Essential Explanation of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra

Writings of Master Yuanyin

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Part One: Seeing the Way

Volume One: The Sevenfold Examination of Mind (Empty Tathāgata-Garbha)

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was staying at Śrāvastī, in the Jeta Grove Monastery, together with a great assembly of 1,250 bhikshus.

All were great arhats free of outflows, upholders of the Buddha Dharma, who had well transcended all states of existence. They could manifest dignified conduct in lands throughout the ten directions; turn the Dharma wheel with the Buddha and were eminently fit to receive his final instructions; uphold the Vinaya in purity and serve as a great model for the three realms; manifest countless bodies to liberate sentient beings; rescue those of the future and transcend every burden of adventitious defilement.

Their names were Śāriputra, foremost in wisdom, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākauṣṭhila, Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, Subhūti, Upaniṣad, and others, who were foremost among them. There were also countless pratyekabuddhas who had completed their training, together with those of initial resolve, who had come to the Buddha. It was just when the bhikshus, having completed the summer retreat, were observing the self-invitation ceremony. Bodhisattvas from the ten directions sought resolution of their doubts, reverently attended upon the Compassionate and Stern One, and wished to seek the profound meaning.

At that time, the Tathāgata spread out his seat and sat at ease. For all those in the assembly, he expounded the profound and mysterious. The pure assembly at the Dharma feast attained what it had never attained before. His kalaviṅka voice pervaded the realms of the ten directions. Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges came together at the bodhimaṇḍa, with Mañjuśrī as their foremost.

At that time, King Prasenajit was preparing a vegetarian offering in observance of the anniversary of his late father, the former king. He invited the Buddha to the inner palace, personally welcomed the Tathāgata, and lavishly set out rare delicacies of unsurpassed flavor. He also personally invited all the great bodhisattvas. In the city, elders and lay practitioners were likewise offering meals to the saṅgha at the same time, awaiting the Buddha's arrival in response to their invitations. The Buddha instructed Mañjuśrī to lead separate groups of bodhisattvas and arhats in responding to the various donors' offerings.

Ānanda alone had previously accepted a separate invitation and had traveled far away without yet returning, so he had not been able to join the saṅgha in its order.

With neither a senior monk nor an acharya, he returned alone along the road. That day there was no offering for him. Ānanda then took up his alms bowl and, in the city through which he was passing, begged in order from door to door. In his mind, he first sought the final donor, intending to make that person the host of the meal, without regard for purity or impurity, whether kṣatriyas of noble lineage or caṇḍālas.

He was practicing impartial compassion, making no distinction in favor of the eminent or against the lowly, intending thereby to bring to perfection the immeasurable merit and virtue of all sentient beings. Ānanda already knew that the Tathāgata, the World-Honored One, had reproved Subhūti and Mahākāśyapa, both arhats, because their minds lacked equanimity. Revering the Tathāgata, he wished to make impartial giving known and thereby dispel every doubt and slander. Passing through the city moat, he walked slowly toward the city gate, his demeanor dignified and orderly, and his alms practice solemn and respectful.

At that time, while Ānanda was begging for food, he passed by a house of prostitution and encountered a powerful illusion. The woman Mātaṅgī used the ancient Brahmā-heaven spell of Śavikāra to draw him onto a bed of lust, caressing his body and about to destroy the substance of his precepts. Knowing that he had been affected by this licentious spell, the Tathāgata returned after the meal. The king and his ministers, elders, and lay practitioners all followed the Buddha, wishing to hear the essentials of the Dharma.

Then the World-Honored One emitted from the crown of his head a hundred-jeweled, fearless light. Within that light appeared a thousand-petaled jeweled lotus, upon which a transformation body of the Buddha sat in full lotus posture and proclaimed a spiritual mantra. He instructed Mañjuśrī to take the mantra and protect Ānanda. The evil spell was dispelled, and Mañjuśrī brought Ānanda and Mātaṅgī back to the Buddha.

When Ānanda saw the Buddha, he bowed at his feet and wept sorrowfully. He regretted that, from beginningless time, he had relied exclusively on extensive learning and had not fully developed the power of the Way. Earnestly, he requested the initial expedient means by which the Tathāgatas of the ten directions attain bodhi: the wondrous śamatha, samāpatti, and dhyāna. At that time, bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, as well as great arhats and pratyekabuddhas from the ten directions, all wished to hear this teaching. They withdrew to their seats, remained silent, and received the sacred instruction.

Then, in the midst of the great assembly, the World-Honored One extended his golden arm and touched the crown of Ānanda's head. He told Ānanda and the whole assembly: “There is a samādhi called the Great Buddha-Crown Śūraṅgama King, which encompasses all practices. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions have all

transcended through this one gate onto the wondrous path of adornment. Listen carefully now!" Ānanda bowed and respectfully received the compassionate instruction.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You and I are of the same clan, and our familial affection is equal. When you first aroused the resolve, what superior characteristic did you see in my Dharma that made you suddenly renounce the deep and weighty worldly ties of affection?" Ānanda said to the Buddha: "I saw the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks, supremely wondrous and extraordinary. His body was radiant and translucent, like crystal. I constantly reflected that such marks could not arise from desire and attachment."

"Why? The energy of desire is coarse and turbid; its foul odors mingle in sexual union, and pus and blood are confused together. They cannot produce the supremely pure, wondrously bright, purple-golden mass of light. Therefore, I longed for you and left home under the Buddha."

The Buddha said: "Excellent, Ānanda! You should know that all sentient beings, from beginningless time onward, have continued in birth and death because they do not recognize the ever-abiding true mind, the pure and luminous essence of their nature. Instead, they employ deluded thoughts. Because these thoughts are unreal, they undergo rebirth in the cycle of existence. Now, if you wish to investigate unsurpassed bodhi and truly realize your intrinsic nature, you should answer my questions with a straightforward mind. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions have all left birth and death by the same path: through a straightforward mind. When mind and speech are straightforward, then throughout all stages, from beginning to end, there are never any crooked or indirect aspects in between."

"Ānanda, I now ask you: when you first aroused the resolve because of the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks, what did you use to see them, and what was it that took delight in them?" Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, I delighted in them through my mind and eyes. My eyes saw the Tathāgata's superior marks, and my mind gave rise to delight. Therefore, I aroused the resolve, wishing to abandon birth and death." The Buddha said to Ānanda: "As you have said, what truly delights is due to the mind and eyes."

"If you do not know where the mind and eyes are, you cannot subdue the afflictions. It is like a king whose country is invaded by bandits: when he sends troops to destroy them, those troops must know where the bandits are. Your mind and eyes are responsible for causing you to revolve in the cycle of existence. I now ask you: where are your mind and eyes at present?"

Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, all beings in the world, in the ten classes, regard the conscious mind as dwelling within the body. Even the Tathāgata's

blue-lotus eyes are on the Buddha's face. As I now observe these physical eyes, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, they are located only on my face. Thus, the conscious mind truly dwells within the body."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You are now seated in the Tathāgata's lecture hall. Where is the Jeta Grove that you see?" "World-Honored One, this great, pure lecture hall with its lofty pavilions is in Anāthapiṇḍada's Garden, while the Jeta Grove is truly outside the hall." "Ānanda, now that you are in the hall, what do you see first?" "World-Honored One, being in the hall, I first see the Tathāgata and then observe the great assembly. Looking outward, I then see the grove and garden."

"Ānanda, by what means do you see the grove and garden?" "World-Honored One, the doors and windows of this great lecture hall are open and unobstructed; therefore, while in the hall, I can see far into the distance." The Buddha said to Ānanda: "As you have said, while the body is in the lecture hall and its doors and windows are open and unobstructed, it can see the grove and garden in the distance."

"Could there also be sentient beings in this hall who do not see the Tathāgata but see what is outside the hall?" Ānanda replied: "World-Honored One, for one to be in the hall, not see the Tathāgata, yet see the groves and springs outside, is impossible!" "Ānanda, it is likewise with you. Your spiritual mind clearly understands everything. If the mind that presently understands were truly within your body, it should first be able to know the interior of your body."

"Are there sentient beings who first see within their bodies and then observe external things? Even if they cannot see their heart, liver, spleen, and stomach, they should surely be aware when nails grow, hair lengthens, sinews flex, and veins pulse. Why do they not know these? If they certainly do not know the interior, how can they know the exterior? Therefore, you should know that your assertion that the aware and knowing mind dwells within the body is impossible."

Ānanda bowed and said to the Buddha: "Having heard the Tathāgata's Dharma teaching, I realize that my mind truly dwells outside the body. Why? It is like a lamp lit within a room: the lamp must first illuminate the room's interior, then, through the doorway, reach the courtyard outside. All sentient beings do not see within their bodies but see only outside them; likewise, a lamp outside a room cannot illuminate its interior. This principle is surely clear and leaves no room for doubt. Does it not accord with the Buddha's ultimate meaning and contain no error?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "These bhikshus have just followed me from Śrāvastī, begging for food in turn, and have returned to the Jeta Grove. I have already finished my meal."

“Look at these bhikshus: when one person eats, do all the others become full?” Ānanda replied: “No, World-Honored One. Why? Although these bhikshus are arhats, their bodies and lives are distinct. How could one person's eating make everyone full?” The Buddha said to Ānanda: “If your aware and discerning mind truly dwelt outside your body, then body and mind would be separate and would not affect one another.”

“Then what the mind knows could not be felt by the body, and what is felt at the body could not be known by the mind. I now show you my hand, soft as tufts of cotton. When your eyes see it, does your mind distinguish it?” Ānanda replied: “Yes, World-Honored One.” The Buddha said to Ānanda: “If they know one another, how could the mind be outside? Therefore, you should know that your assertion that the aware and knowing mind dwells outside the body is impossible.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, as the Buddha has said, because it does not see within, it does not dwell inside the body; and because body and mind know one another and are not separate, it does not dwell outside the body. I now reflect that it must be in one location.” The Buddha said: “Where is that location?” Ānanda said: “Since this knowing mind does not know the interior but can see outside, I consider that it is concealed within the sense faculties.”

“It is like someone placing a crystal bowl over both eyes. Though an object covers them, it does not obstruct them. The sense faculties see along with it and immediately distinguish. Thus, the reason why my aware and knowing mind does not see the interior is that it is within the faculties; and the reason why it clearly sees the exterior without obstruction is that it is concealed within the faculties.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “As you say, that which is concealed within the faculties is like crystal. When a person covers their eyes with crystal, do they see the crystal when they see mountains and rivers?” “Yes, World-Honored One. When a person covers their eyes with crystal, they truly see the crystal.” The Buddha said to Ānanda: “If your mind were like eyes covered by crystal, then when you saw mountains and rivers, why would you not see your own eyes? If you saw your eyes, the eyes would become an external object and could not function as the faculties that accompany seeing.”

“If you cannot see them, how can you say that this aware and knowing mind is concealed within the faculties like eyes covered by crystal? Therefore, you should know that your assertion that the aware and knowing mind is concealed within the faculties, like eyes covered by crystal, is impossible.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, I now reflect further: in the bodies of sentient beings, the viscera and organs are inside, while the openings are outside. What is hidden is dark, and what has openings is bright. Now, facing the Buddha,

when I open my eyes and see brightness, this is called seeing outside; when I close my eyes and see darkness, this is called seeing inside. What do you say of this?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "When you close your eyes and see darkness, does that realm of darkness confront your eyes or not? If it confronts your eyes, then the darkness is before your eyes. How can it be inside? If it is inside, then when you are in a dark room without sun, moon, or lamp, all the darkness in that room would be your own internal organs."

"If it does not confront your eyes, how can it become seeing? If, apart from seeing outside, what is called inside is formed by an inward confrontation, then closing your eyes and seeing darkness should be called seeing within your body. But when you open your eyes and see brightness, why do you not see your own face? If you do not see your face, inward confrontation cannot be established. If seeing your face can be established, then this aware and knowing mind, together with the eye faculty, would be in empty space. How could it be within? If it were in empty space, it would not be part of your body. Then, when the Tathāgata now sees your face, that too should be your body."

"Once your eyes know, your body should not feel. If you insist that both body and eyes are aware, there should be two consciousnesses; then your single body should become two Buddhas. Therefore, you should know that your assertion that seeing darkness is seeing within is impossible."

Ānanda said: "I have often heard the Buddha explain to the fourfold assembly: 'Because the mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise.' I now reflect that this very faculty of reflection is truly my mind-nature. Wherever it joins with something, the mind exists accordingly; it is not in any of the three places—inside, outside, or between."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You now say that because dharmas arise, various minds arise, and that the mind exists wherever they come together. If this mind has no substance, there can be nothing with which it comes together. But if, without substance, it can nevertheless come together, then the nineteen realms would arise from the combination of the seven sense objects."

"This is not so. If it has substance, then, as when you pinch your own body with your hand, does the mind you know come forth from within, or enter from without? If it comes forth from within, it should see inside the body; if it comes from without, it should first see your face." Ānanda said, "Seeing belongs to the eyes; knowing belongs to the mind, not to the eyes. Thus it is not right to say that the mind sees."

The Buddha said: "If the eyes can see, then when you are in a room, can the door see? Moreover, when people have died, their eyes still remain; they should all be

able to see things. If they can see things, why are they called dead? Ānanda, if your mind that is aware and knows necessarily has substance, is it one substance or many? Now that it is in your body, does it pervade the body or not? If it is one substance, then when you pinch one limb with your hand, all four limbs should feel it. If they all feel it, the pinching would have no particular location. But if the pinching has a location, then your claim that it is one substance cannot stand."

"If it consists of many substances, then you would become many persons. Which substance would be you? If it pervades the body, the same objection applies to the pinching just mentioned. If it does not pervade the body, then when you touch your head and also touch your foot, the head should feel it while the foot should not know it. Yet this is not so. Therefore, you should know that the claim that the mind exists wherever things come together has no basis."

Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, I have also heard the Buddha discuss true reality with Mañjuśrī and other Dharma princes. The World-Honored One also said that the mind is neither within nor without. As I reflect on this: because nothing is seen within, it cannot be within; because body and mind know one another, it cannot be outside. Since they know one another, yet nothing is seen within, it must be in between."

The Buddha said: "When you say 'in between,' that middle position cannot be indeterminate; it must have some location. Now investigate this middle: where is it? Is it in a place, or in the body? If it is in the body, then what is at the side is not in the middle, while what is in the middle would be the same as being inside. If it is in a place, does it have some marker or no marker? Without a marker, it is the same as nonexistent; with a marker, it has no fixed position."

"Why is this? If someone sets up a marker to indicate the middle, then looking eastward it becomes west, and looking southward it becomes north. Since the marker itself is confused, the mind should also be disordered." Ānanda said: "The middle of which I speak is neither of these two. As the World-Honored One has said, the eye and visible forms are conditions for the arising of eye-consciousness. The eye has discrimination, while the sense object of form is insentient; consciousness arises between them, and that is where the mind is."

The Buddha said: "If your mind is between the sense faculties and their objects, does this mind-substance encompass both, or not encompass both? If it encompasses both, the substance of things would be confused. Things are not aware, while the body is aware; they would stand opposed as two enemies. How could this be called a middle? If it cannot encompass both, it is neither aware nor unaware, and thus has no substance or nature. What appearance could a middle then have? Therefore, you should know that the claim that it is in between has no basis."

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, in the past I saw the Buddha, together with Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Subhūti, Pūrṇa, and Śāriputra, the four great disciples, turn the Dharma wheel. You often said: ‘The nature of the mind that is aware and discriminates is neither within, nor without, nor in between; it has no location whatsoever. Nonattachment to all things is called the mind.’ Then, is my nonattachment what is called the mind?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “You speak of the nature of the mind that is aware and discriminates as having no location whatsoever. In the world, empty space, water, land, flying creatures, and all forms of things are called ‘everything.’ Is that to which you are not attached existent or nonexistent? If nonexistent, it is like tortoise hair or rabbit horns; how could there be nonattachment? If something exists without attachment, it cannot be called nonexistent. Without characteristics, it is nonexistent; if it is not nonexistent, it has characteristics. If characteristics exist, it has a location. How, then, can there be nonattachment? Therefore, you should know that the claim that nonattachment to all things is called the knowing mind has no basis.”

At that time, Ānanda rose from his seat among the great assembly, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms reverently, and said to the Buddha: “I am the Tathāgata’s youngest brother. Receiving the Buddha’s compassionate love, I have left home, yet I still rely on his tender care. Therefore I have become widely learned, but have not attained freedom from the outflows. I could not subdue the Śāmbhāra spell and was turned about by it, sinking into a house of sexual indulgence. This was because I did not know the ultimate destination of true reality. I pray that the World-Honored One, in great compassion and pity, will reveal to us the path of śamatha, so that the icchantikas may destroy the mleccha views.”

Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground. The entire assembly, thirsting with anticipation, waited respectfully to hear the instruction.

At that time, the World-Honored One emitted various lights from the gateway of his face. Their radiance shone like a hundred thousand suns. Throughout the Buddha worlds, the earth quaked in six ways. Thus the lands of the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, all appeared at once. By the Buddha’s majestic spiritual power, all these worlds merged into a single world. In that world, all the great bodhisattvas remained in their own lands, with palms joined, attentively receiving the teaching.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “All sentient beings, from beginningless time, have been subject to various inversions. Their karmic seeds arise naturally, clustered together

like akāśa seeds. Those who cultivate cannot attain unsurpassed bodhi; instead, they become śrāvakas, pratyekabuddhas, adherents of non-Buddhist paths, heavenly demons, demon kings, or members of the demon retinue."

"All this is because they do not know the two fundamental roots and cultivate in confusion, like cooking sand in the hope of making a fine meal: even after dust-epochs, it can never be accomplished. What are these two? Ānanda, first is the beginningless root of birth and death: the mind that you and all sentient beings now use in grasping at conditions and take to be your own nature. Second is the originally pure substance of beginningless bodhi and nirvāṇa: the original luminosity of the essence of consciousness, which can give rise to all conditions, yet is what conditioned objects leave behind. Because sentient beings abandon this fundamental luminosity, though they act all day long, they are unaware of it and vainly enter the various realms of rebirth."

"Ānanda, you now wish to know the path of śamatha and seek to escape birth and death. I will ask you again." Thereupon the Tathāgata raised his golden arm, bent the fingers of his five-wheeled hand, and said to Ānanda, "Do you see?" Ānanda said, "I see." The Buddha said, "What do you see?" Ānanda said, "I see the Tathāgata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a radiant fist, which illumines my mind and eyes."

The Buddha said, "With what do you see?" Ānanda said, "The assembly and I see with our eyes." The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You have now answered me that the Tathāgata bends his fingers into a radiant fist, which illumines your mind and eyes. Your eyes can see; but what do you take to be the mind that is illuminated by my fist?" Ānanda said, "The Tathāgata is now asking where the mind is. I investigate and seek after it with my mind; that which is able to investigate is what I take to be my mind."

The Buddha said: "Alas, Ānanda! This is not your mind." Startled, Ānanda withdrew from his seat, joined his palms, stood up, and said to the Buddha, "If this is not my mind, what should it be called?" The Buddha said to Ānanda: "This is a false mental image of preceding sense objects, which deludes your true nature. From beginningless time until this present life, you have mistaken a thief for your son, lost what is originally constant in you, and thus undergone the cycle of rebirth."

Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, I am the Buddha's cherished younger brother. Because my heart loved the Buddha, he caused me to leave home. Not only have I used this mind to make offerings to the Tathāgata, but, traveling throughout lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, I have served Buddhas and spiritual teachers, aroused great courage, and undertaken every difficult practice—all through this mind. Even if I were to slander the Dharma and forever lose my roots of goodness, it would also be because of this mind."

“If that which makes such discernment is not the mind, then I have no mind and am like earth or wood. Apart from this awareness and knowing, there is nothing else. How can the Tathāgata say that this is not the mind? I am truly alarmed and afraid, and no one in this assembly is without doubt and perplexity. I pray that you will extend great compassion and instruct those who have not awakened.”

At that time, the World-Honored One wished to instruct Ānanda and the great assembly, causing their minds to enter the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. From the lion seat, he touched Ānanda’s crown and said: “The Tathāgata has often said that all dharmas that arise are manifested only by the mind. All causes and effects, and even the minute particles of worlds, take their substance from the mind.”

“Ānanda, in all worlds, everything within them—even grasses, leaves, threads, and knots—has a substance when its origin is investigated. Even empty space has a name and an appearance.”

“How much more so the pure, wondrous, luminous mind, which is the nature of all minds—could it itself lack substance? If you stubbornly maintain that the nature which knows the discriminations of awareness and contemplation is necessarily the mind, then this mind should possess a complete nature apart from all forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches, and the activities of the sense objects. As you now listen to my teaching, your discrimination arises because of sound.”

“Even if you were to extinguish all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and inwardly preserve a secluded stillness, that would still be a dharma-object, a shadow of discriminating thought. I do not tell you to insist that it is not the mind. But examine the mind with subtle care: if the nature that discriminates exists apart from preceding sense objects, then it is truly your mind. If the discriminating nature has no substance apart from sense objects, then it is merely a shadow of discrimination based on preceding sense objects.”

“Sense objects are not permanent. When they change and perish, this mind would become like tortoise hair or rabbit horns. Then your Dharma body would be subject to annihilation. Who, then, could cultivate and realize the forbearance of the unborn dharmas?” At once Ānanda and the great assembly fell silent and were at a loss. The Buddha said to Ānanda: “All practitioners in the world, though they may presently attain the nine successive absorptions, cannot eradicate the outflows and become arhats, because they cling to this deluded thought of birth and death and mistake it for what is real. Therefore, though you have now gained extensive learning, you have not attained the fruit of a noble one.”

Having heard this, Ānanda wept again in sorrow. He prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground, knelt for a long time with palms joined, and said to the

Buddha: “From the time I followed the Buddha and resolved to leave home, relying on the Buddha’s majestic spiritual power, I always thought that I need not cultivate myself. I supposed that the Tathāgata would bestow samādhi upon me. I did not know that body and mind cannot substitute for one another. Thus I lost my own fundamental mind. Though my body has left home, my mind has not entered the Way, like a poor son who leaves his father and flees.”

“Today I know that even with extensive learning, if one does not cultivate, it is the same as not having heard at all; it is like someone speaking of food who can never be filled. World-Honored One, we are now entangled by the two obscurations, entirely because we do not know the mind-nature that is quiescent and ever-abiding. I pray that the Tathāgata will pity us in our poverty and destitution, reveal the wondrous luminous mind, and open the eye of the Way for us.”

At that time, the Tathāgata caused precious light to stream forth from the swastika on his chest. The light shone brilliantly in hundreds of thousands of colors and instantly pervaded Buddha worlds throughout the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust. It bathed the crowns of all the Tathāgatas in jeweled lands throughout the ten directions, then circled back to Ānanda and the great assembly. He said to Ānanda: “I shall now raise the great Dharma banner for you, and enable all sentient beings in the ten directions to obtain the wondrous, subtle, secret mind whose nature is pure luminosity, and to attain the pure eye.”

“Ānanda, you previously answered me that you saw the radiant fist. From what does this radiance of the fist arise? How is it formed into a fist? With what do you see it?” Ānanda said: “The Buddha’s whole body is like Jambūnada gold, crimson like a jeweled mountain and born of purity; therefore it has radiance. I truly see with my eyes that the Tathāgata bends and closes the tips of the five-wheeled fingers to show people, and thus there is the appearance of a fist.” The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Today the Tathāgata will tell you the truth.”

“Those who possess wisdom must rely on analogies to attain awakening. Ānanda, for example, without my hand there could be no fist of mine; without your eyes there could be no seeing of yours. Is the principle of comparing your eye faculty to my fist equivalent?” Ānanda said: “Yes, World-Honored One. Without my eyes, there could be no seeing of mine; in comparing my eye faculty to the Tathāgata’s fist, the matter and principle are analogous.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “You say they are analogous, but this is not so. Why? If a person has no hands, a fist is entirely absent; but one who has no eyes does not thereby entirely lack seeing. Why is this? Go and ask blind people along the road, ‘What do you see?’ Those blind people will surely answer, ‘Before our eyes we see only darkness and nothing else.’”

Viewed in this way, the objects before you may themselves be dark; how is seeing thereby diminished? Ānanda said, “Before the eyes of those who are blind, there is only darkness. How can that be called seeing?” The Buddha told Ānanda, “For those who are blind and without eyes, there is only darkness before them. Is this darkness different from the darkness seen by a person with eyes in a dark room, or is there no difference?” “Just so, World-Honored One. Comparing the darkness seen by a person in a dark room with that seen by the blind, there is no difference at all.”

Ānanda, if a person without eyes sees only darkness before him, and suddenly gains the light of sight, then sees all kinds of forms among the objects before him, you call this seeing by the eyes. If a person in darkness sees only darkness before him, and suddenly obtains the light of a lamp, then also sees all kinds of forms among the objects before him, he should be said to see by the lamp. If it is the lamp that sees, then the lamp itself can see and should not be called a lamp. Moreover, if the lamp does the seeing, what does that have to do with you? Therefore, you should know that a lamp can reveal forms; the one that sees is the eye, not the lamp. The eye can reveal forms; the seeing-nature is the mind, not the eye.”

Although Ānanda heard these words, he and the great assembly remained silent, their minds not yet awakened. Still hoping that the Tathāgata would compassionately expound the teaching in a gentle voice, they joined their palms, cleared their minds, and waited for the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.

At that time, the World-Honored One extended his radiant hand, marked with webbing soft as tūla cotton, opened his five fingers, and instructed Ānanda and the great assembly: “When I first attained the Way in the Deer Park, I told Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya and the other five bhikṣus, as well as you of the fourfold assembly: ‘All sentient beings fail to attain bodhi or arhatship because they are misled by the afflictions of guests and dust.’ By what did you awaken at that time and now attain the fruits of sagehood?”

Then Kauṇḍinya rose and addressed the Buddha: “I am now the eldest among the assembly and alone have received the name ‘Understanding,’ because I awakened through the two words ‘guest’ and ‘dust’ and thereby attained realization. World-Honored One, it is like a traveling guest who stops at an inn: he may lodge there or take a meal. When lodging and eating are finished, he packs for the road ahead and cannot remain there. But the true host has nowhere to go.”

Reflecting thus, that which does not remain is called a guest, while that which remains is called the host; what does not remain is the meaning of ‘guest.’ Again, after a fresh clearing of the sky, the pure sun rises into the heavens, and its light enters through a crevice, revealing the various motes of dust in the air. The particles of dust move, while empty space remains still. Reflecting thus, clarity and stillness

are called empty space, and movement is called dust; what moves is the meaning of ‘dust.’” The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Then, in the midst of the great assembly, the Tathāgata bent his five fingers. Having bent them, he opened them; having opened them, he bent them again. He said to Ānanda, “What do you see now?” Ānanda said, “I see the Tathāgata’s palm, marked with a hundred jeweled wheels, opening and closing among the assembly.” The Buddha told Ānanda, “You see my hand opening and closing among the assembly.”

“Is it my hand that opens and closes, or is it your seeing that opens and closes?” Ānanda said, “The World-Honored One’s jeweled hand opens and closes among the assembly. I see the Tathāgata’s hand itself opening and closing; it is not my seeing-nature that opens and closes.” The Buddha said, “What moves, and what is still?” Ānanda said, “The Buddha’s hand does not remain still, whereas my seeing-nature is beyond even stillness; how could it be said not to abide?” The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Then the Tathāgata emitted a precious ray of light from his wheel-marked palm, sending it to Ānanda’s right. Ānanda immediately turned his head to look to the right. The Buddha emitted another ray of light to Ānanda’s left, and Ānanda again turned his head to look to the left. The Buddha told Ānanda, “Why does your head move today?” Ānanda said, “I saw the Tathāgata emit a wondrous precious light that came to my right and left. Therefore, I looked right and left, and my head moved of itself.” “Ānanda, as you look at the Buddha’s light and turn your head from right to left, is it your head that moves, or is it your seeing that moves?” “World-Honored One, my head moves of itself, whereas my seeing-nature is beyond even cessation; how could it be shaken?” The Buddha said, “So it is.”

Then the Tathāgata proclaimed to the great assembly: “If sentient beings regard what moves as dust, and what does not remain as a guest, look at Ānanda: his head moves of itself, yet his seeing does not move. Again, look at me: my hand opens and closes of itself, yet seeing has no opening or closing. Why do you now take movement to be your body and movement to be your environment? From beginning to end, thought after thought arises and ceases. You lose your true nature and act in inversion; the true nature of mind is lost, and you take things to be yourself. Thus you revolve within saṃsāra and bring this ceaseless turning upon yourselves.”

I. Background to the Sūtra Opening

Thus have I heard. At one time, the Buddha was in the city of Śrāvastī, at Jeta Grove, in Anāthapiṇḍada’s Park, together with a great assembly of bhikṣus, twelve hundred and fifty in all. All were great arhats free from outflows, disciples who upheld the Buddha’s teaching. They had skillfully transcended all states of existence and could perfect their deportment in every land. Turning the Dharma wheel with the Buddha,

they were eminently capable of receiving his final instructions. They strictly upheld and purified the Vinaya, setting a great model for the three realms. They manifested countless bodies to liberate sentient beings.

They would rescue those of the future and transcend all worldly defilements. Their names were Mahāprajñā Śāriputra, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Mahākauṣṭhila, Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra, Subhūti, Upaniṣad, and others, who were foremost among them. There were also innumerable pratyekabuddhas who had nothing further to learn, as well as those of initial resolve, who had come together to the Buddha's presence at the conclusion of the bhikṣus' summer retreat, when they invited mutual admonition.

Bodhisattvas from the ten directions consulted him to resolve the doubts in their minds. Reverently attending upon his compassionate majesty, they sought the profound meaning. Then the Tathāgata arranged his seat and rested at ease, revealing profound and subtle teachings to the entire assembly. The pure assembly at the Dharma feast attained what they had never attained before. The immortal voice of the kalaviṅka resounded throughout the realms of the ten directions. Bodhisattvas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges came together at the place of practice, with Mañjuśrī as their foremost.

At that time, King Prasenajit, in observance of the anniversary of his father's death, prepared a vegetarian offering. He invited the Buddha to the palace and personally welcomed the Tathāgata. He lavishly set out precious and incomparable delicacies, and personally invited all the great bodhisattvas as well. In the city, elders and lay practitioners likewise offered meals to the saṅgha at the same time. As they awaited the Buddha's arrival to receive their offerings, the Buddha instructed Mañjuśrī to lead divisions of bodhisattvas and arhats to accept the invitations of the various donors. Only Ānanda had previously accepted a separate invitation.

He had traveled afar and had not yet returned, so he had not joined the saṅgha in its order. Having neither a senior monk nor an ācārya with him, he returned alone along the road. On that day there was no offering for him, so Ānanda immediately took up his alms bowl and proceeded through the city where he was staying, begging for alms in order from door to door.

In his mind, he first sought a final donor to provide the meal, without asking whether the person was pure or impure, whether of the noble kṣatriya caste or a caṇḍāla. In this way he would practice equal compassion, making no distinction between high and low, intending to bring all sentient beings to the perfection of immeasurable merit. Ānanda already knew that the Tathāgata, the World-Honored One, had reproved Subhūti and Mahākāśyapa because, as arhats, their minds lacked equanimity. Revering the Tathāgata, he wished to proclaim this impartial teaching,

thereby dispelling all doubts and slanders. Passing through the city moat, he slowly approached the outer gate, his deportment solemn and orderly, observing with utmost reverence the rules for receiving alms.

At that time, while Ānanda was begging for alms, he passed by a house of prostitution and encountered a powerful illusion. Mātaṅgī's daughter used the Kapila mantra of the Brahma Heaven to draw him onto a bed of lust. Caressing his body, she was about to destroy the substance of his precepts. Knowing that Ānanda had been affected by this licentious spell, the Tathāgata returned after the meal. The king, his ministers, elders, and lay practitioners all followed the Buddha, wishing to hear the essentials of the Dharma. Then the World-Honored One emitted from the crown of his head a hundred-jeweled light of fearlessness. Within that light appeared a thousand-petaled jeweled lotus, upon which sat a transformation body of the Buddha in the full lotus posture, proclaiming a sacred mantra. He instructed Mañjuśrī to take the mantra and protect Ānanda. The evil spell was dispelled, and Mañjuśrī brought Ānanda and Mātaṅgī's daughter back to the Buddha.

II. The Sevenfold Examination of the Mind

(I) Taking the Mind to Be Within the Body

You now wish to investigate unsurpassed bodhi and to realize your true nature. You should answer my questions with a straightforward mind. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions have departed from birth and death by the same path: all do so through a straightforward mind. Because mind and speech are straightforward, from the beginning to the end, throughout all the stages, there are never any crooked or devious appearances. Ānanda, I now ask you: when you first aroused the resolve, drawn by the Tathāgata's thirty-two marks, what did you see, and who gave rise to delight and attachment?

Ānanda addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One, this delight and attachment arose through my mind and eyes. My eyes beheld the Tathāgata's sublime marks, and my mind gave rise to delight and attachment. Therefore I aroused the resolve, wishing to relinquish birth and death."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "As you have said, what truly gives rise to delight and attachment is due to the mind and eyes. If you do not know where the mind and eyes are, you cannot subdue the afflictions. It is like a king whose country is invaded by bandits: when he sends troops to suppress and eliminate them, the troops must

know where the bandits are. What causes you to wander in cyclic existence is the fault of the mind and eyes. I now ask you: where exactly are your mind and eyes?"

Ānanda addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One, throughout all worlds, the ten kinds of ordinary beings all regard the conscious mind as dwelling within the body. Even the Tathāgata's blue-lotus eyes are on the Buddha's face. I now observe that these physical eyes, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, are upon my face. Thus, the conscious mind truly dwells within the body."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You are now sitting in the Tathāgata's lecture hall. Where is the Jeta Grove that you see?"

"World-Honored One, this great, pure lecture hall with its lofty pavilions is in Anāthapiṇḍada's Park, while the Jeta Grove is truly outside the hall."

"Ānanda, now that you are within the hall, what do you see first?"

"World-Honored One, within the hall I first see the Tathāgata; next I observe the great assembly; then, looking outward, I see the grove and park."

"Ānanda, by what means do you see the grove and park?"

"World-Honored One, the doors and windows of this great lecture hall are wide open. Therefore, while in the hall, I can gaze far out and see them."

At that time, in the midst of the great assembly, the World-Honored One extended his golden arm and touched Ānanda on the crown of his head. He instructed Ānanda and the entire assembly: "There is a samādhi called the Great Buddha-Top Śūraṅgama King, complete with the myriad practices. It is the wondrously adorned path by which the Tathāgatas of the ten directions transcend through a single gate. Listen carefully now." Ānanda bowed in reverence and respectfully received the compassionate instruction.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "As you have said, your body is in the lecture hall, whose doors and windows are wide open, and so you can gaze far out and see the grove and park. Is there any sentient being who, while in this hall, does not see the Tathāgata but sees what is outside the hall?"

Ānanda replied: "World-Honored One, it is impossible for one in the hall not to see the Tathāgata yet to see the groves and streams outside."

"Ānanda, you are likewise. Your spiritual awareness clearly knows everything. If the mind that now clearly knows were truly within your body, it should first be able to know the inside of your body. Are there sentient beings who first see inside their bodies and afterward observe external things? Even if they cannot see their heart,

liver, spleen, or stomach, they should surely be aware when their nails grow, their hair lengthens, their sinews move, and their veins pulse. How could they not know? If they do not know what is within, how can they know what is outside? Therefore, you should know that your statement—that the mind capable of awareness and knowing dwells within the body—is impossible."

(II) Clinging to the Mind as External

Ānanda bowed and said to the Buddha: "Having heard the Tathāgata's Dharma teaching, I have realized that my mind truly resides outside the body. Why is this so? It is like the light of a lamp burning within a room: the lamp must first illuminate the inside of the room and then, through its doorway, reach the courtyard beyond. Yet all sentient beings do not see within their bodies, but see only outside them. This is also like a lamp placed outside a room, which cannot illuminate the room within. This principle is surely clear and leaves no room for doubt. It accords with the Buddha's ultimate teaching; could it be mistaken?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "These bhikṣus have just returned to the Jeta Grove after going in order through Śrāvastī to beg for food. I have already eaten. Look at these bhikṣus: when one person eats, are all the others filled?"

Ānanda replied, "No, World-Honored One. Why? Although these bhikṣus are arhats, their bodies and lives are distinct. How could one person's eating make them all full?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "If the mind that is aware and cognizant truly resides outside the body, then body and mind are separate and have no connection with one another. What the mind knows, the body could not perceive; what the body perceives, the mind could not know. I now show you my hand, soft as tūla cotton. When your eyes see it, does your mind discriminate it?"

Ānanda replied, "Yes, World-Honored One."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "If they know each other, how could the mind be outside? Therefore, you should know that your claim that the mind capable of awareness and knowing resides outside the body is untenable."

(III) The Latent Roots of Deluded Conceptions

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, as the Buddha has said, because it does not see within, it does not abide inside the body. Because the body and mind know each other and are not separate, it is not outside the body. I now reflect that this knowing mind is in one place."

The Buddha said, “Where is that place now?”

Ānanda said, “This mind that is aware and knows, since it does not know what is within yet can see what is outside, must, as I think, be hidden within the sense faculties. It is like someone placing a crystal bowl over both eyes: although something covers them, it does not obstruct them.”

“The sense faculties follow what is seen and immediately make distinctions. Yet the mind that is aware and knows does not see within because it is within the sense faculties; it clearly observes without obstruction what is outside because it is hidden within the sense faculties.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “As you say, that which is hidden within the sense faculties is like crystal. When a person covers his eyes with crystal, does he see the mountains and rivers, and does he see the crystal as well?”

“Yes, World-Honored One. When that person covers his eyes with crystal, he indeed sees the crystal.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “If your mind were like the crystal covering the eyes, then when it saw the mountains and rivers, why would it not see the eyes? If it sees the eyes, then the eyes would be like an object, and could not function as that which follows seeing. If it cannot see them, how can you say that this mind that is aware and knows is hidden within the sense faculties, like crystal covering the eyes? Therefore, you should know that your claim that the mind that is aware and knows is hidden within the sense faculties, like crystal covering the eyes, is untenable.”

(IV) Opening and Closing, Light and Darkness

“Ānanda said to the Buddha, ‘World-Honored One, I have another thought. The bodies of sentient beings have their viscera within and their openings without. Where there are viscera, there is darkness; where there are openings, there is light. Now, as I face the Buddha, when I open my eyes and see light, this is called seeing outside. When I close my eyes and see darkness, this is called seeing inside. What is the meaning of this?’”

“The Buddha told Ānanda, ‘When you close your eyes and see darkness, is this realm of darkness opposite your eyes, or is it not? If it is opposite your eyes, then the darkness is before your eyes. How can it be inside? If it is inside, then when you are in a dark room without sunlight, moonlight, or lamplight, all the darkness in that room would be your own viscera. If it is not opposite your eyes, how can it be called seeing?’”

The Buddha asked Ānanda: When you close your eyes and see darkness, is this realm of darkness opposite your eyes? If it is, then that realm of darkness should be before your eyes. Since it is before your eyes, it should not be inside your body.

If you insist that darkness is darkness, that this darkness and that darkness are exactly the same and without distinction, then the darkness seen when you close your eyes would be equivalent to seeing the inside of your body.

If that were truly so, then when you were in a dark room with no sunlight, moonlight, or lamplight, the darkness you saw should be equivalent to the inside of your body.

Would that not make the room your five viscera and six bowels? Clearly, this is incorrect. Therefore, when you close your eyes and see darkness, if the realm of darkness is opposite your eyes, it cannot be called the inside of your body. If it is not opposite your eyes, you cannot see it at all, much less call it the inside of your body.

For whenever we see something, that thing must be before our eyes, opposite them. For example, I can now see the recorder on the left and the teacup on the right. These things are all before our eyes and opposite them. Otherwise, I could not see them.

“If, apart from external seeing, an inward opposition were established, then when you close your eyes and see darkness, it could be called seeing within the body. But when you open your eyes and see light, why do you not see your own face? If you do not see your face, inward opposition cannot be established. If seeing your face were possible, then this knowing mind and the eye faculty would be in empty space. How could they be within the body? If they were in empty space, they would naturally not be your body. Then, since the Tathāgata now sees your face, he too would be your body. Your eyes already possess awareness; then your body should not be conscious. If you insist that body and eyes both possess awareness, there would be two awarenesses, and your one body should become two Buddhas. Therefore, you should know that your assertion that seeing darkness is seeing within has no basis.”

At this point, Ānanda objected: If my mind could leave my body, it could stand in opposition to the body—this is “inward opposition.” Then the darkness seen when the eyes are closed could be called seeing the inside of the body. The Buddha continued his instruction: Suppose that your mind could truly leave your body and stand in opposition to it, and that you called the darkness seen when you closed your eyes

seeing the inside of your body. Then why, when you open your eyes, can you not see your own face? Just as my mind is outside your body and I can see your face,

whereas you yourself cannot see it, this shows that your mind cannot leave your body.

Suppose someone stubbornly argued, “I have supernormal powers and can see my own face.”

If you truly could see your own face, then your knowing mind and eye faculty would be in empty space rather than within your body. They would naturally not be your body. Otherwise, if I, Śākyamuni Buddha, can see your face, Ānanda, then Śākyamuni Buddha would be you, Ānanda. Clearly, that is impossible.

To go a step further: if your mind were in empty space, outside your body, then although your eyes could see, your body should have no sensation. It would be like your being able to see me eat while never becoming full yourself, since each belongs to its own body.

If you insist, “The body is one thing and the eyes another; there are two awarenesses,” then you, Ānanda, as one person, should become two Buddhas. That is impossible. In fact, body does not depart from mind, nor mind from body; body and mind are one and cannot have two awarenesses. Thus, Ānanda’s claim that seeing darkness with closed eyes is seeing the inside of the body is mistaken.

Ānanda’s error lay in his attachment to deluded thoughts and his failure to turn the light inward. For example, in Chan practice, investigating a huatou (critical phrase) depends on arousing a sense of doubt. When investigating the huatou “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” the thought “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” keeps turning in the mind.

Within this sense of doubt, the deluded thought suddenly snaps off. At that time, one is not dead, but clearly and distinctly aware. What is this? At this point, one must turn the light inward. With an immediate awakening, one can directly realize the true nature of suchness (tathatā). If you merely keep thinking, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name? Who is reciting the Buddha’s name? …” it is useless. Even if you continue for decades, you will gain no insight.

The same applies to those who practice the Pure Land Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation: “Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha Buddha …” When recitation reaches the point at which the mind’s activity and its course are cut off, and mental thoughts cease, the mind that recites and the Buddha who is recited both fall away at once. At that time, one must also turn the light inward. With an immediate awakening, one can directly realize the true nature of suchness.

This is what Pure Land practitioners mean when they say, “When the lotus opens, one sees the Buddha and awakens to the unborn.” Some people do not understand.

When their Buddha-recitation has reached precisely the right point, their body is gone and the Buddha's name is gone as well, yet they become alarmed: "Oh no! How have I left the Buddha behind? It is empty—this will not do, this will not do!" Once such a deluded thought arises, they miss the opportunity to directly realize their intrinsic nature.

All this is because we do not know the essential key to practice. In Buddha-recitation, we must recite until there is no one able to recite and nothing being recited. Only this is Buddha-recitation samādhi. When samādhi is truly realized, there is neither one who recites nor anything recited; one awakens utterly bare, with no need for further words. This is what we call "the path of words is cut off and the mind's activity and its course are ended."

Many practitioners simply do not know the essential key to practice. They do not turn the light inward at every moment, and instead are deluded by all kinds of external circumstances. In fact, all the states before our eyes are accumulated by the deluded mind. The aggregate of form among the five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—comes about through our solidified deluded thoughts and their accumulation.

When we break through deluded thoughts, these states vanish at once. Then the great earth levels and sinks, and empty space shatters into dust. The Buddha-nature of suchness suddenly appears before us. Therefore, the Buddha, in his great compassion, repeatedly instructed us, "At what place? At what place? …" This is equivalent to the question asked in our tradition: "What is it? What is it? …"

All these point directly to the ultimate meaning in the very words spoken; they all require us to turn the light inward in the present moment and directly realize our original nature. Regrettably, Venerable Ānanda did not heed this direct indication. At one moment he said it was here, at another that it was there; but however he put it, he was wrong.

Regarding the "seven locations for seeking the mind," we have already discussed four: first, the attachment that the mind is inside; second, the attachment that it is outside; third, the false supposition that it is concealed in the latent faculty; and fourth, the opening and closing of the eyes, light and darkness. These four locations were all conceived by Ānanda from the standpoint of worldly dharmas, and the Buddha refuted each one. But Ānanda had always been widely learned: he had heard many Buddhas and bodhisattvas expound the sūtras, and he had examined their principles in great detail.

He thought, "Since it is incorrect to explain this in terms of worldly dharmas, I will explain it in terms of supramundane dharmas." Thus, the final three of the seven locations for seeking the mind are discussed from the standpoint of supramundane

dharmas. Had Ānanda not been widely learned, an ordinary person could not have presented such arguments. So do not say that being widely learned is of no use; it has its advantages as well. Let us now look further at the sūtra text:

(V) Wherever There Is Union

"Ānanda said, 'I once heard the Buddha instruct the fourfold assembly: Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise.'"

The two statements in this passage—"Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise"—are of great importance in Buddhism, so let us first discuss them.

Simply put, these two statements mean this: because our thoughts stir—that is, because "mind arises"—all manner of phenomena arise—that is, "dharmas arise." In turn, when various phenomena arise, they cause us to produce various minds. Here, the word "dharma" refers to all worldly things and phenomena. But on close examination, the two instances of "mind" in these statements differ.

Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna says, "Ignorance permeates suchness …" Our suchness and Buddha-nature—that is, the true mind—originally possess the characteristics of wisdom and virtue. They are originally the great perfect mirror wisdom, the wisdom of equality, the wondrous observing wisdom, and the wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done.

Yet because of the permeation of ignorance, the deluded mind arises within the true mind, and wisdom becomes consciousness: great perfect mirror wisdom becomes the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); the wisdom of equality becomes the manas consciousness; wondrous observing wisdom becomes the sixth consciousness; and the wisdom of accomplishing what is to be done becomes the first five consciousnesses.

The eighth consciousness is called the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Its function resembles that of a great storehouse, in which every kind of thought, good or bad, is stored. The seventh consciousness is called manas consciousness. It is the root of the sixth consciousness and is called the mind faculty. It clings to a self, and because of this self, it considers everything in terms of self. The sixth consciousness is what we ordinarily call consciousness, or what ordinary people call the mind. Most people's understanding of mind goes no further than this level.

Because of the permeation of ignorance, the deluded mind arises within the true mind. When the deluded mind stirs again, it in turn permeates ignorance anew,

causing the deluded mind to stir even more intensely. Thus cause returns to result, result continues cause, cause gives rise to result, and result returns again to cause. This repeated permeation gives rise to deluded objects.

The process that gives rise to deluded objects is the function of the manas consciousness, for the manas consciousness is a transmitting consciousness located between the sixth and eighth consciousnesses. As soon as deluded objects arise, all manner of phenomena are produced. This is what is meant by “Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise.” Therefore, the “mind” in this statement refers to the manas consciousness.

From this we can see that all worldly phenomena and states are created by our deluded mind and are illusory and unreal. Yet once illusory states arise, they in turn permeate our deluded mind again.

For example, when a greedy person sees gold, the thought of possessing it arises; when a lustful person sees beauty, the thought of craving it arises. This is how deluded objects in turn permeate the deluded mind, causing our sixth consciousness to make all kinds of discriminations and our thoughts to change. This is what is meant by “Because dharmas arise, the various minds arise.” Therefore, the “mind” in this statement refers to the sixth consciousness. Thus, although both statements use the word “mind,” they have different meanings.

The greatest difference between the true mind and the deluded mind is that the true mind is unmoving, whereas the deluded mind continually arises and ceases. The sixth consciousness is affected by its environment; it follows the first five consciousnesses—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—and changes incessantly. Let me now tell you a koan. Chan Master Sansheng Huiran, a Dharma heir of Patriarch Linji, visited Yangshan after realizing the Way.

At Yangshan there was a great Chan master, Chan Master Yangshan Huiji, a Dharma heir of Guishan Lingyou. One day, an official of the imperial court came to visit. Yangshan asked him, “What office do you hold?” The official replied, “I am a judicial commissioner.” A judicial commissioner was an official post at that time, chiefly responsible for investigating injustices in the world.

At this, Chan Master Yangshan raised his whisk and asked, “Can you investigate this?” The judicial commissioner could not answer. Chan Master Yangshan asked the others, but no one could reply. He therefore sent an attendant to ask Chan Master Sansheng how he would answer.

The attendant ran to the shelter, where Chan Master Sansheng was recuperating. After explaining why he had come, he asked, “Can you still investigate this?”

Sansheng replied, “Alas! Misfortune arises! Misfortune arises!” “Misfortune arises” means that calamity has come forth.

Why did he say that misfortune had arisen? Because “because mind arises, the various dharmas arise”: as soon as the deluded mind stirs, misfortune arises. The attendant returned and reported this to Chan Master Yangshan.

Chan Master Yangshan wished to see whether Sansheng’s realization was thorough, so he told the attendant, “Go ask him again: What misfortune has arisen?” This time, Chan Master Sansheng answered in a stern voice, “A further offense will not be tolerated!” This means that the mind must not stir again. What is there to speak of as misfortune or no misfortune? Originally, not a single dharma is established—purely naked, utterly bare, with nothing whatsoever to be attained.

Chan Master Yangshan praised him, saying, “Chan Master Sansheng Huiran is truly remarkable.” Therefore, the mind must not stir. Once the mind stirs, all manner of dharmas arise, and they become mutually cause and effect, combining with one another.

Once we understand the meaning of the two statements, “Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise,” let us look again at this passage:

“Now as I reflect, this faculty of reflection is truly my mind-nature. Wherever it joins with something, the mind accordingly exists there; it is not confined to any of the three places—within, without, or in between.”

Ānanda said, “I once heard the Buddha teach and instruct the fourfold assembly—the four groups of disciples: the two monastic assemblies of bhikṣus and bhikṣuṇīs, and the two lay assemblies of upāsakas and upāsikās—‘Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise.

’ Therefore, I think that this faculty of reflection by which I am now able to think is my mind-nature. As circumstances present themselves, this faculty of reflection joins with them, and my mind arises accordingly. Thus it is everywhere; it is not only within, without, or in between.”

Ānanda inferred this from the Buddha’s statement, “Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise,” but he emphasized only the latter statement. Thus, the faculty of reflection of which Ānanda speaks is the deluded mind, namely the sixth consciousness. Since the sixth consciousness is the most powerful, it is everywhere, regardless of place or time.

“The Buddha said to Ānanda, ‘You now say that because dharmas arise, the various minds arise, and that wherever they join, the mind exists accordingly. If this mind

has no substance, there can be nothing with which it joins. If, without substance, it can nevertheless join, then there would be nineteen realms, arising from the conjunction of seven sense objects. This is not so.'"

Fearing that Ānanda might change his position again, the Buddha repeated Ānanda's view. The Buddha said: You now believe that your mind arises only through joining with various objects—that is, that various minds arise because various objects exist. If you regard the mind in this way, then the mind of which you speak exists because of objects.

If it exists because of objects, then apart from objects it does not exist. It is like flowers in empty space or the moon reflected in water: it has no substance of its own. Without substance, it cannot join with anything. We know that conjunction requires two necessary conditions: first, there must be a substance of its own; second, the properties must correspond. For example, the six faculties join with the six sense objects to produce the six consciousness-realms.

The six faculties are the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; the six sense objects are form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas.

When the six faculties join with the six sense objects, the eye faculty must join with form to produce the eye-consciousness realm; the ear faculty with sound to produce the ear-consciousness realm; the nose faculty with smell to produce the nose-consciousness realm; the tongue faculty with taste to produce the tongue-consciousness realm; the body faculty with touch to produce the body-consciousness realm; and the mind faculty with dharmas to produce the mind-consciousness realm. Together, the six faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousness-realms are called the eighteen realms.

But we cannot say that the eye faculty joins with sound or that the ear faculty joins with form. Such conjunction is impossible, because their properties differ.

Now Ānanda takes what he calls the faculty of reflection—actually the consciousness-mind—and joins it with the five external sense objects of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. This amounts to adding another sense object beyond the six sense objects: the various states composed of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Does this not make a seventh sense object? Ānanda then joins this faculty of reflection, a faculty without substance, with this seventh sense object,

so would this not become "nineteen realms arising from the conjunction of seven sense objects"? In fact, there are only eighteen realms and only six sense objects. The sixth consciousness cannot join with form, sound, smell, taste, and touch; it can join only with dharmas.

Thus, Ānanda's understanding of mind still remains at the level of the sixth consciousness. This mind is still illusory and unreal, without substance of its own. Without substance, it cannot join with anything. But if Ānanda stubbornly maintains that the mind of which he speaks has substance, then—the Buddha having discussed above the case in which it lacks substance—the following analysis addresses Ānanda's view that this mind has substance.

Now let us look at the passage:

"If it has substance, then, just as you use your hand to touch your body, would the mind that you know come forth from within or enter from without? If it comes forth from within, it should see inside the body; if it comes from without, it should first see the face.' Ānanda said, 'Seeing belongs to the eyes; the mind knows, but it is not the eyes. Therefore, it is not correct to speak of the mind as seeing.' The Buddha said, 'If the eyes can see, then when you are in a room, can the door see? Moreover, when people have died, their eyes still remain; they too should see things. If they can see things, why are they called dead?'"

"Existence" has two meanings. One is original existence, as when we say that sentient beings' Buddha-nature has existed since beginningless time. The other is subsequent existence: something that originally did not exist but came to exist later. Here, the Buddha first analyzes the view of subsequent existence.

If something comes to exist only later, it must have a source from which it came. For example, we did not previously have a tape recorder, but now we have one. Where did this tape recorder come from? Was it purchased, borrowed from someone else, or brought from somewhere else? It must have a source. Without a source, there could not be such a tape recorder. Someone might say it was stolen, but even if it was stolen, it still came from somewhere.

Therefore, the Buddha said: "If the mind of which you speak has a substance, then when you strike your own body with your hand, you will know pain."

Then where does this pain come from? Does it emerge from inside the body, or enter from outside the body? If it emerges from inside the body, you must be able to see what is inside your body. If it enters from outside the body, you must be able to see your own face."

But in fact, you can see neither your heart, liver, spleen, stomach, and lungs within your body nor your own face.

This shows that the mind of which you speak neither emerges from inside the body nor enters from outside the body; it has no source. How can that which has no

source exist? Hearing this, Ānanda objected: “Seeing belongs to my eyes; the mind of which I speak is not my eyes. My mind is awareness and cannot see as the eyes do.”

Therefore, it is wrong for you to analyze it in terms of whether it can see. The Buddha said: “If the eyes can see, then when you are inside a room, can the door see things?” Here the Buddha uses the “door” as an analogy for the eyes and “you” as an analogy for the mind. As we often say, the eyes are the windows of the mind; it is the mind, not the eyes, that truly sees things.

Therefore, the Buddha continued: “When you are inside a room, you can see things, but the door cannot. This shows that it is the mind, not the eyes, that sees things.”

If someone says that a door is insentient while a person is sentient, and that it is therefore wrong to compare an insentient thing with a sentient person, the Buddha gives a further example: “If a person has died but the eyes remain, why can that person no longer see? Conversely, if that person can still see things, how can one say that the person has died?” The Buddha wished to make us understand that we see things not with the eyes but with the mind. Buddha-recitation is the same: it is not done merely with the mouth, but with the mind.

Chan practice is likewise so: one must investigate with the mind, “Who is it that recites the Buddha’s name?” Thus, the Buddhadharma is a Mind-Ground Dharma Gate. At this point, the Buddha refuted Ānanda’s view that the mind comes into being later. Next, the Buddha proceeded to analyze Ānanda’s view that the mind exists originally.

“Ānanda, if the mind that is conscious and capable of knowing truly has a substance, is it one substance or many substances? Now that it is in your body, does it pervade the body, or does it not pervade the body? If it is one substance, then when you touch one limb with your hand, all four limbs should be aware of it. If they are all aware of it, then the touch could not be located anywhere. But if the touch has a location, your claim that it is one substance cannot stand.

If it is many substances, then it would become many persons. Which substance would be you? If it pervades the body, the same objection applies to the touch just mentioned. If it does not pervade the body, then when you touch your head, you also touch your foot. If the head has sensation, the foot should have no awareness. But this is not so for you. Therefore, you should know that the mind does not simply exist wherever it comes into contact.”

This passage assumes that the mind of which Ānanda speaks inherently has a substance, rather than acquiring one later. If it acquired one later, it should have a source; but when questioned to the end, Ānanda could not explain its source. Thus, Ānanda’s claim that the mind later acquires a substantial nature is mistaken.

Now suppose Ānanda were to say: “My mind has had a substantial nature since beginningless time; it did not acquire it later.” In that case, it would have no source. Yet anything that truly has a substance must necessarily have characteristics and function. Without characteristics and function, one cannot establish that it has a substance. Substance, characteristics, and function are inseparable. Even after we directly realize our intrinsic nature, there are still characteristics and function.

Suchness and Buddha-nature are not something solitary and isolated, nor are they annihilation; they possess inexhaustible wondrous functioning and manifest in all kinds of realms. For example, there are Pure Lands in the east, south, west, and north. These are all characteristics and function. Without characteristics and function, one cannot demonstrate the existence of substance.

It is like a mirror: there must be reflections in a mirror; without reflections, it cannot be called a mirror. If the mind of which Ānanda speaks has a substance, it must certainly be capable of manifestation.

Therefore, the Buddha pressed the question: If the mind of which you speak definitely has a substance, is that substance one or many? Now that it is in your body, does it pervade your entire body, or is it confined to one place? If it is one substance, then when you strike yourself with your hand—for example, when you strike one arm—your other arm and both legs should all feel pain at the same time.

If all four limbs truly felt pain, where exactly would the blow have landed? Since even the parts that were not struck would hurt, how could one distinguish where the blow landed? In that case, “striking” would not exist. In fact, wherever one is struck is where one feels pain. This shows that the mind capable of knowing is not one substance.

If the mind capable of knowing were many substances, then a person, who has a knowing mind and only one body, would necessarily become many persons. Which person, then, would be you, Ānanda? Therefore, this mind capable of knowing is not many substances either.

If the mind capable of knowing pervaded your entire body, then, as explained above, when one limb was struck, your whole body would feel pain. This is impossible. Therefore, this mind capable of knowing does not pervade the entire body. If this mind capable of knowing does not pervade the entire body, then it exists only in some particular part of your body.

Now, if I strike your head and foot at the same time, then if your head feels pain, your foot should not feel pain, because your mind capable of knowing exists in only one place. If it is in the head, it should not be in the foot, and the foot should have

no sensation. But this is not in fact the case. This shows that your mind capable of knowing is not non-pervasive either.

The detailed discussion of these four questions shows that the mind capable of knowing is neither one substance nor many substances, neither pervasive throughout the body nor non-pervasive throughout the body. Thus, the mind capable of knowing—that is, our intrinsic nature—is neither one nor two, neither empty nor existent, neither identical with nor separate from anything. It cannot be grasped as existing in one place. To grasp it as existing in one place is deluded mind and makes perfect interpenetration impossible.

For example, suppose we are now in a room. If we let go of everything and the mind abides nowhere, everything in the room lies within our field of vision, and we see it all very clearly. But if the mind abides somewhere and becomes attached to a particular object—for example, if we focus intently on a piece of handicraft—

then your eyes contain only that work of art, and you cannot see the other things. Thus, when the mind abides somewhere, one's field of vision narrows, and one cannot see the world's Original Face clearly.

There have been many philosophers and thinkers in this world, but broadly speaking, they fall into only two major categories: idealists and materialists. Idealists hold that everything is created by mind and that mind is the master. Material civilization has been created through our ingenuity and skill; therefore, without mind, there would be no such world.

Materialists, on the other hand, hold that mind is the reflection of objective things in the human brain. Mind must be governed by the objective laws of matter and conform to the laws of material development before it can make creative inventions. The two schools have argued endlessly over this. In fact, idealism and materialism are two aspects of one thing.

It is like one of our hands: one side is the palm and the other is the back of the hand, yet both sides belong to the same hand. Viewed from one side, it is the palm; viewed from the other, it is the back of the hand. The perspectives differ. Both materialists and idealists begin from their respective perspectives, emphasizing only their own arguments and one-sidedly clinging to one side; thus, neither is complete.

In Buddhism, however, this question is discussed more comprehensively. The statement we discussed earlier—"Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise; because dharmas arise, the various minds arise"—represents Buddhist philosophical thought.

“Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise” means that when thoughts stir in our minds, all kinds of things and phenomena arise; this is idealism. “Because dharmas arise, the various minds arise” means that because all kinds of things and phenomena exist in the world, various thoughts arise; this is materialism.

Someone may ask: “Does Buddhism not teach that ‘The three realms are mind-only; all phenomena are consciousness-only’? Therefore, is Buddhism not, on the whole, still idealist?” Actually, this is a misunderstanding of Buddhism.

Ordinary people usually understand mind as referring only to the sixth consciousness, because they know only the sixth consciousness. In fact, we have not only the sixth consciousness, but also the manas consciousness and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

As explained earlier, our true mind—that is, our suchness and Buddha-nature—when permeated by ignorance, becomes consciousness. Thus, great perfect mirror wisdom becomes the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); wisdom of equality becomes the manas consciousness; wondrous observing wisdom becomes the sixth consciousness; and wisdom of accomplishment becomes the first five consciousnesses. What ordinary people call mind is the sixth consciousness, that is, discursive consciousness. The root of the sixth consciousness is the manas consciousness, while the seeds that give rise to these consciousnesses are the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), sometimes called the mind-king.

To use a great tree as an analogy: the seed is the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); when the seed sprouts and produces roots, these are the manas consciousness. As the roots absorb nourishment and continue to grow, the trunk that emerges is the sixth consciousness; the branches and leaves growing from the trunk are the first five consciousnesses.

Last time, someone asked: “The first five consciousnesses have physical sense faculties and faculties of ultimate meaning. Where are the physical sense faculties of the other consciousnesses?” Physical sense faculties are physiological organs composed of the four great elements that play only an auxiliary role in apprehending objects and giving rise to consciousness. Faculties of ultimate meaning are the capacities that actually apprehend objects and give rise to consciousness.

Thus, we all know that the material sense bases of the first five consciousnesses are the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body. The material sense base of the sixth consciousness is in the brain; that of the manas consciousness is within the channel between the brain and the heart; and that of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is within the heart. These matters are not explained very clearly in Exoteric Buddhism, but are explained in great detail in Esoteric Buddhism.

Esoteric Buddhism teaches that a channel runs through the center of the human body, from the abdomen through the heart to the brain. This differs from Daoist teachings: Daoism speaks of the Ren and Du channels, whereas here it is the central channel. The ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is within the heart, enveloped by a halo of five-colored light. This is the palace of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), the mind-king.

It radiates light like the sun. Therefore, when we meditate and the mind becomes pure, we see light. This light is emitted by your own body, and it is five-colored light, not light of a single color. The manas consciousness is situated in the middle of the channel running from the heart to the brain; it serves as a means of communication between the sixth and eighth consciousnesses.

The sixth consciousness is in the brain. The central channel connects through the left and right channels to the two eyes. Thus, we say that the eyes are the windows of the mind: through the eyes, we can see intrinsic luminosity. Esoteric Buddhism includes certain practices that teach us how to visualize the channels and see the light. Because Esoteric Buddhism must be transmitted through empowerment, these will not be explained publicly here.

Whether they are idealists or materialists, the mind of which they speak refers to the sixth consciousness. Yet the mind spoken of in the two statements, “Because mind arises, the various dharmas arise” and “The three realms are mind-only,” differs from the mind of which they speak. It is not the subjective mind of the sixth consciousness as understood by philosophers. The mind referred to in these two statements unifies subject and object. It is what we call the One True Dharma Realm —our suchness and Buddha-nature, that is, the true mind.

In Buddhism, “mind-only” has two important meanings. First, it means that all things are created by the true mind and are illusory and insubstantial. Here, “all things” refers to every phenomenon and object, including what we ordinarily call the mind of the sixth consciousness. All are flowers in empty space and the moon reflected in water, without any substantial reality.

Therefore, Buddhism says: “Mind is not mind in itself; because of form, there is mind. Form is not form in itself; because of mind, there is form.” “Mind is not mind in itself; because of form, there is mind” is what we referred to earlier as “Because dharmas arise, the various minds arise.” It explains the source of mind. Only because there are phenomena and objects is there this mind; if there were no reflection of objective matter, there would be no such mind.

But conversely, where do these phenomena and objects come from? They do not fall from the sky.

Because our minds can investigate the objective laws governing the development of matter, we can use these objective laws to make inventions and create things. Thus it is said, “Form is not form in itself; because of mind, there is form.” This form is what mind invents and creates. Hence, mind derives from form, while form in turn is created by mind.

Thus, the mind and form spoken of here have no truly substantial reality; both are illusory and insubstantial, and are called deluded mind and deluded form. What creates them is suchness and Buddha-nature—the true mind. This is the first meaning of “mind-only” in Buddhism.

The second meaning of “mind-only” in Buddhism is that these deluded minds and deluded forms are precisely manifestations of our true mind. The true mind is our suchness and Buddha-nature; it is the all-capable basis that creates all things. Every phenomenon and object in the world, and every kind of thought, arises from it.

Thus, the existence of the various forms and various minds proves the existence of the true mind. The true mind is their essence, while they are its appearances and functions. Without essence, appearances and functions cannot arise; without appearances and functions, the existence of essence cannot be demonstrated. We will now give a simple example to explain the relationship among essence, appearance, and function.

For example, when we cook rice, we must first add an appropriate amount of water. If there is too much water, the rice will be watery; if there is too little, it will be hard. After adding the water, cook it over high heat; once it boils, simmer it over low heat. In this way, the rice will be properly cooked. If it is kept over high heat throughout, it will burn.

Everyone knows that this principle has no visible form. Yet if we follow it and cook the rice, the result proves that the principle is correct. This essential principle is manifested in the process of cooking rice; this is called principle being revealed through phenomena. The essential principle must be manifested through certain appearances and functions before its existence can be demonstrated.

If there are no appearances and functions through which it can be manifested, its essence cannot be demonstrated. It is like a mirror: a mirror must have reflections; without reflections, it could not be called a mirror. Thus, essential principle and phenomena are not independent of one another; essence, appearance, and function are inseparable.

Therefore, we say that essence, appearance, and function are one—the One True Dharma Realm. Yet essence, appearance, and function are also many, with all kinds of wondrous functions. Thus, the true mind is neither one nor two, and is also one

and two. Buddhist teaching is comparatively comprehensive: it encompasses both idealist and materialist thought. Because Ānanda had not yet awakened and did not recognize the true mind, he would at one moment speak of one essence, at another of many essences, at another of a pervasive essence, and then again of a nonpervasive essence. None of what he said was correct. This was Ānanda's fifth false conception.

Now let us look at the sūtra text:

(VI) Counted as Being in Between

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, I have also heard the Buddha, when discussing ultimate reality with Mañjuśrī and the other Dharma princes, say that the mind is neither within nor outside. As I reflect on this, if it were within, there would be nothing to see; if it were outside, it would not be connected with the body. Since there is no knowing within, it cannot be within. Yet body and mind know each other, so it cannot be outside. Now, since they know each other and yet there is no seeing within, it must be in between."

First, we should understand what ultimate reality is. Everything that has form arises under certain conditions; once those conditions disappear, the corresponding form also disappears. Thus, all things in the world arise from causes and conditions: whatever is born must die.

Nothing can escape the four stages of formation, abiding, decay, and emptiness; this is dialectics. Thus, all appearances that have form must perish; they are illusory and unreal, and have no independent substance.

Then what is eternal, real, and imperishable? This is ultimate reality; it is the secret causal ground of the Tathāgata's Great Buddha Crown. It cannot be seen with the eyes, yet it truly exists. It can be experienced and realized only through the dharma eye of the mind. Therefore, the Buddha says in the Diamond Sūtra: "If one sees ultimate reality as non-appearance, one sees the Tathāgata."

In Buddhism, Tathāgata, suchness, Buddha-nature, and true mind all refer to ultimate reality; only their names differ. Everything we now see has form: for example, a football is round and a table is square. Whatever has form must perish and is necessarily illusory. Therefore, to see ultimate reality, one must leave behind all material appearances. As Śākyamuni Buddha said, "If one sees me through form or seeks me through sound, that person follows a deviant path and cannot see the Tathāgata."

To truly see ultimate reality, we must quiet the frantic mind and let all appearances vanish completely. For example, when we truly apply ourselves to Buddha-recitation, the deluded mind may suddenly disappear with a snap; at that moment, all appearances disappear. Why? Because appearances are accumulated by our deluded mind and are called “solidified deluded thoughts.”

When the deluded mind is stilled, deluded appearances also disappear. Thus, when our practice reaches just the right point, body, mind, and Buddha are all gone. An ancient saying calls this “When deluded thoughts are exhausted, the illusory body dissolves.” Deluded thoughts are our inverted and false imaginings; the illusory body is our illusory physical body.

When these things with form disappear and dissolve completely, seize the moment and directly see ultimate reality—then awakening occurs. Yet many practitioners do not understand this principle. Just as they are about to reach this point, they become frightened: “Oh no, I am falling into emptiness! I want to see the Buddha; I must rely on Amitābha Buddha to receive me into the Western Pure Land of Utmost Bliss. Now there is noth-”

“ing at all; even the Buddha is gone, and the Western Pure Land of Utmost Bliss is gone. I am falling into emptiness—what should I do?” What a pity! This is precisely the moment when ultimate reality is about to be seen, yet, not knowing this, they retreat again and fall back into appearances. These appearances are the deluded mind; they are not real. Therefore, everyone should take note: ultimate reality is eternal, imperishable, and without form.

This passage records some essential teachings spoken by Ānanda when he heard the Buddha discussing “ultimate reality” with Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva and the other Dharma princes. Dharma princes are those who have grasped the essentials of the Buddhadharma and become great bodhisattvas. Thus Ānanda said that when the Buddha discussed ultimate reality with Mañjuśrī and these other great bodhisattvas, the Buddha said: the mind is neither within nor outside.

I now think: if my mind were within, then, just as a person inside a room should first see the things in the room and then those outside it, I should first see what is within my body. But now I can see only external things and cannot see my own heart, liver, spleen, stomach, or lungs. This shows that my mind is not within.

If my mind were outside, it would have no connection with my body. When the body had sensations, the mind should not know of them; when the mind knew something, the body should have no sensations. But in fact, body and mind are consistent with each other, so it is also wrong to say that the mind is outside. Therefore, I think the mind must be in between.

The Buddha said, “When you say ‘in between,’ this ‘between’ cannot be unclear; it must have a location. Now, as you reason about this middle, where exactly is it? Is it in some place, or is it in the body? If it is in the body, then being at the edge is not the middle, while being in the middle is the same as being inside. If it is in a place, can it be indicated, or can it not be indicated? If it cannot be indicated, it is the same as not existing. If it can be indicated, it has no fixed position. Why? When a person uses an object as a marker and takes it to indicate the middle, one looking from the east sees it as west, while one looking from the south sees it as north. Since the marker itself is confused, the mind should be disordered.”

“In between” is in fact the Middle Way. For one who understands the Middle Way, everywhere is the Middle Way. For one who does not understand it, it must be understood relatively. For example, if we take three objects, place one here, another there, and the third in the middle, the position of the third indicates the middle.

If there were no first and second objects, then this middle could not be established either. This is the Middle Way as ordinary people understand it. Ānanda did not understand the principle of the Middle Way and merely spoke of a middle; this middle was relative, so the Buddha continued to question him.

The Buddha said: The middle of which you speak is not just any place; it must refer to something definite.

Does the middle of which you speak refer to a person’s body or to some other place? If you mean the body, then precisely where in the body is it? If it is on the surface of the body, such as on the skin, that is not the middle. If it is inside the body, then it is the same as the earlier claim that it is within the body.

If what you mean is not the body but some particular place, then it should be possible to indicate it. If you cannot indicate it, that shows there is no such place. If you can indicate it, then that indication must be relative to some reference point. If the reference point differs, the indication also differs.

For example, taking this teacup as an example: people to its east see it as being west, while people to its south see it as being north. Therefore, the way of indicating it is not fixed. Since methods of indication can vary in many ways, the middle of which you speak becomes confused.

From this we can see that the Western Pure Land of Utmost Bliss is the same. From here, we see it as being in the west; but from the west of that Pure Land, it would be in the east. Therefore, do not become attached. The west is a Pure Land, but the east, south, and north are also Pure Lands. So long as we let go of everything and the mind abides nowhere, everywhere is a Pure Land.

If there is abiding, it becomes an impure land. When our minds are pure, this very moment is the Pure Land, and we ourselves are Amitābha. The importance of this sūtra lies in its constantly dispelling our deluded thoughts, turning the light inward, and enabling us to see ultimate reality. Therefore, this sūtra is praised as an essential contemplation of the Chan gate and the great framework of the teaching king.

Ānanda said, “The middle of which I speak is not either of these two. As the World-Honored One has said, the eye and visible forms are conditions that give rise to eye consciousness. The eye has discrimination, while material objects lack awareness. Consciousness arises between them; therefore, this is where the mind is.”

Vision is one of our principal ways of knowing the world, but it functions only under certain conditions; in Buddhism, such conditions are called conditions (yuan). Let us carefully examine what conditions are required for vision to function. The Verses on the Structure of the Eight Consciousnesses of the Dharma Characteristics School says: “Nine conditions, eight, and seven follow in sequence; three require contact, two separation, to perceive the world of sense objects.” “Nine conditions” means that when ordinary people see external material objects, nine conditions must come together for vision to function. What are these nine conditions?

The first is space. If something were stuck over our eyes and blocked them, leaving no space, we could not see. Therefore, the condition of space is necessary.

The second is light. There must be illumination; we cannot see in a dark room. Therefore, the condition of light is necessary.

The third is the faculty. The faculty refers to our two eyes. If one is blind, one cannot see. Thus, the eye faculty must be sound in order for one to see; this is the condition of the faculty.

The fourth is the object. The object is the external environment, namely material objects. Without an external environment, what could one see? Therefore, the condition of the object is necessary.

The fifth is attention. Attention is deluded movement. Originally, our ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), the mind-king, functions well: it neither clings nor discriminates. Yet attention causes it suffering. Because of attention, the deluded mind moves ceaselessly: “Look! What is coming? Do not block me—how beautiful!” This attention is constantly moving and is everywhere.

Even after a person dies, it follows them through life after life in the six realms of rebirth; therefore, it is called a universal mental factor. “Universal” means that it is

present everywhere. Without attention, the mind does not move and does not cling. Therefore, the condition of attention is necessary.

The sixth is discrimination. Discrimination is even worse than attention: it makes us distinguish beauty from ugliness and gives rise to minds of love and hatred, grasping and rejection.

The seventh is defilement and purity. Defiled dharmas are worldly dharmas, full of afflictions. Pure dharmas are supramundane dharmas—that is, the cultivation of the Buddhadharma, which purifies body and mind. Since there are only defiled dharmas or pure dharmas, the condition of defilement and purity is necessarily present.

The eighth is seeds. Seeds are thoughts stored in the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). For example, as soon as we awaken in the morning, we plan what we are going to do; in this way, we store seeds in the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). For example, if from this moment we begin wholeheartedly to recite the Buddha's name, we cultivate the seed of Buddha in the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). When that seed matures, we can be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Utmost Bliss. Only with seeds can aspirations arise; therefore, the condition of seeds is necessary.

The ninth is the root, namely the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Without this root, there would be nowhere to store seeds. Without seeds, the other consciousnesses could not arise. Therefore, the root condition is necessary.

In summary, for the eye to function, all nine of these conditions must be present. Viewed from another angle, conditions are further divided into four major categories:

The first is the causal condition. This refers to the interaction of the sense faculties and their objects.

The second is the object condition. After the sense faculties and their objects come into contact, the faculty apprehends its object—that is, it accepts or rejects an object according to its own thoughts.

The third is the dominant condition. These are the necessary conditions required for a sense faculty to apprehend its object, such as the emptiness and luminosity discussed above.

The fourth is the immediately preceding condition, namely attention. This is fundamental to the sense faculties' apprehension of their objects. Our thoughts move without ceasing, with no interval between one thought and the next, impelling our five faculties to cling tightly to sense objects. The Dharma gates of Buddha-recitation and Chan investigation, as well as the Esoteric Buddhist Dharma gate of

empowerment through the three mysteries of body, speech, and mind, all hold and direct this attention. They can calm our thoughts so that they no longer move about chaotically, making it easier to enter the Way.

If even one of these four conditions is lacking, vision cannot function. Once we have some understanding of conditions, the following passage of the sūtra becomes easier to understand.

Ānanda said: “World-Honored One, the middle that I speak of is not the middle you speak of. I mean that when our eyes come into contact with visual objects—for example, when we see this teacup—the eyes produce various discriminations and recognize what kind of teacup it is. Yet the teacup itself has no sensation.”

“Thus, through the interaction of the eye and visual objects, my mind arises. This is eye consciousness. Therefore, by ‘the middle,’ I mean the space between the sense faculty and its object, not a location in the body or somewhere else.” Here Ānanda uses the eye faculty as an example to explain his point. In fact, the eye faculty here represents our six sense faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—not the eyes alone.

“The Buddha said: ‘If your mind is between the sense faculty and its object, does the substance of this mind partake of both, or does it not partake of both? If it partakes of both, then objects become confused. Objects are not aware, while the substance is aware; they stand opposed as two enemies. How, then, can this be called the middle? If it cannot partake of both, then it is neither aware nor unaware, and thus has no essential nature. What appearance, then, could the middle have? Therefore, you should know that there can be no such thing as its being in the middle.’”

The Buddha said: “If your mind is in the middle where the sense faculty and its object meet, how is the substance of this mind to be defined? Does its appearance and function possess the characteristics of both the faculty and the object? If its appearance and function possess both characteristics, the faculty is aware and belongs to the sentient, whereas the object is unaware and belongs to the insentient. The two are opposed to each other.”

How could they be combined into a single entity? If one insists on mixing them together, is this entity aware or unaware? It would then become confused. Therefore, the two cannot be combined into a single entity.

If its appearance and function do not possess the characteristics of both the faculty and the object, then this mind possesses neither the faculty’s characteristic of awareness nor the object’s characteristic of unawareness. What, then, are the characteristics of this mind? Its appearance and function cannot be defined; without appearance and function, there is no essential nature. Therefore, you should know

that it is incorrect to say that the mind is in the middle where the sense faculty and its object meet."

At this point, the sixth inquiry into the location of the mind has been completed. Some people believe that this inquiry should be placed before the fifth inquiry into the location of the mind. They reason that in the fifth inquiry, the Buddha had already said that it is not inside, not outside, and not in the middle; since this discussion again says that it is not in the middle, they consider the arrangement inappropriate.

They believe it would be better to place this inquiry before the fifth. In fact, they misunderstand. In the fifth inquiry, the Buddha's statement that it is not inside, outside, or in the middle means that it is not merely inside, merely outside, or merely in the middle; it does not deny that it may be inside, outside, or in the middle. In fact, this mind is everywhere, but it is not only inside, only outside, or only in the middle. Thus, the fifth inquiry does not deny its being in the middle. Everyone should take careful note of this point.

Next, we shall discuss the seventh inquiry into the location of the mind:

(VII) Non-Attachment to All Things

"Ānanda said to the Buddha: 'World-Honored One, formerly I saw the Buddha, together with Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Subhūti, Pūrṇa, and Śāriputra, your four great disciples, turn the Dharma wheel. You often said that the mind-nature that is aware and discriminates is neither within, nor without, nor in between; it is nowhere at all. To be unattached to everything is called the mind. If I am unattached, then is that called the mind?'"

The sixth investigation of the mind was something Ānanda heard when the Buddha was discussing ultimate reality with the great bodhisattvas. This investigation, however, was something Ānanda heard when the Buddha and the great arhats were turning the Dharma wheel together. "Turning the Dharma wheel together" means that they jointly proclaimed the Buddha's teachings and spread the Buddhadharma.

These great arhats principally refer to the Buddha's four great disciples: Mahāmaudgalyāyana, foremost in spiritual powers; Subhūti, foremost in understanding emptiness; Śāriputra, foremost in wisdom; and Pūrṇa, foremost in explaining the sūtras. These great disciples were all extraordinary: they could expound the sūtras and teach the Dharma, benefiting sentient beings. Ānanda heard these great arhats say, "To be unattached to everything is called the mind."

To be unattached to everything means not to crave after any form or appearance; this is the manifestation of the true mind. But Ānanda did not understand these words, and he fell into biased emptiness. Being unattached to everything does not mean that nothing exists or that nothing is done. Rather, it is as the Diamond Sūtra says: “Give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.”

“Give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere” means that, so long as it is for the benefit of sentient beings, we should do whatever needs to be done. Learning Buddhism does not mean doing nothing. Yet when acting, we should accord with causes and conditions and not cling to phenomenal appearances, as though nothing had been done.

Therefore Śākyamuni Buddha said, “For forty-nine years I have taught the Dharma without ever uttering a single word.” Did Śākyamuni Buddha not teach the Dharma? In fact, everyone knows that the Buddha taught the Tripiṭaka and the twelve divisions of the teachings. Why, then, did he say that he had not uttered a single word? This is precisely “giving rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.” This mind refers to the inexhaustible wondrous functioning of the true mind. Thus, to understand what it means to be “unattached to everything,” one must understand what the true mind is.

Before Chan Master Deshan Xuanjian realized his true nature, he studied the Diamond Sūtra and wrote a commentary entitled Qinglong Commentary and Notes. At that time, the Chan school in the south advocated “seeing one’s true nature and becoming a Buddha.” But according to his understanding, becoming a Buddha required three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas, so he considered this demonic talk.

He therefore carried a load of Qinglong Commentary and Notes southward to refute the Chan school’s demonic followers. When he reached Lizhou, he saw an old woman by the roadside selling fried rice cakes. These were a food of that time, resembling today’s glutinous-rice dumplings. Hungry from walking, he set down his load and wished to buy some cakes for a snack.

The old woman asked what he was carrying. He replied that it was Qinglong Commentary and Notes, an explanation of the Diamond Sūtra. The old woman said, “I have a question. If you can answer it, I will give you some rice cakes for your snack; if you cannot, please go elsewhere to buy them.” Deshan said, “Very well. Ask.”

The old woman said, “The Diamond Sūtra says: ‘The past mind is unobtainable, the present mind is unobtainable, and the future mind is unobtainable.’ Which mind, venerable sir, do you wish to refresh?” Deshan was skilled at expounding the Diamond Sūtra and had believed himself thoroughly conversant with its profound meaning, thinking no question could stump him. Yet he was confounded by this old woman’s question.

He merely stared blankly, unable to reply. The old woman then directed him to visit Chan Master Longtan Chongxin nearby, and he later awakened. In fact, the Diamond Sūtra explains this very clearly. When the old woman asked him, “Which mind do you wish to refresh?” she was in fact asking about the mind that “gives rise to itself without abiding anywhere.”

Here is another example. An old woman lived next door to a monk who recited sūtras all day. Every day she heard him say, “Unobtainable, unobtainable . . .”

She began to wonder, “What is unobtainable?” She heard it today and tomorrow, until the conditions for awakening matured. While making clothes, she thrust a needle through and pulled the thread—snap! “Oh! Unobtainable!” She understood. The monk reciting the sūtras had not yet understood, but this old woman already knew.

At every place and at every time, the true mind is manifest. It is not within, without, or in between; it is everywhere, present in every place. Thus, “to be unattached to everything is called the mind” does not mean that there is no mind; it means that the true mind is manifest everywhere. But Ānanda did not understand this at the time. Although he spoke the same words, their meaning was entirely different.

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “Formerly, when you discussed the Buddhadharma with your four great disciples—Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Subhūti, Pūrṇa, Śāriputra, and others—you often said that the mind-nature capable of awareness and discrimination is neither within, nor without, nor in between; it is nowhere at all. To be unattached to everything is called the mind.”

“Now that I am unattached, is this called the mind?” After these several investigations of the mind, Ānanda had become hesitant. He did not understand the true meaning of “being unattached to everything.” In fact, he had fallen into biased emptiness: he understood “being unattached to everything” as meaning that nothing whatsoever exists.

“The Buddha said to Ānanda: ‘You say that the mind-nature capable of awareness and discrimination is nowhere at all. The empty space of the world, and all things that fly, swim, or move on land, are called “everything.” That to which you are unattached—is it existent or nonexistent? If nonexistent, it is like hair on a turtle or horns on a rabbit. How could there be non-attachment? If there is something to which one is unattached, it cannot be called nonexistent. If there is no appearance, then there is nothing; if it is not nonexistent, then there is appearance. If appearance exists, then it exists. How, then, can there be non-attachment? Therefore, you should know that saying “to be unattached to everything is called the aware and knowing mind” is untenable.’”

The Buddha asked Ānanda: You say that the mind-nature capable of awareness and discrimination is nowhere at all. Of all the things in the world that fly through the air, swim in the water, or move on land, to which you are unattached—are there things to which you are unattached, or are there fundamentally no things at all? If there are fundamentally no things, it is like hair on a turtle or horns on a rabbit.

(For turtles have no hair, and rabbits have no horns.) That would amount to inert emptiness. What, then, could be called non-attachment? If there was never anything in the first place, how could one become attached to it? If there is no attachment, then still less can there be non-attachment. Thus, where there is nothing, one cannot speak of non-attachment.

If there are things and yet one is unattached, then, since things already exist, one cannot say that there is nothing. No appearance means that there is nothing; where there are things, there must be appearances. Since things exist, appearances exist. If appearances exist, how can one speak of non-attachment? Therefore, your claim that being unattached to everything is the aware and knowing mind is incorrect.

Here we should understand that the Buddha was testing Ānanda and prompting everyone to turn the light inward. Things do indeed exist, but such existence is like flowers in empty space and the moon reflected in water: they have no self-nature and thus are as if existent yet nonexistent. Therefore, the Buddha's "existence" differs from the existence of which Ānanda speaks.

Ānanda's existence is the existence ordinarily understood by people, opposed to emptiness; and the emptiness of which he speaks is emptiness opposed to existence. This is inert emptiness. If "being unattached to everything" truly meant what Ānanda thought it meant—namely, inert emptiness—we would fall into vague nihilism. Nothing would need to be done. The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss would not exist, nor would the Buddha. What Dharma would there be to practice, and what Buddha would there be to become?

The great Greek philosopher Socrates was like this: the emptiness of which he spoke was inert emptiness. So he threw away all his possessions and lived in a roadside drain, though he kept a cup for drinking water. One day he saw a child drinking water cupped in both hands. He laughed aloud and said, "Oh! So even the cup is superfluous."

Bang! He threw away the cup as well. This may sound admirable—abandoning everything—but the emptiness taught by the Buddha is not such emptiness. The Buddha tells us that the intrinsic nature of all things is empty; this does not mean that all things have no appearances. On the contrary, these appearances are precisely the wondrous functioning of suchness and Buddha-nature. Therefore,

cultivation should not fall into inert emptiness. One should still conscientiously do what needs to be done, without attachment.

With this, the discussion of the seven investigations of the mind is complete. Some teachers of the doctrinal schools dispute this point. Some say that these seven investigations ask where the mind is located, and thus investigate its location rather than asking what the mind is; the investigation of the mind comes later. Others say that the later portion is a supplementary addition to the seven investigations of the mind.

In fact, investigating location is precisely for the sake of investigating the mind. For example, if we cannot find a precious jewel, yet we truly possess it, it must have been placed somewhere—perhaps in a closet or a cabinet; there must be some place. Once we find where it was placed, we find the jewel. Thus, investigating location is for the sake of investigating the mind. There is no need to dispute this further.

Among the seven investigations of the mind, the first six refute existence, while the last refutes emptiness. Because existence has countless distinctions, it requires six refutations; but emptiness is all alike, so one refutation suffices. Now that both existence and emptiness have been thoroughly refuted, it is time to add the finishing touch. Ānanda has reached a dead end, and deluded thoughts are no longer active. At this very moment, the true mind is present before him. He need only turn the light inward and seize it at once; then he can return home by the very road on which he stands.

III. Two Fundamentals

Now let us look at the scripture:

“At that time Ānanda, amid the great assembly, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms reverently, and addressed the Buddha: ‘I am the Tathāgata’s youngest brother. Having received the Buddha’s compassionate love, although I have now left home, I still rely on indulgent affection. Thus I have become widely learned but have not attained the undefiled. I was unable to subdue the Śābhīra spell and was turned by it, sinking into the house of lust. This was because I did not know the ultimate reality to which it leads. I only pray that the World-Honored One, in great compassion and pity, will reveal to us the path of śamatha, so that the icchantikas may destroy their perverse views.’ Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground. The entire assembly, yearning eagerly and waiting with upturned faces, reverently wished to hear the teaching.”

At this time Ānanda was deeply ashamed. He rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms—an Indian gesture of respect—and said to the Buddha: “I am your youngest brother. Through your compassionate love, although I have now left home, I have not been subjected to strict discipline. I have often merely listened to teachings, without practicing in a down-to-earth manner,”

“and therefore I was taken in by the Śābhīra spell. Śābhīra was a golden-haired man, one of the non-Buddhist practitioners, who could know events within eighty thousand kalpas. He specialized in an evil spell, the Brahmā spell. Thus I entered the room of the woman Mātaṅgī and nearly violated the Buddha’s precepts. All this happened because I did not understand the true meaning of the Buddhadharma.”

“Now I beg you, revered elder, in your compassion to pity us who lack wisdom and to reveal to us the wondrous path of śamatha. May those lacking faith—icchantikas are those who lack faith and have not planted wholesome roots before the Buddha—be able to destroy their wrong views. Mìlìchē refers to wrong views, such as the erroneous views that deny cause and effect or cling to a barren emptiness.” Having finished speaking, Ānanda prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground. The assembly present stood waiting with upturned faces, thirsting to hear the Buddha’s instruction.

Originally, Ānanda asked three questions together: what are wondrous śamatha, samāpatti, and dhyāna? But now he asks them separately, requesting that the Buddha explain them one by one. First, he asks the Buddha to explain the wondrous path of śamatha. Wondrous śamatha means cessation and meditative stability: stopping deluded thoughts and attaining right samādhi.

“Path” means method. Through this method one can realize the Great Buddha’s Crown and the Tathāgata’s secret cause; this is samāpatti. The central question here remains that one must first understand what samāpatti is.

From the very beginning, when the Buddha “extended his golden arm and touched Ānanda’s crown,” he told Ānanda: “I have a samāpatti called the King Śūraṅgama of the Great Buddha’s Crown, complete with the myriad practices—the wondrous, solemn path by which the Tathāgatas of the ten directions transcend through a single gate.” Yet up to this point, the Buddha has not clearly told us what samāpatti is.

Why? Because samāpatti is what we call the true suchness of Buddha-nature. In itself, it cannot be spoken of or expressed in words. Whatever is spoken is not it; such words merely circle around the point. Thus it is said: “The path of words is cut off, and the way of mental activity is extinguished”; “To call it a thing is already to miss.”

The Buddha cannot state it directly, but he has continually been dispelling Ānanda's false calculations. When deluded thoughts have been utterly eliminated, the true mind, samāpatti, is precisely what reveals itself. It is like this: I am inside a door and you are outside. Once the door opens, you see the person. Thus, the very moment the door opens is the moment one sees the person; it is not that, after the door has opened, one must slowly search for the person.

In the Chan school this is called, "When the skin has completely fallen away, only the one reality remains." The skin refers to our deluded thoughts and attachments. When these deluded thoughts and attachments are destroyed, the true mind is precisely what appears. The Buddha's continual breaking of Ānanda's false calculations and deluded thoughts was intended to reveal samāpatti—our true mind. Unfortunately, Ānanda could not comprehend this and still asked the Buddha to continue his explanation.

The Chan school proceeds in the same way when instructing students, employing many skillful means. Broadly speaking, however, these may be divided into two kinds. One is relatively direct instruction. For example, Bodhidharma gave direct instruction; this is called direct pointing. The other takes many turns without explaining directly; this is called indirect pointing, as in investigating a huatou.

Investigating a huatou was used by Chan Master Dahui Gao of the Song dynasty when he saw that students' faculties had become dull and that they were given to empty grandiosity. He used huatou investigation to guide them so that their deluded thoughts would be utterly cut off. When students' deluded thoughts are utterly cut off, the true reality is precisely what reveals itself.

At present, there is some debate over these two methods. Some say that when students come to study Chan, they should be instructed directly, while others believe this is inappropriate. On the one hand, if students are instructed directly, what they receive is something heard from another rather than something attained through their own painstaking effort, so they do not cherish it at all.

On the other hand, upon hearing it, they think, "So it is merely this ordinary, this plain; there is nothing much to it." They are like an unfilial child who inherits the ancestral estate but does not know the hardships by which it was acquired, squanders it recklessly, and becomes destitute. After direct instruction, students must carefully safeguard realization and completely eliminate the habitual tendencies accumulated through many lives and kalpas.

This is what the ancients called "the practice of herding the ox." Only in this way can one gain genuine benefit; otherwise, direct instruction loses its meaning. Therefore, some advocate indirect pointing: having people investigate a huatou and make a

great circuit, until mental activity reaches its end and the reality of true suchness reveals itself.

However, investigating a huatou requires a teacher's skillful guidance. For example, when a student asks the teacher, "What is the Buddha?" the teacher may tell the student, "Go investigate it yourself." Some teachers say, "Your investigation is yours, and mine is mine."

If students must rely entirely on their own investigation, and the teacher gives neither instruction nor guidance, then what is the teacher for? Moreover, huatou investigation must be prescribed according to the condition: one must see what causes and conditions the student has, what their faculties are like, and what kind of huatou can arouse their sense of doubt.

But now the approach is uniform: whoever it may be, everyone investigates, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name?" They investigate for decades without any result. For this reason, some also advocate restoring the original direct instruction.

For example, when a student asks, "What is the Buddha?" the teacher may say, "You yourself are it!" Or he may say, "Plainly before your very face—if this is not Buddha, what is?" This is direct instruction.

Which method to use should be determined by the visitor's faculties. Some hear this and think, "Ah? This is the Buddha? Surely not!" Others, being a little cleverer, hear "This is the Buddha," and think, "It is so simple, nothing remarkable, nothing remarkable." They cast it aside as though they had heard nothing; this will not do.

Therefore, in guiding students, one should not set up a rigid framework requiring that things be done in one fixed way. Rather, one should adopt different methods of guidance according to the student's faculties. Those who have an affinity with the Chan school may receive direct instruction or investigate a huatou. Those who have an affinity with the Pure Land school should be taught Buddha-recitation. Those who have an affinity with Esoteric Buddhism should be taught its methods of practice. Buddhadharma must be determined entirely according to students' faculties and causes and conditions; it cannot be fixed rigidly. Once it is fixed rigidly, it is no longer Buddhadharma!

"At that time, the World-Honored One emitted various lights from his face. Their radiance blazed like hundreds of thousands of suns, illuminating Buddha worlds everywhere and causing the six kinds of shaking. Thus, the lands of the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, appeared all at once. By the Buddha's majestic spiritual power, all these worlds merged into one world. In those worlds, all the great bodhisattvas remained in their own lands, joined their palms, and reverently listened."

At that time, the Buddha emitted lights of various colors from his face—that is, from the part of the forehead above the eyebrows. As we explained earlier, the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), the mind-king, is enveloped by an aureole of five-colored light. Ordinarily, because deluded thoughts arise in confusion, the radiance of intrinsic nature is obscured. Once one becomes purified, light is emitted.

Do not suppose that only Buddhas possess light. In fact, every one of us fully possesses this light, and it is exactly the same as the light of Amitābha Buddha and Śākyamuni Buddha. We know that Amitābha means "Infinite Light, Infinite Life." Infinite Light describes a light that is exceedingly powerful and dazzling.

The light emitted by Śākyamuni Buddha at that time was like hundreds of thousands of millions of suns. It illuminated the worlds of the ten directions and caused each world to undergo the six kinds of shaking: movement, surging, rising, trembling, roaring, and striking.

It caused lands as numerous as motes of dust to appear in an instant and, under the Buddha's majestic power, to merge into one realm: the One True Dharma Realm. The great bodhisattvas in these worlds did not need to go before Śākyamuni Buddha. Remaining in their own lands, they could reverently listen to Śākyamuni Buddha teach the Dharma.

Why is it said that the worlds of the ten directions all become one realm? And what does this "one" refer to? This "one" is our true suchness, Buddha-nature. When we realize this level, we know that the Buddha-nature of all things is one body: without distinction, distance, closeness, or estrangement. Therefore, the bodhisattvas in every land can remain in their own countries and still hear Śākyamuni Buddha's Dharma words, unrestricted by distance. This is that the myriad dharmas return to the One. But where does the One return?

Here, let us tell a modern Chan koan. Many emperors of the Qing dynasty understood Buddhadharma. The Shunzhi Emperor left home, the Kangxi Emperor was called the Old Buddha, and the Yongzheng Emperor was an emperor awakened in the Chan school.

The Qianlong Emperor also understood Buddhadharma. Whenever he traveled south, he wished to visit monasteries. Thus all the monasteries decorated with lanterns and colored banners, erected high platforms to expound the Dharma, and prepared to welcome the imperial procession. Only Tianning Monastery in Changzhou was quiet. The Dharma-seat holder at Tianning Monastery at that time was the old monk Yankai. He said, "Today the imperial procession has arrived. Here we shall welcome it by sitting incense."

Sitting incense means that everyone in the Chan hall sits in meditation holding incense, while a young novice is appointed to greet visitors at the gate. When the Qianlong Emperor arrived at Tianning Monastery, the monastery was completely dark, and only a young novice came forward to receive him.

The young novice was of rather humble status, so the Qianlong Emperor was somewhat displeased. He asked, “Where is your abbot?” The novice replied, “Your Majesty, our abbot and the entire assembly are sitting in meditation in the Chan hall, awaiting Your Majesty’s arrival.” This made the Qianlong Emperor even more displeased.

The Qianlong Emperor knew well the rules of the Chan hall: monks engaged in seated meditation there must not be disturbed, for doing so would damage their wisdom-life. He therefore said, “In that case, I shall go to the main hall and offer incense.” The Qianlong Emperor then offered three sticks of incense in the main hall, and the novice struck the bell three times.

After offering the incense, the novice served tea, and the Qianlong Emperor sat waiting to one side. After a while, the monks still had not emerged. The novice said, “Their meditation period is not yet over. Please wait a little longer.” After some more time had passed and they still did not come out, the Qianlong Emperor angrily departed.

After returning to Beijing, the Qianlong Emperor told his ministers about the incident. They all said, “Ah! He truly is a monk of the Way. The other monks merely flatter you. We should invite him to the capital to serve as Imperial Preceptor.” The Qianlong Emperor therefore issued an imperial edict inviting Monk Yankai to become Imperial Preceptor.

As soon as Monk Yankai received the imperial edict, he thought, “Oh no—this is terrible! I did not go out to receive the imperial carriage precisely because I wished to free myself from this affliction. Yet now the emperor has made me Imperial Preceptor, and the trouble will be even greater. Very well, I shall leave—but first I must find a way.”

He looked about and saw a monk responsible for cooking. This monk was dark-skinned and burly, and his name was Chuanhai. He went up to Chuanhai and asked, “Is the rice cooked?” Chuanhai replied, “It was cooked long ago.”

Monk Yankai asked, “Then tell me: what is it for the myriad dharmas to return to the One?” Chuanhai drew the fire shovel from the stove and said, “There!” Monk Yankai then asked, “And where does the One return?” Chuanhai thrust the fire shovel back into the stove and said, “There!” Monk Yankai said, “Good, good! I have found my way. I can leave now.”

Monk Yankai then gathered the assembly and said, “Because the emperor has appointed me Imperial Preceptor, I am truly unqualified for the position”—he was being modest—“so I am leaving. I have found an abbot for you.”

He had the novice summon Chuanhai. Everyone burst into laughter, saying, “This monk is so rough and dark; he is nothing but a crude fellow. How can he be abbot?” While they were joking, Monk Yankai took advantage of the moment and draped his kāṣāya over Chuanhai’s body; then he himself departed. This is “The myriad dharmas return to the One; where does the One return?” Do you understand its subtle meaning?

On one occasion, a follower of a non-Buddhist path came to question the Buddha. He said, “I do not ask about speech with words, nor do I ask about speech without words.” For ordinary people, it is either being or nonbeing, or nonbeing or being—there are only these two answers. But if he asks neither whether there is speech nor whether there is no speech, how can one teach the Dharma? Then “the World-Honored One remained silent for a long time.”

That is, Śākyamuni Buddha remained silent for a long time. The outsider then said, “World-Honored One, in your great compassion, you have dispelled the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter.” He meant, “I am deeply grateful for your compassion. You have cleared away the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to see my true nature.” Having said this, he prostrated himself and left.

But Ānanda was puzzled and asked the Buddha, “Why did he bow to you? What did he awaken to?” The Buddha said, “Like a fine horse in the world, it moves upon seeing the shadow of the whip.” That is, a good horse does not need to be struck before it runs; as soon as it sees the whip’s shadow flicker, it runs. Thus, “the World-Honored One remained silent for a long time” was not an absence of everything; it expressed everything.

On another occasion, people were discussing what the Dharma gate of nonduality is. Each person offered an opinion, and many different views were expressed. At last it was the layman Vimalakīrti’s turn to speak. Vimalakīrti remained silently without words—just so! This is “The myriad dharmas return to the One.” Where does the One return? Right here. Yet those who merely put on an act do not count; one must truly awaken and realize suchness and Buddha-nature.

For example, Chan Master Wenxi once went to Mount Wutai to pay homage to Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva. When he arrived, the sun had set and darkness had fallen. There was no village ahead and no inn behind, and he could not see the road up the mountain. Suddenly, he saw a temple ahead. He encountered an old man leading an ox, who invited the master into the temple. The old man called, “Junti!” and a boy answered and came out to receive him.

The old man released the ox and led the master into the hall. The entire hall shone with a golden radiance. The old man sat on a raised seat, pointed to an embroidered cushion, and told him to sit. In fact, this was a manifestation of Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva. Mañjuśrī asked Wenxi, "You have come from the south. How many members are there in the south?" At that time, the south was a mixed and confused place, with many schools and lineages.

Wenxi in turn asked Mañjuśrī, "How many members are there here?" Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva replied, "Here there are 'three before three, three after three.'" Wenxi was bewildered when he heard this and began to wonder what "three before three, three after three" meant. He maintained this sense of doubt for more than three years, until he suddenly awakened.

Why? There are three in front and three behind; three times three makes nine. Nine upon nine is an inexhaustible number, yet when nine upon nine returns to its source, it is still one whole. Thus, the innumerable lands, when restored to their source, are still one realm; and the innumerable Buddhas and bodhisattvas, however one speaks of them, are all one whole.

Therefore, great bodhisattvas need not travel from the lands where they dwell to stand before Śākyamuni Buddha. Remaining in their own lands, they can hear Śākyamuni Buddha teach the Dharma. In fact, this is not possible only for great bodhisattvas. So long as we turn the light inward and do not let the mind race outward, every person can do it.

The same applies to hearing the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. We should not rely only on superficial explanations of its words. We must return to our own original mind-ground and turn the light inward; then we can understand the Buddha's true meaning. When the Buddha teaches the Dharma, teaching through verbal expression is not the only form of teaching. This form is the teaching of the nirmāṇakāya (manifestation body).

For example, there is teaching the Dharma through fragrant rice. No words are needed: one simply gives people some rice—fragrant rice—to eat, and they understand the Buddhadharma. There is also the previously discussed "the World-Honored One remained silent for a long time." This too is a form of teaching the Dharma, the teaching of the dharmakāya (Dharma body).

At the beginning of this passage of the sūtra, the Buddha's emitting various lights from his face was also a teaching of the Dharma; this was the teaching of the sambhogakāya (reward body). The Buddha has the dharmakāya, sambhogakāya, and nirmāṇakāya, and all can teach the Dharma. The dharmakāya teaches neither truth nor falsity, for the dharmakāya is formless and has nothing to say; it simply is.

The sambhogakāya teaches truth but not falsity, for it is the body of wisdom, the light-body. It does not teach with its mouth; rather, it emits light, and people understand. The nirmāṇakāya teaches falsity but not truth. Why? Because the nirmāṇakāya teaches the Dharma with its mouth. Whenever there is speech, there is no ultimate meaning. Thus, teaching with the mouth, however much one says, can only make indirect suggestions and use clouds to set off the moon. Originally, the moon cannot be made manifest; but when clouds set it off, the moon becomes apparent. The nirmāṇakāya's teaching cannot, in fact, reach the point of ultimate reality.

Ānanda still did not understand the Buddha's intention. He did not know that the Buddha was now demolishing his deluded conceptions in order to reveal the true mind, to tell him what samādhi is. Thus Ānanda could only follow the Buddha's tongue faculty.

Ānanda alone was not so deluded. In fact, all sentient beings are like this: knowing only how to chase after the sense objects before them, allowing circumstances to give rise to thoughts, discriminating and choosing or rejecting, and ceaselessly creating karma.

People everywhere let the deluded mind take charge. Once that deluded mind is broken through, they instead feel that they have fallen into emptiness. This is like materialism's claim that mind is a reflection of the material world in the human brain; hence matter is primary and determines everything. In this way, once there are no external things, there is no mind, and they no longer know what to do.

This is because they do not know that it is merely the deluded mind causing mischief. The deluded mind is the sixth consciousness, the mind previously referred to in the phrase, "When dharmas arise, all kinds of thoughts arise."

When the Buddha breaks through our deluded mind, we should turn the light inward. In this way, we can realize samādhi. This is the wondrous mind of nirvāṇa; it is the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye. Here the Buddha borrows Ānanda's words to proclaim to the whole assembly the wondrous meaning of the Buddhadharma, enabling us to turn the light inward and realize our true nature.

Thus, the Buddha emitted light and caused six kinds of tremors. Yet only those of the highest capacities can understand the dharmakāya's and sambhogakāya's teaching of the Dharma; those of middling and lesser capacities are utterly bewildered. Therefore Ānanda and the assembly still had to wait for the Buddha to speak and continue his instruction.

Now let us look at the sūtra passage:

“The Buddha said to Ānanda: From beginningless time, all sentient beings have been subject to various inverted delusions. Their karmic seeds arise naturally, clustered like akṣa seeds. Practitioners cannot attain unsurpassed bodhi; they may instead become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas, or follow non-Buddhist paths, or become heavenly demon kings and the demon’s retinues. All this is because they do not know the two fundamental roots and cultivate in confusion. It is like boiling sand in the hope of making a fine meal: even after dust-mote kalpas, one will never succeed.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: From beginningless time, ignorance and intrinsic nature have existed simultaneously; this is called co-arisen ignorance. It is not that our Buddha-nature existed first and that ignorance arose only later. It is like the two horns of an ox: they exist together from birth, rather than growing one after the other. “Beginningless” means that there was no beginning; it has always been so.

Since beginningless time, everyone has possessed the capacity for awakening. Because of ignorance, one thought mistakenly takes illumination as real, and in confused unawareness pursues and grasps at sense objects. Thus arise such mental states as greed, anger, and ignorance; one creates karma and undergoes karmic retribution. This is what is meant by “karmic seeds arise naturally.” For once we become attached to appearances, impressions are formed. These impressions are imprinted and stored in the eighth consciousness; these are called seeds.

When the causes and conditions mature, these seeds sprout and naturally bring forth karmic results, like an “akṣa cluster.” The akṣa is a kind of tree found in India. It is also called the “string-of-beads tree,” because its fruits resemble beads strung together in clusters of three.

Because of ignorance, doubts arise. Taking the objects of the senses to be real, people then create karma; having created karma, they undergo retribution, and thus experience all kinds of suffering. The arising of delusion, the creation of karma, and the undergoing of suffering are linked together like the fruits of the akṣa cluster. For this reason, many people seek the path of liberation; these are “practitioners.”

There are many practitioners. For example, among the various religions of our time are Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Daoism, and so on, and their methods of practice differ. Yet most religions require people to do good deeds. By cultivating goodness, one may ascend to heaven and become free from suffering and attain happiness. This is the law of cause and effect.

But when the blessed retribution of heaven has been exhausted, one must still fall again. Thus, this method is not ultimate and cannot lead to unsurpassed bodhi. “Unsurpassed” means supreme: nothing is higher than it. Bodhi is what the Heart

Sūtra calls “anuttara-samyak-saṃbodhi”—unsurpassed, complete, perfect awakening—namely, ultimate nirvāṇa.

Likewise, many Buddhist practitioners cannot realize unsurpassed bodhi. Instead, they become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas, or even followers of non-Buddhist paths, demon kings, and members of demonic retinues. Why is this so? It is because they do not know the “two roots.” These “two roots” are also intended to guide Ānanda so that he may attain samādhi.

This point is explained in the next passage of the sūtra. Therefore, practitioners must first recognize the Great Buddha’s Crown, the Tathāgata’s secret cause; otherwise, theirs is blind cultivation and blind practice—“confused cultivation.” To practice in this way is like trying to cook rice with sand and stones. Not only will it fail after a day or two; even after great kalpas as numerous as dust motes, one still cannot attain realization.

Most sentient beings do not know how to practice; they create karma and undergo retribution because of ignorance. Many others know that they should practice, yet do not know how to do so and therefore still cannot realize unsurpassed bodhi. This, too, is due to ignorance. This ignorance has followed us since beginningless time. To realize unsurpassed bodhi, we must thoroughly break through ignorance.

Someone may ask, “If, after practicing, we eradicate ignorance and realize unsurpassed bodhi, could ignorance arise again? If it did, would we not fall again?” This is impossible. Why? Because this ignorance does not arise after your awakening. Rather, since beginningless time, you have never fundamentally awakened through it.

Thus, it has existed together with your dharmatā and is called co-arisen ignorance. Once ignorance has been thoroughly broken through, it no longer exists. But this does not mean that, the moment we first awaken and see our true nature, ignorance is entirely eradicated.

In its finer divisions, ignorance has four levels: first, delusions of view; second, delusions of thought; third, dust-like delusions; and fourth, delusions of ignorance—the most subtle co-arisen ignorance. Initial awakening breaks only the delusions of view. One must continue to temper oneself before ignorance can be thoroughly broken through. Therefore, accomplishment in practice requires persistent and unremitting effort.

Once ignorance has been thoroughly broken through, it is like gold extracted from ore: it will not turn back into sand and stones. How, then, can we break through ignorance and realize unsurpassed bodhi? We must begin from the causal stage of practice. Only when the causal ground of practice is correct can one realize the

proper fruition. If the causal ground is biased, one cannot realize the proper fruition. Therefore, the initial cause of practice is extremely important.

As we said above, some people study Buddhism and ultimately become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas, unable to realize unsurpassed bodhi. Why is this? It is because, at the causal stage, they incline toward biased emptiness. They think that there is birth and death to be ended and nirvāṇa to be realized. They do not know that birth and death and nirvāṇa themselves are like flowers in empty space and the moon reflected in water—unobtainable.

Thus, in the end they become śrāvakas or pratyekabuddhas. Becoming a śrāvaka or pratyekabuddha is still relatively good. For after śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas attain the four fruits of arhatship, they gain the supernormal power of the extinction of outflows and completely transcend segmented birth and death. At that time, seeing all the great bodhisattvas liberating sentient beings in the six realms while they themselves sit alone and unmoving, they feel ashamed.

Then they turn from the lesser to the greater and arouse the great resolve to liberate sentient beings extensively. In the course of liberating sentient beings, they extinguish the dust-like delusions and ignorance completely. Thus, even becoming an arhat is not bad. But if one becomes a follower of a non-Buddhist path, or even a demon king in the various heavens or a member of a demon's retinue, that is disastrous.

Many people become followers of non-Buddhist paths because they cannot understand the meaning of the unborn. They believe that everything arises and ceases, rather than being neither arising nor ceasing. For example, Daoism teaches that after yin and yang unite, a yang-spirit may be produced, called the "infant and maiden." Ultimately, one may cultivate oneself until one qi transforms into the Three Pure Ones—that is, until one produces three yang-spirits.

But they do not know that this is merely a mind-born body, still subject to arising and ceasing. Unless one breaks through views of arising and ceasing, one cannot realize unsurpassed bodhi. Layman Pang and his wife had a son and a daughter. All four members of the family awakened, so Layman Pang composed this verse: "A son does not marry; a daughter does not wed. The whole family sits together in a circle, speaking of the unborn."

After hearing this, a monk also spoke a verse: "With no man to marry and no woman to wed, the assembly sits gathered in a circle—why speak of birthlessness?"

"With no son to marry and no daughter to wed, the assembly sits together in a circle —why speak of the unborn?" Because a monk has no household, wife, or children, but only the assembly, why should they all sit together speaking of the unborn? Now

let us also compose a verse: “A son may marry, and a daughter may wed; children beget children and grandchildren—this is speaking of the unborn.” Lay practitioners may marry and may have children.

Those children may in turn have children; this is children begetting children and grandchildren. Children and grandchildren are precisely the unborn. Therefore, do not suppose that only nonexistence is the unborn. This view is mistaken.

So long as we do not cling to appearances, all appearances are the wondrous functioning of the Buddhadharma. Existence is equivalent to nonexistence; birth is unborn! Once suchness and Buddha-nature depart from form and appearance, they have no value whatsoever. Some followers of non-Buddhist paths do not understand this. During practice, they rigidly suppress their thoughts until they no longer move; eventually, they lose all awareness and become like earth, wood, gold, or stone.

We previously discussed formlessness and thoughtlessness. Formlessness becomes emptiness and disperses within emptiness; thoughtlessness becomes like earth, wood, gold, or stone.

Someone may say, “Earth, wood, gold, and stone are all mud and rocks, part of the insentient world; animals and humans, however, are sentient and conscious. How could they become such material things?” In fact, if practitioners take the wrong path, they truly can become like earth, wood, gold, or stone. We previously spoke of a person who sat motionless until grass grew from his head.

Everyone said, “Oh! This person’s practice is excellent!” But in fact, he was practicing dead practice—he had become dead—not practicing well at all. A person whose practice is good possesses inexhaustible wisdom. Within, the mind is open and expansive, pure and naked, free and unencumbered. In doing anything, such a person does not abide or cling, but functions with agile wonder and ease. This is great samādhi. Great samādhi has neither entering nor leaving.

Therefore, practitioners must not suppress thoughts so that none arise. When a thought comes, those who practice Buddha-recitation bring up the Buddha’s name: “Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha Buddha . . .” In this way, deluded thoughts are redirected. When Chan practitioners raise the question, “What is this?” it is like a blow directly to the head, and the thought vanishes. Therefore, practitioners must certainly recognize their original nature. When a thought arises, simply do not attend to it.

Others, because they cling to appearances, take the attainments of others as their own attainments. If they continue practicing in this way, they become demon kings. Later we shall discuss the fifty skandha demons, each of whom possesses great

spiritual powers. They, too, must undergo cultivation; they do not become demon kings easily.

Those whose practice is somewhat weaker become members of demonic retinues, subordinate to demon kings. They reach this point because their causal ground is not correct and thus cannot realize unsurpassed bodhi. On my last visit to Tiantai Temple, I met two young monks. I asked them, “Why did you leave home?” Things are not as they were in the past.

In the past, someone might have said, “Oh, my family was poor and had nothing to eat, so I had no choice but to leave home.” Or someone might have had his fortune told, and the fortune-teller might have said, “This child has an unfortunate fate and may not grow up. It would be best to send him to a temple to become a monk.” Such things no longer happen now.

So I asked them why they had left home. The two young monks could not answer. Oh, this is terrible. They had not left home for a true ideal. In their muddleheaded way, they merely follow others in going to the shrine hall, recite a few lines of “Namo Amitābha Buddha . . .,” perform the evening service, and muddle through another day. How is this any different from worldly people going to work? When will such practice ever lead to realization of the Way? Thus, Buddhism today is truly pitiful!

“What are the two? Ānanda, the first is the root of beginningless birth and death. It is the mind that grasps at conditions, which you and all sentient beings now take to be your own nature. The second is the originally pure essence of beginningless bodhi and nirvāṇa. It is the original luminosity of your consciousness-essence, which can give rise to all conditions, yet is what is lost amid those conditions. Because sentient beings have lost this original luminosity, although they act all day long, they are unaware of it and vainly enter the various destinies of rebirth.”

Ānanda had originally asked what the wondrous path of śamatha was, but the Buddha did not answer him directly. Instead, he spoke of the “two roots.” Why did he speak of this? It was because of the Buddha’s compassion.

The Buddha did not have Ānanda cultivate the Pure Land practice of Buddha-recitation, nor did he have him cultivate the Chan practice of investigating Chan or other Esoteric Buddhist methods, because all these dharma gates are roundabout paths. Here the Buddha directly instructs Ānanda. Since samādhi cannot be expressed in words, how can it be indicated? Only by dispelling delusion and revealing the true. Once deluded thoughts are eliminated, the true mind naturally reveals itself. With deep and urgent compassion, the Buddha explained to us the causes that make people fall, his purpose being to eliminate people's deluded thoughts.

The preceding passage states that people do not recognize samādhi and thus suffer pointlessly in saṃsāra because they do not know the “two roots.” Therefore, the Buddha said: What are the two roots? First, there is the root of birth and death that has existed since beginningless time.

The fundamental cause of birth and death is that our five faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—continually follow external objects—forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile objects—and ceaselessly cling to conditions. The mind produced thereby is the clinging mind, the deluded mind—namely, the sixth consciousness.

Materialism holds that the mind is a reflection of the material world: without the material world, this mind would not exist. Thus, this mind arises with circumstances and ceases with circumstances; it has no inherent substance and is called the deluded mind. Yet because we do not know the true mind, we instead take this mind to be the true mind. We discriminate, accept, and reject amid material objects; create karma and undergo retribution; and revolve endlessly through birth and death.

This is the “beginningless root of birth and death.” The fundamental reason why we have undergone uninterrupted birth and death since beginningless time is that we take this clinging mind to be our intrinsic nature. Intrinsic nature is originally neither arising nor ceasing, whereas the deluded mind arises and ceases; the two are different. Because we mistakenly recognize our own mind, we suffer pointlessly. Second, there is “beginningless bodhi and nirvāṇa, the originally pure essence.” Nirvāṇa means quiescent extinction. It may be divided into four kinds:

(1) Nirvāṇa of intrinsic nature: this means that all sentient beings inherently possess Buddha-nature, which neither arises nor ceases.

(2) Nirvāṇa with remainder. “With remainder” means that ignorance still remains. It refers to the nirvāṇa realized by śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas before they have eliminated attachment to dharmas.

(3) Nirvāṇa without remainder. “Without remainder” means that everything has been completely eliminated. This is the nirvāṇa realized by the Buddha.

(4) Nirvāṇa of non-abiding. Non-abiding means that there is no particular place in which to abide; everywhere is nirvāṇa. That is, within birth and death there is no birth and death; nirvāṇa is not a separate place apart from birth and death.

At the time of his nirvāṇa, Śākyamuni Buddha said to the assembly: “I have not left you; I am among you.” This is nirvāṇa of non-abiding. The Buddha is everywhere, present in every place. It is only because our minds are foul and our deluded

thoughts are inverted that we cannot see the Buddha. So long as our minds are pure, we can see the Buddha anytime and anywhere.

Yuan means “originally,” and “pure essence” means the wondrous essence that is free of defilement. Thus, “beginningless bodhi and nirvāṇa, the originally pure essence” means that we inherently possess this pure, wondrous essence, free of defilement and neither arising nor ceasing. The fundamental basis by which we are now able to know the world and give rise to mind in response to circumstances is the “essence of consciousness.”

Because it inherently possesses luminosity, it is also called “original luminosity.” This luminosity is not the light seen by our eyes. The light seen by our eyes exists in contrast to darkness and is still deluded light. The inherent luminosity of which we speak is an all-capable essence. All things arise from it.

Without it, nothing would exist. Idealists say that we can create a rich and variegated world because our minds can investigate the laws governing the development of things and use those laws for invention and creation. Without mind, there would be no such rich and variegated world.

Yet the mind spoken of by idealists is, like the mind understood by ordinary people, still the deluded mind; it is not what we call the “original luminosity of the essence of consciousness.” The “original luminosity of the essence of consciousness” is what we call the true mind. It unifies the mind and matter as understood by ordinary people, rather than separating mind from matter and then arguing over which governs the other.

In Buddhism, the true mind is unique. It governs and creates everything, including what ordinary people call matter and mind. Therefore, this true mind “can give rise to all conditions.” Yet it is not itself produced by anything; it has inherently existed since beginningless time.

Therefore, the true mind is absolute, with nothing standing in opposition to it. It cannot be an object of conditions, and is therefore called “that which conditions leave behind.” “Leave behind” means to omit or forget.

We sentient beings inherently possess such a priceless treasure, which has never departed from us for a single moment. All day long, it functions wondrously as this original luminosity of the essence of consciousness, yet no one knows it. We continually take the false for the true, create karma and undergo retribution, and revolve through the six realms. How unjust! Therefore, the Buddha said: “Because sentient beings have forgotten this fundamental luminosity, though they function through it all day long, they do not realize it and vainly enter the various realms.”

In this passage, “original luminosity” and “fundamental luminosity” differ. Fundamental luminosity refers to the essence of consciousness itself, while original luminosity refers to its wondrous functioning. “Forgetting this fundamental luminosity” means that sentient beings do not know that they themselves possess this essence of consciousness. So long as we cease the frenzied mind, that itself is bodhi.

Why does the Chan school investigate “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” It is to enable us to recognize our own “essence of consciousness.” When we investigate this huatou, the mass of doubt gathers upon the word “who”; we do not seek outwardly, but turn the light inward.

When one asks, “Who is it?” and thoughts no longer move, is there not clear, ever-present knowing? Is this not precisely the radiance of the essence of consciousness? Therefore, one must seize it and recognize it. To recognize it is enough; then one may rest completely and at ease. One may do all things without attachment, and thus be free and unrestrained.

In fact, this is the aim of every dharma gate: to bring us to cease the mind that clings to conditions. Once that mind ceases, the essence of consciousness immediately appears. But those who now recite the Buddha’s name, investigate Chan, or practice Esoteric Buddhism do not know this key point. They seek outwardly: “I want fundamental luminosity! I want fundamental luminosity!” In this way, they will never see fundamental luminosity.

For this single thought that seeks to grasp is itself the deluded mind. Therefore, to see this essence of consciousness, one must cease the mind that clings to conditions. What, then, is this true mind? Someone may say: “Can you show it to me? If I see it, I will believe it; if you do not let me see it, I will always be only half convinced and half doubtful.”

If it could be shown, Śākyamuni Buddha would long ago have demonstrated it to Ānanda and the assembly. Unfortunately, this cannot be done. For as it is said, “To call it a thing is already wrong.” No matter how one speaks of it or describes it, one cannot convey it. What, then, should be done? So long as we can cease the deluded mind, we can realize it.

If practitioners do not grasp this key point, then with every thought they practice and with every thought they create birth and death; they can never be liberated. Practitioners must understand this principle and put it into practice steadily and concretely. By ceasing all conditions, they can realize the great Way.

Now let us look at the sūtra passage:

“Ānanda, you now wish to know the path of śamatha and aspire to escape birth and death. I will now ask you again.”

“Thereupon, the Tathāgata raised his golden-hued arm, bent the fingers of his wheel-marked hand, and said to Ānanda: ‘Do you see it now?’”

“Ānanda replied: ‘I see it.’”

The Buddha was continually eliminating Ānanda’s deluded thoughts in order to enable Ānanda to see his own true mind. But Ānanda had not understood, so the Buddha continued to ask him: You now wish to know the path of śamatha and thereby escape the bitter ocean of birth and death. I will now ask you.

The Buddha then raised his arm, golden in color like refined purple-gold, and bent the fingers of his wheel-marked hand. Because the Buddha possesses the thirty-two excellent marks, his luminous arm is golden, and the joints and lines of his fingers, when spread open, resemble the spokes of a wheel; hence, “he raised his golden-hued arm and bent the fingers of his wheel-marked hand.” He asked Ānanda: “Do you see it?” Ānanda replied: “I see it.”

Ānanda answered that he saw it, but this word “see” admits of a great distinction. Originally, the secret cause of the Tathāgata of the Great Buddha-Crown is seeing nothing. If there is something seen, it is not that. In the Chan school it is said: “To see it is to be blind.” This means that if you can see it, your eyes are completely blind.

Yet within non-seeing, seeing is not precluded. Why? Because all things are manifested by the wondrously luminous true mind, and seeing is the wondrous functioning of the true mind. In the past, a Chan Master named Chenghao made a pair of short trousers and wrote upon them the names of the patriarchs of every generation. He wore them and said: “Only Mañjuśrī and Samantabhadra are somewhat better; for the time being, I shall write them on the waistband.” Everyone called him “Hao of the Cloth Trousers.”

Buddhas and patriarchs should ordinarily be deeply revered and worshipped. How could their names be made into trousers to wear? Because his mind was empty and pure, it made no difference to him.

Another monastic did not understand and imitated him. When Chenghao saw this, he rebuked him: “How dare you treat this as a game? When you vomit blood in the future, it will be too late.” In the end, that monastic vomited blood and died. Though the same act was performed, the karmic result was different.

The former, because his mind was empty and pure, was not constrained by karmic obstacles; the latter, ignorant and unenlightened, created karma and underwent retribution. Chan Master Danxia once rode on the head of a Buddha image, and

Mazu even praised him, saying, “My son Tianran!” Therefore, do not look only at outward appearances; look instead at whether a person’s inner mind is truly empty and pure.

On one occasion, Chan Master Chenghao ascended the Dharma seat to teach. He did not speak a word. After a long time, he asked the assembly: “Have you seen it?” The assembly did not know what he meant. Then an awakened lay practitioner asked in return: “Has the monk seen it?” Chan Master Chenghao replied: “You have already seen it.” Having said this, he left the seat.

Thus, this “seeing” and “not seeing” cannot be defined too rigidly. From the standpoint of essence, there is nothing seen; from the standpoint of function, there is nothing not seen. Therefore, when Ānanda said “seeing,” his answer could be considered good or not good—it depends on whether it is true seeing or deluded seeing.

The Buddha’s hand is precisely a manifestation of mind. Through the appearance of the hand, one can see the true mind. It is like using a hand to point at the moon: through the finger, one can see the moon. Such “seeing” is true seeing. But if one merely sees the appearance of the hand, that is not true seeing. Thus, the Buddha next wished to continue testing whether Ānanda truly saw.

Now let us look at the sūtra text:

“The Buddha said: ‘What do you see?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘I see the Tathāgata raise his arm and bend his fingers into a radiant fist, which shines upon my mind and eyes.’”

“The Buddha said: ‘With what do you see?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘The assembly and I all see with our eyes.’”

“The Buddha said to Ānanda: ‘You have now answered me that the Tathāgata bends his fingers into a radiant fist, which shines upon your mind and eyes. Your eyes can see it; but what do you take to be the mind that is illuminated by my fist?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘The Tathāgata is now asking where the mind is located. As I investigate, reason, and pursue it with my mind, that which is capable of reasoning is what I take to be my mind.’”

“The Buddha said: ‘Hey! Ānanda, this is not your mind.’”

The Buddha continued to ask Ānanda: What do you see?

Ānanda said: I see you raise your arm, bend your fingers, and clench your fist; it shines brightly and illuminates my mind and eyes. At this point, Ānanda gave himself away: one can see that he had fallen into attachment to appearances. The “seeing” of which he spoke was still deluded seeing, not true seeing.

The Buddha then pressed him further: What do you use to see? This question was like the Chan investigation, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?”—a blow directly to the head. It reminded him to ask: What is it that can see things?

Yet Ānanda answered: The assembly and I all see through our eyes. This was even worse. Ānanda was not merely confused himself; he dragged everyone else down with him as well. In fact, many others had already understood.

As we explained earlier, a fine horse runs upon seeing the shadow of the whip. A thousand-li horse need only see the whip’s shadow flicker, and it understands and begins to run; it does not need to be struck by the whip. If, when the Buddha asked him this question, Ānanda had turned the light inward, then—as when investigating “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?”—at the arising of the sense of doubt and a moment of awakening, both mind and objects would have vanished.

When mind and objects both vanish, it does not mean that one knows nothing at all. Rather, the mind that is capable of awareness manifests with radiant clarity. This is the wondrous path of śamatha. Unfortunately, Ānanda did not recognize it. He still sought outwardly, taking the grasping and conditioning mind as his own nature and falling into attachment to dusty appearances. Thus the Buddha instructed Ānanda at every turn, but Ānanda repeatedly missed the opportunity and could not comprehend. Yet the Buddha’s compassion was profound and urgent. Tirelessly, he treated a dead horse as if it were alive: perhaps, although Ānanda said that he saw through his eyes, inwardly he was not attached to visual seeing. That was also possible.

Therefore, the Buddha continued to ask Ānanda: You say that I bend my fingers and clench my fist, and that its light illuminates your mind and eyes.

You can see all this through your eyes, but what do you take to be your mind? Earlier, in the seven locations of examining the mind, the Buddha had already asked Ānanda this question. As everyone knows, the mind is neither inside nor outside, neither within the faculties nor in between. It is not located anywhere, nor is it vague nothingness.

Now the Buddha asked again: What do you take to be your mind? Śākyamuni Buddha was truly earnest and compassionate, hoping that when Ānanda heard this question raised again, he would turn back and see his own Original Face.

This is how genuinely awakened masters originally instructed students: step by step, they press you until there is nowhere left to retreat. If you retreat further, there is only a wall; at that moment, you can only turn around. As you turn, turning the light inward and taking a look, you see what is original.

Many teachers today lack this skill. When you ask them, they say: “Go investigate it yourselves. It is not I who am investigating. My investigation is mine, and yours is yours.” If that is truly so, what use is there in having a teacher? Thus, it would have been good if Ānanda could then have turned back.

But, alas, Ānanda still could not understand. He said: You ask what I take to be my mind. What can reason and think, what pursues the shadows of forms and colors within the eye faculty—that is what I take to be my mind. We say that the shadows left by the six faculties in their contact with the six sense objects are called the mind of conditioned shadows of the six sense objects. This is the grasping and conditioning mind; it is the deluded mind.

By this point, the Buddha had thoroughly seen the root of Ānanda’s illness. He therefore rebuked him: “Hey! Ānanda, this is not your mind.” This “Hey!” is the Chan school’s shout of rebuke, like a clap of thunder. It can suddenly halt a student’s thoughts and cause them to turn the light inward.

When thoughts cease to function, one is not a corpse, nor wood or stone, without awareness. Rather, there is clear and lucid spiritual knowing. Is not this clear spiritual knowing our own intrinsic nature? To realize the Way in this manner—how exhilarating it is! Therefore, the Buddha rebuked Ānanda and told him: This is not your mind; it is merely the mind of conditioned shadows of the six sense objects!

“Ānanda, startled, rose from his seat, joined his palms, stood up, and addressed the Buddha: ‘If this is not my mind, what should it be called?’”

“The Buddha told Ānanda: ‘These are illusory thoughts arising from the false appearances of the present sense objects, which delude your true nature. From beginningless time until this present life, you have taken a thief for your son and lost what is originally and eternally yours; therefore, you undergo the cycle of rebirth.’”

At this, Ānanda was utterly alarmed—jue means startled. He rose from his seat —“leaving his seat” means getting up from it—joined his palms, and said to the Buddha: If this is not my mind, then what is it? The Buddha told Ānanda: These are the illusory thoughts you produce in response to the sense objects before you. They delude you, causing you, from beginningless time onward, to mistake these illusory appearances for what is real and to lose your originally abiding true mind. Thus you have revolved without end in the bitter sea of birth and death.

Why does the sūtra call them “present sense objects”? Because the realm before our eyes is like dust, obscuring the light of our mind-ground. These realms all arise through the coming together of causes and conditions; they have no intrinsic nature and are therefore false and unreal. Such false realms are appearances.

“Appearance-thought” means that appearances churn about in the mind: now thinking of this, now thinking of that, now thinking of gold, now thinking of women. This is deluded thought. Because of such deluded thought, we have revolved not merely through one lifetime or one age, but through many lives and kalpas since beginningless time, within the six realms.

Yet even now, we remain attached to these deluded thoughts and refuse to let them go.

We take them to be real—is this not taking a thief for one’s son? Why call them thieves? Because deluded thoughts and attachments cause us to lose our originally abiding true mind—the “originally eternal”—and to cast away this priceless treasure that is neither arising nor ceasing. Thus we fall into the bitter sea of birth and death. Of course, it is not Ānanda alone who is like this; all sentient beings are the same.

Ānanda has long since realized the Way, but we are still struggling to emerge from the six realms. We should therefore feel deeply ashamed. Buddhism now offers many dharma gates—Pure Land, the Chan school, Esoteric Buddhism, and so forth—all intended to help us return to our original source and transcend the cycle of birth and death.

So long as we let go of everything and practice diligently, penetrating deeply into a single dharma gate, we can attain genuine benefit. Unfortunately, many teachers today divide themselves into sects and schools, believing that only their own dharma gate is good and that all others are not. This is rather narrow-minded. In fact, the practice suitable for a student must be determined according to that student’s capacities.

Teachers of old were very compassionate and could recognize the capacities of those who came to them. If someone was not suited to them, they would say: “My own practice is not good enough. I will introduce you to a better teacher,” and would direct the student where to go.

But teachers today may regard disciples as their private property and tell them: “It is good only if you take refuge in me; other teachers are no good.” If you then take refuge in another teacher, it is treated as though you had betrayed them. Such teachers take disciples for fame and profit; this is deluded thought and attachment. If teachers themselves stir up deluded minds in this way, how can their disciples directly realize their intrinsic nature? It is truly lamentable.

IV. Ten Revelations of Seeing

Ānanda addressed the Buddha: “World-Honored One, I am the Buddha’s favored younger kinsman. Because I love the Buddha, I became a monastic. With what mind do I alone make offerings to the Tathāgata, and even travel throughout lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, serving the Buddhas and good spiritual friends, arousing great courageous resolve, and undertaking every difficult practice? It is all done with this mind. Even if I were to slander the Dharma and forever lose my roots of goodness, it would also be through this mind. If this faculty of awareness is not the mind, then I have no mind and am like earth and wood; apart from this awareness, there is nothing else. How can the Tathāgata say that this is not the mind? I am truly terrified. This entire assembly is likewise filled with doubt and confusion. I pray that, in your great compassion, you will enlighten those who have not awakened.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, I am your most favored younger kinsman. Seeing the Buddha’s wondrous marks, majestic adornment, and unimpeded radiance, I gave rise to reverence and love and therefore resolved to leave home.”

Now I single-mindedly make offerings to the Tathāgata. Previously, I traveled throughout lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Unafraid of hardship or suffering, I served as an attendant to the Buddhas and good spiritual friends, aroused great courageous resolve, and undertook every difficult task. All this was done with this mind. Even slandering the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha and forever losing one’s roots of goodness would also be done with this mind.”

If you say that this is not the mind, then it would mean that I have no mind and am like grass and trees. Apart from this mind of awareness that arises in response to the objects before me, what else do I have? Why do you say that this is not the mind? I am truly terrified beyond measure! Nor am I alone in this: the members of the assembly are as alarmed and bewildered as I am. I ask you, compassionate elder, to explain this to us who have not awakened to the Way.”

In this passage, Ānanda says that he was favored by the Buddha. (“Favor” carries the sense of partiality, and such attachment is not good.) Since Ānanda was the Buddha’s youngest cousin, he spoke of himself in this way.

But the Buddha was not like this. The Buddha’s compassionate love for everyone is equal and impartial. Because conditions differ, there may appear to be degrees of intimacy or distance, but the Buddha’s heart toward sentient beings is in fact the same. Seeing the Buddha’s thirty-two wondrous marks and the gathered radiance of

purple-gold light, Ānanda resolved to leave home and make offerings to the Tathāgata.

Making offerings means providing the Buddha with the four daily necessities: clothing, food and drink, bedding, and medicine. Because Ānanda resolved to serve as an attendant to the Buddhas, over many lives and kalpas he traveled through lands as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, serving the Buddhas and good spiritual friends. Good spiritual friends must be thoroughly unobstructed in both principle and phenomena. If they can speak of something but cannot put it into practice, they are not good spiritual friends.

As the Buddha's attendant, Ānanda was unafraid of hardship and suffering. He aroused great courageous resolve and undertook "every difficult task." Such difficult tasks are explained rather comprehensively in Tibetan Esoteric Buddhism. Those who practice Esoteric Buddhism must eliminate all kinds of karmic obstacles and undergo many severe tests.

For example, some must go naked into icy rivers and endure unbearable cold, suffering the pain of the icy-river hell. Others, in unbearably hot weather, sit beside a great furnace to be scorched, suffering the pain of the hell of blazing cauldrons and copper pillars. Still others make a bed in a sheep pen or pigsty and live there in suffering.

One must be able to withstand every kind of arduous trial in practice. Of course, the purpose of studying Buddhism is not to seek suffering. Yet ascetic practices can temper one's will and eliminate habitual tendencies. This differs from non-Buddhist paths that take suffering as their goal and cling to the appearance of suffering.

In our country, people are comparatively intelligent. For those who study Buddhism, striving diligently and not retreating is itself a difficult practice. Perseverance is hard to come by. It is easy for some people to arouse resolve for a day or two, but it is not easy to do so every day. Many people find a Dharma practice today and try it, but after a couple of days say, "Oh, I can't take it, I can't take it," and decide to rest for a while. In this way, attainment is difficult. Therefore, practitioners must have perseverance and be able to arouse courageous resolve. This is a difficult practice.

Ānanda says that if he were apart from the mind of awareness that arises in response to objects before him, he would have no mind. He uses this mind in resolving to study Buddhism; even if he did not study Buddhism, or even slandered the Buddha, Dharma, and Saṅgha, he would still use this mind. Apart from this mind, what else is there? Here we come to a crucial point: the mind of which Ānanda speaks is still the deluded mind.

Apart from this deluded mind is the point where the deluded mind ceases. At that time, you are not dead, nor are you insentient like grass and trees; you remain distinctly aware. What is this? It is empty quiescence and numinous knowing. “Empty” means that all things are absent; “quiescent” means neither coming nor going, neither moving nor wavering; “numinous knowing” means clear and distinct awareness. If you do not believe it, try it for yourselves. (At this point, Master Yuanyin claps once.) “Clap—”

At this moment, when the preceding thought has ceased and the following thought has not yet arisen, is there not precisely this clear and distinct awareness? What is this clear and distinct awareness? If practitioners can recognize it directly in that very moment, they have seen their true nature. Thus, seeing one’s true nature is not difficult. There is no need to spend decades or centuries investigating Chan. At the instant of this clap, one can directly realize one’s intrinsic nature.

After seeing one’s true nature, one must engage in continuous and seamless contemplation and safeguarding realization. “Continuous” means lasting and unbroken; “seamless” means vigorous and diligent, without laxity. When my fingers are spread apart, air passes through the gaps; when they are tightly closed, there are no gaps. This is what is meant by “seamless.”

What must be safeguarded? This wondrously luminous true mind: non-abiding, ever empty and quiescent, ever numinously aware. Yet while it is always empty, quiescent, and numinously aware, one must not abide in that empty quiescence and numinous knowing. If one abides in it, there is still something to abide in, and it is still the deluded thinking mind. For one still retains a mind of empty quiescence and numinous knowing. In the Chan school, this is called “falling into sainthood.”

Falling into the position of a sage still entails birth and death. We say that one must return to nothing attainable; nothing whatsoever can be attained. Returning to nothing attainable is precisely the great attainment. This true mind does not require you to exert great effort. You need only turn the light inward, and it is present immediately. But you must have blessings. What blessings? The courage to affirm, “Ah, this is the true mind.”

To have no doubt whatsoever is the root of goodness and merit and virtue cultivated over many lives and kalpas. If you do not dare to affirm it, saying, “Oh, perhaps this is not it,” then you lack roots of goodness and merit and virtue. The same is true of rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Does not the Amitābha Sūtra say that one cannot be born in that land with few roots of goodness, merit and virtue, and favorable conditions?

Therefore, one also cannot lack merit and virtue if one wishes to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. We have spoken before of a lay practitioner for

whom the sacred realm of the Western Land had appeared at the time of death, and who was about to be reborn there. Then his beloved concubine began to weep, his mind became disturbed, and as a result he returned.

This was because the conditions had not come together. When conditions fail to come together, it is because one lacks roots of goodness and merit and virtue. Lacking these, one cannot directly take it up or dare to affirm it, and can only continue practicing the Dharma. Thus, those who recite the Buddha's name recite the Buddha's name, those who investigate Chan investigate Chan, and those who practice Esoteric Buddhism practice Esoteric Buddhism, gradually cultivating roots of goodness and merit and virtue.

There are five capacities among Buddhist practitioners. The first is the human and deva vehicle. Such people are taught to do good deeds and cultivate blessings, so that after death they may be born in heaven or at least not lose their human birth. Christianity, Catholicism, and Islam are examples of this. The second is the śrāvaka vehicle.

Such people are taught the principle of biased emptiness and realize nirvāṇa with residue. The third is the pratyekabuddha vehicle. Such people are taught the twelve links of dependent origination. They still have the capacities of the Lesser Vehicle, and it is relatively difficult to induce them to arouse the great resolve. Only after they attain the fruit of arhatship can they do so. The fourth is the bodhisattva vehicle.

Such people arouse great compassion, awaken themselves and others, and practice with courageous diligence. Rather than seeking rebirth in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, they remain in this world among sentient beings in order to liberate them. They vow not to attain Buddhahood until all sentient beings have been liberated. These are great-resolve bodhisattvas.

The fifth is the Buddha vehicle. Such people possess the capacity for perfect and sudden awakening; they need not pass through gradual methods. With a single word, everything is understood. In studying Buddhism, one must proceed according to a person's capacities and cannot force anything at all. It is like my pointing out the true mind to you now: if I were to force you to affirm it immediately, it would be like pressing a cow's head down to make it eat grass. The cow will not eat, yet you press its head into a heap of grass and mutter, "Look here, look here." That will not do. This matter is no small thing and cannot be forced.

When explaining sūtras, one must not merely interpret the words; one should elucidate their true meaning. The important and genuine meaning of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra lies in pointing out our true mind. This is the core of the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate. In the Chan school, this is called "painting in the dragon's eyes": pointing out

for us what the true mind is. In the doctrinal schools, it is called “hitting the essential point”: explaining the crucial meaning within the sūtra. Merely explaining according to the words has little significance.

At this point, Ānanda still could not understand the wondrous meaning of the Buddhadharma. Once apart from the deluded mind, he did not know what to rely on. This is characteristic of sentient beings. Sentient beings are sentient beings because they take deluded thoughts for the mind and, on this basis, seek delusion within delusion, pursuing the curious and playing with petty cleverness.

They use all kinds of tricks to show others, “I can do this; I can do that,” deceiving and enticing them.

The deluded mind moves falsely and can indeed promote the advanced development of material civilization. Yet because people lack wisdom, human desires grow ever greater and greed becomes ever stronger. Thus, although material civilization has developed, the world is not peaceful; wars and violence are everywhere. All this results from people’s attachment to deluded thoughts.

Therefore, if everyone can study Buddhism, calm their deluded minds, and examine their own conduct, this world will become a better place. Otherwise, after struggling and contending for an entire lifetime, one must still leave empty-handed in the end. How unjust and futile that is! Therefore, Ānanda repeatedly asked the Buddha to instruct us unenlightened sentient beings, so that we might leave behind false and illusory appearances, recover our originally free and at ease, inherently unborn and undying true mind, and escape the bitter sea of birth and death. This is precisely the Buddha’s compassionate heart.

“At that time, the World-Honored One instructed Ānanda and the entire assembly, wishing to lead their minds into the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. Seated upon the lion’s throne, he stroked Ānanda’s crown and said to him: ‘The Tathāgata has always taught that all dharmas that arise are manifested only from the mind. All causes and effects, and even every mote of dust in the world, take their substance from the mind.’”

What is the forbearance of the unborn dharmas? “Unborn dharmas” means that all things are neither arising nor ceasing. “Forbearance” means that the mind accepts it. When I expound the Dharma here, will your minds accept it or not? If I say that people undergo birth and death, everyone readily accepts it. But if I say that people are without birth and death, no one is willing to accept it.

Everyone sees children being born, and also sees others die from illness or old age. Does this not mean that there is birth and death? Why, then, do you say there is neither birth nor death? They are unwilling to accept this view. In truth, when we

directly realize our intrinsic nature, we know with certainty that we are neither born nor dying. The forbearance of the unborn dharmas means being able to accept and affirm the truth that all sentient beings are neither arising nor ceasing.

At this time, the Buddha wished for Ānanda and the entire assembly to enter the forbearance of the unborn dharmas and accept the principle of neither arising nor ceasing.

Therefore, the Buddha sat upon the “lion’s throne” (the lion’s throne is an expression describing the Buddha’s seat as exceptionally majestic and awe-inspiring), while stroking Ānanda’s crown. Stroking the crown has two meanings: first, it expresses the Buddha’s care for Ānanda. Although the Buddha had taught for so long, Ānanda had still not awakened, and so the Buddha deeply pitied him. The second meaning is that the Buddha hoped Ānanda would open the eye at the crown of his head.

At the same time, he continued his instruction. The Buddha said: All things that arise and cease are produced from the deluded thinking mind. All causes and effects in the world, even a single mote of dust, exist because of the mind.

In this passage of the sūtra, “all dharmas that arise” refers to all things subject to arising and ceasing. “Manifested only from the mind” means that all material appearances arise from the deluded thinking mind. The “mind” spoken of here refers to the sixth consciousness. As we explained earlier, when ignorance permeates suchness, deluded thoughts arise.

Thoughts coalesce to form aggregates; when the aggregates collect without dispersing, form comes into being, and the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind appear. Going a step further, form coalesces into faculties, producing our six sense faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. This is “when the mind arises, the various dharmas arise.” Because the mind moves, the multifarious world comes into being.

After the multifarious world has arisen, it in turn permeates the deluded mind. This is “when dharmas arise, the various minds arise.” When the deluded mind moves delusively, the world becomes what it is today. The arising of all things in the world necessarily involves cause and effect. Yet ordinary beings are unafraid of creating evil causes; they fear only suffering painful results.

When criminals rob others, they do not consider that they will consequently be punished. This is shortsightedness and a lack of wisdom. Ordinary beings see only immediate advantage; insatiable in their greed, they do not hesitate to create karma. When karmic retribution arrives, they blame Heaven and resent others, not knowing that they themselves have brought it about.

For example, when murderers are arrested and executed, they are terrified. Yet why did they not consider at the time that those who kill must repay with their lives? Bodhisattvas are wiser, because they understand cause and effect and therefore do not commit evil. Since they do not create evil causes, they do not undergo painful results. Nothing in the world is apart from cause and effect.

Modern scientists make inventions and discoveries precisely by making use of the law of cause and effect. When we heat water, it produces steam, and the steam can in turn drive a train. This is the law of cause and effect. If we violated this law, invention and discovery would be impossible.

Therefore, cause and effect cannot be reversed. But great practitioners are different: they can transcend cause and effect and be free and at ease. Let us now speak of the Chan koan of Baizhang's wild fox. One day, Chan Master Baizhang ascended the Dharma seat and gave a teaching. When he had finished, the assembly dispersed, but one old man remained.

Chan Master Baizhang then asked, "What is the matter?" The old man replied, "I am not a human being. In the time of Kāśyapa Buddha, I lived on this mountain. A student asked me, 'Does a great practitioner fall under cause and effect?' I answered, 'He does not fall under cause and effect.' As a result, I fell into the body of a wild fox for five hundred lives."

"Now I ask the Reverend to offer a turning word on my behalf, so that I may cast off this wild fox's body." He then asked, "Does a great practitioner fall under cause and effect?" Chan Master Baizhang replied, "He is not blind to cause and effect." At these words, the old man attained great awakening. Bowing, he said, "I have already cast off the fox's body. It is behind the mountain. I ask that the Reverend conduct my funeral according to the rites for a deceased monastic."

The next day, Chan Master Baizhang led the monastic assembly to the rock behind the mountain, where they found a dead fox, and cremated it according to the rites. Thus, great practitioners can transcend cause and effect. To transcend cause and effect means not being blind to cause and effect; it does not mean denying cause and effect. When cultivation is complete, one can be so unrestrained and at ease.

The arising of anything in the world has definite causes and requires definite conditions; this is causes and conditions. Once the conditions change, the thing no longer exists. Therefore, all material appearances are formed through the coming together of causes and conditions, yet when traced back to their root, they are empty.

Then how do these material appearances arise? As we explained earlier, they arise from our wondrous, luminous true mind. Therefore, all causes and effects, even a

single mote of dust in the world, exist because of the mind. That is to say, all material appearances are combinations of causes and conditions and are empty in themselves; their substance is our wondrous, luminous true mind.

Put differently, all material appearances are transformations of the true mind and its wondrous functioning. We can see men and women, young and old; eating, dressing, and daily life; mountains, rivers, and the great earth; grasses, trees, and forests; and all kinds of dharma appearances—just as we can see our true mind.

So long as one does not abide in attachment, everywhere is a manifestation of the dharmakāya. But if one forcibly suppresses thoughts and falls into inert emptiness, one becomes like earth, wood, metal, or stone, without awareness, and cannot see it. Then, when one is diligently practicing the Dharma and a state suddenly appears, does one see or not see?

Shenhui, a disciple of the Sixth Patriarch, asked him, “When the Reverend sits in Chan meditation, does he see or not see?” Note that Shenhui here raises the question of seeing or not seeing.

The Sixth Patriarch did not answer directly. Casually striking Shenhui three times with his staff, he asked in return, “When I strike you, does it hurt or not?” This was very difficult to answer. If it hurts, one is an ordinary worldly person; if it does not hurt, one is like earth, wood, metal, or stone. So does it hurt or not? Shenhui answered, “It both hurts and does not hurt.” A very nimble and ingenious response.

My mind is already empty, and does not abide in either pain or its absence; therefore, it both hurts and does not hurt. Did the Sixth Patriarch approve of him? He did not approve immediately, because Shenhui might still have fallen into the two sides—pain and no pain—leaning toward existence on one side and nonexistence on the other.

The Sixth Patriarch did not immediately reject him either. To test whether “it both hurts and does not hurt” was Shenhui’s actual realization, he followed the thread of Shenhui’s words and casually answered his question: “I too both see and do not see.” Shenhui asked, “What does it mean to both see and not see?” At this, the fox’s tail was exposed. Pain and no pain, seeing and not seeing, are fundamentally questions of the same kind.

He had just answered, “It both hurts and does not hurt,” yet he did not understand what it meant to “both see and not see.”

This shows that his reply had merely been verbal skill, without true substance; his feet were not planted on the ground. The Sixth Patriarch compassionately wished to use this question to guide him and direct him to see his intrinsic nature, so he

pressed him hard with this challenge: “What I see is always the faults and failings of my own mind; I do not see the rights and wrongs, likes and dislikes, of others. Therefore, I both see and do not see.”

“What, then, do you mean by saying that it both hurts and does not hurt? If it does not hurt, you are like wood or stone; if it hurts, you are like an ordinary person, and anger and resentment arise. Your earlier seeing and not seeing are the two extremes; pain and no pain belong to arising and ceasing. You have not even seen your own intrinsic nature, yet you dare to toy with others!” The Sixth Patriarch pointed directly to the heart of the matter: Shenhui had fallen into the two extremes of arising and ceasing. He spurred him on to clearly see his intrinsic nature.

Shenhui possessed exceptionally sharp faculties. At once, he left the two extremes behind, and his intrinsic nature appeared in luminous clarity. He then bowed in repentance and thanks. The Sixth Patriarch further said: “If your mind is deluded and does not see, ask a good spiritual friend for the way. If your mind awakens, you yourself see your intrinsic nature and cultivate in accordance with the Dharma. You are yourself deluded and do not see your own mind, yet you come asking whether I see or do not see. What I see, I know for myself; how could I take your place in being deluded? If you see for yourself, you likewise cannot take my place in being deluded. Why do you not know and see for yourself, instead asking whether I see or do not see?” Shenhui bowed more than a hundred times, asking forgiveness for his faults. He then diligently served and attended the master, never leaving his side. This was how he repaid his teacher’s kindness.

When we consider this koan, we must not become attached to pain and no pain, seeing and not seeing. It is like a pair of handcuffs and a set of shackles placed before you, to see whether you can free yourself from them.

Say “pain” or “seeing,” and the handcuffs are fastened; say “no pain” or “not seeing,” and the shackles are fastened. You must be able to free yourself from them. In our ordinary practice, we should free ourselves from phenomenal appearances and not cling to appearances in whatever we do. This does not mean doing nothing. To act while clinging to appearances is to fall to the side of existence; not to act is to fall to the side of nonexistence. Both are wrong.

The Buddha-nature of suchness is neither dead nor inert emptiness. It can give rise to all kinds of dharma appearances and bring forth all kinds of wondrous functioning. The essence of Buddha-nature cannot be separated from appearance and function; essence, appearance, and function are one yet three, and three yet one. Therefore, the question of seeing and not seeing is extremely important both in the Chan school and in the doctrinal schools.

In the past, one of Master Ouyi's disciples was undertaking a seven-day Buddha-recitation retreat at Gaomin Monastery in Yangzhou. He practiced with all his might, hoping to attain the Buddha-recitation samādhi. His Buddha-recitation was diligent and vigorous, and suddenly the sacred realm of the Western Pure Land appeared before him: Amitābha Buddha, Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva, the assembly of sages in the lotus pond and sea, and so forth—all appeared before his eyes. The four characters "Amitābha Buddha" shone with brilliant golden light.

He was overjoyed and told Master Ouyi: "When I move a little to the left, Amitābha Buddha turns a little to the left; when I move a little to the right, Amitābha Buddha turns a little to the right. The experience is extraordinarily wonderful."

Master Ouyi was one with clear insight, and he warned him: "You must not cling to these appearances!" How could one cling to appearances? To do so is to invite demonic obstruction. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra speaks of fifty kinds of skandha demons. Although Buddha-recitation for rebirth in the West aims at seeing the Buddha and going to the Western Pure Land to cultivate Buddhahood, one still must not cling to appearances.

Once one clings to appearances, there is abiding. Because of attachment to appearances, one cannot realize the Buddha-recitation samādhi. Buddha-recitation samādhi is correct reception: it receives none of all receptions, and remains unmoved when any experience appears. Because nothing is received, all deluded states fail to appear. One then sees through appearances to one's own true nature and directly realizes the Buddha-recitation samādhi. If one abides in states, the light of mind is obscured by preceding sense objects. If that light cannot shine through freely, one cannot see one's true nature.

I recall once attending a Dharma assembly. A Dharma teacher was teaching the emptiness of the marks of all dharmas. A picture of the Buddha hung on the wall, with a halo around the Buddha's head. Pointing to the image, the teacher asked, "Can all of you still see it?" Someone answered, "No." The teacher approved of this. But in fact, that answer was not correct.

You cannot see it? What then are your eyes for? When we practice the Dharma, do we cultivate with our eyes closed? Such practice is dead. The natural Buddha-nature is exquisitely lucid and transparent, capable of giving rise to all phenomena. By realizing it, one gains genuine benefit; how could it do to close one's eyes and not see? Seeing one's nature actually means seeing one's true nature through phenomenal appearances. All phenomenal appearances flow forth from intrinsic nature; they do not arise from nowhere.

The Chan school says: “Seeing smoke beyond a mountain, one knows there is fire; seeing a horn beyond a wall, one knows there is an ox.” For example, when we see trees swaying, we know that the wind has come. If one painted wind in a forest without painting the trees, how could one paint the wind? Likewise, when we see all states, we know that this is the wondrous functioning of Buddha-nature. So long as we do not cling to states, we see our nature at all times and in all places. As the Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch says: “Those who see their nature … can see it even when brandishing a sword on the battlefield.”

Thus, the question of seeing and not seeing is extremely important in Buddhist cultivation. So long as we grasp this crucial point and gather both the seer and the seen into one mind, practice becomes much easier.

Now let us look at the sūtra passage:

“Ānanda, all that exists in all worlds—even grass leaves and knots of thread—when their origin is investigated, each has its own substance and nature. Even empty space has a name and appearance. How much more, then, can the pure, wondrous, pure, luminous mind—which gives rise to all minds—lack its own substance?”

Grass is insignificant, yet it can grow leaves. A strand is a thread, and threads can be woven into many things, such as clothing; the simplest thing is to tie a knot. A leaf grows from grass: grass is the leaf’s origin, and the leaf possesses the nature of grass. A knot is made from thread: thread is the knot’s origin, and the knot possesses the nature of thread.

The Buddha tells Ānanda that all worlds, and indeed everything in them—even insignificant grass leaves and knots of thread—have an origin and an intrinsic nature if one investigates their source. No phenomenal appearance is vague and unreal or without cause; all arise from a substance, for without substance there can be no appearance. Even empty space has the name and appearance of empty space. Since this is so even of empty space, how could the “pure, wondrous, pure, luminous mind,” which gives rise to all minds, lack its own substance?

In the phrase “nature all minds,” the character xing ( ), “nature,” refers to Buddha-nature. It is originally a noun, but here it is used as a verb. “Nature all minds” means that the various minds arise from Buddha-nature. The character xin ( ), “mind,” in “pure, wondrous, pure, and luminous mind” also refers to Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature takes “purity” as its essence, “wondrous,” “pure,” and “luminous” as its characteristics, and “nature all minds” as its function.

That its essence is pure means that Buddha-nature can never fundamentally be defiled; it does not become dirty through use. If we truly do not cling to phenomenal appearances, the wondrous, pure, and luminous characteristics of mind will clearly

manifest before us. The mind will be filled with purity and light, wondrous beyond words—beyond the description of language and the grasp of thought.

Even if one clings to phenomenal appearances, this can only obscure the characteristics of wondrousness, purity, and luminosity; it does not hinder the essence, which remains pure. It is like a pearl buried beneath the ground: although wrapped in earth and unable to display its pearly appearance, its essential nature remains exquisitely lucid and transparent.

When the Sixth Patriarch awakened to the Way, he said: "Who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally pure? Who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally unborn and undying? Who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally complete in itself? Who would have thought that intrinsic nature is originally without movement? Who would have thought that intrinsic nature can give rise to all phenomena?" Intrinsic nature is Buddha-nature. "Originally pure" describes the essence of Buddha-nature. "Originally unborn and undying" describes its wondrous characteristic.

All visible things that have form are continuously arising and ceasing, whereas Buddha-nature is unborn and undying—wondrous beyond words. "Originally complete in itself" describes the luminous characteristic of Buddha-nature. Immeasurable Light and Immeasurable Life are complete as one and complete all at once: it is plainly the great thousandfold world-system. "Originally without movement" describes the pure characteristic of Buddha-nature.

It is pure and undefiled, unchanging and unmoving. Its ability to give rise to all phenomena—that is, to give rise to all minds—describes the function of Buddha-nature. Buddha-nature is the wondrous, luminous true mind. The sun, moon, and stars; mountains, rivers, and the great earth; grasses and forests; flowers, birds, fish, and insects—even grass leaves and knots of thread—all things arise from the wondrous, luminous true mind. The wondrous, luminous true mind is the source of all things.

"Things are not things in themselves; because of mind, they are things." Without the wondrous, luminous true mind, no things would exist. How could the wondrous, luminous true mind lack its own substance? To realize this substance directly, we must relinquish all craving and seeking and abide in no appearances. Whether we recite the Buddha's name, investigate Chan, or practice Esoteric Buddhism, we gradually free ourselves from deluded thoughts and attachments. When the mind becomes as vast as empty space, and then suddenly breaks through even that empty space, we directly realize the substance and directly see the Original Face. This is seeing the Way.

“If you stubbornly maintain that the discriminating awareness and contemplation, and the nature that knows what has been understood, must be the mind, then this mind should, apart from all the sense-object activities of form, smell, taste, touch, and the rest, possess a complete nature of its own. Yet as you now listen to my teaching, discrimination arises because of sound.”

Zhi means grasping, and lin means clinging to or begrudging. Here, jue refers to the arising of a thought: when one first thought arises upon encountering an object, this is called awareness. Guan here refers to deliberating over acceptance and rejection —pondering and considering.

Discriminating awareness and contemplation means giving rise to a discriminating mind when encountering things: “Is this good for me?” If it benefits me, one calculates how to obtain it; if it harms me, one calculates how to get rid of it. In this way, one considers oneself to know the matter clearly. Yet this “nature that knows what has been understood” is the deluded mind, not the true mind.

The deluded mind is false and unreal; it is merely the shadow left behind by the six sense objects and has no substance. “Mind is not mind in itself; because of things, it is mind.” For example, if a tape recorder is placed before us, the idea of a tape recorder arises in us, and we form the concept of a tape recorder. If we had never seen or even heard of a tape recorder, would we still have such a concept? Therefore, the deluded mind is false: it exists in dependence on objects and does not exist apart from them.

Suppose you grasp this mind as the wondrous, luminous true mind, and thus cherish and protect it. Then this mind should possess a nature wholly its own, even apart from the six sense objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas, and apart from the objects it encounters.

For example, you are now listening to me teach the Dharma. Earlier, when we discussed the seven locations of the mind, you understood that the deluded mind should be cast aside.

You have this mind only after hearing me speak. If I did not teach the Dharma and you did not hear the Dharma, would this mind still exist? This mind exists because it discriminates the sense object of sound. The “nature that knows what has been understood” of such “discriminating awareness and contemplation” exists in dependence on objects and does not exist apart from them. It has no nature wholly its own. This is the present activity of the sixth consciousness; it is not the wondrous, luminous true mind, but the deluded mind.

