
Three Sutras

on

**Complete
Enlightenment**

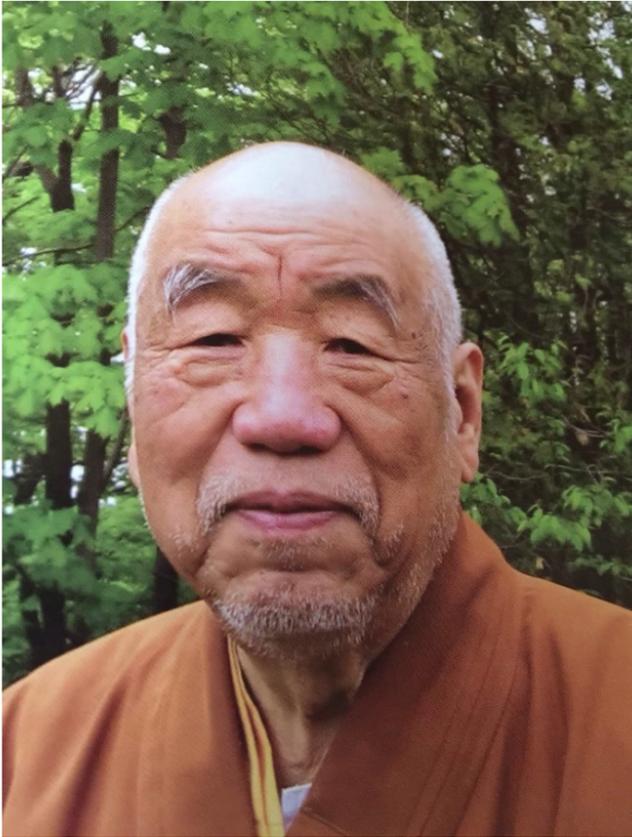


**Sutra Translation Committee
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紀念樂渡法師圓寂

*This book is dedicated to the memory of
Dharma Master Lok To (1923~2011)*



*Three sutra
on
complete Enlightenment*

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**THREE SUTRAS ON
COMPLETE ENLIGHTENMENT**

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by
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THE DISCOURSE OF MANJUSHRI

From the

Maha Prajna Paramita Sutra

THE DISCOURSE OF MANJUSHRI BODHISATTVA

From the Mahaprajnaparamita Sutra

THUS HAVE I HEARD: Once the World Honored One was staying at Sarvasti in the grove of his friend benefactor of homeless and orphans. The Buddha was accompanied by one thousand bhikshus and ten thousand irreversibly self-attained Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas. Maitreya Bodhisattva, Manjushri Bodhisattva Mahasattva, Unhindered- power-of-speech Bodhisattva, Not-abandoning-the-burden Bodhisattva and many more bodhisattvas joined the Buddha's retinue.

Manjushri Bodhisattva Mahasattva, the embodiment of the great, profound wisdom called Maha Prajna-paramita, waited since the early hours at the entrance to the Buddha's residence. The Buddha's great disciples, aryas Sariputra, Puranas, Maitreyaniputrah, Mahamaudgalyayana, Mahakasyapa, Mahakatyayana and Mahakausthila were also present. Upon entering the lecture hall, the Tathagata, turning to Sariputra, inquired what brought him so early in the day, to which Sariputra replied that Manjusri Bodhisattva Mahasattva was the first to arrive. The World Honored One seated himself, arranged his robe and asked Manjusri the reason for his early arrival. The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva joined his palms, made an obeisance and said: "World Honored One, I am seeking the Right View and the Right Contemplation for the benefit of all sentient beings. I observed characteristics of non-differentiation, non-movement and non-action and I noticed that there is neither birth nor death, neither existence nor non-existence; there is no abiding and no non-abiding. There is neither time nor non-time, neither pure nor defiled; there is no duality and no nonduality. In this manner I noted the Tathagata for the benefit of all beings."

"Whoever perceives me in this manner is unencumbered by acceptance and rejection and by notions of increase or decrease. He/she has eradicated from his/her mind all defilement" remarked the Buddha.

Sariputra interjected that to see and to perceive the Tathagata the way Manjushri just described is rare. “Whoever wants to perceive the Tathagata thus must remain unattached to form, to sentient beings, to the Tathagata even. Whoever has liberated sentient beings or has attained nirvana must remain unattached to either of them. Then sentient beings enhance themselves and augment their distinction, their beauty and glory imperceptibly, unaware of their enhancement, their distinction, their beauty and their glory.”

Manjushri agreed: “It is just as you say. When sentient beings are liberated, thereby becoming distinguished, beautiful and glorious, no form is apprehended by them, not even the form of their own enhancement. The realm of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases. Suppose a buddha dwells in the world for as long as one kalpa. Let us further suppose that in that buddha-sphere there are as many buddhas as there are grains of sand in the River Ganges; if each of these buddhas spoke dharma for as long as one kalpa, thereby liberating and guiding to nirvana as many sentient beings as there are grains of sand in the Ganges, there would not be the slightest increase or decrease in the realm of sentient beings.”

Sariputra queried: “Suppose the realm of sentient beings neither increases nor decreases. For what reason, then, does the Mahasattva point out to them the path to a complete and perfect enlightenment (Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi)?”

“How can there be a bodhisattva speaking Dharma of Supreme Enlightenment to sentient beings if the form of the sentient beings is void? There is no dharma to be obtained from the dharma I am teaching,” retorted Manjushri.

At that point the Buddha wondered how can Manjushri speak of sentient beings and of a realm of sentient beings if there are no sentient beings to speak of.

“The realm of sentient beings is the same as the realm of all buddhas,” replied Manjushri.

“Where and in what manner is the realm of sentient beings demarcated?”

“The realm of sentient beings is as inconceivable as the realm of all buddhas.”

“Is the realm of sentient beings to be understood as some specific dwelling place?”

“The realm of sentient beings is not a specific place; it is space-like.”

“How can you dwell in Prajna while practicing in this manner?”

“Dwelling in Prajna Paramita means not-dwelling in any dharma whatsoever.”

“How can you dwell in Prajna Paramita while not dwelling in dharmas?”

“Non-abiding in dharmas is what dwelling in Prajna Paramita means.”

“Can you explain how those who dwell in Prajna Paramita in the manner you just described can increase, decrease or even as much as perceive their good roots?”

“The root of goodness does neither increase nor decrease for the one who dwells in Prajna Paramita in this manner. There is no increase or decrease of dharmas or form, and no increase or decrease of the nature of Prajna Paramita. World Honored One, those who practice in this manner neither abandon Mundane Dharma nor do they receive the Supra-mundane one. Why? Because there are no dharmas to be received, none rejected; when Prajna Paramita is practiced, nirvana is not perceived as happiness to be sought; no conscious effort is made to reject the cyclic existence of birth and death. Why? Because when birth and death are not perceived, how can picking and choosing arise? When there is no attraction for the comfort and the joy of nirvana, how can attachment arise? Whoever practices Prajna Paramita wholeheartedly in this manner neither dwells on the defilements to be abandoned nor on the merits to be gained. Dharmas do not cause the mind to increase or decrease. World Honored One, practicing in this manner can truly be called practicing Prajna Paramita. A mind established in the Prajna Paramita mode is emancipated from wishful thinking and from appropriating. It is freed from seeking Dharma according to form. Not making distinctions in terms of ugly and beautiful eradicates the duality of form. Relinquishing judgments in terms of superior and inferior reveals dharmas and Self Nature as being equal. Abandoning evaluations pertaining to gain and loss

fosters a comprehension of the true nature of reality, leading to Perfect Wisdom.”

“Is Buddhadharma the supreme teaching, surpassing all other?”

“I have not discerned any supreme dharmas; their ultimate emptiness is evidenced by the Tathagatas.”

“Just so,” the Buddha commented, “all Tathagatas attained complete and perfect enlightenment, and by doing so they disclosed the Ultimate Void of all dharmas.”

“What in that Void can we obtain and surpass?” inquired Manjushri.

The Buddha continued: “Excellent, Manjushri, excellent. The true Dharma is just as you described it. Do you consider Buddhadharma ‘anuttara’ (excellent, chief)?”

To which Manjushri replied “Yes, I do, World Honored One, because the non-obtaining or the Void of all dharmas is, in itself, anuttara. Yet such practice of Prajna Paramita can neither be designated as a worldly dharma, nor as Buddhadharma. Why? Because there is no increase or decrease when and where Prajna Paramita is practiced. A mind that makes no distinctions does not produce a single thought.”

“Manjushri,” said The Buddha, “do you mean to say that you make no distinctions when you think about the diverse teachings within Buddhadharma?”

To which Manjushri replied: “No, World Honored One, I do not make any distinctions between the dharmas of the worldly, the sravaka, or the pratyeka-buddha: That is the supreme Buddhadharma. Furthermore, practicing in the Prajna Paramita mode, one does not differentiate between the form of the Mundane or Worldly Dharma and the form of the Supramundane one. The practice of Prajna Paramita can be developed only when no predetermined forms are present. A mind in the Prajna Paramita mode does not discern the realm of desires or form, the formless realm, or the realm of tranquility, because such a mind does not attempt to characterize the boundaries of the diverse dharma-forms. Not making distinctions between benefactors and recipients, not pondering who is repaying a favor (or not) to whom, is the true practice of Prajna Paramita. Thoughts about embracing Buddhadharma or

rejecting the Mundane (Worldly) Dharma are relinquished as a part of the Prajna Paramita practice. The boundaries of these realms are no longer discerned since all attainment is viewed as a non-attainment.”

“Excellent, excellent”, approved the Buddha. “Your words, Manjushri, bear the Dharma-seal of a Bodhisattva Mahasattva whose practice of Perfect Wisdom is flawless. Sravakas, upasakas and upasikas should practice the path and the fruition of the path to Bodhi without making distinctions between the diverse Dharma-seals. Manjushri, those who are not adversely affected upon hearing this Dharma have the good root, planted by thousands of buddhas, and they inherited merits from a hundred thousand, or ten hundred thousand buddhas: For that reason they are not apprehensive when hearing this teaching of profound Wisdom.”

“World Honored One, may I be allowed to expound the perfected virtue of the Profound Wisdom”, enjoined Manjushri: “When practicing Prajna Paramita, one should neither abide apprehending Dharma, nor should one abide not-apprehending it, and there should be no perception of a form or a realm to be accepted or abandoned. Why? Because the Tathagatas do not perceive any abiding or not-abiding, no region, form or dharmas, until there is no realm of buddhas. How could there be the realms of the worldly, of the sravaka or the pratyeka-buddha? When there is no holding on the form of the conceivable or the inconceivable, no dharma-forms are perceived, and the Dharma of the Void emerges, self-evident. This is known to all Bodhisattva Mahasattvas, who made offerings to thousands of buddhas and by doing so planted many good roots in their previous lives.

Due to the depth of their Prajna Paramita practice, they obtained a firsthand knowledge of the Dharma of the Void, yet they experience no anxiety or concern. For them nothing is tied, and therefore there is nothing to be untied, and nothing left to be manipulated.”

“Manjushri,” asked the Buddha, “in your previous lives, how many buddhas did you make offerings to?”

“Regarding myself and all the buddhas,” observed Manjushri, “it is all an illusion, a reflection, a shadow. I do not discern who is the donor, who the receiver.”

“Manjushri,” probed the Buddha further, “do you dwell in the buddha-vehicle?”

“From my vantage point I do not see a single dharma. How could I dwell in the vehicle of buddha? As to obtaining the vehicle of buddha, it is only a name, these are only words; how could I expect to obtain anything?” retorted Manjushri, upon which the Buddha asked: “Is your wisdom completely freed from obstacles?”

“I am completely free of obstacles; whence would obstacles come? And I do not sit on the Bodhimandala,” continued Manjushri. “Tathagatas do not sit on Bodhimandala; how can I sit there without them? The reality of all dharmas is manifested as a perpetual present.”

“What is reality?” wondered the Buddha.

“Whenever there is a view, there is also a body: That is reality. Yet, ultimately, it is neither reality nor non-reality: Reality is neither coming nor going, neither body nor non-body,” reasoned Manjushri.

“The Bodhisattva-Mahasattva’s understanding of reality is as lucid as it is exhaustive, and yet he is unafraid, unconcerned; there is no evidence of doubt, no regret” commented Sariputra, and Maitreya Bodhisattva added: “The one who hears this perfect teaching of Prajna Paramita is near the Bodhi-seat, because the Tathagata knows form, or dharmas, as the Ultimate Reality.”

Manjushri concurred, saying: “World Honored One, whoever can behold the profound Dharma of Perfect Wisdom without trepidation, confusion or regret is already seeing the Buddha.” At this point an upasika stepped forward, made an obeisance to the Buddha and kneeling to one side, reiterated the forgoing argument to confirm his understanding of it.

The Buddha commented: “A virtuous man or a virtuous woman who experiences no fear, no anxiety, no confusion or regret upon hearing this profound teaching of Prajna Paramita has already reached the ground of no return. A mind that is receptive to this teaching and follows it faithfully, delighting in

it, has accomplished the practice of all six Paramitas, to wit, Danaparamita (generosity or giving), Silaparamita (self-discipline), Ksantiparamita (patience), Viryaparamita (energetic perseverance), Dhyana-paramita (concentration or absorption), and Prajna (knowledge obtained by means of intuitive insight).”

He turn to Manjushri with the following question: “How do you understand the attainment and the nature of Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, and what is meant by dwelling in Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi?”

“I have not attained Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi and I did not ever dwell in the buddha-vehicle.”

“Excellent” approved the Buddha, “You convey most skillfully the subtlety of this Dharma; you practiced a purified action known as the Formless Dharma, and you planted many good roots while paying homage to countless buddhas in the past.”

Manjushri resumed his discourse. “When we acknowledge form by asserting ‘there is form’, we automatically imply ‘there is no form’, which means that any given form simultaneously is and is not, or, conversely, neither is, nor is not. How can I make claims to a practice of pure or formless action? I cannot detect the discipline of a sravaka because I do not distinguish the worldly from the holy; I do not distinguish learners or hearers from non-learners and I do not perceive in terms of great and small. Although I do not submit to any control or discipline, I do not lack control or discipline; I am not without perception, yet I do not perceive. I do not single out the bodhisattva vehicle from the rest of the vehicles, nor distinguish the one whose action is directed toward attaining the Bodhi from the one who already attained it.”

Sariputra asked what is “buddha” and how can it be observed. Manjushri returned to his discourse: “What is ‘self’? Self is only a name. Similarly, ‘buddha’ is a term or form, and it is void of an independent or lasting existence: Therefore neither the form nor the name are relevant to the quest for the Bodhi. Sariputra, you ask me what is buddha: Buddha is perceived when there is no birth, no death, neither coming nor going and when no distinctions are made between name and form. To observe the Ultimate Reality of one’s own self means observing buddha;

it can be accomplished only by means of Prajna, or the knowledge obtained by means of intuitive insight. A novice bodhisattva, a hearer, or a student, no matter how eager they may be to accomplish the path, cannot comprehend what it is that needs to be accomplished. Why? Because although there is this profound Dharma, there is really no dharma to be comprehended. Why? Because the Bodhi is stillness and emptiness: The nature and the form of the Bodhi cannot be reached through discrimination; the Bodhi is secluded from the five senses, from thinking and from the cycle of birth and death. How can there be talk of attainment, how can there be talk of Bodhi when the mind is emancipated from knowing, from forms and names?”

Sariputra asked Manjushri: “Did the Buddha attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi (the supreme, complete self-enlightenment) for the sake of Dharmadhatu (reality beyond being and non-being)?”

“No, Sariputra,” replied Manjushri and continued, “because the Buddha IS the Dharmadhatu, and to argue that the one has the other for purpose is to engage in a circular argument. Why is Bodhi the same as the Dharmadhatu? In Dharmadhatu there is no form and no sentient beings, all dharmas being void; and such is the supreme Bodhi or the non-dual mind as well. A non-dual mind is mind freed from mental formations and from distinctions resulting from dual thinking, and that implies emancipation from words and from an inner debate; without form and without words there is neither existence nor non-existence, neither knowing nor not knowing, and the same holds true for all dharmas. All the contrived or preconceived places, forms or dharmas, such as the five rebellious acts (sins) for example, are inconceivable, because the Ultimate Reality of all dharmas is void of self without exception. There is no heavenly birth, no fall into hell and there is no such thing as an entry into nirvana for that matter. Every condition, karma included, is rooted in the same reality empty of self. Neither coming nor going, free from cause and effect, every condition is a part of the same boundless Dharmadhatu where there is neither front nor back. Sariputra, you may have come across a monk who has broken the weightier rules of discipline and yet he did not fall

into hell; another one may have practiced pure action but did not attain nirvana. You may consider at times some particular monk not worthy of offerings; perhaps you ponder at length his merit or a lack of it, wondering whether his cause of reincarnation was terminated or not. As for my part, I dwell in the equality of all dharmas.”

“How do you understand the patient endurance of non-backsliders?” asked Sariputra.

“I do not see any dharma called the patient endurance of non-backsliders in the cyclic existence,” replied Manjusri, returning to his explanation: “What is called being outside the karmic force in the manner of the arhat is not something just brought under control. By the time a person becomes an arhat, that person’s cause of reincarnation has long been extinguished, because he/she destroyed all fetters to existence and was liberated through Right final knowledge. Therefore we refer to some of the monks as not brought under control. People who do not understand their own mind are called worldlings, because they do not perceive the Dharma of Truth, nor do they follow it.”

“Excellent” commented Sariputra: “Your explanation of being outside the flow of passions as applied to the arhat is most skillful.”

“I am also outside the flow of passions,” added Manjushri.

“Are the bodhisattvas experiencing the perfect, supreme enlightenment (Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi) when they sit on the Bodhi Mandala?” Asked the Buddha.

“While sitting on the Bodhimandala, bodhisattvas do not enter Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi,” replied Manjushri, resuming his discourse: “Why? Because the very nature of Bodhi is such that not a single dharma can be obtained therefrom. The Bodhi-form is formless, meaning no form is rising and none falling; consequently, I see no bodhisattvas sitting on the Bodhimandala, attaining what is called Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. World Honored One, the Bodhi has the same status as the five rebellious acts or sins, and vice versa. Why is it so? Because both the Bodhi and the five rebellious acts do not exist in isolation but assume countless nuances, manifested as the diverse forms. These sometimes overlap and sometimes mesh,

defining and redefining subject and object. Without the various forms of Bodhi we would not have a subject of enlightenment, nor would there be an object of non-enlightenment without the five rebellious acts or sins and their countless variations. When there is neither knowing nor not-knowing, there is nothing left to extinguish; that is the mode of Bodhi and it includes the form of the five rebellious acts. Anyone who says there is a Bodhi to be attained is an arrogant person.”

“Manjushri,” queried the Buddha, “you called me ‘Tathagata’; do you really think that is what I am?”

“No, World Honored One, I am not saying the Tathagata is the *real* Tathagata”, replied Manjushri, “because there is no notion of form in true Suchness, not even the notion of wisdom or the Tathagata. Only in the true Void can real Tathagata be known. It is only a name; otherwise, how could I possibly apply the term? Since you asked me if I have any doubt regarding the Tathagata, I answer ‘no’, World Honored One. I observe the true Tathagata of undetermined nature, independent of birth and death, and therefore I have no doubt.”

“Manjushri, did you not say that the Tathagata appeared in the world?” wondered the Buddha, to which Manjushri retorted, “the Tathagata appears in the world, and so do all dharmas.”

The Buddha followed with another question: “Are you saying that all the buddhas, as numerous as the sand in the Ganges river, entered nirvana?”

“All buddhas are one form, a form that is inconceivable,” replied Manjushri and asked “World Honored One, does the Buddha dwell in the world?”

“Yes, the Buddha dwells in the world!” declared the World Honored One.

“If the one Buddha dwells in the world,” continued Manjushri, “then so do all the buddhas, as numerous as the grains of sand in the Ganges River. All buddhas have an inconceivable form; moreover, they are without a past, present and a future, transcending birth and death. But sentient beings, clinging as they are, endow the buddhas with a past, present and a future, and say that buddhas and nirvana appear in the world.”

“This Dharma, Manjushri, is understood by Tathagatas, arhats and avaiartikas (non-backsliding bodhisattvas), because these three kinds of people do not praise or disparage this profound teaching upon hearing it,” commented the Buddha and continued, “yet the Tathagatas, as well as the worldly people, are inconceivable, for the reason that the mind in all its forms is inconceivable.”

