

*The Sūtra of
Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's
Consulting the Buddha*

大梵天王問佛決疑經

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Published by
The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation

“All Buddhist sūtras and books written to expound Buddha dharma can make people get good fortune and avoid mishaps, mend their errors and do virtues, understand the cause and effect of the three lifetimes, recognize their innate Buddha nature, transcend the bitter ocean of birth and death, and take rebirth in the Lotus Land of Ultimate Bliss. The readers should generate gratitude and hard-to-meet cherishment in having them, clean their hands and desks before reading, and be respectful and sincere just like facing the Buddha and the teacher. Accordingly, they will gain immeasurable benefits by themselves. If they are unscrupulous, profane the books wantonly, stick to their narrow vision, and slander them relentlessly, they will commit transgression as high as the sky, and suffer endless retribution. All are advised to stay away from transgression and seek for benefits so as to avoid suffering and obtain bliss in the end.”

Respectfully quoting “The Writings of
Master Yin-guang Version 3 Book 4:
Epigraphy to the Chanting Rituals of
Ling-yen-shan Monastery”

Printed for free distribution by

The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation

11F., 55, Sec. 1, Hang Chow South Road, Taipei, Taiwan, R.O.C.

Tel: 886-2-23951198 Fax:886-2-23913415

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An Exposition of
The Sūtra of
Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's
Consulting the Buddha

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the Buddha Educational Foundation

Sept. 28, 2014

The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha, one (or two) fascicle in length, abbreviated as *The Sūtra of Consulting the Buddha*, was now collected in Volume 87 of the *卍-character Sequel Piṭaka*. Nowadays, all followers of Ch'an School know that this sūtra records the origin of Ch'an tradition: The Buddha picked up a flower to show to the disciples; Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile (hereinafter the flower sermon), and thus inherited the Buddha's mind seal and became the first patriarch of Ch'an School. Because of this episode, Ch'an School has been developing until today.

In the early years of the T'ang Dynasty, followers of

Ch'an School already knew this great event of the flower sermon. However, they considered it as the narration from preceding patriarchs without knowing its origin.

In the first year of Kai-yuan Reign of Emperor Xuanzong of the T'ang Dynasty (713 CE), Master Huineng, the sixth patriarch of Ch'an School, wanted to return from Baolin Monastery in Caoxi to Guoen Monastery in Xin State to enter parinirvāṇa. His disciples failed to implore him to stay, so they asked him to explain the lineage of Ch'an School. Despite being an illiterate, the Sixth Patriarch Master Huineng, in his great round mirror wisdom (ādarśa-jñāna), clearly introduced with great familiarity the lineage: from Śākyamuni Buddha, the last of the preceding seven Buddhas, to Mahākāśyapa, and then from patriarch to patriarch until Master Huineng, the 33rd patriarch. As the Master answered so fluently, all people were further convinced that the incident of "the flower sermon" originated from the narration of patriarchs. This legend was finally disclosed by Upāsaka Wang Anshi (1021–1086 CE), the prime minister of Emperor Shenzong of Song Dynasty.

Wang Anshi was deeply fascinated with Ch'an School. One day, he called on Ch'an Master Faquan of

Yunmen School, a sub-school of Ch'an School, whether he knew which sūtra first mentioned the incident of “the flower sermon.” The Master answered: “This was narrated by preceding patriarchs. I also never saw it while reading the sūtras.”

Wang Anshi replied: “In the original translated version of *The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha*, one of the rare books collected by the imperial Hanlin Academy, I did see the record of the flower sermon—the origin of Ch'an School.”

Upon hearing this, Master Faquan was immensely joyous and pleaded with Wang Anshi to make a copy of the sūtra to show to the world. Being the incumbent prime minister, Wang Anshi was granted by Emperor Shenzong the privilege to make a few handwritten copies for the study and practice of Buddhists.

Nevertheless, due to the powerful obstruction of deva-māra as prophesied by the Buddha in the sūtra, this sūtra was unable to spread widely, and waned gradually in China. Even the original translated version was lost in wars through the dynasties.

Fortunately, the handwritten copies spread to Japan,

and the sūtra was compiled into Volume No. 87 of the *Ṛ*-character Sequel Piṭaka. The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha we are publishing now was compiled from a photo copy of it.

This sūtra was certainly translated from Sanskrit. Because the grammar and sentence structure of Sanskrit and Chinese are different, and because the translator deliberately kept the style of Sanskrit version without any polishing, the readers may find it difficult to understand, and should go over it several times before grasping its meaning.

This sūtra was translated into Chinese sometime in the Wei, Jin and Northern-Southern Dynasties (220–589 CE), the golden era of Buddhist sūtras' translation in China. Based on my research, this sūtra was translated most likely during the reign of Emperor An (396–418 CE) of the Eastern Jin Dynasty for the following reasons:

1. In the first year of Putong Reign (520 CE) of Emperor Wu of the Southern Liang Dynasty, Master Bodhidharma, the first patriarch of Chinese Ch'an School, came to Guangzhou, China, to transmit the supreme Tathāgata Dhyāna, which transcends the

canonical teaching, points to one's mind directly, and enables one to see one's mind nature to become a Buddha. At that time, a few people had already learned about the great event of the flower sermon to transmit the essence of Buddha's mind. This story was orally passed down until early years of the T'ang Dynasty. Therefore, all followers of Ch'an tradition assumed that this event came from the narration of previous patriarchs.

2. Buddhists widely believed that Patriarch Bodhidharma was the nirmanakāya (emanated body) of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva. Since the deva-māra vowed to destroy this sūtra with his strong obstructive power, the Tathāgata enjoined Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva to hide and protect this sūtra (as recorded in the sūtra). Thus, the translator of this sūtra was certainly the nirmanakāya of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva in the form of an Indian monk who came to China in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317–420 CE) and translated this sūtra into Chinese according to its original meaning. But why did he choose this time to come to China? It is because prior to this time, Patriarch Bodhidharma had sent his two disciples, Fotuo and

Yaśas, to China to sow the seeds of “transmitting the essence of Buddha’s mind, which transcends the canonical teaching, points to one’s mind directly, and enables one to see one’s mind nature to become a Buddha” so as to facilitate the earlier maturation of the conditions of Ch’an School, the supreme vehicle of Buddha dharma. Thus, this sūtra was needed to authenticate the origin of Ch’an School.

3. The Buddha says in this sūtra that all prehistoric culture in China was instructed by Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva. This sūtra also explains: After the world was formed, the Wheel-turning Holy King (Chakra-varti-rājan) based on the teaching of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja to instruct that this world was made up of the five elements, i.e., metal, wood, water, fire, and soil; while the Buddha listed the five elements as earth, water, fire, wind, and space because he referred to the condition before the formation of the world. In the distant past, before the Buddha appeared in the human world, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva manifested in China to teach old Chinese civilization. In compliance with the disposition of Chinese people, he disclosed the interaction of the

five elements of metal, wood, water, fire, and soil as the principle of the universe and human life. Also, because Ch'an School would spread widely in China, and Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva was versed in Chinese culture, he used the technical terms of Chinese culture to translate this sūtra. This is just like the way Master Huiyuan explicated the Buddhist sūtras with the doctrine of Laotze and Zhuangtze, and the way Caodong School, a sub-school of Ch'an School, always used the ideas of yin-yang and eight trigrams. Therefore, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, the translator of this sūtra, used his familiar Chinese culture and the profound doctrine of Buddha dharma to integrate with the theory of yin-yang, five elements, six elements, seven elements, etc. in explaining all phenomena of the universe and human life so that Chinese people could better understand them.

4. After translating this sūtra, the translator Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva observed with his universally penetrating wisdom how to transmit the translated version to later ages without being destroyed by deva-māra. After penetrating observation, he gave the script and his brief biography to Emperor An of the Eastern Jin

Dynasty for publication, a better way to preserve and transmit this sūtra to later ages. (In ancient times, all translated sūtras were published in the name of imperial court.) Due to the incessant wars and change of dynasties, when Wang Anshi, a prime minister of the Northern Song Dynasty, copied this sūtra, only the translated version was left, but the brief introduction of the translator had already been lost. It seems that Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva intended to make fortunate readers of later ages associate this sūtra with himself as the translator.

5. After the consultation among Emperor An of the Eastern Jin Dynasty and his chief ministers, it was agreed that this sūtra was exceptionally excellent. However, the way to attain Buddha path deviates radically: In this sūtra, the Buddha picked up a flower, and Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile, indicating that there is no need to learn externally; in other sūtras, the Buddha was enlightened only after practicing what is hard to practice, tolerating what is hard to tolerate, and implementing six perfections (pāramitās) and all kinds of practices for three great countless eons (asaṃkhyā kalpas). Furthermore, at

that time, Patriarch Bodhidharma's two disciples, Fotuo and Yaśas, who introduced Mahāyāna Ch'an teaching to China, were gravely misunderstood by other Buddhists, framed by people, and even sought after by imperial soldiers. Fortunately, they escaped to Donglin Monastery in Lushan Mountain to seek shelter from Master Huiyuan. (Nevertheless, exactly because of this, the propagation of the Mahāyāna teaching of Ch'an School had the chance to become mature in China.) At that time, if this sūtra had been released, it would have been relentlessly attacked by local Buddhists. The time for circulating this sūtra had not yet come. Also, this sūtra is one about Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's consulting the Buddha, so how could the emperor show disrespect to "deva-rāja" while he proclaimed himself as "son of heaven (deva)"? Therefore, the decision was made to preserve this sūtra in the imperial library and not to be circulated. This situation coincides with what the Buddha illustrated in this sūtra "..... or to entrust it to son of heaven (emperor) and the three key ministers, not circulating this sūtra in the country"

6. After translating this sūtra, the translator knew well

that its teaching of transmitting the Buddha's mind seal, i.e., the way to see one's mind nature and thus to become a Buddha via pointing to one's mind directly outside of scriptures and not relying on any word or letter, would not be accepted, and would be even repelled vehemently by the Buddhist community. If the contemporary Buddhists knew about the existence of this sūtra, they would try every means to destroy it. Consequently, the translator could only tell his close disciples the story through word of mouth: "The Buddha picked up a flower to show to people, and Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile. This wondrous teaching was a kind of transmitting Buddha's mind seal outside of scriptures, not resting on words or letters, pointing to one's mind directly, and becoming a Buddha through seeing one's mind nature." He did not mention that the story of the flower sermon was actually recorded in this sūtra so that this sūtra would not be destroyed. For this reason, this story was spread through word of mouth among few people only, and was passed down to the Northern-Southern Dynasties, the Sui Dynasty and the T'ang Dynasty. And by the beginning of the T'ang Dynasty, this in-

cident had been known widely among followers of Ch'an school. However, at that time people mistook that the story was narrated by patriarchs orally, without knowing its origin. It was not until the time of Emperor Shenzong of the Northern Song dynasty that, with the help of prime minister Wang Anshi, this sūtra was revealed to the world. Since then, people realized that the story of the flower sermon came from *The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha*, not the oral narration of patriarchs.

This sūtra elaborates on the teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism to ferry people of supreme vehicle and the most supreme vehicle. It is a sūtra taught by the Buddha. Buddhist sūtras might be taught by five kinds of beings: the Buddha, the Buddha's disciples, bodhisattvas, devas, and supernaturally transformed human beings (nirmittas). The criterion of judging a sūtra as the Buddha's teaching is the three seals of dharma or three characteristics of existence in Hīnayāna Buddhism and the one seal of ultimate reality in Mahāyāna Buddhism respectively. Buddha means the enlightened one, not referring to any particular Buddha.

In this sūtra, the Buddha picked up a flower, and

Mahākāśyapa broke into a smile. This is a teaching given by the Dharmakāya Buddha to show directly the state of the supreme ultimate reality of all existences. It is the same as “Vimalakīrti’s silence to show the ultimate reality” in the chapter of non-duality dharma of *The Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa Sūtra*. The supreme wondrous dharma was taught in these two sūtras to make people realize instantaneously the essence and function of the pure dharmakāya (truth body), which is neither increasing nor decreasing. This is the true unconditioned dharma, not the unconditioned dharma in contrast to the conditioned dharma. This is the very ultimate reality of the ultimate realities, and the self-awakened state of all Buddha-Tathāgatas.

In addition, in the chapter of dharma realm (dharma-dhātu) of this sūtra, there is a wide discussion on the dependent origination of the dharma realm, i.e., the truth of the ultimate reality of all existences. This is the teaching of Sambhogakāya (Reward Body) Buddha. The theory of dependent origination and emptiness of self-nature is completely congenial to “the one seal of ultimate reality.”

Also, in the chapter of the moon (candracakra) of this sūtra, the practice of the six and ten perfections (pārami-

tās) as well as the five kinds of wisdom is extensively discussed, unveiling the 15 virtues (the ten perfections as well as the five kinds of wisdom) innate in our Buddha nature by means of practice. This is the teaching given by Nirmāṇakāya (Abstrusely Manifested Body) Buddha. Therefore, we can see that the doctrine of this sūtra corresponds to Mahāyāna teaching, and is recognized by the one seal of ultimate reality. This sūtra is indeed rare and precious, has right understanding and right view, is a Mahāyāna sūtra of complete teaching given by the Buddha, and should be promoted widely.

In the chapter of subduing māras of this sūtra, deva māras, ghost māras, heretic māras, and even the heretic māras camouflaged in Buddhist circle are introduced minutely in order to make disciples of Triple Jewels (Triratna) understand thoroughly the tricks of demons and heretics so as not to be cheated and hurt. Thus, this sūtra is hated deeply by all māras, who try every means to destroy it.

Mahāyāna sūtras such as *The Sūrangama Sūtra*, *The Perfect Enlightenment Sūtra*, *The Śastra of Awakening Faith in Mahāyāna*, *The Sūtra of Kṣītigarbha Bodhisattva's Original Vows*, *The Sūtra of Ma-*

hābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha, etc., which expound Mahāyāna complete teaching, dispel māras and heretics, and promote the right path, are defamed as fake sūtras by very few scholars of Buddhism who even maintain that Mahāyāna is not the teaching of the Buddha, which shows they are tricked by the māras to help them do evil. Alas! They obstruct not only their own practice and learning but also the faith of Mahāyāna practitioners who have higher capacity and keen intelligence and make them unable to achieve the supreme Buddha path. What an abhorrence! All are advised not to believe the rumor, not to be tricked by the evil māras, and not to help the māras do evil, for this will not only make you destroy the right dharma, defame the Triple Jewels, and do bad karma out of ignorance but also ruin your own faith in practicing and learning the supreme bodhi.

I follow the mind nature teaching of Ch'an School to practice and learn the Buddha path. Since 1987, I have been lecturing on *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch*. For countless times, I mentioned that the event of the flower sermon, the origin of Ch'an School, is recorded in *The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha*. But I never tried to read it. What a heavy ob-

struction of bad karma and māras!

Several months ago, elder upāsaka Mr. Chen Zhen-hua, the board chairman of Hua Mei Optical Co., Ltd. in Tainan, came to see me after listening to my talks on *The Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch* on website. He handed me the version of *The Sūtra of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja's Consulting the Buddha* downloaded from website, and consulted me the idea to publish this sūtra.

Thus, I had the opportunity to read this sūtra with utmost piety. After reading it, I deeply felt that we Buddhists, who chant the gāthā “To repay the four heavy graces upwardly, and to relieve the bitterness of the beings in three lower realms downwardly” every day, should know better the true meaning of “remembering its source while drinking water.” As the old saying goes, “Pay homage to the tree while eating fruits.” How can the followers of Ch’an School miss this sūtra without promoting it? What’s more, this sūtra teaches the Mahāyāna supreme truth, right understanding and right view! It is also the sūtra of the origin of Ch’an School. Indeed, followers of Ch’an School should resolve to spread it widely.

Therefore, I proofread this sūtra with utmost piety and respect, and beseech the Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation to publish it for free distribution. Besides, I volunteered to lecture on this sūtra so as to repay the grace of the Triple Jewels. I know well that I lack knowledge and talent, and am not qualified to assume the great mission of lecturing. I only hope that by taking this opportunity, a brick is cast to draw a jade. Eminent monks and virtuous householders are expected to propagate this sūtra widely to ferry sentient beings.

We hereby would like to appreciate the most esteemed Buddhist instructor Mr. Cheng, Chen-huang (鄭振煌教授) for making modifications to the translation work of Ms. Chien, Su-chen (簡素琤老師). What they have done will certainly benefit a lot of people and accumulate merits for themselves. Namo Amitabha!