The deluded mind arises through “discriminating awareness and contemplation,” obscuring the light of the true mind and preventing you from seeing the wondrous,

luminous true mind. To study the Dharma and practice is to cast aside this mind of deluded thoughts and attachments. But this certainly does not mean suppressing thoughts so that they do not arise, thereby falling into annihilationism.

Please look at the following sūtra passage:

“Even if one extinguishes all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and inwardly guards a secluded stillness, this is still an illusory activity—a discriminating shadow of dharmas.” What was discussed earlier was the arising of mind in response to objects, which is attachment to appearances; that is wrong. Now it is said that extinguishing the mind that arises in response to objects is also wrong.

Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing means seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and knowing—the functions of the six faculties: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Seeing belongs to the eye, hearing to the ear, smelling to the nose, tasting to the tongue, feeling to the body, and knowing to the mind. To inwardly guard secluded stillness means that secluded is quiet and stillness is unmoving.

Those who sit in meditation and practice often have this fault: they shut off the six faculties, neither seeing nor hearing, and remain blank and tranquil, rigidly guarding this state of mind without moving. They think this is seeing the empty characteristics of all dharmas, but it is actually biased emptiness. Attachment to form is biased existence; extinguishing form is biased emptiness. The wondrous, luminous true mind is neither existent nor empty. It has no characteristics to be found, and so is said to be not existent; it can give rise to all kinds of wondrous functioning, and so is said to be not empty. Thus one must not cling to emptiness or to existence. If one clings to emptiness, emptiness is still existence, because there is an emptiness there.

Even if one shuts off the six faculties, extinguishes all seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, and rigidly guards a blank and tranquil state of mind, this is still a dharma sense object. It still belongs to discrimination; it is still a matter at the gate of light and shadow, not the wondrous, luminous true mind.

Ordinary beings have deeply entrenched habitual tendencies and strong attachments; everywhere they cling to existence. Therefore, begin cultivation from existence and gradually progress, eliminating the habit of clinging to existence. Yet when one no longer clings to existence, one easily falls into an indeterminate state; this indeterminate state is biased emptiness. If one continues in biased emptiness, one becomes like earth, wood, metal, or stone. This too is a deluded view based on discriminative images of dharma-objects. These are all faults.

Do not cling to existence, and do not cling to emptiness. Emptiness is existence, and existence is emptiness. The fundamental essence is neither existent nor empty; it is

both existent and empty. It can give rise to wondrous functioning and produce the myriad dharmas. When Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva spoke of perfect penetration through the ear faculty, he said: "...The hearing and what is heard are exhausted; when hearing is exhausted, do not abide in it. Awareness and its object are empty; when the emptiness of awareness reaches perfect fullness, the object of emptiness is extinguished. ..." Even emptiness cannot be obtained.

Emptiness too must be shattered; otherwise it will not do. The Chan school says: "Empty space is shattered to dust; the great earth sinks level." If empty space is not shattered, then there remains an emptiness to which one clings in the mind. The light cannot shine through unobstructedly; it is still a discriminative image of a dharma-object. This is only a shadow, not the true master. Therefore, one must not cling to existence, nor cling to emptiness. Abide in neither emptiness nor existence; nothing whatsoever can be obtained.

"No eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or dharmas ... the mind has no hindrance" does not mean that one either has a mind or has no mind in response to circumstances. Rather, it is lively and vital: with a "snap," the preceding thought has ended and the subsequent thought has not yet arisen. At that very moment is the actual ground of true emptiness. True emptiness is not annihilation; there is still clear and distinct knowing. This is the numinous knowing and awareness free from thoughts. This knowing and awareness has neither a knower nor what is known, neither subject nor object; it is absolute. This alone is one's original destiny. Its essential nature is formless; it is not some thing possessing form.

Let us continue with the sutra text:

"I did not command you to regard it as not being the mind. But carefully examine the mind: if, apart from the preceding objects, there remains a discriminating nature, then that is truly your mind. If the discriminating nature has no substance apart from objects, then it is merely a discriminative image of the preceding objects. Objects are not permanent; when they change and perish, this mind would be like turtle hair or rabbit horns. Then your Dharma body would likewise perish utterly. Who, then, would cultivate and realize the patience with the non-arising of dharmas?"

We have just explained that "discriminating perception and contemplation" are not the wondrous, luminous true mind, and that "inwardly guarding secluded stillness" is likewise not the wondrous, luminous true mind.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: It is not that I deliberately intend to make you regard all these as other than the true mind. Even if I did not tell you, you should carefully examine the matter yourself. To examine means to think it over and investigate it.

Think carefully for yourself: if you were apart from the preceding objects—that is, apart from all the realms of form or sacred realms before your eyes—would a discriminating mind still remain? If you could still discriminate apart from the preceding objects, then the discriminating mind would be your true mind. But as explained earlier, the discriminating mind is the deluded mind: it arises in response to objects and is absent apart from them. The discriminating mind absolutely has no substance apart from the preceding objects. Therefore, it certainly is not the true mind.

The Buddha continued to guide Ānanda: if the discriminating mind has no substance apart from the preceding objects, then it is a discriminative image of those objects—a shadow of all realms of "forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, and dharmas." It is not the wondrous, luminous true mind; it is not the Dharma body; and one cannot rely on it to cultivate and realize the patience with the non-arising of dharmas.

Why? Because the preceding objects do not remain constant; they are ever changing and unstable—what is called "the blue sea turning into mulberry fields." They are continually changing. When the preceding objects change and perish, the discriminating mind is like turtle hair or rabbit horns: it too ceases to exist along with them.

Turtles have no hair, and rabbits have no horns. "Turtle hair and rabbit horns" is a metaphor for that which fundamentally does not exist, has no actual existence, and has no substance. If the discriminating mind were the true mind and the Dharma body, then when such a "Dharma body" perished together with the preceding objects, who would cultivate and realize the patience with the non-arising of dharmas? Patience here has the sense of acceptance. The patience with the non-arising of dharmas is acceptance that the Dharma body neither arises nor ceases; that is, directly realizing the wondrous, luminous true mind. It is also called seeing one's true nature, awakening, and avaivartika.

A monk asked Chan Master Dasui, "When the kalpa fire blazes and the great thousandfold world is destroyed, I wonder whether this is destroyed or not?" "This" refers to the wondrous, luminous true mind—that is, buddha-nature. Buddha-nature neither arises nor ceases; how could it be destroyed? But if one mistakenly takes the discriminating mind for buddha-nature, then it is destroyed.

Chan Master Dasui replied with only one word: "Destroyed!" How did Chan Master Dasui know that the monk had mistaken the discriminating mind for buddha-nature? It can be seen from the monk's question. In truth, the kalpa fire is provisional, and the great thousandfold world is not real. To connect buddha-nature with the kalpa fire and the great thousandfold world is to make that fire and world

into preceding objects. Such “buddha-nature” is plainly a discriminative image of preceding objects, not the wondrous, luminous true mind. Therefore, Chan Master Dasui answered him, “Destroyed!”

When we say that the deluded mind is originally nonexistent, we do not mean that there is no true mind. The true mind does exist. As explained earlier, even blades of grass and tangled fibers have their essential nature; how much more so the true mind! The true mind is the Dharma body. If the Dharma body did not exist, then the reward body and manifestation body would not exist either. Would that not fall into emptiness? Would that not be annihilation?

“At that moment, Ānanda and the entire assembly sat silently, at a loss.”

At this point, Ānanda and the entire assembly could no longer bring forth their deluded minds. Everyone seemed to have lost themselves; they could not speak or offer any defense. This is what is meant by sitting silently, at a loss. By this point, Śākyamuni Buddha had thoroughly shattered the deluded minds of the assembly. What mind remained with which they could debate Śākyamuni Buddha? Search exhaustively through all thought as they might, they could no longer find one.

The entire assembly sat silently and at a loss. They could neither open their mouths nor stir a thought. The path of words was cut off, and the sphere of mental activity was extinguished. In that very moment, deluded thoughts became empty and clear; not a single thought arose, yet there was clear and distinct knowing. In an instant, they awakened: “Oh! Formerly, we clung to the empty as real and took the false for true. It turns out that we had all been wrong before.”

Chan Master Xuedou said: “For twenty years I have endured hardship, descending again and again into the lair of the blue dragon. What a shame! It bears telling! Clear-eyed patch-robed monks, do not take this lightly.” Here, “you” refers to buddha-nature. In seeking buddha-nature and seeing his true nature, how much hardship Chan Master Xuedou endured over twenty years! It was like repeatedly descending into the lair of the blue dragon, surviving nine deaths for each life. “What a shame”—it turns out that everything before had been mistaken! “It bears telling”—this is to inspire later students: clear-eyed patch-robed monks must never take this lightly or overlook it.

“The Buddha told Ānanda: Although all practitioners in the world may now accomplish the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, they cannot exhaust the outflows and become arhats. This is entirely because they cling to these deluded thoughts of birth and death, mistaking them for what is real. Therefore, although you have now attained extensive learning, you have not attained the fruit of a sage.”

Successive stages means sequence. The nine successive stages of meditative absorption are nine kinds of dhyāna: the four dhyānas, the four formless absorptions, and the cessation of feeling and perception. From lower to higher, one enters another absorption in sequence.

The four dhyānas are the first, second, third, and fourth dhyānas. The four formless absorptions are the boundlessness of space, the boundlessness of consciousness, nothingness, and neither perception nor non-perception. The absorption of cessation of feeling and perception is also called the absorption of cessation. It eliminates “feeling” and “perception” among the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. Upon coming into contact with an external object, one apprehends it: “What is this?”

The word aggregate means storing and accumulating. When one receives many impressions and stores them up, this is the aggregate of feeling. After receiving an impression, one thinks: Which things benefit me? Which things harm me? How can I obtain what benefits me? How can I eliminate what harms me? When these many thoughts are accumulated, this is the aggregate of perception.

In seated meditation and practice, one first attains coarse abiding, then subtle abiding, followed by concentration of the desire realm and access concentration. Access concentration means that one has not yet reached the first dhyāna. Continuing to meditate and practice, the eight contacts and ten virtues arise, and one reaches the first dhyāna. Then, from the first dhyāna, one passes through the second, third, and fourth dhyānas and enters the four formless absorptions. Passing through boundlessness of space, boundlessness of consciousness, and nothingness, one reaches the absorption of neither perception nor non-perception, where a trace of the aggregate of perception remains unextinguished. Finally, when the aggregates of feeling and perception are entirely extinguished, one reaches the absorption of cessation of feeling and perception.

Outflows are afflictions. Afflictions are greed, anger, ignorance, pride, doubt, and wrong views. Wrong views include the view of the body, extreme views, attachment to views, attachment to precepts and prohibitions, and deviant views. Such views are called “afflictions of views,” while mental attitudes such as greed, anger, ignorance, pride, and doubt are called “afflictions of thought.” This is a broad classification.

In a detailed classification, there are far too many technical categories. The Abhidharma school divides the afflictions of views into eighty-eight classes, while the Consciousness-Only school divides them into one hundred and twenty classes. As for the afflictions of thought, they may be divided into eighty-one classes across the nine grounds. These categories are highly complex, and there are still disputes

within Buddhist doctrinal circles as to which should be eliminated first and which afterward. We will not discuss them in detail here.

In brief, both the afflictions of views and the afflictions of thought belong to the outflows. When these two kinds of affliction are entirely eliminated, the outflows are exhausted. Not exhausting the outflows means not having fully eliminated these two kinds of affliction; then one cannot realize the fruit of arhatship. Why can one not become an arhat? Because, in practicing the Dharma, one does not use the true mind to practice.

The true mind is the "secret cause of the Tathāgata's great Buddha-crown"; it is the wondrous, luminous true mind, buddha-nature itself. It neither arises nor ceases, neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor wavers. To practice the Dharma without using the true mind, but instead using the deluded mind that arises in response to objects, is like cooking sand in hopes of making rice: it is impossible. Although one may succeed in cultivating the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, one still cannot exhaust the outflows and become an arhat.

Deluded thoughts of birth and death are deluded thoughts that arise and cease.

The Buddha told Ānanda: Although all those in the world who practice and study the Dharma may cultivate the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, they cannot eliminate the two afflictions of views and thought or realize the fruit of arhatship. Why? Because they cling to the deluded mind that arises and ceases, mistaking it for the true mind. Therefore, although you are now known as foremost in extensive learning, because you do not practice with the true mind, you still cannot exhaust the outflows and become an arhat; you still have not realized the fruit of a sage.

After Chan Master Shishuang Qingzhu had passed away, the assembly wished to invite the head seat to continue presiding over the Dharma seat. Shishuang's attendant, Chan Master Jiufeng Daoqian, said to the assembly: "One must first understand the former master's intent before this is possible."

The head seat was unconvinced and asked in return, "What intent did the former master have?" Jiufeng said: "The former master said: 'Go on resting, go on resting; go on cold and desolate; go on with one thought lasting ten thousand years; go on like cold ashes and withered wood; go on like an incense burner in an ancient temple; go on like a strip of white silk.' I will not ask about the rest. What does it mean to 'go on like a strip of white silk'?" The head seat replied, "This merely illuminates the matter on the side of uniformity."

Jiufeng did not acknowledge him, saying, "So you had not understood the late master's intent!" When the chief-seat monk heard this, he became angry. "You do

not acknowledge me? Then bring incense! If I cannot depart when the incense has burned out, then I have not understood the late master's intent!" The attendant immediately lit the incense. Before it had finished burning, the chief-seat monk had already passed away while seated.

Jiufeng stroked the chief-seat monk's back and said, "To pass away seated or die standing is not impossible for you, but you have not even dreamed of the late master's intent!" Everyone, take note here: if one cultivates the nine successive stages of meditative absorption and can enter the cessation of feeling and perception, one can indeed pass away seated or die standing. But does that mean one has truly realized the Way? Not necessarily. Only clearly seeing the true mind counts. The Chan school says: "Ten hu of relics are not worth a single turning word." If one has not clearly seen the true mind, then no matter how one may pass away seated or die standing, or how countless one's relics may be, these are merely matters of one side.

Someone raises a question: if one cultivates the nine successive stages of meditative absorption to the end and also accomplishes the cessation of feeling and perception, then one no longer undergoes any feelings, and thoughts too are gone. Does this not mean that the delusions of thought have already been completely cut off? Once the delusions of thought are cut off, segmented birth and death should be finished. Why, then, do the scriptures say that even after accomplishing the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, one cannot attain the fruition of an arhat whose outflows are exhausted?

This is an excellent question. Let us answer it from two perspectives.

First, there are many commentators on the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. Some say that, when one cultivates the nine successive stages of meditative absorption to accomplishment, the delusions of thought in the nine grounds of the three realms have all already been cut off.

As we explained last time, the three realms are the desire realm, form realm, and formless realm. The nine grounds are the ground of the mixed dwelling of the five destinies in the desire realm; the four dhyānas in the form realm—the ground of joy and bliss born of separation, the ground of joy and bliss born of meditative stability, the ground of wondrous bliss free from joy, and the ground of purity through equanimity and mindfulness; and the four formless attainments in the formless realm—the ground of boundless space, the ground of boundless consciousness, the ground of nothingness, and the ground of neither perception nor non-perception. In each of these nine grounds, there are three classes of delusions of thought—superior, middling, and inferior—and each class can in turn be subdivided into

superior, middling, and inferior grades. Thus, each ground has nine grades of delusions of thought.

When he says that accomplishing the cessation of feeling and perception can cut off all delusions of thought, he means that all eighty-one grades of delusions of thought in these nine grounds have been cut off. But what about delusions of view? He says they have not been overcome. Because delusions of view have not been overcome, one's views and understanding are incorrect; one mistakes the false for the real and may still sink into delusion when encountering circumstances. If delusions of view are not overcome, one cannot attain the wisdom of the unborn. Only after delusions of view have been overcome can one attain the wisdom of the unborn. Only when both delusions of view and delusions of thought have been overcome can one realize the fruition of arhatship. Since delusions of view have not yet been overcome, the wisdom of the unborn is not attained; therefore, one cannot realize the fruition of an arhat whose outflows are exhausted.

Second, if practitioners do not understand the true mind that neither arises nor ceases, but cling to deluded thoughts of birth and death, like Ānanda mistakenly taking the deluded mind to be real, they will mistake the false and lose sight of the true. This is delusion of view—incorrect views and understanding. If delusions of view are not overcome, the objects before one will not be entirely cast off.

The forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects before us—these various objects of the senses—cannot be shaken off or completely discarded by such a person. If these former objects remain, how can one say that the delusions of thought have been entirely overcome? He sinks into emptiness and guards quiescence, without encountering circumstances, so it seems as though nothing is happening. But once he encounters circumstances, the mind stirs. When the mind stirs, all kinds of desires arise.

Seen in this light, the delusions of thought have not in fact been completely overcome. Delusions of view are confusion regarding principle: one does not understand the principles involved. Delusions of thought are confusion regarding phenomena: when affairs confront one, the mind becomes muddled. If principle is not understood, how can one's thoughts be wholly clear? If one has not even understood the principles, can the mind remain unmoved when encountering matters? Therefore, even though one may accomplish the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, one cannot attain the fruition of an arhat whose outflows are exhausted.

Some people in the Dharma Characteristics School say that cultivation should first overcome delusions of view and only afterward delusions of thought. Delusions of view arise from discrimination; the cognitive hindrances produced by discrimination

are called delusions of view. The innate cognitive hindrances and afflictive hindrances are delusions of thought. “Innate” means that they have existed since beginningless time. One must certainly first overcome the discriminative ones and afterward the innate ones. One must first overcome delusions of view and afterward delusions of thought.

One cannot say that delusions of thought are overcome first and delusions of view afterward. From this, it would seem that the claim that one can accomplish the nine successive stages of meditative absorption without realizing arhatship is incorrect, and that even the Śūraṅgama Sūtra is a forgery. In fact, however, this explanation is unreasonable.

On careful reflection, if one succeeds in cultivating the nine successive stages of meditative absorption, can the cessation of feeling and perception truly overcome the delusions of thought? I think it cannot. Why? It merely suppresses them, pressing the delusions of thought down within. This is because, in cultivating meditative stability, one does not cultivate with the true mind but with the deluded mind, restraining the deluded mind and suppressing thoughts so that they do not arise.

It is like placing a stone on grass to keep it from growing. This does not solve the problem at its root. When the grass is pressed beneath the stone, it grows again as soon as the stone is removed. Once the cessation of feeling and perception has been accomplished, the meditative stability attained has a limited duration measured in kalpas. After that period has passed and one emerges from meditative absorption, there will instead be a great upheaval: the habitual tendency toward deluded movement will be ten times stronger than before.

When Master Xuanzang went to India to obtain the scriptures, he saw a Dharma master in the mountains who was waiting for Śākyamuni Buddha to be born and teach the Dharma. This Dharma master had already been living on the mountain before Śākyamuni Buddha was born. As Master Xuanzang, himself a cultivator of the Way, passed by this mountain, he saw purple qi above it and knew that there was a cultivator in the mountain. He therefore had everyone search for him.

Because so much time had passed, the entrance to the cave had disappeared. Fallen rocks and trees had blocked it. After great difficulty, they dug open the cave entrance and saw a man sitting inside. Master Xuanzang’s disciples said, “Oh no! He must be dead.” Master Xuanzang said, “No. He is cultivating the cessation of feeling and perception.” He then struck a chime beside the man’s ear to bring him out of meditative absorption.

After emerging from meditative absorption, the man saw Master Xuanzang wearing monastic robes and thought that Śākyamuni Buddha had come to transmit the

Dharma to him. Master Xuanzang told him that Śākyamuni Buddha had already entered parinirvāṇa. On hearing this, he wept bitterly, feeling that he had missed his opportunity and had waited in vain.

Master Xuanzang told him, “Do not weep. Mahāyāna Buddhism is now flourishing in China, and you may go there to be reborn. After all these years, the skin and bones of this body have deteriorated; it can no longer be used. Go and be reborn again, and exchange it for a new one. You should be reborn in a place of lofty buildings, glazed roof tiles, and yellow walls.”

The Dharma master then passed away. After being reborn, he became the later Three-Cart Monk. Why was he called the Three-Cart Monk? He was reborn into the household of Yuchi Gong. After his rebirth, his habitual tendencies were exceedingly strong. In his former cultivation of the cessation of feeling and perception, he had suppressed killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. But now he engaged in great killing, great theft, and great sexual misconduct.

As a result, he caused a great disaster and was thrown into the Imperial Ancestral Temple, where he was to be beheaded. According to Tang dynasty law, one who had committed a capital crime could avoid execution by leaving the household life and becoming a monk. His family had no alternative but to have him become a monk; otherwise, he would have been beheaded. The Three-Cart Monk said, “If I leave the household life, I want to take women with me.”

When asked how many he wanted to take, the Three-Cart Monk said that he wanted enough to fill three carts—hence his sobriquet, the Three-Cart Monk. Just look at this—is it not outrageous? Thus, cultivating the cessation of feeling and perception cannot cut off the delusions of thought. Once they surge forth, they become all the more immense. At most, this can be called a “semblance of cessation”: they seem to have been cut off, but are actually wrapped up within.

Delusions of view are confusion about principle: one is confused about the principles and has incorrect views and understanding. Delusions of thought are confusion about phenomena: when events arise, they surge forth. Delusions of thought are most difficult to overcome. Therefore, we say that some people may cultivate the nine successive stages of meditative absorption and indeed attain meditative stability, but it is merely forced restraint. Because they have not truly attained the wisdom of the unborn, it is not ultimate. Since it is not ultimate, they cannot attain the fruition of an arhat whose outflows are exhausted.

This explanation is now complete. If there are still questions, we can discuss them another time when the opportunity arises.

(I) Raising a Fist to Test Seeing, Demonstrating That Seeing Is Not the Eye

“Having heard this, Ānanda wept again in sorrow. He prostrated himself with all five parts of his body touching the ground, then knelt for a long time with palms joined and said to the Buddha: ‘Since I first aroused the resolve and left home to follow the Buddha, relying on the Buddha’s majestic spiritual power, I have often thought to myself: “I need not labor at cultivation; surely the Tathāgata will bestow samādhi upon me.” I did not know that one person’s body and mind cannot substitute for another’s, and so I lost my original mind. Though I have left home in body, my mind has not entered the Way. It is like a poor son who abandons his father and flees. Today I realize that, although one may have heard much, if one does not cultivate, it is no different from not having heard. It is like someone speaking of food: one can never thereby be satisfied.’”

This passage of scripture is easy to understand, so here we need only discuss “samādhi.” Simply put, directing the mind to one place, with one-pointedness of mind without distraction, is samādhi. To elaborate on it would take far too long.

The Commentary on the Mahāvairocana Sūtra speaks of five kinds of samādhi: entering the gateway of the syllable “A” and the dharma realm in a single thought is Vairocana Samādhi; maintaining one-pointedness of mind without distraction in the lotus mudrā is Avalokiteśvara Samādhi; maintaining one-pointedness of mind without distraction in the vajra-wisdom mudrā is Lord of Secrets Samādhi; maintaining one-pointedness of mind without distraction in the dharma gates of Śākyamuni, Brahmā, and the various honored ones is Pure Divine-Eye Samādhi; and maintaining one-pointedness of mind without distraction amid the cloud-ocean of the treasury of great compassion is Universal-Eye Samādhi, also called Samādhi of Universally Manifesting Bodies. To attain samādhi, one must cultivate for oneself. Without actual cultivation, no matter how much theory one knows, one cannot attain samādhi.

After Ānanda heard this, his sorrow again welled up and tears streamed down his face. He regretted his former error. Hastily, he prostrated himself before the Buddha with all five parts of his body touching the ground, bowing in reverence. Then he knelt with palms joined and told the Buddha: Since I first aroused the resolve to leave home and follow the Buddha, I have always wanted to rely on the Buddha’s majestic spiritual power.

I often thought, “I need not practice so arduously.” I always assumed that the Tathāgata would show me favor and eventually grant me samādhi. I did not know

that my body and mind and the Buddha's body and mind cannot substitute for one another. Thus I lost my original mind.

Although my body has left home and appears to be that of one cultivating the Way, my mind has not left home; my mind is still not in accord with the Way. It is like the son of a wealthy family who flees his father and consequently lives in poverty. Only today do I realize that, although I have heard the Buddha expound the sūtras many times, if I do not practice, it is equivalent to never having heard them. It is like merely hearing someone speak of food without eating it oneself: one can never be satisfied.

Nowadays, some who practice the Pure Land say: "Amitābha Buddha's forty-eight vows liberate sentient beings. I need not recite the Buddha's name or cultivate; I need only believe in Amitābha Buddha's vow-power." How can that work? Amitābha Buddha will not simply pull us there. Is this not just like Ānanda? One refuses to practice diligently and merely waits for the Buddha's favor.

"To purify one's land, one must first purify one's mind; as one's mind becomes pure, so the Buddha-land becomes pure." The mind is like a cup of water, and the Buddha is like the moon in the sky. If the water of the mind is impure and turbid, it cannot reflect the moon in the sky.

At the time of death, not only will one fail to see the Buddha and be unable to be reborn in the Western Pure Land; when karmic obstacles manifest, one will involuntarily follow them and be carried along in rebirth through the six realms.

Master Yongming Yanshou taught us to recite the Buddha's name well, reciting it 108,000 times each day. Why? Because if Buddha-recitation becomes effective —"Amitābha Buddha! Amitābha Buddha! . . ."—it eliminates the impurities in the water of our minds. When the water of the mind is pure, it reflects the bright moon; ultimate reality then appears before us. This is direct realization of the "Buddha-recitation samādhi." Samādhi cannot be obtained through favor or bestowed as a gift; one must make one's own effort in cultivation. This is still the explanation according to Exoteric Buddhism.

According to Esoteric Buddhism, the Buddha has great compassion without conditions and emits light impartially to illuminate all sentient beings, calling, "Whoever you are, come to me!" Yet sentient beings fear the Buddha's light: it shines so brightly that they cannot open their eyes, so they quickly flee far away. This is lack of correspondence.

If you cultivate well and the water of your mind becomes pure, your mind will also become luminous. Your light and the Buddha's light will shine upon each other and enhance one another, and you will naturally unite with the Buddha. Once there is

such correspondence, you will be reborn in the Pure Land. In truth, whoever cultivates attains; whoever does not cultivate does not attain. Speaking of food does not satisfy hunger, and relying on favor or gifts will not do. In fact, even telling you about food is already a favor.

Some people say, “Does not the Universal Gate Chapter state that one who seeks a son obtains a son, one who seeks a daughter obtains a daughter, one who seeks wealth obtains wealth, and one who seeks blessings obtains blessings? Is that not a gift?” Alas! Sentient beings are deeply attached. Since Buddhas and bodhisattvas are urgently compassionate and cannot at first lead you to faith and entry, they first let you taste a little sweetness. If you seek blessings, they give you some blessings. This is “first using desires as hooks to draw them in.”

“World-Honored One, we are now entangled by the two hindrances because we do not know the quiescent and everlasting nature of mind. We only pray that the Tathāgata will pity us, who are destitute and exposed, reveal the wondrous luminous mind, and open our eyes of the Way.”

The two hindrances are the hindrance of afflictions and the hindrance of what is known. A detailed explanation is profound and complex, so we shall now discuss it simply and plainly.

For example, the tape recorder we use now is a manifestation of intrinsic nature. A tape recorder did not simply exist by nature; it was researched and invented by the mind—the sixth consciousness—according to the laws of the objective environment and the principles of electronics.

Then where does the sixth consciousness come from? The first five consciousnesses —eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—the sixth consciousness, and the manas consciousness all arise from the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). The root of the fifth, sixth, and seventh consciousnesses is the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). The first five consciousnesses function by illuminating their objects; the sixth consciousness discriminates and deliberates; the manas consciousness carries and grasps.

The manas consciousness takes the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) to be “self,” carries the wholesome and unwholesome actions produced by the preceding consciousnesses into the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), and forms karmic seeds. This is the cause of receiving retribution later. Once the seeds mature, one receives wholesome or unwholesome retribution; this is the result.

People all know the first five consciousnesses and the sixth consciousness, but they do not know the manas consciousness, much less the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), and so they argue about materialism and idealism. Matter is what is seen,

while mind is that which sees. In fact, everything in the world is a manifestation of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). That which sees is the perceiving aspect of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), and that which is seen is its object aspect. Neither mind nor matter is apart from the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

The "object aspect" is an object. When the "perceiving aspect" encounters an object, it produces "what is known"; at this point, it has not yet become a hindrance. But because one does not understand the true mind, one gives rise to a view of dharmas and regards this thing as truly existent. It then becomes a hindrance.

For example, after seeing a tape recorder, one does not know that it is a function of the true mind, but becomes attached to the appearance of the tape recorder: "Oh! There is such a thing, called a tape recorder; its function is to record sound; it is real." This is the hindrance of what is known.

The hindrance of afflictions arises from the hindrance of what is known. Believing that a tape recorder truly exists, one wants to obtain it; if one cannot obtain it, one becomes troubled. Even after obtaining it, one remains troubled: "This is a treasure! I dare not touch it or handle it; it would be terrible if it were damaged." This is the hindrance of afflictions. Worldly people are all like this, rolling about amid these two hindrances, the hindrance of afflictions and the hindrance of what is known.

When we practitioners give rise to thoughts of practicing a dharma or realizing the Way, this is in fact the hindrance of what is known. "Oh! I understand: all dharmas are equal . . ." This is still the hindrance of what is known, because you still have attachment to dharmas and a view to cling to.

Therefore, the Chan school says: "'Buddha' is a word I do not like to hear!" After reciting a single "Namo Buddha," one should carry water and sweep the Chan hall, in order to sweep away the contamination of that single Buddha-name. This means removing the hindrance of what is known. To remove the hindrance of what is known, one must first remove the hindrance of afflictions. The hindrance of afflictions comes later but is removed first; the hindrance of what is known comes first but is removed later.

Quiescence means not arising; everlasting means not ceasing. The quiescent and everlasting nature of mind is the nature of mind that neither arises nor ceases; it is the wondrous luminous true mind.

Qiong means to exhaust completely and thoroughly; lu means to disclose and reveal. Thus, qionglu means to reveal something completely.

The eye of the Way is the eye that sees the Way. To know that the wondrous luminous true mind neither arises nor ceases is to have opened the eye of the Way.

Once the eye of the Way has opened, the two hindrances of afflictions and what is known are removed: what is known is wisdom, and afflictions are themselves bodhi.

Therefore Ānanda said: “World-Honored One, we are now entangled by the two hindrances of afflictions and what is known, like travelers unable to return home. This is because we have not awakened to the Way and cannot know the wondrous luminous true mind, the quiescent and everlasting nature of mind. We earnestly implore you, honored one, to pity and watch over us, thoroughly reveal the wondrous luminous true mind to us, and open our eyes that see the Way.”

The Tathāgata did not disappoint their hopes. To open their eyes of the Way, he manifested his sambhogakāya and expounded the Dharma:

“At that moment, from the swastika on the Tathāgata’s chest issued forth a precious radiance. This radiance shone resplendently in hundreds of thousands of colors, pervading at once the Buddha lands throughout the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust. It then shone upon the crowns of all the Tathāgatas in all the precious lands of the ten directions, before returning to Ānanda and the entire assembly.”

There is a swastika on the Buddha’s chest. This swastika is a Sanskrit symbol, signifying adornment with myriad virtues, purity unstained by defilement, and auspicious fulfillment. The precious radiance issuing from the swastika is symbolic: because Ānanda asked the Buddha to expound the eye of the Way, the swastika represents the pure eye of the Way, while the precious radiance represents the merit and virtue arising from that pure eye of the Way.

This merit and virtue has been accumulated over many lives and many eons; it is adorned with myriad virtues and brings auspicious fulfillment, and thus emits light. Huangyu describes brightness, dazzling radiance, and shining splendor. The hundreds of thousands of colors are also symbolic teaching, indicating that the wondrous functioning of the true mind changes in countless ways, is inexhaustible, and can give rise to all dharmas.

“Pervading at once the Buddha-worlds of the ten directions, as numerous as dust motes.” The ten directions are east, west, south, north, the four intermediate directions, above, and below. As we often say, there are the four sides and eight directions; adding above and below to the eight directions makes ten directions. Dust motes are extremely fine particles of dust. How many Buddha-worlds are there in the ten directions? As many as dust motes.

To pervade them all at once means that so many Buddha-worlds were universally illuminated in an instant. This signifies seeing one’s true nature, for Buddha-nature inherently fills empty space and pervades the dharma realm.

The Amitābha Sūtra says: “The light of that Buddha is immeasurable, illuminating the lands of the ten directions without obstruction.” Just as the Buddha’s light is thus, so too is the light of us sentient beings; it is merely shut off by deluded thoughts and attachments, so that it cannot manifest or shine forth brightly.

When we apply ourselves to practice, we must remove these deluded thoughts and attachments. Whatever states arise in meditation, pay them no heed; do not abide in states or cling to appearances. When awakening comes, deluded thoughts and attachments will be shattered in an instant, and one will see a ray of light.

Why can one see only a ray of light? Because we have long been accustomed, life after life and kalpa after kalpa, to deluded thoughts and attachments, and it is difficult to change them all at once. Since only a small opening has been made in deluded thoughts and attachments, one can see only a ray of light. This is seeing one’s true nature, and wondrous functioning then follows. Yet because there is only a ray of light, the power of this wondrous functioning is also very weak.

In the future, as deluded thoughts and attachments diminish and the light increases, the power of wondrous functioning will also increase. The lotus flowers of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss likewise symbolize the Dharma: when the lotus opens, it signifies that the flower of the mind has opened. “When the lotus opens, one sees the Buddha and awakens to the unborn” signifies awakening to the fact that one’s original nature neither arises nor ceases.

“It universally anoints the crowns of all the Tathāgatas in jeweled lands throughout the ten directions, then immediately reaches Ānanda and the entire assembly.” Here, xuan means “immediately,” “at once.” As stated earlier, the ten directions contain so many Buddha lands and so many jeweled lands, and each jeweled land has a Buddha.

The precious light that Śākyamuni Buddha emits from the swastika on his chest universally anoints the crowns of all these Buddhas. It then immediately anoints the heads of Ānanda and all the members of the assembly. This too symbolizes the Dharma: it signifies empowerment, blessing, and the mutual sealing of mind with mind. The reward body’s emission of light is also a teaching of the Dharma, though not one delivered orally. Immediately afterward, the Tathāgata speaks aloud:

“Ānanda, I now raise the great Dharma banner for you, and also enable all sentient beings throughout the ten directions to obtain the wondrous, subtle, secret, intrinsically pure and luminous mind, and to gain the pure eye.”

The great Dharma banner is a metaphor for right knowledge and right view. To raise the great Dharma banner is to establish right knowledge and right view. To establish right knowledge and right view, one must destroy erroneous knowledge and

erroneous views. Each erroneous view is like a building; only by removing all these deluded minds can right view be raised. This is what is called raising the great Dharma banner.

Miaowei means “wondrous and subtle.” Intrinsic nature can give rise to all phenomena; everything in the world arises from intrinsic nature. How wondrous this is! Yet intrinsic nature is without appearances. Though it truly exists, you cannot see it or show it to others; it is exceedingly secret—this is what is meant by “secret.” Though it exists, it cannot be grasped; though it cannot be grasped, it can give rise to all phenomena.

How can one attain this “wondrous, subtle, and secret” reality? At this point, the way of words is cut off and the activity of mind is extinguished. It can only be apprehended inwardly, not conveyed in words; it depends entirely on mind sealing mind. Once one understands it in one’s mind, it is simply the landscape of one’s own original nature, with no secret at all. The Chan school says: “For one who does not understand, ‘the World-Honored One has secret words’; for one who understands, ‘Kāśyapa conceals nothing further.’”

“Conceals nothing further” means that there is no secret at all. Not secret yet secret, secret yet not secret—what, after all, is it? It is the “intrinsically pure and luminous mind,” namely Buddha-nature. Its substance is utterly pure and wholly undefiled; it can illuminate the ten directions brightly and give rise to immeasurable, boundless wondrous functioning. Such a mind—Buddha-nature—is the intrinsically pure and luminous mind. To directly realize this intrinsically pure and luminous mind is to see the Way. With what does one see it? With the pure eye. Thus, seeing the Way is gaining the pure eye. Once one has gained the pure eye, one will no longer cling to appearances.

The Buddha tells Ānanda: I now raise the great Dharma banner for you, enabling you to sweep away erroneous views and establish right view. I also enable all sentient beings in the worlds of the ten directions to attain the wondrous, subtle, secret “intrinsically pure and luminous mind,” directly realize their original nature, and gain the pure eye by which the Way is seen, so that their Dharma eye may be thoroughly clear.

How can this be accomplished? One must devise a means; this is the skillful means by which the World-Honored One liberates and guides beings. How could it work without any means? Just as Chan masters must have a means if they wish to awaken their disciples: if they had no means, no skillful method at all, and merely told their disciples to investigate desperately, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?”, how could they awaken? The Buddha has many skillful Dharma gates; the Buddha has his methods. Please read on:

“Ānanda, first answer me: when you saw the radiant fist, from what did this fist’s radiance arise? How did it become a fist? With what did you see it?”

The Buddha calls to Ānanda: first answer me. When you saw my radiant fist, where did the fist’s radiance come from? He next asks, “How did it become a fist?” How did it become a fist? Third, “With what did you see it?” This is the most important question. What is it that investigates, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s name?” Who is this seeing?

“Ānanda said: ‘The Buddha’s entire body is Jambūnada gold, shining crimson like a jeweled mountain. Because it is born of purity, it has radiance. I truly see it with my eyes: the five wheel-like fingertips are bent and clasped to show people, and thus there is the appearance of a fist.’”

Ānanda clings only to external objects and does not understand the true mind. Ānanda says, “The Buddha’s entire body is Jambūnada gold,” meaning that the Buddha’s body is pure and radiant, like Jambūnada gold. Jambūnada is a Sanskrit term translated as “supreme gold.” South of Mount Sumeru is a continent with many jambū trees. When the juice of their fruit enters water, sand and stones turn into gold; this is called Jambūnada gold.

If a single grain of this gold is placed among ordinary gold, all the latter loses its luster. If an inch of this gold is placed in a dark room, its radiance shines like broad daylight. This illustrates that the golden light of the Buddha’s body is like Jambūnada gold, and that the Buddha’s body is the color of Jambūnada gold. “Shining crimson like a jeweled mountain”: shining crimson describes a ruddy color, luminous like a jeweled mountain.

The Buddha asks where this radiance comes from, and Ānanda says that it is born of purity and therefore has radiance. The Buddha asks what he uses to see it, and Ānanda says that he sees it with his eyes. “The five wheel-like fingertips are bent and clasped to show people, and thus there is the appearance of a fist.” When the hand is extended, it is a palm; when it is bent, it is a fist. When the hand is tightly clenched, it becomes a fist.

Here the Buddha is making an analogy. He first asks Ānanda: Where does radiance come from? How is a fist formed? With what does one see? Only after settling these questions does he explain the principle.

“The Buddha told Ānanda: ‘Today the Tathāgata speaks truthfully to you. All wise people must rely on analogies in order to awaken. Ānanda, take my fist as an analogy: without my hand, my fist could not be formed; without your eyes, your seeing could not arise. If the principle of your eye faculty is compared to that of my fist, are their meanings equivalent?’”

Without analogies, it is not easy to understand. An analogy is a comparison: one uses something known to illustrate something unknown, making it easier to understand. The Tathāgata says: I tell you that even all wise people need analogies in order to awaken; those without wisdom need analogies all the more. “Ānanda, take my fist as an analogy: without my hand, my fist could not be formed. Without your eyes, your seeing could not arise.”

“If the principle of your eye faculty is compared to that of my fist, are their meanings equivalent?” Ānanda, consider a fist: if there were no hand, how could a fist be formed? Consider the eye faculty: without it, how could one see things? If your eye faculty is compared to my fist, are their meanings equivalent? That is, is this analogy appropriate? A fist comes from a hand; without a hand, a fist cannot be formed. Likewise, without eyes, seeing cannot arise. Is it appropriate to compare your eye faculty to my fist in this way?

“Ānanda said: ‘Yes indeed, World-Honored One. Without my eyes, my seeing could not arise. Comparing my eye faculty to the Tathāgata’s fist, their factual meanings are similar.’”

Ānanda says: World-Honored One, what you say is correct. Without eyes, how could I see? Comparing my eyes to the Tathāgata’s fist is comparing like with like; they are very similar, with no difference between them.

In fact, the principle is not similar. A fist has no independent substance; it is formed from the hand. When extended, it is a palm; when bent, it is a fist. But seeing has a substance. As explained earlier, even worldly things have their own natures; how much more must the wondrously luminous true mind have a substance. A fist, however, is a false appearance. Extend the hand and it is a palm; do not extend it and it is a fist. The two are not similar. Ānanda says they are similar, but this is mistaken.

“The Buddha told Ānanda: ‘What you call similar is not correct. Why? For a person without hands, fists are completely absent. But one without eyes does not entirely lack seeing. Why is this so? Try asking a blind person on the road, “What do you see?” Those blind people will surely answer you, “Before my eyes I see only darkness and nothing else.” Viewed in this way, the external objects are themselves dark; how is seeing diminished?’”

The Buddha tells Ānanda: You compare my fist to your eye faculty and say that they are similar, but this is not correct; it is not so. “Why? For a person without hands, fists are completely absent.” How could someone without hands have fists? Only with hands can fists be formed. “But one without eyes does not entirely lack seeing.” A person without eyes does not lack seeing altogether.

For example, a blind person sees only darkness, total blackness. Seeing darkness is still seeing. Seeing a tape recorder, a desk lamp, or a cup is seeing; why is seeing darkness not seeing? "Why is this so? Try asking a blind person on the road, 'What do you see?' Those blind people will surely answer you: 'Before my eyes I see only darkness and nothing else.'"

"Viewed in this way, the external objects are themselves dark; how is seeing diminished?" Ask blind people on the road what they see, and they will certainly tell you, "Before my eyes there is only darkness; I cannot see anything else." In fact, "the external objects are themselves dark": the objects of form before our eyes are originally all dark. We see them because of light—lamplight, sunlight, and so forth.

Without light, how could we see? If we were shut in a dark room without any light, there would likewise be nothing but darkness before our eyes, and we could not distinguish anything. Would this not be the same as being blind? The error of people in the world is that they count seeing things as seeing, but do not count seeing darkness as seeing.

When darkness is before one's eyes, it is still seeing: one sees darkness, so one cannot say one does not see. "The external objects are themselves dark; how is seeing diminished?" Seeing darkness is still seeing. How could seeing be damaged or deficient? Seeing is neither damaged nor deficient. Without reading the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, one would not know this. Sentient beings originally do not know it; how could they know that seeing darkness and seeing blackness are also seeing?

"Ānanda said: 'Before the eyes of those who are blind, there is only darkness. How can this constitute seeing?'"

Ānanda's state is the same as ours: blind people see only darkness. How could they see things? How could this constitute seeing? But what we mean by "seeing" is not seeing things. "Seeing" is the nature that is capable of seeing; it is not the seeing of things. This point is very important.

"The Buddha told Ānanda: 'Those who are blind and have no eyes see only darkness. Is the darkness they observe different from, or no different from, that seen by people with eyes who are in a dark room?'"

The Buddha further questioned Ānanda: You say that seeing darkness cannot constitute seeing. Let me ask you again: blind people can see darkness, and people with eyes see darkness when in a dark room. Both the sighted and the blind see darkness. Is this the same or different? Are they identical or distinct?

"Thus, World-Honored One, the darkness seen by a person in the dark and that seen by the blind are, upon comparison, entirely without difference."

Ānanda said that the darkness seen by a person with eyes in a dark room and that seen by a blind person are the same, without distinction. This shows that seeing darkness and seeing things do not depend on the eyes. Why? As explained earlier, for the eyes to see things, there must be supporting conditions. When the eyes confront visual objects, seeing cannot occur without supporting conditions. These supporting conditions are space and light.

If there are no supporting conditions, then even when the eyes confront visual objects, one still cannot see things. This is not a matter of the eyes. Seeing darkness does not depend on the eyes; how, then, could seeing light depend on the eyes? If supporting conditions did not bring light into manifestation, and if there were no space, you could not see either. Thus, this has nothing to do with the eyes.

“Ānanda, if a person without eyes sees only the darkness before him, and then suddenly acquires sight and, before the same objects, sees all kinds of forms, this is called seeing with the eyes. A person in darkness likewise sees only the darkness before him; if he suddenly obtains lamplight, he too sees all kinds of forms before the same objects. Then this should be called seeing with the lamp. If the lamp sees, then the lamp is capable of seeing and should no longer be called a lamp. Moreover, if the lamp sees, what does that have to do with you?”

The Buddha again asked Ānanda: Suppose a person without eyes sees nothing but darkness. Then he suddenly gains sight—for example, a blind person is cured and suddenly obtains the light of sight. The visual objects before him are still the same, yet he can see them all. “Seeing all kinds of forms” means being able to see the many differentiated and varied things.

If this seeing is called “seeing with the eyes,” the Tathāgata will next explain that it is not the eyes that see. The eyes merely illuminate; it is our mind that sees.

If a blind person who “suddenly obtains the light of sight” is said to see with the eyes, then a person in darkness, who sees only darkness, can likewise see all kinds of forms when a lamp suddenly shines upon him. This would be seeing because of the lamp, so it should be called “seeing with the lamp.” It has just been explained that when a blind person is cured and can see things, this is called seeing with the eyes.

Then, when a person in darkness encounters lamplight and sees all kinds of forms, this must be seeing with the lamp! “If the lamp sees, it should no longer be called a lamp”: if a lamp were capable of seeing things, it would not be called a lamp; it should be called an eye. “Moreover, if the lamp sees, what does that have to do with you?” If the lamp can see, then it is the lamp that sees, and it has nothing to do with you.

“Therefore, you should know that a lamp can reveal forms. Thus, that which sees is the eyes, not the lamp. The eyes can reveal forms. Thus, the nature of seeing is the mind, not the eyes.”

“Therefore, you should know”: for this reason, you should now understand my analogy. “A lamp can reveal forms”: the lamp is a supporting condition that reveals all visual objects. “Thus, that which sees is the eyes, not the lamp.” We can see the things that have been revealed, but it is not the lamp that sees them; the lamp merely makes them manifest. It is the eyes that see, not the lamp.

“The eyes can reveal forms. Thus, the nature of seeing is the mind, not the eyes.” The eyes can reveal forms; the eyes are like a lamp, and the eye faculty is a supporting condition for the nature of seeing. If the eye faculty is intact, the supporting condition is present. If the eye faculty is damaged, it is like a lamp being absent in a dark room. Without the supporting condition, one cannot see. Only when the supporting conditions are present can the matter be accomplished.

In actuality, it is not the eyes that see things. The eye faculty is merely a supporting condition for the nature of seeing. When the conditions are complete, one can see things. When the eye faculty is damaged and the conditions are incomplete, one cannot see the objects before one. “Thus, the nature of seeing is the mind, not the eyes.” The nature of seeing is the inherent capacity by which things are seen. This nature capable of seeing is the mind, not the eyes.

(II) Awakening to Seeing Through Faculties and Objects, Revealing That Seeing Is Unmoving

“Although Ānanda had heard these words, he and the great assembly fell silent, yet their minds had not awakened. Still hoping that the Tathāgata would proclaim the teaching in a compassionate voice, they joined their palms, calmed their minds, and waited for the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.”

Above, we discussed the first of the ten demonstrations of seeing: light and darkness do not diminish it, revealing that seeing is not the eye. Our nature of “seeing” does not arise only because we possess the eye faculty; it has existed from the very beginning.

The eye faculty is only a supporting condition. It enables the nature of “seeing” to function and merely assists that function, just as lamplight assists our eyes in functioning. When there is lamplight in the darkness, we can see all kinds of scenes. This is the analogy the Buddha gave to Ānanda, because Ānanda mistook the deluded mind for the true mind.

The deluded mind is a false appearance and conception arising in dependence upon the six sense objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, and dharmas. If there were no objects before us—no forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, or dharmas—this mind could not arise.

Therefore, the Buddha clenched his hand into a fist as an analogy: “I have a hand, so I can clench it into a fist. If I had no hand, I could not form a fist.” This was meant to enlighten Ānanda, for Ānanda had said, “Because I have eyes, I can see; without eyes, I cannot see.”

The Buddha asked Ānanda, “Is my analogy correct? Does it accord with what you have said? Is my analogy appropriate?” Ānanda replied, “It is quite appropriate. With eyes, one can see; without eyes, one cannot see. With hands, one can make a fist; without hands, one cannot make a fist.”

In fact, the hand and the fist are both false appearances, subject to continual change, whereas the nature of “seeing” is unmoving. The seeing nature does not exist only because the eye faculty exists. If the eye faculty is absent, one is blind. A blind person’s eye faculty is impaired and cannot see things, yet such a person can see darkness; seeing darkness is also seeing. Whether it is light or dark, the seeing nature has not been diminished. This is the first demonstration of seeing—light and darkness do not diminish it, revealing that seeing is not the eye. The ten demonstrations of seeing all fully show that the true mind exists and does not arise because of external circumstances.

Next comes the second demonstration of seeing: movement is called dust, revealing that seeing is unmoving.

Ānanda and the assembly, having heard the Buddha explain that seeing is the mind’s seeing, not the eye’s seeing, knew that the Buddha was correct and had nothing further to say. Yet they had not fully understood, and still hoped that the Buddha would show great compassion and continue teaching. Everyone joined their palms, purified their minds, and waited for the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.

“At that time, the World-Honored One extended his hand, soft as śaṭa cotton and radiant with the marks of a net, and opened its five wheel-like fingers. He instructed Ānanda and the great assembly: ‘When I first realized the Way, in the Deer Park, I told the five bhikṣus, including Ājñāta, and you members of the fourfold assembly: All sentient beings fail to attain bodhi and arhatship because they are led astray by the afflictions of guest and dust. By what did you awaken at that time and now attain the fruits of sainthood?’”

The Buddha naturally knew what everyone was thinking. He therefore extended his palm, soft as śaṭa cotton and beautiful and radiant with the marks of a net. Like a

round wheel, he spread open its five fingers. Then he began with the time when, having just realized the Way, he liberated the five bhikṣus at Deer Park.

“The five bhikṣus, including Ājñāta, and you members of the fourfold assembly”: Ājñāta is Kauṇḍinya. Ājñāta is his personal name, while Kauṇḍinya is his family name. When the Buddha first left home, his royal father sent five men to accompany him.

Who were these five men? One was Ājñāta; one was Mahānāma, namely Kuḷika; one was Vāṣpa; one was Aśvajit, namely Bhadrika; and one was Bhadrarāja. These five accompanied Śākyamuni Buddha into the deep mountains to practice. Later, they left the Buddha and went to Deer Park.

Deer Park was a place in the kingdom of Vārāṇasī where deer were kept. They went there to study a non-Buddhist path. After Śākyamuni Buddha realized the Way in the Snow Mountains, he first went to Deer Park to liberate the five bhikṣus, teaching them in succession the Dharma of the Four Noble Truths. The Four Noble Truths are suffering, origination, cessation, and the path. Thereupon, these five attained the Way and realized the fruit of arhatship. Thus, the Buddha called upon them to teach the Dharma, so that they could speak from their own direct experience.

“All sentient beings fail to attain bodhi and arhatship because they are led astray by the afflictions of guest and dust.” The seeing nature is unmoving; what is unmoving is the host, while what moves is the guest. Guest and dust are analogies: the deluded mind is guest and dust. Guest means a visitor, and dust means the objects of the senses. When guest and dust obscure our true mind, we cannot cultivate the path to bodhi or realize arhatship.

When we encounter matters and give rise to mind in response to circumstances, afflictions arise. All this is the error of the afflictions of guest and dust. “By what did you awaken at that time and now attain the fruits of sainthood?” How did you several people awaken at that time? How did you succeed in cultivation? The Buddha wished them to use their own course of attaining the fruits of sainthood to resolve the confusion of Ānanda and the fourfold assembly.

“Then Kauṇḍinya rose, addressed the Buddha, and said: ‘I am now an elder. Among the great assembly, I alone received the name “Understanding.” I attained fruition through awakening to the two words “guest” and “dust.”’”

Kauṇḍinya was relatively advanced in age and venerable in virtue, and was therefore called an elder. Kauṇḍinya said, “Among the great assembly, I alone received the name ‘Understanding.’” What does this mean? When the Buddha taught the Dharma, he was the first to awaken to the Way and to realize the truth taught by the

Buddha. Therefore he attained understanding, grasped the principle, and was said to have "alone received the name 'Understanding'" among the assembly.

"I attained fruition through awakening to the two words 'guest' and 'dust.'" Kauṇḍinya realized the principle through these two words, "guest" and "dust," and attained the true fruit. What is this principle? Our bodies are ceaselessly arising and ceasing, like guests. Guests cannot remain permanently; they appear and disappear, coming and going. They are also like dust, which drifts without rest and continually moves about.

This is an analogy for our physical bodies: like guests and dust, they come and go and cannot remain permanently. Where there is a guest, there is a host; where there is dust, there is space.

All of us seated here today are guests; after a while, we will all leave. But Old Wei is the host—this is only an analogy, for the sūtra is being explained at Old Wei's home, so Old Wei is called the host, while all who have come to participate in the Dharma assembly are guests—and he does not leave. The host remains permanently; the guests cannot remain permanently. The physical body is precisely such a guest.

We should not look at the physical body; we should see the host within. What is the host? The host is our nature of "seeing." In the first demonstration of seeing, the nature of "seeing" is not the eyes; the nature of "seeing" is our host. Yet our mistake is that we recognize only the guest and not the host. This physical body is an illusory body, a guest, and it changes without pause even for a moment.

The metabolism of cells does not stop even for a second. In roughly a month, all the blood in the body is replaced; it is no longer the original blood. Yet we recognize only this ceaselessly changing realm of sensory objects and do not recognize the empty and quiescent substance of Buddha-nature. Guest is set against host, and dust against space; Kauṇḍinya awakened to the Way through these two words. The nature of "seeing" is unborn and undying.

We must recognize the nature of "seeing" and not merely notice the fluctuations of dharmic objects. Everyone clings to family and toils all their life for wives, children, gold, silver, and wealth—grasping, grasping, grasping! In the end, not a single thing can be taken away. We come naked and go naked.

When we go, however, we are not entirely naked; we must take one thing with us. What is it? Karma. We must take karma with us; the karma we have created follows us. Kauṇḍinya was wise: after the Buddha taught him, he awakened to this host. He saw that the nature of "seeing" is constant. He saw that the fundamental substance is true emptiness, not the murky appearance of the sensory-object realm.

In fact, Kauṇḍinya's awakening was only to the nirvāṇa of the Lesser Vehicle. Why was it the nirvāṇa of the Lesser Vehicle? He understood that the nature of "seeing" is a constant realm, like empty space. The six sense objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touchables, and dharmas—are like guests. Abandoning guest and dust, he gained the empty host and realized his own intrinsic nature. He had already attained such a Lesser Vehicle fruition.

Going a step further, this guest and dust of ceaseless change, continual coming and going, and segmented birth and death is, in its very substance, the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The Tathāgata-garbha is unborn and undying. Unborn does not mean rigidly without birth; ceaseless arising is precisely unborn. Because it is unborn, it is also unceasing. To recognize this is the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. When the mind does not abide in circumstances and wondrous functioning fully arises, one is liberated from transformational birth and death. The Mahāyāna and Lesser Vehicle differ by only this small point.

"World-Honored One, suppose a traveling guest stops at an inn. He may lodge there or eat there; when he has finished lodging or eating, he packs for the journey ahead and cannot remain at rest. But the true host naturally has nowhere to go."

World-Honored One, for example, a traveler hurriedly "stops at an inn," entering a lodging house to stay; "he may lodge or eat," either staying there or merely eating a meal. After lodging or eating, "he packs for the journey ahead" and still must gather his luggage and continue on his way. "He cannot remain at rest": he cannot stay there permanently and cease traveling. "But the true host naturally has nowhere to go." If he were the host, he would remain permanently and would not leave.

"Thus I reflected: what does not remain is called a guest; what remains is called a host. That which does not remain is what is meant by 'guest.'"

"Thus I reflected: what does not remain is called a guest; what remains is called a host." When you come but do not remain, you are a guest; to remain permanently and unmoving is to be the host. "That which does not remain is what is meant by 'guest.'" What cannot remain permanently, but comes and goes, is a guest. Our illusory bodies are like guests in the inn of this world.

An ancient said: "Heaven and earth are the lodging house of the myriad things; time is the passing guest of the hundred generations." Heaven and earth are the inn in which we reside. Our coming into this world is likewise that of a guest: we eat and drink, and once our affairs are finished, we depart.

How are our affairs finished? We carry out a course of activity in this world and create a store of karma; in the end, we grow old and die. Once dead, we must "pack

for the journey ahead" and depart. Where do we go? To where new karma has come to fruition.

When past karma is exhausted, it means that all the karma we created in past lives has already been undergone in this life. We then take on a new body to undergo the karma newly created. Each of us lives in different circumstances because the karma created in the past differs. "To know the causes of past lives, look at what one undergoes in this life; to know the results of future lives, look at what one does in this life."

What we do in this life becomes the result in future lives. We depart carrying the karma created in this life. "Not having leisure to remain settled" means that we cannot remain here forever; we must continue revolving through the six realms. "If one is truly the master, there is naturally nowhere to go": our nature of seeing neither arises nor ceases.

What appearance of coming or going could the true mind, which neither arises nor ceases, have? Thus, when we speak of being reborn in the Pure Land, and of turning into another body many years later, "the one born is indeed born, but the one who goes has not gone." This means that the master has no appearance of coming or going, arising or ceasing. As I just said, we must be liberated from transformational birth and death. Within non-arising, manifested birth is not hindered; within neither coming nor going, coming and going are not hindered.

Thus it is said that the Tathāgata comes without coming, and comes yet does not come. Why say that there is no coming? Because one recognizes the master. Although there is coming and going, it remains unmoving. We must not cling to past objects or external circumstances; past objects and external circumstances are guests. Cultivating the Way means recognizing the master and recognizing the true mind. Once one lets go of such past objects and external circumstances, accomplishment is attained.

A patriarch said, "Do not go about reciting the Buddha's name or investigating Chan; that is superfluous effort. Such people wear cangues and chains!" Why say this? Because he is free and at ease: broad and open in accord with conditions, carefree in spontaneous functioning. He recognizes the Tathāgatagarbha mind that is original and recognizes the master. Ordinary beings recognize only the guests and do not recognize the master. Though the difference is slight, its consequences are immense. Kauṇḍinya said, "What permanently abides is the master; what does not abide is the guest." Therefore, I have let go of this illusory body.

"It is also like the fresh clearing after rain, when the pure sunlight rises in the sky. As its light enters through a crevice, it reveals the various appearances of dust in empty space. The dust particles move, while empty space remains still. Reflecting thus,

what is clear and still is called space, and what moves is called dust. That which moves is what is meant by dust."

"The Buddha said: 'Just so.'"

Let us give another analogy. The preceding analogy concerned the guest; this one concerns dust. Thus the two words, guest and dust, have now been explained. Dust means particles of dust. It is like the time just after rain has cleared, when fresh sunlight rises. "The light enters through a crevice" means that light passes through a gap.

When there is a broad expanse of light, one cannot see the dust. But if light shines through a crevice, one can see that the sunlight is filled with dust. We have all had this experience: seeing a beam of sunlight full of dust, beyond measure. "The dust particles move, while empty space remains still." The dust never ceases moving, but empty space does not move.

"Reflecting thus, what is clear and still is called space, and what moves is called dust." He reflected in this way: that which is clear and tranquil is empty space, while that which moves without cease is dust. This illustrates the condition when we first remove afflictions through diligent practice.

But for people of great capacity, one may directly say, "There is no cultivation, no attainment, and no realization." Such people must let go of everything. Such people do exist, but they are few. Most people need to progress slowly, step by step. When one first removes afflictions, it is like the clearing after rain, when the air is fresh.

This illustrates our beginning to awaken and seeing how immensely weighty our afflictions and habitual tendencies are, like seeing dust flying in a beam of light. The innumerable forms of this world all illusorily arise and perish, arising and ceasing without rest; yet empty space remains tranquil and unmoving. This tranquil, unmoving empty space represents our true mind, for the essence of the true mind is quiescent and constant. The dust in empty space moves; the moving dust represents our deluded thoughts. This analogy is most fitting, so the Buddha said, "Just so." Yes, yes.

"Then the Tathāgata, amid the great assembly, bent the fingers of his hand, then opened them again; having opened them, he bent them once more. Addressing Ānanda, he said: 'What do you now see?'"

"Ānanda said: 'I see the Tathāgata's palm marked with a hundred jeweled wheels opening and closing amid the assembly.'"

At this point, the Buddha wished to demonstrate that what Kauṇḍinya had said was correct. He bent his five fingers, making a fist; having bent them, he opened them,

and having opened them, he bent them again. What was the point of this? It illustrates how guests continually come and go. He asked Ānanda, “What do you now see?”

Ānanda said that he saw the Tathāgata’s palm marked with a hundred jeweled wheels—Buddha’s hands bear the marks of a hundred jeweled, thousand-spoked wheels, and his feet also bear wheel marks—opening and then closing amid the assembly, closing and then opening again.

“The Buddha said to Ānanda: ‘You see my hand opening and closing amid the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or does your seeing open and close?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘The World-Honored One’s precious hand opens and closes amid the assembly. I see the Tathāgata’s hand itself opening and closing; it is not my nature of seeing that opens and closes.’”

The Buddha again asked Ānanda: “You see my hand opening and closing amid the assembly. Is it my hand that opens and closes, or does your seeing open and close?”

Ānanda replied: “Your hand opens and closes; my seeing does not open or close.”

“The Buddha said: ‘What moves, and what is still?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘The Buddha’s hand does not remain still. Yet my nature of seeing does not even have stillness; how could it be non-abiding?’”

“The Buddha said: ‘Just so.’”

The Buddha further asked: “What is moving, and what is still?”

Ānanda said: “It is the Buddha’s hand that moves without remaining still. As for my nature of seeing, it does not even have stillness; how could it be non-abiding? Non-abiding means not remaining still, and not remaining still means movement. If there is not even stillness, how could there be movement?”

The Buddha said: “Yes, yes.”

This too is an analogy: the hand opens and closes, but seeing does not open or close. At this point, Ānanda’s understanding had become relatively correct. He knew that seeing is unmoving, neither opening nor closing.

Yet there are distinctions even in saying that seeing does not move. What distinctions? Has one truly recognized the unmoving nature of seeing, or is one only temporarily abiding in stillness? For example, suppose a guest is related to an elder. Having met the elder and chatted for a while, he says that he will stay for a month.

After all, this is only a temporary stay; he is not the true master. The elder is the true master.

If one mistakes this temporarily staying guest for the master, one is wrong.

The Buddha was concerned that Ānanda might not yet have truly seen his nature, so he asked, “What moves, and what is still?” He wanted him to see clearly: what is moving, and what is still? Ānanda said, “The Buddha’s hand moves without remaining still. My nature of seeing does not even have stillness; how could it have movement?” At this point Ānanda truly awakened.

Movement and seeing exist only in relation to each other. If there were no movement, seeing would not exist at all. My seeing does not even have stillness, so how could there be movement? Therefore, movement does not exist. This is extremely important. If one says that “seeing” is still, then it is merely a guest temporarily abiding, not true seeing. Only when one is free from both sides, movement and stillness, when neither exists, is there true stillness. Ānanda understood here that even the nature of seeing is absent; how then could there be abiding? The Buddha considered his answer entirely correct, and so said, “Just so.”

Above, the relationship between master and guest was explained; below, the relationship between dust and empty space will be explained.

“The Tathāgata then emitted a jeweled light from the wheel-marked palm, placing it to Ānanda’s right. Ānanda immediately turned his head and looked to the right. Then he emitted another light to Ānanda’s left, and Ānanda again turned his head and looked to the left.”

“The Buddha said to Ānanda: ‘Why is your head moving today?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘I saw the Tathāgata emit a wondrous jeweled light to my right and left. Therefore, I looked to the right and left, and my head moved of itself.’”

The Buddha again tested Ānanda by means of the meaning of dust and empty space. He emitted a ray of jeweled light from his palm marked with a hundred jeweled wheels, placing it to Ānanda’s right, and Ānanda looked to the right. Then he emitted another ray of light to Ānanda’s left, and Ānanda turned to look left. The Buddha asked Ānanda, “Why is your head moving today?”

Ānanda said: “The jeweled light emitted by the Tathāgata is to my left and right. Since I look at the light to the left and right, my head moves.”

“Ānanda, when you look at the Buddha’s light and move your head to the right and left, is your head moving, or is your seeing moving?”

“World-Honored One, my head moves of itself. Yet my nature of seeing does not even have cessation; how could there be shaking?”

“The Buddha said: ‘Just so.’”

The Buddha again asked Ānanda: “When you look at the jeweled light and move your head to the right and left, is your head moving, or is your seeing moving?” As above, he pressed the inquiry further: is your head moving, or is your seeing moving?

Ānanda said: “My head is moving. My nature of seeing does not possess cessation—cessation means stopping, in contrast to movement—so where could movement be? Dust flies about, then gradually settles and ceases to move; this is cessation. Where there is cessation, there is movement; the two are relative. Our intrinsic nature is neither moving nor still, and so it is said, ‘It does not even have cessation; how could there be shaking?’ One does not grasp or reject on the basis of opposites.”

The Buddha confirmed that Ānanda had spoken correctly: “Just so, just so.”

All appearances of dust—the objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas—also have times of stillness, but their stillness comes about from movement. Since it becomes still from movement, it will move again from stillness. It always runs between the two sides of movement and stillness and cannot permanently abide. But the nature of seeing is originally thus; it does not move from stillness, nor become still from movement. Therefore Ānanda said, “My nature of seeing does not even have cessation; how could there be shaking?” This statement is thoroughgoing.

“Thereupon, the Tathāgata addressed the entire assembly: ‘If sentient beings call that which moves “dust” and that which does not abide “a guest,” then observe: Ānanda’s head moves of itself, yet the seeing does not move. Again, observe my hand opening and closing of itself, yet the seeing neither extends nor contracts. Why do you now take movement to be the body and movement to be the environment? From beginning to end, thought after thought arises and ceases; you lose your true nature, act in inversion, and, with the nature of mind deprived of its truth, take things to be yourselves. Thus you revolve in saṃsāra, bringing this ceaseless wandering upon yourselves.’”

Suppose the assembly understood the words, “That which moves is called dust; that which does not abide is called a guest.” Then they would recognize the two words “guest” and “dust”: guest and dust are afflictions. These guests and this dust are constantly moving and constantly changing. Because impermanence is suffering, afflictions then arise.

You see Ānanda's head moving, while the "seeing" does not move. Again, you see my hand open and close, while the "seeing" neither extends nor contracts. Why do you now "take movement to be the body and movement to be the environment"? Why take this illusory body to be your body, and the dusty environment to be your realm?

"From beginning to end" means from beginningless time until the very end. What end is that? It is when we realize the Way and attain Buddhahood. If we do not practice the Way and attain Buddhahood, there is no end, because the cycle of rebirth in the six realms never stops; it is never extinguished.

Even if this world were destroyed, we sentient beings would not thereby come to an end. When this world is destroyed, karmic causes and conditions pull us into another world, where we still revolve through the six realms of rebirth. When that world is destroyed and this world comes into being again, we turn back here once more. Formation, abiding, decay, and emptiness never cease; there is no time of termination and no final end. If we cultivate with wholehearted resolve and attain Buddhahood, that is called the end.

"Thought after thought arises and ceases; you lose your true nature." We all take the deluded body and deluded environment as real, regarding this illusory body as our own body and this illusory realm as our precious environment, to which we cling unwilling to part. The mind wavers, arising and ceasing without stop. We forget our true nature, which neither arises nor ceases.

That is, not knowing that it exists, one acts in inversion. Sentient beings do not recognize their own inherently quiescent, everlasting, and unextinguished nature. Instead, they take the deluded mind, which continually arises and ceases, as real, and thus turn things upside down. What actions do they perform? They create karma and undergo karmic retribution. As we have just said, the afflictions of views and thought are erroneous knowledge and erroneous views.

Only by taking the false appearances before one as real does one give rise to greed and create karma. Having created karma, one undergoes karmic retribution; to undergo karmic retribution is to suffer. Thus they are called "delusion, karma, and suffering." Is this not inversion? A perfectly fine Buddha becomes a sentient being in the six realms; this is inversion.

"The nature of mind is deprived of its truth." What is meant by the nature of mind? It is the dharmatā of the entire dharma realm. The various things and various dharma characteristics all arise from dharmatā. For example, in the earlier analogy of grass, leaves, thread, and knots: leaves grow from grass, and grass is the essential nature of the leaves; knots are made by tying threads together, and thread is the essential nature of the knots.

This thread and this grass symbolize our true mind, which is called the nature of mind. Sentient beings lose their true mind and do not recognize it. They take delusion to be themselves, regarding all things with form as the self. Because they deludedly cling to a self—"I want this; I want that"—they chase after external objects. Sentient beings take delusion to be themselves; the Buddha is the manifestation of true mind.

Everything the Buddha says and does is the wondrous functioning of true mind. The difference is only this slight. Simply put, sentient beings cling to appearances, whereas the Buddha does not cling to appearances at all. The Buddha sees all appearances as non-appearances, seeing that all appearances are without appearance.

Sentient beings "take things to be themselves," clinging to something and thereby acquiring a physical body. Once there is a physical body, wherever there is an "I," there is also "what belongs to me." I want all things; selfish thoughts and stray thoughts multiply without end. Desires are endless, afflictions are endless, and the cycle of rebirth in the six realms follows. Thus, one revolves within them, bringing ceaseless wandering upon oneself.

What does "within them" mean? It means within guest and dust, within afflictions, within deluded thoughts, and within the six realms. Because the deluded mind chases after external objects, one revolves within these. "Bringing ceaseless wandering upon oneself" means continuing to wander in this way without end. Why is it called self-induced? Because one oneself loses one's true nature and oneself takes things to be the self. Thus one wanders on without end; therefore it is called self-induced.

Because the karma created differs, the karmic retribution undergone by each sentient being also differs. When some people encounter something unfavorable, they either blame Heaven or fault others. "Oh, why does Heaven have no eyes? My conscience is so good—why must I undergo this retribution?"

"That person is so bad; why are they still so fortunate?" Others say, "I believe in Buddhism and eat vegetarian food, so why is my fate still so bad? Some people do not believe in Buddhism and do not eat vegetarian food, yet their family circumstances are excellent."

What is the principle behind this? They do not know that cause and effect extends through the three periods of time; cause and effect is not limited to a single lifetime. When you do good deeds in this life, the karmic offenses from your previous life are lightened—it is not that they have not been lightened. Originally, great suffering awaited you; because you act well in this life, the evil karma from your previous life can be reduced somewhat.

When others enjoy blessings, it is because they planted those blessings in past lives and did many good deeds then. If they do bad deeds in this life, they too must suffer in future lives. So long as one does bad deeds, even if one does not suffer now, one's blessings in future lives will be diminished; invisibly, they are naturally diminished. Therefore, do not blame Heaven or fault others. It is all due to acting in inversion. By acting in inversion, one continues to revolve within this without end.

We must understand that clinging to appearances is such ignorance. From now on, let us put down the myriad dusts and accord with our circumstances, knowing that these are all adventitious defilements. We recognize that the true master is unborn and undying. We need not fear when the habitual tendency to cling to appearances arises. The sole method is safeguarding realization; we must struggle against our habitual tendencies.

Practice is in fact making a revolution. It is not a revolution against others, but a revolution against oneself. First, we must overthrow the life of the ordinary being, for ordinary beings cling to existence; this must first be cast off. Then we must overthrow the life of the two vehicles, for falling into emptiness and biased emptiness is also wrong; even emptiness must be cast off. Then we must overthrow the life of the bodhisattva, for bodhisattvas still retain dharma views.

What are dharma views? For example: "I have accumulated merit and virtue by liberating sentient beings; I can escape the cycle of birth and death; I can realize the Way" … all these are dharma views. This is how the work is done: advance courageously and directly attain the supreme vehicle. Continue for a long time, and you will realize the Way.

What we have just discussed is the second manifestation of seeing: movement is called dust, revealing that seeing is unmoving. The master does not move, while the guest comes and goes without cease; empty space does not move, while dust is constantly moving. This reveals that the seeing nature is unmoving. Next comes the third manifestation of seeing: the young and old observe the river, revealing that seeing does not cease. This seeing nature has never arisen or ceased, and never will arise or cease.

Volume Two: Ten Revelations of Seeing (the Nonempty Tathāgata-Garbha)

At that time, Ānanda and the entire assembly, having heard the Buddha's instruction, felt ease in body and mind. They reflected that, since beginningless time, they had lost their fundamental mind and mistakenly taken the shadowy

discriminations of objects and conditions for reality. Now they awakened, like a child who has lost its mother's milk and suddenly encounters a loving mother. With palms joined, they bowed to the Buddha and wished to hear the Tathāgata reveal the true and false, illusory and real aspects of body and mind, and elucidate the two natures of arising and ceasing and of non-arising and non-ceasing, present before them.

Then King Prasenajit rose and addressed the Buddha: "Formerly, before I had received the instructions of the Buddhas, I encountered Kātyāyana and the son of Vairāṭī, who both maintained that, after the death of this body, there is annihilation, and that this is called nirvāṇa. Although I have now encountered the Buddha, I still harbor doubts. How may this be elucidated, so that I may realize and know the ground in which this mind neither arises nor ceases? All in this assembly who still have outflows likewise wish to hear this."

The Buddha said to the king: "Your body exists before you now. Let me ask you: is this physical body like vajra, permanently abiding and indestructible, or does it decay?" "World-Honored One, my present body will ultimately perish." The Buddha said: "Great King, you have not yet perished. How do you know that you will perish?" "World-Honored One, although this impermanent and decaying body of mine has not yet perished—"

"—I observe that it is changing and passing away thought after thought, ever renewed and never abiding. Like wood burning into ashes, it gradually wears away and ceases without pause. I therefore know with certainty that this body will ultimately perish." The Buddha said: "So it is. Great King, you are now advanced in years and have entered old age. How does your appearance compare with that of your childhood?" "World-Honored One, when I was an infant, my skin was soft and lustrous; when I reached maturity, my blood and vital energy were abundant."

"But now, in my declining years, pressed by old age and feebleness, my form and complexion are withered, and my spirit is dim. My hair has turned white and my face is wrinkled. As death approaches, how could I compare with the vigor of my prime?" The Buddha said: "Great King, surely your appearance did not suddenly decay?" The king said: "World-Honored One, these changes have secretly shifted, and I truly did not notice them. Cold and heat passed in succession, and gradually I came to this state."

"Why is this so? When I was twenty, though called young, my appearance had already aged beyond that of my tenth year. At thirty, I had further declined beyond twenty. Now, at sixty-two, when I look back at myself at fifty, I seemed decidedly strong and vigorous. World-Honored One, although I perceive this subtle shifting and decline, its changes seem limited to intervals of ten years."

“But if I examine it more minutely, how could its changes occur only every ten or twenty years? In truth, it changes year by year. And is it only yearly change? It also changes month by month. And is it merely monthly change? It changes day by day as well. Upon deep reflection and careful observation, I see that in every instant and every thought it never remains still. Therefore, I know that my body will ultimately perish.”

The Buddha said to the king: “You see these changes, which never cease in their shifting and alteration, and thus awaken to the fact that you will perish. But at the time of perishing, do you know that within your body there is that which does not perish?” King Prasenajit joined his palms and addressed the Buddha: “I truly do not know.” The Buddha said: “I shall now show you the nature that neither arises nor ceases.”

“Great King, at what age did you first see the waters of the Ganges?” The king replied: “When I was three years old, my loving mother took me to pay respects to the deity Jīvaka. As we passed this river, I then knew that it was the Ganges.” The Buddha said: “Great King, as you have said, at twenty you had declined from what you were at ten; and by sixty, days, months, years, and moments had changed with every thought.”

“When you saw this river at the age of three, what was its water like when you were thirteen?” The king replied: “It was just as it had been when I was three, entirely unchanged. Even now, at sixty-two, it is no different.” The Buddha said: “You now lament that your hair is white and your face wrinkled; surely your face is more wrinkled than it was in childhood.”

“Yet when you now look upon the Ganges, is the seeing by which you see it any older than the seeing by which you beheld it as a child?” The king said: “No, World-Honored One.” The Buddha said: “Great King, although your face is wrinkled, the essential nature of this seeing has never wrinkled. What wrinkles changes; what does not wrinkle does not change. What changes is subject to extinction; that which does not change is originally free of arising and ceasing. How, then, could it be subject to your birth and death? And why do you still cite the teachings of Maskarī and others, who all claim that this body is completely annihilated after death?”

Hearing these words, the king came to trust and understand that, after leaving this life, one proceeds to another birth. Together with the entire assembly, he rejoiced exuberantly and attained what they had never before experienced.

Ānanda then rose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha with palms joined, knelt on one knee, and said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, if this seeing and hearing truly neither arise nor cease, why does the World-Honored One call us beings who

have lost their true nature and act in inversion? May you arouse your compassion and wash away our defilements."

Thereupon the Tathāgata lowered his golden-colored arm and pointed downward with his wheel-marked hand. He showed it to Ānanda and said, "Do you now see my hand, the hand of the mother-of-pearl mark? Is it upright or inverted?" Ānanda said, "Worldly beings regard this as inverted, but I do not know what is upright and what is inverted." The Buddha said to Ānanda, "If worldly people regard this as inverted, what do they take to be upright?" Ānanda said, "When the Tathāgata raises his arm and his soft cotton-like hand points upward into empty space, this is called upright."

The Buddha then raised his arm and said to Ānanda: "If this is called inversion, it is merely a reversal of head and tail. Worldly people look at it in this way. You should therefore understand that your body and the pure dharmakāya of the Tathāgatas are, by comparison, revealed as follows: the body of the Tathāgata is called right and universal knowledge, while your bodies are called inverted in nature. Examine carefully your body and the Buddha's body: in what respect is that called inversion? What precisely is designated as inversion?" At that time, Ānanda and the whole assembly stared bewilderedly at the Buddha without blinking, not knowing where the inversion of body and mind lay.

The Buddha, moved by compassion and pity for Ānanda and the entire assembly, spoke with the sound of the ocean tide and proclaimed to all present: "All good men, I have always said that the conditions of form and mind, the mental factors, and all dharmas that are objects of cognition are manifested by mind alone. Your bodies and your minds are all things manifested within the wondrous, bright, true, essential, and wondrous mind."

"How is it that you have lost the originally wondrous, perfectly wondrous, bright mind and its precious, bright, wondrous nature, and, within awakening, recognize delusion? When obscurity becomes emptiness, then within the dark obscurity of emptiness, darkness congeals into form. Form mingles with deluded thoughts, and the interaction of thought and form becomes the body. The gathered conditions stir within and rush outward, and you take the confused and disturbed appearances for the nature of mind. Once you mistake this for mind, you are bound to believe that it resides within your physical body."

"You do not know that this physical body, as well as mountains, rivers, empty space, and the great earth outside it, are all things within the wondrous, bright, true mind. It is like abandoning a clear ocean of hundreds of thousands of leagues and recognizing only a single floating bubble as the entire ocean, exhausting all seas and gulfs. You are people doubly deluded amid delusion. It is no different from my lowering my hand; thus the Tathāgata calls you pitiable."

Having received the Buddha's deeply compassionate and saving instruction, Ānanda wept, crossed his hands, and said to the Buddha: "Although I have received the Buddha's wondrous teaching and awakened to the wondrous, bright mind, the originally perfect and permanently abiding ground of mind, I now understand the Buddha's present voice of Dharma through the conditioned mind, which is indeed what I rely upon in listening. Though I have merely obtained an understanding of this mind, I still do not dare to acknowledge it as the original ground of mind. May the Buddha take pity on us and proclaim the perfect teaching, uproot the root of my doubts, and lead me back to the unsurpassed Way."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You and the rest still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind; thus this Dharma also becomes a condition and you do not obtain the Dharma nature. It is like someone pointing at the moon with a finger to show it to another. Because of the finger, that person should look at the moon. But if the person looks at the finger and takes it for the moon itself, that person not only loses sight of the moon, but also loses the finger. Why? Because the pointing finger is mistaken for the bright moon. Nor does that person merely lose the finger; they also fail to distinguish brightness from darkness."

"Why? Because they take the finger itself to be the nature of the moon's brightness and therefore understand neither brightness nor darkness. You are the same. If you take the discrimination of my voice in speaking Dharma to be your mind, then this mind should retain a discriminating nature even apart from the discriminated voice. It is like a traveler who lodges temporarily at an inn: after a short stay, the traveler leaves and does not remain. But the innkeeper never goes anywhere and is therefore called the master of the inn."

"So too, if it is truly your mind, it does not go anywhere. How, then, when separated from sound, does it have no discriminating nature? And this applies not only to the mind that discriminates sound. When it discriminates my appearance, apart from all forms and appearances it has no discriminating nature. So it is even when all discrimination is absent: it is neither form nor emptiness. Kośalī and others, in their ignorance, take this to be primordial matter. Apart from the conditions of all dharmas, it has no discriminating nature. Thus the nature of your mind returns each to its own source; how then can it be the master?"

Ānanda said: "If the nature of my mind returns each to its own source, then how can the wondrous, bright, original mind of which the Tathāgata speaks have no return? I beg you, in your compassion, to explain this to me."

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "For now, consider your seeing of me. The fundamental brightness of the essential faculty of seeing is not the wondrous, essential, bright mind itself, just as a second moon is not a reflection of the moon. Listen carefully: I

shall now show you that which has nowhere to return. Ānanda, this great lecture hall opens widely to the east. When the sun rises into the sky, there is brightness. At midnight, when the moon is dark and clouds and mist obscure the sky, there is darkness."

"Through gaps in doors and windows, there is openness; between walls and roofs, there is obstruction. Where distinctions are made, there are conditioned appearances; within blank emptiness, there is pervasive emptiness. When the air is thick and dusty, there is murky dust; when the sky clears and the vapors subside, there is purity. Ānanda, you observe all these changing appearances. I shall now return each of them to the place from which it arises."

"What is its original cause? Ānanda, among these changing appearances, brightness returns to the sun. Why? Without the sun there is no brightness; brightness belongs to the sun, and so it returns to the sun. Darkness returns to the dark moon; openness returns to doors and windows; obstruction returns to walls and roofs; conditioned appearances return to discrimination; blank emptiness returns to space; murkiness returns to dust; and clarity returns to a clear sky. All things in the world fall within these categories."

"Of the eight kinds of bright nature perceived by your essential seeing, to which would you return the seeing itself? Why? If it returned to brightness, then when there was no brightness it could no longer see darkness. Yet although brightness and darkness, and all such distinctions, differ from one another, seeing itself is without difference. Whatever can be returned is naturally not you; what cannot be returned—if it is not you, then who is it? You should therefore know that your mind is originally wondrous, bright, and pure. Yet you yourself are confused and deluded, having lost your original nature and undergone the round of rebirth, continually tossed and drowned in birth and death. Thus the Tathāgata calls you pitiable."

Ānanda said: "Although I understand that this nature of seeing has nowhere to return, how may I know that it is my true nature?"

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "I shall now ask you. You have not yet attained undefiled purity, yet through the Buddha's spiritual power you can see as far as the first dhyāna without obstruction. And Aniruddha sees Jambudvīpa as one sees an āmalaka fruit in the palm of one's hand. The bodhisattvas see hundreds of thousands of worlds. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions see throughout pure lands as numerous as motes of dust, with nothing beyond their sight. The vision of sentient beings extends no farther than a fraction of an inch."

"Ānanda, you and I now view the palaces where the Four Heavenly Kings reside, surveying throughout them beings that move in water, on land, and through the air.

Though there are various forms, bright and dark, they are all objects before you, distinctions that obstruct and remain."

"Here you should distinguish self from other. I shall now have you select, among what is seen, which is your own substance and which is the appearance of objects. Ānanda, trace your seeing to its furthest reach: from the palaces of the sun and moon, all are objects and not you. Extending to the Seven Golden Mountains, look carefully all around: though they emit many kinds of light, they too are objects and not you. As you gradually look farther, clouds soar, birds fly, wind stirs, dust rises, trees, mountains, rivers, grasses, plants, people, and animals—all are objects and not you."

"Ānanda, all these near and distant things, all objects with material nature, though various and different, are alike in being perceived by your pure essential seeing. Thus the various kinds of objects have their own distinctions, but the nature of seeing has no distinction. This essential, wondrous brightness is truly your nature of seeing."

"If seeing were an object, then you too should be able to see my seeing."

If seeing is the same as seeing me, then when I do not see, why do you not see the place where I do not see? If you see the non-seeing, that naturally is not the appearance of non-seeing. If you do not see the place where I do not see, it is naturally not a thing. How, then, can it not be you? Moreover, when you now see things, if you see things and things also see you, then their natures become confused. Neither you and I nor all the worlds could then be established. Ānanda, when you see, it is you who see, not I. The seeing-nature pervades everywhere—who else could it be but you? Why do you doubt your own true nature and seek reality in me, taking your own nature not to be true?

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if this seeing-nature is surely my own and not another's, then when the Tathāgata and I behold the splendid treasure halls of the Four Heavenly Kings or dwell in the palaces of the sun and moon, this seeing extends in a complete circle throughout the Sahā world. Yet when I return to the monastery, I see only the grounds of the monastery; in the pure hall, I see only its doors and eaves. World-Honored One, this seeing-nature thus originally pervades an entire realm, but now, within a room, it fills only one room. Has this seeing contracted from great to small? Or has it been cut off by the walls and buildings? I do not understand where the meaning of this lies. I pray that you will, in your great compassion, explain it for me."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "All the various activities of the world—great and small, inner and outer—belong to the objects before one. One should not say that seeing expands or contracts. For example, when one looks at the space within a square

vessel, one sees square space. I ask you again: is the square space seen within that square vessel definitely square, or not definitely square? If it is definitely square, then when a round vessel is placed elsewhere, the space within it should not be round."

"If it is not definitely square, then there should be no square space within a square vessel. You say that you do not know where the meaning of this lies. Such is the nature of the principle—how can it be said to be located anywhere? Ānanda, if you wish the space to be without squareness or roundness, simply remove the square vessel; the nature of space has no squareness. One should not say that, in addition to removing the vessel, one must remove the location of the square appearance from space. As in your question, when one enters a room, does seeing contract and become small?"

"When you look up at the sun, do you pull your seeing outward until it reaches the sun's surface? If walls and buildings could cut off seeing, then when a small opening is pierced through them, should there not be traces of seeing reconnecting? This principle is untenable. Since beginningless time, all sentient beings have mistaken themselves for things, lost their fundamental mind, and been turned by things. Therefore, within this, they perceive things as great or small. If one can turn things, one is the same as the Tathāgata. With body and mind perfectly bright, one remains unmoving in the bodhimaṇḍa; at the tip of a single hair, one can contain and receive the lands of the ten directions."

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if this essence of seeing is surely my wondrous nature, then this wondrous nature is now before me. If seeing is surely my true self, what then are my present body and mind? Yet my present body and mind make distinctions and have a real existence, while that seeing has no distinguishing nature and distinguishes my body. If it is truly my mind, let it cause me now to see. If the seeing-nature is truly myself, then my body is not myself. How is this different from the Tathāgata's former challenge that things could see me? I pray that, in your great compassion, you will open up my lack of awakening."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "What you now say—that seeing is before you—is not true. If it were truly before you, and you truly saw it, then this essence of seeing, having a location, could be pointed out. Now, as you and I sit in the Jeta Grove, we look all around at the groves, streams, and halls; above are the sun and moon, and before us is the Ganges."

"Here before my lion throne, you raise your hand and point out these various appearances: what is dark is a grove, what is bright is the sun, what obstructs is a wall, and what is unobstructed is space. So it is even with the finest blade of grass or

tree. Though their sizes differ, whatever has form can be pointed to; there is nothing that cannot be indicated."

"If seeing is necessarily now before you, then you should be able to point it out clearly with your hand: what is seeing? Ānanda, you should know that if space is seeing, then, since it has already become seeing, what is space? If things are seeing, then, since they have already become seeing, what are things? You may carefully analyze the myriad appearances and separate out the pure, wondrous, luminous source of seeing. Point it out and show it to me, as clearly and unmistakably as you can point to those other things."

Ānanda said, "Here in this lofty lecture hall, extending afar to the Ganges and upward to the sun and moon, whatever I point to with my raised hand or behold with my eyes is a thing; none of it is seeing. World-Honored One, as the Buddha has said, not only I, a śrāvaka at the initial stage of study who still has outflows, but even bodhisattvas cannot, before the appearances of the myriad things, separate out the pure essence of seeing, apart from all things, as having a distinct nature of its own." The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is."

The Buddha again told Ānanda, "As you have said, there is no essence of seeing that, apart from all things, has a distinct nature of its own. Then among the things to which you point, there is nothing that is not seeing. I now ask you again: as you and the Tathāgata sit in the Jeta Grove and again look upon the groves and gardens, even up to the sun and moon, though their various appearances differ, there is surely no essence of seeing that can be pointed out by you."

"Now further clarify: among all these things, what is not seeing?" Ānanda said, "As I truly look throughout this Jeta Grove, I do not know what within it is not seeing. Why? If a tree were not seeing, how could one see the tree? If the tree itself were seeing, how could it still be called a tree? So it is even with space: if space were not seeing, how could one see space? If space itself were seeing, how could it still be called space? I have further considered this carefully: among the myriad appearances, none is not seeing." The Buddha said, "So it is, so it is."

At that time, among the assembly, those who had not yet completed their training heard the Buddha's words and were bewildered, not knowing the beginning or end of this meaning. All at once they were alarmed and lost their bearings. Knowing that their minds and thoughts had become unsettled and fearful, the Tathāgata felt compassion and comforted Ānanda and the whole assembly: "All you good men, the unsurpassed Dharma King speaks truthfully, speaks in accordance with reality, and speaks as things are. He does not deceive or speak falsely. He is not like Maskarī and the other adherents of the four evasive propositions, who advance distorted and

confused arguments. Consider this carefully; do not fail to live up to my compassionate concern."

Then Mañjuśrī, Dharma Prince, taking pity on the fourfold assembly, rose from his seat among the great assembly, bowed his head at the Buddha's feet, joined his palms respectfully, and said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, this assembly has not understood the Tathāgata's explanation of the two kinds of pure seeing—form and emptiness—and the meaning of what is and is not seeing. World-Honored One, if such objects before us as form and emptiness are seeing, they should be capable of being pointed out; if they are not seeing, they should not be seen."

"Now they do not know where this meaning leads, and so they are frightened. It is not that their good roots accumulated in former times are slight. We pray that the Tathāgata, in great compassion, will explain what these objects and this essence of seeing fundamentally are, so that between them there is neither seeing nor not seeing."

The Buddha told Mañjuśrī and the entire assembly, "Within the samādhi in which the Tathāgatas of the ten directions and great bodhisattvas abide, seeing and its conditions, together with the appearances that are conceived, are like flowers in empty space: they have never existed."

"This seeing and its conditions are fundamentally the wondrous, pure, luminous substance of bodhi. How could there be within them what is or is not seeing? Mañjuśrī, I now ask you: as for you, Mañjuśrī, is there another Mañjuśrī who is Mañjuśrī, or is there no Mañjuśrī?" "So it is, World-Honored One. I am truly Mañjuśrī; there is no Mañjuśrī who is Mañjuśrī. Why? If there were one, there would be two Mañjuśrīs."

"Yet today I am not without Mañjuśrī; truly, within this there are neither the two appearances of what is and what is not." The Buddha said, "This wondrous luminosity of seeing is likewise so with space and sensory objects. It is originally the wondrously luminous, unsurpassed bodhi—the pure, perfect true mind—but is mistakenly taken to be form and emptiness, hearing and seeing. It is like a second moon: which is the moon, and which is not the moon? Mañjuśrī, there is only one true moon; in between there is naturally neither 'this is the moon' nor 'this is not the moon.' Thus, when you now distinguish between seeing and objects in various ways, this is called deluded thought; you cannot thereby transcend what is and is not seeing. Because of the true essence of the wondrously awakened, luminous nature, you can transcend pointing out and not pointing out."

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, it is indeed as the Dharma King has said: the nature of awakened awareness pervades the realms of the ten directions, is serene and ever-abiding, and is by nature neither arising nor ceasing."

“How does this differ from the primordial matter (prakṛti) discussed by the Brahmin Sāṅkhya philosophers, or from the claim of such non-Buddhist schools as those who smear themselves with ashes that there is a true self pervading the ten directions? World-Honored One, on Laṅkā Mountain you also explained this meaning to Mahāmati and others: those non-Buddhists constantly speak of spontaneity, whereas I speak of causes and conditions; these are not the same realm. Now I see that this nature of awakened awareness is spontaneous, neither arising nor ceasing, and far removed from all deluded inversions. It seems not to be causes and conditions, but rather their spontaneity. How should you instruct us so that we do not fall into the various erroneous views, but attain the wondrously awakened, luminous nature of the true mind?”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “Though I have now explained skillful means to you in this way and truthfully told you, you still have not awakened and mistakenly take it to be spontaneity. Ānanda, if it were necessarily spontaneous, you would have to distinguish clearly a substance of spontaneity. Look now within this wondrously luminous seeing: what do you take as its self? Does this seeing take brightness as its self? Darkness as its self? Space as its self? Obstruction as its self? Ānanda, if brightness were its self, it should not see darkness. If space were its substance, it should not see obstruction. Likewise, if it took such appearances as darkness for its self, then when there was brightness, the seeing-nature would cease. How then could it see brightness?”

Ānanda said, “This wondrous seeing-nature is surely not spontaneous. I now understand that it arises from causes and conditions, but my mind is still unclear. I ask the Tathāgata: how does this principle accord with the nature of causes and conditions?”

The Buddha said, “You speak of causes and conditions; I ask you again. Since, through seeing, your seeing-nature is now manifest, does this seeing arise because of brightness? Because of darkness? Because of space? Because of obstruction? Ānanda, if it arose because of brightness, it should not see darkness. If it arose because of darkness, it should not see brightness. The same applies to arising because of space or obstruction, just as with brightness and darkness.”

“Furthermore, Ānanda, does this seeing arise in dependence on brightness? In dependence on darkness? In dependence on space? In dependence on obstruction? Ānanda, if it arose in dependence on space, it should not see obstruction. If it arose in dependence on obstruction, it should not see space. The same applies to dependence on brightness and darkness, just as with space and obstruction.”

“You should know that this pure awareness, wondrous and luminous, is neither caused nor conditioned; neither spontaneous nor not spontaneous; neither not-not

nor not-is; neither is nor is-not. It is apart from all appearances, yet is all dharmas. How can you now apply your mind to it and discriminate it by means of the argumentative names and appearances of the worldly realm? It is like grasping and rubbing empty space with the palm of your hand: you only weary yourself. How could empty space submit to your grasp?"

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, if the nature of wondrous awakening is neither caused nor conditioned, why has the World-Honored One often taught the bhikṣus that the seeing-nature possesses four kinds of conditions—namely, space, brightness, mind, and the eye? What is the meaning of this?"

The Buddha said, "Ānanda, what I have taught concerning the appearances of worldly causes and conditions is not the ultimate meaning. Ānanda, I ask you again: people in the world say, 'I can see.' What do they call seeing, and what do they call not seeing?" Ānanda said, "By means of the light of the sun, moon, or lamps, people see the various appearances, and this they call seeing. Without these three kinds of light, they cannot see."

"Ānanda, if the absence of light is called not seeing, then one should not see darkness. But if one surely sees darkness, this is merely the absence of light—how can it be the absence of seeing? Ānanda, if, when it is dark, not seeing brightness is called not seeing, then when it is bright, not seeing the appearance of darkness should also be called not seeing. Thus both appearances would be called not seeing. If these two appearances each displace the other, it is not that your seeing-nature is temporarily absent between them."

"Thus you should know that both are called seeing. How, then, can there be not seeing? Therefore, Ānanda, you should now know: when seeing brightness, seeing is not brightness; when seeing darkness, seeing is not darkness; when seeing space, seeing is not space; when seeing obstruction, seeing is not obstruction. These four meanings are established. You should further know: when seeing sees seeing, that seeing is not seeing. Seeing remains apart from seeing; seeing cannot reach it. How then can you speak again of causes and conditions, spontaneity, or the appearance of combination? You śrāvakas, narrow and limited in understanding, cannot penetrate the pure true reality. I now instruct you: contemplate this well, and do not grow weary or negligent upon the wondrous path to bodhi."

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, although the Buddha has explained to us causes and conditions, spontaneity, the characteristics of combination and of non-combination, our minds have still not opened. Now, on hearing further that 'when seeing sees seeing, that seeing is not true seeing,' our confusion and bewilderment have only increased. We earnestly pray that, in your great compassion, you will bestow upon us the great eye of wisdom and instruct us

so that our awakened minds may become clear and pure.” Having spoken thus, he bowed with tears of sorrow and awaited the sacred instruction.

At that time, the World-Honored One, taking pity on Ānanda and the entire assembly and wishing to expound the wondrous path of practice leading to the great dhāraṇī and the various samādhis, said to Ānanda, “Although you have a strong memory, it only benefits your extensive learning. In the subtle and secret contemplation of śamatha, your mind has not yet understood. Listen carefully now. I shall explain and reveal this to you in detail, and shall also enable all beings of the future who still possess outflows to attain the fruit of bodhi.”

“Ānanda, all sentient beings revolve in the world because of two inverted, discriminating deluded views. These arise where they are and turn according to their karma. What are these two views? First, the deluded view of individual karma among sentient beings; second, the deluded view of shared karma among sentient beings.”

“What is meant by the deluded view of individual karma? Ānanda, it is like a person in the world whose eyes are afflicted with an inflammation. At night, when he sees the light of a lamp, he sees around it separate circular halos, layered in five colors. What do you think? Are these circular lights manifested by the lamp’s brightness the color of the lamp, or the color of seeing? Ānanda, if they are the lamp’s color, then why do those without the eye disease not see them? Yet these circular halos are seen only by diseased eyes.”

“If they are the color of seeing, then seeing has become color. What, then, should one call that which sees the circular halo in the person with the eye disease? Furthermore, Ānanda, if this circular halo existed separately from the lamp, then it should also appear beside screens, curtains, tables, and mats. If it existed separately from seeing, it should not be visible to the eye. How, then, does the person with diseased eyes see the circular halo? Therefore, you should know that the color truly belongs to the lamp, while the disease of seeing produces the halo. Both the halo and the seeing of it arise from the eye disease, but the awareness of the eye disease is not itself diseased.”

“One should never say that this is the lamp or that this is seeing, nor that there is in this something neither lamp nor seeing. It is like a second moon, which is neither the moon itself nor its reflection. Why is this? The perception of a second moon is produced by pressing on the eye. Those with wisdom should not say that the source of this pressing is form or not form, apart from seeing or not apart from seeing. This case is the same. It is produced by the inflammation of the eye. Whom would you now call the lamp or seeing? How much less should you discriminate it as neither lamp nor seeing?”

“What is meant by the deluded view of shared karma? Ānanda, in this Jambudvīpa, apart from the waters of the great seas, there are three thousand continents on the land between them. On the central great continent, measured from east to west, there are altogether two thousand three hundred great countries. Among the smaller continents in the various seas, some contain two or three hundred countries, some one or two, and some as many as thirty, forty, or fifty.”

“Ānanda, suppose that among them there were a small continent containing only two countries, and that the people of only one country collectively experienced evil conditions. Then the beings in that land on the small continent would see every kind of inauspicious phenomenon: perhaps two suns, perhaps two moons, or halos, cometary signs, meteors, sidelights, rainbows, and other ominous appearances. Only the people of that country see them; the beings of the other country neither originally see nor even hear of them.”

“Ānanda, I shall now use these two matters to explain them together, advancing and returning between them. Ānanda, just as the deluded view of individual karma leads those beings to see circular halos appearing amid lamplight, although they appear like external objects, they are ultimately produced by the eye disease of the one who sees them. The disease is the fatigue of seeing; it is not created by color. Yet one who is aware of the eye disease ultimately has no fault in seeing.”

“By analogy, the mountains, rivers, lands, and all sentient beings that you now see with your eyes are all produced by the beginningless disease of seeing. Seeing and its conditions appear to form the realm before you. Originally, when my awakened awareness became bright, what seeing conditioned was a disease; awareness of seeing is itself the disease. But the bright mind of original awakening, aware of conditions, is not diseased. That which is aware of the disease of what is perceived is not within the disease. This is truly ‘when seeing sees seeing.’ How can it further be called awareness through seeing, hearing, knowing, and perception? Therefore, what you now see—myself, yourself, and the ten classes of beings in the world—is all the disease of seeing, not the awareness of the disease of seeing. That which sees is the true essence whose nature is free from disease; therefore it is not called seeing.”

“Ānanda, the deluded view of shared karma among those beings is analogous to the deluded view of individual karma in one person. A person with diseased eyes, like those in a single country, sees circular halos, produced by the delusion of the eye disease. The inauspicious things seen in common by this group arise from the pestilential evils within their shared karma. All are produced by beginningless deluded seeing.”

“By analogy, throughout the three thousand continents of Jambudvīpa, the four great seas, the Sahā world, the lands with outflows in the ten directions, and all sentient beings, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all the false conditions of disease within the wondrous mind of awakened awareness, which is originally without outflows. Through deluded combination they arise, and through deluded combination they die. If one can leave behind all conditions of combination and non-combination, one will further eradicate all causes of birth and death, perfect the unborn and unceasing nature of bodhi, and realize the pure original mind, in which original awakening constantly abides.”

“Ānanda, although you have previously awakened to the fact that the wondrous brightness of original awakening is neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature, you still do not understand that this source of awakening is neither born of combination nor of non-combination. Ānanda, I shall now question you further by means of the objects before you. You still use the deluded notions of combination and the natures of causes and conditions belonging to all worldly things, and thus doubt whether the mind that realizes bodhi arises through combination.”

“Does your wondrous, pure essence of seeing combine with brightness, with darkness, with openness, or with obstruction? If it combines with brightness, then when you look at brightness and it is before you, where does seeing become mixed with it? If the appearance of seeing can be distinguished, what form does the mixture take? If it is not seeing, how can you see brightness? If it is seeing, how can seeing see seeing? If seeing is complete in itself, where can it combine with brightness? If brightness is complete in itself, it cannot combine with seeing. Seeing must differ from brightness; if they are mixed, the name “brightness” loses its inherent nature. If the nature of brightness is lost through mixture, then combining with brightness is meaningless. The same applies to darkness, openness, and all obstructions.”

“Furthermore, Ānanda, does your wondrous, pure essence of seeing unite with brightness, with darkness, with openness, or with obstruction? If it unites with brightness, then when darkness comes, the appearance of brightness has already vanished. This seeing would then not unite with darkness; how could it see darkness? If, when seeing darkness, it does not unite with darkness but unites with brightness, it should not see brightness. Since it does not see brightness, how can there be union with brightness? Clearly, brightness is not darkness. The same applies to darkness, openness, and all obstructions.”

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, as I reflect upon it, is not this source of wondrous awakening separate from all conditioned objects and from the thoughts and considerations of the mind—that is, non-combined?”

The Buddha said, “You now say again that awakening is non-combined. I shall ask you further: if this wondrous essence of seeing is non-combined, is it not combined with brightness, not combined with darkness, not combined with openness, or not combined with obstruction? If it is not combined with brightness, then seeing and brightness must have a boundary between them. Look carefully: where is brightness, and where is seeing? What forms the boundary between seeing and brightness? Ānanda, if there is necessarily no seeing within the bounds of brightness, then they do not reach one another. Since one does not even know where the appearance of brightness is located, how can a boundary be formed? The same applies to darkness, openness, and all obstructions.”

“Again, if the wondrous essence of seeing is non-combined, is it not united with brightness, not united with darkness, not united with openness, or not united with obstruction? If it is not united with brightness, then the natures and appearances of seeing and brightness are mutually opposed, like the ear and brightness, which do not touch each other at all. Since seeing does not even know where the appearance of brightness is, how can it distinguish whether union is reasonable or not? The same applies to darkness, openness, and all obstructions.”

“Ānanda, you still do not understand that all illusory and transforming appearances of the floating dust arise where they are and perish according to their conditions. Their illusory falsity is called appearance, but their true nature is the substance of wondrous awakened brightness. So it is with the five aggregates, the six entrances, the twelve places, and the eighteen realms: through the combination of causes and conditions, they falsely seem to arise; through the separation of causes and conditions, they are falsely said to cease. Yet one utterly fails to know that arising, ceasing, coming, and going are originally the ever-abiding, wondrously bright, unmoving, all-pervading wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Within this true and eternal nature, no coming or going, delusion or awakening, birth or death can be found.”

“Ānanda, why are the five aggregates originally the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha?”

“Ānanda, it is like someone who, with clear and healthy eyes, gazes upon a bright, cloudless sky and sees only clear emptiness, utterly without anything in it. For no reason, he does not move his eyes but stares fixedly until they become fatigued. Then he sees wild flowers in empty space, along with every kind of confused, unreal appearance. You should know that the aggregate of form is likewise. Ānanda, these wild flowers do not come from empty space, nor do they arise from the eyes.”

“Thus, Ānanda, if they came from empty space, then having come from empty space, they would return into empty space. If they could enter and leave, then it would not

be empty space. If empty space were not empty, it could not contain the arising and ceasing of the flower appearances, just as Ānanda's body cannot contain another Ānanda. If they arose from the eyes, then having arisen from the eyes, they would return into the eyes. Since the nature of these flowers came from the eyes, they should be capable of seeing."

"If they could see, then after leaving they would flower in empty space, and upon returning they should see the eyes. If they could not see, then after leaving they would obscure empty space, and upon returning they should obscure the eyes. Moreover, when the flowers are seen, the eyes should not be obscured. How, then, when looking at clear empty space, are they called clear and healthy eyes? Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of form is illusory, neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature."

"Ānanda, it is like someone whose hands and feet are at ease and whose hundred limbs are well adjusted, who suddenly, as if forgetting his body, feels neither compliance nor resistance in his nature. For no reason, he rubs his two palms together in empty space. In his two hands, he falsely experiences sensations of roughness and smoothness, cold and heat. You should know that the aggregate of feeling is likewise. Ānanda, these illusory contacts do not come from empty space, nor do they arise from the palms."

"Thus, Ānanda, if they came from empty space, then, since they could touch the palms, why would they not touch the body? Empty space should not select what it touches. If they arose from the palms, they should not depend on their joining. Moreover, if they arose from the palms, then when the palms join, the palms should know it; when they separate, the contact should enter them, and the arms, wrists, bones, and marrow should also be aware of the course by which it enters. If there were necessarily an aware mind that knew its exit and entry, then there would be some thing moving back and forth within the body. Why would it have to wait for the palms to join before it could be known and called contact? Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of feeling is illusory, neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature."

"Ānanda, it is like someone who speaks of sour plums and saliva comes forth in his mouth, or who thinks of stepping over a precipice and feels soreness in the soles of his feet. You should know that the aggregate of perception is likewise. Ānanda, such talk of sourness does not arise from the plums, nor does it enter through the mouth. Thus, Ānanda, if it arose from the plums, the plums themselves should speak; why wait for a person to speak? If it entered through the mouth, the mouth itself should hear it; why wait for the ears? If the ears alone heard it, why would this saliva not come forth from the ears? Thinking of stepping over a precipice is similar to speaking of sour plums. Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of

perception is illusory, neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature."

"Ānanda, it is like a rushing current whose waves follow one another without the earlier and later boundaries overrunning each other. You should know that the aggregate of formations is likewise. Ānanda, the nature of this current is not born from empty space, does not exist because of water, is not the nature of water, and is not apart from empty space and water. Thus, Ānanda, if it were born from empty space, then the endless empty space of the ten directions would become an endless current, and the worlds would naturally all be drowned."

"If it existed because of water, then the nature of this rushing current should not be water. If it had an existing appearance, it should now be apparent. If it were the nature of water itself, then when the water was clear and still, it should no longer be water. If it were apart from empty space and water, empty space is not outside what exists, and apart from water there is no current. Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of formations is illusory, neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature."

Ānanda, suppose someone takes a Pinga bottle, seals its two openings, fills it with empty space, and carries it a thousand miles away to offer it to another country. You should understand that the aggregate of consciousness is likewise. Ānanda, this empty space does not come from that place, nor does it enter from this place. Ānanda, if it came from that place, then when the original bottle, having contained the empty space, was carried away, there should be less empty space at the place where the bottle originally stood. If it entered from this place, then when the openings were unsealed and the bottle overturned, one should see empty space come out. Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of consciousness is illusory and unreal: it is fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature.

Ten Revelations of the Seeing Nature (the Nonempty Tathāgatagarbha)

(III) Contemplating the River to Establish That Seeing Does Not Perish

"At that time, Ānanda and the great assembly, having heard the Buddha's instruction, felt peaceful and at ease in body and mind. They reflected that, since beginningless time, they had lost their original mind and mistakenly taken the

shadows of conditioned objects and discriminations to be real. Today they had awakened, like an infant who has lost its nursing mother and suddenly encounters her again. Joining their palms, they bowed to the Buddha and wished to hear the Tathāgata reveal the true and false, empty and real aspects of body and mind, and clarify the two illuminating natures of arising and ceasing, and of non-arising and non-ceasing, present before them."

At this time, Ānanda awakened, and the great assembly awakened as well. "Having heard the Buddha's instruction, they felt peaceful and at ease in body and mind." Being at ease means feeling light and comfortable, having laid down every burden. How light one feels after recognizing the true mind! Thus, body and mind are peaceful and at ease. "They reflected that, since beginningless time, they had lost their original mind." They reflected on how, since beginningless time, they had not known the true mind.

The original mind cannot actually be lost, but if you do not know it, it is as though it were lost. "They mistakenly took the shadows of conditioned objects and discriminations to be real." At every moment, they cling to forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas. Clinging to objects, the mind arises and discriminates between beauty and ugliness: wishing to obtain more of what is good and greedily seeking fame and profit, while trying to get rid of what is bad.

These conditioned shadows fall into the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and become seeds, bringing about rebirth in the six realms and unbearable suffering. "Today they had awakened": after awakening today, how light they felt! After awakening, many Chan practitioners suddenly burst into tears and weep bitterly. Throughout countless lives and kalpas, they have suffered this undeserved anguish: "I possess such a precious treasure, yet did not know it. I fell into the realm of dust, underwent birth and death in vain, and revolved through the six realms in vain—what an injustice, what an injustice!" Then they suddenly burst out laughing: "How joyful it is, after all these years!"

Chan Master Baizhang was like this. Baizhang and his teacher, Mazu, were taking a walk together. When Mazu saw a flock of wild ducks flying by, he asked Baizhang, "What is that?" Baizhang replied, "Wild ducks." (Pursuing preceding objects.) Mazu asked Baizhang, "Where have they gone?" (His compassionate concern was most earnest.) Baizhang replied, "They have flown away." (Still not fully awake.)

Mazu twisted Baizhang's nose. Baizhang could not help crying out in pain. What was it that cried out in pain? In that instant of pain, Baizhang suddenly awakened. When Baizhang returned to his quarters, he wept bitterly. A fellow practitioner asked, "Do you miss your parents?" "No." "Have you been scolded?" "No."

“Then why are you crying?” “My teacher twisted my nose so painfully.” “Why did he do that?” “Go ask my teacher.” The fellow practitioner went to ask Mazu. Mazu said, “He has understood it in his heart. Go ask him.” The fellow practitioner went again to ask Baizhang: “The Master says that you have understood it in your heart and told me to ask you.”

Baizhang burst out laughing. The fellow practitioner said, “Just now you were crying. Why are you laughing now?” Baizhang said, “Just now I was crying; now I am laughing.” This left the fellow practitioner bewildered. The next day, Mazu ascended the Dharma seat to teach. As soon as he had ascended it, Chan Master Baizhang rolled up the mat. Seeing him roll up the mat, Mazu descended from the seat and returned to the abbot’s quarters.

Baizhang followed him to the abbot’s quarters. Mazu asked Baizhang, “I had not yet spoken the Dharma. Why did you roll up the mat?” Baizhang replied, “Yesterday, my teacher twisted my nose so painfully.” Mazu asked, “Where did you direct your mind yesterday?” That is, did you know where yesterday’s matter had landed? Baizhang replied, “Today my nose no longer hurts.” Mazu said, “You understand yesterday’s matter deeply.” Baizhang bowed and withdrew.

Just now he was crying, and now he was laughing: this is how it is after awakening. Through countless lives and kalpas, how could one not have suffered unjustly? This is no trifling matter! “Like an infant who has lost its nursing mother and suddenly encounters her again.” It is like a little child who nurses at its mother’s breast seeing the mother from whom it had been separated. How intimate, how joyful it is.

“Joining their palms, they bowed to the Buddha and wished to hear the Tathāgata reveal the true and false, empty and real aspects of body and mind, and clarify the two illuminating natures of arising and ceasing, and of non-arising and non-ceasing, present before them.” They had awakened, but did not yet understand fully. They still asked the Tathāgata for a clearer teaching: in this body and mind, what is true and what is false, what is empty and what is real?

Earlier, it was taught that seeing-nature does not move. Ānanda had now realized that within our body and mind there are both true and false aspects: the physical body is false, while “seeing” is true. The false body arises and ceases; true nature neither arises nor ceases. The physical body arises and ceases; the dharmakāya neither arises nor ceases.

But he did not yet understand how body and mind have, since beginningless time, been true and false, empty and real, arising and ceasing, and non-arising and non-ceasing. This principle was still unclear. That is, although body and mind include what arises and ceases and what does not, what is true and false, empty and real, he did not know how these are manifested. He hoped that the Tathāgata would

reveal them. From where are they revealed? From the two contrasting sides of true and false, empty and real, arising and ceasing, and non-arising and non-ceasing, so that our true mind may be displayed.

“Then King Prasenajit rose and addressed the Buddha: ‘Formerly, before I received the instructions of the Buddhas, I encountered Kātyāyana and the son of Vairāṭī, both of whom maintained that this body is annihilated after death, and called this nirvāṇa. Though I have encountered the Buddha, I still have doubts. How may this be elucidated, so that I may realize and know the ground of this mind that neither arises nor ceases? All in this assembly who still have outflows likewise wish to hear.’”

King Prasenajit had a doubt that remained unresolved. The Buddha’s earlier teaching stirred his mind, so he rose and said to the Buddha: Before I encountered the Buddha and heard the Dharma, Kātyāyana and the son of Vairāṭī—these two were leaders of non-Buddhist paths—both said that while people are alive they exist, but after death there is nothing at all: they are annihilated after death. They called this annihilation nirvāṇa. We speak of nirvāṇa as neither arising nor ceasing.

This teaching of the non-Buddhist paths is a misunderstanding of nirvāṇa. Although I have now encountered the Buddha, I remain very confused. Foxes are suspicious creatures. When a fox walks on ice, it repeatedly walks and listens, listening for the sound of flowing water. If it hears such a sound, it will not proceed, fearing that the ice may suddenly crack and it will fall into the water and drown.

Earlier we spoke of a koan: after giving the reply “not falling into cause and effect,” he himself became doubtful: “Ah! Was that answer correct?” With a single doubt, he became a wild fox for five hundred lifetimes.

Because King Prasenajit was confused, he asked the Buddha, “How may this be elucidated, so that I may realize and know the ground of this mind that neither arises nor ceases?” Please elucidate this and explain the principle so that I may know with certainty what “neither arising nor ceasing” means. Moreover, “all in this assembly who still have outflows likewise wish to hear.”

All those now seated here who have not attained the fruit of an arhat without outflows wish to hear. What are outflows? Outflows are afflictions. To have outflows is to have afflictions. The word “outflow” has two meanings: leakage and falling away. Afflictions such as greed and anger continually leak and flow forth, day and night, through the gates of the six sense faculties; this is called an outflow. Afflictions can also cause people to fall into the three lower realms; this too is called an outflow. “All who have outflows” means those whose afflictions have not been completely eliminated. “All likewise wish to hear” means that all wish to hear.

“The Buddha said to the king, ‘Your body is present now. Let me ask you: is this physical body like vajra, permanently abiding and indestructible, or does it decay?’”

“World-Honored One, this body of mine will ultimately decay and perish.”

The Buddha said to King Prasenajit: Your body is still present now. Let me ask you: is your physical body indestructible like vajra, or will it decay?

King Prasenajit said: World-Honored One, in the end my body will still decay and perish; it will die.

“The Buddha said: ‘Great King, you have not yet perished. How do you know that you will perish?’”

“World-Honored One, although this impermanent body, subject to decay, has not yet perished, I observe that before me it changes and passes away from thought to thought, ever renewed and never abiding. Like fire turning to ash, it gradually wears away and vanishes. Its vanishing never ceases; thus I know with certainty that this body will ultimately perish.”

“The Buddha said: ‘So it is.’”

The Buddha said: You have not yet perished. How do you know that you will perish in the future?

There are three ways of knowing future events. The first is reasoning, like a detective solving a case: one reasons how something was done and what result will follow from it. The second is inference by analogy: one compares one matter with another and thereby comes to know. The third is experience: when something previously experienced occurs again, one knows the result from past experience.

King Prasenajit reached his conclusion through reasoning and inference by analogy.

“Changing and passing away from thought to thought” means that thoughts change and pass away moment by moment: the preceding thought ceases and the following thought arises; at every moment there is change and passing away. “Ever renewed and never abiding” means continual renewal and decay. It is also like fire turning to ash: when charcoal burns and the wind blows, layer after layer peels away; ash falls and fresh fire appears. In the end, not even a spark remains, and all becomes ash.

“It gradually wears away and vanishes,” until it perishes. Yet thoughts do not abide from moment to moment, so this wearing away and vanishing is also an unceasing perishing, never stopping. Therefore, “I know with certainty that this body will ultimately perish”: one knows with certainty that this body cannot be relied upon and will come to an end.

The Buddha said: Correct. What you say is not wrong. Through reasoning and inference by analogy, you know that this body does not last forever. There is experience as well: look at others. When Zhang San dies, Li Si weeps; when Li Si weeps for Zhang San, he is weeping for himself, because he too will eventually die. This is correct: seeing that one's own turn will come—is this not experience? On the basis of reasoning, inference by analogy, and experience, one knows that the body does not last. Yet although the body does not last, there is something that does.

"Great King, you have now passed from youth into old age. How does your appearance compare with that of your childhood?"

"World-Honored One, when I was an infant and child, my skin was soft and lustrous. As I reached maturity, my blood and vital energy were abundant. But now, in my declining years and nearing old age, my form and complexion are withered and worn, my spirit is dull and obscured, my hair is white and my face wrinkled. Before long I will be gone. How can I compare with the vigor and fullness of my prime?"

The Buddha further asked King Prasenajit: You have now passed from youth into old age—King Prasenajit was sixty-two at the time. Compared with when you were a child, how do you find your appearance and physical form now?

World-Honored One! When I was an infant, my skin and flesh were moist and lustrous; in adulthood, my blood and vital energy were abundant. Now that I am old, my body and appearance have become withered and haggard beyond endurance; my aged eyes are dim, my mind unclear, my hair white, and my face full of wrinkles. As the saying goes, "skin like a chicken's and hair like a crane's, decrepit with age." I will probably not remain long in this world.

"How can this be compared with the time of fullness and vigor?" How could it compare with one's prime? This refers to two kinds of change: one is change in time, and the other is change in space. Age is a change in time; physical form, complexion, and vitality are changes in space.

"The Buddha said: Great King, your form and appearance surely did not suddenly decay."

"The king said: World-Honored One, these changes shift imperceptibly; I truly do not notice them. Cold and heat pass in succession, and gradually I have come to this."

The Buddha further explained: Great King, your physical form surely did not become decrepit all at once.

The king said: Yes, World-Honored One, it changes gradually and slowly. For example, at this very moment one's nails grow a little and one's hair grows a little,

yet one is unaware of it; they grow imperceptibly, not all at once. Thus cold comes and heat goes, year after year passes, and one eventually arrives at old age.

“Why do I know this? When I was twenty, though I was called young, my countenance had already aged from when I was ten. At thirty, I had declined further from twenty. Now I am past sixty-two; when I look at how I was at fifty, I was plainly robust.”

How do I know this? When I was twenty, although I was still young, my appearance was already much older than when I was ten. At thirty, I had aged further from twenty. I am now sixty-two; compared with how I was at fifty, I was clearly much stronger then.

“World-Honored One, I see that these imperceptible shifts occur. Although this decline and fall is reckoned in intervals of ten years, if I examine it carefully, its changes are surely not limited to one decade or two. In truth, it changes year by year. Nor does it change only by the year; it also changes month by month. Nor only month by month; it changes day by day. On deep reflection and close observation, it does not remain still even from instant to instant, from thought to thought. Therefore I know that my body will ultimately perish through change.”

I know that this is an imperceptible process of change, not something that suddenly became so. Although I provisionally divide this change from decline to death into stages of ten years, if I think carefully, how could this change occur only once in a decade? In fact, it changes year by year, month by month, and day by day.

“On deep reflection and close observation”: if one thinks calmly and observes carefully, one sees that it is actually changing instant by instant, moment by moment, second by second, and thought by thought, without pause. Therefore I know that my body will ultimately perish through change; it must eventually die.

What does it mean to think carefully, layer by layer, instant by instant? The Benevolent Kings Sūtra says that a single thought contains ninety kṣaṇas, and that each kṣaṇa contains nine hundred arisings and cessations. The instant a thought stirs, there are ninety kṣaṇas. Some may say, “How could I have so many arisings and cessations? My thoughts are not that fast.”

That is because you do not see it. Our form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—especially the consciousness aggregate—move with an astonishing, inconceivable speed. Not seeing it means that one lacks sufficient practice; when one’s meditative stability is deep, one sees the movement. When one reaches the point at which the consciousness aggregate is clear and still, like water without waves, it may appear motionless, but in fact it is moving with extraordinary speed:

ninety kṣaṇas in one thought, and nine hundred arisings and cessations in one kṣaṇa. Only deep meditative attainment can reveal this.

“The Buddha told the Great King: You see that change and transformation never cease, and you realize that you will perish. Yet at the time of perishing, do you know that there is within your body something that does not perish?”

“King Prasenajit joined his palms and said to the Buddha: I truly do not know.”

“The Buddha said: I shall now show you the nature that neither arises nor ceases.”

The Buddha further instructed him: You see that change, shifting, and transformation proceed without cease, and thus realize that your body must perish through change. Amid this process of change, do you know that there is something within your body that does not perish?

King Prasenajit joined his palms and said to the Buddha: I truly do not know.

The Buddha said: I shall now point out to you the self-nature that neither arises nor ceases.

This change is the appearance of spatial arising and cessation; shifting and transformation are the appearance of time. Thus both space and time have been discussed. Because of the changes of time and space, one knows that the body will perish, yet does not know that there is also something in the body that neither arises nor ceases. Like ordinary beings, King Prasenajit clung to external objects, could not detach himself from their appearances, and lost sight of the intrinsic nature of seeing that is able to see.

One knows only how to look at external things and loses one’s own master. The error lies precisely here. When one clings to external appearances, one forgets one’s own master and does not know that amid arising and cessation there is something that does not perish. This master has in fact never left us for even a single second.

Layman Fu said: “Every night I embrace the Buddha as I sleep; every morning I rise together with him.” Every day and night, we sleep embracing a Buddha, and in the morning we rise together with him. This is the awakened nature of mind, yet we ourselves do not know it.

Although this self-nature has never left us for even a moment as we wander through birth and death, and has always been together with us, unfortunately you are unaware of it. All sentient beings crave life and fear death; they want their bodies to endure and their lives to be long. Thus, at the Lunar New Year, people congratulate one another: “May you enjoy good health and live to be a hundred.”

In fact, we possess immeasurable life, yet people do not recognize it. After Qin Shi Huang obtained the throne, he wished to become an immortal and to live forever without dying. In fact, there is something that never dies.

Then is that which neither arises nor dies unknowable? No. When we speak of the first, second, and third manifestations of seeing, we are demonstrating this deathless and birthless thing. When the fourth manifestation of seeing is explained later, it becomes increasingly clear, and this will be revealed in full. Everyone knows it, yet they refuse to acknowledge it. It is not that it cannot be known; rather, habitual defilements and deeply ingrained attachments prevent people from relinquishing external objects. This refusal is a great fault indeed!

“Great King, at what age did you first see the waters of the Ganges?”

“The king said: When I was three years old, my loving mother took me to pay homage to Jipo Heaven, and we passed by this river. At that time, I knew it was the Ganges.”

The Buddha asked: Great King, when did you first see the waters of the Ganges?

The king said: When I was three years old, my mother took me to worship Jipo Heaven, and we passed by this river. I then knew that it was the Ganges. Jipo Heaven is the Ever-Abiding Heaven. People worship its deity to pray for a long life.

“The Buddha said: Great King, as you have said, when you were twenty, you had declined from how you were at ten. Even up to sixty, the days, months, years, and hours passed on, and each thought changed. When you saw this river at three years old, what was its water like when you reached thirteen?”

“The king said: It was exactly as it had been when I was three, without any difference. Even now, at sixty-two, it is still no different.”

The Buddha said: As you have said, Great King, at twenty you appeared older than you had at ten. Now that you are over sixty, with the passing of years, months, days, and hours, each thought has shifted and changed. But was there any change in the Ganges as you saw it at three and as you saw it at thirteen?

The king said: The Ganges that I saw at thirteen was no different from the one I saw at three. Even now, at sixty-two, the Ganges I see is still no different.

“The Buddha said: You now grieve that your hair is white and your face wrinkled; your face must surely be more wrinkled than it was in childhood. Yet when you now look upon the Ganges, is the seeing with which you look upon it any older than the seeing with which you looked upon the river in childhood?”

“The king said: No, World-Honored One.”

True mind has no form or appearance and cannot be taken out and shown to us. As it is said, “the way of words is cut off, and the sphere of mental activity is extinguished.” It cannot readily be explained through language or conceived through thought, so one can only use analogies. The Chan school likewise evokes clouds to suggest the moon; even when one reluctantly speaks of it, one cannot truly reach it. Nothing is harder to express. In order to resolve everyone’s doubts, the Buddha reluctantly used the Ganges as an analogy.

The Buddha said: You grieve that your hair has turned white and your face has wrinkled, and that your face is more wrinkled than in childhood. But what of the seeing that sees the Ganges? Has the seeing with which you now see the Ganges aged, like your body, from the seeing with which you saw it as a child?

King Prasenajit said: No. The seeing remains the same. My seeing now is the same as my seeing when I was three; it has not grown old.

This tells us that seeing does not age; this is what neither arises nor ceases. The body’s aging is a false appearance: the body must age and perish through change. But the intrinsic nature of seeing is the true substance; it does not age or perish through change. Because it neither arises nor ceases, it neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor wavers. Today this is being shown to you so that you may know it and willingly acknowledge it for yourself.

“The Buddha said: Great King, though your face is wrinkled, the essence of your seeing has never wrinkled in nature. What wrinkles changes; what does not wrinkle does not change. What changes is subject to extinction, but that which does not change is fundamentally without arising or cessation. How, then, could it be subject to your birth and death? Yet you still cite people such as Maskarī, who all say that this body is utterly annihilated after death.”

The Buddha said to King Prasenajit: Although your face has wrinkled, this essence of seeing does not wrinkle. Only that which can wrinkle changes; since the intrinsic nature of seeing does not wrinkle, it does not change. What changes will certainly perish, but how could that which does not change have arising and cessation? How, then, could this essence of seeing undergo birth and death? When you are born, it is not born with you; when you die, it does not die with you.

Thus, when birth comes, it too is not born; when death comes, it too does not die. It neither arises nor ceases. But this body is different: when the body is born, one can see that it is born; when the body dies, one can see that it dies.

“Yet they still cite Maskarī and others.” Maskarī was a follower of a non-Buddhist path. This non-Buddhist path taught naturalism—that things simply happen of themselves. “They all say that when this body dies, it is completely annihilated.” Like the two annihilationist non-Buddhist paths mentioned earlier, they all maintain that when a person dies, everything naturally comes to nothing. What they say is wrong. The essence of seeing has not been extinguished.

“When the king heard these words, he came to believe and understand that after the body dies, one relinquishes one birth and proceeds toward another. Together with the whole assembly, he leapt with joy and delight, attaining what he had never known before.”

Having heard the Buddha’s words, King Prasenajit “came to believe and understand that after the body dies, one relinquishes one birth and proceeds toward another.” To relinquish one birth means to cast off this body. Qu means “to go”; to proceed toward another birth means to go somewhere and be reborn. It is not transformation into annihilation, nor is it annihilation; it is rebirth within the six realms. Yet this is not ultimate: relinquishing one birth and proceeding toward another are both karmic obstacles.

It is a mistake to take relinquishing one birth and proceeding toward another as something real. “After my body dies, I will be reborn”—this is precisely rebirth within the six realms. Going a step further, when Buddhas and bodhisattvas enter the sea of birth and death to liberate sentient beings extensively, this is brought about by the power of their vows; it is not relinquishing one birth and proceeding toward another. Though they are born, they have never truly been born; though they have never been born, this does not prevent birth from being manifested.

Above, the text spoke of “two aspects that reveal the nature”: “We pray that the Tathāgata will reveal the true and false, the empty and real, in body and mind—the arising and ceasing and the non-arising and non-ceasing that are presently before us—these two aspects that reveal the nature.” The body arises and ceases, whereas the essence of seeing neither arises nor ceases. These two sides are the two aspects that reveal the nature. Although the seeing-nature that neither arises nor ceases is present, we must still develop and strengthen it, expanding it from its initial emergence.

Why speak of its initial emergence? Because one has only just seen it. Someone may ask: “Do arhats see their true nature?” Of course arhats see their true nature. It is not that they fail to see it, but that they do not see it thoroughly, because their view of dharmas has not yet been eliminated and their ignorance has not yet been completely exhausted. They are only comparable to eighth-bhūmi bodhisattvas.

Even tenth-bhūmi bodhisattvas still retain one portion of ignorance, so their realization is not yet thorough either.

We must not be satisfied with a little. Chan Master Linji said, “When the seal of the Three Essentials is opened, the vermilion point is narrow.” The Three Essentials are body, speech, and mind. The vermilion point is the mind—the Buddha-nature that neither arises nor ceases. Since it has only just been seen, this “vermilion point” is still “narrow”; it still needs to be “opened by the seal.” To open it by the seal means to develop and strengthen it.

The Three Essentials of body, speech, and mind, and genuine practice without deliberate cultivation, must culminate in Buddhahood. We must not be like followers of non-Buddhist paths, who, upon merely learning of relinquishing one birth and proceeding toward another, and realizing that it is not annihilation, become satisfied with a little. Relinquishing one birth and proceeding toward another has not yet come to an end; it is still a defiled characteristic.

“They leapt with joy and delight, attaining what they had never known before.” They had originally thought that death meant annihilation. Now that they understood it was not annihilation, they were immensely delighted.

(IV) Deluded Views Are Obscured; Manifest Seeing Is Never Lost

We now discuss the fourth demonstration of seeing: revealing that inverted views are deluded, and that seeing is not lost.

The third demonstration of seeing explained that the seeing-nature does not perish. We now explain that the seeing-nature is not lost: that is, it cannot be lost or misplaced. These teachings are all given in response to the particular doubt at issue. The preceding explanation that the seeing-nature does not perish was given because non-Buddhist paths taught annihilation, giving rise to their doubt; the Buddha therefore revealed that the seeing-nature does not perish.

What doubt is addressed by the present explanation that the seeing-nature is not lost? Earlier, the Buddha rebuked Ānanda, saying that he had lost his true nature. Ānanda now feels that his true nature is still there and has not been lost, so why does the Buddha say that it has been lost? The present explanation that the seeing-nature is not lost addresses this doubt.

Please consider the sūtra passage:

“Ānanda then rose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha with palms joined, knelt on both knees, and addressed the Buddha: ‘World-Honored One, if this seeing and hearing neither arises nor ceases, why does the World-Honored One say that we have lost our true nature and act in an inverted manner? May you arouse your compassion and wash away my defilements.’”

Ānanda has now given rise to a doubt. In the second demonstration of seeing, it was explained that the guest dust is subject to movement and agitation, while the seeing-nature is unmoving. The Buddha said that Ānanda had lost his true nature and acted in an inverted manner, taking objects to be himself. Yet in the third demonstration of seeing, in his discussion with King Prasenajit, the Buddha said that the seeing-nature neither arises nor ceases. One statement says it is lost, while the other says it remains; therefore Ānanda has a question.

Therefore, he rose from his seat, bowed to the Buddha with palms joined, knelt on both knees, and asked the Buddha to explain: “World-Honored One, since this seeing-nature originally neither arises nor ceases, why do you rebuke me for having lost my true nature and for acting in an inverted manner? May the Tathāgata, in compassion, wash away the defilements of my delusion.”

In fact, Ānanda misunderstood the Buddha’s meaning. When the Buddha said that Ānanda had lost his true nature, he meant that Ānanda was deluded and did not know that there is a true nature that neither arises nor ceases. Since he did not know of its existence, it was as though he had lost it; he had not truly cast it away. How could true nature be lost? If one does not know what is true nature and what is delusion, is that not equivalent to losing one’s true nature and acting in an inverted manner?

“At that moment, the Tathāgata lowered his golden-colored arm and, with his wheel-marked hand pointing downward, showed it to Ānanda and said: ‘Do you now see my mudrā hand as upright or inverted?’”

“Ānanda said: ‘Worldly beings regard this as inverted. But I do not know what is upright and what is inverted.’”

The Buddha lowered his arm, with his fingers pointing toward the ground, and asked Ānanda, “Do you see my hand as upright or inverted?” The “mudrā hand” is what was previously called the “palm marked with a hundred jeweled wheels.” In fact, how can a hand itself be upright or inverted? This is a figurative way of speaking, illustrating inverted conduct.

Ānanda knew that all the views and perceptions of sentient beings arise from the habit of analysis, so he replied: “Worldly beings consider this not upright but

inverted. I do not cling to this distinction and do not know what counts as upright or what counts as inverted."

"The Buddha said to Ānanda: 'If worldly people regard this as inverted, then what do they regard as upright?'"

"Ānanda said: 'When the Tathāgata raises his arm, with his soft cotton-like hand pointing upward into space, that is called upright.'"

Following worldly convention in his teaching, the Buddha asked Ānanda: "What do worldly people regard as upright?"

Ānanda said that it is upright when the Buddha's soft cotton-like hand points upward into space. A hand like tuṣa cotton is simply a soft, pliant hand; the Buddha's hand is very soft.

In truth, there is no such thing as upright or inverted. Whether the finger points up or down is all delusive; calling one upright and the other inverted is itself a deluded view, and affliction arising from the cognitive hindrance. In reality, the two hindrances are originally nonexistent. People in the world often have no views of their own; they merely follow others and echo conventional views. How could conventional views be true principles? ...

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(V) Distinguishing Seeing Through the Eight Returns, Revealing That Seeing Does Not Return

Ānanda, having received the Buddha's profound teaching of compassionate rescue, wept, placed his palms together, and said to the Buddha: "Although I have received from the Buddha such wondrous sounds and awakened to the wondrous bright mind—the original, perfect, ever-abiding mind-ground—"

I have understood the Dharma sound that the Buddha is now teaching only by relying on my conditioned mind, allowing it to be what I look to. I have merely apprehended this mind and do not yet dare to recognize it as my original fundamental mind-ground.

May the Buddha take pity on me and proclaim the perfect sound, uprooting the root of my doubt and returning me to the unsurpassed Way."

The Buddha said to Ānanda, "You and the others still listen to the Dharma with the conditioned mind. This Dharma, too, is conditioned and does not reveal the Dharma-nature.

It is like someone pointing at the moon with a finger to show it to another. Because of the finger, the other person should look at the moon. But if he looks at the finger again and takes it to be the moon itself, would such a person merely lose sight of the moon? He would also lose the meaning of the finger. Why? Because the pointing finger is meant to indicate the bright moon.

Not only would he lose the meaning of the finger, but he would also fail to recognize brightness and darkness. Why? Because he takes the finger itself to be the bright nature of the moon; thus he understands neither the nature of brightness nor that of darkness.

You are the same. If you take the discriminating awareness of the sound of my teaching to be your mind, then this mind should have a discriminating nature even apart from the sound it discriminates.

For example, a traveler lodging at an inn stays temporarily and then departs; he does not remain there permanently. But the keeper of the inn does not go anywhere and is therefore called its master. So it is here: if it is truly your mind, then it does not go anywhere. How, then, could it have no discriminating nature when apart from sound?

And not only would the mind that discriminates sounds lack a discriminating nature apart from sounds; the mind that discriminates my appearance would likewise lack a discriminating nature apart from all forms and appearances.

So too, when all discrimination is absent and there is neither form nor emptiness, Kauśalī and others mistakenly take this to be primordial matter. Apart from conditions of all dharmas, it has no discriminating nature.

Then your mind-nature has something to which each aspect can return. How could it be the master?

Ānanda said, “If each aspect of my mind-nature has something to which it can return, then how can the wondrous bright original mind of which the Tathāgata speaks have no return? I beseech you, in your compassion, to explain this to me.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda, “For the moment, you see me. The fundamental brightness of this faculty of seeing, although not the wondrous essential bright mind, is like a second moon and not the moon’s reflection.

Listen carefully. I shall now show you the ground that has no return.

Ānanda, in this great lecture hall, the east is wide open. When the sun rises in the sky, there is brightness; in the middle of the night, when the moon is dark and clouds and mist obscure the sky, there is darkness again. Through gaps in doors and

windows, one sees openness; between walls and buildings, one sees obstruction. Where distinctions are made, one sees conditions; within unyielding emptiness, there is everywhere the nature of space. When there is a murky appearance, there is swirling dust and gloom; when the atmosphere clears after rain and the vapors subside, one sees clarity.

Ānanda, you see all these changing appearances. I shall now return each of them to the source on which it depends.

What is its original cause? Ānanda, among these changing appearances, brightness returns to the sun. Why? Without the sun there is no brightness; brightness belongs to the sun as its cause, and therefore returns to the sun.

Darkness returns to the dark moon; openness returns to doors and windows; obstruction returns to walls and buildings; conditions return to discrimination; unyielding emptiness returns to space; murkiness returns to dust; clarity returns to clear weather. Thus, everything in the world falls within these categories.

Your faculty of seeing, with its bright nature, sees these eight kinds of appearances. To what would you return it? Why? If it returned to brightness, then when there was no brightness, you would no longer see darkness. Although brightness, darkness, and the rest differ in many ways, seeing itself does not differ.

Whatever can be returned is naturally not you. What cannot be returned—if it is not you, who is it?

Thus you should know that your mind is originally wondrous, bright, and pure. You yourself are deluded and confused, have lost your original nature, and undergo the round of rebirth, ever drifting and drowning amid birth and death. Therefore the Tathāgata calls you pitiable."

(VI) Extraordinary Views of Past Objects: Manifest Seeing Is Unmixed

[Ānanda said: "Although I recognize that this seeing-nature does not return anywhere, how may I know that it is my true nature?"]

[The Buddha said to Ānanda: "I will now ask you: although you have not yet attained undefiled purity, sustained by the Buddha's spiritual power, your sight reaches as far as the First Dhyāna without obstruction. Aniruddha, however, sees Jambudvīpa as one sees an āmalaka fruit in the palm of one's hand."]

[The bodhisattvas see hundreds of thousands of worlds; the Tathāgatas of the ten directions behold to their utmost limit pure lands as numerous as motes of dust—there is nothing they do not see. Sentient beings' penetrating vision extends no farther than a fraction of an inch.]

[Ānanda, now you and I shall look upon the palaces where the Four Heavenly Kings reside. Surveying all that moves through water, on land, and in the air, although there are light and darkness and forms of every kind, all are merely objects before you, giving rise to discriminations and hindrances.]

[You should now distinguish the self from what is other. I shall have you select, within what is seen, which is your own substance and which are material forms.]

[Ānanda, extending your seeing to its farthest source, from the palaces of the sun and moon—these are objects, not you. Down to the Seven Golden Mountains, look closely all around: though they shine with various lights, they too are objects, not you. Looking gradually nearer, clouds drift, birds fly, wind stirs, dust rises, and trees, mountains, rivers, grasses, plants, people, and animals are all objects, not you.]

[Ānanda, all these near and distant things, all things that possess material nature, though they differ in many ways, are alike perceived by your pure seeing-essence. The various kinds of things differ from one another, but the seeing-nature itself does not differ. This subtle, wondrous luminosity is truly your seeing-nature.]

[If seeing were an object, then you too could see my seeing.]

[If you could see it as the same seeing, that would be called seeing my seeing. When I do not see, why can you not see the place where I do not see?]

[If you see my non-seeing, that naturally would not be the appearance of non-seeing. If you cannot see the place where I do not see, it naturally is not an object. How, then, could it not be you?]

[Moreover, when you now see an object, you see the object, and the object also sees you. Then substance and nature become confused, and neither you nor I nor the whole world could be established.]

[Ānanda, when you see, it is you who see, not I. Since the seeing-nature pervades everywhere, if it is not you, who is it?]

[How can you yourself doubt your own true nature? If your nature were not truly yours, you would be taking me as the basis from which to seek reality.]

(VII) Examples of Expansion and Contraction, Demonstrating Unobstructed Seeing

[Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, if this seeing-nature is truly mine and not another’s, then when the Tathāgata and I behold the splendid treasure palaces of the Four Heavenly Kings and dwell in the palaces of the sun and moon, this seeing extends perfectly and pervades the Sahā world. Yet when I return to the monastery, I see only the monastic grounds; within the quiet chamber, I see only its doors and hall, and gaze merely upon its eaves and verandas.”]

[“World-Honored One, since this seeing originally pervades an entire realm, why, when I am in a room, does it fill only that one room? Has this seeing contracted from great to small, or have the walls and roof enclosed it and cut it off? I do not know the meaning of this. I pray that you will bestow your great compassion and explain it for me.”]

[The Buddha said to Ānanda: “All things in the world, whether large or small, inner or outer, belong to the objects before you. One should not say that seeing expands or contracts.”]

[“For example, when one sees square space within a square vessel, I ask you: is the square space seen within that square vessel definitely square, or is it not definitely square?”]

[“If it is definitely square, then when a round vessel is placed elsewhere, the space should not be round. If it is not definitely square, then within a square vessel there should be no square space.”]

[“You say that you do not know the meaning of this. Its essential nature is thus; how can you speak of where it is?”]

[“Ānanda, if you wish to make the space within neither square nor round, simply remove the square vessel. The substance of space has no square form. You should not say that, in addition to removing the vessel, one must remove the location of the square appearance from empty space.”]

[“If, as you ask, entering a room contracts seeing and makes it small, then when you look up at the sun, do you pull your seeing out until it reaches the sun’s surface? If walls and roofs could enclose seeing and cut it off, then if a small opening were made through them, should there not be traces of its continuation? This reasoning is untenable.”]

["Since beginningless time, all sentient beings have mistaken themselves for things, lost their fundamental mind, and been turned by things. Therefore, within this, they perceive things as large or small."]

["If one can turn things, one is then the same as the Tathāgata. Body and mind are perfectly luminous, abiding unmoved in the bodhimaṇḍa. At the tip of a single hair, one can encompass and contain the lands of the ten directions."]

(VIII) Mañjuśrī Inspires Insight, Revealing the Nonduality of Seeing

[Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, if this essence of seeing is indeed my wondrous nature, then this wondrous nature is now before me. Seeing must truly be myself; what, then, are my present body and mind?"]

["Yet my present body and mind distinctly have real existence, while that seeing does not distinguish my body from itself. If it is truly my mind that enables me now to see, then the nature of seeing is truly myself, and the body is not myself. How is this different from the Tathāgata's earlier challenge: 'Can an object see me?' I pray that, in your great compassion, you will enlighten one who has not yet awakened."]

[The Buddha told Ānanda: "What you now say—that seeing is before you—is not true. If it were truly before you, and you truly saw it, then, since this essence of seeing would have a location, it could not be beyond indication."]

["Now, as you sit with me in Jeta Grove, you behold all around the groves and streams, the halls and pavilions; above are the sun and moon, and before you is the Ganges. Before my lion seat, you raise your hand and point out these various appearances: what is dark is the forest; what is bright is the sun; what obstructs is a wall; what is open is space. Thus, down to the finest blade of grass or tree, though large and small differ, wherever there is form, nothing cannot be pointed out."]

["If seeing must indeed be present before you, then you should clearly point it out with your hand: what is seeing? Ānanda, you should know that if space is seeing, then, once it has become seeing, what is space? If an object is seeing, then, once it has become seeing, what is an object?"]

["You may carefully strip away the myriad appearances and separate out the pure, wondrous, luminous source of seeing. Point it out to me as clearly and unmistakably as you would those objects."]

[Ānanda said: "Here in this multistoried lecture hall, extending afar to the Ganges and upward to the sun and moon, whatever I point to with my raised hand or

behold with my eyes is an object; none of it is seeing."]

["World-Honored One, as the Buddha has said, even I, a śrāvaka who is still learning and has outflows, and even bodhisattvas, cannot, before the appearances of the myriad things, separate out the essence of seeing from all objects as something with an independent nature."]

[The Buddha said: "So it is, so it is."]

[The Buddha again told Ānanda: "As you have said, there is no essence of seeing that, apart from all objects, has an independent nature. Thus, among the objects you point to, none is seeing. Now I tell you again: you and the Tathāgata sit in Jeta Grove and again behold the forest garden, even to the sun and moon. Though the various appearances differ, there is surely no essence of seeing that can receive your pointing. You should further make clear: among all these objects, what is not seeing?"]

[Ānanda said: "I truly behold this entire Jeta Grove, yet I do not know what within it is not seeing. Why? If a tree were not seeing, how could one see the tree? If the tree itself were seeing, how could it still be a tree? So too, if space were not seeing, how could one see space? If space itself were seeing, how could it still be space? I have further reflected carefully upon the myriad appearances: none is not seeing."]

[The Buddha said: "So it is, so it is."]

[At that time, those in the great assembly who had not yet completed their training heard the Buddha's words and were bewildered, not knowing the beginning or end of this teaching. All at once they were alarmed and shaken, losing their bearings.]

[The Tathāgata, knowing that their minds and thoughts were disturbed with fear, felt compassion and comforted Ānanda and the whole assembly: "All good people, the unsurpassed Dharma King speaks true words, speaks according to reality, and does not deceive or speak falsely. This is not the evasive and confused doctrine of the four kinds of undying assertions taught by Maskari. Reflect upon this carefully, and do not disappoint my compassionate concern."]

[Then Mañjuśrī, Prince of the Dharma, took pity on the fourfold assembly. In the midst of the great assembly, he rose from his seat, bowed his head at the Buddha's feet, joined his palms respectfully, and said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, this great assembly does not understand the Tathāgata's exposition of the two kinds of essential seeing, and the meaning of whether form and space are or are not seeing."]

["World-Honored One, if the appearances before us—form, space, and so forth—are seeing, they should be capable of being pointed out; if they are not seeing, they

should not be perceptible. Yet now we do not know where the meaning of this teaching lies, and so we are afraid. It is not because our wholesome roots from former times are slight. We pray that the Tathāgata, in great compassion, will explain what these appearances and this essence of seeing fundamentally are, so that between them there may be neither 'is' nor 'is not.'"]

[The Buddha told Mañjuśrī and the whole assembly: "For the Tathāgatas of the ten directions and the great bodhisattvas, while abiding in their own samādhi, seeing and the conditions of seeing, together with the appearances conceived, are like flowers in empty space: they fundamentally do not exist."]

["This seeing and its conditions are fundamentally the wondrous, pure, luminous essence of bodhi. How could there be within them an 'is' or an 'is not'? Mañjuśrī, I now ask you: apart from you, Mañjuśrī, is there another Mañjuśrī who is Mañjuśrī, or is there no Mañjuśrī?"]

["So it is, World-Honored One. I am truly Mañjuśrī; there is no other Mañjuśrī. Why? If there were one, then there would be two Mañjuśrīs. Yet I am not without Mañjuśrī today; in this there truly are no two aspects of is and is not."]

[The Buddha said: "This wondrous, luminous seeing, together with space and material objects, is likewise so. Fundamentally it is the pure, perfect, true mind of unsurpassed, wondrous, luminous bodhi, but it is falsely regarded as form and space, hearing and seeing. It is like a second moon: which is the moon, and which is not the moon?"]

["Mañjuśrī, there is only one true moon; between them there is naturally neither a moon nor not a moon. Thus, when you now distinguish seeing and objects in various ways, this is called deluded thinking; you cannot thereby transcend is and is not. Because of the true essence of wondrous awakening and luminous nature, you are able to transcend pointing and not pointing."]

(IX) Right and Wrong Are Opposing Views; Clear Seeing Transcends Conceptual Thought

Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, it is indeed as the Dharma King has said: the nature of awareness pervades the ten directions, is limpid and ever-abiding, and is neither arising nor ceasing."

"How does this differ from the primordial matter discussed by the earlier Brahmins and Sāṃkhya philosophers, or from the divine self said by various non-Buddhist paths, such as the ash-smeared ascetics, to pervade the ten directions?"

“The World-Honored One also once expounded this principle for Mahāmati and others on Laṅkā Mountain: ‘Those non-Buddhist paths constantly speak of spontaneity; I speak of causes and conditions. They are not the same realm.’”

“Now I contemplate this nature of awareness as spontaneous, neither arising nor ceasing, free from all false and inverted views. It seems not to be based on causes and conditions, and thus resembles their spontaneity. How should this be explained, so that we do not fall into the various wrong paths, but attain the true mind and the wondrous, enlightened, luminous nature?”

The Buddha said to Ānanda: “Although I have now explained this expediently and told you the truth, you still have not awakened and mistakenly take it to be spontaneity.”

“Ānanda, if it were necessarily spontaneous, you would have to discern a substance of spontaneity. Look carefully now within this wondrous, luminous seeing: what do you take as its self? Does this seeing take brightness as its self? Darkness as its self? Emptiness as its self? Obstruction as its self?”

“Ānanda, if brightness were its self, it should not see darkness. If emptiness were its substance, it should not see obstruction. So too with darkness and the other characteristics: if any of them were taken as its self, then when brightness appeared, the nature of seeing would cease. How, then, could it see brightness?”

Ānanda said: “Since this wondrous seeing is certainly not spontaneous in nature, I now understand that it arises from causes and conditions. Yet my mind is still unclear. I ask the Tathāgata: in what way does this accord with the nature of causes and conditions?”

The Buddha said: “You speak of causes and conditions, so I will ask you again. Because you now see, the nature of seeing is manifest before you. Does this seeing arise because of brightness? Because of darkness? Because of emptiness? Because of obstruction?”

“Ānanda, if it arose because of brightness, it should not see darkness. If it arose because of darkness, it should not see brightness. So too, if it arose because of emptiness or obstruction, the same principle applies as with brightness and darkness.”

“Furthermore, Ānanda, does this seeing arise in dependence on brightness? In dependence on darkness? In dependence on emptiness? In dependence on obstruction? Ānanda, if it arose in dependence on emptiness, it should not see obstruction. If it arose in dependence on obstruction, it should not see emptiness.

So too, if it arose in dependence on brightness or darkness, the same principle applies as with emptiness and obstruction."

"You should know that this refined awareness and wondrous luminosity are neither cause nor condition, nor are they spontaneity; nor are they not spontaneity. There is neither 'not' nor 'not-not,' neither 'is' nor 'is-not.' Free from all characteristics, they are all dharmas."

"Why, then, do you set your mind upon this and make distinctions through the speculative names and characteristics of the world? It is like grasping and kneading empty space with your hand: you merely weary yourself. How could empty space submit to your grasp?"

(10) Seeing Seeing Is Not Seeing; Manifest Seeing Is Free of Seeing

[Ānanda said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, if the wondrous nature of enlightenment is neither cause nor condition, why do you always teach the bhikṣus that the nature of seeing has four conditions—space, light, mind, and eyes? What does this mean?"]

[The Buddha said: "Ānanda, what I have taught concerning the various appearances of causes and conditions in the world is not the ultimate truth. Ānanda, I ask you again: when people in the world say, 'I can see,' what is called seeing, and what is called not seeing?"]

[Ānanda said: "People in the world rely on the light of the sun, moon, or lamps to see all kinds of appearances; this is called seeing. If these three kinds of light are absent, they cannot see."]

["Ānanda, if the absence of light is called not seeing, then one should not see darkness. But if one does see darkness, this is merely the absence of light. How can it be called an absence of seeing?"]

["Ānanda, if, when it is dark, not seeing light is called not seeing, then when it is light, not seeing the appearance of darkness should likewise be called not seeing. If both of these appearances are called not seeing, then, since the two appearances alternately displace one another, it would mean that your nature of seeing is temporarily absent between them. Thus, you should know that both are called seeing. How can it be called not seeing?"]

["Therefore, Ānanda, you should now know that when seeing light, seeing is not light; when seeing darkness, seeing is not darkness; when seeing space, seeing is not

space; and when seeing obstruction, seeing is not obstruction.”]

[“Once these four points are established, you should further know: When seeing sees seeing, that seeing is not true seeing. Seeing is still apart from seeing; seeing cannot reach it. How then can you speak again of causes and conditions, spontaneity, or appearances of combination? You śrāvakas are narrow and inferior in understanding; you cannot penetrate the pure true reality. I now instruct you: contemplate this carefully, do not grow weary or indolent, and proceed upon the wondrous path of bodhi.”]

V. Two Kinds of Deluded Views

(I) Deluded Perception Arising From Individual Karma

What is meant by the deluded perception arising from individual karma? Ānanda, suppose that a person in the world has an eye disorder, so that at night, on seeing the light of a lamp, he sees separate circular halos, with five colors overlapping.

What do you think, then? Are the circular lights that appear around the lamp at night the color of the lamp, or are they the color of seeing? Ānanda, if they are the color of the lamp, then why do those without the eye disorder not see them in the same way? Yet these circular halos are seen only by those with the disorder. If they are the color of seeing, then seeing has become color. What, then, should those with the eye disorder who see the circular halos be called?

Furthermore, Ānanda, if these circular halos existed separately from the lamp, then circular halos should also appear around screens, curtains, tables, and seats when viewed from the side. If they existed separately from seeing, they should not be visible to the eyes. How, then, can those with the eye disorder see the circular halos with their eyes?

Therefore, you should know that the colors truly reside in the lamp, while the disorder of seeing produces the halos. Both the halo and its perception arise from the eye disorder; the seeing that recognizes the eye disorder is not itself diseased. One should never say that this is the lamp or seeing, nor that within it there is something neither lamp nor seeing.

It is like seeing a second moon: it is neither an actual entity nor an image. Why? The perception of a second moon is produced by pressing the eye. Those who are wise should not say that the root cause of this pressing is either form or not form, separate from seeing or not seeing.

This is likewise produced by an eye disorder. Whom would you now designate as the lamp, and whom as seeing? How much less should you discriminate that it is neither lamp nor seeing.

(II) Shared Deluded Perception

What is meant by a shared false perception? Ānanda, in this Jambudvīpa, apart from the waters of the great oceans, there are three thousand continents upon the intervening land. On the central great continent, measured from east to west, there are altogether twenty-three hundred great countries. The remaining small continents lie within the various seas; among them there may be two or three hundred countries, or one or two, up to thirty, forty, or fifty.

Ānanda, suppose there is among them a small continent containing only two countries. If the people of one country alone collectively experience adverse conditions, then the beings of that land on the small continent will see all kinds of inauspicious sights: perhaps two suns, perhaps two moons, and even halos, eclipses, pendants, rings, comets, meteors, flying lights, streaming lights, ominous apparitions, ear-shaped signs, rainbows, and secondary rainbows—various evil signs. Only the people of that country see them; the beings of the other country neither see nor hear of them.

Ānanda, I shall now use these two matters to explain them together, advancing and retreating by analogy.

Ānanda, just as in the false perception arising from individual karma, those beings see a circular image appearing within the lamplight: although it appears as an external object, it is ultimately produced by the eye disorder of the one who sees it.

This eye disorder is weariness of seeing; it is not produced by the form itself. Yet the one who perceives the eye disorder ultimately has no fault in seeing.

By analogy, the mountains, rivers, lands, and all sentient beings that you now see with your eyes have all, since beginningless time, been produced by the disease of seeing.

Seeing and the conditions of seeing appear like objects before you, but they are originally an eye disorder caused by the awareness and brightness of your own enlightenment. The awareness that sees is itself the disorder; the originally enlightened, luminous mind that is aware of conditions is not the disorder.

The awareness that is aware of the perceived eye disorder is not within the disorder. This is truly seeing seeing. How, then, could it again be called awareness, hearing, knowing, or seeing?

Therefore, what you now see—me, yourself, and the ten kinds of sentient beings in all the worlds—is all the eye disorder of seeing, not the one who sees the eye disorder.

That true essence of seeing is by nature free of eye disorder; therefore, it is not called seeing.

Ānanda, the shared false perception of those beings may be compared to the individual-karmic false perception of a single person.

The one person with diseased eyes is like the people of that one country. The circular images that person sees arise from the falsehood of eye disorder; the inauspicious appearances seen collectively by these people arise from the noxious influences within their shared karma. Both have, since beginningless time, arisen from the delusion of seeing.

By analogy, throughout Jambudvīpa, its three thousand continents and four great oceans, the Sahā world, and all defiled lands and sentient beings in the ten directions, all are the false, disease-producing conditions of seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing within the wondrous mind of original enlightenment, which is free of outflows. Through combination they falsely arise, and through combination they falsely die.

If one can become remote from all conditions of combination and noncombination, one will further eliminate all causes of birth and death, and perfect the unborn and unceasing nature of bodhi: the pure original mind, in which original enlightenment ever abides.

Ānanda, although you have previously awakened to the wondrous luminosity of original enlightenment, whose nature is neither dependent arising nor natural spontaneity, you still do not understand that this source of enlightenment neither arises from combination nor from noncombination.

Ānanda, I shall now again question you by means of the objects before you. You still take all worldly deluded combinations and the nature of causes and conditions as grounds for doubting that the mind that realizes bodhi arises through combination.

Then does your wondrous, pure essence of seeing combine with brightness? Does it combine with darkness? Does it combine with openness? Does it combine with obstruction?

If it combines with brightness, then when you look at brightness and brightness is present before you, where does seeing become mixed with it? If the appearance of

seeing can be distinguished, what form does the mixture take? If it is not seeing, how can it see brightness? If it is seeing, how can seeing see itself?

If seeing is necessarily complete in itself, where could it combine with brightness? If brightness is complete in itself, it cannot combine with seeing.

Seeing must differ from brightness; if they are mixed, it loses the name and nature of brightness. If, through mixture, brightness loses its nature, then combination with brightness has no meaning. The same is true of darkness, openness, and all forms of obstruction.

Furthermore, Ānanda, does your wondrous, pure essence of seeing unite with brightness? Does it unite with darkness? Does it unite with openness? Does it unite with obstruction?

If it unites with brightness, then when darkness arrives and the appearance of brightness has already vanished, this seeing will not unite with darkness. How, then, can it see darkness? If, when seeing darkness, it does not unite with darkness but unites with brightness, it should not see brightness. Since it does not see brightness, how can it unite with brightness and thereby distinguish brightness from darkness? The same is true of darkness, openness, and all forms of obstruction.

Ānanda said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, as I consider it, is not this source of wondrous enlightenment independent of all conditioned objects and of the thoughts and deliberations of the mind?”

The Buddha said: “You now again say that enlightenment is not a combination. I ask you again: if this wondrous essence of seeing is not a combination, is it separate from brightness? Is it separate from darkness? Is it separate from openness? Is it separate from obstruction?”

If it is separate from brightness, then seeing and brightness must have a boundary between them. Examine carefully: where is brightness, and where is seeing? What constitutes the boundary between seeing and brightness?

Ānanda, if there is necessarily no seeing within the limit of brightness, then they do not reach one another. Seeing itself would not know where the appearance of brightness lies. How, then, could a boundary be established? The same is true of darkness, openness, and all forms of obstruction.

Furthermore, if the wondrous essence of seeing is not a combination, is it separate from brightness? Is it separate from darkness? Is it separate from openness? Is it separate from obstruction?

If it is separate from brightness, then seeing and brightness are by nature opposed to one another, like the ear and brightness, which do not come into contact at all.

Since seeing does not even know where the appearance of brightness lies, how can it distinguish whether they are united or not united? The same is true of darkness, openness, and all forms of obstruction.

VI. The Four Categories of Delusion

First Section: The Five Aggregates Are Illusory, Neither Arising from Causes and Conditions nor of a Spontaneous Nature

(I) The Aggregate of Form Is Illusory

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“If they came forth from the eyes, then, having come forth from the eyes, they should also reenter through the eyes. Since the nature of these flowers comes forth from the eyes, it should be capable of seeing. If it is capable of seeing, then, having gone out as flowers in empty space, it should return and see the eyes. If it is incapable of seeing, then, having gone out, it should obstruct empty space; upon returning, it should obstruct the eyes. Moreover, when one sees the flowers, the eyes should be free of obstruction. How, then, can clear empty space be called clear and luminous eyes? Therefore, you should know that the form aggregate is illusory and unreal, and is fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a self-arising nature.”

“If they came forth from the eyes, then, having come forth from the eyes, they should also reenter through the eyes.” If the flowers in empty space that you see came forth from your eyes, then, since they can come forth from the eyes, they should naturally also be able to return into them.

All things exist only in relation to one another. This is true not only of flowers in empty space, but of everything else as well. Coming forth and entering are relative terms. Good and bad, long and short, square and round are likewise relative.