Manjushri added: “all the countless attained buddhas worked for nothing. Why? Because this Dharma of the Inconceivable is not different from Nirvana; the inconceivable Dharma regarding the Worldly is not different from the inconceivable Dharma of the Buddhas. Virtuous men and women of good families, who planted good roots over long periods of time and who cultivated virtues of their innermost nature without interruption will have no difficulty understanding this.” The Buddha turned to Manjushri with a question: “Do you, Manjushri, want the Tathagatas to surpass the sentient beings?” Manjushri answered: “I want both the Tathagatas and sentient beings to become a supreme, unsurpassed whole; but the form of sentient beings cannot be accessed. Whenever the Tathagata aims to teach the inconceivable Dharma, dharmas fall short of accomplishment; although I want the Tathagata to teach sentient beings, there should be neither a speaker nor a listener; all of it takes place in the Dharmadhatu: There is, really, no difference between Dharmadhatu and sentient beings.” “Manjushri,” asked the Buddha, “do you want the Tathagata to become the land of supreme bliss?”

“The Tathagata IS the inexhaustible form, the Land of Supreme Bliss: Being neither the Land of Bliss nor the non-land of bliss, it is the True Land of Bliss. Without form, without brightness and darkness, the Tathagata is the real land of bliss. Those who planted deep the good seeds will comprehend without delay.” was Manjushri’s retort.

“How can good seeds be planted without any increase or decrease?” wondered the Buddha. Manjushri resumed his discourse: “Both the form of the Realm of Bliss and the form of the one practicing this Dharma correctly are forms that are inconceivable. When planting the seeds thus, there is neither increase nor decrease, and that is what Land of Supreme Bliss

means.”

The transcendental powers of the Buddha caused the great earth tremble in six kinds of ways and thus to manifest itself as impermanence, and sixteen thousand people attained the patient endurance of the unborn. Seven hundred bhikshus and bhikshunis, three thousand upasakas, forty thousand upasikas and sixty thousand navutas (denizens of the heaven of six desires) were able to lift the haze off their minds, thus purifying their Dharma Eye. Arya Ananda rose from his seat, uncovered his right shoulder and reverently joined his palms, kneeling. “World Honored One,” he addressed the Buddha, “why did the earth tremble in six different ways just now?” The Buddha declared: “Ananda, I say the Realm of Bliss is free of all form, and therefore it can and does manifest itself in this very region. All buddhas of the past spoke about the form of the Realm of Bliss for the benefit of all sentient beings. Whenever that happens, the world trembles in six different ways and in the ten directions.” Sariputra commented that by declaring the form of all dharmas inconceivable, Manjushri puts himself beyond all debate. “World Honored One,” retorted Manjushri, “that which cannot be explained is inconceivable, and that which is conceivable cannot be explained. Neither the nature of the inconceivable nor the nature of the conceivable can be explained. Forms and sounds are, similarly, neither conceivable nor inconceivable.” Upon which the Buddha asked: “Have you entered the Samadhi of the Inconceivable?” Manjushri replied: “No, I have not, World Honored One. I view myself as inconceivable. I am not aware of having a mind that could be called conceivable; how can I make claims to having entered the Samadhi of the Inconceivable? The mind that continues manifesting itself as Manjushri Bodhisattva since time immemorial has no mind-form and while I would find entering such a samadhi very satisfying, I do not have a mind-form to enter the Samadhi of the Inconceivable with; someone who has practiced for many years how to use a bow and arrow becomes so skillful he can hit a bull’s eye without any conscious effort on his part; that is a mastery which takes a long time to acquire. Similarly, I mastered the Samadhi of the Inconceivable by means of a one-pointed mind, following a very long practice. I can

enter the deep-absorption-samadhi without having to make a special decision or a conscious effort. Sariputra asked about surpassing the deep levels of meditation and attaining the wonderful stillness, and I told him that the inconceivable meditation is so rare it cannot be obtained: Let alone the wonderful stillness, which is even more rare. The form of conceivable meditation can be obtained, but not the inconceivable kind. Sentient beings can accomplish the Samadhi of the Inconceivable because the forms of the mind are not really the mind, and that is the true Samadhi of the Inconceivable: In reality there is no difference between a form of sentient beings and a form of the Samadhi of the Inconceivable.”

Praising Manjushri, the Buddha said, “Excellent, excellent! You are fit to discuss this profound practice. You have planted the root of goodness, practiced pure action for a very long time and, therefore you are now abiding in the Perfect Wisdom.”

“Dwelling in Prajna Paramita and speaking the Dharma imply thinking, and inherent to all thinking is a concept of a separate self. On the part of the thinker is an implied notion of a discrete, lasting self doing the thinking: It is an essential characteristic of all thinking. The Perfect Wisdom thus appears attached to a place. To say that Prajna Paramita dwells in the Void is, again, a reference to a specific place. An emancipated mind that was released from thinking and from all notions of a separate self, neither has nor needs a specific place to dwell. There is only the inconceivable realm of the buddhas, completely stable and still. The inconceivable realm is called the Realm of Perfect Wisdom; in it all phenomena are without form and all dharmas without action. Perfect Wisdom is inconceivable in the same way the Dharmadhatu is. Perfect Wisdom is the Dharmadhatu: It is formless and as such, inconceivable. The Inconceivable is the Perfect Wisdom and the Perfect Wisdom is the Dharmadhatu: These three are one and the same: Dharmadhatu is formless, and the formless is the realm of Perfect Wisdom. The formless realm is inconceivable, and as such it is free from birth and death. Therefore it is the realm of the Tathagata and the realm of the Self.

The one practicing Perfection of Wisdom does not seek the Bodhi, because the Bodhi as a form has no place to dwell in the formless Prajna. World Honored One, the one who truly knows the nature of the Self is free from attachment. When there is neither a knowing nor an attachment, there is a perfect and unobstructed understanding, in other words, buddha, which is, likewise, inconceivable. Because the original nature of all substance is without form, true understanding inevitably leads to non-attachment. In the formless realm there are no things. In other words, there is a 'non-thing-ness' and, therefore, no place to dwell or to rely on. Furthermore, there can be no birth and death. Such is the non-action) or the supreme merit. Whoever understands this doctrine is emancipated from thought and therefore cannot speculate about the merits of action or non-action.

Non-knowing is inconceivable and that characteristic defines it as the mode of buddhas: Not seeing the form of the three periods, the form of coming and going, the form of birth and death. Not formulating annihilation or permanence is the Right Wisdom in which there is no acceptance and no rejection: It is inconceivable. The true wisdom, like space, transcends good and evil.”

“Manjushri,” declared the Buddha, “the one who understands the doctrine in this manner has the wisdom of a non-returner.” To which Manjushri added: “The wisdom of a non-backsliding bodhisattva is the wisdom of non-action. Gold ore has to be tested by fire to reveal the gold it contains; similarly, the form of the non-backslider’s wisdom is practiced in the realm free from thought and from attachment, from change and action; hence the stillness, emancipated from birth and death can manifest itself.”

The Buddha asked Manjushri: “The wisdom expounded by all the Tathagathas comes from the very center of their being. Who is going to believe them?”

“This kind of wisdom is not the result of the Dharma of Nirvana nor the Dharma of Birth and Death. The stillness that is free of all movement does not eradicate greed, hatred and ignorance, neither does it not non-eradicate greed, hatred and ignorance. Why? Because none of these are ever exhausted,

ever brought to an end. There is no separation from birth and death, yet there is not the absence of separation from birth and death. There is no practice of the Way, yet there is no cessation of the practice of the Way. Those who understand this Dharma have the Right Faith”, was Manjushri’s reply, well received and approved by the Buddha.

“Who will hear and accept this profound Dharma in the future?” Wondered Mahakasyapa. The Buddha explained “in this gathering there are bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas who hear and understand this teaching. In the future there will be at least some who will hear, understand and accept in the manner of this gathering. Those who understand will generate the Right Faith requisite for the Right Understanding of this sutra. Subsequently they, in turn, will teach and explain this profound Perfection of Wisdom to others. Let me give you an example. An Elder who lost his/her Mani Pearl will grieve until the pearl is found again, at which time he/she will rejoice. The bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas continually generate faith and delight in this Dharma in the same manner. They become concerned when separated from these teachings, and find delight in receiving the teachings again. Such people really see the buddhas, and offer their innermost self to all of them. In the Trayastrimsas heaven grows a tree called the daricitra. Whenever that tree forms calyxes, heaven-dwellers are elated because they are sure the tree is about to bloom. Some bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas who understand and believe in this manner will be able to open the Wisdom Eye of all the future buddhas. These bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas will accept and uphold this Dharma of Perfect Wisdom, and teach others by example. Those people praise and delight in a fully awakened mind. Such virtuous men and women already learned from all the past buddhas, and planted roots of goodness.

Some sentient beings are able to accept and uphold this teaching of the Perfect Wisdom as soon as they are exposed to it. They establish a happy disposition resulting from having learned this teaching, and from knowing intimately the legacy of buddhas. When, for example, a person hears others praise a place he or she is acquainted with, complimenting its gardens,

flowers, fruits, forests and its people, that person feels very comfortable. That person will encourage others to remember frequently that particular place, thereby cultivating that lovely circumstance, because that person previously experienced that same place in such manner. Similarly, someone may have heard this teaching of Perfect Wisdom, feels happy with it and for that reason shares it. In such case that person received that Dharma from Manjushri: This should be understood.”

“Furthermore, it should be understood that such a person is learning this practice from all the buddhas of the past” added Mahakasyapa. Manjushri continued: “According to the Buddha’s teaching, dharmas liberated from form and from action lead to the original stillness. Those who reach deep understanding of this Dharma and pass it on receive praise from all Tathagatas and an approval from all buddhas. There is no contradiction here regarding the dharma-form. It is the supreme, Perfect Wisdom as taught by the Buddha. It is the consummate Buddhadharma, the Inconceivable, Ultimate Reality.”

“While I was a bodhisattva practicing toward a stage of non-backslider, planting roots of goodness, my learning mostly consisted of perfecting the virtue of transcendental wisdom. It is indispensable for the completion of Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, indispensable to the understanding of form of dharmas, and of the minds of all sentient beings as equal,” declared the Buddha. “Whoever wishes to complete without obstacles the study and the practice of Buddhadharma should therefore concentrate all effort on perfecting the virtue of unsurpassed wisdom. Similarly, those who want to learn from all buddhas, wishing to attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi and obtain excellent physical marks that command respect, should focus on the cultivation of Perfect Wisdom, a practice conducive to a consummate understanding of all dharmas. As their practice is perfected and as they enter the Ultimate Reality they realize that in the supramundane Void no Bodhi, no buddhas and no dharmas are perceived; if they experience no doubt and no confusion, dharmas of birth and death, of pure and impure, of the past, present and future, all vanish due to the Perfection of Wisdom. Why? Because the nature of Dharmadhatu is without past, without present and without future. The one who seeks the

knowledge of all dharmas can enter Dharmadhatu without obstacles by means of Prajna Paramita.

To master the three instances of the turning of the wheel, i.e., the Four Noble Truths, the Twelve Links in the Chain of Existence and Self-evidenced Non-attachment, one needs an in-depth cultivation of the Perfect Wisdom. To attain a heart of universal compassion and to protect all sentient beings without ever giving them a single thought, one must develop this practice of Perfect Wisdom; wanting to avoid all conflict, not letting even as much as one conflicting thought arise, one needs to ponder deeply Perfect Wisdom. Again, to develop a finely tuned discernment of the right and the wrong place, to develop the ten powers so one can dwell, undaunted, in the Buddha's wisdom, and to obtain the gift of unhindered discourse, one needs to cultivate Prajna Paramita."

"World Honored One," said Manjushri, "I abide by the correct Dharma of non-action and non-form; distanced from grasping and rejecting, free from birth and death, from coming and going, I do not see and do not know. I do not see any Perfect Wisdom, yet I do not-see Perfect Wisdom: There is neither attainment nor non-attainment, no room left for faulty reasoning or fallacious argument. Dharmas are neither boundless nor not-boundless. There is no Worldly Dharma, no Sravaka Dharma, no Pratyeka-buddha Dharma, and no Buddha Dharma. There is neither obtaining nor non-obtaining, no attainment of Nirvana and no rejection of the cyclic existence or birth and death. This mode is neither inconceivable nor non-inconceivable; there is no action and no non-action, and all dharmas without exception are Suchness. That is a fully developed Prajna Paramita."

"The one who understands this Dharma can truly be said to have attained the Perfection of Wisdom," summarized the Buddha. "When a Bodhisattva Mahasattva enters the freedom of absorption in the Bodhi, attaining samadhi, the most profound dharmas, all buddhas and all buddha-spheres are clearly understood by him or her without any obstacles. Manjushri's words should be heeded, his practice carefully studied."

Manjushri asked the meaning of the term Prajna Paramita and the Buddha offered the following explanation: "It

means no boundary and no end, no name, no form and no thought. It means no place to dwell and nothing to depend on; no commitment, no blessings, no light and no darkness; like the Dharmadhatu it has no designated limits and cannot be enumerated, classified calibrated or measured in any way. Such is the Perfect Wisdom, known as the practice-field of Bodhisattva Mahasattvas; when there is neither practice nor non-practice, there is only one vehicle and one practice, to wit: 'Beyond'. Why? Because only then there is a complete absence of thought and action. The Prajna Paramita practice is the most expedient path to Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi. A good person practicing the Samadhi of Nonduality can attain the Unsurpassed, perfect awakening by those means. The Dharmadhatu is a form, and a wholehearted concentration on that form is called one-pointed or nondual absorption. To enter it, the meditator needs to hear the teaching on Perfect Wisdom, accept and hold it with a well focused mind. The condition of that samadhi is the same as the condition of Dharmadhatu. It is non-returning, indestructible, inconceivable, formless and free of obstacles. A good person wishing to enter the Samadhi of Nonduality should find a quiet place and let go of confusion and imaginings. Sitting erect, the mind focused on buddha, the meditator should proceed in the direction of buddha, mind-moment after mind-moment. Such a meditator is bound to see all the past, present and future buddhas. Why? Because that conduct produces an immeasurable merit, honoring all buddhas without exception. It equals the one vehicle of the Inconceivable Dharma that is Suchness. The Samadhi of Nonduality is conducive to complete enlightenment and encompasses all merit. It promotes an understanding of all the countless buddhas and buddha-fields as not different from Dharmadhatu. Venerable Ananda, the Buddha's chief hearer, heard the teachings and held the dharani, and thus surpassed the vehicle of sravaka, but his understanding had boundaries that acted as obstacles.

Upon entering the Samadhi of Nonduality all dharmas and all sutras are understood. The practice fosters a decisive, powerful eloquence completely free from obstacles. The effectiveness of Venerable Ananda's samadhi, when compared to the Samadhi of Non-duality, would represent less than one

hundred thousandth part of it. A Bodhisattva Mahasattva should make the utmost effort to enter the Samadhi of Nonduality and receive an immeasurable merit. He or she should make a whole-hearted effort and progress energetically, guarding against looseness: In such a manner the Samadhi of Nonduality can be accessed and the inconceivable merit obtained. Those who slander this Dharma, reject the doctrine of cause and effect or have a particularly heavy karma are the only exceptions to this rule and cannot attain it. Such people cannot enter samadhi. Again, Manjushri, if a man who obtained a Mani pearl shows it to a jeweller, the jeweller would confirm that it is genuine. The owner would then ask the jeweller to polish the pearl until its luster dazzles the eye. The meditators who learn and practice the Samadhi of Nonduality increase their inconceivable merit by the same process. Their understanding of the form of all dharmas will eventually become completely unencumbered, benefitting all creatures without exception in the same way daylight does: Without excess and without paucity. By means of that samadhi all conceivable merit can be obtained. It illuminates all dharmas the way the sun illumines the world. Manjushri,” continued the Buddha, “the Dharma I teach has only one taste, a taste distilled from all flavors: That taste is the non-taste of stillness. The good men and good women who attain Samadhi of Nonduality will pass on to others this Dharma which has only one flavor, i.e., the non-flavor of stillness. They will unerringly follow the true Dharma. The samadhi I am speaking of is conducive to the Way and to the speedy attainment of the unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment. A Bodhisattva Mahasattva does not perceive its form as different from Dharmadhatu. A practice without any thought of buddhahood is the inconceivable great Bodhi; it is a means by which Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi can be attained. Those who hold all dharmas to be Buddhadharma and yet experience neither doubts nor fears as a result of it can attain Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi by means of their endurance alone.”

“World Honored One, because of these causes, a prompt attainment of the unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment can be accomplished”, concluded Manjushri. The Buddha added “It is not obtained by causes, yet not non-obtained by causes. Why? Because the realm of the inconceivable is not reached through

causes, nor is it not non-obtained through causes. Good men and good women who do not yield to indifference and carelessness after hearing this Dharma already planted the root of goodness and follow the example of previous buddhas. The bhikshus and bhikshunis who do not become frightened upon hearing this Dharma of Prajna Paramita truly left their home for the teachings of the Buddha, and the lay devotees who can hear this Dharma without experiencing fear thereby accomplished their practice and acquired a stabilizing point they can return to at will.

Good men and good women who ignore the profound Dharma of Prajna Paramita, do not practice the Buddha's vehicle. To offer an example, countless trees and herbs depend on the great earth to be nourished, to be strong, to develop their roots and, consequently, to grow and flourish. Likewise, it is important to practice Prajna Paramita for the attainment of Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, because the one enhances the other."

"World Honored One, is there a region that can be considered more appropriate than most for the teaching of this profound Dharma? Should it take place in Jambudvīpa, in forests or in a remote countryside?" asked Manjushri. The Buddha explained "The right place for teaching this Dharma is wherever a Sangha has gathered. The important point is that all who have heard the teaching vow to attain Perfect Wisdom in their next life. They should make every effort to understand this teaching clearly, believing it deeply. A person of a certain kind can understand, hold and deeply cherish this teaching. The root of such a person cannot be shallow. If people accept from you this teaching, Manjushri, would you maintain that there is no sravaka, no pratyeka-buddha, no bodhisattva and no buddha, and, moreover, that there is no mundane dharma, no birth and no death in Perfection of Wisdom?"

"World Honored One," said Manjushri, returning to his discourse, "whenever a bhikshu, a bhikshuni, an upasaka or an upasika asks what reason does the Tathagata have for teaching Prajna Paramita, I answer that all buddhas are beyond controversy. The Tathagata's teaching is the Perfect Wisdom because all Dharma is beyond dispute: It does not depend on the mind of sentient beings and on their understanding thereof. It is

the Dharma of Ultimate Reality, and in it all the other dharmas are enshrined. There is no surpassing the Dharma of the arhat, because there is no difference between it and the worldly dharma. They are neither identical nor different. Although you have been teaching this Dharma time and time again, no sentient beings attained Nirvana in the past or in the present, nor will they attain it in the future, because the form of sentient beings has never been determined. To the one who seeks me because he/she wants to hear the Dharma of Prajna Paramita I offer this teaching as contained in my present discourse, further emphasizing that there should neither be thought nor attachment, neither hearing nor attainment, and no discriminating thought. All of it is like a slight of hand performed by an illusionist. The true Teaching or Dharma is like this. It is completely free from duality. The listener should not dwell on form in any or all of its great variety, should not abandon views, not embrace the Buddhadharmas, and not reject the Mundane Dharma. All form, including that of the Buddha is void and there is nothing to be craved, nothing to be rejected. Such will be my answer to those eager to understand this Dharma of Perfect Wisdom. The good men and the good women should dwell like this and feel comfortable in this mode, their minds never confused. Just keeping in mind that Perfect Wisdom contains all dharmas.”

The Buddha approved: “Excellent, Manjushri, it is just as you say. These people from good families, who want to see all buddhas, want to know deeply and intimately the buddhas’ teachings, and who offer themselves wholeheartedly to the Dharma should cultivate Perfect Wisdom in this manner. Whoever considers himself/herself to be the disciple of the Tathagata should concentrate on perfecting Prajna Paramita. Those who do not follow the teachings of the Tathagata should nevertheless make an effort to develop their practice of Prajna Paramita. For the attainment of Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, one has to practice and study Prajna Paramita. Correspondingly, the perfection of Wisdom is indispensable for the completion of all other types of samadhi because the samadhi of non-action is formless. To get to know the untrue, the contrived or synthetic names of dharmas, to learn that all dharmas are free of birth and death, one ought to practice Prajna Paramita. Whoever wants to

perceive all dharmas as a form of the Bodhi, to keep the mind free of confusion, and to discover that sentient beings already practice the Bodhi Tao, should not seek the Bodhi according to form but focus on perfecting Prajna Paramita. Meditators who want to see the manifestations of Tathagatas' supernatural powers unhindered by either form or obstacles, non-abiding, should, likewise, practice and study Prajna Paramita."

