Mahakashyapa, Purple-golden Light Bhikshuni, and others arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa: "Maha" means great; "Kashyapa" was his name. Since there were many people with the last name Kashyapa, the word "great" was added to indicate who was being referred to. Kashyapa means "Great Turtle Clan (*da gui shi* 大龜氏)." His ancestors had seen a huge turtle with a map on its back and took their name from this incident. Mahakashyapa is also known as "drinker of light (*da yin guang* 大飲光)." The light of his body seemed to swallow up all other kinds of light, because they disappeared in the brilliance of his light.

His personal name was **Pippala**, which is the name of a tree. His parents had no son, and they prayed for one to a pippala tree; as a result they had a son, whom they named in the tree's honor. Mahakashyapa was a fire worshipper. He cultivated the skill of smelting fire. There were all kinds of outside religions in India.

Water worshippers, fire worshippers, and earth worshippers. The latter would bury themselves in the earth and if they remained alive for a certain number of days, they could become spirits. These outside religions were confused and confusing.

Purple-golden Light Bhikshuni, who was Mahakashyapa's wife. At the time of Shakyamuni Buddha, Mahakashyapa was 120 years old, and his wife was probably close to one hundred. Long ago, at the time of Kashyapa Buddha, his wife saw a Buddha-image being battered by wind and rain, to the point that there was no gold left on the figure. She resolved to repair the temple, but didn't have enough money. She also hoped to regild the image, but that was even more expensive. However, where there's a will, there's a way, and this woman's heart was strong and true. Everywhere she went she begged for money, and over a period of years she accumulated the equivalent of about 100,000 American dollars. Then she hired a goldsmith to regild the image. The goldsmith was moved by her decision to repair the Buddha image despite her own poverty, and he offered to do the work for half the wage. So the two of them shared the merit and virtue of this. Soon the temple was repaired so that it didn't leak anymore, and the Buddha image was regilded. After that in every life, this woman's body shone with a purple-golden light. After the goldsmith, who was Mahakashyapa in a former life, finished the Buddha image, something strange happened between him and the woman. "Your heart is very good," he said to her. "I'll take you for my wife, and I will be your husband. Not just in this life, but from now on, in every life, we will marry one another." That's why I guessed that since Mahakashyapa was 120, his wife must have been at least a hundred. Even so, they were still very strong and active in their cultivation. Mahakashyapa's wife cultivated the Way and was certified to the fruition.

And others in his retinue arose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha.

Sutra:

“In a past kalpa in this region, I drew near to the Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp, who was then in the world. I heard dharma from him and cultivated and studied with him. After that Buddha’s extinction, I made offerings to his sharira and lit lamps to continue his light. Purple-Golden Light gilded the Buddha’s image. From that time on, in life after life, my body has always been perfect and has shone with a purple-golden light. The Bhikshuni, Purple-Golden Light, and others make up my retinue, and we all brought forth the resolve for Bodhi at the same time.

Commentary:

We should all remember the important point: their relationship of husband and wife in life after life was not based on emotional love. Rather, they married in every life and then cultivated together. They investigated Ch’an and sat in meditation. In life after life, they did the Buddha’s work. They studied the Buddhadharma and cultivated the Way. Now do you understand?

Mahakashyapa explains, **“In a past kalpa in this region, I drew near to the Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp, who was then in the world. I heard dharma from him and cultivated and studied with him.”** A very, very long time ago, a Buddha named Sun-Moon-Lamp Buddha appeared in the world. The sun can illumine things in the daytime; the moon can light things at night; lamps can shine day and night. Daytime represents existence, and night represents emptiness. Thus it’s both noumenon and phenomenon; phenomenon and noumenon. It’s also neither noumenon and phenomenon; not phenomenon and not noumenon. That means it’s not attached to emptiness or existence.

“After that Buddha’s extinction, I made offerings to his sharira.” The merit and virtue of making offerings to the Buddha’s sharira is equal to that of making offerings to the Buddha himself. **“I lit lamps to continue his light,** so the Buddhadharma would expand and flourish. **Purple-Golden Light gilded the Buddha’s**

image. From that time on, in life after life, my body has always been perfect and has shone with a purple-golden light.” Mahakashyapa’s appearance was very full and complete. And I’m sure his wife was also lovely. **“The Bhikshuni, Purple-Golden Light, and others make up my retinue, and we all brought forth the resolve for Bodhi at the same time.”** The important point was that they cultivated together. Their relationship was not based on emotional love.

Sutra:

“I contemplated that the world’s six sense-objects change and decay; they are but empty stillness. Based on this, I cultivated extinction. Now my body and mind can pass through hundreds of thousands of kalpas as though they were a finger-snap.”

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa continues, **“I contemplated that the world’s six sense-objects change and decay.”** He is, basically, discussing objects of mind, but here he refers to the six sense-objects, because the objects of mind have no shape or appearance; they are the shadows of the first five sense objects. The objects of mind exist because of the first five sense-objects. If the first five did not exist, the objects of mind would not come to be, because they have no substance of their own. Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas – these six objects – interact, change, and decay. **“They are but empty stillness.** Their very essence is empty. There isn’t anything there at all. **Based on this, I cultivated extinction.** I used the power of this contemplation,” says Mahakashyapa, “to cultivate the Samadhi of Extinction, which means I put an end to the sixth mind-consciousness and no longer dwelt in the discriminating mind. This is also known as the Samadhi of the Extinction of Feeling and Thought. **Now my body and mind can pass through hundreds of thousands of kalpas as though they were a finger-snap.”** His mind could endure through as long a period of time as hundreds of thousands of kalpas, as

though they were but an instant of time – the snap of a finger. Mahakashyapa is actually in samadhi now – in the Samadhi of Extinction – inside Chicken Foot Mountain in [Yunnan](#) Province in China.

Sutra:

“Based on the emptiness of Dharmas, I accomplished Arhatship. The World Honored One says that I am foremost in Dhuta practices. Wonderful dharma brought me awakening and understanding, and I extinguished all outflows. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, dharmas are the superior means.”

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa says, **“Based on the emptiness of Dharmas, I accomplished Arhatship. The World Honored One says that I am foremost in Dhuta practices.”** [Dhuta](#) is a Sanskrit word; it means “ascetic” (*dou sou* 抖擞). It means to strike up your spirits and go forward with vigor; to work hard and not be lax. There are twelve [Dhuta](#) practices:

1. Wearing rag robes;
2. possessing only three robes;
3. begging for food;
4. consecutive begging;
5. eating only one meal a day;
6. eating a fixed and moderate amount of food;
7. not drinking juices after noon;
- B. dwelling in an Aranya (a quiet place);
9. dwelling beneath a tree;
10. dwelling in the open;
11. dwelling in a graveyard;
12. always sitting and never lying down.

“Wonderful dharma brought me awakening and understanding, and I extinguished all outflows. The Buddha asks

about perfect penetration. Buddha, you are asking each of us about the cause and conditions regarding perfect penetration – our initial resolve which brought about our certification. **As I have been certified to it, dharmas are the superior means.** The sense-object of dharmas, this cause, is the best means.”

Five Organs

M2 Perfect penetration through the five organs.

N1 Aniruddha: the eye organ.

Sutra:

Aniruddha arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home, I was fond of sleeping all the time. The Thus Come One scolded me and said I was no better than an animal. When I heard the Buddha's scolding, I wept and upbraided myself. For seven days I did not sleep, and I lost the sight in both my eyes.

Commentary:

Aniruddha means "Never Poor" (*wu pin* 無貧) and "According to your wish" (*ru yi* 如意) He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I first left home, I was fond of sleeping all the time. The Thus Come One scolded me and said I was no better than an animal."** Shakyamuni Buddha spoke this way to him:

*Hey! Hey! How can you sleep,
Like an oyster or a clam?
Sleep, sleep for a thousand years,
But you'll never hear the Buddha's name.*

When the Buddha said that to him, he became repentant. **“When I heard the Buddha’s scolding, I wept and upbraided myself.”** How can you be so gutless?” I asked myself. ‘Why do you like to sleep all day long? All right for you, I’m going to forbid you to sleep!’ **For seven days and nights I did not sleep.**” He probably walked around and sat alternately to keep himself from falling asleep, **“And I lost the sight in both my eyes.”** The eyes will work during the day, but they need to rest at night. If you don’t let them rest and they get too tired, they just quit working. They go on strike. So Aniruddha couldn’t see a thing.

Sutra:

“The World Honored One taught me the Vajra Samadhi of the Delightful Seeing, which illumines and is bright. Although I had no eyes, I could contemplate the ten directions with true and penetrating clarity, just as if I were looking at a piece of fruit in the palm of my hand. The Thus Come One certified me as having attained Arhatship.

Commentary:

“The World Honored One took pity on me because I was blind and taught me a certain method. It was called **the Vajra Samadhi of the Delightful Seeing, which illumines and is bright.** I cultivated this samadhi for a long time, and I obtained a Heavenly Eye which covered half my head (*ban tou tian yan* 半頭天眼). **Although I had no eyes** – although I didn’t use the ordinary flesh eyes to look at things, with this Heavenly Eye – **I could contemplate** all the places in the **ten directions with true and penetrating clarity, just as if I were looking at a piece of fruit in the palm of my hand.** It was like seeing an Amala fruit in my hand. The Thus Come One certified me as having attained Arhatship.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning the seeing back to its source is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks the Bodhisattvas and disciples **about the perfect penetration** that they have obtained. **As I have been certified to it, returning the seeing back to its source is the foremost method.** As I, Aniruddha, have learned, you turn the seeing around and bring it back to your own original nature to cultivate it. This is the best Dharma-door.”

N2 Kshudrapanthaka: the nose organ.

Sutra:

Kshudrapanthaka arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Kshudra means “Born on the Way.” The custom in India was that after a woman married and was about to give birth, she would return to her mother’s home to have the child. In Kshudra’s case, his mother, who should have really gone back a month or two in advance, waited until the last minute to return. The distance between her home and her mother’s was considerable – probably about one or two hundred miles. Since she had waited until she was of full term, she only got half way there when her labor started, and she gave birth right then and there by the side of the road. That’s how Kshudra got his name. His younger brother, Kshudrapanthaka, got his name the same way. **Panthaka** means “Born in the Same Fashion.” In Kshudrapanthaka’s case, the mother again waited too long and gave birth en route. So he was Kshudra’s brother, Panthaka.

Kshudrapanthaka was extremely stupid. When one leaves the home life, the first thing one is given to learn is a short verse that is to be recited every morning. I recited one version earlier. This is another version:

*Don’t do evil with deeds of body, mouth, or mind;
Don’t bother any living being in the world.*

*With proper thought, regard the desire-realm as empty;
And stay far away from non-beneficial practices.*

When Kshudrapanthaka tried to learn this verse, he had the help of five-hundred Arhats, but after a hundred days of study, he hadn't learned one line of it. Pretty stupid, huh? He'd remember "deeds of body, mouth, and mind," but would forget "don't do evil." Or he'd remember "Don't do evil," but would forget "with deeds of body, mouth, and mind." I'm sure none of you are that stupid. When his brother, Kshudra, saw that five hundred Arhats had taught his brother for a hundred days and he still didn't know one line, he ordered him to return to lay-life. "Go find a wife and be done with it," he said and sent him on his way, refusing to allow him to stay and be a bhikshu.

Kshudrapanthaka thought, "I want to be a monk like all these people; what meaning is there in my returning to lay-life?" So he took a rope, went into the back gardens, and prepared to hang himself. Just as he was ready to do it, the Buddha manifested as a tree spirit and asked him, "What are you up to?"

"I'm not going to go on living."

"Not go on living? After you die, what then?"

"I don't know."

"Don't die," the tree spirit said. "Don't take your own life. There is a reason why you are stupid. You should strive to change your faults of the past. Once you change, everything will work out fine."

"What are the causes and effects from the past that make me so stupid now?" Kshudrapanthaka asked.

Remember that the tree spirit was a transformation of Shakyamuni Buddha; when Kshudrapanthaka asked that question, the Buddha appeared in his original Buddha-body and said, "In a past life you were a Tripitaka Master with five hundred disciples. Every day they wanted to study with you, but you did not teach them. You didn't lecture the Sutras or explain the Dharma, even if

people requested it. They might kneel before you for three days and nights and still you would not speak it for them. Because you would not explain the Dharma, you became stupid to the point that you don't understand a single sentence of Dharma."

Upon hearing that, Kshudrapanthaka was greatly ashamed "How could I have been like that?" That's what is called being stingy with the Dharma. You should all remember this. After I explain the Dharma for you, you should explain it wherever you go. Be sure not to harbor the attitude of "I'm not going to explain it for you: If you understand it, what will happen to me?" Don't be jealous of others' understanding of the Buddhadharma. The more jealous you become, the less you yourself will understand. Kshudrapanthaka had been stingy with the Dharma, so he was stupid. But because he still had good roots, too, he was born at the time of the Buddha.

Having told him of his past causes, the Buddha took up a broom and asked, "Do you know what this is?"

"It's a broom."

"Can you remember that?"

"Yes."

Then the Buddha instructed him, "Then just recite this way every day: just say, "broom," "broom," "broom" all day long. Kshudrapanthaka recited that for a few weeks. Then the Buddha stopped by to ask, "How are you doing? Can you remember that?"

"Yes, I remember it," replied Kshudrapanthaka.

"Fine," said the Buddha. "I'll just change the words a little to 'sweep clean.' Try reciting that now."

So he recited, "Sweep clean, sweep clean, sweep clean." And he used that invisible broom to sweep clean his own defilements. What he was doing was sweeping clean the defilement of his stinginess with the Dharma. Remember this. Take the principles that I am explaining to you in the *Shurangama Sutra* and explain them to others. If you do that, in future lives you will have

exceptional wisdom and intelligence. If you like to practice the giving of Dharma, you will never be stupid.

Sutra:

“I am deficient in the ability to memorize and do not have much innate intelligence. When I first met the Buddha, I heard the dharma and left the home-life. But, when I tried to remember one line of a verse by the Thus Come One, I went through a hundred days remembering the first part and forgetting the last, or remembering the last and forgetting the first.

Commentary:

“Born on the Way in the Same Fashion” tells of his experience now. **“I am deficient in the ability to memorize and do not have much innate intelligence.** Ananda never forgets anything that passes by his eyes. He is able to memorize things and is endowed with intelligence. But I, Panthaka am extremely stupid. **When I first met the Buddha, I heard the dharma and left the home-life.** Although I left home, **when I tried to remember one line of a verse by the Thus Come One** – The one line of verse was “Don’t do evil deeds with body, mouth, or mind” – **I went through a hundred days remembering the first part and forgetting the last, or remembering the last and forgetting the first.** I would remember the first few words and forget the last ones. When I would remember the last words of the line, I forgot the first ones again. So in all that time I never mastered even one line of verse. That’s how stupid I am.”

Kshudrapantha was stupid because in past lives he refused to lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma for people. Wherever you go, then, you should make every effort to help others speak the Sutras and propagate the Dharma in order to teach and transform living beings. Take this as your personal responsibility. Don’t be stingy with the Dharma!

I’ve already said this, but it bears repeating. Kshudrapantha had to undergo the retribution of being stupid because he could not

practice the giving of Dharma – he was stingy. My lecturing the Sutra now is the giving of Dharma. And why do I lecture for you? Because if I understand the Dharma and I do not explain it for you, in a future life I may not even come up to Kshudrapanthaka. He was unable to learn one sentence of verse in a hundred days; I might not be able to remember a single word in a whole year. That’s why I don’t charge money for lectures. I don’t look for any kind of recompense on your part; I just lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma for you. I don’t want to be stupid. If there are those of you who aren’t afraid of being stupid, then just experiment. Go ahead and have the attitude, “I understand the Buddhadharmā, but I’m not going to explain it to you.” Try it out, and in the future, when you are more stupid than Kshudrapanthaka you’ll know that what I say is true. You’ll end up being the victim of the experiment. Ever since I first heard a Dharma Master say that if you don’t practice the giving of Dharma you will end up stupid, I have never forgotten it.

That reminds me of a public record. Once there was an official, probably the equivalent of a mayor, who was very interested in the *Wonderful Dharma Lotus Flower Sutra*. It was strange, however: of the seven scrolls of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*, he was extremely familiar with the first three and a half. He memorized those as soon as he read them. But as to the last three and a half scrolls, he couldn’t remember them for anything, no matter how many times he read them. He couldn’t understand why it was this way, so he asked a High Sanghan of the time, a Bright-Eyed Good Knowing Advisor who had opened all Five Eyes and had the Six Penetrations.

When the mayor was announced, the Elder Monk welcomed him and the official explained his problem. “Of all the Buddhist Sutras, it is the *Dharma Flower* which interests me. I like it best, but I can only memorize the first half of it. What’s the reason?”

The Elder Monk said, “Oh, you want to know about that? Well, when I tell you, don’t get upset or disbelieve.”

“Fine,” said the mayor, “I’ll believe what you tell me.”

So the Elder Monk explained, “The reason you are a mayor is that you created some merit in your past lives.

In the past you were an ox and you helped plow the fields at a temple. Since you made offerings to the Triple Jewel in this way, you amassed some merit. The reason you are only familiar with the first half of the *Dharma Flower Sutra* is as follows: It is the custom in temples to air the Sutra texts on the sixth day of the sixth lunar month. This keeps them from getting wormy. On that day, you approached the *Dharma Flower Sutra* and sniffed the first volume of the Sutra. But you only sniffed the first volume, not the second. That’s why you are so familiar with the first three and a half rolls of the Sutra in this life.”

The mayor bowed to the Elder Monk, and after that he was even more diligent in his investigation of the *Dharma Flower Sutra*.

An ox sniffed the Sutra and gained so much intelligence, whereas Kshudrapanthaka refused to give the Buddhadharma and became so stupid. If you compare these two incidents and reflect on them, it should be sufficient to keep you from experimenting. In fact, I hope you won’t experiment, because to sink to the level of Kshudrapanthaka would be a lot of suffering. On the other hand! we should not look down on Kshudrapanthaka. Although he was dull, he became enlightened after reciting “broom” and “sweep clean” for a short time. We may be smarter Kshudrapanthaka, but we haven’t become enlightened as quickly as he did. So in this respect we do not measure up to Kshudrapanthaka.

Sutra:

“The Buddha took pity on my stupidity and taught me to relax and regulate my breath. I contemplated my breath thoroughly to the subtle point in which arising, dwelling, change, and extinction happen in every kshana.

Commentary:

“The Buddha took pity on my stupidity. The Buddha felt sorry for me because I was utterly stupid, and he taught me to recite

‘broom’ and ‘sweep clean.’ He **taught me to relax and regulate my breath.**” This practice involves holding the in-breath for ten counts and then extending the out-breath for ten counts. No matter how stupid one is, one can probably count to ten! One inhalation and one exhalation is counted as one breath. **“I contemplated my breath thoroughly to the subtle point in which arising, dwelling, change, and extinction happen in every kshana.”** In a breath, the point at which you begin to exhale is called the arising, and the sequence progresses through one continuous breath. The [Tyan Tai School](#) divides this contemplation into Six Wonderful Doors – six aspects of regulating the breath. We will not go into detail about them here, except to say that the beginning of the exhalation is called the arising, and continuing the breath is called dwelling. Change is when the breath is about to end, and extinction is when the breath is finished. This happens in every kshana. In the space of one thought there are ninety kshanas. In every kshana are nine hundred arisings and extinctions. These subtleties are not observable with the ordinary eyes.

Sutra:

“My mind suddenly attained vast non-obstruction, until my outflows were extinguished and I accomplished Arhatship. Beneath the Buddha’s seat I was sealed and certified as being beyond study.

Commentary:

“At that time, I contemplated my breath until I reached a state of there being no self, no others, no living beings, and no lifespan. I Inhaled and exhaled effortlessly and my mind united into One. I had no discriminating thought and no thoughts that seized upon conditions. All thoughts stopped. **My mind suddenly attained vast non-obstruction.** ‘Oh, I’ve returned to the origin and have gone back to the source!’” “Suddenly” here refers to enlightenment. It was like a door to a room suddenly being flung open. All the air in the room was immediately purified. There was no stale air left. Have you noticed that although there are a lot of people in this

lecture hall, the air remains pure? If you asked me why, I'd be hard put to tell you. Let's just say that in a Bodhimanda there is an inexpressibly wonderful purity to the atmosphere.

When you attend lectures on the Sutras, it is necessary to be extremely respectful. This is because the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will say, "You're a rotten egg: How can you come to the Way-place and act like that?" Everyone should be respectful and modest and have a harmonious regard for one another. Don't become self-satisfied or arrogant; don't say things like, "Look at how dumb you are: I'm so much smarter than you:" As soon as you have that thought, you start to become stupid yourself. Don't look down on others. The people in this Dharma Assembly are all my past parents; all are future Buddhas. If you slight these people, it's just like slighting the Buddha. So when you study the Buddhadharma you should regard everyone with impartiality.

In the Bodhimanda, you must follow the rules. When you are listening to the Sutra, it is most important not to get up and wander around. And don't recline in your seat or lean over and prop yourself up. You should sit up correctly. Don't be lax and lazy in your attitude. Even if you are a lazy worm, you should not act like one. You should develop yourself into a polite person. Also, don't go to sleep when you come to listen to the Sutra. If you do that then in the future you'll end up like Aniruddha.

The text goes on, "I **attained vast non-obstruction** – that means he became enlightened – **until my outflows were extinguished.**" After he became enlightened, he gradually attained the state of having no outflows. "**And I accomplished Arhatship.**" He arrived at the fruition of Fourth-Stage Arhat-ship. "**Beneath the Buddha's seat I was sealed and certified as being beyond study.** I always accompanied the Buddha and listened to Dharma beneath his seat. The Buddha sealed and certified me and said that I, too, had attained the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship." Such a stupid person also attained the Fourth Fruition of Arhatship. Those who

are so intelligent haven't even attained the First Fruition. Are you ashamed or aren't you?

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, turning the breath back to emptiness is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

Bringing the inhalation and exhalation of the breath back into accordance with emptiness – returning it to empty tranquility: this is the best Dharmadoor.

I've been here for many years, but I've never dared talk about rules. Why? This country advocates freedom. Parents don't watch over their children; the children are free to do as they please. After I came to America, I took disciples, but I, too, didn't watch over them. I let them do what they pleased. They could go wherever they wanted, they could have things their own way. They were very independent. But in the Sutra lecture assembly, I have noticed that some people are just too independent – far more casual than is appropriate. It is said:

*If you don't use a compass and square,
You can't make squares and circles.*

In Chinese, the characters for compass and square are combined to form a compound which means “rules.” If you don't use the compass, you won't get a perfect circle; and if you don't use a square, the square you draw will end up rectangular or triangular. Today, then, in the Shurangama Dharma Assembly, I am telling you not to be lazy. Listen to the Sutras with a respectful attitude. It should be as if the Buddha himself were here speaking the Dharma. You shouldn't think, “This Dharma Master lectures by telling stories and jokes, as if he were entertaining children.” It's not really that way. If you can fathom the meaning of the things I say, you can become enlightened. You can be certified to the fruition immediately. All it takes is a genuine determination in seeking the Dharma,

and it can happen. If you are sincere while you are listening to this section on the Twenty-Five Sages, you can become enlightened on the spot. That’s because these Twenty-Five Sages have each made vows that they will help whoever studies their Dharma door to become enlightened. So put your mind on investigating the Sutra.

N3 Gavampati: the tongue organ.

Sutra:

Gavampati arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I have mouth-karma created from a past offense. I slighted a Shramana, and in life after life I’ve had this cow-cud sickness.

Commentary:

Gavampati’s name is Sanskrit and means “cow-cud” (牛呵). When cows sleep, they snore, and their tongues flap back and forth, making a terrible racket. Gavampati **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I have mouth-karma created from a past offense.”** What kind of mouth-karma did he create? Once he noticed an old shramana, who was toothless, taking a long time to eat. Gavampati teased the old man, saying, “Old monk, you eat the way a cow chews grass.”

The old shramana was a certified Arhat. His reply was, “Oh, you shouldn’t talk about me like that. If you do, you will have to undergo retribution in the future. You’d better repent immediately. Better take it back right away.”

Gavampati apologized, and so he didn’t have to undergo the retribution of being a cow, but even so, he was endowed with cow-like habits ever afterward. His tongue was like a cow’s, and he was always chewing his cud and breathing like a cow. Although he was certified to the fruition of Arhatship, the Buddha was afraid that people would slander him in turn, and say that he, too, was like a cow, and that such people would then have to bear the retribution of being cows. For this reason, the Buddha instructed Gavampati to live in the heavens and receive the offerings of the gods. Since gods

all possess the ability to discern past lives, they would not dare to slight him.

In the text, Gavampati goes on to explain, “The way I created mouth-karma was that **I slighted a Shramana.**” He teased the monk. “Shramana” is a Sanskrit word which means “diligent and putting to rest (*qin xi* 勤息).” A Shramana diligently cultivates precepts, samadhi, and wisdom and puts to rest greed, hatred, and stupidity. **“In life after life I’ve had this cow-cud sickness.”** That’s my retribution.

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One taught me the mind-ground dharmadoor of the purity of a single flavor. My thought was extinguished, I entered samadhi, and contemplated the awareness of flavor as not having a substance and not being a thing. As a result, my mind transcended all worldly outflows.

Commentary:

“The Thus Come One taught me the mind-ground dharmadoor of the purity of a single flavor;” which means the purity of the one mind. When the tongue does not discriminate tastes – when there is no conscious mind – then all flavors return to purity. This, then, is cultivating a samadhi of non-discrimination. **“My thought was extinguished”** – his conscious mind was quieted, that is, **“I entered samadhi,”** – he obtained a proper concentration and proper reception – and he **“contemplated the awareness of flavor as not having a substance and not being a thing.”** The awareness of tastes does not come from the substance of the nose, nor does it come from external objects. **“As a result, my mind transcended all worldly outflows.”** Just in purifying that one thought, I got out of the outflows of the world.

Sutra:

“Internally I was freed of body and mind, and externally I abandoned the world. I left the three existences far behind, just like a bird released from its cage. I separated from filth and

wiped out defilements, and so my Dharma Eye became pure, and I accomplished Arhatship. The Thus Come One certified me in person as having ascended to the Path Beyond Study.

Commentary:

“Internally I was freed of body and mind. Body and mind were gone – I left them. Externally I abandoned the world. I forgot about the world, as well. I left the three existences far behind.” This refers to existence in the realm of desire, in the realm of form, and in the formless realm. At that time, **“I was just like a bird released from its cage. I separated from filth and wiped out defilements, and so my Dharma Eye became pure.”** This means his Dharma Eye opened, and he **“accomplished Arhatship. The Thus Come One certified me in person as having ascended to the Path Beyond Study.”**

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, returning flavor and turning awareness around is the superior method.”

Commentary:

“Returning flavors” means not making discriminations about them. It is to return the light to illumine within. “Turning awareness around” refers to reversing the mind’s discriminations of flavors. “This is the foremost method. This is the best Dharma-door.”

N4 Pilindavatsa: the body organ.

Sutra:

Pilindavatsa arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Pilindavatsa’s name means “left-over habits” (*yu xi* 餘習). This name represents the fact that he still carried with him many habits from aeons of former lives. He was an Arhat who had been certified to the fruition, and so when he wanted to cross a river, he

could stop the flow of the water at will. In the case of one river, the river-spirit was a female, and when he reached the bank, he called out, “Little servant, stop the flow.” The spirit did as she was told, but she was very put out, though she didn’t show it. She did, however, go and complain to the Buddha.

“I was watching over the flow of the river, and he came and said to me, ‘Little Servant, stop the flow.’ He’s an Arhat. He shouldn’t call me that.”

The Buddha told Pilindavatsa to apologize to the river-spirit. Pilindavatsa put his palms together and said to her, “I’m sorry, Little Servant.” At that, the whole assembly of Arhats burst into laughter.

Now, why did Pilindavatsa call the river-spirit “Little Servant?” It was because in past lives the spirit had in fact been his servant. He was in the habit of addressing her that way, so that now, even though she was a river-spirit, he still called her that. The whole reason he had to apologize was because it upset her when he called her “Little Servant,” but his habit was so deep that he even called her that when apologizing.

Sutra:

“When I first left home to follow the Buddha and enter the way, I often heard the Thus Come One explain that there is nothing in this world that brings happiness. Once, when I was begging in the city, I was reflecting on this Dharma-door and did not notice a poisonous thorn on the road until it had pricked my foot. My entire body experienced physical pain, but my mind also had an awareness: though it was aware of strong pain and recognized the feeling of pain, I knew that in my pure heart, there was neither pain nor awareness of pain.

Commentary:

“When I first left home to follow the Buddha and enter the way, I often heard the Thus Come One explain that there is nothing in this world that brings happiness. Many times I

listened to the Buddha explain how the things of this world are all suffering, empty, impermanent, and without self. **Once, when I was begging in the city, I was reflecting on this Dharma-door and did not notice a poisonous thorn on the road until it had pricked my foot.** I was thinking with such intensity about the Dharma-door the Thus Come One had taught us, that I wasn't paying attention to the road, and I stepped on a splinter of wood which wounded my foot. **My entire body experienced physical pain;** my whole body hurt from it. **But my mind also had an awareness: though it was aware of strong pain and recognized the feeling of pain, I knew that in my pure heart, there was neither pain nor awareness of pain.** In my pure, original enlightened mind there was no pain or any awareness of pain. When I realized that, everything was empty, and my body and mind became pure. Therefore, I didn't know who was aware of the pain."

Sutra:

"I also thought, 'Is it possible for one body to have two awarenesses?' Having reflected on this for a while, my body and mind were suddenly empty. After twenty-one days, my outflows disappeared. I accomplished Arhatship and received certification in person and a confirmation that I had realized the level beyond study.

Commentary:

"I also thought, 'Is it possible for one body to have two awarenesses?' Can I have two simultaneous awarenesses? Can I feel pain on the one hand and on the other hand not be aware of it? No.' **Having reflected on this for a while** – I looked into this for a short time – **my body and mind were suddenly empty. After twenty-one days, my outflows disappeared.** Within three weeks, all my various outflows turned out to be empty. They were all gone. **I accomplished Arhatship and received certification in person and a confirmation that I had realized the level beyond study.** The Buddha himself sealed and certified me and gave me confirmation. I realized the fourth fruition of Arhatship.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, purifying the awareness and forgetting the body is the superior method.”

Commentary:

The Buddha is asking each of us disciples about the path we took that brought about our initial enlightenment. What I, Philindavatsa did was to remain intent upon the enlightened mind until it was total and pure, and I forgot about my body. This is my Dharma-door of cultivation.”

N5 “Born Into Emptiness”: the mind organ.

Sutra:

Subhuti arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “From distant kalpas until now, my mind has been unobstructed. I remember as many of my past lives as there are sands in the Ganges River. From the beginning, in my mother’s womb, I knew emptiness and tranquility, to the extent that the ten directions became empty and I caused living beings to be certified to the nature of emptiness.

Commentary:

Subhuti’s name means “born into emptiness” (*kong sheng* 空生), because at his birth all the treasures in his household were suddenly empty. Not a single gem remained. Seven days after his birth, the treasures all reappeared. So he was also called “Good Appearance” (*shan xian* 善現). His father and mother went to have his fortune told; it read: “Both good and lucky” (*ji shan qie ji* 即善且吉), so they also named him “Good Luck” (*shan ji* 善吉). **He arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “From distant kalpas until now, my mind has been unobstructed.** My mind and nature attained freedom from hindrance. **I remember as many of my past lives as there are sands in the Ganges River. From the beginning, in my mother’s womb, I knew emptiness and tranquility – I**

recognized the nature of emptiness – **to the extent that the ten directions became empty.** All the worlds in the ten directions were empty. **And I caused living beings to be certified to the nature of emptiness.** I enabled living beings to be simultaneously certified to the principles of the nature of emptiness.

Sutra:

“Having received the Thus Come One’s revelation that the enlightened nature is true emptiness – that the nature of emptiness is perfect and bright – I attained Arhatship and suddenly entered into the Thus Come One’s sea of magnificent, bright emptiness. With knowledge and views identical with the Buddha, I was certified as being beyond study. In the liberation of the nature of emptiness, I am unsurpassed.

Commentary:

“Having received the Thus Come One’s revelation that the enlightened nature is true emptiness – that the nature of emptiness is perfect and bright: the nature is the same as emptiness. The Treasury of the Thus Come One – the enlightenment to true emptiness – is perfect and bright. The emptiness and the Treasury of the Thus Come One are both perfect and bright. **I attained Arhatship.** Because I understood the basic substance of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, I attained the level of Arhatship, **and suddenly entered into the Thus Come One’s sea of magnificent, bright emptiness.”** The magnificent brightness is once again the Treasury of the Thus Come One. It is like a great sea of emptiness. **“With knowledge and views identical with the Buddha, I was certified as being beyond study.”** The Buddha sealed and certified me as being at the level of no further study. **In the liberation of the nature of emptiness, I am unsurpassed.** My understanding comes from the principle of the nature of emptiness I am foremost in understanding emptiness.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, all appearances enter into nothingness;

nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear. Turning dharmas back to the void is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Now the Buddha is asking all the disciples, the Bodhisattvas, about how they were certified to and obtained the principle of perfect penetration. **As I have been certified to it, all appearances enter into nothingness; nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear.”** That which brings about emptiness and that which is made empty are both gone. That means that there isn’t even any emptiness. In Taoism, this is called, “That which is empty also disappears” (*suo kong ji wu* 所空及無). In Buddhism it is called, “Nothingness and what becomes nothingness both disappear” (*fei suo fei jin* 非所非盡). **“Turning dharmas back to the void is the foremost method.** Turning the nature of dharmas back into the void is the best way. Understanding emptiness is the number one Dharma-door.”

The Six Consciousnesses

M3 Perfect penetration through the six consciousnesses.

N1 Shariputra: the eye consciousness.

Sutra:

Shariputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until the present, my mind and views have been pure. In this way I have undergone as many births as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. As to the various transformations and changes of both the mundane and the transcendental, I am able to understand them at one glance and obtain non-obstruction.