Because wherever there is coming forth, there must be entering; likewise, wherever there is good, there must be bad, and wherever there is long, there must be short. … If there were no entering, there could be no coming forth. This is the principle—the principle governing illusory appearances. Precisely for this reason, we say that all appearances exist only relatively. The principles and criteria must first be made clear; what follows must be explained in accordance with them. If the criteria are broken down, the teaching becomes difficult to explain.

Why does it say, “Since the nature of these flowers comes forth from the eyes, it should be capable of seeing”? It is because the nature of the flowers comes forth from the eyes. We know that the faculty of the eye is able to see forms and appearances; therefore, what is produced by the eyes should likewise be able to see. Just as human beings give birth to human beings, horses to horses, and cattle to cattle, what is produced within the same kind should resemble the preceding generation. Thus, what is produced by the eyes should also possess the nature of seeing and should be able to see.

“If it is capable of seeing, then, having gone out as flowers in empty space, it should return and see the eyes.” If the nature of the flowers possessed seeing, it should be able to see forms and appearances. But in fact these flowers are empty and insubstantial; they do not exist at all, and so they cannot see. This applies not only to flowers in empty space. Even flowers that we ourselves plant have no spiritual awareness; they are insentient things and cannot see either.

Now suppose that the flowers in empty space arise from the eyes and are capable of seeing; this is why it says, “Having gone out as flowers in empty space, it should return and see the eyes.” “Gone out” means that the flowers leave the eyes and enter empty space. If the flowers are in empty space, then when they return, they should see the eyes.

“Return” means to come back. Since coming forth entails entering, when the flowers return from empty space, they stand in relation to the eyes and should be able to see them. But can flowers actually see the eyes? Of course not. This shows that the flowers do not come forth from the eyes, because they have no nature of seeing. This is the first analogy, which positively supposes that they are “capable of seeing.”

Then, conversely, an analogy is made by supposing that they are “incapable of seeing.” Being capable of seeing is paired with being incapable of seeing.

It has already been shown that the supposition of being capable of seeing does not hold. Now let us see whether being incapable of seeing can hold. Since flowers are insentient things, how could they possess seeing? If the flowers are incapable of seeing, then “having gone out, they should obstruct empty space; upon returning, they should obstruct the eyes.”

“Obstruct” means to impede. That is, when the flowers emerge into empty space, they should be able to obstruct it, and the empty space in which the flowers are found should be obstructed by them. If the flowers could obstruct empty space, then when they returned, they should likewise obstruct the eyes. If the eyes were obstructed, they would become impeded and would be unable to see things. This is the argument from the opposite side.

But do the flowers actually obstruct the eyes? No. In truth, there are originally no flowers in empty space. We see flowers there only because the eyes are obstructed. When one sees that there are no flowers in empty space, one sees pure empty space; this shows that the eyes are sound and free of obstruction.

If the eyes were obstructed, one would not see empty space as free of flowers. This further shows that the claim that the flowers come forth from the eyes does not hold. Since coming forth entails entering, if the eyes were obstructed when the flowers came forth, they should still be obstructed after the flowers returned. After encountering an obstruction, the eyes should see flowers in empty space. Yet your eyes are now clear—that is, free of obstruction. Since they are unobstructed, they should see that there are no flowers in empty space. This proves that the flowers do not come forth from the eyes either.

Next, “Moreover, when one sees the flowers, the eyes should be free of obstruction” means that, if the flowers leave the eyes, one should see them in empty space. Since the flowers are in empty space, the eyes ought to be clear and should not be obstructed. But the facts are otherwise. When one sees flowers in empty space, that is precisely when the eyes are obstructed.

If the eyes were unobstructed, one should see no flowers in empty space. In fact, there are no flowers in empty space; one sees them only because the eyes are impaired. Similarly, of two people, one may have sound eyes while the other's eyes are obstructed. The one with sound eyes sees no flowers in empty space, whereas the one whose eyes are obstructed sees flowers there.

If these flowers came forth from the eyes, then when they emerged into empty space your eyes should be clear. In fact, when you see flowers in empty space, you should be without discriminating consciousness and without deliberate intention; you are not intentionally trying to prove that the flowers do not come forth from the eyes.

Next, the passage argues conversely: “How, then, can clear empty space be called clear and luminous eyes?” Clear empty space means that there are no flowers in empty space; clear and luminous eyes are also called pure eyes. Why is clear empty space called pure eyes? Pure eyes are eyes free of obstruction—sound eyes. Since they are unobstructed, they should see that there are no flowers in empty space.

But when one sees clear empty space, it is said that the flowers have gone out from the eyes; and having gone out from the eyes, they must of course return into them. When the flowers return into the eyes, the eyes should be obstructed.

If the eyes were obstructed, one would certainly see flowers in empty space and would not see empty space as free of flowers. If one sees no flowers in clear empty space, the eyes must be clear and luminous; it is because they are unobstructed that there are no flowers in empty space. Repeated examination and verification from both the positive and negative sides show that the flowers do not arise from the eyes, and that their coming forth from the eyes cannot be established. Thus, when you see clear empty space without flowers, your eyes are pure and unstained, free of obstruction.

Earlier, the statement that when one sees the flowers the eyes should be free of obstruction demonstrated that the flowers do not come forth from the eyes. Later, "How, then, can clear empty space be called clear and luminous eyes?" demonstrates that the flowers have not entered the eyes. Since coming forth entails entering, the fact that there is now no entering proves that there was originally no coming forth.

"Therefore, you should know that the form aggregate is illusory and unreal, and is fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a self-arising nature." Form refers to all the various things outside us—that is, forms and appearances. "Aggregate" means that these forms and appearances obscure the radiance of our suchness Buddha-nature; it also refers to the deluded mind and deluded thoughts that arise in response to forms.

Sentient beings have their own suchness Buddha-nature obscured by the shadows of these forms and appearances because they entertain deluded thoughts and attachments.

Although the form aggregate is an illusory appearance produced by ignorance, its very substance is our suchness Buddha-nature. Without suchness Buddha-nature as its substance, how could we see all the various things? We previously used clouds in the sky as an analogy. Clouds originally have no fixed form, but when stirred by the wind, they move and can manifest all manner of appearances—cats, dogs, lions, and so forth.

Though the forms of clouds may change in a thousand ways, their substance remains clouds; that substance does not change with changes in shape. Our suchness Buddha-nature is the same. It is not something dead and motionless; rather, it is an all-capable spiritual awareness that can give rise to various functions in accordance with conditions.

This all-capable substance can manifest not only human bodies, cat bodies, ox bodies, and horse bodies in accordance with conditions, but also the bodies of Buddhas, bodhisattvas, devas, and all manner of bodies. Although it manifests, nothing is truly manifested; although there is birth, nothing is truly born, because its substance is neither arising nor ceasing, unchanging and unmoving.

If our suchness Buddha-nature were not spiritual awareness, it would become something dull and lifeless, like bricks, stones, or roof tiles, and could not function in accordance with conditions. Therefore, the form aggregate is originally our suchness Buddha-nature. We must learn to see the nature through appearances. If, upon seeing appearances, we become attached to them, they become illusory and unreal.

Therefore, we repeatedly say that one should not chase after appearances; this means that one should not become attached to them. For example, when we see plates and cups made of gold, we should not recognize only the appearances of plates and cups, but should recognize the substance of gold. To recognize only the appearances is mistaken. The shape of gold may change, but its essential substance does not.

For instance, I can remake a cup into a plate, or remake a plate into a cup. The appearances of these vessels may change back and forth, but the gold always remains one piece. Our suchness Buddha-nature is the same: although it can manifest various appearances in accordance with conditions, its substance is one and the same, without any difference.

Why is it said that it is “fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a self-arising nature”? Of the two characters in “causes and conditions,” cause means self-arising, while condition means assisted arising, or arising from another. Cause and condition combined mean co-arising. But the form aggregate is an illusory appearance; originally it does not exist. Since it originally does not exist, what is there to arise? Therefore, it does not arise from itself, from another, or from both together.

A self-arising nature means arising without a cause. Since the form aggregate is fundamentally illusory and unreal, neither does it arise without a cause. Suchness Buddha-nature is originally thus: it neither arises nor ceases. If anything did arise, it would be of the nature of causes and conditions or of self-arising.

Because it does not arise from itself, from another, from both, or without a cause, it is said to be originally neither conditioned by causes and conditions nor of a self-existing nature. From the standpoint of the essence of suchness, it arises without there being anything that arises, and is unborn yet manifests birth. For example, however clouds may change, their essential nature does not change: they remain clouds. This is what is meant by “nothing arises.”

Although it is originally unborn, it is not without change. It can take the forms of cats, dogs, lions, and so forth; this is what is meant by being unborn yet manifesting birth. Our suchness and Buddha-nature can, in accordance with conditions, give rise to every kind of wondrous functioning; therefore, it is called unborn yet manifesting birth. This unborn-yet-manifesting birth is an illusory appearance, produced by sentient beings' attachment.

If sentient beings did not cling to it, then illusory appearances would become the wondrous nature of suchness—the wondrous functioning that suchness gives rise to in accordance with conditions. All the forms that appear to us are the wondrous functioning of suchness. The reason sentient beings sink and drift in the six realms is attachment; if one can break through this clinging mind, all karmic conditions are immediately resolved.

For example, suppose a family has a precious only son, whom everyone in the household dearly loves. Later, the child falls ill and passes away. When their precious son dies, the adults naturally weep with great grief. At such a time, if you were to tell them, "Your son has not actually died at all, because this birth is itself no birth,"

you might say: "When conditions arose in the past, he came; now that the conditions have ceased, he has gone."

In fact, not only did his life never truly exist; you yourself do not truly exist either. Why, then, do you still cling to the appearance of this son? After hearing this, they would say, "What you say is quite right. But when the child was with us, he brought us so much joy and so much family affection."

"Now our precious son is gone; we can no longer see him. How can we not feel sorrow? How can we not grieve? Look—his corpse lies here. How wonderful he was when he was once so lively and active; now he lies here, unable to speak or move. How could this not break one's heart?" This is precisely what they cannot get past.

What is so tragic about sentient beings is their deluded thoughts and attachments. If deluded thoughts are cast off, one can see one's intrinsic nature and will no longer run after false appearances. For example, take the gold cup and gold plate we mentioned just now: their forms may undergo all kinds of changes, but their substance does not change.

If the cup and plate are melted down, their original forms may be gone, but the nature of the gold has not changed, and it can still be fashioned into other things.

Sentient beings are the same. When their causes and conditions here come to an end, they again follow conditions to another place and enter a womb. Although the

appearances of arising and ceasing occur one after another, the essence of their intrinsic nature has never moved. This is called fundamental immutability. Because this fundamental basis has never changed, it is said that they neither arise nor cease.

Sentient beings go wrong precisely through attachment. Attachment gives rise to deluded thoughts, and they take illusory appearances to be truly existent. Thus the mind of arising and ceasing comes into being.

If we now turn back and understand that false appearances are our suchness and Buddha-nature, the wondrous functioning manifested by intrinsic nature in accordance with conditions, then although false appearances arise and cease, the substance of the true mind remains still and unmoving. If from then on we never again cling to false appearances, we can see the essence of suchness through them.

Nature and appearance are related as essence and function. If one knows only that "nature is precisely appearance," turning nature into appearance, that is the realm of sentient beings. Because sentient beings cling to appearances and, thought after thought, see only appearances arising and ceasing, they cannot see their intrinsic nature. To understand that "appearance is precisely nature," and to know that appearance itself is nature, is the realm of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

Because bodhisattvas have already broken through the illusory appearances of ignorance, they see that every appearance is a manifestation of the wondrous, luminous true mind. Thus, whenever they see appearances, they see intrinsic nature everywhere. Where do sentient beings' birth and death come from? They come from clinging to appearances. Because of such clinging, one thinks, "My son has died; he has left me."

Your son has not actually left you. His suchness-mind and your suchness-mind are originally one. Intrinsic nature is also called the dharmakāya. The dharmakāya is one shared body of a thousand Buddhas and ten thousand Buddhas. That is, not only do Buddhas share one dharmakāya with other Buddhas, but Buddhas and sentient beings, as well as sentient beings with one another, all share one dharmakāya.

We can use the water of the great ocean as an analogy for the dharmakāya. The ocean's water is one whole, without distinction between this and that, just as the dharmakāya does not distinguish between you and me. Although the seawater is one whole, bubbles can rise one after another on its surface; each bubble is like the body of a sentient being.

Although the bubbles on the ocean's surface seem separate and independent from one another, they all arise from the ocean and never leave it. Sentient beings' bodies

are likewise separate and independent from one another, yet they all arise from the same suchness and Buddha-nature and never depart from it.

When a bubble bursts with a pop, it dissolves back into the ocean. Its arising and ceasing have never departed from the ocean. When a sentient being's conditions are exhausted and the karmic retribution of this life is relinquished, that being again merges into the essence of suchness. Because suchness and Buddha-nature remain thus, thus, unmoving, that being's birth and death never depart from Buddha-nature.

At birth, Buddha-nature does not increase; at death, Buddha-nature does not decrease. This is called: although there is arising and ceasing, there has never been arising or ceasing; although there is coming and going, there has never been coming or going. What we call awakening is understanding this principle. Once one understands it and never again clings, that is awakening; that is seeing one's intrinsic nature.

Therefore, realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature is not difficult. It is not necessary to shut oneself away somewhere to practice, nor is it necessary to hide in the mountains to cultivate. Still less must one investigate Chan for a fixed number of years or recite the Buddha's name a fixed number of times before one can awaken.

The effort of practice does not depend on the length of time. Whether one awakens immediately or only after investigating Chan or reciting the Buddha's name for many years, the experience of awakening is the same. There is a saying: "Practice for decades; awaken in an instant." Thus, awakening to the Way upon hearing a single word is no different from awakening to the Way after decades of Chan practice.

What is called awakening to the Way is awakening to the fact that there is no mind to be called mind. For example, Chan practice emphasizes arousing a sense of doubt. Thus, I investigate, "Who is it that recites the Buddha's name?" and the sense of doubt arises.

When the time and conditions are ripe, the sense of doubt suddenly bursts open, and one clearly understands: "Ah! Buddha-nature has never been separated from me by even the slightest amount. It shines forth at the gateways of my six sense faculties!" It is truly as the saying goes: "Having worn out iron shoes in a fruitless search, one finds it without the slightest effort."

Investigating Chan and awakening to the Way are not inherently complicated. To use an analogy, our suchness and Buddha-nature are like a storehouse filled with treasures. Now its door has been locked, and to enter we must first unlock it.

So we find a key to open the lock. If the key is wrong—meaning that we are using the mind wrongly—the lock naturally will not open. But if we find the right key, the lock opens with a snap. Awakening to the Way is really as simple as opening a lock.

Last time we spoke of the saying, “Had I known earlier that the lamp was fire, the rice would have been cooked long ago!” If we had known from the start that this lamp was fire, we would not have needed to seek a source of fire elsewhere, and the rice would long since have been cooked. Likewise, awakening to the Way is right here in the present moment. To be able to let go completely, unstained by a single speck of dust and untainted by the slightest trace—this is it. Thus, “originally neither conditioned by causes and conditions nor of a self-existing nature” means exactly this.

Why do we say that it arises yet does not arise, and is unborn yet manifests birth? Because intrinsic nature is not dead; it is not inert and motionless. If intrinsic nature were dead, it would become annihilation.

If there were no world, and if intrinsic nature gave rise to no wondrous functioning at all, what meaning or positive value would Buddhism have? We say that Buddhism is positive and engaged with the world, because the Buddhadharma is in the world. To leave the world in search of one’s individual liberation is both impossible and meaningless.

To be a qualified Buddhist and disciple of the Buddha, one must first learn how to be a decent human being. Only then does one’s life in this world have meaning and value. Having understood suchness and Buddha-nature, we cannot remain inert and unmoving. We must learn to give rise to wondrous functioning and, through our own efforts and through invention and innovation, enable all sentient beings to live in happiness and fulfillment.

Therefore, Śākyamuni Buddha taught us that, after recognizing intrinsic nature, we must also study the five fields of knowledge. Seeing one’s nature yields only the bare dharmakāya; if one wishes to benefit sentient beings, one must learn other forms of knowledge as well. The field of crafts and technical arts among the five fields of knowledge refers to natural science, invention, and innovation. The more advanced science becomes and the more inventions and innovations there are, the better people’s living environment and quality of life can become. The field of medicine refers to medical arts and medicines. The more skilled the medicine and the more effective the medicines, the fewer illnesses humanity will suffer and the healthier people will live.

Yet the research we conduct and the inventions and innovations we undertake are not truly existent; all arise dependently and are empty in nature. This is called arising yet not arising. Conversely, true emptiness does not obstruct wondrous

presence. Although the essential nature of all dharmas is originally empty, this does not hinder us from conducting research and creating. This is called being unborn yet manifesting birth.

If everyone worked, invented, and created with the intention of serving society and benefiting sentient beings, they would have no selfish thoughts or distracting intentions. Only then could humanity truly be happy and harmonious.

What is now called scientific research, however, often begins from desire and personal benefit. The more inventions there are, the greater their negative impact on society may instead become.

For after I develop something, I may gain this or that benefit, make a great fortune, and ensure that I eat well, dress well, and live well; consequently, personal desires grow ever greater. From the standpoint of desire as the point of departure, it may be said that the more science and technology advance, the greater the karmic evil that is created.

Why is this so? Because such advances in material life cause people's desires to grow ever stronger. When those desires cannot be fulfilled or satisfied, conflicts arise, and people may commit wrongful acts.

Whether wars and conflicts between nations and ethnic groups on a large scale, or gains and losses of interest among groups and individuals on a small scale, what is not directly related to desire? Since the reform and opening-up, our country's economy has developed rapidly, but the crime rate has also risen steadily. This is the result of some individuals' personal desires expanding excessively.

Conversely, if we understand the principle that though birth is manifested, there is ultimately no birth, and that birth has no place from which it arises; if we know that all appearances, all dharmas, and all thoughts are wondrous functioning of suchness and Buddha-nature, illusory and unreal shadows; and that apart from suchness and Buddha-nature there is fundamentally nothing at all, then we will no longer cling. Nor will we resort to any means for the sake of our own gain and loss, committing criminal acts that violate heaven's principle and conscience.

Knowing that everything is the wondrous functioning of intrinsic nature, and that apart from suchness and Buddha-nature there is fundamentally neither person nor self, neither gain nor loss, we will no longer approach everything from selfish intentions and distracting thoughts. Instead, we will truly give rise to vast and profound vows to benefit, serve, and liberate sentient beings.

We will make vows before the Buddhas and bodhisattvas that, in the future, we too will bring to accomplishment a land as sublime as the Western Land of Ultimate

Bliss. May all sentient beings be born into my world, leave behind all suffering, attain every happiness, and each become a bodhisattva in the final life before Buddhahood; in time, they too will become Buddhas and bring benefit and happiness to immeasurable, boundless sentient beings.

Such people will no longer have the slightest selfish intention. They will no longer think about how to become wealthy or how to enjoy themselves after their own wishes have been fulfilled. Such people no longer worry over personal gain and loss, nor do they break the law or commit crimes in order to satisfy their desires.

Thus, Buddhism has a profoundly positive role in the progress of human society. If everyone could plan their lives according to the Buddha's teachings, regulate their words and conduct, and purify their minds, then this world would surely be filled with peace, tranquility, mutual assistance, and friendship.

Now let us return to the earlier question. If the flowers in empty space came of themselves, then those flowers would possess a natural nature. But flowers in empty space have no place from which they come, so they do not possess a natural nature. If the flowers in empty space arose through causes and conditions—for example, by emerging from empty space or flying out from the eye faculty—then they could be said to possess a nature arising from causes and conditions.

But they neither emerge from empty space nor fly out from the eye faculty. They are manifested as arising, yet ultimately do not arise; thus, they also do not possess a nature arising from causes and conditions. Since they are fundamentally nonexistent, illusory appearances, it is said: “The aggregate of form is illusory; originally, it is neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a natural nature.”

(II) The Illusory Nature of the Feeling Aggregate

“Ānanda, suppose someone’s hands and feet are at ease and his entire body is well adjusted. Suddenly, as if forgetting his former state, his nature has neither opposition nor accord. Without cause, he rubs his two palms together in empty space. In his two hands, false appearances of roughness and smoothness, cold and heat, and so forth arise. You should know that the aggregate of feeling is likewise so.”

We have finished discussing the aggregate of form; now we will discuss the aggregate of feeling. What is the aggregate of feeling? It is the functioning of the mind when the six sense faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—cling to the six sense objects of forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas, receiving the objects before them. This is called the aggregate of feeling.

How should this aggregate of feeling be explained? The Buddha gives Ānanda an example: “Suppose someone’s hands and feet are at ease and his entire body is well adjusted.” The limbs and the hundred bones refer to the whole body; being at ease and well adjusted means that the entire body is healthy, comfortable, and free of any illness.

This sentence is used as an analogy for the pure mind. Our wondrous, luminous true mind is originally pure and free of all defilement, just as a person’s entire body is harmonious and comfortable, without the slightest ailment.

What does “suddenly, as if forgetting his former state, his nature has neither opposition nor accord” mean? Upon the originally pure and undefiled substance of mind, because of a single unenlightened thought, ignorant delusive movement arises, and one thereby forgets one’s former state. This former state is an analogy for the Original Face: the pure mind in which birth is unborn.

This means that, because of a single unenlightened thought, ignorant delusive movement suddenly arises. One loses one’s Original Face, and the originally pure substance of mind becomes defiled. Opposition means that which runs contrary to one’s will; accord means that which conforms to one’s state of mind.

Although our wondrous, luminous true mind can manifest appearances of arising and ceasing, coming and going, these appearances are all shadows of intrinsic nature and wondrous functions of the true mind. Fundamentally, they do not exist; thus this is called birth that is unborn.

Since birth is unborn, all phenomenal appearances are originally nonexistent. What opposition or accord could there then be? Dharmas arise from the mind. Because sentient beings entertain deluded thoughts and regard all dharmas and all appearances as truly existent, they experience feelings of opposition and accord.

For example, in daily life, when they encounter something that accords with their wishes, they laugh heartily; when they encounter something that does not accord with their wishes, they become resentful, angry, and afflicted. In fact, affairs themselves contain neither opposition nor accord. All opposition and accord arise from the mind. Because sentient beings abide in deluded thoughts and attachment, they feel opposition or accord whenever they encounter circumstances.

Our wondrous, luminous true mind is originally pure and undefiled. Although it can give rise to all dharmas and all functions, its arising is unborn. Since originally there are no appearances whatsoever, and since birth is unborn, where could opposition or accord be? Opposition and accord belong to the deluded mind; they are the realm of deluded thought in which ignorance abides. Fundamentally, they result

from suchness failing to preserve its own nature: because a single deluded thought stirs, one forgets the Original Face and the pure mind becomes defiled.

What does the next sentence, “Without cause, he rubs his two palms together in empty space,” mean? “Without cause” represents ignorance. Once ignorance arises, one becomes attached to appearances everywhere. Rubbing the palms together in empty space represents, after becoming attached to appearances, the contact between mind and objects, through which one receives and accepts the objects before one.

When two palms rub against each other in empty space, different sensations arise—cold, heat, smoothness, roughness, and so forth. At one moment there is cold, at another heat; at one moment smoothness, at another roughness.

These various sensations are like the mind’s contact with objects: it sees and receives every kind of feeling. Thus dazzling colors arise, judgments of right and wrong arise, and all the affairs of family, society, and the world arise. All these appearances and feelings are illusory; they are not truly existent. Therefore it is said, “You should know that the aggregate of feeling is likewise so.” Simply put, when mind and objects come into contact and the various appearances present themselves, the mind accepts and receives the appearances before it. This is the aggregate of feeling.

Feeling may be divided into several kinds: painful feeling, pleasant feeling, neutral feeling, sorrowful feeling, and joyful feeling. Together these are called the five feelings. Here, painful, pleasant, and neutral feeling pertain to the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; sorrowful and joyful feeling pertain to the mind faculty. In fact, they all belong to the sixth consciousness, the mind faculty.

We must understand feeling clearly. If we can break through the aggregate of feeling and do not receive any feeling, this is called the proper experience of samādhi. By attaining this samādhi, one can extinguish all suffering. Someone asked me today whether suffering in hell is unbearable. Of course it is; the suffering in hell is beyond our imagination.

But what exactly is suffering? Fundamentally, it is your deluded thought! In fact, body, mind, and circumstances alike are originally illusory; fundamentally, they do not exist. Yet when your deluded mind arises, you consider everything to exist.

Thus, when you see a knife cutting your illusory body, you feel unbearable pain; when you see oil poured over your illusory body, you feel unbearably burned. In fact, all feelings of suffering and pleasure are false; they are produced by your deluded mind. If your mind is empty, these things fundamentally do not exist.

If you can refrain from receiving all feelings, then hell is no different from heaven! Otherwise, how could bodhisattvas enter the evil realms to liberate sentient beings? For example, Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva vowed to adorn the hells and liberate all the beings in hell. If he could not extinguish painful feeling, he himself would suffer unbearably—how could he liberate sentient beings? Again, Devadatta repeatedly attempted to harm Śākyamuni Buddha and consequently fell into hell.

Later, the Buddha sent Ānanda to ask him how he felt in hell. He replied, "There is not the slightest suffering here for me; it is like enjoying the bliss of the third dhyāna heaven." How could Devadatta, this demon king, be like this? A demon king also has power: he can refrain from receiving this painful feeling. This sufficiently shows that all things arise in accordance with our mind. Therefore, we say that awakening does not mean everything is finished at once. We must still do the work of cultivation: train ourselves not to cling to appearances, so that the mind may truly become empty and pure. When the mind is empty and pure, it can perform great functions.

Because sentient beings have deluded thoughts and cling to appearances, even a slight pain feels unbearable. If our minds are truly empty, then no suffering or pleasure that befalls us can shake us. It is like Chan Master Huike, the Second Patriarch, who said at the time of his death: "With his head before the white blade, it is as though cutting a spring breeze."

This was not mere talk. He was falsely accused and truly beheaded. Yet to him, beheading was like cutting a spring breeze; it did not affect him in the least. His mind was truly empty and pure, and he did not receive this feeling at all.

According to the Lotus Sūtra, when Sun-Moon-Lamp Bright Buddha appeared in the world, there was a bodhisattva named Gladly Seen by All Beings, a former incarnation of Medicine King Bodhisattva. To repay the Buddha's kindness, he made a great vow to offer his own body.

First he consumed fragrant oil and incense so that his internal organs became fresh and clean. Then he anointed his body with fragrant ointments and perfumes, wrapped it in cloth, poured fragrant oil over it, and finally set his entire body alight as an offering to the Buddha. He offered his body while still alive; it was not an offering made after death.

Why was he able to do this? Because his mind had truly become empty and pure, and he had truly realized the Way. Therefore, in our cultivation we should learn from the bodhisattvas and train ourselves until we likewise reach this state.

Speaking of realizing the Way, one must first awaken to the fact that all appearances are manifestations of one's true mind, wondrous functions arising from intrinsic nature, and illusory and unobtainable. Otherwise, one has not truly seen one's

nature. Only by not clinging to appearances can one see one's nature. If one understands that appearances are intrinsic nature, and that the absence of any obtainable appearance is intrinsic nature, then one can see one's nature at all times and in all places.

Therefore, speaking of cultivation before awakening is merely blind cultivation and blind practice. Since you do not know what the wondrous, luminous true mind is, no matter how you cultivate, you cannot realize the Way. After awakening, because you already know what suchness and Buddha-nature are and have recognized the root, cultivation can truly begin. Thus, cultivation after awakening is genuine cultivation.

After seeing one's nature, one cannot immediately bring everything to completion. One must still train body and mind and diligently remove habitual tendencies. Sentient beings have long been accustomed to clinging to appearances through countless lives and eons, and these habitual tendencies cannot be reversed at once. They must be repeatedly cleared away and refined until they are wholly eliminated. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says: "Principle is realized suddenly, and through awakening it is simultaneously dissolved; phenomena must be gradually removed, and are exhausted according to their sequence."

After awakening, the delusions of view are cut off at once, but the delusions of thought cannot be entirely eliminated at once; they must be gradually extinguished. Someone asks: What is true cultivation after awakening? True cultivation after awakening means learning to watch over one's own mind and care for one's thoughts.

If the mind becomes attached to appearances and follows thoughts as they run, immediately awaken sharply: "What appearance are you clinging to? That is the deluded mind; you must not cling to appearances!" In this way, struggle against deluded thoughts. After tens of thousands of such struggles, one progresses from being unaware when a thought arises, to being aware when it arises; from being aware but unable to turn it around, to turning it around the moment one becomes aware.

This process of training the mind is like making steel. One first smelts ore into molten iron; this is like seeing one's nature. But newly smelted iron is merely pig iron, containing many impurities. Only after repeated forging can the crude iron be refined into fine steel. This is like safeguarding realization after awakening.

Once crude iron has been forged into high-quality steel, it may be stored for use whenever needed. This is an analogy for cultivation becoming fully mature: one can be free and at ease in accordance with conditions and function at any time. Therefore, after realizing the Way, so long as one is neither negligent nor indolent

and repeatedly trains body and mind amid affairs and circumstances, in time one's mental tendencies will naturally be transformed.

Look at those patriarchs of old: each was steady and firm amid circumstances. Their practice did not come from outside and attach itself to them; it was all cultivated in this way.

Take Chan Master Huike, whom I mentioned just now. After transmitting the Dharma to the Third Patriarch, he often went in and out of wine shops and other impure places. When people saw him, they asked, "How can a monastic like you come to such places?" He replied, "I observe my own mind. What concern is it of yours?" Even such a great patriarch as he did not forget to continue tempering himself amid circumstances; we later generations all the more

must apply ourselves diligently! Practice is not something accomplished in a day or two. It is not the case that one sits once in the morning and once again at night, and then everything is settled. Still less is it enough merely to perform the morning and evening services, chanting, reciting, and striking the ritual instruments.

The first step in cultivating the Way is first to awaken to the Way. One must first know which is one's true mind; only after knowing what the true mind is can one cultivate properly.

For example, if you want to train talented people for the country and society, you must first have a child. If there is no child, whom can you train? If what you find is not a child but a kitten or puppy, what use is there in training it for all that time? Therefore, the first step is to have a child.

Yet merely having an infant is not enough, because it is still too young and cannot do anything. It must be nurtured and trained before it can grow into an adult. Cultivation is the same. Initial awakening to the Way is only the unadorned dharmakāya; one must further nurture the sacred embryo before wondrous functioning can arise. As I said last time, the great golden-winged garuḍa flies ninety thousand li, all by relying on that little bit of force beneath its feet.

Without the force of that initial push beneath its feet, it could not fly. That touch of the ground beneath its feet is comparable to awakening to the Way: "Oh! So this is what one's intrinsic nature is!" After seeing one's true nature, one must then safeguard realization continuously and closely; over time, success will come naturally. Thus, practice requires a key. If one cannot find the key and practices blindly, it is like trying to cook sand into rice: one will surely never accomplish anything.

When suffering and happiness are mentioned, some people say, “Oh! When this happens to me, it is unbearably painful, as though I had gone to hell.” Or they say, “Oh! I am so happy when something like this happens; it is simply as joyful as going to heaven.” In fact, so-called suffering and happiness are fundamentally false; there is fundamentally no such thing.

Why? These feelings of suffering and happiness arise only after the sense faculties and their objects come into contact, and the mind makes discriminations and receives them; only then is there a distinction between suffering and happiness. If there were only the five faculties, or if the faculties encountered objects without giving rise to mind, where would feelings of suffering or happiness be? For example, when the eye faculty sees form, eye consciousness arises. This eye consciousness is mind; it is not only pleasurable feeling that is mind.

Likewise, when the ear faculty hears a sound, ear consciousness arises and distinguishes what sort of sound it is. This ear consciousness is also mind. Thus, the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body may appear to be faculties, but when faculties encounter objects and consciousness arises, what could that consciousness be if not mind? In fact, faculties are consciousness, and consciousness is faculties. Likewise, faculties are mind, and consciousness is also mind; mind cannot be separated from faculties and consciousness.

Of the five feelings, the first three—painful feeling, pleasurable feeling, and neutral feeling—belong to the faculties, while the latter two—sorrowful feeling and joyful feeling—belong to the mind. Sentient beings experience suffering and afflictions because of these five feelings. Once the aggregate of feeling is broken through, we can be liberated from all suffering and adversity and can bring forth wondrous functioning.

We have heard the story of Patriarch Bodhidharma taking poison. Someone poisoned him, yet why could the poison not kill him? It was because he had already broken through the aggregate of feeling: he could remain unaffected by all suffering and happiness, and by every kind of poison or harm.

Before Patriarch Bodhidharma came from India to China, the monastics here all practiced gradual Chan. Like the Tiantai practice of calming and contemplation, it required studying doctrine, establishing verbal formulations and characteristics, and cultivating step by step through the four dhyānas and eight meditative absorptions.

The Chan school transmitted by Patriarch Bodhidharma did not teach gradual stages: there was no sequential order and no preliminary practices. What is called direct pointing to the mind, seeing one's true nature, and attaining Buddhahood is a complete and sudden Dharma gate by which one can ascend to heaven in a single step.

Because the Chan school is a special transmission outside the teachings, none of the scriptures previously translated had mentioned such a Dharma. Therefore, the Buddhist community at that time was very dissatisfied with him and said that he was a demon king preaching the Dharma.

Patriarch Bodhidharma thought, “Since your capacities are insufficient and the conditions for transmitting the Dharma are not yet present, I shall hide myself for the time being.” Thus, he went into retreat in a stone chamber on Mount Song.

Later, Chan Master Huike found him and studied Chan under him. Only then was the Chan school gradually accepted by people, and those who sought the Dharma from him gradually increased. This, in turn, offended many people.

Those who came had previously studied under other Dharma teachers, but now they gradually went over to Bodhidharma. Their former teachers had fewer disciples and could no longer receive offerings, so they bore a grudge against Bodhidharma. They sent someone to poison his food, hoping to kill him. But because Patriarch Bodhidharma's mind was already completely empty and pure, no poison could kill him. This is genuine practice, not empty talk; one must undergo much training before attaining it.

All other schools outside the Chan school say that attaining Buddhahood requires passing through three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas and can be accomplished only after cutting off such deluded karma as views, thoughts, dust-like delusions, and ignorance. Yet Patriarch Bodhidharma said that attaining Buddhahood is not so troublesome: in the space of a question and answer, or through a blow or a shout, one can immediately attain Buddhahood.

Can attaining Buddhahood really be so easy? Was what he taught true or false? The doctrinal schools never understood this principle clearly. Now let me tell you a koan. During the reign of Emperor Huizong of the Northern Song, the Grand Commandant once invited the elders of the various mountains to his home to hold an unrestricted Dharma assembly (unrestricted means speaking freely and conversing as inspiration arises.

Some people misunderstood this, saying that an unrestricted assembly means taking off all one's clothes; that is incorrect). Those attending included not only venerable elders and great masters from every school and tradition, but even Emperor Huizong himself, dressed in plain blue robes and a small cap.

At the assembly, a Huayan lecturer came forward and asked, “According to the doctrinal teachings, attaining Buddhahood requires three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas, whereas your school says that one can realize the Way through a single blow or shout. This greatly diverges from what the Buddha taught and cannot but leave

people doubtful. Since great masters of your school are here today, if a single shout can penetrate the Five Teachings of the Xianshou tradition, everyone will be convinced that blows and shouts truly have this efficacy. If it cannot penetrate the Five Teachings, then the claim that blows and shouts can enable people to realize the Way is no different from the speech of demons. I respectfully ask the great masters of your school to instruct us in our ignorance."

At that time, the eminent master of the Linji school, Chan Master Yuanwu Keqin, was also present. When he heard the Huayan lecturer's question, he looked toward Chan Master Jingyin Cheng. Cheng understood his meaning (because Jingyin was young, he found it awkward to come forward himself before all the elders; only after receiving Yuanwu's signal did he stand up). He then said to the assembly: "This question is very simple and not worth troubling the senior elders to answer. Let me, a junior elder, attempt an answer. To penetrate the Five Teachings of Xianshou, we must first set out the doctrines of the Five Teachings clearly, lest there be confusion when the shout is given. The so-called Five Teachings are:"

1. The Hīnayāna teaching: the Hīnayāna is attached to existence, holding that there are dharmas to cultivate, a path to accomplish, birth and death to transcend, and nirvāṇa to realize;

2. The initial teaching of the Mahāyāna: it refutes the existence posited by the Hīnayāna and takes as its meaning the dharma realm of true emptiness, devoid of characteristics; it esteems not establishing a single dharma and being unstained by a single speck of dust;

3. The final teaching of the Mahāyāna: it takes neither emptiness nor existence as its meaning. Neither emptiness nor existence is affirmed; this is the phenomenal dharma realm in which neither emptiness nor existence is abided in;

4. The sudden teaching of the Mahāyāna: it takes both emptiness and existence as its meaning. Emptiness does not obstruct existence, and existence does not obstruct emptiness; this is the dharma realm of the nonobstruction of principle and phenomena, in which emptiness and existence operate together;

5. The perfect teaching of the Mahāyāna: taking neither emptiness while not being existence, nor existence while not being emptiness, with perfect interpenetration and nonobstruction as its purport; this is the dharma realm of the nonobstruction among phenomena, the mind-essence of the Buddhas and patriarchs.

After setting these forth, Cheng asked the lecturer, "Is the purport of the Five Teachings as I have stated?" The lecturer replied, "So it is, so it is." Cheng said, "If so, listen carefully. My one shout will penetrate the Five Teachings." He then gave a

great shout and asked the assembly, “Did you hear it?” The assembly replied, “We heard it.” Cheng said, “Then it exists, and so it can penetrate the Hīnayāna teaching.”

After a while, the sound had ceased. Cheng again asked the assembly, “Can you still hear that shout now?” Everyone said, “We cannot hear it.” Cheng said, “Then it is empty, and so it can penetrate the initial teaching of the Mahāyāna.”

Cheng continued: “Now there is no sound, whereas just now there was sound; therefore it is not emptiness. Just now there was sound, whereas now it is gone; therefore it is not existence. The present absence of sound is not existence, and the sound just now was not emptiness. We can speak of neither existence nor emptiness only because of my shout. Without this shout, how could we speak in this way of neither emptiness nor existence? Therefore, this one shout can penetrate the final teaching of the Mahāyāna.”

“Next is the sudden teaching, in which emptiness and existence are simultaneous. What is called emptiness is that, after I gave a shout, the shout was gone; its absence is emptiness.”

“This absence did not arise from nowhere. It is only because that shout was present just now that we can now say it is absent. If there had been no shout, how could we now speak of its absence? This ‘absence’ is called absence because of ‘presence’; therefore, is not ‘absence’ itself ‘presence’? Thus, emptiness is existence, and existence is emptiness.”

“Emptiness and existence arise in dependence on each other; neither is absolute. One is two, and two is one. When we speak of existence, existence is not truly existence, for it exists because of emptiness. Likewise, when we speak of emptiness, emptiness is not truly emptiness, for it is empty because of existence. Apart from emptiness, there is no such thing as existence; apart from existence, there is no such thing as emptiness. This is simultaneous existence and emptiness. Thus, this one shout can also penetrate the sudden teaching of the Mahāyāna.”

Finally, he spoke of the Perfect Teaching of the Mahāyāna: neither empty nor existent, neither existent nor empty. “I do not make a single shout serve merely as a single shout. In doing all things, there is no coming or going, no attachment or defilement. All day long I eat, yet have never bitten into a single grain of rice; all day long I wear clothes, yet have never had a single thread cling to me. Without stirring body or mind, I respond daily to the myriad conditions; seated upright in non-contrivance, wondrous function is as countless as the sands of the Ganges.”

“When speaking of emptiness, it pervades the dharma realm; when speaking of existence, not even a hair's breadth is established. The various schools of thought and the hundred arts and crafts are all like this. Such is the perfectly harmonized

and unobstructed purport of the Perfect Teaching of the Mahāyāna." After hearing this, everyone was convinced and praised him; Emperor Huizong, who was present, nodded repeatedly.

The most important point here is that a single shout is not used merely as a single shout. Do not become attached to that shout: shouting is just as if there had been no shout. Likewise, when we eat, it is as if we have not eaten; when we dress, it is as if we have not dressed; when we do things, it is as if we have done nothing. Therefore, when eating, do not indulge in a hundred kinds of calculation; when dressing, do not be excessively fastidious.

Whatever one does, having done it is the same as not having done it; do not become attached to it. Sentient beings go wrong precisely through attachment. They take whatever they see to be truly existent, and so are deceived, create karma, and undergo retribution. To say that a single shout is not used merely as a single shout does not mean that there was no shout; it means not becoming attached to the shout, not allowing the shout to leave an obstruction. Having shouted, it is still the same as not having shouted.

In this way, one can pervade the dharma realm: you encompass me, and I encompass you; we interpenetrate one another without obstruction. It is like the several lamps in this room. The light of this lamp and the light of that lamp mutually encompass one another; you contain me, and I contain you, without mutual obstruction. This is called pervading the dharma realm.

When the Avataṃsaka Sūtra speaks of pervading the dharma realm, it uses mirrors as an analogy. Take ten mirrors reflecting one another: this image is reflected in that mirror, and that image is reflected in this mirror; the mirrors reflect mirrors again. Like Indra's net, they interpenetrate one another in layer upon layer without end.

Therefore, it is said that a single shout contains the fivefold profound meaning: existent yet not existent, not existent yet existent; empty yet not empty, not empty yet empty; neither empty nor existent, neither existent nor empty. A single shout can penetrate the Five Teachings of Xianshou. Nor is this true only of a single shout: all phenomena in the dharma realm, together with all teachings in society, are likewise so.

If we understand this principle, we will discover that everything before us—men and women, young and old, food and daily living, mountains and rivers, the great earth, sentient and insentient beings—is likewise layered without end, mutually interpenetrating without obstruction. So long as your mind does not abide in appearances, you can remain unaffected by every feeling. Once the aggregate of feeling has been broken through, such wondrous functioning becomes possible.

“Ānanda, these illusory tactile sensations do not come from empty space, nor do they arise from the palm.”

Ānanda, these illusory sensations and tactile perceptions neither come from empty space nor arise from the palm. Do not suppose that because the two hands rub against each other in empty space, sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness must come from empty space or arise from the palms.

Why? Because sensations such as cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness are all illusory; they are not truly existent. If they were not illusory, why would they arise only after rubbing and disappear when there is no rubbing? Their arising when there is rubbing and disappearance when there is none is like something conjured up by a magician.

When we watch a magician perform, he may conjure chickens, ducks, pigeons, and many other things. What is conjured is all done by sleight of hand; it is not truly created out of nothing. The following demonstrates why such tactile perception neither comes from empty space nor arises from the palm—why it is illusorily present rather than truly existent.

“Thus, Ānanda, if it came from empty space, then, since it could touch the palm, why would it not touch the body? Empty space should not be able to choose what it touches.”

If tactile sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness came from empty space, then, since they can affect your palms, why would they not affect your body? Our entire body is within empty space—not only the palms, but also the face, trunk, head, feet, and so forth.

If tactile perception came from empty space, it should not only touch the hands but also touch the body. Since empty space is insentient, it cannot choose where to make contact. This proves that it does not arise from empty space. Why is this so? Because, like the aggregate of feeling discussed earlier, these sensations are all conjured forth: they neither arise from form nor emerge from mind, and are fundamentally not truly existent.

“If it arose from the palm, it should not await contact. Moreover, since it arises from the palm, when the hands join, the palm should know it; when they separate, the tactile sensation should enter. The arms, wrists, bones, and marrow should likewise be aware of the trace of its entry. There must be an aware mind that knows its exit and entry. Then there would be something moving back and forth within the body. Why wait for contact to know it, and why call it touch?”

Suppose that sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness arose from the palms. Then there would be no need to rub the two hands together; they could simply arise on their own, irrespective of whether there was rubbing. Yet in fact sensation arises only after rubbing, and there is no sensation without rubbing. This proves that it does not arise from the palms themselves.

Further, suppose tactile perception arose from the palms. Only when the hands come together and rub does the palm become aware and know cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness. Then, after the hands separate, the tactile sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness should enter the hands, just as with the flowers in empty space discussed earlier: where there is an exit, there must also be an entry.

If tactile sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness arose from the palms, then when the hands were not rubbing, these sensations should return inside. Not only should the palms be able to sense this; the arms, wrists, and even the innermost bones and marrow should also know the trace of their whereabouts. If tactile perception had a course of coming and going, then, as the text says, “There must be an aware mind that knows its exit and entry.” There would have to be an aware mind capable of sensing its entering and leaving.

If this were truly so, then, “There would be something moving back and forth within the body. Why wait for contact to know it, and why call it touch?” Since tactile sensations of cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness emerge from the palms and also enter the palms, this would mean that such tactile perception moves back and forth within the body.

If it moved back and forth within the body, it would have no relation to the hands coming together and rubbing. Why, then, would awareness arise only when the hands came together and rubbed? And why would this awareness have to be called tactile perception? If, after rubbing, cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness emerged from the palms, and after rubbing ceased they entered the palms again, one could say that these sensations arose from the palms.

But your actual experience is not like this. You do not sense cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness entering or leaving through your arms. This proves that they do not arise from the palms.

“Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of feeling is illusory and unreal; fundamentally, it does not arise from causes and conditions, nor is it a spontaneous nature.”

The foregoing argument demonstrates that the aggregate of feeling is neither of the nature of causes and conditions nor of a spontaneous nature; it is fundamentally

illusory and unreal. Why is this so? What is called spontaneous nature has a self-nature. Things that can come to completion through their own self-nature are of spontaneous nature. If tactile perception came spontaneously from empty space, it could be called spontaneous nature, but it does not come from empty space.

What is called causes and conditions has no self-nature. Things that arise through the conjunction of internal and external causes and conditions are of the nature of causes and conditions. If tactile perception emerged from the palms, with the palms as the cause and rubbing as the condition, then it would be of the nature of causes and conditions. But in fact it does not emerge from the palms.

Since it arises neither from spontaneous nature nor from causes and conditions, it is not truly existent; it is fundamentally an illusory appearance. Neither arising from causes and conditions nor from spontaneous nature means not self-arising, not arising from another, not arising from both together, and not arising without cause. This is what is meant by arising without arising, and arising with no place of arising.

This arising with no place of arising is the wondrous nature of true suchness; this arising without arising is the wondrous functioning of our wonderfully luminous true mind. As we say, attachment is illusory; nonattachment is wondrous functioning. The difference lies only in this. Only when you are not attached is there bright and wondrous functioning. If you become attached, it becomes dead, and you cannot attain freedom and liberation.

This concludes the discussion of the aggregate of feeling. Next, let us discuss the aggregate of perception:

(III) The Aggregate of Perception Is Illusory

We are now discussing the aggregate of perception. Deluded thoughts are very harmful. Our practice is precisely to break through deluded thoughts, sweep everything clean, and avoid clinging to them in the mind so that they keep circling there.

If our deluded thoughts were gone, the empty space of the ten directions could immediately vanish all at once; this Sahā world of the five turbidities would become a pure world, and we would have mind-born bodies with which we could come and go freely throughout the lands of the ten directions. Therefore, in applying ourselves, we must grasp the essential key. The most important thing is awakening. After understanding the principle, we must protect it continuously and closely, struggle against our own deluded thoughts, deluded notions, and deluded mind, and break through these deluded thoughts. Then the deluded mind will turn into a pure mind, and we will attain freedom and benefit.

The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra speaks of three kinds of mind-born body. The first is the mind-born body of the blissful proper reception of samādhi. We have just said that samaya means not receiving any sensation whatsoever. When the aggregate of feeling and the aggregate of perception have both been broken through, the mind feels incomparably pure, light, and clear. Since it does not receive any sensation whatsoever, this is called the blissful proper reception of samādhi.

Because one no longer receives any sensation whatsoever, the mind-born body emerges. This follows a natural process and cannot be sought by deliberate effort. If you wish to produce a yang spirit and practice qigong for that purpose, the harm can be very great. Why? Those who practice qigong first become attached to qi circulating within the body. After it has circulated for a long time, this deluded thought causes them to remain constantly fixated on it. When they are startled, the qi becomes blocked, and serious problems can arise.

Another problem is forcing growth by pulling up the shoots. Before the qi has become unobstructed, one insists on making it flow; this too can cause problems. In the past, there was a famous doctor in Suzhou whom many people invited to treat their illnesses. One person's illness was very strange. The doctor asked him, “What illness do you have?” The man replied, “Mine is not an ordinary illness; medicine cannot cure it.”

“Mine was caused by practicing qigong.” The doctor said, “Oh! Your deficient fire is excessively high; it truly cannot be cured by medicine.” The doctor therefore wrote an article advising everyone not to practice qigong in this way. Once it causes deficient fire to arise, it becomes difficult to deal with.

This is still only a minor problem. Some people actually cultivate a yang spirit. When it first emerges, it looks like a small child. If it goes out and is seen by others, they may say, “Hey! Where did this little child come from? Let us frighten him by setting off a firecracker.” Bang! At the fright, the little child suddenly flies away. Later, we learn that the person has developed a problem: his yang spirit cannot return, and he becomes mentally impaired.

This will not do! Why did cultivating a yang spirit lead you so seriously astray? It is because you do not know that suchness and Buddha-nature are your own fundamental life-source. Spiritual powers alone are of no use, for you are still attached to appearances; therefore, you cannot transcend birth and death.

We say that realizing the Way is nothing strange or mysterious. At the beginning, there is nothing at all. When you have brought safeguarding realization to full maturity, eliminated deluded thoughts completely, and truly have nothing in your mind, then, without your wanting it to emerge, it will naturally come forth.

The mind-born body is the reflection of the manas consciousness. Ordinarily, this manas consciousness is covered with all kinds of dust and grime—greed, anger, ignorance, pride, doubt, and so forth—and thus it cannot emerge. When you have swept away this dust and grime, the six sense faculties are pure and do not receive any sensation whatsoever, and the obscurations covering the manas consciousness have been removed, it will naturally emerge.

Buddhism differs from Daoism. Daoism holds that the yang spirit is produced through cultivation, whereas Buddhism says that it is originally so and fundamentally unborn. Suchness and Buddha-nature are equally possessed by all sentient beings and do not come from outside. Though unborn, they can give rise to all dharmas; therefore, this is called the forbearance of the unborn dharmas.

When we speak of awakening, this very awakening is the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. Do not say, “Oh! Now that I am awakened, why is there nothing at all strange or mysterious? I am still the same old person,” and therefore fail to assume it. If you do not dare to assume it, you will not know how to bring forth its wondrous functioning. It is like becoming rich: you must learn how to use your wealth, or else you remain a poor fellow.

Learning to put it into function is a complete transformation; one is no longer an ordinary worldling of former days, because ordinary beings are always and everywhere attached to appearances. After awakening, one remains the same person as before, but no longer acts as before; everything of the past is reformed and renewed.

“Ānanda, suppose someone speaks of sour plums, and saliva arises in his mouth; or thinks of stepping off a precipice, and the soles of his feet become sour and weak. You should know that the aggregate of perception is likewise.”

What is perception? Last time, we said that after the faculties come into contact with their objects, the various appearances thereby produced appear in the mind. After the object has already disappeared, the appearances still circle in the mind; this is called the aggregate of perception. Perception includes two situations: recalling the past and imagining the future. Because all that is imagined is unreal and ultimately without any basis, it is called deluded thought.

The deluded mind, deluded notions, and deluded thoughts are three entirely different things. The deluded mind is fundamental: because of ignorance and lack of awakening, one clings to preceding objects, and this is the deluded mind. When the deluded mind confronts sense objects and a thought stirs, this is called a deluded notion. When a deluded notion clings to that appearance and circles without departing, it becomes a deluded thought.

Since we are discussing the aggregate of perception, we must demonstrate that it is unreal and illusory. Anyone who has eaten plums knows that they are sour. Later, when plums are mentioned, saliva flows from the mouth, though one has not actually eaten any plums. If you imagine yourself standing on a sheer precipice and about to fall, your mind immediately becomes alarmed and your legs tremble.

The aggregate of perception is likewise not truly existent; it is all deluded thought!

"Ānanda, this is so: the sourness spoken of does not arise from the plum, nor does it enter through the mouth."

When we speak of sour plums, saliva appears in our mouths. This saliva does not arise from plums, because you have not eaten any plums; nor does it enter through the mouth. The appearance of saliva arising in the mouth is the functioning of the aggregate of perception; it is a dharma-object of our thinking. It neither arises from the true suchness of reality nor enters through the true mind. Since it neither comes out nor enters in, it is deluded thought.

"Thus, Ānanda, if it arose from the plum, the plum itself should speak; why wait for a person to speak of it?"

Why do we say that sourness does not arise from the plum? If this sourness arose from the plum, the plum itself should speak of it; why would it need a person to speak? If the plum itself spoke, one could say that this sourness arose from the plum. But the plum does not speak; it is a person who speaks. Thus, this is deluded thought!

"If it entered through the mouth, the mouth itself should hear it; why wait for the ear?"

If it entered through the mouth, then this mouth itself should be able to hear sounds. What need would there be for the ears?

"If the ear alone hears, why does this saliva not flow out from the ear?"

If only the ears can hear, why does this saliva not flow out from the ears?

"Thinking of stepping off a precipice is analogous to speaking of it."

The two examples above—eating plums and thinking of stepping off a precipice—follow the same principle. It arises neither from the mouth nor from the eyes; it is all deluded thought.

"Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of perception is illusory and unreal. It is fundamentally neither dependent arising nor natural in nature."

Since it does not arise from the plum or enter through the mouth, it is neither dependent arising in nature nor natural in nature. If this sourness arose from the plum, it should be called natural in nature. Since it does not arise from the plum, it is of course not natural in nature. If this sourness entered through the mouth, it could be called dependent arising in nature. But since this sourness does not enter through the mouth, it is also not dependent arising in nature. Thus, it is neither natural nor dependent arising; it is still deluded thought.

The principle is the same as before: arising is itself non-arising. This aggregate of perception is the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, for the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha gives rise to nothing that is truly produced; thus, the aggregate of perception itself also gives rise to nothing that is truly produced. Though it arises without anything truly arising, it is not nonexistent either: sour saliva appears in the mouth. This is arising, though what arises cannot be grasped. This is the wondrous functioning of suchness and Buddha-nature. But we must not cling to it. Once we cling to it, it becomes deluded thought, and that is disastrous.

After the aggregate of perception, we shall discuss the aggregate of formations:

(IV) The Illusory Nature of the Aggregate of Mental Formations

“Ānanda, it is like a torrential current: wave after wave continues without cease; the earlier and later bounds do not overtake one another. You should know that the aggregate of formations is likewise.”

The aggregate of formations is even more formidable than the aggregate of perception. It flows on without cease, like the waters of a river, surging endlessly.

“The great river flows eastward; its waves wash away all the gallant figures of a thousand ages!” Amid this unceasing tide, all figures throughout the ages are like clouds passing before the eyes. Our lives are the same: there is not a moment’s pause. We proceed from childhood to youth, from youth to adulthood, from adulthood to old age, and from old age to death. We are continually changing at every moment. This is the aggregate of formations.

The circulation of blood in our bodies and the cycle of breathing are also part of the aggregate of formations. It is like a torrent unleashed by a mountain flood, pouring downward without the slightest pause. Our karmically conditioned bodies are like later waves driving forward earlier waves: when this body breaks down, another body is born. Thus the cycle of rebirth in the six realms never ceases.

The first characteristic of the aggregate of formations is its ceaseless flow, never stopping. The second is that the earlier and later bounds do not overtake one another. That is, waves before and after follow close upon one another without skipping over each other. Likewise, our bodies pass in sequence through the stages of childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age; it is impossible to leap forward or backward among these stages.

Likewise, our karmically conditioned bodies come one after another. It is impossible for the later karmically conditioned body to arise before the preceding one has decayed; this is why it is called not overtaking one another. There is also a situation called seizing a womb: before this body of mine has died, another womb has already formed, but another person's consciousness has entered it.

After this body of mine dies, I then drive that other person's consciousness out of the other womb and enter it myself. This too is not overtaking one another. Thus, "the earlier and later bounds do not overtake one another. You should know that the aggregate of formations is likewise."

If this aggregate of formations is severed, we can obtain the second kind of mind-born body, namely the mind-born body of the intrinsic nature awakened to dharmas, mentioned earlier. Our intrinsic nature is originally an all-capable entity able to produce all kinds of transformations. Boundless and vast spiritual powers are realized step by step after seeing one's true nature.

Thus, when it comes to practice, it lies in this very present awakening. If one does not awaken to this true suchness-nature, none of what follows can be attained. There are several kinds of spiritual powers. One is retributive powers: in past lives one practiced diligently, performed good deeds, and accumulated merit and virtue, and these powers are bestowed as karmic recompense. Another is cultivated powers, acquired by practicing various methods; Esoteric Buddhism has many such methods.

There are also demonic powers and dependent powers: one relies on some general, celestial being, demon, or ghost to possess one's body and grant spiritual powers. Any spiritual powers acquired through cultivation or sought after are unreliable. Once one's breath ceases, nothing remains. Therefore, we must not become attached to spiritual powers.

As soon as craving and attachment arise, they remain deluded thoughts; thought after thought congeals and stagnates, and liberation cannot be attained. Genuine spiritual powers are directly realized. If our minds are pure and unstained, with no cultivation, attainment, or realization, we ultimately realize that things are originally thus. When one practices in this way, the māras of the aggregates will not arise. The second kind of mind-born body is called the mind-born body of the intrinsic nature

awakened to dharmas. The third kind is called the mind-born body produced through the innate arising of various kinds without deliberate mental activity.

Among all Buddhist approaches to practice, realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature is most important. Without seeing one's true nature, whatever dharma one practices is blind cultivation and misguided training.

"Ānanda, this nature of flowing does not arise because of space, does not exist because of water, is not the nature of water, and is not separate from space and water."

The nature of flowing is the sound and action of water rushing along. This nature of flowing does not exist because of space, nor does it exist because of water; yet it is "not the nature of water, and not separate from space and water."

Why is the nature of flowing not the nature of water? The characteristic of water is wetness, not flowing. If the nature of flowing were the nature of water, then, as discussed below, when water does not flow, it should not be called water but should instead be called flow. Therefore, the nature of water is not the nature of flowing. Yet this nature of flowing is neither separate from space nor separate from water.

Without space, if the way is blocked, water cannot flow through. Space and blockage are spoken of in contrast, as opposites. All things in this world are relative and are not ultimately real. Water cannot be separate from the nature of flowing, nor can the nature of flowing be separate from water. If water were absent, where could there be flowing? This is neither identity nor separation: it is neither identical with water nor identical with space, yet neither separate from space nor separate from water. Our intrinsic nature has such wondrous functioning.

"Thus, Ānanda, if it arose because of space, then the boundless space in all ten directions would become an endless flow. Naturally, all worlds would be submerged and drowned."

If the nature of flowing existed because of space, then the boundless space in all ten directions would all become an endless flow. Since the nature of flowing would arise in space, this space could give rise to it and that space could give rise to it; the entire expanse of space would give rise to the nature of flowing. All worlds would become worlds of water, and every living being would drown. Fortunately, this is not how things are. Water is water, and space is space; they have not become an endless flow. This proves that the nature of flowing does not arise because of space.

"If it existed because of water, then the nature of this torrential flow should not be water. Having its own location and appearance, it should now be manifest. If it were the nature of water itself, then when the water became clear and still, it should not

be the substance of water. If it were separate from space and water, then outside space there is nothing, and apart from water there is no flow."

If this flow existed because of water, it should not be the nature of water but the nature of flowing, and it should have a place where it exists. If the nature of flowing were produced from water, then one thing would produce another, and the latter would need to have another place of its own.

For example, when an adult gives birth to a child, the adult and child are two people, one large and one small, and they occupy two places. If the nature of flowing were produced from water, then apart from water there would be a distinct nature of flowing. It should have a separate appearance and a separate location—this is what is meant by "having its own location and appearance."

If it "has its own location and appearance, it should now be manifest," then it should have a location that you could point out for us to see. Where is this nature of flowing now? In fact, apart from water, there is nothing at all. Therefore, it is not something that exists because of water.

Therefore, the World-Honored One further said, "If it were the nature of water itself, then when the water became clear and still, it should not be the substance of water." If the nature of flowing were itself the nature of water, then when water became clear and ceased to flow, it should not be the substance of water but the substance of flow. Yet when water does not flow, what we see is still water, not flow.

It is like the teacup before us: what it contains is water, not flow. As we said above, the nature of flowing takes unceasing movement as its substance, while the nature of water takes wetness as its substance. Thus, the nature of water is not the nature of flowing, nor is the nature of flowing the nature of water.

When water is still and motionless, it is the substance of water, not the substance of flow. Thus, the nature of flowing is not the nature of water; their characteristics differ. Going further, if space and water were absent, could there still be a nature of flowing? This is what is meant by "outside space there is nothing, and apart from water there is no flow." There is nothing outside space, so it is impossible for something to exist separately from space; and apart from water, no flow can be found. Therefore, it is neither identical with nor separate from them.

"Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of formations is illusory: it is fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor of an inherent, self-arising nature."

If one says that the nature of flowing truly exists, then it would arise naturally, separate from space and water, with a substance of its own. Since there is no nature

of flowing apart from space and water, it is not naturally arising either. Thus, the nature of flowing does not exist because of space or water, so it is not produced by causes and conditions; nor does it exist apart from space and water, so it is not naturally arising. Since it is neither natural nor produced by causes and conditions, it arises without arising, and without arising it arises. This is the wondrous nature of true suchness. Yet one must not become attached to it: attachment itself is deluded thought and becomes the aggregate of formations.

Next is the last of the five aggregates—the aggregate of consciousness:

(V) The Illusory Nature of the Consciousness Aggregate

"Ānanda, suppose someone takes a Pinga bottle, seals its two openings, holds empty space within it, travels a thousand miles, and presents it in another country. You should know that the aggregate of consciousness is likewise."

The consciousness in this aggregate of consciousness is discrimination, discernment, and differentiation: this is one thing, that is another; this is red, that is yellow; this is long, that is square; this is male, that is female. Because there is differentiation, it is called consciousness.

There is a kind of Pinga bottle shaped like the kalaviṅka bird in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Ordinary bottles have only one opening, but this bottle has two, symbolizing the emptiness of both form and body. Suppose someone seals the bottle's two openings, fills it with empty space, holds it in his hand, and "travels a thousand miles to present it in another country."

He runs to someone else and says, "Look, I have brought empty space here to you." Holding empty space within it signifies turning one's back on awakening; presenting it in another country signifies joining with dust. This represents our turning away from right awakening and joining ourselves to worldly defilements. To suppose that empty space can be packed up and carried to another country is impossible.

Empty space is the same everywhere. You cannot pack it away or carry it off. This failure to awaken is the deluded movement of ignorance. Here we are told that the nature of consciousness is universally pervasive and complete, extending throughout empty space and pervading the dharma realm.

Why is it called the aggregate of consciousness? You take just a little empty space and put it into a bottle, treating this small portion as the whole nature of consciousness. This is what is called the aggregate of consciousness.

The nature of consciousness is our suchness, our Buddha-nature. It has no fixed location. Yet, because sentient beings are deluded and do not awaken, they believe it to be within the body. This is like the little bit of space contained in a bottle: they believe that all empty space is inside it. Everyone is deluded in this way. When Ānanda first answered the question of where the mind was, he said, “Inside my body.” That is the aggregate of consciousness; that is the deluded mind. Sealing the bottle’s openings and carrying it about everywhere represents confining the true nature of suchness within the body and revolving through the six realms.

For example, one forgets the great body of water that is the ocean and mistakenly takes a bubble within it to be a substantial entity; this is called mistaking a bubble for the ocean. One takes the space in a bottle and discards the vast space of the ten directions. This is the aggregate of consciousness, and the result is rebirth in the six realms. “Presenting it in another country” therefore means joining with dust. The aggregate of consciousness is thus illusory and unreal; we should not do such foolish things.

All empty space and the entire dharma realm are precisely my own being. Everything within this body is my wondrous nature, and all that is manifested by my own mind is wondrous functioning. Do not think yourself so clever that, by filling a bottle, you can carry empty space away. If you recognize only that little capacity for awareness within the body, it becomes the aggregate of consciousness.

If one can relinquish a single floating bubble and possess the ocean, no longer clinging to one’s own body, then the aggregate of consciousness is shattered immediately. This is the analogy and wondrous metaphor the Buddha gives us. Thus, “You should know that the aggregate of consciousness is likewise.”

“Ānanda, such empty space does not come from that direction or enter from this direction.”

Then does this empty space come from another world? No, it does not come from another world. Does it enter from this direction? Nor does it enter from this direction. Empty space has no appearance of coming or going, nor of movement or shaking. It can neither be put in nor taken away. This proves that the nature of our consciousness neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor shakes.

Thus, although you may revolve through the six realms, it is not subject to the birth and death of the six realms. Although one is reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, there is no substantial entity that comes or goes. Since in reality there is nowhere from which one comes and nowhere to which one goes, “Birth is indeed birth, yet there has been no going; going is indeed going, yet there has been no birth.”

It may also be said, “One is definitely born, yet in truth one does not go,” thereby utterly shattering the appearances of arising and ceasing, coming and going. If this empty space came from that direction, it would be as though this Buddha-nature had come from the worlds of the Buddhas to enter a womb. Then the Buddha realm would be diminished, and the realm of sentient beings increased.

But the Buddha realm is not truly diminished, nor is the realm of sentient beings truly increased. Therefore, it does not come from that direction. If it entered from this direction, then the realm of sentient beings would be diminished and the Buddha realm increased. Yet the realm of sentient beings has not decreased, nor has the Buddha realm increased. Among sages it does not increase, and among ordinary beings it does not decrease. It has always been thus. Therefore it is said that all sentient beings are originally Buddhas. This proves that empty space does not come from that direction or enter from this direction.

“Thus, Ānanda, if it came from that direction, then, after the empty space stored in the original bottle had gone away, there should be less empty space where that bottle originally stood.”

The World-Honored One further asks Ānanda: if the space in this bottle had been filled from another world, then there should be a missing portion of empty space in the world where the bottle originally stood. But the empty space in that direction has not diminished. This space cannot be carried away, which proves that it does not come from that direction. This indicates that sentient beings’ nature of consciousness is not brought from suchness and Buddha-nature—the world of right awakening. It neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor shakes; though birth is manifested, there is ultimately no birth; its wondrous functioning is as countless as the sands of the Ganges. Next, the World-Honored One explains it again from another angle:

“If it entered from this direction, then when the opening was uncovered and the bottle inverted, one should see the empty space come out.”

If this space were not brought from another world but had been put in from our side, then, upon uncovering the opening and inverting the bottle, we should see some empty space pour out. But because there was no entering, there is no empty space coming out.

If we turn delusion into awakening, we neither see anything diminished in the world of sentient beings nor see anything increased in the world of the Buddhas. We do not see sentient beings becoming Buddhas, because sentient beings are originally Buddhas. Thus there is accomplishment without anything accomplished, cultivation without cultivation, attainment without attainment, and realization without

realization. If one clings to there being something accomplished, that is a dharma obstacle: one is obstructed by views of dharmas.

Accomplishment is without anything that can be accomplished, and attainment is without anything that can be attained; therefore one does not see empty space come out.

That is to say, when sentient beings become Buddhas, it is not that their minds are all taken back. For the deluded mind is precisely the true mind: if one casts away the deluded mind, the true mind cannot be obtained either. Truth and delusion differ only in a single thought. If you cling to external forms, that is delusion; if you awaken to the fact that forms are nature, abandon delusion, and return to awakening, that is truth. Awakening is like uncovering the opening and inverting the bottle. Yet not seeing empty space come out means that one should not discard the deluded mind. It is like water producing waves: if the waves are removed, the water cannot be obtained either. Thus it is said that one does not abandon the minds of sentient beings.

We do not abandon illusory appearances because delusion is precisely truth, and appearances are precisely nature. It is not that there is a Buddha to be attained, nor is there anything to be gained. We need only remove the mind that clings to delusion; therefore there is no cultivation, attainment, or realization. If we can cease clinging and know that all this consists of illusory appearances, we can function in accordance with conditions and feel joy everywhere. At that very moment, we are born in the Land of Ultimate Bliss; we need not wait until after death to be born in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

“Therefore, you should know that the aggregate of consciousness is illusory and unreal. Its nature is neither dependent arising nor self-arising.”

Because this aggregate of consciousness does not come from that direction or enter from this direction, it is neither self-produced nor produced by another; therefore, it is not of the nature of dependent arising. Apart from the bottle, there is no empty-space appearance belonging to the bottle that can be obtained. Similarly, if this box is empty, then apart from the box, is there still an empty-space appearance belonging to the box? It too cannot be obtained. Therefore, it is not of a self-arising nature.

Because it is neither dependent arising nor self-arising, it is unborn yet manifests birth. Unborn yet manifesting birth is an illusory appearance; manifesting birth yet not being born is the wondrous nature of true suchness. Of the five aggregates—form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness—the Dharma Characteristics School classifies form as a form dharma, while feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness are mind dharmas.

The Dharma Characteristics School discusses division and combination. Here it is called combining form and opening out mind: that is, there is relatively little said about form and much said about mind. This is because people's delusions differ: some are deluded about mind, while others are deluded about form. For those more deeply deluded about mind, it teaches combining form and opening out mind, counting form dharmas as one and mind dharmas as four.

In actuality, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness among the five aggregates are certainly mind, for without mind there can be no feeling; without mind there can be no perception; without mind there can be no ceaseless flux; and without mind there can be no analysis or differentiation. More precisely, form dharmas are also mind dharmas. Since form and mind stand in relation to each other, form is mind and mind is form. Form is not form in itself; because of mind, there is form. Mind is not mind in itself; because of form, there is mind. Mind and form are nondual in their very substance. If there were only form and no mind, mind could not be established; whence, then, could form arise?

Because mind arises in relation to forms, it is said that mind arises because of objects. Suppose we say that form belongs to the faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body faculties. If these faculties may be called form objects, then not only the mind faculty but the other five faculties can all discriminate: the eyes can see things, the ears can hear sounds, and all possess discriminating consciousness.

From this perspective, the faculties are mind. Thus, apart from form there is no mind, and apart from mind there is no form. There is no such thing as division or combination between mind and form. This is the principle taught in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. The Dharma Characteristics School maintains that mind and form may be divided and combined. Its view conflicts with that of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, and so some Consciousness-Only scholars oppose the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, calling it an apocryphal scripture. What is called consciousness is that, after the faculties encounter objects, they cognize them in the mind. The six faculties take in the images of the six sense objects, forming consciousness; this is called the six consciousnesses.

From the perspective of the Dharma Characteristics School, the mind faculty encounters dharma objects and is therefore a mind dharma, while the other five faculties encounter external form objects and are thus all form dharmas. But by this reasoning all six would be form dharmas, for the sixth, the mind faculty, also has a physical faculty; otherwise consciousness could not arise. Form possesses the nature of the four great elements. Without faculties, it cannot function.

Since the sixth consciousness also has a floating-dust faculty, then, speaking in terms of the faculties, they are all form dharmas and should not be called mind

dharmas. That is, in terms of the floating-dust faculties, they are all form dharmas; in terms of the consciousnesses that arise from them, they are all mind dharmas. There is indeed some distinction here, so it must be explained both separately and together. Because the Śūraṅgama Sūtra differs somewhat from the Dharma Characteristics School on this point, disputes have arisen. Yet the more truth is debated, the clearer it becomes. If there were no debate or contention, how could there be the flourishing of a hundred schools of thought?

Volume Three: The Four Aggregates Are Illusory; the Seven Great Elements Are Fundamentally True (the Empty and Non-Empty Tathāgata-Garbha)

Furthermore, Ānanda, why are the six sense entrances originally of the wondrous true-suchness nature of the tathāgatagarbha?

Ānanda, when the eyes stare fixedly until they become strained, both the eyes and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two illusory objects of light and darkness, seeing arises between them; it takes in these object-images and is called the nature of seeing. Apart from the two objects of light and darkness, this seeing ultimately has no substance. Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this seeing does not come from light or darkness, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness.

Why is this so? If it came from light, then when darkness arose, seeing would be extinguished, and one should not see darkness. If it came from darkness, then when light arose, seeing would be extinguished, and one should not see light. If it arose from the sense faculty, there would necessarily be neither light nor darkness; thus, the essence of seeing would intrinsically have no nature of its own. If it came forth from emptiness, it would see object-images before it and should see the sense faculty upon returning; moreover, if emptiness itself could see, what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the eye entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, suppose someone quickly plugs both ears with two fingers. Because the ear faculty becomes strained, sounds arise within the head. Both the ears and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two illusory objects of movement and stillness, hearing arises between them; it

takes in these object-images and is called the nature of hearing. Apart from the two objects of movement and stillness, this hearing ultimately has no substance.

Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this hearing does not come from movement or stillness, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness. Why is this so? If it came from stillness, then when movement arose, hearing would be extinguished, and one should not hear movement. If it came from movement, then when stillness arose, hearing would be absent, and one should not be aware of stillness. If it arose from the sense faculty, there would necessarily be neither movement nor stillness; thus, the substance of hearing would intrinsically have no nature of its own. If it came forth from emptiness, then hearing itself would become a nature and would not be emptiness; moreover, if emptiness itself could hear, what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the ear entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, suppose someone forcefully pinches his nose. If he pinches it for a long time, strain develops, and he senses a cold touch within the nose. Because he discriminates this touch, he becomes aware of openness and blockage, emptiness and fullness, and likewise of all fragrant and foul odors. Both the nose and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two illusory objects of openness and blockage, smelling arises between them; it takes in these object-images and is called the nature of smelling. Apart from the two objects of openness and blockage, this hearing ultimately has no substance.

You should know that this hearing does not come from openness or blockage, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness. Why is this so? If it came from openness, then when blockage occurred, hearing would cease; how then could one know blockage? If it arose because of blockage, then when openness occurred, there would be no hearing; how then could one discern such sensations as fragrance and foul odor? If it arose from the sense faculty, there would necessarily be neither openness nor blockage; thus, this faculty of hearing would intrinsically have no nature of its own. If it came forth from emptiness, this hearing itself should turn back and smell your nose; if emptiness itself could hear, what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the nose entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, suppose someone licks his lips with his tongue, repeatedly licking until strain develops. If that person is ill, there will be a bitter taste; if he is not ill, there will be a faint sweet sensation. Sweetness and bitterness reveal the tongue faculty; when there is no movement, the nature of blandness is always present. Both the tongue and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi.

Because of the two illusory objects of sweet, bitter, and bland, knowing arises between them; it takes in these object-images and is called the nature of tasting.

Apart from the two objects of sweet and bitter, and of blandness, this nature of tasting ultimately has no substance. Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this knowing of sweet, bitter, and bland does not come from sweetness or bitterness, does not arise because of blandness, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness.

Why is this so? If it came from sweetness or bitterness, then when blandness occurred, knowing would be extinguished; how then could one know blandness? If it arose from blandness, then when sweetness occurred, knowing would perish; how then could one know the two characteristics of sweetness and bitterness? If it arose from the tongue, there would necessarily be no sweet, bland, or bitter objects; thus, this faculty of tasting would intrinsically have no nature of its own. If it came forth from emptiness, emptiness itself would taste; it would not be your mouth that knew it. Moreover, if emptiness itself could know, what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the tongue entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, suppose someone touches a warm hand with a cold hand. If the force of cold is greater, the warm hand becomes cold; if the force of heat prevails, the cold hand becomes warm. Thus, through the touch of contact, awareness of separation is revealed; when the forces intermingle, this is due to the strain of touch. Both the body and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two illusory objects of separation and contact, awareness arises between them; it takes in these object-images and is called the nature of tactile awareness.

Apart from the two objects of separation and contact, opposition and accord, this substance of tactile awareness ultimately has no substance. Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this awareness does not come from separation or contact, does not arise from opposition or accord, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness. Why is this so? If it came when there was contact, then separation would already be extinguished; how could one be aware of separation? The two characteristics of opposition and accord are likewise so. If it arose from the sense faculty, there would necessarily be none of the four characteristics of separation, contact, opposition, and accord; then your bodily awareness would intrinsically have no nature of its own. If it necessarily came forth from emptiness, emptiness itself would be aware; what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the body entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, suppose someone falls asleep when weary and awakens when fully rested. When he encounters objects, he remembers them; when memory is lost, there is forgetting. These are the inverted processes of arising, abiding, change, and cessation. They take in habitual impressions and return them inwardly, without overstepping one another; this is called the mind faculty.

Both the mind and that strain are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two illusory objects of arising and ceasing, knowing gathers between them; it takes in and collects internal objects. Seeing and hearing flow in reverse, and this flow does not reach the ground; it is called the nature of awareness. Apart from the two objects of waking and sleeping, arising and ceasing, this nature of awareness ultimately has no substance. Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this faculty of awareness does not come from waking or sleeping, does not arise from arising and ceasing, does not arise from the sense faculty, and is not born from emptiness.

Why is this so? If it came from waking, then sleep would be extinguished when waking arose; what, then, would constitute sleep? If it existed when arising occurred, then it would be absent when cessation occurred; who would undergo cessation? If it existed because of cessation, then arising would be absent when cessation occurred; who would know arising? If it arose from the sense faculty, waking and sleeping are the two characteristics that accompany the body's opening and closing; apart from these two, this awareness is like flowers in empty space and ultimately has no nature of its own. If it came forth from emptiness, then emptiness itself would know; what would that have to do with your sense entrance? Therefore, you should know that the mind entrance is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Furthermore, Ānanda, why are the twelve sense bases originally of the wondrous true-suchness nature of the tathāgatagarbha?

Ānanda, now observe these Jeta groves and the various springs and pools. What do you think? Do forms give rise to the seeing of the eyes, or do the eyes give rise to the appearance of forms? Ānanda, if the eye faculty gave rise to the appearance of forms, then, when it saw emptiness, which is not form, the nature of form should disappear. Once it disappeared, all would be revealed as nonexistent. If form-appearances did not exist, who would make evident the substance of emptiness? The same applies to emptiness. If form-objects gave rise to the seeing of the eyes, then when observing emptiness, which is not form, seeing would disappear. Once it disappeared, all would be nonexistent; who then would make evident emptiness and form? Therefore, you should know that seeing, form, and emptiness all have no location. Thus, form and seeing—the two sense bases—are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, listen further. In Jeta Grove, when the meal is prepared, the drum is struck; when the assembly gathers, the bell is rung. The sounds of bell and drum continue one after another. What do you think? Do these sounds come to the ears, or do the ears go to where the sounds are? Ānanda, if these sounds came to the ears, then just as I am in Śrāvastī begging for food and am not in Jeta Grove, when they came to Jeta Grove there would be no me there.

This sound must come to Ānanda's ear; then Maudgalyāyana and Kāśyapa should not both hear it. How much less could the 1,250 śramaṇas among them, upon hearing the bell, all come together to the place of eating? Or suppose that your ear goes to where the sound is. Then, just as when I return to dwell in Jetavana Grove, there is no longer any me in the city of Śrāvastī.

when you hear the drum, your ears would already have gone to the place where the drum is struck. When the bell sounded at the same time, you should not hear it as well; how much less the various sounds of elephants, horses, cattle, sheep, and so forth. If there is no coming and going, there is likewise no hearing. Therefore, you should know that hearing and sound both have no location. Thus, hearing and sound—the two sense bases—are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, again smell the sandalwood in the censer. If even one zhu of this incense is burned, its fragrance is simultaneously perceived throughout forty li around Śrāvastī.

What do you think? Does this fragrance arise from the sandalwood, from your nose, or from emptiness? Ānanda, if this fragrance arose from your nose, then, since it arose from the nose, it should come out of the nose. But the nose is not sandalwood; how could there be the fragrance of sandalwood within it? If you say that you smell fragrance because it enters the nose, then fragrance emerging from the nose could not rightly be called smelling.

If it arose from emptiness, then the nature of emptiness is constant, and fragrance should always be present. Why would it need the dry wood in the censer to be burned? If it arose from the wood, then this fragrant substance would become smoke through burning. If the nose perceived it, it should be enveloped by the smoke. Yet the smoke rises into the air and has not traveled far; how, then, is it already perceived within forty li? Therefore, you should know that fragrance, the nose, and smelling all have no location. Thus, smelling and fragrance—the two sense bases—are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, at the two daily meal times, you take your bowl among the assembly. You may encounter ghee, curds, or clarified butter, which are called the finest flavors. What do you think? Does this flavor arise in emptiness, arise in the tongue, or arise

in the food? Ānanda, if this flavor arose from your tongue, then there is only one tongue in your mouth. At that time, if your tongue had already become the flavor of ghee, then upon encountering black rock honey, it should not change.

If it did not change, it could not be called knowing flavor. If it did change, then the tongue would not have multiple bodies; how could one tongue know many flavors? If flavor arose from the food, food is not conscious; how could it know itself? Moreover, if food knew itself, it would be like another person eating; what would that have to do with you, so that it could be called knowing flavor? If flavor arose from emptiness, when you ate emptiness, what flavor would it have? If emptiness necessarily had a salty flavor, then it would make both your tongue and your face salty; the people of this world would all be like sea fish.

Since they would constantly experience saltiness, they would never know blandness. If they did not recognize blandness, neither would they be aware of saltiness. If there were necessarily nothing known, how could this be called flavor? Therefore, you should know that flavor, the tongue, and tasting all have no location. Thus, tasting and flavor—the two sense bases—are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, every morning you rub your head with your hand. What do you think? In this awareness produced by rubbing, which is the one that touches? Is it in the hand, or is it in the head? If it is in the hand, then the head has no awareness; how can there be touch? If it is in the head, then the hand is useless; how can it be called touch? If each has its own awareness, then you, Ānanda, should have two bodies.

If one touch arises from the head and hand together, then hand and head should be one body. If they were one body, touch could not occur. If they were two bodies, in which would touch reside? If it resided in the agent, it would not reside in the object; if it resided in the object, it would not reside in the agent. Nor should emptiness form touch with you. Therefore, you should know that tactile awareness and the body both have no location. Thus, body and touch—the two sense bases—are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor self-arising.

Ānanda, within your mind, the three natures of good, evil, and indeterminate objects upon which it relies give rise to dharmas.

Do these dharmas arise directly from the mind, or do they have a separate location apart from the mind? Ānanda, if they are directly the mind, then dharmas are not objects and are not what the mind relies upon; how could they constitute a sense base? If they are apart from the mind and have a separate location, then are the dharmas themselves conscious or not? If conscious, they are called mind; being different from you, they are not objects, and being like another person's mind-

capacity—if they are your own mind, how could your mind again be divided into two from you? If they are not conscious, then these objects are neither…

Forms, sounds, scents, flavors, separation and contact, cold and warmth, and the characteristics of empty space—where are they to be found? Now, within form and emptiness, there is no indication of them at all. Nor should there be some emptiness beyond the human world. Since the mind is not an object of cognition, from whom could a location be established? Therefore, you should know that dharmas and mind alike have no location. Thus mind and dharmas are both empty and unreal, neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Furthermore, Ānanda, how are the eighteen realms originally the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha?

Ānanda, as you understand it, the eye and forms serve as conditions for the arising of eye consciousness.

Does this consciousness arise from the eye, with the eye as its realm? Or does it arise from forms, with forms as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from the eye, then when neither forms nor emptiness are present, there is nothing to distinguish. Even if your consciousness existed, what use would it have? Moreover, your seeing is not blue, yellow, red, or white; it has no discernible indication. From what could its realm be established? If it arises from forms, then when emptiness contains no forms, your consciousness should cease. How, then, would it know that this is the nature of empty space? When forms change, you also know that their appearances change. If your consciousness does not change, from what could its realm be established? If it changes along with them, the characteristic of a realm itself does not exist; if it does not change, it would be permanent.

Since it arises from forms, it should not know where empty space is. If it arises from both, with eye and form jointly producing it, then when they unite there is a separation in the middle, and when they separate there are two unions. Its nature would be confused and disordered—how could it constitute a realm? Therefore, you should know that eye and form serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of eye consciousness are, in all three locations, unobtainable. Thus the eye, forms, and the realm of eye consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda, again, as you understand it, the ear and sounds serve as conditions for the arising of ear consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the ear, with the ear as its realm? Or does it arise from sounds, with sounds as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from the ear, then when the two characteristics of movement and stillness are not present, the faculty cannot know. If there is necessarily nothing known,

knowing itself cannot be established; what form, then, could consciousness have? If one takes hearing to be in the ear, then, without movement and stillness, hearing cannot be established.

How can the physical form of the ear, mixed with the sensory object of forms, be called the realm of consciousness? From what, then, is the realm of ear consciousness established? If it arises from sound, consciousness exists because of sound and thus has no connection with hearing. Without hearing, the presence of sound would vanish. If consciousness arises from sound, and one allows that sound has its characteristic because of hearing, then hearing should hear consciousness. If it does not hear, there is no realm; if it hears, it is identical with sound. Once consciousness has been heard, who knows the consciousness that hears? If there is no knower, it would ultimately be like grass or wood.

Sound and hearing should not be confused to form an intermediate realm. If a realm has no middle position, from what could the characteristics of inside and outside arise? Therefore, you should know that ear and sound serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of ear consciousness are, in all three locations, unobtainable. Thus the ear, sound, and realm of ear consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda, again, as you understand it, the nose and scents serve as conditions for the arising of nose consciousness.

Does this consciousness arise from the nose, with the nose as its realm? Or does it arise from scents, with scents as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from the nose, then in your mind, what do you take to be the nose? Do you take the fleshy form of the two nostrils? Or do you take the capacity for olfactory knowing, with its moving activity? If you take the fleshy form, its material substance is part of the body; bodily knowing is touch. If it is called body, it is not nose; if it is called touch, it is a sensory object.

If even the name “nose” cannot be established, how can a realm be established? If you take olfactory knowing, then in your mind, what do you take to be knowing? If flesh is knowing, the knowing of flesh is fundamentally touch, not nose. If empty space is knowing, then empty space itself knows, and flesh should not be conscious. In that case, empty space should be you, and your body should lack awareness. Ānanda, you then ought not to exist anywhere today.

If scent is knowing, knowing belongs to scent itself—what does it have to do with you? If fragrant and foul odors must arise in your nose, then the currents of those two odors should not arise from the ilāṅga tree and sandalwood. When neither of these two objects comes near, you yourself smell your own nose: is it fragrant or foul? If foul, it is not fragrant; if fragrant, it should not be foul.

If both fragrance and foulness can be smelled, then you, one person, should have two noses. As you question me about the Way, there would be two Ānandas—which one would be your actual self? If the nose is one, fragrance and foulness cannot be two. Once foulness becomes fragrance, fragrance in turn becomes foulness. Since the two natures do not exist, from what could a realm be established? If consciousness arises from scent, it exists because of scent. Just as the eye possesses seeing but cannot see itself, so, because it exists through scent, it should not know scent.

If it knows, it is not something produced; if it does not know, it is not consciousness. Since scent does not exist because of knowing, the realm of scent cannot be established. If consciousness does not know scent, its realm cannot be established from scent. Since there is no middle, neither inside nor outside can be constituted; all such capacities for smelling are ultimately empty and unreal. Therefore, you should know that nose and scent serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of nose consciousness are, in all three locations, unobtainable. Thus the nose, scent, and realm of nose consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda, again, as you understand it, the tongue and flavors serve as conditions for the arising of tongue consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the tongue, with the tongue as its realm? Or does it arise from flavors, with flavors as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from the tongue, then sugarcane, black plums, coptis, rock salt, asarum, ginger, and cinnamon throughout the world would all have no flavor.

When you taste your own tongue, is it sweet or bitter? If the nature of the tongue is bitter, who comes to taste the tongue? The tongue cannot taste itself; who, then, is aware of it? If the nature of the tongue is not bitter, flavor does not arise of itself. How, then, can a realm be established? If consciousness arises from flavor, consciousness itself would be flavor. Like the tongue faculty, it should not taste itself. How then could it know whether there is flavor or no flavor? Moreover, no flavor arises from a single thing. Since flavors arise in many ways, consciousness should have many separate entities.

If the entity of consciousness is one, it must arise from flavor. Salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, arising together through combination, along with all varied characteristics, would become one single flavor, and there could be no distinctions. If distinctions did not exist, it could not be called consciousness. How, then, could it be called the realm of tongue-and-flavor consciousness? Empty space should not give rise to your mind consciousness. When tongue and flavor combine, they fundamentally have no self-nature within that combination. How could a realm arise? Therefore, you should know that tongue and flavor serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of tongue consciousness are, in all three locations,

unobtainable. Thus the tongue, flavor, and realm of tongue consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda, again, as you understand it, the body and touch serve as conditions for the arising of body consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the body, with the body as its realm? Or does it arise from touch, with touch as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from the body, then without the two objects of awareness—contact and separation—what could the body know? If it arises from touch, then without your body, who would know contact and separation as not belonging to the body? Ānanda, objects do not know touch; the body knows that there is touch.

Knowing the body is touch, and knowing touch is body; yet touch itself is not body, and body itself is not touch. The two characteristics of body and touch fundamentally have no location. When touch joins with the body, it becomes the body's own nature; when separate from the body, it is like the characteristics of empty space. Since inside and outside cannot be constituted, how can a middle be established? If the middle cannot be established, and the natures of inside and outside are empty, then from what could your consciousness arise, and upon what could its realm be established? Therefore, you should know that body and touch serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of body consciousness are, in all three locations, unobtainable. Thus the body, touch, and realm of body consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda, again, as you understand it, mind and dharmas serve as conditions for the arising of mind consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from mind, with mind as its realm? Or does it arise from dharmas, with dharmas as its realm? Ānanda, if it arises from mind, then there must be something thought of within your mind that manifests your mind. If there are no preceding dharmas, mind has nothing from which to arise.

Apart from conditions, it has no form; what use, then, would consciousness have? Further, are your conscious mind, all acts of deliberation, and the faculty of discrimination the same or different? If they are the same as mind, they are mind itself; how could they be produced? If they differ from mind, being unlike mind they should have nothing known. If there is nothing known, how could mind arise? If there is something known, how could consciousness know mind? Neither sameness nor difference can be established; how, then, can a realm be established? If it arises from dharmas, the various dharmas of the world do not lie apart from the five sense objects.

Consider the dharmas of form, the dharmas of sound, the dharmas of scent and flavor, and the dharmas of touch. Their characteristics are clearly distinct and

correspond to the five faculties; they are not encompassed by mind. If you insist that your consciousness definitely arises dependent on dharmas, then examine carefully: what characteristics does each dharma possess? Apart from form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, arising and ceasing, nothing whatsoever can be found. When these arise, dharmas such as form and emptiness all arise; when these cease, dharmas such as form and emptiness all cease.

Since that on which it depends does not exist, what appearance could consciousness, said to arise from it, assume? If no characteristic exists, how can a realm arise? Therefore, you should know that mind and dharmas serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of mind consciousness are, in all three locations, unobtainable. Thus mind, dharmas, and the realm of mind consciousness are neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, the Tathāgata has often taught that the conjunction of causes and conditions brings forth all the various transformations in the world, through the combination of the four great elements. Why, then, does the Tathāgata reject both causes and conditions and self-existing nature? I now do not understand the meaning of this teaching. I beg you, in your compassion, to explain to sentient beings the definitive meaning of the Middle Way, the Dharma free from idle theorizing.”

At that time, the World-Honored One said to Ānanda, “You previously grew weary of and renounced the Hīnayāna teachings of śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas, and you aroused the resolve to diligently seek unsurpassed bodhi. Therefore, I now reveal to you the supreme truth. Why do you again entangle yourself in worldly idle theories and deluded notions of causes and conditions? Though you have heard much, you are like someone who speaks of medicines: when the genuine medicine is before him, he cannot distinguish it. The Tathāgata says that you are truly to be pitied. Listen carefully now. I shall distinguish and explain this for you, and shall also enable future practitioners of the Mahāyāna to comprehend the true reality.” Ānanda remained silent and respectfully received the Buddha’s sacred instruction.

Ānanda, as you have said, the combination of the four great elements brings forth the various transformations of the world. Ānanda, if the nature of these elements were not a combination, they could not intermingle with the other elements, just as empty space does not mingle with forms. If they were a combination, they would be subject to transformation, mutually completing one another from beginning to end, with arising and ceasing continuing in succession. Death followed by birth, birth followed by death; birth after birth and death after death—like a wheel of whirling fire, they never come to rest. Ānanda, water becomes ice, and ice returns to water.

Consider the nature of earth: in its coarse aspect it is the great earth, and in its fine aspect it is minute particles. Reaching particles adjacent to emptiness, if one analyzes these ultimate minute particles, the limiting appearance of form is found to consist of seven parts. If particles adjacent to emptiness are further analyzed, they are in fact the nature of empty space. Ānanda, if such particles adjacent to emptiness can be analyzed into empty space, then you should know that empty space gives rise to the appearances of form. You now ask how the various changing appearances of the world arise through combination.

Now consider this: how much empty space must combine to produce one particle adjacent to emptiness? Surely a particle adjacent to emptiness cannot combine to make a particle adjacent to emptiness. Again, if such a particle is analyzed into emptiness, how many appearances of form must combine to make empty space? When forms combine, what combines with form is not empty space; when empty space combines, what combines with empty space is not form.

Form may still be analyzed, but how can empty space be combined? You fundamentally do not know that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form: originally pure and pervading the dharma realm, it accords with sentient beings' minds and responds according to the measure of what they know, manifesting in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for self-existing nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely words and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the nature of fire has no self; it depends upon various conditions. Look at households in the city that have not yet prepared food: when they wish to cook, they hold a sun-mirror in their hands and seek fire from the sun. Ānanda, what is called combination is like myself, you, and these 1,250 bhikshus, who now form one assembly. Although the assembly is one, when its origins are examined, each person has a body and each has a family, clan, and name of birth.

For example, Śāriputra is of the Brahmin lineage; Uruvilvā Kāśyapa is of the Kāśyapa lineage; and Ānanda is of the Gautama clan.

Ānanda, if the nature of this fire arises through combination, then when one holds a mirror in the hand and seeks fire from the sun, does this fire emerge from the mirror? Does it come from tinder? Or does it come from the sun? Ānanda, if it comes from the sun, it could itself burn the tinder in your hand; and the forests and trees at the place from which it comes should all be burned.

If fire comes forth from the mirror, then since it can issue from the mirror and ignite the moxa, why does the mirror not melt? And if you hold the mirror in your hand, your hand does not even feel heat; how, then, could it melt? If fire arises from the

moxa, why must sunlight and the mirror's brightness meet before fire is produced? Examine this carefully: the mirror is held by the hand, the sun comes from the sky, and the moxa grows from the ground. From what direction has the fire traveled here? The sun and mirror are far apart; they neither mingle nor join. Therefore, the firelight cannot arise of itself without a source.

You still do not understand that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire. It is originally pure and pervades the Dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know. Ānanda, know that wherever people hold up a mirror, fire arises there; if mirrors are held throughout the Dharma realm, fire arises throughout the world. Since it arises throughout the world, how could it have a fixed location? It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the nature of water is indeterminate; its flowing and stillness are not constant. In the city of Śrāvastī, the sage Kapila, the sage Cakra, and other great illusionists such as Padma and Hasti seek the essence of the moon to compound their magical medicines. On the daytime of the full moon, these masters hold a crystal sphere in their hands to receive water from the moon.

Does this water come forth from the jewel? Does it exist spontaneously in space? Or does it come from the moon? Ānanda, if it comes from the moon, then since the moon can cause a distant jewel to yield water, all the forests and trees through which its light passes should also exude streams. If they do, why wait for water to come forth from the crystal sphere? If they do not, it is clear that the water has not descended from the moon.

If it comes forth from the jewel, then water should always flow from within this jewel. Why wait until midnight, when it receives the light of the full moon? If it arises from space, then since the nature of space is boundless, water should likewise be boundless. From human beings to the heavens, all should be submerged in a flood. How, then, could there still be beings that move through water, on land, or through the air? Examine this still more carefully: the moon ascends in the sky, the jewel is held in the hand, and the basin that receives the jewel's water is set out by a person. From what direction does the water flow and pour into it? The moon and jewel are far apart; they neither mingle nor join. Therefore, the watery essence cannot arise of itself without a source.

You still do not understand that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of water is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true water. It is originally

pure and pervades the Dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know. Wherever a jewel is held up, water emerges there; if jewels are held throughout the Dharma realm, water arises throughout the Dharma realm. Since it arises throughout the world, how could it have a fixed location? It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the nature of wind has no substance; motion and stillness are inconstant. Whenever you arrange your robe and enter the assembly, the corner of your saṅghāṭī moves and lightly brushes the face of someone beside you, producing a slight breeze. Does this wind come from the corner of your kāṣāya? Does it arise from empty space? Or is it produced on that person's face? Ānanda, if this wind comes from the corner of your kāṣāya, then you are wearing wind. When the robe flutters, it should leave your body.

As I now expound the Dharma, my robe hangs down in this assembly. Look at my robe: where is the wind? There cannot be a place within the robe where wind is stored. If it arises from empty space, then when your robe does not move, why is there no breeze? The nature of space is constant, so wind should constantly arise. If there is no wind at times, then space should perish.

The cessation of wind can be seen, but what would the cessation of space be like? If it has arising and ceasing, it cannot be called space. If it is called space, how could wind emerge from it? If wind arises by itself from the face that is brushed, it should blow upon you. Since you yourself arranged your robe, why should it blow back upon the other person? Examine this carefully: you arrange the robe, the face belongs to the other person, and empty space is still and does not participate in movement. From what direction does the wind stir and come here? Wind and space differ in nature; they neither mingle nor join. Therefore, the nature of wind cannot arise of itself without a source.

You utterly do not understand that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of wind is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true wind. It is originally pure and pervades the Dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know. Ānanda, when you alone make a slight movement of your clothing, a slight breeze arises. If breezes blow throughout the Dharma realm, they arise throughout all lands. Since they pervade the world, how could they have a fixed location? They manifest in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake them for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the nature of space has no form; it becomes manifest because of material forms. In the city of Śrāvastī, where one lives far from a river, people of the kṣatriya, brāhmaṇa, vaiśya, and śūdra castes, as well as outcastes such as the caṇḍālas, newly establish dwellings and dig wells in search of water. When they remove one foot of earth, there is within it one foot of empty space; when they remove ten feet of earth, there are likewise ten feet of empty space within.

The depth of the space corresponds to the amount of earth removed. Does this space emerge because of the earth? Does it come into being because of the digging? Or does it arise spontaneously without cause? Ānanda, if this space arises spontaneously without cause, then before the earth was dug, why was there no unobstructed space? One saw only the great earth, extending far and wide without any opening.

If it emerges because of the earth, then when the earth is removed, one should see space enter. If the earth comes out first and space does not enter, how can space emerge because of the earth? If there is neither entering nor emerging, then space and earth should originally have no distinct causes. If they are not distinct, they are the same; then when the earth is removed, why does space not emerge? If it emerges because of digging, then the digging should produce space rather than remove earth. If it does not emerge because of digging, and the digging itself merely removes earth, how is space seen? Examine this still more carefully:

Examine it closely and contemplate it with utmost care: digging proceeds from a person’s hand and is directed according to the chosen place; earth is moved because it is part of the ground. From what, then, does this space emerge? The digging tool is solid, while space is empty; they do not function together, nor do they mingle or join. Therefore, space cannot arise of itself without a source. If this space is by nature perfectly complete, all-pervading, and originally unmoving, then know that the earth, water, fire, and wind before you are all called the five great elements. Their natures truly interpenetrate perfectly; all are the treasury of the Tathāgata, originally neither arising nor ceasing.

Ānanda, your mind is confused and deluded; you do not realize that the four great elements are fundamentally the treasury of the Tathāgata. Observe whether space emerges or enters, or neither emerges nor enters. You do not understand at all that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of awareness is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true awareness. It is originally pure and pervades the Dharma realm, responding to sentient beings’ minds in accordance with the measure of what they know. Ānanda, just as the space in one well gives rise to one well’s space, so too are the spaces in the ten directions: they fill the ten directions completely. How could they have a fixed location? They manifest in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake this for causes and conditions or

for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the faculty of seeing and awareness has no independent knowledge; because of forms and space, it manifests. As you are now in Jeta Grove, it is bright in the morning and dim in the evening. If it is midnight, the full moon is bright, while the dark moon makes it dark. Thus brightness and darkness are distinguished through seeing.

Is this seeing one substance with brightness, darkness, and the great void? Or is it not one substance with them? Is it both the same and not the same? Or both different and not different? Ānanda, if this seeing were originally one substance with brightness, darkness, and space, then brightness and darkness, being two mutually exclusive states, would destroy one another: when it is dark there is no brightness, and when it is bright there is no darkness.

If seeing were one with darkness, then when it is bright, seeing would vanish. If it were necessarily one with brightness, then when it is dark, it should cease. If it ceased, how could one see brightness and darkness? If brightness and darkness differ while seeing neither arises nor ceases, how could they be one? If this essential seeing were not one substance with darkness and brightness, then, apart from brightness, darkness, and space, what form would you find by analyzing the essential nature of seeing? Apart from brightness, darkness, and space, this essential seeing is like tortoise hair or rabbit horns. Brightness

darkness, and space are three entirely different things; from what could seeing be established? Since brightness and darkness are opposed, how could they be the same? Apart from these three, seeing is originally nonexistent; how could it be different? Space and seeing have no boundary between them; how could they not be the same? Seeing darkness and seeing brightness do not alter in nature; how could they be different? Examine this still more closely, investigate it in minute detail, and contemplate it carefully: brightness comes from the sun, darkness follows the dark moon, openness belongs to space, and obstruction belongs to the earth. From what does this essential seeing arise? Seeing-awareness and inert space neither mingle nor join. Therefore, this essential seeing cannot arise of itself without a source.

If seeing, hearing, and knowing are by nature perfectly complete, all-pervading, and originally unmoving, then know that boundless, unmoving space, together with the moving earth, water, fire, and wind, are all called the six great elements. Their natures truly interpenetrate perfectly; all are the treasury of the Tathāgata, originally neither arising nor ceasing. Ānanda, your nature is sunk in delusion; you do not

realize that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are fundamentally the treasury of the Tathāgata.

You should observe whether this seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing arise or cease; whether they are the same or different; whether they neither arise nor cease; and whether they are neither the same nor different. You have never understood that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of seeing is aware luminosity, and the essence of awareness is luminous seeing. It is originally pure and pervades the Dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know.

Just as one faculty of seeing sees throughout the Dharma realm, so hearing, smelling, tasting, tactile awareness, and knowing are wondrously clear and pervade the Dharma realm. They completely fill the ten directions of space; how could they have a fixed location? They manifest in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake them for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

Ānanda, the nature of consciousness has no source; it falsely arises through the six kinds of sense faculties and sense objects. Now look throughout this assembly of noble ones. As your eyes move in succession over them, they survey them all like images in a mirror, without separate discrimination. Yet your consciousness identifies them one by one: "This is Mañjuśrī; this is Pūrṇa; this is Mahāmaudgalyāyana; this is Subhūti; this is Śāriputra."

Does this consciousness that knows arise from seeing? Does it arise from appearances? Does it arise from empty space? Or does it suddenly emerge without any cause? Ānanda, if the nature of your consciousness arises from seeing, then if light and darkness, as well as form and emptiness, were necessarily absent—the four altogether absent—your seeing itself would originally not exist. If even the nature of seeing does not exist, from where could consciousness arise? If the nature of your consciousness arises from appearances, it does not arise from seeing.

then, since it does not see brightness or darkness, and brightness and darkness are not perceived, form and space would not exist. If those appearances do not exist, from what could consciousness arise? If it arises from space, it is neither appearance nor seeing. Without seeing, it cannot discriminate and therefore cannot know brightness, darkness, form, or space. Without appearances, the conditions for arising cease, and seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing have nowhere to be established.

In the condition of these two absences, space would be equivalent to nothingness, while existence would not be equivalent to things. Even if your consciousness arose,

what could it discriminate? If it suddenly emerged without cause, why does it not distinguish the bright moon in daytime? Examine this still more closely and investigate in minute detail: seeing depends on your eyes, while appearances are inferred from the objects before you. What can be characterized becomes existence; what cannot be mutually characterized becomes nonexistence.

From what, then, do these conditions of consciousness arise? Consciousness is active, while seeing is clear and still; they neither mingle nor join. The same is true of hearing, listening, awareness, and knowing. Therefore, the conditions of consciousness cannot arise of themselves without a source.

If this conscious mind originally has no source, then know that discriminating awareness, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are perfectly complete and clear and still. Their nature does not arise from objects. Together with space and earth, water, fire, and wind, they are all called the seven great elements. Their natures truly interpenetrate perfectly; all are the treasury of the Tathāgata, originally neither arising nor ceasing. Ānanda, your mind is coarse and superficial; you do not realize that seeing, hearing, and the capacity for lucid knowing are fundamentally the treasury of the Tathāgata.

You should observe whether these consciousnesses of the six sense bases are the same or different, empty or existent, neither the same nor different, or neither empty nor existent. You originally do not understand that, within the treasury of the Tathāgata, the nature of consciousness is luminous knowing, and awakened luminosity is true consciousness. Wondrous awareness is clear and still, pervading the Dharma realm. It contains and brings forth the ten directions of space; how could it have a fixed location? It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the conscious mind; they are merely verbal expressions and have no real meaning.

At that time Ānanda and the entire assembly received the Tathāgata Buddha's subtle and wondrous instruction. Their bodies and minds became open and at ease, free of all hindrance. Each member of the assembly knew for themselves that their minds pervaded the ten directions, and they saw the space of the ten directions as one sees an object held in the palm of one's hand. All things in the world are precisely bodhi, the wondrously luminous original mind. The essence of mind is universally perfect and encompasses the ten directions.

Turning his contemplation to the body born of his parents, he saw it as like a mote of dust blown through the empty space of the ten directions: whether it exists or perishes makes no difference; or like a floating bubble in a vast, clear ocean, arising and ceasing without foundation. He clearly knew for himself that he had obtained

the original wondrous mind, permanently abiding and unceasing. He bowed to the Buddha with palms joined and attained what he had never known before. Before the Tathāgata, he spoke these verses in praise of the Buddha:

The wondrously profound dhāraṇī, the unmoving Honored One—the Śūraṅgama King, rarely encountered in the world—

Has dispelled my inverted thoughts from kalpas beyond reckoning; without passing through asaṃkhyeya kalpas, I have attained the dharmakāya.

May I now attain the fruition and become a Jewel King, then return to liberate beings as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. I offer this profound mind to lands as countless as dust motes; this is called repaying the Buddha's kindness.

I respectfully beseech the World-Honored One to bear witness: I vow to enter first the Sahā world of the five turbidities. If even one sentient being has not become a Buddha, I will never attain nirvāṇa.

Great Hero, of great power and great compassion, I pray that you will further thoroughly remove my subtle delusions.

May I soon attain unsurpassed enlightenment and sit in bodhimaṇḍas throughout the worlds of the ten directions.

Though the nature of emptiness may perish, my vajra mind will never waver.

Second Section: The Six Sense Bases Are Unreal, Fundamentally Neither Arising from Causes and Conditions nor from Self-Nature

Next, we will discuss the "six entrances." What are the six entrances? They are in fact the six sense faculties: eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Why are the faculties also called "entrances"? When the six sense faculties encounter the six sense objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, tactile objects, and dharmas—they take in these objects, thereby giving rise to the six consciousnesses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and knowing.

What is meant by "entrance" is the taking in of sense objects. Why speak now not of the six sense faculties but of the six entrances? Because the six faculties in relation to the six sense objects are called the "twelve sense bases"; when faculties

encounter objects and give rise to consciousness, this is called the “eighteen realms.” Having explained the six sense faculties, one then proceeds to explain the twelve sense bases and the eighteen realms. Here, speaking only of the six sense faculties, because the faculties can take in sense objects, they are called the “six entrances.”

The six sense faculties and the six entrances are actually the same thing. When the faculties encounter sense objects, they can take in these objects, thereby producing consciousness. From the perspective of faculties giving rise to consciousness upon encountering objects, they are called the six sense faculties; from the perspective of their function of taking in sense objects, they are called the six entrances. They are not two different things.

“Furthermore, Ānanda, why are the six entrances fundamentally the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha?”

Why are the six entrances said to be the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha? This principle is not difficult to understand. Earlier, we discussed the five aggregates, and the method of analyzing the six entrances is actually not very different from that used for analyzing the five aggregates. When the faculties encounter objects and take in those objects, this is entrance. All sense objects are illusory; they do not truly exist.

For example, as we mentioned before, the image of a dark dog formed by white clouds is false, while the clouds are real. Yet the white clouds have not departed from the image of the dark dog. Thus, such appearances are originally the suchness-nature of Buddhahood. Because sentient beings cling to appearances, they forget the suchness-nature of Buddhahood. Because Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not cling to appearances, they understand that appearance itself is nature. Once one understands what the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is, one knows that all these appearances are our Original Face. Here we first discuss the six entrances in general; below, we will discuss the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind separately.

First, we discuss the eye entrance:

(I) The Eye Entrance Is Illusory

“Ānanda, the eyes themselves, together with the weariness caused by staring, are both manifestations of bodhi distorted by the fatigue of staring. Because of the two delusive objects of light and darkness, seeing arises between them; taking in these appearances of objects is called the nature of seeing. Apart from those two objects, light and darkness, this seeing has no substance whatsoever.”

What is meant by the eye entrance? The Buddha says it is like staring continuously into empty space: after staring for a long time, the eyes become fatigued, and one sees flowers in the air. This illustrates how, when we are unaware in a single thought, ignorance stirs delusively. Because ignorance stirs delusively, all kinds of false perceptions arise.

Yet delusion is not truly existent either; it too comes from the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha. Hence it is said, “the eyes themselves, together with the weariness caused by staring, are both manifestations of bodhi distorted by the fatigue of staring.” Not only are the flowers in the air manifestations of fatigue; our eyes too are manifestations of fatigue. The faculties and their objects are alike delusive appearances, not truly existent.

All who practice in meditation know that when the deluded mind does not move, not only are there no delusive objects, but there is no illusory body either: the entire body melts away. Not only is the body unobtainable while one is seated in practice; even amid activity, if the mind does not move, this body too is unobtainable. This is utterly real.

If, at this very moment, your mind becomes empty, then this person that you take yourself to be is gone. Although this person is absent, you still walk as usual and do things as usual, as though walking in a dream or working in a dream. If you arrive somewhere, or finish what needs to be done, a thought may suddenly arise: “Oh—I’ve arrived.”

Indeed, you have arrived, or the task has been completed. Therefore, if one truly realizes that there is nothing outside the mind, one can keep walking without feeling tired and keep working without becoming fatigued.

For there is no one walking and no one doing anything. This is called responding without a mind. Although one still responds to conditions and engages with things as usual, there is no mind that responds to objects. Thus, one may pervade worlds as numerous as dust motes without fatigue, and do however much one must do without affliction. Therefore, all the appearances seen by these eyes are manifestations of bodhi distorted by the fatigue of staring; they are also deluded thoughts arising from our wondrous true suchness.

“Because of the two delusive objects of light and darkness, seeing arises between them.” Originally, there was neither seer nor seen. It is because there is light and darkness that the seeing of subject and object arises: one can see light and see that there are so many things in a room. When there is no light, everything becomes shadowy and dark.

Apart from the appearances of light and darkness, what is there to see? In truth, there is nothing to see. Here, light and darkness represent our four great elements: earth, water, fire, and wind. Fire is the appearance of light, while earth, water, and wind are the appearance of darkness. The four great elements are in fact simply the two delusive appearances of light and darkness.

Our bodies are provisionally compounded from the four great elements. Our six faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—are likewise all formed through the combination of the four great elements. Because we are unaware in a single thought and ignorance stirs delusively in relation to the delusive objects of the four great elements, images of those four elements arise. The images of the four great elements that we see are produced from the two appearances of light and darkness.

After the two appearances of light and darkness arise, clarity is adhered to and seeing is brought forth: our clear and unmoving true mind becomes bound up within them. Therefore, Master Hanshan said that the pure-form faculty is a shell of ignorance. The Dharma Characteristics School says that the pure-form faculty is the pure appearance formed through the interaction of the four great elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—before deluded movement has arisen. Because it cannot be seen with the eyes, some say that the Dharma Characteristics School's pure-form faculty has no material substance. Master Hanshan, however, says that it is a shell of ignorance.

The ignorance formed through the interaction of the four great elements is immensely powerful. It wraps our true mind within this bodily shell; this is called adhering to clarity and bringing forth seeing. The sūtra says, "Because of the two delusive objects of light and darkness, seeing arises between them." The appearances of light and darkness bring about the four great elements, which wrap our wondrous, clear true mind within them and give rise to the capacity to see and the appearances that are seen. This seeing is delusive seeing.

"The two delusive objects bring forth seeing between them; taking in these appearances of objects is called the nature of seeing." Once delusive seeing has arisen, because there is a perceiving aspect and an object aspect, one sees all kinds of appearances with the aid of light and darkness. All appearances are worldly dust and toil; they obscure our intrinsic luminosity just as dust obscures the light of a mirror. This is called the nature of seeing. This "nature of seeing" does not mean what we ordinarily mean by seeing the wondrous nature of true suchness. It refers to the capacity by which we see all things, corresponding to eye consciousness.

"Apart from those two objects, light and darkness, this seeing has no substance whatsoever." This seeing that is capable of seeing has no substantial entity apart from the two appearances of light and darkness. Our pure-form faculty and coarse

physical faculty both result from being unaware in a single thought and from deluded movement.

Obscured by the delusive appearances of worldly dust and toil, we take a small portion of the four great elements to be our own body, while the remaining four great elements become the mountains, rivers, great earth, sun, moon, and stars. Once we become attached to the body, views of self and what belongs to self arise, and seer and seen follow in their wake. The eyes and other faculties take in the realms of objects; all that is taken in is deluded thought, manifestations of fatigue, and not truly existent.

If the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind did not contain our nature of seeing, they could not give rise to the appearance of combination. Seeing and the four great elements cannot be separated. If there were only the four great elements and no nature of seeing, seeing could not arise. When form and seeing combine, they can take in the appearances of objects and give rise to all kinds of delusive appearances.

The nature of seeing spoken of here is equivalent to the nature of consciousness; it is not the seeing nature of true suchness or Buddha-nature. It is like waves on water: waves arise in water because of wind, and without wind there are no waves. Thus, the eye faculty and the eye entrance are both manifestations of fatigue arising from the wind of objects. “Apart from those two objects, light and darkness, this seeing has no substance whatsoever.”

“Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this seeing does not come from light or darkness, does not arise from the faculty, and is not produced from empty space.”

Because it is a manifestation of fatigue, it has no real entity. You should therefore know that this seeing comes neither from light nor from darkness; it arises neither from the eye faculty nor from empty space. Why is this so? Although this seeing can see light and darkness, it does not come from light or darkness. Light and darkness are merely manifestations of fatigue.

For example, when we use our eyes to look at things, we cannot see them apart from the eyes. Yet this seeing does not arise from the eye faculty. This was explained clearly above: if seeing emerged from the eyes, then, turning back, it should be able to see the eyes themselves.

If seeing existed because of the eyes, then when a person dies and the eyes remain, why is there no seeing? Seeing does not come from the eyes. Nor does it arise from empty space. If seeing arose from empty space, then empty space should possess seeing, while you yourself would not see. But in fact, it is not empty space that sees; you see. Thus, seeing does not arise from empty space either. The text now explains

separately why it does not come from light or darkness, the eye faculty, or empty space, in order to clarify this principle.

“Why is this? If it came from light, then when darkness arose it would cease, and it should not see darkness. If it came from darkness, then when light arose it would cease, and it should not see light.”

Why is it said not to come from light or darkness? If the eye’s seeing came from light, it should not be able to see darkness: “it should not see darkness.” When darkness came, seeing should cease. If this seeing came from darkness, then “when light arose it would cease, and it should not see light.” When light came, my seeing should cease, and I should not see light. But now, when darkness comes you see darkness, and when light comes you see light. This proves that the eye entrance does not arise from light or darkness.

“If it arose from the faculty, it would necessarily be without light and darkness. Thus, the essence of seeing would originally have no nature of its own.”

If it arose from the faculty—here, the eye faculty does not refer to the pure-form faculty but to the coarse physical faculty—it would necessarily be without light and darkness. Dragons beget dragons, and dogs beget dogs. Our eyes, the coarse physical faculty, themselves possess neither light nor darkness; therefore, what arises from the eyes would naturally possess neither light nor darkness.

This is what is meant by “if it arose from the faculty, it would necessarily be without light and darkness.” Since the faculty has neither light nor darkness, what arises from the faculty naturally has neither light nor darkness. For example, if there were neither darkness nor light, then in darkness we could not see shadows, and in light we could not distinguish the various forms and colors.

If there were neither light nor darkness, what could you see? At that point, there would not even be a nature of seeing. Without even the capacity to see, how could one speak of seeing? Therefore it is said, “Thus, the essence of seeing would originally have no nature of its own”; still less could anything arise from it. The essence of seeing spoken of here does not refer to our true suchness or Buddha-nature. The essence of seeing discussed earlier was the substance of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

Here, the essence of seeing refers to the basis that is capable of seeing things. Since even this basis capable of seeing is absent, how can there be a nature capable of seeing? Since there is neither a seer nor something seen, the so-called essence of seeing and nature of seeing are likewise unobtainable.

“If it emerged from empty space, then, having looked upon the appearances of objects before it, when it returned it should see the faculty. Moreover, if empty space itself sees, what does that have to do with your entrance?”

If seeing emerged from empty space, then when we look ahead and see all kinds of objective appearances and worldly dust and toil, what should we see when it returns? Where there is going, there must be returning; where there is emergence, there must be return. Once it has gone out, it must return.

If this seeing emerged from empty space, then when it emerged it would see the appearances of objects, and when it returned it should see the eye faculty. If so, “if empty space itself sees, what does that have to do with your entrance?” If one could see one’s own eye faculty, that would be empty space seeing it. Then it would concern only empty space, not you. But the fact is that it is not empty space that sees; you yourself take in objective realms and see many things. This shows that seeing is not produced by empty space.

“Therefore, you should know that the eye entrance is illusory and unreal; fundamentally, it is neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature.”

For this reason, this eye entrance does not arise from light and darkness, from the faculty, or from space; it is unborn. Since it is unborn, it is neither dependent arising nor natural arising. If one were to say that it comes from light and darkness or from space, it could be said to arise through causes and conditions; if one were to say that it comes apart from space and apart from light and darkness, it could be said to arise naturally. But apart from space and apart from light and darkness, there is no such eye entrance. Therefore, it is neither dependent arising nor natural arising. This proves that the eye entrance is an illusory appearance that cannot be obtained.

In the preceding ten discussions that reveal seeing, ten explanations were used to reveal this essence of seeing, without going into detail about the ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Since the principles are interconnected, the method of inferring three from one was used: by discussing the eye, the other five faculties were included by analogy. Thus, the treatment was relatively brief. Now, however, the six entrances are explained in greater detail, with each of the six discussed separately and in sequence.

Next, let us discuss the ear entrance:

(II) The Ear Faculty Enters Delusion

“Ānanda, suppose someone presses both ears tightly with two fingers. Because the ear faculty is strained, a sound arises within the head. Both the ear faculty and the strain are manifestations of strain produced by the staring forth of bodhi. Because of the two delusive sensory objects of movement and stillness, hearing arises between them; taking in these sensory appearances is called the nature of hearing. Apart from those two sensory objects of movement and stillness, this hearing ultimately has no substance.”

When discussing the ear entrance, the World-Honored One gives this analogy: someone plugs his ears with both fingers, tightly blocking them. Because the ear faculty is strained, a buzzing sound arises in the head. This buzzing is a manifestation of strain. “Both the ear faculty and the strain are manifestations of strain produced by the staring forth of bodhi.” The ear faculty and the manifestation of strain are both manifestations of strain produced by the staring forth of bodhi.

Staring means looking with the eyes. Why, now that the discussion concerns the ears, does it still speak of “manifestations of strain produced by staring forth”? Because the six faculties were originally one luminous awareness, divided into the six unions. The eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are all luminous functions of the eighth consciousness operating through the six faculties.

Here the Buddha uses “manifestations of strain produced by staring forth” to represent seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, feeling, and knowing alike; therefore, what follows is all expressed in terms of “manifestations of strain produced by staring forth.” This tells us that because of a single moment of unawareness, in which ignorance stirs delusively, mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, stars, the sense faculties, the body, the material world, and all kinds of appearances of toil and strain arise. All these bodies and circumstances are manifestations of strain arising from bodhi's ignorance and unawareness; they are called “manifestations of strain produced by the staring forth of bodhi.”

“Because of the two delusive sensory objects of movement and stillness, hearing arises between them.” For the eyes, seeing objects concerns brightness and darkness; for the ears, hearing sounds concerns movement and stillness, since sound is vibration. When we listen, the presence of sound is movement, and the absence of sound is stillness. Our nature of hearing arises in dependence on movement and stillness—that is, in dependence on the presence or absence of sound.

If movement and stillness are absent, if there is neither sound nor its absence, where is the nature of hearing? Naturally, it is absent. This proves that the nature of hearing is illusory; it is all our deluded knowing and deluded awareness, not

something real. If the nature of hearing truly existed, then apart from movement there should still be sound, and apart from stillness there should still be no sound.

But in fact, apart from movement and stillness, apart from the presence and absence of sound, even "hearing" is absent. Because of these two aspects of movement and stillness, "hearing arises between them." Earlier, in discussing the eye, it was said, "clinging to clarity gives rise to seeing"; now, in discussing the ear, it is said, "clinging to clarity gives rise to hearing."

This means that the force of ignorance firmly drags our wondrous, clear, unmoving true mind and fixes it amid the two sensory objects of movement and stillness, thereby giving rise to deluded thoughts. Amid these two delusive sensory objects of movement and stillness, "hearing arises between them": our deluded hearing arises. We take in these sensory appearances and regard them as the nature of hearing.

We people are especially fond of making distinctions. We take in these sensory appearances and cling to them: "Ah, this sound is wonderfully pleasant! That sound is unbearably noisy!" We follow the sensory appearances of movement and stillness. When something accords with our wishes, we laugh loudly; when it does not, we become anxious and distressed. Deluded views arise in just this way. This nature of hearing is the ear entrance; apart from those two sensory objects of movement and stillness, it ultimately has no substance.

"Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this hearing does not come from movement or stillness, does not arise from the faculty, and is not produced from emptiness."

The analogy here is the same as before. This nature of hearing does not come from movement or stillness, does not arise from the faculty, and is not produced from emptiness. Why? The following explains the principle:

"Why is this so? If it came from stillness, then when movement arose it would disappear; thus it could not hear movement. If it came from movement, then when stillness arose it would disappear; thus it could not be aware of stillness."

The principle is the same as that concerning brightness and darkness. If the nature of hearing arose from movement, then when sound ceased, you should not perceive stillness or hear that there is "no sound." If it arose from stillness, then you should not hear sound; even when there was sound, you should be unable to hear it. But this is not actually so. When a sound occurs, we can distinguish what sound it is; when there is no sound, we can also sense quietness.

Those who enjoy quietness feel very comfortable when there is not the slightest sound. Those who dislike quietness feel oppressed and need some sound—moving

about and jumping around—to be happy. Thus, things themselves have neither goodness nor badness; it is our own discriminating mind that is at work.

Therefore, painful and pleasant feelings both arise from the mind. It is because the mind accepts and rejects that there are feelings of pain and pleasure. When something accords with your wishes, you experience pleasant feeling; when it does not meet your demands, you experience painful feeling. For example, young people today enjoy dancing. They play tape recorders in the park and dance with great enthusiasm.

Older people see this and say, “Oh, this is no good, no good.” Thus, sensory objects themselves do not contain a distinction between pain and pleasure. What experiences pain and pleasure is your own mind; it is your discriminating mind that gives rise to them. Feelings of pain, pleasure, joy, and sorrow are all functions of your discriminating mind.

The ear entrance can hear movement and stillness; this is called the nature of hearing. It arises neither from movement nor from stillness. If it arose from movement, it should not hear stillness; if it arose from stillness, it should not hear movement. But the facts are not so. Therefore, it does not arise from movement and stillness.

“If it arose from the faculty, there would necessarily be no movement or stillness; thus the substance of hearing itself would have no inherent nature.”

Does this faculty arise from the ear? The ear itself has neither movement nor stillness. If it could produce something, then what it produced would naturally also have neither movement nor stillness. It is impossible for an ear without movement or stillness to produce something that has movement and stillness. Since there is no movement or stillness, there is no intrinsic substance capable of hearing. The six faculties are all provisional combinations of the four great elements. Without movement and stillness, even the ear itself would have no intrinsic substance.

Buddha Viśvabhū said: “The four great elements are provisionally borrowed to constitute the body; the mind is originally unborn and arises because of objects.” Originally, we have no body; we merely borrow the four great elements to provisionally make a body. Since there is no body, naturally there is no mind. Mind exists only because of circumstances. Conversely, circumstances too are unborn and exist because of mind. Circumstances originally do not exist; they exist as circumstances only because of mind.

Therefore, circumstances are mind, and mind is circumstances. Mind and circumstances are one entity, not two separate things. We used to say: do not

distinguish between idealism and materialism. In reality, mind is matter and matter is mind; they are originally one entity.

What arises from the ear faculty has neither movement nor stillness. Since there is neither movement nor stillness, how could there be any inherent nature of hearing to be found?

“If it arose from emptiness, then hearing would become its nature, and it would no longer be emptiness. Moreover, if emptiness itself could hear, what would that have to do with your ear entrance?”

If the ear entrance arose from emptiness, then if emptiness could hear sound, emptiness would possess a nature of hearing. If emptiness could hear sound, it would no longer be emptiness but would be something substantial. Only where there is nothing is there called emptiness. If there were a nature capable of hearing, there would be something there, and it would no longer be emptiness.

“Moreover, if emptiness itself could hear, what would that have to do with your ear entrance?” If emptiness could hear sound, then emptiness itself would be hearing it, and it would have nothing to do with you. But the actual fact is not so. It is not emptiness that hears; it is you, Ānanda, who can hear. Therefore, it does not arise from emptiness.

“Therefore, you should know that the ear entrance is illusory and unreal. It is fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor of a self-arising nature.”

Therefore, you should know that the ear entrance is illusory and unreal; fundamentally, there is no such thing. It is neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising. For example, a cup here today arises from causes and conditions. A cup has no intrinsic substance and did not exist from the beginning; it comes into being through the combination of other conditions, and so it is not self-arising.

The Buddha said, “All dharmas produced by causes and conditions, I say, are emptiness.” The teaching of causes and conditions is meant to refute the view of self-arising, to dispel the illusory and unreal view that things arise naturally by themselves. What we take to be substantial entities are, fundamentally, all illusory and unreal. Since they are illusory and unreal, what is there to cling to?

Whether we encounter favorable or adverse circumstances, or hear good or bad news, our minds should not move along with them. A person who has truly seen their nature remains inwardly pure even in an extremely noisy environment,

because they do not receive these sensory objects of sound or any feelings; thus they do not find it cluttered or noisy.

However, those who have only just begun to sit in meditation and apply themselves should practice in a quiet environment, because their meditative stability is insufficient. When they hear others speaking, they interpret the words and their minds run after them. Every one of us is accustomed to clinging to sensory appearances and ordinarily runs after circumstances, so it is difficult to change all at once.

Therefore, one should follow the method of perfect penetration through the ear faculty taught by Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva: “reverse the hearing to hear the self-nature.” Gradually, one can transform habitual tendencies. This is how we should practice in this worldly realm; only practice accomplished in this way is genuine practice.

Next, we discuss the nose entrance:

(III) The Nose Enters Delusion

“Ānanda, suppose someone forcefully sniffs through the nose. If this continues for a long time, it produces fatigue, and then one feels a cold sensation in the nose. On the basis of that sensation, one distinguishes openness and blockage, emptiness and solidity, and likewise all fragrant and foul odors. Both the nose and its fatigue are fatigue appearances produced by staring at bodhi. Because of the two delusive sensory objects of openness and blockage, smelling arises in between; it takes in these sensory appearances and is called the nature of olfactory awareness. Apart from the two sensory objects of openness and blockage, this awareness ultimately has no substance.”

“Forcefully sniffing through the nose” means breathing through the nose extremely quickly and frequently. After a long time, this gives rise to fatigue appearances. It is like our eyes: if we stare without blinking for a long time, flowers in empty space appear. Our noses, too, may be fatigued through prolonged sniffing, and then there will be a sensation of coldness. Because the nose faculty has sensations, it can distinguish openness and blockage, emptiness and solidity. When breathing is unobstructed, this is “openness” and “emptiness.” When it is obstructed, this is “blockage” and “solidity.”

“Likewise all fragrant and foul odors. Both the nose and its fatigue are fatigue appearances produced by staring at bodhi.” The nose faculty can not only sense openness and blockage, emptiness and solidity; it can also sense fragrant and foul odors. When it is open, one can smell odors; when it is blocked, one cannot smell

them. Fragrance and foulness, openness and blockage, emptiness and solidity are all fatigue appearances. Even your nose faculty is entirely a “fatigue appearance produced by staring” of the wondrous bodhi mind.

We have previously explained that the six sense faculties are originally interchangeable. Because they are covered over by the five material faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, boundaries arise. The Heart Sūtra says, “No eye realm, up to no realm of consciousness”; one must break through these boundaries. How does one break through them? By bringing the deluded mind to rest.

Once the deluded mind has come to rest, there is originally only one clear essence, namely the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); therefore, the various faculties can function interchangeably. Here, the discussion of fatigue appearances produced by staring means that, because the deluded mind is moving within, the nose faculty can only perform the function of smelling odors. It can only distinguish fragrance from foulness and cannot perform other functions.

In this Śūraṅgama Sūtra, one faculty is used to represent the other faculties. The following discussions all concern fatigue appearances produced by staring, using the eye faculty to illustrate the other faculties, because the principle by which fatigue appearances arise is the same. Because the nose faculty has the sensory fatigue appearances of openness and blockage, it adheres to luminous awareness and gives rise to smelling; our wondrous, clear, unmoving awareness is bound within by the force of ignorance. The force of this ignorance is extremely powerful. Thus Master Hanshan said: if not for the force of ignorance, what else could wrap the true mind within this bodily shell?

Because the nose faculty has openness and blockage, “smelling arises in between,” enabling it to smell all kinds of odors; deluded awareness thereby arises. The function of taking in sensory appearances is called the nature of olfactory awareness. It specializes in smelling external odors: one rejoices on smelling fragrance and dislikes foul odors. Thus all kinds of sensory fatigue appearances arise; these are all attachments.

Therefore it is said, “Apart from the two sensory objects of openness and blockage, this awareness ultimately has no substance.” When this nature of olfactory awareness is apart from openness and blockage, it cannot give rise to smelling. Without smelling, there can be no discernment or distinction, and discriminating thought naturally cannot arise. It is therefore illusory and unreal.

Our eye, ear, and nose faculties all function because, through ignorance and unawareness, the shell of ignorance adheres within; thus they adhere to luminous awareness and give rise to seeing, hearing, and smelling. Ignorance functions by clinging to our perfectly wondrous true mind. Once deluded seeing arises, the four

great elements are reflected, and attachment to these four great elements gathers them into our sense-faculty body. Our sense-faculty body, including eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, is formed by deluded seeing adhering to material appearances and by the aggregation of material sensory objects. This is therefore called “gathering form to make faculties.”

“You should know that this awareness does not come from openness or blockage, does not emerge from the faculty, and does not arise in empty space.”

You should know that this awareness that can smell fragrance and foulness is not produced by openness and blockage, does not emerge from the faculty, and does not arise from empty space.

“Why is this so? If it came from openness, then when there was blockage, the awareness would cease. How, then, could one know the blockage? If it arose because of blockage, then when there was openness, there would be no awareness. How, then, could one distinguish sensations such as fragrance and foulness?”

Why is this so?

If this awareness were produced by openness, then when there was tight blockage and no passage, the awareness should cease. How could you still know that there was tight blockage? If awareness could arise only when there was tight blockage, then your awareness should perceive only blockage: “when there is openness, there would be no awareness.” When it is open, you should not be able to perceive that openness.

Then, when it is open, how could you distinguish fragrant and foul odors? “How, then, could one distinguish sensations such as fragrance and foulness?” In fact, our noses can smell fragrant and foul odors. This shows that awareness does not arise from openness and blockage.

“If it arose from the faculty, there would necessarily be no openness or blockage. Thus, the faculty of smelling itself has no self-nature.”

If it arose from the nose faculty—where “faculty” here refers entirely to the superficial material faculty—then, since the nose faculty itself has neither openness nor blockage, the awareness it produced should likewise have neither openness nor blockage. Yet our present ability to smell depends on openness and blockage. When it is open, we can smell fragrance and foulness; when it is tightly blocked, we cannot smell anything at all. Apart from openness and blockage, do you still have olfactory awareness? Thus it is said, “Thus, the faculty of smelling itself has no self-nature.” The faculty of smelling is the mechanism that can smell; it has no self-nature to be found. Apart from openness and blockage, there is fundamentally no smelling.

“If it emerged from empty space, then this awareness should itself turn back and smell your nose. If empty space itself possessed awareness, what would that have to do with your faculty?”

If olfactory awareness came from empty space, then, turning back, it should be able to smell your nose. If it smelled your nose, then “empty space itself possessed awareness; what would that have to do with your faculty?” Empty space itself would smell odors, and it would have nothing to do with you; you should not know them. But now it is not empty space that knows fragrance and foulness—it is you who smell the odors. Therefore, olfactory awareness does not come from empty space.

“Therefore, you should know that the nose-entry is illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-arising nature.”

For this reason, it is demonstrated that the nose faculty’s ability to smell fragrant and foul odors is originally illusory and unreal. First, it has no substance of its own; second, it comes neither from openness and blockage nor from self-arising nature. What arises from openness and blockage is called causes and conditions; what arises apart from openness and blockage is called self-arising nature. Since it comes neither from openness and blockage nor from self-arising nature, it is illusory and unreal. That is, it has only a delusive name and no real entity.

Here is a Chan koan. One day Chan Master Guishan said to his disciples: “After this old monk dies, I shall be reborn as a water buffalo in the household of a donor at the foot of the mountain. On its right flank will be written several words: ‘The monk so-and-so of Guishan.’ At that time, if you call me the monk of Guishan, I am a water buffalo; if you call me a water buffalo, the words written on me say ‘the monk of Guishan.’ What will you call me?”

He was testing his students. Someone said, “I know—I will simply call you the Guishan water buffalo.”

In fact, that answer was wrong. Why? Because all names and appearances are illusory and unreal. If you call him the Guishan water buffalo, you are ensnared by names and appearances. You have still not leapt out of that circle; the right response is to leap beyond names and appearances. This is the method of the Chan school: it places handcuffs and fetters before you to see how you will put them on. If you say “Guishan water buffalo,” then very well—you have put on all the handcuffs and fetters, because you are attached to false appearances.

Later, a patriarch gave an excellent reply: “The Master has no other name.” He does not tell you any name. You have no other name, yet you have not left this name either. Such an answer is marvelous.

But does this question have only one answer? Of course not. You may say whatever you like; whether you speak horizontally or vertically, it is all right. This reply speaks from the standpoint of essence. Conversely, you could say: “Idle names have always filled the five lakes.” These things are all idle names, all false; they do not exist and have no real entity. “Have always filled the five lakes” means that it is not only the monk of Guishan, nor only the water buffalo: within this universe and this world, among all the myriad forms and appearances, what is not our true mind?

The foregoing discussed the third entry, the nose-entry. Next comes the fourth, the tongue-entry:

(IV) The Tongue Sense Faculty Is Illusory

“Ānanda, suppose someone licks his lips with his tongue, repeatedly licking them until fatigue arises. If he is ill, there will be a bitter taste; if he is not ill, there will be a slight sensation of sweetness. From sweetness and bitterness it is evident that, when the tongue faculty is not moving, the nature of blandness is always present. Both the tongue and this fatigue are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two delusive sense-objects of sweetness and bitterness, awareness arises between them; it takes in these sensory appearances and is called the nature that knows tastes. Yet this nature that knows tastes, apart from the two sense-objects of sweetness and bitterness and the sense-object of blandness, ultimately has no substance.”

Like the eyes, the tongue also has appearances of strain produced by staring. The tongue keeps licking one’s own lips; after licking them for a long time, an appearance of strain arises. What kind of appearance of strain is this? If a person is ill, there will be a bitter taste in the mouth; if the person is not ill, there will be a slight sweetness. The sensations of bitterness and sweetness are both appearances of strain.

When one licks, there is sweetness or bitterness; when one does not lick, there is neither sweetness nor bitterness. This shows that, when the tongue faculty is not moving, the nature of blandness is always present. The delusive appearances of the world all arise through relativity; without relativity, there would be no delusive appearances. Sweetness and bitterness are relative to each other, and both are also relative in comparison with blandness. When the tongue does not move and no strain is produced by licking, the nature of blandness is always present.

“Both the tongue and this fatigue are appearances of strain produced by staring within bodhi.” This is the same principle explained earlier: such appearances of strain as bitterness and sweetness, and even your tongue faculty itself, are appearances of worldly strain within the wondrously luminous true mind. They are

like the appearances of strain produced by staring with the eyes. Our faculties and sense-objects all arise because, in a single moment of unawareness, ignorance stirs delusively.

If we ourselves can awaken, recognize, and hold fast to our intrinsic nature, this world will become pure, and this defiled world will no longer exist. Some may say, “Oh! If this world no longer exists, would that not be annihilation?” It is not annihilation; it is purity.

This Buddha-nature is neither arising nor ceasing. It is not that Buddha-nature appears today because one has a body, and then disappears tomorrow after the person dies. That is not so. This Buddha-nature is neither arising nor ceasing. Our present world is the Sahā world of the five turbidities. Because everyone stirs delusively through ignorance, they create karma and undergo karmic retribution; thus they have such bodies.

Because the karma created by each person differs, the retribution each undergoes and the circumstances each experiences also differ. Once everyone awakens, we return to our wondrous bodhi mind. There will no longer be these appearances of strain, and this world will immediately become pure, like the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. Everyone will be a bodhisattva destined to attain Buddhahood in one more lifetime, no longer as in the Sahā world of the five turbidities.

Now, because of a single moment of unawareness, just as the eyes produce appearances of strain through staring, various appearances of strain—such as sweetness, bitterness, and blandness—arise after that single moment of unawareness. Thus “awareness arises between them.” Because there are appearances of strain, we cling tightly to this body, provisionally compounded of the four elements, and delusive awareness arises.

Then, through this delusive awareness, we distinguish good from bad—this is good, that is not good, and so forth—making all kinds of distinctions, creating karma, and undergoing karmic retribution. Someone may then say, “I shall be reborn in the Western Pure Land while carrying karma, so it does not matter if I kill a couple of chickens to eat.”

Many people think this way. They believe that, since one can be reborn while carrying karma, it does not matter to create a little karma. In fact, this is impossible. Rebirth while carrying karma does not mean carrying this karma. What is meant by carrying karma is carrying the habitual tendencies accumulated over many lives and kalpas. Even if you have seen your true nature, you cannot eliminate all the habitual tendencies of many lives at once.

If all habitual tendencies had been eliminated, one would be a Buddha at the fruition stage. Even the great Chan masters of old did not dare call themselves Buddhas at the fruition stage; they all said that they were Buddhas at the causal stage. We are still Buddhas at the causal stage—mere children, not yet adults. The Records of Pointing to the Moon contains seventeen hundred koans. Of so many great patriarchs, only a few realized the level of an eighth-bhūmi bodhisattva; the others were second- or third-bhūmi bodhisattvas and did not exceed the fourth bhūmi.

After awakening and seeing one's true nature, birth and death have not yet been transcended, because ignorance still remains after awakening and one must still have a place to go. Therefore, after awakening, great Chan masters turned back and cultivated the Pure Land practice as well.

In the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, one is destined to attain Buddhahood in one more lifetime and can advance ever upward. It is not like here, where one undergoes tortuous rebirth in cyclic existence—rising for a while and then falling again. This principle is not spoken carelessly.

When it is said that Chan practitioners must also cultivate the Pure Land, some people misunderstand. They think, "I practice Chan, which is the highest teaching. If I turn back to cultivate the Pure Land, am I not dropping down a level?" This is because you do not understand the principle. You should know that Chan is the Pure Land, and the Pure Land is Chan; there is fundamentally no difference between them. How could it be a demotion? The Pure Land school universally embraces practitioners of all three capacities—the higher, middling, and lower capacities alike. The Chan school, however, can take in only one capacity: people of the very highest faculties. It cannot receive those of middling and lesser faculties. Thus the Pure Land Dharma gate is exceptionally good.

Such bitterness, sweetness, and blandness are delusive sense-objects. Because of these delusive sense-objects, "awareness arises between them." With delusive knowing and delusive awareness within, you naturally distinguish good from bad, and thus create karma and undergo karmic retribution. "It takes in these sensory appearances and is called the nature that knows tastes": taking in these sensory appearances and treating them as the nature that knows tastes. Many people in the world think only about how to eat.

I once had a capitalist friend who thought only about eating all day long. Not only did he dine at every sort of restaurant, but whenever he heard that someone had a famous dish in a private home, he would immediately send several lavish gifts. After accepting the gifts, the people felt embarrassed and did not know how to repay him.

He would say, “I have heard that your family makes a certain dish exceptionally well. I would like to ask you to prepare it and invite a few friends to taste it.”

They had no way to refuse him and arranged for him to come a week later. The dish could not be prepared on the same day; it required several days, with such ingredients as chicken broth and crab roe, and many stages of preparation. Seven days later the dish was made. He took a bite and tasted it: “Delicious! Delicious!” He ate himself to death before reaching the age of fifty. Those in the world who crave food should take heed: rich food harms the body.

“It takes in these sensory appearances and is called the nature that knows tastes. Yet this nature that knows tastes, apart from the two sense-objects of sweetness and bitterness and the sense-object of blandness, ultimately has no substance.” Apart from sweetness, bitterness, and blandness, this “nature that knows tastes” is nothing at all. Originally, there is no taste of its own, for it has no substance. It is a delusive appearance, not something truly existent.

All these things are the force of ignorance, which encloses our originally luminous true mind, takes in sensory appearances, gives rise to delusive knowing and delusive awareness amid delusive sense-objects, and creates all kinds of karma. The suffering we undergo life after life is unjustified; in truth, we are held fast by these delusive sense-objects.

“Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this knowing of tasting bitterness and blandness does not come from sweetness or bitterness, does not arise because of blandness, does not issue from the faculty, and does not arise from empty space.”

You should know that this awareness by which we can taste bitterness, sweetness, sourness, pungency, saltiness, and blandness does not come from sweetness or bitterness, does not arise because of blandness, does not issue from the faculty, and still less does it arise from empty space.

“Why is this so? If it came from sweetness and bitterness, then when blandness was present, this knowing would cease. How, then, could one know blandness? If it issued from blandness, then when sweetness was present, this knowing would vanish. How, then, could one know the two appearances of sweetness and bitterness?” Suppose the nature that knows tastes came from sweetness and bitterness. “Then when blandness was present, this knowing would cease. How, then, could one know blandness?” If blandness arrived, the nature that knows tastes would cease, and we should not be able to know blandness. Yet when blandness is present, we know that it is bland. This shows that the nature that knows tastes does not come from sweetness and bitterness.

“If it issued from blandness, then when sweetness was present, this knowing would vanish. How, then, could one know the two appearances of sweetness and bitterness?” If the nature that knows tastes arose from blandness, then when sweetness or bitterness was present, the nature that knows tastes should no longer exist. If it no longer existed, how could one know sweetness and bitterness? Since you can now know sweetness and bitterness, this shows that it does not arise from blandness. Therefore, the tongue-entry does not arise from sweetness, bitterness, or blandness.

“If it arose from the tongue, then apart from the sense-objects of sweetness, blandness, and bitterness, this faculty that knows tastes would itself have no intrinsic nature.”

If this nature that knows tastes arose from the tongue, and the tongue is what tastes, then the tongue itself would necessarily be without bitterness, sweetness, or blandness. Since it has no bitterness, blandness, or sweetness, we can know that this faculty used to know tastes is originally without intrinsic nature. Intrinsic nature means substance. Because it has no such substance, the tongue itself has no sweetness, blandness, or bitterness, and what it produces should likewise have no sweetness, blandness, or bitterness. This proves that the nature that knows tastes is not produced by the tongue faculty.

“If it arose from empty space, then empty space itself would taste, rather than your mouth knowing. Moreover, if empty space itself knew, what would that have to do with your tongue-entry?”

If the nature that knows tastes arose from empty space, then empty space itself would know tastes, rather than your mouth knowing tastes—that is, “rather than your mouth knowing.” But in fact, one’s own mouth knows tastes; empty space does not. This proves that the nature that knows tastes does not arise from empty space.

If empty space knew, rather than your mouth, that would be empty space’s own affair and would have nothing to do with you. “What would that have to do with your tongue-entry?” What relation would it have to you? Since it is not empty space that knows, but you yourself who know, this proves that it does not arise from empty space.

“Therefore, you should know that the tongue-entry is delusive and unreal. It is fundamentally neither dependent arising nor intrinsic nature.”

Therefore, you should know that the tongue-entry is originally delusive and unreal. It is produced neither by bitterness, sweetness, and blandness, nor by the tongue faculty, nor by empty space. It is originally a delusive appearance. If something has never truly existed, what is there to speak of as dependent arising? What is there to

speak of as intrinsic nature? Therefore it is said to be “fundamentally neither dependent arising nor intrinsic nature.”

Next, we discuss the fifth entry, the body-entry:

(V) The Body Enters Delusion

“Ānanda, suppose someone touches a hot hand with a cold hand. If the cold force is stronger, the hot hand becomes cold; if the heat is stronger, the cold hand becomes hot. Likewise, the touch perceived through contact is revealed through the knowing of separation. When the forces come into contact, the sensation of touch arises through the wearisome exertion. Both the body faculty and this wearisome exertion are wearisome appearances produced by staring within bodhi. Because of the two delusive sense-objects of separation and contact, awareness arises between them, taking in these appearances of sense-objects; this is called the nature of knowing and perceiving. This substance of knowing and perceiving, apart from the two sense-objects of separation and contact, opposition and accord, ultimately has no substance.”

The body faculty is also called touch; it is the tactile sensation produced when the body comes into contact with various things. Suppose someone uses one cold hand to touch another hot hand. If the cold force of the cold hand is stronger, the hot hand will become cold. Conversely, “if the heat is stronger, the cold hand becomes hot”: the hot hand warms the cold hand.

Touch exists only when there is contact. “The touch perceived through contact is revealed through the knowing of separation.” Originally, there is no contact as such; it is because there is separation that there can be contact, and because there is contact that there can be touch. All things in the world are relative in this way. “The touch perceived through contact is revealed through the knowing of separation.” Your tactile awareness of cold and heat appears only because there are separation and contact; without separation and contact, it could not appear.

“When the forces come into contact, the sensation of touch arises through the wearisome exertion.” She involves two things coming into contact with one another, thereby producing touch. Touch exists because of separation and contact. Only when separation, contact, and touch interact with one another do the various sensations arise. These various sensations are wearisome touch; like the wearisome appearance produced by staring, they too are wearisome appearances. This wearisome appearance arises “through the wearisome exertion of touch.”

Why must there be this interaction of forces? Because wearisome touch requires separation and contact; only with separation and contact can there be involvement.

Without separation and contact, there could be no involvement. Thus, all these things are wearisome appearances.

“Both the body faculty and this wearisome exertion are wearisome appearances produced by staring within bodhi.” This wearisome appearance of sensing cold and heat, and even the body faculty itself, are wearisome appearances produced by staring within the wondrous nature of bodhi. The body faculty arises from the provisional combination of the four great elements and has no independent existence. It is only because, in a single thought of unawareness, ignorance delusively stirs that this illusory body faculty comes into being.

We do not know that the natures of the four great elements originally pervade the entirety of empty space and the dharma realm. Clinging to a small portion of the four great elements, we take it to be the body faculty, while the rest of the four great elements become empty space, the world, and the various things outside the body. For example, the nature of fire pervades all empty space and can ignite whenever conditions are present. If there is some gas in the air, it will burst into flame when it encounters fire.

Because sentient beings adhere to and cling to the four great elements, they seal our wondrous true suchness-nature within the shell of ignorance. What is within the body is taken to be oneself, while what lies outside the body is considered unrelated to oneself. In fact, all this is oneself: the body faculty and all tactile sensations are wearisome appearances within the wondrous nature of bodhi.

Because there are the two delusive sense-objects of separation and contact, “awareness arises between them.” Earlier, we explained where this involvement comes from: it is because of separation and contact. If there were no separation and things remained together continuously, there could be no question of involvement.

If things remained in contact continuously, there would be no separation; if there were only separation and no contact, how could there be separation? Thus, separation and contact are spoken of only in relation to one another, and so both are illusory and unreal.

Only our wondrously aware true mind is absolute. This absolute true mind has neither reality nor unreality, neither cold nor heat, neither long nor short, neither square nor round, neither light nor darkness. None of these distinctions exists within it. If there were length and shortness, light and darkness, and so forth, these would be dual appearances, and this would become dualistic seeing.

We must enter the Dharma gate of nonduality: nothing may fall into either extreme, for whatever is dual is not true. Thus, the absolute true mind is this clear and vivid awareness directly before us: there is not a single thing, neither subject nor object.

Its very substance is absolute; this is prajñā wisdom. Because sentient beings mistakenly take the two delusive sense-objects of contact and separation to be real, awareness arises between them, and various changes occur amid separation and contact.

With the two delusive sense-objects of separation and contact, the nature of knowing and perceiving arises between them, and deluded awareness is produced. Because there is deluded awareness, it takes in delusive sense-objects. When deluded awareness apprehends delusive sense-objects, this is called the body faculty; to take in delusive sense-objects is to create karma and undergo karmic retribution. This nature of knowing and perceiving, apart from separation and contact, opposition and accord, ultimately has no self-substance. What exists apart from the two extremes is the true mind; what does not exist apart from the two extremes is deluded thought. Illusory things in the world are not truly existent; they exist only relatively and cannot exist apart from the two extremes.

“Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this awareness comes neither from separation nor from contact, exists neither through opposition nor through accord, does not emerge from the faculty, and is not born from empty space.”

The nature of knowing and perceiving does not arise from separation or contact, nor from opposition or accord. It does not come from the body faculty, much less does it emerge from empty space.

“Why is this so? If it came forth at the time of contact, then separation should already have ceased. How, then, could one perceive separation? The two appearances of opposition and accord are likewise.”

If the nature of knowing and perceiving arose from contact, then when there was separation it should cease, and one should not perceive separation. Yet in fact we do perceive separation. Since we perceive separation, it does not arise from contact.

Likewise, if the nature of knowing and perceiving arose at the time of separation, then at the time of contact it should cease, and one should not perceive contact. Yet we now also perceive contact, so it does not arise from separation either. Since it arises neither from separation nor from contact, it naturally does not arise from opposition or accord either. Hence, “the two appearances of opposition and accord are likewise.”

“If it emerged from the faculty, there would necessarily be none of the four appearances of separation, contact, opposition, and accord; thus your bodily knowing would originally have no self-nature.”

If the nature of knowing and perceiving arose from the body faculty, the body faculty itself has none of the four appearances of separation, contact, opposition, and accord. How, then, could it produce the nature of knowing and perceiving that can sense these four appearances? “Thus your bodily knowing would originally have no self-nature”: your body originally has no self-nature and has no basis from which to arise. Therefore, it does not emerge from the faculty. Next, the text speaks of empty space:

“If it necessarily emerged from empty space, then empty space itself would know and perceive. What would that have to do with your faculty?”

If one says that the nature of knowing and perceiving arises from empty space, then it would be empty space that knows tactile sensations such as cold, heat, smoothness, and roughness; it would have nothing to do with you, and you should not know them. But now it is not empty space that knows—it is you yourself who know. This shows that the nature of knowing and perceiving does not arise from empty space.

“Therefore, you should know that the body faculty is illusory, fundamentally neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature.”

Therefore, you should know that the body faculty—that is, the body’s tactile awareness—is illusory and unreal, fundamentally nonexistent. “Fundamentally neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existent nature”: it arises neither from causes and conditions nor from itself.

Next, we discuss the last of the six faculties: the mind faculty:

(VI) The Mind Faculty Enters Delusion

“Ānanda, suppose someone, weary from exertion, falls asleep; when sleep is complete, he awakens. On encountering sense objects, he remembers; when memory is lost, there is forgetting. These are its inverted states. Arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing, drawn in through habitual conditioning and gathered within, do not overstep one another; this is called the faculty of mental knowing. The mind faculty and these wearisome states are both wearisome manifestations produced by the fixed gaze of bodhi. Because of the two delusive sense objects of arising and ceasing, accumulated knowing abides in the middle. It draws in and gathers the inner sense objects; seeing and hearing flow in reverse, a current that does not reach the ground. This is called the nature of awareness and knowing. This nature of awareness and knowing has, ultimately, no substance apart from the two sense objects of waking and sleeping, arising and ceasing.”

The mind faculty is more important than the preceding five faculties, because among the six entrances the mind faculty has the greatest power. Whether one does good or evil, it is the mind faculty that functions within. The five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body merely discriminate; they do not choose or reject.

If the mind faculty were not creating mischief in between, they would be like a mirror reflecting objects: although there is arising and ceasing, they themselves do not move. It is precisely because there is a mind faculty that it distinguishes good from bad, rejects this and takes that, and gives rise to all kinds of discrimination.

Take sound, for example. Hearing the very same piece of music, someone who likes quiet will find it noisy, whereas someone who enjoys liveliness will find it very pleasing. This is all the mind faculty at work.

Of the six faculties, the mind faculty is the most important. Practitioners must transform consciousness into wisdom. One does not begin with the preceding five consciousnesses, but with the sixth consciousness—that is, one transforms this mind faculty. Once the mind faculty is purified, the preceding five consciousnesses naturally transform as well. Therefore, the Sixth Patriarch said, “The sixth and seventh are transformed at the causal stage; the fifth and eighth are perfected at the fruition stage.” The ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and the preceding five consciousnesses are perfected only at the end.

In transforming consciousness, one must first transform the sixth consciousness. Once the mind faculty is purified, the manas consciousness is purified as well. The manas consciousness, also called the transmitting consciousness, serves as the basis for both defilement and purity: it transmits the sense-object images received by the six consciousnesses to the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). When the sixth consciousness is pure, the manas consciousness follows suit; when the sixth consciousness is defiled, the manas consciousness is defiled as well.

The Pure Land school’s Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation begins with the sixth faculty. Firmly imprinting the Buddha’s name upon the mind faculty, one recites, “Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha Buddha . . .” continuously. Over time, the originally inverted deluded thoughts become purified. This is called purity of the six faculties.

What the manas consciousness ordinarily transmits inward consists of greed, anger, ignorance, killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct. Thus the manas consciousness becomes defiled and deposits those filthy, sordid things in the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

The Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation enables everyone, imperceptibly, to turn the mind around—to transform originally defiled seeds into pure seeds. Each recitation of Amitābha Buddha is conveyed to the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), so that

the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) becomes filled with the Buddha's seeds.

Someone once used an analogy: the method of applying oneself is like putting gunpowder into a jar—putting in a little today and a little tomorrow. Once it reaches a certain point, bang! It explodes. He was quite right. This is how we apply ourselves: whether reciting the Buddha's name, investigating Chan, or practicing Esoteric Buddhism, the principle is the same.

The Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation consists in placing Buddha-seeds within. Put them in, put them in . . . until they are full and saturated; then body and mind fall away, and one realizes the samādhi of Buddha-recitation.

Some elderly women who recite the Buddha's name do not understand this principle. When their recitation reaches the point at which body and mind fall away and even the Buddha's name cannot be found, they become frightened instead: "Oh dear! I rely on the Buddha's power to be reborn in the West. Now even the Buddha is gone—what am I to do?" Frightened, they retreat from it.

At this point, one needs a teacher's guidance. The teacher should tell her that this is good news: her mind-ground is shining forth. It is called, "When the lotus opens, one sees the Buddha and awakens to the unborn." That is, the flower of the mind has opened and you have seen the Buddha of your intrinsic nature. You must awaken to the patience with the unborn dharmas. Do not be afraid! Immerse your mind in it and boldly pass through.

In the Chan school, this is even more good news. Investigate, "Who is reciting the Buddha's name? Who is reciting the Buddha's name? . . ." Pursue this until the sense of doubt is exhausted, so that while walking one does not know one is walking, and while sitting one does not know one is sitting. Bang! When the doubt is exhausted, there is an eruption: the original nature opens, the bottom drops out of the bucket, and one sees one's intrinsic nature.

Esoteric Buddhist practice is the same. Relying on the blessings of the Buddha's three mysteries, when one's practice reaches this depth, it is as though someone behind you were lending a hand, pushing you to the edge of a cliff. Bang! Empty space shatters, the great earth sinks level, and one suddenly sees original reality. To transform consciousness into wisdom, one must transform the sixth faculty.

However, because methods of practice differ, the faculty selected at the outset also differs. Esoteric Buddhism and the Chan school both begin with the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), whereas the Pure Land school begins with the sixth consciousness. The sixth faculty is extremely important and exceptionally powerful.

The contemplation and safeguarding realization that we practice in daily life are all work carried out on the sixth faculty. We shall now discuss the sixth faculty.

“Suppose someone, weary from exertion, falls asleep; when sleep is complete, he awakens.” “Weary from exertion, he falls asleep; when sleep is complete, he awakens” refers to one arising and one ceasing: when one is tired, one must sleep; after one has slept sufficiently, one awakens. This is like there originally being no arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing, and then arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing appear.

What are “arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing”? Take our bodies as an example. When a child is born, this is “arising.” Living for a period—several decades, one hundred years, or two hundred years—is “abiding.” During abiding there are changes: from youth to maturity, from maturity to old age, and from old age to death. This is “changing.” When the final breath does not return and one dies, this is “ceasing.”

Not only human beings are like this; the world is likewise.

Take the earth, for example. Its formation is arising. Its continuation through a number of small kalpas—the earth is now already several billion years old—is abiding. The earth is constantly changing: seas can turn into mulberry fields, and high mountains can become seas. This is changing. Although the earth has a long lifespan, it too will eventually perish. After passing through the three calamities of fire, water, and wind, even the heavens of the first, second, and third dhyānas are destroyed. This is ceasing.

After the world is destroyed, it is called the empty kalpa. Thus the earth’s arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing are also called the four middle kalpas of formation, abiding, destruction, and emptiness. After the empty kalpa, formation occurs again, then abiding, then destruction, then emptiness—cycling on without end.

This is like our mind faculty, which originally has no appearances whatsoever of arising, abiding, changing, or ceasing. Because of weariness, one goes to sleep, provisionally called ceasing. After sleeping sufficiently and fully awakening, this is called arising. The waking state is called abiding. When one is about to sleep but has not yet fallen asleep, or is about to awaken but has not yet awakened, this is the appearance of changing. Sleep is used as an analogy for arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing; therefore it says, “Weary from exertion, one falls asleep; when sleep is complete, one awakens.” After sleep, awakening arises.

“On encountering sense objects, one remembers; when memory is lost, there is forgetting.” These two sentences likewise indicate arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. On seeing certain things, the seeds formerly stored in the field of the ālaya

consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are stirred, and one recalls something that had previously been forgotten.

We often have such experiences. We may already have forgotten something, but then you say a certain phrase, which prompts me to remember it again. This too is called remembering upon encountering a sense object, and forgetting when memory is lost. If one cannot recall it, one has forgotten it. This too is arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing.

“On encountering sense objects, one remembers” means that one recalls something, which is the appearance of arising. “When memory is lost, there is forgetting” means that what one remembered is lost and forgotten, which is the appearance of ceasing. Between the appearance of arising and the appearance of ceasing, there must be the appearances of abiding and changing. One originally remembers something, but later gradually forgets it. When one still remembers it, this is abiding; when it gradually fades from memory, this is changing. Arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing express the inverted appearances of the mind faculty.

“Drawn in through habitual conditioning and gathered within” refers to the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, which specialize in taking in the external five sense objects. Over time this becomes habitual and turns into a habitual tendency. We often say that habitual tendencies must be eliminated; this means eliminating completely the habit of absorbing sensory objects. To see all sensory appearances as our own intrinsic nature is called seeing intrinsic nature through appearances.

For sentient beings, the five faculties specialize in absorbing sensory appearances. After taking in sensory appearances, they create karma and undergo karmic retribution. “Drawn in through habitual conditioning and gathered within” means that the external five faculties transform the five absorbed sense objects into habitual tendencies and bring them to the sixth faculty, the mind faculty. The sixth faculty then conveys them inward, through the seventh faculty, manas consciousness, and stores them in the eighth faculty, ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), where they become seeds of habitual tendencies.

“They do not overstep one another; this is called the faculty of mental knowing.” Not overstepping one another means that the things taken in earlier and later do not have their sequence reversed. It is like a computer: the data you enter are not disordered in the least. Whatever order they are entered in remains their order, and they can quickly be printed out. Our mind faculty is like this. The things it absorbs and enters earlier and later do not overstep one another; they always remain in order and are never confused.

“The mind faculty and these wearisome states are both wearisome manifestations produced by the fixed gaze of bodhi.” This mind faculty and the wearisome states it produces—the waking and sleeping, arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing discussed above—are all sensory toil within our wondrously bright true mind. They are like flowers in empty space that arise when one gazes at the sky for too long. All are wearisome manifestations. Therefore, the things distinguished by the mind faculty are also empty and unreal.