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Chapter 1

Prologue

Thus have I heard. Once, the Buddha stayed at Great Spiritual Vulture Mountain (Mahā Gṛdrakūṭa) with following attendants: 80,000 bhikṣus, among whom are the chiefs Most Venerable (Āyuśmat) Ānanda, Most Venerable Śāriputra, Most Venerable Mahāmaudgalyāyana, and Most Venerable Mahākāśyapa; 80,000 bodhisattvas, among whom are the chiefs Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, Ajita Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva of Great Action and Vow, and Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva; Mahābrahma-rājas, Sakrodevānām Indrah, Vaiśravaṇa, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and innumerable devas; Sea Dragon King, king of yakṣās, king of asura realm, and innumerable devas; King Ajātaśatru, King Prasenajit, officials, brāhmaṇas, and unaccountable human beings; beings in hell (datta naraka), and hungry ghosts of flaming mouth; golden lions, and six-tusked elephant king; and countless non-humans. They all bowed their heads to touch the Buddha's feet, and then retired to their seats.

At that time, the Bhagavān (the World Honored One,

i.e., Śākyamuni Buddha) followed Prabhūtratna Buddha to enter the bottom of a pagoda. Surrounded by all beings, he flew eastward hundreds of thousand miles to a land named Mahā Seven-jeweled Cina. In the middle of the country was a high mountain called Five-jeweled Pulpit where Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva always stayed and preached dharma.

When they reached the mountain, the Bhagavān told them: “In the past, in this country, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva transformed abstrusely as the first brahma deva rāja of the third dhyāna, left the brahma deva palace, for teaching the human world, was born in a royal palace, assumed the dragon body of great virtues, and preached the dharma of fortune and misfortune due to the change of the heavenly principles of five *qis* (vital energies). He then left earth, returned to heaven, and acted as the lord of spring.

“Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva transformed abstrusely as the second brahma deva rāja of the first dhyāna, left the brahma deva palace, for teaching the human world, was born in a royal palace, assumed the ox head of fire virtue, and preached the poison-curing *qi* of helping human world due to the earthly benefits of hundred medicinal herbs. He then left earth, returned to heaven, and acted as the lord of

summer.

“Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva transformed abstrusely as Sakrodevānām Indrah, left the brahma deva palace, for teaching the human world, was born in a royal palace, assumed the human substance of soil virtue, and, preached the human ethics of the great way to enlighten the mind, and the five cardinal relationships. He then left earth, returned to heaven, and acted as the lord of soil utility.

“These three kings made up the powerful trinity of Heaven, Earth, and Human. They preached the virtues of human nature, and based on the conventional truth to show the absolute truth. They were the abstrusely transformed bodies of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, who had great karmic connection with this country, out of his great compassion. In the age of declining dharma, my dharma’s dissemination will rely on Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, not other Buddhas whose karmic connections with this country cease already, to teach and benefit the world forever.”

After the Bhagavān finished this remark, the three kings appeared, bowed their heads to touch the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Now, the Buddha has told such a truth.”

At that time, the Bhagavān arose from his seat, and, for the three kings and the assembly, went east for ten thousand miles to the sea. In the sea was a country named Great Sunrise; in the sea to its east, west, south and north were its small dependent countries. The Bhagavān arrived at the seaside of this country, and said to the assembly:

“In the past at the beginning of the kalpa, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva transformed himself abstrusely as the tenth brahma rāja of the form realm, and told the first brahma rāja to go down to the deva-lokadhātu of desire realm to create the world beneath.

“Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva transformed himself abstrusely as the first brahma deva rāja, who and whose consort, following the order of the mahā brahma rāja of the fourth dhyāna, went down to create one by one the universe, the earth, this country, and its dependent countries in the sea with mountains, rivers, grasses, and trees. A devakanyā (heavenly female) named Wealth of Wondrous Discrimination, also the abstrusely transformed female body of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, came to be the princess of the king to create a field of great bliss, and became the sun and the moon to rule the four continents with numerous dependents who lived in this country as either

chiefs or companions. Therefore, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva had karmic connection with this country. In the age of declining dharma, my dharma's dissemination will rely on Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, not other Buddhas, whose karmic connections with this country cease already, to teach and benefit the world forever.”

After the Bhagavān finished this remark, the devakanyā appeared, bowed her head to touch the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Now, the Buddha has told such a truth.”

At that time, the Bhagavān arose from his seat, and went east for the devakanyā and the assembly. In the sea were several countries whose sentient beings were similar to animals in nature, and, although Buddha dharma spread there gradually, could hardly understand it. The Buddha's intention was to form a karmic connection only for the future.

At that time, the Buddha returned to the original place, the top of Mahā Gṛdrakūṭa, spread mattress, sat down on it, and said to the assembly: “Before long, I will attain parinirvāṇa. All of you are free to ask any question about dharma.” Hearing this, the assembly sat in silence

with no sound.

At that time, the Bhagavān did not exert supernatural power, but showed the following wondrous signs: the wondrous mahāvaipulya Buddha mind bhūtatahatā lotus; the self-reward dharmakāya of five hundred countless kalpas ago; the ultimate reality which all Buddhas can fully realize—the Avataṃsaka-sūtra, the Āgama-sūtras, the Vaipulya-sūtras, Mahā-prajñā-pāramitā-sūtras—, the one seal of ultimate reality, and the Prabhūtaratna Buddha; the bhūtatahatā great vows certified by the Saddharma-puṇḍarika-sūtra; the deathless parinirvāṇa of countless kalpas ago; the precious pagoda, which is the dharma realm pagoda, or the land of eternal peace and illumination; and the sharing of seats, i.e., the truth-wisdom and self-other dharmakāyas. Thus, there were two Bhagavāns: Śākyamuni Tathātagata, who sat facing the padma-garbha-lokadhātu on top of Mahā Gṛdrakūṭa, and Prabhūtaratna Tathātagata, who had returned to the jewel-decorated peace-illumination lokadhātu. The two lands were merged into one, symbolizing that there is Buddha-mind in the minds of ordinary beings, who can become Buddhas and realize the great wondrous dharma. This is the sign that the Buddha intended to transmit this

wondrous dharma store to the successor Mahākāśyapa.

At that time, the Bhagavān did not arise from the dharma seat of saddharma-puñḍarika wondrous path.

Chapter 2

Picking up a Flower

At that time, the lord of the sahā-lokadhātu, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja, whose name was Vaipula, held a saddharma-puṇḍarika-suvarṇaprabhāsa-mahā udumbara flower, the root of the achievement of trichiliocosm, offered it respectfully to the Buddha, stepped back, paid homage, and said: “O Bhagavān! The Buddha has now attained supreme enlightenment, and preached all sorts of dharma and all sorts of instruction to ferry sentient beings of all sorts of mental disposition for the last 50 years. If there is any supreme dharma you haven’t preached, for me and other bodhisattva path practitioners as well as the ordinary people who wish to practice the Buddha path in the age of declining dharma, please announce and spread.”

After saying these words, he offered his body as a seat, decorated with his deva garment, and beseeched the Buddha to sit on it.

At that time, the Tathātagata sat on this precious seat, accepted the lotus, uttered no words, but picked up the lotus only, and showed it to the assembly. All the 84,000

humans and devas remained silent.

Then, Sthavira Mahākāśyapa saw that the Buddha picked up a flower to show to the assembly, was enlightened, and broke into a smile.

The Buddha said to him: “That’s it. I have the store of true dharma eye, the marvelous mind of nirvāṇa, the true form of the formless, the subtle dharma gate which does not rest on words or letters but is a special transmission outside of the scriptures, a total retention and upholding of the ultimate truth for ordinary beings to become buddhas. Now, I entrust this to Mahākāśyapa.”

After saying this, the Buddha stopped talking. At that time, Sthavira Mahākāśyapa arose from his seat, prostrated himself at the Buddha’s feet to pay homage, and said:

“O Bhagavān! It is really very wonderful. I remember what has happened since countless kalpas ago until now: At the place where Dīpaṃkara Buddha preached dharma, I generated bodhicitta (vow for attaining enlightenment), and followed the Buddha to practice.

“Again, after listening to the Bhagavān’s teaching of

dharma, I attained the affliction-ending wisdom (āsrava-kśaya-jñāna) to become an arhat.

“Furthermore, I heard about the ultimate reality of all existences, entered the bodhisattva path, realized the Mahāyāna path while still keeping the arhatship, and came close to the Tathātagata’s all-inclusive wisdom (sarvathā-jñāna).

“Where do such wondrous wisdoms come from? They all come from the ordinary beings’ ever-existing mind, which is the same as that of all Buddhas, the dharmakāya, and the attainment of Buddhahood.

“Such a mind is seen not through instruction, reasoning, or the understanding of letters, but through the enlightenment in the mind without exerting samādhi (concentration) or expecting effect. When cause and conditions are ripe, ordinary beings will see it.

“Therefore, the Buddha path has been transmitted among ordinary beings incessantly. If there were no such a dharma, only the enlightened sages could attain Buddhahood, but not ordinary beings, bhikṣus, bhikṣusnis, upāsakas, and upāsikās.

“If this were the case, then in the turbid and evil world of the dharma-declining age, not even one out of ten million humans could attain enlightenment. With no single human to attain enlightenment, the Buddha path would discontinue. ‘Only name is left, no more sign of the Buddha path. Because of this dharma, the sign of the Buddha path is transmitted, and will not end in the age of declining dharma.’”

The Buddha remarked: “Well said, Mahākāśyapa! Just as you said, the seven Buddha-Bhagavāns instructed the sign of dharma, and the disciples of the seven Buddhas transmitted the sign of dharma. I now entrust this great dharma treasure to you so that after I attain parinirvāṇa, people can practice, transmit, and spread this right dharma generation after generation, to continue this mind-path without letting it disappear.”

At that time, the Bhagavān arose from the wondrous and elegant heavenly seat, i.e., the body of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja, and returned to his original seat. Then, the Bhagavān told Mahābrahma-deva-rāja: “For the past countless kalpas, you have practiced bodhisattva path, and have stayed at a high status of achievement so that you can inquire about this dharma. The continuation of this

great mind-dharma path of all the Buddhas in the turbid and evil world of the dharma-declining age without letting it disappear will utterly rely on your power. If you still have any doubt, please feel free to ask, and I will expound the right dharma to you.”

Mahābrama-deva-rāja said: “Well said. O Bhagavān! Since I am allowed to ask questions, I will ask: ‘Is this mind-dharma not yet instructed, not yet shown, or already shown before?’”

The Buddha said to Mahābrama-deva-rāja: “I already instructed it when I told Śāriputra: ‘This cannot be expressed by words.’ At that time, Śāriputra was awakened to this dharma, and was bestowed the affirmation of becoming Padmaprabha (Lotus-radiance) Buddha in the future. Also, Nāgakanyā (daughter of the Dragon King) offered a precious pearl to the Buddha without uttering a word, and the Tathāgata also accepted it right away without uttering a word. Nāgakanyā was another example of relying on this Buddha’s mind-path to become a Buddha.”

Mahābrama-deva-rāja said: “If it is the case, the Tathāgata now sees this dharma as the truest.”

The Buddha said: “Such is the case. Just as you said,

Śāriputra never left me since past kalpas until today. We both will attain parinirvāṇa soon since he won't stay in the world alone without me. And, Nāgākanyā has become a Buddha in another world, and she is not my disciple. They will not transmit this dharma, so they are as well as non-existent.

“Today, Mahākāśyapa is the only one to transmit the sign of the true path. After I attain parinirvāṇa, until 500 years after the evil world of five turbidities of the dharma-declining age, the no-cessation of the Buddha path will rely totally on Mahākāśyapa because only he was entrusted by me. Thus, only this is called the true dharma.”

Mahābrama-deva-rāja said: “Tathāgata just said ‘500 years after.’ When will be the 500 years?”

The Buddha said: “After I attain parinirvāṇa, the true dharma (sad-dharma) will exist in the world for 800 years, the semblance dharma (saddharma-pratirūpaka) for 1,200 years, and the degenerate dharma (saddharma-vipralopa) for 5,500 years. What I mean is 500 years after the extinction of true dharma, semblance dharma, and degenerate dharma.”

Mahābrama-deva-rāja said: “What world and what

country do true dharma, semblance dharma, degenerate dharma, and 500 years mean?”

The Buddha said: “The world means the human world, not the deva world and the nāga world. The country means the countries of same fate, not only one country in Jambudvīpa. Why?”

“The deva world and the nāga world are the worlds of holy beings, so they have no limit of years. But the human world is pure in the beginning and turbid in the end, prosperous in the beginning and deteriorating in the end, and thus it has limitation.

“Furthermore, all countries are subject to the change of fate at different times. Sometimes, they are protected by devas or holy beings, and sometimes not. Sometimes, they are protected by gods or celestial beings, and sometimes not. Humans have countless fates, while a country’s fate is determined by its people’s fate. Therefore, it means not necessarily one country.”

Mahābrama-deva-rāja said: “Such is the case. O Bhagavān! As what the Buddha said, different countries have different fates. Some have karmic connection with Buddha dharma, and some don’t. Some protect Buddha

dharma, and some don't. This country promotes Buddha dharma, and that destroys it. This country destroys Buddha dharma, and that promotes it. Five hundred years after Buddha dharma spread to the east, the dharma will be preserved to benefit the living beings.”

At that time, Mahābrama-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “The Bhagavān appeared in the world, and have taught various dharmas for more than 40 years. Is there any dharma never expounded before? Is there any dharma expressible by words? Please do show us, all humans and devas, what you have realized.”

After saying this, he offered “the gold-colored thousand-leafed mahā udumbara flower” to the Buddha, retreated, and offered his body as a seat sincerely and wishfully.

At that time, the Bhagavān sat down on this seat, and picked up the flower quietly. In the gathering, millions of humans, devas and bhikṣus remained silent. Only Sthavira Mahākāśyapa realized the gesture, broke into a smile, arose from his seat, joined his palms, stood straightly, appeared poised, and said no words.

At that time, the Buddha told Mahākāśyapa: “I have

the store of true dharma eye, the marvelous mind of nirvāṇa, the true form of the formless, and the subtle dharma which does not rest on words or letters but is a special transmission outside of the scriptures. People of wisdom or no wisdom can realize it when conditions are ripe. Now, I entrust this to Mahākāśyapa. In future lives, you would attend Buddhas and are sure to become a Buddha. Today, you are also qualified as the teacher of the world.”

The Buddha said to all bhikṣus: “The Tathāgata is about to attain parinirvāṇa; you all bhikṣus can rely on Mahākāśyapa to enter the gate of Mahāyāna in practicing the Buddha path.”

Then, the Buddha said to Mahākāśyapa: “To attain Buddhahood, there is no other way except mind nature. What all Buddhas in the past have taught, what all Buddhas in the present are now teaching, and what all Buddhas in the future will enter is nothing but this mind nature. Relying only on the one mind nature, all Buddhas have realized and taught the Buddha path, are now realizing the Buddha path, and will realize the Buddha path. This is also true with all sentient beings.

“It is a heresy to say that there is another way which ‘All Buddhas relied on to become a Buddha, and all sentient beings will rely on to become a Buddha.’ This is not the teaching of the past seven Buddhas. This is not the teaching of all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

“Mahākāśyapa! You should know that all the 80,000 sūtras you are entrusted ride on the vehicle of one mind. Just like the ox cart and horse wagon are the vehicles on the road, all the sūtras taught by the Buddhas are the vehicles to ferry sentient beings. You can follow and practice them.”

At that time, Mahākāśyapa was overjoyed, paid homage to the Buddha, and said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! This dharma is indeed very difficult to meet. It is really the straight way. It is really the wondrous way.

“In the past, I met the Buddha, renounced the household life to practice Buddha dharma, was biasedly fed up with the cycle of birth and death, pursued nirvāṇa only, practiced the unconditioned dharma only, didn't pursue this dharma, understood the theory of emptiness only, didn't know this dharma, undertook hard practice and mortifying practice, and finally became an arhat. Upon

reflection, what a hardship it was!

“Now, the Tathāgata gives the supreme wondrous teaching to let me know, without doubt, that Buddhahood can be attained in an instant, not years and not kalpas. It is not difficult, but wonderful and easy. Though so far I haven’t actually reached the end of kalpas to become a Buddha of wondrous awakening, whose body has 32 major marks, 80 minor marks, and suvarna (pure gold with a violet tinge) color, I really know what dharmakāya is, the mind being the Buddha, and all Buddhas of the three lifetimes having the same wondrous body.

“Now, as I think of the past, my many years’ hard practice and mortifying practice is fruitless; also, my many years’ pursuing the unconditioned emptiness is totally an illusion, not the reality.

“Today, I realize the true emptiness, the form being empty but the nature being non-empty, the essence being unconditioned but the nature being complete. All sentient beings can rely on only this dharma to become a Buddha.”

The Buddha said to Mahākāśyapa: “Such as it is! Such as it is! Just like what you said, in the future you will become a Buddha by following the dharma I taught you

today.”