Commentary:

Shariputra's mother's name was Shari, and his name means "Son of Shari" (*qiu zi* 鶖子). He was foremost in wisdom. "Shari" means "pelican." When Shariputra was in his mother's womb, she would debate with her brother Kaushtila, and always defeat him. His uncle then knew that his sister was carrying a wise child. **Shariputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "From distant kalpas until the present, my mind and views have been pure. In this way I have undergone as many births as there are grains of sand in the Ganges. As to the various transformations and changes of both the mundane and the transcendental, I am able to understand them at one**

glance and obtain non-obstruction. I can tell at a glance what things are about, whether on the ordinary level, or the sagely level, and toward them I've obtained non-obstruction.

Sutra:

“Once I met the Kashyapas on the road, and I walked along with the brothers. They spoke about causes and conditions, and I awakened to the boundlessness of my mind.

Commentary:

“Once I met the Kashyapas on the road, and I walked along with the brothers. As the Kashyapas walked along, **they spoke about causes and conditions.** Upon hearing this Dharma of causes and conditions, I became enlightened and **awakened to the boundlessness of my mind.”**

Before Shariputra left the home-life, he met the Bhikshu **Ma Sheng** (馬勝, Ashvajit), while walking on the road. Bhikshu **Ma Sheng** was one of the five Bhikshus the Buddha first crossed over in the Deer Wilds Park. Shariputra saw Bhikshu **Ma Sheng** walking in a most awesome and correct manner, with magnificent deportment.

*His eyes did not glance at things,
His ears did not eavesdrop.*

He didn't slip sidelong looks at people, and he didn't listen to what was going on around him.

*His eyes watched his nose,
His nose regarded his mouth,
His mouth heeded his heart.*

Before this, Shariputra had had a teacher outside the Way who was called the Brahman **Sha Ran** (沙然梵志). After his teacher died, he had no one to study with. It was then that while walking on the road he met the Bhikshu **Ma Sheng** and admired him so much. He asked him, “You have fine comportment. Who's your teacher?”

The Bhikshu [Ma Sheng](#) replied with a verse:

*All dharmas arise from conditions,
All dharmas are extinguished by conditions,
The Buddha, the Great Shramana,
Often speaks like this.*

When Shariputra heard that verse, he immediately became enlightened and was certified to the first fruition of Arhatship. He went back to his living quarters and repeated the verse to Maudgalyayana. When Maudgalyayana heard it, he also became enlightened. Then, taking his two hundred disciples with him, he went to take refuge with the Buddha. They left the home life and became part of the assembly that always accompanied the Buddha.

That’s how the account is sometimes told. Here the Sutra says that he met the Kashyapa brothers. Since some times the Sutras say that Shariputra met the Kashyapas, and sometimes they say he met the Bhikshu [Ma Sheng](#), I think they were probably all walking together at the time. The Kashyapas and Bhikshu [Ma Sheng](#) were on the road together. Notice that the text says, “and walked along with the brothers.” “Brothers” means not just the Kashyapa brothers, but also Bhikshu [Ma Sheng](#), who was a Dharma-brother. They were talking about causes and conditions, and one said:

*The Dharmas that arise from causes and conditions:
I say that they are empty.
They are false names, as well;
They are also called the meaning of the Middle Way.*

Probably when Shariputra heard that verse, he came up to ask, “What are you talking about? Who’s your teacher?” And it was then that the Bhikshu [Ma Sheng](#) spoke his verse. Upon hearing it, Shariputra became enlightened. Afterward he returned to tell Maudgalyayana, and then they all went to take refuge with the Buddha.

Sutra:

“I followed the Buddha and left the home life. My seeing-awareness became bright and perfect, I obtained fearlessness and became an Arhat. As one of the Buddha’s elder disciples, I am born from the Buddha’s mouth, transformationally born from the Dharma.

Commentary:

“I followed the Buddha and left the home life. My seeing-awareness became bright and perfect.” His seeing became the basic substance of enlightenment and was perfected. **I obtained fearlessness and became an Arhat. As one of the Buddha’s elder disciples, I am born from the Buddha’s mouth, transformationally born from the Dharma.”** Among the Buddha’s disciples, Shariputra was an elder.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I have been certified to it, for the mind and the seeing to emit light and for the light to reach throughout knowing and seeing is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. As I, Shariputra, have been certified to it, for the mind and the seeing to emit light and for the light to reach throughout knowing and seeing is the foremost method. When the light is ultimate, then the knowing and seeing are empty. This Dharma-door is number one for me.

N2 Universal Worthy: the ear consciousness.

Sutra:

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I have been a Dharma Prince with as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions

tell their disciples who have the roots of a Bodhisattva to cultivate the Universal Worthy conduct, which is named after me.

Commentary:

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva is a Bodhisattva of Great Conduct. He has ten great, royal vows which we recite at Morning Recitation. They are:

- 1) To worship and respect all Buddhas.
- 2) To praise the Thus Come Ones.
- 3) To cultivate the giving of offerings.
- 4) To repent and reform all karmic faults.
- 5) To compliantly rejoice in merit and virtue.
- 6) To request the turning of the Dharma wheel
- 7) To request that the Buddha remain in the world.
- 8) To always follow the Buddhas in study.
- 9) To forever accord with living beings.
- 10) To universally transfer all merit and virtue.

These are called the Ten Kings of Vows of Universal Worthy Bodhisattva. In the *Avatamsaka Sutra* there is an entire chapter called, “The Conduct and Vows of Universal Worthy.” His practices and the power of his vows are especially great, and so he has a lot of affinities with living beings. He rides a six-tusked white elephant. The color white represents the One Buddha Vehicle, and the six tusks represent the Six Paramitas.

Universal Worthy Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I have been a Dharma Prince with as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges. In the past, with that many Buddhas, I have been a disciple of the Dharma King. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions tell their disciples who have the roots of a Bodhisattva – that is, if they have the propensity for Bodhisattva-hood – to cultivate the Universal Worthy conduct. They should

cultivate the Ten Kings of Vows. This conduct is one **which is named after me.**

Sutra:

“World Honored One, I use my mind to listen and distinguish the knowledge and views of living beings. In other regions as many realms away as there are sands in the Ganges, if there is any living being who discovers the conduct of Universal Worthy, I immediately mount my six-tusked elephant and create hundreds of thousands of reduplicated bodies which go to those places. Although their obstacles may be so heavy that they do not see me, I secretly rub their crowns, protect and comfort them, and help them be successful.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, I use my mind to listen – I don’t use the organ of the ear to hear with; I use my mind – and distinguish the knowledge and views of living beings. When I make distinctions about living beings, it is not with the discriminating mind, but with the true mind, to determine the faculties of all living beings. I do this not only in this world, but even **in other regions as many realms away as there are sands in the Ganges** – even in places very, very far away from here. **If there is any living being who discovers** and wants to cultivate the conduct **the conduct of Universal Worthy, I immediately mount my six-tusked elephant and create hundreds of thousands of reduplicated bodies which go to those places.** I make myriad transformation bodies and go to those places. **Although their obstacles may be so heavy that they do not see me,** I still give to that person. **I secretly rub their crowns,** invisible to them though I may be.” People who cultivate the Dharma sometimes will feel as if there were a bug crawling on the top of their head or as if someone were patting them on the head. Sometimes one will feel as though there were an insect crawling on one’s face. When this happens, you should not try to brush the feeling away with your hand. The reason is that it is actually a Buddha or Bodhisattva rubbing you on the crown. If you

are attentive, you will notice it. They are blessing us, so you should not try to brush them away. If you are sincere, you can experience this feeling. **“I protect and comfort them, and help them be successful. I help them become accomplished in their cultivation.”**

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The basic cause I speak of in my case is listening with the mind to discover and distinguish at ease. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The basic cause I speak of in my case is the experience I had on the cause-ground. **It is listening with the mind to discover and distinguish at ease.** I listen in order to discover the knowledge and views of living beings. These discriminations of the true mind are done with ease, and I have obtained self-mastery. **This is the foremost method,** I consider this Dharma-door the best.”

People should not get angry, because if they do, demonic obstacles can arise. Be a little less fiery and a little more intent upon your study of the Buddhadharma.

N3 Sundarananda: the nose consciousness.

Sutra:

Sundarananda arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “When I first left home and followed the Buddha to enter the Way, I received the complete precepts, but my mind was always too scattered for samadhi, and I could not attain the state of having no outflows. The World Honored One taught Kaushthila and me to contemplate the white spot at the tip of our noses.

Commentary:

There was Nanda, Ananda, and Sundarananda. **Sundarananda** was the Buddha’s cousin. The first part of his name is Sundari, after his wife; “Sundari” means “beautiful.” She was captivating

“Nanda,” the latter part of his name, means “happiness” (*xi* 喜). Since there were several disciples with similar names, he was referred to as Sundari’s Nanda. Sundarananda **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “When I first left home and followed the Buddha to enter the Way, I received the complete precepts, but my mind was always too scattered for samadhi, and I could not attain the state of having no outflows.** I cultivated the Way with the Buddha and I carefully observed the precepts, but my samadhi-power was not sufficient. My mind was always on the move. I could not accomplish the level of being without outflows. **The World Honored One taught Kaushthila an me to contemplate the white spot at the tip of our noses.** Because I was so scattered, the Buddha taught me and also taught Shariputra’s uncle, Mahakaushthila, to look at the tips of our noses and regard the little white spot that appears when both eyes stare there.

Sutra:

“From the first, I contemplated intently. After three weeks, I saw that the breath in my nostrils looked like smoke when I inhaled and exhaled. My body and mind became bright inside, and I perfectly understood the external world, to the point that everything became empty and pure, like crystal. The smoky appearance gradually disappeared, and the breath in my nostrils became white.

Commentary:

He goes on to say, “When I cultivated according to this method and developed my skill, **from the first, I contemplated intently. After three weeks, I saw that the breath in my nostrils looked like smoke when I inhaled and exhaled.** I regarded the white spot at the tip of my nose with great concentration. After twenty-one days, my breath looked like smoke. **My body and mind became bright inside, and I perfectly understood the external world.** Inside there was light, and I was clear about what was going on in all the worlds, **to the point that everything became empty and**

pure, like crystal. My body, mind, and the world became emptiness and was pure in substance. It was all as clear as crystal. The breath in my nostrils had become like smoke, but this subsided. **The smoky appearance gradually disappeared, and the breath in my nostrils became white.** From daily contemplation like this, my breath became white like the white spot at the tip of my nose.”

Sutra:

“My mind opened and my outflows were extinguished. Every inhalation and exhalation of breath was transformed into light which illumined the ten directions, and I attained Arhatship. The World Honored One predicted that in the future I would obtain Bodhi.

Commentary:

“My mind opened and my outflows were extinguished. When my breath became white, my mind suddenly opened to enlightenment, and I put an end to all outflows. **Every inhalation and exhalation of breath was transformed into light which illumined the ten directions, and I attained Arhatship.** First my breath looked smoky, then it became white like the tip of my nose, and finally it turned into light! The light shone on everything in the Dharma realm of the ten directions. **The World Honored One predicted that in the future I would obtain Bodhi.** He said that in the future I would certainly become a Buddha.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I did it by means of the disappearance of the breath, until eventually the breath emitted light and the light completely extinguished my outflows. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

Sundarananda says that he thinks cultivation of the nose-consciousness is extremely important. For him, it was the best Dharma-door.

N4 Purnamaitreyaniputra: the tongue consciousness.

Sutra:

Purnamaitreyaniputra arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "For vast kalpas I have possessed unobstructed eloquence. When I discuss suffering and emptiness I penetrate deeply into the actual appearance, and in the same way, I give subtle, wonderful instruction to the assembly concerning the secret Dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges. I have also obtained fearlessness.

Commentary:

Purnamaitreyaniputra is named after his father and mother. "Purna," which means "completeness" (*man* 滿) was his father's name. "Maitreyani," which means "compassion" (*ci* 慈), was his mother's name. "Putra" means "son" (*zi* 子). So he was the "Son of Completeness and Compassion." He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "For vast kalpas I have possessed unobstructed eloquence."** There are four kinds of eloquence:

- 1) Unobstructed eloquence with dharmas.
- 2) Unobstructed eloquence in meaning.
- 3) Unobstructed eloquence in phrasing.
- 4) Unobstructed eloquence with delight in speaking.

No matter what dharma he discussed, he could explain it very clearly. Not only that, but he brought forth the meaning in just a sentence or two. His skill in phrasing was such that he could say a few words that would encompass infinitely many meanings. He was brief and to the point. No matter what you wanted explained, he thoroughly enjoyed doing it. He was not like Kshudrapanthaka, who refused to speak the Dharma when he was a Dharma-Master, and as a result ended up being terribly stupid. Purna liked to speak the Dharma. **"When I discuss suffering and emptiness I penetrate deeply into the actual appearance."** He would tell how

all things are suffering, are empty, are impermanent, and lack self. But when he did so, his explanation of this doctrine reached all the way through to the doctrine of the actual appearance, where there is no appearance, and yet there is nothing which does not have an appearance. **“And in the same way, I give subtle, wonderful instruction to the assembly concerning the secret Dharma doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are sands in the Ganges.”** He was able to discuss the most esoteric doctrines and reveal them to living beings by means of subtle principles. **“I have also obtained fearlessness. I have obtained unobstructed eloquence and the power of fearlessness.”**

Sutra:

“The World Honored One knew that I had great eloquence, and so he made use of my voice in turning the wheel of the Dharma. He taught me how to disseminate it. I joined the Buddha to help him turn the wheel. I accomplished Arhatship through the lion’s roar. The World Honored One certified me as being foremost in speaking Dharma.

Commentary:

Purna accomplished the Way by means of the tongue-consciousness. He did it by speaking Dharma. So you see, it is possible to become enlightened and to be certified to the fruition by speaking the Dharma. All you need to do is to deeply enter one door in your cultivation. Decide on one and then cultivate it. Don’t be scattered in your practice, doing one Dharma today, switching to another one tomorrow, and changing your mind again the day after. When you change around like that you waste your time, and you never master any Dharma. You have to choose one and vigorously develop your skill in it.

“The World Honored One knew that I had great eloquence, and so he made use of my voice in turning the wheel of the Dharma. He taught me how to disseminate it.” No one could out-debate Purna. When he spoke the Dharma, his voice was full and resonant and powerful. In a gathering of a thousand or even ten

thousand, people there would have been no need for him to use a microphone or amplifying system. He could be heard easily. “The Buddha taught me to lecture the Sutras and speak Dharma. **I joined the Buddha to help him turn the wheel. I accomplished Arhatship through the lion’s roar.** I would represent the Buddha in speaking the Dharma, and my voice became like the lion’s roar.” When the lion roars, the myriad creatures cower. When the heavenly demons and adherents of external paths heard his voice, they were subdued. **“The World Honored One certified me as being foremost in speaking Dharma.”**

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the sound of Dharma to subdue demons and adversaries and melt away my outflows. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. With my tongue I proclaimed **the sound of Dharma to subdue demons and adversaries.** I tamed the heavenly demons and controlled the five adversary desires: wealth, sex, fame, food, and sleep.” These five desires are hostile thieves that steal people’s treasures, “In this way I was able to **melt away my outflows. This is the foremost method.** I used the tongue-consciousness and proclaimed the wonderful Dharma. This is the best method.”

N5 Upali: the body consciousness.

Sutra:

Upali arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life. I observed the Thus Come One endure six years of diligent asceticism. I watched the Thus Come One subdue all the demons, control adherents of external paths and become liberated from all outflows which were based on worldly desire and greed.

Commentary:

Upali is foremost in holding the precepts. His name means “Superior Leader” (*shang shou* 上首). He never committed the slightest infraction of the precepts spoken by the Buddha. His lay name was **Channa**. He was with the Buddha when they left the palace and went into the mountains. He was extremely familiar with all the events of the Buddha’s life, because he was the person who had followed the Buddha the longest. When the five bhikshus left the Buddha, **Upali** did not leave. He stayed by his side and served Shakyamuni Buddha as he cultivated the Way. **Upali arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life.”** At that time, **Upali**, who was then **Channa**, first accompanied the Buddha to the eastern gate of the city. The Buddha, who was then a prince, went out looking for some excitement, because he was bored in the palace. At the gate they observed a woman by the side of the road giving birth to a child. She was weeping and wailing and writhing in pain. The prince asked **Channa**, “What’s going on? Why is she crying so violently?” When **Channa** told him, he was shocked to find that birth involved so much suffering. After the child was born, the prince was upset and said, “We’re going back, I don’t want to go sightseeing today.”

The next day they went to the southern gate to do some more sightseeing. There they saw an old person. His head shook, his vision was blurred, his teeth had fallen out, and he could hardly walk. The prince asked **Channa**, “What kind of person is that?”

“That person is very old.”

“Oh,” was his reply. “That’s what getting old is like! That’s too much suffering,” and once again he didn’t want to go any further.

The third day they went to the western gate. There they saw a sick person afflicted with an ugly and violent disease. “Why is that person in such horrible shape?” asked the Prince.

“That person is sick,” was **Channa**’s reply. Once again the Prince was troubled and did not want to travel further.

The fourth day they went to the northern gate and came across a person who had just died. When the prince asked about him, Channa told him that that was what death was like.

The Prince was stunned at having seen birth, old age, sickness, and death. At that moment, a monk walked by wearing the robe and sash. When the prince saw him, he asked Channa what he was. Channa said, “Ask him and find out.” The Prince, who was to become Shakyamuni Buddha, asked the monk, “What do you do?”

“I’m a person who has left the home-life.”

“What does that mean?” asked the Prince.

“People who leave the home-life are called bhikshus. They leave home in order to escape the suffering of birth, old age, sickness, and death. Once we understand the Way, then there is neither production nor extinction – we do not have to be born or die, and we can accomplish Buddhahood.”

“Can you tell me how to leave home?” asked the Prince. “Can you be my teacher?”

This bhikshu was actually a god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling. Seeing that conditions were ripe, the god intentionally transformed himself to come take Shakyamuni Buddha across. When the prince asked the bhikshu to be his teacher, the monk beat his staff once on the ground, ascended into space, and entered the heavens. The prince had no way to study the Path and no method for leaving the home life, so he returned to the palace.

Meanwhile, a prognosticator who looked at physiognomies told the King, “If the prince does not leave home in the next seven days, he will attain the position of a wheel-turning king; he will rule over all the countries of the world. All you have to do is keep him here for a week.”

Thereupon his father, the Pure Rice King took action and stationed his armed forces all around the palace to cut off all traffic in and out of the palace. A curfew prevailed and no one was allowed in or out of the palace. Thus, the prince was surrounded

and watched at all times. In this way the Pure Rice King hoped that his son, Prince Siddhartha, would attain the position of a wheel-turning king. A wheel-turning king rules over the four great continents: Purvavideha to the east, Jambudvipa to the south, Aparagodaniya to the west, and Uttarakuru to the north. One world-system is composed of one set of the four great continents, as well as one sun, one moon, and one Mount Sumeru. A thousand of these small world-systems is called a middle sized world system. One thousand middle-sized world systems is called a great world-system. This is the meaning of the phrase “Three-thousand-great-thousand world-system.” A wheel-turning king rules over one small world-system.

The prince had extremely good roots, and so although he was being watched, he did not become confused. The king sent many beautiful women to the quarters of the prince for him to enjoy. But the prince looked upon them with unseeing eyes. He listened with deaf ears. As it is said:

*The eyes see form,
but inside there is nothing.
The ears listen to sounds,
but the mind is not aware of them.*

Or again:

*Inside there is no body and mind.
Outside there is no world.*

Then the god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling appeared and spoke with the Prince. “Prince, are you so greedy for the pleasures of this world that you have forgotten your vows from former lives? Do you remember your past vows?”

Prince Siddhartha said, “I haven’t forgotten. But at present there’s nothing I can do.”

The god from the Heaven of Pure Dwelling said, “If you have not forgotten and you still want to leave the home-life and cultivate the Way, I can help you.”

“Excellent!” said the Prince.

The god told **Channa** – that is, **Upali**, whom we are now discussing – to prepare the horse, and the Prince and **Channa** went to the back garden of the palace to escape. At that point the Four Heavenly Kings appeared, and, each taking one of the horse’s legs, lifted up the horse, the Prince, and Upali into space and flew away with them. They mounted the clouds and rode the fog for three yojanas and then alighted in the Snowy Mountains.

The Prince began to cultivate the Way there in the mountains. As a response from the gods, there was rice and sesame there, and every day Shakyamuni Buddha ate one grain of each to stay alive. Then three members of his father’s clan and two members of his mother’s clan came to cultivate there with him. Three could not take the ascetic practices and began to have doubts. “Cultivation is too much suffering. When can we ever get to be Buddhas? Let’s leave.” These three left and went to the Deer Wilds Park to cultivate the Way. Eventually a heavenly maiden brought an offering of milk gruel for the Prince, because he was nothing but skin and bones. After he drank the milk gruel, his body began to fill out naturally. But the two who were still with him said, “He could take suffering before, but now he can’t. Now that he has drunk that milk gruel, he won’t have any accomplishment. He couldn’t take it. Let’s go.” So the paternal relatives and the maternal relatives all left; only the Venerable **Upali** remained. So he says, “I followed the Buddha in person when he fled the city and left the home-life. I was with him in the palace garden when he mounted the horse and flew out of the city. **I observed the Thus Come One endure six years of diligent asceticism.** For six years he endured bitterness that is difficult to endure. **I watched the Thus Come One subdue all the demons.** The Prince could have accomplished Buddhahood right there on the Snowy Mountains. But he was concerned that people might

mistakenly think that to accomplish Buddhahood you have to be a total ascetic. So he stopped meditating in the mountains and went to the Bodhi Tree. He sat down beneath it and made the vow not to get up until he had become a Buddha.

After the Prince had sat there beneath the Bodhi Tree for forty-eight days, the King of Demons in the Sixth Desire Heaven had a dream. He dreamed of thirty-two transformations. When he awoke, being able to reckon and contemplate, he looked into the reason for this strange dream and found that a Bodhisattva was sitting beneath the Bodhi Tree just about to accomplish Buddhahood. “This will never do,” he thought. “I must find a way to destroy his concentration.” He sent four demonic women, each of whom was exquisite. Demons are weird creatures, but they also dislike being ugly. They went to disturb Shakyamuni Buddha’s samadhi by manifesting thirty-two enticing transformations. They were trying to seduce Shakyamuni Buddha. They wanted him to have an ordinary thought and thereby leave his samadhi. They wanted to arouse his desire. But the Buddha neither loved them nor desired them. Although he was not made of straw or rock – as the saying goes, “People aren’t grass or wood; who doesn’t have emotion?” – yet Shakyamuni Buddha could go through this experience and not be turned by it. He was not shaken by the demonic power of these women. He remained in a state of unmoving suchness. His mind did not move in the slightest, he did not give rise to love or desire.

Faced with this state his thoughts did not arise. During this episode, Shakyamuni Buddha was contemplating impurity, similar to the Contemplation of the Nine Aspects discussed above. He thought, “Oh, you’ve come to cheat me. Although you are beautiful now, you’ll turn into skeletons. Your nine apertures are always oozing impurities. Your eyes ooze tears and matter, your ears ooze wax, your noses have mucus, your mouths have saliva and phlegm – all of it’s unclean. Add to that excrement and urine, and you’re even filthier. Besides that, there are lots of germs in every pore of your body. Your entire bodies are foul.” His contemplation turned the four demonic women into old bags. They took a look at one

another; their skin was like chicken's feet and their hair was white as cranes. Their noses were dripping and their mouths were drooling. They were total wrecks. They looked at one another and began to vomit. Realizing that they had all become old and withered and that they had no way to cheat Shakyamuni Buddha, they left. Once the demon king saw that the four demon women had come back without success, he went with his demon sons and grandsons to kill Shakyamuni Buddha. But the Buddha was still unmoved. He wasn't afraid. He had entered the non-contention samadhi. If you move your mind, the demons will get you. If you don't move your mind, they can't get you. The demons couldn't disturb Shakyamuni Buddha.

Also an externalist master named [Shen Jih](#) (申日) put poison in some food and gave it to Shakyamuni Buddha to kill him. When the Buddha saw the food, he thought, "If there is no poison in my mind, then when I eat this poison, it won't poison me." So he ate the food and didn't die.

Another externalist master was jealous of Shakyamuni Buddha. Before the Buddha arrived on the scene the Brahmans were in the majority. Everyone believed in them. After the Buddha had cultivated for six years and had realized Buddhahood, the externalist disciples went to bow to Shakyamuni Buddha. Kashyapa, Mahamaudgalyayana, and Shariputra had all been adherents of externalist paths. For this reason, the externalist masters were jealous. They fed wine to some elephants – five of them – and sent them to the Buddha to trample him. Who would have guessed that when the elephants approached the Buddha, the Buddha would stretch out his hand and five lions would come from his five fingers, scaring the elephants nearly to death. The Buddha had great power to subdue the demons and external paths.

He also subdued greed and desire. Love is the hardest thing to subdue. It makes people live like a drunkard and die in a dream. If you can't get rid of it, you can't get rid of your outflows. You have

outflows because you have love and emotion. Living beings are confused by emotion.

*Heavy karma and confused emotions
make a living being.
Karma ended and emotion emptied;
that is the Buddha.*

Buddhas become Buddhas because they have ended love and emotion. Living beings are living beings because of heavy love and emotion; because of it they are unable to escape bondage on the wheel of birth and death, and they flow out into the three realms. Without outflows,

*The sea of suffering is boundless;
A turn of the head is the other shore.*

That is liberation from worldly greed and outflows.

Sutra:

“I based myself on the Buddha’s teaching of precepts, encompassing the three thousand awesome deportments and the eighty thousand subtle aspects. Both my direct karma and my contributing karma became pure. My body and mind became tranquil, and I accomplished Arhatship.

Commentary:

“I based myself on the Buddha’s teaching of precepts.” Upali accompanied the Buddha in person when the Buddha left the home-life; he himself saw the Buddha cultivate ascetic practices for six years in the Himalayas; he himself saw the Buddha sit beneath the Bodhi tree, see a star one night, and awaken to the Way; he himself saw the Buddha subdue the demons and control adherents of external paths, and so forth until he accomplished Buddhahood. Upali witnessed all of it. After Shakyamuni Buddha accomplished the Way and began teaching, he saw that the Venerable **Upali** had been foremost in holding precepts in the assemblies of limitless

Buddhas of the past. When Shakyamuni Buddha came to the Saha World this time and accomplished Buddhahood, the Venerable **Upali** came to this world at the same time. So the Buddha told him to concentrate on the cultivation of the precepts within the Buddhadharma.

I will speak about the precepts now, and all of you students of Buddhadharma should take notes.

First are the *Five Precepts*:

1. Do not kill.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not commit sexual misconduct.
4. Do not lie.
5. Do not take intoxicants.

Next are the *Eight Precepts*, which include the five precepts already listed, together with:

6. Do not adorn the body with flowers, fragrances, beads, or fragrant oils.
7. Do not use high, grand, or big beds and do not look at, listen to, or participate in musical entertainment.

By not sleeping in a grand bed, you train yourself not to be arrogant.

8. Do not eat at improper times.

Not eating at improper times means not eating after noon. Not eating after noon helps train you against greed, because if you can eat anytime you want, then you will simply want to eat all the time. Laypeople can take these precepts.

Novices have ten precepts which cannot be taken by laypeople. It's not the case that after taking the Five Precepts you are considered a member of the Sangha. Taking the Eight Precepts does not classify one as a member of the Sangha, nor does receiving the Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. To be a

member of the Sangha you must first take the Ten Shramanera Precepts, then the two hundred fifty Bhikshu Precepts, or the three hundred forty-eight Bhikshuni Precepts, and then the Ten Major and Forty-Eight Minor Bodhisattva Precepts. It's not the case that just because this is America, you can decide to do things in a new and different way. You can't just create a new universe and say, "Everyone is a member of the Sangha." I've heard it said that even the tables and chairs are members of the Sangha! Cups, bowls, chopsticks – plates and silverware – everything's the Sangha! This is ridiculous – it's unspeakably wonderful. In that case, nothing in the world would not be the Sangha. If everything in the world were the Sangha, then why would the Sangha have to assemble together? I think this is something I've never seen or heard of before – it's truly unprecedented.

The word "precept" is "**Pratimoksha**" in Sanskrit. It is also called "**Shila**." The meaning is to "stop evil and guard against transgressions,"

*Don't do any evil.
Offer up all good conduct.*

Once an elderly upasaka asked an elderly Bodhisattva, a person who had left the home-life for a long time, how to cultivate the Way. The high monk said to him: "You should not do any evil and offer up all good conduct."

The elderly upasaka said, "I needed you to tell me that? Even a three-year-old knows that phrase."

The high monk replied, "A three-year-old child may know the words, but most eighty-year-olds can't put them into practice."

In this day and age, a lot of people set up groups and call themselves a "Sangha." You should find out how many precepts they have received. If they have not taken the complete precepts, they cannot refer to themselves as "Sangha." If they protest and say that they are new and different, then they should not call themselves Buddhists. If they do not venerate and adhere to the long-standing

rules and precepts of Buddhism, what kind of Buddhists are they? Neo-Buddhists, they reply. Then ask them what's new about them. The Buddha himself could speak Dharma in the heavens, he could speak Dharma in the hells, he could proclaim the Dharma among people and go to the dragon palaces to teach. Where can these Neo-Buddhists speak Dharma? Ask them that.

"That's myth," they may reply. "Of course we can't go there. You can create your own myths. You can be living myths."

If any one of them had the abilities of a certain one of my disciples present in this assembly (who has opened his five eyes) they still would not have the right to change the structure of the Buddhadharmā; and they don't have nearly as much talent. What right do they have to alter Buddhism? When you go into business, you have to have some capital. If you want to be a high official in government, you have to be a college graduate. If these people decide to be Neo-Buddhists, what is their foundation?

What they retort is, "We teach the Buddha's Four Truths, the Six Paramitas, and the twelve conditioned links, and we use the Buddhist mantras. We recite the Sutras of the Buddha." Then ask them, "If you recite the Buddhist Sutras and recite the Buddhist mantras, in what way are you new?" It's too paradoxical.

I hope you young American students will strive to counteract this mistake. Otherwise, the decline of the Dharma is imminent. Shakyamuni Buddha himself predicted that in the Dharma Ending Age the children and grandchildren of the demons would come into the world in full force. And when Shakyamuni Buddha subdued the demon kings and controlled adherents of external paths, the Demon, [Pou Ts'un](#), confirmed this. He said, "I can't get at you right now, but in the future I will certainly destroy your teaching."

"How will you manage to do that?" inquired the Buddha.

"I will have my children and grandchildren enter your religion, eat your food, wear your clothes, and sully your vessels with excrement and urine. They will destroy your religion from within. Because of them, no one will believe you." Now is the time that he

spoke of. Shakyamuni Buddha long ago saw what is taking place today.

*They will wear the Buddha's clothes,
They will eat the Buddha's food.*

But within Buddhism they won't do the Buddha's work.

Among the Buddha's disciples, the Venerable **Upali** was foremost in holding precepts. In Buddhism there are Vinaya Masters who specialize in maintaining the precepts, and there are Dharma Masters who explain the Sutras and speak the Dharma. Dharma Master has two meanings:

1. One who gives the Dharma to others.
2. One who takes the Dharma as Master.

There are also Teaching Masters, who investigate the teachings; and there are Dhyana Masters, who investigate Ch'an and sit in meditation.

When the Buddha was in the world, people relied on the Buddha as their teacher. When the Buddha left the world, he instructed the bhikshus and bhikshunis to take the precepts as their teacher. So the most important thing for them is to guard the precepts. Vinaya Masters, such as the Venerable Upali, specialize in this. He says, **“I based myself on the Buddha's teaching of precepts, encompassing the three thousand awesome deportments.”** To determine the meaning of “three thousand awesome deportments,” you calculate the two hundred fifty bhikshu precepts with regard to walking, the two hundred fifty precepts with regard to sitting, the two hundred fifty precepts with regard to standing, and the two hundred fifty precepts with regarding to lying down. That totals one thousand awesome deportments, which multiplied by the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind, make three thousand.

Each of the Four Great Awesome Departments of walking, sitting, standing, and lying down has its particular aspect.

1. Walk like the wind.

This “wind” does not refer to a hurricane, but to a gentle breeze, a zephyr. One should walk in a slow and stately manner, and not be impulsive and rush around recklessly.

2. Stand like a pine.

Stand up straight like the pine tree, and do not slouch or lean this way or that.

3. Sit like a bell.

This refers to the huge, heavy bells of old that hung solid and unmoving.

4. Lie like a bow.

One should lie down in the “auspicious lying-down” position: lie on your right side with your right hand under your cheek and your left hand resting on your left thigh.

“The eighty thousand subtle aspects: eighty-thousand is a round figure. It refers to the eighty-four thousand aspects of conduct. This figure is derived by multiplying the departments of the three karmas of body, mouth, and mind by their seven branches (greed, hatred, stupidity, killing, stealing, lying, harsh speech, loose speech, and gossip), making twenty-one thousand, and multiplying them by the four afflictions (greed, hatred, stupidity, or some of each). That is what the “eighty thousand subtle aspects” refer to. “I upheld these aspects,” continues the Venerable **Upali**, “and **both my direct karma and my contributing karma became pure.**” “Direct karma” refers to the Four Fundamental Prohibitions: killing, stealing, lust, and lying. Any of these acts is fundamentally wrong and a direct violation. If one commits one of these four prohibited deeds, there is no chance of repentance. That’s what is said, but if you actually violate one of these precepts and you firmly resolve to change your ways, you still have a chance.