“Because of the two delusive sense objects of arising and ceasing, accumulated knowing abides in the middle.” The two delusive sensory toils of arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing specialize in making distinctions within; thus the faculty of mental knowing arises. “Accumulated knowing abides in the middle” means that the faculty of mental knowing gathers within.

“It draws in and gathers the inner sense objects; seeing and hearing flow in reverse.” What does it mean to draw in and gather inner sense objects? As we have just said, the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body absorb the external five sense objects of form, sound, scent, taste, and touch. These are called external sense objects.

The mind faculty does not perceive external objects directly. Rather, the images left behind when the preceding five faculties take in external sense objects fall upon the sixth consciousness; these are called inner sense objects, or dharma objects. The mind faculty corresponds to inner sense objects, to dharma objects. It specializes in clinging to the images of external sense objects left behind by the preceding five faculties. We call these residual images “mind”; that which grasps these images is the mind faculty, called “intention.”

What is meant by “reversing the current of seeing and hearing”? Going with the current means chasing after sounds and being turned by external objects. For example, when a man sees a beautiful woman, he stares at her without stopping; this is chasing after them. Reversing the current means going against this course and not chasing after them.

How does one avoid chasing after them? When the first five faculties encounter the five external objects, one sees without seeing and hears without hearing, closing the windows of these five faculties. This is called reversing the current of seeing and hearing. Reversing the current is the method of practice used by Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, which will be discussed later. Going with the current means following discrimination. If one reverses the current—seeing without seeing and hearing without hearing—then all things disappear. Because of reversing the current, “the objects are lost”; one no longer discriminates this as good and that as bad. This is reversing the current of seeing and hearing.

Why is it called “the current does not reach the ground”? Although you have reversed the current, closed off the first five faculties, and ceased chasing after the five objects, you can only maintain this as far as the sixth, the mind faculty; the current does not reach the mind-ground. Hence it is called “the current does not reach the ground.” Practice at this stage still has a long way to go. We will not discuss it now, but will return to it when we discuss Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva’s perfect penetration through the ear faculty. Thus, “the current does not reach the ground” means that it does not reach the mind-ground. How can it reach the mind-ground? This will be explained later.

“It is called the nature of awareness and knowing.” That by which you are aware and know is called the nature of awareness and knowing.

“This nature of awareness and knowing, apart from the two objects of waking and sleeping, arising and ceasing, ultimately has no substance.” Your nature of awareness and knowing, apart from sleeping and waking, arising and ceasing, and apart from relative objects, has no self-substance.

The mind faculty is extremely important. Among the six faculties, its power is the strongest; therefore, in practice one must work on the mind faculty at every moment.

“Thus, Ānanda, you should know that this faculty of awareness and knowing does not come from waking or sleeping, does not exist because of arising and ceasing, does not issue from the faculty, nor does it arise from empty space.”

You should understand that the nature of awareness and knowing does not come from the states of waking and sleeping, does not come from arising and ceasing, does not arise from the bodily faculties, and does not arise from empty space. Empty space has no awareness; how could it give rise to the nature of awareness and knowing?

Above, it was explained that the faculty of awareness and knowing is a wearisome appearance of bodhi and is not truly existent. What is a wearisome appearance of bodhi? Bodhi is originally unmoving. Because of ignorance, a single thought of nonawakening gives rise to deluded movement; one then becomes tainted by the five objects of form, sound, fragrance, taste, and touch. Because of this tainting by objects, wearisome appearances arise.

Tainting by objects is like a mirror being obscured by dust. Because wearisome appearances arise, all sorts of delusive appearances arise in opposition to one another. So long as the mind is not tainted by objects and does not engage in pervasive discrimination and attachment, it is not wearied. With respect to the mind faculty, these wearisome appearances are the two delusive appearances of arising

and ceasing. As stated earlier, arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing; sleeping is ceasing, and waking is arising.

Within the perfect, wondrous mind, the two delusive appearances of arising and ceasing adhere to the quiescent clarity and give rise to knowing. That is, ignorance clings to the perfect, wondrous true mind, and from its true knowing and true awareness—serene and unmoving—there arises a deluded knowing. Because of this deluded knowing, it gathers dharmas to form a faculty, gathering the residual images of the preceding objects to become the mind faculty. Therefore, this mind faculty is a wearisome appearance of bodhi and is not truly existent.

“Why is this so?”

Why does it not arise from waking and sleeping, arising and ceasing, the mind faculty, or empty space?

“If it came from waking, then when sleep followed, it would cease. What, then, would be sleeping?”

If the nature of awareness and knowing arose from waking, then it should cease when one falls asleep. If it ceased, one should not know that one is asleep. In fact, one knows that one is asleep; one can also be called awake while asleep. The nature of awareness and knowing remains and has not ceased. Thus, it is clear that the nature of awareness and knowing does not arise from waking.

“If it necessarily exists only when there is arising, then when there is ceasing, it would likewise be absent. Who, then, would experience ceasing?”

If the nature of awareness and knowing necessarily exists only at the time of arising, then it should be absent at the time of ceasing. Yet at the time of ceasing it is not absent: it can know ceasing, and it still remains. Though a person dies, it is not the case that nothing at all remains. If there truly were nothing, if there truly were annihilation, who would experience this appearance of ceasing? Therefore, the nature of awareness and knowing does not arise from arising.

“If it existed because of ceasing, then when arising occurred, ceasing would be absent. Who would know arising?”

If it arose from ceasing, the faculty of mental knowing should exist only along with “ceasing”; when “arising” occurred, this faculty should be absent. If the faculty of mental knowing were absent, who would know arising? Therefore, the nature of awareness and knowing does not arise from ceasing.

Neither arising nor ceasing can give rise to the nature of awareness and knowing. Therefore, one knows that it does not arise from arising and ceasing.

“If it issued from the faculty, the two appearances of waking and sleeping would open and close with the body. Apart from these two states, this awareness and knowing would be like flowers in empty space, ultimately without any nature.”

If one says that the nature of awareness and knowing arises from the mind faculty, the two delusive appearances of waking and sleeping nevertheless manifest in accordance with the opening and closing of the body.

What does it mean to open and close with the body? When the five faculties function —for example, when the eye faculty sees, the ear faculty hears, the tongue faculty tastes, the nose faculty smells, and the body faculty touches—this is called opening. When these five faculties do not function, this is called closing.

When the body faculty is closed, one is asleep; when it is open, one is awake. Thus, as the body faculty opens and closes, the mind faculty likewise arises and subsides accordingly. If you merely push a sleeping person, stimulating the body, or call out to them, stimulating the ear faculty, that person can awaken.

This means that when any one of the five faculties opens, the mind faculty opens; only when all five faculties are closed does the mind faculty close. Therefore, when we sleep, we are neither thinking nor seeing or moving; naturally, we are neither hearing nor speaking. Some say that the mind faculty remains aware during sleep and that, upon waking, the mind faculty is the first to become aware. This is not necessarily so.

For when someone is asleep, if you do not push their body or call out to them, they will not wake up; they must wait until they have slept enough before awakening. Thus, it is called opening and closing with the body. “Apart from these two states, this awareness and knowing would be like flowers in empty space.” Apart from opening and closing—that is, apart from the first five sense objects—there is no nature of awareness and knowing. This mind faculty is like flowers in empty space: it does not exist at all. “Ultimately without any nature” means that it has neither self-nature nor self-substance. Therefore, the nature of awareness and knowing does not arise from the mind faculty.

“If it arose from empty space, then empty space itself would know. What connection would that have with your entering?”

If the faculty of mental knowing arose from empty space, then empty space itself would know, and it would have nothing to do with you, Ānanda. What does “What connection would that have with your entering?” mean? If empty space knows, while you have no mind faculty to receive the appearances of dharmas, then naturally you do not know.

“Therefore, you should know that the mind entrance is unreal and illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a nature that arises of itself.”

From the various arguments above, we can see that the mind entrance cannot be found whether one seeks it in arising and ceasing, waking and sleeping, empty space, or the mind faculty. Therefore, the mind entrance is said to be unreal and illusory.

Since it is unreal and illusory, how could there be causes and conditions or a self-arising nature? If such a thing existed, one could speak of its arising from causes and conditions or arising naturally. But now, not even a single thing can be found, so what is there to discuss concerning causes and conditions or natural arising? Therefore, it is unobtainable. The discussion of the six entrances ends here.

The six entrances are actually a discussion of the six faculties. Because the faculties can receive the external objects of form, the six faculties are called the six entrances when they take in the objective realm. From the perspective of faculties giving rise to consciousness, the faculties are in fact mind; thus, the six entrances are a discussion of this mind.

The emphasis here is on “entrance”: from the perspective of receiving the objective realm, it dispels the false appearance of taking the six entrances to be truly existent. One view holds that among the six faculties, only the mind faculty is mind, while the other five faculties are all objects. This should not be stated so restrictively.

For from the perspective of the basis on which consciousness depends, the faculties are objects. For example, eye consciousness depends on the eye faculty, ear consciousness on the ear faculty, and nose consciousness on the nose faculty. Conversely, the faculties can also give rise to consciousness: when a faculty encounters an object, consciousness arises.

Moreover, the faculties themselves also contain consciousness; consciousness does not necessarily arise only when they encounter objects. Therefore, the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are also mind. The Dharma Characteristics School says that, among the five aggregates, form is an object, while the subsequent feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness are all mind. This is called “opening mind and combining objects.” Mind is divided into four, while the object is only one. This is said for those deluded about mind.

The six entrances discuss “opening form and combining mind,” because eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are all form and all objects. Form is divided into five kinds, while mind has only the single mind faculty; this is called “opening form and combining mind.” This is the teaching of the Dharma Characteristics School. In fact, mind and form are not fixed: mind is faculty, and faculty is mind. It depends on the

perspective from which you consider them. From the perspective of the basis on which consciousness depends, faculties may be called objects; from the perspective that faculties can give rise to mind, faculties are mind. They are not fixed and unchanging.

Let us now briefly summarize the six entrances. The objects of form seen by the eye faculty are light and darkness; the objects of sound encountered by the ear faculty are movement and stillness; and the objects of fragrance encountered by the nose faculty are openness and obstruction, emptiness and solidity. If they are completely obstructed, one cannot smell the various odors; if they are not obstructed, one can smell fragrant and foul odors.

With emptiness one can smell fragrant and foul odors; with solidity one cannot. These are relative. What the tongue faculty tastes is sweetness, blandness, and bitterness; what the body faculty touches is coldness, warmth, smoothness, and roughness; and what the mind faculty takes as its objects are the residual images left by the first five faculties and the five external objects. Because there are such images, there are arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing.

Among all these delusive appearances, not only are the external objects that one encounters wearisome appearances of bodhi; even the six faculties themselves are entirely wearisome appearances of bodhi. Why? Because the bodhi mind is originally unmoving. Because of ignorance, a single thought of nonawakening baselessly grasps at objects, and thus wearisome appearances arise.

Because the mind is wearied, all kinds of delusive appearances of opposites arise: light and dark, form and emptiness, cold and warmth, smoothness and roughness, birth, abiding, change, and cessation.

Moreover, because of all kinds of opposing delusive sense objects, ignorance clings to our clear and tranquil awareness within the perfectly wondrous mind, giving rise to seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing. These reflect the delusive appearances mentioned above—light and dark, form and emptiness, cold and warmth, smoothness and roughness, birth, abiding, change, and cessation—and then coalesce into faculties.

Therefore, these faculties are formed when ignorance grasps our unmoving true mind and combines with external delusive appearances. Once faculties and sense objects join together, they can take in the appearances of sense objects. The appearances taken in by the six faculties are the six entrances; in sum, the six entrances are seeing, hearing, awareness, knowing, smelling, and tasting.

One Dharma teacher has said that seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the pure form faculties of the six faculties, while the external eyes, nose, ears, tongue,

and body are the coarse material faculties. This is not an appropriate explanation.

For seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are delusive knowing and delusive seeing; they are fundamentally unobtainable. Since they are unobtainable, how could they be our pure form faculties? Master Hanshan explained this well: he said that seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the shell of ignorance. They do not truly exist at all, but are still false things. Were it not for the power of ignorance, it could not confine our true mind within this bodily shell. The power of ignorance is immense.

To summarize: whether the six entrances are faculties or sense objects, they are all unreal and illusory, without any intrinsic substance.

We shall now begin discussing the twelve sense bases. What are the twelve sense bases? They are the six faculties plus the six sense objects. The term “base” means that there is a location, a place. For example, the eyes are on the face; the nose is in the middle of the face; the ears are on either side of the face; and the tongue and body also each have their own positions. Each of the six faculties has its location.

The six faculties correspond to the six sense objects. The form objects corresponding to the eyes are things of every shape and color; the sound objects corresponding to the ears are no more than the two aspects of movement and stillness; and the nose, tongue, body, and mind each likewise have their respective sense-object realms. When faculties and sense objects thus stand in relation to one another, there are twelve sense bases. We now use the six faculties to dismantle the six sense-object realms; to dismantle these realms is equivalent to dismantling these bases.

The Dharma Characteristics School discusses the twelve sense bases separately, saying that eleven bases are form, while the remaining mind faculty is mind. Since it arises in dependence on sense objects and has no location, it is not counted as a base. This explanation is not very appropriate, because the Buddha spoke of twelve sense bases.

If only the mind faculty is mind and all the others are form, then when the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body encounter their objects, form should be taking in form. For example, the eye is form, and the external object encountered by the eye faculty is also form. If form takes in form, then the insentient encounters the insentient. This is certainly impossible, so this explanation is not very appropriate.

Furthermore, faculties can give rise to consciousness. If the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are form, and form is insentient, while the consciousnesses they give rise to are sentient, then their giving rise to consciousness would amount to the

insentient giving rise to the sentient. Moreover, faculties can cognize form. If faculties are form, then this would mean that the insentient cognizes the insentient.

If one says that there is no mind in the faculties, and that it is called mind only when the six consciousnesses arise through the contact of faculties and sense objects, then sentient beings could have only six consciousnesses, with no seventh or eighth consciousness.

The first six faculties each have their corresponding sense objects and can give rise to the six consciousnesses, whereas the seventh and eighth consciousnesses have no concrete sense-object realms. Would this not mean that sentient beings have only six consciousnesses, and that the seventh and eighth consciousnesses are both unobtainable? Therefore, this explanation is flawed. We maintain that the six faculties still have six bases.

Some Dharma teachers say that the mind faculty is the physical heart. This explanation is also inappropriate. Our physical heart is actually the basis of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), while the brain is the basis of the sixth consciousness. According to traditional Chinese medicine, the light of the heart shines upward upon the brain; only when heart and brain are connected does the brain function. If the light of the heart does not shine upon the brain, the brain does not function. The brain is the sixth consciousness, and the heart is the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is also called the mind king.

This Dharma teacher also said that the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is unmoving, without coming or going, and that the manas consciousness is what comes and goes. Yet according to the Verses on the Structure of the Eight Consciousnesses: “It departs last and arrives first, acting as the master.” When a person dies, it is the last to leave; when one enters the womb, it is the first to arrive. This refers to the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

If, as he says, the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is unmoving, neither arising nor ceasing, and without coming or going, then that which comes and goes, arises and ceases, should be the manas consciousness. This too is incorrect, because the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is called a consciousness precisely because it has a location; it is not our true mind.

The eighth consciousness is ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is a composite formed by the union of arising-and-ceasing and non-arising-and-non-ceasing; it still comes and goes and is subject to movement. What truly neither comes nor goes is our true mind—Buddha-nature—the wondrous, luminous true mind spoken of in the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. It alone is truly neither arising nor ceasing, neither coming nor going, neither moving nor wavering.

As for the eighth consciousness, it is constituted by the union of arising-and-ceasing and non-arising-and-non-ceasing. Since it contains an arising-and-ceasing aspect, it still undergoes arising and ceasing. We have briefly explained these matters so that everyone may understand what the twelve sense bases and the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousnesses are about.

Our present discussion of the twelve sense bases focuses on the bases upon which the six consciousnesses depend, namely the six faculties. What the faculties take in are sense objects: form, sound, scent, flavor, touch, and dharmas. The first five are external sense objects, while dharmas are internal sense objects—that is, the images left in the sixth consciousness by the sense-object realms apprehended by the first five consciousnesses. These arise and exist in mutual opposition. Thus, the six faculties together with the six sense objects are called the twelve sense bases. We discuss the twelve sense bases now in order to dismantle them and understand that they fundamentally have no real, substantial location.

Third Section: The Twelve Sense Bases Are Illusory, Neither Arising from Causes and Conditions nor Inherently Existing

“Furthermore, Ānanda, why is it said that the twelve sense bases are fundamentally the wondrous true suchness nature of the Tathāgata-garbha?”

Here the World-Honored One asks Ānanda why the twelve sense bases are said to be the wondrous true suchness nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. These twelve sense bases are the six sense faculties in relation to the six sense objects—that is, the perceiving aspect in relation to the object aspect. On the side of the faculties is the perceiving aspect; on the side of the objects is the object aspect. Our ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) simultaneously possesses both the perceiving and object aspects. These two aspects are only a provisional distinction and should not be taken as truly existent.

The perceiving and object aspects spoken of here are respectively the subject and the object. They are like a snail’s two horns: when they extend, both are present; when they retract, neither is present. The snail’s body, however, symbolizes our true mind. These twelve sense bases all arise from our wondrous, perfect true mind. Their essence is our true mind; therefore, it is said that the twelve sense bases are the wondrous true suchness nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

(I) The Illusory Nature of the Faculties of Form and Seeing

“Ānanda, look for a moment at this Jeta Grove and its various springs and pools. What do you think? Do forms give rise to visual seeing, or do the eyes give rise to forms?”

The Buddha asks Ānanda: Look now at this Jeta Grove and the springs and pools within it. What do you think? Is the seeing by which you now see these things produced by forms, or are forms produced by the eyes? If this seeing arises from forms, it is called forms producing visual seeing; if forms arise from the eyes, it is called the eyes producing forms. Are these groves and springs ultimately forms produced by your eyes, so that you see them? Or do forms produce your eyes’ capacity to see, so that because of forms your eyes are able to see?

“Ānanda, if forms were produced by the eye faculty, then when one sees emptiness, which is not form, the nature of form should disappear. Once it disappears, all would be manifestly absent. Since forms would no longer exist, who could discern the nature of emptiness? The same applies to emptiness. If sense objects of form produced visual seeing, then when one observes emptiness, which is not form, seeing itself would disappear. Once it disappeared, all would be absent. Who, then, could discern emptiness and form?”

The locus of visual seeing is what is called a “place.” We will now refute this notion of place for us. The appearances manifested by form are all places, and these places are precisely the appearances that are manifested. To ordinary people, both forms and the nature that is capable of seeing seem to have real existence.

For example, as we sit here now, you all see me and I see you. We can see one another, and we can also see the things in the room. Since there is that which sees and that which is seen, does this not imply a place? This is the mistaken perception of sentient beings. In the Buddha’s eyes, there is fundamentally no such seeing or seen.

Why is it said that there is no seeing and no seen? Because these two places—the seer and the seen—are false appearances to which our discriminating minds cling. From the standpoint of essence, however, if we see through appearances to our intrinsic nature and understand that all appearances are manifestations of our own intrinsic nature, then apart from that nature there are fundamentally no appearances. Since there are no such appearances, all is absent.

Take the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss as an example. In terms of essence, it does not exist: where could there be such a world? Yet in terms of appearances and

function, the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss does exist; true emptiness does not obstruct wondrous presence. If you cling to appearances and function, believing that all appearances truly exist, then one tells you that they do not exist, in order to break your attachment to existence. Thus, to say that there is no Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is intended to break your attachment to existence.

If you cling to biased emptiness, then one tells you that there is a Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, because appearances and function are not absent. The tathāgatagarbha is the true essence capable of all things. It is not dead; rather, it can manifest every form and give rise to every wondrous function. Therefore, one must not cling to biased emptiness. Whether one clings to emptiness or to existence, it is all attachment by our discriminating minds.

From the standpoint of its essential nature, it is neither empty nor existent; neither existent nor empty. Thus, the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss is likewise neither empty nor existent, neither existent nor empty. It can neither be said to exist nor be said not to exist. To call it existent is mistaken, for it is wondrous presence that is not existence; to call it nonexistent is mistaken, for it is true emptiness that is not empty. Therefore, do not cling to appearances. Clinging to either side is a fault and is never complete.

People of the Pure Land school say that it is enough if we can be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. They believe that the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss truly exists. To speak of existence and nonexistence in this way shows that they have not understood the matter from its root. In fact, the Pure Land school explains this issue very clearly: it requires you both to recite the Buddha's name and visualize, and to read and recite the Mahāyāna teachings.

Why read and recite the Mahāyāna teachings? It is in order to understand this wondrous principle. Only after one has fully grasped this principle can one attain rebirth in the highest grade. Since all of you here today wish to be reborn in a high grade, we explain it in this way in order to make this principle clear.

Otherwise, simply cling to real existence: there is a Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, and there is Amitābha Buddha; you may practice in that way and still go there. If we are reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, Amitābha Buddha is presently teaching the Dharma there as well. What Dharma is he teaching? This very Dharma. Apart from this Dharma, what other Dharma is there? There is none. He too teaches this wondrous principle. Therefore, you should cling to nothing. Everything without exception is your wondrous functioning. Both biased emptiness and biased existence are mistaken; attachment to either extreme is wrong.

The World-Honored One then asks Ānanda: You now see the springs and groves of Jeta Park. Were these produced by your eyes? If these forms were produced by your

eyes, then, when “seeing emptiness, which is not form,” you see forms and forms arise. Forms belong to form; therefore, when you see emptiness, it should be non-form.

Next it says, “the nature of form should disappear.” When one sees emptiness, forms should cease to exist. That is, when one sees form, one should not see emptiness. “Once it disappears, all would be manifestly absent.” If forms disappear, empty space too cannot be found, and nothing at all remains.

“Since forms would no longer exist, who could discern the nature of emptiness?” Emptiness and form, and form and emptiness, exist only in relation to one another. If forms no longer exist, emptiness naturally cannot be established either. Who, then, could discern the nature of emptiness? “The same applies to emptiness”: if emptiness came from the eye faculty, the nature of form should disappear. Reverse the supposition, and the principle is the same. Thus neither form nor emptiness arises from the eye faculty.

“If sense objects of form produced visual seeing, then, when one observes emptiness, which is not form, seeing itself would disappear.” Conversely, suppose that forms could produce visual seeing, so that because of sense objects of form there arose a capacity to see.

“When one observes emptiness, which is not form, seeing itself would disappear.” Since visual seeing is produced by forms, and the absence of forms is emptiness, emptiness cannot produce visual seeing. Therefore, when one observes emptiness, visual seeing would no longer exist.

“Once it disappeared, all would be absent. Who, then, could distinguish emptiness and form?” If seeing itself no longer exists, who could discriminate what is form and what is emptiness? All things exist only in relation to one another and cannot be obtained. Earlier, Teacher Gu said, “Mind is originally unborn, yet because of objects it appears; objects are originally unborn, yet because of mind they appear.” At this point, it all becomes clear.

For “because of emptiness, form is revealed; because of form, emptiness is revealed.” Only after there is form is there emptiness, and only after there is emptiness is there form. If there were no emptiness, how could form be revealed? If there were no form, how could emptiness be known? For example, if nothing were placed on this table, we would call it empty; if these things were placed on it, we would call them form.

This exists only through comparison of the two. If there were fundamentally no such things, by what could one call something empty, or by what could one call

something form? Mind and objects are the same: because of mind there are objects, and because of objects there is mind.

“Therefore, you should know that seeing, form, and emptiness all have no locus. Form and seeing—the two places—are both illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor from a self-arising nature.”

This seeing is not produced by forms, nor does visual seeing produce forms. Therefore, seeing, form, and emptiness all have no locus; they are all illusory. Since both form and seeing have no locus and are inherently illusory, they are “neither arising from causes and conditions nor from a self-arising nature.” Because they do not arise from causes and conditions, they are unborn; because they do not arise from a self-arising nature, there is no place where arising does not occur.

What does it mean that there is no place where arising does not occur? If one says that something arises from a certain place, then where there is a place of arising, there is also a place of non-arising. For example, these small walnuts are a specialty of Hangzhou, so Hangzhou is their place of arising; Guangdong and Fujian do not have this kind of small walnut, so they are places of non-arising.

But if something has never existed in the first place, what sense is there in speaking of a place of arising or a place of non-arising? Thus, the absence of a place of arising means that it does not arise from causes and conditions; the absence of a place of non-arising means that it does not arise from a self-arising nature. The faculty of seeing and sense objects of form are both illusory and unreal, so they have no locus. Therefore, they are neither of the nature of causes and conditions nor of a self-arising nature.

Next is the discussion of the ear in relation to sound—the ear faculty in relation to sense objects of sound:

(II) The Delusive Nature of the Faculties of Hearing and Sound

“Ānanda, listen again: in this Jeta Grove, when the meal is prepared, the drum is struck; when the assembly gathers, the bell is sounded. The sounds of bell and drum continue one after another. What do you think? Do these sounds come to the ear, or does the ear go to where the sounds are?”

We now begin the discussion of the ear. The World-Honored One asked Ānanda: Here in the Jeta Grove, when the food has been prepared and it is time for the meal, the drum is first struck and then the bell is sounded in order to gather the assembly. This is the custom in all monastic communities. Nowadays, a wooden clapper or

board is probably struck instead. The fish-shaped object that we see hanging in monasteries is a wooden clapper. When the board is struck, everyone hears the sound and knows that it is time to eat.

First the drum is struck, then the bell is sounded. The two sounds occur one before the other in continuous succession, and you hear them clearly. So, do the sounds come to your ears, or do your ears go to where the sounds are? Since we can hear sounds, everyone assumes that the ears, being on one's head, have a location.

The sound also comes from over there and likewise has a location. Both the ear faculty and sound objects have locations. Here it will immediately be shown that, just as the eye faculty and visual objects were refuted earlier, the ear faculty and sound objects neither have a location nor lack one. Why? If they have a location, does the ear go to where the sound is, or does the sound come into your ear? This will now be refuted:

"Ānanda, if this sound comes to the ear, it is like my going to seek alms in Śrāvastī: when I am in the Jeta Grove, I am not in Śrāvastī. If this sound must come to Ānanda's ear, then Maudgalyāyana and Kāśyapa should not hear it as well—much less should the twelve hundred and fifty śramaṇas, upon hearing the bell, all come to the place of the meal."

Here, the notion that sound comes into the ear is first refuted. Suppose sound comes to the ear. For example, when I leave the Jeta Grove to seek alms in Śrāvastī, I am no longer in the Jeta Grove.

If this sound must come to Ānanda's ear, then Maudgalyāyana, Kāśyapa, and the other twelve hundred and fifty śramaṇas should not be able to hear the bell.

That is, if you are here, you are not elsewhere. It is like my going to Śrāvastī to seek alms: I am then no longer in the Jeta Grove. If the sound of the bell entered your, Ānanda's, ear, no one else should be able to hear it. Why, then, can Maudgalyāyana, Kāśyapa, and the other twelve hundred and fifty members of the assembly all hear it? This refutes the notion that sound comes into your ear.

If sound truly came, it would be like my seeking alms: once I had gone to Śrāvastī, how could I still be in the Jeta Grove? Next, it explains what would happen if the ear went to where the sound is.

"If your ear goes to where that sound is, it is like my returning to dwell in the Jeta Grove: then I am not in the city of Śrāvastī. When you hear the drum, your ear has already gone to the place where the drum is struck. When the sound of the bell arises at the same time, you should not hear both. Much less could you hear the

various sounds of elephants, horses, cattle, sheep, and so forth. If there is no coming and going, then there is no hearing either."

Suppose your ear has already gone to where the sound is. It would be like my having returned to the Jeta Grove: I would no longer be in the city of Śrāvastī.

When you first hear the drum, your ear has already gone to where the drum is. When the bell is sounded a little later, you should no longer be able to hear it. Yet why can you hear the bell after hearing the drum? It can only mean that your ear has not gone to where the drum is. Nor do you hear only the sound of the bell: why can you simultaneously hear all sorts of sounds—those of elephants, horses, cattle, and sheep? Thus, the claim that the ear goes to where the sound is also makes no sense.

"If there is no coming and going, then there is no hearing either." If sound and ear do not come and go to each other, one should not be able to hear sound. It is like using fire to light a lamp wick: the fire must reach the wick in order to ignite it. If it does not reach it, how could it light it? Thus, to say that the ear and sound come and go to each other is untenable.

"Therefore, you should know that hearing and sound alike have no location. Thus, the two locations of hearing and sound are illusory, neither arising from causes and conditions nor possessing a self-existing nature."

Earlier it was said that the ear does not go and sound does not come; neither the ear's going nor sound's coming can be established. Since the ear does not go and sound does not come, this indicates immobility. Conversely, although there is no movement, the sounds of drum and bell are still heard; thus, it is not that there is no coming and going.

As we said earlier, although the essential nature of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is empty, its appearances and functioning are not absent; it still has appearances. To say that it is absent refers to its essence: from the standpoint of our wondrous true nature, it is absent. To say that it is present refers to its appearances and functioning: since it has appearances and functioning, coming and going are not absent.

What is called true reality is our true suchness-nature. It is without characteristics, yet without any characteristic that it does not encompass. Although its fundamental substance is without characteristics, it is also not devoid of characteristics; it can manifest every appearance and wondrous function. Although wondrous functioning is not absent, we must see the essence through appearances. We must not cling to these illusory forms, but should see the essential nature behind them.

In our practice, this is precisely where we must apply effort: recognize that all sounds and forms are illusory appearances, functions arising from intrinsic nature, and do not cling to them. See only the essential nature and do not take illusory appearances as real. If we work at this constantly, practice will be readily accomplished. If you forget this essential nature and merely chase after appearances, discriminating that one sound is pleasant and another unpleasant, then you are following sound objects and clinging to appearances.

Since these things have no substantial reality and are illusory appearances, they cannot be clung to. From the standpoint of essence, they are absent; from the standpoint of appearances and functioning, they are not absent, because they are illusorily manifested from the essential nature. Though provisionally said to exist, they do not truly exist. Therefore, sound and hearing both have no location.

Since there is no location, there is naturally no non-location either. That is, a location neither arises nor does not arise. It was just said that if there were a place of arising, there would be a place of non-arising. Now that there is no place of arising, there is naturally no place of non-arising either. Thus, these two locations of ear and sound are both illusory.

Because they are illusory, they are neither causal nor self-existing in nature. If there were coming and going, that would be causal in nature; if there were no coming and going and they possessed an independent substance, that would be self-existing in nature. In fact, there is no coming and going, so they are not causal in nature; nor is there no coming and going, so they are not self-existing in nature.

Is this neither-causal-nor-self-existing nature not the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha? Throughout, the text refutes the illusory and reveals the true. Where there is no place of coming, our true place is revealed. The true place is that there is nowhere it is not: this is the wondrous true suchness-nature.

Next, we discuss the nose faculty and odor objects:

(III) The Illusory Nature of the Sense of Smell and Fragrant Objects

“Ānanda, you now smell the sandalwood in this brazier. If even one zhu of this incense is burned, its fragrance can be smelled simultaneously throughout Śrāvastī for forty li around. What do you think? Does this fragrance arise from the sandalwood, from your nose, or from empty space?”

Sandalwood here refers to red sandalwood, whose fragrance is very rich. As long as one zhu of it is burned—twenty-four zhu make one liang—the fragrance can be smelled simultaneously throughout Śrāvastī for forty li around.

Ānanda, what do you think? Does this fragrance arise from the red sandalwood, from your nose, or from empty space? With this sandalwood fragrance, the nose faculty is within and the object of fragrance is without; thus, as soon as the nose encounters the object of fragrance, it smells it. Since one is within and the other without, each has its own location.

The Buddha now asks Ānanda: From where does this fragrance that your nose smells arise? In fact, it has no place of arising. It arises neither from the nose, nor from the sandalwood, nor from empty space.

This kind of sandalwood is not found in China. Old records say that it was presented as tribute from foreign lands, four pieces at a time, each about the size of an egg. The emperor did not believe that there could be such an excellent fragrance, so he burned a piece the size of a soybean to test it. Ah! The entire palace could smell it; its fragrance was extraordinary. This incense probably comes from India. China has ordinary sandalwood as well, but it is also quite rare.

“If this fragrance arises from your nose, then, being produced by the nose, it should emerge from the nose. But the nose is not sandalwood; how could there be a sandalwood fragrance within it? If you say that you smell the fragrance, it should enter through the nose. If fragrance emerges from the nose, it is not meaningful to speak of smelling it.”

If this fragrance arose from your nostrils—“being produced by the nose”—you could say that the nose produces the fragrance. But the nose is not sandalwood, so how could it contain a sandalwood fragrance? Your nose is fundamentally neither fragrant nor foul-smelling; how could it produce such a fragrance?

“If you say that you smell the fragrance, it should enter through the nose.” If you say that you smell this fragrance, the fragrance should enter your nose. “If fragrance emerges from the nose, it is not meaningful to speak of smelling it.” If a fragrance comes out from within the nose, it is incorrect to say that one smells the fragrance; this cannot be called smelling it. This explanation, too, cannot stand.

“If it arises from empty space, the nature of space is constant and enduring; the fragrance should always be present. Why would one need to burn this dried wood in a brazier?”

If the fragrance arose from empty space, then the nature of space, being constant and unchanging, would mean that the fragrance should always be present. One

would not smell it at one time and fail to smell it at another. If the fragrance were always present, why would we need to burn this fragrant wood in a brazier? Thus, this fragrance does not arise from empty space.

“If it arises from the wood, then this fragrant substance becomes smoke when burned. If the nose is to smell it, it must be permeated by the smoke. Yet before the smoke has risen far into the air, how can it already be smelled throughout forty li?”

If this fragrance arose from the wood, then the sandalwood would become smoke when burned by fire. If the nose were to smell this fragrance, the smoke would have to reach and permeate the nose before it could be smelled.

But now the smoke has only just risen into the air and has not gone far; smoke is present only in a very small area. Why, then, can this fragrance be smelled throughout forty li? That is, you should be able to smell it only where your nose is reached by the smoke; where the smoke does not reach, you should not be able to smell it.

Yet once this sandalwood is burned, its fragrance can be smelled throughout forty li. This shows that the fragrance does not arise from the wood. Nevertheless, the fragrance is not separate from the wood: without the wood, there would be no such fragrance.

This is what we said just now: although it is not existent, neither is it nonexistent; its outward appearance and provisional function are still present. We are told not to cling, because these illusory appearances are fundamentally unobtainable; they are all shadows of the true nature of suchness. If you cling to external or illusory appearances, you are mistaken. You will create karma, undergo karmic retribution, and continue to revolve in birth and death.

After recognizing the Buddha-nature of suchness, we must completely destroy all inverted deluded thoughts and understand that all appearances are illusory and have no independent substance. Only then can we be liberated from birth and death and transcend saṃsāra.

“Therefore, you should know that fragrance, the nose, and smelling have no fixed location. Smelling and fragrance—the two locations—are illusory and unreal; they are fundamentally neither causes and conditions nor self-arising nature.”

Here, the text refutes location. If the location of the faculty of smelling were real and truly existent, one should be able to smell the fragrance only where the smoke has reached. Yet as soon as the incense is lit, the fragrance can be smelled even where the smoke has not reached. This shows that the faculty of smelling has no fixed location.

Fragrance, the nose, and the faculty of smelling have no fixed location. The two locations of smelling and fragrance are both illusory and unreal: “fundamentally neither causes and conditions nor self-arising nature.” What is neither causes and conditions is also called the locus of non-arising; what is not self-arising is also called the locus in which nothing fails to arise. Since there is neither a locus of arising nor a locus of non-arising, all are illusory and unreal.

Next, we will discuss the tongue and flavors:

(IV) Both Taste and Flavor Are Illusory

“Ānanda, when you carry your bowl among the assembly at the two customary meal times, you may encounter ghee, curds, or clarified butter—the finest flavors. What do you think? Do these flavors arise in empty space, arise from the tongue, or arise from food?”

Sentient beings always discriminate and calculate, falsely conceiving the tongue faculty and flavor-object as each having its own location, one within and one without. The Buddha’s eye neither attaches to appearances nor abides in them; from its perspective, both are nonexistent, and both are false. From the Buddha’s eye, all are the Tathāgata-garbha, the wondrous true suchness-nature.

How can this be seen? Suppose that, while going out with your bowl to beg for food, you encounter an excellent flavor—the finest, a superior flavor—such as ghee, curds, or clarified butter. All these are refined from milk and cream: first ghee is produced, then curds, and then, through further refinement, clarified butter. All are made by refining milk and cream; the later stages are progressively more refined. Clarified butter is the finest flavor, the very best.

When you taste such flavors, do they come from empty space, arise within the tongue, or arise in the actual substance of the food? Of these three places—space, tongue, or food—which gives rise to flavor?

“Ānanda, if this flavor arose from your tongue, then since there is only one tongue in your mouth, when that tongue had become the flavor of ghee, upon encountering black rock honey it should not shift. If it did not change, it could not be said to know flavors. But if it did change, the tongue is not made of many bodies; how could one tongue know many flavors?”

Suppose one says that flavor arises from the tongue.

The tongue is in the mouth, and you have only one tongue. If, when eating ghee, that tongue had already become the flavor of ghee, then when you next tasted honey, you should not know it, for it would not shift. Since the tongue had already

become the flavor of ghee, how could it know the flavor of honey? To know the flavor of honey, your tongue would have to move; it would have to change.

In fact, however, the tongue does not change.

“If it does not change, it cannot be called knowing flavors.” If the tongue knew only one flavor, then after eating ghee it would become the flavor of ghee and know nothing else. How, then, could it distinguish all the various flavors? How could one speak of tasting a hundred flavors or knowing that all things have different flavors? Does this mean that the tongue changes? “The tongue is not made of many bodies; how can

one tongue know many flavors?” Since there is only one tongue, after changing, how many tongues would there be in the mouth? You have only one tongue, not two or three. Why, then, can one tongue taste so many different flavors? This shows that change is impossible, and non-change is also impossible.

Since neither alternative is possible, flavor does not arise from the tongue. Examining the matter from every angle, we see that flavor does not arise from the tongue.

“If it arises from food, food is insentient. How could it know itself? And if food itself knows, then it is the same as another’s eating; what has that to do with you, such that it may be called knowing flavor?” Suppose that flavor arises from food. Food has no mind; it is insentient. How could something insentient possess awareness? “How could it know itself?” How could it itself know? “And if food itself knows”—suppose that this food could know by itself.

“Then it is the same as another’s eating.” That would be equivalent to someone else eating it, not you, Ānanda. “What has that to do with you, such that it may be called knowing flavor?” What does it have to do with you? You should not know it.

Everyone says that whatever one eats has its particular flavor. Sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent foods all have different flavors, and flavor is in the food. But is it really in the food? Food has no awareness; who distinguishes the flavors? Who is it that distinguishes them? If no one distinguishes them, then their presence is no different from their absence.

Everyone possesses the true suchness of Buddha-nature, but because of delusion and lack of awakening, it is as though they did not possess it, and they revolve through the six realms. If you are not deluded, you do not fall into the cycle of the six realms; you become a Buddha. By the same principle, food may have flavor, but who knows that flavor? If it is not known, is that not equivalent to its not being there? Food is insentient; how could it know? Even if food could taste flavor, it would

have nothing to do with you, Ānanda; you should not know that flavor. Therefore, the nature that knows flavor does not arise from food.

“If it arises from empty space, then when you eat empty space, what flavor would it have?”

Suppose that flavor arises from empty space. Then try eating empty space—what flavor does empty space have?

“If empty space necessarily had a salty flavor, then, having made your tongue salty, it would also make your face salty. Then the people of this world would be like fish in the sea.”

Suppose flavor truly existed in empty space. If empty space had a salty flavor, your tongue would taste salt. Since empty space had made your tongue salty, it should also make your face salty. Because your entire body is within empty space, if your tongue received salt, your face should also receive salt. Would not the people of this world then all be like fish in the ocean? All sentient beings are in empty space and would be pickled by its salty flavor, just as fish are soaked in salty seawater.

“Since they would constantly receive salt, they would not know blandness at all. If they did not recognize blandness, they would not perceive salt either. They would necessarily know nothing; how could this be called flavor?”

Since one would constantly be amid a salty flavor, how could one know blandness? One should not know what is bland. “If they did not recognize blandness, they would not perceive salt either. They would necessarily know nothing; how could this be called flavor?” Saltiness and blandness are spoken of in relation to one another. If there were only saltiness and no blandness, saltiness itself could not be established.

Consider fish in the ocean. The seawater is salty, but they do not know it. How could they know it is salty? They remain constantly in seawater, which is always salty; without blandness to provide contrast, they have never encountered a bland flavor and therefore do not know that seawater is salty. Sourness, sweetness, bitterness, and pungency are all distinguished comparatively.

If there were only one flavor and no other flavors, that one flavor would not exist either. They can be established only in relation to one another. If blandness is not recognized, saltiness cannot be established. If saltiness also cannot be established, then flavor should not be known. If there is no sense of taste, what is the point of speaking of flavor?

“Therefore, you should know that flavor, tongue, and tasting all have no location. Tasting and flavor are both false and illusory; they are neither causal and conditional nor self-arising in nature.”

This shows that the three dharmas of tongue faculty, food, and empty space do not give rise to flavor. Flavor has no place of arising. None of the three gives rise to it; apart from these three, where else could it arise? There is nowhere. Therefore, flavor has no permanent abode. Since it has no permanent place, tasting and flavor are false and unobtainable. Because it has no place of arising, it is neither causal and conditional in nature; and because it has no place of non-arising, it is not self-arising in nature. Because it is neither causal and conditional nor self-arising in nature, it is false and unreal; its essential nature is precisely the Tathāgata-garbha, the wondrous true suchness-nature.

Next, we will discuss bodily touch—the body faculty and tactile sensation:

(V) Both Body and Contact Are Illusory

“Ānanda, each morning you touch your head with your hand. What do you think? In this awareness produced by touching, what is the faculty that touches? Is it in the hand, or is it in the head?”

Monastics should touch their heads three times each day. Why do this? It is to arouse vigilance. Monastics have shaved their heads. They touch their own heads and think: “Ah, I have left home. Why did I leave home? To transcend birth and death—not merely to make a living. To transcend birth and death, I must practice with earnest urgency!” Touching one’s head three times a day is an admonition to oneself: remain vigilant and do not waste time.

Practitioners in former times were often like this: “Those who carry their bowls and inquire into the mysteries do not waste time.” In the past, practitioners would call out their own names: “So-and-so! Hey! Wake up!” You must be clear and awake; you must awaken. Do not remain muddleheaded, and do not cling to appearances. This is why they touched their heads three times a day. Seeing this in the Buddhist scriptures, one realizes: “Ah, monastics practiced with such diligence!”

Then should we lay practitioners not do so all the more? The Buddha’s fourfold assembly consists of bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas, and upāsikās. Upāsakas and upāsikās, too, should practice diligently. They likewise must transcend birth and death and remain vigilant at every moment.

Therefore, I say that it is absolutely not enough merely to sit for a while in the morning and again in the evening, or to chant once in the morning and once in the evening. One should practice at every moment and remain vigilant at every moment. One must see one’s true nature through appearances. All these appearances are the wondrous functioning of true nature; they are illusory and unsubstantial, and one must not cling to them.

The twelve bases of perception we are now discussing are illusory and unsubstantial. They have no independent essence; all arise from the true nature of suchness. Yet this does not mean that they lack illusory appearances, nor does it mean that they lack illusory functioning. Illusory appearances and illusory functioning do exist, but we must not cling to them. Nor should we try to eliminate illusory appearances. If they were eliminated, the true mind would be gone.

Illusory appearances are manifested by the true mind. The illusory is itself true. Although the appearances of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss are provisionally manifested and illusory, they are manifested through the vow-power of Amitābha Buddha. Amitābha Buddha's vow-power is the wondrous true nature of suchness, the true nature of reality; therefore, these appearances too are the true nature of suchness. When one is true, all are true—but one must not cling to them.

They manifest and function, but cannot be regarded as truly existent. They are wondrous presence, yet wondrous presence is not existence; thus, one must not cling to anything. We should constantly practice in this way: all phenomenal appearances are wondrous presence that is not existence. If one says that the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss exists, the Sahā world also exists; if one says that the Sahā world does not exist, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss does not exist either.

The Sahā world is brought about by sentient beings' karmic obstacles and is the fruit of suffering. The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is brought about by Amitābha Buddha's vow-power and is a Pure Land. One is defiled and the other pure. As for the appearances that manifest, if called deluded, they are all deluded; if called true, they are all true. If you recognize them, they are wondrous functioning; if you cling to them, they are false and illusory. The Western Land has distinctions of nine grades and four lands for this very reason, so one must not cling to it.

The Buddha asked Ānanda: each morning, you touch your head with your hand, and when you do so, there is a tactile sensation. "In this awareness produced by touching, what is the faculty that touches?" The faculty that touches is tactile sensation. Where does this tactile sensation arise? "Is it in the hand, or is it in the head?" Is this faculty of touching in the hand, or in the head? Where there is a faculty that touches, there is an object touched.

Without a subject and an object, tactile sensation cannot be established. The Buddha now asks Ānanda about touching his own head with his own hand, not about another person touching it. If another person's hand were used, it would be difficult to distinguish the illusory nature of this. If someone else touched my head, my head would be the object touched by that person, while that person's hand, which touches it, would be the faculty that touches.

In that case, it would be difficult to refute its illusory nature. One's own hand and one's own head are a single entity: the hand is you, and the head is also you. Thus, it is not easy to arbitrarily posit subject and object, and the matter can be explained more readily. When you touch your head with your hand and tactile sensation arises, examine it carefully: where is the faculty that touches, and where is the object touched? Is the faculty that touches in the hand or in the head?

"If it is in the hand, then the head has no awareness; how can there be touching? If it is in the head, then the hand is useless; how can it be called touching? If each has it, then you, Ānanda, should have two bodies. If a single touch arises from the head and hand, then hand and head should be one entity. If they are one entity, touching cannot occur. If they are two entities, on which is the touch located? If it is on the subject, it is not on the object; if it is on the object, it is not on the subject. Empty space cannot make contact with you."

Suppose the faculty that touches were rooted in your hand. Then the head should have no sensation. If the head has no awareness, how could touching occur? For touching to occur, there must necessarily be a subject and an object. "If it is in the head, then the hand is useless." If the root of the faculty that touches were in the head, the head would know the touch, while the hand, lacking that root, would not be needed.

"How can it be called touching?" If the hand serves no function, this cannot be called touching. Suppose one says that "each has it"—that both hand and head possess the root of the faculty that touches. Then Ānanda should have two bodies. "If a single touch arises from the head and hand, then hand and head should be one entity."

If head and hand together share the same tactile sensation, then hand and head are one entity. Since they are one and the same thing, how could there be a subject and an object? For example, if I clap with one hand, it cannot make a sound. How could one hand have a subject and an object? "If they are one entity, touching cannot occur." If they are one entity, tactile sensation cannot arise.

"If they are two entities, on which is the touch located?" If they are two entities, then on which side is tactile sensation found? "If it is on the subject, it is not on the object; if it is on the object, it is not on the subject." If both head and hand are faculties that touch, there is no object touched. If head and hand are both objects touched, then there is no tactile sensation that touches. One entity cannot produce touching at all, and two entities cannot produce touching either.

"Empty space cannot make contact with you." Touching means coming into contact with something. Empty space contains nothing; for empty space to make contact with you is simply impossible. "Therefore, you should know that the awareness of touch and the body have no location. That is, body and touch are both illusory; they

are neither dependent arising nor natural in origin." Therefore, you should understand that neither tactile awareness nor the body has a location.

That is to say, the body and tactile awareness—these two bases are both illusory. Since these two bases are illusory, they are "neither dependent arising nor natural in origin." Having no point of arising, they are not of the nature of dependent arising; having no abiding place, they are not of a natural nature. Because they are neither dependent arising nor natural, they are the wondrous true nature of suchness in the Tathāgata-garbha.

Next, we discuss the mind faculty and dharma objects:

(VI) Mind and Dharmas Are Both Illusory

"Ānanda, the good, evil, and indeterminate natures that your mind habitually takes as objects give rise to dharmas. Are these dharmas produced by the mind itself, or do they exist in a separate location apart from the mind?"

This is stated quite clearly: the mind gives rise to objects, and objects give rise to the mind; the mind faculty takes dharmas as its objects. As we said earlier, dharma objects are the residual images left by the first five objects. These residual images are stored in the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), which is the storehouse consciousness. The mind faculty then takes up these images.

These images have no substance. They are unlike the external five objects encountered by the external five faculties, which possess some degree of substance. Once the mind faculty takes up these images, it clings tightly to them. Such clinging gives rise to illusory objects, which are called dharma objects. In summary, there are three kinds of dharma objects: good, evil, and indeterminate.

That which benefits oneself and others is good; that which benefits neither oneself nor others is evil; that which neither accords with nor opposes oneself or others, being neither favorable nor adverse, is called indeterminate. Hence the text says: "The good, evil, and indeterminate natures that the mind apprehends generate dharmas."

Within these three categories, moreover, there are various distinctions. What is adverse to others but favorable to oneself benefits oneself while harming others; this is evil within good. What is adverse to oneself but favorable to others harms oneself while benefiting others; this is good within evil.

In the view of sentient beings, the mind faculty and dharma objects both have locations. But in the Buddha's view, neither can be apprehended; both are illusory and are wondrous functions arising from the Tathāgata-garbha.

“Are these dharmas produced by the mind itself, or do they exist in a separate location apart from the mind?” Does this dharma by which the mind faculty apprehends the three natures arise from your mind, or does it have a separate location outside your mind? If it has a place of arising, it is conditioned; if it has a place where it exists, it is spontaneous. If it has neither a place of arising nor a place where it exists, it is neither conditioned nor spontaneous. The following passage refutes both possibilities completely:

“Ānanda, if it is identical with the mind, then the dharma is not an object. If it is not an object apprehended by the mind, how can it constitute a location?”

The Buddha asks Ānanda: If this dharma is identical with the mind, then the mind is that which discerns; in that case, it is not an object—“the dharma is not an object.”

“Not an object apprehended by the mind”: since it is the mind, the mind does not apprehend itself; the mind apprehends only objects. Of the preceding five objects, the ears can know the sound of bells and drums, and the tongue can know the taste of ghee, and so forth. As for the residual images left by the five objects, only the mind can know them; only the mind faculty can know them, while the preceding five faculties cannot.

When the external five faculties encounter objects, there is mind; without objects, there is no mind. What of the inner mind faculty? Because of objects, the mind arises: “The mind is originally unborn; because of objects, it appears.” Without mind, there are no objects: “Objects are originally unborn; because of mind, they appear.” Without mind, how could there be objects? Mind is deliberation, and deliberation is the mind faculty. The realm of dharma objects all appears from deliberation.

When the preceding five faculties encounter the five objects, mind arises because there are the five objects; if there are no objects, there is no mind. For example, when the eyes encounter visible forms, if there are no visible forms, the eyes see nothing and cannot discern. What of the inner mind faculty? It does not encounter external objects; objects arise because of mind.

Because your mind clings to the residual images left by the first five faculties' encounter with the external five objects, there are objects, sounds, and so forth. Objects arise because of mind; without mind, there are no objects. When the first five faculties encounter the external five objects, “the mind is originally unborn; because of objects, it appears.” The dharma objects encountered by the inner mind faculty are instead such that “objects are originally unborn; because of mind, they appear.”

The preceding five faculties merely discern; they do not deliberate. The mind faculty, however, belongs to deliberation. Dharma objects do not possess substance as the

preceding five objects do. Visible form, bodily sensation, scent, taste, and touch all possess substance, but dharma objects do not. Dharma objects are unlike material dharmas; they are more like mental dharmas.

Thus the Buddha distinguishes the matter in this way: if the dharma by which the mind faculty apprehends the three natures were mind, then mind would be that which apprehends. Mind can apprehend objects but cannot apprehend itself; hence it is "not an object apprehended by the mind." Then it would have no location—where could it be? Thus this dharma is not produced by mind; that is, it is not conditioned in nature.

"If, apart from the mind, it has a separate location, then does the dharma itself possess awareness or not?"

If it is said that this dharma exists somewhere else, apart from the conscious mind, then does its own substance possess awareness, or does it lack awareness? These two questions are asked because they will subsequently both be refuted. It is wrong to say that it possesses awareness, and it is also wrong to say that it lacks awareness. Thus, apart from mind, this dharma does not exist in another place; that is, it is not spontaneous in nature.

"If it possesses awareness, it is called mind. Though distinct from you, it is not an object. If it has the same measure as another mind, then it is your mind. How could your mind become two minds within you?"

Earlier there were two questions: if this dharma exists in another place apart from the conscious mind, does its own substance possess awareness or not? "If it possesses awareness, it is called mind." If it possesses awareness, it is not an object but mind. If it has awareness, how could it be an object? Objects are insentient things, and insentient things lack awareness.

Now, however, it has awareness; thus it is sentient, it is mind, and it is not an object. "Though distinct from you, it is not an object." To be distinct from you means to exist somewhere else apart from you. If so, it is still not an object, for since it possesses awareness, awareness is mind. Although it is not the mind of your own sixth faculty, it is nevertheless not an object.

"If it has the same measure as another mind, then it is your mind." Your mind and that hypothetical mind outside you are alike: both assess and discriminate. Since it could not be established as within, it was hypothetically placed without; yet the discussion is still of the same dharma by which the mind faculty apprehends the three natures. "Then it is your mind." It is the same as your mind, without distinction; it is your mind.

“How could your mind become two minds within you?” If it cannot be established within and is hypothetically placed without, would this not make two minds? How could there be two minds? Apart from you, there is no other mind. From another perspective, your mind encounters dharma objects. The mind of the sixth faculty that knows is mind; the dharma known by the sixth faculty—the dharma object it encounters—also arises because “objects are originally unborn; because of mind, they appear,” and is therefore mind as well. If both the knower and the known are mind, would you not have two minds? Thus two minds cannot be established.

The foregoing explains that the dharma by which the mind faculty apprehends the three natures possesses awareness, and that possessing awareness cannot be established. Next it explains that this dharma lacks awareness, which likewise cannot be established:

“If it lacks awareness, then since this object is neither form, sound, scent, taste, contact, warmth or cold, nor the appearance of empty space, where could it be?”

If it is said that this dharma by which the mind faculty apprehends the three natures lacks awareness, then the dharma object within it must exist elsewhere apart from your mind, since your mind possesses awareness.

“Since this object is neither form, sound, scent, taste, contact, warmth or cold, nor the appearance of empty space, where could it be?” Form, sound, scent, taste, and touch—contact, separation, warmth, and cold—are objects apprehended by the first five faculties and all possess substance. Empty space also has a location. Yet this dharma object has neither substance nor location.

Then where is the dharma object? It is merely an image; it is not a material object such as form, sound, scent, taste, or touch, nor is it empty space. Since it is neither one of the five material objects nor the immaterial object of empty space, where else could it be?

“Now it has no indication in either form or emptiness. One should not suppose that, beyond the human world, there is some space outside of space. Since it is not an object apprehended by the mind, on what basis could a location be established?”

Now it cannot be indicated in form, sound, scent, taste, touch, or even empty space. So where is it? It is neither form, sound, scent, taste, or touch, nor empty space. Thus, apart from these, “one should not suppose that, beyond the human world, there is some space outside of space.” Could there be another place apart from this human world and apart from boundless empty space? There could not. This shows that neither consciousness nor dharma objects has any location.

“Since it is not an object apprehended by the mind, on what basis could a location be established?” Even if there were a place beyond the human world and empty space, our minds could not apprehend it, conceive of it, or perceive that it exists. If so, how could this hypothetical place be established?

“Therefore, you should know that dharmas and mind alike have no location. Thus the mind faculty and dharmas are both illusory, and are fundamentally neither conditioned nor spontaneous in nature.”

Therefore, one should understand that the good, evil, and indeterminate natures, together with the mind that apprehends these three natures, have no place where they exist. “Thus the mind faculty and dharmas are both illusory”: the mind faculty, the sixth consciousness, and dharmas, the three natures, are both illusory and unreal. Since both are illusory and unreal, they are neither conditioned nor spontaneous.

Because they have no place of arising, they are not conditioned in nature; because they have no place of abiding, they are not spontaneous in nature. Since they are neither conditioned nor spontaneous, they are the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra thus refutes delusion and reveals truth at every point, teaching us not to cling. Whether dharma objects or consciousness, none can be found.

In this way, the twelve bases are completely refuted.

Everyone clings to the idea that the faculties are in one's body: the eye faculty, ear faculty, nose faculty, tongue faculty, body faculty, and mind faculty. How can it be said that they do not exist? In truth, these faculties are illusory appearances that cannot be apprehended; they are all objects of our deluded attachment. To cling tightly to the existence of a self is the manas consciousness: “I, I”—that is the body faculty belonging to an “I,” the appearance of self.

The appearance of self is the worst. When we undertake a seven-day retreat in our practice, we do so to overthrow this old seventh consciousness. Once it is overthrown, the eighth consciousness is free and transforms into great perfect mirror wisdom. Whether we use the Dharma gate of Buddha-recitation, the Dharma gate of Chan inquiry, or the practices of Esoteric Buddhism, we overthrow this old seventh consciousness. Once it is overthrown, we directly realize the state of non-self. Sentient beings deludedly cling to a self, and their desires are boundless.

Two young men said, “What you have said is wrong. If there were no desires, the world would not progress. The world progresses precisely because people have desires. Without desires, there would be no progress.”

Alas! On the surface, what they say seems correct: “I have desires. I want to satisfy them. I want to live well, eat well, and dress well, so I want money. Where does money come from?” They think, “I will invent something that others cannot make but I can. Once I have made it, I will hold the patent rights.”

After obtaining the patent rights, I can run the business exclusively, make more money, and satisfy my desires. If not for this desire, I would not undertake research. Without research, things would not be invented. Without invention and innovation, the world would not progress, and there would be no material civilization.”

If science did not advance, material civilization would not become more advanced from generation to generation. They say that desire is good: without desire, there is no progress; with desire, there is progress. From this perspective, it seems correct. But afterward it turns bad. How does it turn bad? Your desires are limitless; they can never be satisfied.

The higher material civilization rises, the higher desires rise, and the more fiercely people pursue material things. Because this pursuit becomes so intense, if they cannot attain their aims and satisfy their ever-increasing desires, they will commit evil deeds. They rob, steal, and commit killing, theft, sexual misconduct, and false speech. Crime rates rise, and public security becomes difficult to maintain.

Desire has this fatal flaw. We should also see that capitalism uses material incentives: whatever you invent, you are given a corresponding reward and a patent. Socialism advocates political consciousness and encourages people to think of humanity and of the public.

The good thing about socialism and communism is that they seek to transform human thought: do not pursue personal gain; serve the people and think of the public. From this starting point, your desire is still good, is it not? Our Buddhism accords quite well with this starting point.

We know that all things are illusory and unreal, fundamentally nonexistent. How, then, could we still think only of ourselves? We should arouse bodhicitta, think of the public, and liberate sentient beings. We should be kind not only to human beings but to every living creature; all that we do should be for the sake of freeing everyone from the sea of suffering.

Starting from this point, we may study science and medicine, and the world will be peaceful and stable. But if we begin from personal desire and use material incentives to create the wealth of civilization, it will become a world of robbers.

Look at how the countries of the world struggle without cease. For example, Africa has abundant oil resources, and others say, “You have so many resources. If you will

not give them to me, I will seize them from you; I will fight you." Is that not robbery? Communism is better: everyone shares one aim—to develop production in order to improve human life. It is not a matter of plunder; that is good. Thus, different perspectives yield different conclusions. The desire we must overcome is selfish desire. This is the principle taught in Buddhism.

"Investigating things and extending knowledge"—this was said by Wang Yangming. Ge means to remove: remove the feelings and desires aroused by things, remove the mind of desire. Only then can one "extend knowledge," enabling one's innate moral knowledge and ability to emerge. Buddhism speaks of realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature.

If desires are without limit, the whole mind is filled with foul impurities and afflictions. They obscure the radiance of your true mind, and you can no longer see it. If material desires are removed, the true mind manifests before you.

When the true mind manifests, that is awakening. What a great treasure it is! Formerly, we did not know this. We knew only how to pursue the false appearances of material things; obscured by things, we underwent the round of birth and death in the six realms and suffered in vain. Now that we have broken open the cage and emerged from the cycle of birth and death in the six realms, how joyful and fortunate we are!

It is not enough to free oneself. So many sentient beings still remain in the cycle of birth and death; how can they all be brought out? Therefore, one arouses the great resolve to save sentient beings. Saving sentient beings naturally also requires invention and innovation, for one must benefit and serve them. Is it not good to serve the masses in this way and to consider the welfare of working people and the public? Therefore, Buddhist thought is very sound.

When the Buddha speaks of breaking through the five aggregates, the six entrances, and the twelve sense bases, he means breaking through the deluded mind. Once the deluded mind is broken through, the true mind manifests, and we can realize the Way. Breaking through delusion is precisely revealing the true. Conversely, these five aggregates, six entrances, and twelve sense bases are all our wondrous true suchness-nature of the tathāgata-garbha.

The tathāgata-garbha is true, and suchness and Buddha-nature are true; therefore, the five aggregates, six entrances, and twelve sense bases are also true, for they are our wondrous functioning. Once there is the mind king, these companions and attendants will not run wild; they can function wondrously. Is that not good? Whether you recognize this or not is the crucial point.

Recognizing the true mind is accomplished in a single turn. There is no need to get rid of deluded thoughts either; deluded thoughts themselves are suchness, like waves arising from water. Waves themselves are water. Once the waves are removed, water too would be gone. Therefore, the five aggregates, six entrances, and twelve sense bases need not be removed. We need only know that they are deluded mind and refrain from clinging to them.

Once we relinquish our deluded attachments, when one is true, all is true. But if you cling to them, when one is false, all is false: everything becomes false. If you give rise to deluded thoughts and cling to them, you enter the cycle of birth and death in the six realms again and must suffer again. How unjust! Therefore, we must understand this principle.

This is the merit of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. It says that the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve sense bases, and eighteen realms—every dharma—is entirely true, all being our wondrous true suchness-nature. There is no need to remove them. When one is true, all is true. Once this is acknowledged, one can genuinely benefit from every dharma.

In our ordinary practice, we must understand the word “awakening.” We must know that the Way belongs to awakening, not to cultivation. What is cultivation? It is more accurate to call it restoration: returning to our Original Face. If it did not originally exist and one produced it from nothing through cultivation, that would be wrong. That would be a “nature arising from causes and conditions,” a dharma produced by causes and conditions.

Therefore, the Way is wondrous awakening. After awakening, one must be able to uphold it, and then safeguard it through practice at every moment. After safeguarding it for a period, let it function freely; release your hold and empty the mind, and you will gain genuine benefit.

Investigating Chan, Buddha-recitation, and Esoteric practice are all expedient approaches established by the patriarchs. They are methods for applying oneself in practice, means enabling sentient beings to enter the gate of prajñā. The various methods differ; there is not only one fixed method.

It is not necessary to investigate Chan until something emerges; it is not necessary to recite a certain number of Buddha-names; nor is it necessary to practice some secret and mysterious thing. All are for the sake of awakening here and now, relinquishing attachment, and gaining genuine benefit. It is not necessary to go somewhere else. Therefore, I say that one who is truly reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is reborn there immediately.

This Sahā world here is the bliss of the West. People can easily misunderstand this statement, as though it meant that there is no Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. That is not what it means; rather, we have expanded the scope of the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss.

The Pure Land is originally our own mind. Our mind encompasses the vast emptiness, and the worlds of the ten directions are all within it. Why then can the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss not be expanded? One is immediately reborn there because one does not undergo any feeling; one has no suffering and no afflictions. At all times one is empty, and at every moment one abides in permanence, bliss, self, and purity. If one is not a Buddha, what is one? Is that not

rebirth in the West? What else could it be? Therefore, do not become deluded and attached, insisting that one must be in the West, must be in the Land of Ultimate Bliss, and must recite a certain number of Buddha-names to be reborn in the West; or thinking that one cannot be reborn there by cultivating other pure practices. This is mistaken.

The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is a Pure Land. When the mind is pure, the Buddha-land is pure. Whatever dharma gate you practice, if you cultivate until your mind is pure and unstained, and you vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, you will certainly be reborn there. Not only can you be reborn in the Western Pure Land; you can also be reborn in the Pure Lands of the other nine directions. So long as you vow for rebirth, the Buddha will not refuse you: “Ah, you do not practice Buddha-recitation; you have not recited my name. You may not come, you may not come.” It is not like that.

What was discussed above concerns the twelve sense bases. Next, we will discuss the eighteen realms.

What are the eighteen realms? They are the six sense faculties and six sense objects discussed earlier, plus the six consciousnesses: three sets of six make eighteen—the eighteen realms. The twelve sense bases use the faculties to break through the objects; the eighteen realms break through “realm,” meaning a boundary. What is this realm? Originally, it means a boundary, a dividing line. When one thing adjoins another, a line marks their division.

When Buddhist scriptures speak of realms, many people say that realm can be understood as a cause: when a cause encounters conditions, a result arises. Others say that realm denotes a type or category, such as an ethnic group or a class.

People's identities, social positions, and occupations can be classified. For example, if someone asks, “What field are you in?” you may answer, “I am in journalism,” or “I am in business,” “industry,” and so forth.

In this passage, realm has the usual meaning of boundary. When the six sense faculties are combined with the six sense objects, six consciousnesses arise; faculties, objects, and consciousnesses together make eighteen realms. A realm is like a field with many ridges within it; each ridge is a boundary.

When our six sense faculties encounter the six sense objects, the latter serve as boundaries and give rise to the six consciousnesses. For example, the consciousness arising when the eye faculty encounters visual forms is called eye consciousness; the consciousness arising when the ear faculty encounters sounds is called ear consciousness.

In fact, the consciousness that arises from the sense faculties and their objects is originally the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). It is originally a single lucid awareness—originally one, not six. It is like a great expanse of land: if there were no field ridges, it would be one continuous stretch of ground, without boundaries.

Now, because it is tightly enclosed by the five preceding faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—consciousness is mutually partitioned and therefore cannot function interchangeably. When the first five faculties discriminate among the five external objects, differentiated appearances and a differentiating mind arise, separating them from one another and creating boundaries.

We cling to the notion that the eye faculty can only see forms and the nose faculty can only smell odors, and that the functions of the six faculties each have their own classifications and limits. As soon as faculties and objects come into contact, the six kinds of conjunction divide them into six consciousnesses. The purpose of speaking here of the eighteen realms is to break through these boundaries. As the Heart Sūtra says, “No eye realm, up to and including no realm of consciousness.” As long as there is a boundary, it causes harm: it completely cuts off our single lucid awareness. Once this boundary is broken and the limits are gone, the faculties can function interchangeably.

In ancient times, the eighteen realms were explained by dividing them into mental dharmas and material dharmas; thus it was said that, in these eighteen realms, “mind and matter are both differentiated.”

When we previously discussed the five aggregates, we said that they “differentiate mind and combine matter.” This is because form among the five aggregates is regarded as a material dharma, while feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness are mental dharmas. The mental dharmas are differentiated into four, while the material dharma is combined into one; hence the phrase “differentiate mind and combine matter.”

When discussing the six entrances, we also said that they “differentiate matter and combine mind.” Among the six faculties, the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are the supports of consciousness. These five faculties are combined with the sixth, the mind faculty; hence the phrase “differentiate matter and combine mind.”

Now, in discussing the eighteen realms, we say that “mind and matter are both differentiated.” How are mind and matter both differentiated? The six consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind, together with the mind faculty, make seven consciousnesses, which are treated as mental dharmas. The remaining five faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—together with the six objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas, make eleven bases, which are treated as material dharmas.

The material dharmas constituted by these eleven bases and the mental dharmas constituted by the seven consciousnesses together form the eighteen realms; this is called “mind and matter are both differentiated.” In fact, this way of speaking is not necessarily accurate.

For example, in speaking of differentiation and combination within the dharmas of the five aggregates, the preceding form is a material dharma—that is, all objective states—while the later consciousness is a mental dharma, the function of discernment. Yet feeling, perception, and formations are both material dharmas and mental dharmas. Without mind, how could one receive? Without matter, what could one receive? Thus feeling, perception, and formations pertain to both mental and material dharmas.

Because they pertain to both aspects, it is said: “Mind is not mind by itself; because of matter, there is mind. Matter is not matter by itself; because of mind, there is matter. Matter is mind; mind is matter.” Taken together in this way, we may say that the five aggregates do not merely differentiate mind; rather, they address both mind and matter.

When discussing the six entrances, since the six faculties each receive the six external objects, this receiving, in terms of its function, is mind. Thus the six faculties are also six kinds of mind. Therefore, it cannot simply be said that the first five faculties are differentiated while the mind faculty is combined. Among the eighteen realms, the six consciousness-minds are very important. Once these six consciousness-minds are broken through, all these boundaries are broken through as well.

Next, we shall begin to break through these eighteen realms one by one.

Section Four: The Eighteen Realms Are Illusory, Neither Arising from Causes and Conditions nor Spontaneously Existing

“Furthermore, Ānanda, how are the eighteen realms originally the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha?”

The twelve sense fields have already been explained; now we shall discuss the eighteen realms.

What are the eighteen realms? Why are the eighteen realms the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha? The six sense faculties and six sense objects among the eighteen realms appear to have definite locations, while the six consciousnesses that arise are deluded mind. How, then, can they be the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha? In ordinary people's understanding, there truly are faculties, objects, and consciousnesses. Because they cling to faculties, objects, and consciousnesses, they believe that external objects and things exist. Thus there are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, and from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching arise all kinds of discrimination.

In fact, these three—faculties, objects, and consciousnesses—are all our deluded mind; originally, none of them exists. Yet the true does not depart from the deluded. If we can see through appearances, then these faculties, objects, and consciousnesses are all manifestations of our wondrous true suchness.

It is like the appearances of cats, dogs, lions, mountains, waters, and so forth that appear in a white cloud. Those appearances are in fact false and nonexistent; they are illusorily manifested by the white cloud. The cloud remains a cloud—it is not cats, dogs, lions, mountains, or waters. If you understand the relationship between the two, you can see the white cloud through the illusory appearances; otherwise, you can only be deluded by those appearances and fail to see the white cloud.

If our eyes are obscured and our vision is impaired, we see flowers in empty space; this is like having faculties, objects, and consciousnesses. If our eyes are purified and awakened, and we know that appearances are the essence of true nature, then seeing appearances is itself seeing true nature. Therefore, in the Buddha's eye, faculties, objects, and consciousnesses do not exist; all are wondrous true suchness.

Yet because sentient beings cling to material appearances, their minds give rise to inverted views. They do not recognize this Buddha-nature of suchness and see only external material appearances; thus they give rise to all kinds of discrimination. What is the reason for this? Why is it wondrous true suchness? Śākyamuni Buddha now explains this point separately:

(I) The Eye, Forms, and the Form Realm: None of the Three Exists

“Ānanda, as you understand it, the eye and forms are conditions for the arising of eye-consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the eye, taking the eye as its boundary? Or does it arise from forms, taking forms as its boundary?”

Ānanda, as you understand it, “the eye and forms are conditions for the arising of eye-consciousness.” Eye-consciousness arises after the sense faculty comes into contact with forms; hence it is said that the eye and forms are conditions for the arising of eye-consciousness. Consciousness discerns, enabling you to know what it is that you see. Once eye-consciousness arises, we can see all things: men and women, young and old, food and daily activities, and all manner of objects outside us.

“Does this consciousness arise from the eye, taking the eye as its boundary?” Does this eye-consciousness arise from the eye and take the eye as its boundary? This means that what is produced by the eye can only be the eye itself; it should not be something other than the eye.

For example, what a dog produces is a dog, and what a cat produces is a cat. Thus, what the eye produces must of course still be the eye. Since it is the same in nature as the eye, it can only take the eye as its boundary; it cannot be something outside the eye. Just as what a cat produces is a cat and cannot enter the domain of dogs, what a dog produces is a dog and cannot enter the domain of cats.

If this eye-consciousness were produced by the eye, it would be identical with the eye. Since it takes the eye as its boundary, it should see only the eye and could not see forms outside the eye.

If it does not arise from the eye, then could it “arise from forms, taking forms as its boundary”? If eye-consciousness is not produced by the eye, does it arise from external sensory forms and take those forms as its boundary? If it were produced by external sensory forms, then what forms produce would likewise all be forms; beyond forms, there should be nothing else.

If it takes forms as its boundary, it can see only forms and cannot see emptiness. Emptiness and form are opposites: to see emptiness would contradict form, and what contradicts form cannot be produced by forms. There is such a boundary between form and emptiness.

The eighteen realms are chiefly concerned with the six consciousnesses. Yet unless they are discussed together with the sense faculties and sensory objects, they cannot be analyzed in detail. As we said just now, if a field has no ridges, you cannot distinguish whose plot is whose. If ridges divide it, you know: “Oh, this plot is mine, and that one is yours.” The six consciousnesses are discussed together with the sense faculties and sensory objects; the faculties and objects are the twelve sense bases. Since the twelve sense bases have already been refuted, it is easier to understand the refutation of the eighteen realms as well.

“Ānanda, if it arises from the eye, then in the absence of form and emptiness there would be nothing to discriminate. Even if you possessed consciousness, what use would it be? Moreover, your seeing is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; it has nothing by which it can be indicated. From what, then, could a boundary be established?”

Here a further analysis is needed.

“If it arises from the eye, then in the absence of form and emptiness there would be nothing to discriminate.” If eye-consciousness were produced by the eye, where would there be form or emptiness in the eye? Each person's eye contains neither form nor emptiness. Since there is neither form nor emptiness, what could you discriminate? It is only because there are form and emptiness that discrimination occurs: whether before you is a cat or a dog, a table or a chair, can be distinguished through differences in appearance.

What if there were no form, but only emptiness? Regarding the relation between emptiness and form, we have said that form is revealed through emptiness and emptiness is revealed through form. If there were no form within emptiness, on what basis could that emptiness be established? And what distinctions could there be? Thus, apart from form and emptiness, eye-consciousness has nothing to discriminate.

“Even if you possessed consciousness, what use would it be?” Eye-consciousness functions by relying on discrimination and discernment. If there is no object to be discriminated, then the eye-consciousness produced by your eye has no use; its existence is equivalent to nonexistence. Hence it is said, “Even if you possessed consciousness, what use would it be?” Even if, apart from form and emptiness, this eye-consciousness truly exists...

…and possesses such capacity and energy, without form and emptiness, what could you use it to discriminate? If there is nothing, what could you see? It could not function at all. The capacity to see alone is not enough; there must also be something seen for it to function. Otherwise, its existence is equivalent to nonexistence.

“Moreover, your seeing is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; it has nothing by which it can be indicated.”

That is, even if you have seeing, this seeing is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; neither long nor short, square nor round; neither cold nor warm, rough nor smooth. There are no names, appearances, or concepts by which it can be expressed or described. If it has none of these things, then from what could its boundary be established? Everything we ordinarily speak of has its own distinctive qualities.

Its qualities allow us to describe and distinguish it. Yet seeing has none of these qualities and cannot be indicated at all. If it cannot be indicated, that amounts to its not existing. Since it does not exist, on what basis could a boundary be established? How could you define it? When there is something, a boundary can be drawn: up to here is the boundary; that side is yours, and this side is mine. But if there is nothing, no such boundary can be established. Since it cannot be indicated, the boundary naturally does not exist.

“If it arises from forms, then when emptiness is without form, your consciousness should cease.”

We have said earlier that what is produced should, in its essential nature, be the same as that which produces it; there should not be any difference. If this eye-consciousness arises through the various sensory forms and is produced from those forms, then this consciousness should see only forms and should not see emptiness. When emptiness appears, your eye-consciousness should also cease. Since eye-consciousness would then be absent:

“How would consciousness know that it is the nature of emptiness?”

If there were no form, there would be no consciousness; so how could you know the nature of emptiness? This shows that eye-consciousness is not produced from forms or from external sensory objects.

“When forms change, you also know that their appearances are changing. Yet your consciousness does not change; from what, then, could a boundary be established?”

This change means arising, abiding, alteration, and cessation. After every thing comes into being, it must undergo the process of arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. People are the same: after leaving the mother's body, they gradually

proceed from childhood to youth, from youth to maturity, from maturity to old age, and finally from old age to death. “When forms change, you also know that their appearances are changing.”

Sensory forms are likewise constantly changing. You know not only their present appearances; when they change, you also know that they are changing.

“Yet your consciousness does not change; from what, then, could a boundary be established?” Earlier, the Buddha asked the king whether the Ganges he saw at the age of three was the same as the one he saw at sixty, and whether there had been any change. The king replied that the Ganges he saw at sixty was the same as the one he had seen at three, because the nature of consciousness does not change with the passage of years.

Since your consciousness does not change along with forms, from where could a boundary be established? Your eye-consciousness is like a field, while appearances are like the ridges within it. If the ridges are constantly moved about, the boundary cannot be established. Since appearances are changing and may alter at any time, while your eye-consciousness remains unmoving, this boundary certainly cannot stand.

“If it changes along with them, then the very appearance of a boundary does not exist.”

Since one changes and the other does not, the boundary cannot be established. Now consider the reverse supposition: what if appearances change and your eye-consciousness changes along with them? Everything would be continually changing, and you could not even determine how a boundary should be drawn. Thus, “the very appearance of a boundary does not exist.” Just now we said that the field ridges change while the ground does not. Now the ground changes as well; if both are continually changing, how can a boundary be established? This conversely proves that eye-consciousness is not produced from forms.

“If it does not change, then it is permanent. Since it arises from forms, it should not know where emptiness is.”

If eye-consciousness does not change, then it is permanent. But if eye-consciousness arises from forms, what arises from forms should recognize only forms; it should not recognize emptiness. Yet that is not how we are now: we see forms and observe emptiness; we can see forms and also know where emptiness is. This proves that eye-consciousness is not produced by sensory forms.

Earlier it was explained that it is not produced by the eye faculty itself—not self-arising. Later it was explained that it is not produced by sensory forms—not arising

from another. If it arises neither from itself nor from another, might it arise from both together, through co-arising? Therefore, let us further suppose co-arising:

“If the two are combined and the eye and forms arise together, then union entails separation of the middle, while separation entails the union of two parts. Their essential natures would be confused; how could a boundary be formed?”

Let us combine the two—the eye faculty and sensory forms—and see whether they can arise together.

“Union entails separation of the middle.” If they arise through union, there can be no middle. For example, suppose a book lies between two cups. If the cups on both sides are brought together, the book in the middle is displaced, and there is no middle to be found. If there is no middle to be found, there is no dividing line. Clearly, they cannot arise together through union. But what if they first separate and then arise together—would that work?

“Separation entails the union of two parts.” If they arise separately, each produces one half: the eye faculty produces one half, and sensory forms produce the other half; then the two halves are joined to become eye-consciousness. This too is incorrect. As stated above, what arises from the eye has the same nature as the eye, and what arises from forms has the same nature as forms. To use an analogy, consider a field with mountains on one side and water on the other.

The half of the field adjoining the mountains has the nature of mountain land and high ground, suitable for planting corn; the half adjoining the water has the nature of paddy land and low ground, suitable for growing rice. The two fields have different natures. If they are joined together, what could be planted? One side is the eye faculty, and the other is sensory forms.

On the side of the eye faculty there is sentience, while on the side of the visual object there is insentience. Can sentience and insentience be joined together? If so, then “their natures would be mixed and confused; how could a realm be formed?” One half would be sentient and the other half insentient. How could sentience and insentience come together? It would be a complete muddle; this is impossible. This means that they cannot arise together.

Then does eye consciousness arise out of nowhere? No, it does not. This is “not arising without a cause.” Not arising from itself, not arising from another, not arising together, and not arising without a cause—“therefore it is said to be unborn.” That is unbornness. One sees with perfect clarity, yet there is nothing to be seen; the faculty, object, and consciousness are all unobtainable. Because they are all unobtainable, this is the wondrous pure and luminous essence of bodhi, the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

“Therefore, you should know that the eye and form serve as conditions for the arising of the realm of eye consciousness, yet all three locations are absent. Thus, the three—the eye, form, and the realm of form—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor spontaneous nature.”

It cannot be found to arise from the faculty, cannot be found to arise from form, and cannot be found to arise from their joint arising. Since none can be found, your view that “the eye and form serve as conditions for the arising of the realm of eye consciousness” is incorrect. The eye, form, and eye consciousness—the three locations—are all absent. The view you understand is merely a conventional way of speaking; those attached to existence generally see things this way.

From the Buddha’s perspective, everything is absent. We say that the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is also absent. This absence is precisely what reveals the true mind and the true bodhicitta. Do not misunderstand these words as annihilationism. Just when we say that “all three locations are absent,” do our eyes not plainly see things? Before our eyes are men, women, the old, and the young.

Look at how many things there are in this room—things of every kind: tables, beds, cabinets, everything. These illusory appearances are not absent. Thus, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss also exists. In fact, this is how it is: provisionally speaking, there is existence; speaking thoroughly, there is absence; ultimately, it is neither empty nor existent, neither existent nor empty—neither extreme can be grasped. To speak of existence or absence, truth or falsity, is all discrimination of your own mind; none of it speaks of the fundamental essence. When it comes to the fundamental essence, there is nowhere to speak; there is no place for you to open your mouth.

The eye faculty, the visual object, and eye consciousness—these three things are all absent. Because they are all absent, “the three—the eye, form, and the realm of form—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor spontaneous nature.” The realm of form refers to eye consciousness. The eye faculty and the visual object combine to give rise to eye consciousness, so it is called the realm of form; this “realm” is the division between the faculty and the object.

The eye faculty, the visual object, and eye consciousness—these three things—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor spontaneous nature. Not arising from itself, not arising from another, and not arising together constitute its not being causal conditions; not arising without a cause constitutes its not being spontaneous nature. To arise naturally, of itself and without a cause, is spontaneous nature. It is not like that: it does not arise without a cause, and thus it is not spontaneous nature.

Does anyone have any questions? Do you want to ask about arising through causal conditions?

Yes, indeed. All dharmas arise through causal conditions, so how can they not arise through causal conditions? We have just explained this: not arising from itself, not arising from another, not arising together, and not arising without a cause—this is arising through causal conditions. Arising through causal conditions is precisely unbornness. The arising through causal conditions spoken of by the Buddha means unbornness, not actual arising.

All these appearances are illusory appearances; they are not truly existent. Therefore, "dharmas arising through causal conditions are, I say, emptiness"; they are absent. Arising through causal conditions is unbornness. Since they are unborn, what causal conditions could there still be? Speaking in terms of essence, they are unborn; speaking in terms of appearances and function, they arise through causal conditions.

As mentioned earlier, a realm is a cause. To dismantle the realm is to dismantle the cause. If the cause is unobtainable, what conditions could there be or not be? There must first be a cause before conditions can be encountered. The cause is the primary cause, and conditions are contributing conditions. When causes and conditions come together, manifest activity arises.

Take a seed as an example. A seed contains the cause for the growth of a grain shoot. When it encounters such conditions as soil, sunlight, and moisture, it can produce a grain shoot. If there is no cause—if there is no seed—then what use are sunlight, moisture, and soil, however much of them there may be? What could they produce? Some say that a realm is a cause. Others say that a realm is a category. For example, we commonly ask, "Where do you work?" "Oh, I work in the newspaper industry."

Now we come to ear consciousness. The eighteen realms primarily dismantle the six consciousnesses. Once the six consciousnesses have been dismantled, the realms are dismantled. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind proceed in sequence; now it is time to dismantle ear consciousness.

(II) The Ear, Sound, and the Realm of Sound: All Three Are Absent

"Ānanda, as you understand it, the ear and sound serve as conditions for the arising of ear-consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the ear, with the ear as its boundary? Or does it arise from sound, with sound as its boundary?"

This sentence pattern is the same as before. Once the earlier discussion is understood, the later one is easy to explain.

The World-Honored One said to Ānanda: Just as you understand it, “the ear and sound serve as conditions for the arising of ear-consciousness.” Ear-consciousness arises when the inner ear faculty hears external sound-objects. This is a principle everyone accepts: everyone would say, “I hear sounds coming from outside.”

Where does this capacity to hear sounds come from? According to the usual explanation, because the ear faculty possesses the nature of hearing, it gives rise to the awareness of movement and stillness in accordance with the arising and ceasing of external sound-objects. When there is no sound-object, there is stillness, and one can hear an absence of sound. When there is a sound-object, there is movement; when the sound-object reaches the ear, one knows that there is sound.

“Does this consciousness arise from the ear, with the ear as its boundary? Or does it arise from sound, with sound as its boundary?” This is the same as what was said before. If this ear-consciousness were produced by the ear, then its nature should be the same as that of the ear. To say that the ear is its boundary means that the ear is its limit: one could hear only sounds within the ear and should not hear sounds outside it.

If it arose from sound, then sound should be its boundary. If this ear-consciousness were produced by sound, then one should hear only moving sounds; one should not be aware of the stillness apart from movement. That is, ear-consciousness should exist when there is sound and cease to exist when there is no sound.

Yet our ears now function as faculties of awareness. Not only can we hear when there is sound; when there is no sound, we hear just the same, for at such times we can still hear the absence of sound. As the scripture said earlier, although a blind person cannot see objects, that person can see darkness; seeing darkness is still seeing. When you cannot hear a sound, it is not that there is no hearing: you still hear an absence of sound.

The Buddha explains this in order to show that the supposed arising of ear-consciousness from the conjunction of faculty and object consists entirely of dharmas arising from causes and conditions. “All dharmas arising from causes and conditions, I say, are empty.” These dharmas of causes and conditions have never truly existed; in the Buddha’s eye, they are empty in themselves.

The Buddha now begins to refute Ānanda’s ear-consciousness. Among the three—the ear faculty, sound-object, and ear-consciousness—ear-consciousness occupies the middle. If ear-consciousness is refuted, the ear faculty and sound-object are thereby refuted as well. Refuting the false is for the sake of revealing the true. Only by refuting the false five aggregates, six sense-bases, twelve sense-fields, and eighteen elements can the wondrous, bright, and true mind that is real and unfalsifiable be revealed.

From the five aggregates, six sense-bases, and twelve sense-fields discussed earlier to the eighteen elements now under discussion, everything is being refuted, layer by layer, until all is cleared away. When we come to the seven great elements later, all will be affirmed. Refuting the false is for the sake of revealing the true: false mind is refuted to reveal true mind. True mind exists; to say that it exists is to enable us to understand wondrous presence. If one speaks only of true emptiness and not of wondrous presence, people may fall into biased emptiness. The discussion of ear-consciousness is likewise a refutation: it refutes it utterly, clearing away faculty, object, and consciousness alike.

“Ānanda, if it arises from the ear, then, when the two attributes of movement and stillness do not appear before it, the faculty cannot become knowing.”

If your ear-consciousness arose from the ear, with the ear as its boundary, then it could not hear sound-objects beyond that boundary. When the two kinds of sound-objects, movement and stillness, are not present, your ear should not become conscious; that is, there would be no ear-consciousness. If it were apart from the attributes of movement and stillness, what could your ear hear? Just as the eye faculty, apart from space and form, has nothing to see, the ear, apart from the sound-objects of movement and stillness, has nothing to know. Since your ear would have no awareness, the ear faculty could not become knowing.

“If there must be no knowing, and knowing itself cannot be established, what form or appearance could consciousness have?”

This knowing is the substance. If there is not even knowing, what form or appearance could consciousness have? If there is not even the underlying basis of hearing, where could what is heard be found? It is like having no parents: how could children be born? It is simply impossible.

To give another example: rice and wheat seeds can sprout and grow. But if they do not encounter water and soil, they cannot sprout. What shape does an ungerminated sprout have? Naturally, no shape can be found.

Our ears possess the nature of hearing and can hear sounds. But without encountering the attributes of movement and stillness—without the functioning of external conditions—there is no awareness. It is like a seed that can originally sprout but cannot do so apart from the conditions of water and soil. Without water and soil, it cannot sprout. Without the two attributes of movement and stillness, the ear faculty cannot become knowing. This proves that ear-consciousness does not arise from within your ear.

“If one takes the ear’s hearing as the basis, then, because there is no movement or stillness, hearing cannot be established. How, then, can the ear’s form, mingled with

the object of color and contact, be called the realm of consciousness? From what, then, is the realm of ear-consciousness established?”

If the ear possesses a nature capable of hearing, then “because there is no movement or stillness, hearing cannot be established.” Although your ear has the nature of hearing, there are no objects of movement and stillness. Without encountering external conditions, this auditory awareness cannot be established. It is like the example just given: if rice and wheat seeds lack the conditions of water and soil, they cannot grow. Ear-consciousness is the same.

Since “hearing cannot be established,” then “how can the ear’s form, mingled with the object of color and contact, be called the realm of consciousness?” How can one say that the ear serves as a faculty and, by contacting the object of color, becomes a realm of consciousness? “Mingled with the object of color and contact” means that the physical form of the ear contacts external visible objects. This contact is the function of the body faculty—tactile awareness, the realm of body-consciousness—not ear-consciousness.

These two are fundamentally not the same thing, so this way of thinking is mistaken. “From what, then, is the realm of ear-consciousness established?” You confuse ear-consciousness with body-consciousness. Since “hearing cannot be established,” you instead invoke the ear’s physical form contacting visible objects. Then from where can you establish the boundary of ear-consciousness? Since the ear has already been subsumed under the body faculty, and now there is not even an ear faculty, with what could you establish a realm of ear-consciousness?

“If it arises from sound, then consciousness exists because of sound and has no connection with hearing. Without hearing, the location of the attribute of sound is lost.”

If this ear-consciousness arose from sound, then, since it exists because of sound, it would have no connection with your hearing. “Without hearing, the location of the attribute of sound is lost.” Suppose you had no nature of hearing, no auditory awareness, and did not hear sound. How could you know that the attribute of sound was present? Who could distinguish whether that sound was a beautiful melody or a disturbing noise? Sound cannot hear itself. Without the nature of hearing, without auditory awareness, the attribute of sound naturally cannot be obtained.

“If consciousness arises from sound, and one allows that sound has the attribute of sound because of hearing, then hearing should be able to hear consciousness.”

If one says that ear-consciousness arises from sound, then one must allow that sound has the attribute of sound because of hearing. Since the attribute of sound exists through hearing, this hearing should also be able to hear ear-consciousness.

What is produced by a sound-object should be the same as the sound-object. Since your ear-consciousness is produced by sound, when you hear sound, you should hear ear-consciousness as well. Hence it is said, “hearing should be able to hear consciousness.” Just now, the discussion was of no hearing: that thing was sound and had nothing to do with your nature of hearing. Now the discussion is of no sound: sound itself is ear-consciousness. Thus, when you hear sound, you are also hearing your ear-consciousness.

“If it is not heard, it is not a realm; if it is heard, it is identical with sound.”

Can you hear consciousness? Of course not. How could anyone hear this ear-consciousness? Since you do not hear it and cannot hear sound, “if it is not heard, it is not a realm.” How, then, could it constitute a realm?

If one supposes that it can be heard, then “if it is heard, it is identical with sound”: this nature of hearing is the same as the sound-object, identical with the sound-object. The sound-object cannot hear, so naturally you cannot hear either. Thus this ear-consciousness belongs neither to your ear faculty nor to the sound-object.

“If consciousness has already been heard, who knows that hearing consciousness?”

If you allow that this consciousness can be heard, then your ear-consciousness has become the same as sound. Thus, “if consciousness has already been heard, who knows that hearing consciousness?” This ear-consciousness has been heard and has become an object of hearing; then there is no longer ear-consciousness capable of hearing. Without a hearer, who knows that this consciousness has been heard? If ear-consciousness is heard as sound, what is it that hears this ear-consciousness? How could one distinguish whether it is sound or consciousness?

“If there is no knower, one is ultimately like grass or wood.”

If you had no awareness, you would become like grass and wood. We now all possess awareness and can all hear sounds, so we are not grass and wood. Since we are not grass and wood, this proves that ear-consciousness does not arise from sound.

Through such repeated reasoning, no consciousness can arise when viewed from this side; no consciousness can arise when viewed from that side; and no consciousness can arise when the two are viewed together. This proves that ear-consciousness fundamentally does not exist. Śākyamuni Buddha explains it repeatedly in this way to help us break attachment to the realm of consciousness and, through refuting appearances, see our true nature. Above, he has explained non-arising from self and non-arising from another; below, he brings them together to explain non-arising from both jointly.

“Nor should sound and hearing, mixed together, form an intermediate realm. If the realm has no intermediate position, from what can the appearances of inner and outer be established?”

The intermediate realm here refers to the realm of ear-consciousness. Since ear-consciousness arises neither from the faculty nor from the object, one surely should not say that sound and the nature of hearing combine and intermingle to form the realm of ear-consciousness.

Ordinary people believe that the realm of ear consciousness arises when the ear faculty encounters external sound objects: the inner and outer come together, producing ear consciousness in between, and thus forming a realm. As we have just said, this supposed middle produced by the union of inner and outer cannot be established. “A realm has no middle position.” Since there is no middle position, this realm of ear consciousness does not exist.

Now we must refute this realm by examining whether the inner and outer can combine to form a realm in between. If this intermediate realm cannot be obtained, how can the appearances of inner and outer be established? What is called the middle must necessarily distinguish two sides. For example, if there are two of us, with me on this side and you on that side, then what lies between us is the middle.

If the two of us come together as one, then there is no middle. Therefore, it is impossible for the union of two sides to form a middle.

Since an intermediate realm cannot be formed, “then how could the appearances of inner and outer be established?” If one speaks of a realm, there should be a middle. If there were an intermediate place, one could speak of boundaries on two sides. But if there is no middle position, the boundaries on the two sides naturally do not exist; inner, outer, and middle are all unobtainable. Since there is neither a middle nor two sides, the appearances of inner and outer are likewise unobtainable. This is non-co-arising.

“Therefore, you should know that the ear and sound as conditions produce the realm of ear consciousness: all three locations are nonexistent. Thus, the ear, sound, and realm of sound consciousness are fundamentally neither dependent arising nor natural in nature.”

Therefore, you should understand that what you formerly believed—that the ear and sound as conditions produce the realm of ear consciousness—is mistaken. The three locations of the ear faculty, sound object, and ear consciousness fundamentally do not exist. They are all illusory and unreal, and cannot be established. The earlier explanation that ear consciousness arises from the union of the ear faculty and sound object merely conforms to ordinary people's habits of

thought and speaks in terms of worldly dharmas. Worldly dharmas are all provisional; you must not cling to them as truly existent or take them as real. This is because these three locations have never existed in the first place.

“Thus, the ear, sound, and realm of sound consciousness are fundamentally neither dependent arising nor natural in nature.” A realm is consciousness. The ear, the sound object, and the realm of sound consciousness produced by their union—the three things that produce and are produced—are neither dependent arising nor natural. They do not arise from themselves, from another, or from both together; this is their not being of the nature of dependent arising. Nor do they arise without cause; this is their not being of a natural nature. Since they are neither dependent arising nor natural, they are said not to exist at all.

The above discussion concerned ear consciousness. We now begin to discuss nose consciousness:

(III) The Nose, Odors, and the Realm of Odors: All Three Are Absent

“Ānanda, as you understand it, the nose and odors serve as conditions for the arising of nose consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the nose, taking the nose as its boundary? Or does it arise from odors, taking odors as its boundary?”

As you understand it, “the nose and odors serve as conditions for the arising of nose consciousness.”

The nose is the nose faculty, and odors are odor objects. If nose consciousness arises from the nose faculty and odor objects as causes and conditions, then does this consciousness arise from the nose, taking the nose as its boundary? Or does it arise from odors, taking odors as its boundary? If this nose consciousness arises from the nose faculty, it should be identical with the nose and know nothing apart from the nose; hence it takes the nose as its boundary. If it arises because of odors, it should be identical with odors and know nothing apart from odors; hence it is said to take odors as its boundary. Can such a boundary be established in this way?

“Ānanda, if it arises from the nose, then what in your mind do you take to be the nose? Do you take the form of the fleshy twin claws, or the nature of the awareness of smelling and movement?”

The World-Honored One asks Ānanda: If nose consciousness arises from the nose faculty, then what in your mind do you take to be the nose? What do you use as the nose faculty? Our external nose has two nostrils, resembling two claws joined

together, and so it is called the form of twin claws. Do you take the form of the fleshy twin claws, or the nature of the awareness of smelling and movement?

“If you take the fleshy form, its substance belongs to the body.”

If you take this external form of twin claws as the nose faculty, then this fleshy nose belongs to the body faculty.

“The body’s awareness is touch; it is called the body, not the nose.”

The awareness experienced by the body is tactile awareness. It can only perceive separation and contact, cold and heat; it cannot smell fragrance or stench. Since this fleshy nose can receive only tactile awareness, it is called the body faculty, not the nose faculty.

“What is called touch is an object; when even the nose has no name, how can a boundary be established?”

This tactile awareness is itself the object of touch. Since there are only the object of touch and the body faculty, and not even the name “nose,” how could there be a nose entity? Without a nose entity, what could you use to establish a boundary?

“If you take the awareness of smelling, then what in your mind do you take to be awareness?”

The question now goes further. Since the nose is said to be the body faculty, might one say: I do not take the physical nose; I take the nature of the awareness of smelling—the nature of the awareness of smelling and movement mentioned above—as my nose faculty. Would that work? If you take this nature of the awareness of smelling as the nose faculty, then “what in your mind do you take to be awareness?” This awareness has already become the nose faculty, so what could you still take in your mind to be awareness?

“If you take flesh as awareness, then the flesh’s awareness is originally touch, not the nose.”

If you take the sensation of the fleshy nose as the nature of nose consciousness, then what this flesh can know is touch, not your nose consciousness. This is what is meant by “originally touch, not the nose.” This shows that it is incorrect to take flesh as awareness. But what of the converse?

“If you take space as awareness, then space itself would be aware, and the flesh should lack awareness.”

Since it is wrong to take flesh as awareness, can you take the space within the nostrils as awareness? If you take this space as awareness, then “space itself would be aware, and the flesh should lack awareness.” If the space within the nostrils can be awareness, then space itself knows, and the flesh of the nose should not know.

“Then space should be you.”

If space knows, then space should be you; space would become you yourself.

“If your body lacks awareness, then Ānanda today should have no location.”

If it is space that knows and your body does not know, is that really so? Of course not. In fact, it is your body that knows, while space does not.

This proves that your nose faculty cannot be found at all. Since there is no nose faculty, what boundary could be established? If you say that space is awareness and that space is my body, then you, Ānanda, should be space. Space has no body, so you, Ānanda, should have no location today. Yet in fact you have this body; your body is still here. This proves that space cannot be taken as awareness. Then, could odors be taken as awareness?

“If you take odors as awareness, awareness itself belongs to odors. What does that have to do with you?”

Since it is incorrect to take the faculty as awareness, does this nose consciousness arise from odor objects? If nose consciousness arises from odor objects, then what arises from odors should have the same nature as odors. This knowing nature belongs to odor objects. What does that have to do with you? Since it has nothing to do with you, you naturally should not be aware of it.

“If fragrant and foul odors must arise in your nose, then these two streams of fragrant and foul vapors would not arise from the yilan tree and sandalwood.”

I smell fragrant and foul odors with my nose. If fragrance and stench necessarily arose within my nose, then these two streams of fragrant and foul vapors would “not arise from the yilan tree and sandalwood.” As stated earlier, the yilan tree produces a foul odor, while sandalwood produces a fragrance. If these fragrant and foul vapors arose within your nose, then the two streams of vapor would not arise from the yilan tree and sandalwood.

“When these two things do not come, do you yourself smell your nose to see whether it is fragrant or foul?”

If there is no yilan tree or sandalwood before you, and these two things of fragrance and stench do not come, then smell your own nose: is it fragrant or foul? How could

the nose itself have fragrance or stench? Without yilan and sandalwood, these two odors of fragrance and stench cannot be found at all.

“If it is foul, then it is not fragrant; if it is fragrant, then it should not be foul.”

Suppose that fragrant and foul odors arise from your nose. Then, “if it is foul, then it is not fragrant; if it is fragrant, then it should not be foul.” If what arises is a foul odor, it should not be fragrant; if what arises is a fragrant odor, it should not be foul. Yet you can now smell both fragrance and stench. This shows that your nose is neither fragrant nor foul.

“If you can smell both fragrance and stench, then you, one person, should have two noses.”

If you can smell both fragrance and stench, then as one person you should have two noses. One nose cannot produce two odors: if it produces fragrance, it should not also produce stench; if it produces stench, it likewise cannot produce fragrance. What belongs to fragrance can smell only fragrance, and what belongs to stench can smell only stench. To smell both fragrant and foul odors at the same time, “you, one person, should have two noses.”

“Then, as you question me about the Way, there would be two Ānandas. Which one would be your true body?”

Each of us can have only one set of six sense faculties. If you had two noses, you should also have two mouths, two pairs of eyes, two pairs of ears, and two bodies. Then there should likewise be two Ānandas now questioning me about the Way. In that case, “which one would be your true body?” One would be real and one false; which would be the real you?

“If the nose is one, then fragrance and stench are not two. Stench would become fragrance, and fragrance would become stench. Since the two natures do not exist, from what could a boundary be established?”

If the nose is one entity, and fragrance and stench enter and mingle in a single nose, then they should be one entity rather than two.

In that case, fragrance and stench could not be distinguished: fragrance would become stench, and stench would become fragrance. Fragrance would no longer be fragrance, and stench would no longer be stench; neither fragrance nor stench could be found. Since even the two natures of fragrance and stench do not exist, from what could a boundary be established? Because these two natures of fragrance and stench do not exist, they are one entity, the same thing. You cannot distinguish the same thing, so how could you establish a boundary? Thus fragrance and stench do not arise from the nose.

Stench arises from the yilan tree, and fragrance arises from sandalwood. When these two things do not come, there is no fragrance or stench within the nose. Then does this nose consciousness arise from fragrance and stench? Certainly not. If it arose from fragrance, nose consciousness would already belong to fragrance, and it should not smell stench apart from fragrance.

If it arose from stench, this nose consciousness would already be stench, and it likewise should not smell fragrance. Thus this nose consciousness arises neither from the nose faculty nor from fragrance and stench. This proves that it does not arise from itself or from another.

“If it arises from odors, consciousness exists because of odors. Just as the eye has seeing but cannot see itself, so, because it exists through odors, it should not know odors. If it knows, then it is not arisen from odors; if it does not know, then it is not consciousness. Since odors do not exist because of knowing, the realm of odors cannot be established. If consciousness does not know odors, then the realm of consciousness cannot be established from odors.”

“If it arises from odors, consciousness exists because of odors.” If nose consciousness arises from fragrance, then this nose consciousness should be identical with fragrance; it should be the same as fragrance.

“Just as the eye has seeing but cannot see itself, so, because it exists through odors, it should not know odors.” Just as the seeing nature of my eyes can see objects but cannot see the eyes themselves, nose consciousness arising from fragrance likewise should not smell fragrance. The eye is used as an analogy here: because the eye cannot see itself, nose consciousness arising from fragrance should likewise not smell fragrance.

“If it knows, then it is not arisen from odors.” Since it should not smell fragrance if it arose from fragrance, yet you can now smell fragrance, this nose consciousness does not arise from fragrance.

“If it does not know, then it is not consciousness.” Consciousness is discrimination and should have awareness. If you do not know and cannot distinguish odors, then there is no awareness. Without awareness, how can it be called consciousness? If it lacks the ability to discriminate and sense odors, it cannot be called nose consciousness.

“If fragrance is not known, the realm of fragrance cannot be established.” Suppose that this fragrance is not known by nasal consciousness, but exists outside nasal consciousness and is not known by my nose. Then this fragrance has no connection with my nose, and thus the realm of fragrance cannot arise. A realm is a boundary: when the internal faculty and the external object come together, the nasal

consciousness that arises between them is the realm. Now, if this fragrance lies outside my nasal consciousness and has nothing to do with it, then this realm does not exist. Hence it is said that the realm of fragrance cannot be established.

“If consciousness does not know fragrance, then the realm conditioned by fragrance cannot be established from fragrance.” The realm of consciousness arising because of fragrance is called the causal realm. If this nasal consciousness cannot know fragrance, but consciousness exists apart from fragrance, then the realm of consciousness that you say arises because of fragrance cannot be established from that fragrance.

Since consciousness does not know fragrance, from where could the realm of consciousness arising because of fragrance be established? The realm of nasal consciousness arises because of fragrance. If your consciousness does not know fragrance, but consciousness exists outside fragrance, what does that consciousness outside fragrance have to do with fragrance? Thus, the consciousness arising because of fragrance cannot be established. Nor is it possible for fragrance to exist outside consciousness or consciousness to exist outside fragrance. This proves that nasal consciousness does not arise from the object of fragrance.

“Since there is no middle, inner and outer cannot be established. Those faculties of hearing are ultimately illusory.”

Only when there are two sides can there be a middle. Since neither side has the capacity to give rise to consciousness—that is, since neither the nasal faculty nor the object of fragrance can produce consciousness—the realm of nasal consciousness in between cannot be established. Conversely, if there is no middle, the two sides of inner and outer cannot be constituted either. Without the nasal consciousness in the middle, the internal faculty and external object likewise cannot be established.

Apart from the internal faculty and the external object, “those faculties of smelling are ultimately illusory.” Without a faculty or a basis, what could possibly arise? Your faculty of smelling is fundamentally illusory. Thus, whatever fragrance or stench you smell is false, illusory, and unreal—fundamentally unobtainable. Do not cling to it.

“Therefore, you should know that the nose and fragrance as conditions for the arising of the realm of nasal consciousness are all nonexistent in these three locations. Thus, the three—the nose, fragrance, and realm of fragrance—are fundamentally neither causes and conditions nor self-arising nature.”

Therefore, you should know that when the nasal faculty takes the object of fragrance as its condition and gives rise to the realm of nasal consciousness, these three—the faculty, object, and consciousness—are all unobtainable. Thus, “the three—the nose, fragrance, and realm of fragrance—are fundamentally neither causes

and conditions nor self-arising nature." The nasal faculty, the object of fragrance, and even nasal consciousness—these three are neither causes and conditions nor self-arising.

As we said above, not arising from itself, from another, or from both together is the nature of not arising from causes and conditions; not arising without a cause is the nature of not being self-arising.

Now these three are all unobtainable and illusory. This proves that their essential nature is suchness, Buddha-nature. Therefore, we should not cling to appearances anywhere; we should see our true nature! Śākyamuni Buddha, with tireless compassion, dismantles our attachments point by point. With each point he dismantles, he removes one faculty. In this way, all six faculties are released and all eighteen realms are dismantled. What remains?

There is nothing to which you can cling. Would that not mean seeing one's true nature at every moment? And if one sees one's true nature at every moment, would that not mean that everyone becomes a Buddha? This is the marvel of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra: there is no need for you to labor over morning and evening services, nor need you investigate Chan, recite the Buddha's name, cultivate Esoteric Buddhism, or cultivate any conditioned merit. You need only let go of everything.

For you see your true nature at every moment! How relaxed, free, and effortless such practice is! Thus, studying and practicing the Buddhadharma is an effortless and unrestrained undertaking; there is no need to be so constrained. If you insist on expending a great deal of effort, that is mistaken—it is merely wearying yourself in vain.

Previously, you did not understand this principle and practiced while clinging to appearances, thinking that you had to perform so much merit and recite the Buddha's name so many times before you could attain realization. It was like carrying a thousand-pound burden on your shoulders.

Now that you understand the principle, you know that your own mind is originally Buddha, and that its numinous clarity and awakened nature are naturally complete from the beginning. There is no need for contrivance or artificial cultivation. When the thousand-pound burden is set down all at once, how relaxed and joyful you are! There is a Chan koan in which a monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is it like when one brings not a single thing?" Every one of us sentient beings carries a heavy burden on our shoulders: spouse, wealth, children, rank, gold and treasure, food and daily living—every kind of thing weighs upon us until we can scarcely breathe.

So, if I now bring not a single thing and let everything go, what then? This may seem like a good question; it is indeed good to be able to do this. Yet there is still a

problem in the question. Chan Master Zhaozhou, in his compassion, said to him, “Put it down.”

Since he had already brought not a single thing, why did Zhaozhou still tell him to put it down? Because he still had this notion of bringing not a single thing; he still had something. It is like the two vehicles: after destroying attachment to existence, they become attached to emptiness, and there is still an emptiness there. This bringing not a single thing is itself still attachment, still an illness. Therefore, Chan Master Zhaozhou told him to let even this go.

But at this point the monk was still not fully awake. Instead, he asked, “If I bring not a single thing, what is there to put down?” Here I have nothing at all—what is there to put down? Seeing that a direct approach would not work, Zhaozhou used a reverse provocation and said, “If you cannot put it down, then carry it away!” If you cannot put it down, that shows there is still something in your mind; then carry it away.

This is wonderfully said. It is like a double-edged sword: one edge kills, while the other gives life. It is truly the finishing touch that brings the dragon to life. Since one speaks of letting go, one must let go until there is nowhere left to let go. There can be nothing else; only then is it your Original Face.

This bringing not a single thing appears to mean that there is nothing at all, but in fact there is still something, because there remains the notion of bringing not a single thing. One must let go even of that. It is like the non-Buddhist Brahmin who went to see the Buddha, bringing fresh flowers as an offering to Śākyamuni Buddha. The Buddha said, “Put it down.”

The Brahmin had originally held flowers in both hands. On hearing the Buddha tell him to put them down, he set down the flowers in one hand. The Buddha again said, “Put it down.” He then set down the flowers in his other hand, but the Buddha still said, “Put it down.”

The Brahmin said, “I have put down all my flowers. What else is there to put down?” The Buddha said, “I am not telling you to put down your flowers. You should relinquish the six external objects, the six internal faculties, and the six consciousnesses between them. Relinquish them all at once. When there is nowhere left to relinquish, that is where you are freed from birth and death.” At these words, the Brahmin awakened to the forbearance of the unborn. The Buddha was not telling him to put down the flowers in his hands, but to relinquish the attachments in his mind; he had to let go even of this letting go.

Here Śākyamuni Buddha explains in succession the six entrances, twelve bases, and eighteen realms. Everywhere, he is dismantling your attachments. This dismantling is itself letting go, and letting go is so that you may see your true nature. Once you

have let go of all inverted, deluded thoughts, the wondrous, bright true mind will naturally manifest before you.

Next, he explains the consciousness of the tongue:

(IV) Tongue, Taste, and the Tongue Realm: All Three Are Absent

“Ānanda, furthermore, as you understand it, the tongue and flavors serve as conditions for the arising of tongue consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the tongue, taking the tongue as its boundary, or from flavors, taking flavors as its boundary?”

As you know, the tongue and the external objects of taste act as causes and conditions, giving rise to our sense of taste.

Does this tongue consciousness arise from the tongue, with the tongue as its boundary? Or does it arise from flavors, with taste-objects as its boundary? If it arises from the tongue, then what the tongue produces should be identical with the tongue itself and would know nothing beyond the tongue; this is what is meant by taking the tongue as its boundary.

Suppose it arises from flavors. Then tongue consciousness should be identical with flavor, and this is called taking flavor as its boundary. There are many flavors—sour, sweet, bitter, pungent, and so forth—but you could be identical with only one flavor. If identical with sourness, you would not know sweetness or bitterness; if identical with bitterness, you would not know sourness or pungency. Which flavor, then, would it ultimately be identical with?

“Ānanda, if it arises from the tongue, then sugarcane, black plums, coptis, salt, asarum, ginger, cinnamon, and all the rest in the world would have no flavor. Taste your own tongue: is it sweet or bitter? If the nature of the tongue is bitter, who tastes the tongue? If the tongue cannot taste itself, who is aware of it? If the nature of the tongue is not bitter, flavor cannot arise of itself; how, then, can a boundary be established?”

Ānanda, if this tongue consciousness of yours arises from the tongue, then “sugarcane, black plums, coptis, salt, asarum, ginger, cinnamon, and all the rest in the world would have no flavor.” We know that sugarcane is sweet, black plums are sour, coptis is bitter, salt is salty, and asarum, ginger, and cinnamon are pungent.

If tongue consciousness arose from the tongue and flavor came from the tongue, then these things in the world should all be flavorless, and you would not need to

taste them in order to know their various flavors.

Sour, sweet, bitter, salty, and pungent are the five primary flavors, respectively representing the flavors of the five directions. Sweet represents the center, sour the east, bitter the south, salty the north, and pungent the west. These five flavors can combine to produce countless other flavors.

If your tongue could produce flavors without needing these things, then: “Taste your own tongue: is it sweet or bitter?” Taste your own tongue and see whether it is sweet or bitter. The tongue is used to taste other things; through contact with objects, it senses flavor. It recognizes salt as salty and coptis as bitter. Without other objects, what flavor could your tongue itself have? This proves that your tongue consciousness does not arise from your tongue.

“If the nature of the tongue is bitter, who tastes the tongue?” If the tongue were bitter, it would have become a bitter flavor. What, then, would taste this bitter flavor? Who would know that the tongue in your mouth is bitter? For example, coptis is bitter, but can coptis say that it is bitter? It does not know its own bitterness; your tongue must taste it.

If your tongue were bitter, it would be like coptis. Who, then, would taste your tongue, which is like coptis? Thus it is said: “If the tongue cannot taste itself, who is aware of it?” The tongue cannot taste itself; if so, there would be no awareness. Who, then, knows the flavor? If the tongue were a bitter flavor, it would already have become a sensory object, a thing; another person's tongue would have to taste your tongue before a flavor could arise.

But now it is you yourself who knows flavor in your own mouth; it is not a flavor produced after someone else's tongue has tasted your tongue. Who, then, is it that knows the flavor?

Next: “If the nature of the tongue is not bitter, flavor cannot arise of itself.” As stated above, the nature of your tongue is not a bitter flavor; if it were bitter, it could not taste flavors. Nor can flavors arise of themselves. Without taste-objects—without such things as the plums and coptis mentioned above—sour, sweet, bitter, salty, and pungent flavors cannot arise on their own.

The tongue cannot produce flavor by itself. According to the preceding sūtra passage, when the tongue is not tasting anything, it has a bland flavor—that is, no flavor. Since there is no flavor, how can a boundary be established? There must be flavors in order to establish a boundary: this is sour, that is sweet, and boundaries are established according to differences in flavor. But when there is no flavor at all, by what could you establish a boundary?

“If it arises from flavor, consciousness itself would be flavor. Being identical with the tongue faculty, it should not taste itself. How, then, could consciousness know whether there is flavor or no flavor?”

If your tongue consciousness arises from flavor, then that consciousness becomes flavor. Since they are of the same nature, what is produced by flavor should be identical with flavor.

It is like the tongue faculty discussed above: the tongue cannot taste itself. If the tongue faculty were bitter, who would taste it? By the same reasoning, since this consciousness has already become flavor, and flavor cannot taste flavor, who would taste this consciousness of yours? Thus it is said, “Being identical with the tongue faculty, it should not taste itself”: it cannot taste itself.

If consciousness is produced by flavor and its substance is flavor, it should not know flavor. Just as coptis does not know that it is bitter and plums do not know that they are sour, “how, then, could consciousness know whether there is flavor or no flavor?” Since tongue consciousness has become flavor, it cannot taste itself. How, then, would you know whether there is flavor or no flavor—whether it is sour

or sweet or bitter? Yet you can now taste flavors and clearly distinguish sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent. You are neither wholly unaware nor do you confuse all flavors as one flavor. This proves that tongue consciousness does not arise from flavor.

“Moreover, no flavor arises from a single thing. Since flavors arise from many things, consciousness should have many substances.”

Furthermore, sour, sweet, bitter, pungent, and other flavors do not arise from a single thing. The five flavors cited above belong respectively to sugarcane, black plums, coptis, salt, and asarum; each arises from a different thing. Thus, “since flavors arise from many things, consciousness should have many substances.” If consciousness arose from flavor, each flavor should give rise to a separate consciousness: bitter flavor would give rise to bitter consciousness, sweet flavor to sweet consciousness, salty flavor to salty consciousness. As many flavors as there are, so many substances of consciousness there should be. Therefore:

“If the substance of consciousness is one, it must arise from flavor. Salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors arise both through blending and together. All their varying characteristics would become one flavor, and there should be no discrimination.”

If the substance of consciousness were one and arose from flavor, then “salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors arise both through blending and together.”

Blending means combining several flavors into a new flavor. For example, when cooking, we add many seasonings, and the final result is a single flavor.

Arising together means that several flavors are mixed while each retains its former flavor. For example, schisandra berries have five flavors; when you eat them, their original flavors are all still present. When we taste something, we can distinguish not only salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, but also flavors that are blended or that arise together.

If this consciousness had only one substance, then once you tasted sweetness, you could not taste saltiness; once you tasted sourness, you could not taste pungency. “All their varying characteristics would become one flavor, and there should be no discrimination.” Since your tongue faculty has only one substance, whatever you tasted would be one flavor, and you naturally could not distinguish the various flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent.

“If discrimination does not exist, it cannot be called consciousness. How, then, can it again be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?”

Consciousness is discrimination and discernment. Without discrimination, it should not be called consciousness. If you have no discrimination at all and whatever you taste is one flavor, how could it be called tongue consciousness? Since it cannot be tongue consciousness, why call it the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness? Why say that the tongue and flavor together produce this tongue consciousness, dividing it into these three realms?

“Nor should empty space give rise to your mind consciousness.”

We have said that the tongue faculty, flavor, and tongue consciousness are all illusory. Apart from these three, what else could give rise to your mind consciousness? Surely one cannot say that empty space produces this mind consciousness, for empty space cannot produce anything. This proves that your mind consciousness arises neither from the tongue faculty nor from taste-objects; neither the internal faculty nor the external object can produce it. The following discussion considers their combination:

“If tongue and flavor combine, then within that combination they originally have no self-nature. How, then, can a realm arise?”

The combination of the tongue faculty and taste-objects would mean co-arising. Suppose this tongue-consciousness realm arose from their combination. “Within that combination they originally have no self-nature. How, then, can a realm arise?” The prerequisite for co-arising is that the internal faculty and external object possess self-nature and truly have their own separate entities. It has already been

shown that faculties and objects originally have no self-nature and no real entity. Therefore, such co-arising cannot be obtained either.

Since there is no co-arising, how could this consciousness realm arise? This consciousness realm is the sense of taste produced when the tongue, as the internal faculty, comes into contact with flavor, as the external object.

Only when there are the two sides of inner and outer can there be the consciousness realm in between. Now that the two sides do not exist at all, this middle cannot be established either. Conversely, if there is no middle, how could there be two sides? Since faculty, object, and consciousness—the three locations—have no self-nature, their combined co-arising cannot be obtained at all. How, then, could the realm of tongue consciousness arise?

“Therefore, you should know that the tongue and flavor serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of tongue consciousness are all nonexistent in these three locations. Thus the three—the tongue, flavor, and realm of tongue consciousness—are fundamentally neither causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature.”

Therefore, you should know that it is impossible for the tongue faculty and the object of taste, as conditions, to give rise to the realm of tongue consciousness, because none of these three is truly existent. Since none of the three exists, it is said of the tongue faculty, the object of taste, and the realm of tongue consciousness: “They are fundamentally neither conditioned arising nor self-arising in nature.” Because they do not arise from themselves, from another, or from both together, they are not of the nature of conditioned arising. Moreover, because they do not arise without causes, they are not of the nature of self-arising. Fundamentally, none can be obtained.

Next, we will discuss body consciousness:

(V) Body, Touch, and the Body Element: All Three Are Absent

“Ānanda, as you have understood: bodily contact serves as a condition, giving rise to body consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the body, taking the body as its boundary? Or does it arise from contact, taking contact as its boundary?”

“Bodily contact serves as a condition, giving rise to body consciousness.”

“Does this consciousness arise from the body, taking the body as its boundary? Or does it arise from contact, taking contact as its boundary?” Through the contact between the body and external conditions, body consciousness arises. Does this

body consciousness arise from the body, taking the body as its boundary, or does it arise from contact, taking contact as its boundary? This sentence is the same as the preceding ones: what arises from the body should belong to the body, and know nothing beyond the body.

Likewise, what arises from contact should belong to contact and have no awareness beyond contact. Now he asks whether you take contact or the body as the boundary. From which side do you think this body consciousness arises?

“Ānanda, if it arises from the body, then without the conditions of the two perceptions of contact and separation, what could the body be conscious of?”

“If it arises from the body, then without the conditions of the two perceptions of contact and separation…” If this body consciousness arose from the body faculty, then it would necessarily not require the two perceptions of contact and separation in order for contact to occur. Perception here means discernment. When something touches my body, this is called contact; when the object touching it moves away, this is called separation. From the contact and separation of the body and an object arise discernment.

When something else touches my body and I feel it, this becomes tactile sensation. If nothing touches my body, how could there be tactile sensation? Therefore, this tactile sensation cannot be apart from contact and separation. If body consciousness arose from the body faculty, and the body itself could produce this tactile sensation, then it would not require these two perceptions of contact and separation.

But apart from these two perceptions of contact and separation, what could the body be conscious of? Without the contact of an external object, and apart from contact and separation, the body faculty has no awareness. How, then, could you have tactile sensation? Tactile sensation cannot be apart from tactile objects; something must touch the body. Only through the contact and separation of an object do we know that there is touch. Constant separation certainly cannot constitute contact, nor can constant contact constitute it.

If you are apart from the two conditions of separation and contact with tactile objects, you have no discernment. If there is no awareness, what could your body consciousness be conscious of? This proves that contact does not arise from the body faculty.

“If it arises from contact, then without your body, who could, apart from the body, know contact and separation?”

If tactile sensation did not arise from the body faculty but instead arose from tactile objects, having nothing to do with your body, then it would not require your body; even without a body, tactile sensation could exist.

But who could know separation and contact without a body? Without a body there is no body faculty. Then who would know that something has touched the body, and who would know that the object has been removed? We know contact and separation because there is a body. Without a body, one absolutely could not know contact and separation. If there were no body, objects moving back and forth would merely touch empty space. How could empty space know touch? Since there can be no tactile sensation without the body faculty, this proves that tactile sensation does not arise from contact.

“An object does not know contact; the body knows that there is contact.”

“An object does not know contact” is an inverted construction; it means that the object does not know contact. The object does not know that there is contact; rather, the body knows that there is contact.

“To know the body is contact; to know contact is the body.”

This explains that body and contact support each other. “To know the body is contact” means that knowing the body is contact: you must be able to sense the body before tactile sensation can arise, for without a body one cannot know contact. “To know contact is the body” means that your ability to know contact naturally depends on having a body; without a body, tactile sensation cannot arise. Thus, body is contact and contact is body; apart from the body there is no contact, and apart from contact there is no body. They arise mutually, showing that contact and body come about in correspondence with one another. Then it continues:

“Contact is not the body; the body is not contact.”

Above it was said that body is contact and contact is body. It then says, “Contact is not the body; the body is not contact.” Contact is not the body, and the body is not contact; the meanings before and after seem to negate one another. What does this mean? What was just explained was mutual arising: body and contact are mutually dependent. Here, however, it speaks of mutual negation: each removes the condition for the other’s existence.

For example, one thing cannot have two names; it should have only one name. If it is called the body, it should not be called contact; if it is called contact, it should not be called the body.

Just now it was said that the body is contact and contact is the body, making one thing have two names. Yet two names should refer to two different things; it is

surely wrong to make one thing into two things. Mutual negation means mutually taking away. What is taken away? It is to prove that the two things do not exist at all.

Not only do the Buddhist scriptures speak of taking away; the Chan school especially likes to use this method to guide people—driving away the farmer's ox and snatching food from the hungry person's hand.

A farmer needs an ox to plow his fields, so I drive away your ox. You are desperately hungry, so hungry that you will eat anything you see, yet I deliberately snatch away the food in your hand. Why do this? Because you are habitually attached to appearances. If you do not cling to something, you do not know what to do; therefore, I take away everything to which you cling, so that when not a single thing remains, you may see your intrinsic nature. The Chan school's means of guiding people are so lively and so marvelous.

Because one thing cannot have two names, when one says contact one should not speak of the body, and when one says body one should not speak of contact. Thus it says, "Contact is not the body; the body is not contact." Body and contact mutually negate one another: when one says contact, it is not the body; when one says body, it is not contact. In this way, contact cannot be obtained, nor can the body be obtained. Since neither side can be obtained, therefore:

"The two appearances of body and contact originally have no location."

Since neither body nor contact can be obtained, it says, "The two appearances of body and contact originally have no location." Thus, whether body or contact, both are delusive appearances; fundamentally, they have no place and no location.

"When they join with the body, they become the body's own nature; when they are apart from the body, they are equivalent to empty space. If inside and outside cannot be established, how can the middle be established? If the middle cannot be established, and the nature of inside and outside is empty, then when your consciousness arises, from what can it establish its boundary?"

What does "when they join with the body, they become the body's own nature" mean? It is what this sūtra says: Ānanda, when you touch your head with your own hand, hand and head become one when they meet—the toucher and the touched become one. Once they are one, where are the toucher and the touched? Yet one and the same thing cannot constitute contact.

For example, if I want to clap, one hand alone cannot make a sound; two hands are needed. What happens when they are apart from the body? "When they are apart from the body, they are equivalent to empty space." Suppose the head and hand,

and indeed the body itself, are absent. There is simply nothing at all; that is empty space.

If they join with the body, the toucher and the touched become one, and once they are one there is no subject and object. If they are apart from the body, then because there is nothing, they become empty space.

Since neither contact nor separation can be obtained, “if inside and outside cannot be established, how can the middle be established?” If there is neither the inner body faculty nor the external tactile object, if there is neither inside nor outside, then from where can this tactile sensation, this body consciousness in the middle, be established? Therefore it next asks, “If the middle cannot be established, and the nature of inside and outside is empty, then when your consciousness arises, from what can it establish its boundary?” There is no

middle, and naturally there is no inside or outside. Since inside and outside are both empty, from where can the body consciousness that arises establish a boundary? The consciousness here belongs to the body faculty, not to the ear faculty. The consciousness of the ear faculty is hearing, while the consciousness of the body faculty is tactile sensation. To establish a boundary, there must be inner and outer locations. If there were necessarily an inner body faculty and an external tactile object, one could say that body consciousness arose in between. But now there are neither two sides nor a middle. How, then, could this boundary be formed? This proves that such a boundary cannot be obtained.

“Therefore, you should know that bodily contact serves as a condition, giving rise to the realm of body consciousness, yet all three locations do not exist. Thus body, contact, and the realm of body consciousness are originally neither causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature.”

Therefore, you should know that the body faculty and tactile objects serve as causes and conditions giving rise to this realm of body consciousness. Since these three locations do not exist, this is impossible. Since they all do not exist, the body faculty, tactile objects, and your body consciousness—these three things—are neither causes and conditions nor self-arising; neither causes and conditions nor self-arising can be obtained.

Since none can be obtained, all are empty. Since all are empty, these six consciousnesses are all delusive. Since they are delusive, this proves that they are suchness, Buddha-nature; outside your suchness, Buddha-nature, there is nothing.

Therefore, do not be deluded, do not cling to appearances, and do not cling to your body or to your tactile consciousness. This body and consciousness cannot be obtained. People all cling to the existence of a self, to this body, and so attachment

to self is exceedingly powerful. Why do the dead have an intermediate-state body? It is because this attachment to self is so deeply entrenched.

After this body dies, they still insist that there must be a self and that they must have a body; therefore, an intermediate-state body appears. The intermediate-state body is a material body. Like a ghost, it has form and substance, but it is extremely subtle, unlike our present material bodies, which are so dense and substantial.

Because their forms are extremely subtle and light, not everyone can see them. Those whose practice is well developed can see them, and a few ordinary people can as well. This attachment is truly powerful. Whatever you cling to while living in this world, you will continue to cling to after death, when the intermediate-state body appears.

Those who aspire to be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss must let go of everything before they can attain rebirth. If they cannot let go, they absolutely cannot go there; fundamentally, they cannot be reborn there.

If your mind is now clinging desperately, it will still be clinging desperately in the intermediate state. If the mind cannot empty itself, how can one attain rebirth? Therefore, if you are to empty yourself, you must do so now; if you are to let go, you must do so now. If you are unwilling to empty yourself or let go now, you will be even less able to let go in the intermediate state. I am not trying to frighten you.

In the past, there was a Mr. Xu Weiru in Shanghai, a prominent lay practitioner of the Pure Land school. He helped Dharma Master Yinguang propagate the Dharma and was extremely well known; everyone at the time knew of him. Later, he passed away. Everyone thought that such a great lay practitioner surely must have been reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. In order to verify whether he had attained rebirth, they performed a ritual to investigate.

How did they verify it? They tested whether he had an intermediate-state body, because those reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss have no intermediate-state body; only those who have not attained rebirth have one.

There are many dharma gates for determining whether someone has an intermediate-state body. Among them is a particularly powerful method of summoning. As soon as this method is used, it can summon not only an intermediate-state body, but even the soul of a living person. This is real, not false.

When everyone tried this method, they could not summon him. So they thought, “It appears that his practice was quite accomplished; he has already been reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.”

But then, on further reflection, they recalled that Lay Practitioner Xu Weiru had formerly been a bank manager. His safe contained many valuables—gold bars, jewels, land deeds, stocks, and much else besides. Might his mind still be clinging to those things? They searched again, and when they summoned him, it was indeed just as they suspected: he had become a wealth-guarding ghost in his safe. Not only had he failed to be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, but he had instead fallen into the realm of ghosts.

Thus, rebirth in the Pure Land is not a simple matter. You must be able to let go before you can depart; if you cannot let go, you cannot depart. Some people say, "I will simply recite the Buddha's name casually. As long as I can attain rebirth, that is enough, so there is no need for one-pointedness of mind without distraction."

If you can truly recite the Buddha's name with wholehearted resolve, without the slightest attachment in your mind to this world, and continue courageously to recite it without concern for whether you attain one-pointedness of mind without distraction, then that is certainly very good. Buddha-recitation has one-pointedness in principle and one-pointedness in phenomena.

The state of one-pointedness in principle is very lofty. We do not require that one must attain one-pointedness in principle; it is enough to attain one-pointedness in phenomena.

What, then, is one-pointedness in phenomena? It means having only the mind that remembers the Buddha and recites the Buddha's name, with no other divided mind. Apart from remembering the Buddha and reciting the Buddha's name, one no longer worries about one's wife and children, nor thinks about gold and silver, wealth and treasures, houses and property. If you direct your mind single-mindedly toward the Buddha alone, your mind will not become distracted. This is called one-pointedness of mind without distraction. If we recite in this way, we can be reborn in the West.

But suppose you say, "No need, no need. I will just recite casually and carelessly."

You may think that as long as you believe in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, believe that Amitābha Buddha will sooner or later come to guide you, and perform the morning and evening services, there is no need to concern yourself with anything else or cultivate any other Buddhist practices. You may simply go on engaging in worldly dharmas and be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss at the time of death. If you think this way, you are mistaken.

Look at the great lay practitioner Xu Weiru. He assisted Dharma Master Yinguang in propagating the Pure Land Dharma gate, performed many good deeds, and wrote many articles. Yet because he remained attached to the treasures in his safe, he

became a wealth-guarding ghost rather than being reborn in the West. Later, Esoteric Buddhist practices still had to be used to liberate him.

Therefore, when you cultivate a practice, do not seek an easy bargain by thinking that being casual and careless does not matter. I tell you solemnly: being casual and careless is absolutely unacceptable. You must let go in your mind. If you cannot let go here, you definitely cannot go there.

Why do the Buddhas and bodhisattvas repeatedly tell us sentient beings, “There is nothing! There is nothing! Do not cling! Do not cling!”? They tell us that all things are nonexistent, that all are empty, precisely so that we will let go of everything. Only by letting go can we attain rebirth. Therefore, do not remain constantly attached to this world, unwilling to let go in the slightest. If you do not let go, you cannot depart.

Everyone knows that giving is the first of the six pāramitās. To give is to relinquish; being asked to give is meant to teach you to relinquish. You must be able to let things go. If you are always attached to wife, wealth, children, position, fame, profit, gain, and loss, then it is absolutely impossible to cultivate the practice in this way.

Next, we shall discuss consciousness. We have now reached the last of the eighteen realms, namely the realm of consciousness. The eighteen realms are the six sense faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses: three sets of six make eighteen. We discuss these eighteen realms in order to break through the realms. To break through the realms, one must break through consciousness, for it is because there is consciousness that there are realms.

Consciousness is the deluded mind. Once the deluded mind arises, the six sense faculties cannot function interchangeably, and thus boundaries arise. For example, the eyes can only see and cannot hear; the ears can only hear and cannot see. If these boundaries are broken down, the six sense faculties can function interchangeably, because they are originally a single luminous essence, all functions arising from the same true mind. To break through these realms is to understand that there are fundamentally no realms; these boundaries are produced by the attachments of our deluded minds. The sūtra will now tell us how the realm of consciousness should be broken through:

(VI) The Mind, Dharmas, and Mind Element: All Three Are Absent

“Ānanda, furthermore, as you understand it: the mind faculty and dharma objects serve as conditions and give rise to consciousness. Is this consciousness produced by the mind faculty, with the mind faculty as its boundary? Or is it produced by dharma objects, with dharma objects as its boundary?”

The teaching here is the same as before and uses the same sentence pattern: as you ordinarily suppose, the mind faculty and dharma objects serve as conditions and give rise to consciousness.

Then, what does it mean when it says, “Is this consciousness produced by the mind faculty, with the mind faculty as its boundary? Or is it produced by dharma objects, with dharma objects as its boundary?” If this consciousness is produced from the mind faculty, it cannot extend beyond the scope of the mind faculty; the mind faculty must be its boundary. If this consciousness is produced from dharma objects, it cannot extend beyond the scope of dharma objects; dharma objects must be its boundary. So which do you maintain: that it is produced from the mind faculty, with the mind faculty as its boundary, or from dharma objects, with dharma objects as its boundary?

At this point, there are several matters that should be explained briefly. Regarding the mind faculty and dharma objects, what we previously called the mind base among the twelve sense bases recognizes dharmas. In the Dharma Characteristics School, there are said to be five kinds of form. The first is called extremely distant form. Why is it called extremely distant form? Jiong means remote and scarce; that is, it means that there is virtually nothing there.

For example, a bird flies in the sky. When it has flown so far away that it can no longer be seen, and not even its form remains visible, there is nevertheless still an image of it in my consciousness. This faint image, as though present and absent, is extremely distant form. The second is called extremely subtle form. Subtle means exceedingly minute—so small that it may be disregarded.

For example, if you analyze a visible object into smaller, smaller, and still smaller parts, until it reaches the point where nothing smaller can be found and it has become so small as to vanish, there nevertheless remains an image. This is extremely subtle form. The third is called freely arisen form produced by meditative stability; it refers to the states that appear when we enter meditative stability.

When everyone sits in meditation and applies themselves, there are states that arise in meditative stability. As was said previously, having such states means receiving some news—that is, receiving some indication. If someone sits again and again without experiencing any state at all, this shows that they have not yet set out on the path.

If practitioners of the Pure Land school can, as Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva taught, gather in the six sense faculties into this single Buddha-name, they will certainly experience such states. If they recite the Buddha's name with a scattered mind, in utter confusion, they will not experience them. The Chan school does not

cultivate such states, whereas the Pure Land school does; once the mind becomes still, such states naturally arise.

Yet one must not abide in or cling to such states. Once one abides in them, one cannot advance; once one clings to them, one will fall into demonic states. Because the states at this time are relatively free and unimpeded, they are called freely arisen form produced by meditative stability. The fourth is called form induced by reception.

Reception means accepting. Form induced by reception is form brought about through acceptance. How is this form induced? When receiving the precepts at a precept platform, one sees the solemn Dharma altar and hears the karma master chant the karma text. This gives rise within one's mind to a precept substance, called the nonmanifest precept substance.

The sūtra recounts that when Ānanda was taken away by the woman Mātaṅgī, because he possessed this precept substance, although his body was drawn in by Mātaṅgī through the former Brahmā Heaven mantra, inwardly he was not seduced by her and did not share a bed with her. This was the power of the nonmanifest precept substance, and therefore it is called form induced by reception.

The fifth is form grasped through pervasive discrimination. This pervasive discrimination refers to the nature of pervasive discrimination and attachment among the three natures. Because our minds tenaciously grasp at all things, it is called pervasive discrimination and attachment. The Dharma Characteristics School says that these five kinds of form are objects conditioned by consciousness. Thus, when consciousness is discussed, the objects conditioned by consciousness must also be discussed.

A Dharma master sought to refute this object of consciousness and the Dharma Characteristics School’s teaching on the five kinds of form. What he said was somewhat reasonable, so let me tell you all about it. How did he refute the so-called extremely remote form? He said that when a bird flies far away, it eventually becomes too distant to be seen.

—since you no longer know it, it should be formless, equivalent to empty space. Can you condition empty space? Empty space contains nothing.

How can you condition that which contains nothing? If it can be seen, then it has form. In that case, is the bird flying high, flying low, or has it stopped to rest? However it flies, you ought to be able to see it. This form is seen by the eye and should belong to eye-consciousness, not to consciousness.

If it has flown far away and disappeared, becoming empty space, there is nothing in empty space. How then can you condition it? Therefore, he says that the Dharma Characteristics School's explanation is unreasonable. This is his first point. Regarding the second, extremely subtle form, he says: are you not analyzing things into smaller parts? Yet when they have been divided to the point where they cannot be seen, they have become so small as to disappear.

Since they have disappeared, they have no location; and having no location should be equivalent to emptiness. If, despite being small, they still have a location, where is that location? When speaking of conditioning form, there should be a visible object that is conditioned. If one can condition form, then, as before, it still belongs to eye-consciousness.

He says that extremely distant form and extremely subtle form both belong to consciousness. Extremely subtle form is an object that consciousness has thought about in the past, while extremely distant form is an object that consciousness can condition from the past. One is an object previously conditioned by consciousness; the other is an object previously thought about by consciousness. This is the distinction between them.

What, then, of freely arisen form produced by meditative stability? This form produced by meditative stability is not at all an object conditioned by the mind faculty, for one cannot enter meditative stability while the mind faculty is actively conditioning objects. What he says is fairly reasonable. If consciousness has not ceased and is still active and thinking, one cannot enter meditative stability. A person who has entered meditative stability must have already brought consciousness to a stop.

For example, in Pure Land practice, one recites the Buddha's name until one thinks of nothing else and focuses solely on a single Buddha-name. When the deluded mind no longer moves, the mind that recites and the Buddha who is recited both fall away. At that time consciousness is no longer moving. If consciousness does not move, how can it condition this state of meditative stability? Therefore, the states manifested in meditative stability cannot be conditioned by consciousness, because consciousness has already stopped and ceased to move.

Even if a state of meditative stability appears during seated meditation, it is not seen by consciousness; it is still seen by the eyes. For example, we dream while asleep. While we are dreaming, the eye faculty does not move, nor does the ear faculty, yet in the scenes that appear in dreams, we still see things with the eyes and hear sounds with the ears.

Regarding the states that appear in meditative stability, if such a state has form, the eye faculty is still what is used; it does not belong to the mind faculty's conditioning

activity. This is the discussion of the third kind, freely arisen form produced by meditative stability.

Regarding the fourth kind, form induced by reception, he says that the nonmanifest precept substance arising through receiving the precepts is likewise not an object conditioned by consciousness. This precept substance is induced by the precepts at the time one receives them; it is mind, not form.

Since mind cannot condition mind and can only condition objects, this nonmanifest precept substance, being a kind of mind, cannot be an object conditioned by consciousness. As for the fifth kind, form grasped through pervasive discrimination, all things are objects conditioned by the first five consciousnesses. We discriminate between long and short, square and round, blue, yellow, red, and white, large and small, high and low; these too are not objects conditioned by consciousness.

Why say this? What is the difference here? According to the Dharma Characteristics School, when we see visible objects with our eyes, the sixth consciousness follows eye-consciousness along with it; thus consciousness also conditions external objects.

But the sūtra says that consciousness does not condition external objects and does not follow the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body outward. Consciousness only inwardly conditions dharma objects; what it conditions are the residual images left behind by the first five consciousnesses.

Among the first five consciousnesses, the eyes condition visible objects, the ears condition sounds, the tongue conditions tastes, the nose conditions odors, and the body conditions tactile objects. After the first five consciousnesses take in images of the external sense objects, consciousness conditions these residual images.

This is also called form included within the sphere of consciousness. Consciousness here is our sixth consciousness, and the sphere refers to the twelve sense bases mentioned above. There are thus these five kinds of form included within consciousness and the sense bases, which differ somewhat from the explanation of the Dharma Characteristics School. Since the mind faculty does not condition external sense objects, external visible objects are not objects conditioned by consciousness. In this way, the view of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra comes into conflict with that of the Dharma Characteristics School. Consequently, some people in that school seek to refute this sūtra. This point must be explained clearly to everyone. Let us continue with the text:

“Ānanda, if it is produced from the mind faculty, then within your mind there must be something thought of that reveals your mind faculty. If there is no preceding

dharma, the mind faculty gives rise to nothing. Apart from conditions, there is no form; what use, then, would consciousness have?"

What does it mean when it says, "If it is produced from the mind faculty, then within your mind there must be something thought of that reveals your mind faculty"? If consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, there must certainly be thought within your consciousness. If there is no thought, it is not consciousness.

If consciousness does not require external sense objects and is produced independently by the mind faculty, then how can your consciousness think apart from the residual images left behind by the first five consciousnesses, apart from dharma objects? The mind faculty can function only when it stands in relation to dharma objects. Without the visible objects, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile objects conditioned by the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—without the images of the five sense objects received by the first five faculties—your mind faculty cannot give rise to consciousness. Thus it says, "If there is no preceding dharma, the mind faculty gives rise to nothing."

If the mind faculty does not stand in relation to external sense objects, then "apart from conditions, there is no form; what use, then, would consciousness have?" We have said that consciousness distinguishes and discerns; it can function only by taking in external sense objects through the inner faculties. Consciousness cannot condition what is formless or condition emptiness. Apart from the residual images left behind by the first five consciousnesses, once dharma objects are absent, the mind faculty cannot function at all. Even if there were consciousness, what use would that consciousness have?

"Ānanda, if it is produced from the mind faculty, then within your mind there must be something thought of that reveals your mind faculty."

The World-Honored One told Ānanda: "If consciousness arises from the mind faculty, then after the mind faculty has produced consciousness, there must be thought within that consciousness. If consciousness has thinking and deliberation, then that deliberation must also have a form. For example, when the eyes see forms, on seeing a tape recorder there is an image of a tape recorder; when the ears hear sounds, they can hear music, opera singing, the sounds of carriages and horses, and all kinds of other sounds. If your consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, then what form or image does this consciousness have?"

"If there is no preceding dharma, the mind has nothing from which to arise."

We know that the object of the mind faculty is dharma-dust. What is dharma-dust? It is the images left behind when our five faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—

engage with the external five objects: forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects.

Forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects all have appearances. What the mind faculty takes as its object are the residual images left by the preceding five objects. Only what has an appearance can cast a shadow; without an appearance, there can be no shadow. Thus, "If there is no preceding dharma, the mind has nothing from which to arise" means that if the preceding five faculties do not engage with the external five objects and retain their residual images, there can be no dharma-dust as an inner object, and your consciousness cannot arise.

"Apart from its object, it has no form; what use, then, is consciousness?"

Dharma-dust is the shadow of the external five objects. Apart from the dharma-dust that is its object—that is, apart from the images of the external five objects—there is simply emptiness here, with nothing at all. We have said that consciousness serves to discriminate, specifically to distinguish all kinds of forms. If there is no form at all here, what function can this consciousness have? What could you use it to discriminate?

"Further, is your conscious mind, together with all thought and the nature of discernment, the same or different?"

Three things are raised here: the conscious mind, thought, and the nature of discernment. The conscious mind is our conscious nature; thought is our manas consciousness, the mind faculty; and the nature of discernment is consciousness. Now I ask you: are these three—mind, faculty, and consciousness—the same or different? Are they identical with one another, or are they distinct?

"If it is the same as the mind faculty, then it is the mind faculty; how could it be something produced?"

If the mind faculty and consciousness are the same, then the mind faculty is consciousness and consciousness is the mind faculty. Since they are one and the same thing, how could there be that which produces and that which is produced?

"If it differs from the mind faculty, then it should have no consciousness."

If the mind faculty and consciousness differ and are distinct, then there should be no consciousness. Earlier it was said that if the mind faculty has consciousness, it should be identical with consciousness; but if it is identical with consciousness, there can be neither producer nor produced. Now it is said that if the mind faculty and consciousness differ, then there should be no consciousness, and consciousness could not arise.

“If there is no consciousness, how could the mind faculty produce it?”

If you have no consciousness and cannot discern or discriminate—if you lack even the most basic function that consciousness should possess—then how can you say that consciousness arises from the mind faculty?

“If there is consciousness, how can it be consciousness of the mind faculty?”

If you say that the mind faculty has consciousness, then how is this mind faculty to be recognized? If the mind faculty has consciousness and discrimination, what difference or distinction remains between the two? Naturally, there is no difference.

If the mind faculty and consciousness differ, then there is no consciousness; if they are the same, they are one entity and there is no distinction. Thus, whether they are the same or different, there is no boundary. In fact, there originally is neither sameness nor difference: sameness cannot be obtained, nor can difference be obtained. No boundaries truly exist at all.

“Since neither sameness nor difference can be established, how can a boundary be posited?”

Since the natures of sameness and difference cannot be established at all, whether one says that the mind faculty and consciousness are the same or different, one is wrong as soon as one falls into either extreme. If they are said to be the same, there should be no boundary. Since the mind faculty and consciousness are one thing, how could one thing have a boundary? A boundary exists only between two different things.

If they are said to differ, treating the mind faculty and consciousness as two things is likewise incorrect. Sameness cannot be obtained, and difference cannot be obtained; both are discriminations of the deluded mind and are not truly existent. Since the two natures cannot be established and neither extreme can be obtained, then how can a boundary be posited? Sameness and difference are both illusory and have no inherent substance, so how could a boundary between them be established? Naturally, there is none. This shows that our consciousness is empty and unreal. We cannot cling to it as truly existent, because it has no place of arising.

If one says that there is consciousness, the mind faculty and consciousness become two things. Yet the mind faculty and consciousness are not actually two things, so there should be no consciousness.

If one says that there is no consciousness, then this absence of consciousness is the same as external objects: your mind faculty does not know that there is consciousness, and consciousness does not know that there is a mind faculty. Is this not the same as the external objects seen by the eyes? How, then, could this

consciousness function? Thus, it is wrong to say that consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, and it is also wrong to say that it is not produced by the mind faculty. Since neither extreme can be obtained, this proves that consciousness is fundamentally illusory.

“If it arises from dharmas, the dharmas of the world do not depart from the five objects. Observe forms and all sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects: their characteristics are clearly distinguishable, corresponding to the five faculties, and are not included within the mind faculty.”

The preceding scripture passage states this very clearly: the inner mind faculty does not encompass the external five objects. The external five objects—forms, sounds, smells, tastes, and tactile objects—are encompassed by our five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. If consciousness is said to arise from dharmas, that is, from dharma-dust, then the dharmas of the world originally do not depart from the five objects.

Look at those five kinds of objects: their characteristics are all clearly distinguishable, each corresponding to one of the five faculties, and none is encompassed by the mind faculty. The five objects are form-objects, sound-objects, smell-objects, taste-objects, and tactile objects. Form-objects comprise all visible forms and things. Sound-objects are all kinds of sounds. Smell-objects are odors, pleasant and unpleasant. Taste-objects are the many flavors, such as sour, sweet, bitter, and spicy.

Tactile objects are sensations such as cold, warmth, smoothness, and roughness that are experienced through contact. These five kinds of objects all have actual appearances and entities. For example, form differs from sound, and smell differs from taste. Their respective features are clear and distinct; their appearances do not become confused with one another.

The five objects of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch correspond respectively to the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Each has its respective sphere, and none directly corresponds to the mind faculty.

As stated earlier, the mind faculty can only receive the images of external objects taken in by the five faculties; it cannot directly receive the external five objects. This is where the Śūraṅgama Sūtra differs from the Dharma Characteristics School.

When the Dharma Characteristics School discusses consciousness, it says that consciousness follows along with the preceding five consciousnesses. For example, when the eye faculty engages with form-objects, consciousness also follows eye consciousness outward; when the ear faculty engages with sound-objects, consciousness likewise follows the ear faculty outward. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra now

says that the external five objects are respectively encompassed by the preceding five faculties and do not belong to the sixth mind faculty. This somewhat conflicts with the teaching of the Dharma Characteristics School. Therefore, some people in that school have disparaged the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, claiming that it is a forgery.

“You maintain that your consciousness is definitely produced in dependence on dharmas. Now carefully observe: what form does each dharma have?”

“Each dharma” means the dharmas of dharma-dust.

If your consciousness is necessarily produced in dependence on dharma-dust, then look carefully: what form does this dharma-dust have? The form-objects, sound-objects, smell-objects, taste-objects, and tactile objects mentioned above all have entities. What form, then, do the dharmas of dharma-dust encompassed by the mind faculty have? These dharmas are not without form; they have illusory images.

Because the five dharmas of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch are all actual things with appearances, where there is an appearance there must be a shadow, and where there is a shadow there must be an appearance. Since these dharmas are the shadows of the preceding five objects, they have appearances. If there were only a shadow and no appearance, where could the shadow come from? It is only because they are illusory shadows rather than actual things that you cannot take hold of them.

“Apart from form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, arising and ceasing—beyond all these characteristics, nothing whatsoever can be obtained.”

If you separate from such phenomena as form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, and arising and ceasing, can you have consciousness? Certainly not. For example, apart from form-objects and empty space as apprehended by the eye faculty, visual awareness cannot arise. Form reveals emptiness, and emptiness reveals form. Without emptiness, form cannot be revealed; without form, emptiness likewise cannot be revealed. Form and emptiness exist only in relation to one another.

Through the various changes of form and emptiness, form-objects also assume endlessly changing appearances. The following pairs—movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, and arising and ceasing—work in the same way. Movement and stillness refer to sound-objects: at one moment there is sound, and at another there is none. Sounds themselves may vary in pitch, volume, speed, and slowness.

Openness and obstruction concern the sense of smell. When the nose is unobstructed, one can smell all kinds of odors, pleasant and unpleasant; when it is blocked, one cannot smell them. Contact and separation concern tactile awareness. When the hand contacts the body, one can know whether it is cold or warm, rough or smooth. Without contact and separation, tactile awareness would not exist. This is the function of contact and separation.

Arising and ceasing arise in dependence on these preceding phenomena. Because of changes in form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, and contact and separation, there occur the conditions of arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. Because other phenomena come and go, these changes of arising and ceasing occur. This is called depending on dharmas as objects.

For example, when a certain dharma arises, an image appears; when that dharma ceases, the image also disappears. That which depends on dharmas as objects is dharma-dust. Therefore it is said, “Beyond all these characteristics, nothing whatsoever can be obtained.” Apart from these appearances, not even an image remains. What, then, would you have? Certainly nothing.

“When they arise, the dharmas of form and emptiness and the rest all arise; when they cease, the dharmas of form and emptiness and the rest all cease.”

The dharmas of form, emptiness, and so forth mentioned here represent not only the objects apprehended by the eye faculty, but also the objects apprehended by the ear, nose, tongue, and body faculties discussed below. Your consciousness does not actually exist, because it is the dharmas of form, emptiness, and so forth that arise and cease. “When they arise, the dharmas of form, emptiness, and so forth arise.”

Once dharmas such as form and emptiness, movement and stillness, have arisen, your consciousness can arise by taking as its object the residual impressions left by the external objects. “When they cease, the dharmas of form, emptiness, and so forth cease.” When dharmas such as form and emptiness cease, the residual impressions left by the external objects are no longer present, and your consciousness likewise ceases along with these dharma-objects.

Arising and ceasing are both objects apprehended by the mind faculty. They can function only in dependence on form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Apart from form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, how could there be any arising or ceasing to speak of? When form, sound, smell, taste, and touch arise, an image arises; when they cease, that image also ceases. Thus dharmas do not actually exist; they depend on the residual impressions left by the preceding five sensory objects.

“If that upon which it depends does not exist, then what form can the consciousness produced from that cause take?”

Here, “that upon which it depends” means the cause on which consciousness relies —the cause that consciousness depends upon and borrows in order to arise. Consciousness cannot arise independently; it must depend on a substratum in order to arise. Here, the cause is precisely this substratum. If that cause does not exist, if even the substratum on which it relies is absent, then what form can consciousness, which arises from that cause, take? If there is no substratum, how can there be that which gives rise to it? If there is nothing that gives rise to it, how can there be anything arisen? If there is fundamentally nothing at all, what shape could there be?

“If no form exists, how can a realm arise?”

Since there is fundamentally no form, there is only vast emptiness. What realm could there be? Since emptiness contains nothing at all, how could boundaries be fixed? Emptiness has no boundaries. So-called boundaries in space are drawn only by reference to physical entities.

The airspace of each country today is demarcated according to its borders on the ground. For example, from certain latitudes and longitudes in Asia to certain other latitudes and longitudes is our country’s airspace; beyond that range lies the airspace of such countries as India, Mongolia, and Russia.

The sky itself has no boundaries. All boundaries are drawn by people on the ground according to their national borders, so these boundaries are delusory and have no real existence. The arising of consciousness cannot be separated from two sides: on one side is the arising of dharmas, and on the other is the arising of the faculty.

We have already explained that the mind faculty cannot give rise to consciousness, and dharmas likewise cannot give rise to consciousness. Since neither side exists, there naturally can be nothing in between. Then where could consciousness arise? Thus, once the two sides have been dismantled, the Middle Way appears.

In fact, the Middle Way is also a provisional name. Since the two sides are unobtainable, the middle is likewise unobtainable. The Tiantai school teaches the three contemplations of emptiness, provisional existence, and the Middle. Once the two sides of emptiness and provisional existence have both been dismantled, even the Middle Way is not established. If there is anything on which to take a stand, one has not truly realized the Way. Those who truly realize the Way do not even have this Middle. Since neither the middle nor the two sides exists, so-called consciousness is fundamentally deluded thought, merely the residual images of the preceding form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. To cling to these false images as real is no different from a fool talking in his sleep.

“Therefore, you should know that the mind faculty and dharmas, as conditions, give rise to the realm of consciousness—yet none of these three exists. Thus the mind faculty, dharmas, and the realm of consciousness are fundamentally neither causal nor self-arising in nature.”

This is the same conclusion as before. To take the mind faculty and dharma-objects as conditions and suppose that they can produce the realm of consciousness is fundamentally impossible, because the mind faculty, dharma-objects, and consciousness—these three—are originally nonexistent. Since these three are devoid of anything at all, “the mind faculty, dharmas, and the realm of consciousness are fundamentally neither causal nor self-arising in nature.” Not arising from itself, from another, or from both together is called being non-causal in nature; not arising without a cause is called being non-self-arising in nature.

To say that consciousness arises from the mind faculty and dharmas as conditions is to speak in the ordinary manner. Worldly people cling to existence and believe that the mind faculty and dharma-objects combine through causes and conditions to produce consciousness. Yet from the Buddha’s perspective, the faculty, objects, and consciousness are all entirely nonexistent and fundamentally unobtainable. Eliminating the two sides in order to dismantle the middle is the method of dual negation.

These eighteen realms, together with the preceding twelve places, six entrances, and five aggregates, are called the four categories. The passages in this sūtra that discuss the four categories are all concerned with negation: both sides are eliminated and rejected. Because neither side is obtainable, the meaning of the Middle Way is revealed.

Eliminating the two sides means non-arising. Non-arising does not mean that there is absolutely nothing; we still exist now, do we not? What, then, is this existence? It is the wondrous functioning of the true nature of suchness. Do not cling to this existence as real existence. Clinging is deluded thought; not clinging is wondrous functioning.

When the World-Honored One expounded the four categories, he negated the two sides and dismantled inner and outer, enabling us to see wondrous functioning and the substance of reality as it truly is. The preceding four categories explain emptiness: only after the two sides have been eliminated can the true suchness and dharma nature of the Middle Way be revealed. The subsequent seven great elements explain existence: through wondrous presence, they reveal that all dharmas pervade the dharma realm and that all dharmas are complete and without deficiency.

Taken together, the preceding seven examinations of the mind dismantle delusory existence in order to reveal true emptiness. They show that the aggregates, realms, places, and so forth are all unobtainable; this is the empty treasury of the Tathāgata. The subsequent ten explanations of seeing expound wondrous presence and tell you not to cling to the side of emptiness, for within true emptiness there is our nature that is able to see, our numinous and wondrous substance. This is the nonempty treasury of the Tathāgata.

Now, taking the four categories together with the seven great elements discussed below gives us the empty-and-nonempty treasury of the Tathāgata. It is wrong to cling one-sidedly to emptiness, and it is equally wrong to cling one-sidedly to existence. One must relinquish both existence and emptiness, because neither side is obtainable. Only then can the true suchness and dharma nature be complete and without deficiency, pervading the dharma realm.

Ordinary beings all cling to existence. From the standpoint of worldly dharmas, everything exists: there are wives and children, gold and silver, food and daily necessities—everything is there. This is the realm of ordinary beings.

The realm of the Lesser Vehicle is biased emptiness. It has none of the phenomenal appearances to which ordinary beings cling: neither this nor that exists. It appears that everything has been emptied, but it still clings to existence. To what does it cling? To the mental body. It empties the physical body, believing that the physical body is unobtainable, while holding that the mental body exists, because it has birth and death to transcend and nirvāṇa to realize.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the Lesser Vehicle still clings to existence, though its existence differs from that of ordinary beings. Thus one must not cling either to existence or to emptiness. When one clings to neither side, the wondrously existent reality of true emptiness and nonemptiness manifests before one. Therefore, to speak of the four categories together with the seven great elements is to speak of the empty-and-nonempty treasury of the Tathāgata. The present discussion of the four categories is specifically concerned with negating the two sides; the seven great elements below specifically reveal that all dharmas pervade the dharma realm.

The five aggregates, six entrances, twelve places, and eighteen realms conclude here. Let us now make a brief summary. We should view the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness in reverse order, placing consciousness first. This consciousness is discrimination, and it is the condition for the arising of sentient beings.

Where does our ignorance come from? Because of a single thought of not awakening, a thought arises upon that originally pure substance: “Here I am, able to be aware and to discriminate.”

This thought that is able to be aware and to discriminate is the conscious mind; it is the primary cause of the arising of ignorance. Because of a single thought of not awakening, ignorance moves delusively. Thus, in the obscurity of awareness within emptiness, one feels oneself to possess knowing and awareness, and the aggregate of consciousness arises. Once the aggregate of consciousness has arisen, it then moves toward objects.

Because once there is that which can be aware, there is that of which it is aware: this is one thing, that is another; this place exists, while that place is empty. Seeing existence, one takes it to be an appearance of existence; seeing emptiness, one takes it to be an appearance of emptiness. In this way, one clings to appearances.

To move toward objects means to run after objects. Because the aggregate of consciousness moves toward objects, the second aggregate arises: the aggregate of volition. Once the aggregate of volition has arisen, one abides in objects and forms perceptions. When objects fall upon the mind, they become the aggregate of perception. Accumulated perceptions become consciousness; accumulated perceptions become faculties. Once they become faculties and consciousness, there is the aggregate of feeling.

Once there is consciousness and there are faculties, consciousness clings to the objects before it and receives them; hence it is called the aggregate of feeling. The aggregate of feeling conveys the form that it encounters to our discriminating consciousness. Thus appearances of form confront our consciousness; this object of confrontation is the aggregate of form.

When form, feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness are stated in reverse, they become consciousness, volition, perception, feeling, and form. These are the conditions for the arising of sentient beings; sentient beings arise from here. Therefore, we say that one can become a Buddha by dismantling the five aggregates.

In cultivation, we must likewise proceed in reverse order. For example, after the five aggregates come the six entrances; after the six entrances come the twelve places; and after the twelve places come the eighteen realms. When dismantling them, we must do so in reverse order: first dismantle the eighteen realms, then the twelve places, then the six entrances, and finally the five aggregates.

It is like putting on clothes. When dressing, one puts on the inner garments first and then the outer ones, adding them one by one. When undressing, one must also proceed from the outside inward: first remove the outermost garment, then the second outer garment, and only at last remove the undershirt next to the body. The undershirt is like the five aggregates, while the outermost garment is like the

eighteen realms. Therefore, when dismantling them, one must begin with the outer eighteen realms.

The five aggregates concern consciousness and material dharmas; they are formed through the combination of mind and matter. In the Dharma Characteristics School, the five aggregates are explained by dividing mind into four while combining form into one: the first, form, belongs to material dharmas, while feeling, perception, volition, and consciousness belong to mental dharmas. Thus four mental dharmas are combined with one material dharma.

In fact, form and consciousness can certainly be distinguished as material dharmas and mental dharmas. But feeling, perception, and formations are both material dharmas and mental dharmas. Without the aggregate of form, how could you experience feeling? Can you experience emptiness? Without sound, how could you hear? Without hearing, how could you receive it? This sound is pleasant, and I like it; that sound is unpleasant, and I dislike it.

Whether you like it or dislike it, there must be a sound before a feeling can arise. Thus, feeling, perception, and formations are both mental dharmas and material dharmas. Here, mind and form are spoken of together as a combined characteristic; they are the cause of our arising.

The six entrances specifically explain the opening of the mind: the one mind is opened into six, and the six sense faculties confront the six sense objects, taking in the objects of the senses. Thus, this is entirely a matter of mind and its objects. The twelve sense bases discussed next open up form. Earlier, the six sense faculties confronting the six sense objects were discussed in order to emphasize their reception, so this was an opening of the mind. Here, the six sense faculties and the six sense objects are discussed in order to emphasize material objects, so this is an opening of form.