At that time, after saying this, the Bhagavān arose from the seat, and returned to his original seat, speechless and motionless. All the assembly also remained silent, showing a wondrous disposition.

At that time, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! How wonderful it is. May the Bhagavān teach us immediately that after the Bhagavān enter parinirvāṇa, how can the sentient beings in coming generations enter and attain Buddhahood? How can they practice? Please instruct us how to enter and attain the essence of the subtle dharma.”

The Buddha said to Mahābrahma-deva-rāja: “Deva-rāja! Listen carefully. Think and remember skillfully. The sentient beings have countless different capacities: Some enter by hearing the doctrine, some enter by practicing meditation, some enter by understanding *hetu-pratyaya* (cause and conditions), and some by observing the instructions. There are diverse ways.

“Deva-rāja! Only with faith can we enter this supreme path. How to arouse faith? Those who don't rely on mind nature cannot become a Buddha. Why? Beyond

mind nature, there is no way to become a Buddha. Those who have such understanding and true pursuit will succeed.

“My following disciples don’t become a Buddha: Śāriputra, who has the highest prajñā (wisdom), Ānanda, who listens to my talks most often, Pūrna, who has the best talent in debate, Subhūti, who best understands śūnyata (emptiness), Upāli, who most observes śīla (precepts), Maudgalyayana, who owns the highest abhijñā (supernatural power), and Aniruddha, who has the best divya-cakṣu (heavenly eyes).

“Why is it? It is because such people obtain the false function of mind nature only, not the true essence of mind nature. Only with the realization of the essence of mind nature can we obtain Buddhahood. The understanding and true pursuit like this can enter this path.

“Deva-rāja! There are some people who may realize the wondrous and true essence of mind nature. After realization, they will never put away and leave behind the wondrous truth of the essence of mind nature. Their mind and body are integrated no matter whether they are walking, standing, sitting or lying down. Their sense faculties

and mind nature are also integrated no matter whether they are seeing, hearing, sensing or knowing. Practice in this way is the practice of the Buddha path.

“The householder bodhisattvas and the homeless bodhisattvas are not different, both only practicing the path of integration to attain Buddhahood instantly. Practice either in the world or out of the world is faultless.”

At that time, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to Mahākāśyapa: “In the past, the Bhagavān gave all sorts of teachings. What is the difference between those teachings and today's instruction of receiving the mind from the Buddha?”

Mahākāśyapa replied to Mahābrahma-deva-rāja: “You should not ask in this way. If the Bhagavān's prior teachings differ from today's instruction of receiving the mind (from the Buddha), then prior teachings are heresies. If today's instruction of receiving the mind from the Bhagavān ever differs from prior teachings, then it must be that all sorts of teachings are made to explain such a mind, which has no hair-tip difference from all the previous teachings.

“If practitioners say that teachings and this mind are

different, then it is the saying of heretics and deva-māra, who don't know not only the doctrine of various Mahāyāna sūtras but also the doctrine of the mind I just received. If one knows the doctrine of mind, one should know that its doctrine is identical with that of the teachings.

“If there is any difference, it is in that although various teachings give benefits, they are not real. Today's teaching of knowing and seeing (the mind nature) is indeed true and non-dualistic. Even though there are other teachings, the benefits are little. We cannot say that other teachings give no benefit. But the teaching of mind nature is like the sunlight while other teachings the starlight.

“The divided light is starlight.

We can't say that stars don't give off light.

The small vehicles are as well as giving no benefit.

The four noble truths and the twelve links of causation (pratyaya),

The five precepts (śīlas) and the ten virtues,

The recitation of Buddha's name and the rebirth in the pure land,

The observance of full precepts and the sitting meditation,

The bodhisattvas of expedient Mahāyāna teachings,
All these vehicles are small.
This teaching is like the sunlight.
Other teachings are like the starlight.
Although numerous stars appear in the sky,
It is not called the daytime.
When the sunlight appears,
The sky becomes bright, and nighttime becomes day-
time.
Although other teachings can benefit the world,
They are not called the Buddha dharma.
Sentient beings are exactly Buddhas.
The impure land is the pure land.
Saṃsāra (cycle of birth and death) is nirvāṇa itself.
The three lives (of the past, present, and future) are
always one life.
The worldly dharma is the Buddha dharma.
The conditioned is really the unconditioned.
Such teaching of knowing and seeing (the mind na-
ture),
And its practitioners
Are called having Buddha dharma,
And also called having Buddha stay in the world.

When the Buddha says these words,
The hundred or thousand followers in the assembly
All realized the supreme path.

“There are two ways to attain Buddhahood by means of realizing the reality of mind nature: one is oral teaching, and the other mind transmission. Buddha’s teachings vary in the speed of realizing the mind nature: gradually or instantly, yet the reality is the same.

“It is just like people living in the east point at the sun and saying that the sun goes from our eastern sky to the others’ western sky, while people living in the west point at the sun and say that the sun comes from the others’ eastern sky to our western sky. Although the words of ‘our’ and ‘go’ are different from those of ‘their’ and ‘come’ respectively, they all refer to ‘the same sun’; although the words of ‘eastern sky’ are different from those of ‘western sky’, they all refer to ‘the same reality (the sun)’.

“The Tathāgata’s instructions are just like this: The signs of ‘teaching transmission’ and ‘mind transmission’ are different, yet the reality is the same.”

Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “O

Tathāgata! Is this path of seeing the mind nature to be practiced by bhikṣus only? Or, by householders, too?"

The Buddha said: "Mahābrahma-deva-rāja! The path of mind nature is possessed equally by bhikṣus, householders, devas, nāgas, ghosts, and gods. How can it be limited to bhikṣus only? The householders and the bhikṣus are different in their signs only, not their practice.

"What is the sign of bhikṣus? Agreed by their parents, the bhikṣus leave their parents' home to serve the Buddhas of the three lifetimes, and serve the bodhisattvas on their parents' behalf because they have no lords and kings. In the monastery, the Buddha image is worshipped like the living Buddha, and the Buddha's relics are treated like the Buddha still living in the world. Because they have renounced the worldly life, bhikṣus don't bow to kings, don't pay homage to celestial beings, don't pursue treasures but keep one alms bowl only, don't store clothes but wear three garments only, live peacefully in deep mountains, under the trees, or in the caves, observe śīlas, sit in mediation, develop wisdom, attain enlightenment, know themselves are originally Buddhas, and follow the Buddha's step."

Chapter 3

The Moon

At that time, the Tathāgata said to Mahākāśyapa: “Mahākāśyapa! The seven Buddhas taught no different ways, and attained no different enlightenment: Only use one and the same understanding and vision. In other words, to see clearly the form, characteristics, nature, and reality of one’s own mind means to become a Buddha. If there are other ways for one to become a Buddha, they are the heresies of deva-māra, or Pāpīyān.

“Mahākāśyapa! You should know: When I sat under the bodhi tree, subdued māras, and attained perfect supreme enlightenment (saṃyak-saṃbodhi), I saw completely the form of mind, I saw completely the reality of mind, and I saw the essence of mind like the form of the moon (chandrachakra). Then, all Buddhas showed up to prove that I had become a Buddha. It was because I had been cultivating myself since countless eons (kalpas) ago.

“Mahākāśyapa has not yet become a Buddha, and will not become a Buddha in this life. However, I prove that he has seen himself as his original Buddha; in other

words, he has known and seen Buddha nature. I now confirm that he will soon become a perfect Buddha in the future life.

“In today's assembly, although Mahākāśyapa has known and seen his own dharmakāya, he hasn't achieved the Buddha's wondrous enlightenment and dharmakāya because he hasn't completed the eons' practice of six perfections. Nevertheless, he has known and seen the dharmakāya of self-nature Buddha, the same body (kāya) attained by all Buddhas of the ten directions. As he knows the essence to become a Buddha, he is confirmed by the Buddha that he will become a Buddha in the future just like all Buddha-Tathāgatas.

“Mahābrahma-deva-rāja! For example, the moon in the world appears in different shapes on the 1st, 7th, 8th, 15th, 22nd, 23rd, and 30th nights of each lunar month. When the moon is dark, people don't call it the moon although it is always high in the sky. On the first night of each lunar month, the moon shines only one portion of light because it is close to the sun, and people can't see it. Although ordinary people don't believe that the moon is still there, the wise do. In the same way, when a practitioner has just generated the intention to see mind nature, worldly people

don't know that, but he knows.

“After three days, in the night sky, the moon shines three portions of light. Although it has not yet become round, worldly people know that it is the moon. It's just like a person who has seen the mind nature can completely demonstrate his/her virtue for other people to know.

“This is the same case of Mahākāśyapa. Although today he has not yet actually attained anuttara-saṃyak-saṃbodhi (unexcelled complete perfect enlightenment), he has been confirmed that he would become a Buddha in the future, the so-called ‘a Buddha just seeing mind nature’.

“What is the mind of an enlightened person? It is like the full moon, which illuminates 15 portions of light.

“Perfection of charity or giving (dāna pāramitā): The great loving-kindness and compassion functions to transform greed to grow one's virtue and benefit other sentient beings.

“Perfection of observing precepts and disciplines (śīla pāramitā): The laws and demeanor functions to transform evil thoughts to solidify oneself and protect

other sentient beings.

“Perfection of tolerance (kṣānti pāramitā): The great honesty functions to transform hatred to safeguard one's practice and stabilize other sentient beings.

“Perfection of diligence (vīrya pāramitā): The truth functions to transform slackness to practice diligently and persuade other sentient beings to do so.

“Perfection of concentration (dhyāna pāramitā): The great wisdom functions to transform indulgence to absorb oneself and other sentient beings in meditation.

“Perfection of wisdom (prajñā pāramitā): The wondrous wisdom functions to transform ignorance to thoroughly understand oneself and other sentient beings.

“Perfection of skillful means (Upāya pāramitā): The benevolent wisdom functions to transform the obstructed mindset to facilitate one's and other sentient beings' practice.

“Perfection of pious vows (prañidhāna pāramitā): The benevolent courage functions to transform low confidence to complete one's and other sentient beings' practice.

“Perfection of power (bala pāramitā): The wisdom and courage functions to transform cowardice to build up oneself and other sentient beings.

“Perfection of knowledge (jñāna pāramitā): The great enlightenment functions to transform perplexity to awaken oneself and other sentient beings.

“Wisdom of the fulfillment of actions (kṛtyānuśṭhāna-jñāna): The virtue of the Nirmānakāya (body of response and manifestation) Buddha to transform the five sense consciousnesses for oneself and other sentient beings to become a Buddha.

“Wisdom of subtle observation (pratyavek-śañā-jñāna): The virtue of the Saṃbhoga-kāya (reward body) Buddha for others’ enjoyment to transform the sixth consciousness for oneself and other sentient beings to become a Buddha.

“Wisdom of equality (samatā-jñāna): The virtue of the Saṃbhoga-kāya (reward body) Buddha for one’s own enjoyment to transform the ātman and purusa (seventh) consciousness for oneself and other sentient beings to become a Buddha.

“Wisdom of great round mirror (ādarśa-jñāna): The virtue of the Self-nature Buddha to transform the ālaya (eighth or storehouse) consciousness for oneself and other sentient beings to become a Buddha.

“Wisdom of the fundamental nature of the universe (dharma-dhātu-svabhāva-jñāna): The virtue of the Dharmakāya (ultimate reality body) Buddha to transform the ignorance (avidyā) consciousness for oneself and other sentient beings to become a Buddha. This awakening transforms ignorance (avidyā) into nature of dharma realms (dharma-dhātutā), and is thus called the wisdom of the fundamental nature of the universe.

“These 15 paths are possessed by innate nature, thus called mind nature or Buddha nature. They make up a complete totality, and not a single one of them can be lacking. They have neither beginning nor ending just like a circle, which has no interruption. But for convenience's sake, the oral expression has a beginning and an end.

“The self-nature of ordinary beings exists but doesn't show. It's just like the moon on the last night of each lunar month, existing but without light. A person who just generates the mind for enlightenment (bodhi-citta) first sees

his/her self-nature. It's just like the moon on the first night of each lunar month; it illuminates only one portion of light.

“A practitioner has both wisdom and ignorance. It is just like the crescent moon, half bright and half dark.

“A holy person who realizes self-nature has cultivated wisdom and vision completely. It is just like the full moon, which is round and bright.”

After saying this, the Tathāgata chanted the following verse (gāthā):

“Ordinary beings have no wisdom and vision,
Being ignorant like the moon on the last night (of
each lunar month).

Bodhisattvas before the first ground or stage (bhūmi)
of practice

Are bright like the moon on the first night (of each
lunar month).

Great bodhisattvas in between the ten grounds or
stages of practice

Are bright like the crescent moon.

Enlightened Bodhisattvas above the tenth bhūmi

Are round like the full moon.

This full moon is likened to
The one who became a Buddha long time ago,
Named the Amitāyus (Definite King Infinite Life)
Tathāgata,
Or the Varocana Buddha of Dharma Realm Palace or
Eternal, Peaceful and Bright Pure Land.
They always dwells on this full moon.
All Tathāgatas of the ten directions dwell in this palace.
It is neither cause nor effect,
Always existing in the three lifetimes.
Ordinary beings and practitioners
Should meditate on this truth, and
Sit uprightly to meditate on the moon.
My body becomes the innate Varocana Buddha.
My dharmakāya pervades the dharma realm.
I wear the crown of five Buddhas on the head,
Sit on the thousand-petaled lotus,
Am clothed in the jeweled garment, and
Have golden-violet (suvarna) body.
A hundred blessings are inherent in my mind.
Ten thousand goodness solemnifies my body.
In an instant I know and see

My moon-shaped mind nature.
In an instant I remember
My body being the Varocana truth.
Such a person is called the practitioner
Of truly meditating on the Buddha
With a view to obtaining great merits.
Akśobhya Buddha is in the east,
Ratnasambhava Buddha is in the south,
Amitābha Buddha is in the west,
Amoghasiddhi Buddha is in the north,
And other Buddhas are as numerous
As the countless sands of the Ganges River.
The merits of reciting their names,
And piously venerating and serving them
For hundreds of thousand years,
As well as the merits
Of comparable knowing and seeing
Are fewer than the merits
Of seeing mind nature for just an instant,
Not even one hundredth, one thousandth,
One millionth, one billionth,
Let alone applying the ever-abiding essence,
The original Buddha of self-nature

To worldly and out-worldly dharmas.
Thus, not only myself can be saved
But also others can be converted.”

Mahābrahma-deva-rāja! The homeless bodhisattvas
(These words are dubious and need further examination.)”

At that time, after saying this gāthā, the Tathāgata told the assembly: “In the past, I mostly taught the various meanings of emptiness (śūnyatā) so as to destroy various afflictions, and purify the mind. When the mind is purified, it is same as the Buddha's mind of emptiness. This is called ‘becoming a Buddha.’ But this is the initial stage.

“Now, I am teaching the mind moon, i.e., practicing the 15 wondrous paths to enter into the supreme path. This is the final stage of practice to achieve Buddhahood.

“The practice of the 15 paths is called the causal stages to become a Buddha. The completion of the practice of the 15 paths is called the fruition of practice to become a Buddha.

“If all sentient beings apply these 15 paths to their physical, verbal, and mental actions, then all their actions will be wholesome without any evil; at all times, they will

be awake without any delusion. Such practitioners can become a Buddha in one life. Human beings and devas will respect them. Nāgas and ghosts will offer alms to them. They can wander freely in the ten directions without obstruction and enemies. All are peaceful and happy. All are unconditioned.”

Chapter 4

The Dharma Realm

At that time, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “Bhagavān! I find that in the dharma realms (dharmadhātus), there are numberless Buddhas, numberless sentient beings, numberless good things, and numberless bad things. What is the basis of these?”

The Buddha said to Mahābrahma-deva-rāja: “Good! Good! Your question is very wonderful. There are seven dharma realms to establish these. 1. The dharma realm of three truth bodies (dharmakāyas), 2. The dharma realm of five cause-conditions (hetu-pratyayas), 3. The dharma realm of four *qis*, 4. The dharma realm of seven elements, 5. The dharma realm of three worlds (lokas), 6. The dharma realm of four wholesome-unwholesome actions, 7. The dharma realm of ten realms. The aggregation of these dharma realms establishes all worlds. Listen carefully, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja!

“What is the dharma realm of three truth bodies? 1. Flow of sameness (niśyanda), 2. Wisdom-action, 3. Buddha-becoming.

“What is the dharma realm of five cause-conditions?

1. Dharma nature (dharma-tā), 2. Ignorance (avidyā), 3. Encountering and clinging, 4. Clinging-action, 5. Meeting again.

“What is the dharma realm of four *qis*? 1. Śūnyatā (emptiness), 2. *Yang* (vigor), 3. *Yin* (passivity), 4. Life.