"Manjushri," added the Buddha, "The bhikshus and bhikshunis, upasakas and upasikas not wishing to fall into evil ways need to practice and develop the Perfect Wisdom, and those who accept and hold even one sentence or one gatha of this Teaching and endeavor to explain it to others according to this Dharma of Ultimate Reality already are on their way to Unsurpassed, Perfect Awakening. Free from fear and anxiety, giving rise to the Right Faith and the Right Understanding, they have the Buddha's seal of approval and the Dharma Seal of Mahayana. The teaching they just received comes directly from the Buddha. They transcend all Dharma and the vehicles of sravaka and of pratyeka-buddha."

While the Buddha was still speaking, Sakra, the lord of thirty-three heavens, showered the assembly with exquisite blossoms at the sound of celestial music. There were blossoms of the blue Utpala lotus, the Kuuda flowers, the Pundarika and the Mandala flowers, the Candana and the Malika incense, not to mention countless splendid treasures. It was his offering to Prajna Paramita, to all the Tathagatas and to Manjushri. He said: "I wish to hear this Dharma of Prajna Paramita continuously, and I wish that every good man and every good woman hear this sutra and understand its teaching. May all of them have the Right Faith and the Right Understanding so they can accept and hold it, and teach others to follow them. May all celestial beings protect this Dharma."

The Buddha then concluded, saying: "Every good man and every good woman should understand the Bodhi of all buddhas." Then he smiled his radiant smile that illuminated the entire universe without exception, and the good earth trembled six times, moved by the Buddha's supernatural powers. Manjushri concluded his discourse, saying: "Every good man, every good woman who accepts and holds this Dharma receives

immeasurable merit. The teaching bears the seal of the Tathagata and of Prajna Paramita. Every occasion of it being taught is an auspicious manifestation of both. It is best to receive and hold it without praise or slander, since all Dharma is formless. There is, really, no time and no space in which praise or slander could take place.”

The Buddha declared: “I bestow upon this teaching the Dharma seal: Let there be no chance for the heavenly demons to disturb it.”

The Buddha finished his discourse and the entire assembly rejoiced having heard this sutra of Prajna Paramita; they accepted and cherished it.

GLOSSARY

The terms are in Sanskrit unless stated otherwise

Arhat -- The one who has achieved Nirvana, a saint according to Buddhist tradition of south-east Asia.

Arya -- Any individual ennobled by his or her continuing effort on the Path to enlightenment.

Bhikshu -- Religious renunciate (man); in Buddhist terminology, a fully ordained monk.

Bhikshuni -- The equivalent of above, designating a woman.

Bodhi -- Perfect wisdom or insight knowledge by means of which a person becomes a buddha.

Bodhi Mandala -- The area on which an adept practices toward enlightenment; usually designates the seat beneath the Bodhi-tree where Sakyamuni's enlightenment occurred.

Dharani -- Extended Mantra, used in devotional practice; the monosyllabic text is the means used to focus and expand the mind; its sounds should not communicate any immediately recognizable meaning.

Gatha -- Arya meter; metrical part of a sutra aimed to assist memorizing it.

Jambudvipa -- "The Rose-apple Continent"; a term from the ancient Indian cosmology, used to designate India.

Kalpa -- Periodic manifestations and dissolutions of universes which go on eternally are called kalpas; great kalpa consists of four asamkhiya kalpas, corresponding to childhood, maturity, old age and death of a universe.

Mahayana -- Lit., great vehicle; dominant Buddhist tradition of China. Special characteristics are the emphasis on the Bodhisattva ideal; the accession of the historical Buddha to a superhuman status; the development of extensive philosophical inquiry to counter Brahmanical and other scholarly argument; and the development of an elaborate devotional practice.

Manjushri -- One of the principle bodhisattvas of Mahayana; personifies profound wisdom, second only to a buddha; shown as holding a sword of wisdom and riding a lion, Manjushri is usually represented at Sakyamuni's side.

Nirvana -- Complete liberation from all problems of existence.

Pratyeka buddha -- Self-enlightened being who has attained enlightenment without a teacher but is unable or unwilling to teach Dharma.

Sakra -- A sovereign of Hindu mythology; Indra; the Lord of devas and of the thirty-three heavens.

Sanskrit -- The learned language of India. Canonical texts of Mahayana Buddhism in its Indian stage were written in Sanskrit.

Sravaka -- Lit., a hearer; an aspirant who is an ardent listener of Buddha's teaching, still requiring guidance in practice; an avid reader of teachings in our modern times.

Sutra -- Lit., a thread; that which like a thread runs through all, connecting it; according to Buddhist terminology the term designates original texts, as contrasted with analytical or explanatory texts or commentaries.

Tao -- Chinese term meaning a path or a way. In the Buddhist context, the term may be used to mean practice, path, doctrine, truth, Self-nature or the Ultimate.

Tathagata -- “thus gone” or “the one who has found the truth”; term frequently used by the Buddha in reference to himself as well as to other buddhas.

Trayastrimsas -- The heavens of the thirty-three devas; the second of the desire-heavens; the heaven of Indra.

Upasaka -- Buddhist lay devotee (man) who formally received five rules of conduct for lay Buddhists.

Upasika -- equivalent term to upasika, designating a woman.

THE INCONCEIVABLE REGION
OF THE
TATHAGATA

From the Maha Vaipulya Sutra

THE INCONCEIVABLE REGION OF THE TATHAGATA.

From the Maha Vaipulya Sutra

THUS HAVE I HEARD: When the Buddha attained his unparalleled enlightenment, he was seated in deep absorption beneath a Bodhi tree in his native land of Magadha.

The Bodhi tree has deep, firm roots, a trunk resembling a sandal wood pillar, its bark is handsomely variegated in a net-like pattern. Strong branches of the Bodhi tree open and reach out, forming an enormous crown, and host countless birds. Heart-shaped, glossy, leathery leaves are thick-bodied, and their color is a deep, fresh green. Blossoms of the Bodhi tree are delicate, but the fragrance is quite delightful; in India only two other trees are said to be comparable with the Bodhi tree (asapa) for beauty: They are the kumbira and the daricitra. A mature Bodhi tree soars above the green multitude of other trees, its kingly bearing dominating the landscape in the same way a highest peak of a mountain-range dominates the horizon. While a Bodhi tree is in bloom, the fragrance filters into the surrounding air and floats great distances away. In a moonlit night the cordate leaves of the Bodhi tree glisten, turning it into an immense silver-white torch, noticeable from afar; at a close range the Bodhi tree and all its adornments convey the contentment of a happy garden. The agreeably even ground the tree stands on supports an exuberant array of trees and bamboo, attracting people all year round. They come to delight in the scenery and to enjoy the fragrant air. The whole area nurtures happiness and a sense of well-being.

The Tathagata manifests himself in that natural garden. His posture is correct, his deportment dignified; he is surrounded by his followers in the way a bevy of stars surrounds Polaris.

Ten buddha-realms containing buddha-fields as countless as motes of dust manifested themselves simultaneously, assuming visible characteristics of Bodhisattva Mahasattvas for the adornment of the Bodhi-mandala of

Vairocana. Bodhisattva Avalokiteshvara, Bodhisattva Manjushri, Bodhisattva Ksitagarbha, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, Womb Of Space Bodhisattva, Womb Of Thunderbolt Bodhisattva, Vimalakirti Bodhisatt, Extinction of Hindrances Bodhisattva, Awe Inspiring Light Of Universal Good Bodhisattva, as well as many other Bodhisattva Mahasattvas presently joined the assembly. Additionally, thousands of bodhisattvas manifested themselves as sravakas, or the best of the best hearers of the Teachings, namely the Aryas Sariputra, Mahamaudgalyayana, Subhuti, Rahula, Ajnata-kaundinya, Mahakasyapa, Upali, Anirudha Revata, Ananda, Devadatta, Upananda, and more. All were fully emancipated by means of a vehicle of hearers. They have fulfilled the sphere of practices of hearers and they entered the state of uninterrupted tranquility—the state of the arhat. A great number of bhikshunis who have likewise completed the sphere of practices and who were equal in accomplishment to the greatest of the men, appear lead by Mahaprajapati, who was the greatest of them. Indra, Brahma, and countless devas, nagas, yaksas, gandharvas, asuras, garudas, kinnaras, mahoragas joined the gathering, some endowed with a personality and some without it: They came because they were all bodhisattvas without exception.

The World Honored One sat beneath the tree: Gloriously pure, fearless and mighty, motionless like the Mount Sumeru, he was comparable to the wish-fulfilling Mani pearl under a citra tree. His thought being the Right Thought, was steeped in lucid knowledge of all regions. Motionless he sat, so all the bodhisattvas, all the sentient beings could perceive, comprehend, and appreciate the deep meditation, the profound absorption called the Samadhi of the Inconceivable, otherwise known as the Inconceivable Region of the Tathagata. The thirty-two laksanas or marks which characterize the World Honored One manifested themselves as a limitless world of buddhas, each of them pervading the ten directions with countless buddhas. Each of the marks was excellent in every detail. Each was manifested as the pure actions of the Tathagata's previous lives while he was still a Bodhisattva, since the time he was a king of light till the time he was Dipamkara Buddha. He made this assembly witness the

many kinds of ascetic practices, the many kinds of difficult deeds that embodied great determination. He relinquished his eyes, his skin, his hands, his flesh, his body, his limbs, his head, his wife, his retinue, his palace and his kingship. From his kind of samadhi emanated great power. It is the samadhi entered and maintained by all buddhas while eating, walking, teaching or when entering Nirvana. Entering and abiding in the inconceivable samadhi the buddhas release, liberate and send forth supernatural powers thereby attaining and securing a spiritual strength requisite for the accomplishment of their aspiration, i.e., the realization of the supernatural Void: When it is accomplished, countless buddha-lands manifest themselves in the ten directions.

While dreaming, a dreamer is completely immersed in his/her dream and only upon awakening realizes it was a dream. Similarly, the worldlings, absorbed in a dream produced by their ignorance, hold the illusory as real; however, the buddhas have awakened from that dream and freed themselves from fetters of ignorance. They are emancipated forever due to their great enlightenment. Thereafter the whole world manifests itself as countless buddha-fields in one thought. Such an accomplishment benefits all beings, enlightening them with the profound Dharma of Deliverance.

The Great Reserve Of Virtue Bodhisattva, whose practice before his enlightenment was Bodhi-action, turned to Samantabhadra Bodhisattva with a question: "Please tell me, Enlightening Being, how can we attain the samadhi of the Tathagata and what name designates it? How can it manifest itself in so many buddha-fields so freely? How can one learn and carry out the practice, liberating all sentient beings in the ten directions?"

"Make a wholehearted effort to understand and accept this Dharma of the Inconceivable Region of the Tathagata which I am going to expound for your benefit" declared Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. As he finished speaking, all bodhisattvas acknowledged, approved and praised the depth, the scope and the clarity of The Great Reserve Of Virtue Bodhisattva's question, as well as the wondrously compassionate generosity of

Bodhisattva Samantabhadra. The great earth trembled in six different ways, celebrating the auspicious event. Fragrant clouds showered lustrous celestial flowers, sprinkled the assembly with perfume, bringing to a momentary halt all defilements and suffering of every sentient being.

Samantabhadra Bodhisattva said: “The samadhi is known as the Inconceivable Region of the Tathagata. It is an ocean of attainment, it is the Bodhi, a firsthand knowledge of the unobstructed space also known as the Ultimate Reality: It is the Samadhi of all Tathagatas. The World Honored One entered such samadhi manifesting himself as countless purified buddha-realms of buddhas completely without effort, just as predicted by Dipamkara Buddha. The Buddha’s entering the concentration of buddhas, his perception of all buddha-realms on the tip of one hair was a manifestation of an unimaginable amount of pure qualities of the Buddha, of his inconceivable virtues and of the extent of his fulfillment of past practices. It was an empowerment of the Buddha to manifest himself spiritually and to turn the Dharma wheel while sitting on a mote of dust. He stayed for some time in Tusita heaven. Upon entering this Saha world of endurance he took seven steps and declared ‘I appear in this world to lighten this burden, this great matter of birth and death.’ Having completed his purification in the realm of action undertaken in seclusion from the worldly, he enhanced his omniscient knowledge and his already great spiritual powers. By overcoming armies of demons he attained the unsurpassed, inconceivable, unexplainable and perfect liberation. He appeared in this world, dwelled in this world through countless kalpas for the benefit, for the salvation, for the liberation of all sentient beings, so they can abandon suffering, drive away their fears and reach the abode of tranquility.

Moreover, he manifested his entry into nirvana. He pointed out and then clarified the realm of reality. He subsequently converted a kalpa -- the unimaginably long stretch of time representing for most us the past, the present and the future -- into a single ksana or one brief mind moment. He then extended one ksana and made it equal in length with one kalpa; by a means of his power of concentration characteristic of the

state of buddhahood he revealed continuous transfigurations of every apparent object and he dissolved the delusions of increase and of decrease. He manifested himself as effortless as motes of dust move through unobstructed space. He entered vast expanses of countless buddha-fields as numerous as the atoms in equally countless buddha-lands on the tip of one hair. He formulated his awe-inspiring Dharma as innumerable buddha-spheres in the world of a buddha. Each buddha-land naturally manifests itself as an immeasurable ocean of awe-inspiring buddhas: Since their heavenly birth they keep emancipating sentient beings one mind moment after another until they enter nirvana. Yet a buddha-field, though it is profound, vast, and immeasurable, does not provide room or time for rest, and there is no decrease and no increase of particles of dust, nor is there an increase or decrease of buddha-spheres. Why? Because all dharmas are an illusion of an illusion.

There are as many great bodhisattvas as there are particles of dust in the country of Magadha. They manifest themselves as buddha-planes, pervading the ten directions. Some of them are upwardly supportive, some are supportive to the left or to the right, while others simply pay attention. All of them are mindful care-givers and their actions are completely freed from obstacles in the same way a dream is free from obstacles, because all worlds everywhere are mind produced. Some worlds may be perceived as consumed by fire through an entire kalpa; the fire may be perceived as being extinguished by the wind. Those worlds do not host any buddhas: Purity and impurity appear because the mind of sentient beings produced it. Their minds pass through as many mind-states as there are motes of dust in one of their worlds.

A hungry ghost, driven as he or she is by an incessant hunger and thirst, upon reaching the River Ganges might perceive its water as ashes, as blood, as pus or as excrement. Similarly, the sentient beings depending upon their individual karma and upon their root of goodness, act accordingly. Depending on the degree of clarity of their knowledge, they may appreciate any or all of the following: Buddha-lands as pure or as impure; the Buddha's stay in this world, as well as his

nirvana; his sitting on the Bodhimandala while expounding the profound Dharma of Ultimate Reality; his teaching the Dharma of Dana (giving), and his praise of the Dharma of Dana. They may see him walking, standing, sitting and eating; visualize his stature as being twice, even seven-times taller than people; or see him one-, one hundred-, or one thousand miles tall. They may behold him as the light of sunrise or as the radiance of the full moon.

Furthermore, dependent on one's karma one might have been born while the Buddha's stayed in the world or after he entered his final nirvana, or one may never have the chance to as much as hear Buddhadharma mentioned and much like those hungry ghosts at the River Ganges, one cannot see anything but dirt. One might apprehend all buddhas and buddha-lands as great, enlightening and awe-inspiring bodhisattvas attending this assembly, or see sentient beings in the process of being consumed by a raging fire in an unchanging world for as long as one kalpa: One may comprehend all sentient beings as seeing the Buddha and forming together one world; or sense the Tathagata entering all worlds in the one world; or bring one world into all the other worlds. Someone whose eyesight is impeded by a deficiency or a malfunction, perceives, as a result of his/her impediment, the colors and shapes of this world differently from those whose eyesight is normal. It is the same case with sentient beings. The nature of color and form is free from obstacles, but the condition of mind, or vision, is not.

Countless obstacles cover over, suffocate or hide the Right View and the Right Understanding of truth and reality.

I am going to teach you the Dharma of Samadhi as it was practiced by the World Honored One: In a single thought he manifested himself as space filled with numberless oceanic buddha-lands on the tip of a single hair. The Dharmadhatu contains these in a single mote of dust, and penetrates in one mind-moment as many worlds as there are atoms in all the land and all the oceans for the benefit of sentient beings. The Buddha manifests himself in the sphere that contains and pervades all the other spheres as numerous as there are buddha-fields on the tip of a single hair. He expounds all the expedient dharmas of all

the buddhas: His teaching is as awe-inspiring as a flash of lightning, and equally as effective. Furthermore, he will continue to do so until all sentient beings attain the unparalleled, complete enlightenment. There will be two buddhas, then three, and so on, until all space in the ten directions becomes a manifestation of one great, respect-commanding merit, emancipating all sentient beings without exception.”

The Great Reserve Of Virtue Bodhisattva attained the Inconceivable Samadhi upon hearing this teaching and perceived unlimited buddhas appearing as immeasurable oceanic buddha-lands, and comprehended in one instant all the expedient dharmas of all the respect-inspiring buddhas while Samanthabhadra Bodhisattva Mahasattva proceeded with his discourse.

“As bodhisattvas progress along the bodhisattvas’ path, they attain, one by one, several kinds of samadhi. The bodhisattvas obtain the patient endurance of the uncreate, and apply the energy they gain from that samadhi to train, subdue and cultivate sentient beings as numerous as there are grains of sand in one hundred Ganges rivers. Avalokiteshvara Bodhisattva Mahasattva and many other accomplished bodhisattvas dwell in the samadhi of the tenth stage. They have universal good on their minds, and expounding good actions they enter the recondite oceans of buddha-qualities. As they attain the Inconceivable Samadhi, they acquire the greatest merit due to the perfection of their attainment. It was always so since the beginning of time.

A bodhisattva has the capacity to perceive countless kalpas in one ksana, to observe unimaginable numbers of worlds contained in a mote of dust, and to disseminate the teachings emancipating sentient beings in a single thought. Born of the teachings of buddhas, a bodhisattva manifests fields of buddha-qualities naturally and without effort, being established in a buddha-land. The bodhisattvas I am speaking of accomplished their career, and teaching them this Dharma would be like exposing a vessel full of water to the rain: Not a drop more can be added. All accomplished bodhisattvas are like that.”

As Manjushri spoke, the World Honored One, still in samadhi, emitted a multicolored, dazzling ray from the middle of his eyebrows: Those bodhisattvas who have not attained the tenth stage and who experienced difficulties because of it suddenly perceived unlimited buddha-lands on the tip of a single hair; they easily apprehended countless buddhas manifesting themselves as oceanic buddha-spheres in one mote of dust. Just as we can see white mustard inside a crystal receptacle, these bodhisattvas could see numberless buddhas as myriads of buddha-fields in a single mote of dust. In each buddha-body they perceived the bodies of all the other buddhas.

“Every name of every Buddha”, continued Samantabhadra Bodhisattva, “is beyond all measurement, because the buddhas benefit all sentient beings and free them from obstacles mind-moment after mind-moment. The bodhisattvas attain naturally and effortlessly the unparalleled perfect enlightenment by keeping their minds on buddha-lands.

For example, the pure, wish-fulfilling Mani-pearl on top of a high pennant will shower sentient beings with precious gems and treasures according to their individual purposes or wishes and make them happy and satisfied. In the same manner the Tathagata accomplishes the perfect enlightenment of sentient beings naturally and effortlessly. Sentient beings, though greatly varied, do not obstruct each other. Nor can mountains, rivers, rocks and walls act as hindrances, because all things and all beings without exception are but an illusion. Bodhisattvas are clearly aware of that, and consequently perceive their great Self as extending through the entire universe; they see each and every buddha face to face for one-, one hundred-, or one thousand kalpas in one mind-moment.

Bodhisattvas pay homage to all buddhas in a single mind-moment. They might hear the Buddha speak the Prajna Paramita dharani; teach the stages of samadhi or supernatural powers; they may experience the expanse of time in one timeless mind-state with no thought arising. They may dwell in non-attachment and non-obstruction, in a state as tranquil as space. Each arising thought makes this Dharma difficult to perceive and to comprehend. The awe-inspiring freedom of the World-

Honored One should be deeply pondered, contemplated and heeded. Using one's merit and one's good root as foundation one should take the risk, persevere and attain in that instant the Samadhi of the Inconceivable Region of the Tathagata."

The Great Reserve of Virtue Bodhisattva had one more question to ask Samantabhadra Bodhisattva for the benefit of sentient beings. "Please tell me, Enlightening Being, what method of practice, what wisdom and what discipline will foster, strengthen and empower the meditator so he/she could attain this kind of samadhi?" At that moment, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva established his mind in a complete and perfect enlightenment for the benefit of sentient beings in the ten directions. Following the occurrence he returned to his discourse:

"Whoever aims to enter the sphere of the enlightened ones should first purify buddha-fields by diverse purifying acts, accomplished by providing protection to those who need it; by guarding against indifference toward sentient beings; by assuring a preservation of Buddhadharmas; by perfecting qualities of one's good root; by purifying one's faith; by accomplishing the welfare and happiness of all beings, not deserting and not abandoning any of them. Such determination, power, and purity of virtue lead to the attainment of the unsurpassed and perfect enlightenment without delay.