The eighteen realms, by contrast, discuss mind and form together; this is called the mutual opening of mind and form. To see our true nature, we must first remove these eighteen realms. The most crucial part of the eighteen realms is the six consciousnesses. There are vertical and horizontal ways of explaining this. The vertical explanation is like practicing the Chan school: one must break through thoroughly from top to bottom and emerge directly; this is called vertical emergence, and it is the Chan method of practice.

The horizontal explanation is equivalent to practicing the Pure Land school. It is like a bamboo stalk: there is no need to bore through each joint lengthwise. If I simply make a hole through it sideways, I can get out. This is called horizontal transcendence of the three realms. Thus, whether horizontally or vertically, one must break through the five aggregates in order to become a Buddha.

An arhat may appear to have broken through the five aggregates, but in fact has not. Why? Because the arhat has broken through only the aggregate of form and no longer clings to this physical body, yet still clings to a mental body. Such a one has only eliminated the personal self, not the dharma-self; therefore, this is not a genuine breakthrough.

What such a one has broken through is only the six consciousnesses within the eighteen realms. If one can further break through the appearances of the six sense faculties—the appearances of the six sense faculties are appearances of emptiness, and one must break through even appearances of emptiness—and understand that the appearances of the six sense faculties are fundamentally unobtainable, one can turn from the Lesser Vehicle toward the Great Vehicle. If even the appearances of existence and nonexistence of the six sense faculties are unobtainable, then the five aggregates will break through of themselves, without needing to be broken through.

For the five aggregates depend on these faculties; they arise from attachment to the four great elements through the six sense faculties. Among our eight consciousnesses, it is the manas consciousness that clings to the four great elements. It takes the perceiving aspect of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) as its faculties and the object aspect of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) as the four great elements. From the innate tendency to cling to the four great elements arise the six sense faculties. The six consciousnesses then discriminate in dependence on external sense objects; therefore, the six consciousnesses are the discriminating mind.

Because the eighteen realms of the six sense faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses are fundamentally unobtainable, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra says that the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve sense bases, and eighteen realms are all empty. In this respect, it differs from the Dharma Characteristics School. Having established the eighteen realms, the Dharma Characteristics School says that everything exists. Thus, it teaches existent dharmas, which conflicts with the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.

If we can break through the six consciousnesses, we can transform from ordinary beings into followers of the Lesser Vehicle. If we further eliminate the six sense faculties, we can transform from the Lesser Vehicle to the Great Vehicle. If we further eliminate the five aggregates, we transform from sentient beings and become Buddhas. This is practice according to the vertical explanation. The horizontal explanation is that sentient beings are existent, the two vehicles are empty, and bodhisattvas are neither existent nor empty.

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra specifically expounds the principles of the Great Vehicle, and therefore says that things are neither existent nor empty. Here, we will briefly

discuss the principles of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and the Dharma Characteristics School. The Dharma Characteristics School establishes the eighteen realms as dharma characteristics and says that everything exists, making very detailed distinctions among names and characteristics. This sūtra, however, says that everything is empty and unobtainable, thoroughly breaking through the eighteen realms. In this way, it overturns all the views of the Dharma Characteristics School, so its adherents say that this sūtra is a forgery.

Next, we will discuss the seven great elements. What are the seven great elements? They are the seven great elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, seeing, and consciousness. Great elements are also called elemental natures. We previously explained that the five faculties are all great elements: our five external faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body arise from these elemental natures.

The Dharma Characteristics School says that when the great elements first form, they are called the pure-form faculties. Ignorance adheres to the wondrously lucid, unmoving true mind and combines with external worldly defilements, transforming form, sound, smell, taste, and touch into a kind of faculty. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are the faculties of floating dust. The elemental natures are the most important. Next, the Buddha will explain one by one what the seven great elements are ultimately about. Please look at the sūtra text:

VII. The True Nature of the Seven Great Elements

“Furthermore, Ānanda, why are the eighteen realms originally the wondrous true suchness—the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha?”

The twelve sense fields have already been explained. Now we will discuss the eighteen realms.

What are the eighteen realms? Why are the eighteen realms the wondrous true suchness—the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha? The six sense faculties and six sense objects among the eighteen realms appear to have locations, while the six consciousnesses that arise from them are deluded mind. How can they be the wondrous true suchness—the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha? Ordinary people say that there truly are faculties, objects, and consciousnesses, because they cling to faculties, objects, and consciousnesses. They believe that there are external objects and things, and thus there arise seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching; from seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching, all kinds of discriminations then arise.

In fact, these three—the faculties, objects, and consciousnesses—are all our deluded mind, and originally they do not exist. Yet the true does not depart from the deluded. If we can see through appearances, then these faculties, objects, and consciousnesses are all manifestations of our wondrous true suchness-nature.

It is like the appearances of cats, dogs, lions, landscapes, and so forth that appear in a white cloud. Those appearances are in fact false and nonexistent; they are illusorily manifested by the white cloud. The cloud remains a cloud—it is not a cat, dog, lion, or landscape. If you understand the relationship between the two, you can see the white cloud through the false appearances. Otherwise, you can only be deluded by those appearances and fail to see the cloud.

If a film grows over our eyes and our vision becomes impaired, we see flowers in empty space; this is like having faculties, objects, and consciousnesses. If our eyes become pure and awakened, and we know that appearances are the essence of nature itself, then seeing appearances is seeing nature. Therefore, in the Buddha-eye, faculties, objects, and consciousnesses do not exist; they are all wondrous true suchness-nature.

But because sentient beings cling to material appearances, their minds become inverted. They do not recognize this true suchness Buddha-nature and see only external material appearances, thereby giving rise to all kinds of discrimination. Why is this so? Why are they wondrous true suchness-nature? Śākyamuni Buddha now explains this separately:

(I) The eye, forms, and the realm of forms: none of the three exists

“Ānanda, as you understand it, the eye and forms serve as conditions for the arising of eye consciousness. Does this consciousness arise because of the eye, with the eye as its realm? Or does it arise because of forms, with forms as its realm?”

Ānanda, as you know, “the eye and forms serve as conditions for the arising of eye consciousness.” Eye consciousness arises after the sense faculty comes into contact with forms; hence it is said that the eye and forms serve as conditions for the arising of eye consciousness. Consciousness discriminates and enables you to know what it is that you see. Once eye consciousness arises, we can see all things: men and women, young and old, food and daily activities, and every kind of thing in the external world.

“Does this consciousness arise because of the eye, with the eye as its realm?” Does this eye consciousness arise from the eye, taking the eye as its realm? This means that what is produced by the eye can only be the eye, and should not be something other than the eye.

For example, what a dog produces is a dog, and what a cat produces is a cat. Thus, what the eye produces should of course still be the eye. Since it is identical with the eye, it can only have the eye as its realm; it cannot be something outside the eye. Just as what a cat produces is a cat and cannot enter the realm of dogs, so what a dog produces is a dog and cannot enter the realm of cats.

If this eye consciousness is produced by the eye, then it is equivalent to the eye. Since it takes the eye as its realm, it should see only the eye and should not be able to see forms outside the eye.

If it does not arise from the eye, then might it "arise because of forms, with forms as its realm"? If eye consciousness is not produced by the eye, does it arise from external form-objects and take those form-objects as its realm? If it is produced by external form-objects, then what is produced by form-objects must likewise be form-objects, and there should be nothing else beyond them.

If it takes forms as its realm, then it can see only forms and cannot see empty space. Empty space and forms are opposites: if it sees empty space, it contradicts forms; and if it contradicts forms, it is not produced by forms. There is such a boundary between forms and empty space.

The eighteen realms principally concern the six consciousnesses, but unless they are discussed together with the faculties and objects, they cannot be analyzed in detail. It is like a field: if there are no ridges, you cannot tell whose plot is whose. If the field is divided by ridges, you know, "Oh, this plot is mine, and that one is yours." When the six consciousnesses are discussed together with the faculties and objects, the faculties and objects are the twelve sense fields. Since the twelve sense fields have already been refuted, it is easier to understand the refutation of the eighteen realms.

"Ānanda, if it arises because of the eye, then without forms or empty space there is nothing to discriminate. Even if you had consciousness, what use would it be? Moreover, your seeing is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; it has nothing by which it can be indicated. On what basis, then, could a realm be established?"

Here a further analysis is required: if it arises because of the eye, then without forms or empty space there is nothing to discriminate.

If eye consciousness were produced by the eye, where would this eye itself contain forms or empty space? Each person's eyes contain neither forms nor empty space. Since there are neither forms nor empty space, what could you discriminate? It is only because there are forms and empty space that one discriminates whether what lies before one is a cat or a dog, a table or a chair; they can be distinguished through differences in appearance.

What if there were only empty space and no forms? We have said that forms are revealed by empty space and empty space is revealed by forms. If there were no forms within empty space, then on what basis could that empty space be established? What could be discriminated? Therefore, apart from forms and empty space, eye consciousness has nothing to discriminate.

“Even if you had consciousness, what use would it be?” Eye consciousness functions by relying on discrimination and discernment. If there is no object available for discrimination, the eye consciousness produced by your eyes has no use. Its existence is then equivalent to nonexistence. Thus it is said, “Even if you had consciousness, what use would it be?” Even if, apart from forms and empty space, you truly possessed this eye consciousness and had this

capacity and energy, without forms or empty space, what could you use it to discriminate? With nothing present, what could you see? It simply could not function. Merely having a capacity to see is not enough; there must also be something seen for it to function. Otherwise, its existence is equivalent to nonexistence.

Moreover, your faculty of seeing is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; it has nothing by which it can be indicated.

That is, even if you possess a faculty of seeing, it is neither blue, yellow, red, nor white; neither long nor short, square nor round; neither cold nor warm, rough nor smooth. No name, appearance, or concept can express or describe it. If all things are absent, then on what basis could its realm be established? Everything we ordinarily speak of has its own distinctive qualities.

Its qualities allow us to describe and distinguish it. Yet seeing has none of these qualities and cannot be indicated at all. If it cannot be indicated, that amounts to its not existing. Since it does not exist, on what basis could a boundary be established? How could you delimit it? Where there is something, boundaries can be drawn: up to here is the boundary; that side is yours, and this side is mine. If there is nothing, no such boundary can be established. Since it cannot be indicated, the boundary naturally does not exist.

“If it arises because of forms, then when empty space contains no forms, your consciousness should cease.”

As we said earlier, what is produced should, in its essential nature, be the same as that which produces it; there should not be any difference. If eye consciousness arises because of the various objects of form and is produced from form-objects, then this consciousness should see only forms and should not see empty space.

When empty space appears, your eye consciousness should also cease. Since eye consciousness would then be absent:

“How could it know that this is the nature of empty space?”

If there were no forms, there would be no consciousness. How, then, could you know the nature of empty space? This shows that eye consciousness is not produced by forms and does not arise from external form-objects.

“When forms change, you are aware that their appearances are changing. But your consciousness does not change; on what basis, then, could a realm be established?”

This change refers to arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. After everything arises, it must undergo the process of arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing. Human beings are the same: after leaving the mother’s womb, they gradually pass from childhood to youth, from youth to adulthood, from adulthood to old age, and finally from old age to death. “When forms change, you are aware that their appearances are changing.”

Form-objects are likewise continually changing. You know not only their present appearances, but also that they are changing as those changes occur.

“But your consciousness does not change; on what basis, then, could a realm be established?” Earlier, the Buddha asked the king whether the Ganges he saw at the age of three was the same as the Ganges he saw at the age of sixty, and whether there had been any change. The king replied that the Ganges he saw at sixty was the same as the one he had seen at three, because the nature of consciousness does not change with the passage of time.

Since your consciousness does not change along with forms, on what basis can a realm be established? Your eye consciousness is like a field, while forms are like the ridges within it. If the ridges are constantly shifted about, no boundary can be established. Since forms are changing and can alter at any time, whereas your eye consciousness is unmoving, this boundary certainly cannot stand.

“If consciousness changes along with forms, then it changes, and the very appearance of a realm does not exist.”

Since one changes while the other does not, the boundary cannot be established. Now let us reverse the assumption: what would happen if forms changed and your eye consciousness changed along with them? Everything would be changing back and forth, and you could not even determine how a boundary should be drawn. Therefore, “the very appearance of a realm does not exist.” Earlier we said that the ridges changed while the ground did not. Now the ground also changes along with

them; when both are changing back and forth, how can a boundary be established? This in turn proves that eye consciousness is not produced by forms.

“If it does not change, then it is constant. Since it arises from forms, it should not be able to know where empty space is.”

If eye consciousness were unchanging, it would be permanent. But eye consciousness arises from form. That which arises from form should only cognize form; it should not be able to cognize empty space. Yet this is not how things are for us. We see forms and observe empty space: we can see forms and also know where empty space is. This proves that eye consciousness is not produced by the dust of form.

Earlier, it was explained that it is not produced by the eye faculty itself—not self-produced. Later, it was explained that it is not produced by the dust of form—not produced by another. If it is neither self-produced nor produced by another, might it be produced by the two together—that is, co-produced? So let us further suppose co-production:

“If the two are combined, so that the eye and form are jointly produced, then when they combine, the middle is gone; and when they are separate, the two must combine. Their natures would be in confusion—how could an element be formed?”

Suppose the two are combined: the faculty and form, the eye faculty and the dust of form, combine to produce it. Let us see whether they can be jointly produced.

“When they combine, the middle is gone.” If they are produced by combining, there is no longer anything in between. For example, there is now a book between two cups. If the cups on both sides are brought together, the book in the middle is displaced, and there is no longer a middle to be found. If no middle can be found, there is no boundary line. Clearly, they cannot combine to be jointly produced. Then, if they are separate, can they still be jointly produced?

“When they are separate, the two must combine.” If they are separately produced, one produces one half: the eye faculty produces one half and the dust of form produces the other half; then these two halves are joined to form eye consciousness. This, too, is incorrect. As stated above, what arises from the eye has the same nature as the eye, while what arises from form has the same nature as form. Take the example of a field: one side borders a mountain, and the other borders water.

The half of the field bordering the mountain has the nature of upland, suitable for growing corn; the half bordering the water has the nature of paddy land, low-lying and suitable for growing rice. The two fields have different natures. When they are

combined, what could be planted? One side is the eye faculty, and the other is the dust of form.

The side of the eye faculty is sentient, while the side of the dust of form is insentient. Can sentient and insentient be combined? If this were so, then "their natures would be in confusion—how could an element be formed?" One half sentient and one half insentient—how could sentient and insentient be joined together? It would be utter confusion. This is impossible. Thus, they cannot be jointly produced.

Then does eye consciousness arise out of thin air? No. This is what is meant by "not arising without a cause." Neither self-produced, nor produced by another, nor jointly produced, nor arising without a cause: "therefore it is said to be unborn." Thus, it is unborn. Clearly seeing, yet nothing is seen; the faculty, the dust, and consciousness—the three—are all unobtainable. Because they are all unobtainable, this is the wondrous, pure, luminous substance of bodhi; it is the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

"Therefore, you should know that eye and form serve as conditions for the arising of the realm of eye consciousness, yet all three locations are nonexistent. Thus the three—the eye, form, and the realm of form—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor self-existing in nature."

It cannot be found to arise from the faculty, it cannot be found to arise from form, and it cannot be found to arise from joint production. Since all are unobtainable, your view that "eye and form serve as conditions for the arising of the realm of eye consciousness" is incorrect. The eye, form, and eye consciousness—the three locations—are all nonexistent. This view that you understand is merely a conventional way of speaking; those attached to existence generally see things this way.

From the Buddha's perspective, everything is nonexistent. We say that even the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is nonexistent. This nonexistence precisely reveals the true mind and the true bodhicitta. Do not misunderstand these words as annihilationism. Just when we say that "all three locations are nonexistent," are not our eyes plainly able to see things? Before our eyes are men, women, the old, and the young.

In this room, look at how many things there are, in all kinds of forms and colors: tables, beds, cabinets—everything is here. These illusory appearances are not nonexistent. Therefore, the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss also exists. In fact, this is how it is: provisionally speaking, it exists; speaking thoroughly, it does not exist; ultimately, it is neither empty nor existent, neither existent nor empty—neither side can be grasped. To speak of existence or nonexistence, truth or falsity, is all the work of your own discriminating mind; none of it reaches the fundamental

substance. When speaking of the fundamental substance, there is nothing that can be said, no place for you to open your mouth.

The eye faculty, the dust of form, and eye consciousness—these three things are all nonexistent. Since they are all nonexistent, “the three—the eye, form, and the realm of form—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor self-existing in nature.” The realm of form refers to eye consciousness. The eye faculty and the dust of form combine to produce eye consciousness, so it is called the realm of form. This “realm” is the boundary between the faculty and the dust.

The eye faculty, the dust of form, and eye consciousness—these three things are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor self-existing in nature. Neither self-produced, nor produced by another, nor jointly produced: this is to be neither causal conditions in nature. Not arising without a cause is to be not self-existing in nature. To exist naturally, arising by itself without a cause, is self-existing nature. It is not like this: it does not arise without a cause, and therefore is not self-existing in nature.

Does anyone have any questions? Do you want to ask about arising from causal conditions?

Yes, indeed. All dharmas arise from causal conditions, so how can they not arise from causal conditions? We have just explained this: neither self-produced, nor produced by another, nor jointly produced, nor arising without a cause—this is arising from causal conditions. Arising from causal conditions is precisely non-arising. What the Buddha calls arising from causal conditions means non-arising; it does not mean actual arising.

These appearances are all illusory appearances, not truly existent. Thus, “Dharmas arising from causal conditions, I say, are emptiness”; they are nonexistent. Arising from causal conditions is non-arising. Since they are unborn, what causal conditions could there still be? Speaking in terms of substance, they are unborn; speaking in terms of appearances and function, they arise from causal conditions.

It was mentioned earlier that realm means cause. To refute the realm is to refute the cause. If the cause is unobtainable, what conditions could there be or not be? There must be a cause before conditions can be encountered. The cause is the primary cause, while conditions are auxiliary conditions. When causes and conditions come together, manifest activity arises.

For example, a seed contains the cause for a rice shoot to arise. When it encounters such conditions as soil, sunlight, and moisture, it can produce a rice shoot. If there is no cause—if there is no such seed—then, even though there may be sunlight, moisture, and soil, what use are they? What could arise from them? Some say that

realm means cause. Others say that realm means a category. For example, in ordinary speech we ask, “What field do you work in?” “Oh, I work in the press.”

We now turn to ear consciousness. The eighteen realms principally refute the six consciousnesses. Once the six consciousnesses are refuted, the realms are refuted. Eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind—in this sequence, it is now time to refute ear consciousness.

(2) Ear, sound, and the realm of sound: all three locations are nonexistent

“Ānanda, further, according to your understanding, ear and sound serve as conditions for the arising of ear consciousness. Does this consciousness arise because of the ear, taking the ear as its boundary? Or does it arise because of sound, taking sound as its boundary?”

This sentence pattern is the same as before. Once the earlier discussion is understood, the later discussion is easy to explain.

The World-Honored One said to Ānanda: just as you understand it, “ear and sound serve as conditions for the arising of ear consciousness.” Ear consciousness arises when the inner ear faculty hears the external dust of sound. This is an explanation everyone accepts; everyone says, “I hear sounds coming from outside.”

Where does this capacity for hearing sounds come from? According to the usual explanation, because the ear faculty has the nature of hearing, it gives rise to the awareness of movement and stillness in accordance with the arising and ceasing of external sound. When there is no dust of sound, there is stillness, and one can hear an absence of sound. When there is dust of sound, there is movement; when sound reaches the ear, one knows there is sound.

“Does this consciousness arise because of the ear, taking the ear as its boundary? Or does it arise because of sound, taking sound as its boundary?” This is the same as what was said before. If this ear consciousness arises from the ear, then its nature should be the same as that of the ear. To take the ear as its boundary means to use the ear as its limit: one should be able to hear only sounds within the ear, and not sounds outside the ear.

If it arises because of sound, it should take sound as its boundary. If this ear consciousness arises from sound, then it should hear only moving sounds; you should not know the stillness beyond movement. That is, ear consciousness should exist when there is sound, and when there is no sound, this ear consciousness should also cease to exist.

Yet our ears can now perform the function of an aware faculty. Not only can we hear when there is sound; when there is no sound, we still hear just the same, because at

that time we can hear an absence of sound. It is like the preceding passage of the sūtra: although a blind person cannot see objects, they can see darkness; to see darkness is still to see. When you cannot hear sound, it is not that there is no hearing; you still hear an absence of sound.

The Buddha says this in order to explain that what is called ear consciousness arising from the combination of faculty and dust is all dharma arising from causal conditions. “Dharmas arising from causal conditions, I say, are emptiness.” These dharmas of causal conditions are originally nonexistent; in the Buddha’s view, they are empty in their very substance.

The Buddha now begins to refute this ear consciousness for Ānanda. Among the three—the ear faculty, the dust of sound, and ear consciousness—ear consciousness occupies the middle. If ear consciousness is refuted, then the ear faculty and the dust of sound are immediately refuted as well. Refuting the false is for the sake of revealing the true. Only by refuting the false five aggregates, six entrances, twelve bases, and eighteen realms can the wondrous, luminous true mind, which is genuine and not false, be revealed.

From the five aggregates, six entrances, and twelve bases discussed earlier to the eighteen realms now being discussed, all are being refuted, layer by layer, until everything has been refuted. In the later discussion of the seven great elements, everything is affirmed as existent. Refuting the false is for the sake of revealing the true: refute the deluded mind in order to reveal the true mind. The true mind exists; to say that it exists is to make us understand wondrous presence. If one speaks only of true emptiness and not of wondrous presence, people may fall into biased emptiness. The present discussion of ear consciousness is also a refutation, one that leaves nothing intact, refuting faculty, dust, and consciousness completely.

“Ānanda, if it arises because of the ear, then when the two characteristics of movement and stillness are not manifest before it, the faculty cannot form knowing.”

If your ear consciousness arose from the ear, then, taking the ear as its boundary, it could not hear sound objects beyond that boundary. When the two kinds of sound objects, movement and stillness, are not present, your ear should have no awareness; that is, there would be no ear consciousness. If the characteristics of movement and stillness were absent, what would your ear hear? Just as the eye faculty, apart from space and forms, has nothing to see, so the ear, apart from the sound objects of movement and stillness, knows nothing. Since your ear has no awareness, the ear faculty cannot constitute knowing either.

“It must then know nothing. If knowing itself cannot be established, what form could consciousness have?”

This knowing is the substance. If there is not even knowing, what form could consciousness take? If there is not even the substance of hearing, where could what is heard be found? It is like having no parents: how could children be born? It is simply impossible.

Let us give another example. Rice and wheat seeds can sprout and grow. But if they do not encounter water and soil, they cannot sprout. What form does an unarisen sprout have? Naturally, no form can be found.

Our ears possess the nature of hearing and can hear sounds. But if the appearances of movement and stillness are not encountered, and external conditions do not function, there is no awareness. It is like a seed, which can in itself sprout but cannot do so without the conditions of water and soil; apart from water and soil, it cannot sprout. Without the two appearances of movement and stillness, the ear faculty cannot constitute knowing. This proves that ear consciousness does not arise from within your ear.

“If one takes the ear as hearing, then, because there is no movement or stillness, hearing cannot be established. How, then, can the ear’s physical form, mixed with colored objects of touch, be called the realm of consciousness? From whom, then, is the realm of ear consciousness established?”

If the ear possesses a nature capable of hearing, then “because there is no movement or stillness, hearing cannot be established.” Although your ear possesses the nature of hearing, there are no sound objects of movement and stillness. Without encountering external conditions, this hearing cannot be established. It is like the example just given: if rice or wheat seeds lack the conditions of water and soil, they cannot grow. Ear consciousness is the same.

Since “hearing cannot be established,” then “how can the ear’s physical form, mixed with colored objects of touch, be called the realm of consciousness?” How can one say that the ear is a faculty which, by contacting form objects, becomes a realm of consciousness? “Mixed with colored objects of touch” means that the ear’s physical form comes into contact with external form objects. This contact is the function of the body faculty—tactile sensation, the realm of body consciousness—not ear consciousness.

These two are fundamentally not the same thing, so such a view is mistaken. “From whom, then, is the realm of ear consciousness established?” You confuse ear consciousness with body consciousness. Since “hearing cannot be established,” you use the ear’s physical form to contact form objects. Then from where do you establish the boundary of ear consciousness? Since the ear has already been subsumed under the body faculty, and now there is not even an ear faculty, with what can you establish the realm of ear consciousness?

“If consciousness arises from sound, then, being caused by sound, it has nothing to do with hearing. Without hearing, the existence of sound characteristics is lost.”

If this ear consciousness arose from sound, then, since it exists because of sound, it would have no relation to your hearing. “Without hearing, the existence of sound characteristics is lost.” Suppose you had no nature of hearing, no auditory awareness, and did not hear sounds. How could you know that sound characteristics exist? Who could distinguish whether a sound was a beautiful melody or a disturbing noise? Sound cannot hear itself. Without the nature of hearing, without auditory awareness, sound characteristics naturally cannot be found.

“If consciousness arises from sound, and one allows that sound has sound characteristics because of hearing, then hearing should hear consciousness.”

If one says that ear consciousness arises from sound, one should then allow that sound has sound characteristics because of hearing. Since sound characteristics exist through hearing, that hearing should also be able to hear ear consciousness.

What arises from a sound object should be identical with that sound object. Since your ear consciousness arises from sound, when you hear sound you should also hear ear consciousness. Thus it is said, “hearing should hear consciousness.” Just now the discussion concerned the absence of hearing: this thing is sound and has nothing to do with your nature of hearing. Now the discussion concerns the absence of sound: sound is ear consciousness. Therefore, when you hear sound, you are also hearing your ear consciousness.

“If it is not heard, it is not a realm; if it is heard, it is identical with sound.”

Can you hear consciousness? Of course not. How could anyone hear this ear consciousness? Since you do not hear it and cannot hear sound, “if it is not heard, it is not a realm.” How, then, can a realm be constituted?

Suppose it could be heard: “if it is heard, it is identical with sound.” This nature of hearing would be the same as the sound object, identical with the sound object. The sound object cannot hear, and thus you naturally could not hear either. Therefore, this ear consciousness belongs neither to your ear faculty nor to the sound object.

“If consciousness has already been heard, who knows the consciousness that hears?”

If one allows that you hear this consciousness, then your ear consciousness has already become the same as sound. Thus, “if consciousness has already been heard, who knows the consciousness that hears?” This ear consciousness has been heard and has become an object of hearing; then there is no ear consciousness capable of hearing. Without a hearer, who knows that this consciousness has been heard? If

ear consciousness is heard as sound, what hears that ear consciousness? How can one distinguish whether it is sound or consciousness?

“If there is no knower, one is ultimately like plants and trees.”

If you had no awareness, you would become like plants and trees. We now all have awareness and can hear sounds, so we are not plants and trees. Since we are not plants and trees, this proves that ear consciousness does not arise from sound.

Through such repeated analysis, viewed from this side, consciousness cannot arise; viewed from that side, consciousness cannot arise; viewed in combination, consciousness still cannot arise. This proves that ear consciousness fundamentally does not exist. Śākyamuni Buddha explains this repeatedly in order to help us break our attachment to the realm of consciousness and, by breaking through appearances, see our true nature. Above, he explained that it does not arise from itself and does not arise from another. Below, he considers them together: it does not arise jointly.

“Sound and hearing should not be mixed together to form an intermediate realm. If the realm has no intermediate position, from what could the inner and outer characteristics arise?”

The intermediate realm here refers to the realm of ear consciousness. Since ear consciousness arises neither from the faculty nor from the object, one surely should not say that sound and the nature of hearing combine and intermingle to form the realm of ear consciousness.

Ordinary people think that the realm of ear consciousness arises when the ear faculty encounters external sound objects and the inner and outer sides combine to produce an ear consciousness in between, thereby constituting a realm. We have just explained that this middle, supposedly produced by the combination of inner and outer, cannot be established. “The realm has no intermediate position”: since there is no middle position, this realm of ear consciousness does not exist.

Now this realm is to be refuted by examining whether the inner and outer sides can combine to form an intermediate realm. If this intermediate realm cannot be found, how can the inner and outer characteristics be established? What is called the middle must necessarily distinguish two sides. For example, if there are two of us, with me on this side and you on that side, the space between us is the middle.

If the two of us joined together, then there would be no middle. Therefore, it is impossible for the combination of two sides to form a middle.

Since an intermediate realm cannot be constituted, then “from what could the inner and outer characteristics arise?” If one speaks of a realm, there should be a middle.

If there were an intermediate place, one could speak of the boundaries of two sides. But if there is no middle position, the two sides naturally do not exist; neither inner, outer, nor middle can be found. Since there is neither a middle nor two sides, the inner and outer characteristics cannot be found. This is non-joint arising.

“Therefore, you should know that the ear and sound as conditions producing the realm of ear consciousness are all nonexistent in all three places. Thus, the three—the ear, sound, and realm of sound consciousness—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor natural in origin.”

Therefore, you should understand that what you formerly believed—that the ear and sound serve as conditions to produce the realm of ear consciousness—is unfounded. The three places of the ear faculty, sound object, and ear consciousness fundamentally do not exist; all are illusory and unreal, and cannot be established. Earlier, the explanation that ear consciousness arises through the combination of the ear faculty and sound object merely accommodated ordinary people’s habitual way of thinking and spoke in terms of worldly dharmas. Worldly dharmas are all provisional dharmas. You must not cling to them as truly existent or take them as real, for these three places do not exist in the first place.

“Thus, the three—the ear, sound, and realm of sound consciousness—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor natural in origin.” The realm is consciousness. The ear, the sound object, and the realm of sound consciousness produced through their combination—the three things that produce and are produced—are neither causal conditions nor natural in origin. Not arising from itself, not arising from another, and not arising jointly are the absence of causal-condition nature; not arising without a cause is the absence of natural nature. Since they are neither causal conditions nor natural in origin, they fundamentally do not exist.

The above concerned ear consciousness. We now begin with nose consciousness:

(3) Nose, fragrance, and the realm of fragrance consciousness: all three places are nonexistent

“Ānanda, further, as you understand it, the nose and fragrance are conditions that produce nose consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the nose, taking the nose as its boundary? Or does it arise from fragrance, taking fragrance as its boundary?”

As you understand it, “the nose and fragrance are conditions that produce nose consciousness.”

The nose is the nose faculty, and fragrance is the fragrance object. If nose consciousness arises through the nose faculty and fragrance object as causal conditions, then does "this consciousness arise from the nose, taking the nose as its boundary? Or does it arise from fragrance, taking fragrance as its boundary?" If this nose consciousness arises from the nose faculty, it should be identical with the nose, knowing nothing apart from the nose; thus it takes the nose as its boundary. If this nose consciousness arises because of fragrance, it should be identical with fragrance, knowing nothing apart from fragrance; thus it takes fragrance as its boundary. Is this how the boundary is established?

"Ānanda, if it arises from the nose, then what in your mind is the nose? Do you take the physical form of the two fleshy nostrils, or the nature that knows odors and is affected by movement?"

The World-Honored One asked Ānanda: "If you say that nose consciousness arises from the nose faculty, then what in your mind do you take to be the nose? What do you use as the nose faculty? Our external noses have two openings, like two claws pressed together, and are therefore called the appearance of two claws. Do you take the fleshy appearance of two claws, or the nature that knows smells and is subject to movement?"

"If you take the fleshy form, its substance belongs to the body."

If you take the external appearance of two claws as the nose faculty, then this fleshy nose belongs to the body faculty.

"What the body knows is touch; it is called body, not nose."

The awareness experienced by the body is tactile sensation: it can perceive separation and contact, cold and heat, but it cannot smell fragrance or odor. Since this fleshy nose can receive only tactile sensation, it is called the body faculty, not the nose faculty.

"What is called touch is an object of touch. Since even the name 'nose' does not exist, how can a realm be established?"

This tactile sensation is itself an object of touch. Since there are only the object of touch and the body faculty, and not even the name "nose," how could there be a nose faculty? If there is no nose faculty, what could you use to establish a boundary?

"If you take the knowing of smells, then what in your mind do you take as knowing?"

The question is now pursued further. Since taking the nose to be the body faculty does not work, could one dispense with the nose and instead take the nature that knows smells—the nature mentioned above that knows smells and is subject to

movement—as one's nose faculty? If you take this nature that knows smells as the nose faculty, then, as the text says, "what in your mind do you take as knowing?" This knowing has already become the nose faculty, so what could you still take as knowing in your mind?

"If you take flesh as knowing, then what the flesh knows is originally touch, not nose."

If you take the sensation of the fleshy nose as the nature of nose consciousness, then what this flesh can know is tactile sensation, not your nose consciousness. This is what is meant by "originally touch, not nose." Thus, taking flesh as knowing is incorrect. But what about the reverse?

"If you take empty space as knowing, then empty space itself knows, and the flesh should not be conscious."

Since taking flesh as knowing is incorrect, can the empty space within the nostrils be taken as knowing? If that empty space is taken as knowing, then "empty space itself knows, and the flesh should not be conscious." If the empty space in the nostrils can know, then it is empty space itself that knows, and the flesh of the nose should not know.

"In that case, empty space should be you."

Since it is empty space that knows, empty space should be you; empty space would become you yourself.

"Your body would not know, and Ānanda today should have no location."

If you say that empty space knows and that your body does not know, is that actually so? Of course it is not. In fact, your body knows, while empty space does not.

This proves that the nose faculty cannot be found at all. Since there is no nose faculty, what boundary could be established? If you say that empty space knows and that empty space is my body, then you, Ānanda, should be empty space. But empty space has no body, so Ānanda today should have no location. Yet in fact you have this body, and your body is still here. This proves that empty space is not knowing. Then, might fragrance be knowing?

"If fragrance is knowing, then knowing itself belongs to fragrance. What has this to do with you?"

Since taking the faculty as knowing is incorrect, does nose consciousness arise from the object of fragrance? If nose consciousness arises from the object of fragrance,

then what arises from fragrance should have the same nature as fragrance. This knowing nature belongs to the object of fragrance, so what has it to do with you? Since it has nothing to do with you, you naturally should not know.

“If fragrant and foul odors must arise in your nose, then those two currents of fragrant and foul air do not arise from the īlāna plant or sandalwood.”

Because I smell fragrant and foul odors with my nose, if fragrance and stench necessarily arise within my nose, then these two currents of fragrant and foul air should “not arise from the īlāna plant or sandalwood.” As explained earlier, the īlāna plant produces a foul odor, while sandalwood produces fragrance. If these two odors arise from within your nose, they do not arise from the īlāna plant and sandalwood.

“When the two things do not come, do you yourself smell your nose to see whether it is fragrant or foul?”

If the īlāna plant and sandalwood are not before you, and these two things—fragrance and stench—do not come, then smell your own nose and see: is it fragrant or foul? How could the nose itself possess fragrance or stench? Without the īlāna plant and sandalwood, these two odors cannot be found at all.

“If it is foul, it is not fragrant; if fragrant, it should not be foul.”

Suppose fragrant and foul odors arise from your nose. Then, “if it is foul, it is not fragrant; if fragrant, it should not be foul.” If what arises is a foul odor, it should not be fragrant; if what arises is a fragrant odor, it should not be foul. Yet you can now smell both fragrance and stench. This shows that your nose is neither fragrant nor foul.

“If both fragrance and stench can be smelled, then you, one person, should have two noses.”

If you can smell both fragrance and stench, then you, one person, should have two noses. One nose cannot produce two odors: if it produces fragrance, it should not also produce stench; if it produces stench, it likewise cannot produce fragrance. What belongs to fragrance can smell only fragrance, and what belongs to stench can smell only stench. To smell both fragrant and foul odors at the same time, “you, one person, should have two noses.”

“Then, as you ask me about the Way, there would be two Ānandas. Which one would be your body?”

Each of us can have only one set of six sense faculties. If there were two noses, there should be two mouths, two pairs of eyes, two pairs of ears, and two bodies. Then

there should also be two Ānandas now asking me about the Way. In that case, “which one would be your body?” If one were real and the other false, which would be the true you?

“If the nose is one, fragrance and stench are not two. Once stench becomes fragrance and fragrance again becomes stench, the two natures do not exist. From what could a realm be established?”

If the nose is one entity, and fragrance and stench enter and mingle within that one nose, then they should be one entity rather than two.

Then fragrance and stench could not be distinguished: fragrance would become stench, and stench would become fragrance. Fragrance would no longer be fragrance, and stench would no longer be stench. Neither fragrance nor stench could be found; even their two distinct natures would not exist. From what, then, could a realm be established? Since the two natures of fragrance and stench do not exist, they are one entity, the same thing. You cannot distinguish the same thing, so how could you establish a boundary? Thus, fragrance and stench do not arise from the nose.

Stench arises from the īlāna plant, and fragrance arises from sandalwood. When these two things do not come, there is no fragrance or stench in the nose. Then does nose consciousness arise from fragrance and stench? Certainly not. If it arose from fragrance, nose consciousness would already belong to fragrance, and it should not be able to smell stench apart from fragrance.

If it arose from stench, then this nose consciousness would already be stench and should likewise not be able to smell fragrance. Thus nose consciousness arises neither from the nose faculty nor from fragrance and stench. This proves that it arises neither from itself nor from another.

“If it arises because of fragrance, consciousness exists because of fragrance. Just as the eye has seeing but cannot see itself, so consciousness existing because of fragrance should not know fragrance. If it knows, then it is not produced; if it does not know, it is not consciousness. If fragrance does not exist as something known, the realm of fragrance cannot be formed. If consciousness does not know fragrance, then the realm of consciousness said to arise because of fragrance cannot be established from fragrance.”

“If it arises because of fragrance, consciousness exists because of fragrance.” If nose consciousness arises from fragrance, then this nose consciousness should be identical with fragrance; it should be the same as fragrance.

“Just as the eye has seeing but cannot see itself, so consciousness existing because of fragrance should not know fragrance.” Just as the seeing nature of my eyes can observe objects but cannot observe the eyes themselves, so nose consciousness that exists because of fragrance should likewise be unable to smell fragrance. The eyes are used here as an analogy: because the eyes cannot see themselves, nose consciousness produced from fragrance should likewise not smell fragrance.

“If it knows, then it is not produced.” Since it is produced from fragrance, it should not be able to smell fragrance. Yet you can now smell fragrance; therefore, this nose consciousness is not produced from fragrance.

“If it does not know, it is not consciousness.” Consciousness is discernment and should possess awareness. If you do not know and cannot distinguish odors, then there is no awareness. Without awareness, how can it be called consciousness? Without the capacity to discern and experience odors, it cannot be called nose consciousness.

“If fragrance does not exist as something known, the realm of fragrance cannot be formed.” If this fragrance is not known by nose consciousness, but exists outside nose consciousness, unrecognized by my nose consciousness, then it has no relation to my nose. Accordingly, the realm of fragrance cannot arise. A realm is a boundary: the inner faculty and outer object together give rise to the nose consciousness between them, and this nose consciousness is the realm. Now, if fragrance lies outside my nose consciousness and has nothing to do with it, that realm does not exist. Therefore, the realm of fragrance cannot be formed.

“If consciousness does not know fragrance, then the realm of consciousness said to arise because of fragrance cannot be established from fragrance.” The realm of consciousness said to arise from fragrance is called the causal realm. If this nose consciousness cannot know fragrance, and consciousness exists outside fragrance, then the realm of consciousness that you say arises because of fragrance cannot be established from that fragrance.

Since consciousness does not know fragrance, from where can the realm of consciousness produced by fragrance be established? The consciousness realm of nose consciousness is said to arise from fragrance. If your consciousness does not know fragrance, but consciousness exists outside fragrance, what does that consciousness outside fragrance have to do with fragrance? In that case, the consciousness said to arise from fragrance cannot be established. Nor is it possible for fragrance to exist outside consciousness and consciousness outside fragrance. This proves that nose consciousness does not arise from the object of fragrance.

“Since there is no middle, neither inner nor outer can be established. These faculties of hearing are ultimately illusory.”

Only when there are two sides can there be a middle. Since neither side has the meaning of giving rise to consciousness—that is, since neither the nose faculty nor the object of fragrance can give rise to consciousness—the intervening realm of nose-consciousness cannot be established. Conversely, if there is no middle, the two sides of inner and outer cannot be constituted either. Without the intervening nose-consciousness, the inner faculty and external object likewise cannot be established.

Apart from the inner faculty and the external object, "these faculties of smelling are ultimately illusory." If there is no faculty and no substance, what could possibly be produced? Your faculty of smelling is fundamentally illusory. Thus, whatever fragrance or stench you smell is false, illusory, and unreal—fundamentally unobtainable. Do not cling to it.

"Therefore, you should know that the nose and fragrance, as conditions, give rise to the realm of nose-consciousness; none of these three locations exists. Thus, the nose, fragrance, and realm of fragrance are fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature."

Therefore, you should know that the nose faculty, taking the object of fragrance as its condition, gives rise to the realm of nose-consciousness. These three—the faculty, object, and consciousness—are all unobtainable. Thus, "the nose, fragrance, and realm of fragrance are fundamentally neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising in nature." The nose faculty, the object of fragrance, and even nose-consciousness—these three are neither produced by causes and conditions nor self-arising.

As we said above, not arising from itself, not arising from another, and not arising jointly are the nature of not being produced by causes and conditions; not arising without a cause is the nature of not being self-arising.

Now, these three are all unobtainable and illusory. This proves that their essential nature is suchness and Buddha-nature. Therefore, we must not cling to appearances anywhere; we should see our true nature. Śākyamuni Buddha painstakingly breaks down our attachments one point after another. With each point he breaks through, he removes one faculty; in this way, all six faculties are released, and all eighteen realms are dismantled. You have nothing

to cling to. Would that not mean seeing your true nature at every moment? And if you see your true nature at every moment, would that not mean that everyone becomes a Buddha? The wonder of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra lies precisely here: you need not laboriously perform morning and evening services, investigate Chan, recite the Buddha's name, cultivate esoteric practices, or, still less, cultivate any conditioned merit. You need only let go of everything.

For then you see your true nature at every moment. How relaxed such practice is! How free and untrammeled! How effortless! Thus, studying and practicing the Buddhadharma is an effortless and liberating matter; there is no need to be so constrained. If you must expend a great deal of effort, something is wrong—you are simply wearing yourself out in vain.

Previously, you did not understand this principle and practiced while clinging to appearances. You thought that you had to perform a certain amount of merit and recite the Buddha's name a certain number of times in order to attain accomplishment, as though carrying a thousand-pound burden on your shoulders.

Now that you understand this principle, you know that your own mind is originally Buddha, and that its numinous, lucid awareness is inherently complete. It requires no contrivance and no cultivation. When the thousand-pound burden is suddenly set down, how relaxed and joyful you are! There is a Chan koan in which a monk asked Zhaozhou, "What is it like when one brings not a single thing?" Each of us sentient beings carries a heavy burden on our shoulders: spouse, wealth, children, position, gold and silver, food, and daily living. Everything weighs upon us, until we can scarcely catch our breath.

"So now I bring not a single thing; I have put everything down. What then?" The question seems well put—being able to do this is very good—but in fact there is still a problem in it. Chan Master Zhaozhou, in his compassion, said to him, "Put it down."

Since he already brought not a single thing, why did Zhaozhou tell him to put it down? Because he still retained the idea of bringing not a single thing; he still had something. It is like the two vehicles: after breaking attachment to existence, they become attached to emptiness, so that an emptiness still remains. This bringing not a single thing is still attachment, still a sickness. Therefore, Chan Master Zhaozhou told him to put even this down.

But at this point the monk still did not awaken. Instead, he asked, "If I bring not a single thing, what is there to put down?" "I have nothing at all here, so what is there to put down?" Seeing that the direct approach would not work, Zhaozhou used a reverse provocation and said, "If you cannot put it down, then carry it away!" If you cannot put it down, this shows that there is still something in your mind; then carry it away.

This is wonderfully said. It is like a double-edged sword: on one side it kills, and on the other it gives life. It is truly the masterstroke that brings the painted dragon to life. Since one speaks of letting go, one must let go until there is nowhere left to let go; there can be nothing else remaining. Only then is that your Original Face.

Bringing not a single thing seems to mean having nothing at all, but there is still something there, because there remains the thought of bringing not a single thing. One must put down even this bringing not a single thing. It is like the Brahmin non-Buddhist practitioner who went to see the Buddha, bringing flowers to offer to Śākyamuni Buddha. The Buddha said, “Put it down.”

The Brahmin had originally held flowers in both hands. Hearing the Buddha tell him to put them down, he put down the flowers in one hand. The Buddha continued, “Put it down.” He then put down the flowers in the other hand, but the Buddha still said, “Put it down.”

The Brahmin said, “I have put down all my flowers. What else is there to put down?” The Buddha said, “I did not tell you to cast aside your flowers. You should cast aside the six external sense objects, the six internal sense faculties, and the six intervening consciousnesses. Cast them all aside at once. Where there is nothing left to cast aside, there is your freedom from birth and death.” Upon hearing these words, the Brahmin awakened to the forbearance of the unborn. The Buddha was not telling him to put down the flowers in his hands, but to relinquish the attachments in his mind; one must let go even of this letting go.

Here Śākyamuni Buddha successively discusses the six entrances, the twelve bases, and the eighteen realms; at every point, he is breaking through your attachments. This breaking through is itself letting go, and letting go is for the sake of enabling you to see your true nature. When you have put down all inverted deluded thoughts, the wondrously luminous true mind naturally appears before you.

Next, he discusses tongue-consciousness:

(4) Tongue, taste, and tongue-consciousness: all three are nonexistent

“Ānanda, as you understand it, the tongue and taste, as conditions, give rise to tongue-consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the tongue, with the tongue as its realm? Or does it arise from taste, with taste as its realm?”

As you understand it, the tongue and the external object of taste serve as conditions that give rise to our faculty of taste.

Does this tongue-consciousness arise from the tongue, with the tongue as its realm? Or does it arise from taste, with the object of taste as its realm? If it arose from the tongue, what the tongue produces should be identical with the tongue and would know nothing of things outside the tongue; therefore this is called taking the tongue as its realm.

If it arose from taste, tongue-consciousness should be identical with taste, which is called taking taste as its realm. There are many kinds of tastes—sour, sweet, bitter,

pungent, and so on—but you could be identical with only one taste. If identical with sourness, you would not know sweetness or bitterness; if identical with bitterness, you would not know sourness or pungency. So with which taste, after all, should it be identical?

“Ānanda, if it arises from the tongue, then sugarcane, dark plums, coptis, table salt, asarum, ginger, cinnamon . . . and all such things in the world would have no taste. Taste your own tongue: is it sweet or bitter? If the nature of the tongue is bitter, who tastes the tongue? The tongue cannot taste itself; who, then, is aware? If the nature of the tongue is not bitter, taste does not arise of itself. How, then, can a realm be established?”

Ānanda, if this tongue-consciousness arose from the tongue, then “sugarcane, dark plums, coptis, table salt, asarum, ginger, cinnamon . . . and all such things in the world would have no taste.” We know that sugarcane is sweet, dark plums are sour, coptis is bitter, table salt is salty, and asarum, ginger, and cinnamon are pungent.

If tongue-consciousness arose from the tongue, and taste came from the tongue, then all these things in the world should have no taste. You would not need to taste them in order to know their various flavors.

The five flavors—sour, sweet, bitter, salty, and pungent—are the primary flavors, respectively representing the flavors of the five directions: sweetness represents the center, sourness the east, bitterness the south, saltiness the north, and pungency the west. From these five flavors, countless different tastes can be combined.

If your tongue could produce taste without needing these things, then “taste your own tongue: is it sweet or bitter?” Taste your own tongue and see whether it is sweet or bitter. The tongue is used to taste other things; through contact with objects, it senses flavors. Salt is known to be salty, and coptis to be bitter. Without other objects, what taste could your tongue have? This proves that your tongue-consciousness does not arise from your tongue.

“If the nature of the tongue is bitter, who tastes the tongue?” If the tongue were bitter, then the tongue itself would have become a bitter taste. What would taste this bitterness? Who would know that the tongue in your mouth was bitter? For example, coptis is bitter, but can coptis say that it is bitter? It does not know its own bitterness; your tongue must taste it.

If your tongue were bitter, it would be like coptis. Who, then, would taste your tongue, which is like coptis? Therefore it is said, “The tongue cannot taste itself; who, then, is aware?” The tongue cannot taste itself, so there would be no awareness. Who, then, knows the taste? If the tongue were a bitter taste, it would already have

become an object appearance, a thing. Another person's tongue would have to taste your tongue before taste could arise.

But now it is you yourself who knows taste in your mouth; it is not a taste produced after another person's tongue has tasted your tongue. Who, then, is it that knows the taste?

Next comes: "If the nature of the tongue is not bitter, taste does not arise of itself." As stated above, the nature of your tongue is not a bitter taste; if it were bitter, it could not taste flavors, nor could taste arise by itself. When there is no object of taste—no plums, coptis, or other such things mentioned above—then sour, sweet, bitter, salty, and pungent tastes likewise cannot arise by themselves.

The tongue cannot itself produce flavors. According to the preceding sutra passage, when the tongue is not tasting anything, its flavor is bland—that is, there is no flavor. Since there is no flavor, how can a realm be established? There must be flavors in order to establish a realm: this is sour, that is sweet; distinctions are established according to differences in flavor. But now there is no flavor at all. By what could you establish a realm?

"If consciousness arises from flavor, then consciousness itself would be flavor. Being the same as the tongue faculty, it should not be able to taste itself. How, then, would consciousness know whether there is flavor or no flavor?"

If your tongue consciousness arose from flavor, then this consciousness would become flavor. Since they would be of the same nature, that which arises from flavor should be the same as flavor.

It is like the tongue faculty discussed above: the tongue cannot taste itself. If the tongue faculty were bitter, who would taste that tongue faculty? By the same reasoning, since this consciousness has already become flavor, and flavor cannot taste flavor, who would taste this consciousness of yours? Thus it says, "Being the same as the tongue faculty, it should not be able to taste itself": it cannot taste itself.

If consciousness arises from flavor, its essential substance is flavor, and it should not know flavor. Just as coptis does not know that it is bitter and a plum does not know that it is sour, how, then, would consciousness know whether there is flavor or no flavor? Since tongue consciousness has already become flavor and cannot taste itself, how can you know whether there is flavor or no flavor? Is it sour?

Or is it sweet or bitter? You can now taste flavors and distinguish clearly among sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent. You are neither wholly unaware nor do you confuse all flavors as one flavor. This proves that tongue consciousness does not arise from flavor.

“Moreover, all flavors do not arise from a single thing. Since flavors arise in many ways, consciousness should have many substances.”

Furthermore, the various flavors—sour, sweet, bitter, pungent, and so forth—do not arise from one thing. The five flavors cited above respectively belong to sugarcane, dark plums, coptis, salt, and asarum; each arises from a different thing. Thus, “Since flavors arise in many ways, consciousness should have many substances.” If consciousness arises from flavor, then each flavor should produce a consciousness. Bitter flavor would produce bitter consciousness, sweet flavor sweet consciousness, and salty flavor salty consciousness. However many flavors there are, consciousness should have that many substances. Therefore it says:

“If the substance of consciousness is one, that substance must arise from flavor. Salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors arise together through combination or coexistence. All their varying characteristics would become one flavor, and there should be no distinction among them.”

If the substance of consciousness were one and arose from flavor, then “salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors arise together through combination or coexistence.” Combination means blending several flavors to produce a new flavor. For example, when cooking, we add many seasonings, and the final result is a single flavor.

Coexistence means mixing several flavors together while each retains its former flavor. For example, schisandra has five flavors; when you eat it, its original flavors are all still present. When we taste something, we can taste not only salty, bland, sweet, and pungent flavors, but also flavors arising through combination and coexistence.

If this consciousness had only one substance, then after tasting sweetness you could not taste saltiness, and after tasting sourness you could not taste pungency. “All their varying characteristics would become one flavor, and there should be no distinction among them.” Since your tongue faculty has only one substance, whatever you taste would be one flavor. Naturally, you would then be unable to distinguish the various flavors of sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent.

“Since there is no distinction, it cannot be called consciousness. How, then, can it again be called the realm of tongue, flavor, and consciousness?”

Consciousness is discrimination and discernment. If there is no discrimination, it should not be called consciousness. If you have no discrimination at all and everything you taste is one flavor, how can it be called tongue consciousness? Since it is not tongue consciousness, why call it the realm of tongue, flavor, and

consciousness? Why say that the tongue and flavor together give rise to this tongue consciousness, dividing them into these three realms?

“Nor should empty space give rise to your mind consciousness.”

We say that the tongue faculty, flavor, and tongue consciousness are all illusory. Apart from these three, what could give rise to your mind consciousness? Surely one cannot say that empty space gives rise to this mind consciousness, for empty space cannot produce anything. This proves that your mind consciousness arises neither from the tongue faculty nor from the object of flavor; neither the internal faculty nor the external object can produce it. Next, the text discusses their combination:

“When tongue and flavor combine, there is originally no inherent nature within that combination. How, then, can a realm arise?”

The combination of the tongue faculty and the object of flavor would be co-arising. Suppose that this combination of the two gave rise to the realm of tongue consciousness. “There is originally no inherent nature within that combination. How, then, can a realm arise?” The prerequisite for co-arising is that the internal faculty and external object possess inherent natures—actual, separate entities. But it has already been established that faculty and object originally have no inherent nature and no real entity. Therefore, this co-arising is also unobtainable.

Since there is no co-arising, how could this realm of consciousness arise? By this realm of consciousness, we mean the sense of taste produced when the tongue, as the internal faculty, comes into contact with flavor, as the external object.

There must be two sides, internal and external, for there to be a consciousness realm in between. Now that neither side exists at all, this middle cannot be established. Conversely, if there is no middle, where could there be two sides? Since the three places of faculty, object, and consciousness all lack inherent nature, the co-arising of their combination is utterly unobtainable. How could the realm of tongue consciousness arise?

“Therefore, you should know that tongue and flavor as conditions giving rise to the realm of tongue consciousness are all nonexistent in these three places. Thus the three—tongue, flavor, and the realm of tongue consciousness—are originally neither causal conditions nor self-arising nature.”

Therefore, you should know that it is impossible for the tongue faculty and the object of flavor, as conditions, to give rise to the realm of tongue consciousness, because these three places are not truly existent. Since all three are absent, it says that the tongue faculty, the object of flavor, and the realm of tongue consciousness “are originally neither causal conditions nor self-arising nature.” Since they do not

arise from themselves, from another, or from both together, they are not of the nature of causal conditions. And since they do not arise without cause, they are not of self-arising nature. Fundamentally, they are all unobtainable.

Next, the discussion turns to body consciousness:

(5) Body, touch, and the realm of body consciousness: all three places are nonexistent

“Ānanda, as you have explained: body and touch are conditions giving rise to body consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from the body, taking the body as its realm? Or does it arise from touch, taking touch as its realm?”

“Body and touch are conditions giving rise to body consciousness.

Does this consciousness arise from the body, taking the body as its realm? Or does it arise from touch, taking touch as its realm?” The body’s contact with external conditions gives rise to body consciousness. Does this body consciousness arise from the body and take the body as its realm, or does it arise from touch and take touch as its realm? This sentence is like those above: that which arises from the body should belong to the body and should know nothing beyond the body.

Likewise, that which arises from touch should belong to touch and have no awareness beyond touch. The question is whether you take touch as the realm or the body as the realm. From which side does this body consciousness arise?

“Ānanda, if it arises from the body, then without the two conditions of awareness of contact and separation, what could the body know?”

“If it arises from the body, then without the two conditions of awareness of contact and separation…” If this body consciousness arose from the body faculty, then it would necessarily not require the two kinds of awareness of contact and separation in order for touch to occur. Awareness here means discernment. When something touches my body, this is called contact; when the thing touching it departs, this is called separation. Awareness arises through the body’s contact with and separation from objects.

When something else touches my body and I feel it, this becomes tactile sensation. If nothing touches my body, how could there be tactile sensation? Therefore, tactile sensation cannot be separate from contact and separation. If body consciousness arose from the body faculty, and the body itself could produce this tactile sensation, then it would not require these two kinds of awareness of contact and separation.

But apart from these two kinds of awareness of contact and separation, what could the body know? Without contact with an external object, apart from contact and

separation, the body faculty has no awareness. How could you have tactile sensation? Tactile sensation cannot be separate from the object of touch. Something must make contact; only through an object's contact and separation do we know that there is touch. Constant separation certainly cannot constitute touch, but constant contact cannot constitute touch either.

If, apart from the conditions of separation and contact with the object of touch, you have no awareness, then if there is no awareness, what could your body consciousness cognize? This proves that touch is not produced by the body faculty.

"If it arises from touch, then there need be no body of yours. Who, without a body, could know contact and separation?"

If tactile sensation did not arise from the body faculty but instead arose from the object of touch, having nothing to do with your body, then your body would not be necessary: tactile sensation could exist even without a body.

But "who, without a body, could know contact and separation?" Without a body there is no body faculty. Then who would know that something has touched them, and who would know that it has been removed? One knows contact and separation because one has a body; without a body, one absolutely could not know contact and separation. If there were no body, objects moving back and forth would only strike empty space. How could empty space know touch? Since without the body faculty there is no tactile sensation, this proves that tactile sensation does not arise from touch.

"Objects do not know touch; the body knows that there is touch."

"Objects do not know touch" is an inverted construction: it means that objects do not know touch; rather, the body knows that there is touch.

"To know the body is touch; to know touch is the body."

Here it explains that the body faculty and tactile objects support and complement one another. "To know the body is to know touch": only when you can sense the body can tactile sensation arise, for without a body one cannot know touch. "To know touch is to know the body": you can know touch only because there is a body; without a body, tactile sensation cannot arise. Thus, body is touch and touch is body; apart from the body there is no touch, and apart from touch there is no body. This is mutual arising, showing that touch and body arise in correspondence. Now, then:

"Touch is not body, and body is not touch."

Above, it was said that body is touch and touch is body. Yet it now continues: “Touch is not body, and body is not touch.” Touch is not body, and body is not touch—the meanings before and after seem mutually contradictory. What is going on? What was just discussed was mutual arising: body and touch depend on one another. Here, mutual negation is discussed: each deprives the other of the conditions for its existence.

For example, one thing cannot have two names; it should have only one name. If it is called body, it should not be called touch; if it is called touch, it should not be called body.

It was just said that body is touch and touch is body. But then one thing has become two names, and two names should refer to two different things; for one thing to become two things is certainly incorrect. Mutual negation means that they negate one another. What is negated? It demonstrates that the two things do not exist at all.

It is not only the Buddhist sūtras that speak of negation. The Chan school especially likes to use this method to guide people: driving away the farmer’s ox and taking the hungry person’s food.

A farmer needs an ox to plow his fields, so I drive away his ox. If you are desperately hungry, so hungry that you will eat anything you see, I deliberately snatch away the food in your hand. Why do this? Because you are habitually attached to appearances. If you do not cling to something, you do not know what to do; so I take away everything to which you cling, enabling you to see your intrinsic nature when not a single thing remains. This is how lively and marvelous Chan methods of guiding people are.

Because one thing cannot have two names, if one speaks of touch, one should not speak of body; if one speaks of body, one should not speak of touch. Therefore it is said, “Touch is not body, and body is not touch.” Body and touch mutually negate one another: if one speaks of touch, it is not body; if one speaks of body, it is not touch. Thus, touch cannot be obtained, nor can body be obtained. Since neither side can be obtained, therefore:

“The two appearances of body and touch originally have no location.”

Since neither body nor touch can be obtained, it is said, “The two appearances of body and touch originally have no location.” Thus, whether body or touch, both are deluded appearances; fundamentally, they have no place and no location.

“When joined with the body, it becomes the body’s own nature; when apart from the body, it is like empty space. If inner and outer cannot be established, how can the

middle be established? If the middle cannot be established, and the natures of inner and outer are empty, then when your consciousness arises, from what can it establish its boundary?”

What does “when joined with the body, it becomes the body’s own nature” mean? It means what this sūtra says: Ānanda, when you touch your head with your own hand, hand and head become joined as one; that is, the toucher and the touched become one. Once they are one, where are the toucher and the touched? Yet one and the same thing cannot itself constitute touch.

For example, when I clap my hands, one hand alone cannot make a sound; two hands are needed. What happens when they are apart from the body? “Apart from the body, it is like empty space.” Suppose my head and hand are separated, separated from this body: there is fundamentally nothing there, and thus it is empty space.

If they are joined with the body, the toucher and the touched become one, and once they are one, there is no subject and object. If they are apart from the body, then, because there is nothing, they become empty space.

Since neither joining nor separation can be obtained, then “if inner and outer cannot be established, how can the middle be established?” Since there is neither the inner body faculty nor the outer tactile object, and neither inner nor outer exists, from where can this tactile sensation in the middle, this body consciousness, be established? Thus it next asks: “If the middle cannot be established, and the natures of inner and outer are empty, then when your consciousness arises, from what can it establish its boundary?” There is no

middle, and naturally there is no inner or outer. Since inner and outer are both empty, from where can the body consciousness that arises in you establish a boundary? The consciousness here belongs to the body faculty, not to the ear faculty. The consciousness of the ear faculty is hearing, whereas the consciousness of the body faculty is tactile sensation. To establish a boundary, there must certainly be inner and outer locations. If there were an inner body faculty and an outer tactile object, one could say that body consciousness arose in between. But now there are neither the two sides nor the middle, so how can this realm be constituted? This proves that this realm cannot be obtained.

“Therefore, you should know that the body faculty and tactile objects serve as conditions for the arising of the realm of body consciousness, yet all three are nonexistent. Thus, body, touch, and the realm of body consciousness are originally neither causes and conditions nor a nature arising spontaneously.”

Therefore, you should know that the body faculty and tactile objects are taken as causes and conditions for giving rise to the realm of body consciousness. Yet because these three loci do not exist, this is impossible. Since none of them exists, the body faculty, tactile objects, and your body consciousness—these three things—are neither causes and conditions nor spontaneous in nature. Neither causes and conditions nor spontaneity can be obtained.

Because none can be obtained, all are empty; because all are empty, these six consciousnesses are illusory; and because they are illusory, this proves that they are suchness and Buddha-nature. Apart from your suchness and Buddha-nature, there is nothing.

Therefore, do not be deluded, do not cling to appearances, and do not cling to your body or to your tactile consciousness. This body and consciousness cannot be obtained. People all cling to there being a self and to there being this body; thus attachment to self is extremely powerful. Why do the dead have an intermediate-state body? Because this attachment to self is too firmly entrenched.

After this body has died, they still insist that there must be a self and that there must be their body, and so an intermediate-state body appears. The intermediate-state body is a material body; like a ghost, it has form and substance, but it is extremely subtle, unlike our present material bodies, which are so dense and substantial.

Because their forms are so subtle and light, not everyone can see them. Those whose practice is well developed can see them, and a few ordinary people can see them as well. This attachment is truly powerful. Whatever you cling to while alive in this world, you will continue to cling to after death, when the intermediate-state body appears.

Those who vow to be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss must let go of everything before they can be reborn there. If they cannot let go, they absolutely cannot go there; they simply cannot be reborn.

If your mind is now extremely attached, then at the intermediate-state stage it will still be extremely attached. If the mind cannot be emptied, how can you be reborn? Therefore, if you are to empty it, you must empty it now; if you are to let go, you must let go now. If you are unwilling to empty and let go now, it will be even harder to let go at the intermediate-state stage. I am not trying to frighten you.

In the past, there was a Mr. Xu Weiru in Shanghai, a great lay practitioner of the Pure Land school. He assisted Dharma Master Yinguang in propagating the Dharma and was immensely famous; everyone at the time knew him. Later, he died. Everyone thought that such a great lay practitioner must surely have been reborn in the

Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss. To verify whether he had been reborn, they performed a ritual to investigate.

How did they verify it? They tested whether he had an intermediate-state body, because those reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss have no intermediate-state body; only those who have not been reborn have one.

There are many methods for determining whether there is an intermediate-state body. One of them, a summoning method, is extremely powerful: once this method is used, it can summon not only an intermediate-state body but even the soul of a living person. This is real, not false.

When everyone tested him with this method, he did not come. They therefore thought, “It seems his practice was quite good; he has already been reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss.”

But on further reflection, they recalled that Lay Practitioner Xu Weiru had once been a bank manager. His safe contained many valuables—gold bars, jewels, land deeds, stocks, and much else besides. Could his mind still be attached to that place? So they searched again. When they summoned him, it was indeed as they suspected: he had become a wealth-guarding ghost in the safe. Not only had he failed to be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, but he had instead fallen into the ghost realm.

Thus, rebirth in the Pure Land is not a simple matter. You can go only if you can let go; if you cannot let go, you cannot go. Some say, “I can just recite the Buddha’s name casually. As long as I can be reborn, that is enough, so there is no need for one-pointedness of mind without distraction.”

If you can truly recite the Buddha’s name with wholehearted resolve, without the least attachment to this world, and continue reciting courageously whether or not you attain one-pointedness of mind without distraction, then this is certainly good. Buddha-recitation has one-pointedness in principle and one-pointedness in practice.

The state of one-pointedness in principle is very lofty. We do not require that one must attain one-pointedness in principle; it is enough to attain one-pointedness in practice.

What, then, is one-pointedness in practice? It is to have only the mind of remembering the Buddha and reciting the Buddha’s name, with no second thought. Apart from remembering the Buddha and reciting the Buddha’s name, one no longer worries about wife and children or thinks of gold, silver, treasures, houses, and land. If you single-mindedly think only of the Buddha, your mind will not be

distracted. This is called one-pointedness of mind without distraction. If we recite in this way, we can be reborn in the West.

But suppose you say that there is no need, that you will simply recite casually and carelessly.

If you believe only that there is a Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss, believe that Amitābha Buddha will sooner or later come to guide you, perform your morning and evening services, and then need not concern yourself with anything else, need not cultivate any other Buddhist teachings, and may freely pursue your worldly dharmas—thinking that at the time of death you will then be reborn in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss—then you are mistaken.

Look at the great lay practitioner Xu Weiru. He helped Master Yinguang propagate the Pure Land Dharma gate, performed many good deeds, and wrote many articles. Yet because he remained attached to the treasures in his safe, he became a ghost guarding wealth. He was not reborn in the Western Pure Land, and later Esoteric Buddhist rites had to be used to deliver him.

Therefore, when practicing the Dharma, do not seek shortcuts and think that being careless does not matter. I tell you solemnly: being careless is absolutely unacceptable! You must let go in your heart. If you cannot let go here, then you certainly will not be able to go there.

Why do the Buddhas and bodhisattvas repeatedly tell us sentient beings: "There is nothing! There is nothing! Do not cling! Do not cling!"? They tell us that all things are nonexistent, that all are empty, precisely so that we will let everything go. Only by letting go can we attain rebirth. So do not always cling to this world, unwilling to let go in the least. If you will not let go, you cannot leave.

Everyone knows that generosity is first among the six pāramitās. To give is to relinquish; exhorting you to give is teaching you to learn how to let go. You must be able to relinquish things. If you continually cling to wife, wealth, children, rank, fame, profit, gain, and loss, then practicing the Dharma in this way is absolutely impossible!

Next we will discuss consciousness. We have now reached the last of the eighteen realms, namely the realm of mind-consciousness. The eighteen realms are the six sense faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses. Three times six equals eighteen. We discuss these eighteen realms in order to dismantle the realms. To dismantle the realms, we must dismantle consciousness, for it is because consciousness exists that realms exist.

Consciousness is deluded mind. Once deluded mind arises, the six sense faculties cannot function interchangeably, and thus boundaries arise. For example, the eyes can only see and cannot hear; the ears can only hear and cannot see. If these boundaries are broken down, the six sense faculties can function interchangeably, because they are originally one luminous essence, all functions arising from the same true mind. To dismantle these realms is to understand that there are fundamentally no realms; these boundaries are produced by the clinging of our deluded minds. The sūtra now tells us how to dismantle this realm of mind-consciousness:

(6) Mind, dharmas, and the realm of mind-consciousness: all three are absent

“Ānanda, as you understand it: mind and dharmas serve as conditions, giving rise to mind-consciousness. Does this consciousness arise from mind, with mind as its boundary? Or does it arise from dharmas, with dharmas as its boundary?”

The explanation here is the same as before and uses the same form of expression: as you ordinarily suppose, the mind faculty and dharma objects serve as conditions and give rise to mind-consciousness.

Then, what does it mean by, “Does this consciousness arise from mind, with mind as its boundary? Or does it arise from dharmas, with dharmas as its boundary?” If this mind-consciousness arises from mind, it cannot extend beyond the scope of the mind faculty, and the mind faculty must be its boundary. If this mind-consciousness arises from dharma objects, it cannot go beyond the scope of dharma objects, and dharma objects must be its boundary. So what do you now maintain? Does it arise from the mind faculty, with mind as its boundary? Or does it arise from dharma objects, with dharmas as its boundary?

At this point, there are some matters I should briefly explain. Regarding mind and dharmas, what we previously called the mind base among the twelve bases: the dharmas cognized by this mind base are said, in the Dharma Characteristics School, to include five kinds of form. The first is called extremely distant form. Why is it called extremely distant form? Jiong means very distant and very slight; it means that nothing whatsoever remains.

For example, when a bird flies in the sky and goes so far away that it can no longer be seen, not even its appearance remains. Yet there is still an image of it in my consciousness. This shadowy image, seemingly present yet seemingly absent, is extremely distant form. The second is called extremely subtle form. Subtle means exceedingly small, so small that it may be disregarded.

For example, you analyze a visible object into smaller, smaller, and still smaller parts, until it reaches a point of such minuteness that no smaller part can be found

and it disappears. Yet an image still remains; this is extremely subtle form. The third is form freely produced by meditative concentration: the states that appear when we enter samādhi.

Whenever people sit in meditation and exert themselves in practice, states appear in samādhi. As I said last time, when states appear, there is some news—one has received a little news. Some people sit and sit, yet no state appears at all; this shows that they have not yet entered the path.

If practitioners of the Pure Land school can, as Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva taught, gather in all six sense faculties into this one name of the Buddha, states will certainly appear. If they recite the Buddha's name with a scattered mind, reciting in complete disorder, no states will appear. The Chan school does not cultivate such states, whereas the Pure Land school does cultivate states. Once the mind becomes quiet, states naturally appear.

Yet one must not abide in or cling to such states. Once one abides in them, one can no longer advance; once one clings to them, one will fall prey to demonic obstruction. Because the states at this time are comparatively free and unobstructed, they are called form freely produced by meditative concentration. The fourth is called form induced by reception.

Reception means receiving. Form induced by reception is form brought forth through reception. How is this form induced? When receiving precepts at a precept platform, you see the solemn Dharma altar and hear the karma master chant the karmavācanā text. A precept substance then arises within the mind; this is called the nonmanifest precept substance.

As this sūtra relates, when Ānanda was taken away by the woman Mātaṅgī, because he had this precept substance, although his body was drawn in by Mātaṅgī through the former Brahmā-heaven mantra, inwardly he was not seduced by her and did not have intercourse with her. This was the power of the nonmanifest precept substance, and so it is called form induced by reception.

The fifth is form grasped through pervasive discrimination. This pervasive discrimination and attachment is the nature of pervasive discrimination and attachment among the three natures. Because our minds fixate firmly on all things, it is called pervasive discrimination and attachment. The Dharma Characteristics School says that these five kinds of form are objects of mind-consciousness. Thus, when discussing mind-consciousness, one must discuss the objects cognized by mind-consciousness.

A Dharma teacher sought to refute the objects apprehended by consciousness and the Dharma Characteristics School's teaching on the five kinds of form. What he said

was somewhat reasonable, so let me tell you about it. How did he refute extremely distant form? He said that when a bird flies far away, it goes so far that it can no longer be seen.

—since you no longer know it, there should be no appearance; it is equivalent to empty space. Can you take empty space as an object of cognition? Empty space contains nothing.

How can you cognize something that contains nothing? If, on the assumption that it can be seen, it has an appearance, then is the bird flying high or low? Or has it stopped flying to rest? However it flies, you should be able to see it. This appearance is seen by the eyes and should belong to eye-consciousness, not mind-consciousness.

If it has flown far away and disappeared, becoming emptiness, then there is nothing in emptiness. How can you cognize it? Thus he said that the Dharma Characteristics School's explanation is unreasonable. This is the first point. Regarding the second, extremely subtle form, he said: Are you not analyzing it into smaller and smaller parts? Then you divide it until it cannot be seen, until it has become so small that it disappears.

Since it has disappeared, it has no location, and having no location should be equivalent to emptiness. If, after becoming small, it still has a location, where is that location? To speak of cognizing form, there should be a visible object that is cognized. If one can cognize form, then, as before, it still belongs to eye-consciousness.

He said that extremely distant and extremely subtle form both actually belong to mind-consciousness. Extremely subtle form is an object that mind-consciousness thinks about from the past; extremely distant form is an object from the past that mind-consciousness can cognize. One is an object from the past cognized by mind-consciousness, and the other is an object from the past thought about by mind-consciousness. This is the distinction between them.

What, then, of form freely produced by meditative concentration? Such form is fundamentally not an object cognized by mind, because when mind is actively cognizing, one cannot enter samādhi. What he says is fairly reasonable. If consciousness has not come to rest and is still active and thinking, you cannot enter samādhi. For one who has entered samādhi, consciousness must already have ceased.

For example, in Pure Land practice, when we recite the Buddha's name until we think of nothing else and focus exclusively on one phrase, the Buddha's name, then when the deluded mind no longer moves, the mind that recites and the Buddha who

is recited both fall away. At this point consciousness is no longer moving. If consciousness does not move, how can it cognize that meditative state? Therefore, the states manifested in samādhi are not objects that consciousness can cognize, because consciousness has already stopped moving.

Suppose that, while sitting in meditation, a meditative state appears. This state is not seen by consciousness, but still by the eyes. For example, when we sleep, we may dream. While we are dreaming, the eye faculty does not move, nor does the ear faculty move; yet in the states appearing in dreams, we still see things with our eyes and hear sounds with our ears.

As for states manifested in samādhi, if such a state has an appearance, it is still the eye faculty that is used. It does not belong to the cognizing function of consciousness. This is the explanation of the third kind, form freely produced by meditative concentration.

Regarding the fourth kind, form induced by reception, he said that the nonmanifest precept substance produced by receiving the precepts is likewise not a state cognized by consciousness. This precept substance arises through the precepts at the time of receiving them; it is mind, not form.

Because mind cannot cognize mind, but can only cognize objects, this nonmanifest precept substance, being a kind of mind, cannot be an object cognized by consciousness. As for the fifth kind, form grasped through pervasive discrimination, all things are states cognized by the first five consciousnesses. We discriminate long and short, square and round, blue, yellow, red, and white, large and small, high and low; these too are not objects cognized by consciousness.

Why say this? What is the difference here? According to the Dharma Characteristics School, when we see visible objects with the eyes, the sixth consciousness follows the eye-consciousness outward; thus consciousness also cognizes external objects.

But the sūtra says that consciousness does not cognize external objects. It does not follow the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body outward. Consciousness only cognizes dharma objects inwardly; what it cognizes are the residual images left behind by the first five consciousnesses.

Among the first five consciousnesses, the eyes cognize visible objects, the ears cognize sounds, the tongue cognizes tastes, the nose cognizes odors, and the body cognizes tactile objects. Once the first five consciousnesses take in the images of external objects, consciousness cognizes these residual images.

This is also called the form included within the sphere of consciousness. Consciousness here is our sixth consciousness, and “sphere” refers to the twelve

spheres discussed above. That which is included within consciousness and the spheres comprises these five kinds of form. These five kinds of form differ somewhat from the explanation given by the Dharma Characteristics School. Since the mind faculty does not cognize external sense objects, the external realm of form is not an object cognized by consciousness. Thus, the view of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra comes into dispute with that of the Dharma Characteristics School. For this reason, some people in that school have sought to discredit this sūtra. This point must be made clear to everyone. Let us continue with the text:

"Ānanda, if it arises because of the mind faculty, there must be something thought of within your consciousness, thereby manifesting your mind faculty. If there is no preceding dharma, the mind faculty has nothing from which to arise. Apart from conditions, there is no form; what use, then, would consciousness have?"

What does "if it arises because of the mind faculty, there must be something thought of within your consciousness, thereby manifesting your mind faculty" mean? If consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, then there must necessarily be thought within your consciousness. If there is no thought, it is not consciousness.

If consciousness did not require external sense objects but arose independently from the mind faculty, then how could your consciousness think apart from the impressions left by the preceding five consciousnesses, apart from dharma objects? The mind faculty can function only in relation to dharma objects. If there are no external objects of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch cognized by the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body; if there are no impressions of the five sense objects received by the preceding five faculties, then your mind faculty cannot give rise to consciousness. Hence, "if there is no preceding dharma, the mind faculty has nothing from which to arise."

If the mind faculty does not engage with external sense objects, then "apart from conditions, there is no form; what use, then, would consciousness have?" As we have said, consciousness discerns and distinguishes; it functions only by taking in external sense objects through the internal faculties. Consciousness cannot cognize what has no form, nor can it cognize emptiness. Apart from the impressions left by the preceding five consciousnesses, when there are no dharma objects, the mind faculty cannot function at all. Even if there were consciousness, what use would that consciousness have?

"Ānanda, if it arises because of the mind faculty, there must be something thought of within your consciousness, thereby manifesting your mind faculty."

The World-Honored One tells Ānanda: If consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, then after the mind faculty has produced consciousness, there must necessarily be something thought of within consciousness. If consciousness has

thoughts and reflections, those thoughts and reflections must also have a form. For example, when the eye sees form, seeing a tape recorder produces the image of a tape recorder. When the ear hears sound, it can hear music, operatic singing, the sounds of carts and horses, and all kinds of other sounds. If your consciousness is produced by the mind faculty, what form or image does this consciousness have?

“If there is no preceding dharma, the mind faculty has nothing from which to arise.”

We know that what the mind faculty cognizes is dharma objects. What are dharma objects? They are the impressions left when our five faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—cognize the five external sense objects of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

Form, sound, smell, taste, and touch all have appearances. What the mind faculty cognizes are the impressions left by the preceding five sense objects. Only what has appearance can cast a shadow; without appearance, there can be no shadow. Thus, “if there is no preceding dharma, the mind faculty has nothing from which to arise” means that if the preceding five faculties do not cognize the five external sense objects and receive the impressions they leave behind, there are no dharma objects as internal objects, and your consciousness cannot arise.

“Apart from conditions, there is no form; what use, then, would consciousness have?”

Dharma objects are the impressions of the five external sense objects. Apart from the dharma objects that are cognized, apart from the impressions of the five external sense objects, there is simply empty nothingness here. As we have said, consciousness serves to discriminate, specializing in distinguishing various forms. If there is no form at all here, what function can this consciousness serve? What could it distinguish?

“Further, is your conscious mind, together with all thought and the faculty of discernment, the same or different?”

Three things are raised here: the conscious mind, thought, and the faculty of discernment. The conscious mind is our conscious nature; thought is our manas consciousness, the mind faculty; and the faculty of discernment is consciousness. Now I ask you: are these three—mind, faculty, and consciousness—the same or different? Are they identical with one another, or are they distinct?

“If they are the same, then consciousness is the mind faculty. How, then, could it be produced?”

If the mind faculty and consciousness are the same, then the mind faculty is consciousness, and consciousness is the mind faculty. Since they are one and the

same thing, how could there be that which produces and that which is produced?

“If they are different, then there should be no consciousness.”

If the mind faculty and consciousness are different and distinct, then there should be no consciousness. It was said above that if the mind faculty has consciousness, it should be identical with the mind faculty; but if it is identical with the mind faculty, there can be no producer and produced. Now it is said that if the mind faculty and consciousness differ, then there should be no cognition, and consciousness could not arise.

“If there is no consciousness, how could the mind faculty produce it?”

If you have no consciousness, cannot discern, and make no distinctions—if you lack even the most basic function that consciousness ought to possess—how can you say that consciousness is produced from the mind faculty?

“If there is consciousness, how can it be consciousness of the mind faculty?”

If the mind faculty has consciousness, how can it cognize the mind faculty itself? If the mind faculty has consciousness and makes distinctions, what difference remains between the two? Naturally, there is no difference.

If the mind faculty and consciousness are different, then there is no consciousness; if they are the same, then they are one entity and there is no difference. Thus, whether they are the same or different, there is no boundary between them. In fact, there never were sameness and difference. Sameness cannot be obtained, nor can difference be obtained; in truth, there are no boundaries at all.

“Since neither the nature of sameness nor that of difference is established, how can a boundary be established?”

Since the two natures of sameness and difference are not established at all, it is incorrect to say that the mind faculty and consciousness are either the same or different, for either assertion falls into one of two extremes. If they are said to be the same, there should be no boundary. Since the mind faculty and consciousness are one thing, how could one thing have a boundary? A boundary exists only between two different things.

If they are said to be different, treating the mind faculty and consciousness as two things, that too is incorrect. Sameness cannot be obtained, nor can difference be obtained. Both are discriminations of the deluded mind, not something real. Since the two natures are not established and neither extreme can be obtained, then “how can a boundary be established?” Sameness and difference are both illusory and have no inherent substance; how could a boundary between them be

established? Naturally, it cannot. This shows that our consciousness is illusory and unreal and cannot be grasped as truly existent, because it has no point of origination.

If there is consciousness, the mind faculty and consciousness become two things. Yet the mind faculty and consciousness are not actually two things, so there should not be consciousness.

If there is no consciousness, then it is the same as external sense objects: your mind faculty does not know that consciousness exists, and consciousness does not know that the mind faculty exists. Is this not like the external objects seen by the eyes? How, then, could this consciousness function? Thus, it is incorrect to say that it is produced by the mind faculty, and it is also incorrect to say that it is not produced by the mind faculty. Since neither extreme can be obtained, this proves that consciousness is fundamentally illusory.

"If it arises because of dharmas, the dharmas of the world do not depart from the five sense objects. Observe the dharmas of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch: their appearances are clearly distinct, corresponding to the five faculties; they are not included within the mind faculty."

The preceding sūtra passage makes this very clear: the internal mind faculty does not include the five external sense objects. The five external sense objects—form, sound, smell, taste, and touch—are included within our five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. If consciousness arises because of dharmas, that is, from dharma objects, then the dharmas of the world do not originally depart from the five sense objects.

Look at those five kinds of sense-object dharmas. Their appearances are all quite distinct; each corresponds to one of the five faculties and is not included within the mind faculty. The five sense objects are the dharmas of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Form dharmas are all visible forms and things. Sound dharmas are all kinds of sounds. Smell dharmas are odors, whether fragrant or foul. Taste dharmas are the various flavors, such as sour, sweet, bitter, and pungent.

Touch dharmas are sensations such as cold, warmth, smoothness, and roughness that are experienced through contact. These five kinds of sense-object dharmas all have real appearances and substantial entities. For example, form differs from sound, and smell differs from taste. Their respective characteristics are clear and distinct; their appearances are not confused with one another.

The five sense objects of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch respectively correspond to the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Each has its own proper sphere; not one directly corresponds to the mind faculty.

As stated above, the mind faculty can only take in the impressions of external sense objects received through the five faculties; it cannot directly take in the five external sense objects. This is where the Śūraṅgama Sūtra differs from the Dharma Characteristics School.

When the Dharma Characteristics School discusses consciousness, it says that consciousness runs together with the preceding five consciousnesses. For example, when the eye faculty cognizes form, consciousness also follows the eye consciousness outward; when the ear faculty cognizes sound, consciousness likewise follows the ear faculty outward. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra now says that the five external sense objects are respectively included within the preceding five faculties and do not belong to the sixth mind faculty. This somewhat conflicts with the position of the Dharma Characteristics School, so some people in that school slander the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, claiming that it is a forged scripture.

“You maintain that your consciousness definitely arises in dependence on dharmas. Now observe carefully: what form does each dharma have?”

“Each dharma” refers to dharmas as dharma objects.

If your consciousness must arise in dependence on dharma objects, then look carefully: what form do these dharma objects have? The form dharmas, sound dharmas, smell dharmas, taste dharmas, and touch dharmas discussed above all have substantial entities. What form, then, do the dharmas included within the mind faculty—that is, dharma objects—have? Dharma objects are not without form; they have illusory impressions.

Because the five dharmas of form, sound, smell, taste, and touch all have material substance and appearances, wherever there is an appearance there must be a shadow, and wherever there is a shadow there must be an appearance. This dharma-object is the shadow cast by the preceding five sense objects, and so it has an appearance. If there were only a shadow and no appearance, where would the shadow come from? It is simply a false shadow rather than a material thing, so you cannot produce it.

“If one transcends such appearances as form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, arising and ceasing, one ultimately obtains nothing.”

If you were separated from the phenomena of form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, and arising and ceasing, could you still have consciousness? Certainly not. For example, apart from the phenomena of form and emptiness apprehended by the eye faculty, you could not give rise to visual awareness. Form reveals emptiness, and emptiness reveals

form; without emptiness, form cannot be revealed, and without form, emptiness likewise cannot be revealed. Form and emptiness exist only in relation to each other.

Through the various changes of form and emptiness, the phenomena of form also take on endlessly varying appearances. The same applies to movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, and arising and ceasing below. Movement and stillness refer to the sense object of sound: at one moment there is sound, and at another there is no sound. Sound itself may also vary in pitch, volume, rapidity, slowness, and so forth.

Openness and obstruction concern the sense of smell. When the nose is unobstructed, one can smell various odors, pleasant and foul; once it is blocked, one cannot smell them. Contact and separation concern the sense of touch. When the hand touches the body, one can know whether it is cold or warm, rough or smooth. Without contact and separation, there would be no tactile awareness. This is the function of contact and separation.

Arising and ceasing arise in dependence on the preceding kinds of phenomena. Through changes in form and emptiness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, contact and separation, and so forth, the conditions of arising, abiding, alteration, and cessation occur. Because other phenomena come and go, these changes of arising and ceasing occur. This is called conditioning based on dharmas.

For example, when a certain dharma arises, a shadow appears; when that dharma ceases, that shadow also disappears. That which is conditioned based on dharmas is a dharma-object. Thus it is said, “If one transcends such appearances, one ultimately obtains nothing.” Apart from these appearances, there is not even a shadow. What could there still be? Certainly nothing.

“When they arise, the various dharmas of form and emptiness arise with them; when they cease, the various dharmas of form and emptiness cease with them.”

The various dharmas of form and emptiness mentioned here represent not only the objects apprehended by the eye faculty, but also those apprehended by the ear, nose, tongue, and body faculties below. Your consciousness does not truly exist, for what arises and ceases are the various dharmas of form and emptiness. “When they arise, the various dharmas of form and emptiness arise with them.”

When the various dharmas of form and emptiness, movement and stillness, and so forth arise, the residual shadows of external sense objects are present, and your consciousness can arise by conditioning on these dharma objects. “When they cease, the various dharmas of form and emptiness cease with them.” When the various dharmas of form and emptiness cease, the residual shadows of external

sense objects are absent, and your consciousness likewise ceases along with the dharma objects.

Arising and ceasing are both objects apprehended by the mind faculty. They can function only in dependence on form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. Apart from form, sound, smell, taste, and touch, how could there be any arising or ceasing to speak of? When form, sound, smell, taste, and touch arise, a shadow arises; when they cease, this shadow also ceases. Thus dharma objects do not truly exist; they depend on the residual shadows of the preceding five sense objects.

“Since that upon which it depends does not exist, what appearance can consciousness, which arises from that cause, assume?”

Here, “that upon which it depends” means the cause on which consciousness relies—the cause that consciousness depends upon and borrows in order to arise. Consciousness cannot arise independently; it must depend on a basis in order to arise. Here, cause is precisely this basis. If that causal basis does not exist—if even this supporting basis is absent—what appearance could the consciousness arising from that cause assume? If there is no basis, how could there be that which gives rise to it? If there is no producer, how could there be that which is produced? If there is fundamentally nothing at all, how could one speak of any appearance?

“If appearances do not exist, how can a realm arise?”

Since there is fundamentally no appearance, there is simply vast emptiness. What realm could there be? Since emptiness contains not a single thing, how could boundaries be established? Emptiness has no limits. So-called boundaries in space are all drawn by comparison with concrete entities.

The airspace of each country today is demarcated according to national borders on the ground. For example, from certain coordinates in Asia to certain other coordinates lies our country’s airspace; beyond that range lies the airspace of such countries as India, Mongolia, and Russia.

The sky itself has no boundaries. Its boundaries are all drawn by people on the ground according to their own national borders. Thus these boundaries are illusory and do not truly exist. The arising of consciousness cannot be separated from two sides: on one side is the arising of dharma objects, and on the other is the arising of the faculty.

We have already explained that the mind faculty cannot produce consciousness, nor can dharma objects produce consciousness. Since neither side exists, there is naturally nothing in between. Then where could consciousness arise? Thus, once the two sides have been dismantled, the middle way appears.

In fact, the middle way is also a provisional name. Since the two sides cannot be obtained, the middle cannot be obtained either. The Tiantai school teaches the three contemplations of emptiness, provisional existence, and the middle. After dismantling both the empty and the provisional sides, it does not even establish the middle way. If there remains a position to be established, one has not truly realized the Way. One who truly realizes the Way does not even have this middle. Since neither the middle nor the two sides exists, so-called consciousness is fundamentally deluded thought, consisting entirely of the shadows of the preceding form, sound, smell, taste, and touch. To cling to these false shadows as truly existent is no different from a fool speaking in a dream.

“Therefore, you should know that the mind faculty and dharma objects serving as conditions for the arising of the realm of consciousness are all nonexistent in these three respects. Thus the three—the mind faculty, dharma objects, and the realm of consciousness—are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor self-arising in nature.”

This is the same conclusion as before: to take the mind faculty and dharma objects as conditions and suppose that they can produce the realm of consciousness is fundamentally impossible. This is because the mind faculty, dharma objects, and consciousness are all originally nonexistent. Since these three are nonexistent, “the mind faculty, dharma objects, and the realm of consciousness are fundamentally neither causal conditions nor self-arising in nature.” Not arising from itself, not arising from another, and not arising jointly is called being beyond causal conditions; not arising without a cause is called being beyond self-arising.

To say that consciousness arises with the mind faculty and dharma objects as conditions is to speak in the ordinary person’s manner. Worldly people cling to existence and believe that consciousness arises when the mind faculty and dharma objects combine through causes and conditions. Yet, in the Buddha’s eyes, the three of faculty, sense object, and consciousness are all nonexistent and fundamentally unobtainable. Eliminating the two sides in order to dismantle the middle is called the method of dual negation.

These eighteen realms, together with the preceding twelve sense bases, six entrances, and five aggregates, are called the four categories. In this sūtra, the passages discussing the four categories all concern negation: both sides are negated and excluded. Because the two sides are both unobtainable, the meaning of the middle way is thereby revealed.

Dismantling the two sides means that nothing arises. Yet nothing arising does not mean that there is absolutely nothing; we still exist now, do we not? What, then, is this existence? It is the wondrous functioning of the true nature of suchness. Do not

cling to this existence as truly existent. Clinging is deluded thought; not clinging is wondrous functioning.

The World-Honored One teaches the four categories in order to negate the two sides and dismantle inner and outer, enabling us to see wondrous functioning and the essence of true reality. The preceding four categories explain emptiness: only after the two sides have been negated can the middle-way dharma nature of suchness be revealed. The subsequent seven great elements explain existence: through wondrous presence, they reveal that every dharma pervades the dharma realm and that every dharma is complete and without deficiency.

Taken together, the preceding seven investigations of the mind dismantle illusory existence in order to reveal true emptiness. They show that the aggregates, realms, sense bases, and so forth are all unobtainable: this is the empty Tathāgata treasury. The subsequent ten revelations of seeing explain wondrous presence, teaching you not to cling to the side of emptiness. For within true emptiness there is our nature capable of seeing, our numinous and luminous wondrous essence: this is the nonempty Tathāgata treasury.

Now, when the four categories are combined with the seven great elements below, they constitute the empty yet nonempty Tathāgata treasury. It is wrong to cling one-sidedly to emptiness, and it is also wrong to cling one-sidedly to existence. One must relinquish both existence and emptiness, for neither side is obtainable. Only then can the dharma nature of suchness be complete and without deficiency and pervade the dharma realm.

Ordinary beings all cling to existence. From the standpoint of worldly dharmas, everything exists: there are wives and children, gold and silver treasures, food and daily living—everything is there. This is the realm of ordinary beings.

The state of the two vehicles is biased emptiness. None of the phenomenal matters to which ordinary beings cling exists for them: there is neither this nor that, and it seems that all has been emptied. Yet they still cling to existence. What exists for them? The mental body. What they empty is the physical body. They regard the physical body as unobtainable, but the mental body as existent, because they have birth and death to transcend and nirvāṇa to realize.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, the two vehicles still cling to existence, though their existence differs from that of ordinary beings. Thus one must not cling either to existence or to emptiness. When neither side is clung to, the wondrously existent true-reality of true emptiness and nonemptiness appears before one. Therefore, when the four categories and the seven great elements are explained together, they are the empty yet nonempty Tathāgata treasury. The present four categories

specifically negate the two sides, while the seven great elements below specifically reveal that every dharma pervades the dharma realm.

The five aggregates, six entrances, twelve sense bases, and eighteen realms conclude here. Let us now make a brief summary. We must look at the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness in reverse order, placing consciousness first. This consciousness is discernment, and it is the condition for the arising of sentient beings.

Where does our ignorance come from? It is because of a single moment of nonawakening that a thought arises in that originally pure essence: “Here I am capable of awareness and discrimination.”

This thought that is capable of awareness and discrimination is the consciousness-mind; it is the primary cause of the arising of ignorance. Because of a single moment of non-awareness, ignorance stirs delusively. Then, amid the obscurity of awareness and emptiness, one feels oneself to possess knowing and awareness; thus the aggregate of consciousness arises. Once the aggregate of consciousness has arisen, it proceeds to pursue objects.

For once there is that which is capable of awareness, there is also that which is perceived: this is one thing, that is another; this place is existent, that place is empty. When one sees something existent, one takes it to have an appearance; when one sees emptiness, one takes it to have the appearance of emptiness. In this way, one becomes attached to appearances.

To pursue objects means to run after objects. Because the aggregate of consciousness pursues objects, the second aggregate arises: the aggregate of formations. Once the aggregate of formations has arisen, one abides in objects and thinks; when objects fall upon the mind, they become the aggregate of perception. Accumulated perceptions become consciousness; accumulated perceptions become faculties. Once they become faculties and consciousness, they constitute the aggregate of feeling.

Once there is consciousness and there are faculties, consciousness clings to the objects before it and receives them; hence it is called the aggregate of feeling. The aggregate of feeling conveys the forms with which it comes into contact to our discriminating consciousness. Thus forms confront our consciousness, and these objects of confrontation constitute the aggregate of form.

Stated in reverse order, form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness become consciousness, formations, perception, feeling, and form. These are the conditions through which sentient beings arise; sentient beings arise from them.

Therefore, we say that one can attain Buddhahood by breaking through the five aggregates.

Our practice, too, must proceed in reverse. For example, after the five aggregates come the six entrances; after the six entrances come the twelve sense bases; and after the twelve sense bases come the eighteen realms. Thus, when breaking through them, we must proceed in reverse: first break through the eighteen realms, then the twelve sense bases, then the six entrances, and then the five aggregates.

This is like putting on clothes: one first puts on the inner garments and then the outer garments, donning them one layer at a time. When taking them off, one must likewise proceed from the outside inward: first remove the outermost garment, then the second outer garment, and finally the undergarment next to the skin. The undergarment is like the five aggregates, and the outermost garment is like the eighteen realms. Therefore, in breaking through them, one must begin with the outer eighteen realms.

The five aggregates concern consciousness and material dharmas; they are formed through the union of mind and matter. The Dharma Characteristics School explains the five aggregates by dividing mind into four, with form at the beginning belonging to material dharmas, and feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness belonging to mental dharmas. Thus, four mental dharmas are combined with one material dharma.

In fact, although form and consciousness may certainly be distinguished as material dharmas and mental dharmas, feeling, perception, and formations in between are both material dharmas and mental dharmas. Without the aggregate of form, how could you feel? Can you feel emptiness? Without sound, how could you hear? Without hearing, how could you receive anything? This sound is pleasant, and I like it; that sound is unpleasant, and I dislike it.

Whether one likes it or dislikes it, there must be sound before the feeling of awareness can arise. Therefore, feeling, perception, and formations are both mental dharmas and material dharmas. Here, mind and matter are spoken of together as an intermediate aspect; they are the cause of our arising.

The six entrances deal specifically with dividing the mind. The mind is divided into six, and the six faculties encounter the six sense objects, taking in the realm of objects; thus, this is entirely a matter of mind and objects. The following twelve sense bases divide form. Earlier, the six faculties and six sense objects were discussed in order to emphasize taking them in, so this was a division of mind. Here, the six faculties and six sense objects are discussed in order to emphasize material objects, so this is a division of form.

The eighteen realms discuss mind and matter together; this is called the mutual division of mind and matter. To see one's true nature, we must first eliminate these eighteen realms. The most crucial of the eighteen realms are the six consciousnesses. There are vertical and horizontal ways of explaining this. The vertical explanation is like practicing the Chan school: one must break through completely from top to bottom and emerge directly; this is called vertical emergence, and it is the Chan method of practice.

The horizontal explanation is equivalent to practicing the Pure Land school. It is like a bamboo stalk: there is no need to pass vertically through each joint. One need only make a hole through its side and emerge; this is called horizontal transcendence of the three realms. Whether by the horizontal or vertical approach, one must break through the five aggregates in order to attain Buddhahood.

Arhats may appear to have broken through the five aggregates, but in fact they have not. Why? Because they have broken through only the aggregate of form and are no longer attached to this physical body, yet they still cling to a mental body. They have only resolved the personal self, not the dharma-self; therefore, this is not a true breakthrough.

What they have broken through are only the six consciousnesses within the eighteen realms. If they can further break through the appearances of the six faculties—for the appearances of the six faculties are appearances of emptiness, and one must break through appearances of emptiness as well—and understand that the appearances of the six faculties are fundamentally unobtainable, they can turn from the Lesser to the Great Vehicle. If even the appearances of existence and nonexistence of the six faculties are unobtainable, then the five aggregates will break through of themselves without needing to be broken through.

For the five aggregates depend on these faculties and arise from attachment to the four great elements through the six faculties. Among our eight consciousnesses, it is the manas consciousness that clings to the four great elements. It takes the perceiving aspect of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) as the faculties and the object aspect of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) as the four great elements. From the innate tendency to cling to the four great elements, the six faculties arise. The six consciousnesses then discriminate by taking external sense objects as their conditions; therefore, the six consciousnesses are the discriminating mind.

Because the eighteen realms of the six faculties, six sense objects, and six consciousnesses are fundamentally unobtainable, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra says that the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve sense bases, and eighteen realms are all empty. In this respect, it differs from the Dharma Characteristics School. After establishing the eighteen realms, the Dharma Characteristics School says that

everything exists; thus, it teaches existent dharmas, which conflicts with the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.

If we can break through the six consciousnesses, we can transform from ordinary beings into the Lesser Vehicle. If we further eliminate the six faculties, we can transform from the Lesser Vehicle to the Great Vehicle. If we further eliminate the five aggregates, we transform from sentient beings and attain Buddhahood. This is the vertical explanation in practice. The horizontal explanation is that sentient beings are existent, the two vehicles are empty, and bodhisattvas are neither existent nor empty.

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra is specifically concerned with the principles of the Great Vehicle, and so it teaches neither existence nor emptiness. Here, we have briefly discussed the principles of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and the Dharma Characteristics School. The Dharma Characteristics School establishes the eighteen realms as dharma characteristics, maintaining that everything exists and analyzing names and characteristics in great detail. This sūtra, however, says that all things are empty and unobtainable, thoroughly breaking through the eighteen realms. In this way, it demolishes the views of the Dharma Characteristics School, so its adherents claim that this sūtra is a forgery.

Next, we will discuss the seven great elements. What are the seven great elements? They are the seven great elements of earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, seeing, and consciousness. Great elements are also called elemental natures. We have previously said that the five faculties are all great elements: it is from these elemental natures that our five external faculties—the eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body—arise.

The Dharma Characteristics School says that when the great elements first form, they are called the pure material faculties. Ignorance adheres to the true mind, wondrously clear and unmoving, and combines with external dusty toils, transforming form, sound, smell, taste, and touch into faculties. The eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and body are the coarse material faculties. The elemental natures are most important. Next, the Buddha will explain one by one what the seven great elements ultimately are. Please look at the sūtra text:

(I) The Earth Element: The Nature of Form Is True Emptiness; the Nature of Emptiness Is True Form

“You contemplate the nature of the earth element: in its coarse form it is the great earth; in its fine form, minute particles; and at its utmost fineness, particles adjacent to emptiness. Analyze the ultimate boundary of these extremely minute material

forms: they are composed of seven parts. Analyze particles adjacent to emptiness further, and they are in fact empty in nature."

Now let us explain this separately, beginning with the earth element. Consider the substance of the earth element: in its coarse and large form, it is the great earth; in its fine and small form, it is minute particles; and the very smallest particles are called particles adjacent to emptiness. What does "adjacent to emptiness" mean? It means adjacent to space. Space contains nothing; "adjacent" means adjoining space. Because they are too small to be made any smaller, they are called particles adjacent to emptiness.

Particles adjacent to emptiness are the smallest of all things described in the Buddhist scriptures. How are they arrived at? As it says: "Analyze the ultimate boundary of these extremely minute material forms: they are composed of seven parts."

For example, take a clod of earth and divide it into seven parts. Take one of those parts and divide it again into seven; then take one part of those seven and divide it once more into seven. Continue dividing in this way, level by level. When one reaches minute particles, divide a single particle into seven parts, and it becomes a particle adjacent to emptiness.

It is like first dividing something until it is the size of a cow's hair, as thick as the tip of a cow's hair. Divide that tip into seven parts, and it becomes as thick as the tip of a sheep's hair. Divide the tip of a sheep's hair into seven parts, and it becomes as thick as the tip of a rabbit's hair.

Rabbit hair is finer than sheep's hair, and sheep's hair is finer than cow's hair. If a minute particle as small as the tip of a rabbit's hair is divided into seven parts, it reaches the point adjacent to emptiness; this is called a particle adjacent to emptiness.

We may also use a book as an analogy. First divide it into seven portions; take one portion and divide it into seven; then take one of those portions and divide it again into seven. Continue in this way, level by level, until the portions become smaller and smaller. In the end they approach emptiness, which is why they are said to be composed of seven parts. What happens if particles adjacent to emptiness are divided further? "Analyze particles adjacent to emptiness further, and they are in fact empty in nature." If such particles are divided again, nothing remains; they become empty in nature, the substance of space.

"Ānanda, if these particles adjacent to emptiness could be analyzed into space, you should know that space gives rise to material forms."

How should this sentence be explained? Suppose that these particles adjacent to emptiness are further divided and analyzed until nothing remains, so that they become space. Since space has been derived from material particles, one could conversely say that material forms arise from space. But in fact, does space come into being only after particles adjacent to emptiness have been analyzed away?

Or, does space arise only because we have divided material forms until nothing remains? No. As we have just said concerning space, emptiness is spoken of in relation to material form. It is because material forms provide a contrast that space becomes apparent. Without material forms, space could not be made apparent.

By the same reasoning, material forms become apparent because of emptiness; without emptiness, material forms could not be made apparent. Thus, form is spoken of in relation to emptiness, and emptiness in relation to form. Emptiness and form can be established only in opposition to each other; without such opposition, neither can be established.

Space is originally just as it is—originally empty and devoid of anything. It is not space only after we have divided things completely away and, at the end of our analysis, nothing remains. Since space does not arise from analyzing material particles, it likewise cannot be said that material forms arise from space.

To analyze material particles into space and then combine space to become material forms is what was previously called combination. Since space does not arise through analysis, space likewise cannot combine to become material forms; therefore, it is non-combination. The natures of the seven great elements are not formed through combination. For example, can space combine to produce something? That is impossible.

Next we must analyze why space cannot give rise to material forms, and why material forms cannot be analyzed into space. Everyone can easily understand that space cannot produce material forms. By using what is easy to understand to explain what is not easy to understand, we can help you grasp the principle involved.

The preceding statement is what is not easy to understand: if material particles could be analyzed into space, then space should also be able to give rise to material forms. In fact, space is originally space; it does not come from an analysis of material particles. Therefore, space cannot give rise to material forms.

“You now ask: ‘Because of combination, the various changing appearances of the world arise.’ Consider this single particle adjacent to emptiness: how much space must combine for it to exist? It should not be that particles adjacent to emptiness combine to form particles adjacent to emptiness.”

This was originally a question Ānanda put to the World-Honored One. He said that, because causes and conditions combine, all the various changing appearances in this world arise.

Now the World-Honored One asks Ānanda in return: “Consider this single particle adjacent to emptiness: how much space must combine for it to exist?” How many portions of space must combine to make one particle adjacent to emptiness? Why use space as an analogy? Because, as we have said, the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form. This earth element is originally empty in nature, so the earth element

is equivalent to space in nature. Can space combine to form something? Consider this particle adjacent to emptiness, this most minute of things: from how much space is it formed by combination? Is a particle adjacent to emptiness formed by the combination of space? No.

For space cannot combine to produce another thing. Only material objects can combine with material objects to form other things. For example, all of us sitting here are separate individuals who together form a whole. Men are men, women are women; Zhang San is Zhang San, Li Si is Li Si. Every person is different.

Can space combine? Space is formless, and what is formless cannot combine to become something with form. If space cannot combine to form particles adjacent to emptiness, then what could combine to form them? Surely two particles adjacent to emptiness should not combine to form a particle adjacent to emptiness. Since particles adjacent to emptiness are the smallest things, material things in the world can only be combined from small into large and from few into many.

When particles adjacent to emptiness combine with particles adjacent to emptiness, the small become large. Even if such a combination could succeed, it should no longer become a particle adjacent to emptiness. Thus, particles adjacent to emptiness combining with one another should become something new. As we have said before, when green and red are combined, they become purple. This is combining the small into the large and the few into the many.

If particles adjacent to emptiness were formed by combining other things, those things would necessarily have to be smaller than particles adjacent to emptiness in order to combine into them. Just as atoms cannot combine to form atoms: only protons, electrons, and neutrons within atoms can form an atom, while atoms can combine only to form molecules.

Gold differs from copper and iron because its texture is fine and dense, and their atomic structures differ. Atomic bombs have such great destructive power because atoms undergo nuclear fission. We know that atoms contain nuclei and electrons,

and that nuclei contain protons, neutrons, and so forth. If the nucleus changes, the substance changes.

Yet when certain atomic nuclei undergo fission, matter is annihilated, producing enormous energy. Later, on the basis of this principle of nuclear fission, humanity invented the atomic bomb. We mention a little physics in order to help everyone understand the principles in the Buddhist scriptures.

We now say that particles adjacent to emptiness are the most subtle things, the smallest material objects. What else could combine to form them? Of course, nothing could. Why does the sūtra argue in this way? It is to let us know that so-called combinations of causes and conditions are all false, all deluded thoughts and attachments; they do not truly exist.

“Moreover, if particles adjacent to emptiness can be analyzed into space, how many material forms must combine to form space?”

We have just explained why space cannot combine to form particles adjacent to emptiness. Now we explain why particles adjacent to emptiness cannot combine to form space. The Buddha asks Ānanda in return: if particles adjacent to emptiness can be analyzed into space, then how many material forms must combine to form space? Since particles adjacent to emptiness are the most minute material particles, if space were produced when they were analyzed away, then the space before us is boundless and limitless. How many material forms would be needed to combine into such vast space?

Emptiness is spoken of in relation to form. Without form, there could be no emptiness at all; without emptiness, there could likewise be no form. Form and emptiness are like existence and nonexistence: form is existence, and emptiness is nonexistence. Existence is spoken of in relation to nonexistence, and nonexistence is also spoken of in relation to existence. Because there is existence, there is nonexistence; if there were no existence, there would be no question of nonexistence.

For example, if I give a shout now, there is sound while the sound is present; after the shout has passed, the sound is absent, and that is nonexistence. Nonexistence does not come from existence, nor does existence come from nonexistence. If I had not just given that shout, there would be no question of either existence or nonexistence. Thus, the two are spoken of only in relation to each other.

By the same reasoning, form does not arise from emptiness, and emptiness does not arise from form. Therefore, space is not formed by combining material forms; form and emptiness are merely spoken of relatively. Since space is not formed by material forms, there is no analysis because there is no combination; and because

there is no analysis, there is likewise no combination. All things in this world are no more than form and emptiness. Form and emptiness are neither combination nor non-combination. This proves that the worldly changes Ānanda asked about are all false conceptions and cannot be apprehended.

“When forms combine, what is combined is form, not emptiness; when space combines, what is combined is space, not form. Form may still be analyzed; how could space be combined?”

Form cannot originally combine with form. For example, particles adjacent to emptiness cannot combine to form particles adjacent to emptiness. Even if they could combine, they could only combine form into form—combining the small into the large and the few into the many. There is absolutely no principle by which combining form can produce emptiness. Since form can only combine into form and cannot produce emptiness, it is said that what is combined as form is not emptiness. Likewise, space cannot combine with space.

Even if combination were possible, emptiness could combine only with emptiness; there is absolutely no principle by which emptiness could combine to form matter. How could emptiness and matter combine? Hence it is said: “If emptiness combines, it combines with emptiness, not with matter.” Originally, neither emptiness with emptiness nor matter with matter can be combined. These two statements make hypothetical assumptions from two sides: if emptiness could combine, it could only combine with emptiness and could not produce matter; if matter could combine, it could only combine with matter and could not produce emptiness.

Although material phenomena cannot combine, they can still be broken down and analyzed until they disappear. But can emptiness be analyzed? Emptiness cannot be analyzed. Since there is originally nothing there, how could you break it apart? Since emptiness cannot be analyzed, how could it be combined? Matter, too, originally cannot be combined; only because it can be analyzed do we hypothetically suppose that it could also be combined.

Emptiness cannot even be analyzed; since it cannot be analyzed, it certainly cannot be combined all the more. Since this so-called combination is false, it follows conversely that the combination of matter with matter and the arising of all sorts of changes are all vain discriminations and are unreal. Why do such deluded discriminations arise? They arise because ignorance stirs deludedly, because of the karma of this ignorance. Next, we shall discuss the principle of karma.

“You fundamentally do not know that, within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of matter is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true matter. It is originally pure, pervades the dharma realm, accords with the minds of sentient beings,

responds to the measure of what they know, and manifests in accordance with karma."

This sentence is the most important; it is the finishing touch. All the preceding discussion of so much emptiness and so much existence was intended to explain this true nature of matter. You cling to all material appearances in the world as existing and suppose that they undergo all kinds of changes, because you do not understand the principle that, within the Tathāgata-garbha, "the nature of matter is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true matter."

What is meant by the nature of matter? Nature indicates freedom from appearances, and freedom from appearances means having no form or characteristics. Matter indicates the earth element. For example, our physical bodies are of the earth element, and all external material appearances are likewise of the earth element. Thus, the earth element is matter.

Why is this matter called the nature of matter? Because all matter is a function of our own nature. Apart from intrinsic nature, there is fundamentally no matter. Therefore, the nature of matter is true emptiness and is free from appearances; this is why it is called "the nature of matter is true emptiness." Do not cling to the material appearances of the world. The appearances to which you cling are all deluded appearances, for these forms do not originally exist; thus they are deluded discriminations.

What is meant by the nature of emptiness? This emptiness is not a void in which there is nothing at all; rather, it means that the essential nature of all dharmas is originally empty. This empty nature is the intrinsic nature of suchness and dharma-nature. Only matter manifested by empty nature is true matter. Material forms with visible characteristics are all deluded discriminations and are therefore deluded matter, not true matter.

What we see with our eyes and hear with our ears are all deluded appearances and deluded matter. True matter, whose nature is empty, has no form or characteristics. Our Buddha-nature of suchness is formless. Precisely because it is formless, it can give rise to all kinds of forms and characteristics. If it had a form, it could not produce forms.

For example, take this cup before me. If you tell it to produce something else, it cannot do so, because it has a form and appearance. Its shape has already been made in this way, so it cannot produce anything else. Formless things are different.

For example, a white cloud has no fixed form or appearance, and therefore it can become a cat, a dog, a lion, or a tiger. If the cloud itself had the appearance of a cat, then if you told it to become a dog, a lion, or a tiger, it could not transform

successfully. Because it is formless, it can manifest forms in accordance with the mind; this is called “the nature of emptiness is true matter.”

When we say, “the nature of matter is true emptiness,” this nature has matter; it is not without matter. What, then, is the matter of intrinsic nature? True emptiness is the matter of intrinsic nature. Matter without form or characteristics is true matter.

“Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for a self-existent nature. All this is merely the discriminating calculation of consciousness. Whenever there is verbal expression, there is no real meaning.”

We have just discussed “the nature of matter is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true matter.” We shall now begin with the seven categories of faculties and objects, which are taken to be the body. The Buddha-nature of suchness has no form or characteristics: it neither comes nor goes, neither arises nor ceases, neither moves nor wavers. Therefore, it is called the Tathāgata-garbha. Because of delusion and nonawakening, deluded movement arises, and it becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is in fact the Tathāgata-garbha, and the Tathāgata-garbha is ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Many commentators on the Śūraṅgama Sūtra say that ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and the Tathāgata-garbha are two different things, but this is incorrect. Later we shall discuss the faculty element. Among the seven great elements—earth, water, fire, wind, emptiness, seeing, and consciousness—seeing is the faculty.

When some people discuss the faculty element, they say that it belongs to ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and not to the Tathāgata-garbha. Yet the Buddhist scriptures clearly state that it is the Tathāgata-garbha. The Tathāgata-garbha and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are not two different things but one thing, just as a person who is upright is called a gentleman, while one whose conduct is improper is called a petty person.

Because of ignorance, the mind of the Tathāgata-garbha in the One True Dharma Realm becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Because the Tathāgata-garbha becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), luminous true emptiness becomes inert emptiness, and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) contains the forms of arising and ceasing within it.

The Tathāgata-garbha is originally luminous true emptiness, not inert emptiness; it is originally clearly aware, not ignorance. It originally possesses the energies and capacities of earth, water, fire, and wind. These capacities have no material forms—no blue, yellow, red, or white; no length, width, square, or round. They are emptiness itself; they are luminous true emptiness. When the Tathāgata-garbha

becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), the power of ignorance turns luminous true emptiness into inert emptiness, which congeals into the deluded matter of the four elements.

Among this deluded matter of the four elements, the nature of fire is brightness, while earth, water, and wind are darkness. These two deluded objects, brightness and darkness—that is, the deluded matter of the four elements—arise and then turn our true knowing into deluded knowing and deluded seeing. Once deluded seeing arises, there are a seer and what is seen. The deluded matter of the four elements becomes the realm that is seen, and thus material appearances come into being.

At first there are only brightness and darkness. Within inert emptiness there are only these two objects, brightness and darkness. Once movement has continued for a long time, and deluded seeing has persisted for a long time, one clings to a small portion of the deluded matter of the four elements as oneself, while the greater portion becomes mountains, rivers, the great earth, the sun, moon, and stars. Because of clinging to it as “myself,” deluded seeing takes root within this small portion of the deluded matter of the four elements.

Earth, water, fire, and wind are originally without awareness or perception; they are insentient. Yet our true mind has been sealed and confined by ignorance. Ignorance wraps it tightly, and it lies hidden within the bodily faculty, grasping a small portion of the four elements as the bodily faculty. It is like a diver who dives down and hides within; thus this bodily faculty has awareness and perception.

Because this true knowing is within and has been sealed and confined by ignorance, it is like water that originally flows but turns into ice when it encounters cold and no longer flows.

This numinous knowing originally fills the whole of empty space and pervades the dharma realm: there is nothing it does not know and nowhere it is not present. Now, however, it recognizes only the small measure of awareness within this body, turning vast and boundless numinous knowing into something small and locking it inside the body. Originally, it can become large or small: when expanded, it fills empty space and pervades the dharma realm; when contracted, it withdraws and conceals itself in the most hidden places, becoming even smaller than the tip of a hair.

Human beings have numinous awareness, and their bodies have perception, whereas the mountains, rivers, and great earth outside have no perception. This distinction between the sentient and the insentient arises because ignorance seals and confines us, storing numinous awareness within the body.

If the cold is removed, ice can become water again. If the ignorance that seals and confines your numinous knowing is removed, our luminous awakened nature can recover its Original Face. What is called practice is simply the restoration of the Original Face. It is not that one must perform some daily service or employ some method to add a little merit and virtue; it is merely the restoration of the Original Face.

“The nature of matter is true emptiness; the nature of emptiness is true matter.” Its purpose is to enable us to awaken to the fact that this nature of matter originally has no form or characteristics—no blue, yellow, red, or white; no length, width, square, or round. It is present at all times and everywhere, neither defiled nor pure, constant and unchanging. What is now to be discussed is how, because of ignorance, the material body deludedly clings to the four elements and relies on them as the bodily faculty.

Because the two deluded objects of brightness and darkness cause the arising of seeing to adhere, the wondrous luminous true mind, which should originally neither move nor waver, neither come nor go, is tightly wrapped by ignorance, and deluded seeing arises. “Seeing-essence responds to form” means that deluded seeing in turn takes the deluded matter of the four elements as what is seen. It further says, “Form accumulates into faculties.”

This means that the deluded matter of the four elements accumulates to form our bodily faculty. The bodily faculty is formed by just such an accumulation of the deluded matter of the four elements. “Consciousness is deluded thought, imagining a body.” As explained above, the originally luminous true mind is sealed and confined by ignorance, becoming deluded knowing and deluded seeing; wrapped within deluded knowing, deluded seeing, and deluded mind, it imagines a body. This is how the bodily faculty comes about.

Our practice today is to proceed in the opposite direction.

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra teaches the Mahāyāna Dharma gate of perfect and sudden awakening. It goes straight to the point: there is no need to undertake any special practice or use any particular method; there is no need specifically to recite the Buddha’s name, investigate Chan, or cultivate Esoteric Buddhism. None of these is necessary. You need only understand this principle: the nature of matter has no form or characteristics; it is true emptiness, not inert emptiness.

Inert emptiness is empty space, dull and without awareness. Though true emptiness is empty, within it there is that which is not empty: numinous knowing. This is called luminous true emptiness. The nature of emptiness is true matter. The true matter of the great element of matter is not matter possessing material appearances, but true emptiness. When there is nothing at all, that is true matter. We must recognize

intrinsic nature through forms and appearances. True reality is the appearance of no appearance, so do not cling to appearances.

For example, when a white cloud is blown by the wind, it may manifest all kinds of forms—the appearance of a cat, a dog, a lion, a mountain, and so forth. Yet it is still a white cloud. We should not see only these illusory appearances; we should see the white cloud.

Take gold, for example. It can be fashioned into cups, bracelets, plates, rings, and all kinds of vessels. But you must not see only these vessels; you must see the gold through these differentiated appearances. What we must understand today is precisely this: “the nature of form is true emptiness”; it does not mean that there is some particular form.

Seeing one’s true nature is actually not difficult. Our intrinsic nature is numinous clarity and true emptiness; it is not inert emptiness, nor is it delusive form. If you can reach this point, then at every moment you see your true nature, and there is nowhere that your intrinsic nature is not present. Thus, a table is Buddha, a chair is Buddha, a cup is Buddha … everything is Buddha; all is manifested by the true mind.

The Diamond Sūtra says: “If one sees all appearances as non-appearances, one sees the Tathāgata.” If you have already seen the Tathāgata, what further practice is there to do? Is there still any need for Buddha-recitation, Chan investigation, or esoteric practice? Thus, practice without practice is true practice. “Only this one is real; the other two are not real.” Only this is true; apart from it, there is no second thing.

Know that everything is false and unreal, and that only this intrinsic nature is real—the One True Dharma Realm. At once let go of everything, and you can “Lay down the butcher's knife and become a Buddha on the spot.” If you can, at all times and in all places, see only the true nature and not appearances, you will have changed fundamentally.

As I said before, we sentient beings see the earth as sand, soil, and mud. Arhats and pratyekabuddhas see the earth as empty space, with nothing there, because they are attached to biased emptiness and have not yet broken through the appearance of emptiness. Bodhisattvas see the earth as made of the seven treasures, like the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss: the ground is paved with gold, and all the towers, terraces, and halls are made of the seven treasures.

The sūtras say, “In accord with the minds of sentient beings, [the Buddha] responds according to the measure of what they know.” That is, because people's capacities differ, what they see also differs. The Buddha surpasses even bodhisattvas: for the Buddha, the earth is not an object of experience. Why is it not an object of experience? Because the One True Dharma Realm is originally unstained by a single

speck of dust. Yet ordinary people in the world stubbornly cling to there being this earth and these things seen.

Because ordinary beings cling, karmic force is inconceivable; even the Buddha cannot take it away from them. Therefore, it is called an inconceivable realm. Because the ten dharma realms differ in mind-capacity, what is seen also differs. These are all illusory appearances; they are all false.

“Worldly people, in their ignorance, take delusion to be causes and conditions or intrinsic nature; all this is discrimination and conjecture by consciousness.” Worldly people are ignorant. They become doubtful about these illusory appearances: some believe they arise from causes and conditions, while others believe that they exist naturally and inherently. All this is the result of deluded discrimination and conjecture by consciousness; these are principles arrived at by speculation. In truth, “the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form.” Delusive appearances are unreal; they are neither caused by conditions nor naturally existent.

The tathāgata-garbha that is neither empty nor nonempty is fully revealed and free from the mark of verbal expression. I am explaining it here in order to enable you to enter its true meaning. To become attached to language is mistaken: “Wherever there are words, there is no true meaning!”

Earlier we discussed the earth element; now we will discuss the fire element.

(II) The Fire Element: The Nature of Fire Is True Emptiness; the Nature of Emptiness Is True Fire

“Ānanda, the nature of fire has no self; it relies on various conditions. Look at the households in the city that have not yet eaten: when they wish to cook, they hold a sun mirror in their hands and seek fire before the sun.”

“The nature of fire has no self”: here, “self” means a ruler or master—something that possesses itself, knows itself, and exercises mastery. We sentient beings cling to this self at every moment: “I am the master; everything must obey my commands; I may do whatever I wish.” That the nature of fire has no self means that fire has no independent basis for existing.

Fire depends on fuel and on implements for kindling; it can ignite only with the aid of supporting conditions. In fact, this is true not only of fire: everything can come into being only through the coming together of causes and conditions. There are many ways to make fire. In earlier times, people bored wood or used flint and a fire striker; now they use matches or lighters. Here, the text speaks of using a glass

mirror to reflect sunlight and make fire. All these are supporting conditions. Without the coming together of causes and conditions, fire cannot ignite by itself.

The Buddha told Ānanda: Look at those households in the city that have not yet eaten. When they are about to light a fire and cook their food—cuan means a stove, in which a fire is lit for cooking—"they hold a sun mirror in their hands and seek fire before the sun." A sun mirror is a convex glass mirror. Hold it under the sun and concentrate the sunlight at one point, and it can ignite the tinder.

Drawing fire from the sun shows that the nature of fire has no independent power and no master; it arises from causes and conditions. "All dharmas arising from causes and conditions, I say, are emptiness." Things produced by causes and conditions are unarisen; that is, they do not truly exist. If they did exist, why would they need the aid of causes and conditions? This shows that they are originally nonexistent.

"Ānanda, what is meant by 'coming together'? For example, you and I, together with the 1,250 bhikshus, now form one assembly. Although the assembly is one, if we examine its basis, each person has a body and a clan name into which he was born. For example, Śāriputra was of Brahmin lineage; Uruvilvā was of the Kāśyapa lineage; … and Ānanda was of the Gautama clan."

Here another example is given. What is meant by coming together? For instance, you and I, together with 1,250 bhikshus, are speaking and hearing the Dharma at Jetavana Vihara. Together, we form one body, one assembly; a harmonious saṅgha is precisely an assembly.

It is like ourselves in this room now: the members of the assembly gather as one body and together form one assembly, a small group. Although the assembly is one, if we examine its basis, each person has a body and a clan name into which he was born.

Although this assembly is one, its members each have their own bodies, and beyond their bodies, their own surnames and names. This assembly is formed through the coming together of many people. Last time we spoke of atoms: they are composed of atomic nuclei, electrons, and so on. An atom cannot combine itself into an atom, nor can an electron combine itself into an electron. Every small unit is formed by the coming together of still smaller units; nothing can form itself into itself.

Therefore, the assembly before us has not formed itself; it is made up of different people coming together. Take Śāriputra, also called Śāriputra's Son: he was born into the Brahmin class, a noble class among India's four great castes, devoted to religious cultivation and called the pure caste.

Uruvilvā is also a person's name; it is translated as "mushroom," because he resembled a mushroom. Kāśyapa means "great turtle." Today we regard "turtle" as an unsavory name, but in ancient times the turtle was a superior spiritual creature, one of the four great numinous beings: turtle, qilin, dragon, and phoenix.

"... and Ānanda was of the Gautama clan." Ānanda's surname was Gautama, which translates as "the most excellent." He shared the Buddha's surname, was Śākyamuni Buddha's cousin, and belonged to the same caste. These people each had their own names and individual bodies; none was the same as another. Only when many such people come together do they constitute an assembly. If fire is formed through coming together, then how, we may ask, does fire come together and arise? The text now refutes this point one by one:

"Ānanda, if the nature of this fire exists because of coming together, then when one holds a mirror in one's hand and seeks fire from the sun, does this fire arise from the mirror? Does it arise from the moxa? Or does it come from the sun?"

If this fire exists through the coming together of the mirror, the sun, and moxa floss —moxa floss is twisted into tinder for making fire—then from where does this fire come? If fire arises through coming together, it is co-arisen; if it does not arise through coming together, apart from both alternatives, then it is originally pure.

If, apart from the sun, mirror, and moxa floss, this fire still exists, that shows that its nature is originally pure—the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. If it is produced through coming together, then it is not the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, but something else. So from where, ultimately, does fire arise?

"Ānanda, if it comes from the sun, then since it can burn the moxa in your hand, the forests at the place from which it comes should all be burned."

The Buddha further asked Ānanda: Does fire come from the sun? Since it can burn the moxa floss in your hand, it should also be able to burn the trees in the forest. The sun can shine on the forest as well, so the forest should all burst into flames. Since the forest does not burn, this shows that fire does not come from the sun. If it came from the sun, how could it burn only the moxa in your hand, but not the forest upon which the sun shines?

"If it comes forth from the mirror, then since it emerges from the mirror and kindles the moxa, why does the mirror not melt? You hold it in your hand, yet there is not even the appearance of heat; how, then, could it melt and liquefy?"

If fire came forth from the mirror, then since it can make the moxa floss burn, why would the mirror itself not melt? If the mirror could produce fire, that fire should not only burn the moxa floss but first burn the mirror itself. "You hold it in your hand,

yet there is not even the appearance of heat": when you hold the mirror's handle, your hand does not even feel hot.

"How, then, could it melt and liquefy?" Pan means a flowing liquid. In other words, why has the mirror not been burned into a molten liquid? Even if it could not melt at once, it should gradually melt, and your hand should feel heat. Yet now, as you hold the mirror, there is not the slightest heat. How could it possibly melt the mirror into a liquid? Thus fire does not come from the mirror. To say that it comes from the mirror is impossible. The text proceeds further:

"If it arises from the moxa, why must the sun and mirror be brought together so that the fire arises only after their light makes contact?"

If fire arose from the moxa, why must the sun and mirror be aligned so that the moxa floss can ignite only after their light makes contact? This shows that fire does not arise from the moxa either. One must rely on the power of the mirror to concentrate the sunlight at one point before the moxa floss can burn. If moonlight were concentrated at one point, that point would not be hot and could not ignite anything.

"Examine this carefully again: the mirror depends on being held by the hand; the sun comes from the sky; the moxa grows from the ground. From what direction does the fire travel here? The sun and mirror are far apart; they neither unite nor combine. Yet the firelight should not exist of itself without any source."

Consider this carefully once more: the mirror is held in the hand, sunlight descends from the sky, and moxa grows from the ground. These three things originally are not in the same place.

Yet when these three things come together, and one holds the mirror under sunlight, the moxa ignites. From where, after all, does this fire travel to the moxa floss? "The sun and mirror are far apart; they neither unite nor combine." The sun and the mirror each have their own substance.

The sun is the sun, and the mirror is the mirror. The two were never one body and are far apart. "They neither unite nor combine": it is not that they join together and become something else. As explained earlier, coming together means mutual fusion; things meet and interpenetrate to form a union. When they are so far apart, they cannot come together in this way.

Although fire does not arise from the moxa, does not emerge from the mirror, and does not come from the sun, it should not exist by itself without any source. It cannot produce itself; that is, it does not arise from itself. Just as our bodies are born of our parents, we cannot give birth to ourselves.

Above, three possibilities have been discussed: it does not arise from itself, from another, or from both together. None of these three possibilities can be found. In addition, it does not arise without a cause: since fire does exist now, this shows that it is not non-combination. Non-combination belongs to non-causality, while not-non-combination belongs to non-nature.

Since it is neither causal nor natural, neither of the two alternatives, this proves that it is the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The nature of fire is originally everywhere; only because we people cling delusively to the illusory appearance of fire do fire appear to exist in some places and not in others. In reality, the inherent nature of fire is like empty space: it is everywhere and exists at all times. The text next says:

"You still do not know that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire. It is originally pure and pervades the dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of their knowledge."

Because of ignorance, you still do not know that within the Tathāgata-garbha, "the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire." These two sentences have the same principle as the "the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form" discussed above. The nature of fire is the energy inherently present in the Tathāgata-garbha. The Tathāgata-garbha is the pure dharma realm, namely the One True Dharma Realm.

Within our Tathāgata-garbha, the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are inherently present; they exist everywhere. The nature of fire is numinous awareness and true emptiness. It has no form, yet it is everywhere.

If one believes that only fire with visible form is fire, that is all produced by delusive attachment. People of the world are accustomed to illusory appearances; tell them not to cling to appearances, and they cannot accept it. They insist upon having an appearance before they will believe. Because of attachment to appearances, these illusory appearances obscure the light of true nature. Therefore, one must break through such appearances and not cling to them.

So-called breaking through appearances does not mean getting rid of appearances or rejecting them altogether. As explained earlier, illusory appearances are not frightening; illusory appearances are precisely manifestations of the true mind. Appearance is nature, and nature is appearance.

Because sentient beings cling to appearances, they lose sight of their true nature. If they can understand that appearance is precisely nature, then they are Buddha right here and now. It is not that some separate thing is Buddha. This teaches us not to

cling. Fire that has form is deluded fire; only formless fire is true fire, called “the true emptiness of the fire of nature.”

Emptiness with an appearance is inert emptiness; only emptiness without appearance is true emptiness. Inert emptiness is dull and uncomprehending, while true emptiness is far removed from the sense faculties and their objects. “The true fire of the emptiness of nature”: the emptiness of nature is not deluded fire, but true fire. Do not cling to the idea that only fire with an appearance is fire; in fact, true emptiness is fire.

This spiritually luminous true emptiness is our suchness and Buddha-nature. Therefore, it is originally pure and free from all appearances. Not abiding in appearances is called purity: it can give rise to all appearances without being stained by them. “Originally” means neither self-arising, other-arising, co-arising, nor causeless arising; it is neither dependent arising nor spontaneous arising, but is originally thus. “Pervading the dharma realm” means that it is nowhere absent and never nonexistent. Sentient beings cling to the notion that there is fire here but no fire there, or that there is fire there but no fire here. This is the discrimination of sentient beings, a deluded attachment to the appearance of fire.

“In accordance with the minds of sentient beings, it responds to the measure of what they know.” The capacity of sentient beings' minds is limited. Among the sentient beings of the ten dharma realms—the four noble realms and the six ordinary realms—each has a different capacity of mind, and each sees a different appearance of fire. This is what is meant by responding to the measure of what they know. Take the Yellow River, for example: we see water, whereas hell beings and hungry ghosts see fire. The appearance of fire they see differs from the one we see.

If we truly realize the Way, fire cannot burn our bodies. Why? Because the fire of nature is true emptiness. The fire of nature is formless—where is there any fire? It is unlike a great forest fire on a mountain, which may burn for a long time and must be extinguished by some means.

Since true fire is empty in nature and formless, where is there any appearance of fire? Therefore, one must not cling to the appearance of fire. A great fire can arise, and so it can also cease; eventually it dies out. If one insists that only what burns up is fire, that is attachment. If we see only nature at every moment and forget appearances, then, if this is truly so, it is genuine practice and one has arrived home.

If this can truly be so, this very place is the Land of Ultimate Bliss; one need not wait until death to be reborn in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss. As was said earlier in discussing the earth element, we see this globe as earth, mud, and stones, whereas bodhisattvas see it as composed of the seven treasures. The Western Land of

Ultimate Bliss is composed of the seven treasures; thus, Sahā is precisely ultimate bliss. All this changes with changes in the capacity of our minds.

“In accordance with the minds of sentient beings, it responds to the measure of what they know.” However great the capacity of your mind, so great are the appearances you see. When the capacity is great, the Dharma is great; everyone must understand this saying. When the capacity of mind is great, the Dharma is great; when it is small, the Dharma is also small. When the capacity of mind expands, the ignorance that congeals your true mind is shattered because appearances are no longer seen.

When ignorance is shattered, it is like the cold receding: as the cold disappears, ice melts again into water, which then flows freely and is no longer blocked. How, then, does water freeze into ice? It does so because of deluded perception; it is formed by the deluded thinking of sentient beings. Therefore, we must use various dharma gates—Buddha-recitation, Chan investigation, and esoteric practice—to melt it away, using the fire of prajñā to burn it away.

When we recite the Buddha's name—“Amitābha Buddha, Amitābha Buddha . . .”—each utterance of the Buddha's name is a flame of prajñā. If, at this very moment, with a “snap!” one understands, the frozen ice of ignorance melts away at once. That is the great mass of prajñā fire, and one realizes the Way.

It is said that realizing the Way requires three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas, but these three great kalpas are not a fixed number of thousands or tens of thousands of years; they are three inconceivable periods of time. This time may be fast or slow, long or short; it is not fixed. Therefore, one must not stubbornly insist that one must recite the Buddha's name a certain number of times or practice a dharma for a set length of time before attaining realization. That is rigid attachment. To awaken to the Way, one must understand wondrous awakening. Awakening to the Way is seeing one’s true nature; upon seeing one’s true nature, one opens the dharma eye and no longer clings to appearances.

“Ānanda, you should know that when people in the world hold a mirror in one place, fire arises in that place; when mirrors are held throughout the dharma realm, fire arises throughout the world. If it arises throughout the world, how could it have a fixed location?”

“You should know that when people in the world hold a mirror in one place, fire arises in that place.” It is not only here that fire can be produced by using a mirror to reflect sunlight. In other places, too, fire can arise in the same way by using a mirror to reflect sunlight, because true fire exhausts empty space and pervades the dharma realm; it is nowhere absent and everywhere present.

If you use a mirror here to focus sunlight on tinder, fire arises here; if someone else uses a mirror there to focus sunlight on tinder, fire arises there. Thus, “when mirrors are held throughout the dharma realm, fire arises throughout the world.” If mirrors were used throughout the entire dharma realm to focus sunlight on tinder, then the whole world would be filled with fire. “If it arises throughout the world, how could it have a fixed location?” To come from this place and go to that place—these are fixed locations.

The fire of nature exhausts empty space and pervades the dharma realm. How could spiritually luminous true knowing have any fixed location? The Śūraṅgama Sūtra is a Mahāyāna scripture; its excellence lies in its direct instruction, without requiring you to investigate.

To comprehend it right now is enough—what is there still to investigate? The Chan school of old likewise pointed directly. Look at how the Sixth Patriarch instructed Huiming: “Do not think of good; do not think of evil. Let both go!” Our thoughts always fall into two sides—one good and one bad. Now do not think of the good, and do not think of the bad. What is it when not a single thought arises? “Huiming remained silent for a long while.” These words are crucial; do not pass over them lightly. When not a single thought arises, the Sixth Patriarch pointed him directly to it: “At precisely such a time, that is the Original Face.”

When not a single thought arises, yet one is clearly aware and distinct from wood or stone, what else could it be but your Original Face? In former times, people used only direct pointing and did not investigate a huatou. When the master pointed it out, they recognized that clearly lucid state of awakening; having recognized it, they never again let it go, but safeguarded realization continuously and closely, without drifting along with habitual tendencies.

People today have shallow capacities and must therefore undergo more hardship. They are told to investigate “Who is reciting the Buddha's name?” and made to go in circles for decades. It is truly unjust! Why must this be so? Because if it is plainly explained to you, you do not value it and treat it as a game.

“Oh! It is so easy—there is nothing remarkable about it!” It is like being given an ancestral inheritance: not knowing how hard it was to acquire, you squander the money recklessly. Squandering it is equivalent to not clearing away habitual tendencies. When circumstances arise, you will again follow them along. So long as you continue to drift with appearances, birth and death remain unresolved. Thus, you are deliberately made to go in circles, so that you will know it was not easily attained.

Patriarch Dahui Gao advocated huatou investigation precisely because he saw that sentient beings had poor capacities. This was the patriarch's compassionate

intention; do not misunderstand it. If all of you can take this up, this is it! If you cannot take it up, do not lose heart; recite the Buddha's name, investigate Chan, and cultivate Esoteric Buddhism.

This matter is of the greatest importance. There is no fixed dharma gate for practice; it is not the case that one must practice a particular one. When Esoteric Buddhism teaches Dzogchen (Great Perfection) and Mahāmudrā, it gives direct instruction.

Why is this? Because in Esoteric Buddhism one first cultivates Exoteric Buddhism, then the esoteric practices of the generation stage and completion stage. By the time Dzogchen (Great Perfection) and Mahāmudrā are transmitted, one has already practiced for decades and has this foundation. “They appear in accordance with karma.”

What does “they appear in accordance with karma” mean? Take households in Shanghai: their methods of using fire are not all the same. Some use gas, some electric stoves, some coal briquettes, and some kerosene. This is the difference in karma. Once there are worldly appearances, this analogy is easy to understand.

This “appearing in accordance with karma” concerns the point at which the three subtle characteristics arise. The so-called three subtle characteristics are the characteristic of karmic activity of ignorance, the characteristic of the perceiving subject, and the characteristic of the objective realm. Suchness and Buddha-nature originally have no appearance and are pure in themselves. Because ignorance fails to awaken, subject and object of awareness arise, and the characteristic of karmic activity arises.

“Ignorance as the cause gives rise to the three subtle characteristics.” This is taught in Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna. These three subtle characteristics are also called the characteristic of karmic activity, the characteristic of transformation, and the characteristic of manifestation. The characteristic of manifestation is the characteristic of the objective realm, and the characteristic of transformation is the characteristic of the perceiving subject. Because it reaches out to grasp the characteristic of manifestation, it is called the characteristic of transformation. Suchness and Buddha-nature are originally without appearance, but when ignorance moves deludedly, what is without appearance transforms into appearance, and this karma arises.

Because karma differs, the appearances of fire seen by sentient beings in the ten dharma realms also differ. Within distinct appearances there are shared appearances—shared deluded perception. The appearance of fire seen by human beings is the same for all of us. As we said just now, hell beings and hungry ghosts see water as fire, unlike what human beings see; these are their respective distinct appearances.

Suppose our karma is eliminated: then the appearance of fire is also eliminated. When karma arises, the appearance of fire arises. The earlier example of a forest fire is just so. “The fire of nature is true emptiness”—where is there any appearance of fire? If your mind is truly empty, fire cannot burn you. If the capacity of your mind is not empty, fire can arise and can burn you to death. All this is “appearing in accordance with karma”: because karmic force differs, the appearances of fire seen also differ.

“Worldly people, being ignorant, are deluded into taking it as dependent arising or as a natural nature. These are all discriminative calculations of the consciousness-mind. Wherever there are words, there is no real meaning.”

“Worldly people, being ignorant, are deluded into taking it as dependent arising or as a natural nature.” People in this world neither know nor understand; all are deluded. They say this arises from causes and conditions, and that arises naturally. In truth, these are all deluded thoughts. Originally, it is neither dependent arising nor natural; originally, it is pure and inherently so. To be pure and inherently so is neither natural nor dependent arising.

“These are all discriminative calculations of the consciousness-mind.” This consciousness-mind is pernicious; it is the root of the five aggregates, because moment after moment awareness arises—the so-called aware subject and object of awareness. This awareness of the aware subject is consciousness. When the consciousness-mind turns toward objects, it becomes a shadow; form and shadow constitute an appearance. When a deluded appearance manifests, consciousness corresponds to it. Thus consciousness is said to be fundamental. Consciousness is most pernicious; it is what performs all these discriminative calculations. These are all false appearances!

“Wherever there are words, there is no real meaning.” When we see the true nature, the way of words is cut off and the path of mental activity is ended; there is nothing to say. The moment one opens one’s mouth, it is already not so.

Next is the discussion of the water element:

(III) The Water Element: The Nature of Water Is True Emptiness; the Nature of Emptiness Is True Water

“Ānanda, the nature of water is not fixed; its flowing and stilling are not constant. In the city of Śrāvastī, such great illusionists as the sage Kapila, the sage Cakra, Padma, and Hasta seek the essence of the moon to blend with their magical medicines. On the day of the full moon, these masters hold a fangzhu vessel in their hands to receive the water from the moon.”

The nature of water is unfixed. When heated, it turns into vapor and rises; when vapor encounters cold, it condenses into water and descends. When it is in a high place, it flows downward; when it reaches a low place, it comes to rest. This is what is meant by “the nature of water is not fixed; its flowing and stilling are not constant.” Its characteristic is to flow from high places to low ones, from rivers into the sea, and to come to rest when it reaches a low place. Neither its flowing nor its stilling remains eternally unchanged.

The Buddha next cites as examples the great illusionists Kapila, Cakra, Padma, Hasta, and others in the city of Śrāvastī—Śrāvastī being the place where the Buddha taught the sūtras. “Sages” refers to cultivators who have transcended worldly defilement and attained spiritual powers.

Translated, their names mean the following: Kapila means “golden head,” that is, yellow hair; Cakra means the wheel of a cart, signifying that his teachings were perfectly rounded and that no one could confound him in debate; Padma means red lotus, signifying that there were many lotuses where he lived; and Hasta means the water of the great ocean, because he lived near the seashore.

These great illusionists were named after their own characteristics or the places where they lived. Because they followed non-Buddhist paths and had not realized suchness and Buddha-nature, none of their spiritual powers or magical arts was real. We have discussed this principle before: only after seeing one’s true nature can one possess genuinely wondrous spiritual powers and functions.

Without seeing one’s true nature, such things remain dharmas of arising and ceasing; arising and ceasing are equivalent to magical arts. Here they seek the essence of the moon. What is the moon? As we have said before, the moon is the great yin, and the sun is the great yang. To seek the moon’s essential water is to draw forth its essential water. Such things existed not only in India, but also in China.

It is said that in ancient times there was a method for obtaining water from the moon.

How was it obtained? Stones from the five directions—east, south, west, north, and center—were used. On a renzi day in the eleventh lunar month, one would go north at midnight and refine them by fire into the shape of a cup. Once the vessel had been refined, one would use it to request water from the moon, and the moon’s water could then flow into the cup.

This is a Chinese account; the sūtra describes an Indian method of obtaining water. Indian illusionists sought the moon’s essential water to compound magical medicines. Such medicines were like the cinnabar of Chinese Daoism. Cinnabar is a mineral substance, prepared by combining certain substances from corpses with

mercury and the like. If cinnabar is consumed improperly, it can cause poisoning and death.

The great illusionists sought the moon's essential water to compound magical medicines, which in India were probably made from the essences of things and of people. Human essences include what Daoism calls gathering yin to replenish yang, obtaining placenta, and obtaining fetal substances. Daoist elixirs come in many kinds, principally two: inner elixirs and outer elixirs. Outer elixirs are like magical medicines.

"On the day of the full moon, these masters . . ." The "white moon" means the full moon; a lunar month of thirty days is called a white month. "The day of the white moon" refers to the night when the full moon stands at the center of the sky. "They hold a fangzhu vessel in their hands to receive the water from the moon." Earlier we spoke of using a yangsui mirror to obtain the essence of the sun. The fangzhu mentioned here is a vessel for obtaining the essence of the moon. We have not seen what it actually looks like; books describe it as curved and shaped like a pearl. As the moon's water flows down, it is received by the fangzhu; one may use the fangzhu to request water from the moon.

"Does this water come forth from the pearl, exist spontaneously in empty space, or come from the moon?"

As in the preceding discussion of where things come from, the four great illusionists now hold a fangzhu vessel and seek water from the moon. The moon's water flows forth. Where, then, does this water come from? Does it come from the moon, already exist in the pearl, or arise by itself?

"Ānanda, if it comes from the moon, then since it can cause the distant pearl to produce water, all the forests and trees through which its light passes should likewise pour forth streams. If they flow, why must one wait for water to issue from the fangzhu? If they do not flow, it is clear that the water does not descend from the moon."

The principle is the same as in the preceding inquiry about fire. The moon and sun are both in the sky, not in the human world; unlike things near us, they cannot be taken up and examined or touched by hand. If water arose from the moon, then, since it can make this distant pearl produce water, the trees and forests illuminated by the moon should also give forth water. Earlier, in discussing the sun, it was said that if fire came from the sun, then when its light shone upon the woods, it should set all the trees ablaze.

If the moon could produce water, why would water emerge only after the fangzhu was directed toward the moon? If the water does not flow forth without the fangzhu,

this proves that it does not flow down from the moon.

“If it comes from the pearl, then water should constantly flow from within this pearl. Why wait until midnight, when it receives the light of the full moon?”

If it flowed from the pearl, then water should constantly flow from that pearl. Why must one wait for the night of the full moon, until moonlight shines upon the pearl, before water can emerge? This proves that the water comes neither from the pearl nor from the moon.

“If it arises from empty space, then, since the nature of space is boundless, water too should be without limit. From humans to the heavens, all would be equally submerged. How then could there still be water, land, and creatures that move through the air?”

If water came forth from empty space, then because space has no boundaries and no visible end, the water produced should likewise be boundless. All of space would be filled with water. If there were water everywhere from the human realm to the heavens, where would the present water, land, and sky remain? Humans, animals, and birds would all drown or starve to death. Therefore, space cannot produce water.

“Examine this more closely: the moon rises through the sky; the pearl is held in the hand; and the basin that receives the pearl’s water is set out by a person. From what direction does the water flow into this? The moon and pearl are far apart; they neither unite nor combine. The essence of water should not arise of itself from nowhere.”

“Examine this more closely” means that you should look again with care and investigate in detail. First, “the moon rises through the sky”: the moon moves in the heavens. Second, “the pearl is held in the hand”: the pearl is held in one’s hand. Third, “the basin that receives the pearl’s water is set out by a person”: the basin beneath the pearl is brought and placed there by someone.

“From what direction does the water flow into this?” From where does the water flow? Since it comes neither from the moon nor from the pearl nor from empty space, yet the water is not absent—it has already flowed into this basin—where, then, do you say it comes from? “The moon and pearl are far apart; they neither unite nor combine. The essence of water should not arise of itself from nowhere.”

The moon and pearl are far apart; the two do not combine, so the water does not arise from their combination. Yet this essential water should not transform itself from nothing into something, for nothing can produce itself. Thus it is said: “not self-arisen, not arisen from another, not jointly arisen, and not arisen without cause.”

If it is not the Tathāgata-garbha, then what is it? The Tathāgata-garbha is originally pure and inherently complete with all potentialities. So long as you do not cling, all of empty space and the dharma realm is water, for the nature of water is formless and true water is without appearances. Once you cling, however, this water comes to have locations and forms; thus, some places have water and some do not.

Because the Tathāgata-garbha is originally without form or appearance, ignorance is like a staircase: layer upon layer, it accumulates into delusive forms. What we ordinarily see are delusive forms, owing to ignorance. Therefore, one must practice diligently to break through this ignorance before one can shatter appearances and see one's true nature. The Tiantai school divides ignorance into several kinds: delusions of views, delusions of thought, dust-like delusions, and delusions of ignorance, making many distinctions. In the Chan tradition, however, such fine divisions are not made. One directly breaks through ignorance; when this staircase dissolves, appearances can no longer be grasped.

"You still do not understand that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of water is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true water. It is originally pure and pervades the dharma realm. It accords with the minds of sentient beings and responds to the measure of their knowing. Where one clings to the pearl, water appears there. If one clings throughout the dharma realm, water arises throughout the dharma realm. It arises and fills the world—how could it have a fixed location?"

Here the explanation is the same as the preceding discussion of the earth and fire elements. Because ignorance and delusion obscure your true mind, you do not know that, within the Tathāgata-garbha, "the nature of water is true emptiness." The nature of water is formless and without appearance; it is true emptiness. The water you see as having form and appearance is an illusory appearance, not true water. "The nature of emptiness is true water": only water that is formless and without appearance is true water.

True emptiness indicates that this is not inert emptiness, while the nature of water indicates that it is not illusory water. The nature of water is formless; what has form and appearance is an illusory appearance. Because beings have different karma, each sees differently: we see water, whereas hungry ghosts in the hells see fire.

"It is originally pure and pervades the dharma realm." Although the Tathāgata-garbha manifests all appearances and gives rise to all dharmas, in arising there is no arising, and in manifesting there is no manifesting; therefore it is pure. It is not self-arisen, not arisen from another, not jointly arisen, and not arisen without cause. Thus it is originally unborn and pervades the dharma realm: there is nowhere it is not and nowhere it does not exist.

“It accords with the minds of sentient beings and responds to the measure of their knowing.” Because the capacities of beings in the ten dharma realms differ, what they see also differs. We see the rivers and oceans as water; devas see them as lapis lazuli; fish, dragons, shrimp, and crabs see them as dwellings. Because sentient beings differ in mind-capacity, what they see also differs.

“Where one clings to the pearl, water appears there. If one clings throughout the dharma realm, water arises throughout the dharma realm.” Because you cling to this function, when you use a fangzhu vessel and direct it toward the moon, water appears where you are; when someone elsewhere uses a fangzhu vessel and directs it toward the moon, water appears there as well. It is not that water comes to you and is therefore absent from the other place, for the nature of water pervades all empty space and the dharma realm; there is nowhere it is not. Thus, “Where one clings to the pearl, water appears there. If one clings throughout the dharma realm, water arises throughout the dharma realm.” True water is everywhere throughout the entire dharma realm; wherever one clings to the pearl, water will flow forth.

“Pervading the world, how could it have any fixed location?” Since the water of intrinsic nature fills all worlds, where could there still be any fixed location? Where could there still be coming and going? When the Sixth Patriarch realized his true nature, he said: “Who would have expected that intrinsic nature is originally pure? Who would have expected that intrinsic nature is originally neither arising nor ceasing? Who would have expected that intrinsic nature is originally complete in itself? Who would have expected that intrinsic nature is originally unmoving? Who would have expected that intrinsic nature can give rise to all phenomena?”

This is directly seeing one’s true nature. We too should do the same today: break through this false appearance and realize, “Ah! This true mind is originally without form or appearance.” Since no form or appearance can be seen, what is there to realize? Since it fundamentally has no form or appearance, where is there a mind that can seek this or that? Once there is a mind that seeks, it will continually pursue all kinds of desires. When its desires are fulfilled, it is happy; when they are not fulfilled, it is afflicted. One desire follows another—when could they ever be satisfied?

Recently, a case was reported in the newspapers. A deputy factory director lived very frugally: he ate the cheapest food in the cafeteria, mended his clothes again and again, and took the lead in every matter. Because he appeared so diligent and seemed to have few desires, he gained the attention of his superiors and was promoted to factory director.

Yet in fact his greed and desire were immense. Every day he thought of producing achievements, and he suffered terribly within. Then he assaulted unmarried female

employees. After doing so repeatedly, he was bound to be exposed. “If you do not want others to know, do not do it yourself.” This man thought only of climbing upward within his heart. He wore a false mask in dealing with others, and his desires could never be satisfied.

Therefore, we must break through deluded thoughts and attachments and recognize the Original Face. What is there left worth pursuing? What is there that you cannot let go of? To be able to do this is to see the Way; to be forever free from attachment to appearances is to realize the Way. Do not take this lightly! I now ask you: “Can you let all this go?” Some may say, “I have not yet developed spiritual powers!” Spiritual powers have nothing to do with seeing one’s true nature. Do not become attached to spiritual powers; you must let everything go.

It is not that you lack spiritual powers; your habitual tendencies have obscured them. Your coarse afflictions have not yet been eliminated, so for the time being spiritual powers cannot emerge. When the habitual tendencies of ignorance are eliminated, you will naturally attain such powers without seeking them.

Here I shall briefly explain the five coverings: wealth, sexual attraction, food, fame, and sleep.

Wealth means the mind that craves wealth; gold, silver, jewels, and banknotes are all wealth. Sexual attraction means the beauty of women and fondness for sensual pleasures—these are all sexual attraction. Food means eating and drinking: one wants food that is tasty and flavorful. Fame means reputation and a good name. One is overjoyed when praised by others, but at a single word of disapproval immediately flares up in anger.

There was a Dharma teacher who lectured very well on the sūtras. Once, when he went somewhere to give a lecture and had just stepped off the train, people from another place handed him a note saying, “Your lectures are so very good; please come to our place and lecture.” Upon hearing this, he hurried off at once. This too was attachment to a good name. Thus even a good reputation is a covering; these are all human habitual tendencies.

Sleep means sleeping. When you hear that sleep too is a covering, you may think that you should give up sleeping altogether, sit in meditation all night, and never lie down. Do not misunderstand: that will not do. Why not? Because there are two kinds of never lying down. One is to doze while sitting in meditation, sitting there and sleeping with loud snores.

You assume a seated posture and do not lie down to sleep, yet you are still attached to appearances. What, then, should you do? Simply sleep when it is time to sleep; though sleeping, do not truly sleep—that is, do not sink into dullness. Let me tell you

a story. Long ago, the Fourth Patriarch, Chan Master Daoxin, went to Niutou Mountain to guide Chan Master Niutou Farong, also known as Lanrong, to awakening.

At night, Chan Master Daoxin lay down, covered his head, and went to sleep, his snoring resounding loudly. Chan Master Farong sat in meditation, wishing to practice never lying down. At daybreak, Chan Master Farong said, “Oh! You slept so soundly last night! Your snoring was tremendously loud and kept me awake all night.”

Chan Master Daoxin said, “Ah! Two lice on your body were fighting. One of them broke a leg and cried out, ‘It hurts! It hurts!’ That kept me awake all night.” Chan Master Farong said, “Did such a thing happen? I sat here and heard only your thunderous snoring. I did not hear any other sound at all.”

He took off his clothes, looked, and picked up a white louse. Sure enough, one of its legs was broken. Though Chan Master Daoxin snored loudly, he could hear the lice fighting. This was true never lying down: though asleep, his awareness remained clear. Chan Master Farong sat through the night without lying down, yet heard nothing at all. Therefore, in applying oneself, one must not become attached to the appearance of sitting.

The Sixth Patriarch said: “While alive, one sits and does not lie down; once dead, one lies down and does not sit. It is but a stinking skeleton—why make a task of it?” People of the Chan school do not speak of this kind of dead practice. If you truly know how to apply yourself, then even when sleepy and lying down, you are still sitting; if you lack practice, then even while sitting, you are drowsy. We must truly understand this and not become attached to such appearances.

After Patriarch Linji awakened, his teacher Huangbo came one day to inspect the monks’ quarters. Linji had been lying down asleep; when he saw his teacher arrive, he continued to sleep with his head on the pillow, while the others were all sitting in Chan meditation. Huangbo looked and said, “You people are putting on airs here. You are not as good as Linji, who knows how to apply himself even while asleep.”

Therefore, practice lies within the mind, not in outward appearance. Practice after realizing the Way is genuine practice, and genuine practice means eliminating one’s own habitual tendencies. Only after awakening, when one knows what nature is and what appearances are, and knows that all phenomena are one’s own functioning, can one practice truthfully and in accordance with principle. If you have not awakened, then whatever dharma you practice is blind cultivation and futile training.

Some people keep count of how many times they have recited the Buddha’s name and how many times they have read the sūtras. “Oh! Amitābha Buddha asked me to

pass a message on to you. The Buddha said such-and-such about a certain person, such-and-such about a certain place, and that we should hold some kind of ritual gathering…" How is this seeing the Buddha? This is seeing ghosts! Genuine realization of the Way is not like this. There is neither appearance nor fixed location; not even the shadow of a Buddha can be found.

"They appear in accordance with karma. Worldly people, lacking knowledge, mistakenly take them to be causes and conditions or an inherent nature. All this is merely the discriminating calculation of consciousness. Whatever may be said has no real meaning."

This is the same as what was explained earlier. These appearances of water vary according to the differing karma of sentient beings. In some places there are great floods and flood disasters; this is karma. In other places it never rains, and the drought is so severe that there is no water to drink; this too is karma. Such appearances of drought and flood are evoked by the collective karma of sentient beings.

Now that the economy has developed, too many factories have been indiscriminately established in various places, and wastewater pollutes everywhere. This too is brought about by collective karma. All these things appear in accordance with karma. Sentient beings' karma differs, and so the appearances of water they see also differ.

"Worldly people, lacking knowledge, mistakenly take them to be causes and conditions or an inherent nature." Those in the world who lack understanding are confused by this and discuss one after another whether these phenomena arise through causes and conditions or through inherent nature. It is like speaking of dreams within a dream: they can never explain it clearly. This is all discrimination by deluded mind and deluded consciousness. Whatever may be said has no real meaning.

(IV) The Great Element of Wind: The Nature of Wind Is True Emptiness; the Nature of Emptiness Is True Wind

"Ānanda, the nature of wind has no substance; its movement and stillness are inconstant. When you adjust your robes and enter the assembly, the corner of your saṅghāṭī moves and brushes those beside you, producing a slight breeze that touches their faces."

We now discuss the great element of wind. “The nature of wind has no substance; its movement and stillness are inconstant.” Wind originally has no inherent substance. What is wind? Wind is air in motion. It has no obstructive nature and therefore no fixed location.

If it is water, you can stir it with something; if it is fire, you can use it to burn. But wind cannot be grasped anywhere. It has no obstructive substance; hence it is said, “The nature of wind has no substance; its movement and stillness are inconstant.” It is sometimes present and sometimes absent. Once there is movement, there is wind; once movement stops, the wind ceases. It suddenly arises and suddenly stops; thus its movement and stillness are inconstant.

“When you adjust your robes and enter the assembly.” You often arrange your clothing and go among the assembly. “The corner of your saṅghāṭī moves and brushes those beside you.” A saṅghāṭī is the outer robe worn by monastics; it is also called a patchwork robe.

At Yunju Monastery, I saw a robe once worn by Master Xuyun. That cloth garment was made of strips in various colors—red, yellow, white, blue, and black. This is a patchwork robe, also called a saṅghāṭī. When you put on your robe and its corner moves, it affects those beside you, and wind brushes against their faces. Where does this wind arise? When your robe moves, the air moves, and wind is thereby stirred up.

“Does this wind come forth from the corner of the kaṣāya, arise from empty space, or originate on the face of the person it brushes?”

So does this wind arise from the corner of the kaṣāya, from empty space, or from a person’s face? Here the World-Honored One asks Ānanda where this wind comes from. Why ask where it comes from? Because if it has a place of origin, then there is wind; if it has no place of origin, then there is no wind.

“Ānanda, if this wind comes forth from the corner of the kaṣāya, then you are wearing wind. As the robe flutters and sways, it should leave your body.”

If this wind arises from the corner of the kaṣāya, then wearing your robe is equivalent to wearing wind. “As the robe flutters and sways, it should leave your body.” Wind moves and sways, so your robe should not remain on you; it should drift away from your body like wind. In that case, what you are wearing would be wind, not clothing.

“As I now expound the Dharma, the garments of those in the assembly hang down. Look at my robe: where is the wind? There should not be a place within the robe where wind is stored.”

The Buddha says: I am now expounding the Dharma here, and the garments of those in the assembly all hang down. The corners of their robes hang motionless below, proving that there is no wind within them. If there were wind, the robes would flutter at any time. “Look at my robe: where is the wind?” Do you see wind stored in my robe? Where is the wind? You cannot say that there is a place in my robe where wind is stored. This shows that wind does not arise from the kaṣāya. The text next discusses empty space:

“If it arises from empty space, then when your robe does not move, why is there no brushing wind?”

If wind arises from empty space, then when your robe is not moving, why is no wind seen? Why is it only when the robe moves that wind brushes against a person’s face?

“The nature of empty space is ever-abiding; wind should therefore arise constantly. If, when there is no wind, empty space must perish, then the cessation of wind can be perceived—but what would the cessation of empty space be like?”

Empty space is always present and does not cease, so wind too should be blowing continuously, without interruption. If wind arose from empty space, then when the wind stopped, empty space too should disappear.

Although wind has no visible form, we can sense its coming and going. When the wind stops, the forms of various things can still be seen—for example, the branches of trees no longer move. But what would it be like if empty space disappeared? Empty space is precisely that in which there is nothing. Since there is nothing, there is neither arising nor ceasing. Thus empty space cannot possibly perish.

“If there is arising and ceasing, it cannot be called empty space. If it is called empty space, how can wind come forth from it?”

If there is arising and ceasing, it cannot be called empty space. Arising and ceasing imply things, objects, something existent; naturally, this cannot be called empty space. Only where there is nothing are there no arising and ceasing; only where there are no arising and ceasing is there empty space. Since empty space contains nothing, how could it give rise to something else? Thus wind cannot arise from empty space. Since it arises neither from the robe nor from empty space, could it arise from the face? Please read on:

“If wind arises from the face that is brushed, then, arising from that face, it should brush against you. Since you are adjusting your robe, why does it instead brush backward?”