“Contributing karma,” refers to acts which lead you to commit offenses which you basically would never have committed. For instance, there was once a person who received the five precepts,

but eventually he found it hard to guard them and decided one day that it wouldn't hurt if he took a little drink of wine. "I can see the sense in holding to the precepts against killing, stealing, lust, and lying, but I don't think it would matter to transgress the prohibition against alcohol," he rationalized. So he went out and bought some brandy, or perhaps it was whisky. He got back home with the bottle, but then realized he didn't have any appetizers to accompany the drink. "A little fried chicken to chase this whisky would be great," he mused. Just as he thought that, the neighbor's chicken strayed into his yard. Glancing quickly to the left and right and finding no one looking, he snatched up the pullet, thereby violating the precept against stealing. Then he lopped off the chicken's head, breaking the precept against killing. Engrossed in his whisky and fried chicken, he noticed the neighbor lady approaching. "I lost one of my chickens," she said. "Have you seen it?"

"I haven't seen it," he denied, thereby violating the precept against lying. Then he took a second look at the woman. Although she wasn't stunning, she was certainly passable. His lust arose, and he had his way with her. All that happened because he violated the precept against taking intoxicants. That's how contributing karma works.

This is also why it's said that eating meat is a violation of the precept against killing. If you didn't eat meat, you wouldn't have any connection with the slaughter of animals. The same goes for cultivating the earth. People who strictly adhere to the precepts do not plow the earth, because in doing so you can kill many living beings. These are all examples of contributing karma.

The venerable **Upali** explains, "I upheld the precepts until all aspects of my karma were purified. **My body and mind became tranquil, and I accomplished Arhatship.** When extreme purity was reached, I was certified to the fruition of sagehood."

Sutra:

"In the Thus Come One's assembly, I am a governor of the law. The Buddha himself certified my mind's upholding of the

precepts and my genuine cultivation of them. I am considered a leader of the assembly.

Commentary:

“In the Thus Come One’s assembly, I am a governor of the law.” He was a superior seated one, a leader of the assembly. He was a model for everyone, exemplary in the Dharma. Multitudes of people studied with him. The precepts were governed by the Venerable Upali. **“The Buddha himself certified my mind’s upholding of the precepts and my genuine cultivation of them.** The World Honored One personally verified my vigor in upholding the precepts. I firmly maintained the precepts and cultivated according to them. **I am considered a leader of the assembly,** since I am foremost in holding the precepts.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I disciplined the body until the body attained ease and comfort. Then I disciplined the mind until the mind attained penetrating clarity. After that, the body and mind experienced keen and thorough absorption. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. He wants to know which of us has achieved it. **I disciplined the body until the body attained ease and comfort.** I upheld the precepts in order to cultivate the body. **Then I disciplined the mind until the mind attained penetrating clarity.** When I had cultivated the body to the point that I did not transgress the precepts involving the body, I then cultivated the mind. I maintained the precepts in my mind. The precepts involving the body belong to the practices of the Arhats of the Small Vehicle. Precepting the mind is what Bodhisattvas do. Bodhisattvas do not violate precepts even in their minds. **After that, the body and mind experienced keen and thorough absorption. This is the foremost method.** My body and mind were extremely comfortable and blissful. **This is the foremost**

method. The Dharma door of holding the precepts to cultivate the body is the number one way, in my opinion.”

N6 Mahamaudgalyayana: the mind consciousness.

Sutra:

Great Maudgalyayana arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “Once when I was out on the road begging for food, I met the three Kashyapa brothers – Uruvilva, Gaya, and Nadi – who proclaimed for me the Thus Come One’s profound principle of causes and conditions. I immediately brought forth resolve and obtained a great understanding.

Commentary:

Great Maudgalyayana arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha – Maudgalyayana’s name means “descended from bean gatherers.” He said, “Once when I was out on the road begging for food, I met the three Kashyapa brothers – Uruvilva, Gaya, and Nadi.” Uruvilva’s name means “papaya grove,” and he got the name because he had a growth on his body that was shaped like a papaya. Gaya was named after a mountain. Nadi was named after a river. “The three brothers **proclaimed for me the Thus Come One’s profound principle of causes and conditions.** They discussed the Buddha’s Dharma, specifically the doctrine of causes and conditions. That is,

I say that the dharmas which arise from conditions are all empty; that they are also given the name falseness; and that they are known as the meaning of the Middle Way.

When they elaborated on this meaning, **I immediately brought forth resolve and obtained a great understanding.”**

Earlier, Shariputra had heard the above verse, had become enlightened, and had been certified to the first stage of Arhatship. He returned to his living quarters and told Maudgalyayana, “I encountered some bhikshus today who are disciples of the Buddha.

They spoke a verse for me.” When Shariputra repeated the verse for Mahamaudgalyayana, he, too, became enlightened. The two of them then went together to take refuge with the Buddha and bow to him as their teacher. Some say that Shariputra encountered the bhikshu Ma Sheng who spoke this verse for him.

*All dharmas arise from conditions;
All dharmas cease to be because of conditions;
The Buddha, the Great Shramana,
Always explains it thus.*

They say that this verse brought about Shariputra’s awakening. In general, he heard the disciples talking about the dharma of causes and conditions and became enlightened, as did Maudgalyayana. The “profound principle” refers to Dharmas used to teach Bodhisattvas. Dharma used for Arhats would be shallow principles. The profound principles, then, are the state of the Great Vehicle.

Sutra:

“The Thus Come One accepted me, and the kashaya was on my body and my hair fell out by itself. I roamed in the ten directions, having no impeding obstructions. I discovered my spiritual penetrations, which are esteemed as unsurpassed, and I accomplished Arhatship.

Commentary:

“The Thus Come One accepted me, and the kashaya was on my body. When I arrived at the Buddha’s place, he said, ‘It’s good you’ve come, bhikshu. Let your hair fall by itself, and the kashaya clothe you.’” By the power of the Buddha’s spiritual penetrations, Maudgalyayana’s hair and beard fell away at those words. In those times, when someone decided to leave home, they did so immediately. They didn’t stop to think it over. They were not like people of today who can never make up their minds. When Maudgalyayana’s hair and beard fell out, he assumed the appearance of a bhikshu. He relates, **“I roamed in the ten directions, having no impeding obstructions.”** Maudgalyayana was foremost in

spiritual penetrations. After he left the home life, he obtained spiritual powers that allowed him to go to all the worlds of the ten directions and perform changes and transformations at will. His spiritual penetrations were unhindered. **“I discovered my spiritual penetrations, which are esteemed as unsurpassed, and I accomplished Arhatship.”**

Sutra:

“Not only the World Honored One, but the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions praise my spiritual powers as perfectly clear and pure, masterful, and fearless.

Commentary:

“Not only the World Honored One, but the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions praise my spiritual powers. It’s not just the World Honored One, Shakyamuni Buddha, who praises me. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions acclaim my spiritual penetrations and wonderful functioning. They commend them **as perfectly clear and pure, masterful, and fearless.**

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. By means of a spiral-like attention to the profound, the light of my mind was revealed, just as muddy water clears. Eventually it became pure and dazzling. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Now the Buddha is questioning his disciples, each person who cultivates the Way, as to what particular skill they developed that brought about their enlightenment. **By means of a spiral-like attention to the profound** – I worked my way back to profound purity – **until the light of my mind was revealed.** My mind emitted light, **just as muddy water clears.** It was just like letting turbid water settle until it becomes pure. **Eventually it became pure and dazzling.** When it had settled long enough, it was naturally clear and sparkling. **This is the foremost method.** I cultivated the skill of spiraling back to

the profundity of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.
This is the best way.”

The Seven Elements

M4 Perfect penetration through the seven elements.

N1 Ucchushma : the fire element.

Sutra:

Ucchushma came before the Buddha, put his palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember how many kalpas ago I was filled with excessive greed and desire. There was a Buddha in the world named King of Emptiness. He said that people with too much desire turn into a raging mass of fire. He taught me to contemplate the coolness and warmth throughout my entire body.

Commentary:

Ucchushma is a powerful Vajra Lord. He is one of those whom this Sutra refers to as Vajra Secret Traces – that is, Dharma Protectors. The history of these Dharma protectors was as follows: limitless kalpas ago, there was a Wheel-Turning King whose first wife gave birth to a thousand sons. The Wheel-Turning King understood the Buddhadharma. He had his thousand sons draw lots; they would become Buddhas in the order of the numbers they drew. The thousand Buddhas of this kalpa, the Worthy Kalpa, are the sons of that Wheel-Turning King. Kanakamuni Buddha became the first Buddha, and Shakyamuni Buddha was the fourth Buddha of the

Auspicious Kalpa, so called because it is a time when worthies and sages appear in the world. Another of the Wheel-Turning King's wives had two sons. The elder son vowed that when each of his thousand brothers became a Buddha, he would go to that place and make offerings to them. The younger brother made a vow that when each of his brothers became a Buddha, he would go and protect him – he would be a Vajra-Powerful Lord.

Why does it say that he **came before the Buddha**, instead of saying that he arose from his seat? This is because Vajra-Powerful Lords are spirits, and spirits cannot sit in the presence of the Buddha. They stand. There is no seat available to them in the Buddha's assemblies. As for ghosts, they are not only forbidden to sit down; they aren't even given a place to stand. They must kneel. The Dharma Protectors must kneel to hear the Dharma. In this very assembly now there are many ghosts kneeling to listen to the Sutra. If you can't see them yourself, you don't have to take my word for it. You can ask my disciple who has his five eyes open. He will tell you.

Ucchushma came before the Buddha, **put his palms together, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember how many kalpas ago I was filled with excessive greed and desire."** This person had a tremendous amount of desire. He was obsessed with women. He probably inherited it from his father, who, as a Wheel-Turning King, also had a lot of desire and lust. "At that time, **there was a Buddha in the world named King of Emptiness.** He spoke Dharma for me; **He said that people with too much desire turn into a raging mass of fire.** In the future they will fall into the hells and be seared by a furious fire. The Thus Come One, King of Emptiness **taught me to contemplate the coolness and warmth throughout my entire body.**" Why do people have excessive desire? It comes from a "fire of desire" in the body. So the Buddha, King of Emptiness, had him return the light and look within at the fire in his own body. He observed the fire of his desire.

Sutra:

“A spiritual light coalesced inside and transformed my thoughts of excessive lust into the fire of wisdom. After that, when any of the Buddhas summoned me, they used the name ‘fire-head.’

Commentary:

“I contemplated the fire in my body, and after a long time I came to abhor it and to be alarmed about it. Once I became alarmed, I no longer liked the thoughts of desire, and I gradually did away with them. Once they were gone, **a spiritual light coalesced inside.**” He produced his own light, **“and transformed my thoughts of excessive lust into the fire of wisdom.”** A change took place in his obsessive thoughts of desire: they turned into fiery wisdom. **“After that, when any of the Buddhas summoned me, they used the name ‘fire-head.’”** They called him “Fire-head Vajra” (*huo tou jin gang* 火頭金剛).

Sutra:

“From the strength of the fire-light samadhi, I accomplished Arhatship. I made a great vow that when each of the Buddhas accomplishes the way, I will be a powerful knight and in person subdue the demons’ hatred.

Commentary:

When each of the thousand Buddhas of the Worthy Aeon accomplishes the Way, I will be a powerful and great Vajra Lord – a big Dharma Protector – and tame all the demons and enemies.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used attentive contemplation of the effects of heat in my body and mind, until it became unobstructed and penetrating and all my outflows were consumed. I produced a blazing brilliance and ascended to enlightenment. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks each of his disciples about perfect penetration. I used attentive contemplation of the effects of heat in my body and mind, until it became unobstructed and penetrating and all my outflows were consumed. The effects of heat were turned into the fire of wisdom, and my inherent nature within was unhindered and flowed freely. It burned away all my outflows, and I produced a blazing brilliance and ascended to enlightenment. This is the foremost method.”

N2 Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva: the earth element.

Sutra:

The Bodhisattva, “Maintaining the Ground,” arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember when Universal Light Thus Come One appeared in the world in the past. I was a Bhikshu who continually worked on making level the major roads, ferry-landings, and the dangerous spots in the ground, where the disrepair might hinder or harm carriages or horses. I did everything from building bridges to hauling sand.

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva, “Maintaining the Ground,” arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember when Universal Light Thus Come One appeared in the world in the past. I was a Bhikshu who continually worked on making level the major roads, ferry-landings. When Universal Light Thus Come One was in the world, I left the home life and was a bhikshu who repaired highways.” “Ferry landings” here includes a reference to fords – to places where small streams crossed the path. He would place a piece of wood across to make it easy for people to pass by. He also repaired **dangerous spots in the ground. Sometimes the earth would be rutted or bumpy, not flat and broad. These were cases of disrepair, which means the path was impassable. The disrepair **might hinder or harm carriages or****

horses. I worked on making these kinds of roadways level. If there were ruts and potholes, I filled them. If there were bumps I smoothed them out. I made the roads even. **I did everything from building bridges to hauling sand.**

Sutra:

“I was diligent in this hard labor throughout the appearance of limitless Buddhas in the world. If there were beings at the walls and gates of the cities who needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them all the way to their destination, set the things down, and leave without taking any recompense.

Commentary:

“I was diligent in this hard labor throughout the appearance of limitless Buddhas in the world.” “This hard labor” refers to such tasks as hauling sand and building bridges. He continued to do this kind of work during life after life. **“If there were beings at the walls and gates of the cities who needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them all the way to their destination.** If there were peddlers along the walls and gates of the cities who sold goods that needed to be hauled, I would haul them, either balancing the load on my head or back, or carrying it in my arms. When I got where they wanted to go, I would **set the things down, and leave.** I would unload the materials they bought and go on my way **without taking any recompense.**” That means that he would not only not ask for or expect money, but he would refuse it if it was offered. This is the kind of ascetic practice that Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva practices.

Sutra:

“When the Buddha Vipashyin appeared in the world, there was a world-wide famine. I would carry people on my back, and no matter how far the distance, I would only accept one small coin. If there was an ox-cart stuck in the mud, I would use my spiritual strength to push the wheels and get it out of difficulty.

Commentary:

“When the Buddha Vipashyin appeared in the world, there was a world-wide famine.” No one had anything to eat. “Vipashyin” means “Pervading Everywhere with Ease”¹. As the famine spread, people would evacuate areas en masse, trying to get out of the stricken places. Some people in the exodus could not walk, and so Maintaining the Earth Bodhisattva would carry them. **“I would carry people on my back, and no matter how far the distance, I would only accept one small coin.”** Whether it was a short trip, or a long journey, he always took the same amount of money – one small coin. I didn’t want any more. **If there was an ox-cart stuck in the mud, I would use my spiritual strength to push the wheels and get it out of difficulty.”** When it rained a lot, the water would stand in the roads and the mud would become so thick it was not easy for people to walk. When a cart tried to pass, it would get bogged down. Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva said that he had great strength – a spiritual force, and so he would push the wheels and pull the cart out of its predicament.

Sutra:

“Once a king asked the Buddha to accept a vegetarian feast. At that time, I served the Buddha by leveling the road as he went. Vipashyin Thus Come One rubbed my crown and said, ‘You should level your mind-ground, then everything else in the world would be level.’

Commentary:

“Once a king asked the Buddha to accept a vegetarian feast.” The King of the country was a faithful follower of the Buddha, and he invited the Buddha to accept a vegetarian offering. **“At that time, I served the Buddha by leveling the road as he went.** On the road the Buddha traveled, I smoothed out all the uneven places as he went along. **Vipashyin Thus Come One rubbed my crown and said, ‘You should level your mind-**

^{1.} *bian yi qie zi zai* 遍一切自在

ground, then everything else in the world would be level.”

When the mind-ground is even, all the other ground in the world will be even quite naturally. Maintaining the Ground Bodhisattva had worked for such a long time at leveling the earth, which was fundamentally level to begin with. But he had been leveling things physically, while the ground of his own nature was not yet level. Vipashyin Thus Come One told him to level the ground of his own mind, for once he had done that, all other ground would be level as well. The mind-ground just means the ground of one’s own nature.

Sutra:

“Immediately my mind opened up and I saw that the particles of earth composing my own body were no different from all the particles of earth that made up the world. The nature of those particles of dust was such that they did not connect with one another nor could they be touched by the blade of a sword.

Commentary:

“When I heard Vipashyin explain this Dharma door, **immediately my mind opened up.** I became enlightened, **and I saw that the particles of earth composing my own body were no different from all the particles of earth that made up the world.** My body was made of particles of dust, nothing more, and they were the same as the particles of dust that composed everything else in the world. **The nature of those particles of dust was such that they did not connect with one another.** They did not come in contact one with another. **Nor could they be touched by the blade of a sword.** Even the stroke of a sword could not disrupt them, and so could not harm my body, because my body was the same as emptiness. I had no appearance of self.”

Sutra:

“Within the dharma-nature I awakened to the patience with the non-production of dharmas and accomplished Arhatship. I brought my mind back, to the extent that I have now entered the ranks of the Bodhisattvas. Hearing the Thus Come One

proclaim the Wonderful Lotus Flower, the level of the Buddha's knowledge and vision, I have already been certified as having understood and am a leader in the assembly.

Commentary:

“Within the dharma-nature I awakened to the patience with the non-production of dharmas and accomplished Arhatship. I brought my mind back: I turned from the Small and returned to the Great, to the extent that I have now entered the ranks of the Bodhisattvas. Hearing the Thus Come One proclaim the Wonderful Lotus Flower, that is, the Great Shurangama Samadhi, that subtle, wonderful Dharma, the level of the Buddha's knowledge and vision, I have already been certified as having understood and am a leader in the assembly. I can testify to this Dharma-door.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Upon attentive contemplation of the body and the environment, I saw that these two dusts are exactly the same – that, fundamentally, everything is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but that an empty falseness arises and creates the dust. When the dust is eliminated, wisdom is perfected, and one accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. Upon attentive contemplation of the body and the environment, I saw that these two dusts are exactly the same. There is no difference between the body and mind and the world. I saw that, fundamentally, everything is the Treasury of the Thus Come One, but that an empty falseness arises and creates the dust. Within the illusory falseness? defilement grows. When the dust is eliminated, wisdom is perfected, and one accomplishes the unsurpassed Way. This is the foremost method.”

N3 Moonlight Bodhisattva: the water element.

Sutra:

The Pure Youth Moonlight arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, **"I remember that long ago, beyond kalpas as many as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Water-God, who taught all the Bodhisattvas to cultivate the contemplation of water and enter samadhi.**

Commentary:

The Pure Youth Moonlight entered the Way as a virgin youth. He left the home-life when he was quite young. As he speaks now, however, he was not a youth; he was an elder among the Bodhisattvas. People referred to him as "Pure Youth" because he entered the Way when he was young and undefiled. He **arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I remember that long ago, beyond kalpas as many as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Water-God, who taught all the Bodhisattvas to cultivate the contemplation of water and enter samadhi.** He practiced the samadhi of water-contemplation.

Sutra:

"I reflected upon how throughout the body the essence of water is not in discord. I started with mucus and saliva and went on through digestive juices, phlegm, semen, blood, to urine and excrement. As it revolved through my body, the nature of water was identical. I saw that the water in my body was not at all different from that in the world outside: even that in royal lands of floating banners with all their seas of fragrant waters.

Commentary:

"I reflected upon how throughout the body the essence of water is not in discord. It does not contend with itself. **I started with mucus and saliva and went on through** – investigating each

in detail – **digestive juices**, which lie below the throat; **phlegm**, which lies above the throat; **semen, blood, to urine and excrement**. **As it revolved through my body, the nature of water was identical**. It circulated throughout my body, ending and beginning continually as it revolved. Throughout it all, the essence of water remained the same. **I saw that the water in my body was not at all different from that in the world outside: even that in royal lands of floating banners with all their seas of fragrant waters.**” The “royal lands of floating banners” refers to the base of Mount Sumeru. All these kinds of water were the same. There was no distinction to be made among them.

Sutra:

“At that time, when I first succeeded in the contemplation of water, I could see only water. I still had not gotten beyond my physical body.

Commentary:

“At that time, when I first succeeded in the contemplation of water, I could see only water. All the waters in my body were united as one, and the water of my body and the water of the external environment were also joined. But, **I still had not gotten beyond my physical body.** I still had a body. I hadn’t experienced the state of having no body.”

Sutra:

“I was a Bhikshu then, and once when I was in dhyana repose in my room, a disciple of mine peeked in the window and saw only pure water there, which filled the entire room. He saw nothing else.

Commentary:

“I was a Bhikshu then, and once when I was in dhyana repose in my room – I was in a quiet room sitting in dhyana cultivating the water-contemplation samadhi – a disciple of mine peeked in the window and saw only pure water there, which filled the entire room. He saw nothing else.” This youth swept the

walks, cleaned up the place, cooked the food, and in general, served this bhikshu. “He looked in my window that day and saw nothing but clear water filling UP the entire room. There wasn’t anything else in there at all.”

Sutra:

“The lad was young, and not knowing any better, he picked up a tile and tossed it into the water. It hit the water with a ‘plunk.’ He gazed around and then left. When I came out of concentration, I was suddenly aware of a pain in my heart, and I felt like Shariputra must have felt when he met that cruel ghost.

Commentary:

“The lad was young, and not knowing any better, he picked up a tile and tossed it into the water. The disciple was a young child and didn’t have much sense. He found a little square of tile and threw it in the window into the water. **It hit the water with a ‘plunk.’ He gazed around and then left.**” The child stood there peering in and wondering, “My teacher’s in that room meditating. Why is the whole place full of water?” Then he threw a stone into the water, looked all around, and left. **When I came out of concentration, I was suddenly aware of a pain in my heart, and I felt like Shariputra must have felt when he met that cruel ghost.”**

The Pure Youth Moonlight is referring to the time when Shariputra was meditating, and a couple of ghosts passed by in the air. One was named “Unreasonably Cruel,” and the other was named “Repeatedly Cruel.” Repeatedly said to Unreasonably, “How about if I hit that Shramana over the head – the one that’s there meditating?”

Unreasonably said, “Don’t! You don’t want to hit a Shramana. Better not mess with a cultivator of the Way.”

After he left, Repeatedly did not heed his advice; He took a bludgeon and whacked Shariputra over the head with it. When Shariputra came out of samadhi, he had a headache. He thought,

“I’ve already been certified to the fruition of Arhatship, and I haven’t any illness, so why does my head ache?” So he went to ask the Buddha about it.

“You were struck by the ghost called Repeatedly Cruel,” the Buddha answered, “and as a result of what he did to you, he has already fallen into the unintermittent hells – the Avicis. The blow he dealt you was so powerful it could have split Mount Sumeru in half, had it been aimed in that direction. Fortunately, you have strong samadhi power. Otherwise you would have been smashed to smithereens.” That’s how Shariputra got a headache. Now the disciple of the Pure Youth Moonlight threw a tile in the water of his samadhi, and when he came out of samadhi, his heart hurt.

Sutra:

“I thought to myself, ‘I am already an Arhat and have long since abandoned conditions that bring on illness. Why is it that today I suddenly have a pain in my heart? Am I about to lose the position of non-retreat?’

Commentary:

The Bodhisattva Moonlight **thought to himself, “I am already an Arhat and have long since abandoned conditions that bring on illness. I shouldn’t get sick, so why is it that today I suddenly have a pain in my heart? Am I about to lose the position of non-retreat? Am I losing the position of Arhatship I have gained? Am I retreating from my resolve for the Way?”**

Sutra:

“Just then, the young lad came promptly to me and related what had happened. I quickly said to him, ‘When you see the water again, you may open the door, wade into the water, and remove the tile.’ The child was obedient, so that when I re-entered samadhi, he again saw the water and the tile as well. He opened the door and took it out. When I came out of concentration, my body was as it had been before.

Commentary:

“Just then, the young lad came promptly to me and related what had happened. I quickly said to him, ‘When you see the water again, you may open the door, wade into the water, and remove the tile.’ The child was obedient, so that when I re-entered samadhi, he again saw the water and the tile as well. The Pure Youth Moonlight entered into samadhi once more, and the youth saw water in the room again, and he could also see the tile in it. He opened the door and took it out. He came in and removed the tile. When I came out of concentration, my body was as it had been before. My heart didn’t hurt anymore.”

Sutra:

“I encountered limitless Buddhas and cultivated in this way until the coming of the Thus Come One, King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas. Then I finally had no body. My nature and the seas of fragrant waters throughout the ten directions were identical with True Emptiness, without any duality or difference. Now I am with the Thus Come One and am known as a Pure Youth, and I have joined the assembly of Bodhisattvas.

Commentary:

“I encountered limitless Buddhas and cultivated in this way until the coming of the Thus Come One, King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas. I cultivated the contemplation of water in this fashion under limitless, boundless Thus Come Ones. When the Buddha called King of Masterful Penetrations of Mountains and Seas entered the world, I finally had no body. At that point in my cultivation of the contemplation of water, the waters outside and the waters within my body united, and my own body disappeared. My nature and the seas of fragrant waters throughout the ten directions were identical with True Emptiness, without any duality or difference.” When he succeeded in his cultivation of the Great Water Contemplation Samadhi, he became one with all the bodies of water. **“Now I am**

with the Thus Come One and am known as a Pure Youth, and I have joined the assembly of Bodhisattvas. Now, in the presence of Shakyamuni Buddha, I am known as a Pure Youth and am part of the Bodhisattva assembly.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. By means of the nature of water, I penetrated through to the flow of a single flavor, and I obtained patience with the non-production of dharmas and the perfection of Bodhi. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“Now the Buddha asks all his disciples about the Dharma-door of perfect penetration which they obtained. By means of the nature of water, I penetrated through to the flow of a single flavor. I used the contemplation of water – of the essence of water – to find the single flavor of water that flows through everything. I obtained patience with the non-production of dharmas and the perfection of Bodhi. This is the foremost method. In my opinion, the contemplation of water is the best Dharma-door.”

N4 Vaidurya Bodhisattva: the wind element.

Sutra:

The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “I can still remember back through aeons as many as the sands in the Ganges to the time of a Buddha named ‘Limitless Sound,’ who instructed the Bodhisattvas that fundamental enlightenment is wonderful and bright. He taught them to contemplate this world and all the beings in it as false conditions propelled by the power of wind.

Commentary:

The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light: “Vaidurya” is a blue gemstone. “Dharma Prince” is a title given to Bodhisattvas. He

arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I can still remember back through aeons as many as the sands in the Ganges to the time of a Buddha named 'Limitless Sound.' The Buddha called Limitless Sound instructed the Bodhisattvas that fundamental enlightenment is wonderful and bright. He taught them to contemplate this world and all the beings in it as false conditions propelled by the power of wind." The Dharma Prince Vaidurya Light accomplished his deeds in the Way through the element wind.

Sutra:

"At that time, I contemplated the position of the world, and I regarded the passage of time in the world. I reflected on the movement and stillness in my body. I considered the arising of thoughts in the mind. All these kinds of movement were non-dual; they were equal and the same.

Commentary:

"At that time, I contemplated the position of the world, that is, how the world-system was established. **I regarded the passage of time in the world.** I looked into the course of past, present, and future. **I reflected on the movement and stillness in my body. I considered the arising of thoughts in the mind."** As soon as we give rise to thought, we have created wind within our minds. Once there is wind in our minds, the many kinds of external winds arise. **"All these kinds of movement were non-dual.** The substance and appearance of all the various movements are **equal and the same.** There is no distinction to be made among them."

Sutra:

"I then understood that the nature of movement does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. Every single material particle throughout the ten directions and every upside-down living being in it is of the same empty falseness.

Commentary:

“I then understood that the nature of movement does not come from anywhere and does not go anywhere. At that time I comprehended the essence of movement. Every single material particle throughout the ten directions and every upside-down living being in it is of the same empty falseness. They are all empty and false, created from one identical illusion.

Sutra:

“And so, throughout the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds, the living beings in each of the worlds were like so many mosquitoes confined in a trap and droning monotonously. Caught in those few square inches, their hum built to a maddening crescendo. Not long after I encountered the Buddha, I attained patience with the non-production of dharmas.

Commentary:

And so, throughout the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds – so it goes, from one world to a small-thousands of worlds, on through a thousand small-thousands of worlds – that is, a middle-thousands of world-systems – and on through a thousand middle-thousands of worlds, which makes a great thousands of worlds. All through the three-thousand-great-thousand worlds, **the living beings in each of the worlds were like so many mosquitoes confined in a trap and droning monotonously.** They were like a great mass of mosquitoes trapped in a vessel. Each mosquito in the container emitted its own sound. **Caught in those few square inches, their hum built to a maddening crescendo.** Inside such a small space, their droning reverberated madly. I contemplated in this way, and **not long after I encountered the Buddha, I attained patience with the non-production of dharmas.”**

Sutra:

“My mind then opened, and I could see the country of the Buddha, ‘Unmoving,’ in the east. I became a Dharma Prince and served the Buddhas of the ten directions. My body and mind emit a light that make them completely clear and translucent.

Commentary:

“My mind then opened, and I could see the country of the Buddha, ‘Unmoving,’ in the east. I worked at perfecting this skill for a long time with a concentrated mind, allowing no other false thoughts to enter. Eventually I became enlightened, my mind opened, and I could see Akshobhya Medicine Master Buddha, in the east.” He is known as the Buddha Unmoving and also as the Vajra Buddha. **I became a Dharma Prince at that place, and served the Buddhas of the ten directions. My body and mind emit a light that make them completely clear and translucent.** I kept cultivating until my mind had light and my body had light. It penetrated within and without and was totally unhindered.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I contemplated the power of wind as lacking anything to rely on, and I awakened to the Bodhi-mind. I entered samadhi and meshed with the single, wonderful mind transmitted by all the Buddhas of the ten directions. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I contemplated the power of wind as lacking anything to rely on. That is, the wind has no substantial nature of its own – it has no self-nature. From this **I awakened to the Bodhi-mind. I entered samadhi and meshed with the single, wonderful mind transmitted by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.** I received the transmission of the Buddha’s mind-seal Dharmadoor. **This is the foremost method.** The Dharma-door of contemplating the

unmoving power of wind is the best way, I think. I accomplished my Way-karma by contemplating the element wind.”

N5 Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva: the emptiness element.

Sutra:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “The Thus Come One and I attained boundless bodies at the place of the Buddha, ‘Samadhi-Light.’

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva accomplished the Way by means of the element emptiness, which is one of the seven elements discussed previously. Now he relates how in the past he cultivated the method of the contemplation of emptiness. He **arose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha, “The Thus Come One and I attained boundless bodies at the place of the Buddha, ‘Samadhi-Light.’** “Thus Come One” refers to Shakyamuni Buddha. Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva says his body was like empty space – boundless in its measure. “Samadhi-Light Buddha” refers to Burning Lamp Buddha. During the second great asamkhyeya of Shakyamuni Buddha’s cultivation, Burning Lamp Buddha bestowed upon him a prediction of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

“At that time, I held in my hands four huge precious pearls, which shone on Buddhalands as many as the motes of dust in the ten directions and transformed them into emptiness.

Commentary:

“At that time,” after Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva had attained a boundless body, he **“held in his hands four huge precious pearls, which shone on Buddhalands as many as the motes of dust in the ten directions and transformed them into emptiness.”** This occurred in innumerable Buddhalands as numerous as fine particles of dust.

Sutra:

“In my mind there appeared a great, perfect mirror, which emitted from within ten kinds of subtle, wonderful precious light that poured out into the ten directions to the farthest bounds of emptiness.

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness, from within his everlasting, true **mind**, found that **there appeared a great, perfect mirror**. This mirror represents great wisdom. When the eighth consciousness is turned around, it becomes the Great Perfect Mirror Wisdom. **“It emitted from within ten kinds of subtle, wonderful precious light that poured out into the ten directions to the farthest bounds of emptiness.** The light was magnificent as it flowed out into all of emptiness throughout the ten directions.”

Sutra:

“All the royal lands of banners came into the mirror and passed into my body. There was no hindrance to this interaction, because my body was like emptiness.

Commentary:

“All the royal lands of banners” – that is, all the Buddhalands – **“came into the mirror and passed into my body.”** He gathered into the mirror all the Buddhalands in the ten directions of emptiness throughout the Dharmarealm. Once they were in the mirror, they went on into this body. **“There was no hindrance to this interaction, because my body was like emptiness.”** His body was emptiness itself, and emptiness was his body. There was absolutely no difference between his body and emptiness.

Sutra:

“My body could enter with ease as many countries as there are fine motes of dust and could do the Buddha’s work on a wide scale, because it had become completely compliant.

Commentary:

Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva realized that his body was just emptiness, and emptiness was his body. Therefore, there was no boundary that could be distinguished between the two, and so there was no obstruction between them, either. They were fused. From that point on, **“My body could enter with ease as many countries as there are fine motes of dust and could do the Buddha’s work on a wide scale, because it had become completely compliant.”** His body could pervade that many lands. What did he do when he got to all those places? He helped the Buddhas. How did he do that? He turned all mundane activities into deeds for the Buddha. His having become “completely compliant” means that he had achieved the greatest degree of ability to accord with living beings.

Sutra:

“I achieved this great spiritual power from contemplating in detail how the four elements lack anything to return to; how the production and extinction of false thoughts is no different from emptiness; how all the Buddhalands are basically the same. Once I realized this identity, I obtained patience with the non-production of Dharmas.

Commentary:

“I achieved this great spiritual power – the spiritual ability to accord with living beings – **from contemplating in detail how the four elements lack anything to return to** I studied and reflected on this in detail: the four elements of earth, air, fire, and water, have no substance; they are not based in anything. I realized that **the production and extinction of false thoughts is no different from emptiness.** False thoughts give rise to production and extinction: once I reflected on that, my body became no different from emptiness itself. Even **all the Buddhalands are basically the same.**” “The same” means that they, too, fundamentally are emptiness. He was a Treasury of Emptiness and found every-thing to be empty. He turned everything into empty space, including the

places where there were Buddhalands and the places where there weren't. **“Once I realized this identity, I obtained patience with the non-production of Dharmas.** I made this discovery about emptiness, and it brought me this kind of patience.”

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the contemplation of the boundlessness of emptiness to enter samadhi and attain wonderful power and perfect clarity. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I used the power of the contemplation of the boundlessness of emptiness. Since emptiness had no bounds, my body also became boundless. From contemplating emptiness I entered a kind of **samadhi** – the concentration-power of emptiness – and attained **wonderful power and perfect clarity.** This emptiness-samadhi was extremely magnificent. The power of it was totally complete and full of light. **This is the foremost method.** As for what I, Treasury of Emptiness Bodhisattva, have cultivated, the Dharma-door of contemplating emptiness is the most wonderful.”