One's wisdom is cultivated everytime one opens one's mind to teachings. Offering one's unfettered understanding to the Dharma leads to the understanding of all dharmas everywhere. One can make offerings to the Sangha by being an unsolicited benefactor, thereby greatly increasing one's merit. Additionally, one should offer one's kindness, gratitude and courtesy to one's parents and teachers and extend these virtues to all beings, thus preserving and cultivating one's good root. A non-regressing bodhisattva who is intent on the right kind of giving to all sentient beings never relinquishes his/her compassion even for one mind-moment.

Great Reserve Of Virtue, try to apprehend, to understand and establish in your mind clearly the World-Honored One's teaching. Everyone can achieve a perfectly good root. As he/she plants great seeds, a bodhisattva nurtures the tree of

samadhi so it can bear the fruit of Bodhi. Reverent offerings of flowers, incense, of chanting or music are actions that plant great seeds. Attempt to discern, to enter and to establish the state of concentration marking in your body and mind the entering into the buddha-sphere. By offering your mind to this Dharma and to the one Buddha you will receive all the rest of dharmas. By making an offering to the one Tathagata you make offerings to all of them. In such manner and by such means of concentration the great seeds of the Samadhi of the Inconceivable Realm Of Tathagata are planted, the knowledge acquired and the mode mastered.

These great seeds will prosper when nurtured by a boundless care for sentient beings and by undertaking the acts and vows of bodhisattvas or enlightened and enlightening beings. Generosity, kind speech and beneficial action will further purify the bodhisattva vehicle by means of fostering sentient beings, by dissolving distinctions and by establishing one's mind in a state of equanimity. The sphere of knowledge of the enlightening beings or bodhisattvas cannot be found in their thoughts, conceptions or in their imaginings. The bodhisattva's knowledge, utterly pure in essential nature, is outside and beyond the web of concepts, cyclic patterns, duration, or chronology that could be calibrated.

Bodhisattvas are, by definition, beyond all misleading thoughts: They see things as they are. Controlled by great vows in the sphere of great compassion they manifest themselves as guides leading sentient beings toward perfection, keeping them from falling into woeful states. Bodhisattvas lead sentient beings to the paths of felicity by using and by teaching many kinds of giving. Moreover, seeing with accuracy and with intuitive knowledge all worlds as dreamlike, realizing all worlds as magic, bodhisattvas generate the great vow and the great Bodhi in every mind-state, proceeding in the direction of all buddhas, aspiring to the supreme, perfect enlightenment. Immersed in an indivisible ocean of virtues, a bodhisattva perfects the practice of bodhisattvas, coursing through countless buddha-lands as unfettered as space, transcending time.

All of you on this who practice this path of wisdom, listen attentively and ponder deeply what I just taught you. The good man and the good woman aspiring to attain the supreme Bodhi should adopt this practice of wisdom for their own until they attain samadhi, because samadhi is obtained by means of wisdom. Purifying one's speech, distancing oneself from frivolous or trivial actions, and contemplating the radiant form or image of Vairocana Buddha as any of the following: The Imperturbable, seated on the throne of the enlightened; the Light of the Knowledge of Oceanic Awareness; the Amita-Buddha beneath the world-illuminating celestial canopy radiating jewel-like rays, adorned with a dazzling array of gems; the Precious Moon Buddha; the Blessed Be the Precious Light Buddha; any or all of the countless other buddhas. All these delight the mind and purify faith.

Visualize reverently the form of the Buddha. Observe an image of the Buddha face to face and take it to be the real form of all Tathagatas. Find a secluded, quiet place. Concentrate your mind and sit perfectly erect, contemplating, discerning, seeing the presence of all buddhas, and keep your thought from fluctuating. Revere the form you are visualizing by making imaginary offerings of fragrant flowers, incense and lights. Think of as many kinds offerings to the Buddha as you wish, and establish the mind of reverence you would if the living Buddha were present. Consider the Buddha as an omnipresent manifestation of the Unobstructed Wisdom. Practice in this manner diligently, maintaining a concentrated mind for three weeks. Providing there is purified action and great merit, the Tathagata will appear. The Tathagata is perceived when the mind is well focused, and unencumbered by a single thought. Through sustained effort even the supreme Bodhi can be attained. It is understandably difficult, for those with unstable practice, to save others without completing their own practice first. Those unable to practice with diligence after having heard this Dharma are a heavy burden for this earth.

To offer another example: The one who drinks a drop of water from the ocean drinks, in that same drop, water from all rivers, because the ocean is where all rivers ultimately flow into.

Similarly, a bodhisattva passes through numerous spheres of samadhi practice in order to gain mastery and to let the ocean of Bodhi manifest itself. The level of a bodhisattva's mastery over the bodhisattvas' sphere of practice is directly proportionate to the degree, the depth and the scope of a bodhisattva's mind in terms of patience, determination, concentration, and self-discipline.

While contemplating a visualized form or an image of the Buddha, it is important to free one's mind from doubt and from any questioning regarding the reality of these visualizations. You should kneel, palms joined, while worshiping with utmost reverence the Buddha's image. Request the World Honored One to teach you the great Dharma of Samadhi and the Dharma of the Inconceivable Region of the Tathagata, out of his great compassion. Those who upon hearing this Teaching embrace it wholeheartedly with a mind completely free of doubt will attain samadhi in that very instant. Those with a heavy karma accumulated during previous existences might not have any opportunity to hear the Dharma. When dharmas are perceived, comprehended, or seen as a delusion, a shadow, a trance or as a blazing fire, the recognition lays bare Voidness as their True Nature. All dharmas regarding the Tathagata are apprehended in a similar fashion: The True Nature of the Tathagata is comparable to space, the entire immeasurably vast expanse being a radiant field of wisdom and compassion. While experiencing this, the meditator may become aware of a luminous ray. Upon observing it he or she will notice its emerald hue: It is the beam of luminous green which illuminates and dissolves all suffering. Such an occurrence marks the attainment of the radiant Dharma of Endurance. The meditator comprehends several kinds of samadhi in that instant; their meaning and their relevance to practice are also clearly recognized. Within seven days following this occurrence the meditator may receive in a dream a prediction, from the Tathagata of his or her imminent enlightenment. It should be remembered, however, that all buddha-spheres, all buddha-lands and all manifestations of buddhas-as-form are mind produced. They are devices aimed to assist the mind in the effort to accede

an entry into the oceanic realm of the tranquil freedom of buddhas.

The above also applies to sentient beings. Our consciousness combines with conditions, producing a thought which, in turn, opens a treasure chest containing an infinity of forms. All of it is but a dream within a dream, and therefore the form of the Buddha can manifest, as inaccessible as birth and death, facing the meditator. There is no birth, although there is birth; there is no death although there is death. There is no coming and no going and so on, until there is neither knowing nor non-knowing. The same applies to action, to sentient beings, to the ego, to the five skandhas, to the eighteen realms, and the twelve nidanas. Finally there arises the perception that no existing thing is what it seems, nor is it otherwise. All buddhas, all dharmas, and all forms equal each other, all being just one form, a form that is mind-produced. The true nature of that form is Voidness. A perception of space is unfettered, in its purity completely free of distinctions. The non-differentiating mind, freed from duality, can perceive buddhas in the same manner and with the same purity. When a bodhisattva clearly understands that all dharmas are mind-produced, he or she attains Samadhi of Endurance, and by doing so enters the first stage on the bodhisattvas' path: The stage of release from one's body, known as rebirth in the realm of joy."

The Great Reserve Of Virtue Bodhisattva interjected his last question: "What merit can be obtained by those sentient beings, who upon hearing this Dharma accept, uphold, practice and teach it?"

Resuming his discourse, Samantabhadra Bodhisattva declared: "Listen attentively: If someone leads all sentient beings toward the termination of birth and death and to the stage of an arhat, and then offers robes, food, medicine and shelter to each and every arhat for as long as one hundred kalpas, and if that person builds a stupa for each arhat who entered Nirvana and makes reverent offerings to them, or if a person practices great patience and great zeal, and progresses greatly in meditation, such a person will not surpass the field of merit of those who upon hearing this Dharma accept it without doubt and practice

accordingly. The merit such people acquire is unlimited, it is beyond all description. Their attainment of perfect awakening will promptly follow and their distinction will be second to none.” Thereby Samantabhadra Bodhisattva concluded his discourse.

The site of this auspicious event expanded in all directions until it became inexpressibly vast, and inconceivable arrays of buddha-lands manifested themselves in the ten directions as boundless bodies of buddhas commending, extolling and giving praise to Samantabhadra Bodhisattva Mahasattva. At that moment Sakyamuni Buddha emitted an undescrivable beam of light from his face, illuminating all sentient beings without exception. Fragrant clouds showered the assembly with countless celestial blossoms at the sounds of the finest heavenly music, resounding harmoniously as the World Honored One epitomized the Dharma of Enlightenment:

“To free one’s own mind is the aim of this Dharma, this Practice of endless virtue and knowledge; a mind which
Attained the requisite stages of meditation is as pure
As the ocean, and just as immeasurable.

The mind attains the supreme Bodhi through an indefatigable Practice of self-discipline and patience, and by doing so
It greatly expands the field of spiritual powers naturally,
Effortlessly, the way all rivers enter the ocean.

The wheel of the Buddha’s teachings is turned
By a benign inner power, and by a boundless wisdom;
He apprehends great kalpas in a single mind-moment
And countless buddha-lands in a single mote of dust.

Sentient beings endure pangs of existence
Through the past, the present and the future; they burn with
Afflictions, and hopelessly stray in the mundane whirl.

Strife to reduce their intense pain, their fears and their
Confusion in each and every single mind-moment,

Seeking to deliver them all; in each mind-moment
Generate their happiness that will last countless eons.”

The preceding discourse is emblematic of Samantabhadra’s attainment since time immemorial. While the World-Honored One was still speaking, all the denizens of heaven attained irreversible Anuttara Samyak Sambodhi, and by those means were liberated from their suffering. The entire assembly were overjoyed. They believed, accepted and upheld this Dharma.

GLOSSARY

Terms are from Sanskrit unless stated otherwise

Asura -- One of the eight classes of supernatural beings in the Lotus Sutra.

Brahma -- The one self-existent spirit, or the absolute, according to the Indian pantheon.

Deva -- One of the eight classes of supernatural beings in the Lotus Sutra.

Gandharva -- see entry under asura.

Garuda -- see entry under asura.

Indra -- Identified with the supreme being in Indian mythology. The best, or the chief in any class of beings.

Kinnara -- see entry under asura.

Lotus Sutra -- or Saddharma-pundarika; one of the essential scriptures of Mahayana.

Mahogara -- see entry under asura.

Naga -- see entry under asura.

Nidanas -- The Twelve Links in the Chain of Existence; the formula and its interpretation according to two opposite directions is central to the Buddha's teaching.

Samantabhadra -- One of the principle bodhisattvas of Mahayana; personifies all-pervading grace and a flawless practice; represented as riding a white elephant, Samantabhadra is usually at Sakyamuni's side.

Vaipulya -- Lit., expansion or enlargement; the term covers the whole of the specifically Mahayana sutras, also known as scriptures of measureless meaning.

Vairocana -- Vajra Buddha, Diamond Buddha or Sun Buddha; sometimes applied to Sakyamuni as embodiment of Truth, of Wisdom and of Purity.

Yaksa -- see entry under asura.

THE TEACHING IN SEVENTEEN CHAPTERS

for

GREAT BEING BHADRAPALA

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THE TEACHING FOR BHADRAPALA

Chapter I: Requesting the Dharma

THUS HAVE I HEARD: Once the World Honored One stayed in the Karanda Vihara near a bamboo grove outside the city of Rajagrha. He was accompanied by five hundred bhikshus, all of them arhats who have destroyed what fetters to existence and were liberated through right knowledge; they have lived the life accomplished their task, laid down the burden and reached the true goal. They completed their meritorious actions leaving nothing undone, nothing left to be brought under control. They dwelled in unobstructed wisdom and for them there was no more rebirth: Saved by the right teachings, they have reached the other shore. Elder Ananda was away on a journey. Five hundred bhikshus arrived on that very morning, reverently joined their palms, made an obeisance to the World Honored One and sat to one side according to an established custom.

Aryas Sariputra and Mahamaudgalyayana came accompanied by several hundred bhikshus returning from a summer retreat in the city of Sravasti. They reverently greeted the World Honored One and sat to one side. The bhikshus who came to attend the Tathagata's discourse counted in the tens of thousands, while the bhikshunis, led by Venerable Mahaprajnapati, were even more numerous. Having greeted reverently the World Honored One, they followed the established custom and sat to one side. The Tathagata emitted a luminescent ray of emerald light from the center of his eyebrows, thereby demonstrating his supernatural powers, and an upasaka named Bhadrappala, a Bodhisattva in his own right, responded instantly. He came, escorted by several hundred upasakas, to receive this Teaching. Thousands of Sangha Elders, as well as Licchavi-Vajjis with their leaders were among those attending this most auspicious event. Elders Nata-devadatta, Heavenly Water, Star Store and Ajatasatro, as well as the four deva-kings and their retinues, arrived. Even the king of Saha-loka-dhatu has materialized and joined the gathering; he was

accompanied by his adherents and retainers. Finally, the audience reached hundreds of thousands. They paid homage to the World Honored One and sat respectfully, waiting to receive the Dharma. The devotees crowded the site as far as the eye could see. Even the celestial expanse was completely filled with supernatural beings who came to attend the propitious occurrence and to receive the precious teaching.

Upasaka Bhadrápala rose from his seat, reverently greeted the Buddha and, kneeling, requested to be heard. Upon receiving the Buddha's invitation to speak, he asked:

“World Honored One, how can we develop root of goodness, enter ocean of teachings and acquire great merit? How do we purify our self-discipline, free ourselves from laziness, doubt and inner turmoil while vigorously and unceasingly deepening our faith, wisdom and compassion? How do we practice the four Brahma-viharas, generate exemplary faith, great vow and pure action? How can we surpass the trivial, which fetters one to existence and covers one's True Nature? How can we attain and abide in the samadhi of the incomparable, perfect enlightenment, and when freed from all false views, establish ourselves amid the great Void a mind of nonduality? By what means can one attain the great wisdom of past, present and future buddhas so as to never leave the buddha-sphere?”

The World-Honored One answered to Bhadrápala: “Your questions show compassion and the aim to save all sentient beings and heaven-dwellers. You planted good root and made offerings to all buddhas in your previous existences. Having already heard and heeded the right Dharma, you generated compassion, needed when all beings and all events are to be considered of equal value and importance. The samadhi of bodhisattvas is called Establishing the Mind of Nonduality. Having attained it, a bodhisattva should be able to understand and answer all these questions and acquire a considerable merit. Beyond that there is the Inexhaustible, the Undescribable, the Immeasurable, the Boundless.” Bhadrápala Bodhisattva listened with gratitude, and when the World Honored One finished speaking, Bhadrápala said: “For the happiness and the benefit of

all sentient beings and heaven-dwellers, I sincerely and humbly hope the Tathagata will teach this assembly the samadhi of nonduality.”

Chapter II: On Contemplation

The World Honored One acknowledged Bhadrapala's request. "I am going to teach the Dharma of Samadhi; pay attention and ponder with seriousness this profound teaching. How does a bodhisattva maintain the mind of nonduality? By bravely carrying the burden of saving all sentient beings and not abandoning it for one single moment; by perfecting his/her virtues and offering them to others; by contemplating deeply and fully the stillness of the great Void; by avoiding bad company and transgressions of speech, thereby reducing or severing altogether causes and obstacles. A bodhisattva intent on attaining the samadhi of nonduality closes all five sense-doors, reduces sleep to a minimum, avoids greed and vanity as regards his or her clothing, accommodation and food. A bodhisattva takes care not to be attached to his or her body, existence or any other form.

A bodhisattva's mind should be well disciplined, compassionate and lovingly kind. He or she should relinquish thinking and instead seek delight in the four dhyanas, eradicating defilements. He or she should diligently observe changing mind-states with no attachment to any of them, and should constantly endeavor to let the mind abide in the great Void. A bodhisattva should guard against stimulation of his or her five senses, against clinging to aggregates, against grasping any of the mind-states. He or she should cultivate generosity and strife to reduce and eventually eliminate arrogance and jealousy. The prime motive for a bodhisattva action should always be the benefit of all sentient beings. His or her practice should accord with the following points: Observing oneself as not different from others; listening to the teachings, entering and abiding in dhyanas without grasping; avoiding thoughts, speech and actions injurious to buddhas, to Buddhadharma and to Sangha. Practicing five kinds of deliverance, ten good virtues, abandoning ten evils and nine defilements; meditating on nine insights and aiming to attain eight enlightenments of bodhisattvas; avoiding eight kinds of negligence and stopping picking and choosing. Perceiving all mental formations as

delusions and as a dream; abandoning chronological framework of past, present and a future; avoiding disputes, confrontations and conflicts and thinking deeply about the Twelve Links in the Chain of Existence. Once the bodhisattva's wisdom-eye was opened and he or she entered Dharmadhatu, the bodhisattva will comprehend the realm of sentient beings, the realm without birth and death and the realm of Nirvana. At such time he or she will enter pure, unobstructed Wisdom, apprehend clearly the Bodhi and attain inexhaustible merit. Bhadrápala, I taught the Samadhi of Nonduality as it should be practiced by bodhisattvas. There is a samadhi by the means of which even greater merit can be obtained. Samadhi known as 'Contemplating Buddhas Face to Face' brings the highest merit to a bodhisattva who is intent on making progress in his or her practice. The meditator should uphold the appropriate precepts, purify his or her actions and stay in seclusion while contemplating Amitabha, the Lord of the Western Paradise, and his Land of Bliss, or the Tathagata and the Arhat Samyak-sambuddha. The meditator should be thinking of that world of utmost joy tremendous distances from here, where Amita Buddha is teaching Dharma to all bodhisattvas. He or she should concentrate on Amita, on the Tathagata and on the Arhat Samyak-sambuddha, visualizing them.

Worldlings, while they are dreaming, may see in their dreams countless treasures, attractive or congenial company, some quite enjoyable or completely objectionable places or situations: Upon awakening they remember with happiness or worry their dreams, discussing them with others. A dreamer experiences all dream events as real and the discrepancies of space, of dimensions or chronology are not perceived as obstacles. Light or darkness, the absence of both or of neither have no impact on the clarity or the sequence of events the dreamer is experiencing.

The unfettered mind of a bodhisattva is exactly like this. Mind of a sincere meditator is similar to that of a bodhisattva: Using the Right Thought, the mind can generate a clear perception of buddha even if that meditator's wisdom eye was not opened; he or she can hear the Dharma even though his or her wisdom ear was not opened; without leaving this world, such

a person can enter other worlds, even though he or she was not endowed with supernatural powers. Having practiced in this manner for some time such a person will brighten and sharpen considerably his or her wisdom and perceive Amitabha, Tathagata, and Arhat Samyak-sambuddha; he or she will receive the Dharma in the manner of a bodhisattva, in the assembly of bodhisattvas. The experience is accompanied by samadhi; upon the meditator's exiting that mind-state his or her perception of the world, as well as his or her speech will remain orderly and articulate.

There once lived in the country of Magadha three men who were overcome by lust upon hearing rumors regarding three particular women and hearing those women's names mentioned. These men's concentration was affected, and so was their practice. One of these three men had a dream. In that dream he had a close physical relationship with one of the three women. His dream experience was sufficient to satisfy his lust and calm his mind.

Should a man in a similar situation seek your advice, guide him expediently and kindly; teach him Buddhadharma to help him stay on the right path without backsliding, and to attain the incomparable, perfect enlightenment. Let him contemplate the ten titles of the Buddha, to wit: Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha, Vidyacarana-sampanna, Sugata, Lokavid, Anuttara, Purusa-damyasathi, Sasta devamanusyanam, and Buddha-lokanatha; since each of these signifies a sublime state of patience, contemplating them will help that man attain clarity.

Similarly, all those wanting to enter the Samadhi of Being Face to Face with Buddhas should use the method of contemplating the titles of the Buddha. Those desiring to see Amitabha and be reborn in his land of bliss should generate a pure mind by concentrating wholeheartedly on the Amitabha Buddha. All good men and women of pure virtue are advised to generate the Right Thought, to practice diligently and to make the great vow to be reborn in buddha-land. Visualize the Buddha according to his ten titles, complete with the thirty-two laksanas or distinguishing marks and eighty noble characteristics, including his radiant physical form, glowing like a liquid gold.