“If wind arises from the face that is brushed, then, arising from that face, it should brush against you.” If this wind arose from the other person’s face, it should blow

toward you rather than upon that person's own face. An east wind should blow westward, and a north wind should blow southward. Wind arising from my face should blow toward you, not toward me.

If it does not blow toward you but instead blows upon my own face, that is a backward brushing. "Since you are adjusting your robe, why does it instead brush backward?" You are adjusting your robe here; the wind arises from the other person's face and then blows back upon that person's face. How could it brush backward in this way? Thus this wind does not arise from that person's face. If it did, it should not blow upon that person's own face.

"Examine this carefully: you are the one adjusting the robe; the face belongs to the other person; empty space is still and does not participate in movement. From what direction does the wind come, stirring and moving to this place? Wind and empty space differ in nature; they neither harmonize nor combine. The nature of wind should not exist of itself, without any source."

Examine and investigate carefully. You are the one arranging the robe. The face belongs to someone else, while empty space is still and does not participate in movement. Then from what direction does the wind come, stirring and moving to this place? This wind does not arise from the robe, from empty space, or from the face. Since it arises from none of these three places, from where does it come, stirring and moving?

"Wind and empty space differ in nature; they neither harmonize nor combine." Wind is moving, whereas empty space is still. One moves and the other does not. Because movement and stillness are not one, their natures differ and they cannot harmonize or combine.

"The nature of wind should not exist of itself, without any source." One should not say that wind has no place of origin and arises by itself, for nothing can give rise to itself. Fire cannot produce fire, water cannot produce water, and wind naturally cannot produce wind. Since it is not produced by another, not jointly produced, and not self-produced, this demonstrates that the nature of wind is originally the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha: without coming or going, and originally pure.

"You still do not understand that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of wind is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true wind. It is originally pure and pervades the dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know."

This rebukes Ānanda: you do not understand at all that "within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of wind is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true

wind." That the nature of wind is true emptiness means that even the distinction of wind cannot be apprehended. Its essential nature is originally empty; do not cling to deluded emptiness or deluded movement. Though wind moves, the nature of wind itself does not move.

The nature of emptiness is true wind. Because true emptiness has no form and no movement, this wind is called true wind. If there is form, movement, or tactile sensation, it is not true wind. The nature of emptiness is true wind: it arises without arising, and does not arise yet arises; it is originally pure and pervades the dharma realm. It is not a matter of "self-arising, other-arising, or co-arising."

Since it pervades the dharma realm, it is never absent, never not present, nowhere absent, and nowhere not present. "Responding to sentient beings' minds in accordance with the measure of what they know." As stated before, because sentient beings differ in the capacity of their minds, the appearances of wind that they know likewise differ from one another.

"Ānanda, when you alone make the slightest movement of your robe, a slight breeze arises. If robes are brushed throughout the dharma realm, wind arises filling all lands. Since it pervades the world, how could it have a fixed place?"

"Ānanda, when you alone make the slightest movement of your robe, a slight breeze arises." When you move your robe slightly, a slight breeze arises. "If robes are brushed throughout the dharma realm, wind arises filling all lands." If robes were brushed throughout the entire dharma realm, wind would arise everywhere; therefore, "Since it pervades the world, how could it have a fixed place?"

It is everywhere in the world, absent nowhere and present everywhere. Since it pervades every place, where could there be one particular location for it? It is not that wind arises when you move here but does not arise when someone else moves there. Because the nature of wind is true emptiness, it pervades all worlds and does not arise from our deluded thoughts and attachments.

People in the world are so ignorant: they indulge in deluded thoughts and attachments, dividing up this true-empty nature of wind. All this is attachment formed from deluded thought. Because of attachment, they see wind in some places and no wind in others, whereas in reality the nature of wind is everywhere.

"It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake it for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. These are all discriminations and calculations of the consciousness-mind. They are merely words and have no real meaning."

“It manifests in accordance with karma.” Because each person’s karma differs, what each sees also differs. People in the world lack understanding and are confused about the origin of wind. Some believe it arises from causes and conditions, while others believe it arises naturally. Causes and conditions mean arising through combination; natural arising means arising neither through harmony nor combination.

In fact, whether through combination or not through combination, neither can be apprehended. Causes and conditions and inherent nature are both discriminations of the consciousness-mind. “They are merely words and have no real meaning.” Whatever can be spoken of is false, merely an illusory appearance. When people now discuss this question, they speak of monism, dualism, idealism, and materialism, but none of these discussions reaches what is real.

To understand the true suchness of reality, only the Buddhadharma can accomplish this. If you cling to arising and ceasing, existence and nonexistence, with respect to time and space, you can perceive only illusory appearances. Only by understanding the principle of the emptiness of nature and not clinging in the least can you perceive the true suchness of reality.

The four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind have now been explained. Next, we discuss the great element of empty space:

(V) The Element of Space: Its Nature Is Awareness and True Emptiness; Its Emptiness Is True Awareness

“Ānanda, the nature of space has no form; it is revealed through material form. For example, in the city of Śrāvastī, in places far from the river, kṣatriyas, brahmins, vaiśyas, śūdras, pukkasas, caṇḍālas, and others newly establish dwellings and dig wells in search of water. When they remove one foot of earth, there is one foot of empty space within it. Thus, when they remove as much as ten feet of earth, there is likewise ten feet of empty space in between. The shallowness or depth of the empty space corresponds to how much earth is removed.”

We now discuss the element of space. What is the nature of space? Length and shortness, squareness and roundness, largeness and smallness, height and lowness are all space. Space has no form or appearance; this is called “the nature of space has no form.” The appearance of space that we perceive is revealed through material form. Where material forms exist, there are things present, and it cannot be called space. Where there are no material forms is space. Thus, space is relative.

Space is revealed through material form; it must rely on form in order to be revealed. “For example, in the city of Śrāvastī, in places far from the river.” Śrāvastī was where the World-Honored One taught the Dharma, and it was quite far from the Ganges. “Kṣatriyas and brahmins …”

In ancient India there were four major castes: kṣatriyas were royalty and nobles; brahmins were pure religious practitioners—ancient India had Brahmanism; vaiśyas were merchants; and śūdras were farmers who tilled the fields. In addition, there were pukkasas and caṇḍālas.

Pukkasas did artistic work such as carving and painting. Caṇḍālas held the lowest status and could engage only in such despised occupations as butchery and prostitution. In ancient India, those engaged in these lowly trades had to hang a flag as a sign. They were looked down upon, called evil people, and were not permitted to associate with people of other castes.

Because these people lived far from the river, they could not simply carry water from the riverbank for drinking. How did they solve their water problem? Thus, they “newly establish dwellings and dig wells in search of water.” People cannot do without water, so the first matter to resolve when establishing a home is drinking water. If they cannot obtain river water, they must dig a well.

When digging a well, “when they remove one foot of earth, there is one foot of empty space within it.” With each foot of earth excavated, there is one foot of space where the earth had been. Because space is revealed through material form, wherever there is no material form there is naturally space. “Thus, when they remove as much as ten feet of earth, there is likewise ten feet of empty space in between.”

If removing one foot of earth produces one foot of empty space, then removing ten feet of earth naturally produces ten feet of empty space. “The shallowness or depth of the empty space corresponds to how much earth is removed.” The depth of space depends on the amount of earth removed: the more that is excavated, the deeper the space; the less that is excavated, the shallower it is. Space and form exist only relatively; they do not exist absolutely. What exists absolutely is the true mind. Whatever exists relatively is illusory and unreal. This proves that space is illusory and unreal, existing only in relation to material objects.

“Does this space arise because the earth is removed, because of the digging, or spontaneously without a cause?”

Does this space exist because earth has been removed, because it was chiseled out in digging the well, or because it arose by itself? Arising without any cause is called

spontaneous arising without a cause. Where does this space come from? If space has no place from which it comes, then it is illusory.

“Ānanda, if this space spontaneously arose without a cause, then before the earth was dug, why was there not unobstructed openness? One saw only the earth, stretching far and wide, with no passage through it.”

Suppose this empty space arose by itself; this is called spontaneous arising without a cause. Before the well was dug and before the earth was removed, why was there not unobstructed openness? Space is unobstructed; where there is obstruction, it is not space. If, before the earth was removed, there were not the slightest obstruction, this would prove that space was everywhere and without obstruction.

But when earth is present, there is obstruction; something blocks the way, and so it is not space. Therefore, before the earth has been removed, “one sees only the earth, stretching far and wide, with no passage through it.” Before our eyes we see only the earth; we do not see the appearance of unobstructed space. Not seeing the appearance of space means there is obstruction, proving that this space does not arise by itself.

“If it arose from the earth, then when the earth came out, one should see space enter. If the earth first came out and space did not enter, how could space arise from the earth? If there were no coming out or going in, then space and earth would originally have no distinct causes. If they were not distinct, they would be the same. Then, when the earth came out, why did space not come out?”

“If it arose from the earth, then when the earth came out, one should see space enter.” We have said that space does not arise by itself. If space came into being only after earth was excavated, then when the earth came out, one should see space enter. Yet we do not see space entering. This proves that space is not produced only after the earth has been excavated.

“If the earth first came out and space did not enter, how could space arise from the earth?” If the earth is removed and one does not see space enter, why say that this space exists because the earth has been excavated? Thus, the assertion that space exists because earth has been dug out cannot be established.

“If there were no coming out or going in, then space and earth would originally have no distinct causes.” If there is no coming out or going in—that is, if the earth does not come out and space does not enter—then space would be earth and earth would be space; space and earth would merge into one. If space were earth and earth were space, they would “not be distinct and therefore be the same.” Since they are not distinct, they should be identical, sharing one nature.

Then, “when the earth came out, why did space not come out?” When the earth is excavated, space too should be excavated; why do we not see space come out? Thus, it is wrong to say they are the same, and wrong to say they are different. If they are different, then when earth comes out, one should see space enter; if they are the same, then when earth is excavated, why does space not come out?

Since neither sameness nor difference is correct, this shows that space does not arise because earth is excavated. Not seeing space come out when earth is excavated means they are not the same; not seeing space enter when earth is excavated means they are not different. This proves that space and earth are neither the same nor different, and that space does not arise from earth.

For example, water and waves are of one substance: only when there is water can waves arise; remove the waves and one removes the water, remove the water and one removes the waves. If water were compared to earth and waves to space, then removing earth should mean removing space. Yet in fact removing earth is not removing space, so earth and space are not of one substance. Since they are not of one substance, one should come out and the other enter: earth comes out and space enters. In fact, we see only earth being excavated, not space entering. This proves that space is not produced from earth.

“If it arose from digging, then what the digging produced would be space, not excavated earth. If it did not arise from digging, and the digging itself merely brought out earth, how could space be seen?”

If this space arose because of digging, then, since what digging produces is space, it should not excavate earth. If digging produces space, it should not produce earth.

“If it did not arise from digging, and the digging itself merely brought out earth, how could space be seen?” If space is not produced by digging, then after the earth has been chiseled away, why does this space appear? This is the same as what was explained above: there, neither identity nor difference was correct; here, neither being produced by digging nor not being produced by digging is correct. Both alternatives are wrong.

Once the chisel digs away the earth, empty space appears. If the chisel could produce space, it should simply produce space directly, rather than excavating the earth. Since neither alternative is correct, space does not arise from digging.

The foregoing analysis proves that space does not arise from itself, from another, from both, or without a cause. Not arising from itself, another, or both means that it is not of the nature of causes and conditions; not arising without a cause means that it is not of the nature of spontaneity. Since it is neither caused and conditioned nor

spontaneous, this proves that it is the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha.

“Examine this still more carefully; contemplate it truly and closely: the chisel is held in a person’s hand and moved about as one wishes; the earth is moved from the ground. From what, then, does this space arise? The chisel and space, the substantial and the insubstantial, do not function together; they neither blend nor unite. Nor should space arise by itself from nowhere.”

“Examine this still more carefully; contemplate it truly and closely.” Examine it with exceptional care. Di means true reality: one must understand the true principle and see, as it truly is, where the truth lies.

“The chisel is held in a person’s hand”: the chisel is in a person’s hand. “It is moved about as one wishes”: according to one’s needs, it is turned in whatever way one wishes. “The earth is moved from the ground”: the earth is moved from the place from which one digs it.

“From what, then, does this space arise?” The chisel is in a person’s hand, and the earth has been moved elsewhere; from where does this space come? “The chisel and space, the substantial and the insubstantial, do not function together.” The chisel is substantial, while space is insubstantial, without an inherent entity, length, shortness, squareness, or roundness. The two neither blend nor unite and do not function together. “Nor should space arise by itself from nowhere.”

Space should not arise by itself. It neither arises through combination nor arises by itself. Since it “does not arise from itself, from another, from both, or without a cause,” from where does this space come? If it has no place from which it comes, is it not originally pure? Is it not the wondrous true suchness of the Tathāgata-garbha? Through repeated examination from many angles, no source can be found. This proves that the element of space is the wondrous true suchness of our Tathāgata-garbha.

“If this space is perfectly complete and pervades everywhere by nature, it is fundamentally unmoving. You should know that the earth, water, fire, and wind before you are all called the five great elements. Their nature is truly perfect and interpenetrating; they are all the Tathāgata-garbha, originally without arising or ceasing.”

Here it is made clear that space between heaven and earth is perfectly complete and all-pervading, lacking nothing and containing no excess. How could space be deficient? What place does not contain space? “Fundamentally unmoving” means that there is nothing within space. How could that which contains nothing move? If there were something in it, it would no longer be space.

For example, if a bottle is full of water, the water will not slosh about; if it is half full, the water will move about within it. Therefore, only when it is perfectly complete and all-pervading, lacking nothing and containing no excess, is it unmoving. “You should know that the earth, water, fire, and wind before you are …”

These are the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind discussed earlier, together with the present great element of space; “all are called the five great elements, and their natures are truly perfectly interpenetrating.” These five great elements are all the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha: real and not illusory, lacking nothing and containing nothing in excess. They pervade the dharma realm and do not obstruct one another.

Perfect interpenetration means that they can merge together: earth, water, fire, wind, and space do not obstruct one another but unite as one. Because they combine, they can form all things; without such combination, they could not form all things. “All are the Tathāgata-garbha, originally without arising or ceasing.” That which originally has neither arising nor ceasing is our wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The Tathāgata-garbha originally has neither arising nor ceasing. Yet because of the deluded stirring of our ignorance, we turn the Tathāgata-garbha into ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Within ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) there is arising and ceasing, causing us to undergo suffering in vain.

“Ānanda, your mind is deluded and confused. You do not realize that the four great elements are originally the Tathāgata-garbha. Now observe whether space comes forth or enters, or whether it neither comes forth nor enters.”

Here space is compared with the material forms of earth, water, fire, and wind. Earth, water, fire, and wind move, come and go, possess forms and appearances, and arise and cease, so it is not easy to understand their emptiness. Space is used for comparison because it is relatively close to our empty nature and easier to understand than the deluded material forms of the four great elements.

The Buddha says: “Ānanda, because you cling to material appearances, you are carried along by them. Thus your mind is confused, and you take matter to be truly existent, desperately pursuing material things—the illusory appearances of delusion. Consequently, you do not recognize the true mind but recognize only the deluded appearances of the external world. You chase after false illusions, create karma, undergo retribution, and thereby transmigrate through the six realms.”

This is confusion. Because one is confused, one cannot see the true mind; because one is deluded, one cannot distinguish the true from the false. Not knowing what the true mind is, one sees only false appearances. Thus, one “does not realize that the four great elements are originally the Tathāgata-garbha.”

Earth, water, fire, and wind are not something else. They are our wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, our Original Face, and our true suchness Buddha-nature. As explained earlier, this is “the nature of form is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true form”; next come “the nature of fire is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true fire,” and so on.

These things are originally true emptiness, without appearances. What is formless and without appearances alone is real; whatever has form and appearance is false. But this distinction between false and real is made from the standpoint of sentient beings. From the standpoint of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, they are neither real nor false: reality cannot be obtained, nor can falsity be obtained. The false is precisely the real, and the real is precisely the false.

Because all material appearances are wondrous functions of the true mind, Buddhas and bodhisattvas do not cling to them or see them as independently existing. It is like seeing clouds in the sky: clouds may take forms resembling lions or tigers, but we know that they are not real lions or tigers; they are clouds in empty space. Thus the real is the false, and the false is also the real.

Because such things do not exist in themselves, one does not cling to them. But from the standpoint of sentient beings, one must distinguish clearly between the real and the false; otherwise, one will mistake the false for the real and become deluded.

Because sentient beings are deluded and fail to awaken, they do not know that the four great elements originally pervade the dharma realm and are perfectly interpenetrating and unobstructed. Although they produce all dharmas and give rise to all functions, they are all one's own fundamental essence, not some separate thing. If one does not understand this principle, one will become attached to appearances and forget the fundamental essence.

Earth, water, fire, and wind are originally oneself. Yet, because one does not recognize this, one instead takes false appearances as real. It is like the lion-forms and tiger-forms manifested by clouds in the sky: one sees only lions and tigers and forgets that their fundamental substance is cloud.

Seeing one's nature does not mean abolishing appearances. These appearances still exist; it is not that, apart from appearances, there is another nature. Our error lies precisely here: we mistakenly suppose that practicing the Dharma means getting rid of all appearances.

This is not so. If one leaves appearances behind, suchness too is gone. It is like waves arising on water: if one were to eliminate all the waves, then the water too would no longer exist. Therefore, one must see through appearances without

clinging to them, knowing that all appearances are manifestations and wondrous functions of the true mind. Only then can one function in accordance with conditions.

The value of the true mind lies in its ability to function in accordance with conditions. It is like clouds in the sky: they originally have no fixed shape, yet can freely manifest all kinds of forms. Once one recognizes the true mind, its wondrous functioning is boundless. If one does not recognize the true mind and clings to material appearances, that becomes an obstruction. One becomes fixed and dead in those appearances, creates karma and undergoes retribution, revolves with one's karma, and cannot be self-mastering.

Because you are confused, you do not realize that the four great elements are originally the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Now look at this space—the Buddha here uses space as an analogy.

This space is inert emptiness: it contains nothing and therefore is dull and unknowing. Empty nature, however, is quiescent and pure; it is luminous true emptiness. Luminous true emptiness has knowing, like a mirror that can reflect the images of objects. This is the difference between the two. Space has an appearance, the appearance of emptiness, whereas luminous true emptiness is without appearance.

We should not cling to this space, for it is inert emptiness. Rather, we should know what luminous true emptiness is. Space is now being used as an analogy for the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Why use space? Because it contains nothing and is easier to understand than an analogy based on the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind.

Does space have coming forth and entering, arising and ceasing? It has neither coming forth nor entering, neither arising nor ceasing. Is this then neither coming forth nor entering, or is it not non-coming-forth and non-entering? Comparing these two sides, does it come forth and enter, or does it not come forth and enter? To say that it comes forth and enters is incorrect, but to say that it does not come forth and enter is also incorrect, because even “not coming forth and not entering” still posits something called not coming forth and not entering.

Our luminous true mind is pure and inherently so. It has neither coming forth nor entering, nor even non-coming-forth and non-entering. Coming forth and entering are the appearance of combination, that is, dependent arising; non-coming-forth and non-entering are the appearance of non-combination, that is, spontaneity. Having neither coming forth and entering nor non-coming-forth and non-entering means being neither dependent arising nor spontaneity.

Since it is neither dependent arising nor spontaneity, it is the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Space is used as an analogy because it does not move and has neither arising nor ceasing. Our wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is likewise so, and earth, water, fire, and wind are likewise so: they too neither come forth nor enter.

All the various appearances manifested by earth, water, fire, and wind arise in accordance with conditions, just as clouds, blown by the wind, manifest various forms. Our true suchness Buddha-nature is like a wish-fulfilling jewel: it can give rise to the myriad dharmas and manifest all kinds of things in accordance with conditions. All their countless transformations are this one mind.

This is called being unchanging while according with conditions, and according with conditions while remaining unchanging. Although it manifests all kinds of appearances—mountains, rivers, the great earth, grasses, trees, forests, men, women, young, and old—this mind remains unchanged, ever thus from ancient times to the present. If it could not manifest in accordance with conditions, but remained dead and motionless, it would not be the wondrous true suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

The Western Land of Ultimate Bliss is likewise so. Its sacred realm of bliss is the wondrous function manifested by Amitābha Buddha's true suchness Buddha-nature and accomplished through Amitābha Buddha's pure vows. All sentient beings who can be reborn in the West are pure sentient beings. Sentient beings inwardly defiled cannot be reborn there, because they do not accord with Amitābha Buddha's pure vows.

The lands of the ten directions are not apart from a single thought of mind. If those of us who dwell in the Sahā world were all inwardly purified, this defiled land could become a Pure Land. The defiled land is manifested by our defiled minds. Mind is the land, and land is the mind. If the human mind is not empty, appearances are not empty. If the mind harbors defilement, the realm it manifests is likewise defiled. If your mind is purified, the land too is purified. Where you are is then a Pure Land; it is not necessary to die before being reborn in a Pure Land. Thus it is said, "As one's mind is purified, so the Buddha land is purified." Here space is used to illustrate this principle.

"You do not at all know that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of awareness is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true awareness; it is pure and inherently so, pervading the dharma realm, responding to sentient beings' minds according to the measure of what they know."

Just as with the space and four great elements discussed earlier, you do not understand that luminous awareness-nature is the nature of true emptiness. This

luminous awareness-nature does not possess any form, appearance, or thing; it is the nature of true emptiness.

As just explained, inert emptiness and true emptiness differ. Inert emptiness is dull and unknowing, whereas true emptiness contains luminous awareness. Its essential nature is empty and numinous, allowing no form or appearance. Because true emptiness has no form or appearance and is luminously non-abiding, it can give rise to the myriad dharmas. Therefore it is said, “the nature of awareness is true emptiness.”

If it were not truly “utterly stripped bare,” but possessed form and appearance, then it would be fixed; once fixed, it could not give rise to other appearances. The awareness of great awakening is our intrinsic nature. This inherently present true emptiness is not the inert emptiness produced by deluded knowing and deluded views. Because the nature of awareness is intrinsically luminous, it is said, “the nature of awareness is true emptiness, and the nature of emptiness is true awareness.” True nature is empty; it is not a thing and not an image. Only such empty nature is our true body of awareness.

“Pure and inherently so, pervading the dharma realm.” Because the nature of awareness is essentially empty and pure, although it gives rise to appearances and wondrous functions, it neither changes nor becomes defiled; it is pure in its very essence. “Inherently so” means originally thus, naturally thus. It is not produced by dependent arising and not produced by spontaneity; it is neither spontaneous nor dependently arisen.

This shows that the nature of awareness differs from illusory, deluded consciousness. Our deluded awareness always arises in relation to material appearances: faculties confront objects, and only after faculties and objects condition one another does this awareness arise. But this awareness does not arise because of such confrontation. It is luminous true emptiness, without any thing at all, and is originally present.

Because it is luminous true emptiness, it can manifest all appearances and give rise to all wondrous functions; therefore, it pervades the dharma realm. The great element of space is true emptiness. It does not obstruct the four great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind discussed above; they mutually encompass and function through one another, pervading the dharma realm. The principle is the same.

“In accordance with the minds of sentient beings, it responds to the measure of what they know.” As the capacity of sentient beings’ minds is broad or narrow, so too can the knowing function arising from your true awakening be great or small. Whatever the capacity of a person’s mind may be, true awakening can function

accordingly. Because sentient beings' minds are impure and afflicted, the world that appears is likewise full of impurity and affliction.

If the minds of sentient beings were all purified, the world would immediately be transformed.

In the Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch, the Sixth Patriarch said: "Shall I move the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss before your eyes?" Everyone eagerly replied, "Yes! Yes!" They were all waiting to see Master Huineng perform a magic trick and display spiritual powers by moving the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss before them. But that was beside the point.

For it is "in accordance with the minds of sentient beings, it responds to the measure of what they know." He was teaching you to transform your mind, reminding you not to let it become defiled, not to cling to appearances, and not to become impure. Once the mind is pure, the Land of Ultimate Bliss is immediately before you. As we said above, the world as seen by Buddhas and bodhisattvas differs from what we see; it is an inconceivable realm.

What is meant by "inconceivable"? To a Buddha, it is awareness and contemplation, true emptiness, without anything there. To bodhisattvas, this world is composed of the seven treasures. To arhats, this world is empty. To sentient beings, it is soil. The karmic power of sentient beings is likewise inconceivable: because each person's karma differs, the circumstances and obstacles that arise also differ.

There are collective karma, individual karma, collective karma shared by those of the same kind, and individual karma shared by those of the same kind, among others. The water we humans on earth see is seen by devas as beryl, by fish and dragons as dwellings, and by hungry ghosts as a great fire. Because mind-capacities differ, the realms that are seen also differ.

The space we see is inert emptiness because we cling to the appearance of emptiness. But for a Buddha there is no question of inert or non-inert emptiness. The emptiness he sees is our luminous true emptiness; our wondrous luminous awakened nature is originally just so. What is seen differs because each mind-capacity differs.

Our practice is to cultivate our own minds, not those external and superficial things. Whether we practice Buddha-recitation, investigate Chan, or cultivate Esoteric Buddhism, it is all for the sake of transforming this mind. Buddha-recitation uses the Amitābha Buddha's name, replete with myriad virtues, to transform the mind of an ordinary being into the mind of a Buddha. When it can be transformed into the mind of a Buddha, that very moment is the Pure Land.

Investigating Chan is the same: use the sense of doubt to cut off deluded feelings, so that deluded thoughts cannot arise. When the time and conditions arrive, with a "hu" sound, the bottom of the bucket falls away, and one sees the originally pure Original Face. Esoteric practice is even more so: relying on the power of the blessings of the Buddhas' and bodhisattvas' three mysteries, it is somewhat easier to attain accomplishment than in the Chan school or the Pure Land school.

In the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, the Buddha compassionately and directly instructs us: Each of you possesses a luminous true mind. Do not cling to external appearances; all external appearances are deluded appearances. If you cling to appearances, you cannot see your true nature. Yet to see your true nature, you cannot leave these deluded appearances behind. If delusion is left behind, the true also ceases to exist. What we must leave behind is the deluded mind.

Once you are free of the discriminating mind, your mind naturally becomes pure, and these appearances are transformed. Thus, one who has truly seen their nature sees everything as Buddha. Not only is a table Buddha and a cup Buddha; mountains, rivers, the great earth, grasses, trees, and forests—everything without exception—is Buddha.

Suppose that, after understanding this principle, we completely let go in a single instant and, with a "hu" sound, fall away. What practice would there still be to cultivate? For you would already have realized the wondrous luminous true mind.

If you cannot suddenly let go, then you should turn back and find a Dharma gate suited to your capacity and cultivate it well. This matter cannot be accomplished by words alone; you must be able to penetrate through circumstances. If you say one thing but still cannot penetrate through when circumstances arise, and afflictions remain as before, then you will gain no benefit from studying Buddhism.

We study Buddhism in order to attain genuine liberation and true benefit, not merely to muddle along, seeking divine aid and worshipping Buddhas, burning incense, and asking the Buddha to grant us some advantage or help us achieve some aim. Rather, we seek truly to be liberated from birth and death.

If we can understand that each has their own causes and conditions, let go completely and relinquish everything, then in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down we will always see our true nature. We will not see any appearance as obtainable, nor will we continue turning about within appearances. If we remain stuck to appearances and follow them, then we are turned by appearances and become their slaves. We must become the masters of appearances and be able to transform them. Only then can we leave appearances, see our true nature, and transcend birth and death.

“Ānanda, as emptiness arises in one well from the empty space of that well, so it is with the emptiness of the ten directions. Though it fills the ten directions, how could it have any fixed location?”

“Ānanda, as emptiness arises in one well from the empty space of that well.” Dig a well and chisel out the earth, and you will see that there is emptiness within the well. “So it is with the emptiness of the ten directions.” The emptiness of the ten directions is the same. Since the earth of the ten directions cannot be obtained, it is originally empty space; it is not that it becomes true emptiness only after all this earth has been dug out.

The Buddha teaches in this way so that our minds may become free from the realm of sense objects. The faculties are mind, and objects are dust; when the mind-faculties and object-dust are separated and no longer cling to one another, the emptiness of the ten directions immediately vanishes, and nothing can be obtained. This practice is the falling away of sense faculties and their objects; in the Chan school, it is called “empty space shattering and the great earth sinking level.” It is the same for those who practice Buddha-recitation.

When the mind that recites and the Buddha who is recited both fall away at once, it is the same kind of scene. Master Yinguang wrote an essay called Notes on Feeling One’s Way Through Buddha-Recitation Samādhi. The state he describes is just like this. The state realized in Esoteric Buddhism is likewise so; it is no different from Chan and Pure Land. Thus it is said: “There are not two roads for returning to the source; expedient means have many gates.” Though the entryways differ in many ways, the destination reached is the same.

“Though it fills the ten directions, how could it have any fixed location?” When our minds are empty and pure, all of empty space and the dharma realm are within our minds. This is called “the mind encompassing empty space.” At that point, where could there still be any fixed location? The ten directions are east, west, south, north, above, below, and the four intermediate directions. The emptiness of these ten directions does not originally exist; it is all discriminated by our consciousness-mind. Thus there fundamentally is no such fixed location.

“It appears in accordance with karma. Those in the world, lacking understanding, are deluded into taking it for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. All this is discriminative calculation by the consciousness-mind. Whenever there is verbal expression, there is no real meaning.”

You distinguish the appearances before your eyes as good or bad, east or west; all this occurs because karmic obstacles have manifested. Karmic obstacles have three subtle characteristics: the characteristic of karma, the characteristic of transformation, and the characteristic of manifestation. “Ignorance as cause gives

rise to the three subtle characteristics." Once karma arises, one then takes hold of these appearances. Karma is divided into collective karma and individual karma.

Individual karma gives rise to each individual sentient being; individual karma shared by those of the same kind forms a particular class of sentient beings; and collective karma shared by those of the same kind together gives rise, through karmic resonance, to the world in which we now live. Thus the six realms all arise from karma: hell is karma, hungry ghosts are karma, animals too are karma. Because each person's karmic obstacles differ, the realms they see also differ.

Earth, water, fire, wind, and space are all perceived differently by different sentient beings. Those in the world who lack understanding are perplexed and think that this is formed from causes and conditions, while that arises naturally—just as crows are black, doves are white, pine trees are straight, and thorn bushes are crooked, all naturally formed without contrivance.

This is the consciousness-mind among the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. This consciousness-mind is ignorance: it believes that it can truly give rise to thoughts, that it possesses awareness and can think. These are all deluded awareness, all the result of the discriminative calculations of the consciousness-mind.

If there were no discriminative calculation, there would fundamentally be no mountains, rivers, and great earth; no men or women, young or old; no sun, moon, or stars—there would be nothing at all. Thus the five aggregates are very bad things. If we are to become Buddhas, we must break through the five aggregates. Once this consciousness-mind is shattered, we see our own luminous awakened nature. Suchness is the Buddha-nature of true emptiness.

When suchness does not preserve its own nature, this is leakage. Because of this leakage, awareness illumines emptiness, and thus this world and our bodies arise. Therefore it is said, "Whenever there is verbal expression, there is no real meaning." Since everyone gives rise to deluded discrimination, arguing over idealism and materialism, monism and dualism, no matter how they speak, they cannot recognize this true reality. They cannot speak of this true mind or of the Buddha-nature of suchness; therefore, there is no real meaning in it all.

The foregoing explained the element of space. Next, we shall discuss the element of seeing:

(VI) The Greatness of Seeing: The Nature of Seeing Is Enlightened Brightness; the Essence of

Enlightenment Is Bright Seeing

“Ānanda, the awareness of seeing has no independent knowing; it arises in dependence on form and emptiness. As you are now in the Jeta Grove, it is bright in the morning and dim in the evening. If it is the middle of the night, a bright moon brings light, while a dark moon brings darkness. Thus, distinctions such as light and darkness arise through seeing.”

This seeing is our faculty, for the faculties give rise to seeing. Many exegetes of the scriptures say that the element of seeing is the element of the faculties. Seeing here does not refer only to the seeing of the eyes; it should include the six sense faculties. Awareness of seeing arises only when the faculties and their objects confront one another. Without objects, the faculties have no knowing; without faculties, objects have no appearances.

Objects have appearances. For example, a table may be high or low, a stool may be square or round, a mirror may be placed somewhere, and a tape recorder may have a particular form. Objects become material appearances because we have faculties capable of knowing and perceiving them.

For example, the appearances of lions and tigers formed by white clouds—the changes in these shapes and appearances—are perceived by the faculties and arise through the confrontation of faculties and objects.

Thus, ancient books first tell us that faculties and objects can give rise to this awareness of seeing only when they come together. A faculty alone or an object alone cannot be found. Therefore it is said: “Mind originally does not arise, yet arises because of objects; objects originally do not arise, yet arise because of mind.” Objects and mind are fundamentally one thing. This is what is meant by “the awareness of seeing has no independent knowing; it arises in dependence on form and emptiness.”

The awareness of seeing itself is in fact without knowing; it is only through material appearances that it can manifest, giving rise to an awareness of seeing. The object-realm includes both form and emptiness. Form consists of the various appearances disclosed through light; both form and emptiness are appearances.

“As you are now in the Jeta Grove, it is bright in the morning and dim in the evening. If it is the middle of the night, a bright moon brings light, while a dark moon brings darkness. Thus, distinctions such as light and darkness arise through seeing.” That awareness is a false appearance. It arises through the confrontation of faculties and objects, and whatever arises through such confrontation cannot be found. For

example, now that one has come beneath the Jeta Grove, “it is bright in the morning and dim in the evening.”

When the sun rises in the morning, the sky grows bright, and there is light. At night, when the sun sets, the sky grows dark. “If it is the middle of the night, a bright moon brings light, while a dark moon brings darkness.” Suppose it is nighttime: a bright moon means that there is a moon, and moonlight therefore brings brightness; a dark moon means that there is no moon, and without moonlight there is naturally darkness.

“Thus, distinctions such as light and darkness arise through seeing.” The two material objects of light and darkness exist only because you discriminate and judge them through seeing. If you had no seeing and no discrimination, how could you know light and darkness? And how could you know from where the appearances of light and darkness arise? They exist because you have this seeing and because you make such distinctions, yet in truth they cannot be found at all. Next, let us examine where this seeing actually arises from.

This requires careful examination. Please read the sūtra passage:

“Is this seeing one substance with, or not one substance with, the appearances of light and darkness and with empty space? Or is it both the same and not the same, or both different and not different?”

Where does this seeing come from? Only because you have seeing can you distinguish light and darkness; without seeing, you naturally could not distinguish them.

Does this seeing come from light, darkness, or empty space? Or are seeing and light, darkness, and empty space one substance? Is your seeing ultimately the same as, or different from, these three things? Or is it the same yet not the same? Or different yet not different? Why is this said? Because the four propositions—one substance, not one substance, same yet not the same, and different yet not different—are also called the four principles. No thing can depart from these four principles.

If it departs from these four principles, no thing can be established; this shows that the thing does not exist at all. Is it one substance or not one substance? Is it the same yet not the same—that is, sameness containing difference? Or is it different yet not different—difference also containing non-difference? The Buddha presents these four principles in order to examine and demonstrate which relation of seeing to light, darkness, and empty space can actually be established.

“Ānanda, if this seeing were originally one substance with light, darkness, and empty space, then light and darkness—the two substances—would negate one another.”

Let us first discuss one substance. Suppose this seeing were one substance with light, darkness, and empty space. Since they would be the same thing, “light and darkness—the two substances—would negate one another.” Why? Because light and darkness are not one substance: when there is light, there is no darkness; when there is darkness, there is no light.

For example, when there is light now, how could there be darkness? When the sun sets and the light is gone, it is dark; how could there then be light? Light and darkness are not one substance; they are opposites. If seeing were one substance with light, darkness, and empty space, then light would not be light and darkness would not be darkness, and the two appearances of light and darkness could not be found. Moreover, light and darkness are wholly opposed, and their two substantial appearances cannot both be established. Thus, to say that seeing is one substance with light, darkness, and empty space is incorrect.

“When it is dark, there is no light; when it is light, there is no darkness. If seeing were one with darkness, then when light appeared, seeing would perish.”

This explains that light and darkness are relative and opposed. When it is bright, it is not dark; when it is dark, it is not bright. Previously, seeing, light, darkness, and empty space were discussed together as four things; now they are discussed separately. “If seeing were one with darkness,” then when brightness appeared, darkness would be gone. Since darkness would be gone, seeing should also be gone. Hence it says, “when light appeared, seeing would perish.”

“If it were necessarily one with light, then when darkness came, it should cease.”

If it were necessarily united with light as one substance, then when darkness came, light should be gone. Since there would be no light, there would naturally be no seeing either. Hence it says, “when darkness came, it should cease.”

“How could that which has ceased see light and darkness?”

When darkness comes, light departs; when light comes, darkness ceases. This seeing could not arise at all, and naturally could not see light and darkness. If this seeing has ceased, then what could see light and darkness without ceasing?

“If light and darkness differ, while seeing neither arises nor ceases, how could they be one?”

Seeing differs in nature and substance from light and darkness, for light and darkness arise and cease, whereas seeing neither arises nor ceases. “How could they be one?” How could they possibly become one substance? If they were one substance, seeing too would arise and cease. Thus, seeing cannot become one

substance with light, darkness, and empty space. This refutes the proposition of one substance.

Next is the proposition that they are not one substance, but are two distinct substances. Let us see whether seeing exists apart from light and darkness. In fact, apart from light, darkness, and empty space, there is no seeing. This therefore also refutes the proposition of not one substance.

“If this pure seeing is not one substance with darkness, light, and empty space, then when you separate it from light, darkness, and empty space and analyze the source of seeing, what appearance does it have?”

If this seeing were not one substance with light, darkness, and empty space, and there were a seeing apart from light, darkness, and empty space, then analyze the substance of this seeing: what would it look like? The source of seeing means the root of seeing, the nature of seeing. The question is: what appearance does the root of seeing have, and what is it?

“Apart from light, darkness, and empty space, the source of seeing is like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit.”

Apart from light, darkness, and empty space, this seeing is like hair on a tortoise or horns on a rabbit: it simply does not exist. As explained earlier, apart from material appearances there is no seeing, and apart from seeing there are no material appearances. Only when faculties and objects come together can this seeing arise. Thus, this seeing is false seeing, not true seeing. Like hair never growing on a tortoise or horns never growing on a rabbit, it is fundamentally nonexistent.

“Light, darkness, and empty space are three things entirely different from one another. From what could seeing be established?”

Light, darkness, and empty space are three distinct things. From where, then, could seeing arise? Since seeing cannot be found apart from light, darkness, and empty space, neither one substance nor not one substance is possible. Thus the first two of the four principles are refuted.

“Light and darkness oppose one another; how could they possibly be the same? Apart from the three, seeing is originally nonexistent; how could it possibly be different?”

The appearances of light and darkness are mutually opposed and cannot become one substance.

When light comes, there is no darkness; when darkness comes, there is no light. How could they be the same? “Apart from the three, seeing is originally nonexistent;

how could it possibly be different?" Apart from empty space, light, and darkness, seeing does not exist. Where, then, could there be difference? Thus, sameness cannot be found, nor can difference.

Apart from light, darkness, and empty space, even these appearances do not exist, so where could there be seeing? Thus it is neither the same nor not the same; both sameness and non-sameness cannot be found. These principles were all explained earlier in the ten examinations of seeing. This is called neither identical with nor separate from: seeing is neither these material appearances nor apart from them. Apart from material appearances, how could there still be seeing? Therefore both sameness and non-sameness cannot be found.

Next, we refute different yet not different:

"When empty space and seeing are distinguished, there is originally no boundary between them. How, then, could they not be the same? When seeing darkness and seeing light, their nature does not change. How, then, could they not be different?"

Let us try to distinguish the boundary between this seeing and empty space. Can you determine which boundary belongs to seeing and which belongs to empty space? Is there a boundary by which seeing and empty space can be divided? Since seeing and empty space cannot be separated and are united as one, it cannot be said that they are not the same.

"When seeing darkness and seeing light, their nature does not change. How, then, could they not be different?" When light and darkness are seen, darkness and light are not one substance; they oppose one another. Light does not become darkness, and darkness does not become light. Since they are opposed, "how could they not be different?" How could they fail to be different—where 'not different' means the same? They are originally not the same.

The foregoing analysis demonstrates that not only are "identity and nonidentity" unobtainable, but "sameness and nonsameness, difference and nondifference" are also unobtainable. Since none of these four principles can establish this view, it is proven to be illusory and unreal—something that has never inherently existed. This view arises only when sense faculties and objects confront one another; it is dependently arisen. "Whatever arises from causes and conditions, I say is empty." Non-Buddhists regard causes and conditions as truly existent, whereas when the Buddha speaks of causes and conditions, there is fundamentally no substantial entity: there is arising, yet no arising.

"Examine still more closely—minutely examine in detail, scrutinize and contemplate carefully. Brightness comes from the sun; darkness follows the dark moon; openness belongs to empty space; obstruction belongs to the earth. From what,

then, does this essence of seeing arise? The awareness of seeing and inert emptiness neither combine nor unite. Nor should the essence of seeing arise by itself, without any source."

What was discussed above was "not arising from another" and "not arising jointly." The essence of seeing neither arises from emptiness, darkness, or brightness ("not arising from another"), nor arises through combining with brightness, darkness, and empty space ("not arising jointly").

The text now goes on to discuss "not arising from itself": Look carefully—that is, examine minutely and in detail. Then scrutinize and investigate with the utmost subtlety and care.

Examine and examine again; reflect and reflect again, in order to understand clearly: Where does brightness come from? Brightness comes from the sun. Where does darkness come from? Darkness accompanies the dark moon; when there is no moon, it is dark. Openness belongs to empty space: where nothing obstructs, there is empty space. Obstruction belongs to the earth: obstruction means hindrance, and hindrance is the characteristic of earth.

Brightness, darkness, openness, and obstruction each have their own source. "From what, then, does this essence of seeing arise?" Where does this essence of seeing come from? Does it come from brightness, darkness, openness, and obstruction? No.

What do "the awareness of seeing" and "inert emptiness" mean? Seeing is our mind of luminous awareness. This seeing-nature can perceive and understand all things. Thus, seeing is our mind: its awareness is numinous and never obscured. The awareness of seeing is the conscious substance that enables us to see. Inert emptiness is dull emptiness—empty yet lacking numinous awareness, benighted and unknowing.

One is the awareness of sentient beings; the other is the dull insentience of inanimate things. These two, sentient and insentient, naturally cannot combine or unite; hence they are said to neither combine nor unite. Since the essence of seeing does not arise from combination, does it arise by itself? "Nor should the essence of seeing arise by itself, without any source." In the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, the World-Honored One repeatedly explains that nothing can produce itself. It can arise only after combining with something else; therefore, it cannot arise by itself without any source.

The meaning that follows is this: since the essence of seeing does not arise from itself, from another, or jointly, it naturally also does not arise without a cause. After all, we do possess the functions of seeing and knowing. As explained just now,

seeing does not refer merely to the eyes' ability to see; it encompasses the cognizant capacity of all six sense faculties. We can see, hear, smell, taste, feel, and think, and these functions are all present without disorder. They are not without cause; this is called "not arising without a cause."

"Not arising from itself, not arising from another, not arising jointly, and not arising without a cause." What could this be if not suchness and Buddha-nature? Once the illusory has been utterly dispelled, the real appears. This proves that the faculty element is our suchness and Buddha-nature.

"If seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are perfectly complete and pervade everywhere in their nature, they are fundamentally unmoving. You should know that boundless, unmoving empty space, together with the moving earth, water, fire, and wind, are all called the six elements. Their nature is truly perfect and interpenetrating; all are the Tathāgata-garbha, fundamentally neither arising nor ceasing."

Taken together, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing constitute the faculty element of the six sense faculties. Seeing-nature is neither the same as nor different from form and emptiness, brightness and darkness. If you say it is the same, it is not the same; if you say it is different, it is not different, for apart from forms there can be no seeing. For example, apart from sound-objects, our ears have no hearing-nature; apart from flavors such as sourness, sweetness, bitterness, and pungency, the tongue has no sense of taste.

Because there is no seeing apart from them, it is said not to be different. Yet if one says that they are the same, they are not one entity. As explained above, brightness and darkness cannot be one entity: if seeing were one with brightness, then when darkness came it should not see; if it were one with darkness, then when brightness came it should not see.

When we hear sounds, we can hear both east and west; when we look at things, we can see both brightness and darkness; when we taste flavors, we can perceive both bitterness and sweetness. This is neither sameness nor difference. Because it is neither same nor different, and is perfectly interpenetrating and without obstruction, it is called "perfect and all-pervading in nature." Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are nature; their mutual nonobstruction is called perfection. All-pervading means present everywhere and at all times: in every place, it is our mind, uninterrupted under every circumstance. How could true nature have the marks of coming and going, arising and ceasing? This is called "perfect and all-pervading in nature, fundamentally unmoving."

"You should know that boundless, unmoving empty space, together with the moving earth, water, fire, and wind." Empty space has no visible boundary, indicating that

our empty nature is unmoving. Earth, water, fire, and wind, however, are the four characteristics that arise and cease: this thing comes into being, that thing passes away. Because there is arising and ceasing, they are moving.

Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, which are perfect and all-pervading in nature and fundamentally unmoving; boundless, unmoving empty space; and the moving earth, water, fire, and wind are "all called the six elements." The six elements are earth, water, fire, wind, space, and the faculty element. In their fundamental substance, they have no marks of arising and ceasing, opposition, coming, or going; therefore, they are the wondrous luminous true mind.

The six elements are truly perfect and interpenetrating in nature. They mutually manifest one another without obstruction; therefore, all are suchness and Buddha-nature. "All are the Tathāgata-garbha, fundamentally neither arising nor ceasing." Why can they interpenetrate one another? Because this is an inherent function of the Tathāgata-garbha's wondrous nature of true suchness; the Tathāgata-garbha inherently possesses this capacity. Since the Tathāgata-garbha is fundamentally without arising and ceasing, the six elements likewise are without arising and ceasing.

"Ānanda, your nature is submerged. You do not realize that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are fundamentally the Tathāgata-garbha. You should contemplate whether this seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing arise or cease, are the same or different, are neither arising nor ceasing, or are neither the same nor different."

Phenomenal appearances delude sentient beings. Everyone chases after appearances, wanting this and wanting that, while the desires in their hearts can never be filled. Look at economically developed countries: although material goods are abundant, people are spiritually empty. Though they eat and dress well, they have no spiritual refuge.

People always first satisfy their material needs, but afterward they must also satisfy their spiritual needs, for the human spirit needs a refuge. Without one, it is too empty.

Therefore, the Buddhadharma teaches that people are all deluded by phenomenal appearances and pursue material desires. The more these desires swell, the more deeply people become attached; consequently, crime rates rise ever higher. The more material desires there are, the emptier the spirit becomes; the more material desire grows, the more crime increases.

Human beings, and even sentient beings in the six realms, are all deluded by phenomenal appearances. Discriminating and choosing amid sounds and forms,

they drown their own original mind. This is why they take religion as a spiritual refuge. After encountering the Buddhadharma, many people say, “What Buddhism teaches is correct and well suited to our needs.”

Therefore, the Buddha said to Ānanda, “Your nature is submerged. You do not realize that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are fundamentally the Tathāgata-garbha.” It is not only Ānanda: every one of us is submerged in birth and death. We do not know our Original Face and therefore cannot awaken.

You have not realized that your seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are the Tathāgata-garbha. These six sense faculties of seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all the Tathāgata-garbha’s wondrous nature of true suchness, not something else. Because the Tathāgata-garbha is obscured by ignorance, it becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), the eighth consciousness.

Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) has the perceiving and object aspects—that is, the perceiving aspect and object aspect arise from the self-verifying aspect. Thus, ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) can give rise to seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing. The six sense faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind all come from ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is the basis upon which our mind of seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing depends. This basis is the consciousness element: consciousness in the sense of awareness and discrimination. Since faculties and objects can illuminate states and produce discrimination, the faculties are mind; thus, the six sense faculties are both mind and objects. Because of this principle that they are both mind and objects, some say that the meaning of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra’s discussion of seeing is incomplete. Yet when the text reaches its later sections, everyone will understand that the six sense faculties are originally the mind of the Tathāgata-garbha.

“You should contemplate whether this seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing arise or cease, are the same or different, are neither arising nor ceasing, or are neither the same nor different.” You should examine carefully: does this seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing arise or cease? Is it the same or different? Or is it neither arising nor ceasing, neither the same nor different? Why say this? Because seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing appear to differ: the eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells, the tongue tastes, the body touches, and the mind knows. Their object-domains differ, so they appear to be different.

Yet they are also one consciousness, one discriminating mind. No matter how one sees, hears, smells fragrances, tastes flavors, perceives, or thinks, all ultimately return to discriminating cognition. Thus, the consciousnesses arising from the six sense faculties are one consciousness-mind, fundamentally a single entity. To say

they are the same: within their sameness there is difference, because the objects they engage differ. To say they are different: within their difference there is sameness, because they are one entity. Thus, are these six sense faculties a mind of causes and conditions that arises and ceases? Are they a mind formed by the combination of sameness and difference?

"You still do not know that, within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature of seeing is aware and luminous, and the essence of awareness is luminous seeing: pure in its original state, it pervades the dharma realm, responding in accordance with sentient beings' minds and the measure of what they know. Like the single faculty of seeing, it pervades the dharma realm. Hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, awareness of touch, and knowing are wondrous in virtue and bright in purity; they pervade the dharma realm and completely fill the ten directions of empty space. How could they have any fixed location?"

You still do not know that within the Tathāgata-garbha's original Buddha-nature there is true knowing and seeing, called "the nature of seeing is aware and luminous." Aware and luminous means right awakening: the mind-essence has luminosity and can clearly understand all things. The "nature of seeing is aware and luminous" spoken of here means that seeing arises from awareness. Our ability to see all things arises from the substance of awareness.

This fundamental awareness is wondrously luminous: it can see all things without being obscured by any of them. It is like a lotus that emerges from mud yet is not stained by the mud. This seeing originally arises from awareness; hence it is called the luminous seeing of the essence of awareness. The essential substance of awareness is suchness and Buddha-nature; it possesses the function of wondrous luminosity.

Above, it was explained that seeing arises from awareness. Below, it is explained that conscious seeing returns to awareness—that this seeing is gathered back into the substance of awareness. To return conscious seeing to awareness means that everything by which you see, hear, sense, and know is inseparable from the substance of my awareness; hence it is called the luminous seeing of the essence of awareness: "Pure and originally so, pervading the dharma realm."

Although it gives rise to all dharmas, sees all things, and manifests the wondrous functions of seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing, it remains undefiled; therefore it is called pure. "Originally so" means that it has always been thus. It is neither causes and conditions, nor spontaneity, nor combination, nor non-combination. Since nothing whatsoever can be obtained, it can pervade the dharma realm.

Because our aware mind is the wondrous substance of suchness, it is nowhere absent and never absent in time. The entire dharma realm is within this one mind;

therefore it is said to pervade all. The ten dharma realms cannot be separated from the Tathāgata-garbha. Within the Tathāgata-garbha are fully contained all mountains, rivers, and lands, as well as every animate being, from the realm of Buddhas above to the three lower realms below. If even one thing were not included, it could not be called all-pervading.

“In accordance with the minds of sentient beings, it responds to the extent of what they know.” As explained earlier, because sentient beings differ in their mind-capacity, the seeing, hearing, sensing, and knowing that manifest from them also differ. Some people like one kind of sound, while others like a different color. There is no fixed standard; all follow the flow of one’s karma. “Like a single faculty of seeing, it pervades the dharma realm.”

Here the faculty of seeing is used as an analogy: just as this faculty of seeing can pervade the dharma realm. Next come “hearing, smelling, tasting, touching, sensing touch, and conscious knowing.”

Here, hearing refers to the ear faculty, and smelling to the nose faculty. Tasting and touching refer to the tongue faculty, because something must touch the tongue in order for a taste to be experienced. Sensing touch refers to the body faculty, since something must touch the body for sensation to arise. Conscious knowing is our mind faculty. These six faculties are all “wondrous in virtue and radiant in purity.”

What is meant by wondrous virtue is that each of the six faculties has its own function: the ears hear sounds of movement and stillness; the eyes see forms and emptiness; the tongue tastes all kinds of flavors; the nose smells fragrances and odors; and tactile sensation recognizes cold, warmth, smoothness, and roughness. As for the mind faculty, it is exceedingly sensitive: it knows everything, because it is the shadow left by the fading of the six sense objects. Each of these six faculties has its own function, without the slightest disorder; this is called wondrous virtue. Radiant purity means luminosity and purity: to be pure and luminous is to be radiant.

“Pervading the dharma realm in every direction, filling the ten directions of space.” This faculty element pervades every dharma realm; throughout the ten dharma realms, it is nowhere absent. There is not a single dharma realm without this faculty element. The ten directions of space are east, south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, above, and below; they are designations of space.

This space is originally within our suchness and Buddha-nature. The Tathāgata-garbha encompasses the ten directions and pervades everything; thus it can fill the ten directions of space. “Could there possibly be a fixed location?” How could there be any fixed place? It is not that it exists here but not there, nor that it exists there

but not here. Therefore, it pervades the dharma realm, fills the ten directions of space, and is everywhere present.

“It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, lacking knowledge, mistakenly take it to be causes and conditions or an inherent nature. All this is merely the discriminating calculation of the consciousness-mind. Wherever there is speech, there is no real meaning.”

As stated above, everything is the karma of sentient beings; even earth, water, fire, wind, space, and the faculty element are karma. Because sentient beings’ karma differs, the circumstances that appear and the experiences they undergo also differ.

If our minds are utterly relinquished and completely empty and pure, then not only can earth, water, fire, wind, and space be transformed, but even the faculty element can be transformed.

For example, in the desire realm we require the six faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. In the form realm, however, it is different: beings do not need to eat, and so the faculties of nose and tongue are absent. This is manifestation in accordance with karma. Because the mind is empty and the mind of sexual desire is gone, one rises to the form realm. Going still higher, one becomes ever more refreshed, until all six faculties are gone.

The absence of the six faculties does not mean being blind or deaf, nor does it mean not seeing. Such beings have wondrous faculties, different from our six faculties. Thus, the faculties, and even all the sense objects that appear, turn in accordance with our karma. Only by letting go of everything and genuinely cultivating practice can we attain accomplishment.

If we still cling to fame, profit, gain, and loss—practicing on the one hand while continually calculating how to earn more money, how to make our families prosper, and how to ensure a bright future for our children and grandchildren—we are dreaming a great dream.

Do not merely keep thinking about your own family. You should care more for sentient beings and consider how to enable them all to be happy and fulfilled, improve their lives, transcend worldly toil, and be liberated from birth and death, just as Ānanda’s resolve later in the text. In this way, our mind-capacity is transformed and becomes different from what it was before.

People today are full of selfishness. Even among Buddhists, there is impurity: many bad deeds are committed by Buddhists themselves, and this causes others to look down on them.

We should feel ashamed, truly arouse the resolve to practice, and begin with ourselves. First, reform the life of greed, anger, ignorance, and ordinary beings; then reform the life of attachment to the views of the Lesser Vehicle; then reform the life of a bodhisattva. Break through ignorance completely and let it utterly perish. Finally, one must even reform the life of a Buddha: when one truly becomes a Buddha, not even a Buddha can be obtained. If you still have a thought or view of a Buddha that can be obtained, you cannot become a Buddha. Therefore, practice earnestly.

“It manifests in accordance with karma. Worldly people, lacking knowledge, mistakenly take it to be causes and conditions or an inherent nature.” Because people in this world lack knowledge, they are confused and fail to understand. They consider this to be causes and conditions and that to be spontaneity. All this is the deluded discriminating activity of the consciousness-mind; therefore, wherever there is speech, there is no real meaning.

It is necessary here to explain the faculty element once more. As we have said, the faculty element may be described as mind or as sense object. According to the Dharma Characteristics School’s classification, it belongs respectively to mental dharmas and material dharmas.

Because the faculty element may be called either mind or matter, people make discriminating calculations and say that it should not be included within the Tathāgata-garbha, but can only be assigned to ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Why? If the faculty element is assigned to mental dharmas, it is the perceiving aspect of the eighth consciousness; if assigned to material dharmas, it is their object aspect.

Since the perceiving aspect is the faculties and the object aspect is the sense objects, whether the faculty element is regarded as the perceiving aspect or the object aspect, it belongs to ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Therefore, they say, the faculty element should be assigned to the eighth consciousness rather than to the Tathāgata-garbha. Because of such distinctions, disputes have long been numerous. Some also say that each of the six faculties has both a coarse material faculty and a subtle ultimate faculty.

The coarse material faculties belong to the object aspect and are included among material dharmas. But the subtle ultimate faculty of the mind faculty is a mental dharma, included within the consciousness element. This consciousness is consciousness in the sense of cognizing. In other words, they assign the subtle ultimate faculty of the mind faculty to the consciousness element among earth, water, fire, wind, space, faculties, and consciousness.

The remaining eleven faculties—the coarse material and subtle ultimate faculties of the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body, together with the coarse material faculty of the sixth, the mind faculty—are all assigned to material dharmas. Since they belong to material dharmas, they do not belong to ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and should be assigned to the Tathāgata-garbha. Alas, there are many disputes. One can also explain it this way: even material dharmas are the object aspect of ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), are they not? Should they not likewise be assigned to ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) rather than to the Tathāgata-garbha?

In fact, this is because the principles of the Tathāgata-garbha mind and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) have not been clearly understood. When Master Jiaoguang, in his Śūraṅgama Sūtra True Lineage Commentary, reaches this point, he too assigns the faculty element to the eighth consciousness. In reality, this eighth ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is precisely the wondrous suchness-nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The Tathāgata-garbha is ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

We have previously explained that the Tathāgata-garbha neither arises nor ceases, whereas ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) combines arising and ceasing. One arises and ceases, while the other does not arise or cease; how can they be the same thing? It is because the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha has been tainted by ignorance. It is like a person who is originally sober but becomes muddled after drinking wine.

The nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is the state of sobriety, while ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is the state after drunkenness. Although there is sobriety and muddlement, it is still one person, not two. Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) arises now because there are six faculties: when the faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind encounter sense objects, consciousness arises.

If there were no six faculties, it would not be called ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), but would become the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. The purpose of the principles we are discussing today is to dissolve these six faculties, gathering them back to their origin, back to the Tathāgata-garbha. When the six faculties have been gathered until they are gone, ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is gone as well.

It is like a person who was originally drunk: after sobering up, he is still the same person as before. When ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) awakens, it is the Tathāgata-garbha; the principle is the same. We also used this analogy last time: a person of upright conduct is an honorable person; if he acquires bad habits and follows a deviant path, he becomes a petty person.

If he abandons evil, turns toward goodness, and reforms himself, a petty person can again become an honorable person. Whether petty or honorable, he remains one

person, not two. Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) and the Tathāgata-garbha are the same: ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is the Tathāgata-garbha, and the Tathāgata-garbha is ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). They are not two things.

Thus, whether you call them the object aspect or the perceiving aspect, they all belong to the six sense faculties. Whether the six sense faculties are the perceiving aspect or the object aspect, they are ultimately gathered back into the Tathāgata-garbha. The six sense faculties arise because deluded thoughts arise. Through the accumulation of consciousness, they become faculties; ignorance seals off the true mind, enters into the six sense faculties, and clings to them as the faculties of my body.

Today, if we break through these six sense faculties, then the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is likewise broken through. The six sense faculties cannot be obtained, and the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) cannot be obtained either. When a petty person changes all his bad habits of wrongdoing, does he not become an upright person? Therefore, even the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) itself should be gathered back into the Tathāgata-garbha.

We have used drunkenness and the contrast between an upright person and a petty person as analogies. Some people may wonder: A sober person becomes confused after drinking alcohol, but can an upright person become a petty person again? Can Buddhas and bodhisattvas become sentient beings again? You may rest assured about this.

This question is explained very clearly in the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment. It says that when we see our true nature and eliminate habitual tendencies, it is “like refining a gold mine: gold does not exist because of the mine. Once it has become gold, it does not become ore again. Through endless ages, the nature of gold remains unchanged.”

A gold mine contains both gold and impurities. Since the formation of the mine, it has always been so: gold did not first exist and then become mixed with impurities, nor did impurities first exist and then become mixed with gold. Once the ore has been refined, the gold becomes pure. From then on, gold is gold and impurities are impurities; the gold will no longer melt back into the impurities.

Likewise, once we recognize suchness and Buddha-nature, suchness is no longer ignorance: “Once it has become gold, it does not become ore again. Through endless ages, the nature of gold remains unchanged.” Once I have become sober and know that drinking can confuse the mind, I will not become confused again so long as I refrain from drinking in the future.

By the same principle, once one knows that it is bad to be a petty person, one can reform oneself and begin anew. If one no longer gives rise to vile thoughts or does vile things, one will not become a petty person again.

Of course, long-term drinking can become addictive, and someone who has long been a petty person can also develop bad habits. These cannot be corrected successfully in a day or two; only through repeated setbacks and efforts can they gradually be corrected.

After realizing the mind and seeing one's true nature, the habitual tendencies accumulated since beginningless time cannot be eliminated all at once. We must therefore practice earnestly and wear away these habitual tendencies completely. It is like knowing that alcohol can confuse the mind: if one does not drink today, one is sober today; but tomorrow, unable to resist temptation, one drinks again and becomes confused once more. Post-awakening preservation and the elimination of habitual tendencies are a long process. Once the coarse habitual tendencies have been eliminated, there still remain subtle, very subtle, and extremely subtle ones. Therefore, success requires lasting perseverance and firm resolve.

Having finished discussing the Tathāgata-garbha and the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), let us briefly discuss the superior faculties and the pure-form faculties. Many people consider the superior faculties and the pure-form faculties to be different.

They say that the pure-form faculties are pure-form faculties, while the gross material faculties are gross material faculties. In that case, the first five faculties become ten faculties; adding the gross material faculty of consciousness makes eleven faculties, all of which are included within form. If the five faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body are gross material faculties, then where are the pure-form faculties? In fact, gross material faculties and pure-form faculties cannot be separated. They should not be divided in this way.

The gross material faculty is like a mirror that reflects objects, while that which performs the function of reflecting objects is the superior faculty. That is, the outward faculty is gross material, while the faculty capable of seeing is superior. Only when the two are joined do they constitute the faculties of the five sense faculties.

Thus, the superior faculty and the gross material faculty are also joined together. Only when seeing and faculty are united, and seeing and form are united, can there be a faculty; if they are separated, there is no faculty. This seeing of ours is great ignorance—the manas consciousness. Where exactly is the superior faculty? Throughout history there has been no uniform explanation, and many people have debated the matter.

The gross material faculty is outward and functions at the surface; it can be seen. Because the superior faculty is the nature of seeing—the nature that is capable of seeing—it cannot be seen by the eyes. Some people therefore say that it is our nervous system.

It is also incorrect to say that the superior faculty is the nervous system, because nerves have terminal endings. When we previously discussed Consciousness-Only teachings, we explained that identifying the nerves as the superior faculty is untenable. The gross material faculty and the superior faculty cannot be separated. If one insists on separating them, the six sense faculties become twelve faculties, eleven belonging to the great element of form and one to the great element of consciousness.

There are many schools among those who interpret the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, and they have divided into these schools because of differing views on such questions. Master Hanshan said that the superior faculty is the shell of ignorance: because ignorance has congealed, it is sealed within it. Since the sūtra clearly says that it is gathered back into the Tathāgata-garbha, this explanation cannot be wrong.

In their explanations, some people depart from the sūtra text, saying that it is not gathered back into the Tathāgata-garbha but into the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). But when the sūtra discusses the great element of the faculties, why does it not speak of the seventh or ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), mentioning only these six sense faculties? Because the six sense faculties give rise to the six consciousnesses, and the manas consciousness and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are included within them as well. This principle will be explained further below when we discuss the great element of consciousness.

Next, we will discuss the great element of consciousness:

(VII) The Consciousness Element: Its Nature Is Luminous Knowing; Awakened Luminosity Is True Consciousness

“Ānanda, the nature of consciousness has no source; it arises delusively through the six kinds of faculties and objects. Now look carefully at the assembly of sages here. As your eyes pass over them, your gaze takes them all in, yet it is merely like images in a mirror, without separate discrimination. Within this, your consciousness identifies them one by one: ‘This is Mañjuśrī; this is Pūrṇa; this is Maudgalyāyana; this is Subhūti; this is Śāriputra.’”

This passage explains the distinction between the faculties and consciousness. The preceding discussion concerned the faculties. The faculties can illuminate objects; after illuminating objects, consciousness arises. That is, when the six faculties encounter the six objects, the six consciousnesses arise. Consciousness has no independent substance; it arises entirely through conditions—that is, with faculties and objects as conditions. Therefore, it is said that the nature of consciousness has no source.

Because whatever arises through conditions is illusory and unreal, rather than truly existent, it is said to have no source: it arises delusively through the six kinds of faculties and objects.

That is, the six faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind grasp the six objects of form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharmas. From the encounter between faculties and objects arise, illusorily, the six consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. “Now look carefully at the assembly of sages here, as your eyes pass over them.”

You use your eyes to look repeatedly and comprehensively at the people assembled here. When you look, “your gaze takes them all in, yet it is merely like images in a mirror, without separate discrimination.” That is, when the eye faculty encounters the object of form, it is like a mirror facing images: it merely reflects, without discrimination. This non-discriminating apprehension is also called a general aspect: it directly reflects the general aspect of the object of form.

Seeing is like a mirror reflecting things: it takes only the general aspect and does not produce particular aspects. If the mirror distinguishes the images it reflects, this is called discrimination. It is like distinguishing what this thing is and what that thing is. To apprehend particular aspects in this way is to give rise to consciousness.

Particular aspects mean distinguishing, for example, that this is a wristwatch and that is a tape recorder, differentiating all forms by their differences. In other words, taking only the general aspect is seeing; discriminating the general aspect and grasping particular aspects from it is consciousness. This is the distinction between seeing and consciousness.

When you take a general aspect, you are simply reflecting it: “merely like images in a mirror, without separate discrimination.” It is like a mirror reflecting an image, without analyzing it. This seeing is the faculty aggregate. How, then, does the consciousness aggregate discriminate? “Within this, your consciousness identifies them one by one.”

Your eye consciousness discriminates there, identifying in sequence the things it sees: this is Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva, that is Pūrṇa, and there are Maudgalyāyana,

Subhūti, and Śāriputra. It is like our distinguishing the things in this room: here are towels, mirrors, beds, tables, and so forth, as well as all of us here.

This is Zhang San, and that is Li Si; each person is different. To discriminate in this way is called taking particular aspects, and these particular aspects are consciousness. Thus, taking general aspects is seeing, while taking particular aspects is consciousness. The faculty aggregate is not the same as the consciousness aggregate.

“Does this consciousness that discerns and knows arise from seeing? Does it arise from appearances? Does it arise from empty space? Or does it suddenly emerge without any cause?”

This sentence presses Ānanda as to where consciousness comes from. Where does this consciousness, which can discriminate and know, arise? Does it arise from seeing? After all, one must see before one can discriminate. Or does it arise from appearances—from the appearances that we see? Or does it arise from empty space? Or, without any cause at all, does it suddenly arise?

“Ānanda, if the nature of your consciousness arises within seeing, then if brightness, darkness, form, and emptiness—the four kinds of objects—were absent, your seeing itself would originally be absent. If even the nature of seeing were absent, from where could consciousness arise?”

If the nature of consciousness arose from seeing, then without the four kinds of object-appearances—brightness, darkness, form, and emptiness—there would fundamentally be no seeing. As we have just said, seeing arises only when there is a faculty in relation to an object, that is, when an object confronts a faculty. Without this encounter of faculty and object, seeing cannot arise.

Apart from brightness, darkness, form, and emptiness, there is not even seeing. From where, then, could consciousness arise? That is, how could function arise without substance? It is simply impossible. Hence: “If even the nature of seeing were absent, from where could consciousness arise?” Without the nature of seeing, consciousness cannot arise.

“If the nature of your consciousness arises from appearances and not from seeing, then it sees neither brightness nor darkness.”

If the nature of your consciousness does not arise from seeing but instead arises from appearances, then it sees neither brightness nor darkness.

“When brightness and darkness are not beheld, form and emptiness do not exist.”

“When brightness and darkness are not beheld” means that neither brightness nor darkness is seen; neither is an object of seeing. Since consciousness is said to arise from appearances rather than from seeing, naturally you cannot see them and do not know brightness or darkness. Since you do not see them, “form and emptiness do not exist.” Without seeing form and emptiness, they cannot be established. As we have just explained, without seeing, appearances cannot be constituted, for appearances cannot constitute themselves. If there are appearances but no seeing, and you do not see brightness or darkness, then form and emptiness likewise cannot be established.

“If even those appearances are absent, from where could consciousness arise?”

If even these appearances do not exist, from where could this consciousness that discriminates arise?

“If it arises from empty space, then it is neither an appearance nor seeing. Without seeing, there can be no discrimination; thus one cannot know brightness, darkness, form, or emptiness. Without appearances, conditions are extinguished, and seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing have nowhere to be established.”

Suppose this consciousness arises neither from seeing nor from appearances, but from empty space. Then it is “neither an appearance nor seeing”: there are neither appearances nor seeing. “Without seeing, there can be no discrimination.” Without seeing, how could one analyze and distinguish? One must first see before distinguishing things as long or short, red or white. If one does not see, one naturally cannot make such distinctions. Therefore it is said, “Without seeing, there can be no discrimination; thus one cannot know brightness, darkness, form, or emptiness.”

“Without appearances, conditions are extinguished, and seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing have nowhere to be established.” Here, “conditions are extinguished” means that there is no object of apprehension. Once the object of apprehension has been extinguished, there are no appearances.

Once all objects of apprehension have been extinguished, where can seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing be established? Seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing must have objects of apprehension in order to arise. If such objects are absent, they naturally have nowhere to arise. To reiterate, when there are neither appearances nor seeing, there can be no discrimination; without discrimination, one cannot know brightness, darkness, form, or emptiness. How, then, could there still be consciousness? Therefore:

“In this state of neither, emptiness is not the same as nonexistence, and existence is not the same as things.”

This sentence differs somewhat among editions. Some editions read “emptiness then becomes the same as nonexistence,” whereas editions from the Song dynasty onward read “emptiness is not the same as nonexistence.” “Emptiness is not the same as nonexistence” makes better sense and is easier to understand than “emptiness then becomes the same as nonexistence.”

When emptiness is mentioned, people often assume that it means that nothing whatsoever remains. This is incorrect. “In this state of neither, emptiness is not the same as nonexistence, and existence is not the same as things.” This sentence is stated in relation to two aspects: the nature of your consciousness is neither seeing nor appearance—that is, it is neither appearance nor seeing.

If you say that this nature of consciousness is the emptiness in which both aspects are absent, then this emptiness of neither is not the same as nonexistence. This emptiness is not the emptiness of either the presence or absence of things. It is not that, once there is emptiness, there is nothing at all.

For the emptiness of intrinsic nature is not the same as the emptiness of things being present or absent. It does not mean that when an object is placed here it is not empty, while after it is removed there is emptiness. “Emptiness is not the same as nonexistence”: because the emptiness of intrinsic nature differs from presence and absence and is unrelated to the arising, ceasing, coming, and going of appearances, seeing and appearances are both empty and absent. Although empty nature is not equivalent to the presence or absence of things, it is not sheer nothingness; rather, it is wondrous presence—“existence is not the same as things.” Thus, the presence within emptiness is not the same as the presence of things, and the emptiness within emptiness is not the same as the emptiness of nonexistence.

The emptiness of empty nature is, in fact, the emptiness of the nature of consciousness. To depart from these two absences is to depart from the absence of appearances and the absence of seeing.

If there are no appearances and no seeing, yet there remains the nature of consciousness, is this nature empty or existent? The emptiness in “emptiness is not the same as nonexistence” differs from the emptiness of things being present or absent; the existence in “existence is not the same as things” differs from the existence of things being present or absent. Your consciousness-nature is not some thing. Things can naturally be seen, but consciousness-nature cannot be seen.

To say that existence differs from the existence of things, and that emptiness differs from the emptiness of nonexistence—this is why “existence is not the same as things” and “emptiness is not the same as nonexistence” correspond to each other. The reading should not be “emptiness then becomes the same as nonexistence.” If it

were, this emptiness would become the nonexistence of presence and absence, contradicting the following phrase, “existence is not the same as things.”

“Even if your consciousness were to arise, what could it discriminate?”

Even if you say that the nature of consciousness exists, then suppose it does exist: what use would such consciousness have? With neither seeing nor appearances, what could your consciousness discriminate? Consciousness serves to discern and discriminate things. Only where there is seeing and there are appearances can things be discriminated. If there is neither seeing nor appearances, and nothing to discriminate, your consciousness has no function to perform. Thus, existence is untenable, and nonexistence is also untenable; neither existence nor nonexistence is possible.

“If it suddenly emerges without any cause, why do you not, in daylight, distinguish the bright moon?”

This is the final sentence of the entire passage. Everything that arises has a source; consciousness, too, cannot suddenly arise without a source. Everything we see can be seen only because that thing exists and there is a cause and basis for seeing it.

For example, because there is a tape recorder, one can see a tape recorder; because there is a sun, one can see the sun.

If something could suddenly arise and be seen without any cause, why do you not see the moon beneath the sun?—“Why not see the bright moon separately in the midst of the day?” Because there is no moon beneath the sun, one sees only the sun.

If something could arise without any cause, “suddenly appearing,” then the moon should also be able to appear beneath the sun. But in fact, the moon you now see did not “arise suddenly without any cause.” It is because the moon already exists. Since there is a moon, there is a cause; thus it does not arise without cause.

After all this discussion, this consciousness-nature does not arise of itself, from another, from both, or without cause. That is, it is neither naturally arising nor arising from causes and conditions. Since it is neither naturally arising nor arising from causes and conditions, it is our tathāgatagarbha mind. The text continues:

“Examine still more closely, with subtle and careful scrutiny: Seeing relies upon your eyes, and appearances depend upon the objects before you. Where there are discernible forms, there is being; where there are no appearances, there is nonbeing. From what does this consciousness, conditioned in this way, arise? Consciousness moves, while seeing is clear and still; they neither blend nor unite.

Hearing, listening, awareness, and knowing are likewise. It should not be that this conditioned consciousness arises from itself without any source."

Look still more carefully and examine this with subtle scrutiny. "Seeing relies upon your eyes, and appearances depend upon the objects before you. Where there are discernible forms, there is being." Your capacity for seeing relies upon your eyes—that is, upon the eye faculty. The forms before you, the objects of sight, all have shape and appearance; they can be seen and touched.

"Where there are no appearances, there is nonbeing." If there are no appearances, nothing can be seen or touched; before you there can only be nonbeing, only emptiness.

"From what does this consciousness, conditioned in this way, arise?" Examine it carefully: from where does this conditioned consciousness of yours come? As explained above, it does not arise from the faculties, from appearances, or from emptiness. Since emptiness, seeing, and appearances are all unobtainable, from where does this conditioned consciousness arise? "Consciousness moves, while seeing is clear and still." This consciousness is our discriminating consciousness. "Consciousness moves" means that it can move about: one moment it conditions this, the next moment that, shifting freely among the six sense faculties.

"Seeing is clear and still" means that seeing is clear, tranquil, and unmoving. For example, when the eye faculty illuminates an object, it is like a mirror reflecting things. It does not move about there, discriminating good from bad. What moves about is discriminating consciousness, whereas seeing—that is, the faculty—does not waver.

"They neither blend nor unite." Consciousness and seeing—one moving and the other unmoving—how could they possibly blend and unite? Only things of the same substance can unite; things of different substances cannot. "Hearing, listening, awareness, and knowing are likewise." Not only is seeing so; the other faculties, such as hearing, listening, awareness, and knowing, are the same as seeing: consciousness moves while the faculties remain clear and still. "It should not be that this conditioned consciousness arises from itself without any source." Since none of these is the case, one cannot say that consciousness emerged by itself. Thus it does not arise of itself.

"If this conscious mind originally has no source, then you should understand that discriminating awareness, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are perfectly complete and lucidly still; their nature does not arise from anything. Together with empty space and the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind, they are all called the seven great elements. Their nature is true and perfectly interpenetrating; all are tathāgatagarbha, originally without arising or ceasing."

This conscious mind comes from nowhere and arises from nowhere; originally, it does not arise from any place. “Then you should understand that discriminating awareness, seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are perfectly complete and lucidly still; their nature does not arise from anything.” You should know that seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing are all perfectly complete and lucidly still, lacking nothing and with nothing superfluous.

They can see everything, hear everything, touch everything, and know everything; therefore they are called complete. “Lucidly still” refers to the nature of the faculties of seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing—that is, the tathāgatagarbha. It is lucidly still and unmoving, neither arising nor ceasing. “Their nature does not arise from anything.”

Its essential nature is pure and lucidly still, inherently present and originally thus; it does not arise from any place. “Together with empty space and the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind.” What does “together with” mean? It means together with the empty space and the elements of earth, water, fire, and wind spoken of earlier, for none of them has any source and all are unobtainable.

Since they are all unobtainable, they are all the wondrous true suchness-nature of the tathāgatagarbha. “They are all called the seven great elements. Their nature is true and perfectly interpenetrating; all are tathāgatagarbha, originally without arising or ceasing.” The five great elements of earth, water, fire, wind, and space, together with the great element of the faculties and the great element of consciousness, are collectively called the seven great elements. There are seven great elements in all. Their original nature—or their substance and essential nature—is true and not false, complete and without deficiency; they mutually encompass and interpenetrate without obstruction. Since all are tathāgatagarbha, where could there be arising and ceasing? Where could there be coming and going?

“Ānanda, your mind is coarse and superficial. You do not realize that seeing, hearing, manifesting, and knowing are originally tathāgatagarbha. You should contemplate these six consciousness-minds at the six sense bases: are they the same or different? Are they empty or existent? Are they neither the same nor different? Are they neither empty nor existent?”

This is much like the earlier questioning concerning the great element of the faculties. The World-Honored One said: Ānanda, your mind is too coarse to examine carefully the great element of the faculties and the great element of consciousness. Because your mind is superficial and unsubstantial, you cannot awaken to this principle through seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing; you have not discovered or understood that they are all tathāgatagarbha mind.

If they were not tathāgatagarbha mind, you should examine the consciousness-minds at the six sense bases of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind. Each has its own conditioned object: the eye conditions forms, the ear conditions sounds, the nose conditions odors, the tongue conditions tastes, the body conditions tactile objects, and the mind conditions dharmas.

Since each has its own basis of conditioning and its own conditioned object, are these consciousness-minds at the six sense bases the same or different? If you say they are the same, they are different; if you say they are different, they are the same. If you say they are different, they share one consciousness-nature. Although eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind are six consciousnesses, “Originally they are one luminous essence, divided into six combinations.”

Originally, they are one luminous essence—that is, one substance. Yet if you say they are the same, they are distinct from one another, because their conditioned objects differ. The consciousness-minds of sentient beings all have their limits: the eye can only see and cannot hear or speak; the ear can only hear and cannot smell or taste. Restricted by their respective functions, the six sense faculties cannot be used interchangeably.

Thus, they are different within sameness and the same within difference. Then, ultimately, “are they empty or existent?” Are these six consciousnesses empty or existent? If you say they are empty, they can function; if you say they are existent, their essential substance is absent. Thus they are neither empty nor existent. “Are they neither the same nor different? Are they neither empty nor existent?”

If you say they are not the same, then not being the same means being different; yet they are not different, because their consciousness is one substance. If you say they are not different, then not being different means being the same; yet they are not the same, because their conditioned objects differ. Thus they are neither the same nor different. Moreover, because their substance is absent while their function is present, they are neither empty nor existent. Therefore it is said that they are “neither empty nor existent.”

Not empty means existent, and not existent means empty. Their appearances and functions are not absent; this is not empty. Yet their essential substance is absent; this is not existent. Thus they are also neither empty nor existent. Because they do not fall into the four alternatives, they are tathāgatagarbha mind.

Although the great element of consciousness has no essential substance, it is not sheer nothingness; it is still present, because its wondrous functioning is not absent. Our seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing can recognize and discriminate all kinds of things because this consciousness is functioning. This consciousness-spirit is tathāgatagarbha mind.

Speaking of the consciousness-spirit, Chan Master Xuansha once said: “Students of the Way do not recognize the true; they have only ever recognized the consciousness-spirit. This is the root of birth and death throughout measureless kalpas; foolish people call it the original person.” Taking this foolish consciousness-spirit to be the original person is the very root of our sinking into birth and death. When people hear these words, they become terribly afraid of the consciousness-spirit.

In fact, there is no need to be so afraid. This consciousness-spirit is tathāgatagarbha; they are one substance, not two things. Xuansha spoke in this way because he feared that we would recognize only the consciousness-spirit and not the tathāgatagarbha. The consciousness-spirit arises from tathāgatagarbha and is its wondrous functioning. It is like waves arising from water: apart from water, there can be no waves.

The substance of suchness is just so. If there were no consciousness-spirit, we would all be fools and dullards. If those who study the Way knew only how to do dead practice and suppressed the consciousness-spirit entirely, how could wondrous functioning arise? How could they receive genuine benefit? Therefore we must not proceed in this way. Those who study the Way must first recognize the fundamental substance, recognize this tathāgatagarbha nature, and know that all the functions of the consciousness-spirit are wondrous functions of tathāgatagarbha nature.

Therefore, we must neither cling to appearances nor cling to function. We should understand that everywhere and in every circumstance is the wondrous functioning of tathāgatagarbha in accord with conditions. Let function arise freely, without any attachment; then, whether circumstances are favorable or adverse, we remain unbound and free in every direction. Conversely, if you have even the slightest stickiness and cling to appearances, then things go wrong—that is birth and death.

Thus, an error by a hair's breadth leads to a discrepancy of a thousand miles. Even an error as small as a hair's breadth creates a difference as vast as that between heaven and earth. This is repeatedly said in the Chan school so that we may recognize this tathāgatagarbha nature and understand that the consciousness-spirit is only its function. Only this tathāgatagarbha mind is our true master.

The same is taught in Esoteric Buddhism. Books on Dzogchen (Great Perfection) and Mahāmudrā tell us to “recognize it, then leave it alone.” Many people find this hard to understand and do not know how to explain it: why, once it is recognized, should it not be attended to? What is called “recognizing it” means knowing it; it does not mean having you hold some object in your hand, but having you recognize it.

To recognize this tathāgatagarbha mind is to “truly attain only in the midst of the unattainable.” Only where nothing can be attained is there true attainment. Once

you recognize this Original Face, do not attend to it any further. Everything is my wondrous functioning; do not cling to appearances or to views and knowledge.

You must not give rise to views such as: “Oh! I am awakened! I have seen my true nature! I have already succeeded!” or “You are all sentient beings; I am now a Buddha.” Such views are unacceptable. Do not pay them any heed, because everything is the wondrous functioning of tathāgatagarbha and everything is unobtainable. Simply let wondrous functioning arise in accordance with conditions, without attending to it.

What should we not concern ourselves with? Whether or not one has spiritual powers. Sentient beings take spiritual powers very seriously, thinking that anyone who has them is extraordinary. This attachment is most fatal. The more you seek spiritual powers, the less likely you are to attain them. If you harbor this desire for spiritual powers, not only will you fail to attain them; you may even end up becoming a demon king. Therefore, even if spiritual powers arise, you must not cling to them. I simply function in accordance with conditions; having used them is the same as not having used them, and having them is the same as not having them.

Seeing one’s true nature does not mean that the great matter has been completely settled. One must still visit wise teachers and have one’s understanding confirmed, to see whether it has become thoroughly unobstructed. Take the old master Zhaozhou: after awakening, he still traveled about visiting teachers. “Zhaozhou was still on pilgrimage at eighty, for his mind had not yet become wholly at peace.” Although he had awakened in his mind, it was not yet entirely free and at ease; subtle residual elements remained.

There is such a Chan koan in this tradition. The venerable masters Nanquan, Guizong, and Magu had already awakened. Once, they arranged to visit Chan Master Jingshan. On the way, they became thirsty and saw an old woman selling tea by the roadside.

The Chan masters approached the old woman and asked for a bowl of tea. Seeing them, she asked, “Where are you great monks going?” They hastily replied, “We are traveling on pilgrimage. Because the weather is hot and we are thirsty, we hope that you will kindly grant us a bowl of tea.”

After brewing the tea, the old woman said to them, “There is a rule for drinking my tea: those with spiritual powers are offered it free of charge. Those without spiritual powers, I am sorry to say, must go elsewhere to find water to drink.”

When these traveling monks heard this, they were dumbfounded, each looking at the others, for none of them possessed spiritual powers. How could they drink the tea? Seeing this, the old woman burst into laughter: “You foolish birds! Watch this

old woman display her spiritual powers and drink tea." With that, she picked up the teacup and gulped it down in one draught.

At this, the Chan masters suddenly awakened: "Ah! We were all attached to spiritual powers, treating them as something wondrous and mysterious. But is not drinking water and tea itself a spiritual power?" Putting on clothes, eating meals, raising a hand, or taking a step—these are all wondrous functions of our intrinsic nature. Each of us is originally endowed with boundless spiritual functioning; why seek anything outside ourselves? Therefore, all you bodhisattvas must not become attached. To cling to spiritual powers would be a grave error indeed.

"You originally did not know that within the Tathāgata-garbha, the nature-consciousness is clearly knowing; awakened luminosity is true consciousness; wondrous awakening is limpid and still, pervading the dharma realm and containing and giving forth the ten directions. How could it have any fixed location?"

Here the discussion of the consciousness element comes to an end. This is a further summary of it. Since the Tathāgata-garbha is the fundamental substance of wondrous awakening, all things arise from our Tathāgata-garbha mind. Thus it is said, "Nothing does not flow forth from this dharma realm; nothing does not return to this dharma realm." The myriad dharmas that flow forth from the Tathāgata-garbha must ultimately all return to it.

Previously, you did not know that the nature-consciousness of the Tathāgata-garbha is true nature. The consciousness within this nature is not dull and insentient like wood or stone. Nature-consciousness is clear knowing, lucid and ever-present knowing. Before it comes into contact with the external world and before discriminating consciousness arises, it is neither more nor less, free from subject and object, without duality. It is absolute true knowing; therefore it is called "nature-consciousness clearly knowing."

"Awakened luminosity is true consciousness." Our Tathāgata-garbha is an awareness-luminosity substance. The clear knowing of this awareness substance alone is our true consciousness; it is not the deluded consciousness produced by the sense faculties and their objects. Deluded consciousness exists only in relativity. We know east, south, west, and north; long and short, square and round; blue, yellow, red, and white—these all exist relatively and are not true knowing.

In fact, true knowing is knowing nothing in particular; therefore it is called prajñā without knowing. Where there is a knower and something known, there is no true knowing, but only deluded knowing. Thus, the substance of awakened luminosity is true consciousness: it has neither a knowing subject nor a known object, yet is itself knowing. Later, when explaining other doubts, it is said that if luminosity is posited within awakening, or awakening within luminosity, that is mistaken.

If awakening possesses luminosity, then on the basis of luminosity an object is established. This object of illumination is the karmic characteristic among the three subtle characteristics; thus it is deluded. The awareness substance itself is luminous, and luminosity itself is awareness. Awakening and luminosity, luminosity and awakening, are not two things. If there is luminosity apart from awakening, or awakening apart from luminosity, this becomes deluded awakening; this is ignorance. As for true consciousness, the luminosity of its awareness substance has neither one who illuminates nor anything illuminated, and therefore it can illuminate everything.

“Wondrous awakening is limpid and still, pervading the dharma realm.” Wondrous awakening is awakening without anything awakened, yet nothing is not awakened. Though there is nothing it cannot do, it does not establish subject and object. All dharmas arise from it, yet it does not abide in the three characteristics of arising. Therefore, it is wondrous awakening.

Limpid stillness means immovability, without waves arising. Unlike water, it need not produce waves. Precisely because it is unmoving, knows everything, is everywhere present, and exists everywhere, it pervades the dharma realm. In any of the ten dharma realms, it cannot be absent.

The phrase “containing and giving forth the ten directions” means that empty space originally has no divisions of east, south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, above, or below. These ten directions are discriminated by our consciousness.

We take the place where the sun rises as east and the place where it sets as west; the two directions facing each other are then south and north. In fact, space is originally one whole, with no east, west, south, or north. Such distinctions arise only after our deluded consciousness begins to operate.

Containing means taking them in. The essential nature of the Tathāgata-garbha has none of these false appearances. Remove fixed directions and locations, and it returns to one whole; that is, space is extinguished. When east, south, west, north, above, and below are all absent, fixed directions and locations are extinguished.

Giving forth means bringing them forth. How are they brought forth? The space of the ten directions may still have east, south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, above, and below, for true emptiness does not obstruct wondrous presence. When wondrous functioning arises, it can be vast and magnificent like rolling waves. If water did not flow or form waves, it would merely be dead water.

Every year, people go to Haining to watch the tidal bore, because the waves there are enormous, vast and magnificent, with majestic force and especially striking

scenery. That is why everyone rushes there to see it.

If the sea remained utterly still, with calm winds and smooth waves, without the slightest billow, what would there be to see? If our suchness and Buddha-nature never moved at all, and we merely guarded the fundamental substance all day long, with everyone resembling a corpse, wondrous functioning could never arise. It would be like a miser guarding immense wealth: no matter how much money he had, it would be of no use.

We must learn to be alive and vigorous, able to respond to circumstances with great capacities and bring forth great functioning. Only when we learn to master great capacities and great functioning is the Buddhadharma active and truly valuable. Thus, consciousness is the wondrous functioning of our suchness. Having recognized the fundamental substance of this consciousness, we must also understand how to use it.

How do we use consciousness? Upon the essential nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, we may fully employ the myriad wondrous functions. We may distinguish east, south, west, north, the four intermediate directions, above, and below; we may have mountains, rivers, the great earth, sun, moon, stars, blue, yellow, red, and white, men and women, the young and old. We may also have study, work, careers, and family life. This is called giving forth.

Giving forth is birth: the space of the ten directions arises again. You may contain as fully as you wish and give forth as fully as you wish, because the ten directions all belong to me, and my essential nature pervades and perfectly encompasses this dharma realm. Whether containing or giving forth, where could there be a fixed direction or location? Only by having no fixed location can it be everywhere present and everywhere existent. This is the wondrous functioning of our spiritual knowing.

Having recognized this spiritual knowing, we must put it to good use; we must not remain there motionless. Remaining there motionless is called, in the Chan school, falling into the station of a sage: one falls into a fixed mold. This is still birth and death; it is called being unable to transcend birth and death.

Those who truly transcend birth and death, though amid birth and death, find no birth and death to transcend. Though they undergo birth after birth and death after death, though they emerge and sink within the six realms, there is no birth and death to be attained. Only thus does one truly transcend birth and death.

Those of the Lesser Vehicle adhere to partial truth and partial emptiness. The truth they realize is truth only in contrast to ordinary beings; because they do not understand the principle that true emptiness and wondrous presence are nondual, it is called partial truth. Because they adhere to partial truth, they further cling to

emptiness, believing that rebirth within the six realms is birth and death, the affair of ordinary worldly people, while leaving the six realms is liberation, the fruition enjoyed by sages.

They believe that birth and death can be transcended and that nirvāṇa can be realized. Taking what they have realized as ultimate, they say, “I have already become a sage. I have already transcended birth and death.” Those of the Lesser Vehicle divide birth and death and liberation into two separate extremes, leaning toward emptiness; thus, they still have attachment to dharmas.

Because of this attachment to dharmas, they do not forget the dharma-self. They cannot transcend transformational birth and death, nor can they bring forth boundless wondrous functioning. One who has truly realized the Way neither falls into existence nor grasps emptiness, neither falls into birth and death nor takes hold of nirvāṇa. Not taking hold of nirvāṇa means that after realizing the Way, one does not merely sit there lifelessly, enjoying oneself and doing nothing.

Rather, one continues to act, carrying out every undertaking that liberates sentient beings. Although one accomplishes many things, the mind abides nowhere; this is called “acting without mind.” So long as I act without mind, I can do all things. After doing them, no trace remains in the mind and there are no hindrances or concerns. Some people seem to misunderstand this absence of mind.

I have heard some people say, “Your mind is empty, so you should not do this task. Let me do it; do not interfere with me.”

This is mistaken. The emptiness of mind of which we speak is not that kind of empty dharma. If that were what it meant for the mind to be empty, then none of us should do anything; we would all sit here motionless, like clay statues or wooden carvings. How could that do? What is called an empty mind means that the mind does not abide in appearances. Go ahead and do your work, go ahead and handle your affairs—just do not let these appearances cling within the mind.

Oh! If my mind is empty, does that mean I can shove every matter off onto others to handle? If you do something improperly, I need not concern myself; if you go off and commit crimes, I need not concern myself either? That is wrong! If you do something wrong, I should admonish you, teach you to correct your errors, repent, and reform yourself. How could I simply let you go unchecked and leave you to it? For one who has truly realized the Way, joy, laughter, anger,

and scolding are all Buddhadharma. I am not your enemy, nor do I hate you. When I strike or scold you, it is to make you reform yourself, to keep you from repeating your errors, and to help you transcend this cycle of birth and death. So do not take it as striking or scolding.

We should act this way in everything we do: while doing it, simply do it earnestly and conscientiously; once it is done, leave not the slightest attachment in the mind, as though someone else had done it. This is emptiness. This emptiness does not mean removing matters altogether and attending to nothing. To act without attachment is what emptiness means.

The Diamond Sūtra says, “Give rise to the mind without abiding anywhere.” This means responding to all things according to conditions while inwardly abiding nowhere. When we speak of emptying the mind, we do not mean not giving rise to mind. Not giving rise to mind is what a dead person does. Precisely because the mind is empty, one must give rise to mind: a mind of flexible, wondrous functioning; a mind devoted to the six perfections and myriad practices.

“They manifest in accordance with karma. Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake them for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature. All are discriminative calculations of the consciousness-mind. Whenever there is verbal expression, there is no real meaning.”

Everything we experience is evoked by karma. According to the depth and weight of karmic obstacles, there are all kinds of differences. Within collective karma there is individual karma, and within individual karma there is collective karma.

Everyone here lives in the same society; this is collective karma. Yet although we live in the same society, each person's circumstances and family environment differ; this is individual karma. Everything is brought forth by karma: our food, clothing, daily life, family circumstances, even our country—the whole world is karma.

This karma is false and unreal. It is merely an illusory appearance formed by the coming together of causes and conditions; originally, it does not exist. Someone once asked me how one can resolve fixed karma. He believed karma to be settled and rigidly fixed: once karma has been created, a corresponding karmic circumstance must certainly appear.

That is, no matter where the karma may be, one must repay it, just as a debt owed to someone must be repaid. This is to cling to karma as truly existent. If karma really exists, where is it? Can you take it out and show it to us? In fact, karma cannot be found at all.

Because there is mind, karma arises when the mind arises; if the mind is empty, karma too is absent. Some people say, “My karma is too heavy. I must repent.” How do they repent? “I recite the Kṣitigarbha Sūtra, or recite some mantra, to eliminate this karma and repent of my karmic offenses.”

But this is not how it is. Why? Because karma arises from the mind and also ceases through the mind. If your mind is not empty, then no matter what sūtra you recite or what mantra you chant, you cannot eliminate it, because that mind remains.

You should empty the mind and understand that all things are illusory appearances, that all karma is false and unreal. The Diamond Sūtra says: “All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows.” What are conditioned dharmas? When a thought first stirs in our deluded mind and ignorance arises, that is conditioned. It does not mean that anything one does is necessarily conditioned.

To act with a mind that is intent on doing so is conditioned. Once the mind is empty, whatever we do is non-contrivance. After the mind stirs and deluded thoughts arise, whatever is done is conditioned dharma. All such conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows. The offenses we committed and the evil karma we created in the past are all like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows; they cannot be found.

Once you recognize this and empty the mind, then whether it be offenses or karma, they are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows—fundamentally empty and false, unobtainable right then and there. Why cling to them? One cannot entirely blame those who believe fixed karma truly exists and cannot be transformed, for this is how it is taught in the Lesser Vehicle: fixed karma cannot be transformed and must certainly receive its retribution.

But the Mahāyāna does not teach this way. Mahāyāna Dharma says that fixed karma can be transformed.

Let me give several analogies to explain why fixed karma can be transformed. First, we may compare karma to an invisible shadow. This shadow is like radio waves in the air, while you are like a radio. If the radio is not turned on, it cannot receive the waves and will not make any sound.

If the radio is switched on and receives the waves, it will sound.

If your mind is not empty, it is like a radio receiving radio waves; naturally, you must repay your past debts. But if your mind is truly empty, then no matter who comes looking for you, they cannot find you, because you have no such shadow at all. It is like a radio that has not been turned on: where could they look for you? Thus there is no such thing as fixed or nonfixed karma.

When Bodhidharma transmitted the Dharma to the Second Patriarch Huike, he told him: “You originally owed others a life-debt, but because you transmit and uphold the true Dharma, you need not repay it.” If fixed karma could not be transformed, then it would certainly have to be repaid. He told him that he need not repay it

because, if he did repay this debt and were beheaded, others might slander my true Dharma.

They possessed knowledge of past lives and knew the events of former lives: because you had killed someone, you were to be killed by someone. Yet he said that you need not repay it. Why could you avoid repaying it? Because my mind is empty; my mind does not stir. Whatever I do is false; I merely respond to conditions, without the slightest attachment in my mind. They simply cannot find me. When the mind is empty, karma naturally dissolves; thus the karma is resolved.

Second, some great patriarchs compare karma to ice. Water is like our suchness and intrinsic nature: it has no fixed shape and flows everywhere without obstruction. But when water freezes into ice, it takes on a shape and becomes obstructive. If the ice encounters warm air, is warmed by the sun, or is doused with hot water, it melts back into water.

Our karma is like this ice. When burned by the flame of prajñā, it melts and is extinguished at once. When you realize the Way and attain prajñā-wisdom, knowing that all these things are false and unobtainable, and the mind is completely emptied, past karmic obstacles vanish in an instant. What fixed or nonfixed karma is there then? What is there to say about repaying or not repaying? This too is an analogy.

There is another analogy. Suppose that you now hold an eminent position, serving as a head of state or president. You once owed someone several hundred yuan, but that person feels awkward about asking you to repay it: “Ah, his position is so high; let this small debt be forgotten.” The person cancels the debt on their own, and so the debt you owe disappears without trace.

Therefore, there is no karma that is irrevocably fixed. Whether karma can be transformed depends entirely on you. As long as you keep the mind empty at all times and know that all is unobtainable, past karma will melt away at once like ice dissolved by hot soup. Thus Chan Master Yongjia says in his Song of Realizing the Way: “Realize the true aspect, where there is neither self nor dharmas; in an instant, the karma of Avīci is extinguished.” As long as the mind is empty and non-abiding, even the greatest fixed karma will be extinguished in an instant. It is not necessary to practice some particular method to eliminate karma.

Then do reciting sūtras and holding mantras have any effect after all? Reciting sūtras and holding mantras eliminate your deluded mind—that is, they turn it around. Ordinarily, you are accustomed to clinging to appearances, always dwelling on how Zhang San is, how Li Si is, how this matter is long and that one short; your mind is constantly attached to such circumstances.

When you recite sūtras or hold mantras, the mind is gathered onto the sūtra text or mantra. Then the deluded mind is gradually transformed, and karma naturally dissolves as well.

When it is said that reciting sūtras and holding mantras can eliminate karma, this is what it means. Once you understand this principle, a turn of thought brings immediate empty purity; once one matter is resolved, all are resolved, and this karma naturally changes. Thus, all things manifest in accordance with karma and must not be clung to as truly existent. “Worldly people, in their ignorance, mistake them for causes and conditions or for an inherent nature.”

Ignorant people in the world do not understand this principle. They suppose that things arise from causes and conditions or exist naturally, and so they discriminate this way and that. “All are discriminative calculations of the consciousness-mind”: all of this is our consciousness-mind, clinging to the functioning of discriminative consciousness and making calculations, thereby producing a great heap of right and wrong.

In fact, all are merely dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows. Where is there any right? Where is there any wrong? Thus, “Whenever there is verbal expression, there is no real meaning.” What we speak of has no true meaning, because the true body of awakening is one in which “the path of language is cut off and the way of mental activity comes to an end”; it cannot be expressed in words or fathomed by thought.

Regarding the consciousness element, several points still need to be clarified:

First, this consciousness arises from the sense-faculty element. The six sense faculties encounter the six sense objects and give rise to the six consciousnesses. The first five faculties—eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body—encounter the five external sense objects of forms, sounds, odors, tastes, and tactile objects, giving rise to the five consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. Then the mind faculty encounters mental objects and gives rise to mind consciousness.

The Śūraṅgama Sūtra explains this matter rather clearly, though its explanation differs somewhat from that of the Dharma Characteristics School. This school calls the sixth consciousness the fivefold associated mind consciousness, saying that mind consciousness operates together with the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body. For example, when the eyes see an external object, they merely apprehend its general aspect. A general aspect means that forms are simply manifested without further discrimination.

For instance, when we enter this room and look around, we see that there are so many people. As for who is Zhang San and who is Li Si, we do not concern ourselves with that at all. This is the general aspect.

The function of consciousness is to classify and distinguish the appearances apprehended by the five faculties when the faculties and their objects interact—for example, “This is Zhang San; that is Li Si”—thus recognizing their particular characteristics. This is how the Dharma Characteristics School explains the consciousness element.

Let us consider the difference between the Śūraṅgama Sūtra and the Dharma Characteristics School. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra says that when the faculties and their objects interact, it is like a mirror reflecting things: with respect to the appearances it apprehends, each of the first five consciousnesses itself has the function of discernment. The Dharma Characteristics School holds that the first five consciousnesses apprehend only general characteristics, while consciousness takes as its object the impressions left by the first five faculties.

It takes this inner object—that is, the dharma object—as its object, deliberates and discriminates over it, and recognizes its particular characteristics. Because of these differences, some members of the Dharma Characteristics School have slandered the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, calling it a spurious sūtra. They have raised many objections, which will be discussed below.

Second, since the consciousness element arises after the faculty element encounters its objects, it would seem that the consciousness element should be subsumed under the faculty element. Why, then, is it said to be subsumed under the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha? On the surface, consciousness seems to arise from the faculty element: the eye faculty sees forms and gives rise to eye-consciousness; the nose faculty smells odors and gives rise to nose-consciousness; and so forth. In fact, both the faculty element and the consciousness element are the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

For example, from the roots of a large tree grows its trunk; from the trunk grow its branches; and from the branches grow its leaves. The leaves appear to grow from the branches, but in fact they cannot be separated from the roots. Only after drawing nourishment from the roots can the branches grow leaves.

If the roots were cut off, and I cut down a branch and asked it to grow leaves, could it still do so? The faculty element of us sentient beings is the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Whether it is the faculty element or the consciousness element, it comes from the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha; therefore, both must be subsumed under the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

Third, in the section on the consciousness element, the sūtra mentions only the six consciousnesses of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; it does not mention the manas consciousness and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Has the Śūraṅgama Sūtra omitted these two consciousnesses? There are several explanations. One is

given in the Commentary on the True Veins of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra: the mental faculty of the sixth consciousness is the seventh consciousness, and the faculty element is the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna).

Once the first six consciousnesses have been explained, the seventh and eighth consciousnesses are included within them. As we explained before, there are two ways of speaking of the faculty element. In terms of the faculty's ability to illuminate objects, the faculty element is a mental dharma. In terms of what consciousness relies upon—for example, eye-consciousness relies on the eye faculty and ear-consciousness on the ear faculty—the faculty element is a material dharma.

Because the faculty element itself includes both mental dharmas and material dharmas, the mental dharmas are the perceiving aspect of the eighth consciousness, and the material dharmas are their object aspect. Both the perceiving aspect and the object aspect arise from the eighth, ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna); therefore, the faculty element is said to belong to the eighth consciousness.

Another explanation, found in the Tiantai Commentary, says that both the manas consciousness and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) are subsumed under the mental faculty. It does not say that the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is the faculty element, and thus differs from Master Jiaoguang’s Commentary on the True Veins of the Śūraṅgama Sūtra. Still others say that the manas consciousness and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) belong to the consciousness element rather than the faculty element. There are many such distinctions in these commentaries and subcommentaries.

In fact, the eighth consciousness belongs neither to the faculty element nor to the consciousness element. Why? As we explained before, this eighth consciousness is ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna), and ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Originally, they are one thing, not two.

With ignorance and arising and ceasing, the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha becomes ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). This is like a person who is originally sober but whose mind becomes dull and confused after drinking too much. Whether sober or confused, the person remains the same person throughout.

If we extinguish both the faculties and consciousnesses, and awaken to the fact that faculties and consciousnesses are originally unobtainable, then ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is likewise unobtainable, and it turns into the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

Ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) exists now only because there are six faculties and six consciousnesses. Once we understand that the six faculties are

unobtainable, the six consciousnesses are likewise unobtainable. When faculties and consciousnesses are broken through, ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) accordingly turns and is subsumed into the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. Thus, the eighth consciousness belongs neither to the consciousness element nor to the faculty element, but to the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha.

Therefore, when the Śūraṅgama Sūtra discusses the consciousness element, it does not concern itself with the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) at all. What, then, of the manas consciousness? The manas consciousness is the six faculties and six consciousnesses, for the six consciousnesses arise from the manas consciousness, and the manas consciousness is their root. Without the manas consciousness, the six consciousnesses could not arise. Thus, the six consciousnesses are the manas consciousness; since the manas consciousness is already included within the six consciousnesses, it is not discussed separately.

Up to this point, we have fully explained the four categories and seven elements. What inspiration can we draw from them? First, they enable us to understand that all worldly dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows—entirely illusory and unreal. Because sentient beings cling through deluded thoughts and take all these illusory appearances as truly existing, they create karma, undergo karmic retribution, and sink into the six realms.

Conversely, every phenomenon and every thing is genuinely real. For all dharmas and all things are manifestations of the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha; in their very substance, they are our true suchness and Buddha-nature. So long as we do not cling to appearances, and the mind is empty and non-abiding, the whole of illusion is immediately true reality. If we cling to objects and circumstances, deluded by appearances and pursuing things, then the whole of true reality becomes illusion.

Delusion and awakening differ only by this small point. Thus, this is what practice cultivates; it is not a matter of cultivating some other thing apart from it. Apply effort on the mind-ground and preserve this true nature: this is the Buddhadharma. To leave this essential nature and practice a dharma with a mind that seeks attainment is all a non-Buddhist path.

You may casually manipulate qi within the body, open the Microcosmic Orbit or the Macrocosmic Orbit, or even produce a yang spirit. Yet if you have not recognized this true nature, it is still not ultimate. The yang spirit you produce is a mind-born body, a shadow of the manas consciousness. It is a dharma of arising and ceasing. Even if it can fly and ascend at will, it is still merely turning about within conditioned dharmas.

You must recognize the fundamental nature of the Tathāgata-garbha. It is the wondrously luminous true mind, able to give rise to all dharmas and manifest every

function. If you do not recognize this intrinsic nature and instead pursue things through deluded feelings, you will go wrong.

The nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is apart from all appearances, yet is precisely all appearances. After realizing its essence, we must still manifest its function. All appearances are the wondrous functioning of the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha; without appearances, this function cannot arise. The teaching of the four categories and seven elements breaks through the two extremes of existence and nonexistence. Once both extremes are broken through, nothing can be obtained, and the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha inherently possessed by everyone is revealed.

After recognizing this nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, we know that all dharmas, all sense objects, and all objective circumstances are its wondrous functioning. Therefore, all dharmas are genuine. This is called the Tathāgata-garbha that is empty yet not empty.

To begin with emptiness means first breaking through the two extremes. All things—including light and darkness, large and small, form and emptiness, long and short, and so forth—arise in relation to one another. When the two extremes are broken through, one can understand that all such things are unobtainable. First, through the preceding sevenfold inquiry into the mind, deluded thoughts are eliminated and true emptiness is revealed. This is called the empty Tathāgata-garbha.

Breaking through the two extremes and understanding that everything is unobtainable serves to subsume all dharmas into the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, thereby revealing the meaning of the middle way, free from attachment. This, in turn, is not empty. Next comes the tenfold revelation of seeing: after breaking through, it is not that nothing remains. Our true suchness and Buddha-nature are both true emptiness and wondrous presence; therefore, this is the Tathāgata-garbha that is not empty. To speak of emptiness is neither emptiness nor existence; to speak of existence is both emptiness and existence. One can adhere neither solely to the true nor solely to the provisional. Therefore, it is called the Tathāgata-garbha that is empty yet not empty.

This is explained in three stages. First, one must empty all that one possesses: all things and all dharmas lack an intrinsic self-nature. Then one must also understand that true nature is not empty. Our true nature can give rise to the myriad dharmas and manifest wondrous functioning; every image and every sense object is wondrous functioning produced by our true mind.

Some say that the Diamond Sūtra and the Amitābha Sūtra are contradictory: the Diamond Sūtra teaches that everything is empty, whereas the Amitābha Sūtra teaches that everything exists. This is because they do not understand that true

emptiness is wondrous presence. The emptiness taught in the Diamond Sūtra is true emptiness, the essence of the wondrously luminous true mind. The existence taught in the Amitābha Sūtra is wondrous presence, the function of the wondrously luminous true mind.

Because of true emptiness, wondrous functioning can be revealed; because of wondrous functioning, true emptiness can be revealed. Without phenomena, there is no way to reveal principle; without principle, phenomena cannot be established. Only when phenomena are precisely principle and principle is precisely phenomena can principle and phenomena interpenetrate.

Therefore, the Diamond Sūtra is the Amitābha Sūtra: wondrous presence arises from true emptiness. The Amitābha Sūtra is the Diamond Sūtra: through provisional wondrous presence, true emptiness is revealed. Since we cannot, at any time or place, be apart from appearances, practice need not take place only in deep mountains or hidden forests. Without being tempered by all kinds of circumstances, you cannot free yourself from appearances.

On the surface, you may seem free and at ease, but when something happens, you still cannot get through it. To attain realization through practice amid the bustle of the city is genuine realization of the Way. Only when the mind remains unmoved amid all favorable and adverse circumstances can one truly understand. Yet, to be unmoved by external circumstances and undisturbed by this dazzling world requires great strength and great meditative stability.

At the beginning, we do not possess such strength, so it is better first to practice in a quiet place. But we must not hide forever in tranquil surroundings. If a circumstance arises and your mind is still stirred, that will not do. It is not enough to penetrate through while in a peaceful place; only by penetrating through amid the bustle of the city does one truly understand.

The Buddha thus expounded the empty Tathāgata-garbha, the Tathāgata-garbha that is not empty, and the Tathāgata-garbha that is empty yet not empty. After this exposition, the assembled audience all attained understanding. Please read on.

VIII. The Wondrous Mind Is Undying

“At that time, Ānanda and the entire assembly, having received the Tathāgata Buddha’s subtle and wondrous instruction, felt their bodies and minds completely freed and attained freedom from all hindrances. Each person in the assembly came to know for himself that the mind pervades the ten directions.” “At that time, Ānanda and the entire assembly, having received the Tathāgata Buddha’s subtle and wondrous instruction…”

“At that time, Ānanda and the entire assembly, having received the Tathāgata Buddha’s subtle and wondrous instruction…” The Buddha tirelessly expounded worldly teachings again and again in order to explain the Buddhadharma; this is called subtle and wondrous instruction. Your attachment to this world is truly too deep. If worldly teachings were not used to explain the Buddhadharma, you would not understand it.

Through the Buddha’s compassionate instruction, Ānanda and the assembly awakened. Thus everyone’s “bodies and minds were completely freed, and they attained freedom from all hindrances.” Having heard the World-Honored One’s instruction, their physical bodies and deluded minds both dissolved and vanished. Because there is mind, there are hindrances. If body and mind are both unobtainable—that is, if your mind is truly empty—where could hindrances remain?

Let us further explain these hindrances. Some people practice in a rigid and lifeless way. They always say, “Everything is empty; I must not be hindered by anything.” Once, while a mother was practicing diligently, someone came to tell her, “Oh no! Your son has fallen into the water!”

She said, “I am free of hindrances. Where could I have a son?” She remained seated without moving.

Tell me, was she right? She appears to have great meditative stability and great detachment; it seems that her mind is truly free of hindrances. A mother loves her son more dearly than anyone else in the world; mother and child are bound by flesh and blood. If others heard that their own son had fallen into the water, they would be heartbroken and leap up at once. Yet she could remain seated without moving—what admirable practice! But in fact, it is wrong. This is not the kind of rigid and lifeless practice we should undertake.

Your son has fallen into the water. Why do you not try to save him? Does allowing him to die prove that your mind is empty and free of hindrances? This is attachment to a dead dharma, not true emptiness.

We say that true emptiness is not empty. Although it is true emptiness, one should still try to save him. One simply must not cling to it excessively in one’s heart. If he can be saved, that is certainly good; but even if he cannot be saved, I can have a clear conscience, because I have done all I could.

If you do not save him and do not care whether he lives or dies, how are you different from a dead person? Since you can disregard even your own son’s life or death, then the Buddhas and bodhisattvas might as well not come to liberate sentient beings.

The Buddhas and bodhisattvas might say: “Go on revolving in the six realms as you please. Your suffering is none of my concern. In any case, I am empty here; there is nothing at all.” Thus, this is a misunderstanding. In practice, we must cultivate the true Dharma and develop prajñā wisdom; we cannot cling to a dead dharma.

Look at the very first sentence of the Heart Sūtra: “Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, practicing deep prajñāpāramitā.” To practice deep prajñāpāramitā is to develop your wisdom. Only with prajñā can one cross over to the other shore of birth and death. This prajñāpāramitā is great wisdom. What sort of wisdom is your rigidly clung-to dharma? Do not speak only of your own son; you should save even others. What we empty is your attachment to deluded appearances; this does not mean that you should abandon compassion as well.

Long ago, there was a practitioner with the same problem. Someone told him, “Your house is on fire! Hurry home and put it out!” He said, “Let it burn. I cannot go; I must remain here sitting in meditation and practicing.” This too is attachment to a dead dharma. The fire must still be put out; one simply must not panic inwardly, but remain calm.

First, see clearly where the fire began, how it started, and what method should be used to put it out. If you panic, you are being turned by appearances.

People in the world are not like this. The moment they see a fire, they panic: “Oh no! My child is in the house!” The mother rushes into the room, grabs a cloth bundle, and hurriedly runs back out. But when she looks, it is a pillow. In her panic, her mind had already become confused, and she had carried out a pillow thinking it was her child.

When she turns back to look, the house has already burned completely, and the child can no longer be saved. Why did she panic? It was because of attachment to appearances. That is why we repeatedly say not to become attached to appearances. Nonattachment to appearances does not mean guarding a dead emptiness. Dead emptiness contains nothing and cannot give rise to wondrous functioning.

The emptiness of which we speak is true emptiness. True emptiness does not abide in appearances; one may nonetheless continue to do all kinds of things. Only this is called “attaining freedom from all hindrances.” Therefore, in practice one must understand the essential key and must not blindly proceed according to rigid principles. Truly “attaining freedom from all hindrances” means that the mind does not abide in appearances; it does not mean that one neglects every matter. We seek to become living Buddhas, not dead Buddhas—dead and motionless, like a pool of stagnant water, of no use at all.

“Each person in the assembly came to know for himself that the mind pervades the ten directions.” The entire assembly had awakened and knew that their true minds fill empty space and pervade the dharma realm, existing everywhere and at all times. This is true not only of those in the assembly: each of our true minds is just so. Therefore, only after recognizing the true mind can one properly set out in one’s practice.

What is good about the Śūraṅgama Sūtra is precisely this: Śākyamuni Buddha analyzes things for us layer by layer and gives subtle and wondrous instruction. It is unlike other sūtras, which offer a general statement that people do not easily understand.

See how detailed this sūtra is: from the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve sense fields, and eighteen realms, to the seven great elements of earth, water, fire, wind, space, faculties, and consciousness, it explains each matter one by one, from within to without, from surface to depth, in a way both profound and accessible. It makes utterly clear the roots of our beginningless birth and death.

Because the Śūraṅgama Sūtra gives such clear instruction, the assembly was deeply grateful for Śākyamuni Buddha’s kindness and praised the World-Honored One: “You have opened the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter.” That is, he opened the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter the essence of the wondrously luminous true mind.

“They see the emptiness of the ten directions as clearly as one sees a leaf or other small object held in one’s hand. All things that exist in the world are the fundamental mind of bodhi, wondrous and luminous. The essence of mind is all-pervading and complete, encompassing the ten directions.”

“They see the emptiness of the ten directions as clearly as one sees a leaf or other small object held in one’s hand.” After awakening, when they again look upon the empty space of the east, south, west, north, the intermediate directions, above, and below, they see it as clearly as a leaf or some small object held in the hand.

Why is this so? As we explained earlier, all appearances arise in accordance with karma. Previously, obscured by ignorance, we did not know that all material appearances are things within the wondrously luminous true mind. We took whatever we saw to be truly existent and distinguished good from bad, east from west.

But once awakening occurs, ignorance is immediately shattered, and the ice of karmic consciousness melts away. What one sees in the mind naturally differs from before. Those who see their nature regard the emptiness of the ten directions as things within the wondrously luminous true mind. All material appearances and

appearances of emptiness are the spiritually luminous, wondrous functioning of the Tathāgata-garbha nature. True emptiness does not obstruct wondrous presence, and wondrous presence does not hinder true emptiness; thus, the capacity of mind naturally becomes vast.

Because they see that these things are all unobtainable—throughout empty space and the great earth, there is not a single thing to grasp and not a single thing to discard—they are unlike us ordinary beings, whose minds are narrow and inferior, who chase after things in deluded attachment and become stuck whenever circumstances arise.

When one directly realizes the suchness Buddha-nature inherently present in one's own mind and understands that all desires and greedy thoughts are unobtainable, the capacity of mind becomes so vast that it can encompass the great void. Even the emptiness of the ten directions is within my mind, and the great void is seen as one sees a leaf held in the hand.

Therefore, the Avataṃsaka Sūtra says that the great can appear within the small, and the small can appear within the great; boundless Buddha-lands are not separated from the tip of a hair, and the ten periods of time, past and present, do not depart from the present thought. Our Tathāgata-garbha nature inherently possesses such boundless wondrous functioning. Once you become attached to appearances, however, there arise all kinds of barriers of large and small, long and short, far and near, square and round.

Originally, the small is the great and the great is the small; the small can contain the great, and the great can enter the small. Because you are attached to appearances, the small can no longer contain the great, nor can the great enter the small. For example, this cup is small and that tape recorder is large. When you cling to these appearances, small and large are distinct.

If your mind is empty and all appearances are unobtainable, where could there still be large or small? Large and small, long and short, square and round are all unobtainable; all dissolve into the great element of form, because they are alike empty in nature. Thus, they mutually contain one another without obstruction. Therefore it is said, "All things that exist in the world are precisely the fundamental mind of bodhi, wondrous and luminous."

All worldly dharmas are manifested by our Tathāgata-garbha nature; therefore, all things are Buddha. As we have repeatedly said, the table, stools, cups, and so on in this room are Buddha; the mountains, rivers, great earth, sun, moon, and stars outside the room are likewise without exception Buddha, because all are reflections of our wondrously luminous true mind. Bodhi is right awakening, while the wondrously luminous true mind is appearance and function. From right awakening

arise appearances and function; through appearances and function one realizes right awakening.

“The essence of mind is all-pervading and complete, encompassing the ten directions.” The wondrous essence of our true awakening is complete and unobstructed. It is vast, mutually encompassing and mutually functioning, without hindrance. It can fill the ten directions and the ten realms. Nothing is absent from it, and nothing lies beyond its capacity to contain; therefore, it is called all-pervading and complete.

“Encompassing the ten directions” means that the emptiness of the ten directions is all within my true mind, not outside it. Because sentient beings have deluded minds, they discriminate among all kinds of different things.

For example, when water is exposed to the sun, it becomes warm. As its temperature rises, it turns into water vapor; when water vapor reaches the sky, it becomes clouds. Thus, clouds are in fact water.

When clouds encounter cold air, they condense into water droplets and fall. If the weather is warm, they fall as rain; if it is cold, they become snow, frost, or ice. Frost, snow, clouds, rain, and ice are all transformations of water.

Ordinary people become attached to these changing appearances: “This is rain, this is frost, this is snow, this is ice, this is cloud.” They do not realize that all of these are transformations of water.

Once we recognize this true mind, we know that all things are transformations of the true mind. All appearances we see are shadows of our intrinsic nature and its wondrous functioning. Thus, to see appearances is in fact to see intrinsic nature.

It is like understanding the relationship between water and frost, snow, clouds, rain, and ice. When you see these things again, you know that they are all transformations of water. Then you recognize water rather than recognizing only rain, snow, ice, and frost.

Since you understand this principle, do not further discriminate between the appearances of male and female. Do not concern yourself with whether food is good or whether clothing is fine. At every moment, see your intrinsic nature rather than becoming attached to appearances. Practitioners must see intrinsic nature through appearances. Then their mind-capacity can become vast: they behold the emptiness of the ten directions as clearly as a leaf in the palm of their hand.

At present, our eyes can see only a few yards in front of us. This is because our mind-capacity is not great and our minds are attached. Once mind-capacity

becomes vast, one can realize the supernormal power of the divine eye; even the most distant places will appear as though they were right before one.

The first requirement of practice is to recognize this true mind. After recognizing it, one must safeguard it continuously and seamlessly, eliminating all habitual tendencies completely, before one can finally attain accomplishment. Recognizing the true mind does not mean that one has reached the goal. At this point, one is still far from it, still at the level of an ordinary being, and has only just begun; a long road still lies ahead.

Speaking of habitual tendencies, greed, anger, ignorance, pride, and doubt are not the only habitual tendencies. Your present assertions that there is emptiness or that there is form are themselves habitual tendencies. Fundamentally, there is neither emptiness nor form. To speak of emptiness and form is to fall into the two extremes. The fundamental cause is still attachment to appearances.

As we said earlier, wealth, sensuality, fame, food, and sleep—the five hindrances—are the heaviest habitual tendencies. Eliminate these five hindrances, and even if you do not seek to develop spiritual powers, they will arise spontaneously. For things manifest in accordance with karma. When your mind-capacity becomes vast, various functions will naturally emerge. Look at this assembly: they "see the emptiness of the ten directions as one sees an object such as a leaf held in the hand." Through the Buddha's compassionate instruction, they awakened to the suchness Buddha-nature inherently possessed by their own minds. Their mind-capacity became vast, and naturally their vision became vast as well.

"Looking back upon the body born of one's parents, it is like a mote of dust blown within the emptiness of the ten directions: it seems to exist and yet to vanish. It is like a bubble floating upon the currents of a vast, clear ocean, arising and ceasing without any source."

Earlier it was said that seeing the emptiness of the ten directions is like seeing a leaf in one's hand. Looking back at the body born of our parents, it is like a speck of dust blown up in empty space: "it seems to exist and yet to vanish."

How can it seem to exist and yet to vanish? This body is not nonexistent; the physical body is still here, so it "seems to exist." Yet the body has never truly existed; it is merely a false appearance and cannot be found at all, so it "seems to vanish."

In fact, whether you say that it exists or that it vanishes is merely your discriminating mind. It exists without truly existing, and does not exist yet appears to exist; it does not truly exist, nor does it truly vanish. For example, when dust is blown by the wind, it drifts along with the wind. This is like our physical body being born of our parents. There is a body there: this is what is meant by existence.

When the wind stops, the dust settles again. This is like the death of our physical body: this is what is meant by vanishing. In reality, it is only the arising and ceasing of a speck of dust. The true mind is unmoving; it neither arises nor ceases, exists nor vanishes.

This true mind is not born when our physical body is born, nor does it cease when our physical body dies. It has neither arising nor ceasing; therefore, it "seems to exist and yet to vanish." Although appearances arise and cease, the true mind neither exists nor vanishes.

The illusory arising and ceasing of this physical body is "like a bubble floating upon the currents of a vast, clear ocean." A floating bubble is a water bubble. It is like a bubble that forms in an unmoving ocean when its waters flow. "Arising and ceasing without any source" means that the bubble does not arise by itself; it arises from the seawater. Nor does it cease by itself; the seawater causes it to cease.

Both its arising and its ceasing are due to the seawater; the bubble is only a false appearance. This is what is meant by arising and ceasing without any source. Thus, the bubble neither truly arises nor truly ceases: when it arises, the seawater is not diminished in the least; when it ceases, the seawater is not increased in the least. It is always neither increasing nor decreasing.

The seawater symbolizes our suchness Buddha-nature, and the bubble symbolizes our illusory physical body. Although that body undergoes illusory arising and ceasing, suchness Buddha-nature always remains neither increasing nor decreasing.

From the neither-increasing-nor-decreasing nature of intrinsic nature, we can clearly see that our physical body and deluded mind are like a mote of dust in empty space or a bubble in the ocean. At birth, although such an appearance exists, there is in fact no birth. At death, although the appearance seems to disappear, there is in fact no cessation. To understand this principle is to realize the Way. Those who realize the Way see all phenomena of arising, ceasing, existence, and nonexistence as unobtainable.

"They clearly know for themselves that they have attained the original wondrous mind, which permanently abides and does not perish."

They understood everything clearly and immediately. All those present knew that this original wondrous mind—our suchness Buddha-nature, the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha—has originally neither arisen nor ceased and has always abided, unmoving. It is unlike the preceding adventitious defilements and afflictions, which come and go. Whatever has arising and ceasing, coming and going, is deluded thought and the ordinary mind, not the true mind.

If we were to tell ordinary people about this deluded mind and illusory body, saying that this body and mind have never truly existed, no one would be willing to believe it.

Only after one has genuinely awakened does one believe it: “Ah! This deluded mind and illusory body are truly unobtainable!” At this Śūraṅgama assembly, Ānanda and the other participants, through the Buddha’s compassionate instruction, all awakened. They truly saw the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha and understood that the deluded mind and illusory body are both unobtainable, while only the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha neither arises nor ceases.

Understanding this principle is the stage of seeing the Way; it is awakening. But does seeing it once mean that one has truly realized the Way? No.

Why not? Because they awakened to this principle through the Buddha’s compassionate instruction and the World-Honored One’s guidance. Those present had not actually realized this stage themselves. This point is extremely important for practitioners.

For example, when one who investigates Chan, recites the Buddha’s name, or practices Esoteric Buddhism reaches the point at which one’s practice accords with the Buddha, there may be a sudden “snap”: empty space shatters, the great earth sinks away, and one sees one’s own intrinsic nature. This is the stage of seeing the Way.

Yet this experience is only as fleeting as an epiphyllum bloom. In an instant, it is lost, and when one tries to find that state again, it cannot be found. One remains the same ordinary person as before; this is not genuine practice. The Chan school calls it “a blind turtle entering a hole in a piece of wood.” A blind turtle happens to enter a hole in a piece of wood once, but if you ask it to do so again, it cannot find the hole.

Therefore, this is not genuine practice. Genuine practice is to realize the essence vividly and dynamically, and to give rise to its functioning. How can this functioning arise? One must repeatedly temper oneself amid affairs and circumstances. Some people become exceedingly arrogant as soon as they have had one glimpse: “Ah! I have seen my intrinsic nature; I am awakened.” Have they seen it? Yes, they have.

But they have merely encountered it by chance. Since they cannot remain thus at all times, it does not yet count as truly seeing it. You must not only see it for a moment, but remain thus at all times. When responding to conditions and engaging with things, carry out all kinds of activities, yet have nothing to encounter and no conditions to which to respond. Only when this true mind and intrinsic nature do not waver in the slightest can one be said to have some slight accord with it.

Ānanda had previously relied on being the Buddha's cousin and attendant. Although he was learned, had a strong memory, and possessed broad knowledge, he did not value actual cultivation and had no genuine realization or meditative stability. He always had a dependent attitude, thinking that the Buddha would someday give him a samādhi. Only when he encountered the woman Mātaṅgī, and his precept body was nearly destroyed by a heterodox evil spell, did he profoundly awaken to his former errors.

Śākyamuni Buddha possessed great compassion. He saw that Ānanda had always emphasized extensive learning without devoting himself to actual cultivation, and thus had been unable to comprehend the great Way in embodied understanding. So he exhausted every means to press him into realizing the Way, just as great Chan patriarchs press their disciples: "Speak quickly! Speak quickly!"

Chan Master Chuanzi received Chan Master Jia Shan Shanhui in just this way. Chan Master Chuanzi Decheng, together with Yunyan and Daowu, had been disciples of Chan Master Yaoshan. After Chuanzi awakened to the Way, he went to a riverbank and ferried people across the river. He instructed his two fellow disciples that, if they encountered a young person of keen capacity, they should recommend one or two to him in repayment of their teacher's kindness. He would wait there for one with the proper affinities.

Later, Daowu saw that Chan Master Jia Shan Shanhui was fit to become a Dharma vessel, so he directed him to visit Chan Master Chuanzi. Chuanzi said to Jia Shan: "A thousand-foot line is lowered, its intent directed toward a golden fish. You are three inches from the hook—why do you not speak?" I have lowered a thousand-foot line here in order to catch a great golden fish or a giant turtle; that is, I intend to guide one of great capacity.

"Now that you are three inches from the hook, tell me!" Just as Jia Shan was about to speak, Chan Master Chuanzi struck him with his boat pole and knocked him into the water.

As soon as Jia Shan emerged from the water, Chuanzi immediately pointed his pole at him and said: "Speak! Speak!" That is, "Quickly speak! Quickly speak!" He gave him no chance to catch his breath, preventing him from seeking an answer through discriminating consciousness and conceptual understanding. But Jia Shan had not yet understood. As he was about to open his mouth again, Chuanzi struck him with the pole and knocked him down once more.

After this had happened three times in succession, Jia Shan finally awakened and nodded. Seeing that Jia Shan truly understood this time, Chan Master Chuanzi pulled him up. The patriarchs used precisely such pressing methods to force one to see

one's true nature. Knowing that the moment you open your mouth you are already wrong, they would speak—and then strike you directly in the face.

Our true mind, beyond all relativity, is beyond words and thoughts; it cannot be conceived or spoken of. Only when "the path of language is cut off and the road of mental activity comes to an end" can one gain a slight sense of the entrance. This means not pursuing mere learning and superficial talk, stuffing oneself full of concepts and views; one must see one's true nature.

Ānanda, too, realized the suchness Buddha-nature inherently present in his own mind only after the World-Honored One repeatedly instructed him and pressed and tempered him. Although he had seen it, some residual doubts remained unresolved in his mind, and his habitual tendencies had not yet been eliminated.

Our practice is the same. Through Buddha-recitation, Chan investigation, or esoteric practice, such a state may appear, and with a snap one breaks free: deluded thoughts and attachments vanish without a trace in an instant. But if this happens only once by chance and then cannot be sustained, it is not genuine practice.

Therefore, after seeing it, we must still practice diligently. We must truly become continuous and undivided, so that walking, standing, sitting, and lying down; favorable and adverse circumstances; activity and stillness—all are alike. Whether circumstances are favorable or adverse, whether one is in activity or stillness, it must be so. Only when one reaches this state is it genuine realization.

Some people today are very arrogant. They have merely encountered it once by chance, yet they think they have already arrived at the goal and become exceedingly proud. Their old habitual tendencies have not yet been eliminated, and they add new ones besides.

It is not that you have seen nothing at all; you have merely encountered it once by chance. Since your habitual tendencies have not yet been eliminated, when circumstances arise you still waver and remain unable to penetrate through them in actual circumstances.

You do not realize that all things are illusory. When circumstances arise, you still cling to appearances and take them to be truly existent. Then your practice has not reached the goal; how can you receive its benefit? Our wondrous, luminous true essence neither comes nor goes, neither moves nor wavers. Whatever circumstances may come, I simply respond in accordance with conditions: there is not a single thing to grasp, nor a single thing to discard; nothing whatsoever can be obtained. Naturally, one will no longer cling to appearances. To live with such lively freedom is wondrous functioning present before one.

Although Ānanda and the assembly had already awakened, the habitual tendencies acquired through the perfuming influences of countless lives and kalpas had not yet been eliminated. Although they could now see the Way, this was only the luminosity of initial awakening; they still had a long way to go.

“They bowed to the Buddha with palms joined, attaining what they had never known before. Before the Tathāgata, they spoke verses in praise of the Buddha.”

They wished to thank the Buddha for his compassion. The Buddha had so earnestly and painstakingly given us subtle and wondrous teachings, enabling the assembly to awaken. Such sublime instruction had never been encountered before, so they joined their palms and bowed to the Buddha, gratefully repaying his kindness. “Before the Tathāgata, they spoke verses in praise of the Buddha.” A gāthā is a verse; through words of praise, they extol the Buddha’s merit and virtue and express their gratitude.

“The wondrously clear, all-sustaining, immovable Honored One, the Śūraṅgama King, is rare in the world. It has dispelled my inverted thoughts of countless kalpas; without passing through asaṃkhyeya kalpas, I have attained the dharmakāya.”

A gāthā generally consists of four lines, like a poem, with a certain rhythm. We have discussed “wondrously clear” before. Clear refers to limpid water, unmoving and without ripples, and is used to signify Buddha-nature. This praises Śākyamuni Buddha for having ended the two forms of birth and death: segmented and transformational.

Although this essential nature neither comes nor goes and gives rise to no waves, it can nevertheless manifest bodies in the six realms and liberate sentient beings throughout the ten directions. Though it manifests bodies according to each kind of being within the three realms, its wondrous, luminous awareness-nature does not change in the slightest. It moves yet remains unmoved; hence it is called wondrously clear.

“All-sustaining” means to encompass all dharmas and retain immeasurable meanings. It means that Śākyamuni Buddha thoroughly knows and completely comprehends all worldly and supramundane dharmas, just as the earth sustains all things and all plants and animals arise from it.

“Immovable” means that although the Buddha manifests every kind of body and liberates every kind of living being, he sees no thing that can be obtained and no living being that can be liberated.

As the Diamond Sūtra says: “Thus I liberate immeasurable, innumerable, boundless sentient beings, yet in truth no sentient beings are liberated.” This is true

immovability. Though I emerge and submerge within the six realms, there is no birth and death, and I have never moved. As for “Honored One,” the Buddha is foremost among the ten dharma realms and the most venerable among all assemblies.

“The wondrously clear, all-sustaining, immovable Honored One.” This praises the Buddha’s fruition-virtues. “Wondrously clear” signifies the greatness of attributes; “all-sustaining” signifies the greatness of function; and “immovable” signifies the greatness of essence. Because essence, attributes, and function are perfectly and completely present, he is called the Honored One.

“The Śūraṅgama King is rare in the world.” Śūraṅgama translates as the ultimate firmness of all phenomena, because this samādhi encompasses all samādhis. No samādhi surpasses it; therefore, this great Śūraṅgama samādhi is called the king of samādhis. Śākyamuni Buddha was able to attain Buddhahood and liberate sentient beings precisely because he realized this Śūraṅgama samādhi. This Śūraṅgama is the essence, while the preceding “wondrously clear, all-sustaining, immovable” is its function. From realizing the essential nature of ultimate firmness arise boundless wondrous functions as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. This is most rare and difficult to encounter in the world.

“It has dispelled my inverted thoughts of countless kalpas.” Once one realizes this great Śūraṅgama samādhi, the inverted deluded thoughts of immeasurable kalpas immediately vanish. Just as one lamp can dispel a thousand years of darkness, after awakening, ignorance is like ice melting in hot soup: it disappears at once.

You should not underestimate yourselves. Our being able to hear this Śūraṅgama Sūtra is not the result of cultivating blessings and conditions for merely one, two, or three lifetimes. As the Diamond Sūtra says: “You should know that such a person has not planted wholesome roots before only one Buddha, two Buddhas, or three, four, or five Buddhas, but has planted all manner of wholesome roots before immeasurable millions of Buddhas.”

It is not through only a limited amount of wholesome roots, but through studying the Dharma with the Buddhas over countless lives and kalpas, that one accumulates the blessings and conditions to hear the Śūraṅgama Sūtra.

Thus, Buddhahood cannot be accomplished through cultivation in merely one or two lifetimes. Śākyamuni Buddha realized the Way only after diligent and arduous practice throughout kalpas as numerous as dust motes. Ānanda and Śākyamuni Buddha aroused the resolve to study Buddhism at the same time, but because Ānanda esteemed extensive learning and did not devote himself to actual practice, Śākyamuni Buddha had already attained Buddhahood while Ānanda had not yet awakened. See how far apart they were! What are “inverted thoughts”?

Before attaining Buddhahood, everyone has inverted thoughts—who does not? This is because they have not awakened to the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha and all cling to appearances. Originally, all appearances are illusory, yet people insist on taking them as real. Is taking the false for the real not inversion? The Tathāgata-garbha is originally real, but it cannot be seen or touched. Tell others about it and see who will believe you. Why is this so? Because false things are not without apparent form and function. For example, this apple exists, and this food exists; when eaten, they can fill one's stomach.

But what of the Tathāgata-garbha? It is formless and without appearance; it cannot be eaten as food or worn as clothing. Thus, people do not believe in it and take it to be false. Taking the false as real is inversion; taking the real as false is even more inverted. Sentient beings in the six realms are all caught in inversion.

We study Buddhism and cultivate practice in order to transcend birth and death. To succeed in practice, we must correct this inverted mind. The Pure Land school says the same. The Amitābha Sūtra tells us: "At the end of this person's life, when the mind is not inverted, they immediately attain rebirth in Amitābha Buddha's Land of Ultimate Bliss." Therefore, if we wish to be reborn in the Western Pure Land, our minds must not be inverted and our thoughts must not be scattered.

If your mind is inverted, then even if you believe in the Buddha and recite the Buddha's name, it will be difficult to attain accomplishment. Some say, "It does not matter if my mind is scattered when I recite the Buddha's name; when the time comes, the Buddha will come and guide me."

When you ordinarily recite the Buddha's name carelessly, with your mind attached to worldly dharmas, this is inversion. You are not truly practicing Buddha-recitation and are not in accord with Amitābha Buddha's fundamental vows. How can you then attain rebirth? Worldly dharmas are illusory, unreal, and unobtainable. Only your Buddha-recitation is real. What is the Buddha? It is the Tathāgata-garbha nature within each of your minds. Buddha-recitation is the remembrance of one's own mind; only your true mind is genuinely real and not false.

If your mind is not earnest when reciting the Buddha's name and you are careless, spending your ordinary days in utter confusion, then it will be even more difficult not to be inverted when death approaches. Others boast that it does not matter if they are careless now: "When I am about to die, give me one week. I will desperately recite 'Amitābha Buddha,' and I will certainly succeed in attaining rebirth."

This is truly the talk of a fool dreaming! When you are presently free from illness and pain, you still cannot recite the Buddha's name with one-pointed concentration. When death approaches and grave illness is upon you, with pain so severe that you are near death, how will you still be able to recite the Buddha's name? Such people

are all inverted; they are truly foolish. Therefore, Ānanda and the assembly bowed in reverence and praise: “World-Honored One, you are truly greatly compassionate. You have dispelled the clouds of my delusion and enabled me to enter and realize this suchness Buddha-nature, eliminating our inverted thoughts of countless kalpas.”

“Without passing through asaṃkhyeya kalpas, I have attained the dharmakāya.” Asaṃkhyeya is an immeasurably large number, used to indicate the vast length of time from the first arousing of the resolve until final Buddhahood.

The “three great asaṃkhyeya kalpas” of which we commonly speak refer to the three stages passed through in the course of practice: in the first great kalpa, one realizes the first bhūmi, which is the stage of seeing the Way; in the second great kalpa, one realizes the eighth bhūmi, which is the stage of cultivating the Way; and in the third great kalpa, one realizes Buddhahood, which is the stage of realization of the Way.

Thus, attaining Buddhahood is not an easy matter; no one knows how many long kalpas it requires. The three great kalpas are not a fixed and rigid period of time. For example, Śākyamuni Buddha aroused the resolve later than Maitreya Bodhisattva during the causal stage, but because he practiced diligently without ceasing, he attained Buddhahood before Maitreya Bodhisattva.

“Without passing through asaṃkhyeya kalpas” does not mean that one must necessarily pass through an asaṃkhyeya kalpa before attaining the dharmakāya; rather, one attains the dharmakāya immediately. The dharmakāya is one’s intrinsic nature—our tathāgatagarbha nature. To attain the dharmakāya is to awaken and see the nature of one’s own mind.

Therefore, in practice we must understand the essential key and comprehend the truth. If you do not understand the truth, then whatever you practice is blind and misguided cultivation. Not to mention the non-Buddhist paths that manipulate discriminating consciousness: even those who have entered the Buddhist gate are likewise following a non-Buddhist path if they do not understand the truth, for they too seek dharmas outside the mind.

We have said that śrāvakas, and even pratyekabuddhas, are followers of non-Buddhist paths, because they posit dharmas outside the mind, have not relinquished attachment to dharmas, have not realized this secret causal ground of the Tathāgata, and have not recognized tathāgatagarbha nature. Therefore, the Śūraṅgama Sūtra classifies them among the fifty skandha demons.

Ānanda and the others have now recognized the secret causal ground of the Tathāgata and thus attained the dharmakāya. If you do not attain the dharmakāya,

then whatever you practice is merely Buddhist activity in a dream. Therefore, no matter which gate one enters through, one must work on intrinsic nature. Cultivating this mind-nature is true practice and the proper path to Buddhahood. Everything else is peripheral practice and has nothing to do with the dharmakāya.

“May I now attain the fruition and become the Precious King, and then liberate sentient beings as countless as the sands of the Ganges. I offer this profound resolve to Buddha lands as numerous as dust motes; this is called repaying the Buddha’s kindness.”

To know kindness is to repay kindness. Look: he merely spoke these words, which may seem to be nothing remarkable. Yet the vows uttered by this mouth are of great consequence: they can awaken your root of bodhi and evoke your bodhi and right awakening.

After directly realizing bodhi and right awakening, we must still practice diligently and properly undertake the work of safeguarding realization, for it can enable us to realize the Way and be liberated from birth and death. This is the foremost matter in human life. It is not only Buddhist practitioners who know that birth and death are a great matter; learned people in the world also know this.

Wang Xizhi, who wrote the Preface to the Orchid Pavilion Collection, sighed, “Birth and death are indeed great matters!” After Qin Shi Huang obtained the imperial throne, he still wished to become an immortal or a deity, because he knew that the throne was but a fleeting bloom: after death, he would no longer possess it or enjoy any of its glory and wealth. Even after gaining the throne, he still wished to live forever. Thus, birth and death are the foremost great matter in human life.

To repay kindness, one must first know kindness. After the World-Honored One’s compassionate instruction, Ānanda and the assembly awakened to the true mind. Deeply appreciating the Buddha’s profound kindness and wishing to repay it, they praised him, saying: “May I now attain the fruition and become the Precious King.”

Now, through the Buddha’s guidance, I have awakened and seen this wondrous, luminous true mind. Yet my habitual tendencies from beginningless time have not been eliminated. I must eradicate my own habitual tendencies, attain the Precious King, and realize the true fruition. Our wondrous mind of nirvāṇa is the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye. It can rain down all treasures; all things in the world arise from it, and among all treasures it is the most honored and precious.

Worldly treasures can be gained and lost. Even the emperor, honored as the Nine-Five, is but a fleeting bloom, and glory and wealth cannot last long. Only this true mind endures throughout all time, unchanging and unceasing; therefore, it is most

precious. Before the Buddha, Ānanda and the assembly made the vow to realize the true fruition and become the Precious King.

What, then, should one do after attaining it? “And then liberate sentient beings as countless as the sands of the Ganges.” We must not only resolve our own birth and death and reach the other shore of liberation, but also save sentient beings drowning in the sea of suffering, helping them to be liberated from birth and death. We must not only awaken ourselves, but also awaken others.

A bodhisattva sees the suffering of sentient beings as worse than his own suffering. Once liberated, such a person will not hesitate to help and save sentient beings. If, having crossed to the shore oneself, one sees others suffering in the sea of suffering yet remains indifferent, complacently sitting there without concern, one is merely concerned with one’s own liberation.

As we have just said, if someone falls into the water and you do not save them or care whether they live or die, claiming that this proves your mind is empty and unmoved, that is wrong. Our awakening and liberation depend on the Buddhas’ and bodhisattvas’ compassionate care for us. People should understand that kindness must be repaid. How do we repay it? By “liberating sentient beings as countless as the sands of the Ganges.”

The Buddha is the Honored One complete in blessings and wisdom. Having long since emptied all appearances, he does not covet your offerings. Turning back to save sentient beings is the best way to repay the Buddha’s kindness. When we save sentient beings, we are not merely helping others; we are also helping ourselves. Without liberating sentient beings, you cannot become a Buddha.

Some say, “What is wrong with not liberating sentient beings? Is it not quite good to be liberated oneself?” They do not know that without liberating sentient beings, one cannot realize the Way. Why? Because ignorance has several categories, including delusions of views, delusions of thought, dust-like delusions, and delusions of fundamental ignorance.

Among these, dust-like delusions are extremely subtle and as numerous as dust motes. They ordinarily lie hidden very deeply. Unless you liberate sentient beings, you cannot discover them and, of course, cannot eliminate them.

Sentient beings each have different tempers and habits. To save them, you must understand them deeply, master every means of guiding and teaching them, and adapt to their dispositions. In the process of liberating sentient beings, your own habitual tendencies and deluded karma can be thoroughly eliminated.

Because sentient beings have ignorance and inverted deluded thoughts, they will not obediently listen to you and follow you. When they contradict you and go against your wishes, can you remain happy? In this way, your habitual tendencies are exposed.

When you are alone in ordinary life, with no one provoking or troubling you, you may feel very at ease and peaceful, imagining that all your habitual tendencies have vanished and been completely eliminated. In fact, many habitual tendencies are like silt lying at the bottom of water: if you lightly stir the surface, they will not rise. Only by vigorously stirring the depths can you bring the silt below to the surface.

Do not think that you alone are liberating sentient beings. In fact, sentient beings are also liberating you. They make you aware that you still have so many habitual tendencies and so much deluded karma, so that you know where to begin working. Once, at Jinshan Monastery, I saw a man whose spiritual powers were quite considerable. Consequently, he thought himself very good and extraordinary.

When he heard someone say that he still had the Buddhadharma within him—that there was still something in his mind—he became displeased. With just one sentence, his habitual tendencies surfaced. I witnessed this with my own eyes. Thus, dust-like delusions can be eliminated only in the process of liberating sentient beings. Because sentient beings differ in their views, habitual tendencies, and capacities, you must understand their differences, teach according to each person, and use different methods to guide different sentient beings. Only then can you eliminate your subtle delusions.

Eliminating delusions is the first aspect of liberating sentient beings. The other aspect is cultivating merit and virtue. The Buddha is the Honored One complete in blessings and wisdom: not only must wisdom be fully perfected, but merit and virtue must also be fully perfected. Seeing one's nature accomplishes only the bare dharmakāya. If you do not liberate sentient beings or do anything for the community, there is no way to establish merit and virtue.

How can these be brought to full completion? Merit and virtue arise only from doing good. If you do nothing at all, can you obtain them? If you do not liberate sentient beings, how can your merit and virtue be perfected? Naturally, they cannot be brought to completion.

Whether it is the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss or the Tuṣita Heaven of the desire realm, each has been accumulated through the perfection of merit and virtue. Thus, the Amitābha Sūtra says: "One cannot be born in that land with few wholesome roots and meritorious causes and conditions." Buddha-recitation is a meritorious cause and condition; liberating sentient beings is even more so. Without merit and virtue, pure karma is difficult to bring to fruition.

There is an old saying: “Cultivate wisdom but not blessings, and an arhat carries an empty bowl.” Because an arhat’s understanding is incomplete, he inclines one-sidedly toward emptiness. He believes that wisdom alone is enough and therefore does not know to cultivate blessings. Since you do nothing for sentient beings and do not cultivate merit and virtue, even though you are honored as an arhat, no one will make offerings to you.

Now we form extensive wholesome affinities, do every kind of good deed, liberate all sentient beings, and accumulate merit and virtue. On the one hand, we eliminate subtle deluded karma; this is the wisdom of realization. On the other hand, we cultivate merit and virtue, accumulating blessings. Only when both merit and virtue and wisdom are complete can one finally become a Buddha. To become a Buddha, one must liberate sentient beings; without liberating sentient beings, one cannot become a Buddha.

“I offer this profound resolve to Buddha lands as numerous as dust motes; this is called repaying the Buddha’s kindness.” We must make such a vow: I will dedicate my profound resolve to save the multitudes to all the Buddhas in the boundless dust-mote lands. Profound resolve is deeply planted in the field of one’s own mind; it is not superficial or spoken casually.

What does it mean to “offer it to dust-mote lands”? It means that I use this mind of saving sentient beings to make offerings to the Buddhas in the ten directions, in worlds as numerous as dust motes. We know that, to repay kindness, one should repay it through what the recipient most delights in.

The Buddha has already realized the ultimate ground of dharmatā, and blessings and wisdom are fully complete. As the Sixth Patriarch said: “How unexpected that intrinsic nature is originally pure; how unexpected that intrinsic nature neither arises nor ceases; how unexpected that intrinsic nature is originally complete; how unexpected that intrinsic nature is originally unmoving; how unexpected that intrinsic nature can give rise to all phenomena.”

The Buddha has everything and lacks nothing. He does not need you to offer food, clothing, bedding, or medicine, nor does he need you to sing his praises. The Buddha regards all sentient beings as parents and takes greatest delight in saving sentient beings. If we make the vow to save all sentient beings, and also make great vows like those of Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva—“Only when all sentient beings have been liberated will I realize bodhi; so long as the hells are not empty, I vow not to become a Buddha”—this is the best repayment of the Buddha’s kindness. If we can make such a great resolve and carry out such vows and conduct, then “this is called repaying the Buddha’s kindness.”

“I humbly beseech the World-Honored One to bear witness: in the evil world of the five turbidities, I vow to enter first. If even one sentient being has not become a Buddha, I will never here seek nirvāṇa.”

I have made such a profound resolve. World-Honored One, please bear witness for me. Why must it be witnessed? There is an important reason for this. Suppose that I privately make a vow to do something. Since no one knows what vow I have made, whether I do it or not, others do not know, and so there is no way for them to supervise or examine me.

But if you now make a vow openly before the assembly—to do something for the Zhang family tomorrow and something for the Li family the day after tomorrow—it is as if you are inviting the whole assembly to supervise you. Since you have made this vow, you must fulfill your promise.

If you make a vow but do not carry it out, it is an empty vow. Not only do you break your own promise, but you also fail those who have undertaken to supervise you. Why, then, ask the World-Honored One to bear witness? Because the Buddha is the most venerable among the assembly; asking the Buddha to bear witness is most solemn.

Moreover, this vow is not made merely for this lifetime, but to the end of future time. If I asked another person to bear witness, that person would know of my vow in this life and could supervise me. But in the next life, as each of us drifts along according to karma and goes our separate ways, where would I find that person to bear witness for me?

Yet the World-Honored One can bear witness for us not only in this life. No matter how much worldly time passes, or in what land or world we are reborn, he remembers every vow we have made and can bear witness for us. Therefore, Ānanda and the assembly “humbly beseech the World-Honored One to bear witness.” I shall repay the Buddha's kindness through actual deeds that liberate sentient beings.

“I vow to enter first the Sahā world of the five turbidities.” Our Sahā world is an evil age of the five turbidities: the turbidity of the kalpa, the turbidity of views, the turbidity of afflictions, the turbidity of sentient beings, and the turbidity of life. Even arhats are frightened when they see such a defiled and evil age, and they are unwilling to come here.

Yet I will be the first to enter such an evil age of the five turbidities; I will come first. This is the difference between the Mahāyāna and the Hīnayāna: bodhisattvas do not fear hardship or danger, but deliberately go among those unlike themselves.

The human realm is not even the most painful. One must not only liberate beings in the human world, but also go into the animal realm; and going into the animal realm is still not enough—one must also go into the hell realm. That is truly a place of suffering. Because you have a profound resolve and compassionate vows, you fear no hardship or obstacle.

In fact, once you truly realize the Way, there is neither suffering nor joy, for suffering and joy are both discriminations made by our minds. Where there is joy, there must be suffering; without suffering, where could joy come from? If your mind is empty, then all appearances are also empty, and there is no such thing as suffering or joy. Thus we say that even joy cannot be obtained in the Land of Ultimate Bliss: if there were joy, it could not be called ultimate bliss.

When your mind is truly empty, even if you are in hell, you do not feel suffering. Not only does Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva not suffer in hell; even Devadatta enjoys the bliss of the third dhyāna while in hell. Devadatta was a demon king who harmed Śākyamuni Buddha.

Even in hell, he remains very joyful, enjoying bliss like that of the third dhyāna, beyond comparison with the first or second dhyāna. Because his mind is empty, he possesses such meditative stability. Yet he is not ultimate, whereas the Buddha is ultimate; thus karma manifests in accordance with the capacity of the mind.

If your mind has ten parts of attachment, you will suffer ten parts of pain in response to adverse conditions. With every part of attachment removed, one part of suffering is diminished. Devadatta had not removed all ten parts, but he had removed seven or eight; therefore, even in hell he did not feel suffering.

The Lotus Sūtra says that Devadatta, also called Devadatta, was a great bodhisattva. He appeared as a demon king to harm Śākyamuni Buddha as a manifestation through great skillful means. Because karma changes with the mind, we sentient beings have ten parts of attachment, and ten parts of karmic fruition respond and manifest in our minds. When your mind is empty, karma is empty; karma cannot bind you, and you are free to move as you wish in heaven or among human beings. But if the mind is not empty, karma is not empty; wherever you go, it follows you like a shadow.

“If even one sentient being has not attained Buddhahood, I shall never here enter nirvāṇa.” I vow that if, in this evil age of the five turbidities, even a single sentient being has not attained Buddhahood, I will not roam at ease elsewhere, abide in non-contrivance, and enjoy blessings there.

“Nirvāṇa” means nirvāṇa. Not entering nirvāṇa does not mean that one has failed to realize nirvāṇa. In fact, one has long realized nirvāṇa, but does not assume the

appearance of entering nirvāṇa. It is like Kṣitigarbha Bodhisattva, who says that he will not assume Buddhahood. This does not mean that he has not realized Buddhahood; it is precisely because he has already realized Buddhahood that he possesses such great power and capacity.

As we have said, Mahāyāna nirvāṇa is non-abiding nirvāṇa. Although one directly realizes non-contrivance, one does not abide in non-contrivance. If one abides motionlessly in non-contrivance, one becomes like the Hīnayāna. Look at Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva: after already realizing Buddhahood, he steered the vessel of compassion back again, reappeared in the body of a bodhisattva, and came to liberate sentient beings universally.

Not only Avalokiteśvara: all Buddhas throughout the ten directions and three times are alike in this.

Therefore, do not suppose that Śākyamuni Buddha has entered nirvāṇa here among us. In the Lotus Sūtra, he says, “I have not entered nirvāṇa. Because my affinity for liberating beings in your world has come to an end, I show you the appearance of entering nirvāṇa. In truth, I have not left this world. Those in this world whose dharma eye is pure can all see me; and in other worlds as well, I still manifest a body in accordance with conditions.”

Thus, not entering nirvāṇa here does not mean failing to realize a stage of fruition. It means that if even one sentient being has not attained Buddhahood, I will not remain peacefully idle or abide in non-contrivance.

“Great Hero, Great Power, Great Compassion: I hope you will further scrutinize and remove the subtle delusions, enabling me soon to attain unsurpassed awakening and sit at the place of the Way throughout the ten realms.”

In every temple we see a Hall of the Great Hero. “Great Hero” means that birth and death cannot reach him: neither segmented birth and death nor transformational birth and death can be obtained. “Great Power” means that māras and non-Buddhist paths cannot disturb him; the powers of all evil māras and heterodox paths cannot destroy or disrupt him.

When the Buddha was about to realize the Way, so many demon kings and demon maidens appeared to disturb him, seeking to pull him down from the seat of awakening. Yet the Buddha remained utterly unmoved.

It is said that the demon king later had no alternative. He scattered his bathing cloth, from which tobacco leaves arose, saying, “Since I cannot draw you into the demonic path, I will use tobacco leaves to smoke down your future Buddhist descendants and

drag them into the water." Thus the tobacco people smoke today is said to have manifested from the demon king's bathing cloth.

Some say that smoking does no harm, because the five precepts prohibit drinking alcohol but do not say that smoking is forbidden. In fact, tobacco should not be smoked either. Some people go to temples and distribute cigarettes to the monks. I strongly oppose this; you are encouraging their bad habitual tendencies.

Tobacco should not be smoked. It is transformed from the demon king's bathing cloth, intended to smoke down your roots of bodhi and prevent the descendants of the Buddha from continuing without interruption. Māras and non-Buddhist paths cannot disturb the Buddha because the Buddha possesses this great power.

Everyone knows "Great Compassion": giving joy is compassion, and removing suffering is pity. Buddhas and bodhisattvas always compassionately liberate sentient beings in the six realms, giving us sentient beings happiness and removing our suffering. For example, whenever we suffer, we pray to Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva to remove our pain. Whenever we have some need, we also think of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva.

If you ask a bodhisattva to grant you a son, you may indeed bear a plump son; if you ask for a daughter, you may truly receive a precious daughter. This is indeed great compassion. Some say, "Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva once responded to me with extraordinary efficacy, but later that efficacy became less than before. Why is this?" There is a reason for this.

For Buddhas and bodhisattvas "first entice beings with their desires, then lead them into the Buddha's wisdom." They first fulfill sentient beings' wishes, enabling you to give rise to the root of faith. Once that root of faith is firm, they lead you into the Buddha's wisdom and open the Buddha's wisdom for you.

Opening wisdom means realizing emptiness and making you understand that everything is illusory and unreal. Since nothing can be obtained, you should no longer seek. Therefore, when they fulfill your wishes, their response may not equal what it was before; later it may be somewhat less. This is the reason.

"Then lead them into the Buddha's wisdom"—this is the compassionate mind of the Buddha. They first fulfill your wishes and cause faith to arise in you. When your faith is complete and unshakable, they further guide you to open the Buddha's wisdom. If the desires of sentient beings are excessively fulfilled, their greed will grow ever greater: you will want this and want that, while the resolve to leave saṃsāra and the resolve for liberation grow ever weaker. Once you have opened wisdom, you should no longer seek. Gradually, your desires are dispelled. This is the great compassion of Buddhas and bodhisattvas.

“I hope you will further scrutinize and remove the subtle delusions” means that after the coarse delusions have been severed, subtle delusions have still not been ended, and habitual tendencies remain.

These habitual tendencies are truly formidable. They are like a foul latrine: because it has been used for far too long, its stench has penetrated deep into the wooden boards. You may empty out the excrement, but the odor remains in the wood. Even if you wash and scrub it repeatedly, it still smells foul when you sniff it.

Our habitual tendencies have been infused over many lives and kalpas, so naturally they cannot be eliminated in one lifetime. We can recognize the coarse habitual tendencies, but the subtle ones are difficult to observe. Hence it is said, “The six coarse characteristics are easy to sever, but the three subtle characteristics are difficult to remove. I hope you will further scrutinize and remove the subtle delusions.”

Ānanda and the assembly therefore again beseeched the World-Honored One: “Buddha of Great Heroism, Great Power, and Great Compassion, please help us ‘scrutinize and remove the subtle delusions.’ ‘Scrutinize and remove’ means helping us identify what is wrong and setting forth the points at which we are deluded.”

Because we ourselves cannot immediately detect subtle delusions, we need you to tell us what is wrong and where the errors lie; only then will we know how to eliminate delusion. The deluded karma of the six coarse characteristics is easy to sever. Once we know that all things are illusory and unreal, that all material appearances are false, we break through them at once.

But subtle delusions are difficult to sever. The so-called three subtle characteristics are the karma-mark, the transforming mark, and the appearance-mark. These are delusions of ignorance, also called innate delusions. They are like a close-fitting undershirt worn against the skin, which cannot immediately be taken off. Therefore, we must ask the Buddha to compassionately instruct us and point out a means of eliminating them.

“May I quickly attain unsurpassed awakening.” This expresses the hope that we may soon attain unsurpassed awakening. “Unsurpassed” means that nothing is higher than it. This unsurpassed path of awakening is the attainment of ultimate Buddhahood. “May I sit in bodhimaṇḍalas throughout the ten directions.” Each person, like Śākyamuni Buddha, manifests Buddhahood in worlds throughout the ten directions, sits securely in a bodhimaṇḍala, teaches the Dharma, and liberates sentient beings.

Śākyamuni Buddha not only manifested the attainment of the Way through the eight phases in our Sahā world; at the same time, he also sits in bodhimaṇḍalas

throughout the ten directions, liberating vast numbers of sentient beings. The Lotus Sūtra explains this very clearly.

Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva is the same. He is not only the foremost bodhisattva in the Western Land of Ultimate Bliss, where he assists Amitābha Buddha in teaching sentient beings; he also hears their cries and relieves their suffering throughout the worlds of the ten directions. He has especially strong affinities with sentient beings in our Sahā world, particularly women. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva represents compassion in the Buddhadharma and therefore often manifests in a female form.