“What is the dharma realm of seven elements? 1. Earth (pṛthivī), 2. Water (ap) 3. Fire (tejas) , 4. Wind (vāyu) , 5. Space (ākāśa) , 6. Consciousness (vijñāna) , 7. Sense faculty (indriya).

“What is the dharma realm of three worlds (lokas)? 1. Material (bhājana), 2. Conditioned (pratītya-samutpāda), 3. Five aggregates (pañca skandhāḥ).

“What is the dharma realm of four wholesome and unwholesome actions? 1. Five virtues (pañca gunas), 2. Ten good actions (daśa kuśala-karmāni), 3. Four noble truths (catvāry ārya-satyāni), 4. Six perfections (ṣaḍ pāramitās).

“What is the dharma realm of ten realms (daśa dhātus)? 1. Hell-beings, 2. Non-sentient objects, 3. Hungry ghosts, 4. Animals, 5. Human world, 6. Celestial be-

ings and devas (gods), 7. Śrāvakas (sound hearing) and pratyekabuddhas (awakening through dependent arising), 8. Emptiness (śūnyatā), 9. Bodhisattvas, 10. Buddhas.

“What is the dharma realm of the flow of sameness (niśyanda) dharmakāya? The essence of the dharmakāya dharma realm of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva gives birth to sentient beings, having neither beginning nor ending, and neither delusion nor awakening. This is called the dharma realm of the flow of sameness dharmakāya. What is the dharma realm of wisdom-action dharmakāya? The essence of the wisdom dharma realm of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva is what sentient beings possess inherently, having neither beginning nor ending, and with delusion being changed to awakening. This is called the dharma realm of wisdom-action dharmakāya. What is the dharma realm of Buddha-becoming dharmakāya? The essence of the great enlightenment dharma realm of Varocana Bhagavān is naturally sufficient in all sentient beings, having neither beginning nor ending, and with delusion being transformed into awakening. This is called the dharma realm of Buddha-becoming dharmakāya.

“What is the dharma realm of dharma nature cause-condition (dharmatā hetu-pratyaya)? The cause of

the dharma realm's flow of sameness of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva will automatically converge the condition of the dharma realm's wisdom-action of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, and, the cause of the dharma realm's wisdom-action of Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva will naturally converge the dharma realm's effect of Varocana Buddha. This is the root of sentient beings' cause-condition and is called the dharma realm of the wondrous dharma nature cause-condition. What is the dharma realm of ignorance cause-condition (avidyā hetu-pratyaya)? The origin of all sentient beings' mind is the essence of dharma nature. From the wondrous essence of this dharma nature, relying on the condition of sentient beings, an illusory thought suddenly arises. This is the origin of sentient beings' cycle of birth and death (saṃsāra), and is called the dharma realm of ignorance cause-condition. What is the dharma realm of encountering and clinging cause-condition? All sentient beings are born out of the same dharmatā. Therefore, they will encounter each other naturally and cling to this encountering. The karmic connection of birth and death is thus made. Life after life, the karmic connection is thus made. This is called the dharma realm of encountering and clinging cause-condition. What is the

dharma realm of clinging cause-condition? Because all sentient beings encounter and cling to one another, from the attachment arises loving-kindness, hatred, wholesome karma, or unwholesome karma. This is called the karmic cause of sentient beings' birth, and the dharma realm of clinging cause-condition. What is the dharma realm of meeting again cause-condition? All sentient beings make karmic connection in this life; therefore, they will get future life and make karmic connection again. This is the reason why sentient beings are caught in the cycle of birth and death forever, and it is called the dharma realm of meeting again cause-condition.

“What is the space *qi*-composing-the-world dharma realm? In the beginningless and endless great space, there is a beginningless and endless wondrous *qi* called tathāgata-garbha, which contains all wondrous truths, and can be the origin to compose the world. This is called the space *qi*-composing-the-world dharma realm. What is the *yang qi* (vigor vital energy)-composing-the-world dharma realm? The space *qi* transforms into the active vigor which governs birth: the first element of water in the north, the third element of wood in the east, the fifth element of soil in the center, the seventh element of fire in the south, and

the ninth element of metal in the west. These five elements compose the world. This is called the *yang qi*-composing-the-world dharma realm. What is the *yin qi* (passive vital energy)-composing-the-world dharma realm? The *yang qi* transforms into the *yin qi*, which governs death: The second element of fire in the south, the fourth element of metal in the west, the sixth element of water in the north, the eighth element of wood in the east, and the tenth element of earth in the center. These five elements compose the world. This is called the *yin qi*-composing-the-world dharma realm. What is the life *qi*? The father's and mother's *qis* compose the body of sentient beings. In the first month of pregnancy, the father's *qi* forms the kidneys of the embryo, while simultaneously the mother's *qi* the bladder; in the second month, the mother's *qi* forms the veins and arteries of the heart, while the father's *qi* the muscle tissue of the heart; in the third month, the father's *qi* forms the liver and its artery, while the mother's *qi* the gallbladder and the brain; in the fourth month, the mother's *qi* forms the pancreas, while the father's *qi* the cardia, the body, and the pylorus of the stomach; in the fifth month, the father's *qi* forms the lungs and their arteries, while the mother's *qi* the diaphragm; in

the sixth month, the father's *qi* forms the skeleton and the ears; in the seventh month, the mother's *qi* forms the blood smoothly circulating the body, while the father's *qi* the tongue; in the eighth month, the father's *qi* forms the eyes, while the mother's *qi* tendons; in the ninth month, the mother's *qi* forms the muscles and the lips; in the tenth month, the father's *qi* forms the skin, while the mother's *qi* the nose. Although all body parts of the fetus grow simultaneously, they become mature at different times. This is called the life *qi*-composing-the-world dharma realm.

“What is the solid dharma realm of the earth element? The sentient beings' bones, and muscles are the accumulation of the earth element. This is called the earth element dharma realm of the body. What is the wet dharma realm of the water element? The sentient beings' blood and warm fluids are the accumulation of the water element. This is called the water element dharma realm of the body. What is the warmth dharma realm of the fire element? The sentient beings' primary and secondary warmth is the accumulation of the fire element. This is called the fire element dharma realm of the body. What is the moving dharma realm of the wind element? The moving of the sentient beings' body caused by their thoughts is the

the accumulation of the wind element. This is called the wind element dharma realm of the body.

“What is the dharma realm of the space element? The sentient beings’ pathway of vital energy, blood and meridian system between viscera is the accumulation of the space element. This is called the space element dharma realm of the body. What is the soul dharma realm of the consciousness element? The discriminative consciousness of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, the master of sentient beings’ mind and body, is the accumulation of the consciousness element. This is called the consciousness element dharma realm of the body and mind. What is the clear dharma realm of the sense faculty element? The sentient beings’ sense faculty of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind is the accumulation of the sense faculty element. This is called the sense faculty element dharma realm of the body and mind.

“What is the material world dharma realm? The places where all sentient beings inhabit — the sky, earth, and surroundings — are called the material world dharma realm. What is the conditioned world dharma realm? The sentient beings and non-sentient beings, whether deluded or enlightened, are called the conditioned world dharma

realm. What is the five aggregates dharma realm? All sentient beings' body and mind (sensation, perception, volitional formation, and consciousness) are called the five aggregates world dharma realm.

“What is the dharma realm of the five wholesome and unwholesome actions? The five wholesome actions: 1. Showing filial piety to one's father, 2. Showing filial piety to one's mother, 3. Being loyal to one's lord and mentor, 4. Assisting holy people, 5. Taking refuge in the Triple Jewels (Buddha, dharma, and sangha). The five unwholesome actions: 1. Killing one's father, 2. Killing one's mother, 3. Killing one's lord and mentor, 4. Killing holy people, 5. Hurting the Triple Jewels. This is called the dharma realm of the five wholesome and unwholesome actions. What is the dharma realm of the ten wholesome actions (*kuśāla-karmāni*) and unwholesome actions (*akuśāla-karmāni*)? The ten wholesome actions: 1. Releasing captive animals, 2. Right charity or giving, 3. Chastity, 4. Honest speech, 5. Right speech, 6. Praise words, 7. Harmonious words, 8. Righteous giving away, 9. Loving-kindness, 10. Clear wisdom. The ten unwholesome actions: 1. Killing animals, 2. Stealing, 3. Adultery, 4. Lying, 5. Flattery, 6. Harsh words, 7. Slandering, 8.

Greed, 9. Hatred, 10. Ignorance. This is called the dharma realm of the ten wholesome actions and unwholesome actions.

“What is the suffering dharma realm of hell-beings? Under the ground is the metal disc wherein evil ghosts gather. In this world, the big ghost gives birth to other ghosts, cuts and eats them, who will be born, cut, and eaten again and again. Under the metal disc is the icy water disc, under which is the burning fire disc. The sentient beings in the water disc are frozen by ice, and those in the fire disc burnt by fire, suffering great pain day and night incessantly. This is called the suffering dharma realm of hell-beings. What is the extremely ignorant dharma realm of non-sentient objects? All non-sentient objects such as earth, stones, grasses, trees, etc. are ignorant, unconscious, and stifled in mind and thought. This is called the extremely ignorant dharma realm of non-sentient objects. What are the different kinds of ghost? They are hungry ghosts, greedy ghosts, plague ghosts, poisonous ghosts, yakṣas, rākṣasas, piśācas, kumbhāṅdas, etc. This is called the extremely suffering dharma realm of the ghost world. What are the animals? Dragons (nāgas) and those with scales; golden-winged birds (garudas) and those with

feathers; turtles, snails, and those with shells; lions, tigers, wolves, and those with furs; and orangutans and those naked. This is called the unwholesome dharma realm of animals. What is the wholesome dharma realm of human world? The ksatriyas, brahmanas, vaishyas, and shudras are born in the good realm by means of the powers of the five precepts and the ten good actions. This is called the wholesome dharma realm of the human world. What is the good and joyous dharma realm of celestial beings (devas)? The power of the ten great good actions and the eight dhyānas enables ones to be reborn as celestial beings in the realm of sensuous desires and the form realm respectively. This is called the good and joyous dharma realm of celestial beings.

“What are the seven elements? 1. The soil and earth elements of physical body, 2. The water and juice elements of blood, sperm, and egg, 3. The fire and *qi* elements of spirituality and warmth, 4. The wind and wood elements of movement and breathing, 5. The space and metal elements of emptiness and space. These five elements make up two paths: the deluded and the enlightened. Both of them have two rewards each: the direct reward and the circumstantial reward. The circumstantial

reward of the deluded path forms the world of the sky and the ground. The direct reward of the deluded path forms the sentient beings of humans and devas. The circumstantial reward of the enlightened path forms the pure lands of the ten directions. The direct reward of the enlightened path forms Buddhas and bodhisattvas. 6. The six-consciousness element: the spirituality of the wind and wood elements makes up the eye consciousness, the spirituality of the water and juice elements makes up the ear consciousness, the spirituality of the space and metal elements makes up the nose consciousness, the spirituality of the earth and soil elements makes up the body consciousness, and the fire element, being the lord of the body, forms two consciousnesses, i.e. its secondary spirituality forms the tongue consciousness, and its primary spirituality forms the mental consciousness. 7. The six-sense-faculty element: The *qi* of the wind and wood elements makes up the eye, the *qi* of the water element makes up the ear, the *qi* of the space and metal elements makes up the nose, the *qi* of the soil and earth elements makes up the body, and the fire element, being the lord of the body, forms two sense faculties, i.e., its secondary *qi* makes up the tongue, while its primary *qi* makes up the

mind.

“What is the tathāgata-garbha? The soil, earth, consciousness, and sense faculty elements make up the dharmakāya niśyanda (flow of sameness) of Vairocana Buddha; the water, consciousness, and sense faculty elements make up the dharmakāya niśyanda of Amoghasiddhi Buddha; the fire, consciousness, and sense faculty elements make up the dharmakāya niśyanda of Ratna-saṃbhava Buddha; the wind, wood, consciousness and sense faculty elements make up the dharmakāya niśyanda of the Akśobhya Buddha; and the space, metal, consciousness and sense faculty elements make up the dharmakāya niśyanda of Amitāyus Buddha. They are beginningless and endless as well as unconstructed and unconditioned. This is called tathāgata-garbha.”

“What is the seven elements becoming a Buddha? According to the Buddha, in the saḥā (enduring) world, there are hundreds of billions of the sky and the ground wherein are numberless worlds with unaccountable sentient beings inhabiting. Some wise animals observe the path of the five precepts. After they die, they will be reborn in the human realm. Those who don’t observe the path of the five precepts but carry out their duties will be-

come common people, while those who observe the path of the five precepts and carry out their duties will become great people. The wise humans practice the path of the ten goodness. After they die, they will be reborn as kings of the human world. Those who practice the path of the ten goodness willingly will become kings of small countries, while those who practice the path of ten goodness naturally will become kings of big countries. This is called the bodhisattvas' initial practice of Buddha path. The bodhisattvas of the ten faiths become the iron-wheel kings; the bodhisattvas of the ten abidings become the brass-wheel kings; the bodhisattvas of the ten practices become the silver-wheel kings; the bodhisattvas of the ten dedications (of merit) become the gold-wheel kings; the bodhisattvas of the first stage (bhūmi) become the Four Heavenly Kings; the bodhisattvas of the second stage become the kings of the Trayastrimśa Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the third stage become the kings of the Yāma Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the fourth stage become the kings of the Tuśita Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the fifth stage become the kings of the Nirmāṇarati Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the sixth stage become kings of the Para-nirmita-vāsa-vartino Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the

seventh stage become kings of the First Dhyāna Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the eighth stage become kings of the Second Dhyāna Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the ninth stage become kings of the Third Dhyāna Heaven; the bodhisattvas of the tenth stage become kings of the Fourth Dhyāna Heaven; and, the bodhisattvas of equal enlightenment live in the Inner Court of the Tuṣita Heaven, continue to practice until all ignorance is ended, and will be reborn in the human world to become Buddhas. They are able to enter the Inner Court of the Tuṣita Heaven just because of their previous practices.

Chapter 5

The Six Elements

At that time, Śariputra arose from his seat, put his palms together to pay homage to the Buddha, and made this remark: “O Bhagavān! Relying on the Tathāgata’s unimaginable power, I have obtained great wisdom, and have known thoroughly all worldly and out-worldly dharmas. In ancient times, a wheel-turning king appeared in the world and ruled the world with the right dharma, saying that the body and mind of sentient beings are made up of the five elements of wood, fire, soil, metal, and water. But the teaching of the Tathāgata is different, saying that the body and mind of sentient beings are made up of the six elements of space, wind, fire, water, earth, and (consciousness). Why is this?”

The Buddha said to Śariputra: “What a good question you asked the Tathāgata! In ancient times, the wheel-turning king, following the teachings of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja, talked about only the dharma after the sky and the ground were formed. But the seven Buddhas saw the things before the sky and the ground

were formed, and taught this dharma:

“The ground was formed before the sentient beings were born. The sky was formed before the ground was formed. *Yin* and *yang* were formed before the Heavens of Desire were formed. There was prime *qi* before *Yin* and *yang* were formed. Prime *qi* is what the beginningless and endless prime space has. There is the prime dharma, also beginningless and endless, which is the origin of all existences just like the space. You should know that this dharma is the right truth, and the lord of space, called the dharmatā (original nature of all existences) or tathāgata-garbha (womb of the thus-come, i.e., womb of the Buddha). Relying on this prime dharma, the prime space had *qi*. Relying on this *qi*, *yin* and *yang* were made. Relying on these *yin* and *yang*, the sky was made. Relying on the sky, the ground was made. After the ground was formed, sentient beings were born. Sentient beings also rely on this prime dharma to become enlightened ones. Those who become the great enlightened ones are the Buddhas. Therefore, the seven Buddhas taught the six elements: space, wind, fire, water, earth, and consciousness.

“Space is exactly the arising of *qi*, called the metal

element (in ancient Chinese cosmology), and is the lord of lungs. Wind is the movement of *qi*, called the wood element (in ancient Chinese cosmology), and is the lord of liver. Earth is the formation of soil, called the soil element (in ancient Chinese cosmology), and is the lord of spleen. Fire, also called the fire element (in ancient Chinese cosmology), is the lord of heart. Water, also called the water element (in ancient Chinese cosmology), is the lord of kidneys.

“Why did the seven Buddhas call the space element rather than the metal element? It is because the metal element is limited to concrete objects only and excludes the space, while the space element is applicable to both concrete objects and space. Why did the seven Buddhas call the wind element rather than the wood element? It is because the wood element is limited to physical body only and excludes the movement, while the wind element is applicable to both physical body and movement. Why did the seven Buddhas call the earth element rather than the soil element? It is because earth is made of soil, soils are accumulated to become great earth, and earth is formed depending on the soil element.