He should be visualized sitting on the lion throne, instructing the Sangha.

When a meditator proceeds in this manner the dharmas and the five skandhas together with form and consciousness are abandoned, but not destroyed. This also applies to the four elements, the six data, the Brahman, the assembly of brahmadevas, and to thoughts regarding the Tathagata. Virtuous men and virtuous women from good families. I explained the correct way to obtain the Samadhi of Emptiness, or Being Face to Face with the Buddhas. When a practitioner who just came out of samadhi shares with you his or her experience of it, expound the Dharma there and then; doing so you help him or her to follow the example of bodhisattvas and to attain the unsurpassed and perfect enlightenment.

Once there lived a buddha called Sunlike Surge Of Well-being. He journeyed through wilderness, starved and parched; due to his exhaustion, he fell asleep and while he slept he had a dream; in that dream he ate and drank to his complete satiety, but upon awakening his hunger and thirst return: Sunlike Surge Of Well-being deeply realized how deceptive the apparent reality is. If one can continuously observe in this manner, one can obtain the patient endurance of the uncreate and the irreversible, complete enlightenment. If a monk, a nun, or a lay devotee bow to all buddhas in the ten directions with reverence and if they concentrate their minds according to my instructions, a buddha-form will appear in front of them, as vast and as unobstructed as space; their minds will be established in perfect Void. A practitioner, while abiding in Right Thought, will perceive buddha-field manifesting itself in its pristine radiance, like a crystal. Bhadrakala, consider a person who left his or her homeland for another country. There are times when such a person recalls his or her homeland: His or her recollections are always very clear, as clear as a dream. Staying in one's body, in one's domain is exactly like this; it is like a dream. Suppose a monk, a nun, an upasaka or an upasika acquires information regarding a buddha in a particular place, and bows in that direction reverently, with a concentrated mind. That person will see a golden image of buddha as clearly as in a crystal.

A monk or a nun should contemplate the body as unclean internally and externally; observe a corpse changing in color and shape as it deteriorates, infested and devoured by numberless animals and insects; they should, furthermore, observe the bones as they appear, separate and scatter once they are bared of flesh. At such time the monk or nun should reach the understanding that there is nowhere to come from and nowhere to go. By recognizing the true nature of one's own mind one comes to perceive the mind's way. All that is, is mind produced.

Bhadrapala, those who want to enter the Samadhi of Facing the Buddhas should first attain one pointed mind, and then focus on the Tathagata. If the practitioner wants to see the buddhas, he or she must complete three prerequisites, to wit: Attain samadhi; accept his or her dependence on buddhas; develop root of goodness. Consider, for instance, a young man contemplating his reflection in the following four substances: A mirror, still water, oil and a crystal; seeing his face clearly, that man can determine the beauty or lack of it as regards his features. Do you think, Bhadrapala, that the man's reflection was incorporated in these reflective substances?" "It did not become part of them," answered Bhadrapala. "Do you think, Bhadrapala, his reflection was already inside these substances?" "No, it could not have been already inside any of them," was Bhadrapala's answer. "Do you think, then, that the reflection became part of the surface of each of those four substances?" Bhadrapala replied "No, his reflection did not become a part of their surfaces. World Honored One, because these four substances were unadulterated, their smooth surfaces reflected whatever they faced. That man's reflection was not produced by any of those substances, nor was it generated by himself; it did not come from some other place. His reflection came from nowhere and had no place to go to. Neither born nor destroyed, it has no place to dwell." The World Honored One approved, and then summarized as follows: "When substances retain their integrity, there is brightness, and reflections appear. No work, no effort is required. The bodhisattvas' practice is exactly like this. Having heard the Buddhadharma, they keep one-pointed

mind focused on the Tathagata, which brings them joy. They may ask where do buddhas come from, or where does their body come from. After a while the Tathagata comes from no particular place, goes no particular place, nor does he abide in any particular place. My own body is also that way: Since it originally came from nowhere, it has no place to return to. One should contemplate the three realms in the same manner, i.e. as being created by the mind. Why? Because as one thought arises, all the rest arises with it. I know my mind is buddha, but my mind does not know it: It can neither know nor see itself. When a single thought arises, that is birth and, consequently, death. A complete absence of thought is Nirvana; phenomena have no reality of their own, they are produced by causes and conditions. There is no object, no phenomena and no subject or mind. Once a bodhisattva understands this through own experience, he or she attains samadhi and accordingly enters the path to Bodhi.”

Chapter III: On Samadhi Practice

The World Honored One continued: “The samadhi called ‘Seeing the Buddhas Face to Face’ can be attained by a means of those dharmas that represent the bodhisattva practice. These come in three sets of fourfold dharmas, Bhadrapala.

The first set includes a firmly established faith; a resolute, uninterrupted progression toward attainment; a cultivation of the unsurpassed wisdom; and a wholehearted, deep practice of virtue.

The second one includes a complete absence of thought in every mind-moment; a complete abstention from sleep for ninety days; walking continuously for three months, except when using the washroom; and propagating the Buddhadharma with no thought of fame, wealth and/or privilege.

The third set includes urging others to seek the Samadhi of Being Face to Face with Buddhas; a relentless and wholehearted study of the Buddhadharma; relinquishing completely jealousy; persuading others to generate Bodhi-mind, or making an image of buddha and inviting people to make offerings to it; making copies of sutras and providing others with an opportunity to read them; convince those ignorant in Buddhadharma to open their minds to learning; protecting Buddhadharma and promoting its propagation world-wide.”

These three sets of fourfold dharmas lead to the ‘Samadhi of Seeing Buddhas Face to Face.’ The World Honored One reiterated this Dharma in the following gathas:

“To establish your mind in Buddhadharma,
First establish firmly your faith; forgo all sleep
And all reclining for three months; recite the names of buddhas
To prevent backsliding, and your practice will progress.

Share your food, or better still, occasionally skip meals,
Offering them to others; not seeking rewards while
Spreading Buddhadharma leads to detachment and to the
Entry into the realm of dhyanas.

Focus your mind: Invoke the buddhas and make

Offerings to them; presently they surpass all mankind;
To establish a one pointed mind is to honor all buddhas
Past, present and future in the ten directions.

To make offerings to all buddhas should be your constant,
Fervent aim; honor them with the finest flowers,
Perfumes and delicacies; entering and abiding samadhi like them,
With ease, is the best expression of your reverence for them.

Inspire others to create images of buddhas
Or with colors and ornaments adorn the Golden,
The Radiant One of flawless features, the Buddha;
Samadhi will then not be difficult to attain.

Learn from all buddhas: Let pure conduct be your constant Dharma
Practice; appreciate and uphold the teachings
And free yourself from doubt: Such is the most Effective approach
To this enlightening practice.

Abandon all evil and be at ease with all beings;
Wish them to be happy and well in the ten directions
And avoid the sway of the three worldly poisons;
Thus you will reach the Samadhi of Nonobstruction.

Request the Teachings from Dharma masters,
Honoring them as you would honor the Tathagata;
Never displease a teacher of this practice of good,
Of concern for the welfare and benefit of all beings.

All buddhas in the ten directions praise the Limitless Virtue
Of this Dharma; it can be accomplished with diligence and with
mindfulness; the World Honored One expounds this teaching
For those seeking to practice toward enlightenment.”

Chapter IV: Seeing the Buddhas Face to Face

The World Honored One continued: “Bhadrapala, bodhisattvas wishing to attain supreme samadhi should respect their Dharma-teachers in the same way they respect all buddhas. They should not be arrogant, and their deportment should never give cause for reprimands. Samadhi is attained by a means of diligent practice. When a practitioner’s mind is tainted by dishonesty, anger and disrespect toward teachers and Sangha, he or she can never hope to achieve the serenity that is the heart of meditation.

Consider, for example, the sky: On a clear day it is completely free of clouds, on a clear night it is dotted with countless stars. People put much effort into discerning one star from the next, striving to describe its color, its shape and its size. Similarly, a bodhisattva who contemplates the Void of all dharmas with a one pointed mind sees all Tathagatas. Observing the eastern skies, the bodhisattva will discern countless buddhas, and there is no need to have a special purpose: The buddhas appear naturally. Continuing in that manner, looking in all ten directions, including Zenith and Nadir, the meditator will see buddha-fields, manifesting themselves as numberless buddhas, and it is not at all necessary to be purposeful about it. Amitabha, Tathagata, Arhat, Sam-buddha will spontaneously appear. In this manner the meditator will apprehend his or her own world manifesting itself in the ten directions as oceanic arrays of buddhas. Applying his or her buddha wisdom, the meditator will distinguish clearly the Tathagatas. Upon achieving the Samadhi of Seeing the Buddhas Face to Face, he or she should enter the practice of six paramitas or perfections of virtue. They are called Dana or giving, Sila or self-discipline, Ksanti or patience, Virya or zeal (heroic determination), Dhyana or absorption, and Prajna or wisdom. Upon completing these, the practitioner will have attained the perfect merit of all bodhisattvas.

On a clear night, the cloudless, mist-free sky
Reveals to the bright-eyed its countless stars,
Providing, that is, their minds are not
Shrouded in confusion.

Bodhisattvas who reached this stage in their
Enlightenment practice will realize that all things
in the universe abound with buddha-fields;
They will then expound it to the assembly.

The eye of a buddha penetrates at a glance all
Universes without obstacles. The eye of a bodhisattva,
The eye of a self-conqueror, is opened by a
Means of the Samadhi of Supreme Insight.

Contemplate the independent, formless Tathagata
As a body of unobstructed knowledge, thereby
Annihilating powerful afflictions; and listen to
The untainted teaching of bodhisattvas born of truth.

To heed the true teaching of buddhas is to enter
The sphere of knowledge uncorrupted by fear:
May all sentient beings in the ten directions
Progress in their enlightening practice.

Enlightening beings, while observing the western
Skies, perceive Amitabha, the Lord of Unlimited Life
And Boundless Light; when in samadhi, they realize that
One Tathagata pervades all lands of all Tthagatas.

Fulfill the practice of good and restore your sense
Of shame: Extinguish the idle chatter of your mind;

Use your power obtained through practice to polish your
Eloquence and expound the supreme wisdom of serenity.”

Chapter V: On the Right Faith

Turning in the direction of Bhadrapala the World Honored One said: “Bodhisattvas who seek the treasure of samadhi should be diligent and intrepid, thereby assuring their natural and rapid progress. Let me give you an example: A man crossed the ocean with a precious cargo of treasures. He navigated the ship successfully through many difficult parts of the ocean, but shortly before he reached the shore, his ship had a fatal accident and the entire treasure sunk into the water. There was much lamentation among those who had lost their treasures in the disaster. In the same way, the good man and the good woman who have heard this teaching of supreme samadhi but neither accepted nor recorded it, cannot study nor contemplate it later even if they wanted to. When that happens, there is grieving among devas and gods because a treasure of great value is lost. It is regrettable that sentient beings do neither understand nor appreciate the great value of supreme samadhi. It is a dharma taught by all buddhas, praised by all buddhas and sealed or approved by all buddhas. It is the supreme merit of all buddhas in its accomplished perfection. Bodhisattvas practice with the utmost zeal toward the supreme samadhi, avoiding heedless actions, arrogance and negligence.

“Let me give you, Bhadrapala, another illustration. Suppose you have a beautiful piece of red sandal-wood. If you show it to someone who does not appreciate its fragrance and beauty, that person will react in a hostile manner. If you try to convince him or her, you will discover that the more you try, the less tolerant he or she will become. That person might even close his or her eyes to drive you away. Likewise, there will be in the future some bhikshus with very little discipline and meditation, and without any wisdom and knowledge regarding purification of their bodies, speech and minds. They will be obstinate and react negatively toward this wonderful Dharma. They will probably criticize this sutra and say it was not spoken by the Buddha. They will reject this teaching the same way the man or the woman refused to experience the fragrance of that sandal-wood.

“There are, on the other hand, monks whose faith is deep and whose wisdom is bright. They have accepted the Tathagata deep into their hearts; they practice according to the Dharma, planting and cultivating their root of goodness. When they have an opportunity to hear this Teaching of Supreme Samadhi they will act upon it instantly; once they attain that Samadhi, they are going to travel to distant lands and teach others. By helping others to practice and to fathom this profound Dharma, by teaching them to recite the name of Amitabha, they will obtain inconceivable blessings. Accepting and upholding this sutra will generate infinitely more blessings than offering gems, precious jewels or treasures to the Sangha.” Then the World Honored One spoke the following gathas:

“The buffoons and the witless will arrogantly
Disclaim this teaching, arguing that this is not
The True Dharma; however, numerous others will derive
Much happiness and much benefit from this sutra.

Unequaled in their actions, they will offer their
Bejeweled deeds to oceanic realms of the Tathagata;
They will not turn back, but will constantly augment
Their inner power and blessings.

To praise this sutra is to broaden the scope of
Universal knowledge, removing obstructions;
The monks and nuns, the laity, all will receive
Supreme blessings upon teaching this Dharma.

“Adepts practicing assiduously toward the attainment of the Supreme Samadhi should not experience fear or regret; they should make every effort to prevent backsliding: The point is as important for lay meditators as it is for monks and nuns. When a practitioner treats these teachings with the utmost respect, he or she will derive joy from them, while his or her practice strengthens. Bhadrápala, whoever is able to enter samadhi is not in the habit of committing evil or unskillful acts, does not taint his or her conduct, does not allow his or her faith to regress nor his or her mind embrace a wrong view. Those who practice

diligently become increasingly receptive to the Dharma, having planted and cultivated their root of goodness in their previous existences. The Samadhi of the Recitation of the Buddha's name will dispel the last traces of their doubts, and they will be able and willing to teach this Dharma. In the last five-hundred years of the teachings, in the Dharma-ending age, the invocation or recitation of the Buddha's name will succeed in keeping practitioners happy in body and mind, free from fear and doubt. Men and women from good families practicing this Dharma will obtain immeasurable merit, they will accomplish the path and the fruit of a non-returner and they will realize all dharmas at will.

"I am going to give you another example, Bhadrápala, to assure your understanding of this teaching: Suppose a man would take a chilicosm (universes multiplied countless-times), grind it down to a dust, and then counted the resulting particles. Do you think these would be numerous?" Bhadrápala replied, "they would be numerous beyond imagining, World Honored One." The Buddha continued: "If a man or woman from a good family uses the smallest part of his or her wealth for alms-giving, the resulting merit will be greater than these particles of dust. However, if a man or woman takes as many gold pieces as these particles of dust and uses them for charity, his or her merit will not reach the merit received for accepting, upholding, and teaching the Samadhi of the Invocation of the Buddha's Name. Whenever they teach it they increase incalculably their merit; having received, upheld and taught the meaning of this sutra, they will obtain untold blessings even if their teaching is of the shortest duration." The World Honored One summed up the teaching in the following gathas:

"Countless blessings await those who practice alms-giving,
Offering precious gems, as numerous as atoms in a chilicosm,
And yet, though countless, their blessings do not surpass
Those received for teaching this Dharma to numerous others.

First, accept and learn this gatha with a joyful heart;
Then teach it; practice with others this path, cutting
Through obstructions; no matter how briefly you teach,
Your blessings will be immeasurable!

These unimaginable blessings, equal in radiance and
Purity to those received for kalpas of samadhi practice,
are received by all who teach this path
Leading to the luminous shores of wisdom.

Emancipate sentient beings, guide them and never turn
Back; teach this gatha; it sends rays of emerald
Light through all chilikosms: The 'Thus Gone' entered
Nirvana to show us what is it like, to be the Buddha.

Attain the abode of peace and bliss; free your mind
From doubts and from obstructions; guided by wisdom,
Assisted by expedient, resolve to focus on meditation --
The unsurpassed vehicle of truth.

This teaching is the Teaching of Truth;
It is the practice of Virtue and of universal, higher Good;
Proceeding slowly, with a true concern for beings,
pay recurrent visits to samadhi, the imminent realm of truth.

Learn first, then teach all sentient beings
To follow and serve well their spiritual benefactors,
Not forgetting their spiritual friends: Such is the
Early practice of those on the path to awakening.

All buddhas praise those who understand and practice samadhi
In the proper manner: By those means, and for the sake of sentient
beings, ocean of principles is inherited and entered,
And by teaching others it is replenished.”

Chapter VI: On Clear Perception

The World Honored One instructed Bhadrupala: “A bodhisattva, or an enlightened and enlightening being should always consider the World Honored One as being present among devas and human beings, and contemplate the following: The Tathagata seated on a lion throne, dignified, amazing and matchless, all his marks complete and visible. Observing the Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha clearly, the bodhisattva should visualize the marks one by one, appreciating their excellence. He or she should then make the vow to seek such an enlightened body and such excellent marks, a mind of such vast compassion; to seek such universal knowledge, a wisdom of such inconceivable radiance, such perfect samadhi. The bodhisattva should vow to attain such a complete awakening in his or her own future. A bodhisattva should follow, expand and fulfill this liberating practice; he or she should resolve to enter the calm bliss of Nirvana, asking himself or herself: Who am I, and what is my object? How do I obtain Bodhi? By means of the body or by means of the mind? If ‘body’ is my answer, then how is it done? This body is as obstinate and as unaware as grass, wood, stone, or as a wall; or like a reflection in the mirror. The Bodhi is formless, imperceptible and beyond attachment. How am I to obtain subtle, supramundane Bodhi with a body that is so obstinate, so unaware? If I answer that the mind is a means to attain Bodhi, then how should I manage this mind which, like the Bodhi, has no form? Mind is identical with delusion and cannot be known. How can I reach it, in what direction? How can I attain Bodhi and how do I know when I have attained it? The meditator should ponder in this manner, until he or she understands clearly that neither the body nor the mind are the Bodhi. Why? Because form cannot be attained through a form, and mind cannot attain itself. We just call these ‘form’, ‘mind’, or ‘knowing’. Similarly, all dharmas are without form and without image; they can neither be seen nor obtained. Minds of the Tathagatas are completely free from illusion and the same applies to their form, their feelings, to their perception, their mental formations and to their consciousness. All these are completely outside the flow of the karmic force: As regards the

Tathagatas, their discipline, their wisdom and their liberation, which includes knowledge and experience of nirvana, all are outside the flow of karma. Therefore all dharmas taught by past, present and future Tathagatas are completely removed from karmic flow. All dharmas appear in this manner when observed by sages. Whoever contemplates in this manner understands that all dharmas are inaccessible, but the teaching surpasses worldlings' capacity to comprehend. Why cannot we attain dharmas? Because, in the last analysis, there is neither the object to be attained, nor the subject seeking to attain; furthermore, there are no such things as conditions of attainment. Observing in this manner, one can easily enter samadhi of complete extinction or non-discrimination of dharmas, and perceive all dharmas as void. Consider, for instance, the following: On a certain day no fire was started in a fireplace, and therefore there was no fire; yet there was a man who said there is no fire because he put the fire out. What do you think, Bhadrápala, was the man telling the truth, or not?" Bhadrápala remarked: "That man's words were not true". The World Honored One continued: "Since there is nothing to be appropriated to begin with, how could anyone say he/she has apprehended all dharmas, understood all dharmas, enlightened all dharmas and acquired the capacity to release all sentient beings from the cyclic pattern of birth and death. Why cannot these be true words? Because, originally, there is no such thing as 'all dharmas' or 'all sentient beings'. How can there be a talk of emancipating, or of attaining for that matter. However, the world depends on causes and conditions.

"A man or woman from good family, wishing to accomplish the supreme Bodhi, or to reach the stage of a sravaka or a pratyeka-buddha should, likewise, observe in the following manner: This meditation makes entering samadhi accessible, for it is the mode of no discrimination and no non-discrimination. Why? Because dharmas are non-existent in the first place. How could there be any discrimination? And in the absence of discrimination, how can there be non-discrimination? Between the two extremes lies the Middle Way. In the Ultimate Reality there is, indeed, no middle, no sides and, therefore, no extremes: There is only the stillness of the supramundane Void. We can

neither call it annihilation nor permanence; it is not accumulation, not a place to abide, nor is it an action or a form. There is no recurrent pattern, no serialization, no calculation and no calibration. In the absence of chronology there are no anterior or prior moments and no subsequent ones.