N6 Maitreya Bodhisattva: the element consciousness.

O1 First tells about his experience at the time of a Buddha of antiquity.

Sutra:

Maitreya Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are fine motes of dust, a Buddha named Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp appeared in the world. Under that Buddha I left the home life; yet I was deeply committed to worldly fame and liked to fraternize with people of good family.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva is also Ajita. Maitreya is his family name, Ajita his given name. Maitreya means “Compassionate

Clan”¹; Ajita means “invincible”². Perhaps you have seen images of a fat monk in the dining hall in Buddhist temples. Maitreya is that monk. Maybe this Bodhisattva liked to eat good things and got fat that way. He also liked to laugh, but his laugh was not a coarse “Ha! Ha! Ha!” Rather, he always had a big smile on his face. He enjoyed playing with children, and so the children were all fond of him in turn. He was always surrounded by them. After Shakyamuni Buddha retires as the Teaching Host of this world, Maitreya Bodhisattva will take over the position. Shakyamuni Buddha is known as the Red-Yang Buddha. When Maitreya Bodhisattva becomes a Buddha, he will be the White-Yang Buddha. This means that when Maitreya Bodhisattva comes to the world as a Buddha, people’s blood will be white, not red. People are red-blooded now because of the Red-Yang Buddha.

When will Maitreya Bodhisattva come into the world? It sounds like a long time when you describe it, but it is not actually so long, because from a Bodhisattva’s point of view it is but the blink of an eye. How long a time will it be? At present, people’s average lifespan is about sixty years. Every hundred years people’s lifespan decreases one year and their average height decreases one inch. When these have decreased to the point that people’s lifespan is around thirty years, there will be a pestilence. People will die very quickly from the disease, even to the point that they will be dead an hour after they contract it. One may call for a doctor, but the doctor will die along with the rest. Fifty percent of the entire population will succumb to the disease. When the lifespan of the remaining fifty percent reaches twenty-five years, there will be another calamity. Why must these people die? Because by that time, people’s minds will be thoroughly decadent. There will be too many bad people, so heaven and earth will have to eliminate these incorrigibles. They will be unacceptable and will have to be traded in for better ones. In the first plague, then, fifty percent of the

1. *ci shi* 慈氏

2. *wu neng sheng* 無能勝

people will die. When the average life-span has declined to twenty-five years, there will be a devastating fire. Not only will people all over the earth be burned, but even those in the First Dhyana Heavens will perish.

Fire burns the first dhyana.

All over the world the seas will be burned dry. Uncountable people will die in the fire. Even so, some people will escape the holocaust. When the lifespan of the remaining people reaches about twenty years, there will be a disaster of water.

Water drowns the second dhyana.

When the lifespan of those who are left is just about twenty, there will be a disaster of wind, which will blow through the Third Dhyana Heaven.

Wind rips up the third dhyana.

So it is said,

*In the Six Desire Heavens
are the Five Signs of Decay;
Above, in the Third Dhyana Heavens
is the disaster of wind.
Even if people cultivate and reach
the Heaven of Neither Thought Nor Non-Thought,
It's not as good as going to the Western Land,
and coming back again.*

The Six Desire Heavens are the ones we see overhead; the Heaven of the Four Kings, the Trayastrimsha Heaven, the Suyama Heaven, the Tushita Heaven, the Heaven of the Bliss from Transformations, and the Heaven of the Comfort Gained from Others' Transformations. Beings in these Six Desire Heavens have to endure the Five Signs of Decay:

1) Their floral crowns wilt. The heavenly beings are crowned with flowers. They do not make the crowns; the crowns naturally appear to adorn them. But when the gods are about to die, what do you suppose happens? The flowers fall. Before a heavenly being's time comes to die, the flowers remain ever-fresh.

2) Their clothes get dirty. The clothes worn by the gods and goddesses don't need to be washed, unlike the clothes we people wear, which must be washed after being worn just once. The heavenly beings' clothes don't get dirty until the five signs of decay appear. This is the result of karmic retribution. The filth on their clothing comes from their karmic obstacles. Why do some people smell very bad when they are on the verge of death? Some smell bad even before it's time to die. That is also a result of karma.

3) Their armpits sweat. The gods don't perspire like people do. They never sweat, until they are on the verge of dying.

4) Their entire bodies smell. Ordinarily, the heavenly beings emit a sweet fragrance from their person. When they are about to die, however, they smell bad. Usually, though, they don't have to douse themselves with perfume, because they naturally smell good.

5) They cannot sit still. They can no longer sit like they used to. They keep restlessly getting up and down as if they were crazy. In the midst of this flurry, they get confused, and as soon as that happens, they die. They fall into this world.

Once the three disasters are over, people's lifespan will decrease to ten years. At that time, people will only reach the height of the dogs of the present day. They will be completely corrupt and act just like horses, cows, and pigs, in that they will have desire from the moment they are born. They will also be able to speak as soon as they are born. They will be capable of sexual desire because,

*People's nature flows into emotion;
Emotion flows into desire.*

By that time, people will have totally abandoned themselves to desire. They will marry by the time they are two or three years old, have children, and die by the time they are ten years old. But when the lifespan of people reaches only ten years, an increase will begin. The proportions will be the same: in every century a year will be added to their lifespan and an inch to their average height. It will increase until the lifespan of people reaches 84,000 years. Then a decrease will begin again, and when the lifespan has decreased to 80,000 years, Maitreya Bodhisattva will come into the world and accomplish Buddhahood. Some religious sects say that Maitreya Bodhisattva has already come to become a Buddha. These are words spoken in a dream; basically, those people don't understand the Buddhadharma. Maitreya's coming will happen in a certain way; you can't just explain it any old way.

When Maitreya Bodhisattva was cultivating the Way, he was always seeking advantage from situations – “climbing on conditions” as it's said in Chinese. He was always hobnobbing and fraternizing with the rich. So although he and Shakyamuni Buddha cultivated together at the same time Maitreya Bodhisattva didn't become a Buddha as quickly as Shakyamuni Buddha did, since he was always climbing on conditions. I certainly believe that he liked to take advantage of situations; how else would he have gotten so fat? He's fat because he liked to eat good food; he didn't get that way just by laughing.

He arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, “I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are fine motes of dust, a Buddha named Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp appeared in the world. Under that Buddha I left the home life; yet I was deeply committed to worldly fame and liked to fraternize with people of good family. I was intent on getting a good reputation.” “People of good family” refers to large families with lots of money. Every country has its wealthy people, and wherever Maitreya Bodhisattva went he paid no attention to the poor, but went to the homes of the rich to exchange greetings and

flatter them. Everywhere he went he also advertised for himself. He was phony this way when he first started to cultivate.

But you shouldn't think of Maitreya Bodhisattva as someone who climbs on conditions, because he eventually stopped doing it. The next passage refers to the time when he had already stopped.

O2 He teaches him to cultivate the samadhi of consciousness.

Sutra:

“Then the World Honored One taught me to cultivate consciousness-only concentration, and I entered that samadhi. For many aeons I have made use of that samadhi as I performed deeds for as many Buddhas as there are sands in the Ganges. My seeking for worldly name and fame ceased completely and never recurred.

Commentary:

At present our desire to climb on conditions and take advantage of situations had not ceased. Maitreya Bodhisattva's ceased long ago. He should study the way in which he stopped climbing on conditions instead of imitating his former bad habits. **“Then the World Honored One**, that is the Buddha Light of Sun, Moon, and Lamp, taught me to **cultivate consciousness-only concentration.**

The three realms come only from the mind

The myriad dharmas arise only from consciousness

That is the principle of the Consciousness-only Concentration.

“I entered that samadhi, and for many aeons I have made use of that samadhi as I performed deeds for as many Buddhas as there are sands in the Ganges. I made offerings to as many Buddhas as there are fine grains of sand in the Ganges River. **My seeking for worldly name and fame ceased completely and never recurred.** Both my desire to be famous and my habit of catering to the rich and well-born are all gone now. Now I don't climb on conditions and I don't seek name or profit.

O3 Later on his samadhi accomplished, he received a prediction.

Sutra:

“When Burning Lamp Buddha appeared in the world, I finally accomplished the unsurpassed, wonderfully perfect Samadhi of Consciousness.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva says, **“When Burning Lamp Buddha appeared in the world, I finally accomplished the unsurpassed, wonderfully perfect Samadhi of Consciousness.”** He realized in person a perfect penetration that was supremely subtle – the concentration power of the mind-consciousness.

Sutra:

“I went on until, to the ends of emptiness, all the lands of the Thus Come One, whether pure or defiled, existent or non-existent, were transformations appearing from within my own mind.

“I went on until, to the ends of emptiness, all the lands of the Thus Come One, whether pure or defiled, existent or non-existent, were transformations appearing from within my own mind. Even the disappearance of emptiness and the pure lands of the Thus Come Ones, as well as the impure ones, came from my own mind.” They were transformations of Maitreya Bodhisattva’s Consciousness Samadhi.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, because I understand consciousness only thus, the nature of consciousness reveals limitless Thus Come Ones. Now I have received the prediction that I will be the next to take the Buddha’s place.

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva addressed Shakyamuni Buddha, **“World Honored One, because I understand consciousness only thus – the doctrine explained above – the nature of consciousness**

reveals – as transformations of the mind-consciousness – **limitless Thus Come Ones**. It manifests countless Buddhas. **Now I have received the prediction that I will be the next to take the Buddha's place**. I have received a prediction of Buddhahood, and in the future, when Shakyamuni Buddha retires, I will come to the Saha World and become a Buddha.”

O4 He concludes his answer by telling how he was certified to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I was intent upon the contemplation that the ten directions come only from consciousness. When the conscious mind is perfect and bright, one enters the perfection of the real. One leaves behind reliance on others and attachment to incessant calculating and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I was intent upon the contemplation that the ten directions come only from consciousness. Everything in the ten directions is created from the conscious mind. **When the conscious mind is perfect and bright, one enters the perfection of the real.”** This means wisdom. **“One leaves behind** the aspect of the nature which involves **reliance on others**, and that nature’s **incessant calculating and attains the patience with the non-production of dharmas. This is the foremost method.”**

There are three aspects of the nature:

- 1) Reliance on Others;
- 2) Incessant Calculating;
- 3) Perfection of the Real.

From the perfection of the real, people give rise to reliance on others and then to incessant calculating. As an analogy, we can say that the perfection of the real nature is like hemp. The aspect which

involves reliance on others is like the hemp when seen as a rope. The incessant calculating of the nature is to see the rope as a snake. For instance, at night someone might see a rope made of hemp and mistake it for a snake and become frightened. That would be the function of his incessant calculating, which mistook a rope for a snake and reacted to it. He became attached to the idea that it was a snake when, in fact, it wasn't. When he realizes it is a rope, he has recognized his nature that involves reliance on others. When he figures out what the rope is made of, then he's gotten back to the perfection of the real nature. He sees it for what it really is. When Maitreya Bodhisattva cultivated the concentration of consciousness-only, he became enlightened. In this passage he refers to the three aspects of the nature when he says, "One enters the perfection of the real" and "leaves behind reliance on others and incessant calculating."

N7 Great Strength Bodhisattva: the element of perception.

O1 He tells how he was transmitted the dharma by a Buddha of old.

Sutra:

Dharma Prince, Great Strength, together with fifty-two Bodhisattvas of similar rank, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Dharma Prince, Great Strength, and **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva were sons of Amitabha Buddha when he was a wheel-turning king in a past life. Once Amitabha Buddha accomplished Buddhahood, these two Bodhisattvas served him. They are his daily companions – one on his left, one on his right. When Amitabha Buddha retires as teaching host of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, in the first half of the night, the Dharma will become extinct, and in the second half of the same night, **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva will accomplish Buddhahood there in the Land of Ultimate Bliss. When **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva retires as the resident Buddha of the Western Land, Great Strength Bodhisattva will become a Buddha in the same way that **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva did, there in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

Great Strength Bodhisattva is also known as Attained Great Strength¹. He is so powerful that if he raises his hand, moves his foot, or moves his head, the great earth quakes and trembles. When he walks about, the earth shakes. “Dharma Prince” means Bodhisattva.

Together with fifty-two Bodhisattvas of similar rank, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha. These fifty-two Bodhisattvas represent the Ten Faiths, the Ten Dwellings, the Ten Practices, the Ten Transferences, the Ten Grounds, and the levels of Equal Enlightenment and Wonderful Enlightenment – the Fifty-two Stages of Bodhisattva Practice.

Sutra:

“I remember when, as many aeons ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha called Limitless Light appeared in the world. In that same aeon there were twelve successive Thus Come Ones; the last was called Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon. That Buddha taught me the Buddha-recitation Samadhi.

Commentary:

“I remember when, as many aeons ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha called Limitless Light appeared in the world. In that same aeon there were twelve successive Thus Come Ones; the last was called Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon. During that one aeon, twelve Buddhas appeared in the world; the twelfth was named Light Surpassing the Sun and Moon. **That Buddha taught me the Buddha-recitation Samadhi.** He taught me to recite ‘Namo Amitabha Buddha.’”

“Amitabha” means “Limitless Light” and “Limitless Life.” The first Buddha of that aeon was named Limitless Light; was it the same Amitabha Buddha we know? Probably not, because the recent Amitabha Buddha accomplished Buddhahood ten kalpas ago. But

^{1.} *de da shi* 得大勢

their names were the same. A lot of Buddhas have the same name, just as we people often have first or last names that are the same.

O2 He brings up an analogy to show the intertwining of the response and the way.

P1 First he uses the analogy of two people.

Sutra:

“Suppose there were a person who always remembers someone else, but the someone else he remembers has entirely forgotten about him. If two such people were to meet, even if they were to see each other, they would not take notice. They would not recognize each other.

Commentary:

Suppose there were a person who always remembers someone else, but the someone else he remembers has entirely forgotten about him. This is an analogy. There are two people, one of whom is always recollecting the other, while the other never remembers the former. Perhaps they are relatives or friends. These two people represent the Buddhas and living beings. The Buddhas are always thinking about us; they are mindful of us living beings, but we living beings never remember the Buddhas. We may happen to study a little of the Buddhadharma, but we’re not very clear about what’s being said. So we exclaim, “The Buddhadharma is really wonderful.” But we don’t know how wonderful it actually is – and that is even more wonderful. Why are the Buddhas mindful of living beings? It is because they see that all living beings are of the same substance. The Buddhas regard all living beings as their past fathers and mothers and as future Buddhas. So the Buddha said, “All living beings on the great earth have the Buddha nature. All can become Buddhas.” There’s not a single living being who cannot become a Buddha. It is this very point that makes doctrines of Buddhism the most lofty and all-encompassing. That is why the Buddhas advocate not killing, not stealing, not committing sexual misconduct, not lying, and not taking intoxicants. Maintaining these five precepts is a way of showing one’s regard for all living creatures. Because the Buddha sees that all living beings are one in

substance with himself, he wants to teach and transform them – to take all living beings across to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.

We living beings come into this world and renounce the roots while we grasp at the branches. We forget the fundamental matters, turn our backs on enlightenment and unite with the “dust” – the wearisome mundane world. That is why we forget the Buddhas and never remember to be mindful of them.

There are several methods in the Dharma door of reciting the Buddha’s name:

1) Mindfulness of the Buddha by holding his name. You can recite the name of whichever Buddha you like. For instance, if you like Amitabha Buddha, you can recite *Namo Amitabha Buddha*. Or perhaps you like to recite *Namo Our Original Teacher, Shakyamuni Buddha*. Maybe you want to recite *Namo Medicine Master Buddha Who Dispels Calamities and Lengthens Life*. It’s the same with any Buddha throughout the Ten Directions – you can recite any name you wish. The object of being mindful of the Buddha is to consolidate your thoughts into the one thought of mindfulness of the Buddha – to dispense with all other false thoughts. If you don’t have extraneous thoughts, you will not give rise to evil thoughts, and when you don’t give rise to evil, you are on the road to good.

2) Mindfulness of the Buddha by contemplating. You consider how Amitabha Buddha has a white ray of light that shines between his brows. A line of a verse in his praise says, “His white ray of light curls as high as five Mount Sumerus.” The verse goes on, “His violet eyes are as large as the four seas.” Can you imagine that!? If you are small minded, then your idea of the Buddha will be fairly small when you consider him. If you have a vast state of mind, then your conception of him can be monumental.

3) Mindfulness of the Buddha by contemplating an image. In this method you look upon an image of Amitabha Buddha while you recite. And as you are mindful of the Buddha, you reflect on his adorned appearance and characteristics.

But, I'll tell you: it can even happen that you become possessed by a demon when being mindful of the Buddha. In general, no matter what practice you do, you must have some virtuous conduct – some virtue in the Way. When I was in Hong Kong at [Ta Yu Mountain](#) at [Tse Hsing Temple](#), a bhikshu wanted to do a Standing-Buddha Session. In this practice one stays in one room and walks continually, and so it is called the “continuous walking samadhi” and also the “Standing Buddha samadhi.” For ninety days one walks in a room without sitting, lying down, or going to sleep. This is a Dharma door of particular vigor. That bhikshu was being mindful of the Buddha while he practiced this Dharma-door of continuous walking. One day I noticed that the more he recited the louder he became, until he was bellowing, “Namo Amitabha Buddha: Namo Amitabha Buddha.” When I heard him reciting that way, I knew he had entered some state, so I went to take a look. He was running around the room reciting like mad. What had happened? In a past life this bhikshu had been an ox. Since he had performed some merit at a temple by plowing the fields, he had become a monk in this life. However, although he was a monk, his ox-like habits hadn't changed yet. He had a terrific temper. The reason he was running around the room when I found him was that he had seen Amitabha Buddha come, and he was chasing him. What was actually going on? He'd gotten into a demonic state.

It wasn't really Amitabha Buddha who had come, it was a water buffalo that had come up out of the sea. This weird water-buffalo had transformed itself into an appearance of Amitabha Buddha in order to dupe the monk. The monk thought it was Amitabha Buddha who had come, and so he went running after him. When I got there I made use of a Dharma and broke up his demonic state. So sometimes you can even be possessed by demons when reciting the Buddha's name.

4) Mindfulness of the Buddha in his Actual Appearance. This means investigating dhyana. We sit and pursue the topic, “Who is mindful of the Buddha?”

Now in this passage of text, the person who always remembers is the Buddha, and the person who never remembers is we living beings. **“If two such people were to meet, even if they were to see each other, they would not take notice.”** Even if they should encounter each other, it would be just as if they hadn’t met. Maybe they see each other at some place or other, but their “lights don’t unite,” their energies don’t interact, because one person remembers but the other one doesn’t. They can’t get together. Even if they were face to face, it would be as if they were not.

Sutra:

“If two people remember each other until the memory of each is deep, then in life after life they will be together like a form and its shadow, and they will never be at odds.”

Commentary:

“If two people remember each other until the memory of each is deep – if they remember each other very well – then in life after life they will be together like a form and its shadow, and they will never be at odds.” Your shadow follows you everywhere and never leaves you. These two people will be that way and will never be at odds. They will never fail to recognize each other or have a falling out.

P2 Then he uses the analogy of a mother and her child.

Sutra:

“Out of pity for living beings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are mindful of them as a mother remembers her child. If the child runs away, of what use is the mother’s regard? But if the child remembers his mother in the same way that the mother remembers the child, then in life after life the mother and child will not be far apart.”

Commentary:

“Out of pity for living beings, the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions are mindful of them as a mother remembers her

child. The Buddhas of the ten directions have sympathetic regard for living beings in the same way that a mother has regard for her child. **If the child runs away, of what use is the mother’s regard?** Although the mother thinks about him all the time, it’s of no benefit. **But if the child remembers his mother in the same way that the mother remembers the child, then in life after life the mother and child will not be far apart.** If they remember each other in the same way, then the mother and child will be together life after life. They won’t be separated from each other.”

That is to say, if the Buddhas are mindful of us living beings, and if we living beings are also mindful of the Buddhas, then for life after life we will not be separated from them. We will be together.

P3 He connects it with the dharma to show the profound benefit.

Sutra:

“If living beings remember the Buddha and are mindful of the Buddha, certainly they will see the Buddha now or in the future.

Commentary:

If they have a memory of the Buddha and they recite the Buddha’s name, it’s for sure they can see the Buddha either in this life or in a future life.

Sutra:

“They will never be far from the Buddha, and their minds will awaken by themselves, without the aid of expedients.

Commentary:

They will become enlightened.

Sutra:

“A person who has been near incense will carry a fragrance on his person; it is the same in this case. It is called an adornment of fragrant light.

Commentary:

“A person who has been near incense will carry a fragrance on his person. If someone is permeated with the fragrance of incense, a fragrance will linger around his body. It is the same in this case. It is called an adornment of fragrant light.”

P4 He recollects how he benefited himself and benefited others.

Sutra:

“On the causal ground I used mindfulness of the Buddha to enter into patience with the non-production of dharmas. Now in this world I gather in all those who are mindful of the Buddha and bring them back to the Pure Land.

Commentary:

“On the causal ground I used mindfulness of the Buddha to enter into patience with the non-production of dharmas. Great Strength Bodhisattva says that on the causal ground, that is, when he had first brought forth the resolve to cultivate the Way as a bhikshu, he obtained the patience with the non-production of dharmas by reciting the Buddha’s name. **“Now in this world-the Saha World, I gather in all those who are mindful of the Buddha”** Just as a magnet collects iron filings, Great Strength Bodhisattva receives and gathers in all beings who practice mindfulness of the Buddha **and brings them back to the Pure Land.** He takes them to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

P5 He concludes his answer by telling how he was certified to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. I would select none other than gathering in the six organs through continuous pure mindfulness to obtain samadhi. This is the foremost method.”

Commentary:

“Now the Buddha asks about the Dharma door of perfect penetration. I would select none other than gathering in the six

organs through continuous pure mindfulness. I have no other choice; I have only the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha. I used this Dharma-door to gather in the six sense-organs and the false thinking that arises from them. I controlled the six sense-organs so they did not create false thinking. I recited so the pure mindfulness of the Buddha continued uninterrupted, until I obtained that kind of samadhi. **This is the foremost method.** This is the best Dharma-door.”

The Ear Organ

(Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva)

L2 Gwan Yin speaks in detail.

M1 He explains how he received a prediction from a former Buddha.

Sutra:

Then Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha:

Commentary:

Above, Great Strength Bodhisattva told how he cultivated the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha, which is a very appropriate method for people in this day and age. It's quite effective. Why? The Sutras tell us that in the Dharma-Ending Age, not even one in a million people who cultivate will attain the Way. That many people cultivate and not even one person among them attains to the Way.' Then what shall we do? Don't worry. It goes on to say, "Only by mindfulness of the Buddha are they taken across." The Dharma-door of reciting the Buddha's name is very easy. With the Dharmadoor of mindfulness of the Buddha,

*One transcends the Three Realms
through the side door (horizontally),*

*And carries one's karma
into that rebirth.*

What does it mean to transcend the Three Realms through the side door? It's like an insect in a piece of bamboo. If the insect were to gnaw its way out through the length of the bamboo, it would have to go through all the sections; it would take a long time. If the insect were to gnaw a hole in the side of the bamboo instead, it would get out very easily. People who are mindful of the Buddha are like the insect who goes out the side of the bamboo; they escape the Three Realms on a horizontal plane – right at the level they are. “One carries one's karma into that rebirth.” The karma one carries is former karma, not current karma – it is old karma, not new karma. This means that before you understood the method of being mindful of the Buddha, you created offenses. You can take that karma with you when you go to rebirth in the Pure Land. But you shouldn't continue to create bad karma once you know about reciting the Buddha's name, because you can't take that karma along. Once you know about mindfulness of the Buddha, you should change your ways. Don't keep creating bad karma. If you do, you will be piling karma on top of karma, adding offenses to offenses. That's called “knowing clearly and transgressing intentionally,” in which case, the offenses are tripled. You can take your old karma with you, but now that you understand the Buddhaharma, you can't say, “Oh, I can recite the Buddha's name on the one hand and create bad karma on the other hand, because in the future I can take my karma with me to the Land of Ultimate Bliss.” That's a mistake. Not only will you be unable to take that karma with you, you won't be able to be reborn there at all, because you will be hindered by your karma. We people who believe in the Buddha should take care not to create any further offenses once we know about mindfulness of the Buddha. This section of text concerning Great Strength Bodhisattva's perfect penetration through mindfulness of the Buddha is extremely important. Everyone should know what the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha is all about.

Why should we be mindful of the Buddha? Because we have great causes and conditions with Amitabha Buddha. Amitabha Buddha became a Buddha ten kalpas ago. Before that, he was called Bhikshu Dharma Treasury. At that time he made forty-eight great vows. In making his thirteenth and fourteenth vows he said, “If the living beings throughout the ten directions say my name and do not become Buddhas, I will not attain the right enlightenment.” In other words, if people who recite his name do not become Buddhas, he will not become a Buddha. And because of the power of Amitabha Buddha’s vows, everyone who recites his name can get reborn in the Land of Ultimate Bliss.

The Pure Land Dharma-door comprises one of the Five Schools of Chinese Buddhism.

1. The Ch’an (Dhyana) School,
2. The Teaching School,
3. The Vinaya School,
4. The Secret School,
5. The Pure Land School.

The Pure Land Sect will be the last of the five to endure. In this world, during the Dharma-ending Age, the *Shurangama Sutra* will be the first Sutra to disappear. After that, the other Sutras will disappear also, until only the *Amitabha Sutra* is left. While the *Amitabha Sutra* remains in the world, it will take many people across. After another hundred years, it will also be gone. “Dharma ending” simply means that the Dharma will entirely disappear. Once the *Amitabha Sutra* has vanished, all that will be left will be the phrase, “Namo Amitabha Buddha.” This tremendous phrase will also take many people across; then, after another hundred years, it, too, will disappear. All that will be left then will be the name “Amitabha Buddha,” which will remain in the world yet another hundred years and then vanish as well. At that point there will be no Buddhadharma remaining in the world. While we are still at the advent of the Dharma-ending Age, we should practice and uphold the events of the Proper Dharma Age. That’s called

“Requesting that the Buddhas dwell in the world to turn the Dharma Wheel.” In the Dharma-ending Age, we should not fear any suffering or difficulty. I don’t fear the trouble of lecturing the Sutra for you, and you should not fear the trouble of coming to listen. Strike up your spirits! Don’t say you’re tired and have to go rest. Forget yourself for the sake of the Dharma.

Take a look at how Shakyamuni Buddha dwelt in the Snowy Mountains for six years for the sake of seeking the Dharma. We haven’t gone to the mountains for six years, but the least we can do is investigate Buddhism. Take the Buddhadharma as you would food to eat. “If I don’t get to hear this Sutra lecture, it’ll be like not getting to eat for several days” – that should be your attitude. “I must hear the Dharma. I will certainly work to understand it truly.” Where do you go to gain genuine understanding of the Buddhadharma? You listen to a lot of Sutras. Without hearing the Sutras, you will be unable to open your wisdom. This is especially true of the *Shurangama Sutra*, for it is the Sutra that opens one’s wisdom.

Just take as an example this section of the method for obtaining perfect penetration, which the twenty-five sages are explaining. Some accomplished their cultivation by means of the Fire-Light Samadhi. Some reached success by cultivating the Water-Contemplation Samadhi. Some reached perfection by means of the wind, some from emptiness. Some cultivated their eyes and won success, and some used their ears. Each of the six sense-organs was cultivated by one or another of them. Every one of the eighteen realms was cultivated by someone. Hearing these principles, you should apply them to yourself.

Through which sense organ should I cultivate? You ask. Don’t be nervous. It is the very organ of the ear which **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva used that is best for you. **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva perfected his cultivation through the organ of the ear, and Ananda will follow him in cultivating the same method. The Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of former times have left us such a wonderful Dharma-door that we should also follow the method of cultivating

the organ of the ear to perfect penetration. This is the easiest method.

Then Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet and said to the Buddha. "Gwan" means to contemplate.

*Using the wisdom capable of contemplation,
One contemplates the objective realm.*

With the capability of wisdom, one regards the state that is being contemplated. The wisdom capable of contemplation is inherent in the self-nature of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva. The objective realm which is contemplated is that of the sounds made by all living beings. You should look into the sounds of suffering, the sounds of happiness, the sounds of what is neither suffering nor happiness, the sounds of goodness, the sounds of evil, the sounds of truth, the sounds of falseness – contemplate all kinds of sounds.

"**Shr**" is the world, in the sense of time – the past, present, and future. Contemplate living beings' past causes and effects. Contemplate the karma that living beings are now creating. Contemplate the rewards and retributions that living beings will have to undergo in the future. "Why is that person suffering so much?" you reflect, and then you realize: "Oh, in his last life he was not filial to his parents and he wasn't kind to people in general. That's why this time his retribution is unfortunate." Contemplate all kinds of sounds – "**Yin**."

"Bodhisattva" means "one who enlightens living creatures." It also means "a living being with a great mind for the Way." A Bodhisattva is also known as "an enlightened living being": that refers to his self-enlightenment. When we say he is "one who enlightens living beings," we are referring to his enlightenment of others. Together these mean he is an enlightened living being who wants to cause all living beings to become enlightened. What Bodhisattvas do is enlighten themselves and enlighten others, benefit themselves and benefit others. You who study the Buddhad-

harma should remember the definition of Bodhisattva. Don't let it be like the people who held a meeting of the "United Sangha," but when someone asked them what "Sangha" meant they were left speechless. Inconceivable!

Sutra:

“World Honored One, I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, there was a Buddha in the world named Contemplating the World’s Sounds. It was under that Buddha that I brought forth the Bodhi-resolve. That Buddha taught me to enter samadhi through a process of hearing and reflecting.

Commentary:

Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva said to Shakyamuni Buddha, **“World Honored One, I remember when, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, passing back through an incredibly long time – unreckonable aeons as numerous as the Ganges’ sands, there was a Buddha in the world named Contemplating the World’s Sounds.”** “Contemplating the World’s Sounds” is the English translation of the name Gwan Shr Yin. This is the Gwan Yin of old. That Thus Come One, Gwan Shr Yin, also cultivated perfect penetration by means of the organ of the ear. **“It was under that Buddha that I brought forth the Bodhi-resolve.** I resolved to attain the Way of enlightenment. **That Buddha taught me to enter samadhi through a process of hearing and reflecting.”** The Gwan Yin Buddha of old taught him the process of hearing and reflecting. It is from the wisdom of hearing, the wisdom of reflecting, and the wisdom of cultivating that he entered samadhi. Here “reflection” does not refer to the thinking of the sixth mind-consciousness. Rather, it has the meaning of quiet consideration – the skill of Ch’an.

M2 He gradually unties the knot, cultivates, and is certified.

Sutra:

“Initially, I entered the flow through hearing and forgot objective states. Since the sense-objects and sense-organs were quiet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness crystallized and did not arise. After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared. Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on, and awareness and the objects of awareness became empty. When the emptiness of awareness reached an ultimate perfection, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be. Since production and extinction were gone, still extinction was revealed.

Commentary:

“Initially, I entered the flow through hearing and forgot objective states.” With the wisdom of hearing, one listens inside, not outside. Not chasing after the objects of sound means not following them out. Earlier, the text spoke of not following the six sense-organs and not being turned by them. This is known as,

Returning the hearing to hear the self-nature.

Returning the hearing means not listening to external sounds but turning back instead to hear your own self-nature. It means,

Gathering in your body and mind.

It means not seeking outside.

Turn the light around and shine it within.

Here the text says that [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva “entered the flow,” which means he returned and listened to the self-nature.

Enter the flow of the Dharma-nature of a sage.

He “forgot the objective states.” All the “dust” – the defiling objects of the six-sense objects as perceived by the six sense-organs – was forgotten.

“Since the sense-objects and sense-organs were quiet, the two characteristics of movement and stillness crystallized and did not arise.” The source of the six sense-organs and six sense-objects ceased to be. It was severed. Here he entered the flow of his own self-nature. When that happens, your self-nature is still and quiet. When this quietude reaches an ultimate point, the appearance of movement and stillness ceases as well. Basically, movement appears as movement and stillness as stillness, but now, although these two characteristics are as clear as crystal, they do not arise.

“After that, gradually advancing, the hearing and what was heard both disappeared.” As this pure and clear state of quiet increased, as day by day it became more full and complete, the hearing that was capable of hearing the self-nature eventually disappeared. It, too, was gone. The ability to hear and the objects of hearing both vanished. The organ of the ear was capable of hearing, and the self-nature was what was being heard, but now they, too, were gone. **“Once the hearing was ended, there was nothing to rely on.”** Since the hearing-nature was gone, there was no attachment. At that time it was “producing the mind that does not dwell anywhere.”

“Awareness and the objects of awareness became empty.” Even the perception of awareness vanished – was emptied out. **“When the emptiness of awareness reached an ultimate perfection, emptiness and what was being emptied then also ceased to be.”** The emptiness of the nature of awareness reached an ultimate state of perfection. Then the mind capable of creating vanished, as did the states that were made empty, so that then there wasn’t even any emptiness! As long as emptiness remains, you’re still attached to emptiness. But now, for Gwan Yin Bodhisattva there wasn’t even any emptiness.

“Since production and extinction were gone, still extinction was revealed.” Since the mind subject to production and extinction vanished, the genuine bliss of still extinction manifested. That state is inexpressibly blissful.

M3 He explains how in accord with the substance he gives rise to the function.

N1 He lists the two sources.

Sutra:

“Suddenly I transcended the mundane and transcendental worlds, and throughout the ten directions a perfect brightness prevailed. I obtained two supreme states.

Commentary:

When still extinction manifested, **“Suddenly I transcended the mundane and transcendental worlds.”** This refers to the world of sentience and the world of material objects. **“And throughout the ten directions a perfect brightness prevailed.”** He was united as one with the worlds of the ten directions without any difficulty. **“I obtained two supreme states.”**

Sutra:

“First, I was united above with the fundamental, wonderfully enlightened mind of all the Buddhas of the ten directions, and I gained a strength of compassion equal to that of all the Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones.