“Why did the seven Buddhas call the six elements

rather than the five elements? It is because the five elements are applicable to only the human world after it is formed by the sky and the ground, not before its formation, while the six elements are applicable to both before and after the sky and the ground were formed.

“Why is this? It is because the holy wheel-turning kings taught only the things between the sky and the ground, not those beyond the sky, and ruled only the human beings, not other beings. But all Buddha-Tathāgatas know the karmic cause and its retributive effect of the sentient beings in the ten realms. The power of karma creates the sentient beings in the sky and the ground, even Buddhas, i.e., the beginning, middle, and final stages of practice. Therefore, their teachings are different.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “Bhagavān! Judging from the teachings of the seven Buddhas, did the holy wheel-turning kings give wrong and confusing instructions?”

The Buddha said: “No! The holy wheel-turning kings followed the teachings of Mahābrahma-deva-rāja, and instructed only the sentient beings of the world to make the superior ones go to heavens, the medium ones become

fairies, and the inferior ones rule humans. They didn't mention the world beyond this, and therefore didn't instruct the dharma beyond the sky and the ground.

“The Buddhas of the three lifetimes instruct both the worldly and out-worldly dharmas. The superior sentient beings become Buddhas, second to them bodhisattvas, second to them pratyekabuddhas, and second to them śrāvakas; they all can transcend the world, and attain sainthood. The medium sentient beings become devas, second to them fairies, and second to them humans; they all can rule the world, and attain kingship. The inferior sentient beings leave the animal realm, second to them the hungry ghost realm, and second to them the hell realm; they all can leave the suffering realms, and be reborn in the good realms. Therefore, Buddhas can teach the right dharma of cause and effect, covering the four holy realms superior to devas, and the six sentient realms inferior to devas.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “Bhagavān! Mahābrahma-deva-rāja had a very long lifespan so that he heard what the seven Buddhas instructed. Why then didn't he pass down what the seven Buddhas taught?”

The Buddha said: “What a good question! However, although what you said is true, what the seven Buddhas instructed had been lost for a long time, and didn't exist in the human world. At the beginning of the kalpa, when the wheel-turning kings appeared in the world, Mahābrahma-deva-rāja did know this dharma of the six elements, yet he hadn't attained the wondrous enlightenment so that he couldn't understand thoroughly its cause and effect. Accordingly, he didn't teach it personally, and could not but wait for the future Buddhas to instruct it. At the times of the past Buddhas, the present Śākyamuni Buddha, and all the future Buddhas, this dharma gradually spread to the east, and is circulated one by one in the eastern countries. These countries spread the dharma in this way as well.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! Where do we find the space element (in the body)?”

The Buddha said: “The space element masters lungs, the six *fu* and six *zang* entrails, the passages of *qi* and blood, the nine holes, and the pores. They all belong to the space element.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! Where

do we find the wind element (in the body)?”

The Buddha said: “The wind element masters the liver, and the big movements of the mind and the body. They all belong to the wind element.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! Where do we find the fire element (in the body)?”

The Buddha said: “The fire element masters the heart and the warmth of the body. They all belong to the fire element.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! Where do we find the water element (in the body)?”

The Buddha said: “The water element masters the kidneys, kidney essence, blood, saliva, and fluids of the body and the heart. They all belong to the water element.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! Where do we find the earth element (in the body)?”

The Buddha said: “The earth element masters spleen, bones, flesh, and other solid tissues. They all belong to the earth element.”

Śariputra said to the Buddha: “O Tathāgata! What

kind of practitioners have the dharma of the six elements? What is the practice?"

The Buddha said: "All the six elements are Tathāgata-garbha. The right, wholesome enlightened saints who comply with the primordial Tathāgata-garbha are called the practitioners. They will become Buddhas. Those sentient beings who are against this kind of practice and do wrong things unscrupulously will be caught in saṃsāra and suffer endlessly life after life just like the wheels of a vehicle rotating forever. How pathetic it is!"

Śariputra said to the Buddha: "O Tathāgata! Where do we find the consciousness element (in the body)?"

The Buddha said: "The consciousness element masters the soul, life-gate, and all spiritual *qi*. They all belong to the consciousness element."

At that time, Śariputra said to the Buddha: "O Tathāgata! When sentient beings end their breathing and die, all the earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements disperse. Which part of the body goes to the bardo (the intermediate state between death and birth) and the next life?"

The Buddha said to Śariputra: “Just like what you asked, the sentient beings’ body is begotten with a limited congenital lifespan depending on the effect of their karma in the past lives because it was derived from their parents’ *qis*. When their reward and congenital lifespan end, they have to die with the earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements dispersing. However, although the five elements disperse, the consciousness element still exists. Why is this? It is because consciousness is not begotten depending on the effect of their karma in the past lives, not born out of the limited congenital lifespan, and not derived from *qis*; but it is the beginningless and endless tathāgata-garbha. The consciousness element is the innate truth, while the earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements compose the body. The unreal body exists on the basis of the invisible consciousness element. They together create ‘the karma of this life’ according to the diverse karma. When the earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements of this life disperse, other earth, water, fire, wind, and space elements will be taken to give rebirth. At the time of taking rebirth, different realms have different types of rebirth, i.e., moisture-born, embryo-born, egg-born, or transformation-born. One will be reborn in

one of the six realms of existence depending on the retribution of the past karmas. This is called the cycle of the becoming of three lifetimes. Out of the compassion for this situation, Buddhas appeared in the human world to spread this doctrine, enabling sentient beings to return to the six elements and tathāgata-garbha. Meditating on the six elements from day to day and from moment to moment, never letting go of or forgetting tathāgata-garbha, and always complying with this truth is called the practice of the six elements and dharmakāya.

Chapter 6

Subduing Māras

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Ānanda! You should know that this sūtra is indeed very hard to believe in and practice. It is not because this sūtra does not correspond with the truth, but because people have no faith and practice. This sūtra is the supreme straight way to Buddhahood. Just because of its being supreme, there must be māra-hindrances. Thus, it is very hard to believe in and practice.

“What are the māra-hindrances? There are four categories of māras to obstruct the spreading of this sūtra: 1. Obstructive deva-māras, 2. Heretic māras, 3. Buddhist māras of heretic evil views, 4. Māras inside oneself. For having these obstructions, it is indeed very hard to practice, and very hard to deal with.

“What is the deva-māra? Those who follow this sūtra are bound to become Buddhas. Therefore, the deva-māra often creates obstructions or disasters. When the sūtra is spread to the world, the deva-māra will obstruct its circulation. When people are teaching it, the deva-māra will

make them have no companions, make others defame them, incur disasters to make them suffer, make other people proclaim that this sūtra was not taught by the seven Buddhas, make other people accuse that those who teach this sūtra are heretics, or empower emperors, kings and senior officials to prevent the spreading of this sūtra in their countries.

“How sad it is! This sūtra is obstructed from wide circulation by the deva-māra. With Buddha-eye I can see that this situation is very hard to change. The only way to let this sūtra spread widely in the world is to transmit its doctrine to people's mind rather than to explicate it word by word. I also skillfully let Avalokitasvara and other great bodhisattvas keep and protect this sūtra, just like me, from being annihilated. Ānanda! You should know that whoever keeps and spreads this sūtra is a mighty bodhisattva and true practitioner.

“What are the heretic māras? There are two categories: 1. The māra view that people die forever when *qi* is dispersed. 2. The māra view that people go to the realms of deities or ghosts after death.

“Who are the people of the secular knowledge of *qi*'s

dispersing? They are those who follow worldly knowledge, and don't know that the mind creates all things between the sky and the ground, good rewards, bad rewards, and even the ten realms of sentient beings. They perceive that the sky, the ground, the five elements, all things, the human world, and the five categories of animal are created by *qi*. When the primordial energy (*qi*) disperses, the mind also disperses to become empty without future retribution. The denial of the law of cause and effect will certainly make them take rebirth in the evil realms after death.

“How sad it is! Such people don't understand the real meaning of the teaching of *qi*. Actually, those who began teaching *qi* were bodhisattvas of higher stages. They appeared in the world as wheel-turning kings. They were the first persons seeing the change of seasons. For the purpose of ruling the human world, they came up with the teaching of *qi* to instruct people. As for the teaching of mind's creating all things, they left it to the Buddhas. Although the central doctrine of this teaching doesn't say that there are no mind, no deities, and no retributions, out of their own ordinary mind, the heretics after the wheel-turning kings wrongly explained the wheel-turning kings' holy teachings. Thus, the holy kings' teachings were lost. Those

heretics set up their own teachings of nothingness and nihilism.

“The holy kings who appeared in this and other countries, or even the great chiliocosm at the beginning of the kalpa were bodhisattvas of higher stages. Therefore, all their teachings are the right teachings, having no perversions and delusions. They ruled their own countries with righteousness and goodness, and made their people follow their teachings in this and other countries during their times and later ages.

“However, the heretics set up their own principles, and destroyed my holy teachings. They destroyed not only my teachings but also the instructions of the holy kings before me. With increased perversions and misunderstandings, they defamed those followers of my views, saying: ‘These people don’t know the truth. Being deluded and inverted, they just do useless things.’ Thus, they extremely obstructed all people from reverting to the gate of my views, saying that there were no such sūtra and path.

“Who are the people with the secular knowledge that people will become gods after death? They cling to the goodness of one life without considering life after death.

They only know that people, after death, will become ghosts or gods. They don't know how to get out of the cycle of birth and death to become a Buddha. Actually, this doctrine was also a kind of holy teaching given by the holy kings.

“Now, a long time later, most people misunderstand the holy kings' teachings as the materials for growing memory and knowledge rather than for cultivating the mind and the body. They don't correct their own delusion, but just destroy others' teachings. How sad it is! These people don't know that this teaching was originally set up by the holy kings, and not different from what the Tathāgata taught. They defame the enlightened Buddhas of right view and right understanding, saying: ‘They don't know the path leading to the pure self-nature. There are no enlightened Buddhas in the dharmadhātu palace or the pure lands in the ten directions. There are also no evil beings in the hells. These are just the delusive words of the Buddhas.’ People with such a view and knowledge don't know the truth. They are extremely foolish, and obstruct people from taking refuge in Buddha's teachings.

“Who are the māras of Buddhist canons? There are four categories: 1. Māras with the view of broad literary

knowledge, 2. Māras with the view of foolish reduced knowledge, 3. Māras with the view of clinging to the form of easy practice, 4. Māras with the view of clinging to the form of difficult practice.

“Who are the māras with the view of broad literary knowledge? They are the śramaṇas (monks) who cling to the letters of words. They analyze, spread, lecture and explain all the words, phrases and sentences of every Mahāyāna sūtra I have instructed with a view to clarifying the meanings of words, phrases and sentences. They claim that they have great wisdom, listen to all sūtras and memorize their meanings, thoroughly penetrating them without anything left unknown. They don't know that the true meaning of the sūtras is innate in their minds. All sūtras are words, and all words explain the truth of one's mind, not the meaning of words. They value knowledge and intelligence, build the sense of self and arrogance, destroy my teachings, go deeply into the path of evil, and become the companions of māras. What they say are the words of the Buddha, but when we investigate their intention and interpretation, we will find that they are actually the heretic māras.

“What a sad thing it is! These people don't know the

original intention of the Buddhas’ appearing in the world to preach dharma and to educate people. If people are not awakened to the path of the Buddha’s knowledge and vision, don’t practice to ‘transform ordinary karmas to holy karmas, and ordinary *qi* to holy *qi*’, but just increase their knowledge and intelligence and eloquently explain the Tathāgata’s teachings, what benefit is there?

“Furthermore, when such foolish people see the true practitioners of Buddha path by means of knowing and seeing the mind nature rather than relying on the words, they will ruthlessly defame them as the disciples of māras, and strongly obstruct them from reverting to all the practices of this sūtra. Such evil people are really very hard to educate.

“In fact, among all Buddhas, humans and bodhisattvas of the three lifetimes, there is not a single Buddha or a bodhisattva who has become or will become a Buddha by just understanding the words or listening to many sūtras without realizing the mind nature and practicing the path of enlightenment. Such foolish people are not my disciples but those of māras.

“Who are the māras with the view of foolish reduced

knowledge? They are the unwise śramaṇas who choose an important passage among the sūtras I taught, deeply cling to its meaning, and desert the very profound dharma of other sūtras, claiming that they are neither truth nor essential paths. They choose this or that, desert all other sūtras, grow faith in their own deluded views day by day, increase hatred for the wide paths of all Buddhas moment by moment, are obstinately attached and obsessed, enter delusion gradually, desert wisdom and enlightenment, and finally become extremely foolish.

“Even if Buddhas appear to stop this evil, and great bodhisattvas try to defeat this folly, they will not listen and enter the teachings, but generate hatred and defame them ruthlessly, saying ‘You don’t know the path and ignorantly destroy my dharma.’ When they see this sūtra, and encounter those who know and see the path, they will call them deluded people who don’t know the essential dharma and misunderstand the meaning of enlightenment, claiming that if Buddhas see their views, they will also consider it useless to have a variety of paths. They ask how the foolish people can understand all these paths. Even if they can understand, what is the benefit to show them the heavens? They just desert Buddhas’ teachings,

and enter the evil paths. Such teachings of theirs obstruct my great path. How sad it is! Such people don't know that Buddhas practiced to become enlightened, and all bodhisattvas, from the very beginning of the kalpa, increase their wisdom, realize the truth, grow right view, and attain enlightenment life after life. All Buddhas are so compassionate as to educate such foolish people.

“Ānanda! You should know that even if such foolish people obtain the six supernatural powers and show the appearance of samādhi, this is achieved with the aid of deva-māra. So, don't arouse a thought of converting to them. Such foolish people are indeed hard to educate.

“In fact, among all the Buddhas and bodhisattvas of the three lifetimes, there is not a single Buddha or bodhisattva who has become or will become a Buddha by knowing the meaning of only one sentence instead of penetrating the meanings of all sūtras, just practicing an important passage instead of understanding the path of mind nature, deserting wisdom and becoming foolish, and never having inspiration. Such foolish people are not my disciples but those of māras.

“Who are the māras with the view of clinging to the

form of easy practice? They are the powerless śramaṇas who don't know that all the sūtras I taught are only the skillful means to educate foolish people with no root of virtues: even the past Buddhas could not but establish skillful teachings, i.e., taking refuge in one Buddha or one bodhisattva, reciting one mantra, or practicing the sentences of one sūtra to let people accept and believe in this skillful means, and not follow the hard-to-practice method of ceasing the sins and detoxifying the three poisons.

“Or there are śramaṇas who break precepts, have bad disposition, and are tired of practicing the right paths taught by the holy kings and enlightened beings. Just like the persons who are happy to see a boat to ferry them across the river, they desert the path of precepts and wisdom instructed by all Buddhas, and are obsessed with this skillful means. They don't know that all Buddhas could not but set up the skillful means, and they regard it as the supreme dharma and supreme path.

“Or there are śramaṇas who generate the evil thought that they have obtained the supreme wondrous dharma and the extraordinary wondrous path of the fully enlightened beings. Thus, they summon all foolish people and organize symposiums for these foolish people to expound it

widely, saying that this path is the most supreme and most wondrous, only this path can make sentient beings become a Buddha, and other sūtras are hard to practice. They claim that all ordinary beings are of low capacity, and if people of low capacity follow the hard-to-practice path, not even one millionth can attain Buddhahood. All māras take the chance to empower and assist them secretly; therefore, they increase their confidence day by day, and spread their evil teaching widely day by day. Furthermore, all foolish people are allured by merits, and feel lucky to take refuge in them.

“Why is this? It is because all foolish people are fond of doing bad and are lazy to do good. However, all saints and Buddhas have said and are saying that those who do bad are not humans, and not Buddhists. Today’s bad actions are the cause to be reborn in evil realms. They will suffer evil rewards life after life, and sever themselves forever from the great path of becoming a Buddha and liberation. Therefore, it is imperative to give up one’s likes, dislikes, and laziness, practice industriously the three learnings of śīla (precepts), dhyāna (meditation), and prajñā (wisdom) as well as the six pāramitās (perfections), endure hardships and sufferings, follow the sages to learn

teachings, fear sins and desert evils, and walk towards the holy path.

“However, people are overjoyed and congratulate themselves for encountering the theory of the easiest practice: It needs not follow the saints’ footsteps and the holy path to be liberated from evil realms forever and become a Buddha directly. Thus, they are converted to this evil teaching, and desert the right dharma of all Buddhas. More than that, they desert not only my way of becoming a Buddha but also the holy path of benevolence and righteousness taught by the holy kings.