“A bodhisattva observing Tathagatas in this manner cannot become attached. Initially there is neither annihilation nor permanence, no time or space for the attachment to happen. A bodhisattva should practice the Samadhi of Facing the Buddhas, and when he/she has reached the stage of seeing the Tathagatas, he/she is freed from all attachment. Dharmas cannot be grasped because their nature is the same as the nature of stillness or the nature of space. Consider, for example, a piece of gold. Usually it is easy to handle and easy to touch, but when it is heated to the point of melting, no one can touch it without being badly burned. That is how a bodhisattva should perceive all things: Knowing the true nature of reality, he or she should be careful not to get attached in the least. While an image of buddha is arising, grasping must not arise along with it. The same applies to perceptions and to mental formations. Likewise, there should be no clinging to discipline, to meditation, to wisdom or to knowledge, and also to the experience of nirvana. Why? Because when there is grasping, there is birth and suffering. There may be clinging to the inconceivable merit of Buddhas, to their wisdom, or to the Tathagata; clinging to the wisdom nature of all wisdom, or the free wisdom; the inconceivable wisdom, the unequalled wisdom, or to the wisdom of all wisdom. When seeking Tathagata’s wisdom, a bodhisattva should diligently recite ‘Buddha’.

A woman applying her make-up observes her reflection and
Clings to it with her complete devotion; similarly,
The unwise crave and cling to their rising passions;
Hence they feel continuously pulled in the ten directions.

Giving rise to a perverted notion regarding things
And how they come about, doubting as to what is
True and what false, is not a real bodhisattva practice:
It is an ego-grasping, and as such, devoid of wisdom.

Clouds of teachings shower a fragrant dew of Bodhi,
And empower all without exception to release sentient beings
From suffering; yet sentient beings are nowhere to be found,
Only birth and death everywhere.

All things are like the moon in water:
There really is no supreme Bodhi to be sought;
Colors and forms are mere reflections in a mirror;
You should view them as a lightning in the sky, or as space.

Worldly people cling to perverted views, holding them
To be permanent and true; yet, though bent and binding,
These views are void; all bodhisattvas
Know it and wisely perceive the world as bent.

When the ego is absent, suffering is reduced to none,
And without suffering all the conditions necessary
For the attainment of awakening are there; at such time a mind
So pure the Bodhi can be discerned in it is reclaimed.

One's work is finished when no trace of the illusion,
Of the cyclic pattern of birth and death
Can be found; when the Ultimate Reality is attained,
All dharmas are removed from karmic flow.

A liberated mind is mind relieved of the burden
Of desires: To discern this is to enter a samadhi.
First, evoke the Buddha as formless; then know
That all dharmas are originally pure and formless;

Thus you should contemplate, having no other
Thought; to enter samadhi is not a problem; simply
Keep your mind steadfast on Voidness; desires and dust
Will dissolve and you will know the taste of liberation.

Seeing is not discriminating, providing you do not
Allow your mind to toil at discerning the diverse forms;
Consider that if the attainment of samadhi meant not-seeing,
All blind people would have attained it by definition.

Neither seeing nor not-seeing
Is what gets the heterodox so confused.
Dwelling in non-form, not-thinking
Is the path to the pristine mind of all buddhas.

Meditators will reach samadhi promptly while observing thus,
By keeping steady on course;
Having seen all buddhas face to face, they should
Proceed to propagate this incomparable Dharma.

Having committed yourself to the peerless conduct
For the sake of liberating all beings, all you need
Is to attend single-mindedly that realm; when seeing
All buddhas in the ten directions, delight in them.

Single-mindedly meditate upon one thought, until
There are no more past, present or future buddhas:
Only a pure sphere of light, of release remains;
This is known as the inconceivable dhyana.

Those seeking happiness of body and mind: For you the best
Way is to join in the unfathomable merit of all buddhas; enter
This incandescent ocean, this Dharma of Reality
Through bejeweled gate of great, accomplished samadhi.”

Chapter VII: Upholding the Discipline

Upasaka Bhadravala bowed reverently to the World Honored One, expressing his deep gratitude for the teaching on supreme samadhi he had just received. He had a question regarding the purpose, the meaning and the benefit of precepts or rules of conduct in relation to Buddhists in general and to monks and nuns in particular. The World Honored One explained: “The main concern of those who choose the homeless life, the monks and nuns, is to understand and teach Buddhadharma and to practice contemplation or samadhi. Their principal tool is a pure, perfect, and unmovable discipline – the discipline of non-attachment – highly praised by the wisest of sages and respected by the greatest among the great saints.”

“The restraining rules of discipline known as the *Pratimoksha*, are often referred to as means to deliverance; incumbent upon monks and nuns from the time they join the Sangha or assembly, these guidelines teach a blameless conduct in relation to each other as well as in their contact with the lay community. Self-discipline is needed when we cultivate patience and when eradicating fears and regrets during a practice called the three gates of liberation, i.e., the gate of the recognition of the Void, that of liberation from characteristics or signs, and the liberation from desires. The above mentioned guidelines of discipline should not be clutched for their own sake, but should serve as a support of the enlightening practice aimed to benefit all sentient beings. Those who join the Sangha with a purpose to grasp the five skandhas, the discipline, or the reward for their pure conduct are courting existence and will receive another rebirth as a result.”

“All practice of samadhi should be preceded by a training in self-discipline. The practitioner should bring his/her self-discipline to a level that is respected by the best among the best, and then he or she should concentrate on practice of the six paramitas or virtues, starting with the perfection of giving, or Dana-paramita. The aspirant should study and practice the Dharma of Dana wholeheartedly and with no interruptions. Firmly holding on to his or her responsibilities and to the Right Thought, he or she should maintain well concentrated mind,

abandon worldly concerns no matter how tempting they may seem, and uphold the Right Faith. Shunning the crowd, he or she should delight in seclusion, live supported by alms, practice self-effacement and respect the seeds of sainthood. The practitioner should heed the following points: Cultivation of silence, of gratitude and of shame; a cultivation of the essential virtues; a flawless care-giving to his or her Dharma-teacher, and the same respect as due to the Tathagata or to a sage; a complete surrender of aversion and of resistance. He or she should give his or her undivided attention to the study of sutras, guarding against fatigue and boredom, because listening to the Dharma is one of the gateways to the great Bodhi. Let it be understood that a practitioner who does not hold his or her Dharma-teacher in the highest respect is not in position to receive, uphold and teach the Right Dharma, and cannot contribute to the survival of the Dharma. A practitioner who approaches the Dharma teacher and the Dharma with reverence is already propagating the Dharma by upholding it in his or her heart. These simple means sustain the noble teaching and make it flourish. Behaving in this manner, the practitioner has acquired the buddha-action.”

“A monk or nun planning to practice meditation should find a secluded place and put down all worldly concerns. They should relinquish greed for clothes and food, store no goods, and neither take care of, nor raise animals; they should not be concerned about their needs, and renounce all ego-oriented interests. Their only concern should be to release their hold over their bodies with all their defilements. They should frequently experience shame, think of death, and practice walking meditation at night to reduce sleep. Unfettered by evil thought, speech and action, free from doubts, Monks and nuns should relieve their minds of all attachment to material objects without resentment, practicing compassion at all times. Their actions, rooted in a boundless kindness, compassion, joy and equanimity, should remain unattached through love or through hate. Monks and nuns, practicing in this manner, will be in a position to master recitation of the word ‘Buddha’ and teach it”.

At this point Bhadrapala Bodhisattva expressed his deep appreciation of the teaching he was receiving and commented on a practice plagued by sloth, torpor and fears of backsliding to a

degree a practitioner is unable to experience joy. He added that many practice diligently, inspired and encouraged by this Dharma. They fulfill all prerequisites and acquire merits in the future. Such practitioners, Bhadrapala asserted, generate a great mind, and they vow to let go of their bodies to save all sentient beings. They rejoice upon receiving this great Dharma from the Tathagata.

The World Honored One said that such practitioners are following their natural inclination in the manner of past, present and future buddhas, and in the same manner as he himself practiced.

Bhadrapala then asked: “Regarding us, lay Buddhist practitioners, is it at all possible for any of us to enter samadhi after having received only a few brief teachings, and then effectively teach others?”

The World Honored One Replied: “Bhadrapala, anyone can learn to enter samadhi in one night and one day, providing he or she has the Right Faith, a mind completely free from greed, providing that he or she takes refuge in the Three Treasures, does not worship devas or gods, follows his or her own true inclination, and purifies his or her life from clinging to own family and/or possessions. He or she must participate in retreats and Sangha events, generate the Bodhi mind, and practice diligently, experiencing a sense of shame; furthermore, such a practitioner must respect the Sangha and must treat his or her Dharma teacher with reverence, gratitude and with generosity. Such a lay Buddhist can learn, practice and teach samadhi.”

Chapter VIII: Predictions

Bhadrapala Bodhisattva acknowledged the teaching with utmost gratitude. He asked: “World Honored One, Tathagata, Arhat, Sama-sambuddha, will the teaching of samadhi continue to be propagated in this Saha world after the Bhagavat has entered his final nirvana?”

The World Honored One replied: “Following my final nirvana this teaching of samadhi will continue in Jambudvipa, surviving the Dharma-age by one hundred years. Five hundred years from now, the Dharma ending age will be marked by an unethical conduct of the Sangha and by a loss of respect for Buddhadharma. There will be a general deterioration of discipline and a great strife among people and between countries. There will be a few sentient beings with strong, prospering good root, who in the past mastered this teaching of samadhi and who know it intimately; these sentient beings made offerings to the buddhas. Due to the accomplishment of these few great men and women this teaching of samadhi will continue to be propagated. By a means of supernatural powers vested in buddhas, this teaching of samadhi will be taught, accepted, upheld and practiced; it will be pondered, discussed and explained.”

Bhadrapala was saddened by these words. The chief of Licchavi-Vajjis; the elder Nata-devadatta as well as the rest of the attending elders, the bhikshus and the bhikshunis, the entire assembly felt similarly moved by the Bhagavat’s prediction. They vowed to accept and uphold Buddhadharma so it may survive. They attained full concentration as the result of their vow, and resolved to contemplate deeply this teaching. The whole assembly requested respectfully that the World Honored One confers upon them this teaching so they may protect and propagate the true Dharma. The Bhagavat smiled a radiant smile. Its radiance circled the assembly three-times and returned to the crown of the Bhagavat’s head.

Arya Ananda, who returned from his journey addressed the World Honored One as follows:

“None can compare with you in nobility; supreme
In purity of mind and action, completely free

From defilements, endowed with the greatest merit and
Power, like the bright moon you rise above all.

Your mind, liberated from obstacles, untouched
By teachings of the outer path, is the supreme
Ground of edification; this world can neither
Reach nor move you: Why then the gentle smile?

To benefit sentient beings, to bring them joy,
Let us hear the wondrous voice of the Tathagata
Instructing us thoroughly; please tell us, what
Reason is there for the Bhagavat to smile?

Buddhas never smile a false smile, nor do they
Send a radiant, world-illuminating smile, unless there
Is a great benefit to be obtained this very moment,
Or the Truth is about to be attained today.

Did some just advance mightily toward their
Attainment? Are there new buddhas? Whose head is about
To receive a sprinkling? Who are the newly awakened
Ones, those who will benefit this world?

Where are the ones, empowered to propagate the Dharma
Of the Tathagata? Are there some who presently
Attained the inexhaustible wisdom, the inconceivable
Buddhahood? Is that why the Tathagata smiled?"

The World Honored one responded to elder Ananda's query with
the following gathas:

"Ananda, do you see Bhadravala Bodhisattva lead
More than five-hundred bodhisattvas? Rising from their
Seats, how sincere are they? How happy in body and mind?
Dharma will survive and flourish in the future.

They all look at me with one mind,
And facing me, they make the great vow;
All of them are about to attain Bodhi.
Yet I remain unmovable and still.

Eight classes of beings, likewise, stand up
And want to be counted as future guardians of Dharma
Their leaders -- all five hundred of them --
Vow to ensure a survival and flourishing of Buddhadharma.

This assembly is completely free from obstacles.
Let me tell you presently that all of those standing up,
Their palms reverently joined, are receiving
The teaching of all buddhas in this teaching.

I visualize the unimaginably deep past, and
Eighty-thousand buddhas pass before my eyes;
Present here this very moment are eight leaders
Who vowed to protect this Ultimate Teaching.

The very existence of this supreme Dharma
Is of first importance to all sentient beings;
And when I enter my parinirvana, they will
Join forces to erect a stupa to enshrine my relics.

To uphold virtues is the concern of buddhas,
Their enlightenment site -- the ten directions.
With devas and nagas protecting the realms
Any place on earth is well suited for a shrine.

This assembly vows to depend on this teaching, to learn
How to become aware of the essence of things; they will
Be reborn among the celestials; upon returning to earth,
Their future will be of the noblest.

Repeatedly fathom this profound, rare teaching,
And uphold Buddhadharma as supremely important.
Your Original Mind should generate the Great Vow
And sow the seeds of this Dharma in the ten directions.

Establish a mind of joy, of care and of sincerity,
Let go of your body, your jealousy and sloth; stay
Clear of the outer path, and when you mastered
This Dharma, transmit it to those who are still seeking.

Five hundred great sages, eight Bodhisattva-
Mahasattvas, and countless bhikshus, bhikshunis,
Upasakas and upasikas will attain the pure virtue
Of the Golden One, acquiring the skill and teach it.

They abandoned their unskillful ways and
Their mundane concerns in exchange for a life
Of peace and harmony; already each of them
Received a boundless and immeasurable merit.

Because they abide in reverence for buddhas
and nurture deep affection for enlightening beings,
They will uphold this Dharma in the Dharma-ending age,
And their purified eyes will see Maitreya.

No doubt that all of them are future buddhas, emulating
Bhadrapala; while practicing and teaching this sutra they
Will respect it both in their waking hours and in their dreams;
These are the ones who will assure the survival of this Dharma.

Benefiting all sentient beings is an inexhaustible task;
Most of them ignore wisdom and merit and therefore
The last five hundred years are never too far;
You have this teaching; now increase your effort.

Discipline, as it is taught in the *Pratimoksha* of the Vinaya
Is your best guide toward the pure practice, leading to
Samadhi; if you reduce your sleep, reject special treats
And invitations and embrace austerity, you will attain it.

Let go of arrogance and jealousy; observe closely
The three poisons, then sever these fetters
And emancipated from desire and grasping, go beyond samadhi;
Make the monastic lifestyle your prime aspiration.

Guard against clinging to your family, your descendants
Or possessions, and shield your mind from sophistry and from
All hurting of self and others; not for one
Moment let yourself forget this Teaching of Samadhi.

Relinquish attachment to all that is worldly, keep your mind
Intent on samadhi; if you are a monk, and a nun asks you
By what means to attain samadhi, teach her diligently,
Warding off your rising jealousy, your pride and haughtiness.

The demon of vanity should not be allowed to
Control your progress along the path; shun
Flattery along with defilements such as double-talk
Or provocations; samadhi abides in a silent mind.

Accept and uphold this teaching of samadhi; discard
The obstacle of triple existence; respect your
Teacher; emancipated from confusion and from evil realms,
Wholeheartedly and deeply entrust yourself to Buddhadharma.”

Chapter IX: Receiving and Holding the Merit

Bhadrapala rejoiced and made an offering to the Buddha. He was joined by four leaders and by hundreds of others, all of whom offered robes and necessities to the Buddha and to the Sangha. The Buddha praised Bhadrapala: “This bodhisattva, whose name means ‘Guardian Of Excellence’, teaches five hundred followers. He comforts them, imparting to them the important Teachings. They are willing to learn and to practice because they are happy. Of pure mind, free from defilements, they are not in bondage, and theirs are not minds covered with dust.” Upon hear this, Bhadrapala and his followers stood up, joined their palms and bowed reverently. Bhadrapala Bodhisattva then asked: “World Honored One, how many dharmas must a bodhisattva learn and practice in order to attain the Samadhi of Recitation of the Buddha’s Name?” The Bhagavan answered: “To obtain that Samadhi, a bodhisattva should complete four dharmas as follows: 1) Not upholding teachings of the outer path; 2) Not indulging in the gratification of his or her desires; 3) Not abandoning the austere lifestyle; 4) Cultivating dislike for all domains of the three realms. Upon completion of these four dharmas, the bodhisattva should be able to enter the aforementioned samadhi.

The adepts who attained the samadhi will then be in the position to explain and teach it, and receive the following five kinds of merit: Because that samadhi generates a compassionate mind, they cannot be affected by poisons, injured by weapons, cannot drown, cannot burn and cannot be hurt by evil individuals. During the period of gradual deterioration of the universe by fire, those practitioners who attained the samadhi will not be burned.

Furthermore, none of the following will represent a threat to those in samadhi: An evil ruler or government, a ferocious predator or a venomous snake. Whoever practices according to this sutra will be protected by it, from demons, for example. This teaching has the power to shield the meditator from every obstacle, provided the ensuing practice is grounded in the Right Thought and pure action. Those who have accepted this teaching of samadhi should have no problems with their

eyes, ears, nose, tongue and body; no problems with their minds and their lives.

Those who completely understand this teaching are in accord with the Bodhi-mind. They can see all buddhas and they want to protect Dharma and Sangha. They will be praised by supernatural beings, heaven-dwellers, denizens and kings of other worlds and by all buddhas.

The rulers and the inhabitants of other realms in unison will protect those who practice samadhi according this teaching. Buddhas and bodhisattvas will console them and urge them to generate the Bodhi-mind. Supposing the meditators have not heard any other Dharma, the supernatural power of samadhi will generate in their own minds the necessary teaching, and in that manner they will be taught anytime, be it day or night. Those who accepted this teaching and practice accordingly will receive an inconceivable and inexhaustible merit.” The World Honored One reiterated this teaching in the following gathas:

“Merits, received for upholding this teaching
Of great samadhi as practiced by all buddhas,
Exceed by far the grains of sand in the Ganges.

Those who practice samadhi according to this sutra
Can neither drown, nor can they burn;
And no weapons, nor poisons of any kind
Can hurt them.

Samadhi practiced according to this sutra helps to overcome
The many kinds of terror, the many dangers
Encountered by those on the path to awakening;
Demons and evil-doers are powerless when faced with samadhi.

The eyesight and the eloquence of those who understand
And who practice accordingly gradually improve and
Serve them well, due to their well-focused minds;
Both protect them from ills and from calamity.

Heavenly guardians are dependable protectors;
They help those who study and uphold this teaching,
And any evil-intentioned demons scheming to harm them
Are bound to be foiled time and time again.

Those of incomparable countenance,
The Dharma-teachers who are completely free
From even the slightest trace of doubt, will not
Waver on their path to the attainment of Bodhi.

The inconceivable merit of those who teach
And emancipate sentient beings will protect them,
Should a disaster strike; nor can adversity,
Suffering or defilement touch them.

Everyone who protects this Dharma, who upholds and
Practices accordingly, is bound to experience
Uninterrupted bliss; teach samadhi in harmony
With the Way I presently explained.”

Chapter X: On attaining Realization Promptly

The World Honored One told a story about a man who lived in a very distant past. He was an elder, named Well-self-restrained, or Sudatta. Once he went to see a buddha called the Undaunted King Of The Lion-Hearted, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha, and asked him about the profound meaning of samadhi. Knowing that Sudatta's faith had deep roots and that he had a strong desire to hear the teaching, The Undaunted King Of The Lion-Hearted instructed him. Elder Sudatta understood the teaching and practiced accordingly. He subsequently decided to become an ascetic, and from then on devoted all his time and energies to the practice of samadhi. His practice extended over countless lifetimes, during which time Sudatta learned dharmas not only from buddha Undaunted King Of The Lion-hearted, but from all buddhas, constantly cultivating his good root. He eventually obtained rebirth in the heaven of the 33 gods. After an extended stay in that heaven he was reborn as the son of a warrior-guardian of society endowed with a power of sovereignty. When Sudatta grew up, he met a great sage called Tien Der, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha, and became a recluse under his guidance. Sudatta's mind was steadfast on samadhi, and his practice extended over numberless lifetimes, until he met his third teacher named Kuang Wang or the King of Light, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha. That teacher came from a family of a priest who possessed divine knowledge. Kuang Wang became Sudatta's spiritual guide, instructing him in the practice of samadhi. Sudatta practiced numberless lifetimes, and ultimately attained the unsurpassed, complete and perfect enlightenment. Let it be understood, Bhadrápala, that elder Sudatta was at that time Dipamkara Buddha, Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha. Until then, Well Self-restrained Sudatta sought this profound Dharma assiduously regardless of all the changes, carrying out his transcendental purpose; therefore he attained the complete realization quickly.

You should be able to appreciate by now, Bhadrápala, the extent of the benefit this supreme teaching of samadhi offers to bodhisattvas and sentient beings. It is the means by which the

wisdom-ground of all buddhas can be attained, and oceans of teachings from all buddhas can be received. Seek the samadhi diligently and practice continuously. Likewise, help others to accept it, to understand its meaning, and to practice according to this teaching. Why? Because whoever receives and holds the right Dharma of Samadhi can obtain the wisdom of all buddhas, the wisdom of liberation, the wisdom of the inconceivable, the wisdom of the un-sayable, the unequalled wisdom, the all-embracing wisdom and the wisdom of distinction. An eloquent man or an eloquent woman who know when to apply expedient means might say that samadhi is the eye of bodhisattvas, the mother and father of bodhisattvas and the wisdom of all buddhas. To put it this way is to use skill. To describe correctly the samadhi, a good man or a good woman would point out that it is the very nature of the Three Jewels, the very nature of the oceanic hearing, the ascetic's inexhaustible store, and the inexhaustible merit of all buddhas. A cultivation of samadhi results in a great patience, a great compassion, and in great Bodhi. When speaking thus regarding samadhi represents a skill m means.