Commentary:

His compassionate mind was exactly like the compassionate mind of all Buddhas.

Sutra:

“Second, I was united below with all living beings in the six paths, and I gained a kind regard for all living beings equally.

Commentary:

“Second, I was united below with all living beings in the six paths.” What are the living beings in the six paths? Looked at in terms of a single person, the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and

mind are living beings in the six paths. They are the cycle of the six paths, as are forms, sounds, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas; these are also the revolutions of the six paths. They are the six paths of living beings in our own self-natures. There is a connection between these six paths within and the six paths outside. The external six paths are the path of heavenly beings, asuras, people, animals, hungry ghosts, and dwellers in the hells. The category of asuras includes all beings who like to fight. Asuras who use their pugnacious natures beneficially join the armed services and protect the country. Asuras who use their propensity to fight in a bad way end up as thieves, robbers, and gunmen. Asuras may live in the heavens, among people, in the animal realm, or as ghosts. Sometimes asuras are counted as part of the “Three Good Paths,” that is, the gods, asuras, and humans. Sometimes they are placed with the “Four Evil Destinies,” that is, the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, and asuras. When you put them together – gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell-dwellers – you have the Cycle of the Six Paths.

The Buddhas are above **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, so the Bodhisattva says, “I was united above with the compassion of all Buddhas.” Beings in the six paths are at a lesser level than Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, so the Bodhisattva says, “I was united below with beings in the six paths.” “Living beings” (眾生 *jung seng*) are defined as those born (生 *seng*) from a multitude (眾 *jung*) of conditions. There are many factors involved in the birth of beings. The Bodhisattva goes on, “I was united with living beings, **and I gained a kind regard for all living beings equally.**” Beings contemplate and seek the kindness of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas.

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- N2 He explains in three parts.
 O1 Thirty-two response bodies.
 P1 He relies on the compassionate power.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, because I served and made offerings to the Thus Come One, Gwan Yin, I received from that Thus Come One a transmission of the Vajra Samadhi of all being like an illusion, as one becomes permeated with hearing and cultivates hearing. Because I gained a power of compassion identical with that of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, I became accomplished in thirty-two response-bodies and entered all lands.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, because I served and made offerings to the Thus Come One, Gwan Yin, I received from that Thus Come One a transmission of the Vajra Samadhi of all being like an illusion, as one becomes permeated with hearing and cultivates hearing.” It is said to be like an illusion because one cultivates without cultivating; without cultivating, one cultivates. It means that one is always aware of what is going on at any given moment and never forgets about it. And yet, though one does not forget, one does not really think about it, either. Without thinking about it, one has nonetheless not forgotten it.

“Permeated with hearing” means that every day he cultivated the method of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature, until he was infused with skill. This is the method of the Vajra Samadhi. When one succeeds in this concentration, one has attained the Vajra Samadhi.

“Because I gained a power of compassion identical with that of all Buddhas, the Thus Come Ones, I became accomplished in thirty-two response-bodies and entered all lands. I gained a compassionate power identical to the Buddhas, and it enabled me to make thirty-two transformation-bodies out of my own body. Then I went to all countries to teach and transform living beings.”

P2 He explains the wonderful responses one by one.

Q1 He responds to the seeking of the sages.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, if there are Bodhisattvas who enter samadhi and vigorously cultivate the extinction of outflows, who have superior understanding and manifest perfected penetration, I will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, if there are Bodhisattvas who enter samadhi and vigorously cultivate the extinction of outflows” – they have attained samadhi and wish to progress in their cultivation and attain a genuine state of no outflows – Nirvana without residue. They are those **“who have superior understanding and manifest perfected penetration.”** Their wisdom is extremely wonderful, and they display the state of perfect penetration of the six organs. **“I will appear in the body of a Buddha and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.** When I encounter living beings like this, I’ll manifest the physical form of a Buddha. Although I have not become a Buddha myself, the power of my compassion is identical with that of all Buddhas. Based on this power of compassion, I will manifest as a Buddha and speak Dharma for these Bodhisattvas, so that they may succeed in becoming liberated.”

Sutra:

“If there are those who are studying, who are tranquil and have wonderful clarity, who are superior and miraculous and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of a Solitarily Enlightened One and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are those who are studying, who are tranquil and have wonderful clarity...” “Those who are studying” refers to

those prior to the Fourth Stage of Arhatship. Those **“who are superior and miraculous and manifest perfection”** are those who have attained the bliss of tranquility and wisdom which is wonderfully clear. Their wisdom is supreme, and they display perfect penetration. **“I will appear before them in the body of a Solitarily Enlightened One.** For that kind of living being I will manifest as one who is solitarily enlightened,” that is, a person of the Two Vehicles who awakens to the Way when there is no Buddha in the world. They cultivate the Twelve Causal Conditions and become enlightened.

*In the spring they contemplate
the blossoming of the white flowers;
In the fall they observe
the falling of the yellow leaves.*

They awaken to the principle of the natural process of birth and extinction of the myriad things and events in the world. That’s how they become enlightened. The Bodhisattva will appear as a Solitarily Enlightened One **“and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.”**

Sutra:

“If there are those who are studying, who have severed the twelve causal conditions, and, having severed the conditions, reveal a supreme nature, and who are superior and wonderful and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of one enlightened to conditions and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are those who are studying, who have severed the twelve causal conditions, and, having severed the conditions, reveal a supreme nature...” Again, “those who are studying” refers to the first three stages of Arhatship. The Twelve Causal Conditions have been explained before. They are extremely important:

1. Ignorance conditions activity;
3. activity conditions consciousness;
4. consciousness conditions name and form;
5. name and form condition the six sense-organs;
6. the six sense-organs condition contact;
7. contact conditions feeling;
8. feeling conditions craving;
9. craving conditions grasping;
10. grasping conditions becoming;
11. becoming conditions birth;
12. birth conditions old age and death.

This is the door of mutual arising.

*When ignorance is extinguished,
activity is extinguished;
when activity is extinguished,
consciousness is extinguished;
when consciousness is extinguished,
name and form are extinguished;
when name and form are extinguished,
the six sense-organs are extinguished;
when the six sense-organs are extinguished,
contact is extinguished;
when contact is extinguished,
feeling is extinguished;
when feeling is extinguished,
craving is extinguished;
when craving is extinguished,
grasping is extinguished;
when grasping is extinguished,
becoming is extinguished;
when becoming is extinguished,
birth is extinguished;*

*when birth is extinguished,
old age and death are extinguished.*

This is the door of returning to extinction. People who cultivate toward Arhatship become very clear about ignorance and the connections that bring about birth. From birth comes death, and one is born and dies again, cyclically. They put an end to the cycle by first extinguishing ignorance. Once ignorance is extinguished, the other links are extinguished in turn. Once they sever these conditions, they discover a supreme nature. They become those **“who are superior and wonderful and manifest perfection, I will appear,”** says Gwan Yin Bodhisattva, **“before them in the body of one enlightened to conditions and speak dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.”**

Sutra:

“If there are those who are studying, who have attained the emptiness of the Four Truths, and cultivating the Way, have entered extinction, and have a superior nature and manifest perfection, I will appear before them in the body of a Sound-Hearer and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are those who are studying, who have attained the emptiness of the Four Truths, and cultivating the Way, have entered extinction... Perhaps there are Sound-Hearers, Arhats, who understand the principle of emptiness with regard to the Four Truths, who have cultivated the Way and have attained the bliss of Nirvana. They **have a superior nature and manifest perfection.** They display a state of perfect penetration and fusion. **I will appear before them in the body of a Sound-Hearer and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.”** Why does the Bodhisattva manifest the body of a Sound-Hearer? It’s because in doing so he becomes like them, and it is easier to communicate. He becomes a good friend and there is mutual trust established. If one

has no affinities with people, then no matter how well one may speak, one won't be believed. He appears like them in order to teach and transform them. Sound-Hearers awaken to the Way upon hearing the Buddha's sound. They are people of the Two Vehicles.

Q2 He responds to the seeking of the gods.

R1 Heavenly kings.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who wish to have their minds be clear and awakened, who do not engage in mundane desires and wish to purify their bodies, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahma King and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings” – these beings are not Sound-Hearers, nor those Enlightened to Conditions, nor Bodhisattvas; they are ordinary beings in the six paths. They are those **“who wish to have their minds be clear and awakened”** They want to attain enlightenment – genuine understanding. They are those **“who do not engage in mundane desires.”** They abstain from greed and desire (sexual desire) in the wearisome mundane world, because they **“wish to purify their bodies, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahma King and speak Dharma for them, causing them to attain liberation.** I will appear as the Great Brahma Heaven Lord and explain the Dharma for them so that they can become free.”

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord, leader of heavenly beings, I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who wish to be the Heavenly Lord”: this refers to the Christian God. They want to be the

“leader of heavenly beings.” They want to rule the heavens. **“I will appear before them in the body of Shakra and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as Shakra for that kind of living being.”** Shakra is the Heavenly Lord – God.

Did you know that the Holy Mother of Catholicism is **Gwan Shr Yin** Bodhisattva? Catholics believe in the Holy Mother, because they want to be born in the heavens. So **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva manifests as a goddess to teach and transform them, enabling them to be born in the heavens. Of course, they will have to come back again from the heavens, but gradually they will make progress. Why does **Gwan Yin** manifest and speak a dharma to help people get born in the heavens? His ultimate aim is to get them to believe in the Buddha. But since at present their wish is to be born in the heavens, he teaches them how to get reborn there. When they return from there, they will eventually come to believe in the Buddha. Ordinary people feel that the time involved in this process is quite long, but actually in the Buddhas’ eyes, it is a mere moment, a blink of an eye.

This method can be likened to that of parents who want their child to master an excellent profession, but whose child does not wish to study that profession. The parents comply and allow the child to study what he wishes, but after several false starts, he eventually winds up studying that excellent profession his parents suggested. **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva’s method for teaching and transforming living beings is to fulfill whatever wishes they might have. But the ultimate aim is always to bring living beings to the accomplishment of Buddhahood.

Sutra:

“If living beings wish to attain physical self-mastery and to roam throughout the ten directions, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If living beings wish to attain physical self-mastery... They want to be free and at ease so that they can do whatever they want. “I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.” The gods from the Heaven of Self-Mastery can roam at will, going wherever they want.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who wish to attain physical self-mastery and fly through space, I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of great self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who wish to attain physical self-mastery... They want to be free and at ease, to have their bodies change forms at will . They want to be able to fly through space. Since they have this wish, I will ground myself in the spirit of the Buddha’s compassionate strength from above and I will appear before them in the body of a god from the heaven of great self-mastery and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.” The Lord of the Heaven of Great Self-Mastery is extremely independent and blissful. Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as this god in order to cause living beings to succeed in their wish.

R2 Heavenly ministers.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who are fond of ruling over ghosts and spirits in order to rescue and protect their country, I will appear before them in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who are fond of ruling over ghosts and spirits in order to rescue and protect their country...” Some beings like to command ghosts and spirits. They do this out of a sense of patriotic spirit for their country – in order to save it and guard it. **“I will appear before them in the body of a great heavenly general and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who like to govern the world in order to protect living beings, I will appear before them in the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who like to govern the world in order to protect living beings...” They want to rule the world. They want to be leaders in the world in order to protect the living beings in it. **“I will appear before them in the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** The Four Heavenly Kings are: Maintaining-the-Country (*Dhīrtarashtra*) who oversees the Eastern continent *Purvavideha*; Increasing (*Virudhaka*) who oversees the Southern continent *Jambudvipa*; Vast Eyes (*Virupaksha*) who oversees the Western continent *Aparagodaniya*; and Learned (*Vaishravana*) who oversees the Northern continent *Uttarakuru*.

For people who want to rule the country and protect the people, *Gwan Yin* Bodhisattva manifests in response as one of the Four Heavenly Kings.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being born in the heavenly palaces and to command ghosts and spirits, I will appear before them in the body of a prince from the kingdoms

of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being born in the heavenly palaces to delight in heavenly blessings... While they are in the heavens, they can command ghosts and spirits. They order the ghosts to do things for them. They summon the spirits and put them to work. Actually the ability to command ghosts and spirits is rather ordinary. People may find it strange, but actually it isn’t. For those who like to order the ghosts and spirits around, “I will appear before them in the body of a prince from the kingdoms of the Four Heavenly Kings and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”

Q3 He responds to the seeking of the human destiny.

R1 Kings, ministers, citizens.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who would like to be kings of people, I will appear before them in the body of a human king and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If someone wants to rule over people, I will appear as a ruler of people and speak the Dharma for them.”

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being heads of households, whom those of the world venerate and yield to, I will appear before them in the body of an elder and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who enjoy being heads of households... They like being wealthy and ruling over a large clan. They want to be people whom those of the world venerate and

yield to. People venerate them and bend to their wishes. People are extremely respectful of such a one and trust him. **I will appear before them in the body of an elder and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will appear as a mighty and wealthy elder to speak the Dharma for them.” A person must have ten kinds of virtuous conduct in order to earn the title of elder. They are:

1. His name is honored.
2. His position is lofty.
3. His wealth is great.
4. His deportment is awesome.
5. His wisdom is profound.
6. His life is long.
7. His conduct is pure.
- B. His propriety is perfect.
9. He is praised by those above him.
10. He is a refuge for those below him.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who delight in discussing the classics and who keep themselves lofty and pure, I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who delight in discussing the classics...” Perhaps they like poetry, or they are interested in the writings of famous authors. They can recite much of this material from memory. **“They keep themselves lofty and pure.”** If asked to do something they consider beneath them, they won’t have anything to do with it. **“I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** I will appear as a layman and speak Dharma for them.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who enjoy governing the country and who can handle matters of state decisively, I will appear before them in the body of an official and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who enjoy governing the country and who can handle matters of state decisively... They legislate the great matters of the country. I will appear before them in the body of an official and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.” I will appear as a minister or official and speak the Dharma for them.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who like reckoning and incantation and who wish to guard and protect themselves, I will appear before them in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who like reckoning and incantation...” “Reckoning” refers to mathematics and divination. “Incantation” refers to the black arts – various dharma-devices. It also refers to the spells and mantras of externalist ways. The former Brahma Heaven mantra of the Kapila religion that Matangi’s mother used as an example of this. These beings **wish to guard and protect themselves.** They figure that if they learn a mantra or dharma, it can protect them. **“I will appear before them in the body of a Brahman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** Brahmanism is a religion in India. The name means “descended from the pure” and represents their cultivation of pure practices. These people have a lot of dharmic devices. They can recite mantras and have many devious magic tricks. And because Gwan Yin Bodhisattva constantly accords with

living beings, he also appears as a Brahman to speak the Dharma, so that these kinds of people can have what they wish for.

R2 Sangha members.

Sutra:

“If there are men who want to leave the home-life and uphold the precepts and rules, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshu and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are men who want to leave the home-life and uphold the precepts and rules...” These men study the Sutras and decide they want to leave the home-life. What home do they leave? They leave three types of homes:

1. They leave the ordinary worldly home.
2. They leave the home of afflictions.
3. They leave the home of the Triple Realm.

The ordinary worldly home refers to one’s family. The home of affliction means dwelling in ignorance. One should get out of ignorance. The Triple Realm, also known as the three realms of existence, refers to existence in the desire realm, existence in the form realm, and existence in the formless realm. It is not until you have left the Triple Realm that you can be certified to the fruition of Arhatship.

When these men leave home, they will uphold the precepts and rules. Precepts and rules are extremely important. One who holds the precepts cannot lie or exaggerate. At the very least, one should maintain the five precepts, which prohibit killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, and taking intoxicants or drugs. Here, “precepts and rules” does not just refer to the first five, however. These men uphold the five precepts, the eight precepts, the ten major and forty-eight minor Bodhisattva precepts, and the two hundred and fifty bhikshu precepts. They guard and protect the precepts and do not

violate them. **“I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshu and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** “Bhikshu” has three meanings:

1. mendicant;
2. frightener of Mara;
3. destroyer of evil.

Every day bhikshus would take their bowls and go out to beg for food. They did not prepare their own food. So they are called mendicants. There are three precept platforms for receiving the complete precepts. When one ascends to the bhikshu platform, the Karmadana asks, “Are you a great hero?”

The answer is, “I am a great hero.”

The Karmadana asks, “Have you already brought forth the resolve for Bodhi?”

The answer is, “I have already brought forth the resolve for Bodhi.”

Then one is given the bhikshu precepts, and an earth-traveling yaksha informs a space-traveling yaksha about it, and the word is passed among the flying yakshas until it reaches the heavenly demons in the Sixth Desire Heaven. They report: “Someone in the world has just left the home-life and become a bhikshu.” This terrifies the demon king, who says, “My retinue is less by one and the Buddha’s retinue has increased by one.”

What evil do bhikshus destroy? The evil of affliction. Without really knowing why, people from time to time give rise to affliction. When they become afflicted, they lose all their talent except for the capacity to turn to evil. For instance, a vegetarian may get upset, and the first thing he decides to do is stop his practice of pure eating. “I’m going to eat meat,” he decides. As soon as people’s afflictions arise, they forget everything except how to do bad things. Or, suppose there’s someone who stopped smoking for a long time. When he gets upset, however, the first thing he does is reach for a cigarette. And pretty soon he’s back on heroin, opium,

and cigarettes all in the same inhale! He's puffing and smoking up a storm. He's inhaling and exhaling so fast that it's as if he'd become an immortal who can breathe clouds and spit fog. A person who likes to drink vows that he'll never touch another drop. But then he gets angry about something and he goes out and buys a bottle to get drunk and drown his sorrows. Who would have guessed that the more he drinks, the more depressed he becomes, but he doesn't realize it, because he's drunk. When he wakes up from the spree, every bone in his body aches. Ask anyone who drinks and they'll tell you that the morning after is terrible. If he's broke by then, there's nothing he can do but endure it. But if he's got any money left, the chances are that he'll go buy another bottle and start in again. Getting drunk is all he knows how to do.

In general, when your afflictions rise up, you do things that you ordinarily wouldn't do. It even happens that someone swears he would never kill anyone, but when he gets afflicted, he totally disregards everything and decides to kill everyone in the world. And he takes a knife and starts doing just that.' So, affliction is something to avoid. Don't give rise to affliction. You want to leave the home of afflictions.

One also wants to get out of the home of the triple world, and so "leaving home" has these three meanings.

Sutra:

"If there are women who would like to leave the home-life and hold the pure precepts, I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshuni and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

"If there are women who would like to leave the home-life and hold the pure precepts..." They also want to study the Buddhadharmā. They also leave the worldly home, the home of afflictions, and the home of the triple realm. Women have more precepts than men. They hold three hundred forty-eight precepts. Women are said to have a body with five outflows. So they have a

lot more precepts. **“I will appear before them in the body of a Bhikshuni and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are men who want to uphold the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. If there are women who wish to base themselves in the five precepts, I will appear before them in the body of an upasika and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are men who want to uphold the five precepts – that is, no killing, no stealing, no sexual misconduct, no lying, and no intoxicants – I will appear before them in the body of an upasaka and speak dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish. I will manifest as a layman and speak the Dharma for them. **If there are women who wish to base themselves in the five precepts – they also want to uphold these precepts. I will appear before them in the body of an upasika.** I will manifest as a laywoman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”

R3 Wives of officials.

Sutra:

“If there are women who govern internal affairs of household or country, I will appear before them in the body of a queen, first lady, or noblewoman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are women who govern internal affairs of household or country...” Perhaps these women look after matters, or perhaps they work for governmental departments which handle a

country's internal affairs, and they govern matters of state. **“I will appear before them in the body of a queen, first lady, or noblewoman and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** Perhaps Gwan Yin Bodhisattva manifests as the female ruler of a country, or as the wife of the ruling man. Perhaps she appears as an influential matron or a woman versed in social graces. In this way she fulfills the wishes of such women.

R4 Virgin youths.

Sutra:

“If there are virgin lads I will appear before them in the body of a pure youth and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”

Commentary:

“If there are virgin lads...” For youngsters who have not known women and are still chaste, **“I will appear before them in the body of a pure youth and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are maidens who want to remain virgins and do not wish to marry, I will appear before them in the body of a gracious lady and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”

Commentary:

“If there are maidens,” that is, women who have never known men and have never married, **“who want to remain virgins and do not wish to marry...”** They do not wish to get near men, to marry, or to undergo the experience of being taken. **“I will appear before them in the body of a gracious lady and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Q4 He responds to those who wish to leave the eight divisions.

Sutra:

“If there are heavenly beings who wish to escape their heavenly destiny, I will appear in the body of a god and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are heavenly beings who wish to escape their heavenly destiny...” These gods or goddesses don’t want to stay in the heavens; they would like to transcend the Triple Realm. **“I will appear in the body of a god and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.** Since they want to transcend the heavens, I manifest before them and, using all kinds of Dharmas, enable them to get what they want.”

Sutra:

“If there are dragons who want to quit their lot of being dragons, I will appear before them in the body of a dragon and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are dragons who want to quit their lot of being dragons...” The average opinion in this day and age is that dragons do not exist. Some people will accept myths about ancient dragons, frightening and immense. There’s no way to say for sure about those, but dragons do exist. Where do they live? In dragon palaces in the sea. “We’ve explored the depths; why haven’t we ever run across them?” you wonder. If you can detect their whereabouts, they’re not true dragons, because dragons are spiritual creatures. They have spiritual powers and can make themselves big or little at will. They can grow as big as empty space itself. They can shrink to the size of a mote of dust if necessary. They can disappear suddenly, and reappear just as unexpectedly. Their spiritual powers give them the ability to transform themselves in endless ways. Why do they have such powers but only the body of an animal? As cultivators in

previous lives, they brought forth the resolve for the Great Vehicle, but they didn't hold the precepts. They were "quick with the vehicle but slow about the precepts." They were very casual. Since they were "quick with the vehicle," they obtained spiritual powers. But since they did not accept the precepts, they fell into the animal realm. If dragons decide they want to transcend the realm of dragons, **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva **"will appear before them in the body of a dragon and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."**

Sutra:

"If there are yakshas who want to get out of their present fate, I will appear before them in the body of a yaksha and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."

Commentary:

"If there are yakshas..." "Yakshas" is a Sanskrit word which means "speedy" (捷疾). It also means "courageous and strong" (勇健). Yakshas are a kind of ghost. There are three main types of ghost:

1. Earth-travelling ghosts;
2. Flying ghosts;
3. Space-travelling ghosts.

A line on the Shurangama Mantra reads, **"Yau Cha Jye La He."** It refers to the yakshas. In the mantra, the names of the kings of various kinds of ghosts are called. Each king of ghosts rules over a lot of lesser ghosts, and when the name of the ruler is called, all the other ghosts must also respectfully obey one's commands. If the yakshas **"want to get out of their present fate"** – if they don't want to be ghosts – **"I will appear before them in the body of a yaksha and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish."** Gwan Yin Bodhisattva will manifest as a yaksha ghost and help them obtain their wish.

Sutra:

“If there are gandharvas who wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a gandharva and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are gandharvas...” “Gandharva” is a Sanskrit word that means “Incense-Skandha” (香陰), because the act of smelling incense forms their consciousness. They are musicians for the Jade Emperor. When the Jade Emperor lights “sinking-in-the-water incense” wood, they smell the fragrance and are attracted. They come and enjoy making music for the Jade Emperor. These gandharvas may **“wish to be freed from their destiny”** as gandharvas. They do not want to be gandharvas any more. **“I will appear before them in the body of a gandharva and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are asuras who wish to be liberated from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of an asura and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are asuras who wish to be liberated from their destiny...” They want to leave the retinue of asuras. **“I will appear before them in the body of an asura and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

This section includes the beings of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits, but in the *Shurangama Sutra* the garudas are not included. In the “Universal Door Chapter” of the *Lotus Sutra*, it is related that *Gwan Yin* Bodhisattva appears in the body of a garuda also. “Garuda” is a Sanskrit word; it means “great golden-winged *p’eng* bird (大鵬金翅鳥). Garudas are also part of the eight divisions, and the fact that the Sutra does not include them here is

perhaps the fault of an omission in copying the text, or perhaps they are understood to be included in the general category of “living beings” mentioned below.

Garudas diet exclusively on dragons. Their wing-span is three hundred thirty great yojanas. A small yojana is forty Chinese miles (one Chinese mile is approximately one-third of an English mile). A middle-sized yojana is sixty miles. A great yojana is eighty miles. With one flap of its wings, the golden-winged p'eng bird flaps away all the waters of the seas. Its strength is that great. Once the waters of the seas are gone, the dragons are exposed. In this way, the garuda was just about to finish off the entire population of dragons. So the dragons went to see the Buddha to seek rescue. “The great golden-winged p'eng bird is about to cause the retinue of dragons to become extinct. What can be done?” They sought the Buddha's compassion in helping them out; they hoped he would forbid the p'eng bird to eat them. The Buddha gave the dragons pieces of his kashaya for them to attach to their horns. After that, the p'eng bird dared not eat them. With nothing to eat, the p'eng bird also went to the Buddha to ask him to save his life.

“No one is eating you,” said the Buddha. “Why have you come and asked to be saved?”

“It's true that no one is threatening me, but without anything to eat, I will die of starvation,” said the p'eng. “You don't permit me to eat dragons anymore, and with nothing to eat, I'm about to die of hunger.” So he asked the Buddha to be compassionate and think of a way to help him.

“You don't have anything to eat? All right, after this, I will feed you. Every time I and all my disciples eat, we will offer something to you to eat. You don't have to eat dragons any more.” That is why, during the high meal offering at noon, a little of the food is taken outside and offered to the great golden-winged p'eng bird. This Sutra does not mention the garuda, but we should be aware that the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits includes this kind of being.

Sutra:

“If there are kinnaras who wish to transcend their fate, I will appear before them in the body of a kinnara and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are kinnaras who wish to transcend their fate...” “Kinnara,” also a Sanskrit word, means “questionable spirit” (疑神). They are so called because they appear to be human, but on their heads is a horn. They are another type of music spirit that plays music for the Jade Emperor. **“I will appear before them in the body of a kinnara and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Sutra:

“If there are mahoragas who wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a mahoraga and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are mahoragas...” “Mahoraga” is a Sanskrit word which means “great python spirit” (大蟒神) and also “earth-dragon” (地龍). The dragons mentioned above can roam in space and are called heavenly dragons. This python, also called a dragon, is confined to the earth. It does not have spiritual powers. Mahoragas are also one of the beings of the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits. If mahoragas **“wish to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in the body of a mahoraga and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”**

Q5 He responds to people who seek to be people.

Sutra:

“If there are living beings who like being people and want to continue to be people, I will appear in the body of a person and

speaking Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are living beings who like being people and want to continue to be people...” They want to be people life after life. They like being a person and always want to be a person. So **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva says, **“I will appear in the body of a person and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** He will speak Dharma for these kinds of beings and help them to be successful in their wish.

Q6 He responds to those non-humans who wish to leave their non-human state.

Sutra:

“If there are non-humans, whether with form or without form, whether with thought or without thought, who long to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in a body like theirs and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.

Commentary:

“If there are non-humans...” This refers to animals and creatures other than people who are **“with form or without form...with thought or without thought.”** If there are beings like this **“who long to be freed from their destiny, I will appear before them in a body like theirs and speak Dharma for them, enabling them to accomplish their wish.”** “With form” means that they have a tangible, visible shape. “Without form” means that they have no visible shape. There are many kinds of beings “with thought.” Beings “without thought” include earth, wood, metal, and stone.

Beings “without form” originally were sentient beings, but they have dispersed into emptiness and fallen into oblivion. This is usually a temporary state, and at some point they can again go through rebirth and become a person.

P3 Concludes with the name and the reasons.

Sutra:

“This is called the wonderful purity of the thirty-two response-bodies, by which one enters into all lands and accomplishes self-mastery by means of the Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing and by means of the miraculous strength of effortlessness.

Commentary:

“This is called the wonderful purity of the thirty-two response-bodies, by which one enters into all lands and accomplishes self-mastery by means of the Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing.” One develops the skill of turning back the hearing to hear the self-nature by cultivating every day. And one applies the **“miraculous strength of effortlessness.”** “Effortlessness” refers to wonderful principle of the unconditioned. With it, there is no need to go through the conception of an idea and the thought-process of working out the idea, as people must when they want to do something. The Bodhisattva does not have to conceive the idea or think it through. Within samadhi he can do all kinds of things. In the samadhi of becoming permeated with hearing and cultivating hearing he can attain the miraculous power of effortlessness. And in this way he accomplishes self-mastery. Very naturally, matters are taken care of.

O2 Fourteen fearlessnesses.

P1 He relies on kindness.

Sutra:

“Also, World Honored One, using this Vajra Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing, and using the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths, I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time

and cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.

Commentary:

“Also, World Honored One, using this Vajra Samadhi of Becoming Permeated with Hearing and Cultivating Hearing, and using the miraculous strength of effortlessness, because I have a kind regard equally for all living beings in the six paths – I have a regard for the kindness of the Buddhadharma, just as do all beings in the six paths of gods, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and beings in the hells. **I go throughout the ten directions and the three periods of time** – past, present, and future. I cultivated the practice of being permeated with hearing until I attained the Vajra Samadhi, and I did not need to conceptualize or think about things in order to be able to do them. **I cause all living beings who encounter bodies of mine to receive the meritorious virtue of fourteen kinds of fearlessness.** I have attained fourteen kinds of virtue in bestowing fearlessness.

P2 He lists the fourteen fearlessnesses.

Q1 Fearlessness in the eight difficulties.

Sutra:

“**First: because I do not contemplate sounds for my own sake, but rather listen to the sounds of those whom I contemplate, I can enable living beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds.**

Commentary:

This is the first of the fourteen kinds of fearlessness. “**First: because I do not contemplate sounds for my own sake, but rather listen to the sounds of those whom I contemplate, I can enable living beings throughout the ten directions who are suffering and in distress to attain liberation by contemplating their sounds.**” It’s not that he just takes note of his own sound; he contemplates the sounds of beings in the world. “Since my skill at

returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is accomplished, there is no need for me to contemplate myself. I can contemplate all the living beings in the world and enable those who are anguished to be freed. I listen, regarding their sounds of suffering, and I enable them to attain liberation.

Sutra:

“Second: since my knowledge and views have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are caught in a raging fire, the fire will not burn them.

Commentary:

“Second: since my knowledge and views have turned around and come back” – that is, since Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva has the skill of returning the light to illumine within – **“I can make it so that if living beings are caught in a raging fire, the fire will not burn them.”** If such a living being can recite the name of Gwan Yin Bodhisattva and can cultivate, then if he enters a great fire, the fire will not be able to burn him.

Sutra:

“Third: since contemplation and listening have turned around and come back, I can make it so that if living beings are floundering in deep water, the water cannot drown them.

Commentary:

Someone says, “I will test **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva to see if he’ll really respond. I’ll sit on a pile of wood and set it afire and see if I burn up.” In that case, you’ll certainly burn. “But why does the Sutra say that if you enter a great fire it will not burn you?” That’s because the “if” means that it happens to you without your intending it.

Someone else says, “**Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva says that if one is caught in deep water, one will not be drowned, so I’ll just jump into the ocean and see if I drown.” Again, you’re sure to drown. It is when you unexpectedly meet with suffering or difficulty that **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva will rescue you. But if your intention is to test him

out, he will pay no attention to you, because basically you don't believe in **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva. If you really believed in him, there would be no reason to test him out. The safest thing would be not to test him out.

Sutra:

“Fourth: since false thinking is cut off, and my mind is without thoughts of killing or harming, I can make it so that if living beings enter the territory of ghosts, the ghosts cannot harm them.

Commentary:

If false thinking is cut off, and you don't have any ideas of killing or harming, and if you can recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, you can enable beings who enter the region of rakshasa ghosts to not be harmed by the ghosts.

Sutra:

“Fifth: since I am permeated with hearing and have brought hearing to accomplishment, so that the six sense-organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing, I can make it so that if living beings are about to be wounded, the knives will break into pieces. I can cause swords of war to have no more effect than if they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light.

Commentary:

“Fifth: since I am permeated with hearing and have brought hearing to accomplishment, so that the six sense-organs have dissolved and returned to become identical with hearing – that is, when the skill of cultivating the return of the hearing to hear the self-nature is accomplished, the six sense-organs function mutually. **Then I can make it so that if living beings are about to be wounded, the knives will break into pieces.** For instance, suppose someone takes up a knife with the intent of cutting off someone's head. Just as the blade is about to fall, the knife of itself breaks into pieces. **I can cause swords of war to have no more effect than if**

they were to slice into water, or if one were to blow upon light. I can cause the sharp weapon which is about to cut into someone's shoulder to have the effect of slicing into water: that is, once it has passed through, it is gone, and no injury is sustained. Or, I can make the cut of the blade have the effect of blowing upon light: that is, no effect, since no matter how much you blow on light, it will not move.

Sutra:

“Sixth: when the hearing permeates and the essence is bright, light pervades the Dharma-realm, so that absolutely no darkness remains. I am then able to make it so that, though yakshas, rakshasas, kumbhandas, pishachas, and putanas may draw near to living beings, the ghosts will not be able to see them.

Commentary:

“Sixth: when the hearing permeates and the essence is bright – that is, when the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is perfected – **light pervades the Dharma-realm, so that absolutely no darkness remains.** The darkness disappears. **I am then able to make it so that, though yakshas, rakshasas, kumbhandas, pishachas, and putanas may draw near to living beings, the ghosts will not be able to see them.**” “Yakshas” are male ghosts, “rakshasas” are female ghosts. Both kinds are extremely fierce. Their diet consists of human corpses. They have certain mantras which are powerful enough to remove the stench of the corpse so they can stand to eat the flesh. “Kumbhanda” is also the name of a king of ghosts. Kumbhanda are shaped like barrels and give people nightmares. For instance, when people are asleep they may see a weird apparition; though in their dream they are mentally alert, they can't move physically. They become paralyzed through the efforts of the nightmare ghosts. Sometimes, if a person's *yang* energies are weak and his *yin* energies prevail, the person can be paralyzed for a long time, and the ghost can

eventually cause the person's death. This kind of ghost abounds in this world.

“Pishachas” are ghosts that eat human essence and energy, and also the essence of grains. “Putanas” are “rulers of fevers.” They can cause people to get sick and have a fever. If you cultivate the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature, or if you recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, then these ghosts cannot see you, though they may come right up beside you, because you emit light which they fear. Actually, owls and bats can see at any time. Since the ghosts belong to *yin*, they cannot see you if you have *yang* light. They can only find you if you give of *yin* energy.

Sutra:

“Seventh: when the nature of sound completely melts away and contemplation and hearing return and enter, so that I am separate from false and defiling sense-objects, I am able to make it so that if living beings are confined by cangues and fetters, the locks will not hold them.

Commentary:

“Seventh: when the nature of sound completely melts away and contemplation and hearing return and enter, so that I am separate from false and defiling sense-objects...” There is no sound, and even the nature of sound disappears when one returns the act of contemplating and listening back to oneself. One leaves behind the defiling sense objects and all false thinking. Then **I am able to make it so that if living beings are confined by cangues and fetters, the locks will not hold them.**” If you recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, the locks fall open by themselves. This happens quite often; a lot of people have had this experience. It's not just a manner of speaking. If people sincerely recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, there can be responses like this.

Once there was a person who committed a crime and was put in jail. He and seven or eight other prisoners recited the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva. How did he know about doing that? He knew a monk and had asked the monk to save him from his plight. The

monk had said, “If you want me to save you, you must single-mindedly recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva; then you will be able to get out of this predicament.” The prisoner recited **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva’s name for three days and three nights and then the locks on his cangue and chains spontaneously opened and he was free to go. But he did not go. “What meaning would there be in my going if the others have to stay here?” was his thought. So he taught the others to recite the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva. After two more days of recitation, the locks on the other prisoners also fell away. They all returned to their homes. After that, they single-mindedly recited the name of **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva; they recited so sincerely that they caused everyone in the village to take up the practice as well.

Sutra:

“Eighth: when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises, and I can make it so that if living beings are travelling a dangerous road, thieves will not rob them.”

Commentary:

“Eighth: when sound is gone and the hearing is perfected, an all-pervasive power of compassion arises. The sounds of the mundane world cease, and by turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature, one’s hearing is perfected, which means that without using the mind to cognize the hearing, one can hear all sounds. **I can make it so that if living beings are travelling a dangerous road, thieves will not rob them.”**

Q2 Fearlessness with the three poisons.

Sutra:

“Ninth: when one is permeated with hearing, one separates from worldly objects, and forms cannot rob one. Then I can make it so that living beings with a great deal of desire can leave greed and desire far behind.”

Commentary:

The **Ninth** fearlessness is to be separate from greed and desire. **“When one is permeated with hearing, one separates from worldly objects, and forms cannot rob one.”** If one cultivates day after day until the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is perfected, one can be apart from all superficial states. In particular, one can separate from the realm of the defiling objects of form.

People should not think that beautiful forms are good to get involved with. If you love a beautiful form, it will plunder the treasures of your household. It will take your most ancient and valuable gems and steal them away from you. Rather, it should be that:

*Eyes contemplate the shapes of forms,
but inside there is nothing.
Ears hear the worldly sounds,
but the mind does not know.*

When you see a beautiful form, your attitude of mind should be that it is as if you had not seen it. If you see a beautiful form and your mind moves, ask yourself why your mind didn't move before you saw it. Don't let forms rob you of the wealth of your household.

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva says, **“I can make it so that living beings with a great deal of desire can leave greed and desire far behind.”** A passage in the “Chapter on the Universal Door of **Gwan Shr Yin** Bodhisattva” of the *Lotus Sutra* reads: “If people with a great deal of desire can constantly be mindful and respectful of **Gwan Shr Yin** Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their desire.” That is the meaning of the present lines of text, as well. “A great deal of desire” specifically refers to sexual desire. The biggest problem in human life, the one that is nearly impossible to resolve, is sexual desire. To see through the involvements of men and women and put them down is genuine liberation. If you can't see through them and put them down, you cannot get free, and you cannot become

enlightened. If you are really adept in your skill, then when you eat you won't know you're eating, and when you are dressed you won't know you're wearing clothes. If you can forget about eating and wearing clothes, you will be even more able to renounce external things. If men can forget about their girlfriends and women can forget about their boyfriends – if you can smash through that state – then your skill will have some substance to it. How much the less should you get hung up with your sisters and brothers, your sons and daughters, and the whole lot of relatives. To study the Buddhadharma, you have to put everything down. During the period in which you are studying the Buddhadharma, you should pay no regard to anything else. You should be like a new person just beginning again, and you should forget about all the events of the past. In that way the water of Dharma can moisten your Bodhi heart. If you can't put this down and can't renounce that, then the water of Dharma has no way to nourish your Bodhi heart. If you can constantly recite the name of [Gwan Yin](#) Bodhisattva and pay respect to [Gwan Yin](#) Bodhisattva, then your thoughts of desire will disappear.

The most important aspect of cultivating the Way is cutting off thoughts of sexual desire. If you cannot do that, you cannot get out of the triple realm. You can't decide that you want to become enlightened and still not be able to part with the experiences of this world. If you can't separate from the affairs of this world, you cannot become a Buddha. You can't have both. Mencius said it well:

You can't have fish and bear-paws at the same time.

Although one may like to eat fish and to eat bear-paws, there is no way one can eat both in the same bite. By the same token, you cannot have worldly pleasures and transcendental bliss at the same time. You want to become a Buddha, but you can't part with mundane wealth, forms, fame, food, and sleep. There's no way you can bring that off.

Sutra:

“Tenth: when sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense-organ and the external state are perfectly fused, without any complement and without anything complemented. Then I can make it so that living beings who are full of rage and hate will leave all hatred.

Commentary:

The Tenth fearlessness: **“When sound is so pure that there is no defiling object, the sense-organ and the external state are perfectly fused.”** When one returns the hearing to hear the self-nature, the sound becomes pure, which just means that there isn’t any sound. The sound is empty, and the defiling object disappears. Then there is fusion of the six sense-organs and the state of the six sense-objects. In this world, anything evil, no matter what it is, can become good if you know how to deal with it. And good things can turn evil if you cannot deal with them. Earlier in the Sutra the Buddhas of the ten directions told Ananda that the six thieving sense-organs are what causes one to fall, and that the six sense-organs are also what enables one to accomplish Buddhahood. It is the six sense-organs and nothing else. If you use them well, they can help you. If you are unable to use them, they can destroy you. It’s just like money: when you have it, if you realize that you should do meritorious things with it and perform all kinds of good deeds to benefit beings, then your money has not be spent badly. But if you use the money to gamble and for opium and various other unwholesome things, then you have used your money to commit offenses. The principle is the same with the six sense-organs.

When the sound is gone and the organs and objects are in perfect accord, there is no **complement** or **anything complemented**. They are non-dual; they have become one. They are united and so there aren’t any sense-organs or sense-objects, and yet the sense-organs are just sense-organs, and the sense-objects are just sense-objects. There is no matching of sense-organs with sense-objects when one reaches this state. **Then I can make it so that**

living beings who are full of rage and hate will leave all hatred.

I can cause living beings' big tempers and fiery natures and their massive hatred to disappear." "Hatred" refers to getting angry and having afflictions. The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says: "If people who have a lot of anger can constantly be mindful and respectful of **Gwan Shr Yin** Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their hatred." The essential point here is being constantly mindful. It's not that you recite today but not tomorrow; recite this morning but not tonight; it's not that you recite this month but not next month. You must recite every day for your practice to be worthy of being called constant mindfulness. And "respectful" does not mean that you recite but never really believe in the Buddha. You harbor a doubt: "Can it really be this way? Is there such a power?" Once you start to question it, you won't be able to be successful. So with faith and constant mindfulness and respect for **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva, you won't have a temper any more. You won't be so fiery, and you won't have such huge afflictions. You'll leave them far behind.

Sutra:

"Eleventh: when the dust has gone and has turned to light, the Dharma realm and the body and mind are like crystal, transparent and unobstructed. Then I can make it so that all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed – all atyantikas – are forever free from stupidity and darkness.

Commentary:

"Eleventh: when the dust has gone and has turned to light..." When the states of the six sense-organs and six sense-objects melt away, we emit a light. Then, **"the Dharma realm and the body and mind are like crystal."** The body and mind are the Dharma Realm, and the Dharma Realm is the body and mind. They become one. The body and mind pervade the Dharma Realm; isn't that the state of a Buddha? That's also the way Gwan Yin Bodhisattva is. The body and mind become like crystal, **"transparent and unobstructed."** From inside one can see outside, and from outside one can see inside. There is no inside,

outside, big, or little. That's like the monk, **Ta Hsiu** (大休, "Great Rest"), from **Ling Yen** Mountain. He deserved his name. He built himself a tomb out of rock just big enough to sit in. Then he made a door for it out of stone and carved a couplet beside it, one line on either side of the door. The couplet went like this:

*No big, no little, no inside or out.
I cultivated, I understood, and
I took care of myself.*

That is, he did his own cultivation, came to understand by himself, and then made his own funeral arrangements. After he finished the couplet he sat down in the tomb, closed the door, and completed extinction. He entered Nirvana. That is an inconceivable state. So when he took his rest, it was indeed a great one. How vast was his liberation! How free he was! I met this monk at **Su Chou** at **Ling Yen** Mountain. He cultivated for himself and took care of everything else as well. He wasn't any trouble for anyone.

"Then I can make it so that all dark and dull-witted beings whose natures are obstructed – all atyantikas – are forever free from stupidity and darkness." They have no wisdom and so they cannot see through and clearly understand anything, just like a dull knife that can't cut clean. They mistake right for wrong and wrong for right. But **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva can enable these beings to be separate from obstructions that cover them over. "Atyantikas" is a Sanskrit word that means "unwholesome mind." If you suggest that such a being do something good, he cannot. Rather than give up a penny for some good use, he grips it clutched in his fist with such force that the copper melts. If you tell him to help someone, his reaction is that it's stupid. "My money's for me to spend. Why should I help other people?" However, **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva can help such people get out of their stupidity – their dark viewpoint. Someone who doesn't help others doesn't have any light in his own self-nature, and therefore is the stupidest kind of person there is.

The passages just previously discussed greed and hatred. This section concerns stupidity. The *Dharma Flower Sutra* says, “If people with a lot of stupidity can constantly be mindful and respectful of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, they can get rid of their stupidity.”

Once there was an extremely wealthy man who really loved money and was loath to give it up. He had three sons. He named the first son “Gold.” “Silver” was the name of the second son. The third son, he was afraid, would do good deeds with his money instead of hoarding it, so he named him “Karmic Obstacle.” When he was about to die he called his first son to his side and said, “I’m about to go. Will you go with me?”

Gold said, “You’re nuts. How could I die with you? You ordinarily love me best. Why is it when it comes time for you to die you want to harm me?” Gold would not go with him.

“Well, I’ll talk it over with the second son,” the father thought, and he called in Silver. “Your older brother won’t accompany me in death. Will you? You’re usually very filial.”

The second son said, “If you’re dying, do it by yourself. Although I’m your son, I can’t follow you into death. You’re getting eccentric. I’m too young to die.” Gold wouldn’t go with him, and neither would Silver.

He called in his third son, Karmic Obstacle. “Usually you’re very disobedient, so I’m not very fond of you. But now I’m about to die, and Gold and Silver won’t go with me. Can you think it over and decide if you can accompany me?”

Karmic Obstacle said, “There’s no need for me to think it over. Of course I’ll go. Now you see that Gold and Silver, whom you’re so fond of, don’t stand up to the test. But I, Karmic Obstacle, will follow you wherever you go. In birth I will accompany you, and in death I will join you. So who’s most filial after all, tell me?”

*None of the myriad things can go.
Only karma will follow you.*

The old man reflected upon all the gold and silver he had accumulated that would go for the pleasures of his first and second son, while he himself had to die. He experienced deep regret. “If only I had built a temple or a Bodhimanda while there was still time,” he thought. “But now that I’m dying, it’s too late.”

The moral of the story is, don’t be like the old man. If you have the means, do good deeds.

Q3 Fearlessness for those with the two kinds of seeking.

Sutra:

“Twelfth: when matter dissipates and returns to the hearing, then unmoving in the Bodhimanda I can travel through worlds without destroying the appearance of those worlds. I can make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. At the side of each Buddha I become a Dharma Prince, and I can make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who wish to have sons, are blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons.

Commentary:

“Twelfth: when matter dissipates and returns to the hearing – when the physical body is transformed and goes back to the nature of hearing – **then unmoving in the Bodhimanda I can travel through worlds without destroying the appearance of those worlds.”** “The unmoving Bodhimanda” means that he stays in his original Way-place. For instance, [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva is here at the Buddhist Lecture Hall, but although he is here, he can travel throughout the world. He hasn’t moved from here, but his transformation bodies are in all places. And the worlds are not destroyed. With his Dharma body he can **“make offerings to as many Buddhas, Thus Come Ones, as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions.”** He goes throughout the ten directions doing the Buddha’s work. **“At the side of each Buddha I become a Dharma Prince, and I can make it so that childless**

living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who wish to have sons, are blessed with meritorious, virtuous, and wise sons.”

Sutra:

“Thirteenth: with perfect penetration of the six sense-organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One. I inherit the secret dharma-doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. Receiving them without loss, I am able to make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who seek daughters are blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects.

Commentary:

“Thirteenth: with perfect penetration of the six sense-organs, the light and what is illumined are not two. Encompassing the ten directions, a great perfect mirror stands in the Empty Treasury of the Thus Come One.” The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind are unobstructed and perfectly interpenetrated. Everything comes together to one. The six organs function interchangeably. It is as if a huge mirror were set up and the Treasury of the Thus Come One is empty. **“I inherit the secret dharma-doors of as many Thus Come Ones as there are fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions. Receiving them without loss, I am able to make it so that childless living beings throughout the Dharma Realm who seek daughters are blessed with lovely daughters who are upright, virtuous, and compliant and whom everyone cherishes and respects.”** If someone wants a daughter, they will have a daughter who is proper, has virtue, and is easy to get along with. Everyone who sees this girl will be fond of her and respect her. She will be a lovely girl with perfect features.

Q4 Fearlessness in those who hold the name.

Sutra:

“Fourteenth: in this three-thousand-great-thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many Dharma Princes as there are grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers appear in the world and cultivate the dharma. They act as models in order to teach and transform living beings. They comply with living beings by means of expedients and wisdom, in different ways for each.

Commentary:

The **fourteenth** kind of fearlessness: **“this three-thousand-great-thousand world system with its billions of suns and moons, as many Dharma Princes as there are grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers appear in the world”** – they are living in the world right now – **“and cultivate the dharma. They act as models in order to teach and transform living beings. They comply with the wishes of living beings by means of expedients and wisdom.** They use skill-in-means and provisional wisdom **in different ways for each** kind of living being that is ready to be taught, since each being is different.

Sutra:

“However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense-organ and have discovered the wonder of the ear-entrance, after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the Dharma Realm, I am able to make it so that living beings who uphold my name obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma Princes who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers.

Commentary:

“However, because I have obtained the perfect penetration of the sense-organ and have discovered the wonder of the ear-entrance... I, [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva, obtained perfect

penetration through the organ of the ear and realized the subtleties of the ear, **after which my body and mind subtly and miraculously included all of the Dharma Realm.** This subtle state pervaded everything throughout the Dharma Realm. Therefore, **I am able to make it so that living beings who uphold my name”** – who recite the name of [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva – **“obtain as much merit and virtue as would be obtained by a person who upheld the names of all those Dharma Princes who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers.”** One person recites only the name of [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva, and another person recites the names of as many Bodhisattvas as there are sands in sixty-two Ganges Rivers. The reward of blessings each person obtains will be identical. This shows how magnificent the merit and virtue of [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva are.

Sutra:

“World Honored One, there is no difference between the merit of my one name and the merit of those many other names, because from my cultivation I obtained true and perfect penetration.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, there is no difference between the merit of my one name,” the name, [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva, **“and the merit of those many other names,”** that is, the Bodhisattvas who are as many as the grains of sand in sixty-two Ganges Rivers. How can this be? How can the merit of one name be the same as that of so many? It is **“because from my cultivation I obtained true and perfect penetration.”**

P3 Concludes with the name and shows the benefits.

Sutra:

“These are called the fourteen powers of bestowing fearlessness; with them I bless living beings.

Commentary:

“I come to their aid. Whenever someone seeks something, I will respond.”

O3 Four inconceivables.

P1 He bases himself on the comfort and power of perfect penetration.

P2 The inconceivable identical embodiment of mantras.

Sutra:

“Moreover, World Honored One, because I obtained perfect penetration and cultivated to certification of the unsurpassed path, I also became endowed with four inconceivable and effortless wonderful virtues.

“First: as soon as I obtained the miraculous wonder of hearing the mind, the mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten, therefore, there was no distinction between seeing, hearing, sensation, and knowing. I achieved a single, perfect fusion – pure and precious enlightenment. For this reason, I am able to manifest many wonderful appearances and can proclaim boundless secret spiritual mantras.

Commentary:

“Moreover, World Honored One, because I obtained perfect penetration and cultivated to certification of the unsurpassed path, I also became endowed with four inconceivable and effortless wonderful virtues.” What are these four inconceivable virtues? **First: as soon as I obtained the miraculous wonder of hearing the mind, the mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten.** When I first acquired the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature – that wonder of wonders – my mind became essential and the hearing was forgotten.” The true mind manifests, and one reaches an essential and wonderful place. **“Once the hearing disappeared, there was no distinction between seeing, hearing, sensation, and knowing.** The other sensations were interfused and could not be divided. **I achieved a single, perfect fusion – pure and precious enlightenment.”** This means he accomplished a oneness without any distinctions between self and

others. **“For this reason, I am able to manifest many wonderful appearances and can proclaim boundless secret spiritual mantras.”**

Sutra:

“For example, I may make appear one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, eleven heads, and so forth, until there may be a hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, or eighty-four thousand vajra heads;

Commentary:

Not only does **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva have a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, but also myriad heads – as many as eighty-four thousand of them. The appearances which **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva makes include, he says, **“one head, three heads”** – the three-faced **Gwan Yin** – **“five heads”** – the five-faced **Gwan Yin** – **“seven heads”** – the seven-faced **Gwan Yin**, or **“nine heads, eleven heads, and so forth, until there may be a hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, or eighty-four thousand vajra heads.”** “Vajra” means strong and firm.

Sutra:

“Two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen arms, or twenty arms, twenty-four arms, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms, or eighty-four thousand mudra arms;

Commentary:

Gwan Yin Bodhisattva can also manifest **“Two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen arms, or twenty arms, twenty-four arms...”** Or perhaps he manifests **“...a hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms.”** “Mudra” is a Sanskrit word that means “seal-hand.” On one’s hand there is a seal-imprint.

Sutra:

“Two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, or eighty-four thousand pure and precious eyes, sometimes compassionate, sometimes awesome, sometimes in samadhi, sometimes displaying wisdom to rescue and protect living beings so that they may attain great self-mastery.

Commentary:

The Dharma Body of [Gwan Yin](#) Bodhisattva can manifest **“two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes, and so forth until there may be a hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, or eighty-four thousand pure and precious eyes.”** How can [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva manifest so many transformations and appearances? It is because he cultivated the Great Compassion Mantra and the Forty-two Hands and Eyes on the cause-ground, so that, on the ground of fruition, when his cultivation was perfected, he had endless transformations.

“...sometimes compassionate, sometimes awesome, sometimes in samadhi, sometimes displaying wisdom...” His eyes are perhaps compassionate, or maybe their light is awesome. Perhaps his eyes display the light of samadhi or of wisdom. He appears this way in order **“...to rescue and protect living beings so that they may attain great self-mastery.”**

P3 The inconceivable embodiment of different mantras.

Sutra:

“Second: because of hearing and consideration, I escaped the six defiling objects, just as a sound leaps over a wall without hindrance. And so I have the wonderful ability to manifest shape after shape and to recite mantra upon mantra. These shapes and these mantras dispel the fears of living beings. Therefore, throughout the ten directions, in as many lands as there are fine motes of dust, I am known as one who bestows fearlessness.

Commentary:

The **second** effortless, wonderful virtue: **“Because of hearing and consideration, I escaped the six defiling objects.** I cultivated the wisdom of hearing and the wisdom of consideration and got out of forms, smells, tastes, objects of touch, and dharmas. I was not attached to them. It was **just as a sound leaps over a wall without hindrance. And so I have the wonderful ability to manifest shape after shape and to recite mantra upon mantra. These shapes I appear in and these mantras I recite dispel the fears of living beings.** They have the power of bestowing fearlessness. **Therefore, throughout the ten directions, in as many lands as there are fine motes of dust, I am known as one who bestows fearlessness.”**

P4 The inconceivable destruction of greed in response to those who seek.

Sutra:

“Third: because I cultivated fundamental, wonderful, perfect penetration and purified the sense-organ, everywhere I go in any world I can make it so that living beings renounce their physical and material valuables to seek my sympathy.

Commentary:

“Third: because I cultivated fundamental, wonderful, perfect penetration and purified the sense-organ...” He is referring to the fundamental purity of the ear-organ – the hearing nature. **“...Everywhere I go in any world I can make it so that living beings renounce their physical and material valuables to seek my sympathy.** They will give up their very bodies and lives and their valuable possessions in search of my aid.”

P5 The inconceivable offerings to Buddhas and aid to living beings.

Sutra:

“Fourth: I obtained the Buddhas’ mind and was certified as having attained the ultimate end, and so I can make offerings of

rare treasures to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions and to living beings in the six paths throughout the Dharma Realm.

Commentary:

The **fourth** inconceivable and effortless, wonderful virtue: **“I obtained the Buddhas’ mind and was certified as having attained the ultimate end.** I obtained the true mind of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.” “Ultimate end” means the final fruition of Buddhahood. **“And so I can make offerings of rare treasures to the Thus Come Ones of the ten directions and to living beings in the six paths throughout the Dharma Realm.** Whatever they want, I will fulfill their wishes.”

Sutra:

“If they seek a spouse, they obtain a spouse. If they seek children, they can have children. Seeking samadhi, they obtain samadhi; seeking long life, they obtain long life, and so forth to the extent that if they seek the great Nirvana, they obtain great Nirvana.

Commentary:

Whatever living beings in the six paths wish will be granted them. **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva realizes that everyone wants a good spouse, so **“If they seek a spouse, they obtain a spouse.”** If they want a good wife, they will find a beautiful one. That’s the foremost wish of living beings. Once they have a spouse, they hope for good children. So the second thing **Gwan Yin** Bodhisattva does is grant children. **“If they seek children, they can have children.”** If they want sons, they get sons. If they wish for daughters, they will have daughters. Third, he says, **“Seeking samadhi, they obtain samadhi; seeking long life, they obtain long life.”** If one has a wife and children and still feels that there is no meaning to human life and so brings forth a resolve to transcend the world and seek samadhi, then one can attain samadhi. Some are seeking long life, and so they obtain long life. They want to become immortal and never die, and they are able to do so. **“And so forth to the extent that if they seek the great Nirvana, they obtain great Nirvana.”**

If beings seek to become a Buddha, they can attain the fruition of Buddhahood.

M4 He concludes his answer about accomplishing perfect penetration.

Sutra:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. From the gateway of the ear, I obtained a perfect and illumining samadhi. The conditioned mind was at ease, and therefore I entered the appearance of the flow, and obtaining samadhi, I accomplished Bodhi. This is the foremost method.

Commentary:

“The Buddha asks about perfect penetration. The Buddha asks all his disciples how they first obtained the expedient of perfect penetration. **From the gateway of the ear, I obtained a perfect and illumining samadhi.** I cultivated the nature of hearing and accomplished samadhi-power. **The conditioned mind was at ease, and therefore I entered the appearance of the flow, and obtaining samadhi, I accomplished Bodhi. This is the foremost method.** The mind that climbs on conditions was gone, and I attained self-mastery. I returned the hearing to hear the self-nature, and the nature accomplished the unsurpassed Way. This is the best method.”

Sutra:

“World Honored One, that Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the dharma-door of perfect penetration. In the great assembly he bestowed a prediction upon me and the name, Gwan Shr Yin.

Commentary:

“World Honored One, that Buddha, the Thus Come One, praised me as having obtained well the dharma-door of perfect penetration.” “That Buddha” refers to the [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Thus Come One of old. “He praised the ease with which I obtained perfect penetration. **In the great assembly he bestowed a**

prediction upon me and the name, Gwan Shr Yin. He named me ‘Contemplator of the Worlds’ Sounds,’ the same name he had himself.”

Sutra:

“Because my contemplation and listening is perfectly clear throughout the ten directions, the name Gwan Shr Yin pervades all the realms of the ten directions.”

Commentary:

“Because my contemplation and listening is perfectly clear throughout the ten directions – that is, because every place throughout the ten directions, to the bounds of the Dharma Realm, came together, and I experienced a perfect clarity – therefore, **the name Gwan Shr Yin pervades all the realms of the ten directions.** In every Buddhaland through-out the ten directions the name [Gwan Shr Yin](#) is known.”

K3 The Buddha manifests portents in response.

Sutra:

Then the World Honored One upon the Lion’s Throne emitted simultaneously from his five extremities a precious light which shone far throughout the ten directions to anoint the crowns of as many Thus Come Ones and Dharma-Prince Bodhisattvas as there are motes of dust.

Commentary:

Then the World Honored One upon the Lion’s Throne emitted simultaneously from his five extremities a precious light. Sitting on the Lion’s Throne, Shakyamuni Buddha emitted light from his two hands, his two feet, and the top of his head, all at the same time. The light **shone far throughout the ten directions to anoint the crowns of as many Thus Come Ones and Dharma-Prince Bodhisattvas as there are motes of dust.** Shakyamuni Buddha anointed the crowns of the Thus Come Ones as a representation that his Dharma is the highest, the “summit.” The Way of all

Buddhas is the same. The Thus Come Ones of the ten directions also proclaim this “Summit” Dharma, just as Shakyamuni Buddha is doing now.

*The Way of All Buddhas is the same.
It is mutually interpenetrating.*

L1 He shows the general appearance of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

All those Thus Come Ones also emitted from their five extremities precious lights which were as numerous as motes of dust and which came from the various directions to anoint the crown of the Buddha as well as the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas and Arhats in the assembly.

Commentary:

All those Thus Come Ones as numerous as the fine motes of dust throughout the ten directions also emitted from their five extremities precious lights which were as numerous as motes of dust and which came from the various directions. Precious light also issued forth from their two hands, two feet, and from the tops of their heads, light just like that which Shakyamuni Buddha had emitted. The light came **to anoint the crown of the Buddha – Shakyamuni Buddha – as well as the crowns of all the great Bodhisattvas and Arhats in the assembly.**

L2 He shows the specific appearance of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

Groves, trees, pools, and ponds all proclaimed the sound of Dharma. The lights blended and criss-crossed like a jeweled silken net. It was an unprecedented event for everyone in the great assembly, and they all attained the Vajra Samadhi.

Commentary:

Groves, trees, pools, and ponds all proclaimed the sound of Dharma. The flowing water, the breath of wind, and the rustle of

the trees all expressed the Dharma. **The lights blended and criss-crossed like a jeweled silken net.** The lights of the Buddhas of the ten directions anointed Shakyamuni Buddha's crown and Shakyamuni Buddha's light anointed the Thus Come Ones in the ten directions as numerous as motes of dust. The lights' pattern appeared to create a magnificent net. **It was an unprecedented event for everyone in the great assembly, and they all attained the Vajra Samadhi.** They had never before seen such auspicious portents, and everyone there obtained the Vajra Samadhi.

Sutra:

Then the heavens rained down hundreds of precious lotus flowers of variegated combinations of green, yellow, red, and white. All the space in the ten directions turned the colors of the seven gems.

Commentary:

Then, when everyone in the Great Assembly attained the Vajra Samadhi, **the heavens rained down hundreds of precious lotus flowers of variegated combinations of green, yellow, red, and white.** These four colors appeared in various combinations on the petals of the lotus flowers. Some green lotuses were accented with touches of yellow. Some yellow lotuses had red dots on them. Some white lotuses were flecked with red. **All the space in the ten directions turned the colors of the seven gems.** The seven gems are gold, silver, lapis lazuli, crystal, mother-of-pearl, red pearl, and carnelian. All the worlds turned these colors.

Sutra:

This Saha world with its mountains, rivers, and great earth disappeared totally, and all that could be seen were lands as numerous as motes of dust coming together as one realm. Pure praises in songs and chants spontaneously pervaded in celebration.

Commentary:

This Saha world with its mountains, rivers, and great earth disappeared totally, and all that could be seen were lands as numerous as motes of dust coming together as one realm. Our world is called the Saha World. The name means “Able to be Endured,” representing that living beings are able to bear the suffering and distress of this world. Actually, it’s unbearable, but beings go right on bearing it, not admitting the suffering. They take suffering to be bliss. They think it’s fine here.

At this point, however, the Saha World disappeared. That was due to the transforming power of spiritual penetrations which Shakyamuni Buddha used in that assembly. The Buddhalands as numerous as grains of sand multiplied by grains of sand united. They had been distinct and individual, but now they came together as one. **Pure praises in songs and chants spontaneously pervaded in celebration.** Pure and clear sounds of music were heard everywhere. Before this, the groves and trees, the ponds and pools had expressed the Dharma, but in this place everything proclaimed the Dharma-sound in subtle songs and chants.

*The water flows, the wind blows,
proclaiming the Mahayana.
In pools of seven jewels are lotuses
of four colors and waves of solid gold.*

CHAPTER 3

Manjushri Selects the Organ of Entry

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- J3 The Buddha instructs Manjushri to select one.
 K1 The Thus Come One instructs him to select.
 L1 He first explains that all descriptions are equal.

Sutra:

Then the Thus Come One said to Dharma-Prince Manjushri, “You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond study.

“Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect penetration. Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later.

Commentary:

Then the Thus Come One, Shakyamuni, said to Dharma-Prince Manjushri, “You should now contemplate these twenty-five great Bodhisattvas and Arhats who are beyond study.” Take a look now; reflect on the Dharma-door which each of these twenty-five sages used. “Beyond study” refers to those who have been certified to Fourth-stage Arhatship or above. **“Each has explained the initial expedient in his accomplishment of the Way. All say they have cultivated to true and actual perfect**

penetration.” They attained genuine, perfect penetration of the sense-organs. **Their cultivation is equal without distinctions of superior and inferior or earlier and later.** In fact, there is no way to distinguish them as better or worse, excellent or deficient, or more or less advanced.

L2 His reason for asking him to select one.

Sutra:

“I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened, and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties, and which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way.”

Commentary:

Shakyamuni Buddha says, **“I now wish to cause Ananda to become enlightened.** Ananda is still a First-stage Arhat. I’d like him to become enlightened and attain the second, third, or fourth fruition of Arhatship, **and so I ask which of these twenty-five practices is appropriate to his faculties.** Which one is right for someone with Ananda’s abilities? There are eighteen realms and seven elements; which Dharma-door is most appropriate for Ananda? **And which will be, after my extinction, the easiest expedient door for living beings of this realm to enter in order to accomplish the Bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way.”** The living beings referred to here are us. We at the Buddhist Lecture hearing this Dharma are just the ones he means. You who read this Sutra now are also included. So don’t set yourself apart and say, “I’m not included.” You’ll just mess yourself up that way. If you put yourself outside, you will fall in the future, and if you become a horse, cow, dog, chicken, or pig, it won’t be easy to get to listen to the *Shurangama Sutra*. For one thing, you’d never make it up the four flights of stairs to the Lecture Hall: In Hong Kong, ducks came to listen to my Sutra lectures, but that was on the ground floor.

Long ago, Shakyamuni Buddha arranged our seats in this Dharma assembly that is now taking place. Don't take yourselves too lightly. Of course, if you don't come to listen now, you won't have a share. "Which of these Dharma-doors will be found most expedient by living beings of the future who have great faculties and who in every thought seek the unsurpassed Way?" the Buddha asks Manjushri Bodhisattva. "Which Dharma-door will most easily bring success? Manjushri Bodhisattva, set your mind to it and select one."

K2 Manjushri responds with a verse.

L1 He prepares to speak the verse.

Sutra:

Dharma Prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.

Commentary:

Dharma Prince, Manjushri, receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, arose from his seat. Wonderfully Lucky Bodhisattva was directed by the Buddha to select from any of the eighteen realms and seven elements a method of attaining perfect penetration. He was to find the one most appropriate for Ananda and for us to cultivate. The six sense-organs, the six sense-objects, and the six consciousnesses make up the Eighteen Realms. Earth, wind, fire, and water, along with emptiness, consciousness, and perception are the Seven Elements, as was explained in detail previous

Receiving this compassionate instruction from the Buddha, Manjushri Bodhisattva arose from his seat, **bowed at the Buddha's feet, and, basing himself on the Buddha's awesome spirit, spoke verses to the Buddha.** The Bodhisattvas and Arhats all have places to sit around the Buddha, unlike Fire Head Vajra, who must stand in the assembly. Verses can vary in number of feet and lines, but they all contain the principles of the Sutra.

L2 He speaks the verse.

M1 He brings the source up to introduce his selection.

N1 He shows two sources.

Sutra:

***“The sea of enlightenment in nature
is perfect and clear.
Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source.
But when basic brightness shone
so that objects appeared,
With objects’ existence,
the nature’s brilliance ceased.*”**

Commentary:

“The sea of enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear.” The Sea of Enlightenment is boundless, containing within it all the mountains, rivers, and great earth, the vegetation and myriad appearances. The nature of the sea of enlightenment is both clean and perfect. **“Complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source.”** The clarity of perfection of the Sea of Enlightenment is fundamentally subtle and wonderful. But within this subtlety of a single truth, falseness arises, and the light reveals the arising of objects. **“But when basic brightness shone so that objects appeared. With objects’ existence, the nature’s brilliance ceased.”** Basically, the Sea of Enlightenment contains every-thing within it. There is nothing which is not in the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. But as soon as there is a single ignorant thought, a falseness arises. Once there is falseness, there are objects – defiling appearances. Be-cause of this falseness, the inherent light of the enlightened nature does not shine forth – just as when the sky is covered by clouds.