“Why is that? It is because this teaching makes people’s minds obsessed with the easy practice without knowing the truth. Thus, they get close to sins and mistakes, illusions and delusions, and evil and perversion, but stay away from father and mother, kings and subjects, holy beings and saints, and the heavens and their mandate. So, for sure, what they desert is not only the holy path.

“When those evil śramaṇas see the practitioners who follow the knowledge and vision of this sūtra, it abhors them greatly and they defame them, saying that the practitioners don’t know the straight way, are deluded for a long

time, and thus remain in the difficult-to-practice path, that the path of knowing and seeing is difficult to know and enter, and absolutely not compatible with the foolish people of the turbid and evil world, and that none out of hundreds of billions of people will ever achieve this path. This is truly very ridiculous! However, this evil statement has widely spread in the world, and greatly obstructed people from going on the path of knowing and seeing.

“How sad it is! Such people don’t know that the original intention of Buddhas’ setting up the skillful means is to make people get close to and arouse faith in the Buddha, then gradually enhance all seeds of Buddhahood in order to convert them to the Buddha path, disclose the paths to the Buddhas’ vision, and finally make them realize Buddhahood to become a Buddha.

“Ānanda! You should know that reciting the Triple Jewels is a halfway ferry boat to the place of the jewel of knowledge and vision. These foolish people don’t know that it is just a ferry boat, cling to it, and, furthermore, deny the place of jewel. How pathetic they are! This obstructs not only the path of Buddha’s knowledge and vision but also their path of reciting the Triple Jewels.

“Why is this? Although reciting the Buddha’s name, reciting the dharma, or reciting the sangha is indeed the dharma instructed by Buddhas, however, the foolish śramaṇas recite with an evil intention. Thus, their reciting the Triple Jewels becomes evil dharma. When people practice evil dharma, they will fall to the path of māra. When they fall to the path of māra, they will lead others to fall to the path of māra, either of which destroys Buddha dharma, which in turn destroys reciting Triple Jewels. Thus, it is a matter of falling to not only the category of māras and evils but also the incessant great fire pit, suffering unaccountable pain for unaccountable and infinite great kalpas, and destroying the seeds of Buddhahood forever. Such foolish people are indeed hard to deal with.

“In fact, among the Buddhas of three lifetimes, and all bodhisattvas, not a single Buddha or bodhisattva but follows the path of Buddha’s knowledge and vision instructed in this sūtra. Such foolish people who insist that there is only one practice of reciting one Tathāgata’s name, or the sentences of one sūtra, or one bodhisattva which has made or will make practitioners realize Buddhahood are not my disciples but those of the māras.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! How can

such foolish people rid themselves of the māra dharma, stop being the māra's disciples, and get back their faith in Buddhas?"

The Buddha said: "Ānanda! Such foolish people should immediately stop their arrogance, and reflect on the following thought: 'I am a foolish man. I am an evil man. I will certainly fall to the fire pit of the three unhappy realms. Fortunately, with great loving-kindness and compassion, Buddhas set up skillful means to teach us this easy-to-practice path of reciting the Triple Jewels so as to leave the three unhappy realms. How lucky we are!'

"Then, they should reflect like this: 'It is indeed unimaginable for me to be reborn in the pure land through this skillful means. Therefore, I should not belittle other people's marvelous path of self-effort practice.' With this reflection, they may mindfully recite the Buddha's name, the dharma, or the sangha without any other thought. They know that with low capacity, they cannot follow the marvelous path of self-effort practice; they can only revert to this skillful path of Tathāgata's; they should not differentiate their and others' ways of practice; they should not obstruct others' path; they should only concentrate on purging their own minds and recite the Triple Jewels. If

they can do so, all māras will leave, and the Triple Jewels will appear. Then, they will become guiltless, and others will also be guiltless. This is the completion of my teaching on reciting the Triple Jewels.

“If one is arrogant enough to have even one thought of being superior to others, this is the practice of the māras, deviant from that of Buddhas. If one considers one's following the Buddhas' path of true knowledge and vision is superior to others, this is the path of the māras.

“Why is this? It is because Buddhas' knowledge and vision is for becoming a Buddha, not for being arrogant and seeing oneself as better than others. The practice of Buddhas' skillful path is actually inferior, and how can one consider it as being superior to others' marvelous path of self-effort practice?

“Who are the māras with the view of clinging to the form of difficult practice? Among the Buddhist śramaṇas, there are extremely bad and foolish people, or extremely evil people, icchantikas (the ones who have cut off the good roots and lack the necessary faith), born blind and deaf and incapable of being saved by the supernatural power of Buddhas and bodhisattvas. Then, Buddhas skill-

fully set up an extremely wondrous and unimaginable method, using the ṛddhi-mantra (magic incantations) to liberate all sinners. The ṛddhi-mantra has ten innate merits. What are the ten merits? 1. To turn the ordinary people into the holy or the immortal, 2. To turn sins into good virtues, 3. To turn icchantikas into liberated people, 4. To turn transmigration in the six realms into rebirth in the pure land, 5. To turn the obstacles of māras into the sage's actions, 6. To turn illness and worries into health and safety, 7. To turn dying young into longevity, 8. To turn natural disasters into godly blessings, 9. To turn hateful enemies into graceful companions, 10. To turn war into peace. In addition, there are other numerous ṛddhi-mantras.

“Following this ṛddhi-mantra, people have to undertake difficult practice and mortification in order to have various ṛddhi-mantras. Some of them have superior capacities but are foolish because they have evil thoughts. Some are bent on benefits by having the world convert to them. Some are obsessed with the ṛddhi-mantras, want to test them, and thus enter mountain to know, wash, and eat all plants, undergoing all sorts of hardships before having ṛddhi-mantras.

“Then, they come back to the world, and startle all people, saying that this ṛddhi-mantra is the most supreme and the most victorious of all Buddhas’ dharmas. They use it to convert people, and lead them into the evil path. Those who don’t know that the ṛddhi-mantra is only a skillful means set up by the Tathāgata and are obsessed with all strange and illusive things always indulge themselves in evil views and thus fall down to the path of the māras. Finally, they fall into the fire pit of the three unhappy realms. This is not only a matter of becoming the disciples of the weird views, and losing the right path themselves, but also that of making the great holy path of the Buddhas become weird, and causing Buddha dharma to lose its right path. It is indeed very pitiable!

“Ānanda! You should know that there are two purposes for Buddha-Tathāgatas to set up this skillful ṛddhi-mantra: 1. In order to save the hard-to-save sinners and let them enter the door of liberation, Buddhas set up this ṛddhi-mantra for the first five merits (mentioned above). This is the true purpose. 2. In order to make all people safe and peaceful in this present life, out of their compassion, Buddhas set up this ṛddhi-mantra for the second five merits (mentioned above). This is the secon-

dary purpose. This ṛddhi-mantra also has other advantages. All these are due to the innate merits of this ṛddhi-mantra.

“But such foolish people are obsessed with the magical powers, all sorts of weird things, and useless fame. They forget that their original intention is to become a Buddha. Though it is beneficial and thus is a Buddha action when the truly liberated and enlightened śramaṇas use ṛddhi-mantra ‘to make the flood which destroy the country flow backward, or bind the ghosts who hurt people,’ overall, what is the benefit of using ṛddhi-mantra ‘to make swift currents flow backward, move mountains elsewhere, bind ghosts or gods, or boil the water’?”

“In addition, when those people who are obsessed with evil magical power see the practitioners following the knowledge and vision of this sūtra, they will defame them as having no merits and virtues, saying ‘these foolish practitioners don’t know that I have merits and virtues so that they practice the functionless, low and base path.’ They greatly obstruct the true and right dharma of all Buddhas. Such foolish people are indeed very hard to deal with.

“In fact, among all Buddhas of the three lifetimes as well as all bodhisattvas, not a single one who becomes a Buddha or a bodhisattva practices the right path without depending on knowing and viewing. Those foolish people practicing the useless ṛddhi-mantra with the view to becoming a Buddha are not my disciples but those of the māras.

“Who are the māras with the obstruction of wrong visions? They can be divided into ten categories: 1. The delusion māras who have no realization in meditation, 2. The delusion māras who are good at debating but unenlightened, 3. The view māras who don't discriminate between the ordinary and the holy beings, 4. The view māras who cannot discover their difficulties, 5. The delusion māras who mistake difficult things for easy ones, 6. The view māras who don't cultivate knowledge and vision, 7. The delusion māras who can cultivate but are without vision, 8. The delusion māras who see the truth of emptiness but not the truth of the middle path, 9. The delusion māras who see annihilation but not the truth, 10. The view māras who believe that the cultivation of the mind, and the doctrinal teachings are different. There are numerous māra views, but I roughly show these ten cate-

gories for the learners to investigate and not to fall into these traps.

“What are the delusion māras who have no realization in meditation? They are the practitioners for knowing and viewing the one-vehicle path (i.e., the Buddha path) who, for the attainment of enlightenment, sit in meditation from morning to night and from evening to dawn day after day and year after year until seeing nothing, no object and no mind, no thoughts and no reflection. They assume entrance into this emptiness as seeing Buddha nature, saying: ‘In my meditation, I obtain the knowledge and vision of Buddhas, seeing nothing else.’

“They don’t know that in the path of the Buddhas’ knowledge and vision, the mind is the holiness, the wisdom, the enlightenment, and the truth. Seeing the empty mind (without seeing the non-empty mind) is only one aspect of knowing, and not the ultimate reality. Over a long time, practicing meditation in this way to compose one’s mind can let one obtain quietude in meditation. But, this is not the true Buddha nature, and consequently, there is no quietude for him in daily activities. One’s mind can be quiet in meditation because of the emptiness and purity in mind. But when one comes out of meditation, his mind

becomes scattered.

“As what is said by some people: ‘If the mental state varies because one is in or out of meditation, this is not the real internal imperturbability.’ Furthermore, these people don’t know that the scattering mind is caused by the lack of true knowledge and vision. Instead, they think that the scattering mind is caused by insufficient practice of meditation. So, they practice harder the meditation of emptiness. Through practice, they enter into emptiness and see only the absolute emptiness, being incapable of obtaining the true path of Buddhas’ knowledge and vision. Learners should beware of entering into this māra. If they ever go astray into it, they will not obtain the true knowledge and vision for kalpas. No other māras are more horrible than this one.

“What are the delusion māras who are good at debating but unenlightened? They are the practitioners for knowing and viewing the one-vehicle path (i.e., the Buddha path) who see that Vimalakīrti and other great bodhisattvas abiding in the unimaginable liberation are witty, good at debating, and unobstructed in eloquence. They mistake the witty nature and wondrous debating for Buddhas’ knowledge and vision. Therefore, they only

muse on wit and eloquence no matter when they are walking, standing, sitting or lying. After a long time of practice, they become witty and eloquent. They think: ‘I have obtained the knowledge and vision of Buddhas so that I can debate freely.’ Thus, their minds don’t care about the truth. They don’t know that the path of Buddhas’ knowledge and vision is sincerity, grace, peace, and virtue. Eloquence and wit are only one aspect of Buddhas’ knowledge and vision, not the ultimate reality.

“Ten categories of the māras obstructed by the habitual tendencies of devas and ghosts are as follows: 1. The māras with retribution of high wisdom but breaking precepts, 2. The māras with retribution of observing precepts but belittling wisdom, 3. The māras with retribution of practicing meditation but clinging to weird things, 4. The māras with retribution of wisdom and precepts but having four heretic views, 5. The māras with retribution of taking refuge in the Triple Jewels but not following the dharma, 6. The māras with retribution of well understanding Buddha dharma but no reward because they don’t have actual practice, 7. The māras with retribution of practicing wisdom but being arrogant, 8. The māras with retribution of having wisdom but no substance, 9. The

māras with retribution of masquerading practice to cheat others, 10. The māras with retribution of being good at debating while indulging themselves in transmigration.

“Two categories of the māras obstructed by the heretic perverted views are as follows: 1. The māras with the nihilistic view that people's body will return to *qi* after death, 2. The māras with the view that people will become gods or ghosts but there is no reward of practice.

“Four categories of the māras obstructed by the perverted understanding among Buddhists are as follows: 1. The māras with the view that only literary ability and profound knowledge matters, 2. The māras with the view that just one simple practice can let them attain enlightenment, 3. The māras with the view that only the easy path is needed and other paths are loathsome, 4. The māras with the view of practicing the difficult path for weird things.

“Ten categories of the māras obstructed by deviant knowledge and vision are as follows: 1. The delusion māras who practice meditation in vain, 2. The delusion māras who are good at debating but have no enlightenment, 3. The view māras who cannot discriminate between ordinary and holy beings, 4. The delusion māras who

cannot discover their difficulties, 5. The delusion māras who mistake difficult things for easy ones, 6. The view māras who don't cultivate knowledge and vision, 7. The delusion māras who can cultivate but are without vision, 8. The delusion māras who see the truth of emptiness but not the truth of the middle path, 9. The delusion māras who see annihilation but not the truth, 10. The view māras who believe that cultivation of the mind and doctrinal teachings are different.

Chapter 7

Taking Rebirth

Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! In the sūtras you have delivered during the past 40 more years, you always advised us to meditate on and recite the names of Buddhas such as Bhaisajyaguru (Medicine Buddha) and Amitābha Buddha. But what merits can we obtain to remember them with the mind and recite them with the tongue?”

The Buddha said: “Deva-rāja! There are four reasons why I say that the merits are great: 1. To get close to the great holy beings, 2. To resolve to follow the paths of the holy beings and sages, 3. To be blessed by the holy beings, 4. To have the opportunity to enter the paths of the holy beings.”

Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Why did you also advise us to always meditate on Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, and Maitreya Bodhisattva?”

The Buddha said: “Deva-rāja! Why did I urge you to

meditate on Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva? He obtained great wisdom through the ear faculty to profoundly penetrate the ultimate reality. The essence of his wisdom is great compassion. Compassion is the great action and vow, the essence of the path of all Buddhas. All sentient beings should follow this path. Meditation on Mañjuśrī begets great wisdom, meditation on Samantabhadra enters great action and vow, and meditation on Maitreya begets great compassion. Practice of wisdom and compassion is essential to the Buddha path. Not a single one of all Buddhas of the three lifetimes and the six directions (east, west, south, north, above, and below) as well as their great dharma is not about the practice of compassion and wisdom. In Buddha dharma, no Tathāgatas have ever become a Buddha without practicing wisdom and compassion, and no sentient beings will become a Buddha without practicing wisdom and compassion.

“The assumption that besides the practice of wisdom and compassion there is another method to become a Buddha is a heresy, not the teachings of the seven Buddhas. All Buddhas of the ten directions and three lifetimes as well as all bodhisattvas practice wisdom and compassion. It is a kind of difficult and hard practice to

save themselves and others. Neither a single Buddha has attained Buddhahood nor a single bodhisattva will attain Buddhahood by reliance on the power of other Buddhas or bodhisattvas instead of by the practice of wisdom and compassion. The assumption that one can become a Buddha by others' power instead of their own practice is the teaching of Pāpīyān, not that of Buddhas.”

Mahābrahma-deva-rāja said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Why can people be reborn in the pure land by practicing all good virtues as well as meditating on the Buddhas and reciting the Buddhas' names?”

The Buddha said: “Deva-rāja! Bodhisattvas who just generate bodhi-citta (enlightened mind) to practice Buddha dharma, and people of low capacity are greatly fearful of practicing the six pāramitās, all disciplines, and the path of awakening to Buddhas' knowledge and vision in this saḥā world. Some of them are exhausted, and some regress. Buddhas skillfully established pure lands to help the residents accomplish their spiritual roots and strength so as to return to this saḥā world. To let people accomplish all virtues and great disciplines, Buddhas taught this path of pure land. Practitioners of this path have two levels of capacity: 1. Those of superior capacity can obtain benefit

in this life, and 2. Those of inferior capacity can obtain benefit in later lives.

“What does it mean by saying that people of superior capacity can obtain benefit in this life? Among those who generate bodhi-citta (enlightened mind) to practice Buddha dharma, some have sharp endowment and witty wisdom. When they start to learn the sūtras, they immediately understand that it is only a skillful means for the Amitābha Buddha and our Śākyamuni Buddha to make great vow and persuade people to be reborn in the pure land. Their real intention is to make all sentient beings practice the great path of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. They don't seek for the rebirth in the pure land, but walk directly towards the great path of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Thus, they become great-rooted bodhisattvas in no time.