Using skillful speech, a person might say that samadhi practice breaks off unskillful karma and illumines all dharmas. Bhadrupala, you should dwell in samadhi, reciting 'Buddha' with a mind of non-duality. It would be of great benefit to all sentient beings. Meditators presently living in this world may observe countless buddha-lands in the ten directions, listen to the right Dharma, worship with reverence and make offerings to the Sangha. After they have attained the great samadhi, they should turn their one-pointed mind on the four-fold smritiupasthana or the four earnest recollections. What are the four? 1) Observing body, skin, hair, nails, teeth etc., as filthy and disgusting; 2) Sensations or feelings invariably resulting in suffering; 3) The mind as impermanent, merely one mind-state following another; 4) Things-in-general as conditioned and void of self-nature. Whoever understands this Dharma has extinguished the obstacle of passions and has entered the path of the arhat or the non-backsliding bodhisattva.

To attain the Samadhi of Reciting 'Buddha', worldlings should focus their minds completely free from grasping. In the

same vain, you should think of this Dharma as spoken by all buddhas, yet accept it without grasping, because all that exists is void of permanent, independent self and originally there is no birth. Do not attempt to think, because there is no place and no time for thinking to occur in the Ultimate Reality. Without a single thought arising there is no more grasping; thereby all dharmas are liberated from all action, since there is nothing to be obtained. Phenomena cannot be manipulated: They are as void as space. Thus all dharmas are pure, distanced from sentient beings, and originally non-existent, they are Nirvana. There is no turbidity because there are no causes and conditions. Practitioners cannot succeed if they seek the Bodhi according to outward appearances, or the teaching according to the sounds; they cannot attain the Samadhi of Reciting 'Buddha' by the means of the vehicle of sravaka or realize the patient endurance of the uncreate, the characteristic of all bodhisattvas. I teach the whole world this way to attain samadhi, and so will you, by sharing the method of reciting 'Buddha'. Even the king of devas will be able to receive it. Now that you have this teaching and understand it, endeavor to make it survive and flourish."

While the World Honored One was still speaking, several inhabitants of the realm of desire, some devas from the realm of form and numerous individuals from among the present attained the Unsurpassed, Complete Enlightenment. The World Honored One predicted a prompt attainment of a complete liberation for all present, and instructed them to dwell in the world and make the Dharma of Samadhi available to all, guiding them toward the path of liberation. He added that countless sentient beings, after having heard this Dharma of Samadhi, obtained the pure wisdom-eye. He epitomized the teaching in the following gathas:

"In its pure state, the mind is a radiant, bright
Mirror; to accept and practice the Dharma of
Samadhi, a discipline made of generosity,
Patience and inner power, is to receive untold blessings.

Whoever accepts and practices according to this
Dharma of Samadhi, has found an abode in the realm of
Unobstructed knowledge that illumines the sky of
Reality by its inconceivable merit.

Whoever practices this Dharma, perceives infinite
Lands, buddhas and teachings with unobstructed eyes;
Celestial beings shower upon him/her
Their protection and their blessings.

Whoever practices this Dharma of Samadhi, this pure
Practice of perfected virtues, sees inconceivable
Oceans of buddha-lands, buddhas and beings in the
Ten directions, and honors them all with offerings.

Whoever accepts this Dharma, this practice rooted
In kindness and compassion based on great vows,
Helps sentient beings leave the sea of existence by means
Of samadhi, and is steeped in nonduality.

Whoever practices this Dharma of the Supreme Samadhi
Enters the realm of skill in means, of independent
Wisdom, of a sky-like mind; such a practice glorifies all
Buddhas, and steadfast teachers pass it on to future beings.”

Chapter XI: Five Dharmas to Be Completed

Bhadrapala reverently expressed his gratitude for the profound teaching, most respectfully inviting the World Honored One, the bhikshus and the bhikshunis, to be his guests of honor; they all accepted out of compassion for their host, since it was Bhadrapala's offering to the Sangha. They were to share a meal in his home the next day. Having the heart of a bodhisattva, Bhadrapala extended his invitation to the rest of the assembly, including many needy people who came from afar. Supported by blessings from kings of all the other realms, Bhadrapala set out to make his dwelling fit to receive the most distinguished of guests, and to make preparations for the auspicious event. Roads were tidied and hung with flags and banners; houses were decorated and blossoms scattered on and along the road leading to Bhadrapala's house and the finest incense burned for offering. Early in the morning the next day Bhadrapala and his community of friends, devotees and workers went to entreat the Buddha and his Sangha and to escort them to Bhadrapala's home. Upon their arrival, Bhadrapala realized the place was far too small to accommodate them all. He felt ashamed because of it and wished the Buddha would exercise his supernatural power, using it to make the dwelling large enough to accommodate everyone; he wished that the walls of his home would become transparent so everyone in the city could participate in the memorable, felicitous occasion. The World Honored One, knowing Bhadrapala's thoughts, deferred to his wishes, enlarged the site and made the walls temporarily disappear.

Following the festive meal, Bhadrapala made three deep bows in the direction of the World Honored One and, palms joined, respectfully requested further instruction: "World Honored One, which dharmas are we to complete before we can attain the Samadhi of Nonduality?"

The Buddha replied: "In order to attain that samadhi you must achieve the following: Patience so perfect it dissolves all defilements; the understanding of nothing being there to end and nowhere for the ending to take place; the understanding that originally, there is no confusion, which marks the end of all confusion; the understanding that originally there was no such

thing as 'dirty', thereby ending all notions of impurity; the understanding that originally there were no dusts (gunas), thereby ending all dusts. Upon accomplishing these five dharmas, a bodhisattva established nondual mind in patient endurance of the uncreate. The following are six sets of five dharmas: Any one of these sets will produce the same result, leading to the samadhi of nonduality once it was accomplished:

1) A dislike for all existence; refraining from all manifestations of existence through action; focusing on Bodhi-mind at all times and in all places; perceiving manifestations of buddhas in all places, abandoning the realms of desire; cessation of grasping objects of desire, whatever they may be;

2) Constantly experiencing one's own mind as boundless; endeavoring to enter the dhyanic kind of meditation; contemplating dharmas in their multitude; observing and teaching the four all-embracing virtues for all sentient beings to accept and to uphold, i.e., dana or the virtue of giving, particularly a giving of what others need in order to accept and to love truth; priyavacana or affectionate speech, for the same purpose; arthakrtya, or a conduct beneficial to others, for the same reason as the preceding; samanarthata or a mind of adaptation and of cooperation with others, to lead them to the truth.

3) Unceasingly generating compassion for all sentient beings, practicing pure or saintly action at all times; practicing a limitless patience and viewing those of lax discipline with tolerance; avoiding bragging or boasting to one's teacher; never slighting anyone or anything whatsoever.

4) Accepting dependence on this teaching and practicing accordingly at all times; purifying completely one's mind and terminating karmas of body and speech; upholding pure discipline and discarding all views; constantly seeking further dharmas, fervently believing in their profound meaning; keeping the mind focused on Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha.

5) Practicing dana completely free from discrimination, giving up everything but the necessities completely free from regret and doubt; practicing dana as alms-giving, meaning the great Dana of Dharma which brings perfect freedom of speech along with it; this Dharma includes the written word, or the truth

arranged in a sequence, and it includes abiding in the profound Dharma of Utmost Patience when faced with slander, insults, and beatings; there should be no anger, resentment, hate or fear, but only equanimity.

6) Listening attentively when the Dharma of Samadhi is taught, reading, studying, pondering deeply its meaning and teaching it extensively; helping this Teaching to survive; renouncing all jealousy, eradicating all defilement and all attachment, terminating all desires and impurities; not enhancing oneself at the expense of others, nor diminishing others to benefit oneself, maintaining an unshakable faith in all buddhas, a deep respect for Dharma teachers, a sense of shame when facing a sage, compassion for all children, gratitude for even the smallest grace received, and complete abstention from lying.

These six sets of five dharmas each, are conducive to the bodhisattvas' realization of the Samadhi of Nonduality." The World Honored One recapitulated the above teaching in the following gathas:

“Rejoice, for you have heard the liberating Dharma;
Give up an existence rooted in delusion;
Establish a concentrated mind, leading to the Bodhi
By means of this purifying practice, by attaining samadhi.

The teachings of the outer path are useless,
Not to mention that they confuse the issue at hand;
Extinguish five worldly desires, avoid all censure
By entering this practice, by attaining samadhi.

The liberating practice, born of pure principles,
Of unbroken discipline virtue, is entered by those
Who chose to contemplate the Ultimate
This path, this purposeful practice lead to samadhi.

Shower with gifts the needy in each of the many
Spheres of life's misery, those caught in deaths
And births; your understanding completely free
From grasping, practice and attain samadhi.

Mind steadfast on the welfare of the world,
Imbued with gentleness, with loving kindness
Resolve to advance and to transcend the worldly;
Enter the path of self-conquerors, attain samadhi.

Dana of food, of warmth, of happier circumstances,
Though much needed and appreciated, cannot be compared
With a gift of Dharma leading to the complete,
Final liberation; practice and attain samadhi.

As regards the deep reaches of this oceanic doctrine,
At the far end of the understanding of it, there is stillness;
It soothes and cools the encounters with cruel faces of hurt,
Transforming them; by such practice one attains samadhi.

Upholding the teachings expediently, according to
Your capacities, write, teach and make these available
To all, without even the slightest trace of yearning
For a reward is a practice conducive to samadhi.

Focusing one's mind, being fearless, are two important sources
Of empowerment; this path of self-conquerors is a practice
Entered by those who constantly perfect their root of goodness;
Such are the means they apply, sure to attain samadhi.

Uphold true faith, honor the Three Precious Ones
By an un-swerving dedication to practice;
These are the greatest offerings anyone can make,
And by these means anyone will attain samadhi.

Whoever understands this Dharma and upholds this teaching
Of pure discipline that lightens, brightens and
Sharpens the mind, has entered the path to enlightenment;
Obstacles, whatever they may be, will be overcome.

Unlimited asamkhiya kalpas ago, Dipamkara Buddha
attained Samadhi of Seeing All Tathagatas Face to Face. Since
then, through countless kalpas up to the present, untold
Tathagatas practiced according to this Dharma. They made
offerings by teaching it. Dipamkara Buddha predicted my

becoming Shakyamuni Tathagata, Arhat, Samyak-sambuddha, Vydyacarana-sampanna, Sugata, Lokavid, Anuttara, Purusa-damya-sarati, Sasta devamanusyanam, Buddha-lokanatha. All of you should practice to attain one-pointed mind, upholding this inconceivable Dharma which is not readily perceptible to worldlings. It is a teaching of profound stillness, leading to the unsurpassed, complete awakening. I met Dipamkara Buddha, I accomplished all merits, and 'Thus Gone' became the Tathagata. The supreme Bodhi can be obtained by anyone who focuses his or her mind by a means of practicing this Dharma."

Chapter XII: Discourse on Nondiscrimination

Bhadrapala listened attentively to the World Honored One, and when that part of teaching was concluded, he interposed a question: “World Honored One, how can one achieve the focused mind required to enter samadhi?” The World Honored One replied: “Whoever wants to attain samadhi should not grasp form while observing it: Not grasping the sight, sound, smell, taste, touch nor any other thing, not grasping birth, or the domain is the way for a true compassion to arise.

If you practice what I just taught you, you will attain true samadhi: Not discriminating while observing the body or any of its parts is what all dharmas teach. Bodhisattvas should observe in this manner, in accordance with the Fourfold Base of Mindfulness. Likewise, while observing one’s mind, one should observe discrimination as one of its forms; in the same way, discrimination should be noticed while one is observing dharmas, and once observed, it should be abandoned. Bodhisattvas should practice in this manner while they seek to develop the concentration leading to the attainment of samadhi. When a bodhisattva observes form, perception or mind without discrimination, he or she will understand that, ultimately, there are no dharmas to be obtained. How or where could discrimination arise? All dharmas are, therefore, void of discrimination. Because of non-discrimination there is no thought, and in its absence no dharmas can be perceived. Without dharmas there can be no obstacles, and when there are no obstacles, samadhi is attained. When that happens, the bodhisattva perceives myriads of oceanic buddha-fields manifesting themselves as countless buddhas, and hears untold dharmas completely without obstacles. It is the supreme liberation or nirvana, it is the attainment of an unobstructed knowledge.

Again, Bhadrapala, when a bodhisattva observes according to the Fourfold Base of Mindfulness, eventually there are no dharmas to be perceived or thought of, and for that reason there can be no discrimination whatsoever. Nonetheless, the bodhisattva should not be thought of as being blind and deaf: His or her non-discrimination comes from a detachment from the

object of his or her seeing or hearing, *not from the cessation of their functions*. Freed from doubt regarding dharmas, separated from confusion and imaginings, the bodhisattva comes to perceive the Tathagata and understands there are no dharmas to be seen or heard. To see or to hear the object is to grasp a dharma of form; to grasp a dharma of form is to see sentient beings and a lasting existence: It means to perceive the cluster of mind and matter as a personal identity, complete with a soul, or pudgala in Sanskrit. At that moment a notion of an independent, enduring self is established. Next, the skandhas come to be; because of the skandhas, the sense-doors come to be; because of the sense-doors, the realms come to be; that means the existence of forms and, consequently, the existence of things. Once there are the things, there are also the causes; causes are always accompanied by conditions which result in grasping, and grasping ushers in the samsaric cycle of birth and death.

Grasping the dharmas is futile since there is nothing to be grasped. Therefore a bodhisattva neither hears or see an object, and does not think. Teachings of the heterodox, or the outer path are based on views rooted in pugala: They assert an independently existing, permanent self, complete with a soul and an ego. Such views inevitably lead to a grasping of the illusory self: These views all bodhisattvas meticulously avoid. The wisdom-eye of a bodhisattva is focused on the Tathagata and does not backslide. The vehicle of the pratyeka-buddha and the vehicle of the arhat both practice in such manner, because when the delusory thought is completely absent, the samadhi of nonduality can be realized.

Consider, for instance, space: Shapeless or formless, completely unobstructed, it cannot be seen, does not depend on anything and does not dwell anywhere; it cannot be declared pure or soiled. The bodhisattvas perceive all dharmas in such manner. As the obstacles are eliminated, the dharmas of action and non-action are correspondingly used up. Each dharma appears naturally before the clear-eyed, the unfettered ones. Contemplating in this manner, the bodhisattva sees all buddhas, accomplished, with adornments of burnished gold, awe-inspiring; as incandescent as countless bejeweled lights, they are comparable to the sovereign Sakra venerated by all devas, or like

Mahabrahma Devaraja who ennoble the four seats of heaven. Each of the buddhas is like the lion, the king of the animal kingdom; like the swan, the king of birds, or like the Mount Sumeru, exalted and majestic, dominating the ocean. Each buddha is like the great Store Of Snow, or the Himalaya region, producing numberless wonderful medicinal plants, or like the Iron Enclosing Mountains that receive and hold the violent, savage wind. Every buddha is like the water-element that supports the earth, like the merkuta or the snow-cap on the Mount Sumeru that shelters a paradise. All Tathagatas are perceived as radiant oceans of wisdom and merit, illuminating the great chalicosm through countless buddha-lands.

The bodhisattva remembers teachings discerned by him or her during meditation, thinks about them deeply, and shares them with others. The Samadhi of Nonduality, sometimes called the King of Samadhi, is indispensable to the bodhisattva practice, it is the perfect merit, beneficial to all sentient beings. The samadhi of nonduality is essential for the attainment of the Bodhi-mind.

Their sphere of knowledge purified, all buddhas, liberated,
Obtain great merit; their unobstructed knowledge transcends all
Things; honor them with clear sounding bells
And with deep sounds of drums: Thus make them offerings.

Pay respect to past, present and future buddhas;
Offer garlands of delicate blossoms, and incense
Of incomparable fragrance, and with glowing lights
Of rare, mellow hues adorn the temple: Thus prepare your entry
Into the enlightening practice according to this Dharma.

This profound Buddhadharma, the teaching most rare
Demonstrates to the world the Ultimate Truth, or
What is unchangeable in everyone's Self Nature;
Fearlessly enter this path of unobstructed wisdom.

This inconceivable Dharma of Samadhi glows
Like the full moon or like the golden sun;
Adorned with all those on the path to attainment, it has
The majesty of the thirty-three sovereign gods in their heavens.

These fearless ones are awe-inspiring and still,
Like the Brahma with his assembly of Brahmadevas;
Unspeakingly brave are those of pure virtue,
Intent on attaining this enlightening Dharma of Samadhi.

The supreme healer, the best of the best, is giving
Away his efficacious medicine which soothes while
It heals; tirelessly follow his enlightening teaching:
Born of truth, it sprung from the true Voidness.

Neither the bright lights, the precious adornments
On the cart of King Sakravarti, nor the Snow Mountain,
The king of all mountains, can be compared for majesty
And dazzle with the perfect characteristics of buddhas.

An image of freshness, the white-feathered king
Of birds -- the swan -- flies unobstructed
Across an unobstructed sky; the same ease marks all
Thoughts of those on this enlightening path.

Consider the unimpeded wisdom of all buddhas, the way
It unravels the great darkness of an endless night;
The joyless states of ignorance and woe are ousted
By the power of samadhi; the ocean of wisdom remains.

Those who end their samsaric pain experience
A moment to moment awakening; upon entering
The gate of liberation they discover, in one single
Thought, the secret of non-becoming.

To uphold this enlightening teaching is to drop the
Tethers of ignorance and doubt; To hear this bright Dharma
With an acute ear is to remove all dust and
To enter a practice of an unlimited potential.

Those who prefer this path to the ways of the
World, the bhikshus and bhikshunis of pure vows and
Of pure discipline should know to trust this practice;
It will lead to samadhi; the upasakas and the upasikas
Should, likewise, observe this Dharma.”

Chapter XIII: On Action Free of Strife

Turning to Bhadrápala, the World Honored One said: “A monk who wants to learn and sustain samadhi should concentrate first on the formless realm. He should guard against pride and arrogance, and furthermore, he should compose his mind so it will relinquish all forms. A teacher teaching approaches to samadhi should not become involved in disputes and conflicts. By a ‘dispute’ I mean the delusory, false thoughts that usually lead to a slander. If the monks wish their samadhi practice to progress, they should avoid confrontations. Ten dharmas should be learned by all who hope to teach in the future. A future teacher of samadhi practice should: 1) Establish a respectful mind, completely free from arrogance; 2) Always remember to express gratitude; 3) Free his or her mind from all dependency, and avoid jealousy; 4) Eradicate all doubts and remove all obstacles in his/her own practice; 5) Be mindful not to destroy the students’ deep trust in the one-pointed mind; 6) Seek the Dharma with unswerving diligence; 7) Live on handouts, shunning special invitations; 8) A samadhi-teacher should reduce his/her desire for gratification, and discipline the body in all its parts; 9) Cultivate deeply the Right Faith and obtain the patient endurance of the uncreate; 10) Ponder the samadhi as taught by all buddhas and then endeavor to practice it. These ten dharmas are for those who wish to practice samadhi not only for their own benefit, but also to benefit others by teaching them. Practicing in this manner can obtain the following eight positive results: No transgression of rules of discipline, which means purity; pure views grounded in wisdom, no more dependence on the views of others; for a mind that abides in the pure wisdom there is no more rebirth; not expecting rewards is the purest form of Dana or the virtue of giving; the more Dharma he/she hears, the less of it he/she will forget, thereby purifying the mind; the process of purification is conducive to the attainment of the Bodhi; the disengagement from worldly concerns shields the practitioner from temptations of fame and wealth; the purifying action prevents backsliding and leads to the attainment of the Unsurpassed, Perfect Awakening. Bhadrápala, these are the eight benefits for those

who practice and teach samadhi.” The World Honored One reiterated his discourse in the following gathas:

The effective teachers of samadhi
Are free of worldly thoughts,
Of false ideas and views;
They learned to master their patience in depth.

The great stillness named nirvana is an
Inconceivable Void totally free from conflict;
Effective teachers of Dharma hold all buddhas and
Their teachings in their highest esteem.

The wise, intent on this practice of stillness,
Remove themselves from wrong views and from jealousy
By reciting “Buddha” with grateful hearts; they are
No longer captives in the whirlpool of birth and death.