Many people are greatly confused, believing that bodhisattvas truly have female bodies and calling him “Lady Guanyin.” In fact, Buddhas and bodhisattvas have exhausted all defilements and do not receive any body. For the sake of liberating sentient beings, they manifest various bodily forms according to the kinds of beings. If we are to attain unsurpassed perfect awakening and truly realize the fruition of Buddhahood, we must eliminate all these subtle deluded thoughts.

Eliminating habitual tendencies is a process that proceeds from the coarse to the subtle, and then to the extremely subtle.

For example, what coarse delusions should those who practice Buddha-recitation first eliminate? First, they must know that all appearances in this world are false: wives, children, families, and so forth are all unobtainable. They must be able to let go of this illusory body and all illusory things, without clinging to right and wrong, gain and loss. Then the coarse delusions are eliminated.

What are subtle delusions? After you have let go of such thoughts, habitual tendencies still repeatedly assail you. Within, they keep churning and emerging one after another. Such thoughts arise quickly and vanish quickly; they well up from within and spill outward. These are subtle delusions.

We may use the Buddha’s name to dissolve such subtle delusions. Whenever a deluded thought arises, recite “Amitābha Buddha”; when another deluded thought arises, recite “Amitābha Buddha” again. Over time, they will cease to stir. If subtle delusions are eliminated, then the mind that recites the Buddha is itself unobtainable. If you still have a mind that is able to recite the Buddha, deluded thoughts still remain.

When deluded thoughts disappear, both the mind that recites and the Buddha who is recited fall away. When there are no deluded thoughts, the mind that recites the Buddha also comes to rest. If, while reciting the Buddha, you cannot let go of other matters and still worry about your children and dwell on your family, it will not be easy for your Buddha-recitation to enter samādhi.

Therefore, whatever method you choose to practice, you must first cut off coarse delusions. Only by letting go of all conditions can you readily enter the Way. This is so whether you investigate Chan or practice Esoteric Buddhism.

As practice advances further, the sense faculties and their objects fall away, and body, mind, and world are all unobtainable. This is called transcending mind, consciousness, and conceptual thought. If you do not transcend them, the gate that seals off the true mind cannot be opened. How, then, can you break through the huatou? Bodhidharma repeatedly admonished us that the first phrase in applying ourselves is, "Outwardly cease all conditions." If you cannot let go of all your external involvements, how could you possibly settle your mind and apply yourself?

Because these subtle delusions cannot be perceived through one's own powers of observation, Ānanda and the others asked the Buddha to help them examine and eliminate these subtle delusions. Only after subtle delusions have been removed can one ascend to the unsurpassed precious awakening and sit in bodhimaṇḍalas throughout the ten directions to liberate sentient beings.

Although Ānanda appears to have spoken this verse for himself, he was actually speaking for the assembly, for the benefit of people then and in the future.

After the Buddha has explained this principle to you and you recognize this intrinsic nature, this is awakening at the level of principle—an intellectual understanding. Although you understand the principle, you do not yet have great strength. Dahui Gao said that this is like medicinal mercury: when it encounters circumstances, it flies away. Because your meditative stability is inadequate, when favorable or adverse circumstances arise, you either become delighted or afflicted.

As soon as one of the eight worldly winds stirs, people are carried away by it. To eliminate subtle delusions, one must diligently apply oneself. We have repeatedly said that this suchness Buddha-nature is not like wood or stone; it is clear, ever-present knowing, free of all appearances. To see this original nature, remain steadfast in it, and take it fully upon oneself—this is awakening. Whatever practice you undertake, the principle realized is the same.

But merely taking it fully upon oneself does not suffice. You must practice, safeguard realization continuously and seamlessly, and at every moment amid circumstances struggle against your own deluded thoughts and habitual tendencies. You must see your nature at every moment and not become attached to appearances. The moment you become attached to an appearance, immediately awaken sharply: recite the Buddha's name, recite a mantra, or simply awaken with a clear and keen awareness, thereby dissolving it into emptiness.

You must continuously and seamlessly carry out the practice of safeguarding realization. Do not underestimate the words “continuous and seamless”; they are extremely important. Many people who follow non-Buddhist paths are far more earnest than we are in their practice. They genuinely cultivate a false dharma.

Yesterday I met someone who told me that he could practice seven or eight hours a day. Morning, noon, or night, whenever he had time, he used it to train. Sitting, standing, or lying down, he was always practicing qigong. “Oh, this system of qigong is extraordinarily good! My entire circulation has opened.”

He applies himself to this physical body and to qi; clearly, he has taken the wrong path. Yet he genuinely cultivates a false dharma. He is willing to apply himself in this way, and this is continuous and seamless practice. If only he could practice the true Dharma and apply himself to intrinsic nature. Conversely, those of us here who practice the true Dharma are unwilling to apply ourselves in this way; we falsely cultivate a true Dharma.

I repeatedly say that after seeing your nature, you must safeguard realization continuously and seamlessly, never becoming attached to appearances at any moment. Yet people insist on becoming attached to appearances and desperately chase after circumstances—worrying over sons and daughters, saying that Zhang is right and Li is wrong; before the matter of the donkey is gone, the matter of the horse has already arrived. How can practice become continuous and undivided in this way? If, throughout the day, you can safeguard realization continuously and seamlessly and practice in this way at every moment, then after three years of such practice, come strike me if you have not developed spiritual powers.

But neither should you become attached to spiritual powers. Whether they are present or absent makes no difference; they too are unobtainable. To become attached to spiritual powers is to invite demonic obstruction. This is because the essence of my suchness-nature has no form that can be grasped. Once you recognize this awareness-body, you must diligently apply yourself to safeguard it. If you practice in this way, you will certainly not fail to attain accomplishment. Those who go wrong do so by genuinely cultivating a false dharma or falsely cultivating a true Dharma. How sad and lamentable!

To demonstrate the steadfastness of his faith and the firmness of his vows, Ānanda concludes with two lines:

“Even should the nature of emptiness perish, my vajra-like mind will not waver.”

“Śūnyatā” means the nature of emptiness. It manifests only when illuminated by the Buddha’s light; without that illumination, it has no form. “Śakra” means a steadfast mind: it does not change and cannot be destroyed. The meaning is that even if this

nature of emptiness were to perish, my steadfast mind of vow would not waver and would certainly never regress.

We know that the nature of emptiness cannot possibly perish, for only something that exists as a thing can perish. The nature of emptiness is, in itself, the Buddha's body and mind. How could this absolute true emptiness, in which there is no thing, perish? Yet even if this unchangeable nature of emptiness could perish, my steadfast mind would not waver. This shows that the power of my vows is incomparably firm and profound: regardless of the difficulties and obstacles I encounter, I will never lose this bodhicitta.

All Buddhist practitioners know that they must arouse bodhicitta. But if asked what bodhicitta is, some cannot answer. Simply put: above, seek the Buddha Way; below, liberate sentient beings. This is bodhicitta. To explain it fully would take days and still not be exhausted.

Volume Four: Neither Arising nor Ceasing, Corresponding to the Tathāgata-Garbha

At that time Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, in the midst of the assembly, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, knelt on his right knee, joined his palms respectfully, and addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One of great awesome virtue, you have skillfully expounded for sentient beings the Tathāgata's supreme truth of ultimate meaning. The World-Honored One has always praised me as foremost among those who expound the Dharma."

"Now, hearing the Tathāgata's subtle and wondrous Dharma sound, I am like a deaf person listening to mosquitoes from more than a hundred paces away: what was originally unseen, much less can be heard. Although the Buddha has clearly proclaimed it and enabled me to dispel my delusions, I still do not fully understand how this principle is ultimately free from doubt. World-Honored One, although those such as Ānanda have awakened, their residual outflows have not yet been eliminated."

"Though those among us in this assembly who have attained freedom from outflows have exhausted all outflows, upon hearing the Dharma sound spoken by the Tathāgata, we still harbor lingering doubts and regrets."

"World-Honored One, if all the sense faculties and their objects, aggregates, sense bases, and realms in the world are all the Tathāgata-garbha, pure and originally

such, how do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise, together with all conditioned appearances, which flow and change in succession, ending only to begin again? Moreover, the Tathāgata has said that the natures of earth, water, fire, and wind are perfectly interfused, pervading the dharma realm, tranquil and ever abiding. World-Honored One, if the nature of earth pervades everywhere, how can it contain water? If the nature of water pervades everywhere, fire cannot arise."

"Moreover, how can it be understood that the natures of water and fire both pervade empty space without overpowering or extinguishing one another? World-Honored One, the nature of earth obstructs, while the nature of space is open and unobstructed. How can both pervade the dharma realm? I do not understand where this principle leads. I only pray that the Tathāgata will pour forth great compassion, dispelling the clouds of delusion for me and for the whole assembly." Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself fully on the ground, reverently thirsting for the Tathāgata's unsurpassed compassionate instruction.

At that time the World-Honored One said to Pūrṇa and to the arhats beyond training in the assembly, who had exhausted their outflows: "Today the Tathāgata will proclaim for this assembly the true nature of the supreme meaning within the supreme meaning, so that the fixed-nature śrāvakas in this assembly, and all arhats who have not yet attained the twofold emptiness but are turning toward the higher vehicle, may all attain the ground of the One Vehicle's quiescence—the true araṇya, the proper place for cultivation. Listen carefully now, and I shall explain it to you." Pūrṇa and the others respectfully received the Buddha's Dharma sound and listened in silence.

The Buddha said: "Pūrṇa, as you have said, if it is pure and originally such, how do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise? Have you not often heard the Tathāgata declare that inherent awakening is wondrous luminosity, and original awakening is luminous and wondrous?" Pūrṇa replied: "Yes, World-Honored One. I have often heard the Buddha proclaim this principle."

The Buddha said: "When you call awakening luminous, do you mean that inherent luminosity is called awakening? Or that awakening which is not luminous is called luminous awakening?" Pūrṇa replied: "If that which is not luminous is called awakening, then there is nothing that is luminous." The Buddha said: "If there is nothing luminous, then there is no luminous awakening. What has an object is not awakening; what has no object is not luminosity. Moreover, ignorance is not the tranquil, luminous nature of awakening. Inherent awakening must be luminous, yet one falsely makes it into luminous awakening."

"Awakening is not an object of illumination; because of illumination, an object is established. Once the object is falsely established, your false subjective capacity

arises. Within what is neither the same nor different, difference blazes forth; in contrast to that difference, sameness is established through difference. Sameness and difference become manifest, and thus what is neither the same nor different is further established. Such confusion gives rise to toil through mutual dependence. When this toil persists, it produces dust; the dust becomes mutually turbid, and thus brings forth the afflictions of worldly toil. Movement becomes the world; stillness becomes empty space. Empty space is sameness; the world is difference. That which is neither the same nor different is truly conditioned dharma."

"When awakened luminosity and the obscurity of emptiness mutually oppose each other, they become motion; thus there is the wheel of wind that sustains the world. Because emptiness gives rise to motion, solid luminosity establishes obstruction. As for gold and treasure, luminous awakening establishes solidity; thus there is the wheel of metal that maintains the lands. When solid awakening forms treasure and moving luminosity produces wind, wind and metal rub against one another, and thus fire arises as the nature of transformation. Treasure-luminosity produces moisture, and the fire's light steams upward; thus there is the wheel of water containing the ten directions."

"Fire rises and water descends; their interaction produces solidity. Moisture becomes great seas, and dryness becomes continents and islands. For this reason, fire often arises within the great seas, while rivers constantly flow upon continents and islands. Where water's force is weaker than fire's, it congeals into high mountains; therefore, when mountain rocks are struck, they emit sparks, and when melted, they become water. Where earth's force is weaker than water's, it draws forth grasses and trees; therefore, forests and groves become earth when burned, and produce water when twisted. Deluded interactions arise from one another and serve successively as seeds. Through these causes and conditions, worlds continue."

"Furthermore, Pūrṇa, this false luminosity is not something else: the fault lies in making awakening luminous. Once the false object is established, the illuminating principle cannot go beyond it. For this reason, hearing does not go beyond sound, and seeing does not go beyond form. Form, smell, taste, and touch complete the six false objects, and thus seeing, awareness, hearing, and knowing become divided. Those sharing the same karma become entangled; union and separation bring about transformation. When seeing is clarified, forms arise; when brightness is seen, thoughts form. Differing views produce aversion, while like thoughts produce love."

"Flowing love becomes a seed, and receptive thought becomes a womb. Sexual union produces development and draws beings of like karma together; therefore, through causes and conditions, kalala, arbuda, and the like come into being. Womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born beings arise according to what is appropriate: egg-born beings arise solely from thought; womb-born beings

arise through emotion; moisture-born beings are affected by union; transformation-born beings respond to separation. Emotion, thought, union, and separation transform one another, and beings undergo karma according to whether they fly or sink. Through these causes and conditions, sentient beings continue."

"Pūrṇa, when thought and love bind together, and love cannot be separated, then in all worlds parents, children, and descendants are born from one another without end. Such continuity has desire and greed as its root. When greed and love nourish one another, and greed cannot cease, then throughout all worlds, egg-born, transformation-born, moisture-born, and womb-born beings devour one another according to the strength of their power. Such continuity has the greed to kill as its root."

"Because people eat sheep, sheep die and become people, and people die and become sheep. Thus, throughout the ten classes of beings, they die and are born, again and again, mutually devouring one another. Evil karma arises with them and continues to the end of future time. Such continuity has the greed to steal as its root. You owe me a life; I repay you a debt. Through these causes and conditions, we remain in birth and death for hundreds of thousands of kalpas. You love my mind; I cherish your form. Through these causes and conditions, we remain bound for hundreds of thousands of kalpas. Killing, stealing, and sexual desire alone are the fundamental roots. Through these causes and conditions, karmic results continue."

"Pūrṇa, these three kinds of inverted continuity all arise from making awakening luminous—the knowing nature made aware. Because awareness gives rise to appearances, mountains, rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances arise from false seeing and flow and change in succession. Because of this falsity, they end only to begin again."

Pūrṇa said: "If this wondrous awakening, originally wondrous and luminously awakened, neither increases nor decreases in comparison with the mind of the Tathāgata, how do mountains, rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances suddenly arise without cause? Now that the Tathāgata has attained wondrous, empty, luminous awakening, when will the conditioned habitual outflows of mountains, rivers, and the great earth arise again?"

The Buddha told Pūrṇa: "It is like a person who has lost his way in a village and mistakes south for north. Does this confusion arise because of confusion, or does it arise from awakening?" Pūrṇa replied: "Such a confused person is not confused because of confusion, nor is he confused because of awakening."

"Why is this so? Delusion originally has no root, so how could it arise from delusion? Awakening does not produce delusion, so how could it arise from awakening?" The Buddha said: "While that person is lost, someone who understands suddenly points

out the way and enables him to awaken. Pūrṇa, what do you think? If this person, having once been lost in that village, is lost there again, would that be possible?" "No, World-Honored One." "Pūrṇa, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions are likewise. This delusion has no basis; its nature is ultimately empty. Originally there was no delusion, though there seemed to be awareness of delusion. When awareness of delusion arises, delusion ceases; awakening does not give rise to delusion."

"It is also like a person with an eye disease who sees flowers in empty space. When the diseased condition is cured, the flowers vanish from space. Suppose a foolish person were to wait in the empty place where those flowers vanished for them to arise again. Would you consider this person foolish or wise?" Pūrṇa replied: "There originally are no flowers in empty space; their arising and vanishing are falsely seen. To see flowers vanish from empty space is already inverted; to demand that they appear again is truly madness and stupidity."

"How could one further ask whether such a mad person is foolish or wise?" The Buddha said: "As you understand it, why do you ask when mountains, rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances will again arise from the wondrous awakened luminous emptiness of the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas? It is like gold ore mixed with pure gold: once the gold is refined to purity, it will not again become mixed. Or like wood reduced to ashes: it cannot become wood again. The bodhi and nirvāṇa of the Buddhas, the Tathāgatas, are likewise."

"Pūrṇa, you also asked why the natures of earth, water, fire, and wind, being perfectly interfused and pervading the dharma realm, do not overpower and extinguish one another. You also questioned how empty space and all the lands can both pervade the dharma realm without being incompatible or unable to contain one another. Pūrṇa, it is like empty space: its essence is not the various appearances, yet it does not prevent those appearances from manifesting."

"Why is this so? Pūrṇa, in the great empty space, sunlight makes it bright; gathered clouds make it dark; wind makes it move; clear weather makes it pure; condensed vapors make it turbid; accumulated dust becomes haze; and settled water becomes a reflection. What do you think? Do these various conditioned appearances arise from those causes, or do they arise from space? If they arise from those causes, then, Pūrṇa, when sunlight shines, since the brightness comes from the sun, the worlds in the ten directions should all take on the sun's color. Why then is a round sun still seen in the sky? If the brightness came from space, space itself should shine. Why then does it not emit radiance in the middle of the night when clouds and mist prevail? You should know that this brightness is neither from the sun nor from space, yet it is not separate from space and the sun."

“True, wondrous, awakened luminosity is likewise. If you make emptiness luminous, emptiness appears. If earth, water, fire, and wind are each made luminous, each appears. If all are made luminous together, all appear together. How can they all appear together? Pūrṇa, it is like the reflection of the sun in a single body of water. Two people observe the sun in the water and walk separately, one east and one west; each sees a sun following him. One goes east and one west, with no fixed direction. One should not ask, ‘If this sun is one, how can it go separately?’ Nor should one ask, ‘If each person has a sun, how can one sun appear?’ Such questions are endlessly false and have no basis.”

“When appearances are examined, they are found to be fundamentally illusory, with nothing that can be pointed out or described. It is like hoping for flowers in empty space to bear the fruit of emptiness. How then can one question how appearances overpower or extinguish one another? When their nature is examined, it is found to be fundamentally true: only wondrous awakened luminosity. The mind of wondrous awakened luminosity is not originally water or fire. How then can one further ask how they fail to contain one another?”

“Pūrṇa, you see form and emptiness as mutually inclining toward and contending with one another within the Tathāgata-garbha. Yet the Tathāgata-garbha accords with becoming form and emptiness, pervading the dharma realm. Therefore, within it, wind moves, space clears, the sun shines, and clouds darken. Sentient beings, deluded and confused, turn away from awakening and unite with dust; thus worldly toil arises and the appearances of the world come into being. I unite the Tathāgata-garbha with wondrous luminosity that neither ceases nor arises, and the Tathāgata-garbha is solely wondrous awakened luminosity, perfectly illuminating the dharma realm.”

“Therefore, within it, one is limitless and limitless is one; the great appears within the small, and the small appears within the great. Without moving from the bodhimaṇḍa, one pervades the dharma realms of the ten directions; one’s body contains the boundless empty space of the ten directions. At the tip of a single hair, one manifests jeweled king-lands; seated within a mote of dust, one turns the great Dharma wheel. By extinguishing dust and uniting with awakening, one brings forth the wondrous awakened luminous nature of suchness.”

“Yet the Tathāgata-garbha, the originally wondrous perfect mind, is neither mind nor emptiness, neither earth nor water, neither wind nor fire; neither eye nor ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind; neither form nor sound, smell, taste, touch, or dharma; neither the realm of eye-consciousness nor, thus, any of the realms up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness.”

“It is neither ignorance nor the ending of ignorance; neither aging and death nor the ending of aging and death; neither suffering, origination, cessation, nor the path; neither wisdom nor attainment. It is neither dāna, śīla, vīrya, kṣānti, dhyāna, prajñā, nor pāramitā; nor, thus, is it the Tathāgata, the Arhat, samyak-saṃbuddha, or great nirvāṇa; neither permanence, bliss, self, nor purity.”

“Because it is all of these negations—worldly and supramundane—the Tathāgata-garbha is the original source of the wondrous luminous mind. It is mind, it is emptiness, it is earth, water, wind, and fire; it is eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind; it is form, sound, smell, taste, touch, and dharma; it is the realm of eye-consciousness and, thus, all the way up to and including the realm of mind-consciousness.”

That is, ignorance is itself enlightenment, and enlightenment exhausts ignorance; and so on, even to old age and death being themselves old age and death exhausted; suffering, origination, cessation, and the Path being themselves so; wisdom and attainment being themselves so; dāna, śīla, vīrya, kṣānti, dhyāna, prajñā, and pāramitā being themselves so. And so on, even to the Tathāgata, the Arhat, perfect and complete enlightenment, great nirvāṇa, permanence, bliss, self, and purity being themselves so.

Because all these are identical, they encompass both the mundane and the supramundane; this is the wondrous, primordial, luminous mind of the Tathāgata-garbha. To depart from identity is to depart from nonidentity; identity itself is nonidentity, and nonidentity itself is identity.

How can sentient beings of the three realms of worldly existence, together with the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas of the supramundane path, use the mind of what they know to measure the Tathāgata’s unsurpassed bodhi, or use worldly language to enter the Buddha’s knowledge and vision? It is like a zither, a lute, a harp, or a pipa: although each has exquisite tones, without skillful fingers it can never give them forth. You and all sentient beings are likewise. The precious awakened true mind is complete and perfect in each and every one of you. When I press my finger, the ocean-seal emits light; when you merely stir your minds, the toil of the dusts first arises. This is because you do not diligently seek the unsurpassed path of awakening, but cherish the Lesser Vehicle and are content with a small attainment.

Pūrṇa said, “The precious awakening, perfect luminosity, true wondrous purity of mind possessed by the Tathāgata and by me are equally complete, without duality. Yet I have long been in saṃsāra because I encountered beginningless deluded thoughts in the past. Now, though I have attained the holy vehicle, I have not yet reached ultimate realization. The World-Honored One has completely extinguished all delusions and alone abides in wondrous, true permanence.”

“I venture to ask the Tathāgata: Why do all sentient beings have delusion, thereby obscuring their own wondrous luminosity and undergoing this drowning in saṃsāra?” The Buddha told Pūrṇa, “Though you have dispelled your doubts, your remaining delusions are not exhausted. I shall now ask you again about matters presently before us in the world. Have you not heard of Yajñadatta in Śrāvastī? One morning, he looked at his face in a mirror. Delighting in the head in the mirror, whose eyebrows and eyes he could see, he angrily reproached his own head because he could not see its face and features. Thinking it was a goblin, he ran about madly for no reason. What do you think? Why did this man run about madly for no reason?” Pūrṇa said, “The man’s mind was mad; there was no other reason.”

The Buddha said, “Wondrous awakening is perfectly luminous, and fundamental perfect luminosity is wondrous. Once it is called delusion, how can it have a cause? If it has a cause, how can it be called delusion? Deluded thoughts generate one another as causes in continual succession; delusion accumulates upon delusion through dust-filled kalpas. Even though the Buddha reveals this, they still cannot return. Such a cause of delusion exists because of delusion itself. Once one recognizes that delusion has no cause, delusion has nothing on which to depend.”

“When even arising does not exist, what could there be to cease? One who attains bodhi is like a person, once awake, speaking of matters in a dream. Even if the mind is exceptionally lucid, by what causes and conditions could it retrieve things from the dream? How much less could there be anything where there is no cause and fundamentally nothing exists. Like Yajñadatta in that city, could he possibly have had some cause or condition for being frightened of his head and running away? When his madness suddenly ceased, his head was not obtained from outside.”

“Even if his madness had not ceased, what would he have lost? Pūrṇa, such is the nature of delusion; where could its cause be? You need only refrain from following discrimination. When the three continuities of the world, karmic fruition, and sentient beings cease because their three conditions are cut off, their three causes do not arise. Then the Yajñadatta within your own mind will have his madness naturally cease. When it ceases, that is bodhi.”

“The supreme, pure, luminous mind pervades the dharma realm from the beginning. It is not obtained from anyone else. Why, then, rely on arduous toil and painstaking cultivation and realization? It is like someone who ties a wish-fulfilling jewel inside his own garment but does not know it. Wandering impoverished and exposed in another land, he runs about begging for food. Though he is truly poor, the jewel has never been lost. Suddenly, a wise person points out the jewel to him; whatever he wishes is fulfilled, and he becomes greatly wealthy. Only then does he realize that the spiritual jewel was not obtained from outside.”

At that time, Ānanda, amid the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha's feet, rose, and addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One, you have just explained that when the three conditions of killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct are cut off, the three causes do not arise; the madness of Dattā in one's mind naturally ceases, and when it ceases, that is bodhi, which is not obtained from another. Thus causes and conditions are plainly evident. Why does the Tathāgata suddenly reject causes and conditions? Through causes and conditions, my mind attained awakening."

"World-Honored One, is this principle applicable only to younger śrāvakas still in training such as ourselves? In this assembly, Mahāmaudgalyāyana, Śāriputra, Subhūti, and others heard the Buddha teach causes and conditions from the elder brahmins; they aroused the resolve, awakened, and attained the undefiled state. If you now say that bodhi does not arise from causes and conditions, then the naturalism taught by Kośalī and others in Rājagṛha would become the highest truth. I beg you, in your great compassion, to dispel our bewilderment!"

The Buddha told Ānanda, "Take the case of Yajñadatta in the city. If the causes and conditions of his madness were eliminated, his state of not being mad would naturally emerge. Thus, causes and conditions and naturalism reach their logical end here."

"Ānanda, Yajñadatta's head was originally natural; it was naturally so in itself. If what is natural were not itself, then why would causes and conditions make him fear his head and run about madly? If the head is naturally present and madness arises because of causes and conditions, why would the head not naturally be lost because of causes and conditions? His original head was not lost, yet his mad fear arose falsely. Since it had undergone no change at all, what need was there for causes and conditions? If original madness were natural, then fearful madness would have been there from the start. Before he became mad, where was the madness concealed? If not being mad were natural, then the head was originally without delusion; why did he run about madly? If one awakens to the original head and recognizes the mad running, then causes and conditions and naturalism are both mere idle speculation. Therefore I say: when the three conditions are cut off, that itself is the bodhi mind."

"When the bodhi mind arises, the mind of arising and ceasing is extinguished. Yet this is merely arising and ceasing. When both cessation and arising are exhausted, this is the path of effortless functioning. If there is a natural state, then one would say that the natural mind arises and the mind of arising and ceasing is extinguished; but this too is arising and ceasing. That which has neither arising nor ceasing is called natural. Just as the various phenomena of the world combine to form one entity, this is called the nature of combination; that which is not combined is called original nature. Original nature is not natural, and combination is not combination.

Leave behind both combination and naturalness; regard both separation and combination as false. Only this can be called the dharma free from idle speculation."

"Bodhi and nirvāṇa are still far distant for you, not something attained through your diligent cultivation and realization over kalpas. Though you can memorize and retain the pure and wondrous principles of the twelve divisions of the teachings of the Tathāgatas of the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, they merely add to idle speculation. Though you speak clearly and decisively of causes and conditions and naturalism, and people call you foremost in learning, the habitual influence of your vast learning over accumulated kalpas could not save you from the ordeal of Mātaṅgī. There was no need to wait for my Buddha's crown-uṣṇīṣa mantra: Mātaṅgī's fire of sexual desire immediately ceased; she attained the state of an anāgāmin and, in my Dharma, became a vigorous grove of practice. The river of her attachment dried up, and this enabled your liberation."

"Therefore, Ānanda, though over kalpas you memorize and retain the Tathāgata's secret, wondrous, and majestic teachings, this is not as good as cultivating undefiled karma for a single day and distancing yourself from the two sufferings of worldly hatred and love. Mātaṅgī was formerly a prostitute, but through the power of the spiritual mantra her craving and desire were dissolved; she is now called Bhikṣuṇī Prakṛti in the Dharma. Together with Yaśodharā, Rāhula's mother, she awakened to her past causes and understood that through lives upon lives, greed and attachment are suffering. Through the undefiled goodness cultivated in a single thought, some are freed from their bonds and some receive a prophecy of Buddhahood. How can you deceive yourself and still remain attached to seeing and hearing?"

When Ānanda and the entire assembly heard the Buddha's instruction, their doubts dissolved. Their minds awakened to the true reality, their bodies and minds became light and at ease, and they attained what they had never known before. Again they wept with sorrowful gratitude, bowed at the Buddha's feet, knelt on both knees with palms joined, and addressed the Buddha: "Unsurpassed, greatly compassionate King of Pure Treasure, you have skillfully opened our minds! Through such various causes and conditions and skillful means, you encourage and guide those sunk in darkness out of the sea of suffering."

"World-Honored One, although I have now received such Dharma sounds and know that the wondrously awakened, luminous mind of the Tathāgata-garbha pervades the dharma realms of the ten directions and contains and nurtures the pure, precious, wondrously adorned Buddha lands of the Tathāgatas in the ten directions, the Tathāgata has again reproached me that extensive learning is ineffective and inferior to cultivation. I am now like a traveler lodging abroad who suddenly receives a magnificent house from a heavenly king. Though he has acquired a great dwelling, he must still enter through its door."

“May the Tathāgata, without abandoning great compassion, show those in this assembly who remain shrouded in darkness the path by which they may relinquish the Lesser Vehicle and fully attain the Tathāgata’s nirvāṇa without remainder—the fundamental path for arousing the resolve. By what means may those still in training gather in and subdue their former grasping on conditions, attain dhāraṇī, and enter the Buddha’s knowledge and vision?” Having said this, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground. The entire assembly waited with one mind for the Buddha’s compassionate instruction.

At that time, the World-Honored One, pitying the pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas in the assembly who were not yet at ease in the bodhi mind, and also wishing to reveal, for sentient beings in the Dharma-ending age after the Buddha’s parinirvāṇa who arouse the bodhisattva resolve, the wondrous path of cultivation of the unsurpassed vehicle, declared to Ānanda and the entire assembly: “If you have decisively aroused the bodhi mind and do not grow weary of the Tathāgata Buddha’s wondrous samādhi, you should first clearly understand the two decisive principles for initially arousing awakening. What are these two decisive principles for the initial resolve?”

“Ānanda, the first principle is this: if you wish to relinquish the śrāvaka vehicle, cultivate the bodhisattva vehicle, and enter the Buddha’s knowledge and vision, you must carefully examine whether the mind that arouses the resolve at the causal stage and the awakening at the stage of fruition are the same or different. Ānanda, if at the causal stage you take a mind of arising and ceasing as the fundamental cause of practice and seek the Buddha vehicle’s unborn and undying state, this cannot be. For this reason, you should observe clearly that all fabricated dharmas in the material world are subject to change and destruction. Ānanda, look upon the world: among fabricated dharmas, which does not decay? Yet one never hears that empty space decays and is destroyed. Why? Because space is not fabricated; therefore, from beginning to end, it does not perish.”

“Within your body, solidity is earth, moisture is water, warmth is fire, and movement is wind. Through these four bindings, your still, perfect, wondrously awakened luminous mind is divided into seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing. From beginning to end, there are five layers of turbidity. What are these turbidities? Ānanda, it is like clear water, which is naturally clean and pure. Earth, dust, ashes, and sand, by their very nature, obstruct and remain. These two substances are inherently of different natures and do not accord with one another. If someone takes earth and dust and casts them into pure water, the soil loses its obstructive stability and the water loses its purity; its appearance becomes turbid, and this is called turbidity. Your five layers of turbidity are likewise.”

“Ānanda, you see that empty space pervades the dharma realms of the ten directions. Space and seeing are not differentiated: where there is space there is no substance, and where there is seeing there is no awareness. Interwoven, they falsely form the first layer, called the turbidity of the kalpa. Your body now takes the four elements as its substance; seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing are obstructed and made to remain confined, while water, fire, wind, and earth whirl about and cause knowing and awareness to interweave falsely. This is the second layer, called the turbidity of views.”

“Further, in your mind, recollection, cognition, and learning give rise to knowledge and views, while the six sense objects appear within its scope. Apart from the sense objects there are no appearances; apart from awareness there is no nature. Interwoven, they falsely form the third layer, called the turbidity of afflictions. Again, from morning to evening, arising and ceasing never stop. Your knowledge and views ever seek to remain in the world, while karmic forces ever move you from land to land. Interwoven, they falsely form the fourth layer, called the turbidity of sentient beings. Your seeing and hearing originally have no distinct nature, but the various sense objects separate and obstruct them, giving rise to distinctions without any real form. Within their nature they know one another, yet in function they oppose one another. The standard of sameness and difference is lost; interwoven, they falsely form the fifth layer, called the turbidity of life.”

“Ānanda, if you now wish your seeing, hearing, feeling, and knowing to accord from afar with the Tathāgata’s permanence, bliss, self, and purity, you must first choose the root of birth and death and rely on the perfect, still nature that neither arises nor ceases. With this stillness, turn back the false arising and ceasing, subdue it, and return to the original awakening. Take the unborn and undying nature of original luminous awakening as the mind at the causal stage; only then can you perfectly fulfill cultivation and realization at the stage of fruition. It is like clarifying turbid water: place it in a clean vessel and let it stand still and undisturbed. The sand and soil settle naturally, and clear water appears before you. This is called the initial subduing of adventitious defilements and afflictions. When the mud is removed and only pure water remains, this is called the permanent cutting off of fundamental ignorance. When the luminous characteristics are utterly pure, all manifestations are no longer afflictions; all accord with the pure, wondrous virtues of nirvāṇa.”

“The second principle is this: if you are determined to arouse the bodhi mind, to give rise to great courage in the bodhisattva vehicle, and decisively to abandon all conditioned characteristics, you must carefully investigate the root of afflictions: since beginningless time, who creates the karma that gives rise to and moistens rebirth, and who receives it? Ānanda, if in cultivating bodhi you do not carefully examine the root of afflictions, you cannot know where the false inversion of sense faculties and sense objects lies. If you do not even know where it lies, how can you

subdue it and attain the Tathāgata's stage? Ānanda, look at those in the world who untie knots. If they do not see the knots, how can they know how to untie them? Nor has anyone heard that space can be torn apart by you. Why? Space has no form or characteristics; therefore, there is neither binding nor release."

Thus your eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, and mind before you now—the six—serve as thieves' accomplices, robbing your household treasure themselves. From beginningless time, because sentient beings are bound by birth, they have been unable to transcend the material world.

Ānanda, what is meant by the world of sentient beings? "World" means change and flow; "realm" means directions and locations. You should now know that east, west, south, north, southeast, southwest, northeast, northwest, above, and below are realms. Past, future, and present are worlds. There are ten directions and three divisions of time. All sentient beings are woven together through delusion; within the body there is mutual alternation and transformation, and the worlds interpenetrate one another.

Although the nature of these realms may extend in ten directions, their locations can be clearly determined. In the mundane world, however, only east, west, south, and north are counted; above and below have no fixed location, and the center has no fixed direction. The four directions are necessarily clear. Interwoven with the three divisions of time, three times four and four times three revolve into twelve. The threefold flow and transformation are repeated: ten, a hundred, a thousand. In sum, from beginning to end, each of the six sense faculties has twelve hundred merits and functions.

Ānanda, you must further determine among them which are superior and which inferior. With the eyes, when one sees, the rear is dark and the front is bright. The front is fully bright, the rear wholly dark; to either side one sees two-thirds. Considered as a whole, their function is incomplete: three parts are counted as merit, while one part has no merit. You should know that the eye faculty has only eight hundred merits.

With the ears, one hears all around without omission in the ten directions. Whether sounds are moving, near, or far, there are no boundaries. You should know that the ear faculty is complete, with twelve hundred merits. With the nose, one smells through inhalation and exhalation: there is outgoing and incoming, but the interval between them is lacking. Examining the nose faculty, one part out of three is missing. You should know that the nose has only eight hundred merits.

With the tongue, one proclaims all worldly and supramundane wisdom. Speech has directional distinctions, but principle is inexhaustible. You should know that the tongue faculty is complete, with twelve hundred merits. With the body, one senses

contact and recognizes agreeable and disagreeable sensations. When there is contact, one can feel; in separation, one does not know. Separation is onefold, while contact is twofold. Examining the body faculty, one part out of three is missing. You should know that the body has only eight hundred merits. With the mind faculty, one silently contains all worldly and supramundane dharmas throughout the ten directions and three divisions of time. It embraces both sages and ordinary beings without exception, reaching to their furthest limits. You should know that the mind faculty is complete, with twelve hundred merits.

Ānanda, if you now wish to reverse the current of birth and death, return to the source of the flow, and arrive at the unborn and unceasing, you must examine these six faculties of reception and use: which are complete and which deficient? Which are deep and which shallow? Which is perfectly penetrating, and which is incomplete? If, in this, you awaken to the perfectly penetrating faculty and reverse that beginningless current of karmic delusion woven together, you may follow the perfectly penetrating faculty. Compared with an incomplete faculty, the difference is as that between a day and an eon.

I have now fully explained the original merits and functions of the six serene and perfectly luminous faculties; their number is thus. Choose carefully whichever one can provide entry for you, and I shall elucidate it, enabling you to advance. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions, cultivating each of the eighteen realms one by one, all attain complete unsurpassed bodhi. Among them there is no superiority or inferiority. But your capacities are inferior, and you have not yet been able to develop within them the wisdom of complete freedom and mastery. Therefore I proclaim this teaching so that you may enter deeply through a single gate. Once one faculty is free of delusion, the other six faculties will simultaneously become pure.

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, how can reversing the current and entering deeply through a single gate cause the six sense faculties to become pure all at once?” The Buddha told Ānanda, “You have now attained the fruition of a srotāpanna and have extinguished the afflictions of the world of sentient beings in the three realms that are eliminated by seeing. Yet you still do not know the beginningless, empty habitual tendencies accumulated within the faculties over many lives. Those habits must be eliminated through cultivation. How much more so the divisions and categories of arising, abiding, change, and cessation within them?”

“Now observe your six sense faculties before you: are they one or six? Ānanda, if you say they are one, why can the ear not see, the eye not hear, the head not walk, and the feet not speak? But if these six faculties are definitively six, then as I now expound this subtle Dharma gate to you in this assembly, which of your six faculties receives it?” Ānanda said, “I hear with my ears.”

The Buddha said, “Your ears hear by themselves; what does this have to do with your body and mouth? Yet your mouth comes to ask about the meaning, and your body rises respectfully to receive the teaching. Therefore you should know that they are not ultimately one, nor ultimately six; fundamentally, your faculties are neither one nor six. Ānanda, you should know that these faculties are neither one nor six. Since beginningless time, through inverted transmigration, the meaning of one and six has arisen within perfect serenity. Although you, a srotāpanna, have attained the cessation of the six, you have not yet eliminated the one.”

It is like the great empty space, which is combined with many vessels. Because the shapes of the vessels differ, it is called different spaces. Remove the vessels and observe space, and one calls space one. How could that great empty space become for you the same or different? How much less could it be called one or not one? Your understanding of the six faculties of reception and use is likewise so.

Through the contrasting dual appearances of brightness and darkness, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to seeing. The essence of seeing reflects forms, and forms congeal to become the faculty. The faculty’s source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical eye, like a cluster of grapes. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after forms. Through the mutual impact of the dual appearances of movement and stillness, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to hearing. The essence of hearing reflects sounds, and sounds curl together to become the faculty.

The faculty’s source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical ear, like newly curled leaves. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after sounds. Through the mutually arising dual appearances of openness and obstruction, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to smelling. The essence of smelling reflects fragrances, and fragrances are drawn in to become the faculty. The faculty’s source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical nose, like two drooping claws. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after fragrances.

Through the intermingling dual appearances of blandness and flavor, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to tasting. The essence of taste reflects flavors, and flavors become entwined to form the faculty. The faculty’s source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical tongue, like a newly crescent moon. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after flavors. Through the mutual friction of the dual appearances of separation and contact, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to tactile

awareness. The essence of awareness reflects tactile objects, and tactile objects join together to form the faculty.

The faculty's source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical body, like the sides of a waist drum. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after tactile objects. Through the successive dual appearances of arising and ceasing, within the wondrous perfect clarity, one adheres to the serene nature and gives rise to knowing. The essence of knowing reflects dharmas, and dharmas are taken in to form the faculty. The faculty's source is called the pure four great elements and is named the physical mind, like seeing within a dark room. The superficial faculty, composed of the four kinds of sense objects, streams outward and chase after dharmas.

Ānanda, these six faculties arise because of that awareness which seeks illumination. With the awareness of illumination, one loses that essential clarity and adheres to delusion, giving rise to light.

Therefore, when you are apart from darkness and brightness, there is no substance of seeing; apart from movement and stillness, there is originally no substance of hearing; without openness and obstruction, the nature of smelling does not arise; apart from flavor and blandness, tasting has no source; without separation and contact, tactile awareness is originally absent; without cessation and arising, where can knowing abide? You need only not follow the twelve conditioned appearances of movement and stillness, contact and separation, blandness and flavor, openness and obstruction, arising and ceasing, brightness and darkness. Withdraw one faculty from its adhesions, let it turn inward and become quiescent; when that quiescence returns to the original truth, its fundamental luminosity will shine forth.

When the luminous nature shines forth, the remaining five adhesions will likewise be removed and completely liberated. Awareness and perception will no longer arise from objects before you; the light will not follow the faculties but will manifest through them. Thus the six faculties may function interchangeably.

Ānanda, do you not know that in this assembly Aniruddha sees though he has no eyes; the nāga Upananda hears though he has no body; the goddess of the Ganges smells fragrances without a nose; and Gavāṃpati knows flavors with an unusual tongue? The deity Śūnyatā has no body yet feels contact; reflected in the light of the Tathāgata, it is temporarily made manifest. Since it has the nature of wind, its body is originally nonexistent. Among śrāvakas who have attained the cessation samādhi, Mahākāśyapa in this assembly has long extinguished the mind faculty, yet he knows with perfect clarity and luminosity, without relying on mental thoughts.

Ānanda, when your faculties have all been completely freed, an inner radiance will shine forth. The superficial faculties, the material world, and all conditioned

appearances of change will melt away like ice in boiling water and, in a single thought, become unsurpassed knowing and awakening. Ānanda, consider a person in the world who gathers seeing in the eyes. If that person quickly closes the eyes, darkness appears before them, and the six faculties become obscure, so that head and feet seem alike. Yet if the person uses a hand to feel around the outside of the body, though unable to see, they can still distinguish head from feet. This knowing is the same. Seeing depends on brightness, and darkness becomes non-seeing. But if luminosity manifests of itself, all appearances of darkness can never obscure it. Once faculties and objects have melted away, how could awakened luminosity fail to become perfectly wondrous?

Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, as the Buddha has said, the mind of awakening at the causal ground, if it seeks permanence, must correspond in name with the fruition ground. World-Honored One, at the fruition ground, bodhi, nirvāṇa, suchness, Buddha-nature, the amala consciousness, the empty Tathāgata-garbha, and great perfect mirror wisdom are seven names. Though their designations differ, they are pure and complete, their essential nature firm and solid, permanently abiding and indestructible like the vajra king."

"But if seeing and hearing, when separated from brightness and darkness, movement and stillness, openness and obstruction, ultimately have no substance, they are like the thinking mind, which has nothing at all apart from objects before it. How can one take this ultimate cessation and extinction as the cause of practice, hoping to attain the Tathāgata's seven permanent fruits? World-Honored One, if separated from brightness and darkness, seeing is ultimately empty. If there are no objects before it, the nature of thought itself ceases."

"Whether advancing or retreating, in repeated and subtle inquiry, there is fundamentally no mind of self or objects of that mind. Upon what, then, can one establish a cause in seeking unsurpassed awakening? The Tathāgata previously spoke of serene, essential, perfect permanence. If this contradicts the true teaching, it will ultimately become mere empty talk. How, then, can the Tathāgata be one who speaks truth? I pray that you will extend great compassion and dispel my ignorance and stinginess."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "You have studied widely but have not exhausted all your outflows. In your mind, you merely know the causes of inversion; when true inversion appears before you, you are in fact unable to recognize it. I fear that your sincere mind still has not been convinced. I shall now use ordinary worldly matters to dispel your doubts."

The Tathāgata then instructed Rāhula to strike a bell once and asked Ānanda, "Do you hear now?" Ānanda and the great assembly all said, "We hear." When the bell

ceased and there was no sound, the Buddha again asked, “Do you hear now?” Ānanda and the great assembly all said, “We do not hear.” Rāhula then struck the bell once more, and the Buddha again asked, “Do you hear now?” Ānanda and the great assembly again said, “We all hear.” The Buddha asked Ānanda, “How is it that you hear? How is it that you do not hear?” Ānanda and the great assembly all replied to the Buddha, “When the bell is struck, we hear it. When, after being struck for some time, its sound fades away and both sound and echo cease, this is called not hearing.”

The Tathāgata again instructed Rāhula to strike the bell and asked Ānanda, “Is there sound now?” Ānanda and the great assembly all said, “There is sound.” After a short while, the sound faded away. The Buddha again asked, “Is there sound now?” Ānanda and the great assembly replied, “There is no sound.” After a while, Rāhula came again and struck the bell. The Buddha again asked, “Is there sound now?” Ānanda and the great assembly all said, “There is sound.” The Buddha asked Ānanda, “How is there sound? How is there no sound?” Ānanda and the great assembly all replied to the Buddha, “When the bell is struck, it is called sound. When, after being struck for some time, its sound fades away and both sound and echo cease, it is called no sound.”

The Buddha said to Ānanda and the great assembly, “Why do you now speak so confusedly and contradict yourselves?” Ānanda and the assembly simultaneously asked the Buddha, “Why are we called confused?” The Buddha said, “When I ask whether you hear, you say that you hear; when I ask whether there is sound, you say that there is sound. Your answers concerning hearing and sound are inconsistent. How can this not be called confused speech? Ānanda, when the sound fades and there is no echo, you say that there is no hearing.”

“If there truly were no hearing, the hearing nature would already have ceased, like a withered tree. When the bell is struck again, how would you know it? Knowing that there is sound or no sound belongs to the object of sound, which may be absent or present. How could the hearing nature itself become existent or nonexistent for you? If hearing were truly absent, who would know that it was absent? Therefore, Ānanda, within hearing, sound itself arises and ceases. It is not that the arising and ceasing of sound causes your hearing nature to become existent or nonexistent. You are still inverted, mistaking sound for hearing. Why be surprised, then, that in your delusion you take what is permanent to be annihilated? You should never say that hearing has no nature apart from movement and stillness, obstruction and openness.”

It is like a person sleeping heavily, sound asleep upon his bed and pillow. While he sleeps, someone in his household pounds cloth and husks rice. In his dream, hearing the sounds of pounding and husking, he mistakes them for something else:

perhaps the beating of drums or the striking of bells. While dreaming, he even wonders why the bell makes the sound of wood or stone. Then he suddenly awakens and immediately recognizes the sound of rice being husked. He tells his family, “Just now, while I was dreaming, I mistook this sound of husking for the beating of drums.”

Ānanda, while this person was dreaming, did he remember stillness and movement, opening and closing, penetration and obstruction? Although his body was asleep, his faculty of hearing was not obscured. Even if your physical form were to perish and the light of life to fade away, how could this nature perish along with you? From beginningless time, all sentient beings have followed forms and sounds, pursuing their thoughts and drifting in the cycle of birth and death. They have never awakened to the pure, wondrous, and constant nature. Not following what is constant, they pursue arising and ceasing; thus, life after life, they drift amid mixed defilements.

If you cast aside arising and ceasing and abide in true permanence, the constant light will appear before you, and the sense faculties, their objects, consciousness, and mind will immediately fall away. Thought-appearances are dust, and discriminating consciousness is defilement. When both are far removed, your dharma eye will immediately become clear. How, then, could you fail to attain unsurpassed knowledge and awakening?

IX. Three Types of Continuity

“At that time, Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra, in the midst of the assembly, rose from his seat, bared his right shoulder, placed his right knee on the ground, joined his palms reverently, and addressed the Buddha: ‘World-Honored One of great majestic virtue, you have skillfully expounded for sentient beings the Tathāgata’s ultimate truth.’”

After Ānanda had finished reciting his verse in praise of the Buddha and made his vow, Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra again stepped forward to ask a question.

Pūrṇa Maitrāyaṇīputra translates as “Son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness.” “Pūrṇa” means fullness and was the name of his grandfather or father; “Maitra” means loving-kindness; and “ṇī” refers to his mother. Together, the name means the son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness, hence “Son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness.”

Pūrṇa was “in the midst of the assembly” and “rose from his seat”: he stood up from his place in order to ask a question on behalf of the assembly. “Baring his right shoulder and placing his right knee on the ground” was an Indian ritual manner of asking a question: exposing the right shoulder, bending the left leg, and kneeling with the right knee on the ground.

“He joined his palms reverently and addressed the Buddha”: pressing the palms together expressed reverence. To speak to the Buddha, as one below addressing one above, was called making a respectful address. “World-Honored One of great majestic virtue”—as we explained above, Śākyamuni Buddha possesses great heroism and great strength. Birth and death cannot bind him, and Māras and non-Buddhists cannot destroy him. He is the most honored among all assemblies, and therefore is called one of great majestic virtue.

“You have skillfully expounded for sentient beings the Tathāgata’s ultimate truth.” This means that, out of great compassion, you, Śākyamuni Buddha, skillfully employ all kinds of analogies and readily understandable methods to explain and teach the subtle Dharma to our assembly, enabling us to awaken, recognize the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, and comprehend the ultimate truth.

“Ultimate truth” means that the noble truth and conventional truth are nondual. Of the two truths, noble truth speaks of nonexistence—that is, not existent—while conventional truth speaks of existence—that is, not nonexistent. One is not existent and the other is not nonexistent; thus, not existent and not nonexistent are nondual. This is called the ultimate truth.

“The World-Honored One has always praised me, saying that among those who expound the Dharma, I am foremost. Now, hearing the Tathāgata’s subtle Dharma voice, I am like a deaf person listening to mosquitoes from more than a hundred paces away: what I have never seen, much less heard. Though the Buddha has clearly expounded the teaching to dispel my delusions, I still do not fully understand this meaning or reach the ultimate ground free of doubt. World-Honored One, people such as Ānanda, though awakened, have not yet eliminated the outflows of habitual tendencies. Those among our assembly who have attained freedom from outflows, though they have exhausted all outflows, still harbor doubts and regrets upon hearing the Dharma voice spoken by the Tathāgata.”

Pūrṇa was asking the Buddha for further instruction. Even after the Buddha had explained the matter in this way, he still had residual doubts, and so he asked the Buddha to help dispel them.

Among the Buddha’s great disciples, each was foremost in a particular respect. Maudgalyāyana was foremost in spiritual powers, Subhūti in understanding emptiness, and Śāriputra in wisdom, while the Son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness was foremost in expounding the Dharma: “The World-Honored One has always praised me, saying that among those who expound the Dharma, I am foremost.”

One who can expound the Dharma must certainly be able to hear and understand the Dharma. Only if one can receive and understand the Dharma one teaches can one explain it to others. Now the Son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness, foremost in

expounding the Dharma, asks the Buddha for instruction. Even this person, most capable of hearing and understanding the Dharma, still has doubts; naturally, others also cannot be without doubts.

Thus, the Son of Fullness and Loving-Kindness asked on behalf of both himself and the entire assembly, for all those present had the same questions as he did.

Today I have heard the Tathāgata's subtle Dharma voice. Through all kinds of analogies, you have portrayed the ultimate truth so clearly and thoroughly, enabling our assembly to gain the true meaning of that truth. Yet we can understand only its general outline.

Here he gives an analogy: to us, these profound principles of which you speak are "like a deaf person hearing mosquitoes from a hundred paces away"—like a deaf person trying to hear the buzzing of mosquitoes more than a hundred paces away.

If a deaf person is nearby, perhaps they can hear a little when you speak loudly. But from a hundred paces away, even a person who is not deaf cannot hear mosquitoes; naturally, a deaf person can hear them even less.

Thus, the subtle, wondrous Dharma of bodhi that you have taught sounds to ordinary people like mosquitoes heard by a deaf person from a hundred paces away. "What I have never seen, much less heard"—we have not even seen it, much less heard it, and so cannot truly understand it. How could I know where its wondrous functioning lies? "Though the Buddha has clearly expounded the teaching to dispel my delusions, I still do not fully understand this meaning."

Although you, Śākyamuni Buddha, have repeatedly used various analogies to explain the principles of the seven great elements, thereby enabling us to dispel delusion and truly see the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, I still do not truly understand the real meaning of the ultimate truth, and doubt remains in my mind. Doubt obstructs my wisdom and prevents me from penetrating the ultimate truth; therefore, I cannot reach the "ultimate ground free of doubt."

"People such as Ānanda, though awakened, have not yet eliminated the outflows of habitual tendencies." Take someone like Ānanda: although he was awakened and realized the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha, the outflows of his habitual tendencies had not yet been eliminated; his habitual tendencies had not yet been removed.

The power of exhausted outflows is the state of a fourth-fruit arhat. Ānanda was only a first-fruit arhat; three further stages remained before he could reach the level of exhausted outflows. Since he had not realized the power of exhausted outflows or entered the fourth fruition, habitual tendencies and outflows still remained; he was still far from that attainment.

In fact, even arhats who have realized the power of exhausted outflows still retain habitual tendencies, because attachment to dharmas remains. This attachment to dharmas is also a habitual tendency. Their habitual tendencies have not been completely eliminated. Although they can transcend segmented birth and death, transformational birth and death still remains.

“Those among our assembly who have attained freedom from outflows” refers to fourth-fruit arhats, whose view-delusions and thought-delusions have already been eliminated and who have attained the stage free of outflows. Among those attending the assembly are fourth-fruit arhats and pratyekabuddhas, who have already reached the state free of outflows.

Outflows are afflictions, and delusions are confusion. In the Lesser Vehicle, afflictions refer to view-delusions and thought-delusions. People in this world are all caught in afflictions and therefore all have outflows. By realizing “freedom from outflows,” one can cut off view-delusions and thought-delusions and transcend segmented birth and death. “Though they have exhausted all outflows, still, upon hearing the Dharma voice spoken by the Tathāgata, they harbor doubts and regrets.”

We arhats and pratyekabuddhas who have realized the power of exhausted outflows and transcended segmented birth and death have exhausted the two delusions of view and thought and are free from all afflictions. Yet, having heard the Dharma you have taught, we are not entirely without doubt; doubts still remain in our minds. Because arhats still retain attachment to dharmas and these habitual tendencies, their understanding is not wholly true. Although they understand this meaning, they have not truly realized this stage, and therefore still have doubts.

As for this character yu ( ), we explained it last time: it means to bend one’s fingers. Yu means “bent” or “twisted.” That is, one does not fully understand this principle; even after hearing you, venerable elder, expound the unsurpassed, profound, subtle, and wondrous Dharma, one may still have doubts and be unable to understand it fully and ultimately.

“Regret” means regretting that one has not heard deeply or awakened thoroughly, regretting that one has missed an opportunity. It is self-reproach, not causing others regret. That is, I have not fully received this exceedingly subtle Dharma taught by the Buddha today. Because I have not truly understood it or comprehended it thoroughly, doubts remain, and I feel considerable self-reproach. This is why it is called still harboring “doubts and regrets.”

“World-Honored One, if all the faculties, sense objects, aggregates, sense bases, and realms in the world are the Tathāgata-garbha, originally pure and inherently so, how do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise? And how do all

conditioned appearances arise in successive flow, ending and then beginning again?”

Above, he said that doubt still remained in his own mind; now he raises his question: “If all the faculties, sense objects, aggregates, sense bases, and realms in the world are the Tathāgata-garbha, originally pure and inherently so.”

Faculties and sense objects are our six sense faculties in relation to the six sense objects. The aggregates are the five aggregates of form, feeling, perception, formations, and consciousness. The twelve sense bases are the six sense faculties plus the six sense objects; these faculties and objects stand in relation, each with its own sphere. The eighteen realms are the six sense faculties, the six sense objects, and the six consciousnesses—a total of eighteen realms.

Suppose that, as you, the World-Honored One, have said, all these faculties, sense objects, aggregates, sense bases, and realms are entirely the nature of the Tathāgata-garbha—originally pure and inherently so, wholly undefiled.

Because it exists from the beginning and is innately complete, it is neither produced by causes and conditions nor spontaneously produced. Then, “how do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise?” If all are originally pure and inherently so, why do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise? From where do they come? “All conditioned appearances” means all appearances that are conditioned—the dharmas produced by a single thought of ignorance are called all conditioned appearances.

The Diamond Sūtra says: “All conditioned dharmas are like dreams, illusions, bubbles, and shadows.” This means that all forms, whether visible or invisible, including abstract things and concepts, are conditioned dharmas, all produced from your deluded thoughts.

“They arise in successive flow, ending and then beginning again.” All these conditioned dharmas revolve within arising, abiding, change, and cessation, and within formation, abiding, decay, and emptiness. They recur in endless cycles. After arising, they cease; after ceasing, they arise again. Thus they cycle unceasingly through arising, abiding, change, and cessation, and through formation, abiding, decay, and emptiness, without end.

What is the principle behind this? The nature of the Tathāgata-garbha is originally pure and inherently so; it should not have arising and cessation. If it is unborn and undying, how can mountains, rivers, and the great earth arise? Because he did not understand this, he raised this doubt. There is another question below:

“Moreover, the Tathāgata has said that earth, water, fire, and wind are in their nature perfectly interfused, pervading the dharma realm, tranquil and ever-abiding. World-Honored One, if the nature of earth pervades everywhere, how can it contain water? If the nature of water pervades everywhere, then fire cannot arise. Furthermore, how can it be explained that the natures of water and fire both pervade empty space without mutually encroaching upon or destroying one another? World-Honored One, the nature of earth is obstructive, while the nature of space is open and unobstructed. How can both pervade the dharma realm, when I do not understand where the meaning of this leads?”

This is the second question. The question just raised was: “How do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise?” Why do all conditioned appearances recur again and again? The present question is this: the Buddha says that the four great elements—earth, water, fire, and wind—are originally perfectly interfused and unobstructed, each containing and pervading the others without hindrance, serenely abiding forever, without change or movement.

If they contain and pervade one another, then “if the nature of earth pervades everywhere, how can it admit water?” If the nature of earth pervades every place, why can it contain water? We know that where there is land, there is no seawater, and where there is ocean, there is no land. Since the nature of earth and the nature of water are mutually incompatible, if the nature of earth pervaded empty space, there should be no water.

“If the nature of water pervades everywhere, fire cannot arise.” Earth overcomes water, and water in turn overcomes fire. If the nature of water pervaded every place, fire should not be able to arise, because water and fire counteract each other. If a fire breaks out somewhere, we can extinguish it by pouring a bucket of water on it. If the nature of water pervaded all empty space and the entire dharma realm, there should be no fire anywhere.

“Again, how can it be said that the natures of water and fire both pervade empty space?” These two things counteract each other. Previously, earth and water were incompatible; here, water and fire are likewise incompatible. Where one is present, the other cannot be present. Two incompatible things should not both pervade the dharma realm.

If the natures of water and fire can both pervade empty space at the same time, they must not encroach upon or extinguish one another. Water should not extinguish fire, nor should fire extinguish water.

Yet in actuality, water and fire have always mutually extinguished and overcome one another. If water is stronger, fire is extinguished; if the heat of fire is greater, water is

boiled dry. They plainly extinguish one another, so I truly do not understand how they can both pervade empty space.

Not only are earth and water, and water and fire, each pairs of opposites; the nature of earth and the nature of emptiness are also opposites. “The nature of earth obstructs, while the nature of emptiness is open and unobstructed. How can both pervade the dharma realm?” For what is open is not solid, and what is solid is not open. If the nature of earth pervades the dharma realm, there should be no nature of emptiness; if the nature of emptiness pervades the dharma realm, there should be no nature of earth.

Fundamentally, they overcome and displace one another. Why then say that these two can both pervade the dharma realm? Since the five great elements—earth, water, fire, wind, and emptiness—are obstructive and mutually incompatible, it truly makes no sense to say that they can simultaneously pervade the dharma realm.

“Yet I do not know where the meaning of this goes.” You means “that to which it returns.” I truly do not understand where this meaning leads: how can the natures of the seven great elements all be universally pervasive and perfectly interfused, without obstructing one another? In fact, he does not understand the principle stated earlier: “The nature of form is true emptiness; the nature of emptiness is true form.”

Since it is said that “the nature of form is true emptiness,” the natures of the five great elements—earth, water, fire, wind, and emptiness—are originally empty; they are not characterized by appearances. What you are now discussing are things with appearances: water with appearance, fire with appearance, and emptiness with appearance. You cling to this emptiness. Emptiness is a dark appearance, and in the final analysis it too is an appearance; but in true emptiness, even a dark appearance cannot be found.

Later it says, “the emptiness that empties is extinguished”: even this emptiness must be extinguished, because having an appearance of emptiness is also incorrect. Thus Pūrṇa is clinging to appearances.

The earth element has the deluded appearance of earth, the fire element the deluded appearance of fire, and the water element the deluded appearance of water. Since all appearances are illusory, you give rise to discriminating thoughts and cling to these false things. Therefore there are obstructions and difficulty, and they cannot contain and pervade one another.

For example, as we said before, the large can contain the small, and the small can contain the large. So long as you completely relinquish appearances, large and small can mutually contain and encompass each other. If you cling to appearances,

however, there will be obstruction. Thus Patriarch Lü Chunyang said when he met Huanglong: “A single grain of millet contains a world; in a half-sheng cauldron, mountains and rivers are cooked.”

How can a single grain of rice contain the world? Go ahead and put it inside for me. “How remarkable I am—I understand this principle.” In fact, he did not truly understand it. He did not know that a single grain of rice can contain not only this world, but also the worlds of the ten directions, because they are all empty in nature and cannot be grasped. So long as you do not cling to appearances, all things are originally without obstruction. Pūrṇa has obstruction only because he clings to appearances.

“I only pray that the Tathāgata will pour forth great compassion, dispel the clouds of confusion for me and for the entire assembly.” Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground, reverently and thirstily awaiting the Tathāgata’s unsurpassed compassionate instruction.

I still have these two questions, which I raise in the hope that you, venerable one, will explain them.

“I only pray that the Tathāgata will pour forth great compassion.” I do not fully understand the principles you have explained, but I know that the Buddha speaks truthfully, speaks what is real, speaks in accordance with things as they are, does not deceive, and does not speak differently. He does not speak nonsense. Therefore, I ask you compassionately to “dispel the clouds of confusion for me and for the entire assembly.” It is not I alone who am confused and do not understand; the members of this assembly do not understand either, nor will sentient beings in the future. Therefore, we ask the Buddha compassionately to give further instruction.

“Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground.” After saying this, he made a full prostration before the Buddha to express his unsurpassed reverence. “Reverently and thirstily awaiting the Tathāgata’s unsurpassed compassionate instruction”: reverence means admiration; like someone desperately thirsty and eager to drink water, he urgently hoped that the Tathāgata would swiftly give unsurpassed compassionate instruction, dispelling the clouds of confusion and enabling us to see the true Way.

“At that time, the World-Honored One said to Pūrṇa and to the arhats in the assembly who had exhausted the outflows and had nothing further to learn: ‘Today the Tathāgata will expound to this assembly the true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning, so that the śrāvakas in this assembly who are fixed in their dispositions, and all arhats who have not attained the twofold emptiness and who turn toward the supreme vehicle, may all attain the ground of quiescence and cessation of the One Vehicle—the true araṇya, the proper place of practice. Listen

carefully now, and I shall explain it for you.' Pūrṇa and the others respectfully received the Buddha's Dharma voice and listened silently."

The World-Honored One indeed did not disappoint everyone's expectations. Seeing them so eager and thirsty to hear the unsurpassed teaching, he therefore "said to Pūrṇa and to the arhats in the assembly who had exhausted the outflows and had nothing further to learn: 'Today the Tathāgata will expound to this assembly the true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning.'"

The Buddha told the assembly: today I shall expound, for Pūrṇa and for the great arhats in the Dharma assembly who have exhausted the outflows and have nothing further to learn, the principle of the true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning.

"Exhausted the outflows and had nothing further to learn": as we explained earlier, exhausted outflows means that they have cut off the delusions of views and thoughts, transcended the three realms, and ended segmented birth and death. Having nothing further to learn means that they fully understand the Four Noble Truths and the twelve links of dependent origination; they have realized the fruits of the śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha paths and need learn nothing further. Therefore, they are called those who have exhausted the outflows and have nothing further to learn.

What, then, is the true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning? "Supreme meaning" is spoken in contrast to worldly dharmas. Worldly dharmas belong to conventional truth and cannot transcend birth and death. Supreme meaning means leaving worldly dharmas and seeking a liberating dharma that is supramundane and transcends birth and death. But because it can enable only oneself to be liberated, it is a teaching of the Lesser Vehicle.

Compared with worldly dharmas, the Lesser Vehicle is already supreme meaning, but it is not yet the supreme vehicle. For the Buddhadharma is divided into three vehicles: the śrāvaka vehicle is the third, the pratyekabuddha vehicle is the second, and the bodhisattva vehicle is the first. "The true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning" refers to this One Vehicle Dharma, also called the supreme vehicle or the Mahāyāna.

The Mahāyāna can not only free you from segmented birth and death, but can also free you from transformational birth and death. It is therefore the true supreme meaning within the supreme meaning. What I teach today is the Mahāyāna, not the Lesser Vehicle. I expound this nature of the true supreme meaning in order to enable the śrāvakas in this assembly who are fixed in their dispositions to understand the principle of the twofold emptiness of self and phenomena, abandon the lesser and turn toward the greater, and enter the unsurpassed One Vehicle.

“The śrāvakas in this assembly who are fixed in their dispositions”: these fixed-disposition śrāvakas rely on emptiness to save themselves. Having heard the teachings of the Lesser Vehicle, they awaken to the partial truth of dharma-nature and attain nirvana without remainder. They then abide there, unwilling to liberate sentient beings, content to seek liberation for themselves alone.

Because their mind-capacity is narrow and they have never made the great vow to liberate sentient beings, they attain liberation through hearing and no longer seek further progress. These are fixed-disposition śrāvakas.

“And all those who have not attained the twofold emptiness”: the twofold emptiness is the emptiness of the personal self and the emptiness of the dharma-self. Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have realized the emptiness of the personal self, but have not realized the emptiness of the dharma-self. Although they no longer have a self, they still posit dharmas. In their view, there is still birth and death to be ended and nirvāṇa to be realized.

Followers of the Lesser Vehicle still retain this view of birth and death. They see sentient beings as being within birth and death, while they themselves have already transcended birth and death and realized nirvāṇa. These are all dharma-views. Because they still have this dharma-view, they can end only segmented birth and death, not transformational birth and death. Thus they are said not to have attained the twofold emptiness. In discussing practice, we first empty the personal self and afterward empty dharmas.

Over the forty-nine years that the Buddha taught the Dharma, he was in fact expounding this principle of the twofold emptiness, telling everyone that both persons and dharmas are empty and cannot be grasped.

“Turn toward the supreme vehicle”: the Śūraṅgama Sūtra teaches the One Vehicle Dharma. The Buddha tells these fixed-disposition śrāvakas: you have not yet awakened to the principle of the twofold emptiness of self and phenomena. Today I shall expound the Mahāyāna for you, enabling you to understand what the twofold emptiness of self and phenomena is, so that you may all abandon the lesser teachings. Do not remain settled in a partial and lesser position; return instead to the path of the Mahāyāna. This is called turning toward the supreme vehicle.

“So that the arhats and the others may all attain the One Vehicle, the ground of quiescence and cessation.” This enables you arhats all to attain the One Vehicle Dharma and truly attain the ground of quiescence and cessation. This ground of quiescence and cessation is the ground of Buddhahood, not the partial nirvāṇic quiescence of the Lesser Vehicle.

We speak of truly realizing the ground of the twofold emptiness, because the twofold emptiness of self and phenomena is the quiescent ground of neither arising nor ceasing. Then one can end transformational birth and death. Thus, the ground of quiescence and cessation of the One Vehicle is the ground of Buddhahood. “The true araṇya, the proper place of practice”: araṇya means a place of purity and quiet; according to the usual explanation, it refers to a monastery.

“True araṇya” is a truly pure place. This truly pure place is nowhere impure and nowhere unclean; it contains no turbidity. The purity we ordinarily speak of exists only in contrast to defilement and noise. Because it is relative, it is not true araṇya.

Some people say that it is good to go into the mountains and forests: “The mountains and forests are so quiet and pure. Cities are no good; they are far too noisy.” This is not true araṇya. True araṇya makes no distinction between purity and impurity. To distinguish purity from impurity is the discriminating mind. Such distinctions show that you are still attached to appearances.

This true araṇya is inherently pure and free from discrimination. Therefore, it is the proper place for cultivation: one cultivates the great Dharma and the true Dharma, not narrow, lesser dharmas. Whether one’s method of practice is correct is of the utmost importance. If the direction of practice is wrong or the method of applying effort is incorrect, one will go astray.

Later, this sūtra speaks of the twelve classes of living beings, among which are the classes of earth, wood, metal, and stone. These may seem unrelated to us, but some are actually transformed practitioners. Such people practice in a deadened way, forcibly suppressing their thoughts until they become like wood or stone.

If our method of practice is wrong, we may become demon kings. Demon kings, too, were once practitioners. They applied effort and thus acquired power and blessings, but because their methods were inappropriate and they became attached to appearances, they entered a deviant path and became demon kings.

Thus, methods of practice are very important. If you are not careful, an attachment to biased emptiness will lead you into the two vehicles; forcibly suppressing thoughts will turn you into earth, wood, metal, or stone. If you practice with attachment to appearances in pursuit of spiritual powers, you will become a demon king.

Take those who practice qigong today. They, too, apply considerable effort. They cultivate the qi within this physical body, guiding it to circulate through the body so as to open the three barriers and the microcosmic and macrocosmic orbits. Gradually, they may even produce a yang spirit.

Even if one develops a yang spirit, without recognizing this true nature or understanding the principle that the nature of form is true emptiness and the nature of emptiness is true form, one remains firmly attached to this embodied form. Thus it is still not ultimate; it is called “still falling into emptiness and oblivion,” and one cannot attain the true fruition.

Therefore, the Dharma gate of practice is very important. Without a correct Dharma gate of practice, it cannot be called the proper path of cultivation. What I wish to tell you today is the true Dharma gate of practice.

“Now listen attentively; I will explain it to you.” You must now listen with complete sincerity, letting go of all deluded thoughts, and I will explain the correct method of practice to you. “Pūrṇa and the others reverently received the Buddha’s Dharma voice.” Pūrṇa and the assembly were as reverent as if receiving an imperial edict. “They silently received and listened.” No one made noise or engaged in idle talk; all quietly listened to the Buddha expound the Dharma.

Practice should begin from one’s true nature. Only by applying effort on the basis of our true nature is it genuine practice. Apart from true nature, however one practices, it is incorrect.

We must always understand what is nature and what is appearance. We must clearly discern all appearances and know that all men and women, young and old, mountains and rivers, the great earth, sun and moon, and stars are produced by the substance of our nature and are the wondrous functioning of our self-nature.

One must see one’s nature through appearances. Having recognized this nature, one should no longer discriminate on the basis of appearances. This is called true practice. Only after seeing one’s nature does one know how to apply genuine effort. Without seeing one’s nature, whatever Dharma one practices is blind cultivation and aimless training.

For if you do not know what nature is or why these appearances manifest, you cannot avoid being led about by appearances. Genuine effort must be realizing the mind and seeing one’s true nature. That is the principle.

The Buddha repeatedly told everyone that the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve places, eighteen realms, and even the seven great elements are all our Tathāgata-garbha nature. He did so in order to make us recognize this original nature and cease attaching to appearances.

Yet people are accustomed to attachment to appearances. Although they may understand something of the principle of nature and appearance, when they encounter circumstances, they still cannot see through them. The moment they

open their mouths, they are attached to appearances. For example, some say, “Oh, my karma is so heavy! My karma has not yet been eliminated!” This is attachment to appearances. Where does this karma come from? It is fundamentally your deluded thoughts.

All conditioned dharmas are unobtainable. There is neither this person called “I,” nor a body, much less material things. So where could this karma arise from? Your attachment to karma comes from refusing to empty these appearances. Because thoughts attached to appearances are too firmly entrenched, you cannot let them go. Thus, at every moment and in every place, you stubbornly insist that there is karma here and karmic obstacles there. Yet this too is a karmic obstacle. In reality, there is fundamentally no karma; there is nothing at all.

We repeatedly say not to cling to karma. Simply respond in accordance with conditions, and all karmic obstacles will naturally vanish. Since conditions have been mentioned, each person’s conditions differ: there are love, hatred, emotional entanglements, and enmities, as well as meetings, partings, and separations. If you take these to be truly existent, karma arises here. This web in which people mutually entangle one another is called karmic affinity.

As long as you accord with conditions in all matters, having no clinging mind in affairs and retaining no affairs within mind, not only are conditions unobtainable, but karma itself is fundamentally unobtainable. If you are attached to nothing, the mind becomes truly empty and pure. It is unstained by a single speck of dust, luminously clear and unobstructed; its numinous light shines alone, far transcending the sense faculties and their objects. Though you do not seek spiritual powers, spiritual powers manifest of themselves.

The reason we are presently unable to bring forth spiritual powers is that ignorance obscures the wondrously bright true mind. Mistakenly taking the five aggregates, six entrances, twelve places, and eighteen realms to be real, we confine the originally unfettered nature-substance, whose wondrous functioning is boundless, within such narrow limits.

We have previously discussed the eighteen realms. All so-called boundaries are produced by our deluded thoughts and attachments; in truth, such boundaries are fundamentally unobtainable.

Once you remove deluded thoughts and dismantle the boundaries, spiritual powers will naturally arise. It is like an endless wilderness, which originally has no boundaries. Only when you erect fences and walls do boundaries of length, breadth, squareness, and roundness arise. If the fences and walls are removed, the boundaries disappear.

Spiritual powers work in the same way. Originally, there is a single bright awareness, complete with all wondrous functions. Obscured by deluded thoughts, it cannot manifest its powers. Once you break through these deluded thoughts, the boundaries that confined it no longer exist. There is no need to seek spiritual powers; they will arise on their own.

Therefore, as long as the mind is empty at all times, spiritual powers will naturally be present. Yet though they are present, there is nothing to abide in and nothing to cling to, because this is how I originally am. These wondrous functions are treasures originally possessed within my own home; they are not acquired from outside. What is there to show off? Formerly, deluded thoughts and attachments covered their light. Now that deluded thoughts have been broken through, the light shines forth anew.

Thus, the wondrous functions did not operate before because one mistakenly took deluded appearances to be real and was obstructed by boundaries. Now, having recognized this original nature, I no longer attach to any appearances, and these boundaries are gone. Next, we must further eliminate our habitual tendencies. Habitual tendencies accumulated through countless lives and kalpas must be eliminated. Therefore, after seeing one's nature, turning back to apply effort is much easier.

After recognizing your original nature, Buddha-recitation is no longer the same as before. Formerly, Buddha-recitation was blind practice: you did not know where the Buddha's name was landing, and recited "Amitābha Buddha" phrase after phrase without knowing what you were reciting.

Some people are attached to merit and virtue: "I must recite the Buddha's name so many times each day, and thus accumulate so much merit and virtue." Others are attached to money: "By reciting Amitābha Buddha, I can avert disasters and be blessed with wealth." All such people have attachments and seek something. In fact, this has nothing to do with it.

After seeing your nature, reciting Amitābha Buddha can sweep away your deluded thoughts, eliminate habitual tendencies, and transform the deluded mind into the Buddha-mind. Then, in walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, you can become continuous and undivided. Only such application of effort is effective; only such application of effort is genuine effort and the proper path of cultivation.

(I) The Continuity of the World

"The Buddha said: 'Pūrṇa, as you have said, if it is originally pure, how do mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise? Have you not often heard the Tathāgata

proclaim: “The awareness of intrinsic nature is wondrously luminous; fundamental awareness is luminous in wondrousness”?’”

The Buddha said to Pūrṇa: “You ask why mountains, rivers, and the great earth suddenly arise from what is originally pure. You have often heard me speak of ‘the awareness of intrinsic nature being wondrously luminous, and fundamental awareness being luminous in wondrousness.’”

What does “the awareness of intrinsic nature is wondrously luminous; fundamental awareness is luminous in wondrousness” mean? “Awareness of intrinsic nature” refers to the awareness within intrinsic nature. The entire substance of intrinsic nature is awareness, and awareness is this substance of intrinsic nature; they are not two different things. As for “wondrously luminous,” it is originally clearly aware of everything, knowing all and lacking no understanding. This luminosity is awareness, and awareness is luminosity.

Although this wondrous luminosity lacks no understanding and knows all, in truth there is nothing it understands and nothing it knows. Since it grasps at nothing and abides nowhere, it is called wondrous. Because this awareness of intrinsic nature can give rise to inexhaustible wondrous functioning, it is called “the awareness of intrinsic nature is wondrously luminous.”

Then what is “fundamental awareness is luminous in wondrousness”? Here, fundamental awareness is deluded awareness. Ignorance means being unaware and failing to awaken. It is because deluded awareness illumines wondrousness that the order is reversed. What is meant by “luminous in wondrousness”? This wondrousness is the wondrous substance, the substance of awareness. One feels that there is a substance of awareness, something that is illuminated by oneself.

At this point, mountains, rivers, and the great earth have not yet arisen. When ignorance stirs deludedly, I remain unmoving here, yet I feel there is some thing; I take the substance of wondrous awareness as an object to be illuminated.

It is like a tape recorder: it can record and play sound. Thus one takes the substance of wondrous awareness to be a tape recorder, an object illuminated by oneself: “I have a tape recorder here; I have spiritual awareness here.”

This is also called “awareness illuminating empty obscurity.” One stubbornly clings to one’s awareness. This is putting a head on top of one’s head: outside awareness there is luminosity, and outside luminosity there is awareness. Awareness and luminosity are separated; then awareness is no longer luminosity, and luminosity is no longer awareness.

Fundamental awareness is the root of delusion. From the awareness that is the root of delusion, one illumines this wondrous substance, taking this substance of awareness as an object of illumination. Thus there is that which illumines and that which is illumined; there is the opposition of subject and object. Where subject and object stand opposed, there are two things. Everything that exists through opposition is illusory and unreal, not truly existent. These two statements are very important; only after understanding them can we proceed further.

In the phrase "the awareness of intrinsic nature is wondrously luminous; fundamental awareness is luminous in wondrousness," the wondrous luminosity of the awareness of intrinsic nature is the awareness of original nature. This wondrous luminosity is aware of all and understands all, yet there is nothing it illumines and nothing it understands. It does not attach to the marks of illumination or non-illumination, understanding or non-understanding; there is no subject and object.

Put differently, "the awareness of intrinsic nature is wondrously luminous" may also be expressed thus: luminosity is awareness, and awareness is luminosity. The following phrase, "fundamental awareness is luminous in wondrousness," means that outside awareness there is luminosity, and outside luminosity there is awareness. Awareness can give rise to luminosity, and luminosity can take awareness as its object of illumination. In this way, luminosity and awareness become two things. The two phrases differ in this respect. Once we understand the meaning here, what follows will be easy to understand.

"Pūrṇa said: 'Yes, World-Honored One, I have often heard the Buddha proclaim this meaning.'"

Pūrṇa said: "Yes, yes, I have often heard you speak of the awareness of intrinsic nature being wondrously luminous and fundamental awareness being luminous in wondrousness." The Buddha then proceeded to question him.

"The Buddha said: 'When you speak of awareness illuminating, do you call intrinsic luminosity "awareness," or do you call awareness that does not illumine "luminous awareness"?'"

Since you say that you have often heard me explain this meaning, let me ask you: when you speak of awareness illuminating, do you call intrinsic luminosity "awareness"? Or do you call that which has nothing to illumine "luminous awareness"? Intrinsic luminosity means that there is something illumined. Do you call having something illumined "awareness," or do you call awareness without illumination "luminous awareness"?

He is being asked here which of these two—having something illumined or having nothing illumined—he considers to be called awareness. Of the two statements

posed to him, neither answer is correct. Having something illumined is deluded awareness; having nothing illumined is lack of awareness, and lack of awareness is ignorance. Neither deluded awareness nor ignorance is right awareness. Because Pūrṇa did not understand this point, and held the same view as ordinary beings, he clung here to the need for something to be illumined. Thus he continued:

"Pūrṇa said: 'If this non-illumination is called awareness, then there would be nothing illumined.'"

Pūrṇa said: "If this non-illumination can be called awareness, then that awareness becomes ignorance. 'Then there would be nothing illumined': it would have no object of illumination. If awareness cannot have something to illumine, it cannot be called awareness." Conversely, this means that there should be something illumined, for only when there is something illumined can there be awareness.

Here Pūrṇa clings in the same way that we ordinary beings do. He believes that what is called awareness should have something to illumine, rather than nothing illumined. If awareness has nothing illumined, it is not awareness. If it is not awareness, then there is no consciousness whatsoever; without consciousness, what awareness or non-awareness could there be? Thus he means that, since it is called awareness, there should be something illumined.

"The Buddha said: 'If there is nothing illumined, there is no luminous awareness. Having an object is not awareness; having no object is not luminosity. Ignorance, moreover, is not the clear and still nature of awareness.'"

The Buddha said to him here: if there is nothing illumined, then of course there is no luminous awareness. But let me tell you: "Having an object is not awareness," because this awareness differs from a physical object. Our consciousness is not something seen, nor is it an external object with form. This awareness is not a thing possessing form.

If awareness has something it illumines, then it becomes a thing, a physical object, an entity. If it is an entity, how can it be called awareness? Thus it is said, "Having an object is not awareness." Since there is an object, it is certainly not awareness.

Because the awareness of consciousness differs from things and is distinct from external things, when you have something illumined and take this awareness as your object of illumination, this awareness has already become a thing. Therefore, it can no longer be called awareness. This is the meaning of "having an object is not awareness."

Then what does "having no object is not luminosity" mean? So-called luminosity is cognition, analysis, and discernment of external things. Therefore, only when there

are things is there luminosity; without things, it cannot be called luminosity. For example, if Zhang San and Li Si are sitting outside, and I know that this is Zhang San and that is Li Si, this luminosity arises because there are objects—Zhang San and Li Si.

If there were no Zhang San or Li Si outside, how could it be called luminosity? What would you be aware of? You could only be aware of emptiness, but empty nothingness cannot be called luminosity. Thus it is said, "Having no object is not luminosity": without an object, it is not luminosity. In this way, both having an object and having no object are incorrect.

You may then say: "I can be aware of ignorance." But if you are aware of ignorance, then "ignorance, moreover, is not the clear and still nature of awareness."

We have said that the stillness in the clear and still nature of awareness means immovability. Our luminous nature is clearly aware and ever-presently knowing. It has no break, is complete in all respects, and can give rise to all dharmas. It is unlike wood or stone, which lack knowledge and awareness.

If you take this ignorance to be awareness, ignorance is utterly dark and contains nothing. Then you are not the clear and still nature of awareness, not the substance of awareness. Thus it is not only wrong to speak of having an object or having no object; it is even more wrong to speak of ignorance.

The denial of having an object, having no object, and ignorance is meant to shatter your deluded thoughts and make you understand that outside awareness there is no luminosity, and outside luminosity there is no awareness. If outside awareness there is luminosity and outside luminosity there is awareness, then subject and object stand opposed. As we have said, when subject and object stand opposed, deluded thoughts begin to stir, and mountains, rivers, and the great earth arise.

You may ask how mountains, rivers, and the great earth arise. The Śūraṅgama Sūtra tells you that they arise in precisely this way. Once your deluded thoughts stir, that single thought of ignorance takes this substance of awareness, this wondrously still substance, as its object of illumination. Because there is a subject and an object, your deluded stirring becomes still more intense. Therefore, this luminosity that has an object is truly the root of deluded luminosity.

People do not understand this principle. They all take quick wits and a clever mind to be good, constantly admiring others: "Ah, this person is truly intelligent; they know everything and learn every kind of knowledge as soon as they study it."

They do not realize that the more clever one is, the worse it is, because the more views and knowledge one has, the more attachments and hindrances one has. This

is worldly intelligence and cleverness; it is all cognitive hindrance, capable of obstructing our path to right awareness.

Because people are all unaware and take this awareness that has an object to be awareness, the old master Zhaozhou said: “This old monk does not dwell in understanding.” Why? Because your awareness that has an object is in fact ignorance and deluded luminosity.

You think yourself exceedingly shrewd, wanting to calculate and scheme over every matter, calculating more astutely than anyone else. Yet you do not realize that these are all the root of birth and death, all deluded thoughts. Thus it is not only ordinary people, nor only first-fruit arhats such as Ānanda, who have not yet exhausted the defilements, who fail to understand this principle. Even great arhats such as Pūrṇa, who have exhausted the defilements and have nothing further to learn, are likewise so: they take luminosity for awareness and take having something illumined to be awareness.

Having something illumined is actually deluded thought and a deluded shadow. Once one takes this shadow as real, mountains, rivers, the great earth, and so forth arise.

“The awareness of intrinsic nature is necessarily luminous; delusion makes it into luminous awareness.”

These two sentences are also very important. Earlier it was explained that what you take hold of is ignorance, not the clear and still nature of awareness. The still substance of the awareness of intrinsic nature is not like wood or stone: it is clearly and ever-presently knowing, without interruption. It has neither a knower nor anything known. Awareness is luminosity, and luminosity is awareness; therefore it is said, “The awareness of intrinsic nature is necessarily luminous.”

The awareness of intrinsic nature does not give rise to luminosity outside awareness, nor to awareness outside luminosity. It is one thing. If you take it as two things, then there is a subject and an object; because there is subject and object, one “deludedly makes it into luminous awareness.”

You suppose that there is an aware subject and that you yourself have attained some realization. This gives rise to the opposition of subject and object. We have said that all relative things are illusory; hence prajñā is without knowing. The essential nature of prajñā has neither a knower nor anything known. Where there is a subject and an object, there is deluded awareness, not true intrinsic awareness.

Why does the Chan school investigate the huatou? It gives you a seemingly meaningless critical phrase and tells you to investigate, “Who is reciting the Buddha’s

name?" This is to eliminate all your deluded thoughts, so that your intrinsic awareness may free itself from them.

Ordinarily, we always have something that we take to be understood. When you quiet down and carefully observe your own mind, there is always something there: all day long you think about what Zhang San is doing and how Li Si is faring. Thus, the Chan school says, "Before the donkey's affair is settled, the horse's affair arrives." It is utter confusion. This is all because there is something that is taken to be understood, and so you think all sorts of chaotic things. Because prajñā is without knowing, there is neither subject nor object. When, through investigating, subject and object both perish, and the sense faculties and their objects suddenly fall apart, the absolute true mind, free of subject and object, will shine forth brilliantly.

The Buddha knows that this is an ignorant and deluded stirring on your part. Because you posit subject and object, it is all deluded thought. When it comes to the true wondrously aware and luminous nature, there is in fact nothing whatsoever that can be said. Not only can the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas of the Lesser Vehicle, and the bodhisattvas of the Mahāyāna, say nothing of it; even the Buddhas of the three times have no point at which to speak.

For as soon as one opens one's mouth, it is no longer it; once one opens one's mouth, subject and object arise. Thus, when the Chan school speaks of the final statement, the ultimate move, one returns silently to the abbot's quarters, because there is truly no way to speak of it. When Layman Fu expounded the Diamond Sūtra, he had barely ascended the Dharma seat before striking the table once with his ruler and immediately descending. Baozhi then said that the Layman had finished expounding the sūtra.

Layman Fu has expounded this Diamond Sūtra for you, and he has already finished, because this wondrously aware and luminous essence cannot be described or expressed in language and writing. "To open one's mouth is already wrong; to frame it in thought is already to go astray." Even sages have no point at which to speak.

But conversely, what we seek is a living Dharma, not a dead Dharma. We must both recognize the intrinsic essence that transcends words and thought and also manifest all kinds of forms and appearances, giving rise to boundless wondrous functioning.

Since we are to give rise to wondrous functioning and manifest all kinds of forms and appearances, why must we first free ourselves from appearances? Because only after freeing ourselves from appearances can we see our intrinsic nature. We must first recognize that intrinsic nature; after recognizing it, we return and give rise to wondrous functioning. Only then can we transcend the two kinds of birth and death: segmented and transformational.

By directly realizing the essence and then giving rise to function, one knows that every worldly thing is this true mind of one's own. The true mind is the dharma realm, and the dharma realm is the true mind. Therefore, "Nothing fails to flow forth from this dharma realm, and nothing fails to return to this dharma realm." All mountains, rivers, and the great earth, all birdsong and floral fragrance, are entirely the dharma realm proclaiming itself; thus, all return to this dharma realm.

If you know only emptiness and not presence, recognizing only the intrinsic essence without giving rise to wondrous functioning, this shows that you still abide somewhere—still confined within the rut of one-sided emptiness. Therefore, Mahāyāna Buddhism actively engages with the world; it does not passively flee from it. If one rigidly clings to emptiness and dares not save sentient beings in the Sahā world of the five turbidities, one is a self-liberating adherent of the Lesser Vehicle, for one has fallen to the side of emptiness and has not realized the nonduality of emptiness and presence.

Once we understand this principle, we understand the relationship between nature and appearances. It is like a mirror and its reflections: a mirror can reflect things, and where there is a mirror, there must be reflections. Without reflections, it would not be a mirror.

Our Buddha-nature of suchness is the same. Because its nature is empty, it can manifest all appearances; because it gives rise to all appearances, its essential nature must be empty. The Buddha-nature of suchness is not only empty, numinous, and still; it can also give rise to myriad wondrous functions. If it could not give rise to and function through the myriad dharmas, it could not be called the Buddha-nature of suchness. This single statement includes essence, appearance, and function at once, just as the Diamond Sūtra says: "What are called buddhadharmas are not buddhadharmas; therefore they are called buddhadharmas."

"Intrinsic awareness must be luminous; delusion makes it into an aware luminosity." This intrinsic awareness is not inert; it is clear, ever-present knowing, and there is nothing it does not illuminate. Here, luminosity is awareness, and awareness is luminosity. If you separate them, positing awareness and luminosity, or making awareness what luminosity illuminates, or luminosity what awareness apprehends, then you are clearly attached to appearances.

"Awareness is not what is illuminated. Because of luminosity, an object is established. Once the object is falsely established, your deluded subject arises."

"Awareness is not what is illuminated." As we have just explained, awareness is the essence of awareness. This essence is not an object of your illumination; it is not the

awareness illuminated by your luminosity. That awareness and luminosity stand in opposition to one another.

Because the essence of awareness is originally not what is illuminated, if you mistakenly take intrinsic awareness to be luminosity, you make your wondrous essence of suchness into what your luminosity illuminates—an object of illumination. This is "because of luminosity, an object is established." Since your luminosity requires an object, its object is what is illuminated. Thus, because of luminosity, an object is established, and luminosity arises outside awareness.

This luminosity is deluded luminosity. Deluded luminosity is what is illuminated. Taking what is illuminated to be awareness, awareness then becomes what is illuminated; therefore it is said that because of luminosity, an object is established.

"Once the object is falsely established, your deluded subject arises." Since there is an object that is illuminated, there is naturally a mind that illuminates it. Where there is the deluded object of an illuminating subject, there is the deluded mind that is illuminated. This opposition between mind and object gives rise to the three subtle characteristics spoken of in Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna: the characteristic of karma, the characteristic of turning, and the characteristic of manifestation.

When our minds stir, luminosity arises outside awareness. This luminosity is ignorance; it is the characteristic of karma. This is how the characteristic of karma arises. After it has arisen, the illuminating subject and the illuminated object emerge. This is the characteristic of turning: it turns toward falsity and runs into the realm of appearances.

We say that originally there were no appearances, no mountains, rivers, or great earth. Yet because of this ignorant and deluded stirring, one imagines that there is an aware subject: "I can sense that those things exist; surely I am aware." In this way, awareness and luminosity become separated and turn into two things. The "three subtleties" discussed in Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna arise, and from subtle appearances coarse appearances arise; thus mountains, rivers, the great earth, and the like become established. Therefore:

"Within what is without sameness or difference, difference blazes forth."

What is meant by "within what is without sameness or difference" is that, before a thought arises, our Buddha-nature of suchness has neither sameness nor difference. In its very essence, it is the One True Dharma Realm, so there is fundamentally no such thing as sameness or difference. Yet because a view of sameness and difference arises within what is without sameness or difference, "difference blazes forth."

What is the view of sameness and difference? It is luminosity outside awareness and awareness outside luminosity. There is an essence of awareness that you take as the object of illumination; thus, within what is without sameness or difference, difference is divided out.

“Blazing forth” means that the stirring becomes still more severe and intense. It is like a fire that, once ignited, burns ever more fiercely. After sameness and difference arise, difference is added upon difference; this is what is meant by difference blazing forth.

Because the stirring grows ever more intense and difference is added upon difference, the great elements of earth, water, fire, and wind successively take shape and manifest appearances. We have just said that the three subtleties are the characteristics of karma, turning, and manifestation. Now these illusory appearances are about to become the characteristic of manifestation.

Once these elemental dispositions arise, discrimination follows. We begin to discriminate: this is one thing, that is another. This is the characteristic of manifestation, and after manifestation comes discrimination. Once you understand this principle, you know that mountains, rivers, and the great earth all arise from deluded stirring. Without deluded stirring, these things would not exist. This is called the empty obscurity of awareness and luminosity.

After awareness has arisen, you crouch within it and look ahead. At this time, although there are no eyes, sense faculties, or sense objects, there is still a thought of wanting to see. For example, when we dream, although we do not feel this physical body, we still feel that we are seeing. This awareness that can see and wants to see has not disappeared.

“Difference from that which is different: because of difference, sameness is established. As sameness and difference become manifest, thereupon non-sameness and non-difference are again established. In such disturbance, mutual dependence gives rise to weariness. When weariness persists, it gives rise to dust; they become mutually obscured. From this arise the afflictions of worldly dust and toil. In motion, they become worlds; in stillness, they become empty space. Empty space is sameness; worlds are difference. This, in which there is neither sameness nor difference, is truly conditioned dharma.”

“The empty obscurity of awareness and luminosity, through mutual dependence, becomes movement; therefore the wheel of wind supports the world. From emptiness movement arises; solidified luminosity establishes obstruction. Those precious substances are solidified by aware luminosity; therefore the wheel of gold holds the lands. When solidity, awareness, and preciousness are formed, moving luminosity produces wind. Wind and gold rub against each other; therefore firelight

arises as the nature of transformation. Precious luminosity produces moisture, and firelight evaporates upward; therefore the wheel of water contains the worlds of the ten directions."

Luminosity outside awareness and awareness outside luminosity constitute deluded awareness. The opposition of subject and object gives rise to movement, and because of movement the elemental dispositions of the five great elements arise. This is the characteristic of manifestation among the three subtleties of ignorance. Illusory movement gives rise to illusory appearances; if the elemental dispositions of the five great elements do not arise, no world can arise.

Conversely, these appearances are true appearances. For ordinary beings who cling everywhere, they are illusory appearances; but Buddhas and bodhisattvas respond to conditions and give rise to wondrous functioning, so they are true appearances. This is the luminosity of the intrinsic essence. Truth and delusion lie in the instant when you turn your thought, not in the objects you encounter. If you cling, this is delusion; if you do not cling, this is truth. This is seeing one's nature. Simply respond to conditions and give rise to function. Both truth and delusion are distinctions made by yourself; they are not in things themselves and have nothing to do with external objects.

"Fire rises and water descends; their interaction gives rise to solidity. Moisture becomes vast oceans, and dryness becomes continents. For this reason, firelight constantly arises within the great oceans, while rivers constantly flow across the continents. Where the force of water is weaker than fire, it congeals into lofty mountains. Therefore, when mountain stones are struck, they produce sparks; when melted, they become water. Where the force of earth is weaker than water, it draws forth grasses and trees. Therefore, forests and groves become earth when burned, and water when twisted."

Here it begins to explain how the various transformations of water and fire give rise to mountains, rivers, the great earth, vegetation, and the myriad things. "Fire rises and water descends": the nature of fire ascends, hence "fire rises"; the nature of water flows downward, hence "water descends." One nature rises, while the other descends.

"Mutual interaction gives rise to firmness": mutual interaction means mutual assistance and support, while giving rise to firmness means producing solid land. Only through the mutual support of water and fire can land exist. On our earth, the moist part is the ocean: "moisture becomes the vast sea." The dry part is land: "dryness becomes continents."

Amid the waters of the four seas, the large landmasses are continents, such as Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. Smaller landmasses include islands of various

sizes, such as Taiwan and Hainan Island. Our world has not only land and seawater, but also fire; land is formed through the interweaving of water and fire. “For this reason, in that great sea, flames constantly arise.”

Because water and fire mutually support one another, flames often arise in the ocean. Do not suppose that there is no fire in the sea; there really is, and it has even been reported in newspapers. “In those continents, rivers constantly flow”: on continents and islands, rivers continually flow.

For example, China has the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and other rivers large and small. The rivers converge and ultimately flow into the sea. Water and fire not only restrain one another; they can also mutually support one another. Thus, there is water within fire and fire within water, enabling the nature of fire to pervade everywhere. Scientists have also investigated why great fires rise from the sea. After investigation, they concluded that they result from eruptions of undersea volcanoes, which spew forth immense flames.

“When the force of water is weaker than fire, it congeals into high mountains.” Because water and fire combine to form earth, if the force of water is less than that of fire—that is, if there is more fire and less water—it rises up to form high mountains. “Therefore, when mountain rocks are struck, they produce flames; when melted, they become water.” When stones are struck against one another, sparks fly out; this is what we call making fire by striking stones.

When stones melt into water, for example, heavy rains may cause mountain torrents, carrying earth and rocks downward in what is called a mudslide. “When the force of earth is weaker than water, it draws forth plants and trees.” If the force of the earth element is weaker than that of the water element—that is, if water is stronger and earth weaker—then plants and trees are drawn forth. Thus, plants and trees arise because water is predominant. “Therefore, when forests and thickets are burned, they become earth”: when plants and trees are burned, they become ash, and ash and dust are earth. “When pressed, they become water”: pressing means squeezing, and when plants and trees are squeezed, they yield water.

All things in this world are formed through mutual support. For example, plants, trees, and forests are formed through the mutual support of water and earth. When burned, they become earth; when pressed, they become water. Without water and earth, there would be no plants or trees. Not only plants and trees, but also continents, rivers, and so forth are formed through mutual support.

Everything in the world, including human beings, is formed through the harmonious combination of the four great elements. The earth consists of earth, water, fire, and wind, and the things upon it likewise consist of earth, water, fire, and wind.

Mountains, forests, and trees could not arise without the harmonious combination of the four great elements.

We are now bound by attachment to dharmas. We see only the superficial appearances of material things and fail to perceive the relationships among the four great elements within them. We suppose that fire is simply fire, water simply water, earth simply earth, and wind simply wind—that they merely restrain and obstruct one another. We do not realize that they actually depend on and complement one another.

Take a forest as an example: it contains not only water and earth, but also fire and wind. We can make fire by drilling wood. It is easy to understand that trees contain fire, but what is the relationship between wind and trees? Wind means cyclical movement and flow. Trees can absorb moisture, drawing water from the ground up into their branches and leaves; this circulation is wind.

Likewise, the breathing within our bodies, as well as the circulations of blood and digestion, are all wind. Moreover, when wind blows upon trees, they sway with it; this too is wind. Thus, all things are formed through the harmonious combination of the four great elements. Because their transformations differ, with one element more abundant and another less so, things undergo countless changes and variations.

“Deluded interactions give rise to one another, each becoming the seed of the other. For this reason, the world continues without end.”

Above, the question Pūrṇa asked about how the world came into being was answered. Here, the question of why the world continues without end is answered. “Deluded interactions give rise to one another, each becoming the seed of the other.” The four great elements were originally produced by deluded thought; then they mutually support one another, and through these illusory movements they bring about such diverse things as mountains, rivers, earth, plants, trees, and forests.

These things become one another’s seeds: each is mutually cause and effect for the others. All these illusory realms arise from illusory movement. As we have just explained, after one clings to and grasps appearances, the mark of karma arises. Once karma exists, there follows the mark of suffering bound to karma.

After creating karma, one must undergo karmic retribution. The causes planted in the past become results in the present; having present results, one again creates causes for the future. Causes and results change without end and never cease. We often say, “If you wish to know the causes of past lives, look at what is received in this life.”

What you did in a past life can be known by looking at your circumstances in this life. If you enjoy blessings in this life, it shows that you cultivated goodness and accumulated virtue in a former life. If you suffer in this life, it shows that you committed evil and created offenses in a former life. “If you wish to know the results of future lives, look at what you do in this life.”

If you wish to know what the future will bring, simply look at how you conduct yourself in this life. As the saying goes, “Plant melons and reap melons; plant beans and reap beans.” Cause and effect are accurate and unfailing in this way. “Deluded interactions give rise to one another” means that causes evoke results, results in turn produce causes, and causes become results again. Causes and results interweave in deluded interaction; thus, “each becomes the seed of the other.”

It is like a turning wheel: what is below can turn to the top, and what is above can turn to the bottom. A cause can become a result, and a result can again become a cause; therefore, each becomes the seed of the other.

Since beginningless kalpas and innumerable lives, the field of our ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) has stored all kinds of seeds. When they encounter conditions, they develop into results; results then become causes and evoke new seeds. This is what it means for each to become the seed of the other: causes and results never cease. The ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) is also called the storehouse consciousness because it has this capacity to contain seeds.

Why can the world continue without end, proceeding from formation, abiding, change, and destruction to formation, abiding, change, and destruction again? It is because of this causal nexus: causes can produce results, and results can produce causes. Like a wheel, it can turn on forever.

Buddhist scriptures speak of the elemental natures of earth, water, fire, and wind. If the element of space is added, there are five great elements. In ancient China, however, people customarily spoke of the five phases—metal, wood, water, fire, and earth—and Daoism likewise speaks of these five phases. When they accord with one another, they generate one another; when they oppose one another, they restrain one another.

The four great elements and the five phases have similarities. Metal among the five phases is included within the earth element of the four great elements. Although the four great elements do not include a wood element, it is still said that wood is formed through the mutual support of water and earth.

Therefore, when some people explain the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, they do so in conjunction with the Chinese five phases of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. This

is not necessarily impermissible. Anything that helps us understand the meaning of the sūtra may be used for that purpose.

For example, during the lifetime of Śākyamuni Buddha, he often drew upon elements of non-Buddhist paths. Many of the Buddha's mantras were offered by adherents of non-Buddhist paths and demon kings. Because such people cling to appearances, these mantras were heterodox teachings in their hands. But the Buddha empties all appearances; whatever he takes up is used in accordance with intrinsic nature. Thus, even a heterodox mantra can become the true Dharma.

A dharma in itself has no distinction between heterodox and orthodox; it depends on who uses it. A mantra offered to the Buddha by a demon king becomes a Buddha-mantra when the Buddha uses it, and can no longer be called a demon-mantra.

When the Buddha taught the Dharma, he always adapted to the habits of sentient beings. The four great elements arose from the ancient Indian understanding of the material origins of things, and their principle is like that of the five phases spoken of by Chinese people; they existed before the Buddha's birth. When Śākyamuni Buddha taught the elemental natures of the four great elements, he was adapting to the capacities of sentient beings. There are many similar cases.

We may use the principles by which the five phases generate and restrain one another to help us understand the Śūraṅgama Sūtra, but we cannot say that the Śūraṅgama Sūtra is itself an exposition of the five phases. If we were to say that the Śūraṅgama Sūtra teaches the generation and restraint of the five phases, followers of the Dharma Characteristics School would raise objections, since Indians do not speak of the five phases; they are a Chinese teaching.

If the Śūraṅgama Sūtra was truly spoken by the Buddha and translated from an Indian text, it should not contain the generation and restraint of the five phases. If you now explain it in terms of the five phases, then it would apparently have been forged by Chinese people. Ever since the Śūraṅgama Sūtra was transmitted to China, voices of doubt and denial have never ceased. There have been quite a number of such people in the Dharma Characteristics School, and many in Japan as well.

(II) The Continuity of Sentient Beings

"Furthermore, Pūrṇa, the illuminating delusion is none other than this: taking illumination for awareness is the fault. Once what is delusory has been established, the principle understood cannot go beyond it. For this reason, hearing does not extend beyond sound, and seeing does not extend beyond form. Form, scent, taste,

and touch—thus the six delusions are brought to completion. From this comes their division into seeing, sensing, hearing, and knowing."

This explains why the six sense faculties cannot function interchangeably. "The illuminating delusion is none other than this: taking illumination for awareness is the fault." This delusion is ignorance. It tells us that this illuminating delusion has no other cause: it is the error of taking illumination for awareness. We take illumination for awareness and separate awareness from illumination, positing awareness outside illumination and illumination outside awareness. Hence, "taking illumination for awareness is the fault."

This ignorance does not come from anywhere else. Because you establish illumination apart from awareness and awareness apart from illumination, this error of illuminating delusion arises. "Once what is delusory has been established, the principle understood cannot go beyond it." You have subject and object: a subject that illumines and an object illuminated, a mind that illumines and a realm that is illuminated. You fix this realm of subject and object.

Once you become attached to this realm, the principle you understand cannot go beyond this range. You think that only the eye can see, that the eye can only see and cannot hear, and that apart from the eyes there is nothing to be seen. Because you cling to the realm of what is seen, this boundary becomes fixed. The functioning of the eye faculty therefore cannot go beyond this range; this is what is meant by "the principle understood cannot go beyond it." The principle you understand is formed through the conjunction of the mind that illumines and the realm illuminated; it cannot go beyond the range of what you understand.

"For this reason, hearing does not extend beyond sound, and seeing does not extend beyond form." For this reason, your ears can only hear sounds; their function cannot extend beyond sound. Your eyes can only see visible forms; their function likewise cannot extend beyond visible forms.

That is, the eyes cannot hear sounds, and the ears cannot see forms. You have separated the functions of the eyes and ears and set boundaries for them; this is deluded awareness. Because there is illumination outside awareness, and because there is an illuminating subject, there is an object illuminated. With faculties and objects confronting one another, a given faculty can apprehend only its corresponding object and cannot apprehend the other objects. Thus the six sense faculties become separated and cannot function interchangeably. "Form, scent, taste, and touch—thus the six delusions are brought to completion." Once the six sense faculties are divided, the six deluded minds arise through the six faculties of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, and mind in relation to the six objects of form, sound, scent, taste, touch, and dharmas.

“From this comes their division into seeing, sensing, hearing, and knowing.” Our Tathāgata-garbha nature is originally a single, pure luminosity. It has no boundaries or obstructions and is an interconnected unity. Once it is divided in this way, boundaries and obstructions arise. Seeing, sensing, hearing, and knowing are our six sense faculties: seeing is the eye faculty, hearing is the ear faculty, sensing refers to the nose, tongue, and body faculties, and knowing is the mind faculty.

Because of your attachment, the single pure luminosity is divided into such boundaries. The functions of the six sense faculties consequently each have their limitations and cannot function interchangeably. We ourselves deludedly give rise to discriminations. Because we cling to this object aspect, there comes this “division into seeing, sensing, hearing, and knowing.”

“Those with the same karma become entwined; union and separation bring about transformation. When seeing illumination, form arises; when illumination sees, thought is formed. Differing perceptions give rise to aversion; corresponding thoughts give rise to love. Flowing love becomes the seed; absorbed thought becomes the embryo. Sexual union brings about development and draws together those with the same karma. Thus, through causes and conditions, kalala, arbuda, and the rest arise.”

Above, it explained how the six sense faculties become divided. Here, it explains how the four modes of birth—womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformational—are formed. We have said that the karma of sentient beings is divided into collective karma and individual karma. The two deluded views of sameness and difference respectively form collective karma and individual karma.

“Those with the same karma become entwined” means that everyone's karma is roughly alike. Sentient beings of the same type thereby become entangled together, forming a shared category from which they cannot be separated. For example, as we often say, devas, humans, asuras, animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings—each of these six realms has its own karma.

Those who cultivate the ten wholesome deeds can be reborn in heaven; according to the degree of their wholesome karma, there are three realms and twenty-eight levels. Those who commit many evils fall below; according to the gravity of the three poisons, there are the three lower realms of animals, hungry ghosts, and hell beings. A mixture of good and evil makes one human, and among humans there are also distinctions of higher, middling, and lower.

Therefore, those whose karma is alike will inevitably become mutually entangled. For example, children come to the same family as their parents because they share the same karma; if their karma differs, they will not dwell under the same roof. “Union and separation bring about transformation” concerns the relationship

between separation and union. Limited interaction is separation; attachment to interaction is union. The transformative workings of heaven and earth differ in many ways, distinguished according to union and separation.

“When seeing illumination, form arises.” Here, illumination means light, and this light is a karmic condition. For example, when someone dies, that person's consciousness has left the former body, while the subsequent body has not yet been formed. The body in between is called the intermediate-state body, commonly known as a ghost.

When this ghost is in the state of the intermediate body and its karmic conditions arise, a bright light shines forth. It sees the parents with whom it has karmic affinity having intercourse. If these conditions have not yet arisen, all is dark and nothing can be seen. This is called “when seeing illumination, form arises.”

This form is the parents engaged in intercourse. Seeing them thus, its mind is stirred, because this is the desire realm, a world of sexual desire. For people in this world to transcend birth and death, they must first resolve this mind of sexual desire. If sexual desire is not removed, one cannot escape the dusts of the world.

Someone may ask: Sexual relations between husband and wife are legitimate; may they be maintained? No, they may not. If you have not resolved this mind of sexual desire, it will remain stored in the field of the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna). Once you reach the state of the intermediate body and encounter such a realm, this mind of sexual desire stirs, and you again enter a womb. Thus birth and death cannot be transcended.

If your mind of sexual desire has truly been entirely extinguished, then even if beautiful sensual forms stand before you, even if sexual intercourse takes place before your eyes, your mind will not be moved. In Esoteric Buddhism there are Joyful Buddhas and paired-deity practices. These are great practices of the Highest Yoga Tantra and may be cultivated only after one has relinquished desire.

But people nowadays are muddleheaded. Understanding nothing, they blindly proceed; casually, they want to cultivate paired-deity practice. Before they have resolved their own minds of sexual desire, they go and practice some paired-deity method—both parties will have a share in hell. One who has truly resolved sexual desire is not moved in the least by such matters. Whatever beautiful forms appear before such a person, they are regarded as if unseen. Only then will it do.

There is a Chan koan about an old woman who burned down a hermitage. The old woman supported a monk for twenty years, sending a young woman every day to bring food to his grass hut.

Later, the old woman thought, “I have supported him for so many years; I should see how well he has cultivated.” So she told the young woman who delivered the food, “Tomorrow, after you have brought him his meal, go up and embrace him, then ask him what he feels.”

The next day, just as the old woman had instructed, the young woman set the food on the ground, embraced the master of the hut, and asked him how he felt. The monk replied, “A withered tree rests against a cold cliff; through the three months of winter, there is no warmth.” It was like a dead tree leaning against a cold rock, without the slightest sensation. What fine practice! Not everyone can remain unmoved when beauty stands before them.

Who would have thought that, upon hearing this report, the old woman instead scolded him: “For twenty years I have only supported a worldly fellow!” She then set fire to his hut. This monk was clinging rigidly to a dharma. When the young woman embraced him, he could remain unmoved; this appears to be good practice, but in fact it is dead practice, and it will not do. If you can truly remain unmoved, you must remain unmoved amid circumstances and attain ease and freedom in accordance with conditions. Only then does it count.

We have previously spoken of the story of Master Baozhi and Lao Guzhui. Emperor Wu of Liang wished to compare the quality of their practice, so he had palace women accompany the two while they bathed. Master Baozhi possessed genuine attainment: he laughed and played with the naked women, yet nothing at all happened. The arhat, however, could initially manage, but after a while could no longer bear it. He closed his eyes, and eventually, utterly unable to restrain himself, hastily rose and fled. Thus, merely suppressing thoughts will not do; only genuine ability of this kind counts.

Because of this “when seeing illumination, form arises,” there come “when illumination sees, thought is formed; differing perceptions give rise to aversion; corresponding thoughts give rise to love.” What does “when illumination sees, thought is formed” mean? It means that, because of your ignorant and deluded perception, upon seeing this appearance your mind is stirred and you wish to join in.

Why does it say that thought is formed? Because the intermediate-state body has no physical body. At that time, it imagines itself to have a body and then rushes forward. “Differing perceptions give rise to aversion; corresponding thoughts give rise to love.”

Why do differing perceptions arise? If it feels itself to be a man, it delights in the woman. Because a man and a woman are having intercourse, it dislikes the man and wants to pull him away. This is called “differing perceptions give rise to aversion.” If it feels itself to be a woman, it will delight in the man and dislike the woman.

It dislikes the person of the same sex as itself, resenting that person for being in the way, and hatred arises in its mind. This is called “differing perceptions give rise to aversion.”

Conversely, this is “corresponding thoughts give rise to love.” If it feels itself to be a man, it delights in the woman; if it feels itself to be a woman, it likewise delights in the man. Man loves woman and woman loves man, hence “corresponding thoughts give rise to love.” Whomever it likes, it goes to embrace, turning its back toward the person it dislikes.

Go and look in an obstetrics department: when boys are born, their faces are turned inward, toward their mothers; when girls are born, their faces are turned outward, with their backs toward their mothers. I have asked several obstetricians, and they said that it is indeed so. Therefore, what the Buddhist scriptures say is all true.

The Buddha possesses the five eyes. Beyond the physical eye, there are also the heavenly eye, the wisdom eye, the dharma eye, and the Buddha eye. He sees with complete clarity how you entered the womb and how the embryo was formed. The intermediate-state body possesses the supernormal power of unhindered movement: whether a thousand or ten thousand miles away, it arrives as soon as a thought stirs. This is how the intermediate-state body is: because it is attracted to the opposite sex, those of the opposite sex share the same thoughts; because it dislikes those of the same sex, those of the same sex hold differing views. Thus it is said, “Differing views give rise to aversion; shared thoughts give rise to love.”

“Flowing love becomes the seed; receiving thought becomes the embryo.” Flowing means the discharge of semen. At this point, the man’s semen is emitted, and he thinks that he himself is engaging in sexual intercourse. “Flowing love becomes the seed” means that the emitted semen becomes the seed for entering the womb. “Receiving thought becomes the embryo” means that he imagines himself having intercourse with the woman and, following the scene he imagines, runs into the woman’s uterus and crouches there; thus an embryonic sac is formed. “When intercourse occurs, it draws in shared karma; therefore, through causes and conditions, kalala, arbuda, and so forth arise.” Thus, embryos are all…

“Womb-born, egg-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born beings arise according to their respective conditions. Egg birth arises solely through thought; womb birth exists because of emotional desire. Moisture birth responds to union; transformation birth responds to separation. Emotion and thought, union and separation, mutually transform and change. The karma they undergo follows their ascent or descent. Through these causes and conditions, sentient beings continue in succession.”

(III) The Continuity of Karmic Results

[Pūrṇa! When thoughts of love become mutually entangled and love cannot be separated, then throughout the worlds, parents, children, and grandchildren continue to be born without end. Such beings take craving for desire as their root.]

[When greed and love nourish one another and greed cannot be stopped, then throughout the worlds, beings born from eggs, transformation, moisture, and wombs devour one another according to the relative strength of their powers. Such beings take greed for killing as their root.]

[When humans eat sheep, sheep die and become humans; when humans die, they become sheep. Thus, even among the ten kinds of beings, they die and are reborn again and again, coming to devour one another. Evil karma arises together with them and continues to the end of future time. Such beings take greed for stealing as their root.]

[You owe me a life; I repay you a debt. Because of these causes and conditions, we remain in birth and death throughout hundreds of thousands of eons.]

[You love my mind; I cherish your form. Because of these causes and conditions, we remain in bondage throughout hundreds of thousands of eons.]

[Only killing, stealing, and sexual desire are the three fundamental roots. Because of these causes and conditions, karmic results continue without interruption.]

[Pūrṇa! These three kinds of inverted continuity all arise because the nature of awakened awareness is made into an object of knowing. Because knowing gives rise to appearances, false views arise. Mountains, rivers, the great earth, and all conditioned appearances successively change and flow. Because of this falsity, they come to an end and begin again.]

Part Two: The Path of Practice

Volume Five

Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, although the Tathāgata has spoken of the gate of the second meaning, when I now observe people in the world who seek to untie their knots, if they do not know the origin of what is knotted, I believe they can never untie them. World-Honored One, I and the śrāvakas still in training in this assembly are likewise so. From beginningless time, we have arisen and ceased together with all ignorance. Though we have gained such wholesome

roots through extensive learning and are known as renunciants, we still suffer like those with an intermittent fever."

"I only pray that your great compassion will pity those drowning in suffering and tell us: What, in body and mind today, is the knot? From what does liberation take its name? May you also enable sentient beings in future times who suffer hardship to escape saṃsāra and not fall into the three realms." Having spoken thus, he and the entire assembly prostrated themselves with their five limbs on the ground. Tears flowed like rain as they raised their sincere hearts and waited for the Tathāgata Buddha's unsurpassed instruction.

Then the World-Honored One, taking pity on Ānanda and on all those in the assembly still in training, and also wishing to provide the cause for liberation from the world and to serve as eyes for all sentient beings of the future, touched the crown of Ānanda's head with his hand, radiant as purple-gold from Jambūnadī. At once, the worlds of the Buddhas throughout the ten directions trembled in six ways. In each world where Tathāgatas as numerous as motes of dust dwelt, a precious light shone forth from their crowns.

At the same time, these lights came from those worlds to Jeta Grove and poured over the crown of the Tathāgata. The entire assembly experienced what they had never before known. Then Ānanda and the whole assembly heard the Tathāgatas throughout the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, speaking with one voice to Ānanda: "Excellent, Ānanda! If you wish to know the root of the knot of co-arisen ignorance that causes you to revolve in birth and death, it is only your six sense faculties and nothing else."

"If you further wish to know unsurpassed bodhi, by which you may swiftly realize peaceful liberation, quiescence, and wondrous permanence, it too is your six sense faculties and nothing else." Although Ānanda heard this Dharma sound, his mind was still unclear. Bowing in reverence, he said to the Buddha, "How is it that the birth-and-death of saṃsāra and peaceful, wondrous permanence both arise from the six sense faculties and from nothing else?" The Buddha told Ānanda, "The sense faculties and sense objects have the same source; bondage and liberation are not two."

"The nature of consciousness is illusory, like flowers in empty space. Ānanda, knowing arises because of sense objects, and appearances exist because of the sense faculties. The object aspect and perceiving aspect have no inherent nature; they are like intertwined reeds. Therefore, Ānanda, when knowing and seeing establish further knowing, this is the root of ignorance. When knowing and seeing are free of seeing, this is the true purity of undefiled nirvāṇa. How could anything

else be admitted within it?” Then the World-Honored One, wishing to restate this meaning, spoke these verses:

The conditioned nature of true suchness,
Arising from conditions, is like an illusion.
The unconditioned neither arises nor ceases;
The unreal is like flowers in empty space.

To speak of the false is to reveal the true;
Yet false and true alike are both false.
Even “not true” and “not not true” are so—
How then can there be seer and seen?

Between them there is no real nature;
Therefore, they are like intertwined reeds.
The knotting and untying share the same cause;
Sages and ordinary beings do not travel two paths.

Look into the nature of the reeds:
Both emptiness and existence are absent.
Deluded obscurity is ignorance;
Illumination brings liberation.

Untie the knots according to their sequence;
When the six are untied, even the one is gone.
Select from the sense faculties that which is perfectly penetrating;
Enter the stream and attain right awakening.

The subtle consciousness called ādhāna,
With habitual tendencies, becomes a violent torrent.
For fear you would mistake the true for the untrue,
I have not often expounded it.

The mind grasps at its own mind,
And what is not illusory becomes illusory dharmas.
If there is no grasping, nothing is not illusory;
When even the nonillusory does not arise,

How can illusory dharmas be established?

This is called the wondrous lotus blossom,
The precious awakening of the Vajra King,
Illusory samādhi;
In the snap of a finger, one transcends the stage of no further learning.

This is the Abhidharma,
The single road and gate of nirvāṇa
For the Bhagavāns of the ten directions.

Then Ānanda and the whole assembly heard the Tathāgata Buddha's unsurpassed compassionate instruction—geya and gāthā, interwoven, refined, and luminous, with wondrous principles clear and penetrating. Their minds and eyes opened in clarity, and they marveled at what they had never before known. Ānanda joined his palms, bowed to the Buddha, and said, "Having now heard the Buddha's all-embracing compassion and these true Dharma words of pure nature and wondrous permanence, my mind still does not understand the sequence by which the six are untied and the one disappears. I pray that you will extend great compassion once more, pity this assembly and those of future times, and bestow the sound of Dharma to wash away their deep-seated defilements."

At once, the Tathāgata, seated upon the lion throne, adjusted his nirvāṇa robe, gathered his saṅghāṭī, leaned upon the table of seven treasures, and extended his hand to take a flowered kerchief offered by the god Kapila. Before the assembly, he tied it into a knot and showed it to Ānanda, saying, "What is this called?" Ānanda and the assembly together replied to the Buddha, "It is called a knot." The Tathāgata then tied the flowered kerchief again, making another knot.

He again asked Ānanda, "What is this called?" Ānanda and the assembly again replied to the Buddha, "This also is called a knot." In this way, he successively tied the flowered kerchief, making six knots in all. Each time a knot was made, he took the knot formed in his hand and asked Ānanda, "What is this called?" Ānanda and the assembly likewise replied in sequence, "It is called a knot."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "When I first tied the kerchief, you called it a knot. This flowered kerchief was originally only one strip. When I made the second and third knots, why did you again call them knots?" Ānanda said to the Buddha, "World-Honored One, this precious flowered fabric, woven into a kerchief, is fundamentally one whole. Yet as I understand it, when the Tathāgata ties it once, it acquires the name of one knot; if it were tied a hundred times, it would ultimately be called a hundred knots."

"How much more so with this kerchief, which has only six knots: it can never become seven, nor can it remain five. Why does the Tathāgata permit only the first to be called a knot, while the second and third are not called knots?" The Buddha told Ānanda, "This precious flowered kerchief, as you know, is originally only one strip; yet when I tied it six times, it came to be called six knots. Examine this carefully: the substance of the kerchief is the same, but because of the knots there are differences."

“What do you think? The first knot formed by tying is called the first; thus, up to the sixth knot. If I now wished to make the sixth knot bear the name of the first, would that be possible?” “No, World-Honored One. So long as the six knots remain, the name of the sixth can never be the first. Even if I exhausted my eloquence throughout successive lives, how could I confuse the names of these six knots?” The Buddha said, “So it is. The six knots differ, yet, tracing them back to their original cause, they are made from one kerchief. To make them indistinguishable could never succeed. Your six sense faculties are likewise so: within their ultimate sameness arise ultimate differences.”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “You surely dislike these six knots and wish them to become one. How can this be accomplished?” Ānanda said, “While these knots remain, disputes over this and that arise of themselves among them: this knot is not that one, and that knot is not this one. If the Tathāgata were now to untie them all, then, once the knots no longer arose, there would be neither this nor that. Even one would no longer have a name; how then could six exist?” The Buddha said, “When the six are untied, the one disappears; it is likewise so.”

“Because from beginningless time the nature of your mind has been frenzied and disordered, deluded knowing and seeing have arisen. As this deluded arising does not cease, wearied seeing generates sense objects. It is like weary eyes, in which wild flowers appear without cause amid the clear, tranquil brightness. All the mountains, rivers, and great earth of the world, as well as birth and death and nirvāṇa, are all inverted appearances arising from this frenzied weariness.”

Ānanda said, “This weariness is like the knots. How are they to be untied?” The Tathāgata took the knotted kerchief in his hand, pulled it toward the left, and asked Ānanda, “Can it be untied in this way?” “No, World-Honored One.” He then pulled it toward the right and again asked Ānanda, “Can it be untied in this way?” “No, World-Honored One.” The Buddha told Ānanda, “Though I pull it to the left and right with my hands, I still cannot untie it.”

“You devise a means: how can it be untied?” Ānanda said to the Buddha, “World-Honored One, it must be untied at the center of the knot; then it will come apart.” The Buddha told Ānanda, “So it is, so it is. If you wish to untie it, you must do so at the center of the knot. Ānanda, when I say that the Buddhadharma arises from causes and conditions, I do not mean the coarse appearances of worldly aggregation. The Tathāgata understands the fundamental causes from which worldly and supramundane dharmas arise, according to the conditions they encounter.”

“Even a drop of rain beyond worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges—I know its number. Before us, the pine is straight, the thorn is curved, the swan is

white, and the crow is black: I fully understand their original causes. Therefore, Ānanda, select from within your mind one of the six sense faculties. If the knot of that faculty is removed, the appearances of sense objects will vanish of themselves. When all delusions are extinguished, what need remains to await the unreal?"

"Ānanda, I now ask you: if the six knots in this Kapila kerchief were untied at the same time, could they all be removed together?" "No, World-Honored One. These knots were originally tied in sequence, and today they must be untied in sequence. Though the six knots share one substance, they were not tied simultaneously; how, then, could they be untied simultaneously?" The Buddha said, "The release of the six sense faculties is likewise so. When one faculty is first released, one first attains the emptiness of the person. When the nature of emptiness becomes complete and clear, one attains liberation from dharmas. Once liberation from dharmas is attained, both are empty and do not arise. This is called a bodhisattva's attainment, from samādhi, of the forbearance of the unborn."

Ānanda and the whole assembly received the Buddha's instruction. Their wisdom and awakening became perfectly penetrating, and all doubt was dispelled. Together, they joined their palms and bowed to the Buddha's feet, saying, "Today our bodies and minds are clear and bright, and we have joyfully attained unobstructed freedom. Although we have understood the principle that the one disappears with the six, we still do not understand the fundamental faculty of perfect penetration."

"World-Honored One, we have drifted alone through accumulated kalpas, orphaned and exposed. By what thought or consideration have we been included among the Buddha's own family? Like an infant deprived of milk who suddenly finds a loving mother, if, through this present encounter, we attain the Way, yet the secret words we receive are no different from our original awakening, then it would be no different from not having heard them. We pray that you will extend great compassion, grant us the secret and sublime teaching, and complete the Tathāgata's final instruction." Having spoken thus, they prostrated themselves with their five limbs on the ground, withdrew and concealed their deepest intent, and hoped that the Buddha would silently impart it to them.

Then the World-Honored One addressed all the great bodhisattvas and great arhats whose outflows had been exhausted in the assembly: "You bodhisattvas and arhats, having been born into my Dharma, have attained the stage of no further learning. I now ask you: when you first aroused the resolve and awakened to the eighteen realms, which was perfectly penetrating for you? By what means did you enter samādhi?"

Then the five bhikṣus led by Ājñāta Kauṇḍinya rose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "When I was in the Deer Park and at the Cock

Garden, I saw the Tathāgata first realize the Way. Through the Buddha's voice, I awakened to and understood the Four Noble Truths. When the Buddha questioned the bhikṣus, I was the first to be called one who understood, and the Tathāgata confirmed me with the name Ājñāta. The wondrous sound is secretly complete; through sound, I attained arhatship. Asked about perfect penetration, according to what I have realized, sound is supreme."

Upaniṣad rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I too observed the Buddha when he first realized the Way. Contemplating the impure appearances, I gave rise to great revulsion and renunciation. I awakened to the nature of all forms: beginning with impurity, white bones, and minute particles, they return to empty space. When both emptiness and form were absent, I attained the path of no further learning. The Tathāgata confirmed me with the name Niṣadha. When the defiled forms had been exhausted, the wondrous form was secretly complete. Through form, I attained arhatship. Asked about perfect penetration, according to what I have realized, form is supreme."

The youth Fragrant Adornment rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "I heard the Tathāgata instruct me to carefully contemplate all conditioned appearances. I then took leave of the Buddha and, in quiet seclusion during pure fasting, saw bhikṣus burning agaru incense. Its fragrance entered my nostrils, serene and still. I contemplated this scent: it was neither wood nor empty space, neither smoke nor fire. In departing, it had nothing to which it clung; in coming, it arose from nowhere. Through this, the mind's discriminations dissolved, and I realized the undefiled. The Tathāgata confirmed me with the name Fragrant Adornment. When the sensory scent suddenly vanished, the wondrous fragrance was secretly complete. Through fragrance, I attained arhatship. Asked about perfect penetration, according to what I have realized, fragrance is supreme."

The two Dharma princes Bhaiṣajyarāja and Bhaiṣajyasamudgata, together with five hundred Brahmā gods in the assembly, rose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "Throughout beginningless kalpas, I have been a skilled physician in the world. I have tasted the grasses, trees, metals, and minerals of this Sahā world; their varieties numbered one hundred and eight thousand."

Having thus known all flavors—bitter, sour, salty, bland, sweet, pungent, and so forth—as well as all their combinations, arising together, and transformations; whether cold or hot, poisonous or nonpoisonous—I was able to know them all completely. I served the Tathāgata and understood that the nature of taste is neither empty nor existent, neither identical with nor separate from body and mind. By discerning the causes of taste, I awakened. The Buddha, the Tathāgata, confirmed for my brother and me the names Medicine King and Medicine Supreme,

the two bodhisattvas. Now, in this assembly, we are sons of the Dharma King. Through the awakening of taste-consciousness, we ascended to the bodhisattva stage. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, taste as the cause is supreme.

Bhadrapāla, together with his sixteen fellow practitioners, rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "Formerly, in the presence of Buddha King of Awesome Sound, we heard the Dharma and left home. While bathing the monks, we entered the bathing room in accordance with the custom and suddenly awakened to the cause of water. It washes away neither dust nor the body, and in between there was peaceful ease; thus I attained nothing whatsoever. My former habit was not forgotten, and now, having left home to follow the Buddha, I attained the state beyond learning. That Buddha named me Bhadrapāla. Through the clear revelation of wondrous touch, I came to abide as a son of the Buddha. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, touch as the cause is supreme."

Mahākāśyapa, together with the bhikṣuṇī Purple-Golden Light and others, rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "In a former kalpa, a Buddha appeared in this world named Sun-Moon-Lamp. I was able to draw near to him, hear the Dharma, and cultivate it. After that Buddha entered parinirvāṇa, I made offerings to his relics, lit lamps to continue his light, and coated the Buddha's images with purple-golden radiance."

Since then, throughout life after life, my body has always been full and perfect, gathering purple-golden radiance. The bhikṣuṇī Purple-Golden Light and the others were my retinue; we aroused the resolve at the same time. I contemplated the decay and destruction of the six sensory objects of the world, and cultivated cessation through empty quiescence alone. Thus body and mind could pass through hundreds of thousands of kalpas as though in the snap of a finger. Through the Dharma of emptiness, I became an arhat. The World-Honored One said that among ascetics I was foremost. The wondrous Dharma opened into clarity, and all outflows were extinguished. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, dharmas as the cause are supreme."

Aniruddha rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "When I first left home, I was always fond of sleep. The Tathāgata reproached me, saying that I was like an animal. Hearing the Buddha's rebuke, I wept and reproached myself. For seven days I did not sleep, and I lost both my eyes. The World-Honored One showed me the vajra samādhi of joyful seeing and illumination. Without relying on my eyes, I saw throughout the ten directions; pure and true, all was utterly clear, as though viewing fruit in the palm of my hand. The Tathāgata

confirmed my attainment of arhatship. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, turning seeing back to its source is supreme."

Cūḍapanthaka rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I lacked the capacity for recitation and retention and had little learning. When I first encountered the Buddha, I heard the Dharma and left home. I tried to memorize a single gāthā of the Tathāgata, but after a hundred days, when I remembered the first part, I forgot the latter; when I remembered the latter, I forgot the first. The Buddha, pitying my stupidity, instructed me during the summer retreat to regulate my inhalation and exhalation."

At that time, I observed the breath in its subtlety to its utmost limit: arising, abiding, changing, and ceasing—the momentariness of all conditioned activities. My mind suddenly opened, and I attained great unobstructed freedom. Eventually all outflows were exhausted, and I became an arhat. Dwelling beneath the Buddha's seat, I was confirmed as one beyond learning. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, turning the breath back and following it to emptiness is supreme."

Gavāṃpati rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I incurred karma of speech. In a past kalpa, I lightly mocked a śramaṇa, and so life after life I suffered from the ailment of chewing like a cow. The Tathāgata showed me the Mind-Ground Dharma Gate of one flavor and purity. I extinguished the mind, entered samādhi, and contemplated the knowing of taste as neither body nor object. In accordance with thought, I transcended all worldly outflows."

Inwardly I was freed from body and mind; outwardly, the world was forgotten. Far removed from the three realms, I was like a bird leaving its cage. Defilements departed and sensory objects vanished; the dharma eye became pure, and I became an arhat. The Tathāgata personally confirmed that I had ascended to the path beyond learning. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, returning taste to its knowing is supreme."

Pilindavatsa rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "When I first aroused the resolve and entered the Way under the Buddha, I often heard the Tathāgata speak of the unpleasurable aspects of all worldly things. While begging for food in the city, I was reflecting on the Dharma gate when, without noticing it, I stepped on a poisonous thorn and injured my foot. My whole body was in pain. I thought: There is a knowing that knows this intense pain. Though awareness is aware of pain, the awareness of the pure mind has no awareness of painful pain."

I further reflected: How could one body have two awarenesses? Not long after gathering in my thoughts, body and mind suddenly became empty. Within twenty-

one days, all outflows were utterly exhausted. I became an arhat, received personal confirmation, and realized the state beyond learning. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, pure awareness abandoning the body is supreme."

Subhūti rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "Throughout vast kalpas, my mind has been unobstructed. I recall taking birth as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. While still in my mother's womb, I knew empty quiescence. Thus, until the ten directions became empty, I also enabled sentient beings to realize emptiness. The Tathāgata revealed to me the true emptiness of intrinsic awakening. The nature of emptiness became perfectly clear, and I attained arhatship. I suddenly entered the Tathāgata's precious, luminous ocean of emptiness, sharing the Buddha's knowledge and vision, and was confirmed as one beyond learning. In liberation through the emptiness of nature, I am unsurpassed. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, all appearances enter nonappearance; when even that which is not is exhausted, one turns dharmas back and returns to nothingness. This is supreme."

Śāriputra rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "Throughout vast kalpas, the vision of my mind has been pure. I have taken birth as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Amid all the various changes in the world and beyond the world, I understood upon seeing, and attained unobstructed freedom. While on the road, I encountered the brothers Kāśyapa, who were following one another and expounding dependent origination. I awakened to the boundlessness of mind and left home to follow the Buddha. Seeing and awareness became bright and complete; I attained great fearlessness and became an arhat. I am the Buddha's eldest son, born from the Buddha's mouth and transformed through the Dharma. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, the vision of mind emits light, and when that light reaches its utmost, there is knowledge and vision. This is supreme."

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I have formerly been a son of the Dharma King for Tathāgatas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. The Tathāgatas of the ten directions teach their disciples who are bodhisattvas to cultivate the practices of Samantabhadra, which are named after me. World-Honored One, I use the hearing of mind to distinguish all the knowledge and views of sentient beings."

"If, in another land beyond worlds as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, a single sentient being brings forth in the mind the practices of Samantabhadra, then I mount a six-tusked elephant and manifest hundreds of thousands of bodies, all arriving at that person's place. Even if that person's karmic obstructions are deep and they cannot see me, I touch their crown in secret, protect and comfort them,

and enable them to attain accomplishment. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I stated my original cause: the hearing of mind becomes clear, and discernment is free and at ease. This is supreme."

Sundarananda rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "When I first left home and entered the Way under the Buddha, although I fully observed the precepts, my mind was constantly scattered and restless in samādhi, and I had not attained freedom from outflows. The World-Honored One instructed Kūṣṭhila and me to contemplate the whiteness at the tip of the nose."

At first, I examined it closely. After twenty-one days, I saw the breath entering and leaving my nostrils like smoke. Body and mind became inwardly bright, and the world was completely penetrated, pervasively empty and pure, like crystal. The appearance of smoke gradually vanished, and the nasal breath became white. My mind opened, outflows were exhausted, and all inhalations and exhalations transformed into light, illuminating the worlds of the ten directions. I attained arhatship. The World-Honored One predicted that I would attain bodhi. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I said that by dissolving the breath, and as the breath was long dissolved, illumination arose; when illumination became complete, outflows were extinguished. This is supreme."

Pūrṇamaitrāyaṇīputra rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "Throughout vast kalpas, my eloquence has been unobstructed. I have expounded suffering and emptiness and deeply comprehended the true reality. Thus, regarding the secret Dharma gates of Tathāgatas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, I have given subtle expositions among the assemblies and attained fearlessness. The World-Honored One knew that I possessed great eloquence and taught me to proclaim it through the wheel of sound. Before the Buddha, I assisted him in turning the wheel of Dharma. Through the lion's roar, I became an arhat. The World-Honored One confirmed that in expounding the Dharma I was unsurpassed. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, I use the sound of the Dharma to subdue Māra and his foes and extinguish all outflows. This is supreme."

Upāli rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I personally followed the Buddha when he left the city and renounced home. I personally witnessed the Tathāgata's six years of arduous practice, saw the Tathāgata subdue all māras, regulate all non-Buddhist paths, and become free from the worldly outflows of greed and desire."

Receiving the Buddha's instruction in the precepts, I mastered, down to the three thousand dignified deportments and eighty thousand subtle observances, all karmic precepts and prohibitive precepts in complete purity. Body and mind became

quiescent and extinct, and I attained arhatship. Among the Tathāgata's assembly, I maintain its discipline. He personally confirmed my mind. In observing the precepts and cultivating the body, the assembly considers me unsurpassed. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I said: by holding to the body, the body attained freedom; then, step by step, by holding to the mind, the mind attained penetration; afterward, body and mind became wholly free and unhindered. This is supreme."

Mahāmaudgalyāyana rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "When I was first begging for food on the road, I encountered the three Kāśyapa brothers—Uruvilvā, Gayā, and Nadī. They expounded the Tathāgata's profound meaning of dependent origination, and I suddenly aroused the resolve and attained great penetration. The Tathāgata bestowed on me a robe to wear, and my beard and hair fell away of themselves."

"I traveled throughout the ten directions without hindrance. My spiritual powers became manifest, and I was considered foremost. I became an arhat. Not only did the World-Honored One praise my spiritual power; the Tathāgatas of the ten directions also praised it as perfectly bright, pure, free, and fearless. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, as I have realized it, by turning back to quiescence, the light of mind shines forth. Like muddy water settling, in time it becomes clear and pure. This is supreme."

Ucchuṣma, before the Tathāgata, joined his palms, bowed at the Buddha's two feet, and said to the Buddha: "I recall that in a distant kalpa my nature was much given to lust. A Buddha appeared in the world named King of Emptiness, who said that people of excessive lust become a mass of raging fire. He taught me to contemplate throughout the hundred bones and four limbs all currents of cold and warmth. Spiritual light gathered inwardly and transformed my lustful mind into the fire of wisdom. From then on, all Buddhas called me Fire-Head."

"By the power of the fire-light samādhi, I became an arhat. My mind brought forth a great vow: whenever the Buddhas attain the Way, I shall be a strong guardian, personally subduing Māra and his foes. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I said: by closely contemplating the warm sensation of body and mind, unobstructed circulation arises; when all outflows are extinguished, a great precious flame arises, and one ascends to unsurpassed awakening. This is supreme."

Earth-Holding Bodhisattva rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I recall that in the past, when Tathāgata Universal Light appeared in the world, I was a bhikṣu. At all major roads, ferry crossings, fields, and dangerous narrow places, wherever something was not in proper order and obstructed or harmed carts and horses, I leveled and filled it in. At times I built bridges; at times I

carried sand and earth. I labored in this way through the appearance in the world of innumerable Buddhas."

"Whenever sentient beings in marketplaces needed someone to carry their goods, I would carry them first, bring them to their destination, set down the goods, and depart without accepting payment. When Buddha Viśvabhū was in the world, there was widespread famine. I carried people on my back, asking neither distance nor destination, and accepted only one coin. If carts or oxen became trapped in mud, I used my spiritual power to push the wheels and relieve their suffering."

"When the king of that country invited the Buddha and made offerings of food, I leveled the ground in preparation for the Buddha. Tathāgata Viśvabhū touched the crown of my head and said to me: 'When you level the mind-ground, all the ground of the world becomes level.' My mind immediately opened. I saw that the motes of dust composing my body were no different from the motes of dust comprising all worlds. The intrinsic nature of dust motes does not touch or rub against one another; even swords and weapons cannot touch them. I awakened to the patience with the non-arising of dharmas and became an arhat."

Turning my mind, I have now entered the bodhisattva stage. Hearing the Tathāgatas proclaim the wondrous lotus, I had already realized the ground of the Buddha's knowledge and vision and became a leading member of the assembly. When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I said: by closely contemplating that the two dust motes of body and world are equally without distinction, I realized that they are originally the Tathāgata's treasury, yet falsely give rise to dust. When the dust is extinguished, wisdom becomes complete, and one attains the unsurpassed Way. This is supreme."

The Youth Moonlight then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I recall that, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha appeared in the world named Water-Deva. He taught the bodhisattvas to cultivate contemplation of water and enter samādhi. I contemplated the water within the body and saw that its nature does not contend or displace itself: beginning with tears and saliva, I examined to the utmost the fluids, essence, blood, urine, and excrement. As these circulate and return within the body, their nature as water is all one."

"I saw that the water within my body was no different from the fragrant-water seas in the Buddha lands of King Floating Banner beyond this world. At that time, I had just accomplished this contemplation: I saw only water and had not yet realized the absence of body. While I was a bhikshu, sitting in meditation in my room, one of my disciples peered through the window into the room and saw only clear water filling it; he could see nothing else."

“The child, being ignorant, picked up a tile and threw it into the water, making a splashing sound, then looked about and left. After I emerged from samādhi, I suddenly felt pain in my heart, as when Śāriputra was harmed by a deviant spirit. I reflected: ‘I have now attained arhatship and have long been free of conditions for illness. Why has pain in my heart suddenly arisen today? Could I be regressing?’ At that time, the child quickly came before me and told me what had happened.”

“I immediately told him, ‘When you see the water again, open the door at once, enter the water, and remove the tile.’ The child obeyed. Later, when I entered samādhi, I again saw the water and the tile plainly visible. He opened the door and removed it. When I later emerged from samādhi, my body was as before. I encountered innumerable Buddhas, and thus continued until the Tathāgata King of Sovereign Penetration of Mountains and Seas. Only then did I attain the disappearance of body, and the nature of the fragrant-water seas throughout the ten directions merged with true emptiness, without duality or distinction. I have now received from the Tathāgata the name ‘Youth,’ and have joined the assembly of bodhisattvas. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration: through the single, pervading flavor of water-nature, I attained the patience with the unborn, fulfilled bodhi, and this is foremost.”

The Dharma Prince Vaidūrya Light then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha’s feet, and said to the Buddha: “I recall that, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha appeared in the world named Immeasurable Sound. He revealed to the bodhisattvas the wondrous luminosity of original enlightenment: contemplate this world and the bodies of sentient beings, all of which are false conditions set in motion by the force of wind.”

“At that time, I contemplated the establishment of worlds, the movement of time, the movement and stillness of the body, and the stirring of thoughts in the mind. These various movements were not two; they were equal and without distinction. I then realized that the nature of this multitude of movements comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. Deluded sentient beings throughout the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, share the same falsity.”

“Thus, throughout the three-thousand great-thousand world system, all sentient beings in a single world are like a hundred mosquitoes and gnats contained in one vessel, buzzing and crying in confusion, stirring up mad turmoil within the space of an inch. Not long after encountering that Buddha, I attained the patience with the unborn. Then my mind opened, and I beheld the land of Akṣobhya Buddha in the east. I became a Dharma Prince, served the Buddhas of the ten directions, and my body and mind emitted light, penetrating everywhere without obstruction. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration: by observing that the force of wind has no

basis, I awakened to the bodhi mind, entered samādhi, united with the Buddhas of the ten directions, and transmitted the one wondrous mind. This is foremost."

Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "Together with the Tathāgata, in the presence of Dīpaṃkara Buddha, I attained the boundless body. At that time, holding in my hands four great precious jewels, I illuminated Buddha lands throughout the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, transforming them into emptiness. Moreover, within my own mind appeared a great round mirror, from within which shone ten kinds of subtle, wondrous precious light, flowing forth to fill the ten directions to the furthest reaches of empty space."

"The lands of all the Banner Kings entered into the mirror and passed into my body. My body was like empty space, without mutual obstruction. My body could readily enter lands as small as motes of dust and extensively perform the Buddha's work, thereby attaining great adaptability. This great spiritual power came from my careful contemplation that the four great elements have no basis, that false thoughts arise and cease, that they are not different from empty space, and that Buddha lands are originally the same. By discerning this sameness, I attained the patience with the unborn. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration: by contemplating the boundlessness of empty space, I entered samādhi, and wondrous power became complete and bright. This is foremost."

Maitreya Bodhisattva then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I recall that, as many kalpas ago as motes of dust, a Buddha appeared in the world named Sun-Moon-Lamp Bright. I left home under that Buddha. My mind placed great importance on worldly reputation, and I delighted in associating with eminent families. At that time, the World-Honored One taught me to cultivate the samādhi of Consciousness-Only and enter samādhi."

"Throughout kalpas, I served Buddhas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges through this samādhi, and my mind that sought worldly reputation ceased and vanished. When Dīpaṃkara Buddha appeared in the world, I then attained the unsurpassed, wondrous, perfect samādhi of consciousness. Throughout the Tathāgata lands filling empty space, whether pure or defiled, existent or nonexistent, all are manifestations transformed by my mind. World-Honored One, because I understood Consciousness-Only in this way, the nature of consciousness emanated innumerable Tathāgatas. I have now received the prophecy that I shall next fill the Buddha's place. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration: by carefully contemplating that the ten directions are Consciousness-Only, the mind of consciousness became perfectly bright; I entered the nature of absolute reality and perfection, far removed from dependence on others and pervasive discrimination and attachment, and attained the patience with the unborn. This is foremost."

Mahāsthāmaprāpta, Dharma Prince, together with fifty-two bodhisattvas of his company, then rose from their seats, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "I recall that, as many kalpas ago as there are sands in the Ganges, a Buddha appeared in the world named Immeasurable Light. Twelve Tathāgatas succeeded one another during a single kalpa. The last of these Buddhas was named Light Transcending Sun and Moon. That Buddha taught me the Buddha-remembrance samādhi."

"It is like two people: one is intent on remembering, while the other is intent on forgetting. Though the two may meet, they do not truly meet; though they may see one another, they do not truly see. But if the two remember one another, and their mindfulness of each other grows deep, then from life to life they will be like form and shadow, never estranged from one another."

"The Tathāgatas of the ten directions cherish sentient beings as a mother remembers her child. If the child runs away, what use is the mother's remembrance? But if the child remembers the mother as the mother remembers the child, then throughout life after life, mother and child will not be separated by distance. If the minds of sentient beings remember the Buddha and are mindful of the Buddha, then they will certainly see the Buddha, whether now or in future lives. They are not far from the Buddha; without relying on expedient means, their minds naturally open. Like one who is permeated by incense and whose body carries its fragrance, this is called adornment with fragrant light."

"At the causal stage, I entered the patience with the unborn through the mind of Buddha-remembrance. Now, in this world, I gather in those who remember the Buddha and bring them to the Pure Land. The Buddha asks about perfect penetration: I made no selection, gathered in the six sense faculties, maintained uninterrupted pure mindfulness, attained samādhi, and this is foremost."

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At that time, Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara rose from his seat, prostrated at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: "World-Honored One, I recall that in ages past, as numerous as the sands of countless Ganges Rivers, a Buddha appeared in the world named Avalokiteśvara. Before that Buddha I aroused bodhicitta. That Buddha taught me to enter samādhi through hearing, contemplation, and cultivation. At first, in hearing, I entered the stream and the object was lost. Once the object entered was stilled, the two characteristics of movement and stillness clearly did not arise."

"Thus I gradually advanced: hearing and its object were exhausted; when hearing was exhausted, I did not abide in that state. Awareness and its object became

empty; the emptiness of awareness became utterly complete; the object of emptiness was extinguished. When arising and ceasing were extinguished, quiescent extinction appeared before me. Suddenly I transcended both worldly and supramundane realms, and the ten directions became perfectly bright. I attained two supreme excellences: first, I united above with the fundamentally wondrous enlightened mind of all Buddhas in the ten directions, sharing with all Tathāgatas the same power of compassion."

"Second, I united below with all sentient beings in the six realms of the ten directions, sharing with all sentient beings the same compassionate aspiration. World-Honored One, because I made offerings to the Tathāgata Avalokiteśvara, I received from that Tathāgata the Vajra Samādhi of illusory hearing, permeation through hearing, and cultivation through hearing. Because I shared the same compassionate power as the Buddhas and Tathāgatas, I was enabled to manifest thirty-two responsive forms and enter all lands."

"World-Honored One, when bodhisattvas enter samādhi, advance in undefiled cultivation, and their superior understanding becomes perfectly complete, I manifest the body of a Buddha before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain liberation. When practitioners still in training have perfected quiescent, wondrous luminosity and their supreme wonder becomes complete, I manifest the body of a pratyekabuddha before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain liberation. When practitioners still in training have cut off the twelve links of dependent origination, and when the cessation of conditions brings their superior nature and supreme wonder to completion,"

"I manifest the body of a pratyekabuddha before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain liberation. When practitioners still in training realize the emptiness of the Four Noble Truths, cultivate the path, enter extinction, and their superior nature becomes complete, I manifest the body of a śrāvaka before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain liberation."

"When sentient beings wish to awaken their minds, remain unstained by the defilements of desire, and purify the body of desire, I manifest the body of Brahmā before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain liberation. When sentient beings wish to become lord of the devas and rule over the hosts of heaven, I manifest the body of Indra before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings wish for mastery of their bodies and to travel throughout the ten directions,"

"I manifest the body of Īśvara before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings wish for mastery of their bodies and to fly through empty space, I manifest the body of Maheśvara before them and

teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in commanding ghosts and spirits and protecting their lands, I manifest the body of a great celestial general before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When sentient beings delight in ruling worlds and protecting living beings, I manifest the body of one of the Four Heavenly Kings before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in being born in heavenly palaces and commanding ghosts and spirits, I manifest the body of a prince in the realm of the Four Heavenly Kings before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When sentient beings delight in becoming human kings, I manifest the body of a human king before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in leading clans and being respected and deferred to by the world, I manifest the body of an elder before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in discussing names and terms and maintaining their own purity,"

"I manifest the body of a lay practitioner before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in governing lands and adjudicating provinces and cities, I manifest the body of a high official before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When sentient beings delight in various arts of calculation and in preserving and protecting themselves, I manifest the body of a brahmin before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When men delight in studying to leave home and uphold all the precepts, I manifest the body of a bhikshu before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When women delight in studying to leave home and uphold all the prohibitions, I manifest the body of a bhikshuni before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When men delight in upholding the five precepts, I manifest the body of an upāsaka before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When women abide by the five precepts, I manifest the body of an upāsikā before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When women establish themselves through domestic affairs and cultivate their households and states, I manifest before them the bodies of queens, royal consorts, noble ladies, and great women of families, and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When sentient beings do not wish to damage their male faculties, I manifest the body of a youth before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain

accomplishment. When maidens delight in preserving their virginity and do not seek violation, I manifest the body of a maiden before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When devas delight in leaving the celestial order, I manifest a deva body and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When dragons delight in leaving the dragon order, I manifest a dragon body and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When yakṣas delight in crossing beyond their own order, I manifest a yakṣa body before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When gandharvas delight in escaping their own order,"

"I manifest a gandharva body before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When asuras delight in escaping their own order, I manifest an asura body before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When kinnaras delight in escaping their own order, I manifest a kinnara body before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When mahoragas delight in escaping their own order, I manifest a mahoraga body before them and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"When sentient beings delight in being human and cultivating as humans, I manifest a human body and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment. When nonhuman beings, whether embodied or disembodied, whether perceptive or nonperceptive, delight in escaping their own order, I manifest bodies identical to theirs before them all and teach the Dharma, enabling them to attain accomplishment."

"These are called the wondrously pure thirty-two responsive bodies that enter lands. All are freely accomplished through the effortless wondrous power of samādhi, permeation through hearing, and cultivation through hearing."

"World-Honored One, moreover, through the effortless wondrous power of the Vajra Samādhi of permeation through hearing and cultivation through hearing, and because I share the same compassionate aspiration as all sentient beings in the six realms throughout the ten directions and the three times, I enable sentient beings to obtain fourteen kinds of fearless merit through my body and mind."

"First, because I do not myself contemplate sound, but contemplate the one who contemplates, sentient beings suffering in the ten directions may contemplate their cries and immediately attain liberation. Second, because perception and awareness turn back to their source, sentient beings who enter a great fire cannot be burned by it. Third, because contemplation and hearing turn back to their source, sentient beings carried away by great waters cannot drown."

“Fourth, because deluded thoughts are cut off and extinguished and the mind harbors no intention to kill, sentient beings who enter the realms of ghosts cannot be harmed by ghosts. Fifth, because permeation through hearing becomes hearing, the six sense faculties dissolve and return, becoming one with hearing; this enables sentient beings who are about to be harmed to have the blades of knives break into pieces, while weapons become like cutting water or blowing upon light, their nature remaining unmoved.”

“Sixth, because permeation through hearing becomes pure luminosity and that luminosity pervades the dharma realm, all darkness cannot remain complete. This enables sentient beings, even when yakṣas, rākṣasas, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, pūtanas, and other such beings are near them, to remain unseen by their eyes. Seventh, because the nature of sound is completely dissolved and contemplation and hearing return inward, one is free from all defiled objects; this enables sentient beings to remain untouched by confinement, shackles, and chains. Eighth, because sound is extinguished and hearing becomes complete, compassionate power pervades everywhere. This enables sentient beings traveling dangerous roads to remain beyond the reach of bandits.”

“Ninth, because permeation through hearing is free from sense objects and forms cannot plunder them, this enables all sentient beings greatly given to lust to remain far from craving and desire. Tenth, because sound is utterly pure and free of sense objects, and faculties and objects perfectly interpenetrate, without an object opposed to a subject, this enables all sentient beings filled with anger and hatred to be free from all resentment.”

“Eleventh, because sense objects dissolve and luminosity returns, body and mind in the dharma realm become like crystal, clear, penetrating, and unobstructed. This enables all icchantikas obscured by dullness and ignorance to be forever free from the darkness of delusion. Twelfth, because form dissolves and hearing returns, while remaining unmoved in the place of practice I enter the world without destroying the world. I can pervade the ten directions, make offerings to Buddhas and Tathāgatas as numerous as motes of dust, and become a Dharma prince beside each and every Buddha.”

“This enables childless sentient beings throughout the dharma realm who seek sons to give birth to sons endowed with blessings, virtue, and wisdom. Thirteenth, because the six sense faculties are perfectly penetrating and luminosity shines without duality, encompassing the realms of the ten directions and establishing the great perfect mirror, the empty treasury of the Tathāgata, I receive and uphold without loss the secret Dharma gates of Tathāgatas as numerous as motes of dust in the ten directions. This enables childless sentient beings throughout the dharma

realm who seek daughters to give birth to daughters who are graceful, blessed, gentle, compliant, beloved and respected by all, and endowed with fine features."

"Fourteenth, in this three-thousand great-thousand world-system, among the Dharma princes now dwelling in the world, there are sixty-two times as many as the sands of the Ganges River. They cultivate the Dharma as exemplars and teach and transform sentient beings, adapting to sentient beings with skillful means and wisdom, each in a different way. Because I have attained the fundamental faculty of perfect penetration, beginning with the wondrous ear faculty, my body and mind subtly embrace and pervade the dharma realm. This enables sentient beings who uphold my name to obtain merit equal in every respect to that of those who uphold the names of all sixty-two times as many Dharma princes as the sands of the Ganges River. World-Honored One, my single name is no different from those many names, because through my cultivation I have attained true perfect penetration."

"These are called the fourteen powers of bestowing fearlessness, which endow sentient beings with complete blessings."

"World-Honored One, having further attained this perfect penetration and cultivated and realized the unsurpassed path, I have also obtained four inconceivable effortless wondrous virtues. First, when I first attained the supremely wondrous hearing-mind, the essence of mind left hearing behind; seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing could no longer be separated, and became a single perfectly interpenetrating, pure, precious awareness. Therefore, I can manifest many wondrous forms and speak boundless secret spiritual mantras."

"Among these, I may manifest one head, three heads, five heads, seven heads, nine heads, or eleven heads; thus up to one hundred and eight heads, a thousand heads, ten thousand heads, and eighty-four thousand śakra heads."

"Two arms, four arms, six arms, eight arms, ten arms, twelve arms, fourteen, sixteen, eighteen, twenty, and up to twenty-four arms; thus up to one hundred and eight arms, a thousand arms, ten thousand arms, and eighty-four thousand mudrā arms. Two eyes, three eyes, four eyes, nine eyes; thus up to one hundred and eight eyes, a thousand eyes, ten thousand eyes, and eighty-four thousand pure precious eyes. At times compassionate, at times majestic; at times in samādhi, at times in wisdom, I protect and aid sentient beings, and attain great freedom."

"Second, through my hearing and contemplation, I am freed from the six sense objects. Like sound passing through a wall, they cannot obstruct me. Therefore, I am wondrously able to manifest each and every form and recite each and every mantra. These forms and mantras can bestow fearlessness upon sentient beings. Thus, throughout lands in the ten directions as numerous as motes of dust, all call me the Bestower of Fearlessness."

“Third, because I cultivate the fundamentally wondrous perfect penetration and purify the fundamental faculty, wherever I travel, I cause sentient beings to relinquish their bodies and precious treasures and seek my compassion.”

“Fourth, I have attained the Buddha-mind and realized the ultimate. I can offer various precious treasures to the Tathāgatas of the ten directions and extend these offerings to sentient beings in the six realms of the dharma realm. Those who seek wives obtain wives; those who seek sons obtain sons; those who seek samādhi obtain samādhi; those who seek long life obtain long life; and so on, up to those who seek great nirvāṇa obtaining great nirvāṇa.”

When the Buddha asked about perfect penetration, I entered samādhi through the faculty of hearing, turned hearing back to hear my own nature, and attained perfect penetration. From the arising of the current, I attained samādhi and realized bodhi; this is foremost. World-Honored One, that Tathāgata praised my excellent attainment of the Dharma gate of perfect penetration and, before the great assembly, conferred upon me the name Avalokiteśvara. Because I contemplate the perfectly luminous hearing of the ten directions, the name Avalokiteśvara is known throughout the realms of the ten directions.

At that time, from his lion throne, the World-Honored One emitted precious light simultaneously from the five parts of his body. It shone afar upon the crowns of the Tathāgatas as numerous as motes of dust in the ten directions, and upon the Dharma princes, the bodhisattvas. Those Tathāgatas likewise emitted precious light simultaneously from the five parts of their bodies, which came from the dust-mote realms to shine upon the crown of the Buddha and upon the great bodhisattvas and arhats in the assembly. Forests, trees, ponds, and marshes all proclaimed the sound of the Dharma. The lights interwove like a net of precious silk.

The entire assembly attained what they had never known before, and all universally attained vajra samādhi. At once, a hundred jeweled lotuses rained down from the heavens, intermingled in blue, yellow, red, and white. The space of the ten directions became the color of the seven treasures. The earth, mountains, and rivers of this Sahā world all vanished at once. Only the dust-mote lands of the ten directions were seen united as one realm, while Brahmā chants and hymns arose and resounded spontaneously.

Then the Tathāgata said to Mañjuśrī, Dharma Prince: “Now observe these twenty-five great bodhisattvas and arhats who are beyond learning. Each has explained the initial expedient by which he realized the Way, and all have said that they cultivated genuine perfect penetration. In their practice, there is truly no distinction of superiority, inferiority, priority, or posteriority. I now wish to enable Ānanda to awaken. Which of the twenty-five methods accords with his faculties? And after my

passing, for sentient beings in this realm who enter the bodhisattva vehicle and seek the unsurpassed Way, through which expedient Dharma gate may they most easily attain accomplishment?”

Mañjuśrī, the Dharma Prince, reverently received the Buddha’s compassionate command. He then rose from his seat, bowed his head at the Buddha’s feet, and, sustained by the Buddha’s awe-inspiring spiritual power, addressed the Buddha in verse.

The nature of the ocean of awakening is clear and perfect;
Perfectly clear, its source of awakening is wondrous.
From the original luminosity that illumines, subject and object arise;
Once what is illumined is established, the nature of illumination is lost.

From deluded falsity comes empty space;
Relying on empty space, worlds are established.
When thought settles and congeals, lands are formed;
When awareness knows, sentient beings arise.

Empty space arises within great awakening,
Like a single bubble arising in the sea.
The dust-mote lands with outflows
All arise in reliance upon empty space.

When the bubble vanishes, empty space itself is originally nonexistent;
How much less, then, are the three realms.

Returning to the source, the nature is not dual;
Yet there are many gates of expedient means.
The nature of the noble ones is penetrable through every gate;
Both favorable and adverse means are expedient.

For beginners entering samādhi,
Their speed of attainment is not the same.

Forms and thoughts bind together as dust;
Pure awareness cannot penetrate them.
How could that which is not fully clear
Thereby attain perfect penetration?