“Or when some bodhisattvas, for the purpose of being reborn in Amitābha Buddha's pure land, contemplate on the Buddha, they see their own body in the Buddha's body and realize their own mind being the Buddha. When they awaken to this truth, they know at once that the whole saḥā world is the pure land, and their body is exactly the Buddha's body without any need to change it. In an instant, they accomplish their spiritual roots and

strength. It is the direct practice of all virtues without being reborn in the pure land.

“Or some bodhisattvas, for the purpose of being reborn in Amitābha Buddha’s pure land, practice the recitation of Buddha’s name with ten unbelievable thoughts, which were explained before to answer Maitreya Bodhisattva’s question. These ten thoughts are basic to all bodhisattvas’ practice. In order to recite the Buddha’s name, they always practice the ten thoughts. If every thought can thoroughly comply with the ten thoughts, one can accomplish the bodhisattva’s great actions. It is the direct practice of all virtues without being reborn in the pure land.

“Or some bodhisattvas, for the purpose of being reborn in Amitābha Buddha’s pure land, practice the three minds. 1. No rudeness, no scattering, no wandering, no defilement, and no perversion lead to the attainment of the sincerest mind. Its characteristics are no illusion, no deception, no agitation, no delusion, no doubt, no greed, and no hatred. It is charity, precept, wisdom, truth, intelligence, compassion, respect, courtesy, reason, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva’s mind, and the Buddha’s mind. 2. The characteristics of the attainment of the great deep mind are no recklessness, no disturbance, no scattering, no wander-

ing, no whims, no bad temper, no melancholy, and no confusion. It is patience, concentration, wisdom, awakening, seeing, distinction, clarity, investigation, carefulness, thoughtfulness, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva's mind, and the Buddha's mind, 3. The characteristics of the attainment of the resolute mind are no boredom, no tiredness, no sluggishness, no sloth, no regression, no turning, no unresistance, and no laziness. It is progress, rightness, resolution, power, courage, enthusiasm, vitality, prosperity, discipline, devotion, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's mind, and the Buddha's mind. These three minds are the true practice of bodhisattvas. If every thought can comply with these three minds, it is the attainment of the great path. It is the direct practice of all virtues without being reborn in the pure land.

“Or some bodhisattvas can know the intention of Buddhas, and can listen to Buddhas' instructions. For the purpose of being reborn in Amitābha Buddha's pure land, they practice the required actions. They heard that the whole-hearted recitation of the Buddha's name and the cultivation of worldly blessings will make one have viparity in a palace or a lotus flower without seeing Amitābha Buddha and hearing the right dharma for 500 years

or even twelve kalpas; however, the awakening to the five great wisdoms will make one be reborn in the pure land by metamorphosis, seeing that Amitābha Buddha sits on his precious seat and is surrounded by all great bodhisattvas, seeing the Tathāgata, hearing the right dharma and generating faith to attain the five wisdoms speedily.

“What are the five wisdoms? 1. The Buddha’s wisdom: the root to understand the perfect sameness of the mind, the Buddha, and sentient beings. 2. The great dharma-dhātu wisdom of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. 3. The wisdom of the unimaginable entrance: the inconceivable liberation which bodhisattvas abide in, and the great skillful means as well as the great liberation wisdom of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva. 4. The unspeakable wisdom: Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva’s great prajñā wisdom, which penetrates the true emptiness and the wondrous emptiness, 5. The unequalled, impartial, supreme, and wondrous wisdom: the knowledge and vision of all Buddhas, and the great one-vehicle wisdom of Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva.

“The bodhisattvas who practice to be reborn in Amitābha Buddha’s pure land (Sukhāvātī), for the purpose of being reborn by metamorphosis, practice the five wisdoms. Amitābha Buddha, out of his original vow, blesses

them to realize these five wisdoms, i.e., the supreme great path of all Buddhas. This is the direct practice of all virtues without being reborn in the pure land.

“These four categories of people are called those of the superior capacity to obtain benefit in this life.

“What does it mean by saying that people of inferior capacity can obtain benefit in later lives? The foolish bodhisattvas of inferior capacity, after seeing such skillful means of Buddhas, don't understand it, are unaware of it, and don't resolve to go on the great path of bodhisattva's practice, but only cling to the happiness and longevity of the land of that Buddha. They are truly foolish people.

“Or, some bodhisattvas only recite the name of Amī-tāyus Buddha (Buddha of Infinite Life) single-mindedly, and only enter this path without seeing the right or wrong and likes or dislikes of others, without thinking about the better or worse and the superiority or inferiority of other teachings, without defaming or praising and believing or blaming other practices, and without getting closer to or going away from and walking forward or against other teachings, but only fear their own sins, mistakes, perversion, and evil, only repent their scattering and coarse dis-

turbances, only blame themselves for no practice and no dharma, and only feel ashamed of their own lack of rightness and harmony. Because of their practicing one-mindedness, they naturally achieve goodness, and forget desire, perverted view, and perverted wisdom; without sins and transgression, they naturally develop the mind of filial piety, compassion, tenderness, integrity, and joy. When the time of death comes, they forsake all attachments and the cycle of birth and death, and take rebirth in the lowest-class lotus womb of the Blissful Land (Sukhāvātī), peaceful and joyous without sufferings and worries. After several kalpas, when the time comes and the lotus blooms, they instantly see the supreme major and minor marks of the Amitābha Buddha, hear his lecture on the one-vehicle dharma, gradually uncover the holy enlightenment, and finally attain the holy stages.

“Or, some bodhisattvas have strong desires and strong hatred, often kill living beings, deeply cling to meat, steal others’ wealth, and greatly pursue riches, clothes, palaces, beauties, and lecheries; furthermore, they worry about short life spans, and insist on longevity. They have boundless desires, but don’t know the principles of the world. Since their minds are dark and deluded, even

when holy beings come down to the world to instruct, or saints appear to teach, they don't accept it.

“Such foolish people may hear the description about the wonderful things of the Blissful Land, which suit their temperament and intention: It is adorned with a hundred kinds of jewels, full of precious pearls, with diets of all delicious tastes, and having the nectar of immortality springing and flowing; all bodhisattvas and sentient beings there can travel freely and at will, enjoy an infinite life span like kalpas of countless sands, which not even fairies can have; people are indescribably beautiful and wonderful; devakanyās entertain people endlessly; there are no daytime and nighttime, no spring and autumn, and no cold and heat just like years in a fairy palace. Such happiness can be found only there, and nowhere else. It is indescribable and unimaginable and can let all foolish people satisfy their desire of being reborn in the Pure Land; consequently, they can gradually make progress in the Buddha's state, happily change evil to good actions so as to comply with the holy path, stay away from perversion and poison, live happily in present life, and after death be reborn in the lotus womb of the Blissful Land according to their wish. When the time comes and the lotus blooms, they see the

landscape of the Pure Land, which is definitely better than the human world, the fairy palaces, and the paradises. Having their wishes fulfilled, they practice the bodhisattva actions until attaining bodhi.

“These two categories of people are those of the inferior capacity to obtain benefit in later lives.

“All Buddha-Tathāgatas taught that sentient beings can be reborn in other Buddhas’ land to obtain great benefits except those foolish people who don’t know the truth, and their minds are deluded so that they forget to understand the theory of the holy teachings, think themselves to be superior to others, teach others with their own knowledge to let them become their foolish companions, and consider such inferior actions as the most supreme ones.

“Why should such actions be removed? It is because they defame the right dharma, and contradict Tathāgata’s original vows.

“Why do they contradict Tathāgata’s original vows? Amitābha Buddha always teaches one-vehicle dharma, and always concerns one-vehicle dharma with the only one wish of letting all sentient beings in the worlds below realize the one-vehicle wondrous path so as not to practice

the inferior path. His original intention is to have people practice the great path in the saḥā world rather than practice happily in the Blissful Land.

“However, foolish people cannot attain enlightenment through this great path in the saḥā world. Therefore, Amitābha Buddha made great vows to help people make up their minds to be reborn in his Pure Land. In fact, Amitābha Buddha does not think that there is any difference between the saḥā world and the Blissful Land. These two lands are totally equal.

“Amitābha Buddha has no thought of oneself or others. Why? One Buddha is exactly all Buddhas, and all Buddhas are exactly one Buddha. Dharmakāya of all Buddhas is identical. There is no difference between this Buddha and other Buddhas. Even the great kings of the human world are unselfish and don't distinguish themselves from others, not to mention Tathāgatas, who have reached the stage of complete fruition. Mahābrahma-deva-rāja already has pure retribution of good actions, sees no difference between heavens and the world below, not to mention Tathāgatas, who have reached the stage of complete fruition.”

At that time, Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! You once said that light shines universally on the sentient beings who recite Buddha’s name. What do you mean by saying that?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! Light doesn’t shine differently on people who recite my name or other Buddhas’ names. Since dharmakāya constantly sheds light on the ten directions without any discrimination, sentient beings will be shone by this light when they enter the Buddha-contemplation samādhi, realize the mind being the Buddha, understand the truth of dharmakāya, and fully master the one-vehicle path. When their mind is congenial to the light, they will be naturally bathed in it, for what makes the light inexhaustible is only Āmitabha Buddha’s original vow made at the beginning of his practice.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! When bodhisattvas complete the meditation on Amitābha Buddha with ten thoughts, three minds, and five wisdoms, why is it that these bodhisattvas will forever stay in the saḥā world, and should never seek the rebirth in the Pure Land?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! The bodhisattvas in the

world of no Buddha will be reborn in the Pure Land of other worlds or the Tuśita Heaven if they admire the Tathāgata, and wish to be reborn in the Pure Land of other worlds and the Tuśita Heaven in order to see the Buddha, listen to the dharma, and receive the joy of dharma.

“Those who wish to be reborn in the Blissful Land will be reborn in the highest of the nine grades. Immediately they will see Amitābha Buddha, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāma Bodhisattva, and all other bodhisattvas, travel to other worlds to see all Buddhas, and hear the right dharma such as *Saddharmapundarīka-sūtra*, *Buddha-avataṃsaka-mahāvaipulya-sūtra*, *Prajñā-pāramitā-sūtra*, and all other Mahāyāna sūtras.

“Those who wish to be reborn in the Tuśita Heaven will be reborn in the 49-storey palace adorned with precious manīs, instantly see me Śākyamuni Buddha, Amitābha Buddha, Akśobhya Buddha, Ratnasambhava Buddha, Bhaiśajyaguru (Medicine Buddha), etc., see and make offerings to lord of the land Maitreya Bodhisattva, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Mañjuśri Bodhisattva, Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, Upāsaka Vimalakīrti, Ākāśa-garbha Bodhisattva, and other rarely seen bodhisattvas, see and make offerings to Acala Vid-

yarāja, Yamāntaka Vajrabhairāja, yakśas, and other hard-to-see vidyārājas, see and make offerings to Sarasvatī-devī (Goddess of Eloquence), Śrī-mahā-devī (Goddess of Blessings), Vaiśravaṇa-deva-rāja, and other bodhisattva devas, and see Mahākāśyapa, Śāriputra and other bodhisattva śrāvakas, and instantly hear Mahāyāna teachings and realize Buddha dharma.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! In terms of taking rebirth in Amitābha Buddha’s Pure Land or Maitreya Bodhisattva’s Tuśita Heaven, which one is more difficult?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! The Tuśita Heaven is still a land of distress and illusions. All ordinary beings practicing ten virtues and reciting the name of Maitreya can be reborn there. Or, if they recite the names of the Medicine Buddha, Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, or all other bodhisattvas, they will also be reborn there. All Buddhas are always in this heaven, and all ordinary beings can always see them because it is where all Buddhas of the three lifetimes practiced before they became Buddhas.

“The Western Blissful Land and the Eastern Pure

Crystal Light Land (Bhaiśajyaguru-vaiḍūrya-prabhāsa) also appear in this heaven. It is just like when Vimalakīrti took the Eastern Joyous Land to his room, Akśobhya Buddha also came to his room; when the dharma function ended, the Land returned to its original place. All Buddhas of the three lifetimes are always in this heaven because it is the place where they practiced before they became Buddhas. They didn't return to their original place. For this reason, it is easier for ordinary beings to be reborn in the Tuśita Heaven.

“On the other hand, Amitābha Buddha's Blissful Land is a land of no distress and illusions. Even the bhikśus who have not yet purified all defilements (āsrava) cannot go there. Why is that? It is because although such bhikśus have ended defilements, they only practice small vehicle path. But the Blissful Land is the land of Mahāyāna path, therefore it is difficult for them to be reborn there.

“Nevertheless, all ordinary beings can be reborn there with two births. What are the two births? This pure land is created with the power of Amitābha Buddha's original vows, and with his skillful means, the lotuses are made into nine grades. Ordinary beings will be reborn in the lo-

tuses which will bloom sooner or later with different speeds according to the size and amount of their merits, or the weight and amount of their sins: the superior grade just overnight, and the lowest grade twelve great kalpas.

“The so-called two births: 1. The first birth happens when ordinary beings take rebirth in the lotuses of that land at the end of their lives on this land. Although the lotuses are in the Pure Land, yet being inside of them is not the same as being in the Pure Land. After several kalpas, they will naturally complete the great path of all Buddhas. They will naturally become enlightened, and practice the great path when their previous sins are destroyed through their repentance. This is the first birth. 2. When they practice the great path, the lotuses instantly bloom. At that time, it is the real birth in the Blissful Land with Amitābha Buddha and all great bodhisattvas surrounding their abodes. This is the real and second birth.

“Besides the nine grades of lotuses, four categories of beings can be reborn there with just one birth: 1. The bodhisattvas who practice the six perfections (pāramitās), attain enlightenment, and develop wisdom can be reborn directly before Amitābha Buddha. 2. The great arhats who have ended their defilements, suddenly turn to the mind

bent on Mahāyāna path, and actually practice it can be reborn directly before Amitābha Buddha. 3. Those who observe Saddharma-puñḍarika sūtra, the one-Buddha-vehicle scripture, faithfully practice it, and realize the wisdom and view of the Buddha can be reborn directly before Amitābha Buddha although they haven't ended their defilements, and haven't practiced the six perfections. 4. Those who recite the supreme mantras of Vairocana Buddha, Akśobhya Buddha, Ratnasambhava Buddha, Amoghasiddhi Buddha, Amitābha Buddha, or all Buddhas of the three lifetimes can be reborn directly before Amitābha Buddha. This is made possible because of the power of all tantric mantras or all Buddhas' mantra, not because Buddhas help them in private. The mantras can transform evil into goodness, delusions into enlightenment, sins into blessings, being ordinary into being holy, obstruction into purity, and disasters into ease. The power of mantra exceeds that of all Buddhas. The practitioners can visualize a round moon seated with five Buddhas: Vairocana Tathāgata radiating yellow light, Akśobhya Tathāgata blue light, Ratnasambhava Tathāgata red light, Amitābha Tathāgata white light, and Amoghasiddhi Tathāgata purple light. Their right hand can make

mūdra (hand sign) of five-colored light, and chant the light mantra to bless themselves and others to attain dharma-kāya. In this way, they will be reborn directly before Amitābha Buddha.

“This mantra can let all beings be reborn in the Pure Land no matter whether they are good or wicked, wise or foolish. The power of Buddhas cannot do this, only the power of mantra can. However, there is one exception: Those who didn’t make karmic connection, didn’t plant cause, and didn’t meet this mantra in their past lives will not arouse faith in this mantra, and will miss the great benefit even if they encounter it in this life. How can the five Buddhas and all Buddhas help such wicked people?”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Suppose the wicked people hear that this mantra has such power, chant the mantra to get power, but still do bad things, what can we do about it?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! Just like what you said, because of this reason, all Buddhas keep it as a secret, and don’t teach people casually. Only those who did good actions in previous lives can encounter this mantra. However, if people chant mantra with faith, relying on the

power of the three tantric actions, they will naturally forget wickedness, destroy sins, and gain purity in mind and body to become good people.

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! As what you said before, ten invocations of Amitābha Buddha can lead a dying person to be reborn in the lotus for the lowest grade. But now you are instructing the rebirth via metamorphosis with ten invocations. Why is this?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! What I said before refers to the dying people who, following the instruction of the virtuous ones, invoke Amitābha Buddha for ten thoughts. However, because they did wicked things every day, the invocation can produce little power that can only let them take rebirth for the lowest grade. Now, I am referring to the people who always recite the Buddha's name for ten times, real practitioners indeed, so that they can be reborn on the precious seats.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! According to the original vows of Amitābha Buddha, all people can be reborn in the Pure Land except those who commit the five heaviest sins and defame the dharma. Now, you are saying that all people, including those who defame the

dharmas and commit the five heaviest sins, can be reborn for the lowest grade. Why is there this difference?”