N2 He discusses production and extinction.

Sutra:

***“Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness.
Relying on emptiness, time and space take form.*”**

***Thoughts settle, making countries and lands.
What knows and feels becomes living beings.***

Commentary:

“Confusion and falseness bring about emptiness.” Because of falseness, subject and object come into being. Basically, both aspects are false. In the substance of the Sea of Enlightenment not a single dharma stands. There isn’t anything at all. But, “Staring produces the appearance of fatigue.” After a sustained period of time, protraction brings about fatigue. And then a falseness and confusion give rise to emptiness. In the Sea of Enlightenment there isn’t anything – not even emptiness. The verse says below:

*The emptiness created within enlightenment
is like a single bubble in all the sea.*

How insignificant that is! And yet, we think of emptiness as being so vast. **“Relying on emptiness, time and space take form.”** The ten directions and three periods of time come into being. **“Thoughts settle, making countries and lands.”** Once time and space arise out of emptiness, then false thinking becomes solid, making the lands. **“What knows and feels becomes living beings.”** Knowledge and sensations turn into living creatures.

Sutra:

***“The emptiness created within Great Enlightenment,
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.
Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows,
All come forth out of empty space.
Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there.
How much the less the three states of being!***

Commentary:

The first lines of the verse said, “The Sea of Enlightenment in nature is perfect and clear/complete, distinct Bodhi is a miraculous source.” The perfection of the pure source of Bodhi is extremely wonderful. Now the verse speaks of **“The emptiness created**

within Great Enlightenment.” We all are aware of the existence of emptiness, but do we know where it came from? I believe no one knows. That’s because emptiness is so vast. It’s impossible to know the limits of empty space or its source. Who is the mother of emptiness? No one knows. But now the *Shurangama Sutra* points to the source. Emptiness is born from the nature of Great Enlightenment. And yet within that expanse it is extremely minute. How big is it? It **“is like a single bubble in all the sea.”** – like a little fleck of foam in the ocean.

“Lands like fine dust motes, subject to outflows. All come forth out of empty space.” There are three categories of outflows:

1. Outflows of desire;
2. Outflows of existence;
3. Outflows of ignorance.

Myriad lands which have outflows all come out of emptiness. The emptiness came out of enlightenment, and the lands came out of emptiness. **“Just as the bubble bursts, space is no longer there.”** In the same way that a bubble pops on the ocean, the emptiness disappears in the great enlightenment. **“How much the less the three states of being!”**

N3 He makes clear there must be a selection.

Sutra:

***“Returning to the source, the nature is not two.
Many are the entrances through expedients;
none of them does the sagely nature
fail to go through.
Compliant or adverse, all is expedient.
First resolve and entering samadhi,
come slow or fast as there are different norms.***

Commentary:

In is verse, Manjushri Bodhisattva says that emptiness is like a bubble in the Sea of Enlightenment, and that countries and lands

within the emptiness are also extremely minute. If emptiness disappears, all the countries and lands, the mountains, rivers, and the great earth, and the sentient and material worlds all disappear as well.

When one cultivates this Dharma-door, **“Returning to the source, the nature is not two.”** “Returning to the source” means accomplishing Buddhahood. There is only one place to return to, and that is your original home. This world we people live in is not really our home. “I have a home,” you protest. But that house is not your genuine home. To become a Buddha is to find your genuine home. Before you become a Buddha, you are a vagabond moving from hotel to hotel. You are always on the move.

“Many are the entrances through expedients;” Being “expedient” means being unattached. For example, once there was a child crawling toward a well which was flush with the ground. If the child had continued, it would have fallen into the well. The Buddha saw this, but he knew that if he called the child back, it would not have listened, but would have continued to crawl forward. So he made a fist with one hand, held it out, and called, “Child, come back. I have candy in my hand for you. I have candy. Do you like candy?” When the child heard there was candy, it turned around and came back. There was no candy in the Buddha’s hand after all. But was the Buddha lying? No. That is an example of an expedient method. He used his “empty fist to save the child” because there was no other method that would have worked at that point. The doors of expedients are uncountable. In general, whatever method will save a person is the Dharma-door you use.

“None of them does the sagely nature fail to go through. Compliant or adverse, all is expedient.” When you are certified to the Dharma-nature of a sage, there is nothing you cannot understand. What is compliant is expedient, and what is adverse is also expedient. Whatever complies with your abilities and circumstances, you can use in your cultivation. What is “adverse” – not in

accord with your situation – can still be applied to your cultivation. Both the compliant situations and the adverse ones in which you cultivate are the expedient Dharma-doors.

“First resolve and entering samadhi, come slow or fast as there are different norms.” Some cultivate more quickly, some more slowly. So they can’t all be lumped together.

M2 He examines each door.

N1 He examines the six defiling objects.

Sutra:

***“Form and thought combined become the ‘dust.’
Their essence is not discernible.
How can one use what lacks clarity,
And expect to gain perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

Form is created from false thinking. **“Form and thought combined become the ‘dust.’”** the defiling objects of form; **“Their essence is not discernible.”** It is not clear and comprehensible. **“How can one use what lacks clarity / And expect to gain perfect penetration?”** Can you expect to attain the Dharma-door of perfect penetration with a method that is neither clear nor ultimate? That is impossible. The verse goes on to say that using the sense-object of form to cultivate perfect penetration is not the best method. Some people are able to be certified to the fruition through this method, but only because they have special conditions with that particular Dharma-door. It is not something that most people can cultivate.

Sutra:

***“In sounds, language is intermingled.
But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase,
Is such that no single one can include them all.
How can this bring perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

There are those who awaken to the Way by means of the defiling object of sounds. Nevertheless, **“In sounds, language is intermingled / But the meaning in a word, a name, a phrase / Is such that no single one can include them all.”** No one word or one name or one phrase can say everything about everything. **“How can this bring perfect penetration?”** One cannot choose sounds as the way to attain perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“Awareness of smells comes
through contact with them.
Apart from them,
one does not know that they exist.
Since sensation of them is not constant,
How can one reach perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

The Pure Youth Adorned with Fragrance awakened to the Way by means of the defiling object of smells. But **“Awareness of smells comes through contact with them.”** The nose must inhale the vapors of a scent for it to be aware of them. **“Apart from them, one does not know that they exist.”** They are not there. **“Since sensation of them is not constant / How can one reach perfect penetration?”** Since the nature of smells is not constant or unchanging, one does not always have an awareness of them, and so they can’t count as the best method for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“Flavors are not to us fundamental.
They only exist when there is something to taste.
Since this sensation is not perpetual,
How can one derive perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

Although there are those who awaken to the Way by means of the defiling object of flavors, **“Flavors are not to us fundamental.”** The nature of flavors is not the complete and perfect self-mature. **“They only exist when there is something to taste.”** It’s only when there is something with flavor that the defiling object of flavor comes to be. **“Since this sensation is not perpetual / How can one derive perfect penetration?”** The awareness of tastes is not there all the time. Therefore, don’t select this Dharma-door as the one for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

***“Touch becomes clear
only when something is touched.
Without an object there can be no contact.
With fluctuation between contact and separation,
How can one gain perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“Touch becomes clear only when something is touched.” Although there are those who awaken to the Way by cultivating the objects of touch, touch can only be known when there is an object to come in contact with. **“Without an object there can be no contact.”** The only way contact can be experienced is for there to be someone who makes contact with some object. **“With fluctuation between contact and separation / How can one gain perfect penetration?”** Therefore, the defiling object of touch cannot be used, either, as the most effective Dharma door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

***“Dharmas are known as ‘internal dust.’
Reckoned as ‘dust,’
they are certainly sense objects.
Involvement of subject and object***

*cannot be pervasive;
How then can they lead to perfect penetration?*

Commentary:

Mahakashyapa cultivated the mind through dharma-objects, and he attained the Samadhi of the Extinction of Feeling and Thought. **“Dharmas are known as ‘internal dust.’”** Dharmas are conditions of the mind. **“Reckoned as ‘dust,’ they are certainly sense objects.”** Since they are defiling objects, they have a location. Since they have a location, they are not at the level of “non-existence and yet not non-existent.” **“Involvement of subject and object cannot be pervasive.”** An interaction involving subject and object is not full and complete, not all-pervasive. **“How then can they lead to perfect penetration?”**

N2 Examining the five organs.

Sutra:

*“Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating,
Making bright what is before one,
it cannot shine behind.
Ever reaching only half the four directions,
How can it manifest perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

“Although seeing itself is clear and penetrating”: the eyes’ ability to see is bright and clear, but, **“Making bright what is before one, it cannot shine behind.”** If it looks in front, it cannot see behind. If it looks left, it cannot see to the right. **“Ever reaching only half the four directions”:** it can only see two of four sides at any one time. **“How can it manifest perfect penetration?”** It is not the one to choose for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“The nose’s breath penetrates in and out.
But in the rests between there is no air.”*

***These interruptions render it inconsistent.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?***

Commentary:

“The nose’s breath penetrates in and out.” This stanza discusses the organ of the nose. **“But in the rests between there is no air.”** Sometimes the breath stops. There are pauses. **“These interruptions render it inconsistent.”** This aspect is a deficiency and makes this organ inadequate also. It is not all-pervasive. **“How can one use it for perfect penetration?”** Therefore, this one cannot be selected for perfect penetration, either.

Sutra:

***“The tongue is not an organ apart from cause;
Flavors form the source of its sensation.
When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all.
How can it attain perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“The tongue is not an organ apart from cause.” Flavors must enter in upon the tongue for it to experience sensation. Without flavors, it lacks any awareness. **“Flavors form the source of its sensation.”** It experiences sensations because of the defiling object of flavor. **“When flavors cease, it knows nothing at all / How can it attain perfect penetration?”** You cannot use it to reach perfect penetration.

Sutra:

***“It is the same for the body as for objects of touch.
Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness.
With defined and limited invisible divisions,
How can it be used for perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“It is the same for the body as for objects of touch.” The Dharma-door of the body is like the objects of touch. **“Neither can be regarded as a perfect awareness.”** Its awareness is not

complete in itself. **“With defined and limited invisible divisions / How can it be used for perfect penetration?”** It is characterized by boundaries and number, and it is invisibly connected with objects of touch, and therefore it is not an appropriate choice for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

***“The mind’s knowledge is a mass of deliberations.
What it perceives is never profound insight.
Unable to get beyond reflection and thought,
How can it reveal perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“The mind’s knowledge is a mass of deliberations.” What the mind knows are mental dharmas – defiling objects of mind, a conglomeration of random thoughts. **“What it perceives is never profound insight / Unable to get beyond reflection and thought / How can it reveal perfect penetration?”** It can never get to what is tranquil and profound; it can never reach what is ultimate, because one can never get beyond it as long as thought – false thinking and the stream of consciousness – remains. How can this lead to perfect penetration?

N3 Examining the six consciousnesses.

Sutra:

***“The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects.
Probe its origin: it has no appearance.
Since its very substance is variable,
How can it bring perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“The seeing-consciousness combines three aspects.” The verse now discusses the consciousnesses, which are a combination of the six sense-organs inside and the six sense objects outside. The six sense-organs have awareness, while the six sense-objects do not. Therefore, the six sense consciousnesses should be half-aware

and half-unaware. These three aspects combine into the consciousnesses. **“Probe its origin: it has no appearance.”** The consciousness has no appearance. **“Since its very substance is variable, how can it bring perfect penetration?”** Since the consciousness itself is in a state of flux, how can you use it to gain perfect penetration? So the eye-consciousness won’t work, either.

Sutra:

***“The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions.
When borne on the strength of great causes,
Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way.
How can one expect to gain perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“The heart of hearing penetrates the ten directions.” The Dharma-door that Universal Worthy Bodhisattva cultivated was the ear-consciousness. But hearing is pervasive only **“When borne on the strength of great causes.”** This Dharmadoor requires the power of great and awesome causes. Only then can one cultivate it. **“Those of initial resolve cannot enter this way.”** Beings with initial resolve to cultivate the Bodhisattva Way will not find this Dharma-door appropriate. Since those of initial resolve cannot enter it, how could it be selected for perfect penetration? **“How can one expect to gain perfect penetration?”** This one won’t do, either.

Sutra:

***“Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method.
It only serves to gather in and settle the mind.
Once settled, the mind is simply still.
How can that be perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“Reflecting on the nose is a provisional method.” Sundrananda cultivated the white spot at the tip of his nose. The cultivation of this Dharma-door involves thought, and so it is a clever provisional expedient. **“It only serves to gather in and**

settle the mind.” It is to help quiet a scattered mind. **“Once settled, the mind is simply still.”** Its aim is to bring the mind to dwell in one place, but since there continues to be a dwelling-place for the mind, **“How can that be perfect penetration?”** It is not the one to pick.

Sutra:

*“Speaking Dharma
through the medium of language,
Is enlightened to by those
of former accomplishment.
But words and phrases are not free of outflows.
How can this make perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

Purnamaitreyaniputra spoke the Dharma and awakened by means of the tongue, **“Speaking Dharma through the medium of language.”** In speaking Dharma and lecturing Sutras, one’s voice must be good and one must be accomplished in expressing oneself in language. Then it **“Is enlightened to by those of former accomplishment / But words and phrases are not free of outflows / How can this make perfect penetration?”** Since they are subject to outflows, they cannot be selected for the Dharma-door of perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“Refraining from transgressions
only controls the body.
Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.
Since its source is not all-pervasive,
How can it bring perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

The Venerable Upali held the precepts. **“Refraining from transgressions only controls the body.”** Both the upholding of precepts and the violation of precepts is done with the body. This is

a Dharma-door that relates to body and mind. **“Lacking a body, there is nothing to restrain.”** If you didn’t have a physical body, there would be no need to control it. **“Since its source is not all-pervasive / How can it bring perfect penetration?”** This Dharma-door is not all-encompassing. It cannot be chosen as the method for perfect penetration, either.

Sutra:

***“Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.
What connection have they
with distinguishing dharmas?
Conditioned thought is not apart from things.
How can one attain perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

Maudgalyayana was foremost in spiritual penetrations, and it was from the mind-consciousness that he accomplished his spiritual powers. **“Spiritual penetrations are based on past causes.”** Possession of spiritual powers comes from causes and conditions set up in past lives. **“What connection have they with distinguishing dharmas?”** They are a different thing from discrimination. **“Conditioned thought is not apart from things.”** Spiritual penetrations still require the thought process, however, and therefore they are not divorced from the material plane – they are not complete in themselves. **“How can one attain perfect penetration?”** Cultivation through spiritual penetrations is also not the way to go.

N4 Examining the seven elements.

Sutra:

***“One may contemplate the nature of earth,
But it is firm and solid, not penetrable.
What is conditioned is not the sagely nature.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?”***

Commentary:

“One may contemplate the nature of earth / But it is firm and solid, not penetrable.” Maintaining the Earth Bodhisattva made use of the Dharma-door of contemplating the earth. Earth has the qualities of solidity and firmness. It is not penetrable. It is a conditioned dharma, not a Dharma-door for entering the flow of the sages. **“What is conditioned is not the sagely nature / How can one use it for perfect penetration?”** It doesn’t measure up as the best Dharma-door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“One may contemplate the nature of water,
But such mental reflection is not the true and real.
This state of suchness is not an enlightened view.
How can it give perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

One may decide to cultivate by the contemplation of water and enter the Water-Contemplation Samadhi, as did the Pure Youth Moonlight. **“One may contemplate the nature of water / But such mental reflection is not the true and real.”** For one to enter samadhi according to this method, the thought process, a contemplative consideration, is also initially involved. **“This state of suchness is not an enlightened view.”** It is not a natural, spontaneous kind of contemplation. **“How can it give perfect penetration?”** So the contemplation of water cannot be considered the method for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“One may contemplate the nature of fire,
But admitting dislike is not true renunciation.
This expedient cannot be one for beginners.
How can one use it for perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

Fire Head Vajra, Ucchushma, cultivated the contemplation of fire, because he had a tremendous amount of desire. The Buddha instructed him to contemplate the fire of desire in his body. **“One may contemplate the nature of fire / But admitting dislike is not true renunciation.”** His decision to reject this was not in itself genuine abandoning. **“This expedient cannot be one for beginners.”** It is not a skill-in-means appropriate to those of initial resolve. **“How can one use it for perfect penetration?”** It cannot be selected as the Dharma-door for perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“One may contemplate the nature of wind,
But movement and stillness are not non-dual.
Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment.
How can one expect perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

The Dharma Prince Crystal Light used the element wind in his cultivation. **“One may contemplate the nature of wind / But movement and stillness are not non-dual.”** Movement and stillness are opposites; they are not absolutes. **“Duality cannot bring highest enlightenment.”** Opposites are not the dharma of unsurpassed enlightenment. **“How can one expect perfect penetration?”** You can’t pick this one for the Dharma-door to perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“One may contemplate the nature of emptiness.
But, its aspect is murky and dull;
it lacks awareness.
What is unaware is different from Bodhi.
How can it bring perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

“One may contemplate the nature of emptiness.” Empty Space Treasury Bodhisattva cultivated a body as boundless as emptiness and awakened to the Way. But Manjushri Bodhisattva says here, “I contemplate the nature of emptiness and see that **“its aspect is murky and dull; it lacks awareness.”** This lack of clarity makes it not an appropriate initial method for enlightenment. **“What is unaware is different from Bodhi / How can it bring perfect penetration?”** This one can’t be picked as a method to gain perfect penetration.

Sutra:

*“One may contemplate
the nature of consciousness;
But one is regarding a consciousness
that is not eternal.
Even the thought of it is empty and false.
How can one get perfect penetration?”*

Commentary:

Maitreya Bodhisattva cultivated the element of consciousness. He contemplated the nature of consciousness. **“One may contemplate the nature of consciousness / But one is regarding a consciousness that is not eternal.”** Take a look at the consciousness of the discriminating mind; it is not everlasting. **“Even the thought of it is empty and false.”** Where there is something contemplated, and a thought of contemplation, they are empty and false. **“How can one get perfect penetration?”** So it cannot be considered perfectly penetrating.

Sutra:

*“All activities are impermanent.
So, too, mindfulness has its origin
in rising and ceasing.
Since cause and effect*

*go beyond cause and effect,
How can we use it for perfect penetration?*

Commentary:

Great Strength Bodhisattva cultivated the element of perception. He “gathered in all six organs until a pure mindfulness linked them together.” **“All activities are impermanent / So, too, mindfulness has its origin in rising and ceasing.”** Both the nature of the recitation and that which is recited are dharmas subject to production and extinction. When you are reciting, it arises; when you cease reciting, it is extinguished. **“Since cause and effect go beyond cause and effect”** we seek to go beyond what is subject to cause and effect. **“How can we use it for perfect penetration?”** So the Dharma-door of mindfulness of the Buddha is not best suited for perfect penetration.

M3 He selects only the ear organ.

N1 He reveals the wonder of this dharma-door.

O1 The ear organ is beneficial for those of this world to cultivate.

Sutra:

***“I now say this, World Honored One,
Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world:
In this land the true substance of teaching
Resides in hearing the sounds purely.
If one wants to attain samadhi,
hearing is the best way to enter.***

Commentary:

At this point Manjushri Bodhisattva has finished speaking about the various Dharma-doors by which the sages were certified. He continues, **“I now say this, World Honored One / Buddha, who has revealed the Saha world / In this land the true substance of teaching / Resides in hearing the sounds purely.”** In this world which is “Able to be Borne,” where the Buddha has compassionately become manifest, the genuine method for teaching and transforming living beings is in the purity of sound.

That refers to the Dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. **“If one wants to attain samadhi / hearing is the best way to enter.”** The skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature is actually the most wonderful, the best method.

O2 The dharma is used by a superior person.

P1 General praise of its benefit to self.

Sutra:

***“Apart from suffering, liberation is found.
How excellent is he who contemplates
the world’s sounds!”***

Commentary:

“Apart from suffering, liberation is found.” One can separate from suffering and attain liberation. Separating from suffering is just liberation; liberation is just leaving suffering behind. **“How excellent is he who contemplates the world’s sounds!”** Ah, the Dharma-door of Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva is so fine!

P2 Broadly reveals its benefits to others.

Sutra:

***“Throughout kalpas as numerous
as Ganges’ sands,
He enters Buddhalands
as many as fine dust motes.
Obtaining great power of self-mastery,
He bestows fearlessness on living beings.***

Commentary:

Why does he praise Gwan Shr Yin? **“Throughout kalpas as numerous as Ganges’ sands / He enters Buddhalands as many as fine dust motes.”** During that many aeons, Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva goes to countless Buddhalands as numerous as fine motes of dust. **“Obtaining great power of self-mastery / He**

bestows fearlessness on living beings.” With spiritual power and great ease, he causes living beings not to be afraid.

Sutra:

*“Wonderful is the sound of Gwan Shr Yin,
A pure sound, like the ocean’s roar.
He saves the world
and brings peace to all within it.
He has transcended the world,
and his attainment is eternal.*

Commentary:

“Wonderful is the sound of Gwan Shr Yin.” [Gwan Yin](#) Bodhisattva is extremely miraculous. **“A pure sound, like the ocean’s roar.”** His pure and clear sound is like the thunder of the sea: a single, all-pervasive sound. **“He saves the world and brings peace to all within it.”** He rescues those in the world so that all living beings attain peace and contentment. **“He has transcended the world, and his attainment is eternal.”** He transcends the world and attains the everlasting enlightenment. He realizes eternal, indestructible, comfortable spiritual powers.

O3 Reveals that his dharma is true and actual.

P1 True and actual perfection.

Sutra:

*“I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One,
regarding what Gwan Yin has just explained:
It is like someone in a quiet place
When drums are rolled
throughout the ten directions,
Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places.
This, then, is the actual true perfection.*

Commentary:

“I now make this report, 0 Thus Come One / regarding what Gwan Yin has just explained about his experience with perfect

penetration: **It is like someone in a quiet place / When drums are rolled throughout the ten directions / Hearing at once the sounds from all ten places.**” In every one of the ten directions drums are beaten simultaneously. Although the drum-sounds come from ten places, the one person in the quiet room can hear them all at the same time. **“This, then, is the actual true perfection.”** This nature is genuinely perfect.

P2 True and actual penetration.

Sutra:

***“The eyes cannot see through solid forms.
Mouth and nose are much the same.
The body registers awareness only through contact.
Tangled in thoughts,
the mind lacks clear connections.*”**

Commentary:

“The eyes cannot see through solid forms.” “The eyes” here are not the Buddha Eye, the Wisdom Eye, the Dharma Eye, the Heavenly Eye, or the Flesh Eye – not the Five Eyes. What is referred to here are our ordinary physical eyes. These eyes can only see within boundaries; they cannot see through and beyond them. They cannot see through solid objects. For instance, if we close the windows and pull the blinds, we can’t see what is outside. Even in perceiving what is close to use, a single layer of skin prohibits our seeing. For instance, we cannot see what is inside our bodies with the ordinary eyes. The eyes of a sage are a different matter, but here we are discussing the capacity of ordinary eyes. They can’t even see through a thin piece of paper! Also, when they look to the right they cannot see to the left, and when they look to the left, they cannot see what’s on the right. **“Mouth and nose are much the same.”** Between breaths there is a hesitation where no air enters or leaves the nose. And the tongue must have some flavor in order to experience taste. Without something to taste, it doesn’t function. These two, then, are more or less like the eyes. **“The body**

registers awareness only through contact.” The body must come in contact with objects of touch for sensation to be experienced, and so it is not complete in itself either. **“Tangled in thoughts, the mind lacks clear connections.”** The mind’s thoughts are random and confused, without any order to them, and so they are not best for perfect penetration either.

Sutra:

*“Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.
One can listen to things both near and far.
None of the other five organs can match this.
It, then, is penetration true and real.*

Commentary:

With the organ of the ear, **“Sounds can be heard even through solid walls.”** You can hear what is going on beyond a wall. **“One can listen to things both near and far / None of the other five organs can match this.”** The eyes, nose, tongue, body, and mind are not as effective as the ear – it is more perfect than any of them. Its function is perfectly fused and unobstructed. The others cannot compare to it. **“It, then, is penetration true and real.”** The other five sense organs do not have this kind of genuine penetration.

P3 True and actual constancy.

Sutra:

*“The nature of sounds
is based in movement and stillness.
One hears according to whether there is sound.
With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.
But this does not mean
that the hearing has no nature.*

Commentary:

“The nature of sounds is based in movement and stillness.” Sometimes there are sounds; sometimes there is no sound. When there is no sound, there is stillness. **“One hears according to**

whether there is sound.” Hearing perceives the movement of sound and the stillness of no sound. **“With no sound, there is said to be no hearing.”** That’s what we say, **“But this does not mean that the hearing has no nature.”** The nature of hearing is definitely not extinguished. When we say there’s no hearing, the nature of hearing is in fact not absent.

Sutra:

***“In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone.
Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.
Entirely beyond production and extinction.
It is, then, truly everlasting.***

Commentary:

“In the absence of sound, the nature is not gone.” The absence of sound does not mean the nature of hearing has ceased to be. **“Nor does it arise in the presence of sound.”** When a sound is heard, there is no change in the nature of hearing. **“Entirely beyond production and extinction / It is, then, truly everlasting.”** It is complete in itself and divorced from production and extinction. Birth and death become perfectly fused. The nature of hearing is an everlasting, unchanging nature not subject to production and extinction.

Sutra:

***“Ever-present, even in dream-thinking,
It does not disappear
when conditions and thought are gone.
Enlightened, this contemplation
transcends cognition,
Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.***

Commentary:

In the presence of sound, in the absence of sound, at the arising of sound, and at the cessation of sound, the nature of hearing never ceases to be. People may realize this in an ordinary waking state.

But is also **“Ever-present, even in dream-thinking.”** Someone sleeping soundly may hear the sounds of beating clothes and pounding rice as a drum and bell being struck. This proves that hearing is present even in dreams. **“It does not disappear when conditions and thought are gone.”** It is not like the mind, which doesn’t exist without thoughts. **“Enlightened, this contemplation transcends cognition.”** The enlightened contemplation of the hearing-nature goes beyond thought. **“Reaching beyond both the body and the mind.”** The body and mind cannot compare to the hearing-nature of the organ of the ear.

O4 He shows that this is the appropriate organ to cultivate.

P1 Brings up the substance of the teaching in this land.

Sutra:

***“Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds
Has been proclaimed and understood.***

P2 Makes clear that the sickness lies in following the sounds.

Sutra:

***“Living beings are confused
about the source of hearing.
They follow sounds and so they turn and flow.
Ananda’s power to remember was exceptional;
Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot.
Was it not from heeding sounds
that he was nearly lost?
By turning back the flow,
one will make no such mistake.***

Commentary:

“Now, in the Saha world, the theory of sounds / Has been proclaimed and understood / Living beings are confused about the source of hearing.” They don’t understand the inherent hearing-nature. **“They follow sounds and so they turn and flow.”** They cannot turn the hearing back to hear the self-nature. They seek

outside; they listen outside. They pursue the sounds and run outside. If one allows the ear to race out after sounds, instead of returning the hearing, one gets caught up in the flow of birth and death. It is also a knot. There is birth and death, and so there is a knot. And it all starts because you pursue the defiling objects of sound. You can't bring it all back.

“Ananda’s power to remember was exceptional.” Ananda was always erudite and had a brilliant memory. He could recite by heart all the Sutras in the Tripitaka. **“Nonetheless, he fell prey to a deviant plot.”** He was smart, but he couldn't avoid the difficulty brought about by Matangi's daughter and the Former Brahma Heaven Mantra. He was captured by a deviant dharma of an externalist religion. **“Was it not from heeding sounds that he was nearly lost? / By turning back the flow, one will make no such mistake.”** If you can turn the hearing back and hear your self-nature, then naturally you will not succumb to any falseness. You won't err like that. The reason Ananda was susceptible to the deception was that he was always seeking outside. He studied this and studied that and was proficient with one Sutra and another, but he never returned the light and illumined within. He never stopped to think about how he so should act or what he was doing. All he did was study. He studied so much that he forgot what he was all about. That reminds me of the answer Confucius gave when someone came to ask him:

“Is there anyone in the world like...?” the questioner began.

“Like what?” asked Confucius.

“Someone who moves, taking everyone with him – all the relatives in the household – except his wife. He forgets to take along his wife. Could there be such a person?”

What do you suppose Confucius answered? Did Confucius say it was impossible for a person to forget his wife? Or that it was not impossible? Confucius said, “Nowadays, people even forget themselves!” Not only could they forget their wives, they could even forget their own bodies. The meaning was that they don't remember

that in the future their bodies will die. They forget they will have to go through old age, sickness, and death.

Since Ananda concentrated on studying things external to himself and on developing his scholastic abilities, he neglected his samadhi-power. Since he neglected samadhi, he didn't know how to develop the skill of turning the hearing back to hear the self-nature, and so he pursued sounds. He did not make the sounds follow his self-nature and so he got caught up in the difficulty with Matangi's daughter.

N2 He explains in detail how to cultivate this skill.

O1 He introduces the teaching of turning back the hearing.

Sutra:

*“Ananda, you should listen attentively:
I rely upon the Buddha’s awesome power,
In describing to you the Vajra King,
A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions.
It is the true mother of all Buddhas.*

Commentary:

When Manjushri Bodhisattva had spoken thus far, he called out to **Ananda**. He was a Dharma Prince with longstanding status, while Ananda was comparatively young. Here, Manjushri Bodhisattva is representing Shakyamuni Buddha in speaking the Dharma, and so he gets Ananda's attention. **“You should listen attentively.** Pay attention! Listen to every word; don't be the least bit casual. Don't sit there half asleep while I am speaking this verse! You should understand that this verse I'm speaking is not my own ideas. It is spoken by the power that the Buddha has vested in me. The Buddha indicated that I should speak and express this intent. He told me to select the Dharma for your sake. You shouldn't think that it is I, Manjushri Bodhisattva, who is telling you this; it is the Buddha speaking for you. Now do you understand?

In describing to you the Vajra King. On the Buddha's behalf I will explain the Dharma-door of the Vajra King, **A samadhi inconceivable of likeness to illusions / It is the true mother of all Buddhas.** This Dharma is cultivated without cultivating. One cultivates, and yet one is not cultivating. Not cultivating, one still cultivates. It is rather like putting on a play, and yet at the same time it's real. That's the wonder of it. You can't imagine how subtle and wonderful this Dharma-door is. You cannot conceive of it nor express it in words. It is the mother of all Buddhas. Every Buddha is born from this samadhi. So pay attention. Do you want to become a Buddha? If so, you have to keep your mind on what I'm saying. And then you have to develop the skill through actual practice. Don't just spend your efforts on superficial skills. You have to attain some internal *gung fu*.

Sutra:

***“You may hear the secret Dharma-doors
Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust,
But without first renouncing desire and outflows,
You may amass learning,
but you will still make mistakes.***

Commentary:

Manjushri Bodhisattva continues, **“You may hear the secret Dharma-doors / Of Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust.”** Ananda, you have listened to limitless Buddhas explain their secret dharmas.” “Secret” means that you say something for one person and a second person doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't realize it. Or you speak for the second person and the first one doesn't know. Each is unaware of what is said to the other. Why does the Buddha have secret Dharmadoors? It is because the capacities of living beings are different. Each person is fond of different things. What is more, each person has cultivated a particular path in past lives. Therefore, the Buddha contemplates the opportunities. He looks to see what

Dharma-door you cultivated before, and based on that he teaches you how to cultivate now.

*Contemplating the opportunities,
he bestows the teaching;
Speaking Dharma
for the sake of each person.*

He does not teach you Dharma-doors which are not appropriate for you.

“But without first renouncing desire and outflows / You may amass learning, but you will still make mistakes.” Although the Buddha has many secret dharmas, you still have to get rid of your desire and outflows.” “Desire” is really hard to overcome. As soon as you have desire, you have out flows. The most serious desire, the one people find hardest to cut off, is the desire for forms. If you can cut it off, you are an outstanding person – extraordinary. When you study the Buddhadharma, you must cut off desire, in order to be able to be rid of outflows.

At the fourth fruition of Arhatship one has no outflows. A first-stage Arhat is at the position of seeing the Way, as a result of having extinguished eighty-eight kinds of delusion of views. The second and third fruition are called the position of cultivating the Way. A fourth-stage Arhat is at the position of having been certified to the Way. At the first, second, and third fruitions, one has not attained the state of having no outflows. Only at fourth stage is that achieved. Having no outflows is extremely important. Why hadn't Ananda reached that level? He had not gotten rid of desire. There were still some things he wanted. He was not yet pure, and so Dharma-Prince Manjushri tells him, “If you don't cultivate and get rid of greed and desire for forms, then you won't have a response with the Buddhadharma. If you merely concentrate on erudition, then you will still err. That's why you encountered the difficulty with Matangi's daughter. If you renounce desire and outflows, you won't have any more difficulties.” When we see that such an

intelligent person as Ananda still had this fault, we should notice that not only have we not severed desire, we are in tent upon pursuing it. It has never occurred to us to get rid of it. Wouldn't you say that is an even greater mistake? At this point, everyone should return the hearing and examine within. Is it the case that we have desires? Have we gotten rid of them? If not, would we like to get rid of them? If not, then there's nothing else to say. But if you want to get rid of them, then quickly start cultivating the skill of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. Study [Gwan Shr Yin](#) Bodhisattva's perfect penetration of the organ of the ear.

Sutra:

***“You concentrate on learning
to uphold the Buddha’s Dharma.
Why don’t you listen to your own hearing?”***

Commentary:

“You concentrate on learning to uphold the Buddha’s Dharma.” You expend your energy on study of the Buddhadharma,” Manjushri Bodhisattva says to Ananda. “With that skill, **why don’t you listen to your own hearing?**” Why don’t you return the hearing to hear the self-nature? Why don’t you cultivate and develop that skill? Why don’t you look into yourself?

O2 He explains how with this dharma one gradually transcends.

Sutra:

***“Hearing does not spontaneously arise;
Because of sound it gets its name.
But when hearing returns and is free of sound,
What does one call that which is set free?”***

Commentary:

“Ananda, don’t continue to take learning so seriously while neglecting your samadhi power. **Hearing does not spontaneously arise.** It doesn’t happen all by itself. **Because of sound it gets its name.**” Because there is sound, there is hearing. We call the

perception of a sound “hearing.” **“But when hearing returns and is free of sound / What does one call that which is set free?”** We say that there is hearing because there is sound, but is the hearing still there when there is no sound? It is, because the nature of hearing is not subject to production or extinction. Therefore, turn the hearing around. From now on, don’t follow out after the six sense-objects with your six sense-organs. Bring them back.”

*Returning the hearing,
listen to your nature,
Till the nature reaches
the supreme Way.*

What is your self-nature? When you hear it, you will recognize it. Now, before you have heard it, you won’t understand even if I tell you. For instance, when I drink this cup of tea, I myself know whether it is hot or cool, but you still don’t have any idea. If you want to know, you will have to drink some yourself. If you want to recognize your self-nature, you first have to return the hearing. If you haven’t done that, how can you expect to know your own nature?

“When you return the hearing, how do you listen?” you ask.

Use your ears. But don’t listen to the sounds outside. Don’t try to figure out what’s happening out in the street, or who is saying what. Turn the hearing inward and listen inside yourself. In this way your own nature will be revealed. That’s how you do it. Now do you understand?

When the hearing is turned around, one is set free from external sounds. “What does one call that which is set free?” If you can divorce yourself from sounds, and hear and yet not hear, is this really hearing, then? It is and it isn’t. It isn’t, yet it is. Hear and yet do not hear. That’s what’s meant by getting free of sounds. One does hear, but it’s not the same as the way one heard before. Even though it is said that ordinary hearing can reach far and near, it still has a limit. If you genuinely attain the state of returning the hearing

to hear the self-nature, you can hear throughout the Dharma Realm. But you can also choose not to listen to any of the sounds throughout the Dharma Realm. You have control. It's like a telegram. If I want to send one, I can send one anywhere at any time. But if I don't want to send the telegram, I don't have to do. If I want to hear some sound in the Dharma Realm, I can tune in on it. You try it. What is that which is free of sound called, then? It doesn't have a name. That which is beyond even the name hearing is true hearing.

Sutra:

***“As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source,
The entire six are liberated.***

Commentary:

When even the name is gone, one can say that that sense-organ is untied. **“As soon as one sense-organ returns to the source / The entire six are liberated.”** The “source” is the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. When one sense-organ reverts to the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One, all six come back together. The older brother returns and the younger brothers follow along. But if you don't bring one sense-organ back, none of them will return. They are connected, because they were originally one, but then they divided into six.

Sutra:

***“Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.
The Triple Realm, a vision of flowers in space.
When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone.
The ‘dust’ gives way to pure and perfect insight.***

Commentary:

Why don't we become Buddhas? We are tied up by the six sense-organs and six sense-objects. So we must find a method to attain liberation. We are not the only ones bound by the organs and objects; at that time, Ananda also had this problem. We are in the same predicament. Ananda took this path to attain liberation, and

we are now very lucky to learn about this method. We, too, can travel this path and get free.

“Sight and hearing are like an illusory covering.” Seeing and hearing are not something real. They are like an illusion, like a film over the eyes, like clouds in the sky. **“The Triple Realm, a vision of flowers in space.”** The desire realm, the form realm, and the formless realm make up the Triple Realm. We are within it, gazing into emptiness until our staring makes us tired. Then it looks as if there are flowers dancing in space. At the beginning of his verse, Manjushri said,

*The emptiness created within enlightenment,
Is like a single bubble in all the sea.*

Emptiness arises out of the vastness of enlightenment and is as insignificant as one bubble in the great ocean. And the Triple Realm is like a bubble in the sea of emptiness. **“When hearing reverts, the cataract is gone.”** When one returns the hearing and hears the self-nature, the film disappears. **“The ‘dust’ gives way to pure and perfect insight.”** When the experiencing of the six sense-objects dissolves, there are no external defiling objects to disturb your self-nature. Then your enlightened nature is pure and perfect.

Sutra:

***“When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating.
A stillness shines and includes within it
all of emptiness.
Looking at the world from this point of view,
Everything that happens is just like a dream.
Matangi’s daughter, too, is part of the dream.
Who was able, then, to physically detain you?”***

Commentary:

Ah, Manjushri Bodhisattva talks tough. He’s not the least bit polite. He’s downright rude to Ananda here. **“When purity is ultimate, the light is penetrating.** Once your insight is pure and

perfect, then, at the ultimate point, a light pervades. You become enlightened. **A stillness shines and includes within it all of emptiness.** When you attain this skill, emptiness is found within you. Your own nature is the great enlightened nature. When you return to that nature which was always yours, you include all of space. **Looking at the world from this point of view / Everything that happens is just like a dream.** As you continue to use this skill, you contemplate the world and find that it is all nothing but a dream. **Matangi's daughter, too, is part of the dream / Who was able, then, to physically detain you?** She is part of the Illusion. Who was able to capture you? You lost face. You wanted to be there. You liked it. If you could reach the level just described, who could restrain you?" Not very polite, wouldn't you say?

O3 He brings up an analogy to relate to the dharma just explained.

Sutra:

***“It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows
And works the dolls to seem as real as people.
Although one sees them move about freely,
They are really governed by a set of strings.
Cease operating the controls
and they return to stillness.
The entire illusion is without a nature.*”**

Commentary:

“It is like a puppeteer who plays with shadows.” This refers to the puppet shows of old when the puppets danced and acted behind a screen of framed oil-paper. Behind it puppets made of donkey skin attached to strings are manipulated by the puppeteer, and the audience sees their shadows against the screen. Nowadays we have movies. The puppets look life-like, but actually they are controlled by the puppet-master. They used to fight noisy battles on stage with swords and guns. I remember watching them as a child. He **“works the dolls to seem as real as people.”** Dressed as men and women, they cavort on stage. **“Although one sees them move**

about freely / They are really governed by a set of strings.” It seems like they can move their arms and legs and even their eyes and lips, but it’s all mechanical. They are strung up to an apparatus. Nonetheless, people watch transfixed. **“Cease operating the controls and they return to stillness / The entire illusion is without a nature.”** There was nothing to it after all. In this section, Manjushri Bodhisattva explains how everything is like an illusion. The previous section made clear how we are in a dream.

Sutra:

*“The six sense-organs are also thus.
At first there was one essential brightness.
Which split into a six-fold combination.
If but one part ceases and returns,
All six functions will stop as well.
In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish,
Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness.”*

Commentary:

Why does he speak about dreams and illusions? It is because the six sense-organs are like an imaginary play. **“The six sense-organs are also thus.”** The six organs are like the play put on by the puppeteer. It’s as if a mechanism is controlling them. But if one organ can become pure, the others will be freed as well.

“At first there was one essential brightness.” Originally there was the single brightness of the nature of the Treasury of the Thus Come One. **“It split into a six-fold combination.”** It divided into eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind. **“If but one part ceases and returns”** – if the knot is untied – **“All six functions will stop as well.”** If one function stops, the others will also cease; they will no longer function. **“In response to a thought, defiling objects vanish.”** All the involvement between the six sense-organs and six sense-objects comes to an end, **“Becoming pure and wonderful perfect brightness.”** They become the everlasting pure nature and bright substance of the Treasury of the Thus Come One.

O4 He concludes by telling that the cause and effect are ultimate.

Sutra:

***“If there is residual defilement, one must still study.
When the brightness is ultimate,
that is the Tathagata.***

Commentary:

“If there is residual defilement, one must still study. When ignorance is cut off initially, there remains a subtle ignorance called “appearance of production ignorance.” That is what is meant here by “residual defilement.” Bodhisattvas must still cut that off. **“When the brightness is ultimate, that is the Tathagata.”** That is the basic substance of the Thus Come One.

M4 He urges everyone to diligently cultivate and certify.

Sutra:

***“Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly,
Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing.
Return the hearing and listen to the self nature
Till the nature reaches the supreme way.
That is what perfect penetration really means.***

Commentary:

“Ananda, and everyone in the great assembly / Turn yourselves around and revert the hearing.” You should cultivate according to this method. Don’t let yourselves run outside. Come back. Look within and find yourself. **“Return the hearing and listen to the self nature / Till the nature reaches the supreme way.** Your nature can accomplish the unsurpassed path. **That is what perfect penetration really means.”** Why does he select the organ of the ear? It is the easiest to cultivate successfully. I believe that some of you already know how to develop this skill, while others do not. What does it mean to return the hearing to hear the self-nature? It is the skill used in investigating **Ch’an**. When you

investigate **Ch'an**, you don't want to expend all your energy on seeking outside. You want to turn the light around and shine it within. Then you ask yourself, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" "Who?" You want to put the "Who?" in your heart and then listen with your ears. Pursue "Who?" Do this nonstop. Don't let your skill become dispersed. You investigate this topic in everything you do.

*Walking, standing, sitting, reclining,
don't be apart from this.
If you depart from this,
you've made a mistake.*

What is "this?" It is the question, "Who is mindful of the Buddha?" You don't have to ask out loud; ask in your heart and listen with your ears. Listen within, not outside. After you have listened within, your heart and your hearing-nature will eventually merge into one. And then in some unexpected way, at some unexpected moment, you will suddenly open enlightenment. But you definitely must bring your mind and nature together. Don't let them scatter in all directions. Don't let them get dissipated outside. Collect them within. Return the hearing and listen to your own nature. Eventually and naturally your skill will develop. Investigating a **Ch'an** topic and returning the hearing to listen to the self-nature are the same. And now everyone knows that using the organ of the ear in cultivation is the easiest method. So put your energy there and cultivate this Dharma-door.

Sutra:

***"It is the gateway entered
by Buddhas as many as dust motes.
It is the one path to Nirvana.
Thus Come Ones of the past
perfected this method.
Bodhisattvas now merge
with this total brightness.
People of the future***

*who study and practice
Will also rely on this Dharma.
Through this method I, too,
have been certified.
Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva
was not alone in using it.*

Commentary:

Now Manjushri Bodhisattva certifies as authentic this Dharma he has selected. **“It is the gateway entered by Buddhas as many as dust motes / It is the one path to Nirvana.”** He says, “Not only was Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva certified through his use of this Dharma-door, this method of perfect penetration that I am explaining, I, too, Manjushri, gave proof to this doctrine of perfect penetration of the organ of the ear. Not only myself, but in the past countless Buddhas also found this the one path to Nirvana. It was by this Way that they reached the fruition of Nirvana. **“Thus Come Ones of the past perfected this method.** They became accomplished by means of the perfect penetration derived from returning the hearing to hear the self-nature. **Bodhisattvas now merge with this total brightness.** Bodhisattvas cultivating right now are on the same road. **People of the future who study and practice / Will also rely on this Dharma.** People of the future who as yet haven’t even encountered the Buddhadharmā will come to select this method for cultivation. **Through this method I, too, have been certified.** A long time ago I gave proof to this Dharma-door of perfect penetration. **Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva was not alone in using it.”**

M5 He concludes his answer.

Sutra:

*“As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested,
I choose sincerely a skill-in-means,
One to save those in the final aeon
Who seek to escape the mundane world,*

*And perfect the heart of Nirvana:
The best way is to contemplate
the sounds of the world.*

Commentary:

“As the Buddha, the World Honored One, requested / I choose sincerely a skill-in-means.” Buddha, I speak the truth, I say what is really so. The method which is the **one to save those in the final aeon / Who seek to escape the mundane world / And perfect the heart of Nirvana.** Of the eighteen realms and the seven elements, which Dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating? Which one is most appropriate for living beings in the Dharma-ending Age? Some will want to get out of the world and seek transcendence. How can they fulfill their vow to cultivate the Way and reach Nirvana? **The best way is to contemplate the sounds of the world.** Gwan Shr Yin Bodhisattva, here in the Saha world, got the best response from this method. This method is the most appropriate one. It tallies best with the causes and conditions of most people.

Sutra:

*“All the other kinds of expedients
Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha.
In some cases they bring immediate transcendence,
But they are not the customary means of practice,
Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.*

Commentary:

“All the other kinds of expedients / Require the awesome spirit of the Buddha.” In cultivating any of the other expedient Dharma-doors besides that of the ear, one needs the Buddha’s aid in order to succeed. Without the Buddha’s support, one cannot accomplish anything through them. **In some cases they bring immediate transcendence / But they are not the customary means of practice / Spoken for those of shallow and deep roots alike.** Although some used these methods to get out of the

wearisome mundane dust and false thinking, they are not Dharma-doors which just anyone can use. In speaking Dharma, one must look at the causes and conditions. I must observe the person. For someone with wisdom, one should speak more profound Dharma. For stupid people, one should explain simple dharmas. The Dharma cannot always be expressed in the same way. Only the organ of the ear is a perfect method which anyone can study. I think this Dharma-door is the most perfectly penetrating.”

M6 He seeks aid and generally concludes.

Sutra:

*“I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka,
And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows,
Trusting they will aid those in the future,
So that no one will doubt this dharma-door.
It is an expedient easy to master;
An appropriate teaching for Ananda
And for those immersed in the final age.
They should cultivate this organ of hearing,
A perfect penetration that surpasses all others.
It is the way to the true mind.”*

Commentary:

After Manjushri Bodhisattva finished speaking this verse, he made obeisance to the Triple Jewel. **“I bow to the Ones Come Thus and the Tripitaka.”** The “Ones Come Thus” are the Buddhas. The “Tripitaka” is the Dharma. **“And to those inconceivable ones with no outflows”**: “Those” refers to the Sangha. The Bodhisattvas and Arhats with no outflows have attained a state which is inconceivable and ineffable. Their spiritual penetrations and wonderful functions are difficult to comprehend. He bows to the sages and saints of the Sangha, **“Trusting they will aid those in the future / So that no one will doubt this dharma-door.”** I hope you will help all living beings of the future, so that they won’t

have any doubts about the Dharma-door of returning the hearing to hear the self-nature.

“It is an expedient easy to master / An appropriate teaching for Ananda. This Dharma-door is both easy to cultivate and easy to be successful with. It is the best method for Ananda to use. There is none better. **And for those immersed in the final age / They should cultivate this organ of hearing.** Not only will this Dharma-door bring a response to Ananda, It is also right for beings who will fall into the Dharma-ending Age. Just use the method of cultivating with the organ of the ear. **A perfect penetration that surpasses all others / It is the way to the true mind.** This Dharma-door of perfect penetration goes beyond the other twenty-four expedient methods. It is a lot easier and brings surpassing results. The true and actual mind found through this Dharma-door is as I have explained above.

H3 Based on the instruction, the great assembly becomes enlightened and accomplishes entry.

I1 Ananda and those like him become enlightened.

Sutra:

Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha’s Bodhi and Parinirvana like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home, though he has not returned completely.

Commentary:

Thereupon, Ananda and all in the great assembly experienced a clarity of body and mind. They had gained tremendous understanding. **Having attained such profound instruction, they contemplated the Buddha’s Bodhi and Parinirvana.** They had received magnificent teaching from both the Buddha and Manjushri Bodhisattva. They looked upon the doctrines of Bodhi and Nirvana **like someone who, having traveled far on business, knows that he is on the road home,**

though he has not returned completely. This person has had to go away on business and hasn't arrived back home yet. But he's gone far enough to recognize that he's on the way to his house. The meaning is that although the members of the Great Assembly and Ananda had not actually been certified as having attained the second, third, or fourth fruitions of Arhatship, now at least they understood the theory, the doctrine.

12 Matangi's daughter and those like her accomplish entry.

Sutra:

Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division, those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond study, as well as all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, found their fundamental mind and, far removed from dust and defilement, attained the purity of the Dharma Eye.

Commentary:

Throughout the entire assembly, the gods, dragons, and all the eightfold division of ghosts and spirits: the eightfold division includes gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas, humans, and non-humans, as well as the dragons. **Those of the two vehicles who were not yet beyond study** refers to the Sound-Hearers and those Enlightened to Conditions. Together with **all the Bodhisattvas of initial resolve, as numerous as the sands in ten Ganges Rivers, they found their fundamental mind.** It was not like before, when they didn't even recognize their own mind. They were **far removed from dust and defilement,** and so they **attained the purity of the Dharma Eye.**

Sutra:

The Bhikshuni named "Nature" attained Arhatship after hearing this verse.

Commentary:

The Bhikshuni named “Nature” was Matangi’s daughter. She **attained Arhatship after hearing this verse** spoken by Manjushri Bodhisattva. At this point she surpassed Ananda by being certified to the second stage of Arhatship. Ananda was still a first-stage sage.

Sutra:

And limitless beings brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi.

Commentary:

At that time, there were also **limitless**, boundless, uncountable beings in the Dharma Assembly who **brought forth a matchless, unequalled resolve for Annuttarasamyaksambodhi**. There was nothing that could compare with the extent of their resolve. It was totally genuine. **“Anuttarasamyaksambodhi”** means the “Unsurpassed Proper and Equal Right Enlightenment.” **Anuttara** is unsurpassed; **samyak** is proper and equal; and **sambodhi** is right enlightenment. Their intention was to become Buddhas.

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Buddhist Text Translation Society Publication

Buddhist Text Translation Society International Translation Institute

<http://www.bttsonline.org>

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When Buddhism first came to China from India, one of the most important tasks required for its establishment was the translation of the Buddhist scriptures from Sanskrit into Chinese. This work involved a great many people, such as the renowned monk National Master Kumarajiva (fifth century), who led an assembly of over 800 people to work on the translation of the Tripitaka (Buddhist canon) for over a decade. Because of the work of individuals such as these, nearly the entire Buddhist Tripitaka of over a thousand texts exists to the present day in Chinese.

Now the banner of the Buddha's Teachings is being firmly planted in Western soil, and the same translation work is being done from Chinese into English. Since 1970, the Buddhist Text Translation Society (BTTS) has been making a paramount contribution toward this goal. Aware that the Buddhist Tripitaka is a work of such magnitude that its translation could never be entrusted to a single person, the BTTS, emulating the translation assemblies of ancient times, does not publish a work until it has passed through four committees for primary translation, revision, editing, and certification. The leaders of these committees are Bhikshus (monks) and Bhikshunis (nuns) who have devoted their lives to the study and practice of the Buddha's teachings. For this reason, all of the works of the BTTS put an emphasis on what the principles of the Buddha's teachings mean in terms of actual practice and not simply hypothetical conjecture.

The translations of canonical works by the Buddhist Text Translation Society are accompanied by extensive commentaries by the Venerable Tripitaka Master Hsuan Hua.

BTTS Publications

Buddhist Sutras. Amitabha Sutra, Dharma Flower (Lotus) Sutra, Flower Adornment (Avatamsaka) Sutra, Heart Sutra & Verses without a Stand, Shurangama Sutra, Sixth Patriarch Sutra, Sutra in Forty-two Sections, Sutra of the Past Vows of Earth Store Bodhisattva, Vajra Prajna Paramita (Diamond) Sutra.

Commentarial Literature. Buddha Root Farm, City of 10000 Buddhas Recitation Handbook, Filiality: The Human Source, Herein Lies the Treasure-trove, Listen to Yourself Think Everything Over, Shastra on the Door to Understanding the Hundred Dharmas, Song of Enlightenment, The Ten Dharma Realms Are Not beyond a Single Thought, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma, Venerable Master Hua's Talks on Dharma during the 1993 Trip to Taiwan, Water Mirror Reflecting Heaven.

Biographical. In Memory of the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua, Pictorial Biography of the Venerable Master Hsü Yün, Records of High Sanghans, Records of the Life of the Venerable Master Hsüan Hua, Three Steps One Bow, World Peace Gathering, News from True Cultivators, Open Your Eyes Take a Look at the World, With One Heart Bowing to the City of 10000 Buddhas.

Children's Books. Cherishing Life, Human Roots: Buddhist Stories for Young Readers.

Musics, Novels and Brochures. Songs for Awakening, Awakening, The Three Cart Patriarch, City of 10000 Buddhas Color Brochure, Celebris's Journey, Heng Ch'au's Journal.

The Buddhist Monthly–Vajra Bodhi Sea is a monthly journal of orthodox Buddhism which has been published by the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, formerly known as the Sino-American Buddhist Association, since 1970. Each issue contains the most recent translations of the Buddhist canon by the Buddhist Text Translation Society. Also included in each issue are a biography of a great Patriarch of Buddhism from the ancient past, sketches of the lives of contemporary monastics and lay-followers around the world, articles on practice, and other material. The journal is bilingual, Chinese and English

Please visit our web-site at www.bttsonline.org for the latest publications and for ordering information.

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association

Mission

The Dharma Realm Buddhist Association (formerly the Sino-American Buddhist Association) was founded by the Venerable Master Hsuan Hua in the United States of America in 1959. Taking the Dharma Realm as its scope, the Association aims to disseminate the genuine teachings of the Buddha throughout the world. The Association is dedicated to translating the Buddhist canon, propagating the Orthodox Dharma, promoting ethical education, and bringing benefit and happiness to all beings. Its hope is that individuals, families, the society, the nation, and the entire world will, under the transforming influence of the Buddhadharma, gradually reach the state of ultimate truth and goodness.

The Founder

The Venerable Master, whose names were An Tse and To Lun, received the Dharma name Hsuan Hua and the transmission of Dharma from Venerable Master Hsu Yun in the lineage of the Wei Yang Sect. He was born in Manchuria, China, at the beginning of the century. At nineteen, he entered the monastic order and dwelt in a hut by his mother's grave to practice filial piety. He meditated, studied the teachings, ate only one meal a day, and slept sitting up. In 1948 he went to Hong Kong, where he established the Buddhist Lecture Hall and other Way-places. In 1962 he brought the Proper Dharma to the West, lecturing on several dozen Mahayana Sutras in the United States. Over the years, the Master established more than twenty monasteries of Proper Dharma under the auspices of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association and the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas. He also founded centers for the translation of the Buddhist canon and for education to spread the influence of the Dharma in the East and West. The Master manifested the stillness in the United States in 1995. Through his lifelong, selfless dedication to teaching living beings with wisdom and compassion, he influenced countless people to change their faults and to walk upon the pure, bright path to enlightenment.

Dharma Propagation, Buddhist Text Translation, and Education

The Venerable Master Hua's three great vows after leaving the home-life were (1) to propagate the Dharma, (2) to translate the Buddhist Canon, and (3) to promote education. In order to make these vows a reality, the Venerable Master based himself on the Three Principles and the Six Guidelines. Courageously facing every hardship, he founded monasteries, schools, and centers in the West, drawing in living beings and teaching them on a vast scale. Over the years, he founded the following institutions:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas and Its Branches

In propagating the Proper Dharma, the Venerable Master not only trained people but also founded Way-places where the Dharma wheel could turn and living beings could be saved. He wanted to provide cultivators with pure places to practice in accord with the Buddha's regulations. Over the years, he founded many Way-places of Proper Dharma. In the United States and Canada, these include the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas; Gold Mountain Monastery; Gold Sage Monastery; Gold Wheel Monastery; Gold Summit Monastery; Gold Buddha Monastery; Avatamsaka Monastery; Long Beach Monastery; the City of the Dharma Realm; Berkeley Buddhist Monastery; Avatamsaka Hermitage; and Blessings, Prosperity, and Longevity Monastery. In Taiwan, there are the Dharma Realm Buddhist Books Distribution Association, Dharma Realm Monastery, and Amitabha Monastery. In Malaysia, there are Zi Yun Dong Monastery, Deng Bi An Monastery, and Lotus Vihara. In Hong Kong, there are the Buddhist Lecture Hall and Cixing Monastery.

Purchased in 1974, the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas is the hub of the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association. The City is located in Talmage, Mendocino County, California, 110 miles north of San Francisco. Eighty of the 488 acres of land are in active use. The remaining acreage consists of meadows, orchards, and woods. With over seventy large buildings containing over 2,000 rooms, blessed with serenity and fresh, clean air, it is the first large Buddhist monastic community in the United States. It is also an international center for the Proper Dharma.

Although the Venerable Master Hua was the Ninth Patriarch in the Weiyang Sect of the Chan School, the monasteries he founded emphasize all of the five main practices of Mahayana Buddhism (Chan meditation, Pure Land,

esoteric, Vinaya (moral discipline), and doctrinal studies). This accords with the Buddha's words: "The Dharma is level and equal, with no high or low." At the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas, the rules of purity are rigorously observed. Residents of the City strive to regulate their own conduct and to cultivate with vigor. Taking refuge in the Proper Dharma, they lead pure and selfless lives, and attain peace in body and mind. The Sutras are expounded and the Dharma wheel is turned daily. Residents dedicate themselves wholeheartedly to making Buddhism flourish. Monks and nuns in all the monasteries take one meal a day, always wear their precept sash, and follow the Three Principles:

*Freezing, we do not scheme.
Starving, we do not beg.
Dying of poverty, we ask for nothing.
According with conditions, we do not change.
Not changing, we accord with conditions.
We adhere firmly to our three great principles.
We renounce our lives to do the Buddha's work.
We take the responsibility to mold our own destinies.
We rectify our lives to fulfill the Sanghan's role.
Encountering specific matters,
 we understand the principles.
Understanding the principles,
 we apply them in specific matters.
We carry on the single pulse of
 the Patriarchs' mind-transmission.*

The monasteries also follow the Six Guidelines: not contending, not being greedy, not seeking, not being selfish, not pursuing personal advantage, and not lying.

International Translation Institute

The Venerable Master vowed to translate the Buddhist Canon (Tripitaka) into Western languages so that it would be widely accessible throughout the world. In 1973, he founded the International Translation Institute on Washington Street in San Francisco for the purpose of translating Buddhist scriptures into English and other languages. In 1977, the Institute was merged into Dharma Realm Buddhist University as the Institute for the Translation of Buddhist Texts. In 1991, the Venerable Master purchased a large building in

Burlingame (south of San Francisco) and established the International Translation Institute there for the purpose of translating and publishing Buddhist texts. To date, in addition to publishing over one hundred volumes of Buddhist texts in Chinese, the Association has published more than one hundred volumes of English, French, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Japanese translations of Buddhist texts, as well as bilingual (Chinese and English) editions. Audio and video tapes also continue to be produced. The monthly journal *Vajra Bodhi Sea*, which has been in circulation for nearly thirty years, has been published in bilingual (Chinese and English) format in recent years.

In the past, the difficult and vast mission of translating the Buddhist canon in China was sponsored and supported by the emperors and kings themselves. In our time, the Venerable Master encouraged his disciples to cooperatively shoulder this heavy responsibility, producing books and audio tapes and using the medium of language to turn the wheel of Proper Dharma and do the great work of the Buddha. All those who aspire to devote themselves to this work of sages should uphold the Eight Guidelines of the International Translation Institute:

1. One must free oneself from the motives of personal fame and profit.
2. One must cultivate a respectful and sincere attitude free from arrogance and conceit.
3. One must refrain from aggrandizing one's work and denigrating that of others.
4. One must not establish oneself as the standard of correctness and suppress the work of others with one's fault-finding.
5. One must take the Buddha-mind as one's own mind.
6. One must use the wisdom of Dharma-Selecting Vision to determine true principles.
7. One must request Virtuous Elders of the ten directions to certify one's translations.
8. One must endeavor to propagate the teachings by printing Sutras, Shastra texts, and Vinaya texts when the translations are certified as being correct.

These are the Venerable Master's vows, and participants in the work of translation should strive to realize them.

Instilling Goodness Elementary School, Developing Virtue Secondary School, Dharma Realm Buddhist University

“Education is the best national defense.” The Venerable Master Hua saw clearly that in order to save the world, it is essential to promote good education. If we want to save the world, we have to bring about a complete change in people’s minds and guide them to cast out unwholesomeness and to pursue goodness. To this end the Master founded Instilling Goodness Elementary School in 1974, and Developing Virtue Secondary School and Dharma Realm Buddhist University in 1976.

In an education embodying the spirit of Buddhism, the elementary school teaches students to be filial to parents, the secondary school teaches students to be good citizens, and the university teaches such virtues as humaneness and righteousness. Instilling Goodness Elementary School and Developing Virtue Secondary School combine the best of contemporary and traditional methods and of Western and Eastern cultures. They emphasize moral virtue and spiritual development, and aim to guide students to become good and capable citizens who will benefit humankind. The schools offer a bilingual (Chinese/English) program where boys and girls study separately. In addition to standard academic courses, the curriculum includes ethics, meditation, Buddhist studies, and so on, giving students a foundation in virtue and guiding them to understand themselves and explore the truths of the universe. Branches of the schools (Sunday schools) have been established at branch monasteries with the aim of propagating filial piety and ethical education.

Dharma Realm Buddhist University, whose curriculum focuses on the Proper Dharma, does not merely transmit academic knowledge. It emphasizes a foundation in virtue, which expands into the study of how to help all living beings discover their inherent nature. Thus, Dharma Realm Buddhist University advocates a spirit of shared inquiry and free exchange of ideas, encouraging students to study various canonical texts and use different experiences and learning styles to tap their inherent wisdom and fathom the meanings of those texts. Students are encouraged to practice the principles they have understood and apply the Buddhadharma in their lives, thereby nurturing their wisdom and virtue. The University aims to produce outstanding individuals of high moral character who will be able to bring benefit to all sentient beings.

Sangha and Laity Training Programs

In the Dharma-ending Age, in both Eastern and Western societies there are very few monasteries that actually practice the Buddha's regulations and strictly uphold the precepts. Teachers with genuine wisdom and understanding, capable of guiding those who aspire to pursue careers in Buddhism, are very rare. The Venerable Master founded the Sangha and Laity Training Programs in 1982 with the goals of raising the caliber of the Sangha, perpetuating the Proper Dharma, providing professional training for Buddhists around the world on both practical and theoretical levels, and transmitting the wisdom of the Buddha.

The Sangha Training Program gives monastics a solid foundation in Buddhist studies and practice, training them in the practical affairs of Buddhism and Sangha management. After graduation, students will be able to assume various responsibilities related to Buddhism in monasteries, institutions, and other settings. The program emphasizes a thorough knowledge of Buddhism, understanding of the scriptures, earnest cultivation, strict observance of precepts, and the development of a virtuous character, so that students will be able to propagate the Proper Dharma and perpetuate the Buddha's wisdom. The Laity Training Program offers courses to help laypeople develop correct views, study and practice the teachings, and understand monastic regulations and ceremonies, so that they will be able to contribute their abilities in Buddhist organizations.

Let Us Go Forward Together

In this Dharma-ending Age when the world is becoming increasingly dangerous and evil, the Dharma Realm Buddhist Association, in consonance with its guiding principles, opens the doors of its monasteries and centers to those of all religions and nationalities. Anyone who is devoted to humaneness, righteousness, virtue, and the pursuit of truth, and who wishes to understand him or herself and help humankind, is welcome to come study and practice with us. May we together bring benefit and happiness to all living beings.

Dharma Realm Buddhist Association Branches

Home Page: <http://www.drba.org>

Main Branch:

The City of Ten Thousand Buddhas

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Tel: (707) 462-0939 Fax: (707) 462-0949

The City of the Dharma Realm

1029 West Capitol Avenue, West Sacramento, CA 95691 USA

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The International Translation Institute

1777 Murchison Drive, Burlingame, CA 94010-4504 USA

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Institute for World Religions (Berkeley Buddhist Monastery)

2304 McKinley Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94703 USA

Tel: (510) 848-3440 Fax: (510) 548-4551

Gold Mountain Monastery

800 Sacramento Street, San Francisco, CA 94108 USA

Tel: (415) 421-6117 Fax: (415) 788-6001

Gold Sage Monastery

11455 Clayton Road, San Jose, CA 95127 USA

Tel: (408) 923-7243 Fax: (408) 923-1064

Gold Summit Monastery

233-1st Avenue, West Seattle, WA 98119 USA

Tel: (206) 284-6690 Fax: (206) 284-6918

Gold Wheel Monastery

235 North Avenue 58, Los Angeles, CA 90042 USA

Tel: (213) 258-6668

Blessings, Prosperity, & Longevity Monastery

4140 Long Beach Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90807 USA

Tel: (562) 595-4966

Long Beach Moastery

3361 East Ocean Boulevard, Long Beach, CA 90803 USA

Tel: (562) 438-8902

Avatamsaka Hermitage

11721 Beall Mountain Road, Potomac, MD 20854-1128 USA
Tel: (301) 299-3693

Avatamsaka Monastery

1009-4th Avenue, S.W. Calgary, AB T2P OK8 Canada
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Gold Buddha Monastery

248 E. 11th Avenue, Vancouver, B.C. V5T 2C3 Canada
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11th Floor, 85 Chung-hsiao E. Road, Sec. 6, Taipei, R.O.C.
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Dharma Realm Sagely Monastery

20, Tong-hsi Shan-chuang, Hsing-lung Village, Liu-kuei
Kaohsiung County, Taiwan, R.O.C.
Tel: (07) 689-3717 Fax: (07) 689-3870

Amitabha Monastery

7, Su-chien-hui, Chih-nan Village, Shou-feng,
Hualien Country, Taiwan, R.O.C.
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Tze Yun Tung Temple

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Kun Yam Thong Temple

161, Jalan Ampang, 50450 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Tel: (03) 2164-8055 Fax: (03) 2163-7118

Lotus Vihara

136, Jalan Sekolah, 45600 Batang Berjuntai,
Selangor Darul Ehsan, Malaysia
Tel: (03) 3271-9439

Buddhist Lecture Hall

31 Wong Nei Chong Road, Top Floor Happy Valley,
Hong Kong, China
Tel/Fax: 2572-7644

Verse of Transference

*May the merit and virtue accrued from this work,
Adorn the Buddha's Pure Lands,
Repaying four kinds of kindness above,
And aiding those suffering in the paths below.*

*May those who see and hear of this,
All bring forth the resolve for Bodhi,
And when this retribution body is over,
Be born together in ultimate bliss.*



Dharma Protector Wei T'o Bodhisattva