Sounds and speech are mixed and varied,
Yet they consist only of names, phrases, and meanings.
One does not contain all;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Fragrance is known only through contact;
Apart from contact, it originally does not exist.
What is perceived is not constant;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

The nature of taste is not inherent;
It exists only when there is tasting.
Its awareness is neither constant nor unified;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Touch is known through what is touched;
Without an object, touch is not known.
Its nature in contact and separation is not fixed;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Dharmas are called internal objects;
Relying on objects, there must be something apprehended.
Subject and object do not extend everywhere;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Although the nature of seeing may be all-pervading,
It sees what is before it but not what is behind.
The four directions leave half unperceived;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

The breath enters and exits through the nose,
Yet before one there is no interchange of breath.
Its divisions do not extend within;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

The tongue does not enter without cause;
Awareness arises because of taste.
When taste ceases, awareness is gone;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

The body and what it touches are alike;
Neither is a perfectly awakened contemplation.
Their limits and measures do not merge;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

The faculty of knowing is mixed with confused thoughts;
Though clear in awareness, it ultimately has no seeing.
It cannot escape thoughts and notions;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Consciousness and perception are mixed with the three conditions;
When its source is examined, it is said to lack form.
Its own substance is first of all unfixed;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Hearing with the mind penetrates the ten directions,
But it arises through great causal power.
Beginners cannot enter it;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Contemplating the nose was originally an expedient device,
Intended only to gather in the mind and make it abide.
When abiding becomes that in which the mind abides,
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Expounding the Dharma plays with sounds and words,
Awakening those already accomplished.
Names and phrases are not without outflows;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Observing and violating precepts only restrain the body;
Without the body, there is nothing to restrain.
They originally do not extend to all;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

Spiritual powers arise from past causes;
What do they have to do with discriminating dharmas?
The objects of thought are not apart from things;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of earth,
Its solidity and obstruction are not penetration.
What is conditioned is not the noble nature;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of water,
Thoughts and notions are not reality.
Suchness is not contemplative awareness;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of fire,
Aversion to existence is not true relinquishment.
It is not an expedient for beginners;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of wind,
Motion and stillness are not without opposites.
Opposition is not supreme awakening;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of empty space,
Dull obscurity is first of all not awareness.
What lacks awareness differs from bodhi;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

If one contemplates the nature of consciousness,
The consciousness observed is not permanent.
To preserve the mind is itself delusion;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

All conditioned activities are impermanent;
The nature of thoughts is originally arising and ceasing.
Causes and effects now yield differing results;
How could this attain perfect penetration?

I now declare before the World-Honored One:
The Buddha appeared in the Sahā world;
In this land, the true essence of teaching
Is purity through sound and hearing.

To attain samādhi,
One truly enters through hearing.

To be freed from suffering and attain liberation—
Excellent indeed is Avalokiteśvara!

Throughout kalpas as countless as the sands of the Ganges,
He entered Buddha lands as numerous as dust motes,
Gained the great power of sovereign mastery,
And bestowed fearlessness upon sentient beings.

Wondrous Sound, Avalokiteśvara;
Brahmā sound, sound of the ocean tide.
He brings peace and security to all who dwell in the world,
And those who transcend the world attain eternal abiding.

I now address the Tathāgata,
In accordance with what Avalokiteśvara has said.

For example, when a person dwells quietly,
Drums are struck throughout the ten directions;
Their sounds from ten places are heard at once.
This is perfect and true.

The eye cannot see beyond obstructions,
And the mouth and nose are likewise so.
The body knows only through contact,
While thoughts of the mind are scattered and disordered.

Through a wall, one hears sounds;
Whether near or far, all can be heard.
The five faculties are not equal in this.
This is penetration and truth.

The nature of sound is motion and stillness;
In hearing, these are called presence and absence.
When there is no sound, it is called no hearing,
But hearing itself does not truly lack a nature.

When sound is absent, hearing does not cease;
When sound is present, hearing does not arise.
Arising and ceasing are both utterly transcended;
This is constant and true.

Even in dreams,
It does not vanish because one does not think.
Awareness and contemplation transcend thought;
Body and mind cannot reach them.

In this Sahā land,
The doctrine of sound is clearly proclaimed.

Sentient beings are deluded about their fundamental hearing;
Following sounds, they therefore wander in saṃsāra.

Though Ānanda's memory is powerful,
He cannot avoid falling into mistaken thought.
Is it not because he follows that in which he sinks?
Turn back the current, and one attains freedom from falsity.

Ānanda, listen carefully.

Relying on the Buddha's majestic power,
I proclaim the Vajra King,

The true samādhi, illusory and inconceivable,
The mother of all Buddhas.

You have heard of Buddhas as numerous as dust motes
And all their secret Dharma gates.
If the outflow of desire is not first removed,
Accumulating learning becomes an error.

You would retain the words of Buddha after Buddha through hearing;
Why not use your own hearing to hear hearing itself?

Hearing does not arise of itself;
It receives its name because of sound.
Turn hearing back, and it is freed from sound.
When the faculty that can be freed is gone, what name remains?

When one faculty has returned to its source,
The six faculties become liberated.
Seeing and hearing are like illusory cataracts;
The three realms are like flowers in empty space.

When hearing returns, the cataract of the faculty is removed;
When the sense objects vanish, awakening is perfectly pure.
At the utmost purity, the light penetrates everywhere;
Still illumination contains empty space.

Turn back and view the world:
It is like events in a dream.
Mātaṅgī was in a dream;
Who could retain your physical form?

It is like a skilled magician in the world
Who conjures men and women.
Though the faculties are seen to move,
They are all controlled by a single mechanism.

When the mechanism stops, they return to stillness;
All illusions lose their nature.
The six faculties are likewise.

Originally, they rely upon one pure luminosity
That divides into six combinations.
When one faculty returns to rest at its source,
The functions of all six are no longer operative.

The dust and defilements vanish in a single thought,
And perfect luminosity, purity, and wonder are realized.

Remaining dust is for those still in training;
When luminosity reaches its utmost, one is a Tathāgata.

Great assembly and Ānanda,
Turn back your inverted faculty of hearing.
Hear your own nature by turning hearing back;
When the nature is realized, the unsurpassed Way is attained.

Perfect penetration is truly thus.
This is the single gate to nirvāṇa
Of Buddhas as numerous as dust motes.

The Tathāgatas of the past
Achieved realization through this gate.
The bodhisattvas of the present
Each now enter perfect luminosity.

Those who cultivate and study in the future
Should rely upon this Dharma.

I too realized through it,
Not Avalokiteśvara alone.

Just as the Buddha, the World-Honored One,
Has sincerely asked me about the expedient means
For rescuing those in the final kalpas
Who seek to transcend the world.

For accomplishing the mind of nirvāṇa,
Avalokiteśvara is foremost.

All other expedient means
Rely upon the Buddha's majestic spiritual power
To relinquish worldly toil in response to circumstances.

They are not methods of constant cultivation;
Their shallowness and depth are taught alike.

I bow to the Tathāgata-garbha,
Immaculate and inconceivable.
May you bestow blessings upon future generations,
That they may not be confused about this gate.

This expedient is easy to accomplish
And is suitable for teaching Ānanda
And those sinking in the final kalpas.

Cultivate only through this faculty;
Its perfect penetration surpasses all others.
Such is the true mind.

Then Ānanda and the entire assembly became clear in body and mind and received a great revelation. They beheld the Buddha's bodhi and great nirvāṇa as one who, having traveled far on business and not yet returned home, clearly recognizes the road leading back to his house. Among the entire assembly—the devas, dragons, and eight classes of beings; the learners of the two vehicles; and all the bodhisattvas who had newly aroused the resolve—numbering ten times the sands of the Ganges, all realized their fundamental mind, became remote from dust and free of defilement, and attained the purity of the dharma eye. After hearing the verses, Bhikṣuṇī Prakṛti attained arhatship. Countless sentient beings all aroused the unsurpassed, unequaled mind of complete and perfect awakening.

Ānanda adjusted his robes and, amid the great assembly, joined his palms and bowed in homage. His mind and its traces were perfectly clear; sorrow and joy mingled within him. Wishing to benefit sentient beings of the future, he bowed his head and said to the Buddha: "Greatly Compassionate World-Honored One, I have now awakened to the Dharma gate for attaining Buddhahood. In cultivating it, I have no doubt. I have often heard the Tathāgata say: 'One who, before having crossed over oneself, first seeks to ferry others across has aroused the bodhisattva resolve; one whose own awakening is complete and who can awaken others manifests in the world as a Tathāgata.'"

"Although I have not yet crossed over, I vow to ferry across all sentient beings in the final kalpas. World-Honored One, as these sentient beings grow ever more distant from the Buddha, teachers of false doctrines become as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. If they wish to gather in their minds and enter samādhi, how may they establish a bodhimaṇḍa, remain far from demonic influences, and prevent their bodhicitta from retreating or faltering?" At that time, in the midst of the great assembly, the World-Honored One praised Ānanda: "Excellent, excellent! You have asked, as you have, about establishing a bodhimaṇḍa in order to rescue and protect sentient beings sinking in the final kalpas. Listen carefully now, and I shall explain it to you." Ānanda and the assembly replied, "Yes," and respectfully received the instruction.

The Buddha said to Ānanda: "You have often heard me expound in the Vinaya the three decisive instructions for cultivation: gathering in the mind is precept; from

precept arises samādhi; from samādhi wisdom emerges. These are called the three undefiled trainings. Ānanda, how is gathering in the mind what I call precept?”

“If the beings of the six realms in all worlds have no lustful thoughts, they will not follow the continuity of birth and death. In cultivating samādhi, your fundamental aim is to escape the defilements of the world. If the lustful mind is not eliminated, you cannot escape those defilements. Even if you possess great wisdom and meditative absorption manifests before you, if you do not eliminate lust, you will certainly fall into the path of māras: those of the highest grade become māra kings, those of the middle grade become māra subjects, and those of the lowest grade become māra women. These māras also have their followers, and each claims to have attained the unsurpassed Way.”

“After my parinirvāṇa, in the Dharma-ending age, many such māra subjects will flourish in the world. They will extensively practice lust and greed while posing as good spiritual friends, causing sentient beings to fall into the pit of attachment and views and lose the path to bodhi. When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, first eliminate lustful thoughts. This is the first decisive, pure, and clear instruction of the Tathāgata and the World-Honored Ones of the past.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, if one cultivates dhyāna while failing to eliminate lust, it is like steaming sand and stones in the hope of making rice. Even after hundreds of thousands of eons, they can only be called hot sand. Why? Because sand and stones are not the basis of rice. If, with a lustful body, you seek the wondrous fruition of Buddhahood, then even should you attain wondrous awakening, it will all be rooted in lust. When the root is lust, one will revolve in the three lower realms and certainly cannot escape. By what path, then, can one realize the Tathāgata’s nirvāṇa? You must cause the impulse of lust in both body and mind to be completely cut off, until even the nature of cutting off is absent. Only then may you hope for the Buddha’s bodhi. What I say here is called the Buddha’s teaching; any other teaching is that of Pāpīyān.”

“Ānanda, further, if the beings of the six realms in all worlds have no thought of killing, they will not follow the continuity of birth and death. In cultivating samādhi, your fundamental aim is to escape the defilements of the world. If the mind of killing is not eliminated, you cannot escape those defilements. Even if you possess great wisdom and meditative absorption manifests before you, if you do not eliminate killing, you will certainly fall into the realm of spirits: those of the highest grade become powerful ghosts; those of the middle grade become flying yakṣas, ghost commanders, and the like; and those of the lowest grade become earthbound rākṣasas. These ghosts and spirits also have their followers, and each claims to have attained the unsurpassed Way.”

“After my parinirvāṇa, in the Dharma-ending age, many such ghosts and spirits will flourish in the world, claiming that eating meat leads to the path of bodhi. Ānanda, I permitted bhikṣus to eat the five kinds of pure meat. This meat was all magically created through my spiritual power and originally had no life faculty. In the land of the Brahmins, much of the ground is hot and damp, and sand and stones abound, so that grasses and vegetables do not grow. Through the power of my great compassion, I provisionally called it meat, and you obtained its flavor.”

“How, then, after the Tathāgata’s parinirvāṇa, can those who eat the flesh of sentient beings be called disciples of Śākyamuni? You should know that people who eat meat, even if their minds open and they appear to attain samādhi, are all great rākṣasas. When their karmic retribution ends, they will certainly sink into the bitter ocean of birth and death; they are not disciples of the Buddha. Such people kill one another, devour one another, and eat one another without end. How can such people escape the three realms? When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, next eliminate killing. This is the second decisive, pure, and clear instruction of the Tathāgata and the World-Honored Ones of the past.”

“Therefore, Ānanda, if one cultivates dhyāna while failing to eliminate killing, it is like someone plugging his own ears and shouting loudly, hoping that others will not hear him. This is called trying to hide something while making it all the more conspicuous. Pure bhikṣus and all bodhisattvas, when walking along a path, do not tread on living grass, much less pull it up with their hands. How can there be great compassion where one takes the blood and flesh of sentient beings to fill one’s stomach?”

“If bhikṣus do not wear silk, floss silk, or brocade from the East, nor the boots, shoes, furs, woolens, milk, curds, and clarified butter of this land, such bhikṣus are truly liberated from the world. Having repaid their past debts, they no longer wander in the three realms. Why? When one wears or uses parts of their bodies, one becomes bound to them by karmic conditions. It is like a person who eats the hundred grains that grow from the earth: his feet cannot leave the ground. One must ensure that, in both body and mind, one neither wears nor eats anything that is the body or bodily part of any sentient being. I call such a person truly liberated. What I say here is called the Buddha’s teaching; any other teaching is that of Pāpīyān.”

“Ānanda, further, if the beings of the six realms in all worlds have no thought of stealing, they will not follow the continuity of birth and death. In cultivating samādhi, your fundamental aim is to escape the defilements of the world. If the mind of stealing is not eliminated, you cannot escape those defilements. Even if you possess great wisdom and meditative absorption manifests before you, if you do not eliminate stealing, you will certainly fall into deviant paths: those of the highest grade become essence spirits, those of the middle grade become goblins and demons, and those of the lowest grade become deviant people possessed by

ghosts. These groups of deviant beings also have their followers, and each claims to have attained the unsurpassed Way."

"After my parinirvāṇa, in the Dharma-ending age, many such demons and deviant beings will flourish in the world. Concealing themselves in deceit and fraud, they will call themselves good spiritual friends. Each will claim to have attained the dharmas of superior persons, dazzling and deluding the ignorant, lest they lose their minds. Wherever they go, households are depleted and ruined. I teach bhikṣus to beg for food in due order, so that they may relinquish greed and accomplish the path to bodhi."

"Bhikṣus do not cook food for themselves. They entrust themselves to their remaining life, lodging temporarily in the three realms and demonstrating a single journey of coming and going; once gone, they do not return. How can thieves borrow my robes, trade in the Tathāgata, create all kinds of karma, and yet call it all Buddhadharma? Such people are not monastics who have left home and uphold the precepts; rather, they are followers of the Lesser Vehicle. In this way they lead countless sentient beings into doubt and error, causing them to fall into the Avīci Hell."

"After my passing, if there are bhikṣus who resolve firmly to cultivate samādhi and who, before an image of the Tathāgata, burn a lamp upon their bodies, burn a finger joint, or burn a stick of incense upon their bodies, I say that such people repay in a single moment their debts from beginningless lives. They bid farewell to the world and forever escape all outflows. Although they may not yet clearly understand the path to unsurpassed awakening, they have already formed a resolute mind in the Dharma."

"If they do not make this slight cause of relinquishing the body, then even if they attain the unconditioned, they must return to human birth to repay their past debts, no different from my own retribution of horse-feed. When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, afterward eliminate stealing. This is the third decisive, pure, and clear instruction of the Tathāgata and the World-Honored Ones of the past."

"Therefore, Ānanda, if one cultivates dhyāna while failing to eliminate stealing, it is like someone pouring water into a leaking vessel and hoping to fill it. Even after dust-like eons, it will never be full. If bhikṣus keep not even a fraction beyond their robes and bowls, and give the remainder of their almsfood to hungry sentient beings; if, at great assemblies, they join their palms and bow to everyone; if, when others strike or revile them, they regard it as the same as praise—"

"—if they truly relinquish both body and mind, sharing their flesh, bones, and blood with sentient beings; and if they do not turn the Tathāgata's provisional teachings

into their own interpretations and thereby mislead beginners, then the Buddha certifies that such people attain true samādhi. What I say here is called the Buddha's teaching; any other teaching is that of Pāpīyān."

"Ānanda, among the sentient beings of the six realms in such worlds, even if their bodies and minds are free of killing, stealing, and lust, and these three practices have been perfected, should they commit great false speech, their samādhi will not be pure. They will become demons of attachment and views and lose the seed of the Tathāgata. That is to say, they claim attainment when they have not attained, and claim realization when they have not realized."

"Or, seeking to be honored as foremost in the world, they tell others: 'I have now attained the fruition of a srotāpanna, the fruition of a sakadāgāmin, the fruition of an anāgāmin, the path of an arhat, the vehicle of a pratyekabuddha, the ten bhūmis, or the various stages of bodhisattvas before the bhūmis.' They seek people's reverence and repentance, greedy for their offerings. Such people are icchantikas, extinguishing the seed of Buddhahood, like a person cutting down a tāla tree with a knife. The Buddha predicts that such people will forever destroy their wholesome roots, have no further right view, sink into the three bitter seas, and fail to attain samādhi."

"After my parinirvāṇa, I command all bodhisattvas and arhats to manifest in that Dharma-ending age, taking various forms to liberate those who revolve in rebirth. They may become śramaṇas, white-robed lay practitioners, kings, ministers, boys, or girls, and even prostitutes, widows, adulterers, thieves, butchers, or merchants. Working alongside such people, they praise the Buddha Vehicle and guide their bodies and minds into samādhi."

"Yet they never say, 'I am truly a bodhisattva' or 'I am truly an arhat,' thereby disclosing the Buddha's secret causal ground and casually speaking of it to later students. Only at the end of life may they secretly leave such an instruction. How can people who confuse and delude sentient beings commit such great false speech? When you teach people of the world to cultivate samādhi, afterward eliminate all great false speech. This is the fourth decisive, pure, and clear instruction of the Tathāgata and the World-Honored Ones of the past."

"Therefore, Ānanda, if one does not eliminate great false speech, it is like carving human excrement into the shape of sandalwood and seeking its fragrance; this can never be. I teach bhikṣus that a straightforward mind is the place of practice. In all conduct within the four deportments, there should not even be falsehood. How, then, can one claim to have attained the dharmas of superior persons? It is like a poor person falsely proclaiming himself emperor and thereby inviting execution."

“How much more so in the case of the Dharma King—how can one falsely steal such a title? If the causal ground is not true, the fruition will be twisted. To seek the Buddha’s bodhi in this way is like a person trying to bite his own navel: whom could he bring to accomplishment? If bhikṣus have minds like a straight bowstring, wholly truthful, and enter samādhi, they will forever be free of māra-obstacles. I certify that such people accomplish the bodhisattva’s unsurpassed knowledge and awakening. What I say here is called the Buddha’s teaching; any other teaching is that of Pāpīyān.”

Part Three: Section on Realizing the Way

Volume Seven

Ānanda, you asked about gathering in the mind. I shall now first explain the wondrous gateway for cultivating and entering samādhi. Those who seek the bodhisattva path must first uphold these four rules of conduct, pure and bright as ice and frost. Then they naturally cannot give rise to any branches or leaves [of defilement]; the three karmas of mind and the four karmas of speech will necessarily have no cause for arising.

Ānanda, if these four matters are not neglected, and the mind no longer pursues forms, smells, tastes, or touch, how could any demonic disturbances arise? If past habitual tendencies cannot be eradicated, instruct such a person to recite single-mindedly my unsurpassed divine mantra of the Buddha’s crown of light, the Mahāpratisarā. This is the divine mantra spoken by the Tathāgata, the mind-Buddha of non-contrivance, who emits radiance from the crown and sits upon a jeweled lotus.

The karmic affinity between you and Mātaṅgī extends through kalpas of past lives; the habitual tendencies of affection and desire are not confined to a single lifetime or a single kalpa. When I proclaimed this mantra once, her loving mind was forever freed, and she became an arhat. Though she was a prostitute and had no intention of cultivation, she secretly received the aid of its spiritual power and swiftly realized the state beyond learning. How much more so you śrāvakas assembled here, who seek the supreme vehicle and are certain to become Buddhas? It is like raising dust into a favorable wind—what hardship could there be?

If, in the Dharma-ending age, anyone wishes to establish a place of practice, they must first uphold the pure prohibitions of a bhikshu. They should choose a foremost śramaṇa whose precepts are pure as their teacher. If they do not encounter a truly

pure monastic, their observance of the precepts will certainly not be accomplished. Once the precepts have been fulfilled, put on new, clean garments, burn incense, and dwell quietly. Recite this divine mantra spoken by the mind-Buddha one hundred and eight times. Then demarcate the boundaries and establish the place of practice.

Pray that the unsurpassed Tathāgatas abiding in the lands of the ten directions emit great light of compassion to empower the crown of one's head. Ānanda, if pure bhikshus, bhikshunīs, or white-robed lay donors in the Dharma-ending age extinguish greedy desire, uphold the Buddha's pure precepts, make bodhisattva vows at the place of practice, bathe upon entering and leaving it, and practice the Way during the six periods of the day, then, without sleeping, they should continue in this way for three periods of seven days. I shall personally appear before them, touch their crowns, comfort them, and enable them to awaken.

Ānanda bowed to the Buddha and said: "World-Honored One, through the Tathāgata's unsurpassed compassionate instruction, my mind has now awakened. I know for myself that my cultivation and realization have accomplished the path beyond learning. When practitioners in the Dharma-ending age establish a place of practice, how should they demarcate its boundaries so as to accord with the pure ritual procedures of the Buddha, the World-Honored One?"

The Buddha told Ānanda: "If people in the Dharma-ending age wish to establish a place of practice, they must first obtain a powerful white bull from the Snow Mountains, which feeds on the rich, fragrant grasses of those mountains. This bull drinks only the pure water of the Snow Mountains, and its dung is fine. Take this dung, mix it with sandalwood, and use it to plaster the ground. If it is not from the Snow Mountains, the bull's dung will be foul and impure and unsuitable for plastering the ground."

"Elsewhere, on level ground, dig down five feet beneath the surface soil and take the yellow earth. Mix it with sandalwood, aloeswood, benzoin, frankincense, turmeric, white gum resin, bluewood, lingling incense, spikenard, and clove incense. Grind these ten substances into fine powder, combine them with the earth to make mud, and plaster the ground of the site. Make it sixteen feet across, round or square, as an octagonal altar."

"At the center of the altar place a lotus made of gold, silver, bronze, or wood. Put a bowl in the lotus, first filling it with dew gathered in the eighth month, and then placing whatever flowers and leaves are available in the water. Take eight round mirrors and place one in each direction around the flower bowl. Outside the mirrors, arrange sixteen lotuses and sixteen incense burners alternately among the

flowers. Adorn the incense burners, burning only aloeswood, without allowing flames to be seen."

"Take the milk of a white bull and place it in sixteen vessels, making milk cakes; also prepare sugar, oil cakes, milk gruel, benzoin, honeyed ginger, pure ghee, and pure honey. Set out sixteen of each beyond the lotuses, surrounding them, as offerings to the Buddhas and great bodhisattvas. At every mealtime, or at midnight, take half a sheng of honey and three he of ghee. Set a small fire burner separately before the altar. Boil dulūpo incense to make fragrant water, sprinkle it over the coals, and make the fire blaze fiercely. Cast the ghee and honey into the flaming burner, burn them until the smoke is exhausted, and offer them to the Buddhas and bodhisattvas."

"Hang banners and flowers all around its exterior. Within the altar chamber, arrange images of the Tathāgatas of the ten directions and of all the bodhisattvas upon the four walls. On the wall facing the sun, display images of Vairocana, Śākyamuni, Maitreya, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, and the great transformation forms of Avalokiteśvara; place Vajragarbha to their left and right."

"Place Indra, Brahmā, Ucchuṣma, Lāṇḍika, the various Kuṇḍalīs, Bhṛkuṭī, the Four Heavenly Kings, Vināyaka, and Yekā at the sides of the door, arranged to the left and right."

"Take another eight mirrors and suspend them upside down in the air, facing the mirrors installed within the altar site, so that their images and reflections interpenetrate layer upon layer."

"During the first seven days, sincerely prostrate to the names of the Tathāgatas of the ten directions, the great bodhisattvas, and the arhats. During each of the six periods of the day, recite the mantra while circling the altar, practice the Way with utmost sincerity, and perform one hundred and eight circuits each time. During the second seven days, devote yourself exclusively to making bodhisattva vows, without interruption of mind; my Vinaya already teaches the vows. During the third seven days, throughout the twelve periods, exclusively uphold the Buddha's Pratītya mantra. On the seventh day, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions will all appear at the place where the mirrors' lights intersect and, receiving the Buddhas' touch upon the crown, one may cultivate samādhi at the place of practice. This can make practitioners in the Dharma-ending age pure and luminous in body and mind, like lapis lazuli."

"Ānanda, if among this bhikshu's original precept teacher and the ten or more bhikshus participating together, even one is impure, such a place of practice will usually not be successfully established. After the three periods of seven days, sit upright in secluded practice for one hundred days. Those of sharp faculties may

remain seated without rising and attain the fruit of stream-entry. Even if their bodies and minds have not yet accomplished the noble fruit, they will certainly know for themselves, without error, that they will become Buddhas. This is how the place of practice is established, as you asked."

Ānanda bowed at the Buddha's feet and said: "Since I left home, relying on the Buddha's fond and indulgent love, I sought extensive learning and therefore did not realize the unconditioned. I encountered the spell of that Brahmā deity's heretical arts; though my mind understood clearly, I lacked the power of freedom. Fortunately, Mañjuśrī came and freed me. Although I have received the Tathāgata's divine mantra of the Buddha's crown and secretly gained its power, I have not yet heard it directly. I only pray that, in great compassion, you will proclaim it again, mercifully rescuing the practitioners in this assembly and those now and in the future who remain in saṃsāra, so that, receiving the Buddha's secret sound, they may gain liberation of body and mind." At that time, all those in the assembly universally bowed, waiting to hear the Tathāgata's secret phrases and verses.

Then the World-Honored One emitted from the crown of flesh a hundred kinds of jeweled light. From within that light emerged a thousand-petaled jeweled lotus, and upon the jeweled flower sat a transformation Tathāgata. From his crown shone ten paths of hundred-jeweled light, and within each ray appeared as many Vajra Secret-Trace bearers of mountains and vajras as there are sands in ten Ganges Rivers, filling the entire realm of space. The assembly looked up in awe, embracing both fear and reverence. They sought the Buddha's compassionate protection and listened single-mindedly as the Tathāgata of the invisible crown emitted light and proclaimed the divine mantra.

Namo satathā sugatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya. Namo satathā buddhakoṭīṣṇīṣaṃ. Namo sarvabuddhabodhisattvebhyaḥ. Namo saptānāṃ samyaksaṃbuddhakoṭīnām śrāvakasaṃghānām. Namo loke arhantānām. Namo srotāpannānām.

Namo sakṛdāgāminām. Namo loke samyaggatānām samyakpratipannānām. Namo devṛṣīṇām. Namo siddhyā vidyādharaṛṣīṇām śapanugrahāṇāṃ sahasraśaḥ. Namo brahmaṇe. Nama indrāya. Namo bhagavate rudrāya.

Umāpati-sahāyāya. Namo bhagavate Nārāyaṇāya pañcamahāsamudrāya. Namaḥ saṃskṛtāya. Namo bhagavate Mahākālāya tripuranagaravidrāvaṇakarāya adhimuktakaśmaśānavāsine mātrigaṇāya.

Namaḥ saṃskṛtāya. Namo bhagavate tathāgatakulāya. Namo padmakulāya. Namo vajrakulāya. Namo maṇikulāya. Namo gajakulāya. Namo bhagavate trilokaśūrasenapraharaṇarājāya tathāgatāya. Namo bhagavate.

Namo Amitābhāya tathāgatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya. Namo bhagavate Akṣobhyāya tathāgatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya. Namo bhagavate Bhaiṣajyaguru-vaiḍūryaprabharājāya tathāgatāya. Namo bhagavate.

Saṃpuṣpitasaṃlendrarājāya tathāgatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya. Namo bhagavate Śākyamunaye tathāgatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya. Namo bhagavate Ratnaketurājāya tathāgatāya arhatē samyaksaṃbuddhāya.

Tebhyaḥ. Namaḥ saṃskṛtāya imaṃ bhagavataḥ satathāgatoṣṇīṣaṃ sitātapatraṃ. Namo aparājitaṃ praty-aṅgiraṃ sarvabhūtagrahanigraha-karaṇīṃ. Varaṣṭhaye chindani, akālamṛtyuparitrāyaṇī.

Nirghāṭani, sarvabandhanamokṣaṇī, sarvaduṣṭaduḥsvapnanivāraṇī, caturaśītīnāṃ grahasahasrāṇāṃ vidhvaṃsanakarī, aṣṭāviṃśatīnāṃ nakṣatrāṇāṃ prasādanakarī, aṣṭānāṃ mahāgrahāṇāṃ vidhvaṃsanakarī.

Sarvaśatrūṇāṃ nivāraṇī, hūṃ duṣṭasvapnanāśanī, piśāca-siddhārthāgni-udakārājā, aparājita-kumāra, mahāpraśasti, mahādīpta, mahātejas, mahāśvetajvara, mahābalapāṇḍara-vāsinī.

Āryatārā, Bhṛkuṭī, śvetavijayā, vajramālatī, viśārutā, buddhāṅkuśā, vajracakranakṣatrā, mārīcī, prajñāpāramitā, vajradaṇḍī, viśālākṣī, śāntā, śvetadevī, pūjitā, somarūpā, mahāśvetā, Āryatārā, mahābalāparā.

Vajraśaṅkaradevī, vajrakaumārī, kulandharī, vajrahastā, vidyā, kañcana-mālikā, kusumabhagavatī, vairocana-kulīyā, yātrā, uṣṇīṣa, vijṛmbhamāṇī, vajrakaṇakaprabhalocanā, vajratuṇḍī, śvetā, kamalākṣī, prabhā, iti iti, mudrā, gaṇā, sarvārtha-sādhanā, kṛtvā imaṃ tathāgatāya.

Wū hōng. Lìsè jiēná. Bōlà shě xīduō. Sàdá tā. Qiédū sèníshān. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Zhānpónà. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Xīdānpónà. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Bōluòsì dìyē. Sānbōchā. Nàjiélà. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Sàpó yàochā.

Hēluō shāsuō. Jiēluōhē ruòshé. Píténg bēng sànà jiélà. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Zhědūluō. Shīdǐ nán. Jiēluōhē. Suōhē sàluō nán. Píténg bēng sànà luō. Hǔ hōng dūlú yōng. Luōchā. Póqiéfàn. Sàdá tā. Qiédū sèníshān. Bōluō diǎn. Shéjílì. Móhē suōhē sàluō.

Bóshù suōhē sàluō. Shìlìshā. Jùzhī suōhē sàní. Dìlì ā bì tí shì pó lìduō. Zhàzhà yīngjiā. Móhē báshé lúdàluō. Dìlì púsānà. Mànchāluō. Wū hōng. Shāxī dì. Bópó dū. Móme. Yìntù nàme me xiě.

Luóshé póyè. Zhǔluó báyè. Āqíní póyè. Wū tuójiā póyè. Píshā póyè. Shěsà duōluō suōyè. Póluó zhuó jiélà póyè. Tūsèchā póyè. Āshění póyè. Ājiāluō. Mìlì zhù póyè.

Tuóluóní bùmì jiàn. Bōjiāpó tuó póyè. Wūluó jiā póduō póyè. Làshé tánzhàng póyè. Nàjiā póyè.

Pítiáo dá póyè. Sūbōluónà póyè. Yàochā jiēluōhē. Luóchāsī jiēluōhē. Bìlìduō jiēluōhē. Píshězhē jiēluōhē. Bùduō jiēluōhē. Jiūpánchá jiēluōhē. Bǔdānnà jiēluōhē. Jiāzhà bǔdānnà jiēluōhē. Xīqiándù jiēluōhē. Ābōxīmóluō jiēluōhē. Wūdàn mátuó jiēluōhē. Chēyè jiēluōhē.

Xīlì pó dì jiēluōhē. Shèduō hēlì nán. Jiēpó hēlì nán. Lú dìluō hēlì nán. Mángsuō hēlì nán. Mídà hēlì nán. Móshé hēlì nán. Shétuō hēlì nǚ. Shì bǐduō hēlì nán. Píduō hēlì nán. Póduō hēlì nán. Āshūzhē hēlì nǚ. Zhìduō hēlì nǚ. Dìshān sàbǐshān. Sàpó jiēluōhē nán.

Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Bōlì báluó zhějiā. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Chá yǎnní. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Móhē bānshū bāndáyè. Lúdàluō. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Nàluóyèná.

Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Dádǒu qiélú cháxī. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Móhējiāluō. Módálǐ jiānǎ. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Jiābōlìjiā. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí.

Shéyē jiélà. Módù jiélà. Sàpó luótā suōdánà. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Zhěduōluō. Póqíní. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Pílìyáng qìlìzhī. Nánduō jīshāluō. Jiānǎ bāndì. Suǒxīyè. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí.

Jīluó yèmí. Nàjiē nàshěluō pónà. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Āluóhàn. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Pítuōluóqié. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Báshéluō bōnǐ. Jùxīyè jùxīyè. Jiādì bāndì. Qìlìdān. Pítuó yèshé. Chēnduō yèmí. Jīluó yèmí. Luóchā wǎng. Póqiéfàn. Yìntù nàme me xiě.

Póqiéfàn. Sàdá duō bāndáluō. Nánwú cuì dūdì. Āxītuō nàluō làjiā. Bōluópó. Xīpǔzhà. Píjiā sàdá duō bō dìlì. Shífóluó shífóluó. Tuóluó tuóluó. Pínduōluó pínduōluó. Chēnduō chēnduō. Hǔ hōng hǔ hōng. Pànzhà pànzhà pànzhà pànzhà pànzhà. Suōhē. Xīxī pàn.

Āmóujiāyē pàn. Ābōluó tíhētuō pàn. Póluó bōluó tuó pàn. Āsùluó. Pítuóluó. Bōjiā pàn. Sàpó tíbì bì pàn. Sàpó nàjiā bì pàn. Sàpó yàochā bì pàn. Sàpó qiántuópó bì pàn. Sàpó bǔdānnà bì pàn. Jiāzhà bǔdānnà bì pàn. Sàpó tūláng jìdì bì pàn. Sàpó tūsè bǐlì.

Qìsè dì bì pàn. Sàpó shípó lǐ bì pàn. Sàpó ābōxīmó lǐ bì pàn. Sàpó shěluó pónà bì pàn. Sàpó dìdìjī bì pàn. Sàpó dámó tuójì bì pàn. Sàpó pítuóyè. Luóshì zhēlì bì pàn. Shéyē jiélà. Módù jiélà. Sàpó luótā suǒ tuójī bì pàn. Pìdìyè.

Zhēlì bì pàn. Zhědūluō. Fùqíní bì pàn. Báshéluō. Jùmólì. Pítuóyè. Luóshì bì pàn. Móhē bōluó dìngyáng. Yìqílì bì pàn. Báshéluō shāngjiélà yè. Bōluó zhàngqí luóshé yè pàn. Móhējiāluō yè. Móhē mòdálǐ jiānă. Nánwú suōjiélì duō yè pàn. Bìsènă bìyì pàn. Bólà hémó níyì pàn.

Āqíní yì pàn. Móhē jiélì yì pàn. Jiélà tánchí yì pàn. Miètálǐ yì pàn. Láodálǐ yì pàn. Zhāwénchá yì pàn. Jiélàluó dálǐ yì pàn. Jiābōlǐ yì pàn. Ādì mùzhìduō. Jiāshī móshěnà. Póxīnǐ yì pàn. Yănjízhì. Sàduǒ póxiě. Móme yìntù nàme me xiě.

Tūsèzhà zhìduō. Āmòdálǐ zhìduō. Wūshé hēluō. Qiépó hēluō. Lúdìluō hēluō. Pósuō hēluō. Móshé hēluō. Shétuō hēluō. Shìbìduō hēluō. Báluèyè hēluō. Qiántuó hēluō. Bùshǐpō hēluō. Pōluō hēluō. Póxiě hēluō. Bānbō zhìduō. Tūsèzhà zhìduō. Láotuóluō zhìduō. Yàochā jiēluōhē.

Luóchāsuō jiēluōhē. Bìlìduō jiēluōhē. Píshězhē jiēluōhē. Bùduō jiēluōhē. Jiūpánchá jiēluōhē. Xīqiánduō jiēluōhē. Wūdámátuó jiēluōhē. Chēyè jiēluōhē. Ābōsàmóluō jiēluōhē. Zhái qūgé. Cháqíní jiēluōhē. Lìfó dì jiēluōhē. Shémíjiā jiēluōhē. Shějūní jiēluōhē.

Lăotuóluō. Nándìjiā jiēluōhē. Ālánpó jiēluōhē. Qiándù bōní jiēluōhē. Shífáluó. Yīnjiā xījiā. Zhuì dì yàojiā. Dálì dì yàojiā. Zhětū tuōjiā. Nìtí shífáluó. Bìshān mó shífáluó. Bódǐjiā. Bítǐjiā. Shìlì sèmìjiā. Sānǐ bāndìjiā. Sàpó shífáluó. Shìlújìdì.

Mòtuó bì dá lúzhì jiàn. Āqǐ lúqián. Mùqiă lúqián. Jiélì tūlúqián. Jiēluōhē. Jiēlán jiélǐshūlán. Dànduō shūlán. Qìlǐyè shūlán. Mòme shūlán. Bálì shìpó shūlán. Bìlìsèzhà shūlán. Wūtuóluō shūlán. Jiézhī shūlán. Báxīdì shūlán. Wūlú shūlán. Chángjiā shūlán. Hēxī duō shūlán.

Bátuó shūlán. Suōfáng àngjiā. Bānluó zhàngjiā shūlán. Bùduō pìduō chá. Cháqíní. Shípóluó. Tuó tūlújiā. Jiàn dūlú jízhī. Pólù duōpí. Sàbān lú. Hālíngjiā. Shūshā dáluō. Pónà jiélà. Píshā yùjiā. Āqíní wūtuójiā. Mòluó bìluó. Jiàn tuòluó. Ājiāluō. Mìlìduō. Dátăn bùjiā.

Dìlì làzhà. Bìlìsè zhìjiā. Sàpó nà jùluó. Sìyǐn jiā bì. Jiēluōlì yàochā. Dáluó chú. Mòluó shì. Wèidìshān. Suōbìshān. Xīdá duō bōdáluō. Móhē báshéluó. Sèníshān. Móhē bānlài zhàngqí lán. Yèbō tūtuó. Shě yùshé nà. Biàndálìná. Pítuóyè. Pándàn jiālúmí. Dìshū.

Pándàn jiālúmí. Bānluó pítuó. Pándàn jiālúmí. Duòzhítā. Oṃ. Ānàlì. Píshètí. Bēiluó. Báshéluó. Tuó lì. Pánduò pánduò nǐ. Báshéluó bàngní pàn. Hǔ hōng dūlú wèng pàn. Suōpóhē.

Ānanda! This secret gāthā of the wondrous passages of the Buddha’s crown, the radiant cluster of light, the Śitatapatra, gives rise to all the Buddhas of the ten directions. Through the heart of this mantra, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions

attain unsurpassed, right, and perfect enlightenment. Holding this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions subdue all māras and restrain all non-Buddhist paths. Relying on this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions sit upon jeweled lotuses and respond throughout lands as numerous as motes of dust.

Containing this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions turn the great Dharma wheel throughout lands as numerous as motes of dust. Holding this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions can touch beings on the crown of the head and confer predictions of Buddhahood throughout the ten directions; though their own fruition has not yet been attained, they too receive predictions from Buddhas throughout the ten directions.

Relying on this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions can rescue beings from all sufferings throughout the ten directions: namely, the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, blindness, deafness, muteness, the suffering of meeting those one hates, the suffering of separation from those one loves, the suffering of not obtaining what one seeks, and the blazing of the five aggregates. Great and small calamities are all simultaneously liberated; dangers from bandits, armies, rulers, imprisonment, wind, fire, and water, as well as hunger, thirst, and poverty, vanish at a single thought.

Following this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions can serve spiritual friends throughout the ten directions, making offerings as desired in the four deportments; in assemblies of Tathāgatas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, they are acclaimed as great Dharma princes. Practicing this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions can gather in those with close karmic causes, enabling adherents of the two vehicles to hear the secret treasury without giving rise to fear. Reciting this mantra-heart, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions attain unsurpassed enlightenment, sit beneath the bodhi tree, and enter great nirvāṇa. Transmitting this mantra-heart, after their parinirvāṇa they entrust the affairs of the Buddhadharma, so that it may abide and be upheld to the end; the precepts are made solemn and pure, and all attain purity.

If I were to explain this Buddha-crown radiant-cluster Śitatapatra mantra from dawn until dusk, with sounds joined continuously and without repeating even between its words and phrases, I could not finish explaining it even through kalpas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. This mantra is also called the Tathāgata’s Crown.

You trainees who have not yet exhausted saṃsāra may sincerely aspire to attain arhatship; yet if you do not uphold this mantra while seated at the place of practice, hoping thereby to keep your body and mind far from all demonic disturbances, there can be no such possibility!

Ānanda! In any world, wherever there are sentient beings, if they write this mantra on birch bark, palm leaves, paper, or white cloth produced in that land and keep it in

a scented pouch, then, even if their minds are confused and they cannot recite or memorize it, whether they wear it on their bodies or place it in their homes, know that throughout the whole of their lives none of the various poisons can harm them.

Ānanda, I will now explain this mantra to you further: it protects and saves the world, grants great fearlessness, and enables sentient beings to accomplish supramundane wisdom.

After I have entered extinction, if sentient beings in the final age can recite it themselves or teach others to recite it, know that such sentient beings who recite and uphold it cannot be burned by fire, drowned by water, or harmed by great or small poisons. Even heavenly beings, dragons, ghosts, spirits, demons, and apparitions, together with all their evil spells, cannot affect them.

When the mind attains right absorption, all curses, sorcery, poisons—poison of gold, poison of silver, poisons from grasses, trees, insects, and snakes, and the poisonous vapors of all things—entering such a person's mouth become the flavor of sweet dew. All evil stars, ghosts, and spirits whose malicious hearts would poison people cannot give rise to evil toward such a person. Piṇḍa and Yākṣa, all evil ghost kings and their retinues, all receive profound grace and constantly provide protection.

Ānanda, you should know that this mantra is constantly attended, day and night, by eighty-four thousand nayutas of koṭis of Vajra Treasury King Bodhisattva lineages, each with vajra beings as its retinue. Suppose sentient beings, with scattered minds and not in samādhi, recollect it in mind and uphold it by mouth: these Vajra Kings constantly follow such good men. How much more so those whose resolve for bodhi is firm and determined. These Vajra Treasury King Bodhisattvas swiftly concentrate their minds and arouse those persons' spiritual consciousnesses. At that very time, such persons can remember and thoroughly know the events of eighty-four thousand Ganges-sand kalpas, without any doubt or confusion.

From the first kalpa until their final body, in life after life they will not be born among yakṣas, rākṣasas, pūtanas, kaṭapūtanas, kumbhāṇḍas, piśācas, hungry ghosts, beings with form or without form, beings with perception or without perception, or such evil destinies. If these good men read or recite this mantra, copy or write it, wear or preserve it, and make offerings of every kind, then throughout kalpa after kalpa they will not be born in impoverished, lowly, or undesirable places.

Even if these sentient beings themselves do not perform meritorious deeds, the Tathāgatas of the ten directions will give them all their merit and virtue. Thus, for Ganges-sand asaṃkhyeya, indescribable, indescribable kalpas, they will always be born in the same place as the Buddhas. Their immeasurable merit and virtue will gather together like akṣa seeds; they will cultivate together in the same place and never be separated. Therefore, this can cause those who have broken the precepts

to have their roots of discipline restored to purity; those who have not received the precepts to receive them; those who are not diligent to become diligent; those without wisdom to gain wisdom; those who are impure to swiftly become pure; and those who do not observe fasting and precepts to naturally observe fasting and precepts.

Ānanda, when these good men uphold this mantra, even if they committed offenses against the precepts before receiving them, after upholding the mantra all offenses of breaking the precepts, whether light or grave, are immediately extinguished. Even if they have consumed alcohol, eaten the five pungent plants, or engaged in various impurities, all Buddhas, bodhisattvas, vajra beings, celestial immortals, ghosts, and spirits will not regard this as a fault. Even if they wear unclean, torn, or tattered clothing, in every movement and every resting they are entirely the same as pure.

Even if they do not construct an altar, enter a practice hall, or perform the ritual practice, reciting and upholding this mantra brings merit no different from entering the altar and performing the practice. If they have committed the grave offenses of the five heinous acts that lead to the Avīci Hell, or if bhikṣus or bhikṣuṇīs have committed the four pārājika offenses or the eight pārājika offenses, then after reciting this mantra such grave karma is entirely extinguished, like a heap of sand scattered by a fierce wind, leaving not even a hair's breadth.

Ānanda, if any sentient beings have accumulated, throughout immeasurable and countless kalpas, every kind of light and grave karmic obstruction from former lives and have not yet repented of them, then, if they can read, recite, or copy this mantra, carry it on their bodies, or install it where they live—in residences, estates, gardens, or halls—such accumulated karma will melt away like snow in boiling water. Before long, they will all awaken to the patience of the unborn.

Moreover, Ānanda, if a woman who has not borne sons or daughters wishes to conceive, then, if she can wholeheartedly recollect this mantra or wear this Sitātapatra on her body, she will give birth to sons or daughters endowed with merit, virtue, and wisdom. Those who seek long life will obtain long life. Those who seek the swift fulfillment of karmic results will swiftly attain fulfillment. The same applies to life span, bodily form, and strength. After death, they will be reborn according to their vows in the lands of the ten directions, and certainly will not be born in remote, lowly regions—much less in mixed forms.

Ānanda, if any lands, provinces, counties, settlements, or villages suffer famine, epidemic, warfare, banditry, conflict, or any other place of hardship, write out this spiritual mantra and place it at the four gates of the city, at stupas, or atop banners. Let all sentient beings in that land welcome this mantra, bow in reverence, and

make offerings with one mind. Let each person wear it on the body, or place it in their dwelling. Then all calamities and hardships will be entirely extinguished.

Ānanda, in every land and place where sentient beings possess this mantra, devas and dragons rejoice; wind and rain come in season; the five grains flourish abundantly; and all people dwell in peace and happiness. It can also suppress all evil stars and strange transformations appearing in every direction, so that disasters and obstructions do not arise. People will not die untimely deaths, stocks, shackles, and chains will not touch their bodies, and they will sleep peacefully day and night, never having evil dreams.

Ānanda, in this Sahā world there are eighty-four thousand calamitous and malevolent stars, with twenty-eight great evil stars as their leaders. There are also eight great evil stars as their rulers. When they assume various forms and appear in the world, they can bring forth all kinds of calamities and anomalies among sentient beings. Wherever this mantra is present, all such things are extinguished. Within an area of twelve yojanas it forms a protected boundary into which all evil calamities and inauspicious signs can never enter.

Therefore, the Tathāgata proclaims this mantra in order to protect beginning practitioners in future ages who cultivate and enter samādhi, so that their bodies and minds may be at ease and they may attain great peace and security. No demons, ghosts, spirits, longstanding unjust enmities, past calamities, old karma, or former debts from beginningless time will come to trouble or harm them. You, the learners in this assembly, and practitioners in future ages should rely on my altar practice and uphold the precepts in accordance with the Dharma. The precept master from whom you receive the precepts must encounter a pure saṅgha. Uphold this mantra in your mind without giving rise to doubt or regret. If these good men, in these bodies born of their parents, do not attain spiritual powers, then the Tathāgatas of the ten directions will have spoken falsely.

After these words were spoken, immeasurable hundreds of thousands of vajra beings in the assembly simultaneously joined their palms, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: “As the Buddha has taught, we shall sincerely protect such cultivators of bodhi.”

Then Brahmā, Śakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings also bowed before the Buddha at the same time and said to the Buddha: “If there are indeed such good people who cultivate and study, we shall protect them with wholehearted sincerity, so that all they undertake in this life may accord with their wishes.”

There were also immeasurable great yakṣa generals, rākṣasa kings, pūtana kings, kumbhāṇḍa kings, piśāca kings, Piṇḍas, Yākṣas, great ghost kings, and ghost commanders. They too joined their palms and bowed before the Buddha, saying:

“We also vow to protect and uphold these persons, so that their bodhicitta may swiftly reach fulfillment.”

There were also immeasurable sons of the sun and moon, masters of wind, rain, clouds, and thunder, the uncle of lightning and others, the officials who oversee the years, and the retinues of the stars. In the assembly, they too bowed at the Buddha's feet and said: “We also protect these practitioners, enabling them to establish a practice hall and attain fearlessness.” There were also immeasurable mountain spirits, sea spirits, all spirits of the land, water, air, and living things, as well as the king of wind spirits and devas of the formless realm. They simultaneously prostrated before the Tathāgata and said: “We also protect these practitioners, enabling them to attain bodhi forever free from demonic hindrances.”

Then the eighty-four thousand nayutas of koṭis of Vajra Treasury King Bodhisattvas rose from their seats in the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: “World-Honored One, we and those like us have long accomplished bodhi through the practices we cultivated, yet do not enter nirvāṇa. We constantly follow this mantra to protect practitioners in the final age who correctly cultivate samādhi.”

“World-Honored One, when those who cultivate their minds and seek right concentration are in a practice hall, walking in meditation elsewhere, or even distractedly roaming and playing in villages and towns, we and our retinues will constantly follow and guard them. Even if the demon king or Maheśvara seeks an opportunity to harm them, they will never obtain one. Lesser ghosts and spirits must remain ten yojanas away from these good people, except for those who have aroused the resolve and delight in cultivating dhyāna. World-Honored One, if such evil demons or their retinues wish to invade or disturb these good people, we will smash their heads to dust with our precious vajras, and shall always ensure that all these persons' undertakings accord with their wishes.”

Ānanda then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha: “We are dull and delight in extensive learning; our minds still have outflows, and we have not sought liberation. Receiving the Buddha's compassionate instruction, we have obtained proper permeation and cultivation; our bodies and minds are joyful, and we have received great benefit. World-Honored One, in such cultivation and realization of the Buddha's samādhi, before reaching nirvāṇa, why are there called the stage of dry wisdom and the forty-four minds? Through what gradual sequence does one obtain the designations of cultivation? At what point is one said to enter the bhūmis? What is called an equal-enlightenment bodhisattva?” Having spoken thus, he prostrated himself with all five limbs on the ground. The great assembly, with one mind, awaited the Buddha's compassionate voice, gazing up in reverent expectation.

Then the World-Honored One praised Ānanda, saying: “Excellent, excellent! You are able to ask on behalf of the great assembly and all sentient beings in future ages who cultivate samādhi and seek the Mahāyāna, revealing from afar the unsurpassed path of correct cultivation, from ordinary beings to final great nirvāṇa. Listen carefully now, and I shall explain it to you.” Ānanda and the great assembly joined their palms, opened their hearts, and silently received the teaching.

The Buddha said: “Ānanda, you should know that the wondrous nature is perfectly luminous and free from all names and appearances. Originally there were no worlds or sentient beings. Because of falsity, arising occurs; because of arising, cessation occurs. Arising and cessation are called false; extinguishing falsity is called true. These are called the two designations of the Tathāgata's unsurpassed bodhi and great nirvāṇa, the transformation of the basis. Ānanda, if you now wish to cultivate true samādhi and proceed directly to the Tathāgata's great nirvāṇa, you must first recognize the two causes of the inverted views of sentient beings and the world. When inversion does not arise, this is the Tathāgata's true samādhi.”

“Ānanda, what is called the inverted view of sentient beings? Ānanda, because the nature of luminous mind is luminously perfect, awareness gives rise to a false apprehension of nature, and from this false nature seeing arises. From what ultimately does not exist, there comes to be what appears ultimately to exist. This apparent existence, which is not caused by any cause, abides in an appearance that has no basis for abiding and is utterly without root. Upon this fundamental non-abiding are established worlds and all sentient beings. Deluded about the fundamental perfect luminosity, one gives rise to false existence. False nature has no substance and depends on nothing.”

“When one wishes to return to the true, this very wish for truth is already not the true nature of suchness. Seeking to return through what is not true, one then seems to form what is without appearance. Neither arising, nor abiding, nor mind, nor dharma, these develop one from another. The power of arising gives rise to manifestation, and through perfuming it becomes karma. Those sharing the same karma mutually respond; because responsive karma exists, they perish and arise in succession. Thus there is the inverted view of sentient beings.”

“Ānanda, what is called the inverted view of the world? This apparent existence arises falsely in segments, and thereby spatial boundaries are established. That which is not caused by any cause abides in an appearance that has no basis for abiding; flowing and changing without rest, it thereby becomes time. The three times and four directions combine and interpenetrate; their transformations produce sentient beings in twelve classes. Therefore, in the world, movement gives rise to sound; sound gives rise to form; form gives rise to fragrance; fragrance gives rise to touch; touch gives rise to flavor; and flavor gives rise to dharmas.”

“The six confused and false thoughts become karmic natures, and through them the twelve divisions revolve. Therefore, the worldly forms of sound, fragrance, flavor, and touch, exhausting the twelve transformations, become one cycle of return. Riding upon this revolving and inverted appearance, there are in the world: egg-born, womb-born, moisture-born, and transformation-born beings; beings with form, without form, with perception, and without perception; beings that are neither with form nor without form; and beings that are neither with perception nor without perception.”

“Ānanda, because of the world's false cycle of rebirth, the inversion of movement combines with vital energy to form eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of flying and sinking. Thus there are egg-born kalalas, circulating throughout the lands; fish, birds, turtles, snakes, and creatures of their kind fill the world.”

Because of the world’s cycle of mixed defilement, the inversion of desire causes their conjunction to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts, horizontal and vertical. Thus there are womb-born arbuda forms, transmigrating throughout the lands: humans, animals, dragons, and immortals fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world’s cycle of attachment, the inversion of inclination causes their conjunction to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of turning over and over. Thus there are damp forms called peśī, transmigrating throughout the lands; crawling and wriggling creatures fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world’s cycle of transformation, the inversion of falsity causes their conjunction through contact to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of new and old. Thus there are transformation forms called ghana, transmigrating throughout the lands; those that molt, transform, and fly fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world’s cycle of hindering retention, the inversion of obstruction causes their conjunction through attachment to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of essential radiance. Thus there are material forms called ghana, transmigrating throughout the lands; auspicious and ominous spirits fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world’s cycle of dispersal and dissolution, the inversion of delusion causes their conjunction through darkness to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of concealment in the shadows. Thus there are formless ghana forms, transmigrating throughout the lands; those that disperse into emptiness and sink away in dissolution fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world’s cycle of illusory images, the inversion of shadows causes their conjunction through recollection to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of latent knots. Thus there are thought-forms called ghana, transmigrating

throughout the lands; spirits, ghosts, essences, and numinous beings fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world's cycle of dullness and stupidity, the inversion of ignorance causes their conjunction through obstinacy to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of withering and desiccation. Thus there are no-thought ghana forms, transmigrating throughout the lands; spirit and consciousness transform into earth, wood, metal, and stone, filling them with their kinds.

Because of the world's cycle of mutual dependence, the inversion of falsity causes their conjunction through defilement to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts based on causes and reliance. Thus there are forms that are not materially existent yet become material, ghana forms, transmigrating throughout the lands; various water mothers and the like, which use shrimp as eyes, fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world's cycle of mutual attraction, the inversion of nature causes their conjunction through spells to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of calling and summoning. Thus there are formless ghana forms that are not devoid of material form, transmigrating throughout the lands; those born through curses and aversions fill them with their kinds.

Because of the world's cycle of combining delusion, the inversion of deception causes their conjunction through difference to generate eighty-four thousand confused thoughts of mutual interchange. Thus there are thought-forms that are not devoid of thought, ghana forms, transmigrating throughout the lands. Pulu and the like are formed from disparate substances, filling them with their kinds.

Because of the world's cycle of injury through enmity, the inversion of killing causes their conjunction through strangeness to generate eighty-four thousand thoughts of consuming one's parents. Thus there are no-thought forms that are not devoid of thought, ghana forms, transmigrating throughout the lands. For example, earth owls attach clods of earth as their young, and broken-mirror birds embrace the fruit of poisonous trees as their offspring. Once the young have matured, they consume both parents; such beings fill the lands with their kinds.

These are called the twelve classes of living beings.

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Ānanda, each of these classes of beings possesses its own twelve inverted perceptions, just as, when one presses upon the eyes, illusory flowers appear in disordered profusion. The wondrous, perfect, true, pure, and luminous mind is

obscured by inversion and thus gives rise to these false and confused thoughts. Now, if you wish to cultivate and realize the Buddha's samādhi, you must establish three gradual stages in order to eliminate these originally disordered thoughts that are their basic cause. It is like cleansing a vessel: first remove the poisonous honey, then wash the vessel with hot water, ashes, and fragrant substances before storing nectar in it. What are these three gradual stages? First, cultivation: eliminating its contributing causes. Second, true cultivation: cutting away its fundamental nature. Third, progressive advancement: going against one's present karma.

What are the contributing causes? Ānanda, the twelve classes of beings in this world cannot sustain themselves independently; they subsist by relying on four kinds of food: morsel-food, contact-food, thought-food, and consciousness-food. Therefore, the Buddha says that all sentient beings live in dependence on food. Ānanda, all beings are born through consuming sweetness and die through consuming poison. Therefore, those beings who seek samādhi must cut off the five pungent vegetables of the world.

When these five pungent vegetables are cooked and eaten, they arouse lust; when eaten raw, they increase anger. Those in this world who eat them, even if they can expound the twelve divisions of the scriptures, are shunned by the devas and immortals of the ten directions because of their foul odor; all keep far away. Hungry ghosts and the like, meanwhile, lick their lips when such people eat. Such people constantly dwell with ghosts; their merit and virtue daily diminish, and they gain no lasting benefit.

When those who eat pungent vegetables cultivate samādhi, bodhisattvas, devas and immortals, and benevolent spirits of the ten directions do not come to protect them. The mighty demon king finds an opportunity, manifests in the form of a Buddha, and comes to teach them Dharma, disparaging the precepts and praising lust, anger, and ignorance. At death, they themselves become members of the demon king's retinue; when the blessings of demons are exhausted, they fall into the Avīci Hell. Ānanda, those who cultivate bodhi must forever cut off the five pungent vegetables. This is called the first gradual stage of progressive cultivation.

What is the fundamental nature? Ānanda, when such beings enter samādhi, they must first strictly uphold pure precepts. They must forever cut off lustful thoughts, refrain from alcohol and meat, eat food purified by fire, and not consume living creatures. Ānanda, for cultivators who do not cut off lust and killing, there is no possibility of leaving the three realms. They should regard sexual desire as they would a poisonous snake or an enemy and bandit.

First uphold the four pārājika offenses and the eight pārājika offenses of the śrāvaka precepts, firmly keeping the body from acting; then practice the pure disciplinary

conduct of bodhisattvas, firmly preventing thoughts from arising. When the precepts are fulfilled, there is forever no karma in the world of mutual birth and mutual killing; theft and robbery do not occur, there are no mutual debts and burdens, and one no longer repays old debts in the world. When such pure persons cultivate samādhi, they naturally see the worlds of the ten directions, behold Buddhas, hear the Dharma, personally receive the sacred teachings, attain great spiritual powers, and travel through the worlds of the ten directions—all without needing the heavenly eye of their flesh-and-blood bodies inherited from their parents. Their knowledge of former lives is purified, and they encounter no hardship or danger. This is called the second gradual stage of progressive cultivation.

What is present karma? Ānanda, when these people who purely uphold the precepts are free of lustful craving in their minds, they no longer let themselves be excessively carried away by the six external objects. Because they are not carried away, they turn back and return to their source. Since they no longer condition themselves upon objects, the faculties have nothing with which to pair; the reversed flow returns wholly to unity, and the six functions no longer operate. The lands of the ten directions become bright and utterly pure, like a bright moon suspended within crystal. Body and mind are at ease; wondrously perfect and impartial, they attain great peace and security. All the secret, perfect, pure, and wondrous qualities of all Tathāgatas appear within them. Such people immediately attain the forbearance of the unborn dharmas. From then on, as they gradually cultivate, they establish the stages of the sages according to the practices they undertake. This is called the third gradual stage of progressive cultivation.

Ānanda, in this good man, desire and love have dried up; faculties and objects no longer pair with one another, and the remaining present material body is no longer renewed. The mind that holds is empty and luminous, consisting wholly of wisdom. The nature of wisdom is bright and perfect, illuminating the worlds of the ten directions. Though wisdom has dried up desire, this is called the stage of dry wisdom. The habits of desire have only just dried up, and it has not yet joined the flowing waters of the Tathāgata’s Dharma.

With this mind, one enters into the middle current; wondrous perfection unfolds. From true wondrous perfection, one again gives rise to true wondrousness, and wondrous faith abides constantly. All deluded thoughts are extinguished without remainder; the Middle Way is wholly true. This is called the abiding of faith. When true faith is clear, all penetrations become complete, and the three categories of aggregates, sense-fields, and realms cannot obstruct one.

Thus, throughout innumerable kalpas of past and future, whenever one relinquishes a body and receives another, all habitual tendencies appear before one. This good man can remember them all and forgets none of them; this is called the abiding of

mindfulness. Wondrous perfection is wholly true; true essence gives rise to transformation, and beginningless habitual tendencies are penetrated as one pure luminosity. Advancing toward true purity solely through this pure luminosity is called the mind of diligence. When the essence of mind appears before one and consists wholly of wisdom, this is called the abiding of wisdom.

Maintaining the luminous wisdom, which pervades all and is tranquil and clear, with its quiescent wonder constantly congealed, is called the abiding of samādhi. When the light of samādhi shines forth and the luminous nature penetrates deeply, one advances without retreating; this is called the abiding of non-retrogression. When the advancing mind rests securely, preserving itself without loss, it communes with the vital influence of the Tathāgatas of the ten directions; this is called the mind that protects the Dharma. Maintaining awakened luminosity, one can, through wondrous power, turn the Buddha's compassionate light back toward oneself and abide facing the Buddha.

It is like two mirrors facing one another: their wondrous reflections enter one another layer upon layer. This is called the mind of dedication. When the light of mind turns back in secret, protecting the Buddha and remaining constantly still, one abides in the unsurpassed wondrous purity and non-contrivance without loss; this is called the abiding of moral discipline. Abiding freely in moral discipline, one can travel through the ten directions, going wherever one vows; this is called the abiding of vows.

Ānanda, when this good man gives rise to these ten minds through true skillful means, the essence of mind radiates brilliance. The ten functions interpenetrate, perfecting a single mind; this is called the abiding of the arousal of the resolve. Luminosity arises within the mind, like pure gold appearing within clear crystal. Treading upon the former wondrous mind to make it into ground is called the abiding of preparing the ground. When mind and ground interpenetrate in knowing and both become clearly understood, one travels throughout the ten directions without obstruction or hindrance; this is called the abiding of cultivation.

One's conduct is the same as the Buddha's, and one receives the Buddha's vital influence. It is like an intermediate-state body seeking its own parents: through hidden, silent correspondence, one enters the lineage of the Tathāgata. This is called the abiding of birth into nobility. Having entered and journeyed within the womb of the Way, one personally serves the heir of awakening; it is like a fetus already formed, with all human features complete. This is called the abiding of complete skillful means. One's appearance resembles the Buddha's, and the characteristics of one's mind are also the same; this is called the abiding of the right mind. Body and mind unite and increase daily; this is called the abiding of non-retrogression.

The spiritual features of the ten bodies are all complete at once; this is called the abiding of youthful innocence. Having formed and emerged from the womb, one personally becomes a child of the Buddha; this is called the abiding of a Dharma prince. One is represented as having reached maturity, like the great king of a country entrusting the affairs of the realm to the crown prince. When that kṣatriya king's heir has grown up, he is ceremonially given empowerment; this is called the abiding of empowerment.

Ānanda, after this good man has become a child of the Buddha and fully acquired the immeasurable wondrous virtues of the Tathāgatas, he accords with the ten directions; this is called the practice of joy. Being able to benefit all sentient beings is called the practice of benefiting others. Awakening oneself and awakening others, without opposition or refusal, is called the practice free of anger and resentment. Manifesting in various kinds throughout the end of future time, equal throughout the three times and penetrating the ten directions, is called the practice of inexhaustibility.

All accords with all; among the various dharma gates, there is no error or confusion. This is called the practice free of delusion and disorder. Within sameness, the multitude of differences appear; in every distinct characteristic, each sees sameness. This is called the practice of skillful manifestation. Thus, even if the ten directions of empty space were filled with motes of dust, within every mote would appear worlds of the ten directions. Motes appear and worlds appear, without obstructing one another; this is called the practice free of attachment. All the varied manifestations before one are the foremost pāramitā; this is called the practice of reverence. Such perfect interpenetration can fulfill the standards of all Buddhas in the ten directions; this is called the practice of good Dharma. Each and every one is pure and undefiled, the single truth of non-contrivance, because this is the nature of their original suchness; this is called the practice of truth.

Ānanda, when this good man has fulfilled spiritual powers and accomplished the work of a Buddha, his pure and true essence is free from all lingering afflictions. When he liberates sentient beings, he eliminates the mark of liberating sentient beings; turning the mind of non-contrivance toward the path of nirvāṇa, this is called the dedication of rescuing all sentient beings while being free of the mark of sentient beings. Destroying what can be destroyed and distancing oneself from even the act of distancing, this is called the indestructible dedication. Original awakening is profoundly tranquil, and awakening is equal to the awakening of the Buddhas; this is called the dedication equal to all Buddhas.

When pure true essence shines forth, one's ground is like the ground of the Buddhas; this is called the dedication reaching everywhere. The worlds and Tathāgatas interpenetrate one another without hindrance; this is called the

dedication of the inexhaustible treasury of merit and virtue. Upon the ground shared with the Buddhas, each ground gives rise to pure causes. Relying on these causes, brilliance arises and one takes up the path to nirvāṇa; this is called the dedication of accordance with equal wholesome roots.

When the true root has been established, all sentient beings of the ten directions are one's own intrinsic nature. When this nature is perfectly fulfilled, one does not lose sentient beings; this is called the dedication of according with an equal view of all sentient beings. Being identical with all dharmas yet free of all marks, one neither clings to identity nor to separation; this is called the dedication of the mark of suchness. Truly attaining that to which suchness refers, one is unobstructed throughout the ten directions; this is called the dedication of liberation without bondage. When inherent virtue is perfectly fulfilled, the measure of the dharma realm is extinguished; this is called the dedication of the immeasurability of the dharma realm.

Ānanda, these good men have completed the forty-one pure minds and next accomplish the four kinds of wondrous, perfect preparatory practices. Using the Buddha's awakening as the function of their own minds, they are as though emerging yet not yet emerging, like drilling wood to make fire in the hope of igniting it; this is called the stage of warmth. Again, using their own minds to form the path traversed by the Buddhas, they are as though relying yet not relying, like climbing a high mountain: their bodies enter empty space, though below there remains a slight obstruction. This is called the stage of the summit. Mind and Buddha are alike; they have skillfully attained the Middle Way. They are like people who endure a matter without either harboring it or expressing it; this is called the stage of forbearance. Measures and numbers vanish; in the Middle Way of delusion and awakening, neither can be named. This is called the foremost stage in the world.

Ānanda, these good men thoroughly comprehend great bodhi; their awakening penetrates that of the Tathāgatas, and they fully enter the realms of the Buddhas. This is called the Ground of Joy. Distinct natures enter into sameness, and even the nature of sameness is extinguished; this is called the Ground Free of Defilement. When purity reaches its utmost and luminosity arises, this is called the Luminous Ground. When luminosity reaches its utmost and awakening is complete, this is called the Ground of Blazing Wisdom. That which all sameness and difference cannot reach is called the Ground Difficult to Conquer. When unconditioned suchness reveals its naturally pure luminosity, this is called the Ground Manifest Before One.

Reaching the limit of suchness is called the Ground Far-Reaching. The single mind of suchness is called the Immovable Ground. Giving rise to the function of suchness is called the Ground of Good Wisdom. Ānanda, from this point onward, these

bodhisattvas have completed their cultivation; their merit and virtue are perfected, and this ground is also called the stage of cultivation. The wondrous clouds of compassionate shade cover the sea of nirvāṇa; this is called the Dharma Cloud Ground.

The Tathāgatas proceed against the current; such bodhisattvas proceed with the current until they arrive at the juncture where the limits of awakening meet. This is called equal awakening. Ānanda, from the mind of dry wisdom through equal awakening, this awakening first attains the initial ground of dry wisdom within the vajra mind.

Thus, through layer upon layer of twelve single and compound stages, one finally exhausts wondrous awakening and accomplishes the unsurpassed Way.

These various grounds are all contemplated with vajra insight as ten profound analogies of illusion. Within śamatha, one employs the pure cultivation and realization of the Tathāgatas' vipaśyanā, gradually penetrating more deeply. Ānanda, through these three progressive stages, one can well accomplish the true path of bodhi through its fifty-five stages. Those who contemplate in this way possess right contemplation; those who contemplate otherwise possess wrong contemplation.

At that time, Mañjuśrī, Dharma Prince, rose from his seat in the great assembly, bowed at the Buddha's feet, and said to the Buddha, "What should this sūtra be called, and how should sentient beings and I receive and uphold it?" The Buddha told Mañjuśrī, "This sūtra is called 'The Great Buddha's Crown: the Unsurpassed Precious Seal, the Pure Ocean-Eye of the Tathāgatas of the Ten Directions, the Sitātapatra.'"

It is also called 'Protecting the Immediate Causes, Liberating Ānanda and the Bhikṣuṇī of This Assembly Whose Nature Was [Formerly That of a] Courtesan, Enabling Them to Attain the Bodhi Mind and Enter the Ocean of All-Knowing.' It is also called 'The Tathāgatas' Secret Cause and the Ultimate Meaning of Cultivation and Realization.' It is also called 'The Great, Expansive, Wondrous Lotus King, the Dhāraṇī Mantra of the Mother of the Buddhas of the Ten Directions.' It is also called 'The Chapter and Phrases of Empowerment, the Myriad Practices of All Bodhisattvas, Śūraṅgama.' You should receive and uphold it."

After these words were spoken, Ānanda and the entire assembly immediately received the Tathāgata's explanation of the secret seal and the meaning of the pattra, and they also heard the names that express this sūtra's ultimate meaning. They suddenly awakened to the sublime principle by which dhyāna cultivation advances through the sacred stages, and their mental deliberations became empty and still. They cut off the six categories of subtle afflictions involved in cultivating the mind within the three realms.

He then rose from his seat, bowed at the Buddha's feet, joined his palms reverently, and addressed the Buddha: "World-Honored One of great majestic virtue, your compassionate voice excludes no one. You have skillfully revealed the subtle, deep-seated delusions of sentient beings, enabling my body and mind today to feel at ease and to receive great benefit. World-Honored One, if this wondrous, bright, true, pure, and wondrous mind is originally perfect and all-pervading, extending even to the great earth, grasses and trees, and creeping sentient beings, and if their fundamental suchness is the very true essence by which the Tathāgata attains Buddhahood—"

"—if the Buddha's essence is true and real, how can there again be such realms as hells, hungry ghosts, animals, asuras, humans, and devas? World-Honored One, do these realms exist inherently, or do they arise from the false habits of sentient beings? World-Honored One, the bhikṣuṇī Jewel-Lotus-Fragrance upheld the bodhisattva precepts but secretly engaged in sexual desire. She falsely declared that sexual conduct was neither killing nor stealing and brought no karmic retribution."

"After making this statement, fierce fire first arose in her female organ; then fierce flames burned through every joint, and she fell into the Avīci Hell. King Virūḍhaka slaughtered the Gautama clan, while the bhikṣu Sunakṣatra falsely proclaimed that all dharmas are empty; while still alive, both fell into the Avīci Hell. Do these hells have fixed locations, or do they arise spontaneously? Each being generates karma and privately undergoes its own retribution. I beg you, in your great compassion, to enlighten the young and ignorant, so that all sentient beings who uphold the precepts, on hearing this definitive teaching, may joyfully receive it upon their crowns and keep themselves carefully pure, without transgression."

The Buddha told Ānanda, "Excellent is this question! It will keep sentient beings from falling into wrong views. Listen carefully now, and I shall explain it to you. Ānanda, all sentient beings are in truth originally pure, but because of their false views, false habitual tendencies arise. From this come the divisions of inner and outer portions."

"Ānanda, the inner portion is that which belongs within sentient beings. Because of various attachments and defilements, false emotions arise. When emotion accumulates without cease, it can produce the water of attachment. Thus, when sentient beings think of fine delicacies, saliva flows from their mouths. When they think of someone from the past, whether with affection or resentment, tears fill their eyes. When they greedily seek wealth and treasures, loving saliva arises in their hearts and their whole bodies become moist and radiant. When their minds are attached to sexual conduct, the male and female organs naturally emit fluid. Ānanda, although these attachments differ, their flowing and congealing are the same. Moisture does not rise but naturally falls downward. This is called the inner portion."

“Ānanda, the outer portion is that which belongs outside sentient beings. Because of various longings and aspirations, empty imaginings arise. When thought accumulates without cease, it can generate a surpassing energy. Thus, when sentient beings uphold precepts, their whole bodies become light and pure; when they maintain mantras and mudrās, their bearing is heroic and resolute; when they desire rebirth in heaven, they dream of flying upward; when they keep a Buddha-land in mind, sacred realms secretly appear; and when they serve a good teacher, they make light even of their own lives. Ānanda, although these thoughts differ, their light upward movement is the same. They fly and move without sinking, naturally transcending. This is called the outer portion.”

“Ānanda, throughout all worlds, birth and death continue without interruption. Birth follows accustomed tendencies, while death follows the current of transformation. At the moment of death, before warmth and sensation have departed, the good and evil of an entire lifetime suddenly appear at once. Death is contrary to birth, and birth is compliant; these two habits intermingle. Pure thought brings flight and one will certainly be born in heaven. If, within this flying mind, there are also merit, wisdom, and pure vows, the mind naturally opens. One sees the Buddhas of the ten directions and all Pure Lands, and is reborn according to one’s vows.”

“When emotion is slight and thought abundant, one rises lightly but not far, becoming a flying immortal, a powerful ghost king, a flying yakṣa, or an earth-roving rākṣasa. One roams among the four heavens and goes without hindrance wherever one wishes. Among such beings, those who possess good vows and good intentions may protect and uphold my Dharma; or they may protect the precepts and accompany those who uphold them; or protect mantras and accompany those who maintain them; or protect dhyāna and safeguard those who abide in dharma-patience. Such beings dwell close beneath the Tathāgata’s seat.”

“When emotion and thought are equal, one neither flies nor falls, but is born among humans. When thought is bright, one is intelligent; when emotion is obscure, one is dull. When emotion is abundant and thought slight, one flows into horizontal birth: the heavier become furred creatures, and the lighter become feathered species. With seven parts emotion and three parts thought, one sinks beneath the water wheel and is born at the boundary of fire, where one receives the force of fierce flames. One’s body becomes that of a hungry ghost, constantly burned; water itself can harm one, and there is neither food nor drink for hundreds of thousands of eons.”

“With nine parts emotion and one part thought, one sinks down through the fire wheel, and the body enters the region where wind and fire intersect. Those with lighter karma are born in the intermittent hells; those with heavier karma are born in the uninterrupted hells—the two kinds of hell. Pure emotion brings sinking

directly into the Avīci Hell. If, within this sinking mind, there is slander of the Mahāyāna, destruction of the Buddha's precepts, deceitful teaching of the Dharma, false greed for offerings of faith, or the unworthy acceptance of reverence, along with the five heinous offenses and the ten grave offenses, one is further reborn in the Avīci Hells of the ten directions. Although one follows one's own evil karma and thus brings this upon oneself, within the shared category of beings there are also original locations. Ānanda, all these are karmic responses evoked by sentient beings' own karma: they create the ten habitual causes and receive the six intermingled retributions."

"What are the ten causes? Ānanda, first, the habitual tendency of sexual desire arises through mutual friction. When this grinding continues without cease, great and fierce fiery light is generated within it, just as warmth appears when one rubs one's hands together. When the two habits kindle one another, there arise such things as iron beds and copper pillars. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call sexual conduct the fire of desire. Bodhisattvas regard desire as they would a pit of fire."

"Second, the habitual tendency of greed arises through mutual calculation and attraction. When grasping and drawing in do not cease, accumulated cold and solid ice are generated within it, freezing and chilling, just as cold sensation arises when one draws in air through one's mouth. When the two habits oppress one another, there arise such things as the chattering cold, the bubbling cold, the roaring cold, and the blue, red, and white lotus ice hells. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call excessive seeking the water of greed. Bodhisattvas regard greed as they would an ocean of pestilential vapors."

"Third, the habitual tendency of arrogance arises through mutual domination and reliance upon oneself. When this rushing flow does not cease, surging and racing waves accumulate to form water, just as saliva arises when one rolls one's tongue about in one's mouth. When the two habits stir one another, there arise such things as rivers of blood, rivers of ashes, hot sand, poisonous seas, molten copper, and forced swallowing. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call self-arrogance drinking the water of delusion. Bodhisattvas regard arrogance as they would a great drowning."

"Fourth, the habitual tendency of anger arises through mutual opposition. When opposition and resentment do not cease, heat in the mind generates fire, which casts the breath into metal. Thus there arise mountains of knives, iron stakes, trees of swords, wheels of swords, axes, halberds, spears, and saws, just as murderous energy flies about when a person harbors a grievance. When the two habits strike one another, there arise such things as castration, beheading, chopping, sawing,

piercing, and pounding. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call anger sharp swords. Bodhisattvas regard anger as they would execution and slaughter."

"Fifth, the habitual tendency of deceit arises through mutual enticement and manipulation. When this drawing forth continues without rest, there arise ropes, wooden restraints, and fetters, just as grasses and trees grow when fields are irrigated with water. When the two habits extend one another, there arise such things as handcuffs, shackles, cangues, chains, whips, staffs, and clubs. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call treachery and falsity slanderous thieves. Bodhisattvas regard deceit as they would fear wolves."

"Sixth, the habitual tendency of deception arises through mutual cheating. When false accusations and deceptions do not cease, the mind flies off to create treachery. Thus there arise dust, excrement, urine, filth, and impurity, just as dust follows the wind and none can see clearly. When the two habits are added to one another, there arise such things as submersion, drowning, tossing upward, falling through space, and drifting away. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call cheating and deception plundering and killing. Bodhisattvas regard deception as they would tread upon venomous snakes."

"Seventh, the habitual tendency of resentment arises through mutual hatred. Thus there arise flying stones, hurled pebbles, confinement in boxes, carts with barred enclosures, containment in jars, and beating in sacks, just as malicious people harbor and nurture evil within themselves. When the two habits devour one another, there arise such things as casting down, seizing, striking, shooting, and hurling. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call hostile enemies spirits of opposition and harm. Bodhisattvas regard resentment as they would drinking poisoned wine."

"Eighth, the habitual tendency of views arises through mutual assertion, as in the view of a self, attachment to views and precepts, and the various karmas of misguided understanding. It arises through opposition and rejection, producing contrary appearances. Thus there arise kings' messengers and officials, witnesses, and documents, just as travelers meet one another while coming and going on the road. When the two habits intersect, there arise interrogation, deceitful measures, questioning under torture, investigation, examination, scrutiny, exposure, and illumination; youths who record good and evil hold documents in their hands, and there are disputes and arguments. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call wrong views a pit of views. Bodhisattvas regard all false and biased attachments as they would stand before a poisonous ravine."

"Ninth, the habitual tendency of injustice arises through mutual false accusation and slander. Thus there arise mountains pressed together, stones pressed together,

grinding mills, and plowing and milling, just as slanderous villains oppress and wrong good people. When the two habits press against one another, there arise such things as forcing down, pressing and pounding, squeezing and straining, weighing and measuring. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call resentment and slander a slanderous tiger. Bodhisattvas regard injustice as they would being struck by a thunderbolt."

"Tenth, the habitual tendency of litigation arises through mutual clamor and through concealment. Thus there arise mirrors and illuminating lamps, just as one cannot hide one's shadow in the sunlight. When the two habits are set forth against one another, there arise evil companions, karmic mirrors, fire pearls, the exposure of past karma, and confrontational verification. Therefore, all Tathāgatas of the ten directions call concealment a hidden thief. Bodhisattvas regard concealment as they would wearing a high mountain upon their heads while treading upon a vast sea."

"What are the six retributions? Ānanda, all sentient beings create karma through the six consciousnesses, and the evil retributions they summon emerge through the six sense faculties. How do evil retributions emerge through the six sense faculties?"

"First, the retribution of sight draws forth evil results. When the karma of sight intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees fierce fire filling the worlds of the ten directions. The consciousness of the deceased flies and falls, riding on smoke, into the uninterrupted hell. Two aspects then manifest: first, bright sight, through which one sees all kinds of evil objects and gives rise to immeasurable fear; second, dark sight, in which one sees nothing in utter stillness and gives rise to immeasurable terror. Thus the fire of sight burns hearing, becoming boiling cauldrons and molten copper; burns breath, becoming black smoke and purple flames; burns taste, becoming charred pellets and iron mash; burns touch, becoming hot ashes and furnace coals; and burns mind, producing sparks that scatter and fan throughout empty space."

"Second, the retribution of hearing draws forth evil results. When the karma of hearing intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees waves and billows drowning heaven and earth. The consciousness of the deceased descends and flows along the current into the uninterrupted hell. Two aspects then manifest: first, open hearing, which hears every kind of clamor and leaves the spirit disturbed and confused; second, closed hearing, which hears nothing in utter stillness, while the hidden spirit sinks away. Thus the waves of hearing pour into hearing, becoming accusation and interrogation."

"Poured into sight, they become thunder, roaring, and poisonous vapors. Poured into breath, they become rain and mist, sprinkling poisonous insects all over the body. Poured into taste, they become pus, blood, and various filth. Poured into

touch, they become animals and ghosts, excrement and urine. Poured into mind, they become lightning and hail, shattering the heart and spirit."

"Third, the retribution of smell draws forth evil results. When the karma of smell intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees poisonous vapors filling both near and far. The consciousness of the deceased surges up from the ground and enters the uninterrupted hell. Two aspects then manifest: first, unobstructed smelling, in which various evil vapors fumigate one until the mind is extremely disturbed; second, obstructed smelling, in which the breath is blocked and cannot pass, so that one is suffocated upon the ground. Thus the odors of smell rush into breath, becoming interrogation and trampling."

"Rushing into sight, they become fire and torches. Rushing into hearing, they become submersion and drowning, melting and boiling. Rushing into taste, they become hunger and bitter deprivation. Rushing into touch, they become splitting and rotting, becoming a great mountain of flesh with hundreds of thousands of eyes and innumerable mouths that devour. Rushing into thought, they become ashes and pestilential vapors, flying sand and gravel that smash the body to pieces."

"Fourth, the retribution of taste draws forth evil results. When the karma of taste intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees an iron net, its fierce flames blazing, covering the entire world. The consciousness of the deceased passes downward through the net, hangs suspended upside down, and enters the uninterrupted hell. Two aspects then manifest: first, inhaling breath, which congeals into ice and freezes the flesh; second, exhaling breath, which flies forth as fierce fire and burns the bones and marrow to ruin."

Thus, the retribution of tasting: when experienced through tasting, it can become endurance and forbearance; when experienced through sight, it can become burning metal and stones; when experienced through hearing, it can become sharp weapons and blades; when experienced through breathing, it can become great iron cages covering the land; when experienced through touch, it can become bows and arrows, crossbows and shooting; when experienced through thought, it can become flying red-hot iron raining down from the sky.

Fifth is the retribution of touch, which brings about evil results. When the karma of touch intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees great mountains closing in from all four sides, with no way out. The consciousness of the dying person sees a great iron city, fiery snakes and dogs, tigers, wolves, and lions, and ox-headed jailers and horse-headed rākṣasas holding spears and lances, driving them through the city gate toward the Avīci Hell. Two aspects are manifested: first, contact through union —the closing mountains press upon the body, and bones, flesh, and blood are crushed and scattered.

Second, contact through separation—knives and swords touch the body, and the heart and liver are cut and torn apart. Thus, when experienced through touch, contact through union can become collision and striking, stabbing and shooting; when experienced through sight, it can become burning and scorching; when experienced through hearing, it can become paths and inspections, halls and benches; when experienced through breathing, it can become bindings and bags, interrogation and fettering; when experienced through tasting, it can become plowing and clamping, chopping and severing; when experienced through thought, it can become falling and flying, boiling and roasting.

Sixth is the retribution of thought, which brings about evil results. When the karma of thought intermingles, at the moment of death one first sees an evil wind blowing apart the land. The consciousness of the dying person is blown up into the air, whirled about in the wind, and falls into the Avīci Hell. Two aspects are manifested: first, unconsciousness—when delusion reaches its extreme, one becomes frantic and rushes about without rest. Second, non-delusion—when one is aware, there is suffering: immeasurable burning and torment, with pain too profound to endure.

Thus, with distorted thought: when thought congeals, it can become directions and places; when sight congeals, it can become mirrors and testimony; when hearing congeals, it can become great crushing stones, ice and frost, earth and fog; when breathing congeals, it can become great fire-carts, fire-boats, and fiery railings; when tasting congeals, it can become great cries, regret, and weeping; when touch congeals, it can become great and small, ten thousand births and ten thousand deaths in a single day, lying down and rising up.

Ānanda, these are called the ten causes and six results of the hells; all are created by sentient beings in their delusion. If sentient beings create the same evil karma together, they enter the Avīci Hell, undergo immeasurable suffering, and endure it through immeasurable kalpas. If each of the six faculties creates karma, and what they do involves both objects and faculties, that person enters the eight uninterrupted hells. If body, speech, and mind commit killing, stealing, and sexual misconduct, that person enters the eighteen hells.

If the three karmas are not all involved, and one commits, for example, either killing or stealing, that person enters the thirty-six hells. If, through a single faculty of seeing, one singly commits one karma, that person enters the one hundred and eight hells. Thus sentient beings act and create separately, yet within the worlds enter places of shared karmic retribution. These arise from deluded thought; they are not inherently existent.

Furthermore, Ānanda, when these sentient beings have not destroyed the moral codes, violated the bodhisattva precepts, or slandered the Buddha's nirvāṇa, but

have committed other miscellaneous karmas that burn through kalpas, then, after their retribution has been exhausted, they assume the forms of various ghosts. If greed for material things was the original cause of their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter things and take form as strange ghosts. If greed for sensual beauty was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter wind and take form as drought-demon ghosts.

If greed for delusion was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter animals and take form as charm ghosts. If greed for hatred was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter insects and take form as gu-poison ghosts. If greed for recollection was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter decay and take form as pestilence ghosts. If greed for arrogance was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter vapor and take form as hungry ghosts.

If greed for deception was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter darkness and take form as nightmare ghosts. If greed for brightness was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter essences and take form as wangliang ghosts. If greed for achievement was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter light and take form as servant ghosts. If greed for factional attachment was their offense, then, when their punishment is complete, they encounter people and take form as messenger ghosts. Ānanda, all such beings fall because of pure emotion; when karmic fire burns them dry, they emerge as ghosts. All these are brought about by the karma of their own deluded thoughts. If they awaken to bodhi, then the wondrous, perfect luminosity is fundamentally devoid of any such things.

Furthermore, Ānanda, when ghost karma is exhausted, both emotion and thought become empty. Then, in the world, they encounter those to whom they originally owed debts and meet them as adversaries; they become animals in order to repay their former debts. When the retribution of strange ghosts attached to things is exhausted and the thing itself decays, they are born into the world mostly as owl-like creatures. When the retribution of wind-demon ghosts is exhausted and the wind disperses, they are born into the world mostly as portentous and anomalous creatures.

When the retribution of animal-charm ghosts is exhausted and the animal dies, they are born into the world mostly as foxes. When the retribution of insect gu-ghosts is exhausted and the gu poison is destroyed, they are born into the world mostly as venomous creatures. When the retribution of decaying pestilence ghosts is exhausted and decay is spent, they are born into the world mostly as worms. When the retribution of vapor-receiving ghosts is exhausted and the vapor disperses, they are born into the world mostly as creatures that feed.

When the retribution of ghosts bound to darkness is exhausted and the darkness disperses, they are born into the world mostly as creatures that serve. When the retribution of ghosts harmonized with essences is exhausted and the harmonization ceases, they are born into the world mostly as responsive creatures. When the retribution of luminous spirit ghosts is exhausted and the light is extinguished, they are born into the world mostly as all kinds of auspicious creatures. When the retribution of ghosts dependent on people is exhausted and the person dies, they are born into the world mostly as creatures that follow.

Ānanda, all of these are dried up by karmic fire and, in repaying their former debts, become animals in the lower realm. These too are brought about by their own false karma. If they awaken to bodhi, then these deluded conditions are fundamentally nonexistent. As you mentioned, the fragrant lady Baolian, King Virūḍhaka, and the bhikshu Sunakṣatra—such evil karma is manifested from within oneself; it does not fall from heaven, rise from the earth, or come from another person. It is summoned by one's own delusion and must be undergone by oneself. Within the bodhi mind, all such things are floating unrealities, congealed from deluded thought.

Furthermore, Ānanda, after animals have repaid their former debts, if those repaying exceed what is owed, these sentient beings again become human and in turn claim the surplus. If the debtor has strength as well as blessings, they remain human among humans and repay that strength; if they lack blessings, they again become animals and repay the remaining value. Ānanda, you should know that if repayment is made with money or goods, or through labor, then once the debt is fully paid, it ends of itself.

But if, in the meantime, one kills another's life or eats another's flesh, then even through kalpas as numerous as motes of dust, they devour and kill one another, like a turning wheel, each in turn above or below, without any rest. Apart from śamatha and the Buddha's appearance in the world, it cannot be brought to an end. You should now know that, when those of the owl kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the obstinate kind.

When those of the portentous kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the anomalous kind. When those of the fox kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm among the mediocre kind. When those of the venomous kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the fierce kind. When those of the worm kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the insignificant kind. When those of the feeding kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the gentle kind.

When those of the serving kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the laboring kind. When those of the responsive kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm among the cultured kind. When those of the auspicious kind have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm mixed among the intelligent kind. When those of all the following kinds have repaid in full and regain human form, they are born in the human realm among the accomplished kind. Ānanda, after all these have repaid their former debts, they return to human form. Since beginningless time, their karmic reckoning has been confused; they give rise to and kill one another. Without encountering the Tathāgata or hearing the true Dharma, they naturally revolve in the wearisome world. Such beings are called pitiable.

Ānanda, there are also people who, without relying on right awakening, cultivate samādhi. They instead cultivate deluded thoughts, preserve an imagined form, and wander in mountains and forests beyond human reach. There are ten kinds of immortals. Ānanda, those sentient beings who steadfastly ingest elixirs without ceasing, and perfect the way of diet, are called earth-traveling immortals. Those who steadfastly use grasses and trees without ceasing, and perfect the way of medicines, are called flying immortals.

Those who steadfastly use metals and stones without ceasing, and perfect the way of transformation, are called wandering immortals. Those who steadfastly regulate movement and stillness without ceasing, and perfect the essence of vital energy, are called air-traveling immortals. Those who steadfastly cultivate bodily fluids without ceasing, and perfect the virtue of moistening, are called heaven-traveling immortals. Those who steadfastly cultivate seminal essence and form without ceasing, and perfect the absorption of pure essence, are called penetrating immortals.

Those who steadfastly maintain mantras and prohibitions without ceasing, and perfect occult arts, are called Way-traveling immortals. Those who steadfastly maintain thoughts without ceasing, and perfect thought and recollection, are called illuminating immortals. Those who steadfastly pursue sexual union without ceasing, and perfect sympathetic response, are called essence-traveling immortals. Those who steadfastly pursue transformations without ceasing, and perfect awakening, are called transcendent immortals. Ānanda, all these cultivate their minds among humans but do not cultivate right awakening. They attain a separate principle of life, live for tens of millions of years, and dwell in remote mountains or islands in the great sea, cut off from human habitation. They too remain within saṃsāra. Deluded thoughts continue to flow; because they do not cultivate samādhi, when their retribution is exhausted, they return and scatter into the various destinies.

Ānanda, worldly people who do not seek permanence and have not yet relinquished their affectionate attachment to wives and concubines, yet whose minds do not become dissipated through sexual misconduct, become clear and bright. After death, they dwell near the sun and moon. Such beings are called the Heaven of the Four Heavenly Kings.

Those whose sexual attachment to their own wives is slight and who, in pure dwelling, do not obtain its full flavor, after death rise beyond the radiance of the sun and moon and dwell at the summit of the human world. Such beings are called the Trāyastriṃśa Heaven.

Those who, when desire arises, engage only briefly and afterward have no thoughts or recollections of it, and who in the human world are more still than active, after death dwell serenely in open space. The light of the sun and moon cannot shine upon them from below. These people possess their own light. Such beings are called the Yāma Heaven.

Those who are tranquil at all times, yet when a responsive contact comes are unable to resist it, after death rise to the subtle level and do not connect with the realms of humans and devas below. Even when a kalpa is destroyed, the three calamities do not reach them. Such beings are called the Tuṣita Heaven.

Those who say, “I have no desirous mind; I merely respond to your actions,” and who, when sexual union is offered, find its taste like chewing wax, are after death born beyond the realm of transformation. Such beings are called the Heaven of Enjoying Transformations.

Those who have no worldly mind while engaging in worldly activities, and who, in sexual union, remain lucidly transcendent, after death can universally transcend the realms of transformation and of no transformation. Such beings are called the Heaven of Mastery over Others' Transformations.

Ānanda, in these six heavens, although their bodies are free from coarse movement, traces of mental intercourse remain. From here downward is called the desire realm.

Part Four: Thoroughly Investigating the Seven Destinies and Five Aggregates, Ever Entering the Great Ocean of Perfect Enlightenment

Volume Nine

Ānanda! All those in the world who cultivate the mind cannot have wisdom without dhyāna. They may merely restrain the body and refrain from sexual desire; whether walking or sitting, no lustful thoughts arise, sensual attachment does not arise, and they remain free from the desire realm. Such persons should be regarded as companions in the Brahmā life. Those of this kind are called the Brahmā Multitudes Heaven.

Once the habit of desire has been removed and the mind free of desire appears, they delight in and comply with all disciplinary precepts. Such persons can then practice Brahmā conduct. Those of this kind are called the Brahmā Ministers Heaven.

Their bodies and minds are subtly complete, their deportment is without deficiency, and, in addition to pure precepts, they possess clear understanding. Such persons can then govern the Brahmā multitudes and become Great Brahmā Kings. Those of this kind are called the Great Brahmā Heaven.

Ānanda! These three superior levels cannot be oppressed by any suffering or affliction. Although they have not properly cultivated genuine samādhi, the outflows in their pure minds remain unmoved. This is called the first dhyāna.

Ānanda! Next are the Brahmā heavens: governing Brahmā beings, perfecting Brahmā conduct, and clarifying the mind until it is unmoving, they become still and lucid, giving rise to light. Those of this kind are called the Lesser Light Heaven.

Lights mutually illuminate one another; their radiance shines without end, reflecting throughout the worlds of the ten directions, all of which become like crystal. Those of this kind are called the Immeasurable Light Heaven.

They absorb and maintain complete light, thereby accomplishing the substance of teaching; pure transformations issue forth, and their functions are inexhaustible. Those of this kind are called the Light-Sound Heaven.

Ānanda! These three superior levels cannot be oppressed by any burdens of anxiety. Although they have not properly cultivated genuine samādhi, the coarse outflows in their pure minds have already been subdued. This is called the second dhyāna.

Ānanda! For such devas, complete light becomes sound; through the sound, subtle wonders are revealed, giving rise to pure conduct and penetrating the bliss of cessation. Those of this kind are called the Lesser Purity Heaven.

Pure emptiness appears before them and extends without limit. Their bodies and minds are light and at ease, and they attain the bliss of cessation. Those of this kind are called the Immeasurable Purity Heaven.

Their worlds, bodies, and minds are all completely pure. Their virtue of purity is fulfilled, a superior support appears before them, and they return to the bliss of cessation. Those of this kind are called the Pervasive Purity Heaven.

Ānanda! These three superior levels possess great compliance; their bodies and minds are peaceful and secure, and they attain immeasurable bliss. Although they have not properly attained genuine samādhi, joy is fully present in their peaceful and secure minds. This is called the third dhyāna.

Ānanda! Furthermore, for these devas, nothing oppresses body or mind; the causes of suffering have ended. Yet bliss is not permanent and, after enduring for long, must give rise to decay. The two minds of suffering and bliss are both suddenly relinquished; coarse heaviness disappears, and the nature of pure merit arises. Those of this kind are called the Merit-Born Heaven.

Their mind of equanimity is perfectly integrated, their superior understanding is pure, and amid unobstructed merit they attain subtle compliance, enduring to the limit of the future. Those of this kind are called the Merit-Loving Heaven.

Ānanda! From this heaven there are two divergent paths. If, in their former mind, they realize immeasurable pure light, and their merit becomes complete and luminous through cultivation and realization, they abide there. Those of this kind are called the Extensive Fruition Heaven.

If, in their mind of equanimity, they have fully developed aversion to both suffering and bliss, intensely investigate the mind of equanimity without interruption, completely pursue the path of equanimity, and cause body and mind alike to perish, their mental activity becomes like cold ashes for five hundred kalpas. Because these persons take arising and ceasing as their cause, they cannot bring forth the nature that neither arises nor ceases: for the first half of a kalpa they cease, and in the latter half they arise. Those of this kind are called the No-Thought Heaven.

Ānanda! These four superior levels cannot be moved by any states of suffering or bliss in all worldly realms. Although they are not the genuinely unmoving ground of unconditioned reality, their mind of attainment has matured in its functioning. This is called the fourth dhyāna.

Ānanda! Within this are also the five heavens of Non-Returners. The nine grades of habitual tendencies of the lower realms are all extinguished at once. Having forgotten both suffering and bliss, with no dwelling place below, they establish their

abode among those of like kind in the mind of equanimity. Ānanda! When suffering and bliss are both extinguished, their contentious minds no longer interact. Those of this kind are called the No-Affliction Heaven.

Their mechanism functions alone, and there is no ground for scrutinizing interaction. Those of this kind are called the No-Heat Heaven. The worlds of the ten directions are perfectly clear to their subtle vision, and no images of dust or any defilements remain. Those of this kind are called the Good-View Heaven.

Refined vision appears before them, and they transform and fashion without obstruction. Those of this kind are called the Good-Manifestation Heaven.

They fully investigate the most subtle workings of the group and exhaust the nature of material form, entering boundlessness. Those of this kind are called the Ultimate Form Heaven.

Ānanda! Of these Non-Returning heavens, the heavenly kings of the four levels of the fourth dhyāna merely hear of them with reverence; they cannot know or see them. It is like the sacred places of the Way in remote wildernesses and deep mountains in this world: because arhats dwell there and uphold them, coarse worldly people cannot see them.

Ānanda! These eighteen heavens practice alone, without sexual intercourse; yet they have not exhausted the burden of material form. From here downward, they are called the form realm.

Furthermore, Ānanda, from within the uppermost boundary of the form realm, there are again two divergent paths. If, in the mind of equanimity, they bring forth and illuminate wisdom, and the light of wisdom becomes perfectly penetrating, they then leave the realm of dust, become arhats, and enter the bodhisattva vehicle. Those of this kind are called great arhats who have turned their minds back.

If, while in the mind of equanimity, their relinquishment and aversion are complete, they perceive the body as an obstruction and dissolve that obstruction into emptiness, those of this kind are called the Sphere of Infinite Space.

Once all obstructions have been dissolved, neither obstruction nor its cessation remains. Within, only the ālaya consciousness (ālaya-vijñāna) remains, together with the extremely subtle half-portion of manas. Those of this kind are called the Sphere of Infinite Consciousness.

When both emptiness and form have vanished, and consciousness and mind are completely extinguished, the ten directions are still and there is utterly nowhere to go. Those of this kind are called the Sphere of Nothingness.

The nature of consciousness remains unmoving. They investigate it to the utmost through cessation; within the endless, they proclaim the nature of exhaustion. It is as though it exists and does not exist, as though exhausted yet not exhausted. Those of this kind are called the Sphere of Neither Perception nor Non-Perception.

These persons exhaust emptiness without exhausting the principle of emptiness. They are those who, from the sacred path of the Non-Returning heavens, have pursued emptiness to its limit. Those of this kind are called dull arhats who have not turned their minds back. If they come from the No-Thought heavens of non-Buddhist paths, pursue emptiness to its limit without returning, and are deluded by outflows and without hearing the Dharma, they enter transmigration.

Ānanda! In all these heavens, each deva is an ordinary being. They receive the recompense of karma, and when that recompense is exhausted, they reenter the round of rebirth. Their heavenly kings, however, are bodhisattvas who roam in samādhi, gradually advance, and dedicate themselves to the path cultivated by the noble community.

Ānanda! In these four formless heavens, body and mind are extinguished, the nature of meditative absorption appears, and there is no material form resulting from karma. From here to their end, this is called the formless realm.

All this arises because they do not understand the wondrously enlightened, luminous mind. Delusion accumulates and gives rise to further delusion; thus the three realms falsely exist. Amid them, beings falsely follow and sink into the seven destinies. Each pudgala follows its own kind.

Furthermore, Ānanda, within these three realms there are four kinds of asuras. If, in the ghost realm, they rely on the power of protecting the Dharma and ride spiritual powers into emptiness, these asuras are born from eggs and belong to the ghost destiny. If, among the devas, they are demoted and cast down because their virtue has declined, their dwelling places lie near the sun and moon. These asuras emerge from the womb and belong to the human destiny.

There are asura kings who uphold the world; their power penetrates everywhere and they are fearless. They can contend for authority with Brahmā Kings, Śakra, and the Four Heavenly Kings. These asuras arise through transformation and belong to the deva destiny. Ānanda! There is another, inferior class of asuras. Born in the heart of the great ocean, they sink to the mouths of watery caverns; by day they roam through empty space, and at night they return to dwell in the water. These asuras arise from dampness and belong to the animal destiny.

Ānanda! Thus the hells, hungry ghosts, animals, humans, spirits and immortals, devas, and asuras—when the seven destinies are closely examined—are all deluded,

submerged, conditioned appearances. They are born from deluded thought and follow karma through deluded thought. In the wondrous, perfectly luminous, uncreated fundamental mind, they are all like flowers in empty space, originally without any attachment. There is only a single falsity, with no root or origin to be found.

Ānanda! These beings do not recognize their fundamental mind and undergo this cycle of rebirth through immeasurable kalpas, never attaining true purity. This is entirely because they comply with killing, stealing, and sexual desire. Reversing these three gives rise to the absence of killing, stealing, and sexual desire. Where there is, there is the category of ghosts; where there is absence, there is the destiny of devas. Existence and absence incline against one another, giving rise to the nature of cyclic rebirth. If one attains the wondrous arising of samādhi, then there is wondrous, constant quiescence: both existence and absence are absent, and even the absence of these two ceases. If even non-killing, non-stealing, and non-sexual desire do not remain, how could one still follow acts of killing, stealing, and sexual desire?

Ānanda! If the three karmas are not cut off, each retains its own private attachment. Because of these individual private attachments, the many private attachments share corresponding destinies; they are not without fixed places. Arising comes forth from delusion; deluded arising has no cause and cannot be traced. You should exert yourselves in practice. If you wish to attain bodhi, you must remove the three delusions. If the three delusions are not exhausted, then even if you gain spiritual powers, they are all conditioned worldly functions. If habitual tendencies are not extinguished, you will fall into the path of māras. Though wishing to eliminate delusion, you instead multiply falseness. The Tathāgata calls such people pitiable. You yourselves create your delusion; it is not the fault of bodhi. To speak thus is called right speech; any other explanation is the speech of the Māra King.

(The Fifty Skandha Māras)

At that moment, as the Tathāgata was about to leave the Dharma seat, he leaned upon the seven-jeweled table on the lion throne, turned toward Purple-Gold Mountain, and again rested against it. He addressed the entire assembly and Ānanda: “You who are still learning, pratyekabuddhas and śrāvakas, have today turned your minds toward the unsurpassed, wondrous enlightenment of great bodhi. I have now explained the true method of practice.”

“Yet you still do not recognize the subtle māra-related matters involved in cultivating śamatha and vipaśyanā. When māra states appear before you, you cannot recognize them; your efforts to cleanse the mind are not right, and you fall into deviant views. You may encounter skandha māras, heavenly māras, attachment to ghosts and

spirits, or chīmèi demons. Because your mind lacks clarity, you take a thief for your own child."

"Moreover, midway through you may gain a little and take it as sufficient, like the uninstructed bhikshu of the fourth dhyāna, who falsely claimed to have realized sagehood. When his heavenly reward ended and signs of decline appeared, he slandered arhats; he then underwent further rebirth and fell into the Avīci hell. You should listen carefully. I shall now distinguish these matters for you in detail." Ānanda rose, and together with the other learners in the assembly, joyfully bowed in homage and respectfully listened to the compassionate instruction.

The Buddha told Ānanda and the great assembly: "You should know that the twelve classes of living beings in worlds with outflows possess the fundamentally enlightened, wondrously luminous, perfectly enlightened substance of mind, no different from that of the Buddhas of the ten directions. Because of your deluded thoughts, you mistake principle and generate ignorance and attachment. As arising generates pervasive delusion, the nature of emptiness comes to exist; as transformed delusion does not cease, worlds arise. Thus the lands of the ten directions, as numerous as motes of dust, insofar as they are not without outflows, are all established by obstinate delusion and false thought. You should know that empty space arises within your own mind like a small cloud specking the vast clear sky. How much more so are the worlds within empty space!"

"When any one of you brings forth genuine return to the source, all the empty space of the ten directions will utterly vanish. How then could the lands within that empty space not tremble and split apart? You cultivate dhyāna and adorn samādhi. The bodhisattvas of the ten directions and all great arhats without outflows have minds whose essence communicates and accords with yours; in that very place, they remain serenely still."

"All māra kings, ghosts and spirits, and ordinary devas see their palaces collapse without cause, the great earth quake and split open, and creatures of water, land, and air all become terrified. Ordinary beings are dim and dark and do not perceive these changes. Those beings all possess the five spiritual powers, except the extinction of outflows. Attached to this worldly toil, how could they permit you to destroy and shatter their abodes? Therefore, ghosts and spirits, heavenly māras, wangliang demons, and goblins all come to trouble you during samādhi."

"Yet although these māras may be greatly enraged, within their worldly toil and your wondrous enlightenment, they are like wind blowing upon light or a knife cutting water: they do not touch one another at all. You are like boiling water, and they are like solid ice. As warmth gradually approaches, they soon melt away. They merely rely on spiritual powers, and are only guests. Their success in causing disruption

depends upon the master of the five aggregates within your own mind. If the master is deluded, the guest finds an opportunity."

If, in dhyāna at that very place, you awaken and are free of delusion, what can those demonic events do to you? When the aggregates dissolve into brightness, those hordes of evil spirits are all enveloped in darkness. Brightness can dispel darkness; when it draws near, they naturally perish. How then would they dare remain to disturb your meditative absorption? But if you fail to awaken and are deluded by the aggregates, then you, Ānanda, will surely become a child of Māra and accomplish the work of demons. Mātaṅgī was especially insignificant; she merely used a spell on you, causing you to violate the Buddha's rules of conduct. Of the eighty thousand practices, only one precept was broken. Because your mind was pure, you had not yet sunk into ruin. But this would destroy your entire precious awakening, like the confiscation of a minister's household: all would be scattered and lost, with no possibility of rescue.

Ānanda, you should know that as you sit in the place of practice and dissolve all thoughts, if those thoughts are exhausted, then all that is free of thought becomes utterly clear. Movement and stillness do not shift; remembering and forgetting are alike. When you abide here and enter samādhi, it is like a person with clear eyes dwelling in profound darkness: the essential nature is wondrously pure, but the mind has not yet emitted light. This is called the realm of the form aggregate. When the eyes become bright and clear, and the ten directions open completely, with no further darkness, this is called the exhaustion of the form aggregate. Such a person can then transcend the turbidity of time. Looking into its origin, firm deluded thought is its basis.

Ānanda, while abiding in this state, one may closely investigate the wondrous brightness. The four elements then cease to obstruct one another, and in a short while the body may pass through obstacles. This is called the essential brightness flowing out into external objects. It is only a temporary attainment through the power of practice; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

Ānanda, one may again use this mind to closely investigate the wondrous brightness, so that one sees through the interior of one's body. Such a person may suddenly pull out roundworms from within the body, while the body's appearance remains intact and suffers no injury. This is called the essential brightness flowing through the physical body. It is only a temporary occurrence resulting from refined practice; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to investigate inwardly and outwardly with focused clarity. At that time, the ethereal and corporeal souls, volition, consciousness, and vital spirit—apart from that which holds to the body—may all intermingle, becoming mutually host and guest. One may suddenly hear the sound of Dharma teaching in empty space, or hear the secret meanings being expounded alike throughout the ten directions. This is called the alternating separation and union of the essential and spiritual aspects, bringing wholesome seeds to maturation. It is only a temporary occurrence; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind so that it becomes clear, open, and penetrating, its inner light shining forth. The ten directions may all become the color of Jambūnada gold, and every kind of being may transform into Tathāgatas. At that time, one may suddenly see Vairocana seated upon a lotus pedestal of heavenly light, surrounded by a thousand Buddhas, while a hundred billion lands and lotus flowers appear all at once. This is called the mind's spiritual awareness being influenced by its habitual impressions; the mind-light has been refined into brightness and illuminates all worlds. It is only a temporary occurrence; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to closely investigate the wondrous brightness, observing without pause, restraining and subduing, controlling and transcending. Then the empty space of the ten directions may suddenly become the color of the seven treasures, or of a hundred treasures, filling everything at once without obstruction. Blue, yellow, red, and white each appear in their pure forms. This is called the power of restraint and control exceeding its proper measure. It is only a temporary occurrence; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to investigate until it becomes clear and penetrating, with its essential light undisturbed. Then, in the middle of the night, while in a dark room, one may suddenly see all kinds of things as clearly as in daylight, while the objects in the dark room remain and do not disappear. This is called the mind's subtle and concentrated clarity purifying one's seeing, so that what one sees penetrates the hidden. It is only a temporary occurrence; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to enter completely into empty fusion. The limbs may suddenly become like grass or wood, so that one feels nothing when burned by fire

or cut by a blade. Fire may not burn one, and even if one's flesh is cut, it is like carving wood. This is called the sense objects being merged away, the nature of the four elements being expelled, and one entering wholly into purity. It is only a temporary occurrence; it is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind until purity is accomplished and the power of the pure mind reaches its utmost. One may suddenly see the earth, mountains, and rivers in the ten directions all become Buddha lands, complete with the seven treasures and pervaded by radiance. One may also see Buddhas and Tathāgatas as numerous as the sands of the Ganges filling empty space, with magnificent palaces; below, one sees the hells, and above, one beholds the heavenly palaces, all without obstruction. This is called thoughts of attraction and aversion growing ever more concentrated; after long contemplation, they become manifest. It is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to investigate deeply and far. Then, in the middle of the night, one may suddenly see distant marketplaces and streets, relatives and family members, or hear them speaking. This is called the mind being pressed to an extreme and flying forth, so that one often sees across intervening distance. It is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, it is called a good state. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

One may again use this mind to investigate until utmost refinement is attained. One then sees a good spiritual friend whose physical form changes and shifts, undergoing various transformations for no apparent reason in a short time. This is called an aberrant mind admitting ghosts and spirits, or a heavenly demon entering one's mind and body, causing one to expound the Dharma without cause and comprehend subtle meanings. It is not sacred realization. If one does not form a thought of holiness, demonic events will cease. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, one will be affected by the various evil influences.

Ānanda, these ten states that appear in dhyāna all arise from the mutual interaction of the mind and the functioning of the form aggregate; therefore, these events manifest. Sentient beings are stubbornly deluded and do not examine themselves. When they encounter such conditions, they are confused and fail to recognize them, claiming that they have attained holiness. This becomes a great falsehood, and they fall into the Avīci Hell. You should accordingly proclaim this teaching in the Dharma-ending age after the Tathāgata's extinction. Do not allow heavenly demons to find an

opening; protect and support practitioners so that they may accomplish the unsurpassed Way.

Ānanda, when a good man cultivates samādhi and, within śamatha, the form aggregate is exhausted, he sees the minds of the Buddhas appearing like images in a clear mirror. Though there seems to be something attained, he cannot yet make use of it. It is like a person oppressed by a nightmare: the hands and feet are intact, seeing and hearing are undisturbed, yet the mind is touched by an alien evil influence and cannot move. This is called the realm of the feeling aggregate. When the affliction of the nightmare ceases, the mind leaves the body and turns back to look upon its own face; coming and going are then free, with no further obstruction. This is called the exhaustion of the feeling aggregate. Such a person can then transcend the turbidity of views. Looking into its origin, empty and bright deluded thought is its basis.

Ānanda, while abiding in this state, the good man may attain great radiance. As his mind becomes illumined, he may inwardly restrain himself to excess and suddenly give rise to boundless compassion. He may look even upon mosquitoes and gnats as though they were infants, feel pity for them, and weep without realizing it. This is called the function of practice exceeding its limits through excessive suppression. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. If one clearly understands it and is not deluded, it will naturally cease after a time. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon of compassion enters one's mind and body. Upon seeing people, one becomes compassionate and weeps without end. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Ānanda, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, extraordinary states may appear before them. Moved beyond measure, they may suddenly give rise to boundless courage. Their minds become fierce and sharp; their aspiration is equal to that of all Buddhas, and they believe that they can cross the three asaṃkhyeya kalpas in a single thought. This is called the function of practice exceeding its limits through overreaching haste. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. If one clearly understands it and is not deluded, it will naturally cease after a time. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon of madness enters one's mind and body. When seeing people, one boasts, with incomparable arrogance, even to the point of seeing no Buddha above and no human beings below. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, yet gain no new realization ahead and lose their former resting place behind, their power of wisdom declines. They enter a state of collapse, utterly without anything to see. A great dryness and thirst suddenly arise in their

minds. At all times, they remain immersed in unceasing recollection, taking this to be a sign of diligent effort. This is called cultivating the mind without wisdom and thereby losing one's way. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon of recollection enters one's mind and body, gathering up the mind morning and evening and suspending it in one place. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, their wisdom overbalances their samādhi. Erring through excessive sharpness, they harbor their extraordinary qualities in their minds, suspecting that they themselves are Vairocana and being satisfied with slight attainment. This is called losing constant discernment in the use of the mind and drowning in views and understanding. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a lowly demon, readily satisfied with a little, enters one's mind and body. On seeing people, one declares, "I have attained the unsurpassed ultimate truth." Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, what they seek to realize has not been attained, while their former reliance has already been lost. Surveying the two ends, they generate danger and hardship within themselves. A boundless sorrow suddenly arises in their minds, as though sitting upon an iron bed or drinking poison. They do not wish to live and constantly ask others to kill them, so that they may quickly gain release. This is called losing skillful means in cultivation. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization.

But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon of constant sorrow enters one's mind and body. One may take up a knife or sword and cut one's own flesh, delighting in relinquishing one's life; or one may remain constantly sorrowful, flee into the mountains and forests, and be unable to bear the sight of people. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, after dwelling in purity and attaining peace and security of mind, boundless joy may suddenly arise of itself. The mind is so delighted that it cannot stop. This is called ease; without wisdom, one cannot restrain it. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon delighting in joy enters one's mind and body. On seeing people, one laughs; beside the roads, one sings and dances to oneself, claiming to have attained unobstructed liberation. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, they believe themselves already sufficient. Then, for no apparent reason, great self-conceit suddenly arises, including conceit, excessive conceit, conceit beyond conceit, overestimation, and inferior conceit, all arising at once. In their minds, they may even slight the Tathāgatas of the ten directions, much less śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas of lower rank. This is called seeing one's own superiority but lacking the wisdom to save oneself. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization.

But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon of great self-conceit enters one's mind and body. One no longer bows to stupas or temples and destroys sūtras and images. One tells donors, "These are merely gold, bronze, clay, or wood. The sūtras are merely tree leaves or woven cloth. The physical body is truly permanent; instead of honoring it, you revere clay and wood. This is truly inverted." Those who deeply believe such words follow one in smashing these things and burying them in the ground. Thus sentient beings are misled into falling into the Avīci Hell. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, they may completely awaken to the principle of essential brightness and attain great compliance. Boundless ease then suddenly arises in their minds, and they declare themselves saints who have attained great freedom. This is called obtaining various states of lightness and clarity through wisdom. If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization. But if one interprets it as sacred realization, a demon delighting in lightness and clarity enters one's mind and body. One believes oneself complete and seeks no further progress. Such people often become ignorant bhikṣus, misleading sentient beings into falling into the Avīci Hell. Having lost proper samādhi, one will thereafter fall.

Again, when good men in samādhi see the form aggregate dissolve and the feeling aggregate become clear, within their awakening to brightness they attain the nature of empty clarity. They may suddenly incline toward eternal extinction, deny cause and effect, and enter wholly into emptiness. A mind of emptiness appears before them, and they may even develop a lasting annihilationist understanding. [This is called the mind of samādhi sinking and losing its responsive illumination.] If one recognizes it, there is no fault; it is not sacred realization.

If they interpret this as a holy realization, an emptiness demon enters their mind and vitals. It then slanders the keeping of precepts as belonging to the Lesser Vehicle: "Since bodhisattvas have realized emptiness, what is there to uphold or violate?" Such a person often drinks wine and eats meat in the homes of faithful donors, and engages extensively in licentious conduct. By the demon's power, those before him are captivated and do not give rise to doubt or censure. Once the ghostly

mind has long entered him, he may eat excrement and urine along with wine and meat, declaring them all equally empty. He destroys the Buddha's discipline and leads people into wrongdoing. Having lost proper concentration, he will inevitably fall.

Furthermore, when these good men are in samādhi and see the form aggregate disappear and the feeling aggregate become manifest, they savor this empty luminosity, which penetrates deeply into their minds and bones. Suddenly boundless attachment arises in their minds. When attachment reaches an extreme, it gives rise to madness and becomes craving and desire. This is the peaceful and agreeable state of samādhi entering the mind. Without wisdom to maintain themselves, they mistakenly enter into various desires. If they awaken to this, there is no fault; it is not holy realization.

If they interpret it as a holy realization, a desire demon enters their mind and vitals. It constantly declares desire to be the path of bodhi and induces laypeople to engage equally in sexual desire. Those who engage in sexual conduct are called heirs who uphold the Dharma. By the power of ghosts and spirits, in the Dharma-ending age it captivates foolish ordinary people, sometimes numbering one or two hundred, or five or six hundred, and often reaching thousands or tens of thousands. When the demon grows weary, it leaves the person's body. Its spiritual power being gone, both disciples and teacher fall into trouble with the authorities. They mislead living beings through doubt and error, causing them to enter the Avīci hell. Having lost proper concentration, they will inevitably fall.

Ānanda, these ten kinds of states that appear in dhyāna all arise from the mutual interaction of the mind with the feeling aggregate. Therefore, such things appear. Sentient beings are stubbornly deluded and do not reflect upon themselves. When they encounter such circumstances, they are deluded and fail to recognize them, claiming that they have attained sainthood. Having committed the great lie, they fall into the Avīci hell. You too should transmit the Tathāgata's words after my extinction, making their meaning known throughout the Dharma-ending age, so that all sentient beings may awaken to it. Do not allow heavenly demons to find an opening; protect and support them, so that they may accomplish the unsurpassed Way.

Ānanda, when these good men cultivate samādhi and the feeling aggregate is exhausted, although their outflows have not yet been exhausted, their minds are freed from their bodies, like a bird released from its cage. They are then able to accomplish the ascent from this ordinary body through the sixty sacred stages of a bodhisattva, attain a mind-born body, and travel freely without obstruction wherever they wish.

It is like someone talking in sleep. Although that person has no separate awareness, the speech has already become articulate and orderly, so that those who are awake can all understand it. This is called the realm of the thinking aggregate. When the stirring of thoughts is exhausted and superficial imaginings are eliminated, the mind's awakened luminosity is like dust and grime being removed. The entire cycle of birth and death, from beginning to end, is then perfectly illuminated. This is called the exhaustion of the thinking aggregate. Such a person can transcend the turbidity of afflictions. Looking into its origin, one finds that interconnected false thoughts are its basis.

Ānanda, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in complete illumination. They sharpen their concentrated thought and greedily seek skillful abilities. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person does not realize that he is possessed by a demon, but claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks skillful abilities, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

In an instant, his appearance may become that of a bhikshu for the people to see; or he may become Śakra, a woman, or a bhikshunī. Or, while lying in a dark room, his body may emit light. Foolish and deluded people take him for a bodhisattva, believe his teachings, and have their minds shaken. He destroys the Buddha's discipline and secretly engages in craving and desire. He delights in speaking of disasters, auspicious omens, and strange transformations, or says that a Tathāgata has appeared in some place.

Or he speaks of a kalpa-fire or warfare, terrifying people and causing their household wealth to be squandered for no reason. This is a strange ghost that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Ānanda, again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in wandering freely. They send forth their concentrated thought and greedily seek experiences. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person likewise does not realize that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks such wandering, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

His own appearance does not change, but those listening to his teaching suddenly see themselves seated upon jeweled lotus flowers, their entire bodies transformed into clusters of purple-golden light. Every person in the assembly sees the same thing, attaining what they have never experienced before. Foolish and deluded, they take him for a bodhisattva. Their minds become licentious; they destroy the Buddha's discipline and secretly engage in craving and desire.

He delights in saying that various Buddhas have appeared in the world: that a certain person in a certain place is the transformation-body of a certain Buddha who has come here, or that another person is a certain bodhisattva who has come to transform people in the human realm. Seeing this, people develop longing and admiration; deviant views secretly arise, and the seed of wisdom is extinguished. This is a drought demon that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in subtle savoring. They clarify their concentrated thought and greedily seek correspondence. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person truly does not realize that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks such correspondence, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

Neither his appearance nor that of those listening to the Dharma changes outwardly. Yet, before hearing the teaching, the listeners' minds awaken spontaneously, and their thoughts change from moment to moment. Some gain knowledge of past lives; some know the minds of others; some see the hells; some know the good and evil affairs of the human realm; some recite verses aloud; and some spontaneously chant sūtras. All are delighted and attain what they have never experienced before.

These people are foolish and deluded, taking him for a bodhisattva. Their minds become tenderly attached; they destroy the Buddha's discipline and secretly engage in craving and desire. He delights in saying: "Buddhas are great or small; one Buddha precedes another Buddha, and one Buddha follows another. Among them are also true Buddhas and false Buddhas, male Buddhas and female Buddhas; bodhisattvas are likewise so." Seeing this, people wash away their original minds and readily enter deviant awakening. This is a bewitching ghost that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it

leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in fundamentals. They investigate exhaustively the beginning and end of the transformative nature of things, invigorate their minds, and greedily seek discernment and analysis. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings.

That person at first does not realize that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks the origin, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma. His body possesses an imposing spiritual power that subdues those who seek instruction, so that those seated before him naturally submit in their hearts even before hearing the Dharma.

He tells all these people that the Buddha's nirvāṇa, bodhi, and Dharma body are precisely this present physical body of mine; that fathers beget sons, and sons in turn beget sons, generation after generation, and this is the Dharma body eternally abiding without interruption. He points altogether to the present as the Buddha-land, asserting that there is no other pure abode or golden form. Those people believe and accept this, lose their original minds, and devote their bodies and lives in refuge, attaining what they have never experienced before.

Such people are foolish and deluded, taking him for a bodhisattva. They investigate his mind, destroy the Buddha's discipline, and secretly engage in craving and desire. He delights in saying that the eyes, ears, nose, and tongue are all Pure Lands, and that the male and female sexual organs are the true place of bodhi and nirvāṇa. Those ignorant people believe this filthy talk. This is a gu-poison or nightmare-subduing evil ghost that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in remote responses. They make a thorough, penetrating investigation and greedily seek hidden spiritual resonance. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person originally does not realize that he is possessed by a

demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks responses, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

He can make his listeners temporarily see his body as if it were a hundred or a thousand years old. Attachment and affection arise in their hearts, and they cannot leave him. They become his servants and provide the four requisites, without feeling fatigue. He causes everyone seated before him to believe in their hearts that he was formerly their teacher and good spiritual friend, giving rise to a separate attachment to the Dharma. They cling to him like glue and lacquer, attaining what they have never experienced before. Foolish and deluded, they take him for a bodhisattva. Their hearts become intimate with him; they destroy the Buddha's discipline and secretly engage in craving and desire.

He delights in saying: "In a former life, in a certain birth, I first liberated a certain person. At that time, that person was my wife, concubine, brother, or other relative. Now I have come to liberate that person again. Follow me, and we shall return to a certain world to make offerings to a certain Buddha." Or he says that there is another great Heaven of Light, where a Buddha dwells, the resting place of all Tathāgatas. Those ignorant people believe these empty deceptions and lose their original minds. This is an epidemic ghost that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in going deeply within. They discipline themselves with arduous effort, delight in dwelling in shadowy seclusion, and greedily seek stillness. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person does not originally realize that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks seclusion, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

He causes each listener to know his own past karma. Or, in that place, he may say to someone, "Though you are not yet dead, you have already become an animal." He orders another person to step on that person's tail, and suddenly the person cannot rise. The entire assembly then wholeheartedly reveres and submits to him. Whenever anyone gives rise to a thought, he already knows its beginning.

Beyond the Buddha's discipline, he adds severe ascetic practices. He slanders bhikshus, abuses disciples, exposes people's private affairs, and does not avoid

criticism or reproach. He delights in foretelling calamities and blessings that have not yet occurred; when the time arrives, not the slightest detail is wrong. This is a powerful ghost that, having grown old, has become a demon. It harasses and confuses the person; when it has had its fill, it leaves that person's body. Both disciples and teacher then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If you are deluded and do not recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Again, when these good men find the feeling aggregate empty and subtle, encounter no deviant thoughts, and their complete samādhi becomes manifest, in samādhi their minds delight in knowledge and views. They labor diligently in investigation and greedily seek knowledge of past lives. Then a heavenly demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth its essence to possess someone, who speaks Dharma teachings. That person is utterly unaware that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man who seeks knowledge, arranges a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

Without apparent cause, this person obtains a great precious jewel at the place where he teaches the Dharma. At times the demon transforms into an animal, carrying the jewel in its mouth together with various precious objects, documents and talismans, and all kinds of strange things. It first gives them to that person, then attaches itself to his body. Or it induces listeners to hide something underground, where a bright moon pearl illuminates the spot. All these listeners attain what they have never experienced before.

He eats many medicinal herbs and does not partake of fine meals. At times he eats only one sesame seed and one grain of wheat each day, yet his body remains plump and well nourished, sustained by the demon's power. He slanders bhikshus, abuses disciples, and does not avoid criticism or reproach. He delights in speaking of treasure troves in other lands and places where sages of the ten directions are concealed. Those who follow him often see strange and extraordinary people.

This is called a mountain-forest spirit: an earth deity, city god, river or mountain ghost-spirit, grown old and become a demon. It may promote sexual indulgence, violate the Buddha's precepts, and secretly engage in the five desires with those who serve it. Or it may be diligent, eating only grasses and plants, yet without any settled course of conduct. When it has troubled this person and its desires are satisfied, it leaves the person's body. Disciple and master alike then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If, confused and unaware, you fail to recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Moreover, good man, when the aggregate of feeling becomes empty and wondrous, without being assailed by deviant thoughts, and perfect samādhi manifests, within

samādhi the mind may delight in spiritual powers and various transformations. Investigating the source of transformations, it greedily seeks spiritual powers. At that time, a celestial demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth an essence-spirit to possess someone, who then expounds sūtras and Dharma teachings. This person truly does not realize that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man seeking spiritual powers, sets up a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

This person may hold firelight in his hands, gather the light with his hands, and distribute it over the heads of the four assemblies listening to him. The flames above the heads of these listeners may rise several feet high, yet have no heat and never burn them. Or he may walk upon water as though walking on level ground. Or he may sit motionless in midair, enter a bottle, or remain inside a bag. He may pass through windows and walls without obstruction. Only in the presence of weapons is he not at ease.

He claims to be a Buddha, wears white clothing, and receives the homage of bhikshus. He slanders Chan and the monastic discipline, abuses his disciples, exposes people's private affairs, and does not avoid ridicule or censure. He constantly speaks of freedom in spiritual powers, or causes people to see Buddha lands elsewhere. It is ghostly power that deludes people; there is nothing real in it. He praises sexual indulgence, does not condemn coarse conduct, and treats all manner of obscenities as the transmission of the Dharma.

This is called a powerful spirit of heaven and earth: a mountain essence, sea essence, wind essence, river essence, earth essence, or an essence-spirit of grasses and trees that has accumulated over countless eons. It may also be a dragon-spirit, or an immortal whose lifespan has ended and who has revived as a spirit. Or an immortal's appointed term may have ended, so that it should die according to its allotted years, but its form does not decay; another strange being attaches itself to it, and in old age it becomes a demon. When it has troubled this person and its desires are satisfied, it leaves the person's body. Disciple and master alike then fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If, confused and unaware, you fail to recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Moreover, good man, when the aggregate of feeling becomes empty and wondrous, without being assailed by deviant thoughts, and perfect samādhi manifests, within samādhi the mind may delight in entering cessation. Investigating the nature of transformation, it greedily seeks profound emptiness. At that time, a celestial demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth an essence-spirit to possess someone, who then expounds sūtras and Dharma teachings. This person never realizes that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed

nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man seeking emptiness, sets up a seat, and teaches the Dharma.

Among a great assembly, his form may suddenly disappear, so that no one sees him; then he may suddenly emerge again from empty space, appearing and disappearing at will. Or he may manifest a body transparent as crystal; or, when he lowers his hands and feet, they may emit the fragrance of sandalwood; or his urine and excrement may be like thick rock honey. He slanders the precepts and disparages monastics. He constantly says that there is no cause and no effect, that death is eternal extinction, and that there is no future life, no ordinary beings, and no sages.

Though he has attained empty quiescence, he secretly pursues sensual desire. Those who submit to his desires likewise attain an empty mind and deny cause and effect. This is called an essence-spirit of solar and lunar eclipses, gold, jade, sacred fungi, qilin, phoenixes, tortoises, or cranes, which after tens of thousands of years does not die but becomes a spirit, enters a land, and in old age becomes a demon. When it has troubled this person and its desires are satisfied, it leaves the person's body. Many disciples and masters alike fall into trouble with the authorities. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If, confused and unaware, you fail to recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Moreover, good man, when the aggregate of feeling becomes empty and wondrous, without being assailed by deviant thoughts, and perfect samādhi manifests, within samādhi the mind may delight in longevity. Painstakingly investigating subtle principles, it greedily seeks everlasting years, abandons segmented birth and death, suddenly hopes for transformational birth and death, and seeks the permanence of subtle appearances. At that time, a celestial demon, waiting for an opportunity, sends forth an essence-spirit to possess someone, who then expounds sūtras and Dharma teachings.

This person never realizes that he is possessed by a demon, yet claims to have attained unsurpassed nirvāṇa. He comes to the good man seeking longevity, sets up a seat, and teaches the Dharma. He likes to speak of traveling without hindrance to and from other lands. Or he may travel ten thousand miles and return in an instant, bringing back objects obtained in those distant places.

Or, while in one residence, only a few steps away, he may tell someone to go from the eastern side to the western wall; yet that person may hurry along for years without ever reaching it. This causes people to believe in him and to suspect that the Buddha has appeared before them. He constantly says: "The sentient beings of the ten directions are all my children. I give birth to all Buddhas. I bring forth the worlds.

I am the primordial Buddha, naturally appearing in the world, not attained through practice."

This is called a celestial demon of sovereign mastery. It sends its retinue—such as Zhewenza and the Piśāca youths of the Four Heavenly Kings—who, not having aroused the resolve, exploit that person's empty luminosity and feed upon his vital essence. Or, without the aid of a teacher, a practitioner may personally see one who calls himself Vajradhara and says, "I shall grant you long life." He manifests in the form of a beautiful woman and vigorously indulges in sensual desire. Within less than a year, the victim's liver and brain dry up. He speaks to himself, and his listeners seem like goblins or spirits. Those before him do not understand, and many fall into trouble with the authorities; before they are even sentenced, they have already dried up and died. Thus he troubles those people until they perish. You should awaken beforehand and not enter the cycle of rebirth. If, confused and unaware, you fail to recognize this, you will fall into the Avīci hell.

Ānanda, you should know that in the Dharma of the latter age, these ten kinds of demons may leave the household life to cultivate the Way. Some possess people's bodies; some manifest their own forms. All claim to have attained perfect, universal awakening. They praise sexual desire and violate the Buddha's disciplinary standards. Evil demon-masters and demon-disciples pass on sexual indulgence from one to another. Such deviant essences bewitch people's hearts and innermost beings. In the nearer case, for nine lives; in many cases, for more than a hundred generations, they cause true practitioners all to become the retinue of demons. After death, they will certainly become demon subjects, lose perfect, universal awakening, and fall into the Avīci hell.

You need not seek cessation first. Even if you attain the state beyond further learning, remain by vow in the age of the final Dharma. Give rise to great compassion, rescue and liberate sentient beings of upright mind and deep faith, enable them not to become attached to demons, and let them attain right view. I have now liberated you from birth and death. If you follow the Buddha's words, this is called repaying the Buddha's kindness.

Ānanda, these ten kinds of meditative states that appear are all manifestations arising from the interaction of the aggregate of thought and the mind's functioning. Sentient beings are stubbornly deluded and do not reflect upon themselves. When they encounter such conditions, they are deluded and do not recognize themselves, claiming that they have ascended to sagehood. Thus the great lie is formed, and they fall into the Avīci hell. You must transmit the Tathāgata's words after my extinction, showing them to those in the age of the final Dharma, so that all sentient beings may awaken to this principle. Do not allow celestial demons to find an

opportunity. Protect and safeguard them, so that they may accomplish the unsurpassed Way.

Volume Ten

Ānanda, when a good man cultivates samādhi and the aggregate of perception is exhausted, his ordinary dreams vanish; waking and sleeping become ever the same. His awareness is bright, empty, and still, like a clear sky, no longer disturbed by the coarse, weighty images of former sense objects. He contemplates the earth, mountains, and rivers of all worldly realms as though reflected in a bright mirror: what comes does not adhere, and what passes leaves no trace. He merely receives and responds to the reflections; the old habitual patterns are wholly gone, and only essential purity remains.

The root source of arising and ceasing is then disclosed. He sees the twelve classes of living beings throughout the ten directions, each complete in its kind. Although he has not yet penetrated the course of each individual life, he sees their common basis of birth: like shimmering wild horses, flickering and subtly stirring, it is the ultimate pivot of the material sense faculties and their objects. This is called the domain of the aggregate of formations. When this flickering original nature of subtle disturbance enters its original clarity, and, once clear, its original habits are stilled—as waves subside and become clear water—this is called the exhaustion of the aggregate of formations. This person can then transcend the turbidity of living beings. Observing its source, he sees that hidden deluded thought is its root.

Ānanda, you should know that when these good men, having attained proper knowledge in śamatha, concentrate their bright and proper minds, the ten kinds of celestial demons can find no opportunity. Only then may they undertake refined investigation and exhaust the root of the classes of living beings. When the source of birth becomes exposed within that fundamental class, and they contemplate that hidden, clear, all-encompassing source of movement, if they give rise to speculative judgments within that all-encompassing source, they fall into the doctrine of two kinds of causelessness. First, they see an original causelessness.

Why? Having completely broken through the mechanism of birth, and relying on the eight hundred merits of the eye faculty, they see the winding currents of karma of all living beings throughout eighty thousand eons: dying here and being born there. They see only living beings revolving in this manner; beyond eighty thousand eons, they see nothing in the darkness. They therefore conclude that living beings in the worlds of the ten directions have existed of themselves without cause since eighty thousand eons ago.

Through this speculation, they lose right and all-encompassing knowledge, fall into non-Buddhist paths, and delude their bodhi-nature. Second, they see an ultimate causelessness. Why? Having seen the root of birth, they know that humans give birth to humans and birds give birth to birds. Crows have always been black, and swans have always been white; humans and devas have always stood upright, while animals have always gone on all fours. White is not made by washing, nor black by dyeing. For eighty thousand eons, these have undergone no change.

When this body now comes to its end, it will be the same. Since I have never seen bodhi, how could there be any further matter of attaining bodhi? They should know that all phenomena today are originally without cause. Through this speculation, they lose right and all-encompassing knowledge, fall into non-Buddhist paths, and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the first non-Buddhist path: the establishment of the doctrine of causelessness.

Ānanda, when these good men in samādhi concentrate their bright and proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments within the all-encompassing constancy, they fall into the doctrine of four kinds of universal permanence. First, they exhaust the natures of mind and objects and see the two as without cause.

Through practice, they know that throughout twenty thousand eons, the arising and ceasing of living beings in the ten directions have all cycled without ever being lost; they take this to be permanence. Second, they exhaust the source of the four great elements and see the four natures as permanently abiding. Through practice, they know that throughout forty thousand eons, the arising and ceasing of living beings in the ten directions have all remained in substance without ever being lost; they take this to be permanence.

Third, they exhaust the six sense faculties, the appropriation of manas, and the original source within mind, consciousness, and awareness, and see its nature as ever constant. Through practice, they know that throughout eighty thousand eons all living beings have cycled without loss, originally abiding permanently. Having exhausted this nature that is not lost, they take it to be permanence. Fourth, having exhausted the source of perception, they see that the principle of birth no longer has any flowing, stopping, or movement. Since the mind of arising-and-ceasing perception has now been forever extinguished, they conclude that the principle itself naturally becomes neither arising nor ceasing. On the basis of what their minds have measured, they take it to be permanence. Through this view of permanence, they lose right and all-encompassing knowledge, fall into non-Buddhist paths, and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the second non-Buddhist path: the establishment of the doctrine of universal permanence.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments concerning self and others, they fall into four inverted views: the doctrine that one part is impermanent and one part permanent. First, they contemplate the wondrously bright mind pervading the realms of the ten directions and take its tranquil clarity to be the ultimate divine self.

They then conclude, “My self pervades the ten directions, concentrated, bright, and unmoving. All living beings are born and die of themselves within my mind. Thus my mind-nature is called permanent; those that arise and cease possess a truly impermanent nature.” Second, they do not contemplate their own minds, but instead contemplate the lands of the ten directions, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges. Where they see an eon destroyed, they call it the ultimate seed-nature of impermanence; where an eon is not destroyed, they call it ultimate permanence.

Third, they separately contemplate their own minds as exquisitely subtle and minute, like motes of dust flowing through the ten directions, yet unchanging in nature, able to cause this body to arise and cease at once. Its indestructible nature they call the permanence of their self-nature; all deaths and births flowing forth from it they call impermanent in nature. Fourth, they know that the aggregate of perception is exhausted and see the flowing of the aggregate of formations. They take the constant flow of the aggregate of formations to be a permanent nature; form, feeling, perception, and the like have now been extinguished, and they call these impermanent in nature. Through such speculation that one part is impermanent and one part permanent, they fall into non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the third non-Buddhist path: the doctrine that one part is permanent.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments concerning divisions and positions, they fall into the doctrine of four finite views. First, they mentally calculate the source of birth, whose flowing function never ceases. They regard the past and future as finite, while the continuing mind they regard as infinite.

Second, when they contemplate eighty thousand eons, they see living beings; but before eighty thousand eons, all is silent, without hearing or seeing. Where there is no hearing or seeing, they call it infinite; where living beings exist, they call it finite. Third, they suppose that they themselves know pervasively and have attained an infinite nature. Since all other people are presently within their knowledge, yet they

have never known the nature of those others' knowing, they say that those others do not possess an infinite mind, but only a finite nature.

Fourth, they exhaust the emptiness of the aggregate of formations and, through the deliberations of their minds based on what they see, conclude that within the single body of every living being, all are half arising and half ceasing. They further declare that all things in the world are half finite and half infinite. Through this speculation about finitude and infinitude, they fall into non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the fourth non-Buddhist path: the establishment of the doctrine of finitude.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments in their views and understanding, they fall into four kinds of inverted, evasive, and confused doctrines of immortality—pervasively calculated empty theories. First, they contemplate the source of change. Where they see movement and transformation, they call it change; where they see continuity, they call it permanence.

Where they see what is seen, they call it birth; where they do not see what is seen, they call it extinction. Where the cause of continuity is not cut off in nature, they call it increase; where, in the midst of continuity itself, there are intervals, they call it decrease. Each separate arising, they call existence; the mutual disappearance of one into another, they call nonexistence. Although they contemplate the matter as a whole in principle, they distinguish it separately with their minds.

When someone seeking the Dharma comes to ask them its meaning, they reply, "I now both arise and cease, both exist and do not exist, both increase and decrease." At all times their speech is confused, causing those before them to lose the thread of the discourse. Second, they carefully contemplate their minds and see mutual nonexistence; on the basis of nonexistence, they claim realization. When someone comes to ask, they answer with only one word, saying merely, "No." Apart from "no," they have nothing to say.

Third, they carefully contemplate their minds and see each thing as existing; on the basis of existence, they claim realization. When someone comes to ask, they answer with only one word, saying merely, "Yes." Apart from "yes," they have nothing to say. Fourth, they see both existence and nonexistence. Because the objects of their contemplation are branching and confused, their minds are also confused. When someone comes to ask, they reply, "Existence itself is also nonexistence; within nonexistence, it is not also existence." Such confused evasions allow no room for exhaustive questioning. Through this speculation of evasive emptiness, they fall into

non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the fifth non-Buddhist path: the pervasively calculated empty theory of the four inverted natures of evasive immortality.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments concerning the endless flow, they fall into the view that there are forms after death, and their minds become inverted.

Some rigidly identify the body with the self, saying, “Form is myself.” Some see the self as encompassing and pervading all lands, saying, “I possess form.” Some see the prior conditions returning in accord with themselves, saying, “Form belongs to me.” Some again see themselves as dependent upon continuity within the aggregate of formations, saying, “I am in form.” All make the calculation that there are forms after death. In this cycle there are sixteen forms. From this, some further suppose that afflictions are ultimately real and bodhi is ultimately real, the two natures proceeding side by side without touching one another. Through this speculation that there is existence after death, they fall into non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the sixth non-Buddhist path: the inverted doctrine that within the five aggregates there are forms after death.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments concerning the form, feeling, and perception that have previously been eliminated, they fall into the view that there are no forms after death, and their minds become inverted. Seeing form extinguished, they find no basis for shape; contemplating perception extinguished, they find no object to which the mind can be attached; knowing feeling extinguished, they find no further connection.

The nature of the aggregates disperses and vanishes. Even if the principle of life remains, without feeling and perception it is the same as plants and trees. Since this substance cannot be apprehended even while it is present, how could there be any forms after death? Examining it in this way, they conclude that there are no forms after death. In this cycle there are eight formless states. From this, some further suppose that the causes and effects of nirvāṇa are all empty, existing only in name and ultimately subject to annihilation. Through this speculation that there is no existence after death, they fall into non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the seventh non-Buddhist path: the inverted doctrine that within the five aggregates there are no forms after death.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. Since the aggregate of formations remains while feeling and perception are also extinguished, they calculate both existence and nonexistence, mutually destroying the characteristics of their own position. They fall into the doctrine that there are neither forms nor no forms after death, and give rise to an inverted theory. Within form, feeling, and perception, they see existence as not existence; within the flowing of the aggregate of formations, they contemplate nonexistence as not nonexistence.

Thus they cycle through and exhaust the realm of the aggregates, arriving at eight characteristics of neither existence nor nonexistence. Following whatever condition they encounter, they say that after death there are forms and no forms. They further suppose that, because all formations are by nature shifting and erroneous, their minds have attained penetrating understanding: both existence and nonexistence are denied, and they lose all sense of what is empty and what is real. Through this speculation that after death there is neither existence nor nonexistence, they fall into the non-Buddhist paths; the future is dark and obscure, with nothing that can be stated, and they delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the eighth non-Buddhist path: the inverted doctrine that within the five aggregates there are neither forms nor no forms after death.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments that all later states are nonexistent, they fall into the doctrine of seven annihilations. Some suppose that the body is annihilated; some that desire is annihilated; some that suffering is annihilated; some that supreme bliss is annihilated; some that supreme equanimity is annihilated. Thus they cycle through and exhaust the seven limits, all of which vanish before them and, once extinguished, do not exist again. Through this speculation of annihilation after death, they fall into non-Buddhist paths and delude their bodhi-nature. This is called the ninth non-Buddhist path: the inverted doctrine that within the five aggregates there is annihilation after death.

Again, when these good men in samādhi firmly concentrate their proper minds, demons can find no opportunity. They exhaust the root of the classes of living beings and contemplate that hidden, clear, ever-stirring source of movement. If they give rise to speculative judgments that all later states exist, they fall into the doctrine of five kinds of nirvāṇa. Some take the desire realm as the proper basis of transformation and, seeing it as complete and bright, give rise to attachment and admiration.

Some take the first dhyāna, in which their nature is free of sorrow, as nirvāṇa; some take the second dhyāna, in which the mind is free of suffering, as nirvāṇa; some take the third dhyāna, attended by utmost joy, as nirvāṇa; and some take the fourth dhyāna, in which both suffering and pleasure have ceased and in which they no longer undergo the nature of cyclic birth and death, as nirvāṇa. Deluded by the defiled heavens, they interpret them as unconditioned. They take the five places of security as supreme pure abodes. Thus they revolve in these five places, taking them as ultimate. By such calculation, they establish five present nirvāṇas, fall into non-Buddhist paths, and obscure the nature of bodhi. This is called the tenth non-Buddhist path: the inverted theory that establishes five present nirvāṇas within the five aggregates.

Ānanda, these ten kinds of deluded interpretations arising in dhyāna all occur through the interaction of the functioning mind and the aggregate of formations; therefore, such realizations appear. Sentient beings are stubbornly deluded and do not reflect upon themselves. When these states appear before them, they mistake delusion for realization, claim that they have attained sainthood, commit the grave falsehood, and fall into the uninterrupted hell. You must transmit the Tathāgata's words after my extinction and reveal them to beings in the Dharma-ending age, so that all may understand their meaning. Do not allow mind-demons to arise on their own and create grave karmic offenses. Protect and shelter them, and dispel deviant views. Teach them to awaken in body and mind to the true meaning, so that on the unsurpassed path they will not encounter branching deviations. Do not let their minds seek a little attainment and take it as sufficient. This is the pure directive for becoming the King of Great Awakening.

Ānanda, when a good man cultivates samādhi and the aggregate of formations is exhausted, the common life-force of the subtle, pure, and restless natures of all worldly beings suddenly breaks through its deep and subtle network. The profound karmic channels by which pudgalas repay their karma are cut off from their responses. In the heaven of nirvāṇa, he is about to awaken greatly. It is like a rooster's final crow: when one looks eastward, the refined light of dawn has already appeared. The six sense faculties are empty and still, no longer racing outward. Within and without, all is clear and calm; he enters where there is no entering.

He profoundly understands the original causes by which the twelve classes of beings throughout the ten directions receive life. Contemplating the source of their grasping, he sees that the various classes are no longer summoned forth. He has already attained identity with them throughout the ten directions; the refined light no longer sinks away, and hidden secrets are revealed. This is called the realm of the aggregate of consciousness. If, amid the collective summons, he has attained identity, wears away the six gates, and achieves their mutual opening, seeing and hearing interpenetrate, and their mutual functioning is pure. The worlds of the ten

directions, together with body and mind, are like beryl, transparent within and without. This is called the exhaustion of the aggregate of consciousness. Such a person can then transcend the turbidity of life. Contemplating its source, he sees that its basis lies in the inverted deluded thought of a vague, illusory nothingness.

Ānanda, you should know that when this good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations and returns consciousness to its source, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. He can cause the sense faculties, though separated, to function together; and he can also awaken in communion with the various classes of beings in the ten directions. His awareness and knowing become thoroughly clear, and he can enter the perfect source. If, regarding that to which he returns, he establishes a truly permanent cause and gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the attachment to a cause based on a cause. Sāṃkhya's return to primordial matter becomes his companion. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the first: establishing the mind that has attained something and making it the fruit to which one returns. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of a non-Buddhist path.

Ānanda, again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, regarding that to which he returns, he takes it to be his own substance and gives rise to the superior understanding that all beings within the twelve classes throughout the realm of empty space have flowed forth as a single class from within his own body, this person falls into the attachment that what is capable is not capable. Maheśvara, who manifests limitless bodies, becomes his companion. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the second: establishing capability as the mind and making capability the fruit of his undertaking. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of all-pervading great pride.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, regarding that to which he returns, he finds something on which to rely, and doubts that his body and mind have flowed forth from it, and that the empty space of the ten directions has all arisen from it, then he takes the place from which all things arise and flow forth as a truly permanent body, interpreting it as unborn and unceasing.

Within birth and cessation, he prematurely calculates permanence. Having thus become deluded about non-arising, he is also confused about birth and cessation. If

he abides in this deep delusion and gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the attachment that the permanent is not permanent. Those who regard Īśvara as their companion become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the third: establishing a mind dependent on a cause and making it the fruit of deluded calculation. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of inverted perfection.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, regarding what he knows, he believes that knowing is all-pervading and perfect, and on the basis of this knowing establishes the interpretation that all grasses and trees throughout the ten directions are sentient beings no different from human beings, that grasses and trees become people, and that after death people again become grasses and trees throughout the ten directions—if he gives rise to this superior understanding of indiscriminate omniscience—this person falls into the attachment that knowing is not knowing. Vātsya and Śaṇḍilya, who hold that all things are aware, become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the fourth: taking all-pervading knowing as the mind and making it the fruit of false delusion. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of inverted knowing.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, within the mutual functioning of the sense faculties in perfect interpenetration, he has attained accord with them, then he takes all arising phenomena as transformations of this perfect whole. Seeking the brightness of fire, delighting in the purity of water, loving the circulation of wind, and contemplating the achievement of earth, he reveres each of them in turn. Taking these various elements as the original cause of all creation, he establishes the interpretation that they are permanent.

This person falls into the attachment that birth is no birth. The various Kāśyapas and brahmins who diligently wear out body and mind, serve fire and revere water, and seek escape from birth and death become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the fifth: attached to revering such things, he loses the mind and follows objects, establishes a deluded cause to be sought, and seeks a deluded and hoped-for result. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of inverted transformation.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, within perfect luminosity, he considers the emptiness within that luminosity not to be the extinction of all transformations, but takes perpetual extinction as that on which to rely and gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the attachment of returning where there is no return. The various Śūnyatās in the Heaven of No Thought become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the sixth: perfecting a mind of empty nothingness and making it the fruit of empty annihilation. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of annihilationism.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, regarding perfect permanence, he firmly holds that his body is permanent and abiding, identical with refined perfection and forever not subject to decline, and gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the attachment of craving what is not to be craved. The various Āsitas who seek long life become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the seventh: clinging to the source of life, establishing a fixed deluded cause, and heading toward the fruit of prolonged toil. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of deluded prolongation.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. Observing that life is mutually interconnected, he nevertheless retains worldly toil, fearing that it will be exhausted. Thereupon, in this state, he sits in a lotus palace, lavishly adorns it with the seven treasures, greatly increases his jeweled consorts, and indulges his mind. If he gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the attachment that the real is not real. Ṭakki and Kāla become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the eighth: giving rise to a deviant cause of thought and establishing the result of blazing worldly defilements. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of heavenly demons.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. Within the luminosity of life, he distinguishes the refined from the coarse and decides what is true and false. Seeing the mutual requital of cause and effect, he seeks only responsive results and turns away from the path of purity. Thus, he sees suffering, cuts off its origin, realizes cessation, and

cultivates the path; then, abiding in cessation, he rests there and advances no further. If he gives rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the fixed nature of a śrāvaka. The monastics without learning who are inflated by arrogance become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the ninth: perfecting a mind that responds to refined distinctions and making it the fruit that tends toward quiescence. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of being bound to emptiness.

Again, when a good man has exhausted the emptiness of all formations, birth and cessation have already been extinguished, but the subtle wonder of quiescent extinction is not yet complete. If, in perfect interpenetration and the pure luminosity of awakening, he develops and investigates profound subtleties, then establishes nirvāṇa and advances no further, giving rise to a superior understanding, this person falls into the fixed nature of a pratyekabuddha. Those solitary realizers who do not turn their minds back become his companions. He is deluded about the Buddha's bodhi and loses right knowledge and views. This is called the tenth: perfecting the mind of awakening and making it the fruit of tranquil luminosity. He departs from perfect penetration, turns his back on the city of nirvāṇa, and gives rise to the seed of awakening that is perfectly bright yet does not transform others.

Ānanda, in these ten kinds of dhyāna, practitioners become deluded midway because they rely on confusion and, within what is not yet sufficient, produce a realization of fulfillment. All this arises through the interaction of the functioning mind and the aggregate of consciousness; therefore these states occur. Sentient beings are stubbornly deluded and do not reflect upon themselves. When such states appear before them, each becomes lost in what they have formerly loved and habitually practiced; their minds rest there by themselves, taking it to be the ultimate place of repose to which they return. They claim that they have fulfilled unsurpassed bodhi, and thereby commit the grave falsehood.

When the karma that evokes non-Buddhist paths and deviant demons is exhausted, they fall into the uninterrupted hell. Śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas fail to make further progress. You should preserve in your minds and uphold the Tathāgata's way, transmitting this Dharma gate after my extinction and revealing it to beings in the latter age, so that all may understand its meaning. Do not allow view-demons to create deep karmic offenses for themselves. Protect, soothe, and compassionately rescue them, and dispel deviant conditions. Enable their bodies and minds to enter the Buddha's knowledge and views, so that from the beginning they may achieve realization without encountering a divergent path. In past ages, as numerous as the sands of the Ganges, the Tathāgatas awakened their minds through this Dharma gate and attained the unsurpassed path.

When the aggregate of consciousness is exhausted, the sense faculties before you function interchangeably. From this mutual functioning, one can enter the bodhisattva's adamantine dry-wisdom stage. The perfectly luminous and refined mind unfolds and transforms within it, like a precious moon contained within pure beryl. Thus one transcends the ten faiths, ten abodes, ten practices, ten dedications, the minds of the four preliminary practices, the bodhisattva's adamantine ten bhūmis, and the perfect luminosity of equal enlightenment. One enters the Tathāgata's ocean of wondrous adornment, perfectly fulfills bodhi, and returns to no attainment.

This is the subtle analysis of demonic events made through the luminous awakening of vipaśyanā within the śamatha of the World-Honored Ones, the Buddhas of the past. When demonic states appear, if you can recognize them, the defilements of the mind will be washed away and you will not fall into deviant views. The aggregate-demons will vanish, heavenly demons will be crushed, and powerful ghosts and spirits will lose heart and flee; chīmèi, wǎngliǎng, and other malevolent spirits will no longer arise. Until bodhi, there will be no deficiency whatsoever. Those of lesser capacity will advance, and their minds will not become confused or dull concerning great nirvāṇa.

If foolish and dull sentient beings in the latter age do not recognize dhyāna, do not understand the teaching of Dharma, yet delight in cultivating samādhi, you should fear that they may fall in with deviant paths. With a single mind, urge them to uphold my Buddha-Crown Dhāraṇī mantra. If they are unable to recite it, write it in the meditation hall or carry it on their persons; then none of the demons can disturb them. You should reverently regard this as the final model left by the Tathāgatas of the ten directions for ultimate cultivation and advancement.

Ānanda then rose from his seat. Having heard the Buddha's instruction, he bowed in reverence, accepted it, and retained it without error. Before the great assembly, he again addressed the Buddha: "As the Buddha has said, the five aggregates are fundamentally based on five kinds of deluded thought. We have ordinarily not received the Tathāgata's subtle explanation. Moreover, are these five aggregates extinguished simultaneously, or are they exhausted in sequence? To what realm do these five successive layers lead? We only pray that the Tathāgata will proclaim great compassion and clarify the minds and eyes of this assembly, so as to provide eyes for all sentient beings in the latter age to come."

The Buddha told Ānanda: "The refined, true, wondrous luminosity of fundamental awakening is perfectly pure. It neither retains birth and death nor any worldly defilements. Even empty space arises solely from deluded thought. This fundamental awakening—wondrously luminous, refined, and true—is falsely made to bring forth all the material worlds, just as Yajñadatta, deluded about his own

head, recognized a reflection as his head. Delusion originally has no cause; yet within deluded thought one establishes the nature of causes and conditions. Those deluded about causes and conditions call it spontaneity."

"Even the nature of empty space is in truth illusorily produced. Causes and conditions and spontaneity are all calculations of sentient beings' deluded minds. Ānanda, when one knows how delusion arises, one speaks of the causes and conditions of delusion. But if delusion originally has no basis, then the causes and conditions of delusion are originally nonexistent. How much less can one who does not know this infer spontaneity? Therefore, the Tathāgata has explained to you that the fundamental cause of the five aggregates is all deluded thought."

Your body first arose from your parents' thoughts of desire. If your own mind had not entertained such thoughts, you could not have come into being; life is transmitted through thought. As I said before: when the mind thinks of the taste of vinegar, saliva arises in the mouth; when the mind thinks of climbing to a height, the soles of the feet feel sore. Yet no precipice is present, nor has any vinegar come before you. If your body were not pervaded by empty falsity, how could saliva arise merely from talk of vinegar? Therefore, you should know that your present physical body is called the first false thought, that of solidity.

Likewise, as just described, when the mind thinks of being at a height, it can cause your body actually to feel the sour ache. Because feeling arises from a cause, it can move the physical body. The favorable and adverse sensations now before you, these two appearances driving you on, are called the second false thought, that of illusory clarity.

Your thoughts cause your physical body to act. Since the body is not of the same kind as thought, why does your body follow the commands of thought, taking on various images? When the mind gives rise to an image, the body takes on that image, corresponding to the thought. When awake, it is the thinking mind; when asleep, it becomes the various dreams. Thus your thoughts stir your deluded emotions; this is called the third false thought, that of interpenetration.

The principle of transformation does not abide; moment after moment, it shifts imperceptibly. The nails grow and the hair lengthens; vital energy wanes and the face wrinkles. Day and night replace one another, yet you are never aware of it. Ānanda, if this were not you, how could your body change? If it truly were you, why are you unaware of it? Thus your activities continue without pause from thought to thought; this is called the fourth false thought, that of hidden subtlety.

Moreover, that clear and still place within you, which you call constant, does not go beyond seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing in relation to the body. If it were truly pure and genuine, it could not admit habitual delusion.

Why is it that, in former years, you saw some strange object, then after the passage of years both memory and forgetting were absent; yet later, upon suddenly seeing that former oddity again, you remember it clearly, as though it had never been lost? Within this clear, knowing, and unmoving state, thoughts are impregnated moment after moment—what calculation can account for this? Ānanda, you should know that this stillness is not true. It is like a swiftly flowing river, which from a distance appears tranquil. Because its current is rapid, its flow is not seen; this does not mean that there is no flow.

If it were not the source of thought, how could it receive deluded habits? Unless your six sense faculties are opened and function interchangeably, these false thoughts can never be extinguished. Therefore, in your present seeing, hearing, awareness, and knowing, habitual tendencies are interwoven. Within this clear stillness are vague and indistinct traces, empty and unreal: this is the fifth inverted and extremely subtle false thought.

Ānanda, these five grasping aggregates are formed from five false thoughts.

You now wish to know the relative shallowness and depth of their causal boundaries. Only form and emptiness are the boundary of form; only contact and separation are the boundary of feeling; only remembrance and forgetting are the boundary of perception; only cessation and arising are the boundary of formations; and clear awareness entering into and merging with clarity is the boundary of consciousness. The five aggregates originally arise in overlapping layers: their arising is due to consciousness, and their cessation begins with the removal of form. In principle, they are suddenly realized and, through that realization, simultaneously dissolved; in actual practice, they are not suddenly eliminated, but are exhausted in sequence.

I have already shown you the knots in the cloth of the Kalpa wave. What is there that you do not understand, that you ask again? You should penetrate to the root of these false thoughts in your own mind, and transmit this teaching to practitioners in the Dharma-ending age to come, so that they may recognize falsity, deeply grow weary of birth from themselves, know that there is nirvāṇa, and not cling to the three realms.

Ānanda, suppose someone were to fill all the empty space throughout the ten directions with the seven precious treasures, and offer them to Buddhas as numerous as motes of dust, serving and making offerings to them without wasting a thought. What do you think? Would this person gain much merit and virtue through the causal conditions of offering to the Buddhas? Ānanda replied, “Space is boundless, and precious treasures are limitless. In the past, a sentient being offered seven coins to a Buddha and, even after giving up his life, obtained the status of a

wheel-turning king. How much more would one gain by offering treasures that fill the Buddha lands throughout all space? Even if one contemplated and calculated throughout countless kalpas, one still could not reach the limit of such merit. How could it have any boundary?”

The Buddha told Ānanda, “The words of all Buddhas, Tathāgatas, are never false. Suppose someone has committed the four grave offenses and the ten pārājika offenses, and in an instant passes through the Avīci hells of this land and other lands, even through the uninterrupted hells throughout the ten directions, without failing to experience them all. Yet if, with a single thought, that person were to disclose this Dharma gate to those who have not yet learned it in the latter age, that person’s karmic obstacles would be extinguished at once, and the causes of the hell sufferings they were to undergo would be transformed into the Land of Bliss. The merit obtained would surpass that of the previous donor by a hundredfold, a thousandfold, ten million hundred-millionfold—indeed, beyond the reach of calculation or analogy.”

Ānanda, if any sentient being can recite this sūtra and uphold this mantra, I could explain its benefits throughout countless kalpas without exhausting them. Relying on my teachings and practicing the Way in accordance with them, one will directly attain bodhi and be free of all demonic hindrances.

After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, the bhikṣus, bhikṣuṇīs, upāsakas, upāsikās, and all beings of the world—devas, humans, and asuras—as well as bodhisattvas from other lands, the practitioners of the two vehicles, holy immortals, youths, and mighty spirits and ghosts who had newly aroused the resolve, were all greatly joyful. They paid homage and departed.