The Buddha said: “Ānanda! Just like what the Amitābha Buddha’s original vows said: This is his teaching for people to be reborn in his Pure Land. Therefore, those who defame the dharma and commit the five heaviest sins are excluded. If he said that the recitation of my name can change the five heaviest sins to let wicked people be reborn in his Pure Land, this is unreasonable. If this were the case, Amitābha Buddha would not fulfill his vows, would not complete his Buddha path, would fall into the pit of committing unreasonable sins, and therefore would not become a Buddha.

“As to the rebirth in the Pure Land for the lowest grade, it refers to those people who follow the teachings of the virtuous ones to sincerely repent their previous wickedness and sins, forsake all their evils, purify their minds, attain the right mindset, invoke Amitābha Buddha for ten thoughts, and become new people. You should know that these people have become right-minded and sinless, and thus are good people. They are reborn in the Pure Land by themselves, not by the Buddha’s help. Furthermore, if we say that it is due to the Tathāgata’s blessing power, since

they are good people, why shouldn't Amitābha Buddha bless them?

“The rebirth of one birth is called the rebirth of good people. Regardless of ordinary or holy beings, the rebirth in the Tuṣita Heaven is easier than in the Pure Land.

“The rebirth of two births is called the rebirth of wicked people. Ordinary and holy beings are different, and the rebirth in the Pure Land is easier than in the Tuṣita Heaven.

“Only those who practice mantra, the three tantric actions, and the one-vehicle path, i.e., the Buddha's knowledge and vision, will be reborn easily in either the Pure Land or the Tuṣita Heaven. There is no difficulty at all.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “O Bhagavān! Isn't it beyond the ability of the lowest ordinary beings or the most foolish people to practice the three tantric actions, mantra, and mūdra? It is even more difficult for them to meditate on the moon in heart. How can they practice it?”

The Buddha said: “Ānada! The tantric practitioners have four categories, and the wisest one, three... (After this, 546 words are missing.)”

The Bhagavān gave the greatest Mahāyāna teachings to Mahāmāti Bodhisattva, devas, immortals, etc. in Laṅkā Mountain.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Those of you humans and devas who really want to become a Buddha should straightly practice the Tathāgata’s true dhyāna to calm down the distracted body, mouth, and mind so as to enter the state of self-awakened holy wisdom, and accomplish the supreme Buddha body.

“Ānanda! You should know that this dhyāna is realized by three factors: 1. Understand thoroughly the phenomena and noumena of all dharmas, destroy the perverted theories, and attain the right truth. 2. Practice the holy paths, concentrate the scattering mind, and attain the enlightened mind. 3. Achieve concentration (samādhi) and insight to transform ordinary beings into holy ones.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “This Tathāgata Dhyāna has three stages: 1. Expedient dhyāna in the beginning, 2. Path-attaining dhyāna in the middle, 3. True dhyāna in the end.

“What is the expedient dhyāna? People should meditate on the Vairocana Buddha as emptiness, and this Vai-

rocana Tathāgata being the dharmatā (dharma nature), the essence of emptiness, and the dharmadhātu body, which pervades all realms (dhātus).”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Before meditating on the Tathāgata’s empty body, people should meditate on their minds as being formless, absolute, peaceful, and empty without a hair’s existence. All that they have is the empty dharmakāya of the Buddhas. When people meditate in this way until their minds realize the ultimate truth of the absolute emptiness, they will attain the state of complete stillness. This is the accomplishment of dhyāna. People who can enter this concentration are liberated from all vexations, and the cycle of birth and death. This is called the expedient dhyāna in the beginning, or the beginning meditation of entering the path in Mahāyāna.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “What is the path-attaining dhyāna in the middle? When bodhisattvas want to meditate on the dharmadhātu body of the Tathāgata, they should meditate that their mind is originally the wondrous truth (Buddha nature), the ocean filled with perfect and infinite treasures, and the intrinsic self-awakened holy wisdom, i.e., the qualities of eternity, bliss, liberation, and purity. This has five bodhisattva vir-

tues. People should practice such Tathāgata Dhyāna.

“What are the five bodhisattva virtues? Now let’s recollect the numberless Buddhas who appeared in the world numberless (asaṃkhy) kalpas ago. Among them is the Vairocana Buddha whose dharmakāya was composed of dhyāna (concentration) pāramitā and prajñā (wisdom) pāramitā, which became two bodhisattvas: 1. The bodhisattva of prajñā pāramitā is called Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, the emanation of the right part of Vairocana Buddha’s body. 2. The bodhisattva of dhyāna pāramitā is called Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, the emanation of the left part of Vairocana Buddha’s body.

“Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva’s original body of prajñā pāramitā was composed of three bodies of truth, wisdom, and compassion which became three bodhisattvas: the original body of truth is Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva, the right-hand wisdom is Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva, and the left-hand compassion is Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva.

“Samantabhadra Bodhisattva’s original body of dhyāna pāramitā was composed of two bodies of wisdom and actions, which became two bodhisattvas: the action and vow is the emanation of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva him-

self, and the wisdom is Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva.

“Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva dwells in action and vow in the west, and executes compassion in the east; Samantabhadra Bodhisattva dwells in compassion in the east, and executes vow in the west; Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva dwells in wisdom in the south, and executes discipline in the north; Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva dwells in discipline in the north, and executes wisdom in the south; Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva dwells in honesty in the center, and execute virtues in the four directions.

“All these five bodhisattvas have karmic connection with the saḥā world. Their dharmakāya pervades the dharmadhātu, and therefore outflows the five bodhicittas (original enlightened minds) of humans, devas, and other sentient beings.

“What are the five bodhicittas?

“1. The Śākya bodhicitta: Bodhisattvas should meditate on their primal mind having great loving-kindness and great compassion. It is the mind of all Buddhas, and all devas. There are good people in the world, who follow the natural laws of heaven and earth, and thus benefit the world. It is the innate bodhicitta to arouse loving-kindness

and compassion in such people, transforming all minds into the mind of love and peace, and all karmas into the karma of nourishment. Such a mind and such karmas are the pure good mind and pure good karmas. There are bad people in the world, who act against the natural laws of heaven and earth, and thus incur disasters and sufferings. It is the innate bodhicitta to arouse compassion in such people, transforming all minds into the mind of sympathy, and all karmas into the karma of relief. Such a mind and such karmas are the pure good mind and pure good karmas. When facing our parents with this mind, we have filial piety; when facing our children and subordinates with this mind, we have wisdom. This mind is the supreme and the best mind innate in our nature, protecting and nurturing all things. If people can exercise this mind to the state of constancy and changelessness, it is the accomplishment of dhyāna.

“2. The artha bodhicitta: Bodhisattvas should meditate on their primal mind having the solid ultimate truth. This is bodhisttvas’ practice, and devas’ path. All sentient beings are established by the right reason, and benefited by the truth. This mind is the mind of truth, and this truth is the ultimate truth. Relying on it, good people are bene-

fited because the ultimate truth itself has benefit, not because it has the thought of benefit. On the contrary, bad people are blamed because the ultimate truth itself has blame, not because it has the thought of blame. When facing our lords with this mind, we have loyalty. When facing people with this mind, we have proper relationship. This mind is the essence of the heaven, and thus is firmly retained. If people can exercise this mind to the state of constancy and changelessness, it is the accomplishment of dhyāna.

“3. The śīga bodhicitta: Bodhisattvas should meditate on their primal mind having respect and demeanor. This is the dharma of the supreme heavens and the holy beings. Its essence is constant and unchanged, and its function complies with time. Mahābrahma-deva-rāja stipulates this dharma in heavens, the Gold-wheel Turning Holy King stipulates this dharma on earth, Buddhas stipulate this dharma in the dharmadhātu, and bodhisattvas stipulate this dharma in the human ethics. This mind is the right mind, and this dharma the right dharma. This mind can accomplish all things in the world, and the hierarchical order of the heavens and the earth. If people can exercise this mind to the state of constancy and changelessness, it is the ac-

complishment of dhyāna.

“4. The prajñā bodhicitta: Bodhisattvas should meditate on their primal mind having wisdom and illumination. This is the light of all Buddhas, and the illumination of all devas. In the world, there are mountains, plains, valleys, rivers, seas, bridges, and boats; without light and illumination, where can people go? In the human world, there are all sorts of things, disputes, delusions, and realizations; without wisdom, how can people make distinctions? All things depend on wisdom to decide their quantity and size. If people can exercise this mind to the state of constancy and changelessness, it is the accomplishment of dhyāna.

“5. The tama bodhicitta: Bodhisattvas should meditate on their primal mind having honesty. This is the origin of truth, and the path of bodhisattvas’ virtues. People depend on it to practice the worldly and out-worldly dharmas. Without honesty, all dharmas will lose their foundation. The previous four minds are based on it. If people can exercise this mind to the state of constancy and changelessness, it is the accomplishment of dhyāna.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “The so-called śākya bodhicitta induces great compassion and great forgive-

ness, and is regulated by the artha bodhicitta so that it won't grow to be excessively compassionate and forgiving. The so-called artha bodhicitta induces righteousness, and is regulated by the prajñā bodhicitta so that it won't grow to be excessively righteous. The so-called prajñā bodhicitta induces broad thoughtfulness and far vision, and is regulated by the śīga bodhicitta so that it won't grow to be excessively thoughtful and visionary. The so-called śīga bodhicitta induces humbleness and moderation, and is regulated by the tama bodhicitta so that it won't grow to be excessively humble and moderate. The so-called tama bodhicitta induces truthfulness and consistency, and is regulated by the śākya bodhicitta so that it won't grow to be excessively truthful and consistent. Because of such mutual regulation and restraint, not a hair-tip delusion can arise.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Because of their mutual regulation, the five bodhicittas can stay in their own place to function reasonably and orderly. It is just like the city walls of the wheel-turning holy kings: the stones are laid on one another to regulate and restrain one another so that they become solid, and won't scatter and collapse. The five bodhicittas, because of such mutual regulation

and restraint, will become neither excessive nor deficient. Each of the five bodhicittas stays in their own place: the śākya bodhicitta goodness, the artha bodhicitta righteousness, the prajñā bodhicitta truth, the śīga bodhicitta sincerity, and the tama bodhicitta path. If the whole world can follow them, great peace can be achieved.”

The Buddhas said to Ānanda: “These five bodhicittas are only one mind. They are co-existent and empty in nature. Their co-existence enables them to accomplish the virtue of educating and saving sentient beings. Their emptiness in nature enables them to obtain goodness. It is just like a circle without beginning and end. Meditating on their primal essence firmly, and applying them correctly, people can make countless things become perfectly good.

“Those who accomplish these five bodhicittas vary: Those in the lower grade practice the path of the sage and the holy in the human world to benefit themselves and others, make the world peaceful and joyful, and lead the sentient beings to the bodhisattva path. Those in the medium grade enter the realm of deities to practice the bodhisattva path, appearing as nāgas, gods, demons, monsters, and ogres to lead them to the Buddha path and protect the world. Those in the superior grade are reborn in

the deva realm to practice the bodhisattva path, protecting the heavens, maintaining order on earth, and benefitting sentient beings and all things. Those in the supreme grade can inhabit any realm – hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, immortals, devas, or all Buddhas' pure lands in other places – with countless transformation bodies and forms to practice the Buddha path, benefitting themselves and others.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Even such good minds need regulation and restraint to achieve true goodness, not to mention the wicked minds. All the wicked minds will not arise if the five bodhicittas are regulated and restrained.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “The arising of wicked minds and wicked things has two origins: 1. Excessive goodness, 2. Heedlessness (pramāda).

“What is the origin of excessive goodness? If the five bodhicittas don't co-exist and anyone of them is excessive, mistake will be made one by one. If the five bodhicittas don't regulate and restrain one another, then the bodhi (enlightenment) of Buddha nature becomes ignorant false *qi*, which drifts away from enlightenment, erodes it

to form faults, and soon becomes wicked minds: compassion becomes craving and attachment, righteousness becomes abhorrence, wisdom becomes wiles and tricks, respect and demeanor becomes flattery, and honesty becomes bias. All these greatly harm the holy path. It is just like curing patients with medicine, an overdose of medicine will make it become a poison.

“What is the origin of heedlessness? If people don’t practice the five bodhicittas until they constantly function but abruptly let go of them, then in the heedlessness, evil passions like greed and miserliness, anger and resentment, foolishness and confusion, illusions, etc. will arise. When such thoughts are born, the mind will soon carry out evils: in actions — killing, stealing, lewdness, insolence, etc.; in speech — harsh words, double-tongue, lying, idle talks, etc. When these people are living, they defame others, hurt themselves, incur shame, damage their offspring, and destroy their families. When they die, they will go to hell realm, hungry ghost realm, animal realm, or asura realm, and cannot liberate themselves from the cycle of birth and death, worry, sadness, and affliction.

“You should observe clearly all phenomena like the āmra fruit in your palm, just like the śrāvakas and pra-

tyekabuddhas who have obtained both nirvāṇa and the six out-worldly supernatural powers; or the devas, immortals, ghosts, etc. who have only obtained the five worldly supernatural powers but not nirvāṇa. If people practice such observation on the infinite things of the world, they will obtain all disillusionings and all virtues, the accomplishment of samādhi. This is called the path-attaining dhyāna in the middle, or the constant practice of meditation in Mahāyāna.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “What is the true dhyāna in the end? Bodhisattvas who want to meditate on the whole buddhakārya of the Tathāgata can follow five ways:

“1. Use Avalokitasvara Bodhisattva's śākyā bodhicitta to practice the wisdom dhyāna to destroy the concept of life (jīvasaṃjñā), obtain the virtue of bliss, cease the conditioned citta, mano, and vijñāna, obtain the fruit of Amitāyus Buddha, attain the wisdom of wondrous observation, and reside in the unconditioned loving-kindness and compassion.

“2. Use Samantabhadra Bodhisattva's artha bodhicitta to practice the holy dhyāna to destroy the concept of sentient beings, obtain the virtue of eternity, cease the

conditioned ālaya vijñāna, obtain the fruit of Akśobhya Buddha, attain the wisdom of great round mirror, and reside in the non-contrived actions and vows.

“3. Use Amoghasiddhi Bodhisattva’s prajñā bodhicitta to practice the self-nature dhyāna to destroy the concept of self, obtain the virtue of personality, cease the conditioned mano vijñāna, obtain the fruit of Saṃkusumita-rāja Buddha, attain the wisdom of equality, and reside in the blessing of non-duality.

“4. Use Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva’s śīga bodhicitta to practice the awakening dhyāna to destroy the concept of manhood, obtain the virtue of purity, cease the conditioned five sense organ vijñānas, obtain the fruit of Dundubhisvara-rāja Buddha, attain the wisdom of achievement, and reside in the vision of non-form.

“5. Use Kṣītigarbha Bodhisattva’s tama bodhicitta to practice the Tathāgata Dhyāna to destroy all the views of erroneous dharma, obtain the virtue of pāramitās, cease the conditioned primal ignorance, obtain the fruit of Vairocana Buddha, attain the wisdom of the fundamental nature of the universe, and reside in the passionless fruit.

“All Buddhas of the three lifetimes follow this path

to transform cause into effect, and realize right enlightenment. They are called Tathāgata (Thus-Come), Arhat (Worthy of Respect), Samyak-sambuddha (Correctly Enlightened), Vidyā-carana-Sampanna (Perfected in Wisdom and Action), Sugata (Well-Gone), Lokavid (Knower of the Secular World), Anuttara (Unsurpassed), Purusadamyā-Sāratha (Tamer), Śāstādevamanusyānām (Teacher of Gods and Men), Buddha (Awakened), or Bhagavān (World Honored). This is called the true dhyāna in the end, or the meditation of ultimate entering Tathāgata abode and obtaining enlightenment in Mahāyāna.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Among those who have accomplished the Buddha dhyāna: those of the lower grade accomplish right enlightenment (sambodhi) as soon as they generate bodhicitta. They dwell in the ground of ordinary beings, and instantly awaken to become Buddhas. Those of the middle grade accomplish the Buddha's teachings of three periods (the reality of the aggregates and elements, the emptiness in nature of all existences, and the middle path), and enter the path of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva. Those of the superior grade are called the next Buddhas. Those of the supreme grade are the Buddhas of the three lifetimes.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “For those who practice this Tathāgata Dhyāna in the beginning, middle, and last stages, and have not yet fully attained Buddhahood, if they live the worldly life, they will practice the worldly path: those of the lower grade become good people, those of the middle grade become sages, and those of the superior grade become holy people. They are disillusioned in this life, and will be reborn in the deva realm after death. However, if they renounce the worldly life, they practice the śramaṇa path: those of the lower grade become good people, those of the middle grade become enlightened, and those of the superior grade obtain samādhi. They are wonderfully and unimaginably different from other people in this life, and will be reborn in the pure land after death.”

After the Buddha finished this sūtra, all bodhisattvas, śrāvakas, devas, immortals, ghosts, and people were greatly joyous.