The surrender of one’s doubt, one’s jealousy, one’s
Need to gratify one’s desires, leads to an entry
Into this profound Dharma of Reality; that is a
Practice of those on the way to samadhi.

Monks, nuns and all others who abandoned mundane concerns
And determined to realize the truth
Will disregard all privileges, all self-indulgence;
Thus their attainment of samadhi is assured.

Accepting and upholding this inconceivable Dharma
Really means paying attention and being receptive;
Those teaching it should be honored as buddhas;
Their great virtue is their teaching the way to samadhi.

The eight dharmas represent an accomplishment, and a
Merit surpassing the world in purity; its nature
Can only be compared to that of the merit of all buddhas,
And it greatly facilitates the attainment of samadhi.

Upholding the discipline boundlessly purifies
The mind; keeping it stainless through one’s

Entire existence is to abide, undefeated,
In the supreme, immeasurable merit.

The practice of those of pure wisdom is free
From receiving or giving away; alms, once offered,
Are not thought of again; the wise, once having
Heard the Dharma, retain it forever.

Untouched by fame or by wealth, undefeated,
The wise valiantly proceed to attain the Bodhi;
Adorned by their countless, immeasurable virtues
They attain and abide supreme samadhi.”

Chapter XIV: The Characteristics and Powers of the Buddha

The World Honored One explained: “A bodhisattva should accomplish eighteen distinctive characteristics of buddhas. What are they? Since his attainment of anuttara-samyak-sambodhi until the time he entered his final nirvana, the Tathagata dwelled in wisdom; his bodily karmas, karmas of speech and karmas of mind consistently accorded with his wisdom; the Tathagata knows that the past, present and future represent no obstacles. By maintaining purity of speech and mind and by disengaging all attachments the Tathagata abides in samadhi. His compassion, progress, meditation and wisdom never decrease; the Tathagata’s liberation, knowledge and experience of nirvana are firmly established. These are the eighteen distinctive characteristics of buddhas.

A bodhisattva should study and practice the profound, right Dharma in its completeness, and if he or she hopes to teach, he or she should focus on the ten supreme dharmas called the Ten Powers Possessed Only by Buddhas: 1) The capacity for prediction; 2) knowing and fulfilling the desires of the living; 3) knowing all buddha-realms and their inhabitants; 4) knowing all their different natures; 5) knowing all good roots; 6) knowing all the laws; 7) all kinds of wisdom; 8) all events in every moment; 9) all evolving domains or conditions; 10) all expressions, words, and discussions.

The Buddha realized both Wisdom and Truth and received the great empowerment by a means of his unsurpassed, perfect enlightenment, to turn the great wheel of Dharma by teaching the assembly and thereby surpassing all seekers, all humans and all denizens of other realms. That was his first manifestation of the buddha-power.

A bodhisattva should practice the complete Dharma. He or she should learn the power of knowing, by a means of the Right Wisdom, if any given place is an appropriate place to be or not; what is appropriate and what is not; what is right and what is wrong in any given condition and in any situation.

A bodhisattva should learn the power possessed by buddhas, by means of which he or she would acquire a knowledge of the countless realms representing the karmas of

every being past, present, and future, including their causes conditions and effects in terms of retribution. The realm of the buddhas is boundless, their spiritual power is unlimited.

A bodhisattva should master the power possessed by buddhas by entering all four stages of dhyana liberation culminating in samadhi. During the practice on the path to samadhi by a means of the four dhyanas all defilements gradually surface and vanish, and that is how the Buddha obtained the Right Wisdom. The four dhyanas and the samadhi bring forth enormous mind-power. Because of the Buddha's great mind-power he can exercise the ten powers, as it was evidenced at the time he turned the Dharma-wheel in the Deer Park, surpassing all humans and demons.

A bodhisattva should learn the power of the buddhas and get to know powers and faculties of all beings. The Buddha, using his acute heavenly eye, surpassing by far any other vision, beholds all beings as forms which may be fine or rough, beautiful, ugly, good or bad. Furthermore, he beholds their faculties which may be sharp or dull, their various inclinations as well as their powers.

A bodhisattva should practice this Dharma in its completeness, and master the power possessed by buddhas, namely, that of knowing the desires, or moral direction of every being. By means of his or her heavenly eye, the bodhisattva knows their actions, their reasons for the actions, their ambitions, aversions and the many forms of their grasping, or the absence of it. Likewise, he or she perceives the outcome of every being's behavior, their happiness, their suffering, or both, as it was proven in the Deer Park when he turned the Dharma-wheel for the first time.

A bodhisattva should master this Dharma in its completeness by acquiring the power to know the conditions of every individual. Such a power is possessed by all buddhas, and it can be accomplished by a means of the Right Wisdom and by using heavenly eye, as attested in the Deer Park at the time of the lion's roar, or when the Tathagata, turning the wheel of Dharma for the first time, surpassed every being in the universe.

A bodhisattva should master the entire Dharma. He or she should acquire the powers possessed by all buddhas,

including the power to know every law, every direction and every consequence of every law; all causes of mortality, of good and evil as they really are. Because of his unsurpassed wisdom, the Buddha knows the time, the place and the circumstances of every life's ending, as well as every rebirth and its causes. He understands the meaning and the application of every law, and all inevitable results or consequences of every law. This was well demonstrated in the Deer Park, when he taught the Lion's Roar Dharma for the first time.

A bodhisattva should learn this Dharma in its completeness, and master the powers possessed by all buddhas, including entering and abiding buddha-realms, and the subsequent expressing and sharing the experience and the path with others, so they likewise attain awakening. The Buddha extinguished his karmic outflow and left forever the stream of transmigration. Following his full, unsurpassed awakening, he declared: 'I have accomplished the pure action, and for me there is no more rebirth. Thus gone, I terminated my karmic outflow, attained the radiant liberation of mind, and therefore I say I have ended the cycle of rebirths.'

Liberating himself, the Buddha liberated simultaneously all sentient beings, as proved at the time of the great Lion's Roar; he turned the great Dharma-wheel the way it has never been turned before by any sage, priest, deva or demon. Teaching the assembly, he surpassed all seekers, the best of the best of sages, all humans, and all dwellers of other worlds. This completes the teaching regarding the ten powers possessed by all buddhas.

Whoever studies and practices this Dharma in its completeness, accepting and upholding this teaching of samadhi, entered the path leading to the ten powers possessed by all buddhas."

Following his discourse the World Honored One epitomized it in the following gatha:

"The four dhyanas and the ensuing samadhi are accomplished
Naturally if the ten boundless Bodhisattva-treasures
Provide the foundation for the study and practice
of the ten powers possessed by all buddhas."

Chapter XV: On the Merit of Appropriate Joy

The World Honored One, turning to Bhadrápala, said: “Bhadrápala, a bodhisattva can enter samadhi the moment he or she accomplishes four merits of appropriate joy. What are the four? First, the bodhisattva should consider the practice and the attainment of past buddhas as a treasure of teachings they left behind to guide us in the enlightening practice. Our methods are the same as those of these past Buddhas. Because they succeeded then, we can hope to attain realization now, providing we practice as diligently as them. Second, the bodhisattva should consider all the bodhisattvas presently practicing toward the attainment of complete, perfect awakening in the future: There will be more teaching in the world, and consequently more attainment. Third, the bodhisattva should ponder the vastness of unlimited space as buddha-fields, manifesting in accordance with the merit of appropriate joy. The more Dharma is there to be heard, the more likelihood that the perfect, complete awakening is attained. Fourthly, the bodhisattva should consider all past, present and future buddhas on terms of their practice, their attainment and their merit of appropriate joy. The bodhisattva should derive from that consideration his or her own merit of appropriate joy, realizing that the more Dharma is there to be learned, the better chance for everyone to attain complete, perfect awakening.

The completion of the merit of appropriate joy facilitates a prompt attainment of the Bodhi Way. Because it benefits not only the one who is practicing it, but all sentient beings as well, the resulting reward is, accordingly, immeasurable. Consider carefully the following example: Let us suppose a person one-hundred years old, enjoying perfect health, is capable to walk as fast as if he or she were flying. Furthermore, let us suppose that person walks in all ten directions, one by one, as far as he or she could see. Let’s say that individual is well trained in arithmetic. Do you think Bhadrápala, that person would be able to determine subsequently the extent of his or her travels?” Bhadrápala thought that wayfarer would not be able to figure out all these distances. The World Honored One asked: “Bhadrápala, supposing such an individual walked in all ten directions for a

hundred years. Do you think he or she would be able to add up all those distances he or she walked?” Bhadrápala answered that he did not think it was possible. He felt that individual would be able in neither case to determine the diverse directions and the world’s boundaries. However, the elder Shariputra, as well as all the bodhisattvas apparently knew the answer. The World Honored One explained: “No matter how huge the distances may be, they are minute when compared with the merit of appropriate joy, because the bodhisattva has a goal: While cultivating to develop that merit, he or she is on the way to samadhi and, consequently, on the right path to the attainment.

In a very distant past a buddha named Lion’s Mind (Shih Tzu I in Chinese) appeared in the world. The part of the world where he appeared enjoyed great prosperity. Not only did the four grains yield great harvest, but there were many precious metals and gems of all kinds. All of the many excellent towns thrived, their population, numerous beyond counting. It was an age of supreme magnificence. Lion’s Mind Tathagata, Arhat, Lokavid taught the people the practice of virtue, leading his numberless followers to enlightenment. The ruler of that part of the world was named Cakravarti, which means ‘wheels of the chariot turn without obstructions’. He was a glorious king, fair toward his subjects. His many possessions included the seven royal treasures, namely, a golden wheel, elephants, dark swift horses, a Mani-pearl, able ministers of the treasury, jewels for women, and loyal generals. His many sons were his pride and joy; they helped conquer all their enemies and the country was at peace. Once the ruler asked Lion’s Mind buddha to teach him the Samadhi of One-pointed Mind. Upon receiving the teaching, the king was overjoyed. He practiced diligently from then on and in his consecutive existence he was reborn a prince, fortunate enough to receive the teaching of the merit of appropriate joy from a religious mendicant of pure virtue. He practiced assiduously and eventually dedicated himself exclusively to his spiritual practice. Many of his subjects followed his example and entered the path of self-conquerors. Practicing patiently and energetically, both he and his tutor attained the complete and perfect enlightenment. Those who followed him were also successful in their practice.

The story illustrates, Bhadrapala, what I have taught you regarding the merit of appropriate joy and the long-range effect it has on karma. Practitioners should spare no effort when seeking, studying and practicing this teaching. In order to succeed in this practice it is necessary to keep one's mind from becoming scattered, and to guard against sloth and torpor. Laziness and negligence must be avoided. Zeal and determination should be encouraged; a practitioner should not hesitate to travel great distances, if necessary, to hear the teachings. Patience is essential, and the seeker should not dwell on worldly ideas, calibrating the time and energy he or she spends in practice. The adept should abandon worldly concern, respect the teachings and the teacher, and endeavor to master the practice and teach. How can one respect the Dharma and not respect a Dharma teacher? Cultivation of gratitude, courtesy and of respect is conducive to the development of good root. Let me give you the following gathas to help you remember this teaching:

“Once there lived a great sage
Named Lion's Mind: He taught a wise ruler
The practice of samadhi. The king rejoiced,
Renounced the world and served it better
By means of a sustained spiritual practice.

He established himself firmly in the Dharma and
Thereby obtained the benefit of noble rebirth;
Once more a ruler, he found a spiritual guide and
Again dedicated himself fully to this pure practice.

He heard one day a teaching of oceanic wisdom
And entered a path, leading to what is hard to reach;
He was tireless in his practice of enlightenment:
He found himself face to face with all buddhas.

Inconceivable buddha-worlds manifesting themselves
As countless buddhas, filling the space with
Sounds of teachings, sounds of the most
Profound Dharma expounded by the Tathagata.

The prince accomplished the immeasurable bravery
And the spiritual power of buddhas, steadfast
In their efforts to retrieve sentient beings
From the endlessly turning rounds of Samsara.

Many of his subjects joined the prince, and like
Him, entered the samadhi and attained the enlightenment;
Praising the buddhas and their immeasurable merit
The liberated ones taught this Dharma of Freedom.

This Teaching of Non-attachment expounds the
Wonderful way to a complete emancipation, and it
Should be cherished and shared; blessings are
Bestowed on all those who heard it even once.

Offer respect and gratitude to your teachers and masters
Attending to their needs with a wholehearted dedication;
Open your mind to this Dharma, and never allow yourself
To miss an occasion for hearing and learning it.”

Chapter XVI: Obligations toward a Dharma Master

Countless kalpas ago, immeasurable distances from here lived a religious mendicant named Ho Lun; he received and followed the teachings of a buddha named Immeasurable Sincerity. Upon his master's entry into nirvana, Ho Lun inherited his master's teaching and became a teacher of samadhi. One day he was visited by a powerful king who ruled a large country. The king came in response to a dream he had: In that dream, Ho Lun taught him successfully the practice of the samadhi of nonduality. The king wanted his dream to become a reality. The ascetic consented to teach the king how to practice and eventually the king became attracted to the ascetic's way of life to such an extent that he abdicated his royal position and privilege and joined Ho Lun, his teacher. While still a king, he showed to his spiritual guide his gratitude by rewarding him sumptuously, in accordance with his regal status. The king's gratitude stemmed from his awareness of the great scarcity of Dharma masters and of spiritual guides. His previous numberless existences were marked by moral and spiritual defeats and he was burdened with obstacles generated by Mara. For an unimaginable length of time the king did not have any opportunity to as much as hear the profound teaching mentioned. Bhadrपाला, Bhikshus, bhikshunis, upasakas, upasikas, the entire assembly, I beseech all of you to master this Dharma without delay, practice assiduously toward a full realization, regardless of the amount of time and energy it may require. A Dharma teacher is indispensable to correct practice and should be rewarded and respected as all buddhas. Attending to the teacher's every need is an important part of practitioner's discipline, abiding in consideration and compliance fosters a peace of mind; it is conducive to the attainment of samadhi. Unimaginable treasures cannot be compared with just one sentence of this teaching." The World Honored One summarized in the following gathas:

"Ho Lun, a seeker of the path, was intent on
Entering samadhi; although a faithful follower of
Many guides, practicing for many kalpas, he was
Unable to find a true teacher.

At last, Ho Lun met the Immeasurable Sincerity
Buddha, and became his disciple; upon his master's
Nirvana, Ho Lun in turn taught the path to samadhi,
Sharing with others what he had mastered.

Cakravarti was a glorious king who had a dream;
He dreamed of an ascetic, teaching him samadhi,
The ascetic being Ho Lun; first rewarding Ho Lun,
The king entered the ascetic practice.

The King's gratitude to Ho Lun for teaching him
Had deep roots; eons of kalpas he searched in the
Ten directions and faced countless defeats by Mara.
To free himself, the wise king at last entered the path.

This admonition is intended for those who renounce the world
So they can follow this teaching,
And for those who make offerings to the Greatest of Sages:
Cherish this sutra and those who teach it.

Spare no effort when attending to your Dharma-
Master, accepting gratefully, with reverence
This pure teaching that leads to the entry
Of the enlightening path, the path of the Golden One.

Consider the grace of this teaching which purifies
The spirit of defiled beings; kingly treasures from
As many universes as there are grains of sand in
The River Ganges come nowhere near its worth.

The best of people engage in this practice of
Complete enlightenment, learning its many ways
To reach nirvana; look how long it survived;
The satisfaction of samadhi is worth the exertion.

Chapter XVII: Review and Admonition

Bhadrapala, good men and good women of pure faith should ponder this teaching, meditate on the meaning, practice accordingly and share both the teaching and their insights with others, taking good care of it. Following the Buddha's final nirvana, the bodhisattvas and the Bodhisattva Mahasattvas should assure the purity, the accessibility and the future of this profound teaching. Spare no effort while you continually improve your practice, even if it means to travel great distances to do it. Those of great learning and pure faith should write and disseminate this Dharma and encourage those without guidance to seek the path of liberation. All things of this world are without form, they are not created. The seal of the Tathagata is non-action, non-thought, neither accepting nor rejecting. It marks the end of all misunderstanding and of all suffering. It leads to the end of the birth/death cycle."

Numberless sentient beings planted good roots during this discourse, and countless bodhisattvas and Bodhisattva-Mahasattvas entered the King of Samadhi or Anuttara-samyak-sambodhi. The great earth trembled in six different ways: Thereby this Teaching of liberation and equality, of wisdom and compassion received an undisputed approval. The World Honored One said to Arya Mahakasyapa: "I practiced this Dharma for three asamkhyeya kalpas before attaining the Unsurpassed and Perfect Awakening. I now entrust to you this doctrine difficult to believe and still more difficult to practice. This profound teaching will guide all sentient beings to liberation from suffering. Those of pure virtue, intent on understanding the true nature of reality should think deeply about this teaching and practice it wholeheartedly."

The Aryas, the great hearers, the bodhisattvas and the Bodhisattvas Mahasattvas, the Sangha, the denizens of other worlds, the eight classes of supernatural beings accepted this teaching with the greatest joy, honored and practiced it.

GLOSSARY

Terms are from Sanskrit unless stated otherwise.

Buddha-Lit., a completely awakened individual; most frequently used to designate Sakyamuni Buddha (Sixth Cent.B.C., India), the fully enlightened man who achieved the perfect knowledge of the truth and thereby liberated himself from all existence, and who revealed his method of attaining nirvana; the first of the Three Treasures and the Three Refuges.

Buddhadharma-Lit., the teaching of the Enlightened One; applied alternative with the term “Buddhism”.

Dharma-Lit., that which upholds; the expression has no exact equivalent in English; it can mean variously the Buddha’s teaching; the law of the universe; the nature of things; any and all phenomena; the real and the unreal, etc., or, simply, the truth; understood as the perfect teaching of the Enlightened One, it constitutes the second one of the Three Treasures, and of the Three Refuges.

Dhyana-Concentration-absorption; in Buddhist meditative practice there are four dhyanas; they are distinguished according to the depth of the absorption.

Mara-The inhabitant of hellish realms; the manifestation of defeat, destruction, and suffering; associated with a bondage to Samsara, opposing liberation.

Sangha-A fully ordained monk, nun or novice; their community; it constitutes the last of the Three Treasures and the Three Refuges.

Samadhi-Concentration of mind so it becomes one-pointed; ordinary attention; ecstatic trance; or a general term applied to all the various practices of meditation.

The Eight Enlightening Thoughts-Universal impermanence; desire results in suffering; ambition is grasping, which increases defilement; laziness is degrading in humans; ignorance leads to suffering as birth and death; poverty often breeds intolerance; the five passions breed obstructions; the cycle of birth and death is like a blazing fire consuming a house.

The Five Deliverances-Five thoughts by which emancipation reaches maturity: The notion of impermanence; the notion of impermanence as suffering; the notion of non-self as suffering; the notion of casting away as suffering; the recognition of emancipation or passionless-ness.

The Five Skandha-Form, sensation, perception, volition and consciousness; the five tethers or attachments to mortality;

The Nine Defilements-or nine kinds of distress as borne by the Buddha while he still possessed his physical form;

The Nine Insights-Or nine meditations on the deterioration of a corpse up to its return to dust to curb desire.

The Six Vedana- The six kinds of information or data received by means of the six organs.

The Ten Boundless Treasures of a Bodhisattva-1) Belief and faith, 2) precepts, 3) shame of past misdeeds, 4) blushing of the misdeeds of others, 5) hearing and knowing the Truth, 6) giving, 7) wisdom, 8) memory, 9) upholding the sutras, 10) empowerment to expound the sutras.

The Ten Evils-Killing; stealing; adultery; lying; double-tongue; coarse language; filthy language; covetousness; anger; perverted views;

The Ten Good Virtues-The six paramitas or transcendental virtues, to which the following four were added: Sacrificing one's life to save parents; a buddha; to become a monk (or a nun); to induce another to do the same; to obtain the authority to preach.

The Ten Titles of Buddha-Tathagata or "Thus Gone"; Arhat or Saint; Samyak-sambuddha or the Completely and Fully Awakened One; Vidyacarana-sampanna or Endowed With Supreme Knowledge and Virtuous Conduct; Sugata or Well Spoken; Lokavid or Knower of the World; Anuttara or Unsurpassed; Purusa-damya-sarathi or Leader Capable of Taming All Beings; Sasta deva-manusyanam or Teacher of Gods and Humans; Bhagavan or The Blessed One;

The Twelve Links In The Chain Of Existence-One of the formulas essential to Buddhadharma; its constituents are: Ignorance, action, consciousness, name and form, the six sense organs, contact, sensation, craving, grasping, existing, birth, old age and death